

Linguistic, Ideological, and Cultural Issues in Chinese and English Argumentative Writings

Jie Zhang

Department of Applied Linguistics, the Pennsylvania State University, University Park, USA

Email: zhangjie2001@gmail.com

Abstract—Social and cultural differences underlying people's ideology exist not only in daily oral communications but also in formal written texts. This study focuses on the use of support and the presentation of personal voice in Chinese and English argumentative writings respectively to investigate the influence of Chinese collective culture and English individualistic culture upon their writing. Contrastive textual analysis was conducted on a sample of Chinese argumentative essays and English argumentative essays. Analysis of the use of support shows that Chinese writers extensively provide examples and direct quotes with less effort to elaborate on them, whereas English writers use fewer examples but elaborate them in details. Chinese writers frequently use direct citations, whereas no direct citation was found in English essays. The analysis of first person pronoun use reveals that the use of first person singulars is more frequent among English writers. English writers use "I" to put forward their arguments, while Chinese writers use "I" to make a modest suggestion. The use of first person plurals displays an opposite tendency. Chinese writers use much more first person plurals than the English writers. The findings suggest a need for incorporating social conventions and cultural thinking in ESL/EFL writing instruction to Chinese learners.

Index Terms—ESL/ EFL writing, contrastive rhetoric, collectivism, individualism

I. INTRODUCTION

As English takes its position as the global language, a fervent enthusiasm of studying English has been witnessed in China. In the meantime more and more students in China pursue further studies in English-speaking countries such as the U.S., Canada and Australia. Despite the fact that most of them are intermediate or advanced English learners with a good grasp of vocabulary and grammar, many feel frustrated when it comes to writing in English. More often than not, their writing is accused of "lacking a focus" and "being digressive". An explanation to this situation is that beyond the more discernable differences at the surface level (such as syntax, grammar and choice of words), the subtle differences between English and Chinese reflected on the level of discourse and style tend to be ignored. Rhetoric, as "a way of thinking about the relationships that exist among speaker, subject matter, purpose, and audience" (Matalene, 1985, p. 789), is a reflection of people's thought and logic, which are defined by culture and social ideology. (Kaplan; 1966; Cai, 1999; Liu, 2005) Rhetoric and writing are "schematic representation of the writer's experience and interactions with the given sociocultural context" (Cai, 1999, p. 293).

The fundamental proposition of this paper is that social and cultural ideologies influences one's thought, and this way of thinking, in turn, is reflected in written texts. With this in mind, a contrastive textual analysis of five Chinese and five English argumentative essays was conducted in their use of support and presentation of personal voice. The ideological and cultural issues that underlie the linguistic differences are discussed. Implications to ESL/EFL writing instruction are suggested.

II. CONTRASTIVE RHETORIC

Different languages encode different aspects of the world, and draw their users' attention to certain aspects of the objective world and reality. (Slobin, 1996) The view that language shapes mind is usually referred to as "Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis" and "Linguistic Determinism". Although a strong version of "Linguistic Determinism" has been proven problematic, a wide range of cross-cultural studies has indicated that language plays a role in formulating people's thinking, and the past twenty years has witnessed a renewed interest in the relationship between language and mind, which was interpreted as a weaker version of Whorfian hypothesis known as linguistic relativity". Linguistic relativity suggests that one's native language influences one's thinking. When people are exposed to another language, the way of thinking imposed by their native language system may have an effect on the acquisition of the new language system.

Taking a cultural anthropological perspective, Robert B. Kaplan applied it to the analysis of cross-cultural rhetoric and compositions. In his 1966 article *Cultural Thought Patterns in Inter-cultural Education*, he pointed out that not only does cultural variation exist at the level of sentence, grammar, and vocabulary, but "logic *per se* is a cultural phenomenon as well" (Kaplan, 1966, p. 2). Rhetoric, taking its basis on logic, is not universal either; it varies from culture to culture, and within the same culture it evolves from time to time. Language not only determines thought, but more important that "logic and rhetoric are interdependent as well as culture specific" (Connor, 1996, p. 30). Based on

his analysis of 600 students' compositions, Kaplan proposed the models of paragraph organization of three basic language groups. The English pattern of written discourse was described as mainly a linear structure, that of oriental people was doodles, and the Arabic patterns displayed a series of complex parallel structures. Kaplan's 1966 article was the first in ESL studies that extended the textual and rhetorical analyses to the discourse and textual levels, and thus initiated a new field of study, i. e. Contrastive Rhetoric (CR). CR approaches texts based on different social-cultural backgrounds of the writers, with a focus on the rhetorical differences in ESL students' writing and that of native English writers.

