Influential Factors and Strategies of Peer Assessment Model Implementation in College English Writing Instruction

Yuxin Liu

Changchun University of Architecture and Civil Engineering, Changchun, Jilin Province 130604

Abstract: *As an important measure in college English writing instruction reform, the peer assessment model can effectively enhance students' writing engagement and critical thinking ability. However, it is often restricted by various factors in practical implementation. This paper combines the teaching practice of college English writing and from three dimensions: students, teachers, and teaching environment, analyzes the core factors that affect the effective implementation of peer assessment model, including inadequate assessment ability of students, missing teacher guidance, and vague assessment criterion. On this basis, it proposes targeted optimization strategies, such as systematically conducting training on assessment ability, strengthening the guiding role of teachers, and improving assessment criterion and processes, aiming to provide practical reference for the efficient implementation of the peer evaluation model in college English writing instruction and help improve the quality of English writing instruction and students' integrated language capability.*

English writing is a key component of college English teaching and directly reflects students' comprehensive pragmatic competence. In previous teaching, teachers corrected compositions alone, which not only increases the teaching burden, but also fails to meet the differentiated needs of students. As a result, students lack initiative in revision and their writing skills improves slowly. The peer assessment model enables students to assess each other's compositions, allowing them to find out problems from various perspectives and cultivate their critical thinking and expression ability.

However, in actual teaching, the effect of the peer assessment model varies greatly, and in some classes, it is just a formality. Students are short on the relevant professional assessment knowledge and skills and cannot accurately point out where the problems lie. Teachers cannot provide adequate guidance and offer effective assistance to students. In terms of the teaching environment, unclear assessment criteria and unreasonable assessment time have affected the effective implementation of the mutual assessment model. Therefore, it is very necessary to analyze the factors influencing the mutual assessment model and propose improvement strategies for enhancing the quality of college English writing instruction.

1.Theoretical Basis and Research Significance of Peer Assessment Model Implementation in College English Writing Instruction

1.1 *Theoretical Basis*

The construction and implementation of the peer assessment model are supported by multiple educational theories. Firstly, the theory of social constructivism emphasizes construction of knowledge in social interaction. Through the exchange of views and discussion of problems in the process of mutual assessment, students achieve a common understanding of writing criteria and synergetic improvement of writing skills. Secondly, interaction hypothesis suggests that language learning stems from meaningful interaction. Feedback and responses in mutual assessment provide students with real language environment, and help them discover loopholes in language expression. Thirdly, metacognitive theory holds that peer assessment can encourage students to step out of the perspective of "writers" and reflect on writing logic and expression strategies as "assessors", thereby enhancing their metacognitive ability.

1.2 *Research Significance*

At the theoretical level, this research can enrich the practical theoretical system of college English writing

instruction and provide theoretical basis for the localization of the peer assessment model. At the practical level, defining the influential factors and proposing optimization strategies can provide operable teaching reference for front-line teachers and address perfunctory implementation in mutual assessment. At the same time, it helps to enhance students' double skills in writing and assessment to correspond to the reform direction of "student-centered" English teaching in colleges and universities.

2.Influential Factors of Peer Assessment Model Implementation in College English Writing Instruction

2.1 *Student-Level Influential Factors*

Students are the direct participants in the peer assessment model, and their own ability and attitude determine the assessment effect. Starting from the perspective of assessment ability, most students do not undergo systematic training when conducting mutual assessment. They have a vague understanding of the assessment dimensions of English writing and only evaluate simple errors such as grammatical errors and spelling errors, while ignoring deep level errors such as article structure and grounds of argument, resulting in incomplete assessment. Some students do not know how to give a mark and act arbitrarily during the scoring process, which affects the objectivity of the assessment.

In terms of engagement attitude, some students treat mutual assessment as a perfunctory task and take no count of it. Some people just mark an "×" sign without giving any suggestions for revision. Some people merely give positive assessment out of fear of offending others, which prevents their peers from noticing the problems in their writing. Some students dare not express their true thoughts, due to their lack of confidence in their English proficiency.

