

EDUCATION ON PLAGIARISM: TEXTBOOKS ON CHINESE-L1 ACADEMIC WRITING PUBLISHED IN CHINA

YONGYAN LI¹, QIANSHAN CHEN², MENG GE³, SIMON WANG⁴, & JOHN
FLOWERDEW⁵

¹Unit of Social Contexts and Policies of Education, Faculty of Education, University of Hong Kong; ²School of Foreign Language Studies, Hangzhou Dianzi University; ³Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, Beijing Foreign Studies University; ⁴Language Centre, Hong Kong Baptist University; ⁵Department of Linguistics and English Language, County South, Lancaster University; Department of Languages, Cultures and Applied Linguistics, Birkbeck, University of London

Abstract

Teachers in Anglophone universities have often attributed Chinese ESL students' plagiarism to "cultural difference", the implication being that what is considered plagiarism in the English-speaking world may not be seen as plagiarism in China. We believe this assumption needs to be questioned on the basis of systematic evidence gathered from the local L1 (first language) context; a large collection of writing textbooks published over time is potentially a valuable dataset for starting to look for such evidence. By analysing the relevant content in a collection of 60 textbooks on Chinese-L1 (Chinese as the First Language) academic writing, our study aimed to answer this question: According to these textbooks, what is plagiarism and how can one avoid it? Data-driven content analysis revealed that despite alignment with the Anglophone world in defining what is plagiarism, their approach to dealing with it differs in two main ways. First, in conceptualising plagiarism, the Chinese textbooks focus on large-scale copying, rather than local, or sentence- and paragraph-level issues; and in advising on how to avoid plagiarism, they emphasise self-discipline and the formalities of source acknowledgement, while textual strategies of proper source citation are hardly addressed. We point out that such gaps in the textbooks, and accordingly, in the Chinese education system, are partly responsible for Chinese students' confusion in the proper practices of source use in academic writing. We end the paper by proposing avenues for future research for further understanding the issue of plagiarism in the local L1 environment and for interrogating the debatable "cultural difference" view of plagiarism.

Keywords: What is plagiarism, how to avoid plagiarism, textbooks on Chinese-L1 academic writing, plagiarism among Chinese students, "cultural difference" view of plagiarism

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Li, Y., Chen, Q., Ge, M., Wang, S., & Flowerdew, J. (2023). Education on plagiarism: Textbooks on Chinese-L1 academic writing published in China. L1-Educational Studies in Language and Literature, 23, 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.21248/l1esll.2023.23.1.490>

Corresponding author: Yongyan Li, Unit of Social Contexts and Policies of Education, Faculty of Education, University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong, China.

Email: yongyan@hku.hk

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1. INTRODUCTION

Plagiarism, in the sense of stealing others' text or ideas as one's own for a personal interest, is probably universally condemned. However, the literature on educational integrity has often adopted a stance of cultural relativism over the issue of plagiarism, speaking of "cultural" attitudes towards textual borrowing and textual ownership. It has often been suggested that students from Confucian-heritage societies hold certain "cultural" values on using prior texts that are at variance with English-L1 (English as the First Language) norms (Amsberry, 2009; Lund, 2004; Sowden, 2005; Tomáš & Shapiro, 2021). We believe "cultural difference" is a complex and tricky notion; as such it has rightly been interrogated by previous researchers from different perspectives. Based on their personal experience in their L1 (first language), some ESL (English as a Second Language) scholars from Confucian-influenced backgrounds pointed out that plagiarism has always been condemned in their societies (e.g., Li, 2022, Li & Flowerdew, 2019, and Liu, 2005 on China; Phan Le Ha, 2006 on Vietnam). Others, through empirical research, have claimed a decisive role for education and acculturation into expected norms rather than ethnic culture (e.g., Gu & Brooks, 2008; Lei & Hu, 2015; Martin et al., 2011; Ting, 2012).

Most of us, as authors of the present article, have experienced the Chinese education system first-hand; but we also have educational and teaching experience in English-medium contexts that follow the Anglo-American tradition in conceptualising and teaching about plagiarism. Our first-hand learning and professional experience enabled us to formulate the following understanding in relation to (mainland) China, a Confucian-heritage society. On the one hand, plagiarism in the sense of copying (or too-close imitation of) others' work and claiming it as one's own creation has always been condemned in the Chinese society and its education system (we thus echo Liu 2005 on this); on the other hand, detailed definitions of plagiarism at sentence and paragraph levels seem to have been lacking and specific instruction on how to avoid plagiarism at sentence and paragraph levels seems to have been missing, so that many Chinese students are confused over proper source use practices. In other words, our bilingual/bicultural experiences have told us that there are differences between the Anglophone world and the Chinese context, and the differences are most visibly manifested in what may have been underdeveloped or absent in the Chinese education system. This experience-informed understanding, however, still needs to be tested through empirical research. The study to be reported in this paper is a step in this direction.

Our purpose in this paper is not to engage with the notion of "cultural differences" in relation to the issue of plagiarism, but to explore how the issue is addressed in a sample of Chinese writing textbooks. Specifically, we report a study that examined a collection of 60 Chinese-L1 (Chinese as the First Language) textbooks on academic writing to find out how they conceptualised plagiarism and suggested ways for learners to avoid plagiarism. Our study showed that, in their treatment of plagiarism, while basically in line with the Anglophone stance on the

issue, the textbooks in our collection tend to focus more broadly on moral education and general principles rather than the teaching of specific textual strategies to avoid plagiarism at sentence and paragraph levels. We believe such a gap in the textbooks, and accordingly, in the Chinese education system, helps to explain Chinese students' confusion in the proper practices of source use in academic writing. In the following, we will first outline a landscape of education on plagiarism in the Anglophone world, and then present a survey of the Chinese context, before reporting our study.

2. EDUCATION ON PLAGIARISM IN THE ANGLOPHONE WORLD

2.1 A systematic and text-based specific approach to addressing the issue of plagiarism

The Anglophone world attaches great importance to originality and intellectual ownership when it comes to writing in academia. A systematic mechanism for education on plagiarism has been in place. In addition, educational texts such as booklets and book chapters focusing on plagiarism typically adopt a specific approach, with text examples provided to illustrate what is plagiarism at local, or sentence and paragraph levels, and how to write from sources in ways that avoid plagiarism. Several strands of texts/literature are available to provide evidence to this, as to be outlined below.

Firstly, guides for using sources and avoiding plagiarism are commonly available at Anglophone universities, or universities in Anglo-American contexts and English-medium universities in other parts of the world (e.g., universities in Singapore and Hong Kong). The guides traditionally take the form of a booklet which every student could get a copy of upon being admitted to a university; the guides are now often published on the webpages of a university too. For example, Princeton University has a freely downloadable 40-page booklet entitled *Academic integrity at Princeton* (Princeton University, n.d.). Under a heading of "Examples of plagiarism", three scenarios of plagiarism are presented: "Verbatim plagiarism, or unacknowledged direct quotation", "Lifting selected passages and phrases without proper acknowledgment", and "Paraphrasing the text while maintaining the basic paragraph and sentence structure" (pp. 14-16). For each scenario, the original source text together with a plagiaristic text example is shown first, followed by a comment or an explanation why the example is plagiaristic.

