

A Study on the Application of Labov's Narrative Analysis Model in Continuation Writing Teaching

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Abstract: Faced with the predicament of continuation writing in high school English teaching, this paper aims to explore an effective way to enhance the teaching and learning outcomes of continuation writing. Based on Labov's narrative analysis model, this paper conducts an analysis of the 2023 National College Entrance Examination Paper I continuation writing task. Based on comprehending the text, it indicates the writing direction and clarifies the writing elements. In classroom teaching, teachers can apply this model to provide students with writing scaffoldings, and improve the quality of writing, thereby promoting students' language competence.

Keywords: continuation writing, Labov's Narrative Analysis Model, discourse analysis

1. Introduction

Continuation writing is a relatively new type of writing task in the National College Entrance Examination. The requirement of it is to read a text of about 350 words and complete a short composition of about 150 words based on the reading text and the first given sentences. Continuation writing marks a transformation from merely testing students' separate language skills to comprehensive language competence. Despite the wide adoption of this new writing task, predicaments in classroom teaching exist: mechanical teaching methods, inexperience in teaching, and inadequate guidance for students, and uncomprehensive understanding of the reading text.

To address these problems, this paper uses Labov's narrative analysis model to guide students to clarify the text structure, understand the text, and grasp the writing intention from the discourse. Based on understanding the text, it provides guidance for students continuation writing, thereby improving the quality of continuation writing.

2. Overview of Narrative Analysis Model

Labov's narrative analysis model was proposed by Labov and Waletzky^[1]. Labov (1972) believes that a complete narrative consists of six parts: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda. Abstract, as the starting point of the narrative, is a concise summary of the core content of the story. Orientation part provides detailed background information such as the time, place, and characters of the story. Complicating action, as the main part of the narrative, details the development and changes of the story. It includes a series of events, conflicts, and turns in the story. Evaluation part reflects the narrator's views and evaluations of the characters and events in the story. Resolution marks the climax and ending of the story. It resolves the conflicts and suspense in the story, and reveals the final direction and outcome of the story. Finally, coda, as the tail of the narrative, brings readers back to reality from the world of the story.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Review of Continuation Writing

Continuation writing is a foreign language learning method proposed by Professor Wang Chuming, which combines reading comprehension with writing practice^[2]. Its theory is the interactive alignment. ^[3] Wang Chuming (2010) believes that alignment also occurs between people and reading materials, and creatively proposes a path for foreign language

learning: interaction -- understanding -- alignment -- production -- learning. He believes there is always a gap between people's language understanding ability and language production ability, with the former being higher than the latter. Higher language understanding ability pulls up lower language production ability, continuously improving language production ability. Continuation writing is a good way to generate the alignment effect.

The proposal of continuation writing has aroused widespread research interest. Multitudes of studies have proved its learning promotion effect. As for language itself, continuation writing could promote second language vocabulary learning^[4] and accuracy, complexity and fluency of writing^[5]. With regards to non-cognitive factors^[6], Zhang Lin and Qin Ting (2020) found that continuation writing helped to alleviate writing anxiety. In summary, the positive effect of continuation writing has been verified in many aspects and at multiple levels.

3.2 Continuation Writing under the Narrative Model

Narrative research initially focused on the field of literature and later gradually expanded to almost all social science disciplines, also having an impact on the field of foreign language education^[7]. Some researchers have used the narrative model to explore strategies for improving the quality of students' continuation writing. For example^[8], Cui Wenhua and Tang Shuzhe (2023) used Labov's narrative analysis model to analyze continuation writing in the college entrance examination paper. Although some researchers have involved the application of the narrative mode in continuation writing, the research focusing on Labov's narrative analysis model is not abundant, so the effectiveness of this model still needs further verification.

4. Strategies for Continuation Writing Based on the Narrative Analysis Model

Labov's narrative analysis model has a clear structure, which can help students clarify the structure of the text, understand the text, and grasp the author's writing intention, thereby clarifying the elements of continuation writing and planning plots, and ultimately achieving high alignment with the original text to produce high-quality continuation writing production. This paper takes the continuation writing task in the 2023 New Curriculum Standard Paper I as an example, uses Labov's narrative analysis model to analyze the reading text.

4.1 Analyzing the Reading Text According to Labov's Narrative Analysis Model

4.1.1 Abstract

Abstract is a summary of the narrative and an introduction to the main idea of the text, allowing readers to have a preliminary understanding of it. The topic sentence of this reading text is presented in the first two sentences, which can be summarized as: My social studies teacher asked me to enter a writing competition, but I refused because I didn't like writing. Entering a writing competition is a highly condensed summary of the text, and the subsequent content is related to the writing competition. This topic sentence can stimulate the reader's interest and curiosity, generating a series of assumptions, such as: Why did the teacher choose me who doesn't like writing, to participate in the competition? Did I eventually participate in the competition? Will I win an award?

4.1.2 Orientation

It describes the time, place, characters, and background of the story. The orientation of this reading text shows that the story takes place in my middle school years, at school. Characters are I, my social studies teacher, and my sister, and background activity is to enter a writing competition.

