

# THE LANGUAGE LEARNERS' PERCEPTION ON TEACHING COMPETENCES OF ENGLISH TEACHERS AT HIGHER VOCATIONAL COLLEGES IN GUANGXI, CHINA

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SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY

2024

THE LANGUAGE LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS ON TEACHING  
COMPETENCIES OF ENGLISH TEACHERS AT HIGHER  
VOCATIONAL COLLEGES IN GUANGXI, CHINA

YIYI CHEN

THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

FACULTY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT  
UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS

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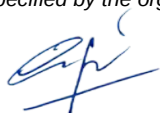
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, I appreciate the support provided by my mother Ms Liu, for my continuing studies for a doctoral degree. She has positively encouraged me in both financial and emotional aspects and she is the person to whom I am most appreciative. I thank her for her selfless love and dedication to me. And my husband Xi ongjing Wei, constantly provides me with positive mental responses and is concerned with my emotions promptly to allow me to be optimistic in my studies.

I appreciate the selfless support I received from my supervisor. He is a wonderfully kind and patient supervisor who has always encouraged me positively and given me confidence in my research. He has also helped me with many challenges besides academic work. He has taught me the importance of a respected teacher.

I would also like to thank Dr. Suhailah Ahmad Shukri, Dr. Puteri Zarina binti Megat Khalid, Dr. Norazilawati binti Abdullah and Dr. Abdull Sukor bin Shaari for the helpful suggestions and comments.

Finally, I would like to thank all my friends (Liyang Huang and her husband Chen Xu, Yanjing Huang, Wentao Zhou, Ziyi He, Xinlu Lu, Nong Hu, Zhenxing Su and Shengquan Nong) for their constantly supporting and encouraging to me.

## ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan rujukan tematik yang komprehensif untuk penambahbaikan kompetensi pengajaran guru Bahasa Inggeris di kolej vokasional tinggi di China dengan menggunakan kajian kaedah penelitian metode campuran eksploratif. Bahagian kuantitatif dari kajian ini memfokus pada persepsi mahasiswa senior tahun pertama tentang lima kompetensi mengajar dalam bahasa Inggeris: pengetahuan dan keterampilan, rekabentuk instruksional, amali mengajar, penilaian pengajaran, dan kebijaksanaan mengajar. Pada tahap ini, para mahasiswa senior dapat memberikan penilaian yang komprehensif dan objektif terhadap setiap tema kompetensi mengajar. Seramai 353 mahasiswa tahun pertama dari lima institusi berbeza yang terdaftar pada bulan September 2021 dan telah menghabiskan semester pertama kursus bahasa Inggeris mereka mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini. Analisis komparatif dari nilai min untuk setiap komponen kompetensi mengajar mengenalpasti tema-tema di mana terdapat kekurangan yang signifikan dalam kompetensi mengajar dari persepsi mahasiswa, dan mengenalpasti kelemahan dalam setiap komponen, terutama dalam amali mengajar dan penilaian. Bahagian kualitatif dari kajian ini, yang menggunakan temuduga separa berstruktur, memfokus pada tema spesifik kompetensi guru, kegiatan pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris aras tinggi, serta pandangan dan saranan untuk meningkatkan kompetensi guru dari 10 mahasiswa senior dari berbagai jurusan dan sekolah. Pada fasa ini, perspektif mahasiswa senior yang lebih mendalam dan spesifik tentang kompetensi guru, serta kegiatan pembelajaran yang mencerminkan faktor-faktor yang terkait dengan kompetensi mengajar, dapat dilihat dengan jelas pada penyediaan strategi yang efektif untuk meningkatkan kompetensi mengajar. Saranan dari kajian ini untuk strategi meningkatkan kompetensi mengajar guru bahasa Inggeris peringkat tinggi didasarkan pada perspektif mahasiswa, dengan fokus pada pengalaman dan perasaan mereka selama kegiatan pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris, menggabungkan perspektif mereka tentang kompetensi mengajar dan akhirnya mensintesis strategi yang efektif. Selain itu, kajian ini memberikan saranan untuk lima komponen terpenting yang diperlukan oleh para pengajar bahasa Inggeris di institusi pendidikan tinggi untuk meningkatkan kompetensi mengajar mereka dalam kerjaya mereka di masa depan, membantu mereka untuk mendapatkan pemahaman yang komprehensif mengenai kekurangan kompetensi mengajar mereka dan menemukan strategi yang tepat untuk memperbaikinya pada waktu yang tepat.

## **THE LANGUAGE LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS ON TEACHING COMPETENCIES OF ENGLISH TEACHERS AT HIGHER VOCATIONAL COLLEGES IN GUANGXI, CHINA**

### **ABSTRACT**

The objective of this study was to provide a comprehensive theme-based reference for the improvement of teaching competences for English teachers in higher vocational colleges in China with an exploratory mixed-methods research design. The quantitative phase of the study focused on first-year higher vocational students' perceptions of five teaching competences in English: knowledge and skills, teaching design, teaching practice, teaching evaluation and teaching wisdom. At this stage, students comprehensively and objectively evaluate the various components of teaching competences. A comparative analysis of the mean values of the components of teaching competences identified items where there were significant deficiencies in teaching competences from the students' perspective and found deficiencies in all components especially teaching practice and teaching evaluation. The qualitative phase of the study, utilizing semi-structured interviews, was concerned with the perceptions and suggestions of 10 higher vocational students from different fields of study and colleges on specific items of teacher competences, higher vocational English learning activities and improving teaching competences. At this stage, higher vocational students' perceptions on teaching competences in a more in-depth and specific manner, and factors related to teaching competencies reflected in learning activities, have a direct impact on strategies to improve teaching competences. This research recommended strategies for improving the teaching competences of English teachers in higher vocational education developed exclusively from the students' perceptions, focusing on their experiences and perceptions of English learning activities, incorporating their perceptions on teaching competences with them, and eventually recommending effective strategies. Furthermore, this research provides recommendations comprising the five most important components of the requirements for English teachers in higher vocational colleges to improve their teaching competences in future career development, helping them to have a comprehensive understanding of the deficiencies of their teaching competences and to promptly develop appropriate strategies for improvement.

