The Process of Subject Content Transformation as Examined Through Psychological and Sociological Perspectives: A Study Conducted in Oxfordshire, England

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Drawing from psychological and sociological fields, this study examines how teachers transform subject content for student learning in a classroom situation. Research on understanding teaching has downplayed the framing of macro-regulative contexts in shaping teachers' thinking and thereby pedagogy. Vygotsky [75; 76] brought to focus the teacher's role in mediating learning in classrooms through the use of psychological tools but could not fully, in his lifespan, attend to the sociocultural contexts that impact those who work within them. To address this gap, the study draws on the educational sociologist Bernstein's social theory [9; 10] which states that the ways in which institutions regulate the social relations within them impact the pedagogic practices in these contexts. A qualitative multicase study was applied and involved several English and mathematics secondary school teachers from Oxfordshire, England. The cross-case analysis reveals a connection between the micro-processes of teaching and learning and macro regulative discourse; demonstrates that teachers' pedagogic decisions are influenced by their reflections on their institutional culture within which and using which they work; and reveals an interplay of several processes in the ways in which teachers mediate and shape the quality of their students' learning.

Keywords: mediation, subject content transformation, teaching and learning, Bernstein's social theory, Vygotsky.

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Introduction

This study examines the mediational role that teachers play in transforming the subject content to engage students in their learning of academic concepts. The study was conducted in secondary schools in Oxfordshire, England, United Kingdom and provides an insight into an interrelation between micro-processes of teaching and learning and macro-regulative discourse in shaping the quality of teaching. Research has captured the notion of quality of teaching by looking into classroom subject pedagogy [3; 46; 68; 72; 74; 83] and into sociocultural contexts of teaching [4; 5; 45; 84]. However, these studies have neglected the framing of institutional contexts and have therefore downplayed a relationship between classroom pedagogy and institutional discourse. Research has also explored the concept of teaching through different practices prevalent in teaching; research in reflective practice is more on beginning teachers and reveals how such practices help them in gaining expertise [41; 51; 52; 61]; research in formative assessment in schools highlights the prominence of teachers’ assessment of student learning [11; 12; 71; 81] rather than peer- or self-assessment [54; 71]; and lastly, research in daily teaching and learning from sociocultural perspectives shows a sporadic presence in the literature [14; 30; 70] and calls for more evidence. To address these gaps, this study sought to answer the main research question — How do teachers transform the subject content to support student learning in classrooms? The study adopts a Vygotskian view of teachers’ role in subject content transformation and looks into texts in the literature that guide a response to this central question.

Teaching subject content from sociocultural perspective

Vygotsky’s reference to the relationship between the students’ everyday experiences and abstract concepts
through the use of psychological tools and to the role of the knowledgeable other in merging that understanding involves three things interrelated and relevant to the study: the use of tasks as mediating tools; the role of knowledgeable other, that is the teacher and peers in mediating learning within the ZPD; and the relationship of tasks and ZPD in the students’ conceptual progression in learning. “Tasks form the basic treatment unit in classrooms” [23] in terms of leading students to selectively derive from their experiences and acquire information and operations required to accomplish the tasks [23]. Recently, researchers [25; 58; 65; 68; 69] have again called attention to subject tasks; taking clues from their work, an academic task must involve both dialogic (interaction with peers and a teacher as others) and dialectic (task as other; external activity reflected in the internal consciousness) processes that assist students gain insights into the thinking of others and into their own. The role of the teacher then lies in building a relationship between the psychological and social, the key tenet of Vygotsky’s work by means of practices that matter in culture [25; 63; 69; 79]. The studies [2; 13; 20; 40; 47; 70] demonstrate how teachers’ use of tasks accompanied by initiated classroom dialogue assisted them to guide and support their students’ learning.

Teachers’ knowledge, learning and expertise

Four other key areas relevant to the study include the following. Firstly, research on conceptualisation of teacher content knowledge has highlighted several types of knowledge that teachers use to function in their profession: the concept of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) [64] incorporates both understanding of the structure of the subject matter (content knowledge) and teacher’s pedagogy, that is, ways to represent the subject content to maximise its comprehensibility for student learning; curricular knowledge [64] refers to the curriculum, guidelines and resources that the government and the school provide to the teachers; knowledge of self and knowledge of learners [74]; PCK as a collection of teacher professional constructions that constitute knowledge of teaching specific topics that an experienced teacher builds and accumulates [36]; and personal practical knowledge, a notion captures the idea of experience in the way we refer to teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons [18], which takes the form of images, metaphors [16; 19], emotional aspects [35] and beliefs that determine teachers’ actions in class that shape teaching and learning [41; 45; 72].

