

Effect of Continuation Task on Chinese Colloge Students' Emotion of English Study

Feng Pan

Changchun University of Science and Technology, Changchun, China

panfeng1978@163.com

Abstract: The continuation task combines reading with writing, builds creative use of language imitation and enables learners to use immediately what are newly learned (Wang, 2012). Continuation task, first proposed by Wang Chuming, is a new method of teaching EFL writing and aims to improve writing capability as well as overall English proficiency for college students. It is a task-based, experimental, and write-to-learn method for learning English, with special attention given to learners' imitation and creation. Continuation task maintains that writing proficiency can be improved through comprehensive input. In the following, theoretical basis, framework, principles, components and implementation of CT will be illustrated one by one in detail. The study is undertaken to find out the effect of continuation task in affecting learners' attitude and affection towards English study.

Keywords: Continuation task, learners' attitude and affection

1. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this thesis are to testify the effectiveness of CT in teaching English writing of non-English majors. How can CT affect learner's attitude and affection towards English study?

2. SUBJECTS

The experiment was carried out in the first semester of academic year 2014-2015. The learners of computer science and technology are chosen randomly as the subjects and they are divided into two groups: experimental group (group 1 includes class 1405114 and 1405115) and control group (group 2 includes class 1405116 and 1405117). Two groups consist of 57 and 60 freshmen respectively. Their level of English proficiency is analyzed and graded by College Freshmen Division Test before experiment. The similar conditions are applied in the process of teaching: the same English teacher, the same textbook, and the same schedule of lesson.

3. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

3.1 Questionnaires

Two questionnaires were arranged to find EG learners' changes in writing before and after the CT practice. The arrangement of Questionnaire 1 consists of two parts. The first part surveys learners' English and Chinese scores of College Entrance Examination, general motivation, attitude and difficulties towards English. The second part is made up of 12 statements from three dimensions which include attitude towards writing (item 1, 4, 7 and 10), difficulties in writing(item 2, 6, 9 and 12), and advices for teacher (item 3, 5, 8 and 11). Questionnaire 2 consists of 12 statements in three dimensions which include attitude towards CT practice(item 1, 4, 7 and 10), activeness in CT practice (item 2, 5, 8 and 11), and advices for CT practice (item 3, 6, 9 and 12). These two questionnaires are written in Chinese (See Appendix) in order to be understood easily by subjects.

3.2 Interview

According to learners' English scores of College Freshmen Division Test, the learners are divided into 3 levels. Two learners of each level are chosen to have an interview. The learners are interviewed individually and asked three questions at the end of semester. The questions are: 1) Which do you like, the CT method or the traditional one? And explain why? 2) Do you think CT is effective in improving your English writing and English study? If so, in which aspect? 3) If CT is applied next term, what do you think are the difficulties? The interview is recorded for further analysis.

4. DATA COLLECTION

Data collection lasted for one semester. Two kinds of data were used: questionnaires and interview.

60 subjects of CG and 57 subjects of EG took part in the two tests and two questionnaires were conducted.

Questionnaire 1 was carried out in the first week. By distribution to 117 subjects,117 completed questionnaires were turned in and 115 were valid. Questionnaire 2 was implemented in the twelfth week. By distribution to 117 subjects,117 finished questionnaires were turned in and 114were valid. The related data were ready to make a mean analysis. The interview was arranged at the end of the semester. 6 subjects were interviewed by the author. Their answers of the three questions were recorded for further analysis.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of three kinds of data are made to prove the effectiveness of CT, including two independent t-tests between EG and CG and two group-tests within EG and CG; comparison between EG's language performances in the pre-test and post-test. Mean value analysis of the two questionnaires; and qualitative analysis of interview. The following are the details.

5.1 Results and Discussion of Pre-test and Post-test

Two independent Sample t-tests of EG and CG are compared in table 5.1 and 5.2 and two paired sample t-test within EG and CG are showed in 5.3 and 5.4. Their means, standard deviation, and t-values are listed respectively.

