

*English Writing Skills*

# 英语 写作技巧

*A Creative Approach for Students  
of English as a Foreign Language*

李炳林 著



国防工业出版社  
National Defense Industry Press

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江苏工业学院图书馆  
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## 内 容 简 介

本书以创作性思维的形式阐述英语作文的写作技巧,并由浅入深分十六个章节讨论英语作文的四种体裁。每个章节有篇首范文、文后提问、相关词汇、范文句型、知识学习、写作指导、段落发展、范文阅读、学习要点和写作练习。本书所体现的是:写作是一种多向思维活动,更是一种社会活动。书中所提供的一些写作技巧能帮助使用者选材、集思、布局等,这些技巧都有相应的阐述并佐以精选段落。本书是一本难得的、有独特风格的英语写作参考书,适合广大英语学习者使用。

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*Dedicated to those teaching and learning writing in English,  
who have kept their heads on the surface  
while many others have been losing theirs  
in the sea of English writing.*

## 序

我认识李炳林教授是2003年在广州召开的第一届全国英语写作教学研讨会上。之后,第二届西安会议、第三届武汉会议,李教授一直坚持参加,而且每次还携弟子一同参会。他对写作教学和研究的投入与执着给我留下了深刻的印象。炳林兄为人朴实且有几分含蓄,谈吐之间透着他的学识和智慧,他做事追求创新和独特。当他把20多年积累的写作教学理论和实践的结晶——《英语写作技巧》的书稿摆在我面前时,我十分惊讶。一本书五易其稿,反复斟酌,写了整整24年,如今终于得以出版,多年的辛勤耕耘终于有了结果,值得庆贺和宣扬。现在,他提出要我为此书写个序,我只好服从,以此表达我由衷的钦佩之情。

英语写作教学与研究是个苦差,要求高,工作量大,英语教师大都不愿意教,要结合写作开展研究,并取得成果更是困难重重。作者是大西南的俊杰之士,通过20多年的探索与实践,创造出一套自己的理论体系与教学法,以一本写作教材崛起于我国外语写作教学与研究界。

国际英语写作教学在20世纪80年代出现了“二语写作过程教学法革命”,写作被看成是一种认知与发现意义的过程,经历非线型的思维过程,作者的创造力、心声、读者观以及自我表达在写作过程中起着中心作用。过程教学法强调写作是一个过程,包含四个阶段:写前准备(prewriting)、写作阶段(composing /drafting)、修改阶段(revising)、润色阶段(editing)。教师着重开发学生的潜能,教会学生在写的过程中获取写作技巧。

当前,国际二语写作研究集中在以下四个领域:(1)二语写作过程中的认知操作模型、写作构思策略、学习者的个体差异以及不同阶段写作过程的变化。(2)二语写作的文本分析、错误分析、对比分析、对比修辞分析、语料分析。(3)二语写作的社会结构、语域分析和知识、动机和需要等个体差异分析。(4)二语写作学习过程、学习策略、语言水平发展、课堂教学环节、写作测试、网络写作课件开发等。特别关注以下课题:二语写作者的个性特点与态度,二语写作的构思过程,二语作文文本的特点,二语写作的读者反应,二语写作评估/评价,二语写作的文化、社会、政治与情景等语境,二语写作教学。

本书围绕着文体与技巧两条主线展开,结构十分清楚,突出实用性和操练性,范文与问题配合,词汇与句型呼应,句子写作与段落写作衔接,自成体系,一气呵成,并配有精美插图,可谓别树一帜,实为写作教材类的佳作,相信阅读定能有所收获。

是为序。

对外经济贸易大学英语学院  
院长 教授 博士生导师

王立非

于北京望京花园

## INTRODUCTION

As we writing teachers might have learned that for quite a long time linguists have been writing textbooks designed to teach students Spoken English, Comprehension English, Extensive Reading, English Literature, English Grammar, and so on. But only in recent decades, as teachers have found that many students want and need to learn how to write English compositions as well as speaking the language, reading it and understanding it, there have appeared linguistically oriented textbooks designed to teach English writing. These textbooks use a number of approaches from variation on the "copy book" method at one end of the spectrum to the "free composition" method on the other—*From Sentence to Paragraph* (Robert G. Bander), *From Paragraph to Essay* (Murice), *Practice, Plan and Write* (Matthews and Turns), *Writing Prose* (Thomas S. Kande & Leonard J. Peters), etc. They are good and helpful books. But how can these "helpful books" be used by an average teacher in an average university? We might have found that each of them is lacking something in some way. This lack is in efficiency. Some are too theoretical, some too elementary, for junior students.

