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English Rhetoric:
Defining the Canons of Modern Prose Style

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1. Introduction

The term *rhetoric* is derived from the Greek nouns *rhêma* (a word) and *rhêtor* ("a teacher of oratory"), which stem from the Greek verb *eirô* ("I say"). The English noun *rhetoric* comes 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, etymologically, rhetoric has to do with speaking or orating, though 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, as "the faculty of discovering all the available means of persuasion in any given situation" (Corbett, 1990, p. 3), and later classical rhetoricians narrowed the scope of rhetorical discourse to persuasion, although it is generally believed that Aristotle's definition was meant to include not only argumentative discourse but expository modes as well. Over time, rhetoric 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 have shifted and the focus today is 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 modern sense, rhetoric can be defined as "the choice of linguistic and structural aspects of discourse—chosen to produce an effect on an audience" (ibid.). This "new rhetoric" has also 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, 1990, p. 6), and has an impact on both social and political domains as "one of the chief mechanisms by which our sense of reality is negotiated" (ibid., pp. 77–78). The term *rhetoric* thus has an "elastic"

quality and carries a great many connotations, depending on the context, the academic discipline, and the historical period referred to. For pedagogical purposes, rhetoric can be defined as the study of the principles and rules of composition, as well as skill in the effective use of speech. 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 and stylistic principles which underlie and direct one's efforts in 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).

At the turn of the last century and the beginning of the present one, the study of rhetoric ceased to be a separate discipline in most educational institutions in the English-speaking world, with the rare exception of certain American universities which have maintained separate 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. Composition studies provide a venue for the practical application of rhetoric in written form, while in the field of linguistics, the relatively recent disciplines of discourse analysis, text linguistics, and pragmatics have assumed responsibility for the theoretical underpinnings of modern rhetoric. Beaugrande & Dressler (1981, p. 15), for example, 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. Mauranen (1993, p. 29) concurs, stating that "in current linguistic work, the term rhetoric is frequently associated with text organisation in units larger than the sentence." Enkvist also agrees, noting that there has been an interest in the structure of texts ever since "the ancient Greeks...began the study of effective communication under the term *rhetoric*..." (1987, p. 26). Traditionally, "the domain of grammar has been the single sentence, whereas disciplines such as rhetoric and stylistics have dealt with textual spans beyond the sentence" (ibid.). Today, the terms rhetoric and discourse are frequently used interchangeably in descriptions of language beyond the level of the sentence as a unit. Kaplan (1987, p. 9), for example, defines rhetoric as "the level of organization of the whole text"; in a similar manner, 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." Kinneavy (1971) was one of the first to treat rhetoric and discourse synonymously, differentiating between oral discourse in speech communication and written discourse in composition studies. But as Mauranen (1993, p. xi) points out, written discourse is one of the "trickiest problems of language description and teaching," and much of the research literature in the field is plagued with terminological and methodological ambiguities and confusion as terms and approaches from the older tradition of rhetoric are juxtaposed with those of contemporary models of discourse linguistics. With the aim of clarifying this

situation, and in order to understand the philosophy behind modern writing instruction, the origins of rhetoric in the western tradition will be outlined below and its development traced up to modern times in the hope of arriving at a description of the field which will lead to an integrated, comprehensive theory of writing within which to conceptualize research models for the cross-cultural study of composition.

2.0 A brief history of western rhetoric

The following survey is designed to be broad in scope and makes no pretense to completeness. Rather, it is an attempt to identify the leading figures, their main contributions, and the most significant intellectual movements in the long history of rhetoric, and in particular, to explain the ways in which many of these historical factors are related to modern studies of linguistics and composition. The art of rhetoric will be the primary focus of the historical sketch to follow, but in addition, major trends in discourse education in the western tradition will be presented within an interdisciplinary framework encompassing not only the rhetoric itself but also its related disciplines. This work 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*.

2.1 Rhetoric in classical times

For most of its 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, as Corbett (1990) notes, "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 (p. 540). This is certainly true of the persuasive oratory of the Greeks, which played an important role in the ancient world many centuries before the first studies on the subject were written.

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 most important of Aristotle's contributions to rhetorical theory are generally considered to be as follows (ibid., p. 544): the three modes of proof (i.e., *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*); deductive and inductive methods of logical ar-

gumentation; the topics, or *topoi*, as a means of discovering available arguments; and the stress on audience as the chief informing principle of persuasive discourse.

The notion of *topoi* (Greek for "places"), or topics, does not mean a list of subjects as it does now, but rather a way of discovering arguments and evidence 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, such as definition, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, etc.

Another important aspect of rhetorical studies elucidated 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: the introduction (prologue), an outline or narration of the subject (the statement of the case), the proofs for or against the case (the argument), and the summary (epilogue). Aristotle also argued for a plain, natural style of argumentation, one that displays the qualities of clarity, dignity, propriety, and correctness, which contrasted with rhetoricians who both preceded and followed him. His 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.

Classical rhetoric was primarily a spoken, not written, art. It also focused almost entirely on *persuasion*, to enable politicians, lawyers, and statesmen to argue their cases. To these ends, classical rhetoricians divided the art of rhetoric into five departments or canons: (1) invention (Latin *inventio*; Greek *heuresis*): finding or researching one's material and discovering arguments and supporting evidence; (2) arrangement (Latin *dispositio*; Greek *taxis*): organizing one's material into the parts of an argument (see above); (3) style (Latin *elocutio*; Greek *lexis*): the fitting of the language to the audience, including the ornamenting of a discourse with traditional rhetorical devices and figures of speech; (4) memory (Latin *memoria*; Greek *mneme*): the training of the mind to ensure accurate recall, often through the use of mnemonic techniques; and (5) delivery (Latin *pronuntiatio*; Greek *hupocrisis*): techniques for presenting speeches, also known as 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 in the wake of the Greeks: 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* and

De Oratore, and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, as well as the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, a work which was widely attributed to Cicero but is now considered to be from anonymous sources. From Cicero comes the belief that an ideal orator should have a broad knowledge of many aspects of culture, resulting in the study of rhetoric becoming a liberal arts course in later times, and his writings were particularly influential during the Renaissance among the English and Continental Humanists. Cicero also expanded Aristotle's division of the argument from four to six sections, as follows: (1) *exordium*: the introduction (to establish rapport with the audience and arouse interest); (2) *narratio*: the statement of the case (a discussion of what has occurred to generate the issue); (3) *divisio*: an outline of the points in the argument; (4) *confirmatio*: the proofs "for" the position being argued; (5) *refutatio*: the proofs disproving the opponent's claim; and (6) *peroratio*: the conclusion (a review of the argument and a final appeal to the audience). In later centuries, students practiced the above sections piecemeal, and this gave rise to what are now called the "modes of composition": *narratio* became the narrative essay, *divisio* the expository essay, and *confirmatio* the argumentative essay (Lindemann, 1995, p. 44). Alexander Bain (1866), for example, established five modes, four of which as still commonly utilized today: exposition, narration, description, and argumentation. Corbett (1990, p. 21) describes the same four modes as the "forms of discourse."

