Eurasian Journal of Educational Research
www.ejer.com.tr

Linking Second Language Acquisition Theories to Practice in English Education for Technical Vocational Learners

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

Background: This research investigates the integration of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories within vocational English education, with particular emphasis on Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Swain's Output Hypothesis, and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. Given that vocational learners require language proficiency within specific professional contexts, SLA-informed instructional approaches, including task-based language teaching (TBLT) and communicative language teaching (CLT), are proposed to enhance practical language application in vocational settings. **Objectives:** The study seeks to examine the applicability of SLA theories to vocational English education, determine pedagogical strategies that effectively facilitate language acquisition among technical learners, and assess the challenges and best practices associated with implementing SLA-based methodologies within vocational learning environments. **Methods:** A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was undertaken in accordance with the PRISMA framework. Relevant studies were sourced from JSTOR, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, applying inclusion criteria that emphasised peer-reviewed research, SLA pedagogy, and vocational English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts. **Results:** The review indicated that various SLA-based strategies, such as peer-assisted learning, sector-specific ESL training, professional development programmes, and multimodal instructional tools, were largely effective. Identified challenges encompassed inadequately trained teaching personnel, misalignment of curricula, and limited opportunities for learners to engage with authentic language exposure. **Conclusion:** The findings underscore the importance of targeted teacher training, policy-driven interventions, and the systematic incorporation of SLA theories and ESL practices into vocational curricula to enhance learners' English language proficiency and workplace communication capabilities.

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Introduction

The field of SLA has experienced considerable expansion in both theoretical and practical domains, particularly in transitioning from English as a Foreign Language to technical and vocational contexts. This research employs SLA theories as its theoretical framework, emphasising Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Swain's Output Hypothesis, and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. These theories address the roles of input, output, interaction, and sociocultural factors in language learning (Krashen, 1982; Swain, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978). Consequently, their application is particularly pertinent for vocational education, as technical learners require specialised language instruction to communicate effectively within their professional domains.

The use of ESL extends beyond basic communicative competence in vocational settings. SLA-informed approaches are therefore highly relevant, as they facilitate professional advancement and cross-sectoral communication in English (Wu, 2023). Recent research indicates that language teaching strategies should align with vocational requirements; TBLT and content and language-integrated learning (CLIL) have been suggested as appropriate for such learners (Hardin, 2023). Additionally, frameworks such as Cognitive Load Theory are employed to optimise learners' cognitive processing during language acquisition (Li & Luo, 2023). Vocational learners focus on field-specific tasks and competencies, making the development of professional linguistic skills essential for effective workplace communication. These learners often encounter challenges including language variation, limited exposure to authentic English usage, and cross-cultural learning demands. It is therefore crucial to implement SLA theories that address both language acquisition and cultural competence (Dong, 2023). Integrating such theories into vocational teaching and learning practices can enhance learners' understanding of professional practices and sector-specific communication (Wang et al., 2022).

Several studies have emphasised the necessity of incorporating innovative SLA-informed approaches in vocational language education (Feng, 2017). Contextualised strategies, learner-centred instruction, and real-world language tasks are considered essential for meaningful engagement in ESL learning for vocational students (Liu 2023). Furthermore, embedding SLA principles into curriculum design ensures a balance between theoretical knowledge and practical language application within vocational contexts (Smith, 2019). Despite increasing demand for English proficiency in vocational settings, technical learners frequently face significant obstacles. Factors such as language transfer, restricted access to resources, and inadequate instructional materials hinder effective ESL acquisition (Soomro, 2022). Learners from non-English backgrounds, particularly in vocational schools, often experience language anxiety, grammatical inaccuracies, and limited speaking opportunities, all of which impede professional communication. Low motivation and insufficient practice opportunities further exacerbate these challenges. While these issues are well-documented in the literature concerning technical vocational education, there has been limited effort to align SLA theory directly with these contextual challenges (Milania et al., 2022). Examining these difficulties through the lens of SLA can provide valuable insights for enhancing vocational ESL instruction.

Research Objectives

- To examine SLA theories and assess their relevance and application within English education for technical and vocational learning contexts.

- To identify SLA-informed pedagogical strategies that effectively support the enhancement of English language proficiency among technical vocational learners.
- To investigate the challenges and determine best practices associated with implementing SLA-based English instruction in technical vocational settings.