Though we can't teach a writing course that never touches on such areas as intensive reading, extensive reading or grammar, etc, a writing course that covers only these areas is redundant. Given the limited time, most of us teachers have to teach the students as much as we can and should about English. This is only for efficiency's sake. So we have to design the course first and choose materials that will touch on those areas in some way.

Teaching English writing to EFL students is a special field, the material of which must first be thoroughly understood before we attempt to teach. Therefore, we must see that the English writing course does carry out a real programme and it is not just a hodgepodge of students and teachers in a certain amount of time in the classroom. So we have to work out a programme, set out the aim, and then choose writing material based on the programme.

Basically, I have two aims: First, I want to help the students improve their skill in using English and second, I hope to provide a classroom environment which is expected to encourage learning to write. My chief academic goal is to help the students practise and improve their skill in written English and train them to write with clearness, accuracy and directness on subjects of interest which were within their grasp. With this conviction in mind, I have, in the selection of teaching materials, included in each unit such sample compositions and exercises as are suited to the knowledge and experience of the junior students.

This textbook contains seventeen units for a year. Each unit is divided into ten parts: MODEL COMPOSITION, QUESTIONS, VOCABULARY, PATTERNS, LEARN THIS, GUIDED WRITING, PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT, SAMPLE COMPOSITIONS, POINTS TO

LEARN AND ASSIGNMENTS. The MODEL COMPOSITION of each unit is based on a theme which the students can easily adapt to their own personal experience and environment. After the MODEL COMPOSITION there are questions about the idea and the structure of the MODEL. THERE ALSO VOCABULARY AND PATTERNS FROM THE MODEL, which will prove helpful to the students. LEARN THIS gives the students some ideas about memorizing new words, writing effective sentences, etc. GUIDED WRITING contains short paragraph with broken sentences or scramble sentences. It is intended to train the students' ability to organize a paragraph. PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT, which is the core of the unit, includes important skills and suggestions, with explanation, for planning a paragraph, choosing a topic sentence, and developing the paragraph. SAMPLE COMPOSITIONS contains plenty of fine paragraphs and short passages related to the subject of the unit. These are chosen from literary works, textbooks and other sources. POINTS TO LEARN gives the students some guidance for their writing. The last part, ASSIGNMENTS, provides the students with an opportunity to write paragraphs or compositions about themselves, or interesting things they know, or their environment, based on the theme of the model composition. Subjects in this book include the students' themselves, their house or apartment, the office in illustration, the weather, personal and business letter, giving directions, common logic reasoning, and so on. The vocabulary contained in this book includes useful words and expressions related to the subjects of the units as set by the model compositions.

In choosing and writing the MODEL COMPOSITIONS, there were certain criteria I adhered to:

1. *The composition, while elementary, has to be of some interesting value to an adult student and easily transposable with his/her own writing.* For this reason, I chose short passages or paragraphs with some cultural orientation or of some informational value. In this way the students may learn something about the valuable system of the new country and at the same time can easily follow the composition pattern to find similar information about his own area. Then he is contributing to an exchange of information. For example:

The theme of the MODEL COMPOSITION:

*The Weather in Brazil*

*Mr. Han's Office*

The theme of the students' composition:

*The Weather in my hometown*

*Our dormitory*

2. *The VOCABULARY must be kept within the experience range of the students.*

3. *Concise passages or paragraphs should be more emphasized.* Although I want the students to get the experience with different rhetorical styles, I have limited the models to concise essays or paragraphs illustrating a narrative, descriptive, expository style of writing. Though I am interested in a controlled and guided writing experience, I have included in some units model compositions of logical reasoning, as I assume these would help the students to think more clearly and more logically.



4. *The model compositions ought to reinforce grammatical structures the students have already learnt.* Since I am very much concerned with having the students write in a literary fashion at this beginning level, rather than trying to get them to express themselves accurately, fluently and adequately with a minimum of errors, I used model compositions that reinforce grammatical structure they have already learnt.

