A CONTRASTIVE STUDY OF TEXTUAL PLAGIARISM BETWEEN CHINESE AND WESTERN MA DISSERTATIONS IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS

KANG SHUANGJUAN

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
NAYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY
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Kang Shuangjuan

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, L1 and L2 students’ plagiarism has become a growing concern in the academia and thus been investigated through various perspectives (e.g., cultural, developmental, disciplinary, and contextual, etc.). Among them, much discussion has primed to Chinese and L1 students’ perceived knowledge, attitude and causes of plagiarism from researchers’ perspective such that few studies have actually explored its characteristics in authentic academic writing from students’ own perspective. Nevertheless, both our deepening understanding and emerging empirical evidence have pinpointed that students’ self-report on their plagiarism, although important, was not necessarily related to their ability to actually recognize and avoid plagiarism. Thus, to better deal with Chinese and L1 students’ plagiarism pedagogically, more text-based studies about the nature and causes of plagiarism that are rooted from students’ perspective are needed.

In addition, other gaps still existed in our understanding of Chinese and L1 students’ plagiarism. Particularly, controversial views on Chinese culture’s acceptability of plagiarism, scant evidence for developmental effects of plagiarism above undergraduate level in Chinese EFL context, inconclusive results about the existence of disciplinary difference on plagiarism construction, and a paucity of research into mainland Chinese postgraduates’ perceived causes for plagiarism.

In an attempt to fill up these gaps, this study adopts a cross-cultural comparison orientation and an integrative perspective in exploring the nature, frequencies and causes of textual plagiarism between Western and Chinese MA dissertations in applied linguistics.

To achieve its objective, this study employs a mixed-methods (combining textual analysis with semi-structured and discourse-based email interview) to collect data from 16 MA dissertations from two universities and some of MA supervisor-supervisee pairs involved. The collected textual data were analyzed to look at the nature and frequencies and reasons for textual plagiarism among dissertations from two cultures. The interview responses with some of supervisor-supervisee pairs were analyzed to explore their justification, perceived causes for, and reported attitudes towards plagiarism.

First, an intradisciplinary gap on transparent source use was confirmed between Chinese and Western MA dissertations corpora in applied linguistics. Specifically, my
results indicated that 15 out of 16 samples from both Chinese and Western corpora were not transparent in their source use. Overall, Chinese corpus tended to be substantially less transparent in accounting for their source influence than Western corpus. These findings corroborate with previous literature indicating that Chinese EFL learners were more likely to fail to transparently account for their source use than that of their Western counterpart (Moore, 1997; Shi, 2004). The observed intradisciplinary gap may arguably have to do with the differences pertaining L1 vs. EFL social and educational contexts, difference in Chinese/Western universities’ education effectiveness and the mitigating effects of local standards on plagiarism management.

Second, the results verified that MA dissertations from both Chinese and Western cultural backgrounds contained textual plagiarism of varying degrees. Such verification lends support to Howard, Serviss., and Rodrigu’s (2010) conclusion that textual plagiarism was widely observed among both L1 and L2 students. It further rejects the claim that Chinese students’ plagiarism is culturally conditioned (Pennycook, 1996; Sowden, 2005). It is argued that Chinese supervisor-supervisees’ and Western supervisors’ seeming acceptability of textual plagiarism may be a result of their different understandings of plagiarism, their limited knowledge of Western notion of plagiarism or the mitigating effects of local universities’ standards on plagiarism identification and management.

Third, regarding the nature and frequency of textual plagiarism, the result revealed textual plagiarism was more severely and unequivocally practiced by postgraduates in Chinese corpus than in Western corpus. Such finding concurs with Shi’s (2004) and Li’s (2012) conclusion that source-acknowledging practice is more inadequate among students in China than in Western context. Such result also adds on previous literature suggesting that textual plagiarism was widely practiced by both L1 and L2 students, nevertheless, L2 (Chinese in particular) students were more severe in such performance (Campbell, 1990; Hull & Rose, 1989; Keck, 2006; Pecorari, 2003; Shi, 2004). The possible reasons for such marked difference may be, as previous literature (Ange"lil-Carter, 2000; Baurain, 2011; Gu & Brooks, 2008; Pecorari, 2003; Shi, 2004, 2006) suggests, due to the differences in plagiarism-related variables between Chinese and Western contexts (e.g., differed perception, standards of and levels of involvement in plagiarism; language proficiency; infrastructure constraint)
Fourth, concerning postgraduates’ perceived causes for their source misuse, Chinese supervisor-supervisee pairs’ self-reports, aside from verifying patchwriting model and partially supporting cross-cultural variance in the perception of plagiarism (see also in Howard et al., 2010; Hu & Lei, 2011; Liu, 2005; Pecorari, 2003, 2008; Shi, 2004, 2006), also converged on other five explanations. They were, students’ limited knowledge and understanding of Western citing convention, university’s/academics’/students’ low psychological engagement with academic guidelines, lack of access to sources, lack of systematic instruction, and students’ poor source-searching, selecting and documenting skills. Surprisingly, the widely suggested language proficiency was not perceived as a cause in this study. This finding highlights the mitigating effects that cross-culturally variant perception of plagiarism, local university’s regulating culture/infrastructure/pedagogical support on plagiarism have exerted in the occurrence of textual plagiarism.

Fifth, regarding disciplinary supervisor’s reaction to supervisees’ source misuses, my results indicated that Chinese supervisors generally held rejecting and condemnatory attitudes towards intentional plagiarism. Such finding, similar with Hu and Lei’s (2011), and Li’s (2012) observations, introduces further counterevidence towards the claim of Chinese culture’s acceptability of plagiarism. Second, Chinese supervisors, similar with Dong’s (1996) and Li’s (2012) reports, despite expressing disapproval of their supervisees’ identified source misuses, reported not to see any intentional plagiarism from supervisees and refused to make plagiarism judgment. This result corroborates with Pecorari’s (2003, 2008) observations that Western supervisors were also hesitant to make plagiarism-related judgment about their L2 supervisees’ source misuse. Chinese supervisors’ reaction to and their justification for supervisees’ source misuses further support the existence of unintentional plagiarism among Chinese postgraduates.

In sum, this study showed that an intradisciplinary gap in effective source-use did exist among mainland Chinese and Western-educated postgraduates. Such gap may be attributable to the difference among multiple variables between the two groups of students pertaining plagiarism such as cultural, developmental, contextual factors (e.g., institutional infrastructure, overall regulating culture regarding plagiarism). It is suggested that in the future discussion of student plagiarism, an integrated perspective is essential if we want to better understand and cope with it.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Overview

I start this chapter by situating the present topic amid the literature, pointing out gaps, and highlighting an urgency to conceptualize and research plagiarism in a new light. Then, based on a critical review of the complication involved in defining plagiarism, I propose a reconceptualization of plagiarism. In the section followed, I demonstrate briefly different perspectives to approach and account for plagiarism in the field of academic writing. In so doing, I aim to highlight the gap in the previous scholarship and to introduce my (integrative and contrastive) research orientation and approach. Finally, I reiterate the goal and significance of this study before concluding this chapter with an elucidation of this dissertation’s overall structure.

1.2 Background of This Study

Along with the reported rise of plagiarism in academic writing across higher institutions in this internet era, plagiarism has received increasing research attention across a variety of fields. In the field of academic literacy, a large number of well-cited monographs and research articles have been generated to add on this already-heated scholarly discussion (Angélil-Carter, 2000; Chandrasoma, Thompson & Pennycook, 2004; Flowerdew & Li, 2007a; Howard, 1999; Pecorari, 2003, 2006, 2008; Shi, 2004, 2006, 2010). Despite the abundance of literature, paradoxically, as many researchers have recently asserted (Marusa, 2003; Pecorari, 2008; Price, 2002; Shi, 2006), there
seems very little, we can say, that we know for sure about plagiarism. Such an uncertainty becomes even more acute with our deepening realization that the multi-dimensional, multi-factorial, heterogeneous and instable nature of plagiarism defy for a simple explanation, characterization, and approach.

As a result, appeals are voiced since long by researchers that for future studies, pluralistic, integrative, ideographic perspective and approach instead of singular, nomothetic ones need to be taken in either its reconceptualization or investigation (Chandrasoma et al., 2004; Flowerdew & Li, 2007b; Hu & Lei, 2011; Marusa, 2003). Nevertheless, in reality, probably because of complex operationalization required or varied research orientations, the above-proposed pluralistic perspectives have not yet been translated into general research, not to mention the institutional practice. A majority of studies still approached plagiarism from a monolithic manner. Specifically, they either failed to acknowledge the existence of multiple and unintentional plagiarism verified by numerous studies (Abasi, Akbari., & Graves, 2006; Chandrasoma et al., 2004; Currie, 1998; Hayes & Introna, 2005; Howard, 1995, 1999, 2000; Pecorari, 2003, 2008; Pennycook, 1996; Sherman, 1992; Shi, 2004, 2006, 2010), obstinately endorsing an absolute conceptualization (e.g., Deckert, 1993; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2005) or view plagiarism from a restrained or singular perspective such as cultural perspectives (e.g., Barker, 1997; Bloch, 2001; Kirkland & Saunders, 1991; Matalene, 1985; Russikoff et al., 2003; Sowden, 2005), developmental and/or enculturational perspectives (e.g., Howard, 1995; Pecorari, 2003), disciplinary perspectives (e.g., Dubois, 1988; Flowerdew & Li, 2007a; Hyland, 2000, 2003, 2004; Hult, 1996; Jones & Freeman, 2003; Krishnan & Kathpalia, 2002; Rymer, 1988; St. John, 1987) or contextual perspectives (Abasi et al., 2006, 2008a, 2008b; Gebril & Plakans, 2009), without realizing that these perspectives may possibly intertwine
intricately around the plagiarism concerned. Thus although insightful in their exploration of certain variable’s effect on plagiarism, there is ample space to doubt the findings generated might only be a fragmented representation.

To make some findings even less reliable is the fact that some studies (e.g., Deckert, 1995) relied on a conceptualization of plagiarism that seems problematic now, namely, viewing plagiarism unequivocally from an ethical grounding and disregarding its constructed, multiform, dynamic nature. Regarding the latter, existing research on the history of plagiarism, however, converged that plagiarism is an ever-evolving construct promoted only by Anglo-American culture and it takes on different forms in varied contexts (Howard, 2000, Pennycook, 1996; Price, 2002).

Furthermore, in terms of methodology, a large body of research mainly relied on survey, interview- or task-based methodologies to solicit students’ or faculties’ self-report of their perception, knowledge or judgment upon plagiarism. Only few studies (e.g., Flowerdew & Li, 2007a; Howard, Serviss., & Rodrigue, 2010; Pecorari, 2003; Shi, 2010) have actually consulted authentic writings. Even less research (e.g., Pecorari, 2003, 2008; Shi, 2010) has inquired students’ testimonial justifications while sampling their writings. Given the concern that reported perceptual recognition or possession of knowledge on plagiarism does not necessarily transfer into practice, thus, more text-based studies supplemented with discourse-based interview are in need.

In sum, discussion on plagiarism, while abundant, is not adequate in their construction of plagiarism, thus a reconceptualization that extends beyond moral absolutism is required. Moreover, considering restrained perspectives reflected in previous scholarship, studies that integrate all above perspectives are warranted. In response, this study plans a contrastive study of textual plagiarism between Chinese and Western MA dissertations from two universities in one discipline (Applied
1.3 Reconceptualizing Plagiarism

1.3.1 Why Needs a Reconceptualization for Plagiarism?

Running counter to the deceptive naturalization of plagiarism as a clear-cut entity as extensively evidenced in the initial plagiarism research and traditional plagiarism management in academic community, nowadays, researchers (Angélil-Carter, 2000; Briggs, 2003; Howard, 1995, 1999, 2000; Pecorari, 2001; Price, 2002; Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002) come to recognize that with its relativistic, dynamic, elusive, and multiform nature, the concept of plagiarism is “by no means easily defined” (Angélil-Carter, 2000, p. 17), especially under current internet-mediated writing environment. As further explicated by the research in this direction (Angélil-Carter, 2000; Howard, 1995, 1999, 2000; Maruca, 2003; Pennycook, 1996; Price, 2002; Scollon, 1995), challenges in clearly framing plagiarism, can be attributable to its various inherent tensions (e.g., its historical and cultural roots, inherent evolution) or external factors surrounding it (general conflation with cheating or destructive challenges posed by hypertexts).

In spite of these complicating factors, nevertheless, it is also important to note that etymologically, some of its core values still remain uncontested over time. For example, as noted by Bouman (2009), Chandrasegaran (2000) and Scollon (1995), despite an absence of consistent definition at present, a consensus of what could be categorized as plagiarism and what could not is still shared by researchers and writing instructors. Such a stability, as vividly described by Scollon (1995, p. 4) through making an analogy with pornography, is like “even though we cannot agree on specifics, we know it when
we see it.” Chandrasegaran (2000, p. 93) also asserted that within the boundary of specific writing genre, a degree of inter-agreement on what counts as plagiarism is reached among university professors. In this sense, it is still possible, if it may be difficult, to reach a working definition for plagiarism in a specific writing genre/context. For instance, Pecorari (2003, 2008), by providing a standard for fully appropriate source use, has offered us a new framework in operationalizing plagiarism in the genres of MA dissertation and PhD thesis. Given the acknowledged novelty and comprehensiveness of Pecorari’s (2003, 2008) framework for plagiarism more replicating studies with different writing samples or contexts are thus needed (Howard et al., 2010).

Furthermore, although scholars have since long called for a reconceptualization of plagiarism in both its theoretical and institutional definition, such an appeal, as highlighted by Lunsford and Ede (1994), Maruca (2003), and Valentine (2006) has not yet been widely applied into today’s institutional policy or general research. As such, to better research and manage plagiarism, an updated conceptualization of it is needed.

1.3.2 The Complications in Defining Plagiarism

1.3.2.1 Historical Roots

Historically, the notion of plagiarism, as an infringement of the author’s ownership of language and idea has not been always existed or universally-appreciated in the human history. To the contrary, it is, in fact, a modern construct that is arisen within the Anglo-Saxon context and reportedly precipitated by Copyright Law and Enlightenment Utilitarian Ideology in the 17th and 18th century (Angélil-Carter, 2000; Pennycook, 1996; Scollon, 1995; Sutherland-Smith, 2005). Such a historical root raises our awareness on two points: first, plagiarism is a relative construct rather than an absolute standard because it was arisen originally in modern European, it “[was] not part of a
premodern European world, and may not be part of a postmodern [European] world” (Pennycook, 1994, p. 280); second, the connotation of plagiarism, as many researchers (e.g., Angélil-Carter, 2000; Flowerdew & Li, 2007b; Pennycook, 1996; Price, 2002) have observed, is unstable and susceptible to constant evolution and variation over time across contexts. For example, Angélil-Carter (2000), on basis of a comparison of its various definitions from dictionaries of different times, recorded that numerous rounds of modifications have been made to its very definition. Similarly, Price (2002, p. 90), based on a review of conceptual discussion on plagiarism, asserted that, “plagiarism is not stable, but shifts across historical time periods, across cultures, across work places, even across academic disciplines.” Besides above wide-angle discussion on its evolving nature, other researchers have documented specific evidence as well (e.g., Price, 2002; Scollon, 1994). Scollon (1994, p. 43), for instance, found that both academic attribution practice and attributing content choice have exhibited substantial changes over time. Thus, given such a long history of the concept of plagiarism, definitional attempts of it hereafter needs to consider its occurring context and time.

Closely related to its historical root and further exacerbating its defining possibility is a reported ever-growing deconstructive challenge placed by current internet-mediated writing environment. It is widely concerned that the popularity of collaborative hypertext may arguably have deconstructed the relevance of the traditional notion of plagiarism (Boynton, 2001; Goldgar, 2003; Landow, 1992; Livingston-Weber, 1999; Maruca, 2003; Shi, 2006). One influential elucidation in this respect is that the incompatibility of web’s transience nature with the fixity of print text that is required for ‘real’ plagiarism (Maruca, 2003, pp. 83-84), may probably have transformed traditional notion of plagiarism and bring out “a new way of thinking about the creation and circulation of texts” (Maruca, 2003, pp. 83-84). Landow (1992), the most influential
researcher on the electronic text, has further posited that current prioritization of computer-mediated texts to print-based materials in research may have important consequences for the perception-change on textuality, originality or textual ownership. Similarly, Maruca (2003, pp. 81-82) doubted the relevance of traditional notion of authorship under current writing environment. Pecorari (2008) also maintained that collaborative nature of hypertext “makes authorship hard to distinguish.” In a similar vein, researchers also speculated that current, highly computer-/internet-mediated practice may have precipitated new forms of plagiarism (Maruca, 2003; Shi, 2006. Thus, postmodern skepticism on plagiarism’s relevance to the changed contemporary writing environment highlights a compelling need in reevaluating the applicability of previous concepts and beliefs in textual ownership in the contemporary society (Boynton, 2001; Goldgar, 2003; Landow, 1992; Maruca, 2003; Shi, 2006).

1.3.2.2 Cultural Roots

In terms of its cultural root, being grounded deeply in the Anglo-Saxon culture (Howard, 2000; Pennycook, 1994, 1996; Price, 2002; Scollon, 1994, 1995), the concept of plagiarism, as Swale and Feak (1994, p. 125) put it, “has nearly become an integral part of North American and Western European academic culture.” Thus, to promote it within Western contexts and towards Western-educated students is culturally undisputable. Nevertheless, when it comes to applying this concept to students from or in other non-western cultures (as evidenced by the reality that plagiarism has been increasingly upheld as a norm in academic communities all over the world), it rightly becomes a site for disputes. Since “the western-based plagiarism may change or lose its meaning across cultures” (Price, 2002, p. 89). Its denial of ‘other’ culture’s interpretations of acceptable textual practice forecasts its unacclimatization in
non-western cultures. As such, discussion on whether such a globalization of Western-originated plagiarism has done justice to other cultural practice abounds (Metalene, 1985; Pennycook, 1996; Scollon, 1995). Although, such discussion is beyond this study’s scope, this cultural root does exacerbate its defining possibility.

### 1.3.2.3 Conflation of All Kinds of Plagiarism as Deception

The fourth difficulty in defining plagiarism is a growing awareness of its inherent tensions in that it conflates all kinds of plagiarism unexceptionally as deception. As Marusa (2003, p. 79) brilliantly summarized, “the traditional view of plagiarism calls on perceptions of universal moral standard in casting all sorts of plagiarism as cheating and deception.” Such a sweeping conceptualization becomes increasingly problematic. Because it fails not only to acknowledge the existence of unintentional plagiarism which many studies have documented (Angélil-Carter, 2000; Howard, 1995, 1999; Metalene, 1985), but also to differentiate specifically its multiple forms in the localized determination and pedagogical treatments. Aside from such conflations, the determination of intent further contributes its defining difficulty. As intent is not a straightforward entity whose presence could be defied and proved conclusively all the time. Conversely, given its presence can only be known by the penetrator/writers himself, and, the writer in fear of plagiarism charges, may incline to “neutralize the moral inhibition to deviate” (Maruca, 2003, p. 77) through discursive practices, thus in most cases, such verifications are exceedingly difficult. Hence, it becomes imperative, as Pecorari (2008, p. 4) and Yeo (2007) have advanced, to explore plagiarism from other dimensions such as linguistic aspects. Embracing this appeal, instead of contending to either support or oppose that plagiarism is inherent improper or reprehensible, this study will explore plagiarism as primarily a linguistic phenomenon.
1.3.2.4 Plagiarism is Multiple in Forms

Another compounding factor in defining plagiarism is its multiplicity of forms. For example, in realizing the multiformness that umbrella term plagiarism can take on in practice, Howard (2000, p. 475) argued that “what we call plagiarism is, in fact, an unwieldy collection of very different actions.” Similarly, Shi (2006, p. 264) noted that “plagiarism is a term that has been used by different peoples to mean different things from simple errors in citation to patchwriting and to downloading or purchasing whole essays”. Flowerdew and Li (2007a, p. 161) further added that plagiarism functions at different levels on a continuum ranging from purposeful fraud such as resorting to paper mill at one end to accidental, careless improper citation at the other. Apart from wide-range theoretical discourse available in acknowledging its multiformness, the disconcerted operationalization of plagiarism in empirical studies further compounds its meaning. In the context of academic writing, Deckert (1993, p. 134), for example, operationalized plagiarism into a number of textual acts. In another recent study, Hu and Lei (2011), similar with Chandrasegaran (2000) and Wheeler (2009), conceptualized plagiarism only into two forms (blatant and subtle plagiarisms). As we have discussed previously, the form of plagiarism in authentic contexts could not be confined within these differentiations. Such a simplified operationalization thus limited its capacity in revealing plagiarism-panorama.

As such, instead of specifying plagiarism as a limited set of intertextual acts according to current ethical-laden, top-down construction of researchers, this study, following Pecorari (2003, 2008) and many other (Keck, 2010; Shi, 2010), argues that reconceptualizing plagiarism from a linguistic perspective from bottom-up is more beneficial and feasible. First, despite the probability that students may plagiarize by
integrating published idea through one’s own language, in reality, as proven by Pecorari (2003, 2008), students’ plagiarism is fundamentally a linguistic phenomenon. Second, local detections and determinations of plagiarism are primarily based on the similarity of linguistic features between the texts and their sources (Flowerdew & Li, 2007b; Pecorari, 2003, 2008). Third, referencing and citation at the heart are subjective and occluded, thus to examine the nature of intertextual relationship ground up from students’ authentic writing would potentially generate much deeper insights. Fourth, to examine plagiarism as a linguistic phenomenon rather than absolute moral transgression has the potential to open up a new space for pedagogy.

1.3.3 Plagiarism in This Study

1.3.3.1 Plagiarism as a Linguistic Phenomenon

This research focuses on depicting and comparing the natures and scenarios of textual plagiarism among MA dissertations from two cultural/institutional backgrounds. Inspired by Pecorari (2003, 2008), it will explore plagiarism from a linguistic perspective and treat it as primarily textual and compositional practice without committing that such act are inherently inappropriate or condemnable.

Considering its contentious nature, if is very difficult, if not impossible to synthesize all considerations on and of plagiarisms in its operationalization in the academic writing. Thus, to operationalize it from a reverse perspective (by setting up a standard for fully appropriate source use, source uses that are found to be discrepant can be casted as textual plagiarism) seem more viable (Pecorari, 2003, 2008). Investigated in this way, potential plagiaristic feature from authentic writing might be further revealed. Moreover, to answer whether a text is fully appropriate in its source use and thereby free from accusation of plagiarism seems arguably more easily and less contentious.
1.3.3.2 Fully Transparent Source Use

So what kind of source use can be perceived as fully appropriate? A comprehensive review of literature (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Charles, 2003; Groom, 2000; Hyland, 2000; Swale, 1998) shows that one consensus reached within and across academic disciplines, as Groom (2000, p. 15) has synthesized, is that readers are “clear at any given point whose ‘voice’ is ‘speaking’ in that text.” In other words, the writer is held responsible for accurately indicating to readers the relationship between citing texts and cited source whenever necessary. The reason for emphasizing the writer’s transparent indication of its influence lies in that without the writer’s clear signal, the subjective and sometimes occluded nature of citing behavior (Pecorari, 2003, 2006, 2008; Shi, 2006; Swales, 1996) may mask the real textual relationship between the source and new text. Since for readers, the only source to infer such relationship is through decoding metatextual devices provided. Once no such indication is provided, the nature of source use will be possibly obscured.

Then, what can be deemed as a fully appropriate attribution in academic writing? According to Pecorari (2003), in principle, an accurate attribution can be implicated at least in three (sometimes overlapping) aspects: “(a) the identity of the text’s origins; (b) the language of the text; and (c) the content of a source” (p. 324). Any misrepresentation in one of these aspects may be susceptible to plagiarism accusation. Specifically, a reader would make at least three assumptions on the relationship between the citing text and cited sources while reading: first, language that is not signaled as quotation is the writer’ originality in both content and form. Second, if no citation is signaled, both language and content are the writer’s originality. Third, the writer has personally consulted the source he/she cited unless otherwise specified (e.g.,

This study will adopt Pecorari’s (2003) framework of appropriate source use in its data analysis.

1.4 Perspectives on Plagiarism

1.4.1 Perspectives Available in the Literature

Plagiarism has been growingly recognized as a complex phenomenon (Chandrasoma et al., 2004; Howard, 1996, 2000; Marusa, 2003; Pennycook, 1996; Price, 2002; Russikoff et al., 2003). Different variables and contextual factors have been reportedly intertwined intricately on the issue of plagiarism. Russikoff et al. (2003, p. 109), for example, have argued that plagiarism is affected by multiple factors (e.g., historical, political, economic, social, pedagogical, and technological influences). Similarly, Chadrasoma et al. (2004, p. 172) have noted that plagiarism is concerned with not only ‘question of language’, but also ‘identity, education, and knowledge.’ In view of its multi-dimensional nature, multiple perspectives have been taken in discussing this issue. These perspectives consist of cultural, developmental /enculturational, disciplinary and contextual perspectives.

1.4.1.1 Cultural Perspectives

Cultural perspectives concur that cultures with different rhetoric traditions and value systems may perceive and apply plagiarism differently. A large body of studies have been conducted to examine whether students’ perceptions, knowledge or applied recognition of plagiarism are culturally-variant or culturally conditioned (e.g., Bloch, 2001; Chandrasegaran, 2000; Deckert, 1993; Dryden, 1999; Liu, 2005; Phan, 2006;
Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2005; Roig, 1997; Russikoff et al., 2003; Shi, 2004; Sowden, 2003; Wheeler, 2009). Heated debates have been held on Chinese culture in particular. To date, despite the absence of a definite answer from theoretical discussion and empirical evidence, these studies do suggest a general awareness of cross-cultural variances in the attitude, perception or practice of plagiarism in some Asian cultures as compared to that of Western style, Chinese culture in particular (Deckert, 1993; Liu, 2005; Matalene, 1985; Pennycook, 1994, 1996; Sapp, 2002; Scollon, 1995). While these findings are valuable in bringing to fore the potential cultural variance between Chinese and Western-educated students’ perception and knowledge on plagiarism, nevertheless, except anecdotal description or brief sampling of their unacceptable source misuse, little systemic data-driven textual evidence has been searched to verify whether such a cultural variance is realized in students’ authentic writing. Thus further contrastive text-based study with more vigorous research design to investigate the culture’s role in plagiarism between Chinese and Western students is needed.

1.4.1.2 Developmental/Enculturational Perspectives

Developmental or enculturational perspectives on plagiarism agree on one position that the concept plagiarism as well as students’ perception, knowledge or applied practice of it is all dynamic and developmental in nature. One developmental perspective which is a historical one hypothesizes that previous studies on plagiarism may be historically correct, but their finding may possibly be inaccurate in characterizing its contemporary situation. Further studies are thus needed to explore the contemporary scenario of plagiarism in both Western and nonwestern contexts (Flowerdew & Li, 2007b).

Another developmental perspective-Patchwriting model hypothesizes that students’
source misuse, their perception and attitude towards plagiarism is developmental in nature and is constantly subject to change along with a writer’s cognitive development. A substantial body of research has examined this perspective in relation to students’ perception and knowledge on plagiarism (e.g., Abasi et al., 2006; Angélil-Carter, 2000; Currie, 1998; Gu & Brooks, 2008; Howard, 1995, 1999; Hu & Lei, 2011; Ouellette, 2008; Pecorari, 2008; Shi, 2004, 2006). Despite attitudinal, conceptual and discoursal support generate for Patchwriting model from the above literature, only limited studies have verified patchwriting in student’s authentic writing within Western contexts. (Campbell, 1990; Johns & Mayes, 1990; Keck, 2006; Pecorari, 2003; Shi, 2004). Few studies have explored patchwriting and source misuse among mainland Chinese students (whose writing practice is arguably more representative of Chinese writing practice than Chinese ESL students studying in a Western context). Even less scarce is the research that has taken a comparative orientation in comparing mainland Chinese postgraduate’s source misuse in MA dissertations with that of their counterparts in the Anglo-American context.

1.4.1.3 Disciplinary Perspectives

Disciplinary perspectives hypothesize that students’ and disciplinary professors’ perception, attitude, applied practice and even approach regarding plagiarism may vary across disciplines (e.g., Abasi et al., 2006; Angélil-Carter, 2003; Borg, 2009; Chandrasegaran, 2000; Flowerdew & Li, 2007a, 2007b; Hult, 1996; Hyland, 1999; Pecorari, 2006; Yeo, 2007). Despite the above findings in supporting a disciplinary difference in the perception, knowledge on plagiarism, nevertheless, there is some counter-evidence (Chandrasegaran, 2000; Wheeler, 2009) in denying the existence of disciplinary difference in the perception, knowledge on plagiarism. Moreover, the
question whether discipline-specific view on plagiarism has been engrained in L1 and L2 students’ disciplinary writing remains. As we need to be mindful that students’ reported discipline-specific perception and knowledge of plagiarism does not transfer automatically into their actual avoidance of plagiarism in practice. Thus future studies examining students’ intertextual practice in their own specialist discipline writing are needed (Flowerdew & Li, 2007b, pp. 442-443).

1.4.1.4 Contextual Perspectives

Contextual perspectives denote that various institution-related/-specific contextual factors are also critical in the occurrence of plagiarism. These contextual factors include such as immediate educational context (Gebril & Plakans, 2009), institutional regulation policy or pedagogical culture (Abasi et al., 2006, 2008a, 2008b; Hu & Lei, 2011), exposure to Western styled academic culture (Abasi et al., 2006; Song-Turner, 2008), English-medium academic training (Lei, 2010). Moreover, institutional reinforcement culture (e.g., absence or presence of honor code, intuitional guideline or policy or pedagogical context) is also suggested to, by closely interacting with other factors, have played an important role in the occurrence of students’ unacceptable intertextual behaviors (Abasi et al., 2006, 2008a, 2008b; Devlin & Gray, 2007; Hu & Lei, 2011; Love & Simmons, 1997; McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2002). Despite aforementioned evidence in recognizing the specific institution’s intervening effects on plagiarism, few studies have consciously considered or controlled its interference. Thus more research with rigorous control of institutional factor is warranted.
1.5 Objective, Significance and Structure of the Study

1.5.1 Objective of the Study

The above review shows that several issues require further clarification and examination. First, despite enormous attention devoted to plagiarism from cultural perspectives, cultural variance and receptivity view of plagiarism for Chinese culture in particular, nevertheless, given the dichotomous findings, it is still unclear whether and to what extent cultural variance and cultural permissibility claims of plagiarism is valid for Chinese culture. Second, although numerous studies have observed developmental and enculturation effects on L1 and/or L2 writers’ knowledge and/or perceptions and/or applied recognition and practice of plagiarism, a majority of them have focused on L1 and L2 students studying in Western contexts (Sun, 2009). It is unknown whether or to what extent developmental effect observed in these contexts can be extrapolated to students in mainland China where a somewhat different convention may be in place as compared with that of Western styled convention. Moreover, though it has suggested that both Western and Chinese construct of plagiarism may be subject to constant change in wake of globalization of scholarship and internet era, little empirical research has verified it. Third, although cross-disciplinary difference (e.g., between soft and hard disciplines) on plagiarism has been reported in Western context, few studies have explored the nature of source misuse in one discipline through cross-cultural comparison. Even less studies have compared the nature of source misuse among Western-educated and mainland Chinese postgraduates in Applied Linguistics. Fourth, few studies have purposely controlled the mediating effects of immediate institutional culture towards plagiarism by restraining the number of institution involved. Lastly, despite multiple perspectives available,
limited studies have adopted an integrative perspective in their research.

