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Approaching the audience: engagement markers in Longinus’ *On the Sublime*

https://doi.org/10.1515/lass-2022-2005
Received October 19, 2021; accepted June 24, 2022; published online September 12, 2022

Abstract: Metadiscourse is a significant method in revealing audience awareness, but related studies have been confined to linguistic markers and current writing analyses. This essay aims to enrich metadiscourse engagement in particular with certain rhetorical figures and to investigate audience awareness in a highly acclaimed Roman-era Greek classic: Longinus’ *On the Sublime*. Drawing from a refined framework of engagement, we find explicit evidence of audience awareness as manifested in the author’s use of engagement markers. We have sorted these markers into four types, including reader mentions (apostrophe and pronouns), directives (modal verbs and imperatives), questions (erotema and rogatio), and appeals to shared knowledge (emphasizers and comment clauses). We suggest that the frequent use of these engagement markers, in particular reader mentions, could be taken as evidence of the author’s strong audience awareness and the cueing effect in facilitating perception. This integration of rhetorical figures into the metadiscourse engagement markers contributes to the audience awareness analysis in a more explicit and comprehensive way.

Keywords: audience; audience awareness; engagement; *On the Sublime*

1 Introduction

Audience, as one of the basic elements of rhetorical argumentation (Tindale 2013), is of great significance throughout rhetorical history. Once traced back to ancient Greece and Rome, it can be noticed that rhetoricians (e.g., Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian) at that time have attached great importance to the audience, which is generally regarded as the determinable factor in the speech-making; but the issue

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of how the audience awareness is reflected in their works have not been investigated yet. One typical way to display audience awareness is the use of metadiscourse, which is an “important link between a text and its context as it points to the expectations readers have for certain forms of interactions and engagement” (Hyland 2005a, p. 13). Among various metadiscourse markers, the use of engagement markers can reveal more explicitly how the author cares for and interacts with the audience, as “engagement is a reader-oriented aspect of interaction which concerns the degree of rapport which holds between communicative participants” (Hyland and Jiang 2016, p. 29). Thus, engagement markers will be an appropriate choice for helping explore the audience awareness in this study.

Previous researchers have applied metadiscourse markers to analyzing interactional effects in academic papers and to investigating audience awareness in students’ compositions (Khabbazi-Oskouei 2013; Kuhl et al. 2014; Qiu and Jiang 2021); however, they have confined themselves to linguistic markers and to current writing analyses. So, is there any room for further enriching the current engagement model, especially via rhetorical devices? How do writers of ancient classics realize audience awareness through metadiscourse markers? By examining a Roman-era classic – Longinus’ *On the Sublime* – we will address the above research questions in the following sections.

## 2 Audience and audience awareness

### 2.1 Audience

The notion of audience rich in complexity and diversity is of great significance in rhetorical studies, which can be traced back to ancient Greece, at least to the work of Aristotle. In Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, he does not define “audience” directly, but rather, emphasizes the importance of this notion by stating that “rhetoric falls into three divisions, determined by the three classes of listeners to speeches. For of the three elements in speech-making – speaker, subject, and person addressed – it is the last one, the hearer, that determines the speech’s end and object. The hearer must be either a judge, with a decision to make about things past or future, or an observer” (Aristotle 2004, p. 1358b). To be more specific, it is the audience that determines and tailors the content of the speech. In addition, Book II of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* has depicted a full picture of analyzing people in different ages, genders, characters, social backgrounds, and the like so as to make a better command of the audience’s psychology. Aristotle has fully shown us the significance of “audience” in rhetorical studies as being one of the determinable elements in speech-makings. Later on, scholars in ancient Rome, like Cicero and Quintilian, also believe that a
successful orator must persuade his audience by gaining their trust and admiration. It can be concluded that “audience” had already gained considerable attention in ancient Greece and Rome.