The name invariably coupled with Cicero is that of Quintilian, who agreed 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, as *divisio* became incorporated into *narratio*, and this resulted in what is known today as the classical arrangement of the parts of a discourse, which is also the basis for a pattern of organization still widely used in English as a model for effective writing and speech communication, the 5-division composition (West, 1989, pp. 25-29).

Another important work from anonymous sources during this time 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—grand, middle, and plain—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.

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 composed of two main streams derived from earlier thinkers—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 not often does. Rhetoric here means a science of persuasion, academic eloquence. (Kinneavy, 1971, p. 7)

Kinneavy (1971) argues that formal education in the western tradition has always emphasized these two interwoven streams of learning, but their importance relative to one another varied according to the particular period of history. In classical times, rhetoric dominated higher education, while its counterpart, dialectic (cf. debate; thesis, antithesis, synthesis), which arose from the influence of the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions of philosophy, did not have its primary impact in the West until later (ibid., p. 8). Rhetoric clearly played the more important role in the education system of the classical period, and preparatory work for higher education usually included exercises in composition, as well as some history and mathematics and a little debating—but all was essentially in preparation for rhetoric:

> [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.)

The "set speech and the imitation of models" were the primary methods of learning at this time, and these "[m]odels were exemplars of the kinds of compositions to be found in speeches" in which the traditional divisions of the argument were carefully followed, and exercises in composition were done solely in preparation for speech (ibid., pp. 7-8).

2.2 Rhetoric in the medieval period

The Platonic Academy in Athens, the last physical establishment of "pagan" learning in the ancient world, was closed 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 witnessed the ever-increasing dominance of ecclesiastical authority, and as a result, public oratory went into a steady decline, being confined mainly to ceremonial occasions or to the schoolroom. For the next thousand years, "[t]he 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 as a result of the emerging nation-states of Europe. There was an important shift in emphasis from invention (i.e., the discovery of arguments), as emphasized by Aristotle, to style. Invention became less significant because all truths were assigned by the Bible, as "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 in persuading people to live by them.

Educational institutions during the Middle Ages, and in fact well up to the twentieth century, reflect Quintilian's insistence on the moral as well as intellectual training of students. All European education during the medieval period took place in Latin, and as soon as children could read and write, they received basic instruction in grammar, including speaking and writing correctly and the interpretation of poems, as taught by a grammar teacher (the *grammaticus*). Students 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. Thus, grammar in the medieval period meant the systematic study of both language and literary texts, and learning continued to take place by imitating and paraphrasing models. After students reached an acceptable level, a second teacher, the *rhetoricus*, began rhetorical studies, and all were expected to master the five departments (or canons) of classical rhetoric. At higher levels of education, debate and disputation within limits laid down by the Christian church became the new focus.[1] In this way, the main concern of the college shifted from rhetoric to dialectic, and composition modes of the Middle Ages were designed to prepare students for dialectic, just as written preparatory exercises in the classical period had been designed for rhetoric:

> 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. ...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. (op. cit., pp. 8–9)

In the later medieval period, undergraduate students at universities studied the *trivium* of grammar, rhetoric, and logic, 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.

2.3 Rhetoric during the Renaissance

The Renaissance is said to mark the transition from the medieval to the modern world,

but it occurred gradually and with different emphases in different countries from as early as the late fourteenth century to as late as the mid-seventeenth century. There was a great revival of art, literature, science, and learning in general in Europe at this time, and the recent rediscovery of Greek and Roman classics was the main intellectual catalyst of the period, with scholars known as humanists studying them enthusiastically. Most of their early efforts centered on reconciling the newly discovered classical knowledge with Christian precepts, while later efforts were devoted to bringing the classics to terms with 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 influence. 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 the sciences, while the development of the printing press in the fifteenth century brought a new focus to rhetoric, as scholars were now able to apply rhetorical principles to written discourse as well. From its origins ancient Greece, through its flourishing period during the Roman Empire, and into its decline in the Middle Ages, rhetoric had been associated mainly with oratory. This was amplified in medieval times to include letter writing, but with the advent of typography 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 contributor to the development of rhetoric in England during the Renaissance was the Dutch humanist Erasmus (ibid., p. 550), who wrote a number of books at the beginning of the sixteenth century which dealt with both pedagogy and 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 constant practice, thus foreshadowing the modern adage that "you learn to write by writing, writing, and more writing" (ibid.). He also recommended keeping a "commonplace book" for jotting 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 books were widely used in Tudor schools to help students develop elegance and variety in expression in Latin, and his influence on Renaissance rhetoricians led to a widespread concern for classifying and cataloguing *copia*—literally "abundance," but meaning "fullness of expression." That is, one achieves 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* (1544), for example, 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. The dialectical tradition was becoming sterile, even farcical, but at the universities disputations continued (it was not until 1722 that Cambridge went over to written exams, and Oxford only added them to the orals) (ibid.).

A movement also developed at this time to get students to orate and write in the vernacular, and the first known instance of the use of English as the vehicle of instruction in schools was *c.* 1349 when French was discarded (ibid., p. 5). But even up to the late 1500s, students were still studying in Latin in English schools, and 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 (op. cit.), vernacular rhetorics produced during the English Renaissance can be classified into three groups: the traditionalists, the figurists, and the Ramists. The traditionalists viewed all five departments (or canons) of rhetoric as important, the figurists emphasized style above all and were most concerned with rhetorical devices and figures of speech, and 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 eventually led to the decline of rhetoric in the eighteenth century.

2.4 Rhetoric from the Renaissance to modern times

During the centuries that followed the Renaissance, there developed in the English-speaking world 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 were prominent: the elocutionary, the literary, and the scientific. The elocutionary approach emphasized delivery and tried to advance the art of public speaking. Its main venues were public lectures, parliamentary debates, and pulpit oratory, and many of its principles are still taught in speech communication classes today (e.g., lessons in elocution). The literary perspective was concerned not so much with oratory, but with literary texts. It encompassed a wide range of conflicting views concerning style, some of which later became precursors to modern literary criticism. The scientific approach stressed the importance of invention as a means of discovering truth, and advocated a plain style of writing, the separation of logic and

rhetoric, and the importance of inductive processes rather than deductive syllogisms (i.e., the empirical observation of nature). Writing in the scientific style was characterized by relatively short sentences, simple words, and little ornamentation, so that research findings could be communicated directly and effectively.

