

*Case Study*

## **The Development of College English Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge in Moral Education Integrated College English Teaching in China**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In mainland China, college English (CE) teachers have been actively involved in integrating moral education into college English courses to promote a more rounded development of students. In the transition from traditional college English teaching to moral education integrated college English (MECE) teaching, college English teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is subject to change. This study was designed as a qualitative case study to conduct a 3-year investigation to investigate the changes in PCK among college English teachers through the transition from CE to MECE. The trajectory of PCK development was collected from three teachers via content representation (CoRe), semi-structured interviews, and teaching materials. As suggested from the findings, in the process of transition from CE to MECE, the pathways that led to changes in PCK are specific objective-based study with reflection, participating in training sessions and workshops, interacting in effective online/face-to-face communities, as well as embracing the new relationship of co-learning

with students. The findings underscored the need for comprehensive professional development programs that equip college English teachers with the skills to integrate moral education into their instruction. The research highlights the practical challenges that must be overcome by teacher training programs in being proactive, responsive, and adaptive to an evolving educational landscape, ensuring teachers are equipped not just to meet new pedagogical demands

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but also to actively engage in the complex discourse on integrating moral education.

*Keywords:* College English teachers, moral education integration, moral education integrated English teaching, PCK developmental trajectory, pedagogical content knowledge

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## INTRODUCTION

Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is an important concept in educational research, and it has been widely studied since Shulman (1986) described it as a construct regarding teachers' ability to transmit their knowledge of a specific subject to the students. It was initially raised in the domain of teachers' professional development. According to Shulman (1986), teachers' PCK refers to the overlapped area of pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge. In the following decades, based on Shulman's (1986) PCK theory, research has emphasised the significance of context-specific approaches to PCK development, recognising the influence of teachers' prior knowledge, student needs, and institutional support (Loughran et al., 2012). In mathematics education, studies have explored the role of teacher education programs in the development of mathematics teachers' PCK, emphasising the significance of opportunities for reflection and collaboration (Lo, 2023). Much of the current literature on PCK still pays particular attention to the teachers in science (Mesci et al., 2020) and mathematics (Anney & Bulayi, 2020; Moh'd et al., 2021).

Research in English language teaching (ELT) has highlighted the complexity of

the language learning process and the importance of PCK for effective teaching (Shulman, 1986). Theoretically, PCK is an integrated whole in which components cannot be separated. Based on Shulman's (1986) PCK theory, researchers have been focusing on the understanding of PCK components (Grossman, 1990; Li et al., 2021; Shariatifar et al., 2017; Tseng et al., 2022; Xu, 2015). Supported by the clarification of PCK components, teachers will pay more attention to understanding the language content, teaching strategies, and student's needs, which enable them to make informed instructional decisions and effectively engage learners in the language learning process. In the context of foreign language (FL) and second language (L2) teaching, research on PCK has been scarce in recent years (Han et al., 2021). Several studies have investigated the development of English language teachers' PCK (Elas et al., 2019; Han et al., 2021; Sadeghi et al., 2022). In foreign language education, research has highlighted the importance of integrating technology in teacher education programs to enhance language teachers' PCK (Rets et al., 2023; Tseng et al., 2022; Yeh et al., 2021). The existing literature on English language teachers' PCK revealed that PCK is subject-specific, domain-specific, and topic-specific (Großschedl et al., 2019; Li et al., 2021). In foreign language education, the context of teaching a specific language with a specific purpose is critical for teachers' PCK development. In the case of college English teachers, their PCK would encompass their understanding

of English language teaching and their knowledge of the best teaching practices and strategies for helping students improve their language skills.

### **Moral Education Integrated College English (MECE) in China**

In mainland China, higher education institutions focus on the fundamental task of strengthening moral education for cultivating people. Moral education should be carried out in four aspects: ideal and faith education, patriotism education, socialist core values education, and excellent virtue education for the Chinese national. To put into practice, it is of great importance to integrate moral educational resources into all courses (Eryong & Li, 2021). An increasing number of higher education institutions have been encouraging teachers to integrate moral education into college English curriculum. College English teachers have been actively involved in the integration of moral education into college English courses by advocating the integration of moral education into English language teaching as a means of fostering students' character and values (Zhang, 2023). The integration of moral education into higher education courses is a topic of interest and debate. According to Li (2009), the roots of moral education in China can be traced back to Confucianism, which emphasised the importance of moral cultivation as a key element of education. In modern times, the Chinese government has increasingly focused on moral education to promote social stability and national development.

