

# New Research on the Problems of College English Writing and Its Strategies

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**Abstract.** With the reform and development of higher education, in order to comply with the development trend of the new era of internationalization and informatization, improving college students' English writing ability has increasingly become the focus and difficulty to be solved by both teachers and students. On the basis of analyzing and probing into the present situation of college English writing and its causes, this paper puts forward that the school should make great efforts from the aspects of English teaching materials, course hours and English network platform; and teachers should improve their teaching mode, evaluation methods and quality; and students should improve themselves in terms of grammar skills, thinking ways and self-efficacy. The school, teachers and students should work together to improve the English writing ability of college students.

## Introduction

With the development of international communication and the arrival of the Information Internet Plus Era, the study and application of English among college students is becoming more and more universal and life-oriented. "Listening, speaking, reading and writing" are four essential part of college English. Among them, writing is an important part and teaching link of English teaching content in colleges and universities, which is also a project with strong application, wide comprehensive knowledge and great difficulty in training. [1] By analyzing and studying the present situation of English writing in colleges and universities and its reasons, this paper explores the effective ways to improve college students' English writing ability. It has a positive role and great practical significance for contemporary college students to adapt to the social trend and realize their comprehensive development under the background of the Information Internet Plus era and the internationalization era.

## The Present Situation of College English Writing and Its Causes

### Colleges and Universities

#### *Improper English Writing Textbooks*

English writing of college students is based on school English textbooks. Currently, there are not specialized English writing materials in most colleges and universities. English writing part is only placed after each unit of the textbook, which exists as an extracurricular assignment. On the one hand, most English textbooks make the writing content of each unit scattered, which can only simply train the students' basic grammar and vocabulary without deepening the ability of students to form sentences; on the other hand, if teachers ignore writing training, students are less likely to participate in writing, and improving their writing ability can only be a mere paper talk. [2]

#### *Inappropriate English Teaching Arrangement*

According to the latest edition of the *Guidelines on College English Teaching*: in the English teaching arrangement, the general English course related to the basic goal and the improvement goal is a compulsory course, 4 lessons per week. At present, teachers can only teach students English articles and listening training in such limited English teaching hours. The English writing training can only be a few after-school exercises, and composition correction is only a simple

scoring on the network correction network, which can not actually help college students improve their English writing.

### ***Insufficient English Writing Platform***

At present, English teaching in colleges and universities actually faces the problem of “students group, large in quantity and wide in scope”. [3] In view of this teaching reality dilemma, most colleges and universities are unable to build an intelligent teaching resource network platform to help students classify students’ typical writing errors. As a result, they cannot help college students improve their English writing level.

### **Teachers**

#### ***Outdated Teaching Mode***

At present, most teaching modes in colleges and universities follow the traditional product approach of “teacher proposition-student writing-teacher correction”. [2] This method emphasizes only grammar and vocabulary, and writing thinking is a reference to the composition sample. In addition, English teachers’ long-term laissez-faire attitude in students’ English writing training. These not only restrains students’ spatial imagination and thinking depth, but also prevents students from forming their own writing style.

#### ***Single Evaluation Method***

The traditional teaching evaluation is mostly the summative evaluation, which pays attention to the writing learning result and neglects the writing process, and lacks the comprehensive evaluation of other aspects during the learning process. Meanwhile, the evaluation is mostly a simple review of the vocabulary and grammar, neglecting the comments on article structure. Therefore, it is impossible to profoundly enhance the students’ writing genre awareness, academic language, basic writing knowledge and writing skills. [4]

#### ***Lack of English Writing Teachers***

At present, all colleges and universities are actively establishing diversified writing courses, while the shortage of English teachers has caused the excessive workload of English teachers. [5] In the meantime, because there is no full-time English writing teacher team, the school cannot set up an English writing center to train and guide students systematically and effectively, and solve the students’ writing problems in a timely and effective way. As a result, students’ English writing level has been stagnant or even retrogressive day by day.

### **Students**

#### ***Confused Grammatical Format***

Generally, the college students are not good at writing English composition. Because the language skills are not firmly grasped, students can’t use the sentence patterns correctly, which leads to subject-verb disagreement and other grammar mistakes. At the same time, students are not familiar with the writing format and standard structure of the composition genre, which leads to a random writing full of mistakes.

