

A Review and Reflection on the Research of English Continuation Writing Teaching

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Abstract

This review is based on the theoretical study of continuation writing, which mainly analyzes its definition, development history, research hot spots, theoretical basis and its application in English teaching systematically. This paper analyzes the sources, discusses the three stages of development of continuation writing, looks at the research hot spots from the main subject terms, looks at the theoretical basis from the interactive synergistic model, the assumption of filling in the gaps, and the theory of “continuation”, analyzing its application in teaching from the teaching strategies of continuation writing. The purpose of this paper is to clarify the theoretical framework of continuation writing, in order to provide researchers with references, and to provide action guidelines for the application of this method in foreign language teaching.

Keywords

Continuation writing; Research review; “Continuation” theory; Alignment effect

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of high input but low output exists in foreign language learning in China. In recent years, some experts and scholars have put forward a series of operational foreign language teaching tools and strategies to change the problem of foreign language learners’ difficulty in producing output and utilizing what they have learned. Wang Chuming (2000) proposed “writing for learning”, and in 2005 pointed out that “length approach in composition writing” in order to change the phenomenon of foreign language learners’ output difficulties, the method is suitable for China’s national conditions and can effectively release the potential of students’ teaching ideas. On the premise that the conditions for continuation writing in China are sufficient, Wang emphasizes “writing” as a way to realize students’ output, on the basis of which a more comprehensive theoretical conception is carried out. Complementary Hypothesis indicates the important role of context in foreign language learning, and points out that learning the right thing is the only way to use it well (Wang, 2003). From the perspective of filling the gap, reading should be utilized

to enrich the contextual knowledge of the foreign language, and language knowledge should be enlarged in the context constructed by words; and writing is the litmus test to see whether the matching between the foreign language and the contextual knowledge is in place (Wang, 2006). The principle of accompanying learning and use further suggests that learning the right thing is necessary to use it well, emphasizing the importance of correct input for foreign language acquisition (Wang Chuming, 2009). On top of the theory of Interactive Alignment Model, reading can be combined with writing to improve Alignment (Wang, 2010). So far, the prototype of the continuation writing approach has been revealed in the theoretical discussion. After studying the output skills of writing and focusing on the correct input of context, the two theories of “learning to use” and “Interactive Alignment Model” have combined comprehension and writing. The two major theories of “learning to use” and “Interactive Alignment Model” have closely integrated comprehension and output to form the theoretical framework of continuation writing. Continuation writing forces students to collaborate with the readings and to utilize their imagination and inference, so that they have content to write, context to follow, and language to imitate.

As a method that closely combines language comprehension and output and organically integrates imitation and creative use, continuation writing effectively improves the efficiency of foreign language learning, and has been gradually integrated into secondary school textbooks and test questions of the college entrance examination in the current wave of English teaching reform, and coincides with the natural contextual advantages of today’s task-based pedagogical method, prompting the vast number of researchers and frontline teachers to carry out theoretical and practical studies. This has prompted researchers and front-line teachers to carry out theoretical and practical studies. The author will give a general overview of continuation writing in order to lay a good foundation for subsequent research and provide reference for researchers and teachers.

2. Definition of the Continuation Writing

Continuation writing combines comprehension and output closely, which is in line with the characteristics of the foreign language environment where there are fewer opportunities for listening and speaking but sufficient conditions for continuation writing, and is a good way to improve the efficiency of foreign language learning, which is usually practiced by intercepting a piece of material with a missing ending from a foreign language reading book and letting learners write the whole content after reading it (Wang, Chuming, 2016). Continuation writing combines content creation and language imitation organically, making “continuation” a bridge between comprehension and output, so as to turn others’ language into their own. The learning mechanism of continuation writing is based on the Interactive Alignment Model model, following the effective path of foreign language learning “interaction →

comprehension → alignment → output → acquisition”, and utilizing the leveling effect produced by the imbalance between learners’ comprehension and output abilities to improve language proficiency (Wang Chuming, 2011). The author believes that the specific process of continuation writing is as follows: learners first read a discourse, comprehend the content in the context provided by the discourse, and realize the language input, so as to acquire the relevant content and language expressions in the discourse. By assigning writing tasks, learners internalize the reading material for comprehension, on the basis of which they imitate and creatively output, in a way that closely integrates continuation writing, and creates alignment and promotes interaction between the two. In this process, language output is gradually aligned with language comprehension, eventually realizing the “leveling effect” and effectively improving the efficiency of foreign language learning.

As a new learning method and teaching tool, continuation writing have gone through the process of exploration, discovery, trial, exploration and in-depth understanding. Under the background of the new college entrance examination reform, continuation writing has become a new type of writing in the college entrance examination in many provinces, and continuation writing is gradually added to the secondary school textbooks, so as to promote teaching and learning through examination.

