1970 到 1990 年代修辭學理論的文藝復興

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摘要

到了 1970 年代，美國的教育已到了慘不忍睹的境界，「為何強尼不會寫作？」已成了美國人盡皆知的疑問。教育界雖然提出了「回歸基本面」以為因應，但是，這畢竟只是權宜的措施，要作為能持久的教育改革，寫作教學還需要修辭學提供理論基礎以為指引，這段期間的修辭學理論可略分為三派：客觀派，主觀派，共構派。

拋開論述上的差異，若要為這三個學派找出個共同點來，那就是：寫作的過程。客觀派將寫作的過程看成是一連串的階段，作者在這些階段中逐一走過；主觀派將寫作的過程看成是一個發掘與建構個人意義的過程；共構派將寫作的過程看成是一個思想及語言，或是作者與觀眾間的一個共構意義的過程。這樣一個重視寫作過程的修辭學的新哲學，不僅為寫作教學注入新的活力，也將修辭學及英文系重新建立起關係來，修辭學經過一百年的演變，從當初被英文系驅逐的對象，到被英文系視為次等附屬品的對象，到後來視為精神上相契合的對象。

這樣一個進展的過程，對寫作教學來說，其意義不亞於另一個文藝復興運動。

關鍵詞：回歸基本面、寫作過程

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The Renaissance of Rhetorical Theories from 1970’s to 1990’s

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ABSTRACT

Into 1970’s, American education was in a state of disarray. Achievement scores were declining and “Why Johnny Can’t Write?” was on many people’s mind. The “Back to Basics” movement seemed to provide a stop gap remedy. But, skills alone are not enough for a lasting education reform. Composition courses needed a theoretical guide from rhetoric. Rhetorical theories during this period can be grouped into three schools: Objective Approach; Subjective Approach; Transactional Rhetoric.

If one central feature must be found for these three schools of thought, it must be: writing as a process. The Objective Approach treats the process as stages through which a writer works. The Subjective Approach treats the process of a process of personal discovery—discovering and constructing meaning. The Transactional Approach treats the process as an interaction between thought and language or between the writer and the audience.

This renewed philosophy of rhetoric has given new energy into writing instruction as well as reconnected rhetoric with English departments. Rhetoric has evolved 100 years—from being the
subject of deportation, to the subject of second class underlie, to the subject of a spiritual partner.

This progress seems to be no less significant than another renaissance in the field of composition.

Keywords: Beck to Basics, Writing as Process
I. Introduction

In the 1950’s and 1960’s, America experienced a shock therapy, namely the Sputnik of Oct. 4, 1957. The fear of Cold War was so overwhelming that any rumored Soviet communist superiority was perceived to be a threat to the national security. Thus, American political leaders, fearing America was falling behind on science and technology, felt the urge not to be surprised again. Thus, American congress passed the National Defense Education Act in 1958 in which funding was provided for education institutions of all levels. The stated purpose of the Act was to turn out more and better scientists and experts. Consequently, the focus of education was oriented toward academics. The catch words in the education communities were: professionalism and subject discipline. In the English communities, there were many serious attempts, like: The Basic Issues conferences (1958), The Commission on English (1959), Project English (1962), to stimulate new thinking and bring out new ideas.

While the education communities were oriented toward academic professionalism, American society was being thrown into a social, political turmoil. The ideals of the academic world and the day-to-day practices in school grounds all around the country presented a perplexing picture.

II. Back to Basics

In the Dec. 8, 1975 issue, Newsweek published an article titled: Why Johnny Can’t Write? This was the first of a series of articles discussing the demise of high school students’ poor writing performance. The articles caused a

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1 At first, only modern foreign languages were funded in 1958. English started received funding in the expanded National Defense Education Act of 1964.

stir in the nation and make English language skills a hot educational topic again. Not coincidentally, this was a time that dissatisfaction with the results of sixties style schooling grew stronger. Standardized achievement test scores showed a slide of language skills across the nation, which only provided more ammunition to critics. All these discontent inadvertently poured cold water on the still going on attempts to cancel or eliminate college freshman composition.

