

Article

Research on Thematic Teaching Mode Driven by Situational Tasks in Military English Course

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Abstract: The Military English curriculum plays a key role in preparing students for future professional paths and international cooperation missions. However, several challenges have been identified, including limited student language production, misaligned course units with allocated classroom time, insufficient practical content, vague value-based education elements, and a lack of a comprehensive assessment framework. To address these issues, this study proposes a topic-based instructional approach driven by contextual tasks. Through restructuring lesson modules, enriching auxiliary learning content, embedding value-oriented narratives, and establishing a diversified feedback mechanism, this model aims to offer insights for enhancing the instruction of Military English.

Keywords: thematic teaching; situational tasks; Military English Course

1. Introduction

Since 2016, the syllabus for teaching and training of military academies has clearly defined that the college English course consists of two parts: general English and military English. Since 2017, military academies have started to teach Military English Courses to students of all majors. The courses use the military unified textbooks *Military English Listening and Speaking Course* and *Military English*, and are taught in two parts: reading and writing courses and listening and speaking courses. The teaching content is in the form of unit themes, covering topics such as new recruit training, establishment system, military exercises, weapons and equipment, international peacekeeping, etc. The teaching content is organized into thematic units covering topics such as recruit training, organizational systems, military drills, weaponry, and international peacekeeping. The course introduces the administrative structures, defense affairs, cultural traditions, and historical background of countries in relevant international contexts, providing a foundation for students to meet the needs of future career development and professional cross-cultural communication. [1].

2. Existing Problems

In the teaching process, the following five problems were found in military English teaching: First, the students' English output was not satisfactory. Most students have a high level of reading and listening skills on the basis of English learning in middle school, but they are generally weak in speaking, writing and translation. The second is that the current teaching content lacks clear organization. The content arrangement of the teaching materials is not in line with the class hours of our school, so some units are selected from the teaching materials for teaching. But the current selected teaching units are rather arbitrary and lack a coherent structure. Military English teaching materials are arranged according to training levels, with overlapping topics, and no in-depth and comprehensive

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study on any particular topic is possible. Third, the materials for practicing military English are not sufficient.

As English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course, military English teaching is limited to military academies, so there are relatively few available online and offline practice resources. Some teachers incorporate modern educational technology to create engaging classroom experiences, while others still rely on traditional methods for classroom interaction [2]. Fourth, the ideological and political elements in the teaching materials are not clear. Military English textbooks mainly introduce language expressions in real military contexts abroad, lacking ideological and political elements. Fifth, the teaching evaluation system has not yet been formed. At present, formative assessment of courses is supported by three major platforms, namely the ITEST intelligent testing platform, the FiF oral training platform and the grading Network writing review system, but it is still in the exploratory stage and has not yet been established as a system.

3. Thematic Military English Teaching Framework with Situational Tasks as the Lead

In response to the problem that students generally have poor English output ability, this paper creates a special military English teaching framework that is "led by situational tasks". This teaching model sets up major output tasks for the unit or topic content, with sub-tasks under them, and completes the major tasks in modules and steps. The forms of the tasks include introducing one's military career in the international student class, preparing for the weapons and equipment exhibition, participating in military exercises and peacekeeping patrol escort, etc.

In order to complete the output tasks, students need to study the teaching materials and input the necessary language knowledge and skills [3]. The "situational task-driven" teaching model distributes "self-study material packages" to students through an online platform before class, which contain MOOC resources, necessary micro-lesson videos, reading materials and self-assessment questions for previewing effects. Students complete the study and practice of the "self-study package" before class and attend offline classes with questions in mind.

During the online recess, the teacher focuses on explaining and demonstrating the common difficulties and problems in the students' preview self-check feedback, provides necessary supplementary and extended lectures, and designs classroom activities with a certain degree of challenge to help students complete the output tasks.

After class, students present their output tasks in the form of online platform submission or in-class demonstration, and teachers provide feedback through the platform's automatic review + teacher's manual review, or teacher's evaluation + student mutual evaluation.

3.1. Create a "Context-Task-Driven" Teaching Model

Create a teaching model that is "led by situational tasks" and give full play to the driving role of tasks and the promoting role of evaluation. Teachers use digital learning platforms to build scaffolds to guide students in autonomous learning, and through offline classroom problem analysis and situational task demonstration to truly achieve "student-centered" learning, thereby enhancing students' autonomous learning ability and military English application communication skills [4]. The specific teaching process is as follows:

- 1) Online task-driven: Teachers use the Rain Classroom or Jia Classroom mobile APP to assign driving tasks (scenario task description, task requirements, video materials and basic vocabulary), and publish corresponding corpora and audio on the FiF oral English platform. After students complete the learning of basic vocabulary and sentence patterns, they are divided into groups to initially and tentatively complete the tasks.

