



普通高等教育“十一五”国家级规划教材

Writing Graduation Thesis 英语专业毕业论文写作教程



田贵森 段晓英 主编

(第2版)

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PREFACE

The purpose of this book is to introduce and describe the process of writing a graduation thesis for a B.A. degree in English and to help English majors make their experience successful through lectures, discussions, assignments and samples. The major topics in the book will follow the chronological sequence in writing a graduation thesis:

1. To understand the basic requirements of a graduation thesis;
2. To choose a topic;
3. To begin locating related materials — sources — on the topic and making a topic bibliography; and to review related literature;
4. To make a reading outline as soon as the focus of the thesis becomes clear;
5. To do closer reading and analysis in specific areas;
6. To make a writing outline, which will actually be followed in writing;
7. To write and polish the first draft;
8. To revise and polish the first draft after consultation with your tutor;
9. To produce the finished product and get ready for thesis defense.

Writing graduation thesis is the final requirement for the B.A. degree. True, this writing does require more sustained work and intellectual effort than any other assignment and it demands that students work more efficiently and organize material more skillfully. But it is also more rewarding, interesting, stimulating, and satisfying. It offers a unique opportunity to learn. So fear

not: it will be a relatively simple task if you know how to go about it, and if you can organize and discipline yourself. We will work on it in different chapters of this book.

This book is the product of the authors' eight years of experience in teaching the course, "Writing Graduation Thesis". It has been used and repeatedly revised at the School of Foreign Languages of Hebei Normal University. It was the joint efforts of both the authors and the editor of Beijing Institute of Technology Press, Miss Liang Tonghua, that have brought the publication of this book. We would like to express our heartfelt thanks also to those eight groups of students who have used this book and given their comments. We will also give our thanks to four English graduates who kindly give our permission to use their graduation thesis as samples for discussion. We apologize for any inconvenience and shortcomings in the book and hope that we will be able to make it better in the near future.

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Chapter One

1

Introduction: What is graduation thesis for BA?

- ◎ Defining graduation thesis
- ◎ Types of research
- ◎ Major features of graduation thesis
- ◎ Major components of graduation thesis
- ◎ Types of thesis and their formats
- ◎ Major aims of writing graduation thesis

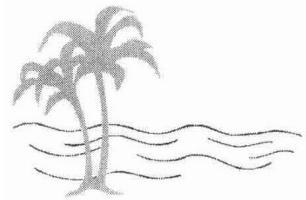


So a thesis should draw on original conclusion based on information derived from research.

Defining graduation thesis

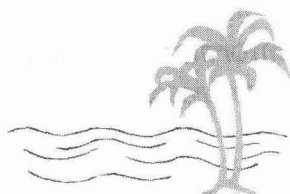
In your composition class you have probably learned how to write personal essays that presented your thoughts, feelings, and opinions in English. Different from those types of writing you have learned, graduation thesis is a kind of “*research paper*”, which requires much more than personal knowledge and experience. We write research papers when we wish to explore an idea or seek answers to particular problems. We then need to search and gather materials from other resources and we need to do research. **So a thesis should draw on original conclusion based on information derived from research.**

Research is the systematic application of scientific methods to the study of problems. It can be defined as disciplined inquiry, or a





The tasks of the researcher are: to ask good questions, to select the best way to find answers, and to interpret the findings in a way he or she can justify.



systematic approach to finding answers to questions. The major research activities include identifying and choosing a research topic, locating and reviewing previous research, assimilating others' findings and formulating your focus, and then developing and expressing your ideas clearly and convincingly with supporting materials.

Research can be very academic, and it can also be very practical and useful in our work and life. Teachers do research to find out how their students can learn better. Students do research to find out about their careers. Even restaurant managers do research to find out what their customers might like. Whatever you plan to do after your graduation, knowing how to do research will be of great value to you. There is no better introduction to doing research than writing a research paper. Planning and writing graduation thesis is just the very opportunity for you to develop your research ability.

Types of research

There are two major kinds of research, primary research and secondary research. Primary research involves generating new ideas and information on your own. It is sometimes called "empirical research", or "field research". It is the study of a subject through firsthand investigation, such as conducting an English language teaching experiment and interpreting the results; interviewing someone about his or her personal experience of using Internet language; analyzing a novel or a literary text.