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## LIST OF ABRREVIATIONS

|        |                                                                 |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| AKEPT  | Higher Education Leadership Academy                             |
| ASEAN  | Association of Southeast Asian Nations                          |
| HVC    | Higher Vocational College                                       |
| HVE    | Higher Vocational Education                                     |
| HVS    | Higher Vocational Students                                      |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization |

## APPENDIX LIST

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the study focusing on the perceptions of language learners regarding the teaching competences of English teachers at higher vocational colleges in Guangxi, China. Guangxi, an economically developing region, has seen a surge in higher vocational education due to national investment. English proficiency is crucial for students, given Guangxi's involvement in ASEAN. However, HVE students face challenges in English learning, partly due to issues with teachers' competences. This study aims to explore students' perceptions to enhance teaching practices. It outlines the background, problem statement, objectives, research questions, theoretical frameworks, significance, limitations, and operational definitions of the study.

## 1.1 Background

China is currently in a crucial phase of transitioning its development mode and upgrading its industrial structure, highlighting the importance of modernizing vocational education and fostering skilled talent adaptable to societal changes (Dayuan, 2021). With increasing emphasis and investments in Higher Vocational Education (HVE) nationwide, Guangxi is aligning with this trend, benefiting from its autonomy to adapt and reform its HVE system (Li, 2020; Yani, 2020). The uniqueness of Guangxi's HVE lies in its integration with local economic and cultural realities, shifting from quantity to quality-focused development (Jianjun, 2022). As a result, Guangxi's HVE serves as a noteworthy example of regional education development in China (Shiming, 2020). HVE, distinct in its focus on technical education, significantly differs in curriculum, teaching methods, and teacher-student resources from other educational institutions (Qi, 2020). English, a vital subject, is taught across two semesters and is essential in higher vocational colleges (Yunxia, 2020). As China's economic strength attracts more foreign investment and global interaction increases, English proficiency becomes increasingly crucial (Yuhong, 2022).

Amidst social and technological advancements, vocational and technical education (TVET) has garnered increasing scholarly attention globally, recognized for its pivotal role in economic and human resource development (Peike, 2021). Vocational

education is crucial for economic development; the future of manufacturing relies on learners' industrial knowledge and workforce competence at all education levels (Jiagui, 2020). The 1974 UNESCO General Conference recommended Technical and Vocational Education, recognizing it as fundamental for modern civilization and essential for economic and social development worldwide (Min, 2019).

In China, Higher Vocational Education (HVE) operations vary by province and region, tailored to local economic and social needs, teaching principles, and the sustenance of Higher Vocational Colleges (HVCs) (Jianfu, 2019). The characteristics of HVE reflect its unique schooling style and development mode, derived from long-term experience and ongoing practices (Qinglian, 2020). Most of the HVCs in Guangxi were established at the beginning of the 21st century and have relatively weak infrastructure (Xinmin, 2019). The reform of the higher education management system in China in 1998 laid the foundation for the development of HVE. From 1998 onwards, HVE in Guangxi began to develop in a modern way (Can, 2017). Despite its initial challenges, HVE in Guangxi has gained prominence amid national HVE development efforts. The provincial government has prioritized vocational education, partnering with the Ministry of Education to establish a national pilot zone for reform (Xinmin, 2022).

HVE should suit regional economic development. In Guangxi, it should capitalize on local strengths and unique features (Haifeng, 2020). In response to this context, Guangxi has excelled in HVE by aligning with national policies and regional circumstances, and capitalizing on opportunities (Guangyi, 2022). Professional courses are tailored to meet the talent needs of vocational positions, focusing on the practical application of skills in HVE (Huili & Maoyun, 2020). These courses aim to produce frontline workers who can translate technology into productivity (Xiao & Wankun, 2022).

HVE mandates English learning; however, the quality of English teaching in HVE has raised concerns (Bingsen, 2020). This has sparked interest in effective English teaching strategies (Runkui, 2021) to meet the goal of producing practical talents (Wenbo, 2022). The demand for English-proficient professionals is rising due to China's ongoing reforms (Shan, 2020). The 2021 English Language Curriculum Standard for HVE prioritizes workplace communication, multicultural interaction, and independent learning. It aims to develop globally-minded individuals proficient in English for effective workplace communication, underscoring the importance of practical English skills in higher education (Yunxia, 2022). This curriculum suggests that English teaching in HVE should occur in two stages: basic and vocational knowledge, integrating language with occupation or profession, and defining the relationship between knowledge, competence, and quality (Mingchen, 2021).

