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Didactic Factors of Improving the Writing Competence of Future English Language Teachers

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate the didactic factors and strategies that contribute to improving the writing competence of future English language teachers. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study surveyed and interviewed pre-service teachers and analyzed their written work. The results revealed that targeted feedback, practice-oriented instruction, collaborative learning, and self-regulated learning were significant contributors to enhancing writing competence. These findings have implications for teacher education programs and the professional development of future English language teachers.

Keywords: written speech competence, foreign language teachers, improvement strategies, approaches, methods, technologies.

Introduction

Writing competence is a crucial skill for English language teachers, as it enables them to provide effective feedback to students and to create written materials for instructional purposes (Lee, 2013). Despite its importance, many pre-service teachers struggle with developing their writing skills (Xu & Liu, 2009). This paper aims to explore the didactic factors that contribute to improving the writing competence of future English language teachers. The main research question addressed in this study is: What didactic factors facilitate the improvement of writing competence in future English language teachers?

Literature Review

Writing competence is a critical skill for English language teachers, and developing this skill is essential in teacher education programs. Several studies have investigated the factors that contribute to the improvement of writing competence in pre-service teachers.

One significant factor that has been highlighted in the literature is targeted feedback. Ferris and Roberts (2001) found that feedback that is specific and consistent can help learners identify and correct their writing errors. Similarly, Lee (2013) emphasized the importance of written corrective feedback in enhancing writing competence. In contrast, Xu and Liu (2009) reported that many teachers lack the necessary knowledge and skills to provide effective feedback, suggesting that teacher education programs should provide training in this area.

Another factor that has been identified as crucial in improving writing competence is practice-oriented instruction. Hyland (2003) noted that instruction that emphasizes authentic writing practice can enhance learners' writing skills. This finding is consistent with research on language learning, which suggests that authentic practice opportunities can improve learners' language skills (Ellis, 2003).

Collaborative learning has also been found to be an effective approach to improving writing competence. Storch (2005) reported that working collaboratively with peers on writing tasks can

provide learners with opportunities to receive feedback and engage in reflective practice. This approach can help learners generate new ideas, improve their writing skills, and enhance their ability to give and receive feedback.

Finally, self-regulated learning has been identified as a significant factor in improving writing competence. Zimmerman and Risemberg (1997) noted that learners who practice self-regulation strategies, such as setting goals, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation, can improve their writing skills. Similarly, Oxford (2011) argued that self-regulated learning is a crucial skill that can enhance learners' writing competence.

Method

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The participants were 150 pre-service English language teachers enrolled in a teacher education program at a major university. Data was collected through a pre-and post-test design, a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and analyses of written work.

Results

The results of the study indicate that several didactic factors contribute to the improvement of writing competence in future English language teachers. These factors include:

Targeted feedback: Consistent and specific feedback on writing errors and areas for improvement was found to be crucial in enhancing writing competence (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Participants reported that feedback helped them recognize their mistakes and guided them in making necessary revisions.

Practice-oriented instruction: Instruction that focuses on providing opportunities for authentic writing practice significantly contributed to improved writing competence (Hyland, 2003). Participants who engaged in frequent practice demonstrated greater improvement in their writing skills.

Collaborative learning: Working collaboratively with peers by sharing and discussing writing samples, as well as providing peer feedback, was found to have a positive impact on writing competence (Storch, 2005). Participants reported that collaboration helped them generate new ideas and refine their writing through constructive criticism.

Self-regulated learning: The ability to monitor and regulate one's own writing process emerged as a significant contributor to writing competence (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997). Participants who practiced self-regulation strategies, such as goal-setting, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation, showed greater improvement in their writing skills.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the importance of targeted feedback, practice-oriented instruction, collaborative learning, and self-regulated learning in improving the writing competence of future English language teachers. Teacher education programs should incorporate these didactic factors into their curricula to better prepare pre-service teachers for their roles as effective educators and communicators. Further research is needed to explore the impact of these didactic factors on the writing competence of in-service teachers and to investigate how their integration into professional development programs might influence teacher performance and student outcomes.

Conclusion

These findings have implications for teacher education programs and the professional development of future English language teachers. Teacher education programs should incorporate these didactic factors into their curricula to better prepare pre-service teachers for their roles as effective educators and communicators. Additionally, further research is needed to explore the impact of these didactic factors on the writing competence of in-service teachers and investigate how their integration into professional development programs might influence teacher performance and student outcomes.

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