The Challenges of Teaching Spoken English Skills at a Chinese Vocational High School

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Abstract
This study aims to explore the challenges faced by vocational high school (VHS) English teachers in teaching spoken English. This study adopted a qualitative case study approach with the aim of exploring the challenges faced in teaching spoken English at a vocational high school in China. Through semi-structured interviews and non-participant classroom observations with six in-service teachers from a vocational high school in China. The participants were chosen based on their years of teaching experience, attendance of relevant professional development training, and professional background in related field. The study found that teachers had significant difficulties in teaching strategies, student needs analysis, and teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). First, in terms of teaching strategies, teachers generally faced the challenges of designing effective spoken interaction activities, stimulating students' interest, and improving students' spoken fluency. Secondly, teachers had difficulties in analyzing students' needs, making it difficult for them to accurately grasp students' language proficiency and motivation, which resulted in a disconnect between teaching content and students' actual needs. Finally, teachers' knowledge of PCK, especially in terms of specialized knowledge and pedagogy of spoken English teaching, showed a wide range of differences, which affected the improvement of teaching quality. The results of the study reveal areas for urgent improvement in the teaching of spoken English in vocational high schools and provide a reference basis for future pedagogical reforms.
Keywords: Spoken English, Vocational High School, Challenges, Teaching Methods, PCK

Introduction
Speaking is the highest goal of learning English because speaking is the basis of communication and serves as functional learning (Parmawati, 2018). National assessments and surveys indicate that low speaking proficiency among Chinese vocational students is an evidenced issue. For example, a survey conducted by the Ministry of Education of China (2022) revealed that only 35% of vocational students met the expected proficiency level in

speaking, compared to 58% in reading and 60% in writing. Mahdi (2024) considers the spoken ability to be the most significant among the four language proficiencies and argues that this is true at least in the case of using a language. As China's important role in world affairs has been recognized globally, the need for English language capabilities has increased significantly (Chen, 2011). With the policy of liberalization and the use of English driving China's economic development, policy makers in China decided to make English the first compulsory subject in the secondary school curriculum and in higher education.

According to the Ministry of Education of China (2020), vocational high schools (VHS) belong to the senior secondary education level. Teaching English in VHS requires knowledge of different materials, methods, and strategies. English teachers in VHS are required to teach the parts of the English language that are closely related to the students' professional studies (Muliyah & Aminatun, 2020). In spoken English, students are normally required to be able to give multi-step instructions, to solve communication problems by asking questions, and to have simple conversations about daily life and related vocational topics. China's English teachers have paid more attention to English test-taking education in classroom teaching, spending more time in the classroom on vocabulary and grammar learning, which leads to students who have learned English for nearly ten years but cannot communicate in English (Jiao et al., 2021). While extensive research exists on language acquisition and pedagogical strategies, studies specifically addressing speaking skills within China's vocational education context are limited. Recent studies by Liu (2021) and Wang (2019) have highlighted general language learning challenges but have not adequately explored targeted interventions for speaking skills.

A study by Ibna and Habil (2021) found that teachers' employment of instructional approaches seems to be a general issue that hinders the progression of students' level of spoken English. Teachers mainly use grammar translation methods to teach spoken English. Conventional teaching methods, such as translation and listening to grammar, are still prevalent (Paul & Liu, 2018). The consequence of this traditional English teaching approach is that students and teachers only emphasize on fostering reading and writing skills, while neglecting the enhancement of spoken English (Hu, 2024; Yu, 2019). Research has shown that VHS students have a relatively low baseline of motivation, which has impacted English language learning (Liu, 2020). Meanwhile, according to Burns (2017), VHS students often experience a range of emotions, including anxiety, self-restraint, lack of confidence, hesitation, and fear of speaking in front of others due to concerns and self-doubt.

