

# Continuation Writing for China's Senior High School Students' Learning

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Under the background of the new college entrance examination, the English writing part of the Chinese college entrance examination has undergone great changes. The continuation writing as a complete new part has received great attention, which puts new demands and challenges on students' abilities. This paper will start from the research background, clarify the relevant theoretical basis, and analyze the problems existing in senior high school students' continuation writing, trying to find solutions, providing relevant case studies, looking forward to giving front-line teachers some useful references and helpful advice.

*Keywords:* continuation writing, reading skill, writing skill

## Introduction

### Research Background

In 2010, the State Council promulgated *The Outline of the National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)*, which pointed out that "deepen the reform of examination content and form, focusing on the comprehensive quality and ability". Based on the talent selection requirements of colleges and universities and the national curriculum standards, ensure the scientificity of the examination and standardized nature of the national examination. The trend of college entrance examination English reform also began.

First of all, Zhejiang Province, which has a prosperous economy and developed education, as the first echelon of English college entrance examination reform, adopted the continuation writing in English written expression questions, providing reference for the college entrance examination English reform in other provinces. Since 2020, more and more provinces have joined the national roll of the new college entrance examination.

Students read a target article with the end removed, continue to write the ending on the basis of understanding, and complete the content. It is an effective way of foreign language writing practice to stimulate students to express their own ideas. Students use their imagination and creativity to complete the writing based on the interpretation of the given text. Different from the previous applied writing, continuation writing places more emphasis on stimulating students' desire for expression, paying attention to the interactive understanding and scenario construction between students and texts, and achieving conflict resolution or emotional sublimation through students' continued writing.

## Theory Basis

Continuation writing is a foreign language teaching and learning method, which is based on the theory of alignment, proposed by Wang Chuming. It is proposed as an effective foreign language promotion method. A series of subsequent studies have confirmed that this method can help to exert learners' imagination and creativity, and can significantly improve the linguistic accuracy and complexity of foreign language learners' writing. The characteristics of vocabulary, syntactic structure, and discourse coherence in reading subsequent texts show obvious synergistic effects (such as Jiang & Chen, 2015).

Krashen holds that language acquisition must be based on comprehensive input, and an active understanding should be based on the acquisition of higher-level language knowledge input. Students learn, use, and summarize language rules independently, and actively guess, analyze, and understand difficult information. This increases students' learning motivation and deepens comprehensible language input.

Swain suggests that continuation writing effectively help language learners focus on the difference between their own abilities and their ideal level and pay more attention to the relevant knowledge in the language input process, which can increase intrinsic learning initiative. Students internalize the language knowledge by adjusting, testing, and revising the language output. Therefore, it can deepen students' understanding, gradually improving their proficiency.

Pickering and Carrod think that the two sides of the dialogue jointly build the situation and understand the meaning through mutual coordination and initiation. The two sides of the speaker will cooperate and compromise to improve the efficiency of communication. Learners have a higher level of comprehending than expressing, which leads students to use the new intellectual language to get a structure coordination, clues coordination, language coordination, and emotion coordination.

## Students' Difficulty in Continuation Writing

As we all know, continuation writing plays an important role in the entrance examination of university, because of its proportion. In addition, senior high school students are the critical period for expressing their own opinions and thoughts. Speaking and expressing is a vital and indispensable way for students' language profession development. When it comes to continuation writing teaching in senior high school, many teachers and students focus more on the practice on writing and less on the reading and analyzing about the material. Teacher should be aware of the problems and difficulties in students writing process and try to find out useful rules for students to follow to alleviate students' learning pressure.

As for students' difficulty in continuation writing, there are two aspects, that is reading difficulty and writing difficulty.

Difficulty in reading the material: Students have a sense of fear about continuation writing. Because English writing in junior high school will give clear writing content and writing requirements, which means a strong control. Students can basically complete the writing task step by step based on their previous knowledge. Continuation writing requires students to interpret the given material first, and then get its theme and storyline require. This part is even more challenging for students who are relatively weak foundations. Even students who have high professional level should try to interpret the given text to avoid deviations from the topic and plot. In the process, students not only deal with the literal meaning of the material, but also infer the relationship between the characters behind the literal meaning. Many students said that the material looks very

long, they do not want to read it, and sometimes there are a lot of new words and sentences patterns, which makes the material reading more challenging.

Difficulties in plot construction and language expression: Some students can basically understand the relationship between the theme and the characters of the given material, but their continued content written is like a pool of stagnant water, without upgrade and vitality, and the monotonous plot construction is the dialogue between the characters, or a series of action descriptions, lacking a sense of picture. In general, the students' reading and writing plots are monotonous, the sentence structure is single, the details lack logic, the emotional expression is not smooth, and it is easy to wander on the edge of the theme.

