

# DEVELOPMENT OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING APPROACH TO PROMOTE ORAL ENGLISH ABILITY OF VOCATIONAL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS



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## Abstract

The objectives of this research were 1) to examine the factors affecting oral English ability of vocational undergraduate students in Guangxi Province of China, 2) to develop project-based learning instructional model to promote oral English ability of vocational undergraduate students and 3) to study the results of project-based learning instructional model to promote oral English ability of undergraduate students. Phases were carried out to answer research objectives 1, 2, and 3. The population of Phase 1 were 96 sophomore students and 3 lecturers of workplace English course in semester 1 academic year 2023 from Guangxi Vocational University of Agriculture, Guangxi City Vocational University and from Nanning College for Vocational Technology. The target group of Phase 2 were 3 experts, and the sample group of Phase 3 were 32 students who enrolled in workplace English course of Guangxi Vocational University of Agriculture. The research instruments were 1) A set of questionnaires for students, and interview for lecturers, 2) A set of questionnaires for conformity instructional model, 3) Lesson plans using project-based learning instructional model, and 4) Scoring rubric form. Data analyzed by percentage, mean and standard deviation.

The results revealed the following. 1) The factors to promote oral English ability of vocational undergraduate students were the internal and external factors. The internal factors included language foundations like listening ability, grammatical and vocabulary level and students' level of interest, familiarity and knowledge about the topics and activities. The external factor included interesting and authentic oral activities, well-designed lesson plans and teachers' efficacy in oral skills and pedagogical knowledge, 2) The project-based learning approach to promote oral English ability in workplace English course of vocational undergraduate students included 5 components: (1) principle and rationale, (2) objectives, (3) contents, (4) method of teaching & materials and (5) evaluation. The model was 100% conformed to utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy standards as assessed by 3 specialists and, 3) After testing the research hypothesis, it can be found that the given treatment influences students' oral English ability at significance level 0.000. In addition, the overall developmental scores of individual students' oral English ability of total 6 dimensions are generally found at High level. There were 10 students or 31.25% of all students at "Very High" developmental level of oral English ability of total 6 dimensions; 18 students or 56.25% at "High" developmental level; 4 students or 12.50% at "Moderate" developmental level; No

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student or 0.00% at "Low" developmental level and the findings from interviews with lecturers in Guangxi, China, regarding factors influencing vocational undergraduate students' oral English ability. Most lecturers are female (66.67%), with over 9 years of teaching experience, primarily aged 36-49. Internal factors like teachers' knowledge, psychological state, and attitude significantly affect students' oral proficiency. Confidence, enthusiasm, and a student-centered approach are highlighted. External factors such as teaching methods, materials, and environment also play crucial roles. Practical, real-world content, diversified resources, and a relaxed classroom atmosphere are emphasized. Small class sizes, flexible seating, and access to necessary devices contribute to oral English development. The article underscores the importance of holistic teaching approaches and suggests providing teacher training and creating a positive learning atmosphere to enhance oral English education.

**Keywords:** Project-Based Learning, Oral English Ability, Vocational Undergraduate Students

## Introduction

Workplace English course is a kind of course belonging to English for Special Purpose (ESP) for non-English major college students. Based on the workplace scenarios, this course covers the English used in job hunting, job orientation and workplace communication, with the hope of enhancing students' ability to use English to communicate in professional area and workplace. It is a new course set in the third or fourth semester by many application-oriented universities and vocational universities in China nowadays, conforming to the vocational education reform taking place under the background of China's industrial upgrading and economic structure adjustment, which desperately needs hundreds of millions of high-quality workers and technical talents. According to the Guidelines on College English Teaching (2020) drawn up by the National Foreign Languages Teaching Advisory Board under the Ministry of Education, workplace English course plays an important role in meeting the national strategic needs and serve China's reform and opening policy and economic and social development, as well as satisfying students' needs of professional learning, work and employment. But the truth is that the current teaching effects of workplace English cannot meet the needs in workplace. Thereinto, many research show that the most serious problem is that students' speaking ability in the workplace leave much to be desired. "Reflections and Suggestions on English Teaching and Learning in Higher Vocational Education: Based on a Survey on the Status Quo and Reform Needs of Foreign Language Testing in Higher Vocational Colleges" reflects that the language skill students want to elevate most is oral English ability and both teachers and students all agree that oral English ability is the most useful skill for employment and career development (Cheng & Wu, 2017). "The Investigation and Analysis of the Status Quo and Needs of English Competence in the Workplace of China" (Wei, Wu & Zhuang, 2018) suggests that College English course should strengthen English speaking training for different businesses in the workplace. The project "Professional English Skills for Employability Across EU" funded by European Commission in 2020 also shows that speaking was considered one of the most important skills across the industries and businesses surveyed.

