高等学校英语专业教材

高级英语写作

邓志勇 ◎ 编著

Advanced English Writing

A Coursebook

华东师范大学出版社

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前　言

多年来有一个念头始终萦绕于我的脑海，那就是编写一本适合我国英语专业的英语写作教材。几年前，我有幸获得上海市教委教材编写项目，使这个愿望得以实现。

我从1993年开始上英语专业的英语写作课。由于多年承担写作课教学，我对英语写作教学有了一些思考与体会。后来有幸师从上海外国语大学胡曙中教授学习，主攻西方修辞学，对中国学习者的英语写作进行了一定程度的理论思考。

我个人认为，英语写作课作为英语专业最重要的基本技能课程之一，之所以成为大家公认的重要且难教的课程，是有原因的。原因之一，英语写作是一个综合性的活动，它不仅涉及遣词造句和布局谋篇，还涉及逻辑思维、语感、读者意识等因素。应该说，英语写作课是兼知识传授与能力培养为一体的课程。用词不当和句法错误是学生作文中的常见问题，备受教师和学生关注；但对英语写作课的教师而言，更应引起重视的是觅材取材、布局谋篇、论题建构、修辞诉诸，以及语言表达方面的通顺连贯、言简意赅、生动形象等问题。写作课毕竟不是词汇课，也不是语法课，更不是放鸭式的“自由活动”。它是既教学生写什么，又教学生怎样写的课；它应该既使学生知其然，也要使学生知其所以然。原因之二是教材问题。写作能力既然是一种综合能力，当然不能只靠某本教科书来培养。但有针对性的、好的教材无疑能使教师和学生受益。对教师来说，它可以提供重要参考、减少备课工作量，并提供一些操作性强的训练方法和手段，使教师能够有效组织课堂教学。对学生而言，它不仅能为学生传授知识，也能培养其修辞能力。

英语写作课我们曾选用国外的原版教材，但我发现该书对以英语为母语的学生使用尚可，对中国学生来说却不尽人意。因为它是以英语为母语的读者而编写的。中国大学生的英语语感、英语水平、思维模式、表达方式等诸多方面与英语母语者不一样。后来改用国内出版的教材，但也发现一些不足，其中一个不足是机械操练多，启发性的指导少，理论阐释缺乏甚至根本就没有，对觅材取材

之道也鲜有涉及。结果学生只是照葫芦画瓢，不知其所以然。另一个遗憾是没有汲取西方修辞学的重要理念。受以辞格为中心的狭隘修辞学影响，古今西方修辞学一些重要的理念和方法没有吸收进来，比如传统西方修辞学中的三种修辞诉诸方式和“invention”（创造）以及现代英语修辞学中的论辩模式、修辞的“identification”（同一）策略等很少纳入写作教材。

基于上述考虑，本书针对中国高校英语专业学生的特点，力图在现有同类教材的基础上有所创新。它与国内同类教材的最大区别在于理论联系实际，即用现代西方修辞学理论指导英语写作实践。

本书共六章，第一章简明扼要地阐述了关于写作的几个基本观点，为后续章节中的理论解释作了铺垫。第二章介绍被英语修辞学认为是写作的第一个重要环节的“觅材取材”，并阐释了几种重要方法。第三章讲述写作中的选词及修辞策略，主要介绍了词义的类别和语体特点，并提出了词汇处理的种种策略，如静态变动态、辞格使用等。第四章讲解句子的建构及其修辞策略，重点是语句的通顺连贯、言简意赅、生动活泼等修辞问题，而非句法的正确与否。第五章讲述段落写作。本章展示了段落的基本结构及其发展的几种重要模式，并提出了作为论题的段落的建构策略。第六章阐述文章写作，先介绍文章的传统发展模式，然后讲解作为论题的文章的写作要领以及文章开头、结尾的修辞策略。本书的最后两章对中国学生英语写作中的常见问题进行了分析，并提出了相应的解决办法。为了便于教学，本书各章都附有针对性的练习。

