

# A Study on Effective Strategies for Improving English Writing and Teaching to College Students

Chao Chen\* Dr. Nurul Ajleaa Abdul Rahman Dr. Goh Ying Soon Dr. Nurul Ain Chua

Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history

Received: 9 November 2024

Accepted: 15 November 2024

Published Online: 30 December 2024

### Keywords:

University students

English writing

Teaching strategies

Personalised instruction

Practical activities

## ABSTRACT

This paper studies how to effectively improve the English writing skills of college students. It introduces the importance of English writing skills and the current situation, and finds that college students generally have problems such as insufficient vocabulary and frequent grammatical errors; it analyses the advantages and disadvantages of traditional and modern teaching methods, with the traditional method focusing too much on the form, while the modern method may neglect the consolidation of basic knowledge and personalized needs. Effective strategies for university students are proposed, including classroom teaching, personalised instruction and practical activities. In classroom teaching, writing tasks with practical application scenarios are designed and diversified teaching methods are used. In personalised instruction, students' needs are understood and targeted instruction is provided. In practical activities, diverse writing tasks are designed and effective feedback mechanisms are established. Finally, the contributions of the study and future research directions are summarised.

## 1. Introduction

In the age of globalisation, English has long become an important language for international communication. Therefore, mastering English writing skills has become more and more important for college students. English writing is not only a way to express thoughts and opinions, but also a way to show academic level and professional quality. At present, the English writing level of college students is generally problematic. They have problems such as insufficient vocabulary, frequent grammatical errors and confusing logical structure. These problems will not only affect their academic performance, but also their future career development. Therefore, it is of

great significance to study how to teach college students English writing skills effectively. Many teachers and researchers have begun to explore how to improve college students' English writing skills. However, the teaching effect in practice is not satisfactory. In traditional teaching methods, teachers usually focus on teaching grammar rules and imitating model texts, while ignoring practice and personalised instruction. In modern teaching methods, methods such as task-based teaching and cooperative learning emphasise practice and communication, and may also neglect the consolidation of basic knowledge and the satisfaction of individualised needs. It is particularly important to provide effective strategies for teaching English writing skills to college students.

\*Corresponding Author:

Chao Chen,

Email: 343794740@qq.com

## **2. The Importance and Current Situation of English Writing Skills**

### **2.1 The Importance of English Writing Skills**

In today's era of globalisation, English has become an important language for international communication. Mastering good English writing skills is of great significance to college students. English writing is an effective way to express thoughts and opinions. Through writing, students can organise their thoughts clearly, express their opinions and communicate effectively with others. At the same time, English writing is a way to demonstrate academic and professional qualities. Whether in academia or in the workplace, good English writing ability is one of the important criteria for assessing one's ability and professionalism. In addition, English writing develops students' critical, logical and creative thinking skills, which has a positive impact on their comprehensive development.

(II) The current situation of college students' English writing skills

At present, there is a general problem with the English writing skills of college students. On the one hand, many students lack sufficient vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, leading to frequent vocabulary and grammatical errors in their writing. On the other hand, many students have difficulties in writing organisation and logical structure, resulting in a lack of organisation and coherence in their writing. In addition, some students suffer from a poor understanding of the writing task and a lack of argumentative and expressive skills.

These problems not only affect students' academic performance, but also have a negative impact on their future career development. In the academic field, good English writing skills are essential for publishing papers, participating in academic seminars and applying for scholarships. In the workplace, good English writing skills are the key to writing reports, communicating and demonstrating professional competence. Therefore, it is urgent and important to improve college students' English writing skills, and effective teaching strategies and methods are needed to help students overcome writing problems and improve their writing skills.

II. Advantages and disadvantages of existing teaching methods

### **2.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Traditional Teaching Methods**

Traditional English writing teaching methods focus on teaching grammar rules and imitating model texts, which can help students master basic grammar knowledge and

writing skills to a certain extent. By teaching grammar rules, students can understand the basic laws of English grammar and thus reduce the occurrence of grammatical errors. At the same time, by imitating model texts, students can learn some common expressions and writing skills to improve their writing ability. However, the traditional method has some disadvantages. On the one hand, the traditional method may make students fall into rote memorisation, focusing only on the memorisation of grammar rules and the mechanical operation of imitating model texts, while neglecting the cultivation of practical application and creative thinking. Such teaching methods tend to make students lack independent thinking and creativity, resulting in a lack of individuality and uniqueness in their writing. On the other hand, the traditional method lacks interactive and practical aspects, making it difficult to truly improve students' writing ability. Students just passively receive knowledge without the opportunity to communicate and practice, and cannot really understand and master the writing skills.