3. The Development History and Research Hot Spots of Continuation Writing in China

3.1. Development History

As of June 4, 2025, the author searched the CNKI database by entering the keyword “continuation writing” and selected the column of Chinese academic journals in the general library, and finally obtained 2750 articles. From 2012-2024, the number of articles on “continuation writing” can be seen that the number of articles on continuation writing is generally showing an upward trend, and its development history can be roughly summarized into three stages.

The first stage (2012-2015) is the embryonic period of the research on continuation writing. In 2012, Prof. Wang Chuming formally proposed “continuation writing” for the first time as a method of combining reading comprehension with writing practice, which opened the prelude to the research on continuation writing. The second stage (2016-2019) is the development period of the research on continuation writing, in 2016, Zhejiang Province for the first time will be included in the new questions of the college entrance examination, the number of studies on continuation writing began to gradually increase from 40 articles in 2016 to 134 articles in 2019, through the examination to promote the teaching of the teaching of the way to promote the learning of the majority of scholars and teachers to attract the study of research and attention, and gradually make continuation writing from a theoretical

level to a more comprehensive and comprehensive study of continuation writing. make reading and subsequent writing from exploring and analyzing at the theoretical level to discovering and trying out in practice. The third stage (2020-2024) is the rapid development of continuation writing, from 220 articles in 2020 to 553 articles in 2024. In 2020, continuation writing will be applied to the new questions of the college entrance examination in six provinces and cities, namely, Zhejiang, Shanghai, Beijing, Tianjin, Shandong and Hainan, and will be extended to eight provinces and cities, namely, Jiangsu, Hubei, Fujian, Liaoning, Guangdong, Chongqing, Hebei and Hunan, in 2021. Hunan. Since the introduction of continuation writing questions into the National College Entrance Examination in many provinces and cities, research on the topic has been on the rise.

3.2. Research Hot Spots

The author searched the CNKI database for the subject term “continuation writing”, selected the academic journals in the Chinese section of the database, analyzed the main themes in the subject, and obtained a number of related subject terms. Firstly, in terms of quantity, “continuation writing”, “high school English”, “teaching strategies” and “application in teaching” are the most frequent topics. The total number of “continuation writing” is the largest, which shows that the research on continuation writing mainly focuses on the high school level and the researchers mainly analyze its application in actual teaching and how to implement it. Secondly, from the perspective of theoretical research, it involves “strategy inquiry”, “alignment effect”, “core literacy” and “thinking quality”. The researchers explore the theoretical value of continuation writing and analyze its effects from various aspects. Thirdly, in terms of the types of research, it mainly involves “empirical research”, “research review” and “effect research”, which indicates that the researchers focus on verifying the effect of writing after reading and analyzing the factors influencing the effect of writing after reading. This shows that researchers have focused on validating the effect of continuation writing on facilitating learning as well as studying the factors influencing the effect of facilitating learning. Fourth, from the perspective of the research object, continuation writing after reading involves studies on “high school English” and “college English”, which reflects that continuation writing after reading may be more difficult for learners, and it requires a certain degree of creative writing and a certain linguistic foundation, the ability to internalize and comprehend the texts, and the ability to imagine and understand the texts. It requires a certain degree of creative writing and a certain linguistic foundation, the ability to internalize and understand the text, to play with imagination and logical coherence, and to complete the task of writing through imitation and creativity.

4. Theoretical Basis of Continuation Writing

4.1. Interactive Alignment Model

Pickering & Garrod (2004) proposed the Interactive Alignment Model. They believe that linguistic representations cooperate and coordinate with each other, and alignment is reflected in interaction; if interaction is strong, alignment is strong; if interaction is weak, alignment is weak, and alignment is the key to smooth dialog. The most basic form of human language use is conversation, and the purpose of learning language is to use language. Interactive Alignment Model points out that alignment exists at the level of situational model, and people in a conversation will have a dynamic concept of the situation they are in, including the talker, the time and space they are in, and their intention to speak. The two sides of the conversation interact and collaborate with each other, gradually constructing mutually convergent situational patterns, so as to make the brain cognitively fit, promote mutual understanding between the two sides of the conversation, and make the conversation go on smoothly.

Alignment exists not only in situational patterns, but also at the linguistic level, Garrod & Anderson (1987) found that for two people in a conversation, the word used by the other person in the conversation increases the probability that the listener will repeat the word. This mutual alignment in interaction and repetition of the words used is called linguistic structure initiation. A basic idea of the Alignment model of interaction is that alignment that occurs at one level triggers Alignment at other levels; alignment of linguistic structures can trigger alignment of contextual patterns; and alignment of contextual patterns can promote alignment of linguistic structures.

