Study on the Application of the Process Approach in Senior High School Continuation Writing Task in the Context of Large-unit Theme Teaching

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Abstract: This paper delves into the application of the process approach within large-unit theme teaching in the realm of continuation writing tasks, a newly introduced writing mode in high school English education. This mode represents a significant shift in traditional writing practices, with both students and educators actively exploring optimal teaching and practice methodologies. Continuation writing tasks, defined as the extension of a narrative by writing two additional paragraphs based on the content and opening words of a provided text to form a cohesive short article, are crucial for developing students' writing skills. This approach not only improves writing proficiency but also deepens students' engagement with the material, fostering critical thinking and creativity. The process approach not only improves students' writing skills but also enriches their overall educational experience, indicating its potential as a valuable tool in English language curricula. This study offers critical insights for educators and curriculum designers in enhancing the quality and effectiveness of English language teaching in the context of these evolving educational needs. The paper concludes with recommendations for integrating the process approach within large-unit theme writing into senior high school English classes, highlighting its potential to enrich students' academic and personal development.

Keywords: Large-unit; Continuation Writing; Process Approach.

1. Introduction

To address the requirement for English reform in the college entrance examination in the new era, Jilin Province has introduced continuation writing. This new format deviates from the previous approach to assessing written English expression in the exam, as it demands students to continue writing while maintaining the author’s style and language features through comprehension and analysis of the provided reading materials. Consequently, this presents a significant challenge to students' pragmatic skills, necessitating teachers to adopt effective and efficient instructional methods.

In the evolving landscape of English language education, the Continuation Writing Task represents a pivotal element, particularly in the context of senior high school education. This task, which involves students engaging with a narrative piece and then continuing the story coherently and creatively, offers a unique challenge and opportunity for both educators and learners. The purpose of this study, "A Study on the Application of the Process Approach in Senior High School Continuation Writing Task in the Context of Large-unit," is to explore the efficacy of the process approach in enhancing students' writing skills within this specific framework.

The process approach, a pedagogical method that emphasizes writing as a series of iterative and reflective steps, has been widely recognized for its potential to improve students' writing abilities. However, its application in the specific context of continuation writing tasks in large-unit educational settings has not been thoroughly investigated. This research aims to fill this gap by examining how this approach can be effectively integrated into senior high school English language curricula to aid students in developing not only their writing skills but also their critical thinking and creative storytelling abilities. By delving into this area of study, this paper seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on English language teaching methodologies, particularly in the realm of writing. We hypothesize that the process approach, with its focus on drafting, revising, and editing, can significantly enhance the quality of continuation writing tasks. This hypothesis is grounded in the belief that writing is not merely a means of communication but also a tool for intellectual development and creative expression.

In the following sections, this paper will explain the large-unit teaching, outline the methodology employed in the research, discuss the application in detail, and make a conclusion. The ultimate goal is to provide educators with insights and strategies to better support their students in mastering the art of writing, particularly in the unique and challenging context of continuation writing tasks within large-unit academic settings.

2. Large-unit Theme Teaching

Language skills are an important part of our life, mainly including listening, speaking, reading, writing, and other skills and the comprehensive use of these skills. Listening and reading are skills of comprehension while speaking and writing are skills of expression. As an important training platform for students' writing ability, writing class is a process in which students understand and respond to texts based on language skills. Writing is one of the important types of English Teaching in senior high school, but compared with reading or grammar, some teachers often ignore its role in the actual operation process.

The post-reading continuation is a new type of question in the college entrance examination English paper. It provides candidates with a language material of less than 350 words. Candidates are required to continue writing (about 150 words) according to the content of the material, the opening words of the given paragraph and the keywords marked, and continue writing it into a passage with logical cohesion, plot and
structure complete with the given material. In this type of question, reading is the basis of writing, writing is the extension of reading, and then it combines the means of reading and writing. It puts forward four ability requirements for students: the ability to grasp the key information and language characteristics of the passage, the ability to use accurate and rich language, the ability to control the discourse structure and the ability to think creatively.

Considering the characteristics of this question type, teachers cannot explain this question type clearly in one or two classes. In other words, this is not a question type at all, but an examination of students' Comprehensive English ability. Therefore, the curriculum design for post-reading writing should be long-term, should be gradual, and should realize the cross-learning of reading, thinking, expression, which coincides with the idea of the integration of reading and writing in large units.