Questionnaire 1

The first part of Questionnaire 1 is a survey of learners' conditions, which are learners' English and Chinese scores of College Entrance Examination, general motivation, attitude and difficulties towards English. From the percentage of every item, we can find that: item 1 shows learners are more anxious about CET 4 and CET 6, and 78.3% learners think passing CET is their aim of college English study. The instrumental motivation is still high. item 2 indicates learners are more anxious about speaking, and 51.6% learners believe speaking is useful and 10% learners think writing is useful. They do not take writing seriously; item 3 demonstrates learners are more anxious about speaking. 41.6% learners believe speaking is most difficult and 8.3% learners think writing is most difficult. They think speaking is more difficult than writing, which may be inconsistent with item 2. But these items imply learners have higher motivation to speaking and their passion for writing is not strong; item 4 shows learners' difficulties in writing are words and grammar, but not structure and content. From these factors, it can be seen that learners' interest in writing is not high, and they believe grammar and words are difficult in writing.

The second part is about learners' attitude, difficulties and requirement for teachers. The mean of every item and corresponding discussion will be illustrated in the following:

Table 1: Learners' attitude towards writing:

Item	Brief statements	Mean
1	Aim of writing is for communication, not for test	3.85
4	Be interested in writing and read related good examples	2.35
7	Writing is helpful for study and further study is needed	2.46
10	Writing is helpful to improve English	3.73

As the table 1 shows, the means of item 1, 4, 7 and 10 are 3.85, 2.35, 2.46 and 3.73 respectively before CT practice. It demonstrates that: learners believe writing is important to

their English study and will be used even in the future work and life. But their enthusiasm is not strong. This phenomenon implies that teacher should give more instruction to learners and design some activities to enhance their writing interest.

Table 2: Learners' difficulties in writing:

Item	Brief statements	Mean
2	Words are insufficient for writing	3.95
6	Syntax is rigid and fixed	3.16
9	Be lack of personal thought and critical thinking	2.15
12	Feel difficult in paragraph development	3.65

As the table 2 shows, the means of item 2, 6, 9 and 12 are 3.95, 3.16, 2.15 and 3.65 respectively before CT practice. It indicates that learners still think words are main obstacle in writing. Syntax and paragraph are next to words, and least consideration to thinking. This phenomenon implies that learners' understanding of writing is still at the surface level, and teacher should improve their consciousness about English writing.

Table 3: Learners' requirement for teachers

Item	Brief statements	Mean
3	Teacher can provide related reading material	3.65
5	Teacher can introduce writing skills	4.05
8	More feedback to grammar mistakes	4.12
11	More guidance on ideas of English writing	2.85

As the table 3 shows, the means of item 3, 5, 8, and 11 are 3.65, 4.05, 4.12 and 2.85 respectively before CT practice. It conveys learners require more aids from teacher, the most they care about is grammar and the least is thinking.

Questionnaire 2

Table 4: Learners' attitude towards CT

Item	Brief statements	Mean
1	CT is helpful to improve syntax	3.86
4	CT is helpful to thought expression	3.03
7	CT is helpful to paragraph development	3.54
10	CT is helpful to improve words and grammar	4.14

As the table 4 shows, the means of item 1, 4, 7 and 10 are 3.86, 3.03, 3.54 and 4.14 respectively after CT practice for one semester. It demonstrates that learners believe CT is helpful for them to improve writing. Great improvement is lexicon, next to it are syntax and paragraph.

Table 5: Learners' activeness towards CT

Item	Brief statements	Mean
2	First reluctant and then active in CT practice	3.83
5	Less anxious to write after CT practice	3.91
8	Like to complete the CT practice	4.04
11	Collect related material after class	2.97

As the table 5 shows, the means of item 2, 5, 8 and 11 are 3.83, 3.91, 4.04 and 2.97 respectively after CT practice for one semester. It indicates that most learners are positive to CT practice, and their anxiety for writing is decreased.

