

Application of Scaffolding Teaching Model in College English Writing Teaching

Tao Luo^{1,a,*}

¹*School of International Culture and Communication, Jingdezhen Ceramic University, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China*

^a*2778457924@qq.com*

^{*}*Corresponding author*

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Abstract: English writing ability is one of the necessary skills that students should master. Meanwhile, it is also a specific requirement of the English teaching syllabus. However, many students only regard writing as a task of the examination and teachers do not pay enough attention to writing teaching. Therefore, how to improve students' writing level has become an urgent and important teaching task. The scaffolding teaching model is a specific teaching model based on constructivism teaching theory. It emphasizes that the teaching process should be student-centered, and teachers should focus on stimulating students' enthusiasm and initiative to learn. This study explores the application of the scaffolding teaching model in College English writing teaching and reveals its significant impact on students' learning outcomes. The findings indicate that this model effectively stimulates students' active thinking and fosters their interest in learning. Moreover, it enhances students' cooperative abilities, thereby ultimately achieving the goal of improving their writing proficiency.

1. Introduction

In modern college English teaching, English writing ability is one of the four basic skills of in English learning. It is an important embodiment of students' expressive skills and language output ability. It can be acknowledged that English writing ability is one of the key contents of college English teaching, and it is also a difficult point for teachers. Additionally, in teaching practice, teachers do not pay enough attention to the cultivation of students' writing skills, and writing teaching objectives are far from being achieved. In the end, students' writing ability has not been gradually improved.

In traditional writing teaching, teachers usually regard 'how to write' as a knowledge, simply focusing on the theoretical level of teaching, and paying too much attention to the form of imitation, thus ignoring the role of writing in the exploration of students' thinking and real interest. This kind of teaching model is conducive to the organization and management of classroom teaching, and it can effectively transfer knowledge and information, also ensure the efficiency of classroom teaching. However, it ignores the initiative and creativity of students, and cannot teach students in accordance with their original aptitude.

With the enhancing of the new round of basic education reform in China, the basic theory and

practice of constructivism plays a more and more unique role in the field of basic education. Scaffolding instruction is based on the theory of constructivism, and its teaching model is in line with the internal law of students' English learning. In English teaching, it can provide learners with the opportunity of active construction in their own learning and create better condition for learners. In the teaching of English writing, scaffolding instruction should be used reasonably. In the advancement of learning process, scaffolding instruction should be gradually withdrawn to help students form their own writing ideas, so that they can eventually solve writing problems independently.

2. Scaffolding teaching and its theoretical basis

Under the constructivism teaching model, there are currently several mature teaching methods that have been developed as followings: Scaffolding Instruction, Anchored Instruction and Random-Access Instruction. The teaching model they respectively represent has their own characteristics and focuses. Among them, Scaffolding Instruction uses the scaffolding which is usually used in the construction industry to vividly illustrate the teaching model. In this teaching model, the teacher guides the teaching process, enabling learners to master, construct and internalize the knowledge and skills they have learned, so that they can later perform higher-level cognitive activities; in the meanwhile, the task of managing learning is gradually transferred from the teacher through the bracket (the teacher's help) to the learner himself, and finally the bracket will be removed.

"Scaffolding teaching" is a concept proposed in 1976 by the famous American educator and psychologist J.S. Bruner and his colleagues in the process of studying how mothers influence children's language development. [3] The original meaning of "Scaffolding" is a facility erected on the outside of a building to assist in construction, commonly known as "scaffolding". Here, it is used as a metaphor for the conceptual framework that assists students in problem solving and meaning construction. It is based on Vygotsky's recent development zone theory. It establishes a scaffolding conceptual framework for more complex issues, so that learners can gradually climb along the "scaffold", thus completing a kind of construction of the meaning of complex concepts teaching strategy [6].

Currently, the more influential definition comes from the relevant documents of the European Community — "Distance Education and Training Project". The document pointed out that the definition of "scaffolding teaching" is: "Scaffolding teaching should provide a conceptual framework for learners to build an understanding of knowledge. The concepts in this framework are designed to develop learners' understanding of problems. To further understand what is needed, for this, complex learning tasks must be decomposed in advance in order to gradually deepen the understanding of learners."

Constructivism teaching theory is the theoretical basis of scaffolding teaching. The theory believes that the knowledge that students learn is not only obtained through teachers' teaching, but also from the learners who use the writing and communication with other people (including teachers and learning partners) in the process of acquiring knowledge under certain circumstances. Students obtained new knowledge through means of construction by using necessary learning materials. Therefore, the study of constructivism is the process of constructing meaning through interpersonal collaboration and communication activities with the help of other people in a certain situation, that is, the social and cultural background. The four elements of constructivism theories are "context", "cooperation", "communication" and "meaningful construction". Among them, "context", "collaboration" and "communication" are the basic conditions and process of learning, and "meaningful construction" is the goal of the entire learning process [2].

