

Classroom Teaching Design in English Academic Writing Class Based on the Multiliteracies Pedagogy: A Case Study of Abstract

Qiong Liu

Department of Foreign Languages
Hua Shang College
Guang Dong University of Finance and Economics
Guang Zhou, china

Abstract—Although abstract is one of the most important parts in academic writing, few people have studied it from the multiliteracies pedagogy. Therefore, this paper, based on the multiliteracy theory, aims to explore the teaching framework in the academic writing class. After the description of each teaching procedure in details including situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice, this study reveals that the use of multiliteracies pedagogy helps to solve many problems such as students' lack of the abilities of critical thinking and innovation. Additionally, the application of multiliteracies pedagogy conduces to cultivate students' multiliteracy abilities, especially the language literacy, culture literacy, critical thinking literacy and technique literacy. The use of this theory in class also adapts to Ecology of Education.

Keywords—multiliteracies pedagogy; English academic writing; abstract; ecology of education

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the cultivation of English academic writing ability has aroused many scholars and teachers' attention, because English academic writing ability has become a comprehensive criterion to judge one's academic ability, critical thinking ability, innovation ability and research ability, etc. However, according to a survey, the graduate students in English major have many problems in writing the research paper, for example, they don't know how to choose a suitable topic and they have no idea about how to make innovation. So, it's urgent to construct a new effective teaching framework in English academic writing class to improve student' academic writing ability.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Multiliteracies Pedagogy

New London Group proposed multiliteracies pedagogy in 1996, aiming to cultivate students' multiliteracy abilities by changing the traditional teaching model and using multimedia resources such as visual sense, auditory sense, posture and space, etc. The design of teaching framework is the core of multiliteracies pedagogy. According to New London Group,

design includes three procedures: available design, designing and the redesigned.

New London Group proposes that multiliteracies pedagogy includes four elements: (1) situated practice, which means the teachers should provide a real environment for practice if the teaching objective is to help the students learn how to apply the knowledge in practice such as the writing practice and communication (NLG,1996)[1](60-93); (2) overt instruction, which means the teachers can help students develop previous resources with active interventions. Therefore, they can reflect and infer from the existing knowledge, and construct meaning creatively in the real context. (3) critical framing, which aims to cultivate students' analytical ability so that they can analyze the social cultural phenomenon reasonably and objectively in the discourse [2](75-76).(4) transformed practice, which means the students can use learned knowledge in the new social cultural context to solve problems [3](55-66).

The research about multiliteracy has been developed quickly at home in recent years. The First Nationwide High-Level Forum of Multimodality was held in Tongji University in 2017, which means multimodality and multiliteracy have a great foreground. The representatives are Hu Zhuanglin, Zhu Yongsheng and Zhang Delu, ect. For example, Hu Zhuanglin discusses the definitions and development of multiliteracy [4](1-10); Zhu Yongsheng analyzes the cultivation models of multiliteracy for the foreigner learners [5](10-14). Meanwhile, many scholars have applied multiliteracy into college English teaching, especially audio-visual and speaking class, which is helpful for the reform of traditional teaching class. However, Feng Dezheng argues that it's hard to distinguish why the teaching effect is improved. Is it because of the multimodal resources or the multiliteracies pedagogy? Moreover, the difficult point is how to apply the real instruction [6](45-52).

In terms of the research subject, most of the studies have focused on multiliteracy in listening, speaking, reading and writing class. Few of them have discussed the academic knowledge for the senior students, let alone English academic writing class. And Liu Lu points out the Chinese students face many problems in English writing, especially academic writing [7](88-91). Li Haiyan and Zhang Chao also argue that many

college teachers over-focus on the format of research paper, and they analyze the theory without concrete examples, etc. Therefore, a new teaching framework should be explored to improve students' academic ability in the writing class, and cultivate their critical thinking ability.

B. Ecology of Education

Ecology of education is proposed by the American educator Lawrence Cremin in 1976. He studies how education and the surrounding environment interact with each other by combining ecology with education. According to Lawrence, education is an organic ecosystem, and all the ecological factors are closely integrated with each other. If one ecological factor is changed, other factors are changed correspondingly. Ecology of education attracted public's attention at home in 1980s, and the most influential book is *Ecology of Education*, written by Wu Dingfu and Zhu Wenwei in 1990. Then many scholars published relevant books, symbolizing the boom of ecological language teaching, which combines language learners and learning environment. It becomes a new approach, guiding the current language teaching and research because it focuses on the meaning, format and structure of language, and emphasize language context through a dynamic point of view [8](22-28).

