
A Comparative Study of the “Universal-Particular” Teaching Model of Maritime English and College English from the Perspective of Vocational Undergraduate Education

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Abstract: The core orientation of vocational undergraduate education is to cultivate high-quality technical and skilled talents. English teaching should balance “general language proficiency” and “specific vocational ability”, achieving a deep integration of language teaching and vocational demands. The navigation major is a field with particularly prominent industry-specificity in vocational undergraduate education. The teaching models of maritime English (specialized English) and university English (general English) are significantly different. The coordinated connection of these two models affects the quality of navigation professionals’ training and their international adaptability. Based on the concept of vocational undergraduate education, this paper conducts a comparative study of the two teaching models, analyzes the current differences between the two models, and, in combination with the actual situation of vocational undergraduate navigation programs, proposes targeted and operational coordinated optimization strategies to help cultivate high-quality navigation talents with solid language foundation and strong vocational adaptability.

Keywords: Vocational undergraduate; Maritime English; University English; General-Specialized; Comparative Study

Online publication: November 26, 2025

1. Introduction

The global economic integration is accelerating, and the shipping industry is the core part of international logistics. English is the universal language in the international shipping field and serves as the medium for shipping personnel to conduct international communication, operate ships, and handle emergency situations. Vocational undergraduate education is an important component of the higher education system. Unlike ordinary undergraduate education which focuses on academia and vocational college education which focuses on skills, vocational undergraduate education mainly aims to cultivate students’ technical skills and undergraduate literacy. The teaching should correspond to the requirements of the vocational position. The shipping major is a characteristic major in vocational undergraduate education. Its English teaching has two core parts, namely college English (general English) and maritime English (specialized English). These two parts

complement each other, with general English laying the foundation and specialized English enhancing the ability. College English mainly aims to cultivate students' general language skills, making their language foundation more solid; maritime English combines language ability with maritime professional skills and industry norms, and exercises students' ability to apply English in actual working scenarios. From the perspective of vocational undergraduate education, comparing and studying the "general- specialized" teaching models of maritime English and college English is of great significance for promoting the reform of vocational undergraduate maritime professional English teaching and improving the quality of talent cultivation.

2. Core dimension comparison

2.1. Comparison of teaching objectives: basic competence orientation vs. professional competence orientation

The core teaching objective of university English (general English) is to lay a foundation for general language proficiency, with a focus on cultivating students' basic language skills. The teaching objectives are not limited to the field of maritime career but also emphasize the cultivation of students' general language proficiency and cross-cultural communication skills, aiming to lay a foundation for students' future professional learning, career development, and lifelong learning. This is in line with the training requirements of "undergraduate literacy" in vocational colleges^[1]. The teaching objective of maritime English (specialized English) is to empower professional language skills, with a focus on cultivating students' ability to use English in maritime career scenarios. The teaching objectives are closely linked to the demands of maritime career positions, highlighting professionalism and practicality. The aim is to enable students to quickly adapt to the English application requirements of maritime positions. This is in line with the training requirements of "technical skills" in vocational colleges. The differences between the two lie in that the teaching objective of university English is general and foundational, mainly cultivating students' general language proficiency, while the teaching objective of maritime English is professional and targeted, mainly cultivating students' professional language application skills. The two complement each other and jointly serve the dual training goal of "basic literacy + vocational skills" for the maritime major in vocational colleges^[2].

2.2. Comparison of teaching content: generalization vs. specialization

In terms of content selection for university English, the principle followed is "generalization and popularization", and the selected materials are mostly of universal, foundational, and interesting nature. They rarely involve specific professional knowledge. The core lies in helping students master general language knowledge and communication skills, and enhancing their cross-cultural communication abilities. For maritime English, the content selection follows the principle of "specialization for the profession". The content is closely related to the requirements of maritime professional positions, mainly focusing on core professional fields such as ship navigation, cargo transportation, maritime communication, emergency response, maritime regulations, and maritime meteorology. The selected materials have obvious professionalism, practicality, and professionalism. In terms of content difficulty for university English, the principle is "moderate foundation", with vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structures mainly focusing on common basic content, and the difficulty gradient is relatively clear, suitable for the basic level of all vocational undergraduate students. The key is to cultivate students' language foundation and learning interest. For maritime English, the difficulty principle is "moderate for the profession". The vocabulary is mostly maritime professional terms, and the sentence structures are mostly concise and rigorous professional expressions. The difficulty is based on the needs of maritime positions and the students' general English foundation, with a focus on cultivating students' professional language application ability^[3].

