

A study of The Use of Parallelism in Editorials of the New York Times

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This paper deals with the use of parallelism in the editorial articles of the New York Times as an important category of the rhetoric of repetition. A study of this kind constitutes one step in compiling a textbook on writing for college students and adults with a more advanced knowledge of English.

The examples of parallelism included in this study are taken from ten editorials of the New York Times newspaper (249 editorials were initially examined) issued between April 1 and May 31, 1995.

These examples have been classified into groups according to form and grammatical structures. The use of this writing technique has then been discussed with a view to its future use as a model for writing English.

Even though 50 editorials with excellent examples of parallelism have been closely analyzed, because of space limitation, examples from only 10 articles have been included in this paper as samples.

1. Introduction

With the accelerating development of the means of communication and transportation, along with the growth of Japan's importance in the fields of economy, politics and academia, it has become imperative that the Japanese work effectively with the rest of the world, thus making an international contribution with its wealth. This change of circumstances has made it more and more important for Japanese to be able to use the English language as a means of international communication. It is with this English that one is able to communicate and exchange knowledge, information and opinions with others; at least, in one's own special field.

There are two kinds of communication: one by speaking and listening and the other by writing and reading. The objective of this study is to search for a method by which Japanese learners may achieve the level of English mentioned above, and to collect materials in order to compile a textbook for that purpose.

To achieve this goal, it is necessary to study superior examples of writings by accomplished writers and learn how their ideas are presented, developed and organized, how and what effective words are chosen, and what devices are employed to make their statements persuasive.

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From this point of view, the author has chosen the editorials of the New York Times newspaper as models for writing essays for argument and persuasion, and has been studying their diction, style, rhetoric and structures. He intends, in a few years, to compile these materials into a textbook on writing aimed at advanced students of English.

In the present paper, the use of parallelism in editorials of the New York Times as an important component of the rhetoric of repetition will be examined.

2. Repetition and Parallelism

As a rhetorical device, repetition refers to "the repeated use of the same word for the purpose of emphasis" in a piece of writing. In the broader sense of the term, such common devices as alliteration and rhyme can be included in the definition. The author has already written a report, published in the bulletin of Fukui University of Technology (Number 23, 1994) on cases involving the repetition of single words.

This time the study has concentrated upon cases of repetition of groups of words together; that is, phrases, clauses or sentences as a whole. It should be noted, however, that in these cases complete and exact repetition is very rarely seen. In many cases, only some words are actually repeated, but other words have corresponding counterparts bearing ideas in common or in contrast. As such they are in parallel and have the same or very similar grammatical structures. This kind of repetition is referred to in rhetoric as parallelism, which is used to emphasize the effect of a section of writing or clarify the meaning of it by repeating a similar idea or contrasting it with an antithetical one. Typical examples of parallelism are as follows:

a) (Parallelism of sentences)

* About half the total cuts would go to the wealthiest 10 percent of households.

A fifth of the cut would go to the wealthiest 1 percent of families.

(From a NYT editorial of April 7, 1995)

b) (Parallelism of clauses)

* The tax cuts are tilted toward the wealthy;

the spending cuts are tilted against the poor.

(Ibid.)

The parallel elements of the foregoing examples can be represented respectively in the following schemes:

- a) About half the total cuts – A fifth of the cut
would go to – would go to

the wealthiest 10 percent — the wealthiest 1 percent
of households — of families

- b) The tax cuts — the spending cuts
are tilted — are tilted
toward the wealthy — against the poor

The first scheme is an example of parallelism used for emphasis, i. e. , repetition of the same idea. The second is two statements presented antithetically to effectively highlight a contrast. The first type of parallelism will hereafter be referred to as 'synonymous', and the second as 'antithetic'.

The above is a classification of parallelism in relation to content. The instances of parallelism may further be sorted into five groups according to structure.

- A. Complete repetition of the whole sentence, clause or phrase.
(No example of this kind was found in the editorials surveyed.)
- B. Parallelism with a repetition of words at the heads of the sentences, clauses or phrases: this is referred to in rhetoric as 'anaphora'.
- C. Parallelism with a repetition of words in the middle of the sentences, clauses or phrases.
- D. Parallelism with a repetition of words at the end of the sentences, clauses or phrases; also called 'epiphora'.
- E. Parallelism with no repetition of words, but with the same grammatical construction and closely corresponding words.

3. Method

1) To find examples of the use of parallelism, 249 editorials of the New York Times newspaper issued between April 1 and May 31, 1995 were examined.