With the passing of time, various forms of information exchange have arisen and interpretations of the “audience” proliferate, which refer at least not only to hearers, but to readers. During the 18th century, the Enlightenment leader, George Campbell, in his work *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1963) gave a detailed classification of audience by dividing it into two types: “as such men in general and as such men in particular” (pp. 71–95), respectively. In this masterpiece, the type of “men in particular” has had particular emphasis lain on it, as he holds the view that “men in general” represents the exact truth and is of abstractness and uselessness. In modern ages, scholars are still trying to seek for the nature of the audience. Chaim Perelman is one of the representatives in studying audience. In his co-authored work *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, audience is defined as “the ensemble of those whom the speaker wishes to influence by his argumentation” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, p. 19). For Perelman, the audience can also be generally divided into two types: universal audience and particular audience. The former consists of all rational beings; while the latter consists mainly of one particular group or individual. Apart from Perelman, other scholars have also put forward their own understanding and definition of audience. Bitzer (1968) argues that a rhetorical audience “consists only of those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change” (p. 8). Park (1982) holds the view that “the meanings of ‘audience’ … tend to diverge in two general directions: one toward actual people external to a text, the audience whom the writer must accommodate; the other toward the text itself and the audience implied there” (p. 249). Gracia (1994) defines audience as “the real or imaginary group of persons who are in fact acquainted, could be acquainted, or are meant to be acquainted with a given text” (p. 711). Babin and Harrison (1999) illustrate audience as a term that can refer to “a group of real readers to which the successful writer must adapt, that is to say, the writer needs to ingratiate with the audience” (p. 117). More recently, because of the presence of the Internet, speeches are not confined to be listened to on the spot either. “Audience” has turned out to be more of dynamic changes and is more of being fictional. Finlayson (2012) regards the audience as “being not a unitary or stable referent and being always in some measure a fictive creation around which rhetorical invention is built” (p. 763). In a word, no matter how the definition of the audience changes, it has always been an important element that the writer needs to consider.

Upon the major definitions presented above, it can be seen that “audience” is a significant and complicated notion. In this essay, Perelman’s definition of audience will be adopted, as it is classic and has been widely acknowledged. However,
we would refine it as the ensemble of those whom the speaker or writer wishes to influence by his or her argumentation, with the added “writer” and “her”, to make the definition more inclusive. As “audience” is such a broad term and difficult to handle directly, the concept of “audience awareness” will be focused on to better analyze the writer’s consideration of the readers.

2.2 Audience awareness

Audience awareness is one important facet of studying the audience, showing the author’s consideration of the audience in his or her work. To be more specific, audience awareness can be reflected towards both actual and fictional audience. As for speech makings, this concept is more related with the actual hearers, while in book writings it is more likely to refer to the fictional readers in the author’s mind. As for the writer, the fictional readers are “invariably involved, as a model, as an object, as a helper, as an opponent” (Freud 1922, p. 1) as they often fantasize about future exchanges, interact with large audiences, and communicate in mediated contexts in the writing procedure (Litt 2012). As for rhetoricians in ancient Rome, audience is the determinable factor of a work, which can be of great significance in tailoring the content. In order to show the importance of this notion, writers tend to show their audience awareness by considering the existence of the readers in their works. In this way, audience awareness contributes to explicitly illustrating the audience.

Many scholars have tried to figure out and define the notion of “audience awareness.” Rubin (1984) regards audience awareness as “one significant component at various levels of the composing processes” (p. 214). In the meantime, Ede and Lunsford (1984) clarify audience awareness as “a kind of notion which comprehends the audience’s experiences and expectations and also helps readers to fit in the role writers imagined” (pp. 159–163). Later on, Rafoth (1985) defined audience awareness as “a writer’s or speaker’s focus of attention on readers or listeners irrespective of the communicator’s language behavior” (p. 237). Meanwhile, he also puts forward “audience adaptation” which “refers to the audience-conditioned language behavior resulting from this awareness” (ibid.). Then, as for Wong (2005), audience awareness refers to “the mental representation of the writers and also their abilities to maintain the flow of communication with readers through words” (pp. 31–32). More recently, Jarvela et al. (2015) redefine audience awareness as “the knowledge or perception of the audience” (p. 133), suggesting that the author needs to acquire the basic information of the readers in terms of their background knowledge and the social context they are in.

To summarize, audience awareness plays a pivotal role in making the real or imaginative readers clearer for the writers to consider in the writing process, and
also in helping readers to understand writers’ intention in a more concrete way. Based on previous definitions, audience awareness in this essay is redefined as the writer’s awareness of the audience which aims to engage them, anticipate their needs and maintain the flow of communication with them so as to better fulfill the rhetorical objective. In terms of its identification, metadiscourse markers can well serve the purpose.

