

# Introduction to *Academic* *Writing*

## 大学英语写作

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对外经济贸易大学出版社

(京)新登字 182 号

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

大学英文写作 = Introduction to Academic Writing/布雷恩(Braine, G.),王俊菊著. —北京:对外经济贸易大学出版社,2005

ISBN 7-81078-555-9

I. 大... II. ①布... ②王... III. 英语 - 写作 - 高等学校 - 教材 IV. H315

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2005)第 110284 号

© 2005 年 对外经济贸易大学出版社出版发行

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## 大学英文写作

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责任编辑:宋海玲

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对外经济贸易大学出版社

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网址:<http://www.uibep.com>

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唐山市润丰印务有限公司印装 新华书店北京发行所发行

成品尺寸:185mm × 230mm 13.75 印张 275 千字

2005 年 10 月北京第 1 版 2005 年 10 月第 1 次印刷

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ISBN 7-81078-555-9

印数:0 001 - 5 000 册 定价:23.00 元

# **PREFACE**

*Introduction to Academic Writing* is based on the premise that students of English as a foreign language (EFL) write best when they are given the opportunity to explore topics that motivate them. In our writing classes, we observe how students draw on their experiences to handle such topics with confidence.

This book introduces students to academic writing through a sequenced set of assignments that help them to move from personal, expressive writing to informative and persuasive writing. The use of source materials, including summary, paraphrase, quotation, and documentation, is emphasized in the informative and persuasive writing assignments. The book stresses writing as a process and encourages the use of collaborative learning strategies as well as individual activities.

Therefore, this book is mainly for students enrolled in English writing courses. It is suitable for undergraduates, both English majors, and non-English majors, and Master students from other majors than English. Students who want to study abroad in English-speaking countries will also find this book useful because good writing skills are essential for success in courses and examinations in an academic setting.

## **ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK**

*Introduction to Academic Writing* is divided into 10 chapters that form two major sections. The first section, Chapters 1 to 4, provides an overview of academic writing. The focus of these chapters is on the writing process, guiding the reader, and effective sentences. In these chapters, the students review writing principles learned in previous courses. The

chapters contain many explanations, examples, and exercises so that students and instructors can select specific areas for emphasis.

The next section, Chapters 5 to 10, is the heart of the book, introducing and developing a portfolio of writing on a chosen research topic. The assignments range from writing based on the student's personal experience and opinions, to informative and persuasive papers that include information obtained from library and other sources. The chapters in this section also discuss methods of development for these papers. Frequent exercises and readings reinforce the concepts taught in these chapters. The final chapter shows students how to apply the writing techniques they have learned in the book to essay examinations.

## ***SPECIAL FEATURES***

*Introduction to Academic Writing* has a number of special features.

- The emphasis is on personal, informative and persuasive writing. This frees students from strict adherence to rhetorical modes such as example, comparison and contrast, classification, process analysis, cause and effect, and argumentation. At the same time, the book suggests ways for students to use these modes as strategies for development of their papers.
- The link between reading and writing is stressed by the inclusion of readings in almost every chapter.
- Students write on a single topic of their choice throughout the course. The topics, such as ethnic and religious conflict, nuclear issues, and the status of women, are thought provoking and of immediate interest to many EFL students. In our experience, such topics generate thoughtful and mature writing. In addition, a single-topic approach allows students to focus their personal analysis and library research; they are thus encouraged to read, think, and write in greater depth than if they wrote on a variety of topics during the course.
- The readings included throughout the book are authentic papers written by EFL students. We have observed that EFL students enjoy reading papers authored by their peers, and gain confidence in their own potential as writers of English by seeing the work of students whose backgrounds are similar to their own.

- Summary and paraphrase skills are covered extensively. These skills are essential to EFL students as they move from personal to academic writing.

We wish to thank the students in our writing classes in the USA, Hong Kong SAR, and mainland China whose enthusiasm has been an inspiration to us. We are especially grateful to those students who allowed us to use their writing in this book.

