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A Practice Study on the Teaching of English "Micro-discourse" Writing in Junior High School based on the Concept of Production-oriented Approach

Lisha Hu [a, *], Yajun Qi [b]

Institute of Humanities, Huzhou College, Huzhou 313000, China

[a, *] 13216178471@163.com, [b] jsszyjq@zjhu.edu.cn

*** Corresponding author:** Lisha Hu (Email: 13216178471@163.com)

Abstract: English writing, as a crucial link in English teaching, is a learning method based on the features of language use of English, cultivating students' integrating skills of using English language and realizing their self-expression. In view of the writing dilemmas such as lack of motivation and knowledge, Separation between Learning and Using, singularity of evaluation in junior high school English writing teaching, this thesis will propose a "micro-discourse" writing method based on the theory of production-oriented approach, which takes "micro-length," "micro-elements" and "micro-conception" as the design ideas, and takes output-driven, input-enabled, output practice, and teacher-student evaluation as the teaching route to develop new learning strategies and teaching methods. Therefore, it can stimulate students' motivation for language learning, effectively cultivate autonomous learning ability, realize their absorption and internalization of writing knowledge, and truly improve junior high school students' English writing, as well as provide new ideas for exploring optimal English teaching methods, and further implement the reform requirements for English teaching in junior high school as set forth in English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education.

Keywords: Production-oriented Approach; Writing Instruction; Junior High School English; Micro-discourse.

1. Introduction

The main obstacle encountered in junior high school English writing instruction is that the traditional teaching mode of "teachers speak and students listen" prevails in the classroom. As a result, the teaching becomes monotonous and boring, and there is a lack of communication between teachers and students. Moreover, it leads to chronic problems, for example, language learning is characterized by rigid thinking, routinized writing and fragmented knowledge, and the input of writing knowledge cannot be effectively transformed into language output, and the expression of meaning lacks coherence and integrity. Therefore, the lack of language knowledge as well as writing training make junior high school students afraid of writing itself, which is not conducive to improving students' writing skills; furthermore, teachers do not pay sufficient attention to writing teaching, writing training time is limited, plus, the evaluation method is single and the period is too long, which greatly reduces the teaching efficiency and is unfavorable to the further development of writing teaching.

According to the latest requirements of Compulsory Education Curriculum Standards: English (2022 Edition), English teaching should focus on the development of core literacy, take the theme as the guide, rely on the discourse, build a grading system, and pay attention to the integration of 'teaching-learning-evaluation', so as to develop language proficiency, cultivate cultural awareness, enhance thinking quality and improve study skills. Therefore, this thesis proposes a "Micro-discourse" writing approach, which aims to help students reduce the difficulty of writing, enhance their confidence, promote students to train writing skills efficiently and pertinently, and make writing normalized and long-term by completing micro-discourse writing with small length, clear conception and less time. From another perspective, micro-discourse has a small number of words and strong operability, which is easier for students to waltz through writing training with cohesion, coherence and diversified themes, so as to master the ability of language application and discourse creation. As far as junior high school is concerned, the learning task is not as heavy as that of senior high school, which is more conducive for students to consolidate the foundation of English writing, and prepare for the transition to high school. In recent years, the teaching research on "micro-writing" has achieved remarkable results, on this basis of which "Micro-discourse" writing is put forward emphasizing more on the integrity, systematicity and extensibility of the text, and promotes the "incremental" innovation and development of English writing instruction in junior high school and even higher stage.

2. The Existential Dilemma of Junior High School English Writing

2.1. Lack of Motivation Discourages Writing

According to Yerkes-Dodson Law, within a certain limit, the stronger the learning motivation is, the better the learning effect will be. However, middle school students in China often have no intention to observe life due to academic pressure, and lack time to enrich their life experience suffering from hectic curriculum schedule. Ye Shengtao once said that, the root of writing lies in life, without life, writing is impossible. Under the pressure of exam-oriented education, junior high school students are eager for quick success and instant benefit, thus their writings are presented as routinized, formalized and fake. This is the very performance of students' lack of thinking and rigid thinking in the process of writing, which in the long run will lose their motivation of thinking

and creating. Additionally, junior high school English classroom pays much attention to inculcation but not the same to interaction. It only accentuates the output of skills and ignores the interest of teaching, which fails to stimulate students' interest, and consequently to wear down their will to learn.