3 Metadiscourse: engagement markers refined

3.1 Interactional metadiscourse

Over the past decades, the academic discourse has no longer been regarded as being absolutely objective without any personal emotion, rather it has come to be seen as a persuasive endeavor involving interaction between writers and readers (Hyland 2005a). In other words, writers have begun to consider the presence of their audience, seeking to interact with them, and willing to accept alternative views which may even be opposed to them. The credibility of the content is not only determined by the scientific data, but also related with the mode of persuasion that the writer adopts.

The linguistic resources used to perform academic persuasion have been broadly described in terms of evaluation (Hunston and Thompson 2000) and appraisal (Martin and White 2005), and later on as stance and engagement (Biber and Finegan 1989; Hyland 2005b). Readers have their rights for making judgments and evaluations toward the written texts, and writers need to leave enough space for other views, even rebuttals.

Metadiscourse is an effective way for promoting writers’ credibility and persuasion, which adopts functional approach to give insights into the texts. Three linguistic functions put forward by Halliday (1994) turn out to be the theoretical cornerstone: the ideational function, interpersonal function, and textual function. Metadiscourse is most commonly divided into interactive and interactional. Compared with the former concerning logic structure of a persuasive appeal, it is the latter that “concerns more explicitly interpersonal and evaluative aspects of authorial presence” (Hyland 2004, p. 122), and has been shown to be a marked feature of overtly argumentative and persuasive genres such as research articles (Hyland 1998). One way for further dividing the interactional metadiscourse is put forward by Hyland (2005b), who divides it into stance and engagement:

Stance: They express a textual voice or community recognized personality. This can be seen as an attitudinal dimension, including features which refer to the ways writers present
themselves and convey their judgments, opinions and commitments. It is the way that writers intrude to stamp their personal authority onto their arguments or step back and disguise their involvement.

**Engagement:** This is an alignment dimension where writers acknowledge and connect to others, recognizing the presence of their readers, pulling them along with their argument, focusing their attention, acknowledging their uncertainties, including them as discourse participants, and guiding them to interpretations (Hyland 2005b, p. 176).

The division of stance and engagement is shown in Figure 1. These two are just like two sides of a coin. They interpret different functions of interpersonal metadiscourse, which are attitudinal dimension and alignment dimension respectively. Stance refers to the way that writers organize their texts in accordance with the readers’ needs, express their personal attitudes and also leave out enough room for discussion, while engagement focuses more on the interaction between the writer and the reader. Each of the elements of engagement serves the interpersonal function of the language and plays a vital role in showing audience engagement. Compared with stance, engagement better shows the connection with the readers and helps the writer attach greater importance to the existence of the audience, which is more effective in helping the writer interact directly with and anticipate responses from the readers. Therefore, in this essay, conforming to the research objective, engagement of the interactional metadiscourse will be selected to better analyze the audience awareness in the text.

One thing needs to be mentioned here is that two elements in engagement, that is, reader pronouns and shared knowledge would be adjusted into reader mentions and appeals to shared knowledge in the textual analysis. The adjustment is based

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**Figure 1:** The division of interactional metadiscourse (Hyland 2005b; Hyland and Jiang 2016).
on Hyland and Jiang’s model in 2016, which has further enriched these two concepts by broadening its scope.

### 3.2 Refined model of engagement

Hyland and Jiang’s (2016) model of engagement is to be refined in this essay, in which the *personal asides* (briefly interrupting the argument to offer a comment) is omitted as it is not suitable for the data we are to analyze. So here, *reader mentions, directives, questions, and appeals to shared knowledge* are taken for interpreting the audience awareness, with *reader mentions* amplified and *questions* specified.

