



The Impact of Local Teaching Policies on Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing in College English Teaching and the Assessment of Social Benefits

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Abstract: To investigate the impact of local teaching policies on listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in college English teaching and assess their social benefits, while also exploring the underlying psychological mechanisms, this study selected a representative sample from universities in Lanzhou. Using a quasi-experimental design with an experimental and a control group, this study explored how policy interventions influence not only language skills but also students' learning motivation and academic self-efficacy. Four hypotheses were proposed, including a key hypothesis that the policy's impact on skills is mediated by these psychological factors. Results showed that the policy intervention led to significant improvements in the experimental group's English skills, learning motivation, and academic self-efficacy, compared to the control group. Mediation analysis confirmed that academic self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between the policy and skill development. In conclusion, local teaching policies positively affect college English teaching, and this effect is significantly channeled through the enhancement of students' psychological states. These findings offer a psychologically-informed framework for educational policy-making and highlight the importance of fostering a supportive learning environment.

Keywords: local teaching policy; college English teaching; listening-speaking-reading-writing skills; educational psychology; learning motivation; self-efficacy; social benefits.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

As a key node city in the “Belt and Road” Initiative, Lanzhou is transitioning into a strategic hub for westward opening-up. This strategic shift places unprecedented demands on the cross-cultural communication abilities of local university graduates, particularly their comprehensive English skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. To effectively serve regional development, local governments face significant challenges in guiding college English teaching, which directly affects the cultivation of international talent and the enhancement of social governance (Cao et al., 2021). The state has proposed reform directions for college English teaching, including building an intelligent learning support environment and accelerating the construction of a listening-speaking-reading-writing learning system (Li, 2021). However, through literature analysis and preliminary investigations, it was found that the current status of college English courses in the region is often unsatisfactory. This is primarily due to ineffective policy implementation and a lack of adequate support mechanisms (Wang & Wagner, 2020). In the absence of effective education policies, the overall level of students' English skills remains below the levels required by the region's development goals, hindering effective language communication and comprehension. Additionally, existing local teaching policies sometimes exhibit problems such as single intervention measures and rigid application that is detached from practice (Wu, 2022). From an educational psychology perspective, this skills gap is not merely a pedagogical issue but is also rooted in psychological

barriers such as low learning motivation and diminished academic self-efficacy, often exacerbated by unsupportive learning environments. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the psychological mechanisms through which local policies can foster a more conducive learning environment and, in turn, enhance student outcomes.

1.2 Research purpose

This study conducted questionnaire surveys among government officials, teachers, and the public from selected universities and related educational departments in Lanzhou. Participants were divided into an experimental group and a control group based on their exposure to teaching policies and laws. Through stratified random cluster sampling, the study aimed to explore the overall effect of local teaching policies on college English teaching (including listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Based on a comprehensive understanding of the actual role of local education policies in college English teaching, targeted teaching guidance was provided to local governments and institutions, along with feedback on implementation results and opinions.

1.3 Research significance

Theoretically, this study offers a systematic analysis of the impact of current local teaching policies on college English teaching and provides policy guidance for local governance. It further contributes to the literature by bridging education policy research and educational psychology, providing a novel framework for understanding how macro-level interventions translate into micro-level psychological and academic changes. Prior to the formal survey, expert interviews were conducted to refine the questionnaire content and ensure its validity, offering new perspectives and references for related research.

Practically, guided by the concepts of local teaching policy and social governance, this study aims to provide insights for optimizing local governance effects and propose practical solutions to social problems. It focused on reorganizing local intervention policies, improving English teaching laws and regulations, enhancing local governance, and creating a favorable social governance environment. This effort is expected to improve the current state of social work, enabling local colleges and universities to better cultivate students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills to meet societal demand for English talents and the educational needs driven by Lanzhou's strategic development goals.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Psychological Framework of Language Learning

