RANGE AND VARIABILITY OF REPORTING VERBS IN DOCTORAL THESES OF HUMANITIES STUDENTS

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Shirley Eli Banini (student #18022913) hereby declare that the thesis for the PhD at the University of Venda, hereby submitted by me, has not been submitted previously for a degree at this or any other university, that it is my work in design and execution, and that all reference material contained therein have been duly acknowledged.

Signature:  Date: 15th February 2021

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S.E.B.

DEDICATION

To Bubune, Enyonam, Ewoenam, and Delali

who endured my absence; this is for you.

and to

Kwaku for your unflinching support.

God bless you.

ABSTRACT

This study examined the occurrence, use, and function of reporting verbs in the literature review sections of fifty-two (52) doctoral theses written by students in the Humanities, examined and passed by the University of Ghana within the academic period of 2010 to 2018. The focus was on the literature review sections, because in this section of the thesis, the researcher (as the writer) presents the views of other scholars, presents his/her views, and supports them by citing earlier authors, criticising and laying claims using reporting verbs. Reporting verbs are an important rhetorical device in academic writing, which carry different nuances and are used to effectively communicate the writer's opinions about issues. The appropriate use of reporting verbs in scholarly research, such as a doctoral thesis, is important for the effective communication of the researcher's critical views on other scholarly works. Social Constructionism and Systemic Functional Grammar were the theoretical underpinnings that guided this largely qualitative study because the use of reporting verbs in the construction of text is a shared experience, negotiated within a social and cultural setting. Data analysis software, AntConc, was used to determine the frequency of reporting verbs and resultant outcomes plotted. The reporting verbs were categorised using Hyland's (2002) taxonomy. Analysis reveals that reporting verbs in Discourse Acts category were employed more frequently (58.28%) compared to those in Research Acts (28.7%) and Cognitive Acts (13.02%). Students employed a variety of reporting verbs to achieve various discourse functions. It is recommended that lecturers of academic writing use corpus-based data in teaching reporting verbs. Further, training of faculty is recommended to better assist students in the effective use of reporting verbs in the construction of academic texts. Also, at the onset of their doctoral programmes, students must be given refresher courses in the correct use of citations and reporting verbs to make their writing more persuasive and impactful.

Keywords*:* Reporting verbs, frequency, rhetorical devices, Humanities, doctoral theses, content analysis, textual analysis, academic writing.

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the research area of interest in this study. It gives a brief background to the study and delineates the problem. It also describes the aims and objectives of the study as well as research questions that need to be investigated. The assumptions that underline the study are presented and the remit of the investigations stated. The justification for carrying out the research and the significance of the study are highlighted. The analytical framework, as well as the method of investigation used, are briefly discussed. The research design, study site, the source of material for the research as well as the sample to be used are described. The chapter concludes with a description of the structure of the subsequent chapters of the thesis. At the end of each chapter of the thesis, a concise summary of the salient ideas is presented.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Reporting verbs are words specifically used to describe other writers' works or to show that discourse is being quoted or paraphrased (Thompson & Ye 1991; Hyland 2002). These reporting verbs are noticeable semantic words in academic writing used in general, to talk or to present the research of others and to state the knowledge and understanding of or attitude to scholarly sources (Hyland 2002). A writer may be required, among other things, to comment on someone else's work, agree or disagree with someone else's study or evaluate someone's ideas. These requirements are tested in students' writing including theses. Neville (2007) mentions that students at the postgraduate level gain more awareness that ideas that various authors present are not; and that their academic writing is improved by challenging ideas and looking for flaws in arguments. According to Hyland (1999), attitudes that writers demonstrate can be positive, reflecting an acceptance of the reported information as

true or correct by using verbs such as *agree, hold, know, think* or *understand*. A writer may also use verbs such as *speculate, suppose* and *believe* to indicate a rather tentative view. In taking a critical stance, a writer may use verbs such as *disagree, dispute* and *not think*; and to indicate a neutral position, verbs such as *conceive, anticipate* and *reflect,* may also be used. Adika (2015 p.237) explains that "Reporting verbs signal our attitude as writers towards the status of an author's ideas, theories or research; or our evaluation of the evidential status of the sources we are reviewing".

Reporting verbs are a crucial feature of all academic writing and are important in the citation process of academic writing. Pecorari (2008 p.6) notes that citation is a rhetorical feature of academic writing and involves a reference "to something external to the citing text". Citation is defined as the explicit mentioning of another writer's text within one's own and this involves making references to, and reporting cited sources (Buckingham & Neville 1997). Hyland (2005) draws attention to the importance of reporting verbs as lexical devices, which benefit writers in displaying their stance and establishing a connection among thoughts from various sources. Loan and Pramoolsook (2015) underscore the importance of reporting verbs and affirm that it is required in academic writing to use information from a variety of sources and to critique the views expressed by such writers.

The use of reporting verbs, through a process of citation, is a key linguistic tool for doing this. Citations are important in academic writing because writers use them to refer to the source(s) (Hyland 2002; Clugston 2008; Ibrahimova 2016) from which they borrowed ideas to prevent plagiarism (Neville 2007; Marzec-Stawiarska 2019). Also, citations show a writer's understanding of previous literature and make the writer a member of a disciplinary community (Hewing et al. 2010). The process of citation in academic writing represents interactions between the present and previous writers.

Hewing's et al. (2010) explain that citations signify the social dimension of academic writing and aver that "choices made regarding what works to cite is a crucial aspect of the interpersonal dimension of academic texts, with the act of citing making visible a network of scholarly relations" (Hewing et al. 2010 p.102). It is this "network of scholarly relations" (Hewing's et al. 2010 p.102), which is visible through citation choices. According to Collet (2018 p.9):

> Citation helps to position the writer firmly as a member of a disciplinary community (community membership) and reflects, the writer's intellectual influences (collaborative action). Sociologists of science, however, argue that this 'network' constitutes, furthermore, a rhetorical device crucial to the future success of the text in which it is embedded. Indeed, citation choices help the citing writer to create a relationship with the intended readership of the text; a readership of academic peers that need to be persuaded to accept the findings put forward in the text and then brought to cite the text, in turn, to promote the integration of its contents into the community's body of knowledge.

Citations are typically found in journal articles and other works such as textbooks, government publications, other forms of written communication, and theses (Yeganeh & Boghayeri 2015).

A key concept in the present study is academic writing. Academic writing represents a distinct form of written communication that pertains to the academic discourse community. Academic discourse encompasses different types of language employed in developing research. Collet (2018) thought of academic discourse as a discipline-specific communicative practice that generally aims to generate and share knowledge. Hyland (2009 p.1) describes academic discourse as "the ways of thinking and using

language which exists in the academy". He stresses that the significance of academic discourse in part lies in the fact that complex social activities like educating students, demonstrating learning, disseminating ideas, and constructing knowledge, are accomplished through language.

Studies on academic discourse which initially focused on intuition, have turned from intuition to an increased focus on how language is used in specific disciplines, with a focus on the communicative purposes of texts (Hyland 2009). This change started in the 1960s. Academic discourse can be both oral and written. Examples of oral academic discourse include lectures, tutorials, discussions, and academic presentations. Written academic discourse includes articles, term papers, essays, undergraduate, master's, and doctoral theses.

Academic writing incorporates a wide range of texts including examined undergraduate student essays (both timed and untimed), theses, dissertations, and laboratory reports. Hartley (2008) points out that the language employed in academic texts is also the language of rhetoric and persuasion. Further, Hartley (2008) describes its nature as "unnecessarily complicated, pompous, technical, authoritative, humourless, and elitist and excludes outsiders" (Hartley 2008 p.14). Some of the distinct features of academic writing include its use of relevant information, references to sources, and formal language (Mahama 2012; Bailey 2015). The use of jargon is usually avoided in academic writing. Sword (2012 p.15) explains that:

> Academics turn to jargon for a wide variety of reasons: to display their erudition, to signal membership in a disciplinary community, to demonstrate their mastery of complex concepts, to cut briskly into a continuing scholarly conversation, to push knowledge in new directions, to challenge readers' thinking, to convey ideas and facts efficiently, to

play around with language. Many of those motivations align well with the ideals of stylish academic writing.

Materials are consulted in writing academic essays, for writers draw on the works of earlier researchers to aid them to construct new ones; these sources are properly cited and acknowledged through in-text citations, references, and bibliographies, as writers demonstrate an understanding of the subject by commenting on other people's ideas and views and bring them together (Bailey 2015). Also, academic writing avoids the use of contracted forms, colloquial expressions, phrasal verbs, clichés, and text message language (Ivrin 2010). It also uses a variety of complex sentences and passive constructions. In academic writing, the writer examines and critiques the work of other authors, particularly in the literature review sections where reporting verbs are employed as rhetoric instruments to support writers' claims and to influence readers that writers' claims are important and acceptable (Bloch 2010). The appropriate choice of a reporting verb in making claims is an important part of academic writing.

Academic genres embrace textbooks, research articles, essays, conference presentations, lectures, theses, and dissertations, which are vital in academic discourse and help in knowledge construction (Hyland 2009). Further, these genres are written following the accepted norms of the academic discourse community. One genre of academic writing of interest in this study and to researchers is the postgraduate thesis. A thesis presents the written account of research on a subject conducted and examined in fulfilment or partial fulfilment of a graduate degree such as a bachelor's, master's, or doctorate (Cone & Foster 2006). The thesis is sometimes referred to as a dissertation in American contexts and this is usually dependent on the duration of the study, and level of study. A thesis is a persuasive piece of writing that displays the student writer's knowledge or familiarity with issues in the discipline

(Koutsantoni 2007). Afful (2012) describes the thesis as a vital genre in graduate research education, which gives suggestions of academic illiteracies inherent in universities. Glatthorn and Joyner (2005) emphasise that a thesis must look and sound scholarly. This means that it must meet specific discipline standards and requirements of the academic discourse community.

The doctoral thesis is an intensive and concentrated piece of a student's original research, completed to obtain a doctorate. There are variations in the macro-structure of the thesis; however, it usually follows the IMRAD pattern – Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion. Rhetorical features of the thesis have been reviewed by researchers. Hyland (2004) reviewed the acknowledgement section, Bunton (2002) reviewed the introduction, Kwan (2006) reviewed the literature review section and the conclusion has also been reviewed by Bunton (2005). These studies reveal the extent to which students become socialised into the academic discourse community.

The present study concentrates on the doctoral thesis. The doctoral thesis represents discipline-specific knowledge shaped by the norms and conventions of a disciplinary culture. The doctoral thesis, according to Afful (2012 p.135) presents "a report of findings of a higher research study, but more importantly, it represents substantial subject knowledge gained as well as the cultural, professional norms and practices acquired during years of socialisation in a discipline". For doctoral students, the thesis is of considerable importance and involves significant amount of writing (Hyland 2001). It must adopt a formal writing tone, be objective, and support claims and assertions with sources. Also, the thesis must ensure the appropriate use of tense, cautious documentation, citations of previous sources, and the use of reporting verbs. Other linguistic devices that are essential in giving the thesis a scholarly look include

the use of personal pronouns, hedging devices, and metadiscourse elements (Swales & Feak 1994).

The doctoral thesis, or dissertation, as explained by Paré et al. (2009 p.179), can be described as a student's first vital input to a disciplinary conversation. It responds to various necessities in many contexts and performs a range of social actions (Sarantakos 2012) aimed at meeting the requirements of those contexts. These embrace the doctoral supervision, the doctoral committee, the academic department, the disciplinary community, and the research setting itself. A doctoral thesis is thus a highly complex multi-genre containing different subgenres such as the literature review, the essay or discussion, and the experimental article. It engages the student in several different contexts. The doctoral thesis is categorised as a genre of academic writing. Academic writing embodies social practices, which are realised through texts, such as the doctoral thesis. As is typical of all genres of academic writing, it is written according to the norms and practices that are recognised by the academic discourse community and serves as an addition to academic discourse, which aims to create, critique, and share knowledge.

Doctoral thesis writing or research generally requires the acquisition of essential academic literacy skills that aid the researcher in reading and engaging with complex texts (Braine 2002), critiquing or evaluating the views of earlier established writers (Casanave 2019), and logically communicating ideas. It is argued that:

> Certain linguistic conventions in constructing doctoral theses texts reflect sophisticated learning of key disciplinary norms governing the conception, production, and reporting of knowledge in particular fields. These conventions are subtle and may not be readily identifiable to experienced scholars, yet doctoral students are expected to learn and master them, suggesting that discipline-specific writing norms and conventions are

> learned largely by tacit means during the doctoral study (Parry 1998 p. 273).

Paré (2010) explains that doctoral researchers can become effective writers in their various disciplines if they study the conventions and practices, which are part of dialogues in their disciplines. It is expected in academic writing to situate the study within the larger academic discourse community; besides, writers in the academic discourse community "need to be sure that their communications are written in the appropriate style. The style of a particular piece should not only be consistent, but also be suitable both in terms of the message being conveyed and the audience" (Swales & Feak 2012 p. 14). A significant feature of academic writing is how a writer reports and comments on earlier research of other authors using reporting verbs. This is done to prevent plagiarism.

Plagiarism, within academic contexts, involves the use or appropriation of ideas, pictures, texts of other authors or researchers, by another person without due acknowledgement to or citation of the source of information (Bailey 2015). In universities, plagiarism is a grave offence or an act of dishonesty, which usually occurs when literature is reported without proper citation, or acknowledgement. Plagiarism also bears the ideas of carelessness in the use of sources either deliberately or otherwise without proper acknowledgement. Plagiarism is also manifest in patchwriting (Pecorari 2008; Pecorari & Shaw 2012; Shi 2012) or misunderstanding source text resulting in close paraphrasing (Howard et al. 2010). To effectively comment on ideas and incorporate the words and views of other scholarly works into one's research, a writer needs among other skills, the ability to use reporting verbs to generate citations most appropriately.

Additionally, reporting verbs can be used to achieve persuasive effects in writing by using them to integrate ideas from a variety of sources into one's writing. Hyland and Milton (1999 p. 147) agree with this claim when they explain that the appropriate use of reporting verbs provides the maximum interpersonal and persuasive effect. The careful choice of reporting verbs is regarded as a fundamental part of increasing the credibility of the research work (Thompson & Ye 1991). However, the difficulty with using reporting verbs is that there is a wide range, and each has a slightly different and often subtle meaning. Through careful observation, it is obvious that graduate students are not aware of how to use reporting verbs appropriately to achieve this persuasive effect (Adika 2015). The persuasive influence of reporting verbs is not fully utilised by graduate students in Ghana.

Bloch (2010) points out that students use the same reporting verbs repeatedly. Although there are many reporting verbs, students use the same reporting verbs, regardless of the impact a reporting verb reflects on their writing. Writers can use a range of reporting verbs to serve various functions, and in this way, bring diversity and richness to their writing. Reporting verbs, such as *claimed*, *stated*, *hypothesised*, and *proved* serve different functions, hence they have different effects on writing in theses. This condition will somehow give different interpretations to the readers on the writers' attitude and their views towards the statements made in their theses. Though there is no restriction on the choice of reporting verbs, writing at the tertiary level involves one being able to present an argument logically and cohesively by choosing and using the appropriate reporting verbs from the wide range available.

Charles (2006) asserts that reporting verbs allow the writer to show his/her responsibility towards the statement made. He explains that using reporting verbs, the writers can use the most appropriate words to relate to the source and to support their claims. Not all writers can choose the most appropriate reporting verbs in their

writing. The assertion is not different from Bloch's (2010) view that non-native English speakers, for instance, do not always make claims to satisfy both the syntactic requirements of their sentences and, perhaps more importantly, to express their attitudes towards the claims. This situation may arise because the writers lack understanding of the subtleties involved in choosing the most appropriate reporting verbs to be used to convey their message; or that their range of vocabulary of reporting verbs may be limited. Thus, non-native writers may lack the strength of the appropriate use of reporting verbs in thesis writing to make meaningful claims to convey their message appropriately. It is worth noting that the effective use of such reporting verbs directly contributes to the recognition of other authors' work. Not all writers, however, can choose the most appropriate reporting verbs to make valid claims in their writing.

The views of writers, and what other authors have done are communicated through texts; writers communicate their attitudes towards what is written in the text. Thus, they become the gatekeepers and by deliberate choice of reporting verbs, can steer the attention and understanding of their audience toward a certain direction. In this way, writers create social relations and given norms between their sense of writing and their audience's sense of reasoning in their writing. The author, on the other hand, can generate negative reasoning by using the reporting verbs effectively to negotiate meanings (Hyland 2004). As a result, positive acts or negative effects are achieved on every piece of academic essay. To identify verbs that can communicate positively or negatively, a variety of discourse models for classifying reporting verbs have been proposed by some researchers. An example is Hyland's (2002) categorisation of reporting verbs which gives three distinguishable processes as Research Acts, Cognition Acts, and Discourse Acts.

Research Acts refer to real-world activities, which occur in statements of findings (*observe, discover, notice* and *show*) or procedures (*analyse, calculate, assay,* and

explore). Cognition Acts are concerned with mental processes and include verbs like *believe, conceptualise, suspect,* and *view*; and Discourse Acts which involve verbal expression (*ascribe, discuss, hypothesise,* and *state*). Many researchers (Ramoroka 2014; Manan & Noor 2014; Yeganeh & Boghayeri 2015; Loan & Pramoolsook 2015; Agbaglo 2017) have also identified that in academic writing, these three processes of reporting verbs as proposed by Hyland (2002) can be used to show a writer's views as positive, negative, or tentative.

Thompson and Ye (1991) grouped reporting verbs under two broad categories: *Author Acts* and *Writer Acts*. The *Author Acts* category refers to those verbs which report the author of the text being quoted. This category includes three subcategories, which are textual, mental, and research verbs. Textual verbs are the ones through which the author's verbal expression is presented. For example, *point out*, or *state.* The mental category refers to verbs implying mental processes, for instance, *believe*, or *think*, and the research verbs refer to physical and mental steps employed throughout the research process. These include *measure* or *find*. The second category, *Writer Acts,* reveals the writer's orientation towards an issue through quoting someone else, contains fewer verbs, and refers to verbs in two subcategories of "comparing" verbs and "theorising" verbs. While comparing verbs such as *correspond to* and *contrast with* attribute the study of the author to a special viewpoint, theorising ones such as *explain* and *support* benefit writers through providing them with gaining the advantage of the author's study in developing their arguments.

Adika (2015) provides another classification of reporting verbs from the language learning support Centre of Monash University which identifies five categories of reporting verbs as follows:

Category 1: The author makes a point to develop or justify his/her argument.

Examples: *account for, claim, contend, establish, find, hold the view* and *maintain*.

Category 2: The author draws attention to a problem.

Examples: *emphasise, focus on, insist, note, observe, draw attention to* and *reiterate*.

Category 3: The author positions himself/herself against other authors.

Examples: *dispute, challenge, reject* and *support*.

Category 4: Signals author's omissions.

Examples: *assume* and *take for granted*.

Category 5: Signals author's admissions.

Example: *acknowledge* and *recognise*.

In a study in Britain, Lang (2004) recognised that Taiwanese students have problems with repetition, tense and voice and generally over-use simple reporting verbs or use verbs he classifies as 'fancy'. The students were not aware of the role of reporting verbs in academic writing as seen in how they made random choices of reporting verbs and used such indifferently. In another British study, Davis (2017) used the rhetorical moves analysis by Swales (1990) with additional investigation of stance, through selected reporting verbs and found that factive (the authors agreed with the information), non-factive (the authors conveyed no judgement on the information) and counter-factive (the authors disagreed with the information being reported) verbs occur in medical research articles.

In South Africa, corpus-based research by Ramoroka (2014) on reporting verbs showed that students generally employ informing verbs more often than argumentative ones in text construction. Gil-Salom & Soler-Monreal (2014) found that in the construction of literature review chapters of doctoral theses written in English and

Spanish, English writers made verb choices to depict personal commitment and tentativeness, while Spanish writers remained neutral or refrained from presenting their individual perspectives to avoid personal confrontation.

In the Middle East and Asia too, there have been a few studies on reporting verbs. Some examples of studies on reporting verbs in English language studies conducted in Malaysia are Manan and Noor's (2014) investigation of reporting verbs as are typically used by masters students in the construction of their theses. The study focused on the regularity of the reporting verbs used, and the impact(s) of the reporting verbs employed in the theses. The study revealed that masters students were more acquainted with the reporting verbs from the Research Acts category, as related to Cognition Acts and Discourse Acts. Their findings also revealed that the verbs *found* from the Research Acts category and *states* from the Discourse Acts category are the most frequently repeated reporting verbs in masters theses.

An example of studies conducted on reporting verbs in Asia is Loan and Pramoolsook's (2015) study which discovered that Vietnamese student writers made mistakes in text construction using reporting verbs and the appropriate use of tense and voice. Further, the Vietnamese writers were unaware of rhetorical functions of reporting verbs and as such, tended to use reporting verbs randomly. In this way, the communicative purposes of their literature review chapters were not achieved.

In Europe, Bašić's (2017) study found that reporting verbs were used as evidentials in text construction of research articles. The evidential interpretation of reporting verbs derives from pragmatic inference, which supports the view that evidentiality must be investigated within the interpretative framework of pragmatics. There have been studies which unearthed the grave challenges postgraduate students in engineering in the University of Technology in Iraq faced in either over-using or mis-using some reporting verbs which made their writing monotonous and repetitive.

Nguyen (2018) from an analysis of reporting verbs using a VARBRUL programme identified that for the verb *propose*, the frequency of its use in the past tense varied with the publication periods and verb voices. This suggests that tense choice of the reporting verb *propose* had a significant link with the editions of the journals and verb types.

The analysis of Swear and Kalajahi (2019) revealed that in the construction of the introductory sections of masters' theses, students preferred to use factive verbs more than non-factive verbs; however, they did not use counter-factive verbs. It is important to note that this depicts the inadequacy, limitation, or inability of the students to challenge existing knowledge adequately and effectively in their disciplines.

Yasmin, Butt, and Sarwar (2020) found that there are variances in the use of reporting verbs in the accreditation of other sources in research papers written by Pakistani and native writers. In addition, Un-udom and Un-udom (2020) studied forms and voices of reporting verbs used in applied linguistic articles in Thailand and found out that verbs belonging to the Research Acts were used more frequently as compared to Discourse Acts, and Cognition Acts categories, respectively. All these works show that reporting verbs and some aspects that are closely related to the field are important and many authors have carried out some works in their countries to interrogate them. In the African continent the situation is dire.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Generally, doctoral students are to exhibit the appropriate use of reporting verbs as a requirement necessary for thesis writing. However, an examination of the doctoral students' theses shows that the students do not use the verbs to satisfy the demands of doctoral thesis writing (https://www.ug.edu.gh/news/school-graduate-studies). Some students use some of the reporting verbs repeatedly, and some students

disregard the impact of the reporting verbs on their theses (Manan & Noor 2014). The limitations found in the use and understanding of reporting verbs among the graduate students limit the students' ability to engage with previous research to generate effective arguments in developing their research topics.

Pecorari (2008) found that students are unable to determine the appropriate reporting verbs that are suitable for reporting claims in their works. Bloch's (2010) research supports earlier findings, and he further argues that most students lack the understanding of the use of appropriate rhetorical strategies in making claims from the writer's point of view. He maintains that even if students can make grammatically correct choices, the rhetorical impact of their claims may be reduced if the reporting verb is not appropriate. Adika (2015) observes that there is a need to examine postgraduate student writing, given the rapid expansion of doctoral programmes in the University of Ghana and unfavourable external examiners' reports about the quality of students' writing. Research on graduate-level writing in Ghana has paid scant regard to the use of reporting verbs by students.

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aims to investigate the types, distribution, and frequency of reporting verbs in completed doctoral theses of Humanities students of the University of Ghana.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the range (types) of reporting verbs used in doctoral theses of Humanities students.
2. Ascertain the frequency of reporting verbs used in doctoral theses of Humanities students.

3. Examine the discourse functions of the reporting verbs in doctoral theses of Humanities students.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions have been proposed to guide the study:

1. What reporting verbs are used in the doctoral theses of Humanities students?
2. How often do reporting verbs occur in doctoral theses of Humanities students?
3. What are the discourse functions of the reporting verbs used doctoral theses of Humanities students?

1.6 ASSUMPTIONS

The study operates on the following assumptions:

1. Doctoral students in the Humanities do not use reporting verbs adequately in their theses.
2. The choice of reporting verbs in academic writing enhances academic discourse.
3. There is a wide range (types) of reporting verbs, which may remain unexplored by doctoral students in the Humanities in their theses writing.
4. The variety and functions of reporting verbs and the meanings they convey can be exploited by doctoral students to enhance the persuasive strength of their writing.

1.7 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The following issues were considered to establish the boundaries of the study. These issues include the disciplinary community the study focuses on, the genre to be used

in collecting data for the study and the section of the thesis selected for analysis in this study. First, the doctoral theses submitted to the College of Humanities at the University of Ghana were examined. There are several collections of doctoral theses, but this study is limited to those in Linguistics, English, Sociology, Psychology, and Human Resource Management and Administration. The study ignores all other forms of written academic genres but concentrates on the doctoral theses.

1.8 JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

Three reasons account for the choice. First, doctoral theses are considered one of the most interpersonal loaded genres of academic writing, are highly interactive, and evaluative (Tse & Hyland 2006). Second, the underrepresentation of the doctoral theses in appraisal and analytical studies (Hyland 2004; Samraj 2013) informed the choice of this genre for the present study. Third, doctoral theses are selected because these theses, unlike undergraduate students' essays, contain verbs used strongly in the various sections (Musa 2014). This study is delimited to the literature review aspect of the doctoral theses.

There is a need therefore to investigate how doctoral students in the Humanities in the University of Ghana use reporting verbs to improve their awareness of the functional roles of reporting verbs and the wide range from which they can make choices to generate more persuasive arguments in their writing. The findings of this study will add to the scant existing body of knowledge in higher-level academic discourse from the global south and provide a basis for further studies on reporting verbs used in other sections of the thesis. The focus of studies done on the use of reporting verbs in academic writing has generally been outside Africa. This observation indicates that not much research has been conducted in this area of study within the region.

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study builds on and contributes to knowledge on the range, variability, and function of reporting verbs used in the literature review sections of theses of doctoral students in the Humanities. This study is significant in three ways. Firstly, the study contributes to the scholarship on academic discourse in general and specifically to the evaluation of academic texts and academic discourse at the postgraduate level. Secondly, by analysing the use of reporting verbs in the literature review sections of the doctoral theses, this investigation adds to the growing interest in research on student writing in general, and thesis writing more specifically. Thirdly, the study is significant to the development of postgraduate writing as it reminds academics in various disciplinary communities about the nuances that reporting verbs carry and how they can be used effectively in academic writing.

1.10 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This study used Hyland's (2002) categorisation of reporting verbs as an analytical framework. Evidence from literature shows that classification of reporting verbs has evolved from Thompson and Ye (1991) to Hyland (2002). In Thompson and Ye's (1991) framework, three categories in terms of denotation: textual, mental, and research verbs were created. The evaluation was separated from reporting, leading to an overlap between categories. Similarly, in analysing the evaluative nature of reporting verbs, these authors derived three factors: author's stance, writer's stance, and interpretation. Hyland (1999) also classifies reporting verbs into Research Acts, Discourse Acts, and Cognition Acts, but Hyland (2002) revised the earlier model by providing a more insightful process of classifying reporting verbs based on their process and evaluative functions. This includes both the original author's academic activity and the reporting writer's evaluative judgments.

Each of the process categories, therefore, presents a subgroup of evaluative options. Although Hyland's (2002) new framework still retains Thompson and Ye's (1991) important insight, it allows the writer to vary his or her commitment by using verbs which either imply a personal stance or attribute a position to the original author. Hyland's taxonomy is discussed further in Chapters 2 and 4 of this study.

1.11 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: AN OVERVIEW

Methodology is the processes and the method by which a researcher acquires knowledge about the world (Creswell 2007). This knowledge helps in answering the research questions and objectives of a study. Krippendorff (2004) argues that data collected in any research becomes meaningful only when the data is well organised and explained. In this section, the methods used to collect data are discussed. The research design, population and sample size used, investigative tools used, how the data analysis procedure was handled are also described.

1.12 RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative research design was selected for this study; it, however, made use of an element of quantitative analysis, where necessary. The qualitative research design allows researchers to understand social reality in a subjective, but a scientific manner. Creswell (2007 p.15) defines qualitative research as:

> an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. In this kind of research, the researcher builds a complex holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting.

Qualitative research involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data that is not easily reduced to numbers as words are predominantly employed at virtually all stages. Thus, the research design adopted in this study supports the aim of exploring how students employ reporting verbs in their doctoral theses. The qualitative research design will help gain an in-depth knowledge of how doctoral students deploy reporting verbs and how they construct meaning in an academic environment within a social setting/community. Further discussions on research design are presented in Chapter 3 of this study.

1.13 POPULATION AND SAMPLE SIZE

The population for this study was the theses of doctoral students from the University of Ghana. The target population of the study was doctoral theses from three schools: The School of Languages, School of Social Sciences, and Business School at the University of Ghana. These schools together belong to and makeup one-half of the College of Humanities (Appendix 1.1 and 1.2).

The sample size was fifty-two (52) theses from the three schools. This sample size was based on Yamane's formula (Appendix 2.1) as cited by Israel (2013). This sample size was relatively ideal to avoid the risk characteristic of large corpus leading to superficial analysis and that of small corpus not fully representative of the field of inquiry (Anthony 2015).

1.14 SAMPLING METHOD

Multistage sampling was used to select fifty-two (52) doctoral theses. The steps involved are as follows:

1. Purposive selection of three (3) schools in the Humanities. These are the schools of Languages, Social Sciences, and Business. This is because programmes in these faculties involve rigorous, broad-based liberal arts curricula that develop students' learning, analytical abilities, research skills, and creativity. Students are thus exposed to varied continuous prose writing and are likely to use more reporting verbs. The purposive sampling technique will help in selecting data that will help to answer the research questions (Creswell 2003).

2. Purposive selection of five (5) departments. These are Linguistics, English, Psychology, Human Resource Management and Administration, and Sociology. Out of the varied and diverse academic programmes, these departments are selected because writing in these departments is discursive.

3. Convenience selection of theses from Linguistics, English, Psychology and Human Resource Management and Administration, and Sociology. Essentially, convenience sampling ensures that the sample group represents certain characteristics of the population chosen for the study.

4. Purposive selection of literature review chapters. In this section of the thesis, reporting verbs are used for the presentation of arguments, emphasis, agreeing, and disagreeing with propositions among others. The literature review chapter is chosen because as Hartley (2008 p. 87) notes, "it integrates and synthesises work from different research areas, evaluates the current state of evidence for a particular viewpoint, reveals inadequacies in the literature and points to where further research needs to be done".

1.15 DATA AND SOURCES

This study used secondary data in the form of doctoral theses completed, passed, and published on the University of Ghana website between 2012 and 2018. This

period is selected because the theses are recent (within the last ten years). It is reported that institutional repositories perform advertising functions and serve as positive marketing tools to enhance the reputation of many organisations (Bhardwaj, 2014). Presently, some universities worldwide display the various research contributions made by members of the academic discourse community publicly.

The doctoral thesis was chosen because it is a public statement in writing about what a student has accomplished based on research; an extensive piece of work that encourages the writer to demonstrate his / her repertoire of language skills on a focused study within a time framework.

1.16 STUDY AREA

The research site for this study is the University of Ghana. The University of Ghana was founded by ordinance on 11th August 1948, as the University College of the Gold Coast. The University of Ghana started initially as an affiliated college of the University of London. It gained full status in 1961 and it is the oldest and largest of the eight public comprehensive universities in Ghana. At present, the university has a student population of about 40,000 consisting of undergraduate and graduate students from Ghana and abroad (international). These students are made up of young adults and older or "mature" students pursuing regular, sandwich, distance, and online programmes. The medium of instruction and language used in the University of Ghana is predominantly the English language; although there are a few like the Department of Modern Languages, where indigenous languages and other languages apart from English are used as the medium of instruction and communication with degrees and certificates awarded in them.

1.17 DATA ANALYSIS

1.17.1 Corpus analysis

This study employed corpus analysis to analyse the data. Corpus analysis is a method of conducting investigations of linguistic phenomena, derived from authentic, communicative texts that are digitally stored as language corpora and can be accessed, retrieved, and analysed using a computer (Cole, 1988; Ngula, 2018; Hasko, 2020). The qualitative corpus analysis adopts an exploratory inductive approach to empirically study how the meanings and functions of linguistic patterns evident in the corpus interact with diverse social characteristics of language used for communication.

Corpus analysis was used to explore the 'phenomena' of reporting verbs used in the theses of doctoral students since the analysis was based on "real data" that is, actual instances of written communication as opposed to contrived or "made-up" data. In this study, corpus analysis facilitated computer-aided retrieval of authentic patterns of the language phenomena under investigation.

1.18 THE STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

For answering the study's research questions, this study was categorised into sequences of divisions that describe how the study developed from a theory level to a practical piece. This is achieved in five chapters.

Chapter One presents a background to the study, a general introduction, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, delimitation of the study, assumptions of the study. The chapter concludes with the structure of the study.

Chapter Two is Literature Review. The review focuses on empirical studies and related literature on reporting verbs used in academic writing. It situates this present study within the theoretical framework. Here, the theories that underpin the study, namely: Social Constructionism and Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar are discussed in broader detail with a focus on clause as representation.

Chapter Three contains information on the methodology used in the study. The methodology covers the research approach and design, data collection procedures, population and sampling technique, and data analysis procedures, which are presented in this chapter.

Chapter Four covers in-depth analyses of data collected to answer the research questions. The main findings obtained from the data analysis are discussed in terms of theories that underpin the study and conclusions drawn are additionally presented in this chapter.

Chapter Five focuses on the summary of the findings, the conclusions of this research, and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter introduced the research area of interest in this study. It presented a brief background to the study and outlined the problem. In the chapter, the aims and objectives of the study were described as well as research questions to be examined. The assumptions that underline the study were presented and the remit of the investigations were also specified as well as the justification for carrying out the research and the significance of the study. Further, the analytical framework, the method of investigation used, research design, study site, the source of material for the research as well as the sample to be used were described together with the arrangement of the subsequent chapters.

This chapter presents an overview of verbs and then reviews the literature and research that are relevant to the study. The concepts of academic writing, academic culture, reporting, citation, and plagiarism are presented. The review attempts to situate the reporting verb in an appropriate and understandable context, by discussing the strategies used individually and collectively to acquire and employ reporting verbs, nature, and the disciplinary variations in the use of reporting verbs. It examines classifications of reporting verbs, and some key theories and concepts associated with use, form, and structure. Further, it highlights the relevance to the analysis and interpretation of data associated with reporting verbs.

2.1. THE VERB

This section of the chapter briefly presents general information on verbs. A verb belongs to the major word classes in English and is a necessary element in a sentence. It is a word or combination of words that specify an action or a state of being or a condition. A verb is described as the part of a sentence that indicates what the

subject performs (Downing 2008; Seaton 2008). Verbs give energy and life to writing. The general overview of the verb is shown in Figure 2.1.