In education, rhetoric was an important part of the university curriculum and as late as the nineteenth century, colleges had departments of rhetoric. There was popular interest in public lectures and debates, and university courses generally stressed oratory, rhetoric, and logic, which were often taught by clergymen or moral philosophers. University students attended lectures on rhetoric and formed debating societies, some of which still survive today. During the eighteenth century the disputation system started to disappear in many universities, although at some schools it was still important until the middle of the nineteenth century. 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, while the final two years incorporated logic, ethics, metaphysics, Christian apologetics, modern languages, as well as zoology, history, and geology (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 (where logic went through further mutations to assume its quasi-mathematical modern forms), the art of rhetoric gradually disappeared, and philology evolved into the modern science of linguistics (ibid.).

In America, as the emphasis in education shifted more and more from speaking to writing and higher education became increasingly diversified into departments and specialized majors, English departments were established and literature studies began to dominate them for the first time. Rhetoric was also incorporated into these 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, and Alexander Bain's *English Composition and Rhetoric* (1866) became one of the most influential works of the times, explicating the four forms of written discourse still widely used today. 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"), as well as an insistence on the importance of "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. (Kinneavy, 1971, p. 12)

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 (Kaplan, 1988, p. 290). 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..." (ibid.), and this is the origin of the modern western ideology of writing.

Although the study of rhetoric had been the central discipline of the school curriculum for extended periods of its long history, and skill in oratory or in written discourse had been a key to success in the courts, the parliament, and the church from ancient times, in the twentieth century it fell 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)

2.5 The rise of the new rhetoric

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

while from later practitioners such as Christensen and Berthoff come practical applications for teaching composition.

Burke, who has probably had the greatest impact on rhetoric in this century, focuses on language itself, asserting that all human beings are linguistic animals, using and misusing symbols. He views rhetoric as a function of language that enables people to overcome the divisions separating them, and 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'...., 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. Kinneavy's work brings together the classical and contemporary elements of rhetoric—his theory is essentially Aristotelian, but also incorporates perspectives from modern linguistics, literary criticism, philosophy, and sociology. He avoids the term *rhetoric* because it can now take on multiple and often shifting meanings and 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, thus bringing the notion of "audience" to the forefront of modern theories of rhetoric. Another important contributor to the "new rhetoric" is the Belgian philosopher Perelman, who along with his colleague Olbrechts-Tyteca, 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 Toulmin was also dissatisfied with the applicability of formal logic to the problems of human affairs and has developed a specific method of argumentation based on claims and warrants. In other manifestations, the "new rhetoric" has focused more on political and social relationships, viewing rhetoric as a tool for social change. From a social constructionist 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 language is] one of the chief mechanisms by which our sense of reality is negotiated" (Bazerman, 1990, pp. 77-78). Closely related to this perspective 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).

3.0 Defining English rhetorical style

Although the concept of rhetoric is notoriously difficult to analyze and reduce to constituent elements, researchers generally emphasize three components (e.g., Holyoak & Piper, 1997): rhetorical structure or patterns of organization, rhetorical style, and the nature of logical argumentation. But whereas the rhetorical organization of written English can be readily accessed from composition textbooks and handbooks on writing,[2] the acquisition of

a mature and sophisticated writing style is extremely difficult for most EL2 students to attain (ibid.), not only because the process always requires a lengthy apprenticeship, but also because the notion of style itself is problematic, falling as it does within the authority of a diverse collection of academic disciplines, including rhetoric, composition studies, stylistics, literary criticism, and discourse studies, each of which has its own particular agenda and understanding of what "style" should mean:

> Many of the terms used in the study of language are 'loaded', in that they have a number of different, sometimes overlapping, sometimes contradictory and controversial senses, both at popular and scholarly levels. The word STYLE is a particularly good example of the kind of confusion that can arise. The multiplicity of meanings which surround this concept—or perhaps set of concepts—testifies to its importance in the history of English language studies.... (Crystal, 1975, p. 199)

Therefore, before embarking on a detailed examination of the rhetorical style of modern English, it is essential to have an understanding of the most important senses in which the term *style* itself is used today.

3.1 Definitions of style

According to Crystal, (ibid., pp. 199-201), the term *style* is used in language studies in the following three ways: (1) in a narrow sense, mostly in literary criticism, referring to the distinctive characteristics of some single author's use of language (e.g., Wordsworth's style, the style of the mature Shakespeare, etc.); (2) in a collective sense, in the development of particular genres of literature, referring to the style of "schools" of literary figures (e.g., the style of the Romantic poets, etc.); and (3) in a sense that is usually extremely difficult to precisely define because it involves intuitive judgments, including the need for both descriptive and evaluative elements for which there is not likely to be a single clear answer, as a "quality of expression."

Hymes (cited in Kinneavy, 1971, p. 359) views the notion of style from a somewhat different perspective, stating that "[it] may be investigated both as deviations from a norm and as 'a system of coherent ways or patterns of doing things.'" In this sense, there are two distinct notions which define style—style as deviation and style as "systematicity"—and these two perspectives are "probably the dominant views of style in linguistics, stylistics, and literary theory in this century" (ibid.).

In yet another approach, Enkvist (1965) suggests that, in one sense, style is a kind of mysterious and objectively unverifiable essence, a "higher, active principle of composition by which the writer penetrates and reveals the inner form of his subject" (pp. 10-11). He notes that it is difficult to be objective about such an "ineffable notion," however, and provides an overview of some of the less subjective ways in which style has been defined (ibid., p. 12): (1) as a shell surrounding a pre-existing core of thought or expression, (2) as a choice between alternative expressions, (3) as deviations from a norm, (4) as a set of

individual characteristics, (5) as a set of collective characteristics, and (6) as those relations among linguistic entities that are stateable in terms of wider spans of text than the sentence. The "shell" analogy above has attained some measure of popularity in recent times, and from this perspective, style is conceived of as a shell that is added to or imposed upon a content of thought. All six definitions, however, have some validity, though all raise serious problems, and according to Adolph (1968, p. 9), "our total conception of style is probably an amalgam of them all." Such a conception also implies that a comprehensive definition of style will have to address both individualistic and institutionally collective levels of understanding.

