



The Application of the Teaching Mode of the Continuation Task

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Abstract. This paper reviews three cardinal aspects in the teaching process of the Continuation Task, including the selection of material, instruction in students' reading and approach in the writing phase. By analyzing influential factors in the three aspects respectively, this paper tries to find out the appropriate and efficient pedagogy, which aimed at providing enlightenment in teaching and facilitating learning proficiency among students. There are primarily several vital factors that deserve measured contemplation: students' interest and background information, lexical difficulty, syntax, literary genres, proper reading guidance, the mark of keywords, micro-skills training and iterative continuation. This paper analyzes the way that these factors function in the Continuation Task and teaching methods deriving from the previous studies. Through the review and reflection of ingredients in the Continuation task from three aspects, the paper presents precautions in teaching and effective skills to enhance the language acquisition of students. In terms of material selection, interest, level of difficulty and genres should all be incorporated into consideration. Specifically, the difficulty level of passage chosen should be attuned to students' production ability level and the proportion of several genres of material for practice need to be modulated in accordance with teaching objectives. In reading guidance, the ploys of situational analysis and underscoring keywords are suggested to be employed. For writing practice, micro-skill training and iterative writing can be of efficacy in teaching process.

Keywords: Teaching Mode · Continuation Task · Reading Material

1 Introduction

Professor Wang Chuming put forward the teaching method of the Continuation Task based on the Second Language Acquisition Theory, as well as the Input and Output Theory. As the Continuation Task combines reading and writing skillfully, it can better promote students' synergy and expression motivation in the second language acquisition. Many previous studies and experiments have been conducted to investigate the actual benefits and advantages for students' learning, which mainly include elevating students' interest in writing [1]. Also, they focus on stimulating students' motivation for expressing, enhancing students' acquisition of advanced expression in reading materials, and improving the efficiency of foreign language learning [2]. However, studies concerned with how to apply the Continuation Task to the teaching process skillfully to maximize

students' learning effect are in scarcity, which is of great importance. Contributing to exert the method's beneficial impact on reality teaching, the paper shows the specific way that these ingredients influence students' learning and enlightening teaching approach accordingly. For teachers who attempts to apply the effective method into practice, practical skills and clues presented in the paper can be helpful for them in making the method of Continuation Task play a greater role in optimizing students' reading and writing ability in the class.

2 The Selection of Materials

In the teaching process of the Continuation Task, rational selection of reading materials is the foundation and guarantee for smooth operation of writing tasks. That is because suitable reading materials not only creates the basis for students' writing, but also provides students with a model for imitation. Fundamentally, three factors should be taken into consideration in choosing reading passages, which include reader-related factors, language-related factors and literary genres.

2.1 Reader-Related Factors

Reader-related factors are primarily concerned with the learners' interests and their accumulation of the background information [3, 4].

Research in educational and cognitive psychology has confirmed a strong relationship between interest and learning. The elevation of students' interest in reading materials is conducive to writing practices, as indicated by research [5]. Students were found to produce less mistakes and more aligned structures when performing interesting tasks, as opposed to uninteresting ones in that interest is a great facilitator for comprehension and alignment [5]. As a result, there emerges the pedagogical method, which is the exact match between students' interests and materials. For example, based on vocabulary and expressions about adventure and extreme sports accumulated in the learning of Unit 8 Adventure Lesson 2 Extreme Sports, students could be assigned to complete writing tasks after reading a passage about extreme sports, which are selected by teachers. For high school students, adventure and sports could stimulate their interests in participation to a certain extent, creating good conditions for the development of post-reading continuation activities [6].

Apart from stimulating learners' interests, reading materials should be closely related to students' daily life. Only in this way, the materials are more likely to trigger emotional resonance among students, who can be easier to understand the connotation of the article, and will have more ideas in the continuation tasks. Specifically, topics of materials should be close to students' actual life experiences to enhance students' reading and learning experience so as to mobilize students' interest in language expression.

