

A Review of Recent Research on the Cultivation of Postgraduates' Academic English Writing Ability in China

Yi Liang

School of Foreign Languages, Southwest Petroleum University, Chengdu 610000, China

Abstract: With the continuous deepening of cross-cultural academic exchanges, English academic papers have become an important medium for international academic communication. As an emerging force in the academic community, the academic English writing ability of Chinese postgraduates is the key to their international academic exchanges. As non-native English speakers, the importance of cultivating academic English writing skills among postgraduates in China has become increasingly prominent and has become a hot topic in domestic academic English research. Therefore, this article will sort out the literature on cultivating graduate students' academic English writing ability published in core journals in China in the past two decades, and review the latest research situation in China. This review mainly categorizes relevant literature from three aspects: research objects, research methods, and research perspectives. The results shows that: (1) the selected research mainly focused on non English major postgraduates as the research subjects; (2) The selected research mainly adopts qualitative analysis research methods; (3) The research on the teaching mode of cultivating academic English writing ability is the main research perspective in this field. The results indicate that in recent years, there have been two hot topics in this field of research in China: research on the cultivation of academic English writing ability for science and engineering postgraduates and research on the cultivation of academic English writing ability based on genre analysis theory. Based on the analysis of the results, it was found that the cultivation of graduate students' academic English writing ability has received continuous attention from scholars. This field should develop towards multiple perspectives and dimensions, and strengthen applied research. Overall, these findings indicate that effectively improving the academic English writing ability of Chinese postgraduates is an urgent issue that needs to be addressed in current domestic academic English research and postgraduates academic capacity building. This review aims to sort out the research in this field in China in recent years, discuss the current research trends, and provide insights for researchers in the forefront of academic English writing ability cultivation.

Keywords: Postgraduate; Academic English Writing; Writing Ability Cultivation; Literature Review.

1. Introductory

In today's increasingly frequent international academic exchanges, high-level English academic papers have become a major way for Chinese researchers to engage in international academic exchanges. However, in domestic universities, as the main source group of future high-level scholars, graduate students still have some shortcomings in their ability to write academic papers in English (Guo, 2006). Academic English writing ability is one of the essential skills for Chinese graduate students to engage in international academic exchanges (Han & Hou, 2012), and it is also a basic quality required for a qualified academic postgraduates (Zhang, 2015). Therefore, how to improve the academic English writing ability of postgraduates has become an urgent problem to be solved in China's postgraduate education and an important topic in academic English research, which has urgent practical significance for research in this field. This review also echoes this research hotspot.

In fact, in international academic exchanges, scholars have limited opportunities for face-to-face communication, and most academic interactions rely on written forms such as journal articles, dissertations, and academic monographs. Therefore, academic English writing ability plays a decisive role in the dissemination and realization of academic achievements (Yan, 2014). It can be said that the academic English writing ability of postgraduates plays a crucial role in demonstrating their academic abilities, therefore, domestic

scholars are increasingly focusing on research in this field. Regarding the research on academic English writing, Han & Wang (2010) pointed out that English Academic Writing (EAW) focuses on cultivating students' writing abilities in capturing academic dynamics, expressing academic ideas, and participating in international academic exchanges. It has a strong tendency towards explanation and argumentation in language expression, clear professional direction in content selection, and professional standardization in format. Zou (2017) believes that English Academic Writing (EAW) is a manifestation of cognitive comprehensive ability, because academic writing requires relevant content knowledge and application skills, such as knowledge from different sources and knowledge reconstruction, knowledge recombination, knowledge evaluation, and knowledge development (Ballard & Clancy, 1997). Academic English writing ability, as an important component of academic ability, also requires other academic abilities as foundational support. In research on academic abilities, domestic scholars, Xiao & Hu (2006), proposes that the academic abilities of postgraduates include the ability to discover and propose problems, the ability to collect and organize literature, the ability to generate and define concepts, the ability to make academic propositions, the ability to design research processes, and sensitivity to the forefront of academia. They believe that through extensive reading, diligent writing of papers, and learning of methodologies, it is possible to cultivate the academic abilities of graduate students. From this perspective,

