Research of College English Independent Writing Teaching Model Based on Pigaiwang

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ABSTRACT

With the development of information technology, computers and network are widely used in college English writing teaching. Taking advantage of modern information technology to improve students’ independent writing ability has become an important content for college English teachers to research. In this article, the authors first introduce the advantages of Pigaiwang (the correction network) and then carry out a detailed research into its use in college English writing teaching on students’ writing motivation, ability and self-efficacy. The research results show the writing teaching model based on Pigaiwang (www.pigai.org) can effectively stimulate students’ English writing motivation, improve their English writing ability and enhance their writing efficiency.

INTRODUCTION

《The College English Curriculum Requirements》 issued by Ministry of Education pointed out: “Modern information technology supported by the network technology in particular, should be made full use of to make English teaching and learning not restricted by time and place to some extant, and developing in the direction of individualized and autonomous learning.” But in the traditional teaching model of writing based on classroom, the students lack autonomous and individualized learning. They passively wait for teacher

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to assign and correct compositions. Because college English teachers undertake heavy teaching work and correcting compositions is laborious, the teachers have little time to arrange compositions. So students have few opportunities to practice writing. At the same time because the teachers can not give the feedback in time, the students lack motivation in writing English compositions and their writing abilities can’t be effectively raised at college. Therefore, it is necessary for us to combine the traditional teaching model with modern network technology, create the writing teaching mode which is suitable for Chinese foreign language learners and favorable to improving the students’ ability of independent writing and their writing motivation, and encourage students to change from “want me to write” to “I want to write”. This is the current urgent task of college English writing teaching.

In recent years, some Chinese scholars [1][2][3] have actively discussed English writing teaching model based on computer and network technology. But there is little research on how to use a simple and practical automatic online marking system in the writing teaching process so as to raise the students’ independent writing ability and motivation. In order to improve the students’ interest in writing and writing quality, the authors take the students as the centre and introduce “Pigaiwang (www.pigai.org)”, an automatic online scoring tool, into English writing teaching so as to fully display its advantages of immediate feedback, comment on the sentence and online correction. The students get fun in the correction process and gradually improve their English independent writing motivation and writing ability.

THE ADVANTAGES OF PIGAIWANG

Pigaiwang (www.pigai.org) is an online automatic composition correcting system based on natural language processing technology and corpus technology. Through the analysis of the differences between students’ compositions and the standard corpus, it can make a timely comment on the students’ English compositions and put forward improvement suggestions and content analysis results. Pigaiwang has aroused the concern of the Chinese scholar[4]. Compared with the automatic writing scoring system abroad, Pigaiwang, an online automated essay scoring system in China, has the following advantages:

The Using Process is Simple and Easy to Learn

The using process of Pigaiwang is simple. It provides demo video and the operating method is manifest at a glance. When the teacher arranges a new composition and writes the title and the corresponding requirements, the system of Pigaiwang generates a composition number. After the students obtain the composition number, they can find it after logging in or find the composition title through the teacher’s personal website, then finish and submit their compositions. The system analyzes and grades the compositions,
and generates the detailed graphic reports. According to the feedback given by the system, the students repeatedly modify and submit their compositions. At the same time the teacher can get the analysis of students’ compositions and make corrections or classroom comments on them.

**Instant Feedback and Comment on the Sentence**

Feedback is one of the indispensable links in writing teaching. After the students submit their compositions, the system of Pigaiwang automatically corrects the common simple mistakes such as spelling mistakes, makes comments on the words, collocation and expressions, provides amendments, gives the scores and evaluates the overall level of students’ compositions. The instant feedback on students’ written language errors can protect students’ self-esteem to a certain extent. The provision of revised opinions helps students to search, select and innovate with the aid of network and cultivates students’ ability of self-correction and self-evaluation.

**Being Suitable for Self-training**

If the students are dissatisfied with the scores and evaluations after submitting the compositions, they can click on “continue to improve” and perform multiple revisions and submissions according to the comments and feedback until they are satisfied. The students can also learn about their score changes in the writing process by clicking on the submission records and the chart of composition submission numbers and score trends. The compositions of the students are constantly improved. The students can learn and master the writing skills at the same time when they actively take part in the writing activity. They can also improve their writing confidence and writing ability.

