

# On the Development of Novice English Teachers' Practical Knowledge—A Case Study of Two Novices in Nanchong No. 1 Middle School in China<sup>\*</sup>

DENG Xiao-fang

Southwest University,  
Chongqing, China

FENG Dan

Southwest Jiaotong  
University Hope College,  
Nanchong, China

YING Bin

High School Affiliated to  
Southwest University,  
Chongqing, China

CHEN Qian

Chongqing Jianshan Middle  
School, Chongqing, China

TPK (Teachers' practical knowledge), an essential component of teachers' knowledge and impetus for teachers' professional development, plays a crucial role in the novice teachers' dealing with the initial years of "sink or swim" crisis. This is a case study to explore what components of TPK the novice English teachers lack, and how the novices develop TPK. Data are collected from questionnaire, interviews, classroom observations, and journals. We find that the novices especially lack three components of TPK, i.e., interpersonal knowledge, situational knowledge, and critical reflection, and internal factors (beliefs, problem consciousness, and reflection) and external factors (interaction with colleagues and students, learning in COP (Community of Practice), and school culture) facilitate the development of novices' TPK. Teacher learning in COP based on constructivism and reflective teaching have contributed greatly to the development of novices' TPK.

*Keywords:* novice, TPK (teachers' practical knowledge), COP (Community of Practice), reflective teaching

## Introduction

As an essential part of teachers' knowledge, teachers' practical knowledge (hereinafter referred to as TPK) is crucial for teachers' professional development. TPK is the central theme within the field of language teacher education (Borg, 2009). Recent years have witnessed studies of TPK at home and abroad on the definitions, components, features, values, and development of TPK (Elbaz, 1983; Clandinin & Connelly, 1987; Golombek, 1998; CHEN, 2003; SHEN, 2006; ZHANG, 2007, etc.).

However, the previous studies of TPK mainly focus on the experienced teachers and most Chinese scholars approach TPK from the static perspective and empirical studies are scant. The novices' initial years of teaching

---

<sup>\*</sup> This paper is one of the research results of the project "Constructing Teacher Research Group for Teacher Learning in Higher Education" sponsored by 2013-2014 Higher Education Scientific Research of Chongqing Higher Education Association (Grant No. CQGJ13B320).

DENG Xiao-fang, associate professor, School of Foreign Languages, Southwest University.

FENG Dan, teacher, Foreign Language Department, Southwest Jiaotong University Hope College.

YING Bin, teacher, High School Affiliated to Southwest University.

CHEN Qian, teacher, Chongqing Jianshan Middle School.

are a “crisis” or a “sink or swim experience” in which teachers have to create coping strategies to face difficult situations (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2011). Besides, teachers have to face more challenges with the ongoing reform in basic education of China which brings about *The National English Curriculum* (2001), the new textbooks, and the conflicts in philosophical assumptions about the nature of the language teaching and learning, teachers' roles, and students' learning strategies and qualities valued in teachers and students. All these call for the novice teachers' development of TPK to adapt to teaching and education reform. Hence, this study aims to explore what components of TPK the novice English teachers lack, and how the novices develop TPK.

## Theoretical Framework

### TPK

**Definition.** Elbaz (1983) thought TPK encompasses first-hand experience of students' learning styles, interests, needs, strengths, and difficulties, and a repertoire of instructional techniques and classroom management skills, as well as the knowledge of the social structure of the school. TPK includes five components: knowledge of self, the milieu of teaching, subject matter, curriculum development, and instruction. Chinese scholar, CHEN (2003) thought that TPK includes six components: teacher's educational beliefs, self-concept knowledge, interpersonal knowledge, situational knowledge, strategic knowledge, and critical reflection. Educational beliefs involve teacher's understanding of the goals of education and how a teacher evaluates his job. Self-concept knowledge is teacher's understanding of his/her own personality, roles, and teaching styles. Interpersonal knowledge is understanding of students' needs, learning styles, and relationship with the students and colleagues. Situational knowledge is understanding of the classroom setting and making quick judgments and decision according to the milieu of teaching. Strategic knowledge is the design, structuring, and implementation of teaching. Critical reflection is timely reflection on one's teaching. As we will explore the novice English teachers' development of TPK in Chinese context, we adopt CHEN's classification of TPK.

