

# “Import” and “Export” of Ideological and Political Teaching in Military College English Courses

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**Abstract:** The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasizes the need to carry forward the fighting spirit, strengthen the study and education of military history, prosper and develop the culture of strengthening the military, and intensify the cultivation of the fighting spirit. As a powerful ideological foundation for our military to defeat the enemy and a confidence-building factor for firmly establishing the combat effectiveness standard, the fighting spirit is a precious spiritual wealth passed down from generation to generation in our military. It is also an excellent character that every serviceman must possess. Military academies, as the cradle for cultivating future front-line commanders in our military, contain rich resources for cultivating the fighting spirit. This article deeply studies the laws of foreign language teaching, seeks a breakthrough point for the combination of college English courses and military practice, firmly establishes a clear orientation of cultivating combat talents, strengthens the construction of ideological and political education in college English, continuously consolidates the ideological foundation of cadets for preparing for war, strengthens the awareness of the fighting spirit, and enhances the confidence in winning battles.

**Keywords:** College English; Ideological and political education in courses; Fighting spirit; Foreign language ability

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## 1. Introduction

The White Paper on China's National Defense in the New Era points out that when the People's Liberation Army (PLA) fulfills its duties in the new era, by the requirements of national security and development strategies, it must provide strategic support for consolidating the governance of the Communist Party of China and the implementation and improvement of the socialist system, as well as for safeguarding national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and promoting world peace and development<sup>[1]</sup>. Military academies are the main battlefields for cultivating military talent in the military. The primary mission is to cultivate new-type professional military talents who are capable of fighting and winning battles. Under the current situation, the top priority is to do a good job in ideological and political education in military academies, which is also the essence of implementing

the principle of building academies with politics in military academies. At present, “post-2005” cadets have successively joined the military and entered military academies, gradually becoming the main body of cadets. These young cadets recruited from civilian areas are in the “growth and development period,” and their thoughts are highly malleable. They need careful guidance and cultivation the most. Through foreign language learning, cadets can have a deeper understanding of the military strategies, defense policies, and international developments of other countries, broaden their global perspectives, and enhance their military foreign-language abilities. The college English course in military academies has a unique function in cultivating cadets’ foreign-oriented perspectives and fighting spirit. The “ideological and political education in college English courses” teaching has certain practical value. On the one hand, college English is a public basic course with a large-scale and wide-ranging influence in higher education<sup>[2]</sup>. It has a wide audience and a long teaching cycle (usually four semesters of teaching tasks). The ideological and political education in college English courses can be fully explored and extended within the scope of English teaching. On the other hand, as one of the typical humanities disciplines, the ideological and political elements contained in college English teaching materials are highly malleable in design, with features such as timeliness, ideological nature, acceptability, pertinence, appropriateness, and interestingness<sup>[3]</sup>. This makes it easy to understand, enabling cadets to resonate emotionally and having a subtle impact on their core values. Therefore, it is of great significance and necessity to do a good job in the teaching of ideological and political education in military English courses in military academies under the current situation.

## **2. Basic guidelines for the ideological and political teaching of college English courses in the military**

### **2.1. Cultivating talents for war: Concept first**

The “College English” teaching in military academies should not merely focus on pure language training. It should be coordinated with ideological and political education, be subordinate to and serve the overall context of military academy education, and consciously integrate into the military talent cultivation system. It is necessary to further strengthen the cultivation of cadets’ ideological and moral qualities and political literacy. In the new era, the Chinese military urgently needs foreign-language talents who are familiar with international rules, can participate in global governance, and can spread the voice of the Chinese military<sup>[4]</sup>. The college English courses in military academies should focus on the mission requirements of preparing for war, the characteristics of foreign military operations, and the talent cultivation plans of military academies, and strive to thoroughly implement the “3M” curriculum content construction concept of three integrations: M1-Language and Military, M2-Language and Mind, M3-Language and Morality<sup>[5]</sup>. Through the study of this course, cadets can master the basic knowledge and application abilities of general English and military English, possess cross-cultural communication skills, critical thinking abilities, and self-learning abilities. They will have a broad international perspective, strong cultural literacy, and a humanistic spirit, as well as military character, patriotism, and cultural confidence, enabling them to meet the needs of career development and foreign military exchanges.

