Sight in Chinese Plagiarism in Writing

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Keywords: Information transmission, American publishing and writing system, Macro reform direction, Micro improvements on Chinese styles.

Abstract. From the perspective of information transmission, by comparing American relatively mature standard system of publishing and writing with Chinese, we find that the dissemination of information is not in place, which is one of the important reasons causing the majority of recipients unable to effectively obtain standard information. Therefore, to improve the propagation direction of our current Chinese style standard and to put forward “author-based” construction of standard system in the academic standard should be taken in to consideration so as to grasp the direction of development of the standard of academic works from the macro reform on standard construction style and from micro improvements on the four key problems.

Introduction

There are comparatively more cases of Chinese writers in plagiarism than those of Anglophone writers. Many scholars, domestic or international, analyzed this phenomenon from the perspectives of ethnic, history, law or culture. However, a short-term stay of learning ESL in the US aroused me to insight into this typical Chinese plagiarism from the root of this problem—citation regulation. There I was impressed to know that majority of American writers in humanity and social science (no matter they are students or scholars) are much familiar with their writing styles such as CMOS (The Chicago Manual of Style),¹ MLA,² and APA³, and that almost all higher education institutions and academic fields in the US have adopted those styles whereas Chinese writers are seldom familiar with China’s state-level writing styles—GB/T 7713⁴ and GB/T 7714⁵ (hereinafter referred to as GBs) and even strongly call for a Chinese version of CMOS.⁶ Yet in fact, "we do not lack standard text about citation description. GBs, as national styles, have been issued for many years..."⁷

Based on the above situation in which GBs are rarely known in China while MLA, APA and CMOS are very popular in the US writing and publishing field, this study is to find How and Why the “existing” national standards or styles of GB are "invisible" and to envisage a systematic construction to address the problem of the typical Chinese plagiarism by comparing cases of style information in the US and China.

How “Invisible”

Basic theory in Information Communication holds that all human knowledge and stories belong to the category of information, a great force promoting the progress of modern society.⁸ Because of its characteristics of transmission, sharing, timeliness, dependency, and value relativity, the style must belong to the category of information with its factors: Information Source, Content, Carrier, Transmission and Receiver.

GBs were released in 1987 and revised in 2005, so it can be presumed firstly for the convenience of this study that there is no problem in Information Source, Content, and Receiver. However, since the majority of Chinese writers—Receivers—had little knowledge of the required writing or publishing style information, it can be inferred that the problem would lie in the link of Carrier and Transmission (as is shown by the red arrow in Figure 1).
Therefore, firstly, this study is to find out the key in the link—how the styles are invisible and not able to prevent the potential plagiarism by wide and in-depth popularization of the writing style among Chinese writers.

Starting Point of the Research

It’s well known that a writer, before completing his/her manuscript, needs to refer to writing or publishing styles. Among a variety of indirect carriers accessing to information (as are shown in Figure 2: a hierarchical taxonomy of ways to obtain information), receivers in the Era of Internet are more likely to resort to Internet search engines (in ellipse of Figure 2) and then link to the webpage of relevant professional institutions, personal webpage or even purchase digital or non-digital resources for more information. So the Internet search engine is the “first” and "most important" way for information receivers to touch styles. Naturally, the Internet search engine is the main battle field for spreading GBs information.

Logically, the difficulty of searching for the styles-related information on the internet by the search engines would tell how the missing link of transmission affects the effectiveness of popularizing GBs.

Then what about the rankings and numbers of China’s GBs if searched compared with American styles of MLA, APA and CMOS on the Internet?

