Scientific Research Publishing

Open Journal of Social Sciences, 2025, 13(7), 287-308
https://www.scirp.org/journal/jss
ISSN Online: 2327-5960
ISSN Print: 2327-5952

Prize-Winners' TMACK Performance—A Longitudinal Study of SFLEP Cup National Foreign Language Teaching Contests

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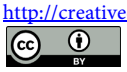
How to cite this paper: Zou, B., & Yan, M. (2025). Prize-Winners' TMACK Performance—A Longitudinal Study of SFLEP Cup National Foreign Language Teaching Contests. *Open Journal of Social Sciences, 13,* 287-308.
https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2025.137017

Received: June 6, 2025
Accepted: July 14, 2025
Published: July 17, 2025



Abstract

This longitudinal study investigates the evolving pedagogical performance of 50 prize-winning teachers from China's SFLEP-Cup National Foreign Language Teaching Contests over the past decade through the Technological, Methodological and Content Knowledge framework (TMACK). Through systematic analysis of competition guidelines, instructional videos, and post-competition reflections, three critical advancements emerge. First, technological integration demonstrates marked progression, with recent winners applying advanced digital tools and an enhanced general digital literacy among contestants. Second, methodological shifts reveal a paradigmatic transition from teacher-centered instruction to interactive pedagogies fostering learner agency. Third, content knowledge displays intentional localization, with more Chinese cultural elements included in many of the textual materials, reflecting strategic cultural subjectivity cultivation. The study establishes TMACK as a dynamic, context-sensitive construct and these findings empirically validate the contest's role as a catalyst for pedagogical innovation and offer a developmental roadmap for pre-service teacher training programs.

Keywords

TMACK, Teaching Competition, Teacher Knowledge, Longitudinal Study

1. Introduction

English language education (ELE) holds a significant position in contributing to the national rejuvenation mission in China while remaining aligned with China's

developmental trajectory (Wen & Chang, 2021). As an integral part of high-quality ELE, teachers' development and performance in teaching contexts have been given enough attention. At the same time, the introduction of New Humanities and Social Sciences Initiative heralds a demand for a more professional teaching faculty with solid language skills, cross-cultural awareness, humanistic quality and critical spirit. The SFLEP-Cup National Foreign Language Teaching Contest (thereafter as the contest), one of the largest and most influential national English teaching competitions in China, could serve as a mirror of the changes and development of English language education in China over a period of time. The inception of the contest is rooted in both policy and temporal contexts. From this perspective, examining teachers' performance over the past decade allows for an observation of the evolution within China's educational landscape over the long term. However, domestic research on the contest mainly focuses on teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), teaching effectiveness, and multi-modal discourse analysis of the demo class. Teachers' performance in the context of teaching competition from the lens of TMACK framework awaits further investigation.

To bridge this gap and align with the New Humanities and Social Sciences Initiative of fostering a competent, innovative, and highly-skilled teaching force, this study examines the performance of the prize-winners within the TMACK framework. Components of the framework were defined and coded in this paper as follows: Technological Knowledge (TK) was coded for teachers' actions involving the selection, integration, or management of digital tools, multimedia, or online resources. Methodological Knowledge (MK) was coded for teachers' actions and reflections concerning pedagogical strategies, classroom management, fostering learner skills, and reflective practice. Content Knowledge (CK) was coded for teachers' actions demonstrating or imparting the linguistic, cultural, and interdisciplinary/general knowledge required for teaching college English.

This endeavor aims to deepen the understanding of teachers' current knowledge, and grasp a comprehensive understanding of teachers' knowledge performance and its evolving patterns across China's developmental phases, particularly the past decade. Generally, it is instrumental in facilitating timely knowledge updates and ultimately elevating the overall standard of English language instruction.

This study aims to provide theoretical guidance for both contestants and non-contestants, offering valuable insights to the professional development of English teachers. The empirical findings of this study can serve as exploratory data to advance further studies on prize-winning teachers' teaching performance, while also serving as a useful reference for prospective contestants. Furthermore, this study offers practical suggestions to sponsors and organizers in refining contest rules and providing additional dimensions for expert judges to assess contestants' performance.

2. PCK, TPACK and TMACK

2.1. From PCK to TPACK

Shulman (1986) developed the term pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) as a

conceptual framework to describe the relationship between the amount and organization of domain knowledge (content knowledge) and knowledge related to how to teach appropriately (pedagogical knowledge). Built on PCK, Mishra and Koehler (2006) added technology as a key component to the original framework, creating technological pedagogical content knowledge (previously abbreviated to "TPCK", but now defined as "TPACK"). As a result of burgeoning technologies and their increased integration into educational practices, TPACK is gaining popularity in the education field (Agyei & Keengwe, 2014). **Figure 1** illustrates the components of TPACK framework: content knowledge (CK), pedagogical knowledge (PK), technological knowledge (TK), pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), technological content knowledge (TCK), TPACK, and contexts.

TPACK, as described in previous literature, involves an understanding of the complexity of relationships among students, teachers, contents, technologies, practices, and tools, which is assumed to be the knowledge base required by teachers to facilitate students' learning of certain contents through pedagogical and technological approaches.

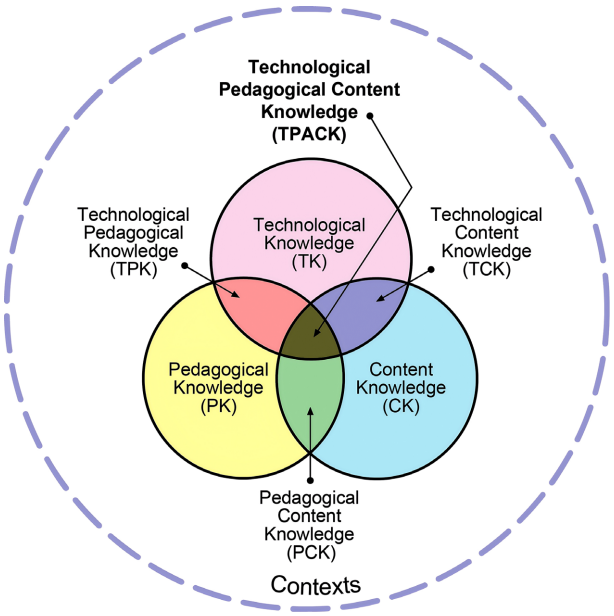


Figure 1. TPACK framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

Additionally, researchers (Hastings & Tracey, 2005; Kivunja, 2014; Mehlinger & Powers, 2002; Son et al., 2017) revealed that the integration of technological devices, appropriate pedagogical approaches, and effective instructional strategies could set up genuine, engaging and cooperative learning environments, empowering students to enhance their knowledge acquisition and cultivate novel proficiencies suitable for handling the fluctuating challenges and situations linked to globalization. Mishra and Koehler (2006) argued that rapid development of modern technologies facilitated changes in the education field, directing teachers to reconstruct their pedagogy and content. Therefore, extending the PCK framework

to include technology was necessary and appropriate.

