

# Rhetorical Functions of Reporting Verbs in Author Prominent Citations of Graduate Students' Research Papers

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**Abstract-***This study investigates the rhetorical functions of reporting verbs employed in the author prominent citations of research papers written by graduate students. Specifically, this study aims to 1) describe the use of reporting verbs functioning as research acts, cognition acts and discourse acts in the graduate students' research papers, and 2) evaluate the appropriateness of those uses of reporting verbs in each research paper. Thus, the examples of the use, misuse, and overuse of the reporting verbs committed by the students were presented in this study. Following this, Hyland's (2002) insightful framework is used as preliminary identification of the functional activities of research verbs, cognitive verbs, and discourse verbs. Documents analysis with checklist worksheet was used to obtain the data. The data comprised eighteen research papers completed as the final project of linguistic subject. The findings show that the students tend to use reporting verbs in discourse act category instead of research act and cognitive act categories. More specifically, the findings reveal that 1) for research act category, the most used verbs were 'find', 'show' and 'identify', 2) only the verb 'believe' was found in cognition act category, 3) the verb 'state' which belongs to the functional categories of discourse verb has the highest occurrence in all of the data. It means that the students tend to overuse and misuse the verb 'state' to present any kinds of cited sentences without fully understanding its functional meaning within the context. And 4) for the appropriateness of reporting verbs, the students' problems were found on the misuses verb choice, tense choice, and syntactic pattern of the reported sentences. This indicates the students are likely to be unaware of the functional use of reporting verbs in cited sentences. To achieve successful communicative purpose in citing others' work, students should be encouraged in advancing their knowledge to familiarize the meanings of reporting verbs within the context in academic writings.*

**Keywords-** *Research Act; Cognition Act; Discourse Act; Reporting Verb; Author Prominent Citation*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The study of academic writing has received a great amount of interest in the last few decades. Its focus covers the studies of genre, content, grammatical complexity, lexical diversity to more specific language features such as modality, prosody, redundancy, and reporting verbs in text citation. In a study involving rhetorical function in text citation, the issue of what is understood by the term reporting verbs in citing behavior is inevitably raised. Dealing with the understanding of rhetorical devices like citation, it is undeniably rather difficult to be mastered for language learners. Thus, it is undeniable that writers sometimes face difficulties in producing the coherent academic discourse. It is supported by Heaton (1989:135)[12] who states that the writing skills are complex yet difficult to teach, requiring mastery not only on conceptual grammatical but also rhetorical devices. Note that all of the aspects of academic discourse are

important, citation appears as one of the essential features in academic writing.

As it is known, in academic writing, it is necessary to refer to the studies of others and to report on their findings. This act of referring to previous studies is called citation. By learning how to cite the works of others properly, it can help to avoid plagiarism. Then, in reviewing the past literature, Weissberg and Buker (1990:43)[29] classify two general options in text citation. They are information prominent citation and author prominent citation. In information prominent citation, the information is given priority over the author with the citation at the end of the sentence, for example: *Several studies show that... (Smith, 2017)*. While in author prominent citation, the author's name is placed in the subject position in the sentence, *Smith (2017) argues that...* The word *argues* is a reporting verb. It carries an important function in citation practice.

As the theory implies, the variation of the use of reporting verbs indicates that reporting verbs used in research

papers carry out different function and communicative purposes (Hyland, 2002)[15]. It cannot be denied that there are differences in the ways writers use reporting verbs. Thus, the appropriate choice of a reporting verb in the citation has been increasingly viewed as an important part in academic writing. Based on this way of thinking, reporting verbs in academic papers might be seen as rhetorical attributions that are used to help writers' claims and to influence readers that writers' claims are significant and reasonable.

The recent study of reporting verbs is conducted by Davis (2017)[7]. He aimed to investigate reporting verbs in medical research. The object of the study was thirteen medical articles which were selected randomly. The specific investigation to whether or not the choice of reporting verb can be affected by its context was proved by using lexical priming. The interesting challenges faced by novice second language writers of medical research article are the tendency to just only report on work done by others, means that the authors are experts and offer something of value to the field. More importantly, authors of medical research article also need to comprehend rhetorical approaches in purpose to persuade the reader. Loan and Pramoolsook (2015)[18] conducted the study analyzing the reporting verbs used in 24 TESOL Master's thesis Literature Review chapters written by Vietnamese students. Later it is found that the findings from Loan and Pramoolsook's study (2015)[18] were in accordance with Hyland's findings (2002)[15]. This implied that Vietnamese students tend to report on reviewing previous research. As concluding remark they claimed the study showed that the group of Vietnamese writers tended to randomly use reporting verbs without noticing their rhetorical functions.