**Features of TPK.** TPK is action-oriented, person-bound, and context-bound. It allows teachers to achieve the aims they personally value (Johnston, 1992). TPK is implicit or tacit knowledge. Teachers are more in a “doing” environment than a “knowing” environment (Clandinin, 1986; Eraut, 1994). TPK integrates scientific or formal knowledge, everyday knowledge, norms and values, and experiential knowledge (Handal & Lauvas, 1987). Teachers' beliefs play a crucial role in building practical knowledge. As part of practical knowledge, both beliefs and knowledge are closely interwoven, but the natures of beliefs make them the filter through which new knowledge is interpreted and subsequently, integrated in conceptual frameworks (Pajares, 1992).

### Theoretical Basis for Developing TPK

**Constructivist learning theory.** Constructivist learning theory forms the basis of teacher learning. With the emergence of the socio-cultural perspective on teacher learning and professional development (Borko, 2004; Johnson & Golombek, 2003), teacher learning is understood as socially negotiated and contingent upon knowledge of self, students, subject matter, curricular, and setting (Cobb & Brower, 1999). Constructivist theory suggests that learners construct knowledge rather than have that knowledge transmitted to them by some other sources. Learner constructs meaning based on his/her own experiences, interpret stimuli on the basis of what they already know, and construct understanding that makes sense to them. New learning is

interpreted in the immediate context of current understanding and social interaction facilitates learning (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000).

Based on constructivism, the process of teacher learning is understood as normative and lifelong, emerging out of and through experiences in social contexts (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Development of TPK is an ever-lasting process of learning through collaboration, interaction with other teachers, students, and the context of situation.

**COP (Community of practice).** Wenger (1998) defined "COP" as groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. All human learning takes place within communities of practice, either in formal learning structures, including classes and schools, or in informal networks, including families, professional groups, and in social circles. A COP has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest, which distinguishes members from other people. Members of COP value their collective competence and learn from each other. In pursuing interest in their domain, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other by interactions on formal and informal occasions (Wenger, 1998).

Teacher learning in COP represents the basic mode of cooperative and collaborative learning that teachers use in their daily interactions with their environment. Knowledge must be co-constructed if it is to have lasting meaning (Schoonmaker, 2002). Teachers' knowledge and beliefs are constructed through and by the normative ways of thinking, talking, and acting that have been historically and culturally embedded in the communities of practice in which they participate as both learners and teachers (Johnson, 2009). COP provides teachers with opportunities to participate "in a professional community that discusses new teaching material and strategies and that supports the risk taking and struggle entailed in transforming practice" (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993, p. 15). With the guidance of more experienced teachers, COP provides a supportive teaching community for the development of novice English teachers through observational learning, modeling, imitation, reflection, and interactions among themselves or with students.

**Reflective teaching.** Since the early 1980's, reflective teaching has been proposed as an effective way for teacher development. Reflective teaching is teacher's thinking about what happens in classroom and alternative means of achieving goals or aims; and thus provides teachers with an opportunity to consider the teaching event thoughtfully, analytically, and objectively (Cruickshank & Applegate, 1981). Schön (1983a, 1983b, 1987) argued that professionals develop their expert knowledge through two separate, but related processes: reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action. Reflection-on-action, the typical self-evaluative thinking that teachers do after lessons, is a deliberate attempt to understand past events in order to discover how our knowing-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome, and shape future action. Reflection-in action occurs "on the run, teachers simultaneously teach and analyze what they are doing, why they are doing it and how the students are reacting" (Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch, & Enz, 2000, p. 14). To reflect-in-action, a teacher must be able to frame problems almost subconsciously, generate hypotheses, and immediately test them.