Secondly, different authors view reflective practice differently. For Dewey, education has a social function that requires transformation of the quality of experience whereby the immature becomes mature [21]. Schön draws attention to the notions of reflection-in-action which involves the teacher learning in the situation the emerging problems in students’ understanding of the content, and reflection-on-action which includes drawing from experiences after the action is over and addressing the unresolved problems [62]. Such reflections, according to Connelly & Clandinin, become part of the personal practical histories of teachers that shape their beliefs and have the possibility of informing their future course of action in the classroom [18]. Korthagen gives prominence to changes that emerge from teachers’ being [41], and Freire focuses on transforming practice in which the teachers play a crucial role from shifting from a banking concept of education to an emancipatory approach to education [31; 32].

Thirdly, research has identified three conditions for effective formative assessment (FA), and these are: the quality of interaction [11]; students’ involvement in active learning; and the teachers’ use of tasks that interest students [81]. Teachers’ use of task and dialogue might involve students in self-assessment or peer assessment [81]. However, such kind of assessment is more common in higher education [33; 54] than school education [71].

Lastly, over time, research on teacher expertise has undergone changes. From viewing teacher expertise as something stable [7; 26; 29; 37; 55; 59; 67; 73; 74] to viewing it as continually working on problematising daily routines [6]; as stagewise learning over time [1; 24; 26]; as embedded in teachers’ beliefs about their students’ learning [3; 49; 72]; and to adaptive nature of teacher expertise [84] that partially connects teacher expertise with the time period view of it, which is problematic as sociocultural contexts are implicitly referred to changing political contexts and education policies that a teacher might have experienced during 10–15 years of teaching and might have worked with almost all situations [34].

Theoretical framework

In examining the micro and macro processes involved in classroom teaching and learning, the study utilised several interrelated sociocultural concepts. Firstly, Vygotsky is interested in development as mediated process. For him, the relationship between psychological tool and behaviour has serious implications for instruction. There are two faces of mediation that assist in enhancing the child’s performance: by human assistance and by introducing mediating tools [15]. Vygotsky defined the role of the human mediator in his Genetic Law of Cultural Development [75], according to which human cognition is inherently social; transformation happens when other-regulation is changed to self-regulation. The former involves activities mediated by other people or cultural artefacts, while the latter involves appropriation and reconstruction of the cultural artefacts to regulate or own activities. Secondly, influenced by Vygotsky’s work, the concept of figured worlds [38] helps in understanding how an individual participates in the culture in which he or she is positioned to turn it around to make way for oneself as a knowledgeable and committed person; it calls for higher order organisation of one’s thought; and involves processes by which human beings as both collective and individual move from one social and cultural reality to
another. Hence, such worlds have developmental histo-
ry; intentionality in their use; are attributed with some
meaning and are both a material and concept [17; 38; 39;
75; 78]. Thirdly, Vygotsky’s work was concerned with the
micro teaching and learning processes. However, it
does not refer to how institutions (schools) regulate
learning, shapes the way in which individuals (teach-
ers) work within them. This aspect was addressed by
Bernstein who was concerned with “the general prin-
ciples underlying the transformation of knowledge into
pedagogic communication” [9, p. 25] through the pro-
cess of recontextualisation which he suggested, “ selec-
tively appropriates, relocates, refocus and relates other
discourses to constitute its own order” [9, p. 33]. How-
ever, such a structure of transfer that Bernstein focused
on is “unidirectional transmission of influence from in-
titution to individual” [80, p. 259] and runs the risk of
obviating the active agent, a teacher with a specific role
in the classrooms and in taking the guidelines forward,
from the process [80]. Fourthly, deriving from Rosen-
blatt’s theory of transaction, which states that there is
always some kind of transaction that goes on during the
reading event in which meaning is constructed between
the reader and the text, between the individual and the
society [56], I view teaching as a meaning making pro-
cess which includes teachers as readers and writers,
reading the classroom dialogue as text and writing that
as an understanding derived from such a reading as an
internal text. Lastly, deriving from research on reflec-
tive practice [18; 62], the teachers utilise the classroom
transaction as a psychological tool for their profession-
al discourses [9]. The data showed instances of vertical
discourse, which reflected the teachers’ hierarchical posi-
tion, implying its relation to the degree of control that a
teacher might have.

