

挑战大学英语考试辅导丛书

大学英语四级阅读

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前言

《挑战大学英语考试辅导丛书》是根据国家教委颁布的大学英语教学大纲所编写应试辅导丛书。其宗旨是帮助学生提高阅读、写作、翻译、听力等方面的能力,并顺利地通过全国大学英语等级考试。

《大学英语四级阅读》由两部分组成:阅读理解和句子翻译。

大学英语全国四级统考的阅读理解部分时间为 35 分钟,共 4 段文章,每段 250~300 字,各有 4 个问题。

把阅读文章中的某些句子翻译成汉语,是近几年推出的多种新题型中的一个。其目的是考核考生对英语书面材料的确切理解能力以及准确流畅地翻译成汉语的表达能力。

本书从理论与实践两个方面对阅读理解和句子翻译进行了分析、归纳和总结,并配以模拟试题,帮助大家顺利过关。

众所周知,影响阅读理解的因素有许多。除了词汇语法知识对阅读理解的影响之外,还有其他因素在起作用,其中篇章结构知识对文章的理解有相当大的影响。因此对这些知识的了解,可以帮助学生更好地理解文章的内容。

阅读理解部分首先介绍了如何提高阅读效率。通过介绍英语文章构造的特点,帮助学生在阅读时不仅对文章的词句有较好的理解,而且要了解文章发展的方式,理清思想脉络,从而达到对整个阅读材料从深层次上的理解。学生可以从宏观上更好地、更有效地把握文章,从而提高做题的准确度。

通过对例文的剖析,介绍了阅读理解题常见的设题形式和设题思路,并提出了切实可行的解题策略。学生不仅可以了解考试的题型,而且可以掌握解题思路,锻炼各种阅读技能,从而在考试中取得好的成绩。

书中所附的阅读练习,提供了大量的运用阅读理论和阅读技能来解决实际阅读问题的实践机会。由于所选材料题材丰富、体裁多样、难易程度适当,通过实践,相信能帮助学生提高阅读理解能力和阅读应试能力。

句子翻译部分,介绍了一些翻译的基本规律和翻译的基本技巧,使学生在翻译过程中有规律可循,有方法可依。10 篇短文中的 50 个句子的翻译练习,提供了实践机会,通过大量的练习,学生可以提高翻译能力。

本书的特点是:从宏观着手、理清思路、了解特点、掌握方法、大量实践,进而培养和提高学生的综合阅读能力和翻译能力。

鉴于编者水平和经验所限,谬误之处在所难免,敬请广大读者批评指正。

编者

1999 年 9 月

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第一章 如何提高英语阅读能力

中英文存在于不同的文化环境中,因此各具其特殊的思想逻辑,反映于文章组织上,就是不同的文章发展逻辑。一般说来,中文文章重启承转合,其表现的是一种螺旋式的发展方式,文章的意思由外而内,最终对主题加以发挥;而英文的文章则单刀直入,简单明了,在安排上,与主题无关的话,一律被摒除其外,因此英文文章结构清晰,主题明确,读起来更易捕捉文意。

英语文章的构成与段落构成颇为相似,通过研究英语段落的结构,建立起对英语段落的基本认识,对日后辨别段落主旨、理解文章意义、应付阅读考试将大有裨益。本章就是要通过介绍英语段落的特点,使考生了解文章构成的一些基本概念,这样有助于提高阅读效率。

第一节 主题

英语好文章,一般都单刀直入,一贯到底,思想脉络分明,论理清晰明确。英语文章有这样的特点关键在于段落是构建在一个以“主题”(topic)为核心的基础上。全段以此为中心,进行逻辑发展,结果自然是内容“单一”,并且也“连贯”了。

因此,要了解一段文字的主旨,最简单的方法是找出该段的主题句(topic sentence)。主题句就是一篇段落中陈述中心思想的句子。任何段落,通常都有主题句,以使其结构清晰严谨。主题句所含的是一个明确的想法,如果主题含混不清,意义错综复杂,文章的发展也就难以统一明确。在以此为核心而建立的段落中,凡是与主题思想无关的内容一概被弃置了,这才使得文章的思想内容整齐划一。因此,只要找到段落内的主题句,段落的内容也就已然在握,其余的文字只不过是主题的说明罢了。这是高效率阅读的重要一步。

段落中的主题句,一般而言,最常见的位置是一段文字开始的第一句。这是因为作者在论说一个论点时,通常运用演绎法。在文章的一开头引出主题,然后将该想法引申演绎,详细说明。另一种常见的位置是段落结束处。当作者运用归纳法来说明主题,先将细节一一陈述,再由此归纳出主题。主题句有时也散置于段落之中,甚至只含于文意之内而不明写。不过这种写法通常运用于文艺作品,而对那些经常在考试中考到的论说文和说明文,起始与结尾处最易找到主题句。

请阅读下列段落,找出每一段落的主题句:

例 1

By comparison with the natives, the invaders were few in number, but they were courageous, unscrupulous(肆无忌惮的) and armed. They wanted gold, and they were ready to take what the natives had and make them dig for more. The Indians were no match for them. In the West Indies the first Spaniards killed or enslaved wherever they went, and slavery was only a slower form of killing. After working the Caribbean natives to death, they brought in black slaves purchased from the Portuguese, the beginning of an involuntary migration that ultimately carried nearly 10 million Africans to the New World. In the Caribbean islands the

Africans died, too, but not before they had earned their purchase price many times over . When the supply of gold ran out, the Spanish turned them to planting sugar, which in the long run proved even more lucrative—and no less deadly—than digging for gold .

