

Identification Function of Chinese Modal Particles in *Wen Xin Diao Long*

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Abstract This study investigates the rhetorical function of Chinese modal particles (MPs) as shown in Liu Xie's *Wen Xin Diao Long* (《文心雕龙》, ca. 501), through the lens of Kenneth Burke's "identification" theory. While previous research has primarily focused on the semantic and syntactic functions of MPs in ancient Chinese, their rhetorical role remains underexplored. By employing the text analysis tool AntConc v3.5.7, this research identifies "也" (ye), "矣" (yi), and "夫" (fu) as the most frequently used MPs in Liu Xie's treatise, with occurrences of 534, 228, and 139, respectively. These particles, when paired with rhetorical figures such as repetition, antithesis, and rhetorical question, create compelling rhythms that greatly enhance reader engagement and facilitate identification with the writer. The analysis reveals that "也" (ye) together with repetition or antithesis effectively creates a rhythm that draws readers into a ready acceptance of the writer's viewpoints. "矣" (yi), often found in four-character clauses, complements sentences and enhances melody. "夫" (fu), typically used at the beginning of sentences, conveys the writer's confidence and deeply engages readers, when combined with antithesis or rhetorical question. The findings indicate that these modal particles play a crucial role in creating a rhythmic structure that bridges the gap between the writer and reader, thus strengthening the power of identification. Furthermore, this inquiry not only demonstrates how rhythm serves as a non-verbal means of achieving identification by unawareness, but also offers an innovative approach to studying ancient Chinese texts via Western rhetorical theory. The present research examines only one Chinese classic, which may not fully represent the use of MPs across all ancient Chinese texts. Future studies may investigate varied Chinese classics to explore more of

MPs' rhetorical functions.

Keywords Ancient Chinese Modal Particles, Identification by Unawareness, *Wen Xin Diao Long*

1. Introduction

Chinese traditional linguistics research considers modal particles (MPs) to be an important means of expressing moods. As research has deepened, scholars have further explored and categorized the functions of Chinese modal particles. Some scholars believe that MPs serve as markers of modality or discourse. For instance, Shao [1] argues that the expression of Chinese modality requires the use of modal particles. Cui [2] finds that MPs are a crucial component of Chinese modality system, and their function is to convey the speaker's attitudes, including their stance, perspective, judgments, and presuppositions. Zhang's research [3] reveals that the combination of the modal particle "啊" (a) and the adverb "真" (zhen) in a sentence intensifies the use of irony. Zong [4] examines the syntactic features of Chinese modal particles "啊", "吧"(ba), "吗"(ma), and "呢" (ne) at the end of sentences, and concludes that they serve as discourse markers. Other scholars have also explored the syntactic functions of modal particles. For example, Wang [5, 6] shows that modal particles expressing suggestions and affirmations are typically used with sentences that end in a falling tone and a flat tone, respectively. Additionally, some scholars have investigated the unique role of modal particles in ancient Chinese parallel prose and poetry. Jin's study [7] focuses on the

prosodic function of modal particles in the parallel prose works of renowned writers Lu Ji (陆机) and Yu Xin (庾信) during the Six Dynasties period. His findings suggest that MPs aid in achieving a rhythmic alternation, making parallel prose more melodious and aesthetically pleasing. After examining the prosodic and syntactic features of ancient parallel prose and poetry in China, Lu [8] concludes that Chinese ancient poetry requires a repetitive rhyme to create a poetic atmosphere, and therefore, the addition of lightly read modal particles is not favored. On the other hand, parallel prose does not require a strict rhyme, making the use of MPs permissible, which allows for a change in rhythm. Tao and Zhang [9] analyze the literary expression function of the modal particle “矣” (yi) in *Shih Chi* (《史记》). They find that Sima Qian deliberately uses the word “矣” in certain sentences to imply the personality traits of different characters, such as reinforcing a positive tone to reveal a character’s blindly arrogant and subjective arbitrariness. Li’s research [10] on pre-Qin poetry shows that the modal particles “兮” (xi), “乎” (hu), and “只” (zhi) located at the end of a poem serve to express rich emotions, such as sadness, despair, anxiety, urgency, joy and cheerfulness. However, there is a lack of research on the rhetorical functions of modal particles. For instance, Lei [11] examines the phonological rhetorical functions of empty words in classical Chinese and concludes that they can prolong the sound, increase the number of characters, regulate the rhythm, and add force to the text; Wang [12] analyzes the interpersonal rhetorical function of MPs, and finds that they can enhance the emotional strength of the discourse, construct discourse identities, and create discourse space to adhere to “The Politeness Principle”. Despite these studies, there has been no research on the rhetorical identification function of Chinese modal particles in classical texts.

