E·S·P·Today
JOURNAL OF ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES AT TERTIARY LEVEL

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REPORTING VERBS IN LITERATURE REVIEW CHAPTERS OF TESOL MASTER'S THESES WRITTEN BY VIETNAMESE POSTGRADUATES

Abstract

Reporting verbs (RVs) are the key feature in academic writing that enables writers to attribute content to another source and allows them to convey both their reported research activities and their evaluation of the cited message. However, little research has been conducted on how they are employed by non-native English students. This paper, therefore, presents a study of RVs used in 24 TESOL Master's (M.A.) thesis Literature Review (LR) chapters written by Vietnamese students. Employing Hyland's (2002) classification of RVs in terms of their denotative and evaluative potentials, this study revealed that this group of Vietnamese writers tended to randomly use RVs without being aware of their rhetorical functions. Furthermore, mistakes and non-idiomatic expressions were also identified in this study. Regarding the evaluative potentials of RVs, and the tense and voice uses, these Vietnamese writers were likely to be unfamiliar with using RVs to achieve the communicative purposes of LR chapters. These findings suggest that explicit instructions should be provided to help novice writers effectively use RVs in their M.A. theses.

Key words

reporting verbs, literature review chapters, Vietnamese writers, master's theses, TESOL.

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Sažetak

Glagoli posrednog izveštavanja predstavljaju važno svojstvo akademskih tekstova koje omogućava autorima da pripišu određeni sadržaj drugom izvoru, izveste o svojim istraživačkim aktivnostima i pruže evaluaciju citirane poruke. Međutim, malo je istraživanja koja se bave načinom korišćenja tih glagola kod studenata čiji maternji jezik nije engleski. U radu se predstavlja istraživanje o upotrebi glagola posrednog izveštavanja u 24 masterske teze vijetnamskih studenata iz oblasti nastave engleskog jezika kao stranog, i to u odeljcima u kojima se pruža pregled literature. Koristeći Hajlendovu (2002) klasifikaciju glagola posrednog izveštavanja na osnovu njihove denotativne i evaluativne funkcije, autori pokazuju da izabrana grupa vijetnamskih studenata nasumično koristi takve glagole, nesvesna njihovih retoričkih funkcija. Nadalje, istraživanje ukazuje i na postojanje grešaka i neidiomatskih izraza. U pogledu evaluativnog potencijala glagola posrednog izveštavanja, glagolskih vremena i stanja, vijetnamski studenti uglavnom ne znaju kako da ih koriste za ostvarenje komunikativne namere u odeljcima namenjenim pregledu literature. Rezultati ukazuju na potrebu za konkretnim uputstvima, koja bi neiskusnim studentima pomogla da efikasnije koriste glagole posrednog izveštavanja u svojim masterskim tezama.

Ključne reči

glagoli posrednog izveštavanja, odeljci sa pregledom literature, vijetnamski studenti, masterske teze, nastava engleskog jezika kao stranog.

1. INTRODUCTION

Citing other works is a distinguishing feature of academic writing, and this practice has a complex communicative purpose with syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic variations (Jalilifar, 2012). Acquiring the skills for appropriate and effective use of citations thus helps writers to appropriately integrate other people's words and ideas into their writing and present their study persuasively (White, 2004).[1] Hyland (1999, 2000, 2002) also indicates that reference to the works or ideas of others has an important role in the knowledge construction. Swales (1986, 1990), who has pioneered the study of citation analysis from an applied linguistic perspective, makes the distinctions between citations that include the name of the author in the sentence and those with the name of the author outside the sentence.

[1] The word "writer" refers to the person citing and "author" refers to the cited person (Thompson & Ye, 1991).

The former are referred to as integral citations and the latter are called non-integral ones. Because the integral sentences contain the name or a specific reference to the author(s), they can place more emphasis on the authorship of the claim while the reported message is the focus of the non-integral sentences.

Besides the emphasis given to the reported author or the reported message through the citation types, RVs are known as one of the explicit ways for writers to establish the credibility of the reported claims (Bloch, 2010; Hawes & Thomas, 1994; Hyland, 1999, 2002; Thompson & Ye, 1991). Hyland (2005) argues that RVs are one of the lexical devices that writers need for both expressing a stance and connecting or aligning themselves with the readers. Thompson and Ye (1991) also state that RVs can be used by writers to report their own claims or ideas and to demonstrate writers' attitudes towards others' claims. In illustrating these functions of RVs, they propose three different categories of RVs according to the process they perform. First, *textual* verbs are those that have an obligatory component of verbal expression (e.g. *state*, *write*) (the stance of the writer). The second group is categorized as *mental* verbs because they refer to mental processes expressed in the author's text (e.g. *believe*, *think*) (the stance of the author whose claims are being reported). The last group of RVs is named *research* verbs, which refer to the research activity or experimental procedures (e.g. *find*, *demonstrate*) (the interpretation of the writer). Similarly, Hyland (1999) also classifies RVs according to three types of activities they refer to. However, he uses the terms "*discourse*" and "*cognition*" for "*textual*" and "*mental*" verb categories in Thompson and Ye's (1991) classification, respectively. Departing from his previous work, Hyland (2002) elaborates and provides a more insightful scheme of options which includes both the original author's academic activity and the reporting writer's evaluative judgments. Each of the process categories, therefore, has a subset of evaluative options (Figure 1). Although his new scheme still retains Thompson and Ye's (1991) important insight, it allows the writer to vary their commitment by using verbs which either imply a personal stance or attribute a position to the original author.

