

A Course in English Writing

英语写作教程

(第2版)

· 大学英语学习系列教材 ·

Undergraduate English Series

□ 华中科技大学外国语学院英语系 编



华中科技大学出版社
<http://www.hustp.com>

大学英语
I

材
ies

A Course in English Writing

英语写作教程

(第2版)

刘毅 编著

华中科技大学出版社
中国·武汉

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

英语写作教程(第2版)/刘毅编著. —武汉:华中科技大学出版社,2010.11
ISBN 978-7-5609-3960-5

I. 英… II. 刘… III. 英语-写作-高等学校-教材 IV. H315

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字(2007)第020517号

英语写作教程(第2版)

刘毅 编著

责任编辑:定晓峰

封面设计:刘卉

责任校对:马燕红

责任监印:周治超

出版发行:华中科技大学出版社(中国·武汉)

武昌喻家山 邮编:430074 电话:(027)87557437

录排:华中科技大学惠友文印中心

印刷:华中科技大学印刷厂

开本:710mm×1000mm 1/16

印张:16.5

字数:355千字

版次:2010年11月第2版第4次印刷

定价:25.00元



本书若有印装质量问题,请向出版社营销中心调换
全国免费服务热线:400-6679-118 竭诚为您服务
版权所有 侵权必究

总 序

21 世纪是一个国际化的知识经济时代, 社会主义市场经济的发展要求新世纪的人才除了具有扎实的专业知识、良好的创新能力和人文素养外, 还必须具有较强的用外语交际的能力。英语作为一种国际性的语言, 已成为人们在国际交往中不可缺少的工具。新形势下, 社会的发展对中国大学生英语能力提出了全新的要求, 已从原来纯粹的语言技能的掌握, 发展到语言应用能力及跨文化交际能力的提高、英语文化认知水平的扩大及人文综合素养的完善。

在这种形势下, 许多高校进行了大学英语教学改革, 除了进行英语听说读写的基础课程训练, 还开设了一系列高级语言能力及文化、文学方面的专业课程供全校学生选修。此外, 本着培养复合型人才的理念, 许多高校英语专业面向非英语专业招收英语第二学位的学生, 开设了一系列英语专业课程。与英语本科专业的教学相比, 这一系列课程因教学对象、学生需求、教学学时等不同, 其目标内涵与层次定位、教材选编、教学方法及教学要求等方面还是存在着一定的差异。为此, 华中科技大学外国语学院英语系在长期开设英语公共选修课及开办英语第二学位、辅修学位的基础上, 组织一批有丰富教学经验的老师, 共同编写了《大学英语学习系列教材》。

本系列教材包括《高级英语阅读》、《英语写作教程》、《英汉互译——方法与与实践》、《英美报刊选读》、《英美文学佳作赏析》等。本系列教材具有以下特征。

1. 本系列教材的编写以国家教育部颁布的《大学英语教学大纲》和《英语专业教学大纲》为依据, 充分考虑非英语专业学生的实际情况和新世纪复合型人才对外语能力的要求, 既重视培养语言技能、提高语言交际能力, 又注重扩大学生的知识面, 提高人文素养。

2. 本系列教材的编写吸收了大学英语、专业英语、英语第二学位的教学及教材编写的丰富经验, 充分采纳国内外先进的教学理论和方法, 力求选材新颖实用、难度适中、具有鲜明的时代特征。

3. 本系列教材体系统一, 既可全套使用, 也可针对学生实际需要有选择地使用。

本系列教材可供非英语专业本科生英语选修课使用, 也可供选修英语第二学位或辅修英语学位的学生使用, 还可供具有相当于大学英语四级水平的英语自学者使用。

本系列教材在编写的过程中得到了华中科技大学外国语学院领导的指导和各位同仁的支持, 华中科技大学出版社对本系列教材的编写和出版给予了鼎力支持, 在此我们全体编写人员表示衷心的感谢。由于经验不足, 水平有限, 错误在所难免, 恳请广大师生和读者提出批评和建议, 以便在今后的修订中不断得到改进和完善。

