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AN INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH STYLISTICS AND RHETORIC FOR CHINESE LEARNERS

英语文体 与 修辞概论

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警官教育出版社

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一九九八年十月

·北京·

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YINGYU WENTI YU XIUCI GAILUN

黄伟新 Paul Livesey 主编

PREFACE

Life is unfair. A foreigner who speaks a few halting words of Chinese will be an object of surprise and congratulation. For learners of English, however, the situation is very different. Native speakers of English are so used to their language being spoken and written extremely well by foreigners that they tend to be tough in their assessment even of quite competent performance. On the whole, Chinese learners of English have a good reputation. They work hard to master the enormous range of vocabulary and idiom, and some even know more about English grammar than most native speakers do. In pronunciation, English in China has improved tremendously, with the result that Chinese learners who have never been abroad are often easier to be understood than many foreigners who have more experience of an English – speaking environment are. If you are reading this book, you are certainly a very competent performer in English. The main purpose of this book is to help you use your English more appropriately in different situations, to help you go one step further, from textbook/classroom English to "Real English".

To do this, we will introduce to you some basic concepts of English stylistics and rhetoric. In the first part of the book, we focus on the characteristics of major varieties of English, the varieties being distinguished in terms of USERS, USES and USERS' SOCIAL RELATIONS. In the second part, we cover the fundamentals of rhetoric. Choice of words, sentence construction and figures of speech will be introduced, with emphasis on the practical application of these techniques in writing and speech. At the end of each chapter, questions or points for discussion are provided, and answers to the questions are supplied in the Key at the end of the book.

Where possible, the source of all example material has been acknowledged, with the author's surname, date of publication and page number provided in the text. Full details of each publication can be found in the Bibliography, except for extracts from "classic" writers (e.g. Shakespeare) and from newspapers. The authors have used contemporary examples in most cases, although older material has not been rejected if it seems to make a point in the clearest way.

The amount of explanation provided is intended to be appropriate for China's senior learners of English. The language of this book has not been "doctored" in any way. It is the English appropriate to an academic textbook.

While the authors have made every effort to avoid errors and omissions in the book, some such deficiencies are bound to have slipped through. We sincerely urge our readers to point out any mistake in the book to us so that we are able to do a better job in future editions.

The authors

August 1998

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank their colleagues at their respective universities ———Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, China; and the University of Central Lancashire, Preston, UK. A book such as this has necessitated constant pestering of colleagues for help, advice and linguistic judgements. We are grateful for the patience shown and assistance received. In particular, we would like to thank Professor Quan Yongbai and Miss Chen Shaowen for spending so much time on keeping the authors in touch by Email. Without Professor Quan and Miss Chen's expertise and kind help, the publication of this book would have been much delayed.

It goes without saying that a book such as this will use examples from a wide range of publications, both in English and Chinese. We have tried to give the source and reference for each citation used; we apologise for any careless omissions and for those cases where we have failed to identify the source.

Finally (and this truly is a case of last but not least) we would like to thank the students in the stylistics classes at GUFS. It is the enthusiasm that they have shown in their studies that has inspired us to write and rewrite this book.

The Authors
August 1998

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Introduction

1. Style and Stylistics

As the name implies, stylistics is the study of style. But what is style? At one level, as we shall see, this is a complex area of academic debate, but at a more practical level, style is something we take account of every day in our speaking and writing, in both English and Chinese. To take a simple example, when we wish to address a person, we do not merely look at the "facts of the case" —— that is, his or her name. There are other considerations —— considerations of style. Let us imagine that we meet a person for the first time. The person is called 王小平. We will address him or her as 王(小平)同志/先生/小姐. When we know this person better, we might call him or her 老王、小王、王小平等. When we know him/her still better, we can call him/her 小平, or use even more intimate forms such as 平哥/弟,平姐/妹,平叔,平爷,平姑娘,平丫头,阿平, or even just 平,平儿,平平,that only his or her parents would use. There are other possibilities too, including terms that might be employed by her relatives. If we called him/her 平平 on the occasion of our first meeting, it would be a serious error, and would indicate a gap in our knowledge of Chinese. Our choice of form of address is determined by a choice of <u>style</u> to suit the situation. 王先生 and 王小姐 are formal ways of addressing someone, while 小平、平哥、平姐等 belong to a more casual style. Note that we cannot mix styles: 平先生、平同志、平丫头同志 could only be legitimately used when the speaker intended to be humorous.