2) Fifty of these editorials, which contain examples of parallelism and which deal with international issues as well as American domestic affairs that might be of interest to Japanese readers, were chosen for detailed analysis.

3) Examples from 10 of these articles have been selected for inclusion in this report, and are listed under the title of the editorial and the date of its publication, these are shown in square brackets and numbered in Roman numerals, e. g. , III [Harvard's Unseemly Haste: April 13, 1995] . The individual examples are numbered in Arabic numerals along with the number of the editorial to which they belong. They are also given labels that show which type of parallelism they exemplify, e. g. , I-2 (2 clauses: antithetic: C).

The 1st label shows whether the parallelism occurs in phrases, clauses or sentences, the 2nd label shows whether it is synonymous or antithetic, and the 3rd shows which group it belongs to according

to structure (A – E above).

4) From an examination of the list of the classified examples of parallelism, the following matters will be clarified:

- A) What sort of parallelism is used most often and why.
- B) How parallelism is used, and to what effect.
- C) What points should be taken as models for the future writing and teaching of English.

4. List of the Examples of Parallelism

I [Alms for the Affluent; April–7, 1995]

I-1 (2 sentences–synonymous–C)

- * /About half the total cuts would go to the wealthiest 10 percent of households.
/ A fifth of the cut would go to the wealthiest 1 percent of families.

I-2 (2 clauses–antithetic–C)

- * The tax cuts are tilted toward the wealthy;
the spending cuts are tilted against the poor.

I-3 (2 phrases–synonymous–D)

- *, the bill would cut more than \$60 billion /out of welfare programs
and 17 percent /out of discretionary programs

I-4 (2 phrases–antithetic–D)

- *, low–income families would absorb two–thirds of the spending cuts,
but reap only about 5 percent of the tax cuts.

I-5 (2 phrases–antithetic–C)

- * The Republicans would write into the tax code /new protections against inflation /for investors,
while wiping out /some inflation protection /for recipients of food stamps.

I-6 (5 phrases–synonymous–E)

- * /Food stamps, /school lunches, /housing assistance, /day–care allowances /and every other
need–based program/ will shrink after taking account of inflation.

II [The Museum; April 13, 1995]

II-1 (2 phrases + 2 phrases–synonymous–C)

- * On April 13, 1870, the Metropolitan Museum of Art came into the world.
It had no properties, either art or real estate,
no fund or promises of them,
only a very grand name
and the very grand ambitions of its founders.

II-2 (2 sentences–synonymous–C)

- * Best of all, however, is to wander one or two of the Met’s galleries on a lazy afternoon.

/Generations of school children have done so;.

/So have generations of parents and artists and tourists and passers-by. .

III [Harvard's Unseemly Haste: April 13, 1995]

III-1 (2 clauses-antithetic-E)

* The confused debate about Harvard University's decision to dump Gina Grant from its next freshman class yields one clear point. Because universities

by /how they act in society as well as

/what they offer in the classroom,

III-2 (2 clauses- antithetic- C)

* /Harvard has a right to make hasty decisions on incomplete facts, but

/it has no right to use primitive public relations techniques to raise

III-3 (2 clauses-antithetic-B)

* Only a searching inquiry by Harvard can reveal

/if she committed some unforgivable offense in the application process or

/if she still qualifies for a probationary admission from a university. . .

IV [Still Too Many Secrets; April 19, 1995]

IV-1 (2 clauses-synonymous-B)

* . . . Washington's obsession with secrecy has kept the governed from learning

what their Government is doing, or even what it has done over the past years.

IV-2 (2 sentences-antithetic-C)

* The Clinton order excludes nine categories of information from automatic 10-year declassification.

Some are warranted, like information on how to make nuclear arms or the identity of American intelligence sources.

Others are not, like information that would "damage relations" with a foreign government.

IV-3 (2 sentences-synonymous-C)

* Yet the new rules allow significant exemptions that officials can easily abuse to claim secrecy for policies that ought to be subject to contemporaneous public debate rather than historical analysis

. . . and regret. . . decades later.

.....

Mr. Clinton, by trying to satisfy the military and intelligence agencies most prone to abusing secrecy, has produced a policy that emphasizes declassifying secrets rather than eliminating the Washington psychology that produces them in the first place.

V [A Hollow Plan for the Homeless; April 20, 1995]

V-1 (2 sentence-antithetic-C)

* At a time of fiscal austerity and widespread sacrifice, it is fair to impose some conditions on the homeless. Yet it is important to recognize that lack of housing is often only one symptom of a homeless person's breakdown. . . .