The significance of applying SLA in vocational education is particularly evident, given that many learners in technical courses encounter various challenges. Understanding how SLA theories can facilitate the development of communication skills relevant to international business contexts is essential. Incorporating SLA principles into vocational settings is therefore critical to addressing these issues. As noted by Dong (2023), key barriers include limited motivation and inadequate opportunities for practice. The outcomes of this research are expected to inform the design of tailored teaching strategies that align with the needs of vocational learners, thereby enhancing their learning outcomes and employability. Furthermore, SLA-based interventions may improve learners' engagement in classroom interactions and support the integration of both language and content, as highlighted by Ye (2024). This approach also helps identify considerations necessary for the enhancement of vocational ESL curricula, addressing both pedagogical and practical dimensions.

Literature Review

SLA Theories and their Applicability to English Education in Vocational Learning Environments

The relevance of SLA theories in vocational English education is particularly significant, given the distinct learning requirements of technical learners. SLA provides foundational explanations that inform pedagogical strategies aimed at enhancing learning outcomes in technical and vocational education and training. Krashen's Input Hypothesis is one of the most influential frameworks, positing that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to input slightly beyond their current level of proficiency (i + 1) (Wu, 2023). This theory is particularly applicable in vocational contexts, where learners benefit from practical, context-specific English input rather than purely academic forms. However, critics argue that mere exposure to input and intake is insufficient for effective acquisition; active production of language, or output, also plays a crucial role (W. Liu 2023).

Swain's Output Hypothesis addresses this limitation by emphasising the necessity of language production in SLA. According to Swain, learners must use the target language to identify gaps in their knowledge and make necessary adjustments to their output (Wang et al., 2024). This concept aligns well with TBLT, which engages vocational learners in technical communication tasks that simultaneously develop language proficiency and workplace skills (Dong, 2023; Ibrahim & Hamisu, 2019). TBLT facilitates the practical application of language, allowing learners to solve contextualised tasks relevant to their professional environments. Collaborative learning strategies, such as peer mentoring and cooperative projects, further enhance interaction and language development in vocational contexts (Li & Luo, 2023). Nonetheless, peer-assisted learning should be carefully supervised, as unguided group activities may not always yield positive outcomes (Feng, 2017).

Cognitive Load Theory has also been increasingly incorporated into vocational ESL practice. By minimising extraneous cognitive load, learners can concentrate on essential

language practice (Wu, 2023). Multimodal resources, including visual aids, models, simulations, and interactive exercises, support learners in grasping linguistic structures and features in a second language (Zhang, 2024). Despite these theoretical advances, a persistent challenge remains in aligning SLA-informed strategies with vocational curricula. Many training programmes still lack customised English instruction that integrates the specific language demands of technical fields (Nurhidayah, 2020). Addressing this gap necessitates systematic curriculum reforms that embed SLA principles, ensuring learners acquire both general language proficiency and technical communicative competence essential for their professional roles.

Pedagogical Strategies Derived from SLA Theories for Enhancing English Language Learning among Technical Vocational Learners

The application of diverse pedagogical strategies within SLA frameworks is essential for promoting English language acquisition among students in technical and vocational colleges. For learners in vocation-oriented education, approaches such as task-based learning, communicative approaches, and technology-assisted language learning have emerged as effective methodologies to bridge the gap between theoretical SLA principles and practical classroom implementation (Ye, 2024). TBLT is particularly effective and closely aligns with Swain's Output Hypothesis, emphasising the communicative use of language. In vocational education, TBLT provides learners with situated, meaningful tasks that facilitate English development in contextually relevant scenarios (Saputra & Rionaldi, 2019). This approach is well-suited for vocational learners, as they primarily require English proficiency for professional communication. Nevertheless, the success of task-based instruction depends on the design quality of the tasks; poorly structured tasks may lead to cognitive overload for students and teachers or disengagement from learning activities (del Pilar García Mayo, 2021).

