

Reporting Verbs in ELT Research Discussions: A Corpus-Based Comparison of Thai Scholars and International Editor-Authors

Natthaphong Sirijanchuen¹, & Supakorn Phoocharoensil¹

¹ Language Institute, Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand

Correspondence: Natthaphong Sirijanchuen, Language Institute, Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand. E-mail: natthaphongs@g.swu.ac.th

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Abstract

Academic writing often requires authors to position their work in relation to previous studies, frequently through the use of reporting verbs (RVs). These verbs are essential rhetorical tools for presenting findings, evaluating prior research, and engaging with readers. This study investigates the use of RVs in the discussion sections of English language teaching (ELT) research articles written by Thai scholars (TS) and international editor-authors (IE), the scholars who also hold editorial roles in top-tier journals. Drawing on Hyland's (2002) classification of RVs, the study compares the frequency and rhetorical functions of the most commonly used RVs in two balanced corpora of 20 discussion sections each. Using both corpus-based and qualitative content analysis, the study reveals key cross-cultural differences. Thai scholars tended to employ more RVs overall and showed a stronger preference for discourse-oriented verbs, while international editor-authors favored research-oriented verbs. These findings highlight differing rhetorical conventions in academic writing and suggest that a deeper awareness of RV use may help novice scholars enhance the clarity and persuasiveness of their academic writing.

Keywords: reporting verbs, academic writing, corpus-based analysis, English language teaching (ELT), Cross-cultural comparison

1. Introduction

Academic writing requires adherence to certain linguistic patterns, and the choice of language is crucial for the acceptance of a manuscript in scholarly journals (Flowerdew, 2015; Li & Flowerdew, 2020). Among these linguistic features, reporting verbs (RVs) play a central role in framing arguments and proving claims, thus influencing the persuasiveness of academic texts (Hyland, 1999, 2002). RVs in academic texts, such as *argue*, *find*, *indicate*, *show*, and so forth are an essential linguistic resource that international scholars use to bring their own or other relevant knowledge and arguments into their text. This means that they are not only linguistic devices, but also contribute to the perception of the credibility and validity of statements in research articles. By signaling the author's stance and appealing to the reader, RVs are indispensable for the construction of academic arguments. Further, RVs are important elements of larger citation practices that all academic writers need to compose their evidence-based justifications for any ideas they wish to persuade readers with (Bloch, 2010; Thompson & Ye, 1991). According to Hyland (1999, 2000, 2002), when writing research articles, the appropriate choice of the RVs for citing one's own claims or the claims of others is an essential part of the process by which credibility is established for such claims. In other words, the use of RVs produces a direct impact on how readers assess the validity of claims in a research article. They are a strategy that helps writers signal their critical opinion or stance and then establish an engagement with readers (Hyland & Tse, 2005).

Due to the significance of reporting verbs in academic writing, there have been a growing number of studies on the use of these lexical devices in disciplinary fields of academic genres such as research articles (e.g., Bloch, 2010; Hyland, 1999, 2022; Thompson & Ye, 1991), theses (e.g., Charles, 2006b; Jiang & Hu, 2010; Nguyen, 2017; Olmos-Lopez, 2021), and different rhetorical sections, especially in the introduction (e.g., Jirapanakorn, 2012; Wen & Pramoolsook, 2021a) and the literature review (e.g., Chen, 2009; Jarkovská & Kučírková, 2020; Loan & Pramoolsook, 2015). RVs are also found to be particularly dense in the discussion section (Thompson, 2005), due to the necessity to establish connections between prior literature and the results of the current study (Yang & Allison, 2003). That is, commenting on the research findings in the discussion section is crucial since it provides the mechanism through which writers can make new knowledge claims, which is the primary objective of a research publication (Basturkmen, 2009). However, previous studies seem to have not paid enough attention to this section, which is especially surprising given the need of conducting research of reporting verbs in the world of publishing, where English is utilized as a lingua franca for academic purposes.

To extend a rhetorical role of reporting verbs in the academic genre, this study thus attempts to fill a notable gap in the existing literature by focusing on the under-researched discussion section of academic articles, a critical area in which authors make their contributions to knowledge explicit. Uniquely, it provides a comparative corpus-based analysis between Thai scholars and international editor-authors (IE) as expert writers in the field of English language teaching (ELT), areas that have not previously been explored in academic writing research. By examining the 10 most frequently used reporting verbs and their rhetorical functions within these discussion sections, this study aims to uncover cross-cultural differences in academic discourse. Such an investigation not only highlights the nuanced role of

reporting verbs in academic communication, but also contributes to a deeper understanding of academic writing practices in different linguistic and cultural contexts. The findings have potential implications for improving academic writing instruction for ELT researchers, particularly for guiding early career researchers who wish to publish in academic journals. This study is an attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. Which reporting verbs are most frequently used by Thai scholars and international editor-authors when writing the discussion section?
2. How do the rhetorical functions of reporting verbs used by Thai scholars differ from those used by international editor-authors in the discussion section?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Reporting Verbs in Academic Writing

