International Journal of Educational Development
ISSN Print: 3104-4263
ISSN Online: 3104-4271
CD ISSN: 3104-428X
https://doi.org/10.63313/IJED.9094

An Exploration of Practical Classroom Teaching of Senior High School English Continuation Writing Based on Textual Cohesion Theory

Yaling Zeng
China West Normal University, Nanchong 637000, China
Email: 2992822748@qq.com

How to cite this paper: Zeng, Y. (2026). An Exploration of Practical Classroom Teaching of Senior High School English Continuation Writing Based on Textual Cohesion Theory. International Journal of Educational Development, 4(1), 82–88. ISSN Print: 3104-4263, ISSN Online: 3104-4271.
https://doi.org/10.63313/IJED.9094
Published: 2026-07-13

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Abstract

The *New English Curriculum Standards for Senior High* (2017 Edition, Revised 2025) attach great importance to cultivating students' textual coherence, yet senior high students often produce logically disjointed continuation writing due to insufficient command of cohesive devices. Most classroom teaching overemphasizes grammar correction and ignores systematic cohesion training. Grounded in Halliday's textual cohesion theory, this paper distinguishes grammatical and lexical cohesion and constructs a two-stage teaching framework covering theoretical learning and writing practice. With the narrative text Little Shoes as a teaching example, the study adopts question chains and mind maps to guide students in identifying and applying cohesive expressions. This teaching design can effectively improve the logicality and stylistic consistency of students' compositions, and provide operable references for integrated reading and writing teaching in senior high schools.

Keywords

Textual Cohesion Theory; Cohesive Devices; Continuation Writing; Senior High School English; Teaching Writing

1. Introduction

The *New English Curriculum Standards* for Senior High (2017 Edition, Revised 2025) (hereinafter referred to as the Standards) distinguish receptive and productive language skills and stress their mutual promotion. As a key productive skill, writing requires learners to build logical connections via cohesive means, which makes textual coherence a core teaching target. Since continuation writing was included in the new college entrance examination, it has become a core part of senior high English lessons. The task combines reading input and written output and generates the "continuation synergy effect", which helps students internalize language knowledge and develop narrative and comprehensive linguistic competence.

Classroom observation and composition analysis reveal obvious defects in existing teaching practice. Restricted by limited class time, teachers spend most of their energy explaining new words and complex sentence patterns, leaving little room for students to analyze textual logic independently. When marking compositions, they prioritize superficial linguistic mistakes rather than coherence and logic guidance. As a result, students rely heavily on memorized templates and fail to match the tone and character settings of given texts. Besides, most existing studies center on plot reasoning and advanced vocabulary accumulation, yet rarely take textual cohesion as an independent training module, despite its decisive role in grading.

Against such practical problems, this paper builds a feasible classroom framework based on textual cohesion theory and conducts full teaching practice with a college entrance examination sample. It intends to ease students' weak awareness of cohesion and incoherent writing, and provide operable strategies for frontline English teachers.

2. Theoretical Foundation

2.1. Textual Cohesion Theory

First, Halliday and Hasan (1976) pioneered systematic research on textual cohesion and defined text as a complete semantic unit, with cohesion serving as the internal semantic bond linking scattered sentences into a unified whole. Hu (1994) introduced and sorted this theory domestically, dividing cohesive devices into grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion.

Grammatical cohesion relies on sentence structures to form contextual links and avoid redundant expressions. Reference covers personal, demonstrative and comparative items that guide readers to retrieve prior information and simplify narration (Sun, 2024). Substitution, categorized into nominal, verbal and clausal types by Cheng & Wang (2004), replaces repetitive phrases with short equivalents to enrich language expression. Ellipsis removes dispensable elements without distorting core meanings and can also be classified by omitted components. For conjunction, Halliday and Hasan (1985) updated their classification into elaboration, extension and enhancement, covering subcategories such as addition, contrast, time, cause and condition. This revised system better fits English narrative writing and classroom guidance.

Lexical cohesion relies on word-to-word semantic association, mainly realized through lexical reiteration and lexical collocation. Reiteration includes original word repetition, synonyms, hyponyms and fixed collocations, which echo themes throughout the text. Collocation refers to related word clusters formed around one topic, including complementary and antonymous word pairs that build integrated semantic networks.

