



Focusing on Practical Application — Design and Practice of Military English POP-SMART Teaching Model

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Abstract: With the fundamental direction of establishing morality and nurturing talents for war, under the background of reduced school hours and enhanced quality and efficiency in military academies, closely following the needs of military post positions and the enhancement of national defense language capabilities, and targeting the three teaching issues of students' weak practical application ability, insufficient high-order thinking ability, and insufficient continuity of English learning, the teaching concept of integrating general and specialized training, ideology and politics, teaching and war, and learning and use is firmly established. The course content is reconstructed, the POP-SMART blended teaching model is created, the quality of the learning environment is improved, and a diversified evaluation model is constructed, all of which help to cultivate high-quality and specialized new military talents in the new era who are proficient in foreign languages, knowledgeable in military affairs, versed in national conditions, and good at application.

Keywords: practical application; blended teaching; POP-SMART; military English

1. Introduction

The College English course is a core and backbone course of our university's public foundation category, offered to all undergraduate students from the first to the second year, with four characteristics: instrumentality, humanity, military nature, and ideological and political nature. It is an indispensable course for implementing the fundamental task of "establishing morality and nurturing talents for war," and plays a supporting role in forging students' competence in performing maritime military tasks. The course consists of two modules, "General English" and "Military English," with a total of 120 hours and 7.5 credits, and about 2000 students study each year. Currently, it adopts a "hierarchical" and "small-class" teaching organization form, with a class size of 20-30 people.

The course construction has gone through 46 years, has been awarded the excellent course of the Naval Academy twice, and is a key construction project of the Naval course. Based on this course, the "Research and Practice on the Construction of a Military English Course Teaching System with Naval Characteristics" won the third prize of the military teaching achievement. In recent years, under the background of reduced school hours and enhanced quality and efficiency in military academies, the course focuses on the new era's national interests and military mission, focuses on cultivating international high-quality and new military talents, fully implements the student-centered educational concept, and upgrades and iterates in creating the "soul, war, high-order, innovation, and challenge" of military courses [1]. It explores and develops in teaching methods and models, innovatively designs and practices the POP-SMART blended teaching model, fully reflecting the "four integrations" characteristics of the deep integration of military academy basic course teaching with military post needs, organic integration with course ideology and politics, full integration with information technology, and efficient integration with innovative practice. The course has achieved significant results. In 2023, it was approved for the cultivation of Navy's fine courses, was rated as a provincial first-class undergraduate course, and was identified as a basic teaching pilot reform course for military academies.

2. Innovative design and practice

2.1 Objectives

The course sets objectives for the comprehensive development of officers and soldiers in the new era and the military's preparation for war. Among them, knowledge objectives highlight the consolidation of foundations, ability objectives focus on high-order thinking, and quality objectives strengthen the soul for war. The following categorized objectives are clearly defined:

2.1.1 Knowledge System Objectives.

Students should master the phonetics, vocabulary, grammar, discourse, and pragmatics of general and military English,

understand the military and cultural background knowledge of military competitors, and effectively construct a cross-cultural military exchange knowledge system.

2.1.2 Thinking Ability Objectives.

Students should flexibly use language strategies for cross-cultural military exchanges, apply military knowledge to execute international military tasks, have strong abilities to discover problems, analyze and evaluate, communicate and express, and have strong teamwork and leadership, innovative thinking and practical abilities.

2.1.3 Value Literacy Objectives.

Students should establish the idea of loving the military and practicing martial arts; broaden their international horizons and improve their humanistic literacy; cultivate a positive outlook on the world, outlook on life, and values; establish cultural confidence and cultivate a sense of home and country; and strengthen the sense of mission, responsibility, and honor of soldiers.

