

Exploring Cultivation Pathways for Emergency Language Competence of Medical Students

Wenjuan Lin¹, Ying Zhang², Wei Liu³

^{1,2,3} Hubei University of Medicine, Shiyan 442000, China

³Corresponding author.

ABSTRACT

With the frequent occurrence of global public health emergencies, emergency language services have become an integral part of national emergency management systems and medical response capabilities, posing new requirements for foreign language teaching in medical colleges and universities. These institutions need to adjust their disciplinary structures and program orientations to enhance their capacity for emergency language response during crises. From the perspectives of emergency language service theory and the development of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, and taking into account the institutional positioning and talent cultivation goals of medical colleges, this paper explores new pathways for cultivating emergency language competencies among medical students.

Keywords: *Emergency language services, Emergency language capability, Emergency foreign language teaching, Interdisciplinary talent, Cultivation pathways.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The global pandemic outbreak at the end of 2019 highlighted the emergency value of language and sparked academic attention to emergency language research. Language is no longer a simple communication tool, but a key element directly involved in emergency rescue, information dissemination, psychological comfort, public opinion guidance, and even international cooperation. In sudden public events, emergency foreign language services are needed for government foreign communication, such as language communication, language comfort, language monitoring, etc. (Li Yuming et al., 2020). Emergency language proficiency has become an important manifestation of the modernization of social governance capabilities (Wang Hui, 2020). The "14th Five-Year Plan" for the National Emergency Management System clearly states to "increase the supply of foreign versions of emergency management standards" and "enhance the multilingual ability of emergency rescue personnel, relying on universities, research institutes, medical institutions, volunteer service organizations and other forces to build a professional emergency language service team".

However, from the current quality and quantity of talent cultivation, it still cannot fully meet the widespread needs of society. Focusing on the core issue of cultivating emergency language service capabilities and actively cultivating high-level and practical emergency language service talents is an inevitable historical responsibility of foreign language teaching in medical colleges.

Medical workers are the backbone of the fight against the epidemic, and in any future public health emergency, composite talents who are proficient in medical professional knowledge and have excellent foreign language communication skills will be the true main force of emergency language services. This practical demand has pointed out the direction for the reform of foreign language teaching in medical colleges and universities in China. The foreign language discipline of medical colleges must start from practical needs, consider how to adjust the discipline and curriculum, and organically integrate the cultivation of emergency language ability into the medical talent training system. This is not only an inevitable choice to meet the needs of the country and society, but also an inherent requirement for foreign language teaching in

medical colleges to shift from language skill learning to language skill application paradigm.

This article attempts to clarify the connotation of emergency language teaching, combined with the practice of specialized English course construction, and explore the cultivation path of medical students' emergency language ability from four dimensions: curriculum system construction, teaching method innovation, teacher team construction, and language technology empowerment, providing reference for improving social emergency service capabilities.

2. THE CONNOTATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF EMERGENCY LANGUAGE TEACHING

2.1 Emergency Language and Emergency Language Services

In terms of concept, emergency language refers to the language used for emergency rescue or crisis communication in emergency situations such as sudden natural disasters, accidents, public health incidents, and social security incidents. Its scope is extremely broad, including national common language, foreign languages, ethnic languages, dialects, and even sign language (Wang Lifei et al., 2020). Correspondingly, emergency language services refer to language rescue activities provided for major natural disasters or public crisis events (Wang Lifei et al., 2020; Teng Yanjiang, 2018), with the goal of eliminating information transmission barriers and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of crisis response.

For a long time, emergency language services in China have mostly occurred between the same language or different dialect groups, and there is insufficient understanding of the key role of foreign languages in emergency services. However, the COVID-19 has spread all over the world. In many links, such as imported case prevention and control, international anti epidemic cooperation, import and export of medical materials, foreign aid and experience sharing, China has for the first time conducted information transmission, communication and exchange between Chinese and different foreign language groups. This profound change enlightens us that we must establish an emergency foreign language service system with foreign languages, especially the key language English, as the main body (Cai Jigang, 2020).