Secondary research involves gathering together and analyzing the research findings from other peoples' research. It is sometimes called "library research", using resources of the library. Most graduation theses for a BA degree are secondary research or library research papers. Students are expected to develop their abilities through planning and writing their graduation theses to learn: how to investigate, review, and productively use information, ideas, and opinions of other

researchers; how to use this information with your ideas and present your thoughts, opinions, and conclusions convincingly.



Major features of graduation thesis

A scholarly and academic graduation thesis for a degree in English usually has and should have the following features:

1. Cultivation of your ability to review and analyze

A graduation thesis for a B.A. degree is usually not an original piece of work or an original contribution to a field of knowledge. It is rather an original compilation — a bringing together from many different sources, including your own analysis, into one coherent whole. It is a new creation, in which different parts are logically related and all center on one research question.

2. Narrow topic

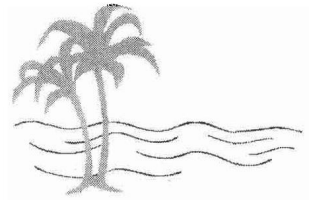
A graduation thesis for a B.A. degree should center on one limited aspect of a general subject. If it is designed to establish a thesis, it should concentrate on establishing one or two main points. Avoid subjects that would lead you to compile miscellaneous information. Many research papers are unsuccessful because they cover too much ground. They are too broad in scope, too shallow in treatment. Restrict your general subject area until you arrive at something that you can explore in detail. **Try to write more and more about less and less.** “The early history of American universities” is a general subject area; “the training of Puritan divines at Harvard” is a specific subject.

3. Multisources

A graduation thesis for a B.A. degree should show that the author has made detailed use of several different sources. Avoid subjects that would tempt you to summarize pre-assembled information

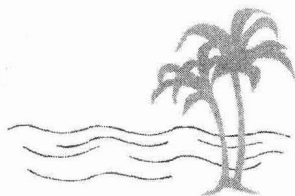


*Try to write more
and more about less
and less.*





If you copy from one person, you are stealing. If you are copying from a hundred people, you are doing research.



from one main source. Avoid subjects that are conclusively and satisfactorily treated in a textbook or in an encyclopedia. By definition, a research paper is more than a condensation of easily accessible material. Whatever points you make should require careful sifting and comparing of evidence from different, and possibly conflicting sources. **If you copy from one person, you are stealing. If you are copying from a hundred people, you are doing research.**

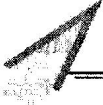
4. Objective in tone

A graduation thesis for a B.A. degree should be objective in tone. The conclusion elaborated in the paper should stay close to the evidence actually presented. In academic writing, your tone and attitude towards your subject should be serious, but not ironic or flippant. Humorous, casual or conversational approaches are usually inappropriate for research paper. The research paper should be formal in style. **You should not make your own personality prominent** in a research paper. Avoid subjects whose discussion might bring into play a large measure of partisan allegiance, personal preference, or individual taste — or be prepared to make a special effort to be objective. **Avoid first-person pronouns** such as *I think*, *as I know*, *I believe*, *in my opinion*... They imply uncertainty. The reader assumes that statements of your paper are your opinion and represent your point of view. **Avoid impersonal labels** such as *the researcher*, *the writer*... to refer to the writer of the thesis. They tend to remove you entirely from your paper. Your admiration for a presidential candidate and your distaste for Western-style music are likely to hinge on psychological factors that are beyond the scope of the ordinary research paper.

5. No plagiarism

A graduation thesis for a B.A. degree forbids any kinds of plagiarism. You may use and you are encouraged to use others' words or ideas but you are not permitted to take theirs as yours.

You may quote, paraphrase, translate and summarize others' ideas.
You need tell clearly in your paper where you take it.



Major components of graduation thesis

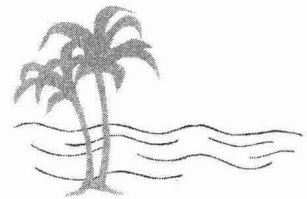
A scholarly and academic graduation thesis usually contains three types of materials: the preliminaries (front matter), the text (body) of the thesis, and reference materials (back matter or front matter). We will describe in the following section 6 major elements.

1. The title page (a title page in English and front cover in Chinese)

The first page of a graduation thesis is the title page. The title page presents the title of the thesis, the full name of the writer, tutor, specialty, and the submission statement including the department or school; the institution or university; the degree granted; and the month and year in which the thesis is submitted.