In responding to the criticisms, two responses were proposed:

1. **Back to Basics**—this proposal focused public schools on the four basic skills of English education: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. English curriculum was redefined primarily as language skills to be taught directly and practiced. This emphasis on skills was not unrelated to the demand of better achievement tests of course.

2. **Raising the standard**—the easiest way for political leaders and educational administrators to show their commitment to education is to demand improvement in achievement tests. At the same time, there were also attempts to raise the qualification of teachers, including more stringent qualification requirements for new teachers as well as more resources for teachers’ in-service training. Some states even pushed for the competence testing for existing teachers.

The Back to Basics movement was a far cry from the traditional classic mode of teaching language: grammar drills and intensive study of sentences. After several decades of study, the teaching of language skills has been much refined. The movement was able to find proofs of its effectiveness in improved

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3 The struggle between the school that defines language as skills and the school that defines language as a more meaningful and enriching learning has existed for decades. The struggle is particular severe as the subject involves poor performing college students or lower grade high school students. The issue has never been successfully resolved, especially up until 1980’s, most of the new ideas of English curriculum had not contained comprehensive work on the organization and sequence of curriculum.

4 In 1980’s, Texas and a few other states did carry out this attempt. More controversy ensued.
test scores across the nation. However, its rather narrow focus had never successfully silenced criticism. Applebee (1974) warned:

Yet in spite of the continuing importance of skills to the defense of the curriculum as a whole, there has been precious little consideration of the relationship between the skills of English and the “higher” goals of expression or response to literature. Almost without exception, skills have been treated as subjects for direct teaching… (p. 249).

III. Rhetoric as Invention & Writing as Process

While the call of Back to Basics and the demand for improved test results were popular themes, the ideas of rhetoric as invention and writing as a process were also gathering steam⁵. None of the ideas was new, but they were receiving more attention.

Rhetoric as Invention

The call for rhetoric as invention started in the University in Chicago in the fifties. In the beginning, this idea was supported exclusively by a few scholars in the U. of Chicago. Through the sixties, seventies, and eighties, this notion of rhetoric as a means of invention, discovery, and creativity, along with the idea of the process of writing, has established a foothold in rhetoric.

During the sixties and seventies, America went through a period of political, social, and cultural turmoil. As the calls of “rebellion” and “revolution” were raging, the entire country was wondering what had gone wrong with America and was eager to search for a remedy. Instead of demanding young generation to fall back to the traditional accepted social ethics, there was a

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common feeling across the country that maybe they needed to pay more attention to the young generation.

In terms of education, there was a keen sense of the necessity of heeding young people’s needs, psychologically, intellectually, and emotionally. Some educators urged the need to recognize young student’s individual, unique personality. Some scholars even encouraged fostering the sense of individualism in students. For example, Donald Murray (1969) argued the necessity to acknowledge student power in his article: Finding your own voice: Teaching Composition in an Age of Dissent.

The cognitive psychology’s view of language became even more attractive to scholars, teachers, and students. Not only was students’ need to be heard recognized, language was perceived as having a more active function of encouraging students to find their own voice and identity. Writing, with the renewed call for its role as a means for discovery, fitted right in. Not confined to the sole function of communication, the idea of St. Augustine about rhetoric of over 1500 years ago was revisited and revitalized: “There are two things necessary to the treatment of the Scriptures: a way of discovering those things that are to be understood, and a way of teaching what we have learned” (Augustine, 1958, p.7). Combined with the latest findings in cognitive psychology, this endeavor has opened a new perspective on writing instruction in colleges and high schools.