2.2. Lack of Knowledge Impairs Text Plasticity

The reading quantity of junior high school students is not enough to support the vocabulary, sentence patterns and materials needed for writing, and the absorption and effectiveness in the reading process also needs to be considered. As our famous scholar Professor Xu Guozhang said, "Learning a few dry English sentences is inadequate. Don 't always read for the purpose of improving English. Reading is first to absorb knowledge, and in this process language intake will naturally be realized. Reading is one of the important ways of language input, and its insufficient input will lead to low-quality output, as a result, there are frequent problems of vacuous content and poor language in junior middle school English composition.

Besides, the lack of methodological writing guidance or inappropriate selection of texts in English teaching can easily cause a lack of logic and coherence in students' thinking and meaning construction, coupled with the influence of traditional teaching, teachers habitually divide the teaching content into several small segments, and explain the vocabulary and sentence patterns in the fragments step by step, breaking the integrity of discourse meaning, which causes fractured mind and deficiency of discourse knowledge. Due to the lack of input and output difficulty of corpus, the lack of guidance of writing methods and strategies, and the fuzzy and closed process of construction and remodeling of thinking, the resulting writing texts do not have plasticity and extensibility.

2.3. Separation between Learning and Using Reduces Subject Practicality

The reason for the phenomenon of "Separation between Learning and Using" in junior high school English teaching is that the goal of "learning" of English is not definite, the method is not appropriate, the understanding of "use" is not clear, and the practice is not in place, resulting in "much time but low efficiency", "high input but low output", "extemporaneous composition dilemma" and other deep-rooted problems. The traditional English classroom excessively focus on the form of language expression and overlooks its function, so the "whole class teaching" only cultivates "grammar experts", but students' oral and writing skills are generally weak. Moreover, teachers generally teach English as knowledge instead of training it as a skill, so the input of language knowledge only stays in the ivory tower of memory and cannot be flexibly used, which is unfavorable for students to use their subject knowledge to solve practical problems. In conclusion, English, as a language discipline, only grasps the problem solving in the form of knowledge, but does not directly point to practical problems, which will lead to a significant reduction in its instrumental, humanistic and practical nature.

2.4. Singularity of Evaluation Affects the Effectiveness of Feedback

Each link of the "teaching-learning-evaluation" chain should be mutually reinforcing and indispensable. As the last link of learning process, evaluation is the key to enhance instruction and improve culture literacy. However, evaluation can neither be above nor float outside of teaching, but should be embedded in teaching and become an integral part of teaching. Due to the lack of attention to evaluation in junior high school English teaching, there are difficulties such as lack of evaluation links, separation of teaching evaluation systems, and poor evaluation results. Tracing the source is the simplification of the evaluation system in the teaching process, which can be further subdivided into a single evaluation subject, a single method, and a single content.

Junior high school don't prioritize the evaluation in English teaching, which has given rise to difficulties such as the absence of evaluation links, separation of teaching and evaluation in systems, and poor evaluation results. In essence, it is the simplification of the evaluation system, which can be further subdivided into the singularity of subject, method, and content in course teaching appraise. In terms of subject of evaluation, students, as the real subject of learning, lack the right to speak in the traditional English class, and the subject is only teachers in general, which greatly reduces the objectivity of evaluation. In fact, there are certain difficulties in the transformation of identity in teaching evaluation: students cannot become evaluators from the appraised one, on account of limitations of their knowledge and abilities which leads to a weakening of evaluation power, and it also reflects the lack of evaluation essence. In addition, as a traditional mainstream evaluation method, summative assessment is too single in form and too one-sided in judgment criteria, which cannot fully reflect students' academic performance, nor can it show the personalized learning outcomes. What's more, evaluation content is so single that only examines students' capability to remember and use knowledge, without testing students' oral, communicative and critical thinking ability. When the knowledge vulnerability is exposed, the results cannot be timely feedback to students, so there is a lag in information feedback. Therefore, this kind of evaluation system does not have comprehensiveness, accuracy, timeliness and innovation.

3. The Theoretical Basis of "Micro-discourse" Writing Instruction in Primary School

3.1. Production-oriented Approach

In order to solve the phenomenon of "Separation between Learning and Using" in EFL in China, and to tear down the inherent labels such as "much time but low efficiency", "high input but low output", and "dumb English, Professor Wen Qiufang created a theory of teaching method with Chinese characteristics and Chinese wisdom on the basis of Second Language Acquisition Theory and Foreign Language Teaching Theory at home and abroad. This is a useful attempt and educational innovation on the localization of foreign language teaching theory, which contributes to the dialogue between China's localized foreign language education theory and the world and improves the international right of speech of China.