Submission statement:

A Thesis Submitted to the Foreign Languages Institute
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
of Bachelor of Arts at XXX University



The responsible office of the university usually prescribes and prepares the form of the front cover for you. You use Chinese language to provide all the information required by the school's front cover. The title should be concise as well as descriptive and comprehensive with 10-15 words. Its wording should indicate the main content of the thesis. Avoid using question forms, vague and general statement in the title.

2. Abstract

Most universities require that a graduation thesis provide two



The numbering of chapters and the wording, capitalization, and punctuation of titles and headings should be exactly the same as they are in the thesis.



abstracts, one in Chinese and one in English. Abstract is a concise summary of your thesis. It is usually about 200 or 300 words with 4 or 5 key words. The major purpose of the abstract is not to evaluate, but rather to describe, the thesis. The abstract therefore should have a brief statement of the research question, research method, perspective of the analysis, design and conclusion or major argument.

3. Table of contents

In the graduation thesis, you should provide a table of contents. It should contain or list all elements of the preliminaries, the chapter (section) titles, the main headings and subheadings in the thesis, and the reference materials. The table of contents should include:

- ① chapter and section numbers;
 - ② chapter and section titles; and
 - ③ page numbers.
- The numbering of chapters and the wording, capitalization, and punctuation of titles and headings should be exactly the same as they are in the thesis.**

4. The thesis proper

There are various formats for organizing your graduation thesis. However, formats for the body of the thesis may differ according to the types of your research.

5. Notes

In any writing not derived purely from your own mind, you must document your facts. In writing graduation thesis, there are three ways of citing sources. They are: ① in-quotation notes; ② end-notes; and ③ footnotes. You should select one of the three according to your school's thesis formats. We will explain this in detail in Chapter Eight.

6. Bibliography

There are numerous styles and formats in listing sources in different disciplines and schools. Do it as required. We will discuss it in Chapter Eight.

Types of thesis and their Formats

The formats of the thesis may differ according to types of thesis. There are three major types: empirical research paper; theoretical research paper; and historical research paper.

1. Thesis based on the collection of empirical data or case study — empirical research paper

The information in this type of thesis is derived from direct observation in case study or experience. This kind of thesis follows a standard format. The chapters are usually divided into **five categories**, corresponding to the stages of research.

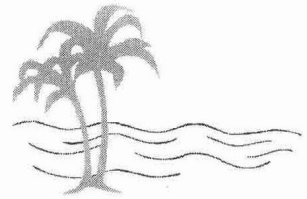
Introduction

This part should introduce the subject; importance and validity of the problem chosen for study; the potential contribution of the study and the need for the research and necessary background information.

You should make a clear and concise statement of the problem, an analysis of its delimitation of scope; hypotheses; statistical study of variables; the schedule procedure for collecting data. It should also include the basic assumptions of the study and definitions of terms.

The review of related research and literature

This part presents the context of your study. It should not only summarize a series of books and articles, rather, it should call attention to the most important previous work, identify the place of your work in relation to their research, presenting agreement and disagreement in the field; evaluating the existing research, but not just repeating it; organizing the review by topic rather than by author, avoiding unnecessary quotations to focus the review of research.



Methods of the investigation

Chapters in this part should discuss the nature of the sample, the data needed to test the hypotheses or to answer the questions, the sources of data, and the procedure followed in gathering and analyzing the data, giving information of participants, materials and procedures.

Results

The analysis of the result without evaluation is the heart of a thesis based on the collection of empirical data. The chapters should present the results of the investigation without interpretation of evaluation, reporting negative as well as positive results. The information should be explained in clear, coherent prose. If you wish to accompany your analysis with tables or figures, these should supplement the text rather than substitute for it. The body of the paper should be comprehensive.

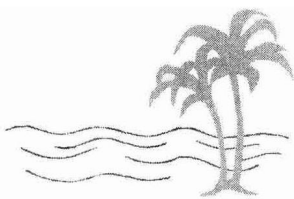
Discussion and interpretation

The final chapters should be devoted to **discussion** and **interpretation** of the data and to formulation of your **conclusions**. They also cover the implications of findings for revising the existing body of knowledge; the relation of the results to previous research, **limitations** of the study and unexpected findings, practical **applications** of the findings or speculations about **further research**.

