



A Study on the Application of the Output-Oriented Approach in the Compilation of English Textbooks for Higher Vocational Education: A Case Study of “New Standard Vocational English”

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Abstract

With the rapid development of vocational education in China, the development of English textbooks for higher vocational education has become a key area of academic research. This study examines the application of the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) in vocational English textbook development, using New Standard Vocational English as a case study. Guided by the English Curriculum Standards for Higher Vocational Education (2021 Edition) (hereafter referred to as the New Curriculum Standards), this research adopts POA principles to address the dual objectives of moral cultivation and technical skill development. It analyzes the theoretical foundations and practical pathways for textbook development, detailing the internal logic of unit structure design: Section I focuses on cultivating students' professional ethics and values to prepare them for unit tasks, while Section II emphasizes workplace competencies by providing content, language, and discourse structures directly serving productive tasks. Key aspects such as material selection are explored, and the textbook's effectiveness is validated through pilot teaching and feedback. The findings demonstrate that POA's "Learning-Using Integration" aligns closely with vocational English objectives, effectively resolving the "separation of learning and use" in vocational English teaching and offering innovative insights for textbook development.

Keywords: Production-Oriented Approach (POA), Vocational English, Textbook Development, New Curriculum Standards, Learning-Using Integration

1. Introduction

In recent years, the Chinese government has prioritized vocational education, issuing a series of supportive policies. Higher vocational education plays a pivotal role in optimizing the higher education system and cultivating skilled professionals to meet regional development needs (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China [MOE], 2021). According to the

2023 *National Education Development Statistical Bulletin*, China has 1,547 higher vocational colleges with an annual enrollment of 5.55 million students. In terms of institutional scale and enrollment, higher vocational education has surpassed undergraduate education, becoming a critical pathway for high-skilled talent cultivation. As an integral component of the curriculum, vocational English is a compulsory or restricted elective course for all students, playing a vital role in talent development (MOE, 2021).

However, vocational English teaching has long lacked national standards (Zeng, 2020), facing challenges such as insufficient vocational characteristics (MOE, 2020) and a "separation of learning and use" (Wen, 2015)—where students acquire language knowledge but struggle to apply it in workplace contexts. To address these issues, the MOE released the *English Curriculum Standards for Higher Vocational Education (2021 Edition)* (hereafter *New Curriculum Standards*), emphasizing moral education and core competencies: Workplace-oriented Transcultural Communication, Linguistic and Cognitive Enhancement, Multicultural Exchange and Understanding, Self-directed Learning Capacity Building. Against this backdrop, developing textbooks aligned with the *New Curriculum Standards* has become a pressing task in vocational education reform.

This study explores the application of POA in vocational English textbook development through *New Standard Vocational English*. By integrating theoretical analysis and practical insights, it proposes innovative pathways for textbook development and offers references for the field.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Current Research on Vocational English Textbook Development

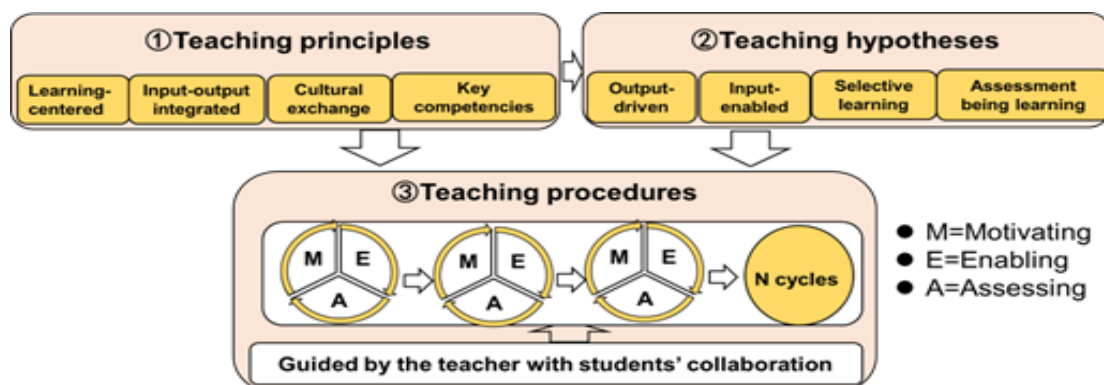
Textbooks serve as the primary guide for education and teaching, directly impacting the implementation of national educational policies and goals (Zeng, 2019). In 2020, the MOE issued a series of textbook management measures to standardize development processes and enhance quality (China Foreign Language Textbook Development Report Team [CFL Team], 2020). The *Vocational Textbook Management Measures* specifically address the lack of vocational relevance by emphasizing industry-education collaboration (MOE, 2020). Despite progress, challenges persist, including the absence of standardized guidelines (Zeng & Ma, 2020).

