

The Approaches to Cultivating the Foreign Language Competency of Cadets in Chinese Military Academies

Lanjie Li *, Shiqiang Jiang, Sha Li

Xi'an Research Institute of Hi-Tech, Xi'an, China

* Corresponding Author Email: 410261452@qq.com

Abstract. Military English courses have laid a foundation for the professional development and international military exchanges of cadets. In the teaching practice, it is found that there are some problems, such as ineffective student output, disharmony between teaching content and class time, lack of practice materials and unsystematic teaching evaluation system. In view of these problems and to cultivate the foreign language competency of cadets in China, this paper explores the development of scenario-task-oriented thematic teaching mode in military English course teaching, reorganizes teaching content, improves auxiliary teaching materials, integrates ideological and political resources, and builds an evaluation system, so as to provide references for the reform of military English course teaching

Keywords: Foreign language competency; Chinese military academies; approaches.

1. Introduction

Since 2016, it has been clarified in the teaching and training syllabus of Chinese military academies that college English courses include general English and military English. Since 2017, military academies have begun to teach military English courses to students of all majors. The courses are taught in two parts: reading and writing courses, and listening and speaking courses. The teaching content is in the form of unit themes, focusing on new training, establishment system, military exercises, weapons and equipment, international peacekeeping and other topics, introducing the politics, military, culture and history of the main target countries, laying a foundation for students to adapt to career development and the needs of foreign military exchanges.

2. Current problems in teaching

In the teaching practice, it is found that there are four problems in military English teaching: First, the English output of students is not ideal. On the basis of learning English in middle school, most of the students have a high level of reading and listening, but they are generally weak in speaking, writing and translating. Second, the current teaching content is not well-organized. The content arrangement of the textbook is not coordinated with the class time of our school, so some units are selected from the textbook for teaching. However, the teaching units selected at present are more arbitrary and have no clear order. The military English teaching materials are arranged according to the training level, and the topics are cross-set, which cannot carry out in-depth and comprehensive learning on a certain topic. Third, military English practice materials are lacking. As English for special purposes, military English teaching is limited to military colleges and universities, so the available online and offline practice resources are relatively small. Some teachers carry out rich and interesting classroom activities online and offline with the help of modern educational technology, while others carry out interactive teaching according to the traditional teaching mode. Fourth, the teaching evaluation system has not yet formed. At present, the formative evaluation of the curriculum is supported by three platforms, namely iTEST intelligent test platform, FiF oral training platform and the writing evaluation system of the grading network, but it is still in the exploration stage and has not been fixed into a system.

3. Cultivating the foreign language competency of cadets

In order to solve the problem of students' poor English output level and enhance the foreign language competency of cadets, this paper establishes a thematic military English teaching framework of "scenario-task-oriented". Aiming at unit or theme content, this teaching mode sets up large output tasks, sub-tasks, and completes large tasks by modules and steps. The forms of tasks include introducing personal military career in international student classes, preparing for weapons and equipment exhibitions, participating in military exercises and peacekeeping patrols and escorts.

3.1. Create a teaching model of "scenario-task-oriented"

Create a "scenario-task-oriented" teaching model to give full play to the driving role of tasks and the promoting role of evaluation. With the help of digital learning platform, teachers build scaffolding, guide students to conduct independent learning, and effectively realize "learning-centered" through offline class problem analysis and situational task display, in this process, improve students' independent learning ability and military English application and communication ability. The specific teaching process is as follows:

Online task-driven: the teacher releases the tasks (situational task description, task requirements, video materials and basic vocabulary) using the mobile APP of Rain class or Jia Class, and releases the corresponding language materials and audio on the FiF speaking platform. After students finish learning basic vocabulary and sentence patterns, they can tentatively complete the tasks in small groups.

Offline task presentation for the first time and problem-oriented promotion activities: Teachers grasp students' task completion through the above online platform data feedback, which is the first layer of difficult feedback. In class, students will display tasks in groups for the first time to find problems and difficulties, which is the second level of difficult feedback. Then the students will have a group discussion on the difficult problems, the teacher will explain the difficult points such as language skills, and organize a variety of teaching activities to promote the acquisition and consolidation of language knowledge and skills.

Offline/online task secondary display: Depending on the task form, choose to rely on Wechat class group for online video display, rely on FiF speaking platform for dialogue or offline classroom display.