CLT, grounded in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, is another widely adopted pedagogical strategy. CLT emphasises equal participation, collaborative group work, and meaning-oriented activities, offering vocational learners opportunities to develop functional language skills relevant to their technical courses (Holbrook, 2023). Peer learning, role play, and collaborative discussions have been shown to positively impact speaking proficiency among vocational ESL learners (Carneiro Lucas, 2021). However, CLT can be constrained by teacher-directed, constructivist approaches and examination-focused curricula that limit authentic target language use (Simarmata, 2024). The integration of digital tools and gamification into SLA-based pedagogy has demonstrated considerable benefits.

Game-based and technology-enhanced language learning approaches increase learner engagement and motivation, particularly in vocational contexts where interactive learning supports skill acquisition (Kacmaz, 2023). Mobile applications, educational games, feedback mechanisms, and interactive exercises contribute to improved language practice and learning experiences (Lubis, 2024). Yet, these benefits are often hindered by infrastructural limitations and insufficient digital competence among instructors, posing challenges to implementation in vocational programmes. Metacognitive strategy training is also critical in promoting self-regulation and learner autonomy. This aligns with Krashen's Monitor Hypothesis, which posits that heightened awareness of language processes enhances linguistic accuracy and learner confidence (W. Liu 2023). Techniques

such as reflective journals, self-assessment checklists, and strategy-based instruction have been shown to positively influence reading and writing skills among vocational learners.

Challenges and Best Practices in Implementing SLA-Based English Education in Technical Vocational Contexts

Implementing SLA-based English education in technical vocational learning environments presents considerable challenges. SLA theories offer structured frameworks for enhancing language proficiency; however, vocational education and training must be adapted to specific contexts to achieve successful language learning outcomes. Key barriers include limited language input, insufficient teacher professional development, curricula that fail to address practical needs, and low student engagement in activities such as task-based communication, technology use, and real-world business simulations (Kim, 2023). A prominent obstacle in vocational SLA implementation is the scarcity of authentic language practice opportunities. Many vocational learners exhibit low English proficiency because classroom instruction seldom reflects real-world language use (Soomro, 2022). This results in gaps in competency, particularly regarding the use of discipline-specific terminology. Additionally, language anxiety and low self-efficacy further impede learners' ability to engage with English effectively (Melak, 2019).

Curriculum design and teaching approaches also pose challenges. Reviews of vocational English programmes indicate that theoretical instruction often dominates, with insufficient focus on the practical skills required for specific fields (Chen-Worley, 2023). Furthermore, vocational ESL teachers frequently lack the professional training necessary to deliver instruction that meets the demands of technical learners. Research suggests that interactive, communicative approaches are more effective than grammar-focused methods in vocational contexts (Scheffler, 2019). Consequently, SLA-focused teacher training remains underdeveloped, limiting educators' capacity to implement best practices effectively.

Integrating participatory and technology-enhanced strategies within SLA-based vocational education has proven to be a practical solution. TBLT, for instance, engages learners through occupationally relevant tasks, promoting group collaboration, problem-solving, and professional communication, thereby strengthening English learning outcomes (Milania et al., 2022). Technology-assisted approaches, including language learning applications, simulations, and online platforms, have also demonstrated effectiveness in vocational contexts (Dong, 2023). Studies indicate that combining traditional classroom instruction with digital language tools enhances learners' proficiency. Moreover, strategies such as peer collaboration and reflective journal writing foster learner autonomy and confidence in using English (Bandara, 2024).

Literature Gap

Despite considerable research on SLA in vocational ESL, several issues remain insufficiently explored. While Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Swain's Output Hypothesis, and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory provide robust theoretical foundations for vocational ESL instruction, their practical application in technical-vocational contexts has not been thoroughly investigated. Much of the existing research focuses on general English learning, whereas vocational learners require English proficiency specific to their professional domains, for which they are often unprepared (Chen-Worley, 2023). Pedagogical strategies

such as TBLT and CLT are widely recommended; however, empirical evidence demonstrating their sustained effectiveness in authentic vocational settings remains limited (Milania et al., 2022). Similarly, technology integration and gamification in vocational ESL have shown promising outcomes, yet structural constraints, inadequate teacher professional development, and implementation challenges continue to impede their full potential (Lubis, 2024). Furthermore, vocational teacher training programmes frequently lack structured frameworks for effectively applying SLA theories within technical education contexts, restricting their influence on practical language acquisition (Scheffler, 2019). Addressing these gaps necessitates focused research that aligns SLA-based methodologies with the specific English language requirements of vocational industries.