本书得以问世，应该感谢上海市教委对英语写作教材项目的大力支持，感谢华东师范大学出版社李恒平老师的关心和帮助，感谢胡曙中教授拨冗审阅全书。此外还要感谢许许多多给予帮助的老师和朋友。由于作者水平有限，错漏不足之处，恳请专家、读者指正。

邓志勇

2008 年 6 月

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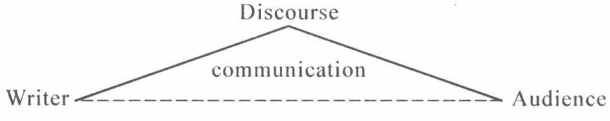
Chapter One
Writing in Perspective

1.1 A Communicative View of Writing

Writing is communication. In writing, we communicate with a reader, who, though physically absent, is in our mind. We "speak" to an imagined or evoked audience and imagine his response to which we then respond. The communication between the writer and the audience can be roughly shown as follows:



(**Figure 1: Writing as Communication**)

Writing, just like speaking, is a dialogic, interactive process. The essential movement in dialogue is turning toward, outgoing to, and reaching for the other. And a basic element in dialogue is "seeing the other" or "experiencing the other side." The writer, during the writing process, not only acts as an addresser, but also as an addressee who responds to the writer's discourse.

To illustrate the interaction between the writer and the audience, let us see the following dialogue:

W: The whole structure of thought in the Middle Ages is one which we find hard to grasp today.

R: Why should this be so?

W: The principles by which this structure was ordered seem to us now outlandish and meaningless.

R: Can you give an example?

W: Yes. Take the simple question: Why does an apple when it leaves the tree fall down to the ground?

R: Why do you take that question in particular?

W: The question had been asked often since the fourteenth century.

R: Why at that time particularly?

W: Because at that time the active and inquiring men of the Italian Renaissance began to take an interest in the mechanical world.

R: Well, how did they answer the question?

W: For answer, they went back to the works of the most pompous tradition of philosophy, and did less to explain the world than to shuffle it in a set of tautologies.

R: Why do you say that?

W: The Middle Ages answered the question about the apple in the tradition of Aristotle: the apple falls down and not up because it is its nature to fall down.

R: Well, that does not tell us very much.

W: Exactly, the answer seems quite meaningless to us these days.

(qtd from Widdowson, 1979:175 – 178)

The above dialogic communication can be converted into a written discourse:

The whole structure of thought in the Middle Ages is one which we find hard to grasp today. It was orderly structured, but the principles by which it was ordered seem to us now outlandish and meaningless. Take such a simple question as that which is said to have turned Newton's mind to the problem of gravitation: Why does an apple when it leaves the tree fall to the ground? The question had been asked often since the fourteenth century, when the active and inquiring men of the Italian Renaissance began to take an interest in the mechanical world. For answer, they went back to one of the great rediscoveries of the Arabs and the Renaissance, the works of the Greek philosophers. To us, this answer smacks of the most pompous tradition of philosophy, and does less to explain the world than to shuffle it in a set of tautologies. For the Middle Ages answered the question in the tradition of Aristotle: the apple falls down and not up because it is its nature to fall down.

(ibid., p. 178)

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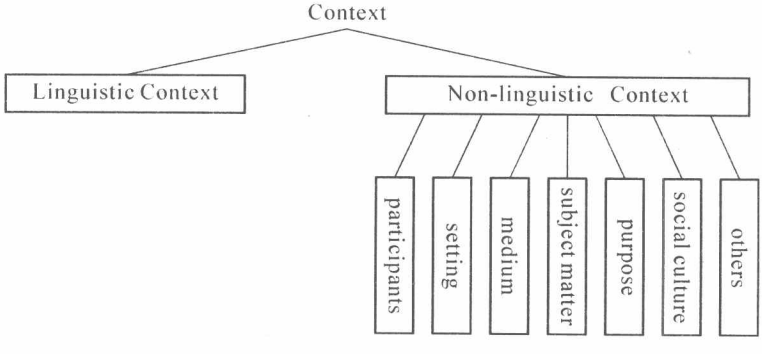
This passage is not coined; it is, in fact, written by a distinguished scholar! As can be seen, it results from the interaction between the writer and the audience.