### **2.3 Advantages and disadvantages of modern teaching methods**

Modern English writing teaching methods emphasise task-based teaching and cooperative learning, focusing on practice and communication, and this method also has its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, task-based teaching can combine writing tasks with real-life application scenarios so that students can improve their writing skills in practice. By solving real problems and completing practical tasks, students can better understand and master writing skills and develop critical and creative thinking skills. First of all, cooperative learning can promote interaction and communication among students and stimulate their interest and enthusiasm in learning. Students can learn from each other, help each other and improve their writing together. Secondly, too much focus on practice and communication may neglect the consolidation of basic knowledge and the satisfaction of individual needs. Students may improve their writing skills quickly in practice, but they are deficient in basic knowledge. On the other hand, modern approaches require a high level of teacher and student engagement, with teachers needing to design appropriate tasks and organise effective collaborative learning activities, and students needing to be actively involved and co-operative. This places certain demands on the ability and quality of teachers and students.

To sum up, traditional teaching methods focus on grammar rules and imitation of model texts, which help students master basic knowledge and writing skills, but tend to neglect practice and individual needs. Modern teaching

methods emphasize task-based teaching and cooperative learning, focusing on practice and communication, which can cultivate students' creative thinking and cooperative ability, but are prone to neglect the consolidation of basic knowledge and personalised guidance. Therefore, traditional and modern methods can be used comprehensively in teaching to give full play to their advantages while avoiding their shortcomings in order to improve college students' English writing skills.

### **3. Effective Strategies for Teaching English Writing Skills to College Students**

#### **3.1 Classroom Teaching Strategies**

##### **3.1.1 Design of Teaching Content**

In teaching English writing to college students, the design of teaching content should take into account grammar, vocabulary, sentence patterns and chapter structure. These basics are the cornerstones of writing. Students need to master correct grammar and rich vocabulary to construct accurate and fluent sentences. In addition, students need to learn different types of sentence patterns and chapter structures to improve the logic and coherence of their writing. In addition to the explanation of basic knowledge, the teaching content should also focus on practical application. Students need to learn common expressions, writing skills and argumentation methods to improve their writing ability. Teachers can demonstrate and guide students how to apply what they have learnt to practical writing through concrete examples and practical tasks. For example, teachers can provide students with some real writing situations and let them practice writing in a simulated environment so as to apply what they have learnt in practice.

##### **3.1.2 Choice of teaching methods**

The choice of teaching methods should be diversified to meet the learning needs and individual characteristics of different students. The traditional lecture method is a basic form of teaching, which helps students understand and master the relevant content by systematically introducing and explaining the knowledge points. In the teaching of grammar, vocabulary and other basic knowledge, the lecture method is an essential part. In addition to explanation, teaching methods can also include demonstration, discussion, interaction and so on. Through demonstration, teachers can show students examples of good writing so that they can learn by imitation and improve their writing skills. Discussion and interaction are effective ways to promote students' communication and co-operation, which can stimulate students' thinking and

passion and enhance their participation and learning. For example, teachers can organise group discussions for students to discuss a certain topic and share their views and experiences, so as to broaden their horizons and develop critical thinking.

#### **3.2 Personalised guidance strategies**

##### **3.2.1 Analysis of students' needs**

In personalised instruction, students' needs need to be analysed first. This can be done in a variety of ways, such as questionnaires, oral enquiry, essay assessment and so on. By knowing information about students' English level, writing ability, study habits and needs, it is possible to better tailor individualised teaching plans and guidance programmes to the students' actual situation.

The following aspects need to be considered when conducting a student needs analysis:

(1) English proficiency: to understand the students' English proficiency, including vocabulary, grammar mastery, reading comprehension, oral expression and other aspects. This can be done through tests or verbal enquiry, etc.

