

## Needs Analysis of English for Occupational Purposes Course for Preschool Major Students in a Chinese College

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### ABSTRACT

As universities place a greater emphasis on English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) to improve worldwide relevance and prepare students for specific professional positions, it is critical that these courses suit students' current occupational demands. For preschool education majors, this entails gaining English abilities that are directly applicable to early childhood education settings. However, contemporary English training frequently lacks a vocational focus and rarely incorporates local cultural components, limiting its effectiveness in providing students with necessary communicative skills. This study conducts a needs analysis to better understand learners' views on the importance of incorporating local culture into the EOP classroom and the relationship between HPBL enriched with local culture and their use in the EOP classroom to develop communicative competence. A quantitative method was used, with data collected using McKillip's Discrepancy Model and a survey questionnaire distributed to 112 second-year students. The finding indicates that the EOP classroom's integration of local culture reflects a dedication to culturally enriching teaching environments. The existing EOP curriculum fails to incorporate local culture inside Hybrid Project-Based Learning (HPBL), underscoring the need for a more cohesive approach to cultural integration in language education. By fulfilling these needs, the curriculum can more effectively equip preschool education students for practical communication challenges in their professional environments.

## 1. Introduction

Globalisation has increased the demand for English proficiency in the workplace, notably in Guangxi, China, where is the One belt one road region towards Southeast Asia, requires good English communication skills. English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) addresses this requirement by teaching vocational language skills. However, traditional English teaching approaches typically fail to meet professional communicative needs, especially in developing real-world communication skills (Xue et al., 2022a). Innovations in

instruction are being examined, with Hybrid Project-Based Learning (HPBL) showing promise. Using face-to-face and digital learning settings, HPBL combines the interactive, hands-on components of project-based learning with the flexibility of hybrid instruction to give students relevant, immersive experiences that match their career aspirations. By involving students in actual, real-world tasks that improve language acquisition and communication, Hybrid Project-Based Learning makes EOP practical and participatory.

HPBL emphasises collaborative projects to imitate working settings and improve important skills through active participation (Chua & Islam, 2021). HPBL with cultural content, such as local cultural themes, improves students' motivation, engagement, and language confidence, which gives students familiar and accessible learning resources and bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world communication. Sociocultural theories like Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development emphasise meaningful, culturally-relevant environments for language learning. In culturally diverse Guangxi, developing a module adds local cultural topics to EOP, enriching and relevant for students. Guangxi's rich cultural past allows students to investigate issues that relate to their culture and environment. By including cultural elements, students practice meaningful English and learn to communicate their own culture in English. Guangxi hosts ethnic minorities, including 11 distinct groups that have coexisted with the Han people for decades. Throughout their extensive history, the 11 ethnic groups in Guangxi have cultivated distinct civilisations, each with unique qualities and traditions. Language serves as the vessel of culture and a crucial instrument for cultural transmission. Language embodies national culture. English education for ethnic minorities must align with the attributes of cultural diversity and integrate the specific characteristics of Guangxi to develop vocational English instruction that reflects local cultural elements.

Presently, Guangxi hosts 20 vocational institutions that provide preschool education majors, with the majority of students originating from 11 ethnic minority groups (Wang, 2023). The students originate from diverse backgrounds and environments, encompassing both urban and rural settings, with varying degrees of English proficiency. Vocational English instruction in higher vocational institutions in Guangxi functions as a transitional phase for students of many levels and ethnic backgrounds, linking junior college to university education. The majority of higher vocational colleges employ general English instruction, whereas a few implements general English in the first year and vocational English in the second year. The objective of instruction is to solidify students' English foundation, enhance training, elevate the English proficiency of junior college students, and establish a robust groundwork for undergraduate English studies (Xue et al., 2022b). Currently, a range of instructional resources is utilised in English education in higher vocational colleges in Guangxi, including "Hope English" (Higher Vocational English) and "21st Century Practical English U Edition." Regardless of whether these instructional resources were initially intended for vocational English, they rarely draw on local ethnic culture to engage students in English-related activities, which may limit students' opportunities for meaningful language practice and reduce their motivation to learn English. Classroom instruction prioritises the development of fundamental language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The instruction of cultural knowledge cannot be adequately addressed within the confines of limited classroom activities, resulting in insufficient cultural education in vocational English instruction. The globalisation of the country raises significant concerns regarding how vocational colleges can effectively convey Chinese narratives in English. Vocational colleges have judiciously integrated aspects of China's esteemed traditional culture into English textbooks, in alignment with the New English Curriculum Standards. Nonetheless, there remains an

insufficient discourse on local cultural subjects, and the integration of local culture education into vocational English instruction will foster a sense of affinity towards the English language among students, thereby enhancing their interest in learning English and encouraging a more proactive approach to their studies.