Methodology

A qualitative multicase study was employed to exam-
ine several cases in diverse settings [48; 50; 66] with an
aim to study the phenomenon exhibited by the cases [66].

Participants and data collection

Eight teachers, four each of English and mathematics,
were observed from five different schools in Oxfordshire,
England. They were selected based on their consistent
performance over three years or more and recognised for
their exemplary work by their school community [53].
The data were collected in three stages for each les-
on observed. These stages include: Think aloud proto-
col before the delivery of the lesson in which the teach-
ers were asked to think concurrently while planning

Data analysis

The data were transcribed and organised into a single
document with 2–3 complete lessons per teacher. Then
narratives of teaching and learning were written that
included teachers’ reasoning during lesson planning and
in-the-moment decision making; these were then them-
atically coded. Both narratives of lessons and themat-
ic coding were used during within-case and cross-case
analysis; the latter will be discussed in this article.

School descriptions and contexts that emerged dur-
ing analysis led to framing boundaries of description
using Bernstein’s sociological theory, the principles of
classification and framing [8]. Classification refers to
the boundary strength between what is classified while
framing refers to a message system of pedagogy, that is,
how interaction that takes place in a social relation will
be regulated. The framework of description was divided
into three parts, namely, Institutional Context, Teacher
and Classroom Practice, with further subparts (tab. 1
and tab. 2, which is an example of Framework of De-
scription from an English teacher, Linda). Bernstein, in
his analysis of discourse, referred to horizontal and verti-
cal discourses [9]. The data showed instances of vertical
discourse that reflected the teachers’ hierarchical posi-
tion, implying its relation to the degree of control that a
teacher might have.

School descriptions

The schools^ in which the participant teachers
worked formed the historical context of their teaching
and learning situation. The participant teachers taught
in secondary schools situated in different locations
in Oxfordshire, England: Spring Hill (Lisa, English
teacher) and Forest Lake Schools (Tyler and Jeffrey,
English teachers; Alex, maths teacher) were both locat-
ed in inner-city; Whitewater School (Justin, maths
teacher) was an academy, a sponsor-led school, situated
in a market town located in an area with high levels
of social and economic deprivation; Lakewood School
(Linda, English teacher) was an urban city all-girls’
secondary school converted into an academy; and Val-
ley View School (Lauren and Steve, maths teachers)
was a co-educational secondary school situated in an
outer-city school with students coming from both af-
fluent and economically deprived families.

Findings

The qualitative thematic cross-case analysis identi-
fied five themes that reflect how the participants played
a mediational role in subject content transformation.
Task design

The data analysis indicated that the participants engaged in teaching and learning in three phases involving inquiry, organising and managing, which, in combination, involves six elements of task design (tab. 3). The inquiring phase includes context and intentions. Example, Linda, in teaching poetry to top set Year 9 students to structure their response to a GCSE type question, uses the success criteria in the form of three medals: "We have bronze, silver, golds, and the idea is that whatever they [students] do in the lesson, they'll get somewhere. They'll get a medal" (Linda, during lesson planning).

The next phase involves organising intentions which includes teachers’ use of figured worlds and selection of artefacts, which is the use of resources drawn from various sources and used to conceptualise the pedagogical approach. Example, Lauren, a mathematics teacher, in teaching "Bearings" to her Year 7 students at Valley View School, used...
different websites: the one recommended by her department (STEM) and the other on her own accord (Diagnostic Questions) to engage the students with misconceptions.

