

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

3.2 Which is analysis rather than speculation? [1]

- | | |
|---|---|
| A | B |
| C | D |
- 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]
