CHINESE AESTHETIC CHARACTERISTICS, ARTISTIC PERFORMANCE, AND MODERN SIGNIFICANCE OF LITERARY LANGUAGE

Emeritus Sakda Pannengpetch
Raksarn Wannawattawong
Narong Khamwijit

Southeast Asia University, Bangkok, Thailand

Literary language holds a distinct and crucial aesthetic value within literature and art. As a fundamental element of literature, it is an aesthetically refined form of language characterized by rhythm, implication, rhetoric, and strangeness. Its artistic performance is multifaceted, encompassing the creation of indirect artistic images, the depiction of the grand and intricate material world, and the exploration of profound emotional landscapes. Literary language's aesthetics and diverse artistic performance significantly contribute to historical traditions, literature evolution, and individual experience, securing its vital and irreplaceable role in contemporary society.

Keywords: literary language; aesthetic features; artistic performance

Emeritus Sakda Pannengpetch
Researcher, Southeast Asia University, Bangkok, Thailand
Research interests: education market, students behavior, teaching, pedagogy
E-mail: pannengpetch.s@gmail.com

Raksarn Wannawattawong
Researcher, Southeast Asia University, Bangkok, Thailand
Research interests: education market, students behavior, teaching, pedagogy
E-mail: ruksarn.v@chula.ac.th

Narong Khamwijit
Researcher, Southeast Asia University, Bangkok, Thailand
Research interests: teaching methodology, education market, education management
E-mail: narong@chuala.ac.th
Introduction

Literature is a poetic or aestheticized form of art mediated by language symbols. In literary art, language is the cornerstone and has an independent and important aesthetic value. Without literary language, one cannot truly appreciate the beauty of language art.

However, literary language is not a general form of language, but rather a special discourse system that contains aesthetic character, rich aesthetic features, and diversified artistic performance.

The aesthetic character of literary language

Literary language symbols cover a variety of levels, such as phonetics, words, vocabulary, rhetoric, grammar, and so on, which are extremely aesthetic in the use of language. Different from daily language and scientific language, literary language is good at discovering its own phonetic, lexical, rhetorical, and other aesthetic factors and integrating these factors into the writer's emotional psychology so as to create a wonderful form of language. We can summarize the aesthetic characteristics of literary language as rhythm, implication, rhetoric, and strangeness.

Rhythmicity

Literary language expresses rhythmicity through voice, meter, and rhythm, which can evoke symmetry, balance, harmony, unity, and other aesthetic feelings in people. The rhythmicity of literary language mainly includes three aspects: voice, meter, and rhythm.

Speech is both the surface structure of literary language and the basic form of rhythmic beauty. Speech's rhythmic beauty is not the same as the rhythm of sound. A certain period of time manifests rhythmic beauty in the regular ups and downs of the sound's height, length, and lightness, encompassing both the phonetics of the Chinese characters and the phonological rereading that takes place when they combine into a sentence. Each Chinese character represents a syllable, and each syllable must contain a vowel, which serves as the main body and rhyme end of the syllable.

The vowel is the musical sound, and the phonetic structure determines the harmony and beauty of the Chinese phonetics. Therefore, when recited, there can be short and long beat changes, which can also distinguish the repetition of speech so that the listener feels that the sound is well organized and pleasing to the ear. Wang Meng's short story "The Sound of Spring" says, "Bam, the night came". "On the opposite wall, a big, square, dim moon appeared". These language forms embody the musical beauty of Chinese literary language.

The deep rhythm of literary language is a phenomenon of lightness and urgency formed by the work's thoughts, emotions, and narrative tone. Poetry, both ancient and modern, is the pursuit of rhythm under certain rules. Li Sao exhibits a clear rhythm in language, and the poem consistently conveys Qu Yuan's noble sentiment of demanding a beautiful government and choosing death over resignation. This is achieved through the repetition of recurring verses, such as "Although I die nine times, I still have no regrets" and "I would rather swiftly die in exile".

"I would rather die in exile", "I would rather die in exile", and so on, amounting to as many as five verses. This kind of verse is similar to the interlacing refrain in a variant piece, achieving the aesthetic effect of harmony and unity in repetition (He, 1996).
The rhythmic pause brought about by the imaginary word "兮" is also quite representative. Statistics show that the poem uses the word "Ruoxi" as a liner up to 180 times. "Ruoxi" strengthens Li Sao's musical rhythm, enriches the poem's meaning, and creates the rhythmic beauty of a song with three sighs and an introspection. Not only poetry, but also prose and novels emphasize creating rhythmic effects.

