

# Study on Restructuring the Content of College English Course in Vocational University Based on Occupational Demands

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**Abstract:** Based on the demand for complex English talents for the high-quality construction of “Belt and Road,” the study proposes a curriculum restructuring program oriented on “serving professional teaching, career development, and quality development” in response to the real problems of the current university English curriculum, such as focusing on language but not on application, insufficient vocational relevance, and low degree of integration with the professional field. We propose a curriculum reconstruction plan oriented to “serve professional teaching, career development, and quality development.” We have constructed a three-in-one curriculum goal of “laying a foundation for professionalism, infiltrating humanity, and empowering development,” systematically designed a curriculum content system of “language foundation, industry knowledge, and quality development,” and established an AI-enabled multi-intelligence evaluation system. This will promote the transformation of university English from single-language teaching to a service-oriented curriculum that supports professional development, and cultivate internationalized talents with both workplace language application skills and cross-cultural communication literacy. The study highlights the “vocational” characteristics and “service” functions of college English, and provides an actionable, practical path for the reform of college English curriculum in vocational undergraduate colleges.

**Keywords:** Occupational demands; Vocational undergraduate education; College English; Curriculum content restructuring

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## 1. Introduction

The General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council issued the Opinions on Promoting the High-Quality Development of Modern Vocational Education, which proposes to “effectively enhance the adaptability of vocational education”<sup>[1]</sup>, indicating the direction of the development of vocational education in the new period. The curriculum reform of vocational

colleges and universities should also enhance their adaptability to the development of students' vocational ability. At present, vocational education curriculum reform primarily focuses on professional program development and core curriculum construction, while reforms of public basic courses receive significantly less attention and remain relatively underdeveloped <sup>[2]</sup>. The ability of public courses to effectively support professional curriculum teaching is insufficient, and there is a lack of research and discussion on the relationship between public basic courses and professional curriculum development. Focusing on the content reform of vocational undergraduate "College English" course, the relevant studies have not yet involved the "adaptability of vocational education" concept of curriculum reform, the curriculum content setting is still confined to a single college English course thinking, and lack of organic integration with the profession from the perspective of the broad perspective of thinking and designing the "College English" course reform program. Therefore, it has become an urgent problem to explore how to reconstruct the content of college English courses for vocational education undergraduates based on vocational needs, and to explore the implementation path to effectively improve students' language application ability and vocational competence in the workplace.

## **2. Positioning of college English curriculum in vocational and technical universities**

College English Teaching Guidelines (2020 Edition) points out that we should insist on the fundamental attribute of "instrumental + humanistic" in college English <sup>[3]</sup>. Based on the attribute positioning of college English courses, vocational undergraduate college English courses need to realize three functions. First, it should be adapted to national strategic needs. To build the "Belt and Road" with high quality, there is an urgent need for internationalized talents who have a global vision, know the international rules, are proficient in the use of foreign languages, and are well-versed in negotiation and communication between China and foreign countries. As a compulsory public basic course for vocational undergraduate majors, the university English program should take up the responsibility of serving the construction of "Belt and Road." Secondly, it should serve the needs of regional economic and social development. Under the background of "building a new open economic system at a higher level" and "going out" of Chinese enterprises, high-level compound talents who know foreign languages and specialties have become a development need. The role of vocational undergraduate college English courses in helping Chinese enterprises "go global" is indispensable. Thirdly, it is necessary to serve the overall development of students. The National Vocational Education Reform Implementation Plan (Guo Fa [2019] No. 4) and the specific implementation opinions of each province clearly require the strengthening of the mutual integration and cooperation between public basic courses and professional courses. The teaching objectives of college English courses should not only consolidate the language ability, but also improve the skills of solving practical problems in a foreign language, as well as enhance the students' humanistic literacy and intercultural communication skills <sup>[4]</sup>, and play an important role in serving the students' career development.

## **3. Analysis of the teaching status and problems of college English courses in vocational and technical universities**

In order to systematically grasp the teaching status of college English courses in vocational undergraduate colleges and universities, the research group conducted research on 12 vocational undergraduate colleges and universities in and out of the province, such as Zhejiang Guangsha Vocational and Technical University of Construction, through a combination of on-site visits and online questionnaire surveys. The research focuses on

the dimensions of course content setting, teaching effect, and student feedback, aiming to reveal the adaptability of the current vocational undergraduate college English program to the goal of vocational ability cultivation. The results of the survey show that the following problems exist in the teaching content and implementation of vocational undergraduate college English courses.

