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English Learning Needs of Vocational Undergraduate Students in China

Haiqing Liu¹, Prannapha Modehiran²

¹Haiqing Liu, Graduate School of Human Sciences of Assumption University of Thailand, Thailand & Guangxi City Vocational University. Email: 358268884@qq.com

²Prannapha Modehiran, Associate Professor, Graduate School of Human Sciences of Assumption University of Thailand, Thailand. Email: prannapha@gmail.com

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Abstract

Guided by the needs analysis framework of Macalister and Nation (2020), this study employed a convergent mixed-methods design to investigate the English language learning needs of 324 vocational undergraduate students in China. A structured survey, featuring both closed-ended and open-ended questions, was administered to assess the three dimensions of needs: necessities, wants, and lacks. Quantitative results demonstrated a strong positive correlation between English learning needs and career development goals ($r = .72, p < .01$), coupled with significant variations across academic disciplines. Regarding learning preferences, a predominant majority (71.2%) favored blended learning models. Additionally, a paired-samples t-test identified a more pronounced deficiency in productive skills (speaking and writing) relative to receptive skills ($t(323) = 8.32, p < .001$). The study culminates in practical recommendations, including adopting a modular curriculum, enhancing the integration of blended learning, providing targeted training for productive skills, and fostering collaboration between language and content instructors. These findings offer evidence-based directions for reforming English curricula in vocational undergraduate education and contribute to the broader application of needs analysis theory within the unique context of Chinese vocational higher education.

Keywords: Vocational Undergraduate Students; English Language Learning Needs; Needs Analysis; Blended Learning; Productive Language Skills

Introduction

In response to rapid industrial modernization and the demands of a globalized economy, China's higher education sector has been significantly reshaped by the strategic upgrading of its vocational education system. A pivotal moment in this process was the issuance of the State Council's *Implementation Plan for National Vocational Education Reform* (2019), which established vocational undergraduate programs as a formal component of higher education. These programs aim to cultivate high-quality, application-oriented talents equipped with solid theoretical foundations and superior practical skills, which inherently demands that English language teaching (ELT) be precisely tailored to support students' specific vocational and academic trajectories.

However, a critical challenge persists: the prevailing misalignment between standard English language instruction and the authentic needs of vocational undergraduate students. Many existing English curricula remain grounded in approaches designed for academic bachelor's degrees, overlooking the distinct communicative demands of professional vocational settings (Zhang, 2020). Compounding this issue, empirical research specifically targeting the English learning needs of this burgeoning student population remains scarce. The absence of a detailed, evidence-based understanding of these needs results in curricula that are misaligned with learner requirements, thereby creating a significant gap between educational provision and student outcomes. This issue is particularly pressing given China's national drive to internationalize vocational education, underscoring the urgent need for a thorough and systematic inquiry.

To address this research void, the present study is grounded in the comprehensive needs analysis (NA) framework developed by Macalister and Nation (2020). This model was selected for its structured and holistic approach to examining language learning requirements through three interconnected dimensions: necessities (the linguistic skills required in target situations), wants (learner preferences and desires), and lacks (the discrepancy between current and required proficiency). Guided by this framework, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the English language learning necessities, wants, and lacks of Chinese vocational undergraduate students?

RQ2: How do these needs correlate with students' career aspirations and academic requirements?

This research employs a convergent mixed-methods design, gathering and integrating quantitative and qualitative data from 324 students across multiple disciplines to develop a holistic portrayal of their English learning needs. The study is expected to yield several important contributions. Practically, it will supply essential evidence for redesigning English curriculum standards and teaching strategies, ensuring they are directly relevant to vocational contexts. Theoretically, it seeks to validate and broaden the applicability of the Macalister and Nation (2020) framework within the unique context of Chinese vocational higher education. Ultimately, this research aims to enhance the effectiveness and relevance of English instruction, thereby boosting the international competitiveness and employability of vocational undergraduate graduates.

