The Application and Research of Parallelism in National English Speaking Competitions Among Chinese College Students
Samples from Grand Final Contestants of China Daily "21st Century Cup" National English Speaking Competition

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ABSTRACT
Speech is the earliest source of rhetoric. They are closely connected to each other. Rhetorical devices are important part of rhetoric study, as well as useful language tools in speech. Parallelism is one of the most frequently used rhetorical devices in speech. This paper conducts both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze all kinds of rhetorical devices, especially parallelism, in winning speeches of China Daily "21st Century Cup" National English Speaking Competition in recent years. The purpose is to explore the use of parallelism in national public speaking competitions among Chinese college students.

Keywords: public speaking, rhetorical devices, parallelism

I. INTRODUCTION

Parallelism is a concise and clear rhetorical devise consisted of a series of sentences or sentence components with similar structure. They are closely related to content and consistent with tones to express meaning, enhance language momentum, and make emphasis, thereby improving the efficiency of ideas delivery. According to *Cambridge Dictionary*, "Parallelism" is defined as the use of matching sentence structure, phrases, or longer parts so as to balance ideas of equal importance.

The history of western rhetoric shows that the speech is the earliest source of rhetoric (Herick, 2001). Rhetorical devices and speech are inseparable. In order to achieve the purpose of persuasion, speakers need to attach great importance to expression skills. One of the manifestations at the linguistic level is the use of rhetorical devices. Parallelism, as one of the most frequently used rhetorical devices, can enhance the credibility and persuasiveness of speeches (Lijun Meng, Mingqin Li, Wei Guo, 2008).

At present, most EFL learners lack an accurate understanding and systematic application of rhetorical devices in English speeches. Also, most of the current research in China of rhetorical devices only focuses on the characteristics of rhetorical devices, while few research focuses on what to choose and how to apply some rhetorical devices in English speeches, which are the purposes of this paper.

II. APPLICATION OF RHETORICAL DEVICES IN COLLEGE ENGLISH SPEAKING COMPETITIONS

This paper collected the prepared speeches of the grand final contestants in recent years, as well as what rhetorical devices they use and how frequently they use them. It also conducts a quantitative analysis of various rhetorical devices, especially parallelism, to see the effects and functions of parallelism in English speech.

To prove the universality of parallelism used in speeches, the study tested the validity of 30 selected winning speeches in total. According to statistics, 251 different rhetorical devices in total were used in 30 speeches, involving 10 types of rhetorical devices. The results are shown in "Fig. 1".
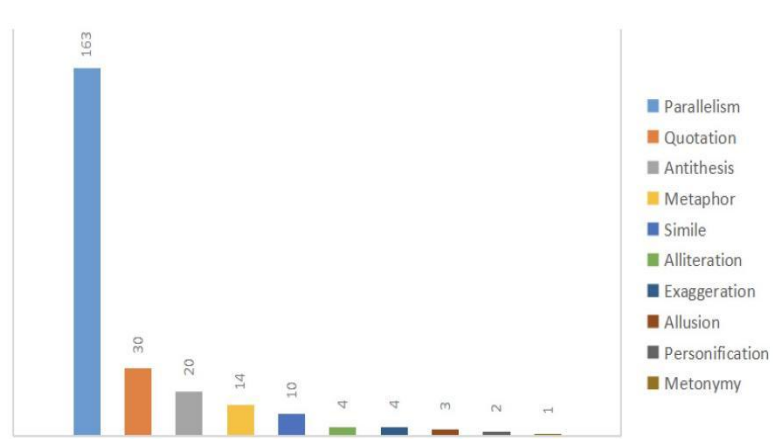
Fig. 1.   The usage of various rhetorical devices.

According to the figure, parallelism is used most frequently in all rhetorical devices and accounts for more than half of the proportion. This further confirms the widespread application of parallelism in speeches. Based on the universal use of parallelism, many scholars have conducted research on it. Li Lisheng (1999) is one of them. Li focused on the components of parallelism and divided them into words, phrases, sentences, sentence groups, and gave examples to analyze the functions of parallelism. However, the study failed to summarize and classify the rhetorical functions of parallelism clearly. In *The Formation and Appreciation of the "Beauty of Language Momentum"* in English and Chinese Parallelism (2001), Huang believed that the "beauty of language momentum" is realized through the parallel, successive and progressive relationship within the structure of the parallelism. So far, articles related to parallelism applied to speeches mostly focus on structure and functions through various examples. In 2004, He Xiaoqin, in his journal *Speech, Persuasion, Appeal, Text,* which is based on logos, pathos and ethos from classical rhetoric theory, put forward the necessity of combining partial rhetorical devices with the overall text layout for rhetorical function analysis. Since then, many case studies have interpreted the function of rhetorical devices in discourse analysis. Taking *The Rhetorical Role of Parallelism in English Speeches: A Case Study of Obama's Winning Speech* (2009) as an example, Fang analyzed the application and function of parallelism in different positions in the entire speech.