James Berlin (1987) divided the rhetorical theories during this period into three major schools, based on each school’s way of interpreting reality. They are:

I. Objective Approach—Primarily Behaviorist Approach
II. Subjective Approach—Expressionist in nature
III. Transactional Rhetoric—Classical Rhetoric, Cognitive Psychology, and Epistemic Rhetoric
I. Objective Approach

Behaviorist influence on composition was most prominent on the workbooks on grammar and usage in the sixties and seventies. Then, Lynn & Martin Bloom and Zoellner employed behaviorist principles on the process of writing.

Lynn & Martin Bloom (1967) focused on the stages, especially the prewriting stage, of producing a writing. They argued that teachers most often focus on the “post-writing critique.” The teacher’s critique is most often ineffective or even harmful because “we don’t really know whether we are rewarding the right thing for the right reason from the perspective of the student’s learning process—the dynamic process that occurs while the writing is being created” (Bloom & Bloom, p.129).

Lynn & Martin Bloom devised three activities to assist the writing instruction:

1. A careful and systematic observation of a student as he writes a number of themes.
2. Applying reinforcement principles in the stages of writing—making the thinking process visible to both the student and the teacher. This includes: making the student aware of a given writing problem, getting him to generate several possible solutions to it and then to select the best one, and, in a conference, giving the student advice about his choices so that he creates a set of standards and operating principles for himself.
3. Making students aware of the criteria of evaluation and evaluating the student’s work accordingly. The purpose is to make the student self-reliant instead of relying on the teacher’s approval and judgment.

Zoellner’s “Talk-Write: A Behavioral Pedagogy for Composition” (1969) focused on the process of writing. The problem of the student’s writing is not with faulty thinking but with faulty or maladaptive behavior—the “concrete, discriminable, and empirically accessible behavioral dimension to the act of
writing to which we have insufficiently attended” (p.271). Zoellner proposes that we replace our think-write metaphor with a talk-write metaphor.

According to Zoellner, teachers must offer students instruction that involves the stages of writing process and not simply the specifications of the final product. The instruction was be directed to the student’s unique writing difficulties. And it must always involve engaging in particular acts rather than striving for particular qualities or emulating particular models.

Many of the techniques recommended by Bloom and Bloom and Zoellner are commonplace today, for example the focus on the activities of writing rather than on thinking skills or reading.

**II. Subjective Approach**

This rhetoric, existed mostly in the sixties and seventies, stresses that reality is a personal and private construct. Truth is constructed through an examination of the writer’s private inner world.

Rohman & Wlecke’s Pre-Writing: The Construction and Application of Models for Concept Formation in Writing (1964) established the language of process in the discussion of writing—the stages of prewriting, writing, rewriting. They viewed writing as a process of discovery, specifically the discovery of self. Writing is seen as an art, rising from within. Therefore, writing as an act authenticates and affirms the self.

S.I. Hayakawa (1962) advocated the use of free-writing as a means to find an original expression.

The Dartmouth Conference in 1966 produced a report: Growth through English (1967) advocated the emphasis of language and personal growth.

Then, there was the “Happening” approach, which creates “an experience” in which the teacher’s authority is removed by having the student become an equal participant in learning. Teachers “shock” the student into understanding clear experiences. Teachers become actors who reduce the distance between
actor and audience, including the audience in the drama. The student will then “participate in the realization of his own awareness of his inadequacy” (Deemer, 1967, p.124).

Donald Murray & Peter Elbow are two leading figures who stressed the function of writing in helping students find one’s own voice. Instead of attempting to teach students write acceptable composition, teachers can and should encourage students to write in such an environment that will foster their self-expression and, thus, build their own self-identity. The teacher achieves this goal by encouraging students to engage in free writing, journal writing, multiple drafts, editorial group, and original thinking. The ideas that are generated, revised, and refined through this process are purely each student’s own creation. They represent each student’s evolving personal interpretation of experience—the world and himself—upon which they keep writing and growing.

