提高托福口语发展的策略

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摘 要

本文从托福口语的评分标准作为切入点,结合托福口语考试的任务特点,分析了托福口语评分标准中"发展"这一标准的提高策略,以及实施这些策略的具体方法,避免了考生在不清楚评分标准的情况下准备考试。同时,本文分析了官方提供的满分回答,支撑了这些策略的有效性。

关键词

托福口语,评分标准,发展,策略

Strategies to Improve the Topic Development in TOEFL Speaking

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Abstract

This paper starts with the scoring rubrics of TOEFL speaking with the focus of *topic development*. It further analyzes the strategies that the test takers can employ while preparing and taking the test. Meanwhile, this paper analyzes the sample answer from the ETS, supporting the effectiveness of the said strategies.

Keywords

TOEFL Speaking, Scoring Rubrics, Topic Development, Strategies

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1. 托福口语评分标准中的"发展"

托福网考(TOEFL Internet-Based Test)为网络形式考试,使用英文出题,考试内容包含 4 项(阅读、听力、口语、写作)。其中托福口语共有 4 道题,每道题的满分为 4 分,总分 30 分。[1]

根据托福的官方指南,托福口语考试作为托福考试的 4 个小项之一[2],共有三个评分标准——"表达"(delivery)、"语用"(language use)和"发展"(topic development) [3]。"发展",在官方指南当中被称为 topic development,关注的是学生答题的内容是否符合题目的要求。

虽然托福口语被分为独立口语和综合口语两个部分,但本文将只从独立任务这一角度,分析托福口语评分标准中的发展的定义以及提高策略。托福口语中的独立任务,现指托福口语 Task1,要求考生在答题时完全根据自己的想法、观点和经验进行作答[3]。在回答托福口语独立题时,考生会直接在界面上看到题目,在机器读题后有 15 秒时间准备,45 秒时间回答。

独立任务中的"发展"

如图 1 [4]所示,在托福口语的独立任务当中,"发展"这一评分标准要求考生能够给出清晰的观点 (clearly communicate a point of view),并在给出观点之后给与充足且较好的展开(provide sufficient and well-developed reasons),在表达时能够清晰地展现想法(present a clear progression of ideas)。考生需在想法 呈现过程中清晰地展现其间的逻辑。偶发的小错和信息的缺失不影响最终的得分。

Score	General Description	Delivery	Language Use	Topic Development
4	The response fulfills the demands of the task, with at most minor lapses in completeness. It is highly intelligible and exhibits sustained, coherent discourse. A response at this level is characterized by all of the following:	Generally well-paced flow (fluid expression). Speech is clear. It may include minor lapses, or minor difficulties with pronunciation or intonation patterns, which do not affect intelligibility.	The response demonstrates effective use of grammar and vocabulary. It exhibits a fairly high degree of automaticity with good control of basic and complex structures (as appropriate). Some minor (or systematic) errors are noticeable but do not obscure meaning.	Response is sustained and sufficient to the task. It is generally well developed and coherent; relationships between idea are clear (or there a clear progression of ideas).

Figure 1. TOEFL speaking scoring rubric 图 1. 托福口语独立任务评分标准

Speaking Scoring Rubric

2. 提高托福口语的"发展"的策略

据笔者观察,作为三大评分标准之一,如何能够提高"发展"可能是中国考生在准备托福口语独立任务时面临的最大的困扰之一。本节将从"清晰地表达观点"(clearly communicate a point of view)、"给

与充足且较好的展开"(provide sufficient and well-developed reasons)以及"清晰地展现想法"(present a clear progression of ideas)三个角度,分析提高托福口语独立任务的"发展"的方法。

Task1

Some universities require first-year students to live in dormitories. Others allow students to live off campus. Which policy do you think is better for first-year students and why?

