

Analysis of the Current Situation of English Writing Teaching Research in China

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Abstract

By searching and analyzing the research literature on English writing teaching published in major foreign language core journals in China in the past five years (2018-2022), this paper summarizes the research status of English writing teaching in China in recent years. In view of the existing problems, the solutions are put forward, and the future development trend of English writing teaching research is discussed.

Keywords

English Writing Teaching; Core Journals; Solutions.

1. Introduction

As an output skill, English writing has always been a weak part of English learners in China, and it is also an important area of concern for Chinese researchers. In order to understand the latest research status of English writing teaching and the problems in assisting writing teaching research, this paper retrieved and analyzed the literature on English writing teaching research published in major foreign language core journals in China in the past five years (2018-2022), so as to have an updated understanding of writing teaching research.

2. Statistical Scope of Literature

Table 1. Publication of English writing research articles in 13 core foreign language journals in China from 2018 to 2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
"Journal of Xi'an International Studies University"	0	0	1	0	0
"Journal of PLA University of Foreign Languages"	1	0	0	0	0
"Technology Enhanced Foreign Language Education"	6	3	2	3	0
"Foreign Language Education"	0	1	5	0	2
"Foreign Language Learning Theory and Practice"	0	0	3	1	0
"Foreign Language Teaching and Research"	0	0	0	1	0
"Foreign Language Education in China"	0	1	1	0	0
"Foreign Language world"	6	2	3	0	0
"foreign language research"	1	0	1	0	0
"Foreign Languages and their Teaching"	0	1	0	2	0
"Modern Foreign Languages"	2	0	0	0	0
"Foreign Languages in China"	0	2	2	0	1
"foreign languages research"	0	0	1	0	0
Total number	16	10	19	7	3

The literature selected in this study comes from 13 core foreign language journals in China. They are "Journal of Xi'an International Studies University"; "Journal of PLA University of

Foreign Languages"; "Modern Foreign Languages"; "Technology Enhanced Foreign Language Education"; "Foreign Language Education"; "Foreign Language Learning Theory and Practice"; "Foreign Language Teaching and Research"; "Foreign Language Education in China"; "Foreign Language world"; "foreign language research"; "Foreign Languages and their Teaching"; "Modern Foreign Languages"; "Foreign Languages in China". These journals are influential, representative and authoritative in the field of English acquisition research in China, so the articles in these journals can basically reflect the latest characteristics and development trends of English writing research in China. Through advanced search, a total of 55 articles related to English writing research were retrieved from CNKI from January 1, 2018 to August 31, 2022 with the theme of "writing teaching"

3. Results and Analysis

In the past five years, China's English writing research has shown an obvious fluctuation trend. Table 1.1 has shown that a total of 55 English writing research articles have been published in 13 foreign language core journals in China in the past 5 years. In addition to 2020, the number of the published journals has decreased. In the last five years, even in the year with the largest number of publications, the number of publications did not exceed 20. We can clearly see that the study of writing research has declined in these five years. Yao Lan and Cheng Lini (2006) divided the methods of English writing research into empirical research and non-empirical research. They stated that "Non-empirical research refers to the research that is not based on systematically collected materials, including personal feelings, operational description (operational description and evaluation of specific links such as syllabus, teaching methods, testing methods or textbooks) and theoretical reflection while Empirical research is characterized by systematic and planned material collection and analysis, including quantitative research, qualitative research, and the combination of quantitative and qualitative research"(P.3). This paper uses this classification method and finds that there are 45 empirical researches and 10 non-empirical researches among 55 articles. The empirical research takes the main place in the writing research in recent five years, which reflects that increasing number of researchers tend to explore more practical application methods based on existing theories, which also represents the theoretical maturity of our writing teaching to a certain extent.

Among the 45 empirical studies on English writing, a total of 29 papers focus on undergraduates, among which 9 papers focus on English majors and 20 papers focus on non-English majors. This may be related to the fact that the source journals of the research samples are mainly for university teachers, and also reflects the problem that the domestic English writing research focuses on the college English level.

