

THE IBC OF WRITING

论文写作课堂教与学

[加拿大] Jean Beauchamp



Sichuan University Press
四川大学出版社

论文写作指导书系

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Foreword

It's about time! I said to myself after previewing this new and exciting book, *The IBC of Writing*. Finally, here is a book, I noted, that is designed especially for teachers and students to work together, and whose subject matter is in great demand in China, namely how to write a clear and comprehensive English essay.

The IBC of Writing, as its name implies, begins with the basics to identify and instruct students to write proper essays complete with Introduction, Body and Conclusion, the essential elements of all fluent compositions. Inside the reader will find all the popular styles and rhetorical patterns, all the common planning and prewriting techniques, as well as plenty of practice and examples that will make writing essays an approachable task for everyone. Here at last is a complete book, written for teachers and students alike who want to make a point of understanding and with practice come to appreciate the need for essay writing, whether at university or in the workplace.

Expository writing, as the author points out in his Introduction, requires that a structural method be taught at the start, to lay the foundation for a coherent presentation of ideas. Some critics say that learning a method, even any method, may stifle students' imagination and critical thinking, but I don't agree. I feel, as the author does, that before any creative phase can emerge, all students, whether aspiring academics, artists, scientists, or even musicians, must master the basic techniques before improvisation can begin.

The author, Jean Beauchamp, a published writer himself and a lecturer at our University, has compiled the definitive textbook on essay presentation based on his popular writing classes, once reserved for English majors at Xiamen University. Now for the first time, students all over China will be able to enjoy and benefit from the combination of valuable insights and lively learning activities Mr. Beauchamp provides in his new book. As this book has definitely demystified the secret of success in writing good essays and articles in English, university students and independent learners of English writing alike will find it accessible, user-friendly and fascinating: a treasure trove.

Ji Yuhua, Ph.D.

纪玉华博士

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Preface

This book is dedicated to the pragmatic spirit of thinkers such as Theodore Levitt, the Harvard professor who coined the term “globalization.” His most famous line, that “People don’t want quarter-inch drills, they want quarter-inch holes,” has been quoted by generations of marketing people. Paraphrasing Professor Levitt’s powerful and enduring insight for our purposes: it is not the method itself but the resulting condition that teachers and students desire from the use of a method.

About this Book

This is a front-line book on writing that comes classroom-ready with the essential elements students need to confront the challenges and overcome the difficulties in acquiring a structurally new writing system. This book offers a combined program of knowledge and classroom-tested activities, including sensible advice, for developing specific skills and techniques on how to write effective 3- and 5- paragraph essays. The target audience can be teachers desirous of a proven set of progressive teaching modules, as well as students whose English proficiency ranges from upper basic to upper intermediate level and beyond, and who wish to become skilled at the three main stages of writing: planning, developing and revising. In addition, *The IBC of Writing* offers excellent preparation for more advanced writing techniques such as academic and report writing, detailed material organization, mixed rhetorical patterns, abstract and concrete terms, effective argumentation, and the finer points of style and rhythm, all of which and more are covered in *The IBC of Advanced Writing*.

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Introduction to the China version

To the Instructor

This comprehensive, hands-on book offers learners as effective and enjoyable an introduction as possible to the four key elements of modern, international essay writing, namely content, organization, clarity and vocabulary. Topics include prewriting, the IBC global standard, popular essay development methods, text revision techniques and sentence skill review, as well as exposure to inductive and deductive reasoning, all in the name of good expository writing.

Expository writing centers around the ability to offer sound and compelling arguments – that is, provide clarity and persuasion in a variety of rhetorical styles that contrast sharply with the high levels of elegant expression, emotion and narration encouraged in Chinese schools.

Essay writing in Western mode is considered a linear affair, related to a line in the sense perhaps that it goes straight to the heart of the matter. Whether one argues in favor of or against forcing linear scans onto associative mental arrays (and I've read my share of non-linear or circular Western writers), so-called Western writing techniques present instructors with a set of specific challenges in China. Chief among these is a shift in thinking (cultural or otherwise) from the circuitous and more abstract “eventually getting to the point” approach, to where students are urged to “quickly establish and support a central idea.” Are we talking explicit versus implicit development here? I fear not – great literature across all borders recognizes no such duality. No, I tell you the most challenging new concept to promote to a classroom of Chinese students eager to learn elementary Western writing is how to think and write backwards.

