

Vocational English and General English: A Theoretical Study

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Abstract: Vocational English and General English represent two major systems in English language teaching, each with distinct goals, content, and methodologies. Vocational English emphasizes specialization and practicality, while General English focuses on universality and foundational skills. With the acceleration of globalization, the demand for composite English language skills across various fields has become increasingly prominent, making the integration of Vocational English and General English a key direction in language teaching research. This study analyzes the core characteristics and intrinsic connections of the two types of English to establish a theoretical foundation for their integration. It focuses on how language needs analysis, language transfer, and learner-centered theories guide integration paths. Furthermore, it proposes practical strategies for integrating Vocational English and General English through the synthesis of linguistic elements, optimization of learning resources, and innovation in teaching methods. The findings aim to provide new insights for the development and practice of language teaching theory.

Keywords: Vocational English; General English; language needs analysis; language transfer; learner-centered approach; teaching innovation

Introduction

Vocational English and General English serve distinct functions in modern language teaching systems. However, as societal demands for English proficiency increase, a single-mode teaching approach can no longer meet the diverse needs of learners. Vocational English focuses on cultivating professional abilities in specific fields, while General English provides a foundational language base. Integrating the two can enhance the practicality and systematicity of English education, contributing to the development of versatile talents capable of thriving in global competition. This study examines the theoretical foundations underpinning the integration of Vocational English and General English and proposes practical paths to promote innovation and progress in language teaching in response to contemporary needs. This research holds significant theoretical value and offers actionable guidance for educational practice.

1. The Concepts and Connotations of Vocational English and General English

1.1 Definition and Functional Analysis of Vocational English

Vocational English (English for Occupational Purposes, EOP) refers to a language teaching system designed to meet the specific linguistic needs of professional fields. Its primary goal is to develop learners' ability to use English effectively in professional contexts. Unlike the broad applicability of General English, Vocational English prioritizes linguistic specialization and practicality, focusing on career-relevant vocabulary, grammar, and communication skills.

The definition of Vocational English revolves around two key dimensions:

Functionality of language, emphasizing specific communication needs within professional tasks.

Contextualization of language, tailoring linguistic materials and communicative activities to specific professional environments.

The functional analysis of Vocational English can be explored through three aspects:

Specificity of language skills: Vocational English emphasizes the precise application of listening,

speaking, reading, and writing skills in professional scenarios, such as technical document comprehension or business negotiation.

Professionalism in content: Learners must master domain-specific terms and expressions to facilitate in-depth communication within their fields.

Practicality of training: By simulating real professional contexts, learners enhance the utility and immediacy of their language skills.

Thus, Vocational English is not merely a form of language learning but also a means of cultivating professional skills, providing learners with essential tools for career development in a globalized context^[1].

1.2 Characteristics and Applicability of General English

General English (GE) refers to an English teaching system designed to meet diverse needs for daily communication and basic academic purposes. Its goal is to develop learners' comprehensive ability to use English in various social and cultural contexts. The characteristics of General English are reflected in its universality, diversity, and foundational nature.

Universality: General English covers a wide range of language needs for daily life, social interaction, and basic professional communication, providing learners with a robust language foundation.

Diversity: It emphasizes balanced development in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatic competence to enable learners to adapt to different contexts.

Foundational nature: General English serves as the cornerstone for further study in Academic English (English for Academic Purposes, EAP) or Vocational English.

General English is primarily targeted at beginners and intermediate learners, helping them navigate daily communication, cultural integration, and basic career requirements. However, as language use becomes more complex and specialized, General English alone may be insufficient for in-depth communication in specific fields. Therefore, it serves as a critical starting point for language learning and the core support for other English teaching systems^[2].

1.3 Comparative Study of Vocational English and General English

Vocational English and General English exhibit significant differences in their goals, content, and methodologies while maintaining a degree of complementarity.

Goals: General English focuses on the holistic development of language skills, emphasizing linguistic accuracy and universality. In contrast, Vocational English is guided by the linguistic needs of specific professional fields, emphasizing practical application in contextual settings.

Content: General English encompasses social communication and basic academic needs with broad, general vocabulary and grammar. Vocational English, however, emphasizes specialized terminology and contextualized expressions, making its learning content highly targeted.

Methods: General English employs systematic, progressive teaching models, whereas Vocational English is practice-oriented, often leveraging situational simulations and task-driven approaches to strengthen applied language skills.

Despite these differences, there is an inherent logical connection between Vocational English and General English. General English provides the foundational language skills necessary for Vocational English, helping learners master linguistic rules and basic competencies. Building on this foundation, Vocational English integrates specific professional requirements to deepen and extend learners' specialized language abilities. The integration of Vocational English and General English represents not only a trend in language learning but also a new avenue for innovation in English teaching theory.

