

A Review of the Research of Summary Writing under the Background of New College Entrance Examination in China

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Abstract

After the new college entrance examination reform, summary writing has been formally used in college entrance examination writing in China. This new question type has triggered many scholars and front-line teachers' research and discussion. In order to further understand the current research status of summary writing in China, this paper collates and analyzes the literature related to summary writing in Foreign Language Teaching in Primary and secondary Schools (middle school papers), English Teaching and Research in Primary and Secondary Schools and the core journals of CNKI from 2015 to 2022. The findings are as follows: (1) The publication of literature related to summary writing increased explosively after 2016, but fell back in the last two years; (2) Most of the research methods are non-material research; (3) The research content is mainly teaching practice inquiry. Based on the analysis results, this paper summarizes and discusses the existing problems in the research of summary writing.

Keywords

Summary Writing; High School English; Discourse; Teaching Strategy.

1. Introduction

English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools (2017 Edition, 2020 Revision) [1] clearly pointed out in the description of high school English academic quality Level 2 that students should be able to identify the content points and supporting arguments in the discourse; Students should be able to summarize the main content of the text they read or write a continuation of the text, and the test proposal provides that the coverage of the English college entrance examination content should be comprehensive and the types of questions should be rich and diverse. For example, you can use information recording and filling in the blanks, judging, matching, short answer, continuation, summary writing, argumentative writing, practical writing, etc." The description of Curriculum Standard emphasizes that under the background of the new college entrance examination reform, the extraction and summary of reading content should become an important ability for students to learn, which also points out the direction for the emergence of various comprehensive writing tasks.

Summary writing is a form of controlled writing, a form of language output in which the basic contents of the original text are condensed and reprocessed [2], and a semantically coherent short text in which the basic contents of original documents or articles are condensed [3]. In this form of writing, the writer needs to quickly understand the content of the original text, and finally form a concise and accurate reprocessing text that expresses the core content of the original text, without any subjective comments or opinions. As a new form of examination, "summary writing" is highly combined with "reading" and "writing", which is helpful to cultivate students' comprehensive language application ability and well reflects the spirit of "Curriculum Standard". Domestic research on summary writing began in the late 1980s. Zeng [4] first proposed that summary writing can improve our intelligence and is one of the best

forms to train abstract and summary ability, namely thinking ability. Before 2016, the English writing part of the college entrance examination was dominated by the thesis composition, and the summary writing only appeared in the domestic international tests such as IELTS and TOEFL or the English professional level tests. According to the requirements of the National Unified English Examination for College Entrance Examination, Zhejiang Province took the lead in including summary writing in the English College Entrance Examination in 2016 [5], that is, an article of about 350 words is provided, and candidates need to read and write a summary of about 60 words. The new question type mainly tests the students' ability to summarize the main idea of the article, obtain the key words and cohesive discourse, and emphasizes the combination of reading and writing to promote reading and writing. Since then, summary writing has attracted more and more attention from front-line teachers and scholars, and the number of literatures related to summary writing in various foreign language teaching journals has also increased substantially. In order to summarize and discuss the current research status of summary writing in China, this paper collected and sorted out the relevant literature of foreign language teaching journals in primary and secondary schools from 2012 to 2022.

2. Scope of Literature and Statistical Methods

With the title of "Summary Writing", the author searched the articles published in Foreign Language Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools (Secondary School Articles), English Teaching and Research in Primary and Secondary Schools and the core journals of CNKI from 2015 to 2022 (retrieval time to September 20, 2022).Then, according to the key words, abstracts, themes and other contents of the literature, the literature related to the summary writing was manually screened, and 11, 13, 8 literatures were obtained from the three types of sources, a total of 32 effective literatures. This study intends to analyze the 32 literatures in order to explore the domestic research trends, research methods, research content and research deficiencies in summary writing.

