

# Study on Teaching Strategies of Continuation Task

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**Abstract:** *The continuation task is a combination of reading and writing, where students are required to write a composition which is highly consistent with the original text in terms of language, structure, plot and so on. This type of exercise is a comprehensive carrier to test students' ability of comprehension, expression and innovative thinking. Based on the analysis of related theories of the continuation task, this paper takes the English test of the National College Entrance Examination in China in July 2020 as an example to explore how teachers guide students to finish the continuation task in high quality. The purpose of this paper is to provide an effective reference for future English teaching in continuation task.*

**Keywords:** *Continuation Task; English Writing; Teaching strategy*

## 1. Introduction

With the deepening of the reform of English teaching, the continuation task as a new topic of the writing in the National College Entrance Examination in China, requires students to design for the rest of story after fully understanding the content of original text. It is necessary to analyze the author's logic, thoughts and feelings, and clarify the main theme of the original text, so as to give play to the imagination to design the rest of story without changing stylistic feature, literary style and plot development. The continuation task is a kind of teaching method that employs reading comprehension to practice writing. While taking into account the context of the article, the process of language input and output is closely combined, and the coherence and interactivity of language learning are emphasized, so that students can get better results in English learning.

However, in the actual teaching process, there are still many difficulties in the teaching of continuation task, which is mainly reflected in the difficulty of guidance for uneven ability of students, the lack of writing material for teaching and the problem of choosing the key words and sentence patterns to ensure the rationality of thinking. Therefore, this paper analyzes the current educational situation, and tries to explore the methods and approaches suitable for guiding students to accomplish the continuation task.

## 2. Current Situation of High School Students' English Writing Ability

As a new type of writing test in English reform of college entrance examination, continuation task pays more attention to the cultivation of students' ability of comprehensive language application and also focuses on the core literacy of students in English study, which makes some students at a loss about what to do and presents the following problems.

### 2.1. Fear and Aversion to English Writing

In the face of English writing, many students have an aversion or even worse, hold the view that they will not get good grades no matter how hard they study. Under the influence of fear of difficulties, students' enthusiasm for English writing is very low. They can't write as a result of not loving writing, which also affects their mastery of other aspects of English knowledge.

### 2.2. Partial or Inaccurate in Understanding

It is not uncommon that some students start to write after casually browsing the text. It also brought some problems, the reason for which is shallow understanding of original text. Those students have the difficulty of accurately grasping the content of the article and its internal logical structure and language characteristics or even worse, engage in writing when not understanding it at all. That's why the essay

will digress from the subject[1].

### ***2.3. Limited Thinking in English Writing***

As a result of the poor English foundation, some students' creative writing is often restricted when writing and it is difficult for them to develop their train of thought, which results in monotonous articles. What's worse, the lack of good writing ideas makes the essay too simple, colloquial and lack of depth, so that it fails to achieve good writing ability cultivation effect, just to complete the homework.

### ***2.4. Emptiness and Repetition of Language***

The content of some articles written by students are empty and devoid, with monotonous and repetitive language, rigid expression and grammatical errors which are deeply influenced by Chinese expression habits.

## **3. Theoretical Basis of Continuation Task**

Wang Chuming (2012) first proposed the concept of continuation task, which means that writing exercises based on a full understanding of the reading text can realize the combination of language input and output, language imitation and creation, and language learning and application, which is an effective method to improve learners' foreign language learning ability[2]. Subsequently, he(2016) further extends the concept as the theory of language acquisition, that is, Continuation Theory. It contains two basic points of view: first language is learned through continuation and second the high efficiency of language acquisition is achieved through continuation task[3]. Wang Chuming (2019) believes that creative imitation is the core concept of continuation promoting language learning. It refers to the way that learners constantly create new content in the process of learners interacting with the text. Once language expression is blocked, they are likely to borrow words of the other to improve their own expression[4].