(2) Writing ability: to understand students' writing ability, including aspects such as verbal expression, argumentation and structural organisation. This can be achieved through essay assessment or oral enquiry, etc.

(3) Study habits: to understand students' study habits and preferences, including aspects such as study time, study styles, and subject preferences. This can be achieved through questionnaires or oral enquiry, etc.

(4) Needs analysis: to understand students' needs and expectations, including aspects such as which aspects they wish to improve and what level they wish to achieve. This can be achieved through questionnaires or oral enquiry, etc.

##### **3.2.2 Selection of guidance methods**

When personalised guidance is given, students need to be selected in a way that suits their actual situation. Different students have different needs and characteristics, so different guidance methods need to be used to meet their needs.

The following are some common ways of personalised instruction:

(1) Tiered teaching: For students with low English proficiency, tiered teaching can be used to group students according to their English proficiency and then provide them with targeted instruction for their specific problems. For example, for students with low vocabulary, more vocabulary exercises and memorisation methods can be provided; for students with low grammar mastery, more

grammar exercises and explanations can be provided.

(2) Independent thinking and innovation: For students with higher English proficiency, independent thinking and innovation can be used to encourage them to try different ways of writing and expression. For example, some open-ended writing tasks can be provided for students to give free play to create different works.

(3) Individualised guidance: Formulate individualised guidance plans for each student's specific situation. For example, for students with weak writing ability, more writing guidance and model essay analysis can be provided; for students with weak structural organisational ability, more chapter structure explanations and practical tasks can be provided.

(4) Interactive teaching: Adopt interactive teaching methods to encourage communication and cooperation among students. For example, activities such as group discussions and revising each other's compositions can be organised so that students can learn and make progress through interaction.

### **3.3 Strategies for Practical Activities**

#### **3.3.1 Setting of writing tasks**

In the practical activities, we should pay attention to the setting of writing tasks. Writing tasks should be challenging and practical, and can stimulate students' learning interest and writing motivation by simulating real scenes and providing real materials. At the same time, different levels of difficulty and types of writing tasks should be set according to the actual situation of students to meet the needs of students at different levels.

#### **3.3.2 Establishment of feedback mechanism**

The establishment of feedback mechanism is also very important in practical activities. Give students timely feedback and guidance to help them find problems, correct mistakes and improve their writing ability. An effective feedback mechanism can be established through teacher evaluation, peer evaluation and self-evaluation to promote students' self-improvement and improvement. Personalised writing instruction is an important and complex task.

In carrying out personalised writing instruction, we need to analyse students' needs in depth and choose appropriate instruction methods in order to help students improve their English writing ability and achieve their personal learning goals. In the process of implementation, we need to take into account the students' English proficiency, writing ability, learning habits and needs in order to develop a personalised teaching plan and instruction programme. Such teaching plans and guidance programmes should be tailored to the characteristics and needs of each student, so they should be specific, actionable and targeted. At the same time, we should also focus on encouraging students to think independently and creatively, and promoting communication and co-operation among students through interactive teaching. This kind of interactive teaching can stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm in learning and help them better understand and master writing skills and methods. In this process, teachers should play the role of guide and supporter to help students overcome difficulties and challenges and stimulate their creativity and expression. In this way, students can express their ideas and opinions more confidently, improve their English writing skills and achieve their personal learning goals.

### **References**

- [1] Zhang, L. (2019). Research on university English writing teaching strategies *Language World*,(2),78-83.
- [2] Wang Xiaoyu, Li Ming (2018). Research on college English writing teaching strategies based on task-based teaching. *Foreign Language Education and Research*, (4):56-63.
- [3] Li Hongxia, Liu Jianguo (2017). An empirical study of university English writing teaching strategies. *Educational Research*, (6):34-40.
- [4] Liu L, Wang F (2016). Research on the application of multimodal teaching in college English writing. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, (3), 45-51.
- [5] Zhou H, Chen H, Zhao YL (2015). College English Writing. Research and Practice of Teaching Strategies. *Modern Foreign Languages*, (2), 67-73.