

大学英语 修辞

时贵仁 著

COLLEGE
ENGLISH RHETORIC

辽宁大学出版社

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前 言

修辞学是一门比较重要、理论性比较突出、实用性很强的学科。修辞学也是一门艺术，许多专业工作者都在研究这门学科。随着我国改革开放的不断发展，政治、经济、外交等各个方面全方位、多层次、宽领域的对外交流的不断增加，提高语言交流的艺术手段和方法显得越来越重要。对当代大学生来说更是尤其重要。当代大学生是 21 世纪的学子，面临就业和升迁的挑战，应该具备更好的演说口才，更高的表达素质，也肩负着推动社会文明与历史向前发展的重任。因此，当代大学生学习和掌握一些修辞方法和修辞技巧，不论是书面写作，还是口头表达都会使其语言交流变得含蓄、幽默、耐人寻味，能显示出其文学修养水平，更能表现一个人的言辞造诣、灵感、智慧和准确、鲜明、生动地表达思想感情的能力。

本书通过多年大学英语教学实践与大量阅读、研究国内外专家学者的修辞学专著和文献编写而成。从多方面、多角度对修辞方法和修辞技巧进行研究和探索，包括音韵修辞、结构修辞、句法修辞、词法修辞和语法修辞等方面的内容。提供了大量简明、易懂的实用范例，供广大学生和读者参考。

在编写过程中，尽管阅读了大量国内外专家学者的专著、文献和相关资料，但由于时间仓促，水平有限，本书难免存在疏漏和不足之处，望各位读者和同仁提出宝贵意见。

编 者

2007 年 4 月

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Chapter One The History and Development of English Language

The English language of today reflects many centuries' development. The political and social events that happened in the course of English history have affected the English people profoundly in their national life and have generally had a recognizable effect on their language.

The Christianizing of Britain in the year of 597 A. D. brought England into contact with Latin civilization and made significant additions to the English vocabulary. The Scandinavian invasions resulted in a considerable mixture of the two peoples and their languages. The Norman Conquest made English for two centuries the language mainly of the lower classes while the nobles and those associated with them used French on almost all occasions.

And when English once more regained supremacy as the language of all elements of the population, it was English greatly changed in both form and vocabulary from what it had been in 1066. In a similar way the hundred years' war, the rise of an important middle class, the Renaissance, the development of England as a marine power, the expansion of British empire, and the growth of commerce and industry, of science and literature in the seventeen century, have, each in every way, by all means contributed to making the English language appear what it is today.

In short, the English language reflects in its entire

development the political, social, and cultural history of the English people. Today it has become an important language, more important than French, German, Russian languages, and it occupies the first place of the most popular language in the world. There are more than 340 million people speaking it as the first language in the United kingdom, the United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and former British empire, even there are about 880 million Chinese people speaking it today, naturally it is the most important spoken and written language in the world today.

A language is a tool and a form of the expression of human ideology, feelings and thoughts in words; whether written or spoken, it is the universal medium for conveying the common facts and communication of thoughts and feelings of everyday life and that of the philosophers' searching and scientific studying after truth, and all that lies in between as we can imagine and create so long so far in our life.

Each language, as any other language, is a natural growth from events of life and work through long history. It is not an instrument that we can directly shape for our own purpose, but it develops and grows in our life. As civilization advances forward, the language will inevitably share pains and gains in the general development of human history. English language began in wide use as Christianity came to England. Before that time it was Celtic and Anglo-Saxon language. English belongs to the Lower West Germanic branch of the Indo-European family, but it is different from Latin language that also belongs to the same family and its influence on English still exists, many polysyllable words are the sound proof. If we look at the most recent grammar book, we still find the rules, set-ups and terms of English grammar that have been dominated by Latin language. Though Latin is no longer

seriously taught in school, its standards and grammatical terminology still to some extent dominate the formal study of the language by the 20th century.

Thus English has become what it is today, it still maintains its own nature of being an analytical instead of a grammatical language. Like Latin words in English, those from Greek are sometimes so far absorbed into the native complex as to be capable of new formations in English with prefixes or suffixes that may be attached to English words. At the Renaissance, Greek was very much a new impulse to English language. The rediscovery and reconsideration of ancient classical Greek brought a new way of looking at life of England with a wealth of new thoughts that brought a fresh field of language, at least for the literary and the learned concerned.