Wang (1993), a contemporary novelist, advocates that "a novel should have a rhythm throughout." In his novel The Precepts, there is a description of a natural scene in a water town in the south of the Yangtze River: "Reed blossoms are just sprouting new spikes. The purple-gray reed spikes, glowing with silver light, were softly rubbing against the spikes, fluttering and flying far away." The length of the whole paragraph varies; the narration is fast and slow, with a dozen pauses in the rhythm of the language to show the beauty, resulting in a fresh and beautiful aesthetic effect.

Consistency

Meaningfulness, also referred to as subtlety, is the quality of having a lingering flavor in the sentence and a lingering meaning in the article, meaning that the limited words may contain an infinite number of meanings.

Literature, as a symbolic system of narration, representation, and symbolism, frequently adopts such expressive techniques as metaphor, implication, setting off, rendering, and symbolism when reflecting on the world and expressing emotions; therefore, the language of literature is often implicit and carries certain hidden meanings.

Li Bai's (a poet of the Tang Dynasty, 701–762) poem "Laolao Pavilion" reads: "The sad place in the world is Laolao Pavilion for Sending Guests. "The spring breeze knows the pain of parting and does not send the willow green". This is a five-character stanza expressing the bitterness of parting. The whole poem is twenty words, short and long, and intriguing. Particularly, the two lines "the spring breeze knows the bitterness of parting; do not send the willow green" stand out as deeply curved and original.

The poet writes about the spring breeze from the farewell, and after a change of perspective, he connects the "spring breeze" with the "willow," implicitly revealing the pain of parting with literary words and imagery. Because the ancient people had the custom of folding willow to send off, people were sent off in the Laolao Pavilion, and their hearts were extremely sad.

From the parting to the willow, from the willow to the spring breeze, at this time, the spring breeze has also become intentional and sentimental; it knows the pain of parting and does not want to see the earth's willows folded to send off the scene, so intentionally do not blow to the willow, do not let the willow green. In this way, through the "spring breeze," to write the parting pain, alleging feelings in the "willow breeze", transforming things into people, empathizing with the scene, and thus the feeling of farewell written in a roundabout way.

Rhetorical

Rhetoric, also known as rhetoric, is a very expressive and expressive program in literature. As we previously stated, the language used in literature cannot be merely straightforward: if it's a description, it must be clear and concise; if it's a description, it must be vivid and lively; if we're describing a situation, it must be wonderful and dynamic; and so on. In order to achieve these purposes, it is often necessary to change the usual expression
and use another rhetorical modification technique. There are many kinds of rhetoric in literature, such as metaphor, simile, hyperbole, parallelism, borrowing, pairing, repetition, irony, empathy, and so on, among which metaphor, simile, and hyperbole are the three commonly used ones.

A simile is a representation that uses a similar object to make something more obvious and concrete. Therefore, a simile usually consists of a body (a thing), a metaphor (a similar thing), and a simile (a modifying word to make a comparison). There are two conditions for the use of simile: one is that there should be similarity between the two things, and the other is that the language is more expressive after the use of simile. Achieving these effects is a beautiful metaphor.

There is a classic simile in Qian's (1979) "Siege": "A man's shortcomings are just like a monkey's tail. When he crouches on the ground, his tail remains hidden until he ascends a tree, at which point his posterior becomes visible to all. However, his red buttocks and long tails were already present and did not signify a new status. The "monkey's tail" metaphor here implies a potential shift in a person's status, and its rhetorical impact is evident.

Anthropomorphism involves personifying objects to imbue them with human movements and emotions. Some common words, such as "the sky and the earth are sad" and "the river is whimpering," represent the sky, the earth, and the river as human beings, implying that these natural objects also possess a sense of perception, emotion, and a sad, sad, crying state. Zhu Ziqing (Chinese writer, 1898–1948) wrote that "spring," written by the "steps of spring," is also the spring as a person, conveying people's eagerness for spring. As a result, anthropomorphism is essentially the transfer of feelings to objects, as well as the use of objects to express feelings. The use of such phrases in literary works can make the language vivid and fresh, as well as arouse the reader's association and interest in reading.

