

# Exploration and Practice of Improving Seamen's English Application Ability in Higher Vocational Colleges under the Background of "the Belt and Road" Strategy

Xiang Huang

Jiangsu Maritime Institute, Nanjing, China

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**Abstract:** The "Belt and Road" strategy promotes the rapid development of China's maritime transport industry, expands the demand for high-quality comprehensive English application talents, and brings opportunities to the reform of Maritime English curriculum. This paper introduces the assumption and practice process of the project-based curriculum reform of Maritime English under the new situation, reflects on the practice results, and forms the optimization suggestions on the training path of seafarers' English application ability in Higher Vocational Colleges under the background of the Belt and Road.

**Keywords:** "Belt and Road", Seafarers' English application ability, Exploration; practice.

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## 1. Introduction

As we all know, the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" are the strategic priorities of China's new round of reform, opening up and going global. The rapid construction of the 21st century Maritime Silk Road provides a golden opportunity for China to move from a major maritime country to a powerful maritime country. With the further promotion and deepening of the Belt and Road strategy in the shipping industry, the demand of shipping trading countries along the Belt and Road for high-end applied talents will also continue to grow. "Vision and Actions to Promote the Joint Construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road" points out that the core content of the Belt and Road strategy is "policy communication, facility connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and people-to-people bonds". Shipping development is the cornerstone of smooth trade, and language communication is an important basis for realizing the "five links". According to incomplete statistics, there are as many as 53 official languages in 65 countries along the "the Belt and Road", belonging to nine language families. In such a complex language environment, English, as the working language of the international shipping industry, seems to be an important bridge for the maritime trade of countries along the "the Belt and Road" and an important part of the language needs and services in the construction of the "the Belt and Road". Undoubtedly, it has become a key factor in promoting the "the Belt and Road" initiative.

Therefore, how to do a good job in Maritime English teaching and improve our seafarers' English application ability is of great importance.

## 2. Opportunities Brought by the "The Belt and Road" Strategy to The Teaching Reform of Nautical English

### 2.1. The Demand for Maritime English Talent Training Has Been Improved

With the further promotion and implementation of the "the Belt and Road" and "marine power" strategies, the maritime trade of the countries along the the Belt and Road has developed rapidly, and the demand for the training of maritime talents with strong English application ability has also continued to increase. Navigation higher vocational colleges undertake the important task of cultivating compound talents with strong English application ability and cross-cultural communication ability. Under such a background, it is an inevitable requirement to innovate navigation English Teaching in higher vocational colleges, improve students' cross-cultural communication ability and improve the quality of talent training. However, the traditional maritime English teaching method is backward, does not pay attention to creating English scenes in teaching, integrates new ideas, new knowledge and new elements of international language exchange, ignores updating teaching contents in combination with the strategic background of "the Belt and Road", and still stays in the translation and teaching of outdated teaching materials, which is difficult to meet the requirements of the current era's maritime talent training objectives. Therefore, it is necessary to adapt to the needs of the "the Belt and Road" strategy, innovate the teaching methods and methods of maritime English, pay attention to updating and improving the teaching content, and enhance the application skills of Maritime English of nautical students.

### 2.2. The Promoted the Teaching Innovation and Reform of Maritime English

The EGP teaching mode (English for general purposes), which was widely used in Maritime English teaching, emphasizes the teaching of vocabulary, grammar and other

language knowledge, and ignores the training of language application ability related to specific majors and occupations. Teaching lacks innovation and interest, and lacks professional characteristics, which is contrary to the school running characteristics of "employment oriented". Under the promotion of the "the Belt and Road" strategy, China's maritime schools have promoted the teaching innovation of Maritime English one after another, adopting situational teaching method, project teaching method and cooperative teaching method, and giving full play to the advantages of Internet plus, conscientiously organizing industrial oral training and extracurricular practical activities, strengthening the training of students' maritime English application skills, forming a win-win situation of teachers' teaching innovation and students' knowledge and skills improvement.