That's right, in reverse. Naturally, Chinese students in their standard essays tend to set up the background and work gradually toward a main point, which they rightly consider to be the conclusion. In contrast, the new paradigm instructor's main task will be to convince students to begin (not end) with the conclusion, by presenting the main idea (or thesis) in the introduction, followed by logical, detailed support for this thesis over one or more subsequent paragraphs. Good organization is the key to clarity and persuasion. With time and practice, the student essay standard under-goes a transformation from process of discovery to an exercise in true rhetorical discourse.

Although a rigid structural method has been criticized as a “cookbook” approach that can stifle students' imagination and critical thinking, I feel its very predictability can be an asset for new writers. Beginning writers need to understand the persuasive value of a main point stated early on, paragraphs that express one idea clearly, and a conclusion that mirrors the introduction. Then with careful preparation and practice, the actual writing part as we shall see, becomes merely a matter of revision.

Getting Around

This book can rightly be called a course book, for it offers a practical, class by class method of presenting the new writing paradigm. The first part, the writing *process*, refers to a planning or prewriting stage, how to prepare the mind (and the essay) before ink reaches paper. The second part deals with the *product*, the written essay itself as soon as ink has been spilled.

The instructor may exploit this book as a turnkey operation – all it requires is enthusiasm. The book comprises thirty-two 90-minute lessons in real time, 48 hours of instructional material, complete with theory and practice. (The instructor is encouraged to complement the book with his or her own know-how, as well as foster group discussion with additional activities to enhance the students' experience.) Here, set out in 32 graduated units, is a fresh approach to learning how to write, with techniques that include group work, peer review, assorted rhetorical pattern practice and fun learning activities.

Banners help to navigate the information.

CONVERSATION

A cast of eclectic characters discuss the pros and cons of several of the new ideas presented in this book, from both a teacher and student perspective.

SPOTLIGHT

Each lesson has special features that are highlighted for both teachers and students. The material is suitable for students of all levels, from elementary to upper-intermediate, making it an excellent resource text for every staff room.

ACTIVITY

Lessons contain lively, educational activities that have been tried and shown to work in the classroom. Activities offer integrated skills material leading to a written outcome.

HOMEWORK

Homework is encouraged to reinforce the classroom experience, and several homework assignments are brought forward into the next lesson for the sake of continuity.

SENTENCE SKILL PRACTICE

Almost every lesson supplies students with a chance to hone their skills with different practice modules, from choosing the right word to grammar and punctuation correction.

APPENDIX

Several appendices offer answers to selected activities, useful reference material, practical handouts and sample exam questions. Included also is a writing tool kit with checklists, correction codes and reference sheets on organization and style for students.

To the Student

What is good writing? Good writing is nothing more than learning to be clear and persuasive when putting words on paper. Good writing presents ideas in such a way that the reader will understand and accept them.

Good writing requires adherence to certain simple steps:

Step 1: Determine your topic, readers and purpose.

Step 2: Locate material. Find out what there is to say about your topic. Generate facts, discover data, think up ideas. Gather the information before you write.

Step 3: Organize the material: What is your main idea? To support it, what material will you keep and what will you discard as unsuitable? Make an outline.

Step 4: Write a first draft.

Step 5: Revise in successive sweeps: 1) the whole paper, 2) the sentence connections and transitions of ideas, 3) words and phrases, 4) the punctuation.