2.2 Language-Related Factors

Generally, there are six language-related factors mentioned in the previous research [7]. However, there are two germane factors to the paper, which are vocabulary and

syntax [7]. They are also primary indexes to measure linguistic complexity [7]. Since the primary task of the Continuation Writing is the comprehension of the input text. Also, the language level of the input text plays a decisive role in the complexity of the task, which naturally has a vital impact on the output text of the task participants.

2.2.1 Lexical Difficulty

Lexical difficulty is measured from two aspects: word length and word frequency [8]. Since long words are usually abstract and infrequent, which could intensify the difficulty for students' comprehension. Likewise, reading materials with words of low frequency would block the perception of materials among students, thereby posing negative effects on the continuation of writing. Thereby, in practical teaching, a certain number of words with long length and low frequency should be pruned out, depending on the language ability of students.

Peng and other scholars explored the impact of syntactic complexity on the continuation of works [9]. This study firstly adjusted vocabulary and sentence length; then it set the antecedents with consistent content but with different complexity [9]. The study found that the antecedents with lower complexity have led to more synergy, improving writing accuracy and fluency [9]. The reason is that the antecedents with higher complexity exceed the output ability of the subjects [9]. Therefore, the proportion of new words in reading materials should be appropriate, so that students can read easily and pay more attention to the language form.

2.2.2 Syntax Complexity

Theoretically, syntactic complexity reflects the complexity of language structure, which often includes multiple indicators such as sentence length, subordinate structure, parallel structure and verb phrase [10]. Simplified linguistic complexity is more favorable for reading understanding and writing practices [9]. Precisely, from the aspect of input, Production Ability in Terms of Linguistic Complexity (PLC) texts lead to more completeness of the situational model and efficient attention to language form than the Comprehension Ability in Terms of Linguistic Complexity (CLC) texts. In the output, writing accuracy and fluency are found to improve under the condition of PLC texts, as the automatic alignment, sufficient attention to form and complete situational models constructed from the Pedagogically, in the respect of students' ability, for effective promotion of the Continuation Task, "Comprehensible Input" is adequate [11]. Indicated by the present study, texts of Linguistic Complexity round students' production rather than comprehension ability effectuate greater strides in writing accuracy and fluency [10]. Thus, input for reading and learning should be tailored to fit the ability level of production for students.

Also, on the side of complexity scale, it needs to be modified within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) of students' production capability. The design of the upper limit should be adjusted to the adaptable intricacy, as the input task should not stretch students too much. Language learning happens under the condition that learners are able to use the language forms of others [11]. Thus, the input should enable learners to pay attention to and tackle forms. To reach the goal, the complexity of input should be tuned

to make the processing of meaning effortless for students. Nevertheless, the setting of the low limit should be arranged above the present ability level. Research shows that the occurrence of synergy is related to the knowledge structure of second language learners [12]. Those structures that are not fully mastered are more prone to synergy [13]. Yang also mentions that synergy occurs when students notice their weakness in language use and become interested in narrowing the gap. Learners' understanding ability often far exceeds their output ability in the post-reading continuation task [14]. Therefore, learners use their own understanding ability to flexibly apply the syntactic structures that they think are valuable in the previous text to the output in the context of self-creation, in which their performance will be better than the output only by their own output ability [12].

2.3 Literary Genre

Generally, argumentation and narrative are the two most frequently employed genres for the Continuation Task. As for the proportion of the two in teaching practices, the adjustment needs to be based on teaching objectives. Argumentative writing has stronger synergy and a lower error frequency than narrative writing, but the language output of narrative writing is greater than argumentative writing.

In argumentation writing, more synergy and less errors occur during the continuation writing among students [15]. There are three reasons mainly attributed to this. First, there is the lack of expressions for synergy and usage in narratives. For one, there are many dialogues in the narrative, in which repetition and deletion are common and the change of sentence pattern is relatively monotonous. For another, the context is rich so that a word can express its meaning clearly [16]. Second, the attention will be abstracted from language form to plot planning. The continuation writing of narratives produces the conflict of attention allocation, as students automatically reduce their attention to language forms [17]. Third, the tense changes in narratives are complex, which puts higher demands for students' knowledge reserve, so students are more likely to make mistakes in writing.