For some, the most intractable problem in the linguistic study of style (i.e., stylistics) is that linguists are not normally permitted an evaluative role—their task is basically descriptive, not in deciding if one particular style is good or bad, but in ensuring that all the features of that style are understood; in other words, linguists are involved with quantitative assessments, not qualitative. For others, it is literary criticism, not linguistics, that should be given the task of articulating our collective feelings about style. Because it does not claim to be a science, literary criticism is allowed an evaluative role, which is, at least in part, subjective (Adolph, 1968, p. 2). On the other hand, Crystal (1975, p. 220) argues that the notion of style is related to "the study of meaning...at the level of discourse" and "the way in which the overall meaning of a use of language is organized," which seems to place it back within the purview of linguistics, thus lending itself to the argument that it is both possible and acceptable for linguists to be qualitative in their descriptions without being evaluative.

3.2 The origins of modern English prose style

The origins of the modern style of written English can be traced to a period some 350-400 years ago during the time of the Restoration (*c.* 1660) when a great stylistic shift took place in the way prose was written: "Scholars, critics, and more common readers agree that today's standard literary prose style arose around the time of the Restoration" (Adolph, 1968, p. 1). Restoration prose has since come to mean many things—"ease of comprehension, elimination of ornament, fluency, brevity, and neatness of structure"—but "the critical terms most frequently applied..., both then and now, are its precision, clarity, and plainness" (ibid., pp. 2 & 222). English prose after this time and continuing up to the present day has become "a means of useful communication rather than self-expression or overt artifice," and once the norm was established, "infinite possibilities for artistic expression through variation" were made possible (ibid., p. 7). As Kinneavy (1971, p. 170) states, "[t]he main prescriptions of [the modern prose style] in English had been consciously written by the mid-seventeenth century. There have been refinements since but only rare dissension." The prose style established in Restoration times thus remains the standard today and though variations on the norm are quite rightly of interest to specialists in the field, the primary concern for teachers of composition is to isolate the norm itself so that its main features can be taught

to students.

In the late Middle Ages, the English language was still very much in the process of development. During the period of roughly 1100 to 1300 AD, for instance, it was essentially a hybrid language composed of French (spoken by the nobility), Latin (used by the Church and by scholars and in such schools as existed in those times), and English, or more accurately, Anglo-Saxon dialects (spoken by the common people) (Sedland, 1994, p. 10). In the early sixteenth, as English pride in the achievements of the nation grew, a movement developed to get students to orate and write in the vernacular, although it was not until the next century that written and spoken forms of English became codified into patterns that all members of society were expected to follow. However, "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 that "...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). The shift in prose style in Restoration times was a move away from this ornamentalism and artifice, and it was accompanied by many of the codifications of the English language which remain with us today. For example, the sentence replaced "the period" as the logical unit of discourse, punctuation, grammar, and forms of speech were standardized, and the spread of typography helped seventeenth century writers replace Latin and establish the regulation and fixation of European vernaculars by reducing all expression to "linear" sequences (ibid., p. 19). "From the Restoration on, normal literary prose is, to use McLuhan's terms, a 'linear' product of the 'print culture.' The chief aim of such prose is useful public communication. Therefore it is made to seem 'rational' or 'precise'..." (ibid., p. 245).[3]

Nevertheless, "the seventeenth century was very self-conscious about its stylistic reforms [and] in an interminable series of arguments, observations, manifestos, and programs it wrestled with the problems of style and the uses of language in general" (ibid., p. 3). In this century, although the great stylistic shift in English prose occurring in Restoration times has become an established fact, there have been vigorous debates as to *why* this shift took place at this particular time in history. Although there is general agreement that it had something to do with the emergence of the new science, there has been much disagreement about the dates and causes of the shift. This disagreement centered on a lengthy debate between two scholars and their followers earlier in this century known today as the Croll-Jones controversy. For Croll the conflict of the times was between ornamental and plain styles of writing deriving from competing perspectives on communication that dated back to Christian humanism and classical times,[4] and the transition toward true modernity in English writing occurred sometime around 1600. For Jones, the opposition was between the newly emerging scientific style of writing and the dominant ornamental style of earlier times, and he argued that the shift occurred more gradually in the period from 1600 to 1660

AD. According to Adolph (1968), the present-day view tends towards the importance of the rise of the new science at this time, but without denying the significance of other factors as well. In fact, it is generally believed that it was not science per se that gave rise to the new prose style, but rather the underlying utilitarian philosophy that defined this particular period of history. There is general acceptance today, as Croll argued, that our modern prose style is continuous with the wider western traditions of classical antiquity and Christian humanism, but also with Jones' standpoint that science played a pivotal role in this shift, within a wider framework of the utilitarianism of the times, however.

The emerging scientific perspective of the seventeenth century emphasized the importance of invention[5] as a means of discovering truth and advocated a plain style of writing. Francis Bacon (1561–1626) was considered a leading proponent of this style, and he argued for the separation of logic from rhetoric and stressed the importance of inductive processes rather than deductive syllogisms (i.e., the empirical observation of nature). He suggested a new way of conducting scientific research and at the same time advocated a style of writing characterized by relatively short sentences, simple words, and little ornamentation in which to communicate this research. He also emphasized the need to understand human nature and analyze the audience one hopes to influence. Bacon had an important influence on the development of conciseness and clarity in scientific writing:

> The utilitarianism of Bacon's style can be shown more dramatically by a comparison of his prose with that of his [Elizabethan] predecessors and contemporaries. ...[T]he distinctive qualities of Elizabethan prose which readers have always felt—its exuberant artifice, its sensuousness, its moralizing cast—are largely lacking in Bacon, even when he is most rhetorical. ...Though living amidst the great Elizabethan delight in language for its own sake, Bacon distrusted [such use of] words [and his] stylistic legacy to his Restoration followers is great. (Adolph, 1968, pp. 68–76)

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 governmental 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)

The question of the intellectual and sociological roots of the Royal Society are complicated and there is probably no completely satisfactory explanation for so much scientific talent appearing at the same time at this period in history. Nevertheless, it was the Royal Society's preference for utilitarianism that helped shape the prose style of the day in its appeal for a "close, naked, natural way of speaking" (Adolph, 1968, pp. 96 & 112).

> The causes for this development are difficult to isolate. I see most of them adumbrated early in the century in Bacon. Only a few of the Restoration authors however—Glanvill and Sprat are notable exceptions—acknowledge their debt to Bacon explicitly or even seem aware of it. Whether Bacon and his followers created the new climate of opinion or are themselves responding to it is another of those...chicken-or-egg questions that haunt the history of ideas.... (ibid., pp. 302-303)

One of the members of the Royal Society's committee for improving the English language was John Dryden (1631-1700), known today as the father of the modern English prose style (Sedland, 1994). 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 urged 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 perhaps 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.). Thus, while oratory 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*..." (Corbett, 1990, p. 563). This kind of writing "had its origin during the Restoration period with writers like Dryden, Bunyan, and Temple..." (ibid.).