George Braine

*The Chinese University of Hong Kong*

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# *Chapter* **1**

## *English Composition and the Chinese Student*



In recent years, the number of students attending universities in China has grown rapidly. This is mainly a result of an increase in the standard of living in China, as well as recognition by students of the importance of a university education.

One challenge facing all students, no matter what their language or province of origin, is the need to develop communication skills that will foster understanding among people. The ability to communicate effectively, orally and in writing, is also essential to academic and professional success.

*Introduction to Academic Writing* will introduce you to an important form of communication, the academic writing you will need for your coursework. It will also lay the foundation for the professional writing you might later do on the job. You already know much about writing from all that you have learned in your first language and in previous English courses you have taken. What you learn now will build on your strengths and add skills to make you an accomplished academic writer.

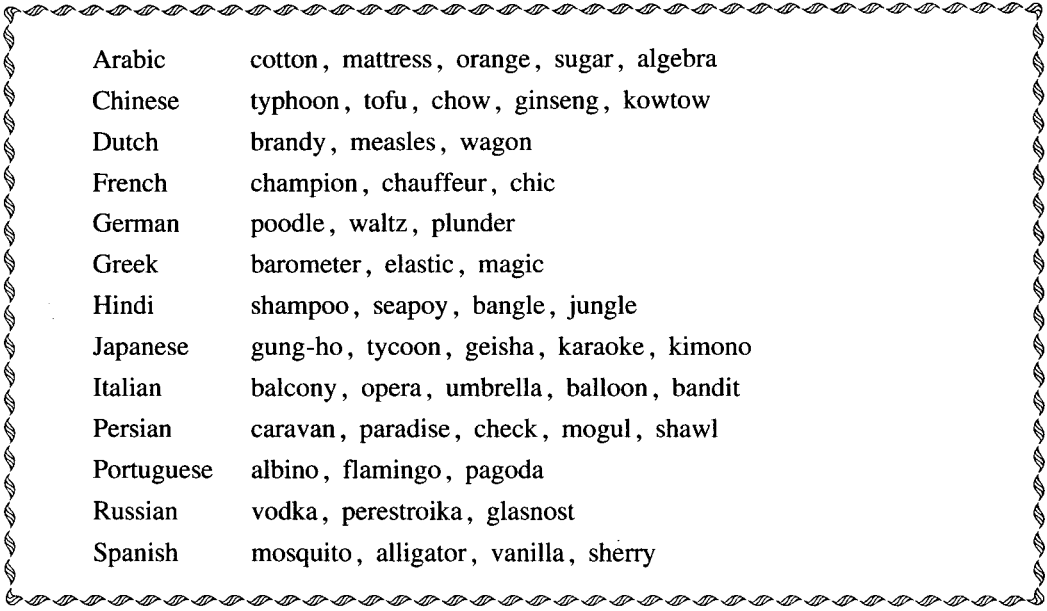
Before discussing your writing strengths and the challenges of academic writing, let us pause to describe this fascinating language which has brought us together, English.

## **THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

In the 16th century, during Shakespeare's time, English had only about 3 million speakers, and most of them lived in England. French, German, Italian, and Spanish languages all had more speakers. Today, about 370 million people speak English as their first language and about 1,000 million speak it as a second or foreign language, with varying degrees of proficiency. Next to Chinese, English is the most widely spoken language in the world. However, English surpasses Chinese as a global language. The majority of the world's newspapers, magazines, and books are written in English. About 80% of computer texts and 70% of scientific papers are also written in English.

English has a rich vocabulary, and the *Oxford English Dictionary* lists 615,000 words. With the addition of scientific and technical terms, the actual vocabulary may be around 2 million. In comparison, German has about 185,000 words and French fewer than 100,000.

English has borrowed words from all other languages. In fact, as Richard Lederer says, "English has never rejected a word because of its race, creed, or national origin." The following list contains examples of borrowings from a few languages.