To address the gaps, this study conceptualizes a contrastive, mixed-methods examination of textual plagiarism among Chinese and Western MA dissertations in applied linguistics from an integrative perspective. It aims to map up the nature, and frequencies of source misuse between Chinese and Western MA dissertations. In so doing, it aims to test the culturally-variant/culturally conditioned explanations against Chinese students’ writing practice. Moreover, in exploring causes for Chinese student’s source misuse, this study attempts to come up with some pedagogical suggestions.

1.5.2 The Significance of the Study

This study is important because it can contribute an integrated perspective on our understanding of plagiarism and patchwriting. It has the potential to shed light on debates over the applicability of culturally-different and culturally-conditioned explanations against Chinese postgraduates’ source misuse. Second, it will provide insight on the issue whether and how mainland Chinese postgraduates patchwrite in their dissertation. This is particularly important as a majority of studies on Chinese students have been conducted in Anglophone or ESL contexts. Third, results of this study may help clarify inconclusive findings from previous studies as it adopts a mixed-methods to investigating plagiarism in students’ authentic writing. Finally, results are also expected to illuminate on causes for plagiarism/patchwriting from Chinese postgraduates’ perspective, thus contributing to better inform pedagogical change and offer remedial instructional support to postgraduates’ dissertation writings.

1.5.3 The Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation falls into six chapters. In Chapter 1, I situate the current topic in the literature, briefly explaining its background, research approach, objective and
significance. In the Chapter 2, I review relevant literature from five perspectives (cultural, developmental, disciplinary, and contextual) in depth. From there, I identify a series of gaps and highlight the necessity for present undertaking. Then I will present research questions this study aims to explore. In Chapter 3, I detail the methodology utilized. Following this, in Chapter 4, I will present results, and interpret these results by drawing on previous literature. In the conclusion Chapter 5, I will restate this study and its major findings before discussing its limitations, implications and suggesting some lines of recommendations for future research. In the next chapter, I will discuss in detail the relevant literature that has inspired the current study.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter intends to review in depth the body of literature from which this study is evolved. Specifically, it firstly reviews the literature on the cultural perspective of plagiarism, with particular bents towards conflicting findings surrounding cross-cultural variation and cultural acceptability claims, and overall problematic conflating tendency shared by this strand of research: a general conflation of the perceived attitude on and knowledge of plagiarism with the student’s avoidance and breach of plagiarism in practice.

Then it follows with a review of literature of the various developmental and enculturational perspectives. There, the attention will be firstly given to the literature discussing the dynamic and fluid nature of Western construct of authorship and plagiarism, and that of Chinese academic conventions and its suggested shift towards Western convention in the wake of globalization of scholarship. In so doing, I aim to underline the paucity of empirical evidence in verifying such shifted supposition. Secondly, the attention will be given to the literature that has reportedly aligned with Howard’s (1995) Patchwriting model where inappropriate source use is argued to be not necessarily involving moral transgression but rather representing a novice writer’s need to learn to write in an unfamiliar discourse. Here, my review further highlights the rarity of empirical evidence in examining patchwriting (its existence, nature and frequency) among Mainland Chinese postgraduates. Thirdly, review attention will be given to enculturational perspective. Researchers working with this perspective argue
that students’ prior perception, knowledge or textual practice on plagiarism may come closer to target discourse community’s expectation along with their growing academic ability or increasing enculturation in the target community. Here, my review intends to underscore the intensity of research among undergraduate and rarity of scholarship in examining enculturational effects at a higher academic level such as postgraduate.

With that in place, this chapter continues reviewing the literature that has examined plagiarism from a disciplinary perspective, highlighting previous scholarship’s general neglect and limited coverage to disciplinary factors in their investigation of Chinese postgraduates in soft disciplines. Following that, it goes on reviewing the literature that has discussed the variables such as institutional regulation culture and prior exposure to western styled academic culture’s intervening effect in the research of plagiarism. Here, I particularly underscore an observed general ignorance of the interference of discipline, institution regulation and prior exposure to Western academic culture in the previous research of plagiarism. Finally, this chapter will be ended with a summary of research gaps and research questions that this study aspires to address.

2.2 Cultural Perspective on Plagiarism

2.2.1 Cross-Culturally Variant or Culturally Conditioned Views on Plagiarism?

Cultural perspective has been repeatedly taken and foregrounded in the discussion of plagiarism in academic writing (e.g., Abasi et al., 2006; Bacha & Bahous, 2010; Barker, 1997; Bloch, 2001; Buranen, 1999; Chandrasegaran, 2000; Deckert, 1993; Dryden, 1999; Gururajan & Roberts, 2004; Kirkland & Saunders, 1991; Liu, 2005; Matalene, 1985; Maxwell et al., 2008; Pennycook, 1996; Phan, 2006; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2005; Sapp, 2002; Scollon, 1995; Shei, 2006; Shi, 2004, 2006; Sowden, 2005; Wheeler, 2009). Specifically, this line of research hypothesizes that cultures with
different rhetoric traditions and value systems may perceive and apply Western-based plagiarism guideline differently (Insull & Craig, 2003; Pennycook, 1996; Scollon, 1995; Sowden, 2005).

To date, although both theoretical discussion and empirical evidence available seem to be mixed to offer a definite answer, these studies do seem to suggest a general awareness of potential self-reported cross-cultural variances in the attitude, perception or practice of plagiarism in the academic culture of some non-western cultures (Asian cultures in particular), such as Chinese (Deckert, 1993; Liu, 2005; Matalene, 1985; Pennycook, 1994, 1996; Sapp, 2002; Scollon, 1995), Japanese (Dryden, 1999; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2005; Wheeler, 2009), Singaporean (Chandrasegaran, 2000) and Vietnam academic culture (Phan, 2006). While these findings are valuable in raising our awareness about potential cultural variance among Chinese and Western-educated students in their perception and knowledge on plagiarism, nevertheless, except anecdotal description or brief sampling of students’ unacceptable textual appropriation, little systemic data-driven textual evidence has been searched to verify whether such cultural variance is realized in students’ actual textual practice. Thus, further text-based study with more vigorous design is needed to explore the cross-culture variance view on plagiarism between Chinese and Western-educated students. Aside from this gap, what also left unknown is on the one hand what is the situation like for other non-western cultures, on the other hand, whether those above-reported variances on plagiarism (different perceptions and practices of plagiarism between Chinese and Western culture in particular) are indeed culturally conditioned. In attempt to clarify these unresolved questions, researchers have approached them mainly from two lenses, theoretical discussion and empirical exploration.
2.2.2 Conceptual Findings on Culturally Conditioned and Cross-Culturally Variant Views of Plagiarism

With respect to the conceptual discussion on cultural perspective, a debate has been initiated over cultural acceptability of plagiarism. Researchers such as Insull and Craig (2003), Matalene (1985), Pennycook (1996), Scollon (1995) and Sutherland-Smith (2005) strongly endorse the view that L2 writers whose native cultural socialization and educational experience are different from that of Western academia (Chinese or Asia cultures in particular) may be blinded by their cultural training in recognizing, practicing and valuing Western styled regulation on plagiarism, thereby exhibiting a tolerant attitude toward plagiarism in practice.

Following the lead of such a cultural orientation, culture’s role in the difference of Chinese or Asian student writers’ view and practice of plagiarism in relation to Western styled expectation has been enormously generalized thereafter (Buranen, 1999; Deckert, 1993; Pennycook, 1994, 1996; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2005; Scollon, 1995; Sowden, 2005). Elaborations abound in the literature, for example, Metalene (1985) blamed her Chinese students’ inappropriate source use on the traditional Chinese literacy practice of memorizing classic and model texts. In agreement with Metalene (1985), Kirkland and Saunders (1991) claimed that students from Chinese or Asian cultures where literacy practices such as rote learning and memorization are privileged are prone to repeat from sources. Similarly, Gregg (1996) attributed his students’ inappropriate source use to the commonly-observed Chinese student’s writing strategy of using famous person’s well-known saying. Elaborating on this respect, Barker (1997, p. 115) posited that students trained under ‘collective culture’ might see plagiarism as a positive collaboration with the source which was likely to lead learning. Taken these unverified suppositions further, Sowden (2005), by drawing on heavily ESOL students’
Explanatory accounts for their plagiarizing behaviors (e.g., Insull & Craig, 2003; Pennycook, 1996; Pecorari, 2001), advanced a claim that Chinese culture or Asian cultures which value the “respect for authority, communal ownership and open access of knowledge as common heritage” (Shi, 2006, p. 265) are usually “less likely to discourage copying and appropriation of ideas from other sources without acknowledgement” (Sowden, 2005, p. 228).

Hereto, an unverified essentialization of Chinese culture’s acceptability of plagiarism is frequently taken over by researchers in advancing new arguments. Consequently, a cultural stereotyping against Chinese student writer’s attitude and writing practice in relation to western styled plagiarism convention has been frequently witnessed (e.g., Kirkland & Saunders, 1991; Matalene, 1985; Russikoff, Fucalora., & Salkauskiene, 2003). For example, Russikoff et al. (2003), ignoring that American students in their study were also found to be confused about Western concept of plagiarism, discriminatorily made the following comment against Chinese students in their cross-national study of university students’ perceptions and practice of plagiarism: “considering the cultural values and pedagogical practices of the People’s Republic of China, it is entirely understandable that less than half (43%) of the Chinese students consider copying to be plagiarism” (p. 112).

In a need to guide against such an inaccurate essentialization of Chinese culture and its writing practice, Liu (2005), relying on his own insider/outsider perspective, rejected Sowden’s thesis of Chinese culture’s acceptability of plagiarism as both biased and flawed. He argued that plagiarism is deemed unacceptable and immortal for a very long history in China. Such non-tolerant view can find wide expression in the derogatory connotations surrounding the two Chinese equivalences for plagiarism (e.g., ‘piao qie and ‘cao xi’) and the prohibitive discourses against plagiarism conveyed in many local
Chinese writing textbooks (Liu, 2005, p. 235). In support of Liu’s argument, Phan (2006) further contributed that “despite a different perception and practice of plagiarism in Vietnam as compared with Western regulation, plagiarism is not at all acceptable in Vietnam” (p. 76). Agreeing with Phan and Liu, Shei (2006) further critiqued the problematic essentialization disclosed by the literature that plagiarism, like behaviors were taught or encouraged in Chinese academic community. Similarly, drawing on her empirical evidence, Pecorari (2003) acknowledged that cultural issues could not be the only factor at work in the explanation of plagiarism in that it also occurred among English-L1 academic writers (p. 319). Thus, it is clear from the above review that findings from theoretical discussion seem inadequate to support the culturally-variant view on plagiarism on one hand, and inconclusive and contradictory for the cultural conditioning view on plagiarism on the other hand.

2.2.3 Empirical Findings on Cross-Culturally Variant or Culturally Conditioned Views of Plagiarism

Aside from indeterminate findings generated from theoretical discussion, mixed results from empirical research further complicate the scenario (e.g., Chandrasegaran, 2000; Chandrasoma et al., 2004; Deckert, 1993; Dryden, 1999; Hu & Lei, 2011; Keck, 2007; Lei, 2010; Maxwell et al., 2008; Pecorari, 2003, 2006; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2005; Russikoff et al., 2003; Shi, 2004, 2006; Wheeler, 2009). Due to large variation in research methodology (survey, text-based analysis, task-based analysis, case study and interview) and focus, accurate synthesis of these empirical is hard to achieve. Nevertheless, this body of research findings does seem to betray a growing consensus that cultural conditioning should not be the sole or at least not the major culprit for plagiarism (Gu & Brooks, 2008; Liu, 2005; Pecorari, 2003; Phan, 2006; Shi, 2006).

Considerable studies have found that both English-L1 and L2 students tend to be
confused about what constitutes inappropriate textual appropriation (e.g., Bloch, 2001; Currie, 1998; Dryden, 1999; Flowerdew & Li, 2007a; Gu & Brooks, 2008; Howard, 1999; Hu & Lei, 2011; Hull & Rose, 1989; Jia, 2008; Keck, 2007; Lei, 2010; Marshall & Garry, 2006; Maxwell et al., 2008; Russikoff et al., 2003; Roig, 1997; Shi, 2006; Youmans & Evans, 2000). For example, Maxwell et al. (2008) has observed that both local Australian and international students of Asian backgrounds seemed to be confused about plagiarism and the two groups did not seem to differ significantly in their understanding of plagiarism. However, what should be noted is that regarding Asian or Chinese, this study, like other similar studies (Currie, 1998; Keck, 2007; Shi, 2006), employed Chinese L2 students who have been studying in the Western-based universities, thus failed to eliminate the compounding effect of possible enculturation that might take place as a result of their continued immersion within that Western academic culture. Simply put, such an immersion or training experienced by L2 Chinese students may have assimilated these students’ attitudes and practices of plagiarism toward that of Western expectation. As rightly pointed out by Lei (2010), lengthy experience or training of avoiding plagiarism received in Western styled academic culture has greatly assimilated their L2 Chinese English teachers’ perceptions of plagiarism closer to the targeted Western regulation.

Similarly, in a survey and interview study on 77 Japanese college students’ perceptions of plagiarism, Wheeler (2009) also concluded that his Japanese learners shared a similar awareness of and unease with plagiarism with their counterparts in Western based universities. On basis of it, he rejected the cultural conditioning view on Japanese culture. And he speculated that a lack of experience or training in source use rather than the cultural conditioning should be held responsible for observed Japanese students’ source misuse. Despite the above research effort in rejecting such a culturally
conditioned view of plagiarism placed upon L2 students from Asian cultures, given L2 student’ lower language proficiency and greater degree of unfamiliarity and distance with the “socioculturally and intertextually constructed [western] academic conventions, as well as the traditions, values and beliefs embedded in the broader social and cultural context in which they operate” (Gu & Brooks, 2008, p. 340), it seems that L2 students are still in a more vulnerable position to be charged as plagiarizing than their English-L1 counterparts. A retrospect of culturally-conditioning view on plagiarism readily reveals its limitation of presuming that English-L1 student will not plagiarize. Such assumption may not, nevertheless, be the case. In effect, on the contrary, English-L1 student also expressed concerns on the unavoidability of plagiarism, as documented in Hull and Rose (1989), Howard (1995) and Paterson et al. (2003, p. 147). For example, Paterson et al. (2003) commented that even to English-L1 students, “plagiarism (still) seems to be an "academic quirk that is difficult to avoid,” and “plagiarism is something everyone says you shouldn't do it, but everyone does it” (Paterson et al., 2003, p. 152). Other studies that compared English-L1 students with L2 students (Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2005; Shi, 2004, 2006) also indicated that participants from both cultural backgrounds expressed a degree of common confusion about how to cite source information appropriately.

Moreover, previous studies also suggest that aside from culture or education socialization, variables such as language proficiency (e.g., Campbell, 1990), academic discipline (e.g., Flowerdew & Li, 2007a, 2007b), academic level (e.g., Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2005), identity, student-teacher power relationship, pedagogical context (e.g., Abasi et al., 2006) are also important motivating factors underlying the occurrence of plagiarism. Concerning these variables, few studies have been conducted with a conscious awareness or attempted control of their compounding effects, as a result, the reliability of their results are caught into question and no definitive conclusion could be
drawn about the culture’s role on plagiarism.

Further adding complexity to the picture is the fact that a considerable studies (e.g., Dryden, 1999; Russikoff et al., 2003) have presumably claimed that certain cultures tend to be permissible with plagiarism despite the fact that their research evidence indicated the opposite. As shown in Dryden’s (1999) problematic reasoning reflected in the evaluation of his own finding (the sampled Japanese students reported negative attitude towards plagiarism) as unreliable in that his Japanese students’ reported negative responses towards plagiarism “were often too similar to be believed” (p. 76).

2.2.4 Weaknesses of Previous Plagiarism Research Adopting Cultural Perspectives

In sum, most reviewed findings seem to indicate that cultural conditioning view on plagiarism against L2 students, Chinese students particularly is arguably flawed and unable to explain amply the underpinnings for plagiarism in academic writing. One weakness with culturally conditioned view is that it bases on a premise that writers of English background will not demonstrate source misuse or confusions about plagiarism, which is not necessarily the case. As documented by researchers such as Angélil-Carter (2000), Hull and Rose (1998), Howard (1993) and Prior (1998), academic writers from English language background also exhibited source misuse and confusion about the notion of plagiarism. Moreover, regarding Asian cultures’ acceptability of plagiarism, cases of source misuse are identified among students from other cultures, such as German, Italian, African, Greek backgrounds (e.g., Angélil-Carter, 2000; Currie, 1998; Ivanicˇ, 1998; Pecorari, 2003; Sherman, 1992; Shi, 2006).

The second weakness with such cultural-conditioned argument is that it yields few pedagogical implications or solutions (Currie, 1998; Deckert, 1993; Hyland, 2001; Liu, 2005; Yamada, 2002). As pointed out by Liu (2005, p. 239-240), few researchers who
have made cultural conditioning argument propose that students who were prone to plagiarize because of cultural conditioning should be allowed to plagiarize. Instead, they often ended by treating it as a language and writing development problems. Moreover, as cautioned by Hyland (2001), writing teachers’ oversensitivity to ‘L2 students’ feelings’ and reported “understanding [of the] potential cultural differences” (p. 381) may perhaps stop them from demonstrating explicitly to students the inappropriate source use in their essay. Similarly, Yamada (2003) denoted that teachers’ ‘oversensitivity’ to cultural issues on plagiarism “prevents effective teaching of the skills ESL/EFL writers need to avoid committing plagiarism” (p. 255). In this sense, culturally conditioned view may arguably have overstated the culture’s role such that there is no space or possibility left for a curing pedagogy. Such a concern is well echoed Kumaravadivelu’s (2003, p. 717) remark, “when ESOL students do not behave the way we (western academics) expect them to, we readily explain their behavior in terms of their culture and cultural stereotypes” (cited from Liu, 2005, p. 235).

The third weakness is that despite assumedly more homogeneous negative or condemnatory attitude conveyed by English-L1 students than that of L2 (Chinese in particular) students of varied cultural backgrounds, little research has compared English-L1 students’ attitude towards and practice of plagiarism with that of EFL Chinese learners in one study, thus this culturally-conditioned view against Chinese students was only an assumption that by far received little empirical support.

Moreover, one large backdrop for studies in this line is that they tend to conflate unacceptable attitude towards plagiarism with the recognition and avoidance of plagiarism in practice. However, whether students’ reported unacceptable perception of plagiarism will be translated into textual practice is actually a jump of faith that remains unexplored. As researchers such as Risquez et al. (2011) showed that there was
always a mismatch between students’ self-reported unacceptability of plagiarism and their actual textual practice. In this connection, Newstead, Franklyn-Stokes and Armstead (1996) and Pickard (2006) further critiqued the reliability of findings grounded on a sole reliance of students’ self-report. They argued that the idea or approach of asking survey participants to provide honest reports of their own dishonesty was itself paradoxical. As such, in clarifying culture’s role on plagiarism, future studies need to rely on multiple instruments, such as self-report supplemented with actual textual evidence to triangulate findings. In this respect, to my knowledge, Shi (2006) has conducted a cross-cultural comparison of students’ attitude towards plagiarism. However, due to its research focus, several cultural backgrounds (each with a small sample size) are involved and actual textual evidence of informants is not checked. Thus, though findings on students’ attitude toward plagiarism from various cultural backgrounds are discussed, its applicability to the current topic is quite limited.

Lastly, this line of studies does little in helping researchers understand plagiarism’s nature in authentic academic writing in a specific discipline. As suggested by Flowerdew and Li (2007b) after a review of literature on that relationship, “there is a need to study textual borrowing as part of the process of performing real composing tasks in various disciplinary and professional communities” (p. 176).

To sum up, dichotomous findings generated from both theoretical and empirical lenses regarding cultural variance or receptivity view of plagiarism seem to project a need for a nuanced approach in investigating the relationship between plagiarism and culture (Pecorari, 2003). In response, this study aims to prime its investigation within only two cultures, namely, Western (North American university) and mainland Chinese postgraduates from two universities in one discipline, and to examine cultural perspective from a contrastive dimension. Moreover, this study will take account of
authentic textual evidence while exploring student’s perceived relationship between their culture and perceived attitude and knowledge of plagiarism. Hopefully, with those improvements in research focus and methodology, more empirical evidence will be generated to test cultural variance or acceptability claims on plagiarism.

2.3 Developmental and Enculturational Perspectives on Plagiarism

An alternative perspective in looking at plagiarism is a developmental or enculturational one. In a need to acknowledge the cross-cultural variance, at the same time to guide against cultural stereotype, currently more and more researchers on plagiarism tend to take up developmental perspectives. Various developmental and enculturational perspectives agree on one position that the notion of plagiarism itself as well as students’ perception, knowledge or practice of it are all dynamic and fluid in nature, thus more rigorous and nuanced research design either from research orientation or methodology are needed to capture the its fluidity and dynamic nature.

2.3.1 Historical Perspective on Plagiarism

One developmental perspective on plagiarism is, strictly speaking, a historical perspective. Such perspective holds that the concept of plagiarism—the overwhelming emphasis on the original author and authorial right is in fact not a universally-shared belief but rather a historical product of Anglo-Saxon society, which can be traced down to “the rise of the printing press during the 15th-16th centuries and the subsequent birth of copyright law in England and United States during 17th-18th centuries” (Flowerdew & Li, 2007b, p. 162). Accordingly, the concept of plagiarism is susceptible to constant changes and evolution along with turns of different historical times in the Western context, not to mention other adopting contexts. Previous studies on plagiarism may be historically correct in depicting plagiarism scenario, but it may
possibly be inaccurate in charactering the contemporary situation. As a result, the question arises, what is plagiarism like in the contemporary era in the Western context?

Further complicating this historical perspective is a reported changing nature of Chinese academic convention and its observed adoption of Western style in the era of globalization. Subsequently, questions arise, what is plagiarism like in a foreign country such as China, specifically, what is it like in mainland Chinese university?

Theoretical discussion in this line have generally realized the fluid and dynamic nature of plagiarism, nevertheless, little updated empirical exploration has addressed the aforementioned questions. What follows is a separated review of literature in this respect, focusing firstly on the elusive nature of plagiarism in the Western context, secondly on the shift nature of Chinese Academic culture. Through such a review, this author intends to further reinforce the need to consider the historical dimension of plagiarism. Moreover, she aims to address the gap, that is, whether the dominance of hypertexts in this internet age has influenced or transformed plagiarism in recent years? What does plagiarism look like in both Western and Chinese university contexts now?

As regards to the literature adopting historical perspective in the investigation of plagiarism in Western context, Pennycook (1996) noted that Western-originated concept of plagiarism has gone through several phases of development (a cycle of birth, redefinition and deconstruction) along with the developing understanding of authorship in Western history. According to his review, three distinct phases of authorship can be identified chronologically (pre-modern era, modern era, and post-modern era), namely, pre-modern view of authorship (this view postulates that concept of authorship does not belong to particular individual but rather to God himself, as a direct consequence, a communal ownership of knowledge is privileged at this era), modern view of authorship (a shifted understanding on authorship emerged after Enlightenment brings forth a
romantic notion of original author and capitalist notion of private property, replacing
God with humans as the source of imagination. Notably, the idea of plagiarism makes
its appearance at this time) and postmodern view on authorship (a post-modern view
rejects romantic notion of original author but supports “text itself is the creator”
(Foucault, 1977, cited from Introna et. al., 2003).

Despite the advancement of postmodern view on authorship in theory, modernist
view of authorship is still holding the ground in the contemporary practice. All these
ever-changing understandings in authorship have in turn fed on the evolution of the
concept of plagiarism. As observed by Bloch (2001), Howard (1995) and Shi (2006),
Western ideal of autonomous author is continuously subverted by the increasing
popularity of hypertexts because the boundary between the originator and plagiarist
becomes blurred as readers and writers collaborate in the text creation. In other words,
by making texts electronically accessible and revisable, the internet precipitates a shift
of the beneficiary of authorship from a previous individual or private intellectual
property towards a shared or communal property. In this sense, as argued by Pennycook
(1996) and Shi (2006), Western plagiarism, originally created for printed texts, has yet
to be explored for its applicability to hypertext both theoretically and practically.
Whether the hypertext has transformed a society’s belief on textual ownership is only a
supposition of scholars that needed empirical verification.

Regarding the shifting trend of Western academic conventions revealed by
non-western contexts, research in this camp has devoted much discussion on Chinese
EFL context, and elucidated such shifting trend mainly from four levels of, perception,
textual practice, pedagogy and policy. At the level of perception, it has been reported
that plagiarism, though not accepted in China in the past, is now considered as theft of
intellectual property (Li & Xiong, 1996). Bloch’s (2001) study also reported that recent
graduates from Chinese background similarly recognized that academic writing was an intellectual property of original author and should not be appropriated by others without acknowledgement. Bloch and Chi (1995) asserted that more and more Chinese writers and students have been adopting the Western appreciation for individual textual ownership. Shi (2006) also reported that 16 students in her Asia group felt that an increasing importance has been placed on intellectual property protection in their home country. At the level of textual practice, for example, it has been documented by Buranen (1999), Bloch and Chi (1995) and Ling, Wang, and Xu (2005) that Chinese scholars and academic journals have been adopting a Western-styled citation and bibliography. For the pedagogy, it is suggested that Chinese universities and education systems are continuously undergoing large-scale reform in wake of globalization, it thus could be argued with some certainty that even if anecdotal evidence reported by Metalene (1985) and Pennycook (1996) decades ago may be historically correct, they may not, however, be an accurate picture of its contemporary situation.

In view of above discussions, the dynamic nature of either Western notion of plagiarism or its non-western counterpart, Chinese academic convention in particular, and the impacts of globalization of scholarship and growing popularity of hypertext in contemporary era all may have redefined the parameter of plagiarism. Consequently, to draw a current picture of Western- and Chinese-based students’ perceptions, attitudes and textual practices on plagiarism calls for an integrated approach. In response, this study will examine 16 recently-completed MA dissertations (2009-2012) of two universities from two cultural backgrounds. By comparing the current findings on source misuse with that of other student populations at various academic levels in previous scholarship, this study strives to contribute more insight in this respect.
2.3.2 Patchwriting View on Plagiarism

Another developmental perspective is referred as Patchwriting model hypothesizing that students' plagiaristic source use and their perception and attitude towards plagiarism exhibit a developmental trend and is constantly subject to change with their academic growth. In other words, novice writer’s manifestly source misuse is a transitional phenomenon rather than a terminal stage. It may disappear along with enough pedagogical support provided and/or with his/her growing familiarity and experience of target convention. As emphasized by Howard (1993, p. 266), student’s seemingly plagiaristic source use may well be “a healthy effort to gain membership in a new culture,” may not necessarily be a deliberate deception. In fact, it is a necessary phrase for novices to pass before they could exercise full control with the new discourse.

Howard’s intuitive appeal challenges traditional moral absolutism view on students’ source misuse. Currently, more and more researchers (e.g., Abasi et al.; Angélil-Carter, 2000; Barks & Watts, 2001; Campell, 1990; Chandrasoma et al., 2004; Casanave, 2004; Currie, 1998; Gu & Brooks, 2008; Howard, 1995, 1999; Ivanic, 1998; Pecorari, 2003, 2006; Price, 2002; Shi, 2004, 2006; Spack, 1997) tend to concur with her and acknowledge that except prototypical plagiarism, most problematic textual borrowings are in fact a survival strategy that novice writers are inclined to fall on and “is a normal part of learning in a student’s acquisition of academic/disciplinary literacy” (Flowerdew & Li, 2007b, p. 164). The popularity of such sympathetic view on students’ inappropriate source use can also find expression in the proliferation of less derogative substituting terms of plagiarism. They are, for instance, patchwriting (Howard, 1995), nontransgressive intertextuality (Chandrasoma et al., 2004), textual borrowing (Pennycook, 1996; Shi, 2004, 2006), and language reuse (Flowerdew & Li, 2007a).

Despite a large body of conceptual and discoursal support for Patchwriting model in
the previous literature, nevertheless, only few studies have actually verified it empirically. Either it is through text-based studies-examining students’ pre-existing or task-based writing samples (Campbell, 1990; Johns & Mayes, 1990; Keck, 2006; Mansourizadeh & Ahmad, 2011; Pecorari, 2003; Roig, 2001; Shi, 2004) or interview or survey-based studies-analyzing students’ self-reported practice (Ange´lil-Carter, 2000; Hu & Lei, 2011; Shi, 2006). In general, despite the varied degrees of applicability of these findings to patchwriting model, these studies do convey a growing consensus that developing writers, especially those in the earlier stages of academic careers tend to rely on copying strategy while completing their academic writings. With all those being said, what follows is a review of studies that are especially illuminative to our understanding of the nature, frequency and causes of inappropriate source use in students’ writing.

Regarding text-based studies that have explored to what extent and how English-L1 or L2 students have borrowed source in their own writing (Campbell, 1990; Johns & Mayes, 1990; Keck, 2006; Mansourizadeh & Ahmad, 2011; Pecorari, 2003; Roig, 2001; Shi, 2004), Johns and Mayes (1990), for example, has examined source use in the summary writing of 80 ESL writers at lower and higher proficiency levels in a North American University. Their finding revealed that problematic textual borrowings were widely observed in both groups. And two proficiency groups did not differ significantly in the aspect of sentence replication or distortion. The two groups, however, had significant differences in the other two categories: replication of sentences from the original text, and combinations of idea units taken from two or more punctuated sentences in the original. The study is the first among other that has investigated through textual analysis the nature of source misuse in L2 student’s source-based writing, thus provides preliminary and illuminative insights for subsequent studies. Despite its invaluable contribution, this study still suffers from limitations. First, it
mainly relied on textual evidence, no effort has been taken to collect contextual-sensitive justification from L2 summary writers. Considering the subjective and private nature of writing and sometimes occluded nature of referencing behaviors, such an absence unavoidably handicaps the reliability of results. Additionally, since this study is mainly concerned with L2 students, so what is the situation like to L1 students remains unknown. Moreover, despite its focused exploration of ESL students, this study did nothing to control ESL students’ first language, as discussed previously, first language or cultural background may exert differing influence on L2 students’ textual practice (Chandrasegaran, 2000; Liu, 2005; Phan, 2006; Wheeler, 2009), thus more research with rigorous control of culture’s impact on source misuse is warranted.

