



英文寫作秘訣：平行結構 Part A- 什麼是平行結構？

難度：中階

平行結構 Part A- 什麼是平行結構？

這個系列要介紹的是英語的平行結構，將分為五個部分加以說明。

在編修英文稿件時，征文(Uni-edit)的編輯們常需要修正文句，使其符合平行結構的正確用法。正確使用平行結構有助於讀者對文章的理解，不論是對英語母語人士或非母語人士皆是如此。

「平行」這個字是方向相同的意思。我們說兩條路平行，就是說它們的方向是一樣的。在語言上，平行結構意味著使用相同的句型結構和形式；在寫作中使用平行結構，對清楚表達文意來說非常重要。使用平行結構寫作，就是說內容和功能類似的詞彙，應該使用類似的表達方式來呈現。

類似的句型結構和形式上可以幫助讀者更快速地認出內容和功能上的相似性，因此，句中所有的元素、詞語或子句，都應採平行方式排列。

下面我們來看看一些常見的用法以及錯誤：

錯誤：The new regulations could cause problems for both the winners and for those who lose.

正確：The new regulations could cause problems for both winners and losers.

(新條例可能對贏家和輸家可能都會造成困擾。)

解釋：以上錯誤的例句中，在 both 之後的兩個類似元素是‘the winners’和‘those who lose’，但這兩個詞卻是以不同的句型結構呈現，所以會讓讀者覺得困惑。在正確的句子裡，‘winners’和‘losers’則是以相同的結構形式呈現，閱讀上容易許多。

以下是另一個例子：

錯誤：Formerly, science was taught by the textbook method, while now the laboratory method is employed.

正確：Formerly, science was taught by the textbook method; now it is taught by the laboratory method.

(以前，自然科學的知識是用教科書傳授，但現在則是透過實驗操作來教導。)

解釋：錯誤的用法整句讀來給人一種躊躇、畏縮的感覺，好像寫作的人沒辦法決定該用哪一種表達方式，或是不敢使用相同的結構。而正確的用法則顯示出作者明快地決定應該使用哪一種句子結構，在此例句中，‘taught ... the... method’就是重複的平行結構，讓句子更容易了解。

再來一個例子：

錯誤：The doctor recommended a daily intake of 5 mg antibiotic, changing the diet plan, and exercising.

正確：The doctor recommended a daily intake of 5 mg antibiotic, a change in diet, and regular exercise.

(那位醫生建議每天服用 5 毫克的抗生素、改變飲食、和加上運動。)

以及另一個例子：

錯誤：The eruption was slow, continued sporadically, and ended in a catastrophe.

正確：The eruption began slowly, continued sporadically, and ended catastrophically.

(火山一開始以緩慢的速度噴發，然後間歇得持續，最後整個大爆發。)

解釋：錯誤的句子因為使用了不同的結構所以顯得內容連貫性低。正確用法中，一致、重複地使用副詞（也就是‘slowly’, ‘sporadically,’ ‘catastrophically’）讓讀者可以更容易了解文意，同時也讓句子讀起來有韻律感，感覺更順暢。

最後一個例子：

錯誤：My professor has wit, charm, and she has an extremely pleasant personality.

正確：My professor has wit, charm, and a pleasing personality.

(我的教授不僅聰慧、有個人魅力、且性格開朗。)

平行結構有什麼優點？

平行結構適合用來敘述和比較句中的細節，可以能讓內容較易讀易懂。舉例來說，如果我們用特徵項目來形容石頭裡面的不同的礦物質(如豐存度、粒徑、習性)，在用同樣特徵，以同樣敘述順序形容多個石頭的礦物質時，我們就可以使用平行結構的方式來形容每種礦物質的特徵，而不用一直重複說在形容的是哪項特徵。這種敘述方式可以讓讀者較容易攝取提供的資訊。在寫研究論文時，我們也可以將敘述研究結果的段落用平行結構的方式呈現。

Uni-edit English Writing Tip: Parallel Structures Part A – What are they?

Level of difficulty: Intermediate

Parallel Structures Part A – What are they?

This is a five part series about using parallel structures.

While editing English manuscripts, Uni-edit editors often need to correct sentences for correct usage of parallel structures. Correct use of parallel structures makes the writing easier to read and easier to understand for native-speakers of English and for non-native speakers of English.

The word 'parallel' means in the same direction. Two roads are parallel if they run in the same direction. In language, a parallel structure means the words are assembled using the same form. In language, using parallel structures is critical for clear writing. To write using parallel structures means that expressions of similar content and function should be outwardly similar.

The similarity of form enables the reader to recognize more readily the similarity of content and function. All items, phrases, or clauses used in a sentence should be parallel.

Incorrect: The new regulations could cause problems for both the winners and for those who lose.
English corrected: The new regulations could cause problems for both winners and losers.

Explanation: In the incorrect sentence, the items after 'both' are 'the winners' and 'those who lose'; but, these phrases have different structures. This confuses the reader. In the correct sentence, 'winners' and 'losers' have the same structure. This is much easier to read.

Here is another example:

Incorrect: Formerly, science was taught by the textbook method, while now the laboratory method is employed.

English corrected: Formerly, science was taught by the textbook method; now it is taught by the laboratory method.

Explanation: The incorrect sentence gives the impression that the writer is undecided or timid; he seems unable or afraid to choose one form of expression and hold to it. The correct sentence shows that the writer made a choice on how to structure the sentence. The repeated structure is 'the...method'. Although repetitive, the parallel structure makes the sentence easier to understand.

Here is another example:

Incorrect: The doctor recommended a daily intake of 5 mg of antibiotic, changing the diet plan, and exercising.

English corrected: The doctor recommended a daily intake of 5 mg of antibiotic, a change in diet, and regular exercise.

And here is another example:

Incorrect: The eruption was slow, continued sporadically, and ended in a catastrophe.

English corrected: The eruption began slowly, continued sporadically, and ended catastrophically.

Explanation: The incorrect sentence seems disjointed as different structures are used. In the correct sentence, the consistent and repetitive use of adverbs (that is, slowly, sporadically, catastrophically) makes it much easier to understand. This also aids the flow of the sentence.

Here is another example:

Incorrect: My professor has wit, charm, and she has an extremely pleasant personality.

English corrected: My professor has wit, charm, and a pleasing personality.

How are parallel structures useful?

Parallel structure is especially useful for making detailed descriptions and comparisons more readable. For example, if the different minerals in a rock are always described with their features (such as modal abundance, grain size, and habit) in the same order, then parallel structures can be used to describe the features of each rock without repeating the same names for each feature. This allows readers to assimilate the information more easily. It may be helpful to construct successive paragraphs in parallel, especially when discussing results in a research paper.

END OF TIP