

Chapter 2 Contrastive rhetoric and studies of Chinese and English writing

2.1. Introduction

It has been argued that the study of text styles such as linearity and circularity in contrastive rhetoric may not be sufficient for understanding overall differences between English and Chinese writing (see e.g. Scollon, 1997b). With the aim of locating the present study in previous research on contrastive rhetoric and highlighting the gaps that the study attempts to fulfil, this chapter focuses on the following three aspects. First, it reviews contrastive rhetoric as a field of study including its history and contemporary developments. It discusses previous contrastive rhetoric studies in four different areas, namely, contrastive text linguistic studies, studies of writing as cultural and educational activities, classroom-based contrastive studies, and contrastive rhetorical genre studies. Then, the literature review outlines previous contrastive studies on Chinese and English writing. Finally, previous contrastive studies on media discourse are described with reference to the present study.

2.2. Contrastive rhetoric as a field of study

In 1966, Kaplan published his famous article ‘Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural Education’, which marked the birth of the notion now known as contrastive rhetoric. In this article, he reinforced the Whorfian Hypothesis in its weak form which asserts that one’s native language influences one’s thoughts. He, further, assumed that different languages had their own specific and culturally bound conventions and patterns of writing. His basic interest was in the interference of culturally bound first language thought and writing patterns on writing in a second language. In Connor’s view (1996, p.5),

Language and writing are cultural phenomena. As a direct consequence, each language has rhetorical conventions unique to it. Furthermore... the

linguistic and rhetorical conventions of the first language interfere with writing in the second language.

The hypotheses underlying this view of contrastive rhetoric may be summarised as

- 1) Each language and culture has rhetorical conventions that are unique to itself;
- 2) The rhetorical conventions of students' L1 interfere with their ESL writing (Grabe & Kaplan, 1989; Kaplan & Grabe, 2002; Kaplan, 1966, 1972, 1987, 1988, 1991, 2000).

After about four decades of research and debate, the major concern of contrastive rhetoric is now moving from purely structural descriptions to an interest in “cognitive and sociocultural variables of writing in addition to the linguistic variables” (Connor, 1996, p.18). Recent research has expanded the concept of contrastive rhetoric and moved it away from looking only at the effects of transfer from L1 to L2 writing towards an interdisciplinary area of cross-language and cross-culture study that benefits from the theories and methods of such related fields as applied linguistics, composition and rhetoric studies, anthropology, translation studies and discourse analysis (Connor, 1996, 1997, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005).

As summarised by Connor (1997), some internal and external forces gave rise to this change in perspective. The internal force comes from criticism of contrastive rhetoric, which has required it to go beyond traditional linguistic parameters of analysis to consider discursive features, processes and contexts of writing. The external forces come from new developments in discourse analysis and changing focuses in first language composition research. What follows is a brief summary of the internal and external forces referred to above. Then, new developments and directions of research in contrastive rhetoric are outlined. Special attention is given to studies of Chinese writing and China's intellectual context.

The strongest ‘internal’ criticism of contrastive rhetoric has argued that contrastive

rhetoric tends to regard cultural rhetoric as a static, exotic and normative system separated from the dynamics of history, and tends to treat English rhetoric as a kind of rhetorical canon (Kubota, 1992, 1997, 1998, 1999; Kubota & Lehner, 2004, 2005; Ostler, 2001). In Kubota's words (1992, p.20), contrastive rhetoric tends to "construct a homogenous representation of the 'Other' while legitimating a certain kind of rhetoric as a canon". Other scholars have also criticised contrastive rhetoric for its reductionist, deterministic, prescriptive, and essentialist orientation (e.g. Leki, 1997; Spack, 1997; Zamel, 1997). Kubota and Lehner (2004) argue that

Despite its unique cross-cultural focus on writing and its well-meaning effort to facilitate second language learning, contrastive rhetoric has tended to construct static homogenous, and apolitical images of the rhetorical patterns of various written languages (p. 9).

From the perspectives of critical literacy and modern linguistic theory, language is neither historically fixed nor emergent out of nowhere; it needs to be understood as fluid, dynamic and constituted through cultural, political and social conditions (Fairclough, 1992a, 2001; Pennycook, 1997, 2001, 2003).

Another problem identified in traditional contrastive rhetoric lies in its using students' L2 texts for the investigation of their L1 rhetoric (Kubota, 1992, 1997). Since the initiation of contrastive rhetoric studies (Kaplan, 1966, 1972), students' L2 essays in college-level academic contexts have been widely used for understanding their L1 rhetoric (e.g. Matalene, 1985; Hinds, 1983, 1987, 1990; Hirose, 2003). This unavoidably leads to overgeneralisation and bias since many factors such as instructional methods and L2 proficiency may affect L2 textual features. In order to understand differences in language use, L1 authentic texts would seem to be a better data source for analysis.

