

# On Improving the Effectiveness of English Education and Teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges

Yating Luo, Riming Huang

Jiangxi Technical College of Manufacturing, Nanchang, China

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**Abstract:** Higher vocational colleges are an important part of China's education system, training professional talents for various industries in our country. English majors in higher vocational colleges need to satisfy students' practical needs well after they take up their jobs. Therefore, English teaching in higher vocational colleges needs to be more effective, put teaching activities into practice, and effectively improve the practical ability of English majors. This paper summarizes the current situation of English teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges, combs out the actual needs of English teaching according to the survey results, and puts forward measures to improve the effectiveness of English teaching.

## 1. Introduction

English is one of the most widely used languages in the world. With the deepening of globalization, the demand for English professionals in China is also increasing. Under such an era background, English education in higher vocational colleges is more pursuing the effectiveness of teaching in order to cultivate English professionals who really meet the actual needs of communication.

## 2. Current Situation and Problems of English Teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges

First of all, English courses in Higher Vocational Colleges are too literary and theoretical, lacking practicality. The cultivation mainly focusses on employment, aiming at developing students' professional skills and working ability. But nowadays, the teaching content of English major in Higher Vocational Colleges lacks practicability, and textbooks are more theoretical and literary. Although these teaching contents consolidate the professional foundation of students majored in English and help them master English knowledge through systematic learning, in practical communication situations, many of the knowledge contents learned in colleges are not practical. Many students often need to go through a period of study time after graduation to train the ability of flexible use of English for communication and translation, which is contrary to the original intention of personnel training in Higher Vocational Colleges and fails to train students successfully to meet the needs of professional posts.

Secondly, the content of English education in higher vocational colleges fail to keep pace with the times. English is a systematic and developing subject. With the development of the times, many new things and social phenomena are emerging. The learning content of English major in Higher Vocational Colleges usually lags behind. Students have not been exposed to some new vocabulary translation methods and the latest included English vocabulary in the learning process. English Teachers should be fully aware of this problem, expand the learning content for students in time in their daily teaching, and impart more knowledge of English that keeps pace with the times.

Finally, the teaching of English majors in higher vocational colleges does not focus on improving students' English conversational competence and lacks a learning environment close to the English context. From the actual survey results, Vocational Colleges in China generally pay more attention to the teaching of English vocabulary, grammar, translation and writing ability, but the training of students' English listening and speaking ability is obviously inadequate. This also leads to the excellent performance in written English expression and test ability of most students majored in

English, but slightly inadequate ability to communicate in the actual process of English conversation. At the same time, in the actual working environment, the demand for English professionals' oral and conversational competence is on the rise. Higher vocational colleges are required to stress the needs of jobs and improve students' ability to use English comprehensively in the process of formulating the curriculum content of English major.

### **3. Practical Needs of English Teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges**

In terms of training objectives, it is necessary to be professional. The training of talents in Higher Vocational Colleges is mainly for employment. Therefore, it is necessary to make students fully learn professional knowledge, exercise professional skills and grow into practical talents with higher professional level through education in colleges. The development of English education is expected to emphasize the strengthening of students' professional skills, improve the ability to communicate in English and meet the needs of professional posts. Students of this major are required to not only learn literary English knowledge, but also master more practical English knowledge so that they can fully meet the needs of their jobs after leaving the campus. In view of the current job requirements for English professionals, the main needs are interpretation, translation, teaching, international trade and so on. It is not difficult to find that these job requirements require students to have a strong ability of reading, writing and conversation, as well as a high level of English vocabulary mastery and translation ability. Teachers of English majors in higher vocational colleges need to arrange courses for students according to their actual needs and set up their own teaching plans, so as to improve students' English proficiency in a targeted way from the perspective of effectiveness.

### **4. Measures to Improve the Effectiveness of English Education and Teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges**

Firstly, adjust the course content and add more practical English learning content. For students of English majors in Higher Vocational Colleges, good English proficiency is the most fundamental and important learning needs. Teachers must strictly require students in the process of teaching activities. Through teaching, students can master solid English knowledge and have excellent English application skills. In the process of designing teaching plan, teachers need to not only let students learn standard English grammar knowledge and guide them to learn classical English literary works and paragraphs, but also focus on providing more practical English learning content for students, such as business English, science and technology English, economic and trade English, so that students are able to adapt to the needs of professional posts as soon as possible after work. Teachers of English majors are advised to stress the balanced cultivation of students' ability to use English in their teaching activities. They must not only devote more efforts to students' test ability, translation ability and written English expression etc, but also invest more energy and teaching time to training students' English listening and speaking ability so as to enable students to truly improve their comprehensive English ability. Teachers are also expected to pay close attention to current affairs and hot social news in their daily life, try to collect translation methods of new words and the latest English vocabulary collected, and impart them to students in time in classroom teaching. Teachers are also advised to maintain a lifelong learning attitude, pay close attention to the latest achievements of English research and advanced teaching concepts, constantly adjust their teaching content and teaching methods in practice, improve the quality of English classroom teaching, and help students acquire solid English professional knowledge.

