

Teaching Strategies for Continuation Writing

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Abstract: Under the framework of core literacy, English teaching emphasizes the simultaneous improvement of students' reading and writing abilities. How to integrate reading and writing in teaching and optimize continuation writing strategies has become an important issue for teachers. This paper explores strategies for continuation writing teaching in high school English under the new curriculum standards, aiming to provide valuable references for improving the quality of English teaching and promoting the development of students' comprehensive language skills.

Keywords: High school English; Continuation writing; Teaching strategies.

1. Introduction

As an integrated approach of writing model that organically combines reading and writing, continuation task has a good effect on foreign language learning. In recent years, many researchers and teachers have made a lot of attempts on continuation task teaching since it was introduced in college entrance examination. The background, the significance and purpose of the study together with overall structure of the thesis are presented in the chapter.

In English acquisition, reading and writing are of great importance. It is generally acknowledged that reading is the prerequisite and basis of writing while the latter is the condensation and sublimation of former. In naturally follows that the effective combination of the two is an invaluable approach to enhancing integrated skills. In 2012, Wang Chuming proposed continuation task, which organically integrates reading and writing to stimulate writing motivation, highlights contextual role and promotes learning through interaction, realizing reading for writing as well as continuation for learning, which has obvious effectiveness over traditional writing exercises.

General Senior High School Curriculum Standards (2020) states that the core literacy of English contains language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability regarded as the key area that the college entrance exam tests. Continuation task is attempted as a part of writing which examines students' text interpretation, written expression and multiple thinking abilities. All of them are of considerable significance in students' core literacy cultivation. To be specific, students rely on writing to train language expression so that they can enhance their language ability. Also, they develop logical thinking skills by predicting the development of the plot and thinking creatively in order to develop thinking quality. Furthermore, they understand the different cultural forms embodied in the text which can enhance language comprehension so as to develop cultural awareness. Finally, they imitate and absorb the vocabulary, phrases and rhetoric of the previous text to enhance language imitation skills with the aim of exercising learning ability[1]. Due to its good backwash, front-line teachers are bound to implement it into their daily teaching activities and also strengthen the research and practice of continuation task teaching.

In the field of ELT at the high school level, teaching with a primary focus on testing still persists, driven by a variety of individual and environmental constraints. Despite this, a

significant number of teachers still adopt a monotonous approach that emphasizes language knowledge such as vocabulary, phrases, sentence patterns, and grammar rules, along with rote memorization. Writing is frequently used as a means to evaluate students' mastery of language knowledge, without sufficient attention being paid to content and discourse instruction. In essence, current English teaching primarily concentrates on language learning itself, which is characterized by static drills. In interactive activities, the use of language always follows the content of the communication, and the difficulty for L2 learners lies in how to map language appropriately to the flowing dynamic thoughts.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Continuation Writing Task

This section first discusses the definition of continuation writing task and reviews the literature relevant to the alignment effect of continuation writing task and the facilitative effect of continuation writing task on SLA in order to provide a general understanding of continuation writing task.

2.1.1. Definition of Continuation Writing Task

In the field of SLA, the importance of output-based activities in terms of writing and speaking has gradually gained attention. The history of continuation writing task can be traced back to the late 1990s, when Wang attempted to encourage students to write long essays and continue endings for stories in an effort to address the challenge that "students are afraid to write and teachers are afraid to correct" in L2 writing instruction. However, this approach has some drawbacks, such as the lack of examples, which may be detrimental to linguistic accuracy and writing coherence. Recognizing that language is always used in context, Wang introduced the principle of "integration of learning and use" to maximize the theoretical value and practical application of continuation writing task in ELT. Wang noted out that both language and discourse in conversation have limitations and are not applicable to ELT, while the traditional approach of reading as a foreign language learning method has only weak alignment effects due to the one-direction interaction between the reader and the reading material. Inspired by the Interactive Alignment Model (IAM) of language acquisition, Wang proposed integrating reading and writing to increase the intensity of interaction and improve the alignment effect so as to enhance foreign language learning proficiency. On this

basis, the continuation writing task was launched.