Literature Review

This review critically synthesizes the scholarly discourse on English language learning needs within China's vocational undergraduate education context. Rather than a sequential summary, it constructs a critical argument that reveals significant theoretical, empirical, and methodological gaps, thereby establishing a compelling rationale for the present study. It begins by examining the evolution of needs analysis (NA) as a cornerstone of language curriculum design, evaluating the strengths and limitations of dominant frameworks. The discussion then situates English education within China's unique vocational undergraduate landscape, highlighting a persistent theory-practice divide. Subsequently, the review

interrogates empirical findings and shortcomings across the three core NA dimensions—necessities, wants, and lacks—explicitly integrating the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2009) to enrich the theoretical understanding of learner 'wants'. The review culminates in a synthesis that positions the current investigation as a direct response to the identified gaps through its application of Macalister and Nation's (2020) integrated framework and a convergent mixed-methods design.

Theoretical Evolution of Needs Analysis

Needs analysis has evolved from a specialized tool in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to a fundamental component of systematic language curriculum development. Early models, such as Munby's (1978) Communicative Syllabus Design, were pioneering in their detailed focus on target situation analysis. However, subsequent scholarship rightly criticized this approach as overly mechanistic and reductionist, arguing that it treated learners as a homogeneous set of communicative needs while largely ignoring affective factors and learner agency.

A significant paradigm shift was initiated by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), who introduced a critical distinction between target needs (what the learner needs to do in the target situation) and learning needs (how the learner can best achieve those competencies). This differentiation valuably broadened the scope of NA to encompass pedagogical and psychological considerations. Yet, a conspicuous limitation of their model is its lack of clear operational guidance for translating these dual needs into concrete curriculum content and classroom practices. This shortfall is particularly acute in vocational education, where learning outcomes must be precisely aligned with industry standards.

The more recent integrated framework advanced by Macalister and Nation (2020) represents a significant advancement by conceptualizing NA through three interconnected pillars: necessities, wants, and lacks. This holistic model offers a more balanced and pedagogically practical lens, rendering it particularly suitable for complex educational environments like Chinese vocational undergraduate education, where occupational, academic, and personal goals intersect. It is this comprehensive and integrated nature that provides the primary theoretical foundation for the present study.

English Education in the Chinese Vocational Undergraduate Context

Formally established in 2019, China's vocational undergraduate system represents a strategic fusion of higher education with advanced technical training. However, scholarly work on English language teaching within this specific context remains nascent. Existing literature predominantly addresses macro-level themes like curriculum design and pedagogical innovation (Wang & Li, 2021), and consistently points to a fundamental misalignment between the English proficiencies fostered by educational institutions and those demanded by industry (Zhang, 2020). Consequently, many English programs persist in mirroring traditional academic models, resulting in a curriculum with a nebulous vocational focus that fails to resonate with student or market needs.

Globally, vocational language education has been influenced by frameworks that emphasize the integration of linguistic and professional competencies, such as the work of Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) on collaboration between language and subject specialists.

These international benchmarks offer valuable, yet underutilized, insights for adapting and refining NA approaches within the distinct socio-economic context of China.

Interrogating Empirical Gaps across the Tripartite Framework

Necessities (Objective Requirements)

Research indicates that the English language necessities for vocational undergraduates are largely discipline-specific (Li & Wang, 2022; Pan, 2022). However, a critical limitation pervading the literature is its predominant focus on single disciplines, which obscures a comprehensive understanding of both commonalities and critical variations across different fields (Zeng & Li, 2023). This siloed approach limits the potential for developing cohesive, institution-wide curriculum policies. Moreover, the dynamic demands of the digital and service economies necessitate NA studies that are not only discipline-specific but also adaptive and current, a challenge that much of the existing literature fails to adequately address (Xiang, 2023).

