

How to Enhance Students' Writing Self-efficacy to Improve Their Writing Performance

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Abstract

The new high school English curriculum standards emphasize core literacy development, including writing skills. However, students struggle with English writing, hindered by low self-efficacy. Enhancing self-efficacy is vital to improve writing performance and advance writing instruction reform. This paper explores the positive effect of self-efficacy on writing and proposes teaching strategies to boost it. Based on curriculum content, we offer specific teaching modes. This research offers fresh perspectives for implementing new standards and practical methods for teachers to overcome writing barriers, boost students' self-efficacy, and ultimately enhance their English writing abilities.

Keywords

Writing Instruction; Self-efficacy; Writing Performance.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Research

In contemporary educational landscape, writing skills are considered a crucial component of language proficiency, particularly in the context of English language learning. However, how to improve the writing ability of high school English learners has become a hot topic in English language teaching. National English Curriculum Standards for Common Senior High School (2017 edition) notes the learning goals that high school English learners need to reach, and made the detailed provisions of the need for English writing in high school. Many students struggle with writing, often attributing their difficulties to a lack of confidence in their own abilities. This phenomenon has led to the concept of writing self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their capacity to successfully perform writing tasks. Understanding and enhancing students' writing self-efficacy is essential for improving their overall writing performance.

1.2. Research Purpose and Significance

1.2.1. Theoretical Significance

The theoretical significance of this research extends beyond the immediate scope of educational psychology. By examining the mechanisms through which writing self-efficacy influences students' writing performance, this study contributes to a broader understanding of the psychological processes involved in learning and skill acquisition. It provides a framework for understanding how cognitive beliefs, such as self-efficacy, interact with affective factors, motivational drives, and behavioral outcomes in the context of writing.

Further more, this study can stimulate further exploration into the role of self-efficacy in other academic domains, enrich the research results of self-efficacy, and make a modest contribution to the development of self-efficacy. At present, there is little research on relationship between self-efficacy and writing performance, Therefore, this study takes senior high school students'

self-efficacy in English writing learning as the entry point in order to explore how to improve English writing performance of senior high school students.

1.2.2. Practical Significance

In practical terms, this research is timely as high school students' English writing falls short of national standards. Their low writing self-efficacy highlights the need to explore its link with performance. The study offers educators practical strategies to create a nurturing learning environment, boosting students' writing self-confidence. By empowering students to manage their learning, persevere among challenges, and cultivate a growth mindset, educators can revolutionize writing instruction. Beyond classrooms, the findings inform policy making, advocating for holistic student development, prioritizing psychological well-being and academic achievement, driven by self-efficacy—a crucial success factor. This aligns with national curriculum goals, fostering personal growth among high school students.

1.2.3. Research Purpose

This paper examines approaches for enhancing students' self-efficacy in the realm of English composition. It aims to address the prevalent issue of "slow, inefficient, and diminished self-efficacy among students" in English instruction. The objective is to elevate the standard of English writing pedagogy, enhance students' confidence in their writing abilities, and ultimately enhance their writing performance in English studies.

2. Self-efficacy Theory

2.1. Definition of English Writing Self-efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy was first proposed in 1977 by the American psychologist Bandura and considered as a core component of social cognitive theory. Obviously, the self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task. It is a cognitive belief that plays a critical role in determining how individuals think, behave, and motivate. Entering the 21st century, research on self-efficacy theory has shown a trend of diversification, not only focusing on the direct impact of self-efficacy on behavior but also exploring its interactions with other psychological variables, such as goal setting and self-regulation, and considering the influence of cultural background, gender, age, and other factors (Schunk & Pajares, 2002).

With the development of education, in addition to the study of self-efficacy, a lot of scholars have turned their attention to English writing self-efficacy. Shell and Murphy(1989) believed that writing self-efficacy consists of two parts. The one aspect is that students can effectively master writing techniques, like revision, proper writing organization and sentence structure and so on. The other part is that students are confident that they can accomplish their writing tasks efficiency and accurately. Obviously, the former has more prominent disciplinary characteristics. Shell(1989) pointed out that students' self-efficacy had an impact on the use of writing strategies and writing achievement. The more confidence students have, the more strategies they use, and the higher motivation makes them have better performance.

2.2. Function of Self-efficacy

Bandura's research indicates that self-efficacy is one of the determinants of learning behavior, and it exerts multifaceted influences on students' psychology and behavior in learning activities: It determines students' choices of learning activities and their perseverance in them. Students with high self-efficacy tend to select challenging tasks and anticipate success. Conversely, those with low self-efficacy may avoid activities they perceive themselves as incompetent in.

