摘　　要

二语学习者语言产出能力的测量和分析是二语习得领域的重要课题之一。句法复杂度被认为是二语教学和研究的一个重要组成部分。近年来，国内外许多学者都对二语学习者书面语的句法复杂度进行了研究，但对高中生读后续写作文的句法复杂度的研究较少。

本研究旨在运用句法复杂度自动分析器（L2SCA）定量研究高中生英语读后续写句法复杂度的特征与变化趋势，以期对读后续写教学提出建设性建议。具体研究问题如下：（1）同一年级不同写作水平高中生的英语读后续写句法复杂度的特征是什么？（2）随着年级的升高，高中生英语读后续写的句法复杂度呈现怎样的变化趋势？研究收集了浙江省某普通高中三个年级 450 篇作文作为语料，并运用 L2SCA 对其句法复杂度进行分析，研究结果表明：

（1）在句法复杂度的特征方面，高一年级中，只有在短语复杂度方面，高写作水平学生比低写作水平学生使用更多的复杂名词。高二年级不同写作水平的学生在产出单位长度、从属结构数量、并列结构数量和短语复杂度上存在显著组间差异。高三学生在产出单位长度、从属结构数量、短语复杂度和句子整体复杂度上表现为高写作水平学生显著优于低写作水平学生。

（2）从变化趋势来看，产出单位长度、从属结构数量、短语复杂度三个子维度随着年级的上升基本呈上升趋势。而高二年级学生在从属结构数量、并列结构数量、短语复杂度和句子整体复杂度方面呈 U 型变化趋势，即高二学生在这些指标上表现不佳。

基于以上结果，本研究对英语读后续写教学提出以下建议。对教师而言，教师应确保写作教学输入文本的数量与质量，以培养学生句法复杂度意识与信心。并且，教师应对不同写作水平的学生给予针对性的写作训练，体现教学梯度。同时，教师还应顺应变化趋势，在对教材文本句法的解读基础上加强各类句法的专项训练。最后，教师要建立评价体系，将句法复杂度评价纳入日常写作教学。对学生而言，应逐步提高句法复杂度意识与信心，重视各类句式表达的积累，并在写作中主动运用。

关键词：句法复杂度；读后续写；高中生；特征与变化趋势

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Chapter One Introduction

Chapter one is the general introduction to the study, which mainly introduces the research background, research purpose and significance. Meanwhile, the structure of the thesis will be elaborated.

1.1 Research background

The gradual transition from acquisition to long-term development has been the focus of second language acquisition research in recent years. Moreover, one efficient strategy to move from learning outcomes to the learning process is to analyze the language features and changing trends of second language learners' written language to thoroughly assess their language growth and practical language use (Gao Wenying, 2020). Complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) have been utilized as performance descriptors for the oral and written assessment of language learners as well as indicators of learners' proficiency underpinning their performance. They have also been used to measure language learning progress (Housen & Kuiken, 2009). Complexity can be divided into lexical complexity and syntactic complexity. Ortega (2003: 492) pointed out that "syntactic complexity is important in second language research because of the assumption that language development entails, among other processes, the growth of an L2 learner's syntactic repertoire and her or his ability to use that repertoire appropriately in a variety of situations". Moreover, syntactic complexity is not only an indicator to measure students' syntactic structure output ability in foreign language writing, but also an essential factor in measuring students' English language competence (Ortega, 2003; Wu Xue & Lei Lei, 2018; Liu Ligang & Liu Liu, 2021). Therefore, it is necessary to explore the characteristics and changing trends of syntactic complexity in students' writing.

As one of the five basic language skills, writing is an essential aspect of foreign language learning, teaching and evaluation. In order to deepen the reform of the test content and give full play to the core function of guiding English teaching in middle

schools, integrative writing tasks are introduced into College Entrance Examination. The continuation writing task was implemented in pilot provinces of the comprehensive reform of College Entrance Examination in 2016. According to the college entrance examination English test instructions, students are given a material (no more than 350 words), most of which are narrative essays with complex plots and a tiny quantity of argumentative essays on occasion. The task required the candidate to compose a passage with a comprehensive narrative and structure in approximately 150 words, based on the content of the material, the beginning of the provided paragraph, and the keywords marked. (Education Examination Center, 2015).

