A Study of Input in Teaching English for Special Purposes (ESP) Based on Multimodal Discourse

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Abstract—**ESP is an inevitable trend of College English Teaching. Traditional language teaching methods become unsuitable for cultivating students' communicative competence of ESP, while theories about multimodal discourse and language input are in association with ESP teaching so that various modes are cooperated, multidimensional contexts of ESP learning are set up, the comprehensive input of ESP learning is ensured, and students' needs are met.**

Keywords—ESP; multimodal discourse; input

I. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

With the rapid development of science and technology, image and animation being main media of communication, the emergence of multimodal discourse breaks the cognition based on words or language of the traditional concept, language is no longer recognized as an isolated research object. While upon most occasions, it carries on analysis and explanation associated with the other semiotic resources which are participating in meaning construction. In the multimodal discourse, the construction of language status more and more relies on semiotic resource integration and the multi-modal information by means of the combination of different forms of visual, listening and figure has gradually become an important form of information processing. Therefore the multimodal phenomenon in foreign language teaching increasingly draws the attention of linguistic circle. Throughout the development of the foreign language teaching in recent 10 years, the requirements of society on ESP (English for Special Purposes) teaching has become more urgent than ever, and numerous domestic scholars believe that the focus of college English teaching has been transferred to the teaching direction of ESP gradually. In recent three years, scholars represented by professor Cai Jigang think that the ESP teaching, especially Teaching EAP (English for Academic Purposes), is the position of the college English teaching in our country, that is, college English teaching should take the EAP as the guidance to satisfy the needs of student major and the social demand for international talents. Vocational English or Academic English is an inevitable trend of the development on College English, but it depends on different college situations as well as the development of academic disciplines and the need of individual development. The college foreign language curriculum system of diversification, personalization,

personalization and localization, which is based on the comprehensive English with ESP as the main development direction, is most in line with the requirements of training diversified personnel, the true national condition of foreign teaching in our country as well as it is also an urgent demand on development of society, economy and culture etc (Ding Renlun, Dai Weidong, 2013).

The application-oriented curriculum of knowledge and skill specialization is suitable to the occupational area, belonging to a branch of second language acquisition research, the research of which has developed to the fifth stage, that is, the learning-centered stage. Nevertheless, ESP set up for meeting the special needs of learners still confines to the training mode of traditional language knowledge and ignores its own characteristics such as dynamics, authenticity and diversity etc. as well as the function of the non-verbal symbols in the process of discourse transfer (Liu Yu, 2012). Krashen (1985) thinks that the language information input in the language input should be real and only in the authentic context can language acquisition produce. Under which conditions it is easier to make learners get better learning effect without consideration of the language form or spending more time and strength on comparison and inter-translation of two kinds of language. (Dai Mingzhong, 2010).

II. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ESP LANGUAGE INPUT AND MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE

Due to the influence of traditional grammar teaching, the early studies on ESP depend on textual analysis too much. ESP teaching mainly teaches the grammar and vocabulary of the professional register (Paltridge, 2009), however the emergence of corpus linguistics and genre analysis theory make the focus on ESP research start to transfer gradually from analysis on static text to the dynamic study on language. Diane Belcher and other researchers (2011) put forward the new direction of research on ESP and point out that the key to distinguish ESP and other branches of applied linguistics as well as the common language teaching is that the ESP emphasize more on the context where language, words, and the target language appear as well as the study on the requirements of learners. The five basic elements should be considered in the teaching research of ESP: social environment, learning target, linguistic input material and output task, teaching method and learning effect evaluation (Quoted in Gao Jiajing, 2013). In the traditional ESP teaching, due to various sensory mode cannot

be effectively activated, complicated ESP term and knowledge easily result in students' attention distraction and loss of interest thus to be unable to obtain ideal results of learning. Multimodal discourse analysis emphasizes that by means of comprehensive application of text, image, animation, sound and other symbols to jointly create a learning situation, this mode fits in with social communication of the multi-information and technicalization, following and meeting the demands of the students in the new era of literacy to improve their own multiple reading ability (He Shanyan, 2011).