V-2 (2 sentences – antithetic– B) + (3 phrases–synonymous–E)

* Anyone found to have other housing options or not using all available income and resources to obtain housing would be denied temporary assistance, including space in shelters. Anyone granted emergency shelter would have to help design a program for independent living, including participation in /drug treatment, /family counselling and /job training programs.

V-3 (3 phrases–synonymous–B)

* The aim is to reduce drug use and violence in shelters, to push out criminal opportunists and to force families into housing that is available,

VI [Holocaust Survivors; May 2, 1995]

VI-1 (2 phrases–synonymous–E)

* In her sleep, Lily Margulels still hears the dogs barking in the night and the German soldiers shouting, "Dirty Jew. "

VI-2 (2 phrases–antithetic–B)

* They are the guardians of memories too terrible to describe and too important not to.

VII [Case Closed in Japan: May 17, 1995]

VII-1 (2 sentences –antithetic –E)

* It is possible that some (of Aum's suspects) were subjected to intense interrogation, without lawyers present.

.....

It is hard to imagine similar techniques being used against friends and associates of those accused of the Oklahoma bombing.

VII-2 (5 phrases –synonymous –E)

* Human rights advocates have long charged that suspects in police custody in Japan are often stripped of their clothes, bombarded by noise, deprived of sleep, watched incessantly and generally degraded until they confess.

VII-3 (2 sentences – synonymous – C)

* But in Japan the public's devotion is to orderliness and safety, and there is little tolerance for American legal principles.

.....

There was hardly a ripple of reaction (to a group of American lawyers deploring what they said was a violation of Aum's religious freedom) in a country proud that it has achieved stability and economic success without the help of lawyers.

VII-4 (2 sentences – synonymous – B)

* Despite their respect for authority, many Japanese fear a return to the authoritarian days of World War II more than random violence by zealots.

Despite the arrests and seizure of equipment, the Japanese know that there could still be military equipment and tons of poisonous materials hidden in different parts of the country.

VII-5 (2 sentences – antithetic – B)

* They will likely still demand an enormous police presence to guard against further attacks and be wary of returning soon to their subways, trains and department stores.

They will also never again be complacent about assuring themselves that Japan is immune to violent pathologies of modern society.

VIII [The Court Stands Idly By: May 25, 1955]

VIII-1 (2 sentences – synonymous – B)

* Other courts in other religions may see more clearly how sorely the United States still needs to repair its shameful record of racial discrimination.

Other public and private agencies may see that by closing doors of opportunity the nation is driving even the most ambitious minority youngsters to desperation.

VIII-2 (2 sentences – synonymous – B)

* The task for public and private institutions now is to devise carefully tailored programs more resistant to legal attack.

The task for the Clinton Administration, which is reassessing affirmative action programs, is to hold fast to the broad purpose of advancing racial justice.

IX [Disunity in Foreign Policy: May 25, 1995]

IX-1 (4 phrases – synonymous – E)

* The initiatives would /disrupt America's relations with China and Russia, /shrink an already skeletal foreign aid budget, /limit American participation in international peacekeeping and /overturn President Clinton's efforts to establish a more rational policy.

IX-2 (2 phrases – synonymous – C)

* The money Washington invests in /dismantling Russian nuclear weapons and /developing Russian private enterprise is a direct investment in American security.

X [Air Strike in Bosnia: May 26, 1995]

X-1 (3 phrases – synonymous – E)

* With luck and follow-through, /this action could save civilian lives, /avert a messy U. N. withdrawal and /nudge along the painstaking search for a diplomatic settlement.

X-2 (2 sentences – synonymous – E)

* Recently /the Serbs have been testing the agreement by reclaiming and reemploying their weapons.

/They have also increased the shelling of Sarajevo's civilians.

X-3 (2 clauses – antithetic – E)

* Pressed /by the United States, NATO has been eager to retaliate, but /has until now been restrained by U. N. commanders in Zagreb. . . .

X-4 (2 sentences – synonymous – E)

* /Meanwhile the Bosnian Serb leader, Radovan Karadzic, is hinting he might talk about the internationally proposed partition map he previously spurned. /Serbia's President, Slobodan Milosevic, is angling to win relief from sanctions by officially recognizing Bosnia.

