



Research Postgraduate Student Oral Presentation

PhD Candidate : Miss WANG Lan (Education Studies)
Date : 14 July 2020, Tuesday
Time : 2:30 p.m.
Venue : The presentation will be conducted via Zoom.
<https://hkbu.zoom.us/j/98062710102>



Exploring EFL Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge for Teaching Speaking in Chinese Universities – A Multiple Case Study.

Abstract

As a concept that represents teacher professionalism and expertise, pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) has received extensive research attention since the mid-1980s. PCK refers to the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular aspects of subject matter are organized, adapted, and represented for instruction (Shulman, 1987). Recent studies have shown that PCK impacts instruction quality and student learning (Beyer & Davis, 2012). Nevertheless, in the field of English language teaching (ELT), PCK remains unnoticed by many language teachers (Kind & Chan, 2019). PCK pertaining to speaking instruction is even more underrepresented. Meanwhile, English teaching in mainland China has undergone reforms aimed at promoting students' oral proficiency, but many problems still exist. Most studies have explored teaching methodologies, learning strategies, and the assessment of speaking. However, there is not much research on improving teaching effectiveness from the perspective of teachers' PCK.

This qualitative multiple case study examines teachers' PCK from the perspective of teaching English speaking over a two-year period. Purposeful sampling was employed, and five EFL instructors were the key informants. The instructors worked in different universities in mainland China and taught various levels of speaking courses. The data include classroom observations, teacher interviews, student interviews, reflection journals from the teachers, and various course syllabuses.

The study findings emphasize the contents and features of EFL teachers' PCK in a more systematic way and show that teachers' PCK comprises six components: knowledge of features of curriculum, pedagogy, learners' challenges, language enhancement, course evaluation, and the educational context. Each category contains a variety of subcategories. Two paths are revealed for the development of PCK: one path is for teachers to develop their PCK by studying the relevant literature and then transform that knowledge into students' comprehensible knowledge based on students' understanding; another path is for teachers to transfer or adjust PCK from other courses or people to their own instruction and then develop PCK through evaluation and reflection. The study also shows that based on three developmental models (the trial-based approach, top-down approach, and inquiry-based approach), the teacher participants advanced in three aspects: spiritual enrichment, renewed teacher roles, and philosophical inquiry. In addition, in this study, PCK is proven to be dynamic, personal, and transformative rather than static, canonical, and integrative.

Theoretically, this study proposes a comprehensive framework of PCK components and development for speaking instructors and underscores the concept of meta-representations. It adds to the literature on EFL teachers' cognition in the Chinese context, thus broadening and enriching the research on EFL teachers' PCK in the educational field. Practically, the study highlights the importance of appropriating the educational context, establishing teacher beliefs and philosophy, and improving teachers' critical literacy as well as their language competency. The findings can also enhance teacher educators' and policy-makers' awareness of specific subject matter and deepen their understanding of speaking instruction.

The findings shed light on how to improve overall EFL speaking pedagogy, empower EFL teachers, and facilitate their professional development within the context of English curriculum reform. Limitations of the study lie in its restricted timeframe, limited resources, and sampling size. Future research directions could be to conduct a longitudinal study with more participants or to develop and quantify PCK measurements.

Keywords: constructivism, pedagogical content knowledge, professional development, reflective practice, teaching speaking