



The Impact of English Language Proficiency on Students' Employment in College Vocational Education

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Abstract

With the increasingly clear employment orientation of colleges and universities, English language proficiency has become an important factor affecting the employment quality and job matching of higher vocational students. However, the existing English teaching methods generally have problems such as weak practice links, detached course content from market demand, and insufficient school-enterprise collaboration, which makes it difficult to effectively support the improvement of students' comprehensive employment ability. To this end, this paper introduces the integration strategy of "practice-oriented teaching + artificial intelligence language learning tools + school-enterprise collaboration platform" and constructs a reform path for higher vocational English teaching that emphasizes both intelligence and application, so as to improve students' language application ability and workplace adaptability in real contexts. By setting up a teaching intervention experiment, the change indicators of students in the five language abilities of "listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating", employment ability dimensions, job matching rate, and salary level are collected. The research results show that after the teaching intervention, the average English ability of the experimental group students increased by 14-18 points, and the employment rate increased by 11.7%. In addition, the frequency of job English applications increased by 23.3%, which is significantly better than the control group, verifying the positive role of the integration strategy in improving the effectiveness of English teaching and promoting students' high-quality employment.

Keywords

Higher Vocational English Teaching; Practical Ability Training; Employment Ability Improvement

1. Introduction

As the process of global economic integration continues to accelerate, English, as an international common language, has become increasingly prominent in the modern workplace. Especially in industries such as business, services, foreign trade, and technical support, English language proficiency has become one of the important indicators for measuring the employment competitiveness of college graduates. For higher vocational education, its core goal is

to cultivate applied talents with strong professional skills and practical work ability. However, in the current higher vocational English teaching, there are common problems such as the disconnection between course content and job requirements, outdated teaching methods, and insufficient application of language skills, which seriously restrict students' employment adaptability and development potential.

To this end, this paper takes higher vocational students as the research object, constructs and implements an English teaching intervention path that integrates "practical teaching, intelligent technology assistance, and school-enterprise collaborative education", and systematically evaluates the impact of this path on students' language ability, professional soft power, and actual employment performance. Through empirical data comparison, this paper aims to explore the internal logic between English teaching and professional ability, and further provide theoretical support and practical reference for the optimization of the higher vocational English curriculum system and employment-oriented teaching reform.

2. Related Work

In recent years, with the acceleration of globalization and the continuous evolution of educational technology, the research on the relationship between language proficiency and students' employability and academic performance has gradually increased, forming a number of research perspectives and empirical findings worthy of attention.

Minh and Tien (2024) explored the key factors that affect the overseas employment of students from the Department of Business Administration of the University of Food Industry, including language ability, soft and hard skills, attitude and adaptability, etc., aiming to help students plan their career development in advance and provide a basis for the adjustment of higher education direction. Bo et al. (2023) found in a study of 514 Singaporean college students that English proficiency can still significantly predict current GPA (Grade Point Average) after controlling for previous grades, enhances the connection between previous grades and current performance, and the subject type plays a marginal regulatory role. Barrot (2024) studied the application value of OpenAI's conversational artificial intelligence ChatGPT in language learning, pointing out that it has the advantages of personalization, immersion, and instant feedback, and is suitable as a supplementary tool for traditional classroom teaching. Ho et al. (2023) found through a follow-up survey of Vietnamese students before and after internships that career development learning significantly improved students' perception of employability, among which academic capital and cultural capital played a mediating role. Paragae (2023) pointed out that innovative teaching strategies should be student-centered, emphasizing their active construction of knowledge in real contexts. Common models include collaborative learning, problem-based learning, and project-based learning. Moqbel and Al-Kadi (2023) believed that, in the context of artificial intelligence, tools such as ChatGPT bring new opportunities for foreign language learning, but the traditional "teaching-testing" evaluation system has been difficult to fully measure students' true abilities.

Although existing research has revealed the important role of language proficiency in academic and employment performance, it has mostly focused on the impact of a single variable and lacks a systematic discussion of the practical paths of teaching reform and its comprehensive effects.

3. Method

3.1 Strengthening Practice-oriented English Teaching Design

In higher vocational education, students' practical ability plays a decisive role in their career development. English teaching should not only be limited to the imparting of classroom knowledge but also focus on the cultivation of students' language application ability in real contexts. To this end, teachers need to focus on the integration of theory and practice in the teaching process, not only reasonably design the content of teaching materials but also promote classroom extension and expansion activities. Inquiry-based learning methods should be actively introduced in teaching, and with the help of various digital platforms and auxiliary tools, such as English learning software and online interactive platforms, students are encouraged to conduct independent and cooperative learning, so as to improve their comprehensive abilities in vocabulary, grammar, expression, etc. At the same time, students should be encouraged to go off campus and participate in language practice in actual work scenarios, such as participating in corporate internships, business negotiation assistance, data translation, etc., to strengthen their ability to solve practical problems in English.

