

Problems and Strategies in the Integration of Reading and Writing Instruction to Foster Creative Thinking in English Continuation Writing

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Abstract

Currently, the integrated instruction of reading and writing in actual classrooms faces several widespread issues. First, teachers focus on teaching language knowledge and skills while neglecting the cultivation of creative thinking. Second, students' creativity and imagination are suppressed, resulting in formulaic writing. Third, output tasks fail to be effectively facilitated, with teachers unreasonably raising the bar for students' thinking abilities. This paper discusses strategies to address these existing problems by optimizing instructional approaches, emphasizing students' competence development, selecting appropriate reading materials to strengthen reading-writing connections and stimulate authentic writing motivation, and encouraging active student engagement in organizing and integrating information. Well-designed instruction is also emphasized to ensure optimal learning outcomes.

Keywords

Continuation Writing; the Integration of Reading and Writing; Creative Thinking; Teaching Strategies; Discourse Analysis

1. Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving era, cultivating innovative talents has become a pressing task. The design and implementation of English courses should reflect the emphasis on developing students' creative thinking. The Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition) (hereinafter referred to as the "New Curriculum Standards") states that students should "gradually develop logical thinking, dialectical thinking, and creative thinking through English learning, enabling their thinking to be agile, flexible, creative, critical, and profound" (Ministry of Education, 2022). The Teacher's Guide to the Compulsory Education English Textbooks (2024 Edition) (Grades 7-9) by the People's Education Press (hereinafter referred to as the "2024 PEP Teacher's Guide") emphasizes the importance of aligning with the pulse of the

times, cultivating innovation and awareness, and supporting the nation's needs for innovative talent development. Regarding the development of thinking quality, the textbook aims to cultivate students' logical, critical, and creative thinking abilities in diverse ways (Zhang Xianchen & Lu Xiqin, 2024). Thus, against the backdrop of national demand for innovative talent and the new curriculum requirements for basic education, English instruction increasingly values the cultivation of students' thinking quality.

The New Curriculum Standards emphasize the integrated development of language skills, aiming to promote the harmonious combination of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In response to the ongoing reform of English instruction, the Compulsory Education English Textbook (2024 Edition) (hereinafter referred to as the "Junior PEP Textbook") gradually develops students' writing ability through an integrated reading-writing model. This model adopts a spiral and progressive unit structure across grades. In Grade 7, reading and writing tasks are included in Section B of each unit, combining reading texts with imitative writing. As students' language proficiency improves, dedicated "reading-to-writing" modules are added in Grades 8 and 9 (Zhang Xianchen & Lu Xiqin, 2024). These updates to textbook content and structure have facilitated the implementation of integrated reading-writing instruction in classrooms, making it a new trend in educational innovation. However, challenges persist, especially in fostering creative thinking through such instruction. This paper identifies these challenges and proposes strategies to promote creative thinking effectively within the context of integrated reading and writing tasks.

2. Existing Problems in Cultivating Creative Thinking through the Integration of Reading and Writing

2.1. Overemphasis on Linguistic Knowledge, Neglect of Creative Thinking Development

In many reading-writing classes, teachers focus excessively on teaching language points, often using translation or grammar explanation to guide reading comprehension. This results in passive knowledge acquisition by students, lacking deep understanding of text logic, structure, and implied meanings. Consequently, students struggle to express their views in writing based on textual themes or contexts. Their compositions tend to be poorly organized, lacking depth and breadth.

Teachers must recognize that thinking is central to both reading and writing. The level of thinking determines the quality of writing. As Wang Qiang (2020) states, thinking development should be placed at the heart of reading and writing activities. Students who can write logically and coherently often have strong reading comprehension and imagination. As independent creators, students must engage in reasoning and imagination to complete creative writing tasks (Bualak Naksongkaew, 2012). Thus, students should internalize language knowledge and deeply understand texts to lay a foundation for writing. By identifying connections between

reading and writing, they can emulate writing structures and rhetorical approaches to produce structurally similar but content-differentiated texts, thereby solving new problems posed in continuation writing creatively.

