

# FIGURES OF SPEECH 英语修辞格

冯翠华编



商务印书馆

# FIGURES OF SPEECH

With Exercises

by

FENG CUIHUA

The Commercial Press

1983, Beijing

DW 18/25

**英语修辞格**

冯翠华

---

**商务印书馆出版**

(北京王府井大街38号)

**新华书店北京发行所发行**

**六三印**

统一书号: 9017·1301

---

1983年7月第1版

开本 787×1092 1/32

1983年7月 第1次印刷 字数 85千

印数 80,000册 印张 3 1/2

定价: 0.40元

## 前 言

“修辞”的定义很多。有人认为它是语词的选择与修饰，有人力求给以较科学的界说，把它说成是语言的同义表达形式的探求。当然，这些都是对的。为了明确易懂，我们不妨把它解释为“说话的艺术”。要表达一个思想，可以有多种不同的方式，而其效果常常差别很大。因此，要使语言的表达更为准确、鲜明、生动、有力，我们必须讲求修辞。古人就曾说过：“言之无文，行而不远”（《左传·襄公二十五年》）。我国梁代刘勰所著的文学批评著作《文心雕龙》和现代陈望道所著的《修辞学发凡》都对修辞作了精到的研究。在西方，古希腊人十分重视演讲在政治生活中的作用，他们自然对修辞也下过一番功夫。近年来，修辞学在各国都有了新的发展，它已成为大学里的一个专门学科。

修辞和语言三要素——语音、词汇、语法——密切不可分。风格和文风的形成都和修辞有关。因此，它不是孤立的东西。只有在比较坚实的语言基础上修辞才能产生效果，而通过修辞，人们又提高了对语言的理解与应用能力。为修辞而修辞，必然导致言之无物或无病呻吟。有目的的、适量的修辞是说话行文所必需的。

修辞学的基本内容一般包括两个方面：一是炼字锻句精心组织语言材料，使文字明确流畅、平实严密；一是随景应情运用各种修辞手法，使文字具体形象、新鲜活泼。辞格\*是后一方面的主体。学语言的人必须予以注意，尤其学习文学的

\* Figures of speech, 亦可译为修辞格或修辞方式等。

人对之更不可忽视。应用辞格最多的是诗，因为诗是高度形象化的、表达人们感情的语言，它必须具有强大的感染力。著名美国诗人罗伯特·弗罗斯脱(Robert Frost, 1875—1963)认为真正的诗的核心是隐喻，不善用隐喻，诗人就很难写出好诗来。事实上，不仅诗如此，其它文学品种，甚至科技和哲学著作，也无不赖辞格以说清事理与表达思维精微之处。在日常生活中，我们也不知不觉地大量应用辞格。俚语之所以有时显得生动活泼，也常常在于辞格的巧妙运用。

不确切地或过多地采用辞格，常使文章不必要的趋于藻丽，华而不实。斯威夫特和海明威等著名作家的语言都很少辞格而以平实精炼、生动有力驰名。相反，我国的骈体文和英国十六世纪时以约翰·李利(John Lyly)为代表的艳丽体散文都只能在文坛上昙花一现而很快地为人们所摒弃了。

正确运用辞格并非易事。有些大诗人(如英国的丁尼生)也常常有用得不确当的时候。对于一个初学外国文学的人来说，必要的有关知识和训练就更不可少了。冯翠华同志的这本书，就是为了适应这个需要而写的。它有如下几个特点。首先，本书所论述的辞格，比一般语法书或“作文指南”中的较为全面，解说亦简明扼要。次之，所用例句，在内容和体裁方面很广泛，有代表性：从圣经、莎士比亚等直到当代流行书刊，其中有文学作品，也有政治、军事、哲学和科技等作品。第三，书中附有练习及答案，有利于课堂教学及读者自修。最后，由于英汉辞格的名称及含义并不都是完全对应的，如用汉语阐释，则反易引起理解和表达上的混乱，作者用了简单明白的英语，更便于初学，这个方法也是可取的。

朱树勋

一九八二年三月

## INTRODUCTION

Figures of speech are ways of making our language figurative. When we use words in other than their ordinary or literal senses to lend force to an idea, to heighten effect, or to create suggestive imagery, we are said to be speaking or writing figuratively. For example, it is more vivid and colorful to say that stars "twinkle *like diamonds* in the sky" than to say that they "shine brightly in the sky."