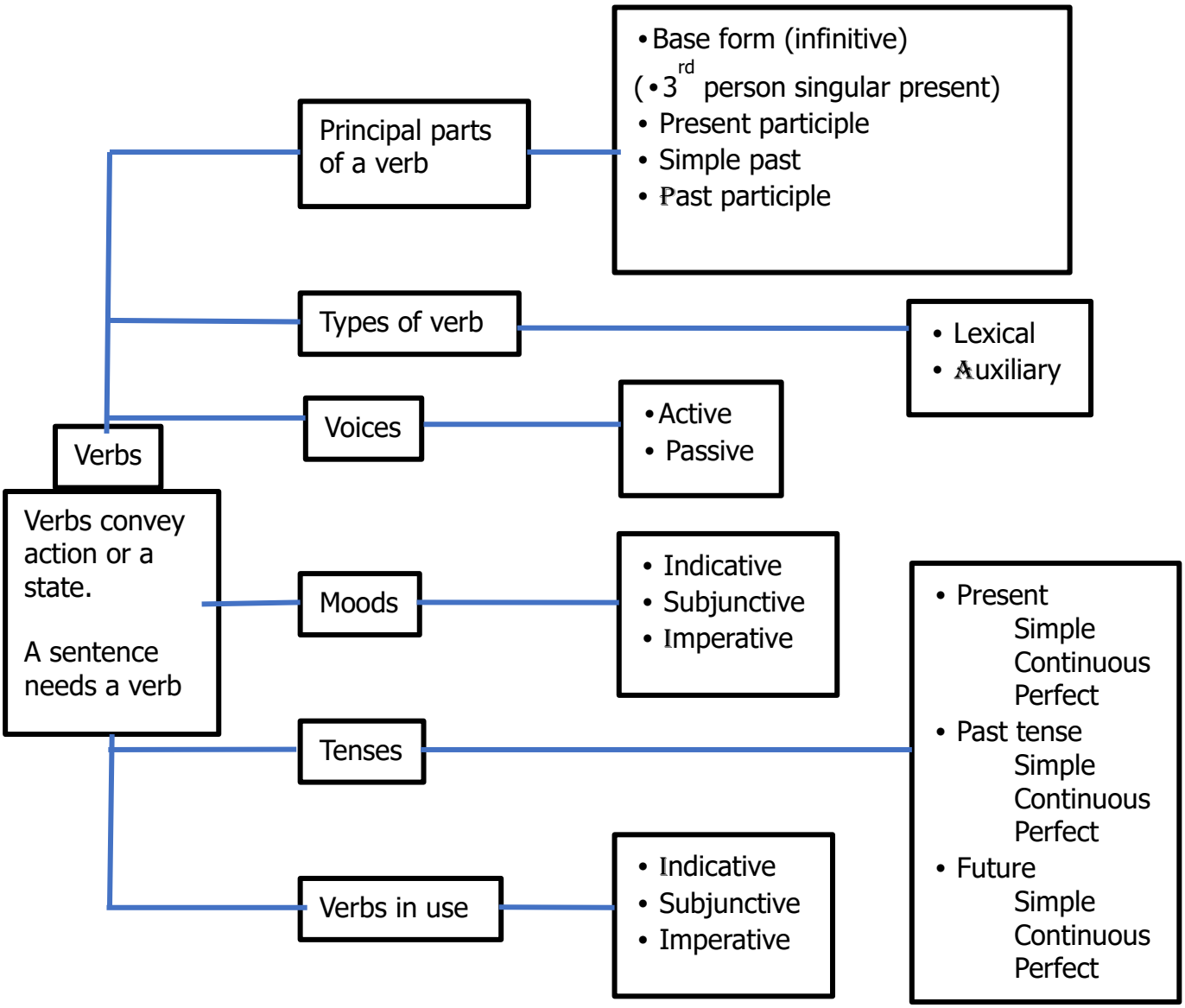

Figure 2.1: Verb tree showing a general overview of verbs (Source: Seaton 2008).

There are six basic forms of verbs which are:

a. Base form: Choristers *sing* in the church.
b. Infinitive: They do not need *to shout*.
c. Past tense: They *played* tennis yesterday.
d. Past participle: The children have *eaten* ice-cream.
e. Present participle: I saw them *dancing* with him on Sunday.
f. Gerund: *Walking* is the best exercise.

2.1.1 Types of verbs

There are two (2) main types of verbs in English grammar namely lexical verbs and auxiliary verbs as shown in Figure 2.2 and further elaborated on in the sub-sections that follow:

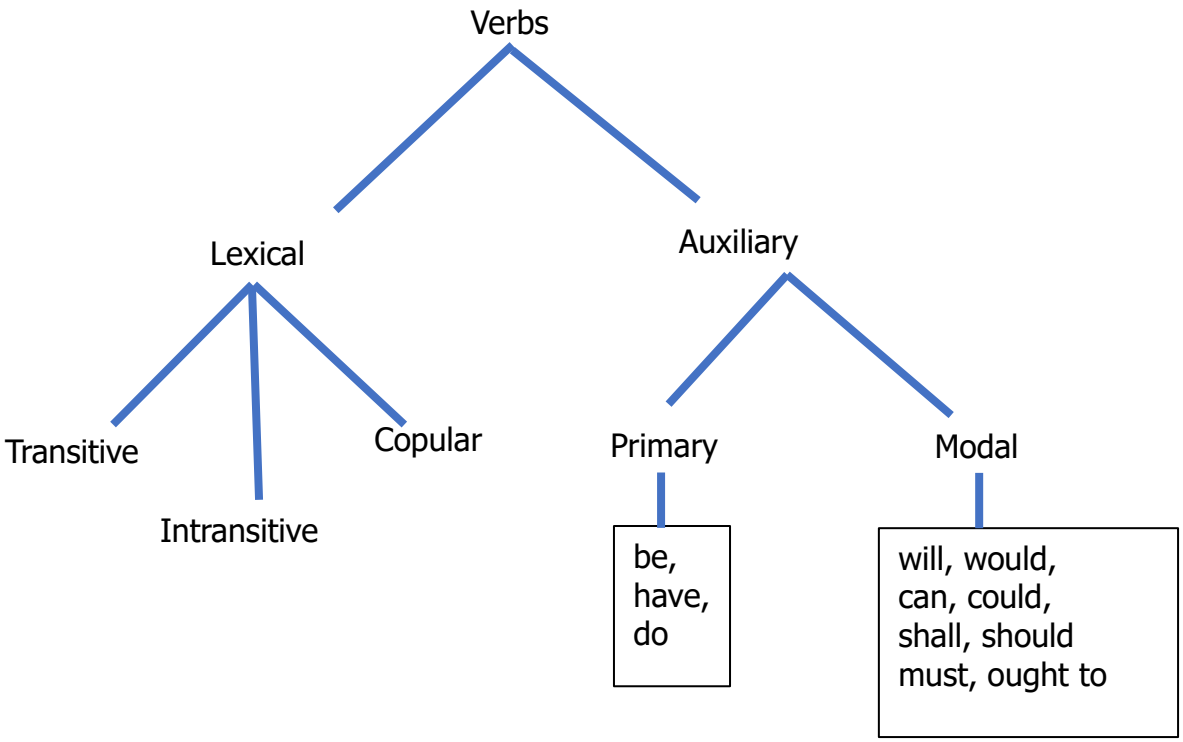

Figure 2.2: Types of verbs in English Grammar.

2.1.1.1 Lexical verbs

Lexical verbs are either action verbs or copular (linking verbs). Action verbs denote physical activity (e.g., *write, carry,* and *walk*) or represent mental activities or states (e.g., *forget, wonder,* and *think*). A lexical verb acts as the head of the noun phrase. An auxiliary verb supports the lexical verb to add grammatical elements that mark the mood, voice, tense, and aspect of the sentence (Palmer, 1974). Lexical verbs convey meaning in different ways. Biber et al. (2002) present seven semantic categories of lexical verbs as activity verbs, communication verbs, mental verbs, causative verbs, verbs of occurrence, verbs of existence, and aspect verbs.

Activity verbs refer to an action done on purpose by a doer or an agent. Examples of such activity verbs include *walk, shout, sing* and *dance*. Communication verbs describe speech and writing activities, which makes them fall in a subcategory of activity verbs. These include verbs such as *say, state, shout* and *ask*. Mental verbs describe mental states and activities. Such verbs include *know, think, decide,* and *hold*. Causative verbs show that a person or thing plays a role in an occurring or new situation. Examples of such verbs are *cause, allow, force, tolerate*. Verbs of occurrence highlight events that occur without an actor. Examples of such verbs are *grow, change, become,* and *degenerate*. Verbs of existence comment on a state of existence or a logical relationship between entities. Such verbs *include, seem, contain,* and *appear*. Aspect verbs describe how an event progresses or its various stages. Such verbs include *start, begin,* and *keep*. In academic writing, the writer may employ such lexical verbs to create an engaging tone in the writing.

2.1.1.1.1 Transitive and intransitive verbs

Lexical verbs can further be divided into transitive, intransitive, and copular verbs. Collectively, these are known as lexical devices. A verb is transitive when an object

is necessary to complete the verb's meaning. A transitive verb has an object and an intransitive verb has no direct object or complement. Verbs are either transitive or intransitive. Sentences (a) to (d) below are examples of sentences with transitive verbs, and sentences (e) to (h) are examples of sentences with intransitive verbs.

a. I *need* a house
b. They *sent* a car to me
c. John *bought* a sack of potatoes.
d. Anne *rode* the bicycle home.
e. The choir is *singin*g.
f. It is *raining.*
g. The children *danced*.
h. Mabel *jumped*.

2.1.1.1.2 Copular verbs

Linking verbs are used in writing to introduce a fact about a person or thing; they link the subject with a complement. For example:

a. The books are *open.*
b. The Vice-Chancellor *is* a chief.
c. Matilda *is* a great cook.
d. The boy *has* a tall hat.

2.1.1.2 Auxiliary verbs

Auxiliary verbs are also called helping verbs. There are two kinds of auxiliary verbs, namely primary and modal. Primary auxiliary verbs, which are *be*, *have*, and *do*, are used to distinguish present and past action, or completed and continuous actions. *Will, shall, can, may, must,* and *ought,* are modals. The verbs *dare* and *need* are full verbs, but they also function as modal verbs. The primary auxiliary verb *be* is usually

used with the present participle (-ing) form of a verb to express continuous action, as seen in the examples below:

a. My family is *looking* for accommodation.
b. The choir is *singing* the hymn.
c. He is *jumping* on the lawn.
d. The chairman was *running* late for the meeting.
e. Joseph was *flying* a paper kite.

The verb *have* is used with its past participle form (-*ed* form) to express completed action.

a. Somebody *has* pressed the doorbell.
b. A week later, the pain *had* subsided.
c. He *has* finished the work.
d. Jones *has* stopped shouting.
e. The storm *had ended* by midnight.

Irregular verbs, however, do not form the simple past tense forms or past participle forms by adding -*ed* or – *d* to the base form of the word.

2.1.1.2.1 Modal verbs

Modal verbs also called modal auxiliary verbs are the other group of helping verbs usually used with ordinary verbs to express possibility, permission and necessity, right or wrong. Some examples are *will, would, may, might, shall* and *should.*

a. They *will* enjoy the meal.
b. You *may* have a seat now.
c. They *might* be late.
d. We *shall* meet next week.

e. You *should* go home.

Primary and modal verbs differ in some formal ways. First, primary auxiliaries take on *-s* forms: *is, has,* and *does*: there are no modal forms of *wills, shalls, cans, mays, musts* and *oughts* (Palmer, 1987). Second, modals have no non-finite forms; as such they cannot co-occur and are limited to occurring in the initial position in a verb phrase. Other forms such as *can may go*, *must can go*, do not occur (Palmer, 1987). The verbs *be* and *have* (but not *do*) have finite forms; thus, they can co-occur and in the verb phrase, they can occur in other places than in the initial position (Palmer, 1987). Examples: *has been dancing, has been bullied, must be dancing, must have danced.*

2.1.2 Voice

The active and passive forms of verbs are known as active and passive voice respectively. A verb is active when the subject of the verb conveys the action. This means that the subject is the agent or doer of the action. When the subject is the 'patient', 'target', or 'undergoer' of the action, the verb is said to be in the passive voice. For example:

a. The lion *ate* the rabbit.
b. The rabbit was *eaten* by the lion.

In (a), the verb *ate* is in the active voice. In (b), the verb was *eaten* is in the passive voice. In both cases, the lion is the Agent (the doer) of the action of eating.

2.1.3 Mood

Verbs also convey moods or states of being. These moods may be indicative, imperative, or subjunctive.

2.1.3.1 Indicative mood

The ordinary form of the verbs used in making statements and asking questions shows the indicative mood. For example:

a. We are going to discuss the budget.
b. The choir performed in the drama.
c. Are you eating now?
d. The band is ready to play.

2.1.3.2 Imperative mood

When the base form of the verbs is used in giving commands, it is called the imperative or imperative mood. Imperatives are sometimes followed by an exclamation.

a. Stop singing!
b. Please sit down!
c. Jump!
d. Halt!

2.1.3.3 Subjunctive mood

The subjunctive mood is used to express wishes, speculation, demands, or suggestions. Illustrative examples are provided below:

a. If I were your sister, I would buy the house.
b. The accident victim must receive treatment.
c. I think he won the lottery.
d. The gentleman must be paid immediately.

2.1.4 Tense use in English

The present and past tenses are used in English. The simple present tense expresses meanings that happen now. These meanings are usually instantaneous, states which

hold over a time or habitual occurrences (Downing 2008). Tense and aspect are both properties of verbs, but they affect verbs and the meaning of a sentence in different ways. Tense is one of the most familiar properties and indicates the verb's position in time – whether the verb is being used to describe something happening in the past or the present.

Different tenses have their own rules regarding the structure of the sentence and the verb being used. For example, regular and irregular verbs are used differently in both the present and past tenses. The simple present tense is used to indicate actions that take place in the present or that occur often. The simple past tense describes an event or a state that has already happened or happened before the time of reporting. If an event will take place after the time of reporting, it is in the future. Future events are marked by several forms. Verbal inflexion is not used to mark future tense.

The simple future is employed to indicate actions that will take place in the future. Like tenses, aspects also relate to the verb's relationship with time. Unlike tenses, which describe the verb's fixed position in time as either past or present, aspects describe how something can be viewed with time, rather than when exactly it happened. Consider the statements below:

a. I *walked* on the lawn.
b. I *had walked* on the lawn.
c. I *was walking* on the lawn.

The first example describes an event in the *simple past* tense – and this is the simplest way of describing an event happening in the past. The second and third examples point out two other categories or aspects.

"I had walked" uses the *perfective* aspect.

This describes something important in the past.

"I was walking" uses the *continuous* or progressive aspect.

This shows that the activity described was continuing for some time before it stopped.

Finite Verbs: These form the roots of sentences. It is a form of a verb that refers to a subject and uses one of the tense forms. It changes according to the number/person of the subject. For example:

a. The cows *went* grazing. (Subject – The cows. Action performed- grazing. Time action performed- in the past. This information is evident only by the verb 'went'.)

b. The athlete *runs* daily.

c. He *is running* for the nation.

d. He *is* one of the best athletes.

Non-finite Verbs: These are not actual verbs. They function as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. Non-finite verbs do not change according to the number/person of the subject because these verbs do not have any direct relation to the subject. Sometimes they become the subject themselves.

The forms of non-finite verbs are – infinitive, gerund, and participle (participles become finite verbs when they take auxiliary verbs). e.g.

a. The cows went *to graze* (Infinitives).

b. *Playing* tennis is her only job. (Present participle)

c. I have a *broken* vase. (Past participle)

d. *Dancing* is good exercise. (Gerund)

Other groups of verbs are phrasal verbs and reporting verbs.

2.1.5 Phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs usually occur in informal texts or speech. They are verbs used together with an adverb or preposition to give a different meaning to the combined words. Some examples are:

a. We *run into* each other at the mall.
b. The bookshop was *giving away* free stationery.
c. Sarah *made up* a story to get out of trouble.
d. They *called off* the Executive meeting.

2.1.6 Reporting verbs

Reporting verbs are also branded as referring verbs. They are specific verbs used in academic writing to report or comment on another person's work. They are used to link intext citation to the information cited. Some examples of reporting verbs are *say, tell, report, examine,* and *argue*. The verbs *say* and *tell* are more related to speech and *report, examine, argue* are related to writing. In examples that follow, the verbs are used inappropriately because they do not fit in the context of academic writing.

a. Powell (2017) *tells* us that …
b. Powell (2017) *says* that …

The examples (c) to (*e*) show that the use of reporting verbs through a process of citation is provided:

c. Kennedy (2019) *reports* that …
d. Dickson (2018) *examines* …
e. Anderson (2016) *argues* that …

Reporting verbs are the focus of this study and the next few sections of this chapter will discuss the related literature. The following concepts guided the study: academic disciplines, discourse community, and literature review (reporting the literature). These concepts are briefly discussed with illustrative examples of the use in the thesis.

2.2. ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES

Academic disciplines are defined based on the nature of the inquiry. In academic institutions, disciplines define the faculties to which they belong and serve as the main organising base of a social framework. Academic disciplines are described as:

> The structure of knowledge in which faculty members are trained and socialized; carry out tasks of teaching, research, and administration; and produce research and educational output. Disciplinary worlds are considered separate and distinct cultures that exert varying influences on scholarly behaviours as well as on the structure of higher education (Favero 2006 p. 10).

Hyland (2004) explains a discipline as an area of study that shares a network of communication, a tradition, a set of conventions, beliefs, and values. Hyland (2000 p.3) contends that "while disciplines are defined by their writing, it is how they write rather than simply what they write that makes the crucial difference between them". This means that the content of one's writing is influenced by the norms and conventions that are recognised in the discourse community. As such, the way one writes to communicate effectively also constitutes these academic norms. Disciplines reflect unique subject matters and specific languages of communication (North 2005). He notes that writing in the Sciences typically involves a shared paradigm within which research moves forward by building on previous studies unlike studies in the Humanities. Writing in the Humanities does not only contribute to previous

knowledge, but also depicts findings that guide and shape national policies, and generally builds on extant literature. In various disciplines, writing involves the strategies, principles, beliefs, and practices adhered to by that discipline – 'how they write' (Hyland 2004).

2.3. DISCOURSE COMMUNITY

2.3.1 Language as Discourse

Discourse represents communicative interaction between a speaker and hearer with the implicit assumption that both are familiar with the language of communication. It can also result in non-verbal communication, performing or carrying out an action in response to communication. It can also be verbal or non-verbal and represents an interaction between a writer and a reader. When a statement is presented as fact (either positively, negatively, or neutrally), and is interpreted and responded to (verbally or non-verbally), we talk about discourse.

A discourse community is one that uses all existing means to send social, religious, or academic meaning in a context (Lave & Wenger 1991). In a discourse community, members adhere to the goals, methods, norms, and principles of communication through a variety of forms such as written, oral or computer-mediated discourse in a sociocultural context. The terms *discourse* and *community* describe social interactions and beliefs (Hyland 2000), and as such a discourse community is sometimes described as a community of practice. However, Bhatia (2004) clarifies that a community of practice describes the practices and values that keep a community together, and a discourse community, on the other hand, focuses on their language.

The concept of discourse community has been interrogated from various perspectives (Fish 1980; Porter 1986; Lave & Wenger 1991; Johns 1997; Wenger 1998; Borg

2003). Swales (1990) describes discourse communities as communities that have goals, and these goals are achieved through communication. There are various discourse communities such as a community of bikers, students taking a dance lesson, a basketball team. This study aligns with an academic discourse community. Swales (1990) thus presents six general criteria for distinguishing discourse communities. First, a discourse community has a set of common public goals which are generally agreed upon. This means that basically an academic discourse community creates, publicises, and assesses knowledge. Secondly, members of a discourse community share common procedures of intercommunication. In an academic discourse community, there are channels of communication that academics use in the dissemination of information among members. Again, discourse communities have participatory communication methods mainly for presenting information and generating feedback. In an academic discourse community, these include reviews, tutorials, and various assessments. Next, discourse communities have genres that define the group and support their communication goals. Genres in the academic discourse community help to advance the goals of the institution and comprise research articles, dissertations, and theses. Also, discourse communities have lexis or vocabulary and lastly, the members need to have a specific level of knowledge. Members of the academic discourse community have appropriate degrees and expertise (Swales 1990 p. 471-473). Hyland (2000) notes that although discourse communities hold some values and norms, they remain dynamic and varied.

The concept of a discourse community is relevant for the present study, for doctoral students like other student researchers, undertake both a learning process and a research process with tutoring supervision to attain full participation in an academic discourse community (Lave & Wenger 1991). As Hyland (2002) notes, in such academic discourse communities, how a writer uses reporting verbs forms an integral part of the social practice of communicating research. Further, reporting verbs are

socially situated and they help to reveal the attitudes of writers and readers in a text and that members in the community act according to the community-recognised norms. Academic discourse communities such as members in the departments of Linguistics, English, Sociology, Psychology and Human Resource Management and Administration (which are the study areas of the present study), have their dynamic rhetorical practices that justify their distinctiveness, and they can thus be considered as discourse or disciplinary communities. Students, who are also members of disciplinary communities adhere to disciplinary ideologies in their academic writing and thesis construction.

The language a student imbibes and uses in the academic discourse community embodies meaning and signifies the experiences of the student. A student's knowledge and language use are derived from what he or she has acquired from the academic discourse community. In relation to the study, doctoral students are aware of already defined academic or social structures and their theses construction is shaped and informed by how other writers in the academic discourse community interact during text construction. Language highlights the social constructionist perspective that knowledge is both constructed and sustained through social interactions (Hyland 2000).

2.4. REPORTING THE LITERATURE

In the various tasks required by students to complete a dissertation, reporting the literature or what is known as literature review, seems to be a daunting task probably because of the complex nature of transforming material from different sources into a new text. The Literature Review section of a thesis or the review of related literature plays an important role in thesis construction (Bruce 1994) where writers or researchers create links between their innovations and the research of previous writers (Paltridge & Starfield 2007). Bruce (1994) as cited in Zuber-Skeritt and Ryan

(1997), clarifies that the Literature Review is both a process and a product. He explains that in constructing the Literature Review, the researcher is engaged in exploring previous literature in the discipline, formulating a problem, solving the problem, comparing his/her findings with others. He notes that it consists of a list; a search; a survey; a vehicle for learning; a research facilitator and a report.

The literature review (henceforth, LR) usually forms a chapter in the thesis and the process involves the selection of available documents (both published and unpublished) on the topic, which contains information, ideas, data, and evidence written from a standpoint to fulfil certain aims or express certain views on the nature of the topic and how it is to be investigated, and the effective evaluation of these documents concerning the research being proposed. Selection and evaluation require careful skilled reading and analysis.

The literature review section of a thesis aims "to provide an in-depth account of the background literature relevant to the context that one's study is situated in and in doing so provides an argument, case or justification for one's study" (Bitchener 2010 p. 60). According to this author, the LR serves seven (7) communicative functions. These are:

1. A review of the non-research literature summarises and synthesises background and contextual information.
2. A review of theoretical perspectives that underpin or inform a research project.
3. A review of the research literature relevant to one's study.
4. It critiques previous works and
    a. identifies arguments for and against issues and controversies related to the functions 1-3 above.

b. evaluates or weighs up the value of theories, ideas, claims, research, designs, methods, and conclusions, including identification of strengths and weaknesses.

5. It identifies gaps or shortcomings in this knowledge and research.
6. A rationale to justify why the gap was important and significant enough to be filled.
7. An explanation of how the design and execution of the current research project were informed by steps 1-6 above. This is likely to explain how the literature provided:
    a. a focus for the research questions or hypotheses that were investigated.
    b. guidelines for an appropriate methodology and design.

The LR sections of postgraduate academic writing have two main features. First, the LR section of the thesis does not present any new primary scholarship, for it makes use of reports of primary or original scholarship. Second, the LR describes, summarises, evaluates, clarifies, and integrates the content of the primary reports (Cooper 1998). Hartley (2008 p.87) shares this view when he states that "Literature Reviews integrate and synthesise work from different research areas, evaluate the current state of evidence for a particular viewpoint, reveal inadequacies in the literature and point to where further research needs to be done." In constructing the literature review chapters, writers have the choice to make them eponymous or embed them within other chapters (Swales & Lindemann 2002).

In the LR sections, researchers display their knowledge and skill acquired which are built on previous studies in the field or discipline. By showing such linkages and relations, the credibility of the researcher's findings or assertions is firmly established. The idea of creating adequate interpersonal and social relationships is vital when writers report or comment on studies of others in the extant literature because the

review of related literature provides researchers with justification for their studies and serves as a channel through which writers engage with others in the academic discourse community. In their thesis construction, the doctoral students reveal disciplinary knowledge of the various fields as they critically assess and engage with prior research and with readers.

2.5. FROM READING TO WRITING

The literature review usually forms a chapter in the thesis and the process involves:

(i) The selection of available documents (both published and unpublished) on the topic of research.

(ii) Reading to extract information, ideas, data, and evidence written from a particular standpoint to fulfil certain aims or express certain views on the nature of the topic.

(iii) The effective evaluation of these documents to identify gaps.

(iv) How the thesis is to be investigated with respect to the research being proposed. Selection and evaluation require careful skilled reading and analysis.

A major problem that students encounter in the LR writing process is reading to understand, summarising, and linking several complex texts to the topic under investigation. The LR process requires a deep understanding of the subject matter of both linguistic knowledge and reading proficiency, which the students may initially lack. Writers must grapple with analyses, summary, synthesis of reports, ideas, concepts, and theories from other sources, integrate other people's ideas, facts and beliefs, and interweave/interlink them with their judgements to demonstrate their thorough mastery of the subject (Haddaway et al. 2020). Students need to gather knowledge gained from source materials and transform/shape the ideas into their writing without losing focus. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987 p.5) proposed that the

writing process can be considered as a two-part model: 'knowledge telling' and 'knowledge transforming'. To these authors, the 'knowledge telling' model is one that makes writing a natural task. The task has its difficulties, but the model handles these in ways that make maximum use of already existing cognitive structures and that minimise the extent of novel problems that must be solved. The 'knowledge transforming' model makes writing a task that keeps increasing in complexity to match the expanding competence of the writer. It is in these latter cases that the students' knowledge, skill in navigating the complex tasks, forming linkages and associations with the material read, and ingenuity is called into play. These can be very daunting to the student.

In the LR writing process, students use the material, which they have studied, to construct their texts. The outcome of this writing usually is a text which is a synthesis of the materials read. This kind of knowledge-transformation is difficult, and the student may often adopt a 'knowledge telling approach through which they simply present the information in a fairly 'undigested' way and it is in this raw form or way of presenting information of others that may lead to problems associated with plagiarism.

A vital skill that students need in transforming their knowledge from reading to their writing, is 'reporting'. Reporting is the process of bringing together information or data in a concise and coherent form either in speech or text, relevant knowledge of what earlier workers have done succinctly with due reference, recognition, and acknowledgement. In a way, reporting may be considered as a method of paraphrasing in the writers' own words using ideas, concepts, facts and acknowledging the source of the information correctly and appropriately.

Groom (2000 p.14) clarifies that "every text bear traces of other texts, and that every speaker's or writer's voice will contain echoes of the voices of previous speakers or writers". This idea of text traces and similarity to other authors is known as "other voices in the text" (Hyland 2002). A writer can use other people's voices directly through quotation, paraphrasing, or summary. Other voices may enter a text indirectly.

A writer's mode of expression springs from the languages he has acquired, understanding of a text read and thought patterns learned from others over time. By coordinating all such voices to serve his or her purposes, a writer creates the author's perspective in a text. The ability to recognise how voices may be used to create one single voice of authority will enable the writer to draw upon and control effectively several voices in his / her writing. Thus, reporting has a major role in academic writing, and learning how to report correctly following the rules of acceptable academic standards, without being accused of plagiarism requires skill in practice. This is reaffirmed by Hyland (2002). He states that "Because reporting is such an important convention of academic writing in English, it is worthwhile equipping students with the means of using it successfully" (Hyland 2002 p.3).

To explain the difficulties in reporting, it is necessary to understand what 'reporting' involves. Thompson and Ye (1991) have usefully analysed the art of reporting, seeing it as one in which two participants, an author, and a writer, are involved. Following Thompson and Ye (1991 p. 366), this study uses 'author' to indicate the person cited and 'writer' to refer to the person citing. Other studies also adopt these definitions (Thomas & Hawes 1994; Groom 2000). The process envisaged by Thompson and Ye (1991 p.377) moves in reverse chronological order, starting with the writer and revealing what lies behind that final act of writing. 1. Writer writes 2. Writer evaluates 3. Writer reads 4. Author writes 5. Author thinks 6. Author research task. The neat simplicity of this schema is not always followed.

Generally, reporting serves four different functions in academic texts. In the first instance, it introduces information from a prior text and a writer can demonstrate a relationship with his or her argument (Thompson 1994 p.178). Secondly, by 'reporting' or reviewing earlier literature, any gaps in it can be identified by the reviewer/writer who may be filled by the writer's study (Thompson 1994 p.178). Thirdly, 'reporting' calls for 'evaluation' revealing the writer's position/stance (positive /neutral/ negative) towards the cited information (Tadros 1985 p.28). Fourthly, 'reporting' persuades other researchers (within the discourse community /'writing community' discussed by Swales (1990 p.21), that the writer's work is worth reading because their work contributes to the community (Thompson 1994 p.179) or as Hyland puts it, "it establishes a credible writer ethos" (Hyland 1999 p.342).

The essence of 'reporting' is to persuade the readers that the writer is presenting information objectively rather than subjectively. The writer's claims must be supported by other authors' works in the extant literature. The importance of 'reporting' in academic texts is commented on by Hyland (2002) as follows:

> Reference to prior research is almost a defining feature of the academic research article. Its importance in academic discourse lies in providing an appropriate context of persuasion, demonstrating how the current work builds on and reworks past utterances to establish intertextuality links to the wider discipline. Without such links, academics could neither justify their arguments by connecting their research activities to significant work in the field nor use this discipline knowledge to establish the novelty of their position (Hyland 2002 p.15).

The underlying difficulty with 'reporting', and which has engaged the interest of many researchers (Thompson & Ye 1991; Hyland 2002; Hyland 2005; Manan & Noor 2014;

Loan & Pramoolsook 2015), concerns how to navigate and make sense of different and conflicting voices from various sources of information. This can be properly done by the appropriate use of reporting verbs through a process of citation, and this is discussed in the next section of the thesis.

2.6. CITATION AND MEANING

One way in which writers show 'text ownership' and engage in reporting is through citation. Citation is the act of making an explicit and uninterrupted reference to another person's work. This includes the use of references and reporting verbs (RVs), which student writers find particularly difficult to handle (Thompson & Ye 1991; Thompson 2000; Hyland 2002). Although most students recognise that they must use a citation, they do not always recognise the important function it fulfils, in offering a critique of the literature. Thompson and Ye (1991 p.366) argue that student writers use citations without showing their attitude towards the cited work through evaluation. The problems can be viewed from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. From a quantitative perspective, writers tend to either over - or under - cite. From a qualitative perspective, student writers tend to use citations for the sake of fulfilling academic conventions in English because they must cite sources. They focus more on the formatting of citations, emphasising the punctuation, spelling, and in general, the correct form of 'presentation' of citations in the text (Thompson & Tribble 2001; Jalilifar 2012) to the neglect of the functional role of citations in the text. Therefore, students need to be given guidance on using citations to make new knowledge claims.

Reporting verbs are an important element in the act of citation. Writers need to select appropriate RVs to demonstrate their attitudes towards the cited information. Reporting verbs in the context of the current research refer to verbs which writers use to indicate or signal prior research or scholarship in the literature review section

(LR) of the dissertation or thesis. The use of an appropriate reporting verb is one of the ingenious ways to signal evaluation. Thompson and Ye (1991 p.367) define evaluation as "the conveying of the writer's view of the status of the information in her text" and indicate that "one of the clearest signals of the presence of evaluation is a reporting verb". Similarly, Hunston (1995 p.135) notes that "The reporting verb is, in fact, capable of construing complex layers of evaluation". The question of how to choose appropriate reporting verbs is one that has interested researchers for a long time. A reporting verb can serve several functions, as Hyland (2002 p.130) points out:

> The selection of a particular reporting verb is a delicate choice as it is a crucial means of both situating one's work appropriately and communicating with one's peers effectively, a way of engaging with colleagues and appealing to the epistemological and interactive understandings of one's community. Selecting a particular verb thus not only signals a reported voice but invokes a precise content of meaning and judgement which locates the writer in a certain relationship with the reader and the reported text. This can critically influence a reader's willingness to go along with a writer and accede to her claims.

In effect, a reporting verb selected by a writer not only carries explicit lexical meaning but also implicit meaning in the text and reveals the writer's stance towards the cited information (Gil-Salom & Soler-Monreal 2014). Reporting verbs can also be used to signal the writer's commitment or distance from the reported information. The choice of RV made by the writer in some sense reveals how he/she has processed the literature in his/her mind.

Sometimes choosing an inappropriate or wrong reporting verb may cause problems for the intended readers, something which occurs frequently in the English writing of novice writers. Novice students tend to have a more limited range of vocabulary generally with the result that they also have a restricted repertoire of RVs to use and are often uncertain or unaware of the implicit meanings of RVs with similar denotative meanings. They seem to underestimate the role and importance of reporting verbs in their writing. The choice of reporting verb can tell the reader a lot about what they are reading. For example, *'Anderson proved that ….'* has a slightly different meaning from *'Anderson argued that ...'*. The former phrase implies a hypothesis has been proven (either positively or negatively), while the latter implies an argument that is still open to conjecture, interpretation, or debate. Writers need to make careful use of words (verbs) in their writing to make or support their claims while at the same time, aim at using a variety of reporting verbs to give life to their writing and reduce monotony by use and repetition of few words.

2.6.1 Integral Citation

In this type of citation, the author's name is included as part of the sentence. This draws attention to the author's important role in developing the information which is being referenced. This type of citation is author prominent. The format is given below:

Human subject + reporting verb + rest of sentence

For example:

a. Boadu (2019) *advises* students to be careful when walking on the streets.
b. Asamoah and Gorge (2020) *reject* the report of the Commission of Enquiry.

As the examples illustrate, this type of integral citation is signalled by the presence of a cited author's name followed by a reference year in the brackets and a reporting verb, and then the rest of the sentence. The reporting verb links/glues the human subject with the rest of the sentence.

2.6.2 Non-integral Citation

In this citation type, the emphasis is on the information rather than the author. It is known as information prominent. This means that information from another source is paraphrased or quoted and the author is mentioned in the reference. This gives greater emphasis to the information being provided rather than its origin. The format is given below:

Begin sentence + reporting verb + rest of sentence (+Human subject)

For example:

a. Students should be careful when *walking* on the streets (Boadu 2018).
b. The Commission of Enquiry's report was *rejected* by the City Council (Asamoah and Gorge 2020).

Though most academic papers contain a mixture of integral and non-integral orientations, in most disciplines there are usually more non-integral references than integral ones.

2.6.3 Reporting verbs as an aspect of citation

When using integral citation, a writer uses a reporting verb after the author's name to establish the nature of the information being reported. Common reporting verbs include *describes, proposes, reports, shows, argues, suggests, analyses, demonstrates, states, observes, believes, says, comments, affirm, establishes,* and

proves. The choice of reporting verb can tell the reader a lot about what he or she is reading. For example, consider the following sentences:

a. Kofi *proved* that the box is heavy.

b. Kofi *argued* that the box is heavy.