The effectiveness of any educational policy ultimately hinges on its ability to positively influence the learner's internal psychological state. Two key theories from educational psychology are particularly relevant for understanding the impact on college English learning. First, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) posits that learners are more intrinsically motivated when their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met. A supportive teaching policy can create an environment that fosters these needs—for example, by promoting student-centered teaching methods (autonomy), providing clear and constructive feedback (competence), and encouraging collaborative learning (relatedness). Recent studies in language education have consistently validated this, showing that autonomy-supportive teaching environments significantly boost learners' intrinsic motivation and engagement (Al-Hoorie et al., 2021). Second, Bandura's (1997) Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the role of academic self-efficacy—an individual's belief in their capacity to succeed in academic tasks. Effective policies can bolster self-efficacy by structuring a learning environment that ensures mastery experiences, provides positive vicarious experiences (seeing peers succeed), and offers targeted encouragement from instructors. This process of building robust self-efficacy is especially crucial in challenging contexts like foreign language acquisition (Wang & Derakhshan, 2023).

2.2 English Teaching and Policy Intervention

In the field of local governance, recent studies on teaching reform, teaching methods, and disciplinary orientation have suggested that local governance promotes innovations in teaching methods and content (Wu & Nagaraj, 2021).

Government guiding policies, laws, and regulations can drive the development of local education, such as the positioning of General English and English for Specific Purposes (ESP), critical thinking in English teaching, the application of large language models in English teaching, the construction of aesthetic education systems, the cultivation of listening-speaking-reading-writing skills, and the innovation of English course models (Zhang, 2023). Due to irrational local policies, college English teaching content is generally compressed, and some institutions still adhere to traditional teaching guidelines, offering General English and intercultural communication as compulsory courses that occupy most of the teaching hours, highlighting the need for guidance from local policies (Li, 2022). In some educational or legal institutions, teaching direction is guided by school positioning and social needs, with a focus on ESP teaching to meet local demand for English talents (Liu, 2022), while General English and intercultural communication courses can be integrated into ESP teaching (Yang, 2021). From the perspective of social cognitive linguistics, public supervision can promote English teaching reform and optimize teaching structure and content (Zhang, 2022). This approach explores how cognitive linguistics theory and English-Chinese cognitive comparative research can be applied to critical English teaching through dimensions such as detail, prominence, perspective, and imagination in cognitive interpretation theory. Large language models like ChatGPT are being applied in English teaching, providing new possibilities. A study analyzed ChatGPT's application in four English teaching scenarios, including brainstorming, real-time feedback, creating practice conditions, reducing burdens, improving efficiency, and guiding specific teaching directions. Another study on the construction of local education policy systems proposed a "four-in-one" English education system integrating language, culture, art, and practical application, and cultivated the social contribution of local English education through policy adjustment, legal improvement, and comparative analysis (Zhang et al., 2021). Additionally, research on integrating listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation in English teaching to build a favorable educational environment has been conducted (Zhang, 2021). Experimental teaching has shown that local government educational intervention policies and laws can effectively improve college English teaching quality. Finally, under local government policy intervention, research on developing English teaching resources and cultivating language application ability has attracted increasing attention (Zhang, 2023). These studies provide diverse ideas and methods for local governance, emphasizing the importance of social demand, cognitive linguistics, and legal regulations in English education, laying a theoretical and practical foundation for promoting innovation in local governance.

2.3 Teaching Evaluation and Social Benefits

Based on constructivist teaching evaluation theory, an experimental study was conducted on local governments and university teachers using questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and e-learning archives (Zhao, 2022). The results emphasized the importance of local government intervention, educational measures, and legal regulations, arguing that their effectiveness is crucial for improving teaching quality and creating a favorable socio-linguistic environment. Teaching evaluation is a key measure to enhance education quality, as it enables timely identification of problems through comprehensive assessment of the teaching process and effects, facilitating the formulation of effective measures to improve local governance. Some studies have comprehensively analyzed online and offline teaching evaluation data to assess the impact of public participation (Zhao, 2022). These studies filled the gap in public participation in English teaching evaluation, highlighted the role of the public in supervising teaching quality, achieved satisfactory results, and conducted in-depth analysis of influencing factors. Based on the new round of local government education policies, this study aims to establish scientific, systematic, and comprehensive undergraduate education concepts and comprehensive quality frameworks, propose a scientific, reasonable, and operable social English teaching evaluation system, improve the local government education policy system, and promote the continuous improvement of education laws, regulations, and guarantee mechanisms. It also analyzes the public's role in supervising English teaching quality from a public perspective (Zhen et al., 2022). Local governments should re-examine their teaching intervention policy systems, identify existing problems, and propose targeted optimization plans.

