

Suggestions on the Cultivation of Intercultural Communicative Competence in Military English Teaching

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ABSTRACT

Military exchanges and cooperation among countries has continuously expanded the functions and tasks of the armed forces and put forward new and higher requirements on the foreign language ability of military personnel. Intercultural communication awareness and ability have become an important component of the comprehensive quality of new military personnel. Therefore, the integration of intercultural communicative competence into military English teaching is a requirement of the military practice in the new era. Based on Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), this paper explores the ways to improve intercultural competence in military English teaching, including adopting comparative teaching method, improving cadets' military English expression ability, and cultivating their fighting spirit through military English teaching. In the process of military English teaching, it is needed not only to deepen students' understanding of military English and foreign military culture, but also to improve their intercultural communication ability and timely introduce the cultural characteristics and fine traditions of the army, so as to improve the students' accurate expression, reflection and interpretation of their culture.

Keywords: intercultural competence, military English teaching, ICC Model

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the 21st century, the armed forces all over the world have been taking more and more participation in multiple military tasks and international military exchanges, which makes the important role of English as a universal language in the world communication more and more prominent. In recent years, with the further rise of China's international status and influence, the PLA has a broader international stage. They are playing a greater role in joint military exercises, international counter-terrorism, UN peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, escort and so on. This requires that the current military English teaching must meet the needs of military practice in the new situation. Since the subject of English carries the main responsibility to develop the students' competence for intercultural communication, it is necessary to enhance the cadets' intercultural sensitivity and ability in military English classes.

The aim of this paper is therefore to explore the effective ways to improve the cadets' intercultural competence in military English teaching. For this purpose, Byram's comprehensive model of intercultural communicative competence will be presented in the

second part as it reflects the complexity of intercultural competence through the interdependence of the different factors. On the basis of Byram's model, the third part will develop suggestions on how to cultivate the cadets' intercultural competence in military English teaching.

II. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

It is generally believed that the publication of *The Silent Language* by American cultural anthropologist Edward T. Hall in 1959 marks the beginning of American intercultural communication research [1]. After the 1960s, more and more scholars joined this research field. In the 1990s, Byram put forward his model of intercultural communicative competence, which became the most influential model.

A. *Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence*

Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence is a systematic approach aiming at a comprehensive description of what intercultural communicative competence involves, which includes linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence,

textual competence and intercultural competence. Intercultural competence is at the center of Byram's model, consisting of several interdependent factors, such as attitudes, knowledge, skills and critical cultural awareness. In his opinion, knowledge refers to the general understanding of the behavior of the country and the target country; skill refers to the ability to acquire new knowledge in a cultural activity and to apply it in practical communication; attitude refers to the ability to judge one's own culture and other cultures by clear standards, or to relativize the self and value the other; critical cultural awareness refers to the ability to find differences between one's own culture and other cultures in many ways [2].

The study of intercultural communication in China began in the 1980s. In 1983, He Daokuan took the lead in introducing intercultural communication to the foreign language community. In the following 10 years, the study of intercultural communication in China began gradually. Many scholars have conducted extensive research on learners' intercultural competence from different perspectives and fields.

B. Military English teaching and intercultural communicative competence

In 2007, the Ministry of Education officially issued *College English Curriculum Requirements*, which set the training goal of college English as "to develop students' comprehensive and applied English ability", so that they can effectively communicate in English in future study and work. At the same time, they can also enhance their independent learning ability, improve their comprehensive cultural quality as well as meet the needs of China's development and international exchanges. The *College English Curriculum Requirements* confirms that college English course is not only a basic language course, but also a quality-oriented education course with the purpose to expand students' knowledge and enlarge their world culture. It is required that curriculum design should "fully consider the cultivation of students' cultural quality and the imparting of international cultural knowledge" [3].

Considering the teaching requirements and characteristics of military academies, the training management department formulated the *College English Syllabus of Military Academies* on the basis of *College English Curriculum Requirements*, which was incorporated into the new round of military college education and training syllabus and was officially promulgated and implemented in June 2018. The *College English Syllabus of Military Academies* regulates and guides college English teaching in military colleges and universities from seven aspects, including teaching objectives, teaching contents, teaching requirements, teaching methods and means, assessment, and teaching conditions and so on. In the

College English Syllabus of Military Academies, there are many expressions related to the concept of intercultural communication competence training, such as "ability to recognize cultural differences between China and foreign countries", "ability to spread Chinese culture", "to develop intercultural communication competence and critical thinking... to broaden international vision, adapting to the needs of professional development and foreign military exchanges", and so on. These statements not only reflect the requirements of the humanistic function of English Teaching in military academies, but also provide the basis and ideas for the integration of English teaching in military academies with the concept of "intercultural communication competence training".

