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Teaching research on wiki-based English collaborative writing

Rong Fu

Xi'an University of Posts & Telecommunications, (CHINA)

ABSTRACT

Wiki is a community-oriented collaborative network communication platform. Taking Wiki as a platform, this paper elaborates how the teachers and students carry out the process of English writing by using collaborative teaching philosophy. It also designs the Wiki-based English writing teaching mode with four steps, describes the respective role of teachers and students in every step. On the basis of teaching practice, it proved the importance of Wiki-based collaborative writing teaching model in improving students' English writing ability.

KEYWORDS

Wiki; Collaborative teaching; English writing.



INTRODUCTION

As productive skills, it is no doubt that Writing plays an important role in English Teaching. However, the CET exam over the years shows the low scores in students' writing. This is an urgent task to approve students' writing ability in college English teaching solved. Of course, students' writing ability is not ideal for many reasons, but the most important reason is that students are lack of the collaborative learning environment and the motor of the learning. With the advent of the Internet information age, computer and network technology affect the traditional teaching content deeply, teaching mode, and teaching methods. Network teaching mode has been developed rapidly. As a popular Internet technology and culture, with the advantage of its free and open collaborative learning environment, Wiki provides a good opportunity for the integration of Network technology and writing model. It's valuable and potential in writing in college English teaching. With the collaborative and open-end features, Wiki breaks through the limitations of traditional teaching of English writing mode, thereby enhancing cooperation, interaction and participation between learners, and ultimately achieve the purpose of improving writing skills of participants. "College English Curriculum Requirements" shows: To provide the good language learning environment and advantage for students, the advanced information technology should be extensive used, develop and build variety of computer and network-based courses. ^[1] Students can participate in completing the process of writing instruction. 77.2% of students will cooperate with each other by using the collaborative cooperative manner (Wang Dongping, 2006). Thus, collaborative writing teaching is entirely feasible.

Constructivist learning holds that knowledge is produced and developed in the interact process of internal (cognitive) factors and external (environmental) factors. Therefore, learning should be a learner-centered process under teacher's guidance, students are the main active construction of meaning and the body of information processing instead of the passive recipients of external stimuli. And teachers are helper and promoter of construction of meaning instead of the sender and imputer of knowledge. So, in the teaching process of wiki collaborative writing, students should take the initiative to collect and analyze the data and information about writing material, Teachers should help to organize and promote students to complete the writing teaching process. Wiki is such a good tool for collaboration learning and dialogue communication.

This paper discusses the application process of Wiki-based English collaborative writing in College English Writing Teaching, aims for students to create a good environment and atmosphere of writing, to improve students' English writing skills.

WIKI OVERVIEW

Wiki can be translated into Chinese as "wiki" or "wiki" which means a collaborative writing platform for 1 Community learning and communication based on Internet technology. On the Wiki, every visitor can take the initiative to publish the information, add or modify the contents of a web page or discuss and probe the themes of collaborators' communications, other visitors can also modify or supplement the information published by themselves. With the features of easy to use, convenient operation and flexible creation, Wiki is attracting more and more users.

THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF COLLABORATIVE WRITING MODE

Constructivist theory holds that learning is a social characteristics, the learning process is the learner's own process of construction. In this process, the learner can gain knowledge through the aid of other people's help, or by means of the necessary learning materials, grasp the way to solve problems and improve their cognitive structure, and thus they can construct their own knowledge for a better development. ^[2] In traditional teaching model, teachers are imparting knowledge. While students are passive recipients, there's a lack of an equal dialogue and exchanges between the two, the effect of this teaching model is not generated ideally. The theory also states that knowledge is producing constantly in the process of dialogue. Both sides of the dialogue exist as an independent subject and they have

common perception of the world, as well as a need of cooperation In this process. According to Freire, I can not really think if the other don't think, I can not think for other people, but without other people, I still can not think. This dialogue is not only the communication in the sense of dialogue level, but also the regeneration of meaningful dialogue parties through interaction. "The language and understanding which is permeated in dialogue is always expanding the understanding of either side and is not associated with the expression of infinite possibilities of this expression domain." [3] Therefore, an positive cooperation and attitude should be take between teachers and students or among students, they should learn from the other's experiences, methods, techniques, etc., share the collective wisdom through collaborative effort, overcome their own limitations by reference and dialogue, thus they will get profound perception of things and the world, finally they can complete the construction of their own knowledge. Therefore, we can say that the theory of constructivism provides a powerful strong theoretical support for Wiki-based platform under English Writing collaborative learning.

