

A Rhetorical Analysis of Kennedy's Inaugural Address in Advanced English

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Abstract: Advanced English is a core course for senior English majors, and the rhetoric is an important part of advanced English teaching. As an important way of language expression, rhetoric can enhance the momentum of language, and a lot of rhetorical language is used in text selection in advanced English textbooks. In this paper, the author takes Kennedy's Inaugural Address in advanced English as an example to analyze the writing style and rhetoric of the text in order to cultivate the students' textual appreciation ability, logical judgment and writing application.

1. Introduction

“Advanced English” is a core course for senior English majors. The course covers a wide range of knowledge, including appreciation and analysis of famous works in literature, philosophy, education, politics, economy and society etc. The aim is “to expand students' knowledge, strengthen their ability to use language, train their ability to analyze and appreciate famous works and improve their ability to think independently and logically.”¹ However, from volume 1 and volume 2, there are as many as 5 speeches among 30 articles, which show the importance of learning speeches in this course. In this thesis, the author takes Kennedy's Inaugural Address in Advanced English as an example to appreciate the writing style and the usage of rhetorical devices in the text in order to cultivate the students' textual appreciation ability, logical judgment and writing application.

The Inaugural Address of Kennedy has long been considered as a rhetorical masterpiece for its grandeur manner, eloquent words and powerful infectivity. This speech pays special attention to the layout, the overall structure is clear, the argument is clear and convincing. This article will analyze it from three aspects: language, syntax and rhetoric.

2. Appreciation of Language and Syntax

The speech is precise, concise; Kennedy pays attention to the elaboration of words and sentences, extremely careful use of short words and short sentences. In the opening paragraph of his speech, “... symbolizing an end as well as a beginning, signifying renewal as well as change.”² “... ask not what America will do for you, ask what you can do for your country”². By repeatedly using the first person pronoun “we”, “we” can put the speaker and the audience in the same position, making the audience feel more approachable, and thus more easily win the audience's support and resonance, and arouse a sense of community.

At the syntactic level, Kennedy uses the biblical style, which reflects Kennedy's determination and will, and maximizes the emotional appeal of the audience. Kennedy deliberately uses of pseudo-Roman style or Biblical language in some places in order to add solemnity to some of his weightier sayings. Here are some examples that illustrate this point: “Let the word go forth from this time and place... around the world”². In 18th paragraph “Let both sides unite to heed in all corners of the earth the command of Isaiah to undo the heavy burdens... Let the oppressed go free.”² At the same time, the speech also uses a large number of “let... “ sentence pattern. Using imperative sentence to stimulate the enthusiasm of the audience to enhance the appeal of the speech. Besides, the speech also uses a large

number of inverted sentences to emphasize the speaker's intentions, such as “for only when our arms are doubt beyond twenty can be certain of beyond that they will be employed.”²

3. Appreciation of Rhetoric

Kennedy uses a lot of rhetorical devices such as metaphor, contrast, parallelism, alliteration, alliteration, Synecdoche, Synecdoche, ascending and so on in his speech to enhance the sense of rhythm and rhythm of the language, which is conducive to highlighting the key points of the speech, at the same time also deepens the audience's impression, expresses the speaker's emotion well, makes the speech more vivid.

1). Metaphor

Metaphor is a figure of speech that refers for rhapsodic effect to one thing by mentioning another thing. Kennedy uses a lot of metaphor in his speech, which enhances the appeal of the language. In paragraph 3, “let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans...”². “Those who foolishly sought power by riding the back of the tiger ended up inside”². The phrase compares seeking help from the socialist state to riding on the back of a tiger, which means that those countries which seek the aid of socialist countries will end up by losing their independence as many other countries did in the past.

2). Antithesis

Antithesis organizes and arranges the opposite or opposite language units in parallel and symmetrical structure in order to obtain a symmetrical form, beauty of form and strong sense of contrast. Antithesis can be expressed at four levels, words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. In Kennedy's inaugural address, Antithesis is expressed in words, phrases, and clauses. For example: In the second sentence of the sixth paragraph, “united, there is little we can not do in a host of cooperative ventures. Divided, there is little we can do, ...”² Kennedy contrasts united with divided at the word level, little we cannot do with little we can do to illustrate the importance of unity. “If a free society can not help the many who are poor, it can not save the few who are rich.”² Otherwise, when the poor rise up, the rich won't be able to enjoy what they enjoy. In the first sentence of paragraph 15, “let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belaboring those problems which divide us”², “explore” and “belaboring” form a contrast, “unite” and “divide” form a contrast to express the importance of be united.

3). Parallelism

Parallel structure is the most widely used rhetorical device in this speech, which is mainly due to the compact, consistent and continuous effect of parallel structure, making people feel the power of language. In the second sentence of paragraph 17, “together let us explore the stars, conquer the deserves, eradicate disease, tap the ocean depths and encourage the arts and commerce”.² These words like explore, conquer, erase, tap, encouraged points out how the miracles of scientific progress should be used by both sides. In addition, Kennedy uses 6 paragraphs from paragraph 6-11 to express “to... “ patterns in order to describe Kennedy's different policies towards different people. From paragraph 15-18, he begins with “let both sides...” to emphasize what the opposing sides should do. The use of parallel structures with clear, well- structured and consistent intonation enables the audience to quickly grasp the speaker's clear thinking and is conducive to the expression of tenor and meaning.

4). Repetition

Repetition is the repetition of a word or sentence in order to strengthen the mood and emotion. It is a common English redundancy phenomenon, which plays an important role in strengthening the language momentum, expressing profound thoughts and enhancing the sense of rhythm of the language, it can produce different effects such as speed, rhythm, sound, color and atmosphere. The second sentence of the first paragraph, “symbolizing an end as well as a beginning, signifying renewal as well as as well as change,”² is repeated twice, reinforcing the power of language.

5). Alliteration

Alliteration is a stylistic literary device identified by the repeated sound of the first letter in a series of multiple words, or the repetition of the same letter sounds in the stressed syllables of a phrase. The proper use of Alliteration can endow the language with the beauty of rhyme and rhythm, which can play the role of coloring the atmosphere, foil the emotion and strengthen the language expression. For example: Friends and foe in the second sentence of the third paragraph, “let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, “ 2 begin with a consonant f, rhythmically pointing out the subject of Kennedy's speech. In the first sentence of the fourth paragraph, “whether it wishes us well or ill, that W shall pay any price, bear any burden... “ 2 pay and price begin with a consonant /P/, and bear and burden begin with a consonant /b/. Alliteration shows the determination of the United States government to ensure the perpetuation and triumph of liberty. In the third sentence of paragraph 13, “... Both right alarmed by the steady spread of the deadly atom... “ 2 both steady and spread begin with consonants /s/, speeding up the pace of language, and expressing alarm at the continued spread of atomic weapons. In paragraph twenty-seven, the second sentence... ask of US here the same high of strength and sacrifice standards which ask of you... strength and sacrifice both begin with consonant /s/, appealing to the efforts and sacrifices of the citizens of the United States and the nations of the world.

4. Conclusion

In a word, the use of figures of speech endows the language with prosody, strengthens the momentum of the language, and makes the language full of aesthetic feeling in read and sound. Besides, some figures of speech make the article clear and the main idea clear. The use, of a great deal of rhetoric in Kennedy's speech, makes it sound compelling, impassioned, and exciting. Therefore, Kennedy's Inaugural Address has been regarded as a classic, and is still a model of rhetoric and speech learning.

References

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