The research about ecology of education can be divided into two types: the macro study and micro study. The ecology in classroom, one of the micro studies, is popular with teachers now. The ecosystem in classroom includes all the factors such as teachers, students, textbooks, teaching environment in class, teaching methods and other assisted media. All the factors interact with each other. If one factor is unbalanced, other factors are absolutely influenced, which will decrease the teaching effect. Therefore, teachers should design the teaching contents, teaching methods according to changes of ecological factors. Additionally, they can optimize the teaching activities by collaboration of multimodal to cultivate talents with multiliteracy ability.

III. CLASSROOM TEACHING DESIGN IN ENGLISH ACADEMIC WRITING CLASS BASED ON THE MULTILITERACIES PEDAGOGY: A CASE STUDY OF ABSTRACT

Abstract, an important part in academic writing, is often written after the paper is finished. It has its own textual structure and style, and plays a very critical role in delivering text message, connecting the readers and writers. The author of this paper analyzed the structure features through the traditional teaching method, and explained the genre characteristics, tense, voice and syntactic features of abstract with some examples. However, there are three problems in the term paper: (1) the structure of abstract is not completed or even make people confused; (2) the students don't understand why the tense and voice is different in different move structure; (3) what is the value of abstract except the research paper? Meanwhile, they consider the traditional teaching method over-emphasizes the format and theory of academic writing, so they don't have much opportunities to practice, which is one of the main reasons of their low motivation about this course. Therefore, this paper aims to renovate the teaching method after searching for many materials about multiliteracy

pedagogy. It is hoped that a new teaching model in English academic writing class can be constructed.

A. Situated Practice

The construction of multimodal teaching model includes the multimodal design of the teaching contents. It specifically means the traditional teaching method which only relies on the books and courseware should be changed, and all the teaching resources such as texts, pictures, video and audio should be fully used by the network to improve the students' multimodal reading ability. According to situated practice, the teachers should choose authentic teaching materials, so the author of this paper chooses ten papers as the corpus in the authoritative foreign language databases, including linguistics, translation, literature, English teaching and English for specific purpose. For each subject, there are two papers. One of them is written by the native writer, and the other is written by the Chinese writer. Both of them have important academic value because they come from the authoritative journal with well-formed format, rigorous logic and idiomatic expression. But the papers in this two groups are different in move structure, tense, voice. The author chooses the papers in foreign language journal as the research subject because writing abstracts according to the thinking patterns and writing features of native writer is one of the most important criteria for the students to publish their papers in the international journal [9](20-27). In situated practice, the students play different roles and finish different tasks according to their own previous knowledge, interests and experience, and finally construct meaning in the real communication. Therefore, the students are required to be divided into five groups according to their hobbies, with each group two people and two papers. In order to make full use of time, the author and students set up a WeChat group at the beginning of this course, and the students are requested to learn some basic knowledge about Rain Classroom. They can use the internet to share and find information, present their assignment and express their opinions.

First, the teacher shares all the papers in the WeChat, asking the students in each group to read and think the following questions: (1) which paper is written by the native writer or by the Chinese writer in each group? (2) compared with other kind of writing, what is the difference of language in abstract? (3) why does the writer use this kind of language? With "design" the center of multiliteracy pedagogy, the teacher design questions according to students' previous knowledge and experience. The students discuss and express their answers in WeChat. Some argue that the vocabulary in abstract is more formal and complicated, and the structure is more distinguished; others claim that the purpose of abstract is the summary of paper, helping the readers get general information quickly. But none of them can tell which abstract is written by native writer. On one hand, they don't have a systematic training about writing abstract; on the other hand, they are eager to know the answers. Therefore, the teacher not only provides opportunities for students to analyze by themselves, but also motivate them to study theory.