这一段落中主题句在段首——与当地土著相比,入侵者为数甚少,但他们悍勇过人,肆无忌惮,而且全副武装。从段落的第二句开始,作者列举了这些入侵者在当地的所作所为——从土著人那儿夺黄金、强迫土著人挖掘更多的黄金;杀戮土著人、奴役土著人、买卖黑奴等这一系列的事实细节都是来说明主题句中所提到的入侵者肆无忌惮这一主题的。

例 2

Whether you do or do not open a gift in the presence of the giver; whether you should or should not turn the plate over to look at the maker's symbol on the back; whether you put your coat on before or after you leave the host's hours; whether you eat as quietly or as noisily as possible; whether you carry on a conversation during a meal; whether you walk in front of or behind a seated person; whether it is a friendly or an offensive gesture to put your hand on the arm of the person with whom you are talking—these and a thousand other questions are matters of cultural definition . None of them is inherently right or wrong, and none is good or bad manners except as a society defines it so .

这段落中的主题句位于段落结束处。作者先列举了具体的例子,最后归纳出中心句。

例 3

Most people take a passive approach to an interview, answering whatever questions they are asked to the best of their ability . A better approach is to take control and give the interviewer what you want to give, not necessarily what they are trying to find out; inspire confidence—give the interviewer every reason to believe that you can handle the job for which you are being considered and little reason to believe you can't . You do this with more than the answers you provide . Confidence is also inspired by the way you look, the enthusiasm, energy, confidence, personal ability and ambition you show or don't show .

本段落的主题句置于段落中间,是第二句。这一主题句中作者既给出了概括的观点,同时又将其具体化了。既点明了主题——控制面试的局面,又告知了如何控制局面。因此理解这一句,也就理解了这段文字的意义。

主题句能在文章中具有支配性,造成一气呵成的效果,最主要的原因是其意义的单一化。主题句中,都有一个或几个字对全文具有强烈的支配性,能明确地表现出单一的意义,使后面接续的句子能承继其意并推演发展。能从段落中找出这些具有支配性的文字,就不难推断出下面文章要讨论的内容。因此从段落中找这些主题句中具有支配性的文字是训练高效率阅读的重要步骤。例如:

主题句: serious soil erosion is occurring in most of the world's important agricultural regions and is increasing as more marginal land is farmed .

这个主题句中具有支配性的文字显然是 serious soil erosion, occurring, increasing, 因此可以推测接下来段落要讨论的这土地流失的严重性。全文如下:

例 4

Serious soil erosion is occurring in most of the world's important agricultural regions and is increasing as more marginal land is farmed . In developing countries especially, it is seri-

ously damaging agricultural productivity, shortening the life of dams and irrigation projects, filling in canals and harbors, and harming productive wetlands . In many regions, rates of soil loss exceed rates of soil formation at least tenfold, and it has been estimated that about 25 billion tons of topsoil are being lost from the world's croplands each year . Soil losses due to cultivation of steep marginal lands, reduced forest and vegetative cover, and improper irrigation are expected to accelerate, especially in North and Central Africa, the humid and high altitude areas of Latin America, and much of South Asia .

该段落是围绕土地流失的严重性及流失更趋严重这两个方面来展开,这两个方面的关键词正是我们在分析主题句时找出的具有支配性的文字,显然这些关键词确实起到了支配段落的作用。

主题句: Not only in obvious situations such as wars and revolutions are enemies necessary and very useful as a way to focus the attention and energy of our friends and followers, but in our every day activities as well .

本主题句中的核心词是 enemies, necessary 和 useful。以这三个核心词为基础,形成的段落内容一定是关于树敌对于我们的好处。请看全文如下:

例 5

Not only in obvious situations such as wars and revolutions are enemies necessary and very useful as a way to focus the attention and energy of our friends and followers, but in our every day activities as well . It reminds us of what we believe and what we do not believe, what we need and what we want as a group . By portraying the enemy as the other, the threat, the danger to our stability and to our sense of order and value, we willingly come together to resist and to reassert our oneness with the group we belong . We cooperate in order to rid ourselves of the threat from the unfamiliar, the different—the enemy . In the process, we share our ideas, feelings, resources and willingly face threats we would normally avoid . Our enemy has made us human and civilized by forcing us to suppress our narcissistic(自我陶醉的)urges and desires for the good of all . We become involved in our community of hate and, like good soldiers, obey orders by persuading ourselves that unless we do so our way of life—our values and beliefs—will be destroyed and we will have to embrace the values, beliefs, practices of those we have just made unfamiliar, unlike ourselves—the enemy . This will require change and we all know how utterly disruptive that can be to a well ordered, habitual way of life . No wonder we are so angry and so eager to remove this threat .

