



Research Article

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Rhetoric Appeal based Writing Model

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ABSTRACT

Teaching English composition has long been recognized as one of the most daunting tasks of college education in China. For the purpose of finding an effective model of writing instruction for students this paper is intended to provide audience-oriented rhetorical appeals to the teaching of English composition. The paper draws on rhetoric theory, and tries to find the interrelationship among cognition, conceptual integration, meaning construction and rhetoric persuasion. It is suggested that the result of this study can be applied into daily communication and benefit students who take writing courses.

Key words: Rhetoric Appeal, Ethos, Pathos, Logos

INTRODUCTION

For a long time, English writing is regarded as a means of testing EFL's language proficiency [1][2]. The focus is language usage and syntax. However, to communicate effectively requires more than just words, pronunciation, syntax, or the desire to convey ideas. To persuade others of speaker and writer's intent and meaning, learners depend on transactions between the speaker and writer and the audience, and on logical connection between ordered information sets (Bliss, 2001). In general, university faculties may ask students to produce two types of writing: descriptive and persuasive. Bliss (2001) noticed that most of multicultural students could handle descriptive writing fairly well. However, when they are asked to write to inform or persuade, many of them have serious difficulties. Persuasive writing at the university level includes a variety of genres and formats that require students to develop an assertive thesis, by making claims and supporting the claims logically with substantive evidence [3]. When students are faced with such writing assignment, they may face logical and structural problems because they may not know how to connect their ideas and their evidence in the expected rhetorical structure. They may present a kind of story or analogy as a way to explain their point of view. In many cases, these students rely on their native cultural and linguistic patterns of explanation, and as a result, to their instructors, their writing seems disorganized and neither informative nor persuasive (Connor, 1996).

Persuasion is important and commonly used in our daily life; it ranges from advertising to scholarly arguments. Between these extremes lie dozens of situations in which persuasion is fundamental to everyday life [4]. For example, when you apply for a job, propose marriage, or try to borrow money, you are using persuasion in an attempt to get someone to do something you want done, or at other times you use persuasion to achieve benefits for others- as in trying to raise money for the victims of a famine or trying to persuade the government to protect an endangered species of wildlife. What all of these examples have in common is that they assume to persuade other people. Therefore learning rhetoric may help students in their English writing.

2 RHETORIC AND RHETORIC APPEALS

The term rhetoric has had different meanings throughout its long history [5]. In ancient Greek, rhetoric referred to public speaking, not writing. "rhetor" in Greek means orator or public speaker. For many people rhetoric has had a negative connotation, "verbal profusion calculated to manipulate an audience, an operation whose aim are suspected

and whose typical procedures are most trivializing” (Connor, 1996: 87). Interest in rhetoric revived in the 1950s and 1960s. Weaver and other scholars who took part in the rhetorical revival applied the lessons of the rhetorical tradition to composition, arguing that rhetoric was the true basis of the discipline for both pedagogy and research. Today, many linguistics studying writing are finding the notion of rhetoric useful [6]. In early 20th century, some philosophers including I. A. Richards, Kenneth Burke, Chiam Perelman, Stephen Toulmin, and Richard Weaver revived and developed rhetoric [7]. Though Richards says that the central theme of traditional rhetoric is persuasion, and in the history of rhetorical study different schools advocate different persuasion models, Classical rhetoric recognized that persuasion was accomplished through three means: the credibility of the writer (ethos), the logic of the argument (logos), and the skill with which appropriate feelings are inspired (pathos). This threefold approach to persuasion has prevailed in the West for almost two thousand years [8].

2.1 Ethos

The Greek word “ethos” means “ethics” or “ethical”. It has to do with the speaker or writer’s character and his credibility. So the term is sometimes translated as “ethics”, “authority”, “charisma”, “image”, or “credibility”. In fact, ethos embodies all these aspects. Aristotle lists three components of ethos, which are “good sense, good moral character, and goodwill”. He believes that anyone who is thought to have all three of these good qualities will inspire trust in his audience.

Here, “good sense” means the speaker or writer must appear to be a competent, intelligent person who knows what he is talking about. First, common sense is essential in demonstrating this quality. Second, the audience consists of as many opinions as people, therefore, recognizing these viewpoints helps the speaker or writer in building his persuasion and discussing the viewpoints exhibits a certain amount of intelligence.

“Good moral character” means the writer or speaker must appear to be an honest person. If he could state his beliefs, values, and priorities in connection with the topic it will assist him in convincing the audience of his argument. If these beliefs and values coincide with the majority of the audience, he is well on his way to success.

“Goodwill” means the writer or speaker must be interested in what is best for the audience rather than one motivated by self-interested profits. This component concerns the audience’s benefit and respects their intelligence, sincerity and common sense.

2.2 Pathos

Pathos refers to the emotional appeals and means how well the writer taps into the audience’s emotions. The most powerful speakers and speeches in history used the emotional appeals. Quintilian, understands the advantages of the emotions, “profits, it is true, may induce the judges to regard our case as superior to that our opponent, but the appeal to the emotions will do more, for it will make them wish our case to be better. And what they wish, they will also believe” (Quintilian, 1920: 419).

Many people are familiar with Martin Luther King’s I Have a Dream. As they listen to a recording of the address, they can hear the roaring cheers and applause of the audience during his speech and can sense that deep emotions flowing through the crowd like an electric charge. Nobody doubts that King successfully persuades his audience. Although there are many reasons for his success and he appeals not to pathos only, pathos is the most remarkable feature of his speech. “I have a dream that one day...” identifies his dreams with the black people’s, his ideals with them and while they experiencing the same feeling, the audience is easily and successfully persuaded.

2.3 Logos

In Greek, logos can mean simply “word” or it can mean “the underlying point that makes sense or meaning behind everything else,” or it can mean “logic, reason or rational thinking”. As a way to build an effective argument, logos in many ways are the most important of the three persuasive appeals because it is the most honest. It is possible for a liar to misuse pathos to play on an audience’s heartstrings. It is possible for a cheat to use false ethos and create a trustworthiness he shouldn’t have. However, if the audience is also trained in logic, a writer’s arguments must stand or fall on their own rational merits.

Induction means a type of reasoning that moves from the specific to the general. The argument is based on a limited number of examples, and from these examples, people can draw a general or universal rule.

Deduction is a type of reasoning that moves from general to specific. The argument is based on a general or universal rule that both the reader and the writer agree upon. The writer takes this general rule and then he tries to show how a specific example fits into that larger category.

to the organization of the audience's belief system.

- The degree to which the writer's entire "character" is amenable to the audience's own.

CONCLUSION

The approach to persuasion presented here has practical applications. Firstly, we hold the view that language is symbolic action, which is applicable to writing as an active process. The model emphasizes the interactional relationship between writer and audience in discourse construction. For the English writing class, the teacher may pass to the students the idea that, instead of being writer-centered, writing is conceptualized as an interactive, social-cognitive task. Writing is not for the writer's own sake, but it is consciously oriented to an audience. Since the writer aims to persuade the audience to share his views, he has to take into account the audience's perspectives, including its values, needs, culture, etc. He also has to pay attention to choosing his content of writing to make it acceptable to the audience. The concept of rhetoric in action through discourse construction can direct the students to persuasive techniques.

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