Second, students are required to briefly express their opinions discussed before by Rain Classroom in class. Thus, the teacher can know the opinions quickly in each group, and

present the most overall opinions. Then the teacher continues to ask the following questions: (1) how many parts in the abstract? What is it? (2) what are the language features of abstract such as the tense features, vocabulary features and voice features, etc.? The teacher guides students to think through asking questions. Meanwhile, students can construct meaning by themselves based on their own experiences and interests in the authentic corpus. In the situated practice, the ecological niche of text books is changed, which means the text books are not the only resources in classroom teaching. So, the teaching method must be changed correspondently so that the entire teaching system is in balance.

B. Overt Instruction

Overt instruction means teachers' positive intervention and guide in the student's learning process rather than directly imparting knowledge to them. Teachers are "scaffold" and they are the designers, organizers and coordinators in the student-centered class, so the ecological niche of teachers and students are also changed. Therefore, the teacher instructs students to analyze abstract concretely by examples, picks out one English abstract as the subject, and guide the students to think by asking questing and sharing the feedback. For example, is there background information in this abstract? Which sentence tells us the background information (the research purpose, research method, findings and results? What is the tense and voice? And how about their percentage? The teacher can guide the students in need to find out the language features and move structure by themselves through these questions. The whole process of designing questions and guiding the students to answer is the process of co-constructing knowledge by teacher and students together, or students' self-constructing meaning under instruction. Then, the students are required to discuss again and finish the following table. The results of each group are presented and compared through Rain Classroom, and the most proper one is picked out. After students' discussion and report, the teacher explains the purpose, structure, language features systematically and presents the referenced table. During this process, students can analyze the function of text under instruction, which can help them to theorize and conceptualize the concrete phenomenon, improve their ability of critical thinking and innovation, and enhance their ability of academic writing and multiliteracy ability.

TABLE I. THE TEACHER EXPLAINS THE PURPOSE, STRUCTURE, LANGUAGE FEATURES SYSTEMATICALLY

Purpose of abstract	Introduce the research problems, research methods, purpose of the study, and finds, results of the study
structure	Introduction — method—results --discussion
Language features	Person: the first / third person
	Tense: present tense (most frequently used one, past tense(second), perfect tense (last)
	Voice: active/ passive voice
	Vocabulary: formal, written language
	Sentences: simple sentences, long sentences

The structure features are consistent with IMRD proposed by Swales in 1990. Introduction includes research background information, research problems and purpose and the significance of the study; method means how to collect and

analyze information, how to use the theoretical framework, how to analyze the data and how to get the results; results means what is the finding and conclusions of this study ; discussion means the theoretical and practical significance of the results.

C. Critical Framing

According to Kalantzis & Cope, critical framing includes functional analysis and critical analysis. The former means cause and effect relationship, and function; the latter means the intention, goals, motivation and opinions, etc. For the abstract, functional analysis means students can use descriptive language to analyze abstracts of all sorts with the learned theory, find out whether the abstract is complete, whether the language features are correct, and whether they will consider all the elements when writing abstract themselves. Critical analysis means students can find out the writer's intention, the implied social and cultural factors from the corpus.

1) The reasons of using IMRD

After students' discussion and teachers' intervention, they figure out the structure and language features of abstract, but they still do not know why abstract has these features. Therefore, students are required to discuss the following four questions again to find out the attitude, position and culture implied in the text: (1) why there are background information, research method, results and discussion in the abstract? (2) why the third person is frequently used? (3) why the active voice is often used? (4) which one in each group is written by English writer?

When discussing, the teacher actively guides students by reminding them that they should pay attention to generic features and writing purpose of abstract. Then one representative in each group should make a brief report after discussion. Finally, the teacher makes a comment and summarizes their reports. The whole process shows that there is no fixed order among the four steps: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice. Situated practice is the basis of overt instruction and critical framing, and the new knowledge gained through transformed practice can also be used as the basis of situated practice, which means the four steps in multiliteracy pedagogy can appear in any order according to the learning context. This new teaching method makes up the deficiency of traditional teaching method which penetrates the whole teaching process as a teaching approach rather than as a teaching method to realize one objective. The paper specifically describes the teaching procedures to show that the teaching effect is improved because of multiliteracy pedagogy rather than multimodal resources.

