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Exploration of the unique aspects of Chinese Rhetoric *Xiūcí* 修辞

Senior Project for the Chinese major

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1. Introduction

In 1932, *Chén Wàngdào* 陈望道 proposed a framework in his influential work *Prolegomenon to Rhetoric* for means of studying Chinese rhetoric further in depth (Huang et al. 2019). Within his framework, he categorized rhetoric into two different subfield called *jījī xiūcí* 积极修辞 ‘active rhetoric’ and *xiāoji xiūcí* 消极修辞 ‘passive rhetoric’ (Huang et al. 2019). Active rhetoric tends to focus more heavily on enhancing verbal communication through utilization of expressive, emotional, colorful, and distinct figures of speech to convey the speaker’s meaning. Due to these vivid feelings conveyed through linguistic devices of active rhetoric, this form of rhetoric lends itself to creative potential. Active rhetoric also values originality and inventiveness, making diction and eloquence important fundamental aspects to studying the current corpus. Active rhetoric thus lends itself for enhancing expressive emotions and is popular in poetry as well as storytelling as a means of elevating communication within the medium. In comparison, passive rhetoric encompasses plainer language that is utilized for communication in non-literary forms. This type of rhetoric is typically more straightforward and easily comprehensible, commonly found in legal documents or other formal communications. While these two categories are distinct, active rhetoric does draw from the passive rhetoric in foundation but expands the boundaries of expression past the strict “real world, truth-dependent facts... for the novelty of expression” (Huang et al. 2019, 728). In this analysis our focus will primarily be on forms of active rhetoric given their pervasive nature in literary texts that second language learners are often exposed to during their language studies. The expressive nature of active rhetoric also provides a deeper understanding of the more subtle nuances of the Chinese language from a linguistic and cultural perspective.

Chinese rhetorical devices are a vividly descriptive means of expressing sentiments of all types. While there are similar devices in other languages, these structures in Chinese have a number of characteristics specific to the Chinese language that are not present in other languages. Their expressive and colorful nature is an element that is showcased in the rhetorical device of Chinese idioms, an essential element of the Chinese language. Chinese idiomatic sayings and phrases are extremely expressive in order to convey strong imagery and intense emotions in as few words as possible (Shen 2004). One example is

the rigid structures that cannot be easily rearranged or truncated without losing meaning. The devices typically employ metaphors to convey vivid imagery and utilize well-known historical or cultural figures that the general population can recognize to express their knowledge (Shen 2004). However, understanding many of these idioms can frequently require deeper thinking due to the highly figurative allusions or the idioms akin to riddles. The incorporation of these figures and continual refining of sayings resulted in phrases of few words but that are highly expressive and thus heavily reflect Chinese culture and values through these idioms.

1.1 Presenting Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study aims to enhance the knowledge of the writer's understanding of Chinese rhetorical devices *xiūcí* 修辞. This linguistic device is a pervasive element of Chinese language and expression found in use dating back to ancient times. Chinese rhetoric is commonly found in traditional poetry and modern terms due to the varying elements this device encompasses. These characteristics of Chinese rhetoric can also help provide greater cultural context and comprehension in both reading Chinese works as well as conversing in the Chinese language. This knowledge of language and culture is accentuated in the various forms of Chinese idioms. To interpret and analyze these linguistic devices, a strong command of the Chinese language as well as comprehensive familiarity with Chinese culture and media is required. The following questions are therefore the source of interests driving this paper: how do Chinese rhetoric and Chinese idioms reflect cultural influences in the terms employed and the usage of various idioms? How does analyzing Chinese rhetoric enhance expression and understanding of the Chinese language? This paper pursues these queries through an exploratory analysis of the semantic structures and diction of Chinese rhetorical devices in their linguistic and cultural contexts. By conducting cross-cultural comparisons, this project is able to highlight the differences in cultural values and aid second language learners in achieving a deeper understanding of Chinese rhetorical devices and their applications. Due to the rich elements within different subfields of Chinese rhetoric and the special representation these linguistic elements have across Chinese formal and colloquial

language, understanding the characteristics and meaning of Chinese rhetorical devices adds a greater value to a second-language learner's understanding of the Chinese language.

This analysis will also go beyond the scope of current advanced Chinese language studies offered at Vassar College and the level generally offered at American universities. This project provides an opportunity to learn about the specified topic in greater depth to enhance the author's engagement with Chinese language and culture. Additionally, given the limitation of the author's own knowledge of Chinese language, this analysis provides a difficult challenge in attempting to understand and analyze different forms of expression in Chinese as well as the language overall. A stronger foundational understanding of Chinese rhetoric is therefore a valuable contribution to the author's own knowledge of the Chinese language and ability to analyze Chinese works in greater detail.

1.2 Introducing Different Types of Rhetoric *Xiūcí* 修辞

Rhetorical devices are rich and diverse sources of linguistic expression found across many languages in similar basic structural forms. In this analysis however, our interest in the unique cultural and semantic aspects of Chinese rhetoric leads us to focus specifically on the linguistic devices that demonstrate characteristics unique to the Chinese language. These traits include the Chinese characters incorporated into phrases, the tonal patterns, and the specific arrangements of the Chinese characters within examples of rhetorical devices. The elements of these linguistic devices will be further explored and explained below in a way that highlights rhetorical enhancement of communication and cultural comprehension.

Within Chinese rhetoric (*xiūcí* 修辞), there is a linguistic device whose name translates to “pun” in English. The Chinese term, *shuāngguān* 双关, has a similar aim as the English pun although there are a few specific points of difference which will be discussed further in section 4. The Chinese pun is a method to enhance one's own expression and can be employed in both a more serious literary manner as well as in a more humorous daily speech manner (Shen 2004). However, these uses are not absolute since a pun can be applied comically within literature as a means to lighten the mood or in everyday language

to convey a more serious sentiment. There are three distinct types of puns in Chinese called phonetic puns *yǔyīn shuāngguān* 语音双关, semantic puns *yǔyì shuāngguān* 语义双关, and structural puns *jiégòu shuāngguān* 结构双关 (Shen 2004). The type of pun often determines the sentiment that will be conveyed, thus dictating in which contexts the pun is appropriate to use.

Another linguistic device of Chinese rhetoric *xiūcí* 修辞 is the antiparallel structure *duì'ǒu* 对偶. This type of linguistic tool is more commonly used in written language. These structures consist of two lines that run parallel to each other. Each line is equal to its pair in regards to the number of characters and corresponding characters are consistent across semantic meaning, lexical meaning, and tone (Xu 2006). They can be employed to express two correspondingly similar or contrasting meanings. This structure can also often be found as a poetic device and can be manipulated to create verses based around the antiparallel structure (Huang et al. 2019). There is also a specific type of *duì'ǒu* 对偶 called *duìlián* 对联 that contains strong cultural elements. This structure also consists of two lines parallel in structure that should correspond appropriately based on the same characteristics mentioned for *duì'ǒu* 对偶 (Xu 2006). The *duìlián* 对联 is typically used for more ceremonial purposes to convey hopes and wishes for the future and can often be seen on building entrances or the door frames of peoples' homes.

1.3 Introducing Different Types of Idioms *Shúyǔ* 熟语

A key distinction between the translation of *shúyǔ* 熟语 as 'idiom' and the English understanding of idioms is that in English this term refers to a single type of phrase or saying. The phrase or saying is differentiated from the English categories of allegories or proverbs, as the purpose, usage, and structure of each category is distinct. In Chinese however, the term *shúyǔ* 熟语 is a term that includes other forms of phrases such as: *chéngyǔ* 成语 (idiom), *guànyòng yǔ* 惯用语 (idiom), *xīēhòuyǔ* 歇后语 (allegory), *yànyǔ* 谚语 (proverb), and *géyán* 格言 (motto or proverb) (Shen 2004). As is evident, the English translation of these terms shows how the term for idiom, *shúyǔ* 熟语, is more diverse in the literary sayings than the term 'idiom' in English encompasses. Since the translations for some of these terms is the same in English, those terms will be referred to in their pinyin form to maintain clarification. In this analysis, we

focus on *chéngyǔ* and *xiēhòuyǔ* of the forms of *shúyǔ* due to the similar cultural and linguistic elements between these styles and *xiūcí* 修辞. These idiom forms also retain characteristics that have certain overlapping features and traits with the forms of Chinese rhetoric focused on in this analysis. Certain rhetorical examples that are present within idioms that are further explained in the sections below. Analyzing these linguistic devices as well as the relationship between these creative forms of expression thus further enhances the understanding and analysis of the Chinese language.