Foreign language textbook research requires systematic design and coordination (Wang & Liu, 2021). The *New Curriculum Standards* (2021) mark a milestone by highlighting moral education, curricular coherence, and vocational applicability. A 2019 survey revealed that vocational students often have weak English proficiency and low motivation, while graduates report inadequate preparation for workplace demands. Although the *New Curriculum Standards* address policy-level issues, deep-rooted challenges—such as neglecting "humanistic education"—require long-term solutions (Wen & Zhang, 2021a).

2.2. Research and Application of POA

Proposed by Wen (2015), POA addresses the "separation of learning and use" in Chinese foreign language education. Its core principle, "Learning-Using Integration," is operationalized through three stages: motivating, enabling, and assessing (Wen, 2018; see Table 1). POA has been validated in textbooks like *New Generation College English* (Chang, 2017), but its adaptation to vocational English—with its strong workplace orientation and diverse student needs—remains underexplored.

Table 1. POA Theoretical Framework 3.0



Source: (Wen, 2018)

3. Research Methods

3.1. Theoretical Framework

Guided by the *New Curriculum Standards* and POA principles, this study proposes a textbook development framework:

1. **Objectives:** Moral cultivation and technical skill development;
2. **Pedagogy:** POA-driven "Learning-Using Integration";
3. **Content Design:** Authentic workplace scenarios and engaging materials.

3.2. Implementation Pathway

The development process includes:

1. **Needs Analysis:** Surveying vocational colleges to define objectives;
2. **Prototype Design:** Translating POA stages into unit structures;
3. **Material Development:** Aligning topics and tasks with the *New Curriculum Standards*;
4. **Pilot Testing:** Collecting feedback from 6 vocational colleges for optimization.

4. Results and Discussion

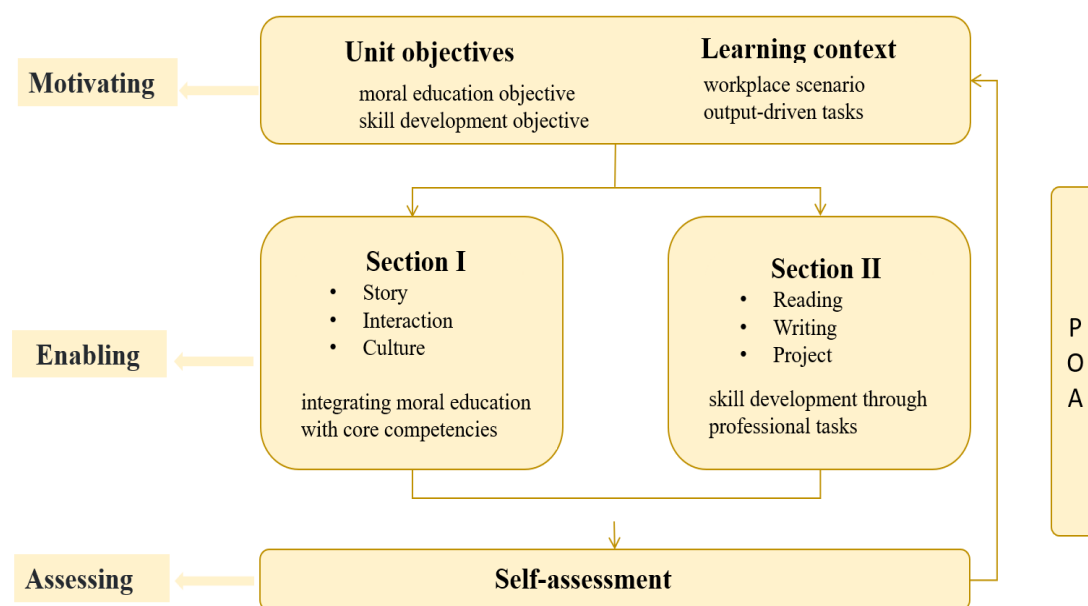
4.1. Unit Structure Design

The unit structure of *New Standard Vocational English* fully embodies the POA teaching process. Each unit sets dual objectives: "vocational qualities" and "vocational skills," aligning with the curriculum's goal of integrating moral cultivation and technical skill development. Authentic workplace scenarios and tasks are designed to motivate learning.