It affects students' attitudes towards learning difficulties. Students with high self-efficacy possess strong learning confidence, enabling them to confront challenges head-on, persevere

through hardships with steadfast willpower, and strive to achieve set goals. In contrast, those with low self-efficacy, doubting their abilities, lack confidence in the face of difficulties and hesitate to challenge them.

It impacts the completion of learning tasks. Students with high self-efficacy, confident in their learning abilities and employing effective study methods, find it easier to grasp and comprehend knowledge, ultimately achieving optimal learning outcomes. On the other hand, those constantly fearing failure and focusing on their inadequacies lose confidence in their learning, making it difficult for them to complete learning tasks effectively.

3. Influencing Factors of Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy will be affected by many factors such as individual, behavior and environment, thus presenting different performance levels (Bandura, 1986). There are four main influencing factors.

3.1. Direct Experience

Direct experience is the main factor influencing self-efficacy. Successful learning experiences can enhance students' sense of self-efficacy. Conversely, unsuccessful learning experiences tend to lower students' sense of self-efficacy. However, the impact of success and failure on self-efficacy also depends on how individuals attribute the outcomes of their experiences.

3.2. Alternative Experience

An individual's sense of self-efficacy is formed through the interaction between the person and the environment. When students observe surrogates (people similar to themselves) succeed, it tends to enhance their sense of self-efficacy, whereas the opposite is true when they observe failure.

3.3. Speech Persuasion

Persuading students verbally to believe in their ability to complete a given task can lead them to put in more effort when faced with difficulties. When teachers or peers express confidence in a student's abilities through words, the student is more likely to persevere and exert additional effort in the face of challenges.

3.4. Emotional Arousal

By adjusting students' emotional arousal and reducing tension and negative emotional inclinations, it can have the effect of changing self-efficacy. By alleviating students' stress and negative emotions, it can help them face challenges more positively and improve their sense of self-efficacy. For instance, methods such as relaxation training and mindfulness meditation can help students regulate their emotions and boost their self-confidence.

4. Literature Review

4.1. Relevant Researches at Home and Abroad

4.1.1. Relevant Researches at Home

In recent years, although the research on writing self-efficacy in the field of foreign language writing teaching in China started relatively late, it has already accumulated considerable achievements. These studies mainly explored the concept of writing self-efficacy, its influencing factors, its relationship with writing performance, and how to improve writing performance by enhancing self-efficacy (Tang Fang & Xu Jinfen, 2011; Gu Shimin & Li Liping, 2018; Yang Yuxin, 2022; Li Hang, Liu Rude, & Liu Yuan, 2013). Tang Fang and Xu Jinfen (2011) conducted a survey on 218 non-English major freshmen and found that there was a significant positive correlation

between students' English writing self-efficacy and writing performance, and there were significant differences in English writing performance between high and low self-efficacy groups. Gu Shimin and Li Liping (2018) used quantitative research methods to explore the correlation between junior high school students' English writing strategies and writing self-efficacy. Yang Yuxin (2022) investigated the impact of TSCA on English major students' writing self-efficacy and pointed out that the multiple feedback mechanisms of TSCA helped create a relaxed and active classroom atmosphere, reduced students' writing anxiety, and thereby improved writing performance. Li Hang, Liu Rude, and Liu Yuan (2013) believed that foreign language writing self-efficacy played a completely mediating role in the impact of foreign language writing anxiety on foreign language writing performance. Overall, the results of domestic research on writing self-efficacy are generally consistent with those of foreign research: learners with high self-efficacy tend to have higher writing performance (Tang Fang & Xu Jinfen, 2011) because they can adopt more effective writing strategies (Li Hang, 2013), have higher mastery goal motivation, can overcome the negative impact of writing anxiety on writing performance, and even demonstrate higher accuracy in language expression in high-complexity writing tasks (Yan Rong & Zhang Lei, 2015).

4.1.2. Relevant Researches Abroad

Albert Bandura, the originator, defined "self-efficacy" as an evaluation system of people's self-organization and execution abilities within a specific behavioral context. Subsequently, foreign researchers have conducted extensive studies on writing self-efficacy, showing a continuous trend of expansion and deepening. Woodrow (2011) analyzed the relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing anxiety, finding that writing self-efficacy is an important motivational factor affecting writing. It can influence learners' anxiety, effort, engagement, and the use of writing strategies during the writing process. Prat-Sala, M. & Redford, P. (2012) selected 145 college students majoring in psychology as subjects to study the relationship between writing self-efficacy and students' writing ability. Bruning et al. (2013) explored the relationship between three factors: writing thinking, writing norms, and writing self-regulation, and writing self-efficacy through two studies, and constructed a scale reflecting these factors. Since then, research on writing self-efficacy has continued to emerge abroad.