Modal particles are an important type of function words in ancient Chinese literature. In his renowned literary criticism *Wen Xin Diao Long* (《文心雕龙》), Liu Xie explained the usage of function words and “provided their classification for the first time” [13]. His interpretation of function words has a significant influence on later related studies. Additionally, Liu Xie paid great attention to phonetic rhetoric, and his use of modal particles in essays is highly professional, demonstrating their important value in academic research. The essays in *Wen Xin Diao Long* are mainly featured by coordinating tones, with each article having a neat and symmetrical tone, occasionally with twists and turns. Liu Xie sought harmony and neatness of rhythm, resulting in exquisite and natural tones throughout the essays. After conducting a preliminary investigation, this study has found that Liu Xie’s *Wen Xin Diao Long* makes use of a significant number of modal particles. Upon closer examination of this treatise, it becomes apparent that the three most frequently used modal particles – “也” (ye), “矣” (yi), and “夫” (fu) – serve a strong function in rhetorical identification.

In contemporary Western rhetoric, Kenneth Burke has

made the most representative inquiry into the category of “identification”. Burke is the founder of the new rhetoric in the 20th century. “Identification” is the most central concept in his rhetorical system, and it is also regarded as the progress of contemporary new rhetoric compared with the classical rhetoric. In Burke’s classic work, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, he explains “identification” as:

You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his. ... True, the rhetorician may have to change an audience’s opinion in one respect; but he can succeed only insofar as he yields to that audience’s opinions in other respects [14].

Burke argues that the key to successful identification between a speaker and audience lies in their shared characteristics, or “consubstantiality,” such as speech, gesture, and tonality. He also puts forward two main ways in which “identification” can occur: by content and form. In his article “The Rhetorical Situation” [15], Burke outlines three strategies for achieving identification by content – identification by sympathy (through the same emotions, positions, values, etc.); identification by antithesis (because of common enemies or problems, etc.); and identification by inaccuracy/unawareness (one unconsciously identifies with the speaker, a thing, or an institution). Among these strategies, identification by unawareness is considered “the most powerful” form [16], because it “brings us to the very roots of the rhetorical situation” [15].

In “The Rhetorical Situation”, Burke discusses the concept of identification by unawareness which can be achieved via using pronouns like “we”. This allows the audience to unconsciously identify with the speaker. However, Burke only mentions the verbal realization, and existing research suggests that there are also non-verbal ways of achieving this type of identification. For example, Foss et al. [16] cite the example of Marlboro cigarettes, where the buyer may unconsciously identify himself with the image of the dashing man on the cigarette box. Additionally, Yuan and Jiang [17] mention other non-verbal methods such as tone and posture. Therefore, this paper argues that there are two main ways of achieving unawareness identification: verbal, through the use of pronouns like “we”; and non-verbal, including images, tones, gestures, etc.

Based on the initial examination of modal particles in ancient Chinese, this study proposes that rhythm should also be considered as a non-verbal means of achieving unawareness identification. In his book *Counter Statement*, Burke himself notes that the rhythm of a text can stimulate the readers’ “muscular imagination”:

The appeal of form as exemplified in rhythm enjoys a special advantage in that rhythm is more closely allied with “bodily” processes. ... The rhythm of a page, in setting up a corresponding rhythm in the body, creates

marked degrees of expectancy, or acquiescence. A rhythm is a promise which the poet makes to the reader – and in proportion as the reader comes to rely upon this promise, he falls into a state of general, surrender which makes him more likely to accept without resistance the rest of the poet’s material. ... The varied rhythms of prose also have their “motor” analogies. A reader sensitive to prose rhythms is like a man hurrying through a crowd; at one time he must halt, at another time he can leap forward; he darts perilously between saunterers; he guards himself in turning sharp corners. We mean that in all rhythmic experiences one’s “muscular imagination” is touched [18].