There is a rather rich avenue of TPACK research on EFL teachers at home and abroad. Focuses are fixing on classroom observation (Koh & Chai, 2014), remote education (Can & Silman-Karanfil, 2021; Kamisli & Akinlar, 2022) and teachers' TPACK performance in genuine teaching environments (Zhang et al., 2015; Chen, Li, & Xu, 2022). The studies mentioned above demonstrate a commitment to understanding the complexities of teaching in the digital age, with a particular emphasis on the role of technology in teaching practices. As the educational landscape continues to evolve, the TPACK framework remains a critical lens through which to examine and improve teacher effectiveness and student engagement.

2.2. From TPACK to TMACK

The initial proposal of the TPACK framework was ascribed to an overemphasis on modern technology's role in education and the neglect of teachers' required knowledge and significant role in knowledge integration process (He, 2012). However, education is not a one-way process but a two-way practice which involves teacher-student interactions. According to Ruan (2014), constant teacher-student interactions not only highlight teachers' knowledge but also entail students' negotiations over their corresponding knowledge, skills, and competency. Previous literature has demonstrated a positive correlation between changes of students' learning motivation, studying habits, high-order thinking abilities and teachers' TPACK. In this regard, TSACK (Technological Strategic Content knowledge) is proposed to represent students' knowledge as the counterpart of TPACK.

During the bidirectional process of education, both teacher and student are refreshing their perceptions towards technological knowledge and content knowledge and re-framing their knowledge structure. In essence, the teaching and learning process involves a kind of high-order thinking pattern of problem-posing, problem-analyzing and problem-solving in dealing with issues at the micro-level (e.g. philosophical aspects), the meso-level (e.g. pedagogical aspects), and the micro-level (e.g. particular techniques in practice), which falls under the domain of methodological knowledge. Following this, Ruan (2014) proposed Technological Methodological Content Knowledge (TMACK) framework as illustrated in **Figure 2**.

TMACK framework grasps the fundamental feature of teaching and learning which can be used to examine both teacher's and student's knowledge structure. It was not expected to resolve or measure all the subtle matters but to provide a guide for a holistic and comprehensive understanding of a specific point in teaching and learning practice.

Based on TMACK framework, a study was carried out to explore the qualities of business English teachers and investigated how their business literacy was fostered in higher education. This study suggested that TMACK framework can offer a systematic framework to explore business English teacher's professional devel-

opment in China (Lei, Ruan, & Zou, 2022). In addition to business English education, TMACK framework could be applied to various contexts in that "Contexts" in the illustration above covers a wide array of environments from classroom, subject to even cultural and historical background. The present study analyzes the prominent features of prize-winning teachers' performance in the context of teaching competition which may further validate the practicability of TMACK framework.

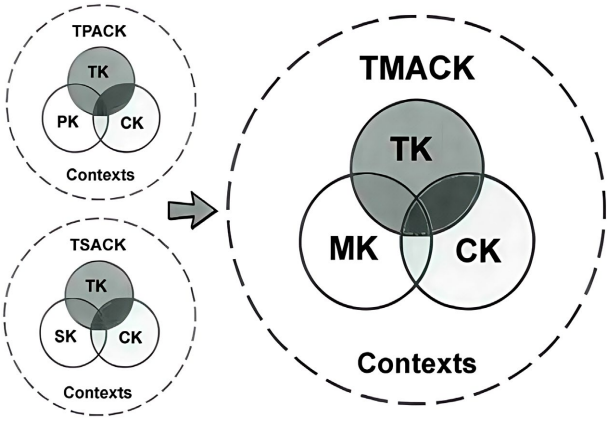


Figure 2. TMACK framework (Ruan, 2014).

3. Studies on SFLEP-Cup National Foreign Language Teaching Contest

The popularization of the contest has accordingly generated substantial scholarly attention. Investigations into the contest have predominantly focused on three research domains: multimodal analyses of classroom discourse in competitive settings (Qiu & Wang, 2015; Zhu & Chen, 2015; Ning, 2019; Wang, 2021); evaluations of pedagogical effectiveness through case studies (Yang, 2011; Qi, 2014; Wang, 2014; Zhu, 2013); and examinations of teaching objective alignment with classroom activities (Shu, 2014, 2017; Wu, 2021). Despite these contributions, extant literature exhibits critical limitations. A review of literature implies that current researches have mainly focused on certain sessions of teaching contests with a limited scope of research subjects, and the research findings can hardly draw a holistic picture of the award-winning teachers' performance. TPACK framework is widely applied in research on language teacher professional development. As an illuminating extension of TPACK, TMACK framework, despite its theoretical relevance, just received peripheral attention from academia. Additionally, major research efforts on the contest have been devoted to improving teaching effectiveness and classroom discourse with little attention on the longitudinal change over the contests. In so doing, we could hardly reach a comprehensive understanding of prize-winner teachers' performances.

Thus, this paper attempts to fill the two gaps by mainly describing prize-winning teachers' performance in the contest from the lens of TMACK framework in order to give a rather comprehensive overview of teachers' performance over the

past decade. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1) What are the prominent features of prize-winner teachers' performance from the lens of TMACK framework in the SFLEP-Cup National Teaching Contests?

2) What implications on teachers' professional development can be drawn from prize-winning teachers' TMACK performance?

