

The Effect of Peer Review on College Juniors' English Writing Apprehension: A Case Study

Xutong Guo *

Faculty of foreign languages, University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, Zhongshan Institute, Zhongshan, 528400, China

* Corresponding author Email: guoxutongcecilia@hotmail.com

Abstract: In College English teaching, writing is a combination of cognitive and emotional activities, and learners' emotions will affect the result of writing. In traditional writing teaching, College English teachers adopt various teaching methods to improve students' English writing levels, but the improvement of their writing levels is not significant at this stage. Many College English majors often feel anxious and lack patience in argumentative essays. In recent years, student-centered peer review has attracted much attention. This study will explore whether peer review can alleviate the apprehension of argumentation for College English majors. This study explores the effects of peer review on argumentative writing apprehension of College English majors based on cooperative learning and feedback theory. This study interviewed 9 English majors who had passed TEM-4 at a Guangdong university, aiming to study two questions: (1) What is the general situation of argumentative essay apprehension among them? (2) Can peer review alleviate the writing apprehension of College English majors? Is it working? Firstly, this study will study the apprehension of 9 College English majors about argumentative writing through case studies and interviews. Then, it will apply the writing teaching mode of peer review in the research objects; Finally, the interview method will be used to collect and analyze the data. Based on the above research and results, it is suggested that College English major teachers should fully understand and realize the importance of peer review and actively use peer review in writing teaching. Lastly, the study shows the limitations and provides some positive ideas for future research.

Keywords: Peer Review; College Juniors; Writing Apprehension.

1. Introduction

1.1. Theoretical Significance of Peer Review

As an English learner, writing is an important means of output, which is influenced by many factors. Therefore, more and more researchers at home and abroad have done a lot of research on writing apprehension and have achieved certain results. Meanwhile, the feedback of peer review is also a concern. Some scholars combined English writing with peer review to explore whether peer review can relieve learners' writing apprehension. Taking non-English major sophomores as the research object, Wu Yuhong pointed out that peer review can significantly reduce students' overall writing cognitive apprehension, and students' subjective role has also been fully played [1]. Liu Ping explored the effectiveness of peer review and teacher feedback in College English writing teaching and holds that students have a positive attitude toward peer review in College English writing teaching, and this feedback mechanism is feasible and effective and is a beneficial supplement form of teacher evaluation [2].

At present, there have been research on the theory and practice of peer review and writing apprehension, but the research objects are mainly junior high school students, secondary vocational students, and senior high school students. The effect of peer review on the writing apprehension of College English majors is less. Therefore, this study has certain theoretical value.

1.2. Practical Significance of Peer Review

In the traditional process of college students' English writing, teachers are the only readers. Therefore, college students are in the stage of passive learning for a long time, and it is tough to actively analyze their own writing problems.

This phenomenon will bring students more negative emotions, aversion, and rejection of writing.

On the basis of understanding the level of junior students' English writing anxiety, this study applies peer review to practical writing teaching to explore whether this writing feedback has a certain impact on alleviating junior students' English writing apprehension, so as to encourage students to actively join in peer review and alleviate junior students' English writing apprehension. Accumulating more positive emotions provides more practical writing feedback channels for students and teachers.

Through the implementation of peer review, it can improve the writing level and reflection ability of junior students, realize the deficiencies and weaknesses of writing, create a good learning atmosphere, help teachers grasp the problems of students' writing, and also provide a cooperative learning opportunity to give full play to information exchange.

2. Innovation

First, research object. The subjects of this study are junior students in college. The objects of previous studies were mostly junior high school students, senior high school students, secondary vocational students, and non-English major college students, and few College English majors were involved, so the research objects were relatively single. However, the classes of English majors are mainly based on English, involving 4 parts, listening, speaking, reading, and writing respectively. It is quite different for junior high school students, senior high school students, secondary vocational students, and non-English major students. In addition, the quantitative criteria of research objects selected in this study are different from other studies. Different from other studies, such as final exam scores, random sampling of high school

parallel classes, native speakers, etc., the objects of this study were selected from TEM-4 qualified, good, and excellent.

Second, research methods. After consulting and reading a large number of literatures, it is found that most studies have done a lot of research on writing apprehension and the differences in different abilities of the research subjects through questionnaires, experiments, and other methods. This study explores the impact of peer review on argumentative writing apprehension of College English majors by means of semi-structured interviews.

3. Literature Review

3.1. The Core Concept of Peer Review

By reading a great number of relative kinds of literature, many scholars have made a clear definition of the core concept of peer review.

