

College English Composition Organizing an Essay

大学英语写作

第二册

编者 汪美瑞 汪渭忠
林奈尔 丁言仁



南京大学出版社

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编者说明

我们这套《大学英语写作》的编写遵循了国家教委高校英语教学大纲的精神,努力满足英文专业本科阶段不同年级教学上的需要,注重帮助学生提高毕业论文的质量。我们希望我们的教学能够培养学生独立从事科研工作所需要的分析问题和解决问题的能力,为国家经济建设和教育发展输送高质量、高水平的外语人才。

长期以来,我国大学英语专业的写作教学一直缺少一套较为完整的、由浅及深、循序渐进、适合课堂教学使用的教材。有的教师在不得已的情况下用些《写作手册》之类的小册子,既不好用又没有连贯性,我们编写这套教材的目的之一就是要填补这一空缺,做到老师用顺手,学生用有效。为了使这套教材真正对教学起到帮助的作用,我们想说明下面几个问题。

一、对于英文专业写作课的教学,大纲已有了明确的规定和要求,但是各个学校在执行上因具体情况的差别而又各不相同。有的学校一年级上学期就开写作课,有的则要待到一下或二上才开写作课。在教学进度上各校也不一致,有的不能切实完成大纲所规定的教学任务,学生在毕业撰写学术性论文时有很大的困难。同时,大纲本身也有一个在实践中不断完善、不断适应学生毕业后工作需要和国家经济建设快速发展需要的问题。

本套教材大致上第一、二、三册分别供大学一、二、三年级使用,第四册则供四年级使用一个学期。对于一年级下学期才开设写作课或者四年级全学年开设写作课的学校来说,第一册的一部分也可供二年级使用,第二、三册也可分别供三、四年级使用。

为了帮助学生适应四级考试和八级考试对写作的要求,我们在第二、三册里又分别包括了快速写作的练习。

二、一般说来,本科阶段英语写作的学习要上两个台阶,过四道关口。第一个台阶是写记叙文、说明文和一般的议论文,学生上这个台阶就是要用英语写出他们在中学时期汉语写作中已经熟悉的各种文体。这里的两道关口,一道是克服畏惧心理,敢于用英语写作,另一道是学会用英语来写作,把作文写好。第二个台阶是写大学本科阶段

专业学习所必需的议论文、科研报告和学术论文。这里也同样存在着“敢写”和“会写”这样的两道关口。

由于学生在这几道关口所面临的困难不尽相同,写作课的教学也应有不同的侧重,我们的写作教材一至四册在一定程度上反映了这些不同的侧重点,在编写过程中我们也没有勉强去追求体例上的一致。总的说来,第一、三册是帮助学生打消顾虑,鼓励他们用一门尚未熟练的外语来写作或者用外语来写学术性的文章,而第二、四册则是要帮助学生在已经可以写的基础上把文章进一步写清楚,写规范,真正上好上述的两个台阶。

三、因为教学情况多样,任课老师在教材内容的选用上应该有很大的灵活性,不必去使用这套教材的每一章、每一节、每一个练习。

首先,学生在不同的地方和时期有着不同的兴趣,老师应根据学生的具体兴趣和要求来组织教学。对于书中的练习,有的可做深,有的可做浅,有的可多做,反复做,有的则可以不做,一切从教学出发,从调动学生积极性出发。

其次,写作是一个不断挖掘深化,不断修改提高的过程。如果课本上每一个练习都要做,就难免会占用过多的时间,影响到一篇作文的深化和提高。

老师对学生帮助最有效的时机是当这一过程仍在进行之中的时候,而不是在这一过程结束之后再来写评语、批分数。在写作过程中,老师可以指出问题,提出修改意见,启发学生,从而参与这一过程,帮助学生写出更好的作文。因此,课堂的主要时间应该是用来评讲学生的作文,帮助他们修改第二稿、第三稿。

这一套教材的出版,得到了校、院、系各级领导长期的关心和支持,藉此机会表示衷心的感谢。我们还要感谢所有参与这项教材编写工作和给予这项工作各种支持的老师和同学们,没有他们,就不可能有今天的成果。

编者

Words for the Teacher

This composition textbook aims to improve the writing skills of second and, in some cases, third year college students with a major in English. These students are already familiar with describing their personal experiences and with writing paragraphs and narrative essays. They are at a stage of learning which paves the way for more independent and academic study in their final years of college education.

