

How to Apply Scaffolding Instruction to Continuation Writing Task Teaching in Senior High Schools

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Abstract: With the implementation of new English curriculum standards for high schools and the reform of National Matriculation English Test (NMET), many places incorporate continuation writing task (CWT) in their English teaching. However, due to lack of theoretical guidance and relevant experience, many teachers still use traditional writing teaching method. As a result, students cannot perform well in CWT and they will lose confidence and interest in writing. It has been proved that scaffolding instruction has positive influence on students' learning. Therefore, this paper takes the CWT of 2021 college entrance examination English test (National Volume 1) as an example, to analyze how to apply scaffolding instruction to CWT teaching in order to give some guidance for teachers and improve students' CWT writing competence. Specifically, by building scaffolding, guiding students to enter learning situation, encouraging students to explore independently and learn collaboratively, and making effect evaluation, teachers can not only improve students' writing competence and efficiency, but also develop their learning interest.

Keywords: Scaffolding instruction; Continuation writing task; Writing.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Based on the synergistic effect theory, Professor Wang proposed continuation writing in 2012. It is believed that this method is a good way to improve the efficiency of foreign language learning by combining language input and output, language imitation and creative use (Wang, 2012). In 2015, *The National Educational Examinations Authority* first proposed CWT as a component of National Matriculation English Test (NMET).

However, at present, many teachers still use traditional methods to teach writing due to lack of systematic theoretical guidance and relevant teaching experience, which not only prevents the role of CWT in promoting learning from coming into play, but also makes students perform poorly in this type of task.

Scaffolding instruction, as one of the most effective teaching theories, has been widely used in various subject as well as in English listening, reading, writing and grammar teaching. However, it is rarely applied in CWT teaching.

1.2. Purpose and significance of the study

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to explore how to apply scaffolding instruction to CWT teaching. Theoretically speaking, this paper can expand the theoretical system of CWT teaching and provide reference for further research. In practice, this paper can provide alternative teaching strategies for teachers to improve their students' continuation writing competence.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical basis

The original concept of "Scaffolding" refers to the support provided for the builders in construction. In the 1970s, based on "Zone of Proximal Development", Bruner and Wood proposed "scaffolding instruction". It refers to the support

provided by adults or more experienced peers for learners to help these learners complete learning tasks that they cannot complete successfully by themselves (Wood et al., 1976).

Scaffolding instruction was introduced in China in the 1990s by He Kekang, and he summarized the five steps of scaffolding instruction: building scaffolding, entering learning situation, exploring independently, learning collaboratively, and making effect evaluation, which is accepted by most researchers (1997).

2.2. Relevant Research on the Application of Scaffolding Instruction to CWT at Abroad and Home

CWT, as a new component of NMET, there are few studies about it at abroad. However, many researchers at abroad have been studying how to apply scaffolding instruction to writing. In 1987, Applebee and Langer (1989) advocated that effective writing teaching cannot be separated from scaffolding. Freedman, Delp, and Crawford (2005) used a scaffolding tool called a "resource map" in teaching to guide students to mark key information that appears in reading. When students need to write something that are related to the reading material, the resource map can serve as a reference. All these researches show the importance of scaffolding in writing teaching.

Since Professor Wang (2012) proposed continuation writing in 2012, the research of the application of scaffolding instruction to CWT appeared even later. Xue (2016) pointed out that we can help students to do CWT successfully by building language scaffolding, content scaffolding, thinking scaffolding and emotional scaffolding. Zheng (2018) attempted to build scaffolding during reading, writing, and evaluation in order to ensure the support of teachers and the exploration of students.

It can be concluded that there is little research on the application of scaffolding instruction to CWT at abroad and home. Therefore, this paper attempts to take the CWT of 2021 college entrance examination English test (National Volume 1) (see Appendix) as an example to analyze how to apply scaffolding instruction to CWT teaching, in order to give

some inspiration for teachers and further research.

3. Measures Taken to Apply Scaffolding Instruction to CWT Teaching

As having been introduced above, Professor He summarized five stages of scaffolding instruction which are accepted by many people. Therefore, this paper will analyze how to apply scaffolding instruction to CWT based on the five stages.