Murray (1969) defines a writer this way: “A writer is an individual who uses language to discover meaning in experience and communicate it” (p. 21). Similarly, Elbow characterizes the function of writing: “I don’t know what I perceive, feel or think until I can get it into language and perhaps even into someone else’s head” (p.751). In Writing without Teachers, Peter Elbow gave further definition: “writing is, in fact, a transaction with words whereby you free yourself from what you presently think, feel, and perceive” (p. 15).

According to Elbow, writing is a process of playing with language through which the writer interacts with words, ideas, people, metaphors and grow out of his current boundary of language and ideas to achieve a better understanding of self and of the world. Elbow explains this process of growth: “A principal value of language, therefore, is that it permits you to distance yourself from your own perceptions, feelings, and thoughts” (p. 54). That is why Elbow declares: “Only you have grown, your words have not” (p. 23).
III. Transactional Rhetoric

Transactional rhetoric discovers reality in the interaction of the features of the rhetorical process itself—in the interaction of material reality, writer, audience, and language. There are three schools of rhetoric in this category: the classical, the cognitive, and the epistemic.

Classical Rhetoric

This school, following the ideal of Aristotle, focuses on a commitment to rationality. The classical rhetoric in the sixties and seventies treated all elements of the rhetorical situation from the view of rationality: interlocutor, audience, reality, and language. (During the tumultuous sixties and seventies, the rhetoric theories in those times generally bore in mind the purpose of reconciling the clashes of extreme views in a society.)

Richard Hughes (1965) based his idea of rhetoric purely on Aristotelian rhetoric: rhetoric is concerned primarily with discovery—with locating the material for an effective argument. Argument determines the balance between facts and opinions and is concerned with “the generative power of the rhetorical process producing an argument from just such an area” (p.158). Rhetoric is, thus, a process of discovery.

Rhetoric has three distinguishing characteristics: its vitalism, its concept of argument, and its concept of topics. Vitalism refers to the creative quality of “moving an idea from embryo to reality” (p.157). The concept of argument grows out of this creativity. The topics provide the means for arriving at a judgment and, consequently, are the center of this discovery process. Pullman (1994) views topics this way: “As the location of arguments of subjects for discourse, they (topics) form the core of invention, and to the extent that invention is central to rhetoric, the topics are a critical practice” (p. 405).

Edward P.J. Corbett, the most conspicuous spokesperson of this school,
includes aesthetical and emotional aspects in the rhetorical act, too, in addition to the rational aspect typical of the classical rhetoric. Corbett understands that rhetoric deals with the probable, so he places persuasion at its center. Therefore, his idea of rhetoric includes invention, arrangement, and style, guiding the student at every step of the composing act: “what most of our students need, even the bright ones, is careful, systematized guidance at every step in the writing process” (Corbett, 1963, p.164).

Obviously, the concept of process had a deep root in Corbett’s thinking, too. In “What is Being Revised,” Corbett (1967) proposed: “What we need now is a rhetoric of the process, rather than of the product” (p.172). Just like the writings of the Behaviorist and Expressionist rhetoric, the concept of process, too, had a solid foundation in the Classical rhetoric.

**Cognitive Psychology**

The Cognitive Psychology advocates that mind is composed of a set of structures that develop in chronological sequence. The most important of these structures are those that deal with the relationship of language and thought. The most prominent advocates of the Cognitive Psychology are Piaget of Sweden and Vygotsky of Soviet Union. In America, the leading spokesman is Jerome Bruner. Because of its focus on the development of language and thought, the concept of the process of learning has a more prominent role than any other schools of rhetoric.

The Cognitive Psychology views the simultaneous development of thought and language as the result of an interaction between the child and environment. Because of the developmental characteristics of each stage, meaningful learning takes place only in the environment the child can relate to. Language is defined

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6 As mentioned before, discussion about rhetoric during this period tended to have the social and political turmoil in mind. Corbett’s idea about rhetoric is typical of the attempt to promote dialogue as the remedy for social unrest.
as a continuum extending from the purely external, referential, and objective, to the purely internal, expressive, and subjective.

