An Examination of the Effectiveness of Peer Feedback on Chinese University Students’ English Writing Performance

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Abstract

Effective writing pedagogy in higher education has been a consistent goal of researchers and instructors in the English as a second / foreign language writing field. Formative peer feedback, a key factor in pedagogical writing practices, has been receiving growing interest. Given that much remains unknown regarding how the quality of peer feedback and back-feedback affects students’ writing performance, this quantitative study adopted a quasi-experimental design to inspect primary pedagogical effects of peer feedback on university students’ writing performance in an EFL context.

The results of a one-way repeated measures ANCOVA analysis revealed that beginning with slightly different writing ability, the peer feedback group made more growth in writing achievement than the traditional feedback group. Further analysis through hierarchical multiple regression analyses showed that both the quality of students’ feedback and the quality of students’ back-feedback were significant predictors of students’ writing performance. Additionally, the quality of students’ back-feedback had a slightly larger impact than that of the quality of students’ feedback.

This study not only provides further evidence of the power of formative peer feedback as an effective learning tool, but also recommends the inclusion of it in the university curriculum to encourage students to monitor their own learning processes and be life-long learners.