THE DESIGN OF WIKI-BASED COLLABORATIVE ENGLISH WRITING

The author opened online English courses in his school. A Wiki named "Writing" is set up under this course, also a folder named "Resource sharing for writing teaching", so that it can save students' writing exercises, excellent writing, comments and other information to facilitate the students' use of these shared resources. The author had one-semester training of Wiki-Based English writing in a class of 30 students. The training focus on analysis of how to create Wiki collaboration features to create an ideal mode of English writing teaching. In the teaching process, they designed a Wiki-based collaborative teaching English writing schematic diagram (shown below), this model has been modified by the reference of Yuan Min's model based. [4] This design spreads two main line of teachers and students respectively, the entire teaching process include preparing step, teaching step one, teaching step two and summary.

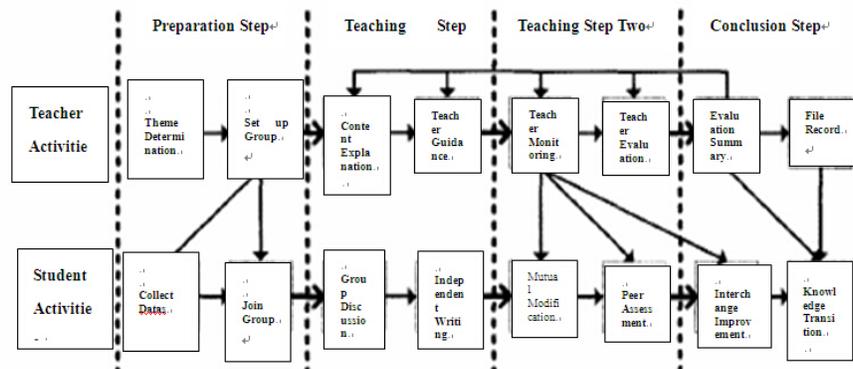


Figure 1 : Teaching Patten of Wiki-based English Collaborative Writing

(A) Preparation Step

Teachers and students are suggested doing some preparation work before writing teaching. Teachers should find some hot social topics which students are passionate about or interesting experiences in their daily lives according to the syllabus and students' mastered the knowledge. For example, you can set up the topic of campus love or communication, distribute students into groups according to their interests and needs, each group can be 5-6 people. After that, teacher needs to explains the Wiki-based teaching model and provide the specific requirements of the course. In addition, teacher must prepare the necessary resource in advance, train and practice the students to get familiar with Wiki tools. Students are also required to try to make themselves adapted in the group activities, also, with the use of resources and other information provided by teachers, they should make full preparations for the discussion group.

(B) Teaching Step Two

After determining the theme of writing, the teacher should give students detailed instruction in contents of writing, such as its level and structure. According to the materials that the team members collected and prepared before class, they can present their own views, also send this information to a Wiki space, in order to share the resources with the group members, get more material, each member discuss the starting point of the theme and the purpose of writing. Everyone put their heads together and eventually develop a writing program. During the discussion of each group, teachers can also join and help them grasp the direction of a good discussion, to prevent them from off-topic.

Students began to conduct an independent writing according to the writing purpose they discussed. Everyone can write according to their own understanding of the knowledge, then send their assignments to Wiki space, so that other team members can consult and modify. This is the independent writing process the team member use, it can develop students' independent thinking, independent inquiry and the ability to solve problems independently. For example, a student at the beginning of "Campus Love" wrote: As the time I've been on campus becomes longer, I find more and more students have their own boyfriends or girl-friends. Even those who are single are eager to have a love story that belongs to them alone. Three girls in my dorm room have been in love already, and there are four girls in one room in total. As far as I know, some couples were in the same high school, while some got to know each other at university. In the following paragraphs, the students would express their view of love in the university. This is an independent thinking process.

(C) Teaching Step Three

The main task of teacher in this session is to monitor the marks between students, if necessary, to give students in technical assistance, such as helping students modify the articles of others by using Wiki tool, and how to escalate the feedback. In this session, teachers should ensure that every student can participate in mutual evaluation with others, n order to help other students to correct the problems in writing.

When each team member sending their assignments to the Wiki space, the other members are asked to read these exercises carefully, as well as make modification if needed. When making the modification among members, mark their views next to the changes such as the abuse of vocabulary or grammar. After proposing the amendments to the other students, we can jointly explore with each other, so as to make progress together. Teachers should encourage students to read as much as possible and modify other people's assignments, the so-called brainstorming, the more people involved, the more everyone benefits.