Topping thinks that peer review is a kind of teaching arrangement, which evaluates peer learning results based on level, value, quantity, success, and so on [3]. Carlson and Berry both hold that peer review is a good learning environment and atmosphere in which peers need to evaluate the learning success or performance of other peers [4]. Di Luo and Li Zhang believe that peer review is a new type of evaluation, an activity in which learners can provide or accept peer feedback orally or in writing in the process of learning [5]. Guo Yining believes that peer review is a process of effective information exchange and social interaction based on cooperative learning, and is a high-effective carrier of interaction between students and students [6]. At the same time, peer review is a way of evaluation and feedback, and also a way of cooperative learning and teaching.

To sum up, according to the above definition of the concept of peer review, the author believes that peer review is not only a new evaluation and feedback way of information exchange and interaction with students as the main position but also a teaching way based on cooperative learning.

3.2. Domestic and Foreign Studies on Peer Review

Domestic and foreign studies have defined, classified, and analyzed peer review and writing apprehension from various aspects. The writing apprehension behavior proposed by Daly and Wilson is a specific behavior that scholars show when they write [7]. Wang Yanli et al. believe that the focus of peer review is to emphasize the dominant position of students, encourage them to actively participate in it, explore their own strengths and weaknesses in writing, and achieve the effect and purpose of "promoting learning through evaluation"[8]. Wu Yuhong holds that peer review can significantly reduce students' overall writing apprehension [1]. Krashen points out that writing in a foreign language tends to experience more anxiety than writing in a native language [9]. Boice confirmed that there are many obstacles in the process of English writing for scholars: inability to complete writing tasks in the prescribed time, writing difficulties, lack of patience, and so on [10]. Clifford, Villamil and DeGuerrero, and Deng Liming showed that students who applied peer review to English writing significantly improved their writing scores [11-13].

After reading relevant literature, it is found that researchers have done a lot of research on the writing anxiety of non-English major college students and the differences of students with different abilities in this aspect through questionnaire survey and experiment method. The research objects are non-

English major college students, and the research objects and methods are relatively simple. English majors' classes mainly focus on English, involving listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which are quite different from those of non-English majors. Therefore, this study explores the influence of peer review on argumentative writing apprehension of college English majors by conducting semi-structured interviews with junior students in college.

4. Methods

4.1. Writing Test

The writing test was conducted before the experiment. The writing test is presented in Appendix 8.1. In order to ensure that the writing could truly reflect the students' writing level, this writing test was conducted without notice to the students. 9 subjects in advance and were asked to complete the given topic and upload it to the learning platform, called XueXiTong. This is a mobile learning platform, and students can peer review under this platform at any time. The task should be done within the prescribed 40 minutes (see Appendix 1 for the topic). The research objects of this test are 3 college English majors with TEM-4 grades of qualified, good, and excellent, and they are regarded as high, medium, and low levels to test whether peer review will have a positive impact on student apprehension and affect the writing anxiety of students with different levels.

4.2. Establishing Peer Review Group

Based on the theory of cooperative learning, Bao Zhimei holds that cooperative learning groups are mainly composed of peers with different levels, and due to the differences in students' professional ability and personal level, different students have different perceptions, participation, and experience in cooperative learning [14]. Therefore, heterogeneous grouping is conducive to the construction of an interactive knowledge system, which is the key to the realization of benign cooperation. According to Johnson et al., cooperative learning applies group form to teaching activities, so that students can promote their own and others' learning in joint activities [15].

In this study, 9 students were reasonably divided into 3 learning groups, with 3 students in each group for mutual evaluation. Group leaders are selected by themselves, and the selected group leaders are responsible for carrying out and following up the whole process of peer review. After completing the argumentative essays, participants upload the draft to the XueXiTong platform and give 2 hours to their peers for mutual review, suggestions for revision, and feedback. Secondly, after submitting the argumentative writing of 9 students, each student was randomly assigned 3 classmates to conduct mutual evaluation and score each other anonymously. In order to make the scoring criteria much more comprehensive and clearer, the researchers conducted peer review training for the students before the start of the mutual evaluation.

4.3. Arrange Peer Review Training

Peer review training is an important part of this research. Before the start of the experiment, high-quality and efficient mutual review training should be carried out, which is conducive to students' clear assessment standards and requirements, and avoid non-standard evaluation and revision of the composition in the same class. Bai Liru and Zhang Jun

both argued that the effectiveness of peer review would be affected if students lacked the ability to comment on essays [16,17]. Therefore, teachers need to train students before mutual evaluation and increase and attach importance to the importance of mutual evaluation. The training is divided into the following steps:

Step 1: Teachers briefly introduce the characteristics, requirements, and features of peer review through multimedia. The difference between peer review and traditional teacher evaluation should be explained to stimulate students' curiosity and enthusiasm for peer review. In this process, we should create a good atmosphere of "interaction, mutual evaluation, and mutual learning" and lay a good comment atmosphere for peer mutual evaluation.