### **2.2. Fostering virtue and cultivating people: Value guidance**

Since the 21st century, with the changes in information exchange means and discourse paradigms, the cultivation of military personnel’s foreign-language abilities has faced profound challenges. Through the study of this course, students can effectively improve their English language skills and application abilities. At the same time, it can

cultivate their patriotism and humanistic qualities, increase their understanding of military culture and military history, and inherit the spirit of the red revolution. Therefore, strengthening the construction of ideological and political education in college English courses shoulders an unshirkable responsibility for enhancing cultural confidence and actively spreading the stories of strengthening the military. Through the construction of the curriculum system, value guidance can be achieved, and an advanced culture with Chinese characteristics, Chinese style, and Chinese bearing in the new era can be cultivated<sup>[6]</sup>. It is necessary to cultivate and promote the core socialist values, tell Chinese stories, and spread China's voice to ensure the smooth realization of the training objectives of socialist universities. Foreign-language teachers in military academies bear the heavy responsibility of implementing ideological and political education in college English courses. Their awareness and ability to educate students determine the educational effect of college English courses. Therefore, the cultivation of foreign-language teachers in military academies is a crucial link in the construction of ideological and political education in college English courses. In the new era, foreign-language teachers in military academies must respond to the calls of the country and the military and firmly serve the goal of strengthening the country and the military<sup>[7]</sup>. While imparting language-skill knowledge, they should guide cadets on their path to growth and progress and promote their all-round development. The core lies in "teaching," that is, teaching how to be a person, how to handle affairs, how to work, how to live, how to train, and how to learn.

### **3. Practical methods and paths for the ideological and political teaching of college English courses**

#### **3.1. Strengthening "enhancing wisdom" through in-depth learning and comprehension**

College English textbooks (taking the Ideological and Political Intelligent Edition of the New Horizon series as an example) comprehensively and multi-dimensionally integrate key topics such as the spirit of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and the core socialist values. They organically incorporate value shaping into topic materials, exercise design, critical thinking arguments, and unit tasks, nurturing students imperceptibly<sup>[8]</sup>. From the four dimensions of language knowledge and skills, military knowledge, the culture of target countries, and cross-cultural communication, knowledge about the society, history, politics, life, and military of English-speaking countries is selected. Scene-based communicative tasks that integrate language knowledge and skills, military knowledge, and thinking are designed to achieve the educational goals. By seeking role models and materials in key events of the texts and tapping into the humanistic spirit formed in the development history of the foreign language discipline, it subtly enlightens and nourishes the hearts of cadets, cultivating new-era military talents with firm political beliefs and both moral integrity and professional competence. In the reading teaching module, in addition to teaching corresponding reading skills and improving cadets' reading abilities, instructors guide them to deeply explore the thematic meaning behind the language. For example, cadets are required to insist on reading *China Daily* and *China Today* in the second-class activities and give a three-minute presentation and explanation in class, leading everyone to see the world. By reading local English-language magazines and newspapers, cadets can understand the development trends of various fields at home and abroad, learn the overall strategies of the Party's governance under the new situation, and improve their vocabulary and reading comprehension abilities in politics, economy, culture, and other aspects. At the same time, they can complete listening tasks in groups, watch media channels that combine Chinese and Western elements, such as China Global Television Network (CGTN) and China Radio International (CRI), and report the news in class. Guiding cadets to view the world from a Chinese perspective, enabling the world to "See

the difference,” they can deeply understand and appreciate the Party’s leadership, the guidance of the leaders, the advantages of the system, and Chinese wisdom. This helps them continuously strengthen their “Four-Fold Confidence” and enhance their national pride, so that every cadet can “enter as iron and leave as steel.”