In this study, the needs analysis phase is based on the McKillip's discrepancy model (Govindasamy, 2024). This model focuses on establishing clear goals, monitoring current performance, and discovering gaps between what is and what should be. The requirements analysis seeks to close communication skills gaps by introducing cultural components into the curriculum, which is especially important for students in vocational contexts where practical language and culture knowledge are essential for professional success. The analysis focuses on examining the necessity for cultural aspects in Hybrid Project-Based Learning for English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) from the viewpoints of teachers and learners. In this way, the researcher analysis and understand how including cultural exercises within the programme helps improve communicative competence in professional situations. This study employed a quantitative method using a questionnaire as the research instrument to collect the data on the needs of the learners. The data obtained were analyzed through descriptive statistics using SPSS software. Needs analysis assesses the technological and instructional requirements for incorporating cultural elements into the HPBL programme. Identifying these requirements is critical for creating culturally relevant and technology-enabled project-based projects that meet vocational learners' professional and communication demands.

### **1.1. Research Objectives and Questions**

The objectives of the needs analysis are as follows:

RO1: To identify the learner's perceptions on the need of integrating local culture in EOP classroom.

RO2: To examine the relationship between the integration of local cultural elements in Hybrid Project-Based Learning (HPBL) and the development of learners' communicative competence in the EOP classroom.

To achieve the research objectives, the following questions are proposed:

RQ1: What are the learner's perceptions on the need of integrating local culture in EOP classroom?

RQ2: What is the relationship between the integration of local cultural elements in HPBL and learners' communicative competence in the EOP classroom?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Needs Analysis Theory in EOP**

Needs analysis serves as a cornerstone in designing and implementing effective English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) curricula, focusing on identifying and addressing the challenges faced by the target population. It evaluates the adequacy of existing services while highlighting gaps that require intervention (Hosshan et al., 2020). McKillip (1987) notes that the structuring of needs analysis can draw upon various models, such as

discrepancy, marketing, and decision-making frameworks, to provide actionable insights. Anglin(1995) further suggests, needs assessment represents the initial and most critical phase of instructional design. It not only identifies learning needs but also sets the foundation for all subsequent design stages by establishing priorities and guiding problem resolution. Needs analysis involves systematically gathering data on the specific requirements of the target audience, enabling educators to diagnose the root causes of challenges and propose tailored solutions (Rifiyanti & Dewi, 2022).

Designing an effective curriculum requires a nuanced understanding of the professional, academic, and learner needs, as these inform all aspects of course development (Chostelidou, 2010; Dehnad et al., 2010; Saragih, 2014; Ulucay & Demirel, 2011). A well-constructed syllabus should address systemic shortcomings, ensuring that educational offerings are aligned with institutional goals and learner expectations (Domínguez & Rokowski, 2005). The significance of needs analysis lies in its ability to bridge academic objectives and real-world demands, providing a clear rationale for addressing specific learning goals. For example, Kim (2008) emphasizes that the purpose for which students engage in English learning—whether for academic, professional, or personal growth—defines their unique needs. Moreover, effective curriculum planning should integrate an understanding of the entire learning process, considering not only the outcomes but also the methods that support skill development (Friedenberg et al., 2004).

Over time, needs analysis has evolved into an indispensable tool in language education, becoming a critical mechanism for aligning teaching strategies with learner requirements. Han (2024) highlights its dual role as both a guiding framework and an evaluative instrument in language teaching. By identifying the skills students have already mastered and those they seek to improve, needs analysis empowers educators to tailor their approaches, ensuring that instruction is both relevant and impactful. As such, it not only enhances the overall learning experience but also ensures that EOP courses are responsive to the dynamic needs of learners in diverse occupational contexts.

