

普通高等教育“十二五”规划教材



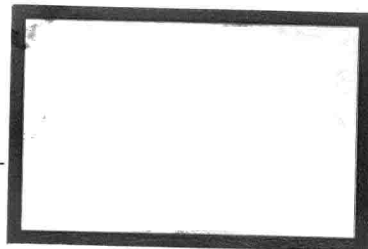
英语论文写作教程

A Writing Course of English Thesis >>>

◎操时尧 柯 军 编著

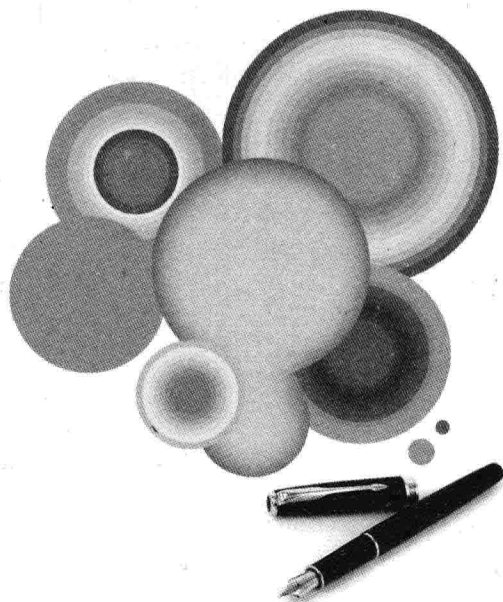


普通高等教育“十



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◎操时尧 柯 军 编著



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前 言

2000 年教育部颁布的《高等学校英语专业英语教学大纲》将“学术论文写作”设为高校英语专业的一门专业知识类必修课程。它还明确规定:英语专业毕业论文一般应用英语撰写,长度为 3000~5000 个单词,要求文字通顺、思路清晰、内容充实,有一定的独立见解。

本教材按照上述《大纲》的要求编写,具有很强的针对性和实用性。为了更有效地指导学生进行毕业论文写作,该书以大量的范例从论文结构、撰写过程、研究方法和体例格式等方面进行了全方位的阐述。全书内容共分 11 章:第 1 章概述科学研究与科研论文的内涵与关系;第 2 章从选题、文献检索和开题报告三个环节介绍毕业论文的写前过程;第 3 章从论文提纲、拟稿和修改等方面探讨写作过程;第 4 章解析毕业论文的各个要件及其特点,并逐一以“模板”和“范例”进行详细解读;第 5 章探讨以段落为单元的有效论证方法;第 6 章介绍国际上通行的三种学术引证格式(CMS, MLA 和 APA);第 7 章简述论文写作过程中应注意的技术性细节;第 8 章略析英语论文的语言风格;第 9 章介绍语言研究的常用方法——观察法、调查法、实验法和个案法,并配以实例分析;第 10 章介绍毕业论文答辩的相关知识;第 11 章提供一个可供学生模仿的完整论文范例,并作了评价与分析。

本教材力求做到以下几点:

1) 发掘语言研究本质 本教材以探讨“科研”开篇,引导学生理解“研究源于问题”和“语言研究服务生活”的思想。通过大量的英语语言和文学研究示例,让学生归纳和认知语言研究话题的“源于问题”、“源于生活”和“源于兴趣”等多源性。结合学科特点和本科毕业论文的写作要求,引导学生运用科学的方法研究语言现象,探索语言规律,也为以后的继续学习打下扎实的理论基础。

2) 点拨论文写作思路 根据 20 多年专业教学和论文指导经验,“没有选题”、“没有思想”和“没有文献”成为英语专业本科生论文撰写的“三大难”。很多学生不知道如何从身边的语言环境中提炼合适的选题,论文写作成了指导老师布置的“命题作文”。选题不合适,再加上文献阅读不足,自然会导致“没有思想”。在网络信息迅猛发展的今天,“没有文献”是缺乏资源利用能力的美丽借口。第 2 章以正例与反例相结合的方法,多角度分析成功的选题和定题,还以较大篇幅探讨文献检索的方法与途径,都是旨在解决论文开题的“三大难”。

