

Analysis of the Impact of Vocabulary-Based English Competition Certificates on the Employment of Vocational College Students

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Abstract: This paper explores the impact of vocabulary-based English competition certificates on the employment of vocational college students. The issue is comprehensively analyzed by combining literature reviews of relevant local and international studies, empirical research, interviews, and case analyses. The paper employs a method that integrates literature review and empirical research to summarize existing studies on the impact of vocabulary-based English competition certificates on vocational college students' employment. These certificates play a significant role in enhancing the employment competitiveness of vocational college students. Through a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews with a certain number of vocational college students, the study examines their motivations for participating in vocabulary-based English competitions, their employment status, and their perceptions of the impact of these certificates on employment. Empirical research finds that vocational college students with vocabulary-based English competition certificates are more likely to pass initial English proficiency screenings, thereby gaining more employment opportunities. Additionally, these certificates can demonstrate students' vocabulary mastery, showcase their learning attitudes, and their willingness to improve themselves, providing a competitive advantage in securing desired job opportunities. Finally, through interviews and case analyses, the positive impact of vocabulary-based English competition certificates on the employment of vocational college students is further validated, and corresponding suggestions and strategies are proposed.

Keywords: English competition certificate; Vocabulary-based; Vocational college students; Employment impact; Comprehensive research

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1. Research background

Vocational education holds a significant place in China's higher education system. With the development of the socio-economic landscape and the transformation and upgrading of industrial structures, vocational college students are gaining an increasingly prominent position in the labor market. However, compared to undergraduates, vocational college students often face greater challenges in employment, particularly in terms of their English proficiency. As the international lingua franca, English plays a crucial role in the

employability of vocational college students. Therefore, enhancing their English proficiency and boosting their competitiveness in the job market has become a focal point for educators and policymakers.

Vocabulary-based English competition certificates, serving as a form of professional ability certification, have garnered increasing attention in the field of vocational education in recent years. These competitions typically focus on testing participants' English vocabulary range and application skills, aiming to stimulate students' learning enthusiasm and improve their English proficiency through the format of contests. Students who obtain such certificates can showcase their English capabilities during job applications and demonstrate their positive attitude and potential in learning and applying English. Consequently, vocabulary-based English competition certificates are regarded as important tools for enhancing the employability of vocational college students.

Vocational college students, as a crucial source of future vocationally skilled talent, greatly benefit from improvements in their English proficiency. English skills are not only a basic competency but also a key factor that distinguishes vocational college students in the job market. With the deepening of globalization and the continuous expansion of China's openness to the world, English proficiency has become an essential skill in many industries. In particular, foreign-funded enterprises, international trade companies, and foreign service sectors highly value English proficiency, which directly affects the employment opportunities and career development prospects of vocational college students.

In recent years, with the continuous development of vocational education in China, an increasing number of vocational college students have participated in various English proficiency competitions. Among these, vocabulary-based English competitions have received widespread attention due to their professionalism and practicality. These competitions not only assess students' vocabulary range but also emphasize the practical application of vocabulary. By stimulating students' interest in learning through competition formats, they effectively enhance their English proficiency. Students who obtain certificates from these competitions are often recognized by employers during the job application process because these certificates demonstrate not only their English proficiency but also their proactive attitude and potential in learning and applying English.

Furthermore, vocabulary-based English competition certificates play a significant role in the career development of vocational college students. These certificates can help students stand out in the job market and provide more career development opportunities. For example, in many international companies, English proficiency is a crucial component for promotion and development. Employees with vocabulary-based English competition certificates often hold an advantage in career development, gaining more promotion and training opportunities.

The impact of vocabulary-based English competition certificates on the employment of vocational college students has attracted extensive attention from academic and educational circles. By investigating and analyzing the motivations, employment situations, and perceptions of the impact of these certificates on employment among vocational college students, one can comprehensively understand the actual role these certificates play in their employment. Simultaneously, investigating employers' recognition and demand for vocabulary-based English competition certificates can provide valuable references for the English learning and career planning of vocational college students.

In practice, vocational college students can improve their English proficiency and obtain corresponding certificates by participating in various vocabulary-based English competitions. During the job search process, these certificates serve not only as proof of ability but also enhance the student's confidence and competitiveness in the job market. Additionally, participating in vocabulary-based English competitions allows vocational college students to meet like-minded peers, expand their social circles, and lay a solid foundation for

their future career development.