2. Characteristics of the Different Types of Idioms

2.1 Characteristics of *Shúyǔ* 熟语

There are five distinct structural characteristics of *shúyǔ* 熟语: combination, form, expression, formal convention, and understanding (Shen 2004). The combination of characters in *shúyǔ* occur in a specific order and composition so each *shúyǔ* has a fixed form. This sequence of characters is important as attempting to remove, add, or change the order of the saying will cause the phrase to lose the intended meaning. For examples, the *chéngyǔ xiábùyǎnyú* 瑕不掩瑜 (meaning ‘small failings do not detract from overall excellence’) cannot be reordered as *yúbùyǎnxiá* 瑜不掩瑕 (Heng & Zhang 1988). The form cannot be easily changed as separating the characters can render the extended or figurative meanings unintelligible. This is shown in the phrase *jīdàn lǐ tiāogǔtōu* 鸡蛋里挑骨头 (meaning ‘to deliberately find fault’, or ‘intentionally picky’) where segmenting the saying would renders the figurative meaning incomprehensible (Heng & Zhang 1988). The individual components of *jīdàn* ‘chicken’, *lǐ* ‘inside’, *tiāo* ‘to carry’ or ‘choose’ and *gǔtōu* ‘bone’ do not have the same figurative meaning once separated from the phrase showing how the the form of *shúyǔ* is not easily changed (Johnson-Laird 1993). The third characteristic also explains why Chinese idioms are so numerous and established in the language as the sayings have typically been used for many years and have undergone much refining to the point that they are able to convey vivid meaning in the fewest number of characters possible (Shen 2004). Due to the years of revision, the various types of *shúyǔ* have evolved into having recognizable formal conventions,

e.g. *chéngyǔ* 成语 being composed of four characters or *guànyòng yǔ* 惯用语 typically being three character sayings, which will be further explored in the following sections. The final characteristic of *shúyǔ* is the method used to convey intense feelings and rich images are conveyed to understand the different idioms. While most typically employ metaphors to articulate expressive images and emotions, certain idioms are comprehensible through their literal meanings. The phrase *chéng rén bù zì zài, zì zài bù chéng rén* 成人不自在, 自在不成人 (literally meaning ‘successful people are not comfortable, comfortable people are not successful’ or more poetically ‘to be successful one cannot be comfortable but must work hard’) is an example of where an idiom’s intended meaning is equivalent to the literal meaning. The literal meaning is still able to reflect the cultural value that working hard and enduring is the way to success. These five characteristics are defining elements among the different types of *shúyǔ* that will become further evident in the following exploration.

2.2 Characteristics of *Chéngyǔ* 成语

While there are several different categories of *shúyǔ* 熟语, the most commonly known type to second language learners is *chéngyǔ* 成语. These idioms tend to be short, fixed sayings that convey rich ideological ideas and are habitually used by people in general life (Shen 2004). They also have strong historical cultural backgrounds and the majority originated from ancient Chinese. This can sometimes lead to terms being updated to suit modern day understanding and language or certain idioms losing their meaning as aspects of culture and society fade out of use (Shen 2004). However as idioms evolve, new idioms also emerge with each modern historical period.

There are three main characteristics of *chéngyǔ*: structure, use of strong color, and the unique four-character format. The order of the fixed phrases tends to be quite rigid and characters cannot be added or subtracted from the saying without losing the intended meaning (Lee 1978). The second characteristic is also a distinguishing feature of *chéngyǔ* from other *shúyǔ* as other types of idioms tend to include vivid imagery words that connect to common characters and easily comprehensible allusions. *Chéngyǔ* however, tend to include characters and allusions that are difficult to decipher and require more

investigation to understand the intended meaning of the idiom (Shen 2004). As many *chéngyǔ* also emerged from ancient Chinese, there is a greater requirement of effort to understand the meaning of certain terms since their usage has shifted with revision over time. In the phrase *wénbùjiādiǎn* 文不加点, while *diǎn* originally means ‘dot’ as in punctuation, in this context the figurative meaning is ‘to write swiftly and skillfully without need of revision’ (Heng & Zhang 1988). The third element of *chéngyǔ* is the distinctive four-character matrix of the sayings that is so strong certain phrases will evolve into four-character sayings over time. The consistent structure makes recognizing and memorizing *chéngyǔ* easier as they can express many sentiments in just a few words. The concise format is likely part of why sayings will assimilate to the four-character matrix over time as these will be easier for people to recall and thus become the idioms shared with the following generation. The phrase *yī yè luò zhī tiānxià qiū* 一叶落知天下秋 has become the four-character phrase *yī yè zhī qiū* 一叶知秋 (Shen 2004). The literal meaning is ‘when one leaf falls, one knows autumn is coming’ which is still retained when shortened to just the four characters. The metaphor thus reflects how individual subtle signs can reflect development of the larger situation and figuratively can also be used to indicate an expression of false meanings (Johnson-Laird 1993). The figurative understanding is likely due to the fact that while smaller events can supplement a picture of the greater development, they are not always holistically reflective or predictive. To rely too heavily on ‘a single leaf falling’ to ‘know autumn is coming’ can be misleading, thus creating the understanding of conveying false meaning. For longer phrases, the four character structure can still exist in a dual structure as seen in this example: *shí nián shù mù, bǎi nián shù rén* 十年树木，百年树人 (meaning ‘it takes a long time to make a small tree into wood, it takes a long time and effort to cultivate talent’) (Heng & Zhang 1988). Here the dual structure creates opportunity for an analogy within the *chéngyǔ* as the comparison of needing a long time for one tree to be large enough to yield wood further emphasizes the need for an even longer time to develop talent. Thus this *chéngyǔ* can still retain the four-character matrix while highlighting expression within the *chéngyǔ* in the dual structure.

2.2.1 Presence of Numbers in *Chéngyǔ* 成语

The role of numbers is interesting to point out as they are fairly common in *chéngyǔ* 成语. When a *chéngyǔ* contains only one number, the number is usually in the first or third position in the idiom. There is a consistency carried over when there are two numbers present as they are most likely to be found in both the first and third position within the idiom (Nall 2009). The numerals: *yī* 一, *bǎi* 百, *wàn* 万, *sān* 三, and *qiān* 千 are the numbers most likely to occur in idioms with numbers where *yī* is the most common. Additionally, the sequential-order of the numerical value is an intriguing anecdote as the most prevalent form is for the numbers to increase from first position to third position. After this, decreasing value is most common, and finally the least common is where the numeral in position one is equal in value to the numeral in position three. The following examples from Nall (2009) show both the position of numbers within *chéngyǔ* as well as the increasing or decreasing order:

三推六问

sān tuī liù wèn three push six ask questions

‘to interrogate again and again’

十围五攻

shí wéi wǔ gōng ten

besiege five attack

‘if the military force is ten times greater than the enemy’s, then besiege them, but if only five times greater. then launch a focused attack upon them.’

一心一计

yī xīn yī jì

one heart one plan

‘very whole-heartedly, not distracted by other things’

Above are examples of how numerical order can differ in different idioms *chéngyǔ* where the value increases, decreases, or is equivalent to the previous number in the phrase. These trends in the idioms reflect how a level of superstition in Chinese culture as the order or the values of numbers can be associated with positive or negative sentiments.

2.2.2 Usage of Negation in *Chéngyǔ* 成语

Chinese idioms *chéngyǔ* 成语 use four different characters for negation: *bù* 不 (not), *wú* 無/无 (no, none), *mò* 莫 (none, no, not, do not), and *wèi* 未 (not yet) (Nall 2009). From the following examples, it is possible to observe that Chinese idioms will occasionally convey the presence of negative qualities or outcomes through negating a desirable or positive concept or result instead of expressing a positive sentiment about a difficult situation.

一尘不染

yī chén bù rǎn

one dust not catch/contaminate

‘(literally) immaculate; spotless; (figuratively) uncontaminated’

一事无成

yī shì wú chéng

one thing no success

‘to accomplish nothing; to get nowhere’

未知万一

wèi zhī wàn yī

not know one 10 thousandth

‘having scant knowledge of something’

一筹莫展

yī chóu mò zhǎn

one plan not unfold

‘cannot find a way out’

The above examples illustrate the usage of negation to express unfavorable sentiments about difficult situations. The expressions show how negating a good element can be done via numbers rather than attempting to express positive words about a rough situation.