*Reader mentions* can directly engage the readers and bring them into the discourse “normally through second person pronouns, particularly *inclusive we* which identifies the reader as someone who shares similar ways of seeing to the writer” (Hyland and Jiang 2016, p. 91). But in *On the Sublime*, apart from appealing to readers with pronouns, “Terentianus” – a person’s name is also repeatedly and remarkably mentioned. Therefore, it is of great necessity for us to innovatively add “apostrophe” – “an emotional figure of someone addressing an absent person or a personified abstraction” (Corbett and Connors 1999, p. 443) which contains the “most ardent expressions of perturbation in the speaker” (Campbell 1963, p. 94). Directives are mainly expressed through modal verbs (e.g., “should” and “must”) and imperatives (e.g., “suppose that” and “let us”) to make instructions to the readers both for helping them understand the text and for persuading them to act in reality. Previously, *questions* are broadly regarded as a way to “invite direct collusion and interaction with the readers by addressing them as someone with an interest in the issue and the good sense to follow the writer’s response” (Hyland and Jiang 2016, p. 31). In this essay, we try to specify *questions* with particular types, i.e., Erotema and Rogatio. Erotema corresponds to the rhetorical question that “requires no answer other than the readers’ agreement” (Fahnestock 2011, p. 298). Rogatio is a question that “writers ask but then answer themselves” (Quintilian 1921, p. 383). *Appeals to shared knowledge* are “explicit signals asking readers to recognize something as familiar or accepted” (Hyland and Jiang 2016, p. 91). In this essay, they are further classified with comment clauses (e.g., “as you know”) and emphasizers (e.g., “obviously”, “of course”) in light of grammatical terms clarified in *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (Quirk et al. 1985).

Based on what has been mentioned above, the refined engagement model with its dimensions and elements is presented in Figure 2.
4 Audience awareness in Longinus’ *On the Sublime*

4.1 Introduction of *On the Sublime*

*On the Sublime* is one of the Roman-era Greek classics (it was written in Greek), which has received great attention in rhetorical, aesthetic, and literary studies. However, the issues of author and composing time have still remained a matter of debated controversy. The only evidence of these questions is a single manuscript from the 10th century AD (De Jonge 2020). Based on the writing styles and general approaches of this book, Cassius Longinus has turned out to be a more appropriate answer. At the beginning of this book, Longinus tries to venture an opinion about Caecilius, a critic who taught in Rome at the end of the 1st century BC, and wrote the only other attested ancient work on sublimity (now lost). As is shown in the outset, his own treatise was evoked by the inadequacies of Caecilius’s treatment, which was “lowlier” than the subject required. The definitions of real “sublimity” and the ways to realize it are displayed and illustrated in this work. Its core lies in five sources of sublimity: the two “innate” sources (grand conceptions and vehement emotion) and the three “technical” sources (figures, diction, and arrangement). Because of the author’s own endeavor to make it a work of real sublimity, it turns out to be sublime with strong audience awareness reflected in it. The eloquence of this book has always continued to earn it enthusiastic readers and enduring influence.

What still needs to be mentioned here is that the addressee of this work seems to be very concrete at first sight, that is, Postumius Terentianus, to whom the

Figure 2: Refined model of engagement.
The author has made an appeal many times. The identity of Terentianus has not been determined. He may, of course, be the Terentianus who served in Egypt (AD 85/6), or the man whose name is “on a lead water pipe of the second century” (Russell 1995, p. 148). But generally speaking, he is regarded as a young Roman of some standing, for whom the author writes and wishes to influence. In this work, Longinus himself tends to describe the sublime in terms of its effect on the audience, suggesting a certain relationship of the inspired author, the sublime text, and the ecstatic audience. Furthermore, it is actually a great work of real sublimity outstanding in diction, arrangement and audience awareness. The following will investigate how Longinus in this work interacts with his audience and finally actualizes the goal of audience awareness.

### 4.2 Engagement markers in *On the Sublime*

As for counting the number of each engagement marker used in this work, we have counted several times for accuracy. The general picture of the engagement used in *On the Sublime* is shown as Table 1, in which reader mentions are used most frequently followed by directives, questions, and appeals to shared knowledge. The detailed analysis of each dimension would be displayed in the following sections.

