

PREFACE

This book has been written as approved by Ramkhamheang University for the course EN 305: ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING. (การเขียนเชิงการถก) The contents contained herein and the aims are focused on writing paragraphs and compositions, according to the methods of development defined in the course catalogue description: that is, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, and analysis.

As the Lord Buddha said "One who points out an error is the one who points out a treasure", I hope to receive such treasures-- any error in this book--for further improvement.

I would like to thank Dr. Donald A. Leuschel and Mr. Thanom Butra-Ruang for their help in giving advice and suggestions in the preparation of this textbook.

Thanpong Mulsuwan

3 October 1995

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

In the third edition of this textbook, there has also been no revision in any of the ten units, so the students who have the previous edition can continue to use it, However I hope very much that this textbook will be useful for all students who take EN 305

THANPONG MULSUWAN

March 2007

INTRODUCTION

Of the four language skills, writing is probably the most difficult because it is not acquired naturally (as are listening and speaking) nor is it simply the interpretation and understanding of graphic symbols (as is reading). Argumentative Writing (EN 305)--just as business and creative writing--has its own purposes and includes structure and vocabulary that are appropriate to it. Furthermore, argumentative writing has characteristics of its own that differ from those of business and creative writing. The student who wants to know English (not simply pass EN 305) must understand these things in order to get the most out of studying these materials.

Kinds of writing in English

When a person writes, he usually has a reason (unless, of course, he simply doodles while listening to a boring lecture or meeting). This purpose of writing in turn may determine--to some extent, at least--the structure and vocabulary he uses in writing. These three aspects are directly related to the major kinds of writing in English--argumentative, business, and creative writing.

The purpose of argumentative writing is to persuade or convince the reader that the writer's ideas are correct and worth agreeing to. To achieve this purpose, the writer must use sentence structures that are easy to understand. He must furthermore use vocabulary that the reader has little or no difficulty in understanding. Both the structure and vocabulary that the writer

uses are important because he has no opportunity to answer--face-to-face--the questions that the reader has.

The purpose of business writing is clearly stated in the modifier "business." The structure used in business writing is quite standard; in fact, the sentences are almost like formulas. The reader of business writing must understand variations of these standard sentences, but the writer need use only one to indicate his business. The vocabulary used in business writing is also quite standardized and limited. Again, however, the reader of business writing must have a wider vocabulary range than the writer needs.

Creative writing has two major purposes: to entertain the reader or to express personal feelings or ideas. The structure that is used in creative writing is limited only by the infinite possibilities that the language offers. The vocabulary used in creative writing must convey--as exactly as possible--the feelings that the writer wants to express.

Characteristics of argumentative writing

In accordance with its purpose, argumentative writing must be impersonal, thought-provoking, and accurate. These characteristics are obviously different from those of the other kinds of writing. Both business and creative writing are personal (although the "person" in business may be a company). Business writing is never thought-provoking, but those who indulge in creative writing may want their readers to think. On the other

hand, business writing must always be accurate, while creative writing may have nothing to do with facts or truth or even with reality.

Since the purpose of argumentative writing is to persuade or convince a reader, the arguments (or facts) that the writer uses must have nothing to do with himself. This characteristic means that the pronoun "I" should never occur in an argumentative piece of writing. Phrases such as I think that... or I believe that ... are completely out of place because the piece of writing itself is to show what the writer thinks or believes. Furthermore, the reader of argumentative writing is often not interested in the I who writes something argumentative. The most important thing in argumentative writing is the act of convincing or persuading, not the I who does it.

In order to have the reader think, the writer of an argumentative piece of writing must have some thoughts of his own about the subject he wants to present to the reader. This characteristic means that an expression such as Everyone knows that... is completely out of place in such writing. If everyone knows that..., then why does the writer look down upon the reader, who is part of everyone? This characteristic furthermore means that generalities such as Everybody wants money. should not be used. In these cases, the reader says to himself Of course everybody wants money--why should I read any more?

Finally, argumentative writing must be based on factual details. The only way that an intelligent reader will be persuaded or convinced about something is when he has facts that

he can verify for himself or accept because of his background. If the reader is to be persuaded or convinced, he must know, not simply think or believe, that the writer's conclusion is valid. Furthermore, facts that are universally known should not be paraded as if the writer were presenting them for the first time. When a reader picks up a piece of argumentative writing, he wants to learn something new, not simply to encounter a series of sentences that contain only things he already knows.

For the students of these EN 305 materials

Students in any English writing course must be not only aware of but fairly proficient in several things: The ability to write legibly; the appropriate use of vocabulary; grammatical correctness. In addition, students using these EN 305 materials are encouraged to think for themselves and, perhaps more important, learn to evaluate their own writing. Any student who fulfills these conditions will not only pass EN 305 easily, but will also improve greatly in the use of English.

The first thing that strikes the reader of a written assignment is the legibility of the handwriting. Some students hand in assignments that look as if they had been written in a bus with two flat tires that was going over a road full of potholes. When an instructor encounters such handwriting, he is little willing to try to decipher it. Using appropriate vocabulary is the second thing that an instructor notices. For example, several years ago, a student of mine wrote the grammatically

correct sentence My parents have no children. What he meant, of course, was that he and his brothers and sisters were all grown up: there were no "little children" in the family. Finally, as far as grammatical correctness is concerned, a few "minor" mistakes--such as a missing plural-s, i.e., many book--are acceptable, but sentences such as I ever go Chiangmai come already or Tom do work home finish already are easily understandable only to people who speak Thai. These EN 305 materials cannot help the student improve his handwriting, but they will provide some instruction in English vocabulary and structure.

Perhaps more important are the abilities of the students to think for themselves and to evaluate their own writing. These EN 305 materials encourage the development of these abilities because they are not self-instructional: that is, except for the last Unit, no "correct" responses are given. From Unit 1 on, the students are led, little by little, in learning to write argumentative paragraphs and essays. If they fully understand each little bit that is taught and earnestly do the exercises honestly, they will achieve those abilities to a great extent.