International Journal of Educational Development
ISSN Print: 3104-4263
ISSN Online: 3104-4271
CD ISSN: 3104-428X
https://doi.org/10.63313/IJED.9089

A Study on the Application of Scaffolding Instruction to Continuation Writing Teaching in Senior High School English

Xiandi Luo
China West Normal University, Nanchong 637000, China
Email: 13608242259@163.com

How to cite this paper: Luo, X. (2026). A study on the application of scaffolding instruction to continuation writing teaching in senior high school English. International Journal of Educational Development, 4(1), 27–34. ISSN Print: 3104-4263, ISSN Online: 3104-4271.
https://doi.org/10.63313/IJED.9089
Published: 2026-07-06

Copyright © 2026 by author(s) and Erytis Publishing Limited.
This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).
http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/
CC BY 4.0

Abstract

Continuation writing combines language input and output, which helps develop students' comprehensive language ability and facilitates the achievement of core competencies. However, in current senior high school classrooms, students' ability to integrate reading and writing is notably inadequate, and teachers' instructional focus often deviates from the core objectives of this task. Scaffolding instruction, grounded in the Zone of Proximal Development and constructivism, advocates providing timely support at the threshold of students' competence and gradually withdrawing it, thus offering a theoretically compatible solution to improve this teaching situation. This study makes the scaffolding procedure into five phases in the continuation writing classroom, namely constructing scaffolding, entering the scene, exploring independently, cooperative learning and evaluation, and uses the teaching case to illustrate the guidelines of implementation in each phase. The case shows that this model effectively stimulates students' emotional engagement and logical reasoning, guiding them to constantly enhance their own abilities and ultimately enabling them to produce continuations that align with the original text in both style and emotional coherence. The research not only provides frontline teachers with a clear classroom framework but also enriches the practical pathways for implementing continuation writing instruction in theory and practice.

Keywords

Scaffolding Instruction; Continuation Writing; Senior High School English; Zone of Proximal Development; Constructivism

1. Introduction

Continuation writing integrates reading and writing within the same context, aiming to assess students' language proficiency and creative thinking ability. This aligns well with the requirements for cultivating English core competencies set forth in the English Curriculum Standards for Senior High School (2017 Edition, 2025 Revision).

However, current teaching practices face multiple challenges, including students' shallow reading comprehension, poor plot construction, and weak language expression, as well as teachers' overemphasis on model essay analysis and error correction while neglecting plot coherence and stylistic consistency. Grounded in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and constructivism, scaffolding instruction advocates a student-centered approach, which aims at developing students' problem-solving ability and autonomous learning ability. It offers a promising solution to the above difficulties. This study proposes a scaffolding instruction-based model for continuation writing teaching in senior high school English and illustrates its implementation process using the College Entrance Exam question as an example, with the aim of providing practical references for frontline teachers.

2. The Concept and Theoretical Foundations of Scaffolding Instruction

2.1. The Concept of Scaffolding Instruction

The term "scaffolding" originates from the field of architecture, which refers to a temporary structure that provides support for workers during construction and is removed upon completion. In 1976, Wood, Bruner, and Ross first introduced this concept into the educational field to describe the support adults provide to help children complete tasks they cannot accomplish independently. Subsequently, Bruner (1978) further proposed that the purpose of scaffolding is to enable children to focus their attention on learning more difficult skills. Professor He Kekang (1997) introduced the scaffolding instruction system to China and summarized its five specific implementation procedures: constructing scaffold, entering the scene, exploring independently, cooperative learning, and evaluation. These five steps are interconnected and progressively build upon one another.

In essence, the core meaning of scaffolding instruction can be summarized as follows: teachers provide temporary auxiliary supports based on students' current cognitive levels to help them complete learning tasks that they cannot accomplish independently. As students' abilities gradually improve, these supports are removed in a timely manner, ultimately enabling students to learn independently.

2.2. Theoretical Foundations of Scaffolding Instruction

The theoretical foundations of scaffolding instruction are primarily derived from Vygotsky' s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Piaget's constructivism.