### **3. Challenges Faced by Seafarers' English Application Ability in The Context of the "The Belt and Road" Strategy**

It is not difficult to find that when shipping companies in countries along the "the Belt and Road" recruit international crew members, they take the listening and speaking ability of crew members as the primary assessment content. Although most of the candidates have successfully passed the examination of professional English competency certificate, only a very small number of students can communicate with the ship owner's interviewer in English, and the vast majority of students are eliminated or restricted in the professional navigation area because of their limited English level. The weak English application ability of shipping talents hinders the personal career development of seafarers from the micro perspective and becomes a stumbling block to the development of international shipping industry from the macro perspective.

### **4. Current Situation of Training Seafarers' English Application Ability Under the Background of the "The Belt and Road" Strategy**

As a special purpose English, Maritime English is an organic combination of nautical business and English language application. Its characteristic is that it needs to apply the corresponding working language according to the actual situation in the process of post practice. Peter trenkner defines Maritime English as: Maritime English is a collection of all English language means that are practical in the field of international nautical communication, promote the safety of ship navigation and ensure the smooth progress of maritime transport. Students need to apply and consolidate the declarative knowledge such as vocabulary, terminology and sentence pattern expression corresponding to the modules they usually learn into the corresponding work scenes, and realize the successful internalization of rational understanding and pragmatic practice through the completion of project tasks.

At present, all kinds of maritime colleges and universities in China are developing rapidly, and the number and scale are increasing year by year. However, the education of Maritime English is still not free from the predicament of exam oriented education. With the further advancement of the maritime power and the "the Belt and Road" strategic background, all

vocational colleges have accelerated the pace of training high-quality talents, combined with their own reality, started bold reform and innovation in the training of dual qualified teachers, the transformation of teaching methods, and the development of three-dimensional and loose leaf textbooks, and made certain achievements in theory and practice. However, the English proficiency of Maritime College Students in China is relatively weak, especially their listening and speaking ability. How to finally realize the practical output of post work through the creation of real scenarios, which is English for Special Purposes (ESP), is still a difficult problem for marine colleges and employers.

## **5. Tentative Plan for Project-Based Teaching Reform of Nautical English Under the Background of the "The Belt and Road" Strategy**

Based on the above opportunities and challenges, the innovation of maritime English teaching mode is imminent. English teaching is inseparable from practice, especially the teaching of professional English. Combining with the reality of the industry is the most important part of teaching. What is most lacking in improving the English application ability of seafarers is the occupational situation. To this end, we will take the creation of the situation as the starting point, and put forward the idea of the project-based teaching reform of maritime English. In view of the current cognitive laws and abilities of navigational students, it is envisaged to divide the teaching of maritime English into two stages: Maritime English (Basic) and Maritime English (Advanced). Various task lists allow students to achieve language output in the process of task implementation.

The successful implementation of project-based teaching of Maritime English is inseparable from the reasonable teaching design in the early stage. The original boring and irrelevant teaching contents are re-integrated. The design of the project is guided by the real work tasks of each intern. It breaks through the limitation that Maritime English always takes reading textbooks as the main line and ignores real work scenes. On the one hand, it solves the problem of the disconnection between English theoretical learning and work practice. On the other hand, it also helps professional students to have a clearer understanding of the professional work content they need to engage in in the future, comprehensive understanding.

## **6. Exploration and Practice of Project-based Teaching Reform of Nautical English Under the Background of the "The Belt And Road" Strategy**

### **6.1. Introduction of Project-based Reform Concept**

In the 1990s, the concept of project-based teaching was introduced into our country. Project-based learning starts from real-world problems or disciplinary problems related to the real world, allowing students to play a certain social role, using the basic concepts and principles of the subject, with the help of a variety of resources, through exploration, to solve a series of related problems, and the results of the research are presented in the form of project results.

Unlike traditional classroom teaching paths, its elements

(see Figure 1) point to deep learning, emphasizing the link between learning and the real world.

