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Introduction

Research about teachers' knowledge has pointed to the importance of developing three types of teachers' knowledge: content knowledge, generic instructional methods or pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Although all three knowledge components are critical in teacher development, the study of PCK is relatively new in some disciplines. Coining the term, *pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)*, Shulman (1987) proposed that this form of knowledge is crucial for effective teaching as it relates to the capability to represent and formulate content in a particular discipline in ways that are understandable to students.

Although PCK has been explored in a number of studies in disciplines such as mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Grossman, 1990; Smith, 2001; Wilson & Wineburg, 1988), teachers' pedagogical content knowledge base in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) is still an understudied area. This study attempts to fill this gap by examining the nature of PCK between two types of teachers, native and non-native English speaking, who commonly teach TESOL courses. Understanding their PCK and any similarities and/or differences between them may begin the building of a PCK foundation for preparing and informing TESOL educators.

Theoretical Framework

As stated above, Shulman (1986) posits that PCK to be a unique but essential part of teachers' knowledge for effective instruction. This requires that teachers possess not only deep understanding of the structure and content of a particular discipline but also to have the ability to flexibly represent content to students with varying conceptions and development (Shulman, 1986). This also calls for teachers to have knowledge of (1) students' abilities, attitudes, motivations, learning techniques, developmental levels, and prior knowledge and (2) the social, political, cultural and physical environments within which students are situated (Cochran, DeRuiter & King, 1993). Shulman's theoretical framework suggests that the integrated nature of PCK continues to grow as teachers increasingly gain teaching experience.

In the TESOL field, PCK is ill-defined. This, in part, is due to two apparent groups of teachers who traditionally teach TESOL courses in two different contexts. One group includes native English speaking teachers (NESTs) who appear to demonstrate a good understanding of the language and its related cultural contexts but lack relative understanding of their non-native students and their students' culture since the majority NESTs teach TESOL courses to English as second language (ESL) students. That is,

NESTs typically acquire English as their first language and tend to be proficient in idiomatic language skills and knowledge. Because of this, it is assumed that NESTs emphasize fluency, meaning, language in use, and oral skills in their teaching.

In contrast, the other group encompasses nonnative English speaking teachers (NNESTs) who appear to be less knowledgeable or have a different kind of understanding about the language and its related cultural contexts since most of them had to study and acquire English as their second language. Because they commonly teach students who undergo similar language acquisition in English as foreign language (EFL) classrooms, NNESTs seem to have a good understanding of their students and their students' culture contexts (Medgyes, 1992; 1994; 2001). Nevertheless, NNESTs tend to focus their teaching on accuracy, form, grammar rules, and printed words since they are generally less proficient in idiomatic language skills and knowledge than NESTs.

The consequence of these assumed differences in language proficiency between the two groups appear to generate different teaching behaviors (Medgyes, 1994; 2001) and differing views of students and ways of language learning (Mahbook, 2004; Lasagabaster & Seirra, 2005). These assumptions about the differences between the PCK of NESTs and NNESTs have not been examined closely in the TESOL field. Much of the literature present theories of TESOL teaching and instructional practices that originate from the field of second language acquisition with little clear delineation of the understanding of ESL or EFL context influences. Little comparative studies have provided empirical evidence of the differences and/or similarities of PCK between NESTs and NNESTs who teach in EFL contexts even though 80% of the TESOL professionals worldwide are NNESTs (Canagarajah, 1999). This study aims to fill this void by examining the nature of PCK between the two types of teachers, NESTs and NNESTs, who commonly teach TESOL courses within an EFL context. Insights gained may establish the beginning PCK foundations for preparing and informing TESOL educators.

Methodology

This study was conducted in one of the largest cities in southern China. Participants consisted of 13 American teachers and 12 Chinese English teachers who, at the time of study, were all teaching English to K-6 Chinese students during a three-week English immersion summer camp. Native speakers of English (NESTs) consisted of US teachers who had either received or were receiving formal teacher education preparation in US teacher education programs and possessed varying years of US teaching experience. Non-native speakers of English (NNESTs) consisted of Chinese teachers of English who were full-time elementary school teachers during the regular school year and they possessed varying years of K-6 teaching experiences in China.

