

淡江大學九十一學年度碩士班招生考試試題

系別：英文學系

科目：英文作文

175-1

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本試題雙面印製

Attached is an excerpt from the book, *Saying and Silence: Listening to Composition with Bakhtin*, by Frank Farmer (Logan, UT: Utah SUP, 2001). Write an essay in which you explain Farmer's main purpose in this passage, and then give your response to some aspect of his excerpt from the point of view of an English learner or teacher in Taiwan.

Assume that your reader will not have access to the Farmer excerpt. Carefully attribute the information in your essay so that it is clear which ideas in the essay are from Farmer (or his sources) and which are your own. Any use of material from the article must be in your own words (for example, as paraphrases or summaries), or quoted appropriately.

◀ 注意背面尚有試題 ▶

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175-2

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本試題共 3-2 頁

VOICE IN A RHETORICAL SENSE

Apart from the many voices internalized or assimilated in inner speech, what of the many voices *encountered* in external, social speech? In other words, to what extent is voice a rhetorical construct, as well as a linguistic, psychological, or—as in the case of essentialist theories—a metaphysical one? Voice, in the understanding offered here, is rhetorical by virtue of its function of addressing or answering other voices—not only those voices encountered in our interpersonal relationships, but those that define the communities and cultures to which we belong.

From a Vygotskian perspective, voice is rhetorical because its manifestations in the zone of proximal development mark it as necessary to the meeting of desires and intentions within situations always involving others. Can there be any doubt that the voices that inhabit zones of proximal development are decidedly, and originally, rhetorical ones:

voices that ask for something *from* another, voices that ask something *of* another; voices that beseech and inquire, voices that guide and explore; voices that intend certain effects, voices that effect certain intentions? One feature of Vygotsky's theory seldom mentioned is that social speech, especially as it occurs within the zone of proximal development, is *rhetorical* speech. It is not supplanted by the development of inner or written speech, nor does it vanish on its own once other speech forms develop. To state the obvious, social speech remains a constant and necessary staple of human existence. For that reason, voice, in a rhetorical sense, is realized only in its relationship to, and difference from, other voices that it must address and answer. The quality of voice, in some measure, always presupposes other voices.

Bakhtin provides a fuller understanding of this point. Though he grants the reality of single-voiced discourse, Bakhtin is repelled by the desire for a single voice, equating such with a wish to take refuge from the demands of life itself: "A single voice ends nothing and resolves nothing. Two voices is the minimum for life, the minimum for existence" (PDP 252). Ultimately, one might say that single-voiced discourse is voiceless, since it is impossible to recognize a voice in isolation, that is, without the dialogizing background of those other voices against which it may be heard. The discernment of any particu-

lar voice, in fact, is accomplished by hearing it situated among all those *other* voices which it may mimic, ignore, or reject, with which it may agree or quarrel, from which it may borrow, and so on. This happens not merely because of the aural contrast provided by other voices. It happens because the voices against which any particular voice may be heard are voices that exist in *relationship* to that voice. Single-voiced discourse, in effect, precludes such relationship, refuses dialogue, since it neither answers nor addresses any other voice—nor does it feel any apparent need to. It is decidedly *arhetorical* in its orientation, imagining itself to be wholly sufficient to whatever task is at hand—a tale, a problem, a character, a truth, and so on. It needs no *other*.

Of course, such discourse holds little interest for Bakhtin, who prefers instead to conceive voice as something of a doubled phenomenon, both answering and anticipating an answer in every utterance. Because the voice that speaks the word is thoroughly implicated in the exigencies of *answering* and *addressing* the word of another, it can never be purely self-expressive, unaware or indifferent to another's word. It may aspire to this condition, as evidenced in Romantic aesthetics, but apart from "the mythical Adam" (SG 93), no one has since voiced an utterance wholly independent of the utterances of others.

Bakhtin understands that all our efforts to persuade, convince, move, inform, affect, contend, agree—all our *rhetorical* efforts to influence one another are dialogically situated. The intentions we "author" in everyday discourse are simultaneously active and responsive, original and derivative, initiated and received. All our efforts to influence someone through *address* are simultaneously attempts to *answer someone else*—at the very least, that same someone whose answer we anticipate and build into our addressing utterance. No one speaks in a vacuum; no voice is heard apart from those voices it answers and addresses. Dialogue, in other words, needs its "other words."

Like Vygotsky, Bakhtin posits an essentially rhetorical dimension to the quality of voice, and also like Vygotsky, he understands this dimension to be contingent on the process of dialogue, in particular, on the basic features of answerability and addressivity. Unlike his contemporary, though, Bakhtin understands these features to be simultaneously present in the structure of each and every utterance, which is why voice is always *voices*. A voice in isolation has no reason to speak, no motive to be heard, and thus is meaningless.

