

An Action Study of the Effects of Multi-Subject Evaluation on High School Students' Writing Self-Efficacy in English Continuation Writing

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Abstract

As continuation writing becomes a standard senior high English exam task in China, learners' writing self-efficacy stands as a vital but understudied factor shaping their writing engagement and outcomes, yet most classrooms still rely solely on teacher evaluation and neglect students' affective needs. This three-month action research integrates teacher, peer and self-assessment into Grade One continuation writing lessons to explore how multi-subject assessment impacts students' writing self-efficacy. Mixed data are collected: pre- and post-intervention questionnaires track self-efficacy shifts, while semi-structured interviews, teaching journals and student writing samples supply qualitative evidence. Findings reveal overall improved self-efficacy, especially in content creation, textual coherence and task fulfillment. The three assessment forms function differently: teacher feedback builds initial confidence via clear guidance, peer review delivers vicarious learning and emotional comfort, and self-evaluation fosters long-term confidence through reflective thinking. Rooted in self-efficacy theory, this study identifies how multi-subject assessment stimulates diverse self-efficacy sources, and puts forward student-oriented formative assessment suggestions for integrated reading-writing teaching.

Keywords

Multi-Subject Assessment; Continuation Writing; Writing Self-Efficacy; Senior High School Students; Action Research

1. Introduction

In recent years, In recent years, continuation writing has become a stable component of English writing assessment in Chinese senior high schools amid the National College Entrance Examination reform. Unlike conventional independent writing tasks, continuation writing requires students to extend a source text while maintaining consistency in content, style, and discourse structure. It places simultaneous demands on language proficiency, discourse awareness, and logical reasoning, making it a cognitively and psychologically demanding task for most

senior high learners.

Classroom observations indicate that students often approach continuation writing with hesitation. Even learners with adequate vocabulary and grammatical knowledge frequently struggle to develop plausible plots, maintain textual consistency, or balance creativity with appropriateness. These difficulties manifest as task avoidance, over-reliance on teacher guidance, and heightened sensitivity to evaluation, suggesting that students' challenges cannot be fully explained by linguistic limitations, but are closely tied to their beliefs about their own writing ability.

Writing self-efficacy refers to learners' beliefs in their capability to successfully perform writing tasks. In second language learning contexts, self-efficacy has been shown to exert a substantial influence on learners' motivation, strategy use, persistence, and writing performance. Learners with stronger self-efficacy engage more actively in writing tasks and sustain effort when encountering difficulty, while those with low self-efficacy often experience anxiety and disengagement. Given the complex demands of continuation writing, insufficient self-efficacy may significantly constrain students' willingness to practice and impede long-term writing development.

Assessment plays a crucial role in shaping students' writing self-efficacy. However, writing assessment in most senior high English classrooms remains predominantly teacher-centered, with teachers functioning as the sole evaluators. While teacher feedback is indispensable, overreliance on single-subject assessment limits students' opportunities for reflection and peer learning. Excessive focus on error correction and scores may also unintentionally reinforce students' fear of writing, especially in tasks involving personal interpretation and creative decision-making.

In response, multi-subject assessment—incorporating teacher, peer, and self-assessment—has gained increasing attention in writing pedagogy. This approach emphasizes learners' active participation in the assessment process and conceptualizes writing as a developmental process rather than a one-time product. Peer assessment exposes students to diverse narrative strategies; self-assessment encourages reflection on writing processes and outcomes, both of which correspond to key sources of self-efficacy such as mastery experiences and social persuasion.

Despite its potential, the application of multi-subject assessment in senior high continuation writing remains limited. Existing studies on continuation writing largely focus on linguistic features, task design, or instructional techniques, with little attention to affective variables. Research on writing self-efficacy tends to examine general writing tasks rather than continuation writing with its unique cognitive and discourse constraints. Furthermore, few classroom-based action studies have explored multi-subject assessment's influence on writing self-efficacy. Action research provides a practical framework for investigating such issues in authentic classroom settings. It allows teachers to identify instructional problems,

implement targeted interventions, and refine practices through reflection, bridging theoretical inquiry and pedagogical reality.

This study conducts an action research project in a senior high English classroom to explore the effects of multi-subject assessment on students' writing self-efficacy in continuation writing. It aims to design a multi-subject assessment model tailored to continuation writing tasks and examine students' responses through mixed methods.