Complexity arises in academic writing because the reporting process must include the author's value judgments towards previous research, which are essential to the credibility of the scholarly work. Because of this, the correct use of reporting verbs has an effect on the construction of such credibility, whether or not citations are used, so that the claim and argument are reported for convincing readers. Hyland (1999) defines reporting verbs as a lexical strategy that enables authors to demonstrate their position and establish a relationship with the reader. In the same vein, Bloch (2010) and Charles (2006b) emphasize the importance of reporting verbs to the credibility of claims and authorship, noting that the proper use of verbs allows authors to demonstrate their stance and personality toward the concept they cite.

Therefore, the use of verbs for reporting have been studied extensively, and researchers have offered criteria to detect and categorize them in academic contexts (e.g., Hyland, 1999; Hyland 2002; Thomson & Ye 1991). Because reporting verbs are inherently complex, understanding the categories of reporting verbs may differ greatly from the basic knowledge and intuition of writers relying on an academic writing textbook in general. In this study, Hyland's (2002) reporting verb categorization was adapted as the foundation for the analysis. His framework mainly includes the process functions and evaluative functions that cover different kinds of reporting verbs. Hyland's framework selection is based on the fact that it is the most thorough taxonomy updated for categorizing reporting verbs in extensive studies (see also Jarkovská & Kučírková, 2020; Loan & Pramoolsook, 2015; Nguyen, 2017; Wen & Pramoolsook, 2021a, 2021b)

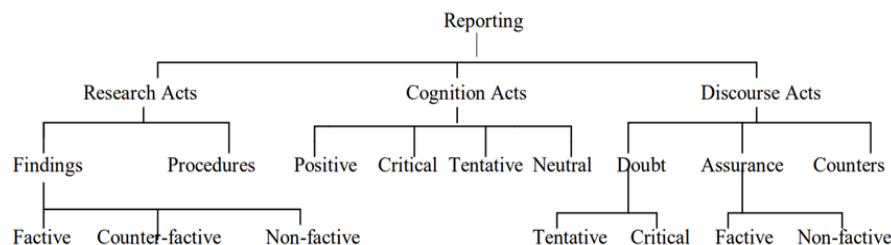


Figure 1. Categories of Reporting Verbs

Under process functions, Hyland (2002, pp.118-121) grouped reporting verbs into three major categories based on their functional purposes. These include Research Acts, Cognitive Acts, and Discourse Acts.

Research Acts are represented by verbs that refer to experimental activities or actions in the real world. Literally, they appear either as assertions of Findings (e.g., *observe, discover, notice, demonstrate, show*) or as Procedures (e.g., *analyze, calculate, compare, explore, investigate, review, replicate, study*). To specify the evaluative functions of the findings category, it can be divided into three subcategories: 1) Factive verbs are used when writers acknowledge their acceptance of other researchers' results or conclusions (e.g. *demonstrate, establish, show, solve, confirm*), 2) Counter-factive verbs are employed when writers want to judge whether an idea is false or incorrect (e.g., *fail, misunderstand, ignore, overlook*), and 3) Non-factive verbs, which are used when writers want to show a neutral attitude toward an idea (e.g., *find, identify, observe, obtain*).

Research Acts

Findings	Factive	e.g., <i>demonstrate, establish, show, solve, confirm</i>
	Counter-factive	e.g., <i>fail, misunderstand, ignore, overlook</i>
	Non-factive	e.g., <i>find, identify, observe, obtain</i>
Procedures	e.g., <i>analyze, calculate, compare, explore, investigate, review, replicate, study</i>	

In Cognition Acts, verbs are used to evaluate the cited work with four different attitudes in terms of a mental process, which include 1) Positive verbs used when writers accept an idea as true or correct (e.g., *agree, concur, hold, know, think, or understand*), 2) Critical verbs used when writers want to raise disagreement against an idea (e.g., *disagree, dispute, not think*) 3) Tentative verbs used when writers are not fully sure about an idea (e.g., *believe, doubt, speculate, suppose, suspect*), 4) Neutral verbs used when writers do not hold any particular

attitudes towards an idea (e.g. *picture, conceive, anticipate, reflect*).