Thompson and Ye (1991), on the contrary, separated evaluation from reporting, allowing a considerable overlap between categories. As can be seen in Figure 1, in the *Finding* category of *Research* Acts in Hyland's (2002) new framework, writers can (1) show their acceptance of the authors' results or conclusions with *factive* verbs (*demonstrate*, *establish*, *show*, *solve*, *confirm*), (2) portray the authors' judgments as false or incorrect by adopting a *counter-factive* stance (*fail*, *misunderstand*, *ignore*, *overlook*) and (3) comment on research findings *non-factively* (*find*, *identify*, *observe*, *obtain*). Verbs referring to procedural aspects of the author's investigation are found to carry no evaluation in themselves but simply report the research procedures neutrally.

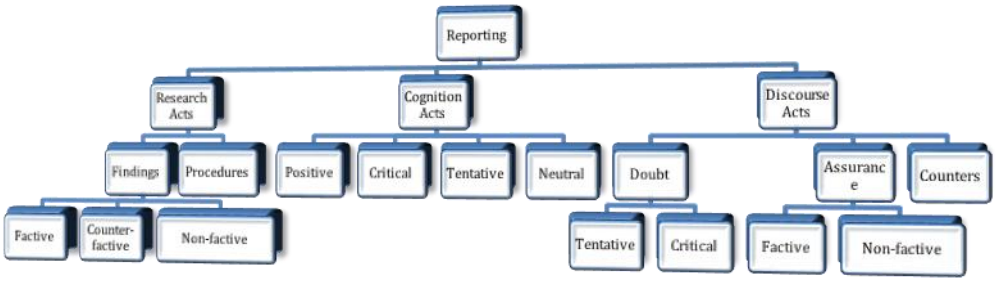

Figure 1. Categories of reporting verbs in showing Activity and Evaluation (Hyland, 2002: 119)

RVs in *Cognition* Acts, which portray the cited work in terms of mental process, are found to handle evaluation rather differently (Hyland, 2002). Instead of explicitly taking a personal stance on the reported information, writers can attribute a particular attitude to the cited author. There are four options for writers to portray the author's attitude towards the reported proposition: (1) the author having a *positive* attitude and accepting the reported information as true or correct with verbs such as *agree*, *concur*, *hold*, *know*, *think*, or *understand*, (2) the author having a *tentative* view (*believe*, *doubt*, *speculate*, *suppose*, *suspect*), (3) the author taking a *critical* stance (*disagree*, *dispute*, *not think*), and (4) the author holding a *neutral* attitude (*picture*, *conceive*, *anticipate*, *reflect*).

Finally, *Discourse* verbs in Hyland's (2002) framework allow writers to convey an evaluation of the cited material by either (1) taking responsibility for his/her interpretation by conveying their uncertainty or assurance of the correctness of the claims reported, or (2) attributing a qualification to the author. *Discourse* verbs which express writers' view directly are divided into doubt and assurance categories. Those expressing doubt about the reported claims can be further divided into *tentative* verbs (*postulate*, *hypothesize*, *indicate*, *intimate*, *suggest*) and *critical* ones (*evade*, *exaggerate*, *not account*, *not make point*). *Assurance* verbs can be used to (1) neutrally inform readers of the author's position (*non-factive*) (*state*, *describe*, *discuss*, *report*, *answer*, *define*, *summarize*) or (2) support writers' own view (*factive*) (*argue*, *affirm*, *explain*, *note*, *point out*, *claim*). The last subcategory of *Discourse* verbs, *Counters*, allows writers to attribute the objections or reservations to the original author instead of taking responsibility for the evaluation as in *Doubt* verbs. The examples of these verbs provided in Hyland (2002) are *deny*, *critique*, *challenge*, *attack*, *question*, *warn* and *rule out*. Thompson and Ye (1991) also explain that such author refutations are used to either support writers' opposition to a proposition or to demolish an opposing argument. Since this framework provides the comprehensive categories of RVs in terms of their activity and evaluation, it will be chosen as a framework for analyzing the RVs in this current study.

Besides the denotative and evaluative loads of RVs, tenses and voice of RVs also indicate the writer's stance towards the reported research (Swales, 1990). For example, the use of present perfect might imply the writer's closeness to the quoted study while the past tense would distance the writer from the cited work. In her study of 20 experimental reports from the Journal of Pediatrics, Malcolm (1987) finds that (1) generalizations tend to be in the present tenses, (2) references to specific experiments are in the past simple, and (3) references to areas of enquiry are in the present perfect. Shaw (1992), in contrast, indicates that emphasis on the information structure of a text and its cohesion is important in assigning the tense and voice of RVs. Sakita (2002) also confirms that tense alteration in RVs reflects how the writer perceives the past scenes in their memory and they are now being recollected. In his study of the RV tenses used in dissertation LR chapters, Chen (2009) finds that the tense uses of RVs were individual and particular to each situation because writers chose the time according to their interpretation of a topic and their purposes in writing their dissertation. However, Oster (1981), Hanania and Akhtar (1985), Malcolm (1987), Salager-Meyer (1992), and Biber, Conrad and Reppen (1998) claim that tense choice in scientific writing is determined by rhetorical concerns rather than by time lines (as in narrative).

