

A Research of Peer Review in the Teaching of Continuation Task Teaching

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Abstract: This research makes an attempt to apply peer review to the English continuation task writing teaching, trying to research the following questions: (1) What is the status quo of students' continuation task writing? (2) How to conduct peer review in the continuation task writing teaching in senior high school? (3) What is the effect of peer review on students' continuation task performance? Based on the theory of cooperative learning, the process writing approach and the zone of proximal development, and taking the students of Class 15 of a senior high school as the research subjects, this thesis researches the application of peer review to continuation task teaching by means of questionnaire survey and tests. After three months study, this research holds the opinion that peer review has a certain practical significance for continuation task teaching in senior high school. Teachers should introduce peer review into the English class as early as possible and conduct relevant peer review training. Peer review and teacher feedback should also work together to improve students' interest and writing performance in continuation task.

Keywords: Continuation Task; Peer Review; English Writing.

1. Introduction

Senior high school English continuation writing is a kind of writing task finished by students who read a short English story with an incomplete text content. This is an examination type that combines reading with writing. Students need to integrate language input and output to build a bridge between reading text and writing text.

The author found that students show some weaknesses in continuation writing. First of all, students lack the ability to extract and integrate the given reading material. Secondly, students' text output ability is weak, which is mainly reflected in language application and discourse cohesion ability. At the same time, the content of the continuation task lacks coherence, necessary cohesive words, and is not fluent enough. In traditional English writing teaching, the evaluation and feedback are from teachers, which is not beneficial to students' learning promotion. Due to the heavy workload of composition correction task, students cannot get feedback from teachers in time, or the feedback they get is rather general. Meanwhile, the teacher's single evaluation method is easy to make students only pay attention to the score given by the teacher, and thus they will not rethink and revise the writing content.

2. Literature Review

This chapter mainly presents the definition of core concepts and relevant theories are also illustrated in this chapter.

(1) Definition

Peer review, also known as peer response, peer feedback, peer evaluation and peer editing, is a writing teaching activity in which students exchange and read each other's compositions and put forward suggestions for revision (Mangelsdorf, 1992) [5]. In this process, after students finish the first draft, they give it to their peers to read and then the peers give suggestions for revision, which aims to improve the accuracy of the language expression and the richness of the writing content, as well as the logic and the integrity of

the text. Students improve the article in different aspects by revising it with the suggestions and comments from their peers. Leki (1991) [4] believed that peer review means students get feedback from peers after completing a writing task. Peer review groups usually consist of 2-4 persons, during which students read, revise, and give relevant comments. Stanley (1992) [7] pointed out that peer review is a kind of writing teaching activity that can help students polish their compositions. In this process, students read their peers' articles, point out their problems and shortcomings, and put forward suggestions for their peers.

Domestic scholars also have their own understanding of peer review. Wang (2010) [10] believed that peer review is a process in which students evaluate the writing of their peers according to the evaluation criteria. Deng and Cen (2010) [2] thought that peer review is essentially an interactive mode put forward by authors and readers when they jointly construct writing texts. It is mainly manifested in the interaction and negotiation of information between peers in the writing process, which is the key point of this process.

Wang (2012) [9] first proposed the concept of continuation task. In his opinion, continuation task is an effective way to improve learners' foreign language learning ability by realizing the combination of language input and output, language imitation and creation, as well as language learning and application. Learners need to complete the content of the article based on their understanding of the plot development and language characteristics after reading an incomplete text. In August 2015, the National College Entrance Examination Center of the Ministry of Education issued Instructions on the English Subject of the National Higher College Entrance Examination (applied to the provinces of the new College Entrance Examination reform). According to the Instructions, continuation writing is a new type of composition writing. Here are the specific requirements. Candidates are given 350 words of an incomplete text to read, and then write a complete ending. It is required to write an essay of about 150 words, and the content should have a logical connection with the material given, and a logical coherence with the first sentence

of two paragraphs given. When it was first adopted by Zhejiang Province in October 2016, it required candidates to write paragraphs containing five key words which are underlined in the original text, while Shandong Province and Hainan Province did not have that key words requirement when they first used this kind of new writing type in July 2020. In this thesis, the author adopts the Ministry of Education's definition of continuation task writing.