China's emergency language service system is not in place in many places in the fight against COVID-19 (Wang Lifei et al., 2020). In the face of frequent language problems such as language communication barriers in domestic rescue operations, language violence in epidemic prevention propaganda slogans, discriminatory reports from international mainstream media, etc., the researchers realize that it is urgent to establish an emergency language service system (Murray et al., 2020).

2.2 Teaching Nature of Emergency Foreign Language Teaching

Emergency language services, especially emergency foreign language services, belong to the category of language teaching. Although the demand for emergency language services often arises during emergencies, its long-term mechanism and reserve talent cultivation depend on normalized language teaching. The cultivation of emergency language talents cannot be separated from the construction of relevant education systems. Wang Lifei et al. (2022) proposed in sorting out the key disciplinary directions for the construction of new liberal arts linguistics that "an emergency language education system should be established to cultivate qualified emergency language talents". The fundamental focus of cultivating emergency language service talents in professional fields lies in specialized language teaching in colleges and universities. Cai Jigang (2020) explored emergency language services and emergency language teaching, pointing out that "the cultivation of emergency foreign language talents should be implemented in foreign language teaching in universities, especially in foreign language teaching in colleges and universities". In the face of the shortage of emergency language service talents, he proposed a specialized English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching model with the goal of cultivating emergency language service abilities.

Defining emergency language teaching as specialized language teaching includes two meanings: firstly, the cultivation of emergency language service talents should mainly be carried out among non-language major students. The main force of emergency language services should be professionals in various fields, especially English, who understand foreign languages, rather than students or language workers majoring in foreign languages. To be able to respond to emergencies in specific fields, emergency language service

personnel must first master certain professional knowledge, such as the need for medical workers to understand the drafting of informed consent forms for hospital patients, communication with terminally ill patients, and accurate use of medical soothing language terminology. Secondly, they must also understand how these professional contents and knowledge are constructed and communicated through language (such as English). Without teaching and training in this specialized language, emergency language service personnel may be unqualified and difficult to be competent in emergency services. Unfortunately, "China's foreign language universities have not yet offered emergency language service majors or directions, including comprehensive university foreign language majors, and no departments have offered similar courses" (Cai Jigang, 2020); In existing foreign language teaching, there is no interspersed teaching content such as emergencies and language, typical scenarios and language.

Medical colleges and universities have the characteristic of interdisciplinary collaboration, and should fully utilize their own advantages to train medical students as emergency language talents, break down disciplinary barriers, integrate disciplinary resources, and develop specialized English courses with the goal of cultivating "medical + foreign language" composite talents, promoting the adjustment of professional disciplinary structure. This article attempts to follow the guidance direction proposed by scholars and propose a framework for cultivating emergency foreign language abilities for medical students based on the practice of specialized English course construction.

3. THE CULTIVATION PATH OF EMERGENCY LANGUAGE ABILITY FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS

For emergency language service personnel, solid language skills and emergency knowledge are the core competencies for competent emergency language services. Based on this, integrating emergency knowledge and skills with college English and offering specialized English courses is to help medical students build a bridge between emergency language and medical knowledge, better reflecting the talent cultivation ideas of interdisciplinary integration in the new era.

3.1 Establishing a Curriculum System for Emergency Language Teaching

The emergency language teaching course is positioned as a core expansion course for medical majors, with the goal of enabling students to master emergency scenario terminology and expression, possess standardized communication and cross-cultural collaboration skills, and be familiar with technical tools and ethical norms. The course structure can be divided into two categories: language-based courses and applied courses. The course requires students not only to have bilingual conversion ability, but also to have the ability to scientifically respond to emergency situations and handle sudden problems in critical situations. Language courses mainly focus on the training of basic language skills, and the teaching design revolves around the actual needs of emergency language services. The content adopts a modular design (see "Table 1"), which is divided into basic modules, scenario modules, ability modules, and technical modules to construct a hierarchical and scenario specific content system. Applied courses mainly aim to enhance students' practical abilities in virtual or real emergency language service environments, and teaching activities are carried out on online platforms and internship bases. Applied courses integrate language teaching into social practice, strengthen students' understanding and mastery of emergency language expression through scenario simulation and internship training, thereby enhancing students' emergency language service ability and professional ethics.

