

Stylistic Features of Impromptu Speech of Chinese Learners

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Abstract

Impromptu speech plays an important role in the English speech contest. Applying the method of text analysis, the paper conducts a systematic research on the general rule of genre pattern from the aspects of the vocabulary, syntax, rhetoric, text structure based on the 23 impromptu speeches selected from the FLTRP Cup from 2011 to 2016. The results show that diversity of vocabulary and flexibility of sentence structure contribute to the outstanding speech. On the discourse level, two genres are widely used in the impromptu speech which are “what” model and “how” model. However, problems still exist, for example, the very limit number and type of figures of speech, which bears significant implications for public speaking teaching.

Keywords

Impromptu Speech, Stylistic Features, Text Analysis

1. Introduction

Impromptu speech, a reflection of the speaker's thinking pattern as well as linguistic competence, is an important part of the English speech contest. Impromptu speech requires students to deliver their speech under the condition of inadequate preparation or even without preparation. It is the manifestation of a student's comprehensive ability that adds new requirements to students' level of proficiency in English. Meanwhile, as a challenging task, it can, for the most part, display their real ability in language using (Wang, 2008a; Zhu, 2010; Ji, Liu, & Wang, 2010). Mostly, students acquire better oratory skills in prepared speech than in impromptu speech which can be verified from the contest videos. However, when it comes to impromptu speech, college students make common mistakes frequently, for example, deviation from the theme, content repetition, hasty conclusions, narrow specialty knowledge, etc. (Ji et al., 2010). They also dis-

play substantial shortcomings: emotional stress, ambiguous expression, logical confusion, thinking limitation, etc., which lead to fear or repulsion. Reversely, the rejection towards impromptu speech could impede their progress in the long run. Thus, the paper aims at the exploration of the stylistic patterns of impromptu speech, including the features in the use of vocabulary, sentences, rhetorical devices and discourse pattern, to explore general rules hidden in it and improve students' impromptu speech.

2. Literature Review

Relevant studies were conducted on both prepared speech and impromptu speech systematically which play a guidance role in our research.

2.1. Research on Prepared Speech

First, studies show that Chinese speakers lack diversity of vocabulary. They are more likely to use simple or medium level words instead of the complex words compared with their English counterparts (Zhang, 2016; Lu & Wan, 2016; Wang, 2008b). Second, the multiplicity of chunks is well-applied (Lu & Huang, 2010; Bing, Zhang, & Dong, 2016). Bing et al. (2016) proved that among the 347 abstracted chunks, verb chunks, noun chunks, conjunction chunks and preposition chunks are frequently used. Third, studies prove that the complexity of the sentence structure and the average length of sentences applied in the draft by Chinese speakers are of low level (Qing, 2005; Zhang, 2016). Fourth, discourse markers are widely used in the drafts of prepared speech to raise a new topic, to make contrast and explanation and help to engage the audience (Zhang, 2016; Li, 2016).

2.2. Research on Impromptu Speech

Impromptu speech is different from prepared speech in that college students' handling ability towards prepared speeches is superior to impromptu speeches (Yu, 2013). Wei (2016) also found out that vocabulary used in prepared speech is more complex, diverse and abstract than in impromptu speech. A sharp contrast also exists between two types of speeches in the aspects of word repetition, part of speech and key words.

Speakers also demonstrate a series of distinctive features in their encoding moves while they are doing the impromptu speech (Fan, Fan, & Huang, 2016). Fan et al. (2016) proved that successful speakers also keep a subtle balance between the use of abstract words and dependent clauses. They also employ figures of speech, especially parallelism and metaphor to achieve rhythmic effects. Ma (2017) proved that in-class presentation of impromptu speech and after-class training are necessary for students to better improve their ability to handle impromptu speech. For example, class teaching reform, second classroom, multiple competition experience, etc. are all beneficial for students' improvement. Xuan (2013) studied the positive effect of recitation language input on impromptu

speech. She proved that in the training of impromptu speeches, teachers should lay emphasis on text-reciting. Because this could help enhance students' pronunciation and intonation, adjust their speed, provide ample language materials, express English in a more idiomatic way, etc. Questions-and-answers session is a necessary part of the impromptu speech. As to the techniques that can be applied to this part, Yang (2016) found out that training on this particular part can help students give better performance. Material accumulation, rhyme, pause, eye contact, anxiety control, etc. are all effective manners to help speakers succeed in this process.