Another research of in reporting verbs was conducted by Charles (2006)[4]. He investigated the reporting clauses in two corpora of theses written by native speakers. The rhetorical functions of verbs patterns were discussed and explained in which it was proposed based on genre and discipline. This study found the most frequent verb group in ARGUE (e.g., argue, note, suggest) and the most frequent tense is present (X argues that. . .). In the view of reporting verbs as an important role in academic writing, Nanyue (2013)[20] conducted a case study attempted to investigate two Chinese students during their studies at the university. He aimed for their development of reporting verbs using in essay writing over the course for one academic year. Both of the subjects had limitation in using only a small range of lexical choices of reporting verbs. This indicated their hesitation and inability in using reporting verbs in essay writing. Following this, the results of the study pointed out no sign of improvement over time in terms of the appropriate use of reporting verbs shown by the two Chinese students. Some major problems appeared with the use of reporting verbs found in their easy writing assignment including the choice of verb, tense choice, and the syntax of reporting verbs in reported sentences. Nanyue (2013)[20] also found that

one of the Chinese students had difficulties in selecting a correct verb. This leads an assumption that they randomly use reporting verb with no intention to correspond the reporting verbs choices with the context.

However, it is worth noticing so far that there has been no study which analyzes the rhetorical functions of reporting verbs in author prominent citation in English graduate students' theses which focuses on the functional aspects of reporting, specifically in Indonesian academic setting. Deriving from the above reasons, the purposes of the study in relation to the problems of the study are to describe how the reporting verbs are used in research papers written by the English graduate students and evaluate the appropriateness of those uses of reporting verbs. Thus, this present study investigates the rhetorical functions of reporting verbs in the author prominent citation of research papers written by the English students in UNESA. Based on the reasons and the idea discussed in the background of the study above, the research questions are formulated as follows; 1) How are rhetorical functions (in research acts, cognition acts and discourse acts categories) of reporting verbs used in research papers written by the English students in graduate school? and 2) How appropriate are those uses of reporting verbs in research papers written by the English students in graduate school?

## 2. RHETORICAL FUNCTIONS OF REPORTING VERBS

According to the Greek philosopher Aristotle, rhetoric is the art of using language effectively to persuade the audience that the ideas of the speaker are valid. Similarly, Corbett (1990:1)[6] defines rhetoric as the art of discourse, an art that aims to improve the facility of speakers or writers who attempt to inform, persuade, or motivate particular audiences in specific situations. Thus, rhetoric, as described above, is a device for writers to enable them to influence their readers about their point of view. Another perspective in relation to the field of academic writing, rhetoric can be referred as the role of discourse which determines how language is used by writers to persuade and to influence readers.

However, in a piece of academic writing, writers' motivations to make citations and to choose particular citation types are seen to be rhetorically driven with the aim of achieving ratification by the disciplinary community of the new claims contained in the text (Hyland, 1999)[14]. As it is supported by Bloch (2010:222)[2] who argues rhetorical terms in academic writing as a process of developing an argument to support the writer's claims. In this perspective, the rhetorical impact of a paper often relates to the connections that writers make either for their own claims or others' claim contributing to the building up of writer's argument.

In order to publish their research, writers must, therefore, evaluate the strength of their claims and references to others' claims. Thus, Bloch (2010:223)[20] concludes that

“the choice of reporting verbs in citation involve a great deal of exactness in order to establish the credibility of both the writer and the claims so that there is a greater likelihood that the reader will accept the position the writer is taking.” This means, the function of a reporting statement is not only revealed by source information itself but from the appropriate choice of a reporting verb as well.

## 2.1 Functional Categories of Reporting Verbs

A reporting verb, in a broad sense, serves as an important linguistic feature that indicates a writer’s attitude towards the work of other researchers in a community. In discourse analysis, citations have been studied in terms of reporting verbs (Hyland, 1999, 2002[14][15]; Thompson and Yiyun, 1991[25]) which enable the writer to position their work in relation to the works of other research. Hyland (2002:118)[15] points out that “the use of a reporting verb is one of the most explicit ways of attributing content to another source and represents a significant rhetorical choice.” Grounded from this statement, reporting verbs in academic papers clearly can be seen as rhetoric instruments that are used to support writers’ claims and to convince readers that writers’ claims are justifiable. Thus, the variation of reporting verbs usage carries out different communicative purposes in different contexts in academic research.