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Participants, Data Collection and Tools

Originally held for College English teachers, the contest has subsequently switched to being held annually in the order of English-major Group, College English Group, and Vocational College English Group alternatively. The contest for English-major group was held in the year of 2012, 2015, 2018 and 2021 while Vocational College English Group was held in 2014, 2019 and 2020. And the rest of years are held exclusively for college English group. This study selects college English group as research focus for the following reasons, a) College English education is an essential component of higher education. Exploring college English teachers' TMACK in the context of teaching contest can provide a window on their professional growth and provide some insights for Chinese higher education development; b) With regard to data collection, college English group was held for five sessions which was held most frequently compared with other groups. Moreover, relatively longer time span—1st contest in 2010 and 10th contest in 2019—provides possibility and feasibility for a longitudinal study on each contest as a whole case.

This study investigates TMACK performance of 50 awardees from five competition cycles (2010, 2011, 2013, 2016, 2019), comprising grand-prize (n = 5), first-prize (n = 15), and second-prize (n = 30) recipients. The temporal selection of these specific competitions was strategically determined by two factors—the availability of complete multi-source datasets (teaching videos, self-reflective diaries, and instructional portfolios) through official channels, and the practical constraint that post-2019 competition materials were inaccessible on official platforms at the time of data collection. In terms of conveniences, ten awardees of each contest were systematically coded as 2010-T1 to 2019-T10.Primary data include demonstration class videos, reflective teaching journals, and competition submission portfolios. Data processing utilized NVivo 12 Plus, a CAQDAS platform renowned for its multimodal analysis capabilities, to conduct triangulated coding of verbal transcripts, written reflections, and instructional artifacts. Analytical rigor was ensured through iterative thematic development, complemented by inter-coder reliability metrics (Cohen's $\kappa > 0.85$; percentage agreement >90%) generated via NVivo's coding comparison module.

4.2. Data Analysis

The study's coding process involved three distinct phases. Initially, open coding with a bottom-up approach allowed for the emergence of new codes, closely adhering to the original data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The second phase applied a

top-down approach using the TMACK framework to analyze award-winning teachers' knowledge structures through thematic analysis (See Table 1), guided by Saldana's coding cycles and facilitated by NVivo 12 Plus. The third phase integrated both approaches through cluster analysis to correlate nodes, integrate repetitive ones, and abstract themes. Analytical memos were used to reflect on data, challenging assumptions and reconsidering their impact on results. This iterative process ensured a comprehensive and reflective analysis of the data.

Table 1. Coding scheme.

Theme	Operationalization	Code descriptions
Technological knowledge	Any action taken by the instructor to deal with technologies in teaching practice	- Exploring computer-supported teaching pattern - Create vivid and active language environment by bringing the videos of Going to the Future, Learning with Me, Air English Classroom, Going All Over the United States, and Dynamic English into the classroom - Integrating modern educational technologies to improve students' learning interests - Making rational use of modern multimedia techniques and avoid excessive reliance on teaching courseware
Methodological knowledge	Strategies and skills of dealing with difficulties in teaching and learning which involve high-order and critical thinking abilities	- Using flexible teaching methods and strategies - Showing respect and equal love to every individual student - Innovation plays a crucial role in maintaining the vitality of English teaching - Keep writing reflective teaching diaries and refine teaching design continuously - Guide students to appreciate the beauty of English language and cultivate their critical thinking ability
Content knowledge	A wide range of knowledge bases required to teach college English well including not only basic language knowledge but also interdisciplinary knowledge and general knowledge	- A broad knowledge is the foundation of teaching - Paying attention to the infiltration of cultural knowledge in language teaching, and introduce the historical geography, customs and other cultural knowledge.

5. Results and Discussions

5.1. Teachers' TK, MK and CK performance

5.1.1. Teachers' Technological Performance

As a major component of the TMACK framework, teachers' TK comprises of three main aspects, namely basic ICT (Information and Communication Technology) competences, modern educational technology proficiency and reflection on technology development. The first two aspects are reflected in demo class observation and the last in teachers' self-reflective diaries. It is hard to grasp every detail of every prize-winning teacher's TK performance, so, based on content analysis of teaching videos, we find two prominent features of teachers' TK performance in general.

1) Progressive diversification of digital tools

As evidenced by **Figure 3**, the educational technology landscape reflects an evolution from basic ICT applications to multifaceted digital ecosystems demonstrating teachers' expanding basic ICT competences. Early contests (2010-2013) focused on foundational tools like whiteboards, physical teaching aids, and basic online functions (resource sharing, assignments). By 2016, the diversification surged with the integration of social media (WeChat/QQ), cognitive tools (mind maps), and specialized platforms (Rain Classroom), indicating enhanced operational fluency with emerging technologies. The 2019 data show an adoption of blended learning strategies combining micro-lectures, team-based projects, and e-assessments, reflecting strategic orchestration of complementary technologies.

This evolution underscores a paradigm shift toward digital integration and interactive learning. Early practices, characterized by reliance on conventional tools like whiteboards and video clips, prioritized visual reinforcement to stimulate classroom participation. Subsequently, pedagogical strategies transitioned toward interactive digital tools—including educational applications and social media platforms—reflecting an institutional prioritization of dynamic, learner-centered methodologies. The proliferation of online resources and assignment management systems further exemplifies this shift, enabling not only streamlined content dissemination but also enhanced remote collaboration and real-time feedback mechanisms. Collectively, these developments signify an educational paradigm emphasizing accessibility and pedagogical flexibility. The 2016 introduction of QQ platform and stereoscopic instructional materials epitomizes sustained experimentation with social-constructivist pedagogies, later augmented by 2019 innovations including team-based digital projects and micro-lectures. These advancements highlight a deliberate synthesis of social media ecosystems and concise content delivery systems to foster immersive, collaborative learning experiences.

The trajectory of these pedagogical innovations aligns with Liu and He's (2019) framework for digital competency, which posits that assessments of technological literacy must account for instructors' capacity to synthesize online and offline evaluation modalities through adaptive tool deployment. The growing emphasis on online assignment systems and data-driven assessment techniques reinforces a commitment to crafting dynamic, technology-enhanced learning environments that prioritize engagement, accessibility, and scalable resource sharing.

