

A Study on Teaching Strategies for English Continuation Task in Senior High School from the Perspective of Sociocultural Theory

Jiaxin Liu

China West Normal University, Sichuan, China

Email: 1738128933@qq.com

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Abstract

The teaching of English continuation tasks in senior high schools still frequently encounters the problem of alignment failure in the context of deeper curriculum reform and developing core competencies. This research develops a teaching strategy framework for the English continuation task in senior high school, using three-dimensional interaction as its pathway, based on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. In order to promote students' deep alignment through methodical and stratified social interactions, this framework naturally blends student-text interaction, teacher-student interaction, and student-student interaction. Through the use of case study interpretation and literature analysis approaches, the research clearly demonstrates the dynamic coordination and synergistic mechanisms of the three types of interaction in teaching implementation. This study provides educators transitioning from writing instruction to alignment facilitation with a helpful model, as well as a thorough theoretical explanation for the application of sociocultural theory in continuation task instruction. It has useful practical consequences for using the core competencies of the English course.

Keywords

Sociocultural Theory; Continuation Task; Alignment Effect; three-dimensional interaction; teaching strategies

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Senior high school English instruction is undergoing a paradigm change from knowledge transfer to the development of skills and literacy against the backdrop of expanding curriculum reform and developing students' core competencies. The continuation task is a crucial assessment format according to the English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools (2017 Edition) since it requires students to

achieve multidimensional alignment through comprehension, imitation, and creativity. As a result, it is the perfect tool for assessing and improving students' abilities to use language comprehensively, think critically, and be culturally aware.(Wang Chuming, 2015).

Nonetheless, alignment failure is still a prevalent problem in educational practice. There are typically obvious flaws in students' continuation writing, like illogical story development, uneven character portrayal, mismatched linguistic styles, and discordant emotional tones.(Zhang Yan, 2023; Ying Kejie, 2023). Superficially, this dilemma stems from students' insufficient output ability, but its root cause lies deeper. Traditional teaching models mechanically separate reading and writing and severely neglect the sociocultural essence of language learning. That is to say, the social interaction processes necessary for triggering deep alignment. Students in today's classrooms frequently participate in one-way discussion with texts while passively listening to teacher explanations, as noted by Li Qingyu (2023). They cannot actively create meaning, negotiate linguistic forms, or modify textual structures in real multidimensional interactions without the proper mediation and scaffolding support.

Researchers have begun examining how interaction contributes to alignment in an effort to break the deadlock. They have started investigating the various impacts of interactions between students and teachers (Chen Lan, 2025). However, the majority of recent research merely enumerates different types of interaction and offers scattered instructional recommendations. The internal mechanisms, complementary relationships, and integration pathways involved in how various forms of social interaction support multidimensional interaction across language, content, and emotion have not yet been thoroughly examined from a systematic learning theory perspective.Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory provides a methodical and lucid approach to comprehending this. This theory's central claim is that social contact and cultural impact are the sources of sophisticated cognitive and linguistic abilities, such as those required for writing. There is no direct transmission of knowledge. Rather, students gradually develop it by interacting within their ZPD, collaborating with more experienced individuals, and utilizing resources like language (Vygotsky, 1978). We must view writing as a social and cultural activity in order to apply this concept to teaching continuation task. Developing a coordinated system of support for students is crucial. This can be accomplished through various social interactions that are deliberately planned to support students' development of alignment skills, such as student-text, student-student, and teacher-student.

1.2. Research Purpose and Significance

This study aims to explore the fundamental ideas of sociocultural theory rather than only enumerate interaction strategies . The following inquiries are the main focus of the study: How can a framework for teaching strategies based on sociocultural theory be developed that successfully incorporates three-dimensional interaction

into continuation tasks? How do various forms of contact operate together within this framework to affect alignment dimensions like narrative content, linguistic form, textual structure, and emotional tone, thereby addressing the misalignment problems that exist in education today? The study will use case analysis and a review of the literature to fully explain, support, and illustrate the suggested three-dimensional interaction strategy framework in order to accomplish these goals.