3. Summary Writing Research Overview

3.1. Annual Trend of Publication

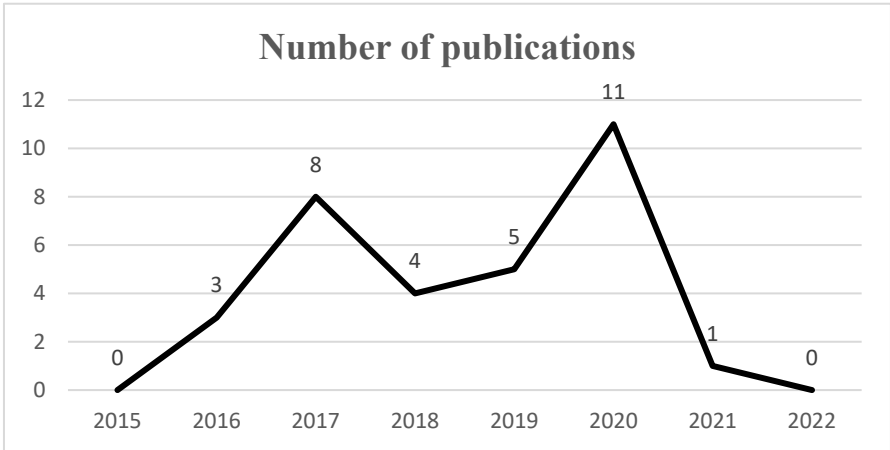


Fig 1. Statistical chart of domestic summary writing research results in recent ten years

According to the statistical summary of 32 literatures in Figure 1, it is found that since summary writing became a new type of college entrance examination in 2016, the domestic research results on summary writing show an obvious upward trend, and the number of related literatures published reached the highest value of 11 in 2020.However, the number of his research results soon fell sharply, dropping to one in the following year. The main reason may

be that its frequency of appearance in the new college entrance examination is not as good as that of continuous writing after reading, and it is difficult to gain short-term practical results from the research results, resulting in insufficient exposure in classroom teaching. At present, the research prospect of summary writing is still very broad. Based on the current research situation, the future research of summary writing needs to be more innovative and diversified, so as to achieve more breakthrough progress.

3.2. Review of Research Methods

Table 1. Distribution of research methods for summary writing

Research Method	Quantity	Percentage (%)
Empirical research	8	25%
Non-material research	24	75%
Total	32	100%

Table 2. The distribution of empirical research methods in summary writing

Empirical study	Quantity	Percentage (%)
Quantitative research	3	37.5%
Qualitative research	1	12.5%
Combination of quantitative and qualitative research	4	50%
Total	8	100%

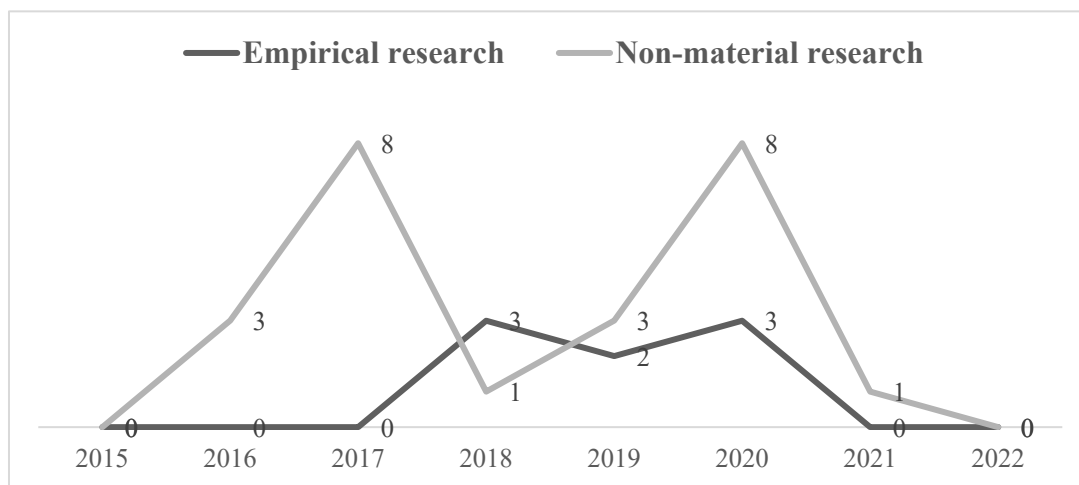


Fig 2. Trends in the types of research methods used in summary writing from 2015 to 2022

Gao and Li [6] divide research methods into material research (or "empirical research" or "empirical research") and non-material research. Among them, material research can be divided into quantitative research based on data materials and qualitative research based on interview, observation and other materials, as well as the comprehensive research combining quantitative and qualitative research with both methods [7]. Non-material research refers to the personal reflection and summary of researchers based on personal experience and views, the operational description and evaluation of specific links, and the procedural description of a theory and its application. Based on this, the author classifies and combs 32 papers. As can be seen from Table 1, research on summary writing in middle school English is mainly non-material research, accounting for the largest proportion (75%), while empirical research is less (25%). Table 2 shows that in the empirical research, the combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods accounts for the largest proportion (50%), the number of quantitative research methods accounts for the middle proportion (37.5%), and the proportion

of qualitative research methods is small (12.5%). At the same time, Figure 2 shows the changing trend of the types of summary writing research methods from 2015 to 2022: In the summary writing research under the background of the new college entrance examination, non-material research shows a large fluctuation, while empirical research shows a stable trend. From the perspective of quantity distribution, the number of empirical studies has not increased significantly in the past two years and the proportion is relatively small, while non-material studies have an absolute advantage. However, since non-material research tends to focus more on the summary of personal experience and opinions or theory and application, and lacks sufficient scientific data analysis and demonstration, the feedback provided to the research of summary writing still needs more scientific support.

