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Innovative Teaching Models and Practical Implementation for Developing Second Language Writing Competence in Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract: With the deepening reform of global-oriented education, as a core link of language output, English second-language (L2) writing serves as a key indicator for measuring students' comprehensive English application competence, critical-thinking ability and academic literacy. It also constitutes a key and difficult point in college public English and specialized English teaching. At present, most domestic higher-education institutions have long adopted traditional modes for L2 writing teaching. Rigid teaching mindsets, monotonous teaching contents and utilitarian teaching orientations lead to common problems among students including weak practical writing competence, lack of critical-thinking awareness and insufficient motivation for autonomous learning. Such problems make it difficult to meet the training requirements for compound foreign-language talents in the new era. Therefore, taking college English L2 writing teaching as the research object, this paper defines the connotations of second-language writing competence and innovative teaching models, clarifies the educational value and reform orientation of writing teaching, and finally puts forward several innovation and practical strategies, so as to construct an efficient, reality-oriented new-type writing-teaching system focusing on competence cultivation.

Keywords: College English; Second-language writing; Teaching model; Innovation and practice; Competence cultivation

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1. Overview of second-language writing competence and innovative writing-teaching models

English second-language writing competence refers to learners' comprehensive language-output capability to finish English written expression in a non-native-language context by drawing on their own knowledge of English vocabulary, grammar and texts, combined with logical-thinking and cognitive abilities. Rather than simple text piling, it represents a compound competence system covering linguistic foundations, text construction, logical critical thinking and contextual application. At the basic level, it includes linguistic

competence for accurate vocabulary use, standardized grammatical collocation and flexible sentence-pattern variation. At the core level, it covers textual-construction competence for paragraph cohesion, text structure organization and theme comprehension. At the high-order level, it embodies critical-thinking expressive competence for viewpoint extraction, logical argumentation and critical reasoning. It is the highest-level capability within the second-language acquisition system that best reflects language-application proficiency [1]. The cultivation of second-language writing competence bears high educational value in higher-education talent-training systems. It can not only consolidate students' English linguistic foundations and remedy deficiencies in their listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities, but also foster their logical-thinking and cross-cultural expressive capabilities, enabling them to adapt to demands in academic-paper writing, cross-border communication and workplace English usage. Hence, it acts as an important guarantee for universities to cultivate high-quality international-oriented talents.

An innovative college-English second-language writing-teaching model is a new teaching mode distinct from traditional indoctrination-oriented and result-driven teaching. It is student-centered, takes competence cultivation as its fundamental goal, and follows the principle of learning-for-application. Breaking inherent patterns of traditional teaching, it features four major attributes: diversification, practicality, critical-thinking orientation and autonomy. Abandoning the single workflow of teacher lecturing, student imitation and end-of-term assessment in traditional teaching, this innovative model integrates multiple teaching approaches such as situational teaching, interactive teaching, layered teaching and online-offline blended teaching. It places emphasis on improving students' competence throughout the whole writing process instead of merely taking writing outputs as evaluation criteria [2-3]. The innovative teaching mode attaches importance to linking classroom teaching with practical application, basic training with critical-thinking cultivation, and unified instruction with personalized guidance. It can well satisfy the writing-learning demands of students at various proficiency levels. Against the backdrop of college-English-teaching-reform, promoting innovation in second-language writing-teaching models carries important practical significance. It can effectively address the low-efficiency, formalistic and utilitarian drawbacks of traditional writing teaching, stimulate students' writing initiative, make up for deficiencies in their second-language writing competence, and facilitate the transformation of college English teaching from knowledge imparting to competence cultivation. It conforms to reform trends and talent demands for foreign-language teaching in higher education in the new era [4].

2. Analysis of the current status and existing problems of college English second-language writing teaching

2.1. Result-oriented dominance and rigid teaching models

Severe utilitarian tendencies exist in second-language writing teaching at most Chinese universities. Examination scores and assignment outputs have long been regarded as primary teaching objectives. Rigid and outdated teaching modes fail to achieve sustained improvement in students' writing competence. In terms of teaching workflows, most teachers stick to age-old teaching frameworks. Classroom sessions mainly consist of theoretical lectures, model-essay recitation and template delivery. After-class procedures focus on assigning writing tasks, unified marking-and-grading, and releasing standard answers. Teacher-centered throughout, such modes put students in a passive-learning state, depriving them of opportunities for independent thinking, original creation and iterative revision.

In terms of writing-teaching evaluation, excessive emphasis is placed on final outputs. Students are

judged merely by grammar, vocabulary and paper scores of their compositions, while their thinking evolution, progress and existing problems in the writing process are ignored. Such one-sided result-oriented evaluation further strengthens students' exam-oriented mindset [5]. Meanwhile, large-class instruction in college English prevents teachers from delivering personalized teaching. Uniform teaching content and pace cannot adapt to students with varied foundations. Rigid modes make writing classrooms lack innovation and appeal. In the long run, students fall into a vicious cycle of "relying on templates, memorizing model essays and coping with examinations", making substantial improvement in writing competence hardly achievable.