In their view, writing is a higher level language activity and serves two functions: 1. to help capture and define the crude, terse idea in the child’s mind and to present it clearly through words; 2. to clarify and refine the meaning and usage of language the child already learned and, thus, promotes further understanding toward mastery. Learning to write requires the cultivation of the appropriate cognitive structures so that the structures of reality, the audience, and language can be understood. Therefore, the composing process involves many factors at work simultaneously.

Janet Emig’s *The Composing Process of Twelfth Graders* (1971)—by studying the working process of cognitive skills in writing, we can understand the role of reality, audience, purpose, and language in the rhetorical act. Emig found that the composing process described in most composition textbooks did not conform to the behavior of actual writers. She indicated flaws in the way writing instruction is commonly approached, and further indicated the complex and unsystematic nature of composing.

Janice Lauer’s “Heuristics and Composition” (1970) offered the most engaging applications of cognitive psychology to composition studies. Lauer encouraged composition teachers to search for inspiration from research and theoretical work outside of studies in English and rhetoric. The most significant of this research had to do with discovery—invention, the heart of a vital rhetoric. Lauer proposed problem-solving as creativity, the open-ended quest for reasonable answers: “Problem solving as creativity uses not sets of rules but heuristic procedures, systematic but flexible guides to effective guessing” (“Counterstatement”, p. 209).

The expressionistic rhetoric also emphasizes invention, but this approach does it by providing students with experiences or getting students to write freely about their experiences. The cognitive psychology approach, on the other hand, provides a set of procedures for students to follow in generating the matter of
discourse.

James Britton in Britain and James Moffett in America all advocate the developmental characteristics of language. Moffett in “Teaching the Universe of Discourse” (1968) sees students as moving in their language development through levels of abstraction: from interior dialogue, to conversation, to correspondence, to public narrative, to published generalization and inference. The distinctions have to do with the distances separating interlocutor, audience, and subject. Moffett thus recommends writing and speaking activities that are appropriate to the stages of the student’s development.

Well into 1980’s, two types of composing process were obvious: a linear model and a recursive model. Richard Gebhardt (1982) characterized the difference between the two types: one that emphasizes liner, deliberate, and rational features; another that emphasizes the recursive, spontaneous, and intuitive features. The Cognitive Psychology’s idea of composing process is a never ending one for its emphasis on the sustained interaction between thought and language. Their studies also found that most writers’ composing process proceed more in a recursive than a linear model.

These two diverse models of the process of composition present a conflict that has not been successfully reconciled. On the one hand, each model represents a different notion of invention process; on the other hand, as Arthur Applebee (1985) argued, researchers and teachers have not made a distinction between writing for which students, as well as teachers themselves, have a well-established routines that contain no prescribed procedures like planning, pre-writing, or revision, and writing which is more or less new for students and, therefore, calls for a more elaborated and creative response.

**Epistemic Rhetoric**

Rhetoric had always been concerned with two aspects: the aspect of coming to know something and the aspect of making others aware of it. This is
the foundation of Aristotle, Cicero, and St. Augustine’s idea of rhetoric. Ever since eighteenth century, the emphasis of rhetoric had been shifted to the communication aspect alone. The Current-Traditional model became the standard model of rhetoric all over Europe and, later, America. Until 1950’s, a few scholars in the University of Chicago started to revive the full aspects of rhetoric by invoking Aristotelian idea. Then, tides started to turn from 1960’s.

Michael Leff (1978) provides a rich bibliographical essay on the subject, in which he defines rhetoric as “a serious philosophical subject that involves not only the transmission, but also the generation of knowledge” (p.75). The position implies that knowledge is not discovered by reason alone—both cognitive and affective processes are required in creating knowledge—, that inter-subjectivity is a condition of all knowledge, and that the contact of minds affects knowledge. In a word, rhetoric is epistemic because knowledge itself is a rhetorical construct, and epistemology is itself a social and historical construct.