该段落内容正是围绕着主题句中的三个关键词展开的。树敌的好处在于:起到提醒的目的,提醒我们相信什么,不相信什么;使我们可以相互合作,集结在一起与威胁我们稳定、价值观的异己抗争;使我们成为普通人、开化了的人。显然主题句的三个关键词起着支配段落的作用。

从以上几例段落中,我们可以看出主题句指引全段的主旨,而其中的关键词支配着段落的发展,与主题无关的观点想法全被屏除在外,这样段落也就具备了单一的特性。段落如此,文章也是如此。不论一篇英语文章长度如何,其中心只有一个,在阐述说明主题时所引用的事实细节、例子等都是为其服务的。因此抓住了主题,弄清了主题与事实细节之间的关系,理解也就水到渠成。

例 6

A close examination of foreign markets and language difference is necessary and should be required before a product's domestically successful name is introduced abroad . Unfortunately, this step is sometimes neglected in a company's enthusiasm to plunge into overseas marketing operations .

Sometimes, the company or product name may require alteration because it conveys the wrong message in a second language . Large and small firms alike have discovered this . For example, when the Coca-Cola Company was planning its marketing strategy for China in the 1920s, it wanted to introduce its product with the English pronunciation of“ Coca-Cola ”. A translator used a group of Chinese characters that, when pronounced, sounded like the product name . These characters were placed on the cola bottles and marketed . Was it any wonder sales levels were low ? The characters actually translated to mean“ bit the wax tadpole(啃蜡蝌蚪)” . Since the product was new, sound was unimportant to the consumers; meaning was vital . Today Coca-Cola is again marketing its cola in China . The new characters used on the bottle translate to“ happiness in the mouth ”. From its first marketing attempts, Coca-Cola learned a valuable lesson in international marketing .

General Motors was faced with a similar problem . It was troubled by a lack of enthusiasm among Puerto Rican auto dealers for its recently introduced Chevrolet“ Nova ”about ten years ago . The name“ Nova ”means star when literally translated . However, when spoken it sounded like“ no va ”which, in Spanish, means“ it doesn't go ”. This obviously did little to increase consumer confidence in the vehicle . To remedy the situation, General Motors changed the automobile name to“ Caribe ”, and sales increased .

Comparable situations have also been experienced by other car manufacturers . In fact, problems with the names used in international automobile promotions seem to crop up frequently . For example, the American car name“ Randan ”was interpreted by the Japanese to mean“ idiot ”. The American Motors Corporation's car“ Matador ”might conjure up (想起) images of virility(男子气概)and strength in America, but in Puerto Rico it means“ killer ”—not a favorable connotation in a place with a high traffic fatality rate .

Multinational corporations have experienced many unexpected troubles concerning company or product names, and even attempts to alter names have led to blunders . It should be evident that careful planning and study of the potential market is necessary because name adaptation can be every bit as important as product or package modification .

本文有五个自然段落组成。起始段点明了全文的主题——把一个国内大受欢迎的产品推向国外之前,应当而且必须对那里的市场情况和语言差异做一番认真的调查。第二、三、四段落是具体的例证来说明这样做的必要性,每一段落的第一句都是各段落的主题句。第二段中举的例子是可口可乐公司在 20 年代向中国推销其产品时的情况,来说明段落主题句中的关键词“ alteration ”;第三段举的例子是美国通用汽车公司在向波多黎各推销汽车时由于汽车名称的缘故,而影响销售;第四段中讲的是其他汽车制造商也有类似的经历,用具体例证来说明这一主题。第五是结束段,作者对全文所讨论的中心思想进行概括。全文观点明确,思想脉络分明,例证充分,结构清晰严谨,读起来比较容易捕捉主题意义。

要提高阅读效率,必须通过辨主题句、找关键词,捕捉文章的主题意义。必须明确文章的单一性,以便自己在读的过程中去思考、去分析,归纳文章所涉及到的各个信息,使文章主题更明了、更突出。

第二节 细节

段落的主题明确了,那么来阐述说明主题的细节在段落中如何衔接在一起,使之成为一段连贯的、有意义的文字,一方面运用一些具体的连贯手段,使句与句之间像索链一样衔接在一起,同时也运用逻辑关系使其所有的思想有逻辑而清楚地互相关联起来。一般说来,一个段落中的细节,1)可以依其重要性,由轻而重的安排;2)可以依其时间发生的顺序,由先而后的陈述;3)可以依其空间的位置,顺次交待;4)可以用演绎的方式,由结论而至细节逐一证明;5)可以用归纳的方法,由诸多细节的陈述,而得出统一的结论。例如:

例 7

Despite almost universal acknowledgment of the vital importance of women's literacy, education remains an elusive dream for far too many women in far too many countries of the world . Worldwide, about 950 million adults lack literacy skills—the vast majority, women: One in three women in illiterate, as opposed to one in five men . In developing countries, 45 percent of women are illiterate . The rate soars to 67 .8 percent in South Asia . In the world's two most populous countries, China and India, 50 percent of adult females are illiterate .