Secondly, well-known writing manuals/handbooks, such as the various editions of the *MLA handbook* (e.g., Modern Language Association of America [MLA], 2016) and *The Bedford handbook* (e.g., Hacker & Sommers, 2010), are widely used, which likewise illustrate detailed text-based specific teaching of what plagiarism means at local levels and advise on how to avoid it. The same approach is further reflected in the research integrity guides issued by professional organisations, such as *Avoiding plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and other questionable writing practices: A guide to*

ethical writing, from the Office of Research Integrity (ORI) under the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (Roig, 2015).

Thirdly, a large body of academic literature on the issue of plagiarism exists. Other than guidance notes targeting students (e.g., Price, 2014), there are commentaries, discussions and sharing of educational approaches from individual institutions (e.g., Henderson & Whitelaw, 2013; Tomaš & Shapiro 2021), as well as a large body of literature reporting pedagogical interventions or strategies designed to teach students how to avoid plagiarism (e.g., Obeid & Hill, 2017; Perkins et al., 2020; Reyneke et al., 2021). This suggests that specific instruction on how to avoid plagiarism may often be offered at universities (e.g., Elander et al., 2010; Graham et al., 2021). Among the reference texts for pedagogical instruction would be chapters on plagiarism in books on academic writing, study skills, research ethics, or publishing (e.g., Cooper, 2016; Drew & Bingham, 2010; Wray & Bloomer, 2006). (A sample of 10 such chapters, together with relevant parts from MLA [2016] and Hacker and Sommers [2010], will be surveyed in the following section.)

Finally, beyond the literature base outlined above, as further evidence of a systematic approach to education on plagiarism in the Anglophone world, apart from institutional anti-plagiarism policies encoded in handbooks and curriculum documents, Anglophone universities typically have units/offices, committees, and boards of examinations charged with the responsibility of educating, monitoring, and when the misconduct of plagiarism occurs, investigating and verdict. Individual instructors and tutors are also expected to convey a message of “zero tolerance” on plagiarism and to incorporate instruction into their teaching as needed, while anti-plagiarism software programmes, perhaps most frequently, Turnitin (<https://turnitin.com/>), are commonly used for checking students’ assignments and degree theses.

2.2 A sample of educational texts conceptualising plagiarism and demonstrating how to avoid plagiarism through citation

Given the wide-ranging literature outlined in the foregoing section, a comprehensive review of the literature to gain insights into the conceptualisation of plagiarism and anti-plagiarism education in the Anglophone world would be infeasible within the space of a single paper. As the dataset in our study to be reported in this article came from teaching texts on Chinese-L1 academic writing, we decided to look into relevant content in a collection of English books to gain insights into this issue. We chose 12 books published between 2006 and 2020, with attention given to diversity in the selection. These 12 titles cover the *MLA handbook* (8th ed.) (MLA, 2016) and *The Bedford handbook* (9th ed.) (Hacker & Sommers, 2010), and ten other titles. Half of the latter ten books, addressing study skills, research, writing, or publishing, have a disciplinary focus: linguistics (Wray & Bloomer, 2006), social sciences (Cooper, 2016), business (Bailey, 2011), sports studies (Magdalinski, 2013), and science and medicine (Rogers, 2014). The other half of the ten books are not distinguished by discipline

but just by the domain addressed: academic or professional writing (Macknish, 2011; Wallwork, 2016), thesis/dissertation writing (Blair, 2016), and study skills (Bedford & Wilson, 2020; Drew & Bingham, 2010).

In the *MLA handbook* (8th ed.) (MLA, 2016) and *The Bedford handbook* (9th ed.) (Hacker & Sommers, 2010), we examined relevant sections on plagiarism; while in the other ten books, we examined a chapter focusing on plagiarism in each book. Our close reading of the sample of 12 educational texts on plagiarism revealed the following features in how they conceptualise plagiarism and propose plagiarism avoidance.

In conceptualising plagiarism, firstly, plagiarism is consistently defined as taking others' words or ideas as one's own, as illustrated below:

- Plagiarism is the *theft* of other people's words and ideas. Plagiarism happens when you claim (or *appear* to claim) that an idea, or the expression of it, is your own when in fact it is someone else's (Wray & Bloomer, 2006, p. 237).
- Plagiarism is a topic that has generated a lot of debate. Basically it means taking ideas or words from a source without giving credit (acknowledgement) (Bailey, 2011, p. 25).
- Plagiarism is representing another person's ideas, information, expressions, or entire work as one's own (MLA, 2016, pp. 6-7).

Secondly, different forms of plagiarism are acknowledged. Two survey-based 10-type schemes, from Turnitin (n.d.) and iThenticate (2013), are cited by Cooper (2016) and Wallwork (2016) respectively. Rogers (2014), on science and medical writing, illustrates in turn plagiarism of text, plagiarism of ideas, and self-plagiarism, noting that plagiarism of text may be a prominent issue for authors who use English as an additional language, echoing Cooper's (2016) comment for the case in social sciences. For plagiarism of text, it is made clear that "[e]ven borrowing just a few words from an author without clearly indicating that you did so constitutes plagiarism" (MLA, 2016, p. 8). In the same spirit, "patchwriting" (Howard 1999, cited in Cooper, 2016), described as "inappropriate paraphrasing", is also seen as a form of plagiarism (Cooper, 2016, p. 121).

Thirdly, still along the line of conceptualising plagiarism, a distinction between intentional (deliberate or conscious) and unintentional (accidental or inadvertent) plagiarism is commonly made: the former is deceptive, while the latter may be due to ignorance (of citation requirements), oversight (of proper source citation), or sloppiness, and may not necessarily constitute misconduct (Bailey, 2011; Blair, 2016; Cooper, 2016; Drew & Bingham, 2010). Nevertheless, it is emphasised that neither is acceptable. Notably, while the two can be hard to distinguish (Blair, 2016), it is also pointed out that accidental plagiarism may be more common than intentional plagiarism and may be committed by someone without realising it (Bailey, 2011; Drew & Bingham, 2010; Rogers, 2014; Wray & Bloomer, 2006).

Beyond conceptualising plagiarism, the checked sample of English texts, above all, consistently emphasise proper citation of sources in writing as the way to avoid plagiarism. Several book chapters map out scenarios when one should cite the

source (Macknish, 2011; Magdalinski, 2013), or provide a long list of the kinds of sources that should be acknowledged, which basically covers “anything that others have written, produced or created, or which has influenced your work” (Drew & Bingham, 2010, p. 174; Bedford & Wilson, 2020). It is typically noted that general or common knowledge does not need to be cited (Bailey, 2011; Cooper, 2016; Drew & Bingham, 2010; Hacker & Sommers, 2010; Macknish, 2011; MLA, 2016). Yet at the same time, what is considered common knowledge may vary with readership and the writing context; when in doubt, the advice is to give the citation (Cooper, 2016; Drew & Bingham, 2010; Hacker & Sommers, 2010; Macknish, 2011; MLA, 2016).