- **Section I** focuses on the "vocational qualities" objective:
 - The *Story* section facilitates value orientation, content, and language development.
 - *Developing Skills* enables task-related methods and production.
 - *Interaction* promotes moral and productive outcomes in workplace communication.
 - *Culture* reinforces moral objectives through intercultural perspectives.
- **Section II** centers on the "vocational skills" objective:
 - *Reading* and *Writing* provide language, content, and discourse structures for task completion.
 - *Project* serves as the final productive task.
- **Assessment** evaluates the achievement of learning objectives.

The unit structure completes the "motivating-enabling-assessing" cycle, with multiple sub-cycles within each section, ensuring coherence and progression. See the Table 2.

Table 2. Unit structure



Source: (Wen & Yang, 2023a)

4.2. Material Selection

4.2.1 Unit Topics

The textbook topics cover the theme categories, sub-themes, and workplace tasks specified in the *New Curriculum Standards*. The correspondence between textbook units and the *New Curriculum Standards* is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Correspondence Between Textbook Units and New Curriculum Standards Topics

Theme Categories	Sub-themes	Corresponding Textbook Units
Career and the Individual	1 Cultural Heritage	Book 1 Unit 6 Business travel
		Book 2 Unit 1 Event Organising
		Book 1 Unit 3 Visitor Reception
		Book 1 Unit 6 Business travel
		Book 2 Unit 1 Event Organising
		Book 1 Unit 5 Office Work
		Book 1 Unit 3 Visitor Reception
		Book 2 Unit 1 Event Organising
	2 Career Planning	Book 1 Unit 1 Internships
		Book 1 Unit 1 Internships
		Book 1 Unit 3 Visitor Reception
		Book 2 Unit 5 Green Products
		Book 1 Unit 1 Internships
	3 Professional Ethos	Book 2 Unit 6 Craftsmanship
		Book 1 Unit 5 Office Work
		Book 2 Unit 4 After-sales service
		Book 1 Unit 2 Time Management
		Book 1 Unit 4 Corporate Meeting
Career and Society	4 Social Responsibility	Book 2 Unit 4 After-sales service
		Book 2 Unit 6 Craftsmanship
		Book 2 Unit 1 Event Organising
		Book 2 Unit 1 Event Organising
		Book 2 Unit 5 Green Products
	5 Science and Technology	Book 2 Unit 6 Craftsmanship
		Book 1 Unit 3 Visitor Reception
		Book 2 Unit 5 Green Products
		Book 2 Unit 6 Craftsmanship
		Book 1 Unit 6 Business Travel
	6 Cultural Exchange	Book 2 Unit 2 Team Spirit
		Book 2 Unit 3 Business Cooperation
		Book 1 Unit 3 Visitor Reception
		Book 1 Unit 6 Business Travel
Career and the Environment	7 Ecological Environment	Book 2 Unit 1 Event Organising
		Book 1 Unit 3 Visitor Reception
		Book 1 Unit 4 Corporate Meeting
		Book 2 Unit 5 Green Products
	8 Workplace Environment	Book 1 Unit 6 Business Travel
		Book 1 Unit 6 Business Travel
		Book 2 Unit 5 Green Products
		Book 2 Unit 6 Craftsmanship
		Book 1 Unit 6 Business Travel
		Book 2 Unit 3 Business Cooperation
		Book 2 Unit 4 After-sales service
		Book 2 Unit 6 Craftsmanship
		Book 1 Unit 6 Business Travel

4.2.2 Material Principles

Two principles guide material selection:

1. Scientific, Ideological, and Engaging Main Texts:

- The *Story* section integrates professional ethics and values into engaging workplace narratives. For example, Unit 2 of Book 1, themed "Time Management," tells the story of a new administrative assistant who learns to prioritize tasks and manage time effectively with a manager's guidance.

2. Authentic Communicative Texts:

- Each unit's vocational skill objective is a typical workplace activity, often a writing or speaking task. For example, Unit 1 of Book 1 requires students to write a resume, while Unit 1 of Book 2 involves drafting an event plan. See the Table 4.

