First Writing Project

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UWRT 100

27 September 2018

Analysis of tension between school and home discourse communities

I read two essays about discourses: a wiki page "discourse community" from the Wikipedia page and Bronwyn T. Williams' essay "Home and away: The tensions of community, literacy and identity" published on "Literacy & Identity"

From reading Professor Williams' essay, we could know that the target audience which the author is writing for is literacy teachers. And the purpose of this article is to persuade literacy teachers to help their students to balance the tension between home and school discourse community. However, the paper "discourse community" is a typical wiki page, that means the purpose of this article is giving information and the target audience would be general--all the people who are interested in the concept which is described and explained in this article are the target audience of this article. By contrast, the target audience of Professor Williams' essay is more specified than the wiki one.

The structure between the two papers is also different. The author of wiki paper uses a special structure which is derived from the core concept to build the article. He set the definition at the first, and then establish logic arguments by describing and explaining the history, the culture, and related terms. Because the main purpose of this article is giving information, there is dense

literature citation scattered between the lines to make the article more convincing. The structure of Prof. Williams's paper could be concluded as three parts--point out the question, discuss the question, and advise the suggestion for this problem. Prof. Williams builds this paper by using narrative skills that he starts this paper from his own story—education experience, and all the examples which he mentioned about himself through the whole paper. Professor Williams use this narrative skill to attract the target audience's attention and the writing skill which is used by Prof. Williams here is to put himself role in the same position—like a storyteller, not a teacher. The reason why he uses this writing skill is that the main purpose of this article is to persuade literacy teacher to help their students to balance the tension between home and school discourse community. He used two examples to discuss the tension between home and school discourse community, "his father" and "the girl". These two examples also show two different types of conflicts. On one hand, Prof. Williams states the imbalance situation which biased in favor of the family by using "the girl" example. In this example, the girl student got used to connect academical opposition to an emotional judgment about that person and that made her felt her classmates' phrases and rhetoric using is disturbingly aggressive because the home discourse community she belongs to won't use such aggressive phrases. (Williams 345) On the other hand, Prof. Williams choose an opposite example to state the extreme case about the tension which tend to the school discourse community by using "his father" example. In this example, his father made a choice clearly—prefer to the discourse of middle-class academic life, but the cost of this action is that his relationships with his parents and sister became strained and unrepairable. (Williams 345) Prof. Williams claims those sentences as evidence to state that the conflict of tension between home and school would not be good for students.

After reading this two works, the new concept of the discourse communities impacted my own knowledge and thinking about possible discourse communities which I belong to. I used to be a small group administrator for a while. Now I view it as a small community of discourse. All the character tags from the group members and also the formation of this small discourse community is in line with the definition which is mentioned by the author in the wiki article. It's really amazing that we find all the thing go perfectly as predicted. In the beginning, we just needed a place that we could chat and discuss outside the forum. The formation of this discourse community was made by the regular members which have the same hobby. During the development of this small discourse community, more and more fresh blood joined this small discourse community. At this point, maybe not everyone had highly unified hobbies like the beginning, but most of hobbies generally oriented in the same direction. And then the small discourse community tend to a typical acquaintance relationship network. All of the members of the discourse community will affect each other through the communication between each other and that's just like a chemical reaction. The main topic among members has shifted from hobby to individual. However, these "chemical reaction communication" leads discourse community continually to define and redefine themselves, just like which is described in the Berkenkotter's theory. And this phenomenon would be considered as the self-iteration of the cognition. At this phase, the main topic between members of the discourse community won't be the original hobby anymore.