Despite the complexity of RVs in academic writing and the important role of M.A. theses in a student's academic accomplishment, few studies have been conducted on how they are used in this genre, especially those written by non-native English writers (NNEW) (Jalilifar, 2012; Jalilifar & Dabbi, 2012; Petrić, 2007). Previous studies on RVs used by Czech and Iranian M.A. students (Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2008; Jalilifar, 2012) revealed their neutral stance toward the cited texts because *non-factive* verbs received the highest frequency in their thesis corpora. Soler-Monreal and Gil-Salom (2012) found that Spanish writers seemed to avoid personal confrontation and mitigate the strength of their arguments through their use of non-integral citations in passive and impersonal structures. Moreover, NNEW are reported to find it difficult to choose appropriate RVs for reporting claims; they do not take an appropriate stance towards a claim and tend to use less assertive devices than native speakers (Hyland, 2002, 2008). Besides these findings, it is claimed that NNEW often rely on a limited number of words in introducing previous work. Similarly, Pecorari (2008) finds that NNEW often randomly choose a RV without a consciousness of the subtleties of language necessary for reporting claims. Hyland (1999, 2002) ascribes this problem to both their deficit of vocabulary and their innocence of how to appropriately acknowledge sources in academic writing when English is not their native language.

In spite of their significance and potential challenges in academic writing, RVs have not been formally taught to TESOL M.A. students in Vietnam. In fact, these writers were provided with the list of conventions of the APA citation style and they themselves figured out how to appropriately cite the previous studies and use RVs in their texts. However, Mansourizadeh and Ahmad (2011) emphasize that

due to various purposes of citation use, novice writers cannot fully learn crucial citation practices from their mere reading of the instructions. Furthermore, as stated by Thompson and Tribble (2001) and Tognini-Bonelli (2001), instructions on citation usage in textbooks are difficult for students to understand the complex interaction between the lexical choice and rhetorical goal of a RV because they focus on illustrating a particular grammatical points outside its rhetorical context. Moreover, like the situation described in Jalilifar (2012), the ways M.A. students in the TESOL discourse community in Vietnam cite in their writing would be of their supervisors' secondary concern as they know that in the defense session, their supervisees' deployment of RVs is not judged by the thesis examiners. Last but not least, in informal conversations with the actual thesis writers, the LR chapters are known to be the only place in their theses which requires citations. Indeed, LR chapters were found to contain most citations (three fourths of the citations) in a corpus of 24 TESOL M.A. theses. This study, therefore, aims to explore how RVs were deployed in terms of their denotative and evaluative potentials, their forms, tenses and voice in these chapters. Such investigations hope to partly add to the literature of how RVs are used by NNEWs in general and in the TESOL discourse community in Vietnam in particular.

2. METHODS

2.1. Data

Twenty-four electronic TESOL M.A. theses written during the 2009–2012 period by Vietnamese students were randomly obtained with the writers' consent and from all three universities providing this M.A. program (eight from each) in the South of Vietnam as data for the current study. In the TESOL discourse community in Vietnam, a thesis is a report on an empirical study of at least 20,000 words in length and containing six separate chapters (Introduction, LR, Methodology, Results, Discussion and Conclusion), or a five-chapter thesis in which Results and Discussion are combined. The separate LR chapters of these theses were then copied and pasted on separate files. For the ease of reference and the anonymity of thesis writers, each LR chapter was also randomly coded from LR1 to LR24. The resulting corpus of 24 LR chapters consisted of 164,344 words (an average of 6,848 words each).

2.2. Frameworks for analyzing RVs

Hyland's (2002) insightful classification of RVs was selected to study their process categories (*Research*, *Cognition* and *Discourse acts*) and their subset of evaluative

options which allow writers to present the reported information as true (*factive*), as false (*counter-factive*) and *non-factive*, giving no clear signal (Figure 1). Citation types (integral and non-integral) were first searched on the Antconc concordance with the use of the Regular Expressions (Regex) which were written for both the conventional and "invented" citing ways by this group of writers. In fact, it was found that this group of Vietnamese writers had their own citing ways, especially in citing Vietnamese scholars (e.g. *Huu Hanh nguyen, 2007*). In order to capture all citations included in the corpus, the researchers scanned through all the texts, noted their "invented" citing ways, and then new Regex were subsequently created when their "invented" citing ways had been found in the corpus. The key word "cited" was also employed in searching for the citation types because a number of secondary citations were noticed. After that, the verbs in citing sentences and those in the further discussions of a previously mentioned author in expressions like "this theory" or "their definition", or "he/she" or "they" which referred to previously cited authors were investigated. Drawing on Hyland (2002), the RVs were classified in terms of the types of activities and their evaluative potentials. For the evaluative possibility of each RV, its specific context on the concordance lines was also examined. Finally, the occurrences of RVs were first calculated (per chapter and per 1,000 words) and then compared with those in the literature. To ensure the reliability of the analysis, an inter-rater was employed to analyze the RVs in six LR chapters (25%), yielding high inter-rater reliability rates (93%). Then, two researchers worked out the coding disagreements until a satisfactory level of coder agreement was attained. After that, the two researchers analyzed their use in the other LR chapters.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Denotative/Process categories

Table 1 below shows the division of RVs used in the LR chapters of the TESOL M.A. theses according to their denotative classification. *Discourse acts* were found to be prominent, accounting for almost two thirds (62.90%) of the RVs in these LR chapters. Ranked second were *Research acts*, followed by *Cognition acts* (28.42% and 8.68%, respectively). This finding confirms the trend of using RVs in applied linguistics by Hyland (2002) and he claims that the greater use of *Discourse act* verbs characterizes the discursive nature of soft disciplines in which explicit interpretation, speculation and arguments are considered as "accepted aspects of knowledge" (p. 126).

