

Teaching and Evaluation of Continuation Writing in Senior High School English

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Abstract: As a new writing genre introduced after the college entrance examination reform in China, continuation writing presents significant challenges in teaching and evaluation due to its complexity and low efficiency. Therefore, developing strategies to address the practical challenges in the teaching of continuation writing has become a pressing issue. This paper comprehensively analyzes and summarizes the theoretical foundation, pedagogical and assessment value, and classroom teaching practices of continuation writing. Additionally, it proposes suggestions for future teaching and evaluation to cultivate students' continuation writing skills.

Keywords: Continuation Writing; Teaching Practice; Assessment.

1. Introduction

Continuation writing is a method that combines reading comprehension with writing training. In 2021, it was first implemented in college entrance examination English tests in multiple provinces across China. Since becoming one of the writing assessment genres in the college entrance examination, it has garnered extensive attention and research from experts and frontline teachers.

From the perspective of reading-writing integration, reading and writing are two crucial components of senior high school English. Reading-writing integrated teaching is a trend in the new curriculum reform and development of senior high school (Zhang, 2022). Under this trend, the "General Senior High School English Curriculum Standards" (2020) list story continuation as one of the examination forms for assessing students' writing skills (Ministry of Education, 2020: 107). This writing assessment form effectively combines reading and writing, requiring examinees to read a narrative short story and imagine and continue the story based on the plot.

From the perspective of college entrance examination English testing, in order to make test questions reflect the law of language acquisition and positively guide English teaching, college entrance examination English tests should adopt comprehensive question types that combine language understanding and language production (Wang, 2022). Chen (2024), an expert from the Educational Examinations Authority, points out that when evaluating continuation writing in college entrance examinations, the following four aspects are mainly considered: (1) the degree of connection with the given short text and the lead-in sentence of the paragraph; (2) the richness of content and the coverage of given keywords; (3) the richness and accuracy of the application of grammatical structures and vocabulary; (4) the coherence of the context. Therefore, the content of the continued paragraph must be logically connected, with a complete plot, clear structure, and rich expression. However, as a new teaching attempt under the new curriculum standards, most senior high school English teachers lack relevant teaching experience in continuation writing and there is no relatively complete teaching model available for reference. Therefore, the current situation of senior high school English continuation writing teaching is not optimistic. Moreover,

current research on continuation writing in China focuses on higher education, while insufficient attention is given to research on continuation writing in the basic education stage, especially among middle school students. Since the college entrance examination is for selecting outstanding talents for higher education, the high school student group preparing for the college entrance examination should be given special attention.

Based on the above background, the author provides a comprehensive analysis and discussion of the concept, theoretical basis, pedagogical and assessment value, and teaching practice of continuation writing. The aim is to help senior high school English teachers deeply understand the theoretical basis and pedagogical value of continuation writing, and then implement precise strategies in the teaching practice and evaluation of continuation writing, thus resolving the various dilemmas they currently face in teaching continuation writing.

2. Definition of Continuation Writing

Continuation writing is an examination form that tightly integrates reading and writing, aiming to assess students' comprehensive language application ability (Liu & Chen, 2016). Its operation is simple, typically involving selecting a foreign language reading passage with a missing ending and asking learners to read and complete the content (Wang, 2012). During the continuation writing process, learners' language application ability is effectively improved through the close integration of language comprehension and production (Gui & Yang, 2023). In other words, continuation writing is a process of "language input - language internalization - language output," which combines understanding and production, imitation and creation, and learning and application to promote learners' language acquisition in a more efficient way (Shi, 2020).

Senior high school English continuation writing is a sub-concept of continuation writing. Unlike ordinary continuation writing exercises, the continuation writing tasks faced by high school students are divided into two parts, and the connecting words for both parts are given. Therefore, when conducting continuation writing teaching, teachers not only need to pay attention to whether students have output relevant content, but also need to evaluate its quality in conjunction with the

original text, focusing on richness, rationality, the completeness of the continuation, and the harmony with the context of the original text (Chen, 2024).

