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Review of the Influence of Peer Assessment on Chinese Students' English Writing Self-efficacy

Peichen Li[1], Siqing Zou[2*]

[1]School of Foreign Language, China University of Geoscience (Beijing), Beijing, China
[2]School of Foreign Language, Central South University of Forestry and Technology, China
**Coresponding Author. Email: 20226619@csuft.edu.cn*

Abstract. Writing is a fundamental dispute in English education, and self-efficacy is a crucial component impacting students' English writing abilities. In the learning of English writing, self-efficacy profoundly affects students' learning motivation, goal setting, and approach selection. Consequently, the secret to solving the English writing instruction conundrum is how to best improve students' self-efficacy in writing in the language. Peer assessment, a contemporary teaching strategy that highlights students' dominating positions and encourages cooperative learning, has steadily gained importance in education as a result of the continuous advancement of educational concepts. Peer assessment has shown to be an incredibly effective teaching tool and has been used extensively in classrooms across all levels and educational contexts. Students' self-efficacy and peer evaluation are closely related, according to the results of numerous research studies. Through empirical analysis, this paper will examine the relationship between peer assessment and students' self-efficacy in English writing as well as their writing skills. Based on the results of other academic peer assessment studies, this study shows that this approach can successfully raise students' self-efficacy. Potential future research directions are suggested at the article's conclusion, along with detailed instructions and recommendations for further research.

Keywords: Peer assessment, self-efficacy, English writing

1. Introduction

1.1. Background information

English has recently become an essential evaluation subject in college and university instruction. English writing can demonstrate whether students are able to use English to communicate their reasoning and ideas properly and reflect their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. As a result, it is now a crucial and demanding aspect of English evaluation. Nonetheless, a substantial number of students struggle with writing in English. As a result, enhancing pupils' writing skills in English has taken precedence in English instruction. Emotional variables are vital in English writing, and self-efficacy, an element of emotional factors, serves an indispensable role in English writing. Bandura's research in 1977 provided rise to the concept of self-efficacy, also known as personal efficacy, which

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describes a person's belief or level of confidence in their capacity to do a certain activity [1]. Self-efficacy is separated into categories such as writing self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, and others based on the kinds of tasks .Self-efficacy aims to accomplish. Students will study more effectively if they have a high degree of self-efficacy. Peer assessment, additionally referred to as peer review or peer feedback, involves students working in groups or pairs to give written or spoken feedback on the writing of their peers [2].

In research, the self-evaluating sources' contributions to self-efficacy are also supposed. Participants with higher self-efficacy not only make an active contribution in the peer evaluation process, but they are also better at appraising others and enhancing their own performance and learning [3]. Naturally, the effect of peer assessment on students' self-efficacy has attracted the attention of many studies during these years. This paper aims to provide a reference point and serve as an inspiration for someone already conducting this kind of research or for relevant experts who wants to start by crafting the outcomes of peer evaluation for self-efficacy in English writing.

1.2. Theoretical foundation

1.2.1. Self-efficacy theory

The fundamental tenet of this theory, which was put forth by Albert Bandura in the 1970s, is that conviction in the accomplishment of a job is greatly impacted by motivation, performance, and perseverance. Students' confidence in writing assignments can also be influenced by their level of self-efficacy in the area of English writing. Their writing performance and writing tactics are both impacted by this confidence [4].

1.2.2. Social cognitive theory

By 1977, Bandura and Wood, who has been credited with introducing the term of Social Cognitive Theory, discussed this in his work [5]. Along with this idea, it also illustrates how the environment affects a person's conduct, thinking, and perception. By seeing the actions and results of people around them, people absorb what they have learned., and people imitate the actions as well as draw the results and then use them as factors or parameters to influence their actions, thoughts, and perceptions. This theory is methodically explained when it comes to learning motivation and the effect of peer-moderated testing on learning outcomes in education, which is an area that has many studies on it.

1.2.3. Interactive learning theory

The Interactive Learning Theory was initially proposed by Palincsar back in 1982. This showcases the critical role that collaboration and interaction play at the very foundation of learning and knowledge creation [6]. Peer assessment, the interactive learning activity in the curriculum of teaching English writing, makes writing strategies familiar for students since they not only analyze the work of their classmates but also get feedback on their own writing. Students, in turn, absorb and boost their writing process and skills by taking active part in this participatory approach. A student's writing self-efficacy, that is, their belief in their own ability to complete writing assignments, can also be enhanced.

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2. Literature review

2.1. Concept definition

2.1.1. Peer assessment

Peer evaluation has been crucial to the teaching of foreign languages, particularly English as a second language, since the 1970s as researchers delved deeper into the study of writing. Scholars have a wide range of opinions regarding peer assessment in the ongoing development of peer research:

Peer evaluation highlights the subjective sentiments of students. It is a social paradigm where students collaboratively create writing texts through peer negotiating and information exchange while being guided by teachers [7]. It has been demonstrated to be an essential component of teaching English, and it can simultaneously improve the writing skills of the students being evaluated and the evaluators [8].