2. The Theoretical Foundations for Integrating Vocational English and General English

2.1 The Perspective of Needs Analysis Theory

Needs Analysis Theory serves as a critical theoretical foundation for integrating Vocational English

and General English, aiming to identify teaching objectives and content by analyzing learners' language use needs. Originating from the "needs-driven" principle in second language teaching, this theory emphasizes that language learning should center on learners' actual language requirements in specific contexts.

From the perspective of integrating Vocational English and General English, needs analysis encompasses three dimensions: target needs, learning needs, and subjective needs.

Target Needs: Refer to the language abilities learners require to complete tasks in professional contexts, such as mastering specific terminology or skills for drafting industry reports.

Learning Needs: Focus on learners' transitional language needs, including the pathway from General English knowledge to Vocational English application.

Subjective Needs: Highlight learners' personalized learning preferences and cognitive characteristics, such as a preference for learning vocational English expressions through scenario-based simulations.

The perspective of needs analysis theory provides a scientific basis for integrating Vocational English and General English. By clarifying their points of intersection and overlap through needs analysis, it ensures the foundational nature of General English while enhancing the practicality of Vocational English. This creates a dynamic, learner-adaptive integrated teaching model^[3].

2.2 The Supporting Role of Language Transfer Theory

Language Transfer Theory explores the interactions between different language skills, asserting that learners can transfer previously acquired language knowledge to new language tasks. This theory plays a significant role in integrating Vocational English and General English by addressing the transfer of language foundations, structural transitions, and optimization of language acquisition.

Firstly, the language foundations provided by General English create the conditions for Vocational English learning. The vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatic knowledge accumulated during General English learning can serve as foundational materials for vocational expression. For instance, common expressions in General English can be adapted to professional contexts through adjustment and reprocessing.

Secondly, Language Transfer Theory explains the structural transformation from General English to Vocational English applications. Learners must map linguistic structures from general contexts to professional ones, such as transitioning from descriptive language to technical terminology, which enhances the efficiency and relevance of language learning.

Lastly, Language Transfer Theory offers guidance for instructional design in integrating Vocational and General English. By designing transfer tasks, such as exercises transitioning from general expressions to specialized terminology, learners are supported in efficiently completing language application shifts.

Language Transfer Theory provides strong support for integrating these two forms of English. It not only uncovers the intrinsic connections between language skills but also offers theoretical grounding for cross-domain integration in language teaching practices.

2.3 The Integrative Value of Learner-Centered Theory

Learner-Centered Theory, a key concept in modern language teaching, emphasizes designing instruction based on learners' needs, interests, and individual differences. The integration of Vocational English and General English is inherently aligned with the learner-centered perspective, aiming to achieve personalized and efficient language learning.

From the perspective of integrative value, Learner-Centered Theory provides three key insights for instructional design in combining Vocational and General English:

Learners' Agency as the Core Driver: Learners are not merely recipients of language knowledge but active constructors of language skills. Engaging learners in setting learning goals and selecting content enhances the relevance and motivation of language learning.

Personalized Learning Pathways: Different learners have diverse language needs, cognitive styles, and professional backgrounds. Therefore, integrating Vocational English and General English requires

dynamic adjustments tailored to individual characteristics. For instance, technical students may benefit from modules emphasizing practical terminology, while management students may require a focus on business communication skills.

Task-Based Teaching: Learner-Centered Theory supports incorporating authentic language tasks into instruction. By embedding contextualized exercises or simulated projects, learners gain opportunities to practice language use in realistic professional scenarios.

Thus, Learner-Centered Theory not only deepens the theoretical foundation for integrating Vocational and General English but also provides essential guidance for innovative teaching methods. This enhances the adaptability and effectiveness of language instruction ^[4].

3. Pathway Exploration for Integrating Vocational English and General English

3.1 Integration Strategies for Language Elements

3.1.1 Dual Strategy for Vocabulary Integration

The integration of vocabulary in Vocational English and General English requires balancing generality and specialization in language teaching. General English vocabulary provides a broad foundation for language learning, including everyday conversational terms, function words, and high-frequency words, which remain indispensable in Vocational English learning. However, the core of Vocational English lies in its focus on terminology and expressions specific to particular fields, making specialized vocabulary a key component. By developing graded vocabulary lists that combine high-frequency words from General English with core professional terms in Vocational English, systematic and progressive vocabulary learning can be achieved. For instance, foundational vocabulary learning can focus on understanding and using general terms, while advanced stages introduce terms related to specific vocational contexts, reinforced through contextualized practice. This dual strategy not only helps build a comprehensive vocabulary system but also enhances learners' adaptability across diverse language contexts.