5 Analysis of Data

For further analysis the distribution of the classified uses of parallelism is shown in the table below:

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
1	s-s-c	p-s-c	c-a-e	c-s-b	s-a-c	p-s-e	s-a-b	s-s-b	p-s-e	p-s-e
2	c-a-c	s-s-c	c-a-c	s-a-c	s-a-b	p-a-b	p-s-e	s-s-b	p-s-c	s-s-e
3	p-s-d		c-a-b	s-s-c	p-s-b		s-s-c			s-s-e
4	p-a-d						s-s-b			s-s-e
5	p-a-c						s-a-b			
6	p-s-e									

**The first letter in each grouping stands for one of the three following labels : s=sentence, c=clause, p=phrase. The second letter represents the parallelism as being either synonymous (s) or antithetic (a). The third refers to the group to which a given example of parallelism belongs according to its structure (A – E of Section 2).*

(1) Parallelism in sentences:

Of the 32 examples, 14 cases of parallelism occur in sentences. Nine of them are synonymous, while five are in antithetic. The repetition of the same words is predominantly seen at the beginning and in the middle of sentences, six times respectively. It occurs at the end of sentences three times.

(2) Parallelism in clauses:

The use of parallelism in clauses is far less frequent than in sentences or phrases. It is, however, notably different in character. While two thirds of the examples in sentences are synonymous, almost all the examples in clauses are antithetic. Conjunctions connecting clauses in those cases are those which contrast, oppose or compare such as 'but', 'or', 'while', 'as well as' etc. . Of the examples taken from the ten editorials referred to in this study, only one contains a case of synonymous parallelism between clauses. Among the 50 editorials initially chosen for detailed analysis, however,

some examples of synonymy are seen in clauses linked with the conjunction 'and'.

(3) Parallelism in phrases:

There are 12 examples of parallelism in phrases, nine of which are synonymous. Only three are antithetic. This more frequent occurrence of synonymy is understandable, for most of the phrases which constitute parallelism are phrases which are lined up in a certain position in a sentence, and which have similar syntactical functions. In the following example, parallelism is seen in three phrases placed one after the other, which make up the complement of a sentence. It can be seen that the syntax of each phrase is similar: the 'to–infinitive' is used at the beginning of each.

*The aim is to reduce drug and violence in shelters, to push out criminal opportunists and to force families into housing that is available. . . . (A Hollow Plan for the Homeless: April 20)

Other kinds of parallelism in phrases are as follows:

(a) Noun phrases as a subject:

* Food stamps, /school lunches, /housing assistance, /day–care allowances /and every other need–based program will shrink after taking account of inflation. (I–6)

(b) Noun phrases as an object:

* It (the Metropolitan Museum) had /no properties, either art or real estate, /no fund or promises of them, only /a very great name and /the very grand ambitions of its founders.

(c) Verb phrases as predicates:

* With luck and follow–through, this action could /save civilian lives, /avert a messy U. N. withdrawal and /nudge along the painstaking search for a diplomatic settlement. (X–1)

(d) Prepositional phrases as modifiers:

* the bill would cut more than \$60 billion /out of welfare programs
and 17 percent /out of discretionary programs.

Among the listed examples of parallelism in phrases, the use of verb phrases as predicates is most frequent. In this case the phrases almost always begin with main verbs, not with auxiliaries, even though they in fact introduce the predicates and are common to each of them e. g. 'could' in the example (c) above.

5. Conclusion

Repetition is the device used most often and most effectively to achieve emphasis in writing. Writers use the same word, the same phrase or the same sentence more than once to catch and hold the attention of the readers. Repetition also includes saying the same idea or a similar one, but without using the exact same words or phrases. This form of repetition may be termed 'restatement'.

Both of these types of repetition can be 'parallelism' if the repeated word, phrases, sentences or ideas have the same or similar grammatical forms and are placed in the same or similar syntactical structures.

Almost all the editorials (86 percent of 249 editorials) contain examples of parallelism. The average number of examples in an article, however, does not exceed four or five. From this fact, it may be suggested that although the authors appreciate the value of repetition as a simple but effective means of emphasis, they restrain themselves from indulging too often in its use.

Of the total number of examples nearly half (46 percent) are of parallelism in sentences. Parallelism in phrases accounts for 35 percent. However, complete repetition of exactly the same sentence or phrase is not seen at all. This strongly suggests that writers try to give color and flavor to their writing by slight but significant changes and modifications, even when they need to repeat a phrase or sentence.

The next stage of this study will be for the author to compile all the samples examined so far into a book, rearranging them according to their classification into types, and ranking them according to their usefulness.

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