According to Adolph (1968, pp. 6-7), in addition to the rise of science and a reaction against the ornamental style of writing in previous centuries, there were other influences on the development of the modern prose style: the new journalism, the rise of rationalism,

and the newly emerging Protestant ethic, especially in the form of Puritanism. All had a general requirement that "prose be a vehicle of useful communication rather than a medium which calls attention to itself either as conscious art or self-expression" (ibid.). There is certainly a feeling that prose writing before 1660 was more ornate and poetical and that after this date it was more a plain, workaday, modern style. However, Adolph (ibid.) maintains that the causes cannot be attributed solely to the efforts of the Royal Society and elements of the Baconian heritage. The movement toward the plain style was widespread, and included early Puritan writers—Bunyan was a later culmination of this Puritan plain style, and the Puritans ignored the classical writers as stylistic models. The utilitarian emphasis of early Puritan writings, for example, foreshadows the style of the Restoration—"its passionate austerity is profoundly Christian, and especially Protestant" (ibid., p. 164)—and "Bunyan's and Defoe's austere narratives are worlds apart stylistically from Elizabethan fiction" (ibid., p. 246).

> In the Restoration prose became prosaic. Writers as different as Bunyan and Dryden understand prose as a vehicle for communicating intelligibly rather than revealing the mind of the author or speaker or showing off his command of literary devices. A writer like Defoe is close to this norm and is the best possible evidence that great art can emerge from utilitarian presuppositions. Once the norm is established, writers like...Swift [among others] achieve fine effects by artful deviations from it. Before the Restoration there is no settled norm at all. (ibid., p. 302)

> Not without reason do we regard Bunyan and Defoe, authors of two of the most popular works of fiction of their day [e.g., *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678 & 1684) and *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)], as the fathers of the modern novel. Like them, we see things not in themselves but leading up to ends. The style then must progress, and it must be plain and, at least for Defoe, impersonal—in a word, modern. (ibid., p. 288)

> Like Puritan prose, 'scientific' style sacrifices rhetorical devices because its real significance is not in itself, but in another purpose beyond itself, new discoveries leading ultimately to 'good works' (that favorite word of both Puritans and Baconians). Both 'science' and Puritanism are intensely empirical, for in both the most inconsequential-seeming details of life are significant, and therefore to be observed closely. Inevitably there is the same concentration, in both styles, on things rather than on words and rhetoric [in the pejorative sense]. (ibid., p. 276)

Linguistically, as well, the new prose style can be distinguished from its predecessor. Prior to the Restoration, the dominant style of writing was characterized by...

> ...various rhetorical devices, such as figures, tropes, metaphors, and similes, or similitudes, to use a term of the period. The sentences are long, often obscurely involved, and rhythmical, developing in...a stately cadence.... The penchant for interlarding a work with Latin and Greek quotations is also apparent. The diction reveals a host of exotic words, many Latinisms, and frequently poetic phraseology of rare beauty." (Jones; cited in Adolph, 1968, p. 21)

After the Restoration, however, there was an predominant shift in emphasis to...

> ...a detached point of view, causal explanations, syntax like mathematical ratios, technical terms, and the series of balanced progressions.... Restoration prose...make[s] for an impersonal style [which can be traced to a] desire...to base...generalizations upon objective procedure divorced from the variable of individual subjectivity. ...[T]he special devices the Restoration used to achieve the utilitarian goals it designated for prose are the basis of modern prose style [and] the stylistic result is the impersonal, progressive kind of plainness that seems 'modern' to us. (Adolph, 1968, pp. 244, 279, & 301)[6]

Whether one stresses the influence of the newly emerging sciences, the reaction against the ornamentation and artifice of a previous age, or the passionate austerity of Puritan writers, it is widely accepted among scholars today that the ultimate influence on the new prose style was "the new utilitarianism around which the values of the age are integrated" (ibid., p. 6), although terms such as "utility" and "science" were never used in a clear-cut way:

> [Utilitarianism at this time was never more than a] vague, undefined instrumentalism. Except for its generally pragmatic, empirical, 'English' quality, it never had much in common with the more systematic doctrines of Bentham or Mill. But though vague, it was extremely powerful. 'Utility' was one of those words, like our 'Freedom' or 'Democracy'.... 'Science' is a much more potent word for us than for the seventeenth century, in which it referred, in a formal way, to any body of systematic thought or skills. Medieval philosophy and rhetoric were 'sciences.' The nearest equivalent to our word 'Science' were tentative circumlocutions like 'the New Philosophy' or 'the experimental way'." (ibid., pp. 7–8)

The seventeenth century thus conceived of utilitarianism in "a very broad and quite unphilosophical way to refer to that outlook which values things as means to ultimate ends rather than things...for their own sakes" (ibid., p. 243). Nevertheless, it was utilitarian concerns that motivated those writing in the new prose style, and as Adolph (ibid., p. 302) states, "utilitarian prose is written in all ages. To my knowledge though, the Restoration is the first time in English history when utilitarian criteria become the official doctrine for literary prose in general" (ibid., p. 302).

3.3 The canons of modern English prose style

Modern English rhetoric, according to Scollon & Scollon (1995), expresses a philosophy of communication in which all information should be conveyed as clearly, briefly, and sincerely as possible, the C–B–S pattern found in so many textbooks on rhetoric and style, and this form of communication is widely seen as the norm in contemporary academic and professional communication of all kinds (p. 94). The historical question is this, however (ibid., p. 99): "[W]hen did we come to assume that communication should be analytic, original, move rapidly forward, have a unified thesis, avoid unnecessary digressions, and in essence, present only the most essential information?" The answer, of course, is to be found in the seventeenth century and the emerging utilitarian ethic as the preferred style for scientific deliberations in institutions such as the Royal Society. As Scollon & Scollon note, "[a]s

science and technology have risen in the west to their current central position, business has risen together with them, and this preferred style has been carried with it into near total dominance in our thinking about effective communication" (ibid., p. 101):

> It is not just a matter of convenience that the C–B–S style has come to symbolize the communication of international business exchanges. Both the communication style and the economic principles were laid out together at the same time in history, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and often by the same writers. They are products of exactly the same psychology, philosophy, and worldview. (ibid.)