Systemic-functional grammatical theory is regarded as a social symbol system,, a kind of meaning potential, that is a semantic system, referring to that other symbol systems besides language is the source of the meaning as well. Context refers to the situation speech act exists in within a certain period of time and space. Halliday（1978, 1985）sums up the contextual factors into three parts: field, tenor and mode. Multimodal Discourse refers to a phenomenon of utilizing hearing, sight, sense of touch and various other kinds of feeling through a variety of means such as language, images, sound, movement and symbols to communicate (Zhang Delu, 2009). Royce（2002）argues that the different symbols in second language classroom teaching have complementarities and cooperatives in the multimodal discourse and also he thinks that the teachers could help the students with the development of multimodal communicative competence by means of applying the visual, linguistic and other mode presented in textbooks, other teaching resources and computer monitors. So we can see that multimodal discourse is multidirectional input for second language.

Input is the basis and prerequisite of language acquisition, and language input information needs to be strengthened in order to increase the possibility of perception, attention, understanding and internalization (Zhang Baicheng, 2009). So input enhancement refers to a deliberately prominent action, which is in order to attract the attention of the learners to some characteristics of second language input information. The significance of input enhancement are primarily based on two cognitions of people: one is that comprehensible input is vital for language acquisition; and the second is that only the language input perceived and noticed by the learners in a certain way will have effect on language acquisition. In the multimodal discourse, through the relevant technical means of multimodal PowerPoint presentation can effectively implement the strengthening on the input information in the modes of the visual, audio or their combination (Zhang Baicheng, 2009). Krashen（1985）argues that language input is likely to become language intake, learning motivation, confident, anxiety etc. only by the means of affective filter, due to the filtration of which it determines how much the learners receive input. Therefore the multimodal discourse needs to ensure the positive role played by emotional factors in language input.

Based on the multimodal discourse analysis theory, Wang Jing and Hu Jianjun conduct a survey and analysis on the learning style of students and the weakened motivation factors of English learning. The result of the research shows that the multimodal discourse analytic strategy could prevent students'

motivation from weakening and teachers could enhance students' English learning motivation and increase the effectiveness of English teaching by adjusting the visual, auditory and space latitude. Zhang Zheng (2013) points out that, learning attitude is an important factor to determine the learning performance, while positively change students' learning attitude is an important way for foreign language teachers to improve teaching quality. Teaching by the multimodal PowerPoint presentation can improve the students' motivation of their interests in learning and consciously participating in teaching activities. Students will change the reception learning into active learning, independent learning and inquiry learning. The multimodal PowerPoint presentation is accepted by most of the students (Zhang Zheng, 2013) that it could improve the students' academic record in EGP (English for Special Purposes), which is helpful to improve the efficiency of the students' short-term memory (Zhang Zheng, 2010) and positively change students' learning attitude. The multimodal discourse analysis theory provides the sufficient theoretical basis for the diversification of language teaching method. Multimedia teaching equipment of modern technology makes multi-modeled Teaching way of linguistics course possible. Generally speaking, it is difficult for single mode to achieve ideal teaching effect. When choosing the mode, teachers should fully consider the interrelation of teaching contents (field of discourse) and teaching mode (mode of discourse) and also should pay attention to the relationship among the modes (Liao Futao, 2012).

The researches at home and abroad indicate that input enhancement of multimodal discourse could make all kinds of modes convert and utilize mutually, in which case it can not only mobilize students' use of cognitive strategies but also improve their attitudes to learning and enhance their learning motivation. Moreover, it contributes more to the students in grasping the input and output of ESP learning, complying with the principle of ESP language learning in nature.

According to the modal discourses' meaning potential and organically combining the students' demands with PowerPoint presentation, material objects, characters, images, videos and teachers' physical characteristics to transfer and strengthen the information, ESP multimodal discourse establishes a multidimensional ESP learning context, which has a great reform significance to break through the shackles of the traditional single mode input pattern and improve the ESP communicative competence. Various measures and resources are applied to the input design of ESP multimodal discourse to achieve the best teaching effect, which conforms to the requirements of the second language acquisition and humanistic teaching concept. Hence, it will become the main trend of ESP teaching.