III. SUGGESTIONS TO CULTIVATE INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN MILITARY ENGLISH TEACHING

A. Adopting the comparative teaching method to cultivate cadets' awareness of comparative screening of Chinese and Western cultures

In military English teaching, comparative teaching method is a very important teaching method. Due to the existence of cultural differences, some ideas and concepts in military terms are not completely symmetrical with foreign armed forces, which is easy to cause communication obstacles in international military communication. Moreover, the teaching resources of military English are mostly based on the language and cultural texts of the United States and other countries, which makes the output and influence of western culture and values become the mainstream. Therefore, in military English teaching, we should not only pay attention to the comparative study of the differences between Chinese and Western etiquette, holidays and other customs, but also pay more attention to the in-depth comparative analysis of the ideological level of belief, outlook on life and morality. In military English teaching, it is necessary to help the cadets to find the cultural similarities and differences between their mother tongue and the target language, critically recognize and recognize the individualism, personal heroism and other values highly praised in the Western values, and through comparison, strengthen their self-identity of the value orientation of collectivism in Chinese culture and heroism in military camp culture, and cultivate their intercultural sensitivity and intercultural critical awareness.

B. Combining theory with practice and improving cadets' military English expression ability

At the 2013 National Conference on Propaganda and Ideological Work, President Xi proposed the requirements of "telling Chinese stories and spreading

Chinese voice well". It is not only the work of the national external publicity department, but also the responsibility of the whole people to tell Chinese stories well, let the world know and understand China in an all-round and objective way, establish a good international image of China and avoid the aphasia of Chinese culture in the global multi-cultural integration.

According to the observation of our military personnel when communicating with foreign officers, most of the military personnel are able to cope with the daily communication. However, when they are trying to introduce Chinese culture and military culture to the foreign side, they are often inadequate [4]. For military cadets, it is the basic cultural accomplishment they should have in the new era, in order to show and spread Chinese culture and military culture in English in foreign exchanges. Therefore, military English teaching should not only cultivate the cadets' language knowledge and skills, but also attach importance to the combination of English learning and Chinese culture communication, cultivate and improve the cadets' ability to express native language culture in English, and attach importance to the promotion of our military culture.

To achieve this goal, first, special chapters on traditional Chinese culture as well as the PLA's traditions and customs can be added to the teaching content. English expressions such as new things, unique things and terms with Chinese characteristics can be introduced to them timely. Second, military news and hot spots around can also be supplemented timely in the teaching process. News is almost the closest to the forefront of social development and the times. News reports on the development of national defense science and technology, military reform and construction, international military exchanges and cooperation have become the focus of the mainstream media at home and abroad. The fair use and application of military English new in the curriculum can actually push the cadets to accumulate and update their intercultural communication information. For example, the reasonable use of the launching news of the first domestic aircraft carrier in China can guide the cadets to know more about the history of aircraft carriers as well as the development of our naval power.

C. Paying attention to the cultivation of fighting spirit in military English teaching

Military English course contains abundant resources of fighting spirit cultivation, which can help to cultivate the cadets' fighting spirit.

Military cadets have different missions from college students. They must have a good command of military English and a clear awareness of military culture in order to better shoulder and complete various tasks in foreign military exchanges. Therefore, in military

English teaching, it is necessary to explore the military culture and cultivate fighting spirit. For example, in the process of military knowledge learning and military English skill training, we can timely insert the traditional culture of red revolution, advanced military culture and other educational contents. We can also select advanced models and heroic groups in military training and exercises as the elements of language skill training, so that the cultivation of core values of contemporary military personnel is closely related to the daily learning and life of students. In the classes of military English, we should create a positive, guiding and military atmosphere.

IV. CONCLUSION

In a word, with the increasingly extensive and frequent international military exchanges, intercultural communication has become an important part of military life. In the process of intercultural communication with the armies of different countries, it involves not only the understanding of the cultural knowledge of foreign armies, but also the mastery of the cultural tradition of our army. Therefore, in the process of military English teaching, we should not only deepen students' understanding of military English and properly introduce British and American military culture, but also improve students' intercultural communication ability, and timely introduce the cultural characteristics and fine traditions of our army, so as to improve the students' accurate expression, reflection and interpretation of our culture.

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