3) 剖析学术论文特点 目前该类教材有两种倾向:一种是“重格式”,大篇幅介绍论文格式与规范;另一种是“重理论”,要么缺乏示例,要么选例过于深奥,不适合本科生模仿。为了避免这些问题,本教材从多届省级本科获奖论文中精心挑选多篇“范例”,以“解剖麻雀”的方法对其摘要、引言、文献综述乃至致谢辞等各论文要件进行深度分析,探究其特点,寻找写作规律,从而让“范例”真正起到示范作用。

4) 指导论文写作方法 经常有学生问:有没有固定的论文写作“模板”供参考?答案当然是否定的,因为论文是科研成果的分享,是思想感悟的交流,不是重形弃意的“八股文”。然而,科研论文是作者与读者的交流,它必须采用合理的研究方法,遵循一定的体例和规范。因此,论文各要件的撰写是有一定规律可循的,“模板”(Model)也就成为本书最大的特色。事实证明,国内外众多学者总结了各种不同的“模板”,这对论文各部分的写作有指导意义。本书

把多年收集的连同自己总结的各类“模板”整理后展示出来,配以实例,供大家参考。例如:英国学者 Grobler(2003)归纳出一个“四成份”的论文标题模板;关于论文摘要,三个学者列出三个不同“模板”。由此可见,这些模板只可参考,不宜复制。

5) 兼顾专业翻译训练 结合英语专业高年级教学特点,课后练习设计遵循 CBI(Content-Based Instruction)教学规律,融合章节内容,强化英汉双向翻译训练。一来训练翻译技巧,备考 TEM8(难度和篇幅大致相似);二来把学科内容学习和语言技能学习结合起来,让学生“在练习中学专业”、“在训练中学技能”,从而充分发挥“内容教学法”的优势。

本书由操时尧和柯军编写。操时尧负责制定编写原则和拟定大纲,编写第1~4章、第8~11章和附录部分;柯军负责编写第5~7章;完稿后,由两人负责共同校对。本书基于操时尧教授主编的《英语论文写作手册》(2009年版)修改而成,感谢湖北科学技术出版社的大力支持,同时,感谢湖北省教育厅教育科学“十一五”规划课题资助(2010B119)。

为了切合英语专业教学要求,本书用英文撰写,但语言简洁易懂,且术语和格式与国际学术规范一致,也可作为相关研究人员的参考书。课后练习的参考答案可在百度文库下载或邮件索取。另外,本书如有疏漏之处,敬请广大读者和同行批评指正(联系方式:sytsao@163.com),以便下次修订时完善。

编者
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Chapter 1 General Introduction

At most Chinese colleges or universities, undergraduates majoring in English language and literature are required of writing an academic thesis in English prior to graduation. However, it is not an easy job for most native English-speaking university students to do this, let alone Chinese college students. Writing an academic paper is a rather demanding task even for most successful language learners in any language learning context. Given these facts, one might ask: what is thesis and what is in a thesis? What makes academic writing so difficult? Is there any specific guidance for reference? These questions have become the original intentions of this book. In order to answer those questions, a brief introduction to research is necessary because a BA thesis is an account of what was done in an academic research over a specific topic.

1.1 Basic information of research

Many people consider research as a difficult task and they claim they have never undertaken research activities. However, this is a narrow understanding of research.

1.1.1 Definition of research

The word “research” can be defined in different ways. According to *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, “research” is a careful study of a subject, especially to discover new facts or information about it. Similarly, *Collins Dictionary* defines it as “a detailed study of a subject or an aspect of a subject. If you do research, you collect data and analyze facts and information and try to gain new knowledge or new understanding.”

From Wikipedia, research is formal work undertaken systematically to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humanity, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications. It is used to establish or confirm facts, reaffirm the results of previous work, solve new or existing problems, support theorems, or develop new theories.

In the above understandings, “research” generally includes any gathering of data, information and facts for the advancement of knowledge. Reading a factual book of any sort is a kind of research. Surfing the Internet or watching the news is also a type of research.