2.2. Suppression of Creativity and Imagination: Formulaic and Patterned Writing

Integrated reading-writing instruction should be driven by writing as the goal, with reading serving as meaningful input. Instructional activities should be designed around students' writing needs and target tasks to guide purposeful reading (Zhang Xianchen, 2021). However, it is common that students lack writing motivation and frequently experience "having nothing to write." Their compositions become highly templated and monotonous. Students' imagination and creativity are stifled, making it difficult for them to express original perspectives or experiences. Many students are unwilling or afraid to express their genuine thoughts or feelings, especially when the reading materials or writing tasks are detached from their real-life experiences and interests.

In such cases, students often resort to directly copying sentences from the reading texts or prompts without truly understanding the author's perspective or the meaning of the passage. Among the most prominent issues in reading-to-writing tasks is plagiarism, which may be either intentional or unintentional. The latter often stems from a lack of knowledge about citation or referencing (Wang Qiang, 2020). Another issue is the overly simplistic and narrow evaluation process: teachers often select and showcase one or two student essays for whole-class discussion, which provides limited benefit for others. As a result, students miss the opportunity for deeper thought exchange and cannot effectively enhance the critical, creative, and reflective quality of their thinking.

This phenomenon reveals how students' interests and imagination are suppressed, leading to passive engagement in writing tasks. Teachers fail to allow students autonomy in exploring and utilizing knowledge, thereby diminishing their creative freedom and fostering writing habits that are formulaic and rigid.

2.3 Difficulty in Facilitating Output Tasks and Unrealistic Thinking Goals

The selection of appropriate reading materials is foundational to integrated reading-writing instruction, as the degree of alignment between "reading" and "writing" depends heavily on the appropriateness of input texts (Chen Huanhong, 2021). To support creative thinking, students must be able to successfully produce output based on comprehensible input. Unfortunately, in practice, reading and writing tasks are often disconnected. Teachers overlook students' linguistic needs or fail to provide necessary background knowledge related to the texts. Sometimes, the thematic content, text structure, and linguistic features of reading materials do not match the requirements of the writing tasks. This disconnect causes students to struggle with written output while being expected to meet inappropriately elevated

thinking goals, resulting in “building castles on sand.” Instructional objectives lack a scaffolded design and fail to guide students progressively from comprehension to application and transfer.

Some teachers neglect pre-reading analysis of the text, students' current level, and potential thinking connection points between reading and writing (Yang Jiao, 2024). On one hand, superficial text analysis leaves students reading without understanding. When it comes to creative thinking tasks, students lack the comprehension of theme, author intention, or textual structure necessary to complete them, leading to a tense and unproductive classroom atmosphere. On the other hand, the reading materials and activities fail to present a cognitive challenge, resulting in low participation and engagement. Without the opportunity to express personal opinions or thoughts, students' creative thinking remains underdeveloped.

3. Strategies for Promoting Creative Thinking through the Integration of Reading and Writing

3.1. Optimizing Instructional Approaches: Emphasizing Competence Development

The goal of English instruction should go beyond the transmission of language knowledge and skills. It must also focus on cultivating students' thinking quality, thereby laying a foundation for their future learning and development (Rao Liping & Zhu Changquan, 2024). Many current models of integrated reading-writing instruction lack theoretical clarity and practical coherence. Common issues include a failure to internalize reading, insufficient scaffolding for writing, and imbalance between reading and writing tasks. Often, reading activities are reduced to grammar and vocabulary exercises, and writing assignments are relegated to homework without formative guidance (Qian Xiaofang & Wang Qiang, 2020).

To prevent reading instruction from devolving into simple translation or mechanical explanation, teachers must move beyond surface-level language focus. They should promote student engagement and language internalization by embedding reading comprehension and cognitive skills development into their instruction. This enables students to transfer their learning to writing tasks.

A solid foundation for writing should be laid through the internalization of linguistic knowledge during reading. Based on the Junior PEP Textbook and the Senior High School English Textbook (published by FLTRP) (hereinafter referred to as the “Senior FLTRP Textbook”), vocabulary instruction should move beyond memorizing word meanings. Instead, the “word-sentence-text” model should be adopted, embedding words in sentences and texts for contextualized understanding. When preparing students for writing, teachers should help them identify meaningful words and phrases in the reading passages, fostering internalization and application.

