

吴相如 著

英语学术论文写作与研究

English

Academic Essay Writing
and Research

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**English Academic
Essay Writing and Research**
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序 言

吴相如同志多年来从事英语写作教学研究，我对他的研究比较熟悉；我自己近些年的研究跟他的研究范围和路数也比较接近。因此作为“知情人”和“同道人”，借此机会对他工作的出发点或追求的目标作一点介绍。

如今有个时髦提法叫做“跟国际接轨”，在学术论文研究中实事求是地遵循国外的理论和方法会使我们的研究得到进一步提高。同时也应该承认，不顾中国的实际，盲目地搬用国外的东西，这样的“接轨”也是行不通的。但是如果我们能够紧密结合中国人英语写作教学的实际，又能适当借鉴国外的新理论、新方法，改变一下我们原来走惯了的路子，这样的“接轨”就不仅是可取的而且是必要的。现在由云南大学出版社出版的《英语学术论文写作与研究》一书就多少有一些这种接轨的味道，也在一定程度上添补了国内在这方面的空白。

对待国外理论采取什么样的态度，我认为首先应该实实在在地弄懂并借鉴国外先进的理论和方法及其已经取得的成果，以此来为我们自己的研究服务，这也是典型的“洋为中用”和“拿来主义”，不然的话，“跟国际接轨”恐怕只是一句空话。

在借鉴国外的理论和方法时要注意防止另一种倾向。吕叔湘先生把这种倾向归纳为“空谈语言学，不结合中国实际，有时引些中国实例，也不怎么恰当”。本书的作者在这个方面做了一些有益的探讨。我们可以看到他的大部分论文（属于本书的第二部分）中都紧密结合汉语及其文化的实际，尤其《汉英电话会话的

《开端之比较研究》就是这方面较好的例子。该书是有理论，有实际研究范例，不限于空谈的著作。特别要强调的是：论文《汉英电话会话的开端之比较研究》即借鉴并严格按照国际论文写作规范，选题新颖有创意，又亲自作了不少调查和苦心分析。因此，该书确实不失为一本供英语专业研究生、本科生借鉴的重要参考书。希望这本书对开学术之踏实务实之风起到积极作用。在此书出版之际，我很乐意向大家推荐本书并为之作序。

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陈慧媛

2004年4月

前 言

本书首先从论文写作的基本结构上给大家提供了一个建立在西方学术传统之上的框架。尽管作者本人是在中国接受中国导师的更高层次的学术指导，然而，在全球化日趋深入的今天，中西学术传统的相互认同需要我们把目光投得更远，从而能最大限度地让世界了解中国。在此理论框架内，本书奉上了一篇名为《汉英电话会话的开端之比较研究》（*A Comparison of Chinese and American Phone Call Beginnings*）的硕士论文。旨在从论文的结构上，给从事相应论文写作的朋友提供一个可借鉴的参考。值得一提的是，这篇硕士论文的写作全过程均由外籍导师督导，可以说是受地道的西方学术传统影响之作。其中从开篇到结尾全都严格按照要求去做，条理清楚、结构严谨、内容详实，作为作者，本人也着实从中获益匪浅。

本书出版的另一个目的是想让大家看到作者在学习过程中思想成熟的全过程。于是书中又向读者提供了撰写硕士论文之前的几篇英语称之为 course work 的作业样本。（其中，《孔子和柏拉图对人性的不同解释》是我读硕士研究生之前所写的英文论文。）试图让读者从中也看到作者开始“鹦鹉学舌”，逐步追求格式和内容上的标准和丰富的孜孜尝试。

本书出版的第三个目的，是想让读者看到语言学涵盖的面之宽广——从英语学习中文汉语的正迁移，到中美两种文化的异同如何在不同程度上影响汉英电话会话的开端及其有关规则等等。其实，本书所图的仅只是抛砖引玉，或许书中所讨论的某一点会触

发读者心灵的火花，从而激发出智慧之光芒。当然，这正是我的良好意愿。应该承认，英语论文写作无论从理论上或实践上都远非我所呈献的寥寥篇幅能及。另一方面，目前对中国学生英语学习策略的研究中，关于如何用英语写作的研究尚属薄弱环节，因此本书的最终目的是鼓励学生们现在就尝试用英语写作，并加强对英语写作的研究，便于以后较规范地写英语学术论文，为将来前往海外攻读学位或参加国际学术交流打下一定的基础。为此，本书还收入了几篇语言学之外的研究论文，以扩大读者的参考范围。