Offline/online evaluation and review: In this mode, formative evaluation is carried out throughout, and this link is particularly prominent. With the help of all kinds of apps and data feedback of smart classroom, combined with classroom student evaluation and teacher evaluation, to achieve evaluation to promote learning. The specific process is as follows: for the video display or offline display of the above links, the group will evaluate each other, and then the teacher will give a speech. After class, the teacher releases the module test tasks through the iTEST platform, and the students complete the test to consolidate their language knowledge; Through the FiF speaking platform to publish oral exercises, students complete the exercises, improve the language communication and application ability. According to the students' task completion and the platform data, the teacher evaluates the students' learning effect in this task, and makes a review and summary of the lesson.

The construction of military English course information resources is based on school-based characteristics, and the online courses of Military vocational education platform "Military English Listening and Speaking Level 1", "Military English Listening and Speaking Level 2", "Military English Reading and Writing" and "Peacekeeping Military English" are used to motivate students to learn independently; The video of some important and difficult micro courses of military English teaching is recorded for students to watch and learn repeatedly after class. In iTEST, FiF system self-build school-based characteristic question bank, strengthen students' practice after class, consolidate knowledge and skills, to achieve the combination of learning and practice.

3.2. Reorganize the teaching content of "output task-driven"

The content of military English textbooks is in the form of unit themes, 24 units are arranged according to 4 levels, and the themes are repeated many times before and after. In the teaching practice of military English in our school, it is found that learning according to the order of the original units will lead to less learning content and low learning efficiency in limited class hours. This paper intends to reorganize the original textbook content according to the new theme, and create a scenario task: "We are about to start learning in the international student class, where the students are officers from different countries. They will learn military knowledge and skills together, and complete military tasks together through understanding and communication." In this way, students will be brought into the situation of the international student class, stimulate their learning interest, build the main story line, set up sub-tasks according to different military themes, and advocate the combination of learning and using in learning. Create scenarios around the theme and set sub-tasks to produce. In order to complete the tasks, students will learn and practice knowledge and skills, and re-integrate the teaching content according to the output tasks. In the context of the class of international students, the textbook content is divided into the themes of first meeting, daily training, weapons and equipment, international organizations, military exercises, peacekeeping skills, graduation ceremony, etc. The teaching content is reorganized, and sub-tasks are set around the theme, so that students can learn and practice knowledge and skills in order to complete the tasks.

3.3. Improve the teaching material construction of "scenario-task-oriented"

In view of the lack of military English practice resources, I compiled the Guide Manual of Military English Listening and Speaking Course as an auxiliary teaching material. In the pre-class part, mind maps are used to clarify the logic between the subject-related contents and detail the teaching objectives, so as to help students clarify the content system. In the whole process of pre-class, during class and after class, it sets the analysis and practice of vocabulary and related sentence patterns based on knowledge points to guide students to accumulate corpus effectively. Corpus accumulation and practice are also matched with the leading textbooks, and expanded cases are based on military news reports of our army. Finally, students complete preset sub-tasks to achieve oral or written output, assist students to start learning and practicing the theme content, and lay the foundation for the output of situational tasks.

3.4. Build an evaluation system based on intelligent teaching platforms

Relying on intelligent teaching platforms such as iTEST intelligent test foreign language teaching platform, FiF oral training platform, Rain Class and the writing evaluation system of the grading network, a "four-in-one" evaluation system is constructed, and an evaluation method covering the whole process of pre-class, in-class and after-class is created. The assessment numbers of the four intelligent teaching platforms will be proportionally incorporated into the formative evaluation of the course to optimize the evaluation structure and provide data support for testing students' output ability.

Relying on the English Club to carry out school-based activities such as Military English Vocabulary Spelling Contest and "Tell Chinese Stories Well", as well as internal selection activities of subject competitions such as Military English Ability Contest for Military students, the school extends classroom teaching and builds a higher-level evaluation and display platform for students.

4. Summary

The study of military English has an important impact on the future career development of students in military colleges and universities, and plays a positive role in promoting students to expand their international vision. As English for special purposes, military English courses are not rich in teaching practice. Different military academies have different learning conditions and class time arrangements, and the actual teaching is still being explored and improved. How to scientifically and reasonably set teaching objectives, choose teaching content, organize teaching implementation and conduct teaching

evaluation are the areas that military colleges and universities need to consider and improve all the time.

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