

Research on the Optimization of Continuation Writing in English for Chinese High School Students Based on Interactive Alignment Theory

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[**Abstract**] Interactive alignment theory refers to the process where both parties in a conversation adjust their language and structure to achieve mutual adaptation and coordination. From the perspective of reading, this theory can be further explored as an interaction between the readers and the texts. By repeatedly using the vocabulary and language structures from the original text, a synergistic effect is produced, which helps students more accurately grasp the target language structures. In essence, exploring interactive alignment theory in the field of education is a form of learning effect. When high school students apply interactive alignment theory in continuation writing, they can fully engage their thinking through interaction with peers and texts, generating new ideas that serve as entry points for continuation writing. This enhances the effectiveness of continuation writing and improves students' overall continuation writing abilities.

[**Key words**] interactive alignment theory; continuation writing; high school English; teaching strategies

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1 Overview

Continuation writing refers to the process where students, after reading an incomplete text, write a continuation based on their understanding of the content and their predictions about the resolution. Continuation writing has a long history in China, dating back to the Qing Dynasty, such as the last 40 chapters of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, which were completed by Gao E. In the field of education, the concept of “continuation writing” was first proposed by Professor Wang Chuming in 2012 and was quickly implemented in classrooms, becoming a hot topic in teaching in recent years.

In the 2016 Zhejiang Province English college entrance examination, the continuation writing task appeared for the first time, requiring candidates to use their imagination to complete a 150-word essay based on the given text, with the content logically consistent. As reading materials are adjusted, continuation writing tasks are also adapted to students' learning levels, making it suitable for students of all levels. It helps them master more writing techniques, starting with language input, fully understanding the text, and then producing language output, which enhances students' reading abilities and stimulates their creative imagination.

2 Key points of high school English continuation writing teaching based on interactive alignment theory

Interactive alignment theory emphasizes that students strengthen their interaction with texts through communication and interaction, thereby enhancing their subjective initiative in learning and applying knowledge.

By applying interactive alignment theory in high school continuation writing teaching, students' thinking abilities can be exercised, allowing their continuation writing ideas to fully expand. The key points of high school English continuation writing teaching based on interactive alignment theory are summarized as follows:

2.1 Dynamic teaching and learning

The new curriculum standards require high school English classrooms to be dynamic, with both teachers and students actively participating. Therefore, when introducing interactive alignment theory into continuation writing classrooms, the dynamic nature of the classroom should not be overlooked. Teachers should find ways to make the classroom lively. In recent years, continuation writing tasks have appeared in college entrance examinations, making teachers pay more attention to this aspect of teaching. If traditional teaching methods are still used in the classroom, it will be difficult to stimulate students' thinking, and their learning attitudes will remain passive, which is not suitable for the modern educational environment. Creating a dynamic English classroom allows students to no longer mechanically memorize and apply knowledge but to flexibly use the skills learned from reading texts in their writing. Additionally, teachers can create interactive scenarios to guide students to actively participate in English activities, enabling them to learn writing techniques through the interaction between teachers and students.

2.2 Student-centered approach

The new curriculum standards emphasize a student-centered approach. Therefore, in high school English continuation writing classes, teachers should fully respect students and consider their needs during lesson preparation, giving full play to students' subjectivity. The essence of interactive alignment theory is interaction, so teachers should create clear, focused interactive scenarios in the classroom to guide students to think deeply and transform their ideas into English language, laying the foundation for English output. From another perspective, in English continuation writing classes, teachers should let students take charge, fostering their initiative in learning, building interest in English learning, and enabling them to actively learn English knowledge, accumulate reading and writing skills, interact with peers, complete alignment, and enhance the synergistic effect.

2.3 Differentiated teaching

By the high school stage, students' learning differences are more pronounced than in middle and elementary schools. Some students have strong logical thinking and can understand higher-level English texts, while others have weaker English foundations and logical thinking, requiring simpler texts. Therefore, a unified teaching method is no longer suitable for all students. Under the interactive alignment theory, differentiated teaching should be implemented. Teachers can group students according to the principle of "heterogeneity within groups", and allow stronger students to help weaker ones, thereby improving the English abilities of lower-level students. Additionally, teachers can conduct targeted teaching, guiding students in group learning to find the dimension suitable for their knowledge acquisition, truly understanding their learning situations, and then learning in a targeted manner.

