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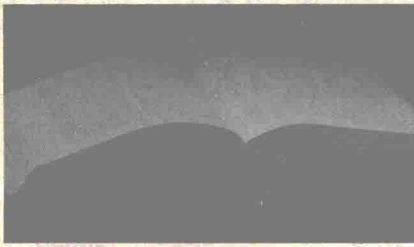
Professional Development through CoPs: A Case Study of EFL Teachers in China



王 平 著

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前言

本研究的目的之一，在于调查研究高校外语教师对自身专业发展的需求、是否有参加过相关项目的经历以及对即将参与的如何在课堂上组织学生英语口语活动这一教师发展项目的要求与期望。在调查研究的基础上，本研究创建了在实践共同体框架指导下促进教师转化学习的专业发展模式，进而分析了教师在参与相关专业发展项目的过程中如何实现转化学习。本研究设计为个案研究，通过多方渠道收集数据。研究数据包括：1）由某高校英语系30名教师参与的一项问卷调查；2）对参与实践共同体的四名教师的多次访谈；3）调研对象的每周会谈录音、博客留言以及研究结束六个月后对其进行的电子邮件访谈。在研究过程中，作者采用了定性和定量相结合的方法来分析收集到的数据。

问卷调查及访谈结果显示：受试教师缺乏参加（教师）专业发展活动的经历，他们对此项活动持积极态度。国内提供的教师专业发展项目多以技能培训为主，与实际课堂教学不太相关。受试教师受工作时间及课时压力等因素影响，更希望参与结合（他们）课堂教学实际需要、能与同事一起交流的活动。基于这些发现，本研究开展的教师专业发展活动采用实践共同体框架，重点帮助教师在英语课堂上组织学生进行各项口语活动。

通过分析教师们每周参与的专业发展会谈、试后访谈、电子邮件访谈等数据，作者发现教师发展模式的实践过程远比预期设想的复杂。主

要表现为：1）实施这一模式的结果比预期要多样化。教师在实践共同体中通过新旧理念的思辨能够学到新的教学方法，但不是全盘接受，而是加以改进和创新，同时也保留了部分旧的课堂活动。2）教师在课堂教学实践中的变化比预期要小。3）教师在教学理念和教学实践方面都有进步。在这些发现的基础上，以实践共同体框架为基础的教师专业发展模式得到进一步完善。

本研究还深入细致地跟踪了一名参与研究的教师（略称“洋”）的学习成长过程。研究发现，洋参加这次教师专业发展活动在多个方面有显著成效。起初洋在实践共同体中表现为一个倾听者，在会谈中更倾向于向其他教师学习；之后她不断地将在实践共同体中学到的新方法、新理念付诸实践，不但在教学中采用了新方法，而且将新的教学策略与传统的课堂活动结合起来；在后期的教师会谈中，她积极参与并起主导作用。

以上发现对未来研究的指导意义在于：中国教师在专业发展中的转化学习有待更深入细致的研究；可以将实践共同体框架指导的教师专业发展模式运用到其他国家或地区，以探究将这一模式进行推广的可行性。

本研究揭示了一项将实践共同体框架运用到中国高校外语教师专业发展的个案研究。研究提出了新模式、实践了新模式并在运用过程中完善了这一模式，以期将其推广到更广阔的研究领域。

本论文于2009年3月完成于澳大利亚昆士兰大学。论文得以顺利完成，应该感谢所有帮助过我的人们。

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List of Abbreviations Used in the Thesis

CoP	Community of Practice
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
MOE	Ministry of Education
PD	Professional Development
PEEL	Project to Enhance Effective Learning
PMI	Plus Minus Interesting
PQP	Praise Question Polish
RALGs	Reflective-Action Learning Groups
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

In the globalisation process, learning English has become a priority for both individuals and society in China. With the development of the Chinese economy following the country's entry to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, the need for a high level of oral communication skills by Chinese English speakers has grown in China (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996), and training in English language skills has been in unprecedented demand (Y. Wu, 2001). For example, by 2005, there have been more than 500 universities and colleges offering courses to 230,000 English majors in China (Dai, 2006). However, the level of English oral competence of Chinese students remains low and the country still lacks qualified English-majored graduates (Q. Wu, 2006). In this situation, teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Chinese tertiary education faces challenges to improve their practices, particularly in relation to teaching oral communication skills. This study focuses on how Chinese university teachers might be assisted to develop their knowledge and practice of teaching oral English in a professional way based on a

Community of Practice (CoP) model.

This chapter first outlines some major issues in English language teaching for Chinese tertiary educators such as educational reforms, understanding EFL pedagogies and learning, and Chinese tertiary EFL teachers' backgrounds with a specific interest in their needs for professional development (PD). The problem and key questions that this study seeks to address are then discussed, followed by the significance of this study as a contribution to the field of education and an overview of the thesis.

1.1 English language teaching in tertiary education

This section introduces the background to the research context of English language teaching in Chinese tertiary education, discussing the changes brought by educational reforms in English language teaching, pedagogies and learning, the requirement for teachers with high qualifications, and Chinese tertiary EFL teachers' needs in professional development programs.

1.1.1 Educational reforms in English language teaching

Since the late 1980s, English language teaching has received a great deal of attention from the government and the education sector (Hu, 2002), with an expansion of English language teaching in schooling. In China, there have been top-down policies from the government to reform education in general and ELT in particular (Hu, 2003). The current national syllabus (MOE, 2000a, 2000b) for primary and secondary English education aims to promote quality education, such as cultivating

students' creativity, and how to put English into practical use (Y. Wu, 2001). Universities in China offer English as an optional course as follow-up. The national syllabus for English in tertiary education was once revised in 2000 to include English listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation (MOE, 2000c). One change from earlier syllabuses is that this one emphasizes "enhancing students' English communicative skills", and suggests that "teachers organise a variety of classroom activities to encourage students to participate in a wider range of language activities" (MOE, 2000c, p. 24).

The implementation of the syllabus for English teaching at tertiary level entails changing ELT classrooms from being teacher-dominated to being student-centred (MOE, 2000c). The teacher-dominated approach aligns with Chinese culture and practices that teachers play an authoritative role in class (Wen & Clement, 2003), i.e., teachers control the classroom activities by asking students to do what teachers assign them to do and consequently students rarely initiate questions or actively engage in activities. According to the current syllabus, teachers should move to a more student-centred approach where they take roles as facilitators of student learning (Cleveland-Innes & Emes, 2005; Nunan, 1989). These changes in the syllabus have brought about changes in the understanding of EFL pedagogies and learning.

1.1.2 Changes in the understandings of EFL pedagogies and learning

The ELT approaches traditionally employed by Chinese tertiary EFL teachers have been the grammar-translation method and a combination of the grammar-translation method with the audiolingual method (Castagnaro, 2006; Fu, 1986). The grammar-translation method focuses on detailed grammar analysis, rote learning of vocabulary, translation in

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