Cognitive Acts

Positive	e.g., <i>agree, concur, hold, know, think, or understand</i>
Critical	e.g., <i>disagree, dispute, not think</i>
Tentative	e.g., <i>believe, doubt, speculate, suppose, suspect</i>
Neutral	e.g., <i>picture, conceive, anticipate, reflect</i>

According to Discourse Acts, they are used to communicate the writer's opinion or convey an evaluation of the cited work explicitly, and could be split into Doubt and Assurance, and Counters. Doubt can be further classified into 1) Tentative verbs (e.g., *postulate, hypothesize, indicate, intimate, suggest*) and 2) Critical verbs which directly criticize an idea (e.g. *evade, exaggerate, not account, not make point*). Assurance, on the other hand, refers to two sets of verbs which introduce cited work in more positive and conclusive ways. These include Factive verbs that are employed when writers want to support his or her own ideas with a high degree of confidence (e.g., *argue, affirm, explain, note, point out, claim*), and Non-factive verbs that neutrally inform readers of writers' position (*state, describe, discuss, report, answer, define, summarize*). Counters, another sub-category of Discourse Acts, may be used by authors to indicate the author's concerns or objections to the validity of the reported information rather than assuming responsibility for the judgment. (e.g., *attack, challenge, critique, deny, question, refute, rule out, warn*).

Discourse Acts

Doubt	Tentative	e.g., <i>postulate, hypothesize, indicate, intimate, suggest</i>
	Critical	e.g., <i>evade, exaggerate, not account, not make point</i>
Assurance	Factive	e.g., <i>affirm, argue, claim, explain, note, point out</i>
	Non-factive	e.g., <i>answer, describe, discuss, define, report, state, summarize</i>
Counters		e.g., <i>attack, challenge, critique, deny, question, refute, rule out, warn</i>

2.2 Previous Studies on Reporting Verbs

Research on reporting verbs (RVs) in academic discourse has evolved significantly since early foundational work. Swales (1986) initiated the study of citation practices, which was expanded by Thompson and Ye (1991), who proposed three key evaluative functions of RVs in terms of textual, mental, and research verbs. These studies laid the groundwork for subsequent research exploring how RVs construct stance and attribution across genres. Charles (2006a, 2006b) advanced this line of inquiry with corpus-based analyses of theses by identifying patterns of RV use such as *argue, find, show, and think*, and examining their phraseological and stance-marking functions. Similarly, Chen (2009) highlighted the role of tense in shaping RV meaning in literature reviews. These findings suggest that RVs are context-sensitive and integral to the construction of disciplinary voice.

From a pedagogical perspective, Bloch (2010) explored how RVs could be taught as rhetorical tools using concordance-based materials. His comparative corpora of student and expert writing demonstrated how exposure to authentic examples enhances learners' metalinguistic awareness. Intercultural studies further reveal significant differences in RV use among writers from different linguistic backgrounds. Jiang and Hu (2010) found that Chinese learners of English (CLE) favored integrated citation structures more than native English speakers (NSE), whose texts exhibited more varied and impersonal RV use. Likewise, Loan and Pramoolsook (2015) reported that Vietnamese MA writers used RVs inconsistently, with limited understanding of rhetorical function.

Attention has also turned to novice academic writers. Nguyen (2017) examined acknowledgements in Vietnamese TESOL theses and found sociocultural factors influenced how RVs expressed gratitude. Jarkovská and Kučířková (2020), studying Czech MA theses, reported a preference for neutral RVs in active present simple constructions, suggesting a cautious rhetorical stance. Wen and Pramoolsook (2021a) compared undergraduate and MA thesis introductions by Chinese English majors and found greater RV variety and rhetorical sophistication among the more advanced students.

While these studies illuminate the role of RVs across genres, languages, and learner levels, most focus on literature reviews or introductions. There remains a gap in understanding RV use in discussion sections, particularly among ELT scholars from diverse academic and cultural backgrounds. This study thus addresses that gap by comparing RV use in discussion sections written by Thai scholars and international editor-authors, highlighting how expertise and cultural context shape rhetorical choices in published research writing.

2.3 Reporting Verbs in Discussion Sections

Previous studies have noted that reporting verbs are particularly dense in discussion sections because this rhetorical space requires authors to link their findings with prior research (Thompson, 2005; Yang & Allison, 2003). Basturkmen (2009) also emphasized the role of discussions in making new knowledge claims, where reporting verbs play a central rhetorical function. More recent research has examined this section in greater detail. For example, Le and Harrington (2015) analyzed the phraseology used to comment on results in applied linguistics research articles and demonstrated how formulaic expressions, often realized through reporting verbs such as *suggest* or *indicate*, allow authors to position their findings in relation to previous studies and expectations. Their study highlighted that reporting verbs not only attribute knowledge but also frame evaluation and show how writers balance similarity with and distinction from prior

work (Hyland, 1999).

