

Review of Peer Feedback on English Writing Teaching in China (2014-2024): A Visualization Analysis Based on CiteSpace

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Abstract: This study is based on the CiteSpace software, which conducts a Visualization analysis of 261 articles from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) Academic Journal Database between 2014 and 2024. By constructing knowledge graphs, it reveals multidimensional characteristics such as research themes, research subjects, research institutions, and authors in this field. The results show that peer feedback is widely recognized in English writing instruction, with the number of studies showing an upward trend before a fluctuating decline. There is a correlation between writing teaching, teacher feedback, second language writing, and peer feedback. This study provides a comprehensive review and analysis of peer feedback in English writing instruction in China, offering valuable references for future research and teaching practices.

1. Introduction

Peer feedback, an important interactive learning strategy, is gradually gaining attention in the education field. It is one of the kinds of feedback, feedback refers to all the information that students get in the learning process^[5]. It enhances students' knowledge acquisition, writing interest, initiative, and critical thinking and collaborative skills through social interaction and peer collaboration. It provides a social interaction environment, promotes peer interaction and collaboration^[12], enabling learners to acquire knowledge from their peers^[7]. This strategy not only offers timely feedback and fosters social interaction among students but also stimulates their writing interest and initiative, cultivating their critical thinking and collaborative abilities. In the context of globalization, improving English writing skills has become particularly important. This study uses CiteSpace to analyze 261 articles from 2014 to 2024, aiming to review the current state of peer feedback research domestically, identify research hotspots and challenges, and predict future trends, providing theoretical and practical guidance for English writing instruction.

2. Methodology

2.1 Data sources

This study focuses on the keywords “peer feedback” and “English writing instruction” and

retrieves articles from the CNKI database to search the articles from January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2024. The study select 261 articles as the sample from a total of 889 relevant articles, excluding academic journal, conference papers and books.

2.2 Data analysis

CiteSpace is an information visualization software widely used in the field of scientometrics. Its functions are citation analysis, literature citation analysis and author citation analysis to explore research hotspots, frontiers and trends in specific research fields^[2]. Utilizing CiteSpace 6.3.R1 software, this study conducts a visualization analysis of 261 articles on peer feedback in English writing instruction from 2014 to 2024, including processing and co-occurrence analysis of institutions, authors, and keywords to explore the evolution of hotspots and future trends in peer feedback research in China through a visual map.

3. Research results and analysis

3.1 Analysis of research topics

The number of papers can reflects the popularity and development of a field to some extent, so this study focuses on "peer feedback" and "English writing instruction" and extracts the annual analysis chart of publications in CNKI from 2014 to 2024 (Figure 1).

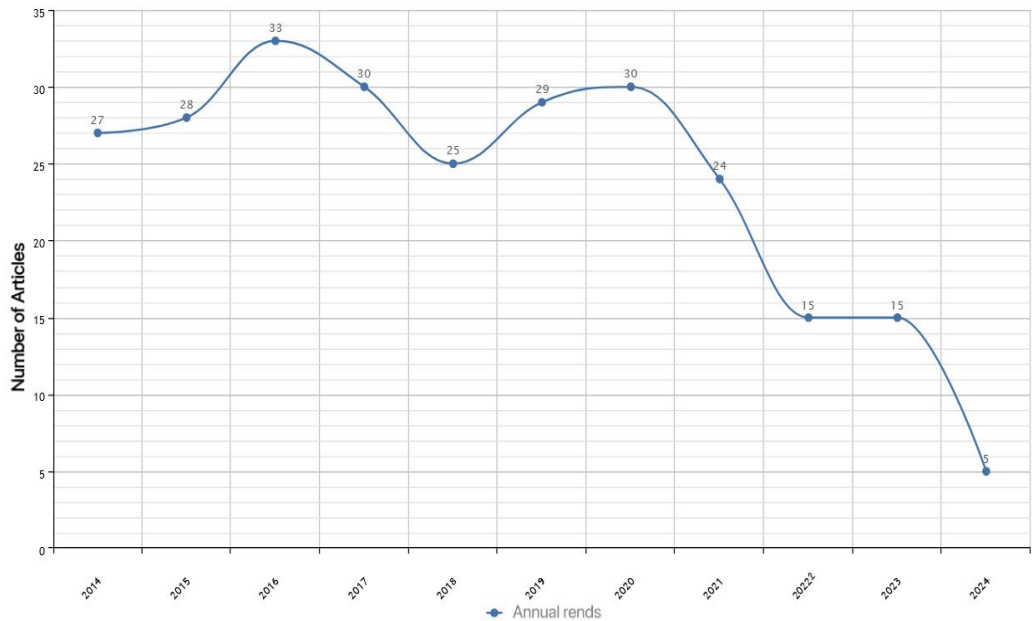


Figure 1 Annual analysis of the number of publications on peer feedback in English writing teaching in CNKI from 2014 to 2024

As can be seen from Figure 1, the number of publications in this category experienced growth between 2014 and 2020, but showed a significant downward trend after 2020. The highest number of publications in this decade was 33 during the periods of 2014 to 2016 and 2018 to 2020.