例题 1 [5]

1) 清晰地表达观点(Clearly communicate a point of view)

从笔者自己的经验来看,在托福口语独立任务当中,考生想要做到"清晰地表达观点",需要做到 迅速地明确表明自己对问题的立场,切忌在尚未表明立场前长篇大论。

如上题,若考生的观点为大学要求大一新生住在学校的宿舍是更好的选择,那么考生可以参考以下 两种答题思路:

"Well, I think it's better for the universities to require the first-year students to live in dormitories on campus." 或者:

"Personally speaking, I believe it's better for the first-year students to live in dormitories on campus."

因此,本文建议在进行托福口语日常练习时,参考上文范例思路进行作答,从而在作答初始阶段就 能更加清晰地表明立场和观点。

需要的注意的是,笔者在日常的教学实践中发现,有一部分考生为了节省时间,往往会将自己的观点句说得过于简短,比如: "Well, I agree with the first one." 或者: "Personally speaking, I think the first one is better."这样的答案虽然节省了时间,但是不符合"清晰地表达观点"这一评分标准,得不偿失,考生在考试中应该尽量避免。

2) 给与充足且较好的展开(Provide sufficient and well-developed reasons)

根据笔者的经验,许多考生在面对托福口语独立任务的时候,都会面临如何在短短 15 秒的准备时间内就迅速准备好 45 秒的答题内容这样的苦恼。针对这个情况,本节从 4 个不同的角度,帮助考生提高展开的广度和深度,希望广大考生在备考时做到有章可循,考试时做到充分利用答题时间并且逻辑严谨。

a) 尽可能使用两个理由进行论述

据笔者观察,部分考生在回答托福口语独立任务的时候,因为一时间想不出更多的理由,会只使用一个理由加上较长的论述去支撑。这样的做法固然不会让考生的分数变得特别低,但是官方给出的评分标准,考生在回答独立任务的时候,如果想拿到 4 分满分,需要做到 provide sufficient and well-developed reasons, 注意这里的 reasons 是复数,也就是理由的数量要大于 1。并且,考生需要使答案具有一个 a clear progression of ideas,也就是理由的推进要足够清晰,同样证明了理由的数量需要大于 1。

以官方提供的满分回答(根据官方给出的 benchmark 录音听写所得)为例:

"Uh I think it's better for the first-year students to live on campus rather than off campus. Main reason because they are new to city and it's safer for them to live on campus with more security. Because they don't know much about the city in

the first place. Second of all, it helps them to be more familiar with their surroundings where they have to study. It also helps them to meet new people ... um ... Living in a dorm encourages friendships with people who you might not seem very comfortable with the first time. It helps you meet new people. It helps you interact with seniors if any of them live in your dorm."

在以上范例回答当中,这位考生为"大学要求大一新生住在学校的宿舍里是更好的选择"这个答案提供了3个理由进行支撑: "住校更安全"、"可以帮助学生熟悉周边环境"以及"可以帮助学生认识更多的人"。

值得注意的是,以上的范例回答虽然提供了3个理由,但只有2个理由得到了充分的展开("住校更安全"和"可以帮助学生认识更多的人"),这也符合笔者根据经验做出的判断。根据笔者的经验,托福口语考试独立任务只给考生提供45秒进行回答,在这个时间内,考生很难充分地展开2个以上的理由,所以提供的理由不宜过多,以2个为合适。

b) 丰富细节

根据托福的官方指南[6],考生在完成托福口语独立任务的时候,除了用必要的理由支撑自己的观点以外,还需要使用细节、例子或者其他方式去支撑自己的理由。而根据笔者的经验,什么是"细节",需要使用多少"细节",很多考生可能没有一个清晰的概念。

以上文的例题为例,如果考生的观点是,大学要求大一新生住在学校的宿舍里是更好的选择,理由是住在学校的宿舍更安全(it's safer),那么考生在支撑自己的理由时,可以说:

"Well, I think it's better for the universities to require the first-year students to live in dormitories on campus. This is because it's safer this way. I mean, there are a lot of security guardsmaking regular patrols on campus every day. Plus, everybody needs to show their student IDs to get into the dormitories. In this case, students will feel comfortable in their surroundings."