2.2. Continuation Writing

Wang (2012) put forward continuation writing as a combined reading-writing training method. Students need to interpret source texts, sort out story logic and create coherent continuations in line with the original linguistic and plot features (Wang & Qi, 2013). Wang & Wang (2014) verified the task's prominent synergy effect on second language learners' linguistic performance. Since 2016, this question type has been officially adopted in national college entrance examinations. It provides a 350-word narrative text and two opening sentences for students to write around 150 words, testing text comprehension, plot reasoning and cohesive competence comprehensively.

2.3. Summary

Continuation writing is an integrated productive task where textual cohesion directly determines writing quality. Empirical findings prove that students proficient in diverse cohesive devices produce more coherent compositions. Therefore, embedding cohesive training into daily continuation writing lessons effectively improves learners' overall writing ability.

3. A Two-Stage Teaching Framework Based on Textual Cohesion Theory

Combining grammatical and lexical cohesion systems, this study divides all continuation writing lessons into two sequential, complementary stages: theoretical explanation of cohesive knowledge and exercise-oriented practical training. The two stages follow students' cognitive order from knowledge reception to practical application. The first stage focuses on helping students recognize and interpret various cohesive devices, while the second stage guides students to consciously deploy cohesion in complete exam-style writing tasks. Each stage is equipped with independent standardized classroom procedures to gradually raise students' cohesive awareness and practical application capacity.

3.1. Teaching Procedures for Theoretical Explanation of Textual Cohesion

This stage takes students' unpolished pre-test continuation drafts as core teaching materials, supported by pre-class preview sheets and group collaborative learning to help students absorb cohesive knowledge systematically. The whole lesson proceeds through three progressive links.

The first link centers on conceptual introduction. Teachers briefly introduce the two major branches of cohesion and elaborate on four frequently used grammatical cohesive devices with simple sentence examples extracted from daily reading passages. In-class random questioning is adopted to check students' prior knowledge reserve and adjust subsequent teaching pace.

The second link focuses on text identification practice. Students work in groups to

mark all grammatical cohesive items in assigned reading materials. Group members cross-check marking results before group presentations, where teachers correct universal identification errors uniformly. After that, teachers distribute high-scoring model essays and ask students to compare cohesive usage between their own drafts and samples, so they can perceive how diverse cohesion improves fluency and learn varied expressions for depicting actions, dialogue and inner feelings.

The third link targets knowledge consolidation and revision. Teachers and students jointly summarize key cohesive rules covered in class. Students revise their old drafts either individually or via peer discussion under the guidance of learned grammatical cohesion rules. Identical teaching arrangements are applied to lexical cohesion learning. After mastering lexical reiteration and collocation, students rewrite their previous compositions, with pre- and post-revision drafts used to measure improvements in cohesive application ability.

3.2. Teaching Procedures for Continuation Writing Exercise Instruction

After students master basic cohesive recognition skills, teachers launch full exercise training guided by mind maps and 5W1H question chains. This stage is designed to teach students to integrate cohesive strategies into complete plot construction and independent writing, with three core classroom steps.

First, teachers guide text analysis and skill instruction. Students are directed to pay close attention to the two given opening sentences of continuation paragraphs and locate topic sentences of the source text to predict the general storyline. Teachers build progressive 5W1H question chains covering character, time, location, events, motivation and process to sort out complete narrative logic and lay a solid foundation for subsequent plot design.

Second, group-based plot prediction is carried out. With the source text and given opening sentences as references, students discuss possible follow-up plots in groups and record reasoning via mind maps. Within each group, learners evaluate the logical rationality of predicted storylines from the perspective of grammatical and lexical cohesion and adjust incoherent clues. Each group sends representatives to display their mind maps, and teachers share standard versions to discuss appropriate plot development with the whole class.

Third, students finish independent writing and conduct comparative revision. Relying on polished group mind maps, students complete their continuation drafts alone. After writing, they compare their compositions with standard samples from three dimensions including cohesive usage, content detail and thematic expression, and revise common defects such as fragmented logic and single cohesive forms.3.3. Equations

4. Teaching Case: Taking Little Shoes as a Practical Example

The exercise-based training stage demands integrated logical thinking and flexible

cohesive application, so this study selects the film-adapted narrative Little Shoes to demonstrate full classroom operation steps for frontline teachers' reference. The original passage tells a poor boy Ali who loses his sister Zahra's shoes and learns that the third prize of a long-distance race is a new pair of shoes. He falls down halfway during the competition, leaving two unfinished paragraphs for continuation with designated opening sentences.

