The Application of Question Chains in the Continuation Task in Senior High School

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Abstract

With the deepening of the new college entrance examination reform, the continuation writing, combination of reading and writing, puts forward higher requirements for students' language ability and thinking quality. Students need to understand the reading articles as the premise, clear their thoughts after writing, but in fact, there are still some difficulties in these aspects. Therefore, this paper takes the common questions of students in continuation writing as the starting point, applies the question chain to the teaching of the continuation task in senior high school, and trains the thinking at different levels to help students deeply understand the reading articles, build the conflict consciousness of students, and enrich the writing content of students.

Keywords

High school English teaching; The continuation task; Problem chains.

1. Introduction

In the Implementation Opinions on the Reform of the In-depth Examination and Enrollment System issued by The State Council, it is clearly proposed to deepen the reform of the examination content and form of the college entrance examination, including changing the written English expression part of the college entrance examination to the continuation writing. The college entrance examination requires students to create articles with high alignment through imitation of authentic expressions and imagination in the process of communication and interaction with reading materials. Continuation task is a method that closely combines language output and input and aims to accelerate the improvement of students' language application ability. The task design of this method is simple and easy, which only needs to erase the end of a reading article, let students read the left part, continue writing on the basis of understanding, and complete the content (Wang Chuming & Qi Luxia, 2013). Compared with letter writing, the biggest difference is that it is a real foreign language learning task that closely combines input and output, and is produced immediately after input. As Professor Wang Chuming said, this kind of task has advantages over many other foreign language learning tasks. The combination of imitation and creation, the combination of learning and application, and frequent use can improve the efficiency of foreign language learning (Wang Chuming, 2012). And the "continuation" in the continuation task is the key to this type of question. Language acquisition is realized by "continuation", which is a kind of communication, with the focus of attention, the creation of content, and the communication between input and output (Wang Chuming, 2016). In the actual reading and writing teaching, teachers usually ask students to read back to the original text and imitate its expressions, so as to improve the cooperation of students' language expression, but how to teach students to better plot construction is still under constant exploration.

At this stage, the genres that continue to be written after the college entrance examination are mainly story-type articles. In a story-style essay, each piece of the plot is particularly important, closely related, and layered. The ability of the student to grasp the context of the development

of the story and to create appropriate conflict at the climax of the story hill is the key to a good completion of the reading.

2. Common Questions of The Continuation Task

With the development of continuation writing, students gradually understand the requirements of question types and answering steps, but in the process of writing, there are certain difficulties in the conception of the plot. The difficulty lies in the lack of understanding of the reading articles and the unclear arrangement of the plot, which leads to the lack of cohesion and logic of the articles, not to mention the creativity of the story content and the ups and downs of the plot.

2.1. Poor reading comprehension

Students are asked to continue writing after reading a given text. Therefore, the depth of understanding of corpus information will affect the quality of articles. Studies have shown that in writing tasks combined with reading and writing, the depth of reading has an important impact on the quality of task completion (Zhang, 2017). According to Professor Wang Chuming, in order to complete the task of continuation writing well, it is necessary to fully understand the content of reading materials, and continue writing after understanding, so as to have fresh memory, easy imitation and good synergy effect (Wang Chuming, 2012). Students' comprehension of reading materials is essentially a process of interaction with high-level students. At present, the college entrance examination is based on the continuation of the story, the theme is man and nature, man and society and man and self these three themes. The language expression of materials is difficult to a certain extent, and the content is drawn by the story line with strong logic, promoting the overall trend of the plot layer by layer. In the study on the teaching and the psychological process of the continuation writing, it is found that students' insufficient understanding of the content of reading articles is an important reason for the influence of the continuation task (Jiang Yong & Wu Xuefeng, 2022). Yao Qiumeng also interviewed teachers and students respectively and found that the phenomenon of students "not writing after reading, less after reading, and scribbling after reading" was mainly caused by the inability to deeply understand the reading articles (Yao Qiumeng, 2023). When students read the articles, they will be blocked in language and cultural understanding, not grasp the logical structure of the story in place, and grasp the key information of the story is not accurate, which will lead to the incomplete understanding of the articles.