Leff sees rhetoric as a means for social knowledge, so meaning emerges not from objective, disinterested, empirical investigation, but from individuals engaging in rhetorical discourse in discourse communities—diverse groups organized around the discussion of particular matters in particular ways. In other words, in rhetoric we can only deal with symbolic realities, not actualities, so knowing is a symbolic, evaluative, and argumentative process so as to achieve a mutual agreement.

The Epistemic Rhetoric widens the spectrum of composition. It not only sees rhetoric as the pursuit of a social knowledge involving the interaction of opposing elements, it also raises the notion of rhetoric as a linguistic construct. The elements of rhetoric are the very ones that make up the communication process: interlocutor, audience, reality, language. Therefore, communication “is

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7 Knowledge being pursued in rhetoric, in Leff’s view, is social knowledge not scientific, objective knowledge. Therefore, rhetoric as an Epistemic activity must include both cognitive and affective aspects as well as the ideas of different disciplines or different views.
at the center of epistemic rhetoric because knowledge is always knowledge for someone standing in relation to others in a linguistically circumscribed situation” (Berlin, 1987, p.166). Berlin further elaborates:

All elements of the communication act are linguistically conditioned: interlocutor, audience, and reality are all defined by language and cannot be known apart from the verbal constructs through which we respond to them. Language forms our conceptions of ourselves, our audiences, and the very reality in which we exist. Language, moreover, is a social—not a private—phenomenon, and as such embodies a multitude of historically specific conceptions that shape experiences… (p.166).

It was exactly for this reason the Epistemic Rhetoric was started in late 1950’s partly as an effort to revitalize General Education movement and communication courses. This movement caught the attention of scholars in communication courses, general education, linguistics, and English studies, because of its emphasis covers the interests of these departments. The most significant development is the rekindled interest of writing instruction in English departments.

Because of the view of writing as an aid for learning and a means for discovery, English departments started paying more attention to the function of writing. According to Richard Young (1987), there were “three significant changes” (p. 10):

1. The efforts to integrate reading and writing on the ground that both are involved with the making of meaning.
2. The attempts to expand the value of writing into different disciplines, the so-called “writing-across-the-curriculum.”
3. The re-conceptualizing of technical writing to include rhetorical invention.

This new trend more or less reconnected English departments with the
teaching of composition and to some degree reestablished English departments in the development of rhetorical theories as well as the studies of writing instruction.

VI. Conclusion

Thus, English departments have started embracing writing instruction, the subject they had strived to get rid of for the past century. This turnaround happens not because English departments need writing courses financially or politically. It happens on account of a regenerated philosophy about rhetoric.

More then 100 years ago, English departments were desperate to rid themselves of rhetoric for two purposes: 1. to establish the identity of English department; 2. to not waste their talents on time-consuming, tedious work of grading papers. The core issue lies in the view of rhetoric.

During the 1950’s and 1960’s, professionalism and subject discipline were the standard for all subject matters. However, students did not subject themselves so easily to subject discipline, nor did they become professional simply by acting like one. As a result, classroom practices and academic theories went their separate ways. The net result was that all across America, student achievement scores were sliding downward.

Rhetorical theories are constantly evolving. Well into 1970’s, rhetoric theories have evolved around writing as a process, specifically a process of invention or discovery. The critical element of this process of discovery is the writer him/herself. The writer is the initiator as well as the final beneficiary of this discovery. The writer must go through this process to discover what he/she has to say about a subject. In addition, he/she can only do it alone, despite all the instructional assistance the teacher or peers may provide. The discovery must be the writer’s own.

In essence, the philosophy of rhetoric has evolved from the writer striving to conform to certain requirements of composition to the writer striving to
discover his/her ideas about a subject and find ways to present them.

By the end of twentieth century, nearly 100 years of evolution, rhetoric has evolved into a subject about people. This slow and inconspicuous evolution has a significant impact on the practice of writing instruction and how English departments treat it. This must be a progress.
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