Therefore, this paper adopts the perspective from part to whole, and conducts quantitative research and exemplified analysis on the compositions, the internal relationships, and the positions of parallelism in the 30 speeches. It also discusses and classifies the functions realized by parallelism. The purpose of the study is to help speakers have a more comprehensive understanding of parallelism, and to put forward scientific and rational suggestions for the application of parallelism in English speeches.

III.   THE APPLICATION OF PARALLELISM IN ENGLISH SPEECH

A.   *The components of parallelism*

In English speech, the components of parallelism can mainly be divided into words, phrases, infinitives and sentence groups. According to statistics, among the 30 speech manuscripts, the frequency and proportion of various forms of composition are shown in "Fig. 2".
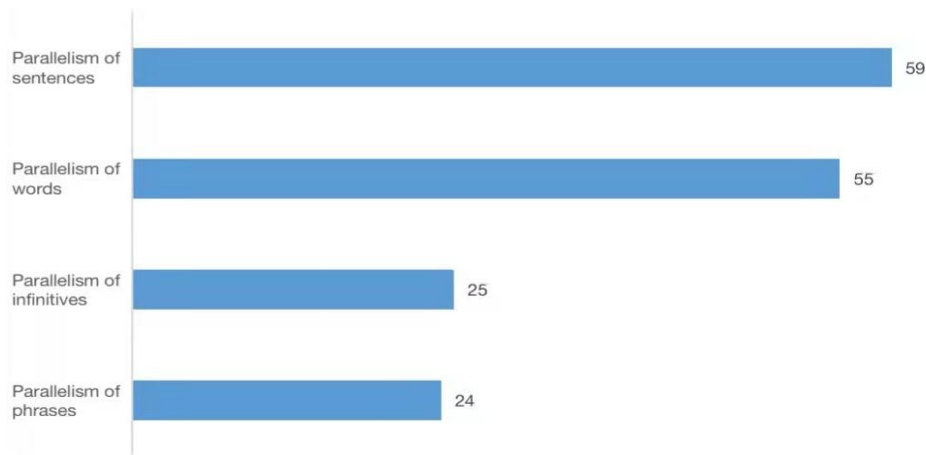
Fig. 2. The components of parallelism.

The data shows that sentence group composition accounts for the highest proportion among the four types, followed by words composition, while infinitives and phrases have similar proportion. It can be seen that contestants are more inclined to use sentence groups with similar structures to express opinions, convey emotions, and enhance language momentum. At the same time, the parallelism of words often appears in the form of multiple adjectives, nouns or verbs, which can enrich the description of objects or express different emotions and opinions. However, each form has its own uniqueness in application. Some typical examples are selected below.

B. Parallelism of words

"Now every year, many local ecoenvironmental protection organizations are receiving donations — big notes, small notes or ever coins — from housewives, plumbers, ambulance drivers, salesmen, teachers, children and invalids." (8th Champion Gu Qiubei)

In this sentence, the series of nouns listed by the contestant are actually the epitome of different groups of people in society. They come from all walks of life, do different jobs and have different identities, but now they all contribute to the ecological environmental protection. The use of parallelism here allows us to see people's increasing awareness of environmental protection and the expanding group of people who are committed to it, which undoubtedly adds confidence to our future ecological civilization construction.

C. Parallelism of phrases

"And now, if you ask me what exactly is "the art of breathing", I would say it is indeed "the art of living". It combines the search of balance, the grace of patience, and the awareness of appreciation." (15th Champion Tong Hua)

This sentence is a typical example of parallelism of noun phrases. The contestant frames balance, patience and appreciation to depict the art of breathing and the art of life in her mind, in which she can transfer her emotions viewpoints to the audiences.