Based on a meta-analysis of published journal articles and papers, T. Sun and C. Wang (2021) examined the relationship between L1 and L2 writing self-efficacy and writing performance, emphasizing the positive impact of writing self-efficacy on writing performance. This also provides evidence to support the argument that there is a positive correlation between writing self-efficacy and students' writing performance. J. Chen and J. Zhang (2019) developed the Second Language Text Revision Self-Efficacy Scale (L2TRSS) to assess students' writing self-efficacy in text revision in an EFL environment.

In summary, looking at the current research, scholars have attached great importance to the study of writing self-efficacy and its application in English writing teaching. However, we can also identify deficiencies: domestic and foreign research on English writing self-efficacy mainly focuses on college undergraduates, lacking in-depth studies on the relationship between high school students' English writing self-efficacy and their writing ability.

4.2. Urgent Problems Existing in Current Teaching

4.2.1. Lack of Positive Feedback and Role Models

In current teaching practices, students often feel perplexed due to the absence of timely, specific, and positive feedback, making it difficult for them to clearly understand their writing proficiency and direction of improvement. Simultaneously, the scarcity of excellent role models for reference hinders students from forming an intuitive understanding and pursuit of high-level writing. This issue leads to low self-efficacy among students, further impacting the enhancement of their writing performance.

4.2.2. Unfavorable Writing Environment

A noisy or unsuitable writing environment can distract students' attention, diminishing their interest and motivation in writing. The lack of dedicated writing time and space makes it challenging for students to immerse themselves in the writing process, engage in deep thinking, and create meaningful work. A favorable writing environment is crucial for boosting students' self-efficacy and writing achievement.

4.2.3. Inadequate Self-Strategy and Regulation Skills

Students often lack awareness and control over their writing process, unsure of how to effectively plan and manage their writing time. Moreover, they may not possess self-regulation strategies, leaving them uncertain about how to adjust their mindset and tactics when faced with writing obstacles. This issue prevents students from fully harnessing their potential, ultimately affecting the improvement of their writing performance.

4.2.4. Lack of Personalized Teacher Guidance

Teachers tend to focus on evaluating writing outcomes while neglecting to guide students on writing strategies such as drafting, and revision. Additionally, personalized guidance is often lacking, with teachers failing to provide targeted writing suggestions and support based on students' different levels and needs. This issue results in students being unable to receive effective guidance and assistance, impacting the elevation of their self-efficacy and writing achievement.

4.2.5. Deficiency in Peer Communication and Experience Sharing

There is a lack of communication and sharing among students, preventing them from acquiring valuable writing experiences and strategies from their peers. Furthermore, the absence of collaborative writing opportunities hinders students from learning others' strengths in practice to enhance their own writing abilities. Peer communication and collaboration are of great significance in elevating students' self-efficacy and writing performance.

4.2.6. Limited Practical Exercise Opportunities

Students lack sufficient opportunities for writing practice, making it difficult for them to apply learned writing strategies and techniques to actual writing tasks. Moreover, the scarcity of diversified writing assignments prevents students from exercising and improving their writing skills across different contexts and themes. The limited practical exercise opportunities severely hinder the enhancement of students' self-efficacy and writing achievement.

This paper will also explore how to improve students' writing performance by enhancing their self-efficacy, focusing on the following aspects:

5. Methods to Enhance Students' Self-efficacy in English Writing

This study explores tangled relationship between writing efficacy and writing performance in order to provide teachers with some enlightenment for the second language writing teaching:

5.1. Providing Successful Experiences

Teachers can assign writing tasks suitable for students' levels, allowing them to experience success through their own efforts and feel a sense of achievement. For example, simple writing goals can be set initially, and the difficulty can be gradually increased as students' abilities improve. Successful experiences can significantly enhance students' self-efficacy, making them believe in their ability to achieve good results in writing.

5.2. Setting Examples

Teachers can share their own or others' successful writing stories, especially those that demonstrate overcoming difficulties through hard work and making progress. Setting examples

is an effective motivational method. The power of examples can inspire students and make them believe that they can also reach the same level through effort (Bandura, 1986).

