The influence of culture and educational context on Chinese students' understandings of source use practices and plagiarism

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1. Introduction

Research on plagiarism and how to support students in their use of source material in their academic writing continues to expand and has covered a variety of topics and perspectives.

Most scholars now look beyond moral explanations as to why students engage in inappropriate textual borrowing (e.g., Howard, 1995; Pecorari, 2003; Pennycook, 1996), instead exploring complexities related to the second language (L2) writer’s identity (Abasi, Akbari, & Graves, 2006), attempts to join a discourse community (Flowerdew & Li, 2007), or educational or cultural background, knowledge, or attitudes (Hu & Lei, 2012; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2005). The concept has been reviewed from a critical perspective as well, calling attention to the role of power and privilege within plagiarism accusations (Lea & Street, 1998; Lyon, 2009).

This topic is particularly salient given that misunderstandings about plagiarism continue in spite of instruction (Flowerdew & Li, 2007; Wette, 2010) and suggestions for various educational strategies intended to eradicate it (Bikowski and Broeckelman, 2007; Dong, 1998). Students often express concerns over plagiarizing inadvertently and are unsure of Anglo-American academic expectations (Lea & Street, 1998). Many scholars recommend contextualizing plagiarism and its avoidance within the larger framework of effective writing, helping students understand cultural and social as well as technical aspects of source use (e.g., Bloch, 2008). As indicated by the growing number of students accused of plagiarism and calls for more practice-oriented research on how English L2 writers use source material (Wette, 2010), more understanding is needed on how students understand plagiarism and various ways that source material can be integrated into an author’s text (i.e., source use practices).

This study addresses this need and focuses on undergraduate Chinese students. It has been suggested that students from Asian countries often struggle to learn source use practices and avoid plagiarism when they pursue studies in North America (Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2005). China, specifically, has been identified as a culture in which many do not share the Anglo-American notion of plagiarism and idea ownership (Sutherland-Smith, 2005) and as a population that merits further...
research in this area given the large numbers of Chinese students on American campuses (Bloch, 2001). Hu and Lei (2012) point out the need to conduct more research on students’ knowledge and understanding regarding plagiarism outside of ESL contexts, such as in mainland China. This study therefore focuses on the Chinese student population, specifically on the role of culture and educational context, by examining how Chinese undergraduate students use Chinese terms to characterize source use practices. It seeks to situate conversations about this topic into broader discussions about cross-cultural education, using a more “nuanced approach” into the role of culture on textual borrowing and citation (Pecorari, 2008, p. 22) in order to be “mindful about cultural tendencies” (Connor, 2011, p. 35) in our teaching and to question the extent of the role of culture on L2 writers’ textual borrowing practices.

2. Literature review

2.1. Culture and educational context in textual borrowing attitudes and behaviors

Definitions and interpretations of culture have been heavily contested in academia in general as well as within linguistics (Atkinson, 2015). A number of scholars have expressed concern over the damage that postcolonial (e.g., Kubota, 1999) and individualist (e.g., Spack, 1997) interpretations of culture can have on individual writers and the choices they make. These concerns are addressed by other scholars who respect these concerns, yet view culture as a necessary topic of discussion and see it as dynamic set of choices and behaviors that individuals negotiate within a cultural landscape (e.g., Atkinson & Sohn, 2013). One lens through which to view culture comes from Connor (2011), who sees it as the active interplay between large groups of people (e.g., countries or regions), smaller groups (e.g., disciplines), and individual variations.

Many researchers have discussed ways in which culture may affect L2 writers’ citation practices, with the acknowledgment that its influence can be “hidden” (Gu & Brooks, 2008, p. 339). A key factor suggested has been differing values related to learning, for example the prioritization of synthesis and critical thinking in Western cultures vs. memorization of content in non-Western cultures (Chandrasegaran, 2000; Dryden, 1999). Similarly, weaving unattributed source words with personal voice as an “imitation” was seen as useful for learning in participants in China (Matalene, 1985, p. 803) but considered plagiarism in the West. Similar to values related to learning, other researchers look to differing concepts of ownership of ideas and common knowledge as they explore students’ textual borrowing practices (Flowerdew & Li, 2007; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2005). The practice of naming and thus highlighting the original writer can be considered less necessary, and thus perhaps less noticed, by students in Asian cultures (Shi, 2004). These values and concepts of ownership can affect students’ attitudes about texts (Currie, 1998); Pennycook (1996) suggested that a Cantonese university student’s attitude was “fundamentally different” from a cross-cultural perspective from the Western educational perspective (p. 227). An example of differing attitudes and their effect on source use practices comes from Rinnert and Kobayashi (2005). They found that Japanese university students may view unattributed copying as “not entirely negative” (p. 39) when the writer fully understands or agrees with the text or is using well-known source material.