postgraduates' academic English writing ability is the output product of logical thinking processing based on a large amount of academic reading input. Compared with the more procedural and general definitions provided by domestic scholars, the definition of academic English proficiency by foreign scholars Snow & Uccelli (2009) is more specific and systematic. They believe that academic foreign language proficiency includes four aspects: linguistic skills, genre mastery, reasoning/argumentative strategies, and disciplinary knowledge. And some scholars in China have taken this as a starting point to explore the cultivation of postgraduates' academic English writing ability (Han & Hou, 2012; Zou, 2017). Although Chinese scholars have paid increasing attention to the cultivation of postgraduates' academic English writing ability in recent years, the relevant empirical research and theoretical construction are still lacking (Yan, 2014). The cultivation of postgraduates' academic English writing ability is a persistent and urgent topic, especially in today's increasingly globalized process and frequent international academic exchanges. China's research in this field is not yet systematic and comprehensive enough. Therefore, this review will sort out the research on the cultivation of postgraduates' academic English writing ability in China in the past two decades, grasp the current research trends, and provide ideas and references for subsequent related research. This study has certain significance in exploring the cutting-edge research direction of cultivating postgraduates' academic English writing ability, and proposes the following research questions to guide this systematic review:

(1) In the selected relevant research, which types of postgraduates are mainly targeted to explore the cultivation of their academic English writing ability?

(2) In the selected relevant research, what research methods were mainly used to explore the cultivation of postgraduates' academic English writing ability?

(3) In the selected relevant research, what research perspectives were mainly used to explore the cultivation of postgraduates' academic English writing ability?

2. Previous Literature Reviews

There are few literature reviews on the cultivation of postgraduates' academic English writing ability in China. Most of the researchers focus on Academic English writing, but the topic usually involves the review of the small topic of the research on postgraduates' academic writing ability. Therefore, this section will introduce the literature review on academic English writing in China to investigate the relevant review on the cultivation of postgraduates' Academic English writing ability in China.

Xu (2015) reviewed the research on academic English writing in China in the past 40 years from 1978 to 2013, and pointed out that since 2003, the research in this field has developed rapidly in China, but from the perspective of academic language ability theory, the research on the cognitive process of academic writing in China is not enough. He believed that with the acceleration of the process of academic internationalization, the international publication of domestic scholars will be gradually strengthened. The cultivation of Chinese scholars' academic English writing ability should be closely linked with the research on the curriculum system of English for Academic Purpose (EAP) and the teaching mode in the perspective of English international language. Dou (2018) reviewed the research

papers on Academic English writing in China from 2008 to 2018, focusing on the application of theory in empirical research and the tendency of research topics. The research results on Academic English writing ability show that since 2008, Chinese scholars have paid more attention to the research on Academic English writing ability from multiple theoretical perspectives, based on the current situation of the development of higher education in China, which provides a rich empirical basis for the application of relevant theories in China. For example, from the perspective of cognitive theory (Deng & Peng, 2009), genre analysis theory (Shao, 2017), knowledge constructivism and social cognitive theory (Zhao et al., 2013). She pointed out that most of these studies used the existing foreign theories, and there were relatively few studies on Academic English Writing based on the local characteristics of China. In addition, this review summarized the research on the influencing factors of academic English writing ability, which is divided into the author's own internal factors and external factors of social attributes. The author's own internal factors mainly include writing motivation (Luo & Xiao, 2011), thinking mode (Tang & Fan, 2008) and specific social culture (LV, 2016). While the research on external factors usually focuses on one aspect of the writing course. In addition to Dou's mention to China's theoretical exploration of academic English writing, Gong (2015) also emphasized the relationship between different factors of academic English writing ability after reviewing the research on Academic English writing, and suggested that Chinese scholars should strive to build a complete and accurate theoretical framework to serve the improvement of academic English writing ability. Similarly, she also pointed out that it is necessary to investigate the impact of academic environment (external factors) on Academic English writing, and whether the change and development of academic environment can promote the improvement of students' academic English ability.