D. Parallelism of infinitives

"And had I not spent the last 2 weeks painfully preparing for the speech contest, I wouldn't have had a chance to think about this world, to ponder on life and to form a better understanding of myself." (18th Second Runner-up Fang Sihan)

In this sentence, the contestant uses infinitives to explain how her experience in the speech contest has helped her know about the world and herself, which made her think about life more deeply. At the same time, she also wanted to use her own story to convey that the meaning of each choice is not about reaching destinations but about the scenery along the way.

E. Parallelism of sentences

"Some people like peace and nature, so they prefer to live tranquilly in the countryside; some people are drawn into arts and literature, so they become wild and let imagination take their wheels; while some others are simply fancy about the betterment of life, in other words, to make big money, so they work their asses off to get to the top of the pyramid, like me." (19th Runner-up Yang Haotian)

This is a parallelism of a group of sentences used to express the happiness in the eyes of different people. Three consecutive "some..." sentences have brought three distinct types of people in the daily life and showed different attitudes towards life. The last type of people seem to be the most frequent ones around us, who pursue career success and big fortunes. Through self-

mockery, the contestant attracts the interest of the listeners and also foreshadows the following text.

IV. INTERNAL RELATIONS OF PARALLELISM

Generally speaking, the internal relations of parallelism can be divided into parallel relationship, successive relationship and progressive relationship. Parallel Relationship means the participation items are of equal importance. Successive Relationship means the participation items occur in accordance with time. Progressive Relationship means the increasing in extent or severity of participation items. In the speech manuscripts, it can be found that the parallel relationship is the most favoured, accounting for 61.3%, followed by progressive relationship and successive relationship (see "Fig. 3" for details).
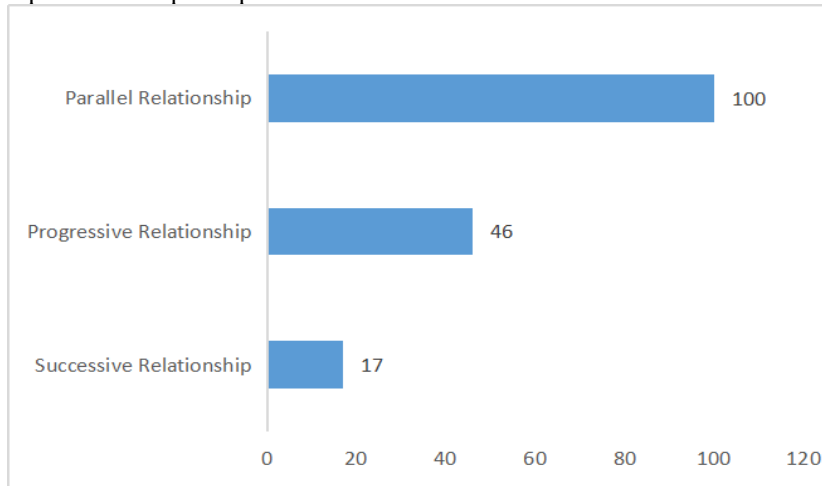

Fig. 3. The internal relations of parallelism.

A. Parallel relationship

The parallel relationship happens between the participation items which exist at the same level or in the same genus concept. The parallel relationship accounts for the largest proportion in the samples. 100 parallel relationships are adopted in 163 samples. For instance:

"Our culture, politics, society and commerce are being sloshed into a large melting pot of humanity."(7th Champion Sun Ning)

In this sentence, the contestant uses the parallel relationship to explain that culture, politics, society and business have infiltrated every aspect of people's life due to globalization and industrialization, so as to encourage people to look at it with a critical attitude and follow the trend of times.

B. Successive relationship

Successive relationships, applying time as the axis, describe the order of participation items. For instance:

"I took that as her permission, and started working with my teacher day and night to find a story, to illustrate the details, and to practice my facial expressions and gestures in front of the mirror." (18th Runner-up Shen You)

This contestant uses the successive relation to describe her experience in preparation for the English public speaking competition. When her mother finally allowed her to participate it instead of only focusing on academic studies, she followed her teacher's advice to get prepared. She wanted to tell a story to open her speech, so she began exploring stories from books she had read, perfecting the details and practicing again and again in front of a mirror.