3.2 Establishing a Globalized School-Enterprise Collaborative Education Mechanism

As a highly practical subject, Business English requires students to have the ability to flexibly apply language knowledge to the workplace. At present, higher vocational colleges generally face the problem of a lack of practical resources and backward facilities in talent training. In order to break this bottleneck, schools should take the initiative to expand in-depth cooperation with enterprises, jointly build training bases, and formulate student internship plans so that students can directly receive professional training in language skills in enterprises. In addition, schools can also introduce enterprise expert resources to carry out employment guidance lectures, special seminars, project practice, and other activities, so that students can get in touch with the real workplace environment earlier and understand the specific application scenarios of English in various positions. Through this school-enterprise linkage mechanism, not only is the professional quality of students improved, but also a platform is provided for enterprises to cultivate and absorb application-oriented talents with language advantages.

3.3 Optimize English Course Content to Meet Market Demand

At present, there is a disconnect between the content of English courses in colleges and universities and the actual needs of the employment market. In order to improve the adaptability of the course, the content of English teaching needs to be reformed around "practicality", and practical modules such as workplace English and industry English should be integrated into traditional basic English teaching, such as business communication, international market exchanges, foreign trade correspondence, etc. In terms of teaching methods, the auxiliary role of multimedia and information technology should be fully utilized, and the interactive and interesting teaching should be enhanced with the help of graphics and text, audio, and video, so as to improve student participation. Studies have shown that when students learn a language under the coordinated stimulation of multiple channels, such as vision, hearing, and language expression, their learning efficiency is significantly improved. In addition, the curriculum setting should extend to dimensions such as humanistic literacy, professional ethics, and psychological quality on the basis of focusing on language ability, so as to achieve a balance between knowledge transfer and quality education, and lay a comprehensive ability foundation for students to enter the workplace.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Experimental Subjects

- (1) Experimental group: two classes of business English majors in a vocational college, about 60 people, using the optimized teaching intervention program.
- (2) Control group: two classes of similar majors in the same grade, about 60 people, using the traditional English teaching model.

The backgrounds of all participants (such as English foundation and employment intention) are basically the same.

4.2 Experimental Cycle

Cycle: one full academic year (two semesters)

Phase division:

Preliminary preparation (1 month): evaluation, grouping, teacher training

Teaching intervention and follow-up (8 months)

Employment tracking and evaluation (3 months)

4.3 Data Analysis

In order to comprehensively evaluate the actual effect of the teaching reform, this paper systematically analyzes data from multiple dimensions, including English proficiency, professional quality, and employment status in the early stages of graduation. The specific results are as follows.

After the experimental group receives the integrated teaching intervention of "practice orientation + intelligent assistance + school-enterprise collaboration", the five dimensions of their comprehensive English proficiency are significantly improved, with an average score increase of 13.6 to 17.8 points, which is much higher than the slight

increase of about 4 points in the control group, indicating that the teaching reform intervention has a significant effect in improving students' practical English ability (as shown in Figure 1).

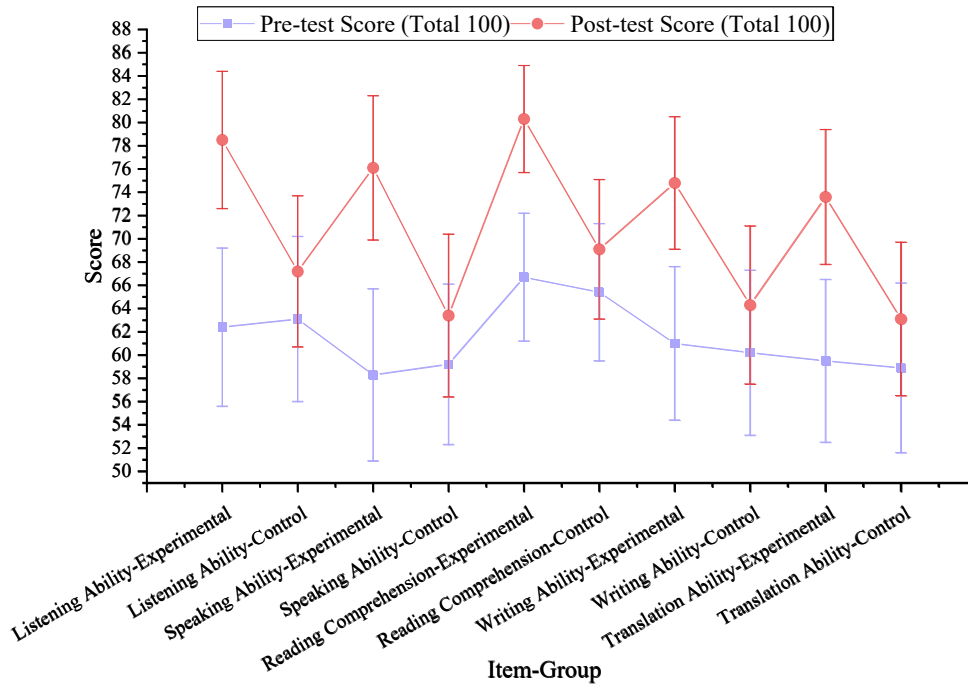


Figure 1. Comparison of English proficiency before and after the experimental group and the control group (mean ± standard deviation).