以上作答由笔者本人撰写,从中黑体字部分可以看出,考生在支撑"住在学校的宿舍更安全"这个理由时,可以使用"学校里每天都有很多保安定时巡逻"以及"所有的学生都需要出示学生证才能进入宿舍"来进行支撑,从而证明"住在学校的宿舍更安全"这个观点的正当性。而提供细节的关键,就是对"安全"这个词做出足够的细化,比如此答案中的"保安"、"巡逻"和"出示学生证"。所以考生在备考托福口语的时候,如果想要充分利用好"细节"这个工具,需要对理由中的关键词做出足够的细化,让它们充分解释和支撑起考生提供的理由。

c) 巧用例子

如上所述,考生在完成托福口语独立任务的时候,可以使用"例子"去支撑自己的理由。而例子篇幅如何,如何才能举出合适的例子,则是考生需要学习的一样技能。

仍然以例题为例,如果考生的观点是,大学要求大一新生住在学校的宿舍里是更好的选择,理由是住在学校的宿舍里更方便(it's a lot more convenient),考生可以使用这样一个例子:

"Well, I think it's better for the universities to require the first-year students to live in dormitories on campus. This is because it's a lot more convenient. For example, during my first year in college, I lived in the dorms on campus. And it only took me around 10 minutes to walk to the classroom buildings every day. So, I was able to save a lot of time on the road."

从以上回答的黑体字部分可以看出,一个好的例子里应该要有充分的叙事元素,其中包括情节、环境(包括时间和地点)、角色以及主题[6]。所以考生在备考托福口语的时候,如果想要充分利用好"例子"

这个工具,在平时的练习中就要时刻积累好自己的故事,用这些叙事元素去丰富自己的故事,让它们支撑起自己提供的理由。

d) 善用对照

自从 2019 年 8 月 1 日以后的托福考试改革之后,托福口语就由原来 6 题版本改为现在我们所知道的 4 题版本,独立任务由原来的 2 题改为了现在的 1 题。[7]而这唯一的一道独立题,是要求考生在两种情况、行为或观点中,选择自己倾向的那一个。这就让 contrast(对照)这个方法显得特别的实用[7]。

仍然以例题[8]为例,如果考生的观点是,大学要求大一新生住在学校的宿舍里是更好的选择,理由是住在学校的宿舍里可以帮助学生省钱(it can help students save some money),考生就可以这样证明自己的观点:

"Also, it can help students save some money. You know, if students live on campus, they can eat in the cafeterias and snack bars on campus every day. However, if they live off campus, that means they will have to eat in restaurants or order take-outs all the time, and that is definitely more expensive than eating on campus."

从以上回答的黑体字部分我们可以看到一个明显的对照。这位考生认为住在学校里可以帮助学生省钱,而支持他的观点的是在学校里吃饭可以省钱,因为住校的学生一般去学校里的食堂(cafeteria)或者小吃店(snack bars)吃饭,而住在校外的学生一般去餐厅(restaurant)吃饭或者点外卖(order take-outs),所以一定比学校里吃饭要贵(more expensive)。

所以考生在备考托福口语的时候,如果想要充分利用好"对照"这个工具,在平时的练习当中就要时刻注意题干当中的两个选项各自的优点和缺点。既然两个选项互为表里,那么选项 A 的优点一般就是选项 B 的缺点,从这个角度出发,很容易就能够展开论述。

3) 清晰地展现想法(Present a clear progression of ideas)

从官方指南来看,考生在参加托福口语考试,回答问题时需要"清晰地展现想法"。具体地说,考生的回答要有连贯性,做到前后不矛盾(coherent);并且,考生的回答要能够展现出想法之间清晰的联系或推进 (relationship between ideas are clear or there's a clear progression of ideas)。从这个角度来说,考生要做到"清晰地展现想法"难度并不大,如果考生能够提供原因能支撑观点,关于原因的所有展开内容能够证明原因,原因之间并没有相互矛盾的地方,一般就不会有太大的问题。

以上题的参考答案为例(笔者撰写):

"Personally speaking, I believe first-year students should live on campus.