2.2 *Teacher-Level Influential Factors*

In the peer assessment model, teachers act as both "guides" and "supporters", and their teaching behaviors influence the assessment effect. Some teachers do not fully explain the purposes, processes and methods of mutual assessment before conducting it. They just say "assess each other's compositions", which makes students very confused and unsure of how to do it. When teachers guide the class and students have questions when evaluating their compositions, the teachers are unable to answer them in time, which affects the quality of the assessment.

In the design of assessment criteria, some teachers use overly general criteria that is not specific and exercisable with ambiguous descriptions of "content completeness, structure clearness, and language accuracy", and fail to refine requirements and scoring criteria for each dimension. As a result, students cannot objectively give marks and provide feedback. Moreover, the teachers do not modify the assessment criteria based on the characteristics of the writing tasks. Although the assessment focuses of argumentative writings and narrative writings are different, the teachers use the same criteria, which reduces the practicality of mutual assessment.

After the mutual assessment is over, some teachers do not promptly sort out and summarize the assessment results, and merely ask students to revise their own compositions instead, which leads to some common problems in the compositions not being resolved. For instance, students often overlook the connection between arguments and grounds of argument. If teachers do not focus on explaining this, students will make mistakes in their next writing. Moreover, the teachers do not display some excellent assessment cases to the students, which is not conducive to the improvement of students' assessment ability [1].

2.3 *Teaching Environment-Level Influential Factors*

In terms of time, under the dual pressure of course time and teaching progress, many teachers leave very little time for peer assessment in class, which is as short as 10 to 15 minutes. In such a short period of time, students are simply unable to carry out in-depth reading, careful analysis and critical thinking. They merely take a cursory glance at the texts and then express their own opinions based on a superficial impression. As a result, their feedback lacks

both practical significance and positive suggestions, greatly reducing the teaching value of the mutual assessment activities. At present, mutual assessment is mostly placed separately in the final completion step of the writing task and is not integrated into the initial links such as outline drafting and draft writing. Such a lagging assessment model prevents students from receiving timely feedback from others during the writing process, makes them miss the best opportunity to revise logical loopholes and improve the content structure, and also restricts the gradual improvement of writing skills.

In terms of group formation, when dividing groups, some teachers do not take into full account on the whole and simply adopt "random grouping" or "free grouping". Random grouping can indeed achieve rapid grouping. However, it can easily lead to significant differences among students in each group in terms of English proficiency, learning ability and engagement. Students with higher proficiency have to undertake more tasks, while those with lower proficiency can only passively accept and cannot cooperate and collaborate with each other. Although free grouping can enhance students' enthusiasm for engagement, it is prone to the phenomenon of "small circles". Students tend to choose close schoolmates for team members. So, the assessment process is mixed with personal preferences, and lacks objectivity and fairness. Another issue is that some groups have too many members, reaching 5 to 6. During the mutual assessment period, the English composition of each student in such groups cannot get sufficient discussion and various sorts of feedback, resulting in a narrow assessment coverage and a lack of in-depth discussion.

From the perspective of technical support, the application effect of online platforms varies greatly, which has become a key bottleneck restricting the development of the peer assessment model. Some online mutual assessment platforms have complex interfaces and complicated operation processes. Students and teachers have to spend a lot of time getting familiar with the functions of the platforms, which invisibly increases teaching cost and slows down the progress of mutual assessment activities. Moreover, there are quite obvious flaws in the functions of platforms. They lack real-time collaborative editing, intelligent assessment, and data statistics and analysis, and other utilitarian functions, making it difficult to meet the diverse operational requirements of teachers and students during the mutual assessment process. What is even more worrying is that there are imperfections in the technical training for teachers in colleges and universities. The training content lags behind technological development, which leads to that teachers are unable to master the operation and management skills of the platforms well and unable to effectively guide students to conduct mutual assessment activities through online platforms, and it is delayed that the process of deeply integrating information technology and writing teaching [2].

