

Chapter 3

Technology Standards for Chinese Language Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT

Guided by the TPACK theory (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), this chapter reviews and compares the technology standards related to and designed for teachers of Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) from the entry level to the accomplished level in the United States and China. It has found that the technology standards are often included in the comprehensive standards for teachers and parallel the standards about other aspects of teaching. The technology standards related to CFL in the two countries share some similarities but also differ in important ways. Several important and critical understandings are identified, including the needs for CFL technology standards, the theoretical foundations for CFL technology standards, and a more solid and comprehensive infrastructure for CFL education. Recommendations are made to address the needs, and research is called for to study the development and implementation of CFL technology standards.

INTRODUCTION

Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) has been developing unprecedentedly in the world. Many countries, including the United States, have developed various Chinese programs in their K-12 schools and higher education. By 2014, the Office of Chinese Language Council International of China (Hanban) had set up 475 Confucius Institutes and 851 Confucius classrooms in 126 countries and areas in the world (Xu, 2014).

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Such fast development of CFL in China and the world requires a large number of qualified CFL teachers. In 2014, Hanban sent 15,500 CFL teachers and administrators to 139 countries to assist and facilitate their CFL development (Xu, 2014). Hanban and the Confucius Institutes in the world have been involved in CFL teacher education, and from 2004 to 2014, they helped prepare a head-count of approximately 200,000 indigenous CFL teachers for around 100 countries, and in 2014 alone, around 35,000 CFL teachers were prepared (Xu, 2014). However, it remains unclear how CFL teachers have been educated in China and around the world.

Meanwhile, educational standards have been implemented worldwide to provide guidance for teacher education programs and to ensure that teachers help their students to achieve desired learning outcome (Murphy-Judy & Youngs, 2006). Similarly, “in foreign language education, given the emphasis on communication and the opportunities for computer-assisted learning, technologies play an ever-increasing role in learning standards” (Murphy-Judy & Youngs, 2006, p. 45). Thus, technologies should also be increasingly important in CFL, and it is necessary to understand how technology standards guide Chinese teacher education programs and CFL teachers. For this purpose, technology standards for Chinese teacher education in China and the United States are examined in this chapter, given the key roles that the two countries play in CFL education nowadays.

BACKGROUND

While China’s critical role is evident in promoting CFL education within China and around the world, a justification is needed for examining and comparing technology standards for Chinese teacher education in the United States and China. The United States is a super power where English, as a global language, is also the dominant language. Thus, English itself is a disincentive for CFL education in the United States (Lo Bianco, 2011). However, the United States has become a critical site for CFL development outside of China. By 2014, the United States has had a total of 542 Confucius institutes and classrooms, which is the largest number of Confucius institutes and classrooms in a country across the world (Xu, 2014). In U.S. higher education, its CFL enrollment grew from 51,582 in 2006 to 61,055 in 2013 (Furman, Goldberg, & Lusin, 2007; Goldburg, Looney, & Lusin, 2015). In its K-12 schools, the percentages of the elementary and secondary schools that offer Chinese rose from 0.3% and 1% in 1997 to 3% and 4% in 2008 respectively (Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011). It is very likely that the numbers will continue growing. Moreover, China has a centralized educational system, but the U.S. educational system is de-centralized. Thus, comparison and contrast of the technology standards for Chinese language teacher education in the two countries may offer important insights for CFL teacher education.

To understand and describe standards for CFL teachers and knowledge that they should have, we turn to the literature of mainstream teacher education for a theoretical framework, because second and foreign language teacher education is relatively new (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Richards & Nunan, 1990), and much work has remained to be conducted. The theory of technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) by Mishra and Koehler (2006) is thus selected and used as the theoretical framework for this chapter because it integrates knowledge of technology with other components of teacher knowledge (e.g., knowledge of pedagogy and content) and best serves the purpose of the chapter.

As Mishra and Koehler (2006) acknowledges, TPACK is based on and extends the classical concept of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) by Shulman (1987), which refers to teacher’s knowledge of selecting appropriate teaching approaches for best instruction. Despite the fast development and wide

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