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Study of Literature Review Writing in English Academic Papers from the Perspective of Move-structure and Generic Theory

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Abstract: In English academic writing, genres play an important role, and move analysis is rooted in genre analysis. This study comprehensively discusses the three-move model of literature review and a six-step Genre-Based Instruction (GBI) approach. In the first study, 55 master's theses of a university majoring in foreign linguistics and applied linguistics were used as the corpus to study the moves of literature review. The results showed that students were not familiar enough with the moves and strategies of literature review, so they needed to strengthen their knowledge of the corpus. The second study guided junior English majors in a university to conduct English academic writing training. The results showed that under the guidance of GBI approach, the students' genre awareness was enhanced and the ability to use genre structure was improved.

Keywords: Literature Review; Move; Generic Theory; Academic Writing.

1. Introductory

In the current academic circle, the main channel of academic exchange in universities is academic papers. In the process of academic writing, there are also various customs. As an important consisting part of academic paper, literature review is the key to the success of academic writing, which can help scholars to understand and evaluate the previous research, and then put forward new research directions in the original field. (Cheng mingfang 2008)Kwan's(2006)three-move model of literature review is rooted in genre analysis. In his opinion, literature review can be divided into three moves, and each move is realized by several strategies.

Among them, move one determines the research direction, which is realized by three strategies: 1. State phenomena irrelevant to the current research. 2. State the phenomena related to the current research. 3. Demonstrate your main point.

Move two determines the research gap, which is realized by five strategies: 1. Point out the research gap. 2. Make a negative argument. 3. State proven opinions. 4. State the relevance of the confirmed opinions to the current research. 5. Construct the theoretical framework.

Move three is an optional step, which is mainly employed to fill the research gap. It is realized by the following strategies: Research purpose; Research focus; Research problem; To make a hypothesis; Theoretical framework; Research design; Explanation of terms.

Under the influence of the tendency of globalization, the academic exchanges between countries are increasingly close, which also has higher requirements for the current graduate students' English academic writing ability. In recent years, our graduate students' public English teaching has achieved rapid progress, but many students still lack the ability to write academic papers in English. (Guo Qiang 2006) At present, many scholars are aware of the deficiency of English academic writing for graduate students in China, and point out that understanding the communicative functions of specific genres can better help students to write academic theses. (Xu Youzhi, Guo Lihui, Xu Tao 2007)

In recent years, genre- based teaching has been widely used in the teaching of English academic writing. As an effective tool, genres can help non-native speakers understand the structural features of academic papers. (Hyland K. 2004) Bhatia (2004)holds that academic writing from the perspective of generic theory improves learners' specific generic abilities, that is to say, the ability to choose the right type of genres to write in the specific subject professional knowledge discourse, rather than their overall linguistic communicative abilities. However, in terms of vocabulary, grammar, discourse structure and other aspects, there are great differences between professional terms of specific disciplines and daily expressions. As a result, learners' daily writing experience cannot guarantee that they can write a good academic paper. (Conner L N. 2007) Of course, generic abilities can also be taught. Martin believes that generic abilities are acquired rather than innate, and they can be taught in different ways. (Zhang Delu 2010)

2. Methodology

2.1. An Analysis of Move Structure in Literature Review of English Academic Papers

Employing the Kwan's analytical framework (2006) and combining quantitative and qualitative statistical methods, Zhang Yan et al. analyzed a total of 55 master's degree dissertations of a university's students majoring in foreign linguistics and applied linguistics in 2018. The researchers first manually annotated and coded the corpus based on the Functional-semantic approach proposed by Lewin (2001), that is, to identify the move function by identifying the semantic features in the text. In this paper, there are two main criteria for the recognition of each genre: 1. Whether it has the typical structural model of the genre; 2. Whether it conforms to the social communicative purpose of a specific genre. After that, the marked strategies and moves are sorted out, and the frequency of their occurrence is counted. This study explores the literature review writing ability of graduate students in academic papers from two aspects: 1. Distribution

structure of literature review moves; 2. Frequency of literature review moves. Finally, two sets of data are analyzed to evaluate students' academic writing ability, and corresponding suggestions are put forward to improve students' academic writing abilities.

2.2. A Study of English Academic Writing Genre-Based Instruction (GBI) Approach

2.2.1. Genre-Based Instruction (GBI) Model

Huang Jie et al. proposed a "six-step" GBI model, namely deconstructing, modeling, identifying, imitating, peer reviewing and independent writing (Figure 1). The model reflects learners' psychological and behavioral processes of induction - strengthening - practicing - consolidating - applying.

