

Pedagogical Study on Developing Students' Multi-literacy in College English Learning

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Abstract—Cultivating students' multi-literacy ability in the modern multimodal environment has become an inevitable tendency of college English teaching. Based on the multi-literacy teaching model proposed by the New London Group, the paper takes non-English majors as the research object and conducts an empirical study on class teaching. The results indicate that the multi-literacy teaching model can be accepted by Chinese non-English majors and effectively improve students' multi-literacy skills.

Keywords—multimodality; multiliteracies; teaching model

I. INTRODUCTION

The popularization of network and the wide application of multimedia technology have a profound impact on people's way of information exchange and expression. Language is no longer the only tool to convey information and express meaning. Communication methods such as gestures, actions, images and colors, which are in the position of paralanguage, are becoming more and more important. So it's no exaggeration to say that multimodal expressions have penetrated into people's lives. Kress (2001) in *Contemporary Communication Modes and Media* pointed out that "all discourses are multimodal, and meaning is always constructed through the co-occurring multiple modes and media in the process of communication". The multimodality of modern discourse requires people to have the ability to interpret and construct multimodal discourse. In the era of multimodal communication, language learning is not only limited to the development of linguistic meaning potential, but also to enhance the ability of multimodal communication mode, namely, multimodal reading and writing ability.

Multimodal communication environment has put forward new requirements for contemporary college students' English competence and college English teaching. The traditional single language teaching mode, which relies too much on textbooks, cannot meet the needs of students to improve their multiple reading and writing abilities. In order to improve college students' English multi-modal reading and writing abilities, it is necessary to make a positive shift in the concept of college English education and teaching mode, that is, the traditional single language-based reading and writing teaching mode should be replaced by the multi-modal teaching mode (Song Qingwei, 2013). How to explore an effective teaching mode in the multi-modal environment to

cultivate students' multiple reading and writing abilities is the focus of this paper.

II. DEFINITION OF MULTI-LITERACY AND RELEVANT STUDIES

A. Definition of Multi-literacy

In September 1994, the New London Group, composed of 11 linguists, first proposed the concept of "multi-literacy". In 1996, the paper "Multi-literacy Pedagogy: Designing the Future of Society" published by the New London Group was regarded as the beginning of the comprehensive study of multi-literacy.

Because of its rich connotation, scholars in China and foreign countries have not yet reached a unified definition on multi-literacy. Williamson (2005) defined multi-literacy as the ability to read information provided by various media and modes. Gentle, Knight and Corrigan (2006) believe that multiple literacy can be divided into five components: language, vision, hearing, posture and space. Hu Zhuanglin (2007) divides multi-literacy into cultural literacy and technical literacy, and divides it into nine levels from the perspective of social conformity. Multi-literacy not only includes traditional reading and writing abilities, but also pays more attention to how people communicate effectively through multi-modal approaches such as voice, action and picture.

B. Relevant Studies on Multi-literacy

The paper "Multi-literal Reading Education: Designing the Future of Society", published by the New London Group in 1996, mainly aims at reforming reading and writing teaching to help students cope with the challenges brought by economic globalization, linguistic and cultural pluralism and the diversification of communication technology. At the same time, the New London Group put forward four teaching steps to achieve multi-literacy skills: real-life practice, clear guidance, critical framing and transformation practice. This teaching design mode requires teachers to use modern information technology and adopt diversified teaching methods to enable students to absorb multiple information and cultures through multi-channels, learn to compare, identify and think critically, and build and innovate knowledge system independently.

Since the introduction of multi-literacy ability, it has aroused widespread concern and research by western scholars. Kress (2003) elaborated on the theory of multi-literacy and proposed a series of new conceptual and theoretical frameworks. Jewitt and Kress (2003) used a series of examples in "Multimodal Literacy" to explore how to develop multiple literacy skills in a multimodal context. In the paper "Using Internet Forum to Improve English Learners' Multi-literacy" (2005), Spiliotopoulos proposed that the use of modern network technology in online interactive teaching could not only improve learners' writing skills, but also enhance their critical thinking and cross-cultural awareness.

Chinese research on multi-literacy focuses on introduction and practical application. Zhu Yongsheng (2008) gave a comprehensive introduction to multi-literacy and put forward suggestions for reforming; Wei Qinhong (2009) studied the multi-modal and multi-literacy training model for college students; Ge Junli and Luo Xiaoyan (2010) introduced the multi-literacy teaching method; Dai Shulan (2011) put forward that attention should be paid to the cultivation of students' multi-literacy and multi-modal communication ability; Zhang Delu (2012) probed into the cultivation of students' multi-literacy and multi-modal communication ability. Zhang Zheng (2013) put forward the ways and methods of cultivating multi-literacy.

However, at present, many studies focus on the cultivation of English majors' multi-literacy, while few studies focus on non-English majors' multi-literacy. Thus

this study focuses on exploring an effective teaching model to improve the multi-literacy of non-English majors.

III. AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF TEACHING

A. Research Questions and Hypotheses

The purpose of this study is to verify whether the innovative teaching mode based on the instructional design proposed by the New London Group to achieve multi-literacy is acceptable to non-English majors in China and to improve their multi-literacy. This study validates the following hypothesis: compared with traditional teaching mode, multi-literacy teaching mode helps to cultivate students' autonomy in learning, enhance their interest in English learning, and improve students' multi-literacy and comprehensive English level.

