

语篇的特征和英语基础写作

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摘要 根据语篇的连贯和衔接特征, 讨论了英语写作的原则和方法。实例分析表明: 零乱的语句可以通过衔接和连贯原则组合成语篇, 但语篇的要旨因衔接和连贯的方式不同而迥异。

关键词 英语; 语篇; 连贯; 衔接; 写作

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从近年历次全国大学英语四六级统考结果看, 各校作文平均分一直在 5~7 分徘徊(满分 15 分)^[1], 成为学生失分最多的一个项目。笔者多次参加四六级作文阅卷, 发现许多考生的作文达不到语篇水平, 语言支离破碎, 与写作的一般要求——意义连贯, 表达明确相差甚远。要成功地产出语篇, 首先必须了解语篇的基本特征, 并由此寻求英语写作的原则和方法。

1 语篇的特征

篇章语言学认为, 语言不会以杂乱无章的词句出现, 语篇(text)最基本的特征是连贯(coherence)和衔接(cohesion)。

1.1 连贯

连贯是语篇中各话语交际值(communicative value)之间的联系, 它是通过句子所表示的言外行为(illocutionary acts)所实现的。一个语句(utterance)在具体语境(context)中所体现的价值就是它的言外值。句子之间的言外功能(function)的关系就是连贯的本质所在。请看语言学家常引用的一个例段。

A That's the telephone.

B I'm in the bath.

A O. K.

从语言形式看, A 与 B 的对话是不连接的, 但由于语境清楚, 说话双方均领会到语句的言外力量, 从而弥补了语言成分的不足, 使会话连接贯通。我们不妨填补上有关的言外链, 就会看到其表层的连接关系。

A That's the telephone. (Can you answer it, please?)

B (No, I cannot because) I'm in the bath.

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A O. K. (I'll answer it myself.)

由此可见, 连贯性是句子语义间的连接关系。但有时候这种语义关系需借助语句间的表层连接(即衔接)才能建立。

1.2 衔接

衔接是语篇表层结构成分之间的联系, 语篇的连贯性大多会通过表层的衔接手段 (cohesive devices) 体现出来。

Lord Melbourne, who was Prime Minister when Victoria became Queen in 1837, did not like birdsong and could not distinguish a woodlark from a nightingale. He preferred the singing of blackbirds anyway; best of all he liked the cawing of rooks and could watch them for hours as they circled at sunset. Victoria was surprised by this: she disliked their grating and insistent calling.

这一例段包含了丰富的衔接纽带, 指代明了, 语义连贯一气。

- 1 Lord—Melbourne—Prime Minister—He—he (照应)
- 2 Victoria—Queen—Victoria—she (照应)
- 3 rooks—them—they (照应)
- 4 birdsong—woodlark—nightingale—blackbirds—rooks (词汇连接)
- 5 birdsong—singing—cawing—calling (词汇连接)

韩礼德把衔接手段分成 5 大类, 除上例中的照应(reference)和词汇连接(lexical cohesion)外, 还包括省略(ellipsis)、替代(substitution)和连接词(conjunction)。

A Jane bought a new dress.

B A new dress? (省略)

A Did he say he would come?

B He said So. (替代)

The guests arrived before the sports took place. (连接词)

值得注意的是, 衔接本身不能确保语篇连贯, 它只能给连贯的确立提供依据和手段, 但并非是唯一手段。

2 实例分析

下面将要讨论的是, 如何根据语篇的衔接和连贯原则, 将零散的句子组成篇章, 并考虑不同的组合方式所产生的不同的言外效果。

- 1 Rocks are composed of a number of different substances.
- 2 The different substances of which rocks are composed are called minerals.
- 3 It is according to their chemical composition that minerals are classified.
- 4 Some minerals are oxides.
- 5 Some minerals are sulphides.
- 6 Some minerals are silicates.
- 7 Ores are minerals from which we extract metals.