Relevant studies of impromptu speech show that research on impromptu speech is quite limited. For example, the above studies mainly concentrate on levels of lexicology, syntax, characteristics of impromptu speech and the training techniques, few of them studied the rhetorical device. Besides, in general, studies on impromptu speech mainly concentrate on speakers' pronunciation, intonation, cadence, their gestures and the fluency of their speech.

However, some other important aspects concerning impromptu speech have been neglected. For example, very few have explored specifically the stylistic features of impromptu speech. Impromptu speech, as an important variant of the language, has its own unique stylistic features and generic structures. Successful impromptu speeches are sure to have clear generic structures, some obligatory generic elements or stylistic features and fixed moves. Whereas, ineffective impromptu speeches usually lack the corresponding moves and stylistic features (Huang, 2006; Li, 2013). Therefore, by using the theory of text analysis, the author will conduct a comprehensive study from the perspective of vocabulary, sentence, and more importantly, the use of rhetoric devices and how to devise the overall text structure.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Data Sources

Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press Cup (FLTRC for short) is widely recognized as the most important speech contest for Chinese learners, and finals of the contest represents very high public speaking level. The competition mainly covers four parts: self-introduction (accounting for 10 points and time limit for 30 seconds), prepared speech (accounting for 40 points and time limit for 3 minutes), impromptu speech (accounting for 30 points and time limit for a minute and a half) and live questions and answers (accounting for 20 points and time limit for 1 minute). For impromptu speech, the standards of assessment include the following four parts: content requirements, language requirements, skill requirements and time control. As to the content, it requires a clear content, a well-organized structure and a prominent focus. The competitors can list several real cases to prove his ideas reasonably and make the content vivid and interesting to hold the audience's attention at the same time. For language requirements, it requires the competitors to speak standard American English or

British English with correct and fluent expressions, clear pronunciation and appropriate pitch and tones. About skill requirements, it requires the speakers to have confidence and momentum, notice his body languages and gestures and add rhetorical devices properly. For time control, the staff will show the card to let the speaker know that there is only 30 seconds left. The speaker must finish his speech before the time run out. Otherwise, he will get a score deduction.

Therefore, final competition of the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press Cup from 2011 to 2016 was chosen as the object of research in this paper. Totally 23 videos, 7 from 2011, 6 from 2012, 5 from 2015 and 5 from 2016 respectively, were collected, with a total length of 100 minutes.

3.2. Research Procedure and Data Analysis

Firstly, videos of impromptu speeches were collected and transcribed. Secondly, text analysis of the transcription was conducted in 4 aspects: vocabulary, syntax, rhetoric and text structure. In terms of vocabulary, the frequency of advanced vocabularies and complex vocabularies were counted and analyzed. Then sentences were analyzed in its length and structure. Figures of speeches were identified and classified. Finally discourse patterns were analyzed by drawing mind maps of these texts.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Vocabulary Features

Two outstanding features in terms of use of words are the use of more advanced words and collocations in general and the use of transitional words in particular.

4.1.1. Advanced Vocabularies and Collocations

Since there is no specific definition that has ever been given towards “advanced vocabulary”, the authors here refer to those with more than ten letters and the complicated ones that are seldom used in daily life. There are on average 5 to 15 advanced vocabularies among the studied texts. For example, “*procrastinate*” was used instead of “*put off*”, “*consequence*” instead of “*punishment*”, “*conceal*” instead of “*hide*”, “*conviction*” or “*perspective*” instead of “*opinion*” or “*belief*”, “*harbor*” instead of “*believe*” and others like “*unconventional*”, “*marginalize*”, “*reinforcement*”, “*accountability*”, “*agreeable*”, “*illegible*”, “*threshold*”, “*conscientiousness*”, “*elaborate*”, “*applicable*”, “*overemphasize*”, “*stumble*” and so on. The use of advanced vocabulary not only indicates the competitor’s accumulation of the multiple words and the high level of proficiency of using them in practice, but more importantly, these advanced words help them to express their ideas more accurately, more forcefully or even more elegantly.