In essence, the data from the teaching contests reveal an educational landscape increasingly enriched by technology, with a clear movement towards online platforms for resource sharing, assignment management, and collaborative projects, underpinning a commitment to creating dynamic, engaging, and accessible learning environments that harness the benefits of educational technology.

2) Pedagogical collaboration as professional development catalyst

Teacher collaboration—defined as structured peer learning—emerges as a central theme in teachers' reflection diaries, demonstrating its dual capacity to foster professional learning communities and enhance individual instructional expertise. For instance, Teacher 2011-T7 (see the quote below) emphasized that collab-

orative engagements not only generated innovative pedagogical insights but also provided essential scaffolding, enabling effective integration of technological tools in demonstration lessons. This synergy underscores collaboration's vital role in bridging theoretical knowledge and classroom praxis.

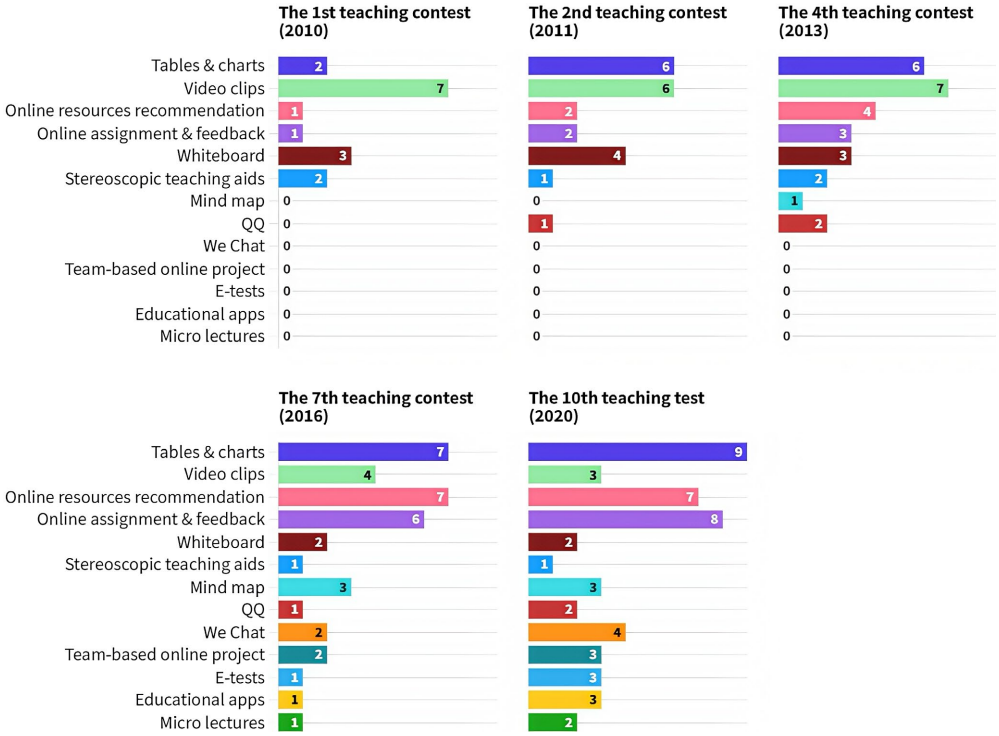


Figure 3. Technologies applied in teaching contests from 2010 to 2019.

Meanwhile, teachers exhibited reflections on technology deployment—one is their deliberate elimination of technologically superfluous or pedagogically incongruent elements to preserve instructional coherence; another is their prioritization of students' autonomous data analysis capabilities, explicitly framed as foundational to critical thinking competencies.

This critical stance aligns with observations from participants 2011-T7 and 2013-T3 (see the quotes below), who contextualized their practices within China's rapidly expanding technology-mediated education landscape. Their accounts reveal a generational imperative: as digital natives, contemporary students demonstrate intrinsic technological fluency, necessitating teachers to continuously refine their digital literacy to maintain pedagogical relevance, design instructional frameworks that balance technological adoption with cognitive skill development and guide students in cultivating discerning attitudes toward information consumption and digital tool utilization.

As a teacher, we need to be cautious about the selection of presentation materials and pay attention to the degree of using the courseware and avoid excessive dependence on presentation materials (*Quotes from* 2011-*T7*, *translated from Chinese*).

In a digital area, we are bombarded with a sea of information and students are surrounded by a mixture of information. Teacher needs to filter, analyze and integrate all sources of information and cultivate students to be critical about information released on the internet. (*Quotes from* 2013-*T*3, *translated from Chinese*).

These findings resonate with sociocultural perspectives on professional development, positioning collaboration as a scaffold for technological acculturation. Furthermore, the emphasis on critical appraisal reflects growing recognition of technology's dual-edged role—as both an enabler and potential disruptor of pedagogical intentionality. The integration of these dimensions suggests a maturation in technology-driven teaching paradigms, moving beyond instrumental adoption toward ethically grounded, student-centered implementation.

5.1.2. Teachers' Methodological Knowledge Performance

Teachers' methodological knowledge is conceptualized as a domain of knowledge related to the high-order thinking pattern of problem-posing, problem-analyzing and problem-solving. Teachers' methodological knowledge covers skills, strategies that are required in teaching process. Based on the coding results, teachers' concrete MK performances are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Teachers' MK performance in each contest.

Contest	Teachers' MK performance
1st (2010)	• Being kind and patient • Strong classroom management skills • Knowledge of teaching approaches • The ability of grasping the essence of the teaching contents immediately • Awareness of cultivating students' critical thinking • Setting thought-provoking questions to inspire students • Using case-study method • Playing games to enhance students' knowledge of vocabulary
2nd (2011)	• Being patient about teaching • Strong classroom management skills • Grasping the key points and difficulties of the text accurately • Designing teaching activities in a coordinated way • Cultivating students' ability of observation and imagination • Using the cooperative Approach to teach content effectively • Knowledge of reflective strategies
4th (2013)	• Providing appropriate guidance for students in classroom activities • Conducting classroom teaching in a logical and organized way • Skills of applying knowledge and techniques to real world contexts • Teaching students learning strategies such as Word Network • Allowing students to learn language points in authentic situations • Knowledge of research

Continued

7th (2016)	• Creating opportunities to cultivate students' teamwork spirit • Building rapport with students • Using verbal and non-verbal strategies to activate students' learning interest • A combination of delivering knowledge and highlighting the interest of learning English • Having clear and appropriate teaching objectives • Fostering students' critical thinking ability in a natural way • Appropriate teacher feedback • Keep updated about modern educational technologies
10th (2019)	• Taking student's needs and interests into consideration • Creating a non-threatening and equal classroom atmosphere • Showing respect for students • Showing creativity in lesson planning • Designing interesting classroom activities to motivate teacher-student interaction • Designing student-involving/open-ended questions • Playing the role of a facilitator and organizer

Table 2 illustrates the enactment of methodological knowledge among prize-winning teachers within teaching competition contexts. Despite variations in instructional content and pedagogical styles, participants consistently demonstrate proficient classroom management skills, establishment of harmonious learning environments, and innovative language teaching strategies.