Similarly, "Imperialism is a *paper tiger*" is an expression definitely more suggestive of outward ferocity and inner weakness and, therefore, more forceful than the literal statement "Imperialism appears to be strong but inwardly it is weak," though the idea is essentially the same.

*Like a diamond* is a simile, and *paper tiger* is a metaphor, and with hyperbole, personification, euphemism, and metonymy make up a score or more of figures of speech most commonly used today. Each figure has its own form and characteristic features, and its own way of achieving effect. Sometimes two or more figures are used together to give greater effect.

At one time, figures of speech were mainly associated with poetry and poetic writing, where they are still most lavishly used, but now they can be found in any form of writing—prose, drama, and even scientific writing and advertisements. In fact, effective writing of any kind is seldom without a figure or two, and most writers, whether they be novelists, historians, journalists or scientists, have their own way of weaving figures

of speech into the fabric of their work to form part of their characteristic style. A knowledge of these figures and how they achieve their effect will, therefore, be of help to us not only in deepening our understanding of what we read, but also in appreciating more fully the finer points of a writer's style.

In this book, twenty-six major figures will be discussed in detail, and examples given of their scope and usage. These examples are taken from a wide variety of sources, ranging from classical to modern, from poetry to prose, from fiction to non-fiction. For each figure there are classical and modern examples.

For convenience in study, figures which are closely related are grouped together, and exercises have been set for each group, to facilitate differentiation and discussion. Exercises have been provided for all the figures, except Apostrophe.

Keys to the exercises are given at the end of the book.

Explanations are provided for words or phrases marked with an asterisk(\*).

Finally, I wish to express here my indebtedness to Professor Chu Shuyang (朱树飏) for the advice and encouragement he gave me in writing this book, and especially for personally writing the Foreword to it in Chinese; to Assoc. Professor Liu Yacheng (刘亚呈) for going over the entire draft of the book, offering advice and suggestions for improvement, and providing the Chinese terms for the Figures of Speech; and to all those who, in one way or another, helped in the completion of this book.

*Feng Cuihua*

## CONTENTS

I. Simile 明喻 .....	3
II. Metaphor 暗喻 .....	10
III. Analogy 类比 .....	18
IV. Personification 拟人 .....	20
Exercises on I—IV .....	25
V. Hyperbole 夸张 .....	30
VI. Understatement 含蓄陈述 .....	38
VII. Euphemism 委婉 .....	40
Exercises on V—VII .....	46
VIII. Metonymy 转喻 .....	50
IX. Synecdoche 提喻 .....	53
X. Antonomasia 换称 .....	56
Exercises on VIII—X .....	57
XI. Pun 双关语 .....	59
XII. Syllepsis 一语双叙 .....	62
XIII. Zeugma 轭式搭配 .....	63
Exercises on XI—XIII .....	65
XIV. Irony 反语 .....	67
XV. Innuendo 暗讽 .....	71
XVI. Sarcasm 讥讽 .....	71
Exercises on XIV—XVI .....	74
XVII. Paradox 似非而是的隽语 .....	76
XVIII. Oxymoron 矛盾修饰 .....	78
XIX. Antithesis 对照 .....	81
XX. Epigram 警句 .....	81



Exercises on XVII—XX .....	82
XXI. Climax 渐进 .....	83
XXII. Anti-climax or Bathos 突降 .....	85
Exercises on XXI and XXII .....	87
XXIII. Apostrophe 顿呼语 .....	89
XXIV. Transferred Epithet 转类形容词 .....	89
Exercise on XXIV .....	90
XXV. Alliteration 头韵 .....	90
XXVI. Onomatopoeia 拟声 .....	93
Exercises on XXV and XXVI .....	94
Answers to the Exercises .....	96

## I. SIMILE

### 明 喻

A simile makes a comparison, but is different from an ordinary, literal comparison.

When we say "Jim looks like his brother Billy" we are making an ordinary literal comparison, for

- a) we are comparing two *like* (同样的) elements — Jim and Billy are both human beings;
- and b) we mean Jim is literally like his brother in appearance.

But when we say "Jim and Billy are as like as two peas" we are using a simile, for

- a) we are comparing two *unlike* (不一样的) elements — human beings and peas;
- and b) we don't mean Jim and Billy are literally like peas, but only that they have one thing in common with peas: great similarity in appearance.