The professionalism of teachers or the qualities of instruction and schooling, and especially their knowledge, seems to be one of the most important issues that need to be focused on and resolved (Schweisfurth 2023). Most teachers realize the importance of teaching spoken English, but they tend to have limited knowledge of how to teach it (Chen & Yin, 2022), resulting in the problem of low teacher proficiency (Aliakbari & Saeedi, 2022). Teachers' poor quality of pronunciation causes students to have difficulty in understanding teachers' instructions and directions and at the same time, their inaccurate pronunciation does not motivate students (Ibna Seraj et al., 2021). Hence, this study aims to explore the VHS English teachers' teaching strategies of spoken English, how they identify students' language learning needs of spoken English, and their perception of using content and pedagogical knowledge in their spoken English teaching. The significance of the study lies in its ability to reveal English

teachers' professional needs, the addressing of which could optimize the process and outcome of language teaching in the context of the present study.

Literature Review

Teaching of Spoken English in Vocational School

Teaching English in VHS deal with the teaching of English for specific purposes and domains. It is based on specific contexts and specific needs of learners (Otilia, 2015). Spoken English teaching in VHS should emphasize practice and focus on improving students' ability to communicate in English, which includes daily communication skills and business communication skills (Wang & Gou, 2015). Students learn not only general conversational English but also specialized language related to their chosen field (Fitria, 2019).

VHS Students participate in simulated workplace communication scenarios such as customer interactions, job interviews and team meetings (Kuivamäki, 2015). VHS education should be empowered with specific technical expertise in particular areas that will enable students to be ready to participate in the job market of today (Khalida, 2020). The primary goal of teaching spoken English in VHS is to assist students to work successfully in their future workplace or in vocational higher education settings where English is the medium of communication (Widodo, 2016). Students should comprehend other people's cultural backgrounds and respond to them graciously and appropriately (Toliboboeva, 2020). Students work together to solve problems and complete tasks in English (Bian, 2019). Some VHS students may have varying levels of English proficiency, so individualized or customized spoken English instruction could address the diverse needs of students (Li, 2015).

Vocational High School Students' Needs in Spoken English

VHS students need to have basic oral communication skills, and the primary reason for learning English is to be able to use grammar accurately (Mahbub, 2018). There is a need for daily greetings and leave-taking and the use of polite language in everyday communication (Oliver & Exell, 2013). Many Asian students may fear of being wrong, feeling embarrassed in the presence of their contemporaries and the teacher, or they may worry about losing face if they fail to answer the teacher's questions (Liu & Jackson, 2011). Meanwhile, English language textbooks should contain extensive phonetics and pronunciation practice (Asrifan & Amir, 2020).

The ESP program is designed to meet the needs of learners and others who are communicating in a specific discipline for the purpose of work or study (Vogt & Kantelinen, 2013). Most VHS students usually apply for jobs after graduation, so they need certain interviewing skills (Asrifan & Amir, 2020). Students' communicative competence is crucial because only with a high level of English proficiency can researchers compete in the era of globalization (Mantra, 2017; Widiastuti, 2016). Collaborative Learning is generally recognized as an instructional practice that promotes student socialization and learning (Shinde, 2022). The combination of teaching and learning of language necessitates a sociable context where the students can regularly engage in interactions and exchanges to improve their linguistic skills (Neda, 2020).

Approaches in Teaching Speaking in VHS in China
ESP (English for specific purposes) English language teaching in China has been teacher-centered, book-centered, and grammar-translation-based, emphasizing the teaching of grammar and translation and rote memorization (Eryansyah, 2017). The traditional teaching approach in VHS is indoctrination. Teachers focus more on the teaching of traditional grammar, and students pay more attention to the test scores (Lee, 2019). In the English education of VHS in China, emphasis is placed on specialized courses with a major emphasis on skilled trades. As a result, English is often considered an optional and under-emphasized secondary subject (Liu, 2020).

The grammatical transliteration has always been the dominant method of teaching ESP in China. It lacks effective mechanisms to improve learners' comprehension of intonations and the right pronunciation (Mahdi, 2024). Moreover, grammatical translation does not consider the communicative aspect (Elmayantie, 2015). After several years of studying English, students may have learned how to analyze sentence structure and how to translate English, but they are still at a loss when they meet people who speak English (Abrejo et al., 2019).