4.1.3 Complicating action

Complicating action is the main part of the narrative, occupying the largest proportion. It reflects the development and changes of the story. First, conflicts help shape and reveal the characters' personalities. When facing conflicts, characters will show their true thoughts, emotions, and values. Second, conflicts are the main driving force for the development of plots. Conflicts in the story will trigger a series of events that are interrelated and progressive, thus forming the framework of the entire story. Third, conflicts help deepen the theme and meaning of the story. When reading the text, students should be guided to sort out the plot of the reading text, determine whether there are conflicts, and if not, they need to be supplemented in the continuation writing. In addition, they should grasp the subtle details of the reading material, deepen their understanding of the text, and apply them in the continuation writing to increase coherence.

First, sort out the plot of this reading material: My social studies teacher suggested that I should participate in the writing competition -- I refused because I didn't like writing -- the teacher encouraged me with words -- I decided to try

participating in the competition -- I prepared carefully and kept practicing my writing -- I completed the work and enjoyed the joy of writing. If the story ended here, it would be somewhat dull because the conflicts in the story have not been fully developed. Therefore, conflicts need to be supplemented in the continuation writing. Second, plan conflicts. I didn't like writing but still participated in the writing competition, and I had to overcome difficulties and made every effort to prepare well. This is the part of conflicts.

4.1.4 Evaluation

Evaluation refers to the subjective analysis and evaluation made by the narrator on the plot, characters' behaviors or events in the story. This element is not fixed in position but flexibly integrated throughout the narrative. Evaluation helps to highlight character traits; construct a complete narrative structure; make the story more interesting and meaningful; enable readers to understand the story more deeply.

Students should consciously identify evaluation while reading and imitate it in their continuation writing to enhance coherence with the original text. In the first paragraph of the reading material, there is a piece of evaluation: Writing was so difficult and painful for me. This indicates that English writing was extremely challenging for me and I found no pleasure in it at all, which contrasted with the transformation in the fifth paragraph where I felt the enjoyment of writing. This conveys the positive value of overcoming difficulties. In the fourth paragraph, there is also commentary: I sympathized immediately, which describes my inner thoughts. I felt sympathy for Paul Revere's horse because, like it, I was emotionally tired and exhausted but chose not to stop and kept pushing forward. This shows that I practiced writing very seriously, paving the way for my winning the competition in the continuation writing. Additionally, it vividly portrays my diligence and perseverance, serving as an inspiration for students. The last sentence of the fifth paragraph is also a piece of evaluation: if I didn't win, I wouldn't care. Because I had experienced the joy of writing, winning or losing the competition no longer counted. This conveys the idea of valuing the process and the richness of experience over the pursuit of results.

4.2 Continuation Writing Based on Labov's Narrative Analysis Model

The given elements of this text can be summarized as abstract, orientation, complicating action and evaluation. In the following continuation writing, it is necessary to develop conflicts, reach a climax, and complete the complicating action. Resolution and Coda should also be considered, with evaluation running through the entire continuation writing. According to the first given sentence, the conflicts are fully developed, so this paragraph should focus on complicating action. The first sentence of the second paragraph focus on the plot after I received the award, emphasizing the theme's elevation. This should be centered on the resolution and coda.

4.2.1 Complicating Action and Evaluation

The first paragraph of the continuation writing should describe I received the competition award results. Considering the beginning of the second paragraph in the continuation writing, it is clear that I not only won the competition but also attended the award ceremony. Therefore, the first paragraph of the continuation must include the key plot of I learning about the result of the award and attending the award ceremony. For instance, I, upon learning of the win, excitedly shared the news with his or her sister who had helped correct grammatical mistakes, and three days later, attended the grand award ceremony. I attended the award ceremony and delivered a tearful speech, expressing gratitude for the guidance of the teacher. Appropriate evaluation can be added during the writing: my hands trembled slightly with excitement as his or her received the certificate and trophy; I thought that this honor was not only individual success but also collective glory belonged to everyone who had offered help.

4.2.2 Resolution and Coda

Resolution marks the end of the story, resolving conflicts and revealing the outcome of the story. Coda is used to bring the reader back from the fictional world of the story to reality. The second paragraph of the continuation writing should cover resolution and coda. From the first sentence of the second paragraph, it can be known that I attended the award ceremony and then went to the sociology teacher's office. The appearance of the two main characters in the same space easily leads to the thought that a dialogue or interaction is about to occur. For example, I showed the teacher the trophy and certificate with excitement, expressing gratitude for the teacher's encouragement and guidance, which made me fall in love with writing; or the teacher congratulated me on the success and gave me a book about writing, encouraging me to continue writing. Coda can be conceived as follows: As long as one has the courage and perseverance to overcome

difficulties, nothing is impossible; enjoy the process of growth and don't focus too much on the utilitarian results; now I have become a famous writer, and this small competition has changed my life trajectory.

5. Conclusion

This paper adopts Labov's narrative analysis model as the theoretical basis to analyze continuation writing task in the National College Entrance Examination, as a way to construct a continuation writing framework and test its effect in practice.

At first glance, the continuation writing seems to have a high degree of freedom, but it is restricted by the original reading text and the first two sentences of given continuation paragraphs. The application of Labov's narrative analysis model solves the two major problems of "how to continue" and "what to continue", which has positive significance for the actual teaching of continuation writing in senior high school. It not only improves students' learning effectiveness but also provides valuable insights for teachers.

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