

Interpretation of Common Rhetorical Techniques in Chinese and English

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Abstract: Chinese and English are two widely used languages in the world, which belong to two different language families, and there are lots of similarities in rhetoric. The author introduces briefly some common rhetorical devices in English and Chinese so as to benefit Chinese and English bilingual learners.

1. Introduction

As the carrier of culture, languages record the history of world civilization. Each language embodies the unique customs, thinking and habits of the people in a particular region. As two shining pearls in the language family, Chinese and English bear the splendid civilizations of the East and the West. After thousands of years of evolution, Chinese has a positive and rich vocabulary, beautiful poems, wonderful chapters, all reflect the charm of Chinese. As a universal language, English also contains mysterious and pure style. According to rhetoric, there are lots of similarities between Chinese and English in rhetorical devices. Through the study of common rhetorical devices in Chinese and English, the author hopes to help Chinese and English learners better understand the connotation of the article and better realize the communication between Chinese and English.

2. Interpretation of common rhetorical devices in Chinese and English

Although Chinese and English are two different languages, their rhetorical devices are same or similar. Rhetoric belongs to linguistics. The commonly used rhetorical devices in Chinese and English are as follow: simile, metaphor, hyperbole, irony, exclamation, repetition, parallelism, personification, euphemism and so on. This research paper will give a comparative study of several common Chinese and English rhetorical devices. and the author tries to explore the similarities between the two languages through specific examples.

2.1 Metaphors in Chinese and English

As we all know, metaphor is a rhetorical device that describes or illustrates one side of two different but similar things. The thing that is figured is called noumenon, and the thing that is figured is called figurative body. For example, apples are big and red, like lanterns. The apple in this sentence is the noumenon and the lantern is the metaphor. For example, the childhood show the man, as morning show the day Translation: A person's childhood is like a morning. Among them, child hood is the noumenon and morning is the figurative body. Metaphors can be divided into two categories. One is simile, which means simile in English. The other is metaphor, metaphor in English.

Simile refers to the use of figurative words to connect the noumenon and the figurative body, that is, the figurative things and the things used for figurative purposes. The commonly used metaphors in Chinese are: 像, 好像 etc. The commonly used metaphors in English include “like, as though, as if, as” and so on. Whether simile in English or simile in Chinese, both of them are directly and obviously figurative, turning Abstract into concrete and profound into simple, in order to achieve vivid artistic effect. Examples are as follows:

Chinese example: Leaves (noumenon) come out of water very high, like the skirt (figurative body) of a dancer in a pavilion. (Moonlight in Lotus Pond by Zhu Ziqing)

English examples: O, my Luve's like a red, red rose, / That's new sprung in June. / O, my Luve's like the melodie, / That's sweetly play'd in tune. (Robert Burns, A Red, Red Rose)

Metaphor is another form. In this kind of figurative rhetoric, there is formally consistent relationship between noumenon and figurative body. The commonly used metaphors are yes, that is, become, become, etc. In English, metaphor is the word corresponding to metaphor. The word metaphor originates from Greek, which means to express another thing with one thing, transforming from one thing to another. The interaction of the two creates the textual meaning vividly. In English and Chinese rhetoric, metaphor has the same function and characteristics. For example:

Chinese example: How moving page after page! This is the flower of human thought. (Xu Chi's Goldbach Conjecture)

English example: Life is a Journey, not a destination.

In the above Chinese examples, text is the noumenon and flower is the metaphor. Here, page by page, chapter is metaphorically the flower of human thinking. It is extremely vivid. In English, life is the noumenon and journey is the vehicle. According to our life experience, when we refer to the term journey travel, we can think of the following three points: beginning and ending; full of joy and hardship; and finally arriving at a destination. If we project these three meanings on the metaphor of life, we will get the implicit meaning that life is a natural process with a beginning and an end, full of joy and hardship, sadness and joy, and with a final purpose.

In English, metaphor also has the characteristic of non-literal meaning, i.e. extending and categorizing words to derive new meanings. For example: That theory doesn't hold water. "Hold water" in this sentence is extended to be capable of standing up to the test.