华中科技大学外国语学院英语系

2006 年 6 月

前 言

《高等学校英语专业英语教学大纲》规定：“英语写作课的目的旨在培养学生初步的英语写作能力，包括提纲、文章摘要、短文以及简单的应用文……教学内容的安排可从如何用词和句子结构入手，要求学生根据提示作文，或模仿范文写作，或根据一定的情景进行串写，进而过渡到掌握段落写作技巧、篇章布局和短文写作。如有条件，还应进一步训练学生掌握各种文体及其篇章结构，如描写文、记叙文、说明文和议论文等。”本教材正是根据此大纲的要求，为满足高等学校英语专业写作的需要而编写的。本教材适用于英语专业二、三年级学生，研究生及其他英语爱好者。

目前，中国许多学生学英语存在会读不会说，或会读会说而不会写的现象。不少学生即使能用英语写作，也是陷于了现代英语写作八股文的谜团，思想空洞、结构没有逻辑性、语言缺乏变化。有些学生求职时连一份个人英语简历也写不好，更别说从事科技论文写作了。英语写作既是一个理论问题，又是一个实践问题。要提高英语写作水平，既需要一定的写作理论、写作知识和写作技巧，同时也需要进行大量的写作实践。

为了使广大英语爱好者提高英语基础写作和实用写作的能力，为将来更高层次的科技论文写作打好基础，本教材包括基础写作和实用写作两个部分，对写作的理论和技巧进行了阐述，并在每一章后面提供了大量的练习材料供学生们进行写作训练。第一、第二、第三章主要是从理论上分析英语写作，指出中国学生在英语写作中所存在的问题，并提出相应的解决办法。第四至第七章介绍了从词、句、段到全文写作的理论和技巧。第八和第九章主要介绍了大学生在学习和生活中常用的两种文体（说明文和议论文）的写作技巧。第十章介绍了英语写作中常出现的一些拼写、排版和校对等细节问题。第十一、第十二、第十三章介绍了简历、申请信和私人信件方面的写作内容和技巧，第十四和第十五章介绍了商务信函、便条、通知、海报等方面的写作内容和技巧，第十六章介绍了图表作文的写作特点和方法。英语教师可以根据自己教学的实际情况将各个章节的内容合理安排，不一定要按照本书顺序安排教学。例如，13.1的信函写作的内容和格式可以安排在第十一章或第十二章之前介绍。

在本教材的编写过程中，编者从众多文献中获取了大量的有益见解和素材。对于本教材所采用的参考书目的作者，本人表示衷心的感谢，没有你们的帮助本教材将难以出版。

编者在本教程第一版三年的教学实践基础之上；从内容、体例、语言等方面对本教程进行了修改。但是，教材中的错误在所难免。殷切希望广大读者不吝赐教，以便能及时改进。

刘 毅
2010年3月

Acknowledgements

The author of this course would like to express his gratitude to those authors listed in the "References" from whom he has been inspired and benefited in the collection of ideas and information for the edition of the textbook. The ideas and examples adopted in this book were obtained from many sources, and those that are presented were chosen because they seemed best to represent what is being produced in the field.

Special thanks should go to Rise B. Axelrod & Charles R. Cooper, Maxine Hairston & John J. Ruszkiewicz, Kathleen T. McWhorter, Richard Marius, Ding Wangdao, Zhou Honghong and Yang Ruodong for their systematic discussion of the English writing system, from which I have benefited much, and for their examples, some of which have been used in this textbook.

Thanks should also go to Ms. Guo Jingjing for proofreading this textbook and some valuable suggestions in the completion of this textbook.

I am grateful to my colleagues for their suggestions and encouragement in planning and compiling this textbook.

Finally, I am greatly indebted to my wife and daughter for their consistent encouragement, understanding and loving support for the completion of this textbook.