Exaggeration, also known as exaggeration, is overstatement based on objective facts. It is the description of things deliberately exaggerated or reduced so as to highlight their characteristics or express deep feelings. Exaggeration can enhance the excitement of language and evoke strong emotions, even if it doesn't align entirely with real-life logic, as long as it resonates with the genuine emotions of individuals. For instance, in Lu Xun's "a small thing" narrative, "I" sat in the rickshaw and knocked down an elderly woman, causing injury to the car's driver. The elderly woman then assisted in getting to the front of the police station, where "I" expressed her feelings.

I thought, "I suddenly felt a strange sensation, and I thought that his dusty shadow had grown taller and taller in a flash, and that it was getting bigger and bigger as he walked, and that I had to look up to see him." The words "taller in a flash" and "bigger and bigger as he walked" are obviously a kind of exaggeration. This "dusty shadow," which is the power of rhetorical exaggeration, touches the reader even though he knows it is not real.

It should be noted that rhetoric is not a product of stacking or making, but rather a result of imagination, association, emotion, and many other elements. The author's rich associations provide some clever and unique rhetoric, so the emotion is really touching and can make the image vivid and meaningful.

Strangeness

The Russian formalist school vigorously promoted the strangeness of language in the 20th century. By breaking conventional grammar and vocabulary, the so-called strangeness transforms the common everyday language into a strange, distorted language that is
unfriendly to people, thereby elevating the everyday language to the status of literary language.

The need for the literary language to be unfamiliar serves two purposes:

First, the unfamiliar treatment of the literary language can give people a strong sense of novelty, so as to change people's habitual responses to the daily language and effectively inhibit aesthetic fatigue.

Secondly, this technique can enhance the difficulty of people's perception of language so that readers repeatedly experience it, prolonging the perception of time. The formalist critic Shklovsky asserted, "The art technique involves the 'abnormalization' of objects, the intricacies of form, amplifying the complexity and duration of emotion. Given that the comprehension process in art exists solely for its own purpose, it warrants extension" (Shklovsky, 1989).

**Artistic performance of literary language**

Literary language is the basic constituent of literary works, and the artistic world it constructs not only shows the aesthetic attributes such as image, substance, spirit, and emotion of the text object but also provides the object reference for the reading subject to produce an aesthetic effect. Therefore, the artistic performance of literary language diversifies, encompassing the creation of indirect artistic images, the reflection of the magnificent and subtle materialized world, and the pursuit of a meaningful emotional realm.

*Indirect artistic characterization*

Literature is the use of language symbols to shape an artistic image. The aesthetic processing of language materials creates an artistic image, which manifests in a vivid form, embodying the essence of literary works. Poetry expresses it through imagery, mood, and scene, while novels express it through character, environment, and scene.

Rather than directly appealing to the aesthetic senses, the artistic image engages the reader through visual, auditory, and other integrated roles. It transforms abstract language symbols through active association and imagination, enabling the reader to experience, grasp, and then conceptualize a vibrant artistic image. To a certain extent, the indirectness of artistic image reflects the advantages of language art, which is mainly based on the readers' reading position. Readers who are deeply immersed in literature will follow the language prompts and specific situations to form their own associations, thereby achieving an aesthetic experience akin to hearing their voices, seeing their people, or actually being there.

*Mirroring the grandeur and subtlety of the materialized world*

Literary language transcends time and space, allowing for unrestricted expression, allowing literary art to portray the vast and complex social life from various perspectives and illustrate the grand materialized world. In the long novel War and Peace, Lev Tolstoy wrote the history of the Russian Patriotic War of 1812 with a huge pen, showing a magnificent picture of Russian social life before and after the war. In the background, the novel takes the lives of four noble families, Kulagin, Bolkonsky, Rostov, and Bezhukhov.

Beginning with the discussion of Napoleon's campaign in a nobleman's parlor in Petersburg in 1802, the novel chronicles the battle between the Russian and Austrian allies and Napoleon's army in Austerlitz, the French army's invasion of Russia, the Battle of
Bilotino, the fire of Moscow, the collapse of Napoleon's army, and finally, the events on the eve of the Decembrists' movement in 1825. It is an intricate and complex history of the war. The book is more than 1.3 million words long, with grandiose ideas and magnificent, exquisite art involving more than 500 characters, reflecting the social life of Russia in an important historical period, known as the world's greatest novel. Therefore, the display of natural objects in literary art allows the reader to experience the physical existence of the living world throughout the text.