Reflective teaching improves teachers' self-knowledge, reshapes teacher beliefs, and facilitates the development of TPK. A reflective teacher would engage with reflection on his own TPK, examine it reflectively, reconstruct it, attempt to solve the dilemmas of classroom practice with such knowledge, reframe his knowledge base for teaching, and promote professional development. Reflective teachers adopt a critical attitude to

themselves and accept other teachers' ideas wholeheartedly. They regularly question their own knowledge, beliefs, and the results of their past teaching experiences with the intention of learning something new. Richards and Nunan (1990) stated that experience coupled with reflection is a much more powerful impetus for professional development. Reflective teaching promotes a professional dialogue and provides a way of situating teachers' stories of TPK development. It leads the teachers to share their stories with colleagues, the experienced and expert teachers. It creates a context which provides a complete process of reflective planning before class, reflective teaching in class, and reflective evaluation after class during which the TPK is considered before class, applied in class, and evaluated, improved, and restructured after class.

### Research Design

Qualitative case study, which allows for thick description of the context and particulars of a phenomenon, is used to "gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved" (Merriam, 1998).

#### Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to examine what components of TPK pre-service English teachers lack. Two hundred pre-service English teachers in Grade Four of Southwest University did the questionnaire of TPK and 10 of them were randomly selected to be interviewed. The results show that the pre-service English teachers were especially lack of three components of TPK: interpersonal knowledge, situational knowledge, and critical reflection. Just graduating from universities, novice teachers' TPK is similar to that of pre-service teachers. Thus we form the hypothesis: The novice English teachers are lack of interpersonal knowledge, situational knowledge, and critical thinking.

#### Research Questions

This study aims to address the following questions: (1) What components of TPK are the novices lack of?; and (2) What facilitates the development of novice teachers' TPK and to what extent?.

#### Subjects

Ann and Betty (alias for Teacher A and Teacher B), two novice English teachers in Nanchong No. 1 Middle School in Sichuan province, participated in the study (see Table 1). Graduating from the same university—China West Normal University, both are teaching senior high school students.

Table 1

*Background of the Novice Teachers*

Participant	Age	Gender	Education degree	Teaching experiences	Students	Textbook
Ann	23	Female	BA	0	Grade 1	<i>New Standard English</i>
Betty	24	Female	BA	1 year	Grade 2	<i>Senior English for China</i>

Both teachers' students participate in the study and are encouraged to answer the interviewer's questions freely without their teachers' presence.

#### Instruments

**Semi-structured interviews.** The semi-structured interview is used, because they offer both the needed structure and flexibility for the participants to express their views freely. The open-ended questions allow the author to get the detailed information about the development of the novice English teachers' TPK (see Appendix).

**Classroom observation.** Classroom observation helps the novices understand what goes on in the language classroom and learn from other teachers, and helps the researcher collect data about the novices' TPK which is embedded in classroom teaching.

**Reflective journals.** Lampert (1985) characterized teachers' work in terms of managing dilemmas: in relation to knowledge, students, teacher's roles, the relations to the local community and the society at large. By writing journals, teachers examine the specific dilemmas, so implicit knowledge was brought to the awareness of the teachers. The novices are requested to write journals based on the following questions designed by Richards and Nunan (1990): (1) Were you able to accomplish your goals?; (2) Was your lesson teacher-dominated or students-dominated?; (3) What was most and least successful?; (4) Did you depart from your lesson plan? If so, why?; (5) Did students contribute actively to the lesson?; and (6) How did you respond to different students' need?.

### **Procedure**

This study takes one year. At the beginning and the end of the study, the two novices are interviewed to find out what components of TPK they already have and what they still lack. Their reading classes are observed as they integrate the teaching of reading, speaking, listening, grammar and vocabulary, and teachers can give full play to TPK. Journals are written to record the teachers' personal reflections on the lessons observed, the specific dilemmas, past experiences; and the conversations and reflections in their teaching and research group.

Analyses of the data from the pilot study and the initial interview show that the novice English teachers are lack of interpersonal knowledge, situational knowledge, and critical thinking. Hence, how the novices develop the interpersonal knowledge, situational knowledge, and critical reflection will be the focus in this study.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

We collect and analyze the data from the non-participated classroom observations, teachers' journals, and the interviews. The data, 12 interview transcriptions, 10 classroom observations, and 10 journals, are complementary and triangulated.