The third phase is an extension of the organising phase and involves the management of task execution: involves making learning objectives known to students either explicitly or implicitly and includes task distribution, instruction and time management. Example, Tyler managed teaching the concept of immigration when teaching American poetry from 1840s to 1940s in a forty-minute lesson. He used three poems that would help him put the novel (The Great Gatsby) that the students were reading for the term on the “historical continuum” and provide them with different perspectives about the concept: “I deliberately picked three examples, one very pro-immigration, one very anti-immigration and one from the perspective of an immigrant” (Tyler, during the interview). He formed three groups, assigned one poem to each group to analyse in detail and instructed them to give a quick reading to the other two poems. The students were required to share their critical reading during whole class discussions. He gave students a space to lead their learning, both by presenting their analysis and adding their critique to discussions, as per his school policy.

**Practices of formative assessment**

Task design paved the way for teachers to practice formative assessment (FA). The teachers created opportunities for themselves to know their students’ thinking, where their students were in their learning of concepts, or of any cognitive conflict through the use of tasks. The participants employed several tools of FA (as shown in tab. 4).

**Recontextualisation**

Recontextualisation can be defined in terms of the ways in which the participant teachers framed, reworded or provided a different situation of a similar example of the content so that their students were able to form a conceptual understanding of it (as shown in tab. 5).

The theme is closely related to the theme of FA. Having used different ways of FA to identify learning gaps and misconceptions, the teachers then used these methods (tab. 4) to recontextualise the subject content for student learning. Learning gap here refers to the distance between teachers’ intentions for students’ learning and where the students were in relation to that. Misconceptions refer to the existence of erroneous understanding or an idea that makes sense to the student but is faulty. In responding to gaps or misconceptions,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Six Elements of Task Design</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Intention</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figured world</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Selection of artefacts</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning objective</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task distribution, instruction and time management</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practices of Formative Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moving around the classroom</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asking questions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborative problem-solving</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other ways of assessment</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transporting students into a different context or physical reality and assigning them a

Teachers divide a lengthy task into smaller manageable steps and give critical information
direct the students to something particular to make them think differently about a

Teachers’ statements or narrations giving out critical information or revealing facts, giving

Teachers provide an example of a response either by working along with the students or by giving them an example to imitate or by giving them an example of a similar situation that students are required to accomplish.

Provide suggestions for thinking

Provide suggestions for thinking

Direct the students to something particular to make them think differently about a situation or a problem; might be phrased as a question.

Students recontextualise the content

Students’ verbalisations serve as a means of re-explanation of the content at hand for other students as well as for the teacher. These verbalisations are in the form of individuals summarising their understanding of the content or students’ collective interpretation of the content.

Ways of Recontextualisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways of Recontextualisation</th>
<th>Teachers’ explanations</th>
<th>Creating imaginative situations</th>
<th>Drawing connections</th>
<th>Breaking into smaller steps</th>
<th>Provide a model response</th>
<th>Provide suggestions for thinking</th>
<th>Students recontextualise the content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ explanations</td>
<td>Teachers’ statements or narrations giving out critical information or revealing facts, giving details or describing situations; rephrasing students’ responses.</td>
<td>Transporting students into a different context or physical reality and assigning them a different role in it.</td>
<td>Assisting students in making connections between different parts of texts, among different responses from their peers; assisting them in reflecting on their own responses by rephrasing their verbalisations.</td>
<td>Teachers divide a lengthy task into smaller manageable steps and give critical information about a concept in parts.</td>
<td>Teachers provide an example of a response either by working along with the students or by giving them an example to imitate or by giving them an example of a similar situation that students are required to accomplish.</td>
<td>Direct the students to something particular to make them think differently about a situation or a problem; might be phrased as a question.</td>
<td>Students’ verbalisations serve as a means of re-explanation of the content at hand for other students as well as for the teacher. These verbalisations are in the form of individuals summarising their understanding of the content or students’ collective interpretation of the content.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Reflective practices

The teachers reflected for designing tasks, reflected while teaching, and reflected on the teaching and learning that took place (as shown in tab. 6). A key finding was that a point of focus of their reflections was their students’ responses and their own teaching.

Reflective practice emerged as a constituent of continuous action and was intricately weaved into FA and recontextualisation that, at times, it was difficult to segregate it from the other two themes; it also informs knowledge base and influences task design.

Knowledge base

This theme differs from the previous four in that that teachers use and build on their knowledge base while designing tasks, when making formative assessments, when recontextualising the content and when they reflect on their thinking. Hence, teachers draw on and from their existing knowledge base and further assimilate new pedagogical experiences. The different types of knowledge bases are presented in tab. 7.