In the field of natural sciences, this term is strictly defined. Jones (1985) defined it as performing a methodical study in order to prove a hypothesis or answer a specific question. Finding a definitive answer is the central goal of any experimental process.

In social sciences, research is considered as “any original and systematic investigation undertaken in order to increase knowledge and understanding and to establish facts and principles.”

There are many other definitions about “research”, and there is no need to list all of them. However, another definition is widely appreciated in academic circles. “Research” is defined briefly

as “an organized and systematic way of finding answers to questions (Hatch and Farhady, 1982)”. This simple definition contains four key words, and the following is an interpretation about them.

● “Systematic” means there is a definite set of procedures and steps which should be followed. There are certain things in the research process which are always done in order to get the most accurate results.

● “Organized” denotes that there is a structure or method in going about doing research. It is a planned procedure, not a spontaneous one. It is focused on and limited to a specific scope.

● “Finding answers” is the end of research. Whether it is the answer to a hypothesis or even a simple question, research is successful when you find answers. Sometimes the answer is no, but it is still an answer.

● “Questions” are central to research. If there is no question, then the answer is groundless. Research is focused on relevant, useful, and important questions. Without a question, research has no focus, drive, or purpose.

After studying those definitions above, one might easily come to believe that research is involved in every corner of human activities. In other words, we do research every day. A doctor is doing a specific research when he sees a patient because he has to search for enough information about the patient before deciding what is wrong. And in order to collect reliable information, the doctor occasionally has to depend on the examinations like X-rays or blood test, in addition to asking questions and giving him/her physical examinations. In this sense, an individual clinical case is a different research towards the doctor.

Similarly, a teacher is doing a research when he is teaching a specific lesson or dealing with a troubled student. In order to answer questions like “Why do students misunderstand the lesson or simply don’t understand? Can it be improved? What is the better way for presentation?” or “What’s wrong with this student? How can this student’s behavior be improved?”, the teacher has also to ask questions, observe the class or student, sometimes an experiment is necessary before he can adjust his action to improve the situation.

1.1.2 Features of research

Since doing research is a systematic process and its aims are generally to answer a question, to solve a problem or to explain a phenomenon, research has the following distinctive features.

● A research starts with a question or problem.

The world we live in is full of mysteries of unanswered questions, unsolved problems and unexplained phenomena. If you are curious enough, you have the nature of doing research because everywhere you see, you may ask yourselves questions. Bringing these questions with you, you begin to collect information to answer them. Research has thus begun.

● A research has a definite goal.

Every human activity has a drive; there is no exception to research. A research should first of all have a definite goal. That is, the researcher has to state exactly what he / she intends to do. A doctor may see many patients every day, but each patient has different complaints and symptoms. For sure, they should be treated differently. However, some patients may suffer from the same disease or

sickness. The doctor who has experienced the practice may start a collective analysis over this particular disease, so his research goal is clear. Similarly, some students may make the same mistakes in English learning; the teacher who wants to solve this problem also has a definite research goal.

● **A research requires a planned working procedure.**

A research is an attempt to answer a question. After the research question is stated and research goal is found, the next step for the researcher is to design the research. This is to figure out an overall plan for the research work. Every step in the research is anticipated and planned in advance. Will you collect data by observation, by using survey or by doing experiment? How long will it take? All these questions should be carefully answered. Different researches require different methods, but one thing is the same—plan ahead of time.

● **A research needs data collection and data analysis.**

No one doubts the significance of data collecting and processing. This is the crucial part of the research work. A policeman who prosecutes a suspected murderer has to provide sufficient and reliable evidence. Therefore, witnesses, blood drops and murder weapons have become “hard data” for policemen to convict criminals. It is similar in language research in that sufficient and reliable evidence should be produced to prove an idea.