Categories	Occurrences (M.A. in TESOL, Vietnam)			M.A. in TESOL (Vietnam)	Hyland (2002) Applied Linguistics
	Frequency counts	Average per chapter	Average per 1,000 words		
Research acts	249	10.38	1.52	28.42%	30.5 %
Cognition acts	76	3.16	0.46	8.68%	10.5 %
Discourse acts	551	13.22	3.35	62.90%	59 %
Total	876	36.5	5.33	100%	100 %

Table 1. Distribution of RVs in process categories in 24 LR chapters

3.2. Evaluative categories

As shown in Table 2, *Procedure* and *Finding* verbs were almost equally used in these LR chapters of the TESOL M.A. theses in Vietnam (14.61% and 13.81%, respectively). This tends to indicate that procedural aspects of previous studies were reviewed as much as their findings. A similar result regarding the employment of *Research* verbs was also identified in the Introduction chapters of these theses (Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015). However, it is interesting to find the prominent use of *non-factive* verbs in these LR chapters, which is in contrast with the finding in the Introduction chapters. In other words, while these thesis writers preferred *factive* RVs in the Introduction chapters, *non-factive* RVs, which neutrally report on the research findings and inform readers of the authors' positions to the cited claims, were found to be dominant in these LR chapters (30.37% and 37.67%, respectively). Although these Vietnamese writers' preference for *non-factive* RVs is in line with previous studies on non-native student writers' use of RVs (Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2008; Jalilifar, 2012), it could be better understood in relation to the communicative functions of these chapters that these Vietnamese writers had in mind when composing them. In fact, in the Introduction chapters of this thesis corpus, more *factive* RVs were used because Move 1, in which the importance of their research topics was claimed and their reported studies were situated into the knowledge body, was found to occupy more than half of the whole chapter length (Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2014b). In their accompanying LR chapters, on the other hand, almost three fourths of *Reviewing non-related research*, which provided a general discussion of a theme, without focusing on specific aspects of previous studies such as subjects, was found. In addition, this step was combined with only 47.1% of *Asserting confirmative claims about knowledge or research practices surveyed* and/or *Concluding a part of literature review and/or indicating transition to review of a different area* (Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2014a). As discussed earlier, although this strategy combination helps these Vietnamese writers display their

familiarity with their field knowledge, it does not help them to establish the credibility of their studies. In summary, the *non-factive* RV preference by these Vietnamese M.A. thesis writers in the LR chapters could be due to these writers' assumptions about the communicative functions of the LR chapters, which simply review previous research without arguing for the need for their studies to be conducted.

Research acts 249 (28.42%)	Finding 128 (14.61%)	Factive 31 (3.54%)
		Counter-factive
		Non-factive 97 (11.07%)
	Procedure 121 (13.81%)	
Cognition acts 76 (8.68%)	Positive 18 (2.05%)	
	Critical	
	Tentative 51 (5.82%)	
	Neutral 7 (0.80%)	
Discourse acts 551 (62.90%)	Doubt 80 (9.13%)	Tentative 80 (9.13%)
		Critical
	Assurance 468 (53.42%)	Factive 235 (26.83%)
		Non-factive 233 (26.60%)
	Counters 3 (0.34%)	

Table 2. Classification of RVs according to denotation and evaluation in 24 LR chapters

Like the findings on RVs in the Introduction chapters, these writers avoided explicit rebuttal or direct confrontation with previous researchers through the absence of *Critical* verbs (in *Cognition* acts and *Discourse* acts) and few instances of *Counter* verbs (*Discourse* acts). In fact, among 876 verbs there were only three instances of two *Counter* verbs (*warn* and *attack*) found in two LR chapters (LR15 and LR19). In other words, the *Counter* verb *warn* occurred two times in LR19. The avoidance of *Counter* verb use in these thesis corpus could be due to these thesis writers' awareness of the power inequality between themselves and examiners and of their status in the community as indicated in Koutsantoni (2006). Moreover, their avoidance of refuting and criticizing previous research partly reflects Vietnamese cultures in which all forms of confrontation should be avoided as taught by the philosophies of Taoism and Confucianism (Nguyen, 2002). As shown in Example 1 below, on the other hand, the *Counter* verb *deny*, which belongs to the *Counter Discourse acts* by Hyland (2002), was classified into the *factive Assurance Discourse acts* in this study of RVs in the LR chapters. It is because this *Counter* verb was employed with a negation (*not*), making the writer's evaluation positive and directly supporting her argument.