另外，需要指出的是，由于本人学识有限，尽管搬用了所谓有理论支持的框架结构，而所表达的思想却难免囿于母语文化和思维方式的影响，可能会存在不少疏漏和偏颇之处，敬请批评指正。

在本书出版之际，我首先要向在我整个硕士生学习过程中的良师益友 Mr. Kevin Smith 及其夫人 Mrs. Erica Smith 表示崇高的敬意与衷心的感谢；还要特别感谢我远在澳大利亚的硕士论文导师——拉特布大学教育研究生院教授 Lynda Yates 博士，没有她的耐心指导，我的硕士学习不可能顺利完成，也难以向读者呈现眼前的拙作。

作 者

2004年2月 昆明

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Part One

How to Write An Academic Essay

Chapter 1

Writing the Research Proposals and Reports

* Variation in formats

* Organizing the proposal/report

① Introduction

② Method—subjects, procedures, analysis

③ Results and discussion

④ Front and back matter—title page, abstract, references, appen-

dices

Variation in Formats

Writing a plan for the research is the first chance we have to put all the pieces together. It can serve as a rough draft of the final research report. Therefore, you can save time and effort if you use the same format for the proposal as you will ultimately use in the final report.

The research proposal will answer the questions that any critic might ask when you first say that you have a question or questions that you want to address:

* What is/are the research question(s)?

* What has already been done to answer the question(s)?

* What evidence do you expect to gather to answer the question(s)?

* What are the variables in the study and how are they defined?

- * Where or from what Ss (or texts or objects) do you expect to gather the evidence?
 - * How do you expect to collect the data?
 - * How will you analyze the data you collect?
 - * What do you expect the results to be?
 - * Exactly how will the results you obtain address the question?
 - * What wider relevance (or restricted relevance) does the study have?
 - * Are there any suggestions for further research? Where can the related literature be found?
 - * If new materials, tests, or instruments are proposed, what does a sample look like?
 - * If funding is sought, what are your qualifications (your curriculum vitae)?
- ① Timetable for the research
 - ② Budget for the research

This list looks formidable. Whether you will need to answer every question depends on the purpose for which you prepare the proposal. However, even if you don't write out an answer to each question, you should consider all questions carefully. For example, you may not apply for funding and the budget may not need to be specified. That does not mean you shouldn't think about it in preparing your plan.

If you prepare the proposal for anyone other than yourself, the first thing to do is to inquire whether there is a set format that you should follow.

Your department, if it is like ours, may give graduate students a detailed outline for thesis and dissertation proposals. You may be re-

quired to give not only an extensive description of the study but a list of relevant course work and a detailed timetable for completion of the project. Whether the format is open or extremely detailed, the same questions will need to be answered.

If your proposal is to be submitted in one of the more common formats such as the APA (American Psychological Association) format, the MLA (Modern Language Association) format, or the Chicago style sheet, computers can be very helpful. Personal computer software programs offer you a choice of many of these formats. In addition, most universities have mainframe programs where a special software program formats the text in exactly the style required by the university. Once you become acquainted with such programs, they are invaluable—they make research more feasible by saving you time and money.

Practice 1.1

① *Obtain instructions for writing a proposal from your department, university, or grant agency. Look at the instructions. How similar is the format to that given in this chapter? In what order do questions (those that must be answered in all research projects) need to be presented?*

② *Check the range of computer software (and hardware) available for report writing and for data analysis. In your study group, evaluate the software available for your use. Which programs are best for your word processing needs? Do these programs also offer possibilities for data analysis?*

Organizing the Proposal/Report

• Introduction

Typically, proposals and research reports begin with a short introduction. In most research formats, the introduction is not labeled as such. Rather, the writer begins with a brief statement that shows the question is timely and of importance. Because novice researchers sometimes find it difficult to break the “writer’s block”, it is worthwhile to pay attention to the almost formulaic phrasing of these opening sentences. You may not want to use them yourself, but they are always available to get you started.

Recent research has suggested xxx. Such (research , work , an interpretation) has many strengths but . . .

The issue of xxx is one which has puzzled researchers for many years. Recent work , however , has offered interesting ways in which we might approach this issue .

A number of proposals have been made in regard to xxx .

Contemporary research into the nature of xxx emphasizes the role of xxx factors . A large part of this research has been based on the idea . . . However , in spite of the diversity / agreement of . . . exactly how we might xxx is not well defined .

The notion of xxx commands a central position in (theory , research , instruction) . While . . . there is considerable controversy regarding . . .