Arabic	cotton, mattress, orange, sugar, algebra
Chinese	typhoon, tofu, chow, ginseng, kowtow
Dutch	brandy, measles, wagon
French	champion, chauffeur, chic
German	poodle, waltz, plunder
Greek	barometer, elastic, magic
Hindi	shampoo, seapoy, bangle, jungle
Japanese	gung-ho, tycoon, geisha, karaoke, kimono
Italian	balcony, opera, umbrella, balloon, bandit
Persian	caravan, paradise, check, mogul, shawl
Portuguese	albino, flamingo, pagoda
Russian	vodka, perestroika, glasnost
Spanish	mosquito, alligator, vanilla, sherry

Figure 1.1 English Borrowings from Other Languages

## **YOUR WRITING STRENGTHS**

Many Chinese students are accomplished writers in their first language. Research shows that good writing skills often transfer from students' first languages to English. That is, if you write well in your first language, you should be able to write well in English too. In addition, you may have taken English composition courses previously. Therefore, you come to this course with experience and skills that will help you become a better writer in English.

Chinese students often have other strengths that will help them succeed in composition courses. They have a wealth of experience because they are familiar with at least two languages — Chinese and English — so they may have a broader perspective on many subjects than students who have known only one language. Chinese students also tend to be highly motivated to work harder in their courses and to learn as much as possible from these courses. If you have this experience and motivation, you are well on your way to success in this and other courses.

## **WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?**

Learning to write academic papers in English also offers a number of challenges to Chinese

students. First of all, because English is not your first language, you should continually work to improve your vocabulary, sentence structures, and knowledge of English idioms. In addition, you must learn the principles of composition and academic research that all university students need. As you study this text, you will find suggestions that will help you improve your knowledge of English as well as principles of composition and research.

The concepts of academic writing in English are also new to many Chinese students. For this reason, you will learn how to meet the expectations of your readers (professors and other students), and ways to incorporate information from library research into your writing.

## **GAINING CONFIDENCE IN WRITING**

Writing creates a certain amount of anxiety for everyone, even the most experienced writers. After all, when we write, we express something of ourselves, a part of ourselves which is then open to judgment by others. For Chinese students, this natural anxiety may be increased because you may not be very confident when writing in English.

With practice and learning, you can overcome this anxiety. Think of the way you learned another skill, such as riding a bicycle or swimming. At first, you were probably a little scared every time you picked up the bicycle or went in the water. However, instruction and practice enabled you to overcome your fears as you mastered the new skill. Soon you were riding or swimming with ease and enjoying it!

You will master writing in English the same way. As you study this text and participate in class activities, you will learn many skills to help develop your writing. The most important part of the course, however, will be the actual writing you do, especially when you learn from your mistakes and make every paper an opportunity to improve your writing. The time and effort you commit to your writing will pay off as you gain confidence in this important skill.

### **Exercise 1.1 Analyzing Your Writing**

What are your writing strengths? What skills do you need to improve? In a short essay, analyze your writing and discuss your strengths and weaknesses. Think about the comments you have received on your writing from previous teachers. Did the comments specify spelling, punctuation, or a specific grammar problem, such as the use of articles or subject-verb agreement? You may also want to mention particular worries you have about this course.

Your essay should be one to three paragraphs.

## READING AND WRITING

One of the ways to learn English vocabulary and writing conventions is to read in English as much as possible. Through research, we know that reading is often the basis for writing, especially in academic settings. Reading improves your vocabulary and your understanding of how English sentences are put together. You also learn English idioms and other idiosyncrasies of the language. Part of the work for this course, therefore, will be to establish a habit of reading extensively in English, beyond the reading in your textbooks.

### Exercise 1.2 Extra Reading from a Newspaper or Magazine

For this exercise, you are asked to read at least twenty pages a week from *China Daily*, *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, *English Weekly*, *English Learning*, *The World of English*, or *English Salon*. For this reading, you may select the articles that interest you most.

