Genre-Based Approach in Business Translation Teaching

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT

Genre-based teaching approach is a pedagogy based on genre and genre analysis theory. Based on this teaching approach, the paper puts forward a three-stage model appropriate for the teaching of business English reading. It develops teaching activities focusing on the schematic structure of a discourse. Its purpose is to make students know that the discourses with different genres have different communicative purposes and discourse structures. Through a theoretical analysis and empirical study of the model, it is concluded that genre-based teaching approach can effectively help students improve their ability of business English reading comprehension.

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the reform and opening up and the continuous development of economic globalization, China's foreign trade activities have become more and more frequent, and the demand for business English talents in society has become greater and greater. In response to this demand, China's major universities have opened business English reading courses, but, at present, China's business English reading teaching is influenced by the traditional English grammar translation teaching. In order to help students understand, teachers often translate the reading materials word by word and sentence by sentence. Over time, teachers pay too much attention to the explanation of low-level language structures such as words and grammar, but neglect to guide students to understand the reading materials from the perspective of the overall discourse. In the classroom, students are only passive recipients, and some even think that learning business English reading is all about memorizing some professional vocabulary, translating and analyzing long and difficult sentences, while completely ignoring the importance of business knowledge and discourse structure for reading comprehension. This kind of traditional business English reading teaching does not help students to analyse the macro structure of business discourse, ignoring the social function and communicative purpose of the discourse, and it does not enable students to understand the essence of reading comprehension and to read at a deeper level. Therefore, this traditional reading teaching method does not help students to improve their business English reading skills. The genre-based approach systematically explores the relationship between linguistic and contextual elements, as well as the meanings and communicative functions they express, and enables students to understand the discourse characteristics and communicative functions of different genres of business English texts through the analysis of

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examples. This paper examines whether the genre-based three-part business English reading teaching model can effectively improve students' business English reading skills through qualitative and quantitative research methods.

2. Overview of Research on Genre-Based Pedagogy

The genre-based approach was developed in the 1980s and is a teaching method based on genre[1]. It consciously applies genre and genre analysis theories to classroom teaching and carries out teaching activities around the schematic structure of discourse. Its fundamental aims are: 1) to guide students to master the different communicative purposes and discourse structures of discourse belonging to different genres; 2) to make students realize that discourse is not only a linguistic construction but also a social construction of meaning; 3) to guide students to master the schematic structure of discourse, 4) to help students to understand the construction process of discourse and to comprehend and write discourse in a particular genre. In teaching practice, there are three main schools of thought on genre teaching[3].

2.1 The Genre Approach of the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) School

Researchers in the English for Special Purposes (ESP) school focus on the teaching of English to non-English speakers, hoping that the genre approach will help learners of English as a foreign language to grasp the functions of the language in their respective domains and the statutes of the discourse. The representative figure of this school, swales[5]describes the structural patterns of genre through step-by-step and step-by-step analysis.

2.2 The New Rhetorical School of Genre Pedagogy

The researchers of this school are mainly a group of scholars who are engaged in the study of rhetorical composition and the teaching of professional writing in North America. They are concerned with high levels of native language education and hope that genre pedagogy will help college students and newcomers to a profession understand the social functions of a particular genre and the contexts in which it is used. Rather than focusing on the structural form of genres, the new rhetorical school focuses on the social context in which genres are formed, and on the social actions and purposes that can be performed by the discourse.

2.3 The Australian School of Genre Pedagogy

This school is concerned with language teaching in

primary, secondary and adult education. As early as the late 1980s, they created the Cultural Education Research Network with the aim of introducing a writing pedagogy in primary and secondary schools that would help students to acquire writing skills in the various genres required by the program. Under this genre-based approach, teachers introduce students to genres that they will encounter in their future lives and improve their writing skills through genre analysis.

In summary, these three schools of genre-based pedagogy each have their own focus in terms of teaching objectives, and their teaching frameworks and pedagogical steps differ. Their definitions of genre are essentially the same, and they are able to agree on the following points: 1) Communicative purpose is the core of genre. It determines the existence of genre, forms the 'schematic structure' of the discourse, and influences its content and style [2]. 2) Genre is conventional in nature. It is a programmed tool for social interaction that is shared by language users and whose basic principles cannot be changed at will. 3) the conventional nature of genre does not mean that genre is static. Due to cultural factors and discourse variables, there are still some differences between discourses belonging to the same genre, and people can be creative without destroying the basic structure of the genre (Ju Yumei, 2014:86).

