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A Study of Common Rhetorical Devices in English Language and Literature

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Abstract: This paper discusses the classification of various rhetorical devices in English language and literature, including semantics, structure and phonetic rhetoric. This paper expounds the value of rhetoric in enhancing the expressive force of works and deepening the theme, and embodies its importance in understanding English literature, feeling the charm of literature and adapting to the creative environment.

Keywords: English; Language and literature; Common rhetorical devices

Under the background of globalization, English is the most widely quoted language, and its language and literary works are widely spread all over the world. Most of these literary works use rhetorical devices, so their contents are more vivid, vivid and infectious. The use of rhetorical devices in English language and literature works helps to enhance the artistic value of the works, and at the same time helps readers to better understand the connotation of the works. Metaphor makes abstract concepts concrete and vivid, artificial hand rules endow things with human characteristics, and exaggeration emphasizes emotions and attitudes to enhance the effect of expression. In addition, it is the use of rhetorical devices that reflects different cultural backgrounds and characteristics of the times. For example, in Shakespeare's works, duality is frequently used, which reflects the cultural atmosphere of British society and people's general way of thinking at that time. This paper makes an in-depth study of various rhetorical devices in English language and literature, so as to keep continuous attention and research on English language and literature and adapt to the ever-changing literary creation environment.

1. Classification of rhetorical devices commonly used in English language and literature

1.1 Semantic rhetoric

1.1.1 Various forms of metaphor

As an expressive language skill, metaphor frequently appears in English language and literature works, adding endless charm and depth to the works, which can be divided into simile and metaphor^[1].

Simile is a direct comparison between two things with similar characteristics, usually with the help of more conspicuous words such as "like", "as" and "seem". For example, "this flower is like a star as we can observe." Through "like", this sentence compares flowers with stars. We can imagine that when people see the blooming flower, the petals are stretched and the shape is as bright as a star, or the flower shines like a star in the dim light of night, such a narrative way enables readers to experience the similarities between things more directly. Another example is "She is as graceful as a swan." She is elegantly associated with the noble swan, and the elegant gesture represented by the swan is subtly mapped to people, so that readers can truly understand the extraordinary temperament and charm of the described object.

The expression of metaphor is quite subtle and exquisite. It does not rely on direct comparative vocabulary, but describes another thing with one thing. When it is presented, it does not directly point out the metaphorical thing, but only shows the image used for metaphor. For example, "Love is a journey" compares love to a journey, which vividly expresses love as a journey full of unknowns, challenges and surprises. In this process, we will experience various landscapes and ups and downs, which makes people have a deeper understanding of love.

English literary works skillfully use metaphor to make abstract concepts concrete and sensible, so that the original plain description

instantly glows with vividness and interest, which is fascinating ^[2].

1.1.2 Personification gives life to inanimate objects

Through personification, external things are endowed with human characteristics and emotions, so they become vivid and full of human brilliance. This skill can even make inanimate objects seem to have human emotions and behaviors. For example, in the sentence “I was very peaceful and could hear the wind whispering in the fields.”, the wind was given to human beings, and the whole picture became quiet and poetic. Personification is often skillfully used in English literary works to enhance the vividness and appeal of the works, so that readers seem to step into a fantasy world where non-human things such as natural phenomena and animals are closer to our daily lives.

1.1.3 Exaggeration extends emotion and imagination

In order to emphasize, enhance emotional expression and create strong artistic effect, exaggeration will greatly expand or reduce the image, characteristics, function or degree of things. For example, “I am so hungry that I would eat a horse.” When we hear this sentence, a hungry person appears in our mind. The speaker seems to be in a state of extreme hunger for food. It seems that every cell in the body is crying out for the urgent need for food. Exaggeration rhetoric is not only a kind of language decoration, but also an indispensable and powerful tool for the author to express strong feelings and create vivid characters ^[3].

