Advanced English Writing

高级英语写作

内 容 提 要

　　本书是为适合研究生提高英语写作水平而编写,主要内容有英语写作的措辞、造句、构段和谋篇的技能及常用应用文写作。

　　本书同样适用于大学生及其他有中等英语水平的读者。

出 版 说 明

　　研究生教育是我国高等教育的最高层次,研究生教材建设是提高研究生教学质量的重要环节。为了贯彻执行国家教委颁布的《非英语专业研究生英语教学大纲》,提高研究生培养质量,加强学位英语课程的教学,促使研究生较好地掌握英语这门工具,进行本专业的学习、研究与国际交流,我院组织了我校外语系研究生英语教研室多年从事教学工作、有丰富经验的教师编写了这套高级英语系列丛书。

　　高级英语系列丛书按照研究生英语教学大纲的教学目的和要求编写,突出语言应用技能的培养,强调全面提高研究生英语读、写、译、听、说能力。全套丛书含《高级英语教程》(精读)、《高级英语泛读》(1～2)、《高级英语听力》、《高级英语测试》、《高级英语写作》、《高级英语翻译》、《高级英语词汇》,共七种。这七种教材既互相配合、形成一个整体,又各具特点、自成体系。该丛书初稿的大部分内容曾经在我校研究生英语教学中使用过,效果良好。我们认为本书也适合英语五、六级水平的学生以及其他较高层次的英语学习者使用。

　　编写高级英语系列丛书是我校研究生教材建设的一次新的尝试,由于水平有限,经验不足,缺点在所难免,我们希望校内外专家学者和广大使用者对该丛书提出宝贵的意见。

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东南大学研究生院

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前　言

　　本教程为"高级英语系列丛书"之一,适合有一定基础的英语学习者使用,旨在全面提高读者的英语写作能力。

　　《非英语专业研究生英语教学大纲》规定:研究生要"掌握基本写作技能(如文章结构、段落展开和起承转合等)。能按具体要求,在一小时内写出 250 词左右的短文(如文章摘要和常用应用文等),正确表达思想,语意连贯,无重大语言错误。"我们的学生离这一要求尚有相当的差距。实行大学英语四、六级统考以来,学生的英语水平普遍提高,但是对近年来全国大学英语统考成绩的分析表明,写作在各考项中得分最低。写作目前仍然是大学生,甚至是研究生英语学习中的最薄弱环节,多数人不仅缺乏英语写作技能的基本功,更缺乏书写英文信件、摘要、论文的语言实际运用技能。我们希望读者通过本教程的学习,在英语写作方面有较大的进步。全书共分两大部分,第一部分系统介绍了英语写作的措辞、造句、构段和谋篇的技能,分析了英语写作中常见的语病;第二部分着重介绍了英语信件、摘要、论文的写作方法。全书共七个单元,均含有扼要的讲解、典型的范例和多样的练习,所有练习附有参考答案。本书适用于大学生、研究生以及其他有中等英语水平的读者,是一本理想的英语写作指导教程。

　　全书由过小宁、张广兰编写,过小宁主编。

　　本书的编写得到东南大学研究生院、外语系和东南大学出版社的鼎力支持,编者在此深表谢意。由于编者水平有限,时间紧迫,书中难免有不足之处,我们恳请专家和读者不吝赐教。

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编　　者
1997 年 12 月

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BASIC WRITING

UNIT 1

WORD CHOICE

Words to an essay are just like bricks to a building. Small as they are, unimportant they are not. Without the use of appropriate words, there can be no effective writing. In order to choose words to express ourselves correctly, we should have a good English vocabulary.

I . *Enlarging the vocabulary*

There are two kinds of vocabularies: the passive recognition vocabulary and the active production vocabulary. The former refers to the words one can recognize in reading and listening and the latter refers to the words one can make use of in speech and writing. Surely the former is always much larger than the latter. Thus strictly speaking, one's vocabulary is only as large as the number of words one can use readily, naturally and intelligently. There are two ways to enlarge one's vocabulary:

Learning words from a word list or a dictionary

It seems that one can learn quite a number of words in this way. But words learned in this way are isolated from context, and often have only one meaning. The list- learner often does not know how a new word should be used correctly and properly. So he is likely to be at a disadvantage when he comes to use the word.

Learning words from reading, listening, speaking and writing

The correct way of learning words involves the long, patient, process of familiarization through repeated and extensive contact with them in the natural language environment. Only thus can one acquire a large, versatile and useful vocabulary. Here are some suggestions which may be of help:

(1) Make it a practice to add to your vocabulary useful words frequently appearing in the writing and speech of educated persons.

(2) Develop a persistent interest in new words. Be constantly on the alert for new ideas and new ways of expressing these ideas.