本段落中为了用具体的例证来说明主题——对世界许多国家的许多妇女来说,教育仍然是一个虚无缥缈的梦想,作者引用了具体的数字。这些例证和数据的安排,通常是依其重要性的轻重而安排的。为了使段落更具说服力,往往将最重要的置于最后。本段落中的数据的揭示,逐步增大,至段尾时,数字本身不是最大,但所反映的问题却是最严重。因此本段落的细节是由轻至重安排。

例 8

Of course, pawnbroking(典当业) is not a new phenomenon . Known as the second oldest profession, it dates some 3,000 years back to ancient China . In the Middle Ages, the Germanic House of Lombard introduced pawnbroking after establishing itself in northern Italy; the family crest, three golden balls, became the symbol for pawnshops . In this country, pawning was a routine part of American life until the 1920s, when banks, finance companies and thrifts became the primary lenders to a new, prosperous group of middle-class consumers . Ironically, the pawn business revived in the boom years of the Eighties when banks introduced stiffer balance requirements, shutting out an increasing number of low-income people . The revival continued as the economy started sliding into recession in the late Eighties . From 1986 to 1990, the number of shops increased by 60 percent, to 7,760 . Now, with layoffs on the rise and lines of credit(银行给顾客的信贷额度) used up for many people, more and more middle-class consumers are turning to pawnshops .

本段落的细节是依时间的先后来安排的。从远古时开始的典当到近代在美国由于各种原因而复苏的典当。第一句为主题句。在引用事例来说明典当并不新鲜这一主题时,首先说的是典当起源于中国,已有 3000 年的历史;之后,到中世纪,在意大利建立了当铺;在本世纪 20

年代,典当是美国人日常生活中常见的现象;到了 80 年代末期,典当行业开始复苏。很显然这段落的细节陈述是按时间的先后顺序的。

例 9

The village of Newbridge seemed infinitely far away . Even the tall church spire was dwarfed into insignificance by the play of perspective . The castle frowned down on it all from the eminence opposite the Hilltop Farm . On the road below, cars crawled like Dinkie toys, human beings like ants . He could see the Dinkie toys going off towards Monmouth in one direction, and towards Ross-on-Wye and eventually Hereford in the other . He could not hear a sound from them . He watched the “ ants ” too, going about their lawful occasions . They were too small for him to identify . He wished he had had a telescope, but he hadn't .

本段落是按空间位置安排细节内容的。这一段有关 Newbridge 村庄的描述,作者是按照从高往低这样一个空间顺序描述的。首先作者看到的是那教堂高耸的尖塔,接着是农场对面的城堡,它高高在上,紧皱眉头,镇唬住整个村庄,最后,是下边的马路,汽车在徐徐移动,像微型玩具,人像蚂蚁在爬,汽车朝着各个方向驶去,人们忙碌着各自的事情,太远了,一点声音也听不到。一段有关事物于空间中位置的段落,其细节内容的安排势必与空间发生关连,它必定按一定的空间顺序排列,或从近到远、或从左到右、或从上到下等。

例 10

These are spectacular examples; but examples on a smaller scale are everywhere to be found . We make a nature sanctuary (保护区) for rare birds, prescribing absolute security for all species; and we may find that some common and hardy kind of bird multiplies beyond measure and ousts(赶走) the rare kinds in which we were particularly interested . We see, owing to some little change brought about by civilization, the starling spread over the English countryside in hordes . We improved the yielding capacities of our cattle; and find that now they exhaust the pastures which sufficed for less exigent(苛求的) stock . We gaily set about killing the carnivores that molest(妨害) our domestic animals, the hawks that eat our fowls and game-birds; and find that in so doing we are also removing the brake that restrains the multiplication of mice and other little rodents that gnaw away(侵蚀) the farmers' profits .

