

Research on Teaching Models of Postgraduates' "English for International Academic Exchanges" in the Circumstance of Multimedia and Internet

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Abstract—This research mainly studies how to foster the postgraduates' English ability of attending international academic exchanges. By analyzing questionnaires and teaching practices, the research finds that with the aid of multimedia and Internet, comprehensively using classroom teaching, cooperative learning, autonomous learning and practice can obviously better the teaching effect of English for International Academic Exchanges. Different from the researches in the same area, this research puts forward the combination of the aid of multimedia and Internet and the comprehensive use of several teaching models rather than the only model of classroom teaching to foster the postgraduates' academic English abilities. The application of its results will greatly raise the postgraduates' English abilities in academic paper writing, paper presentation and other academic activities.

Keywords—*multimedia and Internet; postgraduates; English for International Academic Exchanges; teaching models*

I. INTRODUCTION

With the international academic exchanges more and more frequent, to foster the postgraduates' abilities of attending the international academic exchanges has become an important part of postgraduates' English teaching. But the survey finds that there exists a big gap between the current situation of postgraduates' English teaching and the goal of fostering the postgraduates' English abilities for international academic exchanges. Therefore, how to foster the postgraduates' English abilities for international academic exchanges has become an important research project. According to the features of English for academic exchanges and the characteristics of postgraduates' learning, with the aid of multimedia and Internet, the comprehensive use of classroom teaching, cooperative learning, autonomous learning and practice can be an ideal way of fostering and promoting the postgraduates' abilities of international academic exchanges.

II. A SKETCH OF ENGLISH FOR INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC EXCHANGES

English for International Academic Exchanges is a compulsory course for postgraduates. It aims at fostering the postgraduates' abilities of attending international academic exchanges, especially the abilities of writing academic papers, presenting papers, doing impromptu oral defenses,

communicating, discussing, and organizing the conferences. This course consists of one-semester relative knowledge learning and practice of it. By learning it, the students will get the general knowledge about international conferences, academic exchanges, and related activities. At the same time, they will equip themselves with the particular features and application of the English used in international academic exchanges. The specific knowledge of this course includes academic paper writing, basic knowledge of international conferences, the skills of paper presentation, the impromptu questions and answers, the organization of conferences, special English used in the situation of academic exchanges, and so on[1].

With the internationalization of higher education, many universities, to different degrees, require the postgraduates to have their papers published in well-known journals of their own majors and to present their papers in international conferences. Some universities in China have responded at this and begun to foster the postgraduates' abilities of international academic exchanges. For instance, Xi'an Jiaotong University launched the postgraduate's teaching reforms at language using ability and international exchange ability. Shandong University takes the curriculum reform as one of the important parts in its postgraduate's English teaching reform, putting English for International Academic Exchanges and other related courses into its postgraduates' curriculum system. Xiamen University of Technology, by building "Simulated-Scene Classroom", constructs the scene of international academic exchanges and the environment of language use and fosters the students' practical ability of conducting international academic exchanges in English. The survey based on this research project also shows that 80% of the surveyed postgraduates think it "necessary" or "quite necessary" to offer the course of English for International Academic Exchanges for postgraduates.

However, as the curriculum of postgraduate English has been following that of College English, that is, the model of "Intensive Reading + Listening", the study and practice on how to foster the postgraduates' abilities of English for international academic exchanges are still limited. A lot of work needs to be done in this aspect.

III. RESEARCH ON TEACHING MODELS OF POSTGRADUATES' "ENGLISH FOR INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC EXCHANGES" IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF MULTIMEDIA AND INTERNET

The teaching purpose of postgraduates' English for International Academic Exchanges is to foster the postgraduates' abilities of writing strongly academic and high-level English research papers in a standardized way and of communicating smoothly in English in the international conferences. Based on this purpose, this research, according to the Constructivism teaching theory, cooperative learning theory, autonomous learning theory and practice teaching theory, puts forward four teaching models with the aid of multimedia and Internet. They are the models of classroom teaching, cooperative learning, autonomous learning and practice teaching. Combine all the four models to maximize the effect of fostering the postgraduates' abilities of academic exchanges.

A. Classroom Teaching Model

Before becoming postgraduates, the students' College English is almost restricted to the training of basic English skills. Therefore, English for International Academic Exchanges is strange to them. How to write an academic paper in standardized and proper English and how to display their academic achievements? What activities are mainly included in an international conference? How to present papers, ask and answer questions? How to write to international academic institutions and submit papers? All the basic knowledge of English for international academic exchanges needs to be acquired through the classroom teaching with the aid of multimedia and Internet.

