The Influence of Different Feedback Forms on Academic Writing Self-efficacy of Postgraduate Students

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Abstract: This study explores the impact of various feedback forms, including teacher feedback, peer feedback, and self-feedback, on the academic writing self-efficacy of postgraduate students, and then finds an effective feedback chain for better improving their academic writing self-efficacy. This research adopted a qualitative method design as data were collected from semi-structured interview of six postgraduate students with relatively high academic abilities, providing insights into how different feedback forms shape their confidence in academic writing. Finding showed that postgraduate students were inclined to teacher feedback as it was considered more authoritative, and three feedback forms had various influence on their academic writing self-efficacy. Based on this study, some practical implications are provided for teachers and students.

1. Introduction

Self-efficacy refers to confidence that one can perform successfully in a particular domain [1]. As an important emotional resource, self-efficacy have been gradually applied in the field of writing teaching and learning. Writing self-efficacy highlights learners' confidence in their own writing ability [2] or students' self-efficacy judgments about their use of specific writing skills and completion of specific writing tasks [3]. Recently, the combination of academic literacy and writing self-efficacy has received more attentions. It concerns students' perceived self-efficacy or their self-reported capability to produce written assignments in a specific context or domain, or their perceptions of how confident they are in completing written tasks [4], especially in academic writing. Academic writing self-efficacy is generally associated with academic staffs, including postgraduate students, scientific researchers, teacher and so on. However, postgraduate students' academic writing ability is relatively low and self-efficacy as a psychological factor impacts on postgraduate students' academic writing psychology ability and then reflects on their writing performance. Hence, there is a need to investigate how to improve postgraduate students' academic writing self-efficacy and enhance their academic writing ability.

Numerous factors impact academic writing self-efficacy. It divides into internal factors including personal experience, achievement, emotions, anxiety and external factors including evaluation feedback, physical environment and so on. Feedback, as a main factor, has various forms which can influence the confidence of students in academic writing. It has three main forms: teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-feedback. Teacher feedback has been stated to decrease students confidence [5-6]. The more written teacher feedback they receive, the less confidence they have in their writing.

However, there are some studies showing that the more learners participate in peer feedback, the higher is their confidence in writing performance [7]. Engaging with peers give students extensive feedback, and sometimes feedback that is less harsh than teacher feedback [8]. Meanwhile, peer feedback have a positive effects on student's writing self-efficacy [8-10]. Self-feedback helps learners develop self-referential and self-regulatory skills [11]. It also adds advantages that students with self-feedback can improve their academic writing skills and writing achievement.

Different feedback forms have various impact on students' academic writing self-efficacy, and then ultimately influence students' academic writing writing ability. Thus, this paper aims to investigate different feedback forms, including teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-feedback, have various influence on the academic writing self-efficacy of postgraduate students and find out the most effective feedback form by adopting the semi-structured interview of six postgraduate students.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Research Questions

Based on a larger study that examined various aspects of teacher, peer and self- feedback on academic writing, there is few study on the impact of these feedback forms on the academic writing self-efficacy about postgraduate students and their underlying correlations among them. To fill the above research gaps, two research questions are proposed:

(1) Which of the three feedback forms (teacher feedback, peer feedback, self-feedback) is most effective in enhancing academic writing self-efficacy of postgraduate students?

(2) Is there an underlying connection or potential relationship among these three feedback forms?

2.2. Participants

The research participants consisted of 6 postgraduate students (master's degree), selected from different academic disciplines in China (one student majored in chemistry, botany and medicine respectively and four students specialized in literature). These participants contained first-year and second-year postgraduate students with relatively high academic literacy and academic writing needs, who have completed at least one academic writing task and received different types of feedback. Six students were presented by S1, S2, S3, S4, S5 and S6, who were willing to attend this research and signed the research consents.

2.3. Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, focusing on students' experiences with three feedback forms and the impact of feedback on their self-efficacy. First, a brief survey was conducted with multiple students to understand their perceptions and preferences regarding the three forms of feedback. Six Chinese postgraduate students who have received all three types of feedback were further selected for semi-structured interviews. The interviews addressed various aspects, including the acceptability and understanding of the feedback forms, the specific role of feedback in improving academic writing skills, the impact of feedback on academic writing confidence and students' perceptions and changes in self-efficacy when receiving different forms of feedback.

2.4. Data Analysis

This study quantitatively assessed postgraduate students' academic writing self-efficacy by transcribing and coding the interview recordings. Then data were translated from Chinese to English. First, a preliminary review of the interview content was conducted to code the data and identify representative themes. And theme extraction took place, categorizing the identified themes into key factors that influenced academic writing self-efficacy. By extracting key information, the study compared the impact of the three feedback forms on academic writing self-efficacy and evaluated which feedback form was the most effective.

3. Research Results and Discussion

3.1. Three Feedback Forms in Enhancing Academic Writing Self-Efficacy

Effect of Teacher Feedback: The research results showed that in the actual paper writing process and actual interview, students accepted more teacher feedback than other forms and more students preferred to receive teacher feedback. S2, S3, S4 and S6 were more inclined to teacher feedback. S3 stated, "Teachers will check the selection of paper topics and modify the specific content, so that my academic ability will be improved. If I write a good quality article, my confidence in academic writing will be naturally improved." S4 claimed, "Teacher feedback more focuses on academic standards and gives feedback on academic papers from a more academic perspective, so it is more authoritative." Students' trust in teachers is higher, and their academic self-confidence will also increase significantly. S2 and S6 believed that a lot of knowledge could be learned from teacher feedback, such as data analysis, academic frontier views, academic writing skills, theoretical framework and logical structure. At the same time, S2 said, "I have also learned some so-called academic 'worldly wisdom' from the teacher feedback, and my tutor will encourage me and actively provide feedback information. When I get such feedback, I feel very glad. My self-confidence will be greatly improved, and my writing ability will also be greatly improved."