The course design adopts a combination of "embedded" and "modular" methods. The specific approach is to separately set up emergency foreign language course modules in the existing foreign language teaching of medical colleges, or integrate relevant course content into existing listening, speaking, reading and writing courses, while creating online open courses that support fragmented and self-directed learning. This method is simple, flexible, and can effectively organize medical professional knowledge, enrich students' English knowledge reserves and professional qualities, enhance their awareness of emergency language services, and prepare for the cultivation of international medical talents.

Table 1. Core content module of emergency foreign language courses

Module	Module classification	Content focus
Compulsory Module	Basis module	Introduction to emergency language, medical terminology standards, general emergency expressions, doctor-patient communication
	Scene module	Emergency first aid, critical care, epidemic prevention and control, cross-border diagnosis and treatment, disaster relief, ward culture, end-of-life care, customs and habits
	Ability module	Listening and speaking training, literature speed reading, information translation, cross-cultural communication, psychological comfort
	Technology module	Translation tools, corpus usage, online communication platforms, emergency language technology applications

3.2 *Carrying out Teaching Practices Characterized by Scenario-based Teaching and Task-driven Approach*

The use of creating or simulating real-life scenarios to guide students in task-based learning is an innovative manifestation of modern educational technology in the cultivation of emergency language talents. Teachers can design highly simulated scenarios based on real emergency medical events, and students can use their learned medical knowledge and language skills to complete communication tasks through specific role-playing. The "Epidemic Prevention and Control Foreign Language Communication" developed by the National Emergency Language Service Team includes 41 languages and is published through micro-videos and online query systems. The content covers emergency language in various aspects such as daily precautions, entry precautions, diagnosis and treatment language, personal protective measures, etc. It provides rich materials for situational teaching of emergency foreign language and increases the translation knowledge reserve of medical students for sudden public health emergencies. For example, when students learn "Diagnosis and Treatment Terminology, Symptoms, and Contact History", teachers design teaching content around specific scenarios such as consultation, ward rounds, emergency situations, etc., and complete specific tasks such as inquiring about the condition, describing symptoms, collecting medical history, discussing cases, and handing over shifts in the scenarios. Students can flexibly use the scene vocabulary in the video to talk and exchange, and actively share their knowledge and feelings about the COVID-19 epidemic, based on their own experience during the epidemic; Students initially imitate dialogue templates, and then flexibly apply them in similar but different scenarios, ultimately achieving the

ability to handle new situations in real time. During the process of completing learning tasks, students also trained in nonverbal communication such as eye contact, professional posture, and soothing body language, understanding the guiding and soothing effects of emergency language on service recipients. By repeatedly simulating similar scenarios and providing feedback and corrections afterwards, a "conditioned reflex" is ultimately formed, truly achieving the goal of "being prepared for emergencies on a regular basis and not rushing when urgent".

Taking the online open course "Medical Situational Oral English" offered by our school as an example, we have integrated an emergency foreign language teaching module with a teaching cycle of 10 weeks and 2 class hours per week, making it convenient for students to achieve fragmented learning. The course adopts a hybrid mode of "online+offline", where tasks are posted online, resources are provided, previews and recorded assignments are completed, while offline classes involve scenario simulations, role-playing, centralized lectures, and peer evaluations. The assessment method emphasizes the learning process, with formative evaluation accounting for 80% of the total score, covering multiple dimensions such as course progress, classroom interaction, discussion and Q&A, self-learning summary, and oral recording check-in; Summative evaluation only accounts for 20%, using pop-up tests to examine key knowledge points and skills. During the teaching process, through surveys, interviews, and teacher reflection, students' needs and objectives are understood, teaching content is adjusted and optimized, and curriculum construction is continuously improved; At the same time, it is necessary to connect with the international outpatient, emergency, and fever clinics of affiliated hospitals to provide internship and

volunteer translation services, achieving the transition from classroom to clinical practice, in order to gradually improve the emergency foreign language ability of medical students.

