

On Defining English Rhetoric

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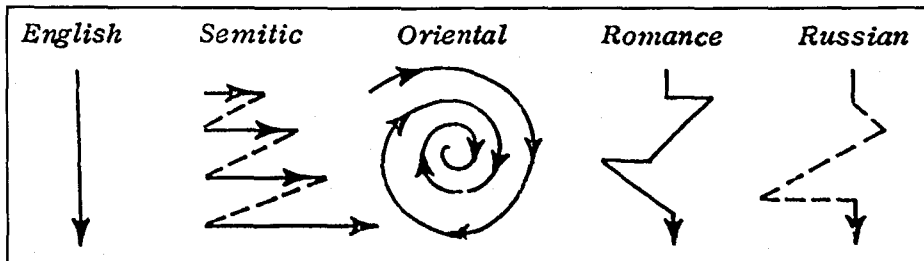
Developments in the Cross-Cultural Study of Rhetoric

When individuals from other cultures produce academic texts in English as a second language, they will often organize and present their ideas in ways that violate the expectations of native readers. Even if the texts are syntactically accurate, the discourse structures may be perceived as “alien,” as not conforming to the standard norms of written English. Where there is an inadequate management of lower level linguistic features, and errors in grammar and usage become superimposed upon anomalous organizational patterns, the resulting texts may very well be incomprehensible. The American applied linguist, Robert Kaplan, was one of the first to notice these discrepancies in students’ cross-cultural writing, and he coined the term *contrastive rhetoric* to account for the phenomenon.

In a seminal article comparing the expository writing styles of several different language groups, Kaplan (1966) claimed that L2 patterns of rhetorical organization will often be transferred to English language compositions with largely negative effects. Contrastive studies across cultures at that time were limited to the level of the sentence, but Kaplan suggested that linguistic and cultural factors beyond the sentence level influenced L2 learners’ writing skills. He further maintained that “foreign students who have mastered syntactic structures have still demonstrated inability to compose adequate themes, term papers, theses, and dissertations,” and that instructors often complain that their written texts are somehow “out of focus,” “lacking in cohesion,” and “lacking in organization” (p. 3). According to Kaplan, these deficiencies arise because L2 students are employing a rhetoric and a sequence of thought (i.e., logic) based on their mother tongue. He suggested that “logic (in the popular, rather than the logician’s sense of the word) which is the basis of rhetoric, is evolved out of culture; it is not universal. Rhetoric, then, is not universal either, but varies from culture to culture...” (p. 2).

Kaplan’s study, which was later to achieve a certain notoriety in applied linguistic and language teaching circles, involved the analysis of paragraph structure in some 600 com-

positions written in English by L2 students from five different language groups: English, Semitic, Oriental, Romance, and Russian. Graphic representations of the rhetorical patterns of each language group were provided, giving rise to its well-known sobriquet, the “doodles” article:



Kaplan's comparisons of these five language groups can be briefly summarized as follows. The expected sequence of thought in English is essentially linear—paragraphs are expected to exhibit unity and coherence and to never be digressive. In the Semitic language group, the paragraph is based on a complex series of parallel constructions and coordination is stressed over subordination. Writing within the Oriental group of languages is characterized by an approach by indirection—the development of the paragraph is said to circle around a subject, providing a variety of tangential views. In the Romance languages, digressions are permitted, there is more freedom to move away from the central topic, and although one is expected to eventually return to the main theme, interesting asides that do not contribute to the basic thought of the paragraph are allowed. Russian permits major digressions, and often material irrelevant to the main idea of the paragraph is presented, somewhat like parenthetical amplifications which would be written as footnotes in English.

Characteristically of any paradigmatic work, Kaplan's theories attracted considerable criticism. As Holyoak & Piper (1997, pp. 125–126) point out, “his graphic representations of rhetorical patterns in selected languages were simplistic, his database was too small, his reliance on English texts as a basis for conclusions about other languages naive.” Kaplan himself (1987) acknowledges the validity of these criticisms, but continues to support the basic premise of his original position, especially in light of “his critics’ failure to provide quantitative evidence to the contrary” (op. cit., p. 126). Writing some two decades later he states that...

...it is now my opinion that all of the various rhetorical modes identified in the “doodles article” are possible in any language—i.e., in any language which has written text. The issue is that each language has certain clear preferences, so that while all forms are possible, all forms do not occur with equal frequency or in parallel distribution. My contention is that any native speaker of any particular language has at his disposal literally hundreds of different mechanisms to signify the same meaning. (Kaplan, 1987, p. 10)

Kaplan's ground-breaking work provided the impetus and set the basic parameters for

a whole new generation of cross-cultural research into written discourse. Early investigations into contrastive rhetoric continued to emphasize his basic hypothesis that differences within the internal logics of languages lead to the development of different rhetorics causing interference with L2 writing performance. The focus of these studies was primarily on textual considerations, and initial approaches were mostly concerned with descriptions of macrostructures (i.e., larger rhetorical patterns of organization, or discourse structures) in the expository writing of selected languages. Later research was redirected towards a more text analytic approach, including the isolation of contrastive features at lower levels of macrostructure (or higher levels of microstructure, depending on one's point of view) such as cohesive ties and the analysis of propositional movement. More recently, the field has moved beyond the boundaries of text itself to encompass cognitive and pragmatic variables in writing, in particular the context in which text is produced, both situational and cultural: "contrastive rhetoric has shifted its emphasis...to deeper levels of discourse meaning in context, assuming that L2 writing displays preferred conventions of the L1 language and culture rather than reflects L1 thought patterns" (Allaei & Connor, 1990, p. 23). Alan Purves' investigations into the nature of writing have been important in shaping this new direction in contrastive rhetoric. Purves & Purves (1986) speak of writing not as a skill, but as "an activity dependent on the prior acquisition of knowledge" (p. 178). They argue that this includes knowledge of the subject matter, knowledge of the grammatical constructs to be used, knowledge of the text structure and text models of written genres, and knowledge of social and cultural roles inherent in the writing process (op. cit.). Contemporary theories of contrastive rhetoric continue to stress that language and writing are cultural phenomena, and that transfer between the mother tongue and target language will typically include not only lexical, grammatical, and syntactic elements, but also patterns of rhetorical organization and stylistic preferences, which in turn are shaped and influenced by implicit, underlying cultural assumptions and traditions, which themselves are forged within linguistic communities over long periods of time.

In its application and orientation, contrastive rhetoric is essentially pragmatic and pedagogical, not in a methodological sense, but in providing teachers and students with knowledge of the links between culture and writing, and how discourse structures and stylistic choices are reflected in written products. The theoretical basis of contrastive rhetoric is interdisciplinary and multidimensional. Its underlying assumptions are neo-Whorfian and derive from the theory of linguistic relativity. Its development has been influenced by such major movements as contrastive analysis, error analysis, interlanguage studies, and language transfer. It is immediately dependent on research in text linguistics and discourse analysis, and is theoretically motivated and informed by the fields of rhetoric and composition theory. It is also fed by ancillary streams as varied as cultural anthropology, cognitive science, translation theory, genre analysis, and literacy studies.

Today, a wealth of materials exists on the application of contrastive rhetoric to the teaching and learning of many languages throughout the world. Still, conceptual problems

remain, and approaches, methodologies, and conclusions tend to be extremely varied and often contradictory. It may be, for example, that some learners' writing problems are predominantly developmental, rather than reflecting issues in rhetorical transfer. As Holyoak & Piper (1997, p. 128) note, "suprasentential features of the written language will be of no avail where the management of lower level linguistic concerns takes up short-term processing capacity, rendering developmental factors just as relevant as transfer...." In addition, as Grabe (1987) points out, one of the main difficulties often lies in comparing text types across languages. For instance, expository or persuasive prose may be distinct and important text genres in English, but not in other languages. It may be that researchers are seeking to compare what is, strictly speaking, incommensurable. Ways must be found to relate the internally defined linguistic categories of one language with those of another, but, as yet, there is no agreed upon theory of rhetoric or discourse from which descriptive categories can be applied to a variety of languages (Houghton & Hoey, 1983).

With the goal of contributing to the creation of such a theory, we will investigate the origins of rhetoric in the West and trace its development up to modern times, arriving in the end at a comprehensive definition of the term which will place it within the framework of a theory of discourse. It is our belief that in order to understand the nature of English rhetoric in the modern world, it is essential to have an adequate knowledge of the historical matrix from which it arose. There is little as divisive as the interpretation of history in this postmodern age, yet without an understanding of the origins and evolution of rhetoric in the Western tradition, we will have no adequate frame of reference for comprehending the canons and strictures which govern our use of language today, nor for developing a uniform theory of discourse within which to conceptualize research models for the cross-cultural study of writing.