Complementing this focus, Liu and Buckingham (2018) investigated the schematic structure of discussion sections and the distribution of metadiscourse markers in applied linguistics research articles. They found that “Commenting on results” was the most frequent move, often realized through sequences of lexical features such as hedges, which frequently co-occurred with reporting verbs (e.g., *may suggest that*). This indicates that discussions are a site where reporting verbs interact with stance-taking and metadiscursive resources to construct arguments and negotiate claims.

Despite these valuable contributions, relatively few studies have focused explicitly on reporting verbs in discussion sections compared with Introductions or Literature Reviews (see Bloch, 2010; Charles, 2006a, 2006b; Loan & Pramoolsook, 2015). As a result, there remains limited understanding of how reporting verbs function in this section across different cultural or authorial contexts. This study addresses the gap by comparing how Thai scholars and international editor-authors use reporting verbs in ELT discussion sections to highlight cross-cultural variation and disciplinary writing practices.

3. Method

3.1 Corpora

The corpora in this study were purposively selected from research article discussions (RADs) produced by Thai scholars (TS) and international editor-authors (IE) in the field of English language teaching (ELT). Thai scholars are defined as L1 Thai academics who work in the field of ELT and have published research articles in national journals indexed in both the Thai Journal Citation Index (TCI Tier 1) and Scopus. International editor-authors, by contrast, are editors, co-editors-in-chief, or associate editors of various nationalities who currently serve in highly regarded peer-reviewed journals in the field of language and linguistics listed in Scopus Quartile 1 (Q1) and who have authored ELT research articles.

To preserve credibility, the scholarly work collected as the TS corpus are from Thai academic writers whose research articles were all published in the top three ELT journals of the three main Thai universities specializing in English language education, namely *PASAA Journal* of the Chulalongkorn University Language Institute (CULI), *Language Education and Acquisition Research Network (LEARN)* Journals of the Language Institute Thammasat University (LITU) and *rEFlections*, the academic journal of the Faculty of Liberal Arts, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi. Likewise, only research articles written by international editors affiliated with reputable peer-reviewed journals with high CiteScores were included. The IE corpus was therefore compiled from 20 articles authored by editors of ten leading Scopus Q1 journals as of 2023. These include *Applied Linguistics*, *Modern Language Journal*, *Language Learning*, *Language Teaching Research*, *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, *Language Testing*, *English for Specific Purposes*, *System*, and *TESOL Quarterly*.

To maintain consistency, only research articles (RAs) adhering to the the Introduction-Method-Results-Discussion (IMRD) format (Swales, 1990) were included since publications using varied rhetorical structures normally depend on different methodologies (Salkind, 2010). If articles were not selected based on these criteria, the comparability and internal validity of the results could have been undermined. Accordingly, only research articles employing comparable methodologies such as surveys, experimental methods, or quasi-experimental approaches were included. These criteria were necessary to ensure that the IE and TS corpora represent two distinct but comparable groups of ELT scholars whose work could be meaningfully examined side by side.

3.2 Data Collection

To compare the salient differences in the use of reporting verbs, two balanced corpora were constructed, each containing 20 research article discussions (RADs). For the IE corpus, reputable Scopus Q1 journals were first targeted to identify international editor-authors (IE). Their names and affiliations were then verified through Scopus and Google Scholar profiles, from which their most recent ELT research articles were retrieved. From each editor, one target article was selected, yielding 20 discussion sections in total. Only single-authored or first-authored articles were included to ensure the highest degree of authorial involvement, and any articles unrelated to ELT were excluded. The selected articles were drawn from journals where the editors themselves served, or from other reputable Scopus Q1 journals such as *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* or *RELJ Journal*.

In parallel, 20 discussion sections were collected from ELT research articles published in the three leading Thai-based academic journals noted above (*PASAA*, *LEARN Journal*, and *rEFlections*). Each discussion written by international editor-authors (IE) was labeled IE1, IE2, IE3... while those of Thai scholars were labeled TS1, TS2, TS3... . To equalize the corpora, TS articles were further screened so that their average length closely matched that of the IE texts.

The corpora chosen by the criteria contained 57,068 words. They consisted of 28,686 and 28,382 words for the IE and TS corpora respectively. The average length between them closely matched to ensure balance between the two corpora in both size and representativeness, showing a reasonable degree of comparability. After being divided into files depending on the year they were published, the discussion corpora were converted into editable Word formats so that they were searched for the reporting verbs' frequency and functions using the concordance software AntConc (Version 4.2.4) (Anthony, 2023). Together, different lexical forms of the reporting verbs were included in the data search (e.g., *show*, *shows*, *showed*, *shown*, *showing*) as their functions are obvious in the context regardless of whether they are the main verbs or complements of a sentence.

