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A Tentative Classification of Rhetoric in Japanese Linguistic Expressions in Advertising Contexts

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Abstract: *This paper studies rhetoric used in Japanese linguistic expressions in advertising contexts. Using actual expressions that appeared in advertisements which were granted Grand Prix and 2nd Grand Prix awards for creative advertisements in newspapers, it was found that most advertisements have various kinds of rhetoric and that a few incorporated loanwords.*

Introduction

Today, various kinds of rhetoric are used in linguistic expressions in a variety of situations. Especially in advertising contexts, advertisers seek to raise awareness of their firm or commodities. Therefore, they have a tendency to use a lot of rhetoric in their advertisement so as to draw more attention from their future customers. Then, if there is a classification about rhetoric by way of similarity of its usage, it is useful for advertisers, firms or individuals to analyze the effect of using rhetoric in their advertisement and decide how they express their appeal points.

A taxonomy about rhetoric in English linguistic expressions in advertising context was put forth by McQuarrie and Mick (1996). The taxonomy is divided into two modes which consist of *scheme*, which shows excess regularity, and *trope*, which shows irregularity. Each mode is divided into two categories. Scheme consists of repetition and reversal, and trope consists of substitution and destabilization.

However, in searching existing articles, it is un-

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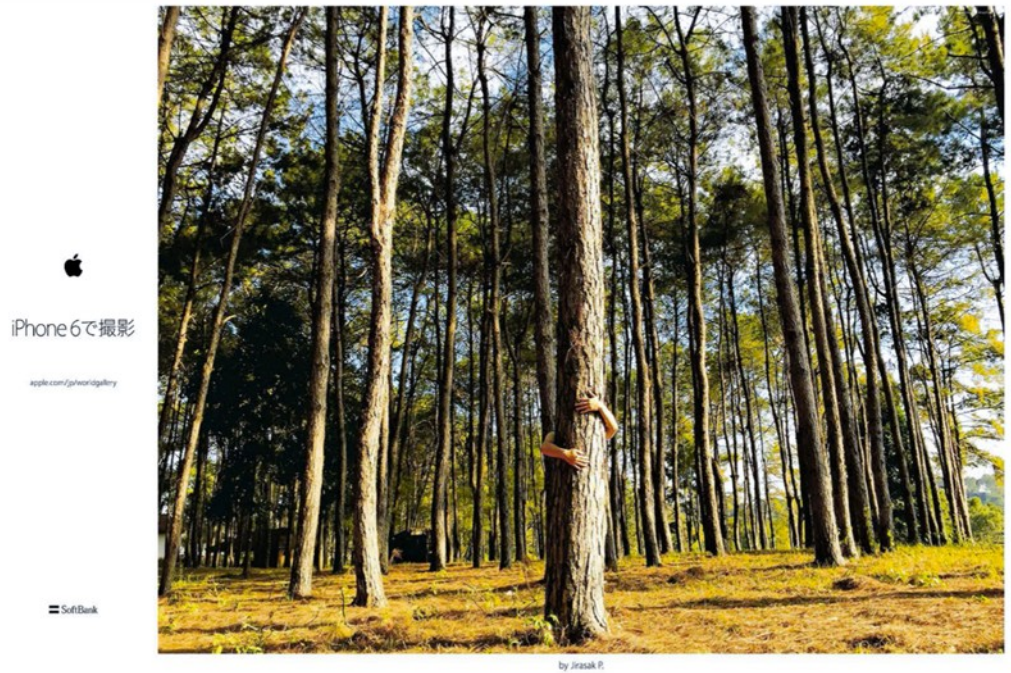


Figure 1. Taking a photograph with the iPhone 6.

clear whether there are any classifications of rhetoric in Japanese linguistic expressions, especially in advertising contexts. Then, if proper classification is not found, making a new classification system by analyzing existing advertisements might be helpful. This paper tried to establish a tentative classification while exploring the advertising world in Japan.

To begin with, do you know the Yomiuri Advertising Awards? Those are major awards for creative advertisements in newspapers. In June 2015 the 31st award ceremony was held for advertisements in 2014 by Yomiuri, which is a Japanese major newspaper company. Then do you know who won the Grand Prix in the advertiser section of this award? Shown in Figure 1 is the Grand Prix of 31st award.

