

# An Analysis of English Teaching Strategies in Higher Vocational Technical College

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**Abstract:** English teaching in higher vocational technical colleges has certain particularity, so the English teaching mode of exam-oriented education should not be used. It should not imitate the college English teaching model of undergraduate colleges as well. It is necessary to pay more attention to students' actual English level and employment needs to formulate vocational college English teaching methods. Based on the analysis of the current situation of students' English learning and the common problems in English teaching in higher vocational technical colleges, this thesis explores some practical strategies for English teaching in higher vocational technical colleges and provides some new methods to improve the quality of English teaching and cultivate comprehensive English talents for English teachers in higher vocational colleges.

## 1. Introduction

Higher vocational technical colleges mainly train vocational talents for the society. The revised Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China in 2022 clearly states that "vocational education is a type of education with the same important status as general education."<sup>[1]</sup> That is also standardizes the development of higher vocational technical education.

With the continuous development of China's economy, the trade and economic exchanges between China and the other countries in the world are becoming more and more frequently. This not only brings more employment opportunities for job seekers, but also puts forward higher requirements for them.<sup>[2]</sup> Today's society no longer only needs a language translator, but needs the comprehensive English talents who understand the language, rules, management, vocational skills and so on.

Therefore, it is necessary to change traditional English teaching model to meet the growing needs of society and students. English teaching in higher vocational technical colleges should be social demand-oriented and provide versatile talents who understand both professional and English.

## 2. Current situation of English learning in higher vocational technical colleges

### 2.1. Students pay less attention to English learning

Most of the students in higher vocational technical colleges have lower admission scores and lower enthusiasm for learning. Especially for English learning,

many students do not have enough confidence to learn English well. There are also some students who can't understand the content of the English class, then begin to give up on themselves. They are not interested in learning English, have no motivation to learn English. They feel that their major has nothing to do with English. They do not realize its importance to their future life and work. So many students show a lack of concentration in English class. They just want to learn a special skill that will help them earn a living.

### 2.2. Weak basic English skills and poor language learning environment

Most of the students in higher vocational technical colleges have less English vocabulary and grammar. Their listening and speaking skills in English are very limited as well. Because they used to study English mainly to cope with various examinations and ignore the importance of oral communication.

In vocational technical college, students usually receive English instruction for only 2-4 hours per week, so students do not have enough time to study English. In order to take care of the students' general English level, teacher can not always speak English in whole course, so students have very limited time to practice English communication. Students seldom learn English on their own initiative after English class.

Therefore, the phenomenon of "can not understand" and "can not speak" English has become more and more common among higher vocational students.

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### **3. Problems of English teaching in higher vocational technical colleges**

#### **3.1. The traditional English teaching model can not meet the requirements of learners**

Teachers continue to use the traditional English teaching mode in the teaching process, which is difficult to stimulate students' interest in English learning. The English cultivating of students in higher vocational technical colleges mainly stays in the teaching mode of exam-oriented and passing English grade, which leads to the mentality of most students to learn English by taking the exam.<sup>[3]</sup> Teachers are used to focus on the cultivating of students' English, especially on reading, writing, translation, reciting words and so on, especially in the teaching process, teachers will spend a lot of time to lead students to learn English grammar knowledge, and learning grammar has become the key points to learn English well for many students. However, teacher do not have enough time to cultivate students' listening and speaking ability. In addition, the traditional final exam system has led students to hold a "pass long live" mentality, thus, the status of traditional English teaching mode is more deeply rooted, making students lose the purpose and focus of language learning - communication.

#### **3.2. English teachers and teaching equipments are relatively backward**

In recent years, higher vocational technical colleges continue to expand enrollment, while the number of teachers basically unchanged, resulting in a serious imbalance between the number of teachers and students. College English teaching gradually becomes "co-class teaching", with more than 50 students in each class. As a result, it is difficult for English teachers to have enough time to carry out whole-class English speaking and listening training.<sup>[4]</sup> In addition, the teaching equipments can not keep up with the teaching and students' needs, so many English teachers only rely on portable tape recorders for listening training. Therefore, English teaching quality can hardly be guaranteed.