3. Theoretical Basis of Continuation Writing

(1) Continuation Theory

The continuation writing assessment task is based on the theory of "continuation." Wang (2022) points out that typical "continuation" occurs in the process of dialogue, where speakers always express their own thoughts immediately after understanding the words of others. Continuation theory suggests that language is not only learned through interaction but is primarily learned through "continuation," which serves as the origin of interaction. Without "continuation," there is no interaction (Wang, 2018). The process of dialogue demonstrates that language is learned through "continuation," meaning that language is learned by combining language comprehension and language production. Learning language includes learning to listen, speak, read, and write, and each skill develops through language interactive activities that combine understanding and production. Depending on the types of understanding and production, different variants of "continuation" can be generated, such as listening and speaking, reading and speaking, listening and reading, and reading and translating. Therefore, the direct theoretical source of continuation writing is the theory of "continuation."

(2) Interactive Synergy Theory

In addition to the theory of "continuation," the other theoretical foundation of continuation writing stems from the theory of interactive synergy. Dialogue is the most basic and natural way for humans to use language (Pickering & Garrod, 2004). The two parties in a dialogue coordinate and inspire each other, constantly constructing mutually similar situational models, thus understanding each other's discourse. This cognitive state of the speaker resulting from interaction is called synergy (Wang, 2010). Atkinson et al. (2007) emphasize that synergy is the key to second language acquisition. Synergy is the internal mechanism of interaction, providing a theoretical basis for continuation writing to promote language learning. At the same time, continuation writing also creates rich interactive situations between learners and the text. During the continuation writing process, students will constantly reread the original text, consciously or unconsciously imitating and applying the language expression style of the original text. Therefore, continuation writing will enhance learners' interaction with the text, promote learners' synergy with the plot of the text, and strengthen the synergy between writing language and original language (Wang, 2010).

4. Discussion on the Value of Continuation Writing

Continuation writing is an effective method for improving the efficiency of foreign language learning. The greatest value of continuation writing lies in its role in promoting learning. Continuation writing can effectively promote learning and is consistent with the law of language learning (Wang, 2012, 2015). Additionally, it can enhance students' language expression ability, especially in terms of word accuracy, sentence diversity, and language fluency (Jiang & Chen, 2015). Moreover, students' avoidance behavior and composition anxiety are reduced during the process of

continuation writing (Zhang & Qin, 2020). Furthermore, Ren & Lv (2021) used meta-analysis techniques to integrate empirical research results on the synergistic effects of continuation writing, verifying that continuation writing can have a synergistic effect on different language representation levels of foreign language learning, and is effective for foreign language learning at different educational levels, majors, and target languages.

In addition to the widely discussed pedagogical value of continuation writing, the value of continuation writing as a writing assessment tool is also deeply researched by scholars and teachers. Wang & Qi (2013) discovered that this genre can effectively measure students' reading and writing levels and possesses differentiation. Subsequently, Liu & Chen (2016) verified the reliability, validity, difficulty, discrimination, and operability of continuation writing test questions, more comprehensively demonstrating the feasibility of this test question. After continuation writing was used in college entrance examination English tests, the positive effects of this genre in the assessment were further confirmed (Chen, 2019). Subsequently, Cai (2023) used correlation, principal component analysis, and regression analysis to discover that the language sample stimulated by this genre can effectively realize the intention of the test constructor. Huang et al. (2023) further verified that the cognitive processing process triggered by continuation writing assessment is consistent with theoretical expectations, possessing high cognitive validity.

