

英语 修辞学

ENGLISH RHETORIC

唐颖 曲晶 编著



吉林大学出版社

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前 言

修辞学是研究提高语言表达效果的一门学科。它是一门既古老又年轻的学科。修辞学的研究源远流长，古希腊时代的亚里斯多德及古罗马时代的西塞罗等语言大师都对修辞艺术有过精辟的论断；我国修辞研究也有悠久的历史，早在《左传》中就有“言之无文，行而不远”的说法。现代修辞学研究从心理学、社会学、人类学、语义学等领域中汲取研究成果，丰富自己的学说，修辞学发展至今已成为一门有效地使用语言的综合性学科。

多年的英语教学实践使我们深感修辞教学的必要性，我们教精读、翻译、写作、报刊选读的同事也经常谈起学生这方面的知识很欠缺。学生通常能理解字、词、句的意思及作品的主要内容，但不会对作品进行分析和评价；学生说、写能力的提高也由于缺乏修辞知识受到影响。本书致力于向学生展示语言的感染力，激发和调动他们学习英语的积极性。在阅读方面，它将帮助学生对作品进行语言分析，使学生了解作者的语言技巧和写作风格，加深对作品的理解，从而得到美的艺术享受；在运用语言方面，它指导学生正确选词炼句，布局谋篇，从而提高说、写能力。

本书注重修辞的实践性，各章节都从分析、比较、修改语言实例入手，例句选自经典名著、名人名言、报刊杂志、商品广告等各种语体。作者参阅了国内外多部优秀的修辞著作和教材，摘引了不少名言佳句，在书后参考书目中逐列出了作者及出版单位，在此向各位专家及相关出版社表示诚挚的谢意。

本书文字简洁，通俗易懂，不仅适用于英语专业的学生，对于没有经过系统写作训练的非英语专业学生也大有裨益。

编 者

2004年6月

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Part I Introduction

1 The Background and Field of Rhetoric

1.1 The Historical Background of Rhetoric

Rhetoric is one of the oldest subjects treated in the world of literature. Early in the 4th century B.C., during the time of Aristotle in Greece, rhetoric was considered as one of the few important branches of learning. In Athens, the center of western civilization, great orators, by exercising their rhetoric, gained following and support, and eventually political power.

Of course the field of rhetoric was then rather limited. Aristotle, in his famous book *Rhetoric*, defined rhetoric as “the art of persuasion”. Rhetoric was originally applied only to oral expressions, constituting mainly what we call today the Argumentation. This oral nature of rhetoric was quite a historical one; it remained so all through the Middle Ages. Even down to about the beginning of the 18th century it was not much changed. John Locke, the noted English philosopher of the latter part of the 17th century, was quoted to have said that rhetoric was the science of oratory; the art of speaking with propriety, elegance, and force. This is not to be wondered at, for the root of rhetoric, whether considered from the Greek, Latin, French, Spanish, or Italian, all means *to speak*.

The shifting of emphasis from the oral side to the written in rhetoric is more a matter of circumstance rather than preconceived design. With the dawn of the 19th century printing became so popular and so convenient that when people wished to communicate thoughts with others they found it easier to write, and so the old rhetorical principles as applied in speech

naturally were also adapted to written literature. This led to the so-called artificial eloquence of rhetoric as revealed through the pamphlets and treatises of the early modern period. Today there are still people who equate rhetoric with ornate, showy language, or with figures of speech.

With the quickened tempo of life, efficiency and efficacy are increasingly stressed. Languages are means of communication. More and more people come to regard rhetoric as the art of using language effectively. Furthermore, rhetoric tends to be connected more with writing than with speech, and more with prose than with verse. Rhetoric today is often used as an equivalent of “effective composition”.