Table 1. *Proposed Classification Scheme*

	Repetition	Reversal	Substitution	Destabilization
Lexical Content	反復	倒置	強調	比喻
All Japanese	A1	A2	A3	A4
Including loanwords	B1	B2	B3	B4

Note. Substitution can also be glossed as 過剩 or 欠落. The C category includes advertisements that lack prose and thus consist only of visual images.

Softbank, which is a Japanese major mobile-phone company, won the Grand Prix by using the photo with the phrase, “Taking a photograph with the iPhone6.” This is an advertisement composed of a picture taken with an iPhone 6 with a few words. Generally speaking, advertisements on newspapers might be thought to consist of many words. Actually, most advertisements that received this award consist of pictures or drawings with a few words. It is a certain finding of this exploration, and interesting. In this way, it is clear that Japanese advertisements in newspapers tend to have some linguistic expressions to be classified.

Then what to classify? Because commercial message on TV or radio might not have linguistic expressions, the author decided to focus on advertisements on newspapers which must consist of some words and selected, as an object of this exploration, the Grands Prix and the second prizes at the Yomiuri Advertising Award in the past five years. But if the advertisement has no words, it is excluded. And as a prior condition of the analysis, there are two more premises. One is that if there are several advertisement related to the same firm as the Grands Prix or the second prizes, the initially listed advertisement is selected as objects. The other is that if there are several sentences in the advertisements, the biggest words are selected as objects. But if the biggest words are formed with the firm’s name, object is shifted to the second biggest words.

Next is how to classify. The author devised a method (Table 1) by reference to existing articles. The columns are based on McQuarrie and Mick (1996), and the rows are derived from Piller (2003).

The columns consists of four elements which show some kinds of rhetoric. *Repetition* [反復], which includes rhyme, anaphora, and other elements, means to use words, which sometimes have similar pronunciation, in the same sentences repeatedly. *Reversal* [倒置], which includes antimetabole,

antithesis or similar, means to change the order of words reversely. *Substitution* [強調], which includes hyperbole, ellipsis or similar, means to emphasize by addition of unnecessary words or lack of necessary words. *Destabilization* [比喻], which includes metaphor, pun or similar, means to destabilize regular words to attract attention by using different meaning of the words or giving different meaning to the words. And the row is divided into two categories based on whether or not loanwords are used in the sentence of advertisements. Finally, if rhetoric is not used in the advertisement, it is not classified in any category written in the table but is classified in a category without rhetoric as “C”. Next, let us peruse some examples.

The first example is already introduced in the opening part as a Grand Prix in 2014 by Softbank with the words “Taking a picture with the iPhone6.” There is no rhetoric in this simple phrase, which is the reason why this is in category C. A second example is 2nd prize in 2011 by TAKASHIMAYA which is a big department store (Figure 2).

This picture shows the appearance of Takashimaya eighty years ago. With this picture there is a phrase, “Who would have imagined?” Ordinary Japanese people can understand what this advertisement wants to say, but actually this sentence lacked an object, which means “imagined what?” Hence, this sentence is categorized A3, which is substitution for emphasis by absence of objective.

The third example was awarded 2nd prize in 2013 by JR East, which is a Japanese train company. The phrase in this advertisement is “We can’t meet by mail. Let’s meet by rail” (See Figure 3). This is apparently rhyme, and it means this is rhetoric as repetition. And in this phrase mail and rail are loanwords into Japanese, so this is easy to classify as B1.

The next example received 2nd prize in 2012 from POLA, which is a cosmetics company (Figure



昭和初期、京都・烏丸の高島屋呉服店。高級コンクリート造りの店が舞臺としての役割は、今から60数年前のことです。この写真の325名の中で、今の高島屋を想像できた人は、いたでしょうか。特選店から、デパートになり、日本の海外展開 ショッピングセンターを京都・玉川に誕生させた東洋百貨や、ショッピングの最先端で生まれたホード事業の高島屋レジットなども加わり、さらに持ち盛りグループ企業に成長。今では、国内の百貨店の利益をグループ各社が分け合い競争はほどになりました。海外でも、シンガポールや台湾で百貨店事業を展開し、そして、この秋には、上海にも高島屋が誕生します。タカシマヤグループは、心をひとつにして、本日、181周年をスタート。より一層、お客様に愛される未来を目指します。