In the early 1930s, Vygotsky proposed the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development. He divided children's developmental levels into two dimensions: the "actual developmental level", which refers to the abilities children currently possess to solve problems independently, and the "potential developmental level", which refers to the abilities children can gain when guided by adults or in collaboration

with more capable peers. The gap between the two constitutes the Zone of Proximal Development. Scaffolding instruction advocates that teachers build scaffolds based on learners' ZPD to help them complete tasks they cannot accomplish independently, and then gradually remove the scaffolds as students' abilities improve, thereby facilitating the transition from the actual developmental level to the potential developmental level. (Vygotsky, 1978)

Constructivism was proposed by Piaget. Piaget(1972) believed that children gradually construct knowledge about the external world through interaction with their surrounding environment, thereby developing their cognitive structures. This process involves two basic mechanisms: assimilation and accommodation. The former refers to the process by which individuals integrate information provided by external stimuli into their existing cognitive structures; the latter refers to the process by which cognitive structures are adjusted and reorganized in response to external stimuli. Furthermore, constructivist learning theory points out that knowledge should be acquired by learners constructing meaning actively in specific contexts with the help of others. Scaffolding instruction is the practical application of constructivism in classroom teaching, where teachers create contexts and build scaffolds to guide students in constructing knowledge actively.

3. Major Difficulties in Continuation Writing Teaching in Senior High School English

Current continuation writing teaching in senior high school English faces multiple difficulties, primarily reflected in both students and teachers.

From the students' perspective, the first issue is the ability to comprehend texts insufficiently. Many students, due to limited vocabulary or a lack of discourse reading skills, fail to adequately understand the main idea, plot development, and character relationships of the passage, causing their subsequent continuation to deviate from the correct direction from the very beginning. The second issue is the ability to construct plots limitedly. Students often produce continuations that are disconnected from the original text or depict character behaviors that contradict the established characterizations. The third issue is the ability to express language weakly. Some students, due to limited vocabulary, cannot accurately express their creative ideas and conceptions in proper English even when they have good ideas.

From the teachers' perspective, in terms of teaching content, teachers tend to place more emphasis on model essay analysis and memorization of good expressions while neglecting language acquisition, thus failing to fully leverage the learning-promoting effect of continuation writing. In terms of teaching methods, the lecture method is predominantly adopted in current classroom instruction, which is teacher-centered and overlooks students' learning initiative. In terms of teaching evaluation, some teachers overemphasize linguistic accuracy in students' continuations while paying less attention to stylistic consistency and plot coherence,

which fails to comprehensively reflect students' writing abilities and makes it difficult to guide students toward deeper thinking and creative expression.

4. Application Strategies of Scaffolding Instruction in Continuation Writing Teaching in Senior High School English

4.1. Constructing Scaffold

Constructing scaffold is the initial step of scaffolding instruction. Its core task is to build a framework around the theme of the continuation writing text based on students' ZPD, laying the foundation for subsequent in-depth reading and creative writing. The contents are as follows:

Firstly, teachers can build topic introduction scaffolds. Teachers may introduce the topic through pictures, videos, or questions to activate students' prior background knowledge and help them establish connections between their existing cognitive foundations and new information. Secondly, teachers can build content scaffolds. Teachers can guide students to read the text in depth through the combination of skimming and scanning—that is, first quickly browse for the gist, and then extract key information of the story using tools such as mind maps or tree diagrams. Thirdly, teachers can build language scaffolds. Teachers can provide students with vocabulary and expressions related to the text theme to enrich their writing resource pool.

4.2. Entering the scene

After constructing the scaffold, teachers need to guide students into a learning context that is related to the topic of text and close to real life. The creation of context can effectively stimulate students' interest and emotional resonance, enabling them to immerse themselves in the theme and emotions of the article and avoid deviating from the theme in their continuations.

Specifically, teachers may use multimodal means to recreate the context of text, allowing students to intuitively experience the setting and atmosphere of the story. Teachers may also create question-driven contexts by raising questions related to the core conflicts of the text in order to prompt students to think about the rationality of characters' behaviors. At the end of entering the scene, teachers may provide some prompts regarding writing direction to help students better transition into the continuation task.