Peer feedback is a method used in writing lessons where students collaborate to provide each other with written or verbal comments to enhance the caliber of their writing [9]. According to Kate, the procedure by which students examine each other's composition papers and offer revision ideas is known as peer feedback [10]. Furthermore, peer review gives students a tool for teamwork and knowledge exchange while they are writing. In this process, students can act as instructors, consultants, or editors [9]. Another perspective holds that peer review is a form of social interaction that takes place when the writer and reader collaborate to create the literary content. It is primarily shown through peer negotiation and information sharing throughout the writing process [7]. Han Qingnian's study focuses on how peer evaluation affects college students' motivation to learn in a mobile learning environment, with a particular emphasis on the effects of self-efficacy, gender, and anonymity [11]. 52 college students constitute the research sample; they are divided into two groups of 26 students each: one with a real name and the other anonymous. The "Pocket Classroom" platform serves as the foundation for the research design, and the media design course's micro-video creation assignment was chosen for peer evaluation. According to the findings, students' internal motivation has increased as a result of peer evaluation overall, while their outward motivation has dramatically declined. There are variations in the effects of gender and anonymity on learning motivation. While boys' motivation is more visibly increased in a real-name setting, girls' motivation is more dramatically increased in an anonymous setting. Motivation can be predicted by many aspects of self-efficacy. Response efficacy significantly affects the improvement of learning motivation, particularly in the real-name group. However, there are not many rounds of peer review, and the research sample size is somewhat tiny. In addition, no comparative study has been carried out. Still, it does not thoroughly examine how students' self-efficacy and other characteristics relate to one another.

2.1.2. Self-efficacy

The following four factors can be used to understand self-efficacy in learning activities: In the first place, it is about an understanding and evaluation of students in respect to the ability to perform and complete a work assignment or activity. Secondly, it is shown by how sure students are of their skills to perform a set task. Then, it is the expectation of the students that they are able to perform the task or the confidence in their ability to perform the task accordingly. Finally, it involves students' cognition of their own powers to accomplish a set task correctly.

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The current research on self-efficacy among English learners has shown that the strength of their self-efficacy is one of the key factors influencing their choice and use of learning strategies. In an article published by Liu Yanju in 2010, it was found that appropriate learning strategies could effectively enhance the self-efficacy of non-English major students, achieving the dual purpose of improving learners' motivation levels and optimizing their ability to apply learning strategies [12]. Self-efficacy has a significant positive correlation with learning strategies and autonomous learning ability, but no direct correlation with academic achievement in English. Autonomous learning ability is significantly positively correlated with self-efficacy, learning strategies, and academic achievement. Furthermore, the influence of other factors on self-efficacy should not be overlooked [13]. For example, perfectionism has a positive correlation with English writing ability and plays a mediating role in enhancing self-efficacy. This study, conducted with 175 non-English major second-year students, including both an experimental group and a control group, explored how perfectionism can improve English writing ability while also influencing students' self-efficacy [14].

The study design utilized the "College English Writing Self-Efficacy Scale" as the primary tool to assess changes in students' self-efficacy following peer feedback. Students in the experimental group showed significant improvement in self-efficacy after undergoing peer feedback training. While the study has some limitations, such as the sample being limited to non-English major students from a single institution, and the lack of comprehensive control over other factors that may influence self-efficacy, it provides valuable insights. In evaluating writing ability, the study primarily used writing test scores, which included aspects such as content and structure, accuracy, and variety of language expression. This metric comprehensively reflects students' writing proficiency, especially the feedback process in peer evaluations, which helps students improve through continuous revision and thus enhances their self-efficacy. Students who actively employed self-regulated writing strategies were more likely to experience higher writing self-efficacy, which in turn contributed to improved English writing performance [15]. This study surveyed 200 students enrolled in a college English writing course, using a combination of questionnaires and writing tests to understand the relationship between the use of self-regulated strategies and writing self-efficacy. In the study design, students were divided into high-efficiency and low-efficiency groups based on their use of self-regulated strategies. The analysis of questionnaire data and writing test results revealed that the high-efficiency group performed significantly better in writing and had higher self-efficacy scores. However, the study's limitations include the sample being limited to a single university and primarily focusing on students in English writing courses, lacking a broader, cross-disciplinary sample. Additionally, the study did not control for individual differences or external factors affecting writing performance. Students with high self-efficacy tend to quickly adapt to changing environments, thereby increasing academic engagement and reducing academic burnout.