In addition, English for HVE focuses on developing students' communicative competence and their ability to apply English in various occupational contexts (Qi, 2020). Consequently, HVE curricula teach industry-specific vocabulary and linguistic structures tailored to their vocational fields. This integration of English language and vocational skills aims to meet the global demand for technical expertise (Yao, 2021). The teaching of English supports students' majors, aligns with professional teaching reforms, enhances career prospects, and boosts employability (Yan, 2022).

The HVE English curriculum necessitates teachers with strong language skills to foster students' independent English usage for daily communication and employment-related challenges (Jingyi, 2021). The quality of the English language curriculum is crucial for assessing students' acquisition of necessary skills within a year (Fang, 2022). English teaching in HVCs is more practical than in general higher education, with a service and employment-oriented focus. Vocational English integrates the language with professional contexts, addressing societal needs in the new era (Yangjing, 2021).

In the new era, English language teaching in Guangxi HVE emphasizes cultivating vocational skills to meet societal needs and produce highly skilled talents (Yan, 2020). The goal is to improve students' English skills, particularly in workplace communication. This includes enhancing listening and speaking abilities, fostering an

interest in learning English, and developing self-directed learning capabilities to improve employability (Chuoqiao, 2022).

Exam-oriented education persists for English in Guangxi's HVCs, lagging behind professional curriculum reform in the new era (Qingmei, 2021). Currently, some renowned HVCs in economically developed regions of the country have achieved remarkable results in reforming vocational English teaching (Ying, 2022). However, in less developed HVCs in Guangxi, vocational English teaching reform has not fully commenced or is still in its early stages, presenting significant challenges (Shaofen, 2022). The importance of English teaching in HVE cannot be ignored. For instance, a survey by Kaibao and Lixin (2021) indicated that 87% of employers emphasize English skills for employees. Foreign companies require technical staff with English proficiency for effective communication, offering better pay for those with combined technical and English skills.

The importance of English teaching in higher education extends beyond preparing students for professional roles; it also emphasizes the development of practical skills alongside professional expertise (Xiaomin, 2020). English is crucial for work communication, business collaboration, and document writing due to increasing trade relations and global interconnectedness (Lin, 2020). In Higher Vocational Education (HVE), English teaching must align with socio-economic trends,

emphasizing contemporary relevance and setting new standards to foster genuine comprehension and appreciation of English (Yu, 2022).

For teachers in leading roles in the process of English teaching, teaching competence has a decisive influence on the efficiency of teaching practice (Jie, 2020). Teaching competence is vital for teachers' professional growth, aiming to bolster teaching values, enrich academic culture, meet educational goals, and enhance overall education quality (Qijia, 2022).

Research on teachers' teaching competence is essential for professional development. In China, understanding English teachers' competence requires insights from research on the competence of teachers in various disciplines (Xiaoshu, 2021). When analyzing English teachers' teaching competence and development, it is crucial to integrate research on teachers from other disciplines. Combining these analyses reveals the true state and trends of English teachers' competence and development research (Weihe & Wei, 2022).

The Chinese government emphasizes improving teaching quality in HVE, requiring teachers to uphold professional ethics, possess advanced educational concepts and subject knowledge, and demonstrate high-quality teaching skills (Lin, 2020). The government urges HVCs to create teaching centers tailored to their needs. These centers

should train teachers, reform teaching methods, communicate research findings, and assess teaching quality (Juan, 2022).

Since the 21st century, China has established organizations such as the Teaching Support Centre at China Ocean University, the Teacher Development Centre at Northeast Normal University, and the Teacher (Teaching) Development Centre at Nanjing Normal University, based on foreign university experiences (Le & Chenyao, 2019). The development of national and HVE requires teachers to enhance their teaching competence for personal growth and the progress of HVE (Shufang, 2021).

## 1.2 Problem Statement

For students enrolled in Higher Vocational Colleges (HVCs), mastering English isn't merely a routine task; it's a crucial skill on par with their professional expertise. While English language teaching in HVCs has shown positive strides, there remain notable challenges (Zhang, 2022).

Research reveals several hurdles faced by higher education students (Mei et al., 2021). Many exhibit low self-esteem, which correlates with negative perceptions of their own abilities and self-image. Furthermore, students often lack enthusiasm for

learning, struggle with creative thinking, self-directed learning, psychological resilience, and adaptability, resulting in subpar learning outcomes (Lihua, 2020). These psychological factors, particularly low self-esteem, significantly impact students' motivation and approach to learning. Consequently, a majority of HVE students exhibit reluctance towards learning, irrespective of their academic performance (Lei, 2022).

From a microscopic perspective, signs of student aversion to learning in higher vocational education (HVE) include frequent absenteeism, engagement in distracting activities like sleeping or using mobile phones during class, reluctance to take notes, disruptive behavior, and a general disregard for the teacher's guidance (Xiaojuan, 2021).

Among the compulsory public courses, such as Chinese Mandarin, mathematics, and English, English is often perceived as lacking substantial benefits for students' studies. This lack of awareness regarding the value and significance of English learning significantly contributes to students' resistance towards the English language curriculum (Xiangshun & Xiang, 2022). Vocational skills, essential for successful occupational activities, are developed through practice, knowledge, and experience, embodying a combination of intellectual and motor skills (Yinglin & Yifan, 2022).

Higher education students in China, particularly those in vocational colleges, prioritize technical and practical skills for future employment opportunities. Unlike other professions, English proficiency isn't an immediate requirement for their careers

(Zhijun, 2020). Consequently, many students perceive learning English as unnecessary. To address this challenge and reignite students' interest in English learning, teachers must reconsider their teaching methods through the lens of student perceptions (Xiaojuan, 2021). This study aims to delve into strategies for enhancing English teaching competences, aligning with students' perspectives, thereby fostering a deeper appreciation for English learning among higher education students (Hongmei, 2022).