English Rhetoric in Historical Perspective

"We are standing," Sir Isaac Newton once remarked, "on the shoulders of giants."

The history of rhetoric in the West covers some 2500 years and during this time the discipline has accumulated a variety of principles and shifts in emphasis that reflect the changing needs of those who practice it. The modern art of rhetoric finds its roots in the past but also responds to contemporary concerns; it is an art which constantly changes to suit the purposes of language use by human beings: "Rhetoric enables writers and speakers to design messages for particular audiences and purposes, but because people in various cultures and historical periods have assumed different definitions of what makes communication effective, rhetorical principles change" (Lindemann, 1995, p. 40). The term *rhetoric* itself has taken on a wide range of meanings, and every historical period has characterized the rhetorical tradition differently, sometimes focusing on oral discourse,

sometimes on written texts, sometimes defining it narrowly as having to do solely with style, or delivery, or invention, sometimes viewing it as including a wider range of the arts and forms of communication in general. Rhetoric has thus accumulated a multiplicity of connotations over the centuries, making the formulation of a comprehensive definition difficult, for it denotes both a practice and a body of knowledge describing that practice. Yet an accurate definition of rhetoric is fundamental to understanding the way in which people communicate in English today in oral or written discourse.

Because this survey of rhetoric is so broad in scope, it makes no pretense to comprehensiveness. It is only possible to dwell on the most important characters and their main works, as well as the most significant intellectual movements of various historical periods. As such, it includes the major trends in discourse education in Western culture in general, presented within a multi-disciplinary framework encompassing not only the art of rhetoric itself, but also related disciplines such as composition theory, literary criticism, philosophy, etc. This brief outline draws freely from a number of excellent historical overviews of the field, including Corbett's (1990) *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, Lindemann's (1995) *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, and Kinneavy's (1971) *A Theory of Discourse*.

Classical Rhetoric

For most of its long history, rhetoric in the Western tradition was a prominent, if not dominant, discipline in both schools and society at large. Its origins are to be found in the Hellenic world of the fifth century BC at which time the great oratorical traditions of public address were systematically developed. Rhetoric in this period was closely allied with other studies, such as aesthetics, logic, and ethics, and was considered a means for communicating great and serious ideas in public forums. However, "the practice of an art antedates its codification" and the codified principles of any discipline are almost always formulated inductively from the study of long-standing practices (Corbett, 1990, p. 540). This is certainly true of the persuasive oratory of the Greeks which played an important role in Hellenic society many centuries before the first treatises on the subject were written:

One only has to note the prominence of speeches and debates in the Homeric epics, in the plays of the Greek dramatists, in the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides, and in the philosophies of Hesiod, to be convinced that persuasive discourse exerted a continuing influence upon the ancient Greeks almost from the dawn of their civilization. (ibid.)

The art of rhetoric was first formulated in a systematic way in Sicily in the second quarter of the fifth century BC and is generally attributed to Corax of Syracuse who developed a manual on public speaking to help citizens regain their confiscated property from a recently overthrown tyrant by proving their claims in the courts. Corax suggested that a judicial speech should have four parts—proem, narration, arguments (both confirmation and

refutation), and peroration¹—the arrangement that formed the basis for all later rhetorical theory.

In Athens during the fifth and fourth centuries there were a relatively large number of itinerant teachers who lectured on various topics, and particularly on rhetoric. They became known as the Sophists and later developed an unsavory reputation for arguing any cause regardless of ethics or morality, and in emphasizing style above all (hence the meaning of *sophistry* today as deceitful reasoning). Not all were unscrupulous, however, and the most influential of the Sophists was Isocrates who was a highly ethical teacher of rhetoric and probably even more popular than Aristotle in his day. He stressed the notion of the proper education for an ideal orator focusing on the whole man, a point of view which had a marked influence on later orators such as Cicero and Quintilian. His teachings also contributed to the development of higher education in later classical times.

However, not all Sophists had high moral standards, and Plato (through his spokesman Socrates) criticized the form of rhetoric practiced in his day in passages scattered throughout his dialogues. Plato deprecated rhetoric as mere flattery, likening it to cookery and cosmetics, and his views had a strong impact on his student, Aristotle, who attempted to counteract his former teacher's low estimate of persuasive oratory in his writings, but who also opposed the Sophists in proposing an approach to rhetoric as a useful and practical form of logical argumentation.

Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (c. 330 BC) is without question the most important treatise on the art of rhetoric ever written. Corbett (*ibid.*, p. 544) describes it as "one of the great books of the Western world" as it has had a monumental influence on all intellectual thought in the Western tradition. It became "the fountainhead of all later rhetorical theory" (*ibid.*, p. 543): "[T]he Rhetoric not only of Cicero and Quintilian, but of the Middle Ages, of the Renaissance, and of modern times, is, in its best elements, essentially Aristotelian" (Cooper, cited in Corbett, *ibid.*, pp. 543–544).

The *Rhetoric* is divided into three books, which deal with the nature of rhetoric, invention, and arrangement and style, respectively. Perhaps the key to understanding Aristotle's approach to the subject is that he viewed *probability* as the basis of the persuasive art of rhetoric, while universal, verifiable truths fell within the domain of dialectic² or logic. That is, rhetoric dealt with *probable* truth, with opinions and beliefs which could be advanced with greater or lesser certainty depending on people's opinions and customs, while dialectic was

¹ Proem: preliminary comment, preface

Peroration: the concluding part of a discourse, especially an oration

² Dialectic: (1) logic, (2a) a discussion and reasoning by dialogue as a method of intellectual investigation, (2b) a Socratic technique for exposing false beliefs and eliciting truth, (2c) the Platonic investigation of the eternal ideas, (3) the Hegelian process of change in which a concept or its realization passes over into and is preserved and fulfilled by its opposite, (4) development through the stages of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis (see dialectical materialism – Marx), (5) any system of reasoning, exposition, or argument that juxtaposes opposed or contradictory ideas and usually seeks to resolve their conflict

considered a method of intellectual investigation for eliciting absolute truths.

The recognition of probability as the essence of the persuasive art lies behind most of Aristotle's contributions to rhetorical theory (ibid., p. 544), the most important of which are as follows:

- the three modes of proof (*ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*)
- deductive and inductive methods of logical argumentation
- the topics, or *topoi*, as a means of discovering available arguments
- the stress on audience as the chief informing principle of persuasive discourse

Aristotle stressed the importance of invention, or the discovery and development of arguments, and he outlined three appeals (modes of proof, or means of persuasion) by which an orator tries to convince or sway an audience—*ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*:

- *ethos* (ethical appeals): creating a favorable impression of oneself as a wise and virtuous individual of good will. These appeals include the speaker's knowledge and experience, personal and socially-recognized expertise on the subject, and awareness of the audience's values. In other words, with ethical appeals, a speaker tries to persuade the audience that he or she is a person worth listening to, someone with valuable insights into the subject under discussion. Ethical appeals are thus centered in the speaker.
- *pathos* (emotional appeals): appealing to the character, emotions, or mental state of the audience. These types of argument are constructed to persuade the audience through the emotions. They include the use of charged language and vivid pictures designed to evoke strong emotional reactions in the audience. Emotional appeals are thus directed toward the heart.
- *logos* (logical appeals): using the deductive logic of syllogisms and the inductive logic of examples. These types of appeal involve the rational mind and are based on lines of reasoning and logical argument; they should always be supported by detailed examples, facts, statistics, etc. Logical appeals are based on the mind or intellect.

Aristotle maintained that all knowledge is acquired and all proof is achieved through either deduction or induction (Corbett, 1990, p. 68). The difference between the two is that deduction makes inferences from generalized statements, while induction makes inferences from verifiable phenomena. A syllogism is a deductive scheme of formal argument consisting of a major and minor premise and a conclusion invented by Aristotle to analyze and systematize deductive reasoning. The enthymeme is the rhetorical equivalent of the syllogism, which produces not the definitive conclusion we get in science or logic, but a form of belief or persuasion instead. With induction, on the other hand, we proceed from the particular to the general. Thus in science or logic we arrive inductively at a generalization through the observation of a series of particulars. Induction leaps from observed facts, over an area of unknown, unobserved instances, to a generalization. The example is the rhetorical equivalent of logical induction.