Secondly, in line with the institutional guidelines on plagiarism (see the foregoing section), a prominent feature of the educational texts checked is their aiming to be specific in demonstrating what proper citation means, by providing text examples, sometimes coupled with exercises, to illustrate what is plagiarism and how to cite properly to avoid plagiarism through quotation, paraphrase, and summary (Bailey, 2011; Bedford & Wilson, 2020; Hacker & Sommers, 2010; Magdalinski, 2013; MLA, 2016; Rogers, 2014; Wallwork, 2016). For instance, Wallwork (2016) provides a host of examples on paraphrasing and lists some introductory expressions to use in quotation (e.g., *As Wood [1997] states: ...*) (p. 189); Hacker and Sommers (2010) go to great lengths to illustrate how to integrate and cite sources to avoid plagiarism, listing possible scenarios, each illustrated with an appropriate textual response, as well as to demonstrate how to quote, paraphrase, and summarise with annotated examples.

Overall, our survey of a sample of 12 texts in the form of book sections on plagiarism and its avoidance, as illustrated above, provides a fair idea of the educational approaches to the issue of plagiarism in the Anglophone world.

3. THE CHINESE CONTEXT

The kind of systematic and specific education on plagiarism in the Anglophone world does not seem to characterise the (mainland) Chinese context (although exceptions are seen in textbooks on English academic writing published in China and in English for Academic Purposes [EAP] classrooms at Chinese universities, as we will point out in the Conclusion section of the present paper).

Nevertheless, plagiarism in the popular sense of blatant large-scale copying or too-close imitation was condemned throughout Chinese history and the condemnation carried on in the 20th century and continued into the 21st century. A search in the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), a mega-database of Chinese academic literature, with *chaoxi* or *piaoqie*, two contemporary Chinese equivalents of the English word “plagiarism”, used as the query terms for “topic”, generated a total of 7,500 (Chinese-medium) hits for the period from the 1950s onwards, with an upward trajectory and with predominantly academic journals and newspapers being the sources of the hits (search date 2 July 2022). Featuring a wide range of discussions, commentaries, and research related to the issue of plagiarism

and cases of plagiarism, the hits indicate a growing amount of attention being directed to the issue of plagiarism in China.

A prominent development in Chinese academia on the front of enhancing educational integrity from the 2000s is the proliferation of academic integrity policies, ethics codes, honour codes, standards, and guidelines in the form of various official documents released by the Ministry of Education, national bureaus, universities, and academic journals. Other than these, the Copyright Law of the People's Republic of China, first passed in September 1990 and later revised in 2001, 2010, and 2020, provides a legal point of reference. Underlying the CNKI literature in general, the Copyright Law's definition of copyright infringement, as well as the various guidelines and codes of conduct at all levels, is this popular understanding of "plagiarism" in the public awareness: that plagiarism is large-scale copying or misuse of source materials, with the intention of cheating; "plagiarism" is typically committed at a degree that would warrant public censure, retraction of a publication, disqualification, or even revoking of a doctorate. It can be suggested that the plagiarism check policies for higher degree theses/dissertations, now commonly implemented at Chinese universities, by specifying percentages for passing the checks (e.g., typically ranging from 15% to 30%), have also facilitated a relatively broad-brush understanding, as opposed to a detailed, specific one of what is plagiarism at sentence and paragraph levels.

However, it must *not* be therefore assumed that in Chinese scholarship and in the Chinese education system, local-level, or sentence- and paragraph-level plagiarism—in the sense of using others' words or ideas without giving credit so as to give the impression that those are one's own—is not considered problematic. The numerous existing guidelines suggest that in Chinese writing, authors are expected to be rigorous in source acknowledgement and clearly distinguish between their own voice and others' voices. There is an emphasis upon "source annotation" (*zhushi*) and the proper formats of "using sources" (*yinyong*, an ambiguous term with different meanings in different contexts) in the wide-ranging official documents and guides. For example, the following extract is from the *Guide for academic conduct in humanities and social sciences in higher learning institutions [Gaoxiao renwen shehui kexue xueshu guifan zhinan]* (PRC MoE, 2009). The extract distinguishes between "direct *yinyong*" (quotation) and "indirect *yinyong*" (citation without direct quotation):

Yinyong can be divided into direct *yinyong* and indirect *yinyong*. Direct *yinyong* should be placed within quotation marks. Indirect *yinyong* should be clearly signalled in the main text or through annotation. When citing the viewpoints of multiple authors or sources, vagueness and ambiguity should be avoided so that the readers can distinguish between different voices. If direct *yinyong* goes above a certain number of words, technical means (e.g., starting a new paragraph, changing the font used) should be adopted to mark it out (PRC MoE, 2009, Section 4.2.7).

The distinction between “direct *yinyong*” and “indirect *yinyong*” is traditionally made in Chinese writing textbooks too (e.g., Wang, 1988; Xu, 2019). On the whole, the extract above clearly demonstrates alignment with norms in English writing.

Yet, as Ling et al. (2011) pointed out, the numerous official guidelines issued in China over time “have focused on spelling out moral principles” but “do not provide a clear and operationable reference of academic norms for the academic circle” (p. 27). If that can be said of the official guidelines (which may be understandable, for after all, official documents are not teaching texts), it is not yet known if writing textbooks might be different. Given that the kind of booklets on plagiarism found at Anglophone universities, with specific illustrations of what is plagiarism and how to avoid it, are not a feature of Chinese universities, what Chinese students would learn will then probably largely depend on what is offered in writing textbooks, if apart from what is taught in the classroom.

Writing textbooks of different kinds have been coming out in China in large numbers in recent times. Two major categories of these books are those on composition with the target readership being primary and secondary school students or teachers, and those on academic writing, targeting university students at undergraduate or postgraduate levels or researchers. Other than textbooks on Chinese-L1 writing which occupy a larger share of the market, there have also been an increasing number of textbooks on English writing or writing for international publication, and in more recent years, a growing number of overseas textbooks being introduced into China in translated version or re-published in the English original by Chinese publishing houses. In the study to be reported in this paper, we focus on textbooks on Chinese-L1 academic writing.

4. METHODS

Our study aimed to address the following research question by analysing our target collection of textbooks on Chinese-L1 academic writing: According to these textbooks, what is plagiarism and how can one avoid it? It should be pointed out that the question in two parts was formulated and clarified in our process of data analysis, as to be explained below. Here by using the term “textbooks”, we are broadly following the practice of several researchers who have used Chinese writing textbooks as their research data (Kirkpatrick, 2002; Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2012; Liu, 2005). We use the term to cover both books that are likely to be used as writing textbooks by instructors in teaching a group of students at a certain level and guidebooks/handbooks that can be studied by learners themselves, in line with our previous research on imitation as a writing pedagogy in a collection of Chinese-L1 composition textbooks (Li et al., 2022).

To look for target textbooks, we conducted repeated rounds of thorough searching in the online system of the libraries of our home institutions and in a large online bookstore, employing the Chinese equivalents of such keywords as “composition”, “writing”, “academic writing”, and “essay writing”. A total of 454

books, in print or soft copies, were obtained eventually, with 33 purchased online. To investigate the presence of the issue of plagiarism in this database of textbooks, two of us examined the books one by one, looking for passages and sections that talk about plagiarism. This process led to the identification of 187 books which contained content on plagiarism; 146 (78.1%) of these books were on academic writing, and the rest on composition writing (which in the Chinese context typically refers to narrative, expressive, or argumentative texts which have an expected length of several hundreds of words in the curriculum, depending on the level of study), with the latter mostly (though not all) targeting pre-tertiary teaching and learning. The identified passages and sections were typed up and saved separately, with the file names reflecting the bibliographic information of the books.