2.3 Characteristics of *Xiēhòuyǔ* 歇后语

Xiēhòuyǔ 歇后语 are more distinct from the other types of *shúyǔ* 熟语 and can be viewed as a Chinese word game. They typically have four defining characteristics: The first is their specific formal construction (Shen 2004). The formal pattern is that *xiēhòuyǔ* are composed of two parts with a distinctive tone pause in between, which is unique in Chinese (Shen 2004). The latter half of the saying is used to further explain the former half (usually a metaphor) and while the entire phrase is written down, sometimes only the first part is spoken out loud. The second feature of *xiēhòuyǔ* is the flexibility in constructing these allegories (Lee 1978). These sayings are able to use homophones more freely than other *shúyǔ* creating the potential for more than one answer to the same *xiēhòuyǔ*. For example, the phrase *héhuā táng lǐ zháohuǒ--ǒurán* 荷花塘里着火--偶然 (藕燃) figuratively means ‘in a very rare case’ (e.g. someone makes a error who no one expected to make a mistake) (Heng & Zhang 1988). The first half of the saying literally translates to ‘a fire in the lotus pond’ where the second part is a homophone of *ǒurán* (偶然 meaning occasionally and 藕燃 meaning lotus root on fire). The second *ǒurán* has the fire radical connecting the meaning to the first half of the phrase with *huǒ* and thus is a double entendre as ‘occasionally’ is synonymous with ‘in a very rare case’ and ‘lotus root of fire’ is akin to ‘a fire in the lotus pond’. The third characteristic of *xiēhòuyǔ* is the vivid and specific imagery used in these allegories to produce a playful effect. Given *xiēhòuyǔ* are a type of riddle, they often contain characters from well-known mythology and historical events or typical social relations in life to make them easier to solve. In the phrase *báigǔjīng bàn xīnniáng -- yāo lǐ yāo qì* 白骨精扮新娘 -- 妖里妖气 the first half is referencing the famous character *báigǔjīng* (translating to ‘the white bone demon’) from *Journey to the West*. The phrase translates to ‘the White Bone demon is playing a new bride’ which likely references how the white bone demon first impersonates a young village girl when meeting the Monkey King, Tang Sanzang, and Zhu Bajie to attempt to capture Tang Sanzang. The second element of *yāo lǐ yāo qì* could be interpreted as ‘inside is a demon that is angry’ as the White Bone demon is actually a demon inside this young bride illusion and the Monkey King continually thwarts the White Bone demon’s attempts to

devour Tang Sanzang's flesh. The final characteristic of *xiēhòuyǔ* is the jesting or humorous element. Many *xiēhòuyǔ* are from spoken Chinese and thus have an element of bantering to make those who hear the saying smile. Since many of these verbal riddles were created by the common people, certain phrases contain a level of vulgarity which means they generally should not be used in more solemn situations but rather in a more lighthearted environment (Shen 2004). The *xiēhòuyǔ gē jiǔcài bù yòng liándāo -- húchě* 割韭菜不用镰刀 -- 胡扯 translates to 'No need to use a sickle to cut the chives -- nonsense (or the more vulgar term, bullshit)' (Heng & Zhang 1988). This saying reflects agricultural roots and showcases a playful tone as the first half of the saying is clearly absurd resulting in the proclamation of calling such an idea foolish which composes the second half.

Having articulated the characteristics of *xiēhòuyǔ*, the usage of these phrases are thus for entertainment value. Due to the lightheartedness of the responses to the initial half of the riddle and the origin of the sayings being in banter, the riddles function as a word game for anyone. The rich cultural elements and references to common experiences allow the masses to participate in *xiēhòuyǔ* as they are designed to be understandable by the public. Additionally, understanding *xiēhòuyǔ* is important for second language learners to better understand elements of Chinese culture. As the answers often require wit and knowledge of Chinese historical or mythological figures and common societal roles, studying the sayings would enhance any second-language learner's grasp of Chinese culture.

3. Cultural Elements in Different Types of Idioms

3.1 Cultural Elements in *Shúyǔ* 熟语

Chinese idioms are one of the richest linguistic sources of cultural elements. Looking cross-cultural at the different ways these sayings are expressed reflects differences in cultural perception of experience, even when the metaphors are conveying the same meaning. The different words used in each phrase also gives a deeper insight into social and work life. One comparison is between the Chinese idiom *zǎixiàng dù lǐ néng chēng chuán* 宰相肚里能撑船 and the Mongolian idiom *xīnxiōng kuānguǎng*

de rén, jīnhuái lǐ néng pǎo dé xià quán ānmǎ 心胸宽广的人，襟怀里能跑得下全鞍马 where both phrases convey the idea of being open minded and generous in addition to treating others with kindness. The cultural difference can be seen in that the Chinese form uses *chuán* ‘boat’ rather than *mǎ* ‘horse’ as waterways were important systems to move goods between locations but Mongolian life is inseparable from horses for travel (Shen 2004). This difference in expression taps into working life and geographic differences which influence linguistic expression.

While these differences in diction are present across the various cultural idioms, there are also universal concepts present in all cultures and languages. These draw on the basis of shared mutual recognition and cognitive experience in life. Some examples are: ‘work like a horse’ in English is *zuò niú zuò mǎ* 做牛做马 (literally to be a cow or horse-reflecting the importance of both animals in agriculture and transportation, though the figurative meaning is equivalent to the English counterpart of working very hard), ‘walls have ears’ in English is *géqiángyǒu'ěr* 隔墙有耳 (figuratively meaning that someone is always listening and can interpreted as a warning to be careful of what a person says and where they say it) in Chinese, and the English phrase ‘add fuel to the flames’ is *huǒ shàng jiāo yóu* 火上浇油 in Chinese where the figurative meaning of both phrases is to make a situation worse as adding more flames to a fire makes the whole thing bigger and more dangerous (Shen 2004). Thus Chinese idioms play an important role in cross-cultural communication as they reflect the differences and similarities of strong national and cultural elements of various nations.

3.2 Cultural Elements in *Chéngyǔ* 成语

Given the strong presence idioms *chéngyǔ* 成语 have throughout the Chinese language, these idioms express cultural and historical values fundamental to Chinese experience. These idioms tend to come from several sources: historical literature, verbal creation, literary works, borrowed from loan words, borrowed from dialects, borrowed from professional language, and created from the internet (Shen 2004). Over time, idioms *chéngyǔ* tend to evolve as the terms get updated and the usage of various idioms expands. Some examples are: *yǐ yǎn hái yǎn, yǐ yá hái yá* 以眼还眼，以牙还牙 from “The Old Testament”

(meaning ‘an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth’), *yītóu wù shuǐ* 一头雾水 (meaning ‘puzzled’, ‘confused’) from Guangdong dialect *guangdong hua* (广东话), *quánxiàn piāohóng* 全线飘红 (literally meaning ‘red tickets across the board/line’), and *zhèng lóng pāi hǔ* 正龙拍虎. The first is a common saying in English which is borrowed from a religious text and translated to Chinese that figuratively means ‘equal payment for equal damage’. The second phrase originates from the Guangdong regional dialect where the meaning is also fairly straightforward to decipher. In this saying, the third character *wù* translates to ‘fog’ and in combination with the fourth character of water can lead to fog being interpreted as ‘foggy’. The term ‘foggy’ can have a double meaning of there being a lot of mist making it difficult to see or having trouble recalling events/thinking; thus one can now understand the saying to mean one’s head is foggy. The following term, *quánxiàn piāohóng*, is borrowed from the stock market (Shen 2004). Traditionally, when stocks were rising they were depicted as red-likely due to red being an auspicious color in Chinese culture. Thus in this phrase one’s prospects are looking good as all of their stock (lines) are red meaning they are going up. The final example saying originated from an internet scandal in 2007 regarding pictures of supposed ‘wild South China tigers’ (EastSouthWestNorth 2020). Soon after release, the internet criticized the photos accusing them of being digitally altered resulting in the term *zhèng lóng pāi hǔ*. The interpretation of this *chéngyǔ* can be ‘one who continues to act genuine even after being exposed as fraudulent’ or ‘lacking social credibility’. The use of *lóng* (‘dragon’) with *zhèng* (‘right’ or ‘pure’) has cultural implications as dragons are highly revered in Chinese culture and thus indicates acting with good intent. The second part of the idiom is the focus however as *pāi hǔ* (‘photographing a tiger’) reveals how this so-called pure individual or action is actually disreputable as they are figuratively ‘creating a photo hoax’. These sayings thus encompass both wisdom handed down through the generations as well as modern phenomena pertaining to the culture’s emotional, mental, and life experiential aspects of common experiences. These tend to include an individual's hopes and fears, such as desiring wealth or fearing death, and wish to be knowledgeable and virtuous (Nall 2009). The expressions play a fundamental role in Chinese culture as they convey rich emotions and cultural ideals. Having a deeper understanding of *chéngyǔ* is therefore essential to learning more about Chinese culture.

3.2.1 Five Categories of Metaphor

Chéngyǔ 成语 are associated with the five elements in Chinese culture. Table 1 (Sun 2006) shows the relationships of each element to the: seasons, climate, major organs, minor organs, senses, and emotion.