## **2.2. English Language Needs for Preschool Education Majors**

The unique sociocultural context of Chinese preschools significantly shapes the English language needs of preschool education majors. In regions such as Guangxi, the rising trend of bilingual education and the increasing demand for English-proficient educators have influenced the competencies required of teachers (Hu & Adamson, 2012). The integration of local cultural elements into teaching further emphasizes the need for teachers to be adept at bridging local traditions with global English communication standards (Wang, 2016). For example, teachers may need to present traditional Chinese stories or practices in English to foster cross-cultural understanding while meeting curriculum goals. Regional demands, such as those in vocational colleges, often focus on equipping students with practical English communication skills to meet workplace expectations (Zhang, 2017).

Despite the growing demand for English language proficiency, preschool education majors face significant challenges in meeting these needs. Many students in Chinese vocational colleges struggle with low English proficiency, which limits their ability to develop advanced communicative skills (Gao, 2020). Limited exposure to spoken English and authentic interaction opportunities further exacerbate this issue (Wu, 2019). Contextual constraints, such as large class sizes, limited teaching resources, and the heavy focus on examination-driven English learning, hinder the development of practical

language skills (Li, 2013). These challenges necessitate tailored educational interventions to address the specific linguistic and pedagogical needs of preschool education majors, ensuring they are equipped to meet professional demands effectively.

By identifying professional communication requirements, analyzing cultural and contextual influences, and addressing challenges, this literature review highlights the need for a targeted approach to English language instruction for preschool education majors, ensuring they are well-prepared for their future roles.

### **3. Research Methods**

The research uses quantitative data analysis. Quantitative refers to research that is concerned with quantities and measurements. It involves a survey to collect numerical data. The method of the research design is appropriate for this study as it allows for a well understanding of the general situation and the problems that arise in the learning of EOP for students in Guangxi college for preschool education.

#### **3.1. Population and Sampling**

The target population for this needs analysis consists of students enrolled in the English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) programme at vocational higher colleges in Guangxi, China, with a specific focus on those majoring in preschool education. These students are being trained for future careers in early childhood education, which shapes both their academic needs and professional language requirements. In terms of language proficiency, the participants demonstrate varying levels of English competence, generally ranging from beginner to intermediate, as determined by the programme's course enrollment criteria. Regarding educational level, the respondents are vocational college students, typically aged between 18 and 22, who are engaged in programmes designed to develop English skills for occupational and practical use. In addition, the students share a common cultural context rooted in the local Guangxi environment. This shared background enables the needs analysis to consider culturally relevant content and learning contexts that are familiar and meaningful to the learners. A purposive sampling method will be employed to select individuals who meet the defined criteria and can provide relevant insights for the needs analysis. This method allows the study to focus on a subset of students who are likely to benefit most from the intervention and to provide valuable data on current limitations and expectations for language learning within this context.

The sample size directly influences the internal and external validity of a study, affecting the reliability of its outcomes. A sample size that is too small may not adequately represent the population, leading to invalid results and erroneous conclusions. Conversely, a sample size that is too large can increase the time and cost of a study. Haenlein and Kaplan (2004) have indicated that for analysis using partial least squares, a minimum sample of 100 would be applicable. According to Creswell (2017), sample sizes in educational studies should be determined based on the population size and the goal of obtaining data that reflect general trends while maintaining manageability in data collection and analysis. The choice of 112 students for the survey sample is based on common practices for sample sizes in educational research where the aim is to achieve reliable insights without overburdening resources. A sample size within this range is generally sufficient to gather representative quantitative data and identify trends in learners' communicative competence, attitudes, and perceptions in a target population that is moderate in size, such as vocational college students within a specific programme.

### 3.2. Instruments

A questionnaire, as defined by the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, is a written or printed compilation of inquiries intended to be responded to by several individuals, particularly as a component of a survey. The questionnaire served as the second technique of data collection for this study, and its content was based on the literature that was read. The questionnaire for students in preschool education major in this study is based on the students' target needs and learning needs in Hutchinson & Waters' model (1987). The questionnaire consists of 32 items grouped into five parts. Part one aims to investigate the students' present English proficiency (item 1-3). Part two is to investigate the students' demands and evaluation on the preschool English curricula with the local culture factors, teaching strategies and vocational competence, which includes 12 items (item 4-12). Part three including 17 items (item 16-32) by adapted Zhong et al.'s (2013) ICCSRS. It comprises communicative competence, which is subdivided into linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. The Cronbach's Alpha for the instrument was 0.934, indicating strong internal consistency of the questionnaire. The questionnaire is designed in Mandarin and English, hoping that all the subjects can understand the items of the questionnaire. The Mandarin version is used to avoid misunderstanding due to the students' different language proficiencies. The questionnaire in the study are presented in the form of a five-level Likert-type. The questionnaire was distributed among preschool major students.