文章中,先下结论,再逐步提出支持该结论的证据或说明,这就是用演绎法来安排细节内容。本段落正是如此。作者开门见山指出较小规模的例子比比皆是。然后逐一给出例子,加以说明,以证明这样的情况太多了。第一个例子是为珍惜鸟类设立自然保护区,可能会导致那些生命力特别旺盛的普通鸟类漫无限制地繁殖而把我们感兴趣的珍惜品种被驱逐;第二个例子是改进了牛群的生产能力,而发现原来足够饲养其他对生存条件要求不高的牲畜的草地也耗尽了;第三个例子是我们把那些妨害家畜的食肉动物消灭,而发现我们在这样做的时候也正在撤掉对老鼠和耗掉农民利益的啮齿动物大量繁殖的扼制手段。类似这样用结论开启一段文章,再随之以说明及论证的写法,是英语阅读测试中极常见的形式。

例 11

As Shakespeare's works were written nearly 400 years ago, there are imaginable difficulties for modern Chinese readers . In Shakespeare's time, the English language was in a transitional period from medieval inflected English to flexible modern English with an expanding vocabulary . Latin and French exercised a great influence on it . Many words in Shakespeare

are different from modern English in spelling and meaning .In addition, Shakespeare contributed innovations and creations to English vocabulary and usage . To overcome the aforesaid difficulties, the Annotated Series focused the annotations(注释) on definition, grammar, word order and rhetorical devices . Some annotations give both the root and derivative meanings, while some explain puns(双关语) . In case of a complex structure, the core of the sentence is set forth . Therefore, most of the notes in English can be used to paraphrase the original accurately . Where easy and brief English explanation is impossible, Chinese explanation is used . Background knowledge about fables, myths, stories, associations, etc . are also in Chinese . Besides annotation, for every title there is a Chinese preface that includes essential Shakespeare biography, stories, sources and texts . Shakespeare scholars, members of the Shakespeare Society of China, and university professors are invited to undertake the annotation project . Well acquainted with English literature and Chinese readers' barriers and difficulties in reading Shakespeare's English, they provide notes specially suited for the Chinese readers . They choose and collate(整理) opinions of modern Shakespeare scholars in the western countries, and so achieved conciseness and a higher academic level .

归纳法安排细节内容与演绎性安排细节内容正好相反。运用归纳法安排细节是先逐步说明各种状况或例证,最后得出一个结论。在本段落中作者正是运用这种逻辑方法来安排细节内容。作者通过对这套丛书特点描述,得出结论。该丛书注释的重点放在释义、语法现象、词序、修辞运用的特点等方面。除此以外,每本书都有用中文写的以介绍莎士比亚生平、叙述故事梗概和分析版本来源为主要内容的前言。另外,参加注释工作的是专家学者。综上所述,作者最后得出结论——由于吸收了西方现代学者的各种意见,博采众长,又避免了烦琐,故而达到了较高的学术水平。

了解细节的逻辑安排方法,有助于我们了解段落内的句与句之间的关系。这样在文章主题思想的指导下,就可以很容易地追踪到作者的思想脉络,从而迅速有效地了解其作品。

第三节 段落的发展方式

了解段落发展方式,能促进我们阅读文章时的理解并提高阅读速度。在阅读时,如能在最短时间内判断出一段文章写作时所采用的逻辑发展方式,则无疑发掘了作者写作时的思想脉络,这样,只要循序追踪,细节与主题间的关系就不难探究,速度自然就能提高,理解自然也能正确。

把上一节中提到的段落细节内容的安排方式,加以简单的分类,可以分为三类:1) 时序发展方式;2) 空间发展方式;3) 分析发展方式。综观近几年的阅读考试中所采用的文章,运用分析发展方式展开的占绝大多数。从体裁来看,多属于说明文和议论文。本节重点介绍分析发展方式中发展段落的各种手段,熟悉各种手段,以便在阅读时,快速判断,理清思路,抓住要点。

经由分析发展方式安排而写出的段落,其目的有二,一是论证某一观点;另一目的是列举事实或有关想法以说明事项。要达到这两种目的,作者一般采用以下六种技巧的一种或几种来列举论证、说明意图。这六种常用技巧是:列举例证,定义说明,因果说明,比较说明,对比说明,分类说明。以下分别举例说明。

1. 列举例证

为了说服读者,让读者接受某一观点,如果尽做空泛之论,文章很难有说服力。要让读者明白究理,心悦诚服,文章一定要循序渐进,论据明白,例证充分。列举例证正是最常用的一种使段落内容充实、增加其说服力的发展段落的方式。在所有以分析发展方式展开的段落中,例证几乎是不可或缺的。有些段落是完全建立在例证的安排上,以其他技巧为主的文章段落里,也时常可见引用例证,以增加文章的说服力。请看以下例文,通过列举例证,是否达到了实在的效果?

例 12

The travel industry in the United States is a major element of our whole national economy . In 1992 there were some 41, 684 hotels and motels in the United States generating roughly 69 billion dollars of receipts for their owners . Of that total number of 41,000 about 12,000 are hotels with 25 or more guest rooms and about 21,000 are what they call motels and tourist courts—set up specifically to take care of tourists traveling by cars . These are 1992 figures and those numbers are certainly higher today . In California, where we live, there are some 5,700 hotels and motels generating some 7 billion dollars of business annually . In a city like Los Angeles, where you might arrive when you come to the United States, there are approximately 2,000 guest rooms in the various hotels and motels within the city and they generate \$ 3 billion in revenue themselves .