The continuation writing task, as proposed by Wang, is an innovative writing mode that aims to enhance students' writing skills by integrating reading and writing through the completion of incomplete passages. Wang emphasized the interconnection between language input and output, as well as the interplay between language imitation and creative use, and highlighted the practical integration of language learning and application. The continuation writing task involves reading an unfinished story, constructing situational models based on the understanding of the source text, producing a continuation composition that is logically coherent, structurally complete, thematically consistent, and linguistically sound.

The continuation writing task is founded on the pedagogical philosophy of "content to be created, but language to be imitated". By integrating input and output, students are required to write on the basis of their comprehension of the reading material. The reading activity before the continuation of composing provides students with a context closely related to writing, inspiring them to write. Different from traditional writing task, continuation writing task integrates reading comprehension with writing output and provides students with imitable knowledge structures. This writing mode can assist students in developing an English mindset through interaction with the source text, thereby improving their language expression skills. Therefore, continuation writing task could be viewed as an effective means of enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of ELF, and a breakthrough in the integration of linguistic forms and contextual knowledge.

As a task mode that effectively integrates the two essential language skills of reading and writing, the continuation writing task has attracted considerable attention and has been the subject of extensive research since its introduction. Scholars have explored the English continuation writing task from various perspectives, and existing literature primarily concentrating on the alignment effect of continuation writing task and its potential to facilitate SLA.

2.1.2. Relevant Studies on Facilitative Effect of Continuation Writing Task

Alignment of mental representations can occur at a diverse level of syntactic, lexical, semantic, phonological, and pragmatic aspects of language as well as accent and speech rate. Continuation task is considered to facilitate L2 learning under the influence of alignment, and has three advantages in terms of motivating expression, highlighting the role of context, and facilitating learning through interaction in SLA. A large number of empirical studies have supported the facilitating role of alignment in L2 learning in continuation writing task.

Jiang and Chen conducted a longitudinal study with college students to explore learners' writing performance in terms of language accuracy, complexity, and fluency[2]. They found that accuracy and complexity in continuation writing tasks outperformed performance in writing on topics without reading materials. The following year, Jiang and Tu conducted another study on continuation writing task in vocabulary acquisition and verified the effectiveness of continuation writing task on L2 vocabulary learning in terms of form, meaning, and use, concluding that continuation writing task facilitated L2 vocabulary learning in terms of meaning and use more than summary task[3].

Using relational clauses as an example, Wang and Wang

investigated how a continuation writing task facilitated the learning of some complex syntactic structures[4]. Their study showed that the probability of relational clauses used by learners in a continuation writing task depended largely on whether the reading material contained that syntactic structure. The results of Wang and Cao's study of passive structures in English in a continuation writing task gave the same positive answer.

With the help of Coh-Metrix 3.0, a text analysis software program, Zhang verified the facilitative effects of continuation writing task on several dimensions including vocabulary, syntactic structure and discourse coherence in the writing process, and proved that continuation writing task can help students give full play to their imagination and creativity as well as reduce writing stress through the analysis of students' writing logs. Peng validated the facilitative effect of continuation writing task on college students' L2 writing coherence. Learners' accumulation of different expressions in the reading stage and will extract more repetitions and specific words from the linguistic expressions of the source text will enhance coherence of writing[5].

From the above research on continuation writing task, it is confirmed that learners need to align themselves with the source text in terms of language and situational model to ensure that their writing is coherent with the text. Studies on continuation writing task have shown an increasing trend of diversity and focus on language learning. However, the studies on continuation writing task still deserve to be extended, and relevant studies show various limitations, such as the early studies mainly focus on the study of theories related to continuation writing task, and the recent studies mainly focus on the factors of continuation writing task itself, such as the complexity, genre and form of reading materials. Current studies on continuation writing task are insufficient in terms of external factors and learners, such as the continuation strategies and continuation process of learners, etc. There is still a deficiency of research related to the form of interaction in the study of continuation writing task.

3. Analysis of Teaching Strategies for Continuation Writing

3.1. Setting Time-limited Tasks to Enhance Students' Pragmatic Ability

Continuation writing is a comprehensive language activity. Through completing the continuation writing task, students can continuously improve their language comprehension ability, imaginative creativity, and written expression skills, thereby subtly fostering the development of core competencies. To ensure that students actively participate in continuation writing activities, teachers can set a series of tasks, creating more opportunities for thinking, expression, and creation, which in turn enhances students' pragmatic ability and overall English proficiency.