Data sources included the use of a two surveys. Administered during the first day of the camp, the first survey obtained background information of both American and Chinese English teachers that included their educational background, teaching styles, views on working with native English speaking teachers, selection of textbooks, teaching autonomy and views on working within a centralized curricular system.

The second survey was administered during the last of week of the camp and required participants to design a lesson plan based on a one-page cartoon script entitled “My Pet” that aimed to teach third grade Chinese students third person singular concepts using the verb “to do.” This script was found in the third grade English textbook commonly used in southern Chinese schools. This lesson design survey attempted to explore participants’ tacit beliefs on EFL teaching and gather information on their PCK and instructional decision after three weeks of teaching in the Chinese context. The major objective of the lesson was to teach Chinese students the grammatical concept of inflectional morpheme “s”, using the third person singular or the plural form “s.” The lesson objective was not revealed to the participants. Rather, they were simply instructed to identify the major objective(s) of the lesson and outline their instructional practices in their lesson plan design.

Following qualitative traditions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), data were translated, transcribed, and coded for each participant and themes and patterns were identified and categorized as they emerged. Comparisons were then made on the themes and patterns from each kind of data using both individual and group-level analysis.

Findings and Discussions

Based on the lesson plan design survey, four distinctive themes emerged between the two groups: (a) the goal(s) of the lesson, (b) the content objective(s) of the lesson, (c) instructional strategies, and (d) the type assessment methods. The majority of the NESTs and half of the NNESTs perceived the major goal of the lesson to be providing students with a global view of language usage while half of the NNESTs reported that the lesson goal was providing the concepts of grammatical rules and structure. More than half (58%) of the NNESTs compared to only 32% of the NESTs were able to correctly identify the content objective of the lesson and were able to visibly make clear connections with prior and current knowledge of key grammatical concept in their instructional strategies. These instructional methods helped students identify the key concepts, understand difficult conceptual points, and make connections with previously learned grammatical points in a sequential manner. In addition, when providing examples that complimented their instructional methods, NNESTs were able to provide examples that aligned to contrasting L2 and L1 learning theories that used students’

native language for comprehensible input (Kreshen, 1987) while NESTs employed examples that emphasized daily idiomatic expressions in the English language. The assessment methods used by both groups of teachers also differed. The majority of the NNESTs (42%) used a combination of reading, writing and oral speech to assess students' understanding of major lesson concepts while the majority of NESTs (53%) used informal oral assessments methods to measure the extent to which students grasped the concepts at the end of the lesson.

Conclusion

This study suggests that NESTs and NNESTs may possess and use different components of PCK when teaching Chinese students in an EFL context. This supports the notion that two groups appear to generate different teaching behaviors as indicated in other studies (Medgyes, 1994; 2001). It appears that because NNESTs acquired English in ways that were similar to their students, they were able to identify the critical and problematic areas of learning for their students which implies that they were more knowledgeable about their students' learning tendencies. They also were able to identify the major content objectives which suggests that they viewed learning English as grasping accuracy, grammar rules, and printed words of the language. In contrast, the majority of NESTs showed better understanding of the language and its related cultural contexts as well as idiomatic language skills and knowledge but lacked relative understanding of their non-native students' critical and problematic learning points of language concepts.

These findings provided empirical evidence that showed that NESTs and NNESTs may develop and use PCK differently. As well, it highlights certain aspects of PCK within Shulman's (1987) model on teachers' knowledge. It points to the importance of teachers being (1) able to identify the critical junctures for students in learning a particular language concept (2) able to use deep content knowledge and represent critical junctures of conceptual understanding in ways that are comprehensible for students at varying levels of conceptions and development and (3) able to have an understanding of the social, political, cultural and physical environments within which their students are situated (Cochran, DeRuiter & King, 1993) in order for effective instruction to take place. Future studies are needed to develop a deeper understanding of the particular PCK components and its relationship to teaching and learning.

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