本段落除了第一句主题句外,其余句子中几乎都包括了具体的数据,从这些数据中,我们是否可以同意作者提出的观点——美国旅游业是我们整个国民经济的重要组成部分?通过这些具体例证列举,达到了说服读者的目的。

例 13

Most of life is a gamble . Very many of the things we do involve taking some risks in order to achieve a satisfactory result . We undertake a new job with no idea of the more indirect consequences of our action . Marriage is certainly a gamble and so is the bringing into existence of children, who could prove sad liabilities . A journey, a business transaction, even a chance remark may result immediately or ultimately in tragedy . Perpetually we gamble—against life, destiny, chance, the unknown—call the invisible opponent what we will . Human survival and progress indicate that usually we win .

这一段落的第一句是主题句,为了使读者接受作者的观点——生活是一场赌博,列举了一些例子——接受新的工作、婚姻、孩子、一次旅行、一次生意等都有不确定的因素存在,都有风险。作者通过这些具体例证的陈述,旨在让读者与他有同样的看法。明白了作者所采用的手法,我们即使有些单词不熟,我们也不难了解段落的大意,不难理清句与句之间的关系,因而理解也就轻而易举。

英语文章中用列举例证方法所展开的段落和篇章非常多。反映在段落发展和文章发展上,就是多“一般特殊型”的语篇思维模式,即先概括后具体。这一段落中的第一、二句是概括,第三、四、五句是例子,用例子来解释说明第一、二句所概括的意思。

一般特殊型思维模式在英语中十分普遍,在自然科学、社会科学的论说文中比比皆是。其特点是先把要表达的思想概括成段落的主题句或全文的立论句,然后举例说明或交代细节。这种常见于论说文中的思维模式是我们中国学生所缺乏的。在阅读中很好地运用这一知识,可以使我们更好地理解句与句、段与段之间的关系。

例 14

Money spent on advertising is money spent as well as any I know of .It serves directly to assist a rapid distribution of goods at reasonable prices thereby establishing a firm home market and so making it possible to provide for export at competitive prices . By drawing attention to new ideas it helps enormously to raise standards of living .By helping to increase demand it ensures an increased need for labor, and is therefore an effective way to fight unemployment .It lowers the costs of many services: without advertisements your daily newspaper would cost four times as much, the price of your television license would cost 20 percent more .

显然,这篇短文运用的是一般特殊型语篇思维模式中的先讲整体轮廓,后讲细节这一形式。作者开门见山地道出了文章的整体轮廓——花钱做广告是值得的,列举了诸多例证——广告所能带来的诸多好处。

2. 因果说明

运用因果说明的手法来安排细节的段落,其写作的目的主要是解释为什么。在阅读时,应注意分辨哪些是“因”,哪些是“果”。作者在运用这一技巧展开段落时,有时先提出一种后果,然后,在扩展句中来分析产生这一后果的原因;有时先提出一个原因,然后在扩展句中分析它将导致的后果。例如:

例 15

Unfortunately, full answers are impossible to give(to the question“ why do people study poetry ?”) . One reason is that poetry has an enormously wide range and serves a variety of interests . Another is that problems which involve cultural values sometimes have less to do with concrete objects, which can be measured and weighed, than with the superiority of certain mental states to others; and such states are notoriously hard to describe . Still a third is that every question about value becomes more deeply implicated in philosophical doubts the further it is pursued . The most that can be attempted in the present chapter is to show that poems, although they may appear to be needlessly indirect and complicated, manage to say things which cannot be said equally well in any other way . Poetry is, in fact, a special mode of discourse, and insensitivity to the mode limits and narrows our consciousness . Learning to read poetry with comprehension is nothing less than a process of discovering additional dimensions in reality . If this thesis can be proved—or, since “ proof ” is next to impossible, rendered antecedently plausible (使……预先看来合乎情理)—the student may be willing to let poems demonstrate their value to him directly .

本段落是以因果说明的方式展开的。第一句是表明结果——这个问题很难作出全面的回答,紧接其后的是原因。原因之一是诗的范围太广,其功用又多种多样;第二个原因是文化价值所涉及的常常不是可以直接度量的具体事物,而是某些精神状态的优劣比较;第三个原因是任何有关价值的问题,一旦深入讨论,都易于陷入哲学上的怀疑。段落接下来的内容是在回答“那么为什么又要研究诗歌呢”这一问题,因此又是针对这个问题的原因。为什么要研习诗歌?因为诗歌所表达的东西常常是用别的方式无法替代的。诗是种特殊话语方式,对这种方式不敏感会限制我们的思维,使之变得狭隘。因此学会读通诗的过程也就是学会多方位地观察世界的过程。从以上的分析中,我们不难明确各句子间的关系,有些句子之间是平行关系,

有些句子是对另一个句子的进一步说明等等,这样,一段较难的文章也就能理解了。

3. 比较与对比说明

比较与对比说明常共同用于段落中,比较注重说明事物的相似性,而对比则强调事物之间的差异。两者共用,自然能把事物的特点描述得更清楚。运用比较和对比说明时,有时作者是讨论完一个事物的特点,再接着讨论另一个;有时是把两个事物的特征彼此交替讨论。请看以下例文:

例 16

There are two kinds of memory : short-term and long-term . Information in long-term memory can be recalled at a later time when it is needed . The information may be kept for days or weeks . In contrast, information in short-term memory is kept for only a few seconds, usually by repeating the information over and over .

