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Review Article

A Review on Researches of "Genre-Based Teaching Approaches" in Recent 20 Years in China

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Abstract: The "genre-based teaching approach" is a new method for English teaching in China. In this paper, the related researches of "genre-based teaching approach" in the past two decades are reviewed from the following aspects: basic concepts of "genre", "genre analysis" and "genre-based teaching approach", research stages, research angles, problems and suggestions. The lack of theoretical innovations and appliance to various fields of the current researches are pointed out to be further studied.

Keywords: Genre, Genre-Based Teaching Approaches (GBTA for Short), Review

1. Introduction

1.1. The Importance of "Genre-Based Teaching Approach"

Since the reform and opening up in China, China has put increasing emphasis on English teaching and learning. Thus, many methods for English teaching are introduced from western countries. The first is Grammar-Translation Method. This method requires learners to learn English by translation and focuses on grammar instruction. Teachers, who are treated as authority, instill knowledge to learners with few communication with them. This method emphasizes on written language not the oral one, and pays no attention to the actual use of English. Then comes the Direct Method. It excludes mother tongue in classroom teaching, requires learners to imitate and uses some visual aids for teaching. Compared with the Grammar-Translation Method, it stresses on oral English but ignores grammar instruction. The third is the Audio-lingual Method, which requires learners to learn English mainly by dialogue imitation and sentence pattern practice. However, this kind of drill is too mechanic to arouse learners' interest and weighs too much on the form of language but ignores the content. The fourth is the Situational Teaching Method, which closely links language teaching to reality. The fifth is the Cognitive Approach, which requires learners to drill after acquiring certain grammar rules and is

helpful for learners to use the language accurately and appropriately. The Communicative Language Teaching Approach is still popular in some areas in China, the goal of which is to cultivate learners' ability to use English to communicate. However, this method is effective only for those with high level of English. The Task-based Language Teaching helps learners learn English by finishing individual tasks delivered by teachers, and is helpful to help learners develop comprehensive language proficiency.

In 1990s, the GBTA was introduced to China. It is based on genre and genre analysis and requires teachers to consciously apply genre and genre analysis theory to classroom teaching, and to carry on teaching activities based on the schemata of a discourse [1]. The purposes that this approach seeks to achieve are as follows: (1) learners will be familiar with communicative purposes and discourse structures of different genres; (2) learners are guided to comprehend the schemata of a genre and how a discourse is constructed so that they can comprehend a specific discourse and create a discourse of the same genre [2]. Through this approach, learners have not only the input of language by reading and concluding the schemata of a discourse, but the output by creating similar discourse. Thus, this approach is especially important for applied English teaching and learning.

1.2. Data Source and Analysis

In recent years, GBTA have received much attention and have been increasingly applied to daily teaching practices and frequently studied by researchers and front-line teachers.

The author uses CNKI Chinese Journal full-text database, "genre" and "genre analysis" as the theme of the word frequency to search all the papers from 1998 to 2017, and the total number is 3335 and 746 respectively. It is easy to see that in the recent 20 years, "genre" and "genre analysis" have become a heated research area. In order to focus on the direction of English teaching, the author again searches the term to GBTA and finds 386 papers in recent 20 years. This paper reviews the current study of GBTA from the aspects of basic concepts, research stages, research angles, problems and suggestions.

2. Research Content

2.1. Basic Concepts

2.1.1. Genre

With the development of discourse analysis, linguists thought that merely analyzing language itself was far from enough, thus they developed great interest in analyzing social and cultural factors of the genre. Researches and studies of genre can be concluded into three schools: New Rhetoric School, Swalesian School and Australian School.

New Rhetoric School was first founded by Miller [3] in his article *Genre as Social Action,* he thought that from the rhetorical perspective, the definition of genre should not just focus on the content or form of the discourse, but on the social action that a discourse can make. He also pointed that genre was changeable and developing and would even disappear. Scholars of New Rhetoric School stresses dynamic quality of genres, and they think that genres are historical and social-cultural texts instead of static and immutable ones i.e. genre as typification [4]. In all, New Rhetoric School closely links genre researches and social-cultural phenomena through repeated social typical events, focusing on the social environment of genre formation and social action and purpose of the genre, to help graduates and novices understand social functions of certain genres and their usage [5].

