

上海市高等学校教育高地英语项目

英语语言学与教学丛书·写作教程系列

丛书主编 ◎ 蔡龙权

修辞写作

A Writing Course
on Paragraph and Essay Development

王丹斌 ◎ 编著

上海科学技术出版社

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Foreword

Writing, as Francis Bacon says, makes one precise. This precision not only refers to what is overtly called speech, an entity right in front of one's naked eyes, but also to what stays covert, thinking, an ability of mind to breed out thoughts and to transfer them into linear words. It is not uncommon for one to be able to write in its general sense, but it is of particular difference if one wants to write precisely along with specific contents.

By content we are reminded of form, the coupled term opposite to and yet indicative of content, and together they relate our discussion to the two sides of writing and the coherence between content and form in achieving the intended effect. It goes beyond doubt that content is of prime importance since it is content that participants are most interested in and therefore is sincerely meant in delivery of communication. By contrast, form acts as an instrument that helps present content, resulting, as is commonly perceived, in a *status quo* secondary to content. Such a relation upholds that content determines form.

While content changes from discipline to discipline, it is expected that there are as many forms to follow suit but as a matter of fact not every content is well matched a form. This is not because writers are unable to concoct enough forms for various contents, but because it does not appear necessary when scientific inquiries are intended to reach at length an ultimate simplification by means of groups of categorical classifications. Generally, therefore, there are five types of writing: daily, journalistic, documentary, creative, and scientific.

To accomplish the coherence between content and form in writing involves such skills as wording and paragraphing, to put it another way, the arrangement of words, sentences, and the whole text. These skills look, in the first place of learning, especially in learning a foreign language, more linguistic than conceptual, for they have a lot to do with spelling, grammar, and fixed expression. Upon a second thought and with deep investigation, it is exposed that many failures in attaining these skills lie in erroneous or improper conceptualization with respect to cohering content and form. Accordingly, to learn to write has two implicitly interactive parts—speech and thought.

Then it is no longer necessary to ask the question “Which should be learned first”; rather it is significant to point out that to relate conceptualization to the learning of grammar and diction may do good to writing as a whole in which a form is selected by certain content and in return affects the representation of that content. The concern at issue is the sensibility to discover the relation and the sense to make use of the mind work, thinking.

But thinking without keeping good terms with content will be labor lost. Therefore, it is sufficiently meaningful to note the worth of reading as an adequate aid to writing. When the opinion that writing ability is not learned may sound going to extremes, the huge unknowing intake of resourceful information and the vast witting imitation of verified exemplifications help

lay the foundation of one's own voluntary writing upon request. Apparently thoughts come in unrelenting reaction to what is found intriguing; forms are shaped up after frequent contact with disciplined reading. On the other hand, practice in writing plays an indispensable role. It reinforces what is newly picked up, accommodates what is unfamiliar, exposes what remains for remediation, and directs what goes for polishing. Consequently, writing ability is further made up via reading and practicing.

I therefore recommend this set of books on writing to those who are interested in learning and teaching how to write in English at college level. These books are written by those who have had years of experience in teaching and researching writing and therefore know a lot about approaches to successful writing in terms of content-form coherence. The four books are internally chained up, with *A Writing Course on Sentence Skills* and *A Course on Practical Writing* intended for freshmen, *A Writing Course on Paragraph and Essay Development* and *A Course on Academic Writing* for sophomores, all being designed to help learners build up the fundamental skills concerning different contents in different forms so that they will find themselves better prepared to further their writing in use at the time of their junior and senior life.

So to write, my recommendation is made without reservation.

Dr. Cai Longquan
Professor and Dean
Foreign Languages College
Shanghai Normal University
July 16, 2007

Preface

It is under the encouragement of the chair of our Foreign Languages College, Prof. Cai Longquan, that I ventured to reexamine my teaching plans and compiled this course book, which aims to present readers with a close-up on paragraph and essay development through an integration of the *process*, *product* and *genre* approaches to teaching writing. What is preached here is highly practical, since it is from the students, to the students and for the students.

To begin with, the book is constructed from my experiences in teaching the *Intermediate English Writing* course to sophomores majoring in English at our university. Many examples are directly quoted from assignments handed in by student writers. Among these examples, some are praiseworthy, serving as models for their fellow students to imitate whereas others are problematic, serving as an authentic corpus for culturally contrastive analysis or error analysis. In classroom situations, such feedback has greatly motivated students.