Hyland (2002)[15] proposes a way of categorizing reporting verbs based on their functions. He classifies reporting verbs into three general categories, they are research acts, cognition acts and discourse acts. This means the functions of reporting verbs can be revealed from such choices. However, Hyland differentiates between what he calls research acts (e.g., *find*) in relation to earlier studies. Discourse acts refers to actions carried out in the research (e.g., *state*), which refer to cognitive or research activities, and cognitive acts, which refer to the mental processes used in reporting claims. Hyland (2002:119-120)[15] classifies the reporting verbs according to the type of activity they referred to. This gives three distinguishable processes:

- Research (real-world) Acts. Reporting verbs in this category represent experimental activities or actions carried out in the real world. They generally occur either in statements of findings (e.g. *observe*, *discover*, *notice*, *show*) or procedures (e.g. *analyze*, *calculate*, *assay*, *explore*, *plot*, *recover*).
- Cognition Acts. These verbs are concerned with the researcher’s mental processes (e.g. *believe*, *conceptualize*, *suspect*, *assume*, *view*).
- Discourse Acts. These involve linguistic activities and focus on the verbal expression of cognitive

**Table 1. The list of functional categories of reporting verbs**

Research Acts	Cognition Acts	Discourse Acts
demonstrate	agree	postulate

establish	concur	hypothesize
show	hold	indicate
solve	know	intimate
confirm	think	suggest
fail	understand	evade
misunderstand	believe	exaggerate
ignore	doubt	count
overlook	speculate	make point
find	suppose	state
identify	suspect	describe
observe	disagree	discuss
obtain	dispute	report
	not think	answer
	picture	define
	conceive	summarize
	anticipate	argue
	reflect	affirm
		explain
		note
		point out
		claim
		deny
		critique
		challenge
		attack
		question
		warn
		rule out

The above table is the list of classification of reporting verbs dealing with the functional categories proposed by Hyland (2002)[15]. This framework of reporting verbs are used in the study to classify the reporting verbs found in the graduate students’ research paper.

## 2.2 Aspect or Job of Reporting Verbs

In *Student Q Manual* by Kimberley and Crosling (2012)[16], Brick (2006:113-116)[3] explains three categories of reporting verbs including their aspects or jobs used in author prominent citation, they are presented below:

**Table 2. The example of reporting verbs meaning**

Reporting verb	Meaning
study	to introduce the topic studied by the

	source/previous study
investigate	to introduce the topic studied by the source/previous study
research	to introduce the topic studied by the source/previous study
state	to indicate the source presents something as a fact
claim	to indicate the source is advancing an argument
point out	to indicate the source emphasizes something
explain	to indicate the source gives details of how or why
discuss	to indicate the source examines in something in detail
mention	to indicate the source deals with the issue very briefly
note	to indicate the source deals with the issue very briefly
conclude	to indicate the conclusion the source reaches
argue	to present the source's position and advancing an argument
evaluate	to indicate the source is making a judgment
suggest	to indicate the source thinks something is possibly important but needs further investigation
emphasize	to indicate the source's most important point
assert	to distance the writer from the source's position
assume	to think the source has treated something a fact but to believe it is not

The above table is several example of reporting verbs meanings in correlation of rhetorical function in academic writing. It can be seen that each reporting verb carries different communicative purpose. They are more than just a list of vocabulary for writers to choose without any consideration. By knowing the meanings of reporting verbs, it can help writers to express ideas more clearly, at the same time it can show writers' level of engagement with the previous literature. To sum up, it can be said that writers' engagement can be partially seen from the meanings of the verbs they used.

### 2.3 Tenses Form of Reporting Verbs

In order to become successful academic writers, it is important to understand the grammar choices when reporting claims or ideas. Swales (1990)[24] notes that from the past tense to the present perfect, to the present tense, there is an increasing degree of generality, for instance, the statements in which the respective tense occurs make references to a particular study, to the area of inquiry, and finally to a broader and more general

domain. In correlation to rhetorical aspect of writing, it has been proved that tense choices as grammatical expressions are not determined simply by time, which means that the usage of the tense in reporting verbs depends on the purpose of the reporting statements.