#### 4.2.1 Reader mentions

Reader mentions, according to Hyland and Jiang (2016), are explicit ways for representing the writer’s ability of spontaneously and actively acknowledging the existence of the audience and the willingness to interact with them. First and second person pronouns (we, our, us, you, your) are frequently used in this work. Apostrophe has also been used in this work to appeal to the author’s friend. Table 2 presents the use of “reader mentions” in *On the Sublime* including the first and second person pronouns, and apostrophe.

|                                  | Per 1,000 words | Total number | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Reader mentions                  | 12.50           | 198          | 65.34          |
| Directives                       | 3.10            | 51           | 16.83          |
| Questions                        | 2.50            | 41           | 13.53          |
| Appeals to shared knowledge      | 0.79            | 13           | 4.29           |
It can be seen from Table 2 that the author uses the first-person pronoun most frequently, creating a certain atmosphere where the readers come out to be the collaborator of this work:

(1) *We* need hardly add that each of these great men again and again redeems all his mistakes by a single touch of sublimity and true excellence; and, what is finally decisive, if *we* were to pick out all the faults in Homer, Demosthenes, Plato and all the other greatest authors and put them together, *we* should find them a tiny part, not the smallest fraction, of the true successes to be found everywhere in the work of these heroes. (Chapter 36, p. 279)

(2) Perhaps it is not the world’s peace that corrupts great natures but much rather this endless warfare which besets *our* hearts, yes, and these passions that garrison *our* lives in present days and make utter havoc of them. It is the love of money, that insatiable sickness from which *we* all now suffer, and the love of pleasure, that enslave *us*, or rather one might say, sink *our* ship of life with all hands; for love of gold is a withering sickness, and love of pleasure utterly ignoble. (Chapter 44, p. 303)

From the examples above, it shows that the use of the first-person pronoun, like the inclusive “*we*,” “*our*,” “*us*,” can actually endow the readers with a sense of shared opinions. The inclusive “*we*” can be of vital importance in uniting the writer with the readers. Generally speaking, the use of inclusive “*we*” tends to occur in illustrating something that is absolutely right and can be accepted easily by the readers. “*We*” addresses readers from “a position of dominance, guiding them through an argument and towards a preferred conclusion” (Hyland and Jiang 2016, p. 34). It can help build up a bond of collaboration with the readers; we share the same kind of opinion. Actually, the use of inclusive “*we*” can be an effective way in helping maintain the flow of the communication with the readers.

Second person pronouns like “*you*,” “*your*,” “*yourself*,” “*yourselves*” have also been used in this work. The second person pronouns produce direct address
when the writer deliberately acknowledges the presence of readers by calling on them in some way or even making some demand on them. In this work, reader pronouns refer to general readers as well as Terentianus.

(3) But since you have now asked me in my turn to prepare some notes on the sublime for your own sake, let us then see whether my observations have any value for public speakers; and you yourself, my friend, will, I am sure, do what duty and your heart alike dictate and give me the benefit of your unbiased judgement in detail. (Chapter 1, pp. 161–163)

(4) If you thus paraphrase it sentence by sentence you will see that if the rush and ruggedness of the emotion is levelled and smoothed out by the use of connecting particles, it loses its sting and its fire is quickly put out. (Chapter 21, p. 239)

In the third example, based on the context of the discourse, “you” refers exactly to the direct addressee in this work, that is, Terentianus. As this is a work written for guiding the thinking of Terentianus, such a direct mention can help him to know the key points emphasized by the writer. While “you” in the fourth example cannot be specified, it may refer to anyone who reads this book. The use of second person pronouns can create certain emotions in the readers that the author cares about, and has a strong desire for instructing and interacting with them directly. As a result, the emotional connection between the author and the readers is easily evoked.

Also, as mentioned above, Terentianus is the apparent addressee in this work, so Longinus appeals to him from time to time.