By synthesizing the existing reviews on academic English writing ability, it can be found that the previous scholars' reviews on academic English writing ability are mostly carried out under the research branch of academic English writing, and there is no separate and systematic review on academic English writing ability. At present, the cultivation of postgraduates' academic English writing ability and the importance of its research make it more and more necessary to carry out a comprehensive and systematic review of the latest scope of this research field, which has certain guiding significance for future research in this field. Therefore, the following study will summarize the domestic research on the cultivation of postgraduates' academic English writing ability in the past two decades.

3. Method

In order to have a better and more comprehensive understanding of the research on the cultivation of postgraduates' academic English writing ability in China, this paper selects the domestic authoritative journal literature as the research object. Since the research on academic English writing is still a relatively new research field in China, the real research started at the beginning of the 21st century (Zou, 2017). Therefore, this review takes the research achievements in this field in the past two decades as the retrieval object. Firstly, the fuzzy matching was carried out on CNKI with the themes of "graduate students" and "academic English writing ability", and a total of 59 relevant papers were retrieved.

Secondly, the papers from journals with greater influence in Chinese academic circles are screened. The screening criteria was to select the papers included in CSSCI and CNKI core journals, and obtained a total of 6 target studies from 2004 to 2024. Next, this review will analyze, summarize and summarize studies on the cultivation of postgraduates' English academic writing ability through content analysis in the past two decades.

3.1. Search Terms

Based on the research purposes and research questions of this review, the following two key words were selected for literature screening, which are "graduate students" and "academic English writing ability". The selected literature should include these two keywords at the same time.

3.2. Selected Journals

Taking CSSCI as the main source of journals, five domestic authoritative academic journals in foreign languages and higher education are selected, including: Foreign Language World, Technology Enhanced Foreign Language Education, Foreign Languages and Their Teaching, Academic Degrees & Graduate Education, Journal of Beijing University of Technology (Social Sciences Edition). In view of the fact that there are few published articles on academic writing in China and the level of journals needs to be improved (Yan, 2014). In order to comprehensively integrate the existing journals in this field, this review also selected some core journals of CNKI in China, such as the papers in the Journal of University of Shanghai for science and technology (Social Sciences Edition), which is the core journal of AMI, to sort out and analyze the research status of the cultivation of postgraduates' academic English writing ability.

The main reason for choosing these journals is that they are all committed to the theme of this review, that is, foreign language education or graduate education, and they are more authoritative journals in China. At the same time, this choice is similar to the relevant reviews in these two research fields (Xu, 2015; Dou, 2018). Therefore, it can be assumed that the relevant papers involved in this review are high-level academic papers highly related to the topic.

3.3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

In order to select the appropriate relevant literature, this review developed three inclusion criteria. That is to say, the study included in this review should meet the following requirements:

It should be published in the core journals listed above.

Its publication date should be between 2004 and 2024.

It should be a journal paper involving two key words at the same time, namely, the cultivation or construction of postgraduates' academic English writing ability.

In other words, if the study is not published in the selected relevant journals within the specified time, it will be excluded. Other types of publications, such as literature reviews, academic conference notices, position papers, book reviews, reviews and editorials, are also excluded. Since the focus of this review is to report on the cultivation or construction of postgraduates' academic English writing ability, it does not include studies related to college English academic writing ability or English writing teaching.

3.4. Coding Scheme

The coding scheme consists of three categories: research

object, research method and research perspective. Each category includes several main categories and subcategories. These were developed based on the research questions of this study, which can be described as below.

3.4.1. Categorization of Research Objects

The first coding category is the research object. This review identifies two major categories and four subcategories. The major categories are divided into the whole postgraduate group and individual postgraduate group. Individual postgraduate groups are subdivided into graduate students in science and engineering colleges and language colleges from the type of school, and English major postgraduates and non-English major postgraduates from the type of major. Non-English major postgraduates can be subdivided into science and engineering postgraduates and liberal arts postgraduates one again. However, since the literature in this review does not involve the research on the relevant groups of postgraduates, it will not be subdivided here.