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175-3

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In teaching voice from a *rhetorical* perspective, we might do well to stress the many ways that texts *answer* one another and (correspondingly) anticipate how they themselves will be answered. Despite the convention of thematic groupings, our anthologies do not always encourage tracing the lineage of intertextual conversations, often preferring instead a "great essays" approach, which offers monuments of fine writing whose self-evident virtues apparently transcend dialogue. In any event, such a weakness can be turned to our advantage, particularly if we ask students to fill in the missing links, as Bakhtin would say, "in the chain of speech communion" (SG 84).

A frequently anthologized piece, for example, like Martin Luther King's "Letter From a Birmingham Jail," can be the occasion for having students reconstruct what those Birmingham clergymen must have said in order to provoke King's eloquent rejoinder. In keeping with the corporate authorship of the original utterance, students are placed in small groups and asked to draft a version of the document to which King responded. To accomplish this task, students must pay close attention not only to what King says, but also to what he implies that his interlocutors have said. Moreover, students are asked to consider if King's chosen "tone of voice" could have any rhetorical significance for his audience and, in fact, whether King might not be speaking to an audience larger than a group of local clergy.

Of course, students express a great deal of curiosity regarding how closely each group's response "matched up" with the original; but there is abundant interest, as well, in how each group approached this task and the reasons each group gave as to why *these* arguments are presented in *this* order and in *that* voice. Further discussion centers upon how and where King anticipated what might be said in response to his letter and what, if anything, he did to preempt unwanted responses. Additionally, students are asked to identify where King moves to keep open this dialogue, to identify passages composed to keep this dialogue open, to steer it in directions (that) King thinks might be more productive.

A useful follow-up assignment is to have students write another group response to King's letter—this time in their own voices, as students writing some thirty years after King wrote his famous letter. Does King have anything to say to address the racial problems America faces today? Are his solutions relevant, his ideas enduring? Does he speak to the pertinent issues? Or more tellingly perhaps, does he speak in voices that resonates among young Americans, especially young African-Americans? Explorations of this sort go far in reinforcing the notion that texts are situated instances of address and rejoinder, utterances that seek to be heard, understood, answered—even across years, decades, centuries, within the expanse of what Bakhtin calls "great time" (SG 4).

Such explorations also go far in revealing how voices emerge in *historical* and social contexts, how one voice is capable of recontextualizing a number of historical voices for contemporary purposes. King's appropriation of Old Testament phrasing and cadence, when reaccentuated in African-American idioms, spoke powerfully to a generation ready to hear a voice of moral authority, a voice able to speak compellingly to a plurality of distinct traditions. Less urgently perhaps, but no less powerfully, the appropriation of historical voices by writers working in different genres has likewise been put to good effect. Though his understanding of voice is different from the one I offer here, Peter Elbow has argued that a characteristic quality of Richard Selzer's voice is his sonorous orchestration of Shakespearean and biblical languages—both appropriated for contexts that neither could foresee, yet both echoing occasions where they had once been declaimed, namely, "the stage and the pulpit" ("Pleasures," 213).

Such examples, along with Bakhtin's explication of double-voicing in a brief passage from *Little Dorrit*, suggest that there may be considerable value in teaching our students to listen for the diverse voices at large in the texts we ask them to read. For without the ability to hear *other* voices, our students' faith in the possibility for writing in and through those voices, of making such voices their own, will be a diminished one. Importantly, though, the analysis of textual voices I advocate here must not separate voices from the contexts in which they are heard and which they themselves are able to suggest or recall. The tempting alternative—to study voices in isolation, with an eye toward identifying the empirical features of a single voice—is contrary to the understanding of voice offered by Vygotsky and Bakhtin. Voice lessons are necessarily history lessons, too.

Finally, then, what do we tell that student earnestly seeking her true voice? Obviously, from what's been said here, the notion of one "true voice" is more than a little suspect. We might do well by this student if we encourage her, instead, to consider finding her true voices. In challenging her received ideas of voice as a permanent feature of an essential self, we also challenge the limitations, rhetorical and otherwise, that a single voice entails. We might point out to her that when we say of ourselves or a peer or a favorite author that he or she has a *voice*, we have done little more than remove that voice from all those other voices it seeks to answer and address. We might point out that every writer has a chorus of voices—some advancing, some receding; some appropriate, some misplaced; some preferred, some resisted. Our task—a difficult one, to be sure—is to deliver voice from its long romance with the true self and return it to the arena of living dialogue from whence it derives its only meaning: the colloquy of other voices.

If we do this, we might even relieve our imaginary student of the burden of thinking she must possess a single, unchanging voice that is hers alone—and the silence that eventually occurs when she, and her classmates, realize this burden is impossible to meet.