

教育部教學實踐研究計畫成果報告

Project Report for MOE Teaching Practice Research Program

計畫編號/Project Number：PHA1122081

學門專案分類/Division：人文藝術及設計

計畫年度：V 112 年度一年期 ☐ 111 年度多年期

執行期間/Funding Period：112/8/1~113/7/31

(計畫名稱/Title of the Project)

英語數位修辭理論與實踐：教學場域之案例分析

Digital Rhetoric in Theory and Practice: A Pedagogical Case Study

(配合課程名稱/Course Name)

英語數位修辭理論與實作

Digital Rhetoric: Theory and Practice

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執行機構及系所(Institution/Department/Program)：國立臺灣大學外國語文學系

成果報告公開日期：☐ 立即公開 V 延後公開

繳交報告日期(Report Submission Date)：2024 年 8 月 8 日

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MOE Teaching Practice Project Report

1. 研究動機與目的(Research Motive and Purpose)

This teaching practice project builds on the concept of rhetoric in classical literary theory as a means of persuasion. It aims to integrate theory with practice through the production of a digital “text” that aims to persuade a mass audience and to build social awareness. The project emerges out of recurring issues experienced in teaching students in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, which may well apply to English or foreign literature departments in other universities. From the perspective of students, common complaints about the traditional foreign literature curriculum include:

- Training in composition/writing, especially in the research paper format emphasizing MLA citation rules, no longer relates to the forms of digital communication most widespread in society;
- Exclusive focus on the written and spoken word (composition, oral training) seems insufficient in a digital era suffused with multiple forms of media;
- Emphasis on canonical literature and classical literary theory appears too removed from pragmatic concerns in the contemporary job market.

This research project arises from the hypothesis that literary theory may fruitfully co-exist with digital practice, and that a greater understanding of theoretical concepts may intensify depth and sophistication in creative work. In an age where digital media is ubiquitous, there has been little awareness of how new digital formats make use of age-old classical rhetoric and persuasion techniques. Components of the project attempt to address some of the collective anxieties experienced by students and offer new directions for promising creative work:

- By engaging critically with **theories of classical rhetoric** since the time of Aristotle and Cicero, students can better understand the role of western philosophical heritage in our contemporary digital world. Students will be able to witness first-hand how rhetoric is put into practice, and participate in that process themselves;
- By working on a **digital rhetoric project** in conjunction with reflecting on classical theory, students will sharpen their both their visual and linguistic sensibilities, expand their means of persuasion in digital media, and attempt to raise social consciousness or awareness on an important issue.
- By developing a **critical commentary on digital rhetoric**, students will develop critical awareness and an advanced media literacy, leading to an in-depth understanding of the means of persuasion in the digital world.

2. 研究問題 (Research Question)

The general objective of this teaching project is to rethink the traditional language and literature curriculum in an increasingly complex, globalized, and digital media landscape. In an age characterized by the sheer complexity of media and the ubiquity of multimodal texts, curriculum design must reflect on how best to negotiate these new currents and revitalize itself. More specifically, this project focuses on the topic of “digital rhetoric” as a means to extend and modernize the established course offerings. The pedagogical resources developed in writing and composition courses provide a promising start to tackle this new challenge. Students’ awareness of writing and oral presentation techniques as a means of persuasion underlies the cornerstone of rhetoric. The concept of “rhetoric” in literary theory may then be extended fruitfully to encompass the digital world we inhabit – a world in which “text” has moved beyond the written word to incorporate a multitude of “modes” that create meaning. By thinking through how rhetoric is activated and deployed through digital modes of

presentation, students will increase their digital literacy and become more conscientious in their digital work. This project seeks to accomplish the following conceptual objectives:

- To understand how **rhetoric and persuasion** techniques learned in writing and composition courses might be applied to digital multimodal texts;
- To create digital narratives by using **digital rhetoric in practice**, thus strengthening self-expression and creative collaboration;
- To participate in developing research parameters, evaluation rubrics, and other measures concerning digital rhetoric, thus contributing to the **research on digital rhetoric theory** and integrating the activation of creative and critical faculties.

3. 文獻探討 (Literature Review)

Digital rhetoric is a newly emerging field within the study of digital humanities. As an innovative methodology developed primarily from the discipline of writing and composition studies, digital rhetoric reflects on and participates in the intersection of traditional rhetoric and digital media technologies. As rhetoric can be largely defined as the art of persuasion, “digital rhetoric” signifies the application of classical theories of persuasion into the digital realm. In a seminal article, Zappen (2005) clarifies the scope of digital rhetoric as “how traditional rhetorical strategies of persuasion function and how they are being reconfigured in digital spaces” (319). In the most comprehensive scholarly monograph on the subject to date, Eyman (2015) defines digital rhetoric as “the application of rhetorical theory (as analytic method or heuristic for production) to digital texts and performances” (13). This section will briefly delineate the origins of rhetorical theory, its current pedagogical uses in writing and composition, and finally its extension beyond the written or spoken word into digital spaces.