Critics of contrastive rhetoric also argue that traditional contrastive rhetoric fails to consider students as human agents and their L1 is viewed as a deficiency (Kubota,

1992; Spack, 1997). This view of contrastive rhetoric considers students from certain cultures as homogeneous groups who are loyal to certain cultural norms and transfer them to writing in English. This view ignores the different experiences, intentions and subject positions these students bring with them. At the same time this hypothesis regards students' L1 rhetoric as problematic and something that will be negatively transferred to their L2 writing. This view overlooks the possibility of positive transfer, which means that students' L1 language competence could exert a positive effect on their L2 learning. On the basis of critiques on traditional contrastive rhetoric, Kubota and Lehner (2004, 2005) argue for a critical contrastive rhetoric that affirms multiplicity of languages, rhetorical forms, and students' identities.

On the other side of the debate, Connor attempts to maintain the image of the orthodox contrastive rhetoric. In a series of articles published recently (Connor, 1997, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005; Connor & Moreno, 2005), Connor reviewed the goals, methods, and accomplishments of research in contrastive rhetoric over the past forty years, and presented new developments and directions for contrastive rhetoric, which is now called intercultural rhetoric (Connor, 2004). Connor also acknowledged the dynamic nature of discourse and culture, and described how there has also been a call in intercultural rhetoric for studying how writing in given cultures is tied to the intellectual history and social structures of these cultures. As Connor (2004) points out:

Changing definitions of written discourse analysis – from text-based to context sensitive – and of culture – from static to dynamic – contribute to the changing focus of intercultural rhetoric research, a new term that better reflects the dynamic nature of the area of study (p.302).

As the external forces that have driven changes in contrastive rhetoric research, new developments in discourse analysis and research in first language composition research play a very important role in broadening the theoretical scope of contrastive rhetorical and discursal studies. The various discourse analytical techniques

developed in systemic functional linguistics, new rhetoric, critical discourse analysis, and so on can be drawn upon to describe the discourses under investigation in contrastive rhetorical research in different ways. For instance, ‘appraisal’ analysis, an important development in systemic functional linguistics which is concerned with evaluative language analysis (Martin, 2000; Martin & White, 2005; White, 2002), and textual analytical frameworks in new rhetoric introduced by Bazerman and Prior (2004) have much to offer this kind of research. These discourse analytical tools can provide a much thicker picture of the discourses under investigation. In first language composition research, researchers increasingly view writing as interactive and social. This indicates that writing is not only a process of writers generating, organizing, and translating ideas into text. Context, situation and intended readers also explain decisions that writers make (Flower & Hayes, 1981). This allows researchers to go beyond linguistic descriptions to consider the social and cultural settings of language use so as to understand particular language choices in relation to their specific setting.

In line with this, Leki argues (1997, p.244),

Contrastive rhetoric can most usefully be seen not as the study of internally driven, culturally specific rhetorical patterns but rather as the study of differences or preferences in the pragmatic and strategic choices that writers make in response to external demands and cultural histories.

The internal and external forces mentioned above, then, have produced four major orientations in contrastive rhetoric.

2.2.1. Contrastive text linguistic studies

Text linguistics is the study of linguistic devices of cohesion, coherence and discourse structures within text (Enkvist, 1974, 1984). It is also concerned with the processes involved in the production and interpretation of texts. Contrastive text linguistic studies examine, compare, and contrast how texts are formed and interpreted in

different languages and cultures using written discourse analytic techniques. Several text linguistic studies have contrasted various coherence and discourse patterns in different languages (see e.g. Clyne, 1987; Connor & Kaplan, 1987; Eggington, 1987; Hinds, 1983, 1987, 1990). Hinds's work is perhaps the most influential in this area. He has shown that writers in different languages use certain textual structures to achieve coherence. He has described how Japanese, Chinese, Thai, and Korean writers prefer to use a quasi-inductive style rather than an explicit inductive or deductive style. He argues that there is an Oriental writing style, which cannot be classified as either deductive or inductive. This style involves 'delayed introduction of purpose' with the topic or thesis statement implied, not stated. Hinds's argument for quasi-inductive style is related to his (1987) assertion that Japanese is a reader-responsible language as opposed to English which is a writer-responsible language. Hinds claims that readers in Japanese, Chinese, Thai, and Korean languages are expected to think for themselves, to consider the observations made, and draw their own conclusions. In English, however, it is usually the writer's responsibility to convince readers by explicitly presenting the idea in a way that they will be able to follow.

2.2.2. Studies of writing as cultural and educational activities

Many researchers in the 1980s investigated literacy development in L1 languages and cultures and examined the effects of this on the development of L2 literacy. They discovered that written texts and their uses differed among cultural groups, and the instruction of writing played an important role in this process (see e.g. Carson, 1992; Purves, 1988). Carson (1992) examined how Chinese and Japanese speakers learned to read and write in their first languages and how that learning affected their expectations and strategies in learning to write and read in English. Carson was concerned with the influence of social context (the educational system) and cognitive considerations (issues of the writing system) in language learning. In relation to the situation in China, Carson writes:

Becoming literate in China involves learning to read and write in a society that values education, but that has only recently been able to develop among the masses a positive attitude towards literacy. Schools reflect the traditional function of Chinese education, which is to teach moral principles reflecting basic societal values: patriotism, the collective good, group loyalty, and respect for authority. In this context, schools are controlled and regimented, with a focus on maintaining order and authority. As in Japan, language is not thought of as primarily a medium for expressing individual meaning, although in China clear public expression is valued as a tool for successful communication. (1992, p. 44)

Carson also discusses the strategies of learning required to master literacy through the writing system (*hanzi*: Chinese characters) in China, where memorization of characters and passages is a large part of literacy instruction. She further writes, “there is a strong belief that the path to lively and creative writing styles lies in internalising others’ styles” (Carson, 1992, p. 53).