In response to some of the above limitations, Campbell (1990) compared textual borrowing in the expository writing of L1 and L2 students. She examined how 30 students (20 ESL and 10 L1) used quotations, exact copies, near copies, paraphrases, summaries, and original explanations for an in-class source-based writing task. Results showed that copying was a major strategy used by all students. The overall small percentage of acknowledgement for texts borrowed suggested little awareness of plagiarism or familiarity with citing conventions among these students. The ESL students, however, acknowledged the author or source text for 42% of their quotations and paraphrases compared with only 16% of those provided by native English speakers. This finding was in conflict with Moore’s (1997) report that L2 writers were more likely to use source texts without explicit references when writing summaries. As Campbell (1990) interpreted, writing to include source without violating conventions of acceptability was difficult for both ESL and native English speakers, especially within the time and physical constraints of the classroom. Campbell also noticed that student’s language proficiency affects the nature of their source use in writing (p. 224).
Such a finding is important as it is, however, due to some uncontrolled interference in its experimental design (that is, students were asked to read a source text on the topic before they write and were aware that their teacher knew the text), the validity and reliability of result is undermined. As acknowledged by Campbell in her latter discussion that with such an experimental condition students might possibly deem explicit citation as unnecessary. Additionally, as critiqued by Pecorari (2003, p. 320), since students in this study were asked to rely on one single source, which may arguably confine students’ independent writing ability as compared with most academic writings in which students were generally encouraged to depend on more source texts. Consequently, how applicable such finding to the source use in students’ academic writings remains unknown. Similarly, in a tasked-based study of university lecturers’ standard for plagiarism and paraphrasing, Roig (2001) concluded that lecturers were varied in their standard and practice on plagiarism and appropriate paraphrasing, commenting that “a significant proportion of professors maintain criteria for correct paraphrasing that may be viewed by some of their colleagues as plagiarism” (p. 313), and that a significant proportion of paraphrasing performed by lecturers may be considered as plagiarism by Western expectation.

Compared to those preliminary quantitative research just reviewed, another research has a higher methodological rigor. In a comparative study of both L1 (n=79) and L2 (n=79) undergraduates’ use and nature of paraphrasing strategy within a summary task, Keck (2006) found that while four types of paraphrasing were identified among both groups’ writings, L2 students’ paraphrases contained significantly more source language than that of L1 students. Specifically, compared with L1 writers who employed significantly more Moderate and Substantial Revisions, L2 writers used significantly more Near Copies. This study is valuable in its pedagogical or educative
rather than moral orientation on exploring the characteristics of grammatical strategies that student writer has attempted to avoid plagiarism. The findings empirically confirm the existence and relative prevalence of patchwriting among L1 and L2 undergraduates in the American context. Moreover, the single source-based summary task employed (similar like that of Campbell’s (1990)), being different from authentic research-based academic writing, may arguably have encouraged students’ source language copying. Consequently, the finding’s generalizability for academic writing genres and other student population is limited. Further, although multiple institutions and disciplines have been involved in this study, it is either out of the author’s ignorance or her recognition that disciplinary or institutional regulation may not exert an evident influence for writing at undergraduate level, the disciplinary and institutional factors’ interference are not considered during analysis. Without the elimination of above interference, whether such a uniform analysis framework has done justice to students with different institutions or disciplines is left unanswered.

To compensate for this, adopting a combination of ‘reflexive’ interview and textual analysis methodology, Flowerdew and Li (2007a) examined a group of nine mainland doctoral science students’ practices and beliefs on language re-use in writing for publication in English. By jointly analyzing textual evidence uncovered from students writers’ writings and their underlying ‘testimonial evidence’ (p. 444), they revealed that improper textual borrowing are richly present in their samples. These language reuses range from short phrases to several sentences in a row, all of which in these students’ view do not constitute plagiarism in their respective disciplines. Such finding empirically supports Patchwriting model. Further drawing on the informed intraview provided by expert informants from science community, Flowerdew and Li (2007a) argued that a different standard for plagiarism may be considered in science discipline
in view of the widely-held assertion that borrowed language is acceptable as long as it did not affect the originality of the work reported. They concluded with a recommendation that possible disciplinary difference in the criteria on plagiarism between science and humanity needs to be aware of in the future. Flowerdew and Li’s (2007a) focus on science discipline and their use of a combined interview and textual analysis methodology are strengths of their research. However, their merits of concentrating on science discipline and a combined methodology also present its limitation. As Flowerdew and Li (2007a) strived to uncover particularly doctoral science students’ language reuse scenario, they failed to consider the potential sub-discipline difference (Physics, Chemistry, Medicine and Astronomy) possibly involved within their sample. Such neglect in my opinion is problematic and may therefore place their finding into question. Whether the result would be differed in each sub-disciplines of science, it provides little clue. Moreover, what is the scenario of language reuse for other disciplines such as soft discipline like applied linguistics? Therefore more investigation is warranted. Furthermore, although this study has approached plagiarism methodologically from more holistic perspective as compared with its previous scholarship, its qualitative orientation in textual analysis offers us little data-driven description of the extent of language reuse with the whole sample which undermines its significance. Meanwhile, as research findings suggest, disciplinary difference may exist even in the genre structure of a subfield of science (Hu & Lei, 2011). Since students involved are different in terms of sub-discipline, thus there is reason to question the representativeness of such result. Moreover, due to a small sample size, and no data-driven description of source misuse provided, this study thus provides a less comprehensive picture about science students’ source misuse.

In view of above concerns, Pecorari’s (2003) study is comparatively more balanced
and well-rounded in terms of research angle and methodology. By using a quantitatively-oriented textual analysis complemented with discourse-based interview methodology, she examined a corpus of 17 NNES (non-native speakers of English) postgraduates’ dissertation- and thesis-writings from three universities in Britain. By closely analyzing the relationship between the source reports in student-generated texts and their original sources, students and their supervisors’ discourse-based justifications, and the researcher’s own contextual knowledge of these informants, she uncovered the nature, frequency and underlying causes of textual plagiarism identified within their MA dissertation and PhD thesis writings. Her finding revealed that most these writings manifested features of textual plagiarism of different degrees, however, writers’ own justifications strongly suggested an absence of intent to plagiarize, thus offers empirical support for Howard’s (1996) Patchwriting model. Such a result further resonates with Chandrasoma et al.’s (2004), Flowerdew & Li’s (2007a) and Shi’s (2004, 2006) findings in arguing that patchwriting is a necessary step for novices to socialize themselves into target discourse community. Moreover, on basis of interview data and her contextual knowledge of these writers, Pecorari argued that cultural explanation of plagiarism is generally inapplicable. To the contrary, developmental needs and competing priorities experienced by writers are argued to be the more immediate concerns. However, since three universities and four disciplines have been involved, the potential intervening effects of different institutional and disciplinary regulations on plagiarism are not eliminated. Thus, we still do not know whether the findings will remain the same if institutional and disciplinary factors have been taken into consideration. Despite those defects, the combination of author’s quantitative data-driven textual analysis and informants’ own justification, in my opinion, increases transparency and credibility for Pecorari’s findings. As a consequence, the present study
will partially model Pecorari’s (2003) research design and methodology. Nevertheless, different from Pecorari’s (2003) work, I limited my selection of samples texts with the boundary of one discipline and carefully minimized the contextual mediating factors.

Aside from researchers’ intentional exploration of language proficiency, cultural background, and disciplinary difference’s interference on the nature of students’ unintentional source misuse, other researchers also explored the specific writing type’s influence on students’ source misuse. In an attempt to clarify the task type and first language’s influence to the student’s language borrowing in source-based English writing, Shi (2004) conducted a quantitative textual analysis to compare L1 and L2 undergraduates’ (39 native English speakers from a North American university and 48 Chinese EFL students from a university in China) source language copying in their summaries and opinion essay writings. Shi’s statistic analysis indicated that both task and first language affected the amount of source language borrowed. It was also found that students who did summary task borrowed more words than those who wrote opinion essays, and Chinese students used source texts mostly without citing references for both tasks. This study is illuminative for its contrastive orientation between L1 and L2 student group for their summary and opinion writings. However, considering the contextual reality that in comparison with their L1 peers in Western academic community where source-based writing is particularly emphasized and formally taught, Chinese students’ lack of knowledge and school experience of source-based writing at undergraduate level at their home universities (as widely documented by Deckert (1990), Lei (2010) and Chandrasoma et al., 2004), may arguably put them in a disadvantage place in this comparison at the first place, thus it becomes dubious that Chinese undergraduate’s poorer source use is a result of their lack of prior knowledge or experience in source-based writing or their culturally-conditioned inability.
Apart from the above mixed-methods research, there are some studies that have relied on interview-based methodology to investigate the nature of source misuse among students. With such qualitative orientation, these studies provide us with rich contextual sensitive description and justification of students’ source-misuse, also supported Patchwriting model. For example, Ange´lil-Carter’s (2000) investigation of English-L1 and L2 students' source use at a South African university provides us rich description of the nature and causes for students’ problematic source uses. Drawing on interview data solicited from student-teacher pairs, Ange´lil-Carter identified a series of problematic source-using strategies which were reportedly employed by students in their academic writing. The strategies include paraphrasing through synonym substitution, repeating selected sentences from a source, and alternating between repeated language and independently written language. Such a contextual-sensitive exploration on student’s problematic source use generates evidence against the ethical essentialism on which so much previous scholarship has been based. It confirms Howard’s Patchwriting model that plagiarism committed by novice students is not necessarily a moral transgression but rather a result of a novice writer’s honest need for growth. Such explanation echoes well Chandrasoma et al.’s (2004) argument that “akin to interlanguage, intertextuality may arise as a form of patchwriting at a particular level of a student’s developing ability to handle academic discourse” (p. 189). Despite insights drawn on the characteristics and causes of unintentional plagiarism for both English-L1 and L2 students, nevertheless, this study is also subject to limitations. As Ange´lil-Carter’s report builds mainly on interview with teacher-student pairs, little description of their actual texts was offered, thus there is always a possibility that what students claim may not match with their actual textual practice. As such, how representative such finding to the actual situation requires further verification.
Similarly, in another interview-based study with 46 L2 undergraduates, Shi (2006) probed whether students from different first languages and cultural backgrounds would see plagiarism differently. Results indicated that the Shi’s intended distinction between plagiarism as a cultural conditioning or as a language problem received inconclusive comments from students with differing cultural backgrounds. Moreover, majority of informants were confused with Western citation convention and voiced concerns about being caught by the pressure between a need of imitation to learn a new language and a fear being accused of plagiarism. It also highlighted the elusiveness and complexity of plagiarism, and a need to switch from punitive perspective and pedagogy to more inclusive, educative perspective and pedagogy (Shi, 2004, p. 277).

In addition to the above text-based and interview-based exploration of the nature of students’ source misuse, there is another important study that approached students’ source misuse from a mixed-methods design. In response to researchers’ appeal for mixed data (textual data and interview data) research to better investigate plagiarism, Shi (2008) conducted a quantitative-oriented and discoursed-based study to explore the nature and reasons for 16 undergraduates’ (4 students from science discipline and the rest 12 are from arts and social science discipline) textual borrowing and citing behaviors in their newly-completed disciplinary research papers in an American university. Analysis of students’ writing and their post-hoc self-reflection on both units of textual appropriation cited and those that were not cited revealed that these students relied heavily on source texts for language and idea in their essay writings. Moreover, it concluded that their over-reliance on source text, their genuine need to learn to cite properly as a novice, their desire to gain credibility in writing through citing published author and desire to project authorial voices all together increase their chance for inappropriate textual borrowing. The finding highlighted that students’ personalized
understanding of roles of quoting and paraphrasing, their language ability and their learning might affect their avoidance or practice of plagiarism in writing. While this study is well-supported and inspiring for our deeper understanding of the nature and causes of inappropriate textual borrowing behaviors observed among undergraduates, however, to what extent does this finding align with postgraduate’s dissertation or journal article writings is nowhere to know. Moreover, despite a preparatory nature of undergraduate’s disciplinary training, this study failed to control the arguable intervening factor-disciplinary difference towards its result, as admitted by several researchers (Flowerdew & Li, 2007a, 2007b; Hu & Lei, 2011; Pecorari, 2003), disciplinary difference on plagiarism does exist across disciplines, therefore, there is ample reason to suspect that the finding may be otherwise if disciplinary difference has been considered. Furthermore, as we discussed earlier, cultural, developmental, disciplinary factors are intertwined inextricably with the phenomenon of plagiarism in reality, thus a more integrative or nuanced approach is called for.

To sum up, most studies reviewed have explored the nature, frequency and causes of patchwriting (non-prototypical plagiarism) among students within Western contexts. Most of them have focused on undergraduates’ source-using practice. Few studies have explored patchwriting beyond undergraduate level. Since academic level, disciplinary and academic enculturation have been suggested to precipitate a changing perception, knowledge and textual practice on plagiarism among students (e.g., Chandrasegaran, 2000; Deckert, 1993; Gu & Brooks, 2008; Hu & Lei, 2011; Lei, 2010; Song-Turner, 2008; Wheeler, 2009), thus the nature and reasons of source misuse among students with higher academic levels, such as postgraduate merit further research.

Moreover, studies on Chinese writers’ source misuse have mostly focused on students who were studying in North America, Australia, Britain, or other places such
as Singapore, Hong Kong where an American or British kind of plagiarism regulation have been adopted. Few studies have investigated the issue of source integration and plagiarism of mainland China context (where students’ writing are arguably more representative of Chinese culture or Chinese way of doing). Even less studies have taken a comparative perspective in comparing and contrasting Mainland Chinese postgraduate’s source misuse in their MA dissertations with their counterparts in the Anglo-American context. Given the current awareness that cultural, developmental, disciplinary factors are intertwined inextricably in the phenomenon of plagiarism, thus more fine-tuned research agenda, as suggested by Flowerdew and Li (2007b, p. 176), that examines ‘rich amounts of ethnographic and textual data’ within particular cultural, developmental and disciplinary community to elude cultural-, disciplinary-, and academic-level-specific conception of plagiarism, is badly needed. Resonated with this proposal, Gu and Brooks (2008, p. 337) recommended that a holistic and developmental perspective needed to be adopted to capture students’ changing perception of plagiarism over time. As such, this study will address these gaps by investigating the nature and frequency of source misuse contrastively from two recent corpora of American and Chinese MA dissertations in applied linguistics. Hopefully, such contrastive and integrative perspective will generate much reliable insight.

2.3.3 Enculturational Perspective on Plagiarism

Another developmental perspective is referred as enculturational perspective. Such a perspective hypothesizes that students' prior perception, knowledge or textual practice concerning plagiarism may shift toward target regulation with their developing academic level or increasing enculturation in the target academic community. A number of studies such as Chandrasegaran (2000), Deckert (1993), Hu and Lei (2011), Lei
(2010), Song-Turner (2008), Wheeler (2009) have verified such a hypothesis among
different student population. Currently, there is a growing consensus among
researchers that the higher are students’ academic levels, the closer their perception and
knowledge on plagiarism will comply with the target academic community’s regulation.
Moreover, the longer students were immersed in the target community, the higher
possibility that students’ perception and knowledge of plagiarism will play up to the
target expectation. For instance, Song-Turner (2008), in her exploration of 68
international postgraduates’ views on plagiarism at one university found that “that the
longer students were immersed in the Australian educational environment, the closer
their definition moved towards the western view” (p. 42). On a similar note, Lei (2010)
found that lengthy English-medium academic enculturation in a Singapore university
(where a western kind of plagiarism definition and regulation has been adopted) has
shifted a group of mainland Chinese college English teachers’ perception of and
attitude on plagiarism towards those that were widely endorsed in the Western
context. Deckert (1993) and Chandrasegaran (2000) also noted a changed perception
and attitudes on plagiarism with the increase of students’ academic level in Hong
Kong and Singapore contexts.

Despite the above supportive evidence of enculturation effect on students’
perception, attitude and applied recognition on plagiarism, researchers such as Walker
(2009, p. 54), however, challenged such a reported enculturation effect by arguing
“students might forget to obey the instruction when they become more senior” and
concluded by remarking that “plagiarism did not reduce by year of enrolment of
students” (p. 55). Similarly, Hu and Lei (2011) indicated that year of study (third-year
vs. first-year) was not a significant indicator of students’ likelihood in detecting blatant
or subtle plagiarisms. In view of Walker’s (2009) and Hu and Lei’s (2011)
contradictory findings, further studies are warranted. Admittedly, given this study focuses on postgraduates’ source misuse, thus it can only address encultural perspective indirectly, that is, comparing our finding among postgraduates with that of previous studies’ examination among undergraduates.

In sum, the literature seems to support developmental perspectives particularly in terms of students’ knowledge of and attitudes towards plagiarism. Nevertheless, although developmental views provide appealing explications for observed plagiaristic behaviors among L1 and L2 writers, little data-driven empirical evidence is available to verify such view. Even less scholarship has examined the existence and nature of patchwriting among mainland Chinese postgraduate’s dissertation. Given the cultural stereotype that Chinese students have frequently experienced, the quest of empirical evidence to verify such developmental effect among them seems to be badly in need.

2.4 Disciplinary Perspective on Plagiarism

In addition to cultural and developmental perspectives, another perspective in researching on plagiarism is a disciplinary one. In fact, in light of proliferating findings documenting variations in academic writing convention across disciplines at macro (e.g., genre structure, rhetorical moves) and micro levels (e.g., citational behavior, intertextual convention), an initiative for more awareness of potential disciplinary difference has been advanced and taken up by many researchers (e.g., Chandrasegaran, 2000; Flowerdew & Li, 2007a; Shi, 2004). Accordingly, an increasing consensus that the student’s and disciplinary professor’s perception, attitude, applied practice and even approach on plagiarism may vary across disciplines has been witnessed (e.g., Abasi et al., 2006; Ange’lil-Carter, 2003; Borg, 2009; Chandrasegaran, 2000; Flowerdew & Li, 2007a, 2007b; Hult, 1996; Hyland, 1999; Pecorari, 2001, 2006; Yeo, 2007). As
Ange´lil-Carter (2000, p. 30) rightly pointed out that the norm of plagiarism shifted across writing contexts based on a cross-sectional comparison of source attribution across genres and disciplines. Echoed Ange´lil-Carter’s (2000) assertion, Jameson maintained that plagiarism was a relative rather than an absolute matter (1993, p. 18). Similarly, Borg (2009) added that varying interpretations on what forms (in)appropriate intertextual strategies should be expected given the nature of intertextuality is disciplinary-specific. Consonant with such a suggested genre-/discipline-sensitive perspective on plagiarism, Ange´lil-Carter (2000) further suggested that varying norms for appropriate textual borrowing might be upheld in different disciplines or even within one discipline (by different academic journals) in Academia.

Besides extensive conceptual and discoursal support for such a view, disciplinary perspective on plagiarism has also been explored and tested empirically from three interrelated research strands. One strand in this connection is to investigate by genre approach whether source attribution norm will vary across genres or professional fields (Devitt, 1991; Jameson, 1993; McCarthy, 1991). Another strand is to explore whether students’ or supervisors’ perception, attitude, knowledge about and intended intervention against plagiarism would vary across disciplines (e.g., Abasi et al., 2006; Ange´lil-Carter, 2003; Borg, 2008; Chandrasegaran, 2000; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2005; Sutherland-Smith, 2005; Wheeler, 2009). The third strand which is the most relevant to the present undertaking is to explore through textual evidence whether the norm for students’ appropriate intertextual practice will differ across disciplines (e.g., Dubois, 1988; Flowerdew & Li, 2007a; Hult, 1996; Hyland, 2000; Jones & Freeman, 2003; Krishnan & Kathpalia, 2002; Pecorari, 2006; Rymer, 1988; St. John, 1987; Shi, 2010).

Regarding the first strand, there is a growing recognition that different interpretations on plagiarism can be found across genres and professional fields.
Jameson (1993, p. 20), for instance, drawing on finding generated from her extensive analysis of appropriate source documentation across genres (e.g., news article, novel, speech, business report) in Western context, concluded that “what would constitute culpable plagiarism in one context might constitute proper use of sources in another context depending on the group whose expectations defined ‘misappropriation’” (cited from Ange´lil-Carter, 2000, p. 30). In a similar vein, other investigations of intertextuality within particular fields in western context such as psychiatry and tax accountancy (Devitt, 1991; McCarthy, 1991) also brought to light the elusive and changing nature of the concept of plagiarism. Such a wide angle, genre-based research on plagiarism such as Jameson’s (1993) is invaluable not only for deepening our understanding of the variability of plagiarism across genres and disciplines but also raising our awareness on the intricate social and pragmatic functions that referencing and plagiarizing have served in the society. In view of such finding, to draw implication for future research, a nuanced investigation of the concept and practice of plagiarism within a specific genre of a discipline is desirable. Similar explorations within ESL or EFL contexts or on a cross-cultural dimension are also worth pursuing.

The second strand of research that tests discipline-specific supposition regarding plagiarism in the students and disciplinary professors’ perception, attitude and knowledge as well as intended approaches generates mixed results. With different research angels (single-discipline’s intrview difference or cross-discipline) and methods (interview, task-based textual judgment, and questionnaire) utilized, mixed, sometimes, contradictory results are produced. A synthesis of these findings reveals that more and more researchers come to align with the discipline-specific perspective on plagiarism despite the fact that some findings, possibly due to their specific choice of subject population, research method or research design limitations, suggest the opposite.
A large number of research supports that there is a significant disciplinary difference in terms of students’ and professors’ perceptions, attitudes and knowledge across disciplines in Academia (e.g., Abasi et al., 2006; Ange‘il-Carter, 2003; Borg, 2008; Chandrasegaran, 2000; Flint et al., 2006; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2005; Sutherland-Smith, 2005; Wheeler, 2009). For instance, in an interview-based research exploring 24 disciplinary lecturers’ perception and attitude towards plagiarism from several disciplines (e.g., Engineering, Science and Technology, Arts, History, Language Study, Law, Fashion), Borg (2009) demonstrated impressively how disciplinary professors’ interpretations of inappropriate intertextuality would vary according to the contextualized expectations and practices of a specific discipline. In view of this difference, Borg suggested that “transgressive intertextuality needs to be defined with reference to the specific disciplinary expectation and that a single institutional definition may be inadequate to incorporate varying disciplinary perspectives” (p. 415). Consonant with this observation, Sutherland-Smith (2005) further noted that attitude and perception towards plagiarism differed substantially even among academics who worked in one discipline. Similarly, student-writers also reported to hold differing interpretations on plagiarism. Cross-discipline, comparative studies on plagiarism shown that students from HSS (Humanities and Social Sciences) disciplines concerned more about source attribution than their science counterparts.

It was also reported that differed interpretations on plagiarism might be maintained even among students within the same discipline. As an example, Rinnert and Kobayashi (2005, p. 31) found that “academic discipline has much larger impact on students’ knowledge of citation conventions and attitude toward borrowing words or ideas than that of their academic level.” Such a bigger impact, as elucidated by Hyland (1999) may be due to the fact that “our routine and unreflective writing practices are deeply
embedded in the epistemological and social conviction of our disciplines” (p. 363).

Despite above supportive evidence, nevertheless, there are also some findings failing to find any significant disciplinary difference on the perception of plagiarism (Chandrasegaran, 2000; Wheeler, 2009). For instance, in a textual judgment-based study, Chandrasegaran (2000) failed to find any significant disciplinary difference in the perception of plagiarism between arts and science students at a Singaporean university. Specifically, the result of Chandrasegaran’s (2000) study showed that unacknowledged paraphrase was not considered dishonest act, while verbatim copying without source attribution were. However, with several intervening factors left unattended in its research design, to what extent did this result correspond to the current practice becomes unknown. As acknowledged in the researcher’s later discussion, since the student sample was mainly composed of 1st and 2nd year undergraduates, it was possible that most students did not have much contact with their discipline-specific writing convention yet. Moreover, the textual judgment task utilized is too fundamental and clear-cut, ceiling effect occurred might arguably blur the difference found.

In another experimental study, Roig (2001) also found no significant difference in college and university professors’ self-reported criteria on plagiarism and paraphrasing from five disciplines (Business, Humanities, Social Sciences, Professional Studies and Science). He thus concluded that similar with beginning writers, research faculty also struggled when writing from unfamiliar sources on unfamiliar topics. Although Roig’s choice of disciplinary professors to uncover potential difference in their criteria on plagiarism and paraphrasing was based on an implicit assumption that disciplinary professors with their lengthy writing experience would exhibit automatically their disciplinary specificity in the uniform textual evaluation task (whose topic is unrelated to their disciplinary field), this author challenges such an assumed transfer of
disciplinary way of writing without being explicitly asked to do so by the researcher. Thus the absence of researcher’ explicit solicitation of disciplinary way of writing may arguably direct these professors to produce a textual rating based on their own personal interpretation rather than based on their disciplinary background. Thus, there is every reason to suspect that the finding reported describes a real phenomenon.

Consistent with Chandrasegaran’s and Roig’ (2001) findings, Wheeler’s (2009) relatively refined textual judgment-based study examining 77 Japanese undergraduates’ perception and attitude towards plagiarism across five disciplines (Agriculture, Economics, Pharmacy, Science and Veterinary Medicine) also indicated no significant disciplinary difference. Notably, since this study did not single out disciplinary factor in its analysis of student-generated textual ratings, thus although no significant difference is found across student samples with different disciplines, it is still unclear how much role does discipline play in this non-difference result. In this connection, drawing on similar student-generated textual judgment data on plagiarism across four disciplines at a Taiwanese university, Sun (2009) oppositely reported a significant disciplinary difference in attitudes towards plagiarism among students from different disciplines. Specifically, language-teaching students were reported to be stricter with inappropriate paraphrasing strategies than management or engineering students.

Similarly, Hu and Lei (2011) by utilizing a refined mixed-methods design of textual judgment (the same as used in Wheeler (2009)) and questionnaire, found that academic discipline is a significant predictor of mainland Chinese undergraduate’s ability in recognizing blatant plagiarism. Specifically, students from HSS discipline are 2.21 times more likely to recognize blatant plagiarism and 12 times more likely to recognize subtle plagiarism than students from Engineering discipline. Echoed Chandrasegaran’s (2000) and Wheeler’s (2009) findings, in their interview-based exploration of staff’s
perception and approach of plagiarism across various departments at a British university, Flint, Clegg, and Macdonald attributed their observed variation in instructors’ approaches to plagiarism as more tied to their individual, personal interpretations and understandings than to disciplinary context (p. 148). However, considering the inclusion of staff of various disciplines was solely intended to enlarge their sample’s cross-sectional representativeness, no effort is spared on eliciting disciplinary understanding of plagiarism during interview. Moreover, few staff was interviewed under each discipline. All these unattended factors, in the present author’s opinion, seem to have greatly undermined the reliability of their result.

To sum up, despite wide-spread conceptual, theoretical and some empirical support on disciplinary difference in the concept of plagiarism, important question such as whether such discipline-specific view on plagiarism has been realized in L1 and L2 student’s authentic writing practice remains. As we need to be mindful in drawing implication from this line of research in that reported discipline-specific perception and knowledge of plagiarism from students does not guarantee an automatic transfer of their perception and knowledge into actual breach or avoidance of plagiarism in practice. Whether there is a direct transfer is a jump of faith that remains largely unexplored. Further complicating the scenario is a frequently reported mismatch in understanding and knowledge of plagiarism even among disciplinary professors, students and regulations within one disciplinary area. As suggested by Riquez et al. (2006, p. 6), characteristics of applied recognition or avoidance of inappropriate textual appropriation could be directly examined in students’ authentic writing artifacts. Thus, to explore potential disciplinary difference right from students’ authentic writing becomes a desirable and promising direction for future research. In line with this suggestion, Flowerdew and Li (2007a, p. 442-443) effectively pointed out that a main
gap in previous scholarship is that few studies have focused on examining students’ actual intertextual practice in their respective discipline, thus holistic exploration of students’ and professors’ discipline-specific perception and knowledge of plagiarism in connection with students’ discipline-specific writing products seem to have a greater potential to offer us more insights. This research responds to such an appeal by focusing on exploring plagiarism and patchwriting from both students’, disciplinary supervisors’ self-report, their current discipline-specific regulation, and text-based analysis of students’ MA dissertations in applied linguistics from two universities. It is hoped that such a holistic and contrastive orientation will generate more insight in this connection.

By closely examining students’ intertextual practice from their respective disciplinary writing artifacts, the third research strand that has working with disciplinary perspective provided rich textual evidence of disciplinary variation in students’ intertextual practice. As indicated by a review of related literature, a substantial body of research has focused on examining separately or jointly L1 and L2 mature academics’ or developing writers’ inappropriate intertextual practice in Western context (e.g., Dubois, 1988; Flowerdew & Li, 2007a; Hult, 1996; Hyland, 2000, 2003, 2004; Jones & Freeman, 2003; Krishnan & Kathpalia, 2002; Pecorari, 2003; Rymer, 1988; Samraj, 2004; Shi, 2010; St. John, 1987). Noticeably, most of studies have focused on analyzing L1 and L2 mature or student writers’ academic writing in a range of science disciplines (e.g., Dubois, 1988; Flowerdew & Li, 2007a; Hult, 1996; Jones & Freeman, 2003; Krishnan & Kathpalia, 2002; Samraj, 2004; Shi, 2010; St. John, 1987). Little research coverage has been extended to L1 and L2 student’s intertextual practice in soft disciplines such as philosophy, sociology or applied linguistics (e.g., Hyland, 1999, 2000, 2003, 2004; Pecorari, 2003, 2006). Among them, even less research has documented Mainland Chinese EFL writers’ inappropriate intertextual practices (e.g.,
Flowerdew & Li, 2007a; Li, 2005, 2006). Important to note that even less attention has been extended to explore students’ improper textual borrowing in disciplinary writing products (e.g., MA Dissertations, PhD Theses) in soft disciplines such as applied linguistics (e.g., Flowerdew & Li, 2007b). Given the globalization of scholarship, soft disciplines in Chinese universities have also encouraged their students to publish in national or internationally prestigious journals, more focused research about the nature of students’ unacceptable intertextual practice in soft disciplines is warranted if pedagogical scaffolding is attempted to help them grow into competent academic writers. Moreover, it seems more worthwhile in exploring on a contrastive dimension about Chinese students’ intertextual practice and that of their Western counterparts.

