

英语修辞与实用文体写作

English Rhetoric and Practical Writing

主 编：吴显友

副 主 编：何 武 刘先清

编 者：董 兵 范 娟 何 武

刘先清 彭康洲 吴显友

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项目编辑 李恒平
审读编辑 姚 望
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Unit 1

Style and Rhetoric

Part 1 Style and Rhetoric

I What Is Style?

The word “style” is quite an interesting and evasive term, which has been discussed by writers, linguists and literary critics for about 2,000 years. It comes from the Latin word “stylus” or “stilus”, meaning a spike or a pointed instrument used for writing. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* lists some 7 meanings, and *Random House Webster’s College Dictionary* gives as many as 18 different meanings, ranging from “a particular type or sort, with reference to form, appearance, or character, like Tom’s style” to “a mode of expressing thought in writing or speaking, esp. as characteristic of a group, person, etc., like Hemingway’s style”. Cicero, a well-known ancient Roman orator, defined style as eloquence, and Jonathan Swift, the great Irish writer in the 18th century, once said, “Proper words in proper places, makes the true definition of a style.” Broadly speaking, Wikipedia (the free encyclopedia) defines style as:

Style (fiction), an aspect of literary composition;
Style (visual arts), style in art and painting;
Architectural style;
Design, the process of creating something;
Fashion, a prevailing mode of expression, *e.g.*, clothing;
Format, various terms that refer to the style of different things;
Human physical appearance;

Hairstyle.

Style, in specific fields, may also refer to:

In typeface, one of the three traditional design features along with size and weight;
Style (botany), a stalk structure in female flower parts;
Style (biology), a digestive structure in the midgut of many bivalve molluscs;
Style (manner of address), titles or honorifics, including Chinese courtesy names.

But linguistically speaking, style may carry some four meanings.

Style may refer to a person's distinctive language habits, or the set of individual characteristics of language use, such as *Shakespeare's style*, *Miltonic style*, *James Joyce's style*, *Lu Xun's style*, *Mo Yan's style*.

Style may refer to a set of collective characteristics of language use, i.e., language habits shared by a group of people at a given time, as *Elizabethan style*, in a given place, as *yankee humour*, amidst a given occasion, as *the style of advertising English*, for a literary genre, as *ballad style*, etc.

Style may refer to the effectiveness of a way of expression, such as a clear or refined style.

Style may refer solely to a characteristic of good or beautiful literary writings, such as a grand style, an ornate style, an involved style, a lucid style, a plain style, a comic style, etc.

As for English writing, those four definitions of style are closely related. So we tend to define style as the particular/unusual/specific/marked linguistic features of an author, a text, a genre, a period, etc. in a given context or situation, and it may be realized by employing unusual linguistic features at various levels of language, such as phonological, lexical, syntactical and semantic (rhetorical devices in particular) levels. Broadly speaking, style may fall into the following three groups.

1. Formal vs Informal Style

First, please look at the two examples:

- 1) This is to inform you that your book has been rejected by our publishing company as it was not up to the required standard. In case you would like us to reconsider it, we would suggest that you go over it and make some necessary changes.
- 2) You know that book I wrote? Well, the publishing company rejected it. They thought it was awful. But hey, I did the best I could, and I think it was great. I'm not gonna redo it the way they said I should.

Obviously the first one is formal, and the second is informal. But what is it that makes them formal or informal? It is the style of writing, or the way we use words to say what we want to say. Different situations call for different ways of putting words together. The way we write in academic and scientific settings differs greatly from the way we write to a friend or a close one. The tone, vocabulary, and syntax, all change as the occasion changes. This difference in the styles of writing is the difference between formality and informality, or the difference between formal and informal writing.

“The informal style, far from being merely a sloppy form of language, is governed by rules every bit as precise, logical, and rigorous as the rules governing formal language” (Akmajian, et al, 2001: 59). An informal writing style is often more direct than a formal style and may rely more heavily on contractions, abbreviations, short sentences, and ellipses. “A formal style is characterized by long and complex sentences, a scholarly vocabulary, and a consistently serious tone. Grammatical rules are scrupulously observed, and the subject matter is substantial. The selection may include references to literary works or allusions to historical and classical figures. Absent are contractions, colloquial expressions, and an identified speaker, with an impersonal tone or the reader frequently used as the subject” (Obrecht, 1999: 329).

