

# Innovation and Practice of Project-Based Teaching Model in Higher Vocational English

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**Abstract:** In higher vocational English teaching, the project-based teaching model is beneficial for reinforcing students' English skills through practical application and better meeting the diverse needs of career development. However, issues such as low student engagement, unreasonable project design, and an incomplete evaluation system persist in practice. To address these challenges, it is suggested to enhance student initiative, optimize project design, and improve the evaluation system to better promote the innovation of the project-based teaching model in higher vocational English. This, in turn, can facilitate the comprehensive development of students' language abilities.

**Keywords:** Higher vocational English; Project-based teaching model; Innovation and practice

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## 1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of globalization, the importance of English as an international language is continuously growing, making English teaching in higher vocational institutions indispensable for cultivating students' professional competitiveness. However, traditional English teaching models often focus too heavily on the transmission of language knowledge while neglecting the development of students' practical application skills, making it difficult to meet the demands of vocational education. Therefore, the project-based teaching model has gained increasing attention. This model integrates real-life projects into the teaching process, driving learning through tasks and collaborative learning, thereby encouraging students to practice language in specific contexts and improving their ability to apply the language. To better leverage the advantages of the project-based teaching model, it is necessary to explore its application strategies in higher vocational English teaching. This not only enhances students' learning experience but also better serves the overall goals of vocational education.

## 2. Principles of Innovation in the Project-Based Teaching Model for Higher Vocational English

### (1) Student-centered approach

The student-centered approach is a key principle for innovating the project-based teaching model in higher vocational English, focusing on students' needs, interests, abilities, and career development goals to stimulate their learning enthusiasm. In traditional teacher-led models, teachers control the classroom, and students passively receive knowledge with limited opportunities for independent inquiry. In contrast, the student-centered teaching model emphasizes the active role of students in the learning process, encouraging them to build their knowledge systems by participating in real-life project tasks<sup>[1]</sup>. Furthermore, teachers shift from being mere knowledge transmitters to learning facilitators. They design diverse learning projects based on students' interests and individual needs. This allows students to learn language in authentic contexts, leading to improved learning outcomes. In

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project-based teaching, teachers should also focus on students' professional needs and future development goals, closely aligning teaching content with professional practice to enhance the practical relevance of learning.

## **(2) Strengthening practical tasks**

Strengthening practical tasks is another important innovation principle in the project-based teaching model, aimed at improving students' language application skills by engaging them in diverse practical tasks in simulated professional contexts. Traditional English teaching often emphasizes language knowledge transfer while neglecting students' ability to apply language in real-life situations. To address this issue, the project-based model emphasizes practical tasks to help students bridge theory with real-world application. Additionally, the authenticity of tasks ensures that students learn in contexts similar to real work scenarios, which requires teachers to consider students' future career needs and incorporate workplace language demands into teaching activities. Finally, project tasks should cover a wide range of skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing, to ensure that students can communicate effectively in diverse professional environments.

## **3. Challenges in the Practice of Project-Based Teaching in Higher Vocational English**

### **(1) Insufficient student participation**

Low student participation is a prominent issue in the implementation of project-based teaching in higher vocational English. Several factors contribute to this problem:

**Lack of student initiative:** Although project-based teaching aims to stimulate interest through real tasks and projects, many students are still accustomed to passive learning and lack the motivation to actively participate, leading to insufficient classroom interaction and discussion.

**Disinterest in project content:** In some cases, project topics fail to align with students' interests or needs, making it difficult for them to find relevant or engaging content, which reduces their motivation and engagement.

**Unclear roles in projects:** Students often struggle with role clarity and responsibility in group projects, leading to confusion and lower participation<sup>[2]</sup>.

**Uneven participation in group work:** Some students actively contribute, while others remain passive, which affects overall team performance and reduces individual participation.

**Lack of reflection and feedback:** Reflection and feedback are crucial in project-based learning, but many students undervalue these processes, failing to use them effectively to enhance their learning.

**Weak self-management skills:** Project-based teaching requires strong self-management, but some students struggle with procrastination, incomplete tasks, and poor planning, further reducing participation.

### **(2) Unreasonable project design**

Unreasonable project design is another key issue affecting the effectiveness of project-based teaching in higher vocational English:

**Unclear project goals:** Project-based learning requires clear objectives and outcomes, but in practice, goals are often vague, lacking specific descriptions and measurable standards, making it difficult for students to focus on key tasks.