The reverse teaching design guided by the project results and the cultivation of core qualities deeply embody the student-centered education concept, which coincides with the

need to solve the current problems of Nautical English teaching, such as "de scenario", passive knowledge absorption by students, sporadic language output and loose English.

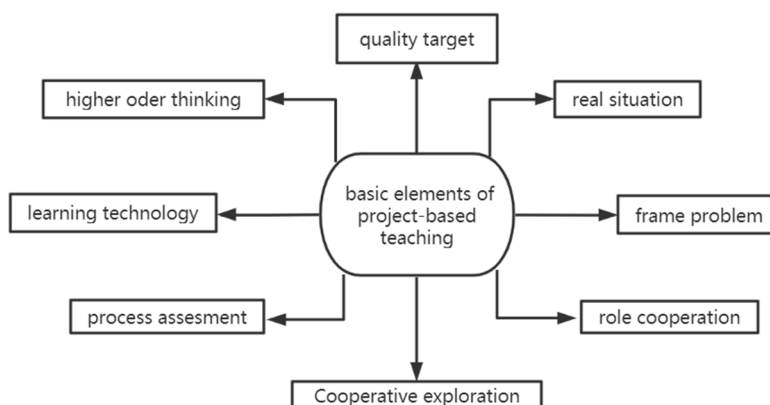


Figure 1. Basic elements of project teaching

## 6.2. Implementation Process of Project-based Teaching Reform of Maritime English

According to the positioning of the demand for comprehensive application-oriented talents of maritime English in the context of the "the Belt and Road", the maritime English teaching team has proposed a reform plan of maritime English curriculum based on project-based teaching, and selected 15 classes of students of nautical technology major of Jiangsu Maritime Institute who entered the school in 2021 as the main objects of this reform pilot. The implementation of this project-based reform is based on the following process for the first time:

### 6.2.1. Analysis of Reform Direction

Through questionnaires and interviews to understand the

learning difficulties of students and the talent needs of employers, and through data analysis to systematically summarize the entry point of reform.

### 6.2.2. Reshaping the Curriculum Knowledge System

Through The key to project-based teaching is to design and formulate work tasks for each project.[3] Taking the interns who are on board for the first time as the main task role, the original learning knowledge points of the first stage of maritime English( Basics) are crushed and reshaped, and the compulsory knowledge of the course is divided into preparation for sailing in accordance with the students' training goals in the basic stage of maritime English, ship duty and other six major modules for task design (Figure 2).

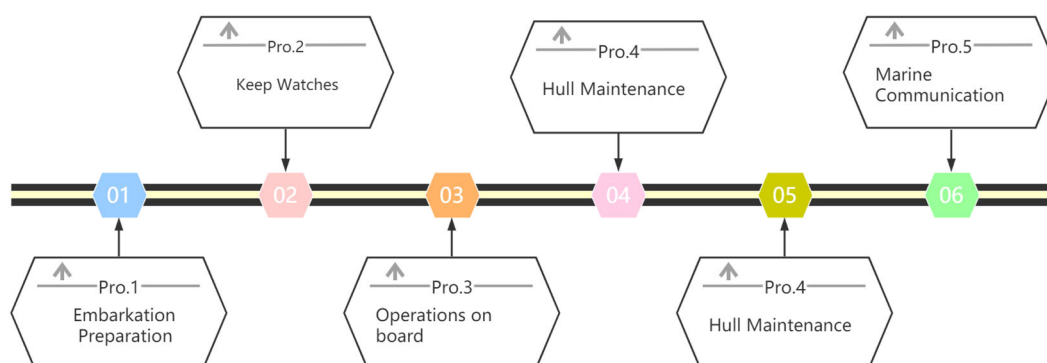


Figure 2. Six major modules for task design

### 6.2.3. Reset of Teaching Materials

The selection of teaching materials should be as real and understandable as possible, and avoid selecting large reading materials that students find difficult to control. Materials should try to relate to the real context as much as possible. For example, the language materials related to the item modules in the table above should reflect the language communication of the characters as much as possible. These materials are

closer to the professional work background, more in line with the learning needs of students, and more in line with the goal of talent training in the context of the "Belt and Road".