The study bears both theoretical and pedagogical significance. Theoretically, it integrates research on continuation writing, writing self-efficacy, and assessment into a unified framework. Pedagogically, it offers practical insights into systematically incorporating multi-subject assessment into continuation writing instruction to support students' confidence and engagement.

Three research questions guide the study:

Does the implementation of multi-subject assessment positively influence senior high school students' writing self-efficacy in English continuation writing ?

Are there differences in the extent to which teacher assessment, peer assessment, and self-assessment contribute to students' writing self-efficacy ?

How do senior high school students perceive the roles of different assessment subjects in English continuation writing ?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Studies on English Continuation Writing

Continuation writing, or reading-to-write continuation tasks, has drawn growing scholarly attention since its formal inclusion in China's National College Entrance Examination. Distinct from traditional independent writing, it requires learners to maintain high consistency with the source text in content, style, and structure, placing greater demands on cognitive processing and language integration abilities. From the reading-writing relationship perspective, Widdowson (1978) argued that reading and writing share similar psychological processes in information acquisition and meaning construction. Kucer (1987) further noted that both rely on learners' prior experiences and shared knowledge construction mechanisms, supporting their integration in instruction. Muncie (2002) emphasized that grammar-focused instruction alone is insufficient for writing improvement, and reading input serves as a critical foundation.

In the Chinese context, Wang Chuming (2012) formally proposed the continuation writing model based on alignment theory, highlighting creative reconstruction through imitation of the source text in a shared thematic context. Empirical studies have confirmed the effectiveness of reading-writing integration: Aminzadeh and Bouyeh (2015) found integrated instruction more effective for writing ability improvement; Turcotte and Caron (2020) reported enhanced text comprehension depth; Gutiérrez et al. (2021) observed a strong association between reading ability

and writing performance.

Subsequent research has explored pedagogical strategies such as pre-reading guidance, plot prediction, and scaffolding, finding that appropriate instructional support significantly enhances continuation writing performance. However, most studies focus on observable writing outcomes rather than students' affective experiences. Few studies systematically examine continuation writing from a learner psychological perspective, leaving the influence of learners' beliefs and affective factors underexplored.

2.2. Writing Self-Efficacy in Second Language Learning

Proposed by Bandura (1977), self-efficacy is a core component of social cognitive theory, referring to individuals' beliefs about their ability to successfully accomplish a given task. It significantly influences emotional responses, effort investment, and task performance.

In second language learning, writing self-efficacy is widely recognized as a key affective variable affecting motivation, strategy use, persistence, and achievement. Learners with higher self-efficacy set more challenging goals, invest greater effort, and demonstrate stronger perseverance. Abundant research has confirmed stable positive relationships between writing self-efficacy and writing performance, engagement, and learning attitudes (Garcia-Sanchez & Fidalgo-Redondo, 2006; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007).

Empirically, Pajares (1996) found a significant positive correlation between writing self-efficacy and students' essay writing performance. In China, Han Liping (2010) reported a positive relationship between English writing self-efficacy and writing achievement among undergraduates, with overall self-efficacy levels remaining relatively low. Gu Shimin and Li Liping (2018) confirmed a positive correlation between writing strategies and writing self-efficacy. Zheng Ru (2020) found that senior high school students generally demonstrated low English writing self-efficacy with notable differences across sub-dimensions.

Writing self-efficacy is a multidimensional construct. Pajares and Valiante (1999) defined it as students' beliefs about capabilities in writing content, grammar, structure, and mechanical skills. Bruning et al. (2013) identified three dimensions: ideation self-efficacy, conventions self-efficacy, and self-regulation self-efficacy. Golparvar and Khafi (2021) categorized it into language self-efficacy, self-regulatory self-efficacy, and performance self-efficacy. Research consistently shows that higher self-efficacy leads students to allocate more attention and time to writing tasks, thereby improving writing quality.

2.3. Multi-Subject Assessment in Writing Instruction

Multi-subject assessment in writing instruction refers to an evaluation approach involving multiple assessors: teacher assessment, peer assessment, and

self-assessment. It emphasizes learners' active participation and the formative function of assessment, fostering learner autonomy and reflective learning more effectively than traditional teacher-centered models.

Scriven (1967) first introduced the concept of "multi-faceted evaluation" as a systematic approach to assessing educational objectives, instructional activities, and learning outcomes. Li Kunchong (2011) further defined multi-subject assessment as using two or more evaluation forms to measure students' learning performance across cognitive, affective, and skill dimensions. Xiong Yanbing (2010) conceptualized it as an integrated model combining formative and summative assessment, self and peer assessment, and quantitative and qualitative analysis. Guan Chengyong and Guo Wanqun (2021) focused on its learning-promoting role, noting that it enhances critical thinking and strengthens learning confidence.