This study is significant from a theoretical and practical standpoint. By using sociocultural theory to the research of continuation task training, it theoretically offers a coherent framework for explaining how social interactions produce alignment effects. From a practical standpoint, it seeks to provide an understandable and useful paradigm for a three-dimensional interactive teaching method. Helping teachers transition from solitary writing lessons to a more structured approach to promoting alignment is the aim. To help instructors make that change, this study offers them precise design guidelines and examples. This not only addresses the idea of “learning through interaction, developing through application” found in the new curricular standards, but it also provides a workable, realistic approach to improving students’ basic competencies in the classroom.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Key Concepts

2.1.1. Continuation Task

The continuation task integrates reading and writing by engaging learners in reading first and then writing. Before expanding the narrative in response to prompts, students must completely comprehend the original text’s content, language, structure, and ideas (Wang Chuming, 2015). This concept was first presented by Professor Wang Chuming. Wang proposed using texts to make language learning more interactive since many Chinese learners don’t have opportunities to communicate with native speakers in person. This can assist with issues such as the indirect and one-sided character of textual interaction (Wang Chuming, 2012). Wang added that the continuation job differs from standard topic-based writing. It presents new demands for teaching English writing in senior high school.

By adding continuation tasks to the writing portion, Zhejiang Province led the way in modifications to English writing assessment in 2016. Based on the given materials, an opening sentence, two concluding paragraphs, and key words, candidates must produce a continuation paragraph (about 150 words) that adheres to the original text’s content, language, structure, and reasoning. The topic of the continuation problem in the English paper for the 2021 college entrance exam was two twins and their father preparing holiday gifts for their mother. Candidates were required to write about 150 words around the initial paragraph. Students must be

fully proficient in the language to complete this challenge. Reforms in English writing classroom instruction have been prompted by this change in writing assessment. Teachers choose relevant materials for teaching continuation activities and assist students in developing extensions based on in-depth comprehension. Continuation challenges enhance students' ability to develop cohesive extensions by closely integrating input and output.

2.2. Theoretical Foundation

2.2.1. Sociocultural Theory

This study is theoretically grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. This theory's central claim is that, rather than developing internally, higher-level psychological functions in humans are developed through engagement in sociocultural activities and the use of cultural instruments, especially language as a mediator (Vygotsky, 1978). In this process, social interaction is essential. The "zone of proximal development" refers to the difference between a student's actual developmental level (achievable by individual problem-solving) and their potential developmental level (achievable with adult aid or collaboration with more capable classmates). "Scaffolding" describes the short-term assistance given in this area by instructors or capable peers. With this individualized guidance, students are able to finish assignments, absorb information, and ultimately perform independently.

2.2.2. Alignment Effect Theory

The "alignment effect" refers to the increasing alignment of learners' output with the reading material in terms of content, language, and structure over prolonged writing (Wang Chuming, 2015). In particular, to preserve content alignment, the continuation's plot, characters, and emotional tone must be very similar to those of the original work. The language, sentence patterns, and stylistic components of the source text are mimicked and applied to achieve linguistic alignment. In terms of narrative logic and textual coherence, structural alignment refers to the continuation creating a coherent whole with the original work (Yuan Hongyang, 2018; Chen Lan, 2025).

2.3. Related Research Home and Abroad

2.3.1. Relative Research Abroad

Their primary strategy for encouraging language learning is their capacity to support alignment in continuation tasks. According to Pickering and Garrod (2004), alignment is the process that facilitates effective interpersonal communication. According to Atkinson (2007), alignment—which takes place between people as well as between people and their social and physical environments—is essential for learning a second language. Through the prism of dynamic role negotiation and