A formal writing style is not necessarily “better” than an informal style. Rather each style serves a different purpose and care should be taken in choosing which style to use in each case. Writing for professional purposes is likely to require the formal style, although individual communications can use the informal style once you are familiar with the recipient. Note that emails tend to lend themselves to a less formal

style than paper-based communications, but you should still avoid the use of “text talk”.

2. Spoken vs Written Style

As T. S. Eliot has ever said, “An identical spoken and written language would be practically intolerable. If we spoke as we write we should find no one to listen; and if we wrote as we speak we should find no one to read. The spoken and written language must not be too near together, as they must not be too far apart” (Schwertfeger, 2007: 1). Therefore, there are many differences that can be noted between spoken and written language.

Spoken style goes well with informal style. It tends to be full of repetitions, incomplete sentences, corrections and interruptions, with the exception of formal speeches and other scripted forms of speech, such as news reports and scripts for plays and films. Spoken style is usually a dynamic interaction between two or more people. Context and shared knowledge play a major role, so it is possible to leave much unsaid or indirectly implied. Spoken style can use timing, tone, volume, and voice quality to add emotional context. Some types of vocabulary are used only or mainly in speech. These include slang expressions, and tags like *y’know*, *like*, etc.

Written style often goes with formal style. It tends to be more complex and intricate than spoken one with longer sentences and many subordinate clauses. The punctuation and layout of written texts also have no spoken equivalent. However, some forms of written language, such as instant messages and emails, are closer to spoken language. Writers receive no immediate feedbacks from their readers, except in computer-based communications. Therefore they cannot rely on contexts to clarify things so there is more need to explain things clearly and unambiguously than in speech, except in written correspondence between people who know one another well. Writers can make use of punctuation, headings, layout, colors and other graphical effects in their written texts. Such things are not available in speech. Written materials can be read repeatedly and closely analyzed, and notes can be made on the writing surface. Only recorded speech can be used in this way.

However, the written style uses its own versions of speech features, and unlike the immediacy of speech, there is the opportunity to revise and correct. Writing is long lasting while speech is transient. Each style may range from spontaneous (a

casual conversation or a scribbled written note) to planned (a prepared talk or a formal essay). Some typical features of both spoken and written styles are illustrated in the following table:

Spoken Style	Written Style
pauses	punctuation
hesitation	punctuation
fillers	usually omitted but can be expressed in written speech as “er”
non-fluency features	usually omitted but can be expressed in written speech as “er” or punctuation
expression of emotions	conventional forms — “aagh!” “grr!” including use of exclamation mark, italics and bold
grammatical errors	fewer
irregular supra-segmental	none
incomplete syntax	rare, expressed as “...”
overlaps	expressed as “...” or authorial voice <i>e.g. Bill interrupted.</i>
instant feedback	long delays in conventional print, faster in newspapers, faster again in online discussion groups and nearly instant in chat rooms
phonology	layout, typography
pronunciation	spelling
accent	spelling
discourse features	rare except as vocabulary
redundancy	rare
divergences from topic	rare
serial coordinators	sentences and more logical coordinators
defined sentence structure	less common. Sentences generally well defined with punctuation defining clauses.
implicit, great use of pronouns	more explicit. Nouns preferred to pronouns.
paralinguistic — gesture and body language	limited to typography
seamless topic change	topic change by sentence or paragraph

3. Literary vs Non-literary Style

The quick definition would be that literary writing contains metaphors, symbols, allegories, etc., and are used in universities and high schools while nonliterary writing is something people read for entertainment purposes. Literary texts are fictional compositions based on the artist's will and imagination and are therefore subjective. Examples of literary texts are poems, short stories and dramas. These texts are usually read to teach rather than for entertainment because literary texts range from easy to understand to something that has to be read more than once and analyzed. These types of texts always have a reason for being written rather than simply on a whim. Literary figures, such as Shakespeare, Faulkner, Emerson, and Langston Hughes, bring up large issues of society or flaws in human nature and some even go a step beyond this to offer a way to repair them or even futuristic predictions. Literary texts are well constructed and take time to compose creatively and meaningfully.

Non-literary texts are informative writings: factual materials, informational explanations, newspaper articles, textbooks, journal and diary entries, and so forth, which are published in newspapers, informative magazines, current affairs news and educative articles. Non-literary composition uses facts and figures to prove a point. Examples of non-literary texts are personal diaries, current affairs news, journals, textbooks and articles. Non-literary composition is written objectively.