(3) Do not turn to the dictionary every time you meet a new word. If that word does not hamper your reading on, read on by all means. Most probably, you will encounter this word again and again and familiarity will bring about understanding. And this understanding will become profound and will grow naturally, and just like friendship made naturally, it tends to be lasting.

(4) Do not take looking up a word in a dictionary as the last step. After this encounter, you should keep on trying to know the phrases that word usually happens to be in, i. e. the usual environment. In this way, together with your familiarity with the word, your ability to use it also develops.

(5) Carefully compare synonyms and antonyms, and learn to be sensitive to the slight delicate differences and emotional overtones of words in dissimilar contexts.

Ⅱ. Using words correctly

1. Overcoming Pidgin English

Using words correctly means, using them as English speaking people generally do, and not to use them as English equivalents of Chinese. Otherwise, the results will be pidgin English, or Chinglish. It is said that once

a Chinese student in America showed a photo of his girl friend to some American friends. Out of courtesy, they all said, "She is very beautiful!" Also out of courtesy, he responded with what he would have done in Chinese in this case, "Where! Where!"(na li,na li)Having heard this, all felt puzzled and nobody said anything for a moment, until the most ingenious one among them, taking another look at the photo, said, "Oh, everywhere!" A westerner would very likely have said simply, "Thank you," probably adding, "I think she is quite pretty. " Some more examples of the wrong use of words are as follows:

    (1)   We feel the room rather wet and cold.

             Correct: We find the room rather wet and cold.

    (2)   She felt the cloth soft.

             Correct: The cloth felt soft to her.

    (3)   I'm not afraid of the hot weather in Nanjing.

             Correct: I don't mind the hot weather in Nanjing.

    (4)   I always sleep late on Saturday night.

             Correct: I always stay up late on Saturday night.

    (5)   The teacher said my level of English had been promoted.

             Correct: The teacher said my English had improved.

    (6)   The teacher tried to foster our ability of listening.

             Correct: The teacher tried to develop our listening ability.

    (7)   I always pay good attention to what the teacher says.

             Correct: I always pay close attention to what the teacher says.

    (8)   She only said a few sentences at the meeting

             Correct: She only said a few words at the meeting.

    (9)   My English teacher usually explains the texts deeply.

             Correct: My English teacher usually explains the texts fully.

    (10) I received the fourth place in the chess tournament.

             Correct: I took fourth place in the chess tournament.

    (11) The facts have proved that these are effective measures to im-

prove our language skills.

Correct: These measures have been proved effective in improving our language skills.

For Chinese students nothing is more important than overcoming Chinglish, which makes use of English in Chinese ways and Chinese patterns, according to Chinese ideological traditions.

Learners of English often make mistakes in collocations, which are indeed the reflection of pidgin English. A collocation is a group of words which are often used together to form a combination. We Chinese learners of English often make mistakes in collocations, because we tend to think in Chinese, and when we write, we may translate thoughts literally from Chinese into English. For instance, a Chinese learner of English may write such sentences as *"I received the third place in the competition," "My family is simple,"* and *"I understand deeply that···,"* while he should write *" I got/ took/won/ third place in the competition," "My family is small,"* and *"I understand thoroughly/fully that···"* or he may change the sentence into *"I had a deeper understanding of ···"* if he wishes to keep the word *"deep. "*

The arrangement of words to form a correct combination can be found in a collocation dictionary or a comprehensive dictionary (but not in a pocket dictionary). For example, in a collocation dictionary, under the word *"experiment"*, we can find many verbs that may go with the word, such as *attempt, begin, carry, conduct, hazard, make, perform, substitute, try, try out, etc.* Arranged in alphabetical order, the verbs may be illustrated with examples. Also shown are adjectives and prepositions that may often be used with the word "experiment": *careful experiment, curious experiment, extravagant experiment, hazardous experiment, interesting experiment, long and exhaustive experiment, new experiment, original and unprecedented experiment, idealistic social experiment, practical experiment, rash experiment, scholarly experiment, scientific experiment, valuable educational experiment, various experiments, as an experiment, by way of experiment, during the experiment, for experiment,*

on experiment, experiment in electricity, experiment on living animals, etc.

2. Bewaring of Archaic and Obsolete Words

Words that are no longer in common use but still occur in special texts (e. g. religious works) and poetry are said to be archaic. For example, *thou (you)*, *forsooth (indeed)* and *ere (before)* are archaic words. Words that have gone out of use altogether are called obsolete. Although they are occasionally used by certain writers, students should, on the whole, avoid them.

3. Avoiding Slang

Slang expressions are used by special groups for special effect. Such words are transitory: some of them are dying out; others are accepted as Standard English. Slang words may be vivid and interesting, but they may, when used inappropriately, make the writer sound offensive or funny. Here are two examples:

(1) He claims to like her, but he's always slagging her off behind her back.