きょう1月10日は、高島屋の創業記念日です。



タカシマヤグループ
 (株) 高島屋 (株) 岡山高島屋 (株) 岐阜高島屋 (株) 東京高島屋 (株) 高松高島屋 (株) ジェイアール東海高島屋 (株) 伊予高島屋 (株) タカシマヤ・シンガポール・LTD. 上海高島屋百貨有限公司 大塚高島屋百貨有限公司 (株) 高島屋友の会 (株) ファッションプラザ・サンロード (株) アルティマ・コーポレーション
 資料提供(株) トーランド・ディベロップメント シンガポールPTE.LTD. 高島屋スペース・スタジオ(株) 高島屋レジット(株) (株) タッドリブ (株) ロジエ (株) トップ (株) エー・ティ・エー (株) センチュリー・アンド・カンパニー (株) 高島屋サービス 高島屋保険(株) しまがわ生活文化研究所(株)

Figure 2. Who would have imagined?



メールじゃ会えない。レールで会おう。



Figure 3. We can't meet by mail.
Let's meet by rail.

4). The phrase used in this advertisement is “Where in Japan is the prefecture with the most beautiful skin?” Because of course a prefecture is not a human being and doesn’t have skin, this sentence is an anthropomorphic metaphor. Moreover, there are no loanwords, so this is classified as A4.

Next is the final example. It is by the Takarajima magazine company (Figure 5): “Can dogs from Japan and dogs from United States talk to each other?” It is unclear what they want to appeal. However, this seems, in some vague way, catchy, because there are several conceivable questions before this specific question. For instance, “Do the dogs need translation?” “Can the dog talk with human lan-



Figure 5. Can dogs from Japan and dogs from the United States talk to each other?

POLA

日本一の
美肌県は、
どこだ？

美人三都市は、強いのか。
雪の降る街か、南の島か。
古都なのか、港町なのか。
秘訣は山の幸か、海の幸か。
果たして、
どの県の肌が一番美しいのか。
ふるさとのために、
ひと肌ぬぐとぎがやってきた。

アペックス・イの
スキンケアで
決定する！

APEX-i

美肌県
グランプリ

2017.8.20 11:00 - 9.30 11:00

女性の肌データから日本一の美肌県を決める！

Figure 4. Where in Japan is the prefecture with the most beautiful skin?

guage?” or “Which is a Japanese dog?” Anyway, ordinary Japanese people seem to conceive of various questions and then are fascinated and attracted by this expression. At any rate, with no loanwords this is judged as A4.

For this paper in total, fifteen examples awarded the Grand Prix or second prize in the past five years were classified. The remaining examples are attached at the end of this paper in a partial appendix (the complete appendix is available online). The results of the classification are shown in Table 2.

From this table we can learn that there are various kinds of rhetorical expressions in Japanese advertising contexts. Only two out of 15 advertisements use no rhetoric. This means that most advertisers tend to use rhetoric in their advertisement to draw the attention of their future customers. We can learn, too, that most advertising words consist of Japanese vocabulary or characters and loanwords are used only a few times. It is unsure why loanwords are not used frequently in the contemporary Japanese community, but it might be probable that the target people of newspapers tend to be older and thus not so accustomed to loanwords.

Finally, the author focused on the words of linguistic expressions in the advertisement on newspapers, but the effect of advertisement depends on the total appeal power, including images or explanations. Thus, this point should be explored further.

Table 3. *Classification Scheme with Results*

	Repetition	Reversal	Substitution	Destabilization
Lexical Content	反復	倒置	強調	比喩
All Japanese	A1 = 2	A2 = 1	A3 = 1	A4 = 6
Including loanwords	B1 = 1	B2 = 0	B3 = 1	B4 = 1

Note. Substitution can also be glossed as 過剰 or 欠落. The C category (advertisements with only images and no prose) had two responses.

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Editor's note: Following is a partial appendix. Interested readers can view the complete index online at <http://www.otbforum.net/publications>

Appendix (partial)

Round	Year	Rank	Company / Type	Phrase	Cat.
		Grand Prix	Softbank (mobile phones)	Taking a picture with the iPhone6 iPhone で撮影	C
31	2014	2 nd Prize	Air France (airline)	Why not meet in Paris? パリで会いましょう	A4
		2 nd Prize	Louis Vuitton (luxury bags)	Louis Vuitton and Christian Louboutin celebrate the LV monogram	B4

Note. Cat. = category.

About the author: Tetsuji Tosa completed his MA in Policy Studies in 2016 at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies. He works for the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in Japan, Science and Technology Policy Bureau.