Despite the meagerness of text-based analysis of students’ intertextual practice in soft disciplines, there are still a handful of studies that either provided anecdotal description or brief sampling of students’ inappropriate intertextual practice or primed primarily on examining the intertextual convention within one discipline. What follows is a separate review of this strand of studies that have supported disciplinary variation in students’ intertextual practice in English-L1 context and Chinese EFL context.

The studies that investigated established L1 scientist writers’ academic writings have provided rich textual evidence on disciplinary difference in terms of (in) appropriate intertextual practices. Hult (1996), for instance, after a cross-disciplinary comparative study of citation, has suggested that attribution of sources emphasized more in most disciplines in Humanities and Social Science than that of Science disciplines. Such findings collaborated with previous observations (Angéil-Carter, 2000; Bloch & Chi, 1995; Jameson, 1993; Hyland, 1999). Building on Hult’s (1996) study, Bloch and Chi (1995) and Hyland (1999) further suggested a broad cross-disciplinary variance in attribution practices between soft disciplines (e.g., Social
Sciences and Humanities) and hard ones (e.g., Natural Sciences, Physical Science). Aside from this supportive evidence elicited from cross-sectional comparison of intertextual practice across disciplines, there are also a number of studies that offered positive evidence by specifically examining intertextual practice in a specific discipline. St. John (1987, p. 117), in his exploration of Spanish scientists’ writing process of writing for publication in English, documented vividly how Spanish scientists imported method section verbatim from his previous paper to write a new paper without realizing it as plagiarism. In another similar study exploring an eminent English-L1 scientist’s writing process, Rymer (1988, p. 234) recorded the scientist’s source language copying behaviors during his writing of the starting sentence in each section of text.

In addition to the above-listed discipline-specific citing and composing strategies, Dubois (1988) reported that copying ‘common phrases’ from source in academic writing was deemed normal and appropriate by biomedical scientists. Such an assertion resonates well with Krishnan and Kathpalia’s (2002) finding that a plagiphrasing (Krishnan & Kathpalia, 2002, cited from Flowerdew & LI, 2007a, p. 193) textual strategy, similar to patchwriting, was used heavily by engineering students in writing literature review of their project report at a Singapore university. Similarly, Jones and Freeman (2003), by examining first-year physics students’ textual borrowing in report writing at an Australian university, found that textual borrowing was practiced at three levels by students, namely imitation genre structure at a micro and macro levels, direct copying of formulaic expressions and syntactic structures.

Apart from the above focused exploration of discipline-specific practice of attribution of source, there are also a handful of studies that have conducted text-based cross-disciplinary comparison in norms of appropriate source attribution. They generally identified cross-disciplinary variance in terms of appropriate source
attribution (e.g., Flowerdew & Li, 2007a; Hyland, 1999, 2000, 2003, 2004; Pecorari, 2006; Shi, 2010). For instance, Hyland (1999), in his corpus-based study of citation behavior in research articles across eight disciplines (Molecular Biology, Magnetic physics, Electronical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Marketing, Applied Linguistics, Philosophy and Sociology), found distinctive disciplinary difference in academic attribution convention between soft and hard disciplines. Precisely, reference to previous research plays a more important role in soft (e.g., Marketing, Applied Linguistics, Philosophy, and Sociology) than hard disciplines (e.g. Molecular Biology, Magnetic physics, Electronical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering), and he interpreted such a difference as closely related to the difference of social activity, cognitive style and epistemological belief of particular disciplinary community. In view of such a potential difference in soft and hard discipline, Flowerdew and Li (2007a), through their analysis of academic attribution practice in a range of sub-disciplines within science field, uncovered that different norms and practices of plagiarism were upheld in the science than that of humanity disciplines. Particularly, their finding highlighted the ‘formulaicity’ (p. 461) characteristic of scientific writing and reported a greater separation between ‘work/content and language/form’ in science than in humanities disciplines. Thus, they concluded that a greater tolerance on source language copying and form imitation is practiced in science discipline than humanities disciplines. Accordingly, they cautioned that, “applying the criteria for ‘plagiarism’, as practiced in the humanities, to the natural sciences can be problematic” (p. 461). In support of this view, Hu and Lei (2011) further contributed that different perception and attitude on plagiarism were likely to be observed among students in HSS and Engineering disciplines by indicating that students from HSS discipline were 2.21 times and 12 times more likely to recognize respectively blatant and subtle plagiarisms than students.
from Engineering discipline. Those findings resonate with Chandrasegaran’s (2000) observation that arts students appeared to have a deeper understanding on plagiarism than their science counterparts and lend support to similar observations contributed by Hayes and Introna (2005) and Rinnert and Kobayashi (2005).

In another study that compared articles published in the physical and social sciences disciplines, Bloch and Chi (1995) uncovered differential regulations for appropriate source use. They thus suggested that identification, regulation, even teaching of avoidance of plagiarism need to be discipline-specific. In a series of investigations of L2 postgraduate students’ citation behaviors across four disciplines (Biology, Civil Engineering, Education, and Linguistics), Pecorari (2003, 2006) reported rich textual and statistical evidence on disciplinary variance in terms of intertextual practice at several levels such as type of source used (e.g., the amount of book or journal cited, age of source (up-to-dated or old)), receptivity of quoting source language, unacknowledged secondary citation. Precisely, she reported that direct quotation is more frequently used and accepted in soft than science disciplines. She also noted that the average age of sources cited by science disciplines was nine years, but ranging from 19 to 22 years for the other disciplines. She interpreted such difference resulting from different epistemological beliefs or conventions underlying each disciplinary community. Concurred with her, Bloch and Chi (1995) and Hyland (1999) further suggested a broad cross-disciplinary variance in academic attribution practices between soft (e.g., social sciences and humanities) and hard disciplines (e.g., natural sciences, physical science).

In sum, given the inconclusive findings generated under disciplinary perspective and growing awareness of intricate interactions among cultural, disciplinary, developmental and institutional and many other factors within the phenomenon of plagiarism, there is a need to employ multiple instruments and perspectives to
investigate students’ plagiarism.

2.5 Other Contextually Mediating Factors on Plagiarism

Owing to the multifarious, multi-dimensional nature of plagiarism, studies exploring causes for students’ plagiaristic behaviors have identified a wide array of likely causes, such as educational context (Gebril & Plakans, 2009), institutional regulation policy or pedagogical culture (Abasi et al., 2006, 2008a, 2008b; Hu & Lei, 2011), exposure to Western styled academic culture (Abasi et al., 2006; Song-Turner, 2008), or academic training (Lei, 2010), academic level (Deckert, 1993; Chandrasegaran, 2000), beside the broadly-suggested cultural, disciplinary and developmental factors. Among them, educational context in which student writers operate is suggested by Gebril and Plakans (2009, p. 69) to be critical in understanding why they use sources improperly. Moreover, immediate institutional reinforcement culture (e.g., absence or presence of honor code, intuitional guideline or policy or pedagogical context on plagiarism) regarding plagiarism is also suggested to, by closely interacting with other contextual factors, have played an important role in the occurrence of students’ unacceptable intertextual behaviors (Abasi et al., 2006, 2008a, 2008b; Devlin & Gray, 2007; Hu & Lei, 2011; Love & Simmons, 1997; McCabe et al., 2002; Smith et al., 2007). For instance, in realizing the important role of severe institutional policy in discouraging students’ plagiaristic behaviors, McCabe and Trevino (1993) reiterated that the presence or absence of institutional policy on plagiarism was an important intervening factor for their students’ plagiaristic behaviors. In alignment with McCabe and Trevino’s (1993) position, Aaron (1992) and Nuss (1984) attributed students’ plagiaristic behaviors largely to an absence or ineffective implementation of institutional policy in the university concerned. Advocating this view, in a survey-based examination of six
contributing variables (personal attitudes, and pressure, availability of internet facilities, institution specific factor, lack of awareness, lack of competence) to plagiarism among Malaysian undergraduate in one discipline, Smith et al. (2007) confirmed that institution-specific factors such as general lenient attitude from lecturers or the institution’s low involvement in promoting official guideline were closely associated with occurrence of plagiarism. In another study examining postgraduates’ perceived causes for plagiarism and cheating, Love and Simmons (1997) uncovered five key contributing factors such as academic pressure, professors’ reaction to plagiarism and cheating, negative personal attributes (e.g., lack of interest), laziness and lack of knowledge. Among them, professors’ attitudes and approaches to plagiarism was reported to be important contextual contributors for plagiarism. Similarly, Hu and Lei (2011), noted that the university’s academic climate and regulation culture might collectively have some role to play in student’s attitudes towards and practice of plagiarism. It is clear from the above discussion that intuition-specific factors, along with other contextual factors were significant in the emergence of students’ plagiarism.

While above studies are illuminative for our understanding of the potential causes for both L1 and L2 students’ plagiarism, they generally provided little contextual description on why students think the way they are. Thus, we are provided with wide array of potential contributing factors but we know nothing how they exert influence on students’ authentic writing (Hu & Lei, 2011).

Moreover, most these studies did not differentiate plagiarism from cheating, not to mention to distinguish intentional from unintentional plagiarism, such as patchwriting. Such a definitional disparity may possibly undermine the validity of their findings and also prevent our deeper understanding of causes underlying each entity.

Furthermore, majority of these studies have elicited students’ responses from a
researcher’s perspective (asking students to answer ready-made survey questions designed by the researcher). This practice is problematic (to inquire causes of students’ plagiarism from researcher’s top-down construction), considering the private and highly contextual nature of plagiarizing behaviors. Thus, exploring students’ responses from their own perspectives through encouraging their narration, may arguably have potential to generate more insights.

Lastly, due to the multifaceted nature of plagiarism, it seems unreasonable and impossible to chase down all intervening factors in one study. As such, an integrative perspective, such as the present one that has taken cultural, disciplinary, developmental, institutional reinforcement culture factors into consideration, is more desirable.

Given a scarcity of scholarship that considered the interference of institutional regulation culture while investigating textual plagiarism, this study plans to locate all writing artifacts and participants within one university for Western and Chinese corpora. In so doing, it is intended to minimize interference that may have occurred if multiple data-collection universities were involved in each corpus.

2.6 Chapter Summary and Research Questions

In this chapter, I have reviewed cultural, developmental, enculturational and disciplinary perspectives advanced by researchers to better understand and attend to students’ plagiarism. I have also reviewed some other institution-related or -specific factors that reportedly have played important role in the occurrence of plagiarism. By doing this, I intend to highlight the gap in previous scholarship and establish a need to research plagiarism further from an integrative perspective (that has incorporated all aforementioned perspectives).

Specifically, first, in spite of extensive research devoted to the cultural perspectives
on plagiarism, it is still not clear whether and to what extent the claims about cultural variance and acceptability of plagiarism against Chinese students are justifiable. Thus, to test the cultural-variance or receptivity views, there is a need for further research that contrast the inappropriate source use, self-reported perception and knowledge on plagiarism between mainland Chinese and Western students.

Second, despite the fact that numerous studies have supported developmental and enculturation effects on L1 and L2 writers’ knowledge and/or perceptions and/or applied recognition and practice of plagiarism, a majority of them have focused on L1 and L2 students that studied in Anglo-American or L2 contexts (Sun, 2009). It is unknown whether or to what extent the developmental effects observed in these contexts can be extrapolated to students in EFL contexts such as mainland China where a somewhat different convention as compared to that of Western styled convention may be in place. Moreover, though it has suggested that both Western and Chinese standard of plagiarism may be subject to constant change in wake of globalization of scholarship and internet era, little up-to date empirical evidence has verified such a supposition.

Third, although studies based on both textual analysis and interview data yielded rich evidence of disciplinary differences in perception and practice of plagiarism among L1 and L2 students in both hard and soft disciplines in Western context, few studies have examined the nature or scenario of unacceptable intertextual practice in soft disciplines such as applied linguistics in Mainland China. Even few studies have examined the intradisciplinary gap in intertextual practice between Western and Chinese-educated postgraduates in one soft discipline. Thus more research working on the above-highlighted disciplinary perspective is called for.

Fourth, few studies have considered the mediating effects of immediate institutional (reinforcement) culture towards plagiarism, thus more research that have purposely
minimized the interference of institutional culture is needed. Lastly, few studies have taken on an integrative perspective in researching plagiarism—a perspective that integrates all cultural, developmental, enculturational, and disciplinary and institutional culture factors discussed earlier.

To fill up the gaps, adopting a mixed-methods design (quantitative textual analysis supplemented by rich interview data), this study will undertake a contrastive study of plagiarism among Chinese and Western MA dissertations in applied linguistics from an integrated perspective. In particular, it seeks to address the following questions:

(I) How transparently did these Western and Chinese-educated postgraduates use source in their dissertations?

(II) Are there any gaps between these two groups of writers in terms of transparent source use? If yes, what are they?

(III) Does textual plagiarism occur in these Chinese and Western MA dissertations?

(IV) What are the individual nature, frequencies of textual plagiarism for these Chinese and Western MA dissertations?

(V) What caused these postgraduates, Chinese postgraduates in particular, to use sources in their dissertations the way they do?

(VI) How did Chinese supervisors react to students’ inappropriate source use?
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter Overview

In the previous chapter, I reviewed the literature in which this study was situated, and outlined research questions that guided the present investigation. In this chapter, I first present the methodology. I start with an explanation of its research design and underlying rationales, drawing particular attention on how this design is informed by methodological findings from previous studies. Next, I describe its instrumentation. Here, participants involved, criteria and underlying rationales used to locate universities, and measures taken to standardize semi-structured interview guides are elucidated. Following this, the two-stage implementation is explained. Herein, measures taken by the researcher to address its perceived IRB (Institutional Review Board) issue in terms of both its topic and research design will be discussed. Then the methods used to gather, compile and analyze email interviews and MA dissertations will be described before I conclude this chapter with a summary.

3.2 Research Design

This study utilizes a mixed-methods design. Primarily, a quantitative-oriented textual analysis of plagiarism among 16 MA dissertation samples from two cultural backgrounds will be supplemented by a qualitative analysis of “discourse-based (email) interview” data (Hyland, 2000; Odell et al., 1983) and semi-structured email interview data provided by participants from China.
Combining textual analysis with interview data analysis is born out of my intention of examining plagiarism as it is appeared in the student’s authentic writing, meanwhile, accessing supervisor-supervisee pair’s contextually sensitive justifications about their source misuse. As advocated by Dornyei (2007), and Miles and Huberman (1984), such a mixed-methods, as a methodological triangulation, has the potential to “help reduce the inherent weakness of individual methods by offsetting them by the strength of another, thereby maximizing both the internal and the external validity of the research” (Dornyei, 2007, p. 43).

Moreover, as shown previously, a number of studies have utilized similar designs in their text-based investigation of plagiarism (Flowerdew & Li, 2007a; Pecorari, 2003; Shi, 2010), and altogether suggested that given the subjective nature of citational acts, combination of both textual and interview data might generate more insights (Shi, 2010, p. 3). Further, few studies, to the best of our knowledge, are conducted on a contrastive dimension with an integrative approach. Thus, the present design, by addressing some of limitations in the previous scholarship, is intended to further shed light on the scenario and causes of plagiarism among postgraduates in Applied Linguistics.

3.3 Instrumentation

3.3.1 Research Sites and Participants

Considering the cultural and contrastive research orientation of this study, two universities from varied cultural backgrounds and geographical locations were identified. One is located in the central region of mainland China and the other is located in north-east of United States. The former university was one of the key research-oriented universities in Mainland China. The latter was also one of a similar kind in the United States. Four criteria are considered during my selection of them.
First, their geographical location and cultural backgrounds, universities must be located in either United States or Mainland China. Second, universities must offer applied linguistic program at the postgraduate level. Third, they are comparable in terms of history and university orientations. Last, my own access to each of the acceptable dissertations is also considered.

3.3.2 Semi-structured Interview Guide

As previously mentioned, aside from performing a data-driven textual analysis of plagiarism among 16 samples from two universities, discourse-based and semi-structured email interview data is also elicited from supervisor-supervisee pairs in the Chinese-based University to deepen and widen our understanding in this linguistic aspect of plagiarism. It is intended that such in-depth interview may capture first-hand experience or contextual sensitive justification from Chinese postgraduate supervisor-supervisees, which the researcher may otherwise be unable to access from solely examining textual data. As Marshall and Rossman (2006) emphasized, interview method yields strengths of enabling the researcher to seek for immediate clarification and gaining context information that facilitates quantitative analysis, providing validity checks and triangulation. The combination of two interview forms (semi-structured and discourse-based) is partly inspired by previous, seminal studies (Flowerdew & Li, 2007a; Pecorari, 2003; Shi, 2010) and partly encouraged by the fact that as research methods, strengths of these interview forms fit in well with the current research and its reality constraint. Essentially, semi-structured interview, as argued by Dornyei (2007), has the strength of enabling researchers not only to access meaning effectively from the informant’s own perspective, but also to explore the issue in depth and ask for further clarification in limited time duration. This is particularly useful for this study in that
MA supervisor-supervisees involved are all packed in terms of schedule to seek for extra time for make-up interview. Moreover, examining citation behavior through sole textual analysis may be limited in its potentiality in that some occluded citing behaviors might not be apparent to the researcher without consulting the writer. As such, since this research is intended to capture subjective meanings placed on citing by writers rather than by textual analysts’ interpretation (Cohen, Manion., & Morrison, 2000, p. 139), discourse-based interview (Odell, Goswami., & Herrington, 1983), which affords writers chances to re-read and reflect upon their writings while sharing their comments and views on source use, was therefore deemed to be the most appropriate.

Subsequently, two semi-structured interview guides are created respectively for supervisors and MA students in accordance to the present research questions and previous scholarship in this respect. Upon formulation of interview guides, to remove possible ambiguities in its instruction and to ensure that these open-ended questions do tap on the intended data and not lead participants to answer in a biased way, the interview guides were put into first piloting among ten first-year MA students and teachers in the same Chinese university in the December, 2011. On basis of their feedback, some reportedly overlapping questions were deleted; changes were also made on the sequence of questions. Meanwhile, Chinese version of the revised interview guides was also prepared to facilitate comprehension and completion. The content validity of this Chinese version in relation to its English version is checked by three experienced Chinese college English lecturers. Then, the researcher emailed the revised interview guides (both Chinese and English versions) to another three MA students and two of their supervisors in English literature for second field pilot in January, 2012. On basis of their answers and feedbacks, the interview guides were finalized.
3.4 Implementation

To address the above-raised questions, this study was implemented sequentially into two phases. In phase one, a recruitment email (see Appendix A) and an invitation letter (see Appendix B) (including a briefing on the study’s purpose, duration and necessary involvement) were emailed to all nine potential supervisors in the said Chinese university. Two supervisors agreed to participate. Afterwards, Participant Information Sheet for Supervisor (see Appendix D) and Informed Consent Form (see Appendix F) were sent to both supervisors for their review and signatures. Meanwhile, they were also asked for assistance in recommending and furnishing contact information of his/her supervised MA students who are currently doing MA dissertations. One supervisor has recommended two students who met the criteria. Another has recommended three eligible students. The same recruitment email and another invitation letter (see Appendix C) were forwarded respectively to the five MA candidates to seek for their participation. Two students have responded to the invitation and agreed to take part. Then, the Participant Information Sheet for Students (see Appendix E) and the same consent form were sent to these two students separately. After their consent was sought, they were asked to furnish their draft dissertations’ literature review sections as well as their respective references for the researcher’s compilation of Chinese dissertation corpus and subsequent quantitative analysis. The insistence on employing their drafts is partly derived from a belief that ongoing writing would be easier for the researcher and participants to discuss certain textual feature given participant’s fresher memory, and partly a precautionary measure taken to avoid discovering plagiaristic features that student writers and supervisors would later consider uncomfortable and unacceptable. As argued by Flowerdew and Li (2007a) and Pecorari (2003, 2006), it appears easier to resolve these issues in a draft than a completed dissertation.
Notably, as for the explanation of the research purpose, to avoid any anxiety, mistrust or biased view on plagiarism thereby arisen among participants with the mention of the sensitive term-plagiarism, and to avoid potential threats to the reliability of data later collected (e.g., Flowerdew & Li, 2007a; Pecorari, 2003; Shi, 2010), the notion of plagiarism is avoided by the researcher. Instead, the purpose is explained as a study on writing and citation behavior in academic writing. However, it should be noted that upon completion of data collection, they were informed about this study’s real focus, and the reason for not disclosing to them in the first place. About the latter, apologies were made. Then samples were put into quantitative analysis of textual plagiarism. During analysis, pertinent ambiguities or occluded features regarding referencing were marked in the soft copy of samples and referred to sample providers (whose personal information is summarized in Table 3.2) for clarifications through emails and QQ (chatting software) promptly.

Table 3.1 Interviewed Supervisor’s Personal Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervisor</th>
<th>Supervisor 1</th>
<th>Supervisor 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Years as MA Supervisor</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Number of Students Supervised Annually</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students Supervised Currently</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such clarifications were also conducted with supervisors (whose personal information is summarized in Table 3.1) for institutional-and disciplinary-specific suggestions. To avoid a situation that by allowing the supervisor’s full access to the
whole scenario of source misuse of particular students’ sample, the student might be put in a disadvantaged position due to the supervisor’s realization that the sample contained too much source-misuse to be deemed accusable, discourse-based interviews for supervisors are confined to some controversial instances in the student’s sample.

### Table 3.2 Interviewed Postgraduate's Personal Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student ID</th>
<th>Postgraduate 1</th>
<th>Postgraduate 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Cailey)</td>
<td>(Carina)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Years of English Learning Experience</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Area of Study for the Last Degree Before Enrolling in the Current MA Program</td>
<td>Linguistics</td>
<td>English Literature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In phase two, to probe students’ and supervisors’ disciplinary views on citing, two separate semi-structured email interviews were conducted (see interview guides in Appendix H and G). For students, questions about their prior academic citing experiences/strategies, their opinions on those strategies and their perceived difficulty in citing and dissertation writing were asked (see Appendix H). For supervisors, questions about their observed problems in student’s dissertation writing and citing in particular were probed (see Appendix G).
3.5 Data Collection

3.5.1 Textual Data

The published MA dissertations (n=14) for both universities were collected in January, 2012 through respective university library online catalogues, ProQuest Theses and Dissertations Database. The other two newly-finished draft dissertations from Chinese side are supplied voluntarily by participants in April, 2012 and included in Chinese corpus immediately. Then, eligible portions of writing were extracted from each dissertation to compile a Western corpus (eight sample texts in total) and a Chinese corpus (eight sample texts in total) respectively. Each sample text was composed of a randomly selected ten consecutive pages from early citation-dense literature review chapter of each dissertation. In alignment with Bazerman’s (1984), Salager-Meyer’s (1999) and Pecorari’s (2003) caution that the nature and standard on source-use might change over time, moreover, motivated by a concern of my finding’s relevance towards current situation and pedagogy, this study, following Pecorari (2003), limits all its selection of dissertations published during past five years, from 2008 to 2011, to minimize such potential interference. The topics for these dissertations were mainly centered on second language vocabulary learning and writing. Such coincidental concentration of topics, in the present researcher’s view, is beneficial for subsequent textual comparison in that the researcher’s growing familiarity with literatures in these aspects might facilitate source identification and analysis. Furthermore, to facilitate textual analysis and subsequent calculation, original passage boundary in each sample was rearranged to fit in one-passage-one-source-use criterion. Table 3.3 presents the details of two corpora composition.
Table 3.3 Corpus Composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Issuing Year</th>
<th>Dissertation No.</th>
<th>Word Count</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Issuing Year</th>
<th>Dissertation No.</th>
<th>Word Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cailey*</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>C-MA 1</td>
<td>3443</td>
<td>Ebba</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>W-MA1</td>
<td>2043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carina*</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>C-MA 2</td>
<td>2612</td>
<td>Edith</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>W-MA 2</td>
<td>3680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Callia</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>C-MA 3</td>
<td>3729</td>
<td>Eileem</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>W-MA 3</td>
<td>3129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrie</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>C-MA 4</td>
<td>3605</td>
<td>Eddie</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>W-MA 4</td>
<td>3037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camilla</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>C-MA 5</td>
<td>2282</td>
<td>Edward</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>W-MA 5</td>
<td>3404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloe</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>C-MA 6</td>
<td>2825</td>
<td>Eldon</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>W-MA 6</td>
<td>2345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>C-MA 7</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Edison</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>W-MA 7</td>
<td>3366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cai</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>C-MA 8</td>
<td>3386</td>
<td>Edwin</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>W-MA 8</td>
<td>3451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23828</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2979</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (both corpus)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>48283</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Authors with * are those who participated in the discourse-based and semi-structured interviews. Chinese Corpus specifically refers to the collection of 8 MA dissertation samples collected from the Chinese university. Western Corpus here refers to the collection of 8 MA dissertation samples collected from the North American university.
3.5.2 Email Interview Data

The collection of email interview data started from March, 2012 immediately after NTU IRB approved letter has been received and finished in May, 2012. The data collected includes written response from discourse-based and semi-structured email interviews, together with research memos taken by the researcher during and after follow-up discussions and clarifications on participant’s discourse-based and semi-structured question answering via email and online chatting software-QQ, and each university’s regulation document on plagiarism extracted from respective student handbooks. To facilitate subsequent analysis, the researcher constructed separate files of interview data for each participant.

In view of precautions given by Seliger and Shohamy (1989, p. 166) that interviewee may be prone to provide socially desirable answers instead of truthful responses in fear of consequences that might be imposed upon them for responding truthfully. To minimize such a biased possibility, the present study, aside from rigorous preparation made beforehand for interview guides (e.g., clear instruction and careful ordering of question items), has also emphasized the importance of truthful answers along with the guarantee of confidentiality before each occasion of data collection (e.g., assuring participants that there is no right or wrong answer, inviting them to freely share their own experience). Given the written nature of these accessed data, unlimited time was given to participants for their completion. It was only made clear to participants that they should send back their response once they finished answering. Moreover, to encourage free, in-depth expression and avoid problems arising out of English deficiency (McKay, 2006), question answering in the email was asked to be completed in Chinese-participants’ native language. The written responses from semi-structured
interview data were selectively (the parts that were relevant to my research questions) translated into English for subsequent report.

3.6 Data Analysis

In view of the types of data collected and research questions, two data analyzing frameworks have been employed. Essentially, a quantitative textual comparison approach for textual dataset (two corpora consist of 16 sample texts), an inductive and iterative approach (see detail in section 3.6.2) for email interview dataset (two from supervisors and two from their currently supervised postgraduates). Although separate data analyzing frameworks have been utilized, it should be noted that during data analysis, quantitative analysis of textual data has been frequently supplemented and triangulated by qualitative analysis of interview data. Moreover, upon the completion of data analysis, both results will be merged again to ‘illuminate and collaborate each other’ (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 268).

3.6.1 Quantitative Analysis

For the textual data, a comparative approach and three levels of transparency principle used by Pecorari (2003, p. 324) was adopted here to examine how transparently postgraduates from two cultural backgrounds used sources. Since the opposite of transparent source use was operationalized as plagiarism in this study, thus along with the report of transparency of source use, quantitative measure of the nature and frequency of source misuses for both Chinese and Western corpora were also depicted. According to the current operationalization of plagiarism, source misuses were coded at the following three levels.
Firstly, plagiarizing language. If the sample passage is identified as having shared words or phrases with the source, whereas the sample author did not clearly signal it by giving a transparent citation, then it is calculated as plagiarizing language. Secondly, plagiarizing with the presence of an unclear citation. Although most of the compared sample passages have identified the source in some ways (such as in-text citation or putting it in the reference list), the source was not named where it was used. No quotation mark was used to clearly signal to readers the boundary between copied language and the writer’s own language. In such case of source use, it is calculated as an instance of plagiarizing form or content with presence of unclear-citation. Thirdly, plagiarizing from secondary citation. Sources cited are what the writer has actually consulted. If the sample is found to have lifted a series of sources from a secondary account without acknowledging such facts by using metatextual signals such as ‘Fulmer, 1990, cited from Sutherland, 1993, p. 3’, then it is calculated as an instance of plagiarizing from secondary citation.

3.6.2 Qualitative Interview Data Analysis

To seek answers for the research questions, (v) What causes these Chinese postgraduates to integrate sources in their dissertations the way they do? (vi) How do experienced Chinese-based supervisors react to student’s source use?, all written responses from semi-structured, discourse-based interviews and follow-up clarifications were compiled separately for each participant.

Then the researcher repeatedly read through these responses and strived to ‘find codes from data’ (Punch, 2005, p. 200). Such initial coding was intended to allow the emergence of provisional themes as much as possible from each participant’s interview response. Basing on the provisional themes derived from this initial coding and
considering the focus of such analysis, the researcher then set out to condense these provisional themes into higher categories through techniques recommended by Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 2000). Ultimately, regarding the perceived causes for inappropriate source use, five main categories were evolved from participants’ responses (limited knowledge of academic convention, low psychological engagement, and lack of access of sources, poor language, documenting and time-management skills, and absence of instructional intervention). To check the reliability of interview data analysis, following Seliger & Shohamy’s (1989) and Mackey & Gass’s (2005) recommendations, the researcher recoded the same data one month after the first coding. Then, the intra-rater reliability was calculated by using Intraclass correlation coefficients, SPSS 15.0. The intra-rater reliability for two coding was ICC = 0.95 (95% CI 0.92–0.98). Such a percentage was satisfactory, thus further supporting the reliability of interview data analysis. As for the marked discrepancy between two coding results, another MA student in Applied Linguistics was invited to help code that part independently. Then the discrepancy among three coding results was dissolved through discussion, which resulted in a number of minor revisions in category definition.

3.6.3 Research Questions and Respective Data Analysis Method

To answer the first two research questions, (1) How transparently do these western and Chinese-educated postgraduate use sources in their dissertation? (2) Are there any gaps between these two groups of writers in terms of transparent source use? If yes, what are they?), each sample text from both corpora was examined to see transparent source use at three levels respectively, namely, transparency of language, transparency in placing citation where it is used, and transparency from influence of secondary sources. To this end, the researcher first compared each text with as many
cited sources as possible. Then, unacknowledged repetition of words between the sample and source were counted for each compared passage, text and corpus respectively. Clearly quoted words, passages, or ones with unidentified sources were excluded from the above calculation. Percentages of unattributed repetition of words from source were calculated for each compared passage, text and sub-corpus. Then, each sample’s and each corpus’ total number of passages that contained unattributed repetition of words at four levels\(^1\) (at or above 90%, 70%, 50% and 40%) were summarized. The number of passages that contained unattributed repetition of words between two corpora were computed and contrasted. In terms of transparency in placing citation where it is used, the unclear citation was searched and its number was computed for each text and corpus. As for transparency from the influence of secondary citation, unacknowledged secondary citation was sought and its number was calculated for each text/corpus.