In formal teaching, to help students concentrate and maximize their potential, teachers can assign time-limited continuation writing tasks. The sense of urgency created by the time limit can activate students' creative thinking, prompting them to quickly organize ideas, structure their language, and express their viewpoints within a short period. For example, teachers can organize a theme-based continuation writing competition, setting strict rules and requirements, such as clear time limits, no revisions, and no copying from model essays. This not only increases the

difficulty of the competition but also motivates students indirectly, encouraging them to actively read, think, innovate, and break through the limitations of their writing abilities. By fully utilizing their strengths within the set time, students can improve their thinking and creative abilities during the time-limited challenge. Driven by interest, they will continuously strengthen their confidence in learning English, thus developing a love for the language and a willingness to actively participate in writing activities.

3.2. Detailed Analysis of the Text

To ensure the quality and efficiency of students' English continuation writing training, teachers need to do more than just manage time and concentrate students' attention on practical participation. They also need to analyze the text together with students. After understanding the main ideas and core themes of the text, students can find points of entry and focus areas for the continuation based on their personal understanding. Ultimately, students should create a reasonable continuation that is thematically clear and logically coherent, which will help improve their reading and writing skills.

3.2.1. Using Mind Maps

Mind maps are one of the main tools for constructing English classrooms under the new curriculum standards. Teachers should focus on presenting vocabulary and grammar knowledge in a clear and sequential manner, so that students can build a complete knowledge system, strengthen their English foundation, and foster the development of comprehensive abilities. In continuation writing teaching, teachers can fully utilize the value of mind maps during the pre-reading stage, helping students organize the relationships between different parts of the story. This enables them to accurately grasp the overall structure of the story, analyze the direction of the subsequent plot development, and create targeted continuation ideas within a visualized framework for interpreting the original text.

Typically, in the "pre-reading" phase, teachers can draw the following branches based on the core theme of the article: main characters, character relationships, character conflicts, and methods of resolving conflicts. Guided by the mind map, students can actively discuss possible directions and endings for the story, enhancing the logic and creativity of their thinking, thus laying a foundation for the subsequent continuation writing practice.

3.2.2. Conceptualizing the Continuation Plot

Key point analysis is a crucial step in continuation writing. Teachers should guide students in conducting an in-depth analysis of the original text, identifying key points and determining the direction and content of the continuation. During this process, teachers should adhere to the student-centered core philosophy, avoiding directly presenting key points and analysis results. Instead, through question-and-answer interactions and practical exploration, teachers should encourage students to discover and summarize key elements on their own, leading to more personalized creations in their continuation writing.

During the analysis, teachers can pose questions such as, "What is the turning point in the relationship between A and B?" or "What role does the word 'XXX' play throughout the text?" By giving students the power to analyze and express their thoughts, they will naturally construct the framework for the continuation plot after finding the answers. In addition, teachers should encourage students to fully unleash their

imagination and creativity to conceive a reasonable and engaging continuation plot. This will help students feel a sense of achievement and satisfaction, boosting their confidence in learning English and fostering the development of core competencies.

3.2.3. Group Discussion to Refine Continuation Content

In the post-reading continuation writing teaching process based on "read first, write later," students should always be in an active state of thinking, continuously reflecting on the issues, and engaging in reasonable innovation and creativity. By actively sharing their ideas and thoughts, they can complete personalized continuation writing. This not only improves their integrated reading and writing abilities but also lays a solid foundation for the learning of more advanced knowledge in the future.

Teachers should create a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere for continuation writing. One way to achieve this is by organizing group discussion activities during class. Students should be required to thoroughly analyze the text and engage in discussions, expressing their understanding of the story and their interpretation of the characters. Through group collaboration, students can propose various possibilities for the continuation, and through interaction, they can learn from each other, offer mutual assistance, and refine the logic and details of the continuation. This collaboration will lead to the creation of more engaging and deeper works, thus contributing to the development of core competencies in English.