- 2) First presentation of offline tasks and problem-oriented facilitation activities: Teachers can monitor students' task completion through data feedback from the above online platforms, which is the first level of difficult feedback. Students present their first task in groups during class to identify problems and difficulties, which is the second level of difficult feedback. Then there are group discussions for students with difficult problems, and the teacher explains the difficulties such as language skills, and organizes a variety of teaching activities to facilitate the acquisition and consolidation of language knowledge and skills.
- 3) Secondary presentation of offline/online tasks: Depending on the form of the task, choose online video presentation through WeChat class groups, dialogue through the FiF oral language platform, or offline classroom presentation.
- 4) Offline/online evaluation and review: Formative evaluation runs through the entire mode, and this part is particularly prominent. With the data feedback from various apps and smart classrooms, combined with peer evaluation in the classroom and teacher evaluation, learning is promoted through evaluation. The process is as follows: For the video or offline presentation of the above sections, the group conducts mutual evaluation, followed by the teacher's review. After class, teachers post module test tasks through the ITEST platform, and students complete the tests to consolidate their language knowledge; Oral practice is posted through the FiF oral platform, and students complete the practice to improve their language communication and application skills. Teachers evaluate students' learning outcomes in this task based on their completion of the task and data from the platform, and review and summarize this lesson.

The construction of military English course information resources is based on school-based characteristics. The online courses of *Military English Listening and Speaking Level 1*, *Military English Listening and Speaking Level 2*, *Military English Reading and Writing*, and *Peacekeeping Military English* on the military vocational education platform are used to encourage students to study independently. Some of the key and difficult points of military English teaching are recorded as micro-lesson videos for students to watch and study repeatedly after class. We have built school-based exercise banks in the ITEST and FiF systems to strengthen students' after-class practice, consolidate knowledge and skills, and combine learning with practice.

3.2. Reorganize the "Output Task-Driven" Teaching Content

The content of the military English textbook is in the form of unit themes, with 24 units arranged in four levels, and the themes are repeated many times before and after. In the teaching practice of military English in our school, it was found that learning in the order of the original units would result in less learning content and lower learning efficiency within the 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 our study in the international student class, where the students are officers from different countries [5]. They will study military knowledge and skills together and complete military tasks through understanding and communication." This will bring students into the context of the international student class, stimulate their interest in learning, build the main storyline of the story, set sub-tasks according to different military themes, and advocate the combination of learning and application, learning for application. Create scenarios around the theme, set up output sub-tasks, and students reintegrate the teaching content according to the output tasks in order to complete the learning and practice of knowledge and skills. In the context of the international student class, the teaching materials are divided into themes such as first meetings, daily training, weapons and equipment, international organizations, military exercises, peacekeeping skills, and graduation ceremonies to reorganize the teaching content, set up output sub-tasks around the themes, and students learn and practice knowledge and skills to complete the tasks.

3.3. Improve the Construction of Teaching Materials with Situational Tasks as the Lead

In view of the scarcity of resources for military English practice, we have developed a teaching aid called "Guidebook for *Military English Listening and Speaking Course*". In the pre-class section, we use mind maps to clarify the logic among the relevant contents of the topic and elaborate on the teaching objectives to help students sort out the content system. Throughout the entire process before, during and after class, vocabulary and related sentence pattern analysis and exercises based on knowledge points are set up to guide students to effectively accumulate language materials [6]. The accumulation and practice of language materials are also in line with the main teaching materials, and the expansion cases are based on military news reports of our military. Finally, students complete the pre-set sub-tasks to achieve oral or written output, which helps students begin practicing the thematic content and lays the foundation for situational task production.

3.4. Integrate Ideological and Political Resources with the Theme of "Telling China"

The Military English leading textbook, *Military English Listening and Speaking Course*, is adapted from *Campaign English for the Military*, a NATO common English textbook. On the one hand, all the cases used in this textbook are foreign military cases, which are characterized by authentic language materials and real military scenarios. But on the other hand, the textbook does not incorporate Chinese elements, which makes it impossible for students to effectively understand and tell the "Chinese story" of our military while knowing about foreign forces [7]. In the new era, as China's national interests expand globally and it is deeply involved in global governance, our military needs to go out more and more to let more people know and understand China. In the course of carrying out international military missions, Chinese military personnel should not only have the military capabilities and language skills to complete military tasks, but also be narrators of China's story and showcases of a good international image. Therefore, in the pre-class task setting and post-class theme expansion sections of this guided learning textbook, Chinese military stories are integrated in connection with students' real life and the development of China's military, supplementing the ideological and political elements that were not included in the original textbook. In line with the theme content, in the pre-class task setting and post-class theme expansion sections, Chinese military stories are integrated in connection with students' real life and the development of China's military, integrating ideological and political resources with the theme of "telling China".

3.5. Build an Evaluation System "Supported by the Smart Platform"

Build a "four-in-one" evaluation system based on smart teaching platforms such as ITEST intelligent test foreign language teaching platform, FiF oral training platform, Rain Classroom and Correction Network writing review system, and create an evaluation method covering the entire process from before class to during class and after class. The assessment data from the four smart 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 [8].

Based on the English club, we have carried out school-based second classroom activities such as the Military English Vocabulary Spelling Competition and "Tell China's Story Well", as well as school-based selection activities for subject competitions such as the Military English Proficiency Competition for students of the entire military, to extend classroom teaching and build a higher-level evaluation and display platform for students.

4. Conclusion

The study of military English significantly influences on the future career development of students in military academies and plays a positive role in helping students to broaden their international horizons. The Military English course, as English for specific purposes, does not have particularly rich teaching experience. Learning conditions and

class hours vary across military academies, and the teaching practices and implementation are still under exploration and refinement. How to scientifically and reasonably set teaching objectives, select teaching content, organize teaching implementation, and conduct teaching evaluation is an area that military academies need to constantly think about and improve.

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