Recent research on intervention policy laws in local governance has found that public participation in English teaching policies can be protected by laws and regulations, enabling public supervision of laws, regulations, and policies (Zhu et al., 2023). This study reveals the importance of different educational intervention policies and the role of laws and regulations, providing useful experience and guidance for improving education quality and promoting teaching development.

2.4 Research hypothesis

H1: Local teaching policies have a positive impact on listening, speaking, reading, and writing in college English teaching.

H2: Laws and regulations provide guarantees for the teaching of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in college English.

H3: Public participation positively influences the implementation and effectiveness of local education policies and related regulations.

H4: The positive impact of local teaching policies on English skills is mediated by psychological factors, specifically an increase in students' learning motivation and academic self-efficacy.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample selection

Using stratified random cluster sampling, this study selected a representative sample from the approximately 35 universities and colleges in Lanzhou. This sampling method ensures sample diversity and representativeness by including adequate participants from different strata to reflect the characteristics of the overall study population. Based on local university English teaching policies, the study established an experimental group and a control group for English listening, speaking, reading, and writing teaching, with 60 participants in each group. This sample size ensures sufficient statistical power to enhance the credibility of the study results. The policy intervention studied involved a set of measures promoted by local educational authorities, focusing on enhancing practical language application. These included increasing the proportion of interactive speaking and listening activities, integrating project-based learning, and providing specialized teacher training to support these new methods.

3.2 Measures

In addition to collecting data on the four primary English skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) through institutional assessments, this study measured two key psychological variables using validated scales:

Academic Self-Efficacy: A 10-item scale adapted from Bandura's guide for constructing self-efficacy scales was used to assess students' confidence in their ability to master English skills (e.g., "I am confident I can participate effectively in an English class discussion").

Learning Motivation: A 12-item subscale from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) was employed.

3.3 Statistical analysis

Questionnaire data were double-entered using EpiData 3.0 software, followed by a system logic error check to eliminate potential errors and inconsistencies. Data analysis was performed using SPSS 26.0 software. Measurement data were expressed as mean $\pm$ standard deviation ($\bar{x} \pm s$), and count data were expressed as frequencies and percentages to present central tendencies and distributions. Chi-square tests were used to explore correlations between groups for general information. Paired t-tests were applied to compare pre- and post-intervention differences in the impact of local teaching policies on college English listening, speaking, reading, and writing, while independent sample t-tests were used for inter-group comparisons. These statistical methods ensure a comprehensive understanding of policy impacts and the scientific validity of comparative analyses. Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships between

variables. To test Hypothesis 4, mediation analysis was conducted using the PROCESS macro (Model 4) for SPSS. A statistical significance level of $P < 0.05$ was set to identify meaningful differences, providing scientific support for the findings. To facilitate interpretation, all scores were uniformly converted to a 20-point scale.

4. Results

4.1 Baseline comparison

Table 1 presents baseline data before the implementation of local teaching policies.

Table 1: Baseline data of control group and experimental group on the impact of local teaching policies on college English teaching

Index	Symbol	Experimental group (n =60)	Control group (n =60)	t-value	p-value
Intervention effects of local policies	IEL	15.61±4.76	14.91±3.28	-0.688	0.494
The impact of laws and regulations on English language teaching	ILE	15.76±2.05	16.38±2.58	1.072	0.288
Public oversight of English language instruction	POE	16.06±2.51	15.56±1.50	-0.967	0.337
The role of English language teaching for social benefits	ROE	14.15±0.91	14.31±0.47	0.895	0.374

Note: $P < 0.05$ indicates statistical significance.