#### **3.3. English textbooks are out of line with students' majors**

Teaching materials are the main basis for teachers to teach, so the appropriate teaching materials will benefit students, and vice versa. At present, the college English textbooks used by higher vocational colleges have unity, that is, no matter what major you are, you should use the same English textbook. This results in a disconnect between students' English knowledge and their major. Students can not use English to correspond to some key words of their own major. In the process of job hunting or employment in the future, if students need English for professional business communication, there will still be language barriers.

At present, English teaching materials which commonly used in higher vocational technical colleges

still focus on vocabulary and grammar learning, and there are also many repeated contents in primary and secondary school textbooks, which is not conducive to the expansion of English knowledge of higher vocational technical students.<sup>[5]</sup> In addition, the English level of students in vocational technical colleges is uneven, and it is difficult for teachers to teach students according to their aptitude in the teaching process.

Therefore, the difficulty of choosing English teaching materials is generally medium, which leads to those students with weak English foundation, can not understand the teaching materials, and lack of confidence in learning English, however, students with good basic English skills will find the textbooks too simple and it is difficult to further improve their English level.

#### **3.4. Lack of cross-cultural communication ability training for students**

In the process of English teaching, teachers mainly teach language knowledge, and seldom cultivate students in cross-cultural communication knowledge. Even if there is, it is only a few minutes to talk about superficial comments, so very few students can realize the importance of learning cross-cultural communication. Language learning that ignores social background and humanistic etiquette is incomplete. If English teachers do not impart knowledge of Western culture and intercultural communication etiquette to students, it will inevitably lead to communication bottlenecks in real work exchanges in the future, and even cause cultural conflicts, which will affect the feelings of both Chinese and foreign parties.

### **4. Strategies of English teaching in higher vocational technical colleges**

#### **4.1. Clarify the purpose of English teaching in higher vocational technical colleges**

Both teachers and students should change the traditional concept of English teaching and learning, and make it clear that the real purpose of learning English is to serve employment during the higher vocational technical colleges. All the English teaching activities should be employment demand-oriented. Teaching emphasis should focus on improving English language communication skills.<sup>[6]</sup> Only when students change their traditional test-oriented learning concept, truly realize the social needs and historical opportunities of English talents, and clearly realize that the actual English communication ability will affect their employment competitiveness, they can change their learning attitude, stimulate their learning interest and initiative, and grasp the essence of language training, and then transform the former "paper English language" ability into a language communication ability.

At the same time, teachers should encourage students to constantly expand their English knowledge, combine language with vocational skills, and become a versatile talent who understands both English and majors.

#### **4.2. Teach students according to their aptitude and make targeted teaching plans**

As early as two thousand years ago, Confucius put forward the teaching concept of teaching students according to their aptitude. It means that according to the actual situation of students, teaching at different levels, promoting strengths and avoiding weaknesses<sup>[7]</sup>, and carrying out targeted teaching activities, so that students can achieve all-round development to the maximum extent. Therefore, according to the English proficiency is uneven, we can make students carry out a survey test at the beginning of entering the school, then according to the test results, English courses can be divided into advanced classes, basic classes and zero-basic classes.

The advanced class mainly cultivates compound talents who are proficient in English and professional; the basic class mainly cultivates applied talents who can understand English materials and carry out daily oral English communication; zero-basic classes can start with simple English letters, cultivate students to regain their confidence in learning English, and develop students' ability to learn English independently as the goal.

In addition, it is necessary to adjust the capacity of students in English classes, which also helps teachers carry out whole-class English practical training, so that each student can get professional guidance, so as to ensure the effect of English teaching.

#### **4.3. Update the curriculum and offer a variety of English teaching activities**

English basic theory teaching aims at application, providing a variety of English teaching activities, and strengthening the pertinence and practicability of applied English teaching. The curriculum of higher vocational technical colleges can get rid of the college English teaching mode of using unified textbooks<sup>[8]</sup>, and there is no necessary to learn the public English teaching mode of undergraduate colleges. Therefore, vocational English curriculum can take into account the actual situation of regional economy and carry out targeted professional English teaching. Such as hotel English, aviation English and tourism English can be set up to meet students' future employment needs. It is also necessary to choose appropriate English textbooks according to different courses, and it is not necessary to unify the content and progress of college English teaching for all majors. Colleges can also set up college English test training courses, which can be divided into different levels of classes to meet the actual needs of students.