**Disconnect between project content and student needs:** Project content may not align with students' professional development or real-life scenarios, reducing their motivation and engagement.

**Unbalanced task difficulty:** Some tasks are overly complex, leading to frustration, while others are too simple, lacking challenge and engagement. This imbalance affects the overall learning experience.

Poor time management: Project timelines are often unscientific, either too tight or too loose, disrupting students' learning rhythms and efficiency<sup>[3]</sup>.

Unclear evaluation standards: Evaluation criteria for projects are often undefined, making it hard for students to gauge their performance and adjust learning strategies accordingly.

Incomplete feedback mechanisms: Feedback systems in project-based learning are often inadequate, lacking timeliness and specificity, which hinders students' ability to improve their performance.

### **(3) Incomplete evaluation system**

The evaluation system for project-based teaching in higher vocational English remains underdeveloped, with several issues:

Lack of standardized evaluation criteria: Different teachers may use inconsistent standards for evaluating student performance, leading to subjective and unreliable results.

Over-reliance on summative assessment: The current system emphasizes outcome-based evaluation, neglecting formative assessment, which fails to capture students' learning processes and development.

Inadequate feedback mechanisms: Teachers often provide a final grade without detailed feedback or improvement suggestions, limiting students' understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.

Delayed feedback: Feedback is often not provided promptly, reducing its impact on students' learning progression.

Single evaluation source: Evaluation is primarily conducted by teachers, with little input from self-assessment or peer assessment, limiting diverse perspectives.

Lack of transparency: Students are often unaware of the evaluation criteria and processes, which undermines their trust in the system and diminishes the motivational impact of evaluation.

Poorly structured evaluation cycles: Evaluations are usually concentrated at the end of a project or term, with little ongoing assessment, which prevents students from receiving timely performance feedback to adjust their learning strategies.

## **4. Recommendations for the Practice of Project-Based Teaching in Higher Vocational English**

### **(1) Enhancing student initiative**

Since project-based learning requires active participation, independent inquiry, and critical thinking, enhancing student initiative is crucial. To achieve this:

Teachers should adopt diverse teaching methods to stimulate student interest, such as using real-life cases, professional scenarios, and problem-based tasks that highlight the direct connection between English learning and career development.

Establish effective incentive mechanisms, such as rewards or recognition systems, to motivate students. Challenging tasks that provide a sense of accomplishment upon completion can also foster continued enthusiasm for learning.

Create more opportunities for interaction in the classroom to enhance language skills and teamwork.

Incorporate self-assessment activities, encouraging students to reflect on their learning process, identify weaknesses, and adjust strategies accordingly.

## **(2) Optimizing project design**

To fully leverage the advantages of project-based teaching, project design should closely align with students' needs and career goals. Considerations for effective project design include:

Align project content with real-world tasks that students may encounter in their future careers.

Adjust task difficulty progressively, starting with simpler tasks to build confidence and gradually introducing more complex challenges.

Select project topics relevant to students' lives to ensure they can practice English in simulated professional contexts.

Provide a variety of learning resources, including textbooks, audio-visual materials, online platforms, and technology tools, to support different project tasks.

Design collaborative tasks that encourage teamwork, using group projects, team discussions, and role-playing to increase student engagement.

## **(3) Improving the evaluation system**

The evaluation system is an essential component of project-based teaching in higher vocational English. However, it requires improvements in terms of diversity, fairness, and transparency:

Develop clear evaluation standards that reflect students' learning goals and project requirements, ensuring that evaluation criteria cover multiple aspects of student performance.

Incorporate formative and process-based assessments in addition to summative evaluations. Teachers can use observations, surveys, learning logs, and oral presentations to gather comprehensive information about students' progress.

Provide specific and individualized feedback through one-on-one meetings, group feedback sessions, or online platforms to ensure students receive constructive criticism.

Include self-assessment and peer assessment in the evaluation process to provide more comprehensive feedback. Clear guidelines should be provided to help students effectively conduct evaluations.

Ensure transparency in the evaluation process by clearly explaining standards, methods, and criteria to students, fostering greater trust in the system.

## **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, by enhancing student initiative, optimizing project design, and improving the evaluation system, a more comprehensive project-based teaching model can be established, significantly improving students' language application abilities. In the future, teaching methods should continue to adapt to students' individual needs to create a more motivating learning environment.

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