The files were then imported into QSR International's NVivo12 for content analysis using a data-driven approach by two of us in the initial stage. The two of us worked on separate parts of the data but they both checked each other's work throughout the coding process, with all disagreements resolved through discussion in the process; they also maintained alignment in their naming of the second-level topics or codes. The two-level coding structure at this stage was made up of a range of topics subsuming a wide range of first-level codes which are in the form of "Book author + publication year + a data extract from the book". This all-inclusive coding structure thus provided a basis for narrowing down and selecting the parts that we could focus on in the scope of the current study.

In the next stage of coding, the coding structure developed from the initial stage of coding of 187 textbooks was checked against the data by the first author of the present paper, who sorted, revised, and re-organised the codes in NVivo at the same time. The research focus for the present study, formulated in the form of the two-part research question noted above, was then determined in the process in an emic spirit, to enable us to report the richer aspects of the data, to highlight characteristics in the Chinese context in addressing the issue of plagiarism, and to identify evidence to compare and contrast with the education on plagiarism in the Anglophone world. The two-part research question was subsequently translated into two top-level, or third-level, codes: "What is plagiarism", and "How to avoid plagiarism". This means that some earlier codes and sub-codes that did not fall under the research focus were excluded in the context of this study. The excluded top-level codes were mainly the following: "the phenomenon of plagiarism in the larger environment or exposed plagiarism cases in China", "causes for plagiarism", and "plagiarism cases or emphasis on academic norms in certain historical periods of time in China". The excluded sub-codes, or second-level codes, were more wide-ranging. To illustrate, under "What is plagiarism", sub-codes such as the following were excluded: "definitions given in dictionaries", "the quantity of copying in plagiarism", and "what is not plagiarism" (illustrating a range of scenarios).

We thus arrived at a coding structure for the present study, which involved 60 books published between 1990 and 2021, meaning that materials from these 60 books constituted the dataset of the present study. These 60 books happened to be

all on academic writing, none on composition writing. Although this seemed coincidental, it may indicate that the topic of plagiarism was much less likely to be tackled at some depth in books on composition writing. The bibliographic information of the 60 titles is shown in the Appendix.

Table 1 summarises the 60 books which contributed to the dataset of the present study by the decades of their publication time. It can be seen that up to 71.6% (43.3% + 28.3%) of the books were published in the 2000s-2010s.

Table 1. The 60 textbooks on Chinese-L1 academic writing as the sources of our dataset in the present study: By decades

<i>1990s</i>	<i>2000s</i>	<i>2010s</i>	<i>2020s</i>
Chen (1998)	Cai et al. (2005)	Chen (2014)	Guo (2020)
Huang (1990)	Cai et al. (2009)	Du (2010)	Li et al. (2020)
Jiang et al. (1994)	Cao & Zhang (2008)	He (2014)	Song (2020)
Jin (1991)	Chen & Zhang (2004)	Hou et al. (2019)	Wang et al. (2020)
Lü (1990)	Cheng & He (2001)	Huang (2012)	Wang Z.-z. (2021)
Min (1992)	Dong (2000)	Jia & Geng (2016)	Wang Z.-h. (2021)
Wen (1998)	Du (2006)	Lai (2019)	Wu (2020)
Xu (1996)	Fu (2004)	Li (2011)	Zhao (2021)
Zhang (1994)	Gao (2002)	Li (2010)	
	Li (2007)	Liang (2017)	
	Li (2006)	Liu (2015)	
	Qu & Pang (2005)	Liu & Li (2018)	
	Sun & Ren (2005)	Lu & Pu (2015)	
	Tan et al. (2000)	Wang Z.-z. (2017)	
	Tao (2005)	Xu (2019)	
	Wang (2006)	Yao (2019)	
	Wang (2003)	Zhongguo Xinlixuehui (2016)	
	Wang (2002)		
	Wang et al. (2006)		
	Wen (2003)		
	Wu & Wan (2001)		
	Wu et al. (2003)		
	Xu & Shi (2007)		
	Zhang (2002)		
	Zhou (2000)		
	Zhu & Wang (2003)		
9 (15%)	26 (43.3%)	17 (28.3%)	8 (13.3%)

Table 2 summarises the same 60 books by categories. It can be seen that “Academic writing (Liberal Arts & Humanities)” and “Academic writing (General)” are the two largest categories, accounting for a total of 65% (36.7% + 28.3%) of the books.

Table 2. The 60 textbooks: By categories

<i>Academic writing (Liberal Arts & Humanities)</i>	<i>Academic writing (Science & Engineering)</i>	<i>Academic writing (Medicine)</i>	<i>Graduation thesis/dissertation (General)</i>	<i>Academic writing (General)</i>
Cai et al. (2005)	Huang (1990)	Li (2007)	Cao & Zhang (2008)	Chen (1998)
Cai et al. (2009)	Jiang et al. (1994)	Xu & Shi (2007)	Dong (2000)	Du (2006, 2010)
Chen (2014)	Jin (1991)	Yao (2019)	Li et al. (2020)	Gao (2002)
Chen & Zhang (2004)	Wang (2006)		Li (2006)	Jia & Geng (2016)
Cheng & He (2001)	Wang Z.-h. (2021)		Li (2010)	Lai (2019)
Fu (2004)	Wu & Wan (2001)		Qu & Pang (2005)	Liu (2015)
Guo (2020)	Zhang (2002)		Sun & Ren (2005)	Liu & Li (2018)
He (2014)	Zhao (2021)		Wang (2003)	Lü (1990)
Hou et al. (2019)			Wen (1998)	Tao (2005)
Huang (2012)			Xu (1996)	Wang (2002)
Li (2011)				Wang et al. (2020)
Liang (2017)				Wang et al. (2006)
Lu & Pu (2015)				Wang Z.-z. (2021)
Min (1992)				Xu (2019)
Song (2020)				Zhang (1994)
Tan et al. (2000)				Zhu & Wang (2003)
Wang Z.-z. (2017)				
Wen (2003)				
Wu et al. (2003)				
Wu (2020)				
Zhongguo Xinlixuehui (2016)				
Zhou (2000)				
22 (36.7%)	8 (13.3%)	3 (5%)	10 (16.7%)	17 (28.3%)

Our coding structure that addressed the 60 titles covered in our final dataset used in the present study was repeatedly checked and amended by the first author in NVivo and cross-checked by the co-authors (including the two of us who did the initial round of coding and resolved any difference in their coding through discussion) to ensure reliability. Table 3 summarises the coding structure used in the present study to address our two research questions.

Table 3. A coding structure on what is plagiarism and how to avoid it: Based on the 60 textbooks

<u>What is plagiarism</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptualisation and condemnation of plagiarism • Different forms of plagiarism
<u>How to Avoid Plagiarism</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasising self-discipline for avoiding plagiarism in graduation thesis writing • Advising on citing sources properly to avoid plagiarism, yet without demonstrating textual strategies of citation, or discussing <i>yinyong</i> in ways connected to the issue of plagiarism

As a supplementary step to gain further information on the 60 titles, we also used Baidu (<https://www.baidu.com/>), the largest Chinese online search engine, to check for the affiliations of the authors of these books as far as possible. The (first) authors of some of the books were found to be Chinese language specialists, including a few academics on Chinese writing studies. Most of the books, however, were (first-)authored by content specialists in social sciences (education, legal science, management, communication studies, information science, etc.), in science and engineering (mechanical engineering, physical sciences and engineering, civil hydrology etc.), or in some humanities disciplines other than language/writing studies (history, philosophy, musicology, etc.). It seems we did not identify clear differences between these groups of books in their discussion of what is plagiarism and how to avoid it.