Although Kaplan's diagrams have been criticized for being overly simplistic and literal (Scollon, 1997; Zamel, 1997 in Connor, 2002), it has important implications to language and culture studies in that it recognized the reciprocal relationship between rhetoric and logic on the one hand, and cultural and social norms on the other hand, which justifies the vigorous research conducted in CR in the past decades. (Kaplan, 1972, 1987; Jensen, 1987; Connor, 1996, 2002)

III. CHINESE AND ENGLISH CONTRASTIVE RESEARCH

Much research has been conducted on Chinese and English rhetoric since Kaplan described the oriental way (including Chinese) of paragraph organization as "doodles". (Matalene, 1985; Mohan and Lo, 1985; Shen, 1989; Taylor and Chen, 1991; Kirkpatrick, 1997, 2002; Liu, 1996; Cai, 1999; Liu, 2005; Jarratt et al, 2006) Most studies used the classical approach of CR, i.e. textual analysis. The English and Chinese writing by Chinese ESL learners have been contrastively analyzed. (Mohan and Lo, 1985; Shen, 1989; Cai, 1999; Jarratt et al, 2006) Other genres that have been covered include newspaper articles (Scollon, 1997 in Connor, 2002) and business letters (Zhu, 1997 in Connor, 2002). Textbooks and online instruction materials are the other sources that have been looked at. (Kirkpatrick, 2002; Liu, 2005)

The theme under most discussion is the rhetorical patterns and overall organization. Kaplan in his 1966 article first described Oriental way of paragraph organization as circular. He further elaborated the Chinese rhetoric pattern in 1972, arguing that current Chinese writers are still heavily influenced by ancient Chinese rhetorical tradition, especially the eight-legged essays (*ba-gu-wen*). As a means of eliciting official candidates in ancient China, the eight-legged essays were characterized as indirect, circular and delaying in stating the thesis. The analysis of 4 ESL essays by Chinese students showed similar traits as those of eight-legged essays, especially in the seemingly unnecessary wandering around the topic. (Kaplan, 1972) Cai (1999) studied a Chinese student's EFL writing portfolio. It showed that the student tends to structure her paragraphs in the 4 parts *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* progression (beginning-continuing-transition-summary), which is regarded to be an evolved and simplified version of eight-legged essays. Cai also found that although the student is an advanced English learner, she still resorted to translating her intended meaning from Chinese to English in writing English essays.

By studying the typical Chinese patterns, in particular *ba-gu-wen* and *qi-cheng-zhuan-he*, it is concluded that Chinese learners tend to write circularly, and Chinese writing displays traits of indirectness, non-expression, softness, discursiveness, and the avoidance of opposing to others' opinions. In contrast, English people usually write in a linear order, and English rhetoric honors directness, clear position, strong arguments, and the refutation of the opposing views. When it comes to writing in English, Chinese students tend to transfer the Chinese rhetorical organization into English. (Mohan and Lo, 1985; Jensen, 1987)

Some researchers, however, argue that the rhetorical differences have been exaggerated. Scholars from this camp have tried to prove that the patterns of writing in Chinese, even in classical rhetoric, are diverse. Liu (1996) analyzed typical Chinese expository writings, and categorized various rhetorical patterns in Chinese, including both indirect and direct. The Chinese direct patterns were found to display the same linear paragraph development as those in English. It was suggested that the diverse patterns in Chinese have been observed since ancient China, although indirect patterns have been regarded as traditional unmarked patterns in China. Kirkpatrick (2002), by analyzing the textbooks in China concluded that Chinese rhetorical styles are extremely diverse and sensitive to audience and the context of situation. Chinese textbooks advise that argumentative texts should consist of three parts: the thesis, the argument, and the proof. Both inductive and deductive forms of argument are possible. The textbooks also suggested explicit and direct argument is persuasive, while allowing "circuitous" techniques to be used in certain circumstances. Kirkpatrick further suggested the diverse writing styles were due to the influence of the western rhetoric more than the traditional Chinese rhetorical style. Liu (2005) compared the Chinese and American online instruction materials about argumentative writing. The findings showed both materials emphasized the three part organization of argumentative essays; both formal logic and valid informal reasoning were introduced as important argumentative techniques.

The above review of literature indicates a lack of agreement on the studies of Chinese-English rhetoric patterns. The overall message is that there are differences, but on the other hand, Chinese rhetoric is diverse either due to the traditional rhetoric heritage or due to the influence of western rhetoric. Considering the long and rich history of Chinese rhetoric, the similarities and differences found in Chinese-English texts are natural, and it is not hard to find some patterns that display similar characteristics as those in English. It is close to impossible to make a generalized statement about Chinese rhetorical patterns.