Research has shown that communicative language teaching (CLT) is more effective in enhancing students' interest in English learning and practical application skills than the traditional grammar-translation method (Liu, 2020). In addition, CLT helps to address the problems associated with grammar-translation pedagogy (Li et al., 2019). As mentioned above, CLT is now an official policy in China, but the results are far from satisfactory (Luo & Garner, 2017). Despite being recognized by the Chinese government, teachers have encountered frustrations and challenges when implementing the communicative approach in the English classroom (Tsui, 2007). The implementation of CLT pedagogy in Chinese VHS also faced some challenges, such as students' varying levels of English proficiency and limited teaching resources (Chen & Wang, 2021).

The Nine-year Compulsory Education Full-time Junior High School English Teaching Syllabus (Ministry of Education of China, 2022) recommends the use of communicative pedagogy, such as task0based language teaching (TBLT), in English language education in China. Liu and Xiong (2016) explored EFL teachers' perceptions of TBLT in China. Their research shows barriers to implementing TBLT in China, such as the availability of teaching materials and large class sizes. Therefore, to resolve the conflict between test-oriented culture and TBLT, finding a localized TBLT model suitable for China has become a major theoretical and practical challenge (Hu, 2021; Lu, 2022).

Recent studies have also shown that content-based instruction (CBI) can enhance students' interest in learning and improve their spoken English ability in VHS (Jiang 2013). As Chinese students generally lack a natural English environment, resulting in poor listening ability, CBI teaching may make it difficult for students to understand the course and keep up with the teaching progress (Liu, 2016). In addition, the problem of teachers is also a major obstacle to CBI teaching in oral English teaching in Chinese VHS. The CBI teaching method requires teachers to have both good language skills and rich professional knowledge, which is often difficult to achieve (Dai, 2004; Liu, 2016).

Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)
ESP teachers need to have knowledge not only of linguistics and pedagogy but also of the subject matter or content of the program (Sherkatolabbasi & Mahdavi-Zafarghandi, 2012). Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is often considered as the primary knowledge (Sarkim, 2020) that determines the unique curriculum constructs (Moh'd et al., 2021) in classroom practice. This knowledge of the teacher is seen as the core of teacher professionalism, guiding the teacher's activities in specific and context-specific situations (Barendsen & Henze, 2019). Bunch (2013) argues that the source of pedagogical content knowledge for language teachers is knowledge of object, linguistics, second language acquisition, bilingual, etc.

Content knowledge (CK) is not only part of the concept of PCK but is considered as an indispensable prerequisite for good teaching (Gess-Newsome, 2015; Lucero et al., 2017). In the ESP environment, the English language is a teaching tool and teaching object, which is the main body of ESP teachers' subject knowledge (Zou, 2015). Competence in CK helps them to know what kind of knowledge is necessary to teach a certain subject and what the appropriate examples and assignments are (Danä & Taniåžli, 2018). Liepertz and Borowski (2017) and Sorge et al. (2017) describe pedagogical knowledge (PK) as encompassing classroom management, instructional methodology, individual learning processes, and (student) performance assessment. Teachers must have PK to guide and manage learning interactions in the classroom (Susanto et al., 2019). Hence, teachers must be pedagogically aware. The formation of pedagogical awareness can be facilitated through classroom learning (Aimah & Purwant, 2018).

