

# The Application of Portfolio Assessment in English Continuation Writing for Senior High Schools

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## Abstract

The continuation writing has emerged in college entrance examination. It undoubtedly increased the writing difficulty and students' writing anxiety. The English curriculum standard stressed on formative assessment. Among various types of formative assessment, "portfolio" assessment is one of the most effective evaluation methods. This paper attempts to explore the application of portfolio assessment in English continuation writing, which provides a way of teaching, practicing, and evaluating for the continuation writing. To be specific, it explains introduction, concepts and types, important values and application methods of continuation writing in the senior high schools. And hopefully it can be rationally used and scientifically optimized in daily teaching practice of continuation writing.

**Keywords:** portfolio assessment, English continuation writing, senior high schools

## 1. Introduction

Under the background of the new college entrance examination, the writing question types of the English college entrance examination have changed a lot. The reform of writing question types has increased from one composition to two compositions, and new composition question types have emerged, namely, continuation writing and summary writing. The writing score also increased from 25 to 40. The continuation writing fully reflects the new trend of the combination of reading and writing. It means that students need to read about 350 words of a text and complete the continuation task according to the opening words of the paragraph. The continuation writing should be logically connected with the given text, appropriate and complete in plot and

structure, with about 150 words. *The 2017 English curriculum standard for senior high schools* requires that teaching assessment should be based on formative evaluation and supplemented by summative evaluation, focusing on the diversification of evaluation topics, the diversification of evaluation forms, the comprehensiveness of evaluation content and the multidimensional evaluation objectives. (2018) The evaluation results should be able to comprehensively reflect the development and level of students' core competences in English discipline, give full play to the incentive and learning promotion functions of evaluation, and form a positive backwash effect on English teaching.

Among various types of formative assessment, "portfolio" assessment is one of the most

effective evaluation methods. Its advantage is not only to promote the improvement of students' abilities, but also to provide a stage for students to show their talents and creativity. Particularly, it plays an important role in students' English writing when dealing with new types of writing in college entrance examination. (Zeng Peng, 2005) Therefore, this paper aims to apply portfolio assessment to the continuation writing of college entrance examination, so as to focus on students' learning process, play the role of evaluation in promoting learning, improve their own continuation writing task, and promote teachers' professional development.

## **2. Concepts and Types of Portfolio Assessment**

### *2.1 Concepts of Portfolio Assessment*

Scholars at home and abroad have many different expressions on the concept of portfolio. Some foreign scholars notes that as one of the assessment tools, portfolio is to systematically collect related material by students and teachers, checking students' efforts, progress, and achievements. It must include guidelines for students' participation in the content selection process, grading criteria, and evidence of students self-reflection. Domestic Scholars proposed that portfolio assessment is an evaluation strategy to purposefully collect personal learning efforts, progress, and achievements in knowledge, skill and affection, and purposefully collect them in portfolios. (Huang Guangyang, 2003)

### *2.2 Types of Portfolio Assessment*

At present, scholars at home and abroad have divided it into various types, mainly in the purpose of setting and the function of portfolios. Portfolio assessment can be divided into three types, namely, product portfolio, process portfolio and synthetic portfolio.

#### **2.2.1 The Product Portfolio**

The product portfolio is an evaluation means to show the excellent works and learning achievements of students. The theme of the portfolio is jointly decided by teachers or students. It can be one theme or multiple themes. Students must select the best or most satisfied works or learning achievements according to the theme and relevant production requirements of the portfolio, and then put them into the portfolio. After that, students need to make necessary notes, reflections and sorting on the

excellent works and achievements, meeting the requirements of the portfolio.

#### **2.2.2 The Process Portfolio**

The process portfolio focuses on presenting and displaying the process of students' learning progress, exploration, effort, reflection and achievement. Generally speaking, process portfolios are created on a thematic basis. Under the guidance of teachers, students systematically collect detailed information that is meaningful in the learning process, and they can explain the learning progress and change process according to the theme agreed by teachers and students in advance. These detailed materials may completely present the gradual process of learning and achieving goals, rather than just putting satisfactory works or learning achievements in portfolios.

#### **2.2.3 The Synthetic Portfolio**

The synthetic portfolio refers to a learning portfolio with both results and processes or multiple themes. In the summative assessment of curriculum teaching or the test that focuses on students' ability, the synthetic portfolio is the most used one.