Based on Swain's Output Hypothesis, the POA theory highlights that production includes the process and results of output, fully combines input and output, and affirms the important role of both in language acquisition. The theory holds that English teaching should take the " output " task as the starting point and goal, and use teachers' "input" teaching

and evaluation as the means to guide students to integrate the study with the application. Since output is not only the drive of language acquisition, but also the goal of language output, it aims to improve the absorption rate of input; Input provides output with optional high-quality language, content and structure, contributing a virtuous circle and avoiding the disconnection between input and output; Teacher plays a leading role in checking input materials and evaluating learning effects to ensure the achievement of teaching objectives; The last step is teacher-student cooperative evaluation, not only to make an immediate evaluation of the selective learning and output practice in enabling, but also to make a delayed evaluation of the output results completed by students themselves, so as to realize the real "Assessment-for-Learning". This theory strongly advocates "learner-centered" theory, challenges the current popular "student-centered" concept of foreign language teaching, breaks the shackles of the traditional "teacher-centered" concept, and proposes that teaching activities should be carried out reasonably in a limited classroom, giving full play to students' initiative, accomplishing the established teaching objectives, and achieving effective learning.

3.2. The Connotation of 'Micro-discourse' Writing

The current English instruction in junior high school still has many "tricky" problems, for example, students have weak foundation, which easily produce fear of difficulty and reduce self-efficacy; teachers do not pay enough attention to writing, plus the limited class teaching hours, students cannot be given enough time to complete 80 words of writing exercises. Therefore, students lack deep thinking in the writing process and are unable to achieve the purpose of discourse writing; the time for marking is too long to provide timely feedback; in terms of writing effect, students' writing often has problems such as vacuous content, loose structure, logical confusion, and repeated expression. In writing training, the use frequency of new vocabulary and new sentence patterns learned in class is too low. In a word, "Micro-discourse" writing aims to help junior high school students solve the above problems, make disciplinary knowledge and writing ability 'alive', and become the true embodiment of students' self-expression and self-improvement.

"Micro-discourse" writing refers to that teachers provide writing themes and high-quality corpus in class, and organize students to use the given materials to complete a 5–10-minute writing training which needs to write a "Micro-discourse" composed of 4-6 sentences. The corpus includes but not limited to words, phrases, sentence patterns, etc. The themes and requirements should be targeted and operable in order to ensure the effective completion of writing tasks and the precise focus of teaching objectives. "Micro-discourse" writing mainly has three "micro" advantages, which are summarized as follows:

1.Micro-length——Small length, less time. Compared with the serious and solemn 80-word composition in the senior high school entrance examination, "Micro-discourse" writing is about 40-50 words, which can greatly eliminate students' fear of difficulties. Completing a "Micro-discourse" will not take up too much class time, and makes it convenient for students to practice on their own every spare minute, promoting writing practice to become the norm.

2.Micro-elements——Fewer elements, higher efficiency. The basic elements of English writing are words, sentences and paragraphs, while "Micro-discourse" has only the first two elements, so it is unnecessary to consider what structure to use and how to divide the essay into several paragraphs. The distinctive elements allow students to write without being limited by genre and the writing ability, nor do they have to scrape together and write in generalities to meet the word count requirements. Additionally, the content of "Micro-discourse" is less, which is easier for students to memorize and construct a writing corpus: when writing a composition in the exam, students can quickly activate the corpus according to the writing theme and context, and extract relevant "Micro-discourse".

3.Micro-conception——Small conception, lower difficulty. Student need to conceive before writing, including determining a topic, selecting materials, and designing the whole discourse. The advantage of "Micro-discourse" writing training is that teachers will clarify the theme and give words, phrases and sentence patterns related to the theme; The form of conjunctions into sentences and conjunctions into articles greatly reduces the difficulty of writing. Therefore, students do not have to worry about 'I've got nothing in my mind', and then focus on how to make the conception profound and novel.