The utilitarian ethic which arose in Restoration England as a rather vague and undefined notion became codified and systematized a century later during the Enlightenment as a mature body of philosophical thought called Utilitarianism. The Enlightenment, or Age of Reason, which reached its high point in the eighteenth century as a result of the growing importance of science as the new authority and the decline of the power of the Christian church, "set the course for western and world development for the next two or three centuries" (ibid., p. 100). "All of the [Enlightenment] writings were based on the flowering of scientific and philosophical writing of the immediately preceding period" and communication styles in the West became modeled on this pattern of scientific writing and the underlying utilitarian ethic that gave it form (ibid., pp. 100–101). At the same time, fundamental concepts in the role of the individual within society changed radically as well. Prior to the Enlightenment, human beings had been thought of as "deeply connected participants in a larger social and spiritual structure of society. The new Enlightenment concept of the human was to isolate each person as a completely independent, rational, autonomous entity who moves about through society according to society's laws..." (ibid.).

The term "Utilitarianism" was coined by Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), whose writings became "extremely influential in the development of contemporary western economic, political, and social life..." (ibid., pp. 101–102). The philosophy of Utilitarianism was further developed by John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), becoming "the philosophical basis of the core of contemporary western social and economic life" (ibid., p. 102). The predominant ideology underlying the Utilitarian discourse system is one of individualism and egalitarianism; its preferred forms include deductive rhetorical patterns and politeness strategies of involvement. The essay or research paper are its prototypical forms in academic circles, while the business letter exemplifies Utilitarian principles in the business world (ibid., pp. 114–115):

> Within this system there is "a reinforced emphasis on direct talk, on avoiding elaboration and extravagance, and on promoting close, egalitarian social relationships. The Utilitarian discourse system has little tolerance for hierarchical social relationships, and even when they exist, it is assumed they should be set aside in contexts of public communication. (ibid.)

Scollon & Scollon state that there are six main characteristics of the forms of discourse

preferred within the Utilitarian system, among which "the essay is the most typical example" (pp. 107). It is (1) anti-rhetorical (in the traditional pejorative sense), (2) positivist-empirical ("one should reject any evidence but the empirical and positive evidence of his...own observations"), (3) deductive (an overall preference for a deductive strategy in the introduction of topics), (4) individualistic ("writers should avoid set phrases, metaphors, proverbs, and clichés, and strive to make their statements fresh and original...by producing original phrasings and statements"), (5) egalitarian (even if individuals have unequal positions in society, from the point of view of the discourse system, it is implied that they are equals), and (6) public (institutionally sanctioned; i.e., there is a screening process that one must go through in order to get one's written ideas published, and a large array of institutionalized boards such as review panels, editors, and peer reviewers act as a filter and gating procedure for set standards before the discourse can be passed on to the public).

In the last two hundred years, Utilitarianism "has come to the position of the central and dominating discourse system throughout the western world" (p. 114), and is now widely believed to be the key to success in our international political and economic systems (p. 120). However, as Scollon & Scollon argue, "in spite of its merits in commerce and international affairs, [it] represents a particular ideology and as such needs to be carefully analyzed" (p. 121). Furthermore, many other systems and sub-systems of discourse exist within this system, crossing ethnic, generational, gender, corporate, and professional lines. Successful intercultural communication depends on "learning to move with both pragmatic effectiveness and cultural sensitivity across such lines" (ibid.).

4.0 Writing handbooks, stylebooks, and publication manuals

The principles of Utilitarianism outlined above are perhaps most clearly reflected today in handbooks on writing such as *The New Oxford Guide to Writing: A Rhetoric and Handbook for College Students* (Kane, 1988) and *Harbrace College Handbook* (Hodges et al., 1994), stylebooks such as *Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace* (Williams, 1989) and *The Elements of Style* (Strunk & White, 1979), and publication manuals such as the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* [APA] (1994) and *The Chicago Manual of Style* (1993). Textbooks such as these act as a "repository of the accumulated knowledge of the field, a distillation of successes and failures over many years" (*APA Manual,* 1994, p. 1). The advice that they offer is the end result of a concerted effort on behalf of many individuals in the English-speaking world dating back at least two centuries to establish and clarify the canons of good writing as determined by a confluence of established authorities and common usage. The characterizations that follow are by no means exhaustive but are representative of certain rhetorical principles that direct and regulate the creation of English academic prose. They are loosely grouped below in terms of style, organization, coherence and cohesion, logical argumentation, sentence structure, and diction.

All handbooks, stylebooks, and publication manuals provide extensive counsel on the

subject of style. The following quotations exemplify the C–B–S model of clarity, brevity, and sincerity (see Scollon & Scollon above), in addition to other important qualities such as simplicity, directness, concision, and eloquence.

> The prime quality of prose style is *clarity* [which] comes from selecting words carefully and arranging them well. (Corbett, 1990, p. 389)
>
> Everything that can be thought at all can be thought clearly. Everything that can be said can be said clearly. (Wittgenstein; cited in Williams, 1989, p. 1)
>
> [Aristotle argued for a plain, natural style of argumentation, one that displays the qualities of clarity, dignity, propriety, and correctness, and held that] "language which does not convey a clear meaning fails to perform the very function of language." (cited in Corbett, 1990, p. 389)
>
> Have something to say, and say it as clearly as you can. That is the only secret of style. (Matthew Arnold; cited in Williams, 1989, p. 1)
>
> Write in clear...prose [to] facilitate clear communication.... (*APA Manual*, 1994, pp. 9 & 23)
>
> [The most common reason for substandard compositions is that many writers] have just never learned how to write *clearly* and *directly*.... (Williams, 1989, p. 4; my italics)
>
> [Success in writing] depends on the ability to make a point precisely, directly, and persuasively. (Williams, 1989, preface)
>
> ...the importance of organizing one's thinking and writing and making every word contribute to clear and concise communication... (*APA Manual*, 1994, p. xxvi)
>
> [In English, writing we admire we describe as] clear, direct, concise, flowing.... [Writing we do not admire we call] turgid, indirect, unclear..., opaque..., obscure..., and so on. (Williams, 1989, p. 8)
>
> Anything is better than not to write clearly. There is nothing to be said against lucidity, and against simplicity.... (Somerset Maugham, cited in Williams, 1989, p. 148)
>
> There is no artifice as good and desirable as simplicity. (St. Francis de Sales; cited in Williams, 1989, p. 81)
>
> Say only what needs to be said (p. 26), make each sentence maximally informative (p. 9), [and] be as brief as possible (p. 9). (*APA Manual*, 1994)
>
> [The best style is] clear, simple, and direct. As important as directness and clarity may be, there are times when we want to go beyond it, to a style that is a bit more...elegant. (Williams, 1989, p. 5)
>
> But clarity and brevity, though a good beginning, are only a beginning. By themselves, they may remain bare and bleak [and may require the addition of some forms of eloquence]. (F. A. Lucas; cited in Williams, 1989, p. 148).