4.3. Exploring independently

Exploring independently is the process in which students independently read texts, organize the plots, extract language materials, and conceive their continuations.

In this step, the teacher's role shifts from "lecturer" to "facilitator". They will provide necessary support and directional guidance. Specifically, teachers may provide necessary writing prompts, such as common vocabulary of emotional expression, to

help students depict characters' inner worlds more delicately. In addition, teachers may design question chains—a series of interconnected questions—to guide students to think deeply about the logic of story development and gradually construct coherent and well-developed continuation plots.

However, as exploration deepens, teacher intervention should gradually decrease, so that students can ultimately independently construct well-organized and logically structured continuation texts.

4.4. Cooperative learning

Since the interaction between learners and the reading materials in continuation writing is one-way, cooperative learning can effectively compensate for this limitation.

Firstly, teachers may guide students to engage in group discussions, where students share the difficulties they encountered during independent exploration and their solutions, and exchange writing ideas. Moreover, teachers may organize more interactive group activities such as role-playing, allowing students to reproduce plots of texts through dialogue and performance, thereby deepening their understanding of characters and plots. In addition, to ensure efficient discussion, teachers may assign a group leader for each group to organize the discussion and record key points. After the discussion, each group may be invited to share their discussion outcomes.

Through cooperative learning, students can not only improve their writing skills through communication but also develop their teamwork spirit.

4.5. Evaluation

In this step, teachers need to establish a diversified evaluation system to help students objectively understand their learning outcomes.

Firstly, evaluation criteria can be constructed from three dimensions. From the perspective of textual content, the rationality of the plot, the completeness of the narrative and the degree of stylistic consistency with the original text should be examined. From the perspective of language expression, the accuracy, appropriateness, and richness of vocabulary and sentence structure in the continuation should be analyzed. From the perspective of textual organization, the logical transitions between paragraphs and the overall structure of the text should be assessed.

Secondly, evaluation methods should be diversified, including self-assessment, peer assessment and teacher assessment. Self-assessment guides students to reflect on their own shortcomings against the criteria; peer assessment allows students to identify problems in their peers' work and learning good expressions; teacher assessment should provide targeted and personalized comments on students' texts.

By clarifying evaluation criteria and adopting diversified evaluation methods,

students can continuously improve their work through feedback, thereby comprehensively enhancing their writing proficiency.

5. A Case of Implementing Scaffolding Instruction in Continuation Writing Teaching in Senior High School English

This study takes the 2024 National College Entrance Examination (New Curriculum Standard II) continuation writing task as an example to demonstrate the specific implementation of the scaffolding instruction model in the senior high school English continuation writing classroom. The text tells the story of a traveler who, due to a flight delay, is in a hurry to catch a bus. With the help of a kind driver named Gunter, he arrives at the station in time but finds himself in a dilemma because he cannot pay the fare.

5.1. Constructing scaffold

Firstly, the teacher introduces the topic by asking, "Have you ever been in a hurry to catch a vehicle?". This prompts students to relate their own experiences of rushing to catch transportation and to empathize with the narrator's anxiety, thus constructing a topic introduction scaffold.

Then, the teacher guides students to sort out the six elements of narrative writing: time (a cold and wet evening), place (from Vienna Airport to the bus station), characters ("I" and Gunter), cause (flight delay, need of catching the last bus), process (Gunter is unfamiliar with the route → calls for help → arrives at the station → payment fails → ATM malfunction), and result. On this basis, the teacher further guides students to use descriptive words to depict the characters and identify their traits (Gunter: warm-hearted, helpful; "I": anxious, polite, trustworthy), thereby building a content scaffold.

Finally, the teacher provides vocabulary and sentence patterns related to the scenarios of "rushing to catch a vehicle" and "payment dilemma", preparing students with language resources for their subsequent writing and constructing a language scaffold.

5.2. Entering the scene

At this stage, the teacher may display three sets of pictures—"rushing to catch a vehicle in a rainstorm at the airport", "language communication inside a taxi", and "frustrated operation at a malfunctioning ATM"—and pose the question: "If you were Gunter and heard the bad news about the ATM malfunction, would you prioritize collecting the fare or letting the passenger catch the bus first? Why?" This prompts students to think about the rationality of characters' behaviors.