Previous studies show that teacher assessment provides authoritative professional guidance, peer assessment creates collaborative learning opportunities and exposes students to diverse writing strategies, and self-assessment enhances metacognitive awareness through reflection. When combined, these three forms complement each other to deliver a comprehensive evaluation of students' writing ability.

An increasing number of studies have examined multi-subject assessment's influence on affective development. Peer interaction and self-reflection can generate positive learning experiences, enhancing confidence and sense of control—factors closely related to self-efficacy development. However, empirical research on their relationship remains limited in senior high English contexts, and few studies adopt action research to investigate long-term effects in authentic classrooms. There is a clear need for classroom-based research exploring how multi-subject assessment influences self-efficacy in specific tasks like continuation writing.

2.4. Empirical Studies on Multi-Subject Assessment, Writing Feedback, and Writing Self-Efficacy

Grounded in social cognitive theory, self-efficacy is not a static internal trait but a dynamic construct continuously shaped by external feedback, social interaction, and self-reflection in specific learning contexts (Bandura, 1997). Assessment activities serve as a key channel for learners to obtain external information and evaluate their abilities, making them critical for self-efficacy formation and development.

International studies demonstrate that formative assessment and multi-participant feedback significantly enhance writing self-efficacy. Andrade and Du (2007) introduced rubric-based self and peer assessment in U.S. middle school classrooms, finding significant improvements in students' writing self-efficacy and task confidence. Andrade et al. (2009) further confirmed that self-assessment training strengthens self-efficacy by enhancing self-monitoring skills and providing successful learning experiences.

In second language writing, Ruegg (2015) compared teacher and peer feedback

effects on Japanese EFL learners, finding that peer feedback led to higher writing confidence and task engagement. Peer assessment reduces psychological pressure through social interaction and provides more comprehensible feedback input.

A meta-analysis by Panadero et al. (2017) revealed the largest self-efficacy gains when self, peer, and teacher assessment are implemented jointly under clear criteria and sustained instructional guidance. Zumbrunn et al. (2016) found that multi-subject assessment not only improves students' feedback understanding but also enhances writing persistence through continuous positive reinforcement.

In China, Xiao Di (2025) investigated multi-subject assessment in senior high continuation writing classrooms via case study, finding that it enhanced students' task understanding, writing engagement, and reflective awareness. Yu Chaochao (2024) found that integrating three assessment forms enhanced students' sense of participation and classroom interaction. However, these studies focus on instructional effectiveness rather than affective factors like writing self-efficacy, with limited systematic measurement of psychological variables.

Domestic research on assessment and self-efficacy has also emerged. Zheng Ru (2020) found that formative assessment and self-assessment activities improved senior high students' writing self-efficacy, especially self-regulatory efficacy. Gu Shimin and Li Liping (2018) reported that writing strategy instruction with diversified feedback support indirectly promotes self-efficacy by enhancing students' perceived competence.

Overall, existing research acknowledges assessment's important role in self-efficacy development, emphasizing the positive effects of formative assessment and active learner participation. However, most studies focus on college-level or general writing tasks, with limited attention to senior high learners and integrated reading-writing tasks like continuation writing. This study addresses this research gap through classroom-based action research.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopted an action research design with two iterative cycles, each following the sequence of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Instructional strategies and assessment practices were continuously adjusted based on classroom observations, student feedback, and emerging data patterns.

The first cycle focused on identifying students' initial difficulties in continuation writing and low writing self-efficacy, and introduced a preliminary multi-subject assessment framework. Reflection on the first cycle revealed superficial peer feedback engagement and shallow self-assessment practices.

The second cycle implemented targeted adjustments: explicit training on assessment criteria, structured peer-feedback scaffolds, and guided self-reflection activities. These modifications addressed first-cycle limitations and further supported students' self-efficacy development.

3.1. Research Design

Action research is characterized by its close connection to classroom practice and emphasis on teachers' reflective inquiry. It enables teachers to identify practical problems, implement targeted interventions, and refine instructional strategies through reflection.

Given the study's focus on how multi-subject assessment functions in authentic continuation writing classrooms and how students' self-efficacy evolves, action research is an appropriate approach. Rather than isolating variables in controlled experimental settings, the study focuses on the dynamic interaction between assessment practices and students' learning experiences in real teaching contexts.