On the other hand, with the globalization of English, the western rhetorical traditions are permeating into Chinese rhetoric. So they are slowly but gradually accepted and learned by Chinese students. However, people's ways of thinking that underlie rhetoric and writing remain stable for a relatively long period of time, and they have been firmly

defined by and embedded in Chinese culture and social ideology. Consequently, they are frequently reflected in Chinese writing. This can be best illustrated in argumentative writing, given that argumentative writing is a genre that requires the writer to take a position and persuade the readers. Besides the frequently studied rhetorical patterns, the use of support and the presentation of personal voice in particular reflect the underlying social and cultural ideologies of Chinese learners.

The use of support has not been intensively studied in the contrastive study of Chinese-English rhetoric; only the citation traditions are mentioned sparingly by some scholars along with the analysis of rhetoric patterns. According to Matelene (1985), Chinese literacy has been based on memorization. Chengyu, proverbs, maxims, and piece of folklore are to be memorized by root. Chinese rhetoric appeals to history, tradition, and the past. Its technique always is the repetition of maxims, proverbs, piece of folklore, and analogies. Chinese rhetorical values are imitations, inculcation, and indirection. Cai also found in his case study that the student frequently used quotations from other sources instead of expressing personal views, but without “citing references” in the Western style and giving credits to the source of the information. (Cai, 1999) In English rhetoric citing sources is indispensable in that the author needs to give credit to the sources. It is also found people’s attitudes toward the proportion of citation differ greatly. English people highly restrict the proportion of citation to avoid plagiarism, while Chinese people don’t regard high proportion of citation problematic. This may be one reason that English writers find Chinese citation traditions to be ambiguous.

Presentation of personal voice is another aspect that has been overlooked in Chinese-English CR studies. However, it denotes important information about the social and cultural ideology and people’s general views on argumentation. In a culture of observation, memorization, and illustration, the purpose of Chinese argumentative writing is to “tell” the reader rather than “showing” to the reader. Therefore, Chinese writers tend to use impersonalized expression and distance themselves from the arguments. Their personal voice is usually implied through analogies, maxims and citations. Predictably, there are less uses of first personal pronouns in Chinese writing. Instead in English the personal voice of the author is made explicit by expressions such as “I argue that”, “I hold that”, “My viewpoint is that...”. Students are encouraged to express their personal voice and demonstrate critical thinking.

The above features are precise illustrations of Chinese and English people’s ideology as reflected in writing. Still they have not been extensively studied. In this paper we focus on the use of support and the presentation of personal voice, and conduct a contrastive textual analysis by comparing five Chinese argumentative essays and five English argumentative essays. Two research questions are raised:

1. Are there differences in the use of support between Chinese argumentative writing and English argumentative writing? What are the social and cultural ideologies underlying the use of support in argumentative writing?
2. Are there differences in the presentation of personal voice, as reflected in the use of first person pronouns, between Chinese argumentative writing and English argumentative writing? What are the social and cultural ideologies that underlie the presentation of personal voice?

IV. THE STUDY

A. Data

The essays used in the study are five argumentative essays written by Chinese students and five by American students. The five Chinese essays are sample essays from the writing section of 2006 National College Entrance Examination (NCEE). NCEE is a compulsory examination for high-school students in China. It functions as the elicitation test for national colleges and universities. In the Chinese subject (*Yu Wen Kao Shi*) of NCEE, there is a writing section, which accounts for 60 out of the total score 150. In this section, students are required to write a composition based on a given topic in 30-45 minutes. Argumentative genre is the most frequently used by Chinese students in this section. For the purpose of the present study, we choose 5 sample essays from 2006 College Entrance Examination. All of them are graded full score or close to full scores. Therefore they are exemplars among the essay pool. The writing prompt is as follows:

The word “Yi Qi” has three meanings according to Dictionary of Contemporary Chinese.

- (1) will and spirit, such as in the phrase *Yi Qi Feng Fa* (to be energetic)
- (2) temperament, such as in the phrase *Yi Qi Xiang Tou* (to have similar temperament)
- (3) personal feelings (or prejudice), such as in the phrase *Yi Qi Yong Shi* (an imprudent behavior caused by personal feelings)

Please write an argumentative essay of 800 characters on “On Yi Qi” based on your personal experiences and understandings.