In China, scholars such as Qin Xiubai [8]introduced genre theory in the late 1990s, and then genre theory has attracted a great deal of attention from scholars in China. In the past ten years or so, scholars in China have made great progress in their research on genre theory, whether in terms of the number of studies, the content of studies, the depth of studies or the methods of studies. Among them, Chen Ping, Zeng Xiangjuan, Li Sen, Zhao Xiufeng, Li Hongmei and Li Ruifang have applied the ESP school's genre teaching method to English reading and writing teaching and published articles on it[9].

Although some results have been achieved in the study of genre analysis in China, compared with foreign research, China's research has started late and developed slowly, mostly borrowing from foreign research theories, with few innovative and empirical research results. This study is an empirical study based on genre analysis theory to explore the effectiveness of genre-based teaching methods in business English reading courses.

3. A Genre-Based Three-Stage Business English Reading Teaching Model

The genre-based approach applies theories of genre and genre analysis to classroom teaching and develops

teaching activities around the schematic structure of the discourse [6] The author has designed a genre-based three-stage teaching model for business English reading based on his understanding of genre teaching methods and the actual teaching of business English reading. The whole teaching process of this model is divided into three stages: pre-class preparation, classroom learning and post-class consolidation exercises.

3.1 Stage 1: Pre-Lesson Preparation

In this stage, students can be guided through pre-course preparation by creating a micro-learning video. As the reading material in Business English is highly specialized, it is necessary to make the reading material to be studied in class available to students before class, so that they can familiarize themselves with the content of the business reading material, understand the relevant professional background knowledge and have a general understanding of the linguistic features and chapter structure of the genre, in preparation for the next stage of learning.

3.2 Stage 2: Classroom Learning (Genre Analysis Approach)

This stage of classroom learning is divided into three specific steps.

3.2.1 Step 1: Genre Analysis

In the genre analysis of the reading material, the teacher first uses a heuristic approach to guide students to recognize the genre to which the text belongs, to identify the author's purpose in writing from the content of the reading material, i.e. the communicative purpose of the text in that genre, and then to have students discuss and analyse how the author has planned and composed the text around this purpose, i.e. to analyse the pictorial structure of the particular genre. Finally, the teacher summarizes the results of students' discussions and draws out the linguistic features and chapter structure of texts in that genre, helping students to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content and structural features of the genre and to form a pictorial structure of the genre in their minds. The teacher should first introduce the genre of the reading material to the students.

3.2.2 Step 2: Independent Analysis

The teacher chooses another text of the same genre from the previous genre analysis for students to read independently. In the process of reading, students are asked to find out the purpose of the piece of writing, the linguistic features and the schematic structure of the piece of writing

according to the genre analysis method, so that they can further grasp the characteristics of the genre through active reading. This process is one of independent thinking and internationalize of knowledge.

3.2.3 Step 3: Intensive Practice

In order to clarify students' awareness of the genre and further strengthen their understanding of the structure of the genre, teachers can give students a chapter restructuring exercise, in which the whole text is divided into several parts according to the schematic structure, and then the order of these parts is disrupted and students can rearrange them.

For example, teaching genre analysis for a cover letter can be divided into the following steps.

(1) Outline the contextual variables of the cover letter. Contextual variables include the purpose of the communication, the type of scene, the thematic event, the communication media and the participants in the communication event [7].

(2) Establish a genre schematic structure for the cover letter, which is usually summarized in seven "steps": a. Introduce the candidate; b. Identify the credentials; c. Encourage the acceptance of the application; d. Refer to the accompanying materials; e. Use pressure tactics; f. Request a response; and g. Close politely.

(3) Discuss in groups the communicative purpose of the cover letter.

(4) Discuss in groups and analyse the features of each speech step on three levels: functional, interpretative and linguistic.

(5) Summarize the general features of a cover letter.

(6) Practise writing a cover letter.