Table of Contents

FOREWORD <i>by Ji Yuhua</i>	i
PREFACE	iii
INTRODUCTION TO THE CHINA VERSION	v
PART 1: THE WRITING PROCESS	
LESSON 1 – INTERNATIONAL IBC SYSTEM	5
LESSON 2 – DE-CONSTRUCTION	9
LESSON 3 – FOUNDATIONS OF GOOD WRITING	16
LESSON 4 – STAR POINTS WHEN WRITING AN ESSAY	19
LESSON 5 – PLANNING TO WRITE AND WRITING TO PLAN	24
LESSON 6 – INDUCTIVE VERSUS DEDUCTIVE REASONING	29
LESSON 7 – REVIEW AND EXERCISES	32
LESSON 8 – INTRODUCTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS	34
LESSON 9 – BODY TYPES	38
LESSON 10 – INTERVAL REVIEW	40
LESSON 11 – DESCRIPTION PART 1	41
LESSON 12 – DESCRIPTION PART 2	44
LESSON 13 – NARRATION PART 1	46
LESSON 14 – NARRATION PART 2	49
LESSON 15 – PRESENTATIONS	52
LESSON 16 – SEMESTER REVIEW	54
PART 2: THE WRITTEN PRODUCT	
LESSON 17 – PREWRITING REVIEW	58
LESSON 18 – SENTENCE SKILLS	63
LESSON 19 – TEM WRITING	67
LESSON 20 – ARGUMENTATION	75
LESSON 21 – PROCESS	80
LESSON 22 – CAUSE/EFFECT	87
LESSON 23 – COMPARISON/CONTRAST	91
LESSON 24 – DEFINITION	93
LESSON 25 – DIVISION/CLASSIFICATION	95
LESSON 26 – EXAMPLES	98
LESSON 27 – INTERVAL REVIEW	100
LESSON 28 – REVISION TECHNIQUES	103
LESSON 29 – IMPLIED MEANING	104
LESSON 30 – HAIKU	110
LESSON 31 – PRESENTATIONS	114
LESSON 32 – FINAL REVIEW	115
APPENDICES	117
INDEX	139

Part 1:
The writing process

Cast of conversation characters

Teachers

Professor Walt: popular lecturer

Oncle Antoine: portly and profound professor

Lin: caring teaching assistant

Students

Eliza: studious and guileless

Carlos: dull but dedicated

Anton: smart and arrogant

CONVERSATION

(ELIZA and CARLOS, classmates, are on their way to the canteen for lunch)

- Carlos: I protest! I disagree completely!
Eliza: How can you disagree? That's just the way it is.
Carlos: I won't accept it! I just won't!
Eliza: I don't think you have any choice, really. Carlos, it's not like choosing between vanilla or chocolate ice cream. I mean, it's more like accepting the inevitable – like gravity, like homework. Some things don't ask our permission to exist.
Carlos: But it's not fair, Eliza. Why should we learn a completely new writing method? Our current way of writing is adequate... we've been using it for thousands of years.
Eliza: Because... because we're the only ones who use it.
Carlos: But...

(Enter LIN, coming up behind Carlos)

- Lin: And that puts us at a disadvantage with respect to other countries.
Carlos: *(Turning around)* Lin, you surprised me.
Lin: I was hoping to convince you instead.
Eliza: It's not as easy as you might think. Carlos is determined to oppose it.
Carlos: I'm not trying to be difficult. I just don't like this so-called IBC system.
Lin: It's not whether you like it or not, Carlos, it's whether you understand it.
Eliza: Really Carlos, what's not to understand? It's simple. Every essay you write requires an Introduction, a Body and a Conclusion. How difficult can that be? The teacher said even a paragraph, the basic writing unit, follows IBC rules.
Lin: That's right. Every paragraph is a complete story in itself that follows IBC rules. Eliza and Carlos, let's look at the IBC system together and try to make sense of it.
Eliza: Can we sit down?
Lin: This won't take long, I promise. Let's walk as we talk. *(Lin sets a rapid pace)* As with many things, including the IBC writing system, there's an introduction. In this case, it's the first paragraph that tells us what's going to be discussed. It's a kind of promise the writer makes to the reader.
Carlos: And ruins the surprise.
Lin: That's true, from our point of view. But the international writing crowd doesn't appear to like surprises.
Eliza: Neither does Carlos.
Lin: Whenever you begin to write, think of yourself as a bus driver or ferry captain. You tell your reader where you plan to take them, and if they like the destination, they'll get on board.
Carlos: A ferry captain? Lin, really!

Lin: Carlos, that's the wonder of writing! As a writer, you have complete power over your reader's mind.

Eliza: Lin, you make it sound like hypnosis.

Carlos: Are you saying we can practice mind control? That's awesome!

Lin: That's exactly what I'm saying, you two! Writers can take readers anywhere they like. Think of the Harry Potter stories, with their readers lost in a magic kingdom. Think of any book you just can't put down. Now tell me again if there's no magic there.