4. The Route of "Micro-discourse" Teaching Practice in Middle School Based on POA

4.1. Output-driven Stimulates Writing Interest

In order to reverse the traditional teaching mode of "Input before Output", the "Output-driven Hypothesis" advocates that learners should try to output in the beginning. After realizing the difficulty of output in a certain aspect, they will have a sense of hunger and urgency for learning, and then understandable input will be carried out. At last, the students complete the output successfully. This method is more suitable for students achieve the effective absorption of knowledge than direct input.

Taking PEP edition Unit 9 I like music that I can dance to as an example, teachers need to assign homework before class, that is, ask students to interview family members, friends and themselves the following question---- "What kind of music do you like? What is your favorite movie? Say the name of your favorite song and movie and explain the reason." In the class, the teacher first asks students to discuss the problem in groups for 3 minutes, and then selected a representative from each group to speak in turn. This process not only allows students to obtain the opportunity of oral practice, but also exercises their capability in language organization and expression. Since the discussion in group is quite different from standing up to answer questions, students are prone to tension when standing up, and may not be as fluent as in the discussion, so that they cannot output smoothly. When students perceive their own lack of ability, they will have a desire to learn. It should be noted that teachers should do a good job of guidance and encouragement to avoid excessive pressure on students. In this part, teachers can spread out the topic in various forms, such as interviews and surveys, games, scenario simulations, the use of props, group competitions, etc., to arouse students' enthusiasm for participation, take the student as a center, combine writing teaching with real context, activating the language knowledge. At the same time, the "output" link drives the generation of "input" needs, so as to introduce the theme of "Micro-discourse" writing, transform passive learning into active learning, promote

teacher-student interaction and peer interaction, increase study interest, and end up achieving the purpose of improving students' interest in writing.

4.2. Input-enabled Riches Language Knowledge

The former President of Stanford University, Donald Kennedy once said: "We actually learn to write by direct imitation, then try to get rid of imitation, and finally achieve independent and creative writing." Therefore, students' writing training should also be divided into two steps: imitation and creation. Firstly, students need to read a lot, because reading is the main source for learners to imitate and expand the corpus. Secondly, according to the theory of "Selective Learning Hypothesis", before out practice, teacher needs to give full play to the role of scaffolding., select language around the theme of writing, and guide students to choose the most appropriate expression with self- condition. According to the theory of "Input-enabled", students choose the required language form from input material, and apply the target language to the completion of the output task through various exercises. However, what should be paid attention to is that the source of input materials as teaching materials and imitation objects needs to be authoritative and malleable.

Taking PEP edition Unit 9 I like music that I can dance to as an example, the output link is to complete three "enabling" ---language-enabled, structure-enabled, and viewpoint-enabled. First of all, on the basis of teaching materials and extracurricular accumulation, students sort out the words, phrases and sentences related to the theme, and then the teacher is responsible for selecting and checking, and build a simple corpus. Teacher designs a reasonable teaching plan before class, uses multimedia to present corpus in class, and explains words, sentences and grammar in a simple way to deepen students' understanding and strengthen their memory. After the completion of the first stage of grammar learning, language learning should transition to the advanced stage, that is, the learning of discourse knowledge. Teachers provide a complete discourse of interest to the student, in order to help students acquire discourse knowledge including content, structure, logic and context, and provide students with opportunities to contact various discourse types, so as to truly understand the theme and meaning of the discourse; For this text, teacher can arrange multi-level and diversified task-based activities, consolidate language skills with output exercises, and maximize the learning effect enabled by input.

4.3. Output Practice Achieves the Integration of Learning and Using

The POA theory starts with output and ends with output. Compared with the first output link, the purpose of the second output activity is to consolidate the learned knowledge, train writing skills, and achieve the unity of learning and using. Therefore, output practice plays an important role in the process of language acquisition. "Micro-discourse" writing training belongs to output practice. Starting from solving students' writing problems, it designs writing activities with moderate difficulty, stimulates students' motivation to solve problems, promotes students to train themselves, and achieves "application for promoting learning", "learning for application", and "have achieved something".

Taking PEP edition Unit 9 I like music that I can dance to as an example, "Micro-discourse" writing activity is designed as follows: set specific themes based on the learning objectives of this unit, create real-life discourse situations, build writing scaffolds, and meet the "communication" and "use" functions of language:

If you are Li Hua, a middle school student, who recently enjoyed watching the music program--- "The American Voice" hosted by American host Mike. According to the main points provided, please write a letter to the host in English, about 50 words (only the text part).