When deconstructing the knowledge, the teacher points out that any text tends to achieve a particular communicative purpose, so readers will search some useful information when reading. The teacher guides students to think about reasons why the move structure of IMRD is used in abstract, and then overtly instruct them. One of the purposes of abstract is briefly introduces the contents of research, more importantly, the author should highlight the importance of the paper by pointing out the deficiencies of the previous studies in the introduction.

Similarly, the author should clearly explain the research method to show the reliability and validity of his research if he wants the paper to be accepted by the experts and readers. Moreover, the detail description of results proves the significance of the paper, and it plays positive role in guiding the future research and teaching, which shows the communicative purpose of the text.

When guiding the students to learn how to use the tense, the teacher should state clearly that it depends on the phatic function of the sentence because people concern about both the grammatical meaning and pragmatic meaning of the tense now rather than the traditional grammatical meaning only. The teacher should instruct clearly when students are eager to know the communicative function of tense: when the facts are not acceptable and is less associated with the current studies, the past tense is more preferred; when the facts are widely recognized by most people with high reliability, and are closely related with the current studies, the present tense is frequently used. The materials should also be considered when using the tense.

When guiding the students to learn how to use the person, the teacher must point out that the third person is more objective when stating the research problems and results because it can help the readers focus on the paper itself rather than the writer. The students can easily understand why the third person is often used in abstract after teachers' instruction. For a long time, the passive voice has been preferred in abstract, but now it is not the case. *Tarone et. Al* (1998) believes that whether the active voice or the passive voice is used depends on the communicative function of the sentence and the placement of information focus, so both of them should be used in balance [10](113-132). Besides, many scholars at home argue that the passive voice is not necessarily used in abstract, the writers should naturally use it according to context. So, the authors in these ten papers use the active voice in most of the sentences of abstract.

When guiding the students to figure out the language features of abstract, the teacher should show clearly the difference of sentence structure because of the different way of thinking. Therefore, it is easy for students to conclude that the simple sentences are more often used in abstract. If the long sentences are used, they should be connected with participial phrases and prepositional phrases, which means the purpose of abstract is to help the readers quickly understand the contents of this paper. Besides, it shows English is a hypotaxis language.

During the whole teaching process, the teacher provides authentic materials in situated practice, and designs many questions, provoking students to think. They give the timely instruction when students are eager to know the answers, which motivates the students to learn and participate in the class. What's more, the teaching method is changed from theory-driven method to question-driven method, and it is beneficial to cultivate students' reasonable critical consciousness based on the learning theories rather than an subjective consciousness.

2) The culture differences in the text

The students cannot distinguish which one in each group is written by the English writer because they find both of them have the complete structure and same textual features. The

teacher should instruct students to think about the different culture and ways of thinking between china and western countries, and more importantly, they should construct the cultural differences implied in the text together.

Although all of the chosen materials have the same textural features and complete structure, there is some slight difference. So, the teacher should help students to find out the difference and deconstruct the Knowledge together by analyzing the concrete examples. Through discussion and analysis, the findings show that the five papers written by the English writers have the complete IMRD move structure. However, one of the five papers written by the Chinese writers does not have introduction, and one of them does not have discussion move structure, which shows the native writers have a better command of move structure, and are more qualified for international academic journals.

Through comparing the differences about the tense and voice in each move structure of the two abstracts, the teacher guides students to find out the culture differences in the text. For example, in the introduction, the perfect tense is more preferred by the Chinese writers and they seldom use present tense to describe the previous studies, which shows the humble attitude of scholarship is one of Chinese traditional culture, and many Chinese writers will respect the historical achievements in scientific research. In terms of method, the Chinese writers are more likely to use the present tense, but the native writers tend to use the past tense. However, in the results the Chinese writers are more likely to use the past tense, but the native writers tend to use the present tense. It is concluded that the native writers are more confident with their research results because the present tense indicates there is a close association between the current study and the previous studies. As for the voice of sentences, the Chinese writers like using passive voice, but native writers are more likely to use active voice because the important information and opinions are obvious if the active voice is used. It is one of the methods constructing the author's identity and it's the way of thinking of native writers. Through the critical analysis with teachers' instruction, the students can cultivate their critical multiliteracy ability and innovation ability, which is helpful for improving their academic writing ability and spreading the academic achievements.