#### ***Shallow Thinking Depth***

College English writing is essentially a process of expressing thinking in the form of language. [6] However, insufficient English reading, narrow knowledge and different culture and thinking between East and West, which prevent students from express their idea in English correctly. In the writing process, students tend to Chinese thinking which is verbose than English, coupled with the storage of too little material, which result in “limited thinking”. [7]

### **Weak Self-efficacy**

At present, in many colleges and universities, there has always been an English teaching mode of emphasizing listening and speaking and neglecting reading and writing. Teachers do not train students much on writing and even without doing anything. As a result, students pay low attention to English writing and lack of initiative. In this kind of learning atmosphere for a long time, it is easy for students to develop English writing anxiety, which makes them avoid writing tasks subconsciously, or worry that composition will be read or evaluated by others. For a long time, students' sense of self-efficacy is getting lower and lower, resulting a low interest and confidence in English writing. [8]

## **Strategies to Improve English Writing of College Students**

### **Colleges and Universities**

As a platform for leading teachers to teach and educating students to learn, the school is responsible for controlling the overall situation. First, the school needs to add authoritative textbooks on English writing, and look for basic and effective English writing materials, such as *College English Writing Skills and Practice* jointly edited by Zhang Xinghua and Lu Maoli, and *English Writing Teaching and Research* written by Xu Fang. Second, schools should appropriately add the class hours of professional writing courses. As long as they have time, they will have the opportunity to train students in English writing, so that students can continue to train and accumulate, and gradually realize the leap from quantitative change to qualitative change. Third, the school should set up a networked writing training platform to provide students with a wealth of online writing essays and exercises, so that students can continue to accumulate English writing skills and genre models, forming a set of writing thinking framework with self-awareness and self-thinking. At present, the writing team of Tsinghua University has developed an English writing platform (version 3.1) called iSmart-TRP, which realizes the complete operation process of "learning-correcting-evaluation" in writing teaching.

### **Teachers**

Teachers play a crucial role in the study of students, which need them to improve themselves in many aspects and at multiple levels. First, teachers should change the traditional teaching mode and introduce process teaching method and diagnostic teaching method. It is necessary to abandon the traditional teaching mode of emphasizing results over process, emphasizing grammar over writing. They should learn to communicate equally with students in practical teaching, sharing information, collecting words, phrases and sentence patterns together, and carrying out a diagnostic teaching of their writing, in order to help students to write their own articles. Second, teachers should change the summative evaluation as a formative evaluation, that is, by monitoring the student's learning status and process and giving feedback timely, and providing suggestions to improve the students. In this way, teachers cannot ignore the students' writing process, and can improve students' writing ability, especially the fluency of writing.<sup>[9]</sup> Third, teachers spontaneously organize and set up a team of full-time writing teachers, formulate a complete set of writing teaching contents and plans in the team to form a complete set of teaching and training systems. They can accumulate and train continuously from the actual process to help students improve English writing gradually.

### **Students**

How to write excellent English articles has always been a problem that students want to solve. First, students should strengthen their own training and solid grammar skills. They should accumulate vocabularies in learning process to lay a good base for using grammars. Second, students should broaden their knowledge and reading and create a free and critical environment. By participating in the English Corner, reading a large number of English articles, participating in thematic writing and thematic debates, a free English environment is formed, and the critical thinking ability is gradually cultivated. Third, students should ease writing anxiety and improve

self-efficacy. Through careful study and proficiency in writing skills, students gradually relieve or even eliminate the long-standing accumulation of writing anxiety, find confidence in English writing and enhance self-efficacy.

## Conclusion

Shortly, Rome wasn't built in a day, the same as to improve students' English writing ability. The school needs to start from English textbooks, course hours, and English network platform, to improve teachers' work quality and students' writing level; teachers need to begin from teaching mode, evaluation methods and teacher quality to enrich students' writing skills. Students also need to start with grammar skills, thinking ways and self-efficacy, and strive to write excellent English articles with souls. Therefore, only when schools, teachers and students work together, can they gradually adapt to the actual needs of college English writing in the modern internationalized and information-based society.

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