This is because it's safer this way.

I mean, there are a lot of security guards making regular patrols on campus every day. Plus, everybody needs to show their student IDs to get into the dormitories.

In this case, students will feel comfortable in their surroundings.

Also, it can help students save some money.

You know, if students live on campus, they can eat in the cafeterias and snack bars on campus every day.

However, if they live off campus, that means they will have to eat in restaurants or order take-outs all the time, and that is definitely more expensive than eating on campus."

从以上的参考答案来看,答案的两个理由同为"大学一年级学生住校"的优点且没有相互矛盾("住校更安全"和"住校更省钱"),且所有的细节都能够支撑两个理由(详见上文),做到了前后一致,关系清晰。

同时,根据以上回答可以推出,在整个回答的内里逻辑正确的情况下,考生可以额外利用一些逻辑连接词来为自己的答案润色。比如在考生提出观点的时候可以说 personally speaking,给出理由时可以说 because,在提供具体的解释和细节的时候可以使用 I mean 或者 you know,在作出结论的时候可以说 so 或者 as a result. 使用这些逻辑连接词的原因是这些逻辑连接词可以使整个答案变得更加清晰易懂,降低考官理解答案的难度[9]。

3. 官方满分示范与考官点评

在本文的最后,笔者希望用官方提供的满分回答,辅以官方提供的考官评价,为各位读者分析,一个满分回答在"发展"上的全貌。

"Uh I think it's better for the first-year students to live on campus rather than off campus. Main reason because they are new to city and it's safer for them to live on campus with more security. Because they don't know much about the city in the first place. Second of all, it helps them to be more familiar with their surroundings where they have to study. It also helps them to meet new people ... um ... Living in a dorm encourages friendships with people who you might not seem very comfortable with the first time. It helps you meet new people. It helps you interact with seniors if any of them live in your dorm."

我们再来看一下考官的评价:

"... In general, the response is well developed. The speaker clearly states his/her opinion and provides several reasons for his/her point of view. He/ She then explains each reason in varying degrees of detail. There is a clear progression of ideas and an ease of presentation typical of a level 4 response."

以上的文字表明了考官认为这一个典型的满分回答。考官认为这位考生清晰地表达了自己的观点 (I think it's better for the first-year students to live on campus rather than off campus), 然后提供了几个理由来支撑自己的观点(safer, be more familiar with their surroundings, meet new people)。并且,这位考生还用了详细程度不一的细节分别解释了这几个理由。比如,针对"safer"这个理由,考生用了学校里有更多的安保措施(more security)和学生对校外情况并不了解(they don't know much about the city in the first place)予以支撑。另外,针对 meet new people 这个理由,考生说学生们可以和那些一开始不喜欢的人都成为朋友(Living in a dorm encourages friendships with people who you might not seem very comfortable with the first time)。最后,考官认为这位考生清晰地展现了自己的想法,是一个典型的满分回答。

4. 结论

本文主要介绍了托福口语三大评分维度其一的"发展",并从三个角度——"如何清晰地表达观点"、"如何给与充足且较好的展开"以及"如何清晰地展现想法"——充分展开说明了本维度的提高策略,希望能够帮助广大托福考生提升考试成绩。在"如何清晰地表达观点"方面,本文说明,考生需要在答题的初始阶段就清晰地表明立场和观点,不能含糊其辞。在"如何给与充足且较好的展开"方面,本文主要给出四个建议:考生应尽量两个理由支撑回答,提供丰富的细节,使用详细的例子以及善于使用对照。而在"如何清晰地展现想法"方面,本文也说明,考生只需要内在逻辑紧密,前后不矛盾,且使用丰富的连接词即可。

毋庸置疑的是,本文以理论分析为主,缺乏数据支持和实证研究,后续其他研究可以从实证研究方向进行论证。

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