2.2.3. Classroom-based contrastive studies

Research in classroom-based contrastive studies examines cross-cultural discourse patterns in process writing, collaborative revisions, and student-teacher conferences. Researchers in this area include Allaei and Connor (1990); Hull, Rose, Fraser and Castellano (1991); and Nelson and Carson (1998). These studies have shown the value of examining perceptions and beliefs about literacy and learning in mainstream writing classrooms. They have found that cultural misunderstandings appear in many classroom situations, such as conversation, collaborative groups, and teacher-students conference.

Hull et al. (1991), for example, argue that classroom talk is deeply embedded in culture. In Western culture, classroom conversations usually consist of a tripartite series of turns in which a teacher initiates, a student replies, and the teacher evaluates

the response. However, Hull et al. (1991) have found that students from language other than English backgrounds in the United States may not function well in this type of conversation.

Nelson and Carson (1998) studied patterns of collaboration in writing groups in writing classes. Through text analyses and transcripts of collaborative writing sessions, they have found that Chinese-speaking ESL writers are more concerned about maintaining harmonious group relations than providing critical input on other's drafts, whereas Spanish-speaking students often take an opposite approach to this.

2.2.4. Contrastive rhetoric and genre analysis

Most genre-specific investigations of academic and professional writing in different languages and cultures have dealt with expository prose, including journal articles, business reports, letters of application, grant proposals, and newspaper commentaries. These studies include Bhatia's (1993) analysis of genre in professional settings; Connor et al. (1995) cross-cultural analysis of U.S. and Flemish job applications; Jenkins and Hinds's (1987) contrastive study of business letter writing in English, French and Japanese; Mauranen's (1993) contrastive study of Finnish and English writing; Tirkkonen-Condit's (1988, 1996; Tirkkonen-Condit & Lieflander-Koistinen, 1989) study of editorials in Finnish and English; and Ventola and Mauranen's (1991) 'Non-native writing and native revising of scientific articles'.

This research has produced findings that explain some characteristics of processes and products of specific genres. The findings indicate, for example, that Japanese and Chinese tend to be more indirect than Americans in their writing; Finns and English speakers tend to have different coherence conventions; and Korean students tend not to want to take a strong position in defending business decisions. The major focus of the studies is still on textual or structural regularity in relation to different genres. The present study belongs to this category, but it goes beyond the scope of what have been done before by adding other levels and kinds of analyses to the study.

Contrastive rhetoric research has found that rhetorical patterns are an essential component of language. They change, however, over time and space. These patterns are arbitrary yet rule-governed. They are also socially constructed and transmitted. Contrastive rhetoric research also shows that rhetorical structures differ between languages and cultures, and these differences are dynamic and change as the society changes (Ostler, 2001). Scollon (1997b) suggests that less attention should be given to the structure of texts in contrastive rhetoric research, and more to rhetorical studies, in their broader sense. As Canagarajah (2002, p.68) argues, contrastive rhetoric research needs to “develop more complex types of explanation for textual difference”. He suggests that genre analysis can help provide some of this explanation, as long as it keeps away from normative, rule-governed, and ‘value-free’ descriptions of genre conventions.

The present study is shaped in line with new directions in contrastive rhetoric research. It examines not only textual organisations, but also other discourse level features, such as interpersonal meanings realised in texts, how writers express their attitudes, as well as intertextual features of texts. It also considers how these discursal features are related to the specific context in which the texts occur by drawing on theories and analytical frameworks from systemic functional linguistics, new rhetoric, and critical discourse studies.

2.3. Previous contrastive studies of Chinese and English writing

Kaplan not only initiated the principles of contrastive rhetoric, he also tried to explore the thought patterns of different cultures. In his famous ‘doodles’ diagram (Kaplan, 1966), he illustrated English exposition structure as being linear and Oriental exposition structure as being circular. This view has consequently provoked polemic debate. He argued that Chinese as well as other Oriental writing is indirect. In 1987, when Kaplan reviewed his previous study, he readjusted his position and regretted his oversimplification and overstatement of differences between languages. He said, “I admit having made the case too strong. I regret having done so, though I in no way

regret having made the case” (Kaplan, 1987, p.10). Later, he emphasized that contrastive rhetoric was not a pedagogical tool (Kaplan, 1988) and its aim was “to describe ways in which written texts operate in larger cultural contexts” (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996, p. 179) and should include “semantic and logical issues as those issues are encoded in language systems” (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996, p.181).