Wants (Subjective Preferences)

Studies reveal that students strongly prefer flexible, interactive, and technology-supported learning environments, with blended learning models being particularly favored (Yang et al., 2022). While these descriptive findings are valuable, they remain superficial. A more profound gap exists in understanding the underlying motivations for these preferences. Why do students prefer blended learning? Is it for autonomy, relevance, or flexibility? Crucially, the literature is silent on how these 'wants' connect to broader theories of L2 motivation, such as Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System, which could powerfully explain how learning preferences are shaped by students' 'ideal L2 self' as a future professional. Furthermore, comparative analyses of how preferences vary across vocational disciplines are strikingly scarce (Gao, 2022).

Lacks (Proficiency Gaps)

A consistent finding in the literature is the significant gap between productive and receptive skills among vocational undergraduates, often attributed to an exam-oriented education system (He & Wasuntarasophit, 2020; Li, 2019). However, the vast majority of studies stop at identifying these gaps, constituting a major research-practice divide. There is a conspicuous absence of empirical research that investigates the root causes of these gaps in vocational contexts or, more importantly, evaluates the efficacy of targeted instructional interventions designed to address them (Liu, 2022). This leaves educators with a diagnosis but without evidence-based remedies.

Synthesis and Rationale for the Present Study

The reviewed literature collectively reveals a fragmented landscape: a robust theoretical NA framework exists, but its application in the Chinese vocational context is hampered by 1) empirically narrow, single-discipline studies; 2) a superficial, non-theoretical treatment of learner motivation and preferences; and 3) a descriptive tradition that identifies problems but offers few solutions.

To address these interconnected gaps, this study is deliberately designed as follows.

- Theoretically, it applies the integrated Macalister and Nation (2020) framework to the Chinese vocational undergraduate context, explicitly incorporating the L2 Motivational Self System to deepen the analysis of 'wants'.

- Empirically, it adopts a convergent mixed-methods design to gather and synthesize data from a diverse, multi-disciplinary sample, enabling a fine-grained analysis of necessities, wants, and lacks across disciplines.

- Methodologically, it moves beyond mere description by aiming to produce actionable, evidence-based recommendations for curriculum design that are directly attuned to the articulated and observed needs of learners.

By adopting this approach, the present study seeks not only to map the English learning needs of vocational undergraduates but also to advance the theoretical and methodological application of NA within this critical and evolving educational domain.

Research Methodology

This section delineates the methodological approach employed to investigate the English language learning needs of vocational undergraduate students in China. Grounded in the needs analysis model proposed by Macalister and Nation (2020), a convergent mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) was adopted to capture the multifaceted nature of learner needs through the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data. The following subsections provide a comprehensive and transparent account of the research design, participant sampling, instrument development, data collection procedures, and analytical techniques, detailing the steps taken to ensure methodological rigor and ethical standards.

Research Design and Hypotheses

A convergent mixed-methods design was implemented, wherein quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently via a single survey instrument and then integrated during the analysis phase to derive a holistic understanding (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). A cross-sectional survey approach was deemed appropriate for capturing the characteristics and perceptions of the target population at a specific point in time (Setia, 2020).

Informed by Macalister and Nation's (2020) tripartite framework, the study tested the following hypotheses:

- H1 (Necessities): A significant positive correlation exists between students' English learning needs and their career development and academic progression requirements.

- H2 (Wants): Students will demonstrate a statistically significant preference for technology-integrated and blended learning modes over traditional face-to-face instruction.

- H3 (Lacks): Students will report a significantly lower level of self-assessed proficiency in productive language skills (speaking and writing) compared to receptive skills (listening and reading).