Stages of the Survey Based on the Internet

First, those search engines with the coverage as wide as possible should be picked up to be representative and authoritative enough to ensure the reliability and validity of the survey. At determining the engines to be investigated, the data provided by Alexa was used because Alexa’s ranking (a world’s ranking of websites according to NNT traffic) is a rather authoritative evaluation index for the website traffic currently, which is based on the geometric mean of users’ reach and views of page and released every three months. By Alexa, the top one Chinese search engine is Baidu (Reputation in March: 4859801), and the top one US search engine is Google (Reputation in

Second, after the top ranking searching engines of the two countries were determined, the relevant keywords writers may input when searching for styles standards need choosing. For this purpose, after 150 writers were randomly sampled, 7 highest frequently-used key words were settled down: paper guide, writing format, writing guide, paper writing format, in-text citation guide, reference format and research paper structural format. (The process of this sampling here was neglected because of the main focus of this paper.)

Finally, after the 7 high-frequency words were input by Baidu (www.baidu.com) and by Google (www.google.com) on March 31, 2012, multiple searching results came from the fuzzy matching, and then, the Title tags’ or Webpage Entries’ rankings and times were picked out when firstly or secondly referred to by accurately matching with GB7713 and GB 7714 or MLA, APA and CMOS( as shown in Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 1. Results of the search for China’s writing styles in Baidu.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>R1</th>
<th>Styles</th>
<th>Webpage builder</th>
<th>R2</th>
<th>Styles</th>
<th>Webpage builder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing format</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7713—87 (1987 edition)</td>
<td>Department of scientific research of Changjiang Polytechnic</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td>A Educational Network of the Maple-Leaf brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing guide</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7713—87 (1987 edition)</td>
<td>Baidu Library</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td>Department of scientific research of Changjiang Polytechnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper writing format</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7713—87 (1987 edition)</td>
<td>Baidu Library</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
<td>Department of scientific research of Changjiang Polytechnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-text citation guide</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7714—2005 (2005 edition)</td>
<td>Baidu Academe</td>
<td>94</td>
<td></td>
<td>A person’s blog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References format</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7714—87 (1987 edition)</td>
<td>Douban Community</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Baidu Academe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research papers structure format</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7713—87 (1987 edition)</td>
<td>Baidu Library</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td>Douban Community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Results of the search for US writing styles by Google.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>Paper guide</th>
<th>Writing format</th>
<th>Writing guide</th>
<th>Paper writing format</th>
<th>In-text citation guide</th>
<th>References format</th>
<th>Research papers structure format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Keywords</strong></td>
<td><strong>R 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>R 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>R 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>R 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>R 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>R 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>R 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Styles</strong></td>
<td>MLA</td>
<td>MLA</td>
<td>MLA</td>
<td>MLA</td>
<td>MLA</td>
<td>APA</td>
<td>APA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Webpage</strong></td>
<td>A Guide for writing research papers</td>
<td>Purdue OWL:MLA formatting and style guide</td>
<td>California state university library</td>
<td>A research guide for student.com</td>
<td>Format guide to writing research papers: MLA-style</td>
<td>Purdue OWL:APA formatting and style guide</td>
<td>How to write a research paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Webpage builder</strong></td>
<td>Capital community university</td>
<td>Purdue university</td>
<td>California state university library</td>
<td>A research guide for student.com</td>
<td>Format guide to writing research papers: MLA-style</td>
<td>Purdue OWL:APA formatting and style guide</td>
<td>How to reference articles in APA format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>More(No.3-)</strong></td>
<td>45, 50, 6, 18,...</td>
<td>13, 14, 24, 26, 28,...</td>
<td>5, 9, 11, 15, 16, 18, 20,...</td>
<td>4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20,...</td>
<td>4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 20,...</td>
<td>19, 28, 35, 42, 43,...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**R1.** (Ranks--MLA/APA/CMOS referred first time), **R2.** (Ranks--MLA/APA/CMOS referred second time)

**Discussion**

Table 1 and Table 2 objectively reflected the differences in transmission of styles on the Internet in China and the United States.