Halliday's functional linguistics believes that language acquisition is not the acquisition of language rules, but gains meaning potential. Our ability to speak is reflected in our ability to speak. This dynamic language movement driven by creative content is constantly being created. The ability to use the potential meaning is the ability that we must strive to acquire when learning a foreign language. This means that students language profession can be developed in the process of creating target language content by learning grammar, memorizing words, and practicing sentence patterns. On one hand, continuation writing can cultivate students' meaning potential creating content. On the other hand, it can help teacher construct an effective foreign language teaching model.

### Useful Rules of Continuation Writing Teaching

Reading is the base of continuation writing. So, before reading, teacher ought to train students in making out reading purposes by giving themselves the relative questions. While reading, students try to find out answers to questions, which can help them understand the theme and plot. As we all know, theme and plot are the basic framework of the continuation writing. Furthermore, a good continuation writing work has coherent and vivid language, which requires students output reasonable and beautiful sentences. The purpose of reading is to finish the writing task. Therefore, if students want to have a good master of their writing work, they have to picture a clear framework about pre-reading and while-reading in their mind. As for the post-reading, that is to put what they get and develop from the material into writing. Because the continuation writing is under the given theme and the previous plots, its content has a strong bound with the material. Otherwise, the continuation writing will be given the lowest rating.

Based on above, here comes the useful rules to train students' continuation writing ability and skill. The framework is showed in the following Table 1:

Table 1

*Useful Rules for Continuation Writing*

Task level	Pre-reading (three steps)	While-reading (six focuses)	Post-reading
Level 1: macro level	Read for theme	Focus 1 Focus 2	Main idea, 5W1H, relationship
	Read for plot	Focus 3 Focus 4	Principle contradiction, secondary contradiction
Level 2: micro level	Read for language feature	Focus 5: type, tense, voice, person Focus 6: sentence pattern	Make the writing sentences reasonable Make the writing sentences beautiful

Before reading, students know the purposes of reading, which motivates students to focus on important points and have a clear reading steps in their mind. Step One is to read for theme. Focus One refers to the title

of the given material. If there is no title, it refers to the first sentence. Focus Two refers to 5W1H, that is when, where, who, what, why and how. Both of them can help us guess and get the main idea of the material. At the same time, students should analyze the relationship between the characters.

Step Two is to read for the plot. Focus Three refers to the last sentence of the given material. This step can help students describe and interpret the principle contradictory that is the main obstacle to realize the theme. Focus Four refers to the given sentence in each continuation writing paragraph, which is beneficial for students to evaluate the direction of the story development. At this stage, students have to take the secondary contradictions into consideration and take action to deal with them, because the solving of main contradictory is based on the resolution of the secondary contradictions.

Step Three is to read for language feature, because specific article type has specific features, such as tense, voice, person, and so on. Because the continuation writing content should keep coherent and cohesive with the given content, students are encouraged to identify the language features. While reading, students pay attention to some sentence patterns, so as to imitate them in their continuation writing part. This paper mainly focuses on three skills of description of action, that is making general one to concrete one, static one into dynamic one and creating a picture with action chains, which can be combined with emotion, environment, and dialogue. This step can make the continuation writing like shooting a movie and every scene like a picture.

### An Example of Continuation Writing Teaching Design

To illustrate the useful rules in teaching design to develop students' continuation writing ability and skill, the author takes "The Mother's Day Gifts" as an example in 2021.

#### A MOTHER'S DAY SURPRISE

The twins were filled with excitement as they thought of the surprise they were planning for Mother's Day. How pleased and proud Mother would be when they brought her breakfast in bed. They planned to make French toast and chicken porridge. They had watched their mother in the kitchen. There was nothing to it. Jenna and Jeff knew exactly what to do.

The big day came at last. The alarm rang at 6 a.m. The pair went down the stairs quietly to the kitchen. They decided to boil the porridge first. They put some rice into a pot of water and left it to boil while they made the French toast. Jeff broke two eggs into a plate and added in some milk. Jenna found the bread and put two slices into the egg mixture. Next, Jeff turned on the second stove burner to heat up the frying pan. Everything was going smoothly until Jeff started frying the bread. The pan was too hot and the bread turned black within seconds. Jenna threw the burnt piece into the sink and put in the other slice of bread. This time, she turned down the fire so it cooked nicely.

Then Jeff noticed steam shooting out of the pot and the lid starting to shake. The next minute, the porridge boiled over and put out the fire. Jenna panicked. Thankfully, Jeff stayed calm and turned off the gas quickly. But the stove was a mess now. Jenna told Jeff to clean it up so they could continue to cook the rest of the porridge. But Jeff's hand touched the hot burner and he gave a cry of pain. Jenna made him put his hand in cold water. Then she caught the smell of burning. Oh dear! The piece of bread in the pan had turned black as well.

*Figure 1. The content of the example.*

Step 1 is to read for the theme according to Focus 1 and Focus 2. From the title and the first sentence, we can know that the theme is children's love for their mother in Mother's Day by cooking breakfast for the mother.