## **3. The Important Values of Portfolio Assessment in the Teaching of English Continuation Writing for Senior High School Students**

### *3.1 Record Students' Progress and Improve Continuation Writing Ability*

Different from summative assessment, portfolio is one of the formative assessment methods. As a formative assessment, portfolio is able to comprehensively evaluate students' learning, not only caring about the result of students learning, but more importantly the process of their learning, such as students' learning progress, attitudes, emotions, reflections, and other aspects of students' development. It also provides a lot of information which can effectively help teachers and students adjust teaching and learning in the classroom practice.

When it comes to the practice of continuation writing in senior high schools, it may cause a lot of problems for students as a completely new type of writing. Students are familiar with practical writing because they have mastered some writing skills and accumulated some useful expressions on it. However, continuation writing might be a little bit difficult for them. First, they must have a clear understanding of

the given material. And then, they have to construct how to continue to write the content logically and creatively, and use correct and appropriate expressions to explain what they would like to talk about. Thus, to some extent, this increases the difficulty of writing and strengthens students' fear of writing, especially the struggling and average students.

However, as one of the formative assessment methods, portfolio assessment can help teachers pay more attention to the process of students' writing, help students record their writing, find some problems in writing, record the process of continuous improvement of writing from the first draft, the second draft to the final draft, and the process from the first-time continuation writing to the last time. In addition, in this process, students themselves can participate more in evaluation process. They will take more responsibility for their own learning through self-evaluation; share and communicate more with peers through peer evaluation; reflect on their own advantages and disadvantages in the writing process through self-reflection. Based on all of these, students will make corresponding actions timely and appropriately, and finally achieve the purpose of improving the ability to continuation writing.

### *3.2 Reflect Students' Abilities in All Aspects*

From the point of extent, portfolio assessment can demonstrate students' abilities in cognition, innovation, social interaction and other aspects. From the depth of perspective, it shows the quality of students' completion of learning tasks without pressure and time constraints. Form the form, it demonstrates students' ability to use and perceive knowledge in specific situations. Thus, the richness of students development and the complexity of education are fully highlighted in portfolio assessment.

### *3.3 Highlight Students' Personality and Reflect on Their Own Learning*

First, the contents of the portfolio are not randomly selected, randomly listed, and randomly stacked, but are purposefully selected, clearly stated, and systematically presented. Students are the main decision-makers for submitting works and have full opportunities to

express opinions and review works. (Cai Yaping, 2003) And then, reflection has become a prominent feature of portfolio evaluation assessment. During the process, students can constantly reflect on their own learning methods and learning result. They reflect on in which aspects they did well in the process, and in which aspects they still need to improve. Gradually, they can experience the joy of growth and enhance learning autonomy and self-confidence.

## **4. The Application of Portfolio Assessment in English Continuation Writing for the Senior High Schools**

### *4.1 Guide Students to Establish a Process Portfolio for Continuation Writing*

First of all, students are asked to prepare a portfolio as a collection of their works. Students write the composition on the uniform paper, which is convenient for the production, display and evaluation of the portfolio.

Second, students are asked to design the cover of their own portfolio. The cover of the portfolio should include the basic information of themselves and try to make it individually and recognizable. They can design it according to the theme of the portfolio, that is, "continuation writing".

Third, teachers and students work together to determine the content of the process portfolio for continuation writing. It could include students' continuation writing, from the first draft to second draft and to the final product. Besides, it could contain the evaluation of the writing, such as self-evaluation, peer evaluation and teacher's evaluation. And more importantly, students' reflection on their work is also included in it. Students' self-reflection is an important content to understand and promote students' self-education, self-growth and self-evaluation. Teachers should intensify instruction and give adequate attention, so as to embody the specialty and educational function of portfolio assessment.

Finally, for future review, learners are asked to set a catalogue of their portfolio. A brief example is presented in the table below.

**Table 1.** Catalogue of portfolio

Number	Date	Theme of your continuation writing	Brief introduction of the content	Page number
1	October 1	Personal growth	An encounter with an old man	P4
2				
3				
4				

#### 4.2 Formulate Evaluation Criteria for Continuation Writing

Before composing the writing, teachers should first formulate evaluation criteria for continuation writing. After determining the scoring standard, teachers should guide students to learn and understand the evaluation criteria. Teachers can also present how she make evaluation on continuation writing and summarize some significant points that students can pay attention to. In this way, it not only helps to guide students to complete the task according to the requirements, but also creates conditions for students to employ the criteria to make appropriate evaluation on their own and peer’s work. After writing, students are asked to make a self-evaluation of the work based on the set grading rules. Through comparison, students gradually understand the grading criteria of continuation writing, and clearly understand the highlights of their works and the areas to be improved, so as to improve the quality of continuation writing.