2.2 Problems

The team, through questionnaires, visits to students, and military interviews, found the following characteristics of students' college English learning: First, students have a strong willingness to use English for military exchanges, but they are not familiar with future military English application scenarios. Second, students have a high level of general English and information literacy, but their higher-order abilities such as thinking, innovation, communication, and cooperation need to be improved. Third, some students take passing exams as their learning goal, lack awareness of the high requirements for foreign language capabilities of the international military, and lack the motivation to continue in-depth English learning. Finally, the feedback from the employing military units in the interviews: in foreign-related military tasks, some officers and soldiers can only complete limited external communication tasks and cannot achieve in-depth and efficient communication due to insufficient higher-order abilities.

Based on years of first-line teaching feedback and data analysis and judgment, the course team summarizes the following problems in students' college English learning:

2.2.1 Weak practical application ability.

According to the analysis of the situation from 2019 to 2023 in the past five years, students have a solid foundation in general knowledge, and more than 80% of students agree that course-oriented courses are more helpful for the future and have a stronger traction on learning. However, there is not enough specialized knowledge output and training in college English classes that connect with future positions, which can easily lead to "learning is difficult to apply," and language learning is disconnected from the military and the battlefield, resulting in weak practical application ability.

2.2.2 Insufficient high-order thinking ability.

The cultivation goal of high-quality, specialized new military talents in the new era has put forward higher requirements for the high-order thinking ability of naval officers, but some students still continue the inertia of mechanical memory and superficial understanding during the English learning process, and the awareness of developing analytical evaluation, communication expression, teamwork, and leadership thinking abilities is not strong, and there is a large room for improvement in the ability to convey China's voice and fully display cultural confidence in future positions.

2.2.3 Insufficient continuity of English learning.

Under the background of information technology transformation, some students believe that the necessity of foreign language learning is not high, and they take the course exam as the learning goal; under the special environment requirements of the military academy, students have limited access to precise and efficient foreign language resources, and the traction of learning is not enough, making language learning easy to disconnect. Faced with the mission requirements of the navy's long-term performance of military diplomatic tasks, the continuity of students' English learning needs to be urgently improved.

2.3 Innovative design

To help achieve teaching objectives, the course team has always adhered to the teaching concept of "integrating general and specialized training, aggregating ideology and politics, coupling teaching and war, and combining learning and use," responding to students' practical application needs for the sea and war, high-order thinking development, and continuous English learning, reconstructing the course content of "integrating general and specialized training, aggregating ideology and politics," innovating the POP-SMART blended teaching model of "coupling teaching and war, and promoting teaching and learning," creating a learning environment of "integrating reality and practice, and combining learning and use," and implementing the learning evaluation reform of "ability-based, diverse methods."

2.3.1 Reconstruct the course content of "integrating general and specialized training, aggregating ideology and politics."

The course is oriented by post application, docking with the military and the battlefield, highlighting military and war flavors, reconstructing the course content system, and providing strong support for cultivating military talents who are "soulful, capable, resolute, and virtuous."

Firstly, the teaching content is practical. In language learning, it docks with the military and the battlefield to enhance cross-cultural military communication ability. Increase "military flavor" and "war flavor" in general English: expand knowledge points related to military science and technology, weapons and equipment, warships, and maritime combat; expand texts and audio and video materials related to military academy life, ship life, and military exercises to lay the foundation for military English learning. In military English, create practical scenarios such as maritime communication, deck reception, and ship visits to achieve immersive teaching and dock with future combat positions; establish a military application case library, and through preset visits to colleges, ship visits, maritime encounters, international escort, South China Sea area shouting, and other challenging comprehensive military tasks, dock with future battlefield and post needs.

Secondly, the teaching content is people-oriented. Based on the humanistic characteristics of the course itself, combined with unit themes, deeply explore the ideological and political elements contained in the teaching materials, build an ideological and political case library, and organically integrate into the entire teaching process through various methods such as situations, resources, activities, cases, practice, and evaluation to strengthen the soul-casting nature of the course. Through heuristic questions, challenging tasks, practical tasks, thinking maps, and cases, guide students to think deeply, improve analytical, evaluative, and argumentative high-order thinking abilities, and help achieve the goal of cultivating high-quality, specialized new military talents in the new era.

