

# Active Learning Strategies in English Teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges

Kong Wei and Carmela S. Dizon

Angeles University Foundation

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2024.1110001>

Received: 23 September 2024; Accepted: 28 September 2024; Published: 26 October 2024

## ABSTRACT

With the continuous development of modern society, the demand for international communication is increasing day by day, which also puts forward the demand for modern talents. Master and be able to communicate with English, has become one of the directions of talent training in various universities, and the importance of English subjects in higher vocational colleges is gradually increasing. The use of active learning strategies in higher vocational colleges to carry out teaching activities can mobilize students' learning initiative, create a better learning experience, improve their oral English expression ability, and develop their critical thinking. This literature review mainly combines an analysis of the current situation of English teaching in domestic higher vocational colleges, presents the use of active learning strategies in the teaching and learning process in order to provide some support for the healthy application of English teaching activities in higher vocational colleges.

**Keywords:** Higher Vocational Colleges, Teaching-Learning English; Classroom Teaching; Active Learning Strategies

## INTRODUCTION

Higher vocational colleges serve as the key components in providing classroom teaching to students and assist in the continuous development of modern society. Every society needs talents who can contribute to its development and modernization. This can be achieved with effective teaching of society's population. Graduates must be able to meet the demands of modern talent market in terms of knowledge, attitude, and skills. This is the key role of higher vocational education. The additional challenge of globalization should prepare graduates to be able to speak, read, write, and listen using the English language. This will give graduates opportunities to compete both in the local and global job market. It is essential then that higher vocational colleges should provide effective and efficient means to provide excellent English language teaching and learning experience for students.

## OPTIMIZATION OF CLASSROOM TEACHING CONTENT BASED ON ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES

On the basis of implementing China's national educational policy of "providing practical and adequate educational degrees," higher vocational colleges need to pay attention to increase the development of students' English language skills. In the teaching process, teachers should pay special attention to students' collaborative learning because it contributes to student engagement in learning <sup>[1]</sup>. Research on the practical domestic education environment proposed that the English teaching goal of higher vocational colleges and other universities is to cultivate students' comprehensive application ability, help students master the listening, speaking, reading, writing skills and related English knowledge, as well as to cultivate students' ability to use English in the workplace <sup>[2]</sup>. In another study, it was found that the application of active learning strategies in teaching English contribute in building students' language competence <sup>[3]</sup>. Centering on the teaching goal of higher vocational education and the current situation of English teaching in higher vocational colleges, the key teaching idea is to apply active learning strategies to improve students' knowledge and confidence in learning the English language <sup>[4]</sup>. Aside of course from minding the strategies, teachers should also be considerate of the content being presented in class. In this regard, teachers should also bring to mind the integration of

ideological and political education, talent market demand, and students' individual growth needs in combination with the current situation of social development.

The optimization of ideas in classroom teaching content based on the active learning strategy are as follows: First, classroom education cannot be divorced from the real life <sup>[5]</sup>. The teaching content needs to be integrated with the ideological and political content. The English subject text must have rich content and topics, which includes, but not limited to culture, science and technology, economy, society, history and other fields. The rich theme content can meet the diverse needs of higher vocational college students in terms of thought, emotion and learning. The rich thematic content also provides a good opportunity for the teaching integration of ideological and political content. Teachers should be in the process of carrying out classroom teaching activities, consciously increasing the content of ideological and political education. Teachers can help students to establish correct and good ideological and educational concepts, such as environmental protection themes. Teachers need to prepare their lessons before class. They can add images of environmental pollution and guide the students to think about environmental protection issues. In addition, teachers can help improve the students' ideological consciousness. Teachers can introduce some cases of ecological environmental damage such as cutting of trees or destroying the vegetation. The teacher can use the 19th National Congress of the CPC report in guiding students to uphold the harmonious coexistence of man and nature. They can guide students to understand that it is the duty of every Chinese citizen to protect the environment. By promoting students' awareness of environmental protection and civic responsibility consciousness, teachers may use the English language to achieve this goal. Another perspective is that the Chinese culture is extensive and profound. Teachers can ask students to translate in English some of the great teaching of the ancient philosopher Lao Tzu from his book Tao Te Ching. The material may be local, addressing understanding of one's culture and translating it to English will help the students understand the meaning of the relevant words and phrases in the famous literary work. This strategy may help guide the students to better understand the wisdom of ancient Chinese philosophers. Through the integration of teaching content and ideological and political content, the content of the existing teaching materials is deepened. This will help students to better realize their own civic responsibilities and help to improve their positive initiative.