Methodology

Research Methods and Design

This study employed a qualitative approach, primarily utilising a SLR to address the research objectives. The SLR was conducted using clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria, alongside rigorous quality appraisal, to ensure the selection of high-quality data. Literature was systematically identified and screened, with the PRISMA flowchart guiding the review process, as recommended for SLR studies. This approach was chosen for its capacity to evaluate the current state of the field and to map existing knowledge gaps within the literature.

Data Collection Methods

Searching Techniques

A keyword-driven search strategy was employed to identify literature pertinent to the research themes. Search terms included phrases such as "SLA in vocational education," "SLA pedagogical strategies," "SLA theories in English learning," and "challenges in vocational ESL education."

Databases

Using the specified keywords, the search was conducted across multiple academic databases, including JSTOR, Web of Science (WOS), Google Scholar, and ResearchGate. These databases were chosen due to their extensive coverage of peer-reviewed scholarly articles relevant to the research topics.

Boolean Operators

Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) were used to refine the search results. For instance:

- ("Second Language Acquisition" AND "vocational education" AND "English learning")
- ("SLA" OR "language learning theories" OR "task-based learning")
- ("Vocational English Education" NOT "General Education")

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

A systematic selection process was implemented to screen the identified literature, ensuring that only high-quality studies pertinent to SLA in vocational education were included, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publications	Peer-reviewed journal articles, and conference papers after 2017	Non-peer-reviewed articles, blog posts, and opinion papers before 2017
Research Type	Systematic Reviews, Empirical studies, Case studies	Unverified, anecdotal studies, grey literature
Language	English-language studies only	Non-English publications
Focus	SLA theories, pedagogical strategies, vocational ESL	General language learning without vocational context

Selection of Papers through the PRISMA Framework

A total of eighty articles were initially identified based on the established inclusion and exclusion criteria. The abstracts and full texts were meticulously and repeatedly examined to determine their alignment with the research objectives. Following this screening, eight studies were deemed eligible for inclusion in the review (Figure 1). The purposive sampling approach ensured that only studies offering clear and relevant insights into SLA in vocational ESL education were selected.
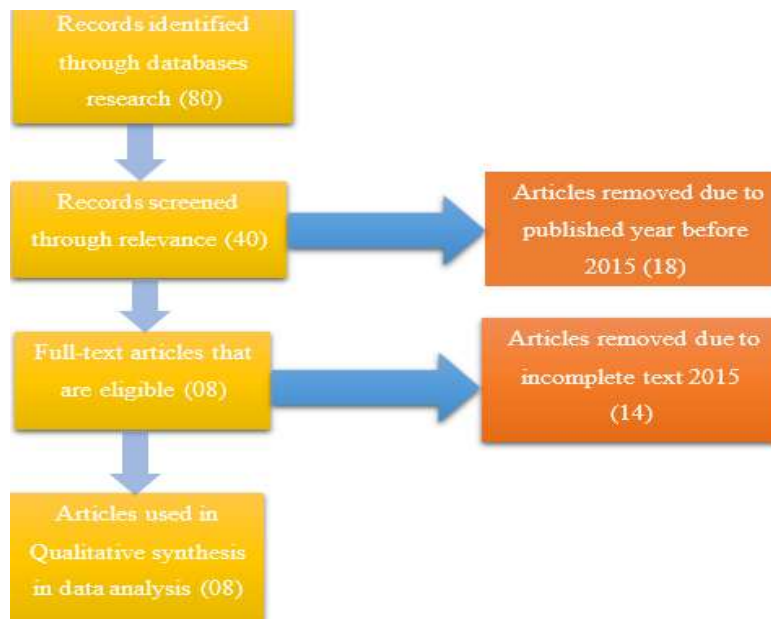

Figure 1: PRISMA Framework

Data Analysis Methods

The study utilised thematic analysis to identify and categorise the principal themes emerging from the literature. This analysis was conducted in a systematic, stepwise manner, as outlined in Table 2.