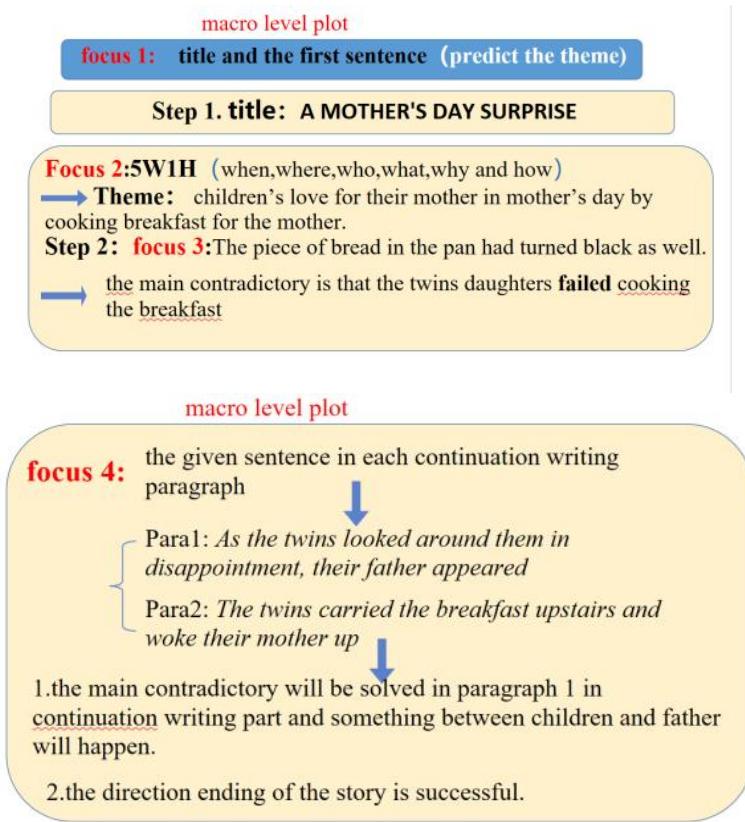


Figure 2. Teaching procedure.

Step 2 is to read for plot according to Focus 3 and Focus 4. From the Focus 3, that is the last sentence in the given material, we can see the main contradictory is that the twins' daughters failed cooking the breakfast. According to Focus four, that is the given sentence in each continuation writing paragraph: Para. 1: "As the twins looked around them in disappointment, their father appeared". We can see the main contradictory will be solved in Paragraph 1 in continuation writing part and something between children and father will happen. Para. 2: "The twins carried the breakfast upstairs and woke their mother up". We can know that the direction ending of the story is successful. Therefore, the macro plot in the first continuation writing paragraph is to make the breakfast successful. The macro plot in the second writing paragraph is to picture a love scene that children bring breakfast to their mother. In the process of dealing with the main contradictory, some secondary contradictions come together. The secondary contradictions include the bread turned black, porridge boiled over, and the stove was a mess and Jeff's hand touched the hot burner, which leads to the loving breakfast failure. So, in the first continuation writing paragraph, father is senior one who will care for his children and help them solve these secondary contradictions and make the breakfast successful. The second paragraph in continuation writing is that emotional change, that is: After making breakfast, surprise the mother and the twins' own emotional reversal.

Step 3 is to read for the language feature to imitate or use some appropriate sentence patterns. Students train their sharp eyes to find some useful vocabulary and sentence pattern. For example: Jenna (threw, put in, and turned down)..., Jeff stayed calm, turned off the gas, clean it up, and continue to cook..., Jerry gave a cry of pain, Jenna made him put his hand in cold water. The structure is "sb did, did, and did...", which is a typical

sentence pattern to describe action chain.

**Focus 5: micro level plot narrative, past tense, active voice, third person**

叙事基本情节结构：事件（冲突和问题）——反应（情感或行动）——解决

事件（冲突和问题） 且而\	反应（情感或行动）	是否解决
<b>冲突1：</b> the <u>bread</u> turned black	Jenna 的行动反应 (threw, put in, turned down)	NO
<b>冲突2：</b> porridge boiled over and the stove was a <u>mess</u>	Jeff stayed calm, turned off the gas, clean it up, and continue to cook	NO
<b>冲突3：</b> Jeff's <u>hand</u> touched the hot burner	Jerry gave a cry of pain Jenna made him put his hand in cold water	NO
<b>主要冲突：</b> 做早餐以失败告终	情感反应: disappointed 行动反应: ?	NO

### Skills for the description of actions

**Skill 1 General words → Concrete words**

**Skill 2 Static words → Dynamic words**

**Skill 3 Create a picture with action chains**

**Basic sentence patterns:** 1. S+ did, did and did  
2. S+ did (and did), + doing (and doing)

**Advanced sentence patterns:** 1. S+ did (and did), + doing (and doing)  
2. Done/Adj.(+adj), S+ did (and did)

Figure 3. Teaching procedure.

### Summary

Continuation writing is an important vehicle for developing students' comprehensive language application ability and their thinking quality. Teachers should guide students to read material with specific purpose to make preparation for writing. Also, teacher provide some vital focuses which can help students focus their attention on the key information. This can alleviate students' psychological burden on reading and writing.

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