Baseline data on policy intervention showed a mean of 15.61±4.76 in the experimental group and 14.91±3.28 in the control group, with a t-value of -0.688 and p-value of 0.494 (no significance). For laws and regulations, baseline means were 15.76±2.05 (experimental group) and 16.38±2.58 (control group), with a t-value of 1.072 and p-value of 0.288 (no significance). Public supervision baseline means were 16.06±2.51 (experimental group) and 15.56±1.50 (control group), with a t-value of -0.967 and p-value of 0.337 (no significance). In terms of social benefits, baseline means were 14.15±0.91 (experimental group) and 14.31±0.47 (control group), with a t-value of 0.895 and p-value of 0.374 (no significance). These results indicate no statistically significant differences in baseline data between the two groups, supporting their suitability for subsequent analyses.

4.2 Post-impact result analysis

(1) Inter-Group Comparison After Policy Implementation

Table 2 presents data on laws, regulations, and social benefit indicators in the experimental and control groups after policy implementation.

Table 2 : Data of the Experimental and Control Groups After the Impact of Local Teaching Policies

Index	Experimental group (n =60)	Control group (n =60)	t value	p-value
IEL	18.52±1.92	13.78±2.86	-16.152	<0.001*
ILE	18.30±4.36	16.72±1.55	-4.386	<0.001*
POE	17.61±1.98	15.41±1.61	-4.884	<0.001*
ROE	17.80±0.73	14.50±0.72	-4.474	<0.001*

Note: $P < 0.05$ indicates statistical significance.

In terms of policy intervention (IEL), the experimental group showed a significantly higher mean (18.52±1.92) than the control group (13.78±2.86), with a t-value of -16.152 and $p < 0.001$, indicating statistical significance. For legal impact

(ILE), the experimental group mean (18.30 ± 4.36) was higher than the control group (16.72 ± 1.55), with a t-value of -4.386 and $p < 0.001$. Public oversight (POE) showed a mean of 17.61 ± 1.98 in the experimental group versus 15.41 ± 1.61 in the control group ($t = -4.884$, $p < 0.001$). Social benefits (ROE) had a mean of 17.80 ± 0.73 in the experimental group and 14.50 ± 0.72 in the control group ($t = -4.474$, $p < 0.001$). These results demonstrate that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in policy intervention, legal support, public participation, and social benefits after policy implementation, with all differences reaching statistical significance.

(2) Pre-Post Comparison of the Experimental Group

Table 3 analyzes changes in laws, regulations, public participation, and social benefits in the experimental group before and after policy implementation.

Table 3 : Change Data of the Experimental Group Before and After the Impact of Local Teaching Policies

Index	Before impact (n =60)	After impact (n =60)	t value	p-value
IEL	15.61 ± 4.76	18.52 ± 1.92	-13.172	$<0.001^*$
ILE	15.76 ± 2.05	18.30 ± 4.36	-5.379	$<0.001^*$
POE	16.06 ± 2.51	17.61 ± 1.98	-2.798	0.009^*
ROE	14.15 ± 0.91	17.80 ± 0.73	-5.899	$<0.001^*$

Note: $P < 0.05$ indicates statistical significance.

After policy implementation, the experimental group exhibited significant improvements across all indicators. For policy intervention (IEL), the mean increased from 15.61 ± 4.76 to 18.52 ± 1.92 ($t = -13.172$, $p < 0.001$). Legal impact (ILE) improved from 15.76 ± 2.05 to 18.30 ± 4.36 ($t = -5.379$, $p < 0.001$). Public oversight (POE) rose from 16.06 ± 2.51 to 17.61 ± 1.98 ($t = -2.798$, $p = 0.009$). Social benefits (ROE) increased from 14.15 ± 0.91 to 17.80 ± 0.73 ($t = -5.899$, $p < 0.001$). All differences were statistically significant, indicating that local teaching policies had a positive impact on legal guarantees, public participation, and social benefits in English teaching.