Normally the typical features of well-used non-literary texts go as follows: Newspaper articles or magazine articles, which include headlines, photographs, and human interest stories, in which colloquial or idiomatic language is frequently used; letters to the editor, which may be praise for a good article or criticism of opinions expressed by the newspaper, suggestions for improving the newspaper, or criticism or praise of politicians; brochures, which refer to information about a product or service, glossy format, photographs and illustrations; advertisements, which must have eye-catching pictures, illustrations or cartoons as well as humorous or witty remarks with a play on words, which are usually exaggerative to give praise of the product or service offered; reports, which cover factual information in an objective style, with diagrams or photographs to illustrate points; editorials, which are the opinions of the newspaper on a particular subject, in which rhetorical devices like metaphors, hyperbole, and irony are employed. Many formal, non-literary texts will follow the

pattern described for essays with an introduction, main part and conclusion. It is a good idea to determine these main sections first. Sometimes it is difficult to say exactly where the introduction ends and the main part begins, so you need to point out transitions that link the sections of the text together.

II Stylistic Features in Writing

Since writing is the expression and use of language, it is necessary to comprehend the characteristics of language itself. Generally speaking, language, from the perspective of linguistics, can be analyzed from the following three levels.

1. At Phonological Level

Spoken language physically consists of distinctive speech sounds (phonemes) strung together to make up words. Phonemes are sounds which distinguish one word from another (e.g. /bet/ vs. /pet/ or /bit/) and linguists note phonemic transcriptions of speech by enclosing the transcription in slash brackets (/). This level of language is often called the phonemic or phonological level. Language is first represented by sounds, and thus the study of linguistics that deals with the sounds of speech and their production, combination, description, and representation by written symbols is phonetics. On the basis of that, phonology is the study of the rules for the organization of the sound systems of a language. Written English does not have sounds (although we can to some degree “hear” the sounds behind the writing in our imagination). Instead it has a set of alphabetical symbols which we conventionally associate with the phonemes of English, sometimes in a one-to-one fashion, or sometimes in spelling combinations (for example, the two-letter combination “sh-” is “used” to represent one phoneme /ʃ/, as at the beginning of the word “shin” (/ʃɪn/). The written equivalent to the phonemic or phonological level in speech is usually called graphology. Graphology is the study of the writing system of a language. Let us look at a simple sentence to illustrate phonology and graphology:

Girls like cats.

In graphological terms, substituting the letter “h” for the “c” at the beginning of the written word “cats” above changes the spelling from “cats” to “hats”, and its spoken equivalent would change from /kæts/ to /hæts/. In both cases, not only would the sound or letter change, but also the whole word and the meaning would do as a consequence:

Girls like hats.

At the end of the words “cats” and “hats” there is no graphological difference between the spelling symbol and the phonemic transcription symbol used to represent the sound. But it is not difficult to find differences, and this is not surprising once you know that there are 26 letters in English but more than 50 phonemes. This explains why the alphabet needs to use combinations of letters like “sh-” to represent some sounds. Phonemic transcriptions, although they use equivalent alphabetical letters where they can, have to resort to other symbols in order to have a different transcription symbol for each phoneme. For example, *girls* has 5 letters but only 4 sounds /gɜ:lz/, and although the plural at the end of each word is indicated by the letter “s”, the plural marker is pronounced as /z/ in /gɜ:lz/ and /s/ in /kæts/. To put it in detail, the stylistic features at this level go as follows.

Phonological features: Segmental phonemes are sounds broken into the smallest units, including consonants and vowels. Sound symbolism is the way sounds can be felt appropriate to the meanings expressed, for instance, the initial *sl-* is often symbolic of *slipperiness* in words like *slide*, *slip*, *slither*, *slush*, *sluice*, *sludge*, etc.

Assimilation refers to the process by which a sound is modified so that it becomes similar or identical to an adjacent or nearby sound, for example, the prefix *in-* becomes *im-* in *impossible* by assimilation to the labial *p* of *possible*.

Elision means omission of a final or initial sound in pronunciation or omission of an unstressed vowel or syllable, as in scanning a verse, for example, the voiceless consonant “t” after another voiceless “s” like in the word “mostly” is usually omitted in pronunciation.