The other example of skillful use of words is the employment of collocations in speeches. Collocations originate from phrases and idioms, so use of collocation contributes to fluency and idiomatic features of the speech. Speakers in this study have displayed the high level frequency of the use of collocations, with an average of 14 in each speech. For example, “*be strongly opposed to*”, “*intend to*”,

“echo in”, “fool around”, “hang over”, “harbor great passion in”, “be obsessed with”, “in the ocean of”, “be in love with”, “fulfill ones dream” and so on.

4.1.2. Transitional Words

Transitions are words or phrases that show the relationship between paragraphs or sections of a text or speech. Findings show that speaker also employ various transitional devices, including coordinating transitions, temporal transitions and spatial transitions. Speakers use coordinating and temporal transitions frequently in their speech, with an average frequency of 10 in each text. For example, the most frequently used ones include *also*, *similarly*, *together with*, *coupled with*, *correspondingly*, *on the contrary*, *in contrast*, *nevertheless*, *as it was happening*, *while*, *that is*, *to put it differently*, *now and then*, *briefly*, *at first*, *firstly*, *in the meantime*, *finally*, *afterward*, etc. Besides, spatial transitions like, *close to*, *far*, *beyond*, *along*, *facing*, *to the right*, *toward*, *away from...* are also frequently used.

Use of transitional words is very important in English speeches. First, contrastive study of Chinese and English language has shown that English is more Hypotactic while Chinese is more Paratactic (Lian, 2010). A manifestation of this feature in English is the use of transitional words or phrases to make the text more cohesive formally. Secondly, the English grammar is more explicit while Chinese grammar is more implicit, so transitional words are also used to ensure the sentences are grammatically correct. So far as the sentence structure is concerned, western languages seem to be law-governed while Chinese language seems to be man-governed (Wang, 1984).

Accordingly, here are some examples adopted by the speakers:

- 1) *To put it differently, human are not machines, we error, we stumble and we need to grab on our feet, so I really insist on accountability.*
- 2) *Similarly, the rationale is also applicable in this society because the most efficient way to solve the problem of human error is the system of responsibility.*
- 3) *But even though it has got all those very good things that it can provide, it has brought us some side effects.*

The proper use of transitional words not only shows the speakers' linguistic competence, but more importantly, it also shows the speaker has acquired the English way of thinking, or text patterns of English speeches. This is even more important for impromptu speeches, since clear and logical expression of ideas is the paramount.

4.2. Syntactic Features

4.2.1. Sentence Complexity

Findings show that speakers use sentences of hugely different length, with the longest sentence of 52 words and the shortest 10 words. The average length is about 24 words in each sentence, Sentences of different length were used for different purposes. Long sentences are used for more accurate expressions or complicated or comprehensive ideas. For example,

- 1) *When everyone is held responsible and accountable for a job, he will in-*

stantly know that he has to focus with more concentration, obligation and responsibility and endeavor and devote to his full efforts in that job.

Adverbial modifier is adopted to connect the two sentences into one to improve coherence which naturally makes the sentence longer.

2) *They consider this kind of choice to be the ending and goal of college education but that is no true for me because I would definitely choose to persevere in Spanish studying, persevere in my studies because I consider college education to be one kind of exploration in my heart.*

Contrastive study of Chinese and English language has shown that English is more Complex while Chinese is more simple (Lian, 2010). The reason lies in the Hypotactic in English that requires a great number of transitional words (like the several “and”, “because” in both the two examples), making the audience to understand what the speakers’ are trying to express comprehensively and accurately.

3) *And that is why I think it is so precious in my life and what it costs and what will be is one kind of time that would be really memorable that one day when we are old, we can tell ourselves, it is the choice that we don’t regret.*

English sentences present the attribute of right-branching, which means that various modifiers, parenthesis can be placed postposition, just as the 3rd example displays, meanwhile, one sentence can be extended continuously. This can help the speakers to express their ideas logically and orderly.

Besides long sentences, short sentences are used for expressing simple but very strong ideas or feelings. For example,

1) *As a girl I myself, I strongly oppose this conviction.*

2) *What a remarkable achievement!*

3) *Just give yourself a break!*

4) *Almost 70%! How disappointing it is!*

5) *My view is: stick to your dream, stick to your true love.*

The above listed 5 examples contains no more than 10 words on average, however, they cannot be erased from the speech, because they all play indispensable roles in the construction of the speakers’ draft. Examples 2 and 4 express the speakers’ strong feelings (either surprised or shocked). Example 1 exposes clearly the speaker’s viewpoints toward the given topic. And examples 3 and 5 reflect the speakers’ intention to call for immediate actions from the audience. All these sentences are simple but the functions they play are forceful.

