

大学英语素质教育拓展教材

PRACTICAL ENGLISH
WRITING (REVISED)

实用英语写作

(修订版)

总主编 江 滨

主 编 谷玉霞 吕 莉 冯 卉

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Practical English Writing (Revised)



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谷玉霞 吕 莉 冯 卉



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前 言

随着社会的变革与发展,我国大学英语教学改革日益深化、日益成熟,英语教学已成为英语教育,其功能已从单一地传授知识向传播文化、训练语言技能、培养交流能力、提高文化素养和思想品德的多元化功能转化。因此,为非英语专业本科生开设了大学英语素质教育系列拓展课程,这些课程是大学英语课程体系的一个组成部分,主要包括语言技能类、文化类、文学类以及应用类,旨在实现大学英语教学的个性化教育与综合素质培养的目标,结合语言学习,综合提高学生语言文化能力和应用能力,全面提升学生的语言素质、心理素质和文化素质,发掘大学英语课程的隐性功能。

大学英语素质教育系列拓展课程的配套教材共 8 本:《实用英语写作》(修订版)、《西方文化掠影》(修订版)、《翻译实践》(修订版)、《英美文学》(修订版)、《商务英语基础阅读》(修订版)、《英语影视欣赏》(修订版)、《中国文化概览》(修订版)、《英美文化掠影》(修订版)。

本教材在 2011 年天津大学出版社出版的《实用英语写作》的基础上,根据时代的发展以及教学实践的需要补充、更新和修订而成的。

本书主要介绍英语写作中的遣词造句、语篇布局、写作规

则及技巧等基本知识以及各种实用英语写作文体的模式与精要。本书共分8章。每章都包含知识导入、知识概述、知识复习和知识拓展四个模块。旨在进一步提高学生实际运用英语表达自己思想的能力和表达思想的准确性与鲜明性,从而提高学生的分析鉴赏及逻辑思考的能力。该课程是一门实践性较强的课程,在理论讲解的基础上,注重学生的大量实践练习。

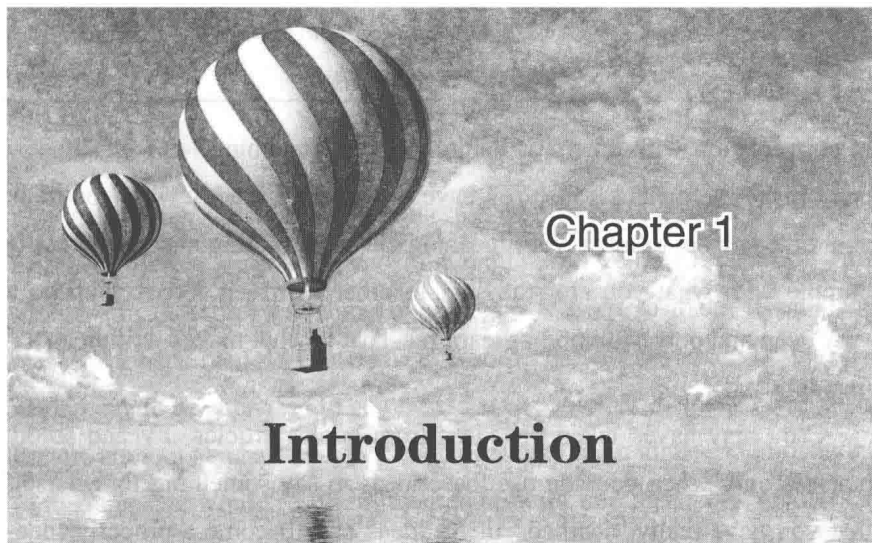
此教材是多年教学积累和资料梳理的成果。在此书出版之际,我们向曾经一起开设课程、共同研究、共享教学资源的老师,向对知识孜孜以求、给予我们动力出版此教材的学生,向始终在默默地支持和奉献着的编者家属表示由衷的敬意。感谢你们!

大学英语素质教育拓展教材编写组

2016年于天津大学

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Chapter 1

Introduction

★ Preview 知识导入

1. Why is writing so important?
2. What is good writing?
3. What are the differences between English writing and Chinese writing?
4. What is the proper writing process?
5. What are the technical considerations in writing?

★ Overview 知识概述

The Importance of Writing

Of all aspects of studying, writing is probably the most challenging because when you write down your ideas for other people to read, you have to explain yourself particularly carefully. Unlike what you do when you are

in conversation with others or thinking about something for yourself, you can't make the mental leaps. You have to work out exactly what you think about the subject to make your meaning clear. So writing makes you really grapple with what you are studying. In other words, it forces you into a very deep and powerful kind of learning. That is what makes writing so demanding.