English too has stylistic rules about modes of address. Suppose we meet a person called Peter Smith, at the first time we will normally address him as "Mr Smith", and introduce him to others as "Mr Peter Smith". As we get to know him better, we will move on to call him "Peter", and will introduce him to others as "Peter Smith" if the situation permits a slightly less formal style. Later still we might graduate to call him "Pete", as members of his family do. To mix our styles, however, and address him as "Mr Pete" would be a terrible stylistic error.

In fact, stylistic choice in terms of address is quite simple in contemporary English. Many older forms that you may find in books (e.g. "Master Peter", "Miss Jane") sound quaint today, and should be avoided.

So style is a simple matter, and if you understood our point about how to address people, you have grasped the essential point about "style" as used in this book. However, you may re-

member that at the beginning of this section we implied that there were more complex issues in determining what <u>style</u> is. We will examine a few of the major issues, and see whether <u>style</u> typically has positive or negative connotations.

2.   Different meanings of "style"

In stark contrast to the simple definition of "style" that we have just provided is Crystal's comment on the topic. In his Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Language (1997:p66), he calls <u>style</u> "one of the thorniest concepts" in the entire book. Katie Wales too in her <u>Dictionary of Stylistics</u> (1989) admits that style is "very difficult to define". Even more pessimistically, Michael Toolan (1996: p117) comments: "The concept of style has had a troubled history in the modern period. Both within and outside literary study, it has commonly been argued that we use the word 'style' without knowing its meaning."

Let us have a look at some of the diverse meanings of "style". Lucas (1974) points out that the origin of the word is <u>stylus</u>, Latin for "pen". From this the word extended its meaning to mean "a way of writing", and then became further refined to mean "a good way of writing". Over the centuries the word has also taken on senses that have nothing to do with writing at all. We will attempt at least to narrow these down towards what we mean by <u>style</u> in this book.

"Style" often refers to "panache" or elegance, concepts that are regularly viewed in the English - speaking world as being "Continental", or more specifically, French. Indeed, the word "panache" is French. French words are used for activities in which "style" in this sense is thought to be important: "haute couture" is used for high fashion, and fine cooking is referred to as "haute cuisine". "Style" in this sense is undoubtedly positive and shows approval. If we say "Brazil won in style", we mean that they not only won, but won convincingly and with touches of football genius. If someone "travels in style", he or she may not display any "panache", but they at least travel in elegant luxury. In language, this sense of "style" can be used to mean "elegant or good expression". "It has no style" would be a negative comment on a piece of writing. This is not the sense of "style" with which this book deals.

Another sense of "style" is that used in style books, for example, The Chicago Manual of Style. This is a prescriptive work, telling you exactly how to do certain things when you write. It has a section called "Style" in which it spends 550 pages (14th edition, 1993) prescribing correct "style" for everything from punctuation to compiling indexes. This prescriptive use of "style" is not our intended sense either.

A closer sense to our sense is style as a "way you have of doing things". This could be in any activity. You might play tennis in a highly individual way, and this would constitute your style (Wales 1989). For language, we can take a narrower view: "style" is the writer's "idiolect". It is in this sense that we speak of "Hemingway's style" or "the style of Henry James". Lucas (1974: p14) usefully adds that this style can mean "a deliberately cultivated, individual, peculiar style of one's own". Presumably this is the sense used by the eighteenth – century French author de Buffon when in his "Discourse on style" he wrote the most quoted sentences on style: "Le style est l'homme meme" —— *style is the man himself*.