In the continuation of the narrative genre, the output of written expression is greater, and the fluency of expression is better [18]. The narrative is rich in plot, leaving large room for imagination without restriction. Hence, students write longer. Meanwhile, since there is no sentimental section in the argumentative paper, students only need to stage facts and reason, which limits the length of subjects' continuous writing.

3 Approach in the Reading Stage

3.1 Reader-Related Factors

Skillful introduction to reading materials could bridge the gap between students and the input, which is contributory to further reading and understanding [6]. In this period, efforts should be mainly devoted to paving the path for the smooth understanding of reading passages, involving context construction and vocabulary expansion.

In the phase, by constructing the language environment related to the reading theme and combining the theme of reading with the students' actual life experience, teachers can

enhance the students' learning experience and mobilize the students' interest in language expression. At the same time, based on the construction of situation context as well as the bonds between actual experiences and reading theme, students' comprehension of issue and emotions behind words would be more comprehensive and exact. Also, with the advancement of modern teaching tools, English teaching Approach are constantly innovating. In consequence, in the adoption of the continuation writing, teachers can also try to cement the teaching effectiveness by new means. For example, before students read, they can use the learning software to release the background video of this follow-up text, so that students can better understand the topic. In addition, teachers can guide students to summarize core phrases related to the topic and expand relevant vocabulary according to their actual ability so as to lay a good vocabulary foundation for follow-up writing activities.

3.2 Analysis of Context

Usage-based approaches hold that any natural language is always used in context and is influenced by contextual factors [19]. In addition, the context can be divided into situational context and cultural context. In the teaching process of post-reading continuation, teachers should consciously train students' ability to analyze the situational context of the text and enhance students' understanding of cross-cultural background knowledge.

Since the original text and the sequel after reading constitute a complete text, the situation must be unified, that is, it has situational synergy [20]. Hence, the accurate analysis of the situational context is the prerequisite to coherence and rationality of the continuation of writing. In order to improve the ability of situational analysis of students, teachers should first let students understand what the so-called situational context is, what elements it is composed of, how these elements are reflected in the specific text, and how they affect the content and language expression in continuation writing. On one side, students should learn to grasp the six basic elements of the story: time (when), place (where), character (who), event (what), reason (why), and method (how). On the other, through reading between the line, the capability to infer the personalities of characters should be formed in students. Continuation is inseparable from the description of the key characters in the story. If students do not understand the traits of the characters and the information hidden behind them, it is very likely to make the characters inconsistent with the story prototype or even deviate from the theme in the writing process [21].

Also, every discourse has its cultural background; meanwhile, culture affects people's mode of behavior and communication mode [20]. Therefore, teachers should teach culture while teaching language to let students understand cultural differences.

3.3 Mark of Key Words

As the usage of certain words is dependent on the context, the application of keywords is not a mechanical repetition, but the creative employment of language. Students have to review the original text repeatedly in order to confirm and reason out the right place where keywords could be placed. In the process of reading back, their language knowledge is constantly consolidated, and their language self-learning ability is enhanced.

Teachers can appropriately increase the number of keywords in the text to promote language synergy. At the same time, when reading back the original text, students should be led to clarify the relationship between the language form and context to reach appropriate transference of language.

4 Approach in the Writing Stage

4.1 Micro-skills Training

The Continuation Task basically involves four kinds of description, which are action description, dialogue description, emotion description, and environment description. Teachers can carry out micro-skills training in these four descriptions to enhance students' writing ability [20]. Taking the action described as an example, most students are merely able to use some general verbs when describing the actions of characters. When they need to express their state of crying, the word "cry" is always the only choice for them, instead of using other words such as "sob." It could ingeniously and exquisitely portray psychological activities of characters. In other words, general words are much more easily mobilized by students than the specific words. Thus, in this training, instead of describing all actions without pertinence, students should learn to accumulate and choose the exact verbs that precisely reflect the psychology of figures.