Table 1. Number of words in the corpora

Corpora	IE Discussions (N=20)	TS Discussions (N=20)
Number of words	28,686	28,382

3.3 Data Analysis

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches, comprising frequency counts and text analyses. The working definition of reporting verbs in this study is the lexical devices the Thai scholars (TS) and international editor-authors (IE) used to report or summarize the findings or ideas of other researchers while at the same time asserting their own positions in relation to those findings or ideas and situating themselves within the body of literature in the ELT community. The selection of the reporting verbs for analysis is based on the top 10 most frequently reporting verbs in each corpus. These include the reporting verbs which refer to the writers' own work and the cited work of other researchers. For the latter, the selection is also based on both integral and non-integral citations (see Thompson & Tribble, 2001) as the evidential acts of the agent of the verb in either active or passive voice, which the writers intended to indicate the names of other researchers in their studies. For example:

The writers' own work: "Overall, the data showed several general trends: (i) the reading times decreased in a non-linear fashion with three distinct phases across exposures." (IE4)

The cited work of other researchers: "To date, research on collaboration in L2 writing has shown that, during collaborative writing, learners provide immediate language feedback to their peers,... (e.g. Fernández Dobao, 2012; Storch, 2005; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007)." (TS2)

In order to capture and list all 10 most frequently used reporting verbs contained in the corpora, all 20 texts of each were analyzed using the concordance software AntConc (version 4.2.0), followed by a qualitative interpretive analysis to verify with contexts that all items function as reporting verbs. Since the number of words in each text may vary, the density calculation was made by frequency counting based on their real occurrences as well as the distribution of the number of each reporting verb per 1,000 words and its percentage respectively. Next, to answer the research questions, the obtained reporting verbs were categorized and explained with examples according to their denotative and evaluative functions using Hyland's (2002) classification framework. In addition, to ensure the validity and credibility of the analysis, one inter-rater with relevant knowledge and experience in the area of discourse analysis was requested to assess the corpus data alongside the author of this study.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the coding, an independent rater with expertise in discourse analysis was invited to code 25% of the corpus data alongside the authors. Inter-rater reliability reached 92% agreement. This indicates a high level of consistency. Any discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus to ensure accuracy and rigor in the analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

The overall results in the table below show the 10 most frequently used reporting verbs (RVs) in discussions between Thai scholars (TS) and international editor-authors (IE). With their different RV selection and frequency, the rhetorical functions of the RVs used by Thai scholars also clearly differ from those used by international editor-authors.

Table 2. Top 10 most frequent reporting verbs in the corpora

TS Discussions				IE Discussions			
RVs	Frequency	Per 1000 words	%	RVs	Frequency	Per 1000 words	%
Find	48	1.69	0.17	Find	53	1.85	0.18
Suggest	40	1.41	0.15	Show	43	1.50	0.15
Reveal	37	1.30	0.13	Suggest	33	1.15	0.12
Show	35	1.23	0.12	Indicate	29	1.01	0.10
Indicate	30	1.06	0.10	Report	20	0.70	0.07
Report	24	0.85	0.08	Examine	16	0.56	0.06
Support	17	0.60	0.06	Explain	14	0.49	0.05
Mention	14	0.49	0.05	Reveal	13	0.45	0.045
Explain	13	0.46	0.045	Confirm	12	0.42	0.042
Conduct	11	0.39	0.039	Reflect	12	0.42	0.045
Total	269	9.48	0.95	Total	245	8.54	0.85

Note: Different lexical forms were included in data search (e.g., show, shows, showed, shown, showing)

From Table 2, it was revealed that the RVs of the two discussion corpora have some similarities and differences in terms of their frequency, occurrence per 1,000 words, and percentage, respectively. In terms of frequency, Thai scholars tended to use more RVs than international editor-authors (269 vs. 245) with 9.48 occurrences per 1,000 words, while only 8.54 occurrences were found in the IE counterpart. On the one hand, both groups of authors use the same 7 RVs to a certain extent, but at different frequency levels. These include find, suggest, reveal, show, indicate, report, and explain. On the other hand, some of their frequent selection of RVs is also different, which includes 6 of them altogether. There are *support*, *mention*, and *conduct* in the TS corpus, while the other set of the IE

corpus are *examine*, *confirm*, and *reflect*. These findings would be explained and discussed in detail accordingly from the specific RVs categories below.