3 Teaching strategies for high school English continuation writing based on interactive alignment theory

This section can be divided into the following four steps to guide students to interact with each other and with the text, starting with reading the text and ending with continuation writing, to carry out various forms of interactive activities and improve the quality of high school continuation writing teaching.

3.1 Creating scenarios before writing to engage students in continuation writing

Under the interactive alignment theory, teachers should first create scenarios that attract students' interest at the beginning of continuation writing teaching, and then introduce the reading text to enhance students' reading attention and ensure the effectiveness of interactive alignment, providing a good start for subsequent writing. Only by fully stimulating students' interest in participating in the classroom can students deeply interact with peers or

texts. Therefore, teachers should create interesting pre-writing scenarios to fully prepare students for later reading and continuation writing.

At the beginning of the class, teachers should introduce the text, and in this process, they should innovate in scenarios and use various methods to introduce the text. For example, teachers can create contexts related to the text's theme, allowing students to learn the text in real-life situations. Before continuation writing, teachers should use diverse methods to introduce the reading text, such as using modern information technology tools like interactive whiteboards or learning platforms to play videos or audio for students, and then use suggestive questions to introduce the topic and guide students into real scenarios, enhancing their attention to the reading material.

For example, in the reading section of Unit 2 of the Oxford Yilin Edition textbook, "Home Alone", teachers can use this as continuation writing material and ask questions like "Have you ever been home alone? Why were you left alone at home?" to guide students to freely talk and share their experiences, allowing them to experience scenarios related to the text's theme through personal experiences. Then, teachers can use interactive whiteboards to show students pictures of possible scenarios when they are home alone, allowing students to think while reading and providing ideas for continuation writing, further stimulating their interest in continuation writing.

3.2 Deeply exploring the text structure to organize the emotional line and detailed descriptions

After creating scenarios before writing to prepare students for reading the original text and stimulating their desire to read, the next step is to explore the text and deeply analyze its structure. In this process, through deep interaction with the text, students can organize details and emotions, completing language alignment. Therefore, in the process of deeply exploring the text structure, teachers should create rich exploratory activities to strengthen students' interaction with the text. For example, teachers can create brainstorming activities or mind mapping activities to help students organize the storylines and emotional lines in the text, clarify the text structure, and complete the language alignment effect.

For example, in the continuation writing class for "Home Alone" in Unit 2 of the Oxford Yilin Edition textbook, after the introduction, students are given two minutes to quickly read the text, and the teacher asks questions like "What are the elements in the article? Please give an example." and "What are the features of this passage?" Then, students are divided into groups to discuss and explore the text structure and language features. According to interactive alignment theory, the more difficult the continuation writing text, the smaller the alignment effect, but if students strengthen their understanding of the continuation writing text, the alignment effect will be effectively enhanced. "Home Alone" is a drama genre, so teachers should also explain the genre characteristics and elements of drama texts to students, first clearing reading obstacles; after skimming, students should read in detail, discussing the story content of the text, clarifying the plot, and communicating from the perspectives of "What's happening?" and "How does it happen?". In this process, students can understand the main idea, structure, and paragraph meanings of the text, which they gain after interacting with the text.

Traditional English writing teaching often leads to resistance from students, as teachers give writing topics directly in class, then have students start writing, and finally, teachers evaluate the work. This teaching method overlooks students' subjective initiative, making them write passively, resulting in a lack of ideas and nothing to write. Interactive alignment theory involves not only interaction between students but also interaction between students and texts.

3.3 Studying the first sentence of the paragraph to conceptualize the writing structure for continuation writing

After students understand the text content and organize the plot and structure, they can proceed to continuation writing, transitioning from input to output. Taking "Home Alone" as an example, the teacher gives the continuation writing task, and then uses suggestive questions to guide students to interpret the first sentence given in

the continuation writing requirements and predict the plot. Students are given fifteen minutes to complete the continuation writing based on the plot and text structure. The teacher should remind students to use key words from the original text in their continuation writing, ensuring that key words in different paragraphs echo each other. For example, the teacher can ask “What will happen to Daniel?” to guide students to outline the continuation writing and present the continuation writing task, such as “Paragraph 1: Desperate, I remember something my father had tried with me when I was little” and “Paragraph 1: I’m not sure when Mum arrived”. Before continuation writing, through interaction, students can fully understand the text and produce an alignment effect. Then, the teacher uses suggestive questions to guide students to imagine and provides the first sentence of the writing paragraph, reducing students’ fear of writing and providing writing ideas, making students not only know the writing ideas but also have something to write, and optimizing the writing process. At the same time, during the writing process, students can refer back to the text, using the text’s language structure to maximize the alignment effect.