A critical factor affecting the effectiveness of English language learning and teaching to higher education students is the teaching competence of English teachers (Huili, 2022). The lack of excellent teaching competence among teachers negatively impacts the improvement of English teaching practices and students' motivation to learn English (Liang, 2021). There are significant deficiencies in the teaching competence of many English teachers, highlighting an urgent need for improvement.

Firstly, some English teachers in China do not have a major in English at the undergraduate or postgraduate level but instead have degrees in other arts or science subjects such as pedagogy, chemistry, or physics. Consequently, they have not received systematic and formal training in English language teaching (Qing, 2022). These teachers, however, possess a high level of English language proficiency and excellent skills, demonstrated by scores such as a 7 out of 9 on the IELTS, or high scores on the TOEFL or GMAT, and they often hold a master's or doctoral degree from an English-

speaking country (e.g., the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, New Zealand). These qualifications indicate their competence in learning and using English effectively, thereby deeming them qualified and capable of teaching English to students (Yang, 2022).

Secondly, the teaching methods employed are often singular and outdated, lacking diversity and failing to incorporate contemporary instructional methodologies or pedagogical approaches. This deficiency hampers the ability to engage students in a modern educational environment. It is closely related to the teachers' competence in lesson preparation, organization, and creativity (Yazhen, 2021). While students' poor behavior, such as playing mobile games, chatting, and sleeping during class, can be attributed to subjective factors like their personal mindset and experiences, it is also influenced by the uninteresting and uninspiring teaching methods used in English instruction (Yawen, 2021). The rise of the internet and new technological media (e.g., TikTok and WeChat) has gradually supplanted traditional knowledge dissemination methods, leading students to expect more from their teachers' teaching competences in this new era (Hehua, 2022).

Finally, there are delays in English teachers' summaries of their teaching and feedback on student learning. Evaluating whether the effectiveness of teaching meets the original objectives requires teachers to promptly adjust their methods based on

students' responses and motivation, thus taking responsibility for effective student learning (Tiehui, 2021).

As a compulsory public subject, the English curriculum in HVE represents an expectation for students to acquire the competence to learn and use English. The international development of the country and foreign exchanges necessitate that students have the ability to communicate in English (Shaoliu, 2020). Therefore, it is inevitable that English teaching practices will need to improve in line with the developmental trends of the new era. Faced with negative student behaviors, such as tardiness, early departure, absenteeism, sleeping, spending time on mobile phones, and disrupting teaching, teachers should strive to understand students' perspectives, address weaknesses in their teaching competencies, and enhance the effectiveness of English instruction to ensure that the limited course time produces sustained and positive results (Feng, 2021).

From the perspective of teacher development research, the focus of Chinese researchers has shifted from merely improving the educational status of teachers to enhancing their teaching competence (Xiaoying et al., 2021). Ultimately, the responsibility for improving the quality of English teaching rests on the practices of English teachers (Jieyuan, 2022). The development of teaching competence is central to teachers' professional growth (Huimin, 2022). The most direct way students can

perceive a teacher's professionalism is by observing the teacher's competencies during instruction, such as lesson design and the efficacy of the teaching methods employed (Qingfeng, 2022).

Therefore, an in-depth study of English teachers' teaching competence and its development in Higher Vocational Education (HVE) is conducted to identify the fundamental components of teaching competence and explore its core essence and governing principles (Xiaofen & Xin, 2020). This research aims to guide English teachers in planning English teaching practices scientifically and improving teaching competence comprehensively, thereby enhancing the quality and efficiency of English teaching in higher education.

In the contemporary educational landscape of China, HVE has gained significant momentum and occupies a prominent position. Nonetheless, a notable educational divide persists across provinces, particularly between developed regions and the relatively disadvantaged western provinces (Xilin, 2022). For instance, the educational contrast between Guangdong and Guangxi is stark, evident in terms of educational quality and resources. While Guangxi's higher vocational and technical education sector has shown commendable stability and growth, with increasing student enrollment and expanding institutional infrastructure annually, it still lags behind its

developed counterparts (Xiaoming, 2021). English, as a core subject in HVE, warrants heightened attention and emphasis from educators and students alike.

English teaching practice is not solely an activity for students but also requires the active participation and guidance of teachers. The core components of teachers' professional development include professionalism, professional knowledge, and professional ability. Among these, professional ability is the most crucial factor affecting teaching development (Ling, 2021). With the various competencies required for teaching English in HVE, English teachers can more efficiently complete teaching tasks and foster the development of students' learning abilities (Congmin, 2022).

English language teaching is a participatory process involving both teachers and students. Teachers cannot directly transfer knowledge to students through unidirectional teaching, as this approach is not conducive to effective learning and often results in a traditional and uninteresting educational experience (Xuemei, 2020). English language learning for students is not merely about the content of a textbook or the rote repetition of knowledge. Instead, it involves developing the competence to understand the meaning and value of English language learning and recognizing the advantages it creates for students, which contribute to the enhancement of their learning competences and future employability (Xian, 2021).

From above discussion , the objective of this study is to adopt a multifaceted method for improving English teaching competencies based on students' perceptions on the various components of English teachers' teaching abilities to support students in recognising the value and purpose of learning English.