Thirdly, the teaching content is three-dimensional. Establish a three-dimensional teaching resource to supplement rich "nutrition" for students' foreign language learning. Use the military network to build 1 audio course ("Military English Basic Vocabulary to Go"), 2 MOOCs ("Naval English," "Military Applied Foreign Languages"), 36 micro-courses, and 2 resource libraries (U-class teaching platform resource library, about 1T electronic resource library). Three-dimensional teaching resources provide strong support for students' independent learning and continuous learning.

2.3.2 Create the POP-SMART blended teaching model.

To achieve the goal requirements of coupling teaching and war, and combining learning and use, the course team innovatively designed the POP-SMART teaching model. Among them, POP stands for Post-oriented Production, which refers to the traction of future military post needs. SMART stands for Scenario-Mission-Assessment-Review-Trial, which is the teaching full process of guiding-training-evaluating-reviewing-producing, and the specific operation is: S for scenario, practical situation introduction. The situation traction allows students to immerse in the post experience, opening up the application link between the classroom and the military and the battlefield. M for mission, task support construction. Simulate real military scenes, decompose it into sub-tasks that can be evaluated, measured, and practically operated according to language ability requirements, organize progressive language input and attempt output training, and gradually facilitate high-order ability output from students. A for assessment, diversified evaluation promotes learning. Online and offline evaluations are organically combined, and immediate and delayed evaluations complement each other. Through diversified, whole-process, and long-term evaluations, students' learning is promoted, their learning gain is enhanced, and their learning motivation is stimulated. R for review, review and reflection advancement. Review the learning process, prompt students to analyze, evaluate, summarize, and improve, achieving high-order thinking development. T for trial, comprehensive output promotion. Push the overall output task, prompt students to cooperate to solve problems, transfer innovative applications, and promote high-order ability improvement.

2.3.3 Implement the learning evaluation reform of "ability-based, diverse methods."

Implement learning evaluation reform, focus on ability and quality, and construct a diversified evaluation model. The final assessment and formative assessment are combined, each accounting for 50%, among which, the formative assessment is composed of classroom performance (10%), achievement display (10%), oral examination (10%), and independent learning (20%). Guided by learning objectives, quantitative and qualitative methods are combined, and through diversified subjects such as teachers, peers, platforms, and AI, multi-dimensional learning content such as knowledge acquisition, skill mastery, group achievements, and ideological and political effects are evaluated. The "ability-based, diverse methods" evaluation model not only pays attention to the quantitative testing of knowledge and ability but also focuses on the development of students' high-order thinking, effectively promoting the achievement of learning objectives.

2.4 Innovative course example

Taking the "Aircraft Carrier" unit of the Military English module as an example, the specific teaching implementation

is as follows:

Before class, situation analysis and content reconstruction. Students are in the advanced class of the first year of grade one, having completed one semester of general English learning, with a good foundation. According to the "NATO Language Proficiency Scale" STANAG6001 [2], students are at about level three of military English proficiency, that is, "minimum professional." Pre-class task feedback shows that students have some understanding of basic aircraft carrier terminology, but they lack the ability to use language strategies to introduce aircraft carriers to foreign forces and carry out cross-cultural military communication. In addition, due to the lack of aircraft carrier post experience and foreign affairs experience, the reserve of military diplomatic etiquette is small, the flexibility in diplomatic occasions is weak, and the position competence of aircraft carrier guides is lacking. Based on this, the unit content is reconstructed, and the learning of low-order knowledge such as aircraft carrier parts is set as pre-class self-study combined with in-class tests, and knowledge points such as the development history of Chinese and American aircraft carriers and ship foreign affairs etiquette are added to the class, and the competition for the position of aircraft carrier guide is used to drive the entire classroom teaching [3].