Researchers have also advocated looking beyond cultural explanations for plagiarism, finding the concept of culture in general to be overly simplistic, deterministic, and leading to stereotyping. As a general principle, Kubota (1999) warns against using culture to stereotype L2 writers. Bloch (2008) strongly refutes the argument that plagiarism is hardwired into our culture (p. 263), points out socioeconomic and historic influences on the concept of intellectual property ownership, and argues that social factors must be considered in order to understand how various groups conceptualize plagiarism. Le Ha (2006) argues that culture is just one of many possible influences on students’ source use and potential plagiarism, noting the importance of other factors such as stereotypes against students from Asian countries, different understandings of common knowledge, and insufficient training regarding academic writing. She calls for educators to learn about their students’ writing experiences and background knowledge in order to “better assist international students in their writing without silencing their own voices and discouraging their creativity” (p. 78).

Other researchers also emphasize the role of academic development and enculturation into their academic community as influencing students’ source use behaviors (Abasi et al., 2006; Angell-Carter, 2000; Gu & Brooks, 2008). Song-Turner (2008) notes that students’ views change over time—as students study longer in a Western educational institution, their definition of plagiarism moves closer to that of the Western view. The role of educational context (i.e., where the student is studying and the norms therefore placed on the student) is an important consideration that is closely linked to cultural expectations.

Hayes and Introna (2008) call for a “progressive and formative approach” toward helping students learn about academic source use expectations in avoiding plagiarism (p. 108). Similarly, Gu and Brooks (2008) call for “a holistic and developmental perspective” to “understand changes in students’ perception of plagiarism as part of their wider adaptation to the academic conventions of their host countries” (p. 337). Second language writing development thus entails developing literacy skills considered appropriate and effective in a specific cultural and educational context, with literacy seen as a social practice, not only as a technical skill (Connor, 2011). A component of developing these academic writing skills is learning to use L2 words in ways that conform with discourse common community norms, and words from the writer’s first language (L1) can reveal cultural understandings that may impact the development of literacy in the L2.
2.2. Chinese and English source use terms

Understanding how L2 writers comprehend source use terms in English begins with understanding what they notice and how they describe source use practices in their first language. Terms related to source use can have subtle differences in meanings in different languages. In Mandarin Chinese, plagiarism can be translated in different ways. For example, 抄 (chāo) can mean both to copy word by word or to plagiarize. 抄袭 (chāoxí) and 剽窃 (piáojié) are very close to plagiarism, with 抄袭 (chāoxí) often meaning textual copying while 剽窃 (piáojié) can be seen as broader, referring to the copying or non-referenced use of ideas. Both 抄袭 (chāoxí) and 剽窃 (piáojié) include intentional cheating in their meaning, while plagiarism can indicate intentional or unintentional academic dishonesty (Hu & Lei, 2012).

While some literature exists on the meanings of various words to express the English term plagiarism (e.g., Hu & Lei, 2012; Jing, 2007), considerably less has been published on other words related to source use. In Chinese, 引用 (yǐnyòng) is a key word regarding source use that merits further investigation. Chinese uses this one term to express several ideas that require distinct terms in English. The meanings of yǐnyòng include at least the following five Definitions: 1.) to cite, 2.) to quote, 3.) to extract, 4.) to refer to something, or 5.) to take someone’s deeds or written or spoken words as example or proof (The Contemporary Chinese Dictionary Chinese-English Edition; The Comprehensive English Chinese-English Dictionary http://www.nciku.com). If a quotation is used, the act is 直接引用 (zhíjié yǐnyòng), while 间接引用 (jiàojié yǐnyòng) is more similar to reported speech. Yǐnyòng has two characters yǐn (引) and yòng (用). Yǐn means to draw or pull, and yòng means use. According to this definition, when a writer uses a source either by copying and pasting or by paraphrasing, the act is labeled yǐnyòng.

2.3. Need for research and present study

Given that the influence of culture and educational context on students’ understanding of source use can be hidden (Gu & Brooks, 2008), more understanding is needed into how educators can assist students by helping raise their cultural and textual awareness within academic writing (Johns, 1995) as it is encoded in their first language. This study fills this need by examining Chinese students’ use of Chinese terms to characterize source use practices. Since studies have found that exposure to higher education affects perceptions of plagiarism (Chandrasegaran, 2000) and that students’ opinions vary on why plagiarism might be wrong (Deckert, 1993), we are hypothesizing that the Chinese participants studying in China with minimal exposure to an Anglo-American education and those studying in the US will differ in their use of their L1 as they explain various source use practices. We explore whether the students will use value-laden negative terms such as 抄袭 (chāoxí, plagiarism) or 抄 (chāo, copy or plagiarize); value-free terms such as 复制粘贴 (fùzhì zhāntiē, copy paste), 用 (yòng, use), or 引用 (yǐnyòng); or value-laden positive terms such as 仿写 (fǎxiǎng, imitation) as a marker of respect and means of learning, as discussed by Matalene (1985). We also explore the use of the polysemous term 引用 (yǐnyòng) and hypothesize that it will be used differently across groups and source use practices, given its multiple meanings. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do two groups of L1 Chinese students studying English (studying in China vs. in the US) describe, in their L1, five distinct source use practices? In what ways are their descriptions similar or different?
2. How might their descriptions demonstrate differences in cultural understandings of source use?
3. How do the two groups of students use and understand Chinese term(s) that have many meanings in English? Does frequency of usage differ?

