

# Study on Bridging between Basic English and Specialized English in Maritime Vocational College

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**Abstract:** *English is the work language for seafarers and should be given due attention in maritime vocational colleges. In Chinese maritime colleges and universities, English is usually divided into two phases. In the first phase, students will learn basic English with topics related to daily life, while in the second phase, students will learn professional English related to professional knowledge. This article first discusses bridging problems between basic English and specialized English in maritime vocational college from the perspectives of curriculum, text books and teachers, analyses reasons for them and then puts forward corresponding strategies, including optimizing curriculum, innovating text books, integrating teachers, and adopting OBE-based English teaching reform.*

**Keywords:** *maritime vocational college, basic English, specialized English, industry English, bridging*

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, with the rapid development of China's shipping industry and the increasing number of Chinese expatriate crews, the importance of English proficiency for graduates from maritime vocational colleges has rapidly emerged. However, due to many problems in the transition between basic English and professional English teaching, the teaching effect of professional English is far from satisfactory. How to make basic English and professional English teaching naturally connect, more effectively cultivate students' English proficiency and lay a good English language foundation for students' employment and future work is an important issue that needs to be solved urgently.

## 2. Basic English and Professional English

Most content of basic English course in maritime vocational colleges is about daily topics, such as society, culture, popular science, economy and trade, etc., and does not emphasize the combination with a certain major[1]. The skills training of English listening, speaking, reading and writing and translation is also carried out around these daily contents, which emphasizes learning from textbooks, and also focuses on writings that can be used in various professions and industries, such as notices, posters, resumes, letters, letters, instructions, etc. Taking Jiangsu Maritime Institute as an example, basic English textbook is "New Horizon English", and the content selection materials are all topics that are closely related to the life and study of college students, and do not involve much professional knowledge.

The content of professional English textbook in maritime vocational colleges is closely integrated with professional theory of navigation courses, emphasizing use of English to understand basic theoretical knowledge of navigation courses and the cultivation of students' English abilities in vocational positions. Professional English for different majors should be based on basic theory of the major as the starting point, with both reading material input and oral output, featured by strong professionalism, highlighting theoretical knowledge, and it is relatively difficult.

Generally speaking, basic English and professional English in maritime vocational colleges are independent of each other. Basic English requires students to master language knowledge, cultural background and other core knowledge in English, and the goal of professional English is to combine English common core knowledge with the profession to achieve the purpose of proficiency in the application of language in specific majors. Taking the navigation major of Jiangsu Maritime Institute as an example, students learn basic English in the first semester of freshman year and professional English, namely nautical English, from the second semester of freshman year. Basic English is independent of nautical English and marine English, and there is a lack of connection in the teaching

materials. Moreover, due to the fact that although basic English and professional English teaching should be systematic, basic English teachers do not have much understanding of the teaching requirements and content of professional English, and professional English teachers are not clear about the teaching methods and content of basic English and the English level of students after learning basic English, resulting in a certain degree of isolation between basic English teaching and professional English teaching.

### **3. Problems in connection between basic English and professional English teaching**

#### **3.1 Curriculum**

In maritime vocational colleges, professional English is considered to be the follow-up course of basic English, and "basic English + professional English" is the course model commonly adopted by maritime vocational colleges. This model isolates professional English from basic English, so that professional English cannot be supported by basic English, students will feel that they suddenly "jump" from basic English to professional English, lack of professional vocabulary support, encounter a large number of new words and complex grammatical structures, it is difficult to adapt, and the teaching effect is very limited. Sometimes, there will even be a situation where students learn professional English first and then learn professional courses later, and before the students' professional knowledge is understood in Chinese, students are required to understand professional knowledge in English, and the teaching effect is not so good.

#### **3.2 Textbook**

"Teaching materials are directly related to educational ideas, teaching principles, teaching methods, teaching concepts and practices, and are the embodiment of various teaching concepts, paths, methods and means. At the same time, it is also an important resource for teaching and learning, which determines the basic methods of teaching and learning, and is the key to the success or failure of teaching" [2]. Basic English of maritime vocational colleges is generally composed of basic English and basic English listening and conversation, and the same teaching material is common to different majors. There is a lack of transition and connection between professional English textbooks and basic English textbooks, and a lack of transitional industry textbooks. Students learn everyday English from basic English textbooks, without involving specialized vocabulary, which does not pave the way for them to learn professional English in the future.

#### **3.3 Teachers**

The problem of teachers is mainly the dual requirements of professional English teachers for both major and language. Basic English teaching in vocational colleges is undertaken by English teachers, while professional English is undertaken by professional teachers with good English proficiency or by English teachers who have undergone professional training. Professional teachers have a good grasp of professional knowledge, but they often do not have enough ability to use English, and the intonation and pronunciation is not particularly standard; On the other hand, English teachers have good language skills, but their understanding of professional knowledge is not very thorough. At the same time, basic English teachers and professional English teachers are often separated and belong to different departments. There is a lack of communication between professional English teachers and basic English teachers, and the teaching arrangement is not integrated, on the one hand, basic English teaching is not prepared for professional English teaching; On the other hand, professional English teachers lack an understanding of students' foundation, and there may be duplication of teaching content, teaching problems and deviation in grasping progress, resulting in waste of teaching resources and greatly affecting the teaching effect.

