

Exploration of Blended Teaching Mode of Practical Military English based on SAP2C in Big Data Era

Yuyi Li

College of Information and Communication National University of Defense Technology

*Corresponding author. Email: 544932660@qq.com

ABSTRACT

The rapid development of information technology has promoted the arrival of “Big Data Era”. In the perspective of big data era, blended teaching mode is a diversified and interactive new teaching method. This paper explores the innovative mode of blended teaching of Practical Military English for graduate students. Combined with teaching practice, the author studied how to realize the integration of information technology and practical military English course based on blended teaching mode in the era of big data. In this study, 34 postgraduates from a military academy were taken as the research objects, and the blended teaching mode based on “SAP2C” was implemented in the teaching of practical military English. SPSS was used to analyze the quantitative research of questionnaire survey and qualitative research of interview. It was found that the students had a high degree of acceptance of this teaching mode.

Keywords: *information technology, big data era, military English, blended teaching mode, SAP2C*

1. INTRODUCTION

The era of big data has brought great changes to people’s way of life and working mode, and the education sector has also been greatly affected. The most obvious change is that mobile learning and online learning have become an indispensable part of education, which is particularly prominent in college education.[1] Under the background of big data era, information technology is widely used in teaching, which not only enriches teaching methods, but also expands teaching resources. Teachers can use more resources in the teaching process, and students can learn more knowledge in the learning process. It is of great significance to improve the effect of College English teaching.

Practical Military English is English for Specific Purposes, which is an important course in the postgraduate curriculum system. It plays an important role in foreign language teaching in military academies, but it is also recognized by students as a difficult course to learn. Under the condition of information technology, online and offline blended teaching mode has many advantages that traditional classroom cannot match, which provides a solution to the shortage of traditional teaching. This study explores the feasibility of blended teaching mode in promoting military English learning from the aspects of offline “SAP2C” mode of teaching,

online software use, attitude and acceptance of teachers and students.

2. ANALYSIS ON THE NECESSITY OF BLENDED TEACHING OF PRACTICAL MILITARY ENGLISH

2.1. Dilemma of Practical Military English Teaching

Practical Military English is a basic course for postgraduates. In recent years, many military academies are actively exploring the reform of military English courses. The curriculum reform highlights the importance of military English in the postgraduate curriculum system. However, for some military academies, military English teaching is in its infancy, and there are some problems in curriculum system, teaching methods, textbook construction and teaching evaluation, which are embodied in the following aspects: [2] First, the teaching methods are monotonous and lack of flexibility and innovation. Most of the time, the lecturer basically follows the traditional teaching methods, that is, “teacher-centered, book-centered and classroom-centered” teaching methods. The teaching is limited to the explanation and exercise of the basic military knowledge, and lacks the expansion and extension of professional knowledge of relevant services. In addition,

some military English courses are mainly classroom theoretical teaching, and the proportion of extracurricular practice is very small, which cannot guarantee the effective supplement and extension of extracurricular teaching to in-class teaching. Second, the teaching materials are outdated and lack of renewal. Up to now, there is no unified curriculum standard and teaching materials for English courses of postgraduates in military academies. Taking the author's school as an example, the textbook used is Practical Military English published by National Defense Industry Press. This textbook takes general military knowledge and English application ability as the main teaching content, aiming at cultivating students' English application ability and military thinking ability. This textbook meets the teaching requirements of General Military English, but lacks the contents of professional military English, especially the relevant professional knowledge of various services and arms, the current situation and development at home and abroad. Moreover, the textbook has not been updated since its publication, and many contents are outdated and backward. From the practical effect, there is little correlation between the learning content and the students' professional development, which cannot effectively improve the students' working ability.

2.2. Analysis of the Advantages of Blended Teaching Mode

Blended teaching is the product of the deep integration of modern network information technology and traditional education. It not only has the teaching flexibility and autonomy of the new online education, but also incorporates the good teaching interaction of offline education. The blended teaching is not the simple addition of online and offline teaching modes, but the use of new teaching methods and means to promote the organic combination of online and offline teaching, and produce complementary advantages effect, education efficiency and quality. [3]

First of all, blended teaching breaks the limit of learning space. Under this teaching mode, students can learn relevant knowledge points online in advance, answer the questions and complete the assignment. Teachers can answer students' questions online before class, and then discuss the difficult and important problems with students in class, and finally solve the problems. This teaching mode transcends the limitation of time and space. It not only helps students to use mobile phones to learn online anytime and anywhere, mark difficult points and then ask questions in class to solve difficult points, but also helps students to learn independently. [4]

Secondly, in terms of teaching resources, it achieves the maximum of course information. With the help of the Internet, students' knowledge is no longer limited to teachers' knowledge storage. [5]

Thirdly, students can learn and think from a wider range of perspectives. Under the blended teaching mode, students can quickly expand or test different learning ideas through the Internet, which stimulates students' ability to think and innovate.