3. Method

The topic of plagiarism and source use has been explored with a variety of perspectives, ranging from interviews and textual data (Flowerdew & Li, 2007; Pecorari, 2003), to theoretical pieces (Howard, 1993; Pennycook, 1996), questionnaires (Chandrasegaran, 2000; Deckert, 1993; Hu & Lei, 2012), qualitative case studies (Gu & Brooks, 2008; Valentine, 2006), or a mixture of the above (Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2005). The current mixed methods study builds on the work of previous research, such as by Hu and Lei (2012) asking Chinese students to rate source use practices, and Chandrasegaran (2000) seeking to understand Singaporean students’ mental representations of plagiarism. This study analyzes the L1 words students use to describe source use practices, both stigmatized and acceptable in the Anglo-American context.

3.1. Participants

A total of 172 Chinese L1 undergraduate students born in China participated in this study. Participants included two groups: 100 Chinese university students studying in China, and 72 Chinese international university students studying in the US (ranging from one month to one year in a US university). For both groups, participants were recruited from large public university English classes; all of the US-based participants and 40% of the China-based participants had taken an English writing class. See Table 1 for details on the participants. This data was collected based on findings of previous research on the
potential roles of these variables (e.g., Hu & Lei, 2012; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2005). Proficiency estimates for English were obtained by asking participants to self-report their proficiency in English writing on a scale of 0 (not at all) to 7 (native-like). This self-assessment was used similar to other studies (Kroll, Michael, Tokowicz, & Dufour, 2002).

As shown in Table 1, the two groups of participants were fairly similar in their years studying English and other languages spoken. They differed in their self-assessment of their English writing (with the participants studying in the US rating themselves higher) and in disciplinary background (with the participants studying in the US majoring more in the humanities and social sciences), and the male-female ratio was slightly different between the groups.

3.2. Materials and procedure

The following procedure allowed for the elicitation of text in the participants’ first language (Chinese) and consequent analysis of the language and features they chose to include in their text. Visible examples of features that can indicate the presence or absence of plagiarism include quotation marks, block quote formatting, or in-text citations. Plagiarism can involve often invisible features as well, such as the writer’s intentionality.

Materials included five screen capture videos created for the study, featuring five different source use practices (see Table 2). The 1-min, silent videos showed a fictional student’s computer screen as he/she was writing a paper. The video format allowed participants to easily see and understand the source use behavior being portrayed and also minimized the potential for participants to simply copy wording from a written description. The fictional student in the videos wrote the text in English and used an online English news source; no indication of the student writer’s intentionality of copying and pasting without attribution was given. English was chosen because the nature of this study was to explore how source use practices are viewed by Chinese students within an Anglo-American understanding of source use and ownership and due to the nature of the class being English courses. The topic of the fictional paper and online source was China sending aid to countries in Africa. The only variation between all the videos was how the copied material was treated regarding the presence or absence of an in-text citation, quotation marks, and paraphrasing (see Fig. A1 for more detail).

The first video demonstrated one of the most clear-cut forms of plagiarism: unacknowledged verbatim reproduction. The video proceeded with the student writer a.) creating a header, title, and two sentences in their own words, b.) going to the online site and copying a paragraph, c.) pasting the paragraph into their paper, and d.) writing another sentence in their own words. The second video followed the same pattern but the student writer included a parenthetical APA-formatted citation. In the third video the student put the copied text in quotation marks but did not include a citation; while some would consider this plagiarism, others might call it a formatting error or oversight due to the obvious lack of intentional cheating that the quotation marks convey. The final two videos demonstrated accurate quoting of material (including quotation marks and an in-text citation) and paraphrasing (the student writer cited and re-wrote the online text). QuickTime screen recording was used to make the videos. Care was taken to ensure that participants could clearly see the text and student behaviors.

Table 1
Description of participants: L1 Chinese students in China and the United States.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Chinese university students in China (N = 100)</th>
<th>Chinese university students in the US (N = 72)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>F: 60%, M: 40%</td>
<td>F: 44%, M: 56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>M/S: 68%, SS: 28%, H: 4%</td>
<td>M/S: 54%, SS: 39%, H: 3%, U: 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years studied English</td>
<td>8.7 (average; SD 1.68)</td>
<td>8.4 (average; SD 3.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak language in addition to Chinese and English</td>
<td>Most do not* (74%)</td>
<td>Most do not* (78%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel to Western country</td>
<td>No (100%)</td>
<td>All have traveled to US*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-assessment of English writing</td>
<td>3.25 out of 7 (average; SD 1.09)</td>
<td>4.4 out of 7 (average; SD 0.85)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F=Female, M=Male, M/S=Math/Science, SS=Social Sciences, H=Humanities, U=Undecided.

* 15% of the participants studying in China speak Korean or Japanese, 8% German or French, 3% 2 extra languages.

* 21% of the participants studying in the US speak Japanese, 1% speak German.