Table 4. Textbook Unit Topics and Vocational Skill Objectives

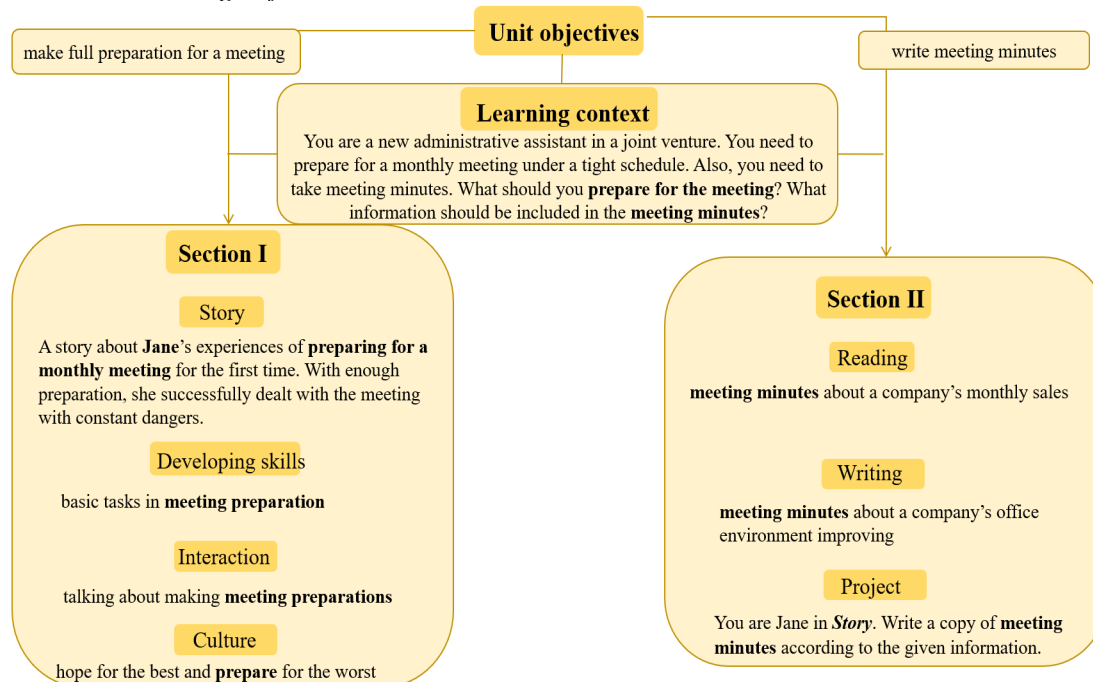
Unit Topics in Book 1	Book 1 Vocational Skill Objectives	Unit Topics in Book 2	Book 2 Vocational Skill Objectives
Unit 1 Internships	Write a resume	Unit 1 Event Organising	Write an activity plan
Unit 2 Time Management	Write a work log	Unit 2 Team Spirit	Write a project reflection speech
Unit 3 Visitor Reception	Prepare an oral welcome speech	Unit 3 Business Cooperation	Write a business cooperation invitation letter
Unit 4 Corporate Meeting	Write a meeting summary	Unit 4 After-sales Service	Write an email to respond to customer complaints
Unit 5 Office Work	Write an apology email	Unit 5 Green Products	Write a product description for the company website
Unit 6 Business Travel	Prepare a business trip report speech	Unit 6 The Spirit of Craftsmanship	Write a live streaming script about traditional Chinese handicrafts

Source: (Wen & Yang, 2023a)

4.2.3 Unit Content Logic

Each unit's content aligns with the " Learning-Using Integration " principle, ensuring authenticity and workplace relevance. For example, Unit 4 of Book 1, "Corporate Meetings," demonstrates the internal logic of unit design, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Content Logic of Unit 4, Book 1



5. Pilot Feedback

5.1. Pilot Teaching

During the development process, pilot teaching was conducted with teachers and students from six institutions in Beijing, Shaanxi, and Guangdong. The pilot generated 15 reports, 130 minutes of teaching recordings, and numerous teacher reflections and interview data. Overall, the textbook was praised for its innovative approach, coherent content, and effective resolution of the "separation of learning and use." Its integration of moral education and practical tasks was deemed highly effective in helping students master core skills.

5.2. Post-Publication Impact

Since its publication in May 2023, the textbook has sold 40,000 copies, reaching 38 institutions across 12 provinces. It has been widely recognized for meeting the needs of vocational English teaching and student development in the new era.

6. Conclusion and Future Directions

This study explores the application of POA in vocational English textbook development through *New Standard Vocational English*. The findings demonstrate that POA effectively addresses the "separation of learning and use" and achieves the dual objectives of moral cultivation and technical skill development.

However, the textbook's application needs to be expanded. Future research should collect more user feedback to optimize content design. Additionally, teacher training on POA principles and textbook use is recommended to maximize its effectiveness.

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