Besides, the book is student-oriented. To ensure the ease of reading, writing skills and other basics of writing are not discussed in long running texts but in the form of lists and diagrams; examples from celebrated writers like Mark Twain and Helen Keller are not beyond students' comprehension but easily comprehensible and manageable. As for the exercises, keys to objective exercises and hints or references to open-ended questions or subjective requirements are provided at the end of the book.

Finally, the book takes both the needs and interests of students into consideration. It offers a variety of exercises ranging from the elementary level to the advanced level and from the objective to the subjective ones. They can be used to illustrate a key concept, emphasize a grammatical or rhetoric point, raise students' awareness of certain writing techniques and assist students in learning to assess their compositions. Since the supply of exercises well exceeds the demand, the practicing teacher can enjoy much freedom to choose whatever suits the language proficiency level of his class best. In this way, all the students can benefit themselves. For example, students preparing for TEM 4 or TEM 8 can practice writing more expository and argumentative essays if they avail themselves of all rather than one of the topic options listed in the routine exercises as well as refer to the topics of the attached student compositions, whereas promising students can challenge themselves to do the extended exercises so as to read more, to think more and to write more.

Also, before the course book is sent to the press, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all those whose kindness and advice have made this book publishable. First of all, my thanks will go to my hardworking and inquisitive students. Without their interaction with me in class and their contribution after class, the compilation of this book would not have gone so smoothly. I am equally grateful to Prof. Su Chengzhi for his scholarly advice and generous help.

He read the whole manuscript of the book and made valuable comments and suggestions. In addition, many thanks go to the editor Mr. Peng Jiangjie for his kindness and assistance in the editing process. Last but not least, I will thank my husband and son for the support and understanding they have given me from start to finish. Their sacrifices have saved me enough time and energy to take part in the present project, otherwise the book can never be completed.

Wang Danbin
June 6, 2007
Shanghai

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Unit One

Overview

1.1 Writer's Block

Is writing a headache to you? Does your mind turn blank when you sit down to write? If so, you are suffering from “writer’s block”. It is an experience in writing when you get frustrated at being unable to generate enough ideas readily. But you need not be afraid. Once you figure out what have caused your “writer’s block” and set out to overcome it, you are still full of hopes in writing. First, you can examine your past experiences in writing by asking yourself questions like the following: Have I had any systematic writing instructions before? How often do I write (including e-mails, notes, letters, etc.)? What type of writing do I find easy to deal with and why? What type of writing do I find difficult to deal with and why? Do I have any strengths (e.g. I write fast. My writing is clear.) or weaknesses as a writer? With the help of these questions, you may have already discovered several causes of your writer’s block, such as lack of training and exercises, inability to cope with various genres, and failure to exploit your strengths to offset weaknesses. Then to get yourself better prepared psychologically, you can sit back and observe your behavior and habits during the writing process and determine whether your “writer’s block” can be attributed to any of these reasons.

- 1) You are anxious about writing the composition.
- 2) You are working on a difficult topic or one that you dislike.
- 3) You sit down and attempt to write a whole essay without doing any preliminary work.
- 4) You tend to avoid writing down premature ideas and seek perfection as soon as you begin writing.
- 5) You are worrying about your teacher’s evaluation and your score.

If any of the above-listed circumstances applies to you, you need to learn the following facts about writing. As to anxiety, the first symptom, few writers including those professional ones dare say that they are entirely free from apprehension in writing, so it is not as fearful and detrimental as you may suppose. On the contrary, a moderate level of anxiety is productive, as it may become a natural response that stirs you up to action. Without it, you might not perform as well, especially when you encounter tough and loathsome topics. Perhaps you can look for another subject you can handle. But if that is impossible, you definitely need some motivation to get yourself some help like library research and prewriting peer discussions, or to begin in the middle by writing the composition backwards and saving the introduction until later when you are about to finish and when you have a clearer idea of what message you really want to convey. Seldom is there any writing task which requires no preliminary work. If you are lucky, you may succeed once or twice in producing a whole essay without any letup. But this does not always

work. To write an effective essay that brings about a satisfying grade, much more work is needed at the initial stage and beyond. Writing is messy in nature and you do not have to get it right the first time. According to Samuel Johnson, “What is written without effort is in general read without pleasure.” Therefore, you had better stop being self-critical and force yourself to write down something that approximates your thought, however poorly worded it may be, in the first place and go on with the next idea. Your major concern at present is the draft, so you must write quickly and revise carefully. There is no hurry and no sense to fret about unfinished, semi-finished products, your teacher’s evaluation or even the score. If that worry continues bothering you, you may attempt to change the audience, say, to pretend that you are writing to a child, to a close friend, to a parent, or to whomever makes you feel more at ease. Finally, you can learn some specific strategies or techniques and practice them when you experience writer’s block at some time or other just as some more skilled writers do.