Two representatives of Swalesian School are Swales and Bhaia. In his book *Genre Analysis*, Swales [6] mentioned three points: (1) genre is a form of communication and thus has such function; (2) the purpose of communication is an important factor to choose a genre; (3) the purpose of communication and the topic decide the form, content and language difficulty of the discourse. Discourses of the same genre have the same schemata in general, and this schemata affects the content and language style of the discourse in turn. Bhatia's theory is similar to Swales's and can be concluded as follows [7]: (1) genre is a recognizable communicative event, which often appears in a specific occupation or academic troupe, and is characterized by a set of communicative purposes that can be affirmed and understood by the community. Thus, the purpose of communication is the most important standard to distinguish a genre; (2) genre is not a common communicative event, but a group of communicative events with distinctive internal structure and high degree of convention; (3) the construction of discourse follows a convention required by a particular genre, as the genre has conventional constraints on discourse construction; (4) although genre has its own conventions and constraints, people in a certain community can still convey personal intentions or communicative purposes within the framework of this genre.

The theoretical basis of Australian School is Halliday's systemic functional linguistics. Thus, scholars have a different explanation of genre from Swalesian School. Hasan [8] thinks that genre is a type of discourse and it is determined mainly by the field. In her opinion, these three concepts, i.e. genre, register and the type of discourse, can be used interchangeably. However, Martin has a different view on genre from Hasan. He agrees with Halliday that genre is relevant to field, tenor and language style, but he believes that the genre is closely related to the overall objective produced by these three variables. In his opinion, a genre is a staged, goal-oriented social process. Martin believes that both register and genre are inherently symbolic systems and that register is a situational context that contains three variables: field, tenor and style. Genre is cultural context, implemented by register which is implemented by the language itself [9].

Judging from the above statement, we can see that the definitions of genre by Swalesian and Australian schools are the same in essence and their commonalities are reflected in the following aspects: (1) they both agree that the purpose of communication determines the kind of genre; (2) they both emphasize the regularity and restraint of the genre. They think that the genre is a kind of stylized social interaction tool that the users of the language abide by. They are repetitive and habitual, and their basic principles can not be arbitrarily changed; (3) there are differences among discourses of the same genre.

2.1.2. Genre Analysis

Genre analysis, which has prevailed in the United States and Australia since the 1990s, has also had a significant impact on China. Genre analysis is the product of interdisciplinary researches, involving not only stylistic analysis but also text analysis, and its fundamental purpose is to study communicative purposes and language use strategies.

In the past three decades, the application of discourse analysis has made great strides in four aspects, that is, register analysis, grammatical-rhetorical analysis, interactional analysis and genre analysis. These four kinds of analyses develop from the surface to the deep, but generally speaking, they still remain in the stage of the surface description. However, genre analysis does not simply describe language features of a discourse, but explains how it constructs and discusses sociocultural, psychological and cognitive factors of its construction, so as to reveal how the communication purpose is realized. Therefore, genre analysis is more explanatory while the other three analyses are more

descriptive.

In all, genre analysis closely combines linguistic approaches with sociological and psychological approaches [10]. The first is often used to describe language features of a discourse while the second treats a discourse as a social phenomenon or social behavior to explore the sociality and normativity of the discourse so as to reveal the social and cultural reasons why a specific genre is formed and has been in use since then. The psychological approach is to study cognitive structure and constructive strategies of a discourse so as to explore how a specific communication purpose is realized through a discourse. To conclude, genre analysis helps to explain why people tend to construct a discourse in a certain way to realize a communication purpose but not in other ways.

2.1.3. Genre-based Teaching Approach

Since GBTA is based on the theory of genre and genre analysis, there are also three schools of GBTA, namely New Rhetoric School, Swalesian School and Australian School. The strength of New Rhetoric School lies in its critical analysis of genre functions, especially studying the relationship between genre and social power. The Australian school's curriculum genre teaching model helps teachers and learners understand the structural and grammatical features of different genres, and how "elemental" genres, such as reports, procedures and descriptions, etc., overlap to make up "macro genres", such as newspaper editorials, lab reports, etc [11]. The Swalesian School focuses on both the language style and social environment. Besides, the Australian School also forms "the wheel genre teaching model" which is often used in current teaching activities. This model has three stages, that is, teacher modeling, joint construction, and independent writing. This model closely contains not only input but output and is proved effective through teaching practice, thus, it is popular all over the world.

2.2. Research Stage

Among all the 386 papers collected from 1998 to 2017, none was published before 2000. Besides, the author finds that 51 papers were published between 2000 and 2006, and 335 papers were published between 2007 and 2017. It clearly shows that GBTA research in China is in an ascendant trend.