Step 2: Introduce the evaluation rules and peer review form and how to fill it out, then the teacher demonstrates how to comment on the student's argumentative essays. The peer review table is presented in Appendix 8.4. Teachers will also talk to students about peer evaluation criteria. The peer evaluation criteria are presented in Appendix 8.3. Through the understanding of the evaluation rules, students can better understand the evaluation standards, requirements, and steps of peer evaluation, learn how to review peers' essays and improve the quality of mutual evaluation.

Step 3: Practice. The practice is to make students familiar with the mutual evaluation in the whole process, increase the experience of mutual evaluation, and avoid unfamiliar scoring rules and the mutual evaluation process. The specific process is as follows:

First of all, check whether the student's word count meets the fixed requirements, whether the handwriting is neat, whether the composition stick to the topic and so on. Second, read carefully. The purpose is to check whether the context is coherent and the use of language is appropriate. If someone finds that there are good words and sentences or grammatical errors in others' argumentative writing when evaluating them, you can highlight them to facilitate subsequent revision. Finally, group discussion. In the process of group discussion, you can point out the highlights of the essays and the shortcomings of the article and suggestions for revision, and give a score. At the same time, the score will be uploaded to the learning platform for a summary.

Then, in the process of peer review, the teacher observes the scores of each group, finds something that needs improvement, and records them in time. At the end of the practice, each group should summarize the problems arising in the peer review process to the teacher and hope that the teacher can give guidance and suggestions to them, which can correct the errors and remind students not be making the same mistakes next time.

Finally, students submit the evaluation results and forms, and the teacher checks and explains the problems. The results of one of the peer-reviewed argumentative essays are in Appendix 8.2.

Step 4: After the peer review, the teacher should reiterate the precautions of peer review and explain the problems in the process of peer review to avoid mistakes from happening again. At the same time, students should also be encouraged to actively participate in peer review, actively discuss the highlights of the composition, and find out the advantages and disadvantages of each other's compositions.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Common Points of the Three-Level Students in the Process of Peer Review

In order to obtain more intuitive and deeper data, the interview in the qualitative research method was used to understand the overall situation and influence of peer review on writing apprehension. Three College English major students who obtained TEM-4 qualified, good, and excellent grades were selected respectively, which can be regarded as High, medium, and low level.

Through the collation of interview information, it is found that students of different levels will be unable to write and think for a long time, with perfectionism, high pressure, and feel nervous when writing argumentative essays.

However, students of different levels generally believe peer review can reduce writing apprehension to a certain extent, especially middle and low-level students who no longer resist writing after peer review. On the contrary, they will face the writing with a more relaxed attitude, thinking they can better use some writing skills to complete the writing task within the specified time. In addition, after participating in peer review, students' sense of writing experience is enhanced. Compared with the traditional teacher evaluation, students focus on having more time and opportunities to have face-to-face communication with their peers in the mutual evaluation group, rather than worrying about the score given by their teachers, fearing that their own writings will not be highly recognized, and so on. Obviously, students have become more positive toward writing. With mutual understanding and trust, students are not only more willing to share their writing knowledge, skills, and ideas with their peers but also create a cooperative learning atmosphere of "interaction, mutual assessment, and mutual learning".

In terms of English writing skills, students' writing becomes more standardized. Grammar mistakes were corrected and accumulated lots of excellent English expressions. Some students regard peer review as a process of self-reflection. In the process of mutual evaluation, peers are equivalent to their own "teaching assistant", who find out the wrong details of their writing and put forward suggestions for revision. Other students believe that the mutual assessment is the same as a "double-check" because it can check the writing mistakes before submitting it to their teacher. However, they will also think about whether there are the same mistakes in their own writing and will be more careful to avoid such mistakes. In addition, peer review deepens students' memory of writing content and errors, and can also promote interaction between teachers and students and better integrate into the classroom.

In terms of writing tasks, students are confident in completing argumentative writing tasks. Due to the exam-oriented education, students lack patience and initiative in writing. They are not willing to spend time and energy in writing but tend to recite model essays, key sentence patterns and template frameworks, etc., in order to get more satisfactory scores in argumentation writing through this "cramming" way. However, through mutual evaluation, students can not only master the overall framework of argumentative writing, and the features and requirements of writing but also have a deep understanding and memory of relevant knowledge. The results of the interview show that the students are looking forward to the in-depth explanation of argumentative writing, and getting more writing methods,

rather than the surface explanation and the correct writing.