Need Analysis in Vocational High Schools
Needs assessment needs to be done in developing semester plans and learning implementation plans for ESP with appropriate instructional materials (Syakur et al., 2020). Therefore, ESP instruction focuses on the process of identifying English skills and content relevant to students' needs and areas of study (Kusni, 2013). Needs analysis has been recognized as a prerequisite for designing a language course or syllabus as well as for selecting tasks (Gilabert Guerrero & Norris, 2019). Need analysis serves an imperative function in education because, from needs analysis, the different aspects of teaching and learning can be connected; teachers, students, materials, and instructional procedures can all be harmoniously linked to improving students' learning process (Shahroom & Hussin, 2018). Needs analysis includes target needs and learning needs. The first one means the needs, deficiencies, and demands of learners to function in the target situation; the latter is about the learner's motivation, attitude, interest, personal reasons for learning, learning style, resources, and available time (Mahbub, 2018). Needs analysis is vital and is the beginning of curriculum planning. It would be useful to determine what necessities the learner lacks. It can be defined as the gap between the learner's target proficiency and the existing proficiency, or it can refer to the learner's difficulty in coping with the target situation. Desire relates to what the learner expects after taking the course (Menggo et al., 2019). In addition, needs are learners' perspectives related to what they want to learn (Hidayati, 2018).

Methodology
A case study qualitative research methodology was employed in this study, with data collected by semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation. The sample for data collection was collected using a purposive sampling technique, which allows the sample to

better match the aims and objectives of the study. Therefore the rigor of the study and the credibility of the data and results are increased (Campbell & Walker, 2020).

The sample for this study was drawn from English teachers in VHS in Zhuzhou, Hunan Province. The name of the school is Z Vocational and Technical School. It has distinctive professional characteristics and high industry representation based on the unique rail transit industry cluster in Shifeng District, Zhuzhou City. The sample was chosen based on the subject (English) they taught in the school. According to Creswell (2013), the sample size of a case study is 3-10 people, and the target sample of this study is in-service English teachers, with a total sample size of six samples. The main reason for choosing the sample was that participants were from different educational backgrounds, including undergraduate or graduate degrees, and with different years of teaching experience. Second, the teachers selected had participated in professional development training or educational seminars.

To explore the challenges faced by VHS English teachers, two methods were used to collect data: semi-structured interviews and observation. Interviews can help provide insight into how participants react to a certain phenomenon (Busetto et al., 2020). In addition to being beneficial to participants, semi-structured interviews also give interviewers the opportunity to obtain basic information needed for research through guiding questions (Roulston, 2010). Researchers need to increase their sensitivity to details that would normally be missed while being able to focus on phenomena that are of real interest to research (Morgan & Gray, 2017). By observing teachers' actual teaching activities in the classroom, the researcher can gain insights into the teachers' teaching methods, students' responses, and classroom atmosphere, thus obtaining valuable information about the teaching and learning of spoken English.

Data analysis is a crucial part of the study, which helps to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' views and perspectives on teaching spoken English in VHS. Qualitative data analysis through interviews or observations produces a large amount of text that needs to be described and summarized (Lacey & Luff, 2001). As defined by Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a process of discerning, analyzing, and communicating data patterns (themes). The thematic analysis approach is an important research method that helps to reveal how English teachers in VHS teach spoken English. This method allows the researchers to identify and explore themes, patterns, and trends in the study text to gain insights into the teaching and learning of spoken English.

Findings
The researcher used pseudonyms to represent each study participant to maintain individual privacy. Each presentation of research findings was accompanied by excerpts from teacher teaching observations, teacher interviews, and field notes. The researcher labeled the interview transcripts "Interview" or "1" where "Interview" refers to the semi-structured interview transcripts and "1" refers to the first person interviewed. For example, the label (Teacher Du, Interview 1/241015) refers to "Teacher Du" (participant in the study), "Interview 1" (semi-structured interview with Teacher A), and "241015" (date of the interview transcript). Examples of observation labels then included (Teacher Li, Observation 1) where "Teacher Li" refers to the name of the study participant and "Observation 1" refers to Teacher B's observation. The study found that teachers' CK and PK, instructional strategies, and

insufficient student needs analysis are the challenges faced by VHS English teachers in teaching spoken English.

