

A Study on the Teaching Practice of English Continuation Writing from the Perspective of Discourse Analysis

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Abstract: With the continuous deepening of the new curriculum reform, the goal of cultivating core competencies in English has become more explicit, and senior high school English teaching is undergoing a transformation from traditional knowledge-based instruction to the enhancement of comprehensive language application ability. As a new English writing type that integrates reading and writing, continuation writing has been officially incorporated into the National College Entrance Examination (Gaokao) English test in recent years, becoming a crucial indicator for measuring students' language proficiency. This question type requires students to have a solid foundation of basic language knowledge and strong innovative thinking ability, as it is a comprehensive assessment of students' overall English application skills. This paper analyzes and studies continuation writing based on the genre, cohesion, coherence of the continuation text and senior high school English continuation writing, and explores practical strategies for continuation writing grounded in discourse analysis.

Keywords: Continuation writing; Discourse analysis; Coherence; Cohesion

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1. Introduction

In the National College Entrance Examination English Test Syllabus (2015) issued by the Examination Center of the Ministry of Education, it was clearly stated that a new continuation writing section would be added to the writing part of the Gaokao English test. This question type was first adopted in the 2016 Gaokao English test in Zhejiang Province. General Senior High School English Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition, Revised in 2020) elaborates on core competencies and methods for their cultivation. Senior high school students are in a critical period for the development of key learning abilities; proper guidance during this stage helps them master essential knowledge and develop sound qualities. In the new curriculum standards, continuation writing has become an important means to assess students' language proficiency and thinking quality^[1].

Continuation writing requires candidates to, based on understanding the original text, develop reasonable imagination within a specified time and complete a continuation of approximately 150 words using the English knowledge they have learned. However, in actual teaching, students' continuations are often disconnected from the original text and lack plot coherence. This paper applies discourse analysis theory to explore how to conduct discourse analysis, accurately grasp the theme and characters of the text, and naturally and effectively use inter-paragraph and inter-sentence cohesive devices in continuation writing, to help students construct continuations with clear structure, tight contextual cohesion, and coherence.

2. Teaching value of post-reading continuation writing under the guidance of core literacy

Fundamental changes have taken place in senior high school English teaching under the guidance of core literacy, and the new college entrance examination places greater emphasis on assessing the educational effects of core literacy. Post-reading continuation writing serves as a crucial means to evaluate students' English learning abilities and the development of their core literacy; it is also a key approach to fostering students' core literacy, setting higher requirements for their subject-specific literacy. Post-reading continuation writing holds significant value in cultivating students' core literacy and demonstrates strong compatibility. Through systematic training, students can integrate all knowledge points into a coherent whole in a short period, thereby forming a comprehensive knowledge system ^[2]. This not only helps improve students' learning efficiency but also enhances the quality of their learning. During the senior high school years, many students maintain a positive learning attitude and strive to master English knowledge. However, they often achieve unsatisfactory learning results and struggle to make effective progress in their grades. An investigation reveals that most students fail to integrate different components, such as reading and writing. As a result, although they can memorize a large number of words, they find it difficult to accurately understand the connotation of materials and produce high-quality compositions in writing. In contrast, the implementation of post-reading continuation writing helps establish connections between vocabulary, phrases, and grammar, thereby enhancing students' comprehensive literacy and abilities ^[3].

3. Research on discourse analysis and post-reading continuation writing teaching

In the 1970s, linguist Halliday (1970) proposed that language possesses three metafunctions: (1) the interpersonal function, (2) the ideational function, and (3) the textual function. The core content of discourse analysis lies in studying continuous language and its relationship with context. Since language consists of both meaning and form, discourse can also be structured through two types of relationships: cohesion and coherence. Discourse analysis refers to the analysis of discourse structure, which is generally divided into two major categories: macro-structural research and micro-structural research. Macro-structural research primarily focuses on exploring the in-depth meaning and organizational framework of discourse, while micro-structural research centers on the study of sentences. From the perspective of cohesion and coherence, discourse analysis theory emphasizes revealing the internal relationships between various parts of a text and explaining how to achieve clearer and more logical expression through cohesive and coherent devices.

3.1. Clarifying discourse structure and grasping the overall content

Senior high school English involves a wealth of theoretical knowledge, and students need to possess certain logical thinking abilities when engaging in post-reading continuation writing, learning and practice. Therefore, teachers should consciously guide students to analyze from the overall perspective of discourse, enabling them to deeply understand the structure and context of the article and better ensure the fluency of the written continuation. In the process of guiding students to carry out continuation writing, teachers should encourage them to analyze based on the overall structure of the article rather than confining their focus to a single paragraph or sentence. This mode of continuation writing is conducive to improving students' reading abilities, thereby helping them develop comprehensive language expression skills ^[4].