Secondly, innovate teaching forms and break through the shackles of traditional classroom teaching forms. Teachers must keep innovative thinking and open attitude, constantly reflect on their own teaching methods, get rid of the rigid and dull classroom teaching form, and actively introduce new media as a new teaching method. New forms of teaching will train students' English application ability through various ways, and make up for the imbalance in the development of students' English ability in all aspects. Teachers are suggested to make use of the Internet and

computers to create an English environment close to the real situation for students, so as to encourage students to actively communicate and solve problems. On the one hand, the innovation of teaching forms improves the enthusiasm of students. On the other hand, it can greatly improve the efficiency of English teaching. Students in contemporary higher vocational colleges are usually accustomed to receiving information through mobile terminal devices. Teachers should be keen to discover the characteristics of students and improve their teaching methods with such behavioral patterns. They can make full use of their fragmented time and make use of mobile phone software and micro-classes to extend the effect of classroom teaching to students' lives. In addition to the traditional classroom teaching, teachers can organize students to participate in more practical activities, so that students can really use English as their mother tongue to communicate, and in the process of using English improve their oral English ability and practical ability. Teachers are also able to provide students with the opportunity to practice in the work unit, so that students will feel the environment of real work, let them find their own interests and shortcomings in practice, and then in the follow-up study consciously improve their ability to find out the deficiencies and improve their knowledge system.

Thirdly, broaden students' horizons and let them have access to knowledge beyond English majors. Many students of English majors in higher vocational colleges have to take on the role of translation after they take up their jobs. Whether they are engaged in written translation or oral translation, they need to master some knowledge other than English, such as the English expression of business language, common English vocabulary in trade process, and common style of scientific and technological English. Therefore, in the process of teaching, besides imparting English knowledge, teachers also need to broaden students' horizons, divide training directions according to their interests and needs, and focus on imparting some common knowledge content of other industries and English-specific vocabulary of related industries for students. In the teaching of translation course, teachers need to enrich the forms and professional fields of translation materials as much as possible, so that students are provided access to more types of translation materials, so as to lay a foundation for students to adapt to the needs of their work as soon as possible in the future. The imparting of these knowledge enables students of English majors to have a preliminary concept and basic understanding of other industries, help them find the general direction of accumulating relevant English vocabulary, make them more targeted in learning, and put the educational achievements of English majors into practice.

Fourthly, improve the overall level of teachers, and improve the detection standards of students' academic level. To improve the effectiveness of English teaching in Higher Vocational colleges, it is necessary to improve the overall professional level and teaching ability of teachers, build a high-level and high-quality teacher team, and provide more solid professional guarantee for students. Higher vocational colleges are expected to provide regular opportunities for English teachers to learn and communicate, so that teachers can more easily master advanced teaching methods, and timely enrich their English knowledge reserves. Meanwhile, higher vocational colleges should set more stringent standards for academic level testing, strictly require students, formulate standards and schemes for academic proficiency testing around teaching objectives, strive to reflect students' real English level comprehensively and effectively, make a scientific analysis of these testing results, and adjust the curriculum difficulty and teaching content in time. Strict academic standards and complete evaluation system urge students majored in English to study hard, improve their professional abilities and spur their continuous progress. A good learning atmosphere also plays a continuous role in nurturing students, making them develop the habit of diligent learning and positive thinking, consciously learning English professional knowledge, and giving full play to their subjective initiative.

Fifthly, strengthen extracurricular activities. Higher vocational students are in adolescence with a lively nature. It is easy to make students feel bored by teaching English only in class. Therefore, reasonable extra-curricular activities can effectively improve students' enthusiasm for learning. After class, it is feasible to take a variety of extracurricular activities. For example, it is recommendable to organize students to watch foreign movies on weekends, and then let them tell

the most impressive clips in the movies in English or organize students to rehearse English short plays so that students can feel the fun of English expression in role-playing. At the same time, it is also suggested to organize knowledge contests about the humanities in western countries and let students fully understand the language environment of western countries, so that they are able to harvest the improvement of English knowledge.

## **5. Conclusion**

To sum up, it is an urgent task to improve the effectiveness of Vocational English education and teaching, and is also the fundamental requirement to improve the competitiveness of English graduates in the workplace. In order to improve the effectiveness of English teaching, firstly, it is essential to try to improve students' comprehensive ability of using English, train their practical ability of English translation and English conversation through teaching activities, and create an environment for students to use English. Teachers are required to combine teaching theory with practical teaching, so that students can understand the real working environment and job needs in practice, and then study with a goal. Only in this way can we put the achievements of English teaching into practice, improve the effectiveness of teaching activities, and train students to be truly qualified and high-quality professionals.

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