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The study context and participant recruitment process are detailed as follows. The study was conducted at Guangxi City Vocational University, which was purposively selected for

three reasons. First, as one of the Ministry of Education's inaugural pilot institutions for vocational undergraduate education, it embodies the reform context under investigation. Second, its location within the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area accentuates the pragmatic value of English proficiency for regional economic engagement (Pan, 2022). Third, its diverse academic portfolio enabled meaningful cross-disciplinary comparisons. First-year students were specifically targeted because their transition from secondary school to vocationally-oriented university learning renders their needs particularly salient for foundational curriculum planning (Li & Chen, 2021).

Regarding sample size determination, a priori calculation was performed based on the requirements for conducting factor analysis and multiple regression, which typically stipulate a subject-to-variable ratio of at least 10:1 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). Given that the core quantitative section of the survey contained 27 items (excluding the 3 open-ended questions), a minimum sample of 270 was targeted. To account for potential non-response and incomplete submissions, the study aimed to recruit approximately 320 students. The final sample of 324 valid responses not only meets but exceeds this threshold, ensuring robust statistical power for the planned analyses (e.g., Pearson correlation, ANOVA).

A combination of convenience and cluster sampling techniques was utilized (Cohen et al., 2018). The entire first-year student body constituted the sampling frame. This population was first divided into discrete clusters based on their academic disciplines (e.g., Mechanical Engineering, Education). Subsequently, several intact classes within each disciplinary cluster were randomly selected and invited to participate. This approach ensured that the sample adequately represented the key disciplinary variations within the vocational undergraduate population, thereby enhancing the representativeness and generalizability of findings within this specific institutional context.

The final sample consisted of 324 students. The sample included 166 female students (51.2%) and 158 male students (48.8%), with the vast majority (95.7%) aged between 18 and 20. Disciplinary distribution was as follows: Mechanical Engineering (40.0%), Education (27.0%), Accounting and Big Data (13.0%), Computer and Information Technology (10.0%), and Automotive Engineering (10.0%).

Research Instrument and Validation

Data were collected using a researcher-designed survey titled *Questionnaire for Investigating English Language Needs of Chinese Vocational Undergraduates*. The final instrument comprised 30 items, strategically structured into four sections to comprehensively address the research questions: 1) Demographic Information; 2) A 27-item core section using a 5-point Likert scale to gauge learning styles, strategy use, activity preferences, skill priorities, and self-regulated learning; 3) Multiple-choice questions on learning objectives, preferred teaching methods, and attitudes toward technology; 4) Three open-ended questions exploring learning challenges, perceived skill gaps, and suggestions for curriculum improvement.

The instrument was developed through a rigorous, multi-stage process:

1. **Theoretical Grounding:** Item formulation was guided by the constructs of Macalister and Nation's (2020) needs analysis model (necessities, wants, lacks). To ensure comprehensive coverage of the learning experience, it was also informed by Cohen's (2006) taxonomy of language learning strategies and Oxford's (2017) model of learning style preferences.

2. **Content Validation:** A panel of three independent experts in English language teaching (all holding the rank of associate professor or higher) evaluated the draft questionnaire for relevance, clarity, and theoretical alignment. The Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) index was calculated for each item by the three experts. The IOC scores ranged from 0.85 to 1.00, with an average of 0.92, collectively indicating strong content validity (Ismail & Zubairi, 2022).

3. **Pilot Testing and Reliability:** A pilot study was conducted with 30 students who were excluded from the main study. This pilot assessed item clarity, appropriateness, and the instrument's psychometric properties. The final instrument demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .87$ for the full scale; all subscales also exceeded the acceptable threshold of $\alpha = .75$, confirming high reliability (Bonett & Wright, 2015).

The three open-ended questions were optional for all respondents. This design allowed participants to voluntarily elaborate on their experiences, ensuring that the resultant qualitative data represented authentic and unprompted student voices, which were crucial for triangulating with the quantitative findings.

Data Collection and Analytical Procedures

Following institutional ethical approval, data collection was executed in the autumn semester of 2024. Participants provided informed consent before completing the anonymous electronic questionnaire, which was administered via the *Wenjuanxing* platform on *WeChat*. The average completion time was 15 minutes.