Table 3. Distribution of reporting verb categories in the discussion corpora

Category	TS Discussions (F)		IE Discussions (F)	
Research Acts: <i>show, find, reveal, conduct, confirm, examine</i>	131	48.70%	137	55.92%
Cognitive Acts: <i>reflect</i>	-	-	12	4.90%
Discourse Acts <i>suggest, indicate, mention, support, explain, report</i>	138	51.30%	96	39.18%
Total	269	100%	245	100%

As can be seen from both corpora, the research acts verbs category as in the use of *show, find, reveal, conduct, confirm*, and *examine* received the high frequency, close to one half (48.70%) for the TS discussions and just over one half (55.92%) for the IE counterpart. This suggests that both groups of writers used this type of RVs in more or less the same proportion, often referring to real-world experimental activities or research to provide background information or to report or summarize results. Due to focusing on different corpora, the high ratio of these research verbs in this study apparently contradicts previous RV research in the introduction section (e.g., Wen, S., & Pramoolsook, 2021a), and literature review section (e.g., Jarkovská & Kurková 2020; Loan & Pramoolsook, 2015), which shows that research verbs tend to be used far less frequently than discourse verbs (e.g., *suggest, indicate, support*) that are often used to interpret the cited work or express the writer's standpoints. This could be said that, in this study, the writers of both corpora put a lot of emphasis on using research verbs in their discussion, especially the international editor-authors. This is because research verbs in the discussion section reflect knowledge discovery rather than researchers' opinion (Hyland, 2002). Consequently, by including other cited work, the frequent use of research verbs is a vital element that allows writers to engage their studies in conversation with readers.

(1) "Regarding ELT materials design and development, Sriithi's (2014) study **found** that English textbooks written by Thai authors introduced ASEAN cultures extensively." (TS2)

(2) "Although students' L2 emotional development can be attributed to some extent to IDs, findings in the present study as well as in previous ones (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2018; Khajavy et al., 2018) **show** clearly that students' classroom emotions could be attributed at least in part to their perceptions of classroom ecology." (IE9)

Another key result from the RV frequency within each corpus shows that Thai scholars used research verbs (48.70%) and Discourse verbs (51.30%) almost in the same ratio, while international editor-authors tend to pay attention to using research verbs (55.92%) rather than using discourse verbs (38.18%). This once again indicates that, according to the seminal study by Thompson and Ye (1991), the choice of verbs for reporting in relation to other members of the discipline actively synthesizes and integrates relevant sources into the text, making them a critical aspect of a broader citation practice that writers need for writing an evidence-based argument. Thus, the use of additional research verbs is intended to solidify the relevant research territory before discourse verbs are used to interpret the findings. However, other striking differences become clearer in the tables below when it comes to analyzing the subcategories of RVs and their actual functions according to the different communicative contexts in the discussion section.

Table 4. Distribution of RVs in the Research Acts sub-category

Research Acts		TS Discussions (F)		IE Discussions (F)	
Findings	Factive	show (35)	26.72%	show (43) confirm (12)	31.39% 8.76%
	Non-factive	find (48) reveal (37)	36.64% 28.24%	find (53) reveal (13)	38.69% 9.49%
Procedures		conduct (11)	8.40%	examine (16)	11.67%
Total		131	100%	137	100%

In the type of factive verbs, the RV *show* was used most frequently; yet, the international editor-authors seemed to particularly favor the RV *confirm* in their corpus since there were 12 occurrences (8.76%) altogether, while the Thai scholars did not use it at all.

(3) "Our results **confirm** the findings of earlier studies (Clément, 1980; Clément & Kruidenier, 1985; Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Kormos & Csizér, 2007) which link contact experiences to linguistic self-confidence." (IE1)

This indicates that the given information reported by the RV *confirm* plays a supporting function in the writer's argument by attaching a high degree of confidence to the statement by the writer (Hyland, 2002) who managed to come up with their own results in line with other cited work.

The RV *find* as a non-factive verb was used in high frequency in both corpora (TS 36.64% vs. IE 38.69%). However, the striking difference is that international editor-authors used the RV *find* with the first plural pronoun *we* as a self-mention, while this feature combination was hardly found in the discussions written by Thai scholars.

(4) "Next, **we found** that researcher-coded segmental accuracy ratios were moderately related to raters' mean L2 accentedness..." (IE6)

(5) "Overall, **we found** that listeners who were speakers of outer and expanding circle varieties attained significantly better scores on iBT

listening passages..." (IE7)

This reflects a particular preference in reporting findings in different discourse communities. Thai scholars consider the use of first-person pronouns (*I, we, us*) as an unacceptable informal feature that should not be used in academic texts as a formal genre (Sirijanchuen, 2017). Nevertheless, the use of these first-person pronouns in a certain context is widespread and frequently used in academic texts, which shows that the academic genre is becoming more informal (Hyland & Jiang, 2017).

The RV *reveal* is also commonly found in both corpora, but it seems to be used much more frequently in discussions by Thai scholars (28.24%) than by international editor-authors (9.49%). This could be due to the effects of shared language acquisition of L1 and cultural factors (Li, 2014), which are likely different between the Thai scholars and international editor-authors. In the similar vein, for the RVs indicating procedures, the Thai scholars prefer to use the RV *conduct* (8.40%), while the international scholars tended to use the RV *examine* (11.67%).