This is closer to our sense of "style" than the earlier examples, but we need to take a more linguistic view to explain our use of the word. Wales's most general sense is "variation in language use". This could include dialectal and other variation that some scholars may not consider "style", and so she also provides a narrower definition: "the set or sum of linguistic features that seem to be characteristic, whether of register, genre or period". Apart from the fact that we will not be too interested in "period", this is our sense of "style". Note that this sense is wider than that used by some writers. They would restrict the use of "style" to considerations of literary discourse. To such writers, some of the varieties to which we devote chapters, such as Scientific English or Religious English would be termed "registers". In the last quotation from Wales, we also met the word genre, which Crystal (1997: Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics) defines as "any formally distinguishable variety that has achieved a level of general recognition, whether in speech or writing". You can probably detect that this is a somewhat vague definition, but this vagueness merely reflects the use of the term. It is difficult to specify how wide or narrow a genre is. Is the novel a genre, or should we be narrowing our division to science fiction novels, western novels and so on?

So, our use of "style" will extend to all situationally distinctive uses of language, literary and non – literary. In fact, our emphasis will be on the non – literary. A crucial element of our approach will be that of choice. Both Crystal and Wales stress the importance of this concept, and it has a long history. The eighteenth – century writer Jonathan Swift (cited in Corbett 1990: p381) defined style as "proper words in proper places". Our aim is to help you choose the "proper" words for each occasion.

3.   Some subdivisions of stylistics

If you read a modern work on stylistics, you will find a bewildering array of subdivisions. Weber (1996), for example, lists eight, ranging from Pedagogical Stylistics to Feminist Stylistics. Even this list is far from complete. Weber does not include more "scientific" subdivisions such as Phonostylistics and Stylostatistics (or Stylometry). The former looks at the

expressive or aesthetic functions of sound in style, while the latter is a quantitative approach. Stylostatistics has in the past been used to try to settle academic debates about authorship, such as whether all (or even any) of Shakespeare's plays were written by Shakespeare. Today, because of developments in computing and the existence of massive corpora of language, Stylostatistics has been put to more practical use. Professor Malcolm Coulthard has used quantitative techniques to expose many miscarriages of justice. One of his successes was to prove that the confession of Derek Bentley in a murder case in the 1950s was almost certainly actually written by the police. One of the factors was that the use of "I then …", which occurred several times in Bentley's confession, was common in police "style" but very rare in general English. Unfortunately, the necessary techniques were not developed until thirty – five years after Bentley was hanged. It was not until 30 July 1998 that Derek Bentley was pardoned by the Court of Appeal.

Our approach belongs to what is often called "General Stylistics".

4.   Trends in Stylistics

Whereas "Style" has a long history, modern stylistics is usually said to have begun with the publication in 1909 of Traité de Stylistique Fran? aise (Treatise on French Stylistics) by Charles Bally, a student of the linguist de Saussure. Bally's stylistics was innovative in that it took a descriptive rather than prescriptive line. In the ninety years since 1909, other schools of stylistics have been developed (for example, structural stylistics by Jakobson [1958] and functional stylistics by Halliday in the sixties), but Bally's principles are still widely followed. Taylor and Toolan (1996) claim that since Bally's time there has been little progress in stylistic theory: "The aims and methods of contemporary stylistics are much the same as those originally proposed by Bally; and, not surprisingly, the problems his new discipline encountered then still perplex stylisticians today."

However, in the seventies, there were two promising developments at the more practical end of the stylistic spectrum. These were contextualised stylistics and pedagogical stylistics. The latter particularly has contributed to advances in EFL teaching. Weber (1996) has shown how, influenced by the ideas of Henry Widdowson and with the support of the British Council, stylisticians realised that stylistic analysis could be "rigorous, systematic and replicable", which meant it could serve as a suitable basis for teaching. Activities were developed (for example, intertextual comparison) which, in addition to improving students' performance in writing and speaking, could heighten their awareness of different uses of language. In China, this development began in the 1980s to attract the attention of English departments in colleges and universities. Leading figures in this process were Professors Wang Zuo –

Liang and Ding Wang – Dao of Beijing. The aim of this development was clearly pedagogical, as we can see in the syllabus for English Stylistics for Advanced College Students of English. 高等院校英语专业《英语文体学》教学大纲（见附录）

As this book is an introductory textbook, we will not deal with abstruse academic debates in the field of Stylistics. Our purpose is clearly pedagogical, but the model within which we operate belongs clearly to General Stylistics.

