

An Exploration of Academic English Teaching

— from Concepts to Logic

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Abstract

Academic English has become an important part of college English teaching. Academic English teaching should not be limited at the language level, but should delve into the infiltration of academic concepts and logic. Starting from the concept and closely adhering to academic logic to achieve the organic integration of language and profession, can we truly promote the deepening of academic English teaching.

Keywords: Academic English; Academic concepts; Academic logic

I. Introduction

When it comes to academic English, people naturally think of ESP (English for Specific purposes). So what is academic? Academic refers to systematic and specialized knowledge, which is a disciplinary demonstration of existence and its laws, generally referring to higher education and research. (Baidu, 2024.1). So, what is research? "Research" comes from the Middle French word "rechercher," meaning "to seek out." Writing a research paper requires us to seek out information about a subject, take a stand on it, and back it up with the opinions, ideas, and views of others. What results is a printed paper variously known as a term paper for a university course, a published article in a journal, and a thesis or dissertation as a partial requirement for a university degree, in which we present our views and findings on the chosen subject (Shen Yuru. 2020:001). "Research" refers to people's endless active exploration of the truth, nature and laws of things, from ignorance to knowledge, from knowing less to knowing more. Simply put, "research" is a process of seriously asking questions and finding answers to them in a systematic way. The English word "research"= "re"+ "search", which means to search again and again. (Baidu, 2024.1) From this concept, we can see three important elements of "research": questions, methods and answers. To research means to explore, such as observation, experimentation and measurement, etc.; to discuss, such as conferences, seminars, symposiums, etc. and to analyze, such as comparison, evaluating, selection, comments, etc.. Subjects vary widely, questions are naturally vast, and the answers are even more difficult to be uniform. It is precisely because of these differences and uncertainties that academic English teaching has long been limited at the level of language and terminology. Even with some strategies and skills, it is difficult to form a systematic methodology, so it is difficult to realize the organic combination of language and specialty. Long-term teaching practice tells us that we can still find the unity behind it through the differences of disciplines and the diversity of problems, that is, academic logic. What connects "question" and "answer" is "method", and behind "method" is real academic logic. Grasping concepts and sticking to logic is the essence of academic English teaching.

II. Theories and Methods

Concept is an important part of academic English. Starting with concept is the beginning of many research work and an important means of academic English teaching. So, what is a concept and why should we start with it? Concept is a form of thinking that reflects the essential attributes of an object. Any thinking object always has certain attributes. Attribute is the nature of the object itself or the relationship between objects. In the

process of understanding, concept is the summary of a certain stage of scientific understanding. In the scientific knowledge system, each science is a theoretical system composed of concepts. In logical thinking, concept is the basic element of judgment and reasoning and the “cell” of thinking (bilibili, 2024.1). If concept is the “bright line” and the grasping hand of academic English teaching, then academic logic is the “dark line” and the whole context of academic English teaching. So, what is academic logic? Academic logic includes linguistic logic and scientific logic. Linguistic logic includes three “C” principles: Complete, Concise, and Coherent, among which coherent is the vital, which means that “referential relationship” in a sentence is clear, and the logic is stable (certainly not allowing logical jumps or logical faults). Scientific logic is to scientifically analyze or demonstrate what you want to discuss on a certain scientific basis. It mainly includes the “four strands” of scientific research: Why do you do this? How did you do it? What is the result? What is your explanation? (Baidu, 2024.1). Besides three “C” principles, linguistic logic also includes some language features which are the significant distinguishing factor between academic writing and non-academic writing. Academic essay writing has a target audience --- scholars, i.e. professors or classmates. For this specific audience, writing language should follow some required style. Firstly, essay language is formal in tone, mainly achieved by lexical choice and sentence structures. Here are some tips: a. using advanced, precise and academic vocabulary; b. using complex and compound-complex sentences; c. minimizing the use of first and second person pronouns; d. avoiding the use of rhetorical questions. Secondly, essay language should be efficient by reducing redundancy, using an appropriate number of nouns or noun phrases and passive voice. Here are some tips: a. avoiding repetition and wordiness; b. using nouns or noun phrases; c. using a mix of active and passive voice. Thirdly, cautiousness is a characteristic of academic language demonstrating that writers are cautious and modest in their arguments. Caution language often called “hedging” or “vague language”, which are used to soften words, to make them less direct, and to limit or qualify the statements. Here are some tips: a. express uncertainty; b. show distance from the argument; c. qualify the quantity or frequency in an argument. Last but not least, essay language should be accurate. If professors or scholars read essay which is full of lexical or grammatical errors, they will become confused and fail to understand. Here are some tips: a. avoid run-on sentences; b. avoid agreement errors; c. avoid dangling modifiers; d. use articles correctly; e. choose appropriate words (Zhu Lin, Han Jinlong, 2020:56-97). Taking academic paper as an example, this paper introduces how the combination of concepts and logic can promote the deepening of academic English teaching. Academic thesis is an important part of higher education, an important carrier for academic exchanges and development, and also the core content of academic English teaching. This method will be illustrated from the following two perspectives. Firstly, introducing relative concepts. There are many ways to intervene in concepts, and the interim classification is more common, which can directly and effectively reveal the essential attributes of things. According to the research direction and purpose, academic papers can usually be divided into five categories: a. research papers, mainly used to show the process and results of a research work. This kind of paper usually includes abstract, introduction, methods, results and discussion, in which the method part describes the research design, data collection and analysis methods, and the results and discussion part presents the research results and analyzes and explains them. b. Summarize the papers, a paper that summarizes and evaluates the literature in a certain field or subject. The purpose is to summarize and summarize the existing research results, point out the shortcomings of the research and the future research direction, and provide readers with a comprehensive understanding of this field. c. conference papers, a paper published at an academic conference, usually a paper that is discussed in depth around a specific research direction under a specific theme. Such papers are usually published at conferences and then submitted to relevant journals for review and publication. d. Newsletter papers, a short academic paper, which usually includes only two parts: abstract and conclusion, and is mainly used to quickly report an important research achievement or discovery. This kind of paper requires concise and accurate language, which can quickly convey the significance and value of research results. e. critical paper, a paper that comments and evaluates a research achievement or an academic problem. This kind of paper needs to make in-depth analysis