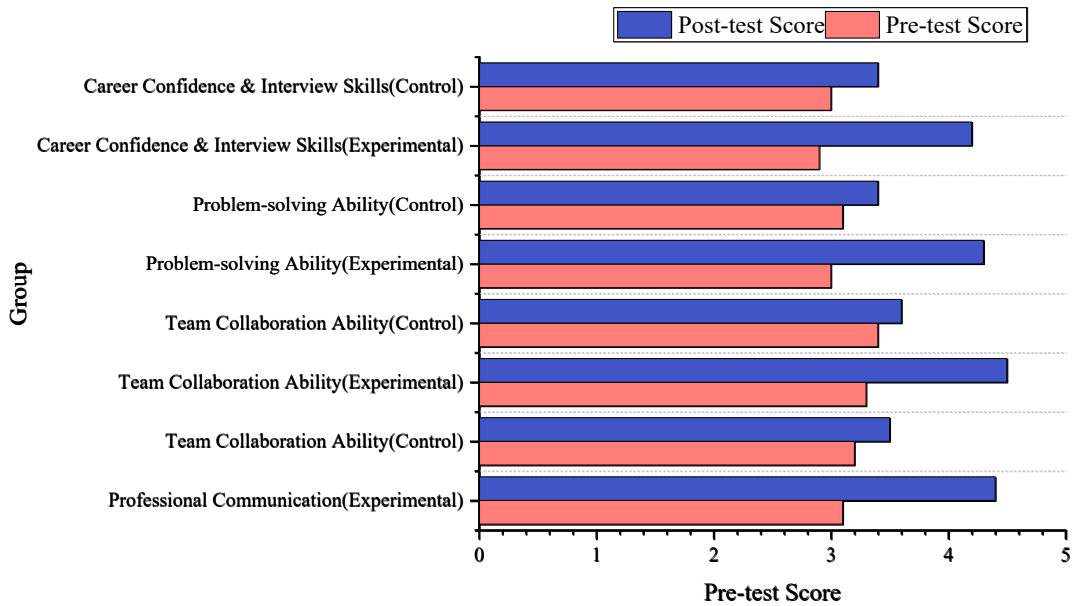


Figure 2. Changes in the scores of the employability dimension (full score 5 points).

The experimental group achieves a significant improvement of 1.2-1.3 points in the four dimensions of professional communication, teamwork, problem solving, professional confidence and job application ability, while the control group only improves by 0.2-0.4 points, indicating that the intervention measures integrating practical teaching and intelligent assistance not only improves students' language skills but also significantly enhances their comprehensive professional soft power. The improvement in professional communication ability, problem-solving ability, professional confidence, and job application ability is 1.3 points, which is the most outstanding, as shown in Figure 2.

Table 1. Comparison of employment within 3 months of graduation

Indicator	Experimental Group (60 people)	Control Group (60 people)
Number of Employed	54	47
Employment Rate	90%	78.30%
Average Monthly Salary (CNY)	6,430	5,820
Proportion of Major-Related Positions	81.50%	66.00%
Frequency of English Use in Position (High)	72.20%	48.90%

As can be seen from the data in Table 1, the experimental group that receives teaching intervention is significantly better than the control group that did not receive intervention in terms of core employment indicators such as employment rate, salary level, job matching rate and frequency of English use, which further proves the significant effect of the teaching model integrating practical teaching, intelligent tools and school-enterprise cooperation in promoting students' high-quality employment. Specifically, the employment rate of the experimental group reaches 90%, significantly higher than the 78.3% of the control group, indicating that the teaching intervention effectively enhanced the students' employment competitiveness. In addition, in terms of the frequency of job English use, the experimental group reaches a high frequency level of 72.2%, while the control group is only 48.9%, highlighting that integrated teaching can better adapt to and meet the current job requirements for practical language application ability.

5. Conclusion

This study focuses on the relationship between the reform of English teaching in higher vocational colleges and the improvement of students' employability, and focuses on the teaching model of "practice-oriented + intelligent assistance + school-enterprise collaboration". Through the experimental design of pre-test-teaching intervention-post-test, this study systematically examines the comprehensive impact of this model on students' English language ability and professional literacy. The results show that the experimental group has achieved significant improvements in the five abilities of English listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation, as well as professional communication, teamwork, problem solving, self-confidence, and other aspects. In the end, the experimental group performs better than the control group in key employment indicators such as employment rate, job matching, frequency of English use, and average salary. This result fully demonstrates that if the reform of English teaching is closely combined with the actual needs of the job, and the application scenarios and career orientation are strengthened, it can not only effectively improve language skills but also help students achieve high-quality employment. The sample range is mainly concentrated in specific regions and majors, and the extrapolation of the results still needs further verification. Future research can further expand the sample range, extend the intervention period, and combine multiple evaluation methods to conduct in-depth tracking and analysis of the impact of teaching reform on students' continued employment performance and career growth trajectory, so as to provide a more solid empirical basis and development direction for the continuous advancement of higher vocational English education reform.

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