5.   Stylistics and Rhetoric

In the previous section, we mentioned that Modern Stylistics is a relatively young discipline, but of course the concept of style is far older. It is often equated with *elocutio*, one of the elements of rhetoric. As we shall see in Part Two of this book, rhetoric is a branch of learning that stems from Greece in the time of Aristotle (fourth century BC). It has undergone many changes of emphasis and interpretation over the centuries. One obvious change is that originally it was concerned with spoken language (Greek *rhetor* = Latin *orator*) whereas today it is chiefly concerned with written language. Classical rhetoric also covered a far wider range than did modern rhetoric, in that it was concerned with the discovery, selection and arrangement of arguments. The putting into words of these arguments was the *elocutio*, which Corbett translates as "style". In modern terms, the connection is different. "Rhetoric" today is often used almost as an equivalent of "effective composition", whereas "style" as we use it is concerned with different registers of language. Of course, to know what is effective writing in any style, we must know what the distinguishing characteristics of that style are. Much of this book will be devoted to the study of such characteristics.

6.   The connotations of "style" and "rhetoric"

We shall see in Part Two that the connotations of the word "rhetoric" are often negative. The opposite is the case for the word "style", as we saw earlier in this chapter. However, there is one sense of "style" that is pejorative: "It is all style and no substance". You should remember then that a mastery of a style is not a substitute for mastery of the facts.

7.   Pedagogical benefits of studying English Stylistics and Rhetoric

A study of English Stylistics and Rhetoric can bring great benefits to the learner of English, especially to advanced learners. Even if you feel that you will never need an active command of certain styles, a passive knowledge of them is a requirement of a full grasp of the language. As Quirk says (1968: p181): "Whether or not we need to be proficient in *producing* all these varieties in our own usage, it is surely useful to be able to *recognise* them and to cultivate a sympathetic, urbane reaction to them". More and more teachers and stu-

dents have come to realise the truth of this.

The benefits can be seen in at least three areas:
a.   In teaching and learning English for general purposes
b.   In teaching and learning English for specific purposes
c.   In translation

7a.   Benefits in English for general purposes

In teaching or learning in English for general purposes, you will benefit from developing an awareness of stylistic variation in contemporary English. It is one thing to be able to <u>feel</u> that there is a difference between the language of an academic text and that of a popular newspaper, or between the speech used to a friend's child and that to a stranger. It is altogether a more satisfying and more useful thing if you can analyse the differences systematically. You can probably "feel" that there is something not quite right about the following examples. Our aim is to make your knowledge more scientific and more explicit.

(0.1)

    (a) Man entering a railway carriage:

        Christ, it's bloody freezing in here. Would you object if I closed the window?

    (b) (Dialogue in a department store in China)

Foreign customer:	I'm leaving China tomorrow. Could you send these things round to my hotel this afternoon, please?
Shop assistant:	Please write your address down and we'll deliver them by six o'clock.
Foreign customer:	Thank you. That's really kind of you.
Shop assistant:	It's our duty.

In the two examples, there was an unacceptable mixing of styles. The man in the train suddenly switches from colloquial English to a very formal request. The people in the carriage would be most perplexed, and would think that there was some hidden message that they couldn't grasp. In the second example, the shop assistant should have selected a stylistically suitable comment such as "Not at all" or "You're welcome". "It's our duty" is inappropriate, as in this context it suggests that the shop assistant is only arranging the delivery because she has to, not because she wants to. Such stylistic slips are significant. Some foreigners comment that Chinese students speak English "like an ambassador", that is, they maintain too formal a style, whereas tourist guides speak "policeman's English" (e. g. "Follow me!", "This way!") which sounds impolite.

A less utilitarian benefit of studying stylistics and rhetoric is that you can enjoy and appreciate

some of the different uses of English. In Part Two, we will deal with phonological patterns such as rhyme, alliteration and assonance. Knowledge of these will of course help you appreciate poetry, but at a far more basic and worldly level, they will help you understand the full force of advertisements, slogans, nursery rhymes, jokes and even trade names. You will begin to see why abbreviations appear in some styles but not in others, why novelists deliberately use non – standard spellings in the speech of certain characters, why some words are common in speech but not in writing, and why others are seen frequently in writing but rarely heard. Such points enable you to see not only the basic meaning of a text, but also layers of subtlety that contribute to the whole meaning. In this way, your receptive language skills will be much improved.