**Delving into the realm of profound emotions**

Literary language has strong emotional expressiveness, is freer, and is more flexible in conveying feelings. The English poet Coleridge said: "Language is more directly expressive of the activities and passions of our inner life, more versatile and detailed than color, image, and action, more suitable for shaping images, and more submissive to the domination of the power of creation" (Liu, 1984).

This is because language, being the most direct symbol of expression, serves as a kind of synthesis that encompasses both material and emotional psychology. According to the Swiss linguist Saussure, linguistic symbols are not associated with objects and names, but rather with concepts and sound images. The latter is not a material sound, a purely physical thing, but the mental imprint of the sound, the acoustic representation that our senses testify to. It belongs to the senses" (Saussure, 1980). Therefore, by fully utilizing this characteristic of language, the ability of literary language to show the psychological and emotional aspects of characters is incomparable to that of other arts.

**Contemporary significance of literary language**

Language is a symbol of human civilization's development. According to Susan Langer, a contemporary aesthetician, "Language is the most amazing symbol system that human beings have invented" (Susan, 1986). Throughout the history of human civilization, the use of language has significantly contributed to the development of society. Today, the aesthetics and diversified artistic performance of literary language continue to highlight the significance of the times, which can be analyzed from three aspects: language and historical traditions, literary development, and individual survival.

First, at the level of language, history, and tradition, language contributes to the transmission of historical and cultural heritage and national cultural traditions, the construction of national identity, and geographical identity.

Social culture serves as the foundation for the creation and evolution of languages. Different societies and cultures determine the language characteristics of different ethnic groups. Therefore, the language and writing developed in a specific social and cultural environment must closely align with the traditional culture of a particular ethnic group. Such language and writing, particularly literature, record the history, knowledge, and culture of the ethnic group, preserving its historical footprints and inherent cultural genes. Anderson, a contemporary American scholar, pointed out that "the most important thing about language is that it is capable of generating imaginative communities, of constructing factual and special ties" (Benedict, 2011).
Furthermore, we can learn about their material and spiritual lives, as well as their thoughts, feelings, and spirituality, so that we can better understand the identity of the national culture.

The social life reflected in language and writing embodies people's aesthetic ideals and spiritual pursuits, as well as strong feelings and deep concern for their own national or regional cultures. Taking folk literature as an example, it has made great achievements in the construction of regional culture and cultural identity.

Tian & Ao (2009) wrote "The construction of regional culture often uses the most popular and reputable materials in folklore as the symbolic image of regional identity." For example, some places promote their local culture by telling myths and legends, and the mythological characters then become the region's business cards, participating in cultural construction and tourism development. In the case of Emperor Yao, one of the five emperors, numerous locations in China claim to be his hometown, including Linfen and Jiangxian in Shanxi, Heze in Shandong, Tangxian and Shunping in Hebei, Jinhu and Gaoyou in Jiangsu, and Youxian in Hunan, among others. These places link the myths and legends of Emperor Yao with the local history, mountains, rivers, and scenery, as well as the folklore of life, and form the common language text of the myths and legends of Emperor Yao in the area (Zhang, 2022). In addition to proving the authenticity of Emperor Yao's hometown, such myths and legends are, more importantly, used to develop tourism and the local economy.

Secondly, from the perspective of language and literary development, the change of language has led to new literary styles, and the diversity of language has opened up a colorful literary world.

Language is the medium of literary expression as well as the constituent and creator of literature. Different languages create different literary meanings. The diversity of linguistic expression forms enriches the literary world and demonstrates the vitality of literature. This primarily manifests in the dual facets of shaping literary style and building the literary realm.

Language and literary style have a close relationship, and language changes often give rise to new literary styles. For example, the development of new literature in China has gone through a language change, that is, from the literary language to the modern Chinese vernacular language, from ancient poetry to modern vernacular poetry. The establishment of this literary language is the basis for the existence of modern and contemporary literature in China." Since the May Fourth Movement, the language of literature has undergone a significant shift. Due to the need for scientific and precise expression, the vernacular language has supplanted the written language.