3. The differences between scaffolding teaching model and traditional teaching model

3.1 Traditional English writing teaching methods

The teaching model of traditional college English writing is one that pays great attention to students' writing methods and skills. It focuses too much on the transfer of knowledge and requires students to understand the application of various skills. It uses classic model essays, analyzes grammar, and improves students' understanding of the meaning of sentences and inculcates writing skills. However, this teaching style would not improve the students' writing level for a long time. On the contrary, it will further increase students' fear for writing, and those writing skills that students can master are also very limited. This kind of bad mood often causes students' English writing level to enter a plateau period, and it is difficult to improve [4].

In addition, many students tend to make the same mistakes repeatedly when they are writing, that is exactly grammatical problems. This is precisely because under the traditional teaching model, most students only learn to memorize good words and sentences, templates, and they are used to mechanically copying when encountering a new topic, instead of learning how to effectively use knowledge. Therefore, it is difficult to merge the new knowledge with one's own original knowledge and truly internalize what one has learned.

3.2 Overview of the application of scaffolding teaching model

Proper use of scaffolding teaching in college English writing class can effectively promote students to improve their writing ability and writing thinking model actively. This has changed the traditional teaching model's attitude of paying too much attention to results, paying more attention to the writing process, emphasizing students' independent construction of knowledge systems, enhancing the role of students in participating in classroom activities, and strengthening the interaction between teachers and students. Teachers no longer play a central role in teaching, but provide significant "scaffolding" for students' learning, and organize, guide and promote students' various learning tasks. The role of students in English writing exercises has also changed from passive receivers to active participants, learners and collaborators. This kind of teaching form is conducive to stimulating students' thinking pattern, and is of great significance to the improvement and development of students' academic performance.

4. The application of scaffolding teaching in senior college English writing class

4.1 Teaching writing skills and building conceptual scaffolding

In the English writing class, teachers should firstly spend a certain amount of time explaining the basic writing knowledge of the topic of the class and teaching related writing skills and methods before conducting formal teaching; secondly, the teaching tasks explained in the class should be arranged appropriately by using the brainstorming method to let the students in the class communicate in groups, improve the enthusiasm of students to participate in the classroom, and stimulate students' multidimensional ideas, what's more, teachers should record them in time [9].

For example, when the teacher is going to teach the related writing content of "Letter", before students start writing, they should standardize the format of the beginning, greeting, and end part of the letter. At this time, what the teacher tries to regulate is the concrete "scaffolding" presented in this class. At the same time, the construction of "scaffolding" should fall within the most recent development area of students, surpass the current development level of students, and not exceed the potential development level of students, so as to promote the improvement of students' writing ability to the greatest extent.

For instance, when teachers discuss how to write in the "notice" style, they should try to introduce students' views on the "notice" style, including discussing various commonly used oral terms. Different students have different views, such as "Ladies and gentlemen", "Boys and Girls", "Comrades and Friends" and so on.

4.2 Creating a specific context

After constructing the related "scaffolding" concept, [10] teachers should create corresponding problem situations for students, and bring students into thinking about specific situations. At this time, a certain situation presented by the teacher exactly serves as the "cutting point" in the entire conceptual network. In the design of this link, special attention should be paid to the full embodiment of the principle of combining audiovisual and thinking and the principle of optimization of media selection and combination. This is the beginning stage of teaching and introduces students to certain problem situations. In this process, multimedia teaching aids can be used to present vivid scenes for students. At the same time, teachers should be good at asking questions, presenting questions, arousing students' thinking, and allowing students to find relevant clues in theoretical knowledge and specific situations.

Take this as an example, [5] in order to give students a clearer style of argumentative essays when teachers are teaching new knowledge about this kind of essay, teachers can organize small debate competitions in the class in terms of the relevant theme of writing. Teachers can draw up appropriate topics based on the content of the text, organize students to collect arguments and evidences, and conduct debates in class. As long as teachers are good at guiding and studying strategies, "happy composition" can be achieved. And in such kinds of debate competitions, through the collision and exchange of different views between the two sides, the argument and the method of argumentation on a certain topic will bring about a more intuitive experience, so that students can feel much better when they are writing as if there is a god.

4.3 Carrying out independent exploration and starting writing experience

Judging whether teaching activities are efficient or not is not just a matter of how well the teachers teach, but also whether teaching and learning have formed a benign interaction, and whether students are motivated to learn actively. Therefore, after teachers introduce students into the learning situation, they should also leave enough space for students to explore independently by using the method of Brainstorming method and allow them to learn independently, so that they can really form unique insights into the conceptual framework and spark creative thinking.

