

# **Response Strategies for Challenges in Applying Electromagnetic Metamaterials in Microwave Technology Education**

**Jiayun Wang<sup>1\*</sup>, Zeng Qu<sup>2</sup>, Zilong Niu<sup>3</sup>**

*1 School of Instrument and Electronics, North University of China, Shanxi Taiyuan, China*

*2 School of Electrical and Control Engineering North University of China, Shanxi Taiyuan, China*

*3 Jinzhong College of Information, Shanxi Jinzhong, China;*

**Abstract:** Electromagnetic metamaterials, due to their unique electromagnetic regulation ability, have become important carriers of microwave technology education reform, and this article analyzes electromagnetic metamaterials in deepening understanding of electromagnetic wave mechanism, expanding vision of device design and strengthening ability of engineering practice in key value aspects. The article points out current deficiencies existing in teaching practice, including insufficient guarantee of experimental conditions, disconnection of content from frontier development, and weak theoretical foundation of students, which poses these challenges, thus prompting this article to propose optimized strategies, such as constructing layered and progressive experimental teaching system, introducing case teaching and virtual simulation methods, and strengthening integration of basic knowledge with frontier applications, with the goal being to improve quality of microwave technology education and cultivate innovative talents who can adapt to technological progress.

**Keywords:** Microwave Technology Education; Electromagnetic Metamaterials; Problem Response; Tiered Experiments

## **1. Introduction**

Microwave technology as core course of electronic information related majors, quality of its teaching can indicate that these key teaching factors substantially influence cultivation of students' engineering practice ability and innovation ability, and moreover, electromagnetic metamaterials may provide new perspective for education of microwave technology through design of artificial structures, which realizes electromagnetic

characteristics that natural materials cannot achieve. However, current teaching practice faces challenges, with insufficiency of experimental resources limiting effectiveness of metamaterial teaching, and additionally, content lagging behind frontier development may limit effectiveness. Nevertheless, students' weak theoretical foundation seems to limit effectiveness, but given that teaching value of metamaterials shows important significance, this paper may explore coping strategies, which based on existing problems, these strategies can optimize teaching system, and although these challenges exist, these methods can promote reform of microwave technology education<sup>[1]</sup>.

## **2. The Importance of Electromagnetic Metamaterials in Microwave Technology Education**

### **2.1 Deepening the Understanding of Electromagnetic Wave Propagation and Control Mechanisms**

Given that electromagnetic metamaterials have subwavelength unit structures and designable equivalent electromagnetic parameters, these important materials can serve as a medium, likely transcending traditional understanding in microwave technology education, where traditional teaching is based on assumption of uniform medium to describe propagation characteristics of electromagnetic waves, however, metamaterials may exhibit special electromagnetic responses, such as equivalent negative refractive index, negative permittivity and negative permeability. These phenomena seem to be associated with physical essence of Maxwell's equations, and moreover, these phenomena provide concrete physical interpretation for abstract wave equations and boundary conditions, with within microwave frequency range, by adjusting unit structure and arrangement of metamaterials, students being

able to observe classical effects such as anomalous refraction, evanescent wave amplification and phase discontinuity. However, this exploration process can go from macroscopic phenomena deep into microscopic mechanisms, thereby establishing corresponding relationship between formulas of electromagnetic theory and physical images, thus deepening understanding of physical essence of wave dynamics<sup>[2]</sup>.

## **2.2 Expanding the Design Horizons for Microwave Devices and Systems**

Introduction of electromagnetic metamaterials may indicate that significant material limitations inherent in traditional microwave device design can be substantially overcome, thereby injecting innovative design thinking into important teaching practice, where traditional education focuses on filters, antennas and power dividers composed of conventional materials. The metamaterial lenses could indicate that these critical electromagnetic structures may even directly demonstrate the capacity to control the significant local field enhancement mechanisms. Moreover, the important metamaterials may suggest the key feature of wavefront control and absorption. Given that the development of microwave technology will go through new materials, metamaterial lenses might indicate some key imaging effects can overcome the diffraction limit. Additionally, metasurfaces could demonstrate the possibility to reduce complexity of beam-forming networks and thus show the possibility of change in structural complexity of devices. However, students may understand the key design changes from inherent property of material to artificial structural design. Thus, compared with traditional design solution, students might understand how structural change can improve device performance. Therefore, this approach could enlarge design freedom and optimization space of relevant microwave system architecture<sup>[3]</sup>.