3.Strategies for Optimizing the Implementation of the Peer Assessment Model in College English Writing Instruction

3.1 *Strengthening the Cultivation of Students' Assessment Ability and Correcting Their Attitude Towards Engagement*

When explaining knowledge, teachers need to elaborate on the assessment dimensions of English writing in detail before mutual assessment, which include content dimension, structure dimension, language dimension, format dimension, etc., and clearly explain the detailed requirements for each dimension. In the content dimension, teachers need to explain the judgment methods for whether the argument is clear, whether the ground of argument is powerful, and whether the theme is pertinent. In the structure dimension, teachers need to explain whether there is a logical relation in the beginning part, the main body and the ending part of the article, etc. And through specific examples, they show students some excellent compositions and defective compositions to help them understand how to apply assessment criteria.

For the assessment on skills, some phased tasks can be designed in terms of skill assessment. In the early stage, "model assessment" can be adopted. The teachers demonstrate how to assess the model composition, mark the problems, give suggestions, and ask the students to evaluate another composition under the guidance of the teachers.

In the middle term, the teachers can carry out "cooperative assessment in groups". Students are divided into groups to assess a composition, reach a consensus through discussion, and learn to assess compositions. In the later term, students can be allowed to "make assessment independently". After assessing the compositions by themselves, they write assessment reports. And teachers give marks according to the quality to encourage students to improve their assessment level.

3.2 Strengthening Teacher Guidance and Perfecting the Assessment System

Effective guidance from teachers is the key to the smooth implementation of the peer assessment model. The power of guidance should be enhanced from three aspects: process control, criterion optimization, and subsequent summary. In terms of process control, a clear mutual assessment process should be established to provide real-time guidance in class. Before mutual assessment, teachers clearly inform students of the tasks and time for mutual assessment, such as 10 minutes for reading the composition, 15 minutes for filling out the assessment form, and 10 minutes for communication and feedback. During the mutual assessment process, teachers walk around to answer questions, explain the criterion on "grounds of argument" with examples, and remind the perfunctory students to complete assessment carefully. After the mutual assessment, teachers organize students to do a report to their assessment in groups, share the assessment results and problems, and carry out exchanges and learning.

Regarding the optimization of assessment criteria, teachers should formulate specific and exercisable multi-dimensional assessment criteria in light of the characteristics of English writing and the practical level of students. Taking the dimension of "language expression" as an example, detailed scoring rules are made based on grammatical accuracy, vocabulary size and sentence coherence, which range from 0 to 4 points. Moreover, depending on different types or forms of literature such as argumentative writing and narrative writing, teachers should develop targeted indicators that emphasize arguments and grounds of arguments, or plots and emotions. Students can also be invited to participate in the formulation of criteria, and they can give suggestions according to their experience in writing, thereby enhancing students' recognition of the criteria.

In the subsequent summary and feedback, teachers need to sort out the results of peer assessment and focus on explaining the common problems. If many children mention that their peers' compositions are "structure-disorganized ", teachers can teach everyone in class how to build the structure of an article, and use model compositions to analyze how to start an article well, arrange paragraphs well, and summarize the conclusion of the article. It is also necessary to pay attention to whether students have made revision in accordance with the revision suggestions, and ask them to submit the compositions before and after the revision as well as the revision explanations to test whether the students have mastered the knowledge points in the problems identified through mutual assessment. Teachers should regularly reflect on the effect of peer assessment, and promptly make revision in response to new situations encountered during the implementation of peer assessment. They can appropriately increase the assessment time or change the number of groups, etc., to ensure that peer assessment can continuously improve and develop [3].