Contents

Part I Basic Writing	(1)
Unit 1 Misunderstandings of English Writing and Solutions.....	(2)
1.1 Misunderstandings of English writing.....	(2)
1.2 Solutions.....	(7)
Unit 2 Criteria and Qualities of Good Writing.....	(10)
2.1 Criteria of good writing.....	(10)
2.2 Qualities of good writing.....	(22)
Unit 3 Writing as a Process.....	(30)
3.1 The product vs. process approach.....	(30)
3.2 Eight steps in the controlled writing process.....	(31)
Unit 4 Word Writing.....	(39)
4.1 Meaning of words.....	(39)
4.2 Cultural and historical perspectives of words.....	(44)
4.3 Choice of denotative language or connotative language.....	(46)
4.4 Levels of being general or specific.....	(48)
4.5 Sexist language.....	(49)
4.6 Idiomatic language.....	(50)
Unit 5 Sentence Writing.....	(55)
5.1 Common problems in sentence writing.....	(55)
5.2 Types of sentences.....	(60)
5.3 Strategies to write effective sentences.....	(62)
Unit 6 Paragraph Writing.....	(71)
6.1 Structure of paragraphs.....	(71)
6.2 Methods to write topic sentences.....	(73)

6.3	Paragraph development techniques	(74)
6.4	Length of paragraphs	(78)
Unit 7	Essay Writing	(81)
7.1	Finding a suitable topic.....	(81)
7.2	Style of writing	(83)
7.3	Methods to write essays.....	(86)
Unit 8	Writing Strategies for Exposition.....	(103)
8.1	Essay development by giving examples	(104)
8.2	Essay development by comparison and contrast	(106)
8.3	Essay development by cause and effect.....	(109)
8.4	Essay development by definition.....	(112)
8.5	Essay development by classification	(116)
8.6	Essay development by process analysis	(120)
Unit 9	Writing Strategies for Argumentation	(124)
9.1	Components of an argumentation.....	(124)
9.2	Methods to develop an essay by argumentation	(127)
9.3	Points to be observed in argumentation.....	(138)
Unit 10	Mechanics of Writing, Editing, and Proofreading	(145)
10.1	Mechanics of writing	(145)
10.2	Editing	(153)
10.3	Proofreading	(156)
Part II	Practical Writing	(163)
Unit 11	Résumé and Reference Writing.....	(164)
11.1	Résumé writing.....	(164)
11.2	Reference writing.....	(174)
Unit 12	Application Letter Writing.....	(183)
12.1	Two types of application letters.....	(183)
12.2	Main contents and requirements of an application letter.....	(184)
12.3	Methods to write an application letter	(186)
Unit 13	Personal Letter Writing	(194)
13.1	Basics of a letter	(194)
13.2	Different kinds of personal letters	(200)
Unit 14	Business Letter Writing.....	(209)
14.1	Features and requirements of business letters	(209)

14.2	Methods to write different kinds of business letters	(210)
Unit 15	Note, Notice, and Poster Writing	(224)
15.1	Note writing.....	(224)
15.2	Notice writing.....	(229)
15.3	Poster writing.....	(231)
Unit 16	Graph Writing	(236)
16.1	Definition, classification, and meaning of graphs	(236)
16.2	Methods to write essays based on graphs	(240)
References	(251)

Part I
Basic Writing

Unit /

Misunderstandings of English Writing and Solutions

1.1 Misunderstandings of English writing

English writing has been a problem for many English learners in China for a long time. While more and more people have realized the importance of spoken English, the importance of English writing is not fully recognized. Many people still have some misunderstandings about English writing and this has greatly hindered the improvement of their writing abilities. Generally, people tend to misunderstand English writing in two different ways: English writing is a kind of translation work; and English writing is a kind of imitation work.

1.1.1 English writing=translation

For many Chinese students, especially beginners, the English writing process is a translation process. They believe that writing means “to translate what comes to the mind in Chinese into the English language”.

