An Exploration on College English Writing Teaching Innovation in the Age of Big Data

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Abstract We have entered into the age of big data. Driven by social progress and economic growth, information technology grows more and more mature. The deep integration between informatization and education asks for more development for college English teaching in China, while it is to becoming increasingly difficult to cultivate intellectuals with high skills and abilities in the traditional English teaching model. Big data, as one of the most prominent features of the information age, has been widely applied in college English teaching. This paper analyzes the dilemma of college English writing teaching and makes an exploration on the innovation from the perspective of the era of big data.

Keywords Big data · Information technology · College English writing

1   Introduction

English writing is one of the important parts of college English teaching. Not only students' English writing abilities affect students' employment competence but also concern the national competitiveness under the background of internationalization [1]. Colleges in China attach great importance to English writing teaching and adopt a variety of methods to improve the teaching mode for college English writing for the sake of enhancing the teaching quality. Among them, the combination with big data technology and English writing [2] is considered as a new way to innovate the college English writing. Referring to a large data set collected from many sources in pluralistic forms, big data is characterized by volume, velocity, and variety, which is the main value of application in college English writing teaching.

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2 The Present Situation of College English Writing Teaching

On the basis of the investigation into the present situations of the English writing teaching in three local colleges, the author has found out that the atmosphere in the college English classes is dull and monotonous, the interaction between teachers and students is of poor quality, and that the teaching ways are terribly stereotyped [3]. The present situation has caused that many students are lacking of interest in the English writing classes and that their writing ability is in continuous decline giving rise to not being adapted to the development for college English writing teaching nowadays.

2.1 The Teaching Model Is Outdated and Learning Autonomy Is Low

In the teaching mode of college English writing, the teachers give lecture, while the students are expected to learn only what the teacher tells them. Teaching is less attractive, the subjective initiative of the students has been ignored, and the autonomous space is comparatively small. Teachers' explanation and exposition about compositions mainly come from excellent samples, whereas the knowledge acquired by students is mostly based on imitating sentences, which is the traditional product-oriented teaching approach [4]. If students do not accomplish their compositions as prescribed by their teacher's samples shown in class, they will not achieve good results in their examinations. In this teaching model, students' independent innovation is been greatly limited and students will ultimately lose interest in English writing inevitably.

2.2 The Teaching Approaches Are Monotonous and the Individualized Teaching Concept Fails to Be Implemented

Although solid basic knowledge in English is required for college English writing, the enrollment comes from a wide range in vocational colleges, the quality of English teaching varies greatly in senior high schools, and the individual differences of students are obvious, all of which result in a large variation in the basis of English writing for different students in the same class. In this situation, English teachers need to realize the individual differences of students when teaching, and to consider synthetically the learning levels of students when choosing teaching materials in order to ensure that every student can make progress in learning.

When surveying the college English writing teaching, nevertheless, the author has found out that teachers do not take into account the various bases in English for students and the monotonous teaching approaches. For the students with poor English writing competence, they feel critical about the writing materials taught by the teachers and are difficult in learning; in comparison for the students with excellent English skills, they feel comparatively easy about the writing materials taught by the teachers and the space left for students to make progress is quite small. Therefore, in view of the obvious individual differences of students, English teachers need to teach students in accordance with their aptitude to meet the demand for English writing learning of students.

2.3 The Curriculum System for College English Is Imperfect, and the Curriculum Provision Is Unreasonable

For English teaching in colleges, the main goal is to develop the abilities of students to use English in the workplace [5]. Cultivate English writing ability will help to improve the logical and analytical abilities of students and lay the foundation for their English oral expressions.

At present, specific English writing courses have not been opened in most colleges, and when teaching English writing in class, most English teachers regard language points as the most important pedagogical practices due to the limitation of class hours, do not pay enough attention to writing practice, and neglect developing English writing skills of students. Since English writing includes vocabulary selection, syntax, discourse, etc. [6], students would lack real understanding of English writing if language points were the only content to be taught in class. That phenomenon gives rise to the fact that the students are not able to complete writing tasks by themselves, and teaching efficiency is greatly declined for English writing.