The rhythm in poetry and prose, if arranged reasonably, will make the reader’s thinking ebb and flow, and then easier to accept the author’s statements. Rhythm thus becomes an effective way to achieve identification between author and reader ¹.

From a cognitive-neurological perspective, the sense of rhythm has a significant impact on reading ability. Goswami [19] and Flaunacco et al. [20] find that children with dyslexia have a weaker perception of musical rhythmic structures, highlighting the importance of rhythm in understanding the language phonology and rhythm. This is crucial for phonological development and subsequent literacy skills. Additionally, Dubin [21] and Hatfield [22] suggest that there is a close connection between Wernicke’s Area of the brain, which is responsible for language comprehension, and Broca’s Area, which is responsible for language production. Hatfield also proposes that the area in the right hemisphere of the brain corresponding to Wernicke’s Area, plays a crucial role in processing rhyme, meaningful intonation, and rhythmic variation. This may suggest that, in writing, it is necessary to incorporate a regular movement of sound in order to engage the reader and evoke empathy. This can be achieved by creating a smooth and fluid rhythm, similar to the flow of running water.

Lin Tao [23] points out that rhythmic features encompass three additional phonetic elements beyond timbre: pitch, length, and intensity. He also states that “Chinese is a language with obvious rhythmic features, which almost utilizes all aspects of prosody”, and this is particularly evident in ancient Chinese. In ancient Chinese, modal particles are often used to achieve euphony, balance the structure and, more importantly, regulate the rhythm.

As a result, the rhythmic features of modal particles in ancient Chinese are especially prominent. For instance, in Liu Xie’s *Wen Xin Diao Long* (《文心雕龙》), in addition to the basic four or six-character clauses, there are also patterns of five, seven, eight, and ten-character, which are supplemented with modal particles such as “ye” (也), “yi” (矣), “fu” (夫), “gai” (盖). As Liu Xie stated, “*Fu* (夫), *wei* (惟), *kai* (盖), and *ku* (故) are particles to initiate a sentence; ... *hu* (乎), *tsai* (哉), *i* (矣), and *yeh* (也) are particles usually used to conclude a sentence.” (Ch. XXXIV Paragraph and Sentence). These words in the ancient Chinese not only create coherence, but also serve to regulate the rhythm, resulting in a cadence in sentences. Modal particles in *Wen Xin Diao Long* are instrumental in forming the rhythm of the text, guiding readers to follow the content. In the following sections, we will analyze the examples to further illustrate the specific strategies of ancient Chinese modal particles in regulating rhythm, and achieving the identification by unawareness.

2. Identification Strategies of Modal Particles in *Wen Xin Diao Long*

The use of modal particles in *Wen Xin Diao Long* is extensive and diverse. To accurately quantify the number of modal particles, this study utilized the 2012 edition of *Wen Xin Diao Long*, translated and annotated by Wang Zhibin [24], as the primary source. This latest revised edition by Vincent Yu-chung Shih [25] was also consulted, as it is the first complete English translation in the Western world. In addition, Professor Shih’s translation has been highly praised. The number of modal particles was determined using AntConc v3.5.7., and cross-referenced with *Handbook of Empty Words in Ancient Chinese* [26], and the *Dictionary of Commonly Used Characters in Ancient Chinese* [27] to exclude non-modal particle characters and eliminate duplicate data (e.g., in the data of “也”, “者也/也者” were excluded). The final count of modal particles that appeared more than once in *Wen Xin Diao Long* is presented in Table 1.

From the data, it is evident that the most frequently used MPs in *Wen Xin Diao Long* are “ye” (也), “yi” (矣), “fu” (夫). In order to analyze the effect of unawareness identification of these three MPs, the following representative examples will be analyzed.