2.2 Hyperbole in Chinese and English

Hyperbole is to express the need of expression. It intentionally uses the rhetoric of exaggeration or reduction to express certain characteristics of things, highlighting or emphasizing the essential characteristics of things, in order to enhance the language appeal, deeply reflect the author's feelings, and thus stimulate readers' rich imagination and strong resonance. Exaggeration should not be too close to the facts, otherwise it is not clear whether it is telling the facts or exaggerating. Not all styles are suitable for the use of exaggerated rhetoric. It is not easy to use exaggeration in scientific and technological expositions and rational articles in order to avoid distorting facts. In English, the word hyperbole comes from the Greek word hyperbole, which means more than. Its characteristic is that the exaggerated description of the object of expression violates common sense or illogical, so as to achieve strong results. Examples are as follows:

Chinese Example 1: To be thirsty, I am a little thirsty. My voice is smoking and my face is burning. I can drink a river. I can drink a river.

Chinese Example 2: Thirty years have passed, with a flick of the finger.

English Example 1: He ran down the avenue, making a noise like ten horses at gallop.

English Example 2: We must fight for every inch of land.

Chinese Example 1 and English Example 1 use exaggerated rhetoric. Exaggeration is the expression of the image and quantity of the object being described, which is especially high and large. Chinese example 1 describes that he is thirsty so much that one can drink all of the water in the river. In English example 1, the sound of human running is compared to the sound of ten horses running. It uses both metaphor and exaggerated rhetoric. Chinese and English examples 2 use the rhetoric of reducing exaggeration. Contrary to exaggeration, narrowing exaggeration is a very low and small expression of the image, quantity and other characteristics of the object being described. Chinese Example 2 reduces the 30-year period to a period of flickering fingers, describing how time flies. In English Example 2, we express our determination to safeguard territorial integrity and national unity by not yielding an inch of land.

2.3 Parallelism in Chinese and English

Parallelism is a common method in Chinese rhetoric. There must be three or more phrases or sentences with similar structure and content in parallelism. This kind of rhetoric often gives people a sense of unity, mostly used for reasoning or lyric. In English, parallelism is called parallelism. It requires three or more items with unlimited number of words and allows the use of homologous adjectives.

Chinese example: “Red like fire, powder like Xia, white like snow”. -- Zhu Ziqing's Spring

English example: We can gain knowledge, by reading, by reflection, by observation, or by practice.

2.4 personification in Chinese and English

Personification has the same characteristics in Chinese and English rhetoric, that is, to use verbs, adjectives, nouns or pronouns which only describe people to describe things, so that the thing has human attributes, things can be vivid, readers can expand the wings of imagination and feel the author's thoughts and feelings.

Chinese Example: On a quiet night, only the stars on that day are whispering.

English Example: The flower was very pretty, it smiled at me and its perfume had such a nice smell.

2.5 Irony in Chinese and English

Irony is also called “inversion”, “rhetoric”, “rhetoric” and so on. It is called irony in English. Irony to express ideas, ideas or things is more emotional, stronger tone and more vivid impression than plain expression. As a matter of fact, irony emphasizes language but neglects language. It often contains irony, humor or teasing, which is quite common in both Chinese and English.

English example: He seldom fails to order a bleeding.

Chinese example: Several women are a little disappointed, but also some sad, each person in the heart scolded their cruel thieves. (Sun Li's Lotus Lake)

2.6 Rhetorical question in Chinese and English

Rhetorical question is also another common rhetorical device in Chinese and English. Re-questioning is also called heckling, cross-examination and cross-examination. There are two main forms, one is to ask without answering, the other is to ask with answering. This rhetorical device can enhance the momentum and improve the persuasion of the article and get to good rhetoric effect finally.

English example: How was it possible to walk for an hour through the woods and see nothing worth of note?

Chinese example: Don't you have anything to blame?

3. Conclusion

At last, there are lots of similarities between common rhetorical devices in Chinese and English. Thus, studying these similarities will help us to learn English better and achieve effective communication between the two languages.

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