



Teaching Strategies for the New Continuation Writing Task in China's College Entrance Examination Guided by Scaffolding Theory: A Case Study of the 2023 Chongqing, China English College Entrance Examination's Continuation Writing

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Abstract: In recent years, how to carry out continuation writing teaching has become an important issue actively explored by Chinese high school English teachers. Guided by the scaffolding instruction theory, this paper takes the authentic continuation writing task from the 2023 Chongqing, China College Entrance Examination as an example and conducts teaching according to five major steps: setting up scaffolds, entering the situation, independent exploration, collaborative learning, and effectiveness evaluation. It explores teaching strategies for the new continuation writing question type that has emerged in the new English college entrance examination, proposing that teachers should create situations, build scaffolds around textbook texts, improve evaluation methods, and implement assessment for learning, thereby efficiently advancing continuation writing teaching.

Keywords: scaffolding theory, continuation writing, teaching strategies

Introduction

With the proliferation of various essay templates, the phenomenon of formulaic writing has become increasingly prevalent. To address this issue, the innovative writing mode of continuation writing emerged. Continuation writing significantly reduces the likelihood of learners relying on templates, closely integrating language comprehension and production, language learning, and application, thereby fostering students' critical thinking abilities. However, issues exist in high school English continuation writing teaching, such as students' lack of thinking abilities, low alignment between textbook texts and continuation teaching, and monotonous evaluation forms and subjects. Consequently, the author applies scaffolding theory to continuation writing teaching, aiming to stimulate students' writing interest and enhance their reading and writing abilities.

1. Case study of continuation writing teaching based on scaffolding theory

This paper exemplifies the teaching of continuation writing using the 2023 Chongqing, China English College Entrance Examination's continuation writing task. Through five progressively advanced teaching steps: setting up scaffolds,

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entering the situation, independent exploration, collaborative learning, and effectiveness evaluation, students' continuation writing abilities are cultivated^[1].

1.1 Building scaffolds around the continuation theme

The thematic context of this case study revolves around man and self. The article narrates the story of the author, encouraged by a teacher to participate in a writing competition, overcoming difficulties and persevering until ultimately falling in love with writing. Teachers construct scaffolds for writing learning centered on this theme, clarifying teaching objectives and backgrounds, and stimulating students' writing interests.

1.1.1 Clarifying clues based on the theme

The article outlines the cause and course of the story, which revolves around the author's participation in a writing competition. Teachers guide students to comprehend the main idea of the article through the 5W1H framework (What, Why, Where, When, Who, How). This approach enables students to quickly engage in reading and initiate self-exploration guided by problem-solving. Teachers can pose the following questions to students:

Q1: Why did "I" reject the teacher at the very beginning?

Q2: How did "I" change my mind and be willing to give it a try?

Q3: What have "I" done to prepare for this writing contest?

Teachers guide students to skim through the narrative story, answering the aforementioned questions. This gives students a general understanding of the plot's emotional development, encouraging them to delve deeper into the exploration step by step.

1.1.2 Constructing a framework based on the text

Deconstruction refers to the process where teachers lead students in analyzing the cultural context, schema structure, and linguistic features of the target text. Teachers should deconstruct the text's content, structure, style, and linguistic characteristics from multiple angles, constructing a framework to deepen students' understanding and mastery of the text, thereby facilitating their language output.

The text in this case study comprises five paragraphs. The first paragraph describes the author's reluctance and desire to give up on the writing competition. The second briefly mentions the teacher's encouragement that emboldens the author to try. The third paragraph narrates the author's choice of topic, the fourth details the writing process, and the fifth describes how the author continuously revises and improves the article upon the teacher's advice, eventually falling in love with writing. The story unfolds chronologically. Teachers guide students to clarify the main content of each paragraph along the thematic thread of the writing competition and how different paragraphs are connected chronologically, thereby constructing the structural framework of the text^[2].

1.2 Entering the textual context and discussing continuation content

Situational teaching refers to the purposeful introduction or creation of vivid scenarios by teachers during the teaching process. After setting up scaffolds, teachers guide students into the classroom context, pose questions, and provide necessary guidance, allowing students to fully contemplate and initially form their own perceptions of the situation, deepening their emotional and cognitive engagement.^[4]

1.2.1 Creating scenarios and expanding topics

Zhou Xiang believes that continuation writing emphasizes the interaction between learners and the original text during comprehension and continuation.^[5] Therefore, teachers can utilize multimedia to play relevant videos, audios, and images, stimulating students' interest and activating their background knowledge. Combining students' life experiences with the textual background, teachers can guide them in learning good words and phrases. Teachers can pose questions and encourage students to engage in Free Talk within groups, sharing their related experiences and reflections on the article's context. Sample questions include:

Q1:What do you do when you write an essay?

