

Research on Writing Assessment in High School Writing Teaching

Qian Liu

China West Normal University, China

Abstract

Writing assessment is a crucial part of language teaching process. A good writing assessment can promote students' writing. However, some teachers and students do not attach much importance on writing assessment. This research aims to discuss the kinds and functions of writing assessment and give some advice for English teachers to help their assessment on writing.

Keywords

Writing Assessment; High School; Writing Teaching.

1. Introduction

According to the National English Curriculum Standard for Senior High school(2017 edition, 2020 revised), the purpose of assessment is to improve English learning and teaching, complete course design and supervise the learning quality. The assessment need to be centered by the key competence of English learning, throughout the whole process of teaching. Different people give different definition of assessment. Rod Ellis define assessment as assessment is a feedback to the information conveyed by the learner. He hold the idea that assessment can give learners more information and plays an indispensable role in writing teaching. Weigle pointed out that the assessment of students' writing ability is an important task for teachers, and designing fair and effective methods to assess their students' progress and achievements is an essential skill. Many scholars have done researches about writing assessment. Zeng and Xu talk about the effective feedback in writing assessment. They point out that teachers need to use various ways to give feedback to students' writing, so that to improve students' writing ability[1]. Su talks about junior high school English writing assessment based on the integration of teaching, learning and assessing. She analyzed the problems which exist in writing assessment during junior high school and gave some advice on how to assess writing[2]. Zhang and Yang made a case study on exploring the status quo of high school English teachers' writing assessment literacy. The research found the complexity and contextualization of teacher's writing assessment[3]. Shao and Lin made a study on the construction of a learning-oriented college English writing assessment system. This study constructs a learning-oriented college English writing assessment system, which aims to promote writing learning as its primary goal by incorporating multiple assessment methods and providing diverse feedback[4]. Yao made a research about the backwash effect and its application in evaluation of secondary school English writing. She put forward the specific measures of the backwash effect[5]. Xu analyzed the problems and solutions in the evaluation of middle-school English writing. Based on the analysis, she gave some suggestions to the process of writing assessment[6].

2. Writing Assessment Method

The main writing assessment methods are Teacher Assessment, Peer Assessment, Self-assessment, Automated Assessment and Combined Feedback Assessment.

2.1. Teacher Assessment

Teacher assessment refers to that teachers give direct feedback to students' writing and provide some comments and advice. This kind of assessment is the most traditional and widely used. For the advantages, students mostly trust teachers because they status and proficiency, thus they are willing to accept the comments and advice. Teachers, as professional group, can give more accurate and efficient evaluation. However, Cui Ying also said that teachers' assessment has some drawbacks like some assessments are rigid, unclear and not timely, which will cause trouble to students' writing[7]. Too much work to do cause teachers may not have much patience to analyze students' writing. They may just pay attention to the superficial errors.

2.2. Peer Assessment

Peer assessment, also known as peer feedback and peer mutual evaluation, refers to the activities of learners providing and receiving oral/written feedback to peers through pairings or groups during writing training[8]. First, peer feedback has positive effect on second language learners' writing quality and writing ability. Learners can comprehend more knowledge about writing and modifying through assessing peers' writing critically. At the same time, they can learn from others and reflect their own merits and demerits. Second, peer feedback benefits students' cognitive ability. During peer feedback process, learners play more active roles in learning writing. It not only improves students' reader awareness, but also helps them realize their writing characteristics. Third, peer feedback can be widely adopted. No matter what level of students, they can give some effective feedback. And a research shows that low-level learners as a feedback giver can benefit more than as a feedback receiver. High-level learners can give more advice than low-level learners.

2.3. Self-assessment

self-assessment is the process of learners' self-adjustment by analyzing and judging their learning outcomes according to certain assessment criteria. self-assessment can help students play a dominant role in teaching and enhance their participation in writing. But not all students have the ability to do self-assessment. Some students can not find out their own errors and mistakes. Students' self-assessment mainly existed in superficial aspects, self-assessment needs teachers' guidance and supervision.

2.4. Automated Assessment

As artificial intelligence springing, automated assessment is introduced into teaching area and widely used. The typical representative is Pigai.net, which depends on the corpus and compute technology to compare the difference between students' texts and the standard corpus. Then it provides the total scores and detailed correcting advice. Students can repeat the behavior of modifying and submitting. This technology can remedy the deficiency of teacher, peer and self-assessment because of its convenience and rapidness. Also, it can increase students' interest and passion as its novel assessment way. But this kind of automated assessment, represented by Pigai.net, pay more attention to the mistakes of spelling, collaboration, grammar and vocabulary which are very superficial. They are not able to give evaluation to the organization, the content and the logic of the text.

2.5. Combined Feedback Assessment

Combined Feedback Assessment is a common assessment model in writing assessment nowadays. Since the above single assessment methods have their own disadvantages, their integration is a good way to solve the disadvantages of single assessment methods.