1 As can be seen from Burke’s discussion of figures of “antithesis” and “climax” in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, the unawareness identification effect of figures also involves rhythm. With regard to “antithesis”, Burke says that “For instance, imagine a passage built about a set of oppositions (‘we do this, but they on the other hand do that; we stay here, but they go there; we look up, but they look down,’ etc.). Once you grasp the trend of the form, it invites participation regardless of the subject matter. Formally, you will find yourself swinging along with the succession of antitheses, even though you may not agree with the proposition that is being presented in this form.” [14] Regarding “climax”, Burke also gives vivid discursive examples to demonstrate the effects presented by rhythm, “But

recall a gradation of political import, much in the news during the ‘Berlin crisis’ of 1948: ‘Who controls Berlin, controls Germany; who controls Germany controls Europe; who controls Europe controls the world.’ ... But regardless of these doubts about it as a proposition, by the time you arrive at the second of its three stages, you feel how it is destined to develop and on the level of purely formal assent you would collaborate to round out its symmetry by spontaneously willing its completion and perfection as an utterance. Add, now, the psychosis of nationalism, and assent on the formal level invites assent to the proposition as doctrine.” [14]

Table 1. Modal Particles and Their number in *Wen Xin Diao Long* 《文心雕龙》

Modal Particles	也	矣	夫	者也	焉	哉	盖	乎	耳	而已	欤	已	尔	也者	耶
	Ye	Yi	Fu	Zhe Ye	Yan	Zai	Gai	Hu	Er	Er Yi	Yu	Yi	Er	Ye Zhe	Ye
Number	534	228	139	72	55	52	47	33	23	16	11	8	6	6	3

2.1. Rhetorical Identification Effect of the Modal Particle “也” (Ye)

The character “也” (ye) is the most frequently used modal particle in *Wen Xin Diao Long*, appearing 534 times. Upon examining its distribution throughout the whole book, it is evident that when “也” is placed at the end of a sentence, it is often used for emphasis through repetition. This is particularly noticeable when it is used in conjunction with the figures of antithesis and climax. Additionally, when “也” is used in the middle of a sentence, it serves as a slight-pause mark to indicate the end of a thought. In the following analysis, we will explore the unawareness identification effect of the character “也” by providing examples from *Wen Xin Diao Long*:

- (1) 故《春秋》一字以褒贬，“丧服”举轻以包重：此简言以达旨也。《邶诗》联章以积句，《儒行》辨说以繁辞：此博文以该情也。书契断决以象《夬》，文章昭晰以效《离》：此明理以立体也。四象精义以曲隐，五例微辞以婉晦：此隐义以藏用也。（《征圣》）²
- (2) 盖《风》、《雅》之兴，志思蓄愤，而吟咏情性，以讽其上，此为情而造文也；诸子之徒，心非郁陶，苟驰夸饰，鬻声钓世，此为文而造情也。（《情采》）³
- (3) 然后品藻玄黄，摘振金玉，献可替否，以裁厥中：斯缀思之恒数也。……扶阳而出条，顺阴而藏迹，首尾周密，表里一体：此附会之术也。夫画者谨发而易貌，射者仪毫而失墙，锐精细巧，必疏体统。故宜拙寸以信尺，枉尺以直寻，弃偏善之巧，学具美之绩：此命篇之经略也。（《附会》）⁴

In the examples above, the modal particle “也” appears repeatedly, often in conjunction with antithesis and climax. According to Zhang [28] in *Modern Chinese Rhetoric*, the function of repetition is “to express urgent demands and

wishes, to express strong and deep emotions, to emphasize the significance of a certain point, to mark the content of the passage, the rhythm of the meter, to naturally repeat the use of a certain word or sentence, to form the beauty of repetition”. Upon examining the repetition of the modal particle “也” (ye), we find that it is mainly used to create the form of simproce (repeating the first and last characters) with “此” (ci), such as “此...也” in examples (1)-(3). This continuous repetition prompts readers to agree with the content without awareness. Furthermore, when “也” is used in conjunction with antithesis and climax, it enhances the effect of identification. For instance, in example (2), “也” is combined with antithesis; and in examples (1) and (3), “也” is combined with climax. Example (3), taken from Ch. XLIII “Organization (*Fu-hui*)”, illustrates the importance of grasping the three main points of “缀思” (organization of thought), “附会” (arrangement/organization) and “命篇” (planning of a literary composition) in order to create a well-integrated and rich essay without being disorganized. These three concepts, “缀思”, “附会”, and “命篇”, form a hierarchical relationship, a climax, from the part to the whole, from the micro to the macro. In this example, the three “斯/此...也” form a figure of repetition, combined with a climax, which leads the reader to accept the point of view more readily. When readers reach the second sentence of example (3), they can already find a structural similarity between the first and second sentences. By the time they reach the third sentence, “此命篇之经略也”, their expectation of repetition is satisfied, and their prediction of the sentence pattern is verified. At this point, readers have unconsciously participated in completing the sentences. As Burke said, “Once you grasp the trend of the form, it invites participation regardless of the subject matter” [14]. Additionally, the climax, from part to whole, “expresses