In respect to similarities and differences between Chinese and English writings, two traditional Chinese rhetorical patterns have been widely discussed in contrastive rhetoric literature. These are ‘*ba gu wen*’ (eight-legged essay) and ‘*qi cheng zhuan he*’ (commonly glossed as ‘beginning’, ‘development’, ‘turn’ and ‘conclusion’). In Kaplan’s book (1972), he argued that the indirectness of oriental writing was largely due to the influence of the Chinese ‘eight-legged essay’, which was actually a traditional essay form used as a standard device in civil service examinations hundreds of years ago. The origin of the ‘eight-legged’ essay *ba gu wen* can be traced back to the Bei Song Dynasty (960—1127AD) in China. It was not until the Ming dynasty (1368—1644AD) that the rules for the composition of the eight-legged essay were explicitly laid down (Tu, 1974). The eight legs, or *ba gu*, refers to the rhetorically parallel paragraphs (legs) of the four central parts of the essay---the *qi gu*, the *xiao gu*, the *zhong gu* and the *hou gu*. The required style of the parallel legs of the eight-legged essay was, “as one falls another one rises” (*yi fan yi zheng*) (Tang, 1980). This structure was extremely complex. The ability to write a good eight-legged essay took scholars several years to master.

Qi-cheng-zhuan-he originated from Chinese poetry study and may refer to four consecutive lines of poetry, to four consecutive sentences or ideas in a single paragraph of prose, or to the four parts of a whole essay. The Chinese textual organisational pattern *qi cheng zhuan he* may be better described as a prosodic structure rather than a rhetorical or functional structure. Since these four Chinese characters can be quite polysemous, each step such as *qi*, *cheng*, *zhuan*, or *he* can be applied to different rhetorical functions (cf. Chapter 6.2). This prosodic structure

concerns itself with the ‘waves’ or ‘ups and downs’ in texts such as poems, literary proses, personal accounts and examination papers. It can accommodate various functional structures and each step in this structure could be identified to serve different purposes in different contexts from a functional discourse analytical perspective. As Bloch and Chi (1995) argue, even classical Chinese rhetoric was never monolithic but invited varied views, some of which promoted logic argumentation and critical examination of the canon.

Following the work of Kaplan, many studies have been conducted in examining differences between Chinese and English writing and the socio-political and cultural reasons behind these differences. Cai (1993), Matalene (1985), Mohan and Lo (1985), Scollon (1991,1997a, b, 2000), Scollon and Scollon (1997), Taylor and Chen (1991), Kirkpatrick (1993, 1995, 1996, 1997), Li (2002), Shi (2002, 2004), Cahill (1999, 2003), Kong (1998, 2005), Liu (2005) and Zhu (1997, 2000) are important figures in this area. Some of these studies and their basic findings are reviewed below.

Cai (1993), as a follower of Kaplan’s work, holds that the eight-legged essay is still a powerful principle for many Chinese students. Moreover, he finds that the four-part classical model of *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* is often employed by Chinese students to organize paragraphs in writing their Chinese essays. Furthermore, he finds that Chinese students seem to avoid expressing their personal views freely and directly in their essays. Instead they quote poetry, quotations and references to the past, as a way of respecting authorities. In Chinese culture, to accept traditional values and social norms is considered a polite act. Li (2002) points out a trace of the eight-legged essay in the writing of high school students in China, but she contrasts it with university-level writing that focuses on logic, clarity, analysis, interpretation, and development of one’s own ideas.

Other researchers who support Kaplan’s hypothesis include Scollon (1991) and Matalene (1985). They do not attribute the indirectness of Chinese writing to the influence of the eight-legged essay, but, to different views about writing in Chinese

culture to Western ones. They carry the discussion further and admit the complexity of the issue. They attribute differences between Chinese and English writing to Confucian thought and other cultural conventions in China.

Scollon (1991) observed that the theory of process writing (Graves, 1983) in English emphasizes the experience and voice of individuals while the thought of Chinese people is largely based on Confucian thought which is made up of four core relationships: affection between parent and child, righteousness between ruler and ruled, differentiation between elder and younger, and trust between friend and friend. Consciously or unconsciously tied by this ideology, directly expressing their true thoughts becomes difficult for Chinese writers.

Among the contrastive rhetorical studies that have found their ways into composition studies, Matalene's (1985) 'Contrastive Rhetoric: An American Writing Teacher in China' has become something of a classic. In her article, Matalene uses parts of English compositions written by Chinese students and translations of various Chinese texts to explain the characteristics of Chinese rhetoric. Unlike Kaplan, Matalene does not dwell just on formal aspects of rhetoric (i.e., the forms that paragraphs take), but discusses Chinese writers' reliance on memorization and manipulation of set phrases and textual forms to emphasize group values over individualistic goals. She found that Chinese students could not use English rhetorical devices effectively to establish arguments. Usually they would use narrations and statements that seemed unconnected in the eyes of Western readers. She concluded that Chinese rhetoric lacked argumentative coherence because of its reliance on references to history, tradition, and authorities.

Matalene has been critiqued by Liu (1996) for her overgeneralizations and for falling into the same methodological trap as Kaplan's work. Liu criticizes Matalene's article for its assumption of an unbroken transhistorical continuity in Chinese rhetorical theory. He also notes that the students that Matalene quotes as being exemplars of traditional Chinese rhetoric are all English majors and as such "must have been

exposed – however limited or imperfect that exposure may be – to English-based texts, rhetoric, discourses, and cultures for a considerable period of time" (Liu, 1996, p. 319).