Teaching Strategies
A variety of teaching methods were used in the classroom, ranging from traditional methods such as reading in unison with the teacher and naming up to read aloud individually, to modern methods such as group discussion through role-playing and giving tasks. Doing exercises in a textbook was also a common practice. They believed that doing exercises in textbooks was the most widely used teaching method to help students build vocabulary and improve their speaking. Teacher Wang1 also explained this, as in the passage below:

> *"The class begins with the textbook. Students read some sentences. Then, by me explaining the content and asking additional questions, using the textbook is necessary for classroom teaching" (Teacher Wang1, Interview 1/241010).*

The current feedback mechanism for students' English learning is still in the position of being judged through the examination results and classroom performance, so it is not difficult to see that the current feedback mechanism for VHS English speaking is still not perfect. Students' recognition of their own learning progress and whether their learning goals have been achieved is rather ambiguous; some students have clearer learning goals and a correct learning attitude to make more obvious progress, but there are still many students who are not clear about their goals and current learning status. This is reflected in the following interview excerpts:

> *"Students assess their progress, well, I think they mostly look at it through exams and classroom performance." (Teacher Wang1, Interview 1/241010).*
> *"Students assess their progress in the learning process, well, everyone has a different way. Some students may test their learning by doing practice problems and mock exams; others prefer to communicate with their teachers or classmates and listen to their feedback and suggestions." (Teacher Du, Interview 1/241015).*
> *"As to whether the learning goals are effectively realized, this varies from person to person. Some students can feel their progress when they have clear goals and proper methods; others may still be figuring things out, so they feel that their goals are not so obviously achieved." (Teacher Li, Interview 1/241008).*

Through the data and analysis, it is not difficult to find that traditional teaching strategies still occupy an important position in spoken English teaching in VHS. English classroom teaching in VHS is usually teacher-centered, emphasizing the teaching of vocabulary and grammar knowledge. By observing English classrooms in vocational schools, it can be found that teachers in vocational schools use the grammar-translation method as a major way of teaching. Teachers usually explain the grammar rules first, then practice translation through example sentences, and finally let students have simple speaking practice in the classroom. It seems to be mechanical and inflexible in actual spoken English use. Many teachers continued to use teaching methods that focused on written skills and included few oral production activities.

Teachers provide brainstorming questions, introduce the speaking topic, pose discussion questions, encourage the students to carry out the activity, and facilitate the process. However, this does not mean that all these procedures occur in all classes and that all teachers follow the same procedures. For example, some classes did not provide brainstorming questions and used only traditional teaching methods in the classroom, and these questions did not appear at the beginning of the speaking lesson. Most learners used Chinese in group discussions. Learners' overt use of Chinese was the reason why teachers repeatedly warned students to avoid using their mother tongue. Teachers would also use Chinese in the classroom. In some cases, for example, Teacher A used Chinese when explaining some difficult proper nouns and used Chinese to manage classroom discipline when students' classroom discipline was difficult to control. Teacher B used Chinese to ask students to listen carefully and activate group discussions.

Students' Spoken English Learning Needs.
Despite the progress made by the students, they still encountered many difficulties in the classroom, and they need to solve some of these problems even in their future learning of English. The main obstacles identified from the teachers' interviews are as follows. Difficulty in expressing their ideas. Due to their limited vocabulary, students at the intermediate level often have difficulty expressing their ideas. Students will be more afraid to open their mouths to express themselves in English because they don't have enough vocabulary to find the right words to express what they want to say, as in the following passage:

> *"That can be a variety of things. The most common one is not having enough vocabulary and not being able to find the right words to express what you want to say, which is like having a map in your hand but not being able to find your destination, which makes you anxious." (Teacher Du, Interview 1/241015).*

Pronunciation is also a very important influence on students' reluctance to speak when expressing themselves orally, as Chinese students have no other environment other than the classroom where they can use English, and all of them have a certain accent, which leads to students' shyness about opening their mouths to speak English. Teacher Wang1 and Teacher Li explained this in an interview.