(5) One problem now remains for solution, my dear Terentianus, and knowing your love of learning I will not hesitate to append it – a problem which a certain philosopher recently put to me. (Chapter 44, p. 299)

(6) Perhaps you will not think me boring, my friend, as if I insert here another passage from the poet, one that treats of human affairs, to show you his habit of entering into the sublimity of his heroic theme. (Chapter 9, p. 191)

(7) Further, writing for a man of such education as yourself, dear friend, I almost feel freed from the need of a lengthy preface showing how the Sublime consists in a consummate excellence and distinction of language, and that this alone gave to the greatest poets and prose writers their preeminence and clothed them with immortal fame. (Chapter 1, p. 163)
First, it needs to be mentioned that apostrophe or appealing to someone’s name is a very common writing technique in ancient Rome. For example, in the Roman classic *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, the name of the author’s friend “Herennium” is mentioned many times, which is the direct addressee of this work. The frequency of mentions, however, is not casual but well-controlled, so that the general readers would not have a sense of being isolated from the work. Also, the use of first- and second-person pronouns at appropriate times can help engage the readers into the work not as a bystander, but as an everyman scholar interested in the topic. Here, the uses of apostrophe in calling for “Terentianus”, “my friend” or “dear friend” are well arranged in this work. By using this rhetorical figure, the unique reader can be much considered; meanwhile, it can also help catch the attention of him by recalling certain memories which only he and the author know.

To summarize, the use of reader mentions is adopted appropriately throughout this work, maintaining the flow of communication till the end of this book. Both Terentianus and the general readers are well-considered, as the author has well controlled the number of mentions of Terentianus and made use of inclusive first-person and second-person pronouns to engage the audience in the work and involve them as collaborators who are interested in and can follow up the arguments of the author. This marker clearly reflects the writer’s consideration of the audience, which shows that Longinus is really a seasoned rhetorician with a strong sense of audience awareness.

### 4.2.2 Directives

Directives are utterances which instruct the readers to perform an action or to see things in a way determined by the writer (Hyland 2001), whose aim is to call for actions in the audience. It is also a frequently used technique in giving authority to the writer by requiring the readers to think or even carry out certain actions. In this work, there are mainly two patterns as directives: modal verbs and imperatives. The general application of this marker in *On the Sublime* is displayed in Table 3.

As Table 3 shows, the use of modal verbs as directive is the most frequent way to direct the readers. Here are two examples:

| Table 3: Frequency of the usage of directives. |
|-----------------------------------------------|
| **Total number** | **Percentage (%)** |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Modal verbs       | 31                | 60.78             |
| Imperatives       | 20                | 39.22             |
(8) And above all we **must** remember this: the very fact that in literature some effects come of natural genius alone can only be learned from art (Chapter 3, p. 167).

(9) To speak generally, you **should** consider to be beautifully and truly sublime which pleases all people at all times (Chapter 7, p. 181).

Clearly, the use of modal verbs in instructing the readers is always combined with the use of reader pronouns, guiding the readers to notice something important or appealing to them to jointly carry out certain actions with the writer. As for the two examples shown above, it can be seen that the modal verbs used here are to inform the readers of bearing the very fact in mind as well as to let them think about certain issues. This marker, to some extent, can be very effective in drawing the writer and the reader much closer. The most typical modal verbs acting as directives include “should,” “must,” “ought to,” and “need to,” and they can easily achieve a certain kind of inducing effect. As for the use of imperatives, examples are shown below:

(10) **Suppose that** in all this show itself someone had brought bags and sacks and set them in the middle of the gold and jewelled bowls, the beaten silver, the pavilions of solid gold and the drinking cups – that would have presented an unseemly sight (Chapter 43, p. 297).

(11) **And consider too**, what variety and liveliness is lent to the exposition by changes of case, tense, person, number or gender (Chapter 23, p. 243).

(12) Well, then, **let us** see whether we can find anything else that can make style sublime (Chapter 10, p. 197).

“Suppose”, “consider” and “let us” are the three major ways for raising imperatives among the readers, guiding them to bear in mind the author’s expectation and finally consolidate his arguments. “Suppose” and “consider” are more likely to raise certain viewpoints for the readers to think about, while the “let us” pattern often guides them to notice the next important section, or even motivate them to carry out actions in the real world. In this book, Longinus uses the “let us” pattern mainly for reminding the readers of certain questions and of paying attention to the next part.

To sum up, by using the directives of modal verbs and imperatives, Longinus focuses on influencing the readers both in helping them accept his views of sublimity and even in reshaping them accordingly. In addition, with the aid of the inclusive “we” (concerning modal verbs), this marker can produce a much stronger effect on the readers.
4.2.3 Questions

Questions, as described above, can be further divided into rogatio (question answered by the author) and erotema (question requiring no answer). How these two types of questions are used is displayed in Table 4.