In China, the integration of moral education into college English courses is a relatively recent development that has gained attention in the last decade. It has been driven, in part, by the recognition that language learning is not simply a matter of acquiring linguistic competence but also involves the development of intercultural communicative competence and the promotion of cultural understanding and empathy (Byram, 2020). Guided by the fundamental goal of strengthening moral education for cultivating people, college English instruction has evolved beyond mere language acquisition, becoming a vital platform for imparting values and moral education. This shift acknowledges language learning as a cognitive process and an ethical endeavour. In that context, CE in China have become crucibles for ideal and faith education, patriotism education, socialist core values education and Chinese national excellent virtue education, where language learning intertwines with value transmission (Feng, 2019; Novawan et al., 2020).

Despite the clear directives from educational authorities, CE teachers face challenges in integrating moral education principles into their teaching practices. The research reveals a significant gap in the pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) required by teachers to effectively deliver such integrated lessons. The disparity between the educational goals set by policymakers and the practical knowledge of teachers in this new domain has motivated the present study, to explore and address the professional development needs of college

English teachers in China to successfully integrate moral education into their teaching repertoire.

This qualitative research, therefore, seeks to understand the research problem from the individual's perspective of the action they are taking or the skills they are developing when integrating moral education concepts into language teaching. It investigated the development of college English teachers' PCK by answering the research question: How does Chinese college English teachers' PCK change when they integrate moral education into college English teaching? What are the pathways that led to changes in college English teachers' PCK in integrating moral education into college English teaching?

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **The Study**

A qualitative case study approach was adopted, as this can assist the researcher in delving into the case by providing insights into the real problem through the examination of a particular situation (Stake, 1995).

### **Context and Participants**

This study focused on a group of college English teachers who have experienced the transition of teaching from college English (CE) to moral education integrated college English (MECE). A 2-year longitudinal case study was carried out at X University in East China. In this university, CE teaching happens in the first two years,

after which the student takes the College English Test (CET), a task for college English learning. Since 2018, CE teaching has been required to integrate moral education, and all CE teachers have been integrating moral education into classroom activities. Considering the English language proficiency and the CET-taking needs of most students, teachers are encouraged to reconstruct their lessons in ways that are in line with the basic goal of fostering virtue. Such reconstruction provides the college English teachers with various opportunities to arrange specific activities to implement collaborative classroom teaching.

The participants of this study were a group of college English teachers who conducted moral education integrated college English (MECE) teaching from 2018 to 2022. The researchers formally invited college English teachers to participate in this research after receiving permission from the office of the College English Teaching Department. Nine CE teachers agreed to participate. The demographic information of those nine CE teachers was obtained. The influence of demographic factors on teachers' PCK development has been proven in previous studies (Shulman, 1986). It was also used as the criterion for purposeful sampling. Through purposeful sampling, three CE teachers were selected to participate in this qualitative case study. Table 1 provides the demographic information of those three participants. The three participants are given the pseudonyms Lilly, Sara, and Nina to guarantee anonymity. Along with the research plan introduction,

Table 1  
*The demographic information of the three selected participants*

Participant *pseudonyms	Professional rank	Gender	Age	Educational background	Years of CE teaching	Years of MECE teaching
Lilly	Professor	Female	49	MA in English Language and Literature	20	4
Sara	Associate professor	Female	40	PhD candidate in Education	12	4
Nina	Lecturer	Female	30	PhD student in Applied Linguistics	8	2

*Source:* Authors' work

the participants voluntarily signed the consent forms before data collection so that the teachers understood what they were agreeing to do.

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected in December 2018, December 2019, December 2020, and December 2021. During those years, two rounds of data collection were completed (2018–2019 is the first round, and 2020–2021 is the second round). The collected data from those two rounds were analysed to investigate whether changes happened and what happened in teachers' PCK during the moral education integrated college English (MECE) teaching compared with the prior college English (CE) teaching. The multiple sources of qualitative data, which consist of content representation (CoRe), interviews, and document analysis, were collected to implement triangulation. At first, the data reflecting the participants' PCK development along with the progress of MECE courses was collected to see if there were changes after the transition to MECE teaching. The timeline of data collection and

the data sources of the two collecting rounds were demonstrated (Figure 1).