● **A research question is usually specified into several sub-questions.**

In order to analyze a problem thoroughly, it is often necessary to specify the research question into several sub-questions. A doctor who undertakes a new medicine test over a particular disease tries to answer a general research question “Is this medicine effective enough?” However, he can develop his judgments by answering sub-questions like “What’s the working mechanism in the new medicine?” “What’s the best dosage for patients?” “Are there any side effects?” “Is there any contraindication?” etc. Similarly, a language researcher who studies the linguistic features of advertisements can split his research question into several sub-questions like “What are the lexical features of advertisements?” “What are the syntactic features of advertisements?” and “What are the rhetorical features of advertisements?” Specifying research questions is necessary in the designing stage of almost all scientific endeavors.

● **A research is dynamic and cyclical in nature.**

A research needs an answer, but that answer is never conclusive. As time goes on, your answer may be considered wrong or partially wrong or inadequate. Some other researcher may pick up your research to continue or even to redo it. Research is not static or isolated, but dynamic and cyclical.

1.1.3 Classification of research

Research can be classified in different dimensions. According to different purpose, research can be classified into applied research and basic research; according to different data type, research can be classified into quantitative research and qualitative research; according to different process, research can be classified into exploratory research and confirmatory research.

● **Applied research vs basic research**

Applied research is designed to solve practical problems of the modern world, rather than to acquire knowledge for knowledge’s sake. One might say that the goal of an applied scientist is to

improve human conditions. So in language teaching and learning, if a teacher wants to solve a particular problem in a particular circumstance, such as determining the cause of low interest in a given course, he is doing an applied research. For more examples, applied researchers may investigate such questions as:

- 1) How to treat or cure a specific disease
- 2) How to use computers in classroom teaching
- 3) How to improve teacher-student relationships in class
- 4) How to deal with troubled students in classroom teaching

Basic (fundamental or pure) research is designed to understand the underlying principles behind human behavior. It is driven by a scientist's curiosity about or interest in a scientific question. The main motivation is to expand man's knowledge, not to create or invent something. There is no obvious commercial value to the discoveries that result from basic research. For example, basic research may probe for answers into questions such as:

- 1) What are protons, neutrons, and electrons composed of?
- 2) What is the specific genetic code of the fruit fly?
- 3) Why are some students less motivated than others in the same classroom?

The distinctions between applied research and basic research lie in: 1) Applied research focuses on "how" questions while basic research eyes on "what" and "why" questions; 2) Applied research is more beneficial at current time while basic research may value in the long run; 3) Applied research creates inventions or specific guidance while basic research generates ideas and concepts.

● Quantitative research vs qualitative research

Quantitative research is a research model in which social phenomena are investigated via statistical, mathematical or computational techniques. In other words, researchers attempt to find relations between the collected numeral statistics and the phenomena being questioned. In the course of quantitative research, the researcher first asks a specific, narrow question and collects numerical data from participants to answer the question. Then he analyzes the data with the help of statistics, and hopes the numbers will yield an unbiased result that can be generalized to some larger population.

Quantitative research measures variables with some precision by using numeric scales. For example, you might measure a person's height and weight. Or you might conduct a survey in which you measure how much respondents like English, using a 1 to 10 scale.

Qualitative research, as against quantitative research, is another research model in which social phenomena are reflected by direct observation of human behavior, or by interviews with informants. Generally, qualitative research uses words and descriptions as its data form. For example, you might talk to ten female students about their writing process. You might interview them for several hours, tape-record the whole process, transcribe the recordings to written text, and then analyze the text. The following table is a distinction between the two.

	Quantitative research	Qualitative research
Aim	Hypothesis-testing	Hypothesis-generating
Method	Experiment, survey	Observation, interview
Data form	Numbers and statistics	Words and description
Process	Controlling variables	Uncontrolled observation
Result	Objective judgment	Subjective description

● Exploratory research vs confirmatory research

Exploratory research is a type of research into the unknown. It is conducted for a problem that has not been clearly defined. It often relies on secondary research such as reviewing available literature and data. It is used when you are investigating something but really don't understand it all, or are not completely sure what you are looking for. It's somewhat like a journalist whose curiosity is peaked by something and just starts looking into something without really knowing what he / she is looking for.

