

冯翠华 著

# English Rhetorical Options

# 英语 修辞 大全

— A  
Handbook  
of English  
Rhetorical  
Devices



外语教学与研究出版社

# ENGLISH RHETORICAL OPTIONS

—A Handbook of English Rhetorical Devices

by Feng Cuihua

## 英语修辞大全

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This book is dedicated to  
all my folks abroad who  
kept in touch through all  
my years in China, and  
who supplied me with  
love, books, and spices.

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## PREFACE

In my many years of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) to Chinese college students, I have often come across this phenomenon: in reading, the students are able to analyse sentences into their grammatical components, but they have difficulty in picking out, or in appreciating a rhetorically effective sentence or passage. In writing compositions, while they are able to make sentences which are grammatically correct, they have great difficulty in composing sentences or paragraphs which are effective rhetorically and stylistically. These two aspects of one phenomenon point to a common gap in their knowledge of the English language—ignorance, or limited knowledge, of the rich store of rhetorical devices that English possesses and of their function in the effective communication of ideas, feelings, and events either in speech or in writing, and especially in writing.

At the same time, I have also found that books available in China on English Composition and Rhetoric seldom supply adequate and satisfactory information on rhetorical devices. Some textbooks on English Rhetoric imported from abroad carry glossaries on some of these devices, especially *Figures of Speech*, but the lists are often inadequate too. There is evidently a need for more and fuller information on the subject, and a more systematic introduction to English rhetorical devices.

This book is an attempt to meet that need. Based on a study of past and present theory and practice on the classification of these devices, I have divided them into five categories: syntactic devices,

lexical devices, phonetic devices and prose rhythm, figures of speech, and allusions and “skewed” quotations. The book does not attempt to supply an exhaustive list of each and every rhetorical device used in English. Only the most important and the most commonly used are chosen, and the choice is entirely mine, and, therefore, subjective. The chapter on figures of speech is largely based on my booklet FIGURES OF SPEECH, published in 1983, but revised and updated.

Most of the examples and illustrations are taken from poetry, for some of the devices, like figures of speech, are found most frequently and most typically in poems.

The grammatical terminology used is largely traditional, modified where necessary according to the new concepts in *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* by Randolph Quirk, et al (1985). For instance, the concept of the Noun Phrase (NP) and the Verb Phrase (VP) as the two basic parts of a sentence is accepted, as well as the idea that a Noun Phrase can contain, through post-modification, an attributive clause or an appositive clause. This means that sentences like the following:

- a. The man *who came today* is his uncle.
- b. The rumour *that he had won the bet* was confirmed.

traditionally considered as complex sentences would now be treated as simple sentences.

However, the traditional concept of the infinitive phrase and the participle phrases as *phrases*, is retained, as to treat them as non-finite *clauses*, as advocated by Quirk et al. , would only cause confusion among Chinese students, who find the old terminology logically more acceptable.

In addition, the elements of English clause and sentence struc-

ture retain their familiar names, viz. Subject (S), Verb(V), Adverbial(A), Object(O), and Complement (C). The basic sentence patterns (using the declarative sentence as illustration) are as follows, for easy reference:

SV The birds sang.

SVA She drove at full speed.

SVC He *looked (became)* angry. He *was* sad.

SVO I bought a book.

SVOiO I bought my sister a book.

SVOA They sent the parcel by airmail.

SVOC They elected him captain.

Familiarity with these elements and patterns is important, as many rhetorical devices involve manipulation of them in various grammatically acceptable ways.

This book is eminently suitable for college students of English at both undergraduate and graduate level, and is also a useful reference for self-study students of English, and for students of other specialities.

## Acknowledgement

I wish to express here my thanks to two former students of mine, and now Professors of English at the PLA Foreign languages University, Yan Weiming and Xue Hanrong, for going over the initial drafts and offering valuable advice and suggestions. Yan Weiming translated my Preface and Afterword into Chinese for me, too, for which I am especially grateful.



## 前 言

长期以来,我一直在大学里教中国学生作为外语的英语。在此过程中,我常常遇到这样一种现象:在阅读的时候,学生们能够分析句子的语法成分,但要领会或欣赏修辞好的句子或段落却有困难。在写作文的时候,他们虽然能够造出语法正确的句子,但要写出修辞和文体好的句子或段落却困难很大。这是一种现象的两个方面,反映出他们的英语知识存在着一个共同的缺陷——他们不知道或不大知道英语里有着大量的修辞手段,他们不知道或不大知道这些手段能在口语或笔语中,尤其是在笔语中,起着有效传递思想、感情和事情的作用。

