

The Application of Self- and Peer- Assessment to English Writing in Senior High School

Hejin Yuan

China West Normal University, Nanchong Sichuan, 637000, China

Abstract

English writing can be seen as an overt manifestation of one's English competence. While in China, it's not easy for students to write an excellent composition with few language errors. Various problems will be found in students' written product, such as, vocabulary problem, grammatical problem and discourse problem. Hence, in order to solve these problems in English writing and cultivate students' English writing ability, feedback efficiency has gained great attention in English writing teaching. Self-assessment and peer-assessment are ways to give feedback in English writing to enrich the validity and efficiency of assessment. Hence, this research aims to apply research analysis method to study the application of self-assessment and peer-assessment to English writing in senior high school, and provide some suggestions for English teaching.

Keywords

Self-assessment; Peer-assessment; High School English.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Under the background of economic globalization, English writing becomes an indispensable ability for modern citizens to cope with the increasingly frequent communication among countries. Writing has become a significant factor in evaluating one's language proficiency. Dong Yafen (2003) states that writing can help learners consolidate the newly gained language input, promote the internalization of language knowledge and cultivate one's ability of language accuracy. Writing, as an ingredient of learner's language skills, is an overt manifestation of learner's ability to analyze, organize and express. Therefore, it's essential to cultivate students' writing ability by adapting various teaching methods and strategies.

1.2. Problems in English Writing

However, for most of high school students, it's not easy to write a composition with accurate and fluent expression. Students' writing ability is urgent to be improved as there are some problems in current English writing teaching. One the one hand, Sun Hao (2016) suggests that students have varying levels of problems in vocabulary, grammar, syntax and discourse. These problems can be gathered as lacking of basic language knowledge, such as, vocabulary errors. Besides, students are also lack of good content to write. One the other hand, Chen Lifang (2021) points that traditional teacher-centered writing assessment model lacks diversity. Students' writing level is uneven in the same class in China, thus the feedback of the same criteria from teacher is not sufficient.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition

2.1.1. Self-assessment

Self-assessment is also called as self-evaluation, it's an significant form for students to get feedback. Bachman & Palmer (1989) defines self-assessment as a credible and effective strategy to evaluate students' communicative competence. As to Bound (1995), self-assessment refers to a way through which students can make criteria of their work and judge their progress. Nie Xin (2008) shows the similar opinion that self-assessment is self-consciousness and people can make their own judgments on their matters. Based on the studies, it can be concluded that self-assessment requires learners themselves to have an overall identification of themselves and get deep reflections.

2.1.2. Peer-assessment

Peer-assessment is also defined as peer-editing, peer-review, etc. Many researchers devote to give definition to peer-assessment. For Mangelsdorf (1992), peer assessment refers to a type of teaching activity, students can share opinions about the composition and put forward suggestions to modify the written product. And this view is similar to the point of Mo Junhua (2007). Topping (1998) suggests that peer-assessment is a method for learners to judge the level, value or performance of the other equal status learners. According to the previous researches, peer-assessment can be viewed as a teaching method through which students can evaluate each other under the agreed criteria and give constructive suggestions to each other.

2.2. Researches on Self-assessment and Peer-assessment Aboard and at Home

2.2.1. Researches on Self-assessment and Peer-assessment Aboard

Many foreign scholars have made contribution to the researches on self-assessment and peer-assessment. They focus on the feedback efficiency, the attitude of learners, the writing ability of learners and the comparison with teacher's assessment.

Upshur (1975) believes that learners can realize their progress and shortcoming comprehensively through self-assessment, and traditional examinations can only offer one part of learners' performance. Hanna (2000) points that self-assessment can benefits both learners and instructors. Little (2002) proposes the status of self-assessment in the process of teaching, that is, self-assessment functions as a continuous interacting process. Based on the research of Leki's (1990), students are positive to do peer-review while writing. And Clifford (1981) concludes that a cooperation in the assessment of writing can improve students' writing ability. Tusi & Ng (2000) point out the benefits of self-assessment and peer-assessment in cultivating learners' authenticity in writing.

2.2.2. Researches on Self-assessment and Peer-assessment at Home

In China, many researchers focus on the studies of self-assessment and peer-assessment. Their researches are mainly about students' attitudes, the impact on students' writing ability and critical thinking as well as the validity of assessment.