The earliest researches of GBTA mainly aimed to introduce relative theories to China. Then, researchers began to apply these theories in classroom teaching, especially in writing and reading instruction. Since 2007, GBTA research has gained a higher degree of attention, and there were researches in a combination of fields, such as business English and medical English, and from new perspectives.

2.3. Research Angle

2.3.1. Theoretical Research

Qin Xiubai [12] is the first person to introduce GBTA to China. He presents a review of GBTA which is implemented in the United States, Australia, Hong Kong and elsewhere, based on a brief account of genre analysis as an approach to discourse studies. Apart from advantages of GBTA, he also mentions its disadvantages, one of which is prescriptivism. In his opinion, if teachers lack imagination and creativity, students will feel it boring to use this approach and articles they create will be similar. To overcome such shortcomings, he mentions several trials made by some linguists, e.g. linking with social and cultural background of the discourse and using various authentic texts belonging to one genre, etc. Han Jinlong and Qin Xiubai [13] then make further studies of GBTA. They not only make a more detailed discussion of its theoretical basis, but mention some successful practices, such as "curriculum genre" and "the wheel genre teaching model". Different from the former two scholars, Wang Shuilian [14] is the first scholar to use some examples to explain how to apply GBTA to English teaching in China, especially in listening instruction. For example, she uses the example of "seeing a doctor" to demonstrate the importance of discourse function. Li Qi and Zhe Hongyan [15] discuss theoretical bases and current practices of GBTA. Fan Yuanyuan [16] and Wang Minghua [17] also present a review of GBTA.

After reading all the papers, the author finds that Chinese scholars prefer to introduce theories of Australian School and Swalesian School but few of New Rhetoric School. For example, Yin Lijuan and Liu Xiaopeng [18], Liang Wenhua [19] [20], Liu Yu and Pu Xianwei [21] and He Xiaolin [22] all introduce theories founded by Australian School, hoping to learn from it and apply some good practices to China's English teaching activities. Feng Ke [23] presents challenges that Australian School faces in China and discusses how to solve them.

2.3.2. Empirical Research

Studies about GBTA are mainly in combination with its appliance. Most of them are linked with writing and reading, several with listening and speaking, and some with EAP (English for Academic Purposes) and ESP(English for Special Purposes).

(i) Writing

In China, GBTA was first applied in writing instruction. The author collects and filters the following papers which apply this approach in writing instruction. Some of them are concerned with EAP and ESP teaching, and will be discussed later.

Yang Hongbo [24] is the first to apply GBTA to writing instruction. He suggests basic steps in teaching and analyzes the validity and feasibility of GBTA in writing instruction through tests and questionnaires. Yuan Xiaohua [25] uses "the wheel genre teaching model" to help students grasp the scheme of a certain genre in a short time. He also mentions that although this is an effective method, it cannot solve the plight in English writing in China, thus, it needs to be combined with other methods. Zhong Min [26], He Guanghui [27], and Li Jing [28] all offer practical teaching procedures based on the status quo of writing instruction in universities. Wang Luhua [29] discusses types of non-language errors of college students and offers some suggestions to put this approach into writing instruction. Kong Jingping [30]

discusses the impact of GBTA on college students' cognition during their writing process. Li Qiaoxia [31] and Tian Huili [32] design a lesson plan based on GBTA and demonstrate that it is effective for writing instruction in vocational college English teaching. Huang Baoyan and Liu Daoxing [33] and Liang Wenhua and Kang Shuming [34] do similar researches and they test students after taking this method, which shows the effect of this method. Liu Lina [35] thinks it helps college school students to lay out when writing. Liang Wenhua [36] later makes a more accurate study of its impact on college students' writing by using SPSS. Other scholars also make some innovation in teaching writing. For example, Liang Wenxia [37] makes use of the advantage of internet in genre-based writing.