* 26% of the participants studying in the US have traveled to at least 1 other Western country.

Table 2
Source use practices demonstrated in the five data collection videos.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Video</th>
<th>Text copied</th>
<th>Quotation marks used</th>
<th>In-text citation included</th>
<th>Text paraphrased</th>
<th>Plagiarized in Anglo-American context?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Gray area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants watched the videos together on a large screen in the front of the room as a class, based on the procedure followed by Hu and Lei (2012). Students were invited to participate in a study on writing and only responses from students who chose to participate were included in the research project. One of the researchers collected the data and provided identical directions to all participants. Similar to Wheeler (2009) and Hu and Lei (2012), the researcher did not mention plagiarism or any similar terms (in English or Chinese). After each video was played three times, participants were asked to describe, in written Chinese, the process of the student writing the paper. Asking students to describe what they see in their own L1 allows for an understanding of both the overall cultural landscape as well as individualist identity, a mindset advocated by Atkinson and Sohn (2013). An open-ended response was chosen so that participants could freely choose the words they would use to describe the source use practices and so that the researchers could gain insights on what features the participants did or did not notice with the different source use practices. This data elicitation method allowed students to use their native language and revealed which features they noticed in the scenarios. Participants were directed to not describe the content of the paper, but to describe the process only. This procedure was repeated for each video. This method was developed in order to capture participants’ noticing of the features of the source use practices they observed. Participants completed the questionnaire as illustrated in Table 1 above. The total time for participants to watch and describe each of the five videos was approximately 20 min.

All US-based participants were invited to participate in a 1-h focus group meant to explore their understandings of the meaning of the word ǐnyòng, with 13 choosing to participate (it was not possible to conduct a focus group with participants studying in China). Participants were asked if nine scenarios were or were not ǐnyòng. Features of these nine scenarios were identified in the literature and in the participants’ written descriptions and included the use of memorized vs. non-memorized material, agreement with a source, the presence or absence of quotation marks/paraphrase/citations, and hard-working vs. intentionally cheating students. A sample scenario they discussed is: “A student is writing a paper for class. She is working very hard on the paper and trying her best. She finds information in an article. She reads it carefully and the information is exactly what she thinks. She copies and pastes it into her paper without quotation marks or citing a source. Is this ǐnyòng or not ǐnyòng? Why?” Results from the focus group were compiled and used to inform analysis of how ǐnyòng is used by Chinese speakers as they describe the source use practices.

3.3. Data analysis

The first research question asked how L1 Chinese undergraduate students studying English in China and Chinese undergraduate students studying English in the US described five source use practices, and how their descriptions were similar or different. Initial analysis involved coding the participants’ descriptions of the five source use practices. Following a two-cycle coding system (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) allowed for provisional coding, which identified preliminary codes based on a review of the literature, on the research context, and on the research questions. The second coding cycle included pattern coding, meaning the descriptions were grouped into final themes and color coded. The 15 codes that emerged (see Table 3, which illustrates participants’ own words and responses as main codes) fell into combinations of the following features and descriptions: 复制粘贴 (copy paste), 注明来源/作者 (indicate the source/author), 加引号 (use quotation marks), 引用 (ǐnyòng), 用自己的语言表达 (express in own words or language), 用 (use), 求助 (seek help), and 抄袭/抄 (plagiarize). The frequencies and percentages for combinations of uses of these codes for each source use type (videos 1-5) were put into a table for comparison and analysis and to guide investigation into the second research question, which examined how their descriptions might demonstrate differences in cultural understandings of source use.

The third research question asked how the two groups of students used and understood Chinese term(s) that have many meanings in English, and if frequency of usage differed. First, the number of participants who used 引用 (ǐnyòng) in their descriptions of each source use practice were calculated (50 participants studying in China; 45 participants studying in the US). Then, a Chi-square test was run to examine whether the use of ǐnyòng is associated with the group and source use practices. The focus group was recorded and transcribed and participants’ discussions were coded. The two-cycle system was used as outlined above with provisional and pattern coding (Miles et al., 2014) and using Definitions and descriptions participants provided. This focus group data was intended as an entry point for further exploration into the meaning(s) and use(s) of this term.