Scholars have found that alignment is the key to second language acquisition, and that interaction can facilitate learners to connect external contextual variables with the language they are learning, thus creating a synergistic effect that helps learners internalize what they have learned into their own knowledge. From this point of view, interaction is like a kind of adhesive, closely combining language structures and contexts, and effectively increasing the probability of the transformation of language structures into learning and use (Wang, Chuming, 2010).

As far as foreign language teaching is concerned, teaching and learning foreign languages need to explore the interactive and cooperative characteristics of language use, actively create synergistic conditions, and guide students to participate in interactive cooperation. In the process of interaction, students can closely integrate listening and speaking, let continuation writing promote each other, and closely combine knowledge learning with practical application. The synergistic effect of reinforcing correct language input enhances learning efficiency. And continuation writing in line with the conditions of our foreign language continuation writing adequacy helps students to build a contextual model, which enables students to give full play to their imagination and reasoning ability, and have content to write. This approach forces students to understand what they read and synergize with it, so that the language structure is initiated to promote alignment, interacting the input

with the reader, so that the language output is gradually converging towards language comprehension, producing a leveling effect from low to high. In the process of continuing writing, students constantly review the original discourse with reference to the original text, imitating and creatively utilizing some of its linguistic structures and expressions.

4.2. The Complementary Hypothesis

Wang Chuming (2003) put forward the Complementary Hypothesis under the phenomenon of “Chinglish” and “dumb English”, which holds that the organic combination of language and context knowledge is the prerequisite for the correct and fluent use of language. Since the foreign language environment lacks real contexts that match the expressions of the foreign language, in the process of understanding, acquiring and using the foreign language, the native language context knowledge in the brain intervenes to fill in the gaps, and then activates the native language expressions that match the native language context knowledge, and the native language transfer occurs as a result, affecting the learning of the foreign language. There is a tendency in China’s English teaching: emphasizing grammar over context, practicing language structures in isolation, and grammar learning is not based on a certain amount of language exposure. This phenomenon is especially obvious in secondary schools, where many schools emphasize grammar learning and few people can speak and write.

Wang Chuming believes that language cannot be used without context, and that the organic combination of language and contextual knowledge is the prerequisite for correct, appropriate and fluent use of language. Reading is an important source of language knowledge, and it is the main platform to promote the correct matching of foreign language expression and context, usually at the level of discourse, which is itself the context (Wang, 2006). Reading texts have the natural advantage of possessing contexts, and teachers can utilize reading discourse to enrich foreign language contextual knowledge and expand linguistic knowledge in textually constructed contexts. The discourse provided by reading gives students a context to imitate and follow, providing a better writing context. From the perspective of Complementary Hypothesis, the reading texts for reading and then writing can be novels or plays, which are the types of discourse that can provide the richest contexts, among which the Chinese novels in translation are the best, which provide contexts students are familiar with, and which can focus the readers’ attention more on linguistic forms and learn to express Chinese ideas in a foreign language (Wang, Chuming, 2006).

4.3. The Theory of “Continuation”

Wang Chuming (2016) puts forward the “continuation” theory of language acquisition, which holds that language is learned through “continuation”. Typically, “con-

tinuation” occurs in the process of dialog, meaning that both parties use language to complete, expand, and create the content of what is being said. The “continuation” theory is consistent with the view of language acquisition held by usage-based linguistics, which holds that language knowledge originates from communicative use, and that language use always occurs in context. However, the “continuation” theory differs in its explanation of the mechanism of language acquisition, in that it suggests that efficient language learning takes advantage of the presence of incomplete segments of speech in the course of a conversation. The learner understands such segments and creatively completes and expands them, thus experiencing language use, expanding linguistic representations, and improving language competence. This learning process involves an organic combination of language comprehension and production, and the “continuation” that connects the two indicates the mechanism that facilitates learning. The “continuation” promotes the interaction between comprehension and output, where what is comprehended is the expression from others, and what is “continuation” is the independent creation after comprehending the above, and the two have a leveling effect in the interaction due to the difference in their heights. The “continuation” and “comprehension” are usually in the same topic. Driven by communicative needs, the leveling effect can increase the probability of repeated use of linguistic structures in the text, and bring about the interaction between comprehension and output, resulting in a variety of facilitating phenomena, including evoking endogenous motivation, accompanying context, relieving pressure on linguistic output, inhibiting native language interference, providing a template for coherent articulation, enhancing attention, and refining language in discourse use. According to the different types of comprehension and output, there can be variants of different “continuation” tasks, such as listening followed by speaking, reading followed by speaking, reading followed by translating, continuation writing, etc. (Wang, Chuming, 2016).

5. Strategies for Continuation Writing in Teaching and Learning

Under the study of teaching and learning of continuation writing, researchers have explored and verified a lot for the effect of continuation writing on English language knowledge to promote learning. From these studies, the author summarizes some effective strategies in foreign language teaching.