Table 2

Data Analysis Methods

Steps	Description
Familiarization	The selected articles were read multiple times to gain an overview of key themes.
Coding	Key findings related to SLA theories, pedagogical strategies, and vocational education were assigned **codes**.
Theme Development	Similar codes were grouped into **themes** that directly aligned with the research objectives.
Reviewing Themes	The themes were cross-checked against the literature to ensure coherence and accuracy.
Finalizing Themes	The refined themes were used to structure the discussion and findings of the study.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical standards throughout the SLR process. As no human participants were involved, institutional ethical approval was not required. Nonetheless, precautions were taken during the selection and analysis of literature to ensure transparency, accuracy, and credibility. Proper citation and referencing were consistently applied to prevent plagiarism. Potential biases in article selection were mitigated through adherence to the PRISMA framework and the established inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Results

This section systematically presents the data collected in the study, including its implications for each research objective. Table 3 provides a summary of the themes extracted during data analysis, which was conducted using NVivo software to organise and interpret the collected data. Table 3 summarises the key themes in SLA for vocational education. It highlights major SLA theories and their applicability, effective pedagogical strategies such as TBLT and CLT, challenges including curriculum limitations and language anxiety, and best practices such as peer-assisted learning and industry-specific instruction to enhance English proficiency among vocational learners.

Wang et al. (2025) demonstrated that social support enhances L2 learning participation, particularly in vocational contexts, emphasising the role of socio-emotional factors in instruction. Dong (2024) highlighted that learners' SES significantly influences self-regulated learning and writing performance, noting that lower-SES vocational learners encounter greater difficulties in writing. Consequently, the integration of self-regulation strategies into vocational ESL instruction is recommended to reduce these disparities (Table 4).

Table 3

Theme Extracted

Themes	Description
Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theories	Analysing major SLA theories (e.g., Input Hypothesis, Output Hypothesis, and Sociocultural Theory) and their applicability to English education in vocational learning environments.
Pedagogical Strategies in SLA	Identifying teaching methodologies derived from SLA theories, including Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and technology-assisted learning that enhance English proficiency among technical vocational learners.
Challenges in SLA Implementation	Examining barriers such as curriculum mismatches, language anxiety, lack of teacher training, and limited exposure to English that hinder SLA-based English education in vocational contexts.
Best Practices in SLA for Vocational Education	Exploring successful approaches such as peer-assisted learning, digital learning tools, industry-specific ESL instruction, and immersive language environments to improve English proficiency in vocational learners.

Table 4

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theories

Authors	Objectives	Methods	Findings	Conclusion
Wang et al. (2025)	To investigate the impact of social support on L2 learning engagement, with attention to the mediating effects of L2 resilience and learner control.	Quantitative empirical study employing a survey-based approach among L2 learners in both vocational and academic environments.	Results indicated that social support significantly improves L2 learning engagement by enhancing resilience and learners' perceived control over language acquisition. This effect was especially notable in vocational settings where peer and instructor support were pivotal.	Highlighted the importance of integrating socio-emotional considerations into SLA-based pedagogy to strengthen motivation and engagement among vocational ESL learners.
Dong (2024)	To examine the influence of socioeconomic status (SES) on self-regulated learning strategies and writing proficiency in ESL contexts.	Quantitative study analysing correlations between SES, self-regulation strategies, and writing performance using structured assessments.	Findings showed that learners from higher SES backgrounds demonstrated more effective self-regulation, resulting in improved writing proficiency, whereas lower SES vocational learners experienced challenges in self-regulation, hindering SLA progress.	Recommended embedding self-regulated learning strategies within vocational ESL curricula to mitigate achievement disparities in SLA education.

Yaqobi (2022) reported that the integration of CLT and task-based technology improves learners' fluency, self-confidence, and motivation in authentic communicative interactions within both vocational and academic contexts. Abbuhl et al. (2018) found that interaction-focused learning, feedback, and collaborative tasks enhance grammar knowledge, suggesting that such interactional practices should be considered essential elements of SLA in vocational ESL education (Table 5).