The proposal of continuation task has its extensive theoretical basis. Krashen (1982) pointed out that learners need comprehensible input in language learning, that is, the input language should be slightly higher than the learner's existing language ability in order to effectively promote the second language acquisition of language learners[5]. Long (1983) proposed the interaction hypothesis, arguing that the interaction between two languages, especially the negotiation of meaning between them, makes the language input easier to understand. The interaction hypothesis is a further development of comprehensible input. However, if the language has only input without output, the smooth expression of language is difficult to achieve[6]. To make up for the deficiency of the input hypothesis theory, Swain (1985) proposed the output hypothesis, pointing out that learners need to do a lot of output practice of speaking and writing in order to internalize language knowledge and improve language competence[7]. Harmer (1983) believes that the process of language input and the output has different functions and interacts with each other[8]. In continuation task, reading is the process of learners' input, while writing corresponds to the output of the language. The interaction between language input and output forms the theoretical basis for continuation task. The Interactive Alignment Model proposed by Pickering and Garrod (2004) is the main theoretical basis for continuation task[9].

## **4. Characteristics and Scoring Principles of the Continuation Task**

Professor Wang put forward the idea of continuation task. He believed that in the process of English learning, the better one understands the language, the more output he will produce. The closer the relationship between the two is, the more successful the language acquisition will be. This type of exercise closely combines reading and writing, which not only inspects students' reading comprehension ability but also tests their writing ability. All of these ultimately improve the learners' ability of comprehensive linguistic using. The new test was first used in English writing of the National Entrance Examination in Zhejiang, China in 2016. It was then introduced nationwide, with the development of its reform. The following will be from the following several aspects to analyze this type of exercise.

### ***4.1. Characteristics of the Continuation Task***

Continuation task literally means to read an article first and then continue writing the story. In this process, learners must comprehend what the article is about, understand its causes and consequences,

development process, and emotional changes in people.

Test Directions put forward clear requirements to continuation task. It is provided a paragraph of less than 350 words. According to the material content, the beginning of the paragraph and the key words, the candidates are required to continue to write an article about 150 words, which is connected with given material, its plot and structure. What refers here is the trial edition regulation of Zhejiang province. The content that examinee continues to write can't copy original text or make up. It is required to have logic connection with original text on the structure, relevance on the content. It would be better with innovation. In general, the characteristics of continuation task are as follows.

First, logic. Candidates can continue to write the content with complete structure and rigorous logic in a reasonable direction according to the key information prompted by the article. Second, innovation. This type of exercise is the semi-open and semi-controlled question. Examinee is required to give full play to the imagination, so as to create the article and continue to write something different and original. Third, rationality. Candidates should be required to continue to write according to the requirements, instead of making up on their own. Fourth, accuracy. What is required here is the accuracy of language knowledge, including vocabulary, grammar, syntax, phrase collocation, etc. Besides, it would be taken into consideration whether the expression is accurate and authentic. Fifth, richness. It means that the details of the continuation should be substantial and lively to attract the interest of the readers.

#### **4.2. Scoring Principle of the Continuation Task**

Zeng(2017) pointed out that examiners generally follow such a process to mark in a very limited time. At first, according to the content of the essay, judge whether it is off-topic, so as to preliminarily determine a level of grade. Then, according to the content of a refined assessment in the level of grade, or readjust the level of grade. Finally, score. This type of writing test has a total of 25 points and is divided into five levels of grades[10]. Text Directions listed the scoring standard of this question in detail. Not only provides it a very important basis and reference for the examiner in the scoring, but also it directs teachers and students to a direction in the usual teaching and practice, so that it is more targeted and easy to achieve the objectives of training.

By comparing with the previous grading criteria for propositional compositions, it can be seen that the two are basically consistent in classification, classification requirements, accuracy and richness in grammar and lexical structure, and coherence in context. The difference between them is that the examiner should take the following content into account when marking. First, the degree of cohesion between the content and the beginning of the paragraph. The purpose of it is to test the students' ability to control the structure of the discourse. Second, the richness of the content and the coverage of the key words. It is to encourage students to think positively and mobilize their subjective initiative. For example, in the fifth grade, four requirements are listed in the scoring criteria, among which the most important one is the high degree of harmony with the given essay. This means that in addition to a reasonable plot, word number, structure and other language knowledge, the composition also emphasizes the consistency of the keynote, theme and language style of the article. Through the analysis of the scoring standards, we can clearly see that for the examinee, continuation task sets higher demands, specifically, is to ask the examinee to understand the article and grasp the key information and language characteristics of the article in a given time. In the continuation part, reasonable imagination, contextual connection, and logical content are needed.