(2) Theoretical Basis

Theoretical basis refers to the theories that support the application of peer review to continuation task. Cooperative learning theory, the zone of proximal development and process writing approach are discussed in this section.

Cooperative learning theory emerged in the United States from the late 1960s to the early 1970s and developed in the 1980s. Slavin (1980) [6] presented the cooperative learning theory, which he regarded as a classroom technique. In the classroom teaching, the teacher divides the students into different groups, where the students learn and communicate with each other when cooperating. The teacher gives certain rewards to the group with good performance. Bruffee (1984) [1] pointed out that cooperative learning is a way for learners to acquire knowledge through communication, and then certain knowledge can be accepted by learners through this learning mode.

Vygotsky (1978) [8] believed that there are two levels of students' development. One is the current level of students, that is, a kind of problem-solving level that students can reach when they are alone. The other one is students' possible development level which can be obtained through teaching and learning. The gap between the two levels is the zone of proximal development. He focused on developing the potential of children. This is a kind of development potential that children can reach with the help of adults or experienced peers. He emphasized the importance of social interaction in people's cognitive development. Children develop their abilities mainly through social interaction with adults or experienced peers.

The process writing approach dated back to the 1970s, during which it was mainly applied to writing in the native language. It is mainly proposed to make up for the shortcomings of the result-based writing approach, which lacks communication and interaction between teachers and students. The traditional teaching process of composition assessment is influenced by the result-based approach, which is usually divided into three steps: students write the first draft, teachers evaluate it, and finally return the revised composition to students. Students are always in a passive and aphasia state in the evaluation, which results in the fact that they cannot evaluate and don't have the ability to do it. Different from the previous result-oriented teaching method in which teachers play a dominant role and pay attention to writing results, the process writing approach regards students as the main subjects of writing and focuses on the writing process, hoping to train and improve students' thinking and cultivate their social communication ability in the writing process.

3. Research Procedures

This research lasted for 12 weeks. It was conducted in the third and fourth classes every Tuesday evening. In the first two weeks, the pre-test questionnaire was distributed and the writing test was conducted before the experiment. In the last two weeks, the post-test writing task was conducted. In the middle eight weeks, the formal teaching mode of peer review

was carried out.

(1) Grouping

Gao et al. (2018) [3] found that mixed groups had the best effect on improving students' writing level, that is to say, there were not only high level students, medium level students, but also low level students in a group. For the number of group members, a group of 3-4 persons works better. Therefore, the author divided the students into three different levels according to the test paper scores before the experiment. Those who score in the top 25% of the class are in high level named as category A; those whose scores are in the middle 50% of the class are in medium level named as category B; those whose grades are in the bottom 25% of the class are in low level named as category C. The total number of students in this research is 57, which can be divided into 14 groups. There are four students in a group except for one group which consists of five students. Each group consists of one high-level student named student A, two intermediate students named student B1 and B2, and one low level student named C. The student A of each group is the group leader, responsible for assisting teachers to carry out peer evaluation activities. Group members are familiar with the peer feedback form, so they evaluate the peer work according to the criterion of it, and then complete relevant information.

(2) Conducting Peer Review Training

Wu (2015) [11] pointed out peer review training is an effective guarantee for the smooth implementation of peer review activity. Peer review training enables students to understand and master the standards and requirements of composition evaluation, and eliminates the distrust of peers.

First of all, the author introduced the detailed information and purpose of peer review activity to students. Peer review is not only to evaluate a composition, but more importantly to learn to find and understand the highlights and shortcomings of others' work through specific grading rules, thus improving students' ability to distinguish and modify the similar mistakes. Second, each student was given a peer review form and a sample composition. The author interpreted each item of the peer review form to the students to make sure they knew how to give feedback on their peers' essays. In addition, PPT was used to present the students with an example of continuation task writing. The author took the peer feedback form and made a demonstration evaluation on the composition. There are three main steps to evaluate: first, read the whole text. Assess whether the number of words is about 150 words and whether the handwriting is neat and doesn't interfere language communication, and then give a score in the corresponding column of the feedback form; second, read in detail and evaluate, mainly focusing on language use and content structure. At the same time, it is necessary to mark something on the composition. For example, using "____" to mark some shining sentences and phrases and "○" to mark some mistakes in words or sentences; third, make a conclusion. The reviser gives some comments on peer's composition, which also should be shown on the peer feedback form. At last, a trial peer review was conducted among students. After the teacher demonstrate how to assess peer's composition before the whole class, the students have a basic understanding of the process and rules of peer review, but it needs a trial to know whether they really understand and master it. The author gave each student a composition written by someone in advance and the students evaluated it in their own group. During this period, the author walked among the groups to observe the students' evaluation performance and