You may have "taken in" ideas from books, articles, TV and so on, but it is only when you can use these ideas to say something for yourself that you have really "learned" them. Ideas only become a properly functioning part of your thought-processes when you can call on them as you communicate with other people. A more exacting way of using ideas in argument is to do it in writing.

In our society a very valuable skill is to be able to write clearly and persuasively, which is a key part of using ideas effectively. It puts you on a much better footing with other people if you can present your point of view forcefully in writing. All of us can benefit from writing in important ways:

1. We understand material better and retain it longer when we write about it.
2. We generate new ideas when we write because the act of writing helps us make connections and see relationships.
3. We think more critically when we write. When we get ideas down on paper, we're more likely to clarify and evaluate them.
4. We solve problems more easily when we write because we understand the dimensions of a problem better after we write out its components.

So writing tends to be both the most demanding and rewarding part of any course of study. You have to put a lot of your time and energy into it because it contributes so much to what you learn.



Good Writing

All writing presupposes a reader as well as a writer. Apart from the fact that different kinds of composition require different treatments, a writer should aim at expressing himself in such a way as to make it easy and pleasant for his reader to understand him perfectly. It is essential that the reader should be supposed to be possessed of a good knowledge of English; for any attempt at adaptation to a reader having but an imperfect knowledge of the language would result in intentional faults and mistakes. Needless to say, good writing is something more than correct writing. No sentence that is unidiomatic can be good. When a sentence strikes you as not quite English though there seems to be nothing definitely incorrect about it, you may be sure that it offends against idiom some way or other and therefore it cannot be a good sentence. You should rewrite it.

Good writing has the following six elements.

Ideas that are interesting and important. Ideas are the heart of the piece — what the writer is writing about and the information he or she chooses to write about it.

Organization that is logical and effective. Organization refers to the order of ideas and the way the writer moves from one idea to the next.

Voice that is individual and appropriate. Voice is how the writing feels to someone when they read it. Is it formal or casual? Is it friendly and inviting or reserved and standoffish? Voice is the expression of the writer's personality through words.

Word choice that is specific and memorable. Good writing uses just the right words to say just the right things.

Sentence fluency that is smooth and expressive. Fluent sentences are



easy to understand and fun to read with expression.

Conventions that are correct and communicative. Conventions are the ways we all agree to use punctuation, spelling, grammar, and other things that make writing consistent and easy to read.

Differences between English Writing and Chinese Writing

Thinking and language are closely related. Dominated by the thinking of a culture, language without thinking would not have the functionality and richness. With different cultures and ways of thinking, English and Chinese fully embody in their respective language the social, cultural and psychological tendencies. Writing is thought. Many of the differences between Chinese and western writing are rooted in the differences between the two cultures. The writing of different cultures will reflect the differences in thought patterns used by those cultures.

Great differences between English and Chinese writing can be found not only in diction but also in syntax and discourse organization. In diction, Chinese attaches importance to complex ornament and there are abundant magnificent words or phrases, while English usually advocates direct and simple depiction. For example, in putting the ideas of Example 1 into English, the writer with a typical Chinese thinking mode tends to use similar structures or repetition, as in 1a. In English thinking mode, the similar three clauses of 1a can be combined into one sentence, 1b, which seems simpler and clearer.

1. 两岸树木葱茏, 鲜花繁茂, 芳草萋萋。

1a. On both banks, the trees are verdant, the flowers are full-blown, and the grass is luxuriant.

1b. Trees, flowers, and grass, a picture of natural vitality, thrive on

both banks.

Another difference in diction lies in word variety. 中国理工科的大学生掌握 3000 到 4000 个汉字就可以读懂许多中文报纸杂志,而知道 10000 个英文单词还不能充分理解英文杂志上的文章。这就意味着中文词的使用重复率相对于英文来说非常高。例如中文的“看”字可以分别用在“看电视、看电影、看书、看父母、看问题”中,而英文则用不同的词表达:“watch TV, see a movie, read a book, visit parents, look at an issue”。

In syntax, Chinese is topic-prominent language, a language in which the basic structure of sentences favors a description in which the topic-comment relation plays a major role. Therefore, the relationship between topic and comment is syntactically much looser than the relationship between subject and predicate, the grammatical relation that English sentences must follow. Another contrast is that nouns are widely used in the Chinese language, while the English language usually adopts simple and concrete verbs. For example, in interpreting Example 2, 2a adopts many abstract nouns to convey the writer's idea. Right in syntax as it is, 2a is unclear to the readers and doesn't sound idiomatic. 2b, however, has made some proper conversions of words. The abstract nouns “stability”, “readjustment”, “improvement” are respectively converted to their homologous verb forms “stabilized”, “readjust”, “improve”, making the sentence clearer to understand and avoiding ambiguity.