However, Weissberg and Buker (1990:51-52)[29] analyze tenses usage of reporting verbs in terms of prominence:

- The past tense is used in the findings of individual studies closely related to the current researcher's idea;
- The present tense is used in the information prominent citations when the cited information is generally accepted as scientific fact;
- The present perfect tense is used in weak author prominent citations and general statements which describe the level of research activity in an area.

In brief, past tense is used to refer the previous research that is completed as part of study. To discuss findings from the literature that are generally considered factual, present tense is used. However, present perfect tense is used to give the general background of past research and to show that previous research still influences current thinking.

### 3 METHOD

The research design of this study is a qualitative research. It is applied in this study because it is relevant to the objective of this study. Since the data of the study are in the form of written words, phrases, and sentences which have reporting verbs, this study uses qualitative method in order to identify, analyze, describe, and interpret the data. Based on frameworks purposed by Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Razavieh (2010:29) about types of qualitative research, this study is categorized as content or document analysis because this study was carried out to analyze the rhetorical function of reporting verbs found in research papers written by English graduate students centralizing on introduction section (Chapter 1), literature review section (Chapter 2) and method section (Chapter 3). Document or content analysis is a research method for constructing valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use (Krippendorff, 2004:18)[17]. In general, data collection technique performed in this study was documentation. Documents were collected from student's writing production that had been compiled into a file. It is important to note that the research papers in this study are written by regular students from Class B of UNESA batch 2015. They were selected because it met the basis of the relevancy to the writer's educational background or the writers' consent. Moreover, the researcher may use an instrument for collecting data but the researcher is the one who actually gather the information. This implies the existence of the researcher is the key instrument in conducting the research. In order to identify rhetorical function of reporting verbs in students' writing effectively, the analysis of reporting verbs limited only to research verbs (*find, identify, show*), cognitive verb

(believe), and lastly discourse verbs (*state, define, and describe*).

### 3. DISCUSSION

This section provides two parts. The first part is the explanation on how reporting verbs functioning as research acts, cognition acts and discourse acts are used in author prominent citation in the research papers. The second part reveals whether or not the reporting verbs are appropriately used based on the intended idea dealing with the use in author prominent citation.

#### 3.1 Rhetorical Function of Reporting Verbs Used in Research Papers

Before closely analyzing the verbs occurring in the research papers, the distribution of all reporting verbs is discussed in this part of the study. The brief data display of the reporting verbs employed in research papers can be easily seen in the Table 2.

**Table 3. The distributions of reporting verbs used by the students**

Code	Reporting Verbs
S1.RP1	state, propose, categorize, define, explain
S2.RP2	show, argue, state, propose
S3.RP3	assert, claim, identify, state, mention, describe (2), define (3),
S4.RP4	explain, state, describe (2), define (2)
S5.RP5	state, propose, study, conduct, analyze, define, find (2)
S6.RP6	claim, argue, define, indicate, state (2)
S7.RP7	state (2), argue (4)
S8.RP8	explain, argue, point out, state (5),
S9.RP9	define, state (5)
S10.RP10	claim, identify, analyze, investigate
S11.RP11	believe, state (3)
S12.RP12	state
S13.RP13	conduct, define, describe, state (2)
S14.RP14	point out, note, define, state (3)
S15.RP15	state
S16.RP16	argue, conduct, describe, state (2)
S17.RP18	claim, explain, identify, find, claim, state (4)

S18.RP18	conduct, note, state (4)
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*Codes: S: Student; RP: Research Paper*

*Note: numbers in brackets are the frequency of reporting verbs occurrences*

The table above shows the variation in the use of reporting verbs, there are 100 reporting verbs found in author prominent citation in the graduate students' research papers. By looking at the distribution of the reporting verbs, it is clear that all of the students used reporting verbs in their research paper even though Student 12 and 15 employed only one reporting verb. With the exception of Student 10, almost all of the students used verb state in their writing. Thus, there is a clear tendency for the students to use state which is perhaps claimed as a well-known reporting verb among the students. Furthermore, after identifying all of the data in students' paper repeatedly in different times, the checklist worksheet was used to classify the reporting verbs into three categories (research acts, cognition acts, and discourse acts) as presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. The functional classification of reporting verbs based on Hyland's framework**

Research Acts	Cognition Acts	Discourse Acts
find (3)	believe (1)	state (39)
identify (3)		define (11)
show (1)		argue (8)
		describe (6)
		claim (5)
		explain (4)
		note (2)
		point out (2)
		indicate (1)

*Note: numbers in brackets are the frequency of reporting verbs occurrences*

From the above table, it is also notable that all the categories of reporting verbs based on their function are found in the students' writing. This classification highlights the tendencies in using reporting verbs from discourse category. In concerning with the research act only three kinds of verbs employed by the students. However, verb in cognition act appears fewer than the other categories. Only one verb appears in cognition acts categories.

