

CAMPAIGN NEWS DIGEST

JULY 2009

AMBASSADORS OF A NEW CHINA

CHINESE PEACEKEEPERS are increasing their participation in UN peacekeeping operations around the world.

Currently, the Chinese have 2,200 peacekeepers in theatres around the world, a figure that is expected to increase as China further develops and becomes a global power. While they do not contribute to combat troops, they do provide medical teams, engineers, civilian police, and military observers. In addition, China recently deployed several naval vessels to the coast of Somalia to help fight piracy.

Alain Le Roy, the United Nations Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, stated that the Chinese troops are competent, disciplined, and highly organized.

Recently, key Western countries have downscaled their presence on the ground in U.N. peacekeeping operations. It is therefore hoped that the Chinese involvement will encourage other countries to increase their contribution in the future.

LINGUISTS IN DEMAND

SKILLED LINGUISTS are in great demand in Afghanistan now that the U.S. is preparing to increase their presence there. The increase in troops translates into a greater need for civilian specialists as language barriers can often cause cultural misunderstandings.

At present, U.S. government agencies are looking for qualified interpreters and translators for languages like Dari and Pashto (the official languages of Afghanistan), Urdu and Kurdish. This is not an easy task because the supply of qualified personnel is limited.

To solve this problem, the U.S. Army is recruiting native speakers from ethnic communities within the country, as opposed to language experts who have studied the language.

There are two advantages of using native speakers. Firstly, it takes a long time to reach the target proficiency level in languages like Dari and Urdu. More importantly, native speakers understand more than the linguistic aspects of language, such as attitude, cultural sensitivities, and body language. This knowledge can mean the difference between life and death in a war zone.

US MILITARY LAUNCHES TWITTER

THE U.S. MILITARY is using a new media strategy: social networking, via Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. The aim is to communicate the Afghan mission to the world via cyberspace, and pre-empt Taliban and al-Qaida propaganda.

By posting news, videos and pictures on Internet webpages, they hope to communicate their message to the public without the filter of the news.

Recently, the Army used the popular website Twitter to post information about a drug operation. U.S. Forces in Afghanistan are using their Facebook page to post news and messages from friends and relatives of U.S. personnel serving in Afghanistan. Additionally, they are using the popular YouTube video sharing site to post videos about their work, and the daily lives of the troops.

FEMALE BLUE HELMETS

THE UNITED NATIONS marked the International Day of Peacekeepers by honouring troops, police and civilians serving around the world. Deployment of United Nations peacekeepers is at a record high, and additional peacekeepers are in great demand.

At the annual commemoration, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made a call for more women peacekeepers. He noted that women make up only 8% of the UN police and 2% of the UN military personnel.

It is widely recognized that female UN staff can better communicate with local women and victims than their male counterparts. Therefore, they are valuable in programs related to peace building, reconstruction, and reconciliation.

King, Nathan, China's Contribution to UN Peacekeeping Grows, *Voice of America News*, May 30, 2009

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-05-30-voa17.cfm>

Thomas, Gary, U.S. Scrambles to Find Linguists for Afghan Surge, *Voice of America News*, May 29, 2009

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-05-29-voa32.cfm>

Memmott, Mrk, U.S. Military in Afghanistan Turns To Twitter, Facebook & YouTube, *National Public Radio*, June 1, 2009

http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2009/06/us_military_in_afghanistan_tur.html

International Day Spotlights Need for More Women in UN Peacekeeping, *UN News Service*, May 29, 2009

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=30957&Cr=peacekeeper&Cr1=>

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Student Worksheet

Task 1: pre-reading vocabulary

Before reading the articles, match the words on the left to the definitions on the right.

- | | | |
|----|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | disciplined | a) something that makes it difficult for someone to achieve something |
| 2 | to downscale | b) to put information on the Internet |
| 3 | skilled | c) to reduce in size |
| 4 | barrier | d) the ability to understand the feelings of other people |
| 5 | sensitivity | e) to block certain information while allowing other information to pass |
| 6 | pre-empt | f) better, worse, faster, etc than ever before |
| 7 | filter | g) having the ability and skill to do something |
| 8 | to post | h) well-organized behaviour which results from training and practice |
| 9 | record | i) a ceremony to honour the memory of someone or something |
| 10 | commemoration | j) to do or say something that stops somebody's plans or actions |

Task 2: comprehension check

Decide if the following sentences are true (*T*) or false (*F*).

- 1 According to the first story, China has increased its diplomatic corps around the world.
- 2 Chinese troops do not fill active combat roles.
- 3 According to story two, the U.S. Army is providing English language training to Afghans, Kurds and Arabs.
- 4 The advantage of using native speakers is that they understand more than language knowledge...
- 5 The Army has prohibited the use of social networking websites to inform the public about Army operations.
- 6 The U.S. military hopes to convey its message to non-traditional audiences through social networking websites.
- 7 According to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the number of female peacekeepers is at a record high.
- 8 Female peacekeepers are sometimes more suitable for particular tasks than male peacekeepers.

Task 3: discussion

The third story in this month's Campaign News Digest talks about the military and the media. Work in small groups and devise the 'rules of engagement' or guidelines for military blogging.

You can use this website to help you: <http://www.globalnerdy.com/2008/12/30/the-air-forces-rules-of-engagement-for-blogging/>

Task 4: writing

The focus of the fourth story is on women peacekeepers. What do you think should be the role of women in the military? Do you think women should have specific tasks and duties, or should their role be the same as men? Write an essay (of about 300 words) stating and defending your opinion. You can use this website for background information:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_women_in_the_military#Contemporary_debate

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Teacher's Notes

Task 1: pre-reading vocabulary

Before reading the articles, match the words on the left to a definition on the right. Encourage students to try to deduce the meaning of the words from the context using clues from the text.