4.2.2. Sentence Structure

The most commonly used sentence structures by the speakers include complex sentence, and compound sentence. Complex sentence, the one with a subordinate clause, is a striking feature of Hypotactic English compared with Paratactic Chinese. The organization of sentence structure with a main clause, indicating the main argument, and subordinate clauses, which explain, modify or extend the main clause, together makes the expression of complicated ideas possible and well received. For example,

1) *My university has paid great attention to the comprehensive course for students which enables them to see some issues in a deeper level and help them to bring more innovation into translation.*

This attributive clause highlights the benefits of the “comprehensive course” to its students, and undoubtedly, indicates the importance of the course to the audience.

2) *If I am going to design a theme park, then I will design a theme park with the name of experiment.*

The adverbial clause helps the speaker to communicate her ideas to her audience, and at the same time, it serves to inspiring the audience to think what theme park they will design if they got the opportunity. By doing so, the speaker narrowing the distance between she and the audience.

3) *I got a very exciting information from my instructor that I was so lucky to be selected as one of the working staff of DP to be held in Macao.*

4) *Frankly speaking, this is the first time for me to get the news that there is a counterpart for the beauty contest for women.*

The appositive clause explains what the “information” or “news” is about and helps to attract the audience’s attention to his speech. The advantage of using appositive clause lies in the fact that it either gives an explanatory or complementary description of the antecedent or just serves as a linking part between two sentences, making the speech logically.

Some special structure of English worth noting is the use of emphatic sentences, inverted sentence, parenthesis, etc. For example, emphatic sentences are often used to make the speech more forceful. For example,

1) *Nowadays, it is the society that requires the team work.*

2) *It was not until at that very moment that he realized what trouble he incurred.*

The first example highlights that team work is no single term that people should ignore because the “society” now requires us to unite to get things done, which help to stress the urgent need of team work. While the second example emphasizes “time”, which indicates that it was too late for “he” to realize the fact. By employing this device, the speakers communicate their ideas strongly and will surely leave deep impressions on their audience.

Inverted sentences are also used for emphasis or more vivid expression. For example,

1) *Only in this way can we be able to translate them well.*

2) *Not only should the journalists report on the truth, but also every just citizen have the rights to know the truth.*

Since inverted sentence is relatively uncommon seen than other sentence patterns, therefore, once they are applied in the text, they will instantly arouse the audiences’ immediate attention. Just like the two examples, one stress the only “way” and the other the “journalists and every citizen”. Thereby the key points are stressed, enabling the speaker to convey his or her idea effectively.

Parenthesis is also often used to provide explanation, indicate one’s point of

view or to raise a new topic. For example,

- 1) *Believe it or not, I think, people are never born to be equal.*
- 2) *But even though it has got all those very good things that it can provide, it has, you know, brought some side effects.*

One sentence is still complete and understandable when parenthesis is removed. However, the use of it can help the audience get to know the speakers' attitude and viewpoint (as shown in the 1st example) because its function is to help explain and illustrate the sentence. Besides, parenthesis can help link the sentences, making the structure tightly connected. Lastly, as the 2nd example displays, it also serves to change the current topic and raise a new one, namely, the "side effects".

With all these sentence structures, combinations of some of the above sentence patterns used by the speakers are also common, for example, attributive clause, adverbial clause of concession and appositive clause used at the same time like "Even though that nowadays, there is a growing number of sissy boys, but we still cannot conceal the fact that there are just more women who are willing to participate in this kind of game that directly leads to its popularity".