#### 3.1.1 Reporting Verb in Research Acts Categories Used in Research Papers

In this study, several students (S2, S5, S3, S10, S17) used reporting verbs in research acts categories. As it is known in academic writing, researcher will often need to describe what another researcher has done in the past. These verbs in research act category is useful to help strengthen research by referring to prior studies, they are objective and non-judgmental as they are focus on the

finding of the result. Based on the findings category of research acts in this study, writers (the person citing) can acknowledge their acceptance of another researcher/author findings with verbs show alongside with find and identify.

#### **a) Reporting Verb 'show' and 'find' Used in Research Papers**

According to the data findings, the verb *show* which is under investigation is only found once. *Show* is used as a reporting verb to present/display something to be seen as a fact from previous research.

- (1) *Yousaf et al. (2015)[26] showed that more than 60% of the children changed their language and accent after watching cartoons. [APC6]*

The reporting verb *showed* used in excerpt (1) is employed very well. It is because *show* gives the meaning that a sentence occurring in that context is true. It extended with the information of presentation number (60%) to strengthen data result as a true finding. It indicates the degrees of reliability of information. However, partially in this study, reporting verb in excerpt (1) presents similar function with excerpt (2). All of these passages give the information of the past findings of research. However, the primary meaning of the verb *find* is rather a process of happening as it means to discover something by searching. To make the clear definition about the verb *find*, another example of the data is discussed below.

- (2) *In his research, Dornerus (2005)[8] found that the maxim of relevance is the maxim that is most frequently flouted to create the different... [APC28]*

Based on the data in excerpt (2) when *find* is used as a reporting verb, the identity of the source responsible for the activity of finding something is the sourced author. It means that the verb *find* refers to the research evidence with the meaning of noticing. In this study, *find* is used the most to refer to authors' findings from their research, where it is factive/factual. As in excerpt (2), the cited information is followed by the expression of 'his research'. It can be interpreted as the acknowledgement of what people (researcher, author) say or do or think as a result of their research activity in the past. It can be referred as making attribution or reference to previous research embedded in a present continuous academic research. The verb *find* occurs primarily in referring to the authors' findings from their experiment. This finding is supportive to Charles's work (2006:322)[4], he found that the *find* verb appearance is indicted by the occurrence of cohesive devices, personal pronouns and lexical repetition. This pronoun expressed the attribution of previously cited authors. More importantly, based on the data, the research verb in this study usually occurred in Introduction section. In contrast, earlier research conducted by Davis (2017:77)[7] has found that the verb *find* occurs primarily in the Results and Discussion sections, referring most frequently to the authors' findings

from their experiment. This claim is in accordance with Charles (2006:322)[4] who argued that the *find* verb is part of an extended description or discussion of the cited author's work. Thus, there is difference of results between the finding from this study and two studies mentioned earlier.

#### **3.1.2 Reporting Verb in Cognition Acts Categories Used in Research Papers**

Literally, cognition acts verb categories is related to mental verbs. It refers to anything related to mind or cognitive process. These cognitive verbs deal with mental state in which actions are mostly abstract. Cognitive verbs provide meanings which are connected to our sensory mental capabilities. The verbs in this category reflect the beliefs regarding author state of mind. These verbs give meaning which is mostly unsuitable for outside evaluation as they are not concrete actions. However, the verbs can evaluate through our knowledge. In this state, only one student used reporting verb in cognition acts categories. The verb *believe* was used by S11 in her citing statement. The further discussions of the verb *believe* is elaborated on the following discussion.

##### **a) Reporting Verb 'believe' Used in Research Papers**

The verb *believe* is categorized as mental verbs because it refers to mental processes expressed in the author's text pertaining to the belief of the author whose idea is being reported. As can be seen, mental verb is the necessary part of the cognition acts, expressing a wide range of activities and states experienced by humans. They do not involve physical action. The following is the example of the verb *believe* found in the research paper.