2.2. The plot lacks logic

Logical thinking is one of the elements of the quality of thinking, and the continuation task can better examine students' logical thinking. Reading and writing are closely related, and in the process of writing, the content, language, and structure of the written text will all be affected by the given text. Starting from the scoring criteria for the continuation task, one of the requirements for writing content is to be coherent with the content of the reading material, that is, to investigate the logic of the content. In English teaching, even though students are familiar with the logical requirements and problem-solving ideas of the continuation writing, they do not have a deep understanding of the reading articles, leading to inadequate capture of key information, resulting in confused plot planning when writing and reading. There is no logical relationship between writing and reading, but only content superposition. Even the overall trend of the plot has been deviated, there is the problem of dog tail.

2.3. The content of passages lacks rationality and richness

First of all, the lack of rationality in the content of the continuation means that the ending of the final continuation of the student often does not conform to the social ethics or the theory of

symbiosis between man and nature. From the perspective of the requirements of the continuation writing, I still hope that the final outcome will be a more happy and satisfactory outcome, so the lack of rationality of the content will greatly affect the final evaluation. Secondly, the lack of richness of the content means that the content of the articles is not rich. Perhaps readers know the end after reading the beginning plot. There is no some various plot, that is, we often say that "problem - solution" has a climax of the plot, which can not attract the attention of the examiners, resulting in a "belly empty" situation.

3. The Concept and Design Principles of The Problem Chain

In teaching, the process of students answering questions is also the process of thinking training, and different types of questions have different training levels of thinking. According to Bloom's cognitive thinking classification, the cognitive process includes six kinds of thinking: memory, understanding, application, analysis, evaluation and innovation. In general, lower-order problems require the use of memory, understanding, and applied thinking, while higher-order problems also require the use of analytical, evaluative, and innovative thinking. The question chain is a series of progressive questions from low order questions to high order questions, which effectively guides students to deeply understand the material content and lays a good foundation for students to continue writing.

3.1. Problem chains

Specifically, the problem chain is a series of distinct and systematic teaching problems that teachers transform textbook knowledge into a series of teaching problems according to the existing knowledge or experience of students and the confusion that will occur or may occur in the learning process of students in order to achieve certain teaching goals. These teaching problems are a set of centered, sequential, relatively independent and interrelated problems (Queen Male, 2010). Chen Weibing et al. defined the question chain as a systematic, hierarchical, relatively independent and interrelated series of questions based on students' existing knowledge or experience, combined with teaching objectives and teaching content. In other words, the first question is the premise of the second question, and the second question is the foundation and ladder of the third question. (Chen Weibing & Shen Huadong, 2018). Through the question chain, teachers guide students to move from surface learning to deep learning, from low order thinking to high order thinking, and from understanding to innovation learning goals. In the teaching of continuation writing, the use of problem chains can effectively help students sort out the context of the article,and appropriately expand the article, so that students can exert their imagination and continue to write articles with rich plots.

3.2. Design principles of problem chain

Teachers should follow the design principles of directivity, logic and appropriateness if they want to design a good problem chain (Rong Rentang, 2018).

3.2.1. The principle of directivity

In the teaching of the continuation task, each sub-question designed by the teacher should have a clear directionality, so as to correctly guide the teaching direction and successfully achieve the teaching goal (Rong Rentang, 2018). That is to say, the questions should be designed with the teaching goal as the starting point, so that the whole class will not deviate from the center, and students will think clearly in the learning process. The primary goal of our teaching is to let students grasp the theme center of the reading article, the main context and direction of the article, and then guide students to the climax of the story mountain to build a certain sense of conflict, and carry on the creative writing. At this time, teachers should push forward step by step around these goals when designing the question chain.