Sun Xin & Li Qiuju (2015) state that some students hold conservative attitude toward self-assessment. Based on Liu Jianda's (2002) experimental results, the efficiency of assessment is correlated with learners' English level and self-assessment is more suitable for high level learners. Li Hongmei (2006) conducts experimental research and concludes that peer assessment can cultivate learners' critical thinking ability, self-reflection ability and writing ability as it can form a communication opportunity for student writers and readers. Yang Miao (2006) proposes that peer assessment benefits the improvement of students' autonomous learning ability. Jiang Xiaoxi (2016) concludes that self-assessment and peer-assessment can

help students realize their shortcomings in writing as well as cultivate their discourse ability and communication ability in written.

2.2.3. Achievements and Limitations of the Previous Researches

All in all, researchers aboard and at home agree that self-assessment and peer-assessment can benefit writing assessment. First of all, studies show that the two assessment methods can cultivate learners' critical thinking ability, writing ability and communication ability. Besides, based on previous researches, it can be concluded that the two methods can generate a more comprehensive and systematic evaluation form by combining with other evaluation method. At last, all these researches energize to the development of English writing.

Except for the achievements, there are some limitations of the previous researches. Firstly, few researches focus on the application of self-assessment and peer-assessment in senior high school, many of them are related with higher education. Secondly, students' interest towards the two assessment methods is virtually ignored, most of the scholars talk about students' attitudes towards the two. Lastly, few researchers combine self-assessment and peer-assessment together to explore the influences on English writing. Most of them concentrate on one of the two methods. Hence, this research aims to apply research analysis method to study the application of self-assessment and peer-assessment to English writing in senior high schools, and provide some suggestions for English teaching.

3. Problem Solutions

3.1. Regard Students as the Center of Assessment

Traditionally, the assessment of English writing was conducted by teachers. Such traditional pedagogy destroys students' opportunity in learning as an active learner. The acquisition of English needs instructor to follow the principle of learner-centeredness. Thus, teacher needs to focus on the writing process, and offers opportunity for students to do peer-review and self-reflection before they hand on their final written product. During this progress, students can learn a lot from each other, such as various sentence structure, the reservation of vocabulary. Besides, during the process of self-assessment and peer-assessment, teacher can function as a resource provider to aid students and answer questions as students may realize their weakness in basic language knowledge. Finally, students can cultivate their critical thinking ability, form autonomous learning awareness and construct reflecting capacity through English writing and assessment.

3.2. Optimize the Rule of Self-assessment and Peer-assessment Continuously

Effective assessment is operated under appropriate assessment rule. The agreed principle can not only keep the justice of assessment, but also help students benefit from the self-assessment and peer-assessment. The assessment principle includes an assessment sheet and student grouping. First of all, the assessment sheet functions as a guidance for students to follow. It can be created by teacher and students together and includes various aspects, such as, writing content, the accuracy of language, the coherence of discourse. The criteria of Gaokao are also mentioned in this sheet. Besides, student grouping is related with the language ability and writing ability of students. A rotational group leader can stimulate students' confidence and motivation in English writing. Last but not least, with the development of English education and with the changing needs of students, the principle is not static, it can be altered to keep the effectiveness of self-assessment and peer-assessment high.

3.3. Teach Students According to Their Level in English Writing

We are not born to become replicas of one another. Students are different, different in language levels, learning styles and learning attitude. According to National English Curriculum

Standards (2018), differentiated teaching is encouraged to implement in language teaching classroom. In this case, teachers need to apply different teaching methods for different students. In the process of self-assessment and peer-assessment to writing, different teaching plans are needed to develop. Teachers can do teaching preparation based on learners' writing ability and evaluation ability. For low level students, teachers can help students gather writing ideas and main structure at the beginning, then finally withdraw the assistance. After such preparation, low level students' learning obstacles are removed and finally their writing ability will be increased.

4. Conclusion

With the development of English education, many scholars are devoted to increasing the teaching efficiency of English writing. As the process approach of English writing proposed, feedback is given a lot of attention because the feedback efficiency is closely related with the effect of English writing. Self-assessment and peer-assessment are two types of assessment methods, they can solve the problems of English writing, optimize the assessment system and increase students' writing capacity. Hence, this study provides some practical suggestions for English teachers to provide effective feedback in writing teaching. The application of self-assessment and peer-assessment to English writing in senior high school can promote the development of students' writing ability and teachers' teaching capacity.

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