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 disciplined | h) well-organized behaviour which results from training and practice |
| 2 to downscale | c) to reduce in size |
| 3 skilled | g) having the ability and skill to do something |
| 4 barrier | a) something that makes it difficult for someone to achieve something |
| 5 sensitivity | d) the ability to understand the feelings of other people |
| 6 filter | e) to block certain information while allowing other information to pass |
| 7 pre-empt | j) to do or say something that stops somebody's plans or actions |
| 8 to post | b) to put information on the Internet |
| 9 commemoration | i) a ceremony to honour the memory of someone or something |
| 10 record | f) better, worse, faster, etc than ever before |

Task 2: comprehension check

Decide if the following sentences are true (T) or false (F).

- 1 False. China is increasing its contribution of peacekeeping troops, not diplomats
- 2 True
- 3 False. The U.S. government is using native speakers of rare languages to act as translators and interpreters.
- 4 True.
- 5 False. The Army uses social networking websites to publish information about work, news and operations.
- 6 True
- 7 False. The Secretary-General is making a call for more women peacekeepers.
- 8 True

Task 3: discussion

The aim of this exercise is to practice speaking fluency.

As a lead in, tell students that digital communication is becoming increasingly popular among soldiers and that issues surrounding the phenomenon of online social networking (e.g. blogging, online diaries, YouTube, Twitter) is intensifying. Obviously, military authorities cannot control the flow of information released on these websites. Brainstorm as a class how social networking might be used and in the media coverage of military operations. Suggestions are as follows:

Possible uses:

- to seek out young recruits
- to spread the military's message
- to connect with families or units

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- to deliver news in real time
- to deliver an unfiltered view of the war from the troops
- to open a two-way dialogue with people around the world
- to foster transparency

Possible abuses:

- to reveal classified or sensitive information
- to manipulate public opinion
- to violate operations security
- to minimize the importance and gravity of military operations
- to undermine the information management capacity of military commanders

To familiarize yourself with the issue of social media strategy, you may want to read this article about the changing nature of conflict coverage: http://ccw.politics.ox.ac.uk/events/archives/mt04_gowing.pdf

Put students into small groups and ask the groups to discuss how soldiers should conduct themselves when using Internet websites such as Twitter and Facebook. Tell students that their task is to discuss this issue and devise the Rules of Engagement for military blogging. One member of each group should be the secretary and take notes. Monitor the groups as they discuss the issue, and provide input where necessary. Remind students that this is an exercise in speaking, and not to focus on writing accuracy. Tell them that they should only write key words to be used as prompts for their oral presentations.

The Air Force's social media strategy will provide students with a model for the task:

<http://www.globalnerdy.com/2008/12/30/the-air-forces-rules-of-engagement-for-blogging/>

If your students do not have access to the Internet, you could print out these blogging guidelines and give a copy to each group.

When the groups have completed this task, ask a spokesman from each group to present the group's findings to the class. Encourage discussion after each group presentation to involve all students.

Alternatively, rather than individual presentations, you could get each student to present their group's invention by forming new groups which include only one member from each original group.

To close, you could produce a final draft for the class which consolidates their findings (weeding out any redundancies).

As a follow-up activity, you could direct students to these official military sites and ask them to read the various threads and decide whether or not soldiers are following good blogging policy. Additionally, they may want to write their own comments.

<http://twitter.com/usfora> (U.S. Forces Twitter page)

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Kabul-Afghanistan/US-Forces-Afghanistan/69621718453?ref=ts>

(U.S. Forces Facebook page)

<http://www.youtube.com/user/USFORA> (YouTube videos of U.S. Forces Afghanistan).

You may want to review the language giving instructions before your students begin (e.g. imperatives and modals of obligation)

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Task 4: writing

As students progress, they will need to learn how to express their opinions; the aim of the exercise is to write an opinion essay. Most students will have an opinion about women in the service, so this topic is not too challenging for their first attempt.

As a lead-in, you could brainstorm some of the various differences between male and female soldiers. Elicit some of the more and less suitable tasks for female soldiers and collect them on the board. This activity will provide much of the content of their essay and so it will be helpful for the students to have this information on display throughout the activity. Then ask students to decide if they are for or against the notion that women in the armed forces should be treated equally to men, and to write their ideas in an essay.

Before students begin writing, you may then want to introduce or review simple essay writing skills and standard layout (introduction, body and conclusion), reminding them that in formal writing we do not use colloquial speech, and we try to avoid contractions.

You could provide more detailed input as follows:

- Introduction

Tell your students to introduce the subject, say why it is controversial, and to state their opinion. Suggest language structures e.g. *I believe/feel/think, From my point of view, In my opinion, I support, I am against, I agree with, I disagree with, etc.*

- Development

Instruct your students to present the opposing opinion about the topic, and then say why they disagree. They should state their own opinion and support it with reasons and examples.

Each paragraph should present a different point of view. You could give them some examples on how to link the different paragraphs using common sequencers e.g. *First, Finally, Furthermore, Moreover, In addition.*

Remind students to sequence their ideas and arguments for clarity using the following language structures: *Firstly, Secondly, Thirdly, Additionally, Finally*

To introduce examples, suggest using the following language structures: *For example, For instance*

Students can give both sides of the argument by using simple expressions such as *Many people think that...while others claim that...*

- Conclusion

The conclusion is the final paragraph of the essay. Tell students to restate the question and summarize the main ideas presented and the position they have argued. You can suggest the following language structures: *In conclusion, To conclude.*