### **5. Teaching Strategy in the Continuation Task**

Continuation task combines reading with writing. Reading the given article is the basis of continuation, and at the same time continuation is to improve the content of the article. It is required that candidates integrate obtaining and processing information with English thinking, and language expression. Therefore, only effective input through step-by-step reading can finally achieve the goal of output. This paper will take English test of College Entrance Examination in Zhejiang, China in July 2020 as an example to analyze and explain.

#### **5.1. Reading Through the Text and Understanding the Main Idea**

It is the first task to read a text thoroughly. Reading is the premise, that is, the input. Writing is the result, that is, the output. To a great extent, whether the continuation is reasonable depends on the accuracy of the understanding of the content, structure and language of the text. Therefore, students need

to have a purposeful reading to understand the main idea of the material, grasp the narrative structure, obtain the information of characters, analyze the conflict of events, taste the language characteristics, etc., so as to lay a solid foundation for the subsequent writing. In the view of it, the teacher should first urge the students to read through the whole text, understand the main idea of the passage, and carefully sort out the WH questions, that is, Who, What, Where, Why, When and How the passage involves. The given material of English test in Zhejiang in July 2020 is from the text named "Face to Face with Polar Bears" published by National Geographic Society in 2009. The author and his wife were confronted by a polar bear at a research camp in the Arctic. They tried various ways to get rid of the bear, but failed. Finally they had to turn to the camp warden for help. However, it would be in 30 minutes at the fastest time before the helicopter could reach them. Therefore, a contest between man and bear was about to begin.

### **5.2. Brainstorming and Elaborating**

Brainstorming can allow students to express their opinions, realize the collision of thinking and exchange of ideas, and bring confidence to writing in English. One of the reasons why many students have difficulty of writing is that they are at a loss when writing. They have no idea what to write. Therefore, this aspect should be strengthened in peacetime training. Students can work and cooperate with each other. Teachers, acting as listeners, understand the plot development and actively guide students to use crossed words such as photograph, pictures, safe, Elli, camera, bread, fence, lee, spray, ran, etc, and effectively link the opening sentences of the two paragraphs.

(1) A few minutes later, the bear headed back to our camp...

(2) At that very moment, the helicopter arrived...

The first paragraph can be written by focusing on the key words "headed back", which effectively guides the students to describe the angry feeling when the polar bear returns. Let students make rich and reasonable associations and actively think about how the polar bear will show its anger after being sprayed with pepper spray, such as howling loudly, attacking the guardrail, etc.

The second paragraph is about the key words "at that very moment", which infers that at the end of the last paragraph, there should be a crucial moment in the fight between the couple and the bear. It also makes students realize that the first sentence of the second paragraph has a great influence on the inference of the first paragraph. The second paragraph is mainly a continuation of the end of the first paragraph, which centers on the rescue of the couple by helicopter. According to the situation described in the article, the helicopter can choose two rescue methods: the first is to lower the rope ladder to take the two people out of the danger area; the second is to use a helicopter to make noise scare off polar bears and remove the danger. Another way to solve the contradiction is to guess the reason why the polar bear came to the camp based on hungry bear and a young male bear. Brainstorming mainly trains students to speak rationally, meaningfully.

### **5.3. Clear Logic and Emulating Creativity**

It is important for students to not break away from the context when writing, and to pay attention to the logical relationship between the contextual events. Only the narrative in line with the plot development can be convincing. According to the previous article, the word "hungry bear" explained the reason why the polar bear wanted to enter the author's camp. In addition, the polar bear mentioned in the article is a young male bear. According to these information, it can be associated that why the bear is so grumpy. Maybe it is hunger or having a baby bear that makes its feeling worse, which forces it to attack humans so as to take food. Therefore, in the process of writing the following article, we can start from this to solve the current hostile relationship between humans and bears. When the bear returned, hungry and injured, a confrontation was inevitable. How the author and his wife would deal with it would be different. In the second paragraph, the helicopter arrived, the only purpose must be to rescue "us", and in line with the principle of harmony between man and nature and animals, the confrontation and hostility relationship between human and bear should be changed, the continuation of the content should be full of positive energy. The prelude or the background statement is very useful for the plot development. Students should take the prelude into full consideration when planning the layout, and avoid aimless and random play by all means.