Using the corpus given in the class, students are asked to complete the time-limited writing training according to the "Micro-discourse" topic. After the writings are displayed and evaluated in the class, they should hand it over to the teacher for review. Before school finishes, teacher deals the compositions to the class, and assign writing assignment, which is to complete a similar practical writing of 80 words with the given situation, namely, to expand the "Micro-discourse" in class. Because practical writing serves real communication occasions, which avoids writing training becoming a mere formality. So, make it practical and realize the transfer of knowledge and skills, to cultivate students' higher-order thinking skill and comprehensive language application ability. The form of "Micro-discourse" writing can be extended to keyword writing, sentence translation writing, text imitation writing, expansion writing, continuation writing, etc., learning different discourse forms and feeling the beauty of various languages.

4.4. Teacher-student Evaluation Promotes Learning

In order to solve the problem of single subject, method and content of teaching evaluation, POA teaching concept emphasizes the organic combination of "Evaluation and Learning" and "Evaluation and Teaching", and neither can be dispensed with. The basic education curriculum reform advocates that process evaluation and summative evaluation should complement each other in teaching, and strive to maximize the role of teaching evaluation. The main body of the class is actually students, thus teachers should give full play to the role of scaffolding, increase interaction with students, stimulate their interest in learning, and give targeted process evaluation by observing students' performance, listing to their feedback, carrying out teaching activities and teacher-student cooperation evaluation as well, using stage test to comprehensively examine learning effect for a period of time, improving the credibility, accuracy and completeness of teaching evaluation, and enhancing students' awareness of independent learning.

Taking PEP edition Unit 9 I like music that I can dance to as an example, this part is divided into instant cooperative evaluation and delayed individual evaluation. Instant cooperative evaluation means that after having output practice, students show their writing results on the spot with peer evaluation, and then teacher summarizes and supplements the assessment, which realizes the cooperative evaluation between teachers and students. Teacher should reward students who write well, encourage all the students, and allow other students who haven't present themselves to exchange their writings. The comments should point out the advantages as well as disadvantages. Delayed individual evaluation refers to that, students' compositions should be submitted after class, and the teacher corrects and comments these writings one by one. Also, the comments are supposed to focus on encouragement in order to arouse students' writing motivation. It should be noted that traditional writing

instruction often ignores the importance of correction and feedback, hindering students' writing ability to be substantially improved. Therefore, we should pay special attention to the quality and quantity of teaching evaluation. Writing feedback must be conveyed to students in time before school so that it will enhance the timeliness of training, and achieve "promoting learning by evaluation". And assign homework--- completing a practical article, so as to ensure the effectiveness of feedback and maximize the individual promotion of teaching evaluation in a short time. This kind of practice is essentially a process of self-testing and self-evaluation of students' learning, which is helpful to set up "key archives", "archives of difficulty" and "archives of error", realizing the self-development of writing ability.

5. Conclusion

With the continuous promotion of the new curriculum education reform in English teaching and writing training, junior high school English classes pay more attention to the improvement of quality-oriented education, student experience, teacher-student communication, and subject practicality. It is required to implement quality education in middle school English teaching, earnestly practice the teaching concept of discipline education, create a high-quality education environment, and write a new chapter in the high-quality development of education. Starting from the common writing problems of middle school students, the "Micro-discourse" writing teaching is based on the Production-Oriented Approach and Discourse Analysis Theory, pointing to the solution of writing motivation, text plasticity, subject practicality, and feedback effectiveness. It provides an effective teaching method for middle school English writing, in order to improve the diversity, flexibility, interest, depth, logic, and efficiency of writing activities. As an important step to carry out writing training, "Micro-discourse" writing teaching cultivates students' ability to acquire, collect, process and extract information through the study of language knowledge, which not only originates from the text, relies on the text, but also returns to the text. Therefore, the study of discourse knowledge should be carried out step by step from shallow to deep, which is conducive to the successful implementation of topic-based writing. The teaching practice based on POA theory is divided into four teaching links: output-driven, input-enabled, output practice, and teacher-student evaluation. They are interlocking and inseparable. It emphasizes the combination of input learning and output practice, so that students can actively participate in the class, to think actively, to be willing to explore, to release vitality, to display personality, all of which contribute to build an efficient English classroom, and improve English teaching quality.

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