## **3. Problems in the Application of Electromagnetic Metamaterials in Microwave Technology Education**

### **3.1 Inadequate Experimental Conditions and Teaching Resource Guarantees**

Experimental research involving

electromagnetic metamaterials may impose significant demands on existing hardware facilities, while teaching institutions may typically face severe shortages of critical resources, as unit cell structures of metamaterials appear at subwavelength scales. Furthermore, fabrication may rely on precision photolithography, direct laser writing or nanoimprinting, with traditional teaching laboratories lacking high-precision manufacturing equipment. However, testing in microwave frequency range may require vector network analyzers, anechoic chambers and probe stations—these instruments may be expensive and costly to maintain, thereby making it difficult for universities to establish comprehensive experimental platforms. Given existence of resource constraints, teaching demonstrations may be limited to simulation stage, thus preventing students from participating in sample preparation process and error analysis, which may undermine authenticity and rigor of practical teaching. Given scarcity of teaching resources, depth and breadth of curriculum content may be limited, and existing textbooks may introduce basic theory of metamaterials. However, textbooks may lack typical case libraries combined with microwave technology and experimental guides, which means that limited availability of simulation models and data sets in teaching process may hinder students' ability to conduct comparative studies on effects of different structural parameters on electromagnetic response.

### **3.2 Disconnect Between Teaching Content and Frontier Developments**

Content related to metamaterials in current microwave technology courses may indicate slow updates, lagging behind significant pace of disciplinary progress, and additionally, content of textbooks may indicate focus on early-stage negative refractive index materials and important left-handed transmission lines, while coverage of rapidly developing frontier fields such as digital coding metasurfaces and space-time modulated metamaterials and intelligent metasurfaces is extremely limited. However, course cases are sometimes based on idealized models, which still don't mention the lack of ideal effects in practice such as loss and dispersion and anisotropy, and the content is out-of-date, so that students' understanding of

metamaterials are still at elementary level and still can't be connected with research frontier and industry application. Therefore, gap between teaching and research aggravates problem of out-of-date content and furthermore, the latest university research findings are not timely transformed into teaching content, so that students can't get access to real research data and designing methods. Moreover, cases are still lack of in-depth study on the challenges and solutions on using metamaterials in specific engineering environment such as 5G/6G communications and radar stealth and imaging systems<sup>[4]</sup>.

### **3.3 Students' Weak Theoretical Foundation Hinders Deep Understanding**

Students' understanding of basic electromagnetic theory probably would explain that the great effectiveness of the metamaterial teaching may largely be due to these important mathematical background, while poor mathematical foundation may be a great barrier to effective learning results. In addition, effective medium theory may be used to explain that the metamaterials may contain mathematical tools such as tensor analysis and spatial Fourier transforms that may briefly appear as prerequisite in the microwave technology courses. Furthermore, the poor understanding of concepts such as Green's functions and Bloch's theorem may lead to difficulty in the periodic structures analysis. Since students do not have mathematical background, these conclusions may be passively accepted by students but not able to derive quantitative relationship by themselves. Given that students show difficulties in establishing physical images, their understanding seems to be further limited, and abnormal electromagnetic phenomena may require analogical explanations from wave optics and solid-state physics. However, students seem to be accustomed to image of electromagnetic wave propagation in uniform media, thereby showing superficial understanding of physical nature, where concepts such as negative refraction and perfect lenses can easily lead to cognitive confusion.

## **4. Optimization Strategies for Electromagnetic Metamaterials in Microwave Technology Education**

### **4.1 Constructing a Tiered and Progressive Experimental Teaching System**

Establishing a hierarchical and progressive experimental teaching system can well promote gradual deepening from basic cognition to innovative design, thereby solving this major problem of insufficient experimental conditions and resource guarantee. In addition, the basic layer can be oriented to all students through commercial simulation software, which can demonstrate electromagnetic response simulation of metamaterial unit structure, examine skills of structure modeling, parameter scanning and result analysis, with this teaching level being able to utilize existing computer resources. The method can ensure cost effectiveness and wide coverage, with the premise being that each student can master basic workflow, and considering that students with stronger abilities need advanced guidance, the advanced layer may involve preparing metamaterial samples through simplified preparation processes. These processes may include printed circuit board technology, which can create metasurfaces for microwave frequencies, while conventional laboratory instruments can conduct transmission and reflection characteristic tests, with the hierarchical design alleviating equipment pressure while ensuring systematicness of practical links. However, the stage of setting experimental content still base on cognition idea and should start from verification experiments and then to design experiments in stages. And the verifying experiments initial stage could be classical structures assembling some certain frequency point absorbers. Besides, since the frequency selective surface could be used to let students linking the structural parameters and electromagnetic characters, so the advanced stage could be set as setting real engineering requirements, and then with these requirements, students must complete the whole process of designing from evaluating indicators, selecting structures to optimizing simulations and evaluating performances, if they want to design metamaterial lenses or beam manipulation metasurfaces satisfying certain bandwidth requirements.