**Facilitating Teaching and Research**

Teachers’ feedback is a remedy for the single feedback form of the automatic evaluation tool. It is also the necessary part of normal teaching activities. In the teacher’s written feedback on the students, he often repeatedly modifies the same error. “The teachers correction reuse” provided by Pigaiwang can record and learn the teacher’s experience of this revision, add it to system knowledge base and provide students with revision suggestions according to the teacher’s instructions. In addition, when the students submit the compositions to a certain number, the teachers can use corpus research tools provided by writing correction system for corpus analysis so as to improve their teaching and carry out scientific research and creation.
RESEARCH DESIGN

The Research Problem

In order to verify the advantages of Pigaiwang in college English writing teaching, our research specifically studies the following problem based on establishing a college English independent writing teaching platform on the basis of Pigaiwang: Whether can Pigaiwang arouse the students’ English writing learning motivation and improve the students’ English writing ability and self-efficiency?

The Research Object

The objects of the research are the students of 4 classes taught by the authors. The students’ college entrance examination scores vary from 50 to 138. To ensure the validity of the experiment, the experiment has lasted ten weeks. All the students should submit one composition on Pigaiwang every week to keep the writing continuity.

THE COLLEGE ENGLISH INDEPENDENT WRITING TEACHING MODEL BASED ON PIGAIWANG

First, the teachers open the personal website on Pigaiwang. The college English independent writing teaching model the authors have adopted includes the following steps in the 10 weeks of teaching practice:

Determining the composition theme and creating the situation

Bruner, the author of the Process of Education, once pointed out: “It is in the teaching environment close to real life that the students can learn the real knowledge”[5]. Therefore in order to stimulate students’ initiative and learning motivation, the establishment of composition theme should be based on students’ cognitive basis, selecting the topics close to the students’ life or relevant to the subject being taught. The topics should be interesting, informative, and educational. After determining the topic, in a shared document the teacher can establish the writing situation for students’ composition writing as far as possible by uploading the related videos and reading materials, and provide brief requirements, combined with the feedback, submitting compositions and doing independent revisions several times.

After logging in Pigaiwang, the student can click on “my teacher” to find “the latest composition”, finish and submit it. After the composition is submitted, the system can immediately provide the score, comment and review after the sentence analysis, semantic analysis and language points analysis. According to such immediate feedback information as the recommended use, the wrong usage, Chinglish and the easily confused usage
provided by comment on the sentence, combined with the teacher’s comments and feedback, the students click on “continue to improve”, perform online revisions and submit the compositions again until they are satisfied.

The teacher selectively reads and comments on students’ compositions

After the students submit their compositions, the teacher need selectively read and comment on some students’ compositions, especially the low-level students’ compositions. At the same time, he need comment on some excellent compositions and recommend them for other students to read, compare and reference. After the deadline of submission, the teacher should combined with the common weakness provided by Pigaiwang to discuss and analyze with the students in time. At the same time, he should select a few good and bad compositions to read and comment on with the students in class, and answer the students’ questions in their writing and modifying process.

Recommend compositions and the shared document

“Recommend compositions” in Pigaiwang are the students’ own excellent compositions for other students to learn, appreciate and reference instead of the traditional model essays or expert works. When appreciating the classmates’ good compositions, the students can compare them with their own from different aspects of writing subjects, writing structures, words and thinking angles. They can learn a lot from the comparisons, enhance their writing confidence and improve their writing ability.

After each writing, the teacher should make a detailed summary of the writing situations such as the common weakness, words and coherence and upload them to the shared document for students to review and reference in their future writing.

THE RESEARCH RESULT AND ANALYSIS

We have used the independent writing teaching model for ten weeks. Pigaiwang’s advantages of timely score, instant feedback, comment on the sentence and online multiple draft modifications effectively stimulate the students’ English writing motivation, increase the students’ self-efficacy and improve the English writing ability of different levels of students to varying degrees.

