

Practical Approaches for Higher Vocational English Classroom Teaching in the Context of Industry-Education Integration

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Abstract: Industry-education integration imposes new requirements on higher vocational English teaching, calling for better alignment with job-post needs while supporting industrial development. Although classroom-based English teaching is widely implemented in higher vocational colleges, prominent challenges remain, including weak alignment between teaching content and vocational requirements, as well as outdated, monotonous teaching models. This paper first analyzes how industry-education integration reshapes higher vocational English instruction, then explores the practical challenges facing current classroom teaching. Drawing on real-world case examples, it finally proposes actionable implementation strategies covering teaching objectives and content, aiming to offer practical references for higher vocational English educators.

Keywords: Industry-education integration; Higher vocational English; Classroom teaching; Implementation strategies

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1. Introduction

Within vocational education, industry-education integration represents a fundamental operational model and has evolved into a national-level institutional framework. Its core goal is to advance the organic integration of the education, talent, industrial and innovation chains. Against this backdrop, public compulsory higher-vocational English courses raise a key question for educators: how to deliver discipline-based instruction while effectively supporting students' major-specific training. Focusing on classroom-teaching reform for higher-vocational English, this study seeks to shift from passive adaptation to active embedding within the industry-education-integration ecosystem and identify viable, evidence-based instructional approaches.

2. Impacts of industry-education integration on higher-vocational English classroom teaching

2.1. Teaching objectives: From knowledge acquisition to competence-oriented development

Traditional higher-vocational English teaching centers on the transmission of linguistic knowledge. Instructional goals prioritize mastery of grammar rules and vocabulary accumulation, and assessment largely measures knowledge retention. This discipline-driven curriculum perspective treats English primarily as a body of knowledge rather than a practical communication tool. Such an approach has been challenged under the industry-education-integration framework. Employers expect vocational-college graduates to possess job-relevant English capabilities: for instance, the ability to interpret equipment operation manuals and complete foreign-trade documentation.

Industry-education integration demands a shift from knowledge-centered to competence-centered teaching objectives. This transition does not dismiss linguistic knowledge but reframes it as an instrumental resource. Specifically, teaching objectives can be structured across three progressive tiers: general English competence to satisfy everyday workplace communication needs; vocational English competence enabling learners to complete role-specific professional tasks; and cross-cultural communicative competence, defined as cultural awareness and adaptive capacity for interactions with international practitioners. These three dimensions of competence are interrelated and collectively serve the overarching goal: learners' practical language performance in future professional contexts. Importantly, revised objectives do not negate the humanistic value of English education. When students recognize connections between English learning and career prospects, their learning motivation improves substantially, and the humanistic-enrichment potential of language education can be fully realized within vocational settings. In summary, higher-vocational English teaching under industry-education integration should achieve a dialectical balance between instrumental utility and humanistic cultivation.

2.2. Teaching content: From general English to industry-embedded English

For a long time, higher-vocational English textbooks have followed a relatively uniform design. Reading materials tend to draw on literary and cultural themes such as Western festivals and celebrity biographies. Such content has limited relevance to students' majors and future careers; learners struggle to establish meaningful links between English coursework and their professional training.

Industry-education integration calls for content expansion toward industry-specific English. Industry-specific English organizes learning around typical workplace tasks and uses authentic corpora from production and service contexts as instructional materials. For example, teaching resources for manufacturing majors may include equipment-panel labels and product specification manuals in English; materials for tourism-management majors can feature English-language scenic-spot introductions and hotel-service expressions. Rooted in authentic communicative scenarios, these resources immerse students in real-world language use. Incorporating industry-specific materials does not mean abandoning general-English instruction. The optimal solution is to build a layered progressive structure: general-English foundations for lower-year students, followed by industry-specific English for upper-year cohorts, facilitating the transfer of general-language skills to vocational contexts.

3. Practical challenges for higher-vocational English classroom teaching

3.1. Misalignment between teaching content and vocational scenarios

Textbook selections often fail to match students' major requirements. Learners across different majors

frequently use identical course materials, creating weak overlaps between English learning and professional study. Language-practice activities are poorly contextualized for real-world workplaces; classroom drills rely heavily on decontextualized sentence-pattern exercises. Linguistic-skill development becomes decoupled from vocational-competence training. Many instructors treat English as an isolated general-education subject. These issues stem largely from English teachers' limited familiarity with relevant industries and insufficient on-the-job enterprise experience.

3.2. Mismatch between pedagogical methods and competence-centered objectives

Competence-oriented vocational education requires updated instructional forms, with situational and task-based approaches strongly recommended. Nevertheless, lecture-style delivery and exercise-driven instruction still dominate higher-vocational English classrooms. Participatory activities such as group discussions and project-based assignments occupy limited class time. Multiple factors contribute to this reality: many teachers have not received systematic training for task-based pedagogy; situational teaching consumes considerable instructional time, and constraints from fixed class hours and large student cohorts leave instructors little room for pedagogical innovation.