These two sentences have different (distinct) meanings. The former phrase implies a hypothesis has been proven, that is, Kofi showed beyond reasonable doubt (*proved*) that the box is heavy. The latter case (b) implies that Kofi is trying to convince the listener with some argument (argue) as to the heaviness of the box. In this case, the argument is still open to interpretation/debate. The writer needs to make accurate use of these verbs in their theses to make claims while at the same time, aiming at the variety and reducing the incidence of repetition using very few reporting verbs.

2.7 ROLE OF REPORTING VERBS IN ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

Writers employ reporting verbs to integrate the ideas of others into their arguments, to indicate what is already known about the subject of study, or to point out the weaknesses in other writers' arguments, or to align themselves with a distinct school of thought. Reporting verbs feature as one of the crucial elements of language which writers use in constructing text in academic writing to assess sources they draw on, into their texts, making the writers critical about the source texts (Kwon, Staples & Partridge 2018). The use of RVs persuades the reader that the information the writer is presenting is objective because the writer's claims are reinforced by the views of other writers. Hyland (2002 p.115) explains the importance of 'reporting' in academic texts when he states that:

> Even the most original paper integrates and represents ideas, concepts, findings, and theories from other sources and, indeed, would be unlikely to reach publication if it did not. Simply put,

academic writing depends on its success in situating current work in a larger disciplinary narrative.

Various sources of information are required to be integrated into writing academic papers, and essential also is an evaluation of the ideas used in one's writing. A writer makes references to preceding research by other writers, to convince readers and to show that the work being described is crucial and valid. A writer does this by exhibiting the view that another writer's claim is correct, incorrect, or remains neutral. One important tool for doing this is the use of reporting verbs. Hyland (2002 p.116) indicates that the use of RVs 'is a significant rhetorical choice'. A writer's use of reporting verbs is not only to report the source material but also to direct readers' attention to their position or stance towards the cited material. Hyland (1999) affirms that it is particularly important to cite other writers while constructing knowledge, and the way writers respond to the knowledge or their stance is of equal importance to the knowledge given. Hunston and Thompson (2000 p.223) note that "the rhetorical impact of a paper often rests on the connections that writers make between their claims and the claims of others". Thus, to establish the credibility of both the writer and the claims, the choice of reporting verb is vital (Bloch 2010).

An author's viewpoint regarding other related research and literature can be done using appropriate reporting verbs. A writer can use RVs to present, criticise and question another author's viewpoint and what has been done, which is an essential part of academic discourse. Thompson and Ye (1991) also point out that writers may use RVs to refer to their claims and opinions and to reveal how the writer views others' claims. Sakita (2002) also points out that reporting verbs reflect how writers and speakers present, critique, and question their claims as well as express their own related opinions. Reporting verbs encompass a wide range of lexical devices writers employ to establish the credibility of the reported claims, espousing stance and

indicating their attitudes regarding their propositions to their readers (Hyland 2002; Bloch 2010).

A writer uses reporting verbs to make intertextual connections while presenting an argument and creates a link between the present study and previous research in the discipline. Moreover, reporting verbs help the writer create a new place in the related field of study (Charles 2006). In academic writing, the choice of an appropriate reporting verb is key because this can impact the credibility and rhetorical impact of the claim made (Bloch 2010). The most appropriate choice of reporting verb in academic writing is a challenge to many writers (Hyland 1999). Swales (1990, 2014) indicates that academic writing follows rhetorical, grammatical, and stylistic patterns. In referring to claims in academic essays, the correct choice of grammatical devices such as the reporting verb is important. Some scholars identify the importance of the reporting verb by evaluating it within a statement made by the writer. The reporting verb allows the writer to show responsibility for the statement made (Zhang 2008; Swales 2014).

2.8 THE NATURE OF REPORTING VERBS

Reporting verbs vary and often they carry similar meanings. Reporting verbs also occur in different kinds of grammatical structures and the domain of use of the verbs varies. For example, in some sentence structures, RVs such as *add*, *acknowledge*, *admit*, *agree*, *allege*, *argue*, *assert, assume, believe, claim comment, conclude,* and *confirm* can be used with *that* as in

Verb + that (complement clause)

e.g. Anderson (2010) *argues* that …

The study *assumes* that …

It was *claim*ed that …

However, in other structures the complement clause marker is absent. The absence of the clause marker makes it difficult for writers to determine the distinct choice of verbs to "satisfy both the syntactic requirements of their sentences and, perhaps more importantly, to express their attitudes towards the claims" (Bloch 2010). In doing so, "some writers may lack comprehension in terms of the subtleties of the appropriate Reporting verbs to be used to convey their message" (Manan & Noor 2014). Writers generally find it complex to determine the appropriate use of the variety of reporting verbs to convey the appropriate meanings.

Silva and Matsuda (2002) state that writing is always embedded in a complex web of relationships between writers and readers. Further, these relationships are constantly changing. Writers need to use RVs to present, criticise and question other writers' opinions and/or claims and to express theirs. Silva and Matsuda (2002) argue that "the writer's task is not as simple as constructing an accurate representation of reality; the writer also has to negotiate, through the construction of the text, his or her view of these elements of writing with the views held by the readers" (Silva & Matsuda 2002 p.253). This process they describe highlights the complex nature of reporting verbs.

Tojo (1990) attributes the most recalcitrant problem in reporting verb phrases to the differences of tense, aspect, mood, and modality. He highlights the difficulty of writers using a system of verbs and generating sentences to project the different nuances the reporting verbs convey. More than a decade later Dazdarevic, Pazar, and Fifuljanin (2015) re-affirm the complex nature that reporting verbs present and aver that reporting verbs represent a complex and confusing group of verbs for reporting statements and questions that are often non-definitive. These authors

describe reporting verbs as words with "never-ending feature" which makes this group of verbs most challenging and difficult to understand.

Some reporting verbs fall in the category of academic discourse. Pickard (1995) for example, was concerned about pedagogic purposes and used a concordance tool to investigate how expert writers use citations from a corpus of eleven (11) applied linguistic articles, motivated by the observation that English as a Second Language (ESL) writers overuse the RV *say.* She presents an argument that the overuse of the reporting verb *say* is "part of a much larger problem related to understanding the requirements of academic writing, especially when acknowledging sources" (Pickard 1995 p.87). Her analysis of the integral citations found that there were only four occurrences of *say* in her corpus, which "is consistent with Thompson and Ye's (1991) research as they found that *say* "appeared less frequently than would have been predicted" (Thompson & Ye 1991 p.367). Instead of using *say*, expert writers use alternative RVs such as *argue, point out,* and other RVs with similar meanings of *say* in their writing. The author concludes that expert writers use a variety of reporting verbs and do not limit themselves to verbs such as *say, tell, talk* and *speak*. These verbs in general are known as communicative verbs, but not all communicative verbs are used in academic writing. For example, those used in fiction for coherence are not adequate for academic writing as indicated by Hinkel (2020). He demonstrates this in the illustration below:

> I went to a bookstore and *asked* the saleswoman, 'Where's the self-help section?' She *said* if she *told* me, it would defeat the purpose.

These kinds of reporting verbs are used to enable the free flow of conversation in literary works. Using "creative" substitutions for academic writing can be distracting to the reader and the verbs in these instances are referred to as "quote markers" (Klamer 2000). He mentions that using these quote markers involves a violation of

universal constraints on ”Semantic Transparency” and “Structural Simplicity” in academic writing, where semantic transparency refers to the separation of a word to its simplest word to infer meaning from its parts or morphemes, and semantic transparency means clear and simple writing.

2.9 DISCIPLINARY VARIATIONS IN THE USE OF REPORTING VERBS

Although many disciplines use RVs, they vary in their choice of use. Some disciplines require elaborate use of RVs than others. Hyland (1999) studied the choice of RVs used in citations from various disciplines and found that approximately, 400 RVs were used across the various disciplines. Hyland (1999) observes that articles from Philosophy contained the highest number of RVs – 57.1 per article, while those from Physics used the least – 6.6 per article. Further, disciplines use specific RVs – philosophers preferred the verb *says*, linguists preferred to use verbs such as *suggest*, *argue, show, explain, find* or *point out*, while physicists used verbs such as *develop, report* or *study.*

In a related study in Applied Linguistics, Cullip and Carrol (2003) argue about the technical nature of the subject which follows a style that is unique to this genre. The writers in this discipline exploit different patterns of RVs to construct their texts; such writers employ reporting verbs like *consist, discuss, show,* and *illustrate* to make claims as also noted by Jafarigohar and Mohammadkhani (2015). These authors assert that the Applied Linguist may face difficulty in using reporting verbs to develop academic essays like any other discipline, even though they are supposedly taught as competent users of the English language.

The findings of Hyland’s (1999) study reveal that in the various disciplines, there were significant differences in the choice of RVs used to make claims. Academic writing

articles in Marketing, Sociology, Philosophy, and Applied Linguistics displayed a preference for discourse activity verbs while Engineering and Science used more research verbs. There was a high proportion of author tentative verbs in the marketing papers. Hyland (1999) found that writers in all the disciplines studied tend to indicate their positions to cited works more often indirectly by ascribing an attitude to authors than directly showing their stance towards the cited work. However, there were certain differences in their attitude towards the cited materials. Scientists or Engineers in the "hard sciences" denote cited authors as conveying a neutral attitude to their findings (Nguyen 2018). Their reporting style is more detached and neutral, reflecting a need to build a convincing argument by merely displaying an awareness of prior research without personal argument. On the other hand, papers in 'soft' disciplines such as Social Sciences or Humanities, provide evidence that writers portray the reported authors as adopting a stance towards their work either presenting their views as true, false, or tentatively correct.

Hyland (2002) argued that writers tend to indicate their positions to cited work by ascribing an attitude to authors who use different reporting verbs. Writers in the Humanities and Social Sciences tend to use Discourse verbs in their writing. He explains that "the greater use of Discourse Act forms in the Humanities and Social Sciences… is more appropriate in an argument schema which more readily regards explicit interpretation, speculation, and complexity as accepted aspects of knowledge" (Hyland, 2002 p.126). His work supports the idea that there were considerable disciplinary differences in the use of reporting verbs.

Petric (2007) carried out a comparative study of the rhetorical citation functions in eight high-rated and eight low-rated master's theses in the discipline of Gender Studies, written by English as a second language students. The study revealed that low-rated theses had a tendency towards description rather than analysis and high-rated theses used citation in various rhetorical functions and for different purposes.

De Oliveira and Pagano (2006) studied RVs usage in Portuguese research articles and science popularisation articles in Portuguese magazines. This study indicated that the occurrence of RVs that imply direct discourse representation was more frequent in science popularisation articles than in research articles. Besides, in the science popularisation articles, most of the verbs were used in the simple present tense, which shows that novel findings were being reported; however, in research articles, the verbs were mostly used in the past tense. These cited references demonstrate the complexity of reporting verbs in the use of tenses.

The studies that investigated RVs have not only been limited to articles and theses written in the discipline of English Language Studies, neither are the studies limited to the literature review section of academic essays. The use of RVs in medical science research has also been explored in recent years by some researchers. For example, Jirapanakorn (2012) investigated how reporting verbs are used in articles written in Thai journals. He concluded that in the Thai journals, fewer reporting verbs were used. From another medical science research, Davis (2017) showed that novice second language (SL2) writers of medical research articles used RVs solely to report on work done by others; this suggests that the authors of those articles they comment on are experts and offer something of value to the field. He studied thirteen (13) medical articles that were randomly selected. He used lexical priming to determine if the choice of reporting verb can be affected by its context. He states that authors of those medical articles lack the skill of choosing and using reporting verbs persuasively. This is in line with the earlier studies by some researchers who point out that students have persistent difficulty choosing appropriate RVs in certain situations, which always leads to misinterpretation in their written assignments (Pecorari 2008; Bloch 2010).

2.10 CATEGORIES OF REPORTING VERBS

Due to the complex nature of reporting verbs in academic discourse, some researchers have tried to categorise them to help writers choose and use appropriate RVs in their writing. Some of the categories are Author Acts or Writer Acts, Research Acts, Discourse Acts, and Cognition Acts.

2.10.1 Thompson and Ye (1991)

Thompson and Ye (1991) developed a framework that has served as a basis for examining RVs in different types of texts (Figure 2.3). They investigated the function of RVs in the Introduction section of academic articles and proposed a useful framework, which has encouraged other researchers to adopt or modify it for their purposes (Thomas & Hawes 1994; Hyland 2002).

Thompson and Ye (1991) examined how writers agree with or detach themselves from a reported proposition to varying degrees by using different RVs. First, they establish two types of Acts performed by RVs. These are Author Acts and Writer Acts, where the author is the person who is cited, and the writer is the person who is citing.

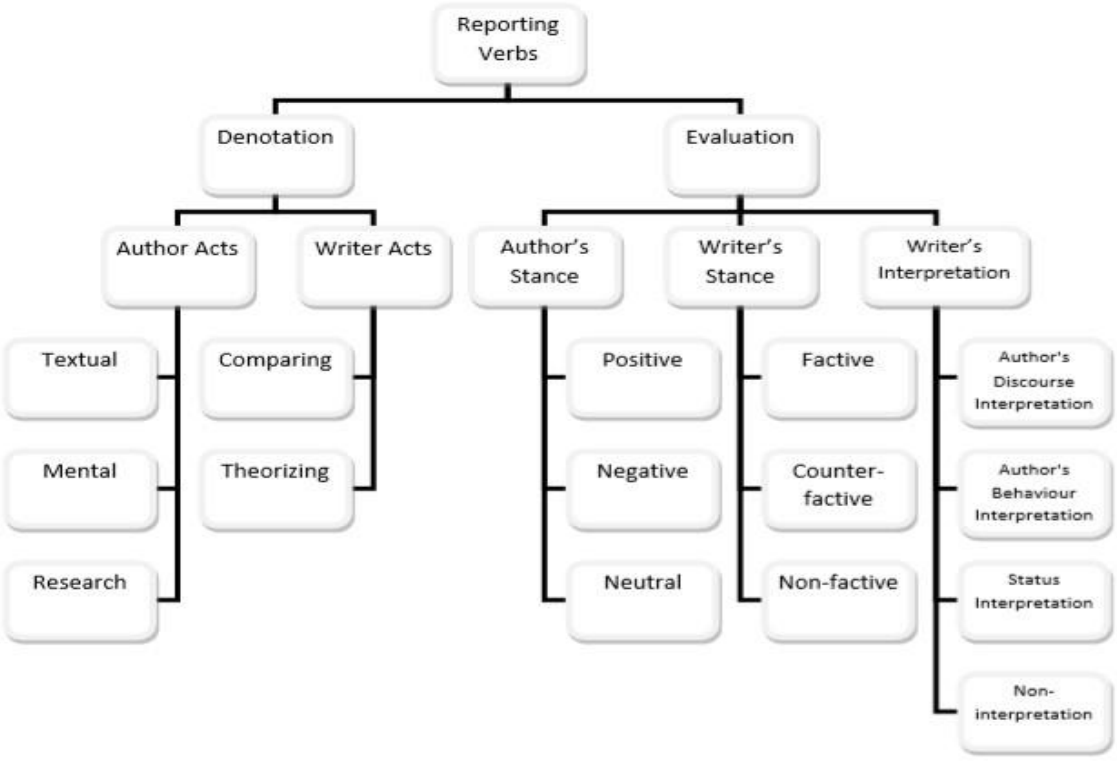

Figure 2.3: Thompson and Ye (1991) classification of reporting verbs.

Verbs in the Author Acts "involve the existence of the author's text, to a more or less explicit degree ... the responsibility for the process is given to the author" (Thompson & Ye 1991 p.370). Verbs in the Writer's Acts "do not refer to the author's Acts but rather to processes for which responsibility is ascribed, as it were, covertly to the reporting writer" (Thompson & Ye 1991 p.370).

The reporting verbs in the Writer Acts refer to the processes for which the reporting writer is taking responsibility. Textual verbs refer to processes in which verbal expression is an obligatory component. Such examples of textual verbs include *state, write, suggest, point out, term, challenge, underline, name,* and *deny*. Mental verbs primarily specify cognitive processes. Examples of mental verbs include *believe, focus on, think, consider,* and *prefer*. Research verbs refer to the mental or physical

processes that are part of the research work. Examples of Research Acts verbs include *find, measure, calculate, quantify,* and *obtain.*

Thompson and Ye (1991) also establish that writers make choices of reporting verbs to describe a positive and negative evaluation of previous studies. Reporting verbs can be used to perform an evaluative function where they show the author's stance, the writer's stance, and the writer's interpretation. Verbs can be used to show an author's stance as positive, negative, or neutral. A writer can indicate his or her stance by using factive verbs, counter factive, and non-factive, as well as give an interpretation. Thompson and Ye (1991) based their classification of RVs on more than one hundred introductory chapters of articles from various disciplines from published journals. This makes their classification an in-depth one, as they used over four hundred RVs to derive this framework. Although this framework brings out the differences in the meanings of reporting verbs and specifies the functions of denotation and evaluation they perform, it is complex for many writers who use it.

Nanyue (2013) adopted Thompson and Ye's classification of reporting verbs for a study of two Chinese students pursuing a master's programme at the University of Exeter in the UK. The idea was to examine how the students progressed by using reporting verbs in essay writing activities over a one-year duration. Nanyue's (2003 findings were that the two Chinese students did not make any progress with the use of reporting verbs.

Nkansah (2013) used Thompson and Ye's (1991) framework of RVs in her examination of how reporting verbs were used in the front-page stories of the *Daily Graphic* and *The Ghanaian Times* which are two common Ghanaian newspapers in wide circulation nationwide. For the study, a random selection of eighty front-page stories of these newspapers was carried out. A qualitative content analysis conducted

in the study revealed that ample use was made of reporting verbs that indicate a speaker's attitude rather than reporting verbs that indicate a writer's attitude. This is an example of speech-to-text analysis where journalists interview people and usually record on tape recorders, then transcribe and report what was said almost verbatim.

Jafarigohaar and Mohammadkhanni (2015) carried out a study using articles written in the English language by both native and non-native writers. They used a corpus of sixty-three (63) articles which were published in three scholarly journals in the disciplines of language teaching and applied linguistics. Their findings indicated vast differences in RV choice by these categories of writers. An important aspect of their study was the goal to ascertain to what extent the writers cited other authors directly or indirectly. A tally of the verbs used by the writers was noted and thereafter categorised according to Thompson and Ye's (1991) framework. The authors concluded that native writers made ample use of direct quotations in their writing, as compared to the non-native writers. Their findings were attributed to the possible language competence of the native writers compared to the non-native speakers.

Davis (2017) selected a corpus of two hundred and fifty (250) peer-reviewed medical research articles that were open-sourced from a medical journal (PubMed) and examined how reporting verbs in medical writing were used. He focused on the Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion sections of these articles employing for his analysis Thompson and Ye's (1991) three categories of author's stance namely factive, counter-factive, and non-factive verbs of reporting. The findings of his study revealed that even in the medical sciences, some authors lack the skill of choosing and using reporting verbs persuasively.

The framework of Thompson and Ye (1991) may not be 'watertight'; nevertheless, it serves as a basis for investigating RVs in different types of texts; some researchers have adapted it and used it and others have modified it. Hyland (2002 p.4) clarifies:

> Thompson and Ye (1991) provide an interesting analysis of the relationships between reporting verbs and evaluation, and their categorisation emphasises the important distinction between the position of the reporting writer and the source author. However, their study was confined to the introduction sections of articles, which ignores a great deal of the reporting which occurs in Humanities and Social Science papers and involves a rather complex categorization system which separates evaluation from reporting and allows considerable overlap.

Nanuye (2013 p.16) asserts that Thompson and Ye's classification is "sophisticated due to the large corpus size and the number of reporting verbs identified from the texts, not to mention the evaluative potential and the interaction between these verbs".

2.10.2 Thomas and Hawes (1994)

Thomas and Hawes (1994) analysed RVs in medical journals, using Thompson and Ye's (1991) framework. They examined semantic categories of a corpus of eleven (11) research articles and presented a grouping of denotation of RVs that writers of medical articles could use. Thomas and Hawes (1994) suggested: Real-World or Experimental Activity verbs, Discourse Act verbs, and Cognition Act verbs (Figure 2.4).

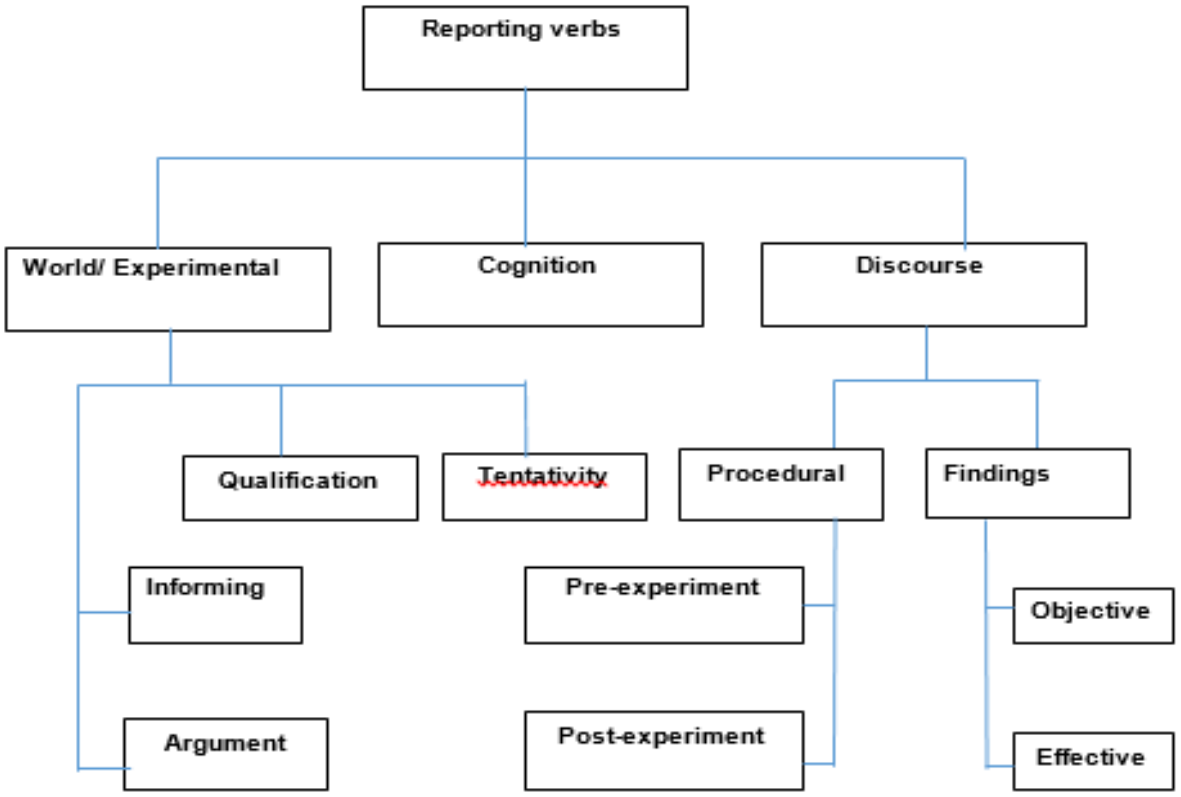

Figure 2.4: Thomas and Hawes' (1994) framework of reporting verbs.

These authors mention that the category of Discourse Activity verbs coincides with their category of Textual verbs; Cognitive Activity verbs with Mental verbs and Real World / Experimental verbs with Research verbs.

The first group, world or experimental verbs, is used by a writer to refer to the method or procedures of the cited research. These verbs include *show, find, conduct, observe, demonstrate,* and *establish*. Second, discourse verbs refer to any activities related to speech or writing. Some examples of the discourse verbs are *suggest*, *conclude, report, describe,* and *recommend.* The third group, cognition verbs, *are* reporting verbs that refer to mental activities. Cognition verbs include *believe, consider, think, assume,* and *recognise*.

Using Thomas and Hawes' (1994) model, Ramoraka (2014) investigated the use of RVs in essays written by L2 undergraduate students. His focus was on Discourse Activity verbs (Textual verbs) and he examined a corpus of forty (40) essays from students in the departments of Media Studies and Primary Education of the University of Botswana. His findings showed that these students used more informing verbs as compared to argumentative verbs, which indicate an evaluative role. Besides, the findings showed that comparatively, students from the Primary Education Department used more reporting verbs than students from the Department of Media Studies.

Thomas and Hawes' (1994) classification is suitable for writers when choosing a reporting verb appropriate to the cited information. It does not clearly show the evaluative potential of these verbs, although this classification seemed much easier to use with choosing the different functions of the verbs. It also does not present a clear difference between reporting and reported writer. Hyland (2002 p.4) notes that:

> Thomas and Hawes' (1994) alternative taxonomy offers a much clearer description of the network of options available to writers in medical articles. But while this scheme is easier to apply in identifying the functions of different verbs, it does not clearly reveal their evaluative potential nor always maintain the distinction between reporting and reported writer in identifying the source of this evaluation.

2.10.3 Francis, Hunston, and Manning (1996)

Another classification of RVs was presented by Francis, Hunston and Manning (1996). Their model, which derives from the COBUILD project, describes the semantic groupings of reporting verbs. These authors group semantic verbs into the following categories:

1. Argue verbs are concerned with speaking, writing and other forms of communication. For example, *argue, suggest, point out, write, conclude, claim, add, maintain, propose, imply* and *mention.*
2. Think verbs are concerned with thinking including having a belief*;* For example, *knowing, understanding, hoping, fearing, think, assume, feel, hold* and *believe.*
3. Show verbs are concerned with indicating a fact or situation. For example, *show, demonstrate* and *reveal.*
4. Find verbs that are concerned with coming to know or think about something. For example, *find, observe, discover* and *indicate.*
5. Add verbs are concerned with the relationship of something that is said or written to something else that has been said or written. For example, *add, repeat* and *verify***.**

This classification by Francis, Hunston, and Manning (1996) was essentially to serve as a pedagogical tool. Friginal (2013) conducted a study on how college students make use of reporting verbs in writing activities that incorporate research on works from a variety of sources. He employed the groupings of semantic verbs of Francis, Hunston & Manning (1996) and showed that when a corpus of reporting verbs is used in teaching students, the process yields a positive impact.

Kwon, Staples and Partridge (2018) use a task on literature review writing from various sources to examine the reporting verb uses of first-year second language (L2) writers. They analysed the types of verbs the students choose and how they are used based on the classification of Francis, Hunston and Manning, (1996). Their findings indicate that the study participants use similar reporting verb patterns repeatedly. Thus, they recommend more pedagogical effort to help students in using reporting verbs appropriately to make their writing tasks more persuasive.

2.10.4 Hyland (1999)

Hyland (1999) draws on the earlier works to classify RVs into Research Acts, Discourse Acts, and Cognition Acts. Hyland (1999 p.349) establishes this when he states that: "Following Thompson and Ye (1991) and Thomas and Hawes (1994), I classified the reporting verbs according to the type of activity referred to". In Hyland's (1999) classification, he uses the terms "discourse" and "cognition" for "textual" and "mental" verb categories in Thompson and Ye (1991) classification, respectively, and sub-categorised verbs in the Research group into two groups as Thomas and Hawes did. He does not explain why Discourse verbs were not sub-categorised. The distinction between Hyland's study and the previous studies is that essentially Hyland's work sought to examine disciplinary differences in the use of RVs in different discourse communities. Hyland points out that reporting previous research in the different disciplines reflects how knowledge is constructed and established in these different discourse communities. Hyland (1991 p.343) states that:

> Overt references to specific other texts and the response of writing to prior writing is an important constitutive feature of research articles, contributing to how we identify and evaluate research writing in different disciplines.

Hyland classified the RVs in terms of denotation using a simplified version of Thompson and Ye's categorisation as shown in Figure 2.5. Hyland (1999) presents three categories of denotative meanings of reporting verbs as Research Acts (Finding verbs and Procedure verbs), Cognition Acts and Discourse Acts, equivalent to the classification of Thompson and Ye (1991).

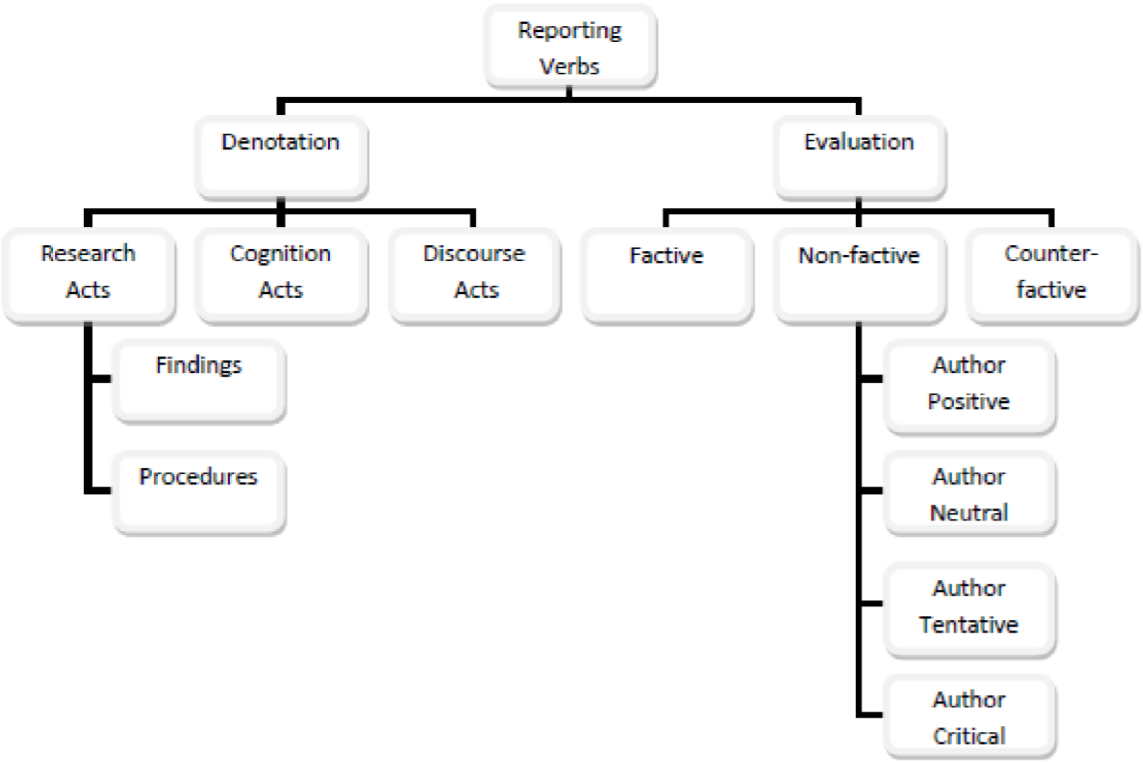

Figure 2.5: Categorisation of reporting verbs in terms of denotation and evaluation in Hyland (1999).

These authors classified reporting verbs according to a simplified version of Thompson and Ye (1991), in terms of evaluative meanings of RVs. Hyland (1999 p.350) explains that:

> The writer may present the reported information as true (*acknowledge, point out, establish*), as false (*fail, overlook, exaggerate, ignore*) or non-factively, giving no clear signal. This option allows the writer to ascribe a view to the source author, reporting him or her as positive *(advocate, argue, hold, see),* neutral *(address, cite, comment, look at),* tentative *(allude to, believe, hypothesize, suggest)* or critical *(attack, condemn, object* and *refuse*).

These processes combine to show the writer's stance regarding reported claims and therefore are an important part of the writing process. Hyland further explains that a problem arises with integrating these processes into a classroom situation because some of the subtler distinctions, such as whether the attitude of the writer toward a claim is favourable or otherwise are only understood clearly when the reader appreciates the background or the bigger rhetorical context within which the claim is made.

In 2002, Hyland revised his earlier model by classifying reporting verbs based on their process and evaluative functions. This new outline, which serves as the analytical framework for this present study, will be discussed in the next chapter. Reporting verbs have also been categorised in academic journals as being either evaluative or objective based on a study by Ferris and Hedgecock (2005). These authors give examples of evaluative reporting verbs as *believe, suppose, assume, imply* and *insist*. They clarify that evaluative reporting verbs bear evaluative meaning and show a writer's degree or disagreement with another writer's view. They also give examples of objective verbs as *state, suggest, maintain, explain* and *conclude.*

Bloch (2010) designed an online database of sentences that enables students, teachers, and material developers to use the various kinds of RVs in their instructional materials for academic writing essays. The categories Bloch created reflect the divisions writers make in choosing RVs. He indicated that by exposing students to authentic samples and showing the process of how a writer decides to write, one can familiarise learners with the appropriate use of RVs. Bloch (2010) additionally, presented categories that reflect the distinctions writers make in choosing a reporting verb. These categories are integral / non-integral, informative / descriptive, writer / author, positive / negative /neutral, and strong / weak / moderate.

Manan and Noor (2014) employed Hyland's (2002) model to determine the choice of RVs by masters' students and identified that verbs in the Research Acts category were used more frequently by students as compared to verbs from Cognition Acts and Discourse Acts categories. Also, *states* from the Discourse Acts were the most repeated verb in the theses. They suggested that RVs could be taught from the perspective of Hyland's classification because these categories could be more beneficial for students. Charles (2006) observed from her evaluation of stance in reporting clauses in theses in the disciplines of material and social science that there were some occurrences of the use of *find/show* as a verb group (e.g., find and observe) and these were used in the past tense. The most frequent verb group found in her corpora was the *Argue group* (e.g *argue* and *note*) and the most frequent tense used was the present simple.

Recent research by Uba (2019) investigated the semantic classification of verbs, used in the citation process of writing in Medicine, Applied Linguistics, Accounting, and Engineering. This analysis was done at two levels with a compilation of a general corpus and sub-corpus. The various categories were identified, and a list was generated for analysing the rhetorical features of the scholarly contributions. The study showed that writers in Accounting and Applied Linguistics employed more reporting verbs in citation processes compared to those in Medicine and Engineering.

A study by Amrullah et al. (2017) investigated the rhetorical functions of reporting verbs employed in the author's prominent citations of 18 research papers written by graduate students of applied linguistics. The focus of this study was on cognitive verbs, discourse verbs, and research verbs, based on Hyland's (2002) framework. The document analysis revealed that Discourse Acts verbs were used more, as compared to the other categories.

2.11 SOME PROBLEMS WITH THE USE OF REPORTING VERBS

From the literature gleaned thus far, students in all academic disciplines make use of RVs to refer to other works to either support their claims or refute them. In the use of RVs writers sometimes encounter problems of correct reference. Some of the most outstanding problems are the overuse of a limited range of RVs, lack of knowledge about rhetorical functions of RVs, wrong tense choice, and limited choice of reporting patterns.

Hyland (2005) supports the idea that a writer needs to use RVs to express a stance and to connect or align oneself with the readers. In academic writing, this choice of RVs requires a great deal of exactness to establish the credibility of both the writer and the claims so that there is a greater possibility that the reader will accept the position the writer is taking (Hunston & Thompson 2000). This is difficult to achieve, as observed in most students' writing; students seem to restrict themselves to using a limited range of RVs. Bloch (2010 p.221), explains that:

> Taking the appropriate stance towards a claim, therefore, can be a complicated process as students often find it difficult to choose among the wide variety of RVs that can satisfy both the syntactic requirements of their sentences and, perhaps more importantly, to express their attitudes towards the claims.

