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A Study on the Application of Narrow Reading to Continuation Writing Instruction in Senior High School English

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Abstract

As a task that integrates language comprehension with creative production, continuation writing has become an important component of senior high school English instruction. However, in teaching practice, students frequently encounter problems such as failing to grasp the plot accurately, using monotonous language, and producing continuations that are stylistically inconsistent with the original text. These problems largely stem from students' insufficient background knowledge on relevant topics, limited linguistic resources, and weak awareness of textual structures. Narrow reading (Krashen, 1981, 2004), which refers to the practice of reading multiple texts on the same topic, of the same genre, or by the same author, facilitates the internalization of linguistic knowledge through repeated exposure to language items in similar contexts, thus offering a potential solution to the above difficulties. Grounded in the Input Hypothesis, the Output Hypothesis, and Schema Theory, this study explores the application strategies and implementation approaches of narrow reading in senior high school continuation writing instruction. It proposes principles for material selection (thematic consistency, appropriate difficulty, and interest), input implementation strategies (activating schemas before reading and constructing schemas during reading), and output guidance strategies (discussing and predicting before writing and consciously applying accumulated language knowledge during writing). A teaching case based on the 2025 National College Entrance Examination (Volume I) continuation writing task is also presented. This study constructs a teaching framework of "same-theme input - schema construction - continuation output," which offers practical references for frontline senior high school English teachers.

Keywords

Narrow Reading; Continuation Writing Task; Senior High School English; Schema Theory; teaching strategies

1. Introduction

As a task that integrates language comprehension with creative production,

continuation writing serves as an important means of implementing the core competencies of the English subject. However, in teaching practice, students often encounter problems such as failing to grasp the plot line accurately, using monotonous language, and producing continuations that are stylistically inconsistent with the original text. These problems largely stem from students' insufficient background knowledge, limited linguistic resources, and inadequate structural awareness of specific topics. Krashen (1981, 2004) proposed the concept of narrow reading, which refers to concentrated reading of multiple texts on the same topic, of the same genre, or by the same author. By repeatedly presenting language items in similar contexts, narrow reading can facilitate learners to internalize linguistic knowledge, thus offering a possible solution to the above difficulties. Based on these considerations, this study aims to explore the application strategies and implementation paths of narrow reading in senior high school continuation writing instruction, with the goal of providing practical references for frontline teachers.

2. Key Concepts

2.1. Narrow Reading

Narrow reading (Krashen, 1981, 2004) refers to the practice in which learners read multiple works on the same topic, of the same genre, or by the same author to improve their reading ability. Its core lies in providing learners with the opportunities of built-in review through concentrated reading, which enables them to accumulate background knowledge and linguistic resources in natural contexts in order to promote language acquisition.

2.2. Continuation Writing Task

The continuation writing task (Wang, 2012; Wang & Qi, 2013) requires learners to continue writing after comprehending the original text. Its learning-promoting mechanism lies in its combination of language imitation and creative use. Specifically, students rely on the reading material in the continuation process and then imitates its language expressions, sentence structures, and writing style. At the same time, students are required to advance the plot, shape characters, and design endings based on their own understanding and imagination about continuation, which inevitably involves creative language use. Imitation and creation are not separate in this task but are integrated and mutually reinforcing.

3. Theoretical Basis

This study is mainly grounded in the Input Hypothesis, the Output Hypothesis, and Schema Theory.

Firstly, the Input Hypothesis emphasizes that comprehensible input at the "i+1" level is the key to language acquisition (Krashen, 1985). Narrow reading, by limiting

the range of topics, reduces cognitive load and enables high-frequency repetition of topic-related vocabulary and structures in context, which perfectly meets the requirements of comprehensible input.

Secondly, the Output Hypothesis holds that language output promotes acquisition through noticing, hypothesis testing, and metalinguistic reflection (Swain, 1995). Continuation writing serves as a channel that transforms narrow reading input into output, which can force students to activate, test, and internalize the linguistic knowledge they have accumulated through reading.

Thirdly, Schema Theory divides knowledge structures into linguistic schema, content schema, and formal schema (Rumelhart & Carrell). Linguistic schema refers to readers' existing knowledge of language; content schema refers to readers' background knowledge related to the text content, and formal schema refers to readers' knowledge of text genre and discourse structure. These three schemas do not function in isolation but work together during language comprehension and production. Narrow reading helps construct these schemas through focused input. And continuation writing draws on these schemas to produce discourse.

4. The Value of Applying Narrow Reading to Senior High School Continuation Writing Instruction

4.1. Major Difficulties Students Face in Continuation Writing

First of all, students often have difficulty grasping the theme of the original text. Due to limited vocabulary or insufficient reading skills, they fail to understand the main idea, plot development, and relationships of characters accurately.

Secondly, students' ability to express language is weak. Specifically, because of their limited vocabulary, even when they have good ideas in mind, they cannot express them properly in English.

Thirdly, the continuation content is often disconnected from the original text. In practice, students frequently produce continuations with inconsistent plots and mismatched language styles. The continuation lacks logical coherence with the given material and reads like a patchwork of two unrelated pieces.

4.2. Advantages of Narrow Reading in Continuation Writing Instruction

Firstly, when students repeatedly read multiple articles on the same topic, their background knowledge about that topic gradually deepens, and their relevant knowledge structures become more complete, which can form a content schema. In this way, when facing a continuation writing task on the same topic, students can quickly activate their existing background knowledge to decide the direction of their continuation, effectively alleviating the problem of content deficiency and helping them produce richer content.