Criticisms of Kaplan and Matalene exemplify the problems that traditional forms of contrastive rhetoric research have had, the most serious of which is a tendency to stereotype students according to their ethnic or cultural group membership. As Leki writes, "the danger in accepting the traditional contrastive-rhetoric explanations for writing differences or cross-cultural explanations for behavioural differences is that such explanations risk turning ESL students into cardboard characters whose behaviour is simply determined by these cultural norms and who have no individual differences or subtleties obscured by these behaviours" (Leki, 1997, p. 239). Part of the tendency to overgeneralise comes from a methodology that traditionally emphasized written texts as finished products. Lacking an understanding of how writers deal with the process of making their texts, researchers failed to distinguish developmental factors in writing from factors related to writers' native languages and cultures.

Other researchers have also expressed their disagreement with Kaplan's hypothesis. They reject the overly simplistic explanation offered by Kaplan in his early writings about the effect of the eight-legged essay on Chinese ESL writing. Among these, Mohan and Lo (1985) dispute Kaplan's claim of the importance of the eight-legged essay in Chinese writing, and argue that the eight-legged essay is only one variation used in traditional *wen-yan* (old prose) style and was used by government officers hundreds of years ago. In fact, *wen-yan* was replaced by the *bai-hua* style (a more direct kind of writing style based on spoken language) at the beginning of the twentieth century (Tang, 1980). After surveying Chinese-speaking ESL students in Hong Kong and British Columbia, Mohan and Lo argue that organizational patterns of Chinese writing do not differ greatly from that of English and that the modern Chinese writing style taught in Chinese schools today favours a direct rather than an

indirect expressive mode.

Taylor and Chen (1991) studied the relationship between discourse structures and disciplinary conventions in article introductions by three groups of physical scientists: Anglo-Americans writing in English, Chinese writing in English, and Chinese writing in Chinese. They analysed thirty-one papers in related fields of natural science. Four moves proposed by Swales (1981) (establishing the field, summarizing relevant previous work, preparing for present research by showing gaps, and introducing the present project by stating its purpose or objectives) were examined in the introductions of these research papers. After analysing the four move structures, they found that all three groups employed all four moves, but with some differences. The Chinese scientists writing in both English and Chinese were less likely to elaborate on the moves, wrote less and cited fewer references. More important is that the Chinese scientists were less likely to summarize previous literature in related fields. Taylor and Chen attribute these differences to two possible explanations: one is the lack of a traditional disputation in Chinese academia while the other is that Chinese scientists do not have access to the bibliographic resources that are available in Western countries.

A further important figure in the study of differences between Chinese and English writing is Kirkpatrick (1993, 1995, 1996, 1997). He argued in 1993 that both English and Chinese are linear, but while English tends to follow a sequence that develops from a main to a subordinate information sequence, the opposite is true of Chinese. He studied in particular how the subordinate-main sequence in Chinese complex sentences is also found in the textual organization of Chinese request letters. In many instances in his article, he refers to a principle of modern standard Chinese sequencing as the 'Because-therefore' sequence. He far prefers the term 'frame-main' in his later articles. After studying Chinese essays from Chinese university entrance examinations (Kirkpatrick, 1995), information structure in modern standard Chinese (Kirkpatrick, 1996), and traditional Chinese text structures and their influences on the writing in

Chinese and English of contemporary mainland Chinese students (Kirkpatrick, 1997), he finds that Mainland Chinese students do not have to learn traditional Chinese text styles (eight-legged essays or even *qi-cheng-zhuan-he*) in order to enter university. In fact, eight-legged essays have been not been used for quite some time and have very little influence on contemporary writing. As for *qi-cheng-zhuan-he*, this model is not focused on in the Chinese school curriculum either. Chinese students do not have to master any contemporary style that could be classified as intrinsically Chinese. Furthermore, they are encouraged to be inventive and original in their writings. After a survey of contemporary Chinese textbooks on composition, Kirkpatrick (1997) concludes that the prescriptive advice given in these texts reflects a contemporary 'Anglo-American' rhetorical style more than a traditional 'Chinese' style.

The contemporary influence of English text structure on Chinese academic writing is also demonstrated in a study conducted by Shi (2002). Based on interview data, she claims that mainland Chinese TESOL professionals who were educated in the West tend to use 'Anglo-American' conventions of academic writing in publishing their papers in both Chinese and English. These studies indicate that for contemporary Chinese students, western ideas of what constitute good writing are not alien.

Scollon and Scollon (1997) compared the reporting of the same news story in 11 Hong Kong newspapers and 3 Peoples' Republic of China papers. Four were English language papers, the rest were written in Chinese. The researchers focused on structural features and point of view as well as the attribution of content to sources. They found that both the classical structure "*qi-cheng-zhuan-he*" and inductive and deductive organizational structures were found in the stories, written in either language, concluding that "there is nothing inherent in the linguistic or cognitive structures of either Chinese or English which determines the use of these structures" (Scollon and Scollon, 1997, p.107).