power allocation, this phenomenon in second language writing can be comprehended (Vygotsky, 1978). Syntactic complexity, lexical diversity, and pragmatic appropriateness are just a few of the linguistic levels where learner alignment is effectively promoted by teacher-student and student-student interactions. (Storch, 2002; Watanabe & Swain, 2007). In light of this, a three-dimensional framework explaining the use of the alignment process in instruction has been developed by current study. Emotional, social, and cognitive alignment are all part of this framework (Byrnes & Manchón, 2014; Kormos, 2011). Social interaction has a significant impact on the degree and impact of alignment. While instructor feedback aids students in mastering writing conventions, student engagement encourages language discovery. The average increase in syntactic complexity in collaborative writing is about 23% (Nassaji, 2015; Storch, 2005). According to Hyland (2003), effective teaching should begin with the teacher laying the groundwork by offering direction, followed by collaborative practice. Alignment priorities are also influenced by cultural circumstances. While Western classrooms prioritize rhetorical innovation and creative expression, Confucian-influenced educational institutions frequently use structural repetition to enhance textual coherence (Silva, 1993; Kubota, 1999). Blended approaches that combine structural rigor and creative freedom work especially well in multicultural classrooms (Hyland, 2003).

In conclusion, linguistic alignment is a dynamic balancing process that necessitates the natural fusion of cultural adaption techniques and cognitive sequencing design. Explicit teaching of linguistic forms should be the first step in corresponding education, followed by a gradual shift to collaborative meaning negotiation. The long-term retention of alignment effects should be the main focus of future research, and mechanisms for evaluating multidimensional skill development should be established.

2.3.2. Relative Research at Home

Wang Chuming, a Chinese L2 acquisition expert, focuses on interaction in learning. He proposed a new learning path called “Interaction → Understanding → Alignment → Output → Acquisition” and emphasizes the role of interaction in continuation tasks. (Wang Chuming, 2010). Early research focused on task characteristics and alignment effects (Du Jianchao, 2018; Feng Min, 2020). Now, studies on continuation tasks have moved toward deeper exploration of specific teaching methods and interaction patterns. Many studies have shown the importance of alignment effects in these writing tasks and have provided teaching suggestions for achieving alignment in areas such as language, storyline, characters, and emotions (Sun Xu, 2021; Zhang Yan, 2023; Ying Kejie, 2023).

In recent years, classroom interaction as a way to promote learning has gained a lot of attention. Chen Lan’s (2025) research showed that Teacher-Student Interaction

(TSI) and Student-Student Interaction (PI) affect content, language, and structure alignment in different ways. TSI helps improve language accuracy and structural consistency, while PI encourages creativity and variety in language use. Li Qingyu (2023) found that teacher-student interaction has a stronger effect on high- and intermediate-level students, while student-student interaction is more helpful for intermediate- and low-level students. These studies show how different types of interactions have different values.

Research has started to organize the interaction perspective more clearly. Studies by Du Yang (2025) and Zhao Qun (2024) both propose a teaching model based on three types of interaction: “student-text, teacher-student, and peer.” Yang Yuting’s (2025) study focuses on the overall effectiveness of teaching strategies through the alignment effect.

However, there are still some limitations in the research. Most studies only describe one or two types of interaction or examine the overall effectiveness of interactive teaching. While some have mentioned the three-dimensional framework, they haven’t fully explored how these interactions are connected and work together. In particular, there is a lack of theoretical frameworks and strategies that explain, using Sociocultural Theory’s core ideas like mediation, ZPD, and scaffolding, how the three types of interaction act as cultural tools and social support to help students align within their ZPD during different stages of the reading-writing process. This study aims to fill this gap by creating a teaching strategy based on Sociocultural Theory that integrates all three types of interaction.

3. Teaching Strategies for English Continuation Task in Senior High School from the Perspective of Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory suggests that high school English continuation writing should follow an approach that includes three types of interaction: student-text, teacher-student, and student-student. This approach, based on Vygotsky’s ideas of scaffolding, mediation, and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), encourages teachers to design tasks that help students engage deeply with the text to build meaning. By working with teachers and peers to discuss language forms and adjust the material’s logic, students will gradually learn and improve their language skills within their ZPD.