本段落中作者是在说明两种记忆。从 in contrast 可以看出,作者运用的是比较说明的发展段落方式。先说明长期记忆的特点,再说明短期记忆的特点,从中我们可以了解到两种记忆的不同。

例 17

There are two basic ways to see growth: one as a product, the other as a process . People have generally viewed personal growth as an external result or product that can easily be identified and measured . The worker who gets a promotion, the student whose grades improve, the foreigner who learns a new language—all these are examples of people who have measurable results to show for their efforts .

By contrast, the process of personal growth is much more difficult to determine, since by definition it is a journey and not the specific signposts or landmarks along the way . The process is not the road itself, but rather the attitudes and feelings people have, their caution or courage, as they encounter new experiences and unexpected obstacles . In this process, the journey never really ends; there are always new ways to experience the world, new ideas to try, new challenges to accept .

作者在说明主题——有两种方法来看待成长这一主题时,运用的是比较说明方式,尽管是由两个自然段落组成,其主题思想是一个。第一段中作者说明了第一种方式看待成长的特点——通过那些能衡量的、能看得见的成果来说明一个人的成长;第二段通过表层语言形式 by contrast, 引出另一种看待成长的方式,把成长看作是一个过程,这过程很难测定。这种过程不是路本身,而是人们在获得新的经验以及遭遇到障碍时的态度和感受以及他们的谨慎和勇气。通过这两者之间对比,作者说明了主题。

例 18

Defenders of the Corporation—of whom there are many—are fond of quoting the American slogan “ If it ain't broke, don't fix it .” The BBC “ ain't broke, ” they say, by which they mean it is not broken (as distinct from the word “ broke ”, meaning having no money), so why bother to change it ?

Yet the BBC will have to change, because the broadcasting world around it is changing . The commercial TV channels—ITV and Channel 4—were required by the Thatcher Government's Broadcasting Act to become more commercial competing with each other for advertis-

ers, and cutting costs and jobs . But it is the arrival of new satellite channels—funded partly by advertising and partly by viewers' subscriptions—which will bring about the biggest changes in the long term .

显然,这两个段落之间是对比关系,作者运用的是对比手段,来说明两种不同的观点:有人认为 BBC 广播公司不必进行改变(上段);另外一方意见是广播公司必须进行改革,改革是势在必行的。

运用比较和对比展开段落或文章,这种方法所构建的篇章,从语篇思维模式角度去看,我们通常将其称之为匹配比较型语篇思维模式。这种语篇思维模式如同全面提到的一般特殊模式一样,在英语的文章里特别常见,在阅读时,如果我们能辨别出语篇思维模式,就能对文章上下文内容进行猜测,从而加快对文章的整体理解。

例 19

If a nation is essentially disunited, it is left to the government to hold it together . This increases the expense of government, and reduces correspondingly the amount of economic resources that could be used for developing the country . And it should not be forgotten how small those resources are in a poor and backward country . Where the cost of government is high, resources for development are correspondingly low .

This may be illustrated by comparing the position of a nation with that of a private business enterprise . An enterprise has to incur certain costs and expenses in order to stay in business . For our purposes, we are concerned only with one kind of cost—the cost of managing and administering the business . Such administrative overheads in a business are analogous to the cost of government in a nation . The administrative overheads of a business are low to the extent that everyone working in the business can be trusted to behave in a way that best promotes the interests of the firm . If they can each be trusted to take such responsibilities, and to exercise such initiative as falls within their sphere, then administrative overheads will be low . It will be low because it will be necessary to have only one man looking after each job, without having another man to check upon what he is doing, keep him in line, and report on him to someone else . But if no one can be trusted to act in a loyal and responsible manner towards his job, then the business will require armies of administrators, checkers, and foremen, and administrative overheads will rise correspondingly . As administrative overheads rise, so the earnings of the business after meeting the expense of administration, will fall; and the business will have less money to distribute as dividends or invest directly in its future progress and development .

It is precisely the same with a nation . To the extent that the people can be relied upon to behave in a loyal and responsible manner, the government does not require armies of police and civil servants to keep them in order . But if a nation is disunited, the government cannot be sure that the actions of the people will be in the interests of the nation; and it will have to watch, check, and control the people accordingly . A disunited nation therefore has to incur unduly high costs of government .