2 The English version is: “In the Spring and Autumn he uses one word to express both praise and censure and in ‘San-fu’ he expresses a greater category under the form of a lesser. These illustrate his expression of an idea in a few words. In the ‘Pin’ lyrics we find many verses with many lines each, and in ‘Ju-hsing’ there are long discussions and ornate rhetoric. These illustrate his indulgence in comprehensive discussions of all his sentiments. Writing chiefly characterized by critical judgment he symbolizes by the hexagram *kuai* (which means ‘to judge’), and writing chiefly characterized by logical clarity he models after the hexagram *li* [which stands for fire and the sun]. These illustrate how he reveals the nature of a thing by pointing out the pattern it exhibits. In the Four Images there is profound meaning which is delicate and cryptic, and in the Five Illustrations the language is connotative, implicative. These illustrate how he implies the function of a thing through cryptic innuendo.” [25]

3 The English version is: “Because the rise of the *feng* and *ya* was due to the fact that the Ancient Poets, full of frustrations, sang of these emotions in satirical remonstrances against their superiors: this is what is meant by building literary forms on emotion. Other writers, on the contrary felt no real frustration, but indulged in hyperbolic ornamentation merely for the

sake of winning fame and fishing for worldly glory: this is what is meant by creating emotion to fit a literary form.” [25]

4 The English version is: “Only after he has learned this is he able to evaluate black and yellow, to ring out the sonorous tones of metal and jade, to offer what is appropriate and advise against what is not, and thus to reach what is considered the mean. For it is in fu-hui that we find the lasting principle for the organization of thought. ... like a tree, he will be able to send out some shoots to meet the sunshine and keep in reserve others which remain in the shade. In this way he will achieve a close-knit organization from beginning to end, which manifests a unity of external and inner elements. These achievements constitute the art of fu-hui, organization. The painter who pays close attention to a hair misses the portrait, and the archer who aims at the very small misses the wall. Preoccupation with the fine and small naturally involves looseness in the general structure of the whole. Therefore, we should bend an inch to make a foot straight, and bend a foot to straighten up eight; in short, we should give up the one-sided cleverness to gain the beauty that is all-encompassing. This is the general principle governing the planning of a literary composition.” [25]

thoughts and motives in a powerful way that the audience cannot help but be moved by it” [29]. With the combination of repetition and climax, this sentence has achieved a strong identification effect among readers.

- (4) 文之为德也⁵大矣，与天地并生者，何哉？（《原道》）
- (5) 生也⁶有涯，无涯惟智。（《序志》）
- (6) 其取事也⁷必核以辨，其摛文也⁷必简而深。（《铭箴》）
- (7) 圆者规体，其势也⁸自转；方者矩形，其势也⁸自安。（《定势》）

In the examples provided above, the modal particle “也” is typically found in the middle of the sentence. Upon examining its position and meaning, it becomes clear that “也” is used to indicate a pause. Pan, He and Wei [30] find that “when reading aloud, individuals often naturally pause in sentences to take a breath or convey specific thoughts and emotions. ... These pauses are often indicated by function words”. In the above examples, the typical function word is the modal particle “也”. Lv [31] explains this grammatical phenomenon, stating that “sometimes we use a modal particle to indicate that the sentence is not finished, which can be called a pause”. These pauses can be divided into two categories: intentional pauses used to capture the audience’s attention, and natural pauses that occur in speech. According to Lv [31], the modal particle “也” is often used as a natural pause. Example (4), “文之为德也大矣” (*Wen*, or patten, is a very great virtue indeed), is a subject-predicate structure, with “也” indicating the pause between “文之为德” and “大矣”. By adding “也”, the pace of the sentence slows down and the discussion appears more organized. In example (5), the structure of the two clauses is the same, but in the first clause, the character “生” (life) is monosyllabic, requiring the use of “也” to complete the sentence. Besides, “生也有涯” is a subject-predicate structure, with “也” used to indicate the pause between the subject “生” and the predicate “有涯” (is limited).