The author also finds that many scholars employ the genre-process approach, which combines genre-based teaching with process teaching, in writing instruction. Han Jinlong [38] first introduces this approach in China by capitalizing Badger's and White's theories, and presents practical teaching procedures. This approach contains four steps: teacher modeling, imitating writing, independent writing, and editing and revising. Yang Shuo [39] discusses theoretical bases of the genre-process approach and then he presents an effective method after systematically analyzing problems existing in English writing instruction in China [40]. Ren Rong [41] mentions that the choice of approaches in writing instruction should depend on factors such as writing purpose, type, and environment. Zeng Yanfang [42] concludes that only genre-process approach meets the needs of China's EFL writing teaching from the perspective of feedback, and she also thinks that feedback on writing should be prompt, motivating, inspiring and targeted. Ma Lan [43] adds a pre-writing process, which aims to train students' thinking ability, before traditional procedures. Liu Shuhua [44] and Zhao Xia [45] discuss the current use of the genre-process approach in China and its development. Shen Yuru [46], He Xiaojia and Ji Huinan [47] apply this approach to writing instruction for non-English major students, while Huang Jiefang and Yao Xianghong [48] discuss its use for English major college students. Besides, Huang Jian and Li Mei [49] use the genre-process approach to design a macro-process and a micro-process of Practical English Writing (PEW) course respectively and finally affirm that this approach is of great practical guiding significance in the teaching practice of PEW. Yao Xianghong [50] explores the impact of the genre-process approach on college students' writing strategies and writing competence with a qualitative and quantitative analysis, and finds that genre-process approach seems to be more helpful in facilitating a comprehensive use of writing strategies, strengthening the awareness of revision, boosting a flexible application of genre knowledge, and arousing the interest in the cooperative generation of ideas and peer evaluation in the experiment groups. Different from those focusing on college school students, Zhu Hongguang, Zhang Libo and Zou Shuang [51] explore its use in junior high school English teaching and offer some suggestions in teaching practice. Ren Yongdong and Zhang Jian [52] design a lesson plan for senior high school students to demonstrate the efficiency of the genre-process approach. Li Su [53] analyzes its advantage and makes some suggestions for senior high school English teaching practice.

It is obvious that GBTA in writing instruction is a heated research topic, and scholars now develop a more effective approach by combining with the process approach. However, judging from subjects of those researches, the author finds that a great number of researches are for college students and vocational school students while only three researches are conducted for high school students.

(ii) Reading

Apart from writing, GBTA is also widely used in reading instruction in China. The author will analyze researches concerning reading below.

Li Sen [54] is the first scholar to apply GBTA to reading instruction in China. He puts forward teaching procedures for college English reading instruction and discusses several issues which may occur during the teaching process. Hu Qian [55] states that college students' reading ability can be enhanced by their analysis of the schemata and language features of a discourse with the help of GBTA. Hu Yuying [56] finds that GBTA is helpful for English major students to foster their habits of appreciating and recognizing both the construction and the writing purpose of an article so as to quicken their reading speed and improve their reading comprehension. Li Hongmei [57] carried out an experiment among 90 students for three months in which quantitative and qualitative methods are adopted. The research results reveal that GBTA may improve students' reading ability and communicative competence as well as their autonomous learning habits. However, he also finds that this approach is not suitable for under-intermediate-level students. Sheng Yan and Wang Tao [58] apply GBTA to teaching reading for vocational college students. Liang Wenhua [59] presents a case of applying GBTA to reading instruction and makes an analysis of its effects, aiming to provide reference for the popularization of GBTA in classroom practice. Many other scholars do some researches to demonstrate advantages of GBTA in teaching reading for college students, such as Li Qiaoxia [60], Liu Lijuan [61] and Pan Wenjin [62], to name just a few.

Dong Miaomiao [63] discusses the practicability of GBTA in teaching reading for senior high school students. Du Yingdong and Liu Zhongxi [64] and Xu Heping [65] design a lesson plan to illustrate how to apply GBTA to reading instruction for senior high school students.

Just as the condition of GBTA in writing instruction, most researches on reading are for college students and vocational college students while only three researches are for senior high school students.

(iii) Listening and Speaking

Guan Wei [66] demonstrates that GBTA is practicable and valuable to college English listening instruction in China and it conforms to the English learners' cognitive style in listening comprehension. Lou Hongliang [67], Guo Ping [68], Li Na [69] also employ GBTA in teaching listening for college

students. Yang Xiaolin and Chen Jiqiong [70] conclude that GBTA is very effective in students comprehensive language level by testing college students on an English Film Appreciation Course. Zhang Xiaoming [71] uses GBTA in news listening instruction and attains good results. However, Liu Ping [72] is the only one to apply GBTA to speaking instruction.

It is obvious that the number of researches which apply GBTA to listening and speaking is quite small, compared with that of writing and reading.

(iv) EAP and ESP

Apart from four basic fields of language teaching, GBTA is also popular in ESP and EAP teaching.