(6) "*The results correspond with studies **conducted** by Kanoksilpatham (2015, 2016) and Kanoksilpatham and Channuan (2018) in terms of valuing and integrating local culture into English language teaching.*" (TS3)

(7) "*This mixed methods study **examined** one rater characteristic (experience) and one speaker variable (L1) in relation to L2 comprehensibility, accentedness, fluency ratings.*" (IE5)

The result here might be addressed by the notion of using a human subject as the most common reporting type (Marti, et al., 2019). The RV *conduct* is clearly related to human subjects either in active or passive construction. These verbs assist the writer to build a rapport with the cited author by indicating a clear acceptance of the results, and they also provide direct reference to the cited work inside the reporting structure (Charles, 2006a, 2006b). In the humanities and social sciences, the RV of procedures *examine* could also be used with both human and non-human subjects. It can be used to report experiments and facts in a neutral tone in order to construct an argument and make room for discussion (Hyland, 1999; 2002).

Moving to the comparison of Discourse Acts verbs, as shown in the table 5, it is surprisingly interesting to see that, with the highest frequency of RVs in this study, the Thai scholars used a lot more the Discourse Acts category than the international editor-authors (TS 51.30% vs. IE 39.18%). This category of RVs includes *suggest, indicate, mention, support, explain, and report*. This possibly implies that the Thai scholars may feel comfortable using these most frequently used RVs when communicating their opinion or convey an evaluation of either their own work or the cited work explicitly. International editor-authors, on the other hand, tend to use fewer RVs at this point. The differences between discourse verbs are further shown in the table below.

Table 5. Distribution of RVs in the Discourse Acts sub-category

Discourse Acts		TS Discussions		IE Discussions	
Doubt	Tentative	suggest (40)	28.99%	suggest (33)	34.38%
		indicate (30)	21.73%	indicate (29)	30.20%
		mention (14)	10.14%		
Assurance	Factive	support (17)	12.31%	explain (14)	14.58%
		explain (13)	9.42%		
	Non-factive	report (24)	17.39%	report (20)	20.83%
Total		138	100%	96	100%

The most popular RV in this category is suggested as it allows both groups of writers (28.99 vs. 34.38%) to display their tentative attitude of doubt towards the work of their own and the cited work of others. The RV *indicate* ranked the second, yet; it was used by the international editor-authors (30.20%) at a higher percentage than Thai scholars (21.73%). Again, Thai scholars used more RV in this sub-category. The most frequent RVs used by Thai scholars, but does not appear in the IE corpus were *mention* and *explain*. The RV *mention* was used to express doubt or uncertainty (10.14%) and the RV *support* was used to show assurance in terms of factive mode (9.42%).

(8) "*Several students **mentioned** in the interviews that interaction and instant feedback for productive skills (i.e., speaking and writing) were hardly possible on this platform.*" (TS15)

(9) "*The findings **support** the literature which indicated that student attitude toward participating in online learning is related to a student's previous computer knowledge (Selim, 2007 as cited in Omar et al., 2012)*" (TS20)

From the examples, it was interestingly found that Thai scholars often used the RV *mention* to refer to participants in studies, while they preferred to use the RV *support* to justify the results of their research. For the similarity in using the same RVs in the approximate percentages: *suggest, indicate, explain, report*, it may imply that they have adopted the text-based and discursive qualities of applied linguistics writing in the comparable use of tenses and voices (Shaw, 1992; Swales, 1990). Despite differences, the RVs in both corpora are most suited for conveying the writer's evaluative viewpoint (Thomas & Hawes, 1994) as Hyland (1999, 2002) maintain that, in humanities and social science writings, this group of RVs allow for greater consideration when the writer wants to introduce debate or critique, as it is possible to do via the sub-categories of doubt and assurance. In other words, they represent an evaluation that all authors may participate in ongoing discussion with the discipline literature and negotiate the validity of their own contribution by establishing a discursive space in that literature and expanding on what has done before. Among the three, the next table is to discuss the least used category of RVs, the cognitive acts verbs.

Table 6. Distribution of RVs in the Cognitive Acts sub-category

Cognitive Acts	TS Discussions	IE Discussions	
Neutral	-	reflect (12)	100%
Total	-	12	100%

The Cognitive Acts are the least used of all the categories. In particular, the Thai scholars refrained from using RVs this category, while the international editor-authors used a small proportion of the RV *reflect* (4.90%) to evaluate the cited work in terms of their mental process. Neutral verbs used when writers do not hold any particular attitudes towards their work or previous studies. The low use of this RV category is consistent with previous studies (e.g., Loan & Pramoolsook, 2015; Marti et al., 2019; Nguyen, 2017; Wen & Pramoolsook, 2021a, 2021b) indicating that academic writers tend to use fewer cognitive verbs in research article writing.