Taking the theme "from problems to solutions" as an example, teachers can guide students to conduct an in-depth analysis of the article and reflect on how the global community provides solutions to address problems. Teachers can also encourage students to use their imagination to think about issues, explore solutions applicable to different problems, and thereby complete the continuation writing.

In addition, teachers can provide writing ideas and frameworks to help students express their thoughts and viewpoints, thereby achieving effective teaching guidance. This teaching method is beneficial for the development of students' comprehensive abilities and the cultivation of their innovative capabilities.

3.2. Analyze the meaning of the original text and ensure coherent continuation

When high school English involves challenging writing tasks (specifically continuation writing), teachers can help students gain a deep understanding of the detailed requirements of the task by creating outlines. They can also list cohesive devices in the form of the shortest discourse units according to the development of the story. After students complete the continuation task, they can optimize and integrate their writing content to ensure that the continued work is coherent and natural with the original text. For the entire article, cohesive devices are particularly important. The coherence of the continued text is ensured through the use of references and pronouns, conjunctions, and transitional language. Therefore, to ensure that the style and quality of students' continued works are consistent with the original text, teachers can guide students to learn and use cohesive devices and creatively develop the story content.

For example, after reading a text themed "Mother's Day" and completing the continuation task, students should be guided to deeply analyze the continuation mode and language style of the text, to integrate the original text with their own writing. Teachers should encourage students to engage in extensive reading in their spare time, extract sentence patterns and structures from the texts they read, and then flexibly incorporate phrases and sentence patterns into the plot of their stories during the learning process. This model also helps arousing students' interest in learning, allowing them to give full play to their imagination to complete writing tasks through continuation or adaptation of structures, and select sentence patterns from their knowledge reserve. This is a key way to cultivate good thinking qualities and helps students develop strong writing skills.

3.3. Explore textbook discourses and build a corpus

To ensure the quality and effectiveness of teaching, teachers should deeply explore the reading discourses in textbooks, establish a corresponding corpus, and conduct multi-perspective analysis of the stories in the discourses. This enables students to analyze and think about problems from different angles, record and summarize the insights they gain during the learning process, and build their own corresponding corpus. Only

in this way can students deeply understand the content and structural characteristics of the text, master key language knowledge, and improve their personal reading and writing abilities.

For instance, in the teaching of the “Reading and Thinking” unit in textbooks, teachers can select representative article content based on the unit’s theme, and choose article structures of different genres, including news reports, popular science articles, novels, etc. Students are then guided to conduct an in-depth analysis of these articles from aspects such as theme and structure. During the analysis process, teachers should ask students to pay attention to important sentence patterns and vocabulary in the articles and record them. These records will also be helpful for students in their subsequent reading and writing. When reading news reports, students can record the article’s theme, main content, and conclusion, as well as important vocabulary and phrases. In this way, when writing, students can select appropriate vocabulary and sentence patterns from the corpus to accurately express their views and opinions, making the writing content more interesting. The establishment of a corpus also helps to enrich teaching materials and provide support for teaching work ^[5].

3.4. Imitate discourse style and continue the story plot

For continuation writing, it is of great importance for students to fully understand the linguistic characteristics and writing style of a work. Otherwise, there will be discrepancies in the style of the continuation, making it difficult to convey the emotions intended by the original text. If the original text of an article is relatively simple, students also need to express themselves using simple and clear sentence patterns. If the structure of the original text is complex, teachers should guide students to analyze the characteristics and structure of the original text, and then use different descriptive techniques to complete the continuation. This ensures the continuity of the work and avoids inconsistencies with the original style caused by ambiguous expression methods.

Take the textbook text “Mother of Ten Thousand Babies” as an example, teachers first guide students to analyze the writing style and linguistic characteristics of the original text, so as to understand the ideas and attitudes the author intends to convey. During the reading and writing process, students can also imitate the expressive features of the original text to present a consistent style and complete the continuation task. This kind of learning and practice activity helps students master more diverse writing skills, thereby improving their expressive abilities. In the writing process, students can add some detailed elements to further enrich the content of the article and ensure the rigor of the content, which also helps to enhance their writing skills ^[6].

4. Conclusion

To sum up, the combination of discourse analysis theory and continuation writing provides important theoretical support for the practice of continuation writing, a key learning activity in senior high school. It is of great guiding significance for constructing continued texts with coordinated context, reasonable cohesion, and coherent plots. Under the background of the new curriculum reform, teachers should guide students to practice continuation writing based on discourse, develop key discourse analysis abilities, and improve their personal writing skills. In teaching, teachers should focus on cultivating students’ “discourse analysis” ability, consciously guide them to master key methods of cohesion and coherence, and complete high-quality continuous texts.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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