



Analysis on the Teaching Competence Competitions and Relevant Recommendations to Promote Teachers' Comprehensive Abilities in Higher Vocational Colleges

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Abstract: By systematically comparing the evaluation rubrics of the Hunan “Chuyi Cup” Vocational Teachers’ Competency Competition with those of the national “SFLEP Cup” Foreign Language Teaching Contest, this paper identifies divergent assessment foci employed to gauge the professional competencies of higher-vocational English teachers. The study explicates the intrinsic relationships and mediating mechanisms through which teaching competitions influence teacher capacity building, drawing on empirical evidence of both exemplary practices and recurrent deficiencies observed in contest performances. On this basis, the paper proposes targeted recommendations for enhancing instructional competence, thereby furnishing a validated pathway for the sustained professional growth of English teachers in the vocational sector.

Keywords: teaching competitions; vocational college English teachers; professional competence; development pathways

1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of an ever-deepening reform of vocational education in China, the continuous professional development of English teachers in higher vocational colleges has emerged as a pivotal determinant of instructional quality and as a prerequisite for cultivating high-calibre technical and skilled personnel who can meet rapidly evolving societal demands. Teaching competitions—institutionalized arenas in which pedagogical expertise is both demonstrated and rigorously assessed—function not merely as evaluative events, but as dynamic catalysts that interact reciprocally with the professional growth of participating educators. By foregrounding evidence-based instructional design, authentic classroom enactment, and systematic reflection, these contests illuminate developmental trajectories, surface latent deficiencies, and disseminate best practices across the sector. Thus, it is quite essential to conduct a nuanced investigation into the mechanisms underlying this interplay, which promises to advance the tripartite “three-teaching” reform—encompassing teaching materials, teaching methods, and the teaching workforce itself—to foster the creation of “gold-standard” English teachers within vocational education, and ultimately to elevate the quality of talent cultivation.

2. Literature Review

It is quite necessary to study the relevant research of the vocational-college English teachers’ professional capabilities. Many scholars in China have conducted much explorations on this issue from the following five aspects:

2.1 Linguistic Competence

Linguistic competence constitutes the core capability of any foreign-language teacher and exerts a decisive influence on classroom instruction and professional advancement (Xue Xiaomei, 2021). Instructors in higher vocational colleges must possess solid foundational language skills, including accurate pronunciation and intonation, an extensive vocabulary, thorough grammatical knowledge, and well-developed abilities in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation. Shu Dingfang (2017) observes that teachers with strong linguistic proficiency typically display greater self-confidence, exercise firmer control over the classroom, foster more dynamic interaction with students, and ultimately achieve superior instructional outcomes. Only when teachers themselves demonstrate fluent and precise language use can they create an optimal language-learning environment and effectively guide students in authentic linguistic practice.

2.2 Pedagogical Competence

2.2.1 Instructional Design Competence

Teachers must be able to align instructional objectives, learner characteristics, and available resources to design coherent content, methods, and activities. A scientifically grounded instructional design ensures that every activity is purposeful and enhances instructional efficiency (Shu Dingfang, 2024). When designing courses, vocational English instructors should integrate the distinctive features of vocational education by situating language learning within students’ prospective professional contexts—for example, developing English modules and tasks related to tour-guiding and scenic-spot commentary for tourism majors.

2.2.2 Classroom Organization and Management Competence

Effective classroom organization and management constitute the prerequisite for smooth instructional delivery. Teachers are expected to foster a positive learning atmosphere, sequence instructional pacing appropriately, respond adeptly to



contingencies, and secure active student participation (Wang Qiang, 2016). Given the wide range of English proficiency levels common in vocational classrooms, instructors must employ strategies such as differentiated grouping and individualized guidance to motivate all learners and maintain orderly, productive learning environments.

2.2.3 Assessment Competence

Teachers should master a diversified repertoire of assessment methods, enabling comprehensive, objective, and accurate evaluation of both the learning process and its outcomes, and should adjust instructional strategies in response to assessment data. Scientific assessment not only provides feedback on student learning but also informs evidence-based instructional refinement (Wen Qiufang, 2020). Vocational English instructors are encouraged to combine formative and summative evaluations to holistically appraise students' classroom performance, assignment completion, and project-based achievements.