C. Progressive relationship

Progressive relationship, namely the increasing in size, extent, depth, etc., can make listeners' impressions and emotions get deeper and deeper. For instance:

"They speak different languages; they belong to different ethnicities; they once served different nations and governments, but now, they gather and strive for the common goal: existence." (24th Second Runner-up Yuan Jiayin)

In this sentence, the contestant tells the story of a very famous film The Wandering Earth, in which people from different countries unite together to fight against the great challenge against human destiny. She uses the progressive relation to explain that languages, races, countries, etc., cannot prevent people from uniting together step by step. When the external forces are powerful enough to destroy our

species, humans should collaborate and help each other.

V. THE POSITIONS OF PARALLELISM

Analyzing the positions of parallelism in speech is helpful for audience to understand the functions of parallelism in specific places. Therefore, this paper divides the positions of parallelism into "At the Beginning", "In the Middle" and "At the End". Specifically, "At the Beginning" generally refers to the introduction of the topic or the opening of the speeches. "In the Middle" contains the entire arguing process. "At the End" is the conclusion or closing of the speeches. Accordingly, the quantitative results are shown in "Fig. 4".
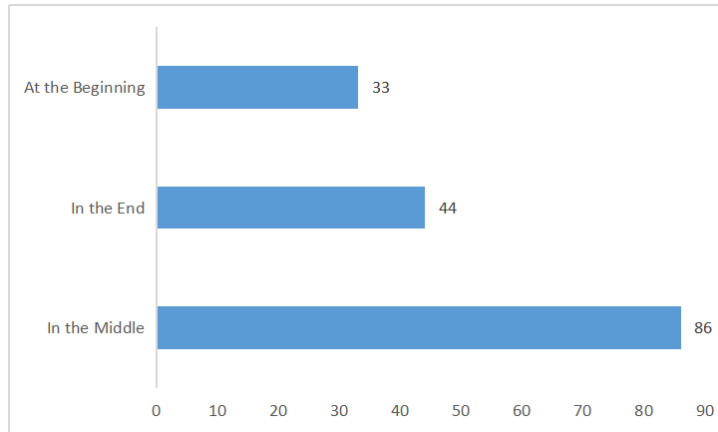

Fig. 4. The positions of parallelism.

According to the data, parallelism occurs most often "In the Middle," followed by "At the end." Even though the contents "In the Middle" account for the largest proportion of text, there are still many parallel structures used at the beginning and he end. Parallelism can be used to attract audience' attention at the beginning or summarize the topic at the end. Some specific examples are presented below.

A. Parallelism: at the beginning

"After knowing the topic, I can imagine students cutting directly into the definition of happiness, sharing their little happy stories, setting criteria for happiness and using puns to show what happiness consists of. But that is not where I am going." (19th Runner-up Li Haotian)

The contestant simply lists the conventional thinking patterns of what most students will do after seeing the topic. Then he uses "but", as a turning point, to express his different opinions. At the beginning of the speech, the contestant not only shows the audience his uniqueness in personality, but also adds a sense of mystery to the rest of the text.

B. Parallelism: in the end

"For China, still more challenges exist. How are we going to ensure a smooth transition from the planned economy to a market-based one? How to construct a legal system that is sound enough and broad enough to respond to the needs of a dynamic society? How to maintain our cultural identity in an increasingly homogeneous world? And how to define greatness in our rise as a peace-loving nation? Globalization entails questions that concern us all." (7th Champion Sun Ning)

In this sentence, the contestant uses four consecutive questions to show the audience the great challenges China is still facing. At the end of his speech, the contestant wants the new generation to carry on their responsibilities, be open-minded and keep in pace with the time.

C. Parallelism: in the middle

"When grandma entered college, she was in the age of prime, but education wasn't. It was an age when China had a literacy of merely over 50 percent; it was an age when one out of eight got enrolled by a university or college; it was an age when even the top-class universities in China were not recognized by the world. It was with the aspiration of changing education for the better that my grandma became a teacher, in pursuit of teaching students at home and learning more about the abroad." (23rd Second Runner-up Xiong Ziqing)

Here, the contestant explains his ideas through examples, taking the audience back to the time when his grandma lived. He tells the story at that time when education is still a pressing issue in China.

