

The Influence of Peer Assessment Used in Writing on Students' Core Competencies

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Abstract

The cultivation of students' English writing ability plays an important role in English teaching. Along with the continuous reform of education, teaching to cultivate students' Core Competencies increasingly becomes a focus. Therefore, this paper attempts to investigate the influence of peer assessment used in writing on students' English Core Competencies by adopting the method of literature review.

Keywords

Peer assessment; English Core Competencies.

1. Research Background

Writing plays an extremely significant role in the interaction and communication in modern society. A lot of researchers have put forward many effective methods on how to teach writing. One of them is to take peer assessment in writing process. And many studies have proved its effectiveness. However, recent researches rarely study its influence on students' core competence. Hence, in order to find the relationship between the development of students' core competencies and peer review, the author uses the method of literature review to explore the influence of peer assessment used in writing on students' English Core Competencies, aiming at promoting the development from the comprehensive perspective.

2. Literature Review

This chapter shows a review of related literature. It introduces the concept of peer assessment, core competences and the relevant studies on peer review.

2.1. Peer Assessment

Peer assessment which is first put forward by Graves (1983) and applied to writing teaching is one of the important methods used in Process Writing Approach.

About the peer assessment, different scholars show different definitions. In Hyland's (2000) view, peer assessment is regarded as a formative developmental process which gives writer the opportunity to discuss their composition and find others' interpretations of their writing. Topping (2009) says that peer assessment is an arrangement for learners to consider and specify the level, value, or quality of a product or performance of other learners of similar status. And he also believes that peer assessment can be used in the form of feedback, face-to-face and often reciprocally among the assessors and assessed.

Besides the definition of the peer assessment, many scholars have also studied the benefits of peer assessment. Bostock (2000) holds the view that peer assessment is reported to have many potential benefits for both learners and assessors. For example, students can become more autonomous learners if they are actively involved in peer assessment (Cheng and Warren 1999; Bloxham and West 2004). Besides, through the peer assessment, students' analysis ability, assessment ability and writing ability have been improved. (Wu Weiming, 2009).

2.2. Core Competence

Core competencies was firstly put forward by the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) in 1997. Later, many countries such as Japan, the United States, and Europe started to study their own Core Competence. Although different countries have different core competencies, all of them include three items: knowledge, ability and emotional attitude. They also think highly of the cultivation of students' critical thinking and innovative thinking ability.

In 2014, the Chinese Ministry of Education announced the Core Competency. The purposes of it is to help students use other language to communicate and understand through speaking or writing according to their own ideas. In 2017, the Ministry of Education released the English Curriculum Standard for Senior High School which clearly illustrates the Core Competencies, including four aspects. They are language competence, culture awareness, thinking quality and learning ability.

Language competence mainly refers to ability that students can express the meaning, intention, and emotion through listening, speaking, reading, writing, and observing. The development of language competence is the base of the cultivation of other core competencies.

Cultural awareness refers to the ability that students can understand and identify with the excellent Chinese and Foreign culture. What's more, cultural awareness also can help students develop self-confidence in the culture of own nation and form right views of the world, life and value.

Thinking quality refers to the ability that students can think logically, critically and creatively. The development of the thinking ability can improve students' problem-solving and analyzing ability.

Learning ability refers to the ability that students can flexibly and actively take different learning strategies to their learning process. The cultivation of the learning ability can help students have good learning habits.

3. Discussion

In this part, I will study whether the application of peer assessment in writing can improve students' core competencies. And I will mainly use the method of literature review to finish this part.

3.1. The Influence on Students' Language Ability

When students take the peer assessment in writing, one of the most important things they need to assess is to check whether there are language mistakes, such as spelling, punctuation, phrase, the structure of the sentences in their peer's composition. In other words, during the assessment, the students should read the passage carefully to find the these mistakes.

Before the experiments conducted, in most of the studies, the researchers usually train students in how to provide the constructive feedback on their peers' writing. In Zhao Huahui's (2014) study, grammar and wording were the two common aspects throughout all training sessions. And some scholars usually show students the standards of the assessment in order to help students provide the effective assessment. For example, when Gu Jia (2021) conducts her experiment, she uses the Shanghai high school entrance examination composition scoring standards which include content, language and organization as the standards for students to conduct peer assessment.

According to the interview, Zhao Huahui (2014) finds that students benefit from reading peers' writing while responding. In his interview, some students asserted that they can learn from their writing by reading it which is another resource for learning and if two students write in two different styles, they can learn some new words, sentence structures and organization from

theirs. From Birjandi and Siyyari(2010), they find that all the three groups show gradual improvement in their writing performance after nine sessions.

On the one hand, peer assessment puts highly demand for students' English language proficiency. On the other hand, through the assessment of their peer's composition, these students can find peer's mistakes, and at the same time, it can also remind them not to make same mistakes during their writing process. In the next time, the students can overcome their mistakes, take their peer's advice and use the new learned words and expressions to finish their writing. Hence, there is no doubt that adopting peer assessment in students' writing can develop students core competencies' language ability.