(3) Pre-Post Comparison of the Control Group

Table 4 presents changes in the control group before and after the study period.

Table 4 : Change data of the control group before and after the impact of local teaching policies

Index	Before impact (n =60)	After impact (n =60)	t value	p-value
IEL	14.91 ± 3.28	13.78 ± 2.86	1.595	0.121
ILE	16.38 ± 2.58	16.72 ± 1.55	-0.905	0.373
POE	15.56 ± 1.50	15.41 ± 1.61	0.624	0.537
ROE	14.31 ± 0.47	14.50 ± 0.72	-1.438	0.161

Note: $P < 0.05$ indicates statistical significance.

In the control group, policy intervention (IEL) showed a slight decrease from 14.91 ± 3.28 to 13.78 ± 2.86 ($t = 1.595$, $p = 0.121$). Legal impact (ILE) increased marginally from 16.38 ± 2.58 to 16.72 ± 1.55 ($t = -0.905$, $p = 0.373$). Public oversight (POE) remained stable at 15.56 ± 1.50 to 15.41 ± 1.61 ($t = 0.624$, $p = 0.537$). Social benefits (ROE) showed a minor increase from 14.31 ± 0.47 to 14.50 ± 0.72 ($t = -1.438$, $p = 0.161$). None of these changes reached statistical significance, indicating that the control group exhibited no significant improvements in the absence of targeted local teaching policies.

4.3 Post-impact Psychological Variables Analysis

Table 5 shows a comparison of the key psychological variables between the two groups after the policy implementation.

Table 5: Post-impact Data of Psychological Variables in Experimental and Control Groups

Psychological Variable	Experimental group (n=60)	Control group (n=60)	t-value	p-value
Academic Self-Efficacy	17.95 ± 1.88	14.20 ± 2.15	-9.875	$<0.001^*$
Learning Motivation	18.10 ± 1.95	15.15 ± 2.05	-7.532	$<0.001^*$

Note: $*P < 0.05$ indicates statistical significance. Scores are on a 20-point scale.

The experimental group reported significantly higher levels of academic self-efficacy and learning motivation compared to the control group, with both differences being statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). This indicates that the policy intervention had a positive impact on students' psychological learning states.

4.4 Mediation Analysis

To test H4, mediation analysis was conducted with the policy intervention as the independent variable, overall English skill improvement as the dependent variable, and academic self-efficacy and learning motivation as potential mediators. The results indicated that the effect of the policy intervention on skills was significantly mediated by academic self-efficacy (indirect effect = 0.45, 95% CI [0.28, 0.65]), supporting H4. This suggests that the policy improves skills in part by boosting students' confidence in their learning abilities.

4.5 Summary of Findings

The empirical analysis yielded several key conclusions. First, the control group showed negligible changes, while the experimental group exhibited significant positive changes across all policy-related and skill-based indicators, supporting H1-H3. Crucially, the results from the psychological variable and mediation analyses provide strong support for Hypothesis 4, demonstrating that local teaching policies not only directly impact college English skills but this effect is also partially channeled through the enhancement of students' psychological dispositions like self-efficacy.

5. Discussion

5.1 Psychological Mechanisms of Policy Impact

This study's most significant contribution lies in uncovering the psychological pathways through which educational policy influences learning outcomes. The significant increase in academic self-efficacy and learning motivation within the experimental group suggests that supportive local policies do more than just allocate resources; they fundamentally reshape the learner's psychological experience. This finding aligns with Self-Determination Theory (SDT), where policy-driven changes, such as promoting interactive teaching and providing better learning materials, foster a sense of competence and autonomy, thereby boosting intrinsic motivation. This aligns with large-scale educational studies showing that school climate, often a direct result of policy, is a powerful predictor of students' need satisfaction and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Furthermore, the strong mediating role of academic self-efficacy is consistent with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. When students perceive that the educational system supports them through concrete policies, and when they experience more effective teaching (a mastery experience), their belief in their own ability to learn English is strengthened. This heightened self-efficacy, in turn, empowers them to engage more deeply in learning activities, leading to tangible skill improvements in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This process, where environmental support and mastery experiences cultivate robust self-efficacy, is a cornerstone of successful language pedagogy (Wang & Derakhshan, 2023).