The results of exploratory research are not usually useful for decision-making by themselves, but they can provide significant insight into a given situation. Although the results of qualitative research can give some indication as to the "why", "how" and "when" something occurs, it cannot tell us "how often" or "how many".

Confirmatory research, opposite to exploratory research, is, as its name indicates, a type of research whose aim is to prove existing knowledge. It starts from where you have a pretty good idea about what's going on. That is, you have a theory (or hypothesis), and the objective of the research is to find out if it is supported by facts.

1.1.4 Research process

According to Wen (2004), language researchers have to undertake 5 stages for doing a research: developing research questions; reading literature; selecting research designs; collecting data / analyzing data; writing a thesis or dissertation.

● Developing research question

All researches start with a question and a research question may be specified into several smaller questions. The research question is usually the goal of the research. Setting a goal is always the first step. Research in all disciplines and subjects, not just science, must begin with a clearly defined goal. Sometimes the goal is to test a hypothesis, for example, "extrovert students learn a foreign language faster than introvert ones". Certainly, your research question should be based on previous research and scientifically accepted fundamentals.

● Reading literature

Whether in natural sciences or social sciences, all researches should be based on previous research findings. The reason for doing so is that you have to fit yourself into the research context. "Has anyone else ever answered my research question?" "Do I want to continue with his research or to argue against him?" In the above example, after you have read the literature (a collection of books and published articles of relevant topic), and found two research papers with the same research

topic, but different research methods (say, one is an experimental study, the other is a survey study), you suddenly have an idea that you want to do the same research with a different method—by case study. The purpose of your current research is to strengthen the previous statement “extrovert students learn a foreign language faster than introvert ones”, and your future findings will also supplement “the literature family” for others to refer to.

● Selecting research designs

This is a detailed planning about how to process your research. It involves the selection of samples, research methods and ways of processing data. Taking again the above “extrovert” research as example, having decided to use case study, you have to select a representative or several representatives as case. Besides, your plan has to include what kinds of data to collect and how. After you have collected the data as planned, how you will process and analyze the data is also part of your design. Designing a sound research is the premise for a reliable research, and it requires the clever use of research methodology and research methods. As for research methodology for language researchers, action research, experiment, survey and case study are highly appreciated. Specific methods may vary in forms of observation, interview and questionnaire. More detailed information about research methodology will be available in chapter 9.

● Collecting data / analyzing data

During the collection of data, you need to be unbiased, otherwise your findings will be biased. Once you have collected your data, for example, in the above case study, the classroom observation of two students (one is a typical extrovert; the other is a typical introvert), records of their academic achievements, together with respective interviews with them, you have to make detailed comparisons between the two selected cases before you summarize research results.

● Writing a thesis or dissertation

After you have finished the above procedure, the last step is to account what you have done in your thesis.

1.2 Brief introduction to “thesis”

Thesis writing is an indispensable task for English majors. “Graduation thesis writing is a significant means to measure overall proficiency and evaluate academic performance of undergraduates”, as is said in *The National Syllabus for English Majors in China's Colleges and Universities*, which was prescribed by the Ministry of Education. It has long been clearly confirmed in most universities that the granting of a BA degree largely depends on whether the student could write a qualified thesis or not.

1.2.1 Definition of thesis

Thesis is defined in *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* as “a long piece of writing completed by a student as part of university degree, based on his / her own research.”

In Wikipedia, a dissertation or thesis is defined as a document submitted in support of candidature for an academic degree or professional qualification presenting the author's research and

findings. In some countries/universities (US), the word “thesis” is used as part of a bachelor’s or master’s course, while “dissertation” is normally applied to a doctorate, while in others (Britain), the reverse is true.

In this book, thesis is used to refer to a written document, usu. a long research paper, submitted by an undergraduate as a part of requirements for the granting of a BA degree. It is also called in some universities graduation thesis or BA thesis.

However, the academic community refers to research writing by a number of other names: research paper, academic paper, scholarly paper, research report and review paper, while in universities course paper (or term paper, sometimes essay) is a more popular term, referring to a comparatively short piece of writing task assigned by a professor as part of a specific course study.