Supra-segmental features are sounds that extend over longer stretches of spoken text, co-existing with the segmental ones that occupy those stretches, such as syllable

stress, rhythm, and intonation; pitch height and pitch range; pause and tempo.

Stress refers to the emphasis placed on the sound or syllable spoken most forcefully in a word or phrase, the relative force of sound or emphasis given to a syllable or word in accordance with a metrical pattern, or a syllable having strong relative emphasis in a metrical pattern. Rhythm is the pattern or flow of sound created by the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables in accentual verse or of long and short syllables in quantitative verse. Intonation is the use of changing pitch to convey syntactic information.

Graphological features: the graphological level concerns the use of alphabet, the number system, punctuation, capitalization, headlining, italicizing, bracketing, diagramming, paragraphing, spacing, etc.

2. At Lexical and Grammatical Levels

A second linguistic level we can distinguish is that of grammar (by which we mean, the form, positioning and grouping of the elements that go to make up sentences). Grammar, the central part of a linguistic statement, studies the structure of units called sentences in a language, and the way these function in sequences. Grammar is divided into morphology which studies the internal structure of words and of rules governing their formation, and syntax which studies their external relationships in a sentence. Lexicology studies the choice of specific lexical items (units of vocabulary) in a text, their distribution in relation to one another, and their meanings. English is pretty extreme in its extensive use of syntax, compared with most of the world's languages. And if you change the grammar you also change the meaning. So note that sentence (1) below uses exactly the same words as sentence (2) but the different syntax results in radically different meanings:

1) *Girls like cats.*

2) *Cats like girls.*

Grammatical relations in languages can also be controlled by adding grammar — indicating elements onto the words themselves. Most of the world's languages use morphology more extensively than English to indicate grammatical relations. This is

often referred to informally as “adding endings to words”, because, although some languages put such grammatical markers at the beginning, or even in the middle, of words, most put them at the end. This sort of grammatical structuring is usually called morphology. Morphology accounts for the building blocks of meaning inside words.

Although English is a very syntactic language, it does have some morphology. So, in the above examples, the adding of the “-s” ending indicates plural. Hence the one-word item “cats” is composed of two morphemes, CAT + PLURAL, and the first of these morphemes has 3 phonemes /kæt/ and the second morpheme has one, /s/. Stylistic features at grammatical level usually refer to different sentence types and sentence complexities.

Sentence type: Sentences can be identified in two ways: purpose and structure. When we categorize sentences based on purposes, we get four types of sentences, including statements (declarative sentences), questions (interrogative sentences), commands (imperative sentences) and exclamations (exclamatory sentences). When we classify sentences by structure, we may have simple, compound, complex and complex-compound sentences as well as elliptical ones.

Statements or declarative sentences are the most common type of sentence in English literature. A declarative sentence states a fact. Examples of declarative sentences are like: *The bus arrived late. My pink sweater needs to be washed.*

Questions or interrogative sentences are commonly used to ask a question or request information and end with question marks, e.g. *Where are you going today? Will you hand me the red paintbrush, please?*

Commands or imperative sentences give a command or ask someone to do something. Imperative sentences may appear to lack a subject: *Shut the door. Clear the table. Stop right this instant.* It is common for imperative sentences to have an implied subject. In all three examples of imperative sentences above, the implied subject is “you.” Each imperative sentence above is commanding or requesting that “you” do something.

Exclamations or exclamatory sentences are generally more emphatic forms of statements expressing emotions: *I have to go to work! It's so beautiful! I love it!* It is important to note that simply placing an exclamation mark at the end of a sentence

does not automatically create an exclamatory sentence. An exclamatory sentence must also convey strong emotions. An exclamatory sentence uses strong emotions and ends with an exclamation mark.

An elliptical sentence is a shorter form of sentence in which some words have been omitted, but it retains the same meaning. However, an elliptical sentence does not mean a sentence with an ellipsis in it. An ellipsis is expressed by three periods, symbolizing missing information. This form most often appears when using only part of a direct quote. An elliptical sentence refers to sentences with information missing. This form does not require an ellipsis. These sentences are grammatically correct only if the necessary information to understand the sentence has been supplied previously or is clear from the context of the sentence. For example: *Are you tired? Yes.* In the example, although by itself *Yes* would not normally be a sentence, the context makes the meaning clear and hence creates a grammatically correct sentence. This is the simplest form of elliptical sentence.