3.3 Stage 3: Post-Lesson Consolidation Exercises

At the end of the lesson, the teacher assigns students some writing tasks (e.g. writing a cover letter), so that they can practise writing in a particular genre and further test their mastery of the linguistic style and structural features of various genres of business English.

4. Experimenting with Genre-Based Business English Reading Teaching

The author applies the genre-based three-part business English reading model to teaching practice and conducts a pilot experiment using a quasi-experimental design with an unequal group pretest and post test [4]to verify that this model improves students' business English reading ability. In addition, students were given a pretest and post-test to test their reading skills. In addition, a pretest and post-test

interview with students was conducted to examine whether this model enhanced students' interest in reading.

4.1 Purpose of the Experiment

The aim of this experiment was to verify whether the genre-based three-stage business English reading model could be applied to the teaching practice of business English reading, whether the model could help reform the traditional business English reading teaching, cultivate students' interest in reading, help students improve their reading speed and efficiency, and enable students' confidence in business English reading to increase substantially, thus improving students' business English reading ability [10].

4.2 Experimental Process

The experimental study was conducted with students from Business English classes 1301 and 1302 at Zhejiang Yuexiu College of Foreign Languages during a ten-month period from March 2014 to December 2014. These two parallel classes were of equal size, had equal English bases and used the same teaching materials. The experimental class (Class 1301) was taught using a genre-based three-stage business English reading teaching model, while the control class (Class 1302) was taught using the traditional reading teaching method. The whole experimental process was divided into two stages: the experimental design and preparation stage and the experimental implementation stage.

4.2.1 Stage 1: Experimental Design and Preparation

(1) The experimental class was taught using the genre teaching method, while the control class was taught using the traditional reading teaching method.

(2) The experimental class studied one model text from one genre each week; the control class also studied one model text each week.

(3) Both the experimental class and the control class have the same teacher and the number of teaching hours is two hours per week.

(4) The specific teaching steps of the genre-based three-stage business English reading teaching model in the experimental class were: preparation before class, learning in class and consolidation practice after class.

(5) Evaluate the validity of the two sets of reading test papers before and after the experiment.

(6) Pretest: pre-experimental reading test; pre-experimental student interview.

4.2.2 Stage 2: Experimental Implementation

The experimental class was taught using a genre-based three-part business English reading teaching model for ten months.

The specific teaching steps of the genre-based three-stage business English reading teaching model are: pre-class preparation, classroom learning and post-class consolidation exercises.

(1) The pre-course preparation stage is an important preparation stage for classroom learning, in which students are asked to prepare themselves, look up the dictionary, solve some language problems, familiarize themselves with the content of the reading materials and understand the relevant professional background knowledge.

(2) Classroom learning is divided into three steps according to the genre-based three-stage business English reading teaching model described earlier:

Step 1: Genre analysis lasts approximately 45 minutes;

Step 2: Independent analysis lasts approximately 25 minutes;

Step 3: Intensive practice lasts approximately 20 minutes.

(3) The post-lesson consolidation exercise stage was mainly to assign students some writing tasks, so that they could imitate the graphic structure of the model text and carry out writing exercises to further test their mastery of the language style and structural features of the model text.

5. Analysis and Discussion of Experimental Results

5.1 Analysis of the Experimental Results of the Performance Comparison

The pretest of the two classes' performance was conducted in the pre-experimental period, and the post-test was conducted after the experiment. The data collected in this study were statistically analysed using the statistical software for social sciences, SPSS 17.0, and the pre and post-test scores were analysed using independent samples t-tests to produce the following results.

5.1.1 No Significant Difference between the Mean Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups on the Pretest

As can be seen from Table 1, the mean scores of the total scores of the experimental and control groups were 62.36 and 62.25 respectively, with a t-value of 0.302 (p=0.768 >0.05), indicating that the pretest scores of the

Table 1. Results of independent sample t-test for pretest scores

Item	Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	t	P(double test)
Total score	Experimental group	62.36	6.25	0.302	0.768
	Control group	62.25	7.38		
Subjective questions	Experimental group	25.45	2.89	1.104	0.647
	Control group	25.08	3.24		
Objective questions	Experimental group	36.91	3.78	-0.279	0.805
	Control group	37.17	4.69		