Speaking is one of the most important skills of all the four language skills because individuals who learn a language are referred to as the speakers of that language (Ur, 1996). Learning the speaking skill is the most important aspect of learning a second or foreign language and success is measured based on the ability to perform a conversation in the language (Nunan, 1995). Above all, as one of the productive language skills, speaking ability is the indicator that can best display students' real learning effects especially in this AI era when most language exercises and assignments can be easily searched and even completed through various applications like ChatGPT. Furthermore, as an essential tool for language teaching and learning, speaking can facilitate language acquisition and development (Goh, 2007), it helps learners develop their vocabulary and grammar skills and then better their writing skill (Leong, 2017). Finally, as one of the crucial facets of communication

competence, speaking is also supposed to be one of the most essential skills demanded by employees in the 21st Century. Spoken proficiency is necessary in any workplace and is expected by nearly every employer when considering new hires, especially for companies with foreign businesses. Learners who speak English very well can have greater chance for finding good jobs and getting promotion (Baker & Westup, 2003).

However, there are many issues existing in oral English teaching of workplace English course in China: 1) The curriculum setting overlooks the training of speaking ability in the workplace. In many colleges and universities, workplace English course still emphasizes on reading teaching, the training time for spoken English is far from adequate. 2) This skill is often ignored in some teachers' classes. Due to unfavorable teacher-student proportions and reduced class periods, learners do not have enough opportunity either in their classes or outside to speak English. 3) The activities and contents for oral practice of workplace English are not practical and real-world. Most activities are still daily English speaking, students tend to feel bored and useless, and eventually lack interest and motivation to speak up. 4) The teaching method is quite rigid and dated. Teacher-centered teaching approaches are still commonly used in workplace English course leading to embarrassing interaction and silent atmosphere in class. 5) The poor English foundation prevent students to express themselves. They lack confidence to speak in English due to the fear of being mocked by classmates and being scolded by lecturers. They don't know what to say and how to communicate, thus easily feel anxious and nervous, and tend to give up if the tasks assigned are difficult or not interesting (Cheng & Wu, 2017).

Therefore, we need a new learning approach to arouse students' interest and motivation, let them willing to speaking up and help them qualified with good communicate skills in the workplace in future. Project-based learning approach (PBL) is probably one of the ideal instructional modals to solve the problems as it is perfectly in accordance with the features and requirements of spoken teaching in Workplace English course. It is a teaching method in which students learn by actively engaging in real-world and personally meaningful projects. Many previous studies have confirmed that PBL is an effective approach to promoting the simultaneous acquisition of language, content and skills. According to Leaver & Stryker (1989) "students who work on projects show increased motivation and engagement in their studies". By designing interesting projects (e.g., a drama, a multimedia presentation or even a piece of poetry), students learning motivation will be stimulated and they will find English useful and have a fulfillment after completing a project (Kafai & Resnick, 1996; Worthy, 2000). PBL provides opportunities for the natural integration of all four skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing (Stoller, 2006). It is also proposed that PBL can complement the interaction potential of the second language classroom (Legutke & Thomas, 1991). Therefore, PBL will allow interaction, communication and participation in a student-centered class. It is a good option to have students practice their oral English ability because they must present the work product of their projects.