The five English essays are sample essays of SAT tests. SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) in the U.S. is comparable to NCEE in China. Since 2006 writing an argumentative essay is required for all candidates. Students are given 25 minutes to write on a given topic, by taking a position and using specific examples or facts to support their position. The five essays used in this study are exemplars of English argumentative writing posted on www.collegeboard.com. They are graded either 6 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 6 with 6 as the highest score. The topic is stated as:

Do memories hinder or help people in their effort to learn from the past and succeed in the present? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

B. Methods

The essays are compared in their use of support and presentation of personal voice. To analyze the use of support, the numbers of support are counted; types and sources are categorized. Considering that personal voice is often featured by the use of first personal pronouns. The numbers of first personal pronouns are counted; the singular and plural forms are counted separately.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. The Use of Support

The use of support by Chinese and English writers is summarized in Tab. 1. A major similarity is found in the essays. All the essays, Chinese and English alike, cite historical events and famous historical figures to support their arguments. This shows the basic understanding of the two cultures about argumentative writing is the same.

| TABLE 1 THE USE OF SUPPORTS IN THE CHINESE AND ENGLISH ESSAYS | | |
|--|----------------|--|
| | # of Instances | Sources of Supports |
| Chinese essays | 33 | 1. direction citation of <i>Shi</i> and <i>Ci</i> lyrics, prose, and maxims 2. life experience of famous persons in history 3. contemporary famous figures 4. ancient Chinese emperors or poets |
| English essays | 8 | 1. the author's personal experience 2. historical events, such as the World Wars 3. historical figures |

However, major differences are found in the use of support. Firstly, the length and number of citations differs greatly from Chinese essays to English essays. The total number of supports used by Chinese writer is 33, while that used by English writer is 8. It shows that Chinese writers use much more examples and citations than English counterparts. However, in terms of the explanation of supports, English writers explain their citations and examples in more details and make logical reasoning out of the support. (example 1 and 2) It seems that Chinese writers tend to “tell” the facts and examples with less effort to make logical reasoning out of the support. The underlying ideology may be that they think the examples in themselves are convincing and credible enough. They pay more attention to the extensiveness of citations to present the examples, historical facts, etc, so that the essays are stylistically rich. In contrast, the English counterparts don't cite many examples; however, they explain the examples and facts in detail. They are not simply telling the facts; their efforts are to “show” why it is like this and how the use of the supports proves their arguments. From the writing prompt of SAT writing section, we can perceive the underlying philosophy clearly. One of the requirements in the writing section of SAT says:

Don't oversimplify. Developing your point of view doesn't mean coming up with as many examples as you can. Sometimes students cut a great example short to move on to something else, and end up oversimplifying. Take the time to really explain an example; that's the best way to fully develop your point of view. An essay with one or two thoughtful, well-developed reasons or examples is more likely to get a high score than an essay with three short, simplistic examples. (Writing prompt, SAT)

More significantly the content of the support differs dramatically. (example 1 and 2) English writers rely on their personal experience, feelings, and understandings to develop their topic, while Chinese writers rely heavily on citing from the past and the present. When English writers cite others, they use less historical facts, while Chinese writers cite the facts, anecdotes, maxims, proverbs, and even the exact sentences from the history. The basic assumption may be that Chinese writers regard themselves as less reliable as the sages and historical figures. Compared to expressing their own voice and using their personal experience directly, citing from the history is more credible. This is indeed regarded as one of the best approaches to successful writing, because in Chinese writing, students are encouraged to create a sense of *pan zheng bo yin* (citing extensively from various sources) and *yin jing ju dian* (citing intensively from the sages' books and the holy books). (Cai 1999) Even now when Chinese students prepare for National College Entrance Exam, they are provided with large quantities of materials to memorize by root, so that they are able to write out of memory when taking the exams. Those who make good use of the citations are usually praised by the assessors and set as example for other students.

1. 凡人欲成大事者，皆需受尽千磨万砺。也许上天就是喜欢捉弄那矢志于成功的人们，总是要为孜孜于辉煌的人们设置障碍。那障碍，可能是罗马宗教裁判所前的熊熊烈火，可能是哥伦布远航新大陆中的连天风雷，可能是红军长征中的雪山草地。然而，幸运的人们呵，他们还有理想，在献身理想的意气的指引下，他们如布鲁诺一般投身于火海，为捍卫真理而与烈火永生；他们在献身理想的意气指引下，如哥伦布一般义无反顾地踏上征途为探寻未知世界而披肝沥胆；在献身理想的意气的指引下，他们如红军战士一般豪气顿生征服千山万水为拯救民族而抗争，——献身理想的意气，是成功的精神动力。(from Chinese essay #3) (Translation: All those who have made great achievements have gone through tons of hardships. Maybe fate enjoys playing with people who are determined to be successful, and it always sets barriers for them. It could be the flaming fire in front of Rome Catholic

Church, the fierce storm Columbus faced when sailing to the New Continent, or the mountain and vast swamp that the Red Army crossed in the Long March. However, they are lucky people because they have dreams. With their dreams in mind, they plunged into the fire and burn themselves like Bruno did. With their dreams in mind, they embarked on pursuing the unknown world like Columbus did. With their dreams in mind, they fought for the future of the nation like the Red Army soldiers did. Therefore, the spirit to pursue one's dreams is the impetus to success.)

