



The Electronic Writing Assessment Tool as a Means to Enhance Students' Writing Skills in English as a Foreign Language

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Abstract

The results of the teaching and learning process can be improved through formative assessment. In the specific context of English language teaching, formative assessment is related to formative feedback. Hence, by revealing the students' needs and areas for improvement, teachers of English as a foreign language may better contribute to the enhancement of the students' language skills, particularly writing skills. However, formative feedback on students' written work is not as common as would be desired. This paper presents a study conducted at a Chinese university in 2018. The presenters will discuss the limitations of assessment in academic writing associated with teacher subjectivity, feedback inexplicitness and haphazardness. Their findings show that written formative feedback is frequently avoided by the instructors due to the intensive labor required and the significant amount of time that it takes. As a potential solution, the presenters will introduce the Electronic Assessing Instrument, a tool to assist instructors in the constructive assessment of students' written work. The Electronic Assessing Instrument was designed by the presenters with the conviction that assessment itself belongs to the instructor while scoring and feedback can be more efficiently done with technology. The presenters will focus on data provided by a six-week long experiment that involved two groups of volunteer students: (1) an experimental group receiving feedback on their written works through the Electronic Assessing Instrument and (2) a control group receiving feedback through the traditional pen-and-paper technique. Detailed comparative analyses of the essays and revisions written by the two groups will reveal the effectiveness of the Electronic Assessing Instrument. The advantages of the Electronic Assessing Instrument include: increases efficiency and reduces labour while giving effective formative feedback; guarantees the assessment task goals by avoiding giving haphazard feedback; minimizes teacher subjectivity; it is useful for giving both summative and formative feedback and it can be used both by teachers and students in assessing written works.

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