## **Results and Discussion**

This section presents the detailed development of the novices' TPK with the focus on interpersonal knowledge, situational knowledge, and critical reflection.

### **Teachers' Interpersonal Knowledge**

Interacting with students and colleagues, learning in the COP and reflection has gradually promoted the two novices' growth of interpersonal knowledge.

**The data of Ann.** At the beginning of the study, Ann, who had only two lessons' teaching experience during internship in the university, had no idea of interpersonal knowledge and did not know how to interact with her students. She planned her lessons according to the syllabus or reference books but ignored the factor of students. She was more concerned about carrying out the lesson plan than students' needs. In order to make her class go smoothly, she chose the top students to answer questions and ignored other students. This can be seen from her students' description:

Ann is friendly to us but she never requires us a lot. She only asks the good students to answer questions. Sometimes her class is boring. (XIA Xu, personal interview, September 20, 2011)

Ann has a name list with students' scores of high school entrance examination. She likes to ask the top students to answer questions. What I care about is not the answer but the reason. She didn't tell us. She didn't know what we want. (Monitor, personal interview, September 20, 2011)

Interacting with colleagues helps Ann adapt to the teaching situation quickly and the knowledge from experienced teacher helped her grow. Being a newcomer, Ann was not familiar with her colleagues, and she was afraid of talking too much with her colleagues at first. After Ms. CHEN was appointed to be her mentor, Ann had been observing her mentor's classes and participating in all discussions in her teaching and research group. She said that her mentor's and peer teachers' teaching style, ideas, and techniques had a great influence on her professional development especially in educational beliefs, attitude to students, and teaching skills. After one term's teaching, the relationship between Ann and her students and colleagues became much better. She regularly reflected her teaching, considered students' needs and interests in her lesson planning, and made her lesson more student-centered and more effective. In the journal, she wrote:

At first, when I reflected my own teaching, I couldn't find so many problems. Gradually, by listening to my mentor's suggestions, I came to know more problems and try to find solutions. I took my students' ability into consideration when designing the tasks. I could see the smile on my students' face after they finished the tasks. I learned how to involve students and make the lesson interesting by observing my mentor's classes. I began to make friends with the students and understand what they want. The leader of our group and other peer teachers especially my mentor contributed a lot in my career. (Ann, journal, June 2, 2012)

Learning in COP, as formed by the mentor and peer teachers, interaction with students and colleagues, and reflection contributed a lot in a respectful and constructive way in helping Ann adapt to the real teaching situation quickly, reshape her beliefs, and develop interpersonal knowledge.

**The data of Betty.** Betty, with open-minded personality and one year experience in work, developed her interpersonal knowledge more quickly and easily.

From the first year on, Betty had been guided by a mentor, Mr. TANG, an experienced English teacher, and the collective lesson planning was used in their grade. Discussions with her mentor and other teachers helped her a lot in dealing with teaching more easily as well as establishing good relationship with her students. Betty admitted that at first, she did not pay attention to her students' needs until after she became comfortable with her own position as a teacher in the classroom. She used to be more concerned about how she could be accepted by her students and colleagues. Little by little, she found that students should be the center of the whole class, and that one's class would never succeed if the students' needs, interest, and personality were neglected. This can be seen in her journal:

I did not know my students at the very beginning. But my mentor told me if I can call out the students' names, they would pay more attention to my class. So I spent several weeks remembering the students' names and after class I often chatted with them to know their difficulties better. (Betty, journal, October 15, 2011)

Betty's personal knowledge grew after one year's teaching. And she had established good relationship with her students and known her students' needs well. Students spoke highly of her as follows:

Betty makes her class humorous and interesting by telling jokes, so we like to speak English in and out of class. She

can easily predict and explain the difficulties clearly. My class makes great progress and is at the top in the final examination. (LI Wen, personal interview, June 18, 2012)

Betty is familiar with all the students and often chats with us after class. (Monitor, personal interview, June 18, 2012)

Interacting with colleagues helps Betty solve her teaching dilemmas. Being active and open-minded, Betty likes discussing teaching dilemma in her office and always finds satisfactory answers. Here is an example of their discussion:

Betty: I'm angry that certain student listened to music in my class.

