A Demand Analysis and Teaching Design of English for Specific Military Purposes for Non-commissioned Officers

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Based on the theory of “demand analysis”, this paper investigates and analyzes the motivation, and demand of non-commissioned officers for ESMP (English for Specific Military Purposes) by means of questionnaire and interview, in an attempt to construct the framework of ESMP teaching design for non-commissioned officers. The study points out that the design of ESMP for non-commissioned officers should be oriented by “demand analysis” theory, explore the effective integration of professional knowledge and language acquisition, and promote the cultivation of non-commissioned officers’ practical ability of professional English application.

Keywords: non-commissioned officer, ESMP, demand analysis, teaching design

Introduction

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) refers to English relevant to a particular profession or subject. It is an English course designed to meet the specific purposes and needs of the learners. It has clear teaching objective, teaching contents and communication needs (Strevens, 1977), aiming to better combine traditional English teaching with other courses.

After decades of development, at abroad, abundant achievements have been made in ESP teaching and research. The research fields involve all aspects of ESP teaching practice: such as ESP classification, ESP teaching methods, ESP demand analysis, ESP teaching material design, ESP teacher training, ESP corpus research and ESP evaluation, etc. (Gu Zhizhong, 2010), which have formed a relatively through system. Most of the early ESP researches in China were most about ESP-related theoretical research, or introduction of foreign research trends. Research on ESP teaching practice was relatively rare. In the 21st century, as China’s participation in international market competition has gradually deepened, ESP research has received extensive attention. Well-known scholars in the foreign language circle, such as Liu Runqing (1996), Sun Youzhong (2011) and CAI Jigang (2010), emphasized the important role of ESP teaching in cultivating application-oriented and compound talents. They viewed ESP teaching as the development direction of College English teaching in China. In 2003, the Ministry of Education issued the College English Curriculum Requirements, suggesting that all colleges and universities should set up ESP teaching in the college English curriculum system. The 2007 revision
explicitly requires college students to “understand their own professional English lectures”, “be able to conduct conversations or discussions on general or professional topics fluently and accurately”, and “be able to read literature reviews related to their major smoothly”, etc. In 2017, the Guidelines on College English Teaching adopted ESP into the college English curriculum system for the first time (Ji, 2017).

Military English, as a kind of ESP, can be divided into English for General Military Purposes (EGMP) and English for Specific Military Purposes (ESMP) (Ge Guangchun, 2014). Military English teaching has attracted the attention of scholars within the military, but the research and practice of ESMP for non-commissioned officers are rarely involved. Considering this and the talent training program requirements of our academy, this paper will analyze ESMP learning demand of communication majored non-commissioned officers, explore the approaches and strategies to build the ESMP ability of non-commissioned officers in military academies.

**Research on ESMP Learning Demand of Non-commissioned Officers**

ESP researchers generally agree that demand assessment is a prerequisite for ESP curriculum design (Guan, 2005). Demand analysis mainly includes two aspects: the target demand, and the learning demand (Hutchinson & Water, 1987, p. 59).

**Research Methods**

Based on this, this study analyzes the “target scenario” (job requirements), “subject content” (professional requirements) and “learner characteristics” of Non-commissioned officer cadets. The survey on students’ English proficiency and expectations for ESMP was conducted by a questionnaire and a face-to-face interview of 5 military English teachers and 5 communication teachers. The questionnaire includes: (1) self-cognition of English, such as learning status and English learning difficulties (5 questions); (2) ESMP learning needs, such as ESMP learning motivation and knowledge of ESMP learning (5 questions); (3) Students’ expectations and demand for ESMP teachers and teaching materials, such as English proficiency, professional knowledge, teaching methods, content of teaching materials (5 questions). The interview with military English teachers is mainly on the current military English teaching situation, teaching concept and relevant suggestions. The interview with communication teachers is designed to understand the requirements of the army on the professional English skills of non-commissioned officer cadets, as well as the application in practical work.

**Research Objects and Data Collection**

This research selects 3 classes of non-commissioned officer cadets of grade 2020 in our school as the survey objects. We issued 130 questionnaires, and 118 valid questionnaires were recycled. Based on the characteristics of non-commissioned officer cadets’ English learning, the questionnaire mainly examines the learners’ learning status, learning concepts, learning motivations, learning strategies and skills requirements.

**Survey Results and Analysis**

There are single-choice and multiple-choice options. Students choose to answer the questionnaire according to their actual situation. In each aspect, 2-3 questions are chosen to analyze the results. Here is the table of the response of each question:
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1. Students’ Personal Information and Self-knowledge of English

As for the question, “What’s your education background?" (Question 1), 66.1% of the students graduate from high school, 20.3% of the students graduate from junior colleges, and only 11.8% of the students were once admitted to university. The big differences in educational level among students lead to big differences in their English level. As for the question, “How long have you not studied English?” (Question 3), over 80% of the students cadets have not studied English for more than 2 years. Since they have been training and working in basic units after joining the army, they don’t have enough time to study English. And many of the basic English knowledge have been forgotten. As for the question, “What do you think of your current English level?” (Question 4), 27.2% think that their basic level of English is poor, 50.8% think that it is average, and 14.1% think it is good. As we can see, over 80% of the students think their English is poor, and only 4.8% of them think their English is very well and they have no difficulty in learning military English. This requires English teachers should design the ESMP teaching content in accordance with students’ English level. As for the question of “the degree of interest in learning military English” (Question 5), 52.5% of the students are very interested, 27.7% of the students are very interested, and only 6.7% of the students are not interested. There are still 12.7% of the students are uncertain about it. As we can see, most of the students are interested in the current military English course, but some of them are not interested because of their poor English level and the content of the textbook cannot fully meet their needs.

