

The System Construction of Rhetorical Figures and Its Cognitive Exploration

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Abstract: The systematic study of rhetorical figures involves the classification and system construction of rhetorical figures. This paper probes into the studies by Group μ , Cong, and Sutton & Mifsud, aiming at sketching how the study of rhetorical figures has developed from the system construction to its cognitive interpretation.

1. Introduction

Among the classifications and categorial studies of rhetorical figures, or figures of speech, there is one major type based on the four fundamental operations, namely suppression, addition, substitution and permutation, which were first mentioned by Quintilian in his *Institutio Oratoria*. Some scholars like Ethelbert W. Bullinger (1968), Jeff Stanley (2007), and Richard Lanham (1991) employed some of these operations in their classifications of rhetorical figures for various practical purposes. Group μ (1970) had the first try using the four operations in their system construction of rhetorical figures. Prof. Cong Laiting (2007) made a much greater effort in building up an elaborate system of rhetorical figures (devices), and developed some sense of approaching the system construction from a cognitive perspective, which was explicitly illustrated by Sutton and Mifsud (2015).

2. Group μ 's System of Rhetorical Figures: A New Way to System Construction

Group μ established a rather scientific system of figures by applying the theory of paradigm and syntagm to the system construction, with fields as the syntagmatic axis and operations as the paradigmatic axis. The specific figures fit in the different positions in the coordinate system according to their different features.

2.1. Rhetorical Operations

Group μ reorganized the four operations into suppression, addition, suppression-addition, and permutation, classifying the first three as substantial operation, and the last as relational operation. Moreover, the operations can also be subdivided respectively: partial/complete suppression, simple/repetitive addition, partial/complete/negative suppression-addition, and inversion/permutation of any other sort. With subdivisions, the figures can be positioned in the system more appropriately and accurately.

2.2. Fields of Rhetorical Operations

The fields of these rhetorical operations involve two major dichotomies: the grammaticals versus the logicals, and the expression versus content. Under these two major dichotomies, and with the corresponding rhetorical operations occurring, the four groups of metaboles may take shape: metaplasms, metataxes, metasememes and metalogisms.

2.3. Group μ 's Legacy: Testified Value of the Four Operations for System Construction

With the "cooperation" of the fields and operations, 77 figures have gained their identities in the system, which demonstrates fully the inclusiveness and the scientificity of the system. The successful employment of the four rhetorical operations in a system construction, though limited, had some invocative effect on further experiments in a bigger scale of system construction of

rhetorical figures (devices), for which, Prof. Cong's effort is one. A scientific system construction, in itself, has some cognitive value, at least in its own field. When analogically and universally applied to other fields, the cognitive function may be further enhanced. That is Group μ 's legacy: testified value of the four operations in the construction of the system of rhetorical figures and other devices.

3. Prof. Cong's System of Rhetorical Figures: A Potential for the Cognitive Study

Prof. Cong also employed the two axes of operations and fields in his system (refer to Cong's General Table of Rhetorical Figures or Devices).

Table 1 Cong's General Table of Rhetorical Figures (Devices)

Fields Operations			(I) Lexis						(II) Syntax		(III) Discourse	
			(i) Morpheme			(ii) Lexeme			(i)Me	(ii)M	(i)	(ii)
			1 Soun d	2Mor - phem e	3 Both	1 Lexem e. Origina l	3 Lex - eme 1	3 Lex - eme 2	ta synta xes	eta- Sntax - eme	Struc - ture	Con- tent
(A) Supressi on	(a) Partial		011	012	013	014	0 1 5	0 1 6	017	018	019	02 0
	(b) Complete		021	022	023	024	02 5	02 6	027	028	029	030
(B) Addition	(a) Simple		031	032	033	034	0 3 5	0 3 6	037	038	039	04 0
	(b) Repetitive		041	042	043	044	04 5	04 6	047	048	049	050
(C) Substitut ion.	(a) Partial		051	052	053	054	0 5 5	0 5 6	057	058	059	06 0
	(b) comp lete	1 Synony mous	061	062	063	064	0 6 5	0 6 6	067	068	069	07 0
		2 Deviated	071	072	073	074	075	076	077	078	079	080
		3 Abnormal	081	082	083	084	085	086	087	088	089	090
(D) Separati on&Co mbinatio n	(a) separa tion	1 Direct	091	092	093	094	0 9 5	0 9 6	097	098	099	10 0
		2 Varied	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110
	(b) combi nation	1 Direct	111	112	113	114	1 1 5	1 1 6	117	118	119	12 0
		2 Varied	121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130
(E) Transpo sition	(a) Inversion		131	132	133	134	1 3 5	1 3 6	137	138	139	14 0
	(b) Others		141	142	143	144	14 5	14 6	147	148	149	150
(F) Repetiti on	(a) Sound		151	152	153	154	1 5 5	1 5 6	157	158	159	16 0