4. Results

4.1. Chinese students’ descriptions of five types of source use practices

To identify the most common Chinese words that the participants used in their descriptions of the five source use practices, the participants’ descriptions of each source use type were coded and frequencies of the key words that emerged were tallied. Table 3 shows the completed coding scheme of terms and phrases participants studying in China and the US used to describe the five source use practices, in percentages. The first two videos demonstrated practices considered to be
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code No.</th>
<th>Chinese characters participants used</th>
<th>English dictionary definition</th>
<th>Video 1</th>
<th>Video 2</th>
<th>Video 3</th>
<th>Video 4</th>
<th>Video 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>抄襲/抄;偷懒/不负责任;复制/当做自己的想法</td>
<td>Plagiarize; being lazy/responsible; copy</td>
<td>27% 55% 4% 46% 30% 60% 3% 8% 2% 4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>复制粘贴</td>
<td>Copy, paste</td>
<td>58% 31% 13% 3% 14% 5% 5% 2% 4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>复制粘贴 + 注明来源/作者/时间</td>
<td>Copy paste + indicate source/author/time</td>
<td>– – 37% 42% – – 13% 8% – –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>(复制粘贴) + 加引号/用引号</td>
<td>(Copy paste) + add/use quotation marks</td>
<td>– – – – 19% 27% – – – –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>引用</td>
<td>Yìyòng [roughly translated cite/quote/use for support]</td>
<td>4% 4% 15% – 18% – 17% 1% 3% 6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>引用 + 注明来源;复制标签引用</td>
<td>Yìyòng + indicate source; copy labeled/market Yìyòng</td>
<td>– – 20% 8% – – 22% 5% 2% 1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>引用 + 引号</td>
<td>Yìyòng + quotation marks</td>
<td>– – – – 15% 7% – 1% – –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>引用 + 引号 + 注明作者</td>
<td>Yìyòng + quotation marks + indicate author</td>
<td>– – – – – – 14% 7% – –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>引用 + 用自己的语言表达</td>
<td>Yìyòng + express in own words</td>
<td>– – – – – – – – 6% –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>写;用;查找;求助;来自于网络;收集资料</td>
<td>Write; use; search; seek help; come from the internet; collect writing materials</td>
<td>9% 3% – – 4% – 2% – 2% –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>引号 + 注明来源/作者/时间</td>
<td>Quotation marks + indicate source/author/time</td>
<td>– – – – – – 24% 70% – –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>用自己的语言表达;总结/概括;重新加工;修改;改变时态</td>
<td>Express in own words; summarize; reprocess; revise; change tense</td>
<td>– – – – – – 28% 26%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>用自己的语言表达/复述 + 注明来源</td>
<td>Express in own words/retell + indicate source</td>
<td>– – – – – – – – 53% 57%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>自己思考;不作弊</td>
<td>Think by oneself; not cheating</td>
<td>– – 7% – – – – 2% 6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>丢脸;对中国学生写作的一般评价,如忽视引用规范</td>
<td>Comments about Chinese students' different writing habits or losing face</td>
<td>2% 7% 4% 1% – 1% – – – –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
plagiarism in the Anglo-American tradition, the third video represented a gray area of quoted text with no citation, and the final two videos demonstrated acceptable source use practices.

As can be seen in Table 3, several different words/phrases were used to describe the source use practices. Many differences between groups can be seen. In the videos representing the most stigmatized source use practices (unacknowledged copied text and copied text that lacked quotation marks), participants studying in the US used words or phrases that either translate to plagiarism in English or reflect potentially unethical behavior more frequently than they used other words/phrases (code 1 in Table 3: 55% for video 1, 46% for video 2). Examples include plagiarizing (抄袭/抄), being lazy or irresponsible (偷懒/不负责), or the writer copying and treating the original as their own idea (复制/当作自己的想法). Participants studying in China, however, were less evaluative when they described these same source use practices. For copied text that lacked both quotation marks and a citation (video 1), the most common words were copying and pasting (复制粘贴) at 58% (code 2 in Table 3), and for copied text that lacked quotation marks (video 2), the most common words/phrases were copying and pasting while indicating a source/author/time (复制粘贴 + 注明来源/作者/时间) at 37% (code 3 in Table 3). These differences in descriptions address the second research question regarding how their descriptions might demonstrate differences in cultural understandings of source use. Participants studying in the US were more likely to describe, in Chinese, stigmatized behaviors as either plagiarized or inappropriate than were the participants studying in China.

For the less-clear-cut practice of copying text with quotation marks but no citation (video 3), while both groups of participants used the same words/phrases the most frequently, they did so at very different rates. A greater percentage of participants in the US (60%) than in China (30%) used plagiarizing (抄袭/抄), being lazy or irresponsible (偷懒/不负责), or copying or treating the original as one’s own idea (复制 + 当作自己的想法) (code 1 in Table 3). For an accurate quotation with citation (video 4), a clear majority of participants in the US (70%) referred to the quotation marks and indicating the source/author/time (引号 + 注明来源/作者/时间) (code 11 in Table 3). The participants in China also used these terms (24%), but a majority of these participants used the term 用 in some way (53%, codes 5, 6, and 8 in Table 3). This video elicited comments regarding the presence of both the features of quotation marks and an in-text citation from only 38% of the participants studying in China, while 77% of those studying in the US noted these features (codes 8 and 11 in Table 3). For paraphrasing (video 5), participants in the US (57%) and China (53%) both most frequently indicated the student writer expressed the idea in their own words and indicated the source (用自己的语言表达/复述 + 注明来源) (code 13 in Table 3).