2. 随着货币和物价取得稳定,根据新的条件 and 需求,必须在全国进行商业调整和交通与通信的改善,为生产恢复服务。

2a. With stability of currency and prices achieved, there had to be readjustment of industry and commerce as well as improved communications throughout the country, in accordance with the new conditions and demands, so that they could serve the restoration of production.

2b. Once the currency and prices were stabilized, to help restore production we had to readjust industry and commerce and improve communications throughout the country, in accordance with the new conditions and new demands.

In discourse organization, English usually adopts abundant connective words to demonstrate the relations of different clauses of sentences, but the Chinese uses fewer. A great number of attributive clauses, participle phrases, and prepositional phrases find their way into English to indicate a certain relation, but fewer such expressions are used in Chinese. Chinese adopts juxtaposed structure instead. 即, 英语是重形合的语言 (hypotaxis)——以形显意, 句子各成分之间的逻辑关系靠关联词(介词、连词、关系代词、关系副词、连接代词、连接副词)等显性连接手段来直接标示, 句子结构因此紧凑严密但缺乏弹性; 汉语是重意合的语言 (parataxis)——以意役形, 句字各成分之间靠隐性连贯、逻辑关系和叙述的事理顺序来间接显示, 不用或少用关联词, 句子结构比较松散却富有弹性。例如下面一组句子:

3. On the whole such a conclusion can be drawn with a certain degree of confidence but only if the child can be assumed to have had the same attitude towards the test as the other with whom he is compared, and only if he was not punished by lack of relevant information which they possessed.

3a. 总的来说, 得出这样一个结论是有一定把握的, 但是必须具备两个条件: 能够假定这个孩子对测试的态度和与他相比的另一个孩子的态度相同; 他也没有因缺乏别的孩子已掌握的有关知识而被扣分。

中国古代写文章讲究“起承转合”, 由浅入深, 水到渠成, 观点在最后“合”的部分才告诉读者, 非常含蓄。受传统文化的影响, 汉语文章观点的提出滞后, 而英文恰好相反, 通常一开始就旗帜鲜明地挑明主题, 然后再逐步展开。另外, 中文鼓励使用谚语、警句、名人名言等, 而

在英文中这些常常被认为是陈词滥调(cliché),没有原创性(originality)。在提供支持材料时,中文喜欢引经据典,使用名人的故事,如讲到忧国忧民就一定会提到范仲淹,讲到尊重人才就一定提到三顾茅庐。而英文则提倡引用统计数字和普通人的例子来作证。

Writing Process

Writing is more than putting words on paper; it is a process, or series of stages. In this part you will learn the stages of the writing process and the critical thinking skills needed for making decisions at each stage.

Prewriting is all the thinking and planning you do in order to be able to express your ideas in sentences and paragraphs. You may take notes or make an outline in this stage, but basically you are preparing to write. Most prewriting takes place before you write your first draft. Occasionally, however, you will find yourself returning to this stage even when you are in other stages of the writing process.

During the prewriting stage you need to make several important decisions: Why am I writing? (purpose) For whom am I writing? (audience) What will I write about? (subject) What will I say? (content) How will I say it? (language/tone). Understanding and making sound decisions about each of these questions will help you produce strong writing.

Brainstorming is a method for coming up with ideas for a project. The key to brainstorming is to write down everything that pops into your head — the idea you are the least certain about may be the one you use for your paper! Brainstorming is a way you can provide yourself with topic options.

One brainstorming technique is called listing. This strategy involves a simple list of every idea that pops into your mind. From this list, you might choose to narrow down your topics or branch into a related topic. The im-



important thing is that all of these ideas are down on paper so they won't be forgotten and potentially useful ideas are not lost in the process. Clustering is another terrific brainstorming idea. Visual learners may find this technique more effective than listing because of the manner in which ideas are spatially arranged. To start, write the word "ME" in the center of your paper and draw a circle around it. Then branch out from the center circle with any idea that interests you. If more ideas pop into your head, draw branches stemming from your outer circle. Again, the key is to write down as many ideas as possible. You may find that two smaller branched ideas may work together well to form one solid topic. Or, you may find that your branch circles form supporting ideas or arguments for your main ideas.

It is important not only to find a topic, but to find an angle about that topic that can be argued within an essay. Once you find an idea you like, you might form a new cluster by putting your main idea in the center, and then build supporting claims in branched circles.