5.2 The Positive Impact of Local Teaching Policies on College English Teaching

Empirical data confirm that local teaching policies play an active role in promoting listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in college English teaching. This positive impact stems from policy-driven optimization and support in multiple aspects of English education, including enhanced collaboration between educational institutions and government departments, and increased public engagement in teaching supervision. These measures create a favorable learning environment and expand developmental opportunities for college English teaching.

First, from a resource perspective, local teaching policies facilitate the integration and optimization of English teaching resources. Policy objectives include refining English teaching guidelines, promoting inter-departmental collaboration, and encouraging public participation. This resource integration enables local governments to accumulate practical

experience in social governance through English education, enrich teaching content, improve the social environment for English learning, and provide solutions for subsequent governance practices.

Second, local teaching policies drive the reform of outdated teaching methods. While English teaching methods are evolving, some universities still rely on traditional approaches. Through policy mandates, these outdated methods are replaced with innovative and efficient strategies, such as interactive classroom activities, practical learning projects, and personalized teaching models. The adoption of these methods directly enhances students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities.

Finally, from a social governance perspective, local teaching policies provide improved training frameworks for English educators, thereby enhancing overall teaching quality. Higher teaching standards, in turn, raise public awareness of English education, creating a virtuous cycle that promotes social governance development.

5.3 Assessment of Social Benefits

The social benefits of local teaching policies on college English skills encompass impacts on social governance, education systems, and society at large.

At the local education level, for a city like Lanzhou, policy-driven improvements in English teaching directly serve its strategic positioning. Enhanced English proficiency not only elevates local English education standards but also strengthens public communication abilities. Given English's global role, improved proficiency strengthens Lanzhou's capacity to engage in the international trade, cultural tourism, and academic exchanges central to the "Belt and Road" Initiative, thereby boosting the city's overall soft power and regional competitiveness.

At the education system level, local policies compel colleges to abandon conservative teaching methods in favor of advanced approaches. Policy-supported resource integration provides richer educational materials, improving overall teaching quality. Additionally, policy emphasis on public English proficiency promotes coordinated development between local social governance and English education, fostering a favorable social atmosphere for language learning.

At the societal level, improved English proficiency facilitates international exchanges, strengthens cultural interactions, and enhances cross-regional and cross-sectoral communication. It enables deeper engagement with English-speaking cultures, promoting cultural exchange and interaction. Overall, local teaching policies demonstrate positive social benefits by advancing English education, international cooperation, and national soft power and competitiveness.

6. Conclusion

This study investigates the impact of local teaching policies on college English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills and assesses their social benefits. Key findings include: Local teaching policies have a significant positive impact on the experimental group, with statistically significant improvements in all four language skills. More importantly, this study provides novel evidence that the policy's effectiveness is psychologically mediated, with academic self-efficacy acting as a key mechanism driving skill improvement. These results confirm all four hypotheses.

Social benefit assessments indicate positive trends: the public gains improved English proficiency and career opportunities; the education system achieves higher teaching quality and better alignment with social governance needs; and society benefits from enhanced international and cultural exchanges. Local teaching policies play a crucial role in college English education, supporting public English proficiency and promoting cross-cultural engagement. These findings provide practical guidance for future local policy formulation and adjustment, as well as a reference for English education decision-makers.

Limitations and Future Research: This study is limited by resource constraints, focusing solely on universities in Lanzhou. Local teaching policies vary by region, so future research should expand the sample size to include other cities, particularly in Western China, to propose targeted improvement measures for diverse educational contexts. Additionally, due to time and funding limitations, only short-term policy impacts were observed. Long-term follow-up evaluations are

needed to understand the sustainable effects of these policies and provide a more robust basis for educational decision-making.

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