Yeganeh and Boghayeri (2015) conducted a cross-cultural study into RVs. They used a corpus of sixty (60) articles from the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA): thirty (30) articles written by native English speakers and thirty (30) articles written by Persian authors. Using Francis, Hunston and Manning's (1996) classification of RVs as their theoretical framework, Yeganeh and Boghayeri (2015) examined the use and functions of RVs in the Introduction and Literature Review sections of research articles

written by native Persian and English speakers. Their findings revealed a problem of both Persian and English writers having difficulty with using a wide variety of verbs. The writers employ a limited choice of reporting verbs repeatedly. Further, compared to the other categories of verbs, both Persian and English speakers preferred the use of the *Argue group* of RVs. Their results indicate that while English authors show a tendency toward *Think verbs* as their second priority, Persian writers were more oriented towards the use of *Find* verbs as their second priority. This limited range of use of RVs leads to a lack of linguistic variety and makes writing monotonous.

The lack of knowledge about the rhetorical functions of RVs creates yet another problem in writing which stems from the inappropriate selection of verbs (for example, the inappropriate use of 'claim'). Observation of students' writing shows that RVs are not used appropriately to show a writer's views and stance regarding an author's claims. Bloch (2010) observes that the complex interaction between word choice and linguistic goal can make this process "messy and imprecise" (Bloch, 2010 p. 226). He argues further that even if the student can make grammatically correct choices, the rhetorical impact of their claims may suffer if the reporting verb is not appropriate. He adds that students do not always have the linguistic resources for learning how to make these kinds of distinctions, and sometimes rely on simple dictionary definitions. This he adds is, however, not always a useful strategy for expressing a writer's stance towards a claim, as there were instances of detachment between the meanings of words found in a dictionary and how they are commonly used in actual rhetorical contexts.

Concerning how RVs are used in literature review sections of theses written by Vietnamese students on an English major programme, it was revealed that these students were not familiar with using RVs. In constructing texts, students used RVs casually, without paying attention to their rhetorical functions. In sum, the

Vietnamese writers appeared to be unfamiliar with the appropriate use of verbs to achieve the communicative purposes of Literature Review chapters. These authors concluded that it would be appropriate to provide novice writers with examples of some explicit constructions to help them achieve their purposes in writing.

Wette (2010) analysed some assignments by Chinese students who had instruction in English before writing. The common problem encountered was that even after instruction, these non-native speakers of English still had a limited range of reporting verbs which were used repeatedly as evident in their writing. Thus, after instruction, the students failed to acquire the more sophisticated and subtle aspects of reporting.

For two years, Davis (2013) monitored three Chinese students studying for their pre-masters English for Academic Purpose (EAP) programme which eventually served as a basis for them to undertake the master's degree. Davis (2013) observed a dominant use of a limited range of reporting verbs alongside over-citation and insufficient paraphrasing in their assignments.

Nanyue (2013) conducted a case study in monitoring two Chinese students focusing on the use of reporting verbs during one academic year and discovered that both students limited themselves to a small range of lexical choices of reporting verbs. This hindered their expressive power to communicate their views effectively in their essay writing. There was also the use of reporting verbs at random, in the wrong context and tense.

It is openly acknowledged that tense usage poses a challenge to many writers and speakers; however, one effective way in which a writer can convey information and his judgment of a source is to ensure that it is presented in the appropriate tense. For writers, incorrect tense use or lack of knowledge of the past participle forms of irregular verbs presents a challenge. Communication is hindered when writers use

verb tenses vaguely, inconsistently, or wrongly. Students sometimes fail to realise that time - the tense relationship is not the only factor that determines the tense choice.

Salager-Meyer (1994) argues that it is misleading to teach verb choice according to timelines because different tenses are exploited for different functions. Some researchers have studied the usage of the past, present simple, and present perfect tenses in writing and observe that the choice of tense is determined by various elements rather than simply by time. These elements include the writer's attitude towards the importance of events, the degree of generality of the research described, or the context within which the discourse occurs (Gunawardena 1989). The choice of the tense of RVs depends on different levels of generalisation of the reporting statements. Swales (1990) comments that the tense choice may display or give a reflection of the author's stance towards the cited work.

Swales and Feak (1994 p.182) point out that "tense choice in reviewing the previous research is subtle and somewhat flexible" and developed three major patterns. They stated that past tense is used to refer to single studies, the simple present tense is used as a reference to the area of inquiry, and present perfect tense is preferred to refer to the state of current knowledge as presented below:

Pattern 1: Reference to single study (past tense)

Eg.: Bruce (2007) investigated the causes of teenage parenting.

Pattern 2: Reference to areas of inquiry (present perfect tense)

Eg. The causes of teenage parenting have been widely investigated (Bruce 2007; Anderson 2010).

Pattern 3: Reference to the state of current knowledge (simple present tense)

Eg.: The causes of teenage parenting are complex.

(Bruce 2007; Anderson 2010).

Swales and Feak (2004) argue that an acceptable pattern is to use the past tense to refer to the works of previous researchers; besides, to make references to their ideas, the reporting writer can make use of different tense choices. In statements where a writer switches from the past to the present perfect, to the present simple tense, the writer indicates the increasing relevance of the reported study to the writer's research or point of view (Swales & Feak 2004). Further, some writers use a limited range of reporting patterns, dominant among which are patterns such as' according to', 'says that', 'states that'. This usage shows unfamiliarity of the possible pattern's writers can use or of their functions. This limitation in students' writing has also been pointed out by Davis (2013), who found that one of the participants in her investigation tended to repeat a single format of non-integral citation. In the learner corpus, the predominant format is integral citation with the reported author as the subject of the reporting verb.

Ädel (2018) observed a problem of RVs being used rather peculiarly in the published academic papers of ten disciplines. She observes that it is rare to find clear patterns across the hard-soft discipline divide. She states that the typical attribution type is a verbal structure, involving a reporting verb, and emphasise the need for the measurement of the most common reporting verbs used in attribution across disciplines.

There has also been copious work done on RVs and citation practices amongst both expert and novice writers. Such studies highlight the complexities of the use of reporting verbs and reflect the difficulties novice writers experience as they learn to use RVs to cite sources fully in their writing.

2.11.1 Native / Non-Native/Cross-Cultural use of Reporting verbs

A study by Barton (1993) explored how RVs are employed in the construction of stance in argumentative essays of experienced academic writers and novice student writers at Wayne State University. The texts were chosen to explore the similarities or differences in the text construction of the two groups of writers when constructing arguments and using reporting verbs. Barton (1993) maintains that members of both groups constructed arguments for a general academic audience and their texts could be said to be similar in terms of verbs used in conveying the arguments. He points out a significant difference in the use of source materials between the two groups. The experienced writers used evidence of RVs to refer to literature within a critical perspective, while students neutrally used the evidence. Barton (1993) clarifies that in the use of verbs in the citation, student writers generally maintain a neutral stance as seen in their use of *state, say, call, refer to, believe,* and *write,* and do not use RVs to reflect their perspectives. The experienced writers had expertise in academic fields and published in the *Chronicle of Higher Education newspaper*, whereas the students also came from different disciplines. Barton (1993) argued that the texts produced by experienced writers were easier to read compared to writing from inexperienced writers like students.

Zhang (2008) examined and compared theses written in English by Chinese and native speakers. His comparison was based on the reporting forms, reporting verbs used, and the related functions. He found out that the English writers used more reporting verbs; besides, Chinese writers do not use as many reporting verbs. He added that both groups use RVs in integral and non-integral citations.

A study by Loi (2012) on the nature and use of reporting verbs and citation practices in introductions of research articles written by Chinese and English researchers revealed that Chinese researchers tend to use fewer reporting verbs in citations than

English researchers. Oskueia and Kubi (2014) have also studied Iranian and native English writers in the field of Applied Linguistics. Their results showed that Iranian writers used more reporting verbs in citations than native English writers.

Manan and Noor (2014) found that students in Malaysia were more familiar with RVs from the Research Acts category than reporting verbs from the Cognition Acts and the Discourse Acts categories. Their data revealed that the RVs from Research Acts category had the highest occurrences. As compared to the Cognition Acts and Discourse Acts categories, the Research Acts accounted for 44.8% of the total occurrence of RVs. The Cognition Acts and Discourse Acts categories documented 30% and 25% respectively. In these categories, words such as *suggest* and *states* had the highest frequency of occurrence.

Many researchers have studied the use of RVs by native and non-native writers. These studies reveal some differences such as the type of verbs chosen, and the range of reporting forms used, among others. For example, Jafarigohar and Mohammadkhani (2015) examined how RVs are used by native and non-native writers in 63 articles on language teaching and Applied Linguistics. They found that although there were differences in the choice of reporting verbs, the overall number, and frequency of reporting verbs used by native and non-native writers were equal. They also found that native writers used more reporting verbs and indirect quotations than non-native writers**.** Another difference they realised, which was not surprising though, was that native writers used more RVs than non-native writers.

Yilmaz and Ertuk (2017) also examined the diversity, functional and positional differences of RVs by comparing the works of native and non-native Turkish researchers. These authors used a native corpus (80 articles from 3 scholarly journals) and a non-native corpus (80 articles from 3 scholarly journals). Yilmaz and

Ertuk (2017) concluded that both native and non-native Turkish researchers used similar reporting verbs in their writing.

The deliberate choice and semantic implications that reporting verbs convey when used in newspaper reporting have been the focus of some scholars. Bergler (1992) identifies two levels in newspaper reports. These are pure information and meta-information. Bergler (1992) points out that reporters use reporting verbs to incorporate important information related to the preciseness of quotations and the manner of the original utterance. Yamashita (1998) analysed discourse in American and Japanese newspaper reports and categorised verbs into reporting, mental, manner-of-speaking, and speech acts. Mental verbs depict the content of the reporter's mind to the reader. Manner-of-speaking verbs show the physical features of the reported discourse and Speech Acts verbs are used by reporters to present the illocutionary force of the discourse.

Floyd (2000) analysed reporting verbs and bias in the press. He concluded that reporting verb choices emphasise the bias of journalists, or highlight the attitude of the reporter towards the speaker. Floyd (2000) maintains out that journalists report on the activities of different people using different reporting verbs and this, in one way or the other, impacts how readers perceive them. He points out that some reporting verbs favour the speakers and others do not. Reporting verbs that favour the speakers represent the information as valid or credible. Some of these verbs include *appeal, reveal, confirm, announce, point out,* and *state.* Other report verbs like *allege* and *claim* are unfavourable to the speaker. *Allege* is a word that gives the ideas in the strongest possible terms that someone has done something illegal or a wrongdoing typically without proof. Similarly, *claim* means to assert that something is the case typically without providing evidence or proof. Hence, the uses of these verbs in reporting by a writer do not place an author being cited in a favourable light. Again,

depending on the stance of the writer and the goal in mind, he/she may deliberately use the words to achieve an aim. Therefore, writers must understand the meanings of a reporting verb before use in constructing texts so that the explicit meaning the writer intends to convey to the reader can be achieved.

2.11.2 Form and Structure

The use of reporting verbs has also been extended to form and structure. Dubois (1988) and Charles (2006) have discussed reporting forms among others to find out how scientists use RVs in citations in biomedical journal articles. Of the four forms of reporting used (direct quotations, generalisations, summary, and paraphrasing), Dubois' (1988) concluded that in the sciences, generalisation, and summary were the highest used. Weissberg and Buker (1990) add to the study of reporting verbs and tense and discuss this in terms of prominence. They present their views on tense usage as follows:

a. The past tense is used in the findings of individual studies closely related to the current researcher's idea.

b. The simple present tense is used in the information prominent citations when the cited information is generally accepted as scientific fact.

c. The present perfect tense is used in weak author prominent citations and general statements which describe the level of research activity in an area.

Using two corpora made up of native speakers' theses in politics/international relations and materials science, Charles (2006) for example, investigated the phraseological patterns in reporting clauses used in the citation. The focus of her study was on finite reporting clauses in that-clauses. This study revealed that

reporting clauses are frequently used in both disciplines; besides, they frequently occur as integral citations with a human subject.

Overall, past tense is used to refer to the previous research that is completed as part of a study or to present background information about the study. To discuss findings from the literature that are generally considered factual or show readers the familiarity of the writer with the area, the simple present tense is used. However, the present perfect tense is used to give the general background of past research and to show that previous research plays an important role in conducting present research. This is in line with what Gilbert (1977) means that using reporting verbs, writers give references to previous works to make persuasive claims and to indicate the validity and importance of the work reported.

Yeganeh and Boghayeri (2015) investigated the occurrence of the most used RVs and their functions in the introduction and literature review sections of research articles written by native and non-native writers. Their study revealed that in both corpora, there was the frequent use of reporting clauses with a that-clause. Many reporting verbs carry similar, but different nuances and are difficult to be used appropriately even by native speakers, but when used, they undoubtedly give a greater quality to one's writing. The use of RVs depends on the structure. There are mainly five structures:

> The first one is followed by "preposition + verb-*ing*".
> It can be used in the following cases: *accuse someone of something, blame someone for something, forbid someone from something, recommend, admit (to), consider, insist on, regret, advise someone against something, criticize someone for, justify, suggest, apologize for, deny, propose,* and *warn someone about/of*.

The second one is verbs followed by "to + infinitive".

It is used in the following cases: *agree, demand, promise, ask, forget, refuse, decide, offer* and *threaten*.

The third structure is a reporting verb followed by "that + clause".

It can be applied to *add, consider, imply, tell someone, agree, deny, mean, repeat, think, announce, doubt, mention, reply, threaten, argue, estimate, object, report, warn someone, believe, expect someone, persuade, regret, claim, explain* and *predict*.

The fourth structure is a reporting verb followed by "so + to + infinitive".

It can be used in the following cases: *advise someone, ask someone, encourage someone, forbid someone, instruct someone, invite someone, order someone, persuade someone, prefer someone, remind someone, request someone, tell someone, urge someone* and *warn someone*.

The fifth and last form is reporting verbs structure is followed by "that + (past) subjunctive" or "that + should".

It can be used in the following cases: *advise, agree, demand, insist, prefer, propose, recommend, request, suggest* and *urge*.

2.12 Different reporting structures

There are different reporting formats or structures that writers can employ to vary their reporting, reduce monotony, and bring diversity in the construction of sentences. These formats are outlined below with examples.

1. Author's surname + date + reporting verb + summary/paraphrase:
   e.g. Bruce (2010) notes that early intervention leads to...

2. Summary/paraphrase + author's surname + date:
   e.g. Locally made objects bring foreign exchange (Bruce 2018).
3. Passive structure + summary/paraphrase + author's surname + date:
   e.g. Evidence had been found for the prevalence of Covid 19 (Johnson 2020).
4. Using the impersonal 'it' structure + summary/paraphrase + surname + date:
   e.g. It has been suggested that... (Kennedy 2018).
5. Using the 'there is/are' structure + summary/paraphrase + surname + date:
   e.g. There is evidence for … (Harrison 2018).
6. Using a noun instead of a verb + summary/paraphrase + surname + date:
   e.g. The observation is that … (Stevens 2019).
7. (i) Using the 'according to' phrase + name + date + summary/paraphrase with no reporting verb:
   e.g. According to Micah (2019), teenage parents suffer many brutalities.
   (ii) Summary/paraphrase + 'according to' + name + date, again no reporting verb:
   e.g., Poor people are vulnerable to injustice, according to Williams and Forson (2019).

Drawing from the review of the literature of reporting verbs, the types of genre that researchers have examined is primarily the research article (Thompson & Ye 1991; Hyland 2002; Agbaglo 2017), although there has also been some interest in students' essays and dissertations or graduate students' theses.

Researchers have also examined reporting verbs from different perspectives: the use of tense and voice (Thomas & Hawes 1994); the role of RVs in signalling evaluation (Thompson & Ye 1991; Xie 2013) and the semantics of RVs and their discourse function (Thomas & Hawes 1994), variations in the use of RVs across disciplines

(Hyland 1999; 2002). Studies on RVs in academic writing have generally been outside the Ghanaian setting, hence the need for this current study.

2.13 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Two theories underpin this study. These are Social Constructionism and Systemic Functional Grammar. The two theories are briefly explained in terms of their relevance to the concerns of this study.

2.13.1 Social Constructionism

Social constructionism is based on the premise that "our ways of talking do not neutrally reflect our world, identities and social relations, but rather play an active role in creating and changing them" (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002:1). Human beings are social beings endowed with speech, interact with one another, and can construct knowledge, read and write. Humans can form new words and negotiate their acceptance within a community.

The main precept of social constructionism is that learning exists because of human social interaction. It focuses on the ways individuals and groups participate in the construction of knowledge and perceives it as a social reality. Social constructionism has been used in the domains of Medicine, Psychology, and Sociology among other disciplines to discuss various subjects. There are various proponents of social constructionism (Hyland 2002; Gergen 2011; Gablin 2014; Burr 2015). The principle of social constructionism is that as one uses language by interacting in the social environment, one constructs meaning from the knowledge embedded in the social interaction (Diako 2012); accordingly, the knowledge acquired shapes human interaction and expression.

This implies that writing is constructed through socially negotiated interaction (Augustine 2002). The text in general and the doctoral thesis specifically, is thus an embodiment of social interactions. Hyland (2004) states that the text evolves through a process of social constructionism, which reflects methodologies, arguments, and rhetorical submissions designed to frame disciplinary submissions appropriately. The social constructionist perspective also emphasises the importance of language as a social phenomenon through which individuals relate. Thus, writers can use language to present their views and as well, critique the views of other writers. Using reporting verbs, the graduate student can present his thoughts and concepts.

Academic writing reflects social interactions and language is used not only to signal an understanding of issues in the discipline but also to depict writers' commitment to views/propositions and their positions concerning claims made in the discipline. This suggests that doctoral students by being members of the academic discourse community must embed their writing in a credible, acceptable protocol by using reporting verbs. Friedman (1990) argues that within any given society there are institutions governed by rules and regulations. For example, the academic discourse community has established patterns that define how members should construct and transact meaning with text; thus, these reflect social interactions.

The purpose of this theory views knowledge construction within social communities. Social constructionism examines the processes through which people construct meaning. Indeed, Hyland (2007 p.13) explains that:

> the social interactions in academic writing stem from the writer's attempt to anticipate possible negative reactions to his or her persuasive goals. The writer will choose to respond to the potential negotiability of his or her claims through a series of rhetorical choices

> to galvanize support, express collegiality, resolve difficulties and avoid disagreements in ways which [SIC] most closely respond to the community's assumptions, theories, and methods and bodies of knowledge.

Augustine (2002) posits that the claims and viewpoints that people have at a point in time are taught by our culture and society through learning. Accordingly, in the academic discourse community, the claims and viewpoints that doctoral students present in their writing using reporting verbs, are based on what has been learned in the community. The texts the students construct are thus, socially mediated, influenced by the communities to which these writers and readers belong (Hyland 2008). Thus, students' writing is influenced by the academic environment as well as the communities in which they reside as they interact with members.

Doctoral students are expected to make choices of reporting verbs and use the same appropriately in their writing from the knowledge they have acquired in their social environment by constructing, evaluating, displaying, and negotiating arguments. In academic writing, a writers' principal goal is to be persuasive, convincing members of the academic community to accept a knowledge claim in a piece of writing.

Social constructionism has been questioned by some authors (McClimens 2005; McKinley 2015). One main argument is that research conducted using social constructionism does not yield much change since there is no yardstick for measuring the findings of the research and that recommendations are rarely made. Andrews (2012) in addressing these issues raised explains that this could be an issue related to methodology. Andrews (2012 p.4) explains that:

> this arises because of a misreading of the process in that, researchers adopting this approach do not ground their arguments in or discredit

> opposing arguments by comparing them unfavourably with objective reality. This suggests that, in presenting the findings of the research, social constructionists do not do so in objectivist terms, but rely instead on the credibility of their findings. In other words, they set out to have their findings accepted by presenting a convincing argument rather than arguing that their results are definitive. This is consistent with the idea in constructionism that the findings of the research are one of many discourses. The suggestion here is that far from being neutral, social constructionism can generate real debate and lead to change.

Gergen (2012) explains that knowledge construction has its origin in relationships. This implies that in writing we construct text based on the knowledge we acquire and accumulate during interactions with the people in that environment. Using social constructionism, writers may critique the views of others and not merely accept them (Wang 2013) since realities are socially constructed. The criticisms may explain the importance that social constructionism places on the process through which knowledge is constructed but the processes of choosing appropriate reporting verbs by students during the thesis construction remain under-researched.

2.13.2 Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)

The other theory, which underpins this study, is Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), a grammatical model developed by M. A. K. Halliday in 1961 (cited in Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). The main purpose of language is to communicate, and this linguistic theory posits that language as a social phenomenon is functional and the use of it presents a writer with unlimited choice in the construction of meanings. Linguistic choices are central to communication in general (Beukeboom & Burgers 2017) and specifically, Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar; thus, in-text construction, writers make choices among different verbs to express their views.

Systemic Functional Grammar focuses on how language functions to present specific meaning a writer intends to communicate. It is concerned with the way text is structured, its function, and the meaning of language.

Systemic Functional Grammar differs from traditional grammar to the extent that it sees language as a social semiotic process, for language can function to produce meanings, which are drawn from the cultural and social context of their exchange. This theory emphasises that the meaning of a text is achieved through linguistic choices in a system in which the levels of discourse are arranged in a text or a clause.

In traditional grammar, the sentence is defined as a set of words that is complete, typically containing a subject and predicate. Halliday's Systemic theory conceptualises the sentence as the clause. The clause is presented as generating several layers of meaning into a single linguistic item. This means that when language is used, three main kinds of meanings are used simultaneously in the structure. These layers of meaning are concerned with different aspects of the text and are classified into three dimensions: clause as a message, clause as a communicative exchange, and lastly clause as a representation of an organised text. These three elements are also known as metafunctions and are thus ideational, interpersonal, and textual (Figure 2.6).

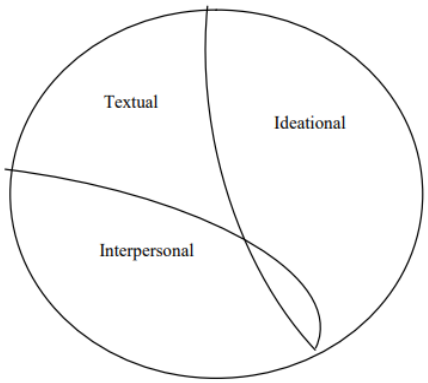

Figure 2.6: Ideational, Interpersonal, and Textual Metafunctions (Martin & White, 2005: as cited in Halliday and Matthiessen 2014).

This suggests that every text is embedded with these three metafunctions and as such, an analysis must incorporate all three. Halliday uses the term metafunction to prevent confusion between what is being talked about and the word*, function*. He elaborates further that:

> we could have called them (i.e., the functions) simply functions; however, there is a long tradition of talking about the functions of language contexts where functions simply mean purpose or way of using language, and has no significance for the analysis of language itself … the systemic analysis shows that functionality is intrinsic to language …[thus]. The term metafunction was adopted to suggest that function is an integral component within the overall theory (Halliday 2004 p. 30-31).

The clause as a message is the textual metafunction; it is concerned with discourse or the flow of information in a text. The clause as a message is the interpersonal metafunction and it expresses attitude and judgment. This relates to the social world, specifically the use of language to create and maintain social relations. These three metafunctions represent different aspects of the world and show different meanings.

2.13.2.1 Clause as a representation

In this study, the focus is on one of the functions of this theory, which is the clause as a representation or ideational meaning. This is concerned with how language is used to express meaning and communicate information clearly and effectively. The clause as a representation uses language to represent a writer's internal and external realities or to interpret and present a writer's experience of the world. In the clause as representation, the meaning of the clause is realised through the types of

processes a writer is involved in. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) categorise these types into the material, mental and relational processes, respectively. Thompson and Ye's (1991) research on reporting verbs reflects this categorisation. The verb is a necessary element in the clausal system and can be used to achieve persuasive and rhetorical intentions. Also, Thompson and Ye's (1991) categorisation of reporting verbs also captures two levels of experience: process and evaluation.

Systemic Functional Grammar emphasises how utterances and texts may specify various possibilities of meaning and will be used to complement social constructionism. Social constructionism emphasises that language is used to define reality. The use of reporting verbs is also a function of linguistic ch

oice. By using Halliday's clause as representation, a more detailed account can be made about the type of processes the doctoral students are involved in as they make choices of reporting verbs.

2.14 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

Social constructivism and social constructionism are regularly confused, sometimes interchanged and other times said to be the same thing. Social constructionism was founded by Seymour Papert, whereas Jean Piaget founded social constructivism. Constructivism is a much earlier theory that focused on the perspective that knowledge is constructed subjectively to represent reality, but not an objective reality. Constructivism discusses the process in which what is considered as real is created by the observer/ individual. This means that when an individual gives meaning to an observation or an experience, the reality is created from his understanding or point of view. This implies that an individual's knowledge and understanding remain the same, regardless of the context. In the absence of in-depth knowledge on a subject, the ideas an individual construct that makes sense to him may be inconsistent with

evidence or commonly accepted explanations leading to misconceptions or abstract from reality. Social constructivism highlights that knowledge construction is based on some linguistic or symbolic constructs and that meaning can be constructed, based on an individual's experiences and knowledge. This represents a shift from the existence of an objective view of the world to the view that an individual can construct an objective world.

The distinction between these theories lies in the fact that social constructionism views knowledge construction as a social activity; an activity that happens between various people, whereas social constructivism views knowledge construction as occurring in an individual's mind when the individual comes across information (existing knowledge) that developed from experiences. Hyland (2000) supports the view that knowledge construction is premised on the social interchange or interactions between people, particularly through discourse, for it is through discourse that knowledge is constructed and transmitted. This suggests that learning and development depend on experience, and prior experiences contribute to the knowledge students bring to classrooms and in the construction of texts as in thesis writing.

2.15 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRESENT STUDY AND PREVIOUS STUDIES

For more than four decades, several studies have been conducted on the role of RVs in academic discourse (Oster 1981; Thompson & Ye 1991; Hyland 1999; Pecorari 2008; Bloch 2010; Agbaglo 2017). While some studies (Loan & Pramoolsook 2015) have investigated RVs in undergraduate student essays, others have investigated them in research articles and focused on the full academic article (Agbaglo 2017). Studies on RVs have been done from different perspectives: tense use (Thomas & Hawes 1994; Sakita 2002), tense and voice (Hanania & Akhtar 1985; Hawes &

Thomas 1997). Thompson and Ye (1991), Thompson (2000), and Yang (2013) have discussed the role of RVs in signalling evaluation.

Petric (2007) discussed the semantics of RVs and their discourse functions. The variations in the use of RVs across disciplines was the focus of Hyland's studies (1999 2002). While other studies were examined the use of RVs in cross-cultural settings (Jafarigohar & Mohammadkhani 2015), others have focused on the use of RVs in interdisciplinary settings (Hyland 2000). The disciplines researched in academic articles in the literature cover a broad range of fields: Education, Media Studies, Biochemistry, Chemistry, Engineering, Medical context and social science and applied linguistics. Not much work is known about how RVs are used in the Humanities such as Linguistics, English, Sociology, Psychology, and Human Resource and Administration, in the Ghanaian setting, a lacuna which this study seeks to fill.

2.16 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter reviewed literature in academic discourse on the use of reporting verbs as a rhetorical device. The literature shows how Thompson and Ye's (1991) taxonomy has been adapted and used by researchers and how others have built on it to increase knowledge of how RVs are used by writers of academic texts. The literature also shows the role, tense use, form, and structure of RVs. Some studies also reveal that writers have problems with the use of RVs and this cuts across cultures. This chapter also discussed the theoretical frameworks of the study. It has also touched on social constructionism and the important role of language as a social phenomenon in knowledge construction. In the next chapter, the methodology employed to extract data from selected theses and the analytical tools are discussed.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

3.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter a review of related literature and research relevant to the study of analysing the range and variability of reporting verbs, to situate the reporting verb in an appropriate and understandable context was presented. It discussed the strategies used to acquire and employ reporting verbs, nature, and the disciplinary variations in the use of reporting verbs. The concepts of academic writing, academic culture, reporting, citation, and plagiarism were also described. The chapter also examined classifications of reporting verbs, and some key theories and concepts associated with use, form, and structure.

This chapter presents information on the research paradigm and research processes used in this study. It highlights the link between research paradigm and philosophical foundations. The various phases of the study such as the data collection process, sample size determination, investigative tools, data analysis process, as well as trustworthiness of the research are presented. The chapter concludes with a summary of the most important concepts discussed.

3.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM AND PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS

A research paradigm is a strategic framework that guides the study. Willis (2007 p.8) explains a research paradigm as “a comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research and practice in a field”. A paradigm, according to Maxwell (2008 p.224), is “a set of very general philosophical assumptions about the nature of the world of research and how it can be understood, assumptions that tend to be shared by researchers working in a specific field or tradition”. It is important for research to be related to a philosophical tradition, for this reflects the direction of the research (Merriam 1998 p.3). According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) there are four

paradigms which guide and inform a study. These are positivism, post positivism, critical theory, and interpretivism.

The positivist paradigm is also described as naturalistic and objective, for it examines, accepts, and predicts rule-governed codes of conduct (Taylor & Medina 2013). Positivist research presents knowledge as objective and quantifiable. Taylor and Medina (2013) explain that the positivist paradigm uses experimental methods in research and makes use of groups that have tests administered to them to measure results. It usually underlies research in the natural sciences because it is experimental and largely quantitative in nature. Generally, positivism highlights objectivity, neutrality and distance between the enquirer and the object of enquiry in order to avoid biases. Findings from research conducted in the positivist paradigm are explained by generalisations derived from patterns and regularities evident in similar situations.

The post-positivist paradigm is closely related to the positivist paradigm. Although it is based on the beliefs of positivism, it focuses largely on the interaction between a researcher and the study participants. The post-positivist paradigm is similar to the positivist paradigm for it aligns with the quantitative method; it employs quasi-experimental research designs as methodological tools. This is because it seeks to "produce objective and generalisable knowledge about social patterns, seeking to affirm the presence of universal properties/laws in relationships amongst pre-defined variables" (Taylor & Medina 2013 p. 7).

The critical theory paradigm aims at addressing societal biases. It employs qualitative approaches to effect important social, economic, political and pedagogical changes. The critical theory paradigm encourages subjects to use advocacy to ensure some positive changes in their lives. Critical research presents knowledge as an ideological account of power, privilege and oppression.

The interpretivist paradigm is based on scientific study and observation (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Interpretivist research focuses on understanding the meanings of choices people make as they are expressed within certain social contexts. One focus of this theory is that individuals explore, understand and create the world around them based on individual experiences and reflections. The interpretivist paradigm focuses on understanding human experiences, and this is mainly achieved using qualitative methods. The interpretivist paradigm seeks to have insight into and extend knowledge of why social life is perceived and experienced in the way that it is. Overall, a research paradigm directs how a study is conceived, interpreted and implemented. There are three main assumptions that support every research paradigm. These are connected, and they are ontology, epistemology and methodology (Al-Ababneh, 2020). In the sections that follow, the link between research paradigm and philosophical foundations (ontology, epistemology and methodology) of a qualitative study is discussed briefly.

3.1.1 Ontology

Ontology describes the nature or the form of reality - how things really are, and how things work. It deals with the nature of existence, social entities or reality. Antwi and Hamza (2015) explain that ontology deals with the way the investigator defines the truth and reality. Lincoln and Guba (2013 p.39) pose these questions regarding ontology: “What is there that can be known?”, or “What is the nature of reality?”. The interpretivist paradigm assumes multiple realities (Guba & Lincoln 1989) and supporters of interpretivism hold that “entities exist only in the minds of the persons contemplating them” (Lincoln & Guba 2013, p.39). Creswell (2014) believes interpretivism deals with subjective meanings and understandings of personal experiences on specific topics relying on social and historical information. The world view of events is understood, constructed and interpreted by people (Crotty 1998).

The positivist paradigm views reality as “objectively given and measurable” (Antwi & Hamza 2015 p.218). Reality is seen as unchanging being dependent on universal laws (Hughes 2010) which are fixed (Bunnis & Kelly 2010 p.361). The positivist paradigm is frequently associated with quantitative research approach to predict, control and generalise findings.

3.1.2 Epistemology

Epistemology deals with sufficient and valid kinds of knowledge (Gray 2014). Epistemology is the process by which an investigator comes to know the truth and reality. The question posed is “how do we know what we know?”. Thus epistemology studies the relationship between the inquirer and the object of inquiry into; shows the relationship between the researcher and the object of research, the expected findings or the kind of knowledge to be generated (Guba 1990). With the Interpretivist paradigm, multiple realities exist between the researcher and participants. The varied interpretations of the world are “constructed and not discovered” (Gray 2014 p. 20) between both parties, researchers and participants. Crotty (1998) avers that “meaning of the world that one experiences is generated through social interaction among people influenced by many factors such as prior experience and knowledge, political and social status, gender, nationality, personal and cultural values” (Lincoln & Guba 2013 p.40).

3.1.3 Methodology

Methodology is concerned with “the method used in conducting the investigation” (Antwi & Hamza 2015 p.218) or how knowledge can be generated. The question posed for methodology is “How does one go about acquiring knowledge?” (Lincoln & Guba 2013 p.39). The choice of a research paradigm and methodology are linked. The paradigm a researcher chooses defines the research methodology. Thus, the methodology of a research must agree with the ontological and epistemological stances of the research. This suggests that a researcher’s choice of the positivist paradigm means that the study will be quantitative, whereas a researcher’s choice of

interpretivist paradigm suggests that the study will be qualitative in nature. The interpretivist paradigm holds that there is no single reality, and the construction of multiple realities are possible through interactions. Social, cultural and historical views play an important part in shaping people's world view. The interpretivist paradigm holds that the methodology utilised in research should explore "the minds and meaning-making, sense-making activities" (Lincoln & Guba 2013 p.40). This approach is often practised in qualitative research (Creswell 2014). On the other hand, positivism argues that reality must be examined by utilising the "rigorous process of scientific inquiry" (Guba 2013 p.20). Here quantitative tools as a method of enquiry are used to generalise data (Mukherhi & Albon 2015).

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) mention some research methodologies suited to the various paradigms. Research methodologies suited to the positivist paradigm include:

- Experimental methodology
- Quasi-experimental methodology
- Correlational methodology
- Survey research methodology

For critical paradigm, the research methodologies include:

- Feminist theories
- Queer theory
- Disability theories
- Action research

Research methodologies suited to the interpretivist paradigm include:

- Case study methodology
- Grounded theory methodology
- Phenomenology methodology
- Ethnography methodology

A suitable methodology that guides this study is phenomenology because it presents descriptions of peoples' experiences (Moustakas 1994, as cited in Creswell 2007). It tries to understand, describe, and interpret human behaviour and the meaning individuals make of their experiences (Carpenter 2013). It is important to note that a researcher's choice of a paradigm influences the methodology used in a research project (Morgan 2007). For a thorough exposition on research paradigm in these areas, the reader is referred to Carpenter (2013), Antwi and Hamza (2015) and the recent works of Kivunja and Kiyuni (2017), and Kamal (2019).

3.1.4 Interpretivism

This study falls within the Interpretivist paradigm; essentially it is focused on students' understanding and ways of creating meaning during text construction in an academic discourse community. Reality is constructed and understanding is developed through social interactions (Pulla & Carter 2018). Myers (2009) reasons that the premise of interpretive researchers is that understanding of reality (whether given or socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, and shared meanings. A researcher can observe a phenomenon, understand, and interpret meanings that underlie human interactions (Cohen & Crabtree 2006; Pulla & Carter 2018). Interpretivism supports the use of naturalistic methods; and these include interviews, observation, and analysis of existing texts. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the ideas of interpretivism as used in the present study. The table is divided into the purpose of the research, the nature of knowledge (ontology), the relationship between the researcher and the phenomenon (epistemology) and the methodology used (Cantrell 2011). The present work draws on these ideas.