At lexical level, some typical linguistic features are word types, word formations and collocations.

Word type is concerned with the word formation and is discussable in terms of traditional morphology: root, prefix and suffix. On this basis, several types of words are worth noting: compounding, complex affixation, conversion, blending, back formation, shortening and neologism.

Compounding refers to the process of combining two words (free morphemes) to create a new word (commonly a noun, verb, or adjective). Compounds are written sometimes as one word (*sunglasses*), sometimes as two hyphenated words (*life-threatening*), and sometimes as two separate words (*football stadium*).

Complex affixation is the process of forming a new word by the addition of a morpheme (or affix) to an already existing word. The two primary kinds of affixation are pre-fixation (the addition of a prefix) and suffixation (the addition of a suffix). Clusters of affixes can be used to form complex words, for instance, unhappy (pre-fixation), happiness (suffixation).

Conversion is a linguistic process that assigns an already existing word to a new word class (part of speech) or syntactic category. This process is also known as a functional shift or zero derivation. Here is an example: *Slow down before you reach*

the crossroads. The verb *slow* is formed from the existing adjective *slow*.

Blending is a word formed by merging the sounds and meanings of two or more other words or word parts. The most common type of blend is a full word followed by a word part (called a splinter), as in *motorcade* (motor + cavalcade).

Back formation is the process of forming a new word (a neologism) by extracting actual or supposed affixes from another word; shortened words created from longer words, such as forming *edit* from *editor*.

Shortening consists of two types: clipping and acronym. Clipping refers to a word formed by dropping one or more syllables from a polysyllabic word, such as *cell* from *cellular phone*. Acronym is a word formed from the initial letters of a name, such as *WAC* for *Women's Army Corps*, or by combining initial letters or parts of a series of words, such as *radar* for *radio detecting and ranging*.

Neologism is a newly coined word, expression, or usage, such as *man-unkind*, a nonce word which is coined specially for a certain occasion.

An archaism is the use of a form of speech or writing that is no longer current. This can either be done deliberately (to achieve a specific effect) or as part of a specific jargon (for example in law) or formula (for example in religious contexts). Many nursery rhymes contain archaisms. Archaic elements that occur only in certain fixed expressions (*e.g. be that as it may*) are not considered to be archaisms.

Jargon is the technical terminology or characteristic idiom of a special activity or group. In other words, the term covers the language used by people who work in a particular area or who have a common interest. Much like slang, it can develop as a kind of shorthand, to express ideas that are frequently discussed between members of a group, though it can also be developed deliberately using chosen terms. A standard term may be given a more precise or unique usage among practitioners of a field. In many cases, however, this causes a barrier to communication with those not familiar with the language of the field. For example, *bit*, *byte*, and *hexadecimal* are jargon terms related to computing.

An argot is a secret language used by various groups — including, but not limited to, thieves and other criminals — to prevent outsiders from understanding their conversations. The term argot is also used to refer to the informal specialized vocabulary from a particular field of study, hobby, job, sport, etc. Nevertheless,

specific words can go from argot into common speech or the other way. For example, *piaf* was a Parisian argot word for *sparrow*; after being taken up by the singer Edith Piaf, this meaning became well known in France and worldwide and no longer serves the purpose of a secret language.

Collocation refers to the habitual or expected co-occurrence of words or a familiar grouping of words, especially words that habitually appear together and thereby convey meaning by association. The meaning of a word depends on its immediate context — its nearby words which are its collocated ones. This context will permit some of the possible denotations and connotations, but rule out others, or make them less probable. Collocation range refers to the set of items that typically accompany a word. The size of a collocation range is partially determined by a word's level of specificity and number of meanings.

3. At Semantic Level

In our brief look at the phonological and grammatical levels of language we have already mentioned another linguistic level, the level of meaning. One aspect of meaning is word-meaning (lexis). Changing the “c” or /k/ in “cats” or /kæts/ to “h” or /h/ changes the word and hence the meaning, in this case dramatically. The different words refer to completely different referents.

Semantics studies the overall meaning of a text, the meaning derived from the formal properties of words and structures but from the way sentences/utterances are used and the way they are related to the context in which they are used/uttered. A text is a stretch of language, which forms a unity by reasons of its linguistic cohesion and semantic coherence.