2.3. Comparison of teaching methods: general common approach vs. scenario adaptation

The core of university English teaching methods is "general common approach", mainly using general English teaching

methods, focusing on laying a solid foundation for students' language skills and enhancing their comprehensive abilities. Most of the teaching is carried out in regular classrooms, emphasizing the systematicness and coherence of classroom teaching. Multimedia is the main teaching tool, supplemented by audio, video, and courseware materials to increase the Entertainment value of teaching. The core of maritime English teaching methods is "scenario adaptation", favoring the use of teaching methods that combine with maritime professional scenarios, focusing on cultivating students' language application skills in professional settings. Commonly used methods include scenario simulation, project-driven learning, case teaching, and on-the-job practical operation. The core difference between the two lies in that university English teaching methods emphasize "general common approach", mainly focusing on language foundation and comprehensive skills; maritime English teaching methods emphasize "scenario adaptation", focusing on cultivating students' language application skills in professional scenarios, and their teaching methods are basically in line with the requirements of maritime professional positions^[4].

3. Collaborative optimization strategies for the "general - specific" english teaching model from the perspective of vocational undergraduate education

3.1. Coordinate teaching objectives and construct a collaborative progressive system

Clarify the overall objective, taking into account the actual needs of vocational undergraduate maritime professional talent cultivation, and set "general language literacy + professional language ability" as the overall objective of English teaching. Ensure that the teaching objectives of college English and maritime English both serve this overall objective, achieving the coordinated unification of the two. Based on the actual needs of the maritime profession, add the training objective of "general expressions related to maritime", such as general English expressions for daily communication and basic communication at ports, so that students can consolidate the foundation while preliminarily come into contact with maritime-related language knowledge, achieving the initial connection between general foundation and professional requirements. The teaching objectives of maritime English mainly focus on "improvement of professional language ability", combined with the existing general English foundation of students, set hierarchical goals of "basic professional expression → comprehensive professional application", strengthen the training of general expressions related to maritime, gradually improve professional terms application, professional scene dialogues, and professional document writing, and achieve the deep connection between professional application and general foundation^[5]. Form a teaching guidance group consisting of English teachers, maritime professional teachers, and industry experts, coordinate the teaching objectives of the two teaching models, regularly organize teaching discussion activities, promptly adjust teaching objectives, ensure that they form a progressive relationship, and prevent situations of misalignment and disconnection^[6].

3.2. Link teaching content and construct an integrated curriculum system

Based on the actual needs of the maritime profession, the existing teaching content of university English should be selected and optimized. Additional general content related to maritime, such as reading materials incorporating news reports and science popularization articles, and listening materials integrating daily conversations and interviews about maritime, should be added. This way, students can also come into contact with language knowledge and industry culture related to maritime while learning general English, achieving effective connection between general content and professional requirements. Link maritime English teaching content while also taking into account the foundation of general English. In the arrangement of maritime English teaching content, a transitional module "Linking General English and Maritime Professional English" should be added to focus on consolidating general expressions and sentence structures related to maritime, and then gradually introduce professional terms and career scenario content, thereby reducing students' learning difficulty^[7]. Based on the actual needs of maritime professional positions, select practical teaching content and remove overly abstract and content unrelated to the position requirements to enhance the practicality and targeting of the teaching content. Construct an integrated curriculum module, integrate university English and maritime English courses, and set up

three core modules: “General English Foundation Module”, “Professional Transition Module”, and “Career Application Module”. Among them, the General English Foundation Module is mainly undertaken by university English teachers, the Professional Transition Module is jointly undertaken by university English teachers and maritime English teachers, and the Career Application Module is mainly responsible by maritime English teachers and industry experts^[8].