(1) Although acknowledging the harmful side of anxiety, Albert & Haber (1960), Kleinmann (1977), Scovel (1978) and Hembree (1988) **did not deny** its positive effect on learner performance. (LR14)

As can also be seen in Table 2, there was about 15% of *tentative* RVs, which report both the authors' tentative views (*Cognition tentative*) (Example 2a) and the writers' tentative uncertainty (*Discourse tentative*) towards the reported messages (Example 2b). Moreover, a small percentage of *Cognition positive* and *neutral* RVs were also found in these LR chapters (2% and less than 1%, respectively) (Examples 3 and 4, respectively). It is interesting to find that *positive*, *tentative* and *neutral* RVs were employed in the LR chapters at almost the same percentage as they were in the Introductions (18%) (Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015). This tendency of using these RVs by these Vietnamese thesis writers is likely to indicate their preference for ascribing a tentative view to the cited authors or characterizing themselves holding a tentative stance when they were uncertain about the cited materials.

(2a) Richards et al (1993) **supposes** long-term memory is a part of the retention system where information is stored more permanently. (LR10) (Cognition tentative)

(2b) Bulik and Hanor (2000) **suggest** that the Web supports self-directed learning by both increasing learner control and providing mechanisms for learners to determine what information is good to them. (LR12) (Discourse Doubt tentative)

(3) For this reason, Hill and Flynn (2006) **think** that interaction is the most important component of cooperative group work that helps to build new knowledge. (LR16) (Cognition positive)

(4) Moreover, Liu (2006) **noticed** that the more proficient in English students were, the less anxious they seemed to be. (LR14) (Cognition neutral)

3.3. Verb forms

Like the findings on the RVs in the Introductions, the most common verb in the accompanying LR chapters is *state* (*Discourse Assurance non-factive*) (57 times). It is followed by three other *Discourse* verbs, *define* (*Assurance non-factive*) (46 times), *suggest* (*Doubt tentative*) (34 times) and *claim* (*Assurance factive*) (33 times) (Table 3). This finding is different from Pickard's (1995) claim about the non-native English writers' overuse of the RV *say*. In fact, 32 instances of *say* (*Discourse Assurance non-factive*) were found in these LR chapters, being equally ranked the fifth with the *Research Finding non-factive* verb *find*, followed by a *Research Procedure* verb *conduct* (31 times) and a *Discourse Assurance factive* verb *argue* (29 times). Besides these eight most common RVs, the other 130 (among 138 verbs) had a low frequency of occurrences and almost half occurred once or twice in the corpus of 24 LR chapters.

1. state (57)	33. prove (8)	65. agree (3)	97. associate (1)
2. define (46)	34. investigate (8)	66. recognize (3)	98. (not) deny (1)
3. suggest (34)	35. list (7)	67. apply (3)	99. predict (1)
4. claim (33)	36. assume (7)	68. have (2)	100. realize (1)
5. find (32)	37. discuss (7)	69. warn (2)	111. interview (1)
6. say (32)	38. refer (7)	70. design (2)	112. declare (1)
7. conduct (31)	39. compare (6)	71. base (2)	113. demonstrate (1)
8. argue (29)	40. remark (6)	72. offer (2)	114. tackle (1)
9. believe (25)	41. carry out (6)	73. notice (2)	115. uncover (1)
10. describe (22)	42. do (6)	74. give (2) (out)	116. comment (1)
11. report (20)	43. support (6)	75. establish (2)	117. speak (1)
12. add (19)	44. stress (5)	76. analyze (2)	118. name (1)
13. propose (18)	45. consider (5)	77. mean (2)	119. spitulate (1)
14. assert (18)	46. study (5)	78. postulate (2)	120. address (1)
15. conclude (18)	47. admit (5)	79. underline (2)	121. estimate (1)
16. point out (17)	48. introduce (5)	80. acknowledge (2)	122. attack (1)
17. use (17)	49. summarize (5)	81. confess (2)	123. invent (1)
18. develop (15)	50. see (5)	82. observe (2)	124. reconfirm (1
19. confirm (15)	51. divide (4)	83. put (2)	125. survey (1)
20. explain (15)	52. make (4)	84. imagine (2)	126. denote (1)
21. affirm (14)	53. suppose (4)	85. convince (2)	127. assess (1)
22. identify (14)	54. treat (4)	86. distinguish (2)	128. speculate (1)
23. indicate (12)	55. view (4)	87. work (2)	129. designate (1)
24. show (11)	56. express (3)	88. call (1)	130. attest (1)
25. examine (11)	57. pinpoint (3)	89. pose (1)	131. judge (1)
26. mention (10)	58. maintain (3)	90. contend (1)	132. write (1)
27. discover (9)	59. reveal (3)	91. advance (1)	133. illustrate (1)
28. present (8)	60. determine (3)	92. provide (1	134. repeat (1)
29. note (8)	61. explore (3)	93. accept (1)	135. reaffirm (1)
30. emphasize (8)	62. coin (3)	94. draw (1)	136. ensure (1)
31. think (8)	63. content (3)	95. reflect (1)	137. advise (1)
32. classify (8)	64. categorize (3)	96. conceptualize (1)	138. defend (1)

Table 3. RVs in 24 LR chapters

** The number in brackets indicates the times of verb occurrences in the LR chapters of TESOL M.A. theses*

This finding is partly in line with Hyland (2002) which found *argue*, *suggest*, *show*, *explain*, *find* and *point out* the most frequent RVs in Applied Linguistics. The low frequency of RV use in the LR chapters, which contain three quarters of citations in this TESOL M.A. thesis corpus, however, is likely to reflect these writers' innocence of how to appropriately integrate sources in academic writing with the employment of RVs. In fact, as discussed in the move-step analysis of these LR chapters (Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2014a), these Vietnamese writers focused on reviewing previous research (Move 1) in a list of summaries on what has been done before and with few instances of synthesis (Move 2 and 3) in order to create a research need for their studies to be filled. Moreover, several non-idiomatic expressions were employed as RVs by this group of writers, which is likely to indicate that this could be due to their low level of language proficiency. As can be seen in Example 5, the writer acknowledged her acceptance of the previous

researcher's (*Widdowson*) results with a high level of confidence through her non-idiomatic expression "*provide evidence to prove*".

