

The Use of Schema Theory in the Continuation Task

Luolan Sun

School of Foreign Language, China West Normal University, Nanchong 637000, China

Abstract

At present, many studies have proved the effectiveness of the combination of reading and writing, but there are still some problems in the actual teaching, such as the rupture of the relationship between reading and writing or the error of language structure, which cannot really implement the task of promoting writing by reading. Therefore, from the perspective of schema theory, this paper combines three types of schemas, namely, formal schema, content schema and language schema, to explore the essence of the combination of reading and writing, establish the deep connection between reading and writing, and promote the development of students' thinking quality. Schema theory offers fresh and innovative guidance for the development of the reading-to-writing instructional model, providing educators with a new perspective on how to effectively integrate reading and writing skills. Building upon this theoretical foundation, educators actively engage in exploring and refining effective strategies aimed at optimizing the current junior middle school English writing teaching landscape. These efforts are focused on enhancing the quality of instruction, fostering deeper understanding of language structures and content, and nurturing students' creative and analytical writing abilities. By leveraging the principles of schema theory, educators can create more engaging and effective learning experiences that cater to the unique needs and learning styles of junior middle school students, ultimately leading to improved outcomes in English writing proficiency.

Keywords

Schema Theory; The Continuation Task; Language Teaching and Learning; Reading and Writing.

1. Introduction

1.1. Key Concepts Defined

Schema Theory refers to the theory based on the representation and storage of knowledge organized around a certain topic [2]. It describes the process and methodology of how to utilize abstract and general conceptual models within the realm of cognition and behavior, serving as a tool to facilitate people's ability to quickly comprehend and process a wide array of information. By employing these models, individuals can better organize, categorize, and interpret complex data and ideas, making them more manageable and easier to understand. This approach allows for more efficient information processing and decision-making, enabling individuals to navigate through vast amounts of information with greater ease and confidence. It is stored in the knowledge base of human brain in a certain structure, but the organization form of this knowledge base is not chaotic, and it is usually expressed in a certain type of specific topic and in a certain application way [10]. It is a mental network structure composed of various information elements which are interrelated and interact with each other in human memory bank.

With the comprehensive reform of the college entrance examination system, reading comprehension and writing abilities have been seamlessly integrated into a novel and innovative test format, known as the continuation task, which aims to assess students'

comprehension of a given text as well as their ability to creatively extend the narrative or argument in a coherent and logically sound manner. After reading a short passage, the examinee is required to complete a short passage related to the original text according to the prompts and requirements in the text [7]. In the continuation task, the reader and the writer (i.e. the student) have a shared schema, which helps the student to construct the language knowledge and framework, see [Figure 1](#).

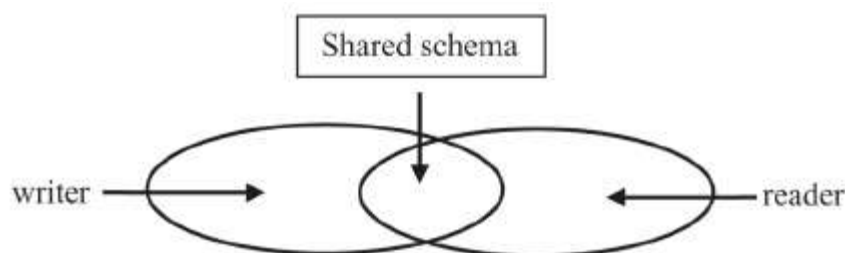


Figure 1. Shared schema

1.2. Literature Review

Schemata was first proposed by the German classical philosopher Immanuel Kant in 1781. Then, psychologist Bartlett proposed schema as a positive development model in his book *Remembering*, and believed that schema could be used in language understanding[3]. Psychologist Piaget defined schema as a dynamic, variable cognitive structure of behavioral patterns. Rumelhart divides schemata into three forms: language schema, content schema, and formal (structural) schema[5].