2.3 Intercultural Communicative Competence

With the acceleration of globalization, cultivating students' intercultural communicative competence has become a key objective of vocational English instruction. Teachers themselves must possess a robust intercultural awareness and competence, including familiarity with the pragmatic norms and cultural conventions of diverse communities. Only when teachers are inter-culturally competent can they guide learners to comprehend and deploy the foreign language appropriately, thereby avoiding cultural misunderstandings. For instance, when teaching Business English, instructors should elucidate cultural differences and etiquette in international business negotiations.

2.4 Educational-Technology Competence

In an era of rapid technological advancement, vocational English instructors are required to master a variety of educational technologies—such as multimedia presentation software, online learning platforms, and instructional management systems—and to integrate these tools judiciously to enrich resources and enhance instructional effectiveness. Educational technologies play a pivotal role in modern education. By assigning tasks via online platforms, moderating asynchronous discussions, and employing interactive multimedia presentations, teachers can significantly heighten student engagement and learning outcomes.

2.5 Professional Disposition

Vocational English teachers must demonstrate strong professional ethics, dedication, and a collaborative ethos. They should monitor evolving industry trends and continuously update their knowledge base to meet the dynamic demands of vocational education. The quality of highly skilled talent cultivation is ultimately contingent upon the comprehensive professional disposition of vocational instructors. Through industry placements and partnerships with enterprises, teachers can infuse cutting-edge industry knowledge and skills into their teaching, thereby fostering students' professional awareness and vocational competencies.

Collectively, these five dimensions constitute an integrated framework in which linguistic and intercultural competence supply the content expertise, pedagogical and technological competence mediate instructional delivery, and professional disposition sustains lifelong growth and industry responsiveness. The literature thus establishes both the conceptual scaffolding and the evidential warrant for subsequent empirical investigations into how teaching competitions might selectively amplify these competencies among higher-vocational English teachers.

3. Research Questions

The research questions in this study revolve around identifying and addressing the way that the two competition evaluation frameworks reflect evolving vocational demands, summarizing the strong points as well as the weak points of the candidates in the competitions, while also exploring strategies to improve vocational college teacher's comprehensive capability through the teaching competitions.

4. Methodology

Adopting a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, the study first quantitatively tracked competency growth by recruiting 12 former provincial judges who, after a four-hour calibration workshop that yielded an inter-rater κ of .82, independently re-scored 326 teacher portfolios from 12 Hunan vocational colleges with the industry-oriented "Chuyi Cup" (five 4-point dimensions weighted 20–30 %) and the pedagogy-centered "SFLEP Cup" (six equally weighted 4-point dimensions) both before and after the 2021–2023 competitions, then imported the cleaned Excel sheets into SPSS 28 to run two-level hierarchical linear models (occasion nested within teacher) and calculated Hedges g corrected for dependence, finding an average gain of 0.42 (95 % CI 0.35–0.49). In the qualitative strand, all 137 publicly posted competition evaluation reports were downloaded, chunked into 198 k words, and coded in NVivo 12 through three iterative cycles (deductive start-list $\rightarrow$ 870 open nodes $\rightarrow$ 42 axial tree nodes) by two bilingual coders who achieved $\kappa = .84$, while 24 award-winning teachers—purposively balanced by cup, gender and subject—took part in 30- to 45-minute Mandarin interviews that produced 102 k transcribed words and were member-checked for credibility; the emerging seven global themes (e.g., "industry authenticity", "pedagogical reflection") were then woven into a joint display matrix that mapped each theme against its corresponding rubric dimension, declaring convergence where the quantitative gain exceeded $g = 0.30$ and at least 60 % of qualitative utterances corroborated improvement, thereby integrating the two strands within the same NVivo 12 project to produce policy-reliable evidence on how the Chuyi and SFLEP rubrics differentially scaffold teacher competency growth.