Kong (2005) investigated how third party ideas were evaluated in research articles written in English and Chinese. The research findings indicate that there are no large

differences between English and Chinese in the weightings of evaluation categories, even though they are realised by different grammatical resources in the two languages. Chinese research articles tend to use more explicit linguistic resources with less frequent use of mitigators possibly because of the socio-pragmatic and typological differences between English and Chinese.

Liu (2005) analysed online instructional materials on argumentative writing for American and Mainland Chinese school writers. The study reveals that although the two groups agree on the purpose, tripartite structure, and the use of formal logic, they differ in the discussion of some fundamentals for argumentative writing. Specifically, the American group considers anticipating the opposition a must while the Chinese group demonstrates epistemological and dialogical emphases and highlights the need to use analogies. The importance of analogies and epistemological and dialogical emphases can be traced to ancient Chinese rhetorical theories. She argues that the findings may help us to understand the assumptions and beliefs that underlie rhetorical conventions or textual features.

Zhu (1997, 2000) analysed sales letters written in the People's Republic of China using a rhetorical moves analysis (Swales, 1990). This work contains a great deal of discussion on linear/circular structures of Chinese discourse. It found that the 20 letters in the sample followed a linear development. Zhu also argued that differences in communicative purposes of the sales letters were shown in the moves, steps and linguistic forms of the letters. Kong (1998) also used two analytical frameworks, a move structure approach and Mann and Thompson's rhetorical structure analysis (1988) to examine Chinese business request letters written in companies in Hong Kong, English business letters written by native speakers, and English business letters by non-native speakers whose first language was Chinese (Cantonese). Differences were found in the occurrence and sequencing of the moves as well as the rhetorical structure between the Chinese letters and the English letters. The theoretical explanation in this study draws on theories of politeness and face systems.

Differences are attributed to different face relationships involved in business transactions rather than inherent rhetorical patterns of the two languages.

In Cahill's (1999, 2003) work, he argues that in the traditional four part Chinese *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* essay format, *zhuan* is not a rhetorical move of digression or circularity as assumed in English-language scholarship but serves rather as the occasion to develop an essay further by alternative means. If that is the case, the Chinese four-part mode comes very close to the three-part English exposition writing mode (see below). He also holds that there appears to be no consensus in Chinese scholarship on the methods by which to develop essays. Moreover, he challenges the theoretical basis of contrastive rhetoric, particularly in relation to Chinese students and Chinese rhetoric. Cahill (1999, p. xi) writes:

Major theoretical and empirical problems (of contrastive rhetoric) result from the field's binary logic, which works by selectively and arbitrarily reducing the rhetorical repertoires of counterposed language to discrete contrasting instances, while evidence of rhetorical structures that do not fit the contrast is downplayed or ignored.

Most of the discussion in the literature after Kaplan about differences between Chinese and English writing has focused on arguments about the directness and indirectness of English and Chinese writing of the classical Chinese essay model *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* for examining whether it is similar to the English tripartite essay model. Researchers do not seem to disagree with each other greatly on interpreting *qi* (introducing the topic), *cheng* (developing the topic) and *he* (forming the conclusion). *Zhuan*, however, seems to involve most of the disagreement on the circularity of Chinese writing. The researchers (e.g. Kirkpatrick, 1997; Cahill, 1999, 2003) who advocate similarities between Chinese and English writing argue that *zhuan* is actually a further deepening and development of the topic rather than a real 'turn' to a new topic. They also claim that modern Chinese scholarship supports an inventive and original style of writing rather than sticking to any fixed model of classical

writing.

In terms of analysing rhetorical structures, readers' power needs to be taken into account as well. According to poststructuralist philosophers such as Jacques Derrida, readers (or here this could refer to analysts) have great power in the meanings that they make of the world. This perspective is based on the view that representations do not simply reflect the world, but rather allow for particular ways of constructing interpretations of the world (Mckee, 2002). This suggests that rather than being representations of reality, these proposed rhetorical structures (whether it is the 'tripartite structure' of western tradition or the '*qi-cheng-zhuan-he*' structure of an oriental tradition) are just particular ways of constructing interpretations of reality. By adopting any proposed categorization of rhetorical types or rhetorical structures, analysts are being equipped with special lenses to look at texts. It could be possible that different scholarships in different cultural and linguistic traditions take different lenses to look at the features of the languages and language use. Cho (1998, 1999), for example, provides an extensive discussion which illustrates how Confucian and Aristotelian rhetoric derives from quite different world views.

Each of the studies referred to above disagrees with Kaplan's 1966 characterization of Chinese texts as being circular. Explanations for differences in the texts studied were found, not in the structure of the texts per se, but in other contextual factors. It is also worth noting that these studies take the analysis of texts beyond student essays (Kaplan's sample). There are, however, many genres in different professional and academic domains that are yet without any exploration. There are, thus, still big gaps in our understanding of similarities and differences between Chinese and English writing.

Also most studies that compare differences between Chinese and English writing focus just on one language: Chinese texts or ESL writing by Chinese speakers (Kaplan, 1972; Cai, 1993; Scollon, 1991; Matelene, 1985). Fewer studies look at the set of texts in two languages, using the same textual criteria or theoretical framework

(see, however, e.g. Taylor and Chen, 1991; Kirkpatrick, 1993; Zhu, 2000). Furthermore, most studies mainly remain on a surface level to understand the ‘direct’ or ‘indirect’ structure of the texts rather than going deeper to try to understand what each given unit of a text is doing in realizing the overall function of the text and, more importantly, how texts are discursively constructed to become coherent pieces of writing.