The writing of each part of an English academic paper, (including title, abstract, key words, quotations, subtitles, discussion, conclusion, note, references and acknowledgements), the standard of English writing (such as the letters' capitalizing and lowercasing, the use of punctuation marks), and the global rules of academic circles (such as the globally-used typing fonts, word sizes and type setting, and so on), all need to be taught with some typical examples to the students through classroom teaching so that they can acquire these rules and form a good habit of following the academic standard of their own fields and strict academic ways. In class, the general knowledge of international academic conferences, the rules and skills of presentation and all kinds of academic activities are introduced. Meanwhile, playing the videos of international conferences with multimedia equipment can display the whole process of the international conferences vividly to the students [2].

However, what's worth mentioning is that 90% of the surveyed students in this research say that they like "the combination of teaching and classroom activities" and "task-based seminars and interactive study". Just as the Constructivism theory points out, learning is a process of constructing information, processing information cognition, and a process in which the learners actively construct internal psychological features. This process can only be realized by the learners' active construction of activities, in other words, the learners should play an active role during the learning process [3]. Therefore, the "only-teachers-talk" teaching method must be avoided in classroom teaching of "English for International

Academic Exchanges". What should be done is by using vivid multimedia courseware and rich Internet resources to direct the students to participate in the learning of new knowledge, observe international conferences and imitate paper presentation and asking-answering questions.

B. Cooperative Learning Model

The cooperative learning method originated from America in 1970', and it has been widely applied from then on [4]. It is the outcome of the Constructivism theory formed by developmental psychology and cognitive psychology [5]. Cooperative learning refers to the method that in class, groups are made as learning units and that the students are required to work together in group to finish meaningful learning tasks. There have been many reports in our country about the application of cooperative learning in teaching of English writing. Professor Yang Yonglin believes that cooperative learning has great instructive function in solving the postgraduates' problems on academic paper writing [6]. Gu Feilong has tried the cooperative learning method in his teaching of doctor's academic paper writing in English, the results of which indicates that the proper coordination among the students and between the students and teachers does help raise the students' level of English writing.

In order to test the effect of cooperative learning method on the teaching of postgraduates' English for academic exchanges, this research practiced this method in teaching. Take the paper presentation stage as an example. The practice mainly includes the following steps:

Group division: Every class usually consists of the students from different majors, so it is required that a certain number of students from the same majors belong to the same group. Each group selects its group leader who is in charge of the group work.

Topic choice: Group members choose their topics and outline their papers through discussion.

Work division: Group members collect materials and sort them out, write speech texts, and prepare PPT respectively.

Speakers' selection: Each group selects its own speaker. In order to have good speech effects, each group, through competition, selects their most excellent member to be their speaker.

Question-Answer step: All the group members must participate in answering questions from the teacher and other groups.

Before the paper presentation process begins, the students are informed that the group's performances in paper presentation, including the choice of topics, the application of Internet resources, the preparation of PPT, the effect of paper presentation, the results of answering questions, will be a part of their normal performances. As a result, all the groups work very hard to choose new and original topics, collect the materials earnestly from various sources, and make the PPT with clear structures and exquisite pictures. The speakers try their best to show their wonderful spoken English and group members also actively give their best answers to the questions. The results of the practice show that through cooperative

learning, the students can better understand all the steps in paper presentation, and that a series of activities of cooperation, work division, organization, and selection promote the postgraduates' abilities of analyzing and solving problems. The results also show that through topic choice, outlines' design, materials' collection, and paper texts' organizing and writing, the students' ability of doing researches can also be promoted. Meanwhile, in order to get the best marks, all the group members think actively and create all kinds of unexpected working methods. It is also proved that the cooperative learning method is very helpful to foster the postgraduates' team spirits and creation ability.

C. Autonomous Learning Model

The concept of autonomous learning was first put forward by Holec in 1980'. Holec thinks that autonomous learning is the ability of self-controlling one's own studies. It includes the formulation of learning goals, the setting of learning contents and its progress, the choice of learning methods, the control of learning process and self-evaluation. The ability of doing autonomous learning is shown in these aspects: having the ability of self-learning, being able to self-control in the learning process, having the right to choose what to learn and being able to shoulder the responsibility for one's own learning.

a. The necessity of applying autonomous learning model to the teaching of postgraduates' English for International Academic Exchanges

The course hours for "English for International Academic Exchanges" are quite limited. Autonomous learning outside classroom can make up for this inadequacy.

Parts of the contents of "English for International Academic Exchanges", such as chairing meetings, making welcome speech and dinner speech, writing invitation letters, needn't be taught in class. The students can learn them through outside-class autonomous learning if they have interest in or need for them.