Table 3.1: Research features and descriptive relationship in the present study

Feature	**Description**
Purpose of research	To explore the types of reporting verbs and their frequency of use in making claims in doctoral theses in a university in Ghana
Nature of knowledge	• Several realities exist. • Realities can be discovered, and constructed through social interactions, and meaningful choices. • These realities derive from various experiences, including students' knowledge, views, interpretations and choices. • Discover how students make sense of their social worlds in their text construction while interacting with others around them.
Relationship between the researcher and the phenomenon	• Linguistic choices are made through mental processes of interpretation that are influenced by social interactions. • Research participants socially construct knowledge by making linguistic choices in their natural settings. • The writer and reader are engaged in an interactive process of knowledge construction.
Methodology	Processes of data collected through documents (theses). Research is a product of the values of the researcher.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.2.1 Qualitative Approach

This study aligns with and is guided by a qualitative research approach. A qualitative method employed in research is any process of investigation that makes use of general observations, depth, and verbal descriptions in place of numerical measures (Priest, et al. 2012).

Qualitative research was relevant for this study as it helped the researcher to explore and gain insight into the phenomenon of reporting verbs. A qualitative research approach was chosen and conducted because it fits into the social constructionist framework of this study and gives direction for the study. Social constructionism highlights that meaning is jointly created through social interactions. This study seeks to make meaning from the texts of the participants in their normal setting of the academic discourse community to explain phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. It focuses on exploring meaning (linguistic choice) from the lived experiences of the participants in an academic discourse community.

Qualitative research allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of issues. It is used to explore the meaning and interpretation of complex social environments, like the nature of people's experiences, and intentions that motivate human interaction, feelings, and thoughts (Dawson 2009). Qualitative research assumes that the social world and human behaviour have no fixed or observable measurement. Thus, lucid descriptions of each social situation must be made to appreciate and answer research problems (Fitzpatrick 2006). Some earlier authors provide characteristics for qualitative research and these characteristics are summarised in Table 3.2. In qualitative research, some methods of data gathering include interviews, observations, visual materials, field studies and documents. In this study, documents, specifically, students' doctoral theses were used. Reporting verbs used in the literature review sections were selected, categorised and analysed.

Overall, Sutton and Austin (2015) affirm that the choice of a qualitative approach can help the researcher to understand and describe the views and feelings of research participants, which can lead to the development of an understanding of the meaning that people ascribe to their experiences. Whereas quantitative research methods can be used to determine the number of people involved in a kind of behaviour, qualitative methods can help researchers to understand in what way such behaviours take place,

Table 3.2: Characteristics for qualitative research according to various authors. N94 - Neuman (1994); C03-Creswell (2003); DL05-Denzin and Lincoln (2005); M19-McLoed (2019).

Characteristics	**N94**	**C03**	**DL05**	**M19**	**This study (2021)**
Natural setting as a source of data	✓	✓	✓	✓	The online environment
Researcher as a key instrument of data collection	✓	✓	✓	✓	Observation, selection, analyse and synthesis of texts
Data collected as words, text or pictures	✓	✓	✓	✓	Selected words, text.
Outcome as a process rather than product; It is exploratory rather than verifiable	✓	✓	✓	✓	Data analyses follow online processes (AntConc software)
Inductive analysis, paying attention to particulars	✓	✓	✓	✓	Reporting verbs, word frequency, verb classification (DA, RA, CA), clause, verb function
Focus on participants' perspectives and meaning	✓	✓	✓	✓	Content analysis

and explain why they take place. Creswell (2007) clarifies the main qualitative research approaches employed across many academic disciplines as the narrative, ethnography, grounded theory, case study, and phenomenology. This study adopts a mixed method of approach which is largely based on qualitative methods, but where necessary uses quantitative methods. This is because some of the research questions call for a quantitative approach in tackling the issue.

3.2.2 Content Analysis

Qualitative data can be analysed in various ways; some methods that can be used include phenomenology, hermeneutics, grounded theory, ethnography, ethnomethodology, the historical method, action research, and content analysis (Kumar 2011). For purposes of addressing the research questions in this study, however, content analysis was chosen, for it presented the opportunity to analyse the various linguistic choices made in the texts selected systematically, to discover important categories, dimensions and interrelationships.

Content analysis, which is usually used in document analysis, lends itself to multiple definitions. Neuendorf (2001) describes content analysis as the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of the characteristics of a message. Krippendorf (2004) contends that content analysis is generally qualitative; he clarifies that analysis of a text is qualitative although some features may be represented by numbers. He affirms that "all reading of the text is qualitative even when certain characteristics are later converted into numbers" (Krippendorf 2004 p.16).

According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000), content analysis is a method of examining the behaviour of humans indirectly, by examining their modes of communication. Content analysis focuses on examining written communication unobtrusively devoid of a researcher's influence or bias. Conclusions arrived at can be applied to other

situations (Neuendorf 2001). This means that content analysis helps a researcher to understand what is being communicated, the reasons for the communication, and the consequent effects of what is being communicated. Content analysis involves a codification process, where coded data is put into important groupings. Findings from content analysis research are usually represented using tables or charts.

Creswell (2003) clarifies that content analysis has roots in literary theory, critical theory, and the social sciences. White and Marsh (2006) note that content analysis stems from how early mass communication studies were examined in the 1950s and that originally the approach underscored making interpretations derived from text content that was easy to identify and recurred often. Over the years, researchers in various disciplines have adapted content analysis to suit distinct requirements of their research interests and have developed a collection of techniques and approaches for text analysis otherwise known under the broad term of textual analysis (White and Marsh 2006 p.23).

Content analysis is a research method of examining various documents or texts for purposes of determining words or themes that emerge to describe the specific phenomenon (Kumar 2011). These varieties of texts generally comprise books, interviews, newspaper headlines and articles, historical documents, speeches, paintings, and many others. According to Payne and Payne (2004 p.51), "content analysis seeks to demonstrate the meaning of written or visual sources by systematically allocating their content to predetermined, detailed categories, and then both quantifying and interpreting the outcomes". In this way, the researcher can gain a better understanding of the text. In the present study, content analysis was used to interpret meaning from written data (Hsieh & Shannon 2005). As a research technique, content analysis concentrates on the content and is used to interpret meaning from written features in different types of text such as phrases, themes,

characters, concepts, word choice, among others. As such, content analysis holds a communicative role, as it seeks to establish the relationships in data in a systematic manner (Merriam 1998).

Crossman (2020) mentions that content analysis as an approach, developed historically from the 18th Century, through different phases. The analysis used to be a time-consuming and painstaking process and was not ideal for large texts or bodies of data, because researchers conducted word counts of unique words in texts. This however changed with the introduction of computers. Gunter (2000 p.60) affirms that the fundamental thrust of content analysis is to vividly describe the content of the text in a manner that others can replicate. Krippendorff describes content analysis as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use. It involves the systematic reading of a body of texts, images, and symbolic matter, not necessarily from an author's or user's perspective" (Krippendorff 2004 p.18). The distinctive feature of content analysis from other research types is that it examines documented information in texts and media. In this study, the focus is on word choice and content analysis was used to analyse the data to reveal common aspects that were classified and generalised.

Content analysis can follow either a quantitative or qualitative approach. The quantitative approach seeks to count the frequencies of words and the qualitative approach goes beyond to uncover and explain the underlying meanings of words. Qualitative content analysis is an approach to the analysis of documents and texts that emphasises "subjective interpretations of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon 2005 p.1278). It focuses on texts and their specific contexts. Weber (1990) cited in Hsieh and Shannon (2005 p.1278), explains that:

> The qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words to examining language intensely to classify large amounts of text into an efficient number of categories that represent similar meanings. These categories can represent either explicit communication or inferred communication.

The use of both approaches, however, involves categorising or coding words and themes in the texts and an analysis of the results. Krippendorff (2004 p.87) identifies the following four features that are common to both approaches:

1. Sample text, in the sense of selecting what is relevant.
2. Unitise text, in the sense of distinguishing words or propositions and using quotes or examples.
3. Contextualise what they are reading considering what they know about the circumstances surrounding the text; and
4. Have specific research questions in mind.

It is argued further that content analysis is a method for analysing text data and there is thus no particularly set method for conducting a content analysis, as different approaches can be used such as social constructionist or linguistic approaches. This is strengthened by Bengston (2016 p.1) when he affirms that:

> In contrast to qualitative research methods, qualitative content analysis is not linked to any science, and there are fewer rules to follow. Therefore, the risk of confusion in matters concerning philosophical concepts and discussions is reduced.

Social constructionist academics argue that meaning is created through social interaction and language is used to construct reality. Text analysis presents a means of knowing social interactions prevalent in text. Crossman (2020) argues that content

analysis is based on retrieving and interpreting words from documents. She affirms that content analysis is a research method used in the analysis of social life by interpreting words and images from documents, film, art, music, and other cultural products and media. In this kind of analysis, the researcher examines how the words and images are used, and the context in which they are used to draw inferences about the underlying culture.

Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) present the following benefits of using content analysis:

1. Content analysis is an unobtrusive research process. In this way, the researcher does not interrupt the study framework in any way; the researcher's actual presence is not needed as may happen with the use of either a questionnaire (which respondents may not respond to honestly), direct participation, participant observation, or interview.
2. Its aids researchers in the analysis of interview and observational data.
3. Through the analysis of records and documents, researchers can interpret the social life of people. Words can be examined to make inferences related to the underlying culture.
4. A researcher can find content analysis economical when information or needed data is readily available.
5. A content analysis research can be replicated easily when data is readily available.

Some drawbacks of content analysis approach (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006) are that:

1. An analysis is generally based on documented sources. The information available may be limited depending on the researcher's area of focus.
2. Validity is expected based on expectations that other researchers would replicate the study.

3. Access to information may exclude some necessary parts, and as such a researcher may not be able to analyse the excluded sections. Thus, the sampling process needs to be done cautiously to avoid bias.
4. The study may explain basic links between variables in a study rather than describing the groupings in the findings.

The benefits of content analysis far outweigh the few drawbacks listed above. The characteristics of content analysis as a research methodology make it useful to achieve the purposes of this study. As a qualitative research method, content analysis has been extensively used to understand the import of content from text data using three separate approaches. These are conventional, directed, or summative approaches. The distinct nature of these three approaches is seen in how they are employed to infer meaning from the content of text data: specifically, in the use of coding schemes, the origins of codes to trustworthiness.

Conventional content analysis is used in studies aimed at describing a phenomenon, but with limited information on literature. Analysis of data using the conventional content approach uses categories that are taken from the data. Analysis of data using the direct approach involves using a theory or the findings from related literature; this serves as a guide for generating the codes. Analysis of data using a summative content approach includes word counts and evaluations of main words or content.

This qualitative study adopts the summative approach to content analysis. A summative approach to qualitative content analysis is an unobtrusive, flexible, and nonreactive way to study the phenomenon of interest (Hsieh & Shannon 2005). This approach helps to discover insights into how words are used in text construction. Summary of content analysis differs from the other two approaches in that it analyses the words in a text and not the text. Also, an analysis of the patterns that emerge will lead to an interpretation of the categories to which they belong and determine if

they are used appropriately (Hsieh & Shannon 2005). It can provide basic insights into how words are used.

Qualitative content analysis involves far more than word counts, identifying and examining the text for inherent themes, patterns, and meanings. Researchers can use qualitative content analysis to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner. It emphasises descriptive data and will help the researcher in explaining the data. To aid understanding however, the study is supported by some quantitative techniques such as frequency counts and percentages, as well as figures and tables.

In the present study, the focus is on discovering underlying meanings or how linguistic choices are made in the construction of the literature review chapters of the theses and identifying the categories of the reporting verbs as belonging to the Research Acts, Discourse Acts or Cognition Acts categories (Hyland 2002). Also, the purpose was to explore how reporting verbs are employed, and not to understand the meanings of the words. Luo (2020) provides five steps for conducting a content analysis. These were followed in this study and were used to identify the linguistic choices that informed the use of reporting verbs in the texts selected. These criteria were:

1. Select the content for analysis.
2. Define the units and categories.
3. Develop a set of coding rules.
4. Code the texts according to the rules.
5. Analyse the results and draw conclusions.

Based on the research questions that guide this study, fifty-two (52) theses were selected for analysis. These theses are available online as public documents. These theses were labelled with a unique alphanumeric code. The analysis of data was done

with the aid of AntConc software to search for and extract occurrences of the reporting verbs in the texts. Regarding the steps suggested to follow in summative content analysis, the units, and categories, as well as the words to extract, are defined in the AntConc software. The frequency of word counts for each of the various categories of selected verbs was calculated and compared. Frequency counts based on the different departments to which the theses belong were calculated and compared to the total number of theses coded. The collected data was examined to find the various categories the verbs belong to; relationships among the categories were identified, and conclusions were drawn to answer the research questions. A discussion of the interpretations and inferences drawn is presented.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The terms methodology and method are sometimes used interchangeably in research. To distinguish between them, Strauss and Corbin (1998 p.3) describe the methodology as "a technique of thinking about and exploring social reality" whereas method is "a set of procedures and systems for gathering and analysing data". Creswell (2007) explains methodology as a process through which the researcher conducts a study to gain knowledge about the world. Krippendorff (2004) points out that, data collected in any research becomes meaningful only when it is organised and explained. As such, any approach to an investigation should be able to answer the research questions. The focus of this study was to examine the linguistic choices of the participants and focused on doing so to understand the phenomenon being studied.

In carrying out an investigation, a methodology must be followed to ensure that the research questions are answered. Thus, the nature of the research questions that need to be explored, determines the choice of research methodology (Denzin &

Lincoln 2005). Generally, three research approaches guide every research. These are the quantitative approach, qualitative approach, and mixed-method approach (Creswell 2003; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004; Ponterotto 2006; Creswell 2013). These three approaches convey different ideas about how research should be conducted because their perceptions of reality differ.

Quantitative research involves adhering to rules for assigning numbers to objects so that they represent quantities of attributes (Durrheim 1999 p.73). Kumar (2011) explains that a study is classified as quantitative if the researcher wants to calculate the difference in a phenomenon, situation, problem, or issue; if the information is mainly gathered using mostly quantitative variables; and if the analysis is geared towards determining the magnitude of variation. Examples of quantitative aspects of a research study are: How many people have a unique kind of problem? How many people hold a particular kind of attitude? What are the ages of the people? (Creswell 2007; Dawson 2009; Kumar 2011). Quantitative research is focused on collecting primary data directly from the sample to provide a basis for generalising or making inferences about the larger population. The quantitative design focuses on establishing a link between variables and uses the following approaches: experimental research, causal-comparative research, correlational research, and survey research.

The qualitative research method allows researchers to understand social reality subjectively and scientifically. According to Creswell (2007 p.15), qualitative research:

> is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or a human problem. In this kind of research, the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting.

This definition emphasises how researchers construct meaning and knowledge through interactions within the social context. This aptly aligns with this study's focus on examining the linguistic choices that students make in the construction of the literature review sections of their theses. Also, this approach was chosen because it "reinforces an understanding and interpretation of meaning as well as intentions underlying human interaction" (Diako 2012 p.82).

The main objective of a qualitative study, according to Kumar (2011) is to "describe the variation and range in a phenomenon, condition or attitude using a very flexible approach to identify as much variation and diversity as possible" (Kumar 2011 p.38). A study is qualitative when:

> it surveys attitudes, behaviour and experiences, and describes a situation, phenomenon, problem or event; if the information is gathered through the use of variables measured on nominal or ordinal scales (qualitative measurement scales); and if the analysis is done to establish the variation in the situation, phenomenon or problem without quantifying it (Kumar 2011 p.12).

Qualitative research involves gathering, analysing, and interpreting data that are not easily reduced to numbers. Thus, the qualitative approach appropriately supports this study's aim of exploring how students understand and use reporting verbs in their doctoral theses. This approach will give an in-depth knowledge of how doctoral students use reporting verbs and how they construct meaning in an academic social environment.

It must be mentioned that there is no single approach to qualitative research. A qualitative inquiry is multifaceted, as it involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach

to the subject matter (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). Neumann (1994) however, notes some of its significant features as being exploratory and deriving meaning from the participants' perspective. Others are that it uses inductive reasoning, sees behaviour as 'intentional' and 'creative' which is explainable but non-predictable. It is also context-based in that it aims at understanding 'phenomenon within a particular context'. The qualitative research approach enables researchers to describe a phenomenon in its entirety.

Meyer (2001) affirms that the nature of qualitative research allows the researcher to provide vivid descriptions of the experiences of the participants, which will either support or differ from the theoretical assumptions on which the study is based. Qualitative research enables readers to understand "the meaning attached to the experience, the distinct nature of the problem and the impact of the problem" (Diako 2012 p.93). Most qualitative research is descriptive and inductive. The qualitative approach helps the researcher present a rich description or different layers of meaning from the participants (Creswell 2007). More will be said about qualitative research in section 3.2 of this study.

A mixed-method approach "involves a collection or an analysis of both quantitative and/or qualitative data in a single study" (Creswell & Clark 2003 p.212). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004 p.17) also explain the mixed method approach as a method that allows the researcher:

> ... to mix or combine quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts, or language into a single study. It further explains that mixed-method research attempts to legitimise the use of multiple approaches in answering research questions, rather than restricting or constraining researchers' choices. ...it is inclusive, pluralistic, and complimentary, and it

suggests that researchers take an eclectic approach to method selection and the thinking about and conduct of research.

It is apparent from the above discussion that this study cannot strictly follow a quantitative approach, as the concentration of this study was to determine the linguistic choices of doctoral students in the construction of the literature review chapters of their theses. This study is focused on exploring and understanding the meanings constructed by the students and follows a largely qualitative research approach, for this approach emphasises comprehension and explanation of meaning as well as the basic intents of interactions.

3.4 STUDY CONTEXT

This study is focused on doctoral theses by Humanities students at the University of Ghana. The University of Ghana is in the Greater Accra Region of the country; it is chosen for this study, for it is the premier university in the country. The university was instituted by ordinance in 1948 and was initially affiliated to the University of London for providing tertiary education, oversight of its academic programmes, and awarding of degrees. The university gained full university status in 1960. Today, it remains the oldest and largest university in Ghana with a population of about 40,000 comprising local and international students pursuing undergraduate and graduate courses in the regular, sandwich, and distance education programmes (University of Ghana, online). The university uses the English language as a medium of instruction and in formal and informal contexts too. The University of Ghana practices the collegiate system and has four colleges that are College of Humanities, College of Education, College of Basic and Applied Sciences and College of Health Sciences.

The College of Humanities was chosen for this study. The College of Humanities consists of six schools namely the University of Ghana Business School (UGBS),

School of Arts, School of Performing Arts, School of Languages, School of Social Sciences, and University of Ghana School of Law. The College of Humanities also hosts three research institutes: Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER); Institute of African Studies (IAS), and the Regional Institute for Population Studies (RIPS). Also, it is home to five Centres: Centre for Social Policy Studies (CSPS), Language Centre, Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD), Center for Gender Studies and Advocacy (CEGENSA), and the Centre for Migration Studies. The University is also in charge of its satellite campus - the University of Ghana Accra City Campus, situated in the Central business district (Accra).

The College of Humanities offers various academic programmes which include Dance, Music, Theatre Arts, Political Science, Sociology, Economics, Geography, Psychology, Social work; English, Linguistics, Modern Languages, Archaeology, History, Religions, Philosophy / Classics. The academic programmes develop students' knowledge, analytical abilities, research skills, and creativity. The College also runs professional programmes in Law and Business Administration. The College has well-known partnerships, teaching and research networks with some universities around the world, and both students and faculty benefit from these networks. The research programmes of faculty in the College continue to grow and increasingly encompass emerging development and social issues of concern to the country. College faculty members are also engaged in advocacy and provide leadership in public policy discussions.

3.5 STUDY POPULATION

The total number of theses in an institutional repository forms the theses population. The population of this study comprises doctoral Humanities theses from the University of Ghana. The target population is made up of theses submitted to the

departments of Linguistics, English, Sociology, Psychology and Human Resource Management and Administration between 2012 and 2018 inclusive. These theses must have met all the expectations of the university and have been published on the university's institutional repository site. The study excludes undergraduate and master's theses because the students may not have had enough exposure to and practice with reporting verbs.

3.6 STUDY SAMPLE

A sample is a collection drawn from a larger population to be used for analysis. De Vos et al. (2011) describe a sample as a representation of a whole, which is carefully selected to ensure its representativeness. Sampling involves a process of identifying a sub-set of a population which shows the characteristics of a phenomenon that is of interest to the researcher (Miles & Huberman 1994). Kumar (2011 p.216) clarifies that:

> … sampling is the process of selecting a few (a sample) from a bigger group (the sampling population) to become the basis for estimating or predicting the prevalence of an unknown piece of information, situation, or outcome regarding the bigger group. Hence, a sample is a subgroup of the population a researcher is interested in.

The research sample size is fifty-two theses. This was drawn from the three schools which are Schools of Languages, Social Sciences and Business. Yamane formula (see Appendix 2.1) was used for this selection. Some researchers also share the common view that there is no ideal or prescribed sample size. In their view, selecting a sample size depends on three things, which are the discipline, the level of confidence expected in the answers, and the anticipated response rate (Hussey & Hussey 1997 p.148).

Although Lyell (1998) states that a small sample size is ideal for qualitative research, Anthony (2001) argues that it is important to get an ideal sample size, which will provide the rich description needed. This helps to avoid the risk that may arise from using a large corpus, which might result in having a superficial analysis and on the other hand, a small corpus not yielding appropriate results. In qualitative research, the focus is on how the sample size that is chosen relates to, or adequately reflects the complex nature of social life and contributes to knowledge (Neuman 2007).

3.6.1 Sampling method

Multistage sampling was used to select fifty-two literature review chapters of the doctoral theses. Multistage sampling involves breaking down large population sizes into smaller stages to make the collection of data easier. First, Purposive sampling was used to select three schools. Purposive sampling helps to pick specific theses for the study. The selected schools are the schools of Languages, Social Sciences and Business out of six in the College of Humanities at the University of Ghana. As earlier mentioned, this is because programmes in these faculties involve a rigorous, broad-based, liberal arts curriculum that develop students' learning, analytical abilities, research skills, and creativity.

Purposive sampling for this research was to select appropriate participants for the study (Dawson 2009). Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003) explain that the participants selected should have certain specific attributes and represent the population relevant to a particular situation. Creswell (2007) makes the same point when he explains that purposive sampling selects only individuals and locations that are of relevance to a study. Purposive sampling is usually used in exploratory investigations where the researcher needs to make a judgment based on the selection (Neuman 2007).

Secondly, quota sampling was used to help select a sample with a feature (Kumar 2011). Quota sampling was used to select the departments of Linguistics, English, Sociology, Psychology and Human Resource Management and Administration. This was to help create an accurate sample of the population. Next was convenience sampling of the theses.

Next, purposive sampling was used again to select the literature review chapter from each thesis. The literature review chapter is chosen because as Hartley (2008) notes, "it integrates and synthesises work from different research areas, evaluates the current state of evidence for a particular viewpoint, reveals inadequacies in the literature and points to where further research needs to be done" (Hartley 2008 p.87). The literature review chapter selected was solely a review of related literature and had no embedded sections like theoretical framework or methodology. The purposive sampling technique helped in selecting data to answer the research questions (Creswell 2003).

3.7 DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Data for this study was gathered from fifty-two doctoral theses submitted between 2012 and 2018 inclusive, and freely available on the University of Ghana's institutional repository website. First, fifty-two doctoral theses on the University of Ghana's institutional repository website were downloaded and placed in a folder. This quantity represented the "optimum number necessary to enable valid inferences to be made about the population" (Marshall 1996 p.522, as cited in Thomson 2011).

The theses were classified and coded according to disciplines after which the literature review chapters were selected. Because the theses were accessible in portable drive formats (pdf) they had to be converted first to word document formats

(.docs) and then to plain text format(.txt) because presently AntConc, the corpus analytical tool supports files with extension .txt format only, for data process.

The sections with headings related to previous work and named as literature reviews were selected for analysis. In many theses, these sections constitute a separate chapter and follow the introductory chapter. The composition of the literature review section is typically one chapter usually divided into thematic units and marked by topic-based headings. This level of sophistication in the schematic structure of literature review sections can be attributed to the complex nature of the writer's research topics and the varied objects that are being studied.

3.8 DATA SOURCE

Data for this study was gathered from documents, specifically, the theses of doctoral students. Document analysis used in qualitative research is a method, which involves the explanation of data related to a study. Document analysis is particularly important as it helps in producing rich descriptions of a single phenomenon (Bowen 2009). In document analysis, data is coded into themes, like the analysis of focus groups or interview transcripts. Overall, Bowen describes document analysis as a process of "evaluating documents in such a way that empirical knowledge is produced, and understanding is developed" (Bowen 2009 p.33). The researcher must hold a high level of objectivity and sensitivity for the document analysis results to be credible and valid. Besides, documents may be practically acceptable as the only necessary data source for studies designed within an interpretive paradigm (Bowen 2009).

In this study, the documents chosen for analysis were doctoral theses of Humanities students. This choice was based on the following reasons:

- They are a resourceful and effective way of gathering data because the theses are handy and practical resources.
- They are available, very accessible and reliable sources of data.
- Finding and analysing documents is usually cost-effective and time-efficient than conducting other research or experiments.
- Documents are stable as they can be read and studied many times and remain unchanged.
- Document analysis can support and strengthen research as a researcher can "discover meaning, understand, and get deeper insights related to the research problem' (Merriam 1998 p.118).

3.9 INSTRUMENT FOR DATA ANALYSIS

Researchers use corpus analysis software to retrieve information from the text and to promote objective descriptions of linguistic patterns. In this study, software (Version 3.5.8, February 2019) was used for the analysis of data (Anthony 2019). Anthony (2004 p.2) clarifies that corpora are practically "useless without some kind of software tool to process it and display results in an easy-to-understand way". The AntConc software is chosen as a tool for analysis because it is a linguistic text analysis software, which extracts the corpora of interest from a text. It allows corpus analysis study of data in plain text formats (.txt); as such, the softcopy of the theses, rather than the hard print copies, is preferable.

The AntConc programme was launched by double-clicking on the .exe or executable file which is downloadable from the website (www.laurenceanthony.net). On executing the command, a user-friendly graphical interface opens. The programme runs under any Windows, XP or Linux environment but it does not allow dual usage; that is, no two people can launch and use the programme at the same time. AntConc

was used to extract the reporting verbs from the verb list. The results were then transferred to Microsoft Excel to generate results to analyse the range and variability of reporting verbs in the doctoral theses.

Another reason for choosing this software is that it enables the creation of word lists and the examination of word clusters that can be found in the text. This 'Word List' tool in the AntConc programme enables the creation of alphabetical and frequency-sorted lists of reporting verbs used, which once compiled, can be opened and edited in spreadsheet format or any other standard text editor. Word lists are useful in linguistic inquiry mainly because they highlight the most frequent words in the text and allow the results to be compared with various corpora. It also helps to find statistically likely and/or unlikely phrases for a text type, kinds of grammatical structures or a lot of examples of a concept across many documents in context. The gathering of the corpora is especially useful for testing intuitions about texts and/or triangulating results from other digital methods (Froehlich 2015).

Various researchers have used the AntConc software for analysis in research. Azadeh and Mohammad (2014) used AntConc software in their study of special types of nouns called shell nouns. Soranastaporn and Tampanich (2015) similarly used AntConc in their corpus-based study on the frequency of academic word lists used in laboratory animal research articles. Afful (2016) also used the AntConc software in his analysis of dialogic positioning in literature reviews of master's theses. Loan and Pramoolsook (2015) used AntConc software in their research on citation practices in literature review chapters of master's theses. Ahmad et al. (2018) used AntConc in their study on Genre Analysis of Acknowledgement texts written by master's students. Therefore, the use of AntConc in research work is well established.

3.9.1 How the AntConc Software Programme works

This programme starts when the AntConc software executable icon is double-clicked. An interface opens like Figure 3.1. To load a single file for analysis, go to the menu file → Open file → select the folder and file and load separately each literature review section of the thesis to be analysed.

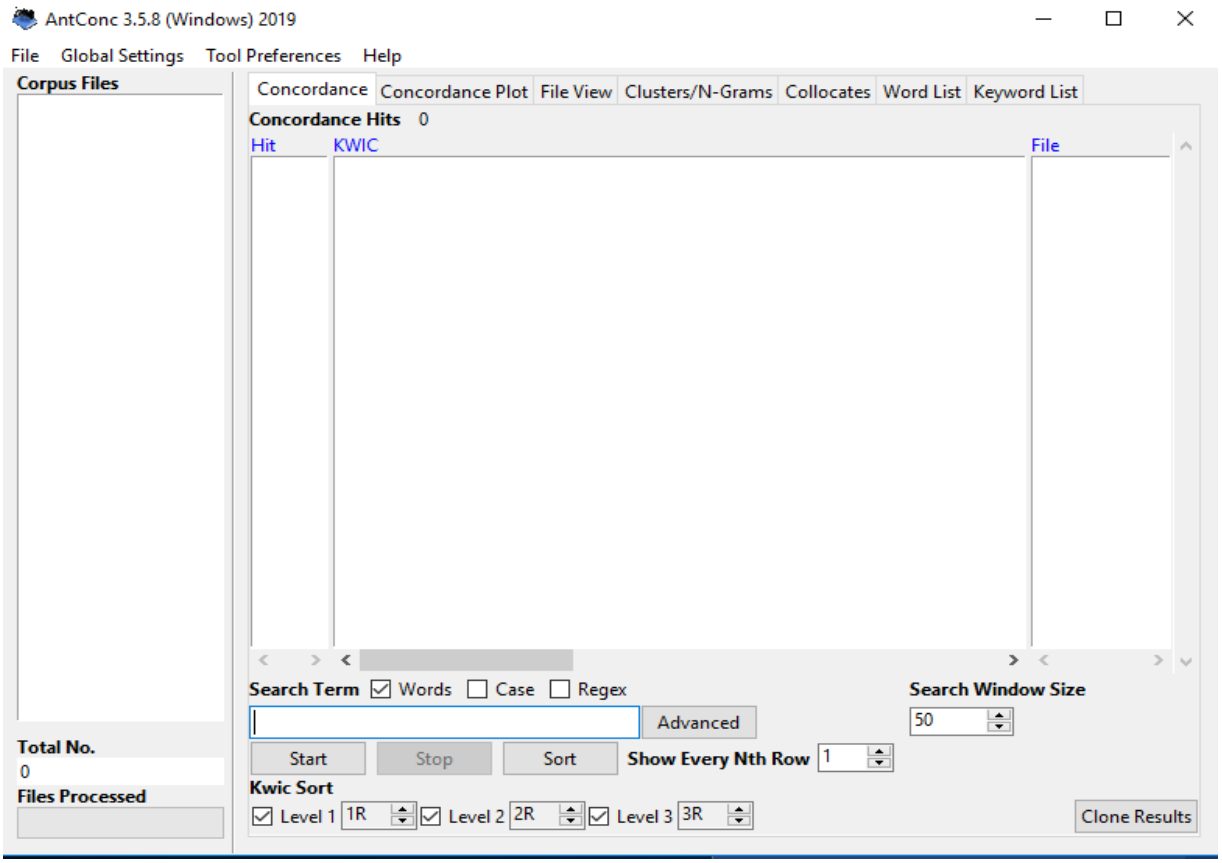

Figure 3.1: AntConc screen on programme startup.

To load several files to work with or a *directory* for analysis at the same time, the *file directory* is opened and the number of files is selected. The files that are selected or deselected will be loaded on the left-hand corner of the screen under *corpus files*. The total number of files loaded will be displayed.

3.9.1.1 Using AntConc to search for the word frequency in the corpus

Having loaded the file(s), one selects *concordance*. In *search term,* one can provide the word of interest to be searched and then click the *Start* button. If the search word exists in the document, feedback of the number of times it occurs will be displayed as *hits* together with the phrase in which each hit occurs. Also displayed is the source of reference (document) in which the word is found. The list of statements displayed can be further searched to see it meets the criteria that one desires. Note down the number of hits. If the word is not in the document, a zero value, no-hit is reported/ returned after the start button is clicked.

3.9.2 Microsoft Excel programme and its use

Microsoft Excel is a Windows-based programme that enables visual representation and analysis of data. After obtaining the results of search words from AntConc, the words and their frequencies will be put in Microsoft Excel to obtain the relationship between the various categories of reporting verbs according to the classification by Hyland (2002). The required tables and corresponding plots are then generated. The same tool will be employed to classify the reporting verbs into various categories. This programme was used for the data analysis of reporting verbs in selected doctoral theses in Chapter 4.

3.10 STUDY TRUSTWORTHINESS

It is necessary to ensure that the analyses that are made using data can be confirmed or relied upon for purposes of drawing inferences. The trustworthiness of qualitative research is about establishing that the findings/outcomes of the research are credible, transferable, confirmable and dependable. Elo et al. (2014 p.8) note that:

> the trustworthiness of content analysis results depends on the availability of rich, appropriate, and well-saturated data. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and result reporting go hand in hand. Improving the trustworthiness of content analysis begins with thorough preparation before the study and requires advanced skills in data gathering, content analysis, trustworthiness discussion, and result reporting.

Guba and Lincoln (1994), cited in Kumar (2011), point out that in a qualitative study, four features determine trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability; these reflect validity and reliability in qualitative research. Credibility deals with the researcher's confidence in reporting the findings of the research. Trochim and Donnelly (2007 p.149) aver that "credibility encompasses showing that the results of qualitative research are reliable from the viewpoint of the study's participants". This explanation of credibility aligns well with the study's theoretical framework of social constructionism. In this study, credibility is achieved based on the procedure used in gathering data, analysis of data and reporting findings from the perspective of the researcher. Thus, this study gathered information from the doctoral theses and described how the students constructed social meaning through their linguistic choices in their text composition.

Transferability deals with how the findings of the research can be applied to or replicated in other situations, populations, contexts or phenomena. For a study to be transferable, the findings must support the theoretical underpinnings. It must describe thoroughly the methodology, methods, and analysis to show that the study's findings can apply to other contexts, circumstances, and situations. The degree of objectivity in the study's findings is Confirmability and this refers to "the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others" (Trochim & Donnelly 2007 p.149). Social constructionism reasons that meaning can be constructed in different ways and different constructions of knowledge are also possible.

A study is dependable if similar or the same results can be achieved if the same study is conducted a second time. Brown (2005) emphasises the importance of the study context when he explains that dependability "involves accounting for all the changing conditions in whatever is being studied as well as any changes in the design of the study that was necessary, to better understand or explain the study context" (Brown 2005 p.35). This study followed a qualitative approach with social constructionism as the theoretical framework. These approaches maintain that there are multiple realities and knowledge construction varies from person to person. As such, if this study is to be conducted with a different set of participants in a different study context, the data may not be the same. However, in this study, dependability is achieved in the quality of the combined methods of data collection, and data analysis.

3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter described how the research was conducted. It presented information on the research paradigms and philosophical foundations, research design, method used to select the theses, the process used to gather data, as well as the approach that was used in analysing the texts. The objective of this study was to understand the participants' linguistic choices or use of reporting verbs in the texts selected, to give an in-depth description of the phenomenon of reporting verbs by doctoral students in the Humanities in the construction of the literature review sections of their theses.