B. Research Object and Method

The subjects of this study are sophomores of non-English majors in Jinlin University Zhuhai College. There are 50 students in the experimental class and 52 students in the ordinary class. According to "Table I", the P values of the two variables are higher than 0.05, which shows that there is no significant difference in the English proficiency of the two classes before the teaching experiment. The research time is one school year. During this period, the learning mode of the experimental class is the innovative teaching method of multi-literacy, while the ordinary class is still the traditional teaching mode.

TABLE I. ENGLISH TEST SCORES BEFORE TEACHING EXPERIMENT

Test variables	Average of experimental class	Average of ordinary class	Standard deviation of experimental class	Standard deviation of ordinary class	T value	P value
<i>College Entrance Exam scores</i>	100.33	100.78	7.18	8.56	0.126	0.901
<i>Final test 1 scores</i>	86.44	86.00	4.65	4.65	0.208	0.837

The New London Group has put forward four teaching methods for the cultivation of multi-literacy: real-life practice, clear guidance, critical framing and

transformational practice. According to this framework, task-based teaching method is adopted in the experimental class, and the design of teaching mode is shown in "Table II".

TABLE II. DESIGN OF TEACHING MODE

<i>Real-life practice</i>	Students present multi-modal information obtained from different channels by various forms such as showing micro-class videos they have made before class or making presentations.
<i>Clear guidance</i>	The main purpose is to develop students' existing resources, clarify the focus of this class, understand the relevant language and cultural knowledge, that is, to discuss the main points of the theme so that students can reflect, discuss, survey, reasoning on it after guidance.
<i>Critical framing</i>	Teachers cultivate students' critical awareness and perspective by designing questions or related writing topics and guiding them to learn to read multimodal discourses in related fields. Through this link, students learn to view their learning content objectively, criticize it constructively, and apply it creatively and extensively.
<i>Transformational practice</i>	Teachers test students' theoretical knowledge and practical ability by designed tasks, so that students can solidify the content of the lesson. Tasks combine existing resources with new content, so that students can transform new content into knowledge and ability through practice.

C. Research Tools

The tools used in this study include data analysis, survey interviews, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis. Data analysis is used to compare the comprehensive English scores of the two classes after one academic year of different teaching modes. Based on the scores of CET-4 and final test 2, the improvement of English proficiency of the two classes has been compared. Finally, the author selected six students from the experimental class and the ordinary class

respectively to conduct interviews, and asked the students to evaluate their multi-literacy and their attitudes towards the traditional teaching method and the multi-literacy teaching method.

D. Research Results

After the Experiment, a Contrast Table of Comprehensive English Achievement Analysis between the Experimental Class and the Ordinary Class is presented in the following part (see "Table III").

TABLE III. ENGLISH SCORES AFTER TEACHING EXPERIMENT

Test variables	Average of experimental class	Average of ordinary class	Standard deviation of experimental class	Standard deviation of ordinary class	T value	P value
<i>CET4 scores</i>	483.1	474.3	34.76	32.83	0.582	0.568
<i>Final test 2 scores</i>	89.70	85.30	3.16	5.29	2.256	0.04

Through interviews, the students of ordinary classes believe that the information society has put forward higher requirements for college students' English ability, and the traditional teaching mode can not meet the need by only focusing on the cultivation of language reading and writing ability. Students are looking forward to innovative changes in College English teaching mode, which can enhance students' interest and motivation in English learning and cultivate their multi-literacy.

The students in the experimental class expressed that they were unfamiliar with multi-modality and multi-literacy before the teaching experiment. In the beginning, some of them, especially those with poor English foundation could not adapt to it well. But through one academic year, most students accept and like the new teaching mode, because it enables students to improve their ability to acquire information and knowledge through multiple channels. The new learning method has broadened students' learning scope, enabled them to have dynamic information exchange with teachers and other people, and improved their English learning autonomy and comprehensive ability. At the same time, students emphasize the importance of teachers' clear guidance. It gives students clear theoretical guidance and knowledge introduction, helps students control different modes in the learning process, and improves their multi-literacy. However, some students, especially those with poor English foundation, lack of autonomy in learning, are easily distracted by various kinds of information, and fail to achieve the desired learning results.

IV. CONCLUSION

The teaching mode of multi-literacy is a tentative exploration in the practice of College English classroom reform in the information age. This study takes non-English majors as the research object, and conducts an empirical study on developing their multi-literacy. The results of this study validate the questions of the study. According to the teaching design proposed by the New London Group, the innovative teaching mode to achieve multi-literacy can be

accepted by Chinese non-English majors and effectively improve their multi-literacy.

With the development of globalization, diversification and modern science and technology, the high quality and versatility of talents are becoming the center of modern talent training mode. College students should not only have good language communicative competence, but also have multicultural, multimedia and multimodal communicative competence, and have a variety of abilities in multidisciplinary knowledge courses. To cultivate such talents, the traditional teaching methods can be said to be powerless, while the new teaching and learning model proposed by the New London Group is effective for cultivating such talents (Zhang Delu, Ding Zhaofen, 2013).

At present, the traditional teaching mode of College English is still in the mainstream, and the form of College English proficiency test is relatively single, besides, many teachers haven't realized the importance of multi-literacy, therefore, the development of multi-literacy training mode for college students still has considerable limitations. In order to cultivate students' multi-literacy, it is necessary to enhance teachers' and students' multi-modal awareness, and formulate clear teaching objectives and evaluation mechanism for multi-literacy. (Qian Jinxiu, 2013).

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