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

The objectives of this study are developed as follows:

1. To investigate the language learners' perceptions about the teaching competences of English teachers at higher vocational colleges in Guangxi, China.
2. To examine the language learners' learning activities in the English classes at higher vocational colleges in Guangxi, China.
3. To recommend strategies for the improvement of teaching competences of higher vocational English teachers based on language learners' perceptions in the new era.

## 1.4 Research Question

The research questions were formulated in to achieve the research objectives. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the language learners' perceptions on the teaching competences of English teachers at higher vocational colleges in Guangxi, China?
2. What are the language learners' perceptions about the learning activities of the English curriculum at higher vocational colleges in Guangxi, China?
3. What are the strategies for improving the teaching competences of higher vocational English teachers that satisfy the needs of students in the new era in

Guangxi, China?

## 1.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this research elucidates the interplay between the variables under investigation. The primary dependent variable, 'Teaching competences of English teachers,' is influenced by two key independent variables: 'Language learners' perceptions on the learning activities' and 'Language learners' perceptions on the teaching competences.'

The conceptual framework posits that language learners' perceptions of learning activities and teaching competence directly or indirectly influence the development of English teachers' teaching competence in higher vocational institutions in Guangxi, China. Through comprehensive understanding and meticulous analysis of these perceptions, the research endeavors to furnish profound insights into the determinants of efficacious teaching within the confines of this educational milieu.

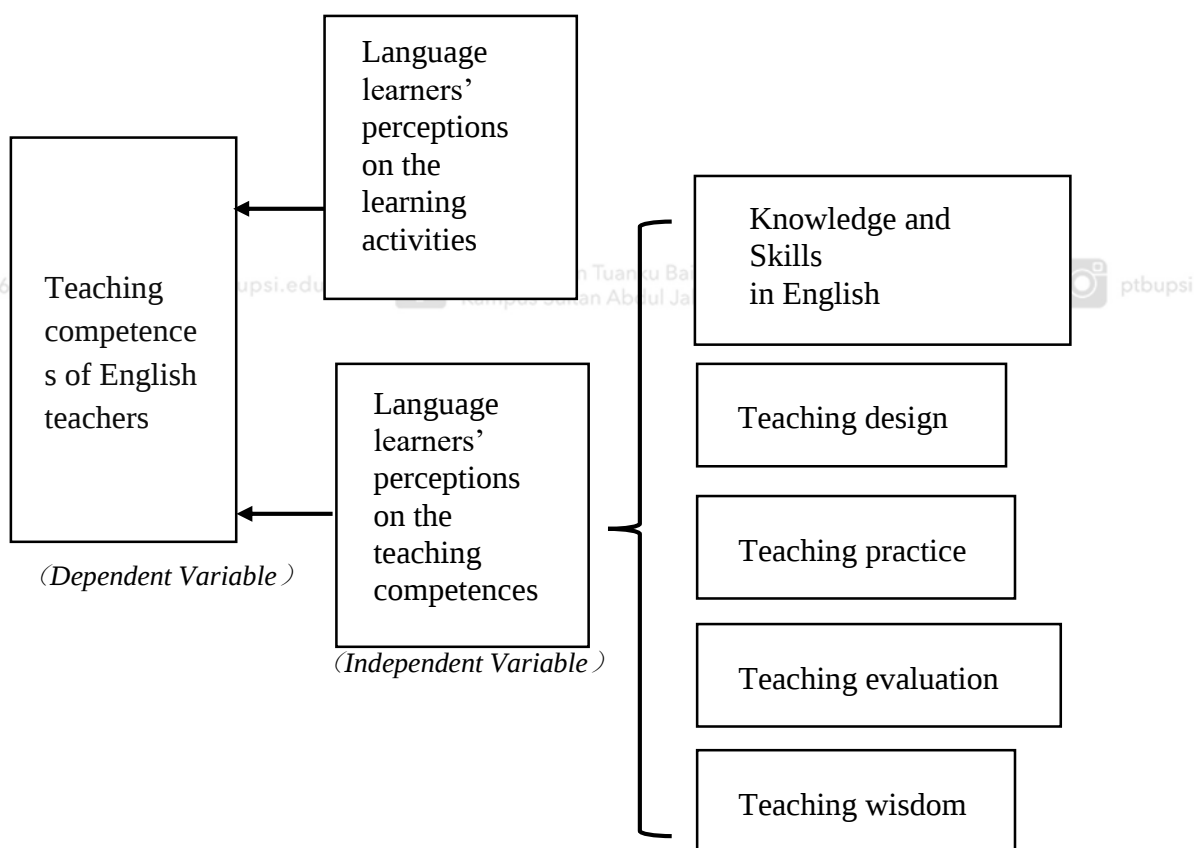


Figure 1.1. Conceptual Framework

## 1.6 Theoretical Framework

### 1.6.1 The Humanistic Teaching and Learning theory of Rogers

Rogers argues that teaching and learning in the classes is not determined by the teacher, regarding the content that is taught, the methods of teaching and learning, the duration of teaching and learning, and all aspects of teaching and learning assessment, it is determined by the students or other aspects of their interests, experiences, intentions and needs (Siying, 2020). The objective of teachers in teaching is to create a learning environment that facilitates the stimulation, assessment and evaluation of emerging perceptual processes and supports students in understanding their individual needs and values in order to effectively inform their own educational decisions (Yinping, 2020). The teacher in a non-directive teaching process is not present as an authority, merely as a facilitator of learning, who acts as a facilitator to direct the learning of the students (Saidan, 2020).