Table 4: Frequency of the usage of questions.

| Types of questions | Total number | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Rogatio            | 33           | 80.49          |
| Erotema            | 8            | 19.51          |

As for each question type, it can be seen that rogatio is used more frequently in Longinus’ *On the Sublime*. Here are some typical examples:

(13) Sappho, for instance, never fails to take the emotions incident to the passion of love from its attendant symptoms and from real life. And *wherein* does she show her excellence? *In the skill with which she selects and combines the most striking and intense of those symptoms.* (Chapter 10, p. 199)

(14) But *what* is the difference between this topic of advice and what we discussed just now, namely the delimitation and unifying arrangement of vital points? *What* in general is the distinction between instances of amplification and those of sublimity? *I must define these matters briefly in order to make my proposition clear.* (Chapter 11, p. 207)

In these two examples, Longinus uses two rogatios which are not in need of responses from the readers, rather he gives his answers after the question, immediately or slightly later. Here, the major purpose of the author is not to express his certainty or negation of an opinion, nor is to leave suspicion for the readers to think. Instead, he tries to guide the readers throughout the reading procedure, as readers sometimes cannot easily grasp the main points correctly. By posing a question and answering it himself, the readers can easily follow up his flow of thinking, know the major points of this issue, and understand the whole text easily.

However, the erotema may have different functions as shown in the following examples:
(15) But, while tumidity seeks to outdo the sublime, puerility is the exact opposite of grandeur; utterly abject, mean spirited, and in fact the most ignoble of faults. What then is puerility? *Is it not* obviously an idea born in the classroom, whose over-elaboration ends in frigid failure? (Chapter 3, p. 169)

(16) There are indeed many indications that he composed his tale after the *Iliad*; for example, throughout the *Odyssey* he introduces as episodes remnants of the adventures at Ilium; yes, and *does he not* in this poem render to his heroes their meed of lamentation as if it were something long known? (Chapter 9, p. 193)

Erotema refers to rhetorical questions in which the answers are included without any doubt. Here, we can see that these two examples clearly show the certainty and exaggeration from the author, meaning, respectively “it is definitely an idea born in the classroom” and “he, in this poem, definitely renders to his heroes their meed of lamentation.” Compared with the corresponding statements, the uses of rhetorical questions can leave deeper impression. Different from rogatio which really aims to raise a question, the uses of erotema help emphasize the author’s point of view as well as convey his strong wishes to build up consensus with the readers.

To sum up, the uses of questions definitely have profound effects on the readers. They target at inviting the readers to cope with the issue together, welcome their responses by leaving enough space, and guide their thoughts accordingly. This again regards the readers as the collaborators and engages them in the process. The integration of various questions in this work, turns out to be successful in helping Longinus keep intimacy and flow of communication with the readers.

### 4.2.4 Appeals to shared knowledge

Certain kinds of emphasers and comment clauses are used in this work as knowledge appeals, as shown in Table 5. Readers are brought to see what is already “known” through this marker. This technique has its own marvelous effect

| Types of knowledge appeals | Total number | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Emphasizers                | 9            | 69.23          |
| Comment clauses            | 4            | 30.77          |
in letting the readers accept something quickly and making them believe that they share the same opinion with the author in a joint group, since readers would possess a sense of self-esteem of knowing what is acknowledged and obvious.

Words and phrases like “obviously” and “of course” are the major emphaticizers in this essay, representing what the author expresses is definite without any doubt or controversy. Typical examples are shown below:

(17) Amplification, they say, is language which invests the subject with grandeur. Now that definition could obviously serve just as well for the sublime, the emotional, and the metaphorical style, since these also invest the language with some quality of grandeur. (Chapter 12, p. 207)

(18) But on the other three come partly from art, namely the proper construction of figures—these being of course, of two kinds, figures of thought and figures of speech. (Chapter 8, p. 181)

As for the comment clauses like “you know” and “as you know” which presuppose that the readers must have previously known, here are some typical examples:

(19) Again, accumulation, variation and climax, the so-called “polyptota,” are, as you know, very powerful, and contribute to ornament and to sublimity and emotion of all kinds. (Chapter 23, p. 243)

(20) Why, the very tones of the harp, themselves meaningless, by the variety of their sounds and by their combination and harmonious blending often exercise, as you know, a marvelous spell. (Chapter 39, p. 285)

From the four examples above, we can see that the uses of this strategy are to invite the readers to agree upon and construct the argument jointly. Longinus uses this marker to mention something that is well-acknowledged to whoever would read his work. It is an effective way of engaging the audience as your partners and realizing the goal of interacting with them. However, compared with the other engagement markers, this device is least employed in On the Sublime.