VI. THE FUNCTIONS OF PARALLELISM IN PUBLIC SPEAKING

Parallelism, as a rhetorical device, is widely used in national English speaking competitions in

China, which is because it has a series of practical and effective functions. According to the preliminary statistics, parallelism has following functions: attracting audiences' attention, logical and thorough reasoning, adding momentum to words, creating images or moods, summarizing and sublimating the main ideas, etc. (see "Fig. 5" for the specific proportions).
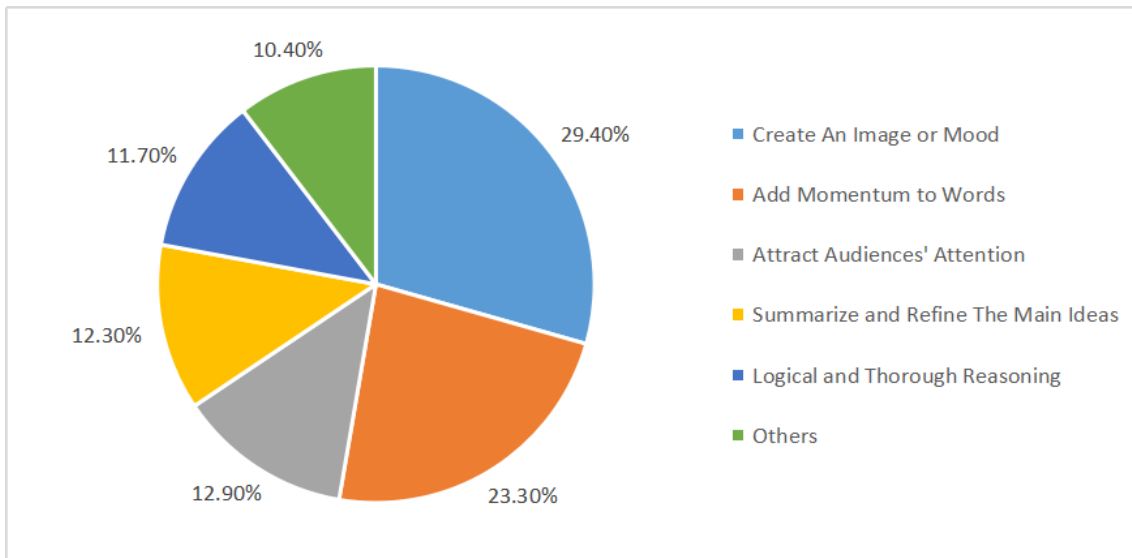

Fig. 5. The functions of parallelism.

A. Attracting Audiences' Attention

At the beginning of a speech, speakers often use parallel rhetorical questions, exclamatory sentences, phrases and other forms to strengthen semantics, enhance the audiences' impression and provide the audience with interesting and novel content, in order to catch their attention at the very beginning. For instance:

"Snap! Look at my new watch. Snap! Westlake in spring. Snap! Here's me middle of a speech competition."(24th Champion Chen Yixian)

The contestant, using parallelism to imitate the snapping sound emitted by the camera, effectively attracted the audiences' attention (Given the fact that the 24th "21st Century Cup" was held in Hangzhou, the examples like "the Westlake in spring", "Here's me middle of a speech competition" that the contest gave were very smart decisions).

B. Logical and thorough reasoning

The salient features of the parallelism is to provide audiences with a more comprehensive discourse background, to expand and enrich discourse information, and to create a logical chain in speech to help audiences better understand the keynotes of speech, with more and more participation items involving. For instance:

"It is this faith that initiates the student to resort to law for a tiny issue; it is this faith that supports him to endure all the exhausting trips when collecting evidence; It is this faith that makes a seemingly "ridiculous" receipt request legal and rightful. It is this faith that helps to change our life, enhance our judicial system and bring social justice."(16th Champion Xu Jiru)

Here, the contestant sums up everything she has mentioned in her speech and explains the importance of having faith in law with a neat use of parallelism. At first, the college students in her speech asked for a receipt of one-yuan sausage, but he was refused. He sued the National Railway Ministry, yet failed for lack of evidence. After the loss, the college student began his journey of collecting evidence. In the end, the student won the case in the court, bringing justice back and pushing forward the judicial process on the issue of receipts in China. The logic seems natural like retelling a story, but in fact, the speaker deliberately uses parallelism to strengthen the logical chain of the whole speech.