3.3. Review of Research Content

Since the 21st century, the application of summary writing in various foreign language examinations in China has increased significantly. However, it was not until 2016 that summary writing was officially applied in the college entrance examination that relevant research literature began to appear in large numbers. As shown in Table 3, according to statistics, the relevant research contents of summary writing can be classified into four research emphases, which are: teaching practice exploration, theoretical perspective research, question type analysis research and quality evaluation research. Among them, the teaching practice inquiry of summary writing accounts for the largest proportion (59.4%), which is closely related to the characteristics of practical and exam-oriented research, and also indicates that most of the relevant research of summary writing directly comes from the accumulation of practical teaching experience, and the interaction between summary writing and teaching practice is the most obvious. The analysis of question type and quality evaluation accounted for the same proportion (15.6%), which reflected the characteristics of development, exploration and experiment of summary writing. Finally, the proportion of research based on various theoretical perspectives is the smallest (9.4%), indicating that the exploration and improvement of the teaching theory and teaching model of summary writing is still a key direction. Based on Table 3, this paper will further analyze and comment on the research content of summary writing.

Table 3. Summary writing research content distribution statistics

Research content	Number of articles	Proportion (%)
Research on Teaching Practice	19	59.4%
Theoretical perspective research	3	9.4%
Analysis of question type	5	15.6%
Quality evaluation study	5	15.6%
Total	32	100%

4. Main Research Results

4.1. Teaching Practice of Summary Writing

In the process of literature review, the author finds that there are a lot of researches on the teaching practice of summary writing in the journals of Foreign Language Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools and English Teaching and Research in Primary and Secondary Schools, which can be summarized as teaching strategies and teaching methods.

In terms of teaching strategies, there are metacognitive strategies such as metacognitive planning, metacognitive monitoring, metacognitive cognition and metacognitive evaluation strategies [8]. Four-stage strategy [9]; Establishing genre awareness, controlling discourse structure and analyzing the hierarchy of sentence groups [10]; It is subdivided into the

"intentional alterative" strategy of complete copy, approximate copy, minimal change, appropriate change, complete change [11]. Metacognitive strategies play an important role in writing activities. Planning strategies can help students plan the use of reading texts and writing steps and strategies. Cognitive strategies activate students' existing cognitive schemata such as discourse, which is conducive to students' interpretation of the source text. The monitoring strategy helps students to remind themselves to pay attention to the understanding of the main idea of the source text, the mastery of the main and secondary points, and the cohesion and coherence of the language in the process of reconstructing the text. Evaluation strategies help students reflect and evaluate their writing after writing, and then improve and enhance it. According to the strategy of "rephrasing", after students read and analyze the source text, teachers can design some relevant creative writing question types, ask students to quote the keywords and sentences in the source text, and use rephrasing strategies such as part of speech conversion, addition and deletion, and sentence structure conversion. This process can improve students' interest and enhance their language expression ability.

In terms of teaching methods, Yang [12] proposed four teaching methods: picture overview method, paragraph structure overview method, key information overview method and clue combining overview method. Duan [13] proposed teaching methods such as activating thinking activities, inputting reading texts, extracting main points of articles, and transforming expression modes. The diversity of teaching methods corresponds to the comprehensiveness of the development of students' core qualities, promotes students' thinking activities, strengthens their language expression ability and develops their autonomous learning ability. The above teaching strategies and methods are mostly derived from the practical results of the first-line teachers in middle schools, which provide valuable teaching experience for improving students' relevant ability of summary writing and conform to the changing trend of the new college entrance examination.

4.2. Study on the Theoretical Perspective of Summary Writing

4.2.1. Discourse and Discourse Analysis Theory

In accordance with the requirements of the fifth paragraph of the Examination Instructions: It is accurate to understand and cover all the main points; Can accurately use the corresponding grammar structure and vocabulary; Effective use of intersentence connection components, so that the completed outline structure is compact; Use your own language completely. This indicates that students must have basic knowledge of discourse theory, discourse cohesion, discourse pattern, discourse features and genre, etc., in order to produce high-quality summary writing articles. In high school English summary writing, the most common problems are: it is difficult to determine the reading style; Difficulty in distinguishing paragraph structure and main points; Paragraph cohesive logic is confused; The language expression is not accurate, the content is empty. The weakness of students' textual awareness is the root cause of these problems. At present, discourse teaching and writing are still separated in the combined teaching of reading and writing in senior high school. The combination of students' language expression and language understanding cannot achieve consistency and compactness.