But there are some misunderstandings in it. Firstly, English and Chinese are different in the meaning of words. Some students misunderstand Chinese words as exactly the equivalent of the English words. For example, the Chinese word “问题” may have its English equivalent as “question”, “problem”, “trouble”, “matter”, “issue”,

“mishap”, and so on. These words may be understood as “问题”, but they are different from each other at the same time. Therefore, in the translation, problems may appear when the wrong word is used. As we know, a word is used in its context. When an English word is remembered separately without its context and is misunderstood as exactly the same as its Chinese equivalent, it will be used pragmatically wrong in the translation from Chinese into English.

Secondly, Chinese and English people tend to think in different ways. Languages function not only as a means of communication (of ideas and emotions), but also as a tool for people to think. Chinese people tend to think in an inductive mode, while English people tend to think in a deductive mode. Chinese people would usually start a piece of writing with sufficient information concerning the background and event, and come to a conclusion at the end of the writing. On the other hand, English people would usually start a piece of writing with a general statement — topic sentence, and then give sufficient details to support what they have stated in the beginning. It goes from general in the beginning to the specific at the end (see Fig.1). As a result, when a piece of writing is translated from Chinese into English, English native speakers may find the writing rather odd though there is nothing wrong with the language because they do not think and will not write in that way.

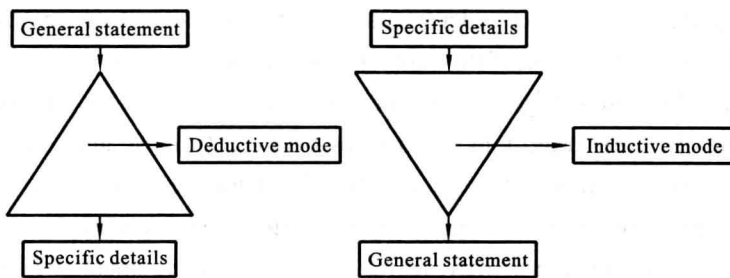


Fig.1 Rhetorical differences between Chinese and English

Thirdly, the typology of Chinese is topic-prominent, that is, instead of putting the emphasis on the subject of a sentence, which is the case in English, the structure of the Chinese language places emphasis on the topic of the sentence. Topic-comment sentences move from whole to part as can be shown in the way Chinese address letters where, in direct contrast to the English address pattern, the country (or whole) is put at the beginning position and the smallest part (street number) at the end. Then Chinese students will tend to write sentences like:

As for Mary, she likes Chinese food.

As for this activity, it is more challenging.

In Table One, it shows that 80 percent of the students take English as a tool. Talking about English writing, it is really too difficult.

The way it is expressed is in the Chinese sentence order, though written in the English language. It is a kind of literal translation of the Chinese language into English. Students write these sentences subconsciously due to the influence of Chinese without noticing differences between the two languages in expression.

Fourthly, Chinese is an iconic language while English is a salient language. This means Chinese language follows logical or natural word order, while English emphasize what is salient or important and this determines the order in which information is presented. For example, when talking about two events “It began to rain”, “The match was postponed”, Chinese will present these two events in the order in which they occurred. Then these two sentences will be put in this order — “It began to rain. The match was postponed”. It implies that “*Because* it began to rain, the match was postponed”. And when connectives are used in this case, Chinese tend to use two or a pair of connectives — because (因为), therefore (所以). Then these two events can also be expressed as “Because it began to rain, therefore the match was postponed”. This contrasts markedly with the preferred English order of the two events — “The match was postponed because it began to rain”. This is not the natural order in which the two events occurred. They are placed in this order because the effect is seen as more important than the cause in English. Of course, if the cause is emphasized, then the two events can also be expressed as “Because it began to rain, the match was postponed” in English.

There are still other important differences between Chinese and English. But the above are the most influential factors which affect Chinese students in their English writing. They may make the writing odd and different from what it is intended to mean. As a result, the writing is difficult for an English native speaker to understand.

Novice writers in a second language should understand the thought processes and study the written products, including the formal conventions of writing, in the target language and decide how far to respect their existing traditions and how far to modify them to be in line with English norms.