2.2. Research on peer assessment in writing

Perry and Bussy proposed that most social learning occured among peers in 1984, and because of their similar age and experiences, peers serve as effective references for performance evaluation and validation [16]. Therefore, positive peer relationships contribute to enhancing self-efficacy, while negative peer relationships can diminish it. From the above discussion, it is evident that during the writing process, the success of peers in writing can bring a sense of enjoyment to other peers who are at a similar level of writing proficiency. This positive impact can boost students' confidence in completing writing tasks and enhance their writing self-efficacy.

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2.3. Research on writing and self-efficacy

Pajares found through experimental research that writing self-efficacy plays a moderating role in academic performance and exhibits a significant correlation with it [17]. In 2009, Wu Xiyan and Zhang Qingzong conducted a study using questionnaires, correlation analysis, and path analysis involving 113 undergraduate English major students from the same university [13]. They established a path model linking self-efficacy with a series of writing-related factors, such as learning strategies, and confirmed that students with low self-efficacy are reluctant to actively apply English writing strategies. Wu Yuhong designed a training experiment for 175 second-year non-English major students based on a questionnaire survey method. The students were divided into several small groups (5-6 students per group) based on factors such as English writing proficiency and learning attitudes, following the principle of heterogeneity within groups and homogeneity between groups. In the initial phase of the experiment, which took place over two class sessions (90 minutes in total), students were introduced to the importance and standards of peer feedback through theoretical explanations, case analysis, and simulated practice, emphasizing continuous communication and discussion. Every three weeks, peer feedback-based writing practice sessions were conducted in class, spanning five cycles in total. After completing the writing tasks, the experimental group received peer feedback in class (30 minutes) and teacher feedback after class, while the control group received traditional teacher feedback after class and classroom explanations (30 minutes). Both groups maintained consistency in writing frequency and content. During the peer feedback process, the teacher provided guidance and supervision to ensure that the peer evaluations proceeded in an organized manner, promptly addressing any issues raised by students. The experimental design was based on social cognitive theory and cooperative learning theory, and the results showed that peer feedback significantly improved the self-efficacy of college students, especially female students, in college English writing.

2.4. Research on peer assessment and self-efficacy in writing

During the writing process, the success of peers in writing can bring a sense of satisfaction to other peers at similar writing levels, which in turn has a positive impact on students, enhancing their confidence in completing writing tasks and improving their writing self-efficacy [16]. In the 2022 experiment conducted by Zhou Xianyan, 112 college students from a high school in Shandong Province were selected as the research subjects [18]. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods was used, with an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group consisted of 30 male and 26 female students, while the control group consisted of 29 male and 27 female students. In the experimental group, the male-to-female ratio was 53.6% to 46.4%, and in the control group, it was 51.8% to 48.2%. The gender distribution between the two groups was similar, making them comparable. Most of these students had started learning English in kindergarten, but had not experienced peer feedback-based writing instruction before this study. Most of the students' English proficiency was at a mid-level or below-average level during their junior high school years, with only a few students at a high proficiency level. To avoid influencing students' attitudes and performance, they were not informed about the specific content of the empirical study before and during the research. In this experiment, the experimental group adopted peer feedback as the teaching method, while the control group used traditional teacher feedback. The data obtained through experimental methods, questionnaires, and interviews revealed that the self-efficacy of the experimental group, which used peer feedback, was higher than that of the control

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group. Therefore, it can be concluded that peer feedback, compared to traditional teacher feedback, is more effective in enhancing students' self-efficacy.

3. Research gaps

Although existing studies have shown that peer feedback can enhance students' self-efficacy in English writing, few studies have focused on the potential social relationship conflicts that may arise during the peer feedback process. In peer feedback, students with weaker foundations often receive more feedback and benefit more, and this unequal interaction can strain relationships between peers, which may, in turn, affect their writing self-efficacy. While peer feedback has a significant impact on English writing outcomes, potential points of conflict during the process—such as whether social relationships among peers influence long-term writing efficiency—raise important questions regarding the long-term effects of peer feedback on learners' social dynamics and writing self-efficacy. These aspects warrant further empirical research and theoretical exploration in the academic field.

4. Conclusion

Peer feedback, as an effective teaching method to improve English writing skills, has gradually been widely implemented in college English writing courses. As an important approach to enhancing writing proficiency, peer feedback plays a crucial role in strengthening students' self-efficacy. Students with high self-efficacy are typically able to provide more accurate and constructive feedback. Existing research has revealed the positive impact of peer feedback on writing self-efficacy. However, there are still some research gaps, particularly regarding the potential social relationship conflicts during the peer feedback process. These conflicts could affect the quality of interactions between peers, which in turn might influence the enhancement of self-efficacy. As an innovative teaching model, peer feedback not only improves students' writing abilities but also provides them with a positive feedback platform, helping them strengthen their self-efficacy through interaction, thereby enhancing the educational outcomes.

Authors contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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