5.3. Giving Positive Feedback

Teachers should provide timely and specific positive feedback to students, acknowledging their efforts and progress. When grading essays, it is important to not only point out errors and deficiencies but also to discover and praise students' strengths and improvements.

Positive feedback can enhance students' self-confidence and self-efficacy, making them more willing to engage in writing. Moreover, personalized feedback should be provided to students, taking into account their gender, age, academic performance, and personality characteristics. Yang Qingsong (2022) pointed out that schools and families should pay attention to gender differences when carrying out specific tasks, especially strengthening the guidance for boys to actively cope with difficulties. Moreover, teachers should also provide dynamic evaluation of students' learning process. Good dynamic evaluation is conducive to promoting the development of learners' self-efficacy (Jia Li, Yang Lianrui, Zhang Wenzhong, 2022).

5.4. Guiding Correct Attribution

Help students learn to attribute correctly, attributing improvements in writing performance to their own abilities and efforts rather than external factors. Correct attribution can enhance students' self-efficacy, making them more confident in facing writing challenges. At the same time, teachers should teach students strategies for self-regulated learning, such as self-observation, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement, to improve self-efficacy.

5.5. Creating a Cooperative Learning Environment

Teachers should create a cooperative learning environment that provides positive verbal persuasion through feedback from peers and teachers. Teachers should emphasize the effective realization of Mutual Understanding among peers, establish formal or informal learning communities, stimulate learners' enthusiasm, initiative, and self-confidence in learning, and construct a favorable classroom interaction environment (Dong Xing & Zhang Wenzhong, 2023).

Through group cooperative learning and other methods, students can learn from and motivate each other in the process of working with others. A cooperative learning environment has a positive impact on students' academic performance. Cooperative learning can enhance students' writing skills and self-efficacy because they can discover their own weaknesses and learn from the strengths of their peers through communication.

5.6. Cultivating Good Writing Habits

Teachers should focus on cultivating good writing habits for students, such as regular writing, accumulating materials, revising and polishing, etc. These habits can help students improve their writing efficiency and quality. Good writing habits can enhance students' self-efficacy because they believe they can achieve better results through persistence and hard work.

5.7. Providing Writing Guidance and Strategies

Teachers can provide specific writing guidance and strategies, such as how to analyze the topic, how to structure an article, and how to use rhetorical devices. These guidance and strategies can help students better grasp writing skills (Graham & Perin, 2007). Mastering writing skills can improve students' writing performance and self-efficacy because they believe they have the ability to write excellent compositions.

6. An Initial Exploration of High School English Writing Teaching based on the Enhancement of Self-efficacy - Based on the Requirements of the New High School Curriculum Standards

6.1. Teaching Objectives

Aligned with the requirements of the new high school curriculum standards, this teaching model aims to comprehensively develop students' English writing abilities by enhancing their self-efficacy. Specific objectives include: improving students' ability to effectively use acquired knowledge in writing, strengthening their thinking qualities, including logical, critical, and creative thinking; enhancing students' cultural awareness, enabling them to understand and adapt to writing styles and habits in different cultural contexts; and emphasizing the cultivation of students' autonomous and cooperative learning abilities, laying a solid foundation for their lifelong learning.

6.2. Teaching Model Design

Initially, based on the writing ability requirements of the new curriculum standards, students are preliminarily diagnosed in aspects such as language knowledge, writing skills, and thinking qualities. According to the diagnosis results, students are divided into different level groups for differentiated teaching. On this basis, the cultivation of students' self-efficacy is taken as the core of the teaching model and permeates the entire teaching process.

6.2.1. Stage One: Introduction to Writing Skills and Initial Exploration of Self-efficacy

Teachers provide detailed explanations of writing skills outlined in the new curriculum standards, such as article structure, paragraph development, transitional vocabulary, and grammatical accuracy. Students are encouraged to apply these skills in practice through simulated real-world contexts, covering various genres including argumentative, expository, and narrative texts. During this stage, teachers focus on guiding students to experience writing success, promptly providing affirmation and encouragement, and initially fostering their self-efficacy.

6.2.2. Stage Two: Self-efficacy Development and Writing Skill Enhancement

Students are guided to set personal writing goals based on the new curriculum standards and formulate plans to achieve them. Timely and specific feedback is provided to reinforce students' successful experiences and enhance their self-efficacy. Interaction and collaboration among students are encouraged to jointly explore writing techniques and improve writing abilities together. During this stage, teachers further stimulate students' intrinsic motivation and enhance their self-efficacy through group cooperation and peer evaluation.