Some facts make it necessary to adopt autonomous learning model. First, there are big gaps among the postgraduates' English levels. Second, the class is made up of the students of different majors. Third, different disciplinary fields and different journals have different demands for academic paper writing. It is impossible to solve all these problems within limited course hours. Hence, personalized autonomous learning outside class becomes necessary.

The final purpose of school education is to foster the students' everlasting independent learning ability. As the subjects of learning, postgraduates have possessed comparatively mature mental mechanism and strong ability of controlling and adjusting their own learning process. They can make full use of Internet teaching resources with the teachers' guidance to do active and personalized learning according to their own interest and demands so as to realize the student-centered knowledge constructing process.

b. The application of autonomous learning model in teaching of postgraduates' "English for International Academic Exchanges"

Take academic paper writing for example. Different disciplinary fields and different journals have different demands for academic paper writing. The differences exist in the structure, the main contents of each part, and the tenses, voices, wording, and length of sentences of used languages. Through classroom teaching and example analysis, the teachers can help the students acquire the basic knowledge about language features and main writing factors of academic paper, then require them to take the representative papers of their own fields as the objects of their research, and take the main contents and language features of the paper as the themes of their research. With what has been learned in class and through self-control, the students collect information on their own and do some writing practices, then make improvements on their papers with the teachers' guidance.

Developed computer network makes it possible for students to establish English communication space, thus to extend the classroom study to outside the class and realize the student-student and student-teacher interaction, resulting in solving the learning problems in time. However, some researches show that in the Chinese background, the postgraduates' abilities of autonomous learning is not high by the large, only reaching medium level[7]. Therefore, teachers are supposed to help the students with their autonomous learning in "English for International Academic Exchanges", such as to provide the training of autonomous learning method for the students, to tell them the arrangement of the course progress and task demands, and recommend some reference books and websites; to guide the students to make reasonable learning plans, to monitor their study and evaluate the effects of their study; to establish together with the students the Internet platform for autonomous learning of "English for International Academic Exchanges"; to set up online system of autonomous learning. To do all of these enables the autonomous learning really to aid classroom teaching and promote the postgraduates' ability of using English.

D. Practice Teaching Model

Language practice is an important step in foreign language teaching. It is an opportunity for students to test their knowledge and apply what they have learned to analyze and solve problems. It is also an important means for teachers to test their teaching quality. Through practice, students can find their deficiency in study so that they can adjust their studies, while educators can find out the problems existing in the teaching process so as to provide references for further teaching reform. Generally speaking, the English teaching for postgraduates in our country has long taken the form of mainly teaching knowledge, neglecting the feedback role of learners' output of language, the fostering of the ability of language use and the students' active role in class. All these have caused the imbalance between the language accumulation and the language skills' development.

The course of "English for International Academic Exchanges" aims at raising the students' level of international academic exchanges and fostering the students' ability of using English to do international academic exchanges. So practice of the related knowledge is a necessary step for this course. To make sure of it, the teaching of this course is divided into two

parts: related knowledge teaching and practice. Thus the students can have necessary course hour for their practice of academic paper writing and international academic conferences.

In the practice teaching of “English for International Academic Exchanges”, students imitate the attendance at the international conferences. In terms of academic paper writing practice, the students are required to follow the demands for the structures and language, write academic papers of their own fields and submit papers according to the rules of academic journals. When it comes to the practice of international academic conference, those universities with good conditions have begun to build “Simulated-Scene Classroom”, in which the scenes of international academic exchanges are designed. Hence, the students have exclusive site for practice and they can master the related knowledge by means of imitating and practical use of it. As a result, they gain the communicating ability. In those universities whose conditions are not very good, teachers and students make full use of existing conditions and work together to layout the scenes of international conferences. By imitating those steps as chairing conferences, making academic speeches, asking and answering questions, the students also can gain the knowledge well through vivid scene experiences. This results in a better teaching effect.

IV. CONCLUSION

As international academic exchanges become increasingly frequent, to foster the postgraduates’ ability of attending international academic exchanges has become the important content of postgraduates’ English teaching. The old single model of classroom teaching has been unable to meet the demand for the fostering of English ability for international academic exchanges. With the aid of multimedia and Internet, the comprehensive use of Classroom Teaching Model, Cooperative Learning Model, Autonomous Learning Model and Practice Teaching Model helps the students master the related knowledge about international academic exchanges, strengthen their awareness of autonomous learning and cooperation, which are necessary for academic research and academic exchanges. Meanwhile, through practice, the students’ understanding and application of what has been learned can be promoted. With all these abilities, our postgraduates will be able to play a successful role on the international academic stage.

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