Scholars have also realized the importance of oral English ability for employment and career development and made some achievement from different directions in this field. Yan (2016) discussed the construct of communicative competence of English for professional purposes and found it comprises seven components: personal attributes, generic competence, language competence, internationalization knowledge, professional development competence, management competence and strategic competence. Luan & Zhao (2017) tried to make an oral proficiency scale of workplace English for Chinese students to assess students' oral English ability at the Workplace. Luan (2019) also studied the construct of oral communicative ability and held that it should involve four dimensions: language, coherence, communication focus and communication content. Scholars like Yang (2011) and Zuo (2014) advocate students to promote their oral English ability in workplace scenes. Feng (2017) tended to search effective ways to promote college students' oral English ability at workplace from three aspects: pronunciation training, intercultural communication competence and paralinguage at workplace communication.

However, the number of studies focusing on oral teaching in workplace English course is still insufficient, much less to be combined with the application of PBL approach. Limited bibliographic data prove that the implement of PBL in oral English teaching at colleges and universities achieve significant improvement in oral English ability as well as other aspects like learning motivation, learning initiative and cooperation ability (Zhang et al, 2016; Duan, 2017; Xu, 2021). It can be inferred that it is a new and worthy field needed scholars to conduct empirical studies. Therefore, this thesis attempts to do some work in filling the research gap and provide some suggestions to promote undergraduate students' oral English ability in vocational universities.

As the rationale shown above, the author realizes the importance of studying "Development of Project-Based Learning Approach to Promote Oral English Ability of Vocational Undergraduate Students".

## Objectives

1. To examine the factors affecting oral English ability of vocational undergraduate students.
2. To develop project-based learning approach for promoting oral English ability of vocational undergraduate students.
3. To study the results of project-based learning approach for promoting oral English ability of vocational undergraduate students.

## Material and Method

### Literature review

In the study of "Development of Project-Based Learning Approach to Promote Oral English Ability of Vocational Undergraduate Students", the researcher studied the documents concerning the following.

### Project-Based Learning

#### Background

PBL is not a new idea, which has roots dating back to the late 1960's and 1970's with open classroom theory and industrial education. The idea of PBL was first brought up by Barrows in medical education in 1980, and then widely applied by other disciplines. However, as a teaching and learning model, PBL did not gain its popularity in the educational circle until 1990s.

Adderley et al. (1975, p.1) provided the following definition for the project method, which is still a good definition after a quarter of a century: PBL is a learning activity which involves the solution of a problem and an end project-based product, and which develops students' initiative and problem-solving ability. According to Morgan (1983: p.166), PBL can be defined as an activity in which students develop an understanding of a topic or issue through some kind of involvement in an actual (or simulated) real-life problem or issue and in which they have some degree of responsibility in designing their learning activities.

Tremblay et al. (1990, p. 58-59) offered a working definition of a second language project: "A unit of work involving constructive thought and action in connection with learning, including a goal, a series of actions (activities or tasks) and a pre-defined sequence". To Duffy & Jonassen (1992) and Brook & Brooks (1993), PBL is a constructivist-based teaching method designed to encourage more engaged learning. Based on Bransford & Stein's (1993) definition, PBL is a holistic instructional approach to have students involved in persistent and cooperative investigations. Sarwar's (2000, p. 41) operational definition is as follows: "PBL is a voluntary collaborative or individual educational process initiated by a teacher to provide English as a foreign language learner a context for meaningful use of the target language outside the classroom." The Buck Institute for Education (BIE, 2003) defines

PBL as a teaching method in which students learn by actively engaging in real-world and personally meaningful projects.

Some Chinese scholars also offer their own definitions to PBL: PBL is focused on the concepts and principles of a research subject, which allows students to investigate and research for problem-solving by participating in a project. With it, students could construct their own knowledge system and apply it in the real world (Li, 2009). As stated above, it can be safely concluded that PBL, by departing from the three centers of traditional teaching – teacher-centered, curriculum-centered and class-centered, is a new approach that is students-centered, interdisciplinary, collaborative, self-inquisitive and closely related to the real world.