3.4 Comparing original text and continuation writing to achieve deep interaction between students and texts

After students study the first sentence of the continuation writing task, they can interact in groups to organize and discuss the continuation writing content, organizing the main storyline of the continuation writing. Then, the teacher guides students to highlight excellent sentences in the original text, use their imagination, and first complete the first paragraph of the continuation writing according to the storyline, trying to imitate the excellent sentences in the original text to predict possible plots.

When students do continuation writing exercises, they can first imagine boldly without considering word limits, expanding their thinking. They can appreciate the original text from the perspectives of style, language, and emotion, and polish the continuation writing. For example, in the continuation writing task of the college entrance exam question “My Dad’s Best Flower”, students first find advanced sentence patterns in the original text at the language level, such as “Realizing Dad loving the flower so much...” and can migrate the advanced expression of non-predicate adverbials to the continuation writing; from the perspective of writing techniques, the father-daughter dialogue in the original text uses the first-person perspective, so the continuation writing can also continue from this perspective, making the plot more vivid; from the emotional perspective, the sentence “My daughter is the best flower” in the text highlights the theme.

Based on this, in the process of continuation writing, the teacher and students complete the comparison between the continuation writing and the original text, polish the continuation writing from different angles, and achieve the alignment effect through deep interaction between students and the text.

3.5 Optimizing post-writing evaluation to improve students’ writing issues

The above introduction to the classroom implementation stage prepares for the production of the alignment effect. After students complete the continuation writing task, teachers need to conduct reading and writing evaluations and interact with students to provide them with direct feedback. Through such feedback, students can understand the issues in their continuation writing and optimize and improve them.

On the one hand, teacher evaluation. Traditional English continuation writing classrooms are mainly evaluated by teachers. Under the background of quality education reform, teacher evaluation should not be ignored, but it should be conducted after students’ self-evaluation and peer evaluation. Under the guidance of interactive alignment theory, interaction between students and between teachers and students can produce an alignment effect. Therefore, current teacher evaluation is no longer a one-sided process by the teacher but is completed in the process of interacting with students. After students complete self-evaluation and peer evaluation, they can recommend excellent continuation writing works, which are projected onto the multimedia whiteboard for joint evaluation by teachers and students. Teachers and students can evaluate them from the perspectives of content,

structure, and language. This not only helps students master continuation writing techniques but also accumulates excellent vocabulary and sentences. After teachers evaluate students' writing, they can also evaluate the entire writing class, and summarize continuation writing techniques and precautions with students to improve students' issues in continuation writing.

On the other hand, classroom evaluation. Classroom interactive evaluation is key to continuation writing classrooms. Through classroom evaluation, students can fully understand their continuation writing situation. Unlike teacher evaluation, classroom evaluation is more interactive and diverse, allowing students to receive learning feedback from different channels. Classroom evaluation is mainly formative evaluation, with students as the main evaluators, achieved through self-evaluation and peer evaluation. After completing continuation writing, students can conduct self-evaluation under the guidance of the teacher. They can carefully check the continuation writing content, mark errors or unclear points, such as spelling mistakes or grammar errors, and correct them.

Through self-evaluation, students can stimulate meta-awareness, making the classroom evaluation session no longer the teacher's "monologue". After students complete self-evaluation and modification of continuation writing, they can exchange their work with peers and comment on each other's work. They can mark errors or excellent sentences in their peers' work and return the work to peers for modification. Finally, language evaluation can be conducted, allowing students to communicate and interact, and discuss modification suggestions for continuation writing. This form can improve students' enthusiasm for participating in English writing classes, truly building a student-centered evaluation classroom.

4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this research provides methods for high school English continuation writing teaching, and explores the value of interactive alignment between students and peers, as well as between students and texts. At the same time, it combines writing with reading, helps students improve their writing skills through imitation and imaginative creation, and provides a theoretical foundation for the further development of continuation writing teaching.

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