The data collection lasted two years (approximately 12 months for each round), during which the researcher collected data four times (Figure 1). CoRe offers a holistic overview of particular concepts related to a content area. It is also helpful in accessing teachers' PCK by suggesting a powerful and useful representation of PCK responsive to practice (Loughran et al., 2012). By completing CoRe, the participants shared their understanding of PCK and developments. Teachers' PCK becomes evident by explicitly expressing the nature of their pedagogical reasoning and the related decision-making in teaching particular content (Loughran et al., 2012). It is also a very useful tool to explicitly focus teachers' attention on what is important in designing lessons (Hume & Berry, 2011). In each round, the participants were asked to complete the CoRe matrix each semester, which included a set of questions (Table 2).

Grossman (1990) proposed a model in which the Pedagogical Content Knowledge consists of four parts: conceptions of

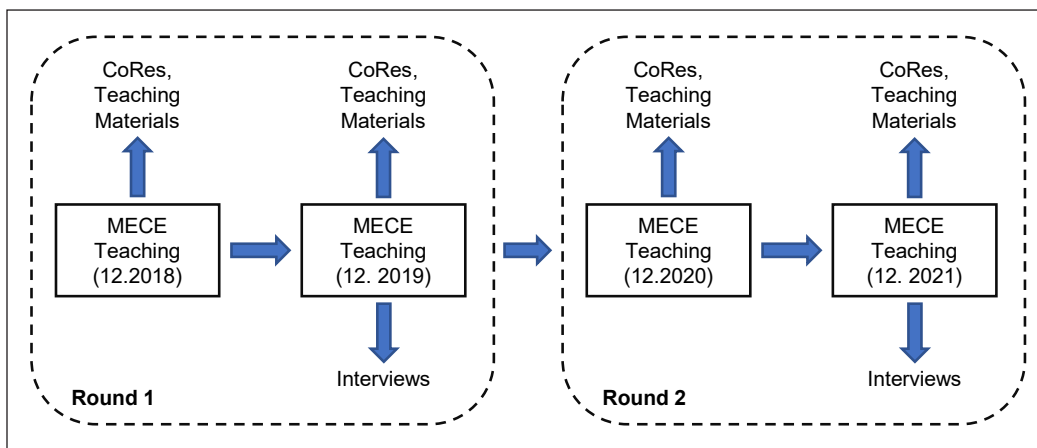


Figure 1. Data collection timeline and data sources

Source: Authors' work

Table 2

Content representation (CoRe) matrix

The year level for which this CoRe is designed	Content area		
	Big idea 1	Big idea 2	Big idea 3
(1) What do you intend the students to learn about this idea?			
(2) Why is it important for students to know this?			
(3) What else do you know about this idea (that you do not intend students to know yet)?			
(4) Are there any difficulties/limitations connected with teaching this idea?			
(5) What do you know about students' thinking which influences your teaching of this idea?			
(6) Are there any other factors that influence your teaching of this idea?			
(7) What teaching procedures are conducted, and what are the particular reasons for using these to engage with this idea?			
(8) What are the specific ways of ascertaining students' understanding or confusion around this idea?			

Source: Authors' work

purposes for teaching subject matter, knowledge of students' understanding (KOSU), Curricular knowledge (CK), as well as knowledge of instructional strategies (KOIS). Underpinned by Grossman's (1990) PCK model, the set of questions corresponds to the four specific components of PCK. For

example, Question 1 looks at the conception of purposes for teaching MECE, Questions 2, 3 on curricular knowledge (CK), Questions 2, 3, and 5 on knowledge of students' understanding (KOSU), and Questions 4, 6, and 7 on knowledge of instructional strategies (KOIS). As for teaching materials,

the participants' syllabi and supplementary teaching materials were collected at the end of each semester. After two collections of CoRe and teaching materials, in-depth semi-structured interviews (SI) were conducted in each round.