Heitman. (1996) classified motives for PBL into four rough categories: professional motives which are related to practice orientation and work-based learning, democratic or humanitarian motives which are related to humanistic studies, the motive to foster critical thinking and pedagogic motives to foster understanding of subject matter.

### **Theory**

#### **1. Dewey's Teaching Theory**

PBL has a long history. The idea that projects represent “learning by doing” certainly is not new (Dewey, 1933). In 1918, American educator Kilpatrick, Dewey's student, first advanced the concept of PBL. In his view, the project is conceived broadly as “whole-hearted purposeful activity proceeding in a social environment.” (Kilpatrick, 1918, p. 319)

Dewey emphasized that education should be a process closely connected with life experiences. His theory proposed that learning should not be isolated and passive but should be closely linked to real-life problems and experiences, enabling students to feel a direct connection between their learning and their lives. In this process, learning should be practical, interactive, and student-centered.

#### **2. Constructivism**

Constructivism is a new theory which originated from American education world in the 1980s. Constructivism, also called structuralism, was traced back to Piaget's works in 1960s and has been developed by Vygotsky, Glaserfeld and other constructivists.

According to Piaget's constructivism (1972), the individual gradually constructs his knowledge about the external world in the process of interaction with the surrounding environment, so to develop his own cognitive structure. That is, the factor determining environment. There are two basic processes involved in the interaction between the individual and its environment, namely assimilation and accommodation. Constructive nature of the learning process has always been the focus of Piaget's works. He assumed that individual's cognitive structure is gradually constructed and continuously enriched and developed in the process of assimilation and accommodation.

The psychologist Vygotsky developed social constructivism theory. He (1978) argues that all cognitive functions originate in, and must, therefore, be explained as products of social interactions and that learning is not simply the assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge by learners; it is the process by which learners are integrated into a knowledge community.

In 1980s, American educator Glasersfeld argues knowledge is actively constructed by the cognizing subject, rather than passively absorbed from external world; and the cognizing subject, in the process of understanding the world, does not discover knowledge independent of his mind, but recombines and constructs a new cognitive structure through personal prior experience from the world (Glasersfeld, 1995).

### **Roles of Teachers and Students**

#### **Teachers**

This type of learning takes place in small groups of students under the guide of a teacher who acts as "facilitator", instead of a mere information transferor. The teacher works as a participant, a coordinator, when necessary, a figure in the background evaluating and monitoring the language being used (Fried-Booth, 1986). Evaluation of learning outcomes is made by the teacher, individual students or groups, which can be teacher-directed or student-

determined. It may include reports, essays, or presentations indicative of the knowledge and skills that the students have acquired. In addition, the students may record the process and stages of their project work by writing diaries or maintaining e-portfolios.

### **Students**

This type of learning is also called " self-guided learning " is the student who gives direction to the projects, although these had been assigned by a teacher; in that sense a project can have different outcomes depending on the group's decisions in the project development. Within the PBL model, learners themselves select topics, reading materials and the way they embark on exploring. They determine the process and the artifact, set the learning goals, seek out both traditional and web-based resources, and decide on how the learning outcomes should be assessed. They must put forward original but feasible solutions to these real-world problems, which helps with their creative thinking skills and problem-solving abilities.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses of PBL**

#### **Strengths**

According to Stoller (1997), strengths of PBL include:

1. Project work is student-centered – the teacher functions as a facilitator to offer support and guidance when necessary and the students act as self-regulatory and autonomous learners, taking full responsibility for their own learning.
2. Project work is collaborative rather than competitive.
3. Project work is authentic in that it combines information processing with skill acquisition from diverse sources and mirrors the real-life the way it is.
4. Project work focuses more on subject content than on specific language points.
5. Project work provides students with opportunities to focus on both meaning and form.
6. Project work is both process-and product – oriented.
7. Project work is potentially motivating, empowering and challenging.

