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The Application of Process Writing Method in Senior High School English Writing Teaching

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Abstract

Writing is a crucial method for conveying information and providing feedback on English language proficiency. In high school, writing stands as a pivotal focus and challenge that demands attention. However, current high school writing instruction faces numerous challenges, including scarce practice opportunities and limited teaching methods. Many teachers overly rely on product-based writing instruction, neglecting guidance on the writing process and cultivation of students' interests. Consequently, students gradually develop a fear of writing and lack motivation to actively participate in the writing process. Therefore, there is an urgent need to explore and improve writing instruction methods to stimulate students' learning enthusiasm and enhance their writing proficiency. The process writing approach, through the orderly connection of various stages, fully mobilizes students' subjective initiative, cultivates thinking skills, and promotes interactive communication, thereby contributing to the improvement of high school English writing instruction quality and students' writing proficiency.

Keywords

Process Writing Approach; Senior High School English; English Writing; Writing teaching

1. Introduction

Writing has always been an important means of English language output and has held a significant position in English teaching. As early as the ancient Greek period, the West began researching English writing teaching, forming a fundamental creative model that had a profound impact------discovering ideas, organizing ideas, and putting ideas into words. Until the 20th century, research had shown that writing was not a "one-time" outcome, but a "cyclical" process. Since writing was included in the scope of the college entrance examination, teachers and researchers have begun to explore how to effectively conduct English writing.Wang Chuming (2000) emphasized that writing is a vital form of communication, encompassing the

integrated utilization of listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities. In the initial teaching of English writing, most teachers adopted a product focused approach that emphasizes writing outcomes. Subsequently, the drawbacks of this teaching method began to be exposed, and researchers began to pay attention to the writing process, realizing that English writing not only tests vocabulary and grammar, but also cultivates students' interest in writing, enhances writing ability, and exercises writing thinking. Wang Qiang (2006) proposed relevant strategies for process writing teaching, which played a guiding role in English writing teaching. The Curriculum Standards for Senior High School English (2017 Edition, 2020 Revision) explicitly emphasize that students should be able to proficiently use discourse coherence devices, construct coherent written expressions, ensure logical and relational expression of meaning, and use multimodal discourse resources to enhance expression effectiveness. In this context, the process writing approach can meet the requirements of student development and the educational goals proposed in the curriculum standards.

2. Process Writing Approach

2.1. Concept of process writing approach

Process Writing Approach is a teaching method that regards writing as a dynamic process. It covers multiple stages, such as preparation before writing, first draft, mutual evaluation, revision, editing, and final draft. It emphasizes students' active participation and exploration in all aspects. Through cyclic operation, it pays attention to the gradual improvement of writing content, structure, language, and other aspects. It focuses on students to improve their writing ability and comprehensive quality. It changes the traditional single mode of focusing on writing products, and provides a systematic and effective new way for writing teaching. The cognitive theory of process writing proposed by Flower and Haves has had a significant impact on the formation of process writing. They proposed that human cognitive processes include task environment, author's long-term memory, and organization of content. They pointed out that process writing emphasizes that writing is a cyclical iterative process, including stages such as pre-writing, drafting, feedback, and revision. In the 1970s, Professor Wallace Douglas of Northwestern University proposed the process writing approach, emphasizing that writing should be viewed as a process and that students need to pay attention to the entire writing process. Wen Qiufang (2014) underscored the significance of a writing style that gave precedence to the essence of output. The fundamental tenet of this approach was the advancement of the “output-oriented hypothesis”. Writing is not a one-way linear activity, but a cyclical cognitive process that includes social interaction and creative thinking. Process writing emphasizes that teachers should help students discover, analyze, and solve problems during the writing process, expand the ideas conveyed to students in writing, and unleash students' innovative thinking in

writing.

Building upon this foundation, Grave's (1978) initial concept of the process writing approach,outlined in his 1978 work, emphasized the comprehensive process of teachers guiding learners through the stages of writing, encompassing information gathering, planning, drafting, peer review and revision. Flowers and Hayes (1981) emphasized that the writing process was not a straightforward,sequential undertaking, but instead exhibited a circular and iterative nature. David Nunan et al. (2023) considered that although the writing process was not entirely equivalent to process writing, it was still considered useful because some principles had influenced the development of process writing.

2.2. Procedures of process writing approach

Different researchers have different understandings of the stages of process writing. Flower and Hayes (1981) delineated the process of writing into three distinct stages: Planning,Translating and Reviewing. These stages were overseen and coordinated by a Monitor, ensuring a coherent and structured writing process. Hu Xinxin (2003) argued that the process writing approach can be categorized into four distinct stages: pre-writing, drafting, revision and sharing. In contrast to the product writing approach, the process writing approach underscored the importance of pre-writing thinking, discussion, post-writing revision and collaboration with others. Li Jinhong (2006), drawing upon prior research,divided the writing teaching process into four stages: pre-writing, composing/drafting, revision and editing, further reinforcing the emphasis on the writing process. Generally speaking, process writing consists of six stages------pre-writing, drafting, responding, revising, editing, and final draft.

