A Research on the Integration of POA and 5E Learning Cycle in Military English Teaching

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ABSTRACT. The paper aims to integrate Production-oriented Approach (POA) with 5E Learning Cycle into military English teaching. The theoretical bases of POA and 5E Learning Cycle are firstly discussed. A teaching model by integrating POA with 5E Learning Cycle in military English teaching is explored in the paper, which centres around the design ideas and 5E teaching procedures. Finally, an experiment class is presented based on the above ideas.

KEYWORDS: Production-oriented approach, 5e learning cycle, Military english

1. Introduction

In recent years, as the number of military missions involving foreign countries increases, new and higher demands have been placed on the foreign language abilities of military personnel and on foreign language teaching in military academies and universities[1] [2] [3]. However, due to the year-long adoption of teaching model in English for General Purposes (EGP) which is identical with that of local universities (that's, a large amount of time in English classes is spent on text understanding and language skill teaching). English teaching in military universities lacks a clear military orientation in terms of teaching content, teaching methods, assessment standards, etc. This generalized teaching model is increasingly unsuited to the needs for English for Special Purposes (ESP) (especially military English) in the new era, which leads to the disconnect between the quality of talent training and the actual needs of the military[4]. Therefore it is urgent to promote the transformation of English teaching to application-oriented military English teaching. To achieve this, the present research attempts to explore an integrated teaching model of Military English by combining Production-oriented-Approach (POA) with 5E Learning Cycle.

2. Theoretical Basis

2.1 Production-Oriented Approach (POA)

Based on Swain's "output hypothesis theory"[5], Professor Wen Qiufang put forward Production-oriented Approach (POA) in teaching foreign languages. POA is a pedagogical innovation in foreign language teaching in Chines colleges and universities. It mainly consists of three parts: teaching concepts, teaching assumptions and teaching processes among which teaching concepts are the guiding ideology, teaching assumptions support the teaching process, and teaching processes are concrete embodiment of the teaching concepts and the teaching assumptions. POA advocates "learning centered principle" and "learning-using integrated principle"[6]. The former stresses that all the language teaching activities in class are designed to achieve the teaching goal. The latter emphasizes that all activities are closely related to the use of language so as to remove the boundary between "learning" and "using".

The teaching process covers three stages: motivating, enabling and assessing. In the motivating process, Teacher lists the related scenarios students might encounter in their future work and the expected communicative objectives should also be clarified. Students could try to deliver designated productive tasks based on their current knowledge. Through this activity, students are expected to realize the gap and actively try to seek for the knowledge and skills they need to finish the tasks. In the enabling process, Teacher provides students with learning materials necessary for the task, and help students to make selective learning so that students can accomplish production tasks. In the assessing process, Teacher needs to make a timely assessment of the students' learning effect and carries out remedial teaching, and gives students a delayed assessment of the output after the instruction. In the process of students' output, Teacher plays the role of "scaffolding", providing input materials consistent with the output task, helping to promote the output

of students, and then Teacher evaluates them, so as to achieve effective teaching. It changes the time-consuming and inefficient traditional teaching patterns into a kind of time-saving and efficient, and changes the "teaching-centered but practice-neglected" and "linguistic knowledge-based but communicative-ability-ignored" college English classes into "learning-centered and application-oriented" and "communicative-ability-based and linguistic-knowledge-equally-embodied" ones[7].

2.2 5E Learning Cycle

5E Learning Cycle is a constructivist-based teaching model that emphasizes the development of exploratory and critical thinking in students. In addition, it focuses on the promotion of students' understanding of scientific concepts and the construction of knowledge through group work. The classroom teaching is designed to follow five steps, each of which begins with the letter "E".

(1)Engage: Students' curiosity and interest in learning will be stimulated and a learning task will be established in this step. Students make connections between past and present learning experiences through activities, and teachers will understand students' ideas, and focus on students' thinking processes.

(2)Explore: This is the main body of the learning cycle. The acquisition of knowledge and the master of skills and techniques are achieved in this section. Students work in groups to gain perceptual experience in inquiry activities.

(3)Explain: Students will abstract and theorize their perceptual experience. Students revise and evaluate their own explanations by comparing theirs with other students' explanations and with the conclusions provided by the teacher or the teaching materials as well, thus reorganizing and constructing their knowledge system.

(4)Elaborate: Teachers provide students with opportunities for experimentation or reflection to test expected questions, and encourage students to apply concepts to explaining new contexts, gain more information and develop higher-level skills.

(5)Evaluate: This step will be completed by both the student and the teacher, which not only evaluates the learning outcome but also the learning process. Through evaluations, teachers and students obtain the necessary information to improve teaching and learning, which further promote students' conceptualization, understanding and mastery of knowledge. [8]

At present, the inquiry-based 5E Learning Cycle is mostly found in teaching Science at home and abroad to cultivate students' spirit of exploration and independent research ability in science and nature, and the hierarchical learning process shown in this model is also of great significance in guiding Military English teaching.