Railsback (2002) also lists the advantages of PBL as follows:

1. Teachers often witness increased motivation through higher levels of attendance, participation and assignment.
2. Learners have more opportunities to construct knowledge collaboratively.
3. Learners can see connections among different disciplines and subjects.
4. Learners use individual learning strengths and various learning approaches.
5. It improves social and communicative skills.
6. It improves problem-solving skills.
7. It enhances learners' self-image.
8. It offers real-world experiences to learn and use technology.
9. It prepares learners for their future work by cultivating such skills as collaboration, planning, decision making and time management.

#### **Weaknesses**

Despite considerable potentials, PBL is not without problems.

1. It is only beneficial when applied appropriately.
2. There are no well-established criteria for what makes up an acceptable project.
3. It is difficult for teachers to reconcile the amounts of time committed to in-depth investigations.
4. Creating the product of project work has become the only driving force in classroom activities.
5. The evaluation of some PBL work was devoted to summative assessment of products.

However, when PBL is well designed and supported, teachers are likely to be amazed at what their students can achieve (Johnson, et al., 2008).

### **Oral English ability**

Analysis of Concepts Related to Oral English ability.

People easily get confused about some terms related to oral English ability. To make the study more rigorous and scientific, it is necessary to clarify the essential differences among these related terms, such as language ability, communication competence, speaking and oral English ability.

### **1. Language Ability**

It is the ability to use the language system appropriately in any circumstances, about the functions and the varieties of language, as well as shared sociocultural suppositions. It can be described as consisting of both knowledge, or competence, and the capacity for implementing that competence in appropriate, contextualized communicative language use (Bachman, 1990).

### **2. Communication Competence**

Communicative competence consists of four underlying competences: linguistic competence (knowledge of the structure and form of language), discourse competence (knowledge of the rules of cohesion and coherence across sentences and utterances), sociolinguistic competence (knowledge of the rules of interaction: turn-taking, appropriate use of first names, appropriate formulae for apologizing, appropriate greetings), and strategic competence (knowing how to make the most of the language that you have, especially when it is “deficient”).

### **3. Speaking**

There are a lot of definitions of the word “speaking” that have been suggested by the researchers in language learning. In Webster New World Dictionary, speaking is to say words orally, to communicate as by talking, to make a request, and to make a speech (Nunan, 1995). According to Chaney (1998, p. 13), speaking is “the process of making and sharing meaning by using verbal and non-verbal symbols in different contexts”. Brown (1994) and Burns and Joyce (1997) defined speaking as an interactive process of making meaning that includes producing, receiving, and processing information.

Bygate. (1987) defined speaking as the production of auditory signals to produce different verbal responses in listeners. It is regarded as combining sounds systematically to form meaningful sentences. Eckard and Kearny (1981), Florez (1999) and Howarth (2001) defined speaking as a two-way process including a true communication of opinions, information, or emotions. This top-down view regards the spoken texts as the collaboration between two or more persons in the shared time and the shared context.

Speaking is an activity in real life carried out by a speaker to carry out his/ her ideas to interact with listeners. The activities are unplanned, and their continuity is based on situations. Speaking is a collaboration between two or more persons in the shared time and context to communicate opinions, information, or emotions (Thornbury, 2005).

English speaking is not an easy task because speakers should know many significant components like pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Speaking is the highest target in English language because speaking is basis of communication which becomes a function learning.

### **4. Oral ability**

Oral ability refers to the ability in using oral organ to explore ideas, intentions, thoughts and feelings to other people as way to make the message clearly delivered and well understood by the hearer (Bygate, 1987). It is a productive oral skill, and it consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning (Nunan, 2003). Oral ability is very important in the context of English learning. Richards (2008, p. 19) states “the mastery of oral ability in English is a priority for many second language or foreign language learners.”

### **Evaluation of Oral English Ability**

Scholars have made some exploration in analyzing what aspect’s oral English ability assessment should focus. Harris (1974) considers that there are five components in measuring oral English ability:

- 1) comprehension.
- 2) grammar.

- 3) vocabulary.
- 4) pronunciation.
- 5) fluency.

Mead and Rubin (1985) believe rating system for speaking skill could be described form four perspectives:

- 1) delivery.
- 2) organization.
- 3) content.
- 4) language.