Aristotle also introduced the notion of *topoi* (Greek for "places"), or topics. This did not mean a list of subjects as it does now, but rather a way of discovering arguments on any

subject (i.e., invention). These discovery procedures included a small number of *common topoi* and a larger secondary set of lines of inquiry such as arguing from cause and effect, from definitions, from parts to the whole, from opposites, etc. Later, in Renaissance England, the meaning of *topoi* changed and came to mean “commonplaces,” or subjects to write about. Today, topics are “subjects for writing about” rather than “ways of approaching a subject” as in Aristotle’s day (Lindemann, 1995, p. 43). Some of Aristotle’s *topoi* survive at present, however, as modes of paragraph development: definition, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, etc.

Another important area dealt with by Aristotle was the divisions of an argument. He suggested that all arguments should have two main parts: the first part states the case, the second part proves it, and advocated four sections to do so, further developing the arrangement originally proposed by Corax:

- the introduction (prologue)
- an outline or narration of the subject (the statement of the case)
- the proofs for or against the case (the argument)
- the summary (epilogue)

Aristotle also argued for a plain, natural style of argumentation, one that displays the qualities of clarity, dignity, propriety, and correctness (this contrasted with rhetoricians who both preceded and followed him). Aristotle’s ideas became a guiding force in Western intellectual thought when they were rediscovered prior to Renaissance times, and the above-mentioned principles came to be significant in the development of the rhetorical style of English and influence our approach to subject even today.

It is also important to understand that classical rhetoric was primarily a spoken, not written, art. It focused almost entirely on *persuasion*, to enable politicians, lawyers, and statesmen to argue their cases (forensic or judicial rhetoric for the courtroom, deliberative rhetoric for the Senate, epideictic rhetoric for ceremonial occasions). To these ends, classical rhetoricians divided the art of rhetoric into five departments or canons:

- invention [Latin *inventio*; Greek *heuresis*]: finding or researching one’s material; discovering or finding arguments and supporting evidence
- arrangement [Latin *dispositio*; Greek *taxis*]: organizing and arranging one’s material; the parts of an argument included *exordium*, *narratio*, *confirmatio*, *refutatio*, and *peroratio*
- style [Latin *elocutio*; Greek *lexis*]: the fitting of the language to the audience through the three styles—high (or grand), middle, and low (or plain); includes the ornamenting of a discourse with traditional rhetorical devices and figures of speech
- memory [Latin *memoria*; Greek *mneme*]: the training of the mind to ensure accurate recall, often through the use of mnemonic techniques
- delivery [Latin *pronuntiatio*; Greek *hupocrisis*]: techniques for presenting speeches; performance

“In oratory and rhetoric, as in so much else, the Romans were heirs to the Greeks [and] Roman oratory, by and large, was an imitation of Greek models, [which] did little more than

elaborate, refine, and systematize doctrines originally staked out by Aristotle” (Ehninger, 1965, p. 169). Nevertheless, two important Roman rhetoricians followed Aristotle: Cicero and Quintilian. Today, in addition to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, the most influential classical works on the subject of rhetoric are considered to be Cicero’s *De Inventione* (86 BC) and *De Oratore* (55 BC), and Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria* (94–95 AD), as well as the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium* (86–82 BC), a work which was widely attributed to Cicero but is now considered to be from anonymous sources.

Cicero (106–43 BC) was a brilliant politician, philosopher, and speaker in his own right. For him, rhetoric was a branch of political science, used in order to defend the political state eloquently, and his treatises emphasize forensic rhetoric, used to argue legal cases. Because he believed that a good orator must have a broad understanding of many aspects of culture, his writings were particularly influential during the Renaissance among the English and Continental Humanists. Cicero wrote numerous rhetorical treatises, orations, and epistles which generations of students had to study and memorize as models until recently. His chief contribution to the field is the belief that the ideal orator should have a broad knowledge of many subjects, which resulted in the study of rhetoric really becoming a liberal arts course.

Cicero also expanded Aristotle’s division of the argument from four to six sections:

- *exordium* (introduction): establish rapport with your audience; arouse interest
- *narratio* (the statement of the case): discussion of what has occurred to generate the issue
- *divisio*: an outline of the points in the argument; thesis statement
- *confirmatio*: proofs “for” the position being argued
- *refutatio*: proofs disproving the opponent’s claim
- *peroratio* (conclusion): a review of the argument, and a final appeal to the audience

In later centuries, students practised the above sections piecemeal, separated from the whole of the discourse, and this gave rise to the “modes” of composition: *narratio* became the narrative essay, *divisio* the expository essay, and *confirmatio* the argumentative essay (Lindemann, 1995, p. 44). Alexander Bain, for example, in *English Composition and Rhetoric* (1866), established five modes, four of which are still commonly utilized today: exposition, narration, description, and argumentation (Bain’s fifth mode was poetry). Today, Corbett (1990, p. 21) describes the four forms of discourse as Argumentation, Exposition, Description, and Narration.

Another important work, from anonymous sources, was the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*. It is the earliest extant Latin work on rhetoric and the earliest treatment of prose style in Latin. This treatise has the most complete coverage of style and delivery of any of the ancient works, and suggests three levels of style—high, middle, and low—designed to move, delight, or teach an audience, respectively. Although this work was virtually unknown in the ancient world, it enjoyed wide popularity in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and became a basic elementary text in schools in England during the Tudor Age.

The name invariably coupled with Cicero in the literature of the field is that of Quintilian (35–100 AD), a prominent teacher of rhetoric who was born in Spain but later became

famous in Rome as a pleader in the law courts. He agreed with Cicero that a rhetor must be broadly educated, but also insisted that a good orator must also be a moral individual.

With Quintilian, the divisions of the argument became reduced to five—the classical arrangement of the parts of a discourse:

- *Exordium* (introduction)

Etymologically, the word *introduction* means “a leading into.” The Greek term *proemium* meant “before the song”; the Latin term *exordium* meant “beginning a web” (by laying a warp in weaving). The basic function is to lead the audience into the discourse, but an abrupt or immediate entry is likely to unsettle them, so they must be “eased into” the subject (*ibid.*, p. 282). The preparation of the audience has two aspects: It informs them of the objectives of our discourse and it disposes them to be receptive to what we say by showing them that our discourse is worthy of their attention. The introduction should be designed to put the audience in a receptive frame of mind, especially if they are indifferent or hostile, and the closing lines of the introduction should be so managed that they lead easily and naturally into the next division of the discourse.

- *Narratio* (statement of fact, or the state of affairs at the moment)

The *divisio*, or outline of the points to be argued, has now become incorporated within the *narratio*. It is difficult to translate the Latin term *narratio* because *narration* has taken on different meanings in modern English than it had for the Romans. *Statement of fact* suggests more accurately what is done in this part of expository and argumentative prose. A *narratio* is essentially a statement of affairs at the moment of speaking or writing. In this section are set forth the essential facts of the case under consideration. The statement of fact is expository in that it is designed to inform listeners of the circumstances that need to be known about the subject. Quintilian (*ibid.*, p. 298) advises that it be lucid (i.e., clear or transparent), brief, and plausible.

- *Confirmatio* (asserting proofs “for”)

This involves the proof of one’s case: The speaker brings to bear “all the available means of persuasion” (*ibid.*, p. 301) to support the cause he or she is espousing. As a general rule, the speaker should not descend from the strongest arguments to the weakest as this will be anticlimactic and the weaker arguments will strike the audience as afterthoughts: “We want to leave our strongest argument ringing in the memory of our audience; hence we usually place it in the emphatic final position” (*ibid.*). If there are a number of arguments of relatively equal strength, they can be placed in any order. If there are a number of both strong and weak arguments, it is best to start and end on strength, sandwiching the weaker arguments between.