3.2.2. Principle of logic

The logical principle of problem chain is often referred to as the degree of cohesion of problems. The problem chain design needs to be independent of each other, but also needs to be considered comprehensively to reflect the close connection between sub-problems (Rong Rentang, 2018). The whole chain of problems is independent of each other, but it is also a whole. The "chain of problems" must be one link after another like a chain. The questions are from surface to deep according to the cognitive level, and the previous question sets the stage for the next question, and the next question is a deeper understanding of the previous question. Through the teacher's questions, the students' thinking process is gradually in-depth, and finally reach a more comprehensive understanding of the article. "Problem chain" teaching not only enables students to internalize knowledge from easy to difficult and improve their comprehensive quality, but also prompts teachers to examine and test their own teaching level (Yuan, 2022). From a macro point of view, the whole process is the process of language learning from input to output, from the existing knowledge to the input of new knowledge, and then the new knowledge is internalized to form a new schema with the original knowledge, and finally output the passage.

3.2.3. The principle of appropriateness

The principle of appropriateness needs to face three questions: one is "where do you take students", the other is "how to take students there", and the third is "how to judge whether students get there" (Rong Rentang, 2018). These three questions are the goal, method and evaluation of teaching. Teaching is a student-centered classroom, all activities and design of teaching should be from the perspective of students, so do the design of the problem chain. It can be said that the suitability of the design of the problem chain is the first consideration of the design. The question chain, even if it is well designed but it does not apply to the students in the classroom, which is meaningless. According to Vygotsky's scaffolding theory, teachers should also design question chains suitably for their students in accordance with their cognitive thinking, knowledge background and language ability when constructing question scaffolds. Specifically, if students have a general foundation, then teachers should guide them step by step when designing the question chain, and focus on the basic questions. If the students have a good foundation, the teacher can involve some more uplifting questions in the design of problems, so that the students' thinking can be more deeply explored.

4. The Use of Question Chain in The Continuation Writing

Facing with common questions of the continuation writing, teachers can help students to a certain extent through the question chain. First of all, for the incomplete understanding of the article, teachers can use the guidance of questions to enable students to grasp the context of the development of the story, usually asking students to answer 5W1H (what, where, when, who, why and how) questions to understand the text. Secondly, as for the lack of coherence of students' plot ideas, teachers can help students clarify their ideas by building question scaffolds. Since the design of question chains follows the principle of logic, students' ideas will also progress with the question chains. At last, most students have the problem that the story plot is not rich. Teachers can use the problem chain to construct students' conflict consciousness to enrich the story plot.

Taking the new college entrance examination questions of Shandong Province in July 2020 as an example, this article is a narrative essay with the theme of people and society. It tells the story of Mrs. Meredith and her three children trying to help Bernard, a little boy with a difficult family, make money to help his parents. The three children in the story, under the influence of their mother, enthusiastically help the little boy Bernard to find ways to make money, which reflects the kind and helpful qualities of Meredith's family.

4.1. Keep track of where the story is going

The article is a story. The key five elements of the story plot include time, place, characters, process and result. The content that continuation to be written in the task is often part of the process and result, so the first step is to help students clarify the context of the text. Through six 5W1H question chains, students can initially clarify the context of the article and grasp the key information of the article.

Then the following questions are designed with these goals:

Q1: When did this story take place?

Q2: Where did this story take place?

Q3: Who are characters of this story?

Q4: What happened in this story?

Q5: Why did children need help Bernard earn money?

Q6: How did they help Bernard earn money?

In addition, the tenses of these questions can make students pay attention to the past tense of the story, so the tenses should be consistent with the original text.

4.2. Build a scaffolding to improve the coherence of the article

The degree of cohesion is not only the logic reflected by conjunctions in language, but more importantly, the cohesion in content and language features. Teachers build question scaffolds to improve the alignment of language, content and structure with the original text. The story has a certain time line and emotional line, and the emotion is expressed through the description of the action. The teacher makes students pay attention to the linguistic features and structure of the text through the question chain to increase the cohesion of the text.