Table 5

Pedagogical Strategies in SLA

Authors	Objectives	Methods	Findings	Conclusion
Yaqobi (2022)	To assess the impact of CLT and Task-Based Technology on enhancing communicative competence and willingness to communicate among international graduate students in English.	Case study employing qualitative techniques, including interviews, classroom observations, and self-reported student reflections.	Results demonstrated that CLT and task-based learning substantially improved learners' fluency, confidence, and engagement in authentic English communication. The use of task-based digital tools further expanded language practice opportunities.	Concluded that integrating task-based technology with CLT is highly effective for improving communicative competence in both vocational and academic ESL contexts.
Abbuhl et al. (2018)	To investigate how interaction-based methods support grammar learning and broader SLA pedagogy.	Systematic literature review examining research on interaction-focused grammar instruction within SLA.	Findings indicated that interaction-oriented learning, combined with feedback and collaborative tasks, enhances grammar acquisition and retention. The study also underscored the relevance of task-based and communicative approaches in vocational ESL education.	Recommended incorporating interaction-based strategies as a central component of SLA pedagogy, emphasising collaborative learning and structured feedback to improve language acquisition outcomes.

Ahmed (2019) identified psychosocial factors, including anxiety and self-confidence, as potential constraints on SLA, highlighting the importance of fostering low-anxiety learning environments and enhancing teacher training in effective instructional strategies. Similarly, Ameen and Mahmood (2023) noted that large class sizes, interference from the mother tongue, and grammar-focused instruction negatively impact SLA, recommending alternative approaches such as student-centred methods, smaller class sizes, and functional teaching strategies for second language learning (Table 6).

Table 6

Challenges in SLA Implementation

Authors	Objectives	Methods	Results	Findings
Ahmed (2019)	To investigate psychological barriers that impede SLA among non-native learners.	Qualitative study examining affective factors such as anxiety and low self-confidence through classroom observations and student surveys.	Identified anxiety, reduced confidence, and social constraints as significant impediments to SLA. Teacher attitudes and limited linguistic awareness were also contributing factors.	Concluded that fostering a supportive, low-anxiety learning environment, alongside instructor training in affective strategies, is crucial for addressing psychological barriers in SLA.
Ameen and Mahmood (2023)	To examine obstacles to English learning in public high school contexts.	Empirical study with 40 students in grades 10–12, utilising surveys and classroom observations.	Highlighted large class sizes, interference from the mother tongue, and predominantly grammar-based teaching as major barriers. Observed low student engagement and dissatisfaction with conventional methods.	Recommended adopting student-centred teaching, reducing class sizes, and employing communicative-focused methodologies to enhance SLA outcomes.

Dizon Jr and Nanquil (2024) demonstrated that implementing role-playing, TBLT, peer learning, and scaffolding improves ESL learners' attitudes and performance, while facilitating the integration of multicultural strategies within CLT, ESP, and TBLT. Hardin (2023) noted that VESL programs are currently constrained by policy limitations and recommended the development of targeted policies and curricula to strengthen effective communication among vocational learners (Table 7).

Table 7

Best Practices in SLA for Vocational Education

Authors	Objectives	Methods	Findings	Conclusion
Dizon Jr and Nanquil (2024)	To investigate effective practices employed by ESL teachers to facilitate SLA among multicultural learners.	Qualitative study using structured interviews with eight ESL instructors.	Identified that role-playing, task-based instruction, peer-assisted learning, and scaffolding substantially enhance learner engagement and language proficiency. Emphasized the significance of culturally responsive teaching in SLA.	Concluded that a blended, multicultural pedagogical approach integrating CLT, ESP, and TBLT is highly effective for vocational ESL learners.
Hardin (2023)	To analyse the trajectory of VESL programs in the US, including their decline and potential revitalization.	Corpus-based research combined with policy analysis, examining historical trends and regulatory changes affecting VESL initiatives.	Found that policy shifts and workforce reforms contributed to the reduction of VESL programs, despite evidence of their effectiveness in enhancing vocational learners' workplace communication. Recommended policy-backed program revival and curriculum redesign.	Concluded that VESL represents an underutilized yet valuable approach in vocational English education, advocating for the integration of workplace-oriented SLA strategies to improve learner outcomes.

Discussion

Interpretation of the Findings

Applicability of SLA Theories to Vocational English Education

The study indicates that Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Swain's Output Hypothesis, and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory are applicable to vocational learners, albeit with necessary adaptations. Findings suggest that input alone is insufficient for effective learning, emphasising the critical roles of output and interaction within vocational contexts. Another challenge identified is the limited alignment between English used in the course and the English required in workplace settings. Peer tutoring and engagement with authentic workplace tasks were found to be particularly beneficial, as theories promoting

collaborative learning appear to favour vocational learners who achieve better outcomes through practical, context-based experiences.