In the following section we will report our findings, following the organisation of the coding structure presented in Table 3. All the citations in the section below refer to the textbooks in our dataset for the present study, and all the 60 textbooks, shown in the Appendix, are cited in the section.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 *What is plagiarism*

5.1.1 *Conceptualisation and condemnation of plagiarism*

The textbooks in our collection shed light on the nature of plagiarism from various perspectives. Firstly, on the definition of plagiarism, they overwhelmingly converge on the following understanding: that in a piece of plagiaristic work, the sources used are not duly acknowledged, or others' views, materials, or words are not properly signalled (Cai et al., 2005; Cao & Zhang, 2008; Hou et al., 2019; Huang, 1990; Jiang et al., 1994; Jin, 1991; Lai, 2019; Li et al., 2020; Tao, 2005; Wang Z.-z., 2017). The following extracts illustrate how plagiarism is defined in the textbooks:

- Plagiarism is using others' ideas and words without clearly indicating the source. (Cai et al., 2005, p. 233)
- Using someone else's academic work in writing without giving a source annotation constitutes plagiarism. (Wang Z.-z., 2017, p. 138)
- If one uses someone else's view but does not give citation, readers would think that is the author's view. If in a paper the distinction between the author's views and others' views is often unclear, then this can be regarded as plagiarism. (Hou et al., 2019, p. 152)

This sample of definitions of plagiarism in several textbooks indicates broad agreement with the definition of the concept in the Anglophone world. However, notably, the discussions of plagiarism in our collection of textbooks overwhelmingly focus on plagiarism as blatant, large-scale copying, as opposed to local, sentence- or

paragraph-level issues, a conception that echoes the understanding in the public awareness in the Chinese context. Accordingly, the books overwhelmingly highlight plagiarism as being intentional cheating, where plagiarists “deliberately” omit citations to falsely claim novelty (Cai et al., 2005; Du, 2010; He, 2014; Min, 1992; Qu & Pang, 2005; Song, 2020; Wang, 2006; Wang Z.-z., 2017; Wang, Z.-h., 2021; Wen, 2003; Zhang, 2002; Zhu & Wang, 2003), despite acknowledgements that unintentional plagiarism can also occur (Cai et al., 2005; Qu & Pang, 2005; Zhu & Wang, 2003).

In line with an overwhelming focus on plagiarism as deliberate cheating that involves large-scale copying, our collection of books is unambiguous in condemning the wrongdoing. It is pointed out that using materials from sources without acknowledgement is not respecting “the fruit of others’ labour” (a metaphorical expression often used in such a context in China) and it is theft that infringes upon others’ rights; it is a moral issue and serious misconduct that is against academic, research, and professional ethics, against the scientific spirit, against the principle of innovation and veracity in research, and even against the law (Cai et al., 2005; Cao & Zhang, 2008; Chen, 2014; Du, 2010; Li, 2010; Li et al., 2020; Liang, 2017; Liu, 2015; Lü, 1990; Wang, 2002; Yao, 2019; Zhao, 2021). Plagiarism has social consequences as it corrupts the academic environment, harms the credibility of academic work, wastes resources and readers’ time, stains the scientific spirit, and harms the reputation of the publishing venues (Guo, 2020; Liu & Li, 2018; Wang, 2006; Yao, 2019; Zhang, 1994). It also has consequences for the plagiarists themselves, who would lose learning opportunities and have their name tarnished and their status of being a student or an academic jeopardized (Huang, 2012; Qu & Pang, 2005; Tao, 2005; Yao, 2019; Zhang, 2002; Zhu & Wang, 2003). It is “an indisputable vice” (Gao, 2002, p. 33), it is “shameful” (Tao, 2005, p. 74; Zhou, 2000, p. 37), and it is “the most abominable behaviour of an educated person” and something that “anyone having received higher education must get rid of” (Cao & Zhang, 2008, p. 61).

Treated as a cardinal type of misconduct, plagiarism is warned against together with practices of recycling of others’ views with no innovation, patchwork, fabrication, falsification, contract cheating or using a third-party for the writing, disparaging others’ work and exaggerating one’s own, and making baseless claims (Cai et al., 2005; Cheng & He, 2001; Du, 2006; Fu, 2004; Gao, 2002; Lai, 2019; Wang, 2003; Wang, Z.-z., 2021; Wang et al., 2020; Wen, 2003; Xu, 1996). Such misconduct of cheating or academic corruption is said to be prevalent and it is urgent to fight against it (Cai et al., 2005; Dong, 2000; Li, 2006; Tan et al., 2000; Wen, 2003). A range of expressions are used in this context, including “to forbid”, “to oppose”, “to warn oneself against”, “to put an end to”, and “to nip in the bud”.

5.1.2 *Different forms of plagiarism*

The textbooks published from the 2000s, in particular those from the 2010s, are more likely to suggest that plagiarism can take different forms. Several books speak

of two broad types of plagiarism: blatant large-scale plagiarism with little change, and hidden copying by large or smaller patches with some changes in the form but not the content (Cai et al., 2005; Cao & Zhang, 2008; Lai, 2019; Wang Z.-z., 2017; Wang, Z.-z., 2021; Wang et al., 2020). Other books speak of a broader range of types of plagiarism. Du (2010, pp. 335-337) lists “taking over”, making a few changes in wording, decorating or doing “plastic surgery”, assemblage or patching together, and contract cheating or buying a paper online. Li (2011, pp. 110-112) cites copying with changes, patchwork, excessive direct quotation, copying-and-pasting, and redundancy with existing work due to lack of research of the literature (the last referred to as “unintentional plagiarism” by the book author, which may not be justified). Wang et al. (2006, p. 251) and its revised edition, Wang et al. (2020, p. 224), propose a categorisation scheme with seven scenarios:

- 1) Copying the overall argument, design, and framework
- 2) Direct copying of sentences, paragraphs, or pages from someone else’s work
- 3) Wholesale copying, with occasional citations inserted
- 4) Changing a few insignificant words or sentence patterns
- 5) Copying parts from the individual texts instead of synthesising the literature to create an analytical framework
- 6) Selective copying with some re-ordering
- 7) Patching together or assemblage

Finally, Wang Z.-z. (2021, pp. 73-76) enumerates direct copying (of whole texts or segments), copying with changes, copying someone’s citations, copying that involves an original text that is in a foreign language, and self-plagiarism. The last-but-one type subsumes three sub-categories:

- 1) Copying from someone’s translation, with some words and sentences modified (e.g., changing the word order, synonym replacement, adding or deleting some words, copying from multiple editions of translation), to give an impression it was one’s own translation
- 2) The translated version which was copied from is not cited; the original text in a foreign language is cited instead, in order to hide the copying
- 3) Translating from an original text that is in a foreign language, but pretending that one is the author rather than a translator; also known as “translingual plagiarism”

The categorisations mentioned above mix what is copied, the motivation of copying, the kinds of changes made in hiding one’s plagiarism, and mishandling actions applied to the source texts.