Q2:If you were the boy, what would you do next?

The creation of scenarios is a crucial prerequisite for continuation writing. When students' emotional experiences are stimulated, they can understand the emotional tendency and presuppositions of the original author, thereby grasping the subsequent plot development.

1.2.2 Divergent thinking and brainstorming

Based on discussions and question scaffolds, teachers guide students to enter the scenario and contemplate the content of the continuation, relying on brainstorming to divergent their thinking. Students need to consider: How could the story develop interestingly? What actions would "I" take next? Teachers lead students in using mind maps to rationalize the story's logical development^[3]. Students can discuss and collaborate with each other to enrich their writing ideas. The following is the given opening sentence for the continuation writing prompt:

Paragraph 1: A few weeks later, when I almost forgot the contest, there came the news.

Paragraph 2: I went to my teacher's office after the award presentation.

Firstly, when conceiving the content of the first paragraph, students can put themselves in the shoes of "I" and imagine the actions, feelings, and expressions of "I" upon receiving the results. For instance, "I can't breathe." "I feel scared and afraid that I may disappoint my teacher." "I find that I win the prize!" Students can use their imagination to come up with expressions that they might use in the continuation. Teachers can establish a descriptive word corpus for students, including adjectives, verbs, and adverbs, to enable them to describe situations from multiple angles using rich language.

Secondly, when conceiving the content of the second paragraph, students need to think about how to connect two different situations coherently, namely, the transition from "receiving the results" to "talking with the teacher." Students can use sentences like "My teacher was waiting for me." "I owe my success to..." "I burst into tears" to construct the plot logically, and by selecting appropriate connecting words, make the article clear and readable. Lastly, at the end, students can summarize and elevate the story by using phrases like "I learned a lesson..." to extract the philosophical insights from the story.

1.3 Deconstructing writing essentials and exploring continuation independently

Scaffolded instruction requires teachers to prepare materials in advance based on students' current levels, curricular objectives, and their zones of proximal development. Teachers should provide appropriate explanations of the materials and, after setting up the "scaffolding," allow students to think and explore independently.

1.3.1 Analyzing key points of language expression

During this process, teachers should focus on helping students create linguistic highlights. Through reading instruction, teachers can lead students to appreciate vocabulary and syntax, gradually making them aware of the importance of word choice and teaching them how to use words effectively to add more sparkle to their writing. This is highly beneficial for enhancing their continuation writing abilities.

Students interact with the reading materials to ensure that the continuation is coherent with the original text in both content and language. This integration of comprehension and production creates a synergistic effect. Key words help students clarify the text's main points and discourse structure. Students should correctly understand the roles and usages of key words in the previous context and utilize them appropriately in their continuations to steer the story's development.

1.3.2 Transferring themes and internalizing language

This continuation writing task revolves around a story of an author who participates in an essay competition under the encouragement of their teacher. Through the knowledge and thinking scaffolds provided by teachers, students organize abstract ideas and scattered knowledge points into a coherent system, weaving them into a complete story. Teachers should ensure that the input materials provided align with the content of the continuation writing task to strengthen the synergistic effect and enhance learning outcomes. Learners engage with the materials, and their compositions should be cohesive with

the original text in both content and language, tightly integrating input and output to achieve the goal of reading-to-write instruction in continuation writing tasks. The word count for the continuation essay should be controlled at around 150 words. Here are excerpts from some students' compositions:

Paragraph 1: I was informed that I won the first prize in the writing contest and that there would be an award presentation in two days. I was so happy to hear the news that I immediately shared it with my teacher. "I knew you'd win! I am proud of you. You made it" he said excitedly. Then came the big day. When I was invited to the stage to receive the award, I expressed my thanks to my teacher. I said, "It's you who make me fall in love with writing, my social studies teacher. Without your recognition and guidance, I couldn't have written this article. Again thank you very much."

Paragraph 2: My teacher was waiting for me. Holding my hands, he said "Congratulations! You are a good writer, so keep writing." "You know I didn't like writing before, but now I am crazy about it! I will try my best to create good works." I said seriously. Since then, I have written many good works and now I am a famous writer. I owe my success to my social teacher who is a beacon in my life on the road to writing.

It is evident that students have effectively continued the story through reasonable imagination, employing a wealth of vocabulary, phrases, and sentence structures, making the article readable. The development of the story is both unexpected yet logical, imbued with positive energy, and the conclusion is also quite meaningful.

1.4 Collaborative group discussion and multifaceted evaluation

After writing, teachers and students review the learning process and outcomes, clarify evaluation criteria, and conduct evaluations from various aspects and angles, such as teacher-student evaluation and peer evaluation.