D. Transformed Practice

Transformed practice means students can apply the learned knowledge in the new text analysis, so they are required to finish the assignment in groups. The teacher guides students to find materials in Guangzhou Library and distinguish the authoritative one. Besides, they are required to download an abstract with the learned features in the foreign language database and present it through WeChat. During the process, the students can search for materials they need by technology, which is conducive for the cultivation of their technical literacy ability. What's more, the teacher provides five academic papers with complete structure, asking students in each group to write an abstract with IMRD move structure according to their interests. Each abstract should be about two hundred words. Similarly, the multiliteracy pedagogy can also be used in writing conclusion, which means students can reach

their own conclusion with critical thinking ability, and they can discuss the differences and similarities between their own results and that in the previous studies.

In transformed practice, the teacher can make full use of multimedia resources and internet and provide students rich and authentic multimodal texts, reducing the students' anxiety and improving their learning efficiency. Meanwhile, the analysis of how to write the abstract, especially about the relationship between the objective method and reliable results can definitely help cultivate students' analytical and inferential ability.

After two weeks' teaching reform, the author interviews some of the students. Some state the academic writing class is not boring anymore; others believe that they are not afraid of writing the research paper and they realize that the critical thinking ability, technical literacy ability and cultural literacy ability are as important as the language literacy ability. It is proved that multiliteracy pedagogy is an effective way to solve the problems in academic writing class such as the difficulty of searching for information, lack of academic language and critical thinking ability.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the multiliteracies pedagogy, this paper constructs a new teaching model in the English academic writing class from the perspective of ecology of education, and introduces the teaching steps in details. This new model helps to solve many problems in writing class such as the low motivation of students, abstract analysis of writing theory, over-focus of the format, etc. The effects can be seen from the following facts: the students participate in the class more actively because they should present their discussion results to all the students through Rain Classroom; the abstracts in term papers are more complete, and the voice and tense is more correctly used; according to the feedback in the term teaching evaluation system, they learn many academic knowledge and their

comprehensive ability is improved. Therefore, the multiliteracies pedagogy is an effective way to solve many problems in English academic writing class. What's more, this paper provides a concrete example for the application of multiliteracies pedagogy in classroom teaching, which is the basis of the combination of multimodal education and cultivation of students' ability.

REFERENCES

- [1] New London Group. "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: designing social futures". *Harvard Educational Review*, 1996(66): pp. 60-93.
- [2] Zhang Delu. *Multimodal Discourse Analysis and Foreign Language Teaching*. Beijing: Higher Education press(In Chinese), 2015. p.75.
- [3] Feng Dezheng. "Classroom Teaching Design Based on the Multiliteracies Pedagogy: A Case Study of an English Linguistics Lesson"(In Chinese). *Foreign Languages in China*, 2017(3): pp. 55-63.
- [4] Hu Zhuanglin. "Multimodalization in Social Semiotics" (In Chinese). *Language Teaching and Linguistic Studies*, 2007(1): pp.1-10.
- [5] Zhu Yongsheng, "Multiliteracies Abilities and Implication for Education in China" (In Chinese). *Foreign Languages Research*, 2008(4):10-14.
- [6] Zhang Delu, Liu Rui. "Pedagogical Design on Developing Students' Multiliteracies in FL Learning —A Case Study of Students' Classroom Oral Presentation" (In Chinese). *Foreign Languages in China*, 2014(03): pp.45-52.
- [7] Liu Lu. "Web-and-Genre-Based English Academic Writing Course for Graduate Student" (In Chinese).*Journal of Anhui University of Technology (Natural Science)*, 2013(06): pp.88-91.
- [8] Gao Ying, Zhang Shaojie. "Sociocultural perspective for interactive discourse studies and the construction of its research methodology" (In Chinese). *Journal of Northeast Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, 2010(06): pp.22-28.
- [9] Liu Yonghou, Zhang Ying. "Contrastive Studies of the Abstracts in International Academic Journal Articles by Chinese and English-speaking Scholars(In Chinese)". *Foreign Language World*, 2016(5): pp. 20-27.
- [10] Tarone E et al. "On the Use of the Passive and Active Voice in Astrophysics Journal Papers: With Extensions to Other Languages and Other Fields". *English for Specific Purposes*, 1998, 17(01): pp.11