The new writing task conforms to the requirements of the *General Senior High School English Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition revised in 2020)* that we should pay attention to the cultivation of students' comprehensive competence for language use and avoid isolated single-skill training. Moreover, according to the description of the objective of the College Entrance Examination, students are required to (1) use accurate, appropriate and abundant vocabulary and sentence structure; (2) be consistent with the vocabulary, sentence structure and even language style of the original text (a higher requirement). As can be seen from the description of the above examination objectives, the new task puts forward certain requirements on syntactic complexity. Wang Chuming (2010) pointed out that the continuation task could organically combine content creation and language imitation, making "continuation" a bridge between understanding and output, thus triggering the effect of alignment and turning the language used by others into a language that one can use. Wang Min and Wang Chuming (2014) found that the alignment effect could strengthen or expand learners' language representation and help them apply syntactic knowledge acquired in reading comprehension to writing, thus improving their language application ability, especially syntactic application ability.

Since the 1970s, the study of syntactic complexity has attracted extensive attention at home and abroad. The existing studies can be broadly summarized in the following four areas: (1) To investigate whether the indicators of syntactic complexity can effectively differentiate second language learners' writing level and to discuss the

relationship between these indicators and writing quality (Ortega, 2003; Larsen-Freeman, 2006; Lu Xiaofei, 2011; Gao Xia, 2021; Wu Jifeng & Lu Xiaofei, 2021). (2) To investigate how each variable, such as task difficulty (Zhang Yujie & Jiang Jingyang, 2020; Guo Jia et al., 2021), topics (Yang Weiwei et al., 2015), feedback modes (Bai Yun et al., 2022), and first language backgrounds (Lu Xiaofei & Ai Haiyang, 2015), affects syntactic complexity. (3) To evaluate the differences in syntactic complexity between second language learners and native speakers (Lu Xiaofei & Ai Haiyang, 2015; Mancilla et al., 2015; Lei Lei, 2017). (4) To ascertain the trends and developmental characteristics of second language learners' syntactic complexity and forecast these changes (Qing Xiaoqing & Wen Qiufang, 2007; Bao Gui, 2009; Verspoor et al., 2012; Housen, 2014; Li Mengxiao & Liu Yongbing, 2016; Zhang Huiping & Zhang Siyu, 2020). On the other hand, the implementation of the continuation writing task has attracted the attention of numerous scholars and teachers. A large number of studies have conducted multi-dimensional exploration and research on the continuation writing task, focusing on the examination objectives and scoring standards (Wu Xuefeng et al., 2018; Chen Kang & Zhang Jie, 2020; Chen Kang, 2022), the theoretical basis of the learning promotion effect (Wang Chuming, 2009; Wang Min & Wang Chuming, 2014), the learning promotion effect and effective teaching strategies and skills (Wu Xuefeng, 2019; Sun Xu, 2020; Wang Qi, 2021; Liu Jianjun, 2022).

While there have been numerous studies on the syntactic complexity of second language learners, most of them have focused on high-level second language learners (Xu Xiaoyan et al., 2013; Bulté & Housen, 2014; Jiang Weishun & Wang Tongshun, 2015; Lei Lei, 2017), and there have been relatively few studies on the syntactic complexity of senior high school students. More importantly, there is a lack of research on syntactic complexity at different writing levels within the same grade. Language acquisition is a continuous process that exhibits various traits depending on where a learner is on the interlanguage continuum. Studying the syntactic complexity of different second language proficiency-level learners is important because, in China, second language learning typically lasts from the third grade of elementary school

until the end of university (Shu Ying, 2022). In addition, previous studies on syntactic complexity in China mainly focused on English argumentative writing (Xu Xiaoyan et al., 2013; Yang Lifang & Wang Lan, 2016; Li Xuelan & Zhang Huiping, 2022; Ye Xiaozhi, 2022), neglecting the exploration of the characteristics and changing trends of syntactic complexity in the new writing mode of continuation writing. In view of this, in order to fill this gap, this study intends to use the automatic L2 syntactic complexity analyzer (L2SCA) to analyze the characteristics and changing trends of the syntactic complexity of senior high school students' continuation writing.