Some other textbooks refer to the ranges of materials that may become the targets of plagiarism: ideas, points of view, evidence used, research design, research data, research results, visuals, audio or video materials, textual expressions, and unpublished work (Li et al., 2020; Qu & Pang, 2005; Tao, 2005; Wang Z.-z., 2017, 2021; Yao, 2019; Zhao, 2021).

It can be suggested that the Chinese-L1 writing textbooks contain elements of borrowing from the Anglo-American conceptualisation of plagiarism. Two of the books (Wang et al., 2006; Wang et al., 2020), for example, cited the types of plagiarism specified on the website of Turnitin (Turnitin, n.d.); and one of the two books (Wang et al., 2006) also cited several forms of plagiarism discussed in the 5th edition of the *MLA handbook*. Nevertheless, compared with the typical discussion of plagiarism in Anglophone academia, two features of the Chinese-L1 writing textbooks' discussion of plagiarism can be highlighted. Firstly, although textual plagiarism can occur on a scale of degrees, this is not pointed out in our sample of books, a practice that is in line with the textbooks' overwhelming focus on plagiarism as large-scale copying. Secondly, with local-level plagiarism not being addressed in our sample of books, it is unsurprising that they do not provide text examples (i.e., in the form of sentences/chunks/passages) to illustrate plagiarism, a feature that might give an impression to learners that local-level or sentence- and paragraph-level copying is not considered a problem.

5.2 *How to avoid plagiarism*

5.2.1 *Emphasising self-discipline for avoiding plagiarism in graduation thesis writing*

In our collection of textbooks, advice on how one can avoid plagiarism tends to be found in books on graduation thesis writing. Overall, the recommendations emphasise self-discipline, honesty, dedication to one's work, a scientific attitude, and proper procedure.

Cao and Zhang (2008) stress the determination to avoid plagiarism at all costs, highlighting the consequence of being caught plagiarising:

From the day one starts learning to do thesis writing, they should firmly reject the thought of plagiarising, establish the idea of writing original content of their own, and stick to the belief that even if they could not finish their thesis and could not get their degree, they should by no means resort to plagiarism (much courage is needed for one to do that). They could take more time to finish their thesis, and get their degree a little later; but if plagiarism is detected, they would be punished or even expelled from the university. (p. 62)

Secondly, it is also advised that one should aim to choose new topics in the first place (Chen, 1998; Chen & Zhang 2004; Wen, 1998; Wu et al., 2003; Xu & Shi, 2007). Old topics that lack novelty may easily lead to plagiarism, according to two books, both making the point metaphorically: that working on a very old topic is like eating a tasteless bun (Wen, 1998) or eating tasteless rice (Chen & Zhang, 2004) that has been chewed by others. One is also advised to choose a research topic that they can complete under the given circumstances, for working on an unrealistic topic can lead them into plagiarism (Jin, 1991).

Thirdly, although the supervisor's role in monitoring is emphasised (Cai et al., 2009; Sun & Ren, 2005), it is stressed that students should take full responsibility for their writing and that careful checking in the revision stage is important for rooting out plagiarism (Li, 2007; Sun & Ren, 2005; Wu et al., 2003). As Wu et al. (2003) put it:

While writing the first draft, oversights or errors in annotation could happen as there are numerous issues to note. In revision, however, annotations should be checked piece by piece to ensure accuracy. Due respect should be paid to others' work, and plagiarism should be strictly prohibited. (pp. 71-72)

Another book advises that even if a thesis has been submitted, if the student discovers plagiarism, they should explain to the supervisor or the examination committee, take back the thesis with permission, revise and resubmit it for oral defence (Chen & Zhang, 2004).

5.2.2 Advising on citing sources properly to avoid plagiarism, yet without demonstrating textual strategies of citation, or discussing yinyong in ways connected to the issue of plagiarism

Echoing the understanding of plagiarism as taking others' words or ideas as one's own, for avoiding plagiarism, our collection of books offers a cardinal principle: that one should always acknowledge sources properly when writing. Firstly, it is advised that any piece of material, content, data, or any point of view, concept, terminology, method, or visual, if originated in a source, the source should be acknowledged accordingly, with the source information cited accurately, meticulously, and completely, in the form of in-text citations or bibliographic notes, and recorded in a reference list (Guo, 2020; Hou et al., 2019; Jia & Geng, 2016; Wang Z.-z., 2017; Wang Z.-h., 2021; Wu, 2020; Xu, 2019; Zhongguo Xinlixuehui, 2016). Such a requirement means that one should keep a meticulous record of the sources while reading (Wang et al., 2020).

Secondly, it is pointed out that for the sake of accuracy, one should read and cite sources first-hand as far as possible, rather than second-hand; if a source is cited second-hand, it should be indicated accordingly (Guo, 2020; He, 2014; Xu, 2019). If one adopts someone's interpretation of a quotation or of an original source in writing, that person should also be credited accordingly, rather than taking the person's view as their own (Wang Z.-z., 2017; Zhongguo Xinlixuehui, 2016).

Thirdly, it is emphasised that when one quotes directly from a source, in addition to providing the source of the quotation, the quoted piece of material should be faithfully reproduced as in the original without change, with the original punctuation marks, citations and even errors preserved (He, 2014; Liu, 2015; Wang Z.-z., 2017; Wang et al., 2020). A book compiled by the China Psychology Society apparently adopts a recommendation from the American Psychological Association (APA) (or the APA citation style) by saying that for a quotation less than 40 Chinese characters, quotation marks should be used, while a quotation of 40 characters or above should

be presented as a block quote or marked out in a different font (Zhongguo Xinlixuehui, 2016, p. 120). It is further advised that one should only quote selectively or quote the essential text segments and should avoid giving an excessive number of direct quotations; one should use their own words to summarise the content of the source as far as possible, with the distinction between the material from the sources and their own voice always made clear (Guo, 2020; Tao, 2005; Wang Z.-z., 2017; Wang et al., 2020).

The advice along the several lines noted above is clearly consistent with expectations in Anglophone contexts, potentially with evidence of borrowing from the latter, as noted above. Nevertheless, related to our earlier observations concerning the books' discussion of what is plagiarism, two features of their discussion of how to avoid plagiarism can also be pointed out, as posing a contrast to Anglo-American practices. Firstly, other than the extensive mention of the required formalities (i.e., the need to give in-text citations/bibliographic notes, and reference lists) and the spelling-out of general principles and rules (e.g., using quotation marks for direct quotations or block quotes for longer quotations), illustration of how to avoid plagiarism at local levels, or sentence and paragraph levels, is completely absent in our collection of textbooks. Secondly, discussion of different types of *yinyong* (an ambiguous term with different meanings in different contexts, as noted earlier in this paper), or of different ways of incorporating source materials into one's writing, addressed to various extents in some books in our collection, is not presented in relation to the issue of avoiding plagiarism. In other words, a connection between the issue of source use in writing and the issue of avoiding plagiarism is not established. These books in our collection talked about *yinyong* in terms of it being a rhetorical device and in similar ways too. To briefly illustrate, Chen and Zhang (2004) speak of direct quotation, reproducing the meaning, and synthesising; Wu and Wan (2001) listed direct quotation in full, direct quotation in parts, reproducing the meaning, and condensing; and Lu and Pu (2015) have direct quotation in full, summary, and the mixing of direct quotation (e.g., from a literary text) with analysis. But in addressing *yinyong* from a rhetorical skills perspective, these books do not draw in the issue of avoiding plagiarism, thus giving the impression that plagiarism is not an issue of concern in one's learning of how to do *yinyong* or use sources in writing.