The present study not only explores textual features of the texts but also examines intertextual features of the texts. More importantly, it explores the relationship between the socio-cultural and socio-political reasons for the features found at the discoursal level by employing the ‘same’ analytical framework for examining the same genre realised in the two different languages and cultures.

2. 4. Previous contrastive rhetoric studies on newspaper discourse

In one of the major works on newspaper language from the early 1990s, Bell (1991) establishes a generic distinction between three kinds of newspaper texts. These are service information, opinion, and news texts. A further major work from the same year, Fowler’s (1991) *Language in the News*, focuses exclusively on news report, the predominant text type in newspapers. However, newspapers also contain texts that carry comments, interpretations, evaluations, and recommendations, based on and relating to the events and issues reported in the news texts. This part of the literature review is specifically concerned with these newspaper opinion texts in previous contrastive rhetorical studies.

Opinion texts are a specific type of persuasive or argumentative text that often occurs in professional writing. The aim of such texts is to influence the opinions of readers on controversial issues. Newspaper opinion texts may be further categorised into editorials (usually written by editors or other press staff), newspaper commentaries (usually written by outside expert writers), and letters to the editors (usually written by readers). Newspaper opinion texts are usually concerned with topical issues and

present opinions which aim to convince readers of a particular point of view. Van Dijk claims that opinion is expressed based on “more general, socially shared knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, norms and values” (van Dijk, 1995b, p.38). In this sense, newspaper opinion texts, “perhaps more than any other type of writing, reflect national styles regarding modes of persuasion” (Connor, 1996, p. 143).

As mentioned in Chapter One, Scollon et al. (2000) argue that there are several reasons why researchers turn to journalistic texts for answering questions raised in contrastive rhetoric studies. Their main reason is that journalistic texts are readily available and appear to form a relatively similar genre across languages and cultural groups. A second reason is that journalistic texts are examples of a highly salient genre of public discourse that may exert some influence on the academic writing of students. A third reason is that journalistic texts are generally thought to exemplify widely accepted standards of form which is less variable than more flexible and varied academic writings.

A number of studies on opinion discourses in contrastive rhetorical research are relevant to this study, such as the work of Dantas-Whitney and Grabe (1989), Tirkkonen-Condit (1996), Tirkkonen-Conid and Lieflander-Koistinen (1989), Ansary (2004) and Zoltan (2002). Other studies on editorials and Chinese media articles such as van Dijk (1995a), Scollon (2000), Fang (2001) are also important for the present study.

Dantas-Whitney and Grabe (1989) compared editorial texts in Brazilian, Portuguese, and English. Twenty newspaper commentaries were compared for fifteen linguistic variables. A significant difference was found on one dimension – the presentation of information. This dimension included five features: use of nominalization, prepositions, third-person singular, pronouns, and locative adverbs. The English texts used a more formal, detached style than the Portuguese; they used more nominalizations and prepositions, whereas the Portuguese texts used more personal aspects of texts such as third-person singular and pronouns. This study is largely at

the level of textual analysis.

A further study of cross-cultural differences in editorials is Tirkkonen-Condit and Lieflander-Koistinen's (1989) study of Finnish, English, and German editorials, in which the authors compared the strength and placement of the main claim or argument in editorials. They found that Finnish editorials did not always argue a point of view, but rather provided information to their readers. The desire to build consensus rather than divide was the stated policy of the newspaper. The German editorials placed the argument statement at the beginning of the editorials more often than the English newspapers did, whereas the Finnish editorials did not contain an argument statement.

Zoltan (2002) compared editorials in English and Hungarian from a contrastive rhetoric perspective and found that English and Hungarian articles had similar rhetorical structures. The difference is that Hungarian editorials are longer and have more information than English editorials. In another contrastive rhetoric study of Chinese and Australian news texts, findings suggest that there exist preferred rhetorical styles within the text genre in different languages and cultures (Ramsay, 2001).

Ansary (2004) analysed English newspaper editorials culled from three English newspapers published in three different socio-cultural environments by native speakers of English (The Washington Times), and non-native speakers (The Iran News, and The Pakistan Today). She analyses the texts in terms of 'Generic structure potential' (GSP) and 'Cohesive harmony index' (CHI), and found that there is 'statistically' no significant difference between English editorials written by (non) native editorial writers, in whatever socio-cultural and socio-political context they are produced and disseminated. In other words, the analytical results of this study indicated that editorial texts produced by non-native speakers of English enjoyed almost the same degree of linguistic cohesiveness as native texts. However, it could be argued that this kind of study which only focuses on the 'surface structures' such as

generic structure and textual features such as cohesion is far from enough to develop a deeper understanding of the genre in question.