### **4.2 Introducing Case-Based Teaching and Virtual Simulation Methods**

To alleviate significant disconnect between teaching content and important frontier

developments, real engineering cases and virtual simulation technology can indicate that these key methodological approaches should be introduced, thereby enhancing timeliness and intuitiveness of teaching content. Additionally, development of case library may indicate that focus should be placed on typical applications, which should examine typical applications of metamaterials in microwave technology field, such as metamaterial antennas in 5G communication, frequency selective surfaces in radar systems, and metalens design for microwave imaging. However, each case may demonstrate that students should analyze technical requirements, design methods, performance indicators and implementation challenges, with students needing guidance, thus requiring cases to guide students to analyze advantages and limitations of metamaterials in solving specific engineering problems. Additionally, this teaching content based on real scenarios may indicate that content helps students understand practical value and development trends of metamaterial technology, while application of virtual simulation methods can prove that these important methods effectively overcome important physical limitations of experimental conditions. Therefore, dedicated simulation modules for analyzing metamaterial characteristics may show that these modules should be developed, which should integrate functions such as periodic boundary condition settings, equivalent parameter extraction algorithms, and far-field radiation pattern calculations. Additionally, adjusting geometric shapes of unit cells, material properties and arrangement methods may indicate that students can intuitively observe interaction process between electromagnetic waves and metamaterials, with significant experimental limitations being present, thereby enabling virtual simulation platform to establish that these key platforms can replicate important ideal conditions difficult to achieve in actual testing, such as lossless environment and perfectly matched boundaries. Therefore, platform can facilitate isolation of various factors, which facilitates students isolating various factors affecting performance<sup>[5]</sup>.

### **4.3 Strengthening the Integration of Basic Knowledge and Frontier Applications**

To solve problems, educators must strengthen

integration, which involves students' weak theoretical foundation and difficulty in understanding frontier knowledge, however in courses, dedicated chapters can indicate need to compare metamaterials with traditional microwave theory, starting from Maxwell's equations, thereby deriving significant differences in constitutive relations between homogeneous media and metamaterials. Furthermore through combination, phenomena can be explained, and this includes combining mathematical formulas with physical images, while also involving intrinsic mechanisms of phenomena such as negative refraction and anomalous transmission, given that this comparative analysis helps students construct framework, which seems to indicate metamaterials have not overturned traditional electromagnetic theory, but represent extension and application, with them being under specific boundary conditions. Nevertheless, teaching process may indicate relevance, which involves between basic concepts and frontier developments, and when introducing, examples can be simultaneously introduced, thus including effective medium theory of metamaterials, while also involving applications in cutting-edge fields such as reconfigurable intelligent surfaces and stealth technology. For example when explaining phase-gradient metasurfaces, educators can link them with basic concepts, which involves concepts of Huygens' principle and wavefront control, and therefore analysis shows how they achieve manipulation, thereby achieving arbitrary manipulation of electromagnetic waves through local phase modulation. Furthermore this comprehensive teaching method can provide scenarios, thus providing concrete application scenarios for abstract basic theory, and although involving complexity, students may grasp principles and understand development, which includes core principles and technological development, thereby constructing comprehensive knowledge system.

### **5. Conclusion**

Electromagnetic metamaterials demonstrate significant application value in education of microwave technology, but widespread adoption of these materials may face multiple challenges, including related experimental conditions, important content alignment and critical theoretical foundation. If these problems

can be solved by building layered progressive experimental system, absorbing important cases and critical virtual simulation methods introduction and enhancing the important foundation-broad integration and engineering practice and innovation ability training of microwave device design, then the students' understanding of electromagnetic theory will be deeper, and the engineering practice and innovation ability will be promoted, so these provide support of talent training of microwave technology. The remaining work will focus on the optimal allocation of teaching resources to promote the integration and cooperation of metamaterial teaching and industrial development.

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