> [E]loquence does not arise from a laboured and far-fetched elocution, but from a surprising mixture of simplicity and majesty.... (Laurence Sterne; cited in Williams, 1989, p. 148)

Organizational and structural principles are another primary concern of writing handbooks and manuals. *Harbrace College Handbook* (Hodges et al., 1994), for example, presents an approach to essay organization which was first enunciated by Alexander Bain in the last century and which is still commonly found in composition textbooks on academic writing today (see, for example, Oshima & Hogue, 1987). From this perspective, English compositions are developed in a linear, hierarchical fashion, from sentence to paragraph to essay, and this structural pattern repeats itself at each level of organization; i.e., "[a]n essential unit of thought in writing, paragraphs develop the main idea of a paper in the same way that sentences develop the main idea of a paragraph" (op. cit., p. 308). Stated another way, the organizational structure of the paragraph mirrors the organizational structure of the composition as a whole, and as such, the paragraph in English can be thought of as "an essay in miniature." Paragraphs are defined as a group of sentences which function together to express one unified idea which relates directly to the theme of the whole composition (ibid.), and in general all the sentences in a paragraph serve in some way to support that idea. According to these principles, paragraphs should be *unified, coherent*, and *well developed* (ibid.). Paragraphs have unity when each sentence contributes to a single main idea or central thought, they achieve coherence when the sentences are appropriately linked by transition signals so that the thought flows smoothly from sentence to sentence, and they are well developed when specific details adequately support the main idea.

The concepts of coherence and cohesion are particularly important in paragraph and essay organization, as well as in the proper development of logical argumentation. Thomas de Quincey (cited in Williams, 1989, p. 37) maintains that the secret of prose composition lies in transition and connection, or "the art by which one step in an evolution of thought is made to arise out of another: all fluent and effective composition depends on the connections." Hodges et al. (op. cit., p. 315) provide the following advice in this regard:

> A paragraph is coherent when the relationship among ideas is clear and the progression from one sentence to the next is easy for the reader to follow. To achieve coherence, arrange ideas in a clearly understandable order. Link them by effective use of pronouns, repetition, conjunctions, transitional phrases, and parallel structure. These transitional devices also ease the transitions between paragraphs.

Corbett (1990, p. 292) agrees, stating that the issue of transition is related to coherence: "We want the parts of our discourse to 'hang together,' and while we would like the sutures to be as unobtrusive as possible, we nevertheless want our readers to be aware that they are passing over into another division of the discourse." Publication manuals also concur, often linking coherence with an express concern for appropriate logical argumentation:

> ...clear and logical communication...ensure(s) smooth expression...by presenting ideas in an orderly manner and by expressing yourself smoothly and precisely [and] by developing ideas clearly and logically and leading readers smoothly from thought to thought.... (*APA Manual*, 1994, pp. 25 & 23)
>
> ...aim for continuity in words, concepts, and thematic development from the opening statement to the conclusion" (ibid., p. 24).
>
> Unity, cohesiveness, and continuity should characterize all paragraphs. (ibid., p. 28).

As Williams (1989, p. 49) points out, however, "[t]here is no consensus among editors and writers on how best to use transitional words. ...The more careful we are to organize the sequence of our ideas, the fewer of them we need." He provides the following counsel for effective transitions:

> [H]owever often you use them, keep them short, use them precisely, and keep them close to the beginning of their sentences.... [The challenge of English prose is that] every sentence requires us to find the best compromise between the principles of clarity and directness...and those principles of cohesion that fuse separate sentences into a whole discourse. [In making these choices, the priority should always be given to cohesion], to what fuses sentences into cohesive discourse. (ibid., pp. 49 & 39–40)

Finally, word choice and sentence structure are also a main priority in writing handbooks and manuals and these issues are related in turn to organizational and stylistic preferences. Most of these books exhort writers to vary sentence length and structure and to avoid wordiness and jargon. For example:

> Although writing only in short, simple sentences produces choppy and boring prose, writing exclusively in long, involved sentences creates difficult, sometimes incomprehensible material. Varied sentence length helps readers maintain interest and comprehension. ...Direct, declarative sentences with simple, common words are usually best. [Avoid] the personal pronouns I and we [and] as much as possible, use the third person rather than the first person. (*APA Manual*, 1994, p. 28 & pp. 9–10)
>
> The main causes of uneconomical writing are jargon and wordiness. Jargon is the continuous use of a technical vocabulary where that vocabulary is not relevant. ...Unconstrained wordiness lapses into embellishment and flowery writing, which are clearly inappropriate.... (ibid., p. 27)

According to Kane (1988, p. 190), diction, or word choice, is at the very heart of effective writing: "Sentences are important; paragraphing and clear organization are important. But words are fundamental. The essential virtue of words is that they be clear. At the same time it is desirable that they be simple, concise, and original." He defines concision as "brevity relative to purpose," pointing out that words which are simple and concise will naturally be clear.

5.0 Conclusion

In order to comprehend the philosophy behind modern writing instruction in the English-speaking world and its tradition of placing great value on "clarity and precision in the framework of a rigorously logical system" (Kaplan, 1988, p. 290), it is essential to have an understanding of the the long and complex development of art of rhetoric in the West. The history of rhetoric in the western tradition 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. Modern rhetoric finds its roots in the past but also responds to contemporary concerns, as it is a field of study 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 understanding of the historical matrix from which the art of rhetoric in the western tradition arose is fundamental today if we are to comprehend the canons and strictures that govern our use of modern English prose. There is little as divisive as the interpretation of our collective past in this postmodern age, but as current events of are beginning to testify, we ignore history at our peril.

Notes

1. This division of labor is continues to be reflected in modern L2 teaching.
2. According to Leki (1992, p. 90), "not many cultures appear to teach rhetorical patterns directly, as we do in our schools. In fact while English bulges with rhetoric handbooks, few other languages have handbooks or courses specifically devoted to teaching writing. (See Kachru, 1984; Eggington, 1987; and Hinds, 1987, for discussions of India, Korea, and Japan, respectively)."
3. Marshal McLuhan makes the point that typographic culture is "linear" in the sense that "it encourages the habit of assimilating matter in sequences, one item after another.... Oral-aural culture by contrast encouraged a sense of simultaneity..., multi-related events occurring not in chains but in clusters. Vision [i.e., the visual field of the printed word] presents its objects in relatively disjointed, strung-out fields: one has to move one's eyes or turn one's head to [visually access the field of print], which means that one catches it in [a] series [of] linear sequences" (Ong, 1967, p. 11).
4. The ornamental style (sometimes called Ciceronian) is attributed to Isocrates and the Sophists and was attacked by Socrates and Plato. It originated in the Greeks' "love of sensuous forms" and is