A simile, then, is a figure of speech which makes a comparison between two *unlike* elements having at least one quality or characteristic *in common*. The comparison is purely imaginative, that is, the resemblance between the two unlike things in that one particular aspect exists only in our minds, in our "inward eye" and not in the nature of the things themselves. To make the comparison, words like *as*, *as ... so*, and *like* are used to transfer the quality we associate with one to the other. Sometimes the association is between unfamiliar and familiar things, or between abstract and concrete images. The stronger

the association that is felt, the greater the force of the comparison, the stronger the power of suggestion and the sharper the image produced.

E.g.

- 1) And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping *like snail*  
Unwillingly to school ... (Shakespeare)

(An association between the slow pace of the reluctant schoolboy and the snail's crawl.)

- 2) Day after day, day after day,  
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;  
As idle as a *painted ship*  
Upon a *painted ocean*. (S. T. Coleridge)

(An association between the absolute immobility of the becalmed ship on a real ocean and the perfect stillness of a ship in a painting, destined to remain in the same place forever.)

- 3) Records fell *like ripe apples on a windy day*. (E. B. White)

(An association between the rapidity with which records were broken and the rapidity of ripe apples being blown down on a windy day.)

- 4) *As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country*. (Proverbs. 25 — the Bible)

From the above examples we can see that the first simile is apt, the second is strikingly sharp; the third is lively and vivid; the fourth is brief and to the point. In our reading it is the essential quality of the inner association we feel between unlike things that we must learn to grasp before we can truly appreciate the force and beauty of a good simile.

A simile may be as short as two words or as long as a whole verse or paragraph. A long simile, which not only states the comparison but also elaborates it, is called an *extended simile*. Extended similes are often found in poetry, especially classical or epic poetry, and thus are sometimes called Homeric or epic similes. Here is an example from *Endymion* by John Keats:

Nor do we merely feel these essences  
For one short hour; no, even *as* the trees  
That whisper round a temple become soon  
Dear as the temple's self, *so* does the moon,  
The passion poesy, glories infinite,  
Haunt us till they become a cheering light  
Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast  
That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'ercast,  
They always must be with us, or we die.

Similes have three main uses: descriptive, illuminative and illustrative.

*Descriptive.* Pure description of persons, things, places, natural scenery, and action has always been the chief use to which similes have been put. A good descriptive simile can draw sharper pictures in the mind than could possibly be done by any other means, and with much more brevity. For example:

1. Her lips were red, her looks were free,  
Her locks were yellow *as gold*.  
Her skin was white *as leprosy*,  
The Nightmare Life-in-Death was she  
Who thicks man's blood with cold. (S. T. Coleridge)
2. Pop looked so unhappy, almost *like a child who's lost his piece of candy*. (Stefan Heym)

3. ... big black flies hit us *like bombs*. (David Parks)

4. The young moon, recurved and shining low in the west, was *like a slender shaving thrown up from a bar of gold*, and the Arabian Sea, smooth and cool to the eye *like a sheet of glass*, extended its perfect level to the perfect circle of a dark horizon. (Joseph Conrad)

*Illuminative.* While the descriptive simile attempts to draw images of people, things, etc., through figurative comparison, the illuminative simile tries to give deeper insight into persons, things, ideas, even problems, through suggestive association; to throw light, as it were, onto what would otherwise be inconceivable to ordinary people. In this sense it is more difficult to understand than descriptive similes, for it is not so easy sometimes to grasp this *insight* into persons or things, which is so important to fuller comprehension of character or situation. Let us look at a few examples.

1. ... there was a secret meanness that clung to him almost *like a smell*. (Carson McCullers)

(The suggestion of an all-prevailing meanness in the man.)

2. He was *like a cock who thought the sun had risen to hear him crow*. (George Eliot)

(The suggestion of overwhelming conceit in the man.)

3. I learned a great many new words that day. I do not remember what they all were; but I do know that 'mother, father, sister, teacher' were among them — words that were to make the world blossom for me *'like Aaron's rod, with flowers'*. (Helen Keller)

(The suggestion of the magical effect the discovery of language ("words") had on the blind girl: it opened up a whole new world of knowledge and happiness for her. In

the Bible story, God chose Aaron to be his priest by making his rod or stick sprout overnight. "It had budded, blossomed, and produced ripe almonds!")