### 6.2.4. Selection of Teaching Strategies

In the teaching of maritime English, the selected teaching strategies should be consistent with the teaching objectives, adhere to the teaching concept of "teaching, learning, doing and evaluating", and actively use the flipped classroom

concept and vocational education cloud platform. Taking the project implementation as the main line and task-driven as the support, the reconstructed teaching content is divided into three links: pre-class exploration, in-class implementation, and after-class expansion. Incorporating the inherently scattered language skills training such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation into each task, and implementing it in an advanced manner according to the "BOPPPS + vocational education cloud platform + flipped classroom six-step teaching method" (see Figure 3 ).

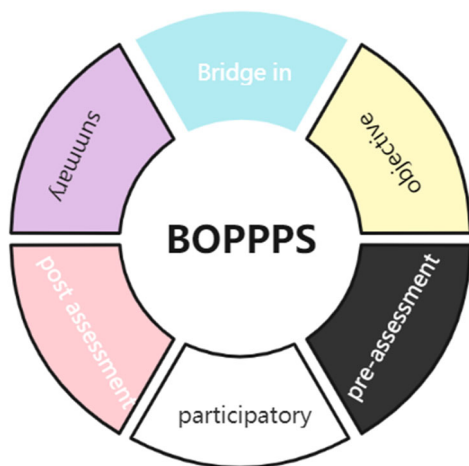


Figure 3. The six-step teaching model of "BOPPPS"

### 6.2.5. Intention of Classroom Design

In combination with the requirements of the "the Belt and Road" initiative on the language communication ability and cross-cultural communication ability of talent training, the classroom teaching of Nautical English should not only strengthen the teaching of traditional culture, but also properly integrate the culture of countries along the "the Belt

and Road". We should not only strengthen the language skills training of higher vocational students, but also pay attention to cultural education and cultural penetration in design, so as to improve students' language communication skills and cultural literacy and break down cultural communication barriers. Through the design of task list, students' classroom training and extracurricular practical activities are reasonably arranged.

### 6.2.6. Improvement of Evaluation System

Evaluation is the measurement of the teaching process of a course, assessment is the test of the teaching results of a course, assessment of a course is the process thinking and experience summary of teachers on how to teach the course well, and students' experience and efforts on how to learn the course well. The project-based course evaluation of maritime English changes the phenomenon of "teaching without evaluation" and "evaluation without promotion", follows the principles of objectivity, comprehensiveness and guidance, starts with the individualization of evaluation indicators, diversification of evaluation methods, diversification of evaluation subjects, and the process of evaluation contents, integrates "teaching", "learning", "doing" and "evaluation", combines ideological and political evaluation, quality evaluation and ability evaluation, teacher comments, team self-evaluation .The multi-dimensional evaluation method (see Table 1) combining group mutual evaluation and technical supplementary evaluation, and combining process evaluation and result evaluation can obtain objective and timely feedback on teaching effect. According to the evaluation results, teachers attach importance to the general lack of items, pay attention to personal shortcomings, adjust the classroom organization and arrangement, achieve "promoting reform with evaluation", "promoting quality with evaluation" and "promoting efficiency with evaluation", and strengthen the diagnosis and development function of teaching evaluation on students' core qualities.

Table 1. Sample Table of Evaluation Criteria

TOTAL SCORE=PROCESS EVALUATION (50%)+OUTCOME EVALUATION (50%)		
PROCESS EVALUATION (50%)	USUAL PERFORMANCE (20%)	classroom discipline (5%)
		classroom questioning (5%)
		homework evaluation (5%)
		attendance status (5%)
	PROJECT TASK EVALUATION (30%)	professional knowledge (5%)
		Operation skills (10%)
		Teamwork (5%)
OUTCOME EVALUATION (50%)	Final test (50%)	
	quality of achievements (10%)	

## 7. Conclusion Optimization

### Suggestions for Project-Based Teaching Reform of Maritime English Under the Background of the "The Belt And Road" Strategy

#### 7.1. Two or Realize Small Class Teaching.

At the initial stage of the project-based reform of Maritime English, large classes were still used for teaching. Due to the large number of students, the breadth and depth of language practice in group courses could not be realized. It is best to optimize the number of classes to about 25, so that students of each module can have the opportunity to participate in the

demonstration, so that students can have a personal experience of the real language communication situation, and can fully reflect students' learning subjectivity in the classroom.