#### 3.2.1. Reliability Analysis

Reliability denotes the consistency of the survey outcomes. An effective measurement instrument must yield consistent results upon repeated assessments of the same entity to ensure credibility. Numerous methods exist to assess the internal reliability of the scale. The  $\alpha$  coefficient is the most frequently employed way in scientific research to denote the reliability of consistency within a scale. The formula for the test is as follows:

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1} \left( 1 - \frac{\sum \sigma_i^2}{\sigma^2} \right)$$

Where  $k$  represents the number of questions in the questionnaire,  $\sigma_i^2$  is the variance of question  $i$ ,  $\sigma^2$  is the variance of all survey results. When  $\alpha$  is lower than 0.6, the questionnaire has low reliability and should be recompiled or screened for problematic signs. When the  $\alpha$  is higher than 0.9, it implies that the results of the questionnaire data are very stable. It is relatively steady between 0.7 and 0.9.

Using the above method to calculate the reliability of the questionnaire. It can be seen from the data in the Table 1 that the reliability value of each dimension of this questionnaire survey is higher than 0.8, and the results are stable and reliable.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

| Number of items | N   | Cronbach's Alpha |
|-----------------|-----|------------------|
| 32              | 112 | 0.934            |

As seen in the table above, there are 32 items in the data, and the reliability coefficient Cronbach Alpha is 0.934, which meets the standard of greater than 0.7, which shows that the results are good and the test performance is stable, which indicates that the reliability quality of the research data is good.

### 3.2.2. Validity Test

Using the SPSS24.0 principal component analysis method to evaluate the questionnaire aggregation validity index. KMO measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity are required to determine whether principal component analysis methods can be used before performing principal component analysis. The calculation results are shown in the Table 2.

Table 2: Validity Test Results

| KMO test and Bartlett's test  |                        |          |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|----------|
|                               | KMO                    | 0.806    |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approximate chi square | 2135.267 |
|                               | df                     | 496      |
|                               | P                      | 0.000    |

The KMO and Bartlett tests were employed to assess validity, and the aforementioned table indicates that the KMO test value for the survey data was 0.806, exceeding the threshold of 0.7, so confirming the questionnaire's appropriateness for factor analysis. The findings of Bartlett's sphericity test indicated an estimated chi-square value of 2135.267 and a significance probability of 0.0, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Consequently, the scale was deemed appropriate for factor analysis, thereby enhancing the validity structure.

### 3.3. Data Collection and Data Analysis

The questionnaire was disseminated via the online survey platform "wenjuanxing" (www.wjx.cn). The participants were notified of the online questionnaire and invited to complete it within a five-day period. A total of 112 complete responses were ultimately collected. The response rate was 100%, signifying that all received responses were authentic. Subsequent to data collection, the results were inputted into SPSS 24.0 software to organize the data and reassess the reversed items. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was utilized to evaluate the overall reliability of the scale.

For validity, The KMO values were all above 0.7, and Bartlett's test was significant, suggesting that the data were suitable for factor analysis. Principal component analysis (PCA) was then performed, and each subscale yielded a single factor with a cumulative variance explained of over 50% and factor loadings between 0.5 and 1, which supported the construct validity of the scale. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were calculated to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants and the distribution of their responses regarding the integration of local culture into EOP classrooms. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships among local culture, teaching strategies, English proficiency, English communicative competence, and vocational competence, with the significance level set at  $p < 0.05$ .