3. Teaching Design Based on POA and 5E Learning Cycle

Based on the theoretical bases of POA and 5E Learning Cycle, a teaching design is drawn forward as follows:

Chart 1. Teaching Design Based on POA and 5E Learning Cycle.
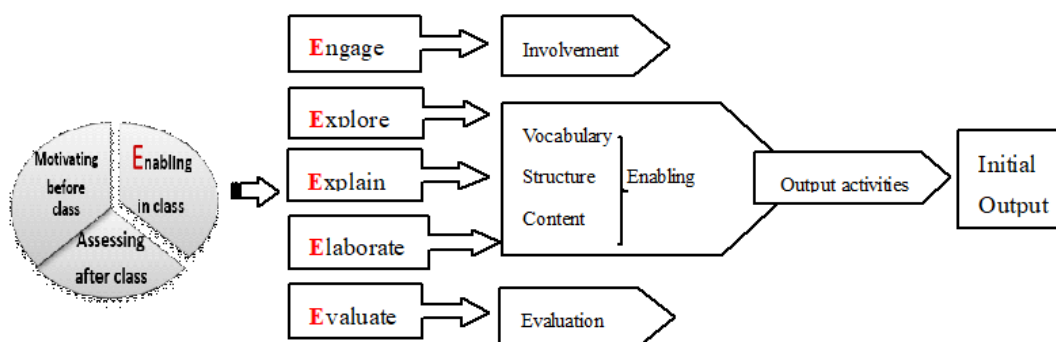
As shown in the chart, Teacher will motivate students by assigning the task of the unit before class. In class, by following the five steps in 5E Learning Cycle, Teacher organizes output activities and offers help in vocabulary, structure and content to equip students with language skills needed to fulfil their tasks. After class, teacher will assess the final output of the students and give feedback on their final output.

An experiment teaching in College Military English teaching will be made based on the above teaching design. A unit *War Games* from the textbook *Campaign English for the Military* (Listening and Speaking) is taken as an example to practice the teaching model. The content mainly includes the learning of vocabulary related to military terrains, the

description of coordinates of military grids, and the presentation of a Mission Briefing, etc.

3.1 Target Students

The target students are the second-year undergraduates. They have a strong interest in Military English and prefer practical exercises. With a solid foundation for English for General Purposes (EGP), 87% of them have passed CET-4. But they are relatively poor in listening and speaking abilities and short of knowledge of military vocabulary and text.

3.2 Teaching Objectives

The students will be able to achieve objectives from four aspects, namely, language, skill, quality and morals:

To familiarize themselves with the English expressions of military terrains and grids, and correctly mark the grid with the given information;

To familiarize with the structure and content of military briefings and make a mission briefing;

To foster their abilities in teamwork, critical thinking and independent research;

To enhance Chinese cultural and military confidence by reviewing the knowledge of *The Art of War by Sunzi*.

3.3 Teaching Design

Motivating before class: the final goal (i.e. the final product in POA) of this class is assigned to students, that's to simulate a mission briefing for one of PLA troops who was tasking with a rescue mission to fight the pandemic in Wuhan. To make a briefing, students should master the corresponding military vocabularies and structures, and they develop a desire to make their first attempt to produce.

Enabling in class: the teacher will act as "scaffolding" by adopting 5E Learning Cycle to achieve class-interaction and facilitate the learning process.

(1)Engage: Teacher engages Ss by reviewing the relevant content of *The Art of War by Sunzi*. Classroom activities would be introduced to make the boring military tactical theories interesting, which the students are eager to participate, to think and to discuss.

(2)Explore: A scenario of "Warrior 7" joint military exercise between China and Pakistan is provided. Students will work in groups to explore which route to be taken to make the mission successful. They are encouraged to apply their knowledge learned in *Military Topography* Course.

(3)Explain: Students revise and reconstruct their understandings of the structures of briefing by comparing and summarizing the structures and linguistic features of the Mission Briefing given in the listening materials.

(4)Elaborate: Students are guided to expand and transfer their knowledge, using the structures newly constructed to simulate the task and attempt to make a mission briefing.

(5)Evaluate: Evaluation will run through the whole classroom teaching process. Students are allowed to make peer evaluation on their initial output. A real-time evaluation would be given to the students on their classroom performance and initial output.

Assessing after class: Based on teacher student collaborative assessment, peer-assessment, self-assessment and teacher's assessment will be conducted successively on the final output according to the criteria made before class. Finally, Teacher will give an overall evaluation and feedback to students' final product.

4. Results and Reflection

Multiple evaluation methods are adopted to test the effectiveness of the integrated teaching model and output activities in class. Process evaluations are embodied in in-class evaluations, online evaluations and unit evaluations. A checklist of classroom tasks and activities are adopted as outcome evaluations to enable students to evaluate the results of the tasks completed.

As for the results, improvements are made from three aspects: first, the students' involvement in the classroom activities is on the rise. Second, students' vocabularies in military terminology and texts are broadened. In a test of military vocabulary and military terminology, students' mastery of military vocabularies increased significantly compared to the previous tests. Third, students' listening and speaking abilities in military environment are developed

greatly. Students can understand normal conversations and military topics in a military context at a rate of about 120 words per minute. They are able to communicate fluently about the military topics, give simple instructions, and work in simple military English.

Since elements as learners' objectivity in assessment, their understanding of expectations, and the individualized learning goals make up an intrinsic motivation for learners and co-learners, which in turn affect the completion of group tasks, the tasks and assessment criteria based on the POA and 5E Learning Cycle in Military English classroom teaching design need to be further improved.

Many of the teaching materials in the design have been searched, edited and designed by the teachers themselves, as compared with the colorful resources in College English, there is still a shortage of practical combat-oriented teaching materials especially in listening and speaking. Therefore there is an urgent need to build a Military English corpus data in listening and speaking, and compile specialized books on the subject.

Military English is a new course in our academy and moreover, military knowledge reserves of most front-line teachers are still insufficient. So there is a need to strengthen training to improve their knowledge structure.

5. Conclusion

To meet the needs of talent training in the military, the author makes a preliminary attempt to explore a new teaching model for Military English by integrating the Production-oriented Approach with 5E Learning Cycle. With the teaching content closely related to the battlefield and the teaching activities reflecting the actual combat, the whole classroom teaching combines English learning with military skills training, giving priority to the output in the classroom. The present paper strives to build a teaching model for English for Special Purposes (ESP), making new explorations for the gold class of ESP, so as to achieve the goal of integration of teaching, learning and researching.

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