group activities. If students have something unclear, they can discuss with their team members or ask for help. After the evaluation, the group members exchanged their revision and peer feedback forms so they could be aware of what they had missed. Then, the author collected all the feedback forms from students to select some good ones, and then showed them to the students to learn.

4. Results and Discussion

(1) Results of Peer Review in Continuation Task

This section illustrates the results of questionnaire and writing tests.

1) Results of Questionnaire

In order to have a basic information of the status quo of students' continuation writing, the author distributed a questionnaire before conducting peer review. The questionnaire will be analyzed from different dimensions.

Table 1. Students' Emotional Cognition of Continuation Writing

Item	A	B	C	D	E
1. I think I can easily have continuation writing.	0.00%	10.53%	33.33%	52.63%	3.51%

Question 1 is aimed to get students' emotional cognition of this new writing type. As is shown in Table 1, only 10.53% of the students think they can easily do it, while the students who plainly think that they cannot easily finish this writing type account for 56.14%, that is to say, students have difficulty in conducting the continuation task writing. Therefore, how to change students' emotional cognition of continuation task writing and how to improve students' ability to have continuation task writing remain a problem for students and teachers to solve.

Table 2. Students' Performance in Content

Item	A	B	C	D	E
2. I can clearly understand the plots after reading the original text.	3.51%	29.82%	52.63%	14.04%	0.00%
3. My continuation writing is closely consistent with the original text.	0.00%	19.30%	66.67%	10.53%	3.51%
4. My continuation writing is related to the given sentence.	10.53%	59.65%	26.32%	3.51%	0.00%
5. I can always come up with a story with rich plots.	0.00%	10.53%	47.37%	36.84%	5.26%

As for the details of students' writing competence, attention was paid to writing content, language use and text structure. In terms of content, as is presented in Table 2, most students can clear up the storyline of the original text; The proportion of the consistency with the given sentence is much higher than the proportion of harmony with the theme of the original text. It is clear that students are better at paying attention to the little point of the content and have a large room for improvement in the grasp of the overall content. While writing, it's especially easy for students to forget to relate what they write to the original theme. Especially for the richness of the story plot, 42.1% of the students think that they can't write a passage with colorful plots, and only 10.53% of the students choose "Agree". That is to say, most of the students' composition content is in shallow language expression, unable to make their own writing content with

rich story plots.

2) Results of Writing Tests

Students were given a writing test before and after peer review activity. The topic was the same for both tests, and the required time was 40 minutes. The purpose of having pre-test and post-test is to know the effect of the application of peer review to continuation task writing. The results are shown in Table 3.

As is shown in Table 3, the average score of pre-test is 13.272, while the score of post-test is 15.360, which is much higher than that of pre-test. Meanwhile, in the Paired Sample T-test, the Sig.(2-tailed) number is 0.000, lower than 0.05, which indicates that there is significant difference between pre-test and post-test. It is predicted that students' writing scores have been improved after applying peer review to continuation task writing. That is to say, peer review has a positive effect on students' continuation writing scores.

Table 3. Paired Sample T-test Results of the Test

		N	Mean	Stg.Deviation	t	Sig.(2-tailed)
Paired	Pre-test	57	13.272	2.6844	-10.925	0.000
	Post-test	57	15.360	2.1145		

(2) Discussion of Peer Review in Continuation Task

This part mainly discusses the application of peer review in continuation task on the basis of previous results.

1) A Teaching Mode for Applying Peer Review to Continuation Task

The three-month teaching research has been completed. Combining the results of previous research and the questionnaire survey, teaching experiment and interview and based on the theoretical basis of process writing teaching method, a teaching mode of applying peer review to continuation task can be made out as follows.