5.1. Selecting Reading Materials Reasonably

The selection of English reading resources is a prerequisite for English literacy teaching. The appropriateness of the choice of reading discourse is directly related to the fit of literacy teaching. Reading materials are the carrier of language input and the source of students’ creativity, so the selection of reading materials is quite important (Jing Han, 2020). When choosing reading materials, it is necessary to scientifically measure their degree of interest, content extension, difficulty coefficient,

plot multiplicity and relevance to life.

Interesting reading materials are more likely to attract students and stimulate their willingness to continue writing. At the same time, the content of the reading materials should be extended, leaving appropriate and diversified space for students' imagination and providing a platform for content development. The topics of the reading materials should also be close to students' lives, so as to arouse students' emotional resonance and stimulate their creative passion. The language difficulty should also be considered based on students' level, and the discourse level should provide a model for language imitation on the basis of students' comprehension (He Jiaxin, 2019). In addition, the development of the reading plot should have a certain degree of diversity, the more the storyline development is full of various possibilities, the easier it is for students to develop their logical and innovative thinking. Teachers should try to choose texts that can have a variety of developmental possibilities in continuation writing instruction (Ling Yong, 2016). And teachers should also make sure that the story topic is close to life, and the stronger the relevance between the story topic and students, the more students' desire to continue writing will be stimulated (Yang Ning and Cui Zangjin, 2024).

5.2. Enhancing Continuation Writing Alignment

The closer the interaction between continuation writing, the stronger the alignment, the more obvious the effect of promoting learning. In continuation writing, students should try to achieve situational alignment and linguistic structure alignment, so that language comprehension and output can produce a leveling effect.

When writing after reading, students cannot just write whatever they want, but they should link the continuation with the reading text to achieve situational alignment. Situational alignment means that the output must be coordinated with the characters, time, place, and the causes and development of things in the text, making the information in the text smooth and the logical structure clear and reasonable (Jing Han, 2020). Teachers should guide students to sort out the reading materials, grasp the content structure of the text, and make in-depth interpretations of the plot, characters, and emotions of the text at the discourse level, as well as have dialogues with the authors, in order to promote situational alignment (He Jiaxin, 2019).

In addition, teachers should also tap the language expressions in the reading discourse to promote linguistic structure alignment. Language is the basis of expression, and only after making language input can students imitate and creatively output. When continuing the writing, students should be consistent and coherent with the reading materials in terms of vocabulary, syntactic structure and other language forms and language styles, so that the preceding and following texts are integrated (He Jiaxin, 2019). Teachers can let students constantly review the previous text, so that input and output interact and synergize, and students can also self-correct the language structure and form through the previous text.

5.3. Providing Writing Prompts Effectively

If students want to successfully complete the task of continuing writing, they must pay attention to the opening sentence of the continuing paragraph and reasonably use the key words. Therefore, teachers need to pay attention to the preparation of the opening sentence of the paragraph and the determination of key words in the teaching process.

First of all, the development of the opening sentence, teachers should pay attention to the following two points in the preparation of the opening sentence of the paragraph, first, the opening sentence should play the role of carrying on the role of the next, which is conducive to the students to continue to write. Secondly, the opening sentence should serve the purpose of controlling the direction of the continuation and help the teacher to evaluate. Secondly, the determination of key words, the teacher should determine the key words reasonably to set up a scaffold for the students to continue the story smoothly and imitate the use of core language knowledge. Teachers can determine the key words for continuation from the three perspectives of language, grammar and topic to realize the teaching purpose of reading for writing and writing for learning (Ling Yong, 2016). Teachers can also outline the key words in the text to strengthen students' understanding of the language, enhance students' attention, and facilitate teachers' analysis of the alignment of students' writing texts as well as the evaluation of teaching effects.

Teachers should make full use of the contextual advantages of reading when implementing continuation writing combination teaching, reasonably select the discourse and writing prompts, so that students can successfully complete the reading and subsequent writing tasks, and also strengthen the correlation between continuation writing, strengthen the alignment effect between continuation writing, and grow up together with the students, to realize the scientific and efficient continuation writing combination teaching.

6. Conclusion

At present, the research on continuation writing is still in the development stage, and the research on continuation writing is being further explored to gradually strengthen the in-depth understanding of the method. With the addition of continuation writing questions to the college entrance examination, there are more and more researches about the method, but teachers and researchers still face many problems. This study reviews and summarizes continuation writing in general, with a view to recognizing the development history, research trends and theoretical framework of continuation writing, and providing teachers and researchers with references and lessons. continuation writing after reading is still an important topic in today's foreign language teaching research field, and the research on continuation writing after reading is waiting to be further expanded, so that it can become a powerful tool to promote the efficiency of learners' foreign language learning and

the integration of learning and using in the future.

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