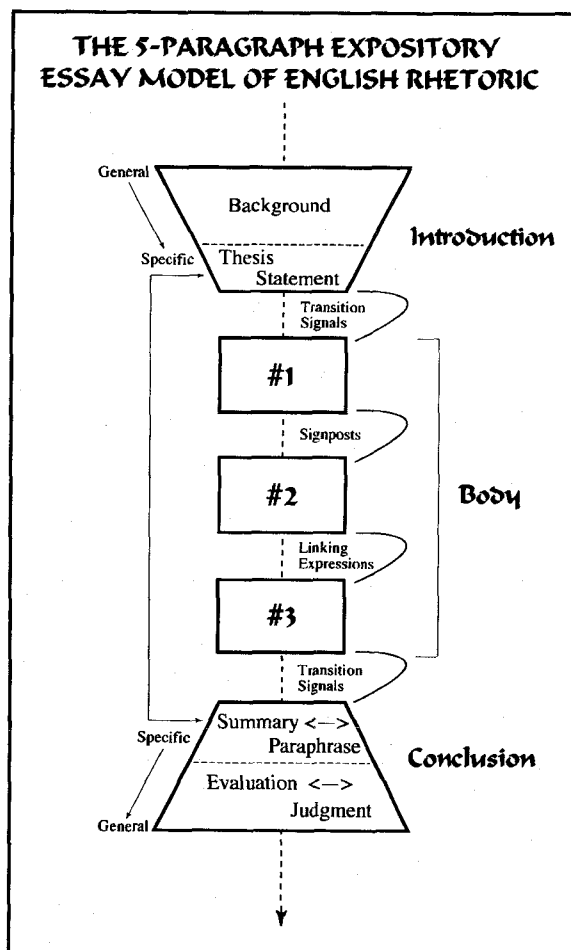
- *Refutatio* (refuting proofs “against”)

An investigation into all possible counter-arguments is also made, and these, of course, are refuted in advance.

- *Peroratio* (conclusion)

The most common Greek term was *epilogos* (cf. *epilogue*), from the verb *epilegein*, meaning

“to say in addition.” An even more instructive Greek term was *anakephalaiōsis*, which is equivalent to the Latin *recapitulatio*, from which the English *recapitulation* derives. The common Latin term was *peroratio*, a word which meant “a finishing off.” What this meant is illustrated by Quintilian who suggested two parts to the *peroratio*: *enumeratio* (an enumeration or summing up) and *affectus* (producing the appropriate emotion in the audience) (ibid., p. 307). Of interest is the fact that even today an academic essay in English is expected to conclude with a summary or paraphrase of the main points discussed followed by an evaluation or judgment on behalf of the writer. Note the similarities between the classical arrangement of the parts of discourse and the five-paragraph essay model of contemporary expository English below, especially in terms of the introduction and conclusion:



Quintilian and Cicero were to have an enormous effect on education in the West from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance and beyond, but during the classical period, higher education in Greece and Rome was most strongly influenced by the works of Isocrates and Plato. It contained two main streams—rhetoric and dialectic:

Systematic higher education began as a device for military training around 320 BC and continued well into the third century AD. These colleges...spread throughout more than 100 Hellenistic cities. Two ideals dominated the college, the speech-maker and the debater. In a real sense they can be said to be the legacies of Isocrates and Plato, respectively. The first [i.e., rhetoric] dominated all higher education in Greece and Rome. Rhetoric here does not mean a general study of communication—as it now often does. Rhetoric here means a science of persuasion, academic eloquence. (Kinneavy, 1971, p. 7)

The alternative to rhetoric in higher education in classical times was dialectic [cf. debate; thesis, antithesis, synthesis]. This was due to the influence of the Platonic and Aristotelian tradition of philosophy, but its main impact was only to come with the Middle Ages (*ibid.*, p. 8). Rhetoric, based on models set down by Isocrates, clearly played the more important role in the education system of antiquity. Preparatory work for higher education included exercises in composition to which were added some history and mathematics and a little debating. But all was in preparation for rhetoric.

He [i.e., Isocrates] developed the set speech and the imitation of models, as an essential part of his technique, and this has continued down to our own day. These models were exemplars of the kinds of compositions to be found in speeches. Consequently, the preparatory exercises in composition in secondary education [included] eulogies and censures, character sketches, comparisons, description, theses, ...and legal stands.... These led immediately to the various kinds of declamations³—legal, political, fictional, historical, mythological, etc. The traditional arrangement of the classical rhetorical speech was carefully followed. (*ibid.*, pp. 7–8)

In general, training in the language arts in the educational institutions of the classical period can be described as follows:

[I]n Antiquity, three main aims of language structured the training in the art of discourse: the literary, the persuasive (rhetorical), and the pursuit of truth (dialectical). The analysis of literary texts was the province of the secondary school: the other two aims were ‘collegiate’ and university concerns. In composition, which was directed to a preparation for rhetoric, certain forms or modes were thought to be basic to all composition (narrative, description, eulogy, and definition) and structured the composition program. (*ibid.*)

Rhetoric in the Middle Ages

The Platonic Academy in Athens, the last physical establishment of “pagan” learning in the ancient world, was closed by the Christian emperor Justinian in 529 AD, and that year is often used as a convenient date to mark the end of the classical period and the beginning of the Middle Ages. The medieval period lasted until the Renaissance, which

³ Declamation: a recital as an exercise in elocution

Eulogy: a commendatory set oration

Censure: a judgment involving condemnation

began in Italy and moved northward to Britain where it is dated by scholars roughly 1500–1650 AD.

With the coming of the Middle Ages and the increasing dominance of ecclesiastical authority, the art of public speaking went into decline. For the next thousand years, oratory was mainly confined to ceremonial occasions or to the schoolroom. “The art of rhetoric stood still, if it actually did not retrogress” (Corbett, 1990, p. 549).

Rhetoric went through a number of transformations during this period due largely to the influence of the Christian Church and later the emerging nation states of Europe. There was an important shift in emphasis from invention, as emphasized by Aristotle, to style. Invention became less significant because all truths were assigned by the Bible, or “invented” by God. Principles of style, however, helped convince others of God’s truth and to explain God’s word. In this way, classical learning and rhetorical principles were accommodated to Christian theology and the interpretation of scriptural truths and persuading people to live by them. The work of St. Augustine (354–430 AD) was particularly influential in this regard. The branches of rhetoric which were most important were thus homiletics (the sermon) and the epideictic (ceremonial) variety.

Educational institutions during the Middle Ages, and in fact up to the twentieth century, reflect Quintilian’s insistence on the moral as well as intellectual training of students. As soon as children could read and write, they received instruction in grammar. This included speaking and writing correctly and interpreting the poets, as taught by a grammar teacher (the *grammaticus*). Children were taught rules for proper word order, agreement, and vocabulary, and were given lectures on every kind of writer, which they then had to imitate through recitations—grammar meant the systematic study of both language and literary texts, and imitating and paraphrasing models was the main form of learning. After students reached an acceptable level, a second teacher, the *rhetoricus*, began rhetorical studies, and all were expected to master the five departments of classical rhetoric. At higher levels of education, debate and disputation within limits laid down by the Christian church became the new focus. The main concern of the college thus shifted from rhetoric to dialectic:

Whereas in Antiquity, the main determinant of academic success was delivery of the set speech (the declamation), in the Middle Ages, each stage of progress in the academic world was determined by the ability to engage in dialectical debate. This concept...permeated higher education till the nineteenth century. Thus, if Isocrates and rhetoric can be said to rule over the first thousand years of higher education in Western civilization, Plato and dialectic can be said to preside over the next thousand. (Kinneavy, 1971, pp. 8–9)

The composition modes of the Middle Ages were designed to prepare students for dialectic, just as written preparatory exercises in the classical period were designed for rhetoric in the form of the declamation:

Although in Antiquity the literary analyses (grammar) and preparatory composition exercises were

all oriented to the ultimate delivery of the well-prepared speech, from the Middle Ages till the eighteenth century, all studies were oriented to the defense of ideas in a debate with one's colleagues or with one's masters. The medieval debate was practically coextensive with education, for around the successive debate exercises was organized the student's progress through the school system. (ibid., p. 9)

During the Middle Ages, undergraduate students at universities studied the *trivium* of grammar, rhetoric, and logic (dialectic), while postgraduate students received training in the *quadrivium* of arithmetic, astronomy, music, and geometry. The province of rhetoric focused on two main arts: the art of letter writing (*ars dictaminis*) was emphasized in the law schools, and the arts of preaching (*artes praedicandi*) were part of theological training. Training in rhetoric was seen as useful for a career in secular and ecclesiastical courts where letter writing became an important means of conducting legal and diplomatic transactions, and also served the clergy in persuading congregations to follow Christian principles. In general, however, rhetoric was much more neglected during the medieval period than in classical times.