In his treatise *On Rhetoric* (336-330 BCE), Aristotle defined rhetoric as the art (*technē*) of establishing the means of persuasion for an argument. In Aristotelian rhetoric, the focus was on oratorical modes of speech, especially for legal, political, and ceremonial uses.

Aristotle also established the three well-known modes of oratorical persuasion: *logos* (arguing based on logic), *pathos* (appealing to the emotions), and *ethos* (establishing moral authority). The process of constructing a successful oration was divided into five stages: invention (formulating the argument), arrangement (organizing the speech), style (using appropriate language), memory (using mnemonic devices), and delivery (presenting the oration). These millennia-old concepts inform the teaching of writing and presentation strategies in composition and oral training classes even in the twenty-first century. The entire modern discipline of “writing, rhetoric, and composition studies” may be traced back to Aristotle, and students are routinely taught these rhetorical concepts in the language and literature curriculum.

Within the context above, “digital rhetoric” might be understood as the next stage in the evolution of the concept of rhetoric. In an earlier stage of digital evolution, Zappen (2005) imagines “how traditional rhetoric might be extended and transformed into a comprehensive theory of digital rhetoric” (319). More recently, Eyman (2015) describes the broad range of material in which digital rhetoric applies: “nearly all digital texts can be seen both as objects of study for analysis (using digital rhetoric methods) and as products of digital rhetoric practices” (9). Taking cues from these statements, this project aims to combine the theory of rhetoric with digital rhetorical practices. As Zappen points out, the development of new technologies “support and enable the transformation of the old rhetoric of persuasion into a new digital rhetoric that encourages self-expression, participation, and creative collaboration” (321). Digital rhetoric in itself implies audience, reach, and engagement, which links naturally to the most popular digital communication and social networking apps in use today. Thus digital rhetoric functions as “not only persuasion for the purpose of moving audiences to action or belief, but also self-expression for the purpose of exploring individual and group identities and participation and creative collaboration for the purpose of building communities of shared interest” (Zappen, 322). This expanded idea of digital rhetoric lends

itself especially well to pedagogic initiatives that encourage creative self-expression as well as collaborative work and community building.

Teaching digital rhetoric, in the current project, emphasizes both theory and practice: understanding how the theory of rhetoric underlies forms of digital text, and utilizing digital rhetoric practices to produce a creative project. In fact, the history of rhetoric as a field of inquiry is inextricably linked to teaching; pedagogy is an intrinsic element of the study of rhetoric. The objective of Aristotle's *On Rhetoric* in the 4th century BCE was to *teach* orators and speechwriters how to appeal and persuade an audience; as Eyman argues, "every explication of rhetorical theory has included a pedagogical foundation" (112). Therefore, the concept of rhetoric naturally lends itself to a teaching initiative – which the current project will put into action.

At the time of this writing (2022), specialized courses on digital rhetoric are now being offered at a growing number of prestigious universities including Stanford University, Indiana University Bloomington, California State University, Long Beach, Stony Brook University, the University of South Carolina, and the University of Toronto, among others. To our knowledge, no such courses are currently offered in any institution of higher education in Taiwan. The new course design aims to extend the humanistic study of digital technologies and new media, enhance students' media literacy and rhetorical use of English, and make a meaningful contribution to the strategic objective of Bilingual Nation 2030.

4. 教學設計與規劃 (Teaching Planning)

A. Course Objectives and Teaching Pedagogy

The teaching practice will be implemented by a new course design, "Digital Rhetoric Theory and Practice." The course will be aimed at students with previous experience in writing and composition, and will be taught entirely in English, utilizing the techniques of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI).

In the first module of the course, students will read, discuss, and engage with classical theories of rhetoric as well as the latest theories of digital rhetoric, with the goal of understanding how rhetorical strategies function differently across diverse forms of media, including written texts, blogs, podcasts, and videos. Students will engage critically with digital rhetoric as a concept and familiarize themselves with the critical analysis of selected literary and digital texts.

In the second module, the course will focus on producing a digital rhetoric project to put theory into practice. This module will cover multimodal forms of presentation, including narrative rhetoric, visual rhetoric and the rhetoric of voice. Students will reflect on the effectiveness of different rhetorical strategies in digital production.