3.3 Optimizing Teaching Environment Configuration to Ensure the Effect of Mutual Assessment

A reasonable teaching environment configuration provides a good guarantee for peer assessment. Teachers make configuration from three dimensions, namely time, group, and technical support, to achieve a good peer assessment effect. In terms of time arrangement, teachers allocate corresponding time for peer assessment and integrate it into the entire writing teaching process. In terms of time, 30 to 45 minutes of mutual assessment time will be given based on the difficulty of the writing tasks and the amount of assessment content. Students will have sufficient time to read others' works, analyze problems and write assessment suggestions. In terms of time nodes, peer assessment should be integrated into the three stages of "before writing - during writing - after writing". Before the writing begins, teachers arrange students to conduct peer assessment on the writing outline to assist them in perfecting their writing ideas; During the writing process, teachers organize students to conduct peer assessment of

the first draft to detect and correct errors as early as possible. After the writing is completed, teachers arrange the students to conduct peer assessment of the final draft, summarize the writing experience and shortcomings. Through peer assessment during these periods, students are encouraged to get feedback throughout the writing process and improve their writing quality.

In terms of group formation, it is necessary to employ "heterogeneous grouping", and take into account students' English proficiency, learning ability, personality traits, and other factors, so that members within the group can complement each other. Teachers should divide those with higher English proficiency and those with lower English proficiency into a group, and let those with higher proficiency help those with lower proficiency enhance their assessment ability, divide extroverts and introverts in a group to enhance communication within the group, and control the size of each group, with 3 to 4 people in each group to ensure that each student's work can be assessed. Each student in the group should assess the works of 2 to 3 other students and also have in-depth communication with their peers. Teachers can regularly change the organizational form of groups to avoid the formation of fixed small groups. They should encourage students to cooperate with different peers, enhance cooperation among students, and improve their adaptability.

In terms of technical support, teachers should choose online platforms that are easy to operate and have complete functions to conduct peer assessment, and strengthen technical training and guidance. When choosing a platform, priority can be given to the teaching platforms that universities have already introduced, such as SuperStarLearn and Rain Classroom. These platforms have functions like "assignment submission", "online evaluation", and "comment reply", which can meet the basic needs of peer assessment. They can also choose specialized English writing assessment platforms, such as Criterion. This platform can provide students with immediate grammar correction and writing suggestions, and assist in peer assessment. In terms of technical training, teachers need to explain in detail to students the operation methods of the platforms before using them, such as how to upload compositions, how to fill in assessment forms, and how to view the assessment results of peers. Teachers should also help students quickly master the operation skills through case demonstrations[4].

4.Conclusion

The peer assessment model is of great significance to college English writing instruction. It can stimulate students' enthusiasm for writing and cultivate their critical thinking and language application competence. However, during its implementation, its effect varies due to students' assessment ability, teachers' guidance, teaching environment, and other factors, which can be addressed by cultivating students' assessment ability, giving full play to teachers' guiding role, and optimizing the teaching environment, etc. In actual teaching, teachers should dynamically adapt strategies based on student needs, monitor implementation progress in real time, and perfect the strategies. Moreover, with the development of educational informatization, an online and offline blended peer assessment model can be explored to optimize efficacy, diversify the pathways for teaching reform, and enhance students' English writing skills.

References:

[1] *Fang Zhao.(2023)An Empirical Study on the Impact of Peer Review on College English writing instruction[J]. Journal of Ezhou University,30(01),36-38+56.*

[2] *Chunyun Yang,Ling Wang,and Changying Liu.(2023)Correlation between sense of self-efficacy and Multi-dimensional Writing Assessment in College English Writing[J].Journal of China West Normal University(Philosophy &Social Sciences),6,89-96.*

[3] *Yu Liu.(2021)An Empirical Study on the Interaction Model in Peer Assessment of English Writing[J].Journal of Hubei Open Vocational College,34(05),173-174+183.*

[4] *Huahua Yang.(2020)Construction of Multiple Feedback Model for College English Writing Course[J].English Square,34,80-83.*