A comparison of to what degree the two groups of participants noticed features related to source use formatting was also conducted. For the videos representing unacceptable or less-acceptable source use practices, participants were coded as noticing features if they used words indicating plagiarism or words indicating the presence or absence of a citation or quotation marks. For the cited copied text without quotation marks (video 2), 61% of the China-based participants noticed features/plagiarism vs. 96% in the US-based group (codes 1, 3, 4, 6 in Table 3); for the copied text with quotation marks (video 3), it was 64% vs. 94% (codes 1, 4, 6, 7, 11 in Table 3). For the videos representing acceptable source use practices, participants were coded as noticing features if they used words indicating the presence of a citation or quotation marks or wording indicating paraphrasing. For the correct quotation (video 4) it was 73% vs. 91% (codes 3, 4, 6–8, 11 in Table 3); for the correct paraphrase (video 5), participants were roughly equal in noticing the citation: 55% vs. 58% (codes 6, 13 in Table 3). Overall, the US-based participants noticed these features more often than did the China-based participants, which also addresses the second research question of how their descriptions might demonstrate differences in understandings of source use.

The third research question asked how the two groups used and understood Chinese term(s) that have many meanings in English; the most commonly used polysemous term was studied, which was 引用 (yùyòng).

### 4.2. Use of term 引用 (yùyòng) for participants in China and the US

In order to better understand how the term is used within source use contexts, frequencies were counted for the overall number of participants who used the term yùyòng in each of their descriptions of the five source use situations. As Table 4 indicates, the participants’ use of yùyòng by source use practice reveals differences in usage between the group studying in China and the one in the US.
The greatest difference between groups was that thirty-five of the 50 participants in China (70%) used yīnyòng to describe a correct quotation (video 4), while 19 out of 45 participants in the US (42%) used the term for that practice ($\chi^2 = 7.45, df = 1, p = 0.006)$. Copying with citation (video 2) and copying with quotation marks (video 3) were also significantly different, but at the 0.05 level. Unattributed copying (video 1) and paraphrasing (video 5), the two groups did not differ statistically in the use of yīnyòng ($p > 0.05$). For videos 2, 3, and 4, the percentage of participants in China using yīnyòng was higher than that of the participants in the US. Across both groups, yīnyòng was used most frequently with the two conditions of exact wording from the original and some form of marking (quotation marks, or a citation, or both). Table 3 demonstrates that the China-based participants who used yīnyòng used it by itself more frequently than did the US-based participants.

Focus group interview data with participants studying in the US was used to interpret the findings outlined above. Participants discussed nine scenarios involving potential meanings of yīnyòng. Analysis revealed that participants differed in their Definitions of yīnyòng and under what conditions the term could be used. Comments from focus group participants regarding varying source use practices revealed that yīnyòng may essentially mean “effective and appropriate source use” or “not plagiarism” in addition to meaning the variety of definitions given for the term (i.e., to cite; to quote; to extract; to refer to; to use as support or proof).

The meaning of effective source use varied according to participants, however. All participants noted certain conditions that must be met, but these conditions varied. These conditions included that source use could be considered yīnyòng: a) if an in-text citation or quotation marks were used; b) only if both an in-text citation and quotation marks were used; c) if the student copied with no citation or quotation marks, but the student was a hard worker and chose the copied material carefully; d) if the student copied with no citation or quotation marks, but the copied material is famous and well-known to readers; or e) if the copied material was memorized and chosen carefully by the student even if no in-text citation or quotation marks were used.

Adding complexity to the meaning of this term is that some focus group participants’ understanding of yīnyòng was that it cannot be used for memorized material (“This is not yīnyòng because the material that he used is from his memory, and in China, teachers always tell students if you can memorize the material, it is yours.”), in contradiction to the participants who said it could be (“Yes, it is yīnyòng because it is memorized”). They felt that if a writer carefully chooses and writes down memorized material, then those words have become the student writer’s own words and therefore by definition can no longer be yīnyòng (“It is not yīnyòng since it is your stuff as you already remember it”). The other factor that some participants noted could exclude an example from being yīnyòng was if a student copied material but did so with the intention to cheat (“Not yīnyòng because the student is not hard worker and is trying to cheat”). Other participants felt that intentionality did not affect if a source use practice was deemed yīnyòng because “the readers can’t tell the difference.” Similarly, work ethic did not always affect the definition, as one participant noted “Even if you didn’t do research hard, the form is what readers will see.”

These meanings are in line with the findings reported earlier in this study that yīnyòng is used most frequently with the two conditions of exact wording from the original and some form of marking (quotation marks, or a citation, or both). They also express the range of meanings Chinese speakers put on the term. Further research can elucidate the subtle meaning(s) of the term as well as factors that predict different uses, such as education level or amount of experience with academic writing or intentionality regarding academic honesty.

5. Discussion

This exploratory study responds to calls for a more “nuanced approach” into how culture, context, and plagiarism may be related (Pecorari, 2008, p. 22); understanding how students describe various source use practices in their L1 is useful in building this understanding, as it indicates what students are noticing and how they view the practices. Our hypothesis that Chinese students studying in China with minimal exposure to the Anglo-American context and those studying in the US would differ in their use of their L1 as they explain various source use situations was largely upheld.