According to Rogers, the word ‘teacher’ conveys the impression of a person who distributes knowledge to students, hence Rogers uses the term facilitator instead of teacher (Lingjun , 2020). Rogers argues that the teacher is not a selector, organiser, planner, director, decider and assessor in the teaching process, a facilitator, encourager, helper, mentor, and friend of the students (Feng, 2021). Teachers should consider their

students as unique persons with their personal emotions, rather than as vessels for the transmission of certain knowledge (Lilin, 2020). The perspective of teaching and learning within humanistic theory emphasises the respect, attention and acceptance that teachers provide to their students. Teacher respect students' emotions and opinions towards teaching and learning, are concerned for their physical and mental health, and accept students' individual values and emotional expressions (Junming, 2019).

In addition, teachers provide students with genuine understanding, and teachers develop a deep appreciation of students' internal responses to learning and understand their learning processes (Xuejiao, 2020). A student-centered atmosphere is created in the classes, in which the teacher is the instructor of learning, and the student is the main subject of the learning process (Lingli, 2022). In conclusion, the humanistic theory of Rogers has impacted on traditional educational theories by advocating student-centered 'meaningful and liberal learning' in educational practice. It highlights the significance and value of emotion in teaching and learning and creates a new model of teaching and learning in which informed and coordinated activity is the primary focus, with emotion as the basic motivation for teaching and learning.

With the perfection of the student's 'self' at its heart, it emphasises the crucial importance of interpersonal interaction in the teaching process, and the content and methods of teaching are geared towards the formation and development of interpersonal



relationships between teacher and student and between students in the classes (Guoyuan, 2020). In addition, the center of the teaching experience must be transformed from the teacher to the student, with the interest, emotion, experience, and behaviour of the student as the principal subject of the teaching process (Huan, 2021). Influenced by the humanistic teaching and learning theories, Rogers developed the ‘non-directive’ model of teaching and learning. The theoretical assumption of the ‘non-directive’ model is that students are comfortable taking responsibility for their own learning (Defu, 2020). Success in learning depends on teachers and students sharing certain ideas openly and having a desire to share ideas honestly with each other.



Rogers believed that positive relationships enable growth, and that instruction should therefore be based on the concept of relationships rather than on the concepts, thought processes or other sources of reasoning in the textbook (Lin, 2019). This kind of instruction is not a direct order to the student, not teaching him/her how to learn, rather it provides the means of learning and leaves it up to the student to decide how to learn (Lichao, 2019). In teaching, the teacher is merely an advisor, playing the role of a facilitator, taking part in discussions at the request of the students. The teacher’s role is that of a guide to assist the students in their learning, to solve problems, not to operate (Yunxiao, 2021). At the same time, the teacher plays the role of facilitator, abandoning the guidance that replaces student thinking in traditional education, and teaching with the goal of promoting students’ self-fulfillment (Chun, 2021).



This study will combine Rogers' humanistic theory of teaching and learning with a non-directive model of teaching and learning to form a theoretical framework for directing the research and insist on exploring the improvement and enhancement of English teaching in higher vocational level from the students' perspective.

### **1.6.2 Teacher Professional Development Theory**

This study uses the three major theoretical systems of teacher competence based on the teacher professional development theory, which is summarised by Xudong (2011), as the basic theoretical framework to explore the basic structure of teaching competence and its development for English teachers.

| Theoretical Categories                  | Competence Categories                                                                    | Competence Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| In the context of competence categories | General competence                                                                       | Competences that are needed in a variety of activities. They include observation, memory, abstraction, imagination, and creativity.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|                                         | Special competence                                                                       | Competences that are shown in certain professional activities. For example, teaching competitions.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|                                         | Imitative competence                                                                     | The competence to learn various knowledge by observing the behavior of colleagues and then reacting in the same way.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|                                         | Cognitive competence                                                                     | The competence of the brain to process, store, and extract information. Such as intelligence, observation, memory, and imagination.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|                                         | Creative competence                                                                      | The competence to generate new ideas and produce new outcomes.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|                                         | Operational competence                                                                   | The competence to operate one's own body to perform various activities. For example, teaching in the classes and writing on the blackboard.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| In the context of competence structure  | The competence structure of Gardner's multiple intelligences                             | Linguistic, Musical, Logical-mathematical, Spatial, Bodily-kinesthetic, Intrapersonal, Naturalist.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|                                         | The competence structure of Guilford's three-dimensional structure model of intelligence | The three dimensions of the intellectual structure: Content (auditory, visual, symbolic, semantic, and behavioral), which is the material for intellectual activity. Operations (cognition, memory, divergent thinking, convergent thinking, and evaluation), which are the processes of intellectual activity. The product of the intellect are the results of the operations of the intellect. |