There exists an intricate relationship between the five themes that emerged from the data analysis. For instance, recontextualisation is a consequence of FA; reflective practice sometimes works in between FA and recontextualisation, sometimes occurs after the classroom situation where in teachers might reflect on their teaching, and sometimes comes before the classroom situation when teachers reflect on their thinking in designing tasks; and, finally, in engaging with several pedagogical processes, teachers continuously draw from their knowledge base and add to it and thus contribute towards their own personal growth of practice.

Reflective Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflective Practice</th>
<th>Ways of Recontextualisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Practice</td>
<td>Teachers’ explanations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections on students’ understanding of the subject content</td>
<td>Teachers’ statements or narrations giving out critical information or revealing facts, giving details or describing situations; rephrasing students’ responses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections on the challenges interpreted for future planning</td>
<td>Transporting students into a different context or physical reality and assigning them a different role in it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-assessment: Self-critique for their own teaching</td>
<td>Assisting students in making connections between different parts of texts, among different responses from their peers; assisting them in reflecting on their own responses by rephrasing their verbalisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To ascertain their beliefs</td>
<td>Teachers divide a lengthy task into smaller manageable steps and give critical information about a concept in parts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To promote their beliefs</td>
<td>Teachers provide an example of a response either by working along with the students or by giving them an example to imitate or by giving them an example of a similar situation that students are required to accomplish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To reinforce their beliefs</td>
<td>Direct the students to something particular to make them think differently about a situation or a problem; might be phrased as a question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To challenge their beliefs</td>
<td>Students’ verbalisations serve as a means of re-explanation of the content at hand for other students as well as for the teacher. These verbalisations are in the form of individuals summarising their understanding of the content or students’ collective interpretation of the content.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

The analyses conducted in this study focused on the mediational role that teachers, whether of English or mathematics, play in supporting their students in their learning. Teachers continually engage with pedagogical processes represented as four intertwined or interconnected phases (fig. 1).

The phases are discussed as follows:

**Phase One: Reflect on their personal sense of experiences**

The first phase of subject content transformation involved the teachers working by means of a regulatory discourse of the institution and by drawing from several resources in making classroom teaching and learning decisions. Their knowledge base ranged from their personal sense of experiences as a student in school, university or as a teacher trainee to their personal sense of experiences as a teacher, which includes a combination of several sources: their understanding of their institutional demands defined in the form of “good teaching” processes along with their sense of their past diverse experiences inclusive of their knowledge of pedagogical structures; knowledge about students; their beliefs about teaching and learning; their interaction with others, for instance their colleagues, mentors, professors, tutors, school teachers, students, literature and subject websites. The sources, in combination, form the contextual element, one of the six elements of Task Design. The teachers, thus, worked by drawing from several resources in making classroom teaching and learning decisions which aligns with previous studies [18; 64; 72; 74] and also by means of regulatory discourse of the institution which this study demonstrates.

**Phase Two: Design tasks and build figured worlds**

The second phase included designing tasks; this phase works in tandem with the first phase. In designing tasks, teachers fostered a balance between their situatedness and their intentions for students’ learning. Teachers used tasks to introduce concepts and start the learning activity. The teachers framed the tasks in a specific way to prompt their students to think in a particular direction or at a certain aspect, thus, implying that they not only attached their intentions to the tasks they assigned, but they also purposefully steer their students’ reflections and influence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers’ Knowledge Base</th>
<th>Knowledge of context The intricate link between institutional demand, departmental policy, SoW and national examinations.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge about students Teachers’ knowledge about students’ interests, their learning difficulties, their prior learning or cumulative learning, their learning in other subjects and their collective characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge from interaction with the other Teachers’ knowledge acquired over time in relation to their interactions with others in the teaching community: their colleagues; their academic tutors; their own teachers when they were at school; their students; their reading of the literature; and their memberships to various teaching websites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of self Their beliefs about teaching and learning or about the subject they teach, their feelings, their identity as knowledgeable persons or of their roots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of pedagogical structures Teachers’ knowledge of the type of inquiry or cultural practice with which to engage students in their learning of subject content.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Fig. 1. Process of Subject Content Transformation (PSCT)](image-url)
their selection process [23; 25; 56]. For instance, one of
the mathematics teachers, Steve, had given a "calculate the
power" task to the students, he intended that they under-
stand the Base 10 system and eventually use that to reflect
on their thinking to understand the other base systems.