3.1.2 Functional Transformation of Grammar Rules

The functional transformation of grammar rules emphasizes linking foundational grammatical structures from General English with the contextual demands of Vocational English, making grammar learning more practical and goal-oriented. In Vocational English teaching, certain grammatical structures (e.g., passive voice, conditional sentences, and complex sentences) have notable adaptability to vocational contexts, providing a concrete basis for functional transformation. For example, the passive voice is often used in technical reports to describe processes and results, while conditional sentences are widely applied in business negotiations to express assumptions and proposals. Grammar teaching can achieve transformation through contextualized task design, such as drafting contractual clauses or writing technical documents in business communication courses, helping learners master practical applications of grammar in real vocational scenarios. This functional transformation pathway strengthens learners' grammatical knowledge and enhances their ability to communicate effectively in professional contexts ^[5].

3.1.3 Cross-Context Transfer of Pragmatic Skills

The cross-context transfer of pragmatic skills is a critical aspect of integrating Vocational English and General English, aiming to develop learners' communication abilities in various settings. Pragmatic knowledge from General English, such as polite expressions, social etiquette, and negotiation strategies, provides an essential foundation for Vocational English learning. For instance, the "request strategies" in general contexts can be refined and adapted to professional scenarios as "proposal expressions" or "problem-solving suggestions" to meet specific vocational needs. Teaching design can adopt a multi-stage progression model, focusing on foundational pragmatic skills development in General English through role-playing and interactive dialogue exercises; in Vocational English, scenario-based simulations, such as client meetings or project presentations, can further enhance the applicability and precision of these skills. By transferring pragmatic skills across contexts, learners can effectively address language needs ranging from daily communication to professional interaction, significantly improving their overall language proficiency.

3.2 Optimizing Learning Resources

3.2.1 Hierarchical Design of Textbook Content

Optimizing textbook design requires balancing the foundational nature of General English with the specialization of Vocational English. At the introductory level, textbooks can focus on building general language skills, such as everyday communication and basic writing. At the advanced level, materials specific to vocational fields, such as technical descriptions and business reports, can be introduced. This hierarchical design meets learners' progressive needs while laying a solid foundation for subsequent vocational applications.

3.2.2 Dynamic Support from Digital Resources

Digital learning resources provide flexible and efficient solutions for integrating Vocational English and General English. By developing online learning platforms, learners can access resource libraries tailored to various vocational needs, such as subtitled vocational scenario videos and interactive vocabulary practice tools. Additionally, intelligent recommendation systems can dynamically provide personalized learning content based on learners' language proficiency and vocational backgrounds, enhancing resource utilization efficiency [6].

3.2.3 Interactive Integration of Multimodal Resources

Multimodal resources emphasize combining text, audio, video, and images to enhance learning outcomes through comprehensive sensory engagement. For instance, in Vocational English teaching, multimodal materials can be introduced alongside General English content, such as real workplace communication videos or visualized industry data charts, enabling learners to understand and apply language in multidimensional contexts. This interactive integration helps learners master complex language tasks from multiple perspectives.

3.3 Innovative Teaching Methods

3.3.1 Practical Pathways for Contextualized Teaching

Contextualized teaching simulates real vocational environments, providing learners with opportunities to apply language skills practically. In the General English phase, foundational teaching can involve daily conversational scenarios. In the Vocational English phase, specialized tasks, such as role-playing business negotiations or explaining technical solutions, can be designed to develop learners' contextual adaptability and precision in expression. This progressive contextual teaching model effectively enhances learning authenticity and practicality.

3.3.2 Collaborative Innovation through Interdisciplinary Teaching

An interdisciplinary teaching model integrates language teaching with professional knowledge, highlighting the practical value of language learning. Within the framework of integrating General English and Vocational English, interdisciplinary tasks can be designed, such as incorporating financial statement analysis into accounting-related English courses or conducting technical document translation tasks in engineering programs. This collaborative innovation deepens the connection between language and professional knowledge while enhancing learners' vocational competence.

3.3.3 Comprehensive Application of Task-Driven Teaching

Task-driven teaching designs problem-solving-oriented comprehensive tasks to help learners apply language skills in real-world scenarios. For example, learners can be assigned a market research report task, requiring them to combine General English linguistic norms with professional terms from Vocational English to complete a bilingual report. These comprehensive tasks enable learners to practice integration skills in complex language environments, improving their language transfer and innovative application capabilities.

Conclusion

The integration of Vocational English and General English demonstrates a progressive logic in language teaching, moving from foundational skill development to professional competence enhancement. It provides learners with a solid language foundation while equipping them with effective language tools for career development. This study, through theoretical analysis and pathway

exploration, elucidates the critical roles of needs analysis, language transfer, and learner-centered theories in integrating the two forms of English, highlighting their support for instructional design and practice. The study also proposes strategies for achieving organic integration through language element consolidation, resource optimization, and innovative teaching methods. However, practical applications must consider the impacts of disciplinary differences, learner characteristics, and technological support. Future research could further explore the application of artificial intelligence and data technologies in English teaching, leveraging intelligent recommendations and personalized learning pathways to offer innovative approaches for dynamically integrating Vocational and General English, thereby advancing precision and efficiency in language teaching.

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