Guo Ping [73], Lu Shuilin [74], He Yun [75], and Cheng Xiaolong [76] put forward teaching procedures for English major's abstract writing while Xu Youzhi, Guo Lihui and Xu Tao [77] for introduction writing, Wu Wei and Cui Gang [78] for literature review instruction, all of which aim to enhance students' overall ability to write academic papers. The research conducted by Ai Yi and Yang Fu [79] is the only one to apply this approach to IELTS teaching, while Xu Hong and Hu Jiaying [80] are the only scholars to talk about its use in CET4 (College English Test Band 4) teaching and Li Xianhua and Yan Fuxiang [81] discusses its use in note-writing in TEM4 (Test for English Majors Band 4). Han Ping and Hou Lijuan [82] conduct a research based on Feez's teaching-learning circle, and the implications of the research are as follows: it is not desirable to focus students' attention only on information about the use of lexico-grammatical and rhetorical resources; in order to have a thorough understanding of the integrity and complexities of academic discourse, students should pay more attention to text-external factors and go beyond the text to probe into genres and disciplinary conventions. Yin Shiyin [83] combines GBTA with TBLT in teaching so as to make it better suitable for senior high school students.

In ESP teaching, most researchers tend to apply GBTA to business English instruction. For example, Cao Lingjuan and Zhou Changming [84] are the first to apply this approach to business English teaching. Li Ruifang [85] finds that GBTA helps students understand social functions, communicative objectives, organizational structures and language-use strategies of certain genres, enabling them to comprehend and create discourses more appropriate to the genres. Wang Linhai and Sun Ning [86] think that GBTA contributes to business letter writing instruction. Many other scholars do similar researches, such as Li Li [87] and Wang Weiqiang [88], to name just a few.

The structure and language features of medical academic papers are different from other articles, which suggests that GBTA is a suitable method for medical English teaching. Xiong Rongmin [89] thinks it effective to use GBTA in abstract writing for medical students. Lu Keyuan [90] offers a practicable and detailed teaching procedure to teach writing for nursing majors. Some scholars prove it by conducting relative studies, such as Yang Xinjian, Chang Feng, and Li Haiyun [91], and Huang Baoyan [92], to name just a few.

There are also some other fields in which GBTA is suitable for teaching. For example, Li Hongbo [93] and Deng Qiufeng [94] applies the genre-process approach to teaching writing for students majoring in law. Song Yaojun and Meng Jian [95], and Yang Lei [96] state the practicability of GBTA in translation course. Chen Qiujing and Deng Liming [97] apply GBTA to law translation course for MTI students.

In a conclusion, GBTA is widely used in EAP and ESP teaching. In EAP instruction, most researches are intended for academic writing. In the field of ESP, the majority of researches are about business English teaching, followed by medical English teaching.

3. Conclusion

Judging from the above analysis, the author has some findings of GBTA researches in China. The first is that researches in China start much later than those in western countries. Many of the theoretical researches in China on GBTA are intended to introduce theories from western countries, but there are few theoretical innovations. Besides, most of the empirical researches are intended for college school students and vocational college students, but only a few for high school students. This clearly reveals that GBTA has not been widely used in high school. In addition, among the four basic fields of English teaching, most researches illustrate the effect of GBTA on writing, followed by reading. In writing instruction, scholars also combine traditional GBTA with the process approach in writing instruction and make great progresses. However, only a few researches are concerned with listening and speaking. Apart from that, GBTA has not been used in some other fields except business English, medical academic writing and translation instruction. And in the field of EAP, most researches demonstrate how to use GBTA in academic paper writing, especially abstract writing.

As is shown above, there exist many problems in studies of GBTA in China. In order to solve these problems, the author offers the following suggestions. The first and foremost is that Chinese scholars need to make some innovations instead of just introducing foreign theories. For example, they can innovate theories with Chinese characteristics in a combination of prior theories. Second, considering the current situation in senior high school, GBTA is in an urgency to be applied to the instruction in four basic fields, especially listening and speaking. Speaking instruction has been ignored for a long period in China and many front-line teachers complain that they do not know how to teach speaking. However, GBTA is a useful tool since students may be instructed based on different communicative situations. Third, since GBTA is quite useful for ESP teaching, it needs to be applied to more subjects besides business and medical English teaching. In addition, more researches are welcomed to analyze the use of GBTA in EAP teaching from various perspectives, not just in how to write abstract and introduction.

In all, the author finds that GBTA now has been a heated topic in China and Chinese scholars still need to make efforts

to explore and develop its theories and apply it to more fields.

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