

福建省教育厅社会科学研究项目成果 (JBS07096)

# Rhetoric

in the Perspective of  
Cross-cultural Communication

## 跨文化交际视域下的 修辞学

◎吴克炎著

 北京理工大学出版社  
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## 内 容 提 要

英语修辞和汉语修辞是两个不同的概念,如何在两者之间寻求一个结合点就成了一个重要的研究课题。本书以跨文化交际为视角,以修辞效果为契合点,从修辞定义到论证过程都贯穿将两者有机结合这一思想。全书在充分对比研究英汉修辞、提供修辞基本研究框架的基础上,十分注重修辞的应用研究。由于双语转换过程中的句式语词选择以及文化意象转换大多数都涉及修辞现象,深入分析修辞效果遗失与保持的根本原因,能够促进对英语写作、英汉互译的深层理解,并且做到知其然而且知其所以然,特别有助于指导如何处理翻译过程中“形式与内容”之间的矛盾。此外,本书倡导“快乐修辞”理念,其例证有别于传统修辞著作,大部分是源自于生活的实例,与现实生活更加紧密结合;每个实例都有针对性的分析,更具阐释力,更具吸引力,更具生命力。全书用英语写作,适合具有一定英语基础的学习者学习,也适合作为修辞学教材使用。

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## 序

吴克炎老师于 2009 年 9 月来北京大学,系教育部高等学校青年骨干教师国内访问学者,我是他高访期间的导师。他来北大后,跟我谈起此书写作设想以及相关的前期准备工作与前期写作情况。我们曾就一些具体的写作细节做过讨论。克炎老师勤于动脑,思维敏捷,能够提出一些新颖的学术观点,而且工作特别刻苦,大部分时间都“泡”在图书馆里。今年 3 月,他完成了本书初稿,5 月嘱我作序,故勉力拟文如下。

纵观全书,我觉得《跨文化交际视域下的修辞学》有三个特点值得一提。

首先,全书的着眼点比较独特,指明是要从跨文化交际的视域探讨修辞学。因此,作者所探讨的修辞学习的根本目的定格在如何提高跨文化交际能力上面。说得更具体一点,他这本书的主要目的是要提高有关读者的英语写作和英汉互译的能力。作者将修辞定义为论题确定与语言润色之艺术,并专辟一章讨论对英语作文起重要作用的“修辞发明”,这对于改善我国修辞学不注重修辞发明、EFL 学习者不擅于修辞发明的现状,显然是有助益的。此书对消极修辞和积极修辞都做了深入的研究。在讨论积极修辞时,作者以修辞效果在英汉转换过程中的保留程度作为分类标准,分成大体可保留、部分可保留、大体不可保留 3 类。由于双语转换过程中的句式语词选择以及文化意象转换大多数都涉及修辞现象,因此深入分析修辞效果遗失与保持的根本原因,有助于译者合理选择翻译对策,并且能够知其然而且知其所以然。显然,这对于解决英汉互译过程中的某些难点问题是有借鉴作用的。

其次,本书采用认知语言学的核心理论来指导修辞现象的分析。作者从心理学借来“联想链”这个概念,深入分析人类认知过程中如何借用喻体或代体将抽象化为具体、将平淡化为形象、将复杂化为简单这一有力手段,从而提高读者的解读能力和自我表达能力。本书还指出,英语拉丁希腊词源的词汇生成是一个隐喻过程,从隐喻这个角度来学习相关词汇能提高词汇识记、辨析能力并促进产出性词汇增长,克服“高原现象”。

再次,全书采用英汉对比的方法,试图通过对比加深读者的鉴定性及认知

敏感性，从而提高他们的语言实际应用能力。全书配有 10 个表格，对英汉喻体等许多方面做了描述，增强了对比出真知的实效。

除上述 3 个特点外，本书还倡导“人生大爱+快乐生活”的理念，以便让学习者受到精神洗礼。比如呼告实例中选取了汶川大地震之后母亲对遇难孩子的深情呼唤，在反复辞格中选取了反战歌曲，在多次“Tell me why...”反复中呼唤人间大爱。作者强调人生的价值在于“被需要”，在于拥有一份真爱。

此书例证有别于传统修辞著作，大部分来源于生活实例，现实性较强。书中的许多内容紧扣跨文化交际问题，如冷战时期北约描述苏联的“iron fence(铁幕)”的修辞话语等。书中的实例有较强的针对性，在阐释解说方面，作者亦颇用心思，这也是值得推荐的。

愿吴克炎老师百尺竿头，更进一步。

辜正坤

2010 年 5 月于北京大学外国语学院  
世界文学研究所



## Foreword

Rhetoric, which strikes many as an abstract concept and suggests a difficult course to a lot of EFL learners, is a bit faraway from the daily life but in fact pervasive in our life.