A: It's common.

B: It's hard to teach senior high school students.

C: If you see them listen to music again, let them hand in their Mp3 or cell phone.

C: How do you deal with it?

Betty: I asked him to stand at the back of the classroom.

D: I think it is better to warn him by walking towards him. On one hand, he knows you noticed him. He will give up listening to the music. On the other hand, if you respect him, he will listen to you carefully... (personal communication, April 8, 2012)

From the data, we can see the novices' interpersonal knowledge has developed after learning in the COP, interaction with students and reflection on their teaching. The students' attitudes towards their English teachers have changed. More and more students think their English teachers know them well, and this makes their learning more effective. Ann's students think she is more competent than before, and Betty's students think that English classes are much more interesting than before. Betty, with one more year's teaching experience, can establish a better relationship with the students. It is the typical feature of TPK, i.e., action-oriented.

### Teachers' Situational Knowledge

Situational knowledge is gradually accumulated in the milieu of teaching. The two novices made progress in different perspectives during the one-year study.

**The data of Ann.** At the beginning of teaching, Ann dealt with the incidents in her class by ignoring or skipping them. In the first class observed, Ann could not control the class appropriately, ignored the students' noise when other students were answering questions, and read her lesson plan constantly. In another lesson, Ann asked the students to describe their favorite teacher using some of the adjectives (nervous, shy, patient, serious, strict, pretty, handsome, energy, popular, amusing, fun, etc.). She did give students time to think and asked the students: "Who'd like to try?" There was no response of her students. Then, she asked a top student to answer the question.

When reflecting the lesson, she found her problems. "It's difficult for me to deal with the incidents in the classroom and I don't know how to react immediately" (personal communication, September 18, 2011). But she did not know how to tackle them with little teaching experience. What she knew came from the teaching methodology book and there was a big gap between theory and practice.

As the study went by, learning from experienced teachers, communicating with her students, and more importantly imitating other teachers' solutions to similar problems helped Ann improve situational knowledge. She made classroom questioning more effective by following her mentor's suggestions: (1) Give the students more time to think about the questions; (2) Do more group work rather than individual work; and (3) Pay more attention

to the students' response. Ann learnt to handle the critical incidents in classroom by observing her mentor's and other teachers' classes whenever possible. Learning from her mentor and peer teachers, interacting with students and reflecting made Ann change her own beliefs and teaching practice. "The students inspired me and I can adjust my lesson planning and made my teaching more effective" (personal communication, May 10, 2012).

Gradually, great changes happen in Ann's class. Firstly, she improved her classroom management. She paid attention to the whole class, moved more frequently in the classroom, and raised students' attention with changed intonations when she highlighted the difficult points. Secondly, she listened to the students patiently and gave clear instructions before the students answered questions. Thirdly, she told some jokes to attract students' attention or relax the tense atmosphere. In the last classroom observation, to the observer's surprise, Ann gave clear instructions, reacted quickly and appropriately to the students' questions and the students actively participated in classroom activities.

**The data of Betty.** Learning from her mentor and other colleagues, Betty had some situational knowledge at the beginning of the study with one year teaching experience. However, there are still some problems in her lessons. In the first observation, Betty asked the students to find the main idea of the text. No students answered her question. After a long while, she wanted to move forward her class by asking a top student to answer her question. And later in her journal she reflected:

I must go on with my class and ignore the students' needs or I cannot finish the content. However, the students did not cooperate with me. I asked some top students of the reason. They said that this reading material was quite different from the previous ones and it is difficult for them to generalize... (Betty, journal, October 12, 2011)

Betty realized her problems and could analyze them. She had the awareness of problem-solving. Suggestions given by her colleagues after discussing with them helped her change. She also appreciated this learning atmosphere in the teaching and research group. In the next class we observed, she improved her teaching. She introduced the features of the English essays and told the students the first sentence or the last sentence of a passage was the topic sentence. Soon the students found the answers and her class went smoothly.