Cohesion: Cohesion is the grammatical and lexical links within a text or sentence that holds a text together and gives it meaning. It is related to the broader concept of coherence. There are two main types of cohesion: grammatical, referring to the structural content, and lexical, referring to the language content of the piece. A cohesive text is created in many different ways. In *Cohesion in English*, Halliday and Hasan (1976: 82) identify five general categories of cohesive devices that create coherence in texts: reference, ellipsis, substitution, lexical cohesion and conjunction.

Reference includes two referential devices that can create cohesion. Anaphoric

reference occurs when the writer refers back to someone or something that has been previously identified, to avoid repetition. An example can be found in formulas such as *as stated previously* or *the aforementioned*. Cataphoric reference is the opposite of anaphora: a reference forward as opposed to backward in the discourse. For example: *Here he comes, our award-winning host...it's John Doe!* Cataphoric references can also be found in written text, for example, *see page 10*.

Ellipsis is another cohesive device. It happens when, after a more specific mention, words are omitted when the phrase needs to be repeated. A simple conversational example: (A) *Where are you going?* (B) *To town*. The full form of B's reply would be: *I am going to town*. A simple written example: *The younger child was very outgoing, the older much more reserved*. The omitted words from the second clause are "*child*" and "*was*".

Substitution happens when a word is not omitted as in ellipsis and is substituted for another, more general word. For example, *Which ice-cream would you like? I would like the pink one*, where *one* is used instead of repeating *ice-cream*.

Conjunction sets up a relationship between two clauses. The most basic but least cohesive is the conjunction *and*. Transitions are conjunctions that add cohesion to text and include *then*, *however*, *in fact*, and *consequently*. Conjunctions can also be implicit and deduced from correctly interpreting the text.

Grammatical cohesion means observation of the grammatical rules. In linguistics, grammar refers to the logical and structural rules that govern the composition of clauses, phrases, and words in any given natural language. The term refers also to the study of such rules, and this field includes morphology and syntax, often complemented by phonetics, phonology, semantics, and pragmatics.

Coherence in linguistics is what makes a text semantically meaningful. It is especially dealt with in text linguistics. Coherence is achieved through syntactical features such as the use of deictic, anaphoric and cataphoric elements or a logical tense structure, as well as presuppositions and implications connected to general world knowledge. The purely linguistic elements that make a text coherent are subsumed under the term *cohesion*. However, those text-based features which provide cohesion in a text do not necessarily help achieve coherence, that is, they do

not always contribute to the meaningfulness of a text, be it written or spoken.



Rhetorical Devices

A rhetorical device or figure of speech uses words in a certain way to convey meaning or to persuade. It can also be a technique to evoke an emotion on the part of the reader or audience. To put it in a clearer way, rhetorical devices are to be introduced from the following levels: phonological, lexical and syntactical levels.

1. At Phonological Level

Rhetorical devices at phonological level make use of the phonological features of words, including onomatopoeia, alliteration and assonance.

Alliteration refers to the repetition of the same consonant sounds or of different vowel sounds at the beginning of words or in stressed syllables (sometimes also in words that are not next to each other). Alliteration draws attention to the phrase and is often used for emphasis. Repetition of initial consonant sounds means that only the sound must be the same, not the consonants themselves. For examples, *killer command* (“k” and “c” both pronounce /k/), *favorite photos* (“f” and “ph” are both pronounced as /f/), *a neat knot* (“k” in “knot” is silent). However, if neighboring words start with the same consonant but have a different initial sound, the words are not alliterated. More examples: *a cool child* (“ch” in “child” is not pronounced as /k/ as “c” in “cool”), *honored* and *humbled* (“h” in “honored” is silent).

Assonance is the repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds, especially in stressed syllables, with changes in the intervening consonants, as in *that dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea*.

Consonance is the repetition of consonants or of a consonant pattern, especially at the ends of words, as in *blank* and *think* or *strong* and *string*.

Onomatopoeia refers to the pronunciation of the word which imitates a sound. Onomatopoeia is used because it is often difficult to describe sounds. Furthermore, a story becomes more lively and interesting by the use of onomatopoeia. For examples: *The lion roared. The steaks sizzled in the pan. The bomb went off with a bang.* In

literary writing, onomatopoeia may fall into several categories:

Imitating sound of metals: *clash, clank, ting, tinkle, clang, jangle, ding-dong, tick-tack*, etc.