Preparation before writing. Preparation before writing is a very important and critical stage, which can help the writer conceive relevant topics, activate relevant schemata in his mind and arouse his interest in writing. Therefore, at this stage, the core goal is to help students determine the writing theme, widely collect relevant materials and carefully sort out writing ideas, so as to lay a solid foundation for subsequent formal writing. In order to achieve these goals, there are a variety of effective activities. For example, brainstorming, clustering, free writing, and questioning. These methods can fully mobilize students' thinking, stimulate students' writing motivation and enthusiasm, provide students with access to information and materials, and lay the foundation for subsequent writing.

Drafting. This stage is the process of students' thinking concretization. It is the key step to translate the ideas and materials accumulated in the pre writing stage into words. It aims to let students put the ideas in their minds on paper and initially build the basic structure of the article. At this stage, students begin to put the content sorted out through brainstorming, mind mapping and other methods in the early stage into a complete and coherent text to form a draft of the article. At this time, the key is to be able to smoothly present the core meaning that you want to express and

build the rudiment of the article, so you usually do not overemphasize the details of grammar, spelling, punctuation and other errors.

Responding. Responding is between the first draft and revision. It is the first feedback that students get after writing the first draft, and students should further revise their first draft according to the feedback. Teachers and students usually put forward constructive suggestions on the content and structure of students' first draft in written or oral form. Its purpose is to help students enhance reader awareness, reduce writing anxiety, and make up for the deficiencies in their own articles. Feedback, especially among peers, is not only convenient for students to find their own problems and promote the improvement of the first draft, but also beneficial to the development of students' self-correction ability and the improvement of their writing level.

Revising. This stage mainly focuses on improving the draft of the article from the macro level, aiming to make the article more reasonable and perfect in terms of content, logic and structure, so as to improve the overall quality and readability. The primary task is to examine the integrity of the content of the article. Students need to check whether the article has fully expressed the views, ideas and relevant examples under the given theme. Logical organization is also the key. Students should consider whether the narrative order of the article is logical and whether the cohesion between paragraphs is natural and smooth.

Editing. The stage is the key link in the process writing method to polish the article carefully. Its focus is to ensure the accuracy of the language use of the article, and to eliminate all kinds of errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation and other aspects, so as to make the article conform to the corresponding language norms, and lay a solid language foundation for the final presentation of a high-quality finished article.

Final draft. After revision and editing, students polish and perfect the previous drafts and complete the final writing. It embodies the achievements of all previous stages, which means that the author has fully considered the feedback from all parties, completed the necessary revision and revision, and presented a high-quality work carefully polished.

Each stage of process writing is linear and cyclic. At any stage, students can go back to the previous or initial stage. It is such a process that allows students to truly achieve the purpose of communication through writing, rather than mechanically writing an article that does not belong to them in order to complete a task.

3. The current situation and problems of teacher’ s teaching

3.1. Neglecting guidance on the writing process

Some teachers focus too much on the final composition presented by students, and lack guidance on various stages of the writing process, such as ideation and drafting. In the early stages of writing, students may be unable to start writing due to a lack of

effective ideation, or may encounter difficulties during the drafting process without timely assistance, which can hinder the writing process and affect the final quality of writing, and also prevent students from truly mastering scientific writing methods and processes.

3.2. Insufficient expansion of writing materials

Teachers sometimes fail to fully assist students in expanding their rich writing materials during the teaching process, resulting in students always relying on limited content in textbooks when writing, lacking the accumulation and application of materials from real life, social hot topics, and other aspects. Teachers often only start based on writing requirements and do not provide materials that are close to students' lives. Students are unable to express their opinions and may even feel unfamiliar with writing topics.

3.3. Lack of writing context creation

Many teachers do not create realistic writing situations for students in the classroom, which often makes students feel like they are writing to complete tasks, lacking real writing experience and emotional investment. Many times, students are not clear about the purpose of writing, nor do they know who it is written for, so the composition they write cannot achieve the purpose of communication.

In the context of the new college entrance examination reform, reading and writing continuation has been included in the scope of the examination, which makes the writing section more difficult and tests students' discourse processing ability, thinking ability, and language expression ability. Teachers can no longer mechanically require students to memorize corresponding templates to cope with the college entrance examination. Continuing to write after reading tests students' comprehensive abilities, not just the accumulation of vocabulary and grammar. Therefore, there are still many difficulties in teaching by teachers. When facing writing classes, many teachers still choose traditional teaching methods, mechanically linking vocabulary and grammar to students, which cannot cultivate students' core English literacy.

Overall, there are still many problems in English writing teaching that need to be overcome by teachers, who need to think about how to create an effective writing class. The process writing approach can effectively address these issues, better meeting the diverse needs of students in English writing learning and developing their comprehensive language proficiency.