The author sorted out and analyzed the theoretical perspectives of summary writing, which are divided into discourse theory and scaffolding theory, among which discourse and discourse analysis theory are the most important theoretical perspectives, and a large number of research results are based on this theory. The concept of discourse was first proposed by Huang [14], that is, discourse usually refers to a whole language composed of a series of continuous paragraphs or sentences. Huang believes that discourse is a natural language that expresses complete semantics in a certain context and is not completely constrained by sentence grammar. In general, a discourse is a language unit composed of more than one paragraph or sentence, and its components are coherent with each other. There are various types of

discourse, including dialogue, monologue, written language, spoken language and other actual language units.

The perspective of discourse structure analysis includes macro and micro levels [15]. The genre, discourse structure, discourse type and format, and article theme and theme of the text materials all belong to the macro organizational structure [16]. Cohesive modes and connections between sentences, coherent relations between paragraphs, linguistic organization within sentences, vocabulary collocation, knowledge of grammatical structure, indicative relations, development modes of sentences and paragraphs, etc., all belong to the microscopic organization structure of discourse [17]. Teachers can guide students to explore how the macro structure of discourse is reflected through the deep micro organizational structure, and how the micro organizational structure converges into the surface macro level. Through discourse analysis, students can quickly grasp the relationship between the structure, theme, sentence and paragraph vocabulary, and thus improve their logical thinking ability, discourse analysis ability and language organization and expression ability. The seven internal and external characteristics of discourse are purposiveness, intertextuality, contextuality, information, acceptability, cohesion and coherence; four discourse modes are problem-solution mode, question-answer mode, claim-counter-claim mode, narrative mode and general-concrete mode [18]; surface discourse cohesion between different discourse genres, grammar and vocabulary; The theoretical knowledge of the organic combination of different concepts between paragraphs under the surface layer of language, such as discourse coherence, plays an important guiding role in summary writing.

4.2.2. Scaffolding Theory

Scaffolding theory is another widely used theoretical perspective. Constructivism scholar Vygotsky proposed the concept of "zone of proximal development" in the 1930s, and cognitivism scholar Bruner et al. proposed scaffolding teaching theory on the basis of this study [19]. In the current research, a large number of scholars have introduced this theory into the teaching process of summary writing. Li [20] believes that scaffolding teaching theory means that teachers provide support and help to students in their recent development area, build "scaffolding" for listening, speaking, reading and writing, guide them to correct learning, and remove the scaffolding until their knowledge and ability have been fully developed, so as to help students improve their comprehensive language ability. The application of scaffolding teaching theory to summary writing can include a variety of scaffolding modes, such as: select appropriate reading materials, build materials and scenes; Guide students to analyze the main idea and main and secondary points of the text, and build the discourse and structural support; Penetration of core vocabulary statements; Build evaluation support, etc. At the same time, this scaffolding teaching mode can be adjusted and modified according to the actual situation of students, when necessary, gradually reduce or remove the support, and gradually cultivate students' independent writing ability.

4.3. Research on Question Analysis of Summary Writing

It is an important way to improve the corresponding teaching methods and improve the pertinence of teaching to analyze the questions in summary writing. Huang Xiaohui started relevant research at the earliest, defined the definition and characteristics of summary writing, and proposed three basic writing steps, namely positioning, rewriting and checking [21]. Under the background of the new college entrance examination reform, [22] studied the correlation between the new question type and other questions in the test paper, and concluded that the correlation between summary writing and other questions in the test paper was high and of significant significance. Chen [23] paid attention to the changes in examination objectives and pointed out that the new types of questions had improved requirements on reading ability, writing ability, thinking and learning ability. Finally, Zhang and Jiang [24] explored the

influence of task complexity of different writing types on the quality of second language writing, and the experiment proved that the average vocabulary density used by students in summary writing was higher, and there were more parallel structures and noun-complex phrases. In general, the analysis of the question types of summary writing is characterized by diversity and practicality. Although the research methods and perspectives are different, the writing method of summary writing, which closely combines the ability of acquiring and processing information, helps to promote the cultivation of students' comprehensive language application ability, and has been widely recognized by teachers and scholars.