Imitating sound of liquid: *splash, bubble, sizz, sizzle, splish-splosh, drip-drop*, etc.

Imitating sound of animals: *neigh, baa, moo, miao, screech, hiss, cook-a-doodle-do*, etc.

Imitating sound of humans: *giggle, chuckle, shriek, snort, sneeze, snigger, smack, whisper, grunt, grumble, mumble, sputter, murmur, chatter, gurgle, whoop*, etc.

In addition, onomatopoeia does not only produce the similar sound, but also evokes the association of an action which produces that sound. Hence it can usually be converted into a verb, as in *he banged the door open*.

2. At Lexical Level

Rhetorical devices at lexical level refer to rhetorical devices produced by semantic association or incongruity of the language in use. That is to say, lexical rhetorical devices are deviations of language conducted by writers on purpose for the sake of achieving a certain prominent stylistic effect. These rhetorical devices, including simile, metaphor, allusion, metonymy, synecdoche, antonomasia, transferred epithet, personification, hyperbole, irony, euphemism, pun, oxymoron, zeugma, are often seen in various types of text.

Simile is a comparison between two different things that resemble each other in at least one way. In formal prose, the simile is a device both of art and explanation, comparing an unfamiliar thing to some familiar thing (an object, event, process, etc.) known to the reader. In short, it is an explicit comparison between two things using “like” or “as”. Possible patterns are:

A is (not) like B

A is more/less than B

A is as...as B

A is similar to B

A is..., so is B

A does..., so does B

Examples of those patterns are as follows:

- 1) Concrete box-style buildings are spreading like inkblots.
- 2) Personality is to a man what perfume is to a flower. (Charles Schwab)
- 3) My friend is as good as gold.

Metaphor compares two different things in a figurative sense. Unlike in a simile (A is like B.), “like” is not used in metaphor (A is B.). A metaphor expresses the unfamiliar (the tenor) in terms of the familiar (the vehicle). When Neil Young sings, *Love is a rose*, *rose* is the vehicle for *love*, the tenor. (In cognitive linguistics, the terms *target* and *source* are roughly equivalent to *tenor* and *vehicle*.)

Metaphor is a type of analogy and is closely related to other rhetorical figures of speech that achieve their effects via association, comparison or resemblance including allegory, hyperbole, and simile. One of the most prominent examples of a metaphor in English literature is the “All the world’s a stage” monologue from *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare. Besides the pattern “A is B”, the phrase “A of B” as in “a sea of laughter” is often seen but is not clear enough to be paid much attention to. So a metaphor not only explains by making the abstract or unknown concrete and familiar, but it also enlivens by touching the reader’s imagination. Further, it affirms one more interconnection in the unity of all things by showing a relationship between things seemingly alien to each other. And the fact that two very unlike things can be equated or referred to in terms of one another comments upon them both. No metaphor is “just a metaphor.” All have significant implications, and they must be chosen carefully, especially in regard to the connotations the vehicle (image) will transfer to the tenor.

Allusion is a figure of speech that makes a reference to, or a representation of, people, places, events, literary works, myths, or works of art, either directly or by implication. Allusion is used to explain or clarify a complex problem. It is important that allusion work best if you keep it short and refer to something the reader/audience is familiar with: famous people, history, (Greek) mythology, or literature (the Bible). If the audience is familiar with the event or person, they will also know background and context. Thus, just a few words are enough to create a certain picture (or scene) in the readers’ minds. The advantages are that we do not need lengthy explanations to clarify the problem, that the reader becomes active by reflecting on the analogy, and

that the message will stick in the reader's mind. Such examples are as follows:

- 1) The Scrooge Syndrome (Allusion to the rich, greedy and mean Ebenezer Scrooge from Charles Dickens' "Christmas Carol")
- 2) The software included a Trojan Horse. (Allusion to the Trojan horse from Greek mythology)
- 3) Plan ahead. It was not raining when Noah built the Ark. (Richard Cushing) (Allusion to the biblical Ark of Noah)

Many allusions to historic events, mythology or the bible have become famous idioms as in:

- 1) to meet one's Waterloo (Allusion to Napoleon's defeat in the Battle of Waterloo)
- 2) to wash one's hands of it (Allusion to Pontius Pilatus, who sentenced Jesus to death, but washed his hands afterwards to demonstrate that he was not to blame for it.)
- 3) to guard something with Argus's eyes (Allusion to the giant Argus from Greek mythology, who watched over Zeus' lover Io.)