3.4.2. Categorization of Research Methods

As for the categories of research methods for the cultivation of postgraduates' academic English writing ability, this review mainly includes qualitative analysis and case analysis. Qualitative analysis is a very common research method in mode and theoretical exploration, while case analysis is a common method in empirical research.

3.4.3. Categorization of Research Perspectives

As for the classification of research perspectives, the research on the cultivation of postgraduates' academic English writing ability in this review is mainly carried out from three perspectives: teaching mode, course setting and teachers' influence. The teaching mode includes two sub categories: project-driven teaching mode and genre analysis theoretical framework mode.

3.5. Data Collection

This search first conducted fuzzy matching on CNKI with the themes of "postgraduates" and "academic English writing ability", and a total of 59 relevant papers were retrieved. Secondly, the papers of journals with greater influence in Chinese academic circles are selected, and the selection criteria are the papers included in CSSCI and the papers of CNKI core journals. Next, the relevant literature on the cultivation of non graduate students' English academic writing ability is excluded through the title and abstract, and then the whole literature is read to test whether the selection based on the inclusion criteria is sufficient. Finally, a total of 6 target studies were obtained from 2004 to 2024.

3.6. Data Analysis

According to the observation and analysis, among the selected relevant studies, non-English major postgraduates are the main research object of the research on the cultivation of postgraduates' Academic English writing ability. The research method is mainly qualitative research. Most of the relevant studies explore how to effectively improve postgraduates' academic English writing ability from the perspective of the teaching mode of academic writing. This review will use the content analysis method to investigate the collected literature. That is to answer the research questions mentioned above through descriptive analysis. This will be discussed in detail in the research results and discussion section.

4. Results and Discussion

After combing the relevant studis of CNKI core journals and SSCI journals, this review summarizes the following research results based on the research questions in this paper, which are presented from three aspects: research object, research method and research perspective, then discusses analyze these results.

4.1. Research Object

In the selected literature, half of the researches on the cultivation of postgraduates' academic English writing ability take non-English major postgraduates as the research object. For example, Zhou (2011) proposed to respect the cognitive characteristics of non-English major postgraduates and explore a teaching mode that allows students to participate in the whole learning process, observe, experience, communicate, learn and summarize themselves under the guidance of teachers, and update the knowledge structure in practice. She believes that the project-driven academic English writing course puts students at the center of learning, which can stimulate their motivation and potential, so as to effectively improve the level of English academic English writing. And most researchers believe that academic English thesis writing is one of the biggest difficulties for non-English major postgraduates in domestic universities (Zhou, 2017). However, among the six selected studies, there is only one research on the whole group of graduate students, graduate students in science and engineering colleges, and graduate students majoring in English. However, among the six selected studies, there is only one research on the whole group of graduate students, one on the graduate students in science and engineering colleges, and one on the graduate students majoring in English.

In fact, the English level of postgraduates in science and engineering colleges and universities is slightly weaker than that of postgraduates in language colleges and English Majors (Hu et al., 2017). This is also an important reason why scholars pay more attention to the cultivation of academic English writing ability of non-English major postgraduates. The research, which takes the whole group of graduate students as the research object (Han & Hou, 2012), applies genre analysis teaching method to the teaching of advanced English writing and the practice of academic research writing, so as to standardize the English academic English writing of graduate students (Xu et al., 2007). This shows how to implement the genre based approach in the teaching of graduate students' academic English writing in order to improve their academic English writing ability, but ignores the overall differences in the English level of different types of graduate students. As mentioned above, this points out the matters that scholars should pay attention to when conducting research in this field, that is, the research object should not be too general, and the types can be appropriately subdivided. In addition, it is also found that the research objects in this review are too concentrated. Among non-English major postgraduates, researchers pay high attention to science and engineering postgraduates, so it is necessary to strengthen the research on the cultivation of academic English writing ability of postgraduates from other majors.

