

李玉洁 ◆ 编著

语言研究

Writing English Research Papers
英语学术写作概论



知识产权出版社

全国百佳图书出版单位

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内容提要

了解和掌握英语论文写作知识是提高写作水平的前提,本书从直观性和实用性的角度出发,详尽地介绍了英语学术写作的基本原则、写作步骤和标准格式。

全书共分9章。第1、2章简要介绍了学术论文的特点和结构,以及论文写作的一般步骤;第3章探讨了如何写“文献综述”;第4章介绍了学术研究中,尤其是实证研究中收集数据的方法;第5、6、7章介绍了学术论文的语言特点和风格、写作技巧和论文摘要的重要性;第8、9章介绍了引文和参考文献的常用格式。

本书集科学性、知识性和可读性于一体,内容丰富,信息量大,对科研人员以及大学生和研究生的论文写作可以起到启迪、借鉴作用。

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Preface

English Research Writing is designed to introduce some important features of English research papers, and give an essential guidance to effective research papers in English. It lays a foundation for writing more advanced research papers and helps students learn how to write a course paper and thesis as well.

Based on practicality, the book combines knowledgeableness with readability. It covers all of the most important aspects of information related to effective research writing. It is divided into 9 chapters, each dealing with a particular aspect in writing.

Chapter 1, Introduction, introduces the characteristics of a research paper and what a research paper is composed of. Chapter 2, The Process of Writing a Research Paper, expounds the ways to write a paper, starting with choosing a topic, exploring data, writing the first draft, and ending with revising, and editing, and proofreading. Chapter 3, Literature Review, elucidates the reference to literature. Good samples and ineffective ones are also offered. Chapter 4, Methodology, explains the basic methods to collect data in empirical research, such as

ways to do questionnaires and interview. Chapter 5, Language and Style, discusses the right language for the audience. The command of diction, sentence structure and grammar are important considerations. Chapter 6, Mechanics, expounds how to apply the mechanics, which is also one of the biggest challenges in writing. Chapter 7, Abstract, describes the elements in an abstract. The reasons why an abstract is needed and the relationship between an abstract and the text are provided. Chapter 8, Documentation, explains the functions of documentation as supporting a thesis, citing sources and avoiding plagiarism and integrating sources. Chapter 9, Documenting sources: Modern Language Association (MLA) Style, introduces the MLA style for Works Cited. Two sample papers are offered in Appendix.

The book is efforts and experiences of the author for years. However, due to the proficiency of the author, there must be inappropriateness and errors in the book. I apologize for any inconveniences those may bring about.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

A research paper is a formal document that presents the interpretation or evaluation or argument of professionals. It analyzes a perspective or argues a point and involves surveying a field of knowledge in order to find out the best possible information in that field. It also expects the author to find, select, and weigh evidence, make inferences, and reach viable conclusions. It, almost exclusively, relies on proven facts and authoritative testimony. Most important of all, a research paper should present the author's own thinking, backed up by others' ideas and information.

1.1 Characteristics of a research paper

A good research paper has the following characteristics. Firstly, extensive research of proven facts and authoritative testimony is the basis of a research paper. The “proven facts” can be gathered through first-hand experiments, field research, and library. Secondly, the

voice of the paper tends to be objective and neutral. The authorial voice in a typical academic paper tends to be objective, neutral, and unemotional because its primary purpose is to appeal to the intellect of the readers, or to gain readers' intellectual agreement rather to move or win them emotionally. In fact, emotional or biased use of language will cause the paper to lose its credibility, hinder the accurate presentation of information, and affect judgment of the content presented. Thus, writers of academic papers usually refrain from using colorful terms.

In addition, the style of the paper tends to be formal. Since the purpose of a research paper is to present accurate information, the style of writing tends to be formal. The formality is achieved through the diction, sentence stricter, and format. Of course, the level of formality of a given paper depends on its subject, audience, purpose, and other relevant facts in the rhetorical context. In some situations, the style can be quite lively, too.