To reach this goal, students must learn to do two things more or less concurrently: 1) develop their own ideas and 2) express these ideas in correct and effective English and in appropriate rhetorical patterns. As teachers, we must, therefore, attempt to a balance between content and form, between idea development and rhetorical organization. Writing is communicating ideas, but communication cannot be effective without clear language and organization. We do need to call the students' attention to the organization of samples and encourage them to select and use in their own work the patterns these samples demonstrate.

We recommend that you use the sample essays in the following ways:

First of all, use a hands-on approach. That is, let students learn as they write and write as they learn. Most units begin with "Suggested Writing Activities" from which the students or the teacher may choose one to start with. The students' initial work thus serves as a point of departure in the classroom discussion, which proceeds as they write and rewrite their drafts.

Secondly, concentrate on student writing in class and do not waste time going over a sample essay line by line, word by word, turning the discussion into another intensive reading class. For the most part, therefore, students should skim the readings outside of class at their own pace. What we do in class with a sample is simply discuss the "Points for Discussion."

Take for instance the article "The Monster" in Unit 5, which has five points following the article. Point 1 calls attention to a technique of description: setting up a background against which the author highlights Wagner's genius. In class we talk about how creating contrasts or surprises is a way of attracting the reader's attention.

Point 2 helps students discuss how details are used to show Wagner's character. We may discuss the examples in Paragraphs 2-5, 7-11 and 13-14.

Point 3 is also about a description technique: by giving a long list of details of the negative aspects of Wagner's personality and habits, the author in fact is expressing his high regard for Wagner's genius since he shows at the end that the negative things should be dismissed because they do not outweigh Wagner's accomplishment in music.

Point 4 encourages students to relate their own experiences to the reading and therefore helps them better interpret the author's intended meaning.

The last point can be used for group (or pair) work in class. It is aimed at helping students improve the drafts of their own essays.

Thirdly, to give maximum time to student writing in class, we want to skip vocabulary learning when we look at a sample. Comprehension of the samples in this book does not require that we know all the difficult words in them. These words are often explained in footnotes, primarily for students who want to make vocabulary a subject of their spare time study.

Using this textbook will bring large quantities of student writings for our correction and comment, and driven by professional conscience, we tend to spend day and night trying to catch every error. This does not have to be the case. Insofar as students cannot pay attention to all our corrections and will repeat most of the errors, we may as well only correct the most obvious errors and concentrate their attention on those few. Step by step, they will make progress and eliminate more and more errors. Demanding perfection all at once proves to be the greatest imperfection.

A textbook is only a tool. Only we as users of this tool know best how it should be used. Ultimately, this is a question that has to be answered in the classroom; by how well our students learn.

The original draft of this book was written by Mary Wang and Wang Weizhong. Based on their design and materials, Ting Yenren and Linell Davis completed the book.

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Unit 1 Keeping a Diary

The only way that anyone ever learns to write is by writing a lot. Reading helps, expanding one's vocabulary helps, but in the end only practice will make writers out of us students.

This is why we would like you to keep a reading diary. In addition to building writing skills, a diary supports your learning in other classes. When you use a newly acquired word in the day's diary entry, or make use of a grammatical structure to which you have just been introduced, or record a fact or idea which interests you, you are far more likely to remember these new additions to your knowledge.

Diaries in an English writing class have the further value of helping you learn to write the way you write in Chinese. When you write in Chinese, you are not writing to practice your knowledge of grammar and vocabulary of the language; rather, you write to pass on a real message to an audience, be the audience your teacher, your classmates or only you yourself. Unless you can use English for such natural communication, you cannot be said to have learned the language.

There are several different types of diaries which you can keep in this writing course. You may choose one of them, or your teacher may choose one for you.

PERSONAL DIARY. You may write daily or three, four, five times a week (depending on what your teacher tells you). Prepare two diary notebooks so that the teacher can have a whole week to go over the diaries without interrupting your daily writing habit.

This should not be difficult for you at all. The following example shows how an entry can begin:

记载

September 10

The happiest thing for me today was to receive an unexpected letter from a high school friend of mine whom I haven't seen since I came to university. From the letter, I learned that he is now studying at a PLA academy and in a little bit more than two years' time will realize his dream of becoming a young officer. Compared with his, my life on campus is rather dull....