Two major themes emerge from the analysis MK application that are intentional design of teacher-student discourse and cultivation of students' critical thinking capacities. This focus can be attributed to two key factors inherent to the competition format. First, the performative nature of teaching demonstrations inherently limits spontaneous student participation, making teachers' strategies for initiating and maintaining T-S interaction particularly indicative of their MK. The constrained interaction framework requires deliberate design of engagement protocols, thereby serving as a measurable indicator of their ability to translate theoretical knowledge into practice under controlled conditions. Second, the emphasis on critical thinking development aligns with contemporary higher education priorities. As institutional benchmarks increasingly emphasize cognitive skill acquisition, teachers' capacity to design learning experiences that challenge cognitive frameworks—through techniques such as argumentation and reflective inquiry—has become a crucial MK evaluation criterion.

1) Promoting student engagement through dialogic learning communities

To analyze teacher-student interaction dynamics across teaching competitions, chronometric measurements of discourse allocation were conducted, quantifying teacher talk duration, student participation time, and ancillary activities. As illustrated in Table 3 and Figure 4, teachers' monologue predominates (75.8%-83.0% of total interaction time), though student discourse exhibits a 70.8% relative increase from 2010 (8.9%) to 2019 (15.2%). While these aggregate figures do not

capture qualitative interaction nuances, they reveal evolving pedagogical priorities toward participatory learning models.

Table 3. The Average proportion of teacher talk and student talk in each contest.

Contest	Teacher Talk (seconds)	Student Talk (seconds)	Percentage of Teacher Talk (%)	Percentage of Student Talk (%)
1st (2010)	930	103	80.0	8.9
2nd (2011)	946	111	82.4	9.7
4th (2013)	923	135	78.6	11.4
7th (2016)	943	106	83.0	9.2
10th (2019)	780	156	75.8	15.2

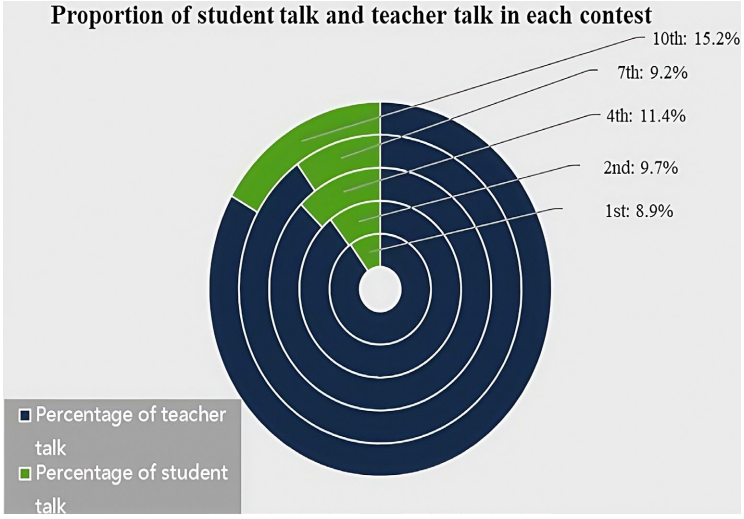


Figure 4. Proportion of student talk and teacher talk in each contest.

T-S interaction is mainly realized by Q & A section in the context of teaching contest. A closer look into the Q-A patterns in the teaching contests helps us gain a more holistic picture of teacher winners' MK performance. Four different Q-A patterns are explored, namely, a) students volunteering to answer questions, b) teachers nominating students to answer, c) students responding in chorus and d) teachers asking and answering questions on their own. Based on close examination on demo class videos and related materials, the frequencies of the four patterns are presented in **Figure 5**.

According to **Figure 5**, the predominance of teacher-dominated responses reflects persistent instructor-centric dynamics, with limited student agency in problem formulation stages. This asymmetry contrasts with the TMACK framework's emphasis on the equal status of teacher and student, where MK is operationalized through teachers' capacity to foster higher-order thinking via dialogic scaffolding (Ruan, 2014). While teachers demonstrate intentional efforts to engage students through structured questioning—evidenced by increased student talk percent-

ages—deep cognitive participation remains constrained to post-problem-solving phases. According to Ruan (2014), methodologically, if teachers consider teacher and student as both subjects of a learning community, "dialogic" and "inquiry" teaching practices will be stimulated and students will gradually form a deep-level learning based on reflection and critique. To stimulate "dialogic" and "inquiry" teaching practice is no easy task. In their reflective diaries, prize-winning teachers emphasized the significant role of natural teacher-student dialogues in college English classrooms and expressed their worries on students' inactive response, and this is a strong sign of teachers' reflection on the student's equal yet important role in foreign language education. For instance, 2016-T7 reflected on her teaching demonstration, saying:

It is a pity that I haven't successfully engage the students to participate in classroom activities because students' responses are not very active. And I came to think about how to involve students and inspire their learning interest. This is really a big challenge for me! (Quotes for 2016-T7, translated from Chinese).

To be brief, teachers' intended invitation for students to participate in the construction of T-S learning community is a good indication, however, much work remains to be done to enliven the classroom atmosphere and make student an active participant in education process.