Before conducting semi-structured interviews, the researcher prepared an interview guide with open-ended questions to encourage detailed responses (see Appendix I). The information-seeking questions were developed based on the specific components of PCK proposed by Grossman (1990) respectively. The participants clarified or confirmed their responses to the CoRe matrix in SI. Then, they responded to the questions concerning the changes after the transition to MECE teaching. All interviews were conducted in the participants' offices or classrooms, each lasting about one hour. With consent, the interviews were audio-recorded to capture the conversation for later transcription and analysis. The interview data were sent back to the participants for confirmation after being transcribed and translated by the researcher. Participation in both rounds of data collection was based on the written consent of the participants. Ethical approval was obtained from X University during the study and was strictly observed.

### **Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was undertaken to interpret the data and unveil respondents' thoughts and opinions through deconstruction. The analysis of data collected from CoRe responses and teaching materials

was conducted while the fieldwork was undertaken in parallel. The data collected from interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the informants confirmed the accuracy of the data. In this process, the researcher guaranteed the informants' anonymity to avoid potential negative influence during the data analysis. Four CoRe responses, four teaching material files, and two interview transcripts from each participant were collected. After a holistic reading of the CoRe responses, teaching materials, and interview transcripts, the data were coded in a way that aligned with the four PCK components proposed by Grossman (1990). Another data analysis strategy used was the comparative approach. Data from different sources in the two rounds were compared according to the PCK components to see if there were any changes, and this process was cyclical.

### **FINDINGS**

This research collected only the changes in the transition to MECE teaching as the developments in teachers' PCK. The findings and discussion are presented case by case to portray the three teachers' PCK development over the two years. Table 3 demonstrates the participants' PCK during the two rounds of the research period.

Lilly, Sara, and Nina all went through a transition in integrating moral education into college English teaching. They all tried to adapt to the MECE teaching, modified their teaching goals, and reconstructed their lessons to align with the purpose of moral education.

Table 3

*The development of the three teachers' PCK in moral education integrated CE teaching*

	<b>Conceptions of purposes for teaching MECE</b>	<b>Knowledge of students' understanding (KOSU)</b>	<b>Curricular knowledge (CK)</b>	<b>Knowledge of instructional strategies (KOIS)</b>
Lilly	Focusing on language skills	Being active in what students know and what they need to learn.	Limited understanding of moral education content	Using similar strategies to CE
	Focusing on language skills and value guidance	Being active in what students know and what they need to learn.	Choosing MECE teaching materials critically	Using similar strategies to CE
Sara	Cultivating students' cultural confidence	Unaware of students' difficulties in learning MECE	Relying on the textbook	Trying some new strategies
	Cultivating students' cultural confidence	Trying to interact with students	Trying to be familiar with the MECE content	Using similar strategies to CE
Nina	Cultivating students' language skills to tell China's story	Unaware of students' interests	Conducting MECE teaching in a superficial way	Experimenting with different strategies
	Cultivating students' language skills to tell China's story	Failing to motivate students	Considering language and moral education as interwoven	Using similar strategies to CE

*Source:* Authors' work

### Lilly

Lilly's conceptions of the purpose of teaching MECE changed a lot. She focused on language skills teaching in the first round and showed unawareness of the differences in the teaching aims. In the second round, she added value guidance to the teaching aims. As to the knowledge of students' understanding (KOSU), in the first round of teaching, she would use quizzes and tests to gauge students' understanding of a particular topic. In the second round, she conducted group discussions and then collected the students' feedback to get a sense of what students were struggling with and what they had grasped. From her responses in CoRe and her statement in the interview, her understanding of the content

and the structure of the moral education module were limited in the first round. When trying to adapt to MECE teaching, she realised that curricular knowledge (CK) could help teachers understand the teaching context and provide a framework for making instructional decisions. She managed to acquire the knowledge she needed from some sample lessons shared online and in pieces of training, for instance, the moral education subject matter being taught, the methods used to teach it, and the assessment strategies used to evaluate student learning. In the second year of MECE teaching, she realised that the purpose of teaching should be changed, so she added moral education activities in line with an additional teaching objective: value guidance. As for Knowledge



of instructional strategies (KOIS), Lilly kept using a product-oriented approach (POA) that emphasises the outcome of students' learning. She insisted that changes were not necessary for strategies because POA is good enough. She firmly believed that her role in classroom teaching would always be a participant.