To summarize, all of the four techniques are well adopted in this book, in which reader mentions are most frequently used, followed by directives, questions, and appeals to shared knowledge. Each of these strategies targets at the audience. Reader mentions can promote the interactive process between the author and the reader by directly referring to them; directives are instructions for the readers to pay attention to what the author wishes and carry out actions as colleagues of the writer; questions can be tools for evoking the readers’ critical thinking toward certain issues, and can be effective for catching their attention or stating some points of view with extreme certainty or negation; appeals to shared
knowledge can construct them as fellow partners who share the same opinion with the author, and thus build up harmonious connection with each other. Therefore, the appropriate uses of these four techniques show that Longinus has attached great importance to the audience, as he closely relates the five sources of sublimity with their impact on the audience and displays his sharp sense of audience awareness throughout his work. Longinus has definitely set a good example for the scholars – what rhetorical sublimity is.

5 Conclusion

This essay manages to enrich metadiscourse, engagement in particular, with two rhetorical markers of apostrophe and interrogation, and to investigate audience awareness in a highly acclaimed Roman-era Greek classic – Longinus’ *On the Sublime*. Based upon the refined model of engagement, we find that audience awareness is shown concretely in Longinus’ adroit use of four kinds of engagement markers: reader mentions, directives, questions and appeals to shared knowledge, and that these markers, especially reader mentions (apostrophe for his friend and pronouns for general audience), are frequently used in this work, reflecting the master’s strong audience awareness. In fact, all of the four engagement markers add no propositional information to the utterances, rather they signal the writer’s communicative intent in engaging the readers in, and building up interactions with them. As “only through a sign can make a meaning got across. To put it in another way, every meaning can be conveyed through a symbol, and every symbol carries its own meaning” (Zhao 2016, p. 2), these markers can also be regarded as signs conveying the writers’ wishes for the readers to perceive.

As the four markers include most often the simple words like “you,” “we,” “should,” “must,” “as you know,” interrogation marks, etc., they can represent different meanings and purposes in different contexts. However, to put it in this context, the uses of reader pronouns and apostrophe can express the author’s intention for stressing the relevance of the content with the past experiences of the readers: the use of modal verbs is not for boosters or hedges but for instructing the readers by putting the reader pronouns before the modal verbs. The use of question marks is not to put forward questions, waiting for the readers to solve them, but rather being signals to arouse their attention to read the following sections or to emphasize certain points of view. The use of emphizers and comment clauses like “as you know” can be very clear signs for the readers to regard the writer’s wishes to make agreement. All of these can be selected from a large database of related words and phrases, while their meanings are endowed both by the writer and the readers. The whole process of achieving audience awareness through
these signs includes the writer’s selection of the words or phrases, the writer’s intention of using them, and the readers’ interpretations. Only through this whole process can the audience awareness be rightly conveyed to the readers. Metadiscourse, especially the interactional one, has thus proved to be a valuable perspective for analyzing audience awareness concretely.

There is no denying that the use of metadiscourse markers depends largely on the writers’ preferred writing styles; it is not appropriate to call for all the other writers to follow one particular pattern. However, the engagement markers adroitly embedded are of great significance in promoting persuasion and identification. This accounts, at least partly, for the everlasting influence of Longinus’ *On the Sublime*. Studies in the future may also probe into the comparison between ancient classics and current treatises, to reveal the changes as well as similarities in audience awareness.

**Acknowledgments:** The authors show their most sincere gratitude to Prof. Jun Wang, Prof. Ying Yuan, Qian Na, Xinyue Wang, Zhengying Guo, Shuting Xing, Linli Lan and the anonymous reviewers for all their valuable and helpful suggestions.

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