2. Thesis based on critical analysis or philosophical speculation — theoretical research paper

Introduction

For library research papers, or theses based on critical analysis, there are some common elements. The introductory section usually defines your topic and research focus, describes very briefly the background of previous work in the field, and explains the scope and importance of your topic. In this part, you should place the study against the background of previous work in this field,



show the importance of the topic and discuss its role in current controversy or development. Don't summarize the works that influence or guide your work. The discussion of these works should demonstrate their relationship to your topic. Don't demolish previous studies to give your own work validity.

Body

The central chapters should develop and present the result of your research and your detailed analysis clearly, logically and systematically to demonstrate that your analysis will confirm or illustrate your thesis statement to convince readers.

Conclusion

The conclusion might include the summary or repetition of your major argument, implications and limitations of your research, and suggestions for the future research. It includes the interpretation or statement of the **significance** of the thesis; exposition of the **findings**; implications of the work for the revision of previous interpretations; **proof or disproof** of assumptions or theories in the field; **new areas** of inquiry opened by the study.

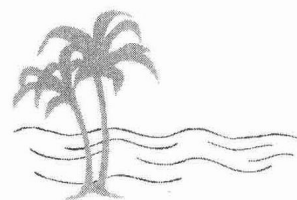
3. Thesis based on historical research — historical research paper

This type of thesis develops data rather than create it, reporting the researchers' new findings in objective chronological organization or cause and effect, presenting the motive of the study; detail of the problems or deficiencies of previous scholarship; presenting new information; explaining the current situation in light of the past; revising the theories.



Major aims of writing graduation thesis

The practice of writing graduation thesis aims to develop the



following abilities of undergraduate students of English majors.

1. The ability to select significant research question

A topic should be interesting, significant, researchable, modest and well focused, and one that the student can find enough data about.

2. The ability to locate and review previous research

Students are enabled to use three major sources of related literature, and they are background sources, original sources, and critical sources. They are enabled to read opinion articles, review articles and research reports, and to search for information through reference books, library catalogues, abstract and index service, computer database, online service, and conference proceedings.

3. The ability to make their own analysis in research

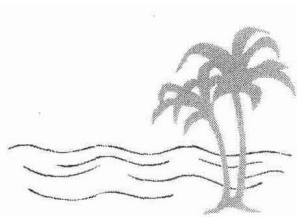
Students are encouraged to ask good questions, to investigate and view things from new perspectives and to make their own analysis. Their contribution, or “newness” could be new in perspective, method, data or analysis. It is hoped that they will learn the essence of science and academic.

4. The ability to express things appropriately in English

Students will develop their ability to write in appropriate style of English, learn to follow stylistic customs in academic writing, choose appropriate tenses and to make their writing objective in tone and their paper coherent in structure.

5. The ability to follow the scholarly style and format

Students are encouraged to quote, paraphrase, translate and summarize others' ideas, but they are not permitted to take others as theirs. They are enabled to tell clearly in their paper where they take it. They will learn how to follow the particular form and style of the academic writing.



■ Class Activity in Groups

Directions: *Work in groups of 4 or 5; discuss what you have learned and what you have expected about writing your graduation thesis. List all the reasons you can think of that might make your writing difficult. The following list is from another group of students like you. When you know your difficulties better, it is easy for you to overcome and to write better.*

I can not write my graduation thesis because

1. I am not confident in writing.
2. I am lacking in vocabulary.
3. I am lacking in the materials I need.
4. I am sometimes absent-minded.
5. I am not motivated to write.
6. I am in a bad mood/ have a bad mood.
7. I am obsessed with computer games.
8. I am not familiar with the mechanics
9. I don't know how to express myself.
10. I don't have a quiet environment.
11. I can't find enough reference materials.
12. I read very few books and know little about the topic.
13. I can't write a clear outline.
14. I don't know how to organize my ideas.
15. I don't know how to start.
16. I don't have an English writing atmosphere.
17. I find that the topic is too difficult.
18. I feel the interference of Chinese.
19. I am forced to write something I don't like.
20. I don't know the format and requirements.
21. I don't have the access to the background sources.
22. I worry too much about the form and style.
23. I have no friends to compare notes before writing.
24. I think writing is less important than what I am doing.