Quantitative data analysis was performed using SPSS 26.0. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations) were computed to summarize the data. To test the hypotheses, the following inferential tests were employed: Pearson correlation for H1, chi-square tests for H2, and paired-samples *t*-tests for H3. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences across academic disciplines.

For the qualitative data, an inductive content analysis approach was adopted (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). This involved a systematic process of coding the responses to the three open-ended questions, categorizing the codes, and thematizing the categories to identify recurring patterns and salient insights. These qualitative findings were subsequently triangulated with the quantitative results during the discussion phase to enhance the depth, validity, and contextual richness of the findings.

In summary, the meticulously designed methodology, encompassing a theoretically-grounded convergent mixed-methods design, a rigorously validated instrument, a clearly delineated sampling procedure, and robust analytical techniques, ensures the credibility, reliability, and transferability of the study's findings. The transparent reporting herein facilitates replicability and underscores the scholarly rigor of this investigation.

Results and Discussion

This section presents an integrated analysis of the findings, structured around the study's three research hypotheses to provide a clear and coherent narrative. The convergent mixed-methods design facilitates the triangulation of quantitative results with qualitative insights, enriching the interpretation of the data.

Preliminary Analysis

Prior to testing the hypotheses, data screening confirmed the dataset's suitability for parametric tests. The survey instrument demonstrated excellent reliability in the main study, with a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .87$ for the overall scale. The assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were met, as confirmed by non-significant Shapiro-Wilk tests ($*p* > .05$) and Levene's tests ($*p* > .05$), respectively.

Integrated Findings by Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Necessities and Their Correlation with Career Goals

Quantitative Results

Hypothesis 1 was supported, and a strong positive correlation was found between students' English learning needs and their career development goals ($*r* = .72$, $*p* < .01$). Furthermore, a one-way ANOVA revealed significant disciplinary differences in perceived necessities, $F(3, 320) = 12.35$, $*p* < .001$. The descriptive statistics for key necessities across disciplines are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Perceived English Language Necessities by Academic Discipline (N=324)

| Discipline | n | Priority Skill 1 (M, SD) | Priority Skill 2 (M, SD) |
|------------------------|-----|---|---|
| Mechanical Engineering | 130 | Reading Technical Documentation (4.62, 0.58) | Report Writing (4.55, 0.61) |
| Business Management | 87 | Professional Presentations (4.78, 0.42) | Negotiation (4.69, 0.51) |
| Education | 88 | Classroom Interaction (4.57, 0.55) | Pedagogical Terminology (4.43, 0.59) |
| Computer Science | 32 | Software Documentation (4.58, 0.56) | Technical Vocabulary (4.49, 0.62) |

Qualitative Triangulation and Discussion

The qualitative data provided rich context for these quantitative trends, directly linking English proficiency to specific career aspirations. A Business Management student articulated this connection: "I need to learn how to write professional emails in English for future internship opportunities." This sentiment echoes the high value placed on professional correspondence in the quantitative data. Similarly, a Mechanical Engineering student's concern, "We want more practical speaking activities related to our future workplace," underscores the desire for vocationally-relevant oral communication, aligning with the high mean scores for report writing.

ng and technical comprehension in that discipline.

This finding strongly validates the 'necessities' dimension of Macalister and Nation's (2020) framework, demonstrating that the target situation requirements are not only perceived by students but are intrinsically tied to their envisioned professional identities. The disciplinary variations challenge the notion of a one-size-fits-all English curriculum and call for a differentiated ESP approach, as advocated by Hutchinson and Waters (1987).

Hypothesis 2: Learning Wants and Preferences

Quantitative Results

Hypothesis 2 was strongly supported, revealing a clear and statistically significant preference for modern learning modalities. A vast majority of students (71.2%) favored blended learning models over exclusively online (13.8%) or traditional face-to-face instruction (15.0%), $\chi^2(2) = 15.34$, $*p < .001$. Table 2 delineates the hierarchy of preferences for learning activities and materials.