1.2 Writing Process

Writing is now viewed as a process. By “process”, it means that there is a sequence of steps to follow in getting the task done. Although no two people follow exactly the same process in writing and a given writer may make more or less use of different steps in writing different essays, there are still some logical and basic steps that every writer seems to share in the creation of a text: prewriting, drafting, revising and editing. These stages do not occur in a sequential and linear fashion. At times they can be interactive and frequently occur simultaneously. Sometimes, the writer may find it necessary to return to a step that he has already “completed” when he engages himself in a new area.

1.2.1 Prewriting

Prewriting is also labeled as planning or invention. Just as athletes need to warm up before a game, writers also need to get ready. Prewriting, although it used to be the most neglected, is the most crucial step in the writing process in that it generates topics and ideas. Usually student writers have to deal with two different kinds of topics: assigned topics or chosen topics. When the topic is assigned, all the students have to do is to read the directions carefully and answer accordingly. However, when students are free to select a topic, they have to look for sources of inspiration themselves. A great many thoughts come from reading, for example, literature, magazines, newspapers or periodicals. Some are from meditations on everyday routines such as dreaming and keeping a journal. And some are from interaction with people around us, say, conducting interviews, holding discussions and doing role-plays. No matter where thoughts originate from, it is always important for students to take into consideration the purpose of writing, the writer’s interest, their knowledge background and the readers’ possible reaction. As long as it selects an uncommon topic or uses a new and original approach for an old topic, any piece of writing has the potential to appeal to readers. Here are a number of strategies.

1.2.1.1 Free-writing

In free-writing, the writer keeps writing for about 5 to 10 minutes without stop. He has to force himself to continue writing quickly even if he has nothing worthwhile to put down and he makes punctuation or spelling mistakes. After he has finished, he looks back over the product and highlights the prominent and interesting points. Then the writer can start all over again, with a sharper focus. In the process of looping one free-writing after another, the writer has a sequence of texts, each more specific than the other, to discover relevant points about the topic.

Example:

Everyday when I drive to school I see bad drivers. Sometimes I'm mad. Sometimes I'm irritated. Sometimes I'm scared. I think someone should do something about them. The drunk drivers are the worst. They should be put away. But a lot of the other should be getting tickets too. Some of the drivers are worse than others. Make me a cop, a super-cop, a Rambo cop, and I'll go after the worst. Maybe I'd just go after the ones that bother me. Some bad drivers cause a lot of accidents and get people all angry. Take the tailgaters for example. And what about the drivers that go into the emergency lanes on the freeways to pass when there's a jam. And then you've got the lane changers and the people that don't signal and those that keep going and turning left when the light turns red. Then you've got the people that drive too fast and too slow. And you've got the ones that don't stop for pedestrians. All kinds of bad drivers are out there—young, old, male, female, insane, drunk, angry, and rushed.

(From *Paragraphs and Essays with Multicultural Readings* by Byron Jackson, p.5)

1.2.1.2 Brainstorming

It is also called listing. The writer jots down all the possible words that emerge from the general topic. He may work on his own or in groups. Teaming up with peers works especially well as more students will see things from different perspectives and suggest more possibilities.

Example:

- 1) Bad drivers
- 2) Types of people (by age, social status, nationality, vehicle driven)
- 3) Freeways only
- 4) Passing on emergency lanes
- 5) Freeways and surface street
- 6) Not bucking up
- 7) Tailgating
- 8) No signals
- 9) Speeding
- 10) Unsafe lane changing
- 11) D.U.I.
- 12) Too slow in fast lanes
- 13) Surface streets only
- 14) Left turn on red

- 15) Not yielding to pedestrians
- 16) Rolling stops
- 17) Motives
- 18) Emergency
- 19) Hostility
- 20) Work related
- 21) Personality problems
- 22) Buses, vans, trucks, sports car, pickups

(Adapted from *Paragraphs and Essays with Multicultural Readings*, p.6)