The study extends the application of the concept of fig-
ured worlds [38] as proposed in anthropology to daily teach-
ing and learning situations. In a teaching and learning situ-
ation, *figured worlds* functioned in two ways: as mediational
means for teachers to get through an inherent contradiction
of teaching subject content to their students; they also serve
as psychological tools to invite students as critics to enter
into a new physical reality in order for them to contribute
toward their own learning of subject content. Such imagi-
nary situations provided them with an opportunity to vi-
sualise the way they want to see their students engage with
the tasks; think of the groups or individuals that they will
have to reach out first; give them access to possible students’
responses to tasks and think ahead of the ways in which they
might respond to those responses; and prepare for an unex-
pected contingency when they might think of changing or
modifying their plan. The use of figured worlds thus assisted
teachers in creating relative experiences for their students
for them to think about and think against. In this way, the
experiences created functioned as both external and inter-
 nal, that is, coming from the authority of a teacher and used
as psychological tools to mediate students’ learning [76; 77],
and whereby the students were able to make some form of
connection or relation between their daily regularities or ex-
periences with new knowledge presented to them [21; 56].

**Phase Three: Involve and engage in transaction,**
**formative assessment and recontextualisation**

In this phase, teachers implement the tasks designed
and enact figured worlds. The teachers in this phase were
highly involved in their students’ learning, and that was
where the concept of the ZPD [75] became evident. ZPD
functioned both as a diagnostic tool and a means to under-
stand the development of academic or abstract concepts.
The question then is how teachers assess their students’
learning of abstract concepts and their higher order psy-
chological processes. This research demonstrates that the
way the teachers designed the tasks as material and con-
cept [17] accompanied by social interaction between teach-
er and students and among students, gave the teachers the
scope to formatively assess their students’ progress in learn-
ing [25; 69]. The interaction around tasks provided scope
to the teachers to start with the reading and writing processes
[56], reading the text of students’ responses and making
sense of that to be able to recontextualise their students’
thinking. The teachers used different practices of FA (Tab
3) to assess where their students were in their learning and
think about what needs to be done as a consequence — in
terms of explanations, further questioning, making them
think on a certain aspect or use more tasks; assist their
students toward their potential level of development [75];
and how they might adapt their teaching to meet their stu-
dents’ learning needs [11; 12]. In doing so, teachers drew
from their past similar experiences or from their repertoire
of resources to reflect upon the learning needs of their stu-
dents. Peer assessment and student self-assessment were
not common amongst the teachers [71], except in the case
of Linda, where the routine need of student self-assessment
came from top-down in the form of success criteria.

Furthermore, social institutions, which are schools in
this study, impacted the work of teachers [10] by providing
them with schemes of work and guidelines of the “good”
ways of teaching (Phase one). The process of recontextu-
alisation, however, does not end with SoW. Rather teach-
ers add to these schemes their knowledge and intentions to
design tasks (Phase two) and, thereby, further impact the
content that the students learn and their learning experi-
ences; which, in turn, creates ripples of discourse and estab-
lish a culture of learning, the kind of teaching valued (Phase
three). In the light of the new understanding of the concept
of recontextualisation, combining both linguistic [43] and
sociological aspects [9; 10], I define the term “recontextu-
alisation” in terms of (a) directionality: recontextualisation
is bi-directional as that involves both teachers and students
as active participants in the learning process and in shaping
the content; and which involves teachers as active partici-
pants in shaping the content by reflecting upon their inten-
tions and pedagogic decisions (b) revisitation: recontextu-
alisation is a way in which the teachers assist their students
to form a conceptual understanding of the subject content
by revisiting the same concept using a different context or
different choice of words with similar context.