S1 stated, "I think the interaction of teacher feedback is relatively poor, teachers are often unilateral output. And there is a lack of in-depth discussion between students and teachers". The teacher-student interaction is poor, and students are not fully integrated into academic writing, resulting in lower academic self-confidence and a decline in writing self-efficacy. At the same time, S1 cleared that teachers had limited time and energy to correct papers. Teachers cannot give feedback on all the articles, but more feedback on general content or structure of the article. Student cannot receive more valuable teacher feedback, and then their writing self-efficacy will also decline. The study found that the serious relationship between tutors and students could also make students struggle to accept teacher feedback. "Some teacher feedback is more strict, and I doubt my academic ability when I see many revisions next to the article," S5 said. It will hurt students' academic self-confidence.

Effect of Peer Feedback: Students are more receptive to peer feedback in that they are in a similar learning stage. Peer feedback generally focuses on the learner's perspective, including the comprehensibility and legibility of the article and whether there exist logical problems. On the contrary, lack of professional experience, student feedback can only point out a relatively small range of errors and provide limited feedback, instead of pointing out deep-rooted academic problems. Peer feedback will be reflected in the academic writing report. S1 stated, "If I want to make an academic report, self-practice is not sufficient. Under the guidance of peer feedback information, I will gain some benefits in the layout, details and reporting speed." In academic writing, peer feedback assists students in improving the local details and text structure of articles. Peer feedback information can also point out problems not seen in self-feedback and teacher

feedback. S3 and S6 both mentioned that peers could help to check the overall structure and layout, but the content or specific details could be more scrutinized by teacher feedback. Peer feedback is highly interactive and boosts diverse perspectives. S5 thought, "When I communicate with my peers, there are some inspirations for academic writing, and my peers will provide me with new perspectives and opinions." For the new ideas provided by peers, students can discuss and communicate with each other, which can improve students' academic self-confidence in the academic field, so as to improve students' academic writing self-efficacy. However, the uneven academic level of students will lead to bias or errors in feedback, and the quality of peer feedback needs to be considered.

Effect of Self-Feedback: S1 stated, "Self-feedback is a crucial part of academic writing ability, and the academic ability of postgraduate students is mainly reflected in student's self-study, so self-feedback is important." S5 thought, "Writing papers is mainly self-oriented, and as a researcher, I am more familiar with my own papers, so getting self-feedback will improve my academic writing confidence." In academic writing, students constantly adjust their thinking and modify their writing expression through self-feedback. After receiving teacher or peer feedback, students will give further self-feedback to find the best solution. Students' independent thinking ability, logical judgment ability and detail control ability will be improved to a certain extent, so as to enhance students' confidence in academic writing and improve their academic writing ability.

The research found that student's self-feedback was usually strongly related to their learning ability level. S1 and S4 believed that people with higher learning ability could achieve self-feedback, and vice versa. People with a higher level of learning ability can achieve self-feedback, and students can find their mistakes in self-reflection and constantly adjust and revise them. Such academic self-drive can provide academic self-confidence, and thus students are more willing to participate in academic writing. For people with low-level learning ability, their self-feedback ability is relatively poor, and they cannot realize their problems in writing process, which will lead to the stagnation of academic ability. At this time, external feedback, like teacher feedback and peer feedback, should be provided for more valuable information, which can improve academic writing self-confidence, and thus enhance academic ability. In contrast, S2 thought that students were too familiar with their own articles and limited to their own perspective, which would lead to a long time and weak accuracy of self-feedback.

3.2. The Underlying Connection among Three Feedback Forms

Based on the research, S1 and S6 thought that students should concentrate on self-feedback, which was the centre of the whole academic writing process. S2, S3, S4 and S5 took teacher feedback as the main feedback source. They both thought different feedback forms could produce various influence on their academic writing ability. According to the responses of different participants, an effective feedback chain are formed as shown in figure 1. Teacher feedback is the main core and peer feedback is the auxiliary. In the meanwhile, self-feedback should be exerted in the whole academic writing process. With reliable and comprehensive feedback chain, postgraduate students can trust themselves in academic writing. It can effectively enhance their writing academic confidence and ability.
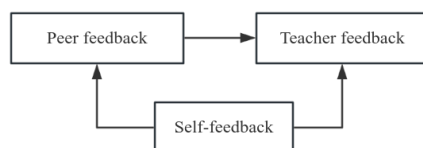

Figure 1: The connection and potential relationship among three feedback forms.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

Teacher feedback should not overshadow the interactive and self-regulatory benefits of peer and self-feedback. Future teaching could incorporate more peer feedback and self-feedback exercises to promote student engagement. The proportion and format of feedback should be adjusted based on different academic disciplines or writing tasks to maximize the development of students' academic writing confidence and skills. The enhancement of self-efficacy is not solely dependent on external feedback, and it is closely tied to students' internal confidence and self-regulation abilities. Students should become aware of the influence that different types of feedback have on their academic writing and gradually develop the ability to actively seek feedback and engage in reflective practices.

This study investigates the impact of teacher feedback, peer feedback, and self-feedback on the academic writing self-efficacy of postgraduate students, and then an effective feedback chain is provided to enhance students' academic writing self-efficacy and ability. But the range of research participants is relatively small, and more empirical experiments in feedback forms should be further conducted.

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