If you do not want to confide your personal matters to your teacher, this is your right. Some students may fill the diary with stories and "lies" to avoid getting too personal.

Some students may complain of having nothing to write. "We do the same old things everyday," they will say, "so what can we possibly write about?" Here are some ideas:

- Dig into your memory and describe an event from your past. For instance, your memory of the first class in primary school grade one.

最终 length.) Think about any personal meaning that new word has for you. Experiment with using it. /ˌdʒəːnəˈlɪstɪk/

- Vary your tone—serious, journalistic, sarcastic, pathetic, lightly humorous—or playing with the idea of style or audience.

- Describe your "boring" life to a peasant, a child, or your grandmother.

- Describe an emotion you felt today or one that you often feel; try to involve all the senses in your description.

- Recount in dialogue form, with quotation marks and reporting verbs, a conversation you had with your classmates.

These are just a few ideas. You yourself can come up with many others.

DIALOGUE JOURNAL. You find (or your teacher helps you find) a partner in the class, and the two of you will carry out a dialogue in writing. One of you start off the written conversations by writing whatever you like and then passing on the journal to the other. You may ask questions of your partner, comment about the content or utility of the lessons, or launch into any topic that interests you. If one comments on a lousy movie, the other may join in the criticism or may disagree by talking about how wonderful the movie is.

Here, you are engaged in real discussion. If you do not want to have discussion only with one person, you may change (or your teacher may help you change) your partner once or twice during the term. This way you will have six to eight weeks to build up a written relationship with a classmate you possibly do not otherwise know very well. You may also choose to have three people engaged in the dialogue rather than only two.

BOOK DIARY (reading diary). With this choice, you write about what you are reading. As you read, you react in writing to novels, non-fiction or whatever you read as part of your class work. If you are reading a long book, you may write numerous entries, each responding to a small section of the book.

It is in fact a good idea to write about what you are learning in your writing or other classes, about the ideas or information that made a strong impression on you. Writing is a process of exploration. It helps you discover where the holes are in your knowledge or understanding.

TRAVELING NARRATIVE. It often is fun to do a bit of creative writing, and this might be a game already familiar to you when you were in the first year. Someone in the class starts a story in a blank notebook. Then any student can add to the story any time or simply take the notebook and read the story and add nothing. A student can write a sentence, a paragraph or a page, can introduce or kill off characters, can introduce new plot lines.

There are other types of diaries that will help you. The thing to remember is:

Writing is thinking, and the diary is a chance for you to let your thoughts run a little wild.

Unit 2 Telling Your Stories

Like keeping a diary, writing stories is another thing you may enjoy doing again and again throughout the semester. Periodically, all in your class may each write a story and post them on the walls. The writing class will therefore turn into a class of short story reading. Of course this will need the organization by your teacher or your class committee.

There are no fixed rules for creative writing. Just use your imagination, your fantasy, and your dreams. And perhaps read a little of works by others.

The following are some of the stories written by students. After you read them, it will be your turn to write a story.

Maternal Care

Lu Qian

No matter how busy and tired, my mother cooked various delicious dishes for me every day during my last spurt¹ towards university. I called her “an excellent cook,” but she would jokingly correct me by saying, “No, I’ve become your exclusive cook.” One day my “exclusive cook” was ill in bed. I asked if the illness hurt her. “No,” she replied, “The illness doesn’t make me uncomfortable, but staying in bed without cooking for you does.”

Not Drunk Enough

Shi Xiao-Bo

Tom, a five-year-old boy, asks his father why the nurse applies spirit to his hip before she gives him an injection.

“She wants to make your hip drunk so that there won’t be pain when she gives you the injection,” his father tells him.

“But I can still feel the pain.”

“That’s because your hip is too good at drinking to get drunk.”

¹ spurt: a short, sudden increase of activity or effort

Exercise One. On a slip of paper, write a little story like the two you have just read. Pass these slips around in class and read as many stories as you can.

火柴
A Box of Matches

Jiang Min

It was raining outside in the night. In order to kill time, he stayed in bed reading a novel.

He has been in the small village for several days and was deeply impressed by the extraordinarily beautiful scenery here. His roommate was an old blind man who was now sitting at the table. To tell the truth, he sometimes felt sorry for the old shabby roommate.