1.2 Research purpose and significance

The purpose of this thesis is twofold. Firstly, the syntactic complexity of different writing levels in the same grade is studied to understand the characteristics of syntactic complexity of learners at different writing levels in the same period. Then, this paper explores the changing trends of syntactic complexity of senior high school English learners to understand the development mode of senior high school learners in the new writing task, and provides constructive suggestions for writing instruction.

The theoretical significance of this study is to extend the field of syntactic complexity research and connect the results of this study with previous studies on advanced learners so as to better understand the characteristics and changing trends of students' writing syntactic complexity throughout the entire learning stage.

The practical significance of this study is to provide some references for English teachers and learners. First of all, mastering the overall situation of the syntactic complexity of the continuation writing task is helpful for teachers to understand students' syntax production capacity, which provides references for the design and implementation of senior high school writing instruction. Secondly, according to the syntactic complexity characteristics at different writing levels in each grade, teachers can provide targeted writing guidance. Thirdly, this study provides a detailed and accurate reference for the establishment of scoring criteria for the continuation task. Finally, students can reflect on their own syntactic output, improve their awareness of interactive learning, and cultivate the awareness of obtaining syntactic information

from reading comprehension and applying it to writing.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

There are five chapters in this thesis.

The first chapter is the introduction, which introduces the research background, research purpose and significance, as well as the structure of the thesis.

The second chapter is the literature review, which defines the key concepts of syntactic complexity and continuation writing, elaborates the theoretical bases of the research and reviews the relevant studies on syntactic complexity and continuation writing at home and abroad.

Chapter Three elaborates on the research methodology, including research questions, data source, instrument, data collection and analysis.

The research results and discussion are presented in Chapter Four. This section discusses in detail the characteristics and changing trends of the syntactic complexity of continuation writing in senior high school students.

Chapter Five presents the conclusion, involving major findings, pedagogical implications, limitations and suggestions.

Chapter Two Literature Review

This chapter firstly introduces the definitions of syntactic complexity and continuation writing, then elaborates the relevant theoretical bases, and finally reviews the relevant studies on syntactic complexity and continuation writing at home and abroad.

2.1 Key definitions

2.1.1 Syntactic complexity

Syntactic complexity, a significant aspect of linguistic complexity, has been defined in a variety of ways over time by various academics. In the earliest studies, researchers tend to define syntactic complexity as an ability of second language learners. When Hunt (1965) proposed the concept of syntactic maturity, he believed that syntactic maturity is the ability to convey more information or express more ideas by using fewer words. “More and richer meaning in relatively few languages” can be used to summarize linguists’ understanding of syntactic complexity during this period. Foster and Skenhan (1996) took sentence types into account and enriched the definition of Hunt (1965). They pointed out that syntactic complexity emphasized “more elaborate language” and “a great syntactic patterning”, such as the elaboration and variation of syntactic patterns. In 1998, Wolfe-Quintero et al. redefined the definition of syntactic complexity. They believed that “syntactic complexity is manifest in writing primarily in terms of grammatical variation and sophistication” (Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998: 69). In brief, if learners can only use a small range of fundamental structures, it is an indication of “lack of complexity”, as opposed to high-degree learners who can grasp and use a vast number of basic structures and complicated structures with ease. By 2003, the concept of syntactic complexity had changed again, from a definition of competence to a description of linguistic output itself. “Syntactic complexity (also called syntactic maturity or linguistic complexity) refers to the range of forms that surface in language production and the degree of

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