Then, to address the third and fourth research questions (*Does textual plagiarism occur in Chinese and Western MA dissertations corpora in applied linguistics? And If yes, what are the individual natures, frequencies of textual plagiarism in two corpora in applied linguistics?*), writing samples from both corpora were examined to identify textual plagiarism at three levels (plagiarizing language, plagiarizing form or content with the present of unclear citation, plagiarizing from secondary citation). Notably, two pairs of Chinese MA supervisor-supervisees’ discourse-based and semi-structured

\(^1\) The four levels were chosen based on a synthesis of Pecorari’s (2003, 2008) studies. Moreover, the unattributed repetition below 40% level was not presented in this study was based on the author’s agreement with Pecorari’s suggestion (2003) that unattributed repetition below 40% level was more unlikely to escape the possibility of being caused by coincidence rather than purposeful, illegitimate reliance of source only.
interview data were also coded to complement such analysis. For purpose of providing a quantitative measure about the scope of textual plagiarism across samples and corpora, in terms of plagiarizing language, individual calculation of unattributed words as proportion to each compared passage was performed. Moreover, passages which contained unattributed words from source were also examined in a large context of the whole sample to explore the pervasiveness of textual plagiarism. For one sample text, an approximate range (minimum and maximum figure) was computed due to the interference of uncomparable passages. The minimum figure was obtained by using the formula-number of repeated words in each sample divided by the total number of words in the sample. The maximum figure was obtained by using the formula-number of word in each sample divided by the total number of words in compared passages.

In terms of plagiarizing form or content with presence of unclear citation, the number of missing or unclear citation in each sample was computed, its pervasiveness was discussed within the larger context of each sample and subcorpus. Regarding plagiarizing from secondary citation, number of unattributed secondary citation was reported and its pervasiveness was discussed by each sample or corpus.

To seek answers for the fifth and sixth research questions ((v) What causes these Chinese postgraduates to integrate sources in their dissertations the way they do? (vi) How do experienced Chinese supervisors react to students’ source use?), email interview data assessed from two pairs of Chinese supervisor-supervisee were put through content analysis, whose method was already detailed in the section 3.6.2.

3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has delineated the methodology utilized by this study. First, it explained the mixed-methods design and its underlying rationale. Then it described its
instrumentation where methods used to recruit participants, find universities, standardize semi-structured interview guides are detailed. Following this, it detailed the implementation procedures, data collection and analysis methods. All of these afford readers a methodological context to interpret its results which will be presented in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Chapter Overview

In the previous chapter, I detailed the research design, instrumentations, implementation procedures, data collection and analysis methods adopted by this study to achieve its research objective, i.e., to investigate how transparently do Chinese and Western-educated postgraduates use source; in so doing, to further contrast the nature and frequencies of textual plagiarism among Chinese and Western MA dissertations.

In this chapter, I present the findings with reference to research questions and interpret them by drawing on previous literature. To begin with, I describe and discuss the result on the transparency of source use exhibited by these Chinese and Western MA dissertations at three levels, namely, transparency of language, transparency in placing citation where it is used, and transparency of the influence of secondary citation. Followings this, I present the comparative findings regarding the nature and frequency of Chinese and Western MA dissertations’ textual plagiarism. Next, by delineating previous findings’ applicability to this study on students’ reported causes for their source misuse, I list two Chinese supervisor-supervisees’ own justifications for their supervised students’ source misuse. Following this, I report the two experienced Chinese supervisors’ self-reported approach for suspected plagiarism and their real contextual responses and comments towards supervisees’ identified opaque source use before finally ending this chapter with a summary.
4.2 How Transparently Do Chinese and Western-Educated Postgraduates Integrate Source in Their Dissertations

Given a lack of consensus on what is plagiarism and what degree of inappropriate source use can be labeled as plagiarism (Pecorari, 2003, 2008; Polio & Shi, 2012; Price, 2003), this study, as noted in the introduction chapter, operationalizes textual plagiarism by referring to a generally-accepted principle of transparent source use, of which I adopt Pecorari’s (2003). According to Pecorari (2003), transparent source use can be implicated by writers at least at three levels, namely, transparency of language, transparency by placing citation where it is used, and transparency about the influence of secondary citation. By operationalizing plagiarism in this way, this study intends to explore whether samples from both corpora are fully transparent in their source uses, therefore, free from potential charges of textual plagiarism.

In order to answer the first two research questions (1) how transparently do these Western and Chinese-educated postgraduates use source in their dissertations? (2) Are there any gaps between these two groups of writers in terms of transparent source use? If yes, what are they?, the sample’s source use from both corpora was analyzed at three levels respectively on basis of Pecorari’s (2003) transparency principle, source uses that are diverged from any level of transparency principle are identified as textual plagiarism in this study.

According to Table 4.1, Chinese corpus, overall, cited 249 sources (to facilitate calculation, each presence of citation was counted as one regardless it is the same as or different source from its previous). Among 249 sources, 190 sources, or over 79% of cited sources have been compared. Western corpus altogether has cited 287 sources. Of these, 185 sources, or over 65% have been consulted. The rest were not compared because of constraints that they either included no citations or the cited sources were
out of the researcher’s access. Overall, a lower citation density was found from Chinese corpus (n=249) than that from Western corpus (n=287). Given the close word account between two corpora, if Chinese corpus is assumed to be roughly comparable to Western corpus, then its citation density is probably four-fifth lower. This number seems to suggest that Chinese postgraduates on average drew on fewer sources in dissertation writings than their Western counterpart. A closer reading of their source uses, one explanation available for such marked difference is that Chinese postgraduates tend to review source primarily, as Petric (2007) has observed, for knowledge display rather than integrate them strategically to advance or substantiate their arguments like expert writers (Gilbert, 1977). Thus, their review tended to be unnecessarily long and detailed. Consequently, the number of sources reviewed became less within comparable word counts.
Table 4.1 Passages Compared by Writing Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Sample</th>
<th>Chinese Corpus</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Western Corpus</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passages (Total)</td>
<td>Passages compared</td>
<td>Inconclusive Passages</td>
<td>Proportion compared</td>
<td>Passages (Total)</td>
<td>Passages compared</td>
<td>Inconclusive Passages</td>
<td>Proportion compared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-MA 1</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>W-MA 1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-MA 2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>W-MA 2</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-MA 3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>W-MA 3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-MA 4</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>W-MA 4</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-MA 5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>W-MA 5</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-MA 6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>W-MA 6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-MA 7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>W-MA 7</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-MA 8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>W-MA 8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.1 Transparency of Language

While reading, academic readers generally assume that language that is not enclosed as quotation (by using metatextual devices such as quotation marks or indented formats) is the writer’s originality. Given this assumption, to avoid plagiarism, the writer is held responsible for signaling clearly to readers wherever appropriate the nature (copied or one’s originality) of his/her language.

To test whether and to what extent do these postgraduates achieve transparency of language in their MA dissertations, the number of words shared by both student-generated texts and sources were tallied by passage, sample and corpus respectively. To further quantify the scope of such a feature, number of words shared by the student-generated passage and source was divided by the total number of words of the student’s passage to obtain a score of unattributed words as a percentage to the student passage. In view of the transparency of language principle that is widely-agreed to be related to plagiarism\(^2\), four levels (40%, 50%, 70%, and 90%) of unattributed repetition of language are decided to be computed for each sample provider. Table 4.2 and Table 4.3 summarized the result for both corpora. Aside from these descriptive statistics, examples of unattributed repetition at four levels (Figures 4.1, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7 from Chinese corpus and Figures 4.2, 4.3, 4.6, 4.8 from Western corpus) are enclosed to contextualize these repetitions, and to further facilitate understanding and subsequent explanation.

\(^2\) Given a possibility that similarity of words may be caused by coincidence rather than copying, thus following Pecorari’s (2003, 2008) suggestion and measure-that unattributed repetition below 40% level was more unlikely to escape the possibility of being caused by coincidence rather than purposeful, illegitimate reliance of source only. Thus, passages below 40% are not reported in this analysis.
Table 4.2 Nontransparent Source Use Feature by The Corpus and Writer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unattributed Source use</th>
<th>Writers from Chinese Corpus</th>
<th>Writers from Western Corpus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cailey*</td>
<td>Carina*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage(s) with 90% + unattributed repetitions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage(s) with 70% + unattributed repetitions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage(s) with 50% + unattributed repetition</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage(s) with 40% + unattributed repetition</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear citation</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing citation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unacknowledged secondary citation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note.

1. Pseudonyms are given to each sample provider for both corpora. To facilitate subsequent discussion and differentiation, the initial letters of pseudonyms are kept the same within the boundary of each corpus and made to indicate the specific corpus that the sample came from: ‘C’ for Chinese corpus (Cathy, Cai) and ‘E’ for Western corpus (Ebba, Edward, and Eldon);

2. Unclear citation refers to the case where source use was not named exactly where it was used, and potentially misleading the nature of textual relationship between the source and new text;

3. Missing citation refers to the instance where citation to their source is completely absent which were uncovered by the researcher in subsequent comparison analysis;

4. Unacknowledged secondary citation refers to the case where instead of consulting personally the primary citation, the author, with high probability composes a review of certain article based on a secondary account without acknowledging the secondary account’s role and lifted serially several sources from it without acknowledging the consulted secondary sources.
According to the result, regarding the transparency of language principle, if passages of 40% or above unattributed repetition of words are considered as a benchmark, then 8 samples from Chinese corpus and 6 from Western corpus contained varying number of passages with unacceptable levels of unacknowledged use of source language. As shown in the Figure 4.1, the language in the Chinese postgraduate Cai’s passage was found to have 58% unacknowledged similarity with its source's abstract section. A comparison between Cai-generated passage and its source readily revealed that even with relatively more language coming from the writer than its source, Cai’s passage still displays unmistakable sign of being based on the source instead of writing autonomously.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cai 19, from C-MA 8, p. 41</th>
<th>Feng Jiyuan and Huang Jiao (2004, p.1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Feng Jiyuan and Huang Jiao (2004) followed the studies of Izumi et al. (1999) and Izumi and Bigelow (2000) in the implementation of the two types of output tasks (i.e., the guided essay-writing task and the text-reconstruction task) to investigate whether the two tasks that force learners to produce precise and accurate target language in communicative context could prompt Chinese ESL students to notice and learn the past hypothetical conditional if appropriate input was subsequently provided. The results of their empirical research confirmed Swain’s Output Hypothesis....&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Following Izumi et al. (1999) and Izumi and Bigelow (2000) in the implementation of two output tasks (i.e., a guided essay-writing task and a text-reconstruction task), the present study sets out to investigate (1) whether tasks that forced Chinese learners of English to produce precise and accurate target language in the communicative context could help them recognize their linguistic problems, and (2) whether the tasks prompted the learners to seek subsequent input with more focused attention, thus intensifying the noticing function and promoting the learning of English hypothetical conditional construction. ....The major findings of the study are: 1) ...; 2) ...;3).... These findings lend strong support to the output hypothesis and have important implications for communicative language teaching.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.1 Fifty-Eight Percent of Words in Common with Source (Chinese Corpus)
The same is also true to Edwin’s passage from the Western corpus. As shown in the Figure 4.2, the language in Edwin’s passage had 52% unacknowledged similarity with that of its source’s discussion section. An unmistaken sign of reliance on the source’s language rather than independent composition is displayed in Edwin-generated passage. Given the use of source language was not acknowledged appropriately by Edwin, readers are thus unable to infer correctly the nature of textual relationship between Edwin’s passage and its source. Similar cases of opaque use of source language were quite common in both corpora. Since the expectation of transparent use of source language was not met at least for some of their passages for 14 samples, their opaque use of source language might therefore put writers at the risk of plagiarism charges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Edwin 19, from W-MA 8, p. 18-19</th>
<th>Knight (1994, p. 292)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Knight (1994) investigated the effect dictionary use had on words learned and if dictionary use helps some second-year Spanish students more than others (i.e., those of higher or lower verbal abilities). The results indicated that participants learned a significant number of new words while reading for meaning; however, high English verbal ability participants learned more words than both low verbal ability participants and those who used a dictionary more frequently. Second, the dictionary condition increased the percentage of words learned by verbal ability group but it appeared that the lower verbal ability group had a special advantage because they learned as many words as the high verbal students in the same condition.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;The above results indicate that subjects indeed learn a significant number of new words while reading for meaning; however, high verbal ability students learn more words than low verbal ability students, and students who use a dictionary learn more than those who do not. Although the dictionary condition increased the percentage of words learned for both verbal ability levels, it appeared to give the low verbal ability group a special advantage.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Moreover, if passages with 20% to 40% level of unattributed repetition of words were included, then all sixteen samples from both Chinese and Western corpora did not bear out transparency of language principle, least of all, not for some of their language. Similar to the previous scholarship (Campbell, 1990; Flowerdew & Li, 2007a; Keck, 2006; Moore 1997; Shi, 2004) that have identified extensive unacknowledged borrowing of source words among L1 and L2 students’ (including Chinese and other non-western students studying within western context and Chinese EFL learners) writings at differing academic levels, our finding enriches this line of research by confirming that opaque borrowing of source words are widely observed in L1 and Chinese EFL students’ MA dissertations.

Additionally, the evidence that like their Chinese EFL counterparts, L1 postgraduates copied long strings of words from source without attribution further lends support to the previous suggestions (Campbell, 1990; Howard et al., 2010; Hull & Rose, 1989; Keck, 2006; Moore, 1997; Shi, 2004) that not only L2 students with Chinese cultural background, L1 students also copied extensively from source without attribution (e.g., Franklyn-Stokes & Newstead, 1995; Murphy, 1990). Finding of such is significant, not only because it provides partial counter-evidence for the view that ‘culture’ motivated plagiarism and challenges the widely-conveyed, cultural stereotypes against Chinese culture and students’ textual practice (e.g., Pennycook, 1996; Russikoff et al., 2003; Sowden, 2005), but also fortifies previous suggestions (Chandrasoma et al., 2004; Li, 2012a; Pecorari, 2003) that a collection of other immediate factors (e.g., language deficiency, confusion on what accounts plagiarism; graduation pressure; insufficiently-promoted vigilance against plagiarism in the previous and current educational environments) should be considered in the discussion and treatment of students’ plagiarism. Furthermore, in line with previous researchers’ propositions...
(Campbell, 1990; Moore 1997; Shi 2004), our findings suggest that writing to integrate source without violating transparency principle on source language use was difficult for both Chinese and Western postgraduates.

In comparing two corpora’s transparency in source language use at four levels, writing samples from Western corpus as a whole appear to be superiorly more transparent than that of Chinese corpus. This result is in accordance with that of Shi’s (2004) where she found that Chinese undergraduate copied sources language more extensively without attribution than did their native-English-speaking counterparts. The reason for such a difference between two corpora may be due to several factors. First, different academic experiences, trainings and standards received regarding plagiarism across two universities (See a similar discussion in Roberts, 2008, p. 6). Students from Western corpus may have experience in the US educational context for quite a long time, where issues of plagiarism and appropriate source-referencing skills are frequently emphasized and dealt with. In comparison, mainland Chinese postgraduates who come from a different educational context where plagiarism is not dealt with in the same enhanced manner thus may not have many experiences or training or heightened awareness in this regard. Second, compared with their Western counterpart, as suggested by previous literature (Li, 2012), Chinese students’ language deficiency and Chinese universities’ inadequate attention granted to the promotion of academic integrity and plagiarism management, coupled with students’ confusion on what accounts plagiarism may also be held accusable.

4.2.2 Transparency in Placing Citation Where It Is Used

To avoid accusation of plagiarism, academic writers, aside from taking the responsibility of transparent use of source language, need also to abide by a second
principle of transparency, that is, if no citation is placed, then that portion of his/her writing needs to be original both in form and content. Translating such a principle into writing, writers are obliged to name source wherever it is used to signpost readers about the real textual relationship between its source and new text. Pecorari’s (2003, p. 330) coding scheme of unclear citation was adopted here to find out whether and to what extent do these postgraduates achieve this second principle of transparency in their MA dissertations. The number of unclear citation passages was searched and tallied by each sample and corpus respectively.

Aside from a small portion of missing citations (where citations to their source is completely absent) uncovered by the researcher in subsequent analysis (8 passages from Chinese corpus and none from Western corpus), a majority of source used for comparison in both corpora, are identified by writers in some ways or other (listing in the reference lists or in-text citations) although those identifications do not always suffice to provide a clear acknowledgment on the source’s role. The following Figure 4.3 is an example of unclear citation that appeared in the Western corpus.

As demonstrated by the Figure 4.3, from comparison with its source, it is obvious that Edward has written his review of Swinney and Curtler’s (1979) Lexcial Representation Hypothesis based on a Cooper’s (1999) secondary account. By providing in-text reference of Cooper (1999) at the end, Edward seems to have no intention to concede his reliance on Cooper (1999). Nevertheless, from the available metatextual signals Edward provided, readers, aside from decoding that Edward has probably summarized Cooper’s synthesis, still would have no way to know that in fact Edward has also copied extensively Cooper’s (1999) language without

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3 Unclear citation: source use that was not named exactly where it was used, and potentially mislead the reader about the real nature of textual relationship between the source and new text.
acknowledgement. Similar unclear citations were quite common in our corpus. Given the source was not named wherever it was used, which might thus obscure readers from understanding the real textual relationship between the source and new text. Simply inserting a source author and year at the beginning or end of a passage does not legitimize its subsequent unacknowledged verbatim copying of language or idea from the source for that passage.

To further provide a quantitative measure for the scope of this opaque source use feature for both corpora, the numbers of unclear and missing citations are tallied by sample and corpus, again clearly signaled citations were removed from this calculation. Table 4.3 summarizes the results.
### Table 4. 3 Unattributed Repetitions from Source by Passage for Both Corpora

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words in common (%)</th>
<th>Passages at or above threshold</th>
<th>As percentage of compared passages</th>
<th>Words in common (%)</th>
<th>Passages at or above threshold</th>
<th>As percentage of compared passages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all, aside from 8 cases of missing citation, 119 passages from Chinese corpus lacked clear citation to their used source, covering 63% of the total compared passages within this corpus. If we view each sample individually within Chinese corpus regarding this opaque feature, the number of unclear citation ranges from 8 to 19 across samples, suggesting a substantial variation across samples. In comparison, 62 passages from Western corpus lacked clear acknowledgement to their used source (no missing citation case was found), covering 34% of the total compared passages within this corpus. Seeing each sample individually in this Western corpus, the number of unclear citations varies from 0 to 21 across samples, signaling a much wider variation across samples. This result seems to indicate that opaque use of source content and/or language are common among both Western-educated (34%) and Chinese postgraduates (63%). Nevertheless, such source misuse appears comparatively more prevalent among Chinese postgraduates (63%). Chinese EFL postgraduates’ higher percentage in this
respect as compared with their Western counterparts enriched Pecorari’s (2003) similar finding where Western-educated L2 postgraduates of varied cultural backgrounds in her corpus were found to have contained unclear citation of differed quantity. Moreover, my finding that Chinese EFL postgraduates’ inclusion of unclear citation in 63% of the total passage compared as compared with Pecorari’s (2003) finding that “27% of the total compared (passages) lacked a clear citation to the source they used” seems to suggest that compared with Western-educated L2 students, Chinese EFL postgraduates may be in a more disadvantaged position. One explanation applies for such a marked difference between Pecorari’s (2003) and my finding may be that postgraduates in Pecorari’s (2003) sample are all L2 students who have studied in Western school context and immersed with Western-styled guideline on plagiarism for, at least, one year, so they may arguably become more vigilant against this basic form of plagiarism out of similar enculturational effect of plagiarism guideline reported by Lei (2010). In comparison, Chinese EFL postgraduates in this study, who have studied in the mainland university may be unaware of the fact that unclear citation has constituted plagiarism. This can find evidence from their self-report during the discourse-based interview where they seemed to perceive that as long as they provide the source author and year somewhere in their review of the source, then they are legitimimized to borrow without further acknowledgement some phrases and idea from the source in the later part of review.

Further, our finding that unclear citation was widespread among Western-educated L1 postgraduates is significant not only because it provides empirical counter-evidence to the view that ‘culture’ has motivated plagiarism, and highlights that improper source uses were actually appeared in all novices’ academic writing regardless of their cultural upbringing, thus may help eliminate the problematic cultural stereotypes regarding Chinese EFL students’ textual practice, but also because it raises our awareness of a
large intradisciplinary gap existed between Chinese EFL postgraduates and their western counterparts on the source use quality.

Moreover, Chinese corpus was found to have eight missing citations (where there lack a citation to their source altogether) whereas no missing citation was identified in the Western corpus. Closer examination of these missing citation cases reveals that Chinese postgraduates frequently resorted to implicit attribution of source (“Researchers suggest...”) in their dissertation. In contrast, postgraduates in the Western corpus as a whole seem to exhibit more caution in attributing their source author explicitly, despite the fact that they also contained many insufficiently attributed source use. Thus, the varied number of missing citation found in Chinese and Western corpora seem to provide partial confirmatory evidence to Moore’s (1997) observation that compared with Western students’ preference of explicit attribution of source by naming authors, Chinese students prefer implicit attribution of source through using sentence structures such as it is said or researchers suggest. In considering the reasons for such a difference, we concur with Moore (1997) in thinking that cultural difference in attribution practice between Western and Chinese culture might be held accountable for such observed difference. Moreover, as revealed during later interviews, more aggregated tension (due to its language proficiency and lack of training through) felt by Chinese postgraduates in projecting authorial voices and avoid plagiarism charges may also have role to play in their reliance on implicit attribution.

In all, to compare the effectiveness of source use between Chinese and Western corpus on the second principle of transparency, Western corpus, with its less amount of unclear citations and total absence of missing citation than that of Chinese corpus, coupled with the absence of unclear citation for two samples and varying number of unclear citation across the rest of samples, it seems fair to conclude that Western corpus
was more effective in transparently accounting for their source use by placing citation wherever it was used than that of Chinese corpus. Such a finding corroborates the previous suggestion (Moore, 1997; Shi, 2004) that compared with Western-educated or native English speaking students, EFL Chinese students seem to more likely to fail to account for their source use (content and form) transparently. It also supports Howard et al.’s (2010) observations that direct copying of source language, unacknowledged close paraphrase of source idea and misrepresentation of source content were widely observed among both L1 and L2 student.

4.2.3 Transparency about the Citations of Secondary Sources

A third transparency principle that academic writers need to stick to in their writing is that source cited should be the one that the writer has actually consulted. Their reliance on secondary sources must be clearly signaled by using metatextual devices (e.g., Fulmer 1998, as quoted in Sutherland, 2004).

Although the inappropriateness of unacknowledged secondary citation is widely-acknowledged among writing researchers and instructors, whether it amounts to plagiarism, as pointed out by Pecorari (2001, 2003) is likely to receive diverse responses. However, when extreme cases of unacknowledged secondary citation (where several sources are lifted serially from a secondary account without acknowledgement) are concerned, to classify them as textual plagiarism seems to attract little disagreement among researchers (Dong, 2009; Howard et al., 2010; Pecorari, 2003), because of researchers’ recognition that the writer in question might thus take credit for a synthesizing and composing behavior that belonged to the source author. Thus, in this study, we only focus on examining above-listed extreme cases of unacknowledged secondary citation.
Regarding transparent about the citation of secondary sources, of 16 writers, only 3 writers (Ebba, Eldon and Edison) from Western corpus fulfilled such an expectation. The other samples, eight from Chinese corpus and five from Western corpus seem to contain texts where they probably have cited sources based on an account of secondary sources but failed to acknowledge such facts.

In total, 65 unacknowledged secondary citations were identified in the Chinese corpus, comparatively, 32 unacknowledged secondary citations were found in Western corpus. Examining this feature within Chinese corpus, wide variation was existed across samples regarding the number of unacknowledged secondary citation, ranging from 3 to 19. In contrast, viewing this feature within Western corpus, a wider variation was observed across samples. The number of unacknowledged secondary citation case ranges from 0 to 16. Thus, it could be assumed that transparency at this second level was not met by all samples from Chinese corpus and most samples (five out of eight) from Western corpus. Thus, Western corpus with its more transparent performance and wider variation across samples appears to be more superior to that of Chinese corpus. This, in my view, can be explained at least from two aspects. On the one hand, given Western universities’ greater concern and promotion of plagiarism policy, as Pecorari (2001) and Dong (2009) have noted, Western-educated postgraduates overall may have a higher vigilance against the plagiaristic nature of unacknowledged secondary citation than their Chinese counterparts, such vigilance might have guided them from consciously avoiding unacknowledged secondary citation. On the other hand, Chinese postgraduates’ less access to original sources as compared with their Western counterpart, coupled with their awareness of disciplinary supervisors’ general disfavor of secondary citation use (as revealed in our latter interview with Supervisor 1) may have increased their chances of withholding their reliance on secondary sources.
In brief, when comparing the effectiveness of source use on the third principle of transparency between Chinese and Western corpus, Western corpus with less cases of unacknowledged secondary citation as a whole appears to be more effective than that of Chinese corpus. Such result is consistent with previous findings (Borg, 2000; Pecorari, 2003, 2008) that although both L1 and L2 students have been observed to draw on extensive use of unacknowledged secondary citation in their source-based writings, such performance seems to be more severe among L2 students due to their limited knowledge and understanding of the subtle aspect of Western convention (here specifically refers to the knowledge that unacknowledged secondary citation is also regarded as improper source-use practice according to Western-styled academic convention).

When considering three principles of transparency simultaneously, fifteen (except Ebba) of 16 writers from both corpora failed to transparently account for their use source. It seems thus reasonable to assume that most writers from both corpora (15) might not be safe from accusations of plagiarism.

4.3 Nature of Textual Plagiarism for Both Corpora

The findings that 15 writers from both corpora failed to use their source transparently (at least for some portion of their texts) not only addressed my first two research questions but also legitimized my another interest in this topic by confirming that textual plagiarism as operationalized by this study did occur across samples in both corpora. After confirming the third research question (III) *Does textual plagiarism occur in these Chinese and Western MA dissertations?*, a further interest arises, what is the nature and frequency of textual plagiarism in both Chinese and Western Corpus? Is there any difference between two corpora? In the following section, the result concerning the fourth research question (IV) *What are the individual natures,
frequencies, and differences of textual plagiarism in Chinese and Western MA dissertation corpus in applied linguistics? was summarized. The individual nature of plagiaristic source use in each corpus and comparative results between two corpora are presented at three levels: plagiarizing source language, plagiarizing source form or content with the presence of unclear citation, and plagiarism from secondary citation.

4.3.1 Plagiarizing Source Language

To explore individual as well as contrastive natures of source-language plagiarism for Chinese and Western corpus, aside from individual calculation of unattributed words as proportion to each compared passage (the number of words shared by both the student’s and source passage was divided by the total number of words in the student’s passage), passages which contained unattributed words from source was also evaluated in the large context of the whole sample to examine the pervasiveness of such a feature.

As shown in the previous Table 4.2, all eight writers in the Chinese corpus have at least three or more passages whose unattributed repetition of words from source was at or above 40% level. Moreover, each of these eight Chinese writers had at least three or more passages where 50% or more of words repeated from sources without being clearly acknowledged. Further, of these eight Chinese writers, except Cathy who had no passage that was above 70% level, the rest of them all had one or more passages whose identical words with that of sources were at or above 70% level. Among them, one writer (Callia) in particular contained five passages whose languages shared 90% or above similarity with that of sources but left acknowledged. Surprisingly, among all eight Chinese writers, none of them had passages whose similarity percentages with sources reach 100%. Most of these identical passages were made slightly different from their sources by writers, either through selectively revising sentence sequence,
substituting synonyms for some key words, adjusting sentence structure or word structure.

This was best illustrated by Figure 4.4. Although both passages in Figure 4.4 share similarities of words with source far above 90% level, obvious modifications made through adding words to the original source (e.g. adding “conducted a research”), changing some of its word structures is still visibly attempted by sample writers (e.g., changing the original “The researcher” into “The research”; changing the original simple present tense of verbs into past tense).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Callia7 from C-MA3, p. 20</th>
<th>Laufer (2005) cited from Widad &amp; Iman’s PPT (slide 4, 5, 10)*-online resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| "Lauffer (2005) conducted a research to examine relevance of FonF and FonFs to vocabulary learning. The research first critiqued the claim that words are best acquired from input, from reading in particular. Then she gave data on the purpose of comparing vocabulary acquisition from input and focused tasks. She examined the FonFs approach on the base of the nature of lexical competence and supplied empirical evidence on word acquisition in the light of various FonFs activities in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of FonFs. She also mentioned that when a learner in un instructed situation encounters an unfamiliar word he notices it as a word he does not know. He then tries to infer its meaning from context and might make the right or wrong guess. Several encounters with the same word increase the possibility of retaining it later. Regular reading is believed to be a good tool for acquiring and retaining vocabulary."
| "to examine the relevance of FonF and FonFs to L2 vocabulary learning (Slide 4) The researcher first critiques the claim that words are best acquired from input, from reading in particular. Then she gives data on the purpose of comparing vocabulary acquisition (learning) from input and from focused tasks. She then examines the FonFs approach on the base of the nature of lexical competence. Laufer then supplies empirical evidence on word acquisition in the light of various FonFs activities in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of FonFs. (Slide 5) "In un instructed situation, when a learner encounters an unfamiliar word he notices it as a word he does not know. He then tries to infer its meaning from context and might make the right or wrong guess. Several encounters with the same word increase the possibility of retaining it later. Regular reading is believed to be a good tool for acquiring and retaining vocabulary."
Chloe 16, from C-MA 6, p. 36

"De Cara and Goswami (2002) and Ziegler et al. (2003) cited from Lindstromberg and Boers (2008a, p. 207)

"It has been conjectured that pre-phonemic (e.g. onset+rhyme) structuring of phonological representations in LTM is most likely in the cases of (i) people who are not literate and (ii) PNs which are so sparsely populated that relatively coarse, non-phonemic, representation can still distinguish among all the neighbors (see De Cara and Goswami 2002; also Ziegler et al. 2003). Plainly, it is children who are most likely to satisfy both conditions. While a goal of PN research is to understand what long-term phonological representations are like, none of the studies we know of has directly concerned long-term recall of L2 chunks...."

Figure 4.5 Forty-seven Percent of Words in Common with Source (Chinese Corpus)

Eddie 4, from W-MA 4, p. 9

"In a similar study with first-year German students, Chun (1994) noticed that learners had better control over discourse management in synchronous computer-assisted class discussion than in normal classroom discussion since they made use of a wide range of communicative and discourse functions, including giving feedback, requesting clarification, and ending conversations to take the initiative to interact with each other."