Muñoz et al. (2012) hold that the oral assessment rubric should comprise:

- 1) linguistic competence (vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar).
- 2) strategic competence (knowing how to make the most of the language that you have, especially when it is “deficient”).

3) discourse competence (knowledge of the rules of cohesion and coherence across sentences and utterances).

- 4) sociolinguistic competence (communicative effectiveness and task completion).

Some assessment scales of authoritative speaking tests especially some for business or vocational purposes are also collected here to make a comprehensive analysis. According to CEFR (the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) (2001), an international standard for describing language ability, the illustrative scales contain 12 qualitative categories relevant to oral assessment: 1) Turn taking strategies; 2) Co-operating strategies; 3) Asking for clarification; 4) Fluency; 5) Flexibility; 6) Coherence; 7) Thematic development; 8) Precision; 9) Sociolinguistic competence; 10) General range; 11) Vocabulary range; 12) Phonological control. Since 12 categories are far too many for an assessment of any performance, it is suggested that features need to be combined, renamed and reduced into a smaller set of assessment criteria appropriate to the needs of the learners concerned, to the requirements of the assessment task concerned and to the style of the pedagogic culture concerned. Then, in 2020, in the companion volume for the CEFR, the oral English ability is described from six qualitative features: 1) Range; 2) Accuracy; 3) Fluency; 4) Interaction; and 5) Coherence; 6) Phonology. (2020)

### Material and Method

This research used Mixed Method of Research. This research is divided into 3 phases.

Phase 1 was conducted to answer research objective 1: To examine the factors affecting vocational undergraduate students’ oral English ability in Guangxi Province.

**Table 1** Conduct research from Phase 1

| Topics                             | Details                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Research process</b>            | Analyzed both internal and external factors                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Research objective 1</b>        | To examine the factors affecting oral English ability                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Conduct research</b>            | Design internal and external factors that influence oral English ability of vocational undergraduate students. Design questionnaires and lecturer interview outlines.                                                                                        |
| <b>Target group/Key informants</b> | 1) 96 former vocational undergraduate students major in Marketing Management in semester 1 of academic year 2022 from 3 universities in Guangxi Province.<br>2) 3 lecturers who teach Workplace English course from 3 colleges in Guangxi Province.          |
| <b>Instrument</b>                  | 1) Questionnaires 12 items. 2) Interview by 10 questions                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Data analysis</b>               | 1) Descriptive Statistics i.e., Frequency, mean ( $\mu$ ) standard deviation ( $\sigma$ ) for questionnaires.<br>2) Content analysis for interview                                                                                                           |
| <b>Research process</b>            | Analyzed both internal and external factors                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Output</b>                      | The result of the factors affecting oral English ability of vocational undergraduate students. The internal factors such as knowledge and skills, psychology and attitude, etc. external factors such as method of teaching, materials and environment, etc. |

Phase 2 was conducted to answer research objective 2: To develop project-based learning approach to promote vocational undergraduate students’ oral English ability in Guangxi Vocational University of Agriculture.

**Table 3.2** Conduct Research from Phase 2

| Topics                             | Details                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Research process</b>            | Development of project-based learning instructional model in terms of accuracy standard, propriety standard, feasibility standard, and utility standard. |
| <b>Research objective 2</b>        | To develop project-based learning instructional model to promote oral English ability of vocational undergraduates.                                      |
| <b>Research method</b>             | Study the component for development of project-based learning instructional model                                                                        |
| <b>Target group/Key informants</b> | 3 experts through Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) according to the criteria                                                                              |
| <b>Instrument</b>                  | The questionnaire                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Data analysis</b>               | Frequency and percentage                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Output</b>                      | The appropriateness of the project-based learning instructional model is confirmed by experts for further implementation.                                |

Phase 3 was conducted to answer research objective 3: To study the results of project-based learning approach to promote vocational undergraduate students' oral English ability in Guangxi Vocational University of Agriculture.