C. Adding momentum to words

Proper use of parallelism can play an effective role in emotion contagion. Parallelism can not only perfect semantic meaning, but also add momentum. With the participation items involving, the atmosphere changes from low to high, the momentum turns from weak to strong, and the rhythm converts from soft to passionate. In the final stage of a persuasive speech, the speaker usually uses parallelism to appeal and invoke audiences' empathy to achieve the purpose of his or her speech. For instance:

"Let Greta's words echo here today. Let every nation pay respect and responsibility to the shared destiny of mankind; let substantial collaboration happen and make a difference; let the 'Wandering Earth' become the 'Wondering Earth', shining glamorously in the universe."(24th Second Runner-up Yuan Jiayin)

At the end of her speech, the contestant concluded her idea by applying parallelism in sentences and called on all countries to carry on their responsibilities, pay attention to global issues such as climate change, remember the warm images in The Wondering Earth, and acknowledge the fact that human beings are in a community with a shared future.

D. Creating an image or mood

The parallelism can help speakers create a picture or mood, through the superposition of layers of images, giving audiences a sense of immersion. This helps the audience build empathy, so as to achieve the purpose of persuasion. For instance:

"Every time I am busy weighing the ingredients, he will offer to help mix the pastry. Every time I teach him how to break an egg, we always end up picking eggshells from the mixture. Every time I ask him to fetch me some milk, he will salute to me and shout 'Yes!'. "(25th Second Runner-up)

Here, the contestant uses the parallelism to describe a sweet scene when she is baking with her brother. Each participation item is depicted in detail during the process of baking (such as weighing ingredients, mixing the pastry, breaking eggs, etc.). These sweet moments are in sharp contrast to the brother's reluctance to wear an apron, which occurs in the following speech.

E. Summarizing and refining the main ideas

At the end of a speech, speakers often use parallelism to summarize the important content or plot of the previous text, to further strengthen the core ideas, to sublimate the theme, and to leave a final impression on the audience through the rigorous and neat discourse structure and fluent language. For instance:

"One day, people living in the areas now sweltering with the horror of wars will be able to sit with their families and enjoy their every moment. One day, people from the rich countries are willing to share what they have with those from the poor countries and those from the poor countries will eventually be able to make their own happy living themselves. One day, different cultures in this age of globalization will coexist with tolerance and the unfriendly confrontations among them will be eliminated. One day, the globe will share the dream with me and we will all contribute to making our

dream come true. One day, our dream will defeat the reality!" (11th Champion Cao Feng)

Here, the contestant uses parallelism to set a series of expectations for the future, and tries to tell the audiences that "reality" and "dream" are never two separated parts because dream can overcome the reality one day. For individuals, communities, regions or countries, all need to have faith in dreams. In this way, people's lives can get better and more sophisticated.

F. Suggestions on the use of parallelism in speech

Based on the above analysis and examples, this paper has expounded the features and functions of parallelism in English public speaking and gives the following suggestions:

1) Diversified use of rhetorical devices: In English speech, a variety of figures of speech should be reasonably used to express content and emotions properly, without relying too much on any one, nor deliberately contradicting any one.

2) Multi-dimensional application of the composition and position in parallelism: Whether there are words, phrases, infinitives, sentence groups, etc., speakers should flexibly use them according to their own needs. It is recommended to use the parallelism at the beginning to attract the audiences' attention, and to summarize ideas and sublimate the theme at the end of speech.

3) Thorough understanding of the internal relations of parallelism: When using parallelism, speakers should first clarify the internal logic such as time, extent and severity between participation items, and then rationally apply the parallel relationship, successive relationship or progressive relationship, so as to ensure the accuracy of the speaker's expression and the content meaning.

4) Making full use of the functions of parallelism: Different from daily conversations or class presentations, public speakers need to take full account of listeners' feelings and impressions. Parallelism is helpful in attracting the attention of the audiences, summarizing and sublimating the main ideas, creating images, etc.

VII. CONCLUSION

After the thorough analysis of compositions, internal relationships, positions and functions of parallelism, it can be concluded that parallelism is an effective and expressive rhetorical device in English public speaking. If the contestants use the parallelism reasonably and properly, they can attract the attention of the audience, enhance the reasoning, strengthen the momentum of speech, create the images of artistic conception, etc. In addition, using parallelism is not the ends. Speakers

should consider the specific context and pay attention to the order of each participation item, so that parallelism can not only create a sense of rhythm, but also add the finishing touch in content.

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