### **3.1. Disconnection between teaching content and vocational needs**

The curriculum structure is homogenized. 90% of the sample institutions take general English reading and writing as the core teaching content, and only 20% of the institutions (e.g. Shandong Vocational University of Foreign Affairs, etc.) try to integrate listening and speaking or audio-visual speaking modules, and the penetration rate of industry English is less than 8.3%.

Lack of career orientation. The curriculum design of most colleges and universities still follows the traditional mode of language knowledge transmission, failing to transform the English application needs of typical work scenarios in the industry into the teaching content, resulting in a structural mismatch between the cultivation of language skills and the needs of specialized fields.

### **3.2. Limited teaching implementation effect**

Students' satisfaction is low. The questionnaire survey shows that 76.5% of the surveyed students think that the course content is weakly related to their majors and has insufficient practical value; 83.2% of the students point out that there is a lack of opportunities to practice the language in the classroom, and the results of the application ability enhancement are not significant.

Insufficient collaboration between schools and enterprises. The interview data show that only two institutions cooperate with enterprises to develop curriculum resources, reflecting that the updating of teaching content lags behind the technological development of the industry and fails to establish a dynamic adjustment mechanism.

### **3.3. Lagging curriculum evaluation**

The current evaluation is still mainly based on standardized written tests (92%), focusing on the assessment of linguistic knowledge points, and lacking in the process evaluation of English application ability in the vocational context, which is difficult to reflect the cultivation orientation of vocational undergraduates as "competence-based."

Thus, it can be seen that there is a mismatch between the teaching content and the goal of vocational ability cultivation in traditional university English courses, which emphasizes the cultivation of general language ability and is out of line with the vocational demand, highlighting the contradiction between the supply side of education and the demand side of industry. The deep-seated causes of the above problems can be attributed to the following: first, the target orientation is vague. Curriculum design does not fully reflect the characteristics of vocational undergraduate "technical skills + language literacy" in the cultivation of composite talents, and is excessively inclined to generalization. Second, the demand response is delayed. The lack of a mechanism for industrial enterprises to participate in curriculum development has led to a disconnect between the teaching content and the requirements of job competencies. Third, the evaluation orientation is biased. The existing evaluation system fails to comprehensively reflect students' English application ability and professionalism, and weakens the assessment dimension of professional competence.

## **4. Research on reconstructing the content system of college English courses**

### **4.1. Theoretical basis of curriculum reform**

Curriculum reform is based on the theory of “Competency-Based Education (CBE).” It emphasizes the cultivation of vocational competence as the core orientation, and its core connotation is competence-oriented teaching goal, and it advocates focusing on the cultivation of learners’ observable and evaluable practical abilities required in the vocational field. At the level of curriculum design, it is proposed to scientifically decompose the complete vocational competency system into several relatively independent and interrelated competency units, and ensure the systematic and complete content of the curriculum through modularized curriculum design. Teaching implementation advocates the provision of personalized learning paths for students with different foundations and learning characteristics. The evaluation mechanism emphasizes the establishment of a competency standard system oriented to the actual needs of the industry, and the adoption of behavioral assessment strategies focusing on practical operational ability to ensure that the teaching evaluation is closely connected with the needs of vocational practice. The theoretical system provides scientific theoretical support for curriculum reform. Xu Guoqing, a scholar in China, proposes that the competency-based curriculum is a curriculum model that takes the cultivation of students’ ability to actually do things in vocational positions as the core objective<sup>[5]</sup>, emphasizing the requirements of vocational competency for human beings as the starting point of educational logic.

### **4.2. Optimization and upgrading of curriculum objectives**

Based on the attribute positioning of “instrumental humanistic,” the vocational undergraduate college English course needs to realize three service objectives, namely, to serve the teaching of professional courses, to serve the quality cultivation of students, and to serve the sustainable development of students. It also needs to highlight the characteristics and service functions of the ‘Vocational’ course, construct a three-in-one curriculum objective of “foundation of vocationality, infiltration of humanity, and empowerment of development.” In terms of teaching language knowledge and developing vocational skills, the program serves the future needs of students in terms of vocational development and growth.