Pedagogical Strategies Derived from SLA Theories

The study further highlighted that TBLT and CLT are among the most effective SLA approaches for supporting vocational learners. TBLT enhances English proficiency by situating tasks within authentic workplace contexts, thereby increasing their practical relevance. However, research indicates that insufficient task design, inadequate preparation, or limited teacher training in TBLT may result in learner disengagement. CLT, while fostering communication and interactive learning, proves less effective when applied within formal, exam-oriented curricula. The use of mobile applications, AI, and gamified learning was identified as a significant factor in motivating learners. Nevertheless, limited digital competence among educators and insufficient infrastructural support impede the effective implementation of these technological tools. Consequently, the integration of IT-based teaching and learning tools with SLA in vocational education remains an area in need of further development.

Challenges and Best Practices in SLA-Based Vocational English Education

The findings reveal that curriculum misalignment, restricted English exposure, gaps in teacher competence, and language anxiety constitute significant obstacles to SLA implementation in vocational education. Many vocational programs fail to incorporate industry-specific ESL instruction, resulting in low learner engagement and minimal opportunities for practical application. Effective practices identified include peer-facilitated learning, contextualised language environments, and targeted ESL programs, all of which improve learner engagement and retention. Nonetheless, the successful implementation of these practices necessitates policy reforms, thoughtfully designed curricula, SLA-oriented professional development for educators, and guidance on adapting instructional content to the specific needs of vocational learners.

Comparison with Previous Studies

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theories

According to Wang et al. (2025) and Dong (2024), vocational learners gain substantial benefits from social support, which contributes to the development of self-regulated learning skills essential for SLA. Self-regulation is identified as a critical factor in SLA, as highlighted by Teng and Zhang (2021), and these findings corroborate the present study. Research by Viberg et al. (2020) indicates that mobile-assisted learning with digital tools enhances learners' mobile-assisted competencies, aligning with Dong (2024)'s observations regarding the impact of SES on SLA self-regulation development. Further, Wang et al. (2025) corroborate Lei (2024)'s findings that social support strengthens L2 engagement and resilience among learners. Structured peer-to-peer support systems are particularly beneficial for vocational learners, enhancing both engagement and retention. Additionally, learners who actively integrate technology into their academic practice exhibit higher motivation and improved language skills, supporting Dong (2024)'s recommendation for targeted interventions to address self-regulation gaps.

Pedagogical Strategies in SLA

Yaqobi (2022) and Abbuhl et al. (2018) provide evidence supporting the effectiveness of CLT and TBLT in SLA, reinforcing prior research. The findings of Yaqobi (2022) align with this research, demonstrating that CLT and task-based learning enhance communicative competence and foster learner confidence. Collectively, these studies indicate that interactive, task-focused approaches facilitate more effective application of language skills in authentic contexts. Abbuhl et al. (2018) emphasised that interaction-based methods support grammar acquisition, which is consistent with Fithriani (2018)'s review of TBLT frameworks for grammar instruction. Both studies confirm that structured feedback and communicative activities contribute to improved grammar learning and retention. While Abbuhl et al. (2018) highlighted the general benefits of interaction-based grammar instruction, Fithriani (2018) specifically focused on how TBLT enhances grammatical accuracy rather than SLA more broadly. According to Yaqobi (2022), the current research builds on these findings by integrating technology-based learning tools within TBLT approaches. The study identifies digital interaction tools as essential components of contemporary SLA pedagogy, an aspect not addressed by Fithriani (2018), illustrating how technology specifically supports the development of communicative competence.

Challenges in SLA Implementation

The findings of Ahmed (2019) align with those of Ameen and Mahmood (2023) regarding psychological and structural barriers in SLA. Affective factors, including anxiety and self-confidence, were identified by Ahmed (2019) as significant challenges, corroborating Sharmin (2019)'s observations on psychological constraints affecting learner language acquisition. Collectively, these studies indicate that learners encounter difficulties due to fear of failure, diminished confidence, and heightened classroom apprehension. While Ahmed (2019) and Sharmin (2019) differ in their emphasis on teacher attitudes and linguistic awareness, Sharmin (2019) particularly highlights the influence of prior learning experiences and motivation. Ameen and Mahmood (2023) examined structural classroom barriers, such as large class sizes and grammar-focused instruction, supporting the findings of Makhathini and Mncwango (2020). Research in bilingual classroom contexts demonstrated that reliance on grammar instruction combined with high student numbers reduces learner participation and hampers SLA outcomes. These findings collectively suggest that grammar-centric teaching poses challenges for language acquisition and reinforce the need for learner-centred methodologies that actively engage students to enhance SLA.