7b.   Benefits in English for Specific Purposes

Few people need to master every style of English, and yet many need a very good command of certain styles. Stylistic and rhetorical research has contributed greatly to the accurate description of these "styles" or varieties, and this allows teaching materials to cover the necessary teaching points with maximum efficiency. Earlier textbooks on English for Science and Technology were based heavily on stylistic analysis, and the same is true now for the huge amount of teaching and learning material in Business English. We devote chapters to both of these styles.

7c.   Benefits for translation

These benefits are obvious. No – one today seriously believes in word – for – word translation; a translation carried out without due regard for style is simply a bad translation. Can you see what is wrong with the following translation from English into Chinese?
(0.2)

>   ... and in 1816, after his mother's death, he enrolled at the Ecole des Beaux Arts under P.N. Guerin, a respected painter of the Neo – classical school.
>   1816 年, 她妈妈死后,他被录取于一所美术学校,并在一个受人们尊敬的新古典学派画家盖兰门下学画。

Of course, you spotted that the use of 妈妈 was totally inappropriate in this style. In Chapter Eight we will provide some rather more difficult examples.8.   Our aim

Our aim in this book is to make you better equipped for further study of English. As Professor Wang Zuo – Liang has said:

"中国学生在大致掌握了英语语音、语法和一定数量的词汇之后,其提高的关键之一就是能否在适当的场合用适当的英语。"(王佐良:《英语文体学论文集》第 164 页,

外研社 1980 年)

At the most basic level, style is suitability, the suitability of the words to the occasion. This book should help you understand some of the mechanisms involved in selecting the language that is suitable in a given context or situation, so that your English will be both appropriate and effective. We are confident that, by applying yourself diligently to the chapters that follow, and to the questions and activities that follow each chapter, you will make further progress in your English.
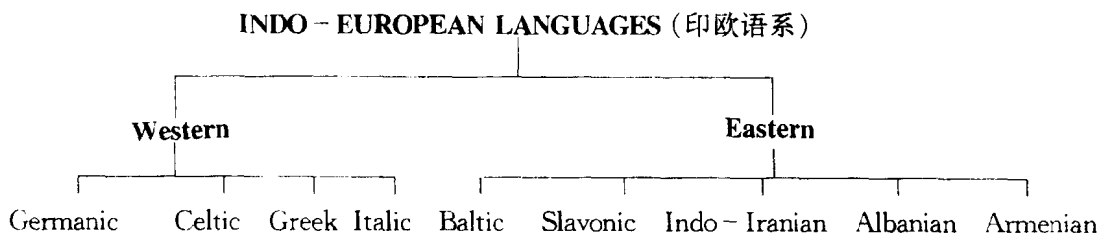
Part One   Varieties of English

Overview

Since English stylistics is a study of different varieties of English, we should start with a general survey of these varieties. However, there is another even more basic point that needs covering first:

1.   What is English?

It is a language that belongs to the Indo – European language group, the most widely spoken family of languages in the world. Even if we ignore the spread of many of these languages through colonisation, they still cover an enormous area. Almost all the languages of Europe belong to this family (major exceptions being Basque, Hungarian and Finnish), and the homelands of its speakers stretch from the eastern shore of the Atlantic Ocean to Northern India. In the Middle Ages, the easternmost language (Tocharian) was spoken in Western China. All these languages are descended from a common ancestor language that probably existed in about 3000BC. Of course, for over 5000 years there has been constantly splintering, and each of the languages has developed in its own way. A Hindi speaker today would not be able to understand a word of Welsh, but scholars can see connections in the core vocabulary, such as numbers. Knowledge of a few basic laws of sound change allows less obvious connections to be made. For example, Greek pater, Latin pater and Sanskrit pitar all mean "father", and are clearly related. Moreover, once we know about Grimm's Law, that p systematically becomes f in certain positions in Germanic languages, we can see that German vater (v is pronounced /f/ in German) and English father fit into the pattern too. But what do we mean when we talk of English being "Germanic"? To answer this we need to look at a family tree. (0.3)