Table 1 *Five categories of metaphor with the five elements*

Element	Wood 木	Fire 火	Earth 土	Metal 金	Water 水
Season	spring	summer	Late summer	autumn	winter
Climate	windy	hot	wet	dry	cold
<i>Zang</i> 藏	liver	heart	spleen	lung	kidney
<i>Fu</i> 腑	gall	Small intestine	stomach	Large intestine	bladder
Sense	eyes	tongue	lips	nose	ears
Emotion	anger	happiness	anxiety	grief	fright

The expression of the emotions are therefore made richer and more vivid by using the element associated with the feeling. Some example phrases are: *gāndǎn jù liè* 肝胆俱裂 (meaning literally ‘the liver and gallbladder have split’), *rèxīncháng* 热心肠 (meaning ‘warmhearted’), and *tiěshí xīncháng* 铁石心肠 (meaning ‘stone heart’). In the first term, the figurative meaning of the saying is ‘loyalty’ or ‘to not fear a threat on one’s life or a great sacrifice’. Here gallbladder and liver are associated with the emotion of anger which can also be interpreted as passion, thus a fierce loyalty connects with the emotion of anger. The second term is in reference to individuals who are willing to help others and are enthusiastic. This uses the heart and small intestines which are associated with happiness and the fire element in combination with warm *rè* to further emphasize the sentiments of ‘warmhearted’. The third is an example of combining multiple internal organs with different elements to form idioms. Here *xīn* (heart) and *cháng* (intestine) are both connected to fire while *tiě* (metal) *shí* (stone) are connected to the metal element.

While the former is associated with happiness, the latter terms are associated with grief. Thus the saying takes on both a literal and figurative element as heart is used literally while the emotion of grief is conveyed through associated elements. The elemental aspect of *chéngyǔ* therefore reflect the cultural ideals present in the linguistic aspect.

3.3 Cultural Elements in *Xiēhòuyǔ* 歇后语

Given the relationship of *xiēhòuyǔ* 歇后语 to culture and shared experience in order to solve these Chinese linguistic riddles, studying and understanding Chinese *xiēhòuyǔ* is important to grasping more about the Chinese experience. The semantics of *xiēhòuyǔ* take advantage of the way that the shape, sound, and meaning of Chinese characters can be flexible. Semantic puns use the characteristics of ambiguous words and homophones so that the literal meaning and figurative meaning are merged into one word through an analogy (Shen 2004). However to understand the nuances of this convergence, one needs cultural context. The allegory *Wūdàláng qǐngkè -- gāopéngmǎnzuo* 武大郎请客 -- 高朋满座 comes from a Chinese classic *Jīnpíngméi* 金瓶梅 (translated to ‘The Plum in the Golden Vase’) where the first half of the saying introduces the character *Wūdàláng* who was described as short and very ugly in the novel. The second half of the *xiēhòuyǔ* plays into the ambiguity of the term *gāo* so that the term can be used in the height sense of ‘tall’ (*gāo’ǎi* 高矮) and the noble meaning of *gāo*. Thus the pun is that when *Wūdàláng* invites others over they are all taller and/or of higher status than him. This saying therefore showcases how semantic puns contain cultural influences.

Another form of word play in *xiēhòuyǔ* that reflect cultural elements are homophonic puns. The phrase *hé biān xǐ huánglián -- hé (hé) kǔ* 河边洗黄连 -- 何 (河) 苦 shows the answer to be a pun using a homophone (He & Zhang 1988). The first part translates to ‘washing clothes in *Coptis chinensis*’ where *Coptis chinensis* is a herb used in traditional Chinese medicine where the second part can be answered as ‘bitter there’. Herbs are often quite bitter so the answer contains bitter. However the homophonic pun occurs between the two *hé*’s, 何 and 河, where the former is used to indicate questioning and the latter is river. Thus washing one’s clothes in this river of Chinese herbs is a ‘bitter river’. The play of words

incorporating traditional Chinese medicine demonstrates how *xiēhòuyǔ* contain important cultural elements in their homophonic puns. The third main characteristic in *xiēhòuyǔ* is character shape interpretation (Shen 2004). These *xiēhòuyǔ* are the most akin to a game as the former segment describes the visual understanding of the second half. In *zì dà shàng jiā yī diǎn -- chòu* 自大上加一点 -- 臭 one only needs to look at *chòu* to see how the character is composed of the character *zì* on top of the character *dà* to understand the connection between both parts. There is also a linguistic pun as the first part can be translated as ‘adding a bit of arrogance’ and the second part to ‘smelly’ or ‘lousy’ remarking on how arrogance is regarded as negative by others. This is also found in *xīn zì tóu shàng yī bǎ dāo -- rěn* 心字头上一把刀 -- 忍 as the character above *xīn* is *dāo* showing the very literal meaning of *dāo* being above the *xīn* in *rěn*. Here too, if one takes the literal translation the saying means ‘when a knife is above one’s head -- endure’ which could imply that in a dangerous or difficult situation one must endure to get through.

4. Characteristics of Active Rhetoric *Xiūcí* 修辞

4.1 Characteristics of Puns *Shuāngguān* 双关

The pun *shuāngguān* 双关 is a rhetorical device where one saying contains a double meaning. Puns are a play on words and a play on sound using homophones. They typically have a literal meaning that is more easily discernible and a metaphorical or hidden meaning that requires a deeper understanding of Chinese language and culture (Shen 2004). The latter element attempts to connect two ideas that are not easily connected and therefore expands the capacities of language beyond traditional meaning. This linguistic device is also applicable to interpretation in a more formal setting, such as poetry, as well as in more common daily speech, such as jokes. Puns are an expressive rhetorical device that can enhance the meaning of the content a user is sharing or expand their comprehension of associated ideas within Chinese. Chinese puns can be categorized into phonetic puns, semantic puns, and structural puns (Shen 2004). The categories are distinguished based on the purpose of the characters selected and the specific aspect of knowledge required to appropriately interpret a pun. The different types of puns also often

incorporate or are influenced by various cultural elements and thus necessitate a familiarity with Chinese culture across mediums to accurately understand certain sayings (“*Shuāngguān* 双关”. 汉典). In the following section we explore the different categories of puns and their unique characteristics.

4.1.1 Characteristics of Phonetic Puns *Yǔyīn Shuāngguān* 语音双关

Phonetic puns *yǔyīn shuāngguān* 语音双关 is the category of pun that employs homophones, which creates an opportunity for word play (Shen 2004). The presence of similar sounds and tones for characters allows a substitution where shifting a character can change the meaning of the word while retaining the same sound and tone marker. This action can create a certain ambiguity that requires a deeper cultural familiarity to understand the true meaning intended behind the literal meaning and translation. One example is identifiable within an allegory *xiēhòuyǔ* 歇后语,

小葱拌豆腐，一清二白¹

xiǎocōng bàn dòufu, yī qīng'èr bái

Small scallion mixed with tofu, innocent

In the allegory above, the phonetic pun is identifiable in the second part through the homophone *qīng*. The character for *qīng* used in the saying is 清 which means “pure” or “clear” in its adjective form. However *qīng* is a homophone for 青 meaning “green”. Here 青 is substituted with 清 to change the meaning of the phrase from “one part green two parts white” to “innocent” or “perfectly clean”. Thus if a person was attesting to their innocence they may say *xiǎocōng bàn dòufu* 小葱拌豆腐 to emphasize they are innocent of the accusations brought against them. When a person is well versed in these types of sayings, hearing only the first half of the phrase is enough to infer the second half and its meaning. Thus the phonetic homophone of *qīng* lends itself to expanding the creative expression language and meaning.

Homophonic puns can be found in all different mediums for more formal purposes, such as poetry, as well as in daily speech, such as for humor. Those used in daily speech are often more casual and tend to be jokes. Comedians may use the phonetic puns to entertain as seen by the example below

¹ Wen Zhaohong 温赵红. Xiehouyu 歇后语 (Chinese idioms)

女士, 最近是你最喜欢的食物?
nǚshì, zuìjìn shì nǐ zuì xǐhuān de shíwù?
“Miss, recently what is your favorite food?”

当然是鸭子!
Dāngrán shì yāzi!
“Of course it’s duck!”

The joke here lies in the word *yāzi* 鸭子. This phrase literally translates to “duck” but has more recently become a slang term for “male prostitute”. The homophone *yāzi* creates a double entendre with a humorous yet risqué punchline demonstrating the more lighthearted nature of the phonetic pun.

4.1.2 Characteristics of Semantic Puns *Yǔyì Shuāngguān* 语义双关

Semantic puns *yǔyì shuāngguān* 语义双关 is the classification for puns utilizing multiple meanings of the same character to create the dual interpretation of the pun (Shen 2004). The character is written the same where its interpretation depends on the context and usage. While there is a similar device in English called a homonym, in Chinese the appropriate deployment of this device for semantic puns differs drastically. English puns often contain a humorous element to leave the reader with a playful sentiment while Chinese puns can take both a joking context and a more formal expression in serious works. One example is an excerpt from the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber Hónglómèng* 红楼梦 by *Cáo Xuěqín* 曹雪芹.

将那三春看破, 桃红柳绿待如何? 把这韶华打灭, 觅那清淡天和
Jiāng nà sānchūn kànpò, táohóng liǔ lǜ dài rúhé? Bǎ zhè sháohuá dǎ miè, mì nà qīngdàn tiān hé
Seeing those three springs, how will the peach flowers and green willows be treated? Destroy this
beautiful springtime, look for the light of the heavenly hand.