3. PRACTICE OF PRACTICAL MILITARY ENGLISH BASED ON BLENDED TEACHING MODE

The teaching object is postgraduate students, and the textbook is Practical Military English published by National Defense Industry Press. The teaching content is reconstructed according to the characteristics of students, and 8 units are planned to be taught in 36 periods. Taking unit 13 Peacekeeping Operations as an example, this paper expounds the specific methods of the integration of information technology and military English based on blended teaching mode. [6]

This lecture is informative and students have a strong self-study & research ability. On the basis of offline teaching, via online platforms like Military Professional Education, Mengke Classroom, Internet, WeChat, students can study individually peacekeeping basics and China's contributions to peacekeeping before class, review what they've learned in class and share "Production" after class. Lecturer makes assessment and provides guidance online, so as to achieve the extension of teaching content, integration of online and offline teaching advantages and enrichment of morality contents. See Figure 1 below.

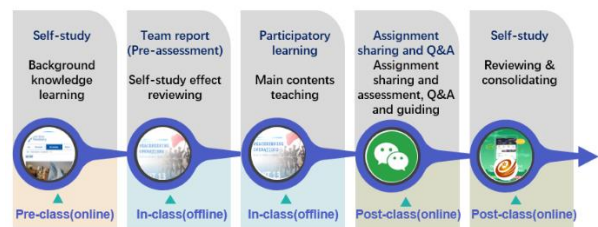


Figure 1 Application of offline and online blended teaching mode

3.1. The Research Question

This study aims to investigate the teaching effects of blended teaching mode on Practical Military English. The specific research questions are as follow:

- 1) How well do students accept the blended teaching model based on information technology?
- 2) Can blended teaching mode promote the teaching of Practical Military English, such as learning efficiency, listening and speaking ability?
- 3) Does "SAP2C" pattern greatly motivate students' learning interest?

3.2. The Research Object

The subjects of this study are postgraduates of non-English majors in a military institute, basically covering liberal arts, science, and other student categories, with a total of 34 students. All of them have passed the CET 4 and 90% of them have passed the CET 6. They have a good foundation in general English, while lack the knowledge of military English.

3.3. The Research Design

This study adopts various research methods, namely questionnaire survey and one-to-one interview, to understand the application of blended teaching mode in practical military English course in military academies from the perspective of students. After the study, questionnaires were used to investigate the acceptance and teaching effect of the blended teaching mode, the questionnaire was designed by Likert five-scale method (1 = completely disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree; 5 = all agree) to refine students' evaluation and explanation of the blended English teaching model based on "SAP2C". The collected data were analyzed by SPSS software (The collected volume data was analyzed by SPSS software (IBM SPSS Statistics20). The questionnaire recovery rate was 100%. Meanwhile, Spearman rank correlation coefficient (i.e. Correlation Coefficient) was used to analyze the correlation between the acceptance degree of blended teaching mode based on "SAP2C" and the improvement of English ability. [7] In addition, 20 (10 female and 10 male students are interviewed for about 15 minutes) students were selected for a one-to-one interview, the interview outline includes the overall view on the application of blended teaching in practical military English, advantages and disadvantages, personal gains, factors influencing the use of this learning method and optimization suggestions, etc.

3.4. Teaching Practice

This lecture is mainly divided into three sessions: Pre-class, In-class and Post-class. In pre-class session, students get the background information through online self-study. In class, students study the main contents following "SAP2C" model. In post-class session, students are required to review, fulfill "Production", share and comment online.

3.4.1. Pre-class

In this section, lecturer assigns pre-class tasks through WeChat and provides websites and links of materials related. Students are required to produce a team report based on the following three questions:

Q1: What are the basic principles of peacekeeping operations?

Q2: What are the duties of different groups of peacekeepers?

Q3: What are those contributions China has made to peacekeeping operations?

Students study materials mentioned above online and produce a team report. and in the next section students will be selected to share pre-class "Production" while lecturer makes comments on pre-class learning activities from aspects of language and knowledge.

3.4.2. In-class

In this section, our original "SAP2C" pattern is applied. S (Scenario setting) refers to setting immersive teaching scenario; A (Analysis) represents detailed explanation of language points; P2 (Practice & Presentation) stands for application-oriented listening and speaking practice and presentation; C (Comment) indicates making comments with the purpose of optimizing "Production". First, lecturer sets the scenario based on real experience of a team member as a military observer in Sudan. Then, students are required to finish the following four tasks: Morning briefing, In-patrol Incident Reporting; Debriefing and SITREP Writing. See figure 2 below.

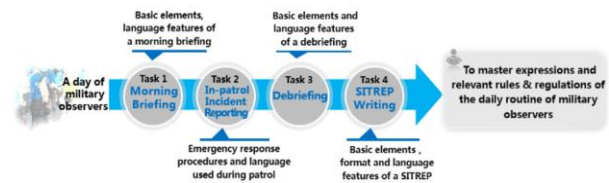


Figure 2 Four daily tasks of military observers

Based on these four tasks, a detailed explanation and analysis was conducted to help students better understand the language points. Meanwhile, pragmatic functions such as "brevity and accuracy" in the text were also analyzed.