4.4. Research on Quality Evaluation of Summary Writing

4.4.1. Evaluation Criteria and Rating Scale

Wu [25] analyzed the differences in scoring standards of English writing tests at home and abroad, summarized the five dimensions of cohesion coherence, language accuracy, language complexity, fidelity to the original text and writing norms, and showed high differentiation and validity in practical application, achieving good results. Chen and Zhang [26] organized high school students to conduct a summary writing simulation test and analyzed the samples, and divided the score into four dimensions: the presentation of the main points of the original text, the use of vocabulary and grammar, the coherence of context and the degree of dependence on the original text language. This result has been widely used in the evaluation of the quality of summary writing. Based on the SOLO classification theory, Zheng and Yu [27] constructed a summary writing evaluation scale from the three levels of language, key points and organization. Lu [29] evaluated the quality of summary writing from three dimensions of content, language and structure based on literature and existing rating scales. At the present stage, domestic research on the validity, reliability and differentiation of the summary writing scoring scale is relatively scarce. Although the above research results have a short time span, they provide strong support for the science and accuracy of the summary writing scoring scale, and also make significant contributions to the construction and further improvement of the whole scoring system.

4.4.2. Category Rating and Overall Rating

The scoring methods of foreign language writing tests usually include overall scoring or sub-scoring [28]. Overall marking means that the grader marks the students' overall impression of the composition. The itemized scoring rule is to divide the writing task into several different dimensions, which are scored by the grader respectively, and finally the average score or total score is obtained according to the score and weight of each dimension [29]. At present, IELTS, TOEFL and other international tests have adopted the point scoring mode. On the whole, the overall grading time is short, but the subjectivity is strong, it is difficult to provide students with accurate feedback information; Itemized scoring can minimize the differences caused by subjective factors of raters, and the results can reflect the strengths and weaknesses of students, giving students comprehensive and accurate feedback. However, it takes a long time to score, and the setting of scoring dimension is relatively difficult. Therefore, in practice, the selection of scoring methods should be combined with the expected evaluation effect, and the advantages and disadvantages of the two methods should be considered comprehensively.

5. Problems and Discussion

In recent years, great progress has been made in the research of summary writing in China, but there are also some shortcomings, which can be summarized as follows:

The research field is relatively narrow. At present, the research on summary writing is mostly focused on the field of teaching practice inquiry, and the relevant literature is mostly analyzed for the topic of a certain unit, which is difficult to be widely applied to the teaching situation of

other text sources. On the other hand, there are still many gaps in the research on the suitability of summary writing to current students' abilities, which is not conducive to providing support for the gap between topics and students' abilities in teaching practice. In addition, there is not much research on the effect of different genres on the quality of summary writing, and there is no research on the effect of different genres on the difficulty of summary writing, such as its content, length and information density. Therefore, more attention should be paid to the multi-dimensional, cross-domain and fundamental exploration of summary writing in the future.

Relatively simple research methods. In the current research on summary writing, non-material research is the mainstream, and empirical research is still few. Most of the research results of teachers and scholars mainly rely on the practice and reflection in classroom teaching, and there are few large-scale experiments on certain teaching strategies of summary writing, which also leads to the lack of empirical data support for many research conclusions. It is difficult to intuitively reflect the actual effectiveness of various teaching strategies in teaching, and difficult to really solve the current teaching problems and meet the needs of students.

Lack of depth of research content. At present, most domestic researches on summary writing focus on relevant teaching methods and strategies, and the research conclusions are superficial, with insufficient depth of content, and have not been integrated into the task of cultivating students' core literacy. Based on this, future research can go deeper into the effective combination of summary writing and traditional proposition composition; The influence of mother tongue thinking on summary writing; The acquisition of cultural awareness and the cultivation of emotional attitude in summary writing; Acquisition of grammar knowledge in summary writing; The interaction between summary writing reading and original text makes the research content of summary writing develop in the direction of depth and become more diversified, pioneering and innovative.

6. Conclusion

Throughout the research on summary writing in China in the past ten years, there is no doubt that the achievements are quite rich, and excellent achievements have been made in the number of published literatures and the development of research fields. Summary writing is a foreign language testing method and writing teaching method with obvious advantages and remarkable effects, which helps to promote the improvement of students' comprehensive language application ability. Based on the background of the new college entrance examination, the current research on summary writing still needs to be improved in many aspects, and its effective and operational teaching methods also need to be further explored and developed. Combined with the existing problems, it is hoped that the future related research will develop towards a more balanced and in-depth diversified direction, so as to provide more solid theoretical support for summary writing and make it more in line with the practical needs of English teaching and examination in China.

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