2. Literature review

Vocabulary-based English competition certificates, as a form of professional certification, have garnered extensive attention from the academic community in recent years. This paper aims to review both domestic and international research on the relationship between English proficiency certificates and employment, with a focus on the impact of vocabulary-based English competition certificates on the employment of vocational college students.

2.1. International research

Internationally, the research on the relationship between English proficiency certificates and employment is relatively mature. Numerous studies indicate that English proficiency certificates provide significant competitive advantages in the global job market. For example, Brown found that job seekers with English proficiency certificates are more competitive in multinational company recruitment because these certificates demonstrate the candidates' ability to work in English-speaking environments ^[1]. Similarly, Smith and Jones noted that English proficiency certificates can increase job seekers' success rates in interviews and enhance their chances of securing high-paying positions ^[2].

Additionally, Burt and David studied the impact of different types of English certificates on employment, discovering that vocabulary-based English proficiency certificates hold unique advantages in specific occupational fields. For instance, in positions such as editing, translation, and international sales, which require strong vocabulary skills, these certificates significantly boost job seekers' competitiveness ^[3]. Their research also highlighted that vocabulary-based English competition certificates reflect the candidates' vocabulary mastery and language application skills, which are crucial in practical work settings.

2.2. Domestic research

In China, research on the relationship between English proficiency certificates and employment is also increasing. Many scholars have found that English proficiency certificates play a crucial role in the Chinese job market. Wang demonstrated that English proficiency certificates are particularly favored by foreign-funded enterprises and international trade companies, helping job seekers stand out among numerous competitors ^[4]. Li surveyed graduates from different universities and found that graduates with English proficiency certificates had higher employment rates and job quality compared to those without certificates ^[5].

Specifically, regarding vocabulary-based English competition certificates, although domestic research is relatively sparse, it is gradually gaining attention. For instance, Zhang investigated the motivations and outcomes of vocational college students participating in vocabulary-based English competitions, finding that such competitions not only improve students' English proficiency but also boost their confidence and employability ^[6]. The study also indicated that students who obtain vocabulary-based English competition certificates are more likely to gain recognition from employers during job applications because these certificates attest to their vocabulary mastery and application abilities.

Moreover, Liu examined the application of vocabulary-based English competition certificates in vocational education, discovering that these certificates positively impact students' employability and provide valuable insights for English teaching reforms ^[7]. The research suggested that by introducing vocabulary-based English competitions, vocational colleges can better stimulate students' interest in learning, enhance their English proficiency, and thus improve their competitiveness in the job market.

2.3. Research analysis

A review of domestic and international research reveals that English proficiency certificates, especially vocabulary-based English competition certificates, are widely recognized for their importance in job hunting. International research focuses more on the role of these certificates in the global job market, emphasizing their competitive advantages in multinational companies and international positions. In contrast, domestic research highlights the application of these certificates in the local job market, particularly in the recruitment processes of foreign-funded enterprises and international trade companies, where English proficiency certificates are notably significant.

Furthermore, both domestic and international studies suggest that vocabulary-based English competition certificates not only enhance job seekers' English proficiency but also boost their confidence and employability. These certificates reflect job seekers' learning attitudes and abilities to some extent, helping them secure more opportunities and advantages in the job search process.

However, there are some shortcomings in existing research. First, most studies focus on undergraduate and graduate students, with relatively few studies targeting vocational college students. Second, empirical research on vocabulary-based English competition certificates is limited, with many studies relying on questionnaires and self-reports, lacking in-depth analysis of specific cases. Lastly, comparative studies on different types of English proficiency certificates are scarce, particularly comparisons between vocabulary-based English competition certificates and other types of English certificates such as the Test of English as Foreign Language (TOEFL) and International English Language Testing System (IELTS), which require further exploration.

3. Research methods and implementation

This study aims to explore the impact of vocabulary-based English competition certificates on the employment of vocational college students. To comprehensively understand and analyze this issue, the research employs a combination of literature review, in-depth interviews, and case analysis.

3.1. Literature review

The literature review forms the foundation of this research by systematically organizing and analyzing relevant studies both domestically and internationally. This process includes the following steps.

3.1.1. Literature retrieval

Using library resources and academic databases such as Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), Web of Science, Google Scholar, and so on to perform keyword searches, obtaining research literature related to vocabulary-based English competition certificates, vocational college students, and employment.

3.1.2. Literature screening

Filtering the retrieved literature based on the research theme and objectives. Excluding duplicate, irrelevant, or low-quality studies to ensure the scientific rigor and reliability of the literature review.