> (5) Then Widdowson (1990) **provides** evidence to prove that the act of speaking involves not only the production of sounds but also the use of gestures, the movements of the muscles of the face, and indeed the whole body… (LR6) (Research finding non-factive)

In terms of *Research Finding non-factive* verbs, which were used to neutrally report on the findings of previous studies, a number of verbs were used with a low frequency of occurrences. As can be seen in Examples 6-7 below, some of *Research Procedures* verbs such as *distinguish*, *classify*, *categorize* and *divide* were employed in reporting what previous researchers have found. However, the contexts in which these verbs occurred were examined and they were classified into *Research Finding non-factive* verbs. Furthermore, a few informal verbs were also found in neutrally reporting the findings of previous studies (Example 8). This could reflect the deficit of vocabulary of these Vietnamese writers as indicated by Hyland (2002).

> (6) O'Malley et al (1985: 582-584) **classified** strategies into three main subcategories: "metacognitive strategies", "cognitive strategies", and "social/affective strategies". (LR9) (Research finding non-factive)

> (7) As an example, Block (1986) **categorized** these strategies into general comprehension, considered as top-down or teacher-centered strategies, and local linguistic strategies, which could be regarded as bottom-up or text-centered strategies. (LR11) (Research finding non-factive)

> (8) Based on the steps of composing an e-lesson plan, Bien Van Minh (2004) **gives out** the steps of composing an e-lecture using Microsoft PowerPoint software as follows:… (LR5) (Finding non-factive)

Regarding the *Research Procedure* RVs, as compared with those classified by Hyland (2002), a number of new verbs (*survey*, *apply*, and *work on*) were employed by this group of Vietnamese writers to refer to the procedural aspects of previous researchers' investigations (Example 9). Moreover, they simply reported the tasks of previous studies neutrally as claimed by Hyland (2002). However, similar to the finding of the *Research Finding non-factive* verbs, the verb *work on* is non-idiomatic in reporting previous studies (Example 9).

> (9) Qian (1996) **worked on** two groups of Chinese university students, of which one (n=32) was instructed with guess-from-context and the other group (n=31) with L1 translation. (LR13)

Cognition RVs, "which portray the cited work in terms of a mental process" (Hyland, 2002: 120), were employed to ascribe a particular attitude to the cited authors. Like the finding of *Research* verbs, a number of new *Cognition* verbs (*content*, *realize*, *assume*, *view*, *conceptualize*, *contend*, *see* and *predict*) were identified in this LR chapter corpus. Given a small number of *Cognition* RVs (8.68%) (Table 2) and the infrequent occurrences of some verbs (Table 3) in this LR chapter corpus, the employment of two RVs (*realize* and *conceptualize*) in LR14 only tends to reflect this writer's preference for *Cognition* verbs (Examples 10-11).

> (10) By using diary studies of language learners, Bailey (1983) **realized** that the relationship between competitiveness and anxiety appeared to result in either an unsuccessful or successful self-image. (LR14) (Cognition positive)

> (11) Cognitivists like Liebert and Morris (1967) **conceptualized** anxiety as having two components "worry and emotionality". (LR14) (Cognition tentative)

In terms of *Discourse* act verbs, which either express writers' views (*Doubt* and *Assurance*) or attribute an attitude to cited authors (*Counters*) (Hyland, 2002), accounted for almost two thirds of all RVs in this LR chapter corpus. Therefore, it is not surprising to see a lot of newly identified *Discourse* verbs (*propose*, *remark*, *admit*, *determine*, *advise*, *denote*, *estimate*, *judge*, and *imagine*) used by these Vietnamese writers. Examples 12a-c show how some *tentative* RVs under the *Doubt* verb group were employed by this group of writers. However, mistakes regarding word choices by these writers were also identified. As can be seen in Example 12c, *imagine* should be replaced by *suggest* or *propose*. Courses with a form focus, therefore, should be provided to help these future writers.