It is concerned not only with the art to explore the theme and to choose or create the best and strongest expression, including passive rhetorical devices and active rhetorical devices (also called figures of speech), but with an essential way of *cognition*, so much so that it functions as an important aid to us in our search for *more efficient learning and a better life*. The acquisition of basic skills of rhetoric would make us *more reasonable, more humorous and more comprehensive of the life*, enabling us *to lead a happier life*. Therefore, this book offers many examples from or about the daily life. Certainly, some examples from the latest newspapers and magazines, the real practice of translation (one significant form of cross-cultural communication), and literary works (artistic description of life, esp. from the actors' lines) are also indispensable. We hope that the examples are a great help for understanding the art and the cognitive process.

English and Chinese have similar skills to make our daily communication productive, either in speech or in writing, but they often differ in the detailed contents. Therefore, we should make a contrastive study of them. As we know, contrast assists us to have a profound probe into rhetoric. Moreover, English majors in China are mostly in great need of not only English but also Chinese rhetoric (many learners believe rhetoric is equal to figures of speech). Yet, we do not attach the same importance to them, but give a bit higher priority to English forms. We first study the English passive rhetorical devices and Chinese forms, and then move to English active rhetorical devices and Chinese forms. The discussion of the passive rhetorical devices contains some new ideas already accepted by journals and the classification of active rhetorical devices is creative, because it is for the first time

applied according to the retaining level of rhetorical effects in the cross-cultural communication.

We may meet many terms, but we do not need to take them as the focus, for what matters is the application of the skills. Sometimes the term may be a bit annoying, as the result of different opinions from scholars. In some cases, English has a subdivision of one device, yet Chinese not. For example, “zeugma,” “syllepsis” equal to Chinese “拈连.” In other cases, one English device may have several Chinese equivalents. For example, “metaphor” refers to “暗喻,” “借喻,” “潜喻（拟物）,” “缩喻” and “隐喻”; “metonymy” to the traditional names “换称,” “借代” and the modern names “转喻,” “换喻”; climax to “递进,” “递升,” and “阶升”; anticlimax to “递降” and “渐降”; oxymoron to “经警” and “矛盾修饰法”; antithesis to “对偶” and “平行对照.” Besides, two parallel constructions of relating ideas are treated as “parallelism” in English but not in Chinese; and antithesis refers to parallel constructions of contrasting ideas only but “对偶” to those of relating or contrasting ideas. For easy reference a bilingual glossary of terms is offered.

What we need to do is apply what we learn into practice. We should exert great efforts to enable ourselves to appreciate the rhetorical attraction in our lives, enhance the cross-cultural communicative competence in writing and translating and become a happy person (here “we” includes all who are interested in English, esp. the college students and the middle-school English teachers).

A special thank is extended to Prof. Liu Yameng for his encouragement and improvement of the design of the book. To Prof. Gu Zhengkun, who helps solve many problems in the process of writing and write the preface, I owe a special debt. Finally, I am indebted to Prof. Li Guonan, Prof. Zuo Biao and Prof. Zheng Shengtao, who help improve the book greatly and I also wish to express my appreciation to those colleagues whose writings have influenced my thinking in the composition of this book.

WU Keyan

Zhangzhou

April, 2008

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# Chapter One



## Introduction

### I. Definitions of rhetoric

People have various ideas of rhetoric and give diverse definitions, just as a flower has different photos from different perspectives.



#### A. Denotation of rhetoric

*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (OALD for short) (Wehmeier, 2004: 1097) declares that rhetoric is the skill of using language in speech or writing in a special way that influences or entertains people. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (Gove, 2002:1946) describes it as the skill in the effective use of speech.

#### B. Connotation of rhetoric

Rhetoric, derived from the Greek word "rhetorike," which was first created by Plato (427—347 B.C.) in his *The Dialogues*, refers to the art (-ike) of speech (rhe-). Yet the rhetorical practice and study came into being before the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. in

ancient Greek, where democracies were established and the art of speaking in the law courts was a great necessity. Gorgias(480?—380? B.C.), for example, had put forward the concept of artifice of persuasion, although he did not use the term “rhetoric.”