1.2 Rhetoric and Grammar

The grammar of a language is a systematic account of how that language functions to provide intelligible discourse. But rhetoric also is concerned with intelligible discourse. What is then the distinction between grammar and rhetoric? Perhaps it can be put most clearly by using an analogy with the game of football. The rules that govern the play of football may be called the grammar of the game. In order to play the game of football, one must observe the rules; but a mere keeping of the rules would not ensure that the team necessarily plays well or that it wins any games. The rhetoric of football, then, would be a knowledge of strategy and maneuver that leads to effective play and a winning game. To play the game correctly would not necessarily be to play it effectively, though effective play would have to conform to the rules of the game.

To see the difference between rhetoric and grammar, let's compare two sentences:

- (1) He said he was very hungry that day and ate four big cakes within two minutes.
- (2) He said he was starving that day and wolfed down four big cakes

within two minutes.

Both sentences are correct grammatically. But the second sentence is more effective because two figures of speech—metaphor and hyperbole—are involved. So grammar is the law of language; rhetoric is the art of language. Grammar tells what is right; rhetoric tells what is effective. Francis Christensen, an American French rhetorician, once said: “Grammar maps out the possible; rhetoric narrows the possible down to the desirable and effective.”

1.3 Communicative Rhetoric and Aesthetic Rhetoric

Rhetoric consists of two basic aspects: communicative rhetoric and aesthetic rhetoric.

Communicative rhetoric deals with the choice of words, the selection of sentence patterns, the organization of paragraphs, and the arrangement of the whole essay. It emphasizes clearness, accurateness and appropriateness.

Aesthetic rhetoric stresses the vividness and gracefulness in expressing one's ideas by artistic approaches like the use of figures of speech so as to increase the emotional appeal of one's speech or writing. The famous Chinese rhetorician Mr. 陈望道 in his 《修辞学发凡》 put forward two corresponding aspects of rhetoric. They are 消极修辞 and 积极修辞. They correspond to communicative rhetoric and aesthetic rhetoric respectively.

1.4 Rhetoric as a Practical Study

Rhetoric is not a decorative art; it is a practical one. It is not sufficient that the readers remember a few canons of some rhetoric textbook. They

must study the subject with a determination to know, to learn, and to practice. Like Robert L. Stevenson, who made up his mind to be a writer by carrying note-books in his pocket all the time and writing down in them whenever he learned anything that would help to achieve his object, so all those who wish to be good speaker and forceful writer, must study rhetoric carefully until they know all sides of the subject, and can apply the principles they have thus learned.

1.5 Five Levels of Rhetorical Operations

Rhetorical operations can be broken down into five levels. They are rhetoric as practiced with **sounds**, rhetoric as practiced with **words**, rhetoric as practiced with **sentences**, rhetoric as practiced with **paragraphs** and rhetoric as practiced with **essays**.

1.5.1 Rhetoric as practiced with sounds

All good writing has a strong sense of “voice”. Effective prose, no less than successful poetry, is attractive to ear and eye alike. Writing that is pleasing has a natural rhythm and melodiousness, qualities that characterize a pleasant speaking voice; in addition, the presence of good “voice” automatically renders one’s writing more personal, warmer and clearer.

All good writing *sounds* equally good when read aloud; and all good talking will *read* well if transcribed.

1.5.2 Rhetoric as practiced with words

The *New York Times* once reported the result of a poll in which a

random sample of Americans were asked about their views of abortion in several different ways. The first question was phrased this way: “Do you think there should be such an amendment to the Constitution *prohibiting abortions*, or shouldn’t there be such an amendment?” 62 percent of the respondents were solidly opposed to such an amendment. But when the question read, “Do you believe there should be an amendment to the Constitution *protecting the life of the unborn child*, or shouldn’t there be such an amendment?” Fully one-third of those who had opposed the amendment when it had been presented as “prohibiting abortions” supported it. Wording makes a big difference.

In Chinese we have such sayings as “一字之失，一句为之蹉跎”，and “语不惊人死不休”. Many lines in poems are very popular because of their diction, for example, “春风又绿江南岸” and “红杏枝头春意闹”.

So the choice of words, or diction, is an important level of rhetorical operation.

