
THE INTERPLAY OF CULTURE AND RHETORIC: THEORETICAL ASPECTS AND CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH APPROACHES

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ANNOTATSIYA:

This article examines the complex and dialectical relationship between culture and rhetoric. It analyzes key theoretical approaches, particularly Rhetoric Culture Theory (RCT), which posits that rhetoric is not merely employed within a culture but is deeply embedded in its practices, while culture, in turn, is shaped and modified through rhetorical processes. Special attention is given to the concepts of intercultural and comparative rhetoric, which investigate culturally contingent argumentative strategies, communication styles, and the varying applications of ethos, pathos, and logos. The paper explores how cultural norms (e.g., individualism vs. collectivism) determine the choice of rhetorical devices and how rhetoric serves as a critical tool for constructing social reality and identity.

The relevance of studying the relationship between culture and rhetoric is driven by the processes of globalization and the intensification of intercultural interactions in the modern world. Effective communication in academic, business, and political spheres demands a deep understanding that modes of persuasion and argumentation are not universal; rather, they are highly situational and culturally embedded. A failure to understand these cultural

determinants can lead to significant communication breakdowns and conflicts. The aim of this article is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the main theoretical frameworks describing how culture and rhetoric mutually constitute one another. To achieve this goal, the following objectives are set:

To examine the core tenets of Rhetoric Culture Theory (RCT) as a contemporary approach to the subject.

To identify key cultural determinants influencing rhetorical discourse in diverse societies.

To define the role of rhetoric in the processes of forming and changing cultural norms and social identity.

The methodological basis of the work includes methods of theoretical analysis, comparative study (comparative rhetoric), and the synthesis of data from related disciplines, including anthropology, cultural linguistics, and communication theory.

Classical Aristotelian rhetoric defined the art as the ability to find all available means of persuasion in any given situation, identifying three primary modes of appeal: ethos (the speaker's credibility), pathos(emotional appeal), and logos (logical argumentation).[6] While these elements are universal to human interaction, their application and valuation differ significantly across cultures. Contemporary approaches criticize the notion of rhetoric as a universal set of neutral tools. Within the framework of Rhetoric Culture Theory (RCT), developed by scholars such as Stephen Tyler and Ivo Strecker, culture and rhetoric are viewed as inextricably linked and co-emergent phenomena. RCT posits that culture is not a static background for rhetoric; rather, culture itself is continually recreated, negotiated, and changed through rhetorical actions and performances. A central premise of RCT is that human actions and meanings are neither entirely free nor fully determined; this tension is mediated by the ongoing generation of discourses stemming from the interaction between intention, convention, and performance.[3] Thus, rhetoric permeates all levels of social analysis: from philosophical anthropology to tactical maneuvers in specific situations, shaping social practices and collective identity. Differences in rhetorical styles across cultures are evident at many levels, ranging from argument structure to non-verbal cues and the use of silence. These differences are rooted in deeply ingrained cultural norms and values.

One of the most notable distinctions is the dichotomy between direct (low-context) and indirect (high-context) communication styles, often associated with the work of Edward Hall and Geert Hofstede. Direct cultures (e.g., USA, Germany, Scandinavian countries)

value clarity, transparency, and explicitness. A good communicator here is one who states exactly what they mean, and the responsibility for the message's clarity primarily rests with the sender. Arguments are often linear and straightforward.[1]

Indirect cultures (e.g., Japan, China, many Eastern cultures) prioritize harmony, saving face, and context. Messages are often conveyed using hints, tone of voice, and non-verbal signals. Direct criticism or confrontation is considered impolite. In these cultures, the responsibility

for interpreting the message largely falls on the receiver, who must grasp the implicit meaning.

The cultural variable of individualism/collectivism also impacts rhetoric. In individualistic societies, emphasis is placed on personal opinion, uniqueness, and self-assertion, which encourages competitive rhetorical styles and open disagreement. In collectivist cultures, rhetoric is aimed at maintaining group solidarity and consensus; hierarchical and diplomatic strategies of persuasion work more effectively than individual pressure. While Aristotle identified all three elements, cultural preferences dictate their hierarchy. The Western academic tradition often prioritizes logos, valuing rational, empirically based proof. In cultures with strong hierarchical structures, significant importance is placed on ethos, or the speaker's authority (status, age, position). Pathos (emotional appeal) is used universally, but its manifestations can be culturally specific. What evokes sympathy in one culture might not in another; for instance, specific colors or historical references carry different emotional weights.

The interaction between culture and rhetoric is a two-way street. Rhetoric not only reflects cultural norms but actively constructs social reality and identity.

Through discourse, individuals negotiate meanings, create collective identity, and contest existing norms. Rhetoric is a vital part of social formation. For example, political debates, media campaigns, or the rhetoric of social movements utilize the language of persuasion to change public opinion, which ultimately leads to the transformation of cultural attitudes and legal norms. Rhetorical acts make ethical and cultural attitudes public, thereby contributing to their awareness, maintenance, or potential change. Cultural identity is formed and sustained through rhetoric, which allows people to relate to each other through shared values and histories. [2]

The study of the relationship between culture and rhetoric demonstrates that these two phenomena are inseparable. Rhetoric is not just a set of techniques for persuasion, but a

fundamental human capacity that manifests in specific, culturally contingent forms. It is simultaneously a product of culture and a tool for its creation and transformation.

Understanding this complex dynamic opens up new perspectives for intercultural dialogue, education, and conflict resolution. Applying the principles of comparative rhetoric allows for the analysis of different discourses, finding common ground, and identifying hidden cultural assumptions, which is critical in a multilingual and multicultural world. Further research in this area can deepen our understanding of how rhetorical practices adapt to new global and digital contexts.

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