With the mentor's guide, Betty successfully prepared and gave an open class of reading ("Saving the earth", Unit 9). She collected the information from the Internet and discussed it with her mentor. In her journal she presented:

Mr. Tang told me to think more about the students and the incidents in class when I designed the tasks. It really helped me when I had my class. Several situations which I met in class were within my expectation and I could handle them. (Betty, journal, December 12, 2011)

The two novices' situational knowledge has grown during the study. At the beginning, they focused too much on whether they could finish their teaching in time or rushed their teaching quickly to some degree without giving students enough time to think over or take notes. Most of their responses to the students' questions or classroom incidents were not effective. Learning in the COP and reflection helped them change. When they joined the discussion in their office, their group leader told them to give each student appropriate feedback. In the last observations, they talked slowly and paid more attention to students' responses. They gave students more encouragement and positive feedback. They could evaluate the students' answers appropriately according to different situations. When students' answers were uncompleted, they gave prompts for students to



complete the answer. They could balance the time of students talk and teacher talk. More and more interactions between the students and teachers happened in class. Their lessons become more flexible and efficient just as they said: "More importantly, I would adjust my lesson planning according to the process of the class" (personal communication, June 18, 2012).

### Teachers' Critical Reflection

Critical reflection helps accelerating teachers' professional development. The two novices develop critical reflection by learning from mentor and communicating with colleagues as well as reflective teaching.

**The data of Ann.** At the beginning of the research, as a green hand, Ann was scared to ask colleagues for help. She could only handle her problems by self-thinking. She followed her lesson planning rigidly and scarcely used the Internet. In the first journal she wrote:

I taught the students the text required, but I really found it hard to reach all the objectives and I did not know how to deal with the incident in class. I feel alone since I did not know whom to ask for help. (Ann, journal, September 15, 2011)

One week later, her mentor was requested to observe and guide her teaching. This enhanced Ann's enthusiasm. With the mentor's help, Ann started to change and reflect her teaching regularly. In the journal she reflected: "I took every opportunity to test my courage, enrich my experience and sharpen my teaching skills. Basically, I wasn't happy with the way my class went today. The activities took up too much time..." (Ann, journal, November 23, 2011). "I reflect each of my class now. Basically, after class, I would ask myself: Was my lesson really students-centered? Which is most or least successful? Did every student participate actively in the lesson and learn anything? Why?" (Ann, journal, June 2, 2012).

Ann's reflection shows her perspectives on teaching. At the beginning, she tended to evaluate her teaching in terms of herself as a teacher and how successfully she had brought about her intended goals. She described success of teaching in terms of teacher's behavior, whether she felt more comfortable handling the presentation stage, whether she was more in control and how the lesson could be more structured and predictable. But later, she evaluated her lesson according to how well she adapted the presentation, practice, or production phases to students' needs. And she came to reflect the lesson more from the perspective of student outcomes.

**The data of Betty.** Betty owned some knowledge about reflection. Compared with Ann, she paid more attention to the efficiency of her classroom teaching and her students. She developed her critical reflection mainly through learning in the COP.

Betty divided her students into three groups at the beginning of this term to give them different tasks according to the students' English competence. Later, she found that some of the lower students were not as active as before in class. In order to find a solution to this problem, she first asked Mr. TANG for help. She did not know she had already hurt some of the students. Additionally, she got the feedback from her students, as she wrote in the journal:

I told my mentor that the students did not participate in my class actively like before. Mr. Tang said that I ignored the self-esteem of the students. It made the top students more confident while the low-proficiency students felt they were discriminated and some even gave up English... (Betty, journal, October 15, 2011)

She canceled this grouping and apologized to her students. Her students were happy to hear that. Later on, neither the difficult tasks nor homework was alternative.

In Betty's class, she never supplemented too much information beyond the textbook. The most difficult part for her was language points. Every time, she explained the language points and let the students memorize them by telling the exact usage of each phrase. It made her class boring.

After many times of interaction in her research group, Betty believed that a good language teacher creates a good context for practice, with plenty of chances for students joining in. Lessons should be relevant and useful to students with various and interesting activities, and teacher gave a clear and structured presentation. A successful lesson engaged the students and generated useful practice of the language. And good language teaching was dependent upon the design of the lesson, which provided good language learning environment and plenty of time for practice. How well the students learned was much dependent on what a teacher provided for them, and classroom materials played a key role.