In examples (6)-(7), the modal particle “也” not only marks a pause, but also adds a stronger sense of rhythm due to its use with repetition and antithesis. In Example (6), the sentence pattern of “其... 也...” is repeated and combined with antithesis. “取事” (to select materials) echoes with “摛文” (to showcase literary talent). In Example (7), the sentence pattern of “其势也...” is repeated. In addition, the characters “圆” (round) and “方” (square) are opposed, as well as “规” (roundness) and “矩” (squareness), and “自转” (rotate) and “自安” (remain at rest). The repeated sentence pattern, combined with the modal particle “也” and antithesis, creates a neat and consistent rhythm, evoking a sense of resonance in readers, and leading them to identify

with the author’s perspective.

2.2. Rhetorical Identification Effect of the Modal Particle “矣” (Yi)

“矣” appears 228 times in *Wen Xin Diao Long*. After examining the position and usage of “矣” in each essay, we find that it is mostly used to complement sentences. “矣” often occurs in the form of repetition and antithesis, creating complementary content and a neat rhythm that effectively engages readers.

Wang [32] points out that “The basic sentence pattern in *Wen Xin Diao Long* is the four-word clause, ... Two beats contain two characters each”. She also notes that in cases where there is only one monosyllabic character in a beat, a modal particle is necessary to maintain a balanced number of syllables and achieve rhythmic harmony. Out of the total 228 instances, 69 cases of “矣” occur in the four-character sentences, accounting for more than 30%. In the following analysis, we will explore some typical examples to further illustrate the unawareness identification effect of “矣”:

- (8) 文之思也，其神远矣。（《神思》）⁹
- (9) 经足训矣，纬何豫焉？（《正纬》）¹⁰

In the above examples, the word “矣” is located in a four-character clause and forms a bisyllabic foot with a monosyllabic character. Example (8) means that when the article is being conceived, the scope of mental activity is very broad. However, in the second beat of the second clause, there is only one word “远” (far), which is not enough to form a two-syllable clause. Therefore, the modal particle “矣” is needed to supplement the sentence. In example (9), the use of a rhetorical question strengthens the effect of unawareness identification. The phrase “经足训” (the Classics are adequate as teachings) is a subject-verb clause with a complete structure, but the second beat only has one character, “训”, which does not create a balanced rhythm. By adding “矣”, the sound is balanced with “经足”. This sentence is a rhetorical question that is literally affirmative, but the meaning is actually negative. Readers can deduce the conclusion that the apocrypha do not make any contribution to teaching, and thus the effect of unawareness identification is further enhanced.

2.3. Rhetorical Identification Effect of the Modal Particle “夫” (Fu)

The word “夫” appears 139 times in *Wen Xin Diao Long*, making it the third most frequently used modal particle. According to Wang et al. [27], “夫” is typically used at the beginning of a sentence to initiate discussion, and at the end of a sentence to express exclamation. Pu [33] suggests that

5 The English version is: “*Wen*, or patten, is a very great virtue indeed. It is born together with heaven and earth.” [25]

6 The English version is: “*Life* is limited; *Wisdom* alone is without bound.” [25]

7 The English version is: “*The matters selected for treatment must be* appropriate and clearly presented; and *the language used should be* simple and yet profound.” [25]

8 The English version is: “The *round* [heaven], because of its *roundness*, tends naturally to *rotate*; the *square* [earth], because of its *squareness*, tends naturally to *remain at rest*.” [25]

9 The English version is: “One who is engaged in literary thought travels far in spirit.” [25]

10 The English version is: “Since the Classics are adequate as teachings, what contribution do the apocrypha make to them?” [25]

the end-of-sentence modal particle “夫” may be an abbreviation of “不乎” (Bu Hu), which can be translated as “不是吗” (isn't it). However, neither of them further analyzes the mood conveyed by the word “夫”. After conducting a systematic analysis of “夫” at the end of sentences, Hua [34] finds that its primary function is to “convey a confident attitude” and the speaker’s certainty about the proposition being put forward. Upon investigating the position distribution of “夫” in *Wen Xin Diao Long*, it is evident that all instances of the modal particle “夫” are located at the beginning of sentences, which does not diminish its function of conveying Liu Xie’s conviction about the content. Therefore, it can be concluded that “夫” at the beginning of a sentence also serves the purpose of conveying a confident attitude. Moreover, “夫” also combines with the rhetorical figures such as antithesis and rhetorical questions to enhance its identification effect. The following three examples have been selected to illustrate how “夫” at the beginning of a sentence aids the author in achieving unawareness identification:

