Empirical Study on a New English Writing Revision Mode Based on Screen-recording Software

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Abstract. Despite its great importance, English writing has been seen as a tough issue for both teachers and learners. By applying screen recording software, this empirical study explores the feasibility and advantages of face-to-face English writing revision mode, and analyzes the effects of this mode on English writing teaching. The results show that the English writing feedback mode constructed by face-to-face revision videos (made by screen-recording software) can motivate learners’ interests and self-confidence in writing largely, and enhance their writing abilities effectively as well.

Introduction

Writing, as a creative output skill, requires lasting accumulation and constant practices. However, despite the vast time and energy invested by teachers, writing is still treated as a “hard nut to crack” by both students and teachers. It may be safe to say that the stagnation of learners’ writing skill is closely related to the lack of individualized and careful revision. Meanwhile, many researchers hold that face-to-face revision was an ideal way to improve EFL learner’s writing skills. Through it, students’ train of thought and the source of mistakes can be found out; the interaction between teacher and students can be enhanced; the contents, structure, thought flow of a composition can also be carefully guided [1]. A face-to-face revision corresponds to the professional “4C” feedback principles, namely, “caring, concrete, constructive and critical”. Nevertheless, the increasingly enlarged class size hinders many teachers from revising writing assignments in a face-to-face way. To resolve this contradiction, we construct a software-based formative feedback mode so as to maximize the effectiveness of English writing teaching.

An Empirical Study

Research Questions

This study combines face-to-face revision mode with the functions of screen recording software, and tries to create an optimized formative evaluation feedback mode. To explore its influence on students’ interest in English, writing score, error types, we designed two questions for the study: a. What are students’ responses towards this mode? b. What impact will this mode exert on students’ interests and ability in English writing?

Research Objects and Tools

This study drew one class of 50 students at random as an experimental group, among them 27 boys and 23 girls. A parallel class in the same major (49 students) was treated as a control group. Research tools include: a screen-recording software, questionnaires, interviews, and test papers.
Research Procedures

Recording

Students wrote essays in electronic documents and sent to teachers. Teachers reminded students of checking their spelling and grammar with word processing software before handing in, and modifying some obvious errors to reduce the amount of trivial technical work later and improve the readability of their essays. When teachers recorded revision videos, the screen-drawing function of software was utilized. If “free brush” was used, then the cursor could draw at random on the screen, which allowed teacher to underline or circle or even write, just like what happens in a face-to-face revision. Besides, some effects like “highlighting cursor” and “clicking animation” helped illustrate the movement and position of the cursor.

Editing

During this phase, teacher produced his revision video by doing all kinds of editing work, based on a time line, and furthered his explanation about some points that were either unable to be explained by language or hard to be understood by language alone. Several practical functions of the software could be used here for emphasis, like “Callout”, “Zoom-n-Pan”, “Picture-in-Picture”, “Quiz/Survey”, “Title Clips”, etc.

Release

The finished videos were shared with students by e-mails. Students watched his/her revision video, and tried to answer questions in the video. Then, they communicated with their teachers in class. After class, students logged in his class account on a video website; commented on one another’s work, and expressed compliment, encouragement or suggestions. After learning from one another, students provided their second drafts. Teachers posted their comments on the website as follow-ups. Finally, teachers selected essays which received the most compliments and polished them. These essays served as model essays for other students to study, imitate and appreciate.

Research Results Analysis

Students’ Recognition Degree and Its Relevance with Their Interest/ Self-confidence in Writing

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of questionnaire and relevance analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interest in writing</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition to software</td>
<td>12.89</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>.562</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition to software-based</td>
<td>20.58</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>.581</td>
<td>.473</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>revision mode</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence in writing</td>
<td>14.33</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>.625</td>
<td>.564</td>
<td>.553</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*[^P]<0.01

Table 1 shows the result of questionnaire about their views on the software, the new mode, and their change of attitudes. We can see a positive correlation between experimental class students’ recognition degree to screen recording software, the software-based revision mode and its relevance with their interest and self-confidence in writing.

By taking the result of interview into consideration, we determine that the creative revision mode changes students’ attitudes towards writing a lot—from external motivation to internal desire. This matches the phenomena appeared during the study: besides their usual assignments, nearly 50% students turned in their essays on self-chosen topics, and asked for extra revision from the teacher. On the other hand, learners had a much deeper understanding about their own problems. And through the improvement of their writing skills, their confidence in writing has been promoted.
The Effectiveness of Face-to-face Revision Mode Based on Screen-recording Software

To explore the effectiveness of a teaching methodology, a teaching mode, the primary concern should be their influence on students’ achievement [2]. Therefore, we analyzed the final test score of both groups.

Table 2. Data analysis of pretesting and post-testing.

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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>SD</th>
<th>Z</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretesting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental group (n=50)</td>
<td>8.31</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>-1.447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control group (n=49)</td>
<td>8.62</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-testing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental group (n=50)</td>
<td>10.27</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>4.362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control group (n=49)</td>
<td>9.43</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since \(n>30\), the test belongs to a large sample; thus we took double ensemble Z test. Through calculating, in the pretesting, \(Z=1.447<1.96\), there is no significant difference between two groups. Then in the post-testing, \(Z=4.362>1.96\), so there is significant difference between the two group. Judging from those data, the writing level of students in the two classes was quite close before the study, while after the study the abilities of the experimental class have been promoted obviously.

According to the interview, 82% learners accepted the use of screen-recording software. They felt it convenient, vivid and easy to handle. At the same time, 94% interviewees said that the dynamic revision process deepened their understanding about writing. The clear and concrete instructions from the teacher helped them clearly grasp their real problems. Besides communication with teachers, peer revision made them enjoy the feeling of being both an author and a reader. The familiar atmosphere and language on the web were more interesting and kind. While knowing everyone may have their own problems, their self-confidence in writing was also enhanced.

Next, in order to find out the changes in the errors the learners made, we had an error analysis about seven commonly seen error types. Results shows that: there appeared significant drop in “lack of key ideas”, “confused tense” and “mistakes in linking words”; minor drop in “mistakes in preposition collocation” and “subject-predicate consistency”. The new revision mode had an influence on learners’ grammar, vocabulary, and way of thinking.

Conclusion

The software-based revision mode makes face-to-face revision not a special favor for some students, but a common favor for all the students. This approach guides students to experience the entire process of writing, reading, detecting problems, suggesting, modifying, and deepening the themes. The revision mode is not limited by time or space. It creates a friendly atmosphere. Just as a writing learning community, it changes the traditional teacher-centered one-way teaching mode into a multi-dimensional interactive mode. The writing process is thus optimized [3].

Nevertheless, there are still limitations in the videos made by screen-recording software. For example, teachers need a huge space to store and a large amount of time to send those videos. Consequently, we suppose whether a web-based revision platform can be established to combine the functions of turning in, storing, releasing and feedback. This may be open for discussion for relevant teachers and technicians.

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References