**Table 3** Conduct research from Phase 3

| Topics                             | Details                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Research process</b>            | 1) Deign lesson plan<br>2) Design scoring rubric form                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Research objective 3</b>        | To study the results of project-based learning instructional model to promote oral English ability of vocational undergraduate students.                                                          |
| <b>Conduct research</b>            | Designing instrument 1 (Lesson plan)<br>Designing instrument 2 (Rubric evaluation form)                                                                                                           |
| <b>Target group/Key informants</b> | The 32 students who enroll in Workplace English Course in Guangxi Vocational University of Agriculture in the 1st semester, the academic year 2023 from class B are obtained by cluster sampling. |
| <b>Instrument</b>                  | 1.Lesson plan<br>2.Rubric evaluation form                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Data analysis</b>               | Categorize students' performance according to rubric scoring criteria into their levels descriptor.                                                                                               |
| <b>Output</b>                      | Students' oral English ability is at a good level $\geq 80\%$ .                                                                                                                                   |

# Results

This chapter presents findings derived from the fieldwork procedures outlined previously, focusing on data collection crucial to this study. The objectives, outlined in Chapter I, serve three primary purposes:

Objective 1: Analyzing factors affecting oral English ability of vocational undergraduate students.

This section presents analysis results serving objective 1 using table and description in terms of MEAN, standard deviation, interpretation (Level of Attitude), and ranking of all factors in overview. After that, items of all factors are presented likewise.

The amount of students University

From class 1: 32 students, from Guangxi Vocational University of Agriculture

From class 2: 32 students, from Guangxi City Vocational University

From class 3: 32 students, from Nanning College for Vocational Technology

## The common data of the respondent in overall (N- 96)

The common data of the respondent in overall shows that the difference between males and females is a little significant, mainly due to the selected students' major is marketing management, which is considered a popular and suitable major for girls in China, with 31.25% of males and 68.75% of females. The age distribution of students is highest in the 18-20 years old age group at 86.46%, consistent with enrollment patterns, basically the sophomore age group is in the mid-20 years old.

### **The result of questionnaire from students in overview (N- 96)**

The result among the internal factors ( $\mu=3.96$ ) affecting students' oral English ability, considering each item individually, it was found that No.5: Students' belief that language foundations like listening ability, grammatical and vocabulary level hinder students to promote their oral English ability. ( $\mu=4.14$ ), have the highest, followed by No.4: Students' belief that their level of interest, familiarity and knowledge about the topics and activities influence students' promotion of oral English ability. ( $\mu=4.10$ ), the lowest mean is No.1: Students' belief that anxiety, shyness and inhibition resulting from lack of practice inside and outside the classroom, insufficient vocabulary, low second language learning motivation, fear of criticism and inferiority complexes hinder students to promote their oral English ability ( $\mu=3.76$ ).

Among the external factors ( $\mu=3.96$ ) affecting students' oral English ability, considering each item individually, it was found that No.5: Students' belief that interesting and authentic oral activities, well-designed lesson plans influence students' promotion of oral English ability. ( $\mu=4.08$ ), have the highest, followed by No.6: Students' belief that teachers' efficacy in oral skills and pedagogical knowledge influences students' promotion of oral English ability ( $\mu=4.06$ ), and the lowest mean is No.1: Students' belief that limited opportunities to practice oral English skills inside and outside the classroom hinder students to promote their oral English ability ( $\mu=3.85$ ).

### **The Lecturers Interview analysis results**

The amount of lecturers University.

From 1 lecturer, work on Guangxi Vocational University of Agriculture.

From 1 lecturer, work on Guangxi City Vocational University.

From 1 lecturer, work on Nanning College for Vocational Technology.

The common data of the lecturers shows that the most common gender is female, representing 66.67% of the respondents, while male lecturer makes up 33.33% of the sample; In terms of experience teaching, all lecturers are over 9 years accounted for 100% of the total, which shows that they all experienced teachers; In terms of the age of lecturers, the 36-49 age group accounted for 66.67%, and the 25-35 age group accounted for 33.33%. This shows that the interviewees have rich teaching experience and are young and strong, their views on the factors affecting oral English ability of vocational undergraduate students are more representative.