Through the four-description training, students know how to describe the story line in detail so that their writing is more fluent, presenting a sense of picture to readers. Admittedly, the four descriptions also have a proportion in the writing process with most of the story lines related to the action description. On the basis of the improvement of the story line, students can add a corresponding emotional description, dialogue description, and environmental description to refine the whole composition.

4.2 Iterative Continuation

Iterative Continuation is one of the variants of post-reading continuation, which can mainly take two forms [22]. One is "two rounds of continuation," and the other is "novel continuation" [22]. The operation procedure of iterative continuation comprises four steps as follows.

4.2.1 The First Step

Teachers select an English story with proper length and complexity based on the learning state of students. Then, the reading material is divided into several sections in accordance with the plot development. The first section can be longer, which can familiarize learners with more background information, the author's writing style, and useful language expressions, paving the way for continuation writing.

4.2.2 The Second Step

Ensuring that students understand the reading materials given is the premise of continuation. In order to test whether students grasp the gist of the material, teachers can

design simple test questions. To be precise, a teacher could give 5 reading comprehension questions for each section, for which true or false questions could make answering more convenient. As for the selected setting, five sentences could be abstracted from each section with slight changes in the language form to check whether the learners have read carefully and fully understood the readings [22].

4.2.3 The Third Step

Grounded on the study of the first section, the continuation writing can be carried on. After completing the continuation of the first section, the second section of reading materials could be distributed to learners, who are required to read the second section and compare their composition with the original second section to find out the gap.

4.2.4 The Forth Step

After the students finish the comparative reading, students could continue to write the continuation section for the second paragraph. By repeating the above operations for the continuation of each chapter, students read one section at a time. In this process, they imitate the writing style of the novel and its language expression, write down its plot, constantly summarize their achievements and overcome their shortcomings until the end of the novel.

In short, Iterative Continuation is a proficient method that integrates reading and writing in the context of the same theme. In this way, students can interact with the text in reading, writing and comparison and then constantly revise and improve their writing. As Zhang and Wang suggest, “Iterative Continuation is the interaction and coordination between learners and authors in the process of students’ prediction and innovation of the content many times under the same theme and style [23]. Also, by imitating the original language, learners will become more familiar with the author’s language so as to gradually transform the high-quality language of the original into a language they can use [23].

5 Conclusion

This review paper analyses three respects of the Continuation Task: the selection of material, instruction in students’ reading, and approach in writing phase. In selecting reading materials, reader-related and language-related factors should be taken into consideration, with reader-related factors referring to students’ interests, foundations, lexical difficulty, syntax complexity and literary genres. In addition, at the reading stage, appropriate guidance should be focused on three points: pre-reading enrichment of background information and vocabulary, the analysis of context, compassing situational and cross-cultural context, and the mark of key words. At the last stage of writing, teachers could conduct micro-skill training and the Iterative Continuation. Through the review and analysis, the paper summarizes pedagogical skills. When choosing reading passages, the teaching method of the exacting match between students’ interest and materials as well as between students’ ability of production and the input difficulty is derived. In the phase of reading, instruction can be provided from several facets, including context

construction and vocabulary expansion. Also, in the writing stage, micro-skill practices and Iterative Continuation can be utilized to help to improve students' writing performance. The value of teaching theories partly lies in serving teaching process to give full play to teachers' function in optimization of students' learning. In the paper, influential points and effectual pedagogy are analyzed and presented for teachers to practice and experiment the teaching theory of Continuation Writing. Conversely, through collection of first-hand data from real teaching practices, the theory could be fully exposed for testimony and thus get further consummation, as some obscure points about the Continuation Writing need to be explored and solved in the context of practices.

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