Table 2

Student Preferences for Learning Activities and Materials (N=324)

| Category | Specific Preference | Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (SD) |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|----------|-------------------------|
| Learning Activities | Scenario-based simulations | 4.41 | 0.63 |
| | Industry project collaboration | 4.32 | 0.59 |
| | Peer interaction tasks | 4.15 | 0.61 |
| | Teacher-led explanations | 3.82 | 0.72 |
| Learning Materials | Authentic workplace materials | 4.38 | 0.59 |
| | Multimedia resources | 4.25 | 0.62 |
| | Mobile applications | 4.12 | 0.65 |
| | Traditional textbooks | 3.48 | 0.81 |

Qualitative Triangulation and Discussion

The open-ended responses illuminated the reasons behind these preferences, emphasizing a demand for autonomy, relevance, and engagement. One student commented, "Learning with real company documents and videos is more motivating than textbooks because it feels like we are preparing for the real world." This explicitly explains the high ranking of authentic materials and scenario-based simulations, indicating that students' 'wants' are driven by a pursuit of pragmatic competence and self-directed learning opportunities (Benson, 2011).

The convergence of quantitative and qualitative data here paints a clear picture: the pedagogical expectations of vocational undergraduates are aligned with contemporary blended learning principles (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). The findings argue for a decisive shift away from traditional, teacher-centric models towards interactive, technology-enhanced, and experientially grounded learning environments.

Hypothesis 3: Identified Lacks and Proficiency Gaps

Quantitative Results

As predicted by H3, a significant disparity between productive and receptive skills was confirmed. A paired-samples *t*-test showed that self-rated proficiency in productive skills ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 0.73$) was markedly lower than in receptive skills ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.64$), $*t$

$t(323) = 8.32$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.92$). Furthermore, regression analysis indicated that deficits in productive skills were a significant predictor of overall learning difficulties, $\beta = -0.68$, $p < .001$, accounting for 46% of the variance.

Qualitative Triangulation and Discussion

The qualitative data gave a human voice to this statistical gap, capturing the frustration and anxiety associated with productive tasks. A Computer Science student's statement, "I can understand technical manuals but cannot explain the content in English," perfectly encapsulates the core issue: a passive knowledge base that fails to activate in active communication. This directly reflects the large effect size found in the quantitative analysis and highlights a critical failure in the current instructional focus.

This pronounced output deficiency is a well-documented phenomenon among Chinese EFL learners (He & Wasuntarasophit, 2020), often attributed to an exam-oriented education system. The study concretizes this general challenge within the vocational context, revealing it as the primary barrier to achieving the very career necessities students value so highly. The regression result underscores that addressing this 'lack' is not optional but fundamental to reducing learning obstacles and achieving program objectives.

Synthesis and Theoretical Implications

Collectively, these findings deliver a nuanced and evidence-based portrait of the Chinese vocational undergraduate. They are characterized by a clear, career-driven 'ideal L2 self' (Dörnyei, 2009), which fuels their understanding of necessities and wants, yet they are critically hampered by a significant gap in productive skills (lacks). This study's primary theoretical contribution lies in integrating these three dimensions into a coherent model using Macalister and Nation's (2020) framework, demonstrating their dynamic interconnections.

The strong correlation between career goals and English needs ($r = .72$) powerfully extends Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System by highlighting the potent role of the 'vocational ideal self' in this specific learner population. The disciplinary variations in necessities reinforce Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) emphasis on specific-purpose language learning, while the preference for blended learning aligns with contemporary CALL research (Blake, 2013).