The generality of role-playing or dialogue in communication, by means of implicit imaginative projections, has a special importance to writing. In oral speech, a mistaken idea of a speaker's intention or of an auditor's response is constantly open to correction. But in writing, where these feedback signals are absent, the characters of the implied author and of the implied audience must be more firmly and securely established within the verbal medium itself.

1.2 A Contextual View of Writing

Writing as communication does not happen in a vacuum. It happens, rather, in a context. By "context" we mean all those factors that have the potential to influence the way a writer writes. It has two aspects: linguistic and non-linguistic. The linguistic aspect involves both the text that precedes, and the text that follows, the act of writing at a particular moment of time. Put simply, the linguistic context in the case of writing communication refers to what has been written and what will be written later. The non-linguistic aspect of context involves both the objective and the subjective factors that have the potential to exert a subtle influence on the way the writer communicates with his audience. These factors include setting, participants of communication, medium, subject matter, purpose of communication, social culture, etc., as the following diagram shows:



(**Figure 2: Writing Context**)

Participants, here in the case of writing, refer to the writer and the audience, that is, the person to whom the writer is writing. Thus are involved the ages and

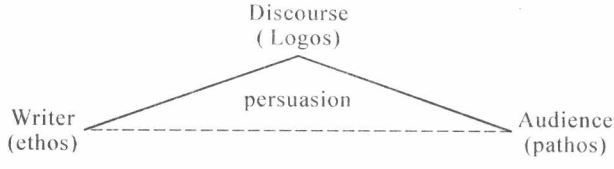
the characters of the writer and the audience, and the relationship between them. *Setting* here refers to when and where the writing communication takes place. *Medium* means the channel of communication. In the case of writing, it refers to the graphic symbols with which communication is done. *Subject matter* refers to what the writer is talking about. *Purpose* refers to why the writer is writing. And *social culture* refers to the culture which the writer and the audience are individually subject to. It should be noted that the writer and the audience may have different cultures.

In a certain situation, one of the above contextual factors may exert greater influence on the writer than does another factor and, perhaps, does so in a different manner.

1.3 A Rhetorical View of Writing

1.3.1 Rhetorical Triangulation in Writing

A rhetorical view of writing holds that writing is a persuasive process. The writer is bent on influencing his audience in one way or another, for instance, creating an attitude, reinforcing an attitude or changing an attitude in the audience. For this purpose, he should bring into collective play *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* — three rhetorical appeals suggested by rhetoricians, ancient and modern, including Aristotle, Cicero, Kenneth Burke, and so on. The rhetorical triangle of writing communication is as follows:



(Figure 3: Rhetorical Triangulation in Writing)

The ethical appeal (*ethos*) is exerted when the writer's speech gives the audience an impression that he is man of sound sense, high moral character, and benevolence. For a discourse to display a person's good sense, it must show that the writer has an adequate grasp of the subject being talked about, that the writer knows and observes the principles of valid reasoning, is capable of viewing a

situation in the proper perspective, and has sound judgment. For a discourse to reflect a person's moral character, it must display an abhorrence of unscrupulous tactics, a respect for the commonly acknowledged virtues, and a degree of integrity. For the discourse to manifest a writer's good will, it must display his sincere interest in the welfare of the audience and readiness to make sacrifices for the benefit of others.

The emotional appeal (*pathos*) is exerted when the writer's discourse arouses an emotion in the audience. Since humans have emotions and their emotions can sway their actions, it is, therefore, important for the writer to make emotional appeals. To arouse an emotion, the writer must contemplate the object that stirs the emotion. For instance, to arouse the anger of an audience, we must describe a person or a situation of a sort that will make the audience angry.

The logical appeal (*logos*) is exerted when the writer's discourse is rational or logical. As rationality is humanity's essential characteristic, reason dominates all of people's thinking and actions, though they are often influenced by passions, prejudices and customs.

1.3.2 Overarching Rhetorical Principle

The overarching principle of rhetoric is that the writer's discourse should be appropriate to the context in which the writing act occurs. Examples:

(1)

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times; it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness; it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity; it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness; it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair; we had everything before us, we had nothing before us; we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way.

(Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*)

This excerpt is the opening part of the novel *A Tale of Two Cities*, which is intended to reveal contradictions and problems in the then turbulent European society. Here the writer's selection of sentence structure is very striking: the overwhelming syntactic structure is parallelism and antithesis. The parallelism seems to emphasize the enormous number of contradictions and problems, and the

antithesis seems to show the irreconcilability of the social contradictions and insolvability of the problems. In other words, the sentence structure here used is appropriate to the theme.

(2)

You don't know about me, without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth. That is nothing. I never seen anybody but lied, one time or another, without it was Aunt Polly, or the widow, or maybe Mary. Aunt Polly — Tom's Aunt Polly, she is — and Mary, and the Widow Douglas, is all told about in that book — which is mostly a true book; with some stretchers, as I said before.

(Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*)

This opening part of the novel contains double negation, contractions, repetitions, grammatical errors, so that we seem to see a lovely child speaking to us face to face. These linguistic features are a vivid reflection of the speaker's social background: a small child with little education. Put another way, these linguistic features are appropriate to the social identity of the speaker.

(3)

Japan approves stimulus plan

TOKYO — Japan's Cabinet approved a record economic stimulus package worth 24 trillion yen (US $197 billion) on Monday in a bid to bring the country out of its worst recession in decades.

The massive plan was aimed at boosting the Japanese economy into growth by next year, Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obushi told reporters after the decision.

"We must do all we can to cut the vicious cycle of recession in order to put the nation's economy back into recovery," Obuchi said.

The announcement comes after the government said last Thursday that the package might total 18 trillion yen (US $149 billion), surpassing the record 17 trillion yen (US $139 billion) stimulus package released last April.

But critics immediately panned the plan as insufficient to resuscitate the

economy. Apparently shaken by the criticism, officials began dropping hints the next day that the package would likely be bigger . . . .

(*21st Century*, Nov. 18, 1998)

This news story is set in a typical inverted format: the most important information "Japan's Cabinet approved a record economic stimulus package" spearheads the news story, with less and still less important information trailing behind. The first paragraph is what we call the news lead which contains *Who* (Japan's Cabinet), *What* (approved . . .), *When* (on Monday) and *Why* (in a bid to bring the country out of its worst recession). The second and third paragraphs offer details about *Why* and, in passing, *Who*. The fourth paragraph mainly concerns *When* and some background information, and the fifth paragraph reveals some reaction to *What*. The news story so structured obviously is appropriate to the context: First, the reader can, at a glance, capture the gist of the news without reaching the end of the story. Second, since all the sentences are loose sentences, they relieve the reader of a memory burden, thus allowing him to read in a more relaxed way. Third, due to the nature of the news lead, the news story gives the reader a gestalt that facilitates him reading more efficiently, since reading is an active language process that is highly dependent on prediction.

(4) I came, I saw, I conquered.

The theme here conveyed is a triumphant, haughty Julius Caesar. A striking feature here is that the excessive short sentences are juxtaposed. The reason for the use of such short simple sentences is that they are fast in tempo and therefore suggest a swift conquest by Julius Caesar. In addition, the very repetition of "I" shows his haughty character.

(5) A silky smooth skin. (Ad for a lotion)

The initial sound [-s] running across the advertisement gives us a sense of smoothness. This suggests that the lotion is really conducive to smooth skin.

The above examples show that, to communicate successfully with the audience, the writer should think carefully about the contextual elements and try to adapt his discourse to them. A very important guideline to bear in mind is that any use of language must be judged against its rhetorical context.

Exercises

1. What lesson can we draw from the following joke? Explain in great detail.

There is an English joke, narrating how a young lady tells an old woman how to suck an egg. Her description goes like this: Take an egg, and make a perforation in the base and a corresponding one in the apex, then apply the lips to the aperture, and by forcibly inhaling the breath the shell is entirely discharged of its contents. On hearing this, the old woman replied, "When I was a gal they made a hole in each end and sucked."

2. Write two application letters, one to a Chinese company and the other to an American company, for a position as secretary. Before you write, analyze carefully the context of situation in each of the writing tasks, paying close attention to the different audiences you apply to.

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