We choose one passage of a student’s writing in the following "Parents, please say no to the possible options", demonstrating the different versions of the writing and the modification:

TABLE 1 : Comparison table of the original and modified versions from Student A

A Original version	With the scientific development and inflated curiosity, even a human ear can grow from the back of a laboratory rat. Hopefully, it won't be long before parents could choose what their children is look like. Do people feel excited about their possible option or do they oppose this behavior?
B Modified version	With scientific development and inflated curiosity, even a human ear can grow from the back of a laboratory rat. Probably, it won't be long before parents could choose what their children will look like. Do people feel excited about their possible option or do they oppose this behavior?
C Student Comments	You had few mistakes in your writing, which is good! Your essay structure, in general, is also quite good. I think “hopefully” isn’t the word you mean. This would mean that you think it’s a good thing for parents to choose what their children look like. Children is plural, so you cannot use “is”. Also, since you are talking about the future, you must use “will”.

After comparing, we can see that students learn a lot of writing knowledge by modifying other people's writings, also they can avoid the same errors happen again. In addition, students will be encouraged to own a sense of accomplishment by helping other people to modify their assignments, thus to improve their passion and enthusiasm in participating in writing activities. Upon completion of modifications and views between each others, teacher evaluates students' achievements they learned from mutual help, make a whole evaluation on their writing and analyze its pros and cons. After that, teacher select the excellent essay and the one which has more mistakes, compare with these two versions and to explain the detailed advantages and disadvantages, so that to make students learn to draw others' strengths and avoid the same mistakes happen. The students look critically at their own problems arising in the process of amending based on teacher's evaluation. Any doubt about that, raising queries and asking teacher for answers.

(D) Summary Step

According to Wiki-based collaborative writing process of each team's performance, outcomes and feelings and experiences, teacher will give students a detailed summary including students' understanding of the subject, the use of vocabulary and grammar, the logic of article hierarchy, the modification of the process and so on, then make a summary and evaluation on these related parts. In addition, after completion of each writing task, teacher will save the writing consults in a folder for easy access to students. After writing exercises for a period, this folder will become students' writing resource library, from which student can learn a lot, and thus make their writing skills to get a faster improvement.

D) Practice Experience

After one-semester-test of Wiki-Based collaborative writing teaching, the author found that this teaching model has a significant effect for improving students' English writing ability, as well as their overall level of English. Compared with the traditional teaching mode, it has its own advantages:

First, Wiki-based collaborative writing model can inspire students to learn with enthusiasm and motivation, effectively promote the interaction and communication between students and enhance the sense of teamwork between them. In Wiki-based collaborative writing instruction, the team members co-operate and assist with each other. To complete the group co-writing goals, team member communicate and discuss with each other, modify and evaluate their essays, make full advantage of them, learn from each other, finally making writing skills with various improvements.

Secondly, Wiki-based platform provides technical support for collaborative writing teaching. It has unparalleled advantages when comparing with the traditional teaching model of writing. With the Wiki platform, teachers and students or students themselves can exchange interaction with each other at any time, which can solve the inconvenient communication issues outside of the traditional classroom. In the traditional mode of teaching, students can only see their comments and suggestions from class, but they cannot see the essay opinions from other students, while in the Wiki platform, students can see the feedback from other students, you can also make modifications, to achieve the exchange of communication among students.

Finally, Wiki-Based platform of collaborative teaching model is helpful for knowledge construction. Constructivist theory holds that knowledge is constructed through interaction and collaboration with others. Collaboration between students in the Wiki platform and exchange with each other, brainstorming, learn from each other, which make them share knowledge and resources with each other. In this way, they can learn more about writing knowledge and skills, so as to improve their ability

a lot. In addition, in the Wiki platform, the writing outcome folder which is based on the exchange of students and teachers reviews records will provide more convenient resource for students' writing.

CONCLUSION

Wiki-Based collaborative writing teaching model not only improve the students' English writing skills effectively, but also stimulate students' enthusiasm and interest in learning English, give them exercises and training to work together in a spirit of cooperation. However, under the virtual network environment, the teaching mode has its prerequisite that teachers and students need to have a network resources and the environment, as well as enough interest. Compared with the traditional teaching mode, this network platform has a weak sense of the scene modes, communication between teachers and students are not intuitive and concrete. So the author believe that if combine Wiki English writing teaching model with the traditional teaching model together, it might integrate resources better, so that the effect of classroom teaching will be more satisfactory.

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