Before the 1980s, listening, speaking, reading and writing were regarded as different skills and were taught in a separate way in China. Since the 1980s, standardized language marked by the "discrete" test of language skills has further separated literacy skills, and in the later development, the separation of literacy has become more and more obvious. Since the 1990s, the English curriculum has been reformed, and the combination of reading and writing has become a new focus of English teaching research [9]. In foreign countries, the research on the combination of reading and writing teaching is relatively rich, focusing on the discussion of various aspects of reading and writing. However, domestic research on the combination of reading and writing mainly focuses on the validation of the effectiveness of reading to promote writing, the topic context and the view of English learning activities, etc. [7], but there are still a few studies on the combination of reading and writing, and insufficient understanding of the essence of literacy teaching.

1.3. Purpose and Significance of the study

With the increasing development and improvement of schema theory, more and more scholars have studied and proved that the application of schema theory in teaching can greatly promote the teaching effect [1]. It is turned out that Schema Theory has a close relationship with the new type of questions in college entrance examination [11]. It requires learners to have strong reading comprehension and writing ability, and schema theory can be applied in both reading and writing. Specifically, language schema can help students master language knowledge faster and use language to communicate. Content schema can help learners better understand and present the central idea and information structure of the text, grasp the core meaning of the text, and thus better conduct reading and writing training. Formal schema can help learners better understand and apply various formal elements [4]. In the face of the new college entrance examination, students must first understand the paragraph provided by the test, and know what the "reading" is, that is, reading the text content, analyzing the language characteristics, and interpreting the structure of the discourse. Therefore, the strategic application of schema

theory to support and enhance reading and writing practices is extremely beneficial in improving the reading comprehension level and writing proficiency of the examinee, particularly within the context of a continuation task. By leveraging the principles of schema theory, educators and learners can create a more structured and meaningful learning environment that encourages the development of deep comprehension skills and innovative writing techniques. This, in turn, enables the examinee to more effectively engage with the text, grasp its underlying themes and messages, and craft coherent and well-argued responses or continuations that demonstrate a thorough understanding of the material. Ultimately, the integration of schema theory into reading and writing instruction serves as a powerful tool for fostering the overall literacy and critical thinking capabilities of the examinee, especially when tasked with completing a continuation assignment.

2. Problem Identification

Wang pointed out that for a long time, English writing teaching has not organically combined reading and writing, resulting in a disconnect between reading and writing, which affects the combination of language input and output, and thus affects the teaching effect of writing[8].

2.1. Low Reading Ability

Influenced by the traditional reading theory, many English teachers in our country focus on the explanation of language knowledge such as words and sentences in reading teaching, but neglect the learning of background knowledge and reading skills [6]. This reform, which integrates reading comprehension and writing into a new test form called the continuation task, unfortunately reduces the enthusiasm of many students to learn English. For a considerable length of time, despite the fact that teachers and students have dedicated substantial amounts of time and energy to improving reading comprehension skills, the overall effect or improvement in students' understanding and retention of the material has remained relatively unobvious or unsatisfactory. The investment of resources and effort has not yielded the anticipated returns in terms of enhanced comprehension abilities or higher test scores.

2.2. Misuse of Language Structure

In the actual writing process, students will use a lot of language structures incorrectly [12]. On the one hand, students often encounter difficulties in identifying the parts of speech correctly, leading to unclear and ambiguous expressions in their writing, as well as the misuse of parts of speech, which can confuse readers and detract from the clarity and effectiveness of their communication. On the other hand, they also struggle with using the grammatical structure of sentences incorrectly, resulting in errors such as subject-verb disagreement, incorrect tense usage, and misplaced modifiers, which can impair the readability and coherence of their writing. These grammatical errors can hinder the smooth flow of ideas and make it challenging for readers to follow the author's intended meaning. When practicing reading and writing, students accumulate and recite a large number of high-level sentence expressions, imitate them when writing, but often use the wrong grammatical structure of the sentence.