Rhetoric in the Renaissance

The Renaissance is a phenomenon which took place in the Western world over a long period of time, from the late fourteenth century to the mid-seventeenth century. During this time there was a great revival of art, literature, science, and learning in general in Europe. The Renaissance marks the transition from the medieval to the modern world, but it occurred gradually and in different forms and at different times in different countries. As such, it is not possible to state precisely when it began or when it ended. It is believed that the Renaissance began in the city states of northern Italy and, particularly from the fifteenth century onward, moved gradually northward. During this time, a number of European countries rose to become world powers, but the intellectual heart of the time remained in Italy. The rediscovery of Greek and Roman classics was the main intellectual catalyst of the Renaissance, and scholars known as "humanists" studied them enthusiastically for their inspiration and enlightenment. Most of their early efforts centered on reconciling the newly discovered classical knowledge with Christian precepts; later, similar efforts took place with regard to the newly emerging sciences.

With the arrival of the Renaissance and the gradual development of free institutions in the Western world, rhetoric and public address began to regain much of their ancient dignity. The classical revival of rhetoric provided the foundation for the important tradition of scholastic disputation, a question-and-answer procedure used not only for academic instruction but also for exploring problems in philosophy, theology, and even in the sciences. This revival would reach its apex some time later in the British Parliament and French Revolutionary Assembly where modern parliamentary speaking first emerged and which witnessed some of the greatest deliberative oratory of all time.

With the development of the printing press in the fifteenth century, however, rhetoric took on a new focus. Whereas classical rhetoric had been concerned primarily with spoken discourse, scholars were now able to apply rhetorical principles to written discourse. From its origins in fifth-century BC Greece, through its flourishing period during the Roman Empire, and into its decline in the Middle Ages, rhetoric was associated mainly with oratory. This was amplified in medieval times to include letter writing, and with the advent of printing in the Renaissance, rhetorical precepts began to be applied on a large scale to written discourse (Corbett, 1990, p. 20). Equally important was the fact that although rhetoric had been associated almost exclusively with the art of persuasion in earlier times, its principles were now extended to include expository modes.

The most influential rhetorician in the development of rhetoric in England during Renaissance times was the Dutch humanist, Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536) (Corbett, 1990, p. 550). He wrote a number of books at the beginning of the sixteenth century which dealt with pedagogy as well as rhetoric and which “set the pattern for the English grammar-school curriculum and for rhetorical training in the schools” (ibid.). He maintained that students could learn to write and speak well through discriminating reading and much practice, and was one of the first to advocate “that sanest of all precepts about writing”—constant practice—thus foreshadowing the modern belief that “you learn to write by writing, writing, and more writing” (ibid.). He also recommended keeping a “commonplace book” for writing down new ideas and passages from reading, paraphrasing poetry into prose and vice versa, rendering the same subject into two or more styles, and proving propositions along several different lines of argument (ibid.). His *De Copia* was astoundingly popular and was widely used in Tudor schools to help students develop elegance and variety in expression in Latin. Renaissance rhetoricians in general were concerned with classifying and cataloguing *copia*—literally “abundance,” but meaning “fullness of expression.” One achieved fullness of expression by gathering many things to say on a subject and by developing a variety of different ways of saying the same thing.

Up until this time, rhetorics had always been written in Greek or Latin, “and most of the compositions by English schoolboys up to the second decade of the sixteenth century were in Latin” (ibid., p. 553). With the publishing of newly rediscovered classical literature came a renewed interest in the works of the chief Greek rhetoricians, and “it was not long before rhetoric [again] became the dominant discipline in...schools and universities” (ibid.). Although the rhetoric taught in schools was basically Aristotelian, the *Rhetoric* was never widely used, and it was the Latin rhetoricians, especially Cicero, Quintilian, and the anonymous author of *Ad Herennium*, who dominated education. William Lyly’s *Grammar of Latin* (published in 1544, but widely used until 1867) was a preparation for Cicero, Virgil, and Ovid. “Poetry and eloquence were reasserted in the Renaissance, and Cicero dethroned Aristotle and Plato” (Kinneavy, 1971, p. 10). Secondary schools again began to stress preparation for rhetoric as during the classical period. Even by the beginning of the Renaissance the dialectical tradition had become sterile and even farcical. At the universities

disputations continued, however, and it was not until 1722 that Cambridge went over to written exams, and Oxford only added them to the orals (*ibid.*).

As English pride in the achievements of the nation grew, a movement developed to get students to orate and write in the vernacular. However, “in the early sixteenth century, when English first became respectable enough to replace French and Latin as England’s institutional language, our first impulse toward elegance produced a prose style thick with Latinate abstraction...” (Williams, 1989, p. 3). Later historians would complain: “...of all the studies of men, nothing may sooner be obtained than this vicious abundance of phrase, this trick of metaphors, this volubility of tongue which makes so great a noise in the world...” (Thomas Sprat, 1667; cited in Williams, 1989, p. 3).

It must be remembered that the language was still very much in the process of development in these times and it was not until much later that written and spoken forms of English became codified into patterns that members of society were expected to follow. During the period of roughly 1100 to 1300 AD, for instance, English was very much a hybrid language composed of French (used by the nobility), Latin (used by the Church and by scholars and in such schools as existed in those times), and English (or rather Anglo-Saxon dialects, used by the common people) (Sedland, 1994, p. 10). The first known instance of the use of English as the vehicle of instruction in schools was c. 1349 when French was discarded (Kinneavy, 1971, p. 5), but even into the 1600s, students were still studying primarily in Latin in English schools. In colleges and universities the use of Latin proved more difficult to displace: Oxford, for example, did not get its first professorship in English Literature until 1873 (*ibid.*).

According to Corbett (*ibid.*), it is common to classify the vernacular rhetorics produced during the English Renaissance into three groups: the traditionalists, the figurists, and the Ramists. The traditionalists viewed all five departments of rhetoric as important. Among them, Thomas Wilson published one of the first rhetorics in English instead of Latin (*Arte of Rhetorique*, 1533). The figurists emphasized style above all. George Puttenham’s *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), for instance, treats 107 different figures of speech. The Ramists (after the French scholar Peter Ramus) assigned invention, arrangement, and memory to the field of logic, and allocated only style and delivery to rhetoric. This narrowly defined Ramist orientation with its preoccupation with style and ornamentation would eventually lead to the decline of the art of rhetoric in the eighteenth century.

Rhetoric from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century

During the centuries that followed the Renaissance, there came into being a “war between the plain, unadorned method of human discourse and the elegant and ornate” (Winterowd, cited in Lindemann, 1995, p. 48). This conflict centered on how prominent scholars believed classical principles should be adapted to new developments in literature and the sciences. Three perspectives developed—the elocutionary, the literary, and the

scientific.

The elocutionary approach emphasized delivery and tried to advance the art of public speaking. The main venues of its advocates were public lectures, parliamentary debates, and pulpit oratory. Thomas Sheridan's *Lectures on Elocution* (1762) is a good example of this perspective which was concerned primarily with delivery and style in formal contexts.

The literary perspective was concerned not so much with public speaking, nor with the new science, but on literary texts. This encompassed a wide spectrum of views concerning style, however. Neoclassicists like Jonathan Swift (1667–1745) revered the ancients, studied the classics, and imitated their styles. The works of Horace, Homer, Virgil, and Cicero were held up as models. They believed that good writing should be relatively unadorned, free from ambiguity, and conform to ancient Greek and Roman models, as they sought to re-establish the importance of classical learning. Unfortunately, many neoclassicists followed classical principles slavishly with rather negative consequences for newly emerging instruction in English grammar. At the other end of the scale were those who admired ornate style. They aimed not only to persuade an audience but to transport them. Writers like Edmund Burke (1729–1797) placed great emphasis on sublimity of thought as well as eloquence in style. It was believed that the sublime arose from contemplating greatness and permitting the beautiful to act on the mind through the senses. In between, there was a large group of rhetoricians who tried to blend the old and new. They followed classical principles, but quoted English literature, and combined rhetoric with poetics, which had heretofore been separate. This was a forerunner of modern literary criticism, best illustrated in the work of Hugh Blair (1718–1800), who presented an enormously popular overview of rhetoric dealing with matters of aesthetics and taste in a publication entitled *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783). He preferred the plain style, but also accepted an emphasis on the sublime. He forged a new alliance between the old and the new, as well as between rhetoric and other verbal arts, focusing on culture and how human beings use language to communicate with different audiences for different purposes. His writings were later used as textbooks at universities in England and Scotland, and later in America at Yale (1785) and Harvard (1788).