5. Research on Classroom Teaching Practice of Continuation Writing

Since the introduction of continuation writing into college entrance examination English writing tests, how to conduct classroom teaching has always been the most concerning issue for front-line senior high school English teachers. Zhu (2016) proposed the "read, analyze, think, write, proofread" writing pentagram based on the genre characteristics of narrative writing, enabling students to grasp the steps and essentials of continuation writing and improve their continuation writing ability. Huang (2016) proposed the "locate, classify, design, first draft, check" five-step writing method to improve students' reading and composition skills. Based on the analysis of college entrance examination English continuation writing test questions, Xu (2023) proposed the "3+3+N" training model for the problems of students' "incomprehension, discontinuity, and lack of luster" in continuation writing, namely "three storylines, three-step continuation chain, and N language points," to help students improve their thinking ability and imitation language level in continuation writing.

In addition to the above research on the teaching models of continuation writing, Jiang (2022) focused on vocabulary, using vocabulary cohesion techniques in continuation writing to create high-quality vocabulary with strong cohesion, relevance, and innovation, improving the coherence of students' continuation writing in form, content, and meaning. In addition to vocabulary, Xu (2023) applied the three-act play text model to the teaching and evaluation process of continuation writing, using this framework to analyze the given text and stimulate students to autonomously ask questions and evaluate continuation writing.

Therefore, the above research all focus on the classroom teaching practice of continuation writing, playing a good

guiding and exemplary role in alleviating the teaching dilemmas of senior high school English continuation writing, helping teachers improve the teaching quality of continuation writing, exploring the teaching rules of continuation writing, and developing students' higher-order thinking and reading and writing abilities.

6. Suggestions for Teaching Continuation Writing

Based on the above review of the concept, theoretical foundation, research on classroom teaching practice, and value discussion of continuation writing, specific suggestions for teaching and evaluating continuation writing are provided, including how to teach and how to evaluate.

To address the challenges in continuation writing teaching and serve both teachers and students in actual teaching, continuation writing teaching should delve into the text, be guided by thematic meaning, rely on the synergistic effect of "continuation to promote learning," and cultivate students' writing ability in multiple aspects.

(1) Integration of Reading and Writing, Exploration of Thematic Meaning

Continuation writing is an important means of measuring reading and writing ability. If reading and writing are separated or if reading is emphasized over writing, students will lack writing ability. Therefore, it is necessary to organically integrate reading and writing training and integrate language input and language output. Both reading and writing are crucial. Reading involves utilizing text features to extract effective information, while writing involves combining thematic meaning to conceive reasonable plots. Thematic meaning serves as the basis and direction for continuation writing – the continuation text and the original text constitute a complete text, so the plot of the continuation text must convey the thematic meaning of the original text (Yu, 2023). To achieve a breakthrough in continuation writing teaching, it is essential to emphasize close reading of the text to identify the connection points between reading and writing, focusing on deep processing and constructing structural supports and key points for continuation writing. Teachers can use thinking visualization tools to provide support for continuation writing teaching. With the help of the "five Ws and one H framework chart," by identifying key elements, namely clarifying who, where, when, what, why, and how, the text content is clarified, guiding students to form a clear understanding of the logical structure, genre characteristics, and language form of the text, thereby deeply interpreting the text and exploring the thematic meaning. Based on a deep understanding of the theme, students are encouraged to design appropriate and reasonable continuation content that fits the story plot and sublimates the thematic meaning.

(2) Promoting Learning through Continuation, Leveraging Synergistic Effects

The greatest value of continuation writing lies in its role in promoting learning. In actual teaching, to stimulate the pedagogical effects of continuation writing, teachers should appropriately intervene and control the three major factors affecting the interactive synergistic effects of continuation writing: reading materials, interaction intensity, and learners.

First, when designing teaching, teachers should select excellent texts that are appropriate in difficulty, interesting, and suitable for imitation as reading materials for writing training, and gradually increase the difficulty and depth of the

materials by stages. For example, at the beginning of the semester, attention can be paid to the commonly used vocabulary and connective phrases in the materials, focusing on students' use of basic vocabulary and phrases; as learning progresses, various genres of model essays can be gradually increased, focusing on expanding students' thinking and enabling them to have something to say and say it well. At the same time, reading texts in daily teaching can also be used for continuation writing teaching. Teachers can adapt reading articles of varying lengths and content to nonstandard for reading-writing integrated training. However, when adapting reading articles, teachers should pay attention to the following principles: 1) Keyword setting should serve and predict the development of key plots; 2) Story development should fully stimulate students' thinking and imagination.