> (12a) Oxford, however, **admitted** that these surveys might miss the richness and spontaneity of less-structured formats. (LR9)

> (12b) Haney, Czerniak, and Lumpe (1996) **determined** that teachers' beliefs are significant indicators of the behaviors that will be present in the classroom. (LR1)

> (12c) Meanwhile, Luoma (2004) **imagines** four scenarios of testing speaking, which is worth mentioning. Scenario 1 is usually applied for young people who have been learning a foreign language at school and possibly taking extra classes as one of their hobbies. … (LR23) (wrong word choice)

Besides some *Discourse Assurance factive* RVs newly identified in the Introduction chapters of this TESOL M.A. thesis corpus (Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015) and those with clear denotative meanings (*pinpoint*, *convince*, *ensure*, *reaffirm*, *reconfirm*, *clarify*, *attest*, *underline*, *approve*, *highlight*), the following examples illustrate how these Vietnamese writers used RVs to support their own arguments in their accompanying LR chapters. As can be seen in Examples 13a-d, these writers employed *accept*, *advance*, *add* and *stipulate* to attribute a high degree of their confidence to the propositions of the cited materials. Although these verbs

were employed once or twice in this LR chapter corpus by a particular thesis writer, this finding indicates that some of these thesis writers were not familiar with the language required for academic writing.

(13a) Meara (1990) only **accepts** the notion of a continuum for productive, while insisting that receptive is qualitatively different. (LR10)

(13b) Breen and Candlin (1980, p. 110) **advances** the understanding of learner roles within the CLT by describing their roles in the following terms: … (LR7)

(13c) Steinberg (1991) **adds** that computer aids refers to computer-presented instruction that is individualized, interactive, and guided. (LR22)

(13d) TESOL (1996, p. 17; cited in Onalan, 2005) **stipulates** the third goal in ESL Standards for Pre-K-12. (LR1)

Like the other RV groups found in these LR chapters, verbs in the *Discourse Assurance non-factive* group were ineffectively used by this group of thesis writers (Examples 14a-c). As can be seen in Examples 14a and 14b, the verbs *speak* and *draw attention to* were employed instead of *say* and *report*, respectively. Moreover, "again and again" was used with the verb *repeat* (Example 14c), making the statement semantically redundant.

(14a) Harmer (2001) **speaks** about some characteristics of a good presentation that should be mentioned here: … (LR16)

(14b) Besides, Henriksen (1999) **draws attention to** the fact that the acquisition of word meaning actually involves two interrelated processes: item learning and system changing. (LR10)

(14c) Sage (1987) again and again **repeated**, Literature portrays a wide variety of human concerns and needs, Literature is rooted in daily life, the activities that people carry out each day (p. 3-4). (LR3)

Besides the mistakes and the ineffectiveness of these Vietnamese writers' use of RVs identified in these LR chapters, the following examples illustrate the non-idiomatic expressions used in reporting previous studies (Examples 15a-d). These expressions are not only inappropriate in academic writing but also reflect some of these writers' low level of language proficiency. In addition, this finding is likely to suggest that citation practice in the TESOL discourse community in Vietnam is not paid due attention to and citation should be formally taught to these thesis writers.

(15a) Oxford and Scarcella (1994) also **appear to be talking** about comprehension when they wrote: By far the most useful [vocabulary learning] strategy is guessing from context. (p. 236) (LR10)

(15b) Kaplan **went further by arguing** that language and culture have a reciprocal relationship in the meaning that the diversity of languages also affects the cultures,… (LR2)

(15c) Kaplan **continued by pointing out** that a fallacy that have been popular at American colleges and universities at a time assumes that if a student can write a well-written text in his native language,.. (LR2)

(15d) However, Yalden (1996) **does not stop at this point but goes forwards in arguing** that discourse is also always attached with 'the process of negotiating meaning'. (LR15)

3.4. Tense and voice

As shown in Table 4, the present simple and the past simple were almost equally used in the LR chapters written by these Vietnamese writers (51.26% and 46.80%, respectively). The present perfect, which is used to refer to the general area of the topic under investigation (Malcolm, 1987; Thompson, 2001), on the other hand, accounted for a very small percentage (1.94%). This finding is different from that in the Introduction chapters in which the past simple was the most commonly used, followed by the present simple and the present perfect (61%, 35%, and 4%, respectively) (Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015). As indicated in previous studies on tenses in RAs and theses, grammatical choices are determined by rhetorical functions of the texts (Hanania & Akhtar, 1985; Lackstrom, Selinker, & Trimble, 1973; Oster, 1981). These writers' preference for the past tense used in the Introduction chapters, as discussed earlier, contradicts the tendency of a higher frequency of the present over the past tense in the Introductions where background generalizations, topic importance, assumptions and research purpose are presented (Swales, 1990). In their accompanying LR chapters, in contrast, there are a marked shift towards the present tense and a remarkable decrease in the past tense. Although the use of these two tenses in the LR chapters by Vietnamese is in line with Hanania and Akhtar (1985), a very small percentage of the present perfect in these chapters reveals that few instances about the past literature generality were provided before more detailed information regarding the reviewed topics or related previous research was reported. In fact, Oster (1981) indicates that in the LR chapters, the present perfect is employed to introduce the generalizations of the reviewed topics, followed by the past simple or the present simple, depending on whether writers would like to report the procedures of past literature or to draw conclusions about the reviewed past literature, respectively.

Tense			Total	Voice	
Present simple	Past simple	Present perfect		Active	Passive
449	410	17	876	858	18
51.26%	46.80%	1.94%		97.95%	2.05%

Table 4. Tense and Voice of RVs in 24 LR chapters

In terms of voice, it can be seen in Table 4 that the active voice was overwhelmingly used in these LR chapters (98%). Moreover, it is not surprising to see the active voice was commonly combined with all the three tenses found in this LR chapter corpus (Figure 2).