2. Students’ Cognition of ESMP Courses

As for the question, “Do you think it is necessary to add professional English content?” (Question 8), 65.7% of the students think it is very necessary, 2.3% of them think there is no need, 24.5% of them have not considered
it, and 7.8% of them are indifferent. As shown in the results, most of the non-commissioned officer cadets have a strong demand for professional English, and they are eager to learn some professional English knowledge required by positions. As for the question “What effect do you hope to achieve through ESMP?” (Question 9, multiple-choice), as we can see, 64.9% of students hope to master some basic professional terms and vocabulary, 87.2% want to be able to read some simple professional English materials related to their major, 57.2% want to be able to translate some simple professional English sentences with the help of reference books, and 60.1% want to be able to communicate briefly on around some professional topics.

3. Students’ Expectations and Requirements for ESP Teachers

As for the question, “What is your need for ESP Teachers’ professional level and English proficiency?” (Questions 11-12), more than 80% of the students hope that this course should be taken by English for they are more proficient in English. They also hope the English teachers who take this course can improve their professional knowledge. As for the question, “What aspects of ESMP content do you think should be included?” (Question 15), students’ professional requirements mainly focus on four aspects: military application system, including integrated command platform, intelligence and reconnaissance, etc.; information service layer, including program-controlled telephone, secret telephone, information services; network bearing layer, including computer network and so on; basic transmission layer, including optical fiber, short wave, satellite, data link and so on.

Teaching Design of ESMP for Non-commissioned Officers

After the demand analysis of ESMP for non-commissioned officers, it further clarifies the necessity and urgency of the reform of military English in military academies. The transformation of military English teaching from EMGP to EMSP becomes inevitable. The development of EMSP teaching includes several practical steps such as the selection of teaching content, curriculum setting, syllabus design, the selection of teaching methods, learning effects evaluation, and teacher training. Military English teachers should improve the EMSP teaching mode, in order to meet the students’ EMSP learning needs.

Establish the ESMP Content System According to Students’ Needs

Based on the establishment of professional requirements, according to the framework of military information system, the construction of professional English teaching content system for cadets, mainly include three levels: (1) professional terms. Introduce the relevant communication system and its professional terms, help students quickly master the core vocabulary of communication, familiar with common acronyms in the field; (2) professional literature reading. The ESMP teachers should analyze the characteristics of the syntactic structure and text framework of communication English literature, summarizes the reading skills of ESMP literature, and helps the students to improve their basic ability of reading professional English materials. (3) professional English listening and speaking ability. Through setting the scene, designing the dialogue and so on, strengthens the student professional English listening and speaking communicative ability training. Since most of the non-commissioned officers think their English is poor, when designing professional military English content, it is also necessary for ESMP teachers to design the teaching content in accordance with students’ English level. The teaching material should not be too long but should be refined.
Explore and Practice Content-based Professional English Teaching Methods in Combination with Teaching Content

In the traditional ESP teaching, teachers usually use the methods of text reading, grammar analysis and translation to teach. Teachers’ teaching method is not student-centered, but teacher-centered. They use the teaching method of monotonous pure translation or a combination of reading and translation in class, which leads to dull class and students’ lack of interest in learning. Modern ESP teaching should make full use of multimedia and network resource, and adopt various proper teaching methods to arouse students’ interest and facilitate their comprehensive practical application of English.

Content based teaching method (CBI) is a teaching method that bases language teaching on a certain subject. It aims to combine language learning with subject learning, improve students’ subject knowledge level and cognitive ability, and promote their language ability development (Yuan, 2008). Focus on the teaching themes, we plan to design the content system according to the module, organize teaching by different topics, and practice the CBI teaching method of theme mode. Each module focuses on a certain topic, and is carried out from three aspects, namely, professional terminology, professional literature reading and professional listening and speaking ability training, so that students can acquire knowledge and improve their professional English ability in an all-round way.

Strengthen the Cooperation with Professional Teachers to Improve English Teachers’ the Professional Knowledge Level

Professional English teaching is not only English language teaching, it has its own vocabulary, syntax and structure mode. It not only focus on the training of English language skills, but also on the professional knowledge. It is the combination of language skills training and professional knowledge learning. ESMP teachers should both be proficiency in English teaching and have a good command of professional knowledge. However, currently, most of the military English teachers only have social science background and are lack of professional expertise. Therefore, they should strengthen cooperation with professional teachers and improve their professional knowledge and accomplishment, to ensure that ESMP teaching can be carried out effectively and smoothly.

Pay Attention to the Process and Comprehensively Assess the Performance of Students’ Professional English Ability

Based on the concept of developmental evaluation, the teaching and learning effect of professional English learning should be evaluated comprehensively. First of all, the evaluation methods should be diversified. Military English teachers can design various language practice activities, such as task report, group research, learning competition, etc., and evaluate students’ comprehensive professional English application ability through multi-dimensional assessment. Secondly, the evaluation process should be diversified. By assessing homework, classroom performance, task completion, etc., the development and changes of students in the learning process should be recorded, and the learning process of students should be comprehensively evaluated.
Conclusion

The research on the ability construction of non-commissioned officers’ professional military English, not only can further promote the ESMP course construction for non-commissioned officers, and explore the effective teaching methods suitable for language features of professional military English, but also can realize the effective connection between English teaching and the ability of noncommissioned officers in future positions, which is of great significance to the reform of military English teaching.

To improve the professional military English ability of non-commissioned officers, it is necessary to identify the job requirements of the non-commissioned officers, establish the professional military English teaching requirements of non-commissioned officers, build a professional military English teaching content system for non-commissioned officers, explore and practice effective professional military English classroom teaching models and teaching methods, create a more scientific and reasonable ESMP course evaluation system to mobilize the students’ professional learning initiative and improve the practical use of professional English of non-commissioned officers.

References