### Weekly Reading Report

At the beginning of each week, please turn in a report of your reading for the previous week. Your reading report will have three parts:

- a list of the articles you have read,
- a summary of one of these articles, and
- a direct quotation from the article, followed by a paraphrase.

#### Part 1: List of Articles

List the articles you read with complete bibliographical entries for each article. For example,

Woodward, K. L., Springen, K., and Nayyar, S. "The more the siblings, the lower the score?" *Newsweek* 18 Sept. 1995:51.

Notice the format of this citation: authors' names (surnames, initials of given names), title of the article within quotation marks, name of the magazine (in italics), date of the issue, and page number(s) of the article. You can use this example as a model for the bibliographic entries of the weekly reading reports. If you need additional help in writing citations, you will find more information in Chapter 7.

*Part 2: Article Summary*

From the list of articles that you have read, select one to summarize. Follow these directions when you write the summary:

Summarize the most important ideas in the article in one paragraph written in your own words. The paragraph should contain five to seven sentences. The first sentence should be the topic sentence of the paragraph; this sentence should also mention the author and the title of the article. The following is an example of an article summary:

"The more the siblings, the lower the score?" by Woodward, Springen, and Nayyar describes a recent study on the correlation between family size and individual academic performance conducted by Douglas Downey, a sociologist at Ohio State University. Downey's study concluded that "Children in larger families don't do as well in school as children in smaller families." The explanation for his conclusion is that, as family size increases, less educational resources can be distributed to the children. Moreover, the parents on average devote less time, money, and energy to each child. According to Downey's observations, when a family has four or more children, the focus appears to shift from providing educational resources to fulfilling basic needs such as food and shelter, for the children. Although Downey shows that a correlation exists between family size and individual academic performance, it does not imply a causality between the two. Besides, Downey has not studied the influence of culture on his findings.

*Part 3: Quotation and Paraphrase*

Select a passage of one or two sentences (about 15 words total) from an article for direct quotation and paraphrase. First, copy the sentences exactly as they appear in the article. Your direct quotation should begin and end with quotation marks. Then, paraphrase the sentences by rewriting them in your own words; no more than three consecutive words should appear as they are in the original. For both the direct quotation and the paraphrase, include a parenthetical citation that gives the author's last name and the page number where you found the quotation.

*Direct Quotation:*

"When Singapore, a 236 square mile island, gained independence in 1965, it was faced with a major pollution problem caused by motor vehicles, the widespread smoking habit, and littering" (Ng 87).



**Paraphrase:**

At independence in 1965, Singapore, a 236 square mile island, was heavily polluted. Motor vehicles, a popular smoking habit, and littering were the causes (Ng 87).

Note: For further instructions on how to summarize, paraphrase, and quote, go to Chapter 7.

**Part 4: New Words**

List the meaning of 5 new words you found in the reading.

Below, you will find one student's reading report.

**READING REPORT**

*Jane Ho*

Articles Read

1. Claudia Kalb and Ted Gideonse. "Move Over, Mona Lisa." *Newsweek* 14 Dec. 1998.
2. Ellyn E. Spragins. "How to Beat Job Lock." *Newsweek* 14 Dec. 1998.
3. Catherine Yang. "Ending the First Half with a Standoff." *Business Week* 7 Jan. 1999.
4. Tom Ham. "A New Legend for the Fall." *Newsweek* 23 Nov. 1998.
5. Jeremy Kahn. "A CEO Cuts His Own Pay." *Fortune* 26 Oct. 1998.

Summary

"Move Over, Mona Lisa" by Kalb and Gideonse is about cosmetic dentistry which allows people to have a big smile on their face by having surgery on their teeth. It seems that teeth are no longer only for food-chewing or greeting in modern society. Cosmetic dentists suggest that teeth size and shape give us a clue on an individual's personality. For instance, tiny teeth may indicate that the person is easygoing while sharper teeth may imply aggressiveness. Some people believe that having surgery like whitening and gum lifting will bring a transformation in their personality and thus enhance their careers. The results of some simple operations such as whitening are often satisfactory but the cost

is very high. However, if cheaper bleaching kits are used, there is no guarantee of a perfect outcome and they may even irritate gums. In conclusion, the writer asked readers to reconsider surgery by reminding us that Mona Lisa's smile has charmed people for centuries but nobody has ever seen her teeth.