2.2. Disconnection from practical application and monotonous teaching contents

The contents of college-English second-language writing teaching are markedly monotonous, exam-driven and divorced from practical practice. They are seriously disconnected from students' real-life application scenarios and future-development requirements, greatly lowering the practical value of writing instruction. Current writing-teaching content mostly revolves around exam-oriented question types for CET-4/6, postgraduate-entrance examinations, and final assessments, dominated by template-based teaching for fixed genres such as argumentative and expository essays. Contents are confined to textbook chapters and high-frequency exam questions, lacking coverage of practical genres including practical writing, short academic papers, and workplace English documents. Teaching materials are updated slowly. Long-used old model essays and cases lead to a severe shortage of life-oriented and discipline-specific materials reflecting social development and cross-border communication in the new era, resulting in empty content, outdated materials, and stiff expressions in students' compositions [6-7].

Furthermore, writing teaching is isolated from other English teaching modules, including reading, speaking, and translation, lacking knowledge interaction and integrated application. Teachers only teach writing skills without guiding students to accumulate linguistic materials, foster language intuition and broaden their thinking. Monotonous and practice-detached teaching content only equips students for exam-oriented writing. Students cannot convert learned knowledge into practical linguistic competence, and fail to meet English-writing requirements for academic research, workplace work and cross-cultural communication.

3. Innovative-practice strategies for teaching-model reform to cultivate college-English second-language writing competence

3.1. Construct process-oriented teaching systems and break rigid result-driven modes

To tackle the problems of result priority, process neglect and rigid frameworks in traditional second-language writing teaching, universities shall take students' long-term competence development as the fundamental starting point, and build a full-process, dynamic and diversified teaching-and-evaluation system, thoroughly getting rid of exam-oriented and monotonous traditional modes.

First of all, teachers shall transform conventional writing-teaching approaches, abandoning old frameworks featuring excessive lecturing while neglecting practice and review. Decompose writing instruction into five complete links: pre-class preview, in-class guidance, after-class practice, revision-and-review, and summary-and-improvement, covering students' whole writing-learning journey. Before class, push writing materials, basic knowledge points and preview assignments via online teaching platforms, enabling students to make adequate preparations, understand writing themes and generalize their own ideas. In class, reduce one-way theoretical indoctrination and increase teacher-student communication, group discussion, and

idea-sharing activities. Give timely guidance on misunderstandings and thinking gaps emerging in students' writing, and encourage them to express unique viewpoints boldly. After class, design hands-on assignments according to layered criteria, setting corresponding tasks for consolidating foundations and improving capabilities to ensure learners of all proficiency levels can fulfill learning objectives [8].

Secondly, comprehensively reform teaching-evaluation approaches and establish a comprehensive evaluation system integrating process-oriented and summative assessment. Lower the weight of final composition scores in grading. Incorporate factors such as pre-class preview performance, in-class participation, first-draft quality of writing, outcomes of autonomous revision and magnitude of phased progress into assessment criteria. Meanwhile, adopt multi-dimensional evaluation approaches including student self-assessment, peer group review, and teacher commentary. Students identify their own writing deficiencies through self-check and mutual evaluation, so as to shake off dependence on standard answers and fixed templates. Through full-process instructional guidance and diversified assessment, students' exam-oriented writing mindsets can be fundamentally changed. Writing teaching returns to the essence of competence cultivation, gradually consolidating students' second-language-writing foundations and fostering sound writing habits.

3.2. Enrich three-dimensional teaching contents and match demands of practical-application scenarios

To resolve the issues of monotonous and practice-detached contents in second-language writing teaching, universities shall build a three-dimensional, diversified and practical writing-teaching-content system in accordance with talent-training requirements of the new era and students' future-development scenarios, so as to organically integrate exam-oriented writing with practical writing, and basic-level writing with academic writing.

Optimization of basic teaching contents shall break the confinement of purely exam-genre instruction. While retaining core exam-genre teaching, add workplace practical writing such as letters, emails, resumes, and work reports, together with academic genres including course summaries, academic abstracts, and mini-theses, covering scenarios of campus study, workplace employment, and academic research for students. Continuously update teaching materials, discard obsolete fixed model essays and cases, and set writing themes based on social hot-button topics, cross-cultural-communication cases and discipline-specific resources. This makes writing content close to real life, majors, and contemporary developments, solving the problem of empty compositions and insufficient materials for students.

In terms of content integration, break fragmentation among English-teaching modules and promote in-depth integration of writing with reading, speaking and translation. Select high-quality linguistic materials, classic sentence patterns and text structures from intensive-reading texts, foreign-language journals and original publications, motivating students to accumulate resources, imitate logical frameworks and apply knowledge flexibly, so as to realize two-way interaction between language input and output.