After interviews with three lecturers, the factors to affecting oral English ability of vocational undergraduate students are summarized as follows:

#### **Internal factors**

Teachers' knowledge and teaching skills: Both lecturers and students strongly believe that teachers' efficacy in oral skills and pedagogical knowledge influences students' promotion of oral English ability. Lecturer A and Lecturer B believed that it is essential for teachers to have solid language knowledge, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and intonation which will help them more accurately explain and demonstrate English expressions, making it easier for students to understand and imitate. Lecturer C also mentioned that a teacher with in-depth knowledge of English language and its applications in the workplace is better equipped to identify key areas that students need to focus on, and a skilled teacher knows how to engage students and make the learning process more enjoyable and effective.

Teachers' psychological conditions: The three Interviewees all held that teachers' psychological conditions such as confidence, patience, enthusiasm, empathy, and encouragement greatly affected the promotion of students' oral English ability. Lecturer A believed that teachers' confidence inspired students' trust, then students were more likely to feel comfortable when speaking. Lecturer B stated that a teacher's enthusiasm could stimulate students' interest in learning and make them more willing to participate in classroom activities, while a teacher's patience, empathy and encouragement could provide care and support to help students better cope with setbacks and thus motivate them to make progress. Lecturer C

suggested that confidence could be transmitted to students, making them believe that they can learn English speaking well.

**Teachers' attitude:** The three Interviewees all suggested that teachers' attitude towards education, teaching, educator and students has a significant impact on students' oral English ability. Lecturer A believes that a teacher who firmly believes in student-centered teaching may place more emphasis on cultivating students' self-directed learning abilities, encouraging them to participate in classroom discussions and activities, thereby improving their English-speaking abilities. Lecturer B suggested that teachers who believe in the transformative power of education are more likely to inspire their students to believe in their own potential for growth and change which can drive students to work harder and persevere through challenges, ultimately leading to promoted oral English ability. Lecturer C believes that teachers should establish correct educational concepts, pay attention to the comprehensive development of students, create a good learning environment for students, and help them promote their English-speaking ability.

#### External factors

**Teachers' method of teaching:** All three interviewees all mentioned that interesting and real-world teaching content, more practical time affects the promotion of students' oral English ability, and all viewed that PBL is a very effective method to promote students' oral English ability and other abilities like problem-solving skill, teamwork spirit which are quite essential in workplace. Lecturer A stressed that the teaching content relevant to students' interests and practical life experiences will help to stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm in learning and many practical activities should be arranged to give students the opportunity to practice English speaking in practical scenarios. Lecturer B said that she would try her best to organize the students in oral practice, students are often assigned by a fixed topic in a group, and the one of them will present their discussion result. Lecturer C mentioned that he would try to create a relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere, organize interesting activities and make incentive mechanism to promote students' oral English ability.

**Teaching materials:** The three Interviewees all showed that they would try to use various teaching resources because they believe they are good for the promotion of students' oral English ability. Lecturer A said that she will employ audio and video materials, interactive oral practice software and online resources to motivate students' interests and give students timely feedback. Lecturer B suggested that IELTS spoken English and BEC are extremely helpful in planning oral activities. Lecturer C also said that he would provide diversified and useful materials he believed good for students' oral performance.

**Teaching environment:** The three Interviewees all suggested that small class size, flexible seating arrangement and relaxed class atmosphere affect the promotion of students' oral English ability. Lecturer A believed that a smaller class size helped teachers to pay attention to each student's oral performance and provide more personalized guidance and feedback and meanwhile facilitated interaction and cooperation among students, increasing their opportunities to practice English speaking in actual conversations. Lecturer B hoped that she could have smaller scale class size, and the classroom could be equipped with necessary devices, and the students are allowed to go to the real workplace like real big office or meeting room to practice oral English. Lecturer C suggested that university should provide teacher training and development opportunities to help them improve their professional knowledge and skills in English speaking teaching and utilize technology and create a positive learning atmosphere to assist teaching.

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