#### **4.4. Choose the right English textbook and optimize the teaching content**

Conventional English textbooks can no longer stimulate students' interest in English learning. Vocational English teaching materials should be different from the structure of primary and secondary school English teaching materials, and practice training should be the leading line of English teaching materials. At the same time, it is also

necessary to combine the students' major and life, and incorporate the simulated scenario training into the English textbook.

Only to reform of English teaching materials thoroughly, English teaching content can be transformed from the traditional "word explanation + text translation + grammar analysis + after-class practice" completely. Only to make English teaching materials based on vocational needs, English teaching content can be tilted towards vocational skills, so that students can establish a strong sense of vocational role during college period. Only to make English teaching materials fit students' major and their life, English teaching content can stimulate students' interest in English learning and make students attach importance to English learning.

Vocational English teaching materials should fully reflect their practical application and professional pertinence, so that students can combine their major with English, apply what they have learned, and meet the development needs of the industry, and cultivate students to become comprehensive talents who understand both English and majors.

#### **4.5. School-enterprise cooperation to cultivate precise English talents**

"School-enterprise cooperation" is the main mode of vocational education personnel training and an effective way to cultivate vocational skilled talents. Usually, students learn professional theoretical knowledge in the first two years at school, and carry out internship training in the enterprise in the last year.

During the period of school, teachers can focus on developing students' ability to use English language and integrate vocational skills. At the same time, it is necessary to cultivate students' awareness of law-abiding, responsibility, integrity, quality and professionalism, and carry out professional quality education for students.<sup>[9]</sup> And then to improve students' ability to withstand pressure and frustration, and cultivate students' ability to communicate and cooperate with others.

During the internship period, students should focus on strengthening the core English communication skills, expanding vocational skills, stimulating the vocational potential, and cultivating professional ethics and innovative spirit. Professional internship should have both clear learning tasks and production tasks. English learning should be combined with production, and production should be linked with students' English learning. It is necessary to cooperate with enterprises to strengthen students' English knowledge and other vocational and technical abilities required for jobs, improve students' English level, so as to improve their employability.

#### **4.6. Reform English teaching assessment model**

It is very necessary to establish a new assessment standard for college English courses and to change the traditional assessment method based on final examination results.<sup>[10]</sup> In order to ensure that students can develop better skills and acquire English language, the assessment of English

courses should include written, oral and listening tests and the proportion of process assessment should be increased. Teachers should lead students to learn English in new directions and make them pay more attention on English communication. Meanwhile to urge students stay in a continuous state of study, rather than cram for final exam results.

#### **4.7. Construction of “double-qualified” English teachers**

The progress of students cannot be separated from the guidance of good teachers. If we want to train students to become compound talents of “English + major”, we should strengthen the construction of “double-qualified” English teachers. Students’ English practice level is closely related to teachers’ social practice ability. Colleges should encourage and support English teachers to improve their academic qualifications and vocational skills, especially strengthen teachers’ practical teaching guidance ability, encourage English teachers to practice in enterprises or learn other professional skills, and obtain relevant vocational qualifications to improve their “English + other major” level.

In addition, the college can also hire professional from various industries to have lectures or trainings, specially cultivate English teachers to have other professional skills, and recommend English teachers to go to enterprises for field visits or short-term learning.

Strengthening the construction of “double-qualified” teachers will certainly help to train students to become English application-oriented talents and improve their employment competitiveness.

### **5. Conclusion**

Most students in higher vocational colleges generally have negative emotions when learning English. If we want to reverse this situation, the first task is to change the traditional English teaching mode, make students have a new understanding of English, clarify the importance of learning English for their future life and work, so as to stimulate students’ initiative in learning English. At the same time, English teaching in higher vocational colleges should focus on English practice communication, so that students can carry out simple oral and written communication in the daily activities of foreign communication and various business activities, instead of blindly participating in the grade training and examination. Vocational English teachers should constantly update and improve their English teaching methods, keep pace with The Times, combine English knowledge with students’ professional knowledge, and cultivate students to be comprehensive talents who understand both English and majors.

Therefore, we should pay high attention to English teaching strategies in higher vocational technical colleges, we should constantly innovate in exploration, and make continuous progress in innovation, so as to accurately transport valuable “English + professionals” talents for the society.

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