Secondly, by reading articles on the same topic or in the same style, students repeatedly encounter similar vocabulary, sentence patterns, and expressions across

different texts, which can form a rich linguistic schema. Once students have accumulated sufficient language resources on a given topic, they can more freely draw on these resources in their continuation writing, making their expressions more varied, accurate, and authentic.

Finally, when students repeatedly read multiple texts of the same genre, they gradually become familiar with the structural features and organizational patterns of the genre, thus building a corresponding formal schema. During continuation writing, they can use this formal schema to quickly grasp the structural framework of the original text so as to maintain consistency and coherence with it.

5. Teaching Strategies

5.1. Strategies for Selecting Narrow Reading Materials

When selecting narrow reading materials, teachers should follow the principles below.

Initially, the principle of thematic consistency. Teachers should select multiple reading materials related to the theme of the continuation writing task so that students can accumulate content knowledge and language knowledge that are consistent with the subsequent writing task.

Then, the principle of appropriate difficulty. Teachers can adapt the original materials according to students' actual levels. That is to say, they can replace difficult words with familiar ones and simplifies overly complex sentences. The linguistic difficulty of the reading materials should be slightly above students' current level, but not so high that students lose confidence due to too many new words or complicated sentence structures.

Finally, the principle of interest. Teachers can select materials from English newspapers or online resources that match students'interests. Only when students are genuinely interested in the reading materials will they actively engage in the reading process and maintain sustained attention.

5.2. Strategies for Implementing Narrow Reading Input

Before reading, teachers can activate students' prior knowledge related to the topic through questioning, showing pictures or playing videos. This helps students connect new information with existing knowledge, reduces cognitive load during reading, and builds content schemas.

During reading, teachers should help students sort out the genre features and discourse structures of the articles, thus building formal schemas. Teachers should also guide students to pay attention to the linguistic characteristics of the texts, and help them extract and accumulate useful vocabulary and expressions for later writing, which can enrich their linguistic schemas.

5.3. Strategies for Guiding Continuation Writing Output

Before students start writing, teachers can organize discussions in which students share the information and ideas they have gained from the narrow reading materials related to the continuation topic, and make reasonable predictions and plans for the content of their continuations.

During the writing process, teachers should encourage students to consciously use the vocabulary, sentence patterns and expressions they have accumulated from narrow reading, rather than relying on memorized templates. Applying the linguistic knowledge gained from reading to writing not only enriches students' language expression but also deepens their understanding and internalization of the knowledge.

6. Teaching Case

6.1. Pre-class Preparation

This study takes the 2025 National College Entrance Examination (Volume I) continuation writing task as an example.

The text is a typical narrative, with themes related to "family affection", "understanding and apology", and "the emotional bond between people and pets". Before the class, the teacher provides students with three narrow reading materials on related themes and asks them to summarize the main idea of each article, extract chunks of emotional description, and compare the structural similarities across the articles. Through this pre-class reading, students are initially exposed to multiple texts on the same topic, preparing them linguistically and content-wise for the continuation writing tasks.

6.2. In-class Implementation

In the lead-in stage, the teacher activates students' background knowledge and existing content schemas by asking questions such as "Have you ever had a misunderstanding with a family member or a close friend?" Then the teacher guides students to review the three narrow reading materials they read before class and briefly share the main ideas of each article. This step not only consolidates students' knowledge that is gained from pre-class reading but also establishes thematic connections between the three reading materials and the continuation writing task they are about to work on.

In the text analysis stage, the teacher uses the 5W1H framework (when, where, who, what, why, how) to help students sort out the plot and emotional changes of the characters in the original text, so that they can accurately grasp the plot development and character relationships. For example, students read key sentences in the original text to trace the author's emotional shift from initial stubbornness to later guilt and reflection. This analysis can help students build a content schema concerning the story and character emotional development, providing a basis for their continuations.

In the language focus stage, the teacher guides students to extract chunks from the text that describe emotions, link plot events, and depict actions and scenes. Students then review similar expressions in the three narrow reading materials, compare and summarize them, in order to deepening their understanding and memory of relevant expressions and expanding their linguistic schemas.

In the structure analysis stage, Teachers lead students to examine the beginning, development, conflict, and turning point of the story, and then determine the direction of the continuation based on the given opening sentences of the two paragraphs. For instance, the first paragraph should focus on the author's inner reflection and the decision to apologize, while the second paragraph should focus on the action of apologizing and the reconciliation between the brothers. Through this analysis, students clarify the structural direction of their continuation, which provides them with a formal schema for writing.

6.3. Post-class Evaluation

After class, students can revise and improve their continuations.

The revision should focus on checking whether the content remains logically consistent with the original text, whether there are language errors, and whether the transition between the two paragraphs is smooth and natural. After revision, students compare their first drafts with the revised versions and summarize the areas in which they have improved.

7. Conclusion

This study has constructed a teaching framework for senior high school continuation writing based on narrow reading, addressing current teaching challenges through the path of "same-theme input → schema construction → continuation output".

The core value of this model lies in integrating reading input and writing output within a theme-focused context, effectively promoting the internalization and transfer of knowledge. It should be noted, however, that this study is currently at the level of theoretical exploration and strategy development and has not yet been tested through empirical research, which is its main limitation. Future research may further validate its effectiveness through teaching experiments and explore its applicability to different genres, so as to provide more practical guidance for senior high school English continuation writing instruction.

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