Then, students are given the time to practice with their partner and then to make a presentation about how to conduct a radio communication as a peacekeeper. After the presentation, a peer-assessment is conducted from their overall performance. Meanwhile, students' performance will be evaluated from aspects of content, language and moralities on a 5-level basis. See figure 3 below.



Figure 3 Model of SAP2C pattern

3.4.3. Post-class

In this section, students are required to write a SITREP based on self-study of SITREP samples after class. By means of peer-assessment and Lecturer’s guidance and assessment, students can strengthen their practical writing ability, and realize that the effective performance requires a good command of language and professional style of rigorousness, discipline awareness and professional competencies of rational judgement.

3.5. Data Collection and Analysis

After the teaching practice, questionnaires were sent to all students and interviews were conducted. In the questionnaire of 34 students, the questions focused on the acceptance degree of students to different stages of blended teaching mode: online learning before class, presentation in class, “SAP2C” teaching pattern in class, and online learning after class. Meanwhile, in-depth interviews were conducted with teachers to evaluate the students’ perceived achievements and progress, as well as their satisfaction with the course content and the chosen teaching methods. After descriptive data analysis using SPSS, students’ acceptance of blended teaching mode is shown in Table 1. The mean values of the four aspects of the blended teaching mode involved in the questionnaire are all above 3, indicating that students have a good acceptance of this “SAP2C” blended teaching mode. The correlation of Spearman rank correlation coefficient (i.e. the correlation coefficient) analysis is shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Questionnaire on students’ acceptance of “SAP2C” blended teaching mode (N=34)

Questions	Rank	Mean Value
online learning before class	1	4.10
presentation in class	2	3.90
“SAP2C” teaching pattern in class	3	4.20
online learning after class	4	3.86

Table 2. Analysis of correlation between the acceptance degree of blended teaching mode based on “SAP2C” and the improvement of English ability

Correlation Coefficient		
	The acceptance degree of blended teaching mode based on “SAP2C”	The improvement of English ability based on blended

			teaching mode
The acceptance degree of blended teaching mode based on SAP2C”	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.392**
	Sig.(bilateral)	.	.000
	N	34	34
The improvement of English ability based on blended teaching mode	Correlation Coefficient	.392**	1.000
	Sig. (bilateral)	.000	.
	N	34	34
** indicates a very significant correlation			

In Spearman correlation analysis, the level of significance (Sig. (bilateral)) less than 0.01 indicates that there is a correlation between them. The ρ value is 0.4 to 0.7 indicates that the two are closely related. In Spearman correlation coefficient analysis in this study, $\rho = 0.392$, greater than 0.3, close to 0.4. Significance level (Sig. (bilateral)) is 0.00, it shows that there is a close positive correlation between students’ acceptance of blended teaching mode and the improvement of students’ English ability. Therefore, it can be concluded that students’ acceptance of blended teaching mode based on “SAP2C” is directly proportional to the improvement of their English ability. That means the higher students’ acceptance of blended teaching mode, the higher their English language ability will be improved, and vice versa. In teaching practice, if students can be guided to accept this model correctly, their language ability will be improved. As their abilities improve, students will be more receptive to the blended teaching mode based on “SAP2C”.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Through the teaching practice, the teaching effects can be analyzed as the following:

First, students study efficiently and effectively, with teaching contents scaffolded according to tasks. Teaching contents are organized into four tasks in accordance with military observers’ daily routine.

Students, acting as military observers, can understand language points easily and then improve language skills. Second, students get actively involved in learning activities with teaching procedure oriented by “SAP2C”. Under the self-innovated “SAP2C” pattern, students act as military observers assigned with specific tasks under a real scenario, which enables students to get deeply engaged in oral presentation, listening practice, dialogue script writing, role-play etc. Third, a variety of evaluation methods are conducted to encourage students to actively participate in classroom teaching activities to find their problems in learning.

At the end of this course, the author conducted an anonymous questionnaire among the students. According to the data analysis, more than 90% of the students hold a positive attitude towards the blended teaching mode based on information technology, believing that the teaching mode can effectively promote the teaching of Practical Military English, such as learning efficiency, listening and speaking ability. “SAP2C” pattern can greatly stimulate students’ interest in learning, and they are more willing to participate in classroom activities and actively complete after-class tasks. Through the teaching practice, the author draws the following conclusion: The integration of information technology and Practical Military English Teaching based on blended teaching mode can integrate pre-class, in-class and post-class to improve students’ learning interest and application ability of military English.

5. CONCLUSION

Practical Military English course is an important part of the curriculum system of postgraduate talent training in military academies. The curriculum system, teaching methods, teaching content and evaluation mechanism directly affect the teaching quality of this course. [8] The reform of military English teaching based on information technology requires that information technology should be effectively integrated into the English teaching process, so as to highlight the leading role of teachers and the dominant position of trainees, arouse the enthusiasm of trainees, and form an educational and teaching mode of mutual cooperation and common learning. [9] Military English based on blended teaching mode reform pay attention to the actual needs of students, highlight the interaction of real and effective, and give full play to the leading role of the teacher, to strengthen the students’ main body status. So it can improve the students’ learning enthusiasm, promote the military the effective learning of English and enhance the quality of education.

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