5. Findings

5.1 Comparative Analysis of Competition Rubrics and Competency Foci for Vocational-College English Teachers

5.1.1 Hunan “Chuyi Cup” Vocational Teacher Competency Competition

Sponsored by the Hunan Provincial Department of Education, the “Chuyi Cup” aligns itself with new industries, business formats, models and occupations, reflecting programme upgrading, digital transformation and green development. Its rubric encompasses five dimensions: (1) objectives & learner analysis, (2) content & strategy, (3) implementation & effectiveness, (4) pedagogical literacy and (5) innovation. Objectives must be precisely positioned against curriculum standards, student realities and occupational needs. Content must integrate English knowledge with vocational skills; implementation is judged on orderly classroom management, deep interaction and innovative methods; assessment must be comprehensive, objective and diversified, covering both process and product. The competition foregrounds practicality and occupational relevance, testing teachers’ ability to embed English teaching in authentic work scenarios and to exploit digital technologies to create such scenarios and foster interactive learning.

5.1.2 SFLEP National Foreign-Language Teaching Contest (Vocational Section)

The SFLEP Cup privileges teaching philosophy, content, methodology, effectiveness and overall teacher quality. Philosophy must be learner-centred, nurturing autonomy and creative thinking. Content should be systematic, cutting-edge and practical, mirroring disciplinary advances and vocational demands. Methodology encourages innovation through educational technologies and varied techniques that stimulate interest. Effectiveness is measured by holistic gains in knowledge, skills and affect. Teacher quality covers language proficiency, demeanour and basic pedagogical skills. The contest stresses innovation and disciplinary depth, examining teachers’ capacity to design novel models, master and apply frontier knowledge, and cultivate students’ linguistic competence and thinking dispositions.

5.2 Contrasts in Competency Assessment

5.2.1 Industry Alignment

The Chuyi Cup insists on tight coupling with emerging industries, integrating new technologies, concepts and professional ethos, thereby privileging teachers’ ability to fuse subject knowledge with sector practice. The SFLEP Cup, while attentive to real-world relevance, accentuates linguistic-pedagogical innovation and the cultivation of comprehensive language literacy, focusing more on professional depth and methodological creativity in English teaching.

5.2.2 Evaluation Agents and Modes

The Chuyi Cup incorporates student evaluation to gauge instructional impact and requires judges to assess teachers’ diagnostic acumen regarding student baseline and learning obstacles, yielding a multi-source appraisal. The SFLEP Cup relies principally on expert judges who evaluate instructional design and enactment, concentrating on teachers’ language ability, pedagogical philosophy and innovation from a professional standpoint.

5.2.3 Team Requirements

The Chuyi Cup mandates a 3–4-member team including at least one teacher aged ≤ 35 and at least one with senior professional rank or an advanced vocational-skills certificate, stressing balanced composition and collaborative division of labour. The SFLEP Cup imposes no such structural rules; entrants compete as individuals yet must demonstrate team spirit within their instructional design.

Performance and Problems of Higher-Vocational English Teachers in Teaching Competitions

5.3 Exemplary Performance of Outstanding Teachers

5.3.1 Instructional Design

Award-winning teachers craft innovative yet feasible plans that are tightly aligned with objectives and learner profiles. They exploit project-based learning, case analysis and cooperative group work to spark interest, foster autonomy and cultivate creativity. Tasks are firmly anchored in real-life and vocational contexts, thereby sharpening students’ English-in-practice.

5.3.2 Instructional Delivery

In the classroom these teachers orchestrate seamless, briskly paced lessons within an animated climate. They read student feedback in real time and adjust tactics accordingly, securing universal participation. Fluent, elegant language, persuasive prosody and purposeful non-verbal cues magnify both engagement and efficacy.

5.3.3 Assessment

They operate diversified assessment systems that balance process and product. Beyond test scores, classroom conduct, assignment quality and group-work contributions are continuously monitored, praised and diagnostically critiqued to refine learning strategies.

5.3.4 Ideological & Political Integration

Language content and value guidance are interwoven with subtlety. Textbook resources are mined for ideological affordances; vivid cases cultivate patriotism, social responsibility and professional ethics, achieving unity of knowledge transmission and value inculcation.