	(b) Meaning		161	162	163	164	165	166	167	168	169	170
(G) Juxtaposition	(a) Parallelism		171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180
	(b)Antithesis		181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190
(H) Composition	(a) Organization		191	192	193	194	195	196	197	198	199	200
	(b)Using techniques	1 Narration	201	202	203	204	205	206	207	208	209	210
		2 Description	211	212	213	214	215	216	217	218	219	220
		3 Argumentation	221	222	223	224	225	226	227	228	229	230
		4 Exposition	231	232	233	234	235	236	237	238	239	240
		5 Emotion	241	242	243	244	245	246	247	248	249	250
<div>Fields Operations</div>			(I) Lexis						(II) Syntax		(III) Discourse	
			(i) Morpheme			(ii) Lexeme			(i)Metasyntaxes	(ii)Meta-Syntaxeme	(i)Structure	(ii)Content
			1 Sound	2Morpheme	3 Both	1 Lexeme. Original	3 Lexeme 1	3 Lexeme 2				
(A) Supression	(a) Partial		011	012	013	014	015	016	017	018	019	020
	(b) Complete		021	022	023	024	025	026	027	028	029	030
(B) Addition	(a) Simple		031	032	033	034	035	036	037	038	039	040
	(b) Repetitive		041	042	043	044	045	046	047	048	049	050
(C) Substitution.	(a) Partial		051	052	053	054	055	056	057	058	059	060
	(b) complete	1 Synonyms	061	062	063	064	065	066	067	068	069	070
		2 Deviated	071	072	073	074	075	076	077	078	079	080
		3 Abnormal	081	082	083	084	085	086	087	088	089	090
(D) Separation&Combination	(a) separation	1 Direct	091	092	093	094	095	096	097	098	099	100
		2 Varied	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110
	(b) combination	1 Direct	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120
		2 Varied	121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130
(E) Transposition	(a) Inversion		131	132	133	134	135	136	137	138	139	140
	(b) Others		141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150
(F) Repetition	(a) Sound		151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160
	(b) Meaning		161	162	163	164	165	166	167	168	169	170
(G) Juxtaposition	(a) Parallelism		171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180
	(b)Antithesis		181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190

(H) Composition	(a) Organization		191	192	193	194	195	196	197	198	199	200
	(b) Using techniques	1 Narration	201	202	203	204	205	206	207	208	209	210
		2 Description	211	212	213	214	215	216	217	218	219	220
		3 Argumentation	221	222	223	224	225	226	227	228	229	230
		4 Exposition	231	232	233	234	235	236	237	238	239	240
		5 Emotion	241	242	243	244	245	246	247	248	249	250

3.1. Fields in Cong's system

Cong's system has the trichotomy in its fields: the lexis, the syntax, and the discourse, fully covering the whole range of language, and it includes five lower corresponding elements: meta-morphemes, metaplasms, meta-syntaxes, meta-syntaxemes, changes in structure in discourse, and changes in content in discourse. Under the morphemes there are three subdivisions concerning change in sounds, change in morphemes and change in both. Under the lexemes there are also three subdivisions: the original (no change in meaning), the change in meaning in lexeme1, and change in meaning in lexeme2.

3.2. Rhetorical Operations in Cong's System

Cong's system still employs the four basic operations, replacing suppression-addition with substitution, partial or complete, and in some cases, partial substitution may be subdivided into those with meanings deviated, synonymous, and antonymous.

Cong's system added such rhetorical operations to Group μ 's at the first level as separation and combination, repetition, juxtaposition and composition. The separation-combination dichotomy is borrowed from Chinese way of naming related rhetorical figures (Cheng, 1991). A word or even a character can be separated into different parts or in reverse different parts combined into one whole, for some rhetorical effect. Repetition is taken from Group μ 's addition, and involves two subcategories of repetitions: those of sounds and those of meaning. Parallelism/antithesis is a dichotomy, quite different from some other operations at that level, and its name already suggests what are included. Composition is used for the inclusion of many discursive operations in composing a discourse or a whole text. Under composition are two subcategories: (structural) organization and (the use of) techniques. Both may occur in such discursive operations as description, narration, exposition, argumentation, and (appeal to) emotions.