● Research paper

Research paper is a general term, referring to any writing based on research purposes. All published papers in academic journals are research papers. Research report is also a research paper. Term paper, thesis and dissertation all belong to research papers. As long as your writing is focused on an academic topic, and it is intended to inform the audience of the research topic, purpose, method, results, findings, conclusions and recommendations, your writing is a piece of research writing. It is a research paper. This term is used to differentiate from writings for non-research purposes, such as literary writing (novel, poem etc.), business writing (contract, memo etc.) or journealese writing (news, TV report etc.).

● Academic paper

Academic paper (also scholarly paper) is the published article in academic journals which contains original research results or reviews existing results. In academic publications, a paper is an academic work that is usually published in an academic journal. Such a paper, also called an article, will only be considered valid if it undergoes a process of peer review by one or more referees (who are academics in the same field) who check that the content of the paper is suitable for publication in the journal. A paper may undergo a series of reviews, editions and re-submissions before finally being accepted or rejected for publication.

● Research report

Research report refers to a thorough record or description of the results of firsthand experiences, empirical studies, or reading in primary sources. This term focuses on the first-handness of the data collection and objectivity of results. It may vary in different forms of experimental report (or laboratory report), survey report or reading report. Although the writer of a report may evaluate or interpret the results of research, most often a report presents information as objectively as possible so that readers can make judgments or decisions for themselves.

● Review paper

Review paper (or review article) refers to the reorganized presentation of previous research findings about a specific topic. The key feature of this kind of writings lies in the second-handness of data collection. The writer usually attempts to organize, evaluate, analyze and synthesize the published information to apprise the reader of the status quo of research on a topic. The main purpose of a review article is to identify problems with the existing sources or to suggest possibilities for future

research.

We have discussed what thesis is, and in order to understand it more clearly, another question is in want of an answer. . . What is a thesis NOT supposed to be?

A thesis is NOT a narration or description. A thesis is an argumentative writing in the first place. That is, it should have a thesis statement (or central argument). Since the main purpose is to convince the audience, the whole paper should serve this thesis statement (sometimes thesis). Any writing without a thesis does not make a thesis.

A thesis is NOT a summary of a book or an article. A summary of a book or article does not make a research paper. On the one hand, it does not fit into academic conventions; on the other hand, it does not contain the writer's own judgments. The writing of a thesis needs to review other's works, but not necessarily on a single one. Besides, literature review is only a part of thesis.

A thesis is NOT a plagiarism. The action of copying other person's ideas, words or work without acknowledgements and pretending they are your own is plagiarism. It is against academic morality. Research paper, by definition, has to reflect the author's own opinions. Repeating other's ideas uncritically does not make a research paper.

A thesis is NOT a collection of quotations. Research paper may quote other's data, but the quoted information should be carefully documented. The purpose of quotation is to support your own ideas as evidence.

A thesis is NOT an "I-believe" article. Unproven personal opinion does not make a research paper. Subjective tone is not the style of academic writing. Much use of expressions like "I believe", "I think" or "In my opinion" betrays your subjectivity.

1.2.2 Standards of a good thesis

What would be considered to be a good thesis? Good choice of words, good grammar, academic style, good cohesion and coherence are the probable answers. However, as academic writing, some characteristics typical of a good English thesis are worth discussing and stressing.

● A good thesis reflects effective and critical reading

Different from writings for other purposes, academic writing requires profound reading of relevant literature. It is no doubt that thesis writing starts from reading, that is, literature reviewing. Effective reading is not only reading in large quantity and in a wide variety, reading for deep comprehension, but also reading with critical analysis. You need to evaluate what you read and take in those elements that you think valuable. Sometimes you will have to give up your monopoly on truth and respect your opponents by analyzing their views carefully. Reading sufficiently, effectively and critically is the foundation of doing a good research.

● A good thesis sparkles with creative thinking

Albert Einstein once said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution." But where does imagination come from? It comes from your creative mind. Creative thinking is part of human nature, and every individual has the quality of creativity. Creativity can be found in many aspects of thesis writing, such as choosing a proper research topic, processing original