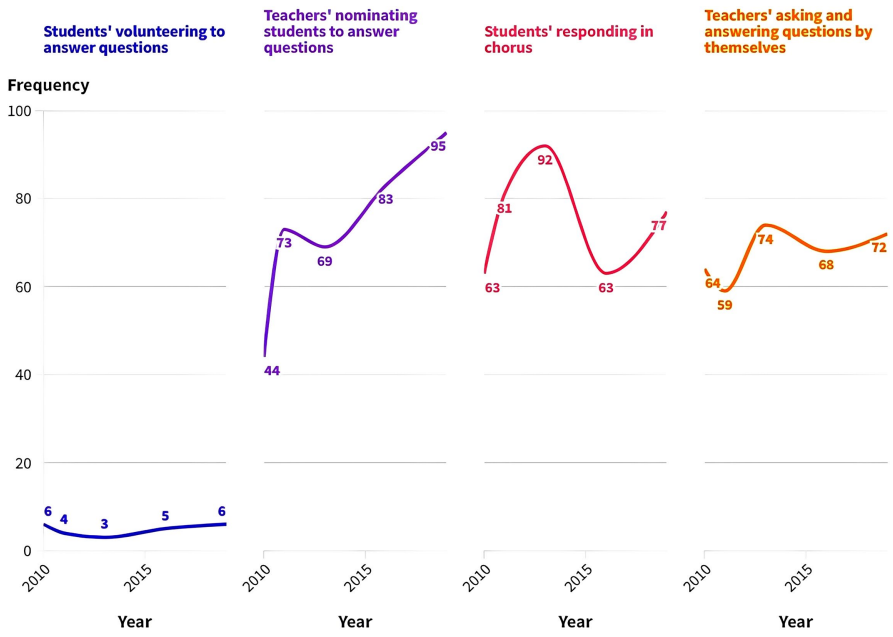


Figure 5. The frequency of four Q & A patterns among contests.

2) Evolving pedagogical emphasis on critical thinking development

The preceding analyses establish that prize-winning teachers' awareness of critical thinking cultivation serves as a significant marker of their methodological knowledge in teaching practice. Coding results reveals that award-winning teachers demonstrate a clear divergence between stated intentions and enacted practices in cultivating critical thinking. Declaration-oriented practitioners explicitly

name critical thinking as an objective but exhibit no observable, scaffolded activities demanding higher-order cognition in classroom demonstrations. Conversely, implementation-focused practitioners integrate substantive pedagogical actions characterized by: 1) cognitively demanding task design (e.g., 2011-T1's structured debate on textual propositions, linkage to real-world crises like the U.S. debt dilemma, and reflective post-video analysis); 2) sustained facilitation guiding students through evaluation and synthesis; and 3) responsive feedback to student inquiries. In a word, authentic critical thinking development requires transforming declarative awareness into enacted pedagogy through rigorous task design and facilitation, reflecting teachers' own methodological knowledge and critical capacities.

Table 4 reveals a notable progression in pedagogical intentionality, with Category A practitioners demonstrating a notable increase across competition cycles. Video analyses substantiate evolving implementation strategies, ranging from structured debates on ethical dilemmas (2010-T1) to student-led content interrogation frameworks (2019-T5). Effective execution of such pedagogies necessitates sophisticated MK competencies, particularly in problem identification, analytical scaffolding, and adaptive response management, which are all hallmarks of higher-order cognitive processing. Notably, while curricular integration of critical thinking objectives has gained prominence, two persistent challenges emerge that are substantive alignment between content delivery and cognitive development goals and responsive facilitation of student-generated critical perspectives.

Table 4. Teachers' enactment of critical thinking activities in each contest.

Competition cycle	Declaration-Oriented Practitioners (Category A)	Implementation-Focused Practitioners (Category B)
1st (2010)	2010-T2; 2010-T6; 2010-T8; 2020-T10;	2010-T2; 2010-T6; 2010-T8; 2020-T10;
2nd (2011)	2011-T1;2011-T3;2011-T5; 2011-T6; 2011-T9; 2011-T10;	2011-T1; 2011-T3; 2011-T5; 2011-T6; 2011-T9;
4th (2013)	2013-T1;2013-T2;2013-T3; 2013-T6; 2013-T7;	2013-T1; 2013-T3; 2013-T7;
7th (2016)	2016-T1; 2016-T2; 2016-T4; 2016-T7; 2016-T8; 2016-T10;	2016-T1; 2016-T2; 2016-T4; 2016-T10;
10th (2019)	2019-T1; 2019-T2; 2019-T3; 2019-T4; 2019-T5; 2019-T6; 2019-T7; 2019-T9; 2019-T10;	2019-T1; 2019-T3; 2019-T4; 2019-T5; 2019-T7; 2019-T9;

Notes: Category A denotes explicit declaration of critical thinking objectives; Category B reflects verified implementation of critical thinking activities.

The observed discrepancy between declared objectives and implemented practice suggests systemic influences, including competition assessment parameters and individual instructional preferences. Some instances reveal performative adoption of critical thinking as a strategic competition tactic rather than pedagogical commitment. This investigation posits that teaching competition environments effectively surface MK manifestations. While those awardees demonstrate emerg-

ing sophistication in high-order thinking facilitation, the findings underscore the need for more robust implementation frameworks and assessment criteria to bridge aspirational objectives with classroom praxis.

5.1.3. Teachers' Content Knowledge Performance

Regarding TMACK framework, teachers' content knowledge extends beyond subject-specific knowledge and encompasses interdisciplinary knowledge pertinent to the specific subject matter (See **Figure 6**). The coding result indicates that award-winning teachers in general tended to possess extensive literary knowledge and incorporated more elements of Chinese culture into college English teaching. Two major features of prize-winning teachers' CK are as follow:

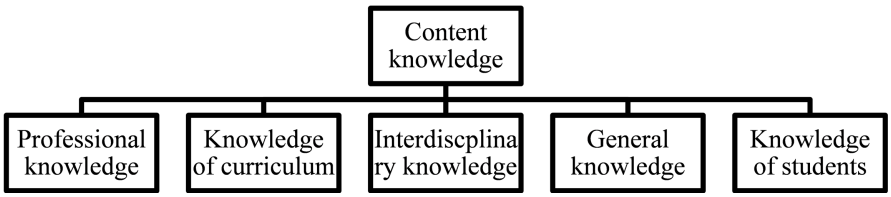


Figure 6. Components of content knowledge.

