

Rhetoric in writing and audience

Profession, Writer



Rhetoric is the study of effective speaking and writing. It is the art of persuasion and many other things. Over its long history there have been many different definitions of rhetoric, which stretches back to the Ancient Greeks and Romans in particular. In its long and vigorous history rhetoric has enjoyed many definitions, accommodated differing purposes, and varied widely in what it included.

And yet, for most of its history it has maintained its fundamental character as a discipline for training students 1) to perceive how language is at work orally and in writing, and 2) to become proficient in applying the resources of language in their own speaking and writing. To see how language and thought worked together, however, it has first been necessary to artificially divide content and form what is said and how we say it. How we say things is precisely the way in which we ensure that our desired meaning has been transmitted to others, so there can be no passing on of ideas without also taking into account lexis.

Because rhetoric examines so attentively the how of language, the methods and means of communication, it has sometimes been discounted as something only concerned with style or appearances, and not with the quality or content of communication. For many (such as Plato) rhetoric deals with the superficial at best, the deceptive at worst ("mere rhetoric"), when one might better attend to matters of substance, truth, or reason as attempted in dialectic or philosophy or religion. Rhetoric studies the effectiveness of language comprehensively, including its emotional impact, as much as its propositional content.

Why Rhetoric is Important? The importance of rhetoric provides significant changes in the areas of learning and the development of a persons and institutions. The study of rhetoric, nearly continuous over 2500 years, has always been central to the objectives of a liberal arts curriculum. Extending that study to film, television, protests, politics, debates, philosophy and all forms of discourse has advanced such study into the 21st century. Here are the following reasons why the study of rhetoric is essentially important.

It gives scientific writing a focus on argument in scientific debate Numerous studies have called attention to the importance of rhetoric in scientific writing by focusing on arguments presented in scientific debate articles. Rhetorical analysis and textual analysis stresses the importance of studying scientific writing to provide better instruction of students learning the genres of academic writing. For example, Swales describes the difficulties of novice researchers or students with English as a second language in learning the literary conventions of American journals.

Gusfield is one of the early writers to argue that scientific methods courses should include the study of literary techniques as well as statistical procedures. Davis subscribes to a similar view in that he claims only to be formally describing a model that he believes many social scientists intuitively or inadvertently follow. Davis argues that a conscious awareness of the importance of defining and then denying audience assumptions would ' increase the Interesting Quotient (I. Q.) of their discipline relative to the Interesting Quotient of other disciplines. It enables to better understand the processes of communication.

Rhetoric is a subject of importance because its study enables us to better understand the processes of communication that underpin decision making in free societies. Judgments on matters of public policy take their cues from rhetoric, and so an understanding of any society's rhetoric will tell us a lot about its ideas, beliefs, laws, customs and assumptions - especially how and why such social features came into being. We don't typically think of it this way, but every law that is on our record books began as an act of rhetorical undertaking by some public or private citizen trying to fix a problem.

Statutes and policies are the ends; rhetoric is the means. If law is the architecture of public life, rhetoric is the art that brings it into being. We don't typically think of it this way, but every law that is on our record books began as an act of rhetorical undertaking by some public or private citizen trying to fix a problem. Statutes and policies are the ends; rhetoric is the means. If law is the architecture of public life, rhetoric is the art that brings it into being. It serves as a means for public deliberation about public issues

Those who identify rhetoric primarily with ornament, passion, specious argument and deceit, and even those who defend rhetoric as a desirable alternative or supplement to legal reasoning, fail to do justice to the signal importance of rhetoric in the ancient world as a means for public deliberation about public issues under conditions of uncertainty. Despite Plato's famous criticisms of rhetoric as mere flattery, the ancient world well understood that rhetoric had a substantive as well as a stylistic dimension; hence the common association of rhetoric with the merely stylistic aspects of deliberation is entirely misleading.

It provides as a precursor for the semiotic study of communication Under the influence of Structuralism, rhetoric has been seen as a precursor for the semiotic study of communication, as in the work of Genette and the *Rhetorique generale* by a group of scholars headed by J. Dubois. More in keeping with the pragmatic nature of ancient rhetoric, Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca attempt in their *La Nouvelle Rhetorique* (1958) to formulate a modern rhetoric of persuasive argumentation. At the other end of the spectrum, writers associated with Post-Structuralism stress the playful, subversive side of the subject.

And finally, the 1980s saw the revived use of explicitly rhetorical models in composition classes in secondary schools to combat an apparent decline in pupils' communication skills. How to Apply Rhetoric in Writing? In order for a writer to know how to apply rhetoric to his writing, he must first know and understand the fundamental forms of persuasive appeals, encompassing forms and rhetoric devices. *Persuasive Appeals According to Aristotle*, rhetoric is " the ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion. He described three main forms of rhetoric: Logos, or the appeal to reason; Pathos, or the appeal to emotion; and Ethos, or the appeal to character. Logos, pathos, and ethos are completely different, yet, they all correlate. In order to be a more effective writer, you must understand these three terms. Logos meant more in ancient Greek than logic or reasoning, it meant " thought plus action". It appeals to patterns, conventions, and modes of reasoning that the audience finds convincing and persuasive. Ideally, a writer should be able to persuade someone based solely upon reason.