3. Current Situation of Writing Assessment in Senior High School

3.1. Lacking Various Assessing Subjects

In order to finish the teaching task, some teachers often ignore other assessment methods. Also, some teachers believe that other assessment methods are not effective. Thus, they only adapted teacher assessment. But there are so many students, teachers don't have enough time to make sure every student's text get effective evaluation. Most of the time, teachers just give a score and underline some obvious mistakes, which do not make much difference to students' writing ability.

3.2. Paying Much Attention to Results

Teachers provide students with mechanical frames and require students to memorize them so that students can write a text by just changing or adding the key words. In this way, students can write a text which seems to satisfy the requirements of the instruction. But this kind of wiring teaching can not improve students' writing literacy and cause students just pay attention to the accuracy but not analyzing, organizing, modifying and other ability which exist behind writing.

3.3. Lacking Assessing Criteria

No matter what kind of assessments, there should be criteria, which can not only help teachers give assessment objectively but also can assist students to provide evaluations. Especially for peer assessment and self-assessment, because of lack criteria, students just pay attention to the superficial mistakes like spelling mistakes and grammar mistakes. Some of them don't know what aspects to assess. Thus, it is critical to provide assessing criteria to students.

4. Solutions

4.1. Combining Different Assessing Methods

Using just a single method to assess writing, students may feel bored. Sometimes teachers can change the ways like using self-assessment, peer assessment and automated assessment, which can make students feel interested in. Different assessing method can satisfy different kinds of students. Some students tend to trust the authority and willing to receive students' recommends and advice. Some students like to learn from their peers, especially for the low-achieving students. Most of them like to learn how high-achieving students gets high score and good performance. Thus when they are more willing to receive their suggestions. Automated assessment can be used once in a while. As it needs to type the words on the computer, high school students do not have many chances to reach a computer. But this kind of assessment can motivate students to pay more attention to their accuracy of their writing. More accurate and well-organized words and sentences, higher score they can get from the computer.

4.2. Cultivating Key Competence

Assessments go through the whole process of English learning. Writing assessment should attach importance on cultivating language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability. The process of writing is logical. Students need to analyze, think, activate, relate, construct and proof etc. The result of producing a text is as important as the process. When teachers teach English writing, they should to lead students to think deeply by designing questions and clues, to help students have profound thoughts during the process of self-assessment and peer assessment. Taking a writing test as an example, the instruction requires students to write a text to introduce Chinese traditional festival to his foreign pen pal. Students not only introduce the festival based on the instruction, but also think about the value of the festival and how to pass by the traditional Chinese culture under the guide of the teacher.

4.3. Using Assessing Criteria

When doing self-assessment or peer assessment, students are not able to recognize what to evaluate. Thus it is necessary for teachers to design the assessing criteria to students. Here the author provides a sample test and gives the tables of writing criteria. The sample is as follows(Figure 1).

If you are a senior high school students LiHua, your school will hold an English debate next month. The school is looking for a foreign teacher to be one of the judges. Please you write an E-mail to the foreign teacher Jack in your school, and welcome him sign up. The content should

⋮ include:

1.The related information about the English debate.

2.The duty of the judges.

Attention:

1.The words should no less than 100.

Figure 1. Sample Writing Instruction

After students finishing their writing, teachers can require them to give themselves or peers evaluation based on the table. The tables are as follows. Table one is the content aspect.

Table 1. Content Aspect

Content Aspect			
1. Complete content	beginning	Writing background	
		Writing purpose	
	Body part	Keypoint 1:Related information about the English debate	
		Key point 2: The duty of judges	
	Ending	welcome and hope	
2. Related content	Debate and duty of judges are related		
3. Whether it has unrelated information			
4. Word number (Best number is close to 120)			

Table 2 is about the structure aspect, which guides students to analyze the structure of the texts.

Table 2. Structure Aspect

Structure Aspect		
1.Reasonable paragraphs arrangement		
2.Every paragraph surrounds a topic.		
3.The cohesion between sentence and sentence, paragraph and paragraph is natural.		

Table 3 is about the language aspect, which guides student to analyze the language of the texts.

Table 3. Language Aspect

Language Aspect	
1.Spelling of words	
1. Tense and voice	
2. Use of words and collocation	

After finishing their writing, students are presented with these three tables. The teacher can use self-assessment or peer assessment or both of them. Every item worth 10 point. Thus the total score is 100 point. According to the content, structure and language situation of the text, students can give scores to their own or their peers’ text. It is very clear to see the components of the total score which can assist students to realize their advantages and disadvantages. In this way, the assessing process has a criteria instead of subjective factors.

5. Conclusion

Writing, as one of the language skill, is considered the most difficult. Some teachers give up writing teaching. Students can only practice writing in tests. They are seldom taught how to write a text, which causes their bad performance in test. Then they become unwilling to write. A vicious circle forms. In order to make writing be easier, teachers should take it seriously and provide more chances for students to write. Teachers use different kinds of assessment to make writing an interesting and manageable thing and help students find self-efficacy in writing.

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