All these have molded the modern English vocabulary that through careful match of words would give expressions much more than diction of one single language would express. They are to be related in this book afterwards. The match of words in English has experienced thousand years of history. The words of a language are tools of the creative writers and of those who are learning the language. They have to recognize their forms, their grammatical functions, and their meanings according to the usage of their times.

Since the middle of the eighteenth century the form of English words that is, their spelling has been fixed, but up to that time it was, within certain limits, variable. This means that a piece of literature written in the seventeenth century will contain spellings that are different from those of today. As in Bacon's essay, if a man writes little, he needs to have a great memory. These old spellings have died off, but occasionally some one may borrow them to describe some person archaic or pedantic.

This "livingness" of spelling also exists in words, and the rich

and complicated structure of English vocabulary grows out of history. The original vocabulary of English consists of those words that were native to the people of Angles, Jutes, and Saxons branches of Germanic family who occupied the British island during the sixth century. With a number of borrowings from Latin, a few from the Celts whom the "English" invaders displaced, and a few from the Danes who tried to displace them.

Then in the centuries following the Norman Conquest there came a great influx of French words as the conquerors settled down with the conquered. Later, as stated before, reflecting the growing complexities of life and thoughts forms a multitude of words from Latin and Greek. Then, during its history English has assimilated or borrowed words from most of the other languages of the world. The result is that seventy percent of English words are foreign. The English vocabulary is truly one international institution at present existing. What is more, the rich and complex English vocabulary was then knocked apart, reshaped, words closely related in sense adjusted themselves to one another, so that no two of them had precisely the same range of meaning. This adjustment is obviously a gradual and continuing process, which is reflected in various kinds of writings sometimes obviously, more often subtly.

Words are living things which is particularly outstanding in English. Even in ordinary writing dictionaries which can help us only up to a certain point, there is something beyond definition, a realm for the creative writer to walk by the light of his intuition and imagination. This intuition and imagination are not beyond the learners' wit, but they must observe, while reading, the match of words which often helps to convey the writer's idea in a subtle way to make the writing touching, attractive and exact in meaning.

English language must be considered the mixed character of its vocabulary. English is classified as a Germanic language group,

that is to say, it belongs to the group of languages to which German, Dutch, Flemish, Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian also belong? It shares with these languages similar grammatical structure and many common words. On the other hand, more than half of its vocabulary derived from Latin, some of these borrowings have Romance language. As a result, English also shares a great number of words with those languages of Europe which are derived from Latin, notably French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese. All of these mean that English presents a somewhat familiar appearance to anyone who speaks either a Germanic or a Romance language.

There are parts of the language that one feels he does not have to learn, or learn with little effort. To a lesser extent the English vocabulary contains borrowings from many other languages. Instead of making new words chiefly by the combination of existing elements as German does, English has shown a marked tendency to go outside her own linguistic resources and borrow from other languages. In the course of centuries of this practice, English has built up an unusual capacity for assimilating outside elements. We do not feel that there is anything "foreign" about the words: chipmunk, hominy, moose, and raccoon, and skunk. All of them have been borrowed from American Indians. We are not conscious that the words: brandy, cruller, golf, duck, isinglass, measles, selvage, wagon and uproar are from Dutch. And so with many other words in daily use from Italian: balcony, canto, duet, granite, opera, piano, umbrella, mosquito, sherry, stampede, tornado, and vanilla. From Greek, directly or indirectly, acme, acrobat, anthology, barometer, catarrh, catastrophe, chronology, elastic, magic, tactics, tantalize, and a host of others. From Russian: steep, droshky, vodka, and ruble. The words borrowed from Persian: caravan, dervish, shawl, jasmine, paradise, check,

chess, lemon, lilac, turban, borax, and possibly spinach.

A few minutes spent in the examination of any good etymological dictionary will show that English has borrowed from Hebrew, Arabic, Hungarian, Bengali, Malay, Chinese, and the languages of Java, Australia, Polynesia, West Africa, and from one of the aboriginal languages of Brazil. And it has assimilated these heterogeneous elements so successfully that only the professional students of language are aware of their origin. So a cosmopolitan vocabulary is an undoubtedly asset to any language that seeks to attain international application.