Brainstorming is a method of stimulating students' creative thinking ability, which is officially published in 1953 by American creationist A.F. Osborne. [1] The purpose of using this method is to concentrate on giving students enough time and space for imagination and thinking, brainstorming, and activating related schema in their minds, such as various ideas, concepts, images and impressions. It usually revolves around a specific topic. The teacher, as the instructor should encourage students to think positively, think creatively, and dig out various useful information and form ideas in the form of talk and discussion; then learn to select meaningful ideas from the active ideas content.

At the beginning of the exploration, students should be inspired and guided by the teachers. Teachers need to establish the exploration goals, make appropriate preparations, and then let the students conduct independent analysis and exploration. In the process of exploration, teachers should offer students some necessary tips, so that students can gradually form the ability of independent thinking in the given "frame".

In the teaching class of English writing, after teachers teach students some common phrases and sentence patterns needed for the composition, they should let students practice more about what

they have learned. Students can practice short sentences at first, and after they are proficient in the use of short sentences, they can further combine and practice writing long sentences. On this basis, teachers can select certain specific topics and allow students to use “frames” to create their own compositions.

4.4 Encouraging collaborative learning and group discussion

“Collaborative learning is a major form of individual cognitive development.” “Individuals must communicate with the group members to enrich and improve their knowledge, modify their views, and complete meaningful construction.”

In the process of independent exploration, students may encounter many problems. [7] In order to solve these problems, we can’t just rely on the teachers to give theoretical guidance, but also through the form of group discussions among students, exchange information with each other, and create a collision of ideas in the discussion. Through group negotiation and discussion, students can truly understand the current knowledge more comprehensively and correctly on the basis of sharing the results of collective thinking, and further achieve the meaningful construction of the knowledge they have learned.

Through group discussions and other kinds of forms, students can actively participate in problem thinking, discussion and interpretation of personal ideas, which can deepen their interests and initiatives in learning tasks, thus effectively improving learning results, and gaining more English writing skills.

For example, after a student has completed an English composition, the teacher does not have to rush to accept the student’s composition to correct. On the contrary, the teacher can first reasonably divide the students into different study groups, and allocate members according to their behavior and grades. Then, let the students mark each other’s compositions in the learning group, so that the students can have a deeper impression of the words or sentences they have used in the wrong way through mutual discussion, and can also help the students test their knowledge level and cultivate their sense of responsibility. Finally, the teachers will check and correct again, which is more helpful to find common problems.

Through this form, students can make more rapid progress in the process of mutual cooperation, and at the same time, it can also enable students to accurately recognize their own shortcomings and make timely corrections.

4.5 Expanding multiple evaluations and writing skills

According to the different roles of evaluation in teaching activities, [8] teaching evaluation can be divided into three types: diagnostic evaluation, formative evaluation and summary evaluation. In the past teaching models, teachers often put more emphasis on summary evaluations such as the final test scores. During the use of scaffolding teaching methods in the class, after the completion of the teaching process, teachers should comprehensively give their evaluations from multiple perspectives. Middle school students are still in the critical period of forming the psychological structure of personality, and in this period, they value the teacher’s evaluation more seriously. Reasonable evaluation can guide students to learn actively and make greater progress; however, if the given evaluation is unreasonable, it may cause students to have rebellious psychology and seriously affect the future development of students. Therefore, in the evaluation process, teachers should avoid paying attention to the form and neglecting content. They should strengthen and guide students to cultivate their English thinking ability, strengthen the cultivation of students’ independent exploration spirit, and allow students to continuously experience the generation and change of writing meaning.

At the same time, the main body of evaluation should also be changed from a simple

teacher-oriented evaluation to a combination of student self-evaluation and team member evaluation. This diversified evaluation method can enable teachers to better grasp the learning situation of students. Teachers can adjust the teaching steps in time according to the evaluation results, thus better improving the teaching effect, and further promoting the improvement of students' writing ability.

5. Conclusion

In college English writing teaching, the scaffolding teaching model is an effective method for the systematic and scientific teaching of teachers, as well as for enhancing students' interest and confidence in writing and promoting their writing motivation. However, each teaching model has its own advantages and disadvantages, and so does the scaffolding teaching model. It needs further development and improvement by front-line educators, especially in the process of building scaffolding. It is well known that proper scaffolding can promote the effective and multi-dimensional interaction between teachers and students, thus making the interaction more operational. Therefore, teachers must build feasible support for tasks in accordance with the recent development area according to the original writing level of students, and reduce the support in time, and finally remove the support, so that students can write independently without the guidance of teachers. Ultimately, students can improve their self-learning ability.

By using the scaffolding teaching method in English writing classes, students can master more qualities necessary for independent learning during the process of building "scaffolding", displaying "cutting points" and other steps. The scaffolding teaching model is of great significance to the teaching and learning of college English writing. It can not only improve students' English level, but also cultivate students' good writing habits and complete their writing thinking ability. It also has an important role in the overall development of students in the future. In addition, as for teachers, scaffolding teaching can improve their teaching levels and ensure the quality of classroom teaching, which is also of extraordinary significance to our country's education career.

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