> *"First of all, their pronunciation is not standardized enough, and many times they are afraid to open their mouths for fear of being laughed at if they say something wrong." (Teacher Wang1, Interview 1/241010).*
> *"Many students are too timid to open their mouths to speak English for fear of being laughed at for saying it wrong. Pronunciation problems are also more common because of the lack of a sufficient language environment. (Teacher Li, Interview 1/241008).*

The lack of correct grammatical structure leads to a lot of times there is no way to complete a complete sentence, and there may be some lack of understanding of the culture may also lead to the students' unwillingness to raise their hands actively to speak. Wang1, Hu, and Wang2 explain this in the following interview excerpts:

> *"Also, there is the inflexible use of grammatical knowledge, which makes it easy to make mistakes when speaking." (Teacher Wang1, Interview 1/241010).*

> *"Oh, and also, their grammar foundation is not solid enough."* (Teacher Hu, Interview 1/241005).
> *"And then, they don't know much about the cultural background of English, and sometimes there are communication barriers."* (Teacher Wang2, Interview 1/241013).

During the observation session, researchers found that participation was lacking in most of the speaking sessions in this study. Whenever the teacher asked a question, no or very few hands were raised voluntarily. In pair and group work activities, learners needed repeated reinforcement from the teacher to form pairs or groups and to start the activity, but once they started, it seemed difficult to stop. Learners were particularly uninterested in classroom activities that required them to stand in front of their classmates and speak. Group discussions are also dominated by one or two members, while the others passively listen to them and write notes for the presentations. It is therefore a challenge for teachers to find willing speakers. It was common practice for teachers to call out the names of certain students even though they did not raise their hands. Although the students named by the teachers were group leaders and the teachers thought they were good, they were even hesitant to speak, as Teacher A said, and wanted the teachers to encourage them again and again. When responding to the teacher's questions or statements, the learners used very few words and finished quickly or switched to giving answers in Chinese (Teacher A, Observation 1). As a result of persistence, learners who were allowed to do the 15-minute pairing activity finished their presentations in less than half a minute. In the teachers' opinion, the learners' inability to express themselves in English was one of the underlying reasons for the low level of participation.

Teachers' Teaching Content and Pedagogical Knowledge
It is basically non-existent for students in VHS to take the initiative to learn the correct pronunciation of English by themselves, so English teachers are the only way for students to get the correct pronunciation of English. Teachers are aware of the influence of their speaking ability on students and realize that teachers are good role models for students, who will imitate their teachers' pronunciation, thus showing that teachers' English pronunciation expertise has a subtle influence on students. Teacher Wang1 and Teacher Lin explain this in the following excerpt from their interview:

> *"Teachers are the role models of students, if the teacher speaks well, students will benefit a lot in the process of imitating and learning."* (Teacher Wang1, Interview 1/241010).
> *"If the teacher speaks well and can communicate fluently with the students, then the students will naturally be inspired and more willing to imitate and learn."* (Teacher Lin, Interview 1/241020).

Most of the teachers in English courses in vocational schools have participated in regular teacher training organized by their schools. They can use the relevant teacher training in the classroom to standardize and organize their teaching. Individual teachers also take part in speaking training courses on their own on the Internet to improve their spoken English skills and apply them to their teaching, as explained by teacher Li and teacher Hu in the following interview excerpts:

"I have participated in some, such as the school's teacher training, as well as some online English-speaking courses. These experiences have had a positive impact on my spoken English. They have helped me correct some pronunciation problems and have taught me more effective communication skills. (Teacher Li, Interview 1/241008)

"I have attended some short-term workshops, mainly to improve my teaching skills and oral expression. These experiences are still quite helpful to me. It made me more aware of my pronunciation problems and I learned some techniques to improve my oral fluency. These experiences, I can also use within my teaching to help students improve their spoken English." (Teacher Hu, Interview 1/241005)

In the classroom, the teacher used two modes of interaction and different speaking activities. The two modes of interaction used by the teachers were group work and pair work. Both modes of interaction were demonstrated in the 3 speaking lessons, but group activities appeared 3 times in Teacher A's lesson, 2 times in Teacher B's lesson, and 1 time in Teacher C's lesson. This suggests that cooperative group activities were the most used mode of interaction in speaking classes. It was followed by role-playing, while the remaining three activities were only used in Teacher B's lessons (Teacher B, Observation 2). All group work activities were discussions. Therefore, group discussion was the most used classroom speaking activity. A common combination of activities was group discussion and presentation, as almost all group discussions were followed by presentation.