The researchers used the research ethics provided by the Research Ethics Committee of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (RECUMS). All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee. The participants were fully informed about the objectives of the study, the nature of their involvement, the potential risks, and their right

to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Sample background information statistics

This survey collected a total of 112 questionnaires, comprising 11 males and 101 females, with a much higher proportion of females than males. In terms of ethnic distribution, there were 75 Han participants, 31 Zhuang participants, and the remaining 6 individuals from other ethnic groups. The descriptive statistical results of each background information in the sample are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Sample Background Data Statistics

| Item            | Category            | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----------|---------|
| gender          | Male                | 11        | 9.8     |
|                 | Female              | 101       | 90.2    |
| nation          | Han Nationality     | 75        | 67.0    |
|                 | Zhuang Nationality  | 31        | 27.7    |
|                 | Other               | 6         | 5.4     |
|                 |                     |           |         |
| area            | city                | 14        | 12.5    |
|                 | county              | 24        | 21.4    |
|                 | villege and town    | 74        | 66.1    |
|                 |                     |           |         |
| basic knowledge | very good           | 2         | 1.8     |
|                 | good                | 7         | 6.3     |
|                 | general             | 53        | 47.3    |
|                 | terrible            | 50        | 44.6    |
|                 | very good           | 16        | 14.3    |
|                 | good                | 37        | 33.0    |
| prospects       | general             | 54        | 48.2    |
|                 | terrible            | 5         | 4.5     |
| necessary       | It is necessary     | 46        | 41.1    |
|                 | It is not essential | 35        | 31.3    |
|                 | It is unnecessary   | 31        | 27.7    |

### 4.2. Learner's perceptions on the need of integrating local culture in EOP classroom

The data analysis of learners' perceptions regarding the integration of local culture in the English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) classroom reveals a strong preference for culturally enriched learning environments.

As seen in the table above, it explores the impact of arranging classrooms or learning settings that incorporate local cultural elements (e.g., traditions, festivals, and history), indicate that 44.64% of the learners find such an approach beneficial for their English learning. Additionally, a culturally immersive learning environment fosters engagement and motivation, as students feel a stronger sense of identity and relevance in their language-learning journey.

Table 4: Arrange classrooms or learning environment related to English, and integrate local culture element

| Option            | Subtotal | Percentage |
|-------------------|----------|------------|
| Strongly disagree | 1        | 0.89%      |
| Disagree          | 4        | 3.57%      |
| Neutral           | 50       | 44.64%     |
| Agree             | 42       | 37.5%      |
| Strongly agree    | 15       | 13.39%     |

Table 5: Participating in Local culture related activities can help me better master the knowledge and language skills that I have learned.

| Option            | Subtotal | Percentage |
|-------------------|----------|------------|
| Strongly disagree | 2        | 1.79%      |
| Disagree          | 6        | 4.46%      |
| Neutral           | 46       | 49.11%     |
| Agree             | 43       | 31.25%     |
| Strongly agree    | 15       | 13.39%     |

Similarly, table 5 investigates the role of local culture-related activities in improving learners' mastery of knowledge and language skills. The data suggests that students perceive active participation in cultural activities as a valuable method for reinforcing their English learning.

Table 6: Holding English-related local culture activities has increased my interest in learning English.

| Option            | Subtotal | Percentage |
|-------------------|----------|------------|
| Strongly disagree | 2        | 1.79%      |
| Disagree          | 5        | 4.46%      |
| Neutral           | 55       | 49.11%     |
| Agree             | 35       | 31.25%     |
| Strongly agree    | 15       | 13.39%     |

Table 6 shows responses on whether English-related local culture events have increased their English learning enthusiasm. Some 49.11% were neutral or disinterested in such activities. However, 31.25% and 13.39% highly agreed that these culturally enriching activities increased their interest in studying English. Few disagreed (4.46%) or strongly disagreed (1.79%). The findings imply that integrating local culture into English learning is generally well received, although some students may need more exposure or better linkages between cultural content and language development to fully participate.

#### 4.3. How HPBL enriched with local cultural elements is applied in the EOP classroom to develop communicative competence

The calculation results are shown in Table 7. From the data in the table, it can be seen that there are significant positive correlation between the variables. Among them, the correlation coefficient between English proficiency and local culture factors, teaching strategies, and vocational competence is less than 0.3, indicating a weak correlation. The correlation coefficients between the other variables are moderate or strong. Due to the

fact that the correlation does not reflect the causal relationship between variables, further regression testing of the variables is needed. The calculation results show that the KMO values of the five variables in the scale are all higher than 0.7, and the Bartlett sphericity test results are significant. The factor scale is suitable for principal component factor extraction. Each scale only contains one factor, and the explanatory rate of factor variance is higher than 50%, which can represent the majority of variance. The indicator load values of each question are between 0.5 and 1, so the factor has strong representativeness for the question.