To summarize, the use of various subordinate clauses and other sentence patterns enhance the connectivity between comparatively long sentences, making the tone of the speech sound more cadenced. Besides, it will help the speakers to express their idea logically and precisely. This is consistent with the findings of Lu & Huang (2010). However, the difference lies in the multiplicity of the sentence patterns. Their research results showed that speakers preferred to use sentence framework but the types of it were less flexible. But this study found out that the sentence structures adopted by the speakers were of various types: emphatic sentence, inverted sentence, parenthesis and other sentence patterns. The reason lies in the different objects of the study. Lu selected the impromptu speeches from CCTV Cup in 2008, while this study selected speeches with a time span of 6 years from 2011 to 2016. It is possible that the speakers' public speaking ability will increase as the society continues to move forward.

4.3. Rhetoric Features

Rhetoric refers to the skill or art of using language in speech or writing in a special way effectively. Rhetoric devices are used to convey to the listener or reader a meaning with the goal of persuading him or her towards considering a topic from a different angle, using sentences to influence or entertain people. There are 19 figures of speech in English like simile, metaphor, parallelism, personification, hyperbole, pun, irony, synaesthesia and so on. Analysis of the 23 impromptu speeches shows that, firstly, every speaker employed certain rhetoric devices in their impromptu speech, and secondly the two most commonly used figures of speeches are metaphor and parallelism.

Firstly, speakers employed a large number of figures of speeches. For example, personification, metaphor, hyperbole, alliteration, rhetoric questions, oxymoron, etc. For example,

- 1) *Money is a good servant, but a bad master. (Personification)*
- 2) *Life is a drama, you never expect what will happen in the next second, everything seems to takes on in an unbelievable way. (Metaphor)*
- 3) *At that moment, the very moment that I will never forget my whole life, my heart almost stopped beating on hearing that striking news. (Hyperbole)*
- 4) *What I would definitely choose id the second kind of doors and I will fight for it with might and main. (Alliteration)*
- 5) *How was it possible to leave these urgent issues alone and only to consider the benefits? (Rhetorical question)*
- 6) *From my perspective, she was a clever fool not to accept that high-paying job at the expense of the opportunity to further study. (Oxymoron)*

The first proverb used by the speaker displays the techniques of personification. It endows the sense of human-beings to “money”, making the sentence a vivid, interesting one. The use of metaphor makes it easier for the audience to understand the meaning that the speaker wants to convey, making the sentence more flexible and vivid. The speaker used hyperbole the express the extreme feelings he felt at that moment brought by the news, meanwhile, this could create a strong impression on the audience. Alliteration is identified by the repetition at the beginning of words or phrases. It helps to convey a sense of rhythm of the sentence. And most importantly, it helps to stress the key point that the speaker intends to tell. Rhetorical question is the one that requires no answer, it is posed as declaration by implying that people should implement immediate action to solve the impending problems first. By employing this device, the speaker intends to inspire the audience to think and reflect, and therefore, making the speech a striking, appealing one. Oxymoron displays elements that appear to be contradictory. It is ridiculous at the first sight, however, after second thought, people can understand the implied truth. By using words to express the speaker’s viewpoint, it can be both humorous and appealing to the audience.

Besides, simile and parallelism appear most frequently in their speeches. For example,

- 1) *Life is just like a film, we all play different roles in our society. (Simile)*
- 2) *Our body is like a computer, and one thing I know is that some computers can work more efficiently after restarting. (Simile)*
- 3) *There are many things that we cannot do and there are many roles that we cannot play. (Parallelism)*
- 4) *One leads to the materialistic success that leads to richness, high social status, a good salary and things like that; the other leads to the perseverance in the idea, and the things that we really love. (Parallelism)*

Parallelism is a rhetorical device that highlights grammatical structure symmetry to stress the significance of the object. It makes the speech more appealing and vigorous meanwhile enhance the expressive effect of their language.

However, the figures on the frequency of the rhetorical device reflect some problems that competitors are not good at using multiple figures of speech, they are limited to only a few kind of rhetorical devices, simile and parallelism in par-

ticular. Only a few of them could master the art of flexibly applying various figures of speech into their speeches in limited time. This indicates that teachers should lay more emphasis on the training of applying multiple rhetoric devices in practice instead of being confined to a limited certain types.

To summarize, a fresh and suitable rhetorical device creates vivid pictures and leaves space of imagination for their audience, making the speech an interesting, striking one. Students should be able to master different types of it both theoretically and practically.

4.4. Text Structure

4.4.1. Overall Structure

The passage structures are divided into two models according to different topics—"What" model and "How" model. As to the overall structure, the section that distinguishes the two models is the argumentation part because the tactics applied in the beginning and ending parts are of high similarity.