Eliza: I've never thought about it that way.

Lin: And the introduction is where you tell the reader where you're going. The only difference is – your destination is an idea, not a place. It's called a thesis or main idea. In an essay, the main idea can be an opinion you have, a claim you make, or an idea you want to develop. The important thing to remember is that you must tell readers where you're going first.

Eliza: To get their permission.

Carlos: And their cooperation. Without that, I guess no one will follow you.

Lin: That, Carlos, leads us to the Body of the essay. Readers will cooperate as long as they know you are steering them toward the destination. You do this by supporting the main idea you began with.

Eliza: How do we provide support?

Lin: By showing that your ideas make sense. You can provide examples, tell a story of a famous person, prove what you say with facts. There are many ways.

Eliza: Lin, we're at the canteen. Can we eat now, I'm so hungry.

Lin: You go ahead, Eliza. I want to explain this last part to Carlos.

Eliza: I want to hear it too.

Lin: Finally, there's the Conclusion, which can be confusing because it should really be called a Summary.

Carlos: And this is the part that I can't accept. It's called a conclusion, isn't it? So that's where we put our conclusion, the main point of our story. Yet our teacher says this is not really a conclusion. I protest. Our way is...

Lin: Your teacher is right, Carlos. The conclusion is merely a re-statement of the introduction. As I said before, the conclusion holds no surprises.

Carlos: Why?

Lin: You can't put the thesis or main point in the conclusion. If you did, how would you be able to support it? By then you're already at the end of the essay.

Carlos: I never thought of that.

Lin: So the conclusion is like arriving at the end of your journey and hearing the driver announce the destination. Why does he do it?

Eliza: To let you know it's time to get off?

Lin: And time to eat. Shall we?

Lesson 1 – International IBC system

Course outline

Discussion 1: What is good writing? Good writing is nothing more than learning to be clear and persuasive when putting words on paper. Good writing presents ideas in such a way that the reader will understand and accept them.

Good writing asks us all to follow certain steps:

Step 1: Determine your topic, readers and purpose.

Step 2: Locate material. Find out what there is to say about your topic. Generate facts, discover data, think up ideas. Gather the information before you write.

Step 3: Organize the material: What is your main idea? To support this idea, what material will you keep and what will you discard as unsuitable? Make an outline.

Step 4: Write a first draft.

Step 5: Revise in successive sweeps: 1) the whole paper, 2) sentence connections and transitions of ideas, 3) words and phrases, 4) the punctuation.

Discussion 2: What is the difference between Composing and Writing? Composing is all about preparing to write – gathering and organizing the ideas and finding examples, as in the case of an exposition, and exploring the emotions in the case of a narration and examining things carefully in the case of a description. This is the PROCESS as opposed to the PRODUCT. We want to separate these two operations for a while and bring them back together again later.

This course has two separate sections: the first one deals with composition, that is, the process or preparation we make before writing, where organization and development are emphasized. The second part is the production or product, the various writing and revision stages, where style, grammar and choice of words become important. Expressed another way, the process is “how” an essay will be written, the product is “what” will be written. With writing, you generally start at the beginning while with composition, you can start anywhere.

What’s IBC? Introduction, Body, Conclusion

Every part of the IBC system has a specific job to do. The introduction defines the context and supplies us with the thesis statement or main idea of the essay. The body hopes to convince us by providing organization and support for the claims the writer makes. Finally, the conclusion brings what the writer has written to a natural summary, as a mirror image of the introduction, the same but different, the way our right and left hands mirror one another. The IBC system is the most efficient way to package and market our written ideas regardless of purpose – whether to give pleasure, share feelings, persuade or praise someone. To conclude the analogy, we might say the introduction *displays* the product, the body *sells* it and the conclusion *wraps* it up.

SPOTLIGHT

The thesis statement, main idea or principal claim is a statement based on the ideas you have generated about the topic you have been assigned. Some refer to it as the theme or message of a story. The thesis is a commitment that you, the writer, make to your readers, that if they follow you and read on, they won't be disappointed. Like trusting a ferry captain who announces his destination, readers will get on board and expect you take them where they're going. If you miss the mark and take them further downriver, your readers certainly won't be pleased.