During the one-year study, the two novices have developed TPK in the light of reflecting their teaching experience, drawing on their own beliefs and assumptions about themselves, about teachers, about teaching, and about learners. As Colton and Sparks-Langer (1993) observed: In the constructivist view, the learner's direct actions, reactions, and interactions with objects, people, rules, norm, and ideas result in the personal construction and reconstruction of knowledge and adaptive abilities. By critical reflection, the novices develop their beliefs about teaching and teaching styles based on several information sources: own experiences, their mentors' practical knowledge, and theory (Black & Halliwell, 2000). By critical reflection, they compare the similarities and differences of the three sources and become aware of differences between the mentors' explicated practical knowledge and the mentors' lessons, and thus improve their own practice and develop TPK.

### Conclusions

This study finds that the components of TPK which the novice English teachers lack are interpersonal knowledge, situational knowledge, and critical reflection, and the novices develop TPK through interaction, teacher learning in the COP, and reflective teaching. Both internal and external factors contribute to the development of the TPK.

Internal factors, including teacher beliefs, problem consciousness, reflective teaching, and practice have great impact on novice teachers' development of TPK. The two novices' changing beliefs assist their development of TPK. Built up through time and practice, their beliefs are derived from and reshaped by different sources, such as experiences as language learners, teaching experience, and reflections on their teaching. TPK guides teachers' thinking and understanding of their work contexts, which determines their classroom teaching practice. With the mentors' help, novice teachers make personal interpretations of formal knowledge through their practice in their specific work contexts by reflection. Reflection impels teachers to shape their beliefs. Additionally, collective reflection in group plays a crucial role in the development of TPK especially after the open class. Reflection helps the novices develop problem consciousness and learning in COP promotes their competence to handle the dilemmas. Hence, the novices develop TPK by learning, reflecting, and problem solving.

Additionally, external factors—the school culture, COP (the teaching and research group, the mentor, peer teachers, the students, etc.) play crucial roles in developing the novices' TPK. Practices and activities of the community influence the novice English teachers' cognition, because learning is the key of a coherent COP and

members share things and simultaneously influence each other. When they find problems in teaching, they naturally ask their mentors or colleagues for help or imitate the same solutions which their companions once did with the similar problems. Besides, communicating with their students helps them improve their lesson planning and evaluation and make their teaching more efficient. This study proves that young teachers' professional development happens in a supportive community of more experienced teachers and positive interactions among themselves or with their students. COP is the driving force for teachers to keep improving themselves in action. COP strongly enhances the generating and enriching of TPK as well as teacher's professional development (ZHOU, 2007; ZHANG, 2007).

However, the present study has some limitations. The subjects are limited, and the time for conducting the study is short. Further studies on novice English teachers' development with more subjects over a longer period of time in different contexts need to be done.