3.3. Deficiencies in teachers' professional competence

Industry-education integration sets higher expectations for instructors. Beyond solid English-teaching expertise, teachers need awareness of industry-specific language demands. Most existing teachers possess strong linguistic and literary expertise yet lack hands-on enterprise-practice experience. At the institutional level, training programs targeting industry-specific English remain inadequate. Enterprise-based teacher training often emphasizes form over substantive practice. Furthermore, teaching-reform achievements receive limited recognition in professional-title evaluation systems, which discourages teachers from proactively adapting their practice.

4. Practical approaches to higher-vocational English classroom teaching under industry-education integration

4.1. Reconstructing a competence-driven teaching-objective system

Content-vocational misalignment originates partly from instructional objectives insufficiently oriented toward workplace contexts. Therefore, the priority is to establish a multi-tiered, progressive objective framework. The foundational tier targets general-language competence for first-year students, shifting focus from knowledge memorization to basic practical application. The second tier builds vocational-situational communicative competence, requiring students to complete typical post-related tasks within simulated workplace environments. The final tier fosters cross-cultural vocational literacy, cultivating students' cultural sensitivity for international business interactions.

Take the unit Reading and Writing of Product Reviews for cross-border-e-commerce majors as an illustration. Teachers can decompose learning objectives into three progressive levels. Basic-level objectives focus on reading comprehension: students master vocabulary related to product quality and customer service and extract key information from authentic buyer reviews. Intermediate-level objectives emphasize information processing: learners synthesize multiple reviews, identify recurring viewpoints, and interpret reviewers' emotional tendencies. Advanced-level objectives target productive vocational output: drawing on authentic review styles, students compose well-structured English product reviews for selected goods.

At the lesson opening, the instructor displays real buyer-review excerpts and guides observational analysis. Classroom activities are then designed around these three tiers, ensuring that student tasks carry clear vocational relevance.

4.2. Restructuring modular teaching-content systems

Traditional text-centered content organization constrains instructional choices and perpetuates lecture-and-exercise-oriented lessons. Restructuring content into task-based teaching modules enables pedagogical transformation. Modular units are built around representative workplace tasks, each integrating linguistic knowledge and practical skills.

One example comes from the mechanical-electrical major unit Interpreting CNC-Machine-Tool Panel Labels and Operating Procedures. Instead of following textbook passages describing CNC-machine-tool history, instructors project real photographs of workshop-based CNC-machine-tool control panels, which contain numerous English-language buttons and indicator labels. Teachers pre-sort labels by functional category and deliver lessons through connected task sequences. Task one is a timed group competition matching English labels (e.g., Power, Start, Stop, Emergency Stop, Spindle Speed) with Chinese functional descriptions; the group achieving the highest matching accuracy wins. In task two, students arrange these labels following logical operating sequences and write concise English notes for each procedural step. Content revolves around tangible vocational equipment rather than abstract textbook texts. Class focus shifts from teacher lecturing to students' task completion.

4.3. Innovating task-driven pedagogical models

Teacher-competence gaps cannot be resolved solely through training; pedagogical transformation itself supports professional growth. Effective task-driven teaching follows three core principles: authenticity, task completeness, and appropriate difficulty. Classroom implementation includes five sequential phases: pre-class preparation, task presentation, task preparation, task execution, and post-task reflection.

The unit Practicing Hotel Check-in Service Expressions for hotel-management majors demonstrates task-driven classroom design. Before class, instructors share anonymized front-desk-service video clips obtained from partner hotels. The task-presentation segment lasts approximately six minutes: video excerpts show the full check-in workflow, including greeting guests, verifying reservations, explaining breakfast arrangements, and handing over room keys. After viewing, students collaboratively summarize dialogue structures and identify core service links. The task-preparation phase takes roughly ten minutes. Teachers display key functional utterances: May I have your name, please; Let me check your reservation; How long will you be staying; Breakfast is served from 6:00 to 9:00 in the second-floor restaurant; The WiFi password is printed on the reverse side of your room card; Here is your room key. Students practice basic dialogue frameworks in pairs. Task execution occupies the longest segment (around twenty minutes). Every student rotates between receptionist and guest roles. Teachers avoid interrupting ongoing role-plays but keep observational records documenting group performance and recurring learner errors. The nine-minute reflection phase replays performances from two selected groups. Learners analyze the effectiveness of different communicative strategies and summarize prerequisites for high-quality check-in service. In this lesson, teachers step out of the central spotlight, allocate substantial practice time to students, and concentrate their efforts on task design and targeted feedback. This process deepens teachers' understanding of real-world hotel-service scenarios.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, industry-education integration sets clear directions and reform requirements for higher-vocational English teaching. This paper puts forward three actionable strategies targeting teaching objectives, course content and instructional models to mitigate content-vocational misalignment and pedagogical-method mismatch. Reform can start with small-scale adjustments: revising single-lesson objectives and reorganizing task-oriented learning materials to accumulate practical experience and improve teaching outcomes. Successful implementation also requires institutional support from higher-vocational colleges, alongside continuous refinement of school-enterprise cooperation mechanisms. Reform of higher-vocational English classroom teaching should maintain openness toward innovation so as to deliver greater educational value within the high-quality-vocational-education-development landscape.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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