Table 6: Learners' requirement for teachers

Item	Brief statements	Mean
3	More practice for words and expressions	3.02
6	Related material is thought-provoking	3.89
9	More guidance for syntax	4.14
12	More illustration for paragraph expression	3.93

As the table 6 shows, the means of item 3, 6, 9 and 12 are 3.02, 3.89, 4.14 and 3.93 respectively after one semester of CT practice. It conveys that more CT practice should be given to syntax, paragraph and thinking in sequence.

6. CONCLUSION

Six subjects of three levels are interviewed. Concerning the first question, high and middle level learners believe CT is better than traditional one. Low level learners think there is little difference between them for English study.

About question two, high level learners hold CT is helpful to improve their syntax devices and paragraph development. When they read the paragraphs of text, CT helps them get a better understanding of syntax and paragraph. They can apply some of them to CT practice. They believe CT is useful to enhance critical thinking, especially when they are given related material and good discussion is carried out very well between them. But CT' s impact on transforming thinking is limited. They can comprehend the linear thinking pattern in the text,

but have difficulties following this pattern in their own writing. Middle level learners hold that CT is functional to expand words and expressions. They can put the newly studied words from the given material into use, which raise their interests for English study. As to syntax and paragraph, they think they can imitate some of them in their composition. As to thinking, they consider CT can open a space for imagination in their composition. Low level learners think CT is helpful to improve words and expression. As to other aspects, they have no much idea.

When they were asked the third question, high level learners consider that in CT practice teachers should pay attention to thinking development. Middle level learners hold that teachers should train more on syntax and paragraph development. Low level learners hope teachers can help them in grammar and words.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Pan Feng (1978-- , male, teacher of College of Foreign Languages, Changchun University of Science and Technology, Master's Degree, research direction is applied linguistics).

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire 1

1. I think the aim of writing is for communication, not for test.
2. During the process of writing, I feel words are insufficient which cannot express my idea.
3. I hope the teacher can provide related reading material in order to give me the necessary material reserves.
4. I am interested in writing and like to read related good examples in normal times.
5. I hope that the teacher can introduce related writing skills in reading materials before we write our own composition.
6. When I want to express my view, I feel the syntax is rigid and fixed and I have difficulty in using multiple sentence patterns.
7. Writing is helpful for my further study and work and I really want to improve my writing proficiency.
8. I hope the teacher can point out the grammar mistakes when he corrects the composition.
9. While writing, I feel lacking personal thought and critical thinking of my own.
10. I think writing is helpful to improve English learning in the round.
11. In the process of writing, I often follow other's opinion. I hope the teacher can increase the practice and guidance on ideas of English writing.
12. While writing, I can't organize paragraphs orderly and the structure is not clear. At the same time, I feel difficult in paragraph development.

Direction: Please answer these questions according to your real situation. There is no right or wrong for the answers and your choices will not affect any scores. We will keep secret for your answers. Thank you!

Questionnaire 2

1. After the practice of CT, I learn about more sentence patterns and can use them in the writing.
2. At first I felt reluctant about the assignment that the teacher asked to finish, but later I could take part in it actively and believe that I can reap benefit from it.
3. I hope the teacher can enhance more practice of words and expressions when he analyzes the text and the arrangement of the assignment.
4. After the practice of CT, I feel my expression of thought is better than before.
5. After CT practice of the whole term, I feel less anxious than before while writing.
6. I hope the teacher can provide some thought-provoking materials when he gives us input materials.

7. After CT practice of the whole term, I make much progress in organizing paragraphs.
8. I am able to finish the CT practice assigned by the teacher actively.
9. For given materials, I hope the teacher can give me more guidance for syntax.
10. After the practice of CT, I found out that I make fewer mistakes in words and grammar than before.
11. After class I can collect materials related to the assignment actively.
12. I hope the teacher can lay stress on the paragraph expression when he gives us illustration.

Direction: Please answer these questions according to your real situation. There is no right or wrong for the answers and your choices will not affect any scores. We will keep secret for your answers. Thank you!