After studying many continued writing examples, I divided them into three units.

Human and Society: Warmth and Transformation of Peril into Safety

This unit explores narratives that depict warmth, compassion, or the transformation of dangerous situations into safe ones, thereby highlighting the essence of true human emotions and the spirit of altruism. In the context of continuation writing tasks, this theme can be used to assess how students perceive and articulate complex social interactions and moral dilemmas. The process approach in this unit can encourage students to delve into character development, plot construction, and the portrayal of societal values. By engaging with stories that embody warmth or the conversion of risk into safety, students can develop a deeper understanding of societal dynamics and the human condition.

Human and Self: Personal Development, Change, or Growth

This unit focuses on narratives centered around the protagonist's self-development, change, or growth. In continuation writing tasks, students are encouraged to explore the internal journey of characters, reflecting on themes of self-discovery, personal challenges, and evolution. The process approach in this context allows students to engage in introspective writing, where they can mirror their own experiences and growth through the characters they develop. This unit not only enhances their narrative skills but also fosters a sense of empathy and self-awareness, crucial for their overall development.

Human and Nature: Harmonious Coexistence

The final unit delves into stories that emphasize the harmonious relationship between humans and nature, including animals. This theme prompts students to reflect on environmental consciousness, the intrinsic value of nature, and the symbiotic relationship between humans and their natural surroundings. Through continuation writing tasks, students can explore diverse perspectives on environmental issues, develop stories that emphasize the balance between human activities and natural ecosystems, and express their understanding of sustainability and conservation. The process approach aids in crafting narratives that are not only imaginative but also carry a strong message about the importance of preserving our natural world.

In each of these units, the paper can further analyze how the process approach in writing not only enhances students' language skills but also deepens their understanding of these complex and essential themes. By examining student writings, teacher observations, and outcomes, the research can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of this approach in fostering not only academic skills but also emotional and ethical development.

However, some teachers simply define the writing class as a classroom to complete a writing task, ignore the role of writing in large units, and set a single classroom goal, which can not make the writing class present a teaching activity form of progressive and progressive improvement, and can not serve the development of students' academic literacy. The single classroom goal makes the teaching activities in the classroom simple, lacks teaching activities closely related to the unit theme, has no real situation, and has no "real" task; The form of writing training is mechanical, which can not really start from the needs of students, can not stimulate students' emotional experience, and can not help students produce works from their hearts that reflect their true feelings. The author believes that the large unit writing activity class oriented to subject literacy is an effective way to solve the common problems in the above writing class, and it is also a writing training class that should be advocated under the new curriculum concept.

Language writing is a process of systematic learning. In the English writing classroom, the process of teachers using large unit theme teaching to guide students to conduct in-depth exploration of English problems can promote the development of students' thinking, improve students' interest in English learning, change students' bored attitude towards English writing, and cultivate students' English core literacy.

The teaching strategy of large unit theme writing follows the learning steps from easy to difficult. Through setting writing tasks around the theme with large unit topics as the core, and systematizing the writing teaching, it helps to improve the topic awareness and the ability to think about topics of students, so as to enhance the confidence of students in writing, and systematically improve their English writing ability and core literacy. The implementation of large unit theme writing teaching is conducive to the continuous improvement of students' knowledge structure, the optimization of thinking mode and learning methods, the enhancement of students' interest in English writing and the improvement of students' English writing level, thinking and ethical development.

3. Process Approach

The Process Approach to teaching writing emerged as a significant shift in the late 1960s and early 1970s, primarily in response to the limitations of the then-dominant product-oriented approach. The traditional method focused heavily on the final written product, often neglecting the stages leading to it. This approach was critiqued for its rigidity and its failure to consider writing as a complex cognitive process.

Pioneers like Donald Murray and Janet Emig played instrumental roles in advocating for this new approach. They argued that writing is not a linear activity but a recursive process involving multiple stages of conceptualization, drafting, revising, and editing. This perspective was grounded in the understanding that writing is a form of thinking and
learning, not just a means to communicate a finished idea. The Process Approach is deeply rooted in constructivist theories of learning, which posit that learners construct knowledge through their experiences and interactions with the world. This approach views writing as a personal and interpretative process, wherein the writer actively makes meaning rather than just transcribing pre-formed ideas.