Warschauer (1997, p. 474)

"Online results have also been reported to be positive regarding quality of discourse. Students of German took greater control over discourse management in online discussion than in normal classroom discussion (Chun, 1994). They used language that was lexically and syntactically more complex (Warschauer, 1996a) and covered a wide range of communicative and discourse functions (Chun, 1994). The types of sentences they used required "not only comprehension of the preceding discourse but also coherent thought and use of cohesive linguistic references and expressions" (Chun, 1994, p. 28)."

Figure 4.6 Forty-one Percent of Words in Common with Source (Western Corpus)
In comparison, within Western corpus, only six writers had one or more unacknowledged passages in their samples where 40% or more of words came from their sources. Four writers had one or more passages in which 50% or more of words came from sources without being indicated as quotations. Of these 8 writers, only three writers each had one passage whose percentage of unattributed words was at or above 70% level. And only two writers each had one passage where unattributed percentage was at or above 90% level. Similar with that of Chinese corpus, none of these eight Western writers had passages whose language shared 100% matching with sources without being unattributed.

**Figure 4.7 Seventy-six Percent of Words in Common with Source (Chinese Corpus)**

In comparison, within Western corpus, only six writers had one or more unacknowledged passages in their samples where 40% or more of words came from their sources. Four writers had one or more passages in which 50% or more of words came from sources without being indicated as quotations. Of these 8 writers, only three writers each had one passage whose percentage of unattributed words was at or above 70% level. And only two writers each had one passage where unattributed percentage was at or above 90% level. Similar with that of Chinese corpus, none of these eight Western writers had passages whose language shared 100% matching with sources without being unattributed.
This was best illustrated by Figure 4.8. Although Eldon’s passage shares similarities of words with the source far above 70% level, obvious modifications made through adding or deleting words to the original source, changing some of its sentence structure are still visibly attempted by the sample writer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eldon (19, from W-MA 6, p. 14)</th>
<th>Hardison (2004, p. 34)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Hardison (2004) documented the effectiveness of computer-assisted prosody training and its generalization to segmental accuracy and lexical recall.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Two experiments investigated the effectiveness of computer-assisted prosody training, its generalization to novel sentences and segmental accuracy, and the relationship between prosodic and lexical information in long-term memory.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.8 Seventy-two Percent of Words in Common with Source (Western Corpus)

Generally, as illustrated by Table 4.2, a large variation in the illegitimate source language dependence was observed among writers in both corpora. Within Chinese corpus, Callia, comparatively, exhibits a heavy reliance on source language in that her total number of unattributed passages at four (40%, 50%, 70%, 90%) levels (5, 6, 8, 10) all far outnumbered the other writers in the corpus. And Cailey (1, 1, 9, 11), Cai (0, 1, 6, 6), Carina (0, 2, 5, 8) and Camilla (0, 1, 5, 7), following Callia, also contained more number of unattributed passages than the rest writers in the corpus. Notably, compared with writers in the Chinese corpus, a larger variation in the illegitimate source dependence was noted among writers in the Western corpus in that with some writers demonstrated heavy reliance on source language, for example, Eldon (1, 1 3, 3), Eddie (0, 1, 2, 7), and Edwin (0, 1, 1, 6), the rest writers seemed to either have composed autonomously from source or have made so large changes to the cited source that their number of unattributed passages were comparatively far more less than their peers in the same corpus. For example, Ebba, aside from two passages of unattributed repetition below 40% level, had scrupulously acknowledged all (refers to the compared) his
source use where necessary. To compare illegitimate source language dependence feature between writers from two corpora, Chinese corpus as a whole seems to be more severe in such performance than that of Western corpus. As shown in Table 4.3, Chinese writers’ illegitimate source language dependence cases (6, 13, 43, 57) clearly outnumbered their Western counterparts (2, 3, 9, 23) at all four levels.

The above summary of individual passages with varied levels of unattributed repetition language only illustrates part of the scenario. To see how pervasive such unattributed repetitions were across samples, these unattributed repetition of words had to be assessed in the larger context of each sample. As such, another unattributed percentage score was computed for each sample as a whole. Given the interference of uncompared passage in the sample whose source uses are either unknown or inaccessible to the researcher, a range, inspired by Pecorari’s (2003) method, was computed (a minimum and maximum scores\(^4\)) to quantify the scope of unattributed repetition within the boundary of each sample. Such a solution was applied and proved by Pecorari (2003, 2008) and Jamieson (2008) as a justifiable and adequate measure in their recognition that we do not have widely-agreed scholarly consensus on the benchmark level of plagiarism to compare with anyway in the field. Table 4.4 summarized the results.

As Table 4.4 demonstrates, although the weight of unattributed repetition seems to be less prominent when evaluated in a larger context of whole sample for both Chinese corpus (Cailey (14%-19%), Carina (16%-24%), Callia (38%-48%), Carrie (8%-9%),

\(^4\) Two formulas are as follows: the number of shared words in each sample is divided by the total number of sample words (minimum); the number of shared word in each sample is divided by the total number of words in compared passages (maximum).
Camilla (19%-30%), Chloe (12%-21%), Cathy (11%-12%), Cai (17%-22%)) and Western Corpus (Ebba (0.3%-0.4%), Edith (1%-2%), Eileem (2%-3%), Eddie (10%-16%), Edward (20%-22%), Eldon (13%-17%), Edison (1%-4%), Edwin (28%-35%)), the writings of eight writers from Chinese corpus and four writers (e.g., Eddie, Edward, Eldon, Edwin) from Western corpus are by no means fully textual plagiarism-proof. Nevertheless, since all dissertations have passed examinations, and writers henceforth had been awarded degrees, therefore, it seems fair to infer that all these textual plagiarism went unnoticed.

**Table 4.4 Unattributed Repetitions as a Proportion of Whole/Compared Text**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Sample Writers</th>
<th>Percent in common with source (as proportion of whole text)</th>
<th>Percent in common with source (as proportion of compared text)</th>
<th>Western Sample Writers</th>
<th>Percent in common with source (as proportion of whole text)</th>
<th>Percent in common with source (as proportion of compared text)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cailey</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>Ebba</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carina</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>Edith</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Callia</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>Eileem</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrie</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>Eddie</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camilla</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Edward</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloe</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>Eldon</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>Edison</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cai</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>Edwin</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.3.2 Plagiarizing Form or Content with Presence of Unclear Citation**

In addition to a small portion of obvious cases of missing citation uncovered in the Chinese corpus, the majority of sources used for comparison in both corpora were
identified by writers in some ways or other (listing in the reference lists or in-text citations). Nevertheless, those identifications did not always suffice to provide a clear acknowledgment of sources’ influences. Since sources were not named wherever it was used, the nature of textual relationship between the source and new text might be masked. Such case thus constituted another level of textual plagiarism in this study.

To provide a quantitative measure of its scope among samples and corpora, the number of plagiarizing form or content with presence of an unclear citation (hereafter refers as unclear citation) were therefore calculated and reported. Table 4.2 presents the results. In all, 119 compared passages within Chinese corpus might potentially have plagiarized the form or content of their unclearly cited source. If we view each sample separately in the Chinese corpus, the number of second form of textual plagiarism ranges from 8 to 19 across samples, indicating a wide variation across samples. In comparison, 62 compared passages within Western corpus were short of clear acknowledgement to their cited sources. Again, if we evaluate each sample individually, the number of second form of textual plagiarism varies from 0 to 21 across samples, signaling a much larger variation across samples than that of their Chinese counterparts. A reasonable conclusion can be drawn from this data is that textual plagiarism at this level is occurred in both L1 and EFL Chinese postgraduates’ dissertations of varying severity (all eight writers from Chinese corpus or six writers (except Ebba, Edith) from Western corpus, see Table 4.2). Nevertheless, given all writers have been awarded with degree, it seems fair to assume that these textual plagiarism cases went undiscovered.

The evidence that textual plagiarism was uncovered among Western-educated L1 postgraduates and Chinese postgraduates is not only consistent with some previous findings that have documented textual plagiarism among L1 undergraduates (Angélil-Carter, 2000; Campbell, 1990; Howard et al., 2010; Hull & Rose, 1989) and
Chinese EFL undergraduates and postgraduates (Dong, 2009; Metalene, 1998; Shi, 2004), but also seems to challenge the previous scholarship that blamed L2 (Chinese students in particular) student’s inappropriate source use indiscriminately on their first cultural-upbringing or -conditioning (Currie, 1998; Deckert, 1993; Hayes & Introna, 2005; Park, 2003; Pennycook, 1996; Scollon, 1995; Sherman, 1992). In view of our findings, appropriate source use appears to place challenges to all novice academic writers (regardless of cultural background) in the academic community (Angélil-Carter, 2000; Shi, 2004).

Additionally, the finding that Chinese postgraduate’s more severe performance as compared with their Western counterparts in this second form of plagiarism seem to indicate a intra-disciplinary gap in the effectiveness of source use in this aspect between Chinese and Western postgraduates. This may arguably result from an interaction of multiple factors such as Chinese EFL context (e.g., different learning styles/rhetoric traditions; comparative low language proficiency, etc.), Education effectiveness (e.g., ill-structured curriculum, lack of relevant instructional support on the part of Chinese universities, etc) and local standards (e.g., different perceptions and standards on plagiarism) and inadequate regulation on plagiarism. Given it is beyond the scope of current study to probe deeper for its underlying reasons, further study that systematically examines the cross-national intradisciplinary gap on appropriate source use and its underlying causes is certainly warranted.

4.3.3 Plagiarizing from Secondary Citation

In recognition of the fact that lifting up a series of sources from a secondary account, even properly quoting as primary source, may allow a writer to take unearned credit for a synthesizing or composing behavior that in effect belonged to the source
author (Pecorari, 2003), thus, such unacknowledged use of secondary citation was also
categorized as a form of textual plagiarism by the current study. As confirmed by our
exploration of previous research questions, writing samples from both corpus contained
aforementioned form of source misuse, thus the result that sought to quantify the scope of
this third form of textual plagiarism across samples and corpus will be presented below.

According to Table 4.2, within Chinese corpus, each of eight writers had three or
more unacknowledged (secondary citation) passages that appeared to have lifted sources
on basis of a secondary account. Wide variation (ranging from 3 to 19) was existed across
writers concerning the number of plagiarizing from secondary citation. Chinese corpus,
in total, included 65 such cases of textual plagiarism. By contrast, only five writers from
Western corpus had unacknowledged secondary citation (Ebba, Eldon and Edison were
textual plagiarism proof in this respect). A wider variation in the quantity of this third
form of textual plagiarism was found across samples (than that of Chinese corpus),
ranging from 0 to 16. Western corpus had 32 such cases of textual plagiarism.

Compared with wide-spread occurrences of plagiarizing language, plagiarizing form
or content with presence of unclear citation and plagiarizing from secondary citations
seem to be less abundant in quantity in both our Chinese and Western corpus. Such
finding seems to contradict with Pecorari’s (2008, p. 71) observation that,
“unacknowledged secondary citation was common in (her) student corpus.” One
explanation applies for such difference would be that with expanded accessibility
endowed by internet as suggested by previous studies (e.g., Howard, 2007),
source-searching becomes more easy and accessible for both Western and Chinese
postgraduates than before, which may, to some extent, decrease students’ chances of
directly drawing on secondary source without consulting the original. Another
explanation may be that growing and more systematic institutional reinforcement culture
regarding academic integrity observed in both Western and Chinese universities (e.g., Bloch, 2007; Flowerdew & Li, 2007b) may have a role to play in students’ growing awareness of subtle forms of plagiarism and may have motivated their greater concern to use source in academically acceptable way.

4.4 Postgraduates' Perceived Causes for Plagiarism

Since citing behaviors, as suggested by Shi (2010) and Pecorari (2003) are subjective in nature and usually guided by individual student’s ‘inferred rule’ (Shi, 2010, p. 4), thus aside from focused examination of the nature of textual plagiarism from authentic writing, student’s and their supervisor’s context-sensitive identification or view about their citing behavior, and perceived causes for their inappropriate citing behaviors need also to be considered in the analysis to generate further insight. The fifth research question (What causes these postgraduates, Chinese-educated postgraduates in particular, to integrate sources in their dissertations the way they do?) was therefore raised to further enrich literature in this respect. By jointly drawing on existing literature, email interview data and textual evidence, the findings concerning how postgraduates accounted for their inappropriate source use were therefore summarized below.

Notably, since 14 writing samples out of 16 (six from Chinese corpus and eight from Western corpus) are taken from published MA dissertations, due to the time, topic (the potential consequences that might be placed upon writers and their identities through present investigation of their inappropriate source use) and other realistic constraints of this project, no contact or email interviews was made with these 14 writers. Thus, their perceived causes for plagiarism could only be inferred through making comparison between their textual evidence and previous relevant research findings. The results are presented in the section 4.3.1. Additionally, since two newly-completed MA dissertations

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(which have passed examination) from the same Chinese university are subsequently included into Chinese corpus, and the respective two pairs of MA supervisor-supervisee have voluntarily attended semi-structured and discourse-based email interviews. So their accounts on the causes of student’s inappropriate source use are presented in the section 4.3.2 with close reference to students’ textual evidence.

4.4.1 Causes for Plagiarism Suggested by Existing Literature

4.4.1.1 Intentional Deception

Given the constraints of current topic’s sensitivity, research time and logistics, and its accompanied complex ethical clearance process, no discourse-based or semi-structure email interview was made with 8 Western and 6 Chinese postgraduates. Thus, such a group of students’ causes for textual plagiarism were speculative rather than empirically validated, made through examining the relevance between existing literature findings and their textual evidence. Generally, a substantial body of literature converges on three suggestions, namely, intended deception, cultural explanation and patchwriting model (Angélil-Carter, 2000; Flowerdew & Li, 2007a; Pecorari, 2003; Shi, 2004; 2006).

Routinely, plagiarism was thought to be caused by a deceptive intention, that is, an attempt to obtain unearned credit while avoiding make efforts oneself (Marusa, 2003; Pecorari, 2008). Despite the finding that samples contained varying amounts of unattributed source use, nevertheless, when it comes to the attempt of attributing those source misuses to deceptive intention, in various aspects, the textual evidence seems to be incompatible with such a conclusion.

One of the counter-evidence is that none of these writing samples have passages that share 100% similarity with their source. Various modifications have been attempted to
the new passages to make it look different from their sources. Even passages whose unattributed repetitions were above 90% level (see Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4), clear attempts of modifications still could be observed. Syntactic reformulations and copy-delete strategies were widely practiced by these postgraduates in the samples. If these 14 students had deceptive intention from the very beginning, it seemed unreasonable that they would make so much effort to modify them.

Moreover, given the wide-range sources that writers have utilized, the potential large amount of time and energy imbued on searching, synthesizing and modifying them, all of which appear to contradict with the image of deceptive plagiarists. Furthermore, the finding that small proportions of textual plagiarism were identified in each sample also seems to challenge the possibility that these students plagiarized intentionally. As summarized ed by Table 4.4, the proportion of textual plagiarism identified for writers in Western corpus are Ebba (0.3%-0.4%), Edith (1%-2%), Eileem (2%-3%), Eddie (10%-16%), Edward (20%-22%), Eldon (13%-17%), Edison (1%-4%), and Edwin (28%-35%); the proportion for writers in Chinese corpus are Cailey (14%-19%), Carina (16%-24%), Callia (38%-48%), Carrie (8%-9%), Camilla (19%-30%), Chloe (12%-21%), Cathy (11%-12%), and Cai (17%-22%). The small proportion of textual plagiarism found within both Western and Chinese corpus further consolidate previous suggestions (Currie, 1998; Pecorari, 2008; Sherman, 1992; Shi, 2008; Spack, 1997) that novice writers, L2 students in particular may copy with an honest intent to learn to write in English.

Additionally, another indication of an absence of deceptive plagiarism lies in the fact that a large portion of identified plagiarism instances in the corpus are actually from unclear citation cases. These students seem to make no attempt to hide the source, as they, though unclear and inappropriate, did identify sources’ origins in some ways or
others in most unclear citation cases. Last but not least, Chinese supervisors’ contextual knowledge and evaluations of samples also seem to suggest their disbelief of intentional deception among sample providers. For example, when two supervisors were asked to comment on identified opaque source use within their supervised student's drafts, none of them turned to intentional deception for explanation.

To sum up, all above evidence seems to imply an absence of intended deception from students. Nevertheless, due to the inferential nature of the evidence, it should be cautioned that my finding is still unable to rule out the possibility that some students may knowingly plagiarize. In any case, they do seem to prove that at least some plagiarisms are accidental, and unintentional plagiarism does engrain in the samples.

4.4.1.2 Cultural Explanation

Another explanation suggested by the literature (Insull & Craig, 2003; Pennycook, 1996; Scollon, 1995; Sowden, 2005; Sutherland-Smith, 2005; Russikoff et al., 2003; Zobel & Hamilton, 2002) for textual plagiarism is a cultural one. Among them, cultural conditional view\(^\text{5}\) (e.g., Pennycook, 1996; Sowden, 2005) and cross-cultural variance view\(^\text{6}\) (e.g., Bloch, 2007; Russikoff et al., 2003) on plagiarism were frequently upheld by researchers in their discussion.

Exploring the applicability of cultural conditional view of plagiarism to textual evidence in the current corpus, we readily found that aside from the finding that Chinese postgraduates were found to commit textual plagiarism of varying degrees in their samples, Western-educated postgraduates, without exception, demonstrated

\(^{5}\) Culturally-conditional view on plagiarism posits that plagiarism is totally conditioned by the students’ home culture.

\(^{6}\) Culturally-variance view of plagiarism argues that perception and standard on plagiarism are different across cultures.
textual plagiarism as well. Such a finding partially rejects the claim that students’
textual plagiarism was culturally conditioned. In view of current findings, it could be
assumed that student’s cultural background is not a strong predictor or at least not a sole
predictor for students’ plagiarism. Such conclusion is consistent with Liu’s (2005) and
Phan’s (2006) findings suggesting that cultural conditioning is not the major cause for
students’ plagiarism. Notably, given the current research focus, the first language of
students in the western corpus was unable to be strictly controlled within English as L1
only (two students’ first language status were unsure\(^7\), the other are native English
learners), such a fact constraints us from ruling out L1 language’s interference in
plagiarism and thus stops us from concluding for certainty that cultural conditional
view of plagiarism regarding Chinese culture was rejected. Nevertheless, given the fact
that all Western-educated writers (even the two whose L1 status were unsure) have
passed fairly the same Western styled education and standard on dissertation writing,
and awarded with degree, thus it could be assumed that their writings are roughly
representative of average level of Western students’ writing at that level.

As for the cultural variance claim regarding plagiarism, the current findings seem to
provide partial confirmatory results. As revealed by the email interview data with two
pairs of Chinese supervisor-supervisee, their understanding and knowledge of what
constitutes plagiarism is indeed diverged from Western notion of plagiarism. This result
is consistent with previous findings (Gu & Brooks, 2008; Hu & Lei, 2011; Lei, 2010;
Liu, 2005). Admittedly, given the current research focuses more on the difference
exhibited by their textual evidence, thus more systematic studies that contrast Chinese

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\(^7\) The evidence available from their dissertations (e.g., name and acknowledgement) could not
determine for sure whether they were Chinese American or L2 learners of a Chinese
background. Consequently, their L1 was unpredictable. Thus L1 interface was unable to be
completely ruled out for this corpus.
student’s perception and knowledge of plagiarism with that of their Western counterpart with a large sample size are needed to further verify such observation.

Further, concerning the claim of Chinese scholars and student’s acceptability of plagiarism (Pennycook, 1996; Sowden, 2005), the current findings seem to generate opposite evidence. As revealed by the interview data made with Chinese supervisors, both of them not only held condemnatory attitude or even hatred towards plagiarism (refer to Section 4.6.1 for more detailed discussion), but also reported to have confronted and rejected plagiaristic practice themselves. Similarly, the concern expressed by Chinese postgraduates and their fear of being accused plagiarism, as well as their description of strategies they took to actively avoid plagiarism (refer to Section 4.5.3 for more discussion) all seem to reflect their perceptual recognition of plagiarism as wrongdoing. This further corroborates with previous findings (Gu & Brooks, 2008; Hu & Lei, 2011; Liu, 2005) suggesting that Chinese culture does not tolerate plagiarism either. Thus, at least, other explanations instead of solely cultural factor should be considered when accounting for the observed source misuse among Chinese students.

For the latter, as the above-mentioned findings and current result indicated, cultural and developmental variances regarding the understanding, and knowledge and regulation of concept of plagiarism should be one factor. Moreover, immediate contextual factors such as institutional culture on plagiarism regulation, infrastructure availability, instructional and pedagogical affordance of training on appropriate source use might be influential in students’ source misuse.

4.4.1.3 Patchwriting Model

Given cultural factor, as discussed above, cannot fully account for these students’ inappropriate source use, thus the applicability of Howard’s patchwriting model was
examined with reference to the current textual evidence and email interview data. Howard (1993) proposes patchwriting model to differentiate novice writer’s temporary, inappropriate textual borrowing strategy-patchwriting “copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one-for-one synonym-substitutes” (p. 233) from intentional plagiarism. She further contends that although patchwriting in the published academic paper was definitely unacceptable, patchwriting was a necessary, developmental phase for novice writers to go through before becoming competent participants in the academia.

Referring back to existing textual evidence, it is clear that seven out of eight writers from Western and eight from Chinese corpus demonstrated extensive patchwriting of different degrees (see Figure 4.1-Figure 4.8 for example). Given no definite evidence for intentional deception was detected in these samples, it may be therefore implied that patchwriting, as a form of survival strategy do account for most of textual plagiarism in the current corpus. This conclusion lends further support to Howard’s patchwriting model. Moreover, corroborated with previous literature (for Western-educated students, Pecorari, 2003, 2008; Shi, 2010; and for Mainland Chinese students, Flowerdew & Li, 2007a; Shi, 2004), it proves that patchwriting is not only extensively existed among Western students but also occurred in Chinese EFL student’s writing.

4.4.2 Perceived Causes Provided by Chinese Supervisor-supervisees

Aside from above three explanations for textual plagiarism, research findings (Abasi et al., 2006; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006; Li, 2012; Park, 2003; Pecorari, 2003, 2008) also suggested that immediate context factor (pedagogical environment regarding plagiarism) and student’s own personal factor (e.g., ignorance of western plagiarism convention, academic ability, personality; motivation; language proficiency) were prominent in
explaining their inappropriate source use. To further examine what causes Chinese postgraduates integrate sources the way they do, email interview data collected from two pairs of Chinese supervisor-supervisees was coded through content analysis, five major categories were finally evolved. The result is summarized below.

4.4.2.1 Limited Knowledge about Appropriate Citing Convention

Both semi-structured, discourse-based interview data with two supervisors and supervisees, and postgraduates’ writing samples seem to indicate that Chinese postgraduates’ limited knowledge and understanding about the scope of western referencing convention was one cause for their source misuse (see also Li, 2012). With this insufficient knowledge and understanding, it is hard to imagine that they could demonstrate appropriate source use in their writing practice. Both supervisors 1 and 2 pointed out in the follow-up interview that their students did not seem to know well about academic convention, let alone appropriate referencing conventions, which in turn gave rise to their inappropriate source use. For instance, Supervisor 1 noted that one problem her supervisees have is their tendency of avoiding giving proper acknowledgement to borrowed ideas or diagrams and figures and she attributed such problematic tendency to students’ insufficient knowledge of academic convention. About this, she wrote as follows:

Extract 1

“Although they are relatively more careful to give in-line acknowledgement to borrowed words, they tend to give no acknowledgement to the source when citing ideas, diagrams and figures from it, which is suspiciously plagiaristic. Such situation is more acute
when they paraphrase other’s opinion. I guess, in their understanding, once they do not use exactly the same words, they do not have to make an effort to acknowledge. ”

(Supervisor 1)

Such a reported observation of students’ ignorance of referencing convention was later confirmed by analyzing two postgraduates’ evaluative responses on the appropriateness of four scenarios of source misuse in the semi-structured interview. Aside from the concerted recognition that copying words verbatim from source was unacceptable, these two postgraduates seemed to be quite ambivalent about the appropriateness of other three subtle forms of plagiarism (unacknowledged paraphrasing, unacknowledged secondary source as well as inconsistent citation forms). For example, when they were asked to evaluate and provide their rationales about the appropriateness of following source use scenario (Expressing other’ ideas into one’s own language and incorporating them into one’s writing without mentioning the sources), Postgraduate 2 said:

“Such a behavior, to some extent, is acceptable, as long as its occurrence is kept to a minimum level. My dissertation writing also included such kinds of source use. I think it is unavoidable, because we as students do not have so many original ideas to write about, as compared to some famous researchers.”

(Postgraduate 2)

In a similar vein, when Postgraduate 1 was asked with the same question, she commented: “To be honest, I don’t know the answers for these questions.” When the
researcher asked her to elaborate on how she would cope with similar situation in her own writing, she explained that:

“If I could express the idea in my own language, to some extent, it also means that I have learnt the idea, therefore, I think it can be regarded as my own as well. So I don't think there is any necessity to provide citation.”

(Postgraduate 1)

Postgraduate 1’s above justification for not citing a paraphrased idea resonated with Petric’s (2004) and Shi’s (2010) similar reports where some of subjects defended their unacknowledged use of source information in terms of how they have internalized similar knowledge as a result of learning. It thus could probably be assumed that students’ lack of knowledge on appropriate citing convention coupled with their own inferred rules of not citing gained as a result of their learning hindered them from referencing properly.

The finding that varied forms of inappropriate source use (unacknowledged paraphrasing (8+9), unclear citation (17+15); unacknowledged secondary citation (8+7); unacknowledged translation (3+3)) uncovered in both Postgraduate 1 and 2’s samples seem to further support both supervisors’ speculation and student’s own justification. Previous research suggested that there is a positive co-relation between students’ knowledge of plagiarism and their chance of committing plagiarism in their own practice (Walker, 2010; Yeo & Chien, 2007), given the limited understanding and knowledge of plagiarism uncovered among students in this study, it therefore seems to partially account for their source misuse.
Moreover, a further examination of both supervisors and postgraduates’ judgments and rationales on the appropriateness of four source-use scenarios in the semi-structured interview reveals that local adaption of academic convention and disparity among its academics’ perception of the adapted convention may have exerted mitigating effects on student’s insufficient recognition of the scope of appropriate citing convention. Both supervisors recognized that all four scenarios are plagiarism. Nevertheless, when it comes to their disciplinary reality, both converged that incorrect citation form and unacknowledged secondary citation were not treated as plagiarism in their discipline. Supervisor 2 further maintained that unacknowledged paraphrasing, to certain extent, was also not factored as plagiarism. Contrasted with Supervisor 2, Supervisor 1, however, insisted that unacknowledged paraphrasing was undoubtedly considered as plagiarism in their disciplinary practice. Such discrepancy seems to imply that supervisors even with the same discipline and institutional culture may interpret citing convention differently (see also in Roig, 2001). Drawing on postgraduates’ judgments and their accompanied justification, both of them seemed to suggest that despite their awareness of inappropriateness of the other subtle forms of plagiarism, when it came to their own writing, similar to Pecorari’s (2003) subjects, they were more concerned in finishing the writings in a way that were acceptable to both their disciplinary tradition and disciplinary professors. They appeared to demonstrate less concern in writing in a genuine academically accepted way. Following their senior’s dissertation style in this respect, according to both postgraduates’ self-report, seemed to be a recommended way.

4.4.2.2 Poor Source-Searching, Selecting and Documenting Skills

Another cause for students’ source misuse evolved from the interview data is that their poor source-search, source-selection and documenting abilities may have some
role to blame on. Supervisors interviewed tend to suggest that students’ uncritical selection of references, coupled with poor documenting skills further complicated their writing and source use qualities. This is consistent with previous findings (Li & Casanave, 2012; Stapleton, 2010) suggesting that uncritical and inefficient selection of sources deteriorate student’s source use and writing quality.

“Many of my supervisees tend to pile up a lot of irrelevant, unauthoritative or unknown references in their literature review which later I have to ask them to cut out. This is quite an unproductive and time-consuming process. Because of this, these days I have to make explicit my rule with current students before their writing that all their cited sources in the literature review should come from key journal articles and books, less authoritative sources have to be kept as few as possible.”

(Supervisor 1)

Such observation of Chinese postgraduate’s difficulties in selecting relevant and citation-worthy references is in accordance with previous findings (Borg, 2000; Gu & Brooks, 2008) indicating that both undergraduates and postgraduates, especially those with limited content knowledge (Chandrasoma et al. 2004 Dong, 1996) might not know how to search and select critically citation-worthy sources. Another problem arises from students’ uncritical selection of references is that as Supervisor 2 has observed, students often presented online sources without proper attribution which, in the supervisors’ eyes, might be caused by their poor documentation skills.

“...they tend to quite easily forget to attribute online sources. In most cases, even if they have identified the sources, the citation formats are
more likely to be incorrect than correct. To ask them to correct it is also a very headache experience for me. Because they usually do not know themselves where they have copied it.”

(Supervisor 2)

Postgraduate 1’s own description of source searching and selection experience for her dissertation seems to further confirm both supervisors’ observations.

“Because of my choice of topic, I could not find many relevant studies to write about from key journal articles. Given the word limit, as a result, I have to rely on many second-class journal articles and online sources to fill in the place. Sometimes, I even have to think ways to make less irrelevant studies to seem relevant to my studied topic.”

(Postgraduate 1)

The textual analysis of students’ samples also confirmed students’ uncritical selection of referencing sources. Both Camilla and Callia have drawn on unauthorized sources available online (Chinese forum posts or student’s PPT slides) without acknowledgement (see Figure 4.4 for Callia’s example). Thus, it is possible that poor skills in searching, selecting and documenting might further complicate students’ already poor source-use quality.

4.4.2.3 Lack of Access of Sources

Students’ lack of access to key and up-to-date sources is also reported by the current interview data to be a cause for their source misuse. This view resonated with Dong’s (2009) finding that Chinese university students’ little access with key journals
or English books might partly explain their source misuse. When supervisors were asked to comment on the underlying reasons for their MA supervisees’ inappropriate source use in general, Supervisor 2 directly stipulated that the lack of access to sources might be partially held responsible for students’ observed source misuse.

“Two aspects of shortages, according to my observation, are accountable for some their source misuse, one is short of access to up-to-date literature resources, which were caused by school and our department’s inadequate library resources. As our university or department alike seldom purchase key international magazines in our field. The other would be students’ lack of training and acculturation in the research conduct of their academic discipline. This has something to do with our school’s expanded enrolment.”