What is clear is that, whether we like it or not, the moment we write we are part of a writing community. It is vitally important for teachers of English to be aware that cultural mismatch, particularly in the area of rhetorical arrangement, is more than likely. It is even more important that they realize that this is a mismatch and not a mistake. The learner will respond very positively to a teacher who is interested in and values the writing culture of the mother tongue.

To be really successful, both teachers and learners should explore the assumptions,

ideologies, and views on which their writing is based and work at these and at the whole process of writing and not just at the final product.

1.1.2 English writing=imitation

In Chinese culture, the great importance is given to imitation in study. This is especially obvious in the old saying “Keep reading the 300 Tang poems until you are familiar with them and you’ll be able to fabricate if not compose”. However, when the importance of imitation is over-emphasized, people may lose their creative ability. Thus, two main problems may appear: plagiarism and modern “Eight-legged Essay”.

Plagiarism is kind of crime. It is more related with morality than academic ability. The problem of plagiarism in study is highly emphasized in the West now. People need to write in their own words, in their own style, and follow their own thread of thinking. To a certain extent, imitation gives people an impression that the writer is taking other’s words as their own.

Comparatively speaking, the modern “Eight-legged Essay” is a problem which is far more difficult to solve.

There is a very common phenomenon in today’s college English writing — students tend to write three paragraphs in an essay. The structure and content of this kind of writing is highly predictable. The first paragraph and the last paragraph are the opening paragraph and the ending paragraph, while the middle paragraph gives the main points of the author without giving enough evidence to support them. This kind of writing is so fixed that it has become a model for students to follow and at the same time, a new shackle for Chinese learners after the infamous “Eight-legged Essays”.

Apart from the influence of imitation, there are still some other causes for this problem. The first cause for this is the influence from pre-examination training programs. As English is foreign language in China, there is a lack of environment for students to acquire the English language. The teaching of English writing is a headache for many teachers of English, and English writing is a shame for many students. In order to achieve higher score in English writing with less effort, English teachers try to give students some writing models for them to follow, and students do a lot of practice in this kind of writing. Some teachers or so-called “examination experts” provide some fixed models for English writing. With this kind of model, students do not need to write much. They just fill in some fixed words in the model and make some necessary changes in sentence patterns according to different writing topics. The following is a typical example of this kind.

Title? (Change the topic into a question.) Different people have different opinions on this. Some people think that (A). But other people think that (B). In my opinion, I believe that (B). There are three reasons for my choosing (B).

Firstly ... Secondly ... Thirdly ...

Therefore, we should say that (B) is right.

This kind of writing has a lot of negative effects on students. Firstly, it can greatly limit students' creativeness in writing as a writer. Students will be reluctant to write in a different way. They may prefer to do it in the safe way and gain high score in shortest possible time. Secondly, it can also greatly damage Chinese students' image when they continue their study in a foreign country. Though the writing is completed independently by students themselves, foreign teachers tend to think of this kind of writing as the result of students' copying each other in the examination — plagiarism, a serious crime. Thirdly, they cannot take a rigorous approach to their study and research. When they want to make a statement, they would usually neglect to give evidence to support their opinion, which can greatly affect the reliability of their writing.

The second cause is the word-limit set in English writing examinations. It is quite alright for the state examination committee to set word-limit in English writing examinations. When used to write this much only, they cannot write any longer. This problem becomes even more serious when it comes to academic writing, which requires much longer writing. In addition, as test topics are usually very general, students need to narrow them down to a manageable size. In most cases in English writing exams, students will not write their own title, and they tend to use the given topic instead as their title for the writing test.

Many English teachers in China have realized the seriousness of this problem and they have been trying new ways to teach English writing and encourage students to write longer essays. For example, Dr. Wang Chuming advocates “the length approach” method to encourage students to write as long as possible in the essay. The principle of this approach is that students are encouraged to write under simulated situations for a real purpose of writing. By writing longer and longer passages, students have more contact with the English language and their fluency of writing in English will be greatly improved. As a result, students' motivation for writing and thereafter for English will be greatly promoted.