4. Strategies and application in high school English writing teaching

4.1. Strategies of process writing approach

- Reading as a Stimulus: Before writing begins, providing model essays, articles, or stories on a similar theme serves as a powerful stimulus for students. Rather than simply reading for comprehension, guide students to deconstruct these texts to understand how they work. Ask them to analyze the genre features, such as identifying where the writer states their opinion in a persuasive essay or what words are used to create conviction. Help them map out the structural patterns by locating topic sentences and observing how paragraphs are organized and connected. Additionally, have students act as "language detectives" to find and record useful phrases, vivid vocabulary, or effective sentence starters from the models. This process creates a personalized "toolbox" of language that students can immediately apply to their own writing, transforming abstract concepts of good writing into concrete, observable models they can emulate.
- Encouraging Multiple Drafts: It is essential to explicitly frame writing as a recursive process where the first draft is merely a starting point, not a final product. Teachers should reframe this initial attempt as a "discovery draft"—a safe space for students to explore ideas, make mistakes, and get their thoughts onto paper without the pressure of perfection. To reinforce this mindset, provide feedback that is staged and focused: respond only to content and ideas in the first draft, then to organization and clarity in the second, and finally to grammar and word choice in the third. A simple yet effective technique is to ask students to use different colored pens or fonts for each draft, which visually demonstrates their progress and improvement over time. Sharing a piece of the teacher's own writing that has gone through multiple messy drafts can also powerfully normalize the struggle and show students that writing is a craft that improves through revision, not a one-time performance.
- Peer Review Workshops: Peer review workshops transform writing from a private act into a collaborative learning experience by providing students with authentic feedback from a real audience. To ensure these workshops are productive, they must be highly structured with clear checklists or guiding questions that focus on "global issues" first, such as the clarity of the main idea, the logical flow of arguments, or the strength of supporting evidence. It is also crucial to explicitly teach students how to give kind, helpful feedback, perhaps by modeling the "sandwich" method—a positive comment, a constructive suggestion, and another positive comment. Assigning specific roles like timekeeper or recorder within groups can keep students focused and accountable. Ultimately, students must be empowered as the authors who listen to all feedback but make the final decisions about which suggestions to incorporate into their work.

4.2. Application of process writing approach

- In the pre-writing stage, teachers should fully mobilize students' enthusiasm and thinking activity. First of all, the topic of writing should be skillfully introduced through a variety of ways, such as using multimedia resources to display pictures, videos, news reports and other materials closely related to the topic. For example, when carrying out the theme writing teaching of "traditional festivals", the lively videos of traditional festival celebrations around the world should be played to catch the students' attention and stimulate their interest.
- At the drafting stage, teachers should play an auxiliary role. On the one hand, provide the necessary writing support, such as giving the beginning and end sentence patterns commonly used in different genres, as well as connectives and Interlanguages. When writing narratives, provide such as "at first..." "then..." "finally..." to help students organize words smoothly. Of course, students should be reminded not to limit to these expressions, and other logical expressions are also good. On the other hand, students are encouraged to create boldly, but focus on setting up the overall framework of the article and transforming the idea into a complete draft by focusing on grammar and other details.
- Peer review is a key link in the revision stage. Teachers organize students to exchange drafts in groups, and formulate comprehensive mutual evaluation standards in advance, covering such dimensions as tight content, clear logic, reasonable structure and accurate language expression. For example, students are required to point out the insufficiencies of the arguments in their peer essays and give supplementary suggestions, so that students can find their own problems from different perspectives and learn from the strengths of others.
- At the editing stage, the students read through their writings and check the clarity of ideas or the logical development of their arguments. And students check carefully the grammar, spelling and punction of their writings. Teachers should provide students with proofreading standards, allowing them to proofread their essays according to the standards. At the same time, students can have a clearer understanding of the problems that still exist in their compositions and conduct proofreading.
- In the final draft stage, we should create opportunities for students to show their achievements. The first is to carry out display and sharing activities in the class, arrange special time for students to read out their compositions, share writing ideas, highlights and experiences, and learn different writing skills and expressions from each other to create a strong writing atmosphere. We can also make a class composition collection, organize the students' excellent works into a volume, and distribute them to each student for retention, so that students can feel the sense of achievement in writing, and encourage more students to write hard to improve the overall writing level.

5. Conclusion

Writing, as an effective language communication skill for expressing ideas, like other skills, requires a significant amount of time for training. The process writing approach values students' writing process and encourages them to improve through continuous revision and practice, which is beneficial for building students' confidence. The process writing method regards the writing process as a cyclical, complex process of psychological cognition, creative thinking, and social communication, which is in line with the essence of writing teaching and can effectively improve students' writing skills. In response to the current situation of high school English writing teaching, we urgently need to improve the traditional teaching methods, flexibly and reasonably draw on the teaching principles of process writing, strive to make writing teaching scientific and systematic, and truly improve the writing level and quality of English teaching for middle school students.

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