All of a sudden power went out and the room was in complete darkness. Extremely upset, he threw the book heavily on the bed.

"What's the matter?" noticing the sound, the old man spoke to him for the first time in those days.

"I can see nothing now without lights," he answered impatiently still lying in bed.

The old man said nothing but began to fumble in his own bed.

He was a little surprised and asked: "What are you looking for?"

"A box of matches," the old man murmured, "I got them by accident. Thinking they might be useful one day. I kept them in my bed. But now, where are they?"

Will matches be useful to a blind man? He was a little puzzled.

The old man began to comfort him while still fumbling. "Don't worry. You will be able to see everything clearly as soon as I find the matches."

He felt his face turning red, upon hearing these words.

Suddenly the old man shouted, "Here, I've found them!" And at the same time, lights came back in the room. The power was on again.

He looked up and in the bright light saw the old man lifting a firing match smiling warmly.

Saying nothing, he returned to reading in the bright light. He knew he would never forget the firing match in this raining night.

Exercise Two. Write a story about the uncommon things you have observed in a common person.

If you still have a mental block, try the following:

Without trying to think of a story, describe a character: male or female, their age, occupation, physical appearance and mood at the moment. Where is this character: city, country; inside, outside; rich or poor surroundings; cold, hot environment; alone or with others?

Now describe the same things about another character. The second character needn't have anything to do with the first. Then connect the two characters. Do they already know each other? If they don't, is there a way in which they meet each other? If they already know each other, are they related by love, hate, accident, physical proximity? Is there an object which is important to the characters? Does one of the five senses predominate? What is the overall mood: menacing, domestic, meditative, conflict, etc.? Write a page in which these two characters interact.

Read the following:

A Pitiful Person

Qian Xiao-Ling

She walks beside him, slowly, keeping some distance, having a glance at him now and then, full of sympathy. Carrying some books in his right arm, he seems to be also a student here. Of course, she does not know him, but she sympathizes with him because of the crutch under his left arm. How cruel it is for a young man to be disabled! What a pitiable person! It is still not very hot, but the back of his shirt is already wet with sweat.

Suddenly, she hears some brisk steps from behind, and then the sound of somebody falling down. They both look back. A little girl has just thrown herself onto the ground and is now crying: "Mum. Ugh..." She hesitates a little; her hands are full of books and she supposes the girl could stand up by herself. Just at that moment, she finds him turning round and going to the child. He transfers his books from one hand to the other, stoops a little, and reaches out his hand: "Come on. Don't cry..."

She turns about and goes on. It is still not very hot, but she feels her face a little burning.

On your draft, you may retell a story from somewhere: a newspaper story, a myth, fairy tale, a joke, a story your mother told you.

Then, ask yourself why you have chosen that particular story rather than another. Is it the events of the story or the people in it? Is it something you find puzzling that makes you want to retell the story? Is it some idea in it that inspires you? Is it similar to something you have experienced? If it is sad, what exactly makes it sad? If funny, what makes it funny?

Change the point of view of the story. Tell it from the point of view of a character (or another character) of the story. What might be a part of the story line that was not told in the original? Change elements of the story to change the outcome, the theme or central idea. Tell the story from the point of view of a photographer, a detective, a filmmaker, a specialist in some aspect of the story. If your mother knew the people in this story what would she tell you about them that was not in the original story?

Read the following two stories, written in different styles, and for each of them, find out: what is not directly said in the story?

Slips of Love

Qian Xiao-Lin

Before I was ten years old, I lived with Dad alone. Teaching in a school far from home, mother came to see us only over the weekend. During the week, Dad assumed all the responsibilities of taking care of me both in my daily life and study.

Occasionally, Dad had to be out for work all day, from early morning to late night. Then, in the morning, I would be woken up by an alarm clock near the pillow. Opening eyes reluctantly and looking at the clock, I was sure I could find a slip by it which read: "You had better get up right now before you fall asleep again. Nobody will wake you up for a second time." Such a slip made me "alarmed." I would get up immediately because I didn't want to be late for school. Going to the table, I would find another slip lying on it. Reading it, I could know how Dad had made arrangements for my meals, which were always seen to by those kind neighbors. When I sat at the desk for my homework in the evening, I could see a slip just beside the desk-lamp: "Always remember to keep a proper