



On the Five Elements of Writing English Sentences

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Abstract--There are many elements that make up a good English article, but the quality of sentence writing is the most important criterion for evaluation. Sentence is the most basic unit for expressing ideas in an article, therefore, the accuracy of sentence writing directly affects the quality of the article. This article mainly discusses the writing skills of English sentences from five aspects: conciseness, diversity, coherence, unity, and dominance, in order to help students further improve their English writing ability.

Keywords-- conciseness, diversity, coherence, unity, dominance



I. CONCISENESS OR BREVITY

For some students, due to objective limitations such as the amount of vocabulary, reading comprehension, and the scope of knowledge, choosing easy-to-understand vocabulary and concise sentence structures to express ideas in English writing is an effective way to achieve twice the result with half the effort. The use of concise language to express ideas is also a necessity in modern life. The pace of life in today's society is accelerating, and language expression should also keep pace with the times. "With the increasingly detailed division of labor in social professions and the increasing level of automation, in order to adapt to the accelerated pace of social life, people's language use is becoming increasingly concise."^{[1]28}. From this perspective, the conciseness or brevity of language expression has become an important principle that people follow. In this regard, students can read more of Hemingway's works and learn from his "telegraph style" literary style. His vocabulary is simple and easy to understand, his sentences are short and concise, and there are few modifiers, but they are full of energy, emotions, and profound meanings. When Hemingway was a journalist for *The Star*, he wrote in a

corner of his desk, "Use more verbs and nouns, less adjectives and adverbs, more simple sentences, and less compound sentences" to exercise his concise language expression ability.

Specifically, how to achieve conciseness in language expression? Firstly, overly formal phrases can be transformed into words, such as "For the reason that Elizabeth was ill, she didn't finish her work on time". "For the reason that" can be replaced with "as". In this way, the meaning remains unchanged and the semantic expression is more concise. Secondly, clauses can be transformed into phrases, such as "When he pushed the door open, Dr. Smith saw a group of young people waiting for his coming". This sentence can be changed to "Pushing the door open, Dr. Smith saw a group of young people waiting for his coming". Furthermore, unnecessary compound sentences can be transformed into simple sentences, such as "Nowadays there are a lot of college students who want to go abroad for their further study". This sentence can be changed to "Nowadays, a lot of college students want to go abroad for their further study". Finally, to avoid semantic duplication, some redundant vocabulary should be removed, such as "In

my opinion, I think the problem is very serious." In my opinion "and" I think "should only be kept one.

II. VARIETY OR DIVERSITY

The conciseness mentioned earlier is not contradictory to the diversity discussed here. The conciseness of language refers to the use of no redundant words in language expression. As long as the meaning is clear, phrases are not used where words can be used, and sentences are not used where phrases can be used. Conciseness does not equate to simplicity, and there are differences between conciseness or brevity and simplicity. Who can say that Caesar 's concise and clear words "I came, I saw, I conquered" are simple? Diversity refers to the diversity of sentence structures. If an English essay uses simple sentences from the beginning to the end, it will be tasteless and lifeless. As is well known, people's minds and thoughts are complex, which makes their lives even more complex. A colorful life requires diverse sentences to describe it. Therefore, "try to achieve sentence structure diversity as much as possible. The combination of long and short sentences can enrich language expression methods, enhance expression effectiveness and the infectiousness of the article" [1] 30. Sentence diversity can be achieved from the following aspects.

1. Changing the beginning of a sentence

Start with an adverb: Tom decided to go abroad, and it was something unexpected.→Unexpectedly, Tom decided to go abroad. Start with an adjective: Daisy was very angry and began to defend her reputation with courage.→Angry, Daisy began to defend her reputation with courage. Start with "unless": He will have to work overtime this weekend, or he won't finish it on time.→Unless he works overtime this weekend, he won't finish it on time. Using non-finite verb: If you want to be a good salesman, much effort is needed.→To be a good salesman, much effort is needed. He has received my letter, and he will send me a sample.→Having received my letter, he will send me a sample.

2. Changing sentence structure

Active and passive sentences: He lacked diligence in his study, so he failed in the exam.→Diligence was lacked in his study, so he failed in the exam. Positive and negative sentences: The story will be firmly kept in my mind.→I will

never forget the story. Normal word order and inverted word order: She didn't realize the importance of English until she went abroad.→Only when she went abroad did she realize the importance of English. Non emphasis sentences and emphasis sentences: Mary broke the glass.→It was Mary who broke the glass.

3. Changing the position of sentence components

He received a second Nobel Prize for his research in 1982, being the first person in the world to receive two Nobel Prizes.→He, being the first person in the world to receive two Nobel Prizes, received a second Nobel Prize for his research in 1982. Or, Being the first person in the world to receive two Nobel Prizes, he received a second Nobel Prize for his research in 1982 .

4. Changing the singularity of sentences, allowing simple sentences, compound sentences,

and complex sentences to coexist

“One thing visitors to London in winter should not expect is warm weather. But this won't spoil your stay. Even if it is raining, or snowing, there's still plenty to do and see indoors. London boasts some of the best museums and galleries in the world and these can be a very good place to retreat to if the weather turns bad”^{[2][13]}

III. COHERENCE

The coherence of a sentence refers to striving for naturalness and smoothness before and after the sentence, and avoiding ambiguity in meaning expression. Semantic coherence is achieved through the orderly arrangement of the various components of a sentence. Chinese is a semantic language that emphasizes the expression of meaning; English is a structured language that emphasizes the rigor of structure. The coherence of sentences can be achieved through the following methods:

1. Adding conjunctions

Professor Jones heard a knock at the door. He asked. Nobody answered.(incoherent) .→When he heard a knock at the door, Professor Jones asked who it was, but nobody answered.(coherent).