**Information Ranking.** To more clearly see the differences of information transmissions of style styles in the two countries, the table below was made based on the rankings information in table 1 and table 2.
It was reflected in Table 3 that China’s style information was difficult to obtain compared to that of the US. First, the overall rankings of the matched entries by Baidu were lower than those by Google, which have higher rankings. In addition, the spans between the first reference and the second reference by Baidu were much wider than those by Google. Second, the second reference rankings of the five Chinese key words out of the seven were beyond the 50th place. There were even some extreme cases. For example, if one input “paper guide” by Baidu, there wasn’t any mention of GBs before the 100th webpage entry. Therefore, the study did not stick to search its third reference. However, the third reference to US styles of MLA, APA, and CMOS showed totally different picture—the research results had not only shown high rankings, but large quantity, high frequency and smaller span.

**Information Releasing Units.** Baidu Library, Baidu Academe, Baidu Encyclopedia, Department of scientific research of Changjiang Polytechnic, Douban community, personal blogs, A Educational Network of the Maple-Leaf brand, etc. were the releasing units of GBs related information by Baidu, 43% of which were closely with the search engine of Baidu itself.

Meanwhile, Purdue University, Capital Community University, California State University Library, University of Wisconsin, Cornell University Library, A Research Guide for Students.com, Psychology.About.com, and Experiment-Resources.com were the releasing units of MLA, APA and CMOS related information by Google, 64% of which were higher education institutions---covering the majority of writers.

**Information Updating.** American styles were timely updated whereas GBs on the Internet were rather slowly updated. For example, the 2005 revised version of GBs appeared only twice by Baidu, and the most released was the 1987 edition of GBs but what Purdue University released was the 2009 edition of MLA. As a result, Chinese general writers implicitly lagged behind in obtaining writing style information via the search engine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking of first reference by Baidu</th>
<th>Paper guide</th>
<th>Writing format</th>
<th>Writing guide</th>
<th>Paper writing format</th>
<th>In-text citation guide</th>
<th>reference format</th>
<th>research papers’ Structural format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Ranking of first reference by Google | 3           | 1              | 2            | 2                    | 1                      | 2              | 2                                  |

| Ranking of second reference by Baidu | >100        | 59             | 80           | 49                   | 94                     | 7              | 27                                |

| Ranking of second reference by Google | 17          | 2              | 6            | 4                    | 3                      | 3              | 15                                |

| Ranking second-pluses reference by Google | 45, 50, 3,4,6,8,10, 16,18…, 13,14,24, 26,28…, 5,9,11,15, 16,18,20…, 4,5,6,7,8,9, 10,12,14,15, 16,17,18,29, 20…, 19,28,35,42, 10,12,13,15, 16,18,20…, 4,5,6,8,9, 10,12,13,15, 16,18,20… | 19,28,35,42, 43… |
Conclusion of the Carrier and Transmission

The above comparative survey clearly indicated three features contained in US writing style information transmission.

Easy access—webpage associated with the style ranked high in the search results, which facilitated writers to quickly locate the styles in the shortest time;

Effective transmission—64% of the information-releasing units were higher educational institutions, which met the needs of a majority of writers for style references;

Timely update—writing style information was regularly updated on the Internet.

To sum up, these features contained in the link of Carrier and Transmission are largely contributing to reducing the chance of academic misconducts. So the typical Chinese problem of plagiarism has the possibility to be addressed if the Carrier of Internet plays a full role in the Transmission of the style information.

Why “Invisible”

Since the picture of the link of Carrier and Transmission has been depicted clearly, the next question is whether it is the only factor to result in the typical Chinese plagiarism phenomenon. In other words, why the styles of GB are invisible is the original cause. Hence, Comparative study on the contents of GB and CMOS was conducted and the difficulty for the Chinese general writers to apply the styles of GB in their writing or publishing was shown as follows.

"Separation" of Styles

Outer-separation--Names of Styles. Chinese writers are effortlessly confused by the specific names of GB styles. For example, GB/T 7713.1—2006 are about the rules for dissertation writing, GB/T 7713.3—2009 for scientific report writing, and GB/T 7714—2005 for bibliographical description. Yet, writers may have some doubts on these styles: what style should they follow for general or research articles? Besides, are the specifications of the GB/T 7713 in line with each other? Does a writer need to read through all the specifications to understand the in-text citation? What’s more, since GB/T 7713 and GB/T 7714 are not put in one book, how many common writers are willing to especially look for GB/T 7713 styles to regulate their in-text citation after they have done the partial citation for the bibliography GB/T 7714 required for their manuscripts? This defect of style “separation” can easily confuse writers and probably lead to their “conscious” ignorance of plagiarism.