Firstly, competitors illustrate their opinions upon the topic directly or indirectly by quoting sayings of famous people, recalling self-experience or interacting with audience, etc at the very beginning of the speech. Secondly, they enumerate several (usually three—the first aspect, the second aspect and the third aspect) arguments that support his or her opinion and lastly finish the speech by emphasizing the topic again or quoting sayings of famous people to appeal to others to take some action. As to the argumentation part in "What" model, speakers usually lay emphasis on expounding the "contents or aspects" to the audience. Take one speech for example. The topic of the speech is "What do you expect from college?" The speaker begins her speech by recalling the experience of her classmates and agrees with the decision her classmate made, which shows her attitude. As to the argumentation part, she explains her own attitude toward the topic from two "aspects". The first aspect is "freedom" that is the first thing she wants to get from college, followed by three points to further explain the aspect. The second aspect is "aspiration" that is the second thing she strives for, also accompanied by three sub-points. Lastly, she ends her speech by quoting famous sayings to arouse audience attention and call for action.

Secondly, speakers also employ "How" model. In this type of text structure, the beginning and the ending part are almost similar to the "What" type. The main difference is embodied in the argumentation part that "How" model expounds arguments from different "angles or perspectives". Take one speech for example. The topic of the speech is "How to promote mutual understanding?" The speaker begins his speech by quoting the sayings of the former US Secretary of State to show his attitude. As to the argumentation part, he expounds his attitude from two angles. Firstly, from the perspective of the media, he stresses the importance of why journalists should stick to the truth and how they can do to help improve mutual understanding. Secondly, from the perspective of common people, he highlights the importance of giving up the biases and how to achieve it. At the end of the speech, he recommends some suggestions to call on people's

action and ends his speech.

In general, the difference of these two models lies in the argumentation part, namely, the “emphasis” is different. However, the above rules are only effective when the given topic obviously exposes which type it is. There are topics that one cannot distinguish instantly which type they belong to, like “Is it gender inequality that leads to the popularity of Miss World Competition?” There are no indicators such as “what...” or “how...”, however, after thinking quickly, one can easily identify that it belongs to “What” type.

Despite the differences in these two patterns, they are both influenced by the western thinking patterns, which is more of a linear mode compares with the eastern cyclical mode. And the results are also supported by this theory. From the perspective of the contrastive analysis of text structure, namely the deductive mode of the west and the inductive mode of the east, people can also find that the two structures the authors explored are in accordance with the deductive structure which is the basic structure in English. Deductive structure is much more widely used, and useful, than the inductive one, because it sustains itself page after page, even through chapters in a whole book. You set down your thesis, your general proposition, then explain it in detail and at length, presenting pros and cons as needed (Lian, 2010). This can be proved by the techniques that these typical speakers used in their arrangement of the speech. While planning the overall structure, the west prefers the linear thinking pattern which comes straight to the point from the very beginning, highlight his theme and clearly tell the listener his subject and main points. While the east tends to adopt the cyclical thinking pattern which points out his main idea or subject at the end of the speech. Obviously, the results show that the construction method of the text is of high coincidence with the former.

The findings above are partly consistent with the findings of Hu (2012) in that there is a fixed pattern in impromptu speech, that is, firstly, generally illustrate the speakers’ point of view towards one topic, then give argumentation to further demonstrate it and lastly echo with the beginning to give an end to the speech, and secondly, there are some techniques frequently used in the opening and ending parts. For example, the quotation of celebrities, stories, verses, etc applied in the opening and ending paragraphs to raise the topic. However, the difference lies in that an in-depth study is conducted from the aspect of text structure of this paper.

4.4.2. Construction Tactics

For the beginning of the speech, competitors are willing to choose different ways like quoting, giving examples, interacting and questioning and so on which set the stage for his own opinion to start his speech after the greeting part. Indeed about 1/3 competitors would like to draw forth the topic or end his speech by quoting famous saying or proverbs. That is to say, most speakers prefer to start his speech by quoting famous saying which is a good method to highlight the topic strongly. Besides, an attractive beginning is the first step for structuring a

good passage. If the beginning could quote philosophical famous saying appropriately, it would make the speech philosophical and persuasive. Similarly, the advantage of using famous saying in the ending of the passage is to persuade and enlighten the audience so that they will reflect themselves and make some changes.