Metonymy is a figure of speech in which a thing or concept is not called by its own name, but by the name of something intimately associated with that thing or concept. Metonymy uses figurative expressions that are closely associated with the subject in terms of place, time or background. The figurative expression is not a physical part of the subject, however. The use of a particular metonymy makes a comment about the idea for which it has been substituted, and thereby helps to define that idea. Some instances go as follows:

- 1) The White House declared... (White House = US government/President)
- 2) The land belongs to the crown. (Crown = king/queen/royal family/monarchy)
- 3) Empty pockets never held anyone back. Only empty heads and empty hearts can do that. (Norman Vincent Peale) (Empty pockets = poverty; empty heads = ignorance/dullness/density; empty hearts = unkindness/coldness)

Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which the part stands for the whole, the whole for a part, the genus for the species, the species for the genus, the material for the thing made, or in short, any portion, section, or main quality for the whole or the thing itself (or vice versa). Synecdoche can be used to emphasize an important aspect of a fictional character. Sonnets and other forms of love poetry frequently use synecdoche to characterize the beloved in terms of individual body parts rather than a coherent whole. This practice is especially common in the Petrarchan sonnet, where the idealized beloved is often described part by part, from head to toe. Here are some examples:

- 1) Farmer Jones has two hundred head of cattle and three hired hands. (A part “hands” referring to the whole “people”)
- 2) The birds sang to welcome the smiling year. (The whole “the smiling year” referring to a part “spring”)
- 3) Spring vanishes with the rose. (The species “the rose” for the genus “flowers”)
- 4) What a lovely creature! (The genus “a lovely creature” for the species “a beautiful woman”)
- 5) He earned his bread as a teacher. (The concrete “bread” for the abstract “living”)
- 6) All the wit and learning of the world were assembled there. (The abstract “the wit and learning” for the concrete “the wise and learned scholars”)
- 7) Do you take plastic? (The material that a thing is (actually, historically, or supposedly) made of refers to that thing, here “plastic” for “a credit card”)
- 8) He drank the cup. (A container “cup” is used to refer to its content.)

Antonomasia is a rhetorical term for the substitution of a title, epithet, or descriptive phrase for a proper name (or of a personal name for a common name) to designate a member of a group or class. Antonomasia is a particular form of metonymy. This trope is of the same nature as metonymy, although it cannot be said to exhibit the idea more vividly. Its principal use is to avoid the repetition of the same name, and the too frequent use of the pronoun. The most frequent forms of it are, naming a person from his parentage or country, as in *Achilles is called Pelides; Napoleon Bonaparte, the Corsican*; or naming him from some of his deeds, as in *instead of Scipio, the destroyer of Carthage; instead of Wellington, the hero of*

Waterloo. More examples: *He is the Newton of this century*; *Shanghai is the New York of China*.

Transferred epithet is a figure of speech in which an epithet, which is an adjective or descriptive phrase that serves to characterize somebody or something grammatically, qualifies a noun other than the person or thing it is actually describing. A transferred epithet often involves shifting a modifier from the animate to the inanimate, as in the following examples:

- 1) She was so worried about her son that she spent several *sleepless nights*.
- 2) In his *quiet laziness* he suddenly remembered that strange word.

Personification is a trope or figure of speech (generally considered a type of metaphor) in which an inanimate object or abstraction is given human qualities or abilities. It is to treat a person or an idea as if it were human or had human qualities. In poetry personification is very common:

Youth is hot and bold,
Age is weak and cold,
Youth is wild, and Age is tame.
— William Shakespeare

While personification functions primarily as a device of art, it can often serve to make an abstraction clearer and more real to the reader by defining or explaining the concept in terms of everyday human action (as in *Man's rejection of readily available wisdom is presented as a woman crying out to be heard but being ignored*). Ideas can be brought to life through personification and objects can be given greater interest. But try always to be fresh: *winking stars* is worn out; *winking dewdrops* may be all right.

Hyperbole, the counterpart of understatement, deliberately exaggerates conditions for emphasis or effect. In formal writing, hyperbole must be clearly intended as an exaggeration, and should be carefully restricted. That is, do not exaggerate everything, but treat hyperbole like an exclamation point, to be used only once a year. Then it will be quite effective as a table-thumping attention getter. It may be used to evoke