2. An example of this is looking back in history to WWI. Sedition acts at this time allowed for the imprisonment of anyone who voiced an opinion against the president, or against the war. America recognized this shady time in its past, and instead of covering it up in a movement towards a more democratic nation, these acts were published in textbooks and taught to students. Americans saw the poor judgement of this situation and later with the war in Iraq, approached "patriotism" differently. With this present war, those adverse to the war are able to voice their opinions without fear of imprisonment or death. In seeing the undemocratic ways of an earlier era, America was able to recognize the bad and try to reform it. If the Sedition Acts had been forgotten then what is to say that they wouldn't come back? (from English essay #3)

Another note-worthy difference is found in the ways these sources are cited. Not a single direct citation has been found in the English essays. In contrast, Chinese writers frequently use direct citations, but without giving credit to the authors. I hold that the understandings about knowledge are different in the two cultures. Chinese people regard knowledge as commonly shared heritage, and hence the mission of teaching is to impart knowledge to students. Such teaching philosophy is best defined by Han Yu, a famous Chinese prose writer and philosopher, as *chuandao, shouye*, and *jiehuo* ("Teaching is to impart knowledge, teach skills, and respond to students' questions.") Students regard the classical books as Holy Bible. They memorize the facts, maxims, proverbs, and even sentences from books. They cite the examples without giving credit to the authors, for citing itself indicates paying respect to the authors, and knowledge is regarded as a common heritage. (Matalene, 1985; Scollon, 1997) However, the Chinese way of citation will appear to be ambiguous to English writers, and they will regard these citations as cliché which is detrimental to the creativity and originality of their writing. (Matalene, 1985) More importantly, they will regard such practice as plagiarism. The citation tradition in the west is a cultural practice based on individualism. They pay respect to other people by citing them and giving credit to them. (Ibid.) They are particularly careful in citing others and strictly control the proportion of the citations.

B. Presentation of Personal Voice

As is shown in Tab. 2, the use of first person singulars is more frequent among English writers. All the five writers in the present study use "I"; only three Chinese writers use "I", and two of them do not use "I" at all. A close look at the use of "I" shows that English writers use "I" to put forward their viewpoints and arguments; however Chinese writers use "I" mostly to make a modest suggestion. In example 3, the author says "I think I am lucky and blessed." This is not to put forward an argument, but a self expression of feelings. In example 4, the author says "Compared with the sages, I am nothing more than a drop in the ocean." Then he goes on to give his suggestion, which appears to be a modest and tentative one in his use of subjective mood "would like to". In example 5, the writer starts from an expression of opinions, but very quickly he/she turns to the use of first person plurals "we". In comparison, the "I" used by English writers denotes a strong sense of self expression and authentic voices, which can be shown by phrases "I agreed with..." (example 6) and "I believe that..." (example 7).

TABLE 2
THE USE OF FIRST PERSON PRONOUNS AS SUBJECTS OR OBJECTS

| | # of First Person Singulars | # of First Person Plurals |
|----------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Chinese essays | 12 | 13 |
| English essays | 36 | 5 |

3. 如此看来, 我觉得我是幸运的、幸福的。(from Chinese essay #2) (Translation: From this perspective, I think I am lucky and blessed.)

4. 与这些伟人相比, 我不过是沧海一粟。然而我愿意循着伟人的足迹, 去继承那份属于中华人的“意气”。(from Chinese essay #4) (Translation: Compared with the sages, I am nothing but a water drop in the ocean. However, I would like to follow the footsteps of the sages and inherit the spirit of the Chinese people.)

5. 我觉得, “意志和气概”固然是人人追求的品质, “志趣和性格”也是必不可少的东西, 但我们也不能落下“主观和偏激产生的情绪”。(from Chinese essay #5) (Translation: I think although 'dreams and spirit' are what everybody is seeking for, "temperament and personality" are indispensable as well. However, we cannot leave the impression of being "subjective and emotional".)