Although the ability to reason and to think are abstractly two of humanity's defining characteristics, we are often guided by our passions—even if they lead to our ruin. Pathos is appeal to emotion. a writer needs to consider the things that the listeners value, need, hope for, fear, and so on; once the writer understands the things they care about, he or she can show how what the readers is asked to do is in accord with values they already hold. Ethos is your persona or “ image” as a writer—your ethical character.

If a writer communicates good will, good character, and good judgment, the reader will be far more likely to trust him or her. Trust is at the heart of effective communication, and without careful attention to ethos, the effectiveness of the other two modes of persuasion -- logos and pathos -- is also diminished. Encompassing Terms Next a writer should learn apply the three-ways, of rhetoric in the larger sense. Which can be distinguished between: Kairos, or the occasions to write, which include considerations like the contexts for piece of writing, while audience, or who will read it, looks at where a discourse may take place.

Decorum, or fitting words and subject together, lastly, deals with making appropriate use of rhetoric, depending on both kairos and audience. Kairos is an ancient Greek word meaning the " right or opportune moment". You should take time to consider what possible considerations for a piece of writings. Isocrates writes that educated people are those “ who manage well the circumstances which they encounter day by day, and who possess a judgment which is accurate in meeting occasions as they arise and rarely misses the expedient course of action”.

As a writer you should develop the ability to adapt to and take advantage of changing, contingent circumstances of your environment. Audience, all rhetorically oriented discourse is composed in light of those who will hear or read that discourse. Or, in other words, rhetorical analysis always takes into account how an audience shapes the composition of a text or responds to it. As a writer you should choose an appropriate subject to the prospective readers. Make sure that your reader is appropriate to your purpose, because when it's not your ideas will just be set aside.

Decorum, lastly, refers to the appropriateness of style to subject. It involves a range of social, linguistic, aesthetic, and ethical proprieties for both the creators and critics of writing. Each of these must be balanced against each other strategically in order to be successful in understanding or creating discourse. A writer should learn the degree of appropriateness or suitability of the use of his words and language in his writing, to enable the interest of the readers to his own discourse.

Rhetorical Devices. Good writing depends upon more than making a collection of statements worthy of belief, because writing is intended to be read by others, with minds different from your own. A writer should know how to get through his readers--or even to be read and considered at all--it must be interesting, clear, persuasive, and memorable, so that he will pay attention to, understand, believe, and remember the ideas it communicates. To apply rhetoric in writing you must know, learn, and understand rhetorical devices in how they have been employed, as well as learning how to use them ourselves.

The following are common rhetorical devices used in writing. Apophasis
Apophasis asserts or emphasizes something by pointedly seeming to pass over, ignore, or deny it. This device has both legitimate and illegitimate uses. Legitimately, a writer uses it to call attention to sensitive or inflammatory facts or statements while he remains apparently detached from them.

Example: 1) Luckily we need not discuss my opponent's marital infidelities when evaluating his claim to hold the moral high ground.) I would call you a liar and a cheat if you weren't my best friend. Aporia Aporia expresses doubt about an idea or conclusion. Its several uses are the suggesting of alternatives without making a commitment to either or any. Such a statement of uncertainty can tie off a piece of discussion you do not have time to pursue, or it could begin an examination of the issue, and lead you into a conclusion resolving your doubt:

1) I have not been able to come to a decision about the new policy, since there seem to be good arguments both for and against it.) I am not sure whether to side with those who say that higher taxes reduce inflation or with those who say that higher taxes increase inflation. Asyndetons and Polysyndetons Asyndeton is consists of omitting conjunctions between words, phrases, or clauses. In a list of items, asyndeton gives the effect of unpremeditated multiplicity, of an extemporaneous rather than a labored account: On his return he received medals, honors, treasures, titles, fame. Polysyndeton, the opposite of asyndetons, is the use of a conjunction between each word, phrase, or clause, and is thus structurally the opposite of asyndeton.