III. THE INPUT DESIGN OF ESP MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE

Bisection method of ESP is to take learners' ultimate purpose of language use and language environment as the main line to divide the ESP into two major branches: EOP (English for Occupational Purposes) and EAP (English for Academic Purposes). EOP, such as Tourism English, Flight Attendant English and Medical English, and EAP, such as Academic English Writing, Textile Science English and

Automotive Professional English etc. respectively conduct a research on the input enhancement of ESP multimodal discourse.

A. The Design of ESP Multimodal Discourse refering to Selection and Collocation of Mode

The three constraints in selecting ESP multimodal discourse are: different ESP courses and contents (field of discourse), English levels and interests of English learners as well as expertise levels of English teachers or English levels of professional teachers (tenor of discourse) and the utilization of multimedia teaching equipment and means and the production (mode of discourse) of PPT presentation courseware. When choosing a certain mode, it should consider that whether this mode is more suitable to reflect the expressive meaning than others; the collocation of mode refers to a phenomenon that the communicative tasks will be completed by choosing multiple modes to coordinate mutually in case that the providing characteristic of a certain mode can not reflect the meaning to be expresses well (Zhang Delu, Ding Zhaofen, 2013). Suitable mode selection and collocation will urge learners to pay' attention to the formal characteristics of ESP language input, and will implement the reinforcement of the input information. Thus, the study on the commonality and difference of ESP in multimodal discourse selection and collocation, that is to say that which mode is suitable for EOP input reinforcement, which mode is suitable for EAP input reinforcement and which mode is suitable for two should be put in first place. At the same time, carry out analysis and discussions on how teachers effectively make multimodal discourse complement and coordinate, such as how the clothes, voices and body language of teachers and the videos, pictures, records and material objects achieve a perfect combination and reach the best teaching effect.

B. Comparison between Multimodal Discourse Input and ESP Learning

Before constructing the experimental class and comparative class, it should be compared that to what extent the traditional single mode (comparative class) and multimode (experimental class) will promote to strengthen ESP knowledge input, and to find which input method will improve the performance of learning and autonomous learning ability. In the teaching practice of experimental class, suitable teaching methods and modes combination should be designed according to the teaching aims. In the experimental class, multimodal discourse constituted by implementing PPT presentation, spoken language, characters, images, animations and interaction and other various ways. The teacher should carry on the processing of content of ESP teaching material with the related video and photo and make multimodal teaching courseware PPT presentation. Meanwhile teachers should design the teaching style and body language that are suitable for the teaching content as well as the coordination of all kinds of modes to complete classroom multimodal design and multimodal input ESP teaching. In comparative class, teachers mainly adopt the traditional oral language mode while making use of PPT presentation image added single-mode teaching as well to help students to understand and remember the ESP

knowledge by means of explanation, introduction, Q & A and discussion etc.

ESP teachers effectively use the multimodal discourse to strengthen language input and improve the quality of the output. Meanwhile it also implements the transformation of ESP teaching factors and roles. Teacher transfers into a "director", while the students transfer into "leading actor". Teaching material, multimedia courseware, image, material object, speech is transferred into "props" and classroom is transferred into a "stage".

IV. CONCLUSION

To order to break the traditional language knowledge training mode of ESP teaching, the multimodal discourse is introduced into the strengthened process ESP input. With dynamic, facticity and diversity characteristics of ESP' dynamics it can lead the learner into multimodal learning context and to acquire, recognize and pass information by using their various senses, in order to provide a large number of comprehensible input for ESP learning. The input information is perceived, noticed, understood and absorbed through certain modal discourse reinforcement methods to highlight the ESP feature items in input information of ESP and increase the probability of perceived and noticed ESP information, so as to increase the amount of effective input, which could be internalized into the elements in the implicit language system of learners to improve the speed and quality of ESP learning.

Consequently, under the language environment of extremely limited ESP input, how to enhance the salience of input information in ESP classroom teaching to be more perceived and noticed by the learners, to what extent the multimodal discourse in ESP acquisition can effectively strengthen the input information, how high the correlation between the multimode discourse and ESP learning performance as well as learning motivation & attitude has become a focus for scholars and teachers in the field of ESP, which needs to be further verified by empirical research data.

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