In the landscape of modern education, the Process Approach holds a position of enduring significance, resonating profoundly with contemporary pedagogical needs and the evolving demands of the 21st century. As a cornerstone in writing education, its emphasis on the writing process rather than the final product aligns seamlessly with the educational imperatives of fostering critical thinking, creativity, and effective communication. This approach, by encouraging students to engage deeply with every stage of writing – from brainstorming and drafting to revising and editing – cultivates not only a more nuanced understanding of writing as a craft but also instills essential life skills such as reflective thinking, adaptability, and continuous learning. Its adaptability to different learning styles and environments, including traditional, remote, and blended classrooms, further underscores its relevance, making it a pivotal component of contemporary curricula. By preparing students to become more autonomous, thoughtful, and versatile writers, the Process Approach continues to shape effective, reflective, and adaptable communicators.

The Process Approach to teaching writing is a pedagogical method that emphasizes writing as a recursive and reflective practice. This approach, distinct from the traditional product-oriented methods, focuses on the various stages of writing rather than merely the final output. It's based on the premise that writing is a complex and non-linear activity, and learning to write involves engaging in multiple processes.

The process approach, which emphasizes the various stages of writing, aligns seamlessly with large-unit teaching themes. For instance, in a unit focused on "Human and Nature: Harmonious Coexistence," students can engage in pre-writing activities that involve brainstorming ideas about the relationship between humans and the natural world. This stage cultivates a deeper understanding and appreciation of the theme, which then informs the drafting phase. Here, students create narratives that explore complex ideas and reflecting on important themes through the medium of writing. This approach nurtures a holistic development of writing skills, thematic understanding, and critical thinking, making it an invaluable tool in contemporary English language education.

4. Application of the Process Approach in Continuation Writing

In the actual process of high school English writing teaching, the process teaching method mainly includes several stages: preparation before writing, independent drafting, evaluation and revision, finalization, summary, and feedback.

Here is an example:

"On a July weekend, Jane and her husband Tom drove for three hours to spend a night camping beside a lake in the forest. Unfortunately, they got into an argument over an unpleasant topic during the drive. By the time they reached the lakeside, Jane was furious. She told Tom, 'I'm going to find a better place to camp,' and walked off.

With no paths to follow, Jane ended up walking a great distance. After climbing to a higher spot, she turned around, hoping to catch a glimpse of the lake. To her astonishment, all she could see was the forest and a snow-capped mountain in the distance. It dawned on her that she was lost. 'Tom!' she cried out. 'Help!' But there was no response. She regretted leaving her phone..."
in Tom’s bag. The more Jane walked, the more disoriented she became. As night fell, exhaustion forced her to stop and spend the night there. Lying in the darkness, she yearned to be with Tom and her family, longing to embrace him and express her love.

At the break of dawn, hungry and thirsty, Jane got up. She heard the sound of water flowing nearby and quickly made her way to a small stream. To her delight, she also found some berry bushes. Drinking and eating the berries, she never felt anything had tasted so good. Feeling rejuvenated, Jane followed the stream, hoping it would lead her back to the lake.

While cautiously following the stream, she heard a helicopter. Could it be searching for her? Unfortunately, the dense trees made it impossible to be seen from above. Minutes later, another helicopter passed overhead. Jane removed her yellow shirt, thinking she should go to an open area to signal them if they returned.

Continuation writing paragraph 1 But no helicopter came, and it got dark again.

Continuation writing paragraph 2 Jane woke up when it was already light.

First, preparation stage before writing

In the preparation stage before writing, when conducting the introduction, the teacher should first set up relevant problem situations according to the content of the article and the actual life of students, so that students can think in time and have something to say and write when they see the problem. Pre-writing preparation mainly includes three parts: the introduction of teachers’ writing teaching, group discussion and the formulation of outlines. At this stage, teachers mainly pay attention to the expression of students' personal views, without excessive pursuit of language accuracy.