在这篇文章中,作者为了说明主题——一个处于分裂状态的国家必然要支付过高的行政管理费用,运用比较对比说明的方法构建成了匹配比较型思维模式的篇章,把国家这种状况与

私人企业的状况加以比较(第二段),通过比较指出一家企业的行政管理费用类似于国家的政府管理所用的开支,进而说明主题。

4. 分类说明

采用分类说明的方法展开段落可以把细节交待清楚。运用这种方法,所有细节依次被划分出来。一个综合性的结论被划分成几个部分,然后再依次一级一级地讨论。这样段落的结构自然井然有序,细节寻找起来也自然不费事了。要注意的是在阅读这类段落时,要紧紧把握住文中所做的分项。注意分项下面所涉及到的细节,不要搞错细节之间的关系。有时,作者在分类时,没有明确表明句子分成几项,这时要注意作者运用的一些连接词,通过这些连接词能帮助我们了解到段落展开的思路。例如:

例 20

As the developments of the last 40 years continue to unfold, some patterns are emerging . In my early work, I theorized that computers would, first, change how we do our jobs . In deed, this pretty much dominated computer and automation applications in the 1950s and 1960s . Second, I believed computers would change the kind of work we do—as began to happen during the 1970s and 1980s . Third, I believed the technologies would change the world in which we work . This is the beginning of the next great development in computers and automation, which has already begun in the 1990s .

这一段落中作者把他对计算机所引起的变化的看法分成三项。这里作者运用了连接词,因此辨别起来非常容易。第一,计算机将改变我们的工作方式;第二,计算机将改变我们所从事的工作;第三,计算机将改变我们在其中工作的世界。

例 21

We have learned much in the last 40 years that we can apply to thinking about the twenty-first century . Here are a few of my thoughts:

- It is hard to change old patterns of perception . People see things from a particular frame of reference that they are used to . But much of what they must deal with, especially in information technology, represents radical change, and it is hard for people to step outside and look at it afresh .

- Just because something is technologically possible doesn't mean it will necessarily happen . Many forecasts assume that if something can happen technologically it will happen when it can be done economically . It won't .

- Preconditions are often needed . For example, there is considerable resistance on the part of some doctors to use computers . Once we have a generation of physicians coming out of medical school who have been brought up using computers, however, there will be a completely different approach to medical services .

- Things usually take much longer to happen than you expect them to . Once you have worked out what is possible and figured out what you can do, you think that everyone else will start to do it . However, it often takes much longer for the obvious to happen .

- You cannot anticipate what people will do with a new technology . Until you provide it at the market price, the only certainty is that people will not use a new technology the way you would expect . Therefore, demonstrations, pilot projects, and competition are impor-

tant .

本段落的发展是以分类说明为主,首先作者告诉读者他把技术对世界的影响的看法分成几项。在具体陈述每一观点时,作者没有运用任何连接词语,他是从文章的布局上告诉读者他要陈述的每一观点。作者在具体陈述时,还运用了一些其他的技巧,如在陈述第一个观点时,运用的是因果说明;第三个观点时,运用了列举例证。

5. 定义说明

为了使某一术语或某一概念的内涵充分地表达出来,作者用一段乃至数段文字来为其下定义。

例 22

It is generally understood that a ballad is a song that tells a story, but a folk song is not so easily defined . A ballad is a folk song, but a folk song is not a ballad unless it tells a story . Folk song, then has come to be the inclusive word, covering many varieties of music . For instance, the chanty, a sailor's song of the sea, is a folk song . A spiritual is a religious folk song . The blues, a predominately melancholy type of jazz popular in New Orleans, may be a folk song . In fact, there are folk songs for every occupation—railroading, herding cattle, and so on . To be considered genuine traditional folk songs, they must have oral transmission, continuity, variation, and selection .

本段落是以定义说明的方式展开的。第一句指出了歌谣(ballad)的定义,接着作者借着ballad来定义民歌(folk song),最后综合出真正传统民歌的特质。全文的整体结构清楚明确,意义清晰。

例 23

A “liberated woman” is simply a woman who controls her own life, rather than allowing it to be controlled by other people, traditions, or expectations . A “liberated women” can be found pursuing any line of work, including housework, or no work at all . She may or may not be married; she may or may not have borne children . She may belong to any race; she may have attained any age . She may be poor or wealthy, educated or illiterate . She need have only trait in common with her “liberated sisters”: she makes her own choices, whether they be the colors on her walls or the advanced degrees she seeks . She acts of her own volition, responsible to herself, and not out of fear of what her mother, lover, or neighbor might say .

这一段落中,作者一连用7句话,从多个角度来说明什么是真正的“liberated woman”。

以上介绍的是发展段落的各个技巧。在内容简单、信息少的段落中,经常是运用一种技巧来发展段落。但是较为复杂的文章段落里大多不会只使用一种技巧来完成全文。为了达到不同的目的,配合各种不同的状况,作者可能会运用多种技巧,因此我们在阅读时,要注意辨别。例如:

例 24

Under these circumstances, the people who are to be happy fix their attention on the conveniences of things, the pleasant parts of conversation, the well-prepared dishes, the goodness of the wines, the fine weather . They enjoy all the cheerful things . Those who are to be unhappy think and speak only of the contrary things . Therefore, they are continually