Compared with the above studies which seem to mainly focus on the discourse level pattern of the texts, van Dijk's 1995 study uses a more social contextual perspective than a linguistic-oriented analysis. He attempts to use the discourse-cognition-society triangle of discourse study advocated by himself (1988, 1995a) to explore editorials. He states "one prominent and characteristic feature of editorials is the formulation of opinions and the expression of ideologies" (1995a, pp.2-3). He gives a view that newspaper editorials express opinions and ideologies. As an opinion discourse, the topic of newspaper editorials is "supported by sequences of arguments: Opinion discourse is argumentative" (p.3). Editorials are usually an institutional opinion rather than a personal one (van Dijk, 1995b). The conventional structure of editorials proposed in van Dijk (1995b) is: the summary of the event, followed by an evaluation of the event, and a pragmatic conclusion.

Good newspaper opinion articles including commentaries are considered some of the best examples of persuasive writing in all countries; they set standards for written persuasion. At the same time little is known cross-culturally about the genre and no systematic study between Chinese and English newspaper commentaries has been carried out so far.

In addition to studies on editorials, studies on Chinese print mass media conducted by Scollon (2000) and Fang (2001) are also important in relation to the present study. In Scollon's 2000 research on China's media texts, he analysed generic variability in news stories in Chinese and English published in two of Chinese major quality newspapers over five days. The newspapers he examined included the *People's Daily* (in Chinese) and the *China Daily* (in English). The *People's Daily* produces two editions of the paper, a 'home' edition and an 'overseas' edition. Over 1,100 separate stories were contained in these three newspapers during the five days. Out of these stories Scollon identified 39 stories which could be compared across the newspapers.

Putting aside a large number of minor or most likely insignificant differences between or among these stories, Scollon identifies five categories of significant variation: 1) Headlines, 2) Textual frame, 3) Point of view, 4) Tone, and 5) Use of quotation marks and of quoted materials. Later he comments on formulaic expressions and vocabulary differences among them as well. The first conclusion he draws from the study is that there are clear distinctions within a single newspaper among the different kinds of news stories. Another further point he makes is that the five categories he advocates for analysing news stories are integrated. He argues that the textual frame comes closest to significantly discriminating types of news story, while the analysis of textual frame depends in part upon separate evidence from the other features such as the headline, the tone, the placement of key points, and the use of quotations. These features, thus, should not be treated in isolation in analysing news stories. The second conclusion he draws is that the five kinds of news story he identified are clearly defined in the two Chinese editions, while in the English newspaper they are not so distinct.

Scollon (2000) further suggests that researchers in contrastive rhetorical studies should exercise great caution in using unmatched or randomly selected genres to draw conclusions about reader interpretations, the cognitive characteristics of the writers or editors, or even more broadly of the ideological community of practice. His study on China's media texts reveals that the reasonably unified ideological community of journalists has produced rather large degrees of variation within what are often said to be 'the same' stories or even 'the same' newspapers. From this point of view, he argues that studies of either cognitive or broad sociocultural patterns in contrastive rhetoric must be approached with caution and must always be grounded through careful and detailed generic analysis.

Another study of Chinese media texts which is relevant to the present study is Fang's (2001) research on two ideologically opposed newspapers in Chinese. These two newspapers are Mainland China's official mouthpiece the *People's Daily*, and

Taiwan's KMT (Nationalist Party) newspaper the *Central Daily News*. Fang's study examined the discourse strategies of several news reports in these two newspapers on two separate controversial events. Two case studies compared how these two newspapers reported civil unrest in South Africa (22 Feb.—8 March 1985) and in Argentina (31 May—1 June 1989). This study critically analysed how various textual elements might be employed for justificatory purpose – in this case, the justification and legitimation of certain diplomatic policies adopted by the regimes in mainland China and Taiwan. This study examined how textual features, such as lexical choices, grammatical elements, headlines and thematic structures may vary or be manipulated to form the messages for legitimising and defending the policies formulated by the regimes in power.

The two above studies approach China's media texts in different ways. Scollon's study is more of a contrastive rhetoric study and Fang's analysis is more concerned with political issues. However, neither of these studies is based on a detailed linguistic analysis of the two sets of texts, nor employs recent developments in discourse analytical techniques such as appraisal analysis (Martin, 2000; Martin and White, 2005; White, 2002) and the textual analytical techniques referred by Bazerman and Prior (2004) which the present study aims to follow. By employing systemic functional linguistics and new rhetoric genre studies as the major analytical framework, the present study aims to take a different approach from the above two studies and tries to explore interpersonal and intertextual features in addition to the rhetorical structures of the texts. Socio-cultural factors that may mediate these textual and intertextual differences are also explored by using perspectives drawn from critical discourse analysis and previous contrastive rhetoric studies on differences between Chinese and English writing.

2.5. Summary

This chapter has presented a general review of contrastive rhetoric as a field of study. It has also outlined previous contrastive studies on Chinese and English writings and

newspaper opinion discourses in relation to the present study. It has demonstrated the restrictions of research scope and methodological flaws of previous studies in the field and indicated the gaps that the present study attempts to fill. It has revealed that most previous contrastive studies of Chinese and English writing have focused on a linearity/circularity argument and few studies have attempted or been able to in any rigorous way construct and account for any comparative genres across these two languages and cultures. The following chapter will describe some of the latest developments in discourse and genre analysis that contribute to the theoretical framework for the present study.