The action research lasted approximately three months. Multi-subject assessment was systematically integrated into continuation writing instruction, allowing observation of its influence on writing self-efficacy through both quantitative and qualitative data.

3.2. Participants and Research Context

Participants were approximately 40 Grade One students from a senior high class taught by the researcher, using the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press English textbook. Students had received basic writing training and been exposed to continuation writing tasks in the regular curriculum.

Most students showed moderate English proficiency, with considerable variation in continuation writing performance. Pre-intervention classroom observation revealed that many lacked confidence in independent task completion and relied heavily on teacher guidance, making the class a suitable research context.

The researcher served as both classroom teacher and researcher. Reflective notes were recorded throughout the research process to minimize potential researcher bias.

3.3. Research Instruments

3.3.1. Writing Self-Efficacy Questionnaire

A writing self-efficacy questionnaire measured students' self-efficacy in continuation writing before and after the intervention. Adapted from established second language writing self-efficacy scales, it was revised to fit the specific features of senior high continuation writing tasks.

The questionnaire examined confidence in four dimensions: content development, language use, coherence with the source text, and overall task completion, reflecting both linguistic and discourse-level demands. It used a 5-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The questionnaire was administered twice to examine changes in students' writing self-efficacy over time.

3.3.2. Multi-Subject Assessment Rubric

A multi-subject assessment rubric was designed to guide teacher, peer, and self-assessment. Developed in line with continuation writing instructional objectives, it provided a shared evaluation framework for all assessment subjects.

The rubric focused on content relevance, coherence with the source text, language accuracy, and overall continuation completeness, with clear descriptors for different performance levels. It was introduced and explained in class before use, guiding students to apply it in peer and self-assessment.

Used consistently throughout the research, the rubric emphasized formative assessment over summative scoring. It encouraged students to reflect on their writing process, revise drafts based on feedback, and gradually build confidence in continuation writing.

3.3.3. Interviews and Writing Samples

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with purposefully selected students representing different writing performance levels to capture diverse perspectives. Interview questions focused on students' experiences with different assessment subjects, their preferences, and the perceived influence on writing confidence and motivation. The semi-structured format allowed flexible probing of emerging issues. Students' continuation writing samples were collected at pre-, during-, and post-intervention stages. These samples served as supplementary qualitative data, providing concrete evidence of writing development. Changes in content development, coherence, and language use were examined to triangulate questionnaire results and enhance data interpretation credibility.

3.3.4. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection proceeded in three stages aligned with the action research design:

Pre-intervention stage: Students completed the writing self-efficacy questionnaire to establish a baseline of self-efficacy levels.

Intervention stage: Multi-subject assessment was integrated into regular continuation writing lessons across multiple writing cycles. Classroom observations documented student engagement and responses to assessment activities. The researcher recorded reflective notes after each lesson to capture emerging issues and instructional adjustments.

Post-intervention stage: The questionnaire was re-administered to examine self-efficacy changes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to further explore students' perceptions. Data from this stage provided both quantitative and qualitative evidence for evaluating intervention impact.

The observed self-efficacy improvement stems from the combined effects of multi-subject assessment: teacher assessment clarified performance standards and task expectations, reducing uncertainty and initial writing anxiety; peer assessment provided non-evaluative comparison opportunities and vicarious experiences;

guided self-assessment enabled students to monitor progress and accumulate mastery experiences. Together, they created a supportive feedback environment continuously reinforcing students' writing self-efficacy.

3.3.5. Data Analysis

Quantitative questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify overall self-efficacy trends and mean score changes across dimensions. Pre- and post-questionnaire comparisons explored the intervention's influence on writing self-efficacy.

Qualitative data from interviews, reflective notes, and writing samples were analyzed using thematic analysis. Data were transcribed, read, and coded to identify recurring patterns related to students' perceptions of assessment subjects and changes in writing confidence. Initial codes were grouped into broader themes reflecting students' experiences and attitudes.

Qualitative findings interpreted and supplemented quantitative results, enabling a comprehensive understanding of different assessment subjects' influences. Triangulation across multiple data sources enhanced the credibility of the findings.

4. Results

4.1. Effects of Multi-Subject Assessment on Students' Writing Self-Efficacy

Quantitative analysis of pre- and post-intervention questionnaires reveals an overall upward trend in students' continuation writing self-efficacy after implementing multi-subject assessment.