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., Aristotle (384—322 B.C.) defined rhetoric as “the faculty of discovering in the particular case what are the available means of persuasion” and first systematized rhetoric into a unified body of thought. His *Rhetoric* is often considered the foundation of the discipline of speech communication (Foss et al, 1991: 4). From then on, five canons—invention, disposition, elocution, memorization and delivery were continually discussed and perfected. They respectively refer to “the art of discovery, the art of organizing one’s material, the art of clothing ideas with words, the art of recalling ideas and images and the art of oral presentation.” (Golden et al, 2000: 3)

Later, the art of expressing oneself well came to be understood as the ability to write or speak well in ornate, showy language. Nowadays, more and more people have come to regard rhetoric as the art of effective communication making full use of language (郭秀梅, 1985: 2). It becomes the art of identification (Burke, 1969: 19–31). According to A. C. Winkler (1988: 4), rhetoric is the art of putting one’s idea in the strongest and best possible way. Mr. Hu Shuzhong (胡曙中, 2004: 2) holds that rhetoric is the faculty of human communication by using codes.

From above, it can be found that “art” or “skill” is the key word for the meaning of rhetoric, which focuses on the discovery of theses and on whether the expressions are nice or poor. It has something to do with grammar, but more often, it is the deviation of grammar, which refers to the rules of how words are combined together into sentences and is mainly about whether the expressions are right or wrong.

Although ancient western rhetoric covers invention, disposition, elocution, memorization and delivery and focuses on debate (刘亚猛, 2004: preface) and some scholars propose a rhetorical research in a broader sense (谭学纯, 2004: 2), the author of this book may simply define rhetoric as the art of polishing in that this book doesn’t aim at profound theoretical study, but at beneficial applied research. It includes the art of discovering proper theses and finding suitable perspectives to discuss in speech or composition (what to say) and that of choosing or creating the best and strongest expression (how to say it). In other words, it focuses on the

exploration of themes and the polishing of language.

Since the art of rhetoric focuses on whether the expressions are nice or poor rather than right or wrong, it stands to reason that the discussion of what are nice expressions is essential.

### **C. Six basic features of good expressions**

Clearness, unity, force, variety, euphony—these are the elements that critics agree are fundamental to effective expression (Zeiger, 1978: 341–42). This is a proper principle for English writing, but it is too general for good expressions in the learning of rhetoric in the perspective of cross-cultural communication. Thus, the author of this book gives a specific one as follows:

Good expressions are basically characterized by brevity, clarity, freshness, elegance, beauty and expressiveness and people would like to make their expressions brief, clear; fresh, elegant; beautiful and expressive. Humor is also considered an important feature, yet it often overlaps some other aspects and it is a high requirement. Therefore, we treat it as a rhetorical effect instead of a characteristic.

#### **1. Brevity**

Shakespeare once said, “Brevity is the soul of wit.” To be brief, people may use many short but ungrammatical expressions to save time and efforts, or rather, to be unconsciously in accordance with the economy principle in language or Zipf’s Principle of Least Effort.

Suppose a young child sees a duck in the lake and becomes rather excited, he may cry out “Duck, Duck” instead of the grammatical saying “I see a duck in the lake.” A short conversation from the film of “The Dark Knight” is also self-evident:

Batman: Beautiful, isn’t it?

Lucius Fox: Beautiful. Unethical. Dangerous. You have turned every cellphone in Gotham into a microphone.

Batman: And a high-frequency generator-receiver.

Similarly, a mother in China would say to her baby running a few steps before her, “车！车！眼睛！眼睛！” when a car runs towards him, instead of saying “车开

过来了，眼睛要看路。” These examples are so common that we usually overlook them. For instance, we often say “Good morning!”, “Good-bye” (shortened from “May God bless you so that I can see you again”), “食堂吃腻了，想吃饭店” and so on.

This principle tells us that people tend to cross out the unnecessary words or take the conventional shortest expressions in a certain context, but it does not defy the usage of repetition, an intentional reappearance of words for the sake of emphasis. For example, English native speakers would like to use “You are cleverer and cleverer” to show their appreciation of others’ smartness, and “He has committed the crime of crimes” to stress the seriousness of his crime. Likewise, Chinese people also often repeat the key words for emphasis, for instance, “你真是英雄中的英雄。”

## 2. Clarity

Clarity is an important factor ensuring the acceptance of speech or writing by listeners or readers. To achieve clarity, speakers or the writers tend to use accurate expressions (to be analyzed in Chapter 4) and follow the rule of prominence, that is, to place the main information in the prominent places, mainly at the beginning or at the end. Besides, emphatic words and phrases and the cleft sentences are often applied.