The chapter also examined what determines the trustworthiness – credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability – that reflect validity and reliability of research, how credibility must reflect the researcher's confidence in reporting the findings of the research so that the methodology can be applied to other similar situations. The next chapter presents the data, analysis and discussion.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the methodology used in this study. The study's key objectives (as stated in chapter one) are to investigate the types, frequency, and discourse functions of reporting verbs in doctoral theses of Humanities students. The chapter described the research paradigms and philosophical foundations, research design, method used to select the theses, the process used to gather data, as well as the approach that was used in analysing the texts. It also examined what determines the trustworthiness, validity, and reliability of research; how credibility must reflect the researcher's confidence in reporting the findings of the research so that methodology can be applied to other similar situations.

This chapter provides the data collection, analyses of the data and its interpretation. The interpretation of data in this chapter focuses on the objectives, research questions and theoretical framework of the study. The types, frequency, and functions of the reporting verbs employed in the literature review sections of the selected doctoral theses are described. The study employs content analysis to discuss the outcome of the research questions guiding the study. Descriptive statistics provides a graphical presentation of the frequency of occurrence of various kinds of reporting verbs. A discussion on the processes the students are involved in as they construct the literature review chapters of their texts is given. In this study, the term "writer" refers to the person who is reporting and "author" refers to the person who is being reported.

4.1 DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

Creswell (2014) suggests that for data to be explanatory, it is necessary to subject the data to analysis and interpretation. Accordingly, the analytical framework, the review of the literature, and the theories that underpin the study inform analysis and

interpretation of data. Each literature review document selected from the fifty-two (52) theses, was saved with a unique alphanumeric code. The essence of the coding is to shield the identity of the doctoral students and to minimise repetition of one source of literature review. Examples from the data are used to theorise portions of the data but this was done carefully to avoid the possibility of linking certain pieces of information to some particular/specific people.

4.2 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This study uses Hyland's (2002) taxonomy of reporting verbs as an analytical framework, for it provides comprehensive categories of reporting verbs in terms of their activity and evaluation. Hyland's (2002) review of the earlier model resulted in a classification of reporting verbs based on their process and evaluative functions. This new model maintains Thompson and Ye's (1991) seminal insight that "while all recording of sources is mediated by the reporter, writers can vary their commitment to the message by adopting an explicitly personal stance, or by attributing a position to the original author" (Hyland 1999 p.350). It explains and gives a clearer outline of verb choices, which includes both the original author's academic research on the area of study and the reporting writer's evaluation or judgments. In Hyland's (2002) new framework, as can be seen in Figure 4.1, the Findings category of Research Acts gives writers three options.

First, a writer can use verbs such as *demonstrate, establish, show, solve,* and *confirm* to indicate their agreement with an author's findings or conclusions. Second, a writer can disagree with or present an author's evaluation or judgments as being false or incorrect by adopting a counteractive stance using verbs such as *fail, misunderstand, ignore,* and *overlook*. Third, a writer can comment on research findings non-factively using verbs such as *find, identify, observe,* and *obtain*. An author's investigation that

involves verbs that refer to procedures used, do not carry any evaluation in themselves, but objectively reports the research procedures.

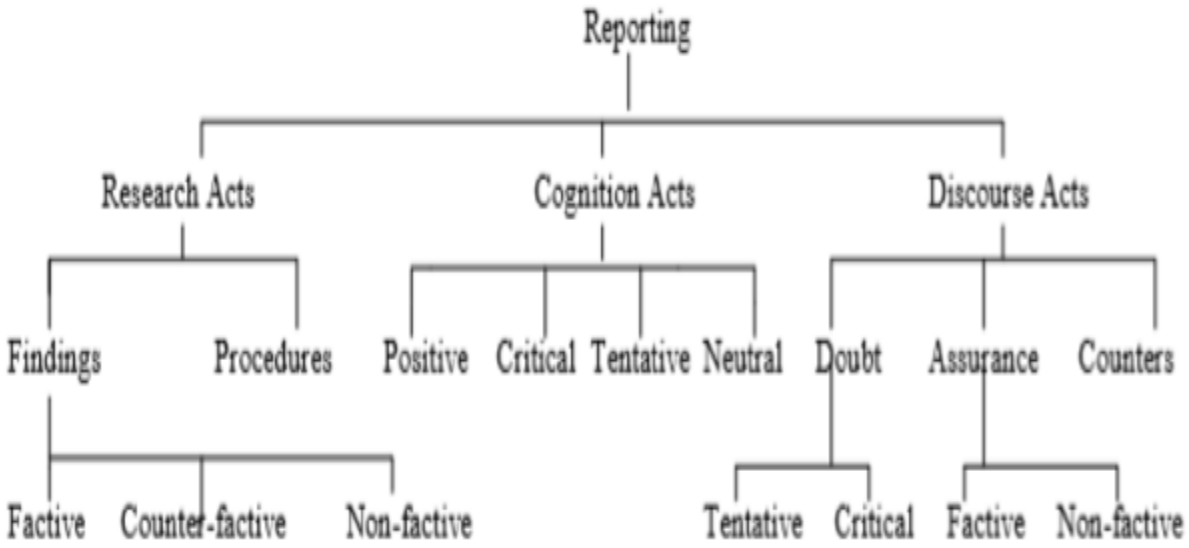

Figure 4.1: Reporting verb and evaluation categories (Hyland 2002).

Evaluation is presented differently in the Cognition Acts category. Writers may give a unique attitude to the cited author rather than adopt a personal stance. In doing so, a writer has a varied choice. First, a writer may display a positive attitude and agree with the reported information as being true or correct by making use of such reporting verb choices as *agree, concur, hold, know, think,* or *understand*. The author can also have a tentative view of the reported information by using words such as *believe, doubt, speculate, suppose,* and *suspect*. Further, the author can take a critical stance on the reported information by using words such as *disagree, dispute,* and *not think*, and finally, the author can have a neutral attitude using words such as *picture, conceive, anticipate,* and *reflect*.

In Hyland's (2002) framework, Discourse Acts verbs describe writers' views directly. The writer could either take responsibility as an interpreter who expresses uncertainty or assurance of the correctness of claims by attributing a qualification to the author. Writers use Discourse verbs to convey an evaluation of the cited material in the following ways: (a) taking responsibility for the correctness of the reported claims, or (b) attributing a qualification to the author. There are two categories: doubt and assurance. Verbs that express doubt about the reported claims are further divided into tentative verbs *(*examples are *postulate, hypothesise, indicate, intimate,* and *suggest*) and critical ones (such as *evade, exaggerate, not account*). Assurance verbs can be used to (a) neutrally inform readers of the author's position (non-factive: words such as *state, describe, discuss, report, answer, define, and summarise*) or (b) support writers' view (factive: words such as *argue, affirm, explain, note, point out,* and *claim*). The Counters, which is the last subcategory of Discourse Acts allow writers to attribute reservations to the original author instead of taking responsibility for the evaluation. Writers use such author objections to support opposition to a proposition or to refute an opposing argument. Hyland (2002) provides examples of such verbs as *deny, critique, challenge, attack, question, warn,* and *rule out*.

Further, Hyland confirms that his 2002 model "seeks to offer a clearer description of reporting conventions in academic writing, to identify the preferences for different verbs among various disciplinary communities and, hopefully, to reveal some of the rhetorical purposes which motivate those preferences" (Hyland 2002 p.4). For the analysis of data, Hyland's (2002) model was used because it demonstrates how a writer can vary his or her commitment to previous studies by employing verbs to imply a stance or attribute a position to the author.

4.3 SAMPLE SIZE AND RUNNING AntConc

From the digital repository of the University of Ghana, the sample size selected for analysis was fifty-two (52) theses. This number was obtained from the population size. A breakdown of the theses selected by subject from the Humanities is presented in Figure 4.2.

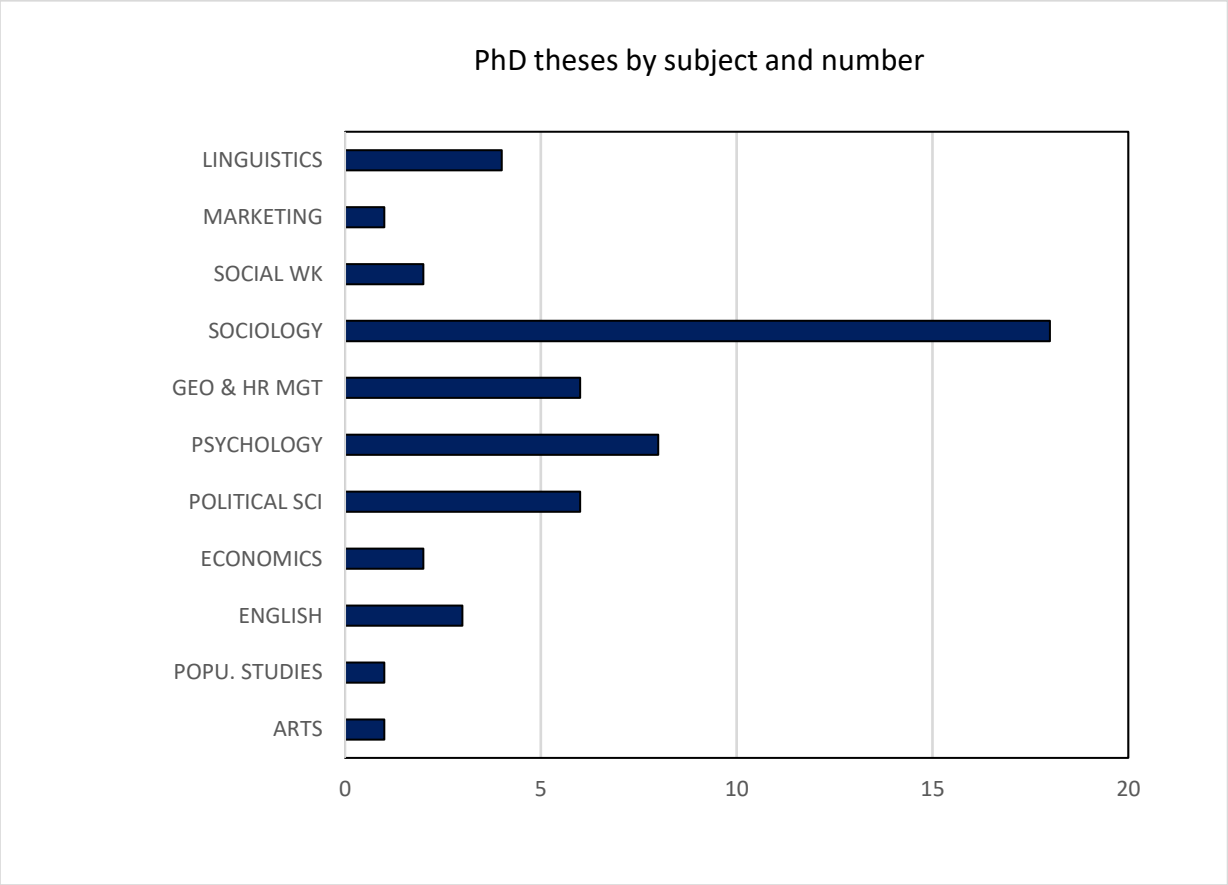

Figure 4.2: Doctoral theses breakdown by numbers considered in the present study.

In the university's digital repository collection for Humanities, the Sociology Department had the largest number of theses at the time of data collection. The selection of theses from the other departments was based on electronic availability. After selecting the sample size and theses, the literature review sections were copied

into a word processing document (. txt format) excluding tables, graphs, and figures because these do not have much text. Each document was assigned a unique alphanumeric coding ranging from DT1 to DT52. The acronym DT stands for doctoral thesis and the number 1 through to 52 identify the various literature review documents.

The tagging of the documents was randomly done, such that it can be easily identified by searching or browsing in AntConc and to shield the identity of these writers. These literature review text files were loaded into AntConc 3.5.8 Windows 2019 programme. A typical screen on loading and running the AntConc for a search word (*confirm*) under concordance is given in Figure 4.3.

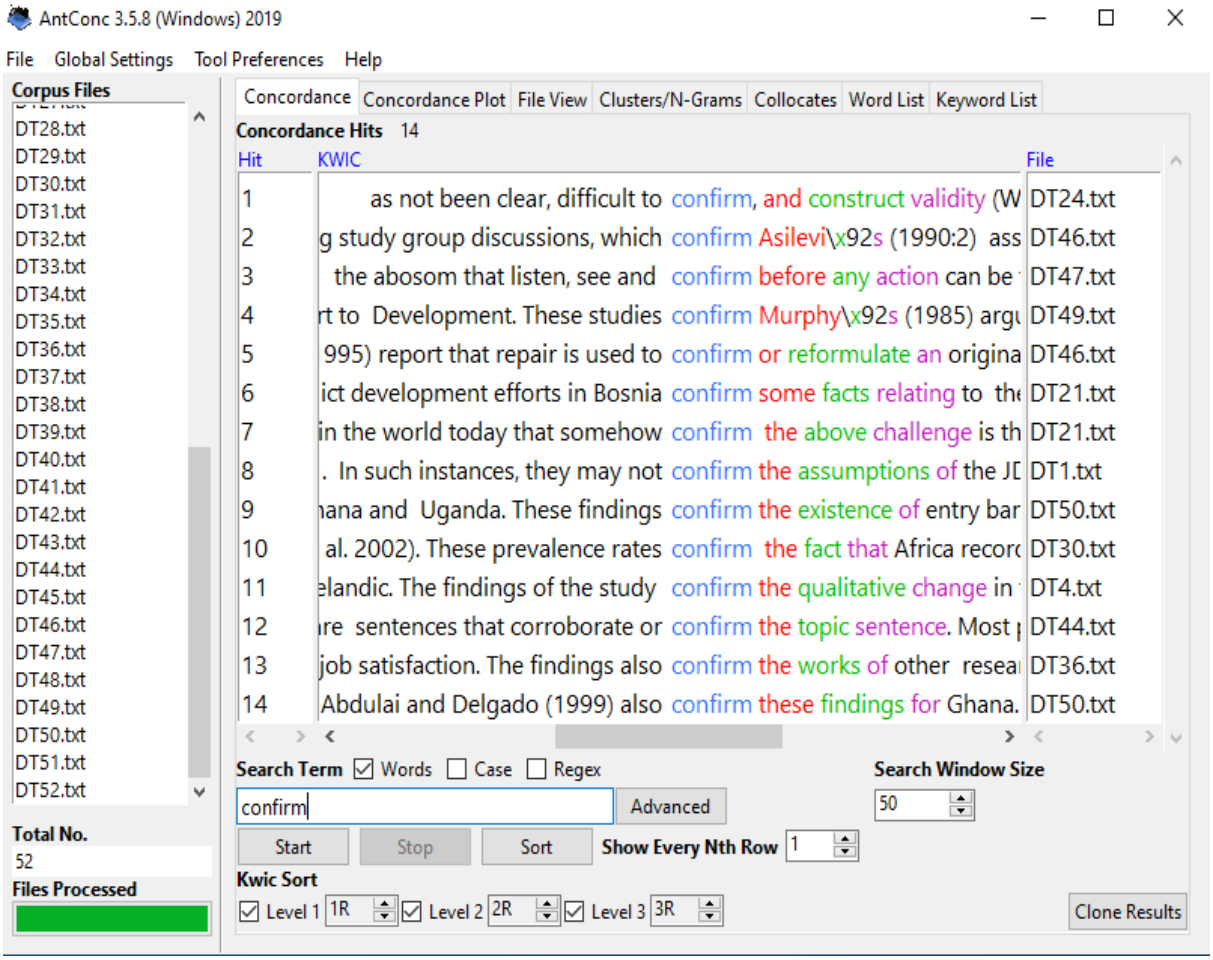

Figure 4.3: An AntConc screen on search mode for the verb *confirm*.

On the right-hand side of this figure, the sentences in which *confirm* (highlighted in blue) appears are outputted to screen and the corresponding file which has the clause is shown in the last column. In the sections that follow, the findings and interpretations related to the research questions are presented.

The number of hits corresponds to the number of occurrences of the search word of interest in the loaded text files. It is important to note that the number of occurrences does not necessarily mean that that word is used correctly as a reporting verb. Rather, it aids the writer to quickly narrow down and to further scrutinise these texts and to identify the context of use to confirm the role of the reporting verbs. In the ensuing sections of the chapter, the findings of the study and interpretation concerning the research questions that informed this research are presented.

4.4 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

4.4.1 RQ1: What reporting verbs do doctoral students in the Humanities at the University of Ghana use in their theses?

The data search of the doctoral texts revealed that generally, students in the Humanities draw on a variety of reporting verbs in the review of existing literature during the construction of the literature review chapters of their theses. Table 4.1 lists the reporting verbs found in the doctoral theses.

There is a range (variety) of reporting verbs used in theses construction and the findings are in line with extant literature which reports that in academic writing, and particularly in the literature review sections of theses, students employ reporting verbs (Thompson & Ye 1991; Pecorari 2008; Bloch 2010).

Table 4.1 List of reporting verbs cited in the doctoral theses analysed.

Reporting verbs
advance, agree, argue, answer, anticipate, assert, assume, attack, believe, cast doubt on, challenge, claim, comment, conceive, conceptualise, confirm, contend, declare, define, demonstrate, deny, describe, disagree, discuss, dispute, doubt, emphasise, establish, exaggerate, explain, fail, find, found, highlights, hold, hypothesise, identify, ignore, imply, indicate, intimate, know, maintain, mention, misunderstand, not account, not make, note, observe, obtain, point out, postulate, propose, put forwar, question, reflect, report, rule out, show, solve, state, suggest summarise, support, suppose, think, understand, warn.

Based on Hyland's (2002) model, the relationships between the various reporting verbs cited in this study and the groups or Acts (Hyland 2002) to which they belong have been categorised and the resulting findings of the initial scan are provided in Table 4.2(a) – (c). In 4.2(a) the investigation is based on Research Acts while (b) is based on Discourse Acts verbs, and (c) is based on the Cognition Acts verbs.

Table 4.2(a): Reporting verbs cited in doctoral theses examined by Research Acts category.

Acts category	**Reporting verbs**
Research Acts - Findings factive	demonstrate, establish, show, solve, confirm
Research Acts -Findings Counter factive	fail, ignore, overlook
Research Acts - Findings Non-factive	find, found, identify, observe, obtain
Research Acts - Procedures	plot, calculate, analyse

Table 4.2(b): Reporting verbs cited in doctoral theses examined by Cognition Acts category.

Act category	**Reporting verbs**
Cognition Acts - Critical	disagree, dispute
Cognition Acts - Positive	agree, hold, think, understand, assume support, suggest
Cognition Acts - Tentative	believe, doubt, speculate, suppose
Cognition Acts - Neutral	anticipate, reflect, conceptualise

Table 4.2(c): Reporting verbs cited in doctoral theses examined by Discourse Acts category.

Act category	**Reporting verbs**
Discourse Acts - Assurance factive	argue, affirm, note, point out, claim, state, explain
Discourse Acts - Counters	deny, critique, challenge, question, warn
Discourse Acts - Doubt Tentative	postulate, hypothesise, indicate, intimate
Discourse Acts - Doubt Critical	exaggerate, not account, not make
Discourse Acts - Assurance non-factive	describe, discuss, report, define, summarise

It is apparent that in writing the literature review in the various theses, the doctoral students employ many reporting verbs from the Research Acts, Discourse Acts and Cognition Acts categories i.e., the students did not only use reporting verbs belonging to one kind of act category but rather used reporting verbs belonging to three different acts. From the Research Acts category, verbs were selected to relate to the research

activity of authors or experimental procedures (Hyland 2002; Loan & Pramoolsook 2015). These verbs are usually used in statements of findings (e.g., observe, discover, notice and show) or procedures (e.g., analyse, calculate, assay, explore, plot, and recover) (Hyland 2002). Illustrative details of Research Acts verbs used in the data are presented below in examples 1 to 4:

1. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) **identified** appraisal as either primary or secondary. (DT42).
2. Whitson et. al. (2011) **examined** a sample of 172 poor Black and Hispanic adolescent mothers, examining their levels of parenting stress, depression, child abuse potential, social support, and the development of their children (DT42).
3. PCs in Otomi were **investigated** by Palancar (2006), and he realized that Otomi had no adjective class but PCs are encoded by verbs and nouns (DT43).
4. Sliter et. al. (2013) **observed** that age was related positively to deep acting but negatively to surface acting, relationships partially mediated by emotional intelligence (DT11).

Cognition Acts verbs were also used to report the results and findings of other authors. These verbs are concerned with the researcher's mental processes (Hyland 2002). When writers use Cognition Acts verbs, they attribute an attitude to the cited author. Illustrative use of Cognition Acts verbs is presented in examples 5 to 8:

5. Scholars like Thiyembe Mwayila (2001: 121) and Trutz Von Trotha (1996: 8) who **hold** such thought have developed more conciliatory and even realistic approaches (DT23).
6. Scholars in this area **agree** that the selection of morphemes from two different grammars in the same sentence is not randomly done (e.g., Poplack 1979; Forson 1979; Myers Scotton 1993; Amuzu 1998, 2005) (DT46).

7. Romo (1995) **see** [SIC] capital as generalized [SIC] resource that can assume monetary and non-monetary as well as tangible and intangible forms (Anheier et al., 1995: 862) (DT6).
8. Some researchers and cultures **believe** that allopathic medicine can only explain certain disease conditions within the limitations of its own medical model and by frequently violating local cultural understandings (Yawney, 2005) (DT47).

Discourse Acts verbs were also used in the literature review sections of the theses to report the claims of other authors, as seen in extracts 9 to 12:

9. Wolin and Wolin (1993) also **suggest** seven protective characteristics of a child namely insight, independence, relationships, initiative, humour, creativity, and morality (DT6).
10. Riecheman, Teitler and Nepomnyaschy (2001) **describe** childcare as an important family management strategy, particularly for working mothers (DT37).
11. Hayes and Kjiox (1984), for example, **state** that, parents and professionals may have different role expectations of one another's involvement in care (DT9).
12. Culley et al. (2006) **report** a similar disadvantage experienced by low-income earning British South Asians (DT30).

Neutral, tentative, and strong reporting verbs were also employed by the student writers in making claims and arguments in their theses. Neutral reporting verbs do not specify any conclusion on the part of the writer. Neutral verbs mainly report what the writer does and does not do. Examples of such verbs in the data are provided as follows:

13. Maslach and Leiter (1997) **assume** that engagement and burnout constitute the opposite poles of a continuum of work-related wellbeing, with burnout representing the negative pole and engagement the positive (DT1).

14. Tolossa (2010) and Kadigi et al. (2007) **demonstrate** that while many households in Ethiopia and Tanzania generally lack other capital assets, they have social capital/assets in the form of affiliation to community associations such as income-generating clubs, burial associations, and strong kinship ties (DT32).
15. Again, Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf (2008) **report** in their study that a large number of the kayayei became involved in the business of carrying head loads either because they have dropped out of school or have never enrolled at school … greater economic stability (DT37).
16. In Georgia in the USA, Cooper-Effa et al. (2001) **studied** 71 adults with SCD (DT14).

Tentative reporting verbs were also used by doctoral students. Tentative reporting verbs depict a situation where the writer tends to believe something, but still wishes to be hesitant. These verbs show uncertainty. Below are some illustrative details.

17. Senge (1990) **considers** learning organisations as those in which members continually develop their capacity to generate steps that lead to set objectives they truly desire, and in which there is a directed pattern of thinking that results in attaining common goal (DT31).
18 Some studies (van den Berg & Wilderom, 2004) **propose** five set [SIC] of distinct cultural dimensions, namely autonomy, external orientation, interdepartmental coordination, human resource orientation and improvement orientation (DT31).
19 Wolin and Wolin (1993) also **suggest** seven protective characteristics of a child namely insight, independence, relationships, initiative, humour, creativity and morality (DT6).
20 According to Kuo et al. (2013), such findings **imply** that spiritual faith and belief could act to improve individuals' psychological wellbeing through promoting

adaptive and culturally appropriate coping behaviours in the midst of [SIC] stressful situations (DT1).

The doctoral students also employed strong reporting verbs. These verbs depict the strength of the writer's argument. The writers use strong reporting verbs to authenticate their arguments, be they positive or negative. The examples below (21 to 24) illustrate how strong reporting verbs are used:

21. As Portes and Walton (1981) **affirm**, the term informal sector refers to the structural features of a capitalist economy, which is not just perverse but is trapped in an escalating crisis of accumulation (DT17).
22. A growing body of research work seems to suggest that men who **endorse** traditional beliefs about masculinity engage in less health-promoting behaviour and therefore have greater health risks than men who endorse less traditional beliefs (DT41).
23. The study aimed to **determine** the impact of autism on coping styles and support systems of the family (DT42).
24. Neil, Twibell, and Harris (2010) **emphasise** that nurses need to embrace family presence, even during crises, as a way to [SIC] keep families connected and to improve patients' clinical outcomes during hospital stay and after being discharged (DT9).

The word *affirm* simply means to state emphatically or support publicly and endorse means to declare one's public approval or support strongly without reservation. Therefore, the use of *endorse* is much stronger than *affirm* although they belong to the same group of strong reporting verbs. Words that are similar to *affirm* include *assert, aver, state, proclaim, pronounce* and *declare.* To *emphasise* is to give special importance or value to something either in speaking or in writing. A similar word to *emphasise* is to *stress*. The above presentation shows that there are subtle meanings (nuances) to various words and to be able to use the reporting words appropriately,

the student-writer must understand the meaning of the word and the context of use to ensure that his message is communicated concisely to the reader without loss of information. The reader needs to decode the message correctly by understanding the import and meaning of the reporting verb within the context of the sentence. It is the poor choice of reporting verbs or failure to use the correct reporting verbs in a context that leads to different understandings due to misinterpretation of statements and conflict. The next section presents the findings and interpretation related to the second research question.

4.4.2 RQ2: How often do reporting verbs occur in theses of doctoral students in the Humanities?

Table 4.3 provides some reporting verbs found in the corpus selected for the study. The first column gives the verb, and the second column gives the frequency or number of times a verb is used in the corpus. The results in terms of variability of the different categories (Research, Cognition and Discourse) are presented in Tables 4.3(a) to (c).

Table 4.3(a): Frequency of Research Acts verbs in LR sections of theses analysed

Report verb	Frequency		Report verb	Frequency
found	388		establish	15
show	251		Ignore	10
identify	145		Analyse	10
observe	140		Obtain	6
demonstrate	68		Plot	5
fail	67		calculate	4
confirm	58		Solve	3

Table 4.3(a) presents the frequency of occurrence of reporting verbs in the Research Acts Category as used by doctoral students. The table shows that the students employ the verb **found** frequently in their writing. **Found** had the highest occurrence of 388 and featured prominently in Economics, Social work, and Psychology theses. There were fewer occurrences in the other disciplines. However, it is important to note that there were no occurrences of **found** in the Political Science theses**.** The verbs **show**, **identify,** and **observe** had frequencies of occurrence of 251, 145, and 140 respectively.

The Cognition Acts verbs include words such as *agree, believe, view, doubt, hold, suppose, think, anticipate, understand, reflect, assume, conceptualise, support, disagree, suggest,* and *dispute.* In Table 4.3(b) the frequency of occurrence of Cognition Act verbs reveal that **agree** was used extensively (252 occurrences), followed by **view** (157 occurrences), **suggest** (148 occurrences) and **believe** (40 occurrences). The verb **agree** was used predominantly in the Linguistics theses. The data revealed that the critical verbs were rarely used as they recorded few occurrences.

Table 4.3(b): Cognition Acts verbs in LR sections of doctoral theses analysed

Report verb	**Frequency**		**Report verb**	**Frequency**
Agree	252		Think	10
View	157		conceptualise	9
Suggest	148		Disagree	6
Believe	40		understand	4
Assume	24		Suppose	3
support	20		anticipate	1
reflect	19		Dispute	1
Hold	19		Doubt	1

Table 4.3(c): Discourse Acts verbs in LR section of doctoral theses analysed

Report verb	**Frequency**		**Report verb**	**Frequency**
Argue	381		Postulate	19
Note	341		affirm	11
indicate	207		Intimate	11
explain	189		hypothesise	10
report	184		Question	9
State	144		not account	8
Define	90		challenge	6
point out	78		Warn	3
discuss	75		not make	2
describe	53		Critique	1
Claim	38		exaggerate	1

In Table 4.3(c), the Discourse Acts verbs used by the doctoral students include *postulate, state, hypothesise, argue, indicate, affirm, intimate, explain, exaggerate, claim, describe, deny, discuss, critique, report, challenge, define, question,* and *warn.* In the table, **argue** had the highest occurrence (381) followed by **note (341) indicate (207)**, and **explain** (189) respectively. Some reporting verbs occur more frequently than others do, and this may be due in part to the individual writers' familiarity with the verbs and to the nature of writing in the disciplines. The reporting verb a**rgue** was used greatly in Social Work, Political Science and English. It is important to note that the reporting verb **note** was also used in Marketing theses and Social work theses. Some verbs have a low frequency of occurrence in the write-ups, which is an indication that these words are rarely used. This low utilisation of some verbs can result from two issues: either the students refrain from using the verbs and

adopt more familiar words in which case their constant use becomes problematic or that there are more appropriate words that denote the same idea in their use.

To get an idea of the numerical values of the reporting verbs in the Act categories, the four highest occurrences or reporting verbs in the three Act categories were considered. Using these 12 reporting verbs in total, the exercise revealed that the Discourse Act verbs are predominant in the literature review sections of these doctoral theses with 41.28%. This occurrence is followed by Research Acts verbs with 34.27% and Cognition Acts verbs with 24.44%. The results are presented in Table 4.3(d).

Table 4.3(d): Frequency of four highest reporting verbs in each category.

Act Category	Verbs	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative (%)
Research	Found	388	14.39	34.27
	Shows	251	9.31	
	Identify	145	5.38	
	Observe	140	5.19	
Cognition	Agree	252	9.35	24.44
	Holds	219	8.12	
	Suggest	148	5.49	
	Believe	40	1.48	
Discourse	Argues	381	14.13	41.28
	Notes	341	12.65	
	Indicate	207	7.68	
	Report	184	6.82	

A more rigorous examination using all the reporting verbs for the three-act categories revealed that the Discourse Acts category had the highest occurrence (2498 occurrences), representing 58.28% of the total reporting verbs identified in the data (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: Frequency of occurrence of both the process functions and the evaluative categories of RVs based on the model of Hyland (2002).

Research Acts 1230 (28.70%)	Findings - 1211 (28.25%)	Factive - 395 (9.21%)
		Counter-factive - 80 (1.87%)
		Non -factive - 736 (17.17%)
	Procedures - 19 (0.44%)	
Cognition Acts 558 (13.02%)	Positive - 477 (11.13%)	
	Critical - 7 (0.16%)	
	Tentative - 45 (1.05%)	
	Neutral - 29 (0.68%)	
Discourse Acts 2498 (58.28%)	Doubt - 258 (6.02%)	Tentative - 247 (5.76%)
		Critical - 11 (0.26%)
	Assurance - 2220 (51.80%)	Factive - 1812 (42.28%)
		Non-factive - 408 (9.52%)
	Counters - 20 (0.47%)	

This numerical placement was followed by the Research Acts category of verbs, which recorded 1230 occurrences, representing 28.25% of the total occurrences of reporting verbs in the data. The Cognition Acts verbs had the lowest number of occurrences (558 occurrences), which is 13.02% of the total number of reporting verbs recorded

in the data. It is interesting to observe that the numerical percentage of the Research Acts, Cognition Acts and Discourse Acts as computed from Table 4.4 using the 4 highest reporting verbs in each category are quite different from that presented in Table 4.3(d). This difference in the Act values would mean that the 12 highest occurring reporting verbs selected in Table 4.3(d) were insufficient to determine the values of the Act categories precisely and would require the values of the other reporting verbs to be included for a better determination as done in Table 4.4.

A visual representation of the data in Table 4.4 is presented in Figure 4.4 and Figure 4.5. These findings buttress the claim of Hyland (2002 p.126) that the use of Discourse Acts verbs in the soft disciplines reflects the discursive nature of writing in the discipline where "assumption, overt explanation and arguments are accepted aspects of knowledge".

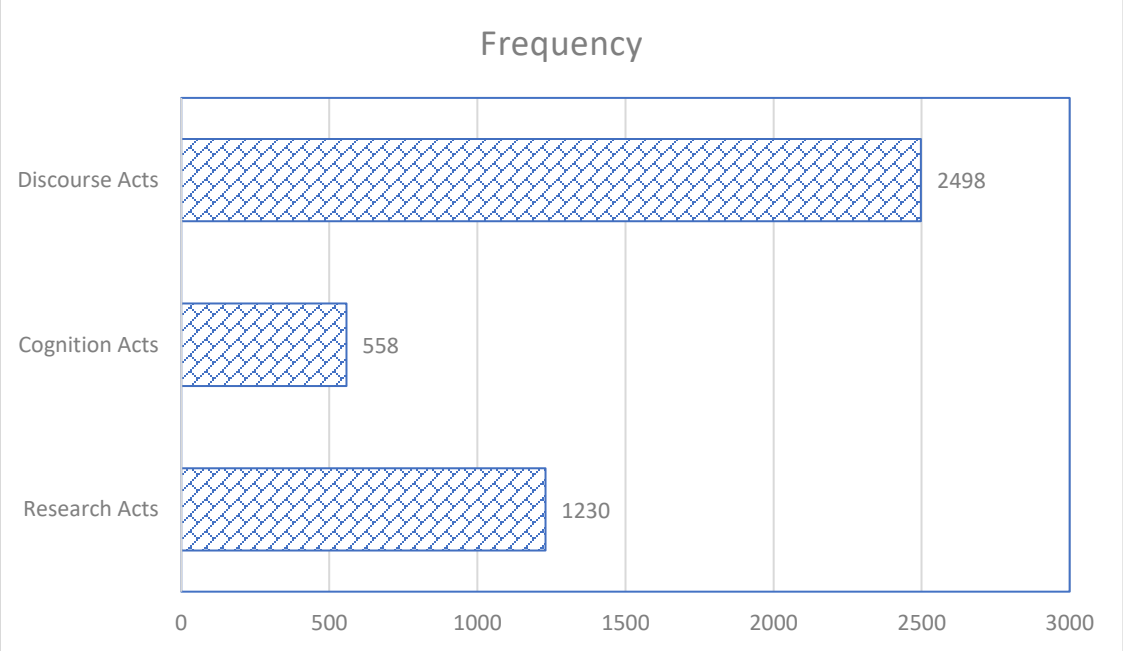

Figure 4.4: Various reporting Acts as a function of the frequency of occurrence in the literature review texts examined.