Prior to the intervention, students generally reported limited confidence in independent task completion, particularly in content development and maintaining coherence with the source text. Though familiar with the task format, their self-efficacy was constrained by uncertainty about performance expectations and evaluation criteria.

After the intervention, students showed noticeable improvement across multiple self-efficacy dimensions. Gains were most prominent in confidence in generating appropriate content and sustaining coherence with the original text, indicating that multi-subject assessment effectively addressed task-specific challenges of continuation writing. Moderate improvements were also observed in language use and overall task completion. These results suggest that multi-subject assessment has stronger effects on discourse-level decision-making dimensions than on surface-level language accuracy.

4.2. Differential Effects of Assessment Subjects on Students' Writing Self-Efficacy

Qualitative data from observations, reflective notes, and interviews further

illuminate the nature of self-efficacy changes and the distinct roles of different assessment subjects.

During the action research, students gradually became more actively engaged in writing and assessment activities. Classroom observations recorded increased participation in peer discussion and greater willingness to revise drafts based on feedback. Interviews showed that students' confidence improved as they became familiar with assessment criteria and received multi-source feedback. Several students reported that understanding "what counts as a good continuation" reduced anxiety and made the task more manageable.

Notably, students' descriptions of writing confidence shifted over time: early comments focused on fear of mistakes and score concerns, while later reflections emphasized progress, improvement, and clearer self-evaluation. This shift indicates that self-efficacy changes involved not only increased confidence but also transformed perceptions of writing difficulty and self-performance evaluation.

Further analysis reveals that teacher, peer, and self-assessment influenced self-efficacy in different ways and at different stages: Teacher assessment was consistently perceived as the most authoritative feedback source, especially at the initial intervention stage. Students reported that teacher feedback clarified task requirements and language expectations, contributing to early confidence building and establishing baseline self-efficacy by reducing uncertainty.

Peer assessment was initially met with skepticism but gradually gained acceptance. Students noted that reading peers' writing allowed them to compare different narrative choices and recognize that writing difficulties were common rather than individual failures. This social comparison reduced anxiety and enhanced confidence. Peer assessment was viewed as especially helpful for idea development and coherence maintenance.

5. Discussion

5.1. Multi-Subject Assessment and the Sources of Writing Self-Efficacy

The findings suggest that multi-subject assessment functions not merely as a pedagogical technique, but as an affective mechanism systematically supporting writing self-efficacy development in continuation writing. From self-efficacy theory, the observed confidence improvement stems from the interaction of multiple assessment agents in a sustained instructional context, rather than a single influence source.

By making assessment criteria explicit and shared across all three subjects, the assessment process itself becomes a source of clarity, reducing anxiety and supporting initial self-efficacy development.

Importantly, multi-subject assessment's impact on self-efficacy is cumulative rather than immediate. Confidence increased not merely from introducing multiple assessment forms, but from their consistent formative implementation across

writing tasks. This indicates that self-efficacy development in continuation writing is a gradual process shaped by sustained assessment experiences rather than isolated feedback events.

5.2. Differential Contributions of Teacher, Peer, and Self-Assessment

Bandura (1997) identified four primary self-efficacy sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional states. All four sources were activated in this study, but their relative contributions varied across assessment subjects and research stages.

Teacher assessment emerged as the most influential self-efficacy source at the initial stage. For students unfamiliar with task requirements, teacher feedback functioned as authoritative verbal persuasion. This finding suggests that authoritative guidance is particularly important for establishing baseline self-efficacy in task-specific writing contexts. Peer assessment contributed mainly through vicarious experiences. As students evaluated peers' writing, they were exposed to diverse narrative continuations and problem-solving strategies. This normalized writing difficulties and reduced fear of failure, supporting confidence development. Peer assessment's effectiveness increased over time, indicating its dependence on adequate scaffolding and classroom trust.

Unlike teacher or peer assessment, it did not produce immediate confidence gains, but fostered a deeper sense of control over writing development—essential for long-term self-efficacy growth.

The two action research cycles further illustrate staged self-efficacy development. In the first cycle, student engagement with peer and self-assessment was superficial, and confidence remained fragile, relying heavily on external teacher feedback. Second-cycle adjustments—explicit criteria training and structured peer scaffolds—significantly enhanced participation and autonomy in feedback interpretation. This progression reflects a transition from reliance on verbal persuasion to accumulation of mastery experiences and self-regulatory awareness.

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