During class, implement the POP-SMART teaching model, starting with the position of aircraft carrier guide.

(1) S, military situation. In this class, create the military situation of "Navy Day Aircraft Carrier Open Day."

(2) M, task training. On the open day, a foreign military officer will board the aircraft carrier for a visit, and our side will send out three guides to perform the guide task. Based on this, a variety of task trainings are set up in the teaching. Before class, through UClass, push the self-built audio course "Aircraft Carrier" and the self-built micro-course "Ship Parts Introduction," and students complete the test online to solve low-order knowledge issues before class. In class, decompose the big task and build a progressive task support - aircraft carrier parts, aircraft carrier parameters, aircraft carrier life, in the form of team competition, group relay, competition for the position, to accumulate team points and win the aircraft carrier guide badge.

(3) A, diversified evaluation. The evaluation runs through the whole process, in addition to peer evaluation and teacher comments, students use the "Crack AI Oral English Mini Program" to have a dialogue with AI on the theme of aircraft carriers, and the mini program will generate scores and personalized suggestions in real-time, allowing students to correct, refresh scores, and compete, subtly guiding students to learn independently and grow continuously. In addition, winning the aircraft carrier guide badge can play the role model power of excellent students and motivate the growth of students who are behind.

(4) R, review. Under the guidance of the teacher, students review with diagrams. At the same time, encourage reflection and questioning, cultivate thinking, guide mutual assistance, and promote student communication and cooperation.

(5) T, output. In addition to in-class attempts to produce, students are also assigned to produce comprehensive outputs and submit videos after class. This forms a learning closed loop driven by the guide task - decomposed and internalized by small tasks - summarized and implemented by the big task.

At the same time, special attention is paid to injecting military cultural characteristics into ideological and political education. This class uses "A Brief History of the Development of China's Aircraft Carriers" to pave the theme, uses the comparison chart of Chinese and American aircraft carrier catapults to render the military scientist spirit of the Ma Weiming academician team, and uses the short video of the naval political commissar answering reporters' questions during the two sessions to stimulate students to think about the significance and role of aircraft carriers in the overall military strength of China in the new era, and to enhance the determination to dedicate themselves to national defense and build the navy, driving continuous learning.

3. Conclusion

Under the background of reduced school hours and enhanced quality and efficiency in military academies, the POP-SMART blended teaching model created by the course focuses on practical application and has achieved significant results in cultivating students' military English application ability, high-order thinking ability, and language continuous learning ability.

Recent military interviews show that our school's graduates' English practical application ability is recognized, especially in terms of international vision, humanistic literacy, and competence in military diplomatic tasks, with the satisfaction index of related troops gradually increasing. According to the latest international exchange mission translator selection results and expert interviews, our school's graduates' military English communication ability is recognized by experts, with the most people passing the assessment among similar colleges. In the past 5 years, by tracking the post competence and career development of some graduates, the results show that students' recognition of the college English course's help in post appointment and future development is increasing year by year.

The course has helped students develop high-order thinking abilities, with fruitful results. Students won the first place in the team in the second and third Naval Military Triathlon and Naval English Single Item Competition; in the past 5 years, students participated in foreign language discipline competitions, won the special prize of the National College English Competition and were awarded the third-class merit 10 times; won the national first prize 32 times, and won the provincial first prize above 46 times, with the award level and proportion both in the forefront of the whole army colleges; in the military games, joint military exercises, far-sea training, military visits, skill competitions, military forums, and other diverse foreign affairs activities, our school students have demonstrated outstanding military diplomatic ability and comprehensive quality.

Students' language learning persistence has been improved. The latest situation survey feedback shows that 75.4% of students have set long-term English learning plans after passing the fourth level, and in the learning methods, students' self-learning tendency exceeds teacher guidance for the first time, highlighting students' independent learning awareness; in the past 3 years, the number of students taking military culture, military science and technology literature reading, naval etiquette, naval English listening and speaking, and other courses has steadily increased.

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