3.1. Building scaffolding

Before building scaffolding, teachers need to analyze learners and learning materials carefully to know students' current levels and anticipate the potential problems that students may have in the process of learning, based on which, teachers can build proper scaffolding within students' proximal development zone. It should bear in mind that scaffolding is not static. With students making progress, their zone of proximal development will change. Correspondingly, teachers need to adjust the scaffolding to meet students' new levels.

Firstly, teachers can build background scaffolding by getting students familiarized with the cultural and social background knowledge relevant to the text. Secondly, if students are unfamiliar with some words that are necessary for their understanding, teachers can build vocabulary scaffolding by teaching these words. Thirdly, teachers can also build emotion scaffolding to stimulate students' learning interest and promote their emotional engagement.

For example, before reading the text, teachers can show some pictures and videos about Mother's Day to help students familiarize the background. Then, teachers can choose to teach words or not according to their students' language proficiency. Besides, teachers can ask the following questions to promote students' emotional engagement.

Q1: How do you usually show your love to your mom on Mother's Day?

Q2: Have you cooked for your mother? If yes, what is your mother's reaction?

These questions can resonate with students well and then promote their emotional engagement.

3.2. Entering learning situation

After building scaffolding, teachers should guide students into the learning situation. In the process, teachers can provide necessary guidance for students (Gu, 2020). For example, teachers can use question chains like 5W1H: What, Why, Where, When, Who and How (Zhou, 2020). In this story, teachers can ask the following question and ask students to skim the passage to find out the answers to these questions.

When did the story happen?

Where did the story happen?

Who are in the story?

What did Jenna and Jeff want to do on Mother's Day?

Why did Jenna and Jeff cook breakfast?

How did the mother feel after seeing the breakfast?

Under the guidance of a series of questions, students can have a general understanding of the story and emerge in the context of the story. Besides, students can know the author's emotional tendencies. All of these can help them predict the general direction of following plots (Jin and Lin, 2023).

3.3. Exploring independently

Based on the above support, students will have a good command of the text and their thoughts about continuation writing will be inspired a lot. At this stage, teachers need to withdraw the scaffolding gradually to allow students to learn independently. Then teachers can ask students to make a prediction about the following plots by themselves according to the original text and the given sentences of the following two uncompleted paragraphs. If necessary, teachers can provide some guidance and assistance for students.

For example, teachers can use the following questions to help students predict.

Q1: What is the main reason for their previous failure?

Q2: How does their father help them?

By ask questions step by step, teachers can inspire students to construct the following plots in the context of the discourse to ensure that the following plots can be coherent and logical, and highly coordinated with the original text (Lin, 2022).

3.4. Learning collaboratively

Cooperative learning can not only give students the opportunity to learn from each other, but also help students acquire social and emotional skills. Firstly, teachers can ask students to work in groups and share the information that they grasp from the original text. Secondly, students can discuss whether their prediction that they made at the exploring stage is logical and coherent. Then, students can brainstorm what expressions they may use in the following plots, and teachers can guide them to categorize and organize these expressions. At this stage, teachers can choose to join some weak groups to give some support if necessary. Lastly, students should make an outline of the following plots by themselves.

For example, after sharing and discussing, teachers can guide students to sort out their ideas. Then, students may brainstorm some words that can be used in the following plots like: help, assist, guide, moved, touched and so on, and then, teachers can guide students to categorize these expressions. Finally, teachers should remove their support and ask students to write the outline dependently.

3.5. Making effect evaluation

After students finish the first draft, teachers should make multiple evaluations about students' works from different aspects and angles to promote students' learning. The evaluation includes self-evaluation, peer evaluation and teacher evaluation. During the self-evaluation and peer evaluation, teachers need to provide guidance for students, like giving some instructions. Then, students can check the spelling, grammar, punctuation or other parts of their own writings according to the instructions, which can not only improve students' writing skills, but also develop their habit of checking. After that, students can work in groups to do peer evaluation according to teachers' instructions, which can not only help students learn from each other, but also reflect on their own writings. Lastly, teachers should evaluate students' writings by giving constructive and positive feedback. Meanwhile, teachers can summarize the typical mistakes of students' writings and teach them in class.

4. Conclusion

Scaffolding instruction emphasizes student-centeredness. With the help of scaffolding, students can explore dependently and cooperate with others. By applying this

method to CWT teaching, teachers can not only improve students' writing competence, but also cultivate their thinking qualities and develop their enthusiasm in learning.

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