Best Practices in SLA for Vocational Education

The studies by Dizon Jr and Nanquil (2024) and Hardin (2023) reinforce prior research on effective SLA practices in vocational education. Dizon Jr and Nanquil (2024) advocate a multicultural instructional approach that integrates CLT, TBLT, and ESP to improve engagement and language proficiency among vocational ESL learners. Wu and Chiang (2021) found that learners using keyboard-based technology for language practice exhibited enhanced vocabulary acquisition and greater engagement within vocational education contexts. Collectively, these findings highlight the importance of task-oriented,

interactive instruction in supporting SLA success for vocational learners. The development of VESL programs is examined in Hardin (2023), whose findings align with Skarpaas and Hellekjær (2021), who investigated English teaching strategies for vocational secondary education. Both studies indicate that vocationally oriented English instruction promotes improved student performance and professional learning outcomes. While Hardin (2023) focused on the impact of VESL policies, Skarpaas and Hellekjær (2021) explored student learning strategies and attitudinal changes influenced by vocationally oriented secondary education.

Theoretical Implications

This study reinforces theoretical perspectives in SLA, specifically Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Swain's Output Hypothesis, and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, within the context of vocational education (Wang et al., 2025; Wu, 2023). Findings indicate that input alone is insufficient for vocational learners to acquire new language skills, necessitating a balance between input, output, and interaction (Dong, 2024). According to Cognitive Load Theory, vocational learners benefit from structured multimodal training approaches, which enhance language skill development (Li & Luo, 2023). The research further advances SLA theory by integrating practical workplace activities through TBLT and CLT in vocational contexts (Feng, 2017). Evidence highlights peer-assisted learning and digital educational tools as effective instructional strategies for vocational learners (Ye, 2024). Successful curriculum implementation requires addressing programmatic misalignment and deficiencies in teacher preparation (Soomro, 2022). Overall, the study demonstrates that SLA applications must be adapted to ensure effectiveness within vocational ESL education systems (Milania et al., 2022).

Conclusion

The study investigates the impact of SLA theories on vocational English education by examining Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Swain's Output Hypothesis, and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. Findings indicate that input alone is insufficient for vocational learners, who require a balanced integration of output and social interaction to achieve language development. TBLT and CLT were identified as particularly effective methodologies for vocational language instruction. Major barriers to SLA implementation include curriculum misalignment, gaps in teacher competence, and limited language exposure. The research further suggests that enhancing vocational learners' English proficiency and workplace communication skills necessitates policy support, targeted professional development for educators, and the integration of technological tools.

Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. Firstly, the exclusive reliance on secondary data via an SLR meant that no primary empirical data were collected. Secondly, variations in vocational education contexts across countries and industries may constrain the generalizability of the findings. Thirdly, although gaps in teacher training and pedagogical challenges were identified, detailed strategies for practical implementation were not fully examined. Lastly, while technology-enhanced learning

approaches were highlighted, empirical validation of digital learning outcomes in vocational ESL contexts was absent. Future research should include empirical investigations to substantiate the effectiveness of SLA-based pedagogies in technical and vocational education settings.

Future Work

Future research should examine the theoretical implications of applying SLA theories within vocational education and employ longitudinal designs to evaluate improvements in learners' language proficiency over time. Comparative studies of TBLT, CLT, and digital-assisted SLA approaches are recommended to determine optimal instructional practices. Attention should also be given to curriculum design and task selection, emphasising real-life occupational contexts, peer-assisted learning, and the integration of multimodal instructional strategies. Consequently, teacher training programs should be reconceptualised in accordance with SLA principles to better prepare vocational educators for instruction in ESL contexts. Finally, future studies should explore the potential policy implications of implementing SLA-based curricular reforms in vocational English education.

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