- (10) 夫玄黄色杂，方圆体分，日月叠璧，以垂丽天之象；山川焕绮，以辅理地之形：此盖道之文也。（《原道》）¹¹
- (11) 夫以无识之物，郁然有彩；有心之器，其无文欤！（《原道》）¹²
- (12) 若夫珪璋挺其惠心，英华秀其清气，物色相召，人谁获安？（《物色》）¹³

The above examples demonstrate that the modal particle “夫” is consistently placed at the beginning of sentences, and that the sentences are all structured in the form of antithesis. This combination of “夫” and the antithesis effectively enhances the effect of identification. For instance, in (10), the use of antithesis is particularly striking, with the contrasting pairs of “丽天之象”/“理地之形”, “日月”/“山川”, and “垂”/“辅”. This suggests that the entire universe, including the heaven and the earth, the sun and the moon, and mountains and rivers, all embodies the literary style of “Tao”. The persuasive power of the sentence is further strengthened by the consistent rhythm created by the use of antithesis.

In (11) and (12), the word “夫” is used in rhetorical questions that require no answer and is difficult to refute, implying the author’s strong conviction. The questions do not need to be answered because their meanings are affirmative even if they are literally negative. They are difficult to refute because the real meaning of RQs is often deduced by readers through the context, and the participation of readers in the argumentation process increases their conviction in the final conclusion. In these two examples, “无识之物” (things devoid of

consciousness) is the opposite of “有心之器” (man endowed with mind), and “有彩” (to express themselves so extremely decoratively) is the opposite of “无文” (lack a pattern proper to itself). Similarly, “珪璋” (excellent jade) is an analogy for “惠心” (the intelligent mind), and “英华” (glorious flowers) is an analogy for “清气” (the pure soul). The first two groups are in opposition, while the last two groups are similar. The consecutive use of the figure of antithesis is effective in stimulating readers to participate and enhances the unawareness identification effect of the sentence. Therefore, the use of the modal particle “夫” not only emphasizes the irrefutable viewpoint and effectively conveys the author’s attitude of certainty, but also combines with repetition, antithesis, and rhetorical questions, to powerfully engage readers, and makes them unconsciously identify with the author.

3. Conclusions

In this paper, we examine the effects of three most frequently used modal particles in *Wen Xin Diao Long* (《文心雕龙》): “也” (ye), “矣” (yi), and “夫” (fu), specifically in relation to their rhetorical function of unawareness identification. The findings reveal that these particles can be used in conjunction with figures of speech to enhance the realization of unawareness identification, although their methods of achieving this differ. For example, the particle “也” creates a strong identification effect through the use of repetition and antithesis. “矣” helps to complete clauses and is often paired with figures of speech such as repetition and antithesis. “夫”, on the other hand, conveys the author’s confidence and is often combined with figures of speech such as antithesis and rhetorical questions, effectively engaging readers and promoting their participation. Overall, these particles play a crucial role in bridging the gap between the author and the reader, facilitating the realization of unawareness identification. This investigation not only enriches the application of Burke’s concept of “identification”, but also offers valuable insights for innovating research methods on modal particles in ancient Chinese texts.

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11 The English version is: “Because all color-patters are mixed of black and yellow, and all shape-patters are differentiated by round and square. The sun and moon like two pieces of jade manifest the pattern of heave; mountains and rivers in their beauty display the pattern of earth. These are, in fact, the *wen* of *Tao* itself.” [25]

12 The English version is: “Now the things which are devoid of

consciousness express themselves so extremely decoratively, can that which is endowed with mind lack a pattern proper to itself?” [25]

13 The English version is: “Excellent jade inspires the mind of the intelligent, and glorious flowers shower splendor upon the soul that is pure. All things exert influence on one another. Who is there that can rest unmoved?” [25]

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