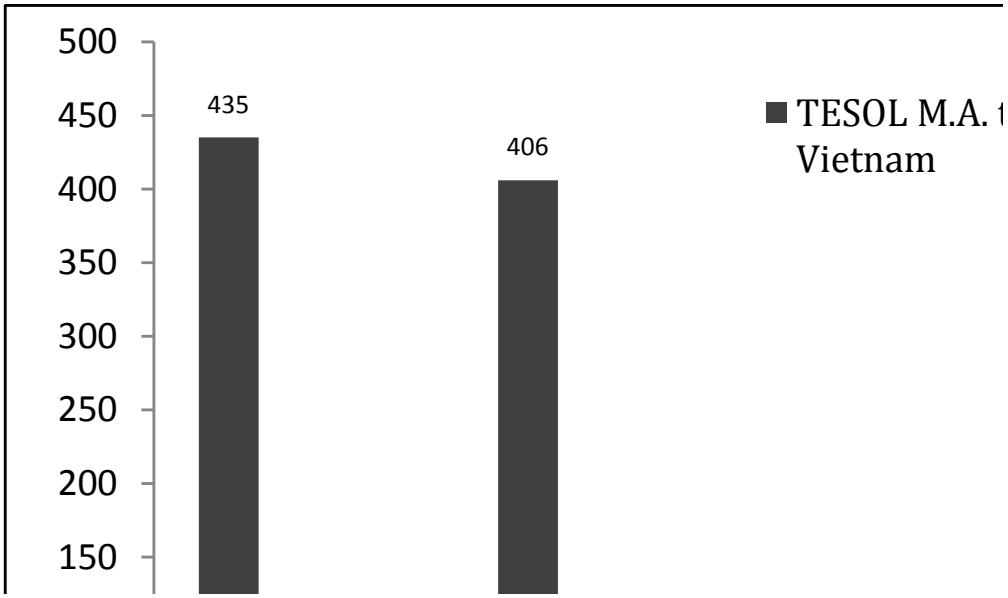

Figure 2. Numbers of instances of tense + voice combination in 24 LR chapters

Besides their emphasis on previous researchers, the active preference for the RVs by this group of Vietnamese M.A. students is similar to Hanania and Akhtar (1985) in science theses. This similarity could be accounted by the rhetorical functions of reviewing the past literature. Moreover, in his study of citations in the Agricultural Botany and Agricultural and Food Economics Ph.D. theses, Thompson (2001) found more active than passive RVs were employed in the latter (a ratio of 10:1) while a 3.3:1 ratio of active and passive was found in the former. The commonality between the preference for the active voice in the current LR chapters of TESOL M.A. theses in Vietnam and the Agricultural and Food Economics Ph.D. theses in Thomson's study (2001) tends to reflect the tendency for active RVs in the social sciences (Hyland, 2000). In fact, as explained in Thompson (2001), although these two fields (Agricultural Botany and Agricultural and Food Economics) are applied, the former falls within the life sciences domain while the latter belongs to the social sciences.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study planned to investigate how RVs were employed in LR chapters which contained the most citations among other chapters in 24 TESOL M.A. theses by Vietnamese postgraduate students. Following Hyland's (2002) classification of RVs in terms of their denotation and evaluation, the study found that *Discourse acts* were the most prominent, followed by *Research acts* and *Cognition acts*. Although this finding confirmed the disciplinary variations on citation conventions as stated by Hyland (2002) and Nwogu (1997), these Vietnamese writers' use of limited number of RVs, their mistakes and non-idiomatic expressions used in reporting previous studies could reflect their deficit of vocabulary and their low level of language proficiency as indicated by Hyland (2002). In terms of their use of evaluative potential of RVs, more *non-factive* RVs were found and it is likely to indicate that student writers preferred to ascribe a neutral view to the cited authors (Pecorari, 2008). Moreover, few instances of *Critical* and *Counter* verbs tend to show these writers' avoidance of refuting and criticizing previous research. This finding partly reflects their awareness of the power inequality between themselves and examiners and of their status in their discourse community as indicated in Koutsantoni (2006). Regarding the tense and voice of RVs, while there was an almost equal use of present and past simple tenses, a few present perfect tenses were found in the LR chapters, which indicated that few instances about the past literature generality were provided before more detailed information regarding the reviewed topics or related previous research was reported. This finding tends to reveal these Vietnamese writers' unfamiliarity with using RVs for achieving the communicative purposes of LR chapters.

Despite the small scale of study and the fact that it was not conducted in a move-related approach as recent studies on citations (Kwan & Chan, 2014; Samraj, 2013), the findings of this paper, to a certain extent, can provide a general picture of how Vietnamese writers used RVs in their M.A. thesis LR chapters. As RVs help them to persuasively integrate other people's works and ideas into their writing and effectively present their evaluations of the cited information, effort should be made to familiarize them with the various functions and the rhetorical effects that RVs can have on their academic writing. Moreover, an appropriate amount of explicit, form-based instruction with a clear focus on the lexical grammatical aspects of using accurate and appropriate RVs may need to be introduced into the classroom. With raised awareness of this rhetorical practice, these writers can become sensitive to subtleties of evaluative potentials of RVs and they can use them in a conscientious and effective manner in their future academic writing.

[Paper submitted 22 Jul 2015]
[Revised version accepted for publication 29 Oct 2015]

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