The comparison of the following groups of sentences can help expound the principle:

- 1) ① Lily is polite and beautiful and is a popular student.
- ② Polite and beautiful, Lily is a popular student.
- ③ Lily is a popular student, polite and beautiful.

Sentence ① is a plain statement about Lily and nothing is emphasized, while sentence ② purposefully moves “polite and beautiful” to the beginning and sentence ③ to the end. By doing so, the phrase is emphasized and the sentences make a clearer impression of “her popularity as a result of her politeness and beauty” on the readers.

### 2) Conversation on campus:

—怎么啦?

—那片肉吃得我心惊肉跳.

Cf.:—我吃那片肉吃得心惊肉跳.

Putting “那片肉” at the beginning, although illogical, lays emphasis on the

cause for “my” fear, with the unknown information mentioned before the known “I,” and clearly shows the problem. Such examples abound in our life as “那本书读得我晕头转向” and “起来，不愿做奴隶的人们。”

3) This is the book my father has been looking for.

Cf.: This is the very book my father has been looking for.\*

With the underlined emphatic “very,” readers know the real significance of the book to “my” father and his probable excitement. Apart from “very,” English has such emphatic words and phrases (to name just a few): do, by far, not at all, on earth, to the death, to the end of time, to the core, to the minute, to one’s heart’s content, under the sun, not to mention, believe it or not, sink or swim, rain or shine, rather than (For details, please read 吴克炎, 2004: 94; 2005a: 68; 2005b: 541–42).

4) Jane was fired because she was late again.

It was Jane who was fired because she was late again.

It was because she was late again that Jane was fired.

Placing the subject “Jane” or the adverbial clause “because she was late again” on the emphatic position, the cleft sentences have offered the emphasized message on “who” or “why.”

On the other hand, we have three exceptions. *First*, when people have to talk about something embarrassing, displeasing or offensive, they are likely to take the strategy of pragmatic vagueness by using mild, vague or indirect words or phrases. For example:

① It is better to keep calm in the face of danger than to behave wildly.

In western society, it is often impolite to give acquaintances direct orders or derogative suggestions (吴克炎, 2005c: 763; 赵湘, 2006: 73), so western people usually do not say “Don’t behave wildly in the face of danger but keep calm,” for it is against the western individualism—they believe that they know what they should do and what not.

② It’s the answer spoken by young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white, Latino, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled and not disabled—Americans who sent a message to the world that we have never been a collection of Red States and Blue States: we are, and always will be, the

\* This book takes underlining or italics to show the emphasized English words and expressions in the illustration and underdotting or blackening to state the emphasized Chinese words and expressions in the illustration.



United States of America.

—Obama's Presidential Victory Speech on Nov. 4, 2008

Obama, in his speech, mentioned all walks of American people, from the perspectives of age, wealth, party affiliation, race, sex affiliation and health, among which whether a person is homosexual or not is not often talked about. He did, but in a vague form: gay and straight, instead of homosexual and heterosexual. After all, being attracted to people of the same sex is not reckoned as honorable conventionally. In China, “同志,” which once referred to revolutionary companions, has been utilized to indicate the homosexuals.

③ 放水啦.

This euphemistic saying for “urine” is used very frequently in the sports field now. If people say “故意让球” (concede a goal), it sounds embarrassing, but “放水” sounds interesting and less displeasing.

In some context, people would like to mention something in roundabout ways. The usage of the device of periphrasis may sound less offensive or bring about humorous effect. The story of “名落孙山” is self-evident: Sun Shan was the last name on the scholarly honor list and those below him failed. Such indirect way lessens the harm to the receivers of the failure news. To mention that Japanese frequently bow, people may humorously say, “After three days in Japan, the spinal column becomes extraordinarily flexible.”

**Second**, ambiguity is what we should avoid, as we know, but active ambiguity is often applied to create humorous effect. E.g.:

① Next to a beautiful girl, sleep is the most wonderful thing in the world.

② —I would like a book, please.

—Something light?

—It doesn't matter. I have a car with me.

③ A bicycle cannot stand on its own because it is two-tyred.

The three examples make full use of the device of “pun,” which is an important form of active ambiguity. In sentence ①, “next to a beautiful girl” refers to either “being inferior to a beautiful girl” or “beside a girl.” The implication may give readers a sense of humor. In sentence ②, “light” is ambiguous with two meanings: not serious and not heavy. The different references result in the theatrical effect. In sentence ③, the homophone of “two-tyred” and “too tired” creates the cute saying. After all, getting to know the implied meaning is an essential source of pleasure