3.3. The Making and Marking of a Rhetorical Figure in Cong's System

The crossing of the axis of operations and the axis of fields results in a position in the General Table, which represents the location where a rhetorical figure or device occurs due to the corresponding operation done in the corresponding field. Thus the corresponding figure has acquired its "identity" in the table, with the marking of serial number ("110" for instance), and the categorial position (both higher and lower; both that in the axis of operation and that in the axis of field). For example, the identity of "Antimetable" can be described as "Antimetabole, Iii1-Fa (164) / Iii1-Fb (168) / Iii1-Gb (188)". That is to say, the figure "Antimetabole" involves three cases: one at the upper level of lexis and the lower level of sound, by the operation of repeating a sound, its serial number denoting its position being 164; two cases at the level of syntactical, by the repetition of meaning and the opposition of two parts in a sentential structure, the two serial numbers being respectively 168 and 188. With these attached markings, the several important features of a figure (or device) included in this system can be clearly shown. Actually a number in the table represents not a single figure, but a category of figures. And most importantly, this system is open to some changes.

3.4. A Potential for Cognitive Study of Rhetorical Figures as a System

Compared with Group μ 's system, Cong's system is much more inclusive. It is not limited to the fundamental figures, but extended to several hundred of figures as well as many special devices. With the fields covering all levels of language, and with operations including all the four fundamental ones (and even more operations combined), no figures or devices can go beyond these categories listed in Cong's system. As a result, a quite complete and scientific system of rhetorical figures has been constructed, and thus a potential of cognitive study of rhetorical figures as a system has been opened up. Cong holds that the four operations all relate to the alteration in the quantity of substances, and the alteration in the positional relations of substances, spatial or temporal. For instance, addition and suppression can be compared to the change in quantity, substitution compared to mutation (sudden change). Affixation is a typical addition (partial addition to a word), and ellipsis, a typical subtraction or suppression (partial omission of a word), and metaphor, a typical substitution. Transposition or permutation may symbolize changes in space or time. And there happen to be some figures concerning this kind of change: palindrome, for example, is the reverse in the order of space, and chronological inversion, the reverse in the order of time.

4. Sutton & Mifsud: Systematic and Cognitive Study of Rhetorical Figures

Some rhetoricians, such as Kenneth Burke, Hayden White, Collin Brooke, and Randy Harris carried out studies of rhetorical figures from a cognitive perspective. Sutton and Mifsud's *A Revolution in Tropes* (2015) is the latest achievement of systematic and cognitive study of rhetorical figures. By theorizing rhetoric as "an art of change", Sutton and Mifsud developed their alloiostrophic rhetoric. They classified the four operations into two different subsystems: the operating system of substitution and the operating system of transmutation, with subtraction, addition, and transposition falling into the latter system.

Sutton and Mifsud's dichotomic division of the operating system also matches the dichotomy of rhetoric: contingency/probable contingency and contingency/random contingency. In other words, the double operating systems of substitution and transmutation reflect the two changes in rhetoric, which involve probable contingency and random contingency. The substitution operating system conveys the sense of "turning down" the other, and can be illustrated by the trope of antistrophe, while the transmutation operating system associates with "changes", illustrated by alloiostrophe. These two aspects are employed by modern rhetoricians to represent our cognition and attitude toward the changes in the world and things – instead of turning down the other, we should adopt a democratic attitude of contact and acceptance. We can approach it more specifically. For example, metaphor, as a substitution, pursues identification and neglects differences in the operational process. Such figures as epenthesis, ellipsis, and inversion, served as the operations of addition, subtraction and transposition respectively, concern more with reserving differences rather than identification, and thus generally considered as variations. Stressing difference, or variation, indicates the respect toward democracy. Such an interpretation of rhetorical figures from classification to democratic deliberation involves a great leap, or a "revolution" in the study of rhetoric, and furthermore leads us to the postmodern cognition.

5. Conclusion

By tracing the development of the study on the system of rhetorical figures, we are led into a cognitive perspective. With Sutton and Mifsud's alloiostrophic rhetoric, we step into the postmodern cognition, in which field further in-depth study is necessary to benefit us more in our cognitive exploration of rhetorical figures as a system.

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