4.1. Text Analysis and Skill Guidance

Teachers first deliver reading hints: the first sentence of each paragraph usually acts as the topic sentence, and the opening and closing paragraphs of the source text carry the most critical plot clues for continuation writing. Then a series of layered 5W1H questions are raised to dig deep into textual logic, covering the story's protagonists, Ali's motivation to join the race, his emotional fluctuations and post-race interactions with Zahra. Teachers convert all clues into visualized mind maps to clarify causal relations between characters' behaviors and inner thoughts.

4.2. Group Cooperative Plot Prediction

Students discuss the source plot and two given opening sentences in groups and draw mind maps to record predicted plots. After drafting, group members judge the coherence of storylines by cohesive standards and fix illogical segments. Each group presents their mind maps on stage, and teachers display a standard template to sort out reasonable plot evolution consistent with the original text.

4.3. Independent Continuation Writing and Comparative Revision

Students complete writing based on their group's polished mind maps and self-check drafts against unified evaluation criteria as shown below:

Table 1. Evaluation Criteria for Continuation Writing Revising

Evaluation Dimension	Standard
Textual Cohesion	Flexible deployment of pronouns, logical conjunctions, lexical reiteration and collocation
Textual Content	Rich depictions of psychology, dialogue, actions and emotions with descriptive adjectives
Thematic Expression	Closely revolve around the core theme of sibling affection

Teachers distribute the full model essay, and students mark all grammatical and cohesive devices within it to identify gaps in their own writing and adjust sentences accordingly. A short classroom summary follows for students to recap core skills including text analysis, 5W1H decomposition, mind-map plotting and

cohesion-oriented revision. Homework requires students to polish their drafts and accumulate high-quality cohesive expressions extracted from the sample text. The source text background and complete model essay are attached below for reference.

Text Outline: Ali and his family live in poverty. He accidentally loses his sister Zahra's shoes, forcing them to share one pair for school. He signs up for a long-distance race after knowing the third prize is new shoes. Another runner knocks him down midway through the competition.

Given Opening Sentences:

Paragraph 1: Ali looked up and saw the other boys rushing ahead.

Paragraph 2: Filled with delight, Ali ran back home.

Model Essay Excerpt:

Ali looked up and saw the other boys rushing ahead. Refusing to give up, he struggled to his feet and sprinted forward at full speed. He crossed the finishing line and thought he ranked fourth, overwhelmed by sorrow for disappointing Zahra. Soon the stadium broadcast announced he won the third prize because the runner who collided with him was disqualified. Holding the new shoes tightly at the award ceremony, Ali felt utterly relieved to fulfill his promise.

Filled with delight, Ali hurried home to share the exciting news. Zahra waited anxiously at the gate, wondering whether Ali could bring her new shoes. "Look what I've brought you," Ali said, taking the prize out with trembling hands. Zahra's face lit up the moment she spotted the shoes. She threw herself into Ali's arms and repeated words of gratitude, warm tears streaming down their faces as they hugged tightly.

5. Conclusion

A large number of frontline teaching practices reveal that current continuation writing lessons ignore systematic cohesion training and overemphasize superficial grammatical correction, resulting in students' weak cohesive awareness and incoherent compositions. Centered on complete textual cohesion theory, this research constructs a two-phase progressive teaching model consisting of theoretical instruction and practical exercise training, and illustrates detailed classroom operations through the *Little Shoes* teaching case. The proposed framework is supported by solid theoretical foundations and operable in-class activities, which effectively solves two typical writing defects: fragmented logic and mismatched linguistic style with source texts. It also supplies feasible classroom references for implementing curriculum standards and improving senior high students' text construction competence.

This research has certain limitations. The teaching design fails to integrate digital and AI auxiliary tools to explore their boosting effect on cohesion training. In addition, it only focuses on linguistic form training without discussing learners' motivation and anxiety and their influences on the synergistic effect of continuation writing. Future research can integrate digital teaching resources and second

language affective factors to enrich diversified teaching strategies for continuation writing.

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