From the figure, peer feedback is a key concern in English writing instruction, thus it is worth analyzing and studying previous literature to provide insights for future research. Although there has been a decline in recent years, it indicates that there is a considerable room for us to explore peer feedback within English writing instruction in China.

3.2 Analysis of Research Institutions

The co-occurrence network map (Figure 2) generated by CiteSpace software, reveals the distribution of research institutions in the study of "Peer Feedback in English Writing Instruction." The figure shows connections between research institutions. Through analysis, it indicates that there are 5 domestic institutions that have published more than 4 papers in this field. There are 7 normal universities among the top 20 institutions, which highlighting the crucial role of normal institutions in English education research.

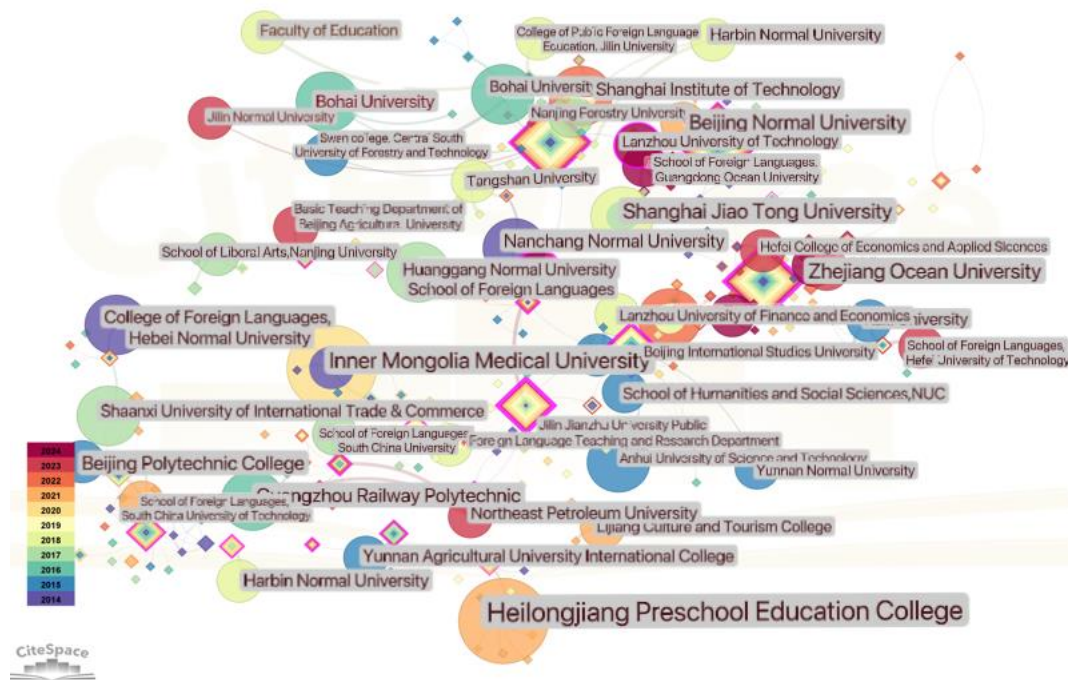


Figure 2 Atlas of institutions of peer feedback in English writing teaching



Figure 3 Core author map of peer feedback in English writing instruction

3.3 Author Analysis

To better understand the research dynamics and key figures in the field of peer feedback in English writing instruction, this study used CiteSpace software to generate a core author Atlas (Figure 3), which shows that although there are cooperative relationships among authors, the overall level of collaboration is not yet tight.

3.4 Keywords Co-occurrence Analysis

The keyword clustering diagram is a visualization tool which is used to display the relationships and clusters of keywords in research, thereby revealing the core areas of research topics. Though analyzing 261 articles, this study uses CiteSpace to construct a co-occurrence diagram of keywords (Figure 4) to intuitively present the current state of peer feedback in English language teaching.