characterized by "schemes," which are chiefly "repetitions of sound used as purely sensuous devices to give pleasure or aid the attention." With the spread of Sophist teachings, this style continued into Roman times in the oratory of Cicero, and later with the church fathers and medieval schools. The origins of the plain style (sometimes called Attic, after the Attic writers of ancient Greece who were models for Cicero's Roman opponents; thus, the style is also known as Anti-Ciceronian) reside in the philosophical curiosity of the Greeks, and this style is first described by Plato (*Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*) as the appropriate method for Socrates' dialectic (i.e., philosophy and the means of discovering truth as opposed to rhetoric and the methods of persuasion). The plain style was first codified by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric*, which became the principal authority, along with Seneca, of the plain style and Anti-Ciceronianism of the seventeenth century (ibid., p. 12). The plain style turns on Aristotle's two essential principles of style: clarity and appropriateness. To this the Roman Stoics added a third, brevity (the Romans were unlike the Greeks in that they were pragmatic and largely unphilosophical—the one philosophy considered congenial to the Roman spirit is therefore Stoicism). With the Stoics, brevity takes the form of aphorisms and maxims which were widely used later by "scientific writers" of English. "Literary history in the Renaissance is a duplication of the struggle between [these two forms] of antiquity" (ibid., p. 14). The plain style was felt to be appropriate for philosophy and the essay, as opposed to oratory which was dominated by the ornamental style, and the seventeenth century regarded the history of prose style as chiefly a conflict between these two modes (ibid., p. 11). The initial dominance of the ornamental style is reflected in the schematic prose of Lyly or the copiousness of the poetry of Spenser. Opposed to this tradition is the later scientific, skeptical spirit of Erasmus (his *Ciceronianus* initiates Anti-Ciceronianism), Montaigne, and Bacon.
5. Invention was one of the five cannons of the art of rhetoric in classical antiquity (Latin *inventio*; Greek *heuresis*). It meant finding or researching one's material and discovering arguments and supporting evidence.
6. See Appendix.

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APPENDIX

The following passages illustrate the contrasts between Restoration and pre-Restoration prose styles. Both are translations of an identical selection from Plutarch, originally written in Latin. The source is Adolph's *The Rise of Modern Prose Style* (1968, pp. 246-247):

(1) P. Lancaster's (1684) translation (Restoration prose):

> Envy and Hatred are passions so like each other, that they are often taken for the same; and generally all the vices are so confusedly twisted and entangled, that they are not easily to be distinguished: for, as differing diseases of the Body agree in many the like causes and effects; so do the disturbances of the Mind. He who is in Prosperity, is equally an occasion of grief both to the Envious, and Malicious Man: therefore we look upon Benevolence, which is a Willing our Neighbours good, as an opposite to both Envy and Hatred; and fancy these two to be the same, because they have a contrary purpose to that of Love. But their Resemblances make them not so much One, as their Unlikeness, distinct: therefore we endeavour to describe each of them apart, beginning at the Original of either Passion

(2) Philemon Holland's (1603) translation (pre-Restoration prose):

> It seemeth at the first sight, that there is no difference betweene envie and hatred, but they be both one. For vice (to speake in generall) having (as it were) many hookes or crotchets, by means thereof as it stirreth to and fro, it yeeldeth unto those passions which hang thereto many

> occasions and opportunities to catch holde one of another, and so to be knit and enterlaced one within the other; and the same verily (like unto diseases of the body) have a sympathie and fellow-feeling one of anothers distemperature and inflammation: for thus it commeth to passe, that a malicious and spightful man is as much grieved and offended as the prosperitie of another, as the envious person: and so we holde, that benevolence and good-will is opposite unto them both, for that it is an affection of a man, wishing good unto his neighbour: and envie in this respect resembleth hatred, for that they have both a will and intention quite contrary unto love: but forsmuch as not things like to the same, and the resemblances betweene them be not so effectual as to make them all one, as the differences to distinguish them asunder; let us search and examine the said differences, beginning at the very source and original of these passions.

The language of the Restoration prose passage above is described by Adolph (idid., p. 248) as "nominal-operative," while that of the pre-Restoration prose piece is labeled "verbal-descriptive." In the former, the verbs are chiefly operative, markers to indicate distinctions and logical processes to the reader, whereas in the latter, they are more descriptive and evaluative and play a leading role in the selection. As a result, Restoration prose seems more impersonal and technical, has fewer clauses and less complexity in sentence patterns, and is more concerned with processes of abstract logic than the writer's subjective viewpoint. In contrast, the style of pre-Restoration prose has greater sentence complexity, syntactic variety, and more subordinate qualifying elements expressing the observations and attitudes of the writer:

> In the Restoration, nouns are very important, frequently doing the jobs that verbs or verbal constructions performed previously. The Restoration habit of capitalizing nouns is significant. [Words such as Envy, Benevolence, and Hatred stand for] fixed, technical concepts, of which everyone has a clear and distinct idea, and which have already been defined. (ibid., p. 249)

In other words, in Restoration prose, nouns have "invariable meanings unaffected by their contexts" (ibid., p. 248), and this precision is not apparent in the "tangle of subordinate clauses" (ibid., p. 249) that make up the pre-Restoration passage above. This is because the function of language in the Restoration was to explain or argue purposefully. The merely descriptive, idiosyncratic, and highly personalized language of pre-Restoration times, which did not advance such an argument, was frowned upon.

> The Elizabethan adds synonyms ("preparatives and flourishes, or preambles") and extra phrases...not to define the application of the first word or phrase but to make everything more rhetorically or dramatically emphatic. He is more interested in giving us his own feelings about the text than in translating with 'accuracy.' He is delighted with language for its own sake. (ibid., pp. 249-250)

In general, pre-Restoration prose, "though quite lively, is static, but intimate and descriptive, while in contrast, Restoration prose always seems to be moving toward a goal or indicating a causal process" (ibid., p. 250). While the Restoration prose piece above seems to to almost

contain "a set of mathematical ratios, these are not balanced rigidly, or even antithetically," but in much of the earlier Elizabethan prose, this balance is "obtrusive and often obviously antithetical" (ibid., p. 253). Thus, Restoration prose, which is "subsumed under the progress of 'The Argument,'" reflects a style of writing in which language does not exist for its own sake. As a result, there is much less need for figures of speech, metaphors, and other "similitudes" (ibid., p. 275). Metaphor is a kind of "verbal shorthand" for expressing emotion directly instead of just describing it: "it does not describe, but makes us experience" (ibid., p. 252). For the Restoration, "metaphor in general is suspect" (ibid., p. 254).

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