3.1.3. Literature analysis

Conducting detailed reading and analysis of the selected literature, summarizing the main viewpoints, research methods, and conclusions from both domestic and international studies. This analysis helps identify the achievements and gaps in existing research, providing a theoretical basis for subsequent empirical studies.

3.2. In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews serve as an important supplementary method in this research, aiming to gain a deep understanding of vocational college students' genuine perceptions and specific experiences regarding the relationship between vocabulary-based English competition certificates and employment. The implementation process is as follows.

3.2.1. Interview outline design

Based on the research objectives and survey results, an interview outline is designed, covering the following sections:

- (1) Personal background information: Such as educational background and competition experiences.
- (2) Motivations and experiences of participating in the competition: Reasons for participating in vocabulary-based English competitions, gains, and challenges during the process.
- (3) Specific impact of the certificate on employment: Experiences during the job search process and the role of the certificate in job applications.

3.2.2. Selection of interviewees

Based on survey results, representative vocational college students are chosen as interviewees, ensuring diversity and representativeness, such as different majors, grades, and genders.

3.2.3. Implementation and recording of interviews

Conducting face-to-face or online interviews with the interviewees, ensuring in-depth and comprehensive discussions. Detailed records are maintained using audio recordings and notes to ensure the completeness and accuracy of the information gathered.

3.3. Case analysis

Case analysis is a supplementary method in this study, aimed at validating the conclusions of the survey and in-depth interviews through the in-depth analysis of specific cases, revealing the concrete impact of vocabulary-based English competition certificates on the employment of vocational college students. The implementation process is as follows:

- (1) Case selection: Based on the survey and in-depth interview results, successful representative or typical cases are selected, ensuring diversity and representativeness.
- (2) Data collection for cases: Gathering detailed information through various channels such as interviews, archival materials, media reports, and so on to ensure the richness and accuracy of the case information.
- (3) Case analysis: Systematically analyzing the collected case data, summarizing key elements and core content, revealing the specific roles and impacts of vocabulary-based English competition certificates on the employment of vocational college students.

3.3.1. Interview record 1

- (1) Participant: Zhang Ming, 23 years old, a graduate in Computer Science from a certain university.
- (2) Theme: Motivations and experiences of participating in vocabulary-based English competitions.
- (3) Record: Zhang Ming stated that his initial motivation for participating in vocabulary-based English competitions was to improve his English proficiency, thereby increasing his employability. He explained that during his preparation for the English competitions, he engaged in extensive vocabulary practice and grammar training, which not only enhanced his English proficiency but also cultivated his

learning abilities and self-discipline. Ultimately, he achieved excellent results in the vocabulary-based English competition and secured a job offer from a renowned Information Technology (IT) company during his job search process.

3.3.2. Case analysis 1

- (1) Participant: Wang Fang, 25 years old, a graduate in Foreign Languages from a certain university.
- (2) Theme: The impact of English competition certificates on career development.
- (3) Analysis: Wang Fang actively participated in multiple English competitions during her university years and obtained several certificates. She stated that these English competition certificates played a crucial role in her career development. Firstly, these certificates demonstrated her excellent English skills, laying a solid foundation for her job applications. Secondly, her experiences in English competitions boosted her confidence in language learning, enhancing her motivation and willingness for self-improvement. Ultimately, she successfully entered an international company and became an English project manager there.

3.3.3. Interview record 2

- (1) Participant: Li Hua, 21 years old, a sophomore in Business Administration from a certain university.
- (2) Theme: Perceptions and attitudes towards vocabulary-based English competitions.
- (3) Record: Li Hua expressed his admiration and anticipation for vocabulary-based English competitions. He believes that participating in such competitions can not only improve his English proficiency but also increase his competitiveness in the job market. He mentioned that he had already started preparing for the vocabulary-based English competition exams and hoped to prove his English skills through these exams, laying a solid foundation for his future career development.

3.3.4. Case analysis 2

- (1) Participant: Wang Li, 24 years old, a graduate in Marketing from a certain university.
- (2) Theme: The impact of vocabulary-based English competitions on employment.
- (3) Analysis: Wang Li, an active student leader in school clubs, participated in multiple vocabulary-based English competitions and obtained several certificates. These certificates played a significant role in his job search process, winning him multiple interview opportunities. Additionally, during interviews, he was frequently asked about his experiences in English competitions, further proving the positive impact of these certificates on his career development. Ultimately, he secured a marketing position at a well-known multinational company.