The first step is to determine peer review criteria. On the one hand, students do not understand the scoring standards for the continuation task, so they are confused about how to conduct peer review. On the other hand, students will inevitably have subjective color in the evaluation of the composition, which cannot guarantee the fairness and objectivity of the evaluation. In order to ensure the effectiveness and accuracy of peer review, the teacher should determine a unified rating scale to help students evaluate their peers' compositions in a group before conducting the activity. An important principle for establishing criteria is that the more specific the scoring items are, the better effects it will have. Writing is a tricky task for students, and it is even more difficult to evaluate their peers' compositions.

The second step is to set up a peer review group. Students' English proficiency and modification ability are limited and vary greatly from individual to individual. Some students with poor English foundation are often unable to find all the mistakes or existing problems in their peers' compositions, and group cooperation is one of the effective ways to solve this problem. Students negotiate, communicate and discuss in groups, which helps them to improve their writing skills. To some degree, how to establish an appropriate mutual evaluation group is directly related to the effect of peer review.

The third step is peer review training. After all the preparations are made, mutual evaluation explanation is needed, that is, peer review training. The teacher should play a leading role in the assessment process and explain each link to students in detail. The purpose of this step is to help

students clear the blind spots about peer evaluation and understand the meaning of each step as well as the order of evaluation, so that students can have an idea of how to evaluate.

The fourth step is to conduct a formal peer review activity. After students finish the first draft, they grade each other's compositions in small groups based on the peer feedback form. Content, language and text structure are mainly focused on. In the process of evaluation, different mark symbols are used to mark errors or highlight sentence patterns, and written comments should also be written in corresponding positions. After the evaluation, the group members have a discussion about what they have revised or learned. In fact, peer review is the embodiment of group cooperative learning theory. The process of cooperative learning is actually a process of frequent communication and interaction among group members.

2) The Effect of Applying Peer Review to Continuation Task

In order to explore the effect of applying peer review to the teaching of continuation task in senior high school, the author firstly analyzed the writing scores of students before and after the teaching experiment by using the paired sample T-test. The results show that there is a significant difference in students' scores. The data showed an average score of 13.272 in the pre-test and 15.360 in the post-test. The average score increased by 2.088 points, which indicates that after 12 weeks of peer review training, students' continuation writing performance has been improved, that is to say, the application of peer review has a positive and effective impact on students' continuation writing level.

The application of peer review to continuation task teaching makes up for the limitations and deficiencies of teacher evaluation, which is a single evaluation method in traditional teaching. Students can increase their vocabulary by reading other students' compositions. By learning sentence patterns and words used by peers, it is helpful to consolidate and improve the mastery of the vocabulary and sentence patterns.

5. Conclusion

In this study, peer review is applied to continuation writing teaching of senior high school English. Questionnaire and writing tests are used as research tools. After a three-month teaching experiment, the following findings are summarized.

First of all, in the eyes of students, it is difficult to have continuation task writing, and students show little confidence when facing this new question type. When conducting continuation writing, most students can grasp the degree of correlation with the first sentence of the given paragraph, but the ability to produce rich plots and the content consistent with the theme of the original text needs to be improved. Some students often make spelling mistakes and misuse grammatical structures and most students have difficulty in using abundant vocabulary and sentence patterns. In terms of discourse cohesion, most students have the consciousness of using connective elements, but how to use linking words correctly and how to write logical and coherent sentences and articles are a big problem for students.

Secondly, the application of peer review continuation writing teaching should follow certain principles and methods.

Before peer review, teachers need to train all students to evaluate their compositions. Because students do not know peer evaluation activities before, a lack of adequate training and guidance will affect the effect of peer review to a large extent. At the same time, teachers need to lead students to determine concrete and practical grading criteria. Only when all students have a common scoring standard can the evaluation be more objective and fair.

Finally, through the analysis of students' writing scores and interview results, it can be concluded that after the implementation of peer review, students have enhanced their confidence in continuation writing, and their writing level has been improved to some extent. According to the data, after the experiment students' writing scores were significantly higher than the scores they got before the experiment, that is, peer review improved students' writing scores. However, it has different effects on students at different levels. The improvement of intermediate level students and low level students is more obvious, especially reflected in the low level students.

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