句子以这样的形式出现, 通常表示彼此独立, 互不关联, 读者也不会寻求其间的联系。若句子以首尾相连(end to end)的形式组合, 即呈现出书面语篇的样式, 于是读者的理解策略被激活, 试图建立句与句的关系, 使语篇产生满意的命题和言外效果, 符合衔接和连贯的要求。

2.1 获得衔接

我们从句 2 开始, 显然它在句 1 中已有预设(presuppose)。句 2 中的 the different substances of which rocks are composed 只是重复了句 1 中的信息, 因而冗余。通过删减多余信息, 我们可以把句 2 改成 These substances are called minerals.

句 3 所涉及的主要是信息的配置。根据布拉格功能语言学派的理论, 一句话按信息的不不同切分为主位(theme)和述位(rheme)。主位即出现在句首的成分, 一般是已知信息(known information)。述位是后置成分, 是新信息(new information)^[2]。此句中的 mineral 在句 2 已有介绍, 属已知信息, 应置句首, 成为 Minerals (They) are classified according to their chemical composition.

句 4~6 均重述了已知信息, 我们不妨用适当的代词予以替换, 成为 Some are oxides, some are sulphides, some are silicates.

在句 7 中, ores 属于新信息, 但却位于句首, 处在已知信息的位置, 显然不合适, 我们把它调整为 Minerals from which we extract metals are (called) ores.

语篇A: Rocks are composed of a number of different substances. These are called minerals. Minerals are classified according to their chemical composition. Some are oxides. Some are sulphides. Some are silicates. Minerals from which we extract metals are called ores.

至此, 我们已在保持原有句子序列的基础上获得了一定程度的衔接, 各句承上启下, 命题(proposition)连接贯通。

2.2 获得连贯

我们来看下列句子: Morgan left at midnight. He missed the train.

如果上述句子出现在语篇中, 读者就会在句子间架起连接的桥梁。

- 1 Morgan left at midnight. He therefore missed the train.
- 2 Morgan left at midnight. Nevertheless he missed the train.
- 3 Morgan missed the train because he left home at midnight.
- 4 Although Morgan left home at midnight, he missed the train.

在此, 句 1 和句 2 以并列方式存在, 各分句所含信息无主次之分; 句 3 和句 4 以从属形式出现, 从句的信息只用于补充说明主句信息, 而不再处于独立状态^[3]。

我们现在回到语篇 A。句 1 和句 2 可以以下列方式组合成一体。

Rocks are composed of a number of different substances which are called minerals.

Rocks are composed of a number of different substances called minerals.

Rocks are composed of a number of different substances (minerals).

可见, 原有的成分越简化, 其表达的命题越次要。

该语篇还有其他组合方式,譬如把句7置于句1~2之后。

语篇B: Rocks are composed of a number of different substances. These are called minerals. Minerals from which we extract metals are called ores. Minerals are classified according to [their chemical composition. Some are oxides, some are sulphides and some are silicates.

这样就改变了语篇的伸展方向。语篇A的伸展轨迹为:一般分类引入 ore 这一主题。在语篇B中, ore 只不过对主题附带说明而已。

我们可以用不同的方法组织语篇,并使其保持衔接与连贯,但不同的篇式其作用也各不相同,转换了配置方式就意味着改变言外功能。换言之,语篇的组合方法影响了其言外效果。虽然不同的篇式“说”的是同一件事,但“做”的却不是同一件事。

3 结束语

人们在交际时能否输出合格连贯的语篇,主要取决于两大因素:各句语义围绕话题展开;句子序列排列条理清晰,结构紧凑,符合逻辑。语篇的结构原则不仅能指导学生有效完成教材所含的连句成篇的训练,而且也能引导他们在实际写作中考虑句子与主题间的关系,克服文不对题的毛病。篇章语言学方兴未艾,它无论在阅读还是写作中,都体现出重大的理论意义和现实价值。

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Abstract: The methodological principles' of English composition are discussed based on the text features: coherence and cohesion. The case study indicates that disordered utterances can be organized into a text according to the text features, and that gists of texts change with the variation in ways of composition.

Key words: English; text; coherence; cohesion; composition