2. The reference of pronouns should be clear

His father was a dancer, therefore he also chose it as his profession.(Unclear reference). → His father was a dancer, therefore he also chose dance as his profession.(clear reference).

3. Correct parallel structure

It is better to die on one's feet than live on one's knees.(incorrect). →It is better to die on one's feet than to live on one's knees.(correct). The interview will be about what you are interested in, your abilities, and your aspirations.(incorrect).→The interview will be about your interests, your abilities, and your aspirations(correct).

4. Avoiding erroneous suspension structures

Being the final yearly report, Mr. Swift spared no effort to complete it carefully(incorrect).→As it was the final yearly report, Mr. Swift spared no effort to complete it carefully(correct). After eating our lunch, the driver called us to the bus(incorrect).→After we ate our lunch, the driver called us to the bus(correct).

IV. UNITY

The unity of a sentence means that a sentence can only express one complete meaning, and unrelated content cannot be placed within the same sentence. To achieve sentence consistency, the following aspects can be considered:

1. Removing irrelevant content

“People have certain advantages over animals. First, they are able to make more different sounds so that they are able to speak. If you want to communicate with people abroad, you first have to remove the language barriers there. Second, the thumb gives a person the power to grasp things. Third, a person's combined senses are greater than those of animals. Finally, people live longer than most animals.”^{[2]125} It is obvious that the meaning expressed in the underlined part is not related to the content expressed in other sentences and should be deleted.

2. Avoiding incomplete sentence components

After class, there were a lot of students played basketball on the playground.(incorrect)→After class, there were a lot of students who played basketball on the playground.(correct). For instance, the increase in the cost of buying a house.(incorrect) →For instance, the cost of buying a house has increased.(correct).

3. Removing redundant details

In 1832, when Joseph Andrew, then a young man of twenty-four years who had been living in Concord, came to California, a place of unknown opportunities, to serve as a teacher, he had the qualifications that would make him

equal to this job. This sentence appears bloated and the expression of ideas is not compact enough. It's better to change it to: In 1832, when Joseph Andrew came to California as a teacher, he had the necessary qualifications for the job.

4. Avoiding sentence structure confusion

"Her mother helped her when her new dictionary was lost and she found it a few days later". The two clauses connected by "and" do not have a parallel meaning at the semantic level. To achieve consistency in sentence expression, this sentence can be reconstructed: She lost her new dictionary, but found it a few days later with the help of her mother. Another example: As for most college students, who have succeeded in passing the interview, will have great chances to be employed. The sentence structure is inappropriate and can be rewritten as: Most college students who have succeeded in passing the interview will have great chances to be employed.

V. THE DOMINANCE OF SENTENCES

Increasing the dominance of sentences can be achieved through the following means:

1. End-focus sentence

An end-focus sentence refers to a way of expression where the subordinate clause is placed before the main clause, mainly to create suspense, attract readers' attention, and enhance language expression effect. For example, Although he was interested in English, he finally decided to study computer. Another example : “It is universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.”^{[3]1}. The sentence guided by "that" is the main sentence, and placing it at the end can have a captivating expression effect.

2. Parallelism sentence (progressive method)

Parallelism sentences can achieve a progressive emphasis effect. As the British preacher John Wesley once said, "Earn all you can, save all you can, and give all you can" (desperately earning money, desperately saving money, desperately donating money), he succinctly summarized the Puritan spirit through three parallel sentences. Another example, Dickens used 14 parallel sentences at the beginning of the first chapter of "*A Tale of Two Cities*", revealing a world full of ups and downs and contradictions to the fullest: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of

times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way”^[4]

3. Inverted sentence

There are many purposes of sentence inversion, but the most important point is to strengthen the tone, highlight a certain component, and enhance the effectiveness of language expression. For example, Never have I seen such a good film. This sentence is much more powerful than "I have never seen such a good film". Another example, Gone are the days when the imperialist powers could do as they liked in China. This sentence is much better than "The days when the imperialist powers could do as they liked in China are gone".

4. Repetitive sentence

In Chapter 1 of Part 3 of *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens repeated the word "ghost" eight times, vividly depicting Charles Darnay's dangerous situation and fear at that time: "Charles Darnay seemed to stand in a company of the dead. Ghosts all! The ghost of beauty, the ghost of stateliness, the ghost of elegance, the ghost of pride, the ghost of frivolity, the ghost of wit, the ghost of youth, the ghost of age, all waiting their dismissal from the desolate shore.”^[4]¹²

5. Words, phrases, and structures with emphatic meanings

For example, The driver himself was to blame for the serious accident. Jones is the very person who is fit for the job. Do go to school earlier next time. If ever I don't want to eat anything, please do not force me to do that. It was my uncle who helped me a lot with my English.

In short, the sentences that appear in a good article should have characteristics of conciseness, diversity, coherence, unity, and dominance. These are the fundamental elements that make up a masterpiece and the fundamental requirements for writing good English sentences. The requirements for a good English composition include not only being relevant to the topic, conveying the meaning, using appropriate words, and having correct grammar, but also higher and stricter requirements for writing good English sentences: the

sentence structure should be rigorous, the sentence pattern should be varied, simple sentences and compound sentences should coexist, long and short sentences should be combined, and single sentence structures and similar sentence patterns should be avoided. "Writing good English sentences is a basic and high requirement. On the one hand, English sentences are tightly structured, and on the other hand, they are constantly changing. The rigorous and standardized syntactic form, relatively stable verb collocation, and flexible and diverse expressions make English sentences present a myriad of scenes." ^[5]⁸⁸. Articles written according to such requirements will shine brightly and have a strong sense of "foreign flavor".

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