Participants studying in the US were more likely to refer to the three source use practices of unattributed copying, copying with a citation, and copying with quotation marks with a value-laden negative term such as plagiarism (抄袭) and more frequently specified citation errors than did the participants studying in China, based on frequencies in the data. Participants studying in China were more likely to refer to those same three source use practices with a value-free term such as copy paste (复制粘贴). It is interesting to note that participants did not use the value-laden positive word imitation (仿写, 模仿), which was proposed by Matalene (1985) as being possible with novice writers. This could have been due to the data elicitation method, given that the situation in the video did not include a clear context that would suggest memo-

ization and imitation. Imitation of models may also be a strategy more suited for beginning writers, which was not the case in these scenarios.

These findings are similar to those of Song-Turner (2008) that students’ Definitions of plagiarism moved closer to that of the Western view with increased exposure, while in this case it is the students’ usage of L1 terms that varied with exposure to a different culture and educational context. Since the videos failed to indicate or not indicate intention to cheat by the student writer, participants had to decide whether to impose that intentionality on that writer, revise the parameters of the
meaning of words representing plagiarism and intentional cheating (e.g., 抄袭 chaoxi and 剽窃 piaoqie), or use value-free terms or phrases in their descriptions. US-based participants were more likely to either impose intentionality on the writer or revise the meaning of the word to remove the intentionality requirement than were their China-based counterparts. That the participants in the US were more aware of intentionality in plagiarism is not surprising, given the emphasis placed on critical thinking in academic writing in Anglo-American higher education. Intentionality of deception may then change based on new educational experiences or contexts (i.e., study in the US). Even within specific Chinese words (e.g., 引用), the role of intentionality was not clear, as to some participants in the US it played a role in defining the term and to others it did not.

引用 (引用) was used across all source use situations, but within participants who used the term, it was used more often by participants studying in China than those in the US under the following circumstances: a.) direct copying of the source words, and b.) marking of the source words (either through quotation marks, in-text citation, or both). These findings reflect the complex role of culture, with differences between the US- and China-based participants at some levels (large culture), but also many variations across individuals (small culture), as discussed by Connor (2011). Culture and educational context do therefore appear to play a role in students’ understandings of source use practices, but also key to their understanding are individual experiences and their own development as academic writers.

The US-based participants commented on features related to source use more frequently in their descriptions than did the participants in China. These findings suggest that learners in the US are developing an understanding of academic writing expectations in Anglo-American higher education through engagement in these practices, even though instruction was carried out in English in both contexts. They also suggest that some students may not be sensitive to noticing certain features related to source use, such as the use of quotation marks or the existence of author name and year, though these are essential elements of citation or quotation. Increased exposure to expectations in the Anglo-American context can lead to differences in features that are noticed as well as to L1 explanations of various practices; whereas the Chinese educational context may prioritize memorization or imitation as a positive trait and less a potential indicator of plagiarism (Hu & Lei, 2012), within Anglo-American expectations, these behaviors are not viewed as positively. Participants seem to have been aware of this difference and shifted their use of their L1 terms accordingly in their descriptions of appropriate and stigmatized source use practices. The making of meaning does indeed seem to have been affected by the literacy practices of each context and culture (Lillis & Scott, 2008). More work is needed in helping all students notice the range of features marking Anglo-American source use and the guidelines for their implementation.

The most salient finding regarding the differences and similarities in usage for one single term arise in the use of 引用. Even though 引用 can refer to when a writer uses a source either by copying and pasting or by paraphrasing, few participants referred to paraphrasing as 引用. While there is no English word for 直接引用 (zhijie yihyou) or 阮接引用 (jianjie yihyou), there is also no Chinese equivalent for citation or paraphrase. When there is no specific word for the counterparts, more words have to be used for explanation, as was seen with the various Chinese wordings participants used to convey citation.

That the focus group participants exhibited such variation in their understandings of 引用 indicates the complexity of the term and the variety of use among Chinese university students. It is unclear if 引用 and plagiarism represent opposite ends of a spectrum, with 引用 being a positive connotation word representing effective source use, or if they overlap in some instances (e.g., with unattributed copying that is carefully selected and with no intention for cheating). How students’ understanding or use of 引用 after studying English as an L2 in the Anglo-American context may change is another area not yet understood. Differences in usage of the term between the two groups could be due to changes in their understanding of the term, or to new uses of the term due to the influence of the educational context or culture.

The findings of this study build on those of Rinnert and Kobayashi (2005), in which the Japanese university students they surveyed felt that unattributed copying is acceptable in certain conditions, such as when the writer fully understands or agrees with the source text. It is possible that the conditions of the writer’s intentions or working toward using sources for effective writing, for example, are part of the understanding of 引用 by some Chinese speakers but not included in the meanings of the source terms used in English. As Roy (1999) notes, a basic difference between any group of people can be if they see the “blurring of author-text-reader boundaries” as liberating, or as unethical deceit (p. 61). 引用 perhaps illustrates a use of this blurring as liberating and supporting effective writing. Since the learning of terms involves identifying the features involved and since many L1 terms do not map directly to their supposed L2 counterparts, speakers must acquire the new norms and naming patterns as part of their literacy development.