4. What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up

*Like a raisin in the sun?*

Or fester like a sore —

And then run —

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over —

*Like a syrupy sweet?*

Maybe it just sags

*Like a heavy load.*

Or does it explode? (Langston Hughes)

(The suggestion of what might happen if hopes and dreams are not realized:

- a. they might just wither and dry up;
- b. they might cause pain and suffering and poison one's whole outlook on life;
- c. they might remain sweet memories;
- d. they might remain a burden on one's mind, dull and heavy; or
- e. they might foster resentment and ultimately lead to violence and rebellion.)

5. He (Preble) looked at the clock.

The big second hand was sweeping down *like a guillotine*. (Pat Frank)

(The association here is between the rapid downward movement of the second hand, and the rapid and relentless movement downward of a guillotine on a man's head.

The suggestion is of the relentless passing away of time, every second bringing Preble nearer to his moment of decision.)

From these examples we can see how important it is to grasp the hidden association between unlike things, if we are to fully understand and appreciate an illuminative simile.

*Illustrative.* Compared with illuminative similes, the illustrative simile is relatively easy to understand. Its use is simple: to explain abstract or complicated ideas or processes in simple, concrete imagery. This sort of simile is most often found in discursive writing, or in scientific, technological writing. For example:

1. To release the energy of stores of atoms by bombarding with sub-atomic particles is *like shooting birds in the dark in a country where there are very few birds.* (Albert Einstein, in the early years of his scientific research.)

(To illustrate the great difficulty of releasing atomic energy by bombarding with sub-atomic particles.)

2. So compared with any ordinary beam of light, the laser beam is a very orderly affair indeed. It's *like a military march — everyone in step.* In an ordinary beam, the waves are *like the people in a crowd going to a football match, jostling and bumping into one another.* (*Scientifically Speaking*)

(To illustrate the great orderliness of light waves in a laser beam.)

Having discussed the different uses of similes, it might now be appropriate to consider what makes a good simile. In the words of Dr. Samuel Johnson, "A simile, to be perfect,

must both illustrate and ennoble the subject, must show it to the understanding in a clearer view and display it to the fancy with greater dignity." The examples we have quoted so far largely accord with his idea of a perfect simile, that is, they have the qualities of clarity, and dignity. But we need not agree with Dr. Johnson that to be effective a simile must always *ennoble* the subject. Especially today, when social norms and language norms are changing, and it is considered the thing to be "shocking" and "permissive" not only in manners but in style of writing, very bizarre similes may be found. Take the following, for example:

"Sensitive. That killed me. That guy Morrow was about as sensitive as a *goddam toilet seat*." (J. D. Salinger)

This simile definitely does not *ennoble* the subject but it is no less effective, for it very pointedly suggests that Morrow has as much sensitivity as a crude toilet seat, which has none at all.

Apart from clarity and dignity (dignity here implying heightening of effect) a simile must possess the quality of freshness and originality too. In fact this quality is the hardest to achieve in writing similes, for it takes a very keen eye as well as a very perceptive mind to put together various unrelated elements and come up with clever, suggestive similes. It would be better to avoid using similes if we cannot come up with fresh clear comparisons than to produce trite and hackneyed similes like

as cold as ice

as good as gold

as strong as an ox, or

as cunning as a fox.

At the same time we must also avoid cluttering up our writ-



ing with too many similes, clogging the mind with so many images that nothing stands out.

E.g. The view from the mountaintop was beautiful. Tall trees towered *like pillars to the sky*, while below in the valleys, rivers flowed *like streams of jade*. Flowers, giving off a fragrance *like the incense of the gods*, bloomed in a myriad colors, while the singing of the birds was *like music in heaven*.

Similes are ornaments of prose and, like all ornaments, should be used tastefully and sparingly. They should not be gaudy baubles that repel.

## II. METAPHOR

### 暗 喻

A metaphor, like a simile, also makes a comparison between two unlike elements, but unlike a simile, this comparison is implied rather than stated.

In a simile, the words *like*, *as*, *as ... so* are used to make the comparison, as in

1) Jim was as cunning as a fox.

2) The world is like a stage.

In a metaphor, however, the comparison would appear simply as

1a) Jim was a fox.

2a) The world is a stage.

A metaphor, then, is in a sense a condensed simile, differing from the latter only in form and artistry. It is a higher form, though, and requires greater ability on the part of the