English possesses to a permanent degree an inflectional simplicity. The evolution of the language, at least within the historical period, is a story of progressive simplification. The farther back we go in the study of the languages to which English is most closely allied, the more complex we find them. Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin, for example, as classical languages of early date, have inflections of the nouns, the adjectives, the verbs, and to some extent the pronouns that are no longer found in Russian or French or German. In this process of simplification English has gone further than any other language in Europe. Inflections in the noun as spoken have been reduced to a sign of the plural and a form for the possessive case. The elaborate Germanic inflection of the adjective has been completely eliminated except for the simple indication of the comparative and the superlative degrees. The verb has been simplified by the loss of practically all the personal endings, the almost complete abandonment of any distinction between the singular and plural, and the gradual discard of the subjunctive mood. The complicated agreements that make German difficult for the foreigners are absent from English. However compensated for, such a reduction of inflections can hardly be considered anything but an advantage.

It is difficult to talk about the relations of the newcomers and the native population. In some districts the inhabitants were few, the Anglo-Saxons probably settled down beside the Celts in more or less peaceful way. In others, as in the West Saxons territory, the invaders met with stubborn resistance and succeeded in establishing themselves only after much fighting. In any case civilization had been attained under Roman influence and Germanic influence, they all brought culture and words to English language. Thousands of years of evolution made English a richest language in the world. It is generally described and classified that the period from 450 to 1150 year is known as the Old English, and during the period a large number of nouns, verbs and adjectives are accumulated and preserved unimpaired. From 1150 to 1500 the language is known as Middle English, and during the period, evolution of the language appeared and changed the language a lot. The language since 1500 is called Modern English. By this time the language reached the stage of great development, it began to build its own language system, and became popular among people ever since.

Chapter Two What Is Rhetoric?

The word "rhetoric" originally develops out of the Greek word "Rhetorike" meaning "the fine art of oratory; to say or to speak more at word". In ancient Greece, so great was the influence of those orators that in the Middle Ages together with logic and grammar, rhetoric had become part of the holy book. Following the emergence of written form of language, the rhetoric came to mean "the art of speaking or writing effectively" and then to mean specifically "the study of principles and rules of composition formulated by critics of ancient times" or "skills in the effective use of speech".

By and by, as time goes on the "rhetoric" has sloughed off its original connection with oratory only. No longer may it be defined as "the art, which teaches eloquence", it developed to be a broad, useful term that includes all the elements of writing and speaking structure, style, diction, rhythm, and tones. Today "rhetoric" is generally used to signify "the art of effectively joining words together" or simply "composition". When these writing ways of rhetoric are adopted to the degree of having a rather fixed form, they became figures of speech, that is the established forms of abnormal expressions designed to produce a special effect, such as hyperbole, alliteration, simile and metaphor, which would be dealt with one by one in later part of the book.

Written English is greatly influenced by Latin and Greek that are rich in rhetoric. Writers of rhetorical prose have left examples

for and had their effect on the general development of the language. A wide and obvious gap may exist and often is a barrier between spoken and written English. The syntax and idiom in common conversation are not the syntax and idiom of the written work. The spoken form often tends to looseness and vulgarity, while the written form, for fear of catching the plague, becomes literary and formal. Once the memorable spoken word, whether in verse or prose, takes upon itself the permanence of ink, once they move from the realm of hearing to the realm of reading, they become the works of literature.

Literature suggests and indeed implies the under-meaning of written words. A writer of literature has an instinct for the sense of using a language, which includes its grammar, word formation, word function. With these instinct sensibilities for language, however, he has another instinct for the aesthetic quality of the sentence and the paragraph. And these two instincts do not always go together. A writer may hammer out for himself a particular style of writing, and in doing so he may define the customary usage of his own age.

Ultimately in whatever sense you may explain, the words of the language are the tools, as it was that of the creative writer in the past days as they are that of us all today. One has to recognize their forms, their grammatical functions and meanings according to the usage of his times. For the creative writer there is a realm in which he walks by the light of his intuition and imagination. Thus, rhetoric, figures of speech are woven into the texture of every language, so is English. English has owed something to those who have used the rhetorical methods in writing like McCauley or Ruskin. When we are reading the originals, hardly anyone could realize how closely the figures of speech are woven into the texture of English.

We might take the sixteenth century as a rough dateline, after it we have a wealth of writers of all kinds of poets, playwrights, journalists, preachers and pamphleteers in Britain, and English had become fully self-conscious of the function of its language. Books of rhetoric, the theory of advice on how to write effectively and how to employ the figures of speech had been written and published earlier in this period. In recent years, many people hold the idea that our civilization is decadent and the language must inevitably share in the general collapse. Maybe the abuse of language is making English to be in that way. Nevertheless, the strength and the function of rhetoric are being strengthened and the volumes accumulated have become a convincing, forceful stunning fact which might be justified in the libraries of universities.