In addition, deliver differentiated teaching according to the characteristics of students from different majors. Strengthen academic-writing training for arts-majoring students, and reinforce teaching of scientific-and-technical English and lab-report writing for science-and-engineering students, making writing teaching fit students' major-development needs. Rich and diversified teaching contents can effectively enhance the practicality and pertinence of writing instruction, help students escape template-driven writing dilemmas, truly improve their practical second-language-writing competence and satisfy diversified-development

demands [9].

3.3. Focus on critical-thinking cultivation and foster high-order writing thinking

Aiming at students' deficiencies in critical-thinking competence and rigid thinking patterns, college second-language writing teaching shall shift instructional priorities from mere linguistic-skill delivery to thinking-training and competence improvement. Critical-thinking cultivation shall run through the whole writing-teaching process to help students develop independent, rigorous and innovative writing mindsets.

In classroom instruction, teachers shall abandon template-oriented teaching ideas, reduce forced indoctrination of fixed sentence patterns and frameworks, and refrain from requiring students to copy model-essay writing. Instead, adopt theme seminars, case analyses and viewpoint debates as primary teaching forms, guiding students to think independently, extract viewpoints and organize logics around given writing themes. When designing writing topics, set more open-ended and critical-thinking-oriented assignments instead of standardized formula-driven propositions. Allow students to express personalized viewpoints based on their own cognition, life experience and cross-cultural perspectives, breaking stereotyped writing outputs.

During writing guidance, teachers shall mainly focus on students' text logics, argumentative threads and viewpoint depth. Provide targeted instruction for problems including confusing logics, one-sided viewpoints and insufficient argumentation, teaching students to analyze issues from multiple angles and demonstrate viewpoints progressively, so as to cultivate rigorous logical thinking. Furthermore, add model-essay-analysis sessions. Compare and analyze excellent model essays and typical defective compositions, enabling students themselves to distinguish good from poor writing, summarize merits in critical-thinking logic and the structures of high-quality articles, and reflect on thinking deficiencies in unsatisfactory ones. Critical-thinking awareness shall be improved through comparative analysis. Besides, encourage students to incorporate cross-cultural reflections and independent insights in writing, avoid homogenized expressions and get rid of passive-imitation-based writing modes. Long-term systematic critical-thinking training can effectively remedy defects in students' writing thinking, transforming their compositions from "text piling" to "idea expression", and comprehensively lifting the high-order quality and core competitiveness of their second-language writing.

3.4. Build blended teaching platforms and strengthen students' autonomous-learning capabilities

To solve students' insufficient autonomous-learning motivation and low-learning-efficiency problems, universities shall leverage information-based teaching technologies to construct online-offline blended writing-teaching platforms. Provide resource support, channel guarantees and supervision mechanisms for students' autonomous writing-learning, and fully mobilize their awareness of independent practice.

For offline teacher-led instruction, shift partial self-learning emphases into classroom activities. Organize students to finish inquiry-based writing tasks and set up writing-learning groups, so that they can collect materials, deliberate ideas and revise articles on their own, forming habits of independent thinking. Address problems arising in autonomous learning via in-class Q&A and one-on-one tutoring to clear learning obstacles.

Online, utilize digital tools such as Xuexitong, Rain Classroom and foreign-language-writing platforms to build dedicated resource libraries for second-language autonomous writing. Sort and categorize learning resources, including high-quality model essays, foreign-language materials, writing-skill tutorials, and classic-sentence compilations, offering students opportunities for anytime-anywhere access, study, and accumulation, breaking temporal-spatial limitations of classroom teaching. Meanwhile, construct online

autonomous-practice and feedback systems. Release layered writing assignments on a regular basis. After finishing compositions, students can check grammar, vocabulary and sentence-pattern errors instantly with intelligent marking systems and complete first-draft revision independently before submitting for teachers' secondary assessment.

Moreover, establish online supervision-and-incentive mechanisms for autonomous learning. Boost students' enthusiasm for independent study through study check-in activities, material-accumulation punch-ins and displays of outstanding student compositions. Encourage students to formulate long-term autonomous-writing plans and realize regular practice and continuous knowledge accumulation [10]. Blended-teaching modes can well expand teaching scenarios and diversify self-learning approaches, helping students gradually move away from passive learning, form good habits of independent accumulation, practice and review, and thereby achieve self-driven progress in second-language writing competence.

4. Conclusion

In short, English second-language writing competence constitutes a vital component of college students' comprehensive English literacy, and also a priority in cultivating international-oriented talents in higher education of the new era. Promoting innovation in second-language writing-teaching models represents an inevitable trend for addressing current difficulties in college English teaching and improving foreign-language-teaching quality. Grounded in real-world university-teaching contexts and student learning conditions, combining consolidation of basic capabilities with cultivation of high-order literacy, we can effectively break down barriers of traditional writing teaching, stimulate students' writing initiative and creativity, and enhance the practicality, critical-thinking orientation and professionalism of their second-language writing. In the future, universities shall continuously advance English-writing-teaching reform, update teaching methodologies in response to shifts in student conditions and requirements of the times, perfect second-language-writing educational systems, and raise the quality of college-English-writing instruction and talent cultivation.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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