(10) “On the other hand, faster reading times **reflect** “partial and incremental growth in knowledge” (Joseph et al., 2014, p. 245),...” (IE4)

(11) “Taken together, the three benefits, based on students’ responses, **reflect** the potency of comprehensive WCF in providing students with linguistic scaffolding...” (IE19)

This result could be explained by the rhetorical move structures in the discussion section (Yang & Allison, 2003), according to which RVs are generally used to convey the writer's intended messages in a neutral tone in order to provide background information before moving on to commenting on or evaluating the results with the use of other reporting verb categories.

Taken together, the preference of international editor-authors (IE) for research-act verbs such as *find* and *show* can be attributed to their close alignment with international publishing conventions that emphasize clarity, objectivity, and empirical grounding. As experienced gatekeepers of academic discourse, international editor-authors are familiar with global norms and thus select verbs that convey precision and credibility highly valued in top-tier journals (Hyland, 2002; Flowerdew, 2015). Verbs such as *find* and *show* also serve rhetorical economy and provide concise and transparent ways to present results that are easily accessible to a broad readership. In addition, verbs like *confirm* highlight evidence-based claims and methodological rigor that indicate the reproducibility of findings (Hyland, 2000; Basturkmen, 2009). Since these editors write for an international audience, their use of neutral and widely recognized verbs could minimize interpretive bias and situates their work within an international academic conversation rather than a localized discourse community (Canagarajah, 2002; Li & Flowerdew, 2020). Finally, their choice of reporting verbs may also carry a pedagogical dimension. As editors and active scholars, their writing provides a model of conventionalized academic practice for other researchers in ELT and applied linguistics.

In contrast, Thai scholars tended to prefer discourse-act verbs such as *suggest*, *indicate*, *support*, and *mention*, which signal a cautious rhetorical stance and allow authors to soften their claims. This reflects broader politeness-oriented rhetorical traditions in many Asian contexts, where indirectness is valued communicative strategies (Hyland, 2000; Li, 2014; Song, 2012). Verbs like *support* and *mention* emphasize alignment with prior studies rather than strong assertions of originality, which may reflect Thai scholars’ positioning as “outsider” authors seeking legitimacy in the wider international research community (Flowerdew, 2015, 2019). Compared with international editors, who often favor empirically grounded verbs, Thai scholars are more likely to choose verbs that show interpretation and tentativeness. It is a tendency that may be shaped by educational traditions in which knowledge is transmitted and respected rather than directly challenged. Furthermore, the rhetorical expectations of Thai ELT journals may also encourage a modest and cautious use of reporting verbs, where softening writing strategies are viewed as academic credibility and respect.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the use of reporting verbs (RVs) in the discussion sections of ELT research articles written by Thai scholars and international editor-authors, focusing on their frequency and rhetorical functions. Drawing on Hyland’s (2002) RV classification, the analysis revealed both shared and different patterns in RV use across the two author groups. While both groups employed a core set of RVs, Thai scholars demonstrated a broader range and higher frequency of use, particularly in the discourse acts category. In contrast, international editor-authors showed a stronger tendency to use research-act verbs and fewer employed cognitive-act verbs to reflect on findings. These variations suggest differing rhetorical conventions and levels of confidence in engaging with disciplinary knowledge across cultural and academic contexts. These contrasting preferences point to deeper rhetorical differences.

The findings therefore contribute to a growing understanding of cross-cultural academic discourse practices and highlight the importance of explicit instruction in reporting strategies for novice scholars, particularly those in expanding circle contexts like Thailand. By raising awareness of how expert writers strategically use RVs to build arguments and establish stance, this study offers pedagogical insights for academic writing instruction in ELT and related fields.

This study is limited by the small size of its corpora, which may not fully capture broader writing practices. This may constrain the generalizability of findings. It also focused only on discussion sections, excluding other rhetorical parts where reporting verbs may function differently. Lastly, the analysis was based solely on textual data, without insights into authors’ intentions behind verb choices. Future research could expand on these findings by incorporating larger and more diverse corpora to examine RVs across other rhetorical sections, and exploring their interaction with other stance markers such as hedges, boosters, and self-mentions. Interviews or think-aloud protocols may also provide deeper insights into writers’ motivations behind RV choices. Clearly, a more understanding of reporting practices can inform targeted writing support for emerging scholars who seek to publish in international academic contexts.

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Authors' contributions

Natthaphong Sirijanchuen (first author) designed the study, collected and analyzed the data, and drafted the manuscript. Dr. Supakorn Phoocharoensil (second author) provided critical review and proofreading. Both authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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