Second, in the course of English classroom teaching, every word in the English textbook conforms to grammatical rules. However, in the actual process of oral English daily communication, some vocabularies rarely appear in the content of the textbook. Using active learning strategies, the English teachers need to integrate the teaching of English vocabularies which are used in their daily communication <sup>[6]</sup>. By placing the relatively high vocabulary used in daily life in the classroom teaching process will help the students to engage effectively in classroom conversations. English teachers can prepare audio clips used on a daily basis. Another strategy may be the provision of face-to-face communication with native speakers of the English language like foreign professors. There is evidence to show that such strategy improves the confidence of students' in speaking the language <sup>[7]</sup>. The students may also be tasked to dub conversations in English which they find to be both engaging and exciting. These activities may help students to improve their own English proficiency skills. In teaching speaking skills in the classroom, for example, linking the teaching material of how to apologize to others and how to reply to others in very formal context, may be helpful for students who may encounter this in the future. Watching videos about real life events, such as those from YouTube, students will have the opportunity to understand the formal and informal expressions used in daily lives <sup>[8]</sup>. Teachers can also organize group simulation dialogues as teaching activities which help further consolidate the students learning <sup>[9]</sup>. In general, it can be concluded that in the teaching of English in the classroom, the teaching content and the real situation must be integrated, which not only improve students' actual English communication skills, but also their interest in learning the language.

## **THE EXTENSION OF THE CLASSROOM BASED ON ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES**

In the whole process of the implementation of English teaching activities in higher vocational colleges, the problem of disconnection between in-class learning and its use in other curricular activities is very prominent <sup>[10]</sup>. When the knowledge learned in the classroom cannot be applied in practical setting, it is easy to forget them and English communication skills do not improve <sup>[11]</sup>. Teachers can use the support of the Internet to

realize the extension and expansion inside and outside the classroom which help students to consolidate the knowledge content learned in class as well as the usefulness of knowing the English language <sup>[12]</sup>. In the traditional teaching of the English language, students are given the textbook, and they simply receive knowledge without being able to apply the skills in real-life context. Students are passive learners. Knowledge and skills are not used in practical ways. Teachers need to change their teaching perspective. They may use available technology to provide online learning resources. Students may be given independent pre-class tasks, and the inputs may be used during classroom discussions. In the in-person classes, the key and difficult points may be further elaborated to help the students understand the learning content. Then the students can complete their after-class tasks after the thorough discussions. The whole teaching idea is more conducive to improving the students' learning experiences. Another perspective is that teachers need to increase their extracurricular practical activities. They can help students review, consolidate and apply classroom content. Common extracurricular practice activities include group preparation of English dialogue, shooting video to complete homework, the use of online language learning platforms (such as Duolingo, Busuu, Mondly, etc.), group English debate competitions, role playing activities, etc. Through these diverse activities, students can have creative tasks outside the classroom where they can apply the things that they have learned inside the class. These activities give the students the opportunity to practice what they have learned. Throughout the practice process, teachers need to give students as much encouragement and support as possible, guide them to build their confidence in learning English.

## **OPTIMIZATION IDEAS OF TEACHING EVALUATION BASED ON THE ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGY**

Evaluation of the teaching-learning process is an extremely in the process of English teaching in higher vocational colleges for it assess both the performance of the teachers and the students <sup>[13]</sup>. Correct and appropriate teaching evaluation can help students realize their own deficiencies and the feedback can serve as input in overcoming these deficiencies. By analyzing the methods that they find effective, teachers may modify their teaching activities to suit the preferences of their learners. Thus, there should be a system where the teaching strategies employed by the teachers may be evaluated by the students as well.

On evaluating the learning process, teachers must have an array of testing mechanisms in assessing English language learning. Aside from paper and pencil tests, performance tasks may be implemented. In testing the four macro skills of speaking, reading, writing, and listening, the teacher may employ performance-based tests<sup>[14]</sup>. For instance, creating conversations may be a good way to measure all macro-skills. Create a scenario where students are paired and have to create a dialogue about a chosen topic. Then, they will rehearse and later deliver the dialogue in class. This method of evaluation is also going to be fun for students. There are many other tasks that the teacher may use in evaluating learning. The primary consideration is to target the skills students have already acquired in the process of learning the language.

This paper pushes for students to develop self-evaluation and mutual evaluation. This can be achieved by providing students with corresponding evaluation platform and teachers should guide them to think about the content and significance of the evaluation. However, students must develop integrity in terms of accomplishing their self-evaluation tasks in order to get appropriate feedback that can aid them in further improving their proficiency in the language. In the traditional English teaching situation, evaluation is solely done by the teachers. This evaluation method is not comprehensive enough and cannot meet the growth needs of students. Without providing other means of evaluating English language efficiency, it is difficult to get a clear picture of the level of the students. Using active learning strategies, teachers may set up self-evaluation links where the student evaluate their English learning experiences. Self-evaluation allows students to determine their progress and their difficulties in the process of the learning <sup>[15]</sup>. This can help students know themselves better and can have a good grasp of their English learning situation. This will give them ideas in terms of the level of their cognition and make timely adjustments in their learning goals. The teacher may also set up peer evaluation mechanisms where learners can evaluate each other <sup>[16]</sup>.