Q1: Could you find the timeline of this passage?

Q2: How did the feelings of children change?

Q3: How is it described? Use some adjectives or other ways?

Students answering Q1 and Q2 can clarify several times the discourse and the child's emotional changes. It was the sympathy when the mother told them about the little boy's situation, and then she felt depressed when she could not think of a way to help Bernard, but she felt pleasure when she finally thought of a way to help the boy. Then Q3 can make students notice that the author does not directly use adjectives to describe children's emotions but reflects them through the description of actions. The three questions can make students pay attention to the description of time through the adverbial of time and the description of characters' actions to reflect emotions.

4.3. Construct students' awareness of conflict

Teachers help students to construct conflict consciousness is the key factor to ensure the rich plot of the article. Conflict has multiple functions: it requires the reader to take sides (decide whom to sympathize with); It creates a rift and then paves the way for a satisfactory solution (which is very common in the continuation writing); It helps build suspense; It gives the work a sense of direction; It can be unexpected, thus making the work confusing (NoahLukeman, NoahLukeman, Lukeman, Donch, & Li Yongqiang, 2012). Therefore, cultivating students' ability to construct conflict awareness is the first step to writing good stories.

Design question chains can logically and gradually help students acquire skills to use antagonistic factors to increase frustration of characters and form divergent thinking (Duan Xiangping, 2022). Based on the first clue given in the question, students are asked to imagine the process of three children helping the little boy make popcorn. And what is the process of the little boy selling popcorn? Did it go well? Did you end up making money to help mom? The first sentence of the first paragraph: When Mrs. Meredith heard of John's idea she thought it

was a good one too. The first sentence of the second paragraph: With everything ready, Bernard started out on his new business. From the first sentence given, it is obvious where the article is going. First, John's idea was recognized by everyone, and he helped Bernard make popcorn together. In the end, it was successful, and Bernard began his journey to make money. However, if the process of making popcorn and selling popcorn is smooth, it is difficult to catch the reader's eye, and it is difficult to connect the emotional changes above. By increasing the frustration in the production process and the sale process, we can avoid the "stomach empty" situation, and at the same time, we can teach students the quality of not giving up when faced with difficulties. You can set the following questions:

Q1: What did Mrs. Meredith do?

Q2: How did they let Bernard know their ideas?

Q3: How did they make popcorn?

Q4: Did their production process go well?

Q5: What difficulties did they encounter?

Q6: How did they solve these difficulties?

Q7: What did their feelings change during this process?

Q8: What difficulties did Bernard encounter when he made business?

Q9: In the end, did Bernard earn money?

The story progresses through a chain of questions. The conflicting points in the story are the difficulties encountered in the process of making popcorn and the little boy in the process of selling popcorn, as well as the changes in the children's inner emotions. From the inner confusion and worry when making popcorn fails to the joy and expectation that everything is finally ready. And then to the sale process, from the frustrating feelings that no one bought at the beginning, to the joyful feelings that helped Bernard make his first money in the end. In writing, constructing conflict is a writing perspective, a writing thinking mode, and a way to explore students' writing potential (Duan Xiangping, 2022). The guidance of these questions makes the story plot designed by students have ups and downs, and makes people want to read more. It is also these progressive questions that enable students to transition from memorizing and understanding thinking to innovative thinking, and better realize the transition from input to output.

5. Conclusion

Question chain is not only a systematic way of asking questions, but also an effective thinking training strategy (Li Liujian, 2022). The alignment and innovation of the continuation task are the test of thinking. Effective question chain can help students clarify the development context, increase the degree of cohesion of students' plot conception, and cultivate students' conflict consciousness. Reasonable question chain can create a problem situation for students to enhance their critical thinking ability, so that they can be aroused by doubt, induced by doubt, and learned by doubt (Zhang Liping, 2021). Through the question chain, students have a better grasp of the discourse, the logic of the text and the richness of the content. This method is of great significance in improving the quality of teaching of the continuation task.

Acknowledgments

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