1.2.1.3 Cubing

The cube has six sides. Each side represents a question type — 5 W's and 1 H: who, what, where, when, why and how. The writer can use these questions to explore the topic he is working at. A key to using these questions is to make them flexible enough to account for the specific details of a topic. For instance, if the topic is about the extinction of the dinosaur species, the writer may find the "who" questions irrelevant, whereas other topics, especially in journalistic reports where human involvement is heavy, may have a lot to do with the "who" questions. Learning to ask appropriate questions takes practice. Here is a list of tentative questions:

who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Who are the participants? ✦ Who is affected? ✦ Who are the primary actors? ✦ Who are the secondary actors?
what	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ What is the topic? ✦ What is the significance of the topic? ✦ What is the basic problem? ✦ What are the issues?
where	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Where does the activity take place? ✦ Where does the problem or issue have its source? ✦ At what place is the cause or effect of the problem most visible?
when	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ When is the issue most apparent? (past/ present/ future) ✦ When did the issue or problem develop? ✦ What historical forces helped shape the problem or issue and at what point in time will the problem or issue culminate in a crisis? ✦ When is action needed to address the issue or problem?
why	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Why did the issue or problem arise? ✦ Why is the topic an issue or problem at all? ✦ Why did the issue or problem develop in the way that it did?
how	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ How is the issue or problem significant? ✦ How can it be addressed? ✦ How does it affect the participants? ✦ How can the issue or problem be resolved?

Let's still cite Byron Jackson's work as an example.

Who?	bad drivers; me as a cop
What?	driving recklessly, unsafely; a cop's job
Where?	on every roadway
When?	all the time
Why?	hurried, disrespectful, self-centered, hostile
How?	lane changing, driving illegally in diamond lane, not signaling, passing on the shoulder, tailgating, turning left on red, rolling stop, speeding, driving while intoxicated

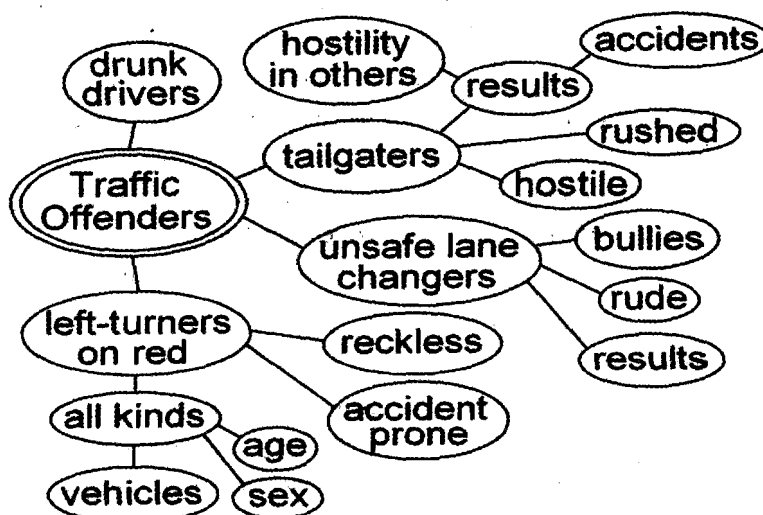
(From *Paragraphs and Essays with Multicultural Readings*, p.5)

The writer can use one of these three techniques at a time or combine any of the approaches to incubate ideas. After that, he is now ready to concentrate on a more precise topic which is appropriate to the length of the article he intends to write. This is essential since a clear focus prevents the writing from being vague, superficial or disorganized. Only when he arrives at that focus can he start to organize thoughts in accordance with their relationship so as to build up an overall structure for his writing.

1.2.1.4 Clustering

Clustering is also called grouping, webbing or mind mapping, which enables the writer to explore the relationship between ideas. For instance, he may put the subject in the center of a page and circle or underline it. When he thinks of new ideas, link them to the subject. When he comes up with more ideas, link them either to the subject or the new ideas. With an abundance of main and subsidiary ideas sprawling on the page, the outcome looks quite like a web. Using key ideas as departure points, the writer may thus reflect upon the development of his paragraph or essay.

Example:



(From *Paragraphs and Essays with Multicultural Readings*, p.10)

1.2.1.5 Outlining

An outline is a writer's plan. It shows the order in which points will be or have been discussed, the relative importance of each part, and the relationship between various parts. To those who hate free-writing, brainstorming or cubing, they may try outlining. Outlining is a more orderly method which can save the writer a considerable amount of time and efforts in the revision process, reducing the possibility that his ideas will need to be rearranged once he has written them. Therefore, almost all the teachers will ask to see an outline of a student's ideas before allowing him to proceed to write the first draft of a lengthy dissertation.

There are two standard forms of an outline: the topic outline and the sentence outline. In a topic outline, words, phrases, or clauses rather than complete sentences are used. In a sentence outline, use complete sentences. Both can use Roman numerals plus letters (see example 1) or decimals (see example 2). But the writer must be consistent in numbering! In computer-aided writing courses, the writer can also use *Outline View of Microsoft Word* to create a plan in topic form.