6. I agree with Ms. Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot in saying that some people "see old memories as a chance to reckon with the past and integrate past and present." (from English essay #4)

7. Interestingly enough, I fall in the middle of these statements. I believe that one should remember the past and learn from those events. However, I also believe that many bad memories harm the present and the future. The only way to continue, many times, is to forget and forgive. (from English essay #5)

The use of first person plurals shows an opposite tendency. Chinese writers use far more first person plurals, and all the five writers use it. Especially in the concluding paragraph, the first person plurals are frequently used to create a sense of closure, by including both the writer and the reader. The statements in example 8, 9, 10 all appear in the concluding paragraph. They are used in the inclusive sense to include both the writer and the reader. The assumption is that in the conclusion the plural from “we” is used to create a sense of harmony and closure, and an attempt to generalize the argument. However, English writers’ use of “we” is fewer. When it is used, it is not in conclusion paragraph (example 11, 12). In the conclusion, English writers tend to state the issue again without using “we” to include the reader. This reminds people that the essay demonstrates the writer’s own viewpoint. It is also an act of respect for the readers by not imposing the writer’s opinions on the reader.

8. 凡此种种，我们要坚决反对，打击，为构建社会主义和谐社会扫清道路。(from Chinese essay #1) (Translation: We should firmly oppose to and fight against cases like this so as to clear the road in constructing a harmonious socialist society.)

9. 在寻觅中，我们对“意气”的理解会越深刻越宽广，而我们得到的回报也一定丰厚无比。(from Chinese essay #2) (Translation: In the process of pursuit, we will have deeper and broader understandings about Yi Qi, and what we will get from this effort will surely be rewarding.)

10. 让我们以舍我其谁的意气为帆，以献身理想的意气为指引，以勇于探索、勇于挑战的意气为桨，驾起人生的巨轮，向着成功的彼岸远航！(from Chinese essay #3) (Translation: Let us have the spirit of “Who but myself can do it” to be our sail, the spirit of pursuing dreams to be our steering wheel, the spirit of consistently exploring and challenging to be our oar. Let us anchor the titanic ship of life, and sail to the shore of success.)

11. Without our past, our future would be a tortuous path leading to nowhere. In order to move up the ladder of success and achievement we must come to terms with our past and integrate it into our future. Even if in the past we made mistakes, this will only make wiser people out of us and guide us to where we are supposed to be. (from English essay #1)

12. Marshall knew that if the US did not help war torn Germany and, especially, Japan, we could eventually have a World War III on our hands. (from English essay #4)

The difference in the presentation of personal voice may stem from the underlying ideologies of the two cultures. The most important credo that underlies Chinese ideology is collective goals and the maintenance of harmony, which has been regarded as the ultimate goal of people’s communication and social interaction. (Cai, 1999; Liu, 2005) The ideological orientation can be traced back to the earliest rhetoric in China, as was stipulated in works by the prestigious philosophers Confucius, Mencius, and philosophical schools such as Taoism and Buddhism. Harmony and avoidance of conflicts with other people and nature have been cherished, respected, and practiced in ancient China for thousands of years. The collective sense prevalent in China has as its goal the harmony in the society and between people. This is manifest in example 8, when the writer concludes the essay with a calling for “constructing a harmonious socialist society”. Chinese culture does not encourage personal voice, and individualism is related to some negative connotations.

In contrast, English people have long valued and practiced individualism in both communication and writing, which could be found in Aristotle’s argument about rhetoric, stating that the purpose of rhetoric is to persuade the audience, and that there are three ways to approach it, i.e. ethos, pathos, and logos. (Jensen, 1987) English people have placed great value on originality and individuality. The individualism as is reflected in rhetoric is an emphasis on “authentic voice” and critical thinking. (Matalene, 1985; Jensen, 1987) The purpose of argumentative essay is to “State your case and prove it”. Writers are expected to contribute to the argument by putting forward some viewpoints of their own. The emphasis on originality and self expression can find trace in SAT writing section as well. The writing prompt of SAT writing section states that:

There is nothing wrong with “I”. You are asked to develop your point of view on the issue, not give a straight report of the facts. This is your opinion, so feel free to use “I”, and give examples that are meaningful to you, even ones from your personal life or experiences.... Remember: the essay is an opportunity for you to say what you think about an important issue that’s relevant to your life. So relax and be yourself, and you will do just fine. (Writing prompt, SAT)

C. Other Findings

It is also found that the organizational patterns of Chinese and English essays both display a clear-cut linear order. As pointed out by Kaplan, rhetoric “varies from culture to culture, and within the same culture it evolves from time to time” (Kaplan, 1966, p. 2). It should be noted that contemporary Chinese rhetoric has been greatly influenced by western rhetoric ever since the opening up of country. The influence is especially obvious in the scientific academic writing (Taylor and Chen, 1991), EAP writing, business letters, and news reports (Zhu, 1997 in Connor, 2002). They are exerting some influence on Chinese rhetoric. (Kirkpatrick, 1997) However, to what extent the new elements influence Chinese writers’ ideology and ways of thinking is still unknown. According to the study of Cai (1999), Chinese writers still think in the Chinese way when they compose English essays. That is to say, they are adopting the norm of English, mostly its organization, but their logic and ideology are still typical Chinese.