The methodological rigor of the convergent design, evidenced by high reliability scores and large effect sizes, bolsters the credibility of these findings. The seamless triangulation of data sources has provided a context-rich understanding that moves beyond simply cataloging needs to revealing their systemic relationships.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study, grounded in Macalister and Nation's (2020) needs analysis framework, has provided a comprehensive investigation into the English language learning needs of vocational undergraduates in China through a convergent mixed-methods approach. Data from 324 students across multiple disciplines yield key findings with significant theoretical and practical implications.

Summary of Major Findings

The analysis reveals a student population characterized by clear, career-oriented motivation yet distinct disciplinary requirements and significant skill gaps. The results demonstrate a strong correlation between English learning needs and career aspirations, with notable disciplinary variations. For instance, students in Mechanical Engineering emphasized technical documentation skills, while their counterparts in Business Management prioritized professional communication. This underscores the critical need for an ESP-oriented approach in vocational education (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

A predominant preference emerged for flexible, technology-enhanced learning, with most students favoring blended models. The higher valuation of authentic multimedia resources over traditional textbooks signals a demand for relevant and autonomous learning experiences, resonating with contemporary pedagogies (Benson, 2011).

Most critically, a substantial and statistically significant gap was identified between productive and receptive skills. Self-assessed proficiency in speaking and writing was markedly lower, with academic writing and professional presentations being the most challenging areas. This aligns with documented output difficulties among Chinese EFL learners but concretizes them within the vocational context (He & Wasuntarasophit, 2020).

Theoretical Contributions

This research makes three primary theoretical contributions. First, it successfully validates and adapts Macalister and Nation's (2020) framework to the Chinese vocational undergraduate context, demonstrating its utility in mapping the complex interplay between necessities, wants, and lacks. Second, it provides empirical evidence for merging ESP principles with digital literacy frameworks in blended learning environments (Xiang, 2023). Third, the findings enrich the discourse on L2 motivation in vocational education by extending Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System to include discipline-specific facets of the 'ideal self'.

Practical Recommendations

Based on the empirical evidence, the following recommendations are proposed to guide educational practice:

- Curriculum Innovation: Develop a modular ESP curriculum based on a "Common Core + Discipline-Specific Modules" structure. This should include creating courses like "Technical English for Engineering," integrating digital literacy, and aligning outcomes with industry standards.
- Pedagogical Enhancement: Adopt a blended learning model that strategically combines synchronous and asynchronous teaching. Incorporate task-based and project-based learning methods focused on productive skills and authentic workplace scenarios, using differentiated strategies for various disciplines.
- Resource Development: Create and curate a repository of multimodal learning resources. This repository should feature authentic workplace materials, interactive multimedia, mobile applications, and profession-specific language databases and assessments.
- Teacher Professional Development: Implement sustained professional development programs focusing on ESP methodology, technology integration, collaboration with subject

experts, and the assessment of productive skills.

- Policy Implications: Policymakers should advocate for discipline-specific English standards, foster sustainable industry-education partnerships to ensure curriculum relevance, and prioritize funding for digital infrastructure to support blended learning.

Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

While offering valuable insights, this study has limitations. The sample was drawn from a single institution, and the cross-sectional design cannot trace the evolution of needs over time. Future research should expand to multiple institutions across diverse regions, employ longitudinal designs to track needs throughout academic programs, and utilize richer qualitative methods like interviews and observations. Experimental studies to evaluate the proposed interventions and comparative cross-cultural analyses would also be highly beneficial.

Concluding Statement

In summary, this study delivers a nuanced, evidence-based portrait of the English language learning needs within China's burgeoning vocational undergraduate sector. It argues compellingly for a paradigm shift from a one-size-fits-all approach to a differentiated, responsive model that simultaneously addresses career-driven necessities, modern learning wants, and critical skill lacks. By implementing the outlined recommendations, educators and policymakers can significantly enhance the quality and relevance of English education. This research not only contributes immediate insights for ongoing curricular reform but also establishes a robust foundation for future inquiry aimed at empowering vocational undergraduates for success in the globalized economy.

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