3.3. Innovate teaching methods and establish a scenario-based collaborative teaching model

Based on traditional teaching methods, task-driven methods and case-based teaching methods can be integrated. Considering the actual needs of the maritime profession, design teaching tasks and cases that are relevant to the positions. For example, assign the “Port Daily Communication” task to cultivate students’ language application skills and knowledge transfer abilities. Utilize multimedia, online teaching platforms, etc., to enrich teaching forms and add Entertainment value to the teaching, thereby stimulating students’ interest in learning. Innovate the teaching methods of maritime English, enhance the adaptability to scenarios, and utilize existing resources such as maritime simulation training rooms and VR technology to create scenarios that are close to real maritime professions, such as cockpit conversations, VHF communication, emergency response, etc. can be included. Adopt scenario simulation methods, project-driven methods, and on-site practical operation methods, allowing students to conduct English conversations and complete career-related tasks in simulated scenarios, thereby enhancing their professional language application abilities. Establish a collaborative teaching mechanism to promote cooperation between university English teachers and maritime English teachers in teaching. In the professional transition module, university English teachers are responsible for explaining language knowledge, while maritime English teachers are responsible for guiding the professional scenarios, achieving the deep integration of language teaching and professional teaching^[9].

3.4. Improve teaching evaluation and establish a diversified collaborative evaluation system

The improvement of teaching evaluation plays a significant role in optimizing the “general-purpose - specialized” teaching model. It is necessary to overcome the shortcomings of the traditional evaluation model and establish a diversified collaborative evaluation system, ensuring that the evaluation goals, contents and methods are coordinated and unified. The core goal of evaluation is to focus on general language literacy and professional language ability. It is necessary to pay attention to both the learning process of students and their learning outcomes, and mainly evaluate students’ ability to transfer knowledge, apply in the profession and engage in autonomous learning, avoiding relying solely on a single score for assessment. The evaluation content needs to be optimized. The evaluation of university English should include general language knowledge and comprehensive skills, as well as additional contents such as common expressions related to navigation and the ability of knowledge transfer. The evaluation of maritime English should cover professional terms, application in professional scenarios, and professional document writing, while also taking into account students’ basic application ability of general language, achieving the coordinated connection of the evaluation contents. The diversified evaluation methods include formative evaluation, summative evaluation and industry evaluation. Formative evaluation mainly focuses on the learning process of students, such as classroom performance, task completion, and scene simulation effects; summative evaluation focuses on students’ learning outcomes, including final exams and comprehensive skill assessments; industry evaluation involves inviting experts and technical backbone from the navigation industry to participate and evaluate students’ professional language application ability and job fit, ensuring that the evaluation results can truly reflect students’ professional abilities. Finally, establish an evaluation feedback mechanism, regularly providing evaluation results to students and teachers, guiding students to make targeted improvements in their learning, and teachers to optimize teaching content and methods, forming a virtuous cycle of evaluation - feedback - improvement^[10].

4. Conclusion

The maritime industry is constantly evolving, and the reform of vocational undergraduate education is also continuously

deepening. The optimization and innovation of the “general-purpose - specialized” teaching model of maritime English and university English, as well as the improvement and innovation of this model, have become an important direction for the future reform of maritime professional English teaching. In the future, attention should also be paid to the development trends of the maritime industry and the latest requirements of the STCW Convention, and the teaching content and teaching objectives should be continuously optimized to ensure that English teaching can keep pace with the demands of the industry. Relying on new technologies such as information technology, VR/AR, etc., innovative teaching scenarios and teaching methods should be created, and an intelligent and scenario-based collaborative teaching model should be developed to enhance the interest and effectiveness of teaching, and continuously improve the “general-purpose - specialized” teaching model, promoting the steady improvement of the quality of vocational undergraduate maritime professional English teaching and providing solid talent support for the development of China’s maritime industry.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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