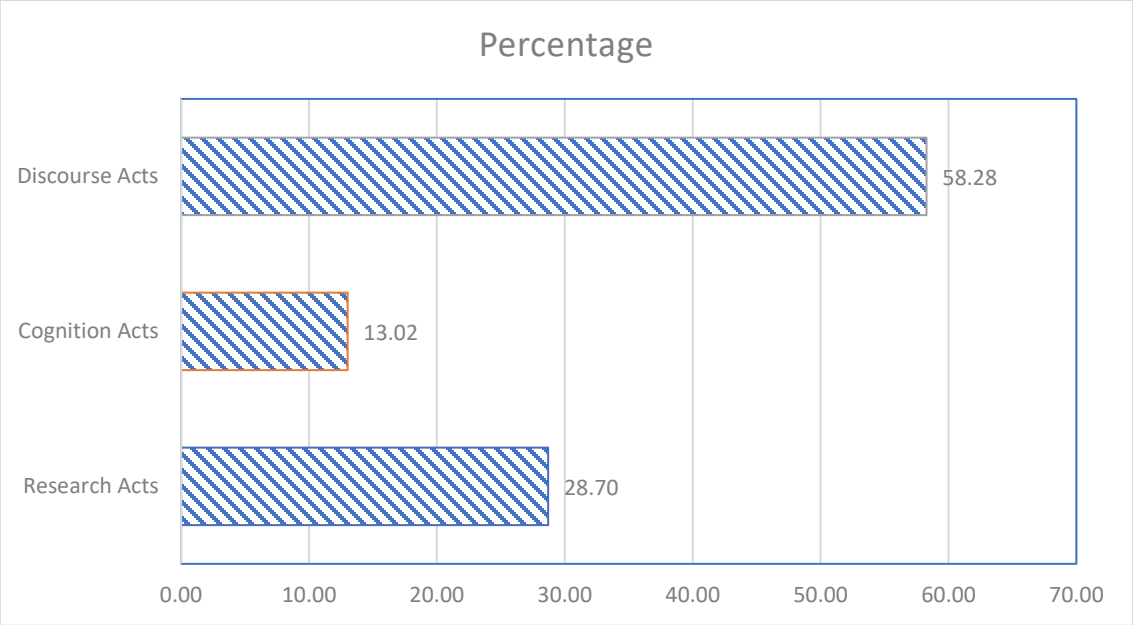

Figure 4.5: Reporting Acts as a function of percentage occurrence in literature review chapters of the student texts examined.

In the evaluative categories, there is a marked difference in how the *Procedure* verbs (19 counts or 0.44%) and *Finding* verbs were employed (1211 counts or 28.25% respectively). This marked difference suggests that in the construction of the literature review chapters of their theses, the doctoral students had a greater focus for verbs that show research findings than the procedures. This finding differs from that of Loan and Pramoolsook (2015) who found that the Vietnamese students in their study reviewed both procedures and findings of previous authors to much the same extent. In the literature review chapters, the students mainly reviewed related literature with attention to key aspects of previous studies, which served as the basis for themes occurring and discussion. The students generally displayed some familiarity with knowledge construction in the various disciplines, but their persuasive efforts were limited due to their inability to confirm the credibility of the findings of authors or other studies; hence, the preference for non-factive verbs. Loan and Pramoolsook (2015) explain that such a situation may arise from the students' assumptions related to the

communicative role of the literature review chapter as merely a review of related literature and not an argument for the studies being conducted.

In the present study, the evaluative functions of the reporting verbs produced interesting results. In the Research Acts category of verbs, the *Findings* had 28.25% of the total number of reporting verbs. Under the category of *Findings*, factive verbs had 395 occurrences, representing 9.21% of the total number of reporting verbs identified in the data and non-factive verbs recorded 736 occurrences, representing 17.17% of the total number of reporting verbs in the data, while counter factive had 80 occurrences in the data, representing 1.87%. That counter factive verbs had such percentage occurrence at all in this data is not surprising because Hyland (2002) earlier affirms that writers, in reporting information of other authors rarely use counter factive verbs. The results differ from Hyland's (2002) study, which recorded 4% of counter factive verbs, and Agbaglo (2017) who had no occurrences in his data. The findings in the present study agree with those of Yeganeh and Boghayeri (2014), Jafarigohar, and Mohammadkhani (2015), Loan and Pramoolsook (2015) and Agbaglo (2017) in which similar results were obtained.

Yeganeh and Boghayeri (2014) employ Thompson and Ye's (1999) categorisation in their study and record similar results. They point out that students use more reporting verbs from the argue group such as **assert, suggest, argue,** and **point out.** They note variations in how reporting verb groups are employed in writing by Persian and English writers, but state that for both groups of study participants, the highest percentage of reporting verb groups is the Argue verb group, where they record 40.5% and 23.3% respectively. In the study of Loan and Pramoolsook (2015), Discourse Acts were found to be the most frequently used. These Discourse Acts account for about two-thirds (62.90%) of the reporting verbs in the literature review chapter. This was followed by Research Acts, and Cognition Acts (28.42% and 8.68%) correspondingly. Agbaglo (2017) records the highest occurrence (108 occurrences)

of reporting verbs in his study from the Discourse Acts category. This signifies that about 51% of the total reporting verbs evident in the data belongs to Discourse Acts, followed by the Research Acts category with 84 occurrences, and which represents 42% of the total occurrences of reporting verbs in the data. The lowest number of 13 occurrences was observed in the Cognition Acts category. This represents 6.7% of the total number of reporting verbs recorded in the data.

These findings support the argument of Hyland (2002) that in the various disciplines, writers use different reporting verbs to reveal their positions to works that they cite. Hyland (2002) affirms that the greater use of Discourse Acts verbs exemplifies the discursive nature of 'soft' disciplines when he clarifies that "in the Humanities and social science ... is more appropriate in an argument schema which more readily regards explicit interpretation, speculation, and complexity as accepted aspects of knowledge" (Hyland, 2002 p.126).

The agreement between the present study and those of Yeganeh and Boghayeri (2014), Jafarigohar, Mohammadkhani (2015), and Agbaglo (2017) could be explained in part by the fact that the focus on these previous studies was based on research articles written by experts; similarly, the doctoral students in this study aimed to construct their theses like experts, making use of expert writing in the field thus reflecting (mirroring) the similarity in the findings. The present findings are, however, distinct from that of Manan and Noor (2013) where the verbs in the Research Acts category recorded the highest frequency of occurrence (44.8%), followed by the Cognitive Acts category which recorded 30.2% of the total reporting verbs identified in the data, and Discourse Acts category, which had the lowest percentage (25%). The prominent use of Discourse Acts reporting verbs in these studies is at variance with and contrasts sharply with the study of Manan and Noor (2014). Findings from the study of Manan and Noor (2014) show that students use more of Research Acts

reporting verbs (which are the verbs related to statements of findings and research procedures). These authors explain that the students are more familiar with these verbs compared to Cognition Acts and Discourse Acts and make abundant use of them in reporting the findings from the previous researchers and the procedures conducted in the research. Also, they do not attempt to critique or synthesise.

Manan and Noor (2014) rather recorded a lower level of use in the Cognition Acts and Discourse Acts. They explain these verbs as a complex level of reporting verbs, as the students do not strongly critique the works of previous researchers. They observed that in their literature reviews, the students made limited choices from the Cognition Act verbs. The same occurred for the Discourse Acts. For these two categories, the authors (Manan and Noor 2014) report that

> the students had to think deeply about the most suitable words to be used to resemble the verbal and mental verbs. By using the higher level of reporting verbs in the theses, the readers were expected to get impressed with their work, and the writers could make the theses more interesting, and further enhance the acceptability of theses themselves (Manaan & Noor 2014 p.4).

Table 4.5(a): Comparison of reporting verbs by Act category with literature

Act category	**Hyland (2002)**	**Manan and Noor (2014)**	**Agbaglo (2017)**	**Present study**
Research	35	44.8	42	28
Cognition	8	30.2	6.5	13
Discourse	57	25.0	51.5	58

Table 4.5a provides a comparison of values in the present study with literature. It must be pointed out that the present study focuses on doctoral theses by students whereas earlier studies focused on articles and journals by graduate research students (Master's theses and Research articles/ Journal articles). It is noted that in the Cognition Acts, reporting verbs used to express positive, tentative, and neutral stances recorded 477 occurrences (11.13%), 45 occurrences (1.05%), and 29 occurrences (0.68%) respectively. The verbs used to express a critical stance about the information being reported recorded 7 occurrences (0.16%). This finding agrees with the findings of Hyland (2002), Loan and Pramoolsook (2015), and Agbaglo (2017). In Hyland (2002) Cognition Acts verbs that express positive stance, tentative stance, and neutral stance recorded 5 occurrences (50%), 2 (20%), and 3 incidences of occurrence (30%) respectively. Critical Cognition Acts verbs recorded 5% in his data. In Loan and Pramoolsook's (2015) study, while Cognition Acts reporting verbs used to express positive evaluation recorded 18 occurrences (2.05%), reporting verbs used to express tentative stance against the information reported had 51 occurrences (5.81%). Verbs used to express a neutral stance had 7 occurrences (0.80%), those used to express critical stance compared to the material reported had no occurrence. In Agbaglo's study, Cognition Acts verbs used to express positive stance, tentative stance, and neutral stance recorded 5 occurrences (2.5%), 6 occurrences (3%), and 2 occurrences (1%) respectively. The verbs used to express critical stance concerning the information being reported were, however not used in the data

In the Discourse Acts category, interesting results were noticed with the Doubt and Assurance categories, which either present the writer's view or attribute an attitude to the cited author. The verbs that express Doubt, recorded 258 occurrences (6.02%) all of which represent tentative reporting verbs. The verbs that express critical opinions to the authors cited recorded 11 occurrences (0.26%). This low occurrence suggests that these writers avoided approaching the views of other authors critically.

This finding agrees with that of Loan and Pramoolsook (2015) and Agbaglo (2017) where critical verbs under the Doubt verb group had no occurrence. Regarding the Assurance verb group, 2220 occurrences were recorded, representing 51.80% of the total number of the reporting verbs identified in the data. Of this number, 1812 (42.28%) were factive verbs while 408 (9.58%) were non-factive verbs. Surprisingly, the Counters verb group under the Discourse Acts category recorded 20 occurrences (0.47%).

In Hyland's (2002) study, the percentage contribution of counters was 5%. However, counters did not occur in Agbaglo's (2017) study. The high occurrence of Assurance verbs as compared to Doubt verbs and Counters in the data studied reflects previous findings (Hyland 2002; Loan and Pramoolsook 2015). In the study of Hyland (2002) for instance, Assurance verbs recorded 71% of the total Discourse Acts verbs, followed by Doubt verbs and Counters, which recorded 24% and 5% respectively, of Discourse Acts verbs. In Loan and Pramoolsook's (2015) study, Assurance verbs occurred 486 times in the data, representing 53.42% of the total number of reporting verbs recorded in the data. These numerical percentage values of the Assurance verbs were followed by Doubt verbs and Counters, which recorded 80 occurrences (9.13%) and 3 occurrences (0.34%) respectively.

The low value of occurrence in Counter verbs in this study agrees with similar findings of Hyland (2002). It is important to note that in the present study, the students avoided directly refuting the findings of previous authors. This avoidance of refutation and critique of research by writers is not new. Infact, the practice is adopted in hedging where a writer deliberately uses words to commit fully to a claim because he/she is not sure of the fact being presented by an author. The writers adopted this posture as a reflection of their status as student writers without much knowledge, fact, or experience in the field of research, to criticise their peers or authority. They remain neutral and do not declare a stance, making their essays un-interesting. The

finding of low occurrence of counters suggests that (i) either writers are not familiar with such verbs or (ii) writers deliberately refrain from using these verbs in their works to criticise and confront other authors. It is most probable that the latter and not the former is the case as the student writers focus more on neutrally reporting findings.

The occurrences of the reporting verbs in the different subject areas were investigated. To have a basis for direct comparison the values obtained in the different subjects were divided by the number of theses used to generate the data. The resulting data which gives the various acts per unit thesis in the discipline, is presented in Table 4.5(b).

It is interesting to observe that not all the subjects had a majority in the Discourse Acts. In most of the cases investigated in this study (nine out of the eleven, 9/11 subjects), the numerical values follow the trend: The percentage of Discourse Acts (DA) verbs greater than Research Acts (RA) verbs greater than Cognition Acts (CA) verbs). It is only in two out of eleven cases (2 /11), that there was a deviation from the majority trend. These two deviations occur in Economics and Linguistics wherein the former Research Acts verbs far exceed Discourse Acts verbs and Cognition Acts verbs (RA > DA > CA) and in the latter Cognition Act verbs far exceed Discourse Acts verbs and Research Acts verbs (CA > DA > RA). These would mean that students of Economics use more Research Acts verbs as compared to Discourse Acts verbs and Cognition Acts verbs within the same discipline. It also means that students of Linguistics (Linguists) use comparatively more Cognition Acts verbs than Discourse Acts verbs and Research Acts verbs per subject, and in other disciplines.

It is not clear why there is a deviation in trend of these two subjects from the other nine investigated. One possible reason for this deviation may be due to the nature of writing in these disciplines themselves. It is widely acknowledged that Economics,

Table 4.5(b): Act categories by subject area for doctoral students in the Humanities.

SUBJECT	ACT CATEGORY (%)		
	RESEARCH	COGNITION	DISCOURSE
Economics	73.4	10.2	16.4
Modern Languages	11.7	6.5	81.8
Population studies	45.6	2.9	51.5
Marketing	26.5	16.3	57.1
English language	17.0	13.5	69.6
Linguistics	13.8	52.2	33.9
Geo & HR Mgt.	26.2	5.9	68.0
Social work	27.5	6.5	65.9
Psychology	44.8	9.1	46.0
Political Science	11.2	10.8	77.9
Sociology	31.3	5.6	63.1

although a social science subject, makes use of technical terms that belong to experimental activities or actions carried out in the real world. Economics is a practically oriented discipline and uses statements of finding (such as *observe, discover, analyse*, and *calculate*) and procedural reporting verbs (such as *analyse, calculate, plot*, and *recover*) in writing and reporting. Therefore, student writers of the subject tend to use more Research Acts verbs than other verbs giving rise to the

observation. There are, however, observations in the extant literature where Research Acts verbs far exceed Discourse Act verbs and Cognition Act verbs (Manan & Noor 2014).

In the case of Linguistics, the data analysis shows that Cognition Acts verbs far exceed Discourse Acts verbs and Research Acts verbs. Linguistics involves the analysis of language forms, the meanings conveyed by the language, and language in context as well as the social, cultural, historical, and political factors that influence language use. As such, the language used in the discipline makes use of verbs concerned with the writers' mental processes (*believe, view, assume, conceptualise, suspect*). Linguists use reporting verbs that reflect positive attitude (*agree, think, hold, understand, know*), tentative view (*believe, suppose*), critical stance (*disagree, dispute*) and neutral attitude (picture, conceive, *anticipate*) to present a holistic narrative about an event or issue. Thus, mental attitude dominates the findings which would account for the observation here that Cognition Acts verbs are more abundant in use by the students of Linguistics compared to the other disciplines in Humanities in the University of Ghana. Such discipline-based variations in reporting verbs have been reported before in extant literature for both hard and soft sciences (Hyland 2002). Indeed, North (2005) showed that disciplines reflect unique subject matter and specific languages of communication. He notes that writing in the Humanities does not only contribute to previous knowledge but also depicts findings that guide and shape national policies, and generally build on extant literature. The present findings agree with and contribute to the findings of Hyland (2002) and North (2005).

4.4.2.1 Verb Choices by doctoral students

The most common verb in the literature review chapters is *found* (388 times). It is followed by *argue* (Discourse Acts-381 times), *notes* (Discourse Acts-341 times), *agree* (Cognition Acts- 252 times), *show* (Research Acts-251 times), *hold* (Cognition Acts-

219 times), *indicate* (Discourse Acts-207 times), *report* (Discourse Acts-184 times), *suggest* (Cognition Acts-148 times), *identify* (Research Acts-145 times), *observe* (Research Acts -140 times), and *believe* (Cognition Acts-40 times).

This finding differs from that of Pickard (1995) who claims that the verb *say* occurred frequently and was overused by non-native English student writers. It also differs from that of Loan and Pramoolsook (2015) who found that *state* had the highest occurrence in their study. The present findings agree with Hyland (2002) which identified *argue, suggest, show, explain, find* and *point out* as the most used reporting verbs in Applied Linguistics. Overall, the frequency of use of the reporting verbs in the literature review sections of the Doctoral theses is appreciable. In this study, the student writers, as compared to those in the study of Loan and Pramoolsook (2015), display knowledge of how to employ reporting verbs to integrate sources in academic writing, and this agrees with Agbaglo (2017) although in that study the focus was on journal articles written by University lecturers. Loan and Pramoolsook (2015) explain that student writers in their study are unable to integrate sources into their writing and thus tend to employ non-idiomatic expressions to state agreement with an author's findings.

As earlier mentioned, Discourse Acts verbs which are verbs used to convey a writer's view of cited material have an outstanding proportion in this study. This prominence of Discourse Acts verbs supports the claim by Hyland (2002) that Discourse Acts verbs feature in the 'soft' disciplines of Humanities because writing in these disciplines is intertextaual and dialogic. As such interpreting, critiquing, and generating arguments are "accepted aspects of knowledge creation" (Hyland 2002 p.126). This high percentage portrayed that the doctoral students in Humanities at the University of Ghana were exposed to these higher-order verbs, and they employed the reporting verbs from the Discourse Acts category more frequently compared to those from Cognition Acts and Research Acts categories. In the construction of the literature

review sections of their theses, the students did not merely report the statements from other studies, or the procedures involved in earlier studies. Reporting verbs were used to critique views, conduct synthesis, engage in critical analysis, and compare the works of previous researchers.

It must be remarked that the writers employ reporting verbs based on the meanings they intend to convey and, on the evidence, facts, or information available to them. A writer may decide to critique any author (i) negatively to project himself or distance himself from an author or (ii) positively and align himself and his (writer's) findings to an author or (iii) remain neutral in order not to commit himself to a proposition by the author. In the last situation, for example, the writer may not be fully aware of the full facts by the author/information and convinced as to take a stance and defend his stance by citing other authors to buttress his/ her case. Such an uncritical stance makes student writing dull or uninteresting and does not help the student to develop critical thinking skills and project his propositions powerfully using reporting verbs.

4.4.3 RQ3: What are the Discourse functions of the reporting verbs used in the theses of doctoral students in the Humanities?

In this study, the discourse function of reporting verbs is based on the context of usage of the reporting verbs observed in the data. Besides, discourse functions in this research are considered in terms of the generic functions that the reporting verbs are used to perform in the literature review sections of the theses. Reporting verbs show the research of others and can also indicate the writer's attitude or the author's attitude to the information being presented. These functions establish the writer's perspective in using reporting verbs. The chapter first presents the evaluative functions of the verbs using Hyland's (2002) categorisation as a guide.

In the present study, writers employed factive verbs such as *demonstrate, establish, show, solve* to signify acceptance of an author's findings or results, while the use of counter-factive verbs such as *fail, misunderstand, ignore*, and *overlook* indicate that the writer thinks the author's judgments are false or untrue and ought to be discarded or rejected. Writers also employed non-factive verbs such as *find, identify, observe,* and *obtain* to comment on research findings "with no clear attitudinal signal as to their reliability" (Hyland 2002 p.7). The examples below show how Research Acts verbs were used in the data analysed.

4.4.3.1 Research Acts verbs used by doctoral students

4.4.3.1.1 Factive verbs

The data indicated that writers explicitly conveyed agreement with the viewpoint advanced or were following what is generally known or expected by employing factive verbs. By using Factive Research Acts verbs, doctoral students take up a valid viewpoint or represent propositions made by scholars in previous studies or existing literature as persuasive, credible and well-founded (Hyland 2000). In this way, the doctoral students tend to show in their writing some agreement with the sources and do not support different views. The extracts below show how the students use factive verbs to show agreement with research findings.

1. Boeh-Ocansey **established** that more efficient production technology /equipment turns out better-quality products and equally so, the class of the workforce and management staff engaged in the operations of the factories can bring about the needed revolution in the food processing subdivision of the fresh fruit chains of export crops (DT51).
2. In another example, Bierlich (1999) and Kirby (1997) both **demonstrate** how Ghanaians ascribe colours to medicines to distinguish their potency, type and use, and to label various stages of illness (DT47).

3. Hyman and Olawsky (2000) **show** in their analysis that the subject pronoun is L tone, while the verb receives a LH melody as realized on zagsi plus ya (the perfective marker) (DT5).
4. Young and Garro **calculate** that only a fifth of traditional care users stated cultural preference as a key reason for utilisation (DT47).
5. Morris and Feldman (2016) **examined** the dimensions, antecedents, and consequences of emotional labour (DT11).

In the extracts above, the doctoral students' use of factive Research Acts verbs points out that the writers share the author's view or conclusion and affirm that the proposition is valid. In extracts 1 to 3, the writer displays acceptance of the information as valid or as a fact by using the word *establish, demonstrate* and *show*. In extracts 4 and 5, the writers report the research finding, but the verbs are procedural; thus, the focus is on the research process of other authors. Procedural verbs carry no evaluation in themselves.

4.4.3.1.2 Non-factive verbs

Non-factive verbs were used to report research findings; these verbs show no commitment. The writer remains neutral in reporting the author's findings. In extracts, 6 to 8 the verbs are used non-factively. The non-factive verbs **(find, identify, observe, and obtain)** in the extracts below reveal that the writers remain neutral to the author's findings.

6. The paper did **not find** any gender differences in the choice of healthcare provider (DT7).
7. Haze and Haggblade (1993) **find** that both the poorest and the wealthiest had the highest shares of income from non-farm sources. (DT50).
8. Adams (2001) **obtains** similar results for Egypt, so did Canagarajah et al. (2001) for Ghana and Ghana (DT50).

The phrase **not find** is employed in extract 6 to state findings non-factively. Similarly, in extracts 6 and 7 the verb **find** is used to state the findings non-factively. In example 8, **obtain** is used non-factively to show that the results for Adams (2001) and Canagarajah et al. (2001) are similar. In all these extracts, the writers remain neutral. They do not show any commitment to the findings of the authors. This means that they comment on research findings 'with no clear attitudinal signal as to their reliability (Hyland 2002 p.7), as compared to factive verbs which clearly show the writer's agreement with the author's findings. Although these verbs are used to show a neutral stance on the part of the writer, other verbs are used to show disagreement with an author's findings or propositions.

4.4.3.1.3 Counter-factive verbs

Counter-factive verbs show disagreement with an author's views, evaluation, or judgments. However, it should be pointed out that in the sampled data for this study, the doctoral students preferred to use the word *fail* in their theses construction, as compared to other Counter-factive verbs such as *overlook, misunderstand* and *ignore.* Although the use of the verb *fail* shows that the students are very critical of what they read or review in the literature, it could also suggest that they are familiar with that word (Davis 2013); hence, the tendency to use it all the time in the different disciplines, which makes it repetitive. This falls in line with the perspective of Bloch (2010) that students do not make ample use of the many reporting verbs to serve various functions; rather they use the same reporting verbs repeatedly. Some illustrative examples are below (Examples 9 to 11).

9. Urban (2010) **failed** to examine the role of demographic characteristics such as age, gender, business experience of entrepreneurs on entrepreneurial mind set (DT41).

10. Hamaideh (2012) **failed** to explicitly examine the nature of the support these Jordanian mental health nurses receive (DT11).
11. Since Campbell and Ntobedzi **failed** to examine …. emotional intelligence and psychological distress (DT11).

The extracts above illustrate the use of Counter-factive verbs in doctoral theses. It is evident from the extracts that by using the verb **fail,** the writer portrays the authors' findings and judgments as false or incorrect. In this way, doctoral students position themselves as being critical. Further, it can be seen from the extracts that by using the Counter-factive verb **fail**, the writer raises a counter argument to the finding and emphasises a commitment to the propositions that other writers come up with (Extracts 9 to 11). Counter-factive verbs are expected in well-constructed literature review chapters, where the writer critiques the works of other authors. Counter-factive verbs vary and highlight various propositions, but in this study, the writers employ only the verb **fail** to emphasise neglect by the authors to incorporate something in the various studies. The writers avoid direct refutation and cover-up by identifying omissions, gaps or actions that were not undertaken.

Extracts 9 to 11 are thus considered as instances of poor research or mistake. The students avoid the use of other verbs (*misunderstand, ignore,* and *overlook*) to express disagreement with the findings of other authors. This avoidance of being overly critical in the review of previous studies could also be because some evaluations may show disregard or disrespect (Weigang 2010), so the students seem to refrain and soften their claims, or simply remain neutral. They then opt to make choices from Non-factive verbs, as a way of meeting the requirements of writing in the various disciplines and the Academic Discourse Community.

4.4.3.2 Cognition Acts verbs used by doctoral students

When writers use Cognition Acts verbs, they can attribute an attitude to the cited author. Hyland (2002 p.120) clarifies that these verbs represent the cited work as involving "a mental process". This suggests that writers can represent the author as having a positive attitude to the information by accepting it as true or correct with verbs such as *think, agree, hold, concur, understand, know* or *think.* Authors may also hold a tentative view towards the information being reported with verbs such as *believe, doubt, speculate, suppose, suspect* or more rarely, as take a critical stance using verbs such as *disagree, dispute, not think*. Critical verbs are seldom used. Lastly, writers can depict that the author holds a neutral attitude towards the proposition with verbs such as *conceive, reflect, anticipate,* and *picture.* Illustrative examples indicating how Cognition verbs are used to display positive attitudes in the data analysed are provided in the next section.

4.4.3.2.1 Positive Attitude

Reporting verbs may be used by the writer to depict an attitude to the source of information being cited. If the writer agrees with the author, reporting verbs with a positive meaning may be used to align the writer's argument with the author. The writer may do that using verbs such as **agree, hold, concur, understand, affirm** and **support** as seen in the following extracts:

12. Dahlgren (2004:14-15) **agrees** that the culturalist tradition, has not affected political communication to any substantial degree (DT20).
13. Addison (2003:4) aptly **concurs** that if recovery is broad-based, then policies must change as well (DT12).
14. Twerefou and Osei-Assibey (2008) **hold** a similar view which … reduction in the programme document (DT8).

15. Scholars like Thiyembe Mwayila (2001:121) and Trutz Von Trotha (1996: 8) who **hold** such thought have developed more conciliatory and even realistic approaches (DT23).
16. Akmajian et al (2003) **think** that distinctive features are exactly those that permit an insightful description of segments and allow the exact nature of the assimilation process between two adjacent phonological segments to be clearly expressed (DT5).

In example 12, the writer shows a positive attitude in agreeing with Chandler's (2003) finding that experimental studies have greater efficacy or uselessness of CFCs. Similarly, in the other examples above, the writers display positive attitudes to the material and accept the information as valid or well-founded with verbs such as *agree, think, hold, concur, know,* or *understand***.** In extract 16 however, the writer uses *think* as a hedging device as he interprets the findings of Akmaijian et al. (2003). Hedging devices withhold total commitment to a proposition. Instead of information being stated factively, it is presented as an opinion without any commitment (Hyland 1999). In the construction of doctoral theses, the use of hedging devices and reporting verbs is vital as these help the writer to emphasise an authorial voice through a cautious interaction between the researcher's view, the works of other writers and his research activities. By using Positive Cognition Acts verbs, doctoral students display positive attitudes as they signify the findings, perspectives, and propositions available in existing literature as convincing, valid, plausible, generally reliable (Hyland 2002). When this happens, the doctoral students tend to display great support for or confidence in the information.

4.4.3.2.2 Tentative Attitude

Some writers also display a cautious (tentative) view towards reported material. This means that the writers use reporting verbs that are speculative rather than verbs that would depict strong agreement or disagreement with the author. Some extracts, which occur in the sampled material, are provided in the following:

17. Ewen and Van Der Hulst (2001:18) **believe** that all the three approaches are required in phonological theory- vowel systems may be organised along any of the three lines suggested by the approaches discussed so that the nature of the phonetic parameters, which play a role in a particular sound system is reflected in the phonology of the language in question (DT5).
18. Oh (2003) **speculated** that at an early age, children might be too limited cognitively to attend to various components of a motion event at the same time, though another possibility might be that they have not yet mastered the skill to pack both manner and path information into a single description (DT4).
19. Burt (1975) **suggests** that teachers should concentrate on global errors rather than concentrate on local errors. On the contrary, I **suggest** business communication teachers should consider the two error types (global and local) if comprehensiveness of textual errors and accuracy is their focus (DT44).
20. Maslach and Leiter (1997) **assume** that engagement and burnout constitute the opposite poles of a continuum of work-related wellbeing, with burnout representing the negative pole and engagement the positive (DT1).

The extracts above illustrate the use of tentative reporting verbs in the doctoral theses. It is evident from the examples that the use of the verbs **speculate, believe,** and **suspect** reveals uncertainty, the hesitancy of the writer in committing to the information. The examples further show that the views of the writers are related to their mental attitudes (Hyland 2002). The writer remains vague or can be said to be hedging. The verbs are used as hedges such that the writers avoid showing clear,

direct commitment to the information; possibly, because the information is not proven and to put themselves in a defensive position. The verbs are used as hedges as they show a lack of commitment or confidence in the information. As Pinker (2014 p.5) points out, in constructing academic texts, writers

> mindlessly cushion their prose with wads of fluff that imply they are not willing to stand behind what they say. Writers use hedges in the vain hope that it will get them off the hook, or at least allow them to plead guilty to a lesser charge, should a critic ever try to prove them wrong.

The statement does not mean that in academic writing, writers do not hedge their claims. On the contrary, writers sometimes deliberately chose to hedge the claims they make. Words that function as hedges include *likely, probably,* and *usually* (Pinker 2015). These words express doubt, uncertainty, or some reservations about the reported claims, as illustrated below:

21. Secondly, it is *likely* that because masculine gender role concerns are considered stereotypically traditional, thus conservative, it may have been overlooked scientifically in the African literature (DT41).
22. Stewart, Ginzler, & Cauce, 2002; Finkelhor, Hammer, & Sedlak, 2002; Thompson, Zittel Palamara, & Maccio, 2004) adduced two factors as *probably* contributing to the homeless situation of teenage girls (DT37).
23. According to Manuh and Quashigah (2009), serious illnesses *usually* bring some family members living outside home back home to care for the sick depending on their personal ties with the sick person (DT34).

It must be emphasised that the words *likely*, *probably*, and *usually* are not verbs. They are hedge words. In this way, the writers tend to be careful in making claims, cautious and precise when explaining and interpreting results. Thus, the reader understands the extent of the commitment and there is little likelihood of doubts or questions being raised.

4.4.3.2.3 Critical Attitude

Cognition Acts verbs in the data were used to display critical attitudes – to challenge and oppose the views presented by the author. In the extracts below, the writers' use of the Cognition Acts verbs displays a critical attitude.

24. I **disagree** that Chandler (2003) which used two studies (with study one having experimental and control groups) is a conjecture (DT44).
25. Also, Ewen and Van der Hulst (2001) **disagree** with Chomsky and Halle's notion of tense vs lax in which phonological distinction of vowels (as in the examples above) are made only by vowel height (quality), without a distinction in length (quantity) (DT5).
26. I **disagree** with Ellis (2009) on this occasion (DT44).

In the extracts above the students use *disagree* to show a willingness to challenge the findings as seen in extracts 24 to 26. The writers strongly refute the views of the sources, and these reflect the critical attitudes of the writers. This shows that they have confidence in their claims. In example 25, the writer is critical and shows that Ewen and Van der Hulst (2001) differ or *disagree* with Chomsky and Halle's notion of tense. The reporting verb *not think* can also be used to refute the views of other authors.

However, *not think* does not occur in the data. This limited use of specific verbs agrees with Bloch (2010) that writers use the same reporting verbs all the time. The few examples of critical verbs show that in the construction of the literature review chapters of their theses, the writers are critical in the review of literature in the field and do not just present findings from other authors.

4.4.3.2.4 Neutral Attitude

In the extracts that follow (27 to 30), the writer holds a neutral attitude as seen in the use of the words **picture, conceive, reflect,** and **see**. The writer remains neutral in attitude to the propositions being put forward as he acknowledges the point being made by another source but remains neutral by not explicitly displaying the validity or otherwise of the proposition.

27. Richard Wright, for instance, creates a **picture** of the peculiarly difficult conditions that confront the African-American (DT17).
28. The above case studies **reflect** some linkages between human security or its absence thereof and the sustainability of post-conflict development (DT21).
29. Walter Jamieson, Harold Goodwin and Christopher Edmunds (2004) **see** livelihood analysis as a methodology, which can be used to analyse the contribution that different forms of tourism might make to the livelihoods of the poor (DT49).
30. This approach **conceives** vulnerability as an end-point, that is, the impact of climate change after adaptation has been accounted for (DT52).

Cognition Acts verbs had few occurrences in the data; they were employed by just a few writers. From the analysis of the sampled data from the student theses, it is quite clear that the students did not employ Cognition Acts reporting verbs that positioned them critical to their findings. The students rather used positive tentative or neutral verbs that positioned them neutrally to the claims reported. Also, some new Cognition Acts words (**assume, view, conceptualise, realise**) were also identified in the data. Examples of how these are used in sentences are now provided.

31. Maslach and Leiter (1997) **assume** that engagement and burnout constitute the opposite poles of a continuum of work-related wellbeing, with burnout representing the negative pole and engagement the positive (DT1).

32. Habermas (2006:420) **view**, a free and self-regulated media with the right kind of feedback between political communication and civil-society provide important tools for determining the level of regime legitimacy in certain political environments (DT20).
33. Karasek et al. (1998) **conceptualised** psychological demands as to how hard workers work, the mental organisation, constrains on task completion and conflicting demands (DT1).
34. Heller (1988) **realized** that in the 1980s CS was used as a neutral strategy to neutralize conflict among students in her Toronto study (DT46).

4.4.3.3 Discourse Acts used by doctoral students

4.4.3.3.1 Tentative verbs

In the extracts below, the verbs express doubt about reported claims tentatively. In this way, the writer does not commit himself to agree with the proposition. Although the verbs express the writer's views, the writer is uncertain and non-definite.

35. Giordano et al. (2002) **postulate** that cognitive transformation ensures motivation or openness to change which is a necessary condition for criminal desistance (DT16).
36. Owens (2009) **hypothesises** that the higher the educational level of offenders, the greater the reduction in re-offending (DT16).
37. The literature **indicates** that workers who resort to deep acting to conform to display rules experience less conflict (emotional dissonance), and more likely to engage in emotional responses that are in line with feeling rules (Leidner, 1993; Wharton, 1999) (DT11).
38. The study **intimates** the manifestation of vulnerability associated with young girls seeking to make a living on the streets of Accra (DT37).

In the above extracts, the verbs are used tentatively to express doubt about research findings. The use of these examples suggests that even as the writers evaluate the works of other authors, the writers do not commit themselves to agree with the propositions.

4.4.3.3.2 Critical verbs

Further, critical verbs were also used to express doubt or disapproval about reported claims. When used, these verbs show the writer's belief that the work, literature, or information presented is incorrect. In extracts 39 and 40 below, the verbs are used strongly to express disagreement. For instance, in example 39, the writer demonstrates that the findings of Truscott (1996) cannot be credible because there is an element of exaggeration. Similarly, example 40 also shows that the findings of Rutter (1999) and Luthar et al. (2000) cannot be accepted because an important component of the research is missing.

39. Thus, Truscott (1996) **exaggerates** research findings that corroborate his thesis and dismisses those that contradict him. This, according to Ferris (1999), is a serious flaw (DT44).
40. Rutter (1999) and Luthar et al. (2000) did **not account for** children who may be exposed to risk but have not yet experienced the risk (DT6).

From the data, it was realised that it is only the verbs **exaggerate** and **not account for** which were used in statement construction while other choices such as **evade, not make (point)** were not used in the data at all. **Exaggerate** had 3 occurrences in the data, and **not account** had 11 occurrences. It is apparent that doctoral students refrained from negatively critiquing extant literature.