Inner-separation--Specific Provisions of Styles. Some specific provisions within GBs are difficult to follow. For example, the Writing Regulations for Academic Dissertations 7713.1-2006 Part II----- citation regulations for academic dissertations----stated that

"The terms in the following documents have become a part of this section through GB/T 7713. For all dated citation documents, the new subsequent amendments (excluding corrections) or revisions do not apply to this part; for the undated citation documents, the new versions apply to this part.

GB/T 788—1999   formats and page sizes for books and magazines
GB/T 2260 Codes for the administrative divisions of China
GB 3100 International unit system and its application
GB 3101—1993 General principles concerning quantities, units and symbols
GB/T 3469 Document types and document carrier codes
GB/T 3793 Description rules for periodical references
GB/T 4880 Codes for languages
GB 6447 Rules of abstract
GB 6864 Degree codes of China
GB/T 7156-2003 Codes and identifiers of document security levels
GB/T 7714—2005 Description rules for bibliographic references
The statement above has shown that GB7713.1 is an extracted style from numerous standards of various kinds. In the other words, the above-mentioned standard documents need further exploring if writers need more detailed specifications. However, the problem is that most of writers have no easy access to the above standards (as partially shown in the previous research on the Internet), that some standards are even not able to be found and that some are no longer in use. Only by calling The National Standardization Technical Committee for information and documentation can the relevant information be obtained. Moreover, few writers would be willing to “take a trouble” to consult every standard and to regulate their citation as the research group members did. So the "expectation" for writers to search for standards themselves undoubtedly leads to the “invisible” of China’s GBs.

Lacking Details

Chicago Manual of Style has 1026 pages while GB/T 7714-2005 has 15 pages, GB/T 7713.3-2009 24 pages and GB/T 7713.1-2006 15 pages, which clearly illustrates the gaps on the details. For example, pages 2-8 of GB/T 7713.1-2006 introduce the terms and definitions (1 page), general requirements (1 page), components (5 pages), editing format (1 page) and the remaining 10-18 pages are the appendix of examples in GB/T 7713.1-2006. So it is natural to be skeptical whether these few pages of styles can effectively answer such questions as “under what circumstances should the original texts be appended if names of people and places in different countries appear to be together in the body and reference part? How should the writers locate given names and family names or the full forms and short forms of names? How should the information from the Internet be cited? How should tables and figures be cited? These never fell into the category of some tedious philosophy. Instead, these are unavoidable problems in researches.”

Slow Update

GB/T 7713.1 Writing Format of Dissertations was published in 2006 and GB/T 7714 Rules of Bibliographic References in 2005. In the six or seven years up to 2012, digital publication developed rapidly so it’s an objective requirement for GBs to “keep in pace with the time”. Yet, though some awareness of style updating witnessed GB/T 7713.3 Writing Format of Scientific and Technical Reports published in 2009, this awareness was still the practice of “expecting” writers to update “by themselves” because of its statement inside “Parties who have concludes agreements in this part are encouraged to study whether the new versions of these documents can be used”. This will definitely leads to the scenario where style update always lags behind the need for the writing styles of digital documents.

Disunity

The implementation condition of GB styles is that even if writers follow these styles, they are required by a lot of magazines and presses to revise their manuscripts according to the requirements of publishing companies. For example, it is stated in chapter 9 of GB/T 7714: the reference can be arranged by either sequence encoding system or author-publishing year system; that is to say, writers may choose one of the above systems in their writing. However, after submission, writers must revise again according to another style set by publication or distribution institutions. Hence the authors have formed the psychology and habit that "standardizing their manuscripts in advance will
be in vain, so there is no need to follow the GB styles”. In this way, China’s national styles gradually become “invisible”.

