AUTHOR’S DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

I. this thesis comprises only my original work towards the Doctor of Philosophy in Education Degree
II. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used
III. the thesis does not exceed the word length for this degree.
IV. no part of this work has been used for the award of another degree.
V. this thesis meets the University of Sydney’s Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) requirements for the conduct of research.

Signature: ………………………………………………………………………

Name: WEI WANG

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On a more personal level, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my wife, Dan Liao and our lovely son, Jeff, who have made this journey with me and who are inspirations in my life.
This thesis is a contrastive genre study which explores newspaper commentaries on terrorism in Chinese and Australian newspapers. The study examines the textual patterning of the Australian and Chinese commentaries, interpersonal and intertextual features of the texts as well as considers possible contextual factors which might contribute to the formation of the newspaper commentaries in the two different languages and cultures. For the framework of its analysis, the study draws on systemic functional linguistics, English for Specific Purposes and new rhetoric genre studies, critical discourse analysis, and discussions of the role of the mass media in the two different cultures.

The study reveals that Chinese writers often use explanatory rather than argumentative expositions in their newspaper commentaries. They seem to distance themselves from outside sources and seldom indicate endorsement of these sources. Australian writers, on the other hand, predominantly use argumentative expositions to argue their points of view. They integrate and manipulate outside sources in various ways to establish and provide support for the views they express. It is argued that these textual and intertextual practices are closely related to contextual factors, especially the roles of the media and opinion discourse in contemporary China and Australia.

The study, by providing both a textual and contextual view of the genre under investigation in the two languages and cultures, aims to establish a framework for contrastive rhetoric research which moves beyond the text into the context of production and interpretation of the texts as a way of exploring reasons for the linguistic and rhetorical choices made in the two sets of texts.
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