A conspicuous difference is also found in the style of writing. Chinese argumentative writing is richer in its use of language compared with English argumentative writing. Chinese writers use more parallel structures, analogies, and

four-word phrases. It creates a sense of richness and variety in language. English language is more plain and direct to the point.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS TO ESL/EFL WRITING INSTRUCTION

The present contrastive analysis of Chinese and English writing shows that there are fundamental differences in ideology and culture between Chinese and Anglo-Americans, which account for the rhetoric differences in their writing. It does not imply superiority of one upon the other. Every language and culture has its own tradition and roots, its own way of communication, negotiation, and mediation. It is unique and valuable. These differences need to be addressed in second language learning and teaching. The present study provides important implications for the learning and teaching of ESL/EFL writing.

For ESL practitioners in the U.S. or other English-speaking countries, instead of dismissing students' writing problems as misunderstanding, they need to take into account students' cultural backgrounds, which can be dramatically different from that in English. An explicit explanation of English rhetoric based on its ideology and logic, or a contrastive analysis of Chinese and English writing will be helpful for students to notice the differences.

For EFL practitioners in China, especially English teachers of Chinese background, it is desirable that they develop good knowledge about the cross-cultural differences in ideology, so that they are able to address these subtle differences in their instruction to help students understand and appreciate the English writing discourse, and gradually develop their own voice in English writing.

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE CHINESE ESSAY

谈意气

意气，是李白“仰天长啸出门去，我辈岂是蓬蒿人”的高歌；意气，是杜甫“致君尧舜上，当使民风淳”的肺腑之言；意气，是毛泽东“数风流人物，还看今朝”的壮怀……

人要有意气，有自己的意志和气概，要意气风发。人不能没有意气，就像傲视苍穹的红杉不能没有坚固的根基，芳香四溢的鲜花不能没有给予它自信的阳光。

人有意气，才能有豁达的胸襟。“惟江上之清风，与山间之明月，耳得之而为声，目遇之而成色”，苏子有意气，虽遭官场与文场一齐泼来的污水，但他仍意气风发，“侣鱼虾而友麋鹿”，心胸之豁达可见一斑。“安能摧眉折腰事权贵，使我不得开心颜”，遭人诽谤的李白，被玄宗赐金放还，虽有昭昭若明星之德，日月齐辉之才，终化为泡影，但他仍意气风发，“举杯邀明月，对影成三人”，酒入愁肠，三分酿成月亮，七分化为剑气，秀口一吐便是半个盛唐。若无意气，他怎会有如此豁达的胸襟？

人有意气，才能千古留名，流芳百世，才能在国家危难之时挺身而出。几百年的风风雨雨，早已涤荡了风波亭的点点残血；几百年的潮起潮落，早已淹没了零丁洋里的声声叹息；几百年的猎猎西风，早已拂走了牧羊的老者；几百年的漫漫黄沙，早已淹没了西域路上的声声驼铃……然而，岳武穆的满腔热血，文天祥的一颗丹心，苏武的一根竹杖，张骞的十几年牢狱之苦，早已映入史册，成为民族的精神瑰宝。若无意气，他们怎会有如此壮行？

人有意气，才能摧不垮，压不倒，追求不泯，意志不衰。还记得舞台上那尊慈祥博爱的千手观音吗？邰丽华，虽是聋哑人，但她有意气，手臂练得青肿了，脚底磨出血泡了，她始终坚持练习。最终，她用手指勾勒人性的美好，用舞姿诠释内心的感觉，感动中国，感动你我。若无意气，她怎会从不幸的底谷达到艺术的巅峰？

意气，是成就人生所必需的。然而，现实生活中缺乏意气之人委实不少。他们在温柔富贵乡中疲软筋骨麻木神经，在歌舞升平中平息了壮志，在灯红酒绿中丧失人性……凡此种种，我们要坚决反对，打击，为构建社会主义和谐社会扫清道路。

人，要有意气，要意气风发。

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE ENGLISH ESSAY

Memories act as both a help and a hinderance to the success of someone. Many people advise you to learn from the past and apply those memories so that you can effectively succeed by avoiding repeating your past mistakes. On the other hand, people who get too caught up with the past are unable to move on to the future.

Elie Wiesel's memoir *Night* perfectly exemplifies the double nature of memories. Wiesel, a Jewish man, suffered heavily throughout the Holocaust and *Night* is rife with horrific descriptions of his experience. These memories help to spread the view of what life was like. Through recounting these memories, Wiesel is able to educate world readers about the atrocities committed in hopes that the same blatant violations of human rights are never repeated again. Through reliving the Holocaust through his writing, Wiesel was inspired to become proactive in the battle for civil rights. Some would point to his peaceful actions and the sales of his book and label him a success.