1.4.1 Evaluation of learning abilities

In the evaluation of learning abilities, students engage in group discussions to complete the evaluation. The evaluation content primarily encompasses text analysis ability, material comprehension ability, collaborative learning ability, and autonomous learning ability. Students need to reflect on their shortcomings, adjust their cognitive strategies based on the evaluation results, and timely adjust their plans for autonomous and collaborative learning. Evaluating learning abilities helps enrich students' cognitive and emotional experiences, allowing them to absorb useful experiences and continuously improve their learning abilities.

1.4.2 Evaluation of content effectiveness

The evaluation of content effectiveness focuses on the richness of students' continuation content, the accuracy of language, and the logical coherence of the text. Teachers analyze and evaluate students' continuation essays to diagnose the effectiveness of the reading-to-write instruction. The evaluation includes the degree of cohesion between students' essays and the given short text as well as the paragraph starters, the appropriateness of detail depiction, and the accuracy and richness of grammatical structures and vocabulary usage.^[6] Teachers' evaluations should primarily be praise and encouragement, providing positive feedback to students. For individual issues, teachers should appropriately address them through one-on-one guidance, promoting corrections, helping students clarify the logic of their articles, grasp the main ideas, and providing feedback and suggestions at the word, phrase, and paragraph levels to help students refine their writing.

2. Strategies for continuation writing teaching

As the reform of the college entrance examination deepens, continuation writing has emerged as a new format for English composition in this exam. Teachers should rely on daily teaching, apply appropriate strategies, and guide students in continuation writing, thereby enhancing their cognition and accumulating English learning experience, laying a solid foundation for writing high-quality English compositions in the college entrance examination.

2.1 Creating scenarios to stimulate interest

Interest is the cornerstone for students to engage in continuation writing. Immersion in the context is the key to

successful continuation. In continuation writing classes, teachers can use the materials as a starting point, employ suitable methods to create scenarios, stimulate students' interest, and encourage them to enter the context, ultimately achieving the goal of continuation writing.

2.2 Promoting writing through reading

continuation writing is an activity based on reading materials. The textual features of the reading materials serve as the basis for students' continuation. These textual features include character roles, the main thread of the article, and its structure. In this regard, teachers should closely follow the materials, guide students to conduct thorough reading, grasp the textual features, and proceed with continuation accordingly.

2.2.1 Analyzing character roles

In English for the college entrance examination, narratives are often used as materials for continuation writing. Narratives have three essential elements, one of which is character roles. Teachers should guide students to analyze character roles, identify who they are, what their personality traits are, how they relate to each other, and how they establish connections. This will help students determine the focus of their continuation. By analyzing character roles, students can understand the content of the material and grasp the key points to continue writing seamlessly from the previous text.

2.2.2 Analyzing the article structure

There are typically two main plotlines: the narrative line and the emotional line. The narrative line focuses on explaining the background, development, climax, and conclusion of the story. The emotional line, on the other hand, emphasizes the display of characters' emotions and feelings through the sequence of events. By understanding these two plotlines, students can ensure that the content and emotions of their continuations harmoniously integrate with the original text. There are various methods to organize plotlines, such as creating mind maps or establishing tables. Teachers should select appropriate methods based on the specific materials to guide students in studying the plotlines, thereby understanding the logical framework of the materials and obtaining a basis for continuation.

2.3 Enhancing learning through evaluation

Teachers should collaborate with students to refine the scoring criteria for continuation writing based on actual teaching situations, making it easier for students to have a more intuitive understanding of the criteria. Then, teachers can first ask students to conduct self-evaluations, self-correct, and revise their work based on the criteria. Next, students can evaluate each other's work in groups, taking turns to appreciate, read, and discuss, providing feedback. Finally, teachers can select typical samples for teacher-student co-evaluation, guiding discussions with questions and providing detailed feedback and suggestions through collective discussions to gradually improve and refine students' compositions. Under this evaluation model, students can exercise their subjectivity and creativity, actively participate in the evaluation process, improve their learning strategies, experience progress and success, and thereby enhance their learning enthusiasm and effectiveness.

4. Conclusion

Under the guidance of scaffolding theory, the teaching of continuation writing requires teachers to lead students in deeply comprehending the text, create scaffolds for students, activate their existing background schemata, guide them into the context, and independently explore and complete the continuation task under the synergetic effect. Finally, students work collaboratively with peers to revise and refine their continuations, evaluating the learning process and writing outcomes. By adopting the scaffolding approach in teaching continuation writing, teachers can help improve students' writing efficiency and cultivate their core English competencies.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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