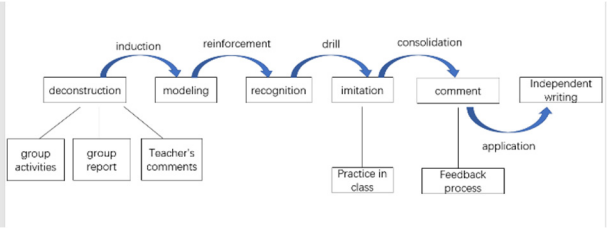


Figure 1. Six-step GBI model

(1) deconstructing

The primary task of teachers is to help students identify language features and discourse types. (Martin JR & Rose D. 2007) Deconstruction includes two parts: annotation and component. From the perspective of functional linguistics, annotation can be used to annotate the function label of each stage. Components are the stages that make up genres.

(2) modeling

By synthesizing the research methods of abstract and introduction (Bhatia V K. 1993; Samraj B.2002) and generic analysis methods (Hasan R. 1985; Swales JM. 1990), teachers guide students to gradually build a generic model.

(3) identifying

Students strengthen the new generic knowledge in the brain and point out the generic features of the new discourse according to the constructed model.

(4) imitating

Students write according to the materials provided by the teacher.

(5) peer reviewing

Students conduct inter-group evaluation to form procedural knowledge.

(6) independent writing

Students use their generic knowledge to write literature reviews independently.

2.2.2. Genre-Based Instruction (GBI) Practice

Huang Jie et al. conducted a teaching experiment of "literature review" writing. The research objects were 50 junior English majors in a domestic university, which were divided into experimental class and control class, with 25 students in each class. The goal of the course is "to provide students with the appropriate literature to produce a successful literature review in English academic paper ". The experimental class adopted the "six-step" GBI model, while the control class adopted the traditional lecture model. In the teaching process, teachers play the role of guidance and observation, while students participate and report.

In the stage of deconstruction and modeling, teachers guide students to make functional labeling of sentences in the materials and establish a literature review generic model. In the identifying stage, students were divided into groups to analyze the generic types and language of the materials. In the imitation-reinforcement phase, students were asked to complete a short literature review, with teacher comments and group reviews.

3. Analysis

3.1. An Analysis of Move Structure in Literature Review of English Academic Papers

In this study, we obtained the structural features of the moves in the literature review of major of foreign linguistics and applied linguistics. The occurrence frequency of identifying research gaps in move two and filling research gaps in move three is higher than others. Strategy 3 (stating proven opinions) and strategy 1 (pointing out research gaps) in move two, and strategy 7 in move three (explanation of terms) have occurred most frequently, accounting for 100%, 85% and 78% respectively. The occurrence frequency of Strategy 5 (theoretical framework) in move three is a little lower than the previous, accounting for 56% of the total number of papers. In addition, in 16 of the 31 literature reviews, the theoretical framework appeared in the paper as a separate chapter, rather than as a part of the literature review. The lower is the strategy 2 (stating the phenomena related to the current research) in move one and Step 3 (research purpose, research focus, research question and to make a hypothesis). The frequency of strategy 2 and Step 3 is 36% and 35% respectively. There are two strategies that do not appear at all. They are strategy 3 in move one (demonstrating your main point) and strategy 2 in move two (making a negative argument).

In addition, these papers have the following characteristics:

(1) A summary paragraph is added at the end of the literature review of 6 papers. Most of the content is limited to summarizing the content of this chapter and proposing the research purpose, and the author's own thinking and evaluation of the literature review is relatively lacking.

(2) Most of the literature reviews of these papers begin with a chapter framework. There are only 6 literature reviews without a chapter framework, and there is even one paper whose literature review begins with an introduction. In addition, the significance of the research was designed in the literature review of 6 papers.

(3) The distribution of moves is not always in the order from move one to move three or in a progressive writing order. Its main distribution structure is as follows: Strategy 7 in move three (explanation of terms), strategy 3(stating proven opinions) and strategy 1 (pointing out that research gap) in move two appear alternately.

(4) The literature reviews of these papers all include Strategy 3 (stating proven opinions) in move two. Nearly half of the literature reviews of the papers contain the structure of strategy 7 in move three, strategy 1 and strategy 3 in move two. Moreover, these three strategies are arranged in a certain order, that is, explain the terms first, then state the proven opinions, and finally point out the research gaps. At the same time, the literature reviews of these papers did not demonstrate the main idea (strategy 3 in move one) or make a negative argument (strategy 2 in move two).