1) Extensive literary expertise

Award-winning teachers among the teaching contests have demonstrated a profound command of both Chinese and Western literary traditions. Their rich knowledge is not merely a display of erudition but a strategic tool for fostering critical thinking among students. The contestants have skillfully woven references to literature from different cultural backgrounds into their teaching practices. Through deliberate curricular integration of cross-cultural literary references, teacher-winners facilitated comparative studies that enhanced students' abilities to identify thematic parallels and divergences across cultural contexts, analyze stylistic variations in narrative construction and deconstruct philosophical underpinnings of literary works. Notably, some of the teachers demonstrated sophisticated content manipulation through literary exemplification. For instance, 2017-T10 juxtaposed character analyses from *A Dream in Red Mansions* and *The Catcher in the Rye* to elucidate developmental psychology concepts in emerging adulthood. This approach achieved dual outcomes including deepened comprehension of psychosocial theories and cultivated aesthetic appreciation for literary works. The literary integration extended beyond direct instruction, instead, this strategy facilitates autonomous learning by providing supplementary reading lists and promotes lexical development through employing indigenous texts.

In conclusion, the rich knowledge of literature exhibited by these teachers has been instrumental in creating a dynamic learning environment that values cultural heritage, critical thinking, and the joy of reading. Their practices reflect a deep understanding of the role of literature in education and its potential to shape well-rounded, critically aware individuals. This approach aligns with the objectives of promoting cultural awareness and linguistic competencies in the class-

room, as emphasized in current educational discourse.

2) Cross-cultural curricular integration

The integration of traditional Chinese cultural elements into collegiate English pedagogy has emerged as a defining trend in the teaching context, particularly since the 7th contest in 2016. Analysis of prize-winning teachers' demo videos reveals a deliberate pedagogical shift toward embedding classical Chinese narratives, philosophical maxims, and contemporary sociopolitical discourse into language instruction. This paradigm extends beyond superficial cultural referencing, serving as a strategic mechanism to cultivate intercultural competencies. A representative example involves instructor 2016-T8's innovative application of Chinese political rhetoric to elucidate rhetorical devices: through comparative analysis of parallelism and repetition in political speeches (see Figure 7), students simultaneously decoded linguistic structures and internalized socialist core values. Such practices reflect a broader institutional alignment with national imperatives for cultural confidence (*wenhua zixin*), positioning English classrooms as dynamic sites for heritage preservation and global identity negotiation. The pedagogical synthesis promotes linguistic mastery and cultural literacy development, enabling students to critically engage with both Eastern and Western discursive traditions. However, operational challenges persist, particularly in balancing lexical instruction with substantive cultural transmission. While most of participants acknowledged the theoretical necessity of cultural integration, fewer than half demonstrated systematic methodologies to avoid reductionist approaches where cultural content serves merely as supplementation. This gap underscores the need for robust frameworks that ensures cultural elements functioning as authentic pedagogical tools rather than decorative additions.

Figure 7. Screen capture of 2016-T8's PPT.

The evolving practices mirror China's sociopolitical trajectory in global education, echoing Ge and Wang's (2016) conceptualization of language instruction as a dual interface for linguistic proficiency and ideological articulation. As college English teaching increasingly assumes responsibility for fostering translingual ne-

gotiation skills, future research must address the critical task of developing assessment metrics that evaluate not merely the frequency but the depth and pedagogical intentionality of cultural integration.

5.2. Discussion

An analysis of policy documents, organizational regulations, and competition evaluation criteria spanning the past decade reveals the evolving macro-contextual forces shaping pedagogical practices within teaching contests. As illustrated in **Figure 8**, these guiding frameworks not only establish performance benchmarks but actively reconstitute teachers' pedagogical orientations.

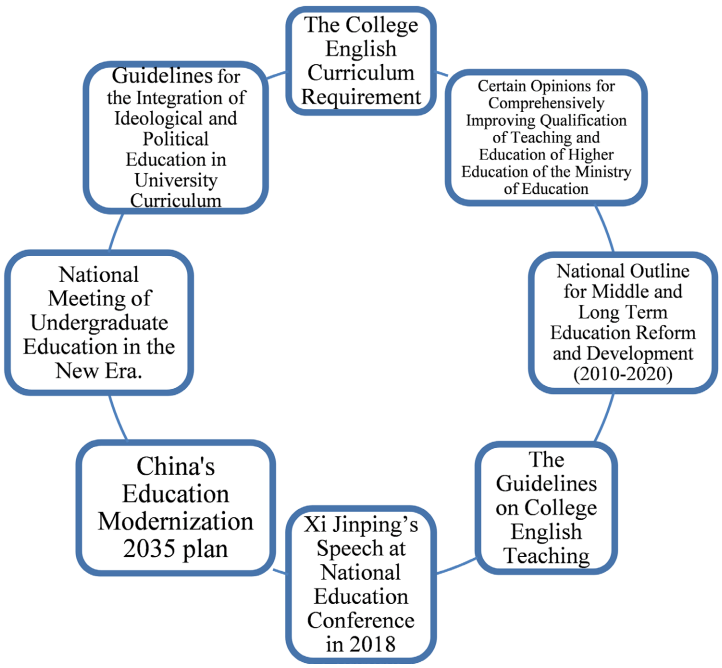


Figure 8. Guiding documents for contests.

The 2010 inaugural contest emphasized technological integration through electronic courseware requirements, reflecting early-stage digitalization in language education. Subsequent policy shifts, notably the *National Outline for Middle and Long-Term Education Reform and Development* (2010-2020), transitioned toward holistic teacher development, prioritizing ethical cultivation and innovative methodologies like blended learning. This trajectory aligns with the *Guidelines on College English Teaching*'s dual focus on linguistic competence and cross-cultural communication (Wang, 2016), marking a paradigmatic shift from teacher-centered knowledge transmission to student-centered capacity building. Evaluation metrics progressively incorporated student engagement metrics, humanistic literacy development, and critical thinking cultivation, while simultaneously reframing professional growth as autonomous rather than skill-acquisition focused.