By the end of the course, students will gain a working knowledge of the latest developments in digital rhetoric theory as well as hands-on experience with digital media production. By writing a critical introduction and commentary, students will gain advanced textual and media literacy in reflecting on their project theoretically.

The course contents will consist of several interrelated phases (see attached syllabus for week-by-week description):

a) Reading in classical rhetoric and digital rhetoric (weeks 1-6)

Students will begin the course by reviewing theories of classical rhetoric as propounded by Aristotle. The instructor will then guide students to think through the time-tested concepts of rhetoric and apply them to the digital realm. Next, a selection of the latest and most influential books and articles on digital rhetoric will be read; a variety of interactive pedagogical methods (e.g. flipped classroom, group discussion, peer debate) will be employed to assist students in engaging with the complex theoretical texts. While discussing the theoretical writings, students will also be trained in the critical analysis of digital “texts” such as visual narratives, social media, and interactive digital platforms. Discussion will

focus on how diverse rhetorical strategies are utilized in digital media to generate modes of persuasion and communication. By closely studying and analyzing the uses of digital rhetoric, students will learn the tools to generate compelling digital projects of their own.

b) Production of multimodal digital content (weeks 7-15)

The production phase will attend to aspects of digital rhetoric in different modes (e.g. text, image, video), which can then be integrated into a coherent project. Through the integration of analytical and creative modes of thinking, students will *create as they analyze*, with the objective of improving and mastering the art of persuasion. Students will choose a topic with contemporary sociocultural relevance and aim to persuade a global audience to a certain view. In digital production, students will be guided to incorporate video shots, voice-over narration and commentary, ambient sound, informative captions, and English subtitles. Several stages of peer review and revision will be undergone for the digital content to be polished to semi-professional standards. Students will also gain experience in the curation of their project by exploring venues of online publication and ways of increasing social impact.

c) Reflection on the theory and practice of digital rhetoric (weeks 16-18)

In the final module, students will write a theoretical introduction and critical commentary on their digital rhetoric project. Just as students have examined the uses of rhetoric in the first module of the course, they will now turn that critical attention to their own creative work. By articulating the theoretical basis of their projects, students will gain a deeper understanding into their creative processes and become more cognizant of the creative objectives they are striving to attain. Through this procedure of self-reflection, students come full circle to integrate theory and practice.

B. Weekly Schedule

The weekly schedule for the course will follow a standard 18-week semester:

1	Introduction to the course	Pre-test: Using rhetoric in argument
2	Review of classical rhetoric	Classical texts in rhetoric since Aristotle
3	Classical rhetoric in composition and speech	Rhetorical analysis of traditional texts
4	Theoretical readings in digital rhetoric	Selection of new theoretical texts
5	Digital rhetoric in videos, websites, and social media	Rhetorical analysis of selected web-based narratives
6	Digital rhetoric analysis continued	Rhetorical analysis continued
7	Project brainstorming session	Conceptualization of digital project
8	Project proposal presentation	Instructor and peer critique
9	Rhetorical organization of digital project	Applying rhetorical analysis to digital production
10	Visual rhetoric in theory and practice	Digital rhetoric in visual presentation
11	Visual rhetoric continued	Apply visual editing techniques
12	Technical session for digital production #1	Overview of video and audio editing
13	Technical session for digital production #2	Resolve technical issues in projects
14	Final project draft presentation	Peer review of work-in-progress
15	Developing rubrics for digital rhetoric	Discussion of rubrics and standards
16	Final digital rhetoric project due	Final critique and revisions
17	Public presentation of final projects	Group critical commentary
18	Post-test: Critical reflection due	Conduct student questionnaires

5. 研究設計與執行方法 (Research Methodology)

A. **Research organization:** A new course was offered through the NTU curriculum, “Digital Rhetoric Theory and Practice.” The course design provides the methodology and implementation of teaching practice. Data was collected at the beginning and ending of the course to measure the effectiveness of this project.

B. **Research hypothesis:** This project investigates how students can enhance their rhetorical skills and digital literacy as critical thinkers and digital content creators. It measures to what extent students meet the learning outcomes of the course, and to what extent they find the course valuable to their creative and critical development.

C. **Scope of research:** This project involved the design and implementation of a one-semester course spanning 16 weeks in the NTU system. The instructor met in person with students on a weekly basis for three hours of class. Class sessions were structured as workshops with the integration of flipped classroom pedagogy and online/MOOC lectures. Students were formally assessed through a mix of instructor, peer, and self-evaluation; students evaluated the course and completed self-assessments through online questionnaires designed to test the research hypothesis.