In a word, the distribution of moves in the literature review

of the master's degree thesis in major foreign linguistics and applied linguistics of the university does not accord with the generic structure model proposed by Kwan. This is mainly due to the fact that most students are not familiar enough with the moves and strategies of literature review, and lack of understanding of the logical structure of this part, which is mainly manifested in the following situations:

First, some move strategies in literature review were repeatedly used, while some key move strategies were neglected, and the internal structure of literature review was messy. It shows that the writer lacks perfect knowledge of academic genre, the logical thinking of writing needs to be strengthened, and the content layout of literature review needs to be improved. Niu Guiling (2018), also came to a similar conclusion in her research. She said that there are still many chinglish writing styles in the introduction of Chinese academic papers, such as the more significant inversion of moves and the less prominent features of language types.

Second, the students' evaluation ability and consciousness need to be improved. In the literature review of these papers, most of the students just listed and summarized the previous research, and then pointed out the gaps in the research. However, they rarely talked about their own views and evaluation of the previous research, and lacked their own research perspectives and discussions.

To solve these problems, this study aims to improve students' academic writing and literature review generic construction ability from two aspects, namely, the use of Genre-Based Instruction method and strengthening learners' awareness of literature review genres, so as to achieve the specific communicative purpose of the genres. So, there are several suggestions to improve the quality of essays and students' writing ability.

First of all, there should be more communication and interaction between teachers and students. At present, most teachers in Chinese universities only teach knowledge in textbooks, and the learning model of interactive teaching between teachers and students is still rare. There is still a big gap between textbook knowledge and practice. Academic writing is an applied and highly targeted academic skill. It is difficult for students to master writing skills purely by traditional teaching. Therefore, teachers and students need to have a lot of interaction in class, at the same time, students need to read the latest international journals in the field and have a lot of academic writing practice after class, so as to improve the level of academic writing.

Secondly, students need to strengthen the generic awareness of academic writing, and standardize their academic writing. English academic writing ability is a direct reflection of students' academic research ability, English writing level and professional quality. There is still a big gap between the writing quality of most students' literature reviews of papers and that of high-level academic papers. Therefore, in the course of academic writing, teachers are ought to help students fully understand the generic features of academic papers, and to guide them to summarize, generalize and apply the writing paradigm in the internationally recognized English academic texts of this discipline.

3.2. A Study of English Academic Writing Genre-Based Instruction (GBI) Approach

The results show that in terms of generic structure, students can first propose the research background, and then sort out the literature and describe the current situation. The majority of students (60%) identified a current research gap, while a minority (36%) predicted the current research. There was a significant positive correlation between generic structure and writing performance ($R= 0.647$, $P < 0.05$), but no significant correlation with language accuracy/fluency ($R= 0.342$, $P = 0.095$).

This experiment compared the academic paper writing performance of the experimental class and the control class, and found that specific generic knowledge has an obvious effect on the improvement of students' academic paper ability, and GBI model can make learners master certain generic knowledge during a short period. In terms of tenor, students in the experimental class tend to use more modal verbs and evidential words such as "possible, probably" and their uses of tenses are more accurate than those in the control class. In terms of language use, the students in the experimental class paid more attention to the standardization of language expression, and used more long sentences, without informal expressions such as slang. Moreover, there are obvious differences between the experimental class and the control class in paper format, paper arrangement and other aspects.

The teaching practice of academic writing of literature reviews shows that the "six-step" GBI model is more effective than the traditional lecture teaching method:

1. GBI model has a short teaching period and less investment, but it can effectively improve students' generic awareness and academic writing ability. (Brown GTL & Marshall JC. 2012)

2. With the help of generic analysis model, GBI model enables students to actively analyze and summarize the literature review model of academic papers and make it explicit. In this way, students can rely on activated prior knowledge when writing the literature review of a new paper.

3. GBI model makes students realize that language function and form are closely related, and the language and structure used in academic papers are designed to meet the needs of academic communication.

4. Conclusion

With the review mechanism of postgraduate academic papers becoming more and more strict, students pay more and more attention to academic writing. Literature review is an indispensable part of academic papers, and a good literature review can fully show the development process of research to readers. At present, there are still some problems in the literature review of academic papers of undergraduate and postgraduate students in some domestic universities, such as: lack of generic awareness, lack of perspective and thinking of literature review, not proficient in literature review writing model and so on. To improve this problem, on the one hand, teachers can use the "six-step" GBI model to improve students' generic awareness and academic writing ability, so as to help students establish a generic model of academic writing. On the other hand, students should improve their motivation of academic writing, and read more literature.

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