5. *The students need to be exposed to various structural items through studying the models.*

6. *Above all, the model composition has not only to be one that the students can understand, but one that is within their ability to write after.*

In a word, in the absence of any appropriate textbooks or manual, setting forth any consistent schemes of programme suitable to various types of students and their varied requirements, it is the teacher himself who has to consider what course and material will have to be persuaded in different cases to organize the programme best adapted to each particular end. A programme and material can only be carried out with success if they are conceived in advance on systematic and proportional lines and thoroughly organized in accordance with consistent principles. The vocabulary must be chosen carefully, unit by unit, and there must be a principle governing the selection of each unit and a reason for representing it at a given moment not at another. Then, the teacher who is to choose material in most cases falls into the responsibility of selecting from among short stories and essays those which are best calculated to form the system which will present the nucleus of the students' studies.

The manuscript, *English Writing Skills*, has gone through several revisions with each use, from its first manuscript in 1982 to a second revision in 1983, to a third revision in 1985, to a fourth revision in 1986, to a fifth revision in 1999 and to the present revision. It comes from the classroom and goes back to the classroom, in a circle—from practice to theory to practice and to theory again. Nearly everything in the book is in the circle, just as John Neihardt (1961 4) in his *Black Elk Speaks* says, "Everything the Power of the World does is done in a circle."

As a professor of English rhetoric who has taught English writing for so many years, I am qualified to write textbook for writing because I am the first to know what the students need in writing and what I should teach them. Therefore, this book will provide students with some peculiar skills for inventing, collecting and arranging ideas. These skills include how to arrange events chronologically, how to describe a place spatially, how to give directions clearly, etc. The explanation of these skills is supported with fine excerpts from various kinds of fine English writing. These good samples are selected on the assumption that the close study of good models is an indispensable aid to learning to write, and that one learns to write by imitating basic patterns, forms and structures. However, I want to remind readers that the selections are not meant to serve only as models for the students to read or write after. They are intended to stimulate interest in and discussion on writing.

For all the above, I own my indebtedness to those authors whose works I have quoted. I have, however, failed to record the publication information of some of the works I consulted, for which I feel particularly sorry to their authors.

I believe that *English Writing Skills* reflects my growth in the past years of study the rela-

tionship between reading and creative writing. And I attribute much of that growth to my association to and interaction with a number of English native speakers. Among them are my valued friends Drs. Wade and Sussan Dorman, who offered me valuable advice on the third revision of the manuscript, and my prose writing teacher in my post graduate study, Kenneth Klinkler, whose teaching method, more or less, influenced my way of thinking, writing in English and teaching English writing. At the same time I desire to make special mention of my indebtedness to Professor Tian Naizhao for his encouragement and suggestions when the manuscript of the first revision had been under preparation.

In addition, I want to credit the success of this book to Dr. Allison Hoffman of Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, who happily took immense efforts to proofread the whole manuscript of the fourth revision, making correction of some of its language errors. This book is published specially in her honour.

Also I want to make special mention of my indebtedness to Professor Wang Lifei, Director of China Association for English Writing Teachers for writing a preface invaluable to this book.

Finally, to my students of English who have used the manuscript in one way or another, I express my appreciation for their hard work and the many helpful suggestions. This book is dedicated to them in a special way. If I had not taught them English writing, it would perhaps have never been written. They taught me as much as I taught them.

Li Binglin

August 1, 2006

In Guizhou University

## To Students Who Are Going To Use This Book

Many students find it easy to speak but hard to write things down on paper. It is important for them, however, to know how to write down what they think.

As writing is a social activity, our ability to write indicates our place in society. It tells others not only what we are thinking but also what we are. Words, expressions and sentences and the ways we use them are the clothing of our personality. Just as we want to dress correctly, so we try to use them acceptably.

To learn the rules of generally approved expression in writing and of expressing our own nature within the compass of these rules, should be our aim in the study of English writing, and the purpose of this book-*English Writing Skills* is to help us in learning some basic points about writing and learning to write paragraphs. We should enter it with belief that no matter how well or how poorly we write this time, by the next, we can have learned to write much better.

The writing is done for a purpose—to inform, or explain, or argue, or request information, because we want to have something done. Any student writer knows that what is written will be read and who the audience will be. In the case of writing class the audience is the writing teacher, but the reason for writing and reading is not only for assessment or correction, but for learning to write and writing to learn. The writing teacher will be reading attentively and purposefully because he will be required to react to what is written, and to do something with it. These natures of writing make for great authenticity of tasks in the writing units.