### **Sara**

Sara supported MECE teaching, and she developed an understanding of the purposes of teaching MECE before the transition happened. In the CoRe response, her big ideas of the content area were in line with cultivating students' cultural confidence. In her reflective journals, it can also be confirmed that she had changed her understanding of the purpose of teaching MECE. During the interview, she stated that moral education is such a big concept that she needed time to grasp it. In preparation for MECE lessons, she found that one of the teaching goals in the textbook was to build students' intercultural competency, especially cultural confidence. So, she focused on building the students' positive and self-assured attitude towards their own culture and a willingness to engage with and learn from other cultures. During the research, she developed the other three PCK components (KOSU, CK and KOIS). In the first round, Sara relied on the textbook due to her limited understanding of MECE content, and she tried some new strategies for teaching MECE.

In the second round, Sara tried to be more familiar with the MECE content and

brought critical thinking to the existing moral education section in the textbook. She did not change her understanding of the purpose of teaching MECE. While her KOSU has developed, she decided to go to the students and listen to the students' opinions on MECE learning. According to her statement in SI, she considered herself a participant in MECE teaching, not a teacher or instructor. As for CK, she found that she made a mistake when she thought of moral education and language teaching as two dissociated items, not as one aspect of a single unity. Therefore, she constructed the lessons and integrated moral education into activities based on unit-specific content. In the second round, her KOIS was developed, and she chose strategies similar to those used in college English teaching. She attributed her PCK development to her interaction with her colleagues.

### **Nina**

Nina supported MECE teaching, and her conception of the purpose for conducting moral education in college English teaching is to cultivate students' language skills to tell China's story in the two rounds of teaching. She built that conception after participating in a teaching competition. In China, there are several competitions for college English teachers aimed at improving the quality of English language instruction in higher education institutions. Nina participated in the National English Teaching Contest for College English Teachers (NETC), held annually since 2001. The Ministry of Education and the State Language

Commission organised the contest. It aims to promote innovative teaching approaches and pedagogical practices among English teachers in colleges and universities across the country. The contest allowed English teachers to demonstrate their teaching abilities, share best practices, and learn from other teachers. During the preparation for the competition, Nina developed her conception of the purposes of MECE teaching. She believed that telling China's story in English is a good catalyst for promoting the student's English language acquisition and the ability to advocate Chinese culture to the world.

As for KOSU, Nina failed to motivate students and gave up collecting the students' feedback in the first round. However, she encouraged students to participate actively in learning in the second round. For CK, in her first round of MECE teaching, she added some videos and passages from the website to share the Chinese culture, and she told the students that there were specific activities for them to cherish the Chinese culture. She would highlight some keywords and sentences for the students to recite. From her statement in the SI, she admitted that her implementation of MECE was quite superficial in the first round. After the teaching contest, she considered language and moral education as interwoven. For KOIS, after analysing Nina's CoRe responses, it can be found that she has been experimenting with different strategies to integrate moral education into language teaching in the first round, such as flipped classrooms, projected-based learning, as well as communicative

language teaching. In the second round, she concluded that her instructional strategy was differentiated instruction, a similar strategy that she adopted in language teaching. She considered herself a facilitator rather than a teacher and encouraged students to participate actively in learning. While transitioning to MECE teaching, she designed her lessons based on her understanding of MECE and considered language and moral education interwoven.

## DISCUSSION

Concerning the research question, it was found that all the respondents' CK changed, and they acquired knowledge of moral education from different resources by themselves, such as training sessions, peers, and sample lesson records. As for KOSI, Sara and Nina tried new instructional strategies and ended up with similar strategies to CE. A possible explanation might be that the teachers felt stressed when acquiring moral education knowledge. An innovation in instructional strategies makes them full of anxiety. Another important finding is that the conceptions of teaching purposes changed in two respondents (Sara and Nina) during the transition from CE to MECE lessons. Then, they maintained the same conception of purpose for teaching during the following two years of MECE teaching. Lilly only changed the conception of purpose for teaching in the second year after realising the transition was a need. The most unexpected finding is that all the respondents agreed that MECE teaching practices changed the relationship between students

and teachers. In KOSU, Lilly kept being active, Sara changed from unawareness of students' learning difficulties to trying to interact with students, and Nina failed to motivate students. Their KOSU results showed a difference; they all confirmed that co-learning is a new relationship when conducting moral education-related teaching and learning activities. In the process of transition from CE to MECE, the PCK growth pathways in college English teachers are suggested from the findings.