In terms of writing diversity, students of different levels feel that their writing is more diverse, mainly in sentence patterns, words, and so on. In daily writing, students pay much more attention to or recite the sentences in the model essay, which can be used in writing. Some students think that they are too perfectionist in their own writing and want to cram a great number of excellent writing expressions and synonyms into their writing. Some other students hold that the content and sentence patterns in the model text are fixed, and lack diversification of sentence patterns, resulting in the repeated use of the same sentence pattern and words in the process of writing, worried that the use of the same things lack of novelty, afraid that the writing score will be reduced. Interviews show that students can "understand, learn and use" other people's writing expressions and vocabulary in reading other people's essays, and apply them to their own writing, which also helps to alleviate their writing apprehension to a certain extent, and significantly alleviates the problem of how to write.

5.2. Differentia of the Three-Level Students in the Process of Peer Review

High, medium, and low English language level students have different views on this:

High-level students' influence on peer review is certain. It can help them avoid some common mistakes, but they have two concerns: time consumption and level difference. High-level students believe that if their writing is revised for students lower than their own level, the efficiency will be greatly reduced. They worry that there will be some undiscovered errors in their writing that have not been found and corrected in time. On the contrary, they would rather directly submit their writing to the teacher, which will greatly improve their efficiency and enable them to get feedback faster. The most urgent need of high-level students is to optimize their writing structure and learn more authentic writing expressions, which can only be met by teachers with higher English proficiency. Nevertheless, high-level students fully affirmed the role and influence of peer review. On the one hand, in the review of different levels of composition, they can always remind themselves of regular writing mistakes and deepen their impression. On the other hand, they are willing to communicate with students of different levels, mutual assistance, and mutual evaluation, creating a good atmosphere for academic exchange.

Medium-level students have a significant increase in their confidence during the process of argumentative essays. First, they can read and understand the general idea of their peers' compositions and find some common grammatical mistakes. When they see some shining points in their peers' argumentative essays, such as sentence patterns, words, etc., they take notes and then use them in their compositions next time. Second, after many mutual reviews, the use of words becomes more appropriate, the anxiety and burden of writing are correspondingly reduced, and the confidence in writing is greatly enhanced. In a word, middle-level students have significantly improved their writing apprehension and confidence.

Low-level students hold that there are limitations in mutual assessment. Firstly, their writing foundation and their writing level are not good. It is difficult to find and correct the errors in the compositions of medium and high-level peers, and they are afraid that others will laugh at their low English level. All

these behaviors make them feel extremely embarrassed, and their sense of participation is greatly reduced. Secondly, they think that it is beneficial for them if their compositions are reviewed by medium or high-level students, and they will provide them with suggestions, which will improve their writing level. On the contrary, if same-level peers revise, then they will give them limited suggestions, and there may be some mistakes that have not been found. So, students feel insecure and want to seek help from teachers. In traditional feedback, when students are given a composition marked by the teacher, they will only read it briefly and have no courage to ask teachers why they are wrong. It will hinder the improvement of their writing ability. In the course of this series, their writing apprehension will increase. However, in the process of peer review, low-level students are more willing to communicate with their peers. They commonly hold that only peers can understand the ideas of peers, and peer review can better make them clear the steps of writing, content, opinions, and so on. Besides, they can ask their partners at any time, and they can often get patient and effective answers. In short, there will be some limitations in the peer review for lower-level students, but the overall situation is good.

6. Limitations & Future Work

6.1. Limitations of Research

First, the duration is relatively short. This study only studies the effect of using peer review in a single writing test, but the cultivation of writing ability is long-term which cannot be changed and improved in the short term.

Second, the sample size is small. In this study, in this study, 3 College English major students who obtained TEM-4 qualified, good, and excellent grades were selected respectively. In fact, the writing level of college students of different grades in the same school is different. There are also differences between different schools and different grades. The study on the effect of peer review in one grade is not universal, and it is hard to see the lasting impact of peer review on writing apprehension.

6.2. Future Work

First, enlarge the sample size. The experimental subjects include college students from different levels of universities and different levels of English. The experimental subjects can be diverse, making the results of the study universal.

Second, extend the research period. In the future, college English writing teaching can combine writing teaching with peer review and takes the four-year period as a cycle.

Lastly, reasonable grouping is conducive to improving the efficiency of mutual evaluation and learning efficiency. Therefore, the effectiveness of mutual evaluation can be enhanced.

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