1.5.3 Rhetoric as practiced with sentences

A sentence is a group of words that you use to communicate your ideas in writing or in speech. It is a complete, independent unit of thought.

Look at the following sentences:

- (1) My best friend in high school was our literature teacher. Her name was Alice. She taught us literature for three years.

In the above example, the idea of one unified sentence is chopped into several short sentences, and the idea gets confused. Actually we can improve the writing by combining the short sentences into a unified one with proper subordination.

- (2) My best friend in high school was our literature teacher, Alice,

who taught us for three years.

The improved sentence is clearer and more effective. So we can see the structuring of sentences is another important level of rhetorical operation.

1.5.4 Rhetoric as practiced with paragraphs

It is not enough to say that a paragraph is a group of sentences. How do these sentences relate to each other? How does a paragraph begin and where does it end? What constitutes a good paragraph? These are all questions that we hope to answer in this level of rhetorical operation.

Compare the two paragraphs below:

(1) **Surviving Cancer**

Progress is gradually being made in the fight against cancer. In the early 1900s, few cancer patients had any hope of long-term survival. In the 1930s, less than one in five cancer victims lived more than five years. In the 1950s, the ratio was one in four. Currently, the ratio is down to one in three. The gain from one in four to one in three represents about 58,000 lives saved each year.

(2) **Surviving Cancer**

Progress is gradually being made in the fight against cancer. In the early 1900s, few cancer patients had any hope of long-term survival. But because of advances in medical technology, progress has been made so that currently one in three cancer patients survives. It has been proven that smoking is a direct cause of lung cancer. However, the battle has not yet been won. Although cures for some forms of cancer have been discovered, other forms of cancer are still increasing. Heart disease is also increasing.

Both paragraphs discuss the same topic. But the first paragraph is unified, while the second lacks unity. The last few sentences break the unity either by introducing a new idea or by being “off the topic.”

From the above examples we can see that how to develop a paragraph is an important part of rhetoric.

1.5.5 Rhetoric as practiced with essays

An essay is a group of paragraphs that develops one central idea. How are the paragraphs organized in an essay? How many paragraphs are there in an essay? How does an essay begin and end? These are questions this part will answer.

The following is an introductory paragraph of an essay. The sentences of it are not in correct order.

(1) The heavy traffic problem can be solved by building rapid transit systems from the suburbs to the cities, by improving public transportation systems within the cities, and by forming car pools. (2) Traffic congestion is caused by the thousands of cars that come into the cities from the suburban areas as well as from the thousands of cars within the city limits. (3) One of the most serious problems that most big cities are faced with is traffic congestion. (4) This mammoth problem must be resolved before it gets worse.

The introductory paragraph should begin with the most general statement. Then more specific sentences follow, and the thesis statement comes last. So the order of the sentences should be (3), (2), (4), (1). From this example we can see that the writing of an introductory paragraph is an art of rhetoric.

Part II Rhetoric as Practiced with Sounds

—Phonetic Rhetoric

Sometimes when I am writing, the music of the words I am trying to shape takes me far beyond the words. —Stephan H. Spender

Words have weight, sound and appearance; it is only by considering these that you can write a sentence that is good to look at and good to listen to. —W. Somerset Maugham

The sound must seem an Echo to the Sense. —Alexander Pope

Good English should have a pleasing sound. We read with our ears as well as our eyes. Orators in ancient times already knew how to use the sounds of their language for maximum rhetorical effect. Modern writers also orchestrate the musical quality of vowels and consonants through the words they use. In this part we'll look at these phonetic devices, which may be classified into two aspects, namely **phonemic patterning** and **rhythmic patterning**.

2 Phonemic Patterning

Phonemes can be patterned in different ways. The most important types of patterning in English literature are: **onomatopoeia**, **alliteration**, **assonance**, **consonance**, **homoeoteuton** and **rhyme**. These are features of language poets and prose writers exploit to create effects such as beauty or emphasis in their writing. In this chapter we'll discuss each of these features respectively.