(Supervisor 2)

Echoed Supervisor 2’s speculation, Postgraduate 1 also expressed similar concern when she was asked to talk about her perceived difficulty in dissertation-writing. She wrote:

“One big problem I have is that I could not find the original copies of some of books and journal articles that are crucial for my topic. As a consequence, I have to draw on and stitch together a lot of secondary extracts on these books and articles to write my own review. So now I am quite worried and unsure whether my patchwork has kept to the original author’s idea....Although it sounds inappropriate, I do not have a choice. Actually, many of my seniors and classmates are also doing the same thing.”
Consistent with Postgraduate 1’s above reflection, her supervisor (e.g., Supervisor 1) also confirmed this problem when she was invited by the researcher to provide some general examples of her current-supervised students’ problematic sources use. She commented specifically by referring to Postgraduate1’s name, though the present author has not requested her to provide the name of the student,

“I have just finished reading (Postgraduate1’s) draft,...one problem in her draft was, though not pervasive, drawing on a lot of sources from secondary account and listed them as if they were first-hand information.”

(C supervisor 1)

Closely related to students’ difficult access to original academic monographs or articles, another popular practice, as Supervisor 1 further underlined, is that students tend to translate many Chinese sources’ abstracts or Chinese sources’ reviews of another relevant article word-for-word in their dissertation without attributing to Chinese authors.

“As part of our dissertation requirement, students are required to review relevant domestic studies as well... One problem arises from such a regulation is that our students tend to translate word-for-word the abstract of Chinese sources or their review of relevant sources into English and used it in their dissertation without attributions.”

(Supervisor 1)

The result that not only both Postgraduate 1 (n=3) and Postgraduate 2’s (n=3) samples had unattributed translation passages but other students’ (Camilla, Cai) samples
also contained insufficiently attributed cases of verbatim translation of Chinese sources further validated Supervisor 1’s observation.

Although unacknowledged translated text (either direct copying or paraphrasing) is regarded as an academic infringement by Western academic convention, none of these Chinese students (judging from their justifications on the use of unacknowledged translated text, and their willingness to discuss it openly) seems to realize that such behavior has amounted to plagiarism. Conversely, both of them believed that it were themselves who have translated it, thus it constituted their own words and synthesis. Both agreed that aside from providing Chinese source author and publishing date, there is no need to provide further acknowledgement. Such justification well echoed Dong’s (2009) Chinese undergraduates’ defense on their unattributed appropriation of translated text.

4.4.2.4 Low Psychological Engagement

Another cause sufficed is that low psychological engagement with plagiarism rules widely observed in both students’ and disciplinary professors’ daily practice might have something to do with the prevalence of students’ source misuse. In other words, a disconnection between what is ascribed and what is practiced on plagiarism may be partially responsible for students’ continuous source misuse. As both supervisors have realized, if no active and sustained engagement was invested in the maintenance of academic integrity across the board, it was very hard for the guideline of plagiarism to take root in both students’ mind and practice.

“....Most of our students can understand or might be well aware of the wrongness of plagiarism, but the problem is that in their practice, they do
not take it very seriously,... Such situation may be partly attributed to some of our teacher’s ignorance of academic convention or negligence of duty as role model. Moreover, I think school-level enforcement culture on academic integrity is also important. If universities administrative or teachers in it could not set up a good and consistent example or standards for students to follow, how can they expect students to take the initiative?"  

(Supervisor 2)

“To uphold academic integrity is easier said than done. I think there is a distance between what our university ascribes and what we actually did in practice. Very often, it is very hard and unrealistic to rely on us teacher alone to promote it. As we already have so heavy teaching load. If I take plagiarism seriously, then it means a lot of additional work to me. This partly explains why although we have an honor code in place, not too many teachers are actually following it.”  

(Supervisor 1)

This reported cause further corroborates with previous suggestions (Risquez et al., 2011) indicating that students’, academics’ and universities’ exhibited psychological distance from academic guideline during day-to-day practice might not only precipitate the occurrence of plagiarism but also inhibit them from consciously developing linguistic resources or disciplinary competence required to avoid plagiarism.
4.4.2.5 Lack of Systematic Instructional Intervention

Supervisors’ and students’ account converged that absence of systematic instructional support in referencing convention and dissertation writing was accusable for students’ source misuse. In exploring the specific support that their discipline has provided to students’ dissertation writing, both students and supervisors’ responses crossed on one point that their discipline did not offer additional instructional support on dissertation except a style handbook.

The finding that absence of systematic teaching of writing convention, discipline-acceptable way of appropriate referencing as well as disciplinary professors’ disagreement on the very scope of appropriate source use, make students’ self-learning process quite agitating. In this connection, one postgraduate’s account is particularly illuminating in explaining how inconsistency among disciplinary professors’ requirements, coupled with absence of relevant instructional support has made her dissertation writing an exceedingly difficult enterprise.

“Our department do not provide course on how to write dissertation. Although we do have a style handbook, it is far from enough in helping me cope with the difficulty and sense of lost during the writing process. ...Most of time, I have to learn how to write through writing, it is quite tough...My supervisor and other teachers are quite helpful and offered me many suggestions, but the problem is that they seem to have slightly different standards in that sometimes they gave quite varied suggestions on my same question, so in the end, I still have to figure it out by myself.”
Echoed Postgraduate 2’s retrospection, Supervisor 2, in speculating causes for students’ difficulty in appropriating source properly, also emphasized that systematic instruction on source-based writing is one way to make up Chinese students’ limited knowledge and experience in working with source in an academically acceptable way.

“From undergraduate to postgraduate, our students generally do not have much chance or experience in research writing. Neither do they have received much systematic training on working with source. Thus, they are generally not ready for the dissertation both in terms of writing skills and academic abilities. So I think direct instruction on dissertation writing seems quite necessary to diminish the gap.”

Chinese Supervisors’ comments seem to underscore the relation between Chinese student’s inadequate ability of writing using source and plagiarism as suggested by many previous studies (Campbell, 1990; Shi, 2006).

4.5 Disciplinary Supervisors’ Reaction to Students' Inappropriate Source Use

Eliciting disciplinary supervisors’ responses to student’s dissertation and source use in particular may not only provide us with valuable individual opinions of what is desirable and appropriate in postgraduate’s dissertation. Moreover, supervisors as representatives and guardians of their nuanced culture of discipline, may evaluate student’s writing with a contextualized standard that are more likely to be deemed appropriate by other members of their discipline (Pecorari, 2008). Specifically, our
elicitation of supervisors’ comments was focused on three aspects: (1) their holistic evaluation on the effectiveness of source use in supervised dissertation; (2) their reported approach in dealing with suspected case of plagiarism and factors that might influence their specific way of handling; and (3) their actual reaction to students’ identified opaque source-use feature.

4.5.1 Overall Evaluation to Students’ Source Use

First of all, given that all sixteen dissertations from both Western and Chinese corpus had been published, and postgraduates had thus been awarded degrees, it seems, therefore, justifiable to assume that neither supervisors nor external examiners had strong disapproval of the quality of source use or any other aspects of dissertations.

Moreover, the evaluation we collected from supervisors points to a general approval or acceptability of students’ writing. In the time of our email interview (i.e., semi-structured interview was conducted before discourse-based interview), both supervisors have finished reading and giving first-round feedbacks on two postgraduates’ drafts. In both interviews, supervisors were asked to summarize their comment on the student’s draft. Moreover, they were requested to give a further evaluation regarding samples’ effectiveness in source-use. Though two supervisors’ responses varied greatly, both of them suggest that although further revisions are necessary, writing samples’ source-use qualities were generally acceptable. None of them indicated or implied in any way that these samples contained problems so serious that might put writers at risk of failing. As Supervisor 1 noted:

“I have just finished reading (Postgraduate 1’s) draft. She has conducted a replicating studies based on a PhD thesis. Since it is only a Master Dissertation, replication study was still acceptable. Overall, her draft was
acceptable, though, there are still several problematic areas needing further revisions. Firstly, grammatical errors are extensive, despite my continuous emphasis that grammatical accuracy is the least they should do and do well. Secondly, layouts of tables are not reader-friendly, as her tables included lots of unused data. Thirdly, hypotheses are very redundantly formulated. Regarding the effectiveness of source use, she has done an acceptable job despite occasional appearances of unacknowledged secondary sources and inconsistent use of citation format and style which might need some slight adjustments later.”

(Supervisor 1)

As the above evaluation indicates, Supervisor 1, though, has identified several problematic areas in the student’s draft that, in her opinion, requires further vetting, her comment is largely rather positive and complimentary. This is especially the case when she commented on the student’s source use, her cognition that students need only to do some slight adjustment seems to suggest that not only she did not find a big problem in the student’s source use but also the student’s source use problem does not seem to influence much of her overall evaluation of the work. This further suggests that supervisor’s evaluation focus may have some role to play in students’ source misuse. Similar with Supervisor 1, Supervisor 2’s evaluation focused more on student’s lack of critical stance to the literature. Aside from that, he also did not find a big issue with student’s source use. In his opinion, the problem student puts up with source was more out of carelessness, quite superficial and technical, and could be easily cured by a help of stylebook.

“Postgraduate 2’s draft was quite well-written and did not have much grammatical problems. The problems I found particular with it are that
although she has done a very thorough review of studies within her investigated topic, reviews are generally short of her own critical evaluation. With such absence, it is hard for me to assess the study’s originality and necessity. Admittedly, this is not unique to her only. Actually it is quite common among my previously supervised students. Moreover, a number of citations she has used in the body content were forgotten to be included in the references. Further, the inconsistent and inaccurate use of citation format and style are also quite pervasive, even if I have provided her with the style handbook and requested her to structure her dissertation accordingly.”

(Supervisor 2)

As all their comments show, up to this point, they did not find a big issue regarding students’ source use. From what they have seen, these samples are general acceptable. To further explore whether their seemingly positive evaluation towards students’ actual source misuse is mainly conditioned by Chinese culture’s acceptability of plagiarism as previous studies suggest (e.g., Pennycook, 1996; Sowden, 2005; Zobel & Hamilton, 2005) or some other factors, these supervisors’ reported approach toward suspected student plagiarism were thus elicited before asking them to specifically comment on the opaque source use in students’ sample.

4.5.2 Reported Approach to Suspected Plagiarism

When they are requested to describe their general approach towards suspected student plagiarism, both supervisors agreed that they held zero-tolerance with intentional plagiarism. They all stated that intentional plagiarism should be severely punished. For example, Supervisor 1 commented:
“Personally, I hate intentional plagiarism, so I will not tolerate it when I detect it. For example, last year I have just rejected a faked promotion application material of a lecturer from another university. Because I found that the applicant has deceptively listed an article in his application that actually belonged to his wife.”

(Supervisor 1)

As the above comment reflects, fairly qualified to be representatives of Chinese culture or Chinese way of doing, these Chinese Supervisors also held condemnatory attitude towards plagiarism. This view contradicts with previous literature’s suggestion that Chinese students or scholars’ observed tolerance of plagiarism is a result of their cultural conditioning (Pennycook, 1996; Sowden, 2005). If cultural conditioning is not the culprit, then our interest arises, what are the other factors that contribute their judgment of general acceptance of student’s de facto source misuse. When we further inquired their experience of detecting intentional plagiarism among postgraduates in their discipline, they all denied ever confronting such a case. They further added that although scholars’ plagiarism deserves severe punishment, as for students, given to their inadequate knowledge of convention and disciplinary competence, pedagogical scaffolding is more appropriate and effective. As Supervisor 2 replied,

“I think, students’ plagiaristic behaviors, are mostly owed to their insufficient academic abilities or insufficient knowledge about academic convention, thus should be instructed accordingly to help them become

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8 Both supervisors are native Chinese and have completed all their education and worked and lived in China all of their life since then.
better. But teacher researcher’s plagiarism are unforgivable otherwise they will fail more students.”

(Supervisor 2)

It is quite clear from the above responses that both supervisors have shared a concerted perceptual rejection towards plagiarism in general. Notably, another interesting theme evolved from their self-report is that they might hold largely different approaches to different people’s plagiarism. They are more sympathetic and tolerant to students’ plagiarism as compared with scholars’ plagiarism due to their recognition that the former has a relatively limited competence in English language and a limited knowledge in both discipline content and academic convention. This differentiated attitude is further confirmed by their later response when they were asked to evaluate specifically their supervised student’s identified opaque source. As will be presented in the section 4.6.3, both supervisors tend to be hesitant to make a plagiarism-related judgment about their respective student's writing. They tend to draw on a number of external factors, such as their familiarity with the student in question, the efforts students have been invested, etc, beside textual evidence in giving their evaluation.

4.5.3 Reaction to Identified Opaque Source Use

During discourse-based interviews, when Supervisor 2 was asked to comment on the appropriateness of the source use (refer to Figure 4.9), he pointed out that although sentence structure has been slightly modified, such copying are definitely unacceptable in the final draft.

“This is unacceptable, though she [the student] has adjusted some of the sentence structure when compared with Matsumura’s sources, most words
are still obviously lifted directly from Matsumura’s sources. She definitely needs to rewrite this passage...."

(Supervisor 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carina 12, from C-MA 5, p. 20</th>
<th>Matsumura, Kawamura., and Affricano (2008, p. 125)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;As Ellis (2003) points out that part of the recent academic interest in task-based instruction may have grown out of the expectation that the task is the “shared construct” (p. 34) on which the interests of L2 researchers and practitioners meet.&quot;</td>
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Figure 4.9 Postgraduate 2’s Source Misuse Sample

When the researcher further asked Supervisor 2 to elucidate on what disturbed him most in this case (unacknowledged copying or unacknowledged secondary citation), he readily replied that unacknowledged copying annoyed him the most. To him, unacknowledged secondary citation was not a major concern in evaluating student’s work, because it was widely observed and kind of unavoidable. Nevertheless, the behavior that the student made no attempt to use her own words to report the secondary source but rather effortlessly copied verbatim from it without acknowledgement was unacceptable. When the researcher invited Supervisor 2 to speculate the possible cause for this observed behavior,

“...This just surprised me, as Postgraduate 2 is quite engaged with her topic and very hardworking.... Drawing on my knowledge of her, I don't believe she did it on purpose....”

(Supervisor 2)

The response made by Supervisor 2 seems to imply that although the source use is
unacceptable, with his knowledge of the student, he still believes that it is caused by other factors other than the student’s deceptive intention. Similar with Supervisor 2’s view, Supervisor 1 was also unwilling to resort to deceptive intention in accounting for her supervisee’s opaque source use, and drawn on a variety of other factors (ignorance of convention, lack of access to sources, time pressure, poor source searching, selecting and documenting skills) in accounting for the source misuse.

To sum up, supervisors’ reaction to identified opaque source use lends further support to the absence of intentional deception in student’s textual plagiarism argument that I established in the section 4.4.1. Moreover, their reaction also provides counterevidence on the claim of Chinese culture’s, Chinese scholars’ or students’ permissibility of plagiarism (e.g., Pennycook, 1996; Sowden, 2005). Further, their reaction identifies a variety of contextual-specific factors that are prominent in explaining Chinese student’s source misuse practice. Lastly, it brings to fore the concern that since supervisors themselves have neither identified nor addressed these source misuse in their feedback given to students, thus there is ample reason to feel worried, as Pecorari (2008, p. 134) has noted, their postgraduates would have received their degree without knowing that their source use would be labeled as plagiarism.

4.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have described and discussed the findings related to the scenario of inappropriate source use in 16 Chinese and Western postgraduates’ degree dissertations in applied linguistics.

Regarding the first two research questions, my result revealed that although 16 writers differed greatly in their approach of source use, 15 out of 16 shared a clear tendency of opaque source use at three levels unanimously. If students’ opaque source
use at either level is considered plagiarism, then none of 15 texts from both corpora could completely safe from textual plagiarism accusations.

Moreover, when samples’ transparent performance in source use at three levels are considered simultaneously, Chinese corpus as a whole is less transparently accounting for their source use than that of Western corpus. Thus an intradisciplinary gap on transparent source use was confirmed between Chinese and Western-educated postgraduates in applied linguistics. It is argued that such a gap might result from an interaction of multiple factors, such as the difference between Western L1/L2 and Chinese EFL contexts (e.g., learning styles/rhetoric traditions, perceptions on plagiarism concept, and language proficiency level, etc), the difference between education effectiveness (e.g., Chinese university’s relatively ill-structured curriculum, lack of relevant instructional support and enforcement, etc) and the difference between individual university’s standard and strength of plagiarism regulation.

About my third research question, the evidence that opaque source uses were observed among writers in both corpora confirmed that textual plagiarism did engrain in both Western and Chinese postgraduates’ dissertations in applied linguistics. Specifically, 8 writers from Western corpora and 7 writers from Chinese corpora failed to use their source transparently, at least for some portion of their texts.

With respect to the fourth research question, my result indicated textual plagiarism at three levels was extensively observed in both Chinese and Western postgraduates’ dissertations. Viewing the quantity of identified plagiarizing passages for each sample provider at three levels, wider variation was observed across Western corpus than Chinese corpus. Put differently, compared with Western writers’ heterogeneous performances on source misuse, writers in Chinese corpus were more homogeneous in their plagiaristic performance at three levels, implying that source misuse were more
common and severe among the latter. The evidence that Chinese supervisor-supervisee pairs’ self-reported unacceptability on the textual practice that they perceived as plagiarism, together with the above comparative textual analysis result rejected previous scholarship’s cultural conditioning explanation against Chinese EFL students’ source misuse, thus verified Howard (1995) Patchwriting model. The difference revealed between Chinese supervisor-supervisee’s perception of plagiarism in this study and that of their Western counterpart from previous literature confirmed a cross-culturally perceptual variance of plagiarism (e.g., Bloch, 2007).

As for my fifth research question, collected Chinese supervisor-supervisees’ contextual-sensitive accounts on identified students’ source misuse shed further light on the causes of source misuse from their own perspectives. Five major causes were evolved from their self-report: students’ limited knowledge and understanding of appropriate citing convention, university’/academics’/students’ low psychological engagement with academic guidelines (plagiarism rule in particular), lack of access to sources, lack of systematic instruction on dissertation writing and referencing, and students’ poor source-searching, selecting and documenting skills. Surprisingly, the widely suggested language proficiency was not perceived as a cause in my finding. This might be attributable to the fact that low language proficiency was perceived as an acquiescent factor for all EFL student writers’ source misuse such that supervisor-supervisee pairs might sense no need to bring up it again to the interviewer who shared the same EFL status. An alternative explanation might be out of the fact that semi-structure interview guide did not directly probe these interviewees’ opinions on the potential relationship between EFL students’ low language proficiency and their source misuse, consequently, language proficiency factor was overshadowed by other more prominent factors.
Concerning my last research question, Chinese supervisors were found to concertedly hold a rejecting and condemnatory attitude towards intentional plagiarism. This seems to generate further counterevidence to previous scholarship’s arguments that Chinese culture tolerates plagiarism. It was also found that Chinese supervisors, despite expressing disapproval of their supervisees’ illegitimate source use, seemed to concur in the opinion that students’ plagiarism was more out of unintentional than intended moral transgression. Out of such sympathetic perspective, they refused to make plagiarism-related judgments when evaluating their supervisee’s source use. They drew on many external factors, such as personal knowledge of supervisees, their status as novice, the amount of efforts students have invested, beside textual evidence in giving their evaluation. Such reaction might have to do with these supervisors’ own experience as EFL writers and their recognition that plagiarism might be not solely a problem of academic dishonesty but rather a problem of academic literacy.

Taken together, all these findings point to a conclusion that on the one hand textual plagiarism was widely engrained in both Western and Chinese MA dissertations, Chinese postgraduates and their Western counterparts do exhibit an intradisciplinary gap in their effectiveness of source use, on the other hand, such happening was caused by an interaction of different factors. Thus, to better understand and manage students’ textual plagiarism, an integrative perspective that takes into consideration of cross-cultural perceptual variance, social, institutional, disciplinary contexts in studying the issue of plagiarism is desirable.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Chapter Overview

In this last chapter, I firstly restate this study and its major findings. I then assess its limitations and propose some areas for future research. Last, I present its implications for theoretical understanding, institutional policy, and classroom pedagogy on plagiarism.

5.2 Summary of the Study

Adopting a contrastive and integrative perspective, this study has examined the nature of transparent source use and textual plagiarism among 16 Chinese and Western MA dissertations in applied linguistics. The collected textual sample and email interview data (accessed from some of Chinese sample providers and their supervisors) were analyzed to address its six research questions: (I) How transparently did these Western and Chinese-educated postgraduates use source in their dissertations? (II) Are there any gaps between these two groups of writers in terms of transparent source use? If yes, what are they? (III) Does textual plagiarism occur in these Chinese and Western MA dissertations? (IV) What are the individual nature, frequencies of textual plagiarism for Chinese and Western corpora of MA dissertations? (V) What caused Chinese postgraduates to use sources in their dissertations the way they do? (VI) How did Chinese supervisors react to students’ inappropriate source use? Five important findings have been thereby generated, which are summarized in the next section.
5.3 Major Findings

First, both Chinese and Western postgraduates were not transparent in source use in their dissertations. Particularly, 15 out of 16 postgraduates from both Chinese and Western corpora are not transparent in their source use at any of the three levels (e.g., transparency of language; transparency and unclear citation and transparency from secondary citation). Wide variation of transparency in source use was observed across writers in both corpora at all three levels.

Second, postgraduates from Chinese corpus tended to be substantially less transparent in accounting for their source influence in their dissertation than that from Western corpus when three levels of transparency in source use are considered simultaneously. An intradisciplinary gap\(^9\) regarding transparent source use was thus confirmed between Chinese and Western-educated postgraduates in applied linguistics. These findings seem to corroborate with the previous literature (Li, 2012; Moore, 1997; Shi, 2004) indicating that Chinese-educated EFL learners were more likely to fail to transparently account for their source use than that of their Western counterpart. The observed disciplinary gap might arguably have to do with the differences pertaining L1 vs. EFL social and educational contexts, difference in Chinese/Western universities’ education effectiveness and local standards’ mitigating effects in plagiarism construction and management (Cheng, 2007; Jia, 2008). Nevertheless, the interviewed Chinese postgraduates and their respective supervisors’ concerted rejection towards what they thought as plagiarism, together with the evidence that western-educated postgraduates also have problem in transparently accounting for source influence all

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\(^9\) Intradisciplinary gap here refers to the possible variances that Western-educated postgraduate and Chinese postgraduate might exhibit in the transparent use of source in their respective MA dissertations in one disciplinary area-applied linguistics.
seemed to indicate that Chinese postgraduates’ more severe performance of opaque source use might not result from a cultural conditioning as previous literature suggests (Pennycook, 1996; Sappe, 2002; Sowden, 2005), but might be rather a result of an complex interaction of different factors such as a different conceptualization of plagiarism, limited knowledge of western styled convention or local university’s academic cultural or other immediate contextual factors.

Third, joint analysis of both textual evidence and email interview data verified that both Chinese and Western postgraduates’ dissertations from two corpora contained textual plagiarism (as operationalized by this study) of varying degrees at all three levels. The existence of textual plagiarism among samples from both cultural backgrounds lends support to Howard, Serviss., and Rodrigue’s (2010) conclusion that textual plagiarism was widely observed among both L1 and L2 students. Such finding also partially rejects the claim that Chinese students’ textual plagiarism is culturally conditioned. In terms of the reasons for the identified textual plagiarism in both corpora, it is maintained that Western-educated postgraduates’ identified textual plagiarism might be related to those students’ statuses as novice, their inadequate content knowledge or insufficient knowledge of Western academic convention. It is argued that Chinese postgraduate supervisor-supervisee’s seeming acceptability of identified textual plagiarism may be a result of their different understandings of plagiarism or their limited knowledge about Western academic convention or a mitigating effect of local university’s standard and regulation on plagiarism.

Fourth, closer examination of the nature and frequency of textual plagiarism among two corpora at three levels (plagiarizing source language; plagiarizing content or form with presence of unclear citation; plagiarizing from secondary citation) revealed that instances of inappropriate textual borrowing were widely occurred in both corpora.
Nevertheless, Chinese corpus as a whole was found to be more severe in the illegitimate use of source than Western corpus. This result seems to concur with Li’s (2012), Moore’s (1997) and Shi’s (2004) suggestions that source-acknowledging practice is more inadequate among students in China than in Western context. The reasons apply for such difference may be, as Li (2012) suggested, a combination of multiple inadequacies experienced by the Chinese part, that is “insufficient understanding of the [western] academic writing conventions..., English difficulty, shortage in the intellectual and cognitive depth needed for handling a subject matter, ...” (p. 13). Notably, wider variation in the number of instances of textual plagiarism at three levels was existed across Western sample providers than Chinese sample providers. This seems to further indicate again textual plagiarism is likely to be more unequivocally practiced by postgraduates from Chinese corpus than that from Western corpus. All the above findings enriched the previous literature (e.g., Campbell, 1990; Hull & Rose, 1989; Keck, 2006; Pecorari, 2003, 2006; Shi, 2004) suggesting that illegitimate source use was widely practiced by both L1 and EFL Chinese students, but Chinese EFL students’ such performance was more severe. The possible reasons for such marked difference between these two groups may be, as previous literature (e.g., Ange’lil-Carter, 2000; Baurain, 2011; Gu & Brooks, 2008; Pecorari, 2003; Shi, 2004, 2006) suggests, due to a complex interactions among multiple factors (e.g., differed perceptions, standards of and levels of involvement in plagiarism; language proficiency; writer development; infrastructure constraint).

Fourth, regarding the causes for postgraduates’ identified source misuse, Chinese supervisors and supervisees’ self-reports, aside from verifying patchwriting model and partially supporting cross-cultural variance in the perception of plagiarism suggested by previous literature (Howard et al., 2010; Hu & Lei, 2011; Liu, 2005; Pecorari, 2003,
also converged on the other five contextual-specific explanations. They were respectively, students’ limited knowledge and understanding of appropriate citing convention, university/academics/students’ low psychological engagement with academic guidelines, lack of access to sources, lack of systematic instruction, and students’ poor source-searching, selecting and documenting skills. Surprisingly, the widely suggested language proficiency was not perceived as a cause in the current study. This might be attributable to the possibility that language deficiency was so fundamental/defaulting factor in the EFL students’ source misuse in the eyes of EFL supervisors and supervisees interviewed that they did not feel the need to mention it explicitly to the interviewer who also shared the same EFL status. This finding draws our attention on the mitigating effects that cross-culturally variant perception of plagiarism, university’s regulating culture/pedagogical support, infrastructure, and students’ own motivation in learning have exerted in the occurrence of textual plagiarism.

Fifth, regarding disciplinary supervisors’ comment and reaction towards students’ source misuse, two points from my finding are particularly worth noting. The first point is that Chinese supervisors’ self-reports revealed their concerted perceptual rejection and condemnation towards intentional plagiarism in general. Such finding, similar with Hu and Lei’s (2011), and Li’s (2012) observations, introduces further counterevidence towards the claim of Chinese culture’s acceptability of plagiarism. The other point is that when it comes to evaluate their supervisees, these supervisors, similar with Dong’s (1996) and Li’s (2012) reports, despite expressing disapproval of their supervisees’ illegitimate source use examples in the dissertations, seemed to be more sympathetic with students’ source misuse. The supervisors denied ever seeing any intended deception from supervisees, and thus refused to make plagiarism-related judgment
about their respective student’s writing. They tended to draw on a number of external factors, such as their personal knowledge of the supervisees, their status as novice, the amount of efforts students have invested, beside textual evidence in giving their evaluation. This result further corroborates with Pecorari’s (2003, 2008) observation that Western supervisors were also hesitant to make plagiarism-related judgment about their L2 supervisee’s illegitimate source use. Chinese supervisors’ reaction towards and their justification of students’ source misuse lend further evidence for the existence of unintentional plagiarism among Chinese postgraduates.

In short, this study has shown that an intradisciplinary gap in source use quality did exist among Chinese postgraduates and their Western counterparts. Such gap may be attributable to a complex interaction of multiple variables such as cultural, developmental, contextual factors (e.g., institutional infrastructure, overall regulating culture regarding plagiarism). Given students’ plagiarism was mediated by a series of factors simultaneously such as cultural backgrounds and developing stages of students, disciplinary and institutional difference on plagiarism standard and guideline, it is therefore suggested that in the future discussion of student plagiarism, an integrated perspective that considered all above factors in their exploration of students’ plagiarism is essential if we want to better understand and cope with student plagiarism.

5.4 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

In view of the multi-dimensional, multi-factorial nature of plagiarism that our finding and previous scholarship together have demonstrated (e.g., Abasi, et al., 2006; Angéil-Carter, 2000; Chandrasoma et al., 2004; Flowerdew & Li, 2007a; Howard, 1999; Hu & Lei, 2011; Marusa, 2003; Pecorari, 2003; Price, 2002; Shi, 2004, 2006,
2010), I admit that the current inquiry only taps onto one small aspect of plagiarism, many issues remain unaddressed.

First, this study mainly focused on depicting the nature, frequency of and identified causes for source misuse among Chinese and Western MA dissertations in applied linguistics. Like many other text-based study of plagiarism, writing samples included is not only limited in quantity but also only represent a snapshot of applied linguistic postgraduates’ writing performance, thus no generalizability beyond this particular sample, population and discipline should be made. Therefore, more replicating studies (using the same methods) that are conducted in different settings with different populations and disciplines may throw more insights into the characteristics and causes of students’ textual plagiarism.

Second, given its research focus, only lexical nature of postgraduates’ source misuse was depicted. Continued studies that specifically described the strategies (e.g., grammatical strategy) that postgraduates’ adopted in their patchwriting and textual plagiarism and that compared the effectiveness of various source appropriating strategies will be beneficial if educators want to help both L1 and Chinese EFL writers move away from inappropriate patchwriting and further develop effective and acceptable textual appropriating strategies. Similarly, more focused investigation about postgraduates’ citing behavior, motivation and various mediating factors that surround their strategy choice are also essential if we want to further inform the pedagogy in this respect.

Third, despite its mixed-method design, given restraints of research time frame and practical concerns, only two pairs of Chinese supervisor-supervisee’s discourse-based and semi-structured interview data were collected. Thus, the results generated are still
restricted to data in which the quantitative textual analysis of plagiarism and limited interview data were capable of yielding. Future studies that drawn on more supervisor-supervisee pairs’ discourse-based and semi-structured interview data or adopted other methodological triangulations on a longitudinal basis may generate more insights.