6. DISCUSSION

Our study aimed to answer a two-part research question with respect to a sample of 60 Chinese-L1 textbooks on academic writing: According to these textbooks, what is plagiarism and how can one avoid it? Our findings demonstrate that, in broad terms, plagiarism is defined in the same way in the Chinese textbooks as it is defined in the Anglophone world. However, the textbooks overwhelmingly focus on plagiarism in the sense of large-scale copying with the intention of cheating; local, sentence- and paragraph-level failures of proper source crediting is almost entirely bypassed.

Strong language is used in the books to characterise the harms and consequences of plagiarism; yet recommendations for avoiding plagiarism emphasise self-discipline and formalities of source annotation, rather than learning any textual strategies for avoiding plagiarism. In the following, we discuss our key findings by making contrasts with Anglophone practices and creating connections to practices in the Chinese context, while presenting a critique of the textbooks examined in the study.

6.1 Despite alignment in broad terms with the Anglophone world in defining plagiarism, the Chinese-L1 academic writing textbooks focus on large-scale copying in discussing plagiarism

Our study shows that the books in our sample offer definitions of plagiarism that are broadly in line with that in the Anglophone world, with plagiarism being defined as taking someone else's work (words or ideas) as one's own. However, intentional plagiarism that typically involves large-scale copying is the focus of discussion in the books, despite acknowledgement that unintentional plagiarism can occur. This contrasts with the Anglophone literature, which points out that unintentional or accidental plagiarism may be more common than intentional cheating (Bailey, 2011; Drew & Bingham, 2010; Rogers, 2014; Wray & Bloomer, 2006).

In line with a focus on intentional plagiarism involving large-scale copying, our sample of books condemns plagiarism unambiguously, speaking of its consequences for society and the plagiarists themselves, and characterising it as being shameful and abominable. Such a stance no doubt echoes the Anglophone literature in which strong language is used to characterise intentional plagiarism as being "a real 'sin' in academic settings" (Drew & Bingham, 2010, p. 173), or "akin to premeditated murder, in that it is deliberate and planned" (Blair, 2016, p. 43). Our sample of books also juxtaposes plagiarism with other forms of misconduct, including fabrication and using contract writing, resembling the Anglophone literature, where plagiarism is likewise often discussed together with other forms of academic misconduct (e.g., Pierson, 2012). Echoing the report that various forms of academic misconduct are prevalent in some quarters of Chinese academia (Tang, 2019), the textbooks in our collection sound a firm message of fighting against them, as conveyed by the large numbers of official ethics codes issued over the years in China at national and university levels.

Like the Anglophone literature on plagiarism, our sample of textbooks also speaks of different forms that plagiarism may take. It can be suggested that the categories of plagiarism listed in the books reflect the variety of taxonomies that can be found in the Chinese academic literature over time, which primarily distinguish between explicit/undisguised and hidden/disguised forms of plagiarism (e.g., Li, 2019; Lu, 1996). They also index the kinds of problems that are known to exist in Chinese publications and students' writings. Copying that involves an original text that is in a foreign language, for example, has been a type of plagiarism that gathered

much attention in several news-making plagiarism cases involving university academics in the 2000s (e.g., Zhang & Yu, 2016).

Although textual plagiarism is mentioned by our sample of books as a form of plagiarism, how it can be manifested at local, or sentence and paragraph levels and on a scale of degrees, is not explained, neither illustrated with text examples. Such a gap in our sample of books eminently contrasts with the prominence given to this form of plagiarism (or plagiarism of words, other than ideas) in the Anglophone literature. It has been pointed out that textual plagiarism may be a prominent issue for English as an additional language (EAL) authors due to the language barrier (Cooper, 2016; Rogers, 2014). Yet it can also be suggested that perhaps a lack of rigour in source use for avoiding plagiarism at local text levels in their L1 has contributed to the occurrence of textual plagiarism in some inexperienced EAL authors' English writing, as the findings in our textbook-based study may suggest for average Chinese students or novice researchers at least. For Chinese students, lack of education on rigorous practices of writing from sources also has consequences in the context of their L1 writing. Most obviously, the routine plagiarism check of their graduation degree thesis (common at Chinese universities) may show a high similarity index that exceeds the threshold allowed by their university for passing, which, as having been noted earlier in this paper, typically ranges from 15% to 30% (the percentages can be challenged, since by nature they do not facilitate an understanding that even copying a sentence is problematic, in view of a high standard of rigour in academic work). The desire to "bring down the similarity index" has unfortunately fostered an online "grey business" of reducing the similarity (Zheng & Shi, 2021) and other malpractices such as contract cheating (Zhao & Chen, 2022).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the notion of "patchwriting", in the sense of "copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one-for-one synonym substitutes" (Howard, 1993, p. 233; Howard, 1999), is not found in our sample of textbooks. "Patchwork" or "assemblage", which is indeed listed among forms of plagiarism in the books, is not the same as "patchwriting" at sentence and paragraph levels. Illustration of textual plagiarism being bypassed in our sample of textbooks also means absence in them of the Anglophone practices of detailing, with text examples, what is plagiarism, and how to quote, paraphrase, or summarise to avoid plagiarism. However, Chinese students would need an intertextual education in this direction, to go beyond focusing on "bringing down the similarity index" in the annual season of graduation thesis submission.

6.2 Self-discipline and the format of source acknowledgement are emphasised, but textual strategies of proper source citation for avoiding plagiarism are largely missing in the Chinese textbooks

In our sample of textbooks, those focusing on thesis writing often give advice on how to avoid plagiarism, by emphasising self-discipline in holding to academic integrity. Appropriate topic selection is also said to discourage plagiarism—it is advised that one’s research topic on a thesis should have novelty and be realistic, a suggestion that resembles the commonly known recommendation in the Anglophone world that teachers can discourage plagiarism through assignment design (e.g., Carroll, 2009). The books’ emphasis upon students taking full responsibility for avoiding plagiarism and supervisors playing a monitoring role echoes messages commonly conveyed in various honour codes and ethics codes for students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels at Chinese universities, where enhancing educational integrity at all levels has been a concern of priority for some years (Tang, 2019).

For tackling plagiarism, our collection of books unanimously emphasises proper source citation: careful preparation of in-text citations, bibliographic notes, and reference lists, facilitated through meticulous documentation of the source information during notetaking. Such advice is, without doubt, again in agreement with that given in the Anglophone literature, where formality issues and note-taking strategies may be found detailed (e.g., Bedford & Wilson, 2020; Drew & Bingham, 2010). The advice on quoting from sources first-hand, ensuring faithfulness to the original and quoting sparingly, and choosing between quotation marks and marked block quotes, likewise echoes messages for English writing (e.g., Bedford & Wilson, 2020; Cooper, 2016; Wallwork, 2016). In the Chinese context, such advice further echoes similar notes on quotation (or direct *yinyong*) sometimes found in official guidelines on research ethics too (e.g., PRC MoE, 2009).