4.2. Research Method

From the results, among the selected studies, the qualitative analysis method is more frequently used to study the

cultivation of postgraduates' academic English writing ability, and the case analysis method is less used, and it is a single empirical study using reflection logs as the data source. The researchers all examined the development of graduate students' academic English writing ability by analyzing their reflective logs before and after the academic English writing course. For example, Yang (2015) used the qualitative case study method to analyze graduate students' perceptions and gains in the reading and writing course with students' reflection logs as the main data. The study found that after a semester of training, students' academic English writing ability improved greatly. This showed that teachers can help students learn to appreciate academic English papers in just one semester, and understand and initially master the writing elements of academic English papers. Du & Chen (2019) used the method of repeated test to compare the changes of graduate students' writing level before and after the EAP writing course. Students were required to write their reflections on the course, and took the students' two compositions and reflection logs before and after the course as data to explore graduate students' views on the course. The results showed that graduate students' overall score, structure, accuracy and academic quality have been significantly improved, but the improvement in fluency, language complexity and other aspects is not obvious. Their reflection logs showed that EAP writing course promotes graduate students' development in five aspects: writing ability, confidence and awareness, reading ability, overall English ability, critical thinking and research ability.

Table 1. Research method

	Exploration of the mode and theory	Empirical studies
Qualitative analysis method	Zhou, 2011; Zou, 2017	Han & Hou, 2012; Shao, 2017
Case analysis method		Yang, 2015; Du & Chen, 2019

In addition, it can be seen from Table c1 that most of the selected studies are empirical studies using different research methods, and a few scholars have explored the mode and applied theory of cultivating postgraduates' academic English writing ability. For example, Zhou (2011) started from the project driven teaching and based on the specific situation of non-English major postgraduates in Chinese colleges, put forward the teaching points and details of the project setting, in order to improve the teaching and effectively improve the postgraduates' English academic English writing ability. Zou (2017) proposed a model of developing non-English major postgraduates' EAW ability based on genre analysis theory, which is to improve academic writing ability driven by academic reading, interactive learning based on genre analysis theory, the combination of writing skills training and postgraduate professional knowledge, and the combination of face-to-face knowledge and online autonomous learning. These are beneficial explorations on the construction of postgraduate academic English writing ability cultivation mode based on the current situation of academic English writing teaching in Chinese colleges.

To sum up, the research direction in this field presents two major focuses. At the level of theoretical application, it is mainly carried out from the perspectives of project driven and genre analysis. At the level of empirical analysis, it is mainly through the qualitative research of student cases. It is suggested that more research should try to use different

research methods to explore the construction of English academic writing ability development model suitable for China's social and cultural environment.

4.3. Research Perspective

From the perspective of research perspective, the teaching mode of postgraduates' academic English writing ability cultivation is a hot topic in the current field. From Table 2, it is not difficult to find that half of the relevant studies from this perspective are guided by the theoretical framework of genre analysis. In addition, the research on EAP writing course (Du & Chen, 2019) also used the genre teaching method, so it focused on discussing the changes of graduate students' academic English writing ability from the perspective of genre analysis. As Wingate (2012) pointed out, the genre-based teaching method focusing on the analysis of disciplinary texts is the best starting point for the teaching of academic writing, which helps novice writers establish the professional knowledge they need (Tribble, 2017). The research pointed out that students should not only understand the use of vocabulary, grammar and rhetoric resources in genre teaching; In order to enable students to fully understand the integrity and complexity of academic discourse, they should be guided to pay more attention to the external factors of the text and go beyond the text to study the genre and discipline conventions.

Table 2. Research perspective

Guiding theory	Project-driven	Genre Analysis
the teaching mode of postgraduates' academic English writing	Zhou, 2011	Han & Hou, 2012; Shao, 2017; Zou, 2017

In addition, Yang (2015) from the perspective of the role of teachers' guidance, integrated teaching and research, investigated and analyzed the impact of teachers' guidance on the development of students' Academic English writing ability, and he also pointed out that the best way to help students improve their academic writing ability is to give students appropriate writing guidance and timely encouragement.