In this article, the husband quarreled with his wife, and her wife got lost in the forest. Teachers should provide students with a situation. According to the red font in the first sentence, if it gets dark and you get lost in the forest, what is your mood? What will you do in the forest after that? According to the red font in the second sentence, how can you get out of the predicament if it is at dawn?

Next, students use the "brainstorming method" to carry out intense discussion, which can be conducted in groups of four people. Finally, they make a speech in class, boldly express their personal opinions and open their minds. This can not only activate the classroom writing atmosphere, but also enable students to brainstorm and accumulate more rich materials for writing. After determining the writing content, the students independently list the writing outline.

Second, the independent drafting stage

This stage is the first draft stage. Students express their ideas in words. After the students list the outline, the teacher can patrol the class to see whether the outline logic listed by the students is clear and reasonable, and then the students begin to write formally. At this stage, students should not only clarify their writing ideas but also select conjunctions into sentences and paragraphs by considering vocabulary and sentence patterns. Therefore, teachers should provide students with an environment where they can think quietly, and set aside enough time for students to conceive the structure of the article and organize the language.

Teachers also need to keep an eye on students’ writing trends, give timely guidance to students with writing problems, encourage them to fully express their views and thoughts, encourage students to think independently, and enhance their enthusiasm and confidence in writing. In addition, for some key sentence patterns that have just been learned, the teacher can also give appropriate hints so that students can apply what they have learned as much as possible. For example, if we want show a sense of terror, writing “I am seized by terror” or “the flood of terror is surging through my heart” is better than “I am afraid”.

Third, the evaluation and modification stage

After students finish their first writing, they exchange essays with each other for peer evaluation, or several students can form a cooperative group to judge together. There are many kinds of questions in the first draft of students’ compositions and the reasons are complex. If the questions are all over and do not distinguish, students will not only be confused, but also aggravate their anxiety. Therefore, the teacher requires students to focus on the content, judging from the three aspects of content richness, integrity and harmony, and giving five grades in turn: upper, middle and upper, middle and lower, and lower. Finally, students can give simple comments on the content creation of their peers' compositions to help them recognize the problems in their own compositions. At the end of the mutual assessment, students should also refer to peer feedback for self-assessment and revision.

When students are evaluating each other, the teacher also asks students to read their peers' compositions as much as possible, especially those who usually have rich imagination and high level of English writing. Because of the same pre-writing guidance, different students will have different understandings, and the content expressed will certainly have innovation. Even if it is the same content, different students will use different expressions. The author requires students to read more of their peers' compositions, so that they can learn from both the innovation of content and the richness of language, and improve their own compositions in the second time.

Then, after peer review, the teacher should ask each student to take back their writing and focus on the feedback to check their writing problems. If in doubt, students can discuss with each other to determine the next development of the story. For example, a student writes in the continuation that his wife met her friend Jennifer in the forest and she helped his wife out of the forest. During peer review, students should point out that this composition did not meet the first rule of the writing standard, which did not add characters outside the original text.

Here are the rules of continuation writing.

Avoid Adding New Characters: Analysis of syllabus sample questions and real test questions from the past five years reveals that storylines in continuation writing are driven by characters from the original text. Therefore, forcibly introducing new characters can deviate from the intended plot development. This principle maintains focus and continuity, ensuring that students develop the narrative around the existing characters without altering the fundamental dynamics of the story.

Refrain from Introducing Subplots: The instruction for continuation writing tasks is to extend the given storyline, not to create new subplots. This principle emphasizes the importance of continuity, requiring students to seamlessly carry the narrative forward from the provided material, thus maintaining the integrity of the original storyline.

Minimize Excessive Dialogue: While dialogues can enrich content and enhance coherence, overuse in a continuation task
can lead to cumbersome writing and difficulties in adequately developing the plot within a limited word count. This principle encourages students to use dialogue judiciously, ensuring that it serves to advance the story rather than detract from it.

Avoid Negative Endings: The conclusion of the continuation should not convey negative energy. The content should be uplifting, aiming to impart knowledge or spread positivity. This principle underscores the importance of providing a sense of closure, ensuring that the story feels complete and resolved.

Incorporating these principles into the continuation writing task ensures that students develop their writing skills within a structured framework, promoting creativity while adhering to key literary and educational standards. This structured approach is vital for nurturing well-rounded and competent writers in a high school setting.