#### Direct Quotation and Paraphrase

"Some people believe that having surgery like whitening and gum lifting will bring a transformation in their personality and thus enhance their careers" (Kalb and Gideonse 26).

To some people, having one's teeth whitened and gum lifted will cause changes in one's personality, and as a result may help in one's career (Kalb and Gideonse 26).

### **HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED**

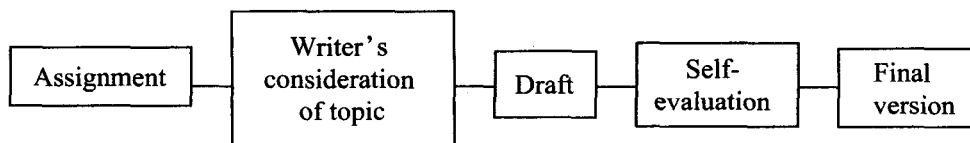
This book builds on the writing skills you have already developed in previous courses by progressing from personal, expressive writing to the type of writing that is more typical of academic work. The book begins with a review of basic composition strategies, including principles of organization. Included in these early chapters are exercises and assignments that will enable you to practice and review your writing skills. The book next presents a series of assignments in a portfolio to extend your mastery of writing. You will begin with writing based on personal experience and go on to writing based on library research. You will write papers whose main purpose is to inform the readers and papers whose purpose is to persuade your readers to think and act in a certain way.

For both informative and persuasive papers, you will learn how to incorporate information you find in library sources by using direct quotation, paraphrase, and summary. You will also learn how to document your papers so that your readers know where you found your information. In addition, you will learn methods of organizing and developing your ideas so that your papers are complete, coherent, and concise.

As you respond to the writing assignments in the book, you will follow the process approach to writing. Before the process approach became popular, writers would mostly work alone, with a self-evaluation of the first draft mainly to correct mechanical errors such as spelling, grammar, and punctuation. As Figure 1.2 shows, the student writer paid little

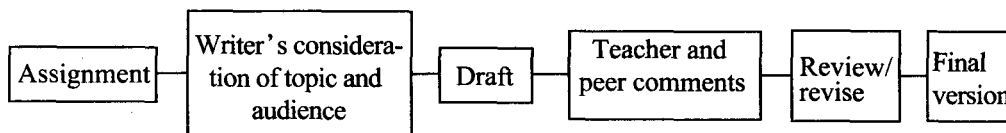


or no attention to his or her readers, and often did not seek help from classmates or teachers.



**Figure 1.2 Writing the Old Way**

When the process approach is used in writing, writers go through more stages. In addition to thinking about the topic and the purpose of the writing, writers carefully consider their audience (readers). Student writers share their writing with teachers and classmates (peers) and receive comments from these readers. The first draft of the paper is then reviewed and revised according to these comments. Therefore, by the time the final version of a paper is written, it may have been seen by a number of readers and gone through many revisions. Figure 1.3 illustrates this expanded process approach to writing.



**Figure 1.3 The Process Approach to Writing**

Researchers have observed and compared the writing strategies of experienced and inexperienced writers. They have concluded that experienced writers approach writing as a process. Compare the list of strategies in Figure 1.4 to your writing strategies. Would you consider yourself to be an inexperienced or experienced writer?

The strategies taught in this book, including the process approach to writing, will help you to write papers in your major coursework (academic writing) and later in your career. However, the students in general composition classes such as this one have many majors. Therefore, this course is an introduction to academic writing. As you take advanced courses in your major, you may learn other styles and conventions of writing that are more suitable for your discipline. For example, the documentation style taught in this text is that recommended by the Modern Language Association (MLA). Some disciplines, such as business,