In this example, there are two identifiable semantic puns. The first are the two characters “*sānchūn* 三春” which would generally refer to late spring. In the context of the novel however, “*sānchūn* 三春” can also refer to the situation of three of the main characters, *Yuánchūn* 元春, *Yīngchūn* 迎春, and

Tànchūn 探春. This section can therefore be a personal anecdote of thoughts from observing the scenery as well as a commentary on the complex situation of the *Yuánchūn* 元春, *Yíngchūn* 迎春, and *Tànchūn* 探春. The other pun is the term *sháohuá* 韶华 which can mean ‘beautiful springtime’ and would be appropriate in the context of the imagery described. However, the other meaning of *sháohuá* 韶华 can also be ‘glorious youth’. Given the sentiments mentioned above, the first part of the second line of this semantic pun can also be interpreted as “destroy this glorious youth” referring to the complex situation between *Yuánchūn* 元春, *Yíngchūn* 迎春, and *Tànchūn* 探春 in this time of adolescence. One can see the command of language comprehension and cultural context necessary here to understand the sentiments of this semantic pun as the reader must know that *sānchūn* 三春 can refer to late spring and they must be familiar with *Dream of the Red Chamber* to catch that *sānchūn* 三春 may also be referring to the situation of *Yuánchūn* 元春, *Yíngchūn* 迎春, and *Tànchūn* 探春.

Semantic puns can also be found within other linguistic devices. The allegory *xièhòuyǔ* 歇后语, mentioned earlier, can also contain characteristics consistent with puns. One example is,

擀面杖吹火 — 一窍不通

gǎnmiànzhàng chuī huǒ — yīqiàobùtōng

“using the wrong tool to do a job, it won’t work”

This allegory has a literal meaning roughly translating to “using the wrong tool to do a job, it won’t work”. Here *gǎnmiànzhàng* 擀面杖 means ‘rolling pin’ and *qiào* 窍 translates to ‘hole’ (Wen 2018). The second half is thus referring to how a rolling pin is solid and has no hollow center so even if a person were to attempt to blow through the rolling pin no air would go through. The cultural context here lies in the historical knowledge of Chinese cooking. Traditional Chinese stoves were typically heated through a fire underneath the flat top. To start the fire and maintain the flame, a person would have to occasionally blow into the fire to sustain the heat. However, there is a metaphorical meaning to this allegory due to the polysemy of the characters. The alternative meaning of this saying can be interpreted as “to know nothing” or “to know nothing about this thing”. These instances of multiple meanings for the

same characters or phrases creates an ambiguity within the attempts to analyze and understand the situations where semantic puns are present.

4.1.3 Characteristics of Structural Puns *Jiégòu Shuāngguān* 结构双关

Structural puns *jiégòu shuāngguān* 结构双关 use the same group of characters that are understood across different grammatical structures. These types of puns require a deeper familiarity with Chinese traditional culture and popular media as they take advantage of the inferences that can be made from the widespread recognition of certain sayings or phrases (Shen 2004). This style of pun can often refer to well known TV shows or advertisements as seen in the following example,

一起来看流星雨，雷声一片。

Yī qǐ lái kàn liú xīng yǔ, léi shēng yī piàn

Let's watch the meteor shower together

For this example, meteor showers *liú xīng yǔ* 流星雨 and thunder *léi shēng* 雷声 are both natural phenomena that occur while *yī qǐ lái kàn liú xīng yǔ* 一起来看流星雨 (*Let's Watch the Meteor Shower Together*) is also the name of a popular Chinese TV show from 2009 (“*Yī qǐ lái kàn liú xīng yǔ* 一起来看流星雨”. 百度). In context of the TV show, *léi shēng* 雷声 can also refer to praise and applause from the audience giving *léi shēng* 雷声 a context specific meaning in addition to the general meaning of “thunder”. With this example one could say *yī qǐ lái kàn liú xīng yǔ, léi shēng yī piàn* and due to the popularity of this TV show a person would understand the reference being to the title of the TV drama along with the connotation of “praise”. If a person performs and is asked how the performance went after, they could use this saying to imply the audience enjoyed it or there was “audience awareness” (in reference to widespread popularity).

Structural puns *jiégòu shuāngguān* 结构双关 can also be short phrases with an underlying meaning different from the initial interpretation of the pun. The example below highlights this phenomenon.

做女人挺好

zuò nǚrén tǐng hǎo

It's good to be a woman

In this phrase, the literal translation is when *zuò* 做 acts as the main verb modifying the subject *nǚrén* 女人. Under that interpretation, *tǐng hǎo* 挺好 means “very good” making the phrase a commentary on being a woman. However, given this phrase is a structural pun, there is another possible interpretation. If *tǐng* 挺 is the main verb then *zuò nǚrén* 做女人 becomes the adverbial modifier of *tǐng* 挺. This case would change *tǐng hǎo* 挺好 to mean “to stand steadfast against”. In this understanding, *tǐng* 挺 means ‘to go against’ or ‘to be brave against someone or something’ while *zuò nǚrén* 做女人 would still be ‘to be a woman’. Thus the phrase can now be interpreted as “good luck going against the mainstream/system of power” which can be used in conversation as a means of verbal support towards a woman in fields dominated by men. These examples demonstrate the versatility of structural puns in their usage and interpretation.

4.2 Characteristics of Chinese Parallel/Antithetical Structure *Duì'ǒu/Duìzhàng* 对偶/对仗

The Chinese parallel/antithetical structure, *duì'ǒu* 对偶 or *duìzhàng* 对仗, has a number of forms and variation in rules for stylistic writings. These rules are predominantly on the relationship between corresponding lines within the structures. The lines of the parallel/antithetical couplet must both have the same number of characters, where the number of characters per line is inferred from the type of parallel/antithetical couplet that is being composed (Plaks 1990). Additionally, the correlating character from each line must be consistent in both lexical category and meaning. For example, if the first line uses a noun at the beginning of the line then the second line must also use a noun at the beginning of the line. If the character of one line has to do with nature, ie. sun *rì* 日, then the corresponding character of the other line should also be related to nature, ie. moon *yuè* 月. This rule of meaning in this structure can also be used as a contrasting element between corresponding lines. If one line uses ‘have’ *yǒu* 有 then the corresponding character in the other line of the parallel/antithetical couplet could use ‘have not’ *wú* 无.

Thus, while the regulations are strict in defining the rules for parallel/antithetical couplets, they afford a degree of flexibility within the diverse characteristics.

Chinese *duì'ǒu* also have specific rules regarding the tonal patterns and application of tones in relation between lines of the parallel/antithetical couplet. These rules stem from the classification used for the four tones of Middle Chinese, *píng* 平, *shǎng* 上, *qù* 去, and *rù* 入 (Xu 2006). Comparing these tones to the ones currently used in Mandarin, *píng* 平 encompasses *yīshēng* 一声 first tone and *èr shēng* 二声 second tone, *shǎng* 上 encompasses *sān shēng* 三声 third tone, and *qù* 去 encompasses *sì shēng* 四声 fourth tone. An important difference between the two tonal sets is that *rù* 入, the sudden entering sound with a glottal stop, does not exist in current standard Mandarin. The tone can still be found in certain dialects like *Shànghǎi* 上海 dialect, Cantonese *Guǎngdōng huà* 广东话, and Southern Minnan *Mínnán yǔ* 闽南语 dialect. These four tones are further grouped into the level tones *píng* 平 and the oblique tones *zè* 仄. The group *píng* 平 contains *yīshēng* first tone and *èr shēng* second tone, as mentioned above. These tones are considered level due to their stable pitch and lack of strong inflection. In comparison, the oblique tones *zè* 仄 comprise of *sān shēng* third tone, and *sì shēng* fourth tone as these two tones have strong and noticeable intonation when pronounced. In context of the parallel structure, the tonal patterns of each pair of lines must have the inverse tone group to each other. For example, if the third character of the first line contained a *píng* 平 level tone then the third character of the second line should contain a *zè* 仄 oblique tone to appropriately follow the rules of *duì'ǒu*. Additionally, final characters of certain types of parallel structure lines (such as the *duìlián* 对联 discussed in the next section) have a set tonal group that should be followed (Xu 2006). The final character of the first line should have an oblique tone *zè* 仄, which would require the final character of the second line to have a *píng* 平 level tone. These formalized rules for tonal patterns can be largely attributed to the Tang dynasty, when these poetic parallel/antithetical couplets experienced the height of their popularity. Later dynasties writing regulated verse, *lǜshī* 律诗, continued adhering to the stricter Tang dynasty rules and regulations. While there have been certain changes and relaxation of the poetic rules with modern day parallel and antithetical structure, many of the Tang dynasty rules can still be found in current practice.