It can be seen from the research hotspots that the research results of genre analysis theory have been widely used in ESP teaching practice (Swales & Feak, 1994,2000; Xu et al., 2007). Although academic genre competence has been proposed and analyzed as a single component of English academic writing ability, the definition, characteristics and application of academic genre analysis need to be further studied (Shao, 2017). Han & Qin (2000) pointed out that genre analysis can enable students to master a relatively fixed discourse model that can be used for reference, so as to enhance their confidence in understanding and writing texts. Therefore, exploring the construction of English academic writing ability based on genre analysis is of great significance to the improvement of postgraduates' academic English writing ability.

4.4. Research Hotspots and Enlightenment

Based on the above analysis of results, it can be concluded that the hotspots and enlightenment of the research on the cultivation of postgraduates' academic English writing ability are as follows.

From the perspective of the research object, non-English major postgraduates, especially science and engineering

postgraduates, are the focus of research on the cultivation of postgraduates' academic English writing ability. Taking science and engineering postgraduates as the research object, the characteristics of students with relatively poor academic English writing ability can be found, so as to provide guidance for the cultivation of academic English writing ability, and improve the writing level and writing ability of postgraduates. Based on the theory of genre analysis, students can have a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the real discourse, at same time, it is of necessity to understand the industry or discipline conventions in the cultural context of a specific industry or discipline, so as to improve their ability to understand, identify, construct and use genre (Han & Hou, 2012). Hence, it is still necessary to strengthen the cultivation of academic writing ability of postgraduates of different majors and promote the diversification of research objects.

From the perspective of research methods and perspectives, the qualitative research based on genre analysis theory is the mainstream in this field, which has laid a good theoretical foundation for the study of academic English writing. Genre competence should be the focus of academic writing ability in teaching, so the goal of English writing teaching can be positioned as cultivating students' academic writing ability based on genre. On this basis, a genre based academic evaluation standard and evaluation system need to be designed to find an effective way to develop academic English writing ability (Yan, 2014).

To sum up, future research should pay more attention to the use of multiple research methods, and strengthen the application and practice of this theory in the cultivation of postgraduates' academic English writing ability, such as the establishment of an evaluation system. At the same time, based on the actual situation of academic English writing teaching for postgraduates in China, future research need to develop in a multi perspective and multi-dimensional direction, combining with modern teaching mode and teaching tools, and trying to build a development model of English academic writing ability that conforms to the social and cultural environment in China.

5. Conclusion

Based on CNKI core journals and CSSCI journals in the past two decades, this review summarizes, analyzes and summarizes the research on the cultivation of postgraduates' English academic writing ability. The research findings are as follows: (1) non-English major postgraduates are selected as the main research object; (2) The selected research mainly adopts the qualitative analysis method; (3) The research on the teaching mode of cultivating academic English writing ability is the main research perspective in this field. The analysis results show that: in recent years, there are two hotspots in the research on the cultivation of postgraduates' English academic writing ability: research on the cultivation of academic English writing ability for science and engineering postgraduates and the research on the cultivation of postgraduate' English academic writing ability based on genre analysis theory. The cultivation of postgraduates' Academic English writing ability has received continuous attention from scholars. The content of this research field is diversified, and the research perspective is also expanding. Finally, this review also summarizes that the field should develop in the direction of multi perspective and multi-dimensional, and need to strengthen the application research.

However, this review also has some limitations. Due to the limitation of retrieval methods, some journal papers that meet the theme may not be included in the review. Therefore, in the future research review, more papers can be reviewed to ensure the comprehensiveness of the review. In general, this literature review is the first paper that sorts out and summarizes the relevant literature on the cultivation of postgraduates' English academic writing ability, and the findings are helpful to provide reference for future research in this field.

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