3.3 Building a Composite Teaching Staff Team of "Medicine + Foreign Language + Emergency"

High-level teachers are the lifeline of the quality of emergency language talent cultivation. In higher education institutions, interdisciplinary integration is the most prominent advantage in carrying out emergency language service teaching. To meet the needs of national emergency language capacity building, medical colleges and universities urgently need to build a high-quality faculty team that is proficient in language, capable of emergency response, and understands the profession. The specific construction path is as follows:

3.3.1 Dual Training: Building a Cross-integrated Teacher Growth Mechanism

Medicalization of Foreign Language Teachers: Schools shall encourage and support foreign language teachers to systematically pursue core courses such as basic medicine, clinical medicine, public health, etc., and pursue medical related degrees or second degrees; Schools can also regularly organize foreign language teachers to visit affiliated hospitals for clinical observation, participate in case discussions and doctor-patient communication practices, and enhance their ability to truly perceive and understand medical scenarios and terminology.

Medical Teachers' "Foreignization" and "Emergency Response": It is necessary for schools to select medical backbone teachers to participate in specialized training on foreign language teaching methods, academic English writing, medical English terminology standards, etc.; It is also necessary to strengthen emergency communication skills training, including modules such as information dissemination on sudden public health emergencies, cross-cultural medical assistance, and application of international organization working languages, to enhance the teaching and practical abilities of medical teachers in multilingual, cross-cultural, and emergency situations.

3.3.2 Team Building: Establishing an Interdisciplinary Collaborative Teaching Community

Schools should break down disciplinary barriers and form a teaching team composed of foreign language teachers, medical teachers, and emergency management experts; Foreign language teachers are responsible for language skills development, including medical English listening, speaking, reading, and writing, academic paper writing, and practical translation and interpretation; Medical teachers are responsible for providing professional content support, including teaching and case design of core knowledge such as disease mechanisms, diagnosis and treatment processes, and public health policies; Emergency management experts are responsible for introducing scenarios and standards, designing emergency simulation drills, standard operating procedures, international emergency response frameworks, and other content to ensure that teaching is closely related to practical situations. It is a must to establish regular collective lesson preparation, joint teaching and research, case study and other systems to promote the continuous optimization of teaching content and methods.

3.3.3 Resource Sharing: Building an Open Collaborative Teaching Support Platform

Colleges and universities shall establish a dynamic faculty pool covering the fields of medicine, foreign languages, and emergency management, classified and managed according to professional directions, language abilities, emergency experience, and other dimensions to facilitate course allocation and interdisciplinary cooperation; They shall also invite high-level domestic and foreign teachers to conduct joint lectures, special lectures, and workshops, and rely on online platforms to achieve cross school and cross regional flow of high-quality teaching resources; It is necessary to regularly organize cross school and interdisciplinary collective lesson preparation activities, and develop modular courses around typical medical emergency scenarios such as international rescue, infectious disease outbreaks, and disaster medical response; It is also necessary to jointly create an open "golden course" that integrates online and offline, combines theory and practice, and integrates language and expertise, achieving course co construction and achievement sharing, and overall improving teaching quality.

Through the above three measures, a well-structured and efficient teaching team will gradually be formed, providing a solid teacher guarantee for the cultivation of "medical+foreign language+emergency" composite talents.

3.4 Building an Emergency Language Service Resource Library to Empower Language Technology Applications

In the information age, the rapid development of language technology has provided new possibilities for improving the efficiency of emergency language services. The construction of emergency language capabilities for sudden public events calls for more and more intelligent language technology support. Colleges and universities can establish a university translation resource sharing platform through a localized service model, including translation case analysis, translation tools, industry language materials, etc., to provide support for emergency foreign language teaching content (Wang Mingyu et al., 2020). Cai Jigang (2020) calls for the construction of emergency language service corpora based on disciplines and industries. Medical colleges should make full use of language technology according to their own professional characteristics, build emergency language service platforms, guide students and teachers to use corpora and intelligent language technology for learning and research, promote intelligent language tools, achieve information communication, psychological comfort, and emergency decision-making, and ultimately improve emergency communication efficiency. In addition, medical colleges should also establish and rely on industry university research cooperation mechanisms to jointly design and develop emergency language technology products, so as to closely integrate language services with disciplinary development and empower each other.