同时,我还发现,中国现有的关于英语作文和英语修辞的书籍,几乎不能提供有关修辞手段的足够和充分的知识。一些从国外进口的英语修辞教科书,包含了某些修辞手段的,特别是修辞格的用词,但也常常不大充分。显而易见,需要在这一方面提供更多的、更充分的知识,需要更加系统地介绍英语的修辞手段。

本书就是为了满足这种需要。我研究了过去和现在关于英语修辞手段分类的理论和实践,在此基础上将其分成五种类型:句法手段,词法手段,语音手段和文章节律,修辞格,以及典故和“断章截句的”引语。本书并不想详尽无遗地列举英语里使用的每一种修辞手段,只是选择了最重要、最常用的部分。这完全是我自己选定的,因此是比较主观的。关于修辞格的那一章,很大程度上基于我1983年出版的那本小册子《修辞格》,但作了修订和更新。

多数例句取自散文作品,但也有相当数量取自诗歌,因为有些修辞手段,比如修辞格,在诗歌中十分常见,非常典型。

本书使用的语法术语,很大程度上是传统的语法术语,但根据伦道夫·夸克等人所著的《综合英语语法》(1985年)中使用的新概念,按照需要作了修订。比如,我接受了名词短语(NP)和动词短

语(VP)是句子两个基本成份的概念,以及名词短语通过后修饰可以包含定语从句或同位语从句的观点。这意味着,下列的一类句子,传统上认为是复合句,现在却被看作是简单句:

a. The man *who came today* is his uncle.

b. The rumour *that he had won the bet* was confirmed.

然而,我保留了有关动词不定式短语和分词短语是“短语”的看法,因为如果像夸克等人所主张的那样把它们看作是非限定式从句,就会在中国学生中引起混乱。中国学生觉得传统的术语在逻辑上更能接受。

另外,英语从句和句子结构的成分,保留了大家熟悉的名字,即主语(S),动词(V),状语(A),宾语(O),和补足语(C)。为了参阅方便,用下列陈述句来说明基本句型:

SV The birds sang.

SVA She drove at full speed.

SVC He looked (became) angry. He *was* sad.

SVO I bought a book.

SVOiO I bought my sister a book.

SVOA They sent the parcel by airmail.

SVOC They elected him captain.

熟悉这些句子成分和句型是非常重要的,因为在语法可以接受的种种情况下,许多修辞手段需要使用它们。

本书适用于大学英语专业的本科学生和研究生,对其它专业的学生以及自学英语者也有很大的参考价值。

我的两位学生、现解放军外国语学院教授严维明和薛汉荣读了本书初稿,并提出了十分宝贵的意见。在此,我特向他们表示感谢。

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# Chapter I

## SYNTACTIC DEVICES

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# Chapter I

## SYNTACTIC DEVICES

### I. 0 Introduction

Syntactic devices here refer to variation in the use of sentence structures for stylistic or rhetorical effect, and are different from the processes of transformation of basic sentence patterns according to grammar rules. Thus the ordinary declarative, interrogative, negative, and exclamative structures, and the construction of simple, compound, and complex sentences as such do not come in for *technical* discussion. It is the way sentence structures are used in a stylistic way that concerns us, as, for example, when an interrogative sentence is used as a rhetorical question, or when declarative sentences are made loose or periodic, and so on.

The discussion of syntactic variation in this sense brings up, therefore, the question of non-grammatical properties of sentences like length, complexity, looseness, for instance, and of artistic features like balance or climax. In classical rhetoric, the manipulation of the normal arrangement of words in a sentence for artistic effect could take many forms, and such deviations were finely distinguished. Such deviations in construction were termed *schemes* of construction and included under *Figures of Speech*, a practice seldom adhered to, today. In this chapter, many of the most common schemes are included.



All this means that writers have a large repertoire of syntactic devices to choose from. They could, for example, make frequent use of simple sentences, or alternate long and short sentences. They could write either loose or periodic sentences, or combine looseness with balance, etc. And they could only choose correctly if they knew what effect each device is meant to achieve.

The syntactic devices discussed below constitute the major options available, and the effects they are meant to achieve.

## I. 1 Long and Short Sentences

The rhetorical effect of long or short sentences depends on purpose and context. Without an appropriate purpose or context, short sentences used abundantly in a passage only make for choppiness and monotony. Likewise, too many long sentences can make a passage heavy and laborious.

Skillful writers, however, can exploit variation in sentence length to great effect to express different moods or attitudes, to describe action or events or to emphasize a point. Let us see some examples.

- (1) Dick Boulton looked at the doctor. Dick was a big man. He knew how big a man he was. He liked to get into fights. He was happy. Eddie and Billy Tabeshaw leaned on their cant-hooks and looked at the doctor. The doctor chewed the beard on his lower lip and looked at Dick Boulton. Then he turned away and walked up the hill to the cottage. They could see from his back how angry he was. They all watched him walk up the hill and go inside the