Table 7: How HPBL enriched with local cultural elements is applied in the EOP classroom to develop communicative competence

|                                  | Mean  | SD   | Local culture | Teaching strategies | English proficiency | English communicative competence | Vocational competence |
|----------------------------------|-------|------|---------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Local culture                    | 10.68 | 2.19 | 1             |                     |                     |                                  |                       |
| Teaching strategies              | 17.60 | 3.63 | 0.578***      | 1                   |                     |                                  |                       |
| English proficiency              | 7.93  | 2.23 | 0.298**       | 0.241*              | 1                   |                                  |                       |
| English communicative competence | 48.18 | 9.78 | 0.756***      | 0.772***            | 0.236*              | 1                                |                       |
| Vocational competence            | 9.41  | 2.61 | 0.575***      | 0.598***            | 0.332***            | 0.742***                         | 1                     |

Note : \* $p < 0.05$  , \*\* $p < 0.01$  , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

The findings revealed that insufficient cultural content and materials in textbooks in one of the main lacks. The students' views and the EOP students responses on including Local culture in a new module are defined as 'wants' in the study. The findings of this study also revealed that the current EOP curriculum does not integrate Chinese local culture and HPBL method well, which indicated that local culture and HPBL strategies are both significant in EOP module design. Qi (2021) mentioned that "teachers should pay attention to the cultivation of cultural factors for students in the teaching process, and strengthen students' cultural knowledge accumulation and sedimentation. Furthermore, the absence of tailored teaching resources and lesson plans exacerbates this disconnect, leaving students underprepared for real-world preschool teaching scenarios. Without these critical elements, the courses fail to address the professional demands of future educators effectively.

Students express a strong desire for English courses that integrate local culture relevant to their major and practical communication skills essential for their field. They want lessons that reflect their professional environment, such as storytelling sessions and communicative strategies, delivered through activities that resonate with their experiences. Moreover, the inclusion of culturally relevant content, both local and international, is a key aspiration, as it would help students relate to the material and enhance their global understanding of preschool education.

To meet these needs, it is essential to redesign English courses to align with professional communication requirements and provide authentic practice opportunities. Curriculum developers must focus on creating lessons that simulate real-world preschool teaching scenarios, such as interactive role-plays and project-based learning activities. Additionally,

the development of customized teaching materials, including storytelling scripts, instructional language templates, and parent communication guides, is imperative. By addressing these necessities, English courses can bridge the gap between academic instruction and professional application, better equipping preschool education majors for their future careers.

## **5. Conclusions**

To facilitate career orientation, educators can develop diverse simulated job scenarios tailored to students' specific majors, allowing them to engage with professional knowledge relevant to their contexts (Kim, 2008). The results of the questionnaire and the theoretical analysis of the study show that the application of local culture is beneficial to the teaching of vocational English, both in terms of teaching philosophy and specific teaching strategies. This study is one of very few studies which have investigated the use of HPBL with local culture integration to help enhance learner's communicative competence.

The findings of this study highlight a critical gap in the current EOP curriculum: the insufficient integration of local cultural content and Hybrid Project-Based Learning (HPBL) strategies. The absence of culturally relevant teaching materials and tailored lesson plans further limits students' ability to develop practical communication skills necessary for their future professions. Students express a strong need for English courses that incorporate local culture, professional communication strategies, and interactive learning experiences to better prepare them for real-world preschool teaching scenarios.

To address these challenges, it is essential to redesign the EOP curriculum by embedding local cultural elements and HPBL methodologies into course content. This approach will not only enhance students' communicative competence but also provide them with meaningful, contextually relevant learning experiences. Developing customized teaching materials—such as storytelling scripts, instructional language templates, and parent communication guides—can bridge the gap between academic instruction and professional application. By doing so, the revised curriculum can effectively support the linguistic and professional development of preschool education majors, ensuring they are well-equipped for the demands of their careers.

## **Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate**

The researchers used the research ethics provided by the Research Ethics Committee of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (RECUMS). All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee. The participants were fully informed about the objectives of the study, the nature of their involvement, the potential risks, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

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