4. CONCLUSION

In the post-pandemic era, emergency language proficiency has become an essential core competency for medical students. Medical colleges must respond to national strategies and social needs, accelerate foreign language teaching reform, and systematically integrate emergency language ability training into the medical education system. The "four in one" training path proposed in this article is to build a curriculum system that matches medical education as the core, carry out scenario task driven teaching as the key, create composite teachers as

the fundamental guarantee, and build a smart resource library to provide technical empowerment. It is an interrelated and mutually supportive organic whole aimed at promoting the deep integration of medical education and emergency language services, cultivating more composite medical talents with professional literacy and emergency language ability, and providing solid talent support for improving China's public health emergency governance level, promoting the construction of a healthy China, and international medical cooperation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Fund project: Philosophy and Social Sciences Project of Hubei Provincial Department of Education (Project No. 21Y164).

REFERENCES

- [1] Cai Jigang, Emergency Language Services: A Pedagogical Exploration [J]. Journal of Beijing International Studies University, 2020(3): 13-21.
- [2] Li Yingying, Pan Xiaotong, A Study of the Construction of Personnel Training System under the Perspective of Emergency Language Services [J]. Journal of Tianjin Foreign Studies University, 2021, 28(4): 10-19+157.
- [3] Li Yuming, Rao Gaoqi, On the Construction of Emergency Language Ability [J]. Journal of Tianjin Foreign Studies University, 2020, (3): 2-13+156.
- [4] State Council, State Council's notice on issuing the "14th Five-Year Plan" National Emergency Management System Plan [EB/OL]. (2022-08-18) [2026-4-9]. https://www.mem.gov.cn/gk/zfxzgkpt/fdzdgknr/202208/t20220818_420530.shtml
- [5] Mu Lei, Liu Xinyuan, Valuing and Building the National Training System of Emergency Language Service Talents [J]. Journal of Tianjin Foreign Studies University, 2020(5): 24-31.
- [6] Teng Yanjiang, The Construction of Emergency Language Service System in the United States and Its Implications [J]. Journal of Beijing International Studies University, 2018, 40(3): 31-43, 128.

- [7] Teng Yanjiang, Emergency Language Service Providers' Competence and Evaluation [J]. Journal of Tianjin Foreign Studies University, 2021, 28(4): 20-31+157-158.
- [8] Teng Yanjiang, Wang Lifei, Emergency Language Service Corps' Capacity Enhancement: Status Quo, Training Curriculum and Approach [J]. Shandong Foreign Language Teaching, 2023,(1): 19-29.
- [9] Wang Hui, The Development of Emergency Language Competence: A Perspective from State Governance [J]. Chinese Journal of Language Policy and Planning, 2020, 5(5): 11-20.
- [10] Wang Lifei, Wang Mingyu, Shen Ji, et al., Diverse Views on Issues Concerning Emergency Language [J]. Chinese Journal of Language Policy and Planning, 2020(3): 75-79.
- [11] Wang Lifei, Ren Jie, Sun Jiangwei, et al., Concept, Developments, System, and Mechanism Construction of Emergency Language Services [J]. Journal of Beijing International Studies University, 2020b, 42 (1): 20-30.
- [12] Wang Lifei, Su Jiexin, Actively Assisting in the High-Quality Development and Speed up of the Construction of the "New Liberal Arts Linguistics" with Chinese Characteristics [J]. Journal of Beijing International Studies University and Telecommunications(Social Sciences Edition), 2022, 44(1): 3-10.
- [13] Wang Mingyu, Kang Zhewen, The Language Service Questions Caused by Language for Emergency [J]. Journal of Tianjin Foreign Studies University, 2020, 27(3): 32-39+157.
- [14] Wang Mingyu, Host's Language [J]. Journal of Tianjin Foreign Studies University, 2020,(03):13.
- [15] Zheng Zezhi, Xu Bo, Analyzing the Basic Concepts and Elements of Emergency Language Service [J]. Journal of Beijing Union University(Humanities and Social Sciences Edition), 2020(3): 43-49.