### **Specific Objective-based Study with Reflection**

In MECE teaching, the CE teachers hold specific objectives when preparing MECE lessons: integrating moral education into college English lessons. With the various objectives, the CE teachers explore the resources of MECE and study by themselves as the first step in the transition from general to MECE teaching. The CE teachers who conduct self-study will focus on the moral education concepts that correlate with English lessons, teaching and learning activities and instructional pedagogies. Reflection is the intentional act of thinking through complex or unclear ideas in learning or tackling problems without clear solutions to derive meaning (Moon, 1999). With critical reflection during self-studying, CE teachers will develop their conceptions of purposes for teaching MECE, not just those limited to "cultural confidence cultivation" (Sara) or "value guidance" (Lilly). The CE teachers' CK will develop correspondingly during the classroom activities designing

and reflection process. Critical reflection provides opportunities for modelling reflection and seeking alternate rhetoric to improve practice (Ergas & Ragoonaden, 2020). With the designed MECE activities in the classroom, the CE teachers will develop KOSU by interacting with students and critically reflecting on the effectiveness of the designed MECE activities.

The objective-based self-study is like an evolutionary procedure; it also provides chances to examine professional identity formation in CE teachers' practice and its impact on student learning (Ergas & Ragoonaden, 2020). Knowledge about self is important for transforming pedagogy and practice (Heilman, 2003). In the process of studying and reflecting, the CE teachers will gradually develop their way of thinking and doing to adapt to the transition from general CE teaching to MECE teaching.

### **Participating in Training Sessions and Workshops**

The participants' instructional strategies showed little change, potentially due to the stress associated with adopting new teaching methods. To ease the stress caused by instructional innovation, institutions can provide training sessions and workshops accordingly. Training sessions and workshops will provide resources such as instructional books, advanced instructional pedagogies, effective learning or teaching platforms or mobile applications, and experience-sharing opportunities. Continuous teacher training addresses the demands arising from societal shifts and

progress, as well as the complexities in grasping educational methodologies and curricula that challenge existing teaching approaches (Boumadan et al., 2020; Dymont & Downing, 2020; Rodrigues, 2020; Wong et al., 2023). The Ministry of Education (MOE) currently organises moral education integrated curriculum development training that is open to all university teachers. It is divided into specific modules based on different courses. University teachers can choose their courses and enrol in the training. The curriculum that consists of moral education integrated curriculum development training sessions can assist CE teachers in enhancing their understanding of moral education integrated CE courses in a short period.

Simultaneously, such training can invite distinguished educators to share cutting-edge theories and teaching methods in moral education integrated curriculum development. Training sessions and workshops can also invite experienced teachers with rich MECE teaching experience to share their insights. Furthermore, these training sessions are available for online viewing and can be replayed. It provides a sense of security for university teachers, as they can access these course resources for review anytime and anywhere. If the course modules of such training can be organised according to the Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) framework, or if a separate module dedicated to enhancing PCK is established on the training website, it will result in a more targeted improvement of teachers' PCK.

### **Interacting in Effective Online/Face-to-face Communities**

The findings demonstrate that all participants confirmed the effectiveness of interacting with peers in the transition from general CE teaching to integrating moral education into CE teaching. A potential reason for this response could be that teachers share their successes and challenges, providing mutual support and learning from each other's experiences, which is particularly valuable in navigating new educational contexts.

The training and workshops mentioned in the previous text are a rapid means to connect with the community. Besides that, the institutions could encourage collaboration between CE and moral education teachers. For example, they could gather CE teachers and moral education course teachers to construct MECE by sharing resources such as lesson plans, teaching materials, and assessments. It is a way to provide regular feedback and cooperation among teachers, highlighting areas where they can improve and offering guidance on how to make the changes, encouraging teachers to think critically about their teaching and consider ways to improve. The shared community discourse also allows entertaining a variety of viewpoints and utilises these as a source for reflection (Lin et al., 1999). In addition, creating a culture of continuous improvement and innovation within the institution can help to foster a mindset of openness to change and a willingness to develop PCK.