The thesis is the controlling idea of your project, which may not be fully formulated until you've done a draft or two. That's fine – there's no reason to rush into a thesis. You first must gather the details of your essay, then after examining the facts, allow the central idea to present itself naturally. Defining a main idea too early often means having to scramble to justify it later.

If gathering material and narrowing the topic have led you to a thesis *question*, try turning it into a *statement* that answers that question. *Example*: "Can the Olympic games be kept free of politics?" can become "Because of the efforts of organizers, politics have hardly affected the Olympic games recently."

Remember a thesis statement should not contain more than one idea, not be too narrow or too broad, and should be in the form of a statement and not merely the announcement of a topic.

ACTIVITY 1

Combine each of the following facts (groups of sentences) into a possible thesis statement.

Example:

- a) There has been an increase in crime in our city lately.
- b) Many unemployed migrants have moved to the city.
- c) Illegal drug sales are on the rise.

Thesis statement: The recent crime wave has several apparent causes.

1.
 - a) Careful planning is needed for wilderness exploration.
 - b) Accidents happen easily in mountainous country.
 - c) Rivers can be dangerous.
 - d) Winter can be particularly cold.
2.
 - a) Students should not neglect their physical health because of exams.
 - b) Regular exercise or participation in sport is important for students.
 - c) Physical health influences intellectual ability.
3.
 - a) Organic foods are usually more expensive than other foods.
 - b) Chemical additives in food can be bad for one's health.
4.
 - a) For boys, basketball is a pleasant pastime.
 - b) Outdoor activities are healthful.
 - c) Basketball is an inexpensive hobby.
 - d) Boys usually play basketball 3 seasons a year.

ACTIVITY 2

De-construct a short essay by answering the following questions: What's the thesis statement or main idea? What are the topic sentences of paragraph 2 and 3, and what ideas support their claims? How does the conclusion mirror the introduction and provide a summary? What transition words does the writer use to help the reader along? How would you write a brief outline or plan of this essay?

The advantages of a job interview

Nowadays, when a person is hunting for a job, there will always be a job interview, through which the interviewer and the interviewee can know about each other. Therefore, I think that the job interview has many advantages.

During the interview, the interviewer can provide information. He can let the interviewee know something about the job, such as the wage, the working conditions and chances to get promoted. Then the interviewee can decide whether the job is really suitable for him.

Besides, the job interview is also a good chance for the interviewee. He can impress the interviewer by showing both his ability and his confidence. He can tell the interviewer in person about his educational background or his working experience. Thus the interviewer can figure out whether he is the right person for the job.

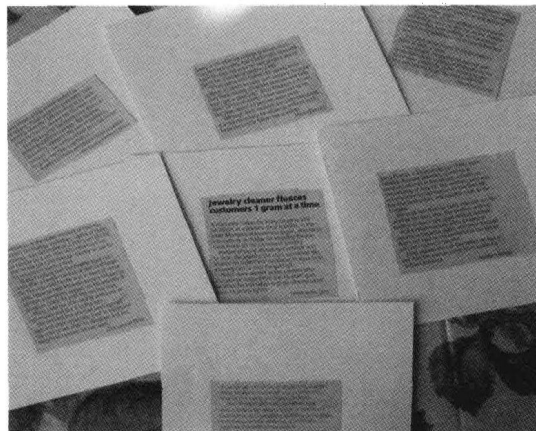
In conclusion, the job interview will benefit both the interviewer and the interviewee. By means of an interview, the interviewee can find a good job and the interviewer can find a suitable person, if both of them make the best of the job interview.

— student essay

ACTIVITY 3

"If it bleeds, it leads." While a cliché, this phrase succinctly expresses the media's fixation not just with tragedy, but with eye-catching headlines. Your instructor will cut out short news stories from the newspaper, separate the headlines from the articles, and hand you one article per pair. Come up with an appropriate headline, then match your headline with the original headline, and comment on the differences.

***China Daily's* CHINASCENE stories are the best.**



ACTIVITY 4

The often used – and abused – irregular verbs are essential for good writing. Standing in two lines facing one another, your instructor will challenge you to recite the Past and Past Participle of *irregular verbs*. (See Appendix 5 for complete list)

HOMEWORK

What do you think the following phrase means “Your pen is your best friend”?