The rhetorical effect of polysyndeton, however, often shares with that of asyndeton a feeling of multiplicity, energetic enumeration, and building up. Example: They read and studied and wrote and drilled. I laughed and played and talked and flunked. Enthymemes Enthymemes is a figure of reasoning in which one or more statements of a syllogism (a three-pronged deductive argument) is/are left out of the configuration; an abbreviated syllogism or truncated deductive argument in which one or more premises, or, the conclusion is/are omitted. Ex: 1) Since she lost the case, she must have been guilty.) There are only two options available to us and we have seen that the first failed. Expletives Expletive it is a figure of emphasis in which a single word or short phrase, usually interrupting normal speech, is used to lend emphasis to the words on either side of the expletive. Typical examples include: in fact, of course, to be sure, indeed, I suppose, I hope, you know, you see, clearly, in any event, in effect, certainly, remarkably. Metanoia Metanoia qualifies a statement by recalling it (or part of it) and expressing it in a better, milder, or stronger way.

A negative is often used to do the recalling. Example: 1) Your proposal will affect everyone in this area, or even the entire region. 2) You fail to realize the impact of these measures – or at least you have not considered the consequences in enough depth. Parallelism and Chiasmus Parallelism is recurrent syntactical similarity. Several parts of a sentence or several sentences are expressed similarly to show that the ideas in the parts or sentences are equal in importance. Parallelism also adds balance and rhythm and, most importantly, clarity to the sentence.

Example: Quickly and happily he walked around the corner to buy the book.

Chiasmus might be called "reverse parallelism," since the second part of a grammatical construction is balanced or paralleled by the first part, only in reverse order. Example: He labors without complaining and without bragging rests. Questions: Hypophora, Rhetorical and Procatalepsis Hypophora is one or more questions is/are asked and then answered, often at length, by one and the same speaker; raising and responding to one's own question(s).

Example: 1) What are the consequences of such an approach to history? There are several, of which the most important is... 2) What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? . . . What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God. --Rom. 4: 1, 3 (NIV) Rhetorical Question is a question which ask, not for the purpose of further discussion, but to assert or deny an answer implicitly; a question whose answer is obvious or implied. Example: What kind of person would bet against the sun rising tomorrow, though?

Procatalepsis is when questions are asked and answered by the writer or speaker, usually by anticipating objections: It is typically suggested that this team will lack the strength in midfield to cope with the opposition, but this neglects the experience gained in the recent tour against... Analogies, Metaphors and Similes Analogy is a kind of extended metaphor or long simile in which an explicit comparison is made between two things (events, ideas, people, etc) for the purpose of furthering a line of reasoning or drawing an inference; a form of reasoning employing comparative or parallel cases.

Example: You may abuse a tragedy, though you cannot write one. You may scold a carpenter who has made you a bad table, though you cannot make a table. It is not your trade to make tables. Metaphor is figure of explication occurring when a comparison made by speaking of one thing in terms of another; an implied comparison between two different things which share at least one attribute in common; an association between two unlike things (A vs. B) achieved by borrowing the language that refers to thing A and applying it to thing B.

Example: Then Jesus declared, " I am the bread of life. " --John 6: 35 [And compare the use of metaphor in 6: 32-63] Simile is a comparison between two different things that resemble each other in at least one way. In formal prose the simile is a device both of art and explanation, comparing an unfamiliar thing to some familiar thing (an object, event, process, etc.) known to the reader. Example: After such long exposure to the direct sun, the leaves of the houseplant looked like pieces of overcooked bacon.

Hyperbole, Litotes and Understatement

Hyperbole is , the counterpart of understatement, deliberate exaggeration of a person, thing, quality, event to emphasize a point external to the object of exaggeration; intentional exaggeration for rhetorical effect. Example: There were millions of people at the bus stop today. Litotes is an understatement formed by the denial of an opposite. This sounds confusing but is actually quite straightforward and a common rhetorical device. For example: Performances like that from the All Blacks are not uncommon.

Understatement deliberately expresses an idea as less important than it actually is, either for ironic emphasis or for politeness and tact. When the writer's audience can be expected to know the true nature of a fact which might be rather difficult to describe adequately in a brief space, the writer may choose to understate the fact as a means of employing the reader's own powers of description. For example: 1) I think there may be some additional factors that you may not have accounted for. 2) Your analysis is far too simplistic. Amplification

Amplification involves repeating a word or expression while adding more detail to it, in order to emphasize what might otherwise be passed over. In other words, amplification allows you to call attention to, emphasize, and expand a word or idea to make sure the reader realizes its importance or centrality in the discussion. For example: This orchard, this lovely, shady orchard, is the main reason I bought this property. In conclusion lots of practice and experimentation are necessary to develop your rhetorical ability. A best way to experiment is writing in a journal or notebook.

Consistency in doing such experiment will develop a natural ability and theory or art in rhetorical aspect. Remember that rhetorical devices are aids to writing and not ends of writing. Further, if used carelessly or excessively or too frequently, almost any one of these devices will probably seem affected, dull, awkward, or mechanical. But with a little care and skill, developed by practice, anyone can master them, and their use will add not just beauty and emphasis and effectiveness to your writing, but a kind of freedom of thought and expression you never imagined possible.