Table 2. Results of independent sample t-tests for post-test scores

Item	Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	t	P(double test)
Total score	Experimental group	72.82	7.06	3.125	0.027
	Control group	64.21	6.57		
Subjective questions	Experimental group	29.99	2.87	2.215	0.037
	Control group	26.46	2.54		
Objective questions	Experimental group	42.83	4.34	4.364	0.002
	Control group	37.75	4.26		

experimental and control groups did not reach significant differences. There was no significant difference between the subjective scores (t=1.104, p=0.647 >0.05) as well as the objective scores (t=-0.279, p=0.805 >0.05).

5.1.2 Significant Difference between the Mean Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups on the Post-Test

At the end of the experiment, the mean of the total scores of the experimental and control groups were 72.82 and 64.21, with a t-value of 3.125 (p=0.027<0.01), which reached a highly significant difference, indicating that the overall level of business English of the experimental group was better than that of the control group. There were significant differences between the two groups in both subjective (t=2.215, p=0.037<0.05) and objective scores (t=4.364, p=0.002<0.01) (see Table 2).

According to the results of the study, the experimental group receiving the three-stage genre teaching method significantly outperformed the control group receiving the traditional teaching in terms of post-test scores, but the

difference between the pretest scores of the experimental group and the control group was not significant. After about 15 weeks of experimental teaching, the gap between the experimental and control groups' business English reading scores had widened, with the experimental group improving significantly more than the control group. This indicates that the three-stage genre teaching method is more conducive to the improvement of students' business English reading levels.

5.2 Analysis of the Experimental Results of the Interviews

5.2.1 Analysis of the Feedback from the First Interview

(1) In business English reading, the difficulties students often encountered were: lack of professional background knowledge, low vocabulary, inappropriate reading skills, and lack of interest and confidence in reading.

(2) Influenced by traditional teaching methods, many students do not understand the nature of reading and do not read at a deeper level. They think that reading is about

learning words and grammar, and that it is enough if they can expand their vocabulary and figure out the meaning of sentences. In reading, students focus excessively on the usage of new words at the expense of the importance of the discourse to reading comprehension. They do not consider the purpose of the author's writing, nor do they care about how the author has composed the sentences and the layout of the text.

(3) In the classroom, students relied excessively on the teacher.

5.2.2 Analysis of Feedback from the Second Interview

After the teaching experiment, the author conducted a second interview with the 30 students who were interviewed for the first time. Most of the students recognized the positive effects of the genre teaching method in teaching business English reading and believed that their reading ability had been improved, mainly in the following ways:

(1) Most students' awareness of genre was enhanced and they were able to clearly know the characteristics and differences between different genres of texts.

(2) Students pay more attention to the structural features and language style of texts in the process of reading.

(3) Students learn how to find key information in texts according to the characteristics of the genre.

(4) Students read faster when they understand the graphic structure of the genre.

(5) Students change their old habit of reading word by word and sentence by sentence.

(6) Confidence in reading has increased and students have begun to enjoy reading.

At the same time, some students reported that they could not master all the genres of business English because there were so many of them. Students sometimes find it boring to analyses one genre of text in one lesson.

6. Conclusion

After two semesters of teaching experiments, the author compared the data of reading test scores before and after the experiment and analyzed the feedback from students' interviews, and came to the following conclusions: Firstly, the genre-based three-part business English reading teaching model can stimulate students' interest in learning and help them to enhance their confidence in reading. Secondly, the model can strengthen students' genre awareness and improve their reading speed and efficiency. Finally, the model can improve students' deeper understanding of the discourse. After mastering genre and genre anal-

ysis theory, students can actively use genre analysis to understand and evaluate reading materials and appreciate discourse with an appreciative eye, which can play a positive role in improving students' reading ability in business English. In summary, the genre-based three-part business English reading teaching model can be effectively applied to the teaching of business English reading and effectively improve students' business English reading skills. However, there are some limitations to this model. For example, the genre approach focuses only on the parts of speech and does not emphasize vocabulary and grammar, which makes it easy for students to neglect their basic knowledge of the language. In addition, students may find classroom teaching boring due to the statute of genre.

Acknowledgment

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