Fourth, although this inquiry has discussed the underlying causes, perceptions and reaction towards source misuse from Chinese supervisor-supervisee’s perspective, the discussions were mostly speculative and inconclusive in nature. Thus only a glimpse of these issues can be provided. Further studies may consider a systematic and focused investigation into causes, perceptions and reaction towards source misuse from Chinese supervisor-supervisee’s perspective. On the similar vein, a systematic and focused investigation on a contrastive dimension between Western- and Chinese-educated postgraduates’ perceived causes on their source misuse are also worth exploring. Results generated from this line of research may not only deepen our understanding of plagiarism across cultures but also empower writing instructors and administrators alike from both cultures to make appropriate decisions when dealing with suspected plagiarism or drafting institutional policy on plagiarism.

Further practice-oriented studies that explore the most useful and appropriate types of intervention tasks in helping students acquire source integration skills are also desirable. The practice-oriented studies may include intervention research that designed to develop students’ effective referencing and source use skills through self-developed workshops or courses.

Despite above-listed limitations, this study has generated useful information about the nature and frequency, and causes of Western and Chinese-educated applied
linguistic postgraduates’ source misuse in their degree dissertation. Moreover, it provides a number of implications for theoretical understanding, institutional policy and classroom implications regarding textual plagiarism.

5.5 Implications

5.5.1 Theoretical Understanding of Plagiarism

Our inquiry, echoed many previous findings (e.g., Flowerdew & Li, 2007a, 2007b; Howard et al., 2010; Hu & Lei, 2011; Marusa, 2003; Pecorari, 2003, 2008; Shi, 2006), demonstrates that both L1 and L2 students’ plagiarism may be unintentional in nature rather than induced by moral transgression only. Primarily, our findings, adding on previous literature (Abasi et al., 2006; Angélil-Carter, 2000; Chandrasoma et al., 2004; Currie, 1998; Howard, 1995, 1999; Pecorari, 2003, 2008; Shi, 2004, 2006, 2010), have verified the existence of unintentional plagiarism among both L1 and EFL Chinese students. Thus, to better understand its nature and cause, and further provide remedial approach to it, I agree with many researchers in suggesting a need for universities and other higher educational bodies to rethink the concept of, discourse around and institutional policy on plagiarism (Chandrasoma et al., 2004; Flowerdew & Li, 2007a, 2007b; Howard et al., 2010; Hu & Lei, 2011; Marusa, 2003; Pecorari, 2003, 2008).

Specifically, an extended conceptualization of plagiarism by incorporating a consideration of unintentional plagiarism is called for. On basis of it, I further argue that a conscious distinction between prototypical plagiarism and unintentional plagiarism need to be made before universities from both cultural backgrounds could properly address the problem of student plagiarism. As we have discussed, it is unfair and unreasonable to blame all cases of plagiarism on students’ lack of morality.
Although both Western-based and Chinese-based universities are far from adequate in their recognition in this respect, this is more exigent for universities in EFL context such as China. Although a growing number of universities there have adopted and enforced plagiarism guideline in the wake of globalization of scholarship, most of these guidelines still unequivocally reflected an ethical-absolute view on plagiarism. In view of the above reality and my own findings, I suggest that universities or relevant administration bodies from both cultural backgrounds should be aware of the possibility that plagiarism or patchwriting in students’ source-based writing may not be necessarily induced by intended deception but well be caused by the writer’s underdeveloped textual skills when they are making or designing relevant policies or pedagogical curriculum. Students’ patchwriting, as Pecorari (2003, p. 342) argued, should be viewed as a “neutral rather stigmatizing error.” By emphasizing this, I suggest that pedagogical efforts should be directed more on how to help writers develop out of patchwriting phase rather than on how to punish them.

Moreover, our findings enrich the literature by highlighting that students’ plagiarism is a complex phenomenon (e.g., Chandrasoma et al., 2004; Howard, 1996, 2000; Marusa, 2003; Pennycook, 1996; Price, 2002; Russikoff et al., 2003). It is intricately mediated by many intervening variables, such as culture, discipline, context, writer’s development. Thus, it is necessary, as many researchers cautioned (e.g., Howard, 1995, 1999, 2000; Pennycook, 1996; Scollon, 1995), to consider all these factors while exploring students’ plagiarism. In sum, it is suggested that an integrated perspective is needed to better understand and deal with the issue of plagiarism.
5.5.2 Pedagogical Implication

Since academic training at postgraduate level is arguably the first most crucial phase for novice writer’s development, thus, more informed institutional policy and pedagogical support need to be in place in guiding and helping them grow out of patchwriting and source misuse.

As our result indicated that although both Western and Chinese-educated postgraduates in applied linguistics exhibited textual plagiarism of different degrees, Chinese postgraduates seem to be more severe in such performance as compared to their Western counterparts. In consideration of the causes provided by those students, it seems that students’ little exposure to Western notion of appropriate citation behaviors, cultural-specific rhetorical tradition and absence of systematic instruction on source-based writing are fundamentally attributable to their source misuse. To address such inadequacy, raising students’ awareness of the potential forms of unintentional and intentional plagiarism that may occur in their dissertation-writing are necessary and essential. Moreover, raising students’ awareness of potential cultural difference in attribution practice (explicit vs. implicit attribution) between Western and Chinese academic writing is also indispensable.

To achieve this, supervisors or/and instructors are advised to introduce explicitly through scenario the potential types of sources misuse behaviors (including cultural-specific or cross-cultural forms of source misuse) to students and then lead an open discussion with students on which and why certain source use behaviors could be classified as plagiarism in their disciplinary practice. With that in place, instructors are then suggested to introduce students with the concept of transparency on which our study is based, and urge students to make and reflect their citation decision on basis of this concept. Or instructors can ask students to compare effective and ineffective sample
writings’ (of the same level with students) source-use transparency (see also Petrić, 2012; Polio & Shi, 2012) to raise their awareness of different forms of inappropriate source use. Concerning the latter, instructors can also ask student to identify the sample’s source misuses and ask them to share their identifying rationales with classmates, then instructor can provide disciplinary appropriate evaluation and comment on their classification.

After raising students’ awareness about the scope of inappropriate source use, explicit instruction needs to be provided to empower students to appropriately avoid them. In this connection, I am in alignment with many researchers (Chandrasegaran, 2000; Pecorari, 2003; Shi, 2004, 2006; 2008) in arguing that systematic instructions should not only be offered to help students acquire the technical skills surrounding source integration but also the higher-level skills of using sources rhetorically. More importantly, students should be made aware that referencing are not only ways to acknowledge the role of others’ work but also important rhetoric strategies that can be used strategically to advance and substantiate their own propositions in the writing (Chandrasegaran, 2000; Pecorari, 2008). To this end, using scenario-based or case-based learning mode to demonstrate explicitly to student the tacit knowledge and skill around the effective use of source and referencing, as suggested by Polio and Shi (2008) and Wette (2010) is quite desirable. Moreover, instructors can also assign students to read relevant research articles that have analyzed the structure and functions of various types of citations in dissertation writing and then lead an open discussion on it. By using these above-listed activities, students will develop a “rhetorical awareness of disciplinary conventions regarding source use” (Petrić, 2012, p. x). Aside from the above recommendations, it is also important that writing tasks or opportunities need to
be created for students to practice by themselves what they have learned about source using and referencing regularly.

5.5.3 Institutional Implication

Although current theoretical discussion on plagiarism has growingly acknowledged the existence of unintentional plagiarism, such advanced understanding has not yet been widely translated in the drafting of institutional policy (Lunsford & Ede, 1994; Maruca, 2003). Most available institutional policies still view plagiarism unequivocally from an ethical-absolute perspective (see examples in the introduction section of Li & Casanave (2012)). Thus, I argue a need for both Western and Chinese universities to synchronize their conceptualization of plagiarism in current policy-making with latest theoretical findings (e.g., difference between intentional/unintentional plagiarisms). In the mean time, it is equally important that Western and Chinese institutions develop cohesive, transparent frameworks for both plagiarism detection and penalty, and then administration bodies and academics involved make efforts to enforce and model these policies sustainably and consistently in the everyday practice. All of these will constitute an initial step in developing and promoting a shared vision of the importance of academic integrity.
References


http://dspace.lib.iup.edu:8080/dspace/bitstream/2069/211/1/


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Appendices

Appendix A

Recruitment Email

Dear (supervisor participants),

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to participate in the following research project.

The focus of my research is the writing process of postgraduate students working on their master’s dissertations, and it involves looking at draft portions of the MA dissertations and discussing with students and their supervisors about it.

The involvement consists of a one-hour email interview and access to draft chapters of supervised student’s MA dissertation with your comments on it. It should be noted that the consent and participation of your student would also be sought.

Thank you very much for your kind help!

Sincerely yours,

Kang Shuangjuan

Dear (student participants),

I have been given your name by your supervisor who has agreed to take part in a study I am carrying out as part of my work toward M.A. degree.

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to participate in this project too.

The focus of my research is the writing process of postgraduates working on MA dissertations, and it involves looking at draft portions of MA dissertations and discussing with students and their supervisors about it.

The involvement consists of two sessions of email interview (about two and a half hours in total) and access to portions of your draft dissertations with your supervisor’s comments.

Thank you very much for your kind help!

Sincerely yours,

Kang Shuangjuan
Appendix B

Letter of Invitation to Supervisors

Dear Supervisors:

I am an MA student majoring in Applied Linguistics in NIE, NTU. The study on the writing process of students working on MA dissertations (their experience with and belief about writing from references and their knowledge of referencing convention in particular) is my research project, which is also the final part of my full-time study for a MA degree.

Given the design of my research, it involves employing semi-structured email interview to solicit the supervisor’s general perception of postgraduate’s source use in the MA dissertation in applied linguistics and supervisor’s contextual observations and comments on their currently supervised postgraduate’s problems and difficulties in source use.

Specifically, the supervisor’s involvement consists of a one-hour semi-structured email interview and access to early chapters (introduction and literature review) of supervised MA student’s draft dissertations with your comments on it. Needless to say, the consent and participation of your students would be sought too.

Please be advised that the use of your email interview data will not bring about any harm or damage to you or your students. To keep anonymity and showing respect for all parties’ basic rights, neither my supervisor and I nor my follow-up dissertation writing will disclose your, supervised student’s, or your university’s name.

For the implementation this research, we need your support and help, thus I am writing to sincerely invite you to participate. Your kind participation will be greatly appreciated.

Undoubtedly, you and your students can resign from this research at any time if you or your students feel the need to do so.

If you have any further inquiries regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at sunnyokang@qq.com.

Sincerely yours,

Kang Shuangjuan
Appendix C

Letter of Invitation to MA students

Dear Participants,

I am an MA student majoring in Applied Linguistics at NIE, NTU. The study on the writing process of students working on master’s dissertations (their experience with and belief about writing from references and knowledge of referencing convention in particular) is my research project for MA degree.

Given the design of my research, it involves soliciting MA students’ perception of the source use in the MA dissertation writing and also their knowledge and experience and perceived difficulties in writing from sources during MA dissertations writing.

The study involves looking at draft portions of the dissertation and discussing to student writer about it. The specific involvement required consists of the access to the early chapters of your draft MA dissertation and two sessions of email interview.

I have been given your name by your supervisor who has agreed to take part in this study.

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to participate in this project too.

Sincerely yours,

Kang Shuangjuan
Appendix D

Participant Information Sheet

(For supervisors)

**Date Information Sheet Produced:**

**Project Title:** Using semi-structured email interview to elicit Chinese MA students’ and supervisors' accounts of their experience with, belief about writing from sources and their knowledge of referencing convention in MA dissertation writing in Applied Linguistics

My name is Kang Shuangjuan. I am a student studying for Master degree in Applied Linguistics at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University. I am currently working on my MA dissertation project entitled a contrastive study of plagiarism and patchwriting between Chinese and Western MA dissertations in Applied Linguistics. My supervisor is Dr. Cheung Yinling, and she is an Assistant Professor at NIE. I would like to invite you to participate in my aforementioned research project that I have to do as part of my degree requirements. The following is some information about it.

**What is the purpose of the research?**

The research is to explore qualitatively and quantitatively the nature, frequency and difference of source-misuse in the Chinese and western MA dissertations in applied linguistics. By mapping up the natures, frequencies of source-misuse among these two groups of novice writers in one discipline, I intend to find out the gaps of the source misuse between these two groups of different cultural backgrounds and explore the possible contextual explanation behind it. Through such exploration, I intend to further contribute some empirical evidence to the discussion of the causes for the prevalence of source misuse in L2 academic writing, and to provide some direct evidence to the resolving of the abundant cultural-biased explanation in this regard. Finally, with such contextualized, informed understanding of the plagiarism and patchwriting, hopefully, this study will come up with some justification and future remedial, pedagogical
suggestions in dealing with plagiarism and patchwriting in the future MA students’ dissertation writing in applied linguistics.

**Brief description of my proposed topic**

My proposed topic is

The present study plans to undertake a contrastive, textual-analysis oriented study of plagiarism and patchwriting among Chinese and Western MA students’ MA dissertations in applied linguistics. Specifically, by drawing on Pecorari (2003, 2006)’s analyzing framework of plagiarism and patchwriting, the researcher plans to firstly paint out quantitatively the nature, frequency, similarity and difference of plagiarism in the two corpuses of writing samples taken from 16 randomly archived MA dissertations from two universities. In view of the quantitative study’s insensitivity towards the individual experience and the individual nature of dissertation writing process as well as the interference of occluded feature of academic writing to the validity of the final result, the researcher will further employ semi-structured email interview to access some of these MA students’ and their supervisors’ contextualized view towards and knowledge of plagiarism in the said China university to triangulate and supplement the quantitative textual analysis. By such mixed-method design, I intend to contribute some direct empirical evidence to the cultural-biased explanation of plagiarism in the field. Hopefully, the study will come up with some justification and future remedial, pedagogical suggestions in dealing with plagiarism and patchwriting in the future MA students’ dissertation writing in applied linguistics.

For this project, I will need to collect data in the form of:

- Email interview responses

If you decide to participate,

I will collect data from you of the type indicated above.

**What will happen if I participate in this research?**

---

10 Eight dissertations are archived from one western-based university and another eight dissertations from one China-based university.
You will be asked to supply me with some portions of the early chapters of your supervised students’ draft MA dissertations with your comments on them.

Participate in one semi-structured email interview.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The semi-structured email interview will take you about one hour.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your privacy will be protected and nothing will be shared with others that will identify you, your school or your university. Specifically, the email interview will be conducted by the co-investigator on a one-to-one basis and a pseudonym will be used too instead of your real name when it comes to the store of the data. Moreover, given the fact that the email interview will be answered in either Chinese or English according to the specific participant’s preference, it is worth noting that both types of data would be analyzed by the co-investigator only. Furthermore, in case email interview responses are collected in Chinese, then it will be translated by the co-investigator. Only co-investigator and the supervisor have access to them.

The researcher will not repeat anything that a participant tells to her supervisor or anybody else, or vice versa. Moreover, the names of your universities, departments will also be identified by a pseudonym you prefer.

What are the discomforts and risks?

There will be no foreseeable risk and the co-investigator does not expect that you will feel any form of discomfort from participating in this study. If you do, please feel free to discuss any issue with the co-investigator or the project supervisor.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

If your feel uncomfortable about the email interview, any question will be skipped without being answered, or the email interview will be stopped at any time you say so to the researcher, and you will not be disadvantaged in any way.

Please also know that:
a). Participation in this project is fully voluntary. If you agree to take part, you will be requested to sign an informed consent form before the co-investigator collects your interview responses via email.

b). This process of obtaining participant consent is part of the National Institute of Education’s procedures for ensuring that ethical standards are maintained in all research work.

c). The researcher will use the data and my background information solely for this study and the result from this research may be published in journals or presented at academic conferences.

**Whom do I contact if I have further concerns and inquiries about the research?**

If you have any further concerns or inquiries regarding the nature of this project or any of the above, please feel free to contact the co-investigator or the project supervisor.

**Student Researcher’s Contact Details:**

Mailing address:

Kang Shuangjuan

#04-132 Blk 919 Jurong West Street 91

Singapore 640919 Tel: (65) 9354-9818 Email:Sunnyokang@qq.com

**Her Supervisor’s Contact Details:**

Mailing address

Dr.Cheung Yinling

English Language & Literature

National Institute of Education

NIE3-03-122, Nanyang Technological University

1 Nanyang Walk | Singapore 637616

Tel: (65) 6790-3436 Fax: (65) 68969149 Email:yinling.cheung@nie.edu.sg
Appendix E

Participant Information Sheet

(For students)

Date Information Sheet Produced:

Project Title: Using semi-structured email interview to elicit Chinese MA students and supervisors' accounts of their experience with, belief about writing from sources and knowledge of referencing convention in MA dissertation writing in Applied Linguistics

My name is Kang Shuangjuan. I am a student studying for Master degree in applied linguistics at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University. I am currently working on my MA dissertation project entitled a contrastive study of plagiarism and patchwriting between Chinese and Western MA dissertations in Applied Linguistics. My supervisor is Dr. Cheung Yinling, and she is an Assistant Professor at NIE. I would like to invite your participate in my aforementioned project that I have to do as part of my degree requirements. The following is some information about it.

What is the purpose of the research?

The research is to explore qualitatively and quantitatively the nature, frequency of source-misuse in the Chinese and Western MA dissertations in Applied Linguistics. By mapping up the natures and frequencies of source-misuse among these two groups of novice writers in one discipline, I intend to find out the gaps in the source misuse between these two groups of different cultural backgrounds and explore the possible contextual explanation behind it. Through such exploration, I intend to further contribute some empirical evidence to the discussion of the causes of the prevalence of plagiarism and patchwriting in L2 academic writing, and to provide some direct evidence to the resolving of the abundant cultural-biased explanation in this regard. Finally, with such contextualized, informed understanding of the plagiarism and patchwriting, hopefully, this study will come up with some justification and future remedial, pedagogical suggestions in dealing with plagiarism and patchwriting in the future MA students’ dissertation writing in applied linguistics.

Brief description of my proposed topic
My proposed topic is

The present study plans to undertake a contrastive, textual-analysis oriented study of plagiarism and patchwriting among Chinese and Western students’ MA dissertations in applied linguistics. Specifically, by drawing on Pecorari (2003, 2006)’s analyzing framework of plagiarism and patchwriting, the researcher plans to firstly paint out quantitatively the natures and frequencies of plagiarism in two corpuses of writing samples taken from 16 randomly archived MA dissertations from two universities\(^{11}\). In view of the quantitative study’ insensitivity towards the individual experience and the individual nature of dissertation writing process as well as the interference of occluded feature of academic writing to the validity of the final result, the researcher will further employ the semi-structured interview to access some of these MA students’ and their supervisors’ contextualized view towards plagiarism in the China-based university to triangulate and supplement the quantitative textual analysis. By such mixed-methods design, I intend to contribute some direct empirical evidence to the cultural-biased explanation of plagiarism in the field. Hopefully, the study will come up with some justification and future remedial, pedagogical suggestions in dealing with plagiarism and patchwriting in the future MA students’ dissertation writing in applied linguistics.

For this project, I will need to collect data in the form of:

- email interview responses
- dissertation writing samples

If you decide to participate,

I will collect data from you of the type indicated above.

**What will happen if I participate in this research?**

- You will be asked to supply some portions of the early chapters of your draft MA dissertation.
- Participate in two semi-structured & discourse-based email interviews.

\(^{11}\) Eight dissertations are archived from one western-based university and another eight dissertations from one China-based university.
What are the costs of participating in this research?

The semi-structured and discourse-based email interview will take you about two and half hours.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

Your privacy will be protected and nothing will be shared with others that will identify you. Specifically, the email interview will be conducted by the student researcher on a one-to-one basis and a pseudonym will be used instead of your real name when it comes to the store of the data. Moreover, given the fact that the email interview will be answered in either Chinese or English according to the specific participant’s preference, it is worth noting that both types of data would be analyzed by the student researcher only. Furthermore, in case interview responses are collected in Chinese, then they will be translated only by the student researcher. And only student researcher and her supervisor have access to them. The student researcher will not repeat anything a participant tells to his or her supervisor or anybody else, or vice versa. Moreover, the names of the universities, departments will be identified by a pseudonym you prefer.

**What are the discomforts and risks?**

There will be no foreseeable risk and the student researcher does not expect that you will feel any form of discomfort from participating in this study. If you do, please feel free to discuss any issue with the student researcher or her supervisor.

**How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

If your feel uncomfortable about the email interview, any question will be skipped without being answered, or the email interview will be stopped at any time you say so to the researcher, and you will not be disadvantaged in any way.

**Please also know that:**

a). Participation in this project is fully voluntary. If you agree to take part in, you will be requested to sign an informed consent form before the student researcher collects your email interview responses, and writing samples. And you can withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.
b). This process of obtaining participant consent is part of the National Institute of Education’s procedures for ensuring that ethical standards are maintained in all research work.

c). The student researcher will use the data and my background information solely for this study and the result from this research may be published in journals or presented at academic conferences.

**Whom do I contact if I have further concerns and inquiries about the research?**

If you have any further concerns or inquiries regarding the nature of this project or any of the above, please feel free to contact the co-investigator or the project supervisor.

**Student Researcher’s Contact Details:**

Mailing address:

Kang Shuangjuan

#04-132 Blk 919 Jurong West Street 91

Singapore 640919   Tel: (65) 9354-9818   Email:Sunnyokang@qq.com

**The Supervisor’s Contact Details:**

Mailing address

Dr.Cheung Yinling

English Language & Literature

National Institute of Education

NIE3-03-122, Nanyang Technological University 1 Nanyang Walk | Singapore 637616

Tel: (65) 6790-3436  Fax: (65) 68969149  Email:yinling.cheung@nie.edu.sg
Appendix F

Informed Consent Form

PART ONE: To be completed by the co-investigator

Name of researcher: Kang Shuangjuan
Contact (phone): (65) 9354-9818
Email: Sunnyokang@qq.com
Name of supervisor: Dr. Cheung Yinling
Title of research project: Using semi-structured email interview to elicit Chinese MA students and supervisors’ accounts of their experience with, belief about writing from sources and their knowledge of referencing convention in MA dissertation writing in Applied Linguistics

PART TWO: To be completed by the participant from whom data will be collected

I, _________________________________________________________ (participant’s name), have been given and have read the Participant Information Sheet describing the nature of the project being conducted by Kang Shuangjuan (researcher’s name) for the research project entitled “Using semi-structured email interview to elicit Chinese MA students and supervisors’ accounts of their experience with, belief about writing from sources and their knowledge of referencing convention in MA dissertation writing in Applied Linguistics.”

I hereby consent / do not consent* to my participation in the above research. (* Please circle whichever applies.)

If an email interview is involved,

I hereby consent / do not consent* to the email interview. (* Please circle whichever applies.)

I understand the purpose and process of the research project and my involvement in it.

I also understand that
• The researcher will not inform my supervisor whether I agree or not to participate in the research.

• I can at any time withdraw my consent for my participation without penalty, prejudice, negative consequences, repercussion, or disadvantage and demand that my personal data/information be permanently deleted from the researcher’s records;

• the researcher will use the data and my personal information solely for this study and the result from this research may be published in journals or presented at academic conferences;

• I will not be personally identified and my personal data/information will remain confidential;

• the ethical aspects of the project have been approved by the ethics committee of NTU.

If I have any questions about the research at any point in time, I will contact the student researcher or her supervisor.

Name of participant: ........................................................................................................

Signature: ................................................................. Date: ..................
Appendix G

Interview Guide

(For Supervisors)

Firstly, thank you very much for participating in this research project. The following interview will concentrate on soliciting your experience, observation and opinion about source use and referencing in MA dissertation writing in applied linguistics. Please read each question carefully and answer them in a way that most closely reflects your situation. Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Name:                  Age:              Research Interest:

Prompts Questions

1. How many years have you been supervising MA candidates in their writings of MA dissertation? How many students do you usually supervise each year?

2. How many students do you currently supervise?

3. Are there any kinds of academic writing courses, workshops or handbooks in your discipline to guide MA students on how to write up their graduation dissertation? Does your department teach the specific writing skills such as referencing? If so, what does it do?

4. What do you think is the role and function of the reference in MA students’ dissertation writing in your discipline? In light of the disciplinary culture of your department, is the referencing or source using evenly or disproportionately encouraged in the various sections of MA dissertation? Can you specify?

Prompts: If disproportionately encouraged, which sections do you think are the referencing or source using more important? Why?

5. According to your previous supervising experiences, what do you observe are the common features and problems that MA students have had when making use of sources in their dissertation writing? Such as insufficient use of references, source misuses (insufficient source acknowledgement and attribution). Can you elucidate?

6. Why do you think students exhibit those features and problems?

7. Among the above-mentioned problems, what kind or degree of source-misuse can be classified as plagiarism according to your discipline’s regulation? Is there any discrepancy between your discipline’s regulation and your own perception in terms of the identification of plagiarism? And what do you usually do when you have detected instances of plagiarism? What factors influence your specific way of handling?

For example:
a. Copying word for word some lines or passages from published books, articles or coursework material without acknowledgement and then presenting it as their own;

b. Expressing someone else’s ideas into one’s own language and incorporating them into one’s own writing without mentioning the sources;

c. Listing useful secondary citations as primary citations in one’s writing without having consulted the cited material oneself;

d. Incorrect citation form, whether they are direct or indirect citation.

8. Now I would like to invite for your comments about some specific points of source use in a particular student’s draft dissertation that you have recently reviewed? You may skip this question if inapplicable.

9. Can you summarize your comment on this draft dissertation? What are the particular features and problems that you want to highlight regarding this writing sample’s source-use? Additional prompts: does the student cover appropriate citation and refer to the appropriate source for them?

Conclusion: now that you have a clearer idea what the research is about, is there anything that I should have asked but did not, do you have anything that you want to add on?

(THE END)

Thank You Very Much for Your Contribution!
Appendix H

Interview Guide

(For Student Participants)

Firstly, thank you very much for participating in this research project. The following interview will mainly concentrate on soliciting your experience, knowledge and opinion about source use and referencing convention in MA dissertation writing in applied linguistics. Please read each question carefully and answer them in a way that most closely reflects your situation. Finally, thank you very much for your cooperation!

Name:                  Age:              Research Topic:

Prompts Questions

Background information:

1. When did you begin to learn English? What is the specific area of study for your B.A. degree?

2. Could you please give me a brief introduction of your MA dissertation topic?

3. When did you begin to work on your MA dissertation? What is the schedule of this MA dissertation writing?

Questions on the writing process of MA dissertation

1. How is your MA dissertation? Does it progress smoothly? Do you encounter any problems currently?

2. How did you find your proposed topic? Could you please recall the difficulties that you have experienced during this phase?
   Prompts: Have you found the topic with the help of your supervisor / your senior schoolmates/other’s specific suggestions or solely your own reading of the literature that you are interested?

3. Prior to the MA dissertation writing, have you had any academic writing experience where involving the use of citation?
   Prompts:
   (a) Have you ever received any kind of instruction or guidance (in the form of writing courses, workshops or handbooks) on academic writing in general, MA dissertation in particular from your previous education? If yes, what are they? Does your department teach the specific academic writing skills such as referencing, abstract writing? If so, what does it do? If not, do you think it is necessary?
   (b) If you have received formal guidance, do you have any problem in making sense of and applying this guidance in your dissertation writing?

4. What do you think is the role and function of the reference in your MA dissertation writing?
5. Are you familiar with the citation convention? What do you remember exactly? How do you learn these conventions? Under which circumstances, do you choose to learn these citation convention? Do you have any tips on where to cite, how to cite and why to cite after so many experience of citing?

6. In light of the disciplinary culture of your department (including your supervisor’s preference) and your own dissertation writing process, Have you had any ideas about the importance of referencing with regards to the various sections of the MA dissertation? Which section do you think referencing is more important? Which section is less important? Can you elucidate?

7. What are the particular difficulties or problems that you have faced regarding the source-use in this dissertation writing? Can you elaborate or show me some examples?

8. What do you think are the appropriate source uses?

9. What kind or degree of source-misuse can be classified as plagiarism according to your discipline’s regulation? Please evaluate the following behaviors one by one. For example,

   a. Copying word for word some lines or passages from published books, articles or coursework material without acknowledgement and presenting them as one’s own.

   b. Expressing other’ ideas into one’s own language and incorporating them into one’s writing without mentioning the sources.

   c. Listing useful secondary citations as primary citations in one’s writing without having consulted the cited material oneself (If the interviewee does not know the difference between the secondary citations and primary citation, please explain their difference first?)

   d. Incorrect citation form, whether they are direct or indirect citation

10. What do you usually do to avoid plagiarism in your source use? Does the concern of avoiding plagiarism influence your strategy of source use?

11. Now I would like to ask for your account on the writing process of your draft dissertation.

   a. How did you locate the necessary literature?

   Probes: are you starting with a reading list given by your supervisor or with a specific RA or something else?

   b. How did you read the literature? Did you have any personal strategy or method regarding literature reading or managing? Did you take note while reading? If so, can you elucidate?

   c. How have you written up the draft dissertation?

   Prompts: What is your writing sequence? Have you spared time for reading references and then writing up some portions or do you do them simultaneously or other ways? Can you elucidate?

12. Now I want to ask for your comments on some specific points that I have highlighted on your writing sample. As you may see, I have highlighted and labeled the passages with reference in your writing sample, and I have prepared a copy of the original content of relevant sources as well (Note. Prompts questions regarding this section will be formulated with reference to the quantitative textual analysis of source use in the specific writing sample).
13. Can you summarize your supervisor’s comment on this draft dissertation? What are the particular difficulties or problems that you have faced regarding the source-use in this writing sample? Can you show me some examples?

Conclusion: now that you have a clearer idea what the research is about, is there anything that I should have asked but did not, do you have anything to add on?

(THE END)

Thank You Very Much for Your Contribution!
Appendix I

NTU IRB Approved Letter

IRB 12/02/20

28 February 2012

A/Prof Cheung Yin Ling
National Institute of Education

NTU INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
Project Title: A Contrastive Study Plagiarism and Patchwriting between Chinese MA Dissertations and Western MA Dissertation in Applied Linguistics

I refer to your application for ethics approval with respect to the above project.

The Board has deliberated on your application and noted from your application that your research involves collecting the draft MA dissertation for analysis and interviewing subjects.

You have also confirmed that informed consent will be obtained from the participants and you have guaranteed the confidentiality of your participants' biodata obtained from them.

The Board is therefore satisfied with the bioethical considerations for the project and approves the ethics application under Expedited review.

Lee
Prof Lee Sing Kong,
Chair, NTU Institutional Review Board
encl.

cc Director, National Institute of Education
Members, NTU Institutional Review Board

Bk N2 1, 94-01, 76 Nanyang Drive, Singapore 637331 Nanyang Avenue, Singapore 639798
Tel.: +65 6791 9657, Fax: 6793 2019
www.ntu.edu.sg