- (3) *Simkin (2013)[23] believes that games provide good feedback for instructors which indicate students understanding. [APC66]*

The reporting verb *believe* indicates no certainty of the statement because the author 'having a belief' about something is heavily connected with the mental attitude of the author. This claim is reassured with the statement from Hyland (2002:120)[15] who states that cognitive verb "portray the cited work in terms of a mental process". This mental statement of belief can change according to the circumstance and it is mostly signal no clear supporting evidence about the statement, just having a belief.

#### **3.1.3 Reporting Verb in Discourse Acts Categories Used in Research Papers**

There are verbs which describe processes in which verbal expression is involved, namely *state*, *define*, *describe*, *argue*, and *claim*. These verbs in discourse act category are referred to linguistic activities in relation to interaction in speech and writing. Interesting fact is that the verbs in discourse acts category is predominantly found in the research papers. Note how dominant is the discourse verb of the students used in their research papers, it indicates the fact that discourse verb of reporting in this study consists of statements simply reporting the findings of the

reviewed author's research without evaluating marking, as it is to a much greater extent created through this discourse verbs.

#### **a) Reporting Verb 'state' Used in Research Papers**

The verb *state* is one of the most striking findings of reporting verb employed in the author prominent citation in the research papers. The students over generalized the use of reporting verb *state* to present almost all of the citing references from other author without fully understanding the context of the sentences. The overuse of *state* by the students can be indicated as showing their lack of knowledge about the use and function of reporting verbs. There are at least three possible readings to the functional use of the verb *state*. Following the previous statement, in the research papers written by graduate students, the verb *state* is almost always used to introduce any kind of citation findings whether the statement is an argument, an explanation, a description, a definition or an emphasizing idea.

Firstly, in some cases, likewise in excerpt (4), the verbs *state* used can be interpreted to indicate the intention to emphasize the author's statement in previous research and to stress certain idea from its generality.

- (4) *From those three acts, Yule (1996: 49) states that the illocution are the most often discussed acts in pragmatics. [APC1]*

There are a number of examples found in the research paper containing the verb *state*. Although students seem to think that *state* is used as a substitute for say or write, the data shows that it can be used to show that the fact is really an emphasizing opinion. The reported sentence of excerpt (4) is fact intended to emphasize or point out something is indicated by expression '...the most often...'. Secondly, the general tendency to use verb *state* in almost all of the citing sentences reflects misconception among students. Instead of being used as emphasizing sentences by the students' writer, the overuse of verb *state* also employed to present claim or argument from the cited author. The verb *state* in citing sentences which can lead to the misuse of its functional meaning are shown in the passages below.

- (5) *Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams (2011)[10] stated that it now seems clear that some amount of language mixing is a normal part of the early bilingual acquisition process. [APC53]*

The verb *state* in excerpt (5) signals a role for the citing sentences as an argument from the original cited author. Unlike the usual function of the verb *state*, the function of *state* in both examples make it clear that particular expressions can be interpreted as argumentation sentences. In this sense, the expression '...seems...' explicitly support idea or claim. Thus, the above evidence of the cited information is being presented as the basis in making claim that the argument of cited author is true.

Furthermore, another case of the misinterpreted use of the verb *state* in this stud was in excerpt (6), it indicates the verb *state* functioning as explanation or definition in cited sentences. To make it clear the example below is presented to be discussed.

- (6) *Following the above idea, Hurford at al. (1983:136)[13] also state that structural ambiguity is basically a question of 'what goes with what' in a sentence, and this can be shown by diagrams of various sorts. [APC99]*

The excerpt (6) has expression word 'is' to explain 'structural ambiguity'. In other words, excerpt (6) indicates to tell readers about important term in a way to be understood or to say something in a clear way. Another different example of the misuse of the verb *state* is presented in the passages below.

- (7) *In addition, Ellis (2008:45)[9] states that "Error Analysis (EA) as a tool for investigating how learners acquire a second language.... [APC58]*

The example above is the reported sentences with defining information. In a sense, the two verb *state* of discourse verb presented above, they can be interpreted to give a definition of something. What in common to these reported sentences are the present of the word 'as' to indicate the definition of certain information. Thus, the passages can lead to the interpretation of reported sentence likely to signal definite terms of something. Furthermore, the remaining state verbs found in this study have the same indication of the misuse cases which have been explained above because the verb *state* occur predominantly among the cited sentences. Thus, this implies that the verb *state* is believed by the students to be used generally in every cited information.