INDO – EUROPEAN LANGUAGES (印欧语系)

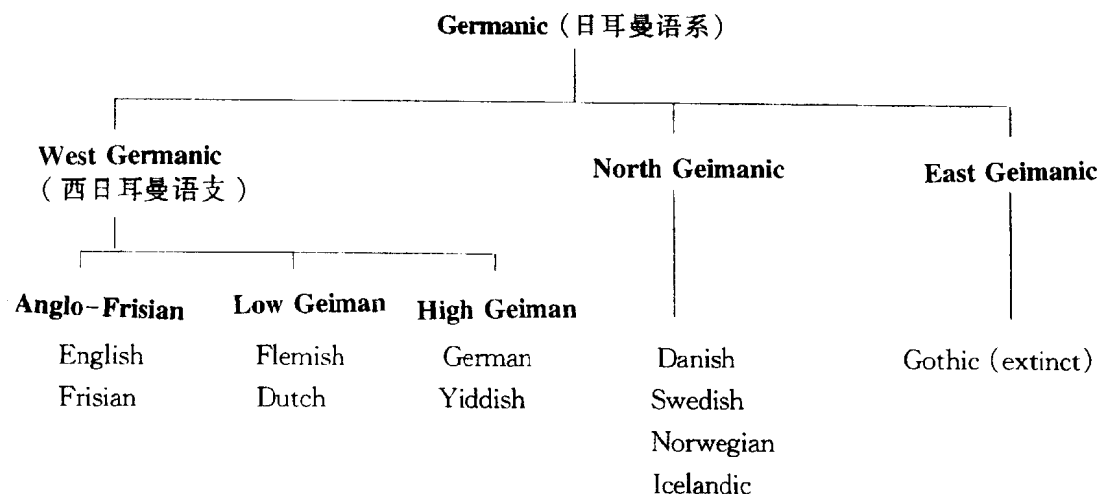|	Western			Eastern				
Germanic	Celtic	Greek	Italic	Baltic	Slavonic	Indo – Iranian	Albanian	Armenian

Some of these groups contain just one language, for example, Greek, Armenian and Albanian. Others contain many. Indo – Iranian includes Afghan, Persian, and many languages of Northern India, for example, Hindi, Punjabi, and the classical language Sanskrit. Slavonic includes Russian, Czech, Polish and Bulgarian, while Celtic includes Welsh and Irish. The

Italic family includes Latin and its descendants —— Spanish, Italian, French, Romanian and Portuguese. Let us look more carefully at the Germanic branch.
(0.4)

Germanic (日耳曼语系)

West Germanic
（西日耳曼语支）

North Geimanic

East Geimanic

Anglo-Frisian
English
Frisian

Low Geiman
Flemish
Dutch

High Geiman
German
Yiddish

Danish
Swedish
Norwegian
Icelandic

Gothic (extinct)

In Chapter One, we will look at the historical events that led the people of what we now call England to speak a Germanic language. Remember that the closer languages are on a tree, the more similar they will be. This will be important in Chapter One, as we will be suggesting that French – speaking invaders (that is, from the Italic branch) arrived speaking a very different language from the Germanic Old English, but that Scandinavian (i. e. North Germanic) settlers could make themselves understood to their West Germanic neighbours.

If you know some German, you can see quite clearly that English and German are fairly close relatives, with much basic vocabulary in common.

2.   The Development of English

Is English special? In one sense it is. It has progressed in the last fifty years from an international language (e. g. one of the United Nations working languages, as is Chinese) to the international language. The first impetus that moved English towards international status was British colonialism, but the driving force now is the powerful economic and political position of the USA. Mother – tongue speakers of English in the English – speaking heartlands (USA, UK, Australia, etc.) number only about 400 million —— far fewer than the native – speakers of Chinese. But overall, English has official status or a dominant position in over sixty countries (see Crystal 1995: p106). However, the use of English is far wider even than this. International activities are almost all carried out in English today, for example, air traffic control, academic conferences and journals, and tourism. In the most modern technical