Appropriate diction and moderately complex sentences are also essential elements of a well-written paper. The rhetorical context of the academic paper determines that its diction should be both precise and appropriate. Informal expressions (colloquialisms and slang expressions) may add some color but are usually frowned upon as being unprofessional and out of place in academic writings. However, writers of academic papers sometimes are tempted to go to the other extreme and become pompous. Contrary to what some (beginners and

“veterans” alike) may believe, simpler expressions, as long as they are appropriate, can be just as accurate and even more forceful and readable.

Sentence structures for the research paper tend to be complex because complex ideas demand complex sentences to express them clearly and accurately. It often takes longer and more complex sentences to show relationships (temporal, spatial, contrastive, and causal) between ideas. The key word for the complexity of sentence structures is moderate. Strings of short and simple sentences will give readers an unfavorable impression of lack of intellectual maturity. On the other hand, wordy, tangled and excessively leaden sentences are unwelcome because they hinder understanding, obscure meaning, and do not serve the purpose of a research report.

Finally it is rather important to have a neat appearance and format of a paper. While the ideas being presented are the most important in an academic paper, its appearance and format also participate in the making of meaning. So, an academic paper should have an aesthetically pleasing appearance: typewritten or printed on good-quality white paper, free from errors, and clear, with easy-to-read diagrams, figures, and tables. It should be correct even down to such details as mechanics, punctuation, and margins (top, bottom, left, and right) .

Research papers require careful documentation of their facts and sources. Different academic disciplines follow different styles or

conventions in documentation . In American colleges and universities , two documentation styles are usually recommended ; the MLA style for the various disciplines in Humanities and the APA style for social sciences. An inappropriately documented academic paper reflects poorly on the writer.

1.2 Types of research papers

Research papers in the university fall into 4 types.

(1) Academic paper (also called scholarly paper) , is published in academic journals and contains original research results or reviews existing results.

(2) Course paper or term paper is usually written by high school or college students. It is written after a specific course is learned or at the end of the term.

(3) Report paper summarizes and reports the findings of an author on a particular subject.

(4) Thesis or dissertation is written and submitted in support of a candidature for a degree or professional qualification.

1.3 The structure of a research paper

A long research paper is usually made up of three main parts ; the front matter , the body and the back matter.

1. 3. 1 The front matter

The front matter includes title page, outline page, abstract (both in Chinese and English), key words, acknowledgements, table of contents, and so on.

1. 3. 1. 1 Title page

Universities and colleges have their own style of title page for theses and dissertation, and this should be followed exactly in matters of contents, capitalization, centering, and spacing.

1. 3. 1. 2 Outline page

The outline page presents a topic or sentence or paragraph outline, and sometimes includes the thesis statement.

1. 3. 1. 3 Abstract

The abstract is a summary of the study. It should be coherent by itself. For research purposes, an abstract makes readers quickly determine the content of a work and decide if the full text should be consulted. A well-written abstract provides information concerning the following aspects: the purpose of the study, the research questions to be addressed, the subjects involved, the instruments used to collect the data, the procedures for collecting and analyzing the data, the findings and the confusions.

1. 3. 2 The body

The body, which is the main part of the paper, is composed of introduction, literature review, method, data analysis, results, discussion and conclusion. The body consists of approximately 80% of total number of words—main ideas and supporting information—headings and subheadings sometimes (not always) used.

1. 3. 2. 1 Introduction

In the introduction, the general topic, issue, or area of concern is defined or identified, thus providing an appropriate context for reviewing the literature. In addition, certain aspects are pointed out, like overall trends in what has been published about the topic, or conflicts in theory, methodology, evidence, and conclusions; or gaps in research and scholarship, or a single problem or new perspective of immediate interest. What's more, it is essential to establish the writer's reason (point of view) for reviewing the literature, to explain the criteria to be used in analyzing and comparing literature and the organization of the review, and, when necessary, to state why certain literature is or is not included. The introduction is made up of approximately 10% of total number of words—interpret terms, state the position, and outline what you will write about.

There are several steps to write an interesting and effective introduction.