### **4. Countermeasures for connection between basic English and professional English teaching**

#### **4.1 Optimizing curriculum**

In terms of curriculum, to achieve natural connection between basic English and professional English, it is necessary to optimize combination of course modules of higher vocational English. Change the traditional curriculum mode of "basic English" + "professional English", and add

transitional teaching materials between the two to form a curriculum model of “basic English” + “industry English” + “professional English”, so as to realize the natural connection of science between the original separated basic English and professional English[3]. Taking Jiangsu Maritime Institute as an example, you can add basic maritime English between basic English and professional English to briefly introduce the knowledge of navigation, so as to lay a foundation for navigational students to learn nautical English and marine English in the future.

#### ***4.2 Innovating text books***

On the basis of optimizing the curriculum, it corresponds to how to innovate teaching materials. Textbook reform is the key to achieving a natural connection between basic English and professional English. According to the setting of the course, add industry English between basic English and professional English, follow the writing idea of “basic English→industry English→professional English”, and promote from easier parts to more difficulty parts so as to realize the natural transition of teaching and training content such as discourse selection, scenario design, conversation materials, and communication tasks from basic English to professional English. At the same time, according to the Ministry of Education’s English Curriculum Standards for Higher Vocational Education Specialists(2021), the requirements of professional positions for English ability and the actual level of students, grasp the effectiveness, professionalism, modernity, interest and operability of teaching materials.

#### ***4.3 Integrating faculty***

English teachers in maritime vocational colleges generally lack systematic professional knowledge, and professional teachers generally lack systematic English learning, which is a difficult problem to achieve natural connection between basic English and professional English. Scheduling English teachers to learn professional knowledge and professional teachers to improve their English proficiency is a common solution in maritime vocational colleges, but this method is slow to achieve results and is not a fundamental solution[4]. Integrating basic English teachers and professional teachers is a better solution. Integrate basic English teachers and professional teachers, set up a curriculum teaching team, and experienced teachers are the team leaders, responsible for the overall teaching program design, teaching organization and coordination and teaching material development, and then decompose the teaching tasks, and the teaching team members show their abilities and give play to their strengths, and respectively assume the corresponding teaching tasks. This step-by-step implementation under overall coordination not only ensures the integrity, systematization and consistency of English teaching, but also enables teachers to develop their strengths and avoid their weaknesses and ensure the teaching effect. This “cooperative” teacher combination is not only conducive to the communication between English teachers and professional teachers, but also conducive to their mutual learning and complementarity in teaching, which is conducive to the vertical and natural connection between basic English and professional English, and also conducive to the horizontal penetration of professional English into professional courses, internships and practical training[5].

#### ***4.4 Adopting OBE-based English teaching reform***

OBE-based education focuses on students' learning objectives, including what learning objectives are, how to define them, how to help students achieve them, and how to assess students' them. When it comes to English teaching, learning objectives means the actual language skills students have to master to meet relevant requirements of different positions on ships.

From the perspective of OBE-based English teaching, the bridging between basic English and professional English is not complicated. Actual language skills students have to master on ships should be surveyed and analyzed. It is obvious that those language skills not only involves daily English, but also cover a wide range of professional English. So the task for basic English teachers is to teach students daily communication skills on ships, while the task for professional English teachers is teach professional English, that is, English related to navigational technology. The tricky point here is how English teachers know what really happens on ships, so it is better if they have the opportunities to experience different positions on ships or sailors can share their experience. Most English teachers lack experiences working on ships and have vague idea about what might be happening in ships. This can be achieved in many ways, such as working on ships to get what is needed in person, or interviewing captains to what what might be included in English learning.

Once the English teachers know what to teach, the next step is how to teach. Against the backdrop of OBE-based education, it is not advisable for teachers to dominate classroom teaching in a traditional way. Instead, teachers should innovate their teaching method, trying their best to create real scenarios where students will acquire what is needed in real job situations and make sure each class is conducive to students' future job requirements in one way or another.

Finally, evaluation on students should be in line with the teaching objectives, content and method. A scientific teaching evaluation system will be established to carry out academic evaluation based on OBE teaching concept and subject core literacy. It takes into account of diversity of evaluation subjects, evaluation methods and evaluation process: combination of teacher evaluation, student mutual evaluation and self-evaluation, combination of in school evaluation and out of school evaluation, and combination of formative evaluation and summative evaluation. Besides, it properly includes relevant industries, enterprises and social organizations to participate in assessment and evaluation; the purpose of it is to improve monitoring, evaluation and feedback mechanism of students' learning process, guide students to realize self-management and active learning, and improve learning efficiency. In the English assessment of international cruise ship management, the proportion of formative assessment accounts for 50%, 40% of which refers to students' completing simulation work projects (mainly listening and speaking), and the other 50% covers students' classroom attendance and final examination. Through this measure, students' enthusiasm and initiative to participate in project regularly are mobilized, and their English application ability to complete projects is improved. So do students' project participation and achievement of curriculum objectives.

In this way, students will learn some useful language skills that will be conducive to their career development.

## 5. Conclusion

To sum up, realizing effective bridging between basic English and professional English in maritime vocational colleges is a systematic project, and it is necessary to continuously explore, innovate and improve from the aspects of curriculum, teaching materials and teachers, in order to reverse the current embarrassing situation of English teaching in maritime vocational colleges and lay a good English language foundation for students' future practical work. Basic English and professional English teaching are two levels created for the common teaching goal, and the two courses are sequential in time but integrated in terms of teaching content. The quality of professional English education has a direct impact on students' ability to use English in future workplaces after graduation. The key task of professional English is to enable students to complete the transition from learning to application. In short, institutions should explore and change the effective integration of professional and basic English, as well as the innovation of English teaching forms and methods.

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