#### **b) Reporting Verb 'define' Used in Research Papers**

Of varying reporting verbs, *define* comes as the second most frequently verb used in research papers. In this study, almost all of the students used *define* appropriately to give the exact meaning of certain term. The use of reporting verb *define* is exemplified by the following excerpt.

- (8) *Rubén (2013)[22] simply define classroom discourse as "a variety of language sometimes used by teachers when they are in the process of teaching". [APC4]*

From looking at an extract (8), the reporting verb *define* in each passage is followed by syntactical pattern like '...as...'. In other words, the verb *define* is linked with an aspect marker 'as' which can indicate the expression of giving meaning to something.

- (9) *Coats (1989:7)[5] defines that sociolinguistics is the study of language in its social constructionism. [APC78]*

Yet, there are several cases of the use of *define* which is not followed by aspect marker 'as'. The above passage is the examples from the data. Excerpt (9) shows that the

cited information with verb *define* was used without aspect marker ‘as’.

**c) Reporting Verb ‘describe’ Used in Research Papers**

When it comes to the reporting verb *describe*, it is noticed that describe is almost similar with define. Generally, this may create confusions among students in this study. As previously mentioned in the discussion of the verb *define*, it is used with the aspect marker ‘as’. In this study, some students also used *describe* with the aspect marker ‘as’ which is not appropriately used by the students. The examples of the verb *describe* with aspect marker ‘as’ can be seen clearly in the following passages.

- (10) Yule (1996: 47)[27] *described* speech act as an action performed by using utterances, and he also determined that, in English, speech act is generally labeled to the following case such as apology, complaint, compliment, invitation, promise, or request. [APC12]

In excerpt (10), the verb *describe* was only used before noun phrases ‘speech act’. The verb *describe* in this state used to introduce term in detail by presenting specific information. By looking at the use of the verb *describe* and define in this study, it can be interpreted that their functional use is interchangeable.

**3.2 The Appropriateness of Reporting Verbs Used in Research Papers**

In view of the complexity of reporting verbs and the central role they play in academic writing, it is necessary to understand what categories to be considered when using reporting verbs. The misuse of reporting verbs in this study occurred mainly in the inappropriate choice of verb, tense choice and syntactical form. The first category is the verb choice, it deals with how the writer choose the reporting verb that can be appropriated used match the writer’s intentions, a sample of sentences containing that verb will be displayed. Then, they are evaluated from the sentences whether the choice of that reporting verb is appropriate or not. The second category is the tenses form, it deals with how the writer choose the tenses that can be appropriated with the students intention. In writing report, the categories of tenses fall into simple present tense, simple past tense, and present perfect tense. Because of the lack of understanding with the use of tenses, selecting what tense to use can be problematic for non-native writer. The third category is the syntactical form, it deals with the writers’ structure in writing cited sentences whether it is appropriate or not with reporting verbs used. For instance, the verb state has syntactical pattern ...state that (clause)...; the verb define has syntactical pattern ...defines X (a noun) as Y (a noun phrase, a clause etc.)...; the verb describe has syntactical pattern ...describe X (a noun) or Y (ing form)..., those are the general syntactical pattern of reporting verbs. Given the significant evaluation in the data display, the

general view of the appropriateness of reporting verbs usage is in Table 5 below.

**Table 5. Items serving as the appropriateness or reporting verbs used in research papers**

Appropriateness	Code
Appropriate	APC1, APC2, APC3, APC4, APC6, APC7, APC8, APC10, APC11, APC12, APC14, APC15, APC16, APC18, APC20, APC21, APC22, APC24, APC25, APC26, APC27, APC28, APC29, APC31, APC32, APC33, APC35, APC38, APC39, APC40, APC41, APC42, APC43, APC44, APC45, APC46, APC47, APC48, APC49, APC50, APC51, APC52, APC54, APC55, APC56, APC57, APC58, APC59, APC60, APC61, APC63, APC64, APC65, APC66, APC67, APC68, APC69, APC70, APC71, APC72, APC73, APC74, APC75, APC76, APC77, APC79, APC80, APC82, APC84, APC85, APC87, APC88, APC89, APC90, APC91, APC92, APC93, APC95, APC97, APC99, APC100
Inappropriate	APC5, APC9, APC13, APC17, APC19, APC23, APC30, APC34, APC36, APC37, APC53, APC62, APC78, APC81, APC83, APC86, APC94, APC96, APC98

Code: APC: Author Prominent Citation

The misuse of reporting verbs in the cited sentences used by the students is because of the failure in choosing appropriate choice of verbs, they occurred in APC5, APC9, APC13, APC36, APC37, APC86, APC94, and APC98. This study has found that the selection of an appropriate reporting verb allows the writer to intrude into the discourse to signal his assessment of the evidential status of the reported proposition and to demonstrate his commitment. For example, the verb explain in APC 5 may be best replaced with the verb note.