One form is called *lùshī*, which consists of eight lines where the number of characters within each line varies depending on the type of *lùshī* (Chen 2015; Cheng 1992). The presence of *lù* signals the poem will consist of eight lines while the number prior to *lù* signals how many characters will be present per each line. The seven character per line *lùshī* is called *qīlǜ* 七律. Within this structure, the third and fourth lines as well as the fifth and sixth lines can each make up a pair of *duì'ǒu* within the eight line poem of Tang dynasty regulated verse. The establishment of a *duì'ǒu* pair in the fifth and sixth lines came out of the Tang dynasty rules while prior to that period this structure was not required to be present within those two lines. Below is an example of *qīlǜ* 七律 using the poem *Gé yè* 阁夜 (Cheng 1992) by one of the most prominent Tang dynasty poets, *Dùfǔ* 杜甫.

杜甫《阁夜》

Dùfǔ “Gé yè”

岁暮阴阳催短景，天涯霜雪霁寒宵。

Suìmù yīnyáng cuī duǎn jǐng, tiānyá shuāng xuě jì hán xiāo.

五更鼓角声悲壮，三峡星河影动摇。

Wǔ gēng gǔjiǎo shēng bēizhuàng, sānxiá xīnghé yǐng dòngyáo.

野哭千家闻战伐，夷歌数处起渔樵。

Yě kū qiānjiā wén zhàn fá, yí gē shù chù qǐ yú qiáo.

卧龙跃马终黄土，人事音书漫寂寥。

Wòlóng yuè mǎ zhōng huángtǔ, rénshì yīn shū màn jìliáo.

This poem contains the couplet in the third and fourth lines. The first character of each line corresponds as both are numbers where *wǔ* 五 is an oblique tone *zè* 仄 and *sān* 三 is a level tone *píng* 平. The second character in line three is a noun meaning ‘watch, guard’ and in line four is also a noun meaning ‘gorge’. These two characters are connected as one would keep watch for enemies over an area of land. The third and fourth characters of both lines are nouns conveying rich imagery. Additionally, the fifth characters in this pair of lines are also nouns where both occur due to the preceding noun in each line. In line three *shēng* 声 means ‘sound’-from the military drums, and in line four *yǐng* 影 means

‘shadow’-relating to the aforementioned galaxy. The final two characters are an interesting combination as *bēizhuàng* 悲壯 is an adjective meaning ‘tragic’ and *dòngyáo* 动摇 is a verb meaning ‘to shake’. In context of this poem however, these terms being across the third and fourth line in corresponding positions creates an emphasis on the tragic feelings the poet experiences as the armies continue to fight (heard via the drum horns continuing to make noise) and the ‘Three Gorges’ are turbulent (Chen 2015). We can also see how this couplet adheres properly to the tonal pattern requirement as the final character of line three ends in an oblique tone *zè* 仄 and line four ends in a level tone *píng* 平.

In addition to the *lùshī* form of *qīlǜ*, there is also the *wǔlǜ* 五律. As indicated by the first character, this form of regulated verse poetry has five characters per each of the eight lines. The same structural rules from the *qīlǜ* 七律 apply to the *wǔlǜ* 五律 as seen in the example poem below, *wǎn jīng* 晚晴 by *Lǐshāngyǐn* 李商隐 (Li and Zhou 2006).

李商隐 《晚晴》

Lǐshāngyǐn “Wǎn qíng”

深居俯夹城，春去夏犹清。

Shēn jū fǔ jiā chéng, chūn qù xià yóu qīng.

天意怜幽草，人间重晚晴。

Tiānyì lián yōu cǎo, rénjiān zhòng wǎn qíng.

并添高阁迥，微注小窗明。

Bìng tiān gāogé jiǒng, wēi zhù xiǎo chuāng míng.

越鸟巢乾后，归飞体更轻。

Yuè niǎocháo gān hòu, guī fēi tǐ gèng qīng.

In the above example there are two parallel structures, one in lines three and four and one in lines five and six. The location of these structures follows traditional expectations as the first line of both pairs end with an oblique tone *zè* 仄 and the second line end with a level tone *píng* 平. In the first parallel structure, *tiānyì* 天意 means ‘God’s will’ and *rénjiān* 人间 means the world. Both are nouns and highlight the relationship between creator and creation. The following character in each line is a verb, *lián*

怜 ‘to pity’ and *zhòng* 重 ‘to stress’, each being a negative connotation modifying the subsequent noun. The final characters of the first couplet, *yōu cǎo* 幽草 and *wǎn qíng* 晚晴 are nouns where the former means ‘small grass in a dark place’ and the latter ‘the late Qing’ (late 19th and early 20th century China; Li and Huang 2006). The following two lines further emphasize the parallel structure as the characters in each line contrast their corresponding term. The first two characters in line one are *bìng tiān* 并添 ‘more’ and *wēi zhù* 微注 which refers to the weak light in the evenings, showing how they are opposites in their semantic meanings. The third and fourth characters of each line are contrasting as the first refers to a high pavilion where the poet lived and the second a small window. The former would have a sprawling view while the later would only have a small space to look out through. The final character of each line are both adjectives describing a relation to the previous noun. In line five, *jiǒng* 迥 means ‘lofty’ as the pavilion is fairly high up; in line six, *míng* 明 conveys ‘bright’ or ‘sight’ in the sense of the view where the view from the small window is limited or the source of light in the space (therefore bright).

There is another large category of regulated verse poetry that consists of four lines per poem called *juéjù* 绝句. Similar to *lǚshī*, the presence of *jué* lets the reader know the poem will follow the four line format with the number prior to *jué* indicating how many characters are present per each line. The *juéjù* poem form tends to consist of *qījué* 七绝, seven character for each of the four lines, and *wǔjué* 五绝, five characters for each of the four lines (*Gúshī yuèfǔ juégōu lǚshī* 古诗 乐府 绝句 律诗). Given *juéjù* are shorter in length to *lǚshī*, the lines within a *lǚshī* can actually be adapted into a *juéjù* while either removing the *duì'ǒu* or retaining the *duì'ǒu* in the adapted *juéjù*. By combining the first and second lines of a *lǚshī* along with the seventh and eighth lines of the *lǚshī*, a *juéjù* without a parallel/antithetical couplet can be formed given, as noted above, the *duì'ǒu* is typically in the third and fourth lines and/or fifth and sixth lines of a *qīlǚ*. However if the writer wishes to retain a *duì'ǒu* within the subsequent *juéjù* the structure would normally be present in either the first and second lines or the third and fourth lines rather than having two parallel/antithetical couplets compose the *juéjù*.

The poem below, *Jiāng pàn dúbù xún huā* 江畔独步寻花 by *Dùfǔ* 杜甫, is an example of a *qījué* 七绝 with seven characters per each of the four lines and follows the appropriate tonal pattern (Han

1997). The poet employs vivid imagery to convey strong emotions. In line one, *huā mǎn* 花满 paints an image of a scene full of flowers. The following line emphasizes the abundance of flowers as the pressure of tens-of-millions of flowers drags the tree branch downward, depicting a distinct and detailed view. The following two lines associate butterflies with dancing and the orioles singing further add to the visual imagery and the auditory sound as if one can hear the birds chirping in their head. The overall feeling conveyed is thus both hopeful and content as spring is in full bloom and one can sit and enjoy the surroundings.

杜甫《江畔独步寻花》

Dùfǔ “Jiāng pàn dúbù xún huā”

黄四娘家花满溪，千朵万朵压枝低。

Huáng sì niángjiā huā mǎn xī, qiān duǒ wàn duǒ yā zhī dī.

留恋戏蝶时时舞，自在娇莺恰恰啼。

Liúliàn xì dié shíshí wǔ, zìzài jiāo yīng qiàqià tí.

From a linguistic standpoint, this poem has much to offer. The rhyme scheme of the poem stands out as traditionally the even and odd line endings would rhyme but here the endings for lines one, two, and four rhymes (*xī* 溪, *dī* 低, and *tí* 啼). Additionally, the last two lines of the poem form a *duì'ǒu* 对偶 as the characters in each line are antithetical to each other. The first two characters of both lines are alliteration (*liúliàn* 留恋 with ‘l’ and *zìzài* 自在 with ‘z’) where the third speaks of a discontent and thus reluctance to leave while the fourth line is a feeling of being content and comfortable. The next two characters are verbs as an action of an animal-line 3 the butterflies play: *xì* 戏, line 4 the orioles sing: *jiāo* 娇. However, in line three the verb is playful and the butterfly is an insect while the bird in line four eats butterflies. The repetition of the following two characters *shíshí* 时时 in line three is matched by *qiàqià* 恰恰 in line four where the former means ‘often’ as opposed to the latter of ‘exactly’, both being adverbs. The final characters for both lines are verbs meaning ‘dancing’ in line three and ‘singing’ in line four. A final anecdote on this poem is regarding the title. In the title, the use of *bù* 步 is from classical Chinese

wényán 文言 as in vernacular Chinese *báihuà* 白话 one would have to use *sànbù* 散步 and cannot just use *bù* 步 (Xiao 1998).