2.3. Deviation from Reading to Writing

The Curriculum Standard for the continuation of the reading requirements for "with the given material logical connection, plot and structure of the complete essay." [14] However, in practical application or when attempting to complete the continuation task, students frequently encounter difficulties in fully understanding the meaning of the first sentence of the two paragraphs provided. As a result, they mistakenly perceive or conceive the content and structure of the paragraphs as illogical or incoherent, which can lead to confusion and hinder their ability to effectively continue the narrative or argument in a manner that aligns with the

original text. This misunderstanding of the initial sentence can set the wrong tone for the rest of their writing, causing them to stray from the intended theme or direction of the continuation. This leads to the lack of coherence and internal logic in reading and writing articles, and the deviation of reading and writing content.

3. The Teaching Strategy of Promoting Writing by Reading under Schema Theory

The reading and writing course based on schema theory can be roughly divided into reading and writing. In the reading part, teachers focus on activating students' existing schema or background knowledge to guide students to identify and internalize the new schema; in the writing section, students begin to use the newly constructed schema to write [13]. Before the reading activity begins, teachers use pictures or audio to activate students' existing schemata and supplement relevant background knowledge in the text to promote the construction of students' schemata.

In the reading section, teachers focus on helping students to solve three kinds of schemata in reading text - content schema, language schema and formal schema. In the writing section, teachers can adopt the method of process writing to help students in the writing process. After the student has carefully determined the appropriate schema or conceptual framework required for the task, they can proceed to integrate the existing schema that is already stored in their brain. This involves drawing connections between the new information and the existing knowledge structures. With this integration, the student can then begin to create a detailed outline, organizing their thoughts and ideas in a logical and coherent manner. Based on this well-structured outline, they can subsequently complete the first draft of their writing, ensuring that it adheres to the intended schema and effectively communicates their intended message.

Finally, the Curriculum Standard advocates the integration of teaching, learning and evaluation [14]. Therefore, once students have completed their initial draft of the writing task, teachers design a set of evaluation criteria that are grounded in schema theory. These criteria serve as a guide for students to conduct self-evaluation and engage in mutual evaluation activities with their peers. During this process, students assess their own work and that of their classmates based on the defined criteria, identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Following this evaluative feedback, students then revise their first draft and write a second draft, incorporating the insights and suggestions gleaned from the evaluation results. This iterative process of writing, evaluating, and revising helps students to refine their work and enhance their understanding of schema theory in practical application.

4. Conclusion

The comprehensive study and practical application of the three distinct forms of Schema Theory, namely linguistic schema, content schema, and formal schema, can significantly promote and enhance students' writing abilities following reading activities. The effective utilization of these three schemas can greatly assist students in achieving a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the reading materials they encounter. By doing so, it not only fosters a richer appreciation of the text but also serves as a catalyst for inspiring creativity and fostering original thinking. Furthermore, through the meticulous application of these schemas, students are equipped with the tools necessary to improve their writing abilities, enabling them to articulate their ideas more clearly, concisely, and persuasively. Ultimately, this holistic approach to learning and applying Schema Theory contributes to the overall development of students' literacy skills and critical thinking abilities. First of all, teachers should help students learn and appreciate the richness of grammar and vocabulary in language schema, and cultivate the habit of accumulating language schema. Secondly, teachers should guide students to

understand the content and theme of the article, guide students to pay attention to the rationality and coherence of the content in reading and writing, and enhance the sensitivity to the content schema and the ability to use it flexibly. Finally, teachers should guide students to pay attention to the textual structure and internal logic of the given materials, so as to conceive a logical and transitional structure. In short, teachers should study and study schema theory in depth, inject impetus into students' learning path through continuous practice and reflection, and help them achieve self-improvement and all-round development in the process of reading and writing. Using reading to promote writing can not only make a deep understanding of the text, but also help to improve writing ability. How to effectively implement reading and writing teaching into practical English classes still needs us to explore and summarize.

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