- (11) Wardhaugh (2006: 306) *explains* that in classroom conversation the teacher is said to own the conversation itself. [APC5]

This is based on the discourse implications in the verb explain has strong meaning for the context in APC 5. According to Brick (2006)[3], the verb explain is used to indicate the source and gives details of how or why. It explicitly conveys the speaker’s insistence on the part of the information presented. The inappropriate choice of reporting verb in this study also happened in research conducted by Nanyue (2013:37)[20]. He found that the verb claim is considered to apply too strong meaning to the contexts. This study also found similar cases about the inappropriate meaning of the verb, however, the different is the type of the verb employed by the students.

In regard to tense of reporting verbs, past, present tense and present perfect are identified in this study. Among the reported sentences, present tense outnumbers past tense and present perfect in research papers written by graduate students. This finding is almost similar with Loan and Pramoolsook (2015)[18] findings. In their findings, the present simple and the past simple were almost equally used in the academic papers written by Vietnamese and Chinese writers. Drawing back to the discussion about the appropriateness of tenses usage, this study has found the cases where the reporting verbs and syntactical form were employed appropriately but failed to meet the appropriate choice of tenses. They are distributed in APC30, APC62, APC81, and APC96. The following is the example of one of them.

- (12) Having the same theme, Miftachudin (2009)[19] has conducted a research on “Some Cases of Flouted Maxims by Some Characters’ Communication Style in Eat Pray Love”. [APC30]

From the shown excerpt above, the interesting point is the verb has conducted in the present perfect tense was used to introduce the research area which is clearly had been done in the past and there is no related continuation from the past research and the research done by Student 9. Thus, by evaluating the cited sentence, tenses usage in excerpt (12) was clearly inappropriate. Thus, the usage of present perfect tense would be better to change past tense (has conducted changes to conducted).

Moreover, this evaluation is grounded by the theory of functional meaning of tenses in reporting verb. According to Oster (1981:77)[21], she explains that “the present perfect tense is primarily used to indicate continued discussion of some of the information in the sentence in which the present perfect tense occurs, and secondarily used to claim generality about past literature”. Following this, Oster’s analysis of tenses usage is associated with the discourse perspective of the claims being made about the previous literature. In keeping up with this statement, theoretically the tenses correction claimed in this study has been supported by Oster’s theory. The last category in discussion section of the appropriateness of reporting verb is the usage of syntactical form. The following is the example of inaccurate syntactical form.

The last category in discussion section of the appropriateness of reporting verb is the usage of syntactical form. The following is the example of inaccurate syntactical form.

- (13) Haynes (2007)[11] claims about the third stage is Speech Emergence, where learners have acquired around 3000 words and should be able to speak short sentences and simple phrases. [APC34]

The verb claim is mostly followed by word marker *that*. Thus, the word *about* would be best replaced with *that*. This happened when the reporting verbs and tenses form

were employed appropriately but the pattern usage in syntactical structure was inappropriate, the similar cases are occurred in APC34 and APC78.

## 4 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, for research act category, the most used verbs were *find*, *show* and *identify*, for cognition act category only the verb *believe* was found, and the verb *state* which belongs to the functional categories of discourse verb has the highest occurrence in all of the data from the research papers. The graduate students in this study were also unaware in making appropriate choices of reporting verbs. The overuse of discourse verbs (e.g. *state*, *define*, and *describe*) indicates the students used these verbs only to strengthen their statement based on some agreements/statements from other researches. This means students preferred to avoid making critical evaluation with the intention of taking less responsibility over the validity of the prior information. As for the use of reporting verbs in the term of their appropriateness, in general, the misuse of verb choices usually happened because the verb unrepresented for the context or/and the functional meaning of the verbs is too strong or too weak for the context. In terms syntactical pattern of reported sentence was usually due to mistakenly in which verbs must be followed by that or as. Regarding the tense choice, the students seemed to be aware of the functional role of tense choice. In this study, the use of present tense outnumbers past tense and present perfect tense. The tendency of using present tense by means the students believed that the reported information from previous study to be true and is relevant to their current study.

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