4.4.3.3.3 Assurance Discourse verbs

Assurance Discourse Acts verbs are used to neutrally inform readers of the author's position or the writer's position. In this way, they do not express any indication about

the writer's position on the research finding. Non-factive verbs that typify Assurance include **state, describe, discuss, report, answer, define** and **summarise**. For example, in Extract 41, by saying that *Becket similarly **describes** the Liberian war as an economic or commercial insurgency in which warlord groups the NPFL foremost among them, fought to control commodities*, the writer acknowledges the information presented by an external source, (Becket 2003), but he still maintains a neutral attitude / stance. The following extracts illustrate how Discourse Acts verbs are used to introduce cited information neutrally:

41. Becket similarly **describes** the Liberian war as an economic or commercial insurgency in which warlord groups the NPFL foremost among them, fought to control commodities (2003:237) (DT21).
42. Diamond (2008) **states** that even though the electoral commission plays an important role in elections, its efforts are sometimes undermined by fraud and ineptitude, which tend to mar the beauty of its work (DT20).
43. Tolossa (2010) also **notes** that in urban Addis Ababa households, especially poor ones, travel to their rural areas of origin to secure grains or food in kind from extended kin whenever there is food scarcity in the city (DT32).
44. Karl (1995) **explains** that empowerment is a word widely used but seldom defined (DT22).

4.4.3.3.3.1 Assurance Factive verbs

These verbs were used purposely to strengthen or support the writer's views; usually, the writer accorded great confidence to the author's proposition. They function to support the information the writer uses in constructing his argument, as evident in the extracts below. In extract 45, the writer uses the argument of Smithbattle (2000) to support his argument of offering social support to teenage mothers. Similarly, in extract 46, the writer uses Portes and Walton (1981), to support his definition of the informal sector. The use of the verbs *argue, explain, affirm, claim,* and *point out,* show

that the writer has a lot of confidence in the findings or propositions of the author. Examples, as they are employed by the students in the literature review sections of their theses, are provided.

45. Smithbattle (2000) **argues** for the need to reweave connections (p 38) with teenage mothers, noting that they usually cannot overcome their pasts or deal with their social environments on their own (DT37).
46. As Portes and Walton (1981) **affirm**, the term informal sector refers to the structural features of a capitalist economy which is not just perverse but is trapped in an escalating crisis of accumulation (DT17).
47. As Silverstone et al. (1994) **explain**, an artefact is appropriated at the point at which it is sold and leaves the world of production and is taken possession of by an individual or household and owned (DT19).
48. Davis, Rhodes, and Hamilton-Leaks (1997) **note that** disputes about appropriate parenting and the young women's lifestyle can easily arise in the sharing of childrearing responsibilities (DT37).
49. As Tsikata & Darkwah (2009) **point out**, an empowered woman is one who can help herself and others, who has a job, knows about herself and her environment and her community (DT22).
50. Chomsky and Halle (1968) **claim** that phonological properties should usually be stated in terms of vowels and non-vowels when the general word structure of a language is CVCV, such that C stands for either true consonants, liquids or glides since what is common with them is usually not syllabic like Vowels (DT22).

By using **note that** and **point out** the writer draws the reader's attention to a salient point and guides the reader in a certain direction. The reader's perception is thus guided to align with the writer's thinking. As mentioned in chapter 2 section 2.11.1, the word **claim** is an unfavourable word and its use in a sentence by a writer shows

that the writer is not in alignment/agreement with the author, but for academic politeness, the writer is accommodating the assertion. When the writer uses the verb **claim**, he subtly distances himself from the assertions of the author as he (writer) does not believe that the proposition made by the author is true or correct. Thus, by using the verb **claim** the burden of proof lies with the author and not the writer.

In using **explain**, the writer is more than likely to side with the author. **Explain** is a word that denotes a discussion and in-depth exposition on a subject. In using the word explain, the author arrogates/confers on himself a knowledgeable role as an expert and able to bring a much clearer understanding to an otherwise fussy statement or subject.

4.4.3.3.3.2 Assurance Discourse Non-Factive verbs

These verbs were used purposely to neutrally inform readers of the writers' position. In so doing, several verbs are available to objectively pass on information without interpreting. Such verbs include **describe, discuss, report, answer, define** and **summarise**. Illustrative examples in the literature review sections of the theses are presented in examples 51 to 56:

51 Li Wei and Milroy (1995) **describe** preference organization as the ranking of adjacency pairs with an assessment (DT46).

52 Simon and Iyengar (1996), Graber and Smith (2005), on the other hand, **discuss** the various theoretical and methodological approaches that underpin political communication research (DT20).

53 The **report** also showed that young mothers and their babies were at greater risk of contracting HIV (DT37).

54 In order to **answer** these questions, a randomised experimental design was used to assess the impact of MCORP on recidivism (DT16).

55 In these discussions, scholars have attempted to **define**, classify and explore the sentence and its constituents (DT27).

56 To **summarise**, languages differ considerably in the amount of manner information they express (even languages within the same typological group (DT4).

In using these words, the writer does not commit himself to the proposition. The statement is presented without bias, embellishment, or stance taking, unlike in the use of Assurance Factive verbs.

4.4.3.3.4 Counters

Discourse Acts verbs directly critique or question views of other authors. They were used to represent the author's disbelief, objections, and reservations about the validity of the information being presented. The writer objects to the original author's assertions, rather than accept responsibility for the evaluation as is typical of Doubt verbs. Extracts 57 to 59 illustrate how counter verbs are used by different students.

57. However, Kerr (1991) **warns** that expectations from efforts aimed at handicrafts development should not be exaggerated, as economic development of handicrafts production alone cannot be expected to result in maintenance of cultural traditions and poverty reduction (DT49).
58. Truscott (2004:342) **rebuts** Chandler's (2003) claim by indicating that the debate in Truscott (1996) is on grammar correction and not about error correction in general (DT44).
59. C.S. Whitaker (1970) [SIC] for instance had **questioned** the assumptions that there could not be a compromise in the leadership of what he called "confrontation societies" (those having many of the mixed attributes of small urban westernized elites and rural agricultural folk largely governed by traditional leaders) (DT23).

4.5 THE VARIOUS USES OF REPORTING VERBS

In describing the discourse functions, the focus is on how reporting verbs vary in terms of their strength; this conveys vastly different pictures about how the writers present their research findings and propositions.

First, reporting verbs show the author's position towards the findings or propositions. This may be either positive, negative, or neutral; next, reporting verbs can represent the writer's position of acceptance (factive), neutrality (non-factive), or refutation (counter-factive) towards the cited study; finally, reporting verbs may be used to depict how a writer explains the attitude of the authors in a discourse. These linguistic choices from the Research Acts, Discourse Acts, and Cognition Acts categories (Hyland, 2002) serve various discourse functions that are discussed in the sections that follow.

4.5.1 Reporting verbs to present an argument

The data also showed evidence of students' use of neutral and strong verbs in the presentation of arguments. The use of arguments is necessary when the writer needs to convince the reader from his or her standpoint by supplying facts or information. It entails guiding the reader to accept the writer's point of view or in trying to reject a proposal to move forward in introducing a statement. The writer does this using strong verbs to aggressively challenge earlier findings or uses neutral reporting verbs in statements as a matter of fact so that the reader can share his views. Examples of such verbs used to present arguments are provided in Table 4.6. In doing so, the writer must use convincing statements that are factual and can withstand further scrutiny by the reader. In other words, the writer needs to be clear in his mind, about the direction to position his / her argument and what style of presentation to adopt.

Table 4.6: Strength of reporting verbs to show argument

Function	Neutral	Strong
Argumentative presentation	states, notes, explains, points out, discusses, observes, clarifies, describes, illustrates, demonstrates, comments, mentions, implies, presents, concludes, adds, elaborates, believes, shows, reports, acknowledges.	argues, proves, contends, alerts, convinces, insists, emphasises.

Arguments can be made with neutral reporting verbs that would appear to an observer/listener as though the writer is expanding or developing a statement by using neutral report verbs such as *explains, notes, observes, shows, comments,* and *concludes*. The essence/strategy is to win the reader to the side of the writer. The examples provided below illustrate the writer's neutral attitude to the information.

1. The studies by Dale [SIC] and Strauss, Prete, Yankah and Schuler [SIC] **discuss** one of the most important means by which people communicate in elections, that is through text messages (DT20).
2. Awumbila et al. (2011) **point out** that the traditional role of women being childcare givers has suffered because migration makes it quite … (DT37).
3. Van der Geest (2002a) **comments** that a person's family size and the investment made in the care of that family largely determined the family relations that may be experienced in old age (DT34).

The writer's neutral attitude seen in the examples above shows that the writer does not want to make a definite commitment to the information. Hence, the reader is left

to conjecture his own opinions. If the argumentative style is vigorous/ aggressive, strong reporting verbs are blended in the statements of presentation. In the extracts that follow, the writers tend to persuade; hence, they present their arguments with stronger verbs such as **argue, prove, emphasise, contend** and **insist**. In extract 4, the writer presents arguments strongly using Obeng-Odoom (2013, 2016) and de Oliveira (2015) as a basis.

4. Recognizing these, I **argue** along with Obeng-Odoom (2013, 2016) and de Oliveira (2015) who argue that urban governance transcends the boundaries of efficient governments, and should be reframed as a cluster of interlocking meanings of decentralization, entrepreneurialism, and democratization (DT13).

Similarly, in example 5, the writer shows how the authors Kaan and Yoo (2014) present their argument by supporting the view of Hawkins. This makes the argument they present, a strong one.

5. Kaan and Yoo (2014), in support of Hawkins, **argue** further that distinctive features are significant phonetic properties of human language that play a crucial role in the statement of phonological rules by distinguishing phonemes from one another, and conclude that distinctive feature theory is a mechanism that is derived from the properties of the phonological rules of the world's languages (DT5).

In examples 6 to 9, the writer persuades the reader strongly with the use of the verbs **emphasise, contend, insist**, and **prove**. The writer ascribes the position to the author and presents their propositions in support of a point very strongly.

6. Neil, Twibell, and Harris (2010) **emphasise** that nurses need to embrace family presence, even during crises, as a way to keep families connected and to improve patients' clinical outcomes during [a] hospital stay and after being discharged (DT9).

7. Talmy (2009) **insists** that constructions used in the serializing languages (exemplified mainly with Chinese) for the translational-motion events are satellite-framing (DT4).
8. Thus, the study **proved** that both correction and underlining were more effective in the reduction of errors in subsequent write-ups than underlining with description was (Chandler 2003:287) (DT44).
9. Barrett et al. (2000) and Barrett and Reardon (2000) **contend** that there is some inconsistency in terminology in the diversification literature (DT23).

4.5.2 Reporting verbs to show agreement

Reporting verbs are also used to question or express agreement with the findings or views of other authors. There are weak, neutral, and strong reporting verbs that belong to this category as shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Strength of reporting verbs to show agreement.

Function	**Weak**	**Neutral**	**Strong**
Agreement	admit, concede	accept, acknowledge, agree, concur, recognise, show, establish, solve, demonstrate.	supports, confirm, affirm.

Reporting verbs can be used to show agreement with a source. Extracts 10 and 11 show weak commitment by the author and not the writer. Extracts 12-13 show the writer does not commit himself. Extracts 14 to 15 show stronger commitment.

10. Ellis (2009) **admits** that CF can facilitate learning (DT23).
11. However, Comrie (1976:264) **concedes** that not all languages conform exactly to the paradigm but where languages differ from the paradigm case they do so in only one or two respects (DT25).

12. Baider-Markel and Joslyn (2008) **acknowledge** that their data do not prove that respondents believe homosexuality can be controlled but that they inferred this from theoretical expectations and prior research (DT29).
13. Dolphyne (1991) **recognised** the importance of girl child education but could not make suggestions as to whether there are other factors that can lead to the emancipation of women from cultural and the religious beliefs apart from education (DT12).
14. Abdulai and Delgado (1999) also **confirm** these findings for Ghana (DT50).
15. Brinkerhoff's (2001) assertions **concur** with the findings of this study (DT45).
16. I strongly **agree** with the views of the above scholars that the use and misuse of illicit drugs correlate positively with re-offending (DT6).
17. On the weakness of Truscott (2004), I **agree** with Chandler (2003) that experimental studies rather than descriptive (review works) studies have the greatest propensity of commenting on the efficacy … (DT44).

In extract 16 and 17 there is a personal alignment of the writer (DT6 and DT44) to the authorial texts by use of the personal pronoun, *I*. The writers (DT6 and DT44) have thus taken a stance or positioned themselves to the available literature.

4.5.3 Reporting verbs for emphasis

It is also possible to use reporting verbs to give special attention to findings and propositions. In the examples below, the verbs (**highlights, stresses,** and **warns**) are used very strongly to present ideas. Writers refrain from presenting the information neutrally because attention needs to be drawn to a special point of view or a statement.

18. Ransford et al., (2010) and Senah (1988) **highlight** the importance of cultural alternatives for Mexican immigrants as a result of belief and structural barriers to accessing formal health care in the United States (DT47).

19. Newman and Schnabel (2002) also **stress** the institutional requisites to postconflict development by stating that violently divided societies are cursed by institutional breakdown, weak or non-existent political institutions and weak or non-existent civil society institutions (DT21).
20. However, Kerr (1991) **warns** that expectations from efforts aimed at handicrafts development should not be exaggerated, as economic development of handicrafts production alone cannot be expected to result in maintenance of cultural traditions and poverty reduction (DT49).
21. Simon et al (1994) cited in Jennings (2006), **underscores** the link between race and social value (DT35).

4.5.4 Reporting verbs to show disagreement

Reporting verbs can also be used to express disagreement with the findings or views of other authors. There are weak, neutral, and strong reporting verbs that belong to this group as shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Strength of reporting verbs to show disagreement.

Function	**Weak**	**Neutral**	**Strong**
Disagreement	doubts, questions	challenges, wonders, debates, requests disagrees, questions	refutes, attacks, accuses, complains, deny, criticises, denies, discards, opposes, disclaims, negates, rejects, objects to, discounts, dismisses, contradicts, refutes, disputes, disregards

Reporting verbs are also used to question or express disagreement with the findings or views of other authors. The extracts below illustrate how writers express disagreement. Extracts 22 to 27 are examples of verbs used to express disagreement rather strongly.

22. Kerr (1991) **warns** that expectations from efforts aimed at handicrafts development should not be exaggerated, as economic development of handicrafts production alone cannot be expected to result in maintenance of cultural traditions and poverty reduction (DT49).
23. Truscott (2004:342) **rebuts** Chandler's (2003) claim by indicating that the debate in Truscott (1996) is on grammar correction and not about error correction in general (DT44).
24. Freeman (2008) has, for instance, **criticised** the re-establishment of the Paramount Chief system, noting that the fact of the system's facilitation of abuse of human rights dates back to 1955 (DT21).
25. Gass (1997:16) has strongly **opposed** this claim, stating that even some kinds of learning do not depend on input (DT44).
26. Ferris (1999) **accuses** Truscott (1996) of problems of definition of the term error correction (DT44).
27. Ferris (1999) then moves to **refute** Truscott's (1996) argument by pointing out and elaborating some of Truscott's (1996) flaws (DT44).

These examples make use of **criticise, refute, reject** and **oppose** which are stronger forms of disagreement. Writers use these verbs to show a clear stance on the proposition being advanced. In examples 7 to 10, the writer disagrees with the findings of earlier researchers / authors and these disagreements are expressed cautiously or tentatively. The examples illustrate disbelief and disapproval of findings.

28. Lambert-Br tire's (2009) paper also **challenges** the typological classification of serializing languages by proposing that a serializing language like Fon, a

Kwa language mainly spoken in South Benin, is better analyzed as a satellite-framed language (DT4).

29. Hedge (2000), for example**, debates** that teachers should defer oral CF until the end of fluency activities (DT44).
30. Brooksbank (2006) **questions** why so many people are choosing self-employment if there are risks of failure and poverty (DT49).
31. The author, therefore **wonders** why there has been so little change if the benefits are readily apparent (DT12).

4.6 Evaluation and Examination

Reporting verbs are also employed for evaluative purposes; they are used to depict how writers make a judgment about a finding or proposition or generally assess a subject. The verbs are used to directly critique or question views of other authors and to represent the author's disbelief, objections, and reservations about the validity of the information being presented as seen in Table 4.9. It is apparent from this table that these evaluative verbs can be neutral or strong and the choice of use depends on what the writer intends to communicate to his audience and how it is communicated.

Table 4.9: Strength of reporting verbs to show evaluation and examination.

Function	**Neutral reporting verbs**	**Strong reporting verbs**
Evaluation and examination	analyses, appraises, compares, assesses, contrasts, consider	blames, complains, ignores, scrutinises, warns.

In extracts 32 and 33 that follow, the verbs of evaluation are used to present statements strongly. The writer assesses the studies of the authors and makes a

declaration or judgment. They show that the author's attitude to the information is negative.

32. Erickson and Ritter (2011) **blamed** Gelderen et al. (2010) for failing to account for differences in gender while reporting that women were more likely than men to hold jobs that require significant amounts of emotional labour, to spend more time with people, and to hide their feelings of agitation (DT11).
33. Smith and Liehr (2008), **scrutinize** the HBM in terms of its substantive foundation, structural integrity and functional adequacy (DT24).
34. Thaniel (2013) **compared** the psychosocial functioning and academic achievement in siblings with and without SCD (DT14).
35. Hochschild (1983) **contrasted** the second process of managing emotional demands in a given context with that of surface acting (DT11).
36. Studies that **evaluate** correctional treatments have shown that cognitive behavioural treatments are effective in reducing recidivism (Wilson, Bouuffard, & MacKenzie, 2005) (DT16).

Example 33 depicts a strong examination of a source by using the word **scrutinise** which means to look closely and critically at something using a benchmark, yardstick, or measure. In Extracts 34 to 56 however, evaluation is presented neutrally, more like a statement of fact; thus, the reader is left to make his/her judgement as to the veracity or otherwise of the information being presented

4.6.1 Reporting verbs to present ideas

The extracts below show how writers neutrally present their ideas to readers. Extracts 37 and 41 illustrate the procedure involved in presenting the information using choice reporting verbs.

37. Chaffee and Frank (1996:48, 58) and Dominick (1990:547-548) **comment** on the effect of the media on political communication (DT20).
38. In this study, we **define** co-production, along with Bovaird (2007), as the provision of services through regular, long-term relationships between professionalized service providers and service users or other community groups, where all parties make substantial resource contributions (DT13).
39. Phelps (1992) **estimated** the income elasticity of demand for healthcare to be generally 0.2 or less (DT17).
40. According to Kuo et al. (2013), such findings **imply** that spiritual faith and belief could act to improve individuals' psychological wellbeing through promoting adaptive and culturally appropriate coping behaviours during stressful situations (DT1).
41. I **argue** along with Obeng-Odoom (2013, 2016) and de Oliveira (2015) who argue that urban governance transcends the boundaries of efficient governments, and should be reframed as a cluster of interlocking meanings of decentralization, entrepreneurialism, and democratization (DT13).

4.6.2 Reporting verbs to present suggestions

Here the information is presented as the writer's personal view rather than fact. The essence of the suggestion is to bring or win the reader to the side or point of view of the writer. It is a form of engagement strategy as in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Strength of reporting verbs to show suggestion.

Function	**Weak reporting verbs**	**Neutral reporting verbs**	**Strong reporting verbs**
suggestions	speculates, alleges, intimates	hypothesises, posits, postulates, advocates, theorises, advises, proposes.	urges, recommends, asserts

Reporting verbs are also used in combination with other words to offer suggestions in a neutral, strong or tentative manner. In the extracts below, the reporting verbs are used to offer suggestions neutrally:

42. In a cross-cultural study, Mahalik, Lagan, Hugh, and Morrison (2006) **hypothesized** that heterosexual men's health behaviors would significantly relate to their adherence to traditional masculine norms (DT41).
43. Simon and Iyengar (1996) **posit** that the only way for a political communication researcher to establish cause-and-effect relationship is through experiment (DT20).
44. Giordano et al. (2002) **postulate** that cognitive transformation ensures motivation or openness to change which is a necessary condition for criminal desistance (DT16).
45. Some studies (van den Berg & Wilderom, 2004) **propose** five set (SIC) of distinct cultural dimensions, namely autonomy, external orientation, interdepartmental coordination, human resource orientation and improvement orientation (DT31).

On the other hand, in extracts, 46 to 49 verbs are employed to offer suggestions strongly. This may be because the writer has some level of assurance about the claim,

but is still not willing to commit fully. In extract 48 for example, the suggestion is made rather tentatively.

46. Alvord and Grados (2005) **assert** that children with a proactive parent or a significant other are more likely to overcome or minimize the effect of risk (DT6).
47. Adegbola (2005) **recommended** specifically that studies should target the relationship between spirituality and Qol since that could have a major impact on the level of psychological and overall wellbeing of patients (DT24).
48. Based on this analysis, Kanazawa **urged** rational choice theorists to factor into the structure of their theory, the backward-looking attitude of voters if they (rational choice theorists) are to make the logic underlying the theory complete (DT20).
49. Oh [SIC] **speculated** that at an early age children might be too limited cognitively to attend to various components of a motion event at the same time, though another possibility might be that they have not yet mastered the skill to pack both manner and path information into a single description (DT4.)

In extracts 50 to 52, illustrative use of the verb *hold* is provided. The contextual use here means that the writer subscribes to the author's idea. The author and not the writer takes a bold stance as seen in the extracts.

50. Twerefou and Osei-Assibey (2008) **hold** a similar view which has been espoused by Leonard (1989) when they highlighted the inextricable nexus between the environment and poverty and indicated that due to this relationship … (DT8).
51. This stance is further reinforced by Okyireh and Okyireh (2017) and Adom (2015) who **hold** the view that that identifying appropriate network structures provide moral and mental support …. (DT40).

52. Scholars like Thiyembe Mwayila (2001:121) and Trutz Von Trotha (1996: 8) who **hold** such thought have developed more conciliatory and even realistic approaches (DT23).

The function of the verb **hold** or the idea that the verb **hold** conveys is also conveyed in the use of *is* (to be) and its variants used in reporting statements as seen below in extracts 53 to 56.

53. He **is** of the view that, although the various authors have portrayed these experiences as individual traits of the infertile, they are conditioned to a great extent by their social realities (DT30).
54. Scott (2006) **is** of the view that institutional theory is employed to examine systems ranging from micro interpersonal interactions to macro global frameworks (DT45).
55. This researcher **was** of the view that, in Africa, tests of IQ are not so predictive of the African effectiveness in the workplace especially when it comes to emotionally demanding issues (DT11).
56. Manuh and Quashigah (2009) **were** of the view that the extent of care received depends on the kind of family to which one belongs (DT34).

In the construction of the literature review chapters, the students account for their own experiences of the text through the grammatical processes they are involved in. The linguistic choices they make show that they project some specific meanings rather than others, for some meanings are embedded in the choice of verbs, and others are repressed. The linguistic choices reveal the writer's worldview and how he chooses to present the information to the readers. These choices give the reader some insight into the writer's ideas and reveal how the writer can push or direct the reader's perception of the meaning of a text in a specific direction. Writers employ various reporting verbs which can be grouped as in Table 4.11.

This means that when the writer evaluates and makes use of some verb choices rather than others, the reader can get different impressions about the information presented in the text. Thus, in the use of the most appropriate reporting verbs, the writer directs and shapes the reader's thinking, persuading him/her to think in some certain direction either positively or negatively. Of interest to this study is how the writer's attitude to the information being reported is reflected in the kind of processes the writers are involved in as they report previous literature. This suggests that the writer's choice of process to convey the information reveals the writer's attitude to the source.

Table 4.11: Main reporting verbs classified in terms of their function and strength.

Type	**Function**	**Examples of reporting verb**
Neutral reporting verbs	Verbs used to say what the writer describes in factual terms.	believe, describe, demonstrate, reveal, show, study, note, indicate, report, point out, observe, assume, examine, take into consideration, go on to say that, state, mention,
Tentative reporting verbs	Verbs used to suggest or speculate (without being certain).	suggest, speculate, intimate, hypothesise, moot, imply, propose, recommend, posit the view that, question the view that, postulate
Strong reporting verbs	Verbs the writer uses to make strong arguments and claims.	argue, claim, emphasise, contend, maintain, assert, theorise, deny, support the view that, negate, reject, refute, challenge, counter the view, strongly believe that, counter the argument that

The root functions of these words and the impact they convey in the construction of literature reviews and convincing readers in statements of reporting are provided. For ideas to be conveyed effectively and persuasively, the writer must use more of the strong types of reporting verbs as observed in the literature review sections of the students' theses. In situations where the students are not sure of their facts but want to make statements, the weaker and neutral reporting verbs are employed.

4.6.3 Tense type of reporting verbs in students' doctoral theses

Hyland (2000) acknowledges the roles played by reporting verbs and the tenses used to report them. The appropriate use of tense plays a crucial role in the citation process of academic writing. In the present study, the doctoral students utilised reporting verbs in the simple past tense, present perfect tense, and present simple tense in making claims. The corpus, which was made up of the selected literature review sections of the doctoral theses, was scanned and yielded information about grammatical tense. A summary is provided in Table 4.12.

In this table, the first column gives the tense type of the word. The second column gives the results of the searched words; column 3 gives the frequency of the occurrence in the corpus. Columns 4 and 5, present respectively percentage by word and by tense type. The numerical value of the percentage use of one word differs from one word to the other within and outside the group. For example, a reporting verb like *showed* had 51% of occurrence. The same word in another grouping had 16% of occurrence while in the simple present tense, it had 26% occurrence. This means that the same word in its variations as used by the student writers within the tense types did not have the same weighting in use. The same trend in word usage across patterns is seen for the other verbs provided. When nominalised to 100%, it is apparent that student writers prefer to use simple present tense (45%), present

Table 4.12: Frequency and percentage of words by tense type.

Tense type	Word	Freq.	Percent by Word (%)	Percent
Simple Past tense	showed	200	51	37
	argued	81	21	
	examined	100	26	
	reported	10	3	
Present Perfect tense	have argued	26	14	18
	have showed	54	29	
	have examined	54	29	
	have reported	54	29	
Simple Present tense	shows	125	26	45
	argues	148	31	
	examines	95	20	
	reports	112	23	

perfect tense (37%) and past tense (18%) in decreasing order of choice in their writing as shown in Figure 4.6. In sentence construction, the study participants prefer to use verbs mostly in the simple present tense, then past tense and then the present perfect tense. The most probable reason for this order of preference by students may lie at the heart of text construction in academic writing itself and on the familiarity of the reporting verbs that are used to make claims. The choice to use any pattern may reflect how sentences are constructed or familiarity with a pattern.

The findings of this study confirm the argument that students engaged in postgraduate level study gain greater awareness that their academic writing greatly improves as they challenge, evaluate, look for flaws and critique the ideas of other authors (Hyland 1999; Neville 2007; Adika 2015). It was evident in the literature review chapter that

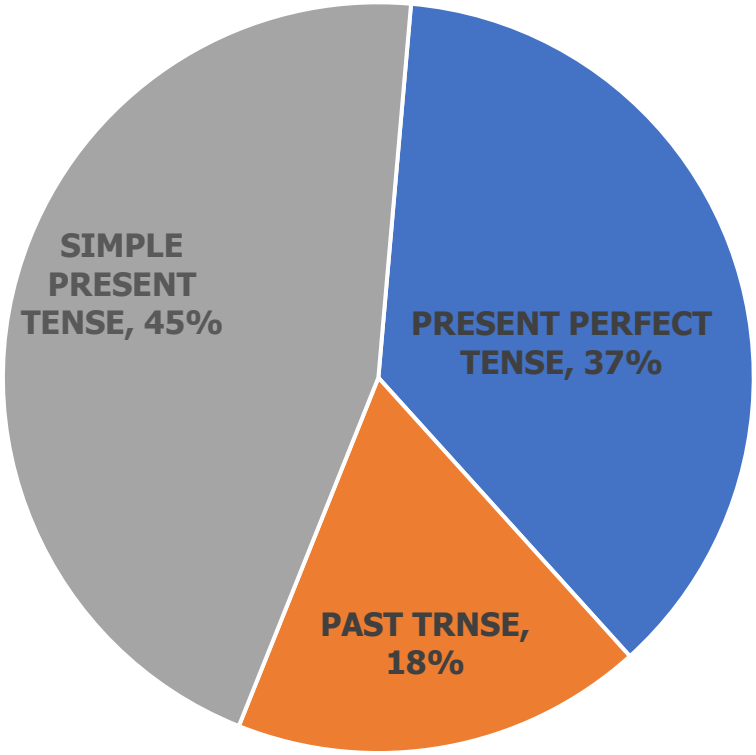

Figure 4.6: Reporting verbs as explored in the text under investigation.

although the participants observe the findings and views of other authors, they are mostly hesitant in exploiting reporting verbs fully to show agreement or disagreement. This agrees with the view expressed by Hyland (2002 p.19) that writers make delicate choices of reporting verbs in their academic writing for:

> … it is a crucial means of both situating one's work appropriately and communicating with one's peers effectively, a way of engaging with colleagues and appealing to the epistemological and interactive understandings of one's community. Selecting a particular verb thus not only signals a reported voice but invokes a precise context of meaning and judgment which locates the writer in a certain relationship to the reader and the reported text. This can critically influence a reader's willingness to go along with a writer and accede to her claims.

Thus, it was observed in the present work that writers usually make neutral verb choices to present arguments. However, it is just a few students who are bold enough or do not hesitate to construct their views that differ or negate the earlier propositions. Further, the findings of this study show that doctoral students adhere to the expectations of the academic discourse community by constructing their texts and views using reporting verbs. These students observe and incorporate ideas from their social settings using reporting verbs to construct arguments in their literature review chapters as expected.

4.7 PROCESSES AND STUDENTS' USE OF CLAUSES AS REPRESENTATION

It is important to note that in making linguistic choices the doctoral students are involved in several processes. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) categorise six processes which are material, mental, relational, behavioural, verbal, and existential. First, in the construction of the literature review chapters, the doctoral students present the reported authors as being involved in material processes. These are processes involved with *doing* or processes that happen outside the human body. Illustrative examples of these verbs of doing include *observe, discover, analyse, demonstrate* and *examine* as used in the doctoral student texts and provided as extracts below. They are categorised into actor, process, and goal in Table 4.13.

Mental processes also take place in the writer's mind. They portray cognitive processes because they represent thinking, feeling, and perceiving. These mental processes describe the experiences related to the world of the writer's consciousness (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). As such, the mental processes are described as involving a sensor (one who senses) and a phenomenon (what is sensed, thought, felt, or perceived). In the table above, the process is *analyse* which is a qualifying study. The phrase *undertook a study to analyse* communicates to the reader that an in-depth

Table 4.13: Examples of Material processes analysed by SFG.

Actor	**Process**	**Goal**
Bindels (2006)	undertook a study to **analyse**	how Ghanaian, African-Surinamese and Dutch patients explain hypertension in the Netherlands (DT15).
Lutz and Linder (2004:36)	**Observe**	that during the participatory planning phase, traditional leaders could then become one of the many other stakeholders at the local level (DT23).
The writers	**examine**	Thai narratives collected from children and adults (DT4).
Barnett and Gareis (2006)	have **discovered**	that there may be very little differences in the amount and type of work-family conflict between the two sexes (DT36).

well thought out process (structured) and a painstaking or labour-intensive investigation was carried out and thereafter an analysis was undertaken, the aim of which was geared towards explaining the observed phenomena.

In the second extract, the word *observe* could be a physical manifestation of a mental process leading to logical deduction. This means that the context of use is important, and the sense of the word is obtained by examining the neighbouring words which

support the verb. To *examine* simply means to observe closely or minutely. In the context of use here the writer is reporting and evaluating an observation looking at the narratives closely to detect similarities or differences. The context of use determines the role of the function of the reporting verb performs.

The word *discover* means to unearth or break new grounds. As used in the extract here, it suggests that through pain-staking research Barnett and Gareis (2006) have uncovered that there may be little differences between amount and type of work-family conflict between male and female. Another way of interpreting the sentence is that there is a correlation or relationship between work-family conflict in both males and females and the difference is small. As to whether the relationship is linear, an exact correspondence or not, the writer did not say. The context of use and understanding of a text is important to give a proper interpretation.

Reporting verbs that show relational processes were also employed by the student writers in the construction of the literature review texts. Relational processes involve the creation of relationships between two entities. Thus, there are two states of being in a relational clause where one precedes the process and one after. A statement may be analysed into sensor, process, and phenomenon in SFG.

This separation is demonstrated with illustrative examples in Table 4.14, with reporting verbs **notice, noted,** and **believe**. The first sentence *Long notices that* …, is structurally and semantically correct, but the second sentence although structurally correct in SFG will be syntactically problematic in traditional grammar. This is because *the study cannot notice*. It has been personified. This is an example of the wrong use of reporting verbs in traditional grammar that must follow rules of syntax. Rather the statement should read *it was noticed from the study that* …. The statement must be read and put into perspective to get the contextual meaning.

Table 4.14: Examples of the sensor, process phenomenon analysed by SFG

Sensor	**Process**	**Phenomenon**	**Source**
Long	**Noticed**	that foreigner talk involved few input modifications	DT44
The study	**Noticed**	that prices of the palm nut often stagnated over a long period	DT51
Smolin (2007a)	**Noted**	that the difficulty with relinquishments by biological parents	DT35
Some scholars	**Believe**	that it is in the best interests of the child to assist birth families to stay together	DT35

However, in SFG it is the idea that that is being put forward and the meaning is derived or deduced from the context. The import of the idea deduced from the example provided is that the writer identified from a study that prices of the palm nut often stagnated over a long period. It was from that study that the findings or associations were made which was not known before the study being carried out. The foregoing example thus illustrates ideational function (Table 4.15).

Generally, verbal processes refer to processes that are said or spoken. This process identifies a *sayer* who says something and a receiver who is addressed by the *sayer* and the *verbiage* or what is said. By examining the theses of the doctoral students, extracts that demonstrate these verbal processes using the verbs *comment, argue* and *ask* (which are the base form of these verbs) are provided in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15: Examples of Sayer-Process-verbiage relationship in text construction.

Sayer	**Process**	**Verbiage**
Perry et al. (2013)	**Commented**	that the experiences of ageing may necessitate transitions in living …
Macvarish and Billings (2010)	**Argue**	that the age of a teenage mother is significant ...
Schmidt (2010:731)	**Asked**	these questions …

A categorisation of the three sentences as in Table 4.15 above can be arranged as they would be depicted in traditional grammar, by applying the rules of syntax is shown in Table 4.16. In this table, the sayer (as in SFG) is equivalent to the actor in the traditional grammar, the verbiage (as in SFG) is equivalent to the goal and the process (in SFG) is equivalent to the action that the sayer (as in SFG) is deemed to have performed.

Table 4.16: Subject-predicate relationship in text construction in traditional grammar.

Subject	**Predicate**		
Noun	**Verb**	**Phrase**	
Noun	**Verb**	**Linking**	**Clause**
Perry et al. (2013)	**commented**	that	the experiences of ageing may necessitate transitions in living …
Macvarish and Billings (2010)	**Argue**	that	the age of a teenage mother is significant …
Schmidt (2010:731)	**Asked**	these	questions …
Dependent	**Verb**	**Linking**	**Independent clause**

It is important to note that the use of various verb choices shows that the students are involved in various processes as they construct their statements using knowledge acquired over time within the academic discourse community. The use of the verb *comment* denotes a verbal process of stating an observation or providing an exposition to a claim. The verb *argue* is stronger than *comment* or *ask*. In using the verb argue, the writer is challenging or debating a stated position or stance in the strongest terms possible with the aim of refuting that claim (or assertion) by supporting with counter-argu ments in