Yet it should be emphasised that these lines of advice address formalities and general principles or rules, rather than actual textual strategies of proper source citation that can be deployed at sentence and paragraph levels to avoid plagiarism. While, in emphasising avoiding plagiarism through proper citation, the Anglophone literature demonstrates how to do so by illustrating with text examples proper ways of quotation, paraphrasing and summarising, the Chinese textbooks give a broad-stroke picture of expectation. In this sense, the textbooks do not go far beyond the existing official guidelines on academic ethics, which focus on moral education without providing “a clear and operationable reference of academic norms for the academic circle” (Ling et al., 2011, p. 27), as noted earlier in this paper. The topic of *yinyong* (using source texts), a term which can sometimes be translated as “citation” (as the term *yinyong* varies in meaning with context, as mentioned earlier), is a topic traditionally found in Chinese books of rhetoric and composition. One might expect that writing textbooks, in particular the more recent ones, would link their discussion of *yinyong* with the issue of avoiding plagiarism. This is, however, not the case. It seems that while there has been a growing concern in Chinese writing textbooks over

the issue of plagiarism, the traditional talk on *yinyong* has been largely kept, rather than catching up to address the question of how to avoid plagiarism in using sources.

Overall, although the sample of textbooks examined in our study were published over a period between 1990 and 2021, these textbooks seem to have largely carried on a tradition in “lecturing” about plagiarism, overwhelmingly concerned with plagiarism as large-scale copying and its tackling through moral education. The implied similarity among the books could suggest that later textbook writers may have to some extent followed earlier textbook writers’ footsteps. To put it bluntly, there may be a degree of borrowing (if not plagiarism) among the textbooks when they address certain topics, including the topic of plagiarism. This observation might make some sense against a backdrop of plagiarism having been reportedly common in some quarters of textbook publishing in China, especially in the decades of 1990s to 2000s (e.g., Huang, 2009).

7. CONCLUSION

It has been pointed out earlier in the paper that the systematic and specific approach to the education on plagiarism that characterises the Anglophone world does not yet characterise the Chinese context. Our study provides evidence to this observation through an examination of a collection of 60 Chinese-L1 textbooks on academic writing (shown in the Appendix). Based on our findings in the study, we argue that what is missing in the Chinese-L1 textbooks on academic writing published in China are specific guidelines on what textual plagiarism means and how to avoid plagiarism by deploying textual strategies that integrate quotation, paraphrasing and summarising, going beyond moral education, warning against plagiarism, and advising on principles, rules and proper procedures. Due to such a gap, the textbooks in our collection do not facilitate specific understandings of what constitutes plagiarism at local levels and how to avoid it. By grasping principles and formalities, learners may learn some “What’s” (the requirements of the formats and mechanics), but do not learn “How’s” (the procedures of writing without committing plagiarism at sentence and paragraph levels).

At present, the absence of text-oriented “How’s” concerning avoiding plagiarism in Chinese writing textbooks is matched by the same absence in instruction at Chinese universities, though with exceptions reported from English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classrooms (e.g., Du, 2022; Zhang, 2021). We believe this gap in education is to some extent responsible for Chinese students’ confusion and ignorance in source citation when studying in an ESL context, hence their proneness to plagiarism. While some Anglophone teachers may associate their plagiaristic practices to “Chinese culture”, we believe their intertextual transgression reflects a prominent gap in their prior education in the Chinese education system.

There are signs of change in the Chinese context, however, suggesting that the Chinese scene may well be on a continuously evolving trajectory over the issue of plagiarism. A relatively new document released by the National Press and Publication

Administration (2019), titled *Academic publishing specification—Definition of academic misconduct for journals* [*Xueshu chubān guīfān Qikan xueshu buduan xingwei jieding*], is worth highlighting. This official document (labelled CY/T174—2019) constitutes a breakthrough from the previous numerous regulations and ethics codes in that it distinguishes between “whole-sale plagiarism” (*zhengti piaoque*) and “textual plagiarism” (*wenzi biaoshu piaoque*). Seven scenarios are listed for the latter in the document, two being the following: “Using expressions from several sources in a row but citing only one or several of the sources”, and “Reiterating segments of text from a source through summary, selective deletion, sentence structure modification, using synonymous expressions etc., without proper citation” (p. 3). We anticipate that the innovative document of CY/T174—2019 is likely to influence future textbooks, by prompting them to illustrate a range of textual plagiarism practices with examples, coupled with specific instruction on proper citation.

Additional sources of potential impact on the future evolution of Chinese-L1 writing textbooks would be the textbooks on English academic writing typically written by English educators in the country, and overseas English writing handbooks/textbooks re-published in China or translated into Chinese for publication in China. Evidence of specific teaching of textual strategies for addressing different types of local-level plagiarism, and the teaching of the citation knowledge required, is a notable feature of the textbooks on English academic writing that have also been growing in numbers in China, like the textbooks on Chinese writing. The specific instruction from these books is likely to make its way into Chinese-L1 writing textbooks in the future and in turn the Chinese-L1 writing classrooms, if it has already been part of the EAP writing instruction at Chinese universities sometimes, as noted above.

Based on the findings in our study, we cannot conclude that the “differences” identified in the study between the Chinese and the Anglophone teachings on the issue of plagiarism are “cultural differences”. However, in terms of both the conceptualisation of plagiarism and the education on plagiarism, the Chinese scene displays features of under-codification and under-development, by largely failing to specify how local-level misuse of sources can constitute plagiarism and to demonstrate how one can deploy citations in ways to avoid sentence- and paragraph-level plagiarism.

Although in this paper we conclude on what is falling short in a sample of textbooks on Chinese writing published in China in presenting a pedagogy on the issue of plagiarism, we do not wish to present a deficit view of the books. After all, our study only focused on a particular aspect of the books rather than assessing the books holistically. By highlighting inadequacies in the books in addressing the topic of plagiarism, we nevertheless would point out that the gap with the Western specific approach in terms of conceptualising plagiarism and teaching its avoidance will need to be filled, if it is so desired that Chinese students learn the rigour of academic work and transition smoothly into Anglophone universities as international

students, and that Chinese scholars have legitimate voices on the international stage of scholarship.

Our study was based on a collection of textbooks. Future research can survey Chinese academic literature to look for confirming and disconfirming evidence to the conclusion of our study, compare textbooks on Chinese-L1 writing and textbooks on English writing, or more broadly, zoom in on Western influences in the Chinese context in relation to conceptualising and educating on plagiarism—in the findings section of this paper, we noted that in our collection of textbooks there are references to Anglo-American sources and potential elements of borrowing from the norms of Anglo-American academia. Methodologically, while we relied on content analysis-based coding of textual data in this study, future research can consider using corpus methods to facilitate automated data analysis of large textual datasets, e.g., to study the collocations or semantic contexts of some high-frequency expressions and potential diachronic changes. These lines of research, and ethnographic investigations that triangulate perspectives and data sources, need to be conducted to understand the issue of plagiarism in the local L1 environment of education and literacy practices, to both extend the current knowledge base and to interrogate the highly debatable “cultural difference” view of plagiarism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback on an earlier version of the paper. This study was part of a larger research project funded by the General Research Fund, Research Grants Council, Hong Kong, China (project code: 17610019).

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APPENDIX

The 60 textbooks that contributed to the dataset of the present study

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