The continuation task is finally presented in the form of writing, and all ideas need to be expressed in the form of language. If the students' language expression is not accurate and vivid, then the effect of the previous careful reading of the text will be greatly reduced. Wang Chuming believes that English

learning is inseparable from imitation, whether in the basic stage of second language learning or in the advanced stage of trying to figure out the language expression of native English speakers. Teachers should guide students to pay attention to the language style of the original text from the aspects of person, tense, vocabulary, sentence structure and rhetoric, so that students can imitate and creatively use it in the continuation of the text, so as to continue its language style and meet the requirements of language collaboration after reading[2]. Therefore, teachers can guide students to focus on language features in the reading and summarize the rich sentence patterns in the original text. For example, the sentence “a young male polar bear who was playing in a nearby lake sniffed, and smelled our garlic bread” is the use of attributive clauses. Sentence “Terrified, Elli and I tried all the bear defense actions we knew” is adjectives as accompanying adverbials to describe the characters vividly. Sentence “We yelled at the bear, hit pots hard, and fired blank shotgun shells into the air” uses continuous predicate verbs to show the urgency of the current situation and make the language concise.

In the process of reading, students continue to read back the original text, stimulate language cognition, so as to make cognitive comparison, and build a framework for the subsequent writing. Imitation and creation can improve the coordination between the continuation language and the original text, and achieve the leveling effect of continuation task so that it finally promotes the improvement of students' language ability and thinking ability.

Therefore, these three aspects should be paid attention to, that is, content, logic and language. Students should know what to write, avoid empty statements, and then focus on thinking about how to plan the layout, explain the topic logically and clearly, and the most important thing is to express the content of the idea in appropriate language.

#### **5.4. Evaluation and Polishing**

Evaluation and polishing are the last part of continuation task. Teachers should create new ways of evaluation and feedback to cultivate students' ability of self-reflection and self-regulation. Students' self-evaluation can improve their self-reflection ability, find out the obvious problems in writing in time and modify them; Peer evaluation can put forward corresponding revision opinions for the other party. In this way, low-level students can expand the scope of language imitation and improve their language ability with the help of the continuation materials of high-level students.

According to the evaluation standard, students modify and polish the works after self-evaluation and mutual evaluation. At the same time, teachers should remind students to pay special attention to the language description of action and psychology, as well as the cohesion and coherence of logic, and keep coordination with the original text in the aspects of plot, content, language and writing style.

## **6. Conclusion**

High school English teaching is shifting from exam-oriented education to quality-oriented education, emphasizing the cultivation of students' comprehensive ability to use language. As a new type of writing test, the continuation task conforms to the trend of high school English teaching reform, and the educational idea of the unity of knowledge and practice, and plays a positive role in improving students' ability of expressing in foreign languages. Reading and writing are closely linked, and adequate comprehensible input can go a long way towards correct language production and even accelerate learning.

However, the improvement of writing ability needs long-term accumulation, and test-taking skills can play the best function only on the premise of mastering the knowledge learned. In view of this, English teaching in senior high schools should strengthen through education from lower grades to higher grades to help them lay a solid language foundation, continuously improve their writing ability, and finally achieve the progress of second language acquisition level. It is necessary for us to reflect on how to realize the optimization of the learning promotion effect of this type of exercise.

The attention should be paid to the cultivation of students' language expression ability. Students are more likely to make mistakes in language expression in the continuation task. It can be seen that language teaching should properly return to the true nature of language and guide students to pay attention to the integrity of language[11]. At the specific level of operation, teachers can increase the training of sentence making or imitation to encourage students to master sentence expression through practice, and avoid passively accepting or mechanically copying to cultivate students' self-correcting ability, and at the same time concentrate on explaining common problems. What's more, it is necessary to focus on the cultivation

of text interaction ability. Based on the interactive and collaborative model, Wang (2011) proposed an effective approach to foreign language learning, that is, firstly interaction, then understanding, then collaboration and output, and finally acquisition[12]. By interacting with the original text and the author, as well as the interaction between language production and text comprehension, foreign language learners consciously draw up to the level of the continuation and the original text. This synergistic effect improves the quality of language production and further promotes the development of second language acquisition.

All in all, there is no doubt that continuation task will lead to the reform of English classroom teaching in senior high schools, which will stimulate teachers to dig into relevant resources, continue to explore teaching methods, then promote the construction of wonderful classes, and finally effectively improve the quality of teaching.

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