Within this policy-mediated ecosystem, longitudinal analysis of contestants' TMACK demonstrates marked evolutionary patterns. Technological Knowledge

(TK) exhibits consistent advancement, with prize-winning teachers progressively integrating emerging digital tools—a trend culminating in the 2022 *Digital Literacy for Teachers* policy that formalizes technological-pedagogical synergy as a national priority (Wu et al., 2023). Post-2019 contest reports further reveal AI adoption milestones, particularly the 13th contest's implementation of AI essay grading systems, signaling impending transformations in foreign language education. Methodological knowledge evolution manifests through deliberate pedagogical restructuring, notably expanded student discourse time and strategic questioning techniques. Analysis of teacher-student interaction patterns reveals sophisticated scaffolding mechanisms, with teachers employing Vygotskian zone-of-proximal-development (ZPD) principles through targeted questioning—a notable increase in high-cognitive-demand questions observed between 2016-2019 competitions. Moreover, content knowledge transformations reflect broader sociocultural imperatives, with most of post-2016 winners systematically embedding Chinese cultural elements into English instruction. This practice transcends linguistic objectives, addressing persistent concerns over "Chinese culture aphasia" (Zeng, 2005; Zhao, 2016) through curated integration of traditional proverbs, modern technological narratives, and critical cultural comparisons. Such pedagogical interventions operationalize the TMACK framework by interweaving language acquisition with cultural subjectivity development, equipping learners with dual competencies in global communication and cultural articulation. The observed TMACK progression ultimately mirrors China's strategic educational reorientation—positioning language classrooms as sites for negotiating global citizenship while sustaining cultural distinctiveness in an AI-driven, digitally mediated era.

6. Conclusion

This longitudinal investigation reveals a progressive transformation in teachers' TMACK performance in the context of teaching contest over the past decade. The findings delineate three interlocking developmental trajectories: technological adaptation through enhanced digital literacy, methodological refinement toward cognitive scaffolding, and curricular reorientation addressing cultural articulation imperatives. Technological Knowledge (TK) advancements manifest through institutional alignment with national policy mandates, particularly the 2022 *Digital Literacy for Teachers* framework, which formalizes teachers' role as digital mediators in an AI-permeated educational landscape. Methodological Knowledge (MK) evolution surfaces through measurable pedagogical restructuring, with notable increase in student discourse time allocation and strategic deployment of high-cognitive-demand questioning techniques. Content Knowledge (CK) transformations emerge most saliently through the systematic integration of Chinese cultural paradigms into English instruction, with post-2016 prize-winners operationalized cultural artifacts ranging from classical proverbs to contemporary political narratives while cultivating translingual negotiation competencies in the more interconnected world.

These developments collectively reconstitute college English pedagogy as a tripartite interface for digital literacy cultivation, critical capacity building, and cultural subjectivity formation. The competition milieu thus functions as both a policy implementation accelerator and a disciplinary innovation incubator, and the observed TMACK progression underscores teachers' evolving role as architects of glocalized learning experiences—mediating global communication frameworks while anchoring pedagogical practice in local cultural environments. This paradigmatic realignment positions language education as a critical nexus for developing 21st-century literacies that transcend linguistic competence to encompass digital agility, cultural articulation, and meta-cognitive awareness.

7. Pedagogical Implications of the Study

First, college English teachers must critically re-evaluate technology integration beyond superficial tool usage, strategically aligning technological knowledge within TMACK framework to foster deeper learning. Given the study's finding of prevalent surface-level teacher-student interactions, teacher training programs should prioritize modules on designing technology-mediated tasks that necessitate critical discourse, collaborative problem-solving, and substantive meaning negotiation—essential in blended/post-pandemic contexts where autonomous learning thrives.

Second, institutional support for structured professional learning communities (PLCs) is imperative. Contest evaluation criteria should explicitly reward demonstrated collaboration within PLCs such as co-designed lessons or peer-reviewed reflections to incentivize knowledge sharing and pedagogical innovation. Schools should establish virtual teaching research hubs with dedicated time for resource co-creation and TMACK-focused lesson studies, fostering a culture where collaborative inquiry drives professional growth.

Third, teacher development must address identified gaps in methodological knowledge. Programs should train teachers to operationalize student-centeredness through protocols for co-constructing learning objectives, facilitating student-led inquiries, and integrating critical thinking assessments into routine practice. Given students' easy access to online knowledge, training must also prioritize techniques for curating and contextualizing cross-disciplinary content, thereby strengthening teachers' content knowledge agility.

Finally, embedding structured reflection mechanisms into teacher appraisal systems is vital. Schools should provide mentorship for teachers to transform reflections into actionable changes, such as revising CK sources or redesigning MK strategies, ensuring continuous adaptation in dynamic educational landscapes.

8. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

Like all research, this study has its limitations, primarily in two areas. Firstly, the analysis of award-winning teachers TMACK performance was not exhaustive, focusing only on the most salient points. Additionally, the reliance on demo class

videos as a key data source presents a challenge, as these are often pre-planned and reflect a team's efforts rather than an individual teacher's capabilities. A single demonstration may not accurately represent an individual teachers TMACK performance. Ideally, surveys or interviews with the teachers would provide a more direct assessment, but access to these individuals is challenging. Thus, future research could benefit from examining award-winning teachers' regular teaching practices through interviews to achieve a more comprehensive view of their TMACK competencies.

Despite these limitations, this study has paved new ground in examining the performances of exemplary college English teachers. It has only uncovered a small proportion of teacher winners' TMACK performances, and their performance is still a neglected topic with much research potential.

Future studies could focus on:

- A detailed examination of TMACK performance among different groups of award-winning teachers within the same year, including comparative analyses between male and female teachers, or between teachers from English major and vocational English groups. This could provide a more holistic understanding of the competencies and qualities demonstrated in teaching contests, enhancing the credibility of the findings.
- Investigating the reasons behind the TMACK performance differences among teachers in each contest. Deep exploration into the enactment of different knowledge elements, particularly through interviews and self-assessment, is warranted. Additionally, the flexible use of multi-modal resources by prize-winning teachers, including paralanguages and non-linguistic modalities, suggests that further research into the characteristics of their multi-modal discourse could yield valuable insights into their methodological knowledge.

Acknowledgements

We extend our gratitude to School of Foreign Languages in ZUEL for providing essential research facilities. Special thanks to Mr. Ruan for his insightful suggestions during manuscript development, and to all participating teachers whose generous participation made this study possible.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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