3.1. Student-Text Interaction

The sociocultural view holds that text is a crucial cultural instrument that conveys language, ways of thinking, and cultural values. Students come into contact with these cultural instruments through their interactions with the text. Students are able to assimilate language structures, thought patterns, and cultural concepts in addition to learning new knowledge. In order to give student a strong cognitive and emotional basis for continuation writing, teachers can assist students in using tools

like mind maps, charts, and tables to analyze the text's content, emotional development, and cultural cues.

For instance, in the 2025 National College Entrance Examination continuation text, the story centers on a Chinese student in Ireland who faces cultural confusion due to issues with the pronunciation of his name. Teachers can guide students in creating mind maps. This map helps students analyze the text from three perspectives: linguistically, by comparing the pronunciation of the name "Qiuyu" in Chinese and English and exploring its cultural and natural meanings; emotionally, by examining the protagonist's emotional journey from embarrassment and compromise to disappointment and growth; and culturally, by discussing how the name reflects cultural identity and the role of cultural confidence in communication. Through this analysis, students can gain a deeper understanding of the story, recognize the importance of names as cultural symbols, and naturally incorporate themes of cultural reflection and identity negotiation into their own writing.

3.2. Teacher-Student Interaction

According to sociocultural theory, educators should provide appropriate assistance when needed. Students should receive support in ways that align with their ZPD. Students can overcome cognitive and expression barriers with this assistance. It facilitates their transition from what they can do currently to what they could do with assistance. Every student learns English in a distinctive manner, however, including varying linguistic abilities, cognitive processes, and comprehension of continuation writing assignments. In order to provide differentiated instruction that is suited to the shortcomings and developmental needs of each level, teachers must precisely diagnose each student's learning level and stratify individuals based on these differences. Instructors should help students enhance proficiency in language, vocabulary, textual organization, and logic coherence. Students who follow this guidance write better continuation essays, thereby facilitating deep teacher-student interaction in the teaching process. Hence, Students can be divided into multiple proficiency levels by teachers. Foundational-level students have weaker language skills and limited cultural knowledge. Intermediate-level students can write basic content but lack depth of logic. Advanced-level students write fluently but explore themes less deeply. Instructors ought to deliver targeted and personalized tutoring tailored to each student's specific level. With this approach, teachers can address individual challenges precisely and systematically strengthen each student's continuation writing skills.

Take the 2025 NCEE continuation writing text as an example. Foundation-level student may produce simple sentences like "My name is Qiuyu. It is hard to say." with limited vocabulary and grammatical errors. The teacher can first help them master vocabulary related to name culture, such as cultural identity, pronunciation, symbolize, and consolidate basic grammar. And then teacher should guide them to

rewrite the sentence as: “My Chinese name, Qiuyu, which means autumn rain, symbolizes peace and nostalgia in my culture.” What’s more, students at the intermediate level possess certain vocabulary and grammar foundation but use monotonous sentence patterns and lack natural logical connectors. For example, “I explained my name in class. Everyone listened. I felt happy.” The teacher can guide them to use complex sentences and cohesive devices for better coherence. This sentence can be revised to: “When I explained the meaning of my name in class, everyone listened attentively, which made me feel genuinely happy and understood.” An extension level student writes fluently but needs deeper content exploration. For example, when describing classmates gathering around after class, they might only briefly depict the dialogue. The teacher can guide them to incorporate cultural context and personal reflection. The sentence can be revised to: “As my classmates gathered around, I not only shared the story behind my name but also expressed how this moment symbolized a bridge between cultures—one that turns mispronunciation into meaningful connection.” This elevates thematic depth and content refinement.

3.3. Student-Student Interaction

Student-student interaction acts as a crucial social context for cognitive development, according to Sociocultural Theory. One primary method of this interaction is peer review. Clear logic, a vivid imagination, and solid linguistic skills are necessary for continuation writing. Every kid is unique in their knowledge reserves, writing habits, and ways of thinking. By organizing peer reviews, students can encourage one another by exchanging ideas and conversations. Students can learn from the strengths of others and recognize shortcomings in their own writing from the perspective of their peers during review. With the aid of peer review, students can not only identify and correct grammatical errors and improper word usage, but broaden their ideas and enhance text organization and plot construction. Thereby, comprehensively enhance the students’ continuation writing proficiency.