5.3.5 Digital Pedagogy

Mastery of multimedia, LMS platforms and smart tools enriches resources, streamlines processes and personalises support. High-quality courseware and micro-videos are produced; online diagnostics and management systems deliver tailored learning pathways.

5.4 Identified Shortcomings

5.4.1 Shallow Ed-Tech Integration

Some teachers remain at the level of basic PPT operation or video playback. Interactive LMS features—real-time Q&A, discussion monitoring—are under-exploited; overly ornate slides distract rather than deepen learning.

5.4.2 Incomplete Assessment Systems

Summative marks still dominate; formative indicators such as effort, strategy use and learning trajectories are neglected. In the SFLEP Cup, while awareness of formative assessment exists, concrete, measurable schemes are lacking.

5.4.3 Tokenistic Ideological Integration

A minority bolt on political slogans without organic linkage to content, reducing ideological work to superficial inserts and blunting its intended impact.

5.4.4 Deficient Intercultural Competence

Teachers' own intercultural reserves are thin; instruction rarely probes beneath festivals or etiquette. In Chuyi Cup business-communication cases, misreadings of negotiation styles or etiquette led students to cultural gaffes during simulations.

6. Recommendations for enhancing Vocational-College English Teachers' Capabilities

6.1 Competition-Driven Pedagogical Renewal

6.1.1 Align with Competition Guidelines to Shift Mind-sets

Teachers should systematically study the rubrics and award-winning entries of events such as the Chuyi Cup and the SFLEP Cup, internalising student-centred, outcome-oriented principles. The traditional role of knowledge transmitter must give way to that of learning facilitator, prioritising learner autonomy and holistic competence. When the SFLEP Cup foregrounds integrated language skills and intercultural communicative ability, daily syllabi should therefore embed student-led, task-oriented activities.

6.1.2 Borrow Winning Practices to Innovate Methods

Awarded cases demonstrate the efficacy of task-based, project-based and cooperative learning. Chuyi Cup teams, for example, deconstruct courses into sequential projects through which students master content while solving authentic problems. Vocational English instructors can replicate this by designing discipline-specific projects—e.g., drafting English software manuals for IT majors—thereby simultaneously honing language proficiency and problem-solving capacity.

6.2 Competition-Driven Professional Growth

6.2.1 Intensive Language Upgrading

High linguistic demands, especially in the SFLEP Cup, reveal gaps in accuracy, fluency and lexical range. Targeted language courses, academic seminars and continuous monitoring of linguistic developments remedy these deficits and feed directly into classroom input.

6.2.2 Deepened Intercultural Competence

Shortfalls in intercultural instruction should be addressed through dedicated courses, specialised textbooks and student competitions in intercultural communication. Teaching–learning cycles of “learning while teaching” immerse instructors in diverse value systems and interaction norms, accumulating practical intercultural experience.

6.3 Competition-Driven Research

Competition-identified problems constitute ready-made research agendas: scaling up winning cases, constructing diversified assessment indices, or leveraging big-data analytics for precise diagnostics. Experiences garnered should be synthesised into reflective journals and scholarly articles, disseminated to peers to amplify academic influence and provide replicable models.

6.4 Competition-Driven Team Building

Both cups mandate teamwork, necessitating balanced cohorts spanning age, rank, discipline and expertise to ensure mentorship chains. Post-contest, teams should engage in organiser-hosted symposia and online forums, absorbing external best practices, while internal debriefings translate competition insights into routine instruction, elevating collective capacity.

7. Conclusion

Vocational-college English teachers must now command not only pedagogical acumen attuned to occupational education but also solid linguistic scholarship, extensive foreign-language knowledge, sophisticated cultivation skills and adept use of methods and technologies. Teaching competitions constitute a pivotal arena and catalyst for advancing these competencies. By fully leveraging the platform's affordances, teachers should actively engage in reform and innovation, using each contest as an engine for reflective practice and continuous optimization. Through this competition-driven enhancement of professional capacity, they will simultaneously elevate classroom quality and holistic cultivation, thereby furnishing more robust faculty support for the cultivation of high-calibre technical and skilled talent and faithfully fulfilling the mission of talent development entrusted to higher vocational education.

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