(2) On hearing that his old father had kicked the bucket, I wrote him a letter to express my deep sympathies.

Because of the slang expressions, the first sentence seems rather casual and abusive , and the second is not serious in tone.

4. Avoiding Nonstandard Words and Expressions

Standard English, as Peter Trugill, a sociolinguist, defines, is "that variety of English which is usually used in print, and which is normally taught in school and to nonnative speakers learning the language. " The other variety of English is nonstandard English, which includes usages from numerous regional and social dialects. Nonstandard English can also be found in print, chiefly in dialogue that attempts to reproduce nonstan-

dard speech patterns. However, it is not used in technical writing and should be totally avoided in serious writing. Here are a few examples of nonstandard English words and constructions:

(1) I ain't like it. (I don't like it.)

(2) Come tonite. (Come tonight.)

(3) I don't want nothing. (I don't want anything.)

(4) That John house. (That is John's house.)

(5) There's not no way to do that. (There is no way to do that.)

(6) I gonna do it. (I am going to do it.)

Ⅲ. *Using words accurately*

We must not be satisfied with words which vaguely express what we want to say until we find the words which express accurately what we want to say. A high-ranking officer in the British Army during the Second World War said, once he reported that his troops had been fighting with the Germans at a small village in Italy. Back came Churchill's copy, annotated in purple ink: *"We do not fight with the Germans. We fight either for or against them. "* This is an example of Churchill's stress on accuracy. Any word in any language has several or many meanings. When using a word, we must be sure that it does not imply anything different from our intention.

1. Specific and Concrete Words

Specific and concrete words are sense words referring to something we can see, hear, touch, smell or taste. General and abstract words refer to something we cannot see, hear, touch, smell or taste—to something we cannot know directly through our senses; instead, they often refer to an idea, a quality or a concept, like *literature* or *democracy*. Though good writing requires general and abstract words as well as concrete and specific

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ones, it is the latter that make our writing more informative and expressive. Out of the stock of words we know, we should choose the most specific and most concrete, thus the most suitable one to express the idea we want to convey. All content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) are either general or specific. Yet specific and general are also relative terms, since a word may be specific compared with one other word, and general compared with a second. For example *professional* is a general word, indefinite and uncertain in meaning, when compared with *doctor*, *lawyer*, *scientist*, *teacher*, *writer*, etc. But *doctor* becomes a general word in relation to *physician*, *surgeon* and *dentist*.

Specific and concrete words give the reader tangible and perceivable images. They are especially valuable in description and in narration, and they likewise add clearness and force to much expository and argumentative writing. The following groups of words illustrate the superiority of specific words over general terms in exactness and suggestiveness.

walk:	stride, stroll, step, drag, stagger, totter, sway, limp, wander
good (food):	tasty, nourishing, rich, wholesome, high-priced, fresh, substantial
nice (person):	kind, honest, just, generous, sympathetic, warm-hearted, selfless, honorable
house or building:	mansion, villa, cottage, cabin, hut, shed, barn, warehouse
workman:	butcher, cook, carpenter, plumber, shoe-maker, smith mason
scientist:	physicist, chemist, biologist, geologist, etc.

An English learner may begin with such general words as *laugh*. Gradually, as he enlarges his vocabulary, he will be able to use *smile*, *grin*, *chuckle*, *beam*, *giggle*, *titter*, etc.

2. Denotation and Connotation of Words

The exact meaning of a word, the definition that appears in a dictionary, is its denotation. Thus in the commonest use of the word *blackboard*, the denotation is a dark smooth surface used especially in schools for writing or drawing on, usually with chalk. Connotation means the emotional, social, or moral value that is associated with a word. For example, if you want to be polite about someone, do not say that they are *fat*. (*Rather*) *overweight* is a more polite way of saying the same thing. *Plump* is most often used of women and children and means "slightly (and pleasantly) fat". *Chubby* (used of babies and children) also means "pleasantly fat". *Stout* means "rather fat and heavy" and *tubby* means "short and rather fat, especially in the stomach". If someone is extremely fat and unhealthy they are said to be *obese*.

Connotation makes all the difference between a compliment and an insult. Some words are favourable, others contemptuous. In the following, the three expressions in each group have the same denotation, but different connotations reflecting the writer's attitudes.

Neutral	Derogatory	Complimentary
government employee	bureaucrat	public servant
policeman	cop	law officer
union official	union boss	labour leader
investor	speculator	financier
detective	spy	investigator
successful businessman	tycoon	captain of industry

So if we wish to write objectively, we may use such expressions as *government employee*, which imply no judgement and express no attitude. If you wish to convey an approving attitude, you may use such complimentary terms as *public servant*. The derogatory terms as *bureaucrat* help you suggest disapproval.