Secondly, increase interaction intensity in actual teaching. To improve synergistic effects, interaction between students can be increased during the continuation writing process, such as allowing students to work in pairs to co-write an article. Teaching can involve discussion of the reading text before continuation writing or vice versa. At the same time, the cultivation of text interaction ability should be emphasized. There should be a conscious effort to expand students' interaction with the reading text and the author, as well as the interaction between reading comprehension and writing output, thereby improving the harmony between the continuation work and the original text and enhancing the quality of continuation writing.

Finally, in the teaching process, teachers can use methods such as text reinforcement and task instructions (Xin, 2017) to increase learners' awareness of the target language forms and features they have learned, thereby enhancing the synergistic effect. Of course, as the difficulty and depth of materials increase, teachers should provide timely and targeted guidance to help learners bridge the gap between language understanding and production.

(3) Step-by-step Improvement, Enhancing Writing Ability

The improvement of writing ability requires long-term accumulation. To help students lay a solid foundation in language, writing ability should be developed step by step. First, emphasis should be placed on the training of students' language expression ability. In teaching practice, imitation writing training is conducted to allow students to imitate authentic English expressions; at the same time, summary writing is conducted to guide students to flexibly use the sentences they have mastered, avoiding mechanical copying. On the basis of accumulating a large number of excellent expressions, students are encouraged to write in their own style, creatively displaying writing highlights. Secondly, emphasis should be placed on the improvement of logical reasoning ability. Taking narrative writing as an example, the perspective of event entry should be analyzed, such as the perspective of time or space; the relevance between events, such as cause and effect, problem and solution, abstraction and concreteness; and the conflicts between event characters, such as student disputes, teacher-student assistance, family support, etc. (Wu, 2019).

(4) Teacher Involvement, Cultivating Writing Strategies

Teachers' intervention and guidance in writing strategies can effectively improve students' understanding of reading materials. Writing strategy intervention and guidance can be carried out in stages. Before writing, teachers can guide students to establish vocabulary chains and make outlines based on the theme; during writing, students are required to

avoid repetitive vocabulary, encouraged to use English thinking and habits; after writing is completed, tense, voice, word spelling, and other issues should be checked.

Writing strategy guidance is divided into classroom guidance and after-class guidance. In class, by analyzing the vocabulary in continuation articles, teachers explain the knowledge of word affixes and roots to students, allowing them to freely change the parts of speech in their expressions. At the same time, teachers should point out the differences in grammar and expression habits between the two languages. By using English to explain English words, students' English thinking patterns are cultivated. After class, teachers can further guide through DingTalk software, WeChat groups, and other methods, checking students' "continuation" situation and understanding students' acceptance of writing strategies and usage. Teachers can establish a public mailbox and upload materials, through which students can understand the structure, language organization, sentence usage, and other knowledge of corresponding genre articles from a large number of model essays provided by teachers. In summary, good senior high school English continuation writing teaching activities can allow students to better understand and express themselves in the process of reading and writing, naturally developing their language ability. To maximize the teaching advantages of continuation writing, it is necessary to study previous typical cases and consider one's own teaching situations, choosing the best methods.

7. Suggestions for Evaluating Continuation Writing

To improve the quality of students' continuation writing, a timely, effective, and comprehensive evaluation system should be constructed. We need to deeply analyze the five aspects of assessment criteria, assessment subjects, assessment content, assessment forms, and assessment results to truly realize the function of promoting writing through assessment.