### **4.3. Reconstruction of curriculum content**

#### **4.3.1. Principles of curriculum reconstruction**

Firstly, it highlights career orientation, closely integrates college English learning with career development, and meets the needs of students’ future workplaces. The second is to emphasize practicality, aligning the English proficiency standards of industrial jobs and improving the practical value of the courses. Thirdly, it focuses on practicability, increases the proportion of practical teaching, creates real or uses VR/AR technology to build virtual simulation training scenes, introduces real cases of enterprises as teaching projects, and cultivates students’ English workplace application ability.

#### **4.3.2. Curriculum content system design**

Set explicit and implicit curriculum content. The explicit curriculum highlights the competence-based approach, taking “language competence + vocational literacy + intercultural competence” as the core. The course content is set as basic module, specialized module, and extension module. The basic template teaches general English for the workplace, and the professional template teaches industrial English that is in line with the needs of professional positions. Based on the “Structured Theory of Vocational Fields” put forward by Felix Rauner (Germany), the design of educational content is based on Typical Professional Tasks, and the job competencies



are integrated into the vocational skills and abilities. The extension module teaches intercultural communication, based on the “Situated Learning Theory” proposed by Stephen Billett (Australia), embedding education in real work situations, enhancing adaptability through “participatory practice,” and improving students’ intercultural communication skills.

The implicit curriculum content creates English cultural immersion space, builds English-themed cultural corridors, campus bilingual signs, and other physical venues, carries out English corner and English broadcasting activities; implements cultural and workplace experiences, such as international cultural festivals, overseas enterprise cloud visits, simulated international exhibitions, cross-border e-commerce roadshows and other activities; builds digital learning ecology, constructs AI-driven English learning community, and provides students with intelligent language companions. With the help of immersive language, culture <sup>[6]</sup>, and workplace experiences, we build an immersion learning ecosystem that naturally enhances students’ language sensitivity and cross-cultural cognitive abilities in non-teaching scenarios. Integrate explicit and implicit goals to effectively improve students’ language proficiency, vocational skills, and intercultural communication skills.

#### **4.3.3. Curriculum reform practice**

Based on the future career development needs of students at the higher vocational undergraduate level, carry out the practice of reconstructing the course content system, and divide the content of college English courses into three stages: the comprehensive foundation stage, the workplace primer stage, and the cultural enhancement stage.

The Comprehensive Foundation Stage is a two-semester course that covers service terms in the workplace, business document writing, etc. It aims to improve students’ listening, reading, writing, and translating skills in general workplace English, and to cultivate their English language foundation. The first glimpse of the Workplace Stage, which is offered for one semester, combines the students’ majors and restructures the curriculum system with the needs of students’ professional job competence as the core. For example, International Economics and Trade majors incorporate business English teaching content, covering business communication, business etiquette, business culture, and business practice. It aims to cultivate students’ business communication ability and enhance their cross-cultural business communication ability, and at the same time, it integrates the typical work tasks and core skills of the industry into the teaching content. It enhances the practical business operation ability and broadens the career development space of students. Cultural Enhancement Phase, which is held for one semester, integrates the content of the English for Intercultural Communication course, and the teaching content includes cross-cultural communication skills, cross-cultural business communication, and cross-cultural taboos case analysis. Through systematic learning and practical activities, students are helped to understand the differences and commonalities between different cultures and improve their intercultural communication and cooperation skills. At the same time, “telling Chinese stories in English” is integrated into this phase to cultivate students’ cultural self-confidence <sup>[7]</sup>, guide them to explore the connotation of Chinese stories in depth, and convey China’s voice to the world through innovative expression. With the guidance of “vocational competence-based education theory” and the requirements of “University English Teaching Guide,” we have formed a three-module course content structure of “General Language Foundation + Industry English Improvement + Cross-cultural Communication Expansion,” as shown in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Content structure of college English courses

