

7.1 Components of the rhetorical situation

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 11 marks**

KEY WORDS qualification 限定 • degree of certainty 确定程度

Objective

Build the skills to use the rhetorical situation to explain a writer’s **degree of certainty** 确定程度.

You must be able to:

- explain how audience expertise affects how strongly a claim is stated
- explain how purpose affects the amount of qualification used
- link a hedge or an absolute claim to the situation
- avoid treating qualification as weakness

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ Expertise and certainty

An expert audience expects claims stated with their real strength; overstatement is noticed and costs standing. A general audience may read qualification as uncertainty, so writers often state more plainly and qualify in a following sentence.

■ Purpose and hedging

A writer seeking a decision states plainly; one seeking a hearing for an unwelcome view qualifies heavily so the reader will keep reading. Both are strategy, not timidity.

■ Linking to the situation

“He qualifies because his audience are specialists who will check” is analysis. “He qualifies because he is unsure” is a guess about a person we cannot observe.

2 Practice

2.1 State how audience expertise affects the strength of a stated claim. [2]

2.2 Explain why heavy qualification may serve a writer’s purpose. [2]

2.3 A writer addressing a general readership states a claim plainly and qualifies it in the next sentence.

(a) State the reason. [1]

(b) State what would be lost by qualifying inside the first sentence. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Overstatement before an expert audience mainly costs the writer [1]

- **A** length
- **B** standing
- **C** coherence
- **D** unity

3.2 Which is analysis rather than speculation? [1]

- **A** He qualifies because he is unsure.
- **B** He qualifies because his specialist audience will check the claim.
- **C** He qualifies because qualification is good style.
- **D** He qualifies often.

3.3 An unwelcome argument is addressed to a hostile readership.

(a) State the likely level of qualification.

[1]

(b) Explain why it serves the purpose.

[2]

Solutions

2.1 experts expect claims at their real strength; overstatement is noticed and costs the writer standing.

2.2 it keeps a hostile or unconvinced reader reading rather than rejecting the claim at the first sentence.

2.3 (a) a general reader may read qualification as uncertainty, so the claim lands first.
(b) the claim's force, since the qualification would blunt it before it registers.

3.1 B. an expert who checks and finds the claim overstated discounts the rest.

3.2 B. it links the choice to an observable feature of the situation.

3.3 (a) heavy. (b) a hostile reader will stop at an unqualified claim, so qualification buys the hearing the argument needs.