Whether a source is used effectively and appropriately may more readily be context-specific within Chinese educational systems. Perhaps Chinese educational norms more readily lend themselves to acceptance of varying source use practices (as exemplified in the term 引用) depending on the writing situation, compared to institutions in the US. Further research into
the meaning(s) of 引用 and other Chinese words to describe source use practices can provide guidance to educators as they
help Chinese students prepare to study in Anglo-American institutions. These findings illustrate the interplay between an L2
writer’s culture and educational context, along with their individuality, in their perceptions of source use practices and
potential plagiarism.

5.1. Limitations and future research

The purpose of this study was to explore the potential role of culture and educational context on students’ understanding
of source use practices, including plagiarism. Given that the influence of culture and educational context on students’ un-
derstanding of source use can be hidden (Gu & Brooks, 2008), a research design that allowed participants to describe the
source use practices in their own first language words was chosen. While offering the benefit of not pre-selecting words,
meanings, or descriptions for the participants, this design dictated that analysis based on frequencies as opposed to scalar
data and inferential statistics be used. The research design could also have increased participants’ noticing of certain features
(e.g., quotation marks) over time as they watched each successive video; for this reason, future research could randomize this
aspect. Assessing the English proficiency of the participants using the same standardized test would have added clarity to the
level of the students in both contexts, yet administering the same test to both populations was not feasible for this study. The
findings of this study provide a solid basis for future research, however, with the identification of Chinese words (e.g., 引用)
that play a role in Chinese students’ understanding of source use practices and potential plagiarism. This study also identifies
areas for further research into how Chinese students understand and describe practices that have no direct translation or have
differing meanings/connotations (e.g., plagiarism, paraphrase, cite). Findings should be interpreted while keeping in mind
that students’ amount of experience with English writing courses differed between the US- and China-based participants.

The focus group data provided preliminary insights into how Chinese students understand the term 引用 and provides
a basis for future study, though it was not possible to conduct focus groups with participants studying in China. Discussion
with participants studying in both educational contexts is warranted. Additionally, more analysis is needed into how and if
students’ understanding and usage of the term 引用 may change after studying in different contexts and for longer periods
of time. Given that the scope of this research did not include investigating native English speakers’ descriptions of source use
practices, future research could investigate this population.

6. Conclusion and pedagogical implications

This research contributes to a greater understanding of plagiarism by exploring the role of culture and educational context
in students’ understanding of source use practices. We found differences in the ways in which many second language learners
describe source use practices in their first language depending on their educational context and exposure to Anglo-American
academic expectations and writing. Exposure to and engagement in new practices may thus alter second language writers’
conceptualization of the practice itself, more so than the cultural background of the writer. These findings illustrate the
development of students’ awareness of academic expectations in the Anglo-American context. An analysis of the source use
concept 引用 reveals that more research is needed into how the lexical meaning of this word, among others, may affect
Chinese students’ understanding of Anglo-American source use expectations. Similarly, their understandings of source use
expectations may also affect their use of Chinese terms to characterize them.

Educators are encouraged to approach the topic of plagiarism from an open-minded perspective regarding the degree to
which cultural and educational context may affect students’ understanding of various source use practices; these factors may
affect some students more than others. With that in mind, educators can lead discussions about the role of culture and
educational context on understanding Anglo-American citation expectations and how these roles may be revealed through L1
terms. These discussions can stem from a focus on developing literacy within specific contexts, thereby reducing potential
student feelings of stereotyping or cultural finger-pointing and encouraging honest conversations and questions without a
heavy moralistic tone. Educators can themselves create videos of various source use practices that can be used to lead dis-
cussions in their own classrooms. As educators become more fully aware of the understandings that students are bringing
with them based on their backgrounds, policies related to plagiarism can be reviewed and potentially revised to more fully
embrace a commitment to education and the social and cultural components of literacy development.

Students can also be led to identify and notice features that mark source use and that are required in Anglo-American
contexts (e.g., quotation marks, in-text citations) compared to the role of those or other features in the home culture
educational system. Instruction can be targeted at identifying and exploring polysemous source use terms, thus scaffolding
and building on students’ existing knowledge. Researchers and educators can thus help students understand the subtleties of
source use practices across various educational contexts, and how their own culture and context may influence under-
standing and writing behavior in a new environment.

Appendix A
Fig. A1. Videos used for data collection. All five videos of source use practices began with the same sequences as shown in the A (student writing introductory sentences in a paper) and B (student copying text from an online source) screen shots above. Video C-1 shows the student pasting the copied text with no citation or quotation marks and then typing the next point. Video C-2 shows the student pasting the copied text with an in-text citation and then typing the next point. Video C-3 shows the student pasting the copied text with quotation marks and then typing the next point. Video C-4 shows the student pasting the copied text with quotation marks and a citation and then typing the next point. In video 5, the student first pasted the copied text into the document (C-5a) and then revised it to their own words and added the citation (C-5b); then they proceeded to delete the copied text and type the next point.
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