#### 7.2. Add Online and Offline Mixed Teaching Plans

In view of the normalization of the epidemic situation, phased teaching content may be transformed between online and offline, so the plan of online and offline mixed teaching should be added in the action oriented project-based curriculum reform. Make full use of the respective advantages of online and offline teaching to better realize the reversal of classroom, the transfer of knowledge, and the resumption of

language practice.

### **7.3. Develop High-quality Teaching Materials**

In order to change the chaotic use and outdated content of maritime professional English textbooks, which have deviated from the actual needs of the current marine power strategy and the development background of the "the Belt and Road", it is necessary to speed up the promotion of high-quality loose leaf and three-dimensional textbooks, draw lessons from the industry's experience in compiling Maritime English audio-visual and oral textbooks based on the actual production and operation, and compile them systematically according to different training objectives of different grades, English textbooks that are novel and adapt to the development of navigation in the future will improve students' interest in learning professional English and their ability to use the working language.

### **7.4. Improve Teachers' Ability**

Maritime English teachers should improve their teaching ability in many ways: Mastering the basic skills of classroom teaching and English application; Improve the ability of classroom teaching organization; Master a variety of teaching methods; Have the ability to study and apply English teaching theories; Try to equip outstanding captains in the industry or foreign teachers or experts with maritime qualifications to assist in teaching.

### **7.5. Accelerate the Construction of Online Course Resources**

At present, maritime English curriculum resources mainly come from the nautical teaching resource bank and the collection and production of teachers. In practice, it will be found that a unified system cannot be formed, and it is difficult to achieve unity in difficulty and practicality. Therefore, in the project-based course construction of maritime English, it can be considered to combine the construction of three-dimensional teaching materials, and build audio and video courses corresponding to the contents of the teaching materials, so as to immerse teaching activities in the simulated professional environment.

### **7.6. Promote the Construction of Online Listening and Speaking Practice Integrated Teaching Platform**

The teaching practice mode of "ability based, task driven, problem-oriented and integrated teaching" can solve the problems of authenticity, practicality and functionality of language in the process of cultivating students' maritime English ability. The vocational education cloud teaching platform currently in use mainly solves the problem of students' reading and reading, but the training of listening and speaking cannot be realized. Advanced learning and evaluation software such as seagullCBT and VIDEOTEL, which are widely praised in the industry, can be introduced,

or a self-developed integrated teaching platform integrating marine case design, authentic English dubbing, and real scene presentation can be developed, so that students can unconsciously and actively participate in the classroom in a visualized, immersive and experiential teaching mode, and gain knowledge imperceptibly, So as to realize the smooth output of post English.

## **8. Conclusion**

Doing a good job in English Teaching in higher vocational colleges is crucial to cultivating high-quality export-oriented workers for the "the Belt and Road" initiative. The goal of maritime English curriculum reform is to carry out school-based action research on maritime English in the context of the development of a strong maritime country and the construction of the Belt and Road, drawing on the regularity of action oriented and project-based teaching and the research results of nautical career development. Therefore, we should clarify our thinking, update our ideas, and make bold innovations and positive reforms in the setting of courses, the selection of textbooks, teaching models and teaching methods. English teaching is only a means, and the goal is that students can really learn at their posts so that they can use it. In the next stage of reform, we still need to constantly find new problems, explore new ideas, implement new measures, and truly serve the cultivation of outstanding talents under the current international background.

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