Proponents of the scientific perspective such as Francis Bacon (1561–1626) emphasized the need for a plain style of writing and the importance of invention in discovering truths. Bacon advocated the separation of logic from rhetoric, the importance of inductive processes (i.e., the empirical observation of nature) rather than deductive syllogisms in conducting scientific research, and a style of writing characterized by relatively short sentences, simple words, and little ornamentation for communicating the results of this research. He also stressed the need to understand human nature and to analyze the audience one hopes to influence, and had an important influence on the development of conciseness and clarity in writing in English.

A later spur to the development of the “restrained prose” of the scientific style was the Royal Society for the Advancement of Science which was established to provide scientists

with government support for their research. In 1664, two years after its founding, the Royal Society named a committee for the improvement of the English language. Although this project never went much beyond the planning stage, it had a good deal of influence on the kind of prose being written in these times, giving impetus and support to the formation of “scientific” writing.

Havelock (1963, 1976) points out that with the emphasis on literacy both in classical Greece and in post-reformation England there was a great concern to make sentences say exactly, neither more nor less than what they meant. Poetry and proverbial sayings, which mean more and less than what they say, were rejected as means of expressing truth by Plato and 2000 years later by members of the Royal Society of London who, according to their historian Spratt (1667/1966), were devoted both to the advancement of science and to the improvement of the English language as a medium of prose. (Hildyard & Olson, 1982, p. 20)

One of the members of the Royal Society’s committee was John Dryden (1631–1700), known today as the father of the modern English prose style. Dryden was undoubtedly the best writer of his time and wrote in all the main literary forms except the novel—poetry, drama, translation, and the critical essay. He set the literary standards for his age and for generations to follow, by working tirelessly to develop a new prose style, suitable for the emerging modern English. With other members of the Royal Society, he proposed the use of a plain and clear style to convey scientific truths. In poetry as well, Dryden urged his countrymen to write more simply (as opposed to the metaphysical poetry of the preceding century), and led the way toward a more restrained, natural, and “easy” style. In the essay, too, Dryden advocated clear, reasonable, and carefully controlled writing, with well-developed reasoning “brought to a conclusion in the final strong assertion” (Sedland, 1994, p. 79). Dryden was most influential in the development of a “middle style” of writing which tempered the more extreme elements of the plain, utilitarian style promoted by some of his colleagues who advocated the establishment of literary symbols having the precision and stability of mathematical symbols. Dryden preserved the language from taking on an arid, mathematical character by making *propriety* (or appropriateness) the central doctrine of his views on style. Closely allied with this concern was his encouragement of the use of vernacular rather than Latinate syntax, allowing for more naturalness, ease, and spontaneity in writing (*ibid.*).

One of the great achievements of this time was the creation of the *King James Bible*, published in 1611. The scholars who researched this Bible drew on earlier English versions as well as older texts written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. The result was a superb complete translation of the Bible into English, surpassing anything previously published, and indeed it is still the most widely read text in the English language. “Its elevated diction and smooth, balanced style set a standard for the English language for succeeding generations” (Sedland, 1994, p. 61). Although it does contain some archaic and ornate content, for the most part it is “very clear and understandable,...written in beautiful flowing prose” (*ibid.*).

Thus, while rhetoric during the seventeenth century developed a preoccupation with style and ornamentation which would eventually lead to its decline, the groundwork was being laid for “the development of the kind of easy, natural, colloquial prose style that prevails today... [as illustrated in] the plain but elegant prose found in such magazines as *The New Yorker* and *Harper’s...*” (ibid., p. 563).

In the eighteenth century, rhetoric still generally followed classical concepts, but a more independent spirit was becoming evident with rhetoricians endeavoring to discover their own natural, individual styles. This freer, more subjective spirit helped set the stage for the appearance of the “romantic” writers. At the same time, the Renaissance emphasis on classification and categorization was replaced with a concern for delivery (*pronuntiatio*). Pulpit oratory was of great importance and collections of sermons by famous preachers “sold on the scale of popular novels today” (Corbett, 1990, p. 564). The chief figure of the time was Thomas Sheridan whose *Lectures in Elocution* (1762) helped shift the meaning of *elocution* from *style* to *delivery* (in the later vogue of the “elocution contest” in schools). This history of British rhetoric in the second half of the eighteenth century is dominated by three Scottish rhetoricians, Hugh Blair, George Campbell, and Lord Kames, making Edinburgh “the Athens of the North” (ibid., p. 567).

In education, rhetoric was an important part of the university curriculum and as late as the nineteenth century, colleges had departments of rhetoric. The study of rhetoric at American universities started in 1806 when John Quincy Adams became Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard. There was popular interest in public lectures and debates at the time and university courses usually stressed oratory, rhetoric, and logic, which were taught by clergymen or moral philosophers. University students attended lectures on rhetoric, among other subjects, wrote compositions for professors, and formed debating societies, some of which still survive today. These extracurricular clubs were completely run by students and some developed into institutions amassing large libraries. These college debating societies also allowed students to develop “Old Boy” contacts which sustained them long after graduation.

During the eighteenth century the disputation system started to disappear in many universities, although at schools like Oxford it was still important until the middle of the nineteenth century. However, although the dialectical system of examinations and promotions gradually disintegrated, the content remained traditional. Freshman and sophomore years were devoted to translating Latin and Greek classics, rhetoric, mathematics, and some natural science. In the final two years, logic, ethics, metaphysics, Christian apologetics, modern languages, and zoology, history, and geology were studied (Kinneavy, 1971, p. 11).

The nineteenth century saw the beginnings of the separation of English literature from the classics, but it was late in the century before most universities established English departments. English literature, however, was still tied to logic, rhetoric, and philology. Eventually, logic and rhetoric were delegated back to philosophy. Logic went through further mutations to become almost a form of mathematics,⁴ and the study of rhetoric gradually

disappeared (ibid.).

In America, as the emphasis in education shifted more and more from speaking to writing, courses in English Literature and Freshman English became part of the curriculum, and higher education became increasingly diversified into departments and specialized majors, with literature studies beginning to dominate English departments for the first time. Rhetoric was also incorporated into English departments by the end of the nineteenth century, but the term *rhetoric* itself fell out of fashion, being replaced by the term *composition*, which dealt exclusively with written discourse. Literature was used to teach freshman composition courses. Another feature of the nineteenth century college English program in America was the appearance of the graduate school (e.g., Yale, 1861; Johns Hopkins, 1876):

[T]he stress on research and publication, rather than teaching, for promotion began a trend which still influences the graduate and undergraduate departments of English.... This was not only an American phenomenon; in England the functions of the university professor and the college tutor reflected an uneasy compromise solution to the same problem. (ibid., p. 12)

Alexander Bain's *English Composition and Rhetoric* (1866) became one of the most influential works of the times and explicated the forms of written discourse still widely used today.

To each of the four modes of discourse [i.e., exposition, narration, description, and argumentation] there corresponds a principle of thought which permits reality to be considered in this way. Therefore, each of the modes has its own peculiar logic. It also has its own organizational patterns, and, to some extent, its own stylistic characteristics. (ibid., p. 37)

Bain's work also helped initiate a pattern of instruction known as "the doctrine of the paragraph" that moved from the word to the sentence to the paragraph to the whole composition. This was accompanied by a method of instruction centered on various methods for developing the paragraph which were really an adaptation of Aristotle's *topoi* (or "topics"), and "the holy trinity of unity, coherence, and emphasis" (Corbett, 1990, p. 572).

Possibly the most important contribution of the nineteenth century, as far as a theory of discourse is concerned, was a clearer classification of the modes of discourse. Alexander Bain, philosopher and psychologist, established the modes (then called forms) of discourse as being: narration, exposition, description, argumentation, and persuasion. The first four quickly became the structuring principles of many composition books in the next half century. They are still accepted modes in many high school and college texts.... (op. cit., p. 12)

⁴ Logic has been looked upon in various ways throughout history: as a tool of philosophy by Aristotle and his followers, as a separate branch of philosophy by the Stoics, as an art of language in the liberal arts tradition, as equivalent to mathematics (Russell), and as the only true philosophy (logical positivists) (Kinneavy, 1971, p. 108). In a general theory of language today, logic would seem to be a part of semantics rather than grammar or pragmatics.