(1) Clarification of Assessment Criteria

Continuation writing does not have fixed answers, and the evaluation of students' writing is a relatively subjective behavior. Therefore, guiding students to learn assessment criteria is particularly important for improving their continuation writing level and confidence. For the actual situation of continuation writing teaching, teachers can follow the college entrance examination continuation writing assessment criteria, refine and compare each evaluation item, and design a continuation writing evaluation form. In the evaluation, based on the four main dimensions of text structure, content, grammar vocabulary, and writing specifications, 10 items are refined and extended, including harmony with the given text, connection with the lead-in sentence, and connection components between sentences.

Table 1. Continuation writing evaluation table

Evaluation Dimension	Ability Requirement	Quantitative Level
Structure Dimension		
Integration with Given Short Text	High integration, able to use consistent style with the original text, suitable for purpose and context	1 2 3 4 5
Lead-in Sentence Connection	Can logically connect with the previous text, develop the following plot	1 2 3 4 5
Connecting Components Between Sentences	Effective and structured connections between sentences, can use appropriate connecting words to express relationships like listing, transitions, causes, effects, progressions, etc.	1 2 3 4 5
Content Dimension		
Richness	Rich content, includes philosophical elevation, unexpected twists, scene recreation, etc.	1 2 3 4 5
Rationality	Conforms to the general logic of the story, no contradictions	1 2 3 4 5
Completeness	Complete and clear content, reasonable, can include individual detail information	1 2 3 4 5
Language Vocabulary Dimension		
Accuracy	Accurate and fluent language use, few mistakes, does not affect meaning expression	1 2 3 4 5
Appropriateness	Uses language that fits the style of the original text, appropriate vocabulary, language is natural	1 2 3 4 5
Variety	Can use a variety of grammatical structures, sentence types, and vocabulary	1 2 3 4 5
Writing Specification Dimension		
Word Count	No less than 150 words; punctuation standardization; writing standardization; neat, aesthetic appearance	1 2 3 4 5

The evaluation table uses a quantitative grading scale of 1-5, which can be described as "cannot be completed," "partially completed," "basically completed," "better completed," and "completed very well." By combining 10 items and 5 levels, the evaluation standards for excellent compositions in the fifth level can be further refined as: high

harmony with the original text, reasonable connection with the lead-in sentence, effective and compact sentence connection, rich and reasonable content, accurate and appropriate grammar and vocabulary, and reaching the word count with beautiful handwriting. The standards for compositions in the fourth level and below are gradually

reduced. Before writing, teachers can provide the evaluation criteria to students to clarify the writing direction and basis, understand the evaluation requirements; after writing, students can conduct self-evaluation by referring to the scoring details to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their articles and make more targeted modifications and polishing.

(2) Diversification of Assessment Subjects

The "General Senior High School English Curriculum Standards" emphasize students' dominant position in evaluation, reflecting the people-oriented educational concept (Ministry of Education, 2020: 3). In the implementation of continuation writing evaluation, students should be encouraged to conduct self-evaluation and constantly reflect on their understanding of the continuation materials and writing ideas, summarizing the strengths and weaknesses of their continuation text, thereby improving the quality of continuation writing. At the same time, peer evaluation mechanisms should be encouraged, as peer feedback can have an impact on the text dimension of continuation writing, effectively improving language expression and text logic, as well as text argumentation, layout, and theme. When emphasizing students as evaluation subjects, the leading role of teachers in evaluation cannot be ignored. Teachers' evaluation of students' writing quality still possesses authority and can fully understand and master the assessment essentials of each level, providing more intuitive and concise suggestions for modification to students.

(3) Comprehensiveness of Assessment Content

Macroscopically, according to the "four levels" basic framework of the college entrance examination evaluation system, teachers should take the three-dimensional four-dimensional examination content as the evaluation orientation, including core literacy, disciplinary literacy, key abilities, and essential knowledge (Chen et al., 2019). In the evaluation, attention should be paid to students' Chinese sentiment and international perspective, their ability to apply integrated disciplinary knowledge, their ability to explore problems and solve them in problem situations, and the essential knowledge of life practice. Microscopically, attention should not only be paid to the content of the continuation work but also to the structure, connection, and logic of the continuation writing.