For example, in the first unit of Book 1 in the Senior FLTRP Textbook, under the “Developing Ideas” section titled High School Hints, teachers can highlight the sen-

tence: “Today I’m joined by a former student of our school.” They may ask: “What does the word ‘former’ mean here?” Then, by guiding students to read: “I’m very glad to be back. I feel as if high school was only yesterday,” the teacher helps them infer the speaker’s identity based on phrases like “be back” and “only yesterday.” This deepens understanding of “former” in context.

Similarly, grammar should be taught from the perspective of language use, not as isolated knowledge. Teachers should highlight how grammar constructs meaning in context. For instance, in Book 1, Unit 5 of the Senior FLTRP Textbook, in the passage *An Encounter with Nature*, the sentence “An eagle flew over the snow-capped mountains, which were reflected in the still lake below,” illustrates a non-restrictive attributive clause. The teacher can ask: “What can be reflected in the lake—the eagle, the mountains, or both?” Drawing from real-world experience, students realize that the clause modifies the entire preceding sentence. This promotes deep processing of form and meaning and supports pragmatic understanding.

Creative writing requires reasoning, logic, and reflection. In reading instruction, teachers should consciously nurture students’ thinking quality by placing cognitive development at the core. Through close analysis of reading materials—examining author intent, theme, and structure—students can respond creatively to new situations in writing tasks. A “chain of questions” approach, progressively deepening analysis, helps students produce original and critical responses based on the reading text, showcasing their independent thinking.

3.2. Selecting Appropriate Text Materials to Stimulate Writing Motivation

The New Curriculum Standards emphasize effective development of teaching resources, stating that:

“Teachers should conduct in-depth study of textbooks, make effective use of teaching materials based on students’ levels and instructional needs, stimulate students’ interest in learning, broaden their perspectives, and expand their thinking. Teachers should not be constrained by textbooks but should fully utilize external resources” (Ministry of Education, 2022).

Accordingly, teachers need to design tasks that establish explicit links between reading and writing and carefully select thematic texts with diverse genres and linguistic features to meet students’ varied interests and levels. Text selection must be based on teaching objectives and staged learning needs, embodying the principle of “student-centered and instruction-serving.”

The New Curriculum Standards also advocate for tapping into students’ internal resources:

“Student resources include their life experiences, learning history, and emotional world. Teachers should fully understand, utilize, and develop these resources to activate students’ existing knowledge, experience, imagination, and creativity” (Minis-

try of Education, 2022).

To effectively stimulate writing interest, teachers must gain a thorough understanding of students' realities and preferences. Real-world relevance enhances instructional authenticity. Teachers should choose learning materials aligned with students' developmental needs and learning desires, helping them feel they "have something to say" and "something worth writing."

Reading-writing integration should not be confined to the textbook. Teachers should guide students to transfer knowledge and thinking into real-life situations, applying what they've learned to analyze and solve authentic problems (Wang Qiang, 2020). Teachers should explore valuable content in each text based on student background and learning needs, making learning genuinely student-driven (Ministry of Education, 2022).

Multi-modal resources can be utilized to meet students' interests and real-world relevance. For instance, digital learning platforms can support blended learning. Students can select texts that interest them from various sources, engage in extensive reading, accumulate language input, and then complete writing tasks. These platforms can also host peer and teacher feedback, serving as both communication and resource-sharing spaces. Teachers can thereby better understand students' interests, and students benefit from diversified feedback and authentic communicative experiences.

3.3. Providing Appropriate Guidance to Engage Students Actively Participation

In integrated reading-writing instruction, students need to possess a certain level of autonomy. Teachers should appropriately relinquish control, creating space for students to discover and construct meaning independently, express their ideas, and present their viewpoints creatively. Classroom activities should be designed around the integration of learning and thinking, learning and creation, and learning and application. Students should be encouraged to draw on the internalized language knowledge acquired through reading and apply it creatively in their writing tasks.

Teachers can utilize tools such as mind maps or information structure diagrams to guide students in organizing, synthesizing, and internalizing information through individual exploration and group collaboration (Li Xingyong & Luo Shaoxi, 2022). By actively constructing knowledge and using tools to consolidate their understanding, students gradually internalize content and participate meaningfully in the learning process. Within a defined framework and task requirements, students can enrich their compositions through creative and critical additions, articulating their own thoughts and insights.