3 The Strategies for College English Writing Teaching Innovation in the Era of Big Data

3.1 To Innovate Educational Philosophy and Integrate Teaching Resources

Teaching philosophy and approaches is the essential parts of teaching [7]. To some extent, teaching philosophy plays an ultimate role in teaching level and teaching approaches can reflect the standard of teaching deeply. The author suggests that English teachers should get rid of the out-dated teaching philosophy, integrate and optimize teaching resources, and provide more opportunities for students to learn English.

In the era of big data, English teachers are able to obtain abundant writing materials for teaching through the Internet, such as MOOCs, microcourses, current news reports, and Ted speeches. With the help of the application of big data technology, the students' horizon has been broadened greatly and their scope of knowledge has been enhanced tremendously. By making use of big data information centers, students can search for the writing resources that they need as quickly as possible, enrich their English writing contents, and use big data technology to monitor their own English writing level as well [8]. Moreover, English teachers can choose different writing materials to meet the needs of students at different levels by means of filtering and managing the data, and meanwhile, offer students more individual guidance in writing according to the data statistics and analysis.

As for the teaching mode of college English writing, English teachers are asked to combine big data with English writing teaching, use big data technology to innovate the teaching mode of English writing and make the teaching more scientific, reasonable, and formal in order to enrich the writing knowledge of students, improve their English application competence, and promote their development in an all-round way. In addition, according to the information provided by the database, English teachers can design writing tasks that are consistent with occupation competence and closely related to daily life bringing freshness to students' English writing. In this way, students' desire for knowledge can be stimulated, their enthusiasm for English writing can be aroused, and the resources and information in the database can be transformed into practical writing skills.

3.2 To Change the Teaching Ways and Transfer the Teaching Mode

Faced with the shock given by the era of big data, English teachers should change their stereotyped teaching ways [9], abandon their out-dated teaching model and found a new one to adjust to the new situation in the digital age. Nowadays, the online and offline blended teaching model has been applied in the college English writing teaching; under this circumstance, autonomous learning and individualized learning can be realized according to students' different needs in English writing and a new routine is formed for the innovation of English writing teaching.

In the writing teaching practice, students can watch micro-course online videos both before and after class on the online English writing teaching platform and finish the pre-class task lists issued by the teachers. When watching the videos, students can choose different ones in line with their own writing levels and accomplish the writing exercises accordingly. In class, students are allowed to ask teachers the questions that they have encountered in their pre-lass study, take solitary learning under the individualized study environment, and fulfill the writing tasks in groups. The students present the reports on their own writing tasks, and find out the mistakes that they

have made in their own writing with the team processing in order to improve their writing skills pertinently.

Integrating the online writing scoring system, the digital course video management system and other systems. The online and offline blended teaching model needs to be realized with the help of big data technologies, and establishes the network writing platform for the sake of providing technical support for the implementation of college English writing teaching. In addition, English teachers are required to use big data technologies to make an analysis on the data of students' writing processes and behavior records, confirm the key points and difficult points of writing, which aims to master the learning situations of students at different levels, and summarize the common problems when students make their writings. Combined with the learning situations of students of different levels, English teachers can assign appropriate writing homework in order to offer different students individualized teaching.

3.3   To Enrich the Assessment Approaches and Improve the Assessment Model

In the era of big data, the ways have changed by which people acquire and spread knowledge; the traditional paper media has been gradually replaced by digital ones. The acquisition, sharing, and dissemination of information are completed in digital forms, saving time and space and reducing the cost of teaching. A mufti-dimensional assessment system is established combined with formative assessment, summative assessment [10], and data platform assessment by making use of the big data technology. The data platform helps to collect students' writing tasks which are considered to be as formative assessment, by which the overall writing learning process is monitored dynamically. With the help of online writing assessment, the teachers adopt both reading and writing tasks in the tests, limit the time of writing tasks, and upload the students' writing assignments into the writing platforms after class. In addition, the students' writing assignments are used to set up the corpus base for future teaching and research.

4   Conclusion

In the era of big data, there are many changes in the college English writing teaching, such as teaching objectives, methods, and mode. In this situation, the author suggests that English teachers should take advantage of big data technology for the integration of teaching resources, implement effective teaching strategies with the help of useful data, change the teaching mode to be suitable for the situation, and guide the students to improve their writing skills as well as their autonomous learning abilities and comprehensive language abilities.

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