While there is a need to promote active learning strategies, it will still be beneficial to maintain the traditional mechanism of evaluating learning among students. Teachers still need to get the students to complete the

exercises in the textbooks, but teachers need to give students some time to complete the exercises. After that, the correct answers must be discussed to help students understand difficult concepts. Taking advantage of online technology, teachers may correct students' homework through an online teaching platform. In this mechanism, peer evaluation is still possible.

The far-reaching goal of learning English is to develop the motivation among the students for continuous learning. Even if they already have completed all their English courses, it is imperative that they continue using the language in order not to lose it. In the case of continuous development of modern society, higher vocational English education is not the end for students. They should be motivated for individual long-term development which will contribute to their personal growth.

## CONCLUSIONS

With the continuous use of Internet-based resources in the English teaching-learning process, there is a need to take advantage of this technology to provide for active learning strategies. The massive requirement for individuals to learn the English language for global competitiveness requires the use of interesting, engaging, and creative strategies that will benefit English language learners. Taking into consideration the goal, content, and the integration of ideological and political education, the teaching of English language can be made relevant to the lives of the learners. This will hopefully motivate them to continuously learn the language, beyond the four walls of the classroom, and integrate it to their desire for lifelong learning. Ultimately, this should give the students, who will soon join the job market, the competitive advantage.

## REFERENCES

1. Youngren, J. (2021). Impacts of collaborative learning on student engagement. Minnesota State University Moorhead.
2. Daqiq, B., Akramy, S. & Barati, A. (2024). The Impacts of English Language Proficiency on Employment Opportunities. *American Journal of Science Education Research*. ISSN: 2835-6764, DOI: 10.47991/2835-6764/AJSER-183
3. Sovhar, O. (2021). Active Learning and its application in teaching English. *The scientific and methodological journal Foreign Languages* DOI:10.32589/1817-8510.2021.2.235675
4. Sunejo, S., Khaton, S. & Jaleel, B. (2022). Active Learning Strategies and their Effects on Learning. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*. July-September, 2022, Vol. 6, No. 3[742-755].
5. Erselcan, F. (2015). Relevance of Education to Real Life and of Real Life to Education – Experiential Learning for International Business. April 2015 *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 177:401-405 DOI:10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.02.378.
6. Magfiroh, E. (2022). The effect of using English dictionary in speaking skills for daily communication of student intermediate level at English Learners Association (ELA) course in academic year 2021-2022. Islamic Institute of Darussalam. (repository.library-iaida.ac.id).
7. Wahyuni, A. & Afrianti, I. (2021). The Contribution of Speaking Practice with the Native Speaker to Student's Speaking Ability in Junior High School. *Ainara Journal (Jurnal Penelitian dan PKM Bidang Ilmu Pendidikan)* E-ISSN: 2746-7767 Volume 2, Nomor 3, Agustus 2021, Hal (247-252).
8. Cahyana, A. (2020). The use of YouTube video in teaching English for foreign language at vocational high school. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Indonesia*, Vol. 8 No. 2 (2020) ISSN: 2541-7207.
9. Angelini, M. & Garcia-Carbonel, A. (2019). Developing English speaking skills through simulation-based instruction. *Teaching English with Technology*, 19(2), 3-20.
10. Lase, L. (2024). Use of English outside the classroom by students of the English Education Study Program. *EBONY Journal of English Language Teaching Linguistics and Literature* 4(1):72-87 DOI:10.37304/ebony.v4i1.12394.
11. Valizadeh, M. (2021). Attrition of Oral Communicative Ability among English Language Graduates in Turkey. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies* ISSN: 2203-4714 doi.org/10.7575/aiac.all.v.12n.1.p.59.

12. Wng, Y., Yasmin, F. & Akbar, A. (2023). Impact of the internet on English language learning among university students: mediating role of academic self-efficacy. *Frontiers in Psychology*, Volume 14 - 2023 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1184185>.
13. Rao, P. (2018). Evaluation and assessment in ELT: A global perspective. *Research Journal of English Language and Literature (RJELAL)*. ISSN:2395-2636 (P); 2321-3108(O).
14. Heydarnejad, T., Tagavipour, T., Patra, I., & Khafaga, A. (2022). The impacts of performance-based assessment on reading comprehension achievement, academic motivation, foreign language anxiety, and students' self-efficacy. *Language Testing in Asia*. Article number: 51 (2022).
15. Kusriani, N. (2023). The Effect of Students' Self-Assessment on Their English Performance in ELT Classroom. *Educatif Journal of Education Research* 5(3):311-323 DOI:10.36654/edukatif.v5i3.297.
16. Meletiadou, E. (2021). Exploring the Impact of Peer Assessment on EFL Students' Writing Performance. *IAFOR Journal of Education: Language Learning in Education* Volume 9 – Issue 3 – 2021.