D. **Research subjects** consisted of undergraduate students primarily from the foreign literature department in their second year or above, who have taken the prerequisites of writing and composition courses, and possess some experience with the concepts of rhetorical persuasion. Instructor/student ratio will be kept low at the initial stage in order to facilitate maximum interaction. Initial condition of students were assessed through a pretest questionnaire at the beginning of the semester. Students enrolled in the course were asked permission to serve as research subjects and may opt out of research at any time (see Research Ethics Agreement Form).

E. **Research methods and tools:** In order to measure learning outcomes, a pre-intervention questionnaire was given to assess initial student skills and proficiencies. Post-intervention questionnaires were given after students finished the course. Data collection was on a number of sources: the final assessment of critical writing by the instructor and peers will be analyzed; the final assessment of creative projects through the **Consensual Assessment Technique** will be statistically tabulated; student questionnaires will be given to measure students' self-assessment and overall feedback on the course design.

For the student questionnaire, the **Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ)** will provide insight into the assessment of student motivation. As elaborated by Pintrich et al. (1991), the questionnaire is designed "to assess college students' motivational orientations and their use of different learning strategies for a college course" (2), which is divided into a motivation section and a learning strategies section. While there are a total of 81 items on the MSLQ, a select handful of most relevant motivators were applied.

F. **Research procedures** follow the established methodologies of pedagogical research: course structure and teaching activities were designed; grading rubrics and learning outcomes were established; pre-intervention questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the course; the final project and critical reflection serve as the post-test to gauge learning outcomes; post-intervention student feedback and evaluation were gathered; all relevant data on assessment were collected and analyzed for research.

G. **Data Processing and Analysis:** Quantitative analysis of student questionnaires and self-evaluations were conducted by assigning numerical values to assessment categories (1.0~5.0). Qualitative data was also compiled from student questionnaire comments.

6. 教學暨研究成果 (Teaching and Research Outcomes)

(1) Teaching Practice and Results

A one-semester course was designed according to the project proposal and approved by the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures as an elective course in literary and cultural studies. The course was successfully offered in the Spring semester of 2024. The course proceeded according to plan and all students produced worthy digital rhetoric projects at the end of semester with all goals achieved.

(2) Student Learning Feedback

Since the course concludes three years of digital creation teaching projects, cumulative results over the three years are presented here to capture the overall results of this long-term teaching practice research project.

Quantitative results: Students' self-assessment about the learning outcomes was quite satisfactory, as the questionnaires demonstrate:

SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS	PRE	POST
I have experience in working on <i>some</i> aspect of digital media	91%	100%
I have shot and edited a video longer than two minutes	36%	100%
I have conducted a formal interview as interviewer	45%	100%
I have pitched the idea of a new project to others in public	68%	100%
I have understanding of the theory behind digital media	9%	77%
I have confidence in planning and executing a digital project	18%	82%
I have confidence in creating digital media <i>independently</i>	36%	91%
I have confidence in collaborating with others on digital media	32%	77%

Pre- and post-intervention results: Pre- and post-intervention questionnaires were conducted by the instructor at the beginning and end of the course. Pre-intervention questions focused on digital media experience prior to the course; post-intervention questions attempted to capture the digital literacy or students after successfully creating a finished piece of final digital project. As can be seen, students progressed most visibly in understanding the theory behind digital media, and their confidence in producing their projects independently as well as collaboration with others.

In addition, general self-assessment scores in their learning skill sets were given by students before and after the course. Certain skill sets, such as leadership and communication, were probably not emphasized enough in the course design, nor was the aim of independent digital media production geared to improve such skills. Most evidently, it can be seen that students improved their creativity, sense of aesthetics, and time management in the execution of their projects. These particular skill sets are probably those less emphasized in traditional curriculum approaches.

GENERAL SELF ASSESSMENT SCORES (1-5)	PRE	POST
Problem solving	3.50	3.86
Critical thinking	3.95	4.00
Time management	3.04	3.45
Creativity	3.59	4.04
Teamwork	4.04	4.22
Leadership	3.45	3.36
Communication	4.50	4.40
Aesthetics	3.54	4.09

7. 建議與省思 (Recommendations and Reflections)

Artificial intelligence poses major challenges to the teaching intervention described in this project. During the execution period, Sora AI was announced February 15, 2024 as OpenAI's text-to-video model. According to the OpenAI website, "Sora is an AI model that can create realistic and imaginative scenes from text instructions." Text-to-video AI calls into question the future of humanities-based digital rhetoric:

- What remains for the text and video content creator and digital rhetorician?
- Which rhetorical techniques might eventually be replaced by AI models?
- What will the brave new world of content creation look like in the next few years?

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