Of course there are a few of competitors who start his speech with his own experience or those noted experience. For instance, No.109 and No.119 competitors in 2015 chose to start their speech by telling self-experience connected with the topic and then stated their own opinion towards the topic. Self-experience is unique for everyone. Beginning with story plot can not only raise the audience's interest but also resonate with all of them. In addition, it can enhance the reliability of the argument part. Nevertheless, few competitors start with interaction and question in all 23 impromptu speeches studied. There is a successful example that No.121 competitor in 2015 started her speech by asking questions and letting the audience to answer by raising their hands which is a novel way among all those techniques in the opening part. This could make the audience feel refreshed and participate in the speech.

For the argument, competitors always begin with "I will illustrate my viewpoint from three aspects." or something similar to this one. What's more, they often give an example or reason things out to further demonstrate the argument under each aspect, which offers support to the argument and avoid being seemed unreasonable. In all 23 impromptu speech studied, different competitors prove their opinions for different topics by telling self-experience or the experiences of famous people or utilizing heated social events like the tainted milk crisis, the problems with the education system and the Gansu preschool bus accident in order to convince the audience. The benefit of doing this is to make the speech more attractive and raise the interest of the audience so that the audience can think, reflect and benefit from the speech. Moreover, the structure seems to be clearer.

The strategies used in the ending of the passage are very the same as those in the beginning of the passage but there is no one ending the speech by interacting and questioning.

From the investigation, the authors find out that quoting famous sayings is a feasible way to be adopted by the speakers to persuade, enlighten and introspect the audience. In this way, the audience would have a better understanding toward the topic of the speech. However, since mentioned in the above part, the frequency of quoting famous sayings is 1/3. However, mostly, summaries and suggestions can be seen in almost each ending. They are the most commonly used ways by the speakers to propose the audience to put the advice into practice. The gap between the frequency of the two methods also expose a problem that the accumulation of famous sayings of students is deficient. Therefore, teachers could pay much attention to this part during their teaching which can not only promote the fluency and perfection of the speech, but improve the writing skills at the same time.

Lastly, the speakers usually end their speech by saying “thank you very much for your attention” or a much more direct way by just saying “thank you”.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

To sum up, there are some general rules hidden in the impromptu speech that can be explored. Firstly, the applications of highlight vocabularies and phrases, various connectives are quite common among the finalists of the FLTRP Cup. Secondly, the syntactics used by these finalists represents the common attributes which are complex and manifold, and special patterns are also frequently used for stylistic purpose. Thirdly, rhetoric devices are often used to emphasize, to empower the speech, though the variety of figures of speech is very limited, mostly confined to simile and parallelism. Lastly, the overall structure can be divided into two types: “What” model and “How” model which can be adopted to construct the draft of the speech quickly. Besides, heated topics of current society and the quotation of the famous sayings are widely used among the speakers to enrich their argumentation.

Based on the findings of this study, suggestions can be made to improve impromptu speech. First, more emphasis should be placed on the accumulation of advanced words and frequently-used collocations and transitional words, which can help to express more complicated ideas, or convey information more accurately. Extensive reading of authentic works, English newspaper, magazine, etc. can be very helpful to enlarge vocabulary and get acquainted with more advanced words and collocations. Second, more attention should be paid to the length of your sentences and diversified sentence structure. Long and short sentences should be distributed properly. Large blocks of short or long sentences should be avoided, while intermixed use of them can be more willingly accepted. The use of different sentence structures can enhance flexibility and avoid monotony of language. It sounds catchier if you can switch from one sentence structure to another freely. Third, to be familiar with the use of rhetorical devices. Do not just be confined to simile, metaphor and parallelism. Learn to use other rhetorical devices neatly to make the audience know that you have better linguistic competence than others. Take down the rhetorical devices you have met in textbooks or magazines and figure out the flexible uses of those rhetorical devices. Finally, choose the proper text structure according to the topic. Consider which model the topic belongs to, then arrange the content appropriately according to the exact text structure. It is also very important to be clear about where to propose the central idea, where to add personal experience, where to quote pearls of wisdom and so on.

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