**Phase Four: Assess classroom teaching**
**and learning experience**

In this phase, the teachers made assessments about stu-
dents’ progress and their own teaching based on their reflec-
tions on their interactions with their students. In this sense,
the findings align with the notions of reflection-in-action
and reflection-on-action [62] and with the concept of per-
sonal practical knowledge [18] that the teachers build over
time through their reflections on their classroom experienc-
es. The teachers assessed the progress of their students and
their future needs; they reflected on their beliefs and either
further cemented those or reviewed those; and critically self-
evaluated their teaching based on their performance in the
classroom. However, the analyses also revealed that teach-
ers reflected in further ways than suggested in research [62].
The teachers reflected while designing action as well and
which can be termed as reflection-for-action. The teachers
reflected before entering the teaching and learning situa-
tion, that is, when they think of their intentions for students’
learning of scientific concepts, imagine the way action might
unfold, think of pedagogical structures they might use or
think of ways in which to balance their beliefs, teaching of
subject content and institutional regulatory policy.

Hence, PSTCT involves a continuous flow of thought
formation and transactional action amidst different phas-
es; and it is not sequential in nature. Phase One and Phase
Two work together, backward and forward. Task design
and figured worlds created in Phase Two are enacted in
Phase Three. In Phase Three, which is a teaching and
learning situation, teachers reflect on their personal sense
of experiences (Phase One) for making in-the-moment
decisions; sometimes, they also think of the tasks (Phase
Two) they might have to introduce in their subsequent
lessons when reflecting on their students’ responses. In
Phase four, teachers use their interactions with their students in Phase Three to assess their teaching. Such assessments then become a part of their personal sense of experiences (Phase One) and which they also use to design tasks. Teachers are thus involved in continuous action and reflection on their own teaching to derive from to support their students' learning of academic concepts.

Conclusion

The study contributes towards an understanding of teachers' mediational role in supporting their students' learning by providing a model of the four phases of Process of Subject Content Transformation (PSCT). The model highlights the intertwining aspect of several elements, highlighting the ways in which the teachers mediate and shape the quality of learning for their students. The elements are previously known in research; however, these are presented mainly as separate entities. This study demonstrates that the teachers engaged and were involved with several pedagogic processes in unison and not piecemeal in supporting their students in learning the academic concepts.

The study has several implications for different stakeholders. Firstly, for teacher educators to consider exposing their student teachers to various theoretical stances to create possibilities for them. Secondly, for teachers to think of the demands of the institutions in which they work and how they might use that knowledge in shaping teaching and learning. Thirdly, for schools to step back, rethink and re-question their role as an authority in creating affordances or constraints through the artefacts that they provide to their teachers. Lastly, for researchers to risk combining different theoretical perspectives and ways of analysis to explore a phenomenon of their interest. Further research may examine the four phases of PSCT in the light of understanding teaching across contexts, the number of years of teaching experience and teaching online. The studies focusing on task design have a high potential in throwing further light on teachers’ thinking processes.

References


Трансформация предметного содержания сквозь призму психологии и социологии: исследование в графстве Оксфордшир (Великобритания)

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В настоящей работе, с опорой на психологическое и социологическое знание, исследуется то, как учителя трансформируют предметное содержание для учеников в ситуации урока. В научной литературе, посвященной преподаванию, уделяется недостаточно внимания тому, какую роль играют макроконтексты в формировании мышления учителя и, следовательно, в педагогике в целом. Выготский поместил в фокус научного рассмотрения ту опосредующую функцию, которую берет на себя учитель в процессе школьного обучения, используя различные психологические орудия, однако он не успел более глубоко изучить влияние социокультурных контекстов, в рамках которых осуществляется учебное взаимодействие. Чтобы восполнить этот пробел, мы обратились к работам социального теоретика и специалиста по социологии образования Б. Бернштейна: он утверждает, что способы, которыми институты регулируют социальные отношения внутри себя, неизбежно влияют на педагогические практики в данных контекстах. Далее было проведено исследование множества конкретных случаев (multicase study) из практики учителей английского языка и математики, работающих в средних школах графства Оксфордшир (Великобритания). Комплексный анализ случаев обнаружил связь между микропроцессами обучения и макроконтекстом. Также показано, что на педагогические решения, принимаемые учителями, влияет их собственное восприятие институциональной культуры, в рамках которой — и средствами которой — они осуществляют свою деятельность. Наконец, анализ высветил взаимосвязь между несколькими способами, которыми учителя опосредуют и направляют процесс обучения своих учеников.

Ключевые слова: опосредование, трансформация предметного содержания, обучение, социальная теория Бернштейна, Выготский.

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