Teachers are supposed to place special importance on the appropriate use of the criteria because to a large extent it determines the reliability of their evaluation. (Ge Qiaoxia, 2021) It is normal that students might not make appropriate evaluation on the composition at the very beginning since it is a completely new type of writing and students are not so familiar with it. But gradually, through portfolio evaluation based on diversified subjects, we will witness their progress.

When it comes to the grading criteria of continuation writing, they can consider evaluating the writing from different aspects,

such as the plot, language, logic and emotion. They can check whether the content is rich and reasonable, whether the structure is coherent and fluent, whether the transition is natural, whether the language is correct and appropriate.

#### 4.3 Evaluate Continuation Writing from Diversified Subjects

Topping (1998) pointed out that students’ self-evaluation and peer evaluation can provide opportunities to observe each other’s works and evaluate and reflect on their own works, and it can promote students to further think about how to improve their works. If it is implemented repeatedly, it can improve students’ writing ability.

Portfolio assessment focuses more on the process rather than the product of learning. The evaluation process is both systematic and personalized. Through teachers’ comments, students’ self-evaluation and peer evaluation, students can make their learning direction clearer and gain learning experience, so as to obtain great satisfaction and sense of achievement in the process of progress. This is the real purpose of the portfolio evaluation.

Therefore, evaluation should be conducted from different subjects, including self-evaluation, peer evaluation, teacher evaluation and sometimes group evaluation. Teachers should set self-evaluation checklist, peer evaluation checklist and group evaluation checklist. Students can evaluate their works based on the criteria of continuation writing. Here, an example of evaluation checklist is listed in the table. Teachers can also change the guiding evaluation items according to the specific situation.

**Table 2.** Evaluation checklist

Evaluation item	Self-evaluation					Peer evaluation				
	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
The plot is reasonable and interesting.	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
The language is abundant and accurate.	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
The logic is clear and the cohesive device is appropriate.	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
The emotional expression is appropriate.	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1

After the evaluation, a significant step is to make reflection on the learning process, such as in which aspects they have done well and in which aspects they have to make improvement. For the content of reflection, they can reflect on their learning attitude, method and effect and even the content of learning. More importantly, learners should make adaptations according to the evaluation and reflection.

#### 4.4 Assess Learners' Portfolio Works

The purpose of the evaluation of portfolios is to review the learning process of the past time and promote their development in the future. They should first determine the grades of the portfolio work, such as excellent, good, average and poor, and then give specific text descriptions.

At the same time, it is advisable to involve parents in the evaluation process, asking parents to evaluate their children's work, write comments on a piece of paper and store them in the portfolio. (Meng Juanjuan & Xia Huixian, 2011) Because of the involvement of parents, some students will take the portfolio writing more seriously. At the same time, portfolios also provide parents with an opportunity to evaluate their own children and learn more about their children's academic performance.

#### 4.5 Hold a Portfolio Exchange Exhibition and Share Their Learning Experience of Continuation Writing

Teachers can organize two portfolio exchange exhibitions, in the middle and the end of the term. First, they share their works and experiences in their own group. Then, each group selects a representative to share their work and experience in front of the class. Finally, the teacher summarizes the performance of the students in the whole process of implementing portfolio evaluation and gives them more suggestions on continuation writing and arrangement of portfolios. As a result, students experience a sense of achievement and confidence in English learning. This is very beneficial to improve students' learning interest, stimulate students' learning initiative and

cultivate students' learning innovation.

### 5. Conclusion

Under the background of the reform of writing question type in the college entrance examination, it undoubtedly increases the difficulty of writing and students' writing anxiety. However, portfolio assessment can better record the whole process of students' learning, which is helpful for students to review later and give them a sense of achievement in continuation writing. When students look back after a stage of learning, they will find that they can overcome continuation writing and they will be more confident about their future study. To sum up, this paper explains the introduction, concepts and types, important values, and the application methods of the portfolio in continuation writing. It provides a way of teaching, practicing, and evaluating for the continuation writing. And hopefully it can be rationally used and scientifically optimized in daily teaching practice of continuation writing.

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