Figure 1.2. Teacher competence theory based on teacher professional development

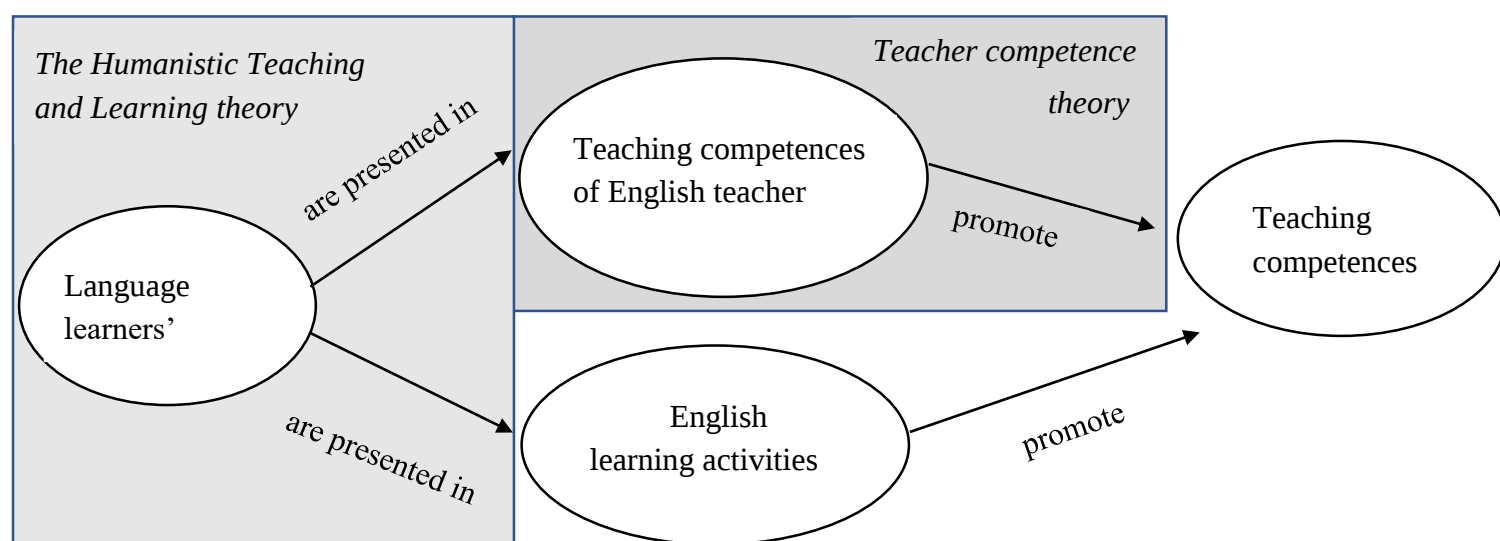


Figure 1.3. Theoretical Framework

### 1.7 Significant of the study

This study will provide a theoretical and practical contribution to the academic literature and to the teaching of English in . From a theoretical contribution perspective, this study will present a broader perspective and comprehensive recommendations for improving the effectiveness of English language teaching at HVE, focusing on the improvement of traditional teaching methods.

By considering the authentic perceptions of HVE students towards the English curriculum and teaching, it will directly explain the various learning situations that lead to the emergence of students in English teaching, the reasons why students have different learning behaviours in English teaching, and the positive and negative effects

of these situations on English teaching, and finally search for appropriate English teaching methods to solve the negative problems.

Therefore, this study will contribute to the relatively limited literature on improving English language teaching in the context of evolving in Guangxi and to research on teaching competencies. In addition, the results of this study will provide an important practical research contribution to English language teachers who are interested in addressing the negative aspects of English language teaching practice. This study will provide the following practical contributions:

1. It will comprehensively contribute to English language teachers and college administrators to better understand what higher vocational language learners thought towards English language teaching, and to make effective improvements for new variations of traditional English language teaching methods. It will help to strengthen the English teachers in HVE to consider English teaching at a deeper level, thereby further clarifying the feasibility and necessity of implementing vocational English teaching, promoting further improvement in the quality of English teaching, and ultimately achieving the purpose of English teaching for professional services and providing a strong guarantee for students' future employment.

2. The study will assist English teachers and college administrators in developing new and effective teaching methods to meet the multiple demands of language learners for English learning and teaching, and to motivate them to continually raise their enthusiasm and expectations for English language learning and ultimately to become proficient in the use of the English language they have learned.
3. The study of teaching competencies and development involves various aspects and is not limited to the problems of individual teachers. By studying aspects related to the teaching competence and development of English teachers in higher education, it is possible to find solutions to relevant problems and construct new models that could serve as a reference for English teachers in planning their teaching, making full use of various opportunities such as teacher competency training to achieve the development of teaching practice, constructing their own teaching competence system, and better developing their teaching competence. The ultimate objective is to improve the effectiveness and quality of English teaching, and to train more highly qualified people for the country.
4. Improving the shortcomings of passive learning and the negative learning of students in English language teaching in HVE. Vocational English teaching is an organic integration of language learning and vocational skills, thereby improving learners' motivation, developing students' independent learning skills, and increasing the efficiency of English learning.

5. This study will provide language learners with a deeper understanding of the importance and necessity of English language learning in the process of employment in the future. In addition to the acquisition of applied and practical skills being a significant focus of study in HVE, the learning of knowledge is also an effective guarantee of enhancing an individual's employ competence successfully.
6. The teaching reform is an essential driving force for the development of HVE. Promoting the reform of English teaching in HVE, organically integrating English teaching with vocational education, and improving the quality of teaching, therefore significantly improving the quality of education, is of great practical importance to the improvement of the quality of human resources training.

## 1.8 Study Limitations

As language learners, higher education students' authentic perceptions of English language teaching competence may be influenced by variables other than the type of institution the student attends. These may be the socio-economic status of the parents, the influence of the parents on their children's education (such as their level of education and role models), and the economic conditions of the family, which could

potentially be a threat to internal validity. This aspect of the challenge is reduced by knowing in advance the external conditions such as the student's family background and choosing a different family economic level background and family educational level background.