The Students’ English Writing Ability Has Been Improved

In order to detect whether Pigaiwang can improve the English writing ability, we have given students composition tests before and after the experiment. The results show that the students’ post test scores are 1.5 points higher than their pretest scores on average. It shows that after ten weeks of independent writing teaching mode training based on Pigaiwang, different levels of students’ writing has been improved in the chapter structure, thought content, paragraph coherence, word selection, grammar, the use of the long sentence and the writing standard to some extent, which indicates that the students’ English writing ability has effectively been improved.
In the last week of teaching practice, we conducted a questionnaire survey and a semi-open interview. In the questionnaire, 75% of the students chose “satisfaction” or “great satisfaction”. None of the students chose “dissatisfaction” or “great dissatisfaction”. Specifically speaking, the students’ learning motivation of English writing has changed in the following aspects:

The sense of English writing accomplishment and the sense of satisfaction have been greatly improved

In the course of many online modifications based on Pigaiwang and the teacher’s feedback and comments, the students can understand the problems which exist in their English writing. In the course of constant searching, selecting and self-modifying the words, sentence structures, chapter structures by means of network and corpus, the students’ English writing potential has been tapped and their English writing level has been improved. When the results change from low to high scores, the students feel an unprecedented sense of achievement and satisfaction. One student has said: “Pigaiwang can point out the direction of improvement. It can point out the mistakes and allow us to correct them and make our writing move towards the right direction. The sense of success is built in the process of continuous improvement on scores”.

English writing anxiety is greatly reduced

Experience tells us that only when the students have improved their self-efficacy of the writing ability and they believe that they can write compositions well can their write anxiety be greatly reduced. The corpus dictionary, timely feedback information and comments provided by Pigaiwang play the role of the virtual motivators, mentors and coordinators, improve students’ writing confidence and self-efficacy of the writing ability and greatly reduce the students’ anxiety in writing. Another student commented: “Pigaiwang can tell us how to make the sentences more perfect, let us learn more advanced vocabulary and master writing skills. Through such a study, my fear of writing is greatly reduced.”

English writing interest and participation have been improved.

The reason why most students lack interest in English writing is that they don’t know how to put pen to paper though they have racked their brains. The chapter structure is messy, the logic is not rigorous, the central issue is blurred and the language is unclear. “Pigaiwang can check out the mistakes in the composition, regulate the structure of the article and remind the use of logical conjunctions, which facilitates the organization of the composition. Encouraging to use long sentences and advanced vocabulary is good for students to improve their writing level,” said respondent Xiao Li.

The English writing goal is more clear

In the traditional writing teaching model, some students regard the writing process as a “torture” and often write in a negative mind that has to be done. There are even plagiarism phenomena. Xiao Liu, one of the respondents says: “Pigaiwang makes me more clear about the writing goal and master the formal written English so that I can do better in my future English-related work.”
CONCLUSION AND EXPECTATION

Through this research, we can see that the application of Pigaiwang to college English writing teaching is of active significance in improving students’ English independent writing ability, stimulating their learning motivation of English writing and improving their self-efficacy, which helps to cultivate students’ ability of independent learning advocated by college English teaching reform.

In the actual use and the interviews, we have also found some deficiencies in Pigaiwang, for example, it can’t comprehensively assess such aspects as the chapter structures and logic; it can’t identify the more complex long sentences, it warns suspected Chinglish with low frequency but can’t give the reference usage; the comments are strong in general but can’t give the detailed evaluations. In view of this, we put forward some suggestions:

First, Pigaiwang should enrich its corpus and increase the amendments. At the same time it should improve its computer intelligence analysis, logic analysis and other technologies. Second, the students’ mutual evaluation function that takes effect after the deadline should be changed into students’ online mutual evaluation function. It is helpful to break the boundaries between teachers and students, and among students, improve the students’ ability of collaborative learning and train their team cooperation ability and creative spirit. Thirdly, teachers should not rely solely on Pigaiwang in their teaching. They should make full use of its function of teacher’s review to make timely comments on students’ compositions and common vulnerabilities. When the online timely feedback, companion feedback and teachers’ feedback of Pigaiwang can be used in combination, students’ independent writing ability and the writing teaching quality can be effectively improved.

REFERENCES