One of the most hotly debated topics in xxx has been the significance of . . .

Researchers and teachers have been interested in X and Y

throughout the twentieth century, but only recently have . . .

Although xxx has always been recognized, scientific interest in this topic has developed slowly/rapidly over the past x years.

xxx and yyy are, for the (applied linguist, educational psychologist, language teacher), two of the most interesting facets of . . .

After the opening lines, the researcher provides a brief review of the most relevant research reports on the question. At the end of the review, it should not only be clear why the question is "interesting", but also why previous research has failed to answer the broad research question (*e.g.* not enough research to answer the broad research question; the research was somehow flawed; the research involved Ss that differ from those you wish to select; the procedures you wish to use will overcome previous threats to validity; and so forth).

Near the end of the introduction, the research questions are stated. Interestingly, some review committees (whether grant committees or department committees) as well as some journals prefer that the research question not be stated in the null form. The reason is, we believe, stylistic. Be sure to check with your advisor (or look at past issues of the journal) before deciding on the precise form of the research question. Operational definitions of terms may also be given here. And, at this point, the researcher may also place disclaimers to show limitations on the scope of the research.

If you are preparing a proposal for a thesis or dissertation, it is likely that the introductory section will be extensive. Typically, committees expect that you will review all the background studies in the research area as evidence that you are thoroughly prepared to undertake the study. This

review may form a chapter of your final document. In rewriting the document as a journal article, only the research most directly relevant to the study would be used. Thesis proposals often give much more documentation to the importance of the study, the original contribution the study will make to the field, and its relevance to theory or practice. Again, this is evidence that the author is qualified to undertake the research. In preparing a journal article on this research, the author, with a few brief sentences, can make the connection between research and theory for readers.

Practice 1.2

① *Select one of the research articles. Outline the introduction section for this study. Where are the research questions posed? How detailed is the introduction? How extensive is the literature review? Where are the research questions posed? Are formal hypotheses stated for the questions? Is there a "limitations to this study" section in the introduction? Are operational definitions given for the key terms in the research?*

② *Compare the results in your study group across all the articles surveyed. How much variability is shown across the studies? How might you account for this variability?*

• Method

The introduction tells us *what* the study is about. The method section tells us *how* the study will be carried out. The method section will, of course, vary according to the type of study. Typically, though, it begins with a section describing the data source—the "unit of observation" (the Ss and their characteristics, or the schools/classes and their characteristics, or the text classifications and characteristics, or the

classes and characteristics of objects from which the data are drawn).

1. *Subjects*

The description of the data source should be as complete and precise as possible. In journal articles, we do not expect that every detail will be mentioned-journals do not have that kind of space nor do readers want to know every tiny detail. We do, however, expect that details will be given for variables that are important to the study. The major criteria in evaluating these descriptions are precision and replicability. When re-search is replicated, it is not unusual to consult the original author for further details. However, readers of articles also evaluate descriptions using these criteria. If the descriptions do not allow replication, then in some way they are not precise enough to allow the reader to interpret the results. As an example, consider each of the following fictitious descriptions. Is sufficient information given so that replication and/or interpretation of results would be possible?

Subjects

Thirty native speakers and 30 normative speakers of Spanish will serve as subjects/or this study. The normative speakers are enrolled in an advanced Spanish conversation class at Houston Community Adult School. The non-natives have English as a first language. Three of these have studied other foreign languages in addition to Spanish.

Comments on description of data source:

This description of Ss is complete in terms of information on number of subjects and their First language. While we know they are enrolled in an "advanced" Spanish class, we do not know much about how fluent

they are in Spanish. We need an operational definition of “advanced” from the author. Other demographic data (e.g. age, sex, travel to Spanish-speaking countries) might be needed, depending on the research question.

Texts

The texts for this study are 30 200-word samples randomly selected from five short stories by American authors. The short stories appear in EFL: Vol 8, a reading textbook for advanced EFL students.

Comments on description of data source:

We do not know how the random selection was carried out. For a detailed description of random sampling procedures using a table of random numbers, you might consult Shavelson (1988, pages 10 ~ 11). We do not know how representative these stories are of American short stories. We do not know if the stories are original or were adapted (simplified). We do not know whether the sample size is sufficiently large to contain examples of the variables being studied. Whether these are important issues could only be determined by reading the remainder of the article.

Practice 1.3

Comment on the following descriptions.

(A) *Classes*

The classes selected for this study include five fourth-grade bilingual classrooms located in a lower middle-class area where little residential mobility has been noted. The control classrooms