Clearly, then, you as students already know a good deal about English writing. In your previous years composition courses you learned the basic rules of clarity, interest, and vigour pertaining to words, sentences, paragraphs, and the various forms of discourse. Advanced English writing builds upon this foundation. At the beginning of your study, therefore, you will find it helpful to recollect what you already know and to discover where you are going.

Recall what you learned about *words*. You might have discovered the wealth of the dictionary and studied how to achieve greater clarity, interest, and vigour in the use of words.

You have also learned about *sentences*. You have learned that they are simple, complex, and compound. Certain rules were placed before you. For *clarity*, the directions read, make your sentences *unified* and *coherent*. For *unity*, make all parts of the sentence contribute to a single main idea or impression. Place words together in their logical relationship. For *coherence* use parallel structure to establish the coordination of coordinate ideas; maintain a consistent point of views.

In a similar manner, you have learned that sentences can be made more *interesting* by the use of vivid expressions and rhythmical arrangement of words. Vigour or emphasis in sentence

structure is attained by placing the main idea in a prominent place in the sentence, at the beginning or at the end, or by using balanced sentences.

You will remember at once statements like these: Make your paragraph clear by *unity* and *coherence*. *Unity* is achieved by relating each sentence to the topic sentence, the sentence that expresses the central thought. *Coherence* is achieved by linking the sentences within the paragraph, by repeating key words, by apt transitions, by parallel structure. Avoid unnecessary shifts in point of view. *Interest* is stimulated by varying the length and structure of the sentences within the paragraph and by mounting your sentences in a climatic order.

You'll remember too that discourse in general was described as a composition with an appropriate beginning, middle, and end. You have learned that the particular discourses consist of:

1. *Narration*, that aims to recount the details of an event;
2. *Description*, that aims to present the physical details or an impression of a subject;
3. *Exposition*, that aims to explain or clarify a subject;
4. *Argument*, that aims to convince the reader or hearer of the truth of a given proposition or thesis.

Now the question arises—*what* do we study next? You will still be concerned with clarity, for example, but the subjects that have to be clarified will gradually become more complex. You will consider again each of the forms of discourse, but you will approach them in a more creative and realistic way. You are going to be helped to expand your previous understanding of skills in effective writing. You will discover too that effective writing is the harmony between knowledge and expression, between what you know and how you say it. Hence creativity in writing is very important.

Good writing does not come easily. One may recognize good writing and state the basic principles that underlie it without being able to produce it. Behind every good writer lie many years of experience in observing facts and details of human life, in exploring ideas in the realms of science, literature, and philosophy, and in thinking a subject through to its essential meaning.

Therefore, you need to be patient with yourselves. You cannot suddenly know all you should in order to write well about an important subject, a book, an author, a philosophical idea. You must study a subject carefully, listen, read, and think. You must begin over again, read more widely, revise your thoughts, rearrange your plans, and constantly correct your language. Good writing is based on continuous growth in knowledge, reflection, and writing.

Writing itself is a means by which you come to know a subject, evaluate your knowledge of it, and refine your style. Indeed, good writing is an *end* and write as well as you can is a *means* to that end.

Two ways of achieving the end of good writing are reflected in this book. The first is the *analysis* of effective paragraphs and/or compositions on subject within your range of interest and ability. To read the selections carefully is to discover the principles that underlie the choice of a particular subject, the type of analysis used in explanation and reasoning, the arrangement of the various parts of the whole piece in relation to a central theme, and the use of a particular style. All the samples in this book may be analyzed, or broken down, in order to see how they are com-

posed. This analytic process develops your knowledge of the art of writing. The second is *synthesis*, i. e. putting things together, which is closely related to analysis. Analysis breaks down what is already composed; synthesis, or composition, puts together what is not yet composed.

You will be wise if you carefully read the sample compositions, explore the writers' subjects, adapt *their* methods of development and master *their* logical habits. By doing all this you may grow to approximate their excellence.

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# UNIT 1

## KINDS OF COMPOSITIONS

---

### MODEL COMPOSITION

A heavy load of wine barrels made it difficult for the lorry to climb the hill. Near the top, the driver had to stop suddenly to avoid hitting a log which was lying in the middle of the road. Immediately there was a loud crash from behind. The driver looked out of the window and noticed that one of the barrels had slid off the back. As there was no hope of getting it back now, the man drove away. Meanwhile, the barrel was travelling at full speed down the hill. It narrowly missed a lamppost and then it changed direction and struck a tree with great force. The noise woke up an old beggar who was sleeping by the roadside.