6.2.3. Stage Three: Writing Skill Advancement and Self-efficacy Reinforcement

Personalized writing guidance is provided to students, focusing on the cultivation of logical and critical thinking, taking into account individual differences. Regular writing exhibitions are organized to allow students to showcase their writing achievements in a broader context, enhancing their sense of accomplishment and self-confidence. During this stage, teachers further strengthen students' self-efficacy by showcasing their excellent works and organizing writing competitions.

6.3. Teaching Implementation and Cultivation of Students' Self-efficacy

6.3.1. Teacher Preparation

Teachers design challenging, innovative, and practical writing courses based on the requirements of the new curriculum standards. They integrate various teaching resources to provide students with abundant writing materials and sources of inspiration. In curriculum

design, teachers emphasize the fun and interactivity of activities to stimulate students' interest and participation in writing, thereby cultivating their self-efficacy.

6.3.2. Classroom Activities and Enhancement of Students' Self-efficacy

Students' interest and participation in writing are stimulated through context creation and story introduction. Systematic writing guidance is provided in accordance with the new curriculum standards, including writing strategies and thinking training. Classroom discussions and group cooperation activities are organized to promote students' thinking collisions and enhance their writing abilities. During activities, teachers guide students to actively speak up, share viewpoints, and enhance their self-efficacy through peer evaluation and encouragement.

6.3.3. Assignment Design and Feedback Mechanism

Targeted and innovative writing assignments are designed to consolidate and expand on what students have learned in class. An effective feedback mechanism is established, including peer evaluation and teacher evaluation, to help students identify and improve issues in their writing. In assignment design and feedback, teachers emphasize the diversity and practicality of assignments, encouraging students to try different writing styles and techniques. At the same time, students' self-efficacy is enhanced through timely feedback and affirmation.

6.3.4. Effect Evaluation and Teaching Strategy Optimization

Changes in students' self-efficacy during the teaching process are assessed through questionnaires, interviews, and other methods. Students' writing assignments are collected and analyzed to evaluate the actual effectiveness of the teaching model, particularly in terms of enhancing students' thinking qualities and cultural awareness. Teachers conduct teaching reflections based on student feedback and teaching effectiveness, continuously optimizing teaching strategies to better align with the requirements of the new curriculum standards. In effect evaluation, teachers emphasize students' self-evaluation and peer evaluation, comprehensively understanding changes in students' self-efficacy through diverse evaluation methods, and adjusting teaching strategies in a timely manner based on evaluation results.

Base on the requirements of the new high school curriculum standards, this research proposes and practices a high school English writing teaching model based on the enhancement of self-efficacy. Through targeted teaching design, effective classroom implementation, and a positive assessment and feedback mechanism, this model significantly improves students' English writing abilities. At the same time, it also helps students master writing techniques, enhance their thinking qualities and cultural awareness, laying a solid foundation for their lifelong learning and future development.

7. Conclusion

Focused on the theme of "Exploring Strategies to Enhance High School Students' Self-Efficacy and Their Subsequent Impact on Writing Performance," this study delves into existing literature to compile a series of meaningful pedagogical recommendations. In the introductory section, the study acknowledges the academic pressures faced by contemporary high school students, particularly in the realm of English writing, and underscores the potential role of self-efficacy in this context. Subsequently, it meticulously examines the definition, functions, and influencing factors of self-efficacy, thereby laying a solid theoretical foundation for subsequent literature analysis and instructional advice. Furthermore, by reviewing relevant research both domestically and internationally, the study sheds light on the intimate connection between self-efficacy and academic achievement, as well as the advancements and gaps in current research within this domain.

Drawing upon a thorough analysis of the literature, the author endeavors to propose instructional suggestions and preliminary teaching models aimed at bolstering high school students' self-efficacy in English writing. These suggestions encompass setting reasonable writing goals, offering concrete writing strategy guidance, and fostering a positive feedback environment, all geared towards nurturing students' self-efficacy through practical teaching practices and ultimately elevating their writing performance.

Nevertheless, this study is not without limitations. Given its reliance solely on literature analysis and the absence of empirical research support, the proposed instructional recommendations necessitate validation and refinement through actual classroom implementation. Additionally, the diversity and extensiveness of the study sample could be expanded to better reflect the diverse realities of high school students.

In conclusion, this study, through a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of existing literature, offers instructional suggestions tailored to enhancing high school students' self-efficacy in English writing. Future research endeavors may build upon this foundation to conduct empirical studies, validate the efficacy of these suggestions, and provide even more valuable guidance and support for practical teaching practices.

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