4.2.1 Cultural Characteristics of Chinese Couplets

An important point to examine is the cultural aspect of *duì'ǒu* 对偶, which contains a specific type of couplet structure. This cultural structure is called *duìlián* 对联, which translates to ‘couplet’ in English but has a different meaning and purpose than the aforementioned *lǜshī* 律诗 and *juéjù* 绝句. An important point of differentiation from the *duì'ǒu* is that *duìlián* do not have a fixed rhyme scheme they must adhere to but rather follow whichever rhythm the first line sets (Shen 2006). They also observe similar structure to the *duì'ǒu* as the third and fourth lines can also form a couplet. The *duìlián* have a more ceremonial purpose for means of display on various buildings. They can often be found in the front hall when entering spaces like temples, ancestral halls, or main entrances to homes. There are two major components to the *duìlián*, the *shànglián* 上联 upper line and *xiàlián* 下联 lower line, that are hung as scrolls or long red pieces of paper on each side of the entrances (Plaks 1990). They are read from right to left where the characters are written vertically and typically have a saying related towards important social and physical aspects of life such as health, wellbeing, fortune, and success that can highlight what places or families are hoping for in the coming year. One example of these characteristics is seen below in a poem by *Mèng Xù* 孟旭.

孟旭

新年纳余庆, 嘉节号长春。

xīnnián nà yú qìng; jiā jié hào cháng chūn

This couplet translates roughly to “The New Year enjoys surplus celebrations; happy holiday sounds invoke lasting spring blessings” highlighting the sentiment of good fortune, wealth, and happiness (NiYuan 2019). One can see how each line has five characters and that their semantic and lexical categories are corresponding. In line one, *xīnnián* is a noun where *xīn* is an adjective modifying *nián* while the third character *nà* is the verb modifying *yú qìng*. In the second line, *jiā jié* is also a noun to

mean ‘good festival’ and *hào* is a verb modifying the final component, *cháng chūn*, meaning ‘long spring’. The tonal pattern is additionally consistent with the specified rules as the pattern follows *píngpíngzèpíngzè* 平平仄平平, *píngpíngzèpíngpíng* 平平仄平平. The final tone for the first line is a oblique tone *zè* 仄 and the last character of the second line has a level tone *píng* 平. Additionally, the other characters in each phrase have corresponding level or oblique tones between each line.

A specific type of cultural *duìlián* 对联 is the Spring couplet *chūnlián* 春联. These couplets are hung up days before *chūnjié* 春节 Lunar New Year (also known as Chinese New Year or the Spring Festival, Shen 2006) carrying auspicious messages of a family or establishment’s wishes and hopes for the future. They have a third smaller scroll, the horizontal scroll called *héngpī* 横批, that is hung above the vertical scrolls that summarizes the *shànglián* upper line and *xiàlián* lower line in anywhere from three to five characters. This shorter component is used to summarize the moral and/or significance of the *chūnlián*. Spring couplets can be about a variety of topics including health, blessings, success, family, and much more.

As *chūnlián* have increased in popularity due to their cultural significance, there has been a relaxation of the rules with more modern *chūnlián*. While creators may adhere to certain simpler rules, such as the same number of characters each line, the tonal choices may not always follow the traditional structure. Below is one such example of a more ‘modern’ Spring couplet.

上联: 事事如意大吉祥

shì shì rú yì dà jí xiáng

下联: 家家顺心永安康

jiā jiā shùn xīn yǒng ān kāng

横批: 四季兴隆

sì jì xīng lóng

The upper scroll *shànglián* 上联 in this couplet translates to “May you have good luck in everything” while the lower scroll *xiàlián* 下联 translates to “May you feel content and your family healthy” (Travel China Guide 2021). The horizontal scroll is consistent with the rules outlined earlier and uses four

characters to summarize the upper and lower scrolls translating to “Flourishing in Four Seasons”. As is evident from the *pīnyīn* 拼音 above, the end of both lines end in level tones *píng* 平 which is against the traditional rule for the tones for the parallel structure. However, the other elements are consistent regarding lexical categories and related semantic meanings across both lines.

The origin of the Spring couplet *chūnlián* 春联 goes as far back as the Five Dynasties (907 - 960) where it was originally used to ward off evil spirits and demons (Pandarow 2019). While the original couplets were often written on peach wood blocks, by the 14th century it became more common for *chūnlián* 春联 to be written on the long vertical strips of red paper seen pasted around doors in current day. The founder of the Ming Dynasty, Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang (1328 - 1398), was the figure who popularized the tradition of pasting *chūnlián* 春联 around the doorframe during his reign by requiring households to do such at their gates for *chūnjié* 春节 Lunar New Year (Pandarow 2019). As such, one can still see many *duìlián* in the Forbidden City where many Ming and Qing dynasty emperors resided. The prominence of the Chinese couplet *duìlián* and Spring couplet *chūnlián* in society has led to the evolution of the couplet to a distinct literary category. Chinese scholars would often attempt to create couplets as a literary exercise and exploration of word play, which has become a popular pastime for those interested in the couplet.

5. Using Techniques to Create Various Forms of Rhetoric

To demonstrate the level of mastery regarding the rhetorical devices analyzed in this paper, I attempted to utilize these techniques to create a few rhetorical sayings of my own. In order to engage at a deeper level of critical thinking, I challenged myself to focus on just a couple of these devices as a means to holistically incorporate the elements highlighted in the context of this analysis.

I attempted to create a semantic pun *yǔyì shuāngguān* 语义双关. As a senior at Vassar College about to graduate, I have been reflecting on the degree of growth I have experienced from my first year to senior year. There are areas of knowledge, such as my understanding of Chinese language and culture, that grew far more than I was expecting from when I entered college. This idea inspired me to focus on

this concept of continual learning. To me an interesting contrast to mental advancement is the physical endpoint of growing. As someone who is short, the two ideas made an amusing comparison to explore. Additionally, as explored in the previous sections, Chinese rhetorical devices often draw from the natural world, leading me to consider phenomena in nature as a framework for my semantic pun. I chose to use a flower in my example as my original fauna choice of a tree felt antithetical to my point of continual growth as leaves, which could symbolize mental development, are often shed during the winter before growing anew. These thoughts culminated into the example below.

花瓣继长大，花茎无长高

huābàn jì zhǎng dà, huājīng wú zhǎng gāo

The petals continue to grow, the flower stems do not grow tall

Here I utilized the subtlety of the term *zhǎng dà* 长大 to create my semantic pun *yǔyì shuāngguān* 语义双关. This term can mean ‘to grow big’ but the characters can also mean ‘to grow up’. The usage of *wú* 无 was an intentional choice of negation as the character is not typically used in spoken language but in this situation serves as an effective means of communicating negation. An interesting aspect I noticed after writing the phrase was the structure actually followed the rules of a *duì'ǒu* 对偶. The tonal patterns show an antithetical structure as the first line has the tonal pattern *píngzè zè zè zè zè* 平仄仄仄仄 and the second line has *píngpíngpíng zè píng* 平平平仄平. The first line ends with an oblique tone *zè* 仄 and the second line ends with a level tone *píng* 平. The first two characters of both lines are nouns related to flowers where the first is ‘petal’ and the second ‘stem’. The third characters of each line are antithetical verbs in meaning where the first, *jì* 继, is a single character version of *jìxù* 继续 to convey ‘continue’ and *wú* 无 conveys ‘(have) not’. Each line has a verb modifying an adjective as the final two characters and are parallel in meaning as the first line has *zhǎng dà* 长大 ‘to grow up’ and the second line has *zhǎng gāo* 长高 ‘to grow tall’. In this context, the use of the words flower petal and flower stem can be representative of a human mind and body. The flower petal continually growing bigger is a natural phenomenon of the flower’s life similar in the way mental development occurs naturally and constantly over time for humans as they grow older. The flower stem will also continue to grow but may not grow to

be very tall which can represent how human height can cease growth even when a person is still quite short. Thus the metaphorical meaning of this saying could be “the mind can continue to grow, even when the body stops”.

The next example was an attempt to create a *duìlián* 对联. As I am writing this, we are currently in the middle of finals season causing me to reflect on physical and mental health. The situation and the cultural value of *duìlián* 对联 regarding hopes and good wishes led me to the idea of how sleeping and health are related. The concept of ‘good health’ is often used in various rhetorical devices as a means of well-wishing. Thus I thought incorporating the idea of ‘good health every day’ would be a smooth way to incorporate a practical and cultural element. As I examined the usage of numbers in section 2.2.1 with *chéngyǔ* 成语, I thought it might be interesting to attempt to incorporate said element into my *duìlián* 对联. Therefore to express ‘everyday’ I decided to use *qītiān* 七天 rather than the more common vernacular of *měitiān* 每天. With the idea of sleep, I was thinking that having good dreams often lead a person to feel more rested rather than bad dreams, which often cause a person to feel fatigued upon waking. To adhere to the structural rules of *duìlián* 对联, I decided to use *sān yè* 三夜 to convey a duration of nights through numbers in order to have the first two characters be consistent across both lines. Upon first writing the *duìlián* 对联, I had originally written the lines in reverse order as seen below. In this order, the phrase could be interpreted as “every day may you have good health, with three nights of sweet dreams”. Rather than the literal understanding of ‘three days’, this can also be interpreted as nights in general where sweet dreams would be lucky each night, given the auspicious associations of the number three in Chinese culture.