This shift in language expression has accelerated the development of vernacular literature, resulting in varying degrees of change across various literary styles. Among the various styles of modern literature, poetry underwent the strongest change, and new poetry emerged as a prose culture (Zhou, 2023).

"The true history of poetry is the history of the change of language, and it is from this ever-changing language that poetry emerges" (Wellek, 1984).

At the same time, miscellaneous essays became the most popular and spectacular form of modern prose. The novel also gained unprecedented prosperity and went from being a marginal genre to the center of literature. Furthermore, children's literature, as a new genre of literature, benefited directly from the widespread use of the vernacular language in its creation and development.
Thus, it seems that the change in literary language played a crucial role in the formation of the pattern of development of modern literature and the basic characteristics of the genre in China.

Shi (2022) asserted a close relationship between language and the literary world. The overall pluralism of language, including heterogeneous language, stylistic genres, and diverse rhetorical devices, has led to the carnival of literary language and the emergence of a new literary world. Let's take the literary development of China's new era as an example. The literature of the new period, influenced by ancient and modern Chinese and Western thought and culture, is committed to breaking through the dilemma of mainstreamed language and single language.

Through repeated language selection and change, it opens up heterogeneous language forms that differ from the traditional ones, such as Wang Meng's "three-dimensional language", Wang Shuo's "flirtatious language", Jia Pingwa's "language" and "language". Wang Meng's "three-dimensional language", Wang Shuo's "flirtatious language", Jia Pingwa's "descriptive language", Yu Jian's "spoken language", and others are examples.

Simultaneously, "Misty Poetry" and "Manganism Poetry" also emerged. Simultaneously, a diverse range of literary forms such as "hazy poetry", "eckless poetry" "roots-searching novels", "Pioneer novels", "new realistic novels" and "private writing" emerged.

"Private writing" and other styles and genres, along with a more novel use of language and rhetoric, have greatly advanced the maturity of the literary form, thereby opening up new spaces for development in Chinese literature.

Thirdly, from the perspective of language and individual survival, language directly projects human perception, imagination, and emotion and can promote the spiritual growth and aesthetic quality of individuals.

Artistic images portrayed in literary language can inspire individuals' thoughts and feelings. Many artistic images in the history of literature have inspired the world with noble thoughts, perseverance, and good behavior, or have infected and inspired people with the power of tragedy and the complexity of human nature. These characters embody the author's cognitive and moral elements: as the reader interacts with the image, comprehends it, and engages in dialogue, they unintentionally become emotionally infused, grasp the image's significance, and subsequently exert a subtle impact on their self-awareness and emotions.

In Chinese literature, the three beauties of form, sound, and meaning are inherent in the Chinese characters themselves, as stated by Lu Xun: "The beauty of meaning touches the heart, one; the beauty of sound touches the ear, two; the beauty of form touches the eye, three" (Lu, 1981). Therefore, literary works written in the Chinese language have a more adequate aesthetic element (Kuang, 2022).

Therefore, literary works created in the Chinese language have more adequate aesthetic factors. When people read the language text carefully, indulging in the texture of words and the art of appropriate rhetoric, they will naturally be attracted by the descriptions, evoking a sense of beauty in appreciation and thinking about life in retrospect.

Simultaneously, the artistic language transforms reality into literature, enabling us to transcend our habitual life situations, temporarily release ourselves from the constraints of fame and fortune, cultivate a broader empathy and care for real life, and gain insight into the subtle nuances of life with a profoundly sensitive mind. In this sense, the literary language
has always been full of imagination and sincere feelings to write about life's interests, enriching our aesthetic mind and spiritual world.

The pace of work and life accelerates in the hustle and bustle of the times, causing people to miss the leisurely moments of sadness in the fall and spring. An increase in pressure and anxiety is bound to threaten an individual's physical and mental health.

At this time, literature can play a healing function; rich aesthetic literary language can act as a good medicine for us to relieve anxiety and pressure. It is hard to imagine what kind of world we will live in and what kind of situation we will face if we leave the language of literature, but going into the world of literature and understanding the language of literature can delight our spirit and temperament and enable us to live on earth in a poetic way.

References:


### CHINESE AESTHETIC CHARACTERISTICS

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