4. Research Contents

(1) Researches of feedback and reviews on English writing

Domestic research on second language writing feedback began in the early 1990s (Zheng Yuqi, 1992). With the promotion of process writing in China, related research has increased significantly. In the last five years, domestic researchers have also paid great attention on the studies of feedback and reviews on English writing. They mainly focus on the application of feedback types such as teacher feedback, peer feedback, multiple feedback and online automatic feedback system and they mainly study the influence of various feedback types on students' writing level; writing attitude and writing strategy and the influence of students' writing level on the feedback types and so on. According to statistics, 13 of the 55 articles are about the studies of feedback and reviews on English writing. In 2018, blended teaching model also attracted attention. Some researchers even

In 2019, academic English writing and multiple feedback models entered the research field. In 2020, the application of output-oriented method in second language writing class and the study of reader awareness have become new research hotspots. Some researchers even studied the feedback and reviews on English writing of different teaching modes. Guan Chengyong and Guo Wanqun(2021) took questionnaire survey, text analysis, classroom observation, online test and so on as the research tools and methods, takes the output oriented method (POA) as the teaching concept, and takes the online and offline hybrid teaching as the environment, aiming to construct, practice and improve the theoretical framework of multiple evaluation of English practical writing. The framework covers diversified evaluation subjects and methods, in which they found that Multiple evaluation can effectively improve the participation and sense of gain of students (especially high-level students), and promote "learning by evaluation", "learning by evaluation" and "integration of evaluation"; At the same time, multiple evaluation can urge teachers to reflect on improvement, and promote "promoting teaching by evaluation" and "integrating evaluation and teaching".

(2) Researches on corpus-based writing

Domestic researchers keep up with the new trend of second language writing research and make full use of the large corpus built or under construction in China, and carry out second language acquisition research based on learner writing corpus. Wang Hua (2020) used abstract writing as an example to explore the corpus driven teaching model of academic English writing and its application in teaching practice.

(3) Researches on the application of teaching methods in writing

With the advent of the era of "Internet + education", blended teaching has attracted more and more attention from researchers in recent years. Small Private Online Course(SPOC) as a type of blending teaching has attracted advocates the combination of Online and offline courses, which combines the interaction between teachers and students in physical classes and the ubiquitous learning mode of "Internet + virtual space".

(4) Researches on the application of teaching methods in writing

During these five years, two articles focus on the application of blended teaching in writing. Zheng Yongyan (2019), based on the SPOC blended course of "English Academic Paper Writing", constructed a deep integration of online and offline teaching model. This paper explored the transformation of students' knowledge view and genre awareness in academic writing and investigated how the deeply integrated blended teaching promotes deep learning. The results show that by participating in a series of online and offline learning activities, students gradually turn to the view of socially constructed knowledge and realize that genre is socially constructed in writing practice. Finally, some suggestions are put forward to promote the reform of foreign language blended curriculum teaching structure, in order to provide new ideas for the deep integration of modern information technology and foreign language teaching. Yang Yang and Feng Zhiwei(2022), based on the SPOC blended course, investigated the development and changes of college students' English writing before and after the course. The results showed that after one semester of SPOC blended teaching, the language complexity of learners has been significantly improved. In terms of lexical complexity, word length, lexical density and the proportion of low-frequency words were significantly improved, while lexical diversity was not significantly improved. In terms of syntactic complexity, the average sentence length, the average T unit length, the number of sub-sentences in T unit, the number of dependent clauses in T unit and the number of complex noun phrases in T unit all increase significantly, while the average clause length does not increase significantly.

(5) Researches on writing Subject

The research factors of individual differences of learners include motivation, self-efficacy, metacognition, writing anxiety, learning strategies, and so on. These factors have been widely

studied in the study of language teaching. Xu Xin and Liu Yumei(2018) used the mixed research method to prove that the multi-modal "current affairs interview" experiment project in the pre-writing stage can stimulate students' pre-writing motivation, and then promote the improvement of the overall writing level. Lie Xi and Zhang Delu(2018) chose sixty writing learners in two classes of third grade English major in a foreign language professional college in the west of China as research subject to explore What the self-identified identities of students in multimodal Writing for English majors are and Whether the identity of teachers and students on student activities is consistent with the students themselves. Zhang Lin and Qin Ting even conducted research on the effect of continuation writing on writing anxiety and writing ability of English majors.

5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the current situation of domestic English writing research in the past five years, it can be seen that English writing research has a slight downward trend. The researches on English writing subject and English writing feedback have become the research hotspots in this period. Even the research on the application of various English rating scales in writing teaching has begun to increase. The social cognitive process of second language writing has attracted much attention abroad, but this topic has not attracted enough attention from domestic researchers. Researches in China can pay more attention to this topic. More and more people begin to apply online education resources and platforms to the process of writing teaching. The teaching of second language writing has gradually transformed from the traditional single text mode to the new digital multi-intelligence mode. Second language writers should actively explore the application of these resources in order to promote the development of timeliness in Chinese English teaching.

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