Because of their emphasis on a broad understanding of culture and insistence on intellectual and moral training, Cicero and Quintilian were the two most important classical influences on education in England and America during this entire period: "The moral bias was especially important, because from the seventeenth through most of the nineteenth century the English and American school systems were dominated largely by clergymen" (Corbett, 1990, p. 547). Writing education at this time reflected a combination of two traditions: Aristotelian, based on syllogistic reasoning, and Galilean, based on hierarchical taxonomies. As a result, "traditional school [writing], from the middle of the eighteenth century well into the twentieth..., placed great value on clarity and precision in the framework of a rigorously logical system..." (Kaplan, 1988, p. 290).

Contemporary Rhetoric

Although the study of rhetoric was the central discipline of the school curriculum for extended periods of its long history, and skill in oratory or in written discourse was a key to success in the courts, the parliament, and the church from ancient times, in the twentieth century the art of rhetoric has fallen into disfavor in the educational institutions of the Western world, and along with Latin, has largely been expunged from most modern curricula. It is now little known in Western society at large.

The first two decades [of the twentieth century] saw some very violent readjustments, more violent undoubtedly than any before or since in the history of western civilization. Beginning around 1913, the formal divorce of speech from English was sought by people who felt that speech was being neglected in English departments.... Departments of speech were created and courses such as elocution, eloquence, declamation, and rhetoric were popular early. These emphases declined in the twenties, and public speaking, debate, argumentation, and discussion received more emphasis.... In a sense, the speech people took rhetoric (the art of persuasion) with them; only now is it being invited back. Secondly, logic also departed and found a haven in philosophy and later—with the marriage of logic and mathematics in Russell and Whitehead—in departments of mathematics. ...With the departure of logic and rhetoric, discourse education as the locus of the traditional liberal arts can be said to have effectively ceased. These removals cleared the way for English to be a department of literature and philology.... Philology, mainly in its historical facets, often dominated the literature component of the department in these early decades [but later left literature behind to become what is known today as linguistics]. (Kinneavy, 1971, p. 13)

With the almost complete separation of writing and speaking skills in most modern university education, speech communication classes are now generally found in the Faculty of Fine Arts which typically offers courses in theatre, speech science, public address, and oral interpretation. In British universities, students are not generally provided with formal instruction in writing skills as this is felt to be the domain of secondary education. In America, however, Freshman English has long been part of the curriculum at most universities and normally falls under the auspices of the English Department. Progressive

schools tend to provide instruction in academic writing skills (English 101) and research paper writing (English 102), but in many colleges, English Departments have generally been reduced to two concerns: the reading and analysis of literary texts, and the writing of expository essays about these texts (ibid., p. 16). Creative writing generally disappeared from standard composition courses several decades ago, and research in discourse education (i.e., rhetoric) now takes place in departments of linguistics or in other ancillary disciplines. Recently, courses in remedial English have also been in great demand in both America and Britain, and in some cases absorb up to one-third of incoming freshman students as well as large numbers of foreign students, giving rise to an unparalleled number of "writing laboratories" for students in tertiary education, in which rhetoric in both its classical and "new" forms continues to play an important role.

The New Rhetoric

The latter half of the twentieth century has seen a resurgence of interest in rhetoric in a different form. Scholars such as Kenneth Burke, James Kinneavy, Chaim Perleman, and Stephen Toulmin have all helped to develop the "new rhetoric" in very different directions, incorporating recent perspectives and refinements in linguistics, anthropology, psychology, political science, etc.

Kenneth Burke (1897–1993) has had the greatest impact on rhetoric in this century. He focuses on language itself, asserting that all human beings are linguistic animals, using and misusing symbols. Burke views rhetoric as a function of language that enables people to overcome the divisions separating them. Identification is a key concept in his theory:

The key term for the old rhetoric was 'persuasion' and its stress upon deliberate design. The key term for the 'new' rhetoric would be 'identification'.... 'Identification' at its simplest is also a deliberative device, as when the politician seeks to identify himself with his audience. (Burke, cited in Lindemann, 1995, p. 54)

Burke's major contribution to rhetorical theory has been his attempt to broaden its scope and connect all acts of language within the social fabric of the culture in which they occur.

James Kinneavy's *A Theory of Discourse* (1971) brings together the classical and contemporary elements of rhetoric. His theory is essentially Aristotelian, but also incorporates perspectives from modern linguistics, literary criticism, philosophy, sociology, etc. Kinneavy avoids the term *rhetoric* because it can take on multiple and often shifting meanings. He focuses instead on the term *discourse* as "the full text...of an oral or written situation," and emphasizes the use of language to purposefully communicate ideas to an audience, bringing the notion of "audience" to the forefront of modern theories of rhetoric.

Another important contributor to the "new rhetoric" is the Belgian philosopher Chaim Perelman, who along with his colleague Madame L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, published a major

rhetorical work, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argument*, in France in 1958. Perleman, who holds an advanced degree in law, applies non-formal modes of reasoning, such as the kind of “dialectical” proofs Aristotle utilized in the *Rhetoric*, to argumentation in jurisprudence. The English philosopher Stephen Toulmin has also been dissatisfied with the applicability of formal logic to the problems of human affairs and developed a specific method of argumentation based on claims and warrants.

In other manifestations, the “new rhetoric” has also focused more on political and social relationships, viewing rhetoric as a tool for social change. From a social constructivist perspective, there has been an investigation into “how the use of...languages reproduces and maintains social activities and relations, how languages are sustained by social institutions,... [and how languages are] one of the chief mechanisms by which our sense of reality is negotiated” (Bazerman, 1990, pp. 77–78). Closely related is critical discourse analysis which examines “how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, social relations, and systems of knowledge and belief” (Widdowson, 1995, p. 158).

Definitions of Rhetoric

The term *rhetoric* itself is derived from the Greek nouns *rhêma* (a word) and *rhêtôr* (“a teacher of oratory”), which stem from the Greek verb *eirô* (“I say”). The English noun *rhetoric* derives from the Greek feminine adjective *rhetorikê*, which is elliptical for *rhetorikê technê* (“the art of the rhetor or orator”). English obtained the term directly from the French *rhétorique*. Thus, in a simple etymological sense, rhetoric has to do with speaking or orating, but in later times came to include writing as well, first as a preparation for oratory, and later as an art in its own right.

Aristotle defined rhetoric as both a practical art and a way of knowing, “the faculty of discovering all the available means of persuasion in any given situation” (cited in Corbett, 1990, p. 3). Classical rhetoricians narrowed the scope of rhetorical discourse to persuasion; however, it is generally believed that Aristotle’s definition was meant to comprehend not only argumentative discourse but expository modes as well.

Over time, rhetoric has also acquired a whole set of negative connotations. At one extreme, it is sometimes associated solely with style—figures of speech, flowery diction—or with the notion of empty, bombastic language (“mere rhetoric”).

Contemporary definitions of rhetoric focus on the notion of audience: “[R]hetoric is the art or the discipline that deals with the use of discourse, either spoken or written, to inform or persuade or motivate an audience, whether that audience is made up of one person or a group of persons” (Corbett, 1990, p. 3). In this sense, it can be defined as the choice of linguistic and structural aspects of discourse chosen to produce an effect on an audience.

The “new rhetoric” has been defined as the way “people use language and other symbols to realize human goals and carry out human activities. [It] is ultimately a practical study

offering people greater control over their symbolic activity” (Bazerman, 1988, p. 6). It also impacts both political and social relationships and is “one of the chief mechanisms by which our sense of reality is negotiated” (Bazerman, 1990, pp. 77–78).

Rhetoric is thus an “elastic” term which has a great many connotations in English depending on the context. Today, it is defined primarily as the study of the principles and rules of composition, as well as skill in the effective use of speech, while sometimes also denoting insincere or grandiloquent language (*Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1990). It might be more accurate, however, to describe both written composition and speech-making as goals, while rhetoric itself is the study of the organizing principles which underlie and direct our efforts towards attaining these goals. In other words, at one end of its range of meanings rhetoric is concerned with the ordering of ideas; at the other end it is concerned with the presentation of these ideas in language (Jordan, 1965, p. 3). In its most minimal sense, rhetoric can therefore be defined as the way people organize and present their ideas when speaking or writing in a language (Davies, 1995; Davies & Ide, 1997).

Rhetoric and Discourse Theory

Towards the end of the last century and the beginning of the present one, rhetoric ceased to become a separate discipline in most educational institutions in the West, with the rare exception of certain American universities which have maintained Departments of Rhetoric. In most cases, the traditional functions of rhetoric were shipped out to other disciplines such as philosophy, speech communication, composition studies, and linguistics. In particular, composition studies, which normally fall within the authority of English departments, provide a venue for the practical application of rhetoric in written form, and within the field of linguistics, the relatively recent discipline of discourse studies has assumed responsibility for the theoretical underpinnings of modern rhetoric.