**Conclusion**

To conclude what has been discussed above, the typical Chinese plagiarism resulted mainly from the style itself and its communication channel. So if traced, frequent and widespread scholars’ and students’ writing misconducts are the consequences of macroscopically ignoring these two crucial aspects in early years. On the aspect of the style itself, ”GBs have been implemented as national styles in China for many years...”[10] but for being internally split GBs are difficult to practice in the actual writing. On the aspect of communication channel, GBs are not popularized in the range of higher education and research institutions. Many students and scholars in colleges and universities do not even know the existence of the 2005 edition of GBs. Therefore, China’s higher education institutions have begun to use anti-plagiarism software and formulated school rules to expel plagiarism from the school, but software and school rules are only ”regulations”, not ”education” in advance, of writing norms before problems occurred.

Hence, the design of constructing scientific research integrity system to uproot the typical Chinese plagiarism was conceived from the macroscopic and microcosmic perspectives.

**Macroscopic Construction**

Compared with the US system of styles, the china’s construction of its own styles was conceived in the following blueprint.

![Figure 3. The blueprint of china’s integrity pyramid.](image)

To conceive the Microcosmic construction of Chinese writing styles, it was necessary to compose the scientific integrity macro-system first. According to the level of the regulatory level, the system can be roughly divided into three levels: the top, middle and basic level. This Pyramid structure (Figure 3) showed that important as the integrity of the upper level was, the basic layer which accounted for 60% of the Pyramid was the fundamental and long-term solution to writing misconducts.

Figure 3 showed that in the basic level, Chinese writing and publishing institutions would widely adopt GB standards which have the integrated structure of internal reference and annotation. In the middle level, many professional industrial committees would set up standards for a single subject according to the state-level standards of GB and subject characteristics. The high level would be responsible for GBs and macro management.

Therefore, this Pyramid, in essence, is a healthy cultivation mode of moral norms in writing. If this mode of operation is analogized as a gear (Figure 4), then standard is the central axis of this maximum gear. Therefore, to ensure the healthy development of writing and publishing in a long-term, effective and fundamental way, it is necessary to have a strong operational, national writing and publishing standard that integrates writing and publishing. Besides, this standard should be known to all.
Microcosmic Construction

Integration. The difficulty to implement GBs is the poor quality of the style itself, so GB/T 7713 and GB/T 7714 need integrating so as to operate facilely. [11]

Yet, what exactly is the poor quality like? What are the detailed steps involved to integrate GBs? To answer these questions, firstly, the internal structure of Anglophone styles should be analyzed, and then their necessary elements suitable for citation should be explained and finally the technical constraints hindering the implementation of GBs in China would be uprooted.

Of course, to better integrate the language of Chinese with the GBs in the China’s writing and publishing field, the elements involving feasibility and acceptability should be taken full account of, namely the differences of state conditions, writing traditions and cultural backgrounds.

Popularization. In terms of standard popularization, almost every Chinese university would promote necessary education about writing norm standards and conduct anti-plagiarism propaganda among university students. [12]

To popularize the GBs as wide as possible, it is necessary for Chinese universities or research institutions to learn from the advanced experience of Anglophone universities. For example, the University of Chicago Press has updated 15 times its famous writing and editing guide----CMOS. Purdue University has its online writing lab to help its students to know better citation. Of course, when being spread in China’s higher education institutions, scientific research institutions and publication fields, GBs, if ever integrated, are expected to take into consideration of culture and language contexts. Thus, GBs would naturally become a habit of citation for everyone related to writing and publishing life.

Acknowledgement

This research was financially supported by the 2013 National Social Science Fund of China and 2017 Shaanxi Normal University Doctoral Free Exploration Project.

References.


GB/T 7713.1 Writing Format of Dissertations

GB/T 7713.2 Writing Format of Scientific papers

GB/T 7713.3 Writing Format of Scientific and Technical Reports