3.3. Creating Lively Contexts to Stimulate Students' Interest in Continuation Writing

English classroom teaching should not only focus on enhancing students' language skills but also emphasize the development of their imagination and creativity. During teaching activities, teachers should create more opportunities for divergent thinking and free imagination, enabling students to generate an interest in learning English in a real, engaging learning environment. This will encourage them to actively think about continuation writing content and, in turn, enhance their creativity.

In teaching, teachers can use modern information technology tools to create contexts for students, utilizing multimedia resources such as images, audio, and videos to vividly recreate the scenes described in the text. This helps bridge the gap between students and the text, encouraging them to interact with the characters within the story. Students can subjectively analyze the plot, drawing on real-life experiences and their English learning background, thus making a detailed and personalized interpretation of the language. This activates their imagination and stimulates their interest in continuing the story.

Additionally, teachers can organize in-class activities such as drama performances, thematic debates, and other practical exercises, allowing students to experience the characters' personalities and emotional changes firsthand. Through these activities, students can analyze the reasons behind these changes and logically predict the story's subsequent developments. By performing the continuation in practice, students can gain inspiration for their writing. With a broadened perspective, they can use rich material to refine the continuation content and establish a complete story framework.

While creating diverse learning contexts, teachers should encourage innovation and creativity, supporting students in

analyzing problems from different angles. Teachers can guide students to make bold predictions about the story's direction, using motivating language to build students' confidence in their creative abilities and maintaining their enthusiasm for continuation writing. At the same time, teachers should regularly showcase students' excellent works, allowing them to appreciate and learn from each other. This provides students with creative motivation and promotes comprehensive development through effective communication within the class.

3.4. Encouraging Extensive Reading to Form a Personalized Writing System

Extensive reading provides students with rich creative inspiration and practical material, offering more choices as they complete continuation writing tasks. By reading different types of texts, students are exposed to various writing styles and expression methods, continually broadening their horizons in English learning. This helps them accumulate more practical vocabulary and sentence structures, thereby improving their language expression skills.

In classroom teaching, teachers should make full use of both in-class and extracurricular reading materials, encouraging students to engage in diversified continuation writing through extensive reading. This helps students develop good reading and writing habits, ultimately improving the quality of their learning.

Teachers should carefully select reading materials based on students' current learning level, age characteristics, and interests. They can present a variety of materials, such as essays, popular science articles, newspapers, scripts, and novels, transforming dull reading into an enjoyable exploration. By maintaining students' interest in reading, teachers help them develop a personalized writing system.

3.5. Focusing on After-Class Practice to Cultivate the "Read First, Write Later" Habit

After-class practice is an effective way for students to consolidate classroom knowledge and improve their continuation writing skills. Through independent reading, writing practice, and reflection after class, students can enhance their reading level, master more writing techniques, and, after accumulating rich practical experience, improve their core competencies and achieve comprehensive development.

Based on this, when designing after-class practice tasks, teachers should continuously vary the forms of practice according to students' developmental needs in English literacy. These may include writing reflections, micro-writing

exercises, and creating skits, all aimed at helping students consolidate what they've learned in class and strengthen their creativity and imagination.

In this process, teachers should encourage students to seek reading materials that interest them, ensuring that they accumulate experience in the "read first" phase. This will allow them to flexibly apply what they've learned in the "write later" phase, enhancing their English proficiency. When assigning after-class tasks, teachers need to emphasize the importance of the "read first, write later" approach, helping students understand that only by fully comprehending the content of reading materials can they create logically coherent and high-quality articles. This practice will ultimately help students develop good habits, continuously improve their reading and writing skills, and lay a solid foundation for future development.

4. Conclusion

In summary, reading and writing are key components of English teaching. Teachers need to explore suitable teaching strategies that integrate reading and writing, based on students' actual learning conditions and future development needs. By implementing continuation writing teaching plans, teachers can break down the barriers between reading and writing, fostering students' strong interest in language interpretation and expression, while building their creative confidence through the enhancement of logical thinking. In the actual teaching process, teachers should design appropriate continuation writing tasks based on the content of the reading texts, providing students with opportunities for diverse thinking and independent expression, thereby promoting the development of their comprehensive skills in practice.

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