1.1.3 Language is the most difficult problem in English writing

Many Chinese students believe that the most difficult problem in their English writing is the English language. They claim that if they have a good mastery of the English language, they may become good English writers. In their opinion, they can transfer the writing skills from Chinese into English.

Actually, the biggest problem for most writers is not from the language of the writer,

but from the writing ability of the writer. Most writers may have experienced the so-called “writer’s block” at the beginning stage. They may feel embarrassed when they cannot put anything down on the paper. This is not because they do not know the language in which they are writing, but rather they have no ideas to convey to their readers.

1.2 Solutions

Can writing be learned? And how can second/foreign language learners avoid the influence of their mother tongue? Many people think of writing as magical or the result of natural talent. They believe that born writers can write a perfect draft in one sitting with minimal effort. And if a person cannot write brilliantly from the beginning, then he/she will never learn to write well. However, researches have proved that these assumptions are wrong. Actually, writing can be learned. Virtually, with training and practice, anyone can learn to write confidently enough to handle the writing required in college and on the job.

Then what should be done? English writing is a complicated process and it is interrelated with many factors. Firstly and most importantly, it is related with the motivation of the students to participate in writing activities. If students have no desire to communicate with others in English, they may feel that they have nothing to write about and do not want to write anything. Secondly, it is correlated with students’ English abilities, especially reading abilities. Usually better readers are also better writers. Reading can greatly help students’ writing. It can extend their vision, and provide them with something to think and write about. Thirdly, it is related with practice. Students need to practise and practise a lot both intensively and extensively to improve their writing abilities. Teachers of writing should help students to develop the abilities and strategies to write in English accurately and effectively.

The main job of a teacher for English writing should make students have something to write about and write it well at the same time. The teaching of writing should involve helping students to do each of the following:

- (1) develop positive feelings about and a desire to participate in communication in written English;
- (2) read extensively and become familiar with different kinds and styles of writing;
- (3) generate ideas for writing;
- (4) develop reader awareness;
- (5) become familiar with the criteria of good writing;
- (6) follow the writing process;
- (7) improve sentence and paragraph development strategies;

(8) learn the conventions of mechanics, spelling, punctuation, and usage appropriate to various situations;

(9) write intensively and extensively;

(10) develop the awareness of cultural differences between Chinese and English in writing.

The teaching of English writing can be conducted in two approaches: intensive approach and extensive approach. Usually, the intensive approach aims at improving students' accuracy in English writing, and the extensive approach aims at improving students' fluency in English writing. In the intensive approach, the teacher gives a lot of instructions on how to write, and students are required to follow the writing process with much planning and revising. The written compositions will be carefully corrected by the teacher. The teacher will give some comments and suggestions for students concerning their English writing. The focus is on the accuracy of the content and the language expressed in the writing. While in the extensive writing, students are given full right to write on their own whatever they are interested in and at a length they will feel sufficient to convey their opinions. The focus is to encourage students to write their opinions freely without worrying about the correctness of the language. When students can put more words on the paper, they will be more confident to write in English and will tend to write better and better.

When both the teacher and the students understand what happens in the writing process, and know the approaches to improve writing abilities, they will develop a kind of cultural awareness and have more confidence to improve their writing abilities.

Exercises

I. Discuss your writing habits with a partner. Ask the following questions and then write a summary of your partner's writing habits.

1. At what time and place can you write better or more fluently?
2. What distracts you from doing your best work?
3. What instrument or equipment do you use for writing? For example, do you prefer pencil or pen? Do you write on notebook paper or on stationery?
4. Do you use a word processor to write an essay?
5. Do you like writing? Would you prefer to write a story you've made up, a description of something that really happened to you, or a report about something you've read?

II. Paragraph writing.

1. Write a brief paragraph describing the kind of writing you have done over the past