Course stages	Module category	Teaching objective	Course content		Tools & resources	Competency objective
			Explicit course	Hidden course		
Synthesis Basics	Languages Basics	Mastering the application of common language in the workplace	1. Workplace service terms 2. Business Document Writing	1. English Corner 2. English Radio 3. Intelligent Language Companion 4. AI-driven English Learning Community	1. Uskills Intelligent Platform 2. Grammarly 3. TED Talks Listening Library	General Workplace English Application Skills
Workplace knowledge Cognitive	Industry knowledge	Mastering English scenarios and skills integration in the target industry	1. ESP English for Specialized Purposes 2. Professional scenarios	1. Simulation of international exhibitions 2. Cross-border e-commerce roadshow 3. Overseas enterprise cloud visit 4. Virtual Business Negotiation	1. ChatGPT industry talk generation 2. Google 3. Analytics case library	Applied English language skills in specialized areas
Quality Expansion	Culture Expansion	Developing Cultural Sensitivity and Adaptability in the Globalized Workplace	1. Cross-cultural communication skills 2. Cross-cultural business communication 3. Taboo case study 4. Telling Chinese Stories in English	1. International Cultural Festival 2. Virtual Transnational Collaboration Program 3. Chinese Storytelling Competition in English	1. 3D cultural simulation scene 2. Zoom virtual meeting	Intercultural Communication Competencies

The three modules are interconnected, progressive, and integrated. It forms a progressive cultivation path of “language foundation-industry cognition-cultural expansion,” which reflects the process of generating vocational competence and realizes students’ stepwise growth from basic language skills to workplace language competence.

## 5. Guarantee measures

### 5.1. Guarantee for the development of dual-teacher teachers

Put forward incentive mechanisms to carry out the training of university English teachers according to career direction. Set up mobile stations for teachers to practice in enterprises, provide enterprise practice positions in combination with the career direction chosen by university teachers, and regularly select and send teachers to enterprises for on-the-job practice; at the same time, equip teachers with enterprise tutors to improve their dual-teacher quality and practical teaching ability, and provide teacher guarantee for the improvement of students’ vocational language ability.

### 5.2. Guarantee of industry-education collaborative education

At the level of curriculum resource construction, industry experts are invited to participate in curriculum development and teaching materials preparation, and based on work tasks, the university and enterprises jointly build a real case database, which is applied in teaching practice to ensure that the content of the curriculum is closely aligned with the needs of the industry<sup>[8]</sup>, and serves to enhance the students’ professional competence.

Dynamic evaluation and continuous improvement mechanism. Introducing enterprise evaluation feedback, regularly updating the course content to adapt to changes in the industry, and testing students' language application ability through real-life tasks in the workplace.

### **5.3. Guarantee of a multiple evaluation system**

Construct a multiple-intelligent evaluation system to realize dynamic tracking of students' language ability<sup>[9]</sup>. Adopting the mode of integrating multiple evaluation subjects and intelligent technology, teachers and enterprise instructors participate in the evaluation together. The evaluation forms cover written tests, oral tests, project presentations, practice reports, etc., paying attention to language ability and meeting the demands of the workplace. Relying on the voice recognition and data analysis technology of Uskills intelligent platform, the AI-enabled formative evaluation realizes intelligent assessment and instant feedback<sup>[10]</sup>, dynamically generates visualized language proficiency growth curves, and tracks the learning trajectory through the digital portrait of language proficiency, accurately reflecting students' stage-by-stage progress and weaknesses, and realizing process evaluation. In addition, language certificates (e.g., CET4/6) are included in the evaluation indexes, and electronic files are set up for students to record their learning trajectories and proficiency curves, forming a comprehensive evaluation system that runs through the whole learning cycle.

## **6. Conclusion**

Based on the theoretical framework of competence-based education, the reconstruction of vocational demand-oriented university English course content system is a choice to crack the problem of disconnecting talent cultivation and market demand, and to enhance the international competitiveness of high-end skilled talents, which embodies the inevitable logic of vocational education to promote the reform of the supply side of education.

The study takes vocational demand as the orientation and carries out an in-depth discussion on the reconstruction of the content of vocational education undergraduate college English courses. The study shows that the reconstructed course content highlights career orientation, practicality, and practicability, adopts a modular design and establishes a diversified evaluation system. Through the implementation paths of school-enterprise collaborative education and evaluation system innovation, students' workplace English application ability and career competitiveness are effectively enhanced. There are two key points to be broken through in the follow-up research and practice. First, AI technology-driven personalized learning path design. Using AI to dynamically assess students' language level, customize differentiated learning content for them, and strengthen their English application ability in vocational scenarios. The second is targeted dynamic optimization for differences in professional fitness. Systematically develop course content for different majors. Establish an interdisciplinary collaboration mechanism of "English + Specialization" to ensure that the teaching content is aligned with the occupational standards.

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