七天如安康

qītiān rú ānkāng

三夜睡甜梦

sān yè shuì tián mèng

However, the order of the two lines above violated the tonal pattern as the first line ended with a level tone *píng* 平 rather than an oblique tone *zè* 仄. Thus I had to switch the two lines so the first line ended

with *mèng* 梦, an oblique tone *zè* 仄, and the second line ended with *kāng* 康, a level tone *píng* 平.

Additionally, when first writing the second line I had used *rú* 如 to mean ‘be like’. However this failed to properly convey the sentiments I was hoping to express which led me to use *shēng* 生 to convey ‘to produce’ or ‘to give birth to’. This created a parallelism between *shuì* 睡 and *shēng* 生 where both were action verbs with the same characteristic.

三夜睡甜梦

sān yè shuì tián mèng

七天生安康

qītiān shēng ānkāng

In breaking down the revised couplet, it is evident the case above attempts to incorporate the many characteristics mentioned in section 4.2 of this paper. Each line consists of five characters where each character is similar in lexical nature and related in semantic meaning. The characters in each line are connected to each other: *sān* 三 and *qī* 七 are both numbers; *yè* 夜 and *tiān* 天 are both nouns related to passage of time; *shuì* 睡 and *shēng* 生 are both verbs related to states of being in life; and finally *tián mèng* 甜梦 and *ānkāng* 安康 are both a combination of an adjective modifying a noun where the first means ‘sweet dreams’ and the second means ‘good health’. An additional note to point out is that while *rì* 日 would potentially be a more appropriate character choice in general writing, in the context of the parallel structure *tiān* 天 fits better with the tonal pattern as a level tone *píng* 平 since the corresponding character in the first line, *yè* 夜, is an oblique tone *zè* 仄. While the original order of the lines were well-wishes related to each other, by reversing their order the second line becomes a direct result of the first line which acts as the cause. If one has good dreams and is sleeping regularly they are more likely to have good health as they will feel more rested upon waking. There is also a cross-cultural play on the number choices present in this saying as seven and can be considered a lucky number in both English and Chinese. In English, the root of the lucky seven may have several origins. There are several religious references that relate to the number seven: in the Bible God made the world in six days and rested on the seventh, in Judaism there are seven heavens, in the Koran there is also mention of seven heavens and

Muslims who make the pilgrimage to Mecca must circle the Kaaba seven times (Derbyshire 2014; Pukas 2014). In Chinese, the number seven is considered lucky in regards to relationships as the actual character symbolizes togetherness (Pang 2021).

I was intrigued by the idea of attempting to create a *chéngyǔ* 成语. While we technically cannot simply generate a *chéngyǔ* 成语 due to their complex semantic and historical origin, I thought it would be an exciting challenge to at least try incorporating the elements fundamental to these four character idioms. Having just attended the Vassar LGBTQ+ Center Lavender Graduation, I was contemplating the notion of chosen family as the term has a significant meaning in LGBTQ+ culture as the family of other LGBTQ+ people within the community. Due to the historical persecution, ostracization, and violence against the LGBTQ+ community, there has been a need to find and create our own spaces to find relationships with other people who hold similar identities and experiences. My own family is a prime example of this type of family as two gay fathers with adopted children making an Italian-Irish-Chinese combination. This led me to ruminate over the emphasis most people place on blood lineage and the unfortunately fallible nature of claiming family inherently means ‘love’.

一家无血，一家满爱

yījiā wú xuè, yījiā mǎn ài

A family without blood, a family full of love

This example is actually the use of a dual structure *chéngyǔ* 成语 where both parts of the phrase adhere to the four character matrix that is a fundamental characteristic of *chéngyǔ*. Here the saying utilizes the most commonly seen number in *chéngyǔ*, *yī* 一, to start both parts. Additionally, the number occupies the first placement within the phrase as the first and third placements are the most appropriate places for numbers to be included in a *chéngyǔ*. While the literal translation can be seen above, there are other ways to interpret this saying. The first half can mean that ‘a family not connected by blood is a chosen family’ where chosen family has a significant meaning in LGBTQ+ culture. The second part of the phrase can be interpreted separately from the first part where the phrase could mean ‘with family one is happy and satisfied’ where *mǎn ài* indicates satisfaction with life. Taking the two phrases together

however, the dual structure *chéngyǔ* can be interpreted metaphorically as “The chosen family is a family that is based on love” as ‘chosen families’ are a person’s decision to surround themselves with certain people they enjoy having relationships with rather than being told to consider a person family simply because of a genetic lineage. There is a further power behind this interpretation as this implies that a person can leave a situation if they are treated poorly and find new connections, as opposed to biological families where there is no choice in who a person shares genetic material with.

These examples above are an initial attempt to ‘scratch the surface’ of the many structural rules of various forms of Chinese rhetoric *xiūcí* 修辞. From the tonal patterns, corresponding meanings, character choice and position, and more, there are many rules to attempt to keep track of in attempting to generate these creative forms of expression. Tonal patterns proved a particular challenge due to their limiting factors. Completing the exercise of forming a phrase was a personal example of the greater knowledge that can result from trying to generate these creative expressions. From endeavoring to create my own phrases, I had to contemplate a considerable number of characteristics and rules simultaneously, emphasizing the challenge posed in employing these linguistic devices. This exercise enhanced my understanding of the linguistic elements within each device and my appreciation for the considerable knowledge these phrases convey, both in actual meaning as well as in technique.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Contribution of Study

The contribution of this study was to the author’s own personal knowledge and understanding of the linguistic aspects of rhetoric *xiūcí* 修辞. Given this literary device dates back to ancient times, rhetoric *xiūcí* 修辞 carries fundamental cultural connotations to both the Chinese language as well as Chinese expression and culture. This linguistic device is also significantly more pervasive in the Chinese language than the author originally realized and therefore has the potential for extensive application in future engagement with Chinese language. Additionally, the author’s understanding and analysis of Chinese poetry is greatly enhanced due to the expressive nature, and thus frequent usage, of

rhetoric *xiūcí* 修辞. They are able to engage with the language in a deeper, more appreciative manner than before and analyze elements of the Chinese language at a more sophisticated level. The author also can now understand the reasoning behind including certain linguistic choices and styles across conversational communication in addition to communication through other methods. The study thus provided a significant contribution to the author's own knowledge and comprehension of Chinese rhetoric, particularly given the term 'rhetoric' in English carries different connotations.

This study also provides an accessible examination of Chinese rhetoric *xiūcí* 修辞 for Chinese second-language learners whose native language is English or who are fluent in English. The analysis is presented from the view of an individual with a similar perspective and limited cultural background in Chinese culture to a second-language learner which creates an opportunity for a clearer understanding for the context of the various examples provided. Certain meanings across languages can potentially be expressed in a more accurate manner than a literal translation may provide to better enhance the reader's understanding.

6.2 Limitations of Study

Despite the benefits of this analysis there were also a number of limitations of this study. A significant limitation was the translational difficulties from Chinese to English. There are certain linguistic or cultural elements that are hard to retain when translating across languages. A specific example is the term for pun in Chinese, *shuāngguān* 双关, does not have an exact equivalent translation in English. The closest cultural equivalent utilizes the same word but the implications of the literary device in each language is not exactly the same. The author's own command of the Chinese language was another source of constraint where subtle aspects of the language in the sources drawn from may have been unrecognized by the author, and thereby unaccounted for when translating and analyzing various examples. There may also be certain cultural elements that were not made as clear given the differences across cultures that exist.

6.3 Towards Further Research

The analysis presented thus far presents an entry point to a few fundamental linguistic devices within Chinese rhetoric *xiūcí* 修辞 but is by no means a comprehensive analysis of Chinese rhetoric *xiūcí* 修辞. Future research could look into the many other forms of rhetoric that are also often utilized in Chinese language and writing to identify comparable or unequivalent devices within the English language. Conducting a cross-cultural analysis between Chinese and another language besides English could also prove illuminating for consistent similar linguistic features or varying linguistic characteristics. A greater in-depth analysis of the cultural influences on the language expression in Chinese would be an interesting comparative study of the ways rhetoric forms specific to English compared to Chinese. For example, a fast emerging field is online ‘slang’ terms that draw from homophones and semantic meaning to create various internet jargon that highlight an interesting evolution of language with the incorporation of technology into daily life. Examining these cultural influences for expression of linguistic characteristics across languages and cultures will only enhance the ever-growing linguistic corpus on rhetoric.

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