Some students set up a follow-up story: the wife draws a distress signal on the ground, and the husband and the rescue helicopter spot her, after which the husband and wife hug and promise not to fight in the future. This fits with the theme of the story.

According to the feedback of peer evaluation and the harvest of reading peer works, students timely reflect and feel, and complete the second writing. Before the second writing, teachers should guide students to study the linguistic characteristics of the original text, pay attention to imitating the writing style of the original author, and strive for linguistic coordination. Since there is little narrative writing training in high school, teachers must teach students how to write the action chain before writing.

For instance, The old man sat on the subway, staring at his phone and knitting his brows or sitting on the subway, the old man stared at his phone, knitting his brows.

After the first writing, the first assessment and the reading of the peer composition, the students have basically solved the content problems in the second writing, and the teacher asks the students to pay attention to the language use problems in the second assessment. When evaluating each other, students should pay attention to the accuracy, appropriateness and diversity of vocabulary and grammatical structure use, as well as contextual cohesion and coherence of the full text on the basis of fluency in story writing, and according to the actual situation, they should be divided into five grades for evaluation.

The second assessment focuses on the accuracy, appropriateness and diversity of language expression. For example, when describing the tears of the wife. The students always write “With eyes full of tears, the wife hugged his husband tightly.” We can change it into “Eyes glistening with tears, the wife hugged his husband for a long and tight hug.” It is fair to say that the second sentence is more aesthetic.

Fourth, final draft and summary feedback

After receiving the revision opinions from peers and teachers, students should actively revise their own articles. In the process of repeated revisions, students can give full play to their subjective initiative, constantly consolidate the learned knowledge, master the writing skills, and thus improve their writing ability. Before the third writing, the teacher shows the students' excellent works and their own compositions, and guides the students to pay attention to the reasonable story plot, clever emotional expression, accurate choice of words and sentences, and natural connection between words in the excellent writing. Then, according to multiple feedbacks, students summarize and reflect on their second work in time to complete the third writing. After students finish the final draft, the teacher should give appropriate comments on each article. It should be noted that the teacher should treat the article as a reader with an attitude of communication, find out the advantages of students as much as possible and give praise. At the same time, the teacher should make students realize their shortcomings, so that they can have a comprehensive understanding of their own writing level. It is worth noting that teachers should focus on some details that students usually ignore, but are included in the evaluation criteria, such as handwriting, punctuation, word number, etc. This stage mainly cultivates students' normative consciousness, helps students standardize their writing in the form of presentation, and gives people a good first impression. In addition, teachers can select some excellent compositions and appreciate them with all students to analyze their writing highlights. This not only creates a relaxed and active classroom atmosphere but also allows students to improve by learning from others' writing strengths.

5. Conclusion

Writing ability is a reflection of an individual’s overall competence. However, enhancing one’s writing skills takes time and continuous practice. Therefore, in the long run, solely focusing on the outcome does not contribute to the enhancement of English proficiency among high school students. Instead, teachers should integrate the content of textbooks with students’ actual situations, employ a process-oriented approach to English writing instruction in the context of large-unit teaching, empower students as active participants in their learning, motivate their enthusiasm and initiative, and ignite their passion for writing. Concurrently, teachers should assume a guiding role throughout the entire writing process, encouraging students to express their thoughts and opinions confidently, while providing practical guidance on writing techniques. Furthermore, teachers should emphasize diverse assessment methods to foster writing skills, thereby effectively enhancing students’ writing proficiency and the quality of instruction.

In conclusion, this study strongly advocates for the integration of the process approach within large-unit theme writing in senior high school English classes. The evidence presented highlights the approach's effectiveness in enhancing students' narrative skills, critical thinking, and thematic comprehension, particularly within the context of themes such as “Human and Nature: Harmonious Coexistence”, “Human and Self: Personal Development, Change, or Growth” and “Human and Society: Warmth and Transformation of Peril into Safety”. This integration not only aligns with the evolving demands of high school English education but also equips students with essential skills for academic and personal development. Therefore, it is imperative for educators and curriculum designers to embrace this approach, thereby enriching the educational experience and preparing students to navigate and articulate the complexities of their world with greater proficiency and insight.
References