Specifically, teachers should ensure the word count of students' compositions, encouraging students to write more and promoting learning through writing. Teachers can assess the score in terms of volume by stipulating the word count, adding points for reaching the specified word count and deducting points for not reaching it. Secondly, emphasis should be placed on the guidance of writing content evaluation, which should be targeted. Teachers should encourage students to conceive articles, and each theme should have corresponding supporting materials, with each supporting material serving as a bonus point. The total score of all bonus points is the overall score for the content aspect. In terms of article structure, the teacher should examine the coherence and connection of the language in the composition, focusing on whether students can effectively use connective sentence patterns and sentence structures and whether they can skillfully use fixed collocations. In terms of article language, examine whether there is the emergence of Chinglish, sentence fragmentation; whether there are spelling errors, part of speech errors, article errors, voice and tense errors, etc. If the above errors occur, points can be deducted

appropriately, and beautiful vocabulary, novel sentence structures, and smooth language expression should be given bonus points. In short, it is necessary to construct an effective assessment and feedback rubric for continuation writing: when evaluating the quality of continuation writing, attention should be paid to students' task time, answer word count, paragraph layout, and writing; attention should be paid to whether the plot of the student's continuation work is reasonable and consistent in tone, whether the logic is connected and the form is coherent, whether the content is complete and detailed, and whether the language style is aligned with the original text.

(4) Diversification of Assessment Forms

Based on the assessment subjects, multiple-stakeholder interactive evaluation can be adopted to allow students to re-examine their works from different perspectives according to peers' evaluation opinions and teachers' classroom comments (Ge, 2021). Based on the assessment process, dynamic interactive evaluation can be adopted, providing personalized guidance to students according to their writing problems before writing; encouraging students to engage in peer evaluation and interaction during the feedback stage; during the revision, guiding students from article structure to content, and further improving based on model essays (Shi, 2020). Based on the assessment tools, online feedback platforms such as the iWrite English Writing Teaching and Review System can be used for online evaluation, integrating educational technology into continuation writing evaluation (Zhang, 2024). Based on the backwash effect of assessment, various incentive methods can be added to continuation writing teaching, such as allowing students to complete reflection diaries after writing, recording students' own growth portfolios, and regularly displaying works within the class, enhancing students' self-confidence and sense of achievement.

(5) Accuracy of Assessment Results

Teachers' assessment results of students' continuation writing quality are mainly reflected in the descriptive language used for students' continuation works. Vague and general descriptive language is not conducive to continuation writing teaching. An important prerequisite for accurate assessment and effective guidance is the clear definition of target abilities and requirements (Chen, 2022). When using descriptive language to evaluate students, teachers need to avoid using experiential or overly general language, such as "beautiful and smooth" and "readable." Teachers should clearly define the specific meaning of the descriptive language used and can try to guide students to interpret the continuation writing scoring criteria together and discuss a series of descriptive language that can be understood and recognized by both teachers and students and is applicable to teaching, ensuring effective communication in teacher-student evaluation feedback.

8. Conclusion

As a new topic in the reform of college entrance examination English in China, continuation writing constantly stimulates the vitality of senior high school English teaching reform. Scholars and teachers are exploring teaching resources and strategies to improve the effectiveness of continuation writing, striving to improve the quality of teaching and cultivate students' language abilities. However, there are still some unreasonable aspects in the current continuation writing teaching in senior high school English,

such as the separation of reading and writing, templated output, and emphasis on structure while neglecting content. To address these challenges, the future direction of continuation writing teaching should focus on the deep integration of reading and writing, leveraging the pedagogical value and synergistic effects of continuation writing to enhance its effectiveness. Simultaneously, a timely, effective, and comprehensive evaluation system should be constructed to enable students to read, understand, write, and continue well, thereby tapping into their writing potential and improving their comprehensive language application ability.

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