The data collection tools for all variables in the study were mainly the use of questionnaires and interperceptions. As Guangxi is a region occupying a large area, it was not possible to select a large number of colleges spread across various cities and use multiple responsible methods to collect data due to scope, time, transportation and financial constraints, which proved to be a great challenge, and therefore specific research methods were conducted only with students from selected colleges.

However, several study participants probably hesitated to answer the questionnaire for fear that they would be punished by their teachers or colleges for incorrect statements, and it possibly could have been difficult to ascertain whether all the information provided by the students about themselves was accurate. The researcher is expected to assure participants of the confidentiality and anonymity of their information, while encouraging them to feel comfortable and safe, as this study is purely for academic purposes.

Moreover, as there are very limited references to literature on students' ideas, opinions, and other aspects of English language teaching practice in the area of in Guangxi, this study will have to be maximised by referring to other literature related to the subject, for example, where the topic of study is teaching English at higher vocational level, higher vocational students, or other aspects. Finally, there is no completely uniform standard for the components of English teachers' teaching competence, and the researcher could only summarise a list of teaching competences applicable to the subject of this study based on collating and analysing the framework and content of teaching competences proposed by various educational scholars.

## **1.9 Operational Definition**

### **1.9.1 Higher vocational education**

Chinese researchers have developed their own unique definitions of higher education. HVE is a specific type of higher education that focuses on the theory of scientific and technical disciplines and related technical skills based on high school education, as well as vocational skills training and related theoretical studies. (Xiaoli, 2019). YING (2019) emphasises that it is an education with the objective of training people for practical and technical applications and is part of the higher education.

Moreover, higher vocational and technical education is an important part of higher education and is high-level vocational education, which is practically oriented, aims at training technically applied talents and is oriented to specific occupations rather than to disciplines (Yuanli, 2019). As mentioned above, HVE is a special category of higher education aiming to cultivate technical and application-oriented talents who have mastered the basic theories and expertise of their specialties, have comprehensive quality and professional competence to engage in the practical work of their specialties, and work in the front line of production, construction, management, and service.

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#### **1.9.2 Language learner**

In this research, the main language learner in English language learning in HVE are students who have graduated from secondary vocational and technical schools, graduates of general high schools and intermediate technical workers with the appropriate level of education and practical experience in the field, and the duration of study for these students is two to three years. A small number of students are enrolled in middle school and the duration of study is 5 years (Qili, 2020).

### 1.9.3 Perceptions of language learners

Language learners' personal opinions, ideas or attitudes about the factors involved in the English language curriculum, including mainly the teaching content, the teaching materials, professionalism of the teachers, the teachers' teaching approaches, the learning and teaching environment. It involves the learners' personal understanding and perception of the English language curriculum in general.

### 1.9.4 Teaching practice

The teaching practice is the conscious human activity of developing human beings. In a broad sense, it refers to all activities that enhance human knowledge, skills, physical health and the formation or modification of human consciousness. In a narrower sense, it refers to the activities of school educators who exert a purposeful, planned, and organised teaching influence on the mind and body of the educated. The educator is the subject of educational practice; the educated is the object of educational practice and at the same time exists in educational practice as the subject of learning activities; the content, methods, organisation and various educational facilities and equipment of teaching are the means of teaching practice.

### 1.9.5 English teaching approach

The teaching methods, modes and materials used by teachers and students in collaborative activities to accomplish certain English language teaching objectives. The quality of English language teaching is frequently associated with the teaching approaches adopted, which determines the extent to which students acquire knowledge, acquire skills, and develop competencies.

### 1.9.6 Teaching competence

The teacher can analyse the learning conditions related to the content of the course and direct the student learning process based on continuous judgement (Mohammed, 2021). The teacher is able to make decisions about the teaching of the course in relation to the learning objectives (Khamroev, 2021). The competence to develop learning arrangements that motivate students to participate actively in their learning based on an analysis of learning prerequisites, individual learning processes and learning objectives (Xiaoshi, 2020). The competence to provide effective lesson management for the successful conduct of teaching and learning (Lin, 2020).

### 1.10 Conclusions

Located in an economically backward region of southwest China, Guangxi has relatively weaker infrastructure and is behind other developed provinces in terms of progress in development. However, with the high level of national interest and investment in HVE, Guangxi immediately followed this trend and was strategically prioritised for development.

English is used in various fields including education, trade and economy.

Guangxi's participation in the ASEAN requires students to have a command of English to access numerous employment opportunities. However, HVE students have multiple problems in learning English. These students have less interest and enthusiasm in learning, avoid learning or even hate learning. More importantly, there is also a problem with the teaching competence of English teachers. Teachers' teaching competence is directly related to the effectiveness of teaching and students' motivation to learn. Therefore, the traditional model of teachers directly explaining their knowledge does not support students' learning outcomes, and teachers require to improve their own teaching competence and hence enhance teaching practice.

To innovate and improve the traditional English teaching models and methods available, to enhance students' English learning efficiency and to raise students'

awareness of the importance and necessity of English learning for future life, this study explores HVE students' real perceptions towards English teaching and learning, as well as their opinions and suggestions, using Rogers' humanistic theory and teacher professional development theory as a framework and three research questions related to teaching competences and students. This study comprehensively explores HVE students' actual perceptions of English teachers' teaching competences, and their opinions and suggestions.