### **Embracing the New Relationship of Co-learning with Students**

For both CE teachers and students, the content of moral education is entirely new in the early stages of MECE teaching and learning. The relationship between teachers and students tends to lean towards co-learning, mutual learning, and collaborative practice. It aligns with existing research, indicating a shift in teacher-student dynamics towards more cooperative models of education. This trend is evidenced by Harumi (2023), Polifiore (2021), and Wei (2023), who have identified a pivot towards co-learning environments, where teachers and students engage in joint educational endeavours. Complementary to this, Li et al. (2021) and Whitehouse et al. (2021) corroborate the efficacy of mutual learning, where shared experiences and knowledge contribute to the learning process. Additionally, the principle of collaborative practice, as detailed by Burns et al. (2014), Hansen et al. (2020), and Syahabuddin et al. (2020), further supports this study's observation of a more integrative and partnership-based approach in educational settings. Once CE teachers embrace this new relationship with students, the CE teachers will continuously receive feedback from students during the collaborative MECE learning process. Teachers will be active in what students know and need to learn, being aware of students' difficulties in learning (Lestari & Wahyudin, 2020). The CE teachers' KOSU will be enhanced when CE teachers manage to interact with the students as co-learners.

### **CONCLUSION**

The findings support the idea that tracking teachers' PCK changes provides the development pathways of PCK. The study reveals that college English (CE) teachers' content knowledge evolves through independent learning from various sources, such as pieces of training and peer interactions, with a focus on integrating moral education into CE lessons. Notably, MECE practices transformed teacher-student relationships, fostering a co-learning environment despite varied teacher engagement and effectiveness levels. Professional development through training and workshops and participation in educational communities were instrumental in supporting teachers through this transition. By embracing new pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and co-learning relationships, teachers are better equipped to respond to educational changes and contribute to students' learning experiences. The research identifies practical challenges that must be overcome by teacher training programs in being proactive, responsive, and adaptive to an evolving educational landscape, ensuring teachers are equipped not just to meet new pedagogical demands but also to actively engage in the complex discourse on integrating moral education.

### **Implications**

This research emphasises that teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is not static but evolves through diverse avenues, including independent study, peer collaboration, and formal training.

Such growth necessitates adaptive professional development frameworks within educational institutions, which should extend beyond mere knowledge acquisition to practical application within the classroom environment. The study also brings to light a transformative shift in teacher-student dynamics towards a co-learning model, advocating for educational ecosystems that promote student-centred learning experiences. This shift is critical in fostering an environment that values collaborative learning and mirrors modern educational paradigms that place the student at the heart of the learning process.

### Limitations and Recommendations

This study adds to the limited research that tracks English teachers' PCK development when designing and implementing moral education practices in college English lessons. This study could be a starting point to develop a project with CE teachers to learn more about teachers' professional development. Meanwhile, the participants were from one university database associated with English language teaching, which shows the limitation of this study. Future studies that can recruit larger participant samples for foreign language lessons which integrate moral education concepts other than college English would help us better understand the factors that could influence PCK developmental trajectories.

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## APPENDIX I

### Interview Guide

Theme	Questions
Conceptions of purposes for teaching moral education integrated college English (MECE)	1. What is your attitude toward teaching freshmen MECE? 2. What knowledge or ability do you want your students to acquire when teaching MECE?
Curriculum knowledge (CK)	3. Do you have any new understanding of curricular knowledge? What are the sources of your understanding? 4. What kind of teaching material do you usually use?
Knowledge of instructional strategies (KOIS)	5. Have you developed any new strategies to facilitate the students' learning? How do you acquire them? 6. What is your role in classroom teaching?
Knowledge of students' understanding (KOSU)	7. What is the student's attitude toward learning MECE? 8. Are there any difficulties when the students learn MECE? What kind of difficulties?
Developing of PCK	9. Overall, what promotes or obstructs your PCK development? Please give some examples