He jumped up with a shock and it nearly broke his heart when he realized what had happened. The wine barrel had split open and a stream of good red wine was flowing past him into a field.



—Qtd. in H. G. Alexander, *A First Book  
in Comprehension* (1980 41)

### QUESTIONS

1. Why do you find the story interesting or uninteresting?
2. How many parts in the model?
3. How are the parts connected?
4. What does the writer of the story try to tell the readers?
5. If you were the writer, would you begin the story in the way he did? Why or why not?
6. What end would you bring the story to if you were to write the story?

7. What does the description of a beggar mean?

## VOCABULARY

### Look up:

a heavy load of	slid off
no hope of	drove away
travelling at full speed	narrowly missed
split open	jumped up with a shock
a stream of	flowing past him

### Additional:

#### wine

dry/sweat wine	red/rose/white wine
desert/sparkling wine	elderberry/rice wine
wine bar	wine cellar
wine cooler	wine glass
wine bottle	wine barrel
winery	wine and dine

#### whisky(ey)

a barrel/bottle of whiskey	highland whiskies
Scottish whisky	
Scotch	
two whiskies	a whisky and soda

## PATTERNS

- |    |  |          |                  |
|----|--|----------|------------------|
| 1. | <u>The driver had to stop suddenly</u>       | to avoid | hitting a log... |
|    | The stranger sneak into the village at night |          | being seen.      |
|    | The student made an excuse for absence       |          | being punished.  |
- 
- |    |                               |      |                   |
|----|-------------------------------|------|-------------------|
| 2. | <u>There was a loud crash</u> | from | behind.           |
|    | The boat came out             |      | under the bridge. |
|    | The captured soldier was tied |      | behind.           |
- 
- |    |  |         |   |
|----|--|---------|---|
| 3. | <u>As there was no</u>                 | hope of | getting it back now, the man drove away.        |
|    | He elbowed his way to the front with a |         | shaking hands with the President.               |
|    | He rushed to the station in the        |         | meeting his friend who he hadn't seen for ages. |



- 4.
- |                                |      |   |      |  |
|--------------------------------|------|---|------|--|
| He jumped up                   | with | a shock and it nearly broke his heart       | when | he realized what had happened.                                   |
| She ran back to school         |      | a pleasant smile and it made her happy      |      | she visualized her bright future.                                |
| He always looks his sufferings |      | a placid heart and it gives him tranquility |      | he is reminded not to hurt him but let his conscience blame him. |
- 5.
- |                           |      |                      |
|---------------------------|------|----------------------|
| The wine barrel had split | open |                      |
| The door was kicked       |      | by a giant foot.     |
| The iron gate was forced  |      | by the angry people. |

## LEARN THIS

### English Spelling

One of the most difficult and confusing aspects of the English language is its spelling system. There is often a discrepancy between the pronunciation of a word and its spelling. One cannot always know how to spell a word by its pronunciation nor how to pronounce it by its spelling. For example, there are twelve different ways to spell the sound [ʃ] in English: *shoe, nation, schist, ocean, sure, mission, machine, special, mansion, nauseous, conscious, and anxious*. To give an opposite example, the vowel combination *ou* can be pronounced in at least five different ways, as in the words *through, although, thought, tough* and *out*.

As we write, we use conventional combinations of letters to represent certain spoken sounds. Although pronunciation can serve as a guide to correct spelling, it can also be misleading: the written forms of many words (like *listen, whole*) do not reflect their exact pronunciation; some words that sound alike (*blew, blue*) have different spelling and different meanings; some spellings represent a number of different sounds, like *ough* in *rough, though, through*; and some sounds have various spellings, such as [ʃ] in *ocean, ration, tissue*.

Words such as *heroin* and *heroine* or *sole* and *soul* sound alike but have vastly different meanings. Always be sure to choose the right word for your context. The following is a list of words that are frequently confused in writing. Add any words you tend to misspell to your individual spelling list.

accent, ascent, assent	accept, except
advice, advise	affect, effect
all ready, already	all together, altogether
allusive, elusive, illusive	altar, alter
bare, bear	born, borne
canvas, canvass	capital, Capitol