Free writing is another way to gather your thoughts and prepare to write. That is, just start writing. Don't stop to think and don't stop writing. Make yourself write for perhaps five minutes, saying whatever comes to mind. If you're like us, a lot of absolute nonsense will appear in your page. But buried in that nonsense may well be a few nuggets that will become the actual support in your paper. It takes a little time, but only a little. And that small investment gets your brain in gear, ready to write.

Once you decide on a topic, the next stage is to collect information. You may find information in indexes for periodicals, newspapers, and academic journals. Interviews can also be useful, whether by phone, through e-mail, or in person.

After you collect information pertaining to your topics, a useful next

stage is to organize it — decide where to place information in the argument, as well as which information to omit. One easy way to do this is outlining. Argumentative and narrative papers generally have three main sections. The introduction is used to grab the readers' attention and introduce the main idea or claim, often in the form of a thesis statement. The body consists of several supporting paragraphs that help to elaborate upon the main claim. Finally, the conclusion serves to wrap up the argument and reemphasize the writer's main idea. By taking time to organize and plan the paper, you save time and frustration in the drafting stage; you find that you can follow the pattern you have established for yourself in the outline.

As you write your first draft, keep in mind your purpose and audience. With your notes in front of you, try to express your ideas as clearly as possible. Some writers find it helpful to say each idea aloud in a sentence and then simply write the sentence. Remember that this draft is not your final version; you will revise your writing at least once.

Any draft, even one written by a professional writer, has some weaknesses that can be corrected or improved. As a result, all writers — including you — must be able to evaluate what they have written. They must be able to separate the strengths that should be saved from the weaknesses that should be corrected.

When you evaluate, you identify problems with your paper. When you revise, you make changes to improve your paper or to correct mistakes. Some writers write the first draft with little or no stopping to look back at what they have written. Others are constantly evaluating and revising, even as they write. Whatever approach you use, you will still need to find ways to improve what you have written.

The stage following revision is proofreading. In the proofreading

stage, you carefully reread your revised draft. Your purpose in this reading, however, is different from your purpose in previous readings. This time you look for and correct mistakes in grammar, usage, and mechanics (spelling, capitalization, and punctuation).

The last step in the writing process is to prepare a clean copy of your revised and proofread draft. This will be the final version of your manuscript.

Technical Considerations in Writing

Grammar, punctuation and spelling are three factors that contribute enormously to ease of reading. The whole point of punctuation is to help the reader approach your words in the right way, and the rules of grammar are what enable the reader to construct the sense intended by the writer. Mistakes in either make the reader stop to work out what is being said. Poor spelling can also cause frequent interruptions. Meanwhile, the reader “loses” the thread of your meaning. None of these abilities is easy to improve quickly, and all fall beyond the scope of this book. But if you think you are particularly weak in them you should seek help. Take comfort from the thought that your tutor will usually try to “read through” to your intended meaning, and will also try to help you improve.

Check out the following links to get started with spelling and grammar:

Visual thesaurus (<http://www.visualthesaurus.com/>): A fun way to improve your vocabulary by finding synonyms and related words. The page also contains word lists and a word of the day.

Dictionary.com (<http://dictionary.reference.com/>): for checking up words that you have used when you are not sure if they mean what you



think they do. But that's not all you can do with this brilliant web site. They have an interesting feature called reverse dictionary (<http://dictionary.reference.com/reverse/>) that looks up words when you write few words to describe their meaning, and a good list of further online resources for writers to check out.

Another option for having a spellchecker in your browser is **Google toolbar**.

Checking for grammar mistakes is much trickier. You may check the grammar first in Microsoft Word or in an online tool (<http://www.spellchecker.net/spellcheck/>) and then go through it manually. For manually checking your grammar you can use a checklist of the most common grammar mistakes or just play it by the ear, depending on how much you trust your own English language skills.

Guidelines for using punctuation

Full stops and capital letters — used at the beginning and end of sentences respectively. Modern typographical practice avoids using capital (upper case) letters within a sentence except when a specific title or proper noun is used. For example, generic titles such as head-teacher, department, government or local authority have lower case letters, but if they refer to a specific person or body, such as the Labor Government, Cardiff County Council or the Department of Physics, then capitals should be used.

Commas — use these when you need to make a pause within a sentence or to ensure the meaning is clear or when writing a list. Usually a comma is not needed before “and”, but its use can sometimes avoid ambiguity; for example, “the Schools of Business Studies, Mathematics and Computing, and Languages”. Normally a comma is used when you insert a subordinate clause or a phrase into a sentence, but many writers do not do