For instance, teachers can design a peer evaluation form to help students give focused feedback in three areas: language use, story plot, and text structure. They can evaluate each other’s writings to see if the vocabulary is precise and varied, if the grammatical structures are correct and diverse, if the plot design is logical and coherent, and if the text organization is complete and well-connected. This method helps students identify areas that need improvement, deepen their understanding of continuation writing, learn diverse ways to express ideas, improve their own writing continuously, and make collective progress.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Research Conclusions

Using Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory as the framework, this study systematically examined how students interact with texts, how teachers interact with students, and how students interact with each other in senior high school English continuation task teaching. The research indicates that achieving alignment in continuation tasks is mainly a psychological process, where students negotiate meaning and internalize language through social interaction. The deficiency in effectiveness of interaction in current teaching practice stems from a fragmented understanding of interaction. Teachers fail to integrate the three types of interaction systematically using theoretical perspective of mediation, scaffolding, and the Zone of Proximal Development.

The main conclusion of this study is a teaching strategy model to promote alignment. It starts from the student's Zone of Proximal Development and follows a pathway of deeply integrating three types of interaction. In this model, student-text interaction is the foundation, aiming to help students deeply decode the text as a cultural tool, and construct meaning. This provides a blueprint for content and language alignment. Teacher-student interaction is the key. Teachers act as scaffold providers, offering precise support through differentiated guidance to help students overcome alignment challenges. Student-student interaction is the catalyst. Using structured evaluation tools, students negotiate and refine content, language, and themes jointly, enhancing continuation writing proficiency comprehensively. The three types of interaction are not simply superimposed, but dynamically integrate and complement each other at different stages of the continuation task: deconstruction, conception, creation, and evaluation. Together, they form an ecosystem that helps students develop language skills and thinking capacities through interactions.

4.2. Teaching Implications

The findings of this study offer important implications for senior high school English continuation task teaching under the new curriculum standards. Teachers need to change their role from unidirectional transmitter of knowledge to a designer of interactive environments, a scaffolder of the learning process, and a facilitator of meaning negotiation. The core lies in accurately diagnosing students' ZPD and designing matching interactive tasks and support tools accordingly. On this basis, instructional design should focus more on interaction quality than on the type of activity. Tasks should have clear cognitive orientation, such as focusing on plot logic and linguistic style alignment. They should also encompass mandatory negotiation structures, like requiring justification or using checklists, to ensure interaction effectively fosters deep thinking and language processing. At the same time, teaching evaluation should be deeply embedded in the interaction process, on the alignment of the final product but also on students' participation, contribution, and metacognitive abilities during interaction. This approach, thereby, truly achieves a virtuous cycle of "promoting learning through evaluation, promoting interaction

through evaluation.”

4.3. Research Limitations

The strategic model constructed in this study primarily relies on literature review and theoretical reasoning. Although explained in conjunction with typical teaching examples, its generalizability and actual teaching effectiveness have not been fully verified through rigorous large-sample controlled experiments.

4.4. Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the conclusions and limitations of this study, future research can deepen and expand in several directions. First, quasi-experimental studies can track the long-term effects of the “Three-Dimensional Interaction” model. Researchers can compare it with traditional teaching models, tracking students’ continuation task performance, writing motivation, and core competency development. These studies should be done under controlled conditions and use quantitative measures to show the model’s effectiveness. Second, in the context of information-based teaching, further exploration can be conducted into using online collaboration platforms, including shared documents, interactive whiteboards, and AI feedback tools. Such tools can expand the forms and boundaries of the three types of interaction. For example, online cross-school peer reviews or AI-assisted language alignment analysis can help create new ways to combine online and offline interactive teaching.

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