Example 1:

The topic outline	The sentence outline
<p><u>Negative Effects of Divorce on Adolescents</u></p> <p>I. Psychologically</p> <p>A. Depressed due to parent conflicts</p> <p>B. Disappointed by fewer visits from relatives</p> <p>C. Hurt in different degrees</p> <p>II. Economically</p> <p>A. Standard of living lowered</p> <p>B. Training needed for some female parents</p> <p>C. Possibility of relocation</p> <p>1. A poorer neighborhood</p> <p>2. A new school</p> <p>III. Socially</p> <p>A. Lose friends</p> <p>B. Experience peer problems</p> <p>C. Have an attitude toward the opposite sex</p>	<p>Negative-Effects of Divorce on Adolescents</p> <p>I. When parents get divorced, adolescents suffer psychologically.</p> <p>A. During the first year, adolescents may be depressed due to conflicts between separated parents.</p> <p>B. Grandparents and other relatives do not pay as many visits as before.</p> <p>C. Almost without exception, adolescents find divorce very painful, but they react in different degrees depending on their age.</p> <p>II. When parents get divorced, adolescents suffer economically.</p> <p>A. The family will likely experience a lower standard of living due to the cost of maintaining two households.</p> <p>B. Some female parents with poor job skills must undergo training before entering the job market.</p> <p>C. The lower standard of living, particularly for an untrained female parent, often causes relocation.</p> <p>1. The family may have to move to a poorer neighborhood in order to cut costs.</p> <p>2. As a result, the adolescent may have to attend a different school.</p> <p>III. When parents get divorced, adolescents suffer socially.</p> <p>A. Due to relocation, adolescents may lose friends.</p> <p>B. Due to prejudice, adolescents may experience peer problems.</p> <p>C. The lack of a healthy relationship with both parents affects an adolescent's attitude toward the opposite sex.</p>

Example 2:

1. Drunks
2. Unsafe lane changers
 - 2.1. Character
 - 2.1.1. Rude
 - 2.1.2. Bullying
 - 2.2. Results
 - 2.2.1. Accidents
 - 2.2.2. People upset
3. Left-turners on red
 - 3.1. Attitude
 - 3.1.1. Self-centered
 - 3.1.2. Putting self above law
 - 3.2. Kinds
 - 3.2.1. Age
 - 3.2.2. Sex
 - 3.3. Results
 - 3.3.1. Collisions
 - 3.3.2. Mass irritation
4. Tailgaters
 - 4.1. Motives
 - 4.1.1. Hostility
 - 4.1.2. Rushed
 - 4.2. Effects
 - 4.2.1. Accidents
 - 4.2.2. People upset
 - 4.2.2.1. My reaction
 - 4.2.2.2. Bumper-sticker evidence

(From *Paragraphs and Essays with Multicultural Readings*, p.14)

Guidelines (See exercises 2-6)

- 1) Order the ideas in terms of logic, such as: from general to specific, from abstract to concrete, from the least important to the most important.
- 2) Coordinate items of the same value, that is, give them an equal ranking.
- 3) Subordinate minor points under major ones to indicate different levels of significance.
- 4) Avoid overlapping parallel points.
- 5) Avoid using single sub-points. Make sure each point has at least two sub-points.
- 6) Make points of the same level of importance parallel in grammatical structure whenever possible (e.g. nouns, gerunds).
- 7) Avoid mixing a topic outline with a sentence one or Roman numerals with decimals.
- 8) Narrow down the subject to achieve a better focus.

* * * * *

Exercise 1: Prepare a spiral notebook or loose-leaf binder and start to keep a journal. You can write once a week or more when your inspiration calls upon. You can try out the prewriting skills in your privacy.

Exercise 2: Please write two possible outlines of different organizational patterns based on the given details.

Thesis Statement: Here's what I do every morning after wake-up.

- Use Crest toothpaste and an Oral B toothbrush
- Take my clothes out of the wardrobe
- Comb my hair in front of the mirror
- Shut off my alarm clock
- Clean my dirty dishes
- Have breakfast
- Brush my teeth
- Get out of bed
- Make breakfast
- Wash my face
- Cereal
- Gargle
- Honey
- Milk
- Egg

Exercise 3: The following outlines require improvement. Please pinpoint the mistake and correct them according to the guidelines.

- 1)
 - (1) The executive branch
 - (2) The President
 - (3) The Cabinet
 - (4) The legislative branch
 - (5) The House
 - (6) The Senate
 - (7) The judicial branch
 - (8) The Supreme Court
 - (9) The lower courts
- 2) A. Rules I hate to obey
 - (1) morning exercises
 - (2) evening studies in the classroom
 - (3) lights off at eleven