Despite the importance of recounting such memories, Wiesel acknowledges the damage that memories can also cause. Following his liberation from the Auschwitz concentration camp, Wiesel was a bitter, jaded man. He could not even write *Night* until several years later. The end of the novel describes Wiesel's gradual but absolute loss of faith throughout the experience. His past experiences haunted him for several years, rendering him passive. It was not until he set aside his past that he could even focus on the future. Had he remained so consumed with the pain and damage caused in the past, he may never have achieved the success that he has attained.

Overall, Wiesel's experiences exemplify the importance of the past as a guide. Wiesel's past experiences helped to guide him in later life, but it was not until he pushed them aside that he could move on. To me this means that you should rely on your past without letting it control you. Allow your past to act as a guide, while making sure that you are also living in the present and looking to the future.

REFERENCES

- [1] Cai, G. (1999). Texts in contexts: understanding Chinese students' English compositions. In C.R. Cooper and L. Odell (eds.), *Evaluating Writing* (3rd ed., pp 29-297). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- [2] Connor, U. (1996). *Contrastive Rhetoric: Cross-cultural Aspects of Second-language Writing*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- [3] Connor, U. (2002). New directions in contrastive rhetoric. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36 (4): 493-510.
- [4] Jarratt, S. C., Loseh, E. & Puente, D. (2006). Transnational identifications: biliterate writers in a first-year humanities course. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 15, 24-48.
- [5] Jensen, Vernon, J. (1987). Teaching East Asian rhetoric. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 17 (2), 135-49.
- [6] Kaplan, R.B. (1966). Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education. *Language Learning* 16, 1-20.
- [7] Kaplan, R.B. (1972). *The Anatomy of Rhetoric: Prolegomena to a Functional Theory of Rhetoric*. Philadelphia: Center for Curriculum Development, 1972.
- [8] Kaplan, R.B. (1987). Cultural thought patterns revisited. In U. Connor and R. B. Kaplan (eds.), *Writing across Languages: Analysis of L2 Written Text* (pp. 9-22). Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
- [9] Kirkpatrick, A. (1997). Traditional Chinese text structures and their influence on the writing in Chinese and English of contemporary Mainland Chinese students. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 6 (3), 223-244.
- [10] Kirkpatrick, A. (2002). Chinese rhetoric through Chinese textbooks: uniquely Chinese? In X. Lu, W. Jia & D. R. Heisey (Eds.), *Chinese communication studies: contexts and comparisons* (pp. 245-260). Westport, CT: Ablex.
- [11] Lan Tian Zuo Wen Wang (Blue Sky Composition Website). <http://www.ltzww.com/zuowen/person/1-3000/2002/48621.htm>
- [12] Liu, L. (2005). Rhetorical education through writing instruction across cultures: a comparative analysis of select online instructional materials on argumentative writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 14, 1-18.
- [13] Liu, Y. (1996). A taxonomy of direct rhetorical patterns in Chinese. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.
- [14] Matalene, C. (1985). Contrastive Rhetoric: An American Writing Teacher in China. *College English*, 47 (8), 789-808.
- [15] Mohan, B.A. and W. A-Y Lo. (1985). Academic writing and Chinese students: transfer and developmental factors. *TESOL Quarterly*, 19 (3), 515-534.
- [16] SAT writing section overview. http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/prep_one/essay/pracStart.html
- [17] Shen, F. (1989). The classroom and the wider culture: identity as a key to learning English composition. *College Composition and Communication*, 40 (4), 459-466.
- [18] Slobin, D. I. (1996). From 'thought and language' to 'thinking for speaking'. In J. J. Gumperz & S. C. Levinson (Eds.), *Rethinking linguistic relativity* (pp. 177-202). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [19] Taylor, G. and Chen, T. (1991). Linguistic, cultural and subcultural issues in contrastive discourse analysis: Anglo-American and Chinese scientific texts. *Applied Linguistics*, 12 (3), 319-336.

Jie Zhang is currently a Ph.D. Candidate in Applied Linguistics at the Pennsylvania State University in the United States of America. She earned her M.A. in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics in Foreign Languages from Tsinghua University in China.

She was instructor of College English at University of Science and Technology Beijing between 2004 and 2006. She teaches ESL Academic Writing and Chinese at The Pennsylvania State University. Her research interests are ESL/EFL writing, Second Language Acquisition, Chinese as a Foreign Language, and Sociocultural theory.