For example, in Unit 4 of Book 1 of the Senior FLTRP English Textbook, under the section Writing an Ending to a Story, teachers may employ visual charts to assist students in organizing and synthesizing information from the text. Students collab-

orate in groups to discuss relevant details and collectively complete the chart through text analysis (see Table 1). This collaborative process not only enhances students' comprehension of the text but also lays a solid foundation for their continuation writing.

Table 1. Text Information Collection Sheet

Group number			
Group member			
Setting	Character	Structure	Language
Time Location Environment Atmosphere	Appearance Personality Behaviors	Exposition Rising action Climax Falling action Conclusion	Adjectives Adverbs Conjunctions Other useful expressions
Supplementary information			

The teacher then collects and displays group submissions through multimedia or online platforms, offering feedback and asking questions such as, "Why did the author use 'cold' repeatedly to describe the setting?" This helps students appreciate narrative techniques. Teachers should encourage students while offering constructive suggestions. Using the co-created templates, students then complete the continuation writing task, drawing on the narrative structure, stylistic features, and language techniques from the original passage to write a creative ending independently.

3.4. Designing Instruction Rationally to Enhance Learning Effectiveness

Teachers should follow the natural progression of language development and plan instruction holistically according to students' current proficiency levels. Instructional activities should be sequentially designed, with interconnected stages that build upon each other from basic to advanced, emphasizing key points and addressing common difficulties. According to the New Curriculum Standards:

"Teachers should base their teaching on students' prior knowledge and learning needs, extract valuable learning content from each text, and select and organize materials based on differences in learning styles, life experiences, cognitive levels, and language proficiency. Instructional objectives should be appropriately formulated, and teaching, learning, and assessment activities should be carefully designed, implemented, and evaluated to ensure objectives are achieved. Curriculum content should be scientifically reorganized and selectively adapted to deliver precise instruction and optimize learning outcomes." (Ministry of Education, 2022)

To realize this goal, integrated reading-writing instruction should ensure that reading and writing skills are merged effectively to achieve a well-structured progression of learning objectives.

First, teachers must thoroughly study the textbook content to provide consistent instructional materials and enable students to integrate reading and writing skills to-

ward productive output. Selected materials should reflect students' lives and real-world experiences, align with their cognitive expectations, and enhance motivation through thematic relevance. Tasks and goals should also present appropriate cognitive challenges to boost student engagement.

Second, instruction must identify the connections between reading materials and writing tasks. This helps students clearly understand writing goals and recognize linguistic features, text structures, and content patterns that can be applied from the reading to their own writing.

Third, in continuation writing activities, students should be guided to explore the theme, grasp the author's intent, and analyze textual features such as problem structures and language patterns. Students should extract useful expressions, writing techniques, and stylistic devices to facilitate a smooth transition from input (reading) to output (writing), ensuring integrated language development. Based on this foundation, teachers can scaffold students' progression from comprehension to application and, ultimately, to higher-order thinking and creativity.

Finally, the integration of teaching, learning, and assessment must be consistently implemented throughout the instructional process. After students complete their writing, personalized feedback should be provided. Peer review can be incorporated using both online and offline formats. For example, a portfolio approach can include self-revision drafts, peer evaluation forms, and teacher feedback. These materials can document students' learning processes and provide opportunities for reflection and revision. According to Wang Qiang (2020), reading-writing portfolios effectively link reading and writing in a meaningful way and support sustainable learning. Portfolios may contain drafts, final compositions, reading materials, and evaluation records, enabling students to track their progress, identify strengths and weaknesses, and build self-efficacy. Through consistent reading and creative writing, students' core literacy can be developed holistically.

4. Conclusion

With the increasing emphasis on the integration of language skills in curriculum standards, especially at the senior secondary level, continuation writing has been formally incorporated into English textbooks. This poses new challenges and higher expectations for teachers. In actual teaching practice, integrated reading-writing instruction still faces numerous problems. Teachers must recognize the importance of cultivating students' thinking quality—particularly creative thinking—which significantly impacts both reading and writing performance. To address this, teachers need to strengthen their theoretical knowledge, shift instructional mindsets, and ground teaching strategies in practice. Through reflection and ongoing adjustment, instructional methods can be optimized to foster the development of students' core competencies.

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