Discussion

The study found that there are various challenges in the process of teaching English as a foreign language in VHS, in line with previous studies (Chen et al., 2022; Jiao et al., 2021; Liu, 2021). All these challenges need to be confronted and addressed to improve the status of spoken English teaching in VHS. The findings of the study show that teachers' teaching strategies still mostly use traditional teaching strategies and lack the use of innovative teaching strategies. Many teachers also have a single teaching strategy that focuses mainly on translating the English texts appearing in the articles, memorizing various emerging English words and English grammar, and thus paying less attention to the spoken English expression skills of the students (Wang & He,2024). Good pedagogical knowledge can also help teachers to better promote and enhance students' spoken English expression in ELT. Borko and Livingston (2008) relate this to pedagogical reasoning. They explain that pedagogical reasoning emphasizes how teachers translate their content knowledge into a pedagogy that is appropriate for the diversity of student abilities and backgrounds. Therefore, teachers should be flexible in their teaching and make the English classroom more interesting so that students are willing to speak English in class. And add colorful teaching activities, especially to meet the various needs of students. The teacher is no longer the main body of the classroom, and the language ability is improved through interaction and practice, which helps them to master English more efficiently (Gumartifa et al.,2023).

Spoken English needs to be supported by teachers' knowledge strengths related to the content of English because teachers' knowledge strengths related to the content of English enable teachers to provide more effective feedback in teaching spoken English. The study also found that the English language curriculum and training in VHS does not focus on teaching English phonetics and speaking. The textbook does not have a special section on spoken English, and teachers are not clear about the embodiment of spoken English expression in

their lessons. Emphasizing spoken English education in the English teaching process and teacher training can give students an advantage in their future careers and employment (Hadi & Izzah, 2018). The study also found that although teacher training in English was provided in VHS. However, from observing teachers' performance in teaching spoken English in the classroom, less attention was paid to the development of spoken English teaching. Therefore, there is a need for specialized courses and training related to the development of oral expression in English in the teaching of English to develop teachers' knowledge and skills involving the phonological elements of English (Segolsson & Hirsh, 2019). There is also a need for teachers to be more proactive in seeking and acquiring the various knowledge and skills needed to develop students' oral expression in ELT.

PCK emphasizes how teachers can transform subject knowledge into representational forms that are easy for students to understand (Wang & Lam, 2024). In spoken English teaching, this means that teachers need to design diversified teaching activities, such as situational simulations and role-plays, to transform boring grammar and vocabulary into lively and interesting dialogues and scenarios. In addition, PCK emphasizes teachers' anticipation and coping strategies for students' learning difficulties. In teaching spoken English, teachers need to predict in advance the difficulties students may encounter in the learning process, such as pronunciation problems and grammatical confusion, and formulate corresponding coping strategies.

Conclusion
In conclusion, this paper reviewed the literature on the context of English language teaching in Chinese VHS, the challenges teachers face in teaching, teachers' teaching strategies, the English language learning needs of students, and the impact of teachers' mastery of PCK on students' spoken English expression. The findings suggest that more research should be conducted to investigate how teachers' teaching strategies and teachers' own mastery of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge affect students, as well as students' learning needs for English and the importance of needs analysis. The review also emphasized the importance of understanding teachers' PCK knowledge and its impact. The literature review also identified the need for further research in exploring effective teaching strategies in VHS, the importance of understanding students' needs conducting student needs, and exploring directions for the acquisition and development of teachers' PCK. As a conclusion, this paper provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of research on the challenges and issues of teaching and learning spoken English in the context of VHS in China, with a focus on the pedagogical challenges faced by English teachers. The findings highlight the important role of teachers in teaching and emphasize the importance of integrating teaching strategies, student needs, and teachers' own PCK.

Conflicts of Interest
None declared.

Ethical Considerations
Informed consent was obtained from all participants of the study.

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