1.2 Structural rhetoric

1.2.1 Duality

Generally speaking, duality is the combination of two phrases and sentences with similar structure, related meaning or relative meaning, so as to exert the effect of emphasis, contrast or balance. English language and literature works often skillfully display this rhetorical device in the field of poetry, which helps to construct the frame structure of poetry and make the poem show the beauty of symmetry in form. For example, the dual use of rhetorical devices in Shelley’s poems not only makes the sentence read smoothly, but also conveys the poet’s delicate feelings and thoughtful thoughts subtly, making the artistic conception of the poem more profound. In addition, it also plays an important role in novels and essays. Writers use this technique to make the narrative of the article smooth and the logic tight. For example, “To strive is brave, to yield is weak.” Here, “to strike” and “to yield” form a strong contrast, while “Brave” and “weak” contrast each other, profoundly showing the differences brought about by brave enterprising and weak retreat under different choices. It causes people to deeply reflect on their attitudes and behavior choices.

1.2.2 Parallelism

Parallelism is a series of (at least three) phrases, sentences or paragraphs with similar structure, harmonious tone and closely connected meanings, so as to strengthen, highlight and deepen the expression effect of the theme, thus making each constituent element of the English text more compact. For example, in Caesar’s classic words “I came, I saw, I conquered.” Xiaohong arranged three short and powerful sentences in turn, showing a decisive and confident action rhythm and powerful gas field. Each short sentence is like a firm step, leading readers to feel the hero’s heroism and domineering, as if they could witness the legendary conquest journey with their own eyes. The application of parallelism rhetoric in English language and literature works leads readers’ emotional ups and downs with rhythmic language melody, so that readers can feel the ideological connotation contained in the works while tasting the beauty of language ^[4].

1.3 Phonetic rhetoric

1.3.1 Alliteration

When the same or similar consonant phonemes are used repeatedly in adjacent or similar words and syllables, it will produce a rhythmic and musical language effect, which is alliteration. For example, “Sarah sells seashells by the seashore.” In this sentence, several words all start with the consonant /s/, which is very smooth to read, making people feel that the literary language is full of vitality, and at the same time, readers also experience a unique rhythmic beauty in the reading process.

1.3.2 Rhyme

The ending rhyme is to use the same or similar phonemes at the end of words, so that the sentence or poem shows a harmonious and beautiful effect in phonology. For example, the words “bright” and “white”, “pure” and “you” in the sentence “The stars are bright, the moon is white, love is pure, and so are you” are antithetical to each other, expressing the meaning of love and praise concisely and vividly. The author uses the rhyme rhetoric flexibly, and with the help of the repeated changes of rhyme, this little poem is more pleasant to read, and the delicate emotional ups and downs and ideological connotation of the poet are subtly conveyed.

2. The value embodiment of rhetorical devices in English literary works

2.1 Enhance the expressive force of the language of the work

The works have vivid language expressions, such as metaphor, personification and other rhetorical devices, so that readers can

easily understand and feel the emotions conveyed by the author during reading. Furthermore, descriptive language can stimulate readers' imagination and make them build vivid visual pictures in their minds as if they had stepped into the scenes outlined in their works. The language in English literary works is no longer just a boring combination of words, but transformed into vivid pictures and scenes, and then resonates with readers emotionally, which greatly enhances the readability and appeal of the works.

2.2 Deepen the theme of the work

The author skillfully conveys his writing intention and central idea by using various rhetorical devices in English language and literature works. The author uses these methods to build a communication bridge between readers and himself, and convey his thoughts and feelings to readers, while readers keep thinking deeply about the theme of the work, feel the charm of literature, resonate with the author in the depths of their hearts, and extend this thinking to a wider range of social, historical, cultural and other fields in order to gain more rich experiences and feelings ^[5].

3. Conclusion

Rhetoric is the source of charm and depth in English language and literature. They not only enhance the expressive force of language, but also deepen the theme of the works, so that readers can feel the beauty of literature in reading and resonate with the author emotionally. A continuous study of rhetorical devices in English literary works will enable us to understand and appreciate its unique charm more deeply.

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