and evaluation of the topics reviewed, and put forward its own opinions and suggestions, which is an important platform for academic exchanges and contention (Baidu, 2024.1). Through the introduction of these concepts, students will have a macro grasp of academic papers and a preliminary understanding of the properties of various papers. For example, the concept of “research paper” is introduced as follows: a research paper (or a thesis) is naturally a formal, fairly long and well-documented composition that explores, discussions or analyses a certain factual or theoretical issue (Li Xiangwu, 2015). Secondly, interpreting academic logic. A. Linguistic Logic. In academic paper writing, all tasks are need to be completed “academically”. What is the academic style? Academic style usually has the following four important features: I. More objective; Phrases such as “I think” “I believe” and “in my opinion” should not be used in academic writing. Academics are not looking for what you think or believe --- they want to see what you can show, demonstrate and prove through evidence. There are three specific strategies for achieving objectivity: Strategy 1: Hedging language increases the “distance” between the writer and the text, thereby creating more objectivity. Strategy 2: Empty introductory phrases provide a platform for objective statements. Strategy 3: The passive voice removes the need for a subject in the sentence. II. More complex; Academic writing often discusses difficult, challenging ideas which can only be expressed with particular grammar and language. This complexity may be seen in the following three aspects: Formality of language (e.g. using “the most significant distinction” rather than “big differences”); Grammatical Structures (e.g. using more passive voice, noun phrases and relative clauses); Density of language; This density can be achieved through a greater use of content words (such as verbs and nouns) rather than structured words (such as prepositions and conjunctions). III. More formal structure; The structure of academic writing usually has the following characteristics: a. The text as a whole has a specific, formalized structure ---- the introduction, main body and conclusion. b. The text must have cohesion and coherence ---- it must link together clearly so that it is possible to follow the writer’s argument. c. Paragraphs should be roughly of the same length throughout, so there is a good overall balance. d. Paragraphs often follow a similar structure --- topic sentence, outline of argument, supporting evidence, short conclusion and transition to the next paragraph. IV. More referencing. Building on the ideas of other people is one of the central features of academic writing. In order to show where these ideas come from (and to avoid plagiarism), a reference system is used (Jin Jing, Zheng Yuqi. 2023.2-5). B. Scientific Logic. The scientific logic in research papers (namely “four strands” above) can usually be described as “Basic steps to conduct research”, which is almost the whole process of academic paper writing: Step 1. literature review. Step 2. Identify RQS. Step 3. Select suitable methods. Step 4. Collect and analyze data. Step 5. Interpret the findings. As the whole work of guiding research paper writing is focused on the “Basic steps to conduct research” therefore it is actually the academic logic of research paper teaching. These basic steps will be illustrated one by one. Step 1: Literature Review. The “literature” in literature review refers to the collection of past research or past published papers on a certain topic. It is absolutely indispensable when you plan a research study because it would guide you in the appropriate direction by answering several questions related to the topic area: Has anybody worked on this topic area before? If so, what suggestions can you make from the results of the earlier studies? Did they encounter any methodological difficulties which you need to be aware of when planning your own research? Is more research required to be carried out this topic? If so, in what specific area? The literature review section should discuss the texts that you believe are most important to the project, demonstrate your understanding of the research issues, and identify existing gaps that your research intends to fill. You should also identify some leading scholars in the field, particularly those whose published works you have studied. A critical literature review is crucial to ensure that your project does not duplicate work already done without having any knowledge that the same study has already be carried out. Step 2: Identify RQS. Only by studying and combing the existing achievements can we identify research questions (that is, the “gap” between past and present research). The pieces of the AOS (area of specialization) include the subjects or subfields that encompass your work, definitions for those subjects, and a description of the problems addressed or current solution. Based on your interests and the need of research, you can identify your research questions.

Steps 3: Select suitable methods. This step is called research methodology, which is a hugely important part of your research. It chronicles the approach(es) you will use to achieve your research results. In methodology section, you should lay out, in clear terms, the way in which you will structure your research and the specific methods you will use. Make sure to include specific techniques and not just a general approach. Step 4: Collect and analyze data. Generally, data acquisition techniques include direct approaches such as interviews and questionnaires, participant observations; indirect approaches such as instrumenting systems and fly on the wall; and independent approaches such as static and dynamic analysis and documentation analysis (Jin Jing, Zheng Yuqi. 2023.19-23) . Step 5: Interpret the findings. This part is called conclusion section in research paper, which is the most valuable part. This part should serve the following functions: a. summarize and bring together the main areas covered in the writing, which might be called “looking back”. b. to analyze and evaluate your main points for readers. c. to point out the general implications and possible limitations of your research (Jin Jing, Zheng Yuqi. 2023:96) . Academic activities, whether oral or written, whether lectures, seminars, conferences or speeches, can certainly achieve the organic combination of form (language) and content (research) as long as they can start with concepts and closely follow academic logic.

III. Conclusion

English teaching should serve the requirements of disciplines, and academic English teaching should naturally serve the professional requirements of academic research. Academic activities are various and endless so it is impossible to formulate a unified method to guide academic English teaching. What we can focus on is the concepts and logic of respective AOS. Only by adhering to the concept and closely following academic logic can we avoid the separation of language and content, and improve academic English teaching further.

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Biography

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