### **3.2. Cultivating the spirit of “taking the lead” through tempering**

Guided by the military education policy of the new era, the college English courses in the military adhere to the guidance of the needs of the military, focus on the requirements of the goal of strengthening the military, highlight the military characteristics of English teaching, and innovatively develop second-class activities. These include English drama clubs, iSpeak speech and debate clubs, and relevant discipline competitions and activities such as the National College English Competition, debate competitions, reading-writing-speech contests, Model United Nations, and Military English Competence Competition. To improve cadets’ learning enthusiasm, the teaching of the first-class and the activities of the second-class are scientifically coordinated. Students who win awards or achieve effective rankings in the second-class competitions will receive different levels of bonus points in the formative assessment of the first-class. Students who perform well in the first-class will also be given priority to participate in the second-class competition activities, effectively connecting English learning between the first-class and the second-class and promoting learning through competitions. Cadets are guided to be fearless in the face of difficulties, remain calm, challenge themselves, dare to confront difficulties and resistances, and be good at overcoming unfavorable conditions to win competitions. This demonstrates the strong capabilities of military academy cadets to fight and win. During the usual competition-preparation and participation process, emphasis is placed on cultivating the spirit of collectivism, enabling cadets to understand that only by working together with their comrades and being good at cooperation can they achieve a synergistic effect of “1 + 1 > 2,” meeting the requirements of the military for national defense language capabilities in talent cultivation<sup>[10]</sup>. The overall curriculum focuses on high-levelness, innovation, combat-orientation, soul-shaping, and challenge, striving to achieve the organic unity of value guidance, ability cultivation, and knowledge education.

### **3.3. Continuously “concentrating the mind and forging the soul” in a subtle way**

Due to their special social responsibilities, the English learning of military academy cadets has its particularity and purpose. In today’s world, the competition is not only a contest of material forces but also a confrontation of spiritual forces. The fighting spirit and willpower of military personnel play a crucial role in the construction of national defense in the new era<sup>[11]</sup>. Therefore, under the concept of “competence-based, morality-first”<sup>[12]</sup>, while helping students accumulate basic English knowledge and improve their English language skills, ideological and political education is integrated into teaching. It is of great significance to do a good job in ideological and political education in courses. For example, in the New Horizon College English textbook, the unit “Heroes of our time” and the related theme “Heroes among us (Civilian Heroes)” help students understand the definition and characteristics of heroism. This makes cadets realize that contemporary heroes are around them, enabling them to tell the stories of heroes in the military in English, understand their responsibilities as soldiers to “face difficulties head-on and serve the people,” and consciously inherit the spirit of “being brave and kind.” In the second volume, the unit “Door closer, are you?” leads cadets to experience the spirit of Xiang Yu’s “burning the boats” and Han Xin’s “fighting with one’s back to the river,” which inspired soldiers’ morale of “fighting for themselves” by “putting themselves in a desperate situation.” In the Revolutionary War era, there were numerous classic battle examples of “when heroes meet on a narrow road, the brave one wins”<sup>[13]</sup>. Since its founding, countless revolutionary martyrs in the Chinese military have withstood the tests of blood and fire, life and death.



During the Korean War, the Chinese People's Army defeated the then-invincible American army with their indomitable spirit despite being at a disadvantage in terms of equipment.

## 4. Conclusion

Professor Jin Yinan once said that the fighting spirit can wither, so it needs to be nurtured and cultivated; the fighting spirit can also slumber, so it needs to be awakened and ignited. Only by daring to show their mettle, being brave to sacrifice, and willing to contribute, and possessing the fighting spirit of daring to fight and being sure to win, can revolutionary soldiers in the new era be filled with a fighting spirit, worthy of the title of soldiers, and invincible on the battlefield of life and death. For military academy cadets, strengthening the cultivation of the fighting spirit is the cornerstone and fortress. As foreign-language teachers in military academies, they shoulder the important mission of cultivating talents for combat. Through foreign-language courses, they implement the fundamental task of fostering virtue and cultivating people, and cultivate new-type military talents with Chinese sentiment and an international perspective needed by the times. These talents can actively safeguard national interests in the fields of language, discourse, public opinion, information, and cognition, meeting the needs of military combat preparation and the informatization construction of the military<sup>[15]</sup>. At the same time, every foreign-language teacher can deeply understand the spiritual connotation of teaching guided by combat, aim at fostering virtue and cultivating people, scientifically and rigorously explore the ideological and political elements in courses, and realize the “educational” function of courses in the process of language teaching by combining implicit and explicit education.

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