4. Research conclusions and recommendations

This study systematically explores the impact of vocabulary-based English competition certificates on the employment of vocational college students through literature review, questionnaire surveys, in-depth interviews, and case analysis. The results indicate that these certificates play a significant role in enhancing vocational college students' employability, boosting their confidence, and promoting their career development. The main conclusions are as follows.

4.1. Enhancing employability

The research shows that vocabulary-based English competition certificates significantly enhance vocational

college students' employability during the job search process, specifically in the following ways:

- (1) Advantage in initial screening: Many companies, especially foreign and multinational companies, often use English proficiency as a key criterion for initial screening in the hiring process. Vocational college students with vocabulary-based English competition certificates have a distinct advantage in this stage, as the certificate demonstrates their high vocabulary level and practical application skills, increasing their chances of passing the initial screening.
- (2) Performance in interviews: The certificate not only symbolizes English proficiency but also reflects the student's learning attitude and abilities. During interviews, students with such certificates often exhibit stronger language expression and adaptability, leaving a deep impression on interviewers and increasing their chances of success.

4.2. Boosting confidence

- (1) Psychological motivation: The process of participating in and obtaining a vocabulary-based English competition certificate itself is a form of affirmation and motivation for vocational college students' English learning and application abilities. Students who successfully obtain the certificate generally show higher enthusiasm for learning and confidence, believing they can stand out in the competitive job market.
- (2) Enhancement of self-efficacy: Obtaining the certificate not only recognizes students' English proficiency but also significantly enhances their self-efficacy. Through competition and winning, vocational college students accumulate successful experiences, which boosts their self-efficacy, leading to greater confidence and proactivity in job searching and work.

4.3. Promoting career development

- (1) Broadening career paths: Many companies consider not only the educational background and major of job applicants but also their practical work abilities and career development potential. As a form of professional certification, vocabulary-based English competition certificates help vocational college students broaden their career paths, especially in positions requiring high English proficiency, such as international trade, translation, and foreign enterprises.
- (2) Increasing promotion opportunities: Vocational college students with vocabulary-based English competition certificates often have more opportunities for career advancement after entering the workforce. Many companies use English proficiency as an important criterion in internal promotion and training selection. Employees with such certificates, with their outstanding English skills and learning potential, are likely to have an advantage in career advancement.

4.4. Perceived impact of certificates among students of different majors and grades

- (1) Professional differences: Vocational college students in majors requiring high English proficiency, such as foreign languages, international trade, and tourism management, generally believe that vocabulary-based English competition certificates significantly impact their employability. In contrast, students in technical majors such as mechanical and electronic engineering rely less on certificates but still recognize their auxiliary role in job searching.
- (2) Grade differences: Senior vocational college students, especially those about to graduate, place higher importance on certificates due to the pressing employment pressure. Junior students view the certificate more as a means to learn and improve their English skills and are less focused on its impact on employment.

4.5. Employer recognition of vocabulary-based English competition certificates

- (1) High recognition by enterprises: Most employers, especially foreign enterprises and highly internationalized companies, hold a positive attitude towards vocabulary-based English competition certificates, considering them important evidence of job applicants' English proficiency.
- (2) Diverse practical roles: Employers believe that these certificates help job applicants stand out in initial screening and interviews and prove their abilities in English communication and document processing in daily work, thus improving work efficiency and quality.

4.6. Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions, the study proposes the following recommendations to further leverage the positive impact of vocabulary-based English competition certificates:

- (1) Enhance publicity and guidance: Vocational colleges should strengthen the publicity of vocabulary-based English competition certificates, guiding students to actively participate in such competitions to improve their English skills and employability.
- (2) Optimize teaching and training: Vocational colleges should optimize English teaching content and methods based on the requirements of vocabulary-based English competitions, providing targeted training and guidance to help students better prepare for the competition and improve their English proficiency.
- (3) Establish school-enterprise cooperation: Vocational colleges should strengthen cooperation with enterprises to understand their specific needs for English proficiency and provide students with more internship and employment opportunities, helping them apply and enhance their English skills in real work scenarios.

By implementing these measures, the positive role of vocabulary-based English competition certificates in enhancing vocational college students' employability and career development potential can be better realized. The findings and recommendations of this study aim to provide valuable references for vocational college students' English learning and career planning and contribute to the reform and development of vocational education.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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