3.2. The Influence on Students' Thinking Ability

Asking students to do the peer assessment is not mean that the students can randomly assess their peer's composition. During this process, they need to find the basic language mistakes, meanwhile, they also need to think whether the ideas of the composition are clearly expressed, the sentences are smooth and logical.

In Gu Jia's (2021) experiment, one of the standards of peer assessment is to assess organization of the passage, such as does the writer use paragraphing properly to make his/her ideas (introduction, body and conclusion) clear for readers? and do writers' ideas flow smoothly? Liang and Tsai, (2010) put forward the peer assessment rubric consisting of five dimensions: knowledge, suitability, correctness, creativity and overall. Suitability means that the students need to evaluate the suitability of the peer's chosen topic and creativity means that students need to evaluate the peer's creativity of the content of their passage.

Comparing to the language mistakes, this kind of assessment require students to think carefully and deeply to verify whether their peers meet these standards. Besides, if the students can provide some constructive suggestions which will greatly improve students' logical thinking ability. Joordens, Pare and Pruesse (2009) believe that as a form of formative assessment and collaborative learning in second language writing curricular and courses, peer assessment can scaffold students' writing process and enhance students' critical thinking ability.

From the above analysis, it is obviously that the adopting peer assessment in students' writing can develop students core competencies' thinking ability.

3.3. The Influence on Students' Learning Ability

During the process of peer assessment, most of the students are divided into different groups and if they meet some difficulties, they can talk about with their partners. Besides, the essence of peer assessment is students' centered which means that the students ought to do the peer assessment independently and the teacher just give some basic help.

Shen, Bai and Xue (2020) investigate the effects of peer assessment on learner autonomy. One of the interviewer in their research displayed her uncertainty in the beginning as she was not convinced of her competence for the task, but the specific guidelines provided in the training and more practices given helped her through the process and ultimately transformed her into a more autonomous learner. Liu and Carless (2006) claim that peer assessment can reduce students' dependence on the lecturer as the only expert. In other words, they think that the students gradually become the independent learners during the peer assessment. Liu Xueqing's (2011) opinion, she believes that peer assessment provides interaction between readers and authors. Through this interaction, students' sense of trust in their peers is enhanced, and their communication and interpersonal skills are also exercised, which is of great benefit to their future cooperative learning in other aspects. And peer assessment activities in the present study can be assumed to develop the learner's social and cognitive ability (Puegphrom, Chiramanee, 2014).

With peer assessment implemented and the teacher's role stepping back, the learners gradually began to evaluate their own learning process through their peers' help and their own critical judging ability, making the teacher no longer the only assessor or judge. By adopting the form of group cooperation, it can improve the relationship between the students and make them aware the importance of the group work.

In a word, the improvement of students' independent and cooperative learning ability coincides with the cultivation of learning ability advocated by Core Competencies. Hence, adopting peer assessment in students' writing can develop students core competencies' learning ability.

3.4. The Influence on Students' Cultural Awareness

Culture awareness emphasizes that students can communicate from a cross-cultural perspective under the background of globalization and develop correct culture attitudes and values. Culture awareness not only can also help students develop self-confidence in the culture of our own nation, but also can appreciate the cultural differences from different countries objectively.

Indeed, the implement of peer assessment does not directly develop students' cultural awareness. However, an important way to cultivate students' cultural awareness is to ask students to tell Chinese stories in English. In other words, the prerequisite for telling Chinese stories to foreigners is that students should firstly have a good command of foreign language which can be practiced by the peer assessment. Peer evaluation indirectly prepares the conditions for improving students' cultural awareness. If teachers want to directly improve students cultural' awareness, they can ask students to write something about culture, and during the peer assessment, students can impress their own idea about that kind of culture.

Although the peer assessment does not directly improve students' cultural awareness, it makes preparation for improving students' intercultural communication ability.

4. Suggestions for the Application of Peer Assessment in Classroom

Peer assessment brings a lot of benefits for students' learning. In order to give full play to the benefits of peer assessment, there are some suggestions for teacher to apply peer assessment.

Firstly, English teachers especially in senior high school are suggested to introduce peer assessment into English writing teaching to improve the effectiveness of teaching. Since by viewing the research results, it can be known that peer review can improve students' writing ability. And, it is helpful to enhance students' writing interest and motivation, and highlight students' learning initiative.

In addition, before peer assessment, students' language level should be considered. It is best to group students with similar language ability, so as to better achieve the purpose of promoting and learning from each other.

And when students start do the peer assessment, it is very necessary to provide the assessment standards to help students finish the job well.

5. Conclusion

The cultivation of the students' Core Competence is very significant in recent years. However, how to develop it is a big question for most English teachers. From the researches on peer assessment used in writing, it is obvious that it can improve students Core Competencies. Hence, it is very necessary for English teachers to take peer assessment during their teaching process.

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