Meanwhile, the teacher may use multimedia to play background sounds such as airport announcements and rain sounds, allowing students to viscerally feel the urgent atmosphere of the story. Through creating context, students can put

themselves in the shoes of both “I” and Gunter, understand the situations and emotions of both parties, and lay an emotional foundation for the subsequent continuation.

5.3. Exploring independently

Firstly, the teacher may design the question chain based on the two given beginning sentences of the paragraphs to help students think more deeply. For example, based on the first beginning sentence, students consider questions such as “How would Gunter react upon hearing the bad news?” and “How can 'I' resolve the dual dilemma of catching the bus and owing the fare?” Based on the second beginning sentence, students consider questions such as “How does 'I' fulfill the promise?” and “How does the ending reflect the theme?”

Then, guided by the question chain, the teacher asks students to independently complete an outline of the continuation. During this time, the teacher may circulate and observe in order to offer appropriate hints to students who encounter difficulties, but should not over-intervene.

5.4. Cooperative learning

Firstly, the teacher may organize students to engage in group discussions around their continuation directions. In the group discussions, students share their conceptions of plot development. For example, would Gunter choose to trust "I" upon hearing the bad news and let "I" catch the bus first? Or would Gunter help "I" find other ways to exchange money? The exchange of different ideas enables students to refine their own works through discussion and deepen their understanding of the topic.

In addition, the teacher may organize a role-play activity, where students take on the roles of "I" and Gunter and simulate the dialogue when "I" runs back to inform Gunter of the ATM malfunction. Through performance, students can more deeply appreciate the emotional changes of the characters and enrich their language expression through interaction.

Through cooperative learning, students can broaden their writing perspectives and better complete their continuations independently.

5.5. Evaluation

Initially, the teacher needs to establish evaluation criteria. Plot coherence is assessed by examining whether the continuation aligns with Gunter’ s character and whether it reasonably resolves the conflict of catching the bus. Emotional authenticity is assessed by examining whether the continuation reflects the emotional shift of "I" from helplessness to gratitude. Language expression is assessed by examining whether vocabulary and sentence structures are correct, appropriate and rich, and whether there are detailed descriptions.

Then, students can conduct self-assessment against the evaluation rubric, marking strengths and weaknesses on their first drafts. And they can also conduct peer assessment, providing feedback of their peers' works. Finally, the teacher displays representative drafts, analyzes the strengths and weaknesses, and offers corresponding revision suggestions.

Finally, students revise and refine their drafts based on the feedback to complete their continuation works. Through this evaluation process, students can gradually improve their own continuation writing abilities.

6. Conclusion

Grounded in the Zone of Proximal Development and constructivism, this study has constructed a teaching model and has demonstrated the specific implementation using continuation writing task in National College Entrance Examination as an example. This model effectively addresses the existing problems in current continuation writing teaching. Its core lies in the teacher's provision of appropriate scaffolds to help students cross the Zone of Proximal Development, gradually transitioning from dependence on external support to independent task completion. Applying scaffolding instruction to continuation writing teaching practice is an effective pathway for promoting the development of students' core competencies.

References

[1] He, K. K. (1997). Constructivism: The theoretical basis for reforming traditional teaching (Part 1). Audio-Visual Education Research, (3), 3-9.

[2] He, K. K. (1997). Constructivist teaching models, teaching methods and instructional design. Journal of Beijing Normal University (Social Sciences), (5), 74-81.

[3] Jin, S. N., & Lin, Q. R. (2023). A study on teaching strategies for continuation writing under the new question types guided by scaffolding theory: Taking the 2021 Zhejiang College Entrance Examination continuation writing as an example. English Square, (1), 129-132.

[4] Li, X. H. (2025). Application of scaffolding instruction in continuation writing teaching in senior high school English. Overseas English, (22), 184-186.

[5] Piaget, J. (1980). The principles of genetic epistemology. Philosophical Quarterly, 24(94): 87.

[6] Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society: the development of higher psychological process. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

[7] Wood, D., Bruner, J. & Ross G. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem solving. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, (17):89-100.