### References

- Black, A. L., & Halliwell, G. (2000). Accessing practical knowledge: How? Why?. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, (16), 103-115.
- Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe and do. *Language Teaching*, 36, 81-109.
- Borg, S. (2009). Contemporary themes in language teacher education. Paper presented at *The Third National Conference on Foreign Language Teacher Education and Development*, Chongqing.
- Borko, H. (2004). Professional development and teacher learning: Mapping the terrain. *Educational Researcher*, 33(8), 1-14.
- Bransford, J., Brown, A., & Cocking, R. (Eds.). (2000). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school*. Retrieved from <http://www.nap.edu/html/howpeople1/>
- CHEN, X. M. (2003). Practical knowledge: The knowledge foundation of teacher's professional development. *Education Review of Peking university*, (1), 104-112.
- CHEN, X. M. (2009). On the components of teachers' practical knowledge. *Education Research*, (10), 66-73.
- Clandinin, D. J. (1986). *Classroom practice: Teacher images in action*. London: Falmer Press.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1987). Teacher's personal practical knowledge: What counts as "personal" is studies of the persona. *Journal Curriculum Studies*, 19(6), 487-500.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Huber, M. (2005). Shifting stories to live by: Interweaving the personal and professional in teachers' lives. In D. Beijaard, P. Meijer, G. Morine-Dersheimer, & H. Tillema (Eds.), *Teacher professional development in changing condition* (pp. 43-59). The Netherlands: Springer.
- Cobb, P., & Brower, J. (1999). Cognitive and situated learning perspectives in theory and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 28(2), 4-15.
- Colton, A., & Sparks-Langer, G. (1993). A conceptual framework to guide the development of teacher reflection and decision making. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 44(1), 45-54.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Cruickshank, D. R., & Applegate, J. H. (1981). Reflective teaching as a strategy for teacher growth. *Educational Leadership*, 38(7), 553-554.
- Elbaz, F. (1983). *Teacher thinking: Study of practical knowledge*. London: Croom Helm.
- Eraut, M. (1994). *Developing professional knowledge and competence*. London: Falmer Press.
- Freeman, D., & Johnson, K. E. (1998). Reconceptualizing the knowledge-base of language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(3), 397-417.
- Golombek, P. R. (1998). A study of language teacher's personal practical knowledge. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(3), 447-464.
- Handal, G., & Lauvas, P. (1987). *Promoting reflective teaching: Supervision in action*. Milton Keynes: SHRE and Open University Press.
- Johnson, K. E. (2009). *Second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective*. New York: Routledge.

- Johnson, K. E., & Golombek, P. R. (2003). Seeing teacher learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37(4), 729-738.
- Johnston, S. (1992). Images: A way of understanding the practical knowledge of student teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 8(2), 123-136.
- Lampert, M. (1985). How do teachers manage to teach?: Perspectives on problems in practice. *Harvard Educational Review*, 55(2), 178-194.
- McLaughlin, M., & Talbert, J. E. (1993). *Contexts that matter for teaching and learning: Strategic opportunities for meeting the nation's educational goals*. Stanford: Stanford University.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research*, 62(3), 307-332.
- Richards, J. C. (2008). Second language teacher education. *RELC Journal*, 32(6), 133-146.
- Richards, J. C., & Lockhart, C. (2000). *Reflective teaching in second language classrooms*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Richards, J. C., & Nunan, D. (1990). *Second language teacher education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ruohotie-Lyhty, M. (2011). Constructing practical knowledge of teaching: Eleven newly qualified language teachers' discursive agency. *Language Learning Journal*, (1), 1-15.
- Schon, D. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Schön, D. A. (1983a). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Schön, D. A. (1983b). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Schoonmaker, F. (2002). *"Growing up" teaching: From personal knowledge to professional practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- SHEN, Y. (2006). On teacher's practical knowledge. *Education Science*, (8), 38-39.
- Steffy, B. E., Wolfe, M. P., Pasch, S. H., & Enz, B. J. (2000). The model and its application. In B. E. Steffy, M. P. Wolfe, S. H. Pasch, & B. J. Enz (Eds.), *Life cycle of the career teacher*. Thousand Oaks, C.A.: Kappa Delta Pi & Corwin Press.
- Verloop, N., Van Driel, J., & Meijer, P. (2001). Teacher knowledge and the knowledge base of teaching. *International Journal of Educational Research*, (5), 441-461.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Community of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wyatt, M. (2009). Practical knowledge growth in communicative language teaching. *The Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language*, 13(2), 1-23.
- ZHANG, J. G. (2007). The development of teacher practical knowledge in the community of teachers (Dissertation for master's degree, Zhejiang Normal University).
- ZHOU, Y. (2007). Optimizing the limited resources for more efficiency in teacher development programs in China. Paper presented at *The Fifth International Conference on ELT in China*, Beijing.

#### Appendix: Interview Questions

1. What's your understanding of English teaching and learning?
2. What do you know about yourself as a teacher? Do you understand your teaching styles? The dilemma in your teaching?
3. Do you know your students well such as their need, affect, and difficulty, etc.?
4. Do you often communicate with your colleagues? If yes, what do you usually talk about?
5. Do you reflect before class, in class, and after class? What do you reflect about?