This is a somewhat simplified rendition of a complex issue in the academic world, and there is still a good deal of terminological confusion in the field, but it is clear that the terms rhetoric and discourse are now often used interchangeably for linguistic analysis beyond the level of the sentence as a unit. For example, van Dijk (cited in James, 1980, pp. 102–103) states that “as soon as the analysis goes beyond the boundaries of...grammatical notions we find ourselves in the inter-disciplinary field of discourse studies,” while Enkvist (1987, p. 26) maintains that “usually the domain of grammar has been the single sentence, whereas disciplines such as rhetoric...have dealt with textual spans beyond the sentence.” Chafe (cited in Widdowson, 1995, p. 162) notes that “the term ‘discourse’ is used in somewhat different ways by different scholars, but underlying the differences is a common concern for language beyond the boundaries of isolated sentences”; in a similar manner, Kaplan (1987, p. 9) defines rhetoric as “the level of organization of the whole text,” while Mauranen (1993, p. 29) states that “in current linguistic work, the term rhetoric is frequently associated with text organization in units larger than the sentence.” Beaugrande & Dressler

(1981, p. 15) claim that “the oldest form of preoccupation with texts can be found in RHETORIC, dating from Ancient Greece and Rome through the Middle Ages right up to the present,” and that classical rhetoric, “despite its different terms and methods,” shares a number of vital concerns with modern text (i.e., discourse) linguistics. Kinneavy (1971) was one of the first to treat rhetoric and discourse synonymously, differentiating between oral or spoken discourse in speech communication, and written discourse in composition studies.

Nevertheless, because “the field of discourse is still in what Kuhn, a notable historian of science, has called the preparadigm period” (ibid., p. 2), the term *discourse* is used in very different ways by different scholars, creating a good deal of confusion that has yet to be resolved. As Fairclough (1992, p. 3) states, “discourse is a difficult concept, largely because there are so many conflicting and overlapping definitions formulated from various theoretical and disciplinary standpoints.” Widdowson (1995, p. 157) concurs, stating that discourse is clearly “a contentious area of enquiry..., a diverse, not to say, diffuse concept.”

One of the more contentious issues existing in the field today, for example, is the difference between *discourse* and *text*. For some, there is an implication that the word “text” refers only to written language, and that discourse analysis of writing beyond the sentence level is therefore text analysis. The result is a distinction between “spoken discourse” and “written text.” Others argue for a different set of distinctions between the two terms. Widdowson, for example, contends that texts can be in written or spoken form and “come in all shapes and sizes: they can correspond in extent with any linguistic unit: letter, sound, word, sentence, combination of sentences” (1995, p. 164). Discourse is a matter of “deriving meaning from text by referring to its contextual conditions, to the beliefs, attitudes, values which represent different versions of reality. The same text, therefore, can give rise to different discourses” (ibid., p. 168).

Another source of confusion has to do with the terms *text analysis* (or *text linguistics*) and *discourse analysis*. The former is often associated with European traditions, the latter with Anglo-American research doing the same things. They can also be viewed as complementary: Discourse analysis starts with outer frames of situations and tries to find formal correlates to situational variables; text analysis works in the opposite direction from linguistic forms to appropriate contexts. In this sense, text analysis is more concerned with formal devices for establishing inter-sentential connections in units above the sentence (see for example, Halliday & Hassan, 1976), while discourse analysis deals with considerations of use. Text analysis usually focuses on written, and therefore monologic (one-‘speaker’) texts; discourse analysis on unscripted (literally) spoken interaction.

There are also fundamental differences between British and American schools of discourse analysis. The British work, which has been greatly influenced by pragmatics and Halliday’s functional approach to language, principally follows “structural-linguistic criteria, on the basis of the isolation of units, and sets of rules defining well-formed sequences of discourse” (McCarthy, 1991, p. 6). American discourse analysis, on the other hand, is “dominated by work within the ethnomethodological tradition (see, for example, Gumperz

& Hymes), ...which examines types of speech event such as storytelling, greeting rituals, and verbal duels in different cultural and social settings" (ibid.). This is often labeled *conversation analysis*. Here, the emphasis is not on building structural models of discourse as in the British model, but on the close observation of individuals as they interact within authentic social settings. The American work has produced a large number of descriptions of discourse types and insights into social constraints on conversational patterns (e.g., turn-taking, politeness strategies, face-saving phenomena, etc.), and overlaps in some ways with British work in pragmatics (ibid.).

The spectrum of discourse studies has also broadened its scope considerably over the last thirty years. This has been carried out in two ways: (1) vertically in terms of larger linguistic units—the *formal* level, or how sentences are organized into larger, suprasentential units or texts; and (2) horizontally in terms of incorporating socio-cultural settings within linguistics—the *functional* level, or the ways in which people put language to use (i.e., pragmatics) (James, 1980, p. 102). Put another way, discourse has moved from a technically narrow definition as exemplified by the study of grammatical and other relationships between sentences, to a broader perspective related to the functional uses of language in social contexts, to a view in its broadest sense as the study of whole systems of communication within cultures, including ideology, forms of discourse, and socialization (Scollon & Scollon, 1995, p. 95).

In defining the parameters of discourse, Kinneavy (1971) maintains that syntactics and semantics are beyond the borders of discourse study, but define its lower boundaries. The upper limits range "beyond the textual into the vast social and cultural effects of language phenomena" (p. 23). Thus, "[b]eyond text lies the context of the situation of which the text is a part. This includes such areas of investigation as psychological and social motivations for speaking and writing.... Beyond the situational context lies the cultural context, the nature and conventions of which make the situational context permissible and meaningful.... It can hardly be denied that cultural context and situational context determine text. In this large sense, no text is autonomous—it exists within a biographical and historical stream" (pp. 23–24).

Discourse Theory and Contrastive Rhetoric

Robert Kaplan (1988, pp. 275–279) once described contrastive rhetoric as a subset of text linguistics, "a kind of text analysis that has floated on the periphery of more formal linguistic studies for nearly a quarter of a century." Although initially largely an American development, contrastive rhetoric was "not compatible with either general or applied linguistic traditions in the United States." Early attitudes among structuralists which limited linguistic investigations to the level of the sentence, as well as the strictly syntactic focus of later developments in TG grammar, were antithetical to contrastive rhetoric as they tended to inhibit research into suprasentential units and intersentential relationships. Underlying

neo-Whorfian assumptions further served to alienate contrastive rhetoric from mainstream linguistics in the United States in the last few decades. Kaplan thus argued that contrastive rhetoric belongs to the basic tradition of text linguistics, which has "its roots in the Prague School Linguistics and in the Firthian influence in Britain," while acknowledging that there are "important differences between the research tradition in European text-linguistics and the immediate and pragmatic objectives of contrastive rhetoric," especially in terms of its pedagogical motives and applications.

In the last decade there have been significant changes to this viewpoint, however, including a major reappraisal in linguistic circles of the theory of linguistic relativity (see for example, Gumperz & Levinson, 1996), a renaissance in contrastive analysis research, especially at the level of discourse, and a gradual merging of the fields of text linguistics and discourse analysis. As Beaugrande (1990, p. 26) notes, "although 'text linguistics' and 'discourse analysis' originally emerged from different orientations, they have steadily converged in recent years until they are usually treated as the same enterprise...." In the light of these developments, Kaplan's assessment needs to be re-evaluated and a new theoretical frame of reference for understanding contrastive rhetoric established.

It was postulated earlier in this work that rhetoric in the Western tradition can best be understood within a theory of discourse. This leads to the premise that contrastive rhetoric, too, can be conceived in a similar way. Recent shifts in discourse studies from an early emphasis on grammatical and other forms used to mark cohesive relationships between sentences, to the inclusion of larger units of social context related to the functional uses of language, to the study of whole systems of communication within cultures and societies (Scollon & Scollon, 1995) has been paralleled by developments in contrastive rhetoric, which has also moved beyond the level of text to include both the situational and cultural contexts of writing. The concerns of contrastive rhetoric today are three-fold. They include inter-sentential textual relationships, the organizational parameters which shape the overall form of a written text, and written discourse as a cultural activity, including education, literacy, and the social functions of writing. Contrastive rhetoric can thus best be defined today within a theory of discourse, not as the alienated, hybrid offspring of text linguistics, but more accurately as *contrastive written discourse analysis*.

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