

外语院系英语专业
高年级系列教材

李绍明 编著

大学英语写作

A Study & A Reader



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我从别国里窃得火来，本意却在煮自己的肉的……

鲁迅：《二心集·“硬译”与“文学的阶级性”》

日月逝矣，而寂漠犹未央也。上下求索，阒其无人，不自发中，不见应外，颀蒙默之，若存若亡，意者往之见戕贼者深，因将长槁枯而不复苑与，此则可为坠心陨涕者也。

一苇之投，望则大于俟他士之造巨筏，吾未绝大冀于方来，则斯论之所由作也。

鲁迅：《集外集拾遗补编·破恶声论》

话已经说得不少了。总之，单是话不行，要紧的是做。要许多人做：大众和先驱，要各式的人做：教育家，文学家，言语学家……。这已经迫于必要了，即使目下还有点逆水行舟，也只好拉纤……无论怎么看风看水，目的只是一个：向前。

鲁迅：《且介亭杂文·门外文谈》

I dedicate this book to Professor Li Yuchen, my mentor for all these 22 years since I was a student, who revised parts of the text and gave me valuable advice on the entire work.

I thank Professor Wang Shouyuan, Dean of SDU School of Foreign Languages, and Mr. Zhang Xiaobo from SDU Press, for spurring and helping me in the work. Thanks also go to Ms Zhang Shuling, who, sacrificed her hard-won summer vacation to type for me, and Ms Shao Yanxia who took the trouble of finding me reference books.

PREFACE

When this volume was beginning to take shape, I was tempted to write a rather bragging prefatory remark about it, which, if comes out in print, would probably be among the briefest forewords ever created. I simply wrote:

This is a mild book about reform. Amen!

But I am sure ours is a civilization that is not likely to encourage writing in this way. Just as the Chinese author Lu Xun felt of the matter seventy-four years ago, "In China there are norms for composition (surely also for that of prefaces), and things still go in loops."

But I am also sure that it doesn't make much sense for us Chinese to continue to write in the way we are doing it. I have a conviction that these norms must account for much of our failures and follies in other things we do. A negative proposition of Lu Xun's statement would be just as true; if we ignore these norms, things in China would cease to go in loops. It is on the basis of such an understanding that I have conceived one single purpose for this book: Reform. In other words, Don't write like such and such.

Writings about writing have never been lacking in this place.

Much has been published and taught about topic and thesis, grammar and structure, paragraph building and essay developing, about purpose, audience and tone, about drafting and revising, and about opening and ending. But what we read, in Chinese or in English as produced around us, are little more than those backward concepts, rigid doctrines, imposed biases and lies, boring, senseless, shameless, even heartless, out of laziness and confusion, selfishness and insincerity.

Therefore I will write a different book.

But the production doesn't seem in keeping with the ambition. This improvisation of a book is full of commonplaces, odds and ends, words picked up from others' lips. Far from systematic and satisfactory.

But you see, even as such, its contribution will be expected all right.

Of its shortcomings I know quite well. It lacks a training program with exercises for students. My excuse is, when reading books on composition, readers normally skip the time-demanding how-to parts, and few students take the trouble to do the exercises unless required by the instructor. I hope my readers will feel like writing for themselves when they find some interest or meet with challenges while reading. When there's the impulse, students will write. I also hope that the Reader part will provide frameworks for discussion and composition. The topics in the selections are what I believe as unavoidable, if not vital, for today's Chinese intellectuals.

Dear readers, dear friends and students: thank you for kindly buying this book. If you don't judge the work as vain and void,

please let me know your needs and complaints, please let me share your ideas. Composition reform is a thing worth doing, and let's work together to do it well.

Simon Lee
from the Foreign Language School,
Shandong University

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Part One

THE STUDY

CHAPTER 1

WHY LEARNING ENGLISH WRITING

I write to find out what I'm thinking about.

—Edward Albee

Inside the pencil crouch words that have never been written.

—W. S. Merwin

The desire to write grows with writing.

—Erasmus

1. 1 Why learning to write

Writing is the most disciplined form of thinking. It allows us to stand back and examine our thoughts, to see if they are precise, to see what our words really mean, to see if they stand up to our own critical eye, make sense, will be understood by someone else.

Writing helps in more than this one way. The act of writing it-

self generates entirely new thought that we can then further manipulate.

In both ways, writing helps us solve problems.

Writing is also a learning process.

Writing can lead us to more complete knowledge about something. To create an effective piece of writing we should look at the subject more closely and from different angles; we should know about accepted ways of thinking about our subject and conventional forms of handling and expressing our knowledge of it.

This is one of the most exciting things about writing: it increases our awareness of the world around us.

We become wiser with writing.

We live in the world of language. We use language, and are used in the way of language. So many forces—tradition, authority, the multitude—are at work to make up our minds for us that we have good reason to doubt whether we can control and use language at all. The words we try to use or control are already so weighed down with the meanings our society and institutions have given them that it's very hard to do anything other than simply accept those meanings.

We would like to get involved in the conversation and make our voice count. We would like to exert some control of our own instead of accepting ready-made or hand-me-down opinions and being controlled by other people's language. To do this effectively, we write to nurture a questioning attitude, one that probes for definitions, explanations, proofs, assumptions. Instead of accepting things blindly or at face value, we look at them from a variety of perspectives, saying both yes and no to them, we test our wits against the