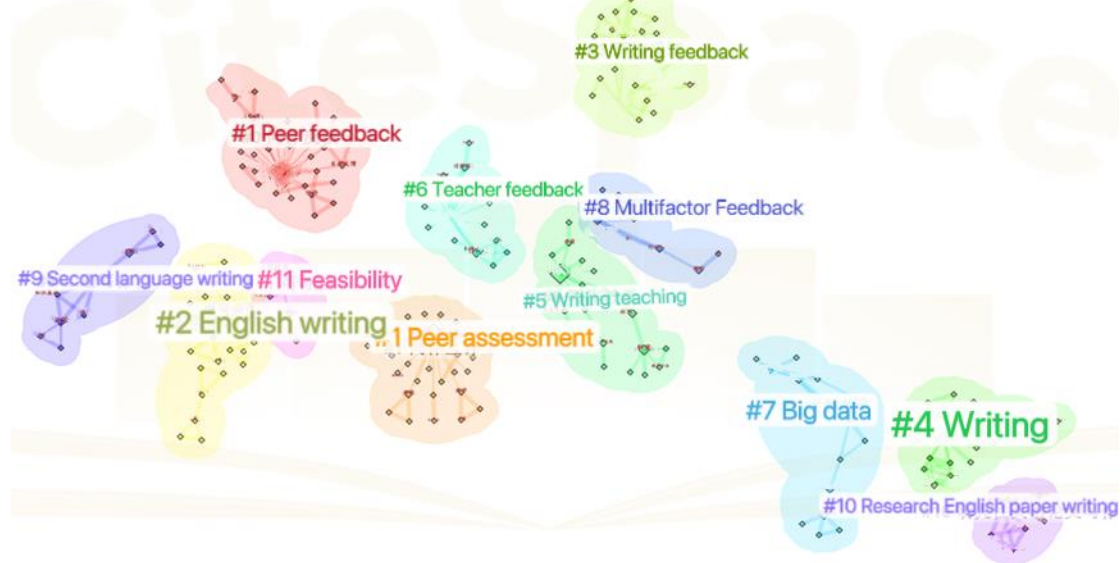


Figure 4 Collinear network graph of peer feedback in English writing teaching from 2014 to 2024

Through CiteSpace clustering analysis, there is a clustering graph of English writing teaching of peer feedback from 2014 to 2024 (Figure 4), where the module value Q is 0.8376, and the average silhouette S is 0.9698, indicating that the clustering results are both efficient and reliable. The 39 clusters in the graph are represented by the size of numbers, with smaller numbers indicating more coverage, and the cluster labels reflect the core themes of the study.

From Figure 4, the co-occurrence clustering network graph of peer feedback in English writing teaching has obtained 12 clusters. Peer feedback focuses on writing feedback, writing teaching and second language teaching and peer feedback, which will be illustrated as follows.

Firstly, the research on writing feedback over the past decade can be roughly divided into three aspects: the review of writing feedback, implications for teaching, and comparative studies, with the majority of research subjects being vocational students and college students. For the review of writing feedback, more attention is paid to second language writing, particularly English writing. Some scholars have reviewed the methods of domestic university English writing feedback research^[14]. Some scholars believe that peer feedback focuses more on the level of text structure, and its effect on improving content theme is more obvious than that of teacher feedback^[11]. In comparative studies, there are some comparative researches that based on dynamic assessment theory of English writing feedback methods^[6]. Therefore, there are more issues focused on identifying in current teaching practices to enhance teaching quality.

Secondly, peer feedback has always been highly valued in the field of second language writing instruction. Theoretically, the research methods for peer feedback are based on a wide range of aspects, including Process writing teaching theory^[9], metacognitive theory^[3], output-oriented approach^[8], dynamic evaluation theory^[1], and scaffolding theory^[7]. In terms of research methods, the main data collection methods over the past decade have been test result analysis, questionnaire, and interviews, however, the research design and data collection methods are relatively monotonous and fixed, with few using reflective logs, classroom observations, and other methods. Overall, the theories, methods, and models of peer feedback are innovative, which play a crucial role in advancing teaching.

Thirdly, peer evaluation plays a crucial role in second language writing. Regarding peer evaluation in second language writing, on the one hand, some studies focus on the impact of peer evaluation on second language writing, such as in 2024, Wu Yong and Ren Peiling studied the influence of online peer evaluation and teacher feedback on students^[10]; Zhang Jin and Tang Zhichao^[13] did comparative study on the application of peer tutoring and peer evaluation in English second language writing instruction in 2020. On the other hand, there are commentaries on second language writing and peer evaluation, such as Dong Zhe, Gao Ying, and Xie Bing^[4] reviewed the research hotspots and frontiers of peer evaluation in second language writing in 2020. Generally, studies that combine second language writing and peer evaluation are relatively novel, but they still have limitations in research direction, lacking empirical research support, and require further expansion and exploration.

4. Conclusions and Implications

This study utilizes CiteSpace software to conduct a visualization analysis of peer feedback literature in domestic English writing instruction from 2014 to 2024, revealing the independence between researchers and institutions, and highlighting the necessity of enhanced collaboration. The analysis shows that peer feedback is valued in this field, but the number of studies has declined after an initial increase. Keyword clustering analysis indicates that peer feedback is closely related to second language writing, teacher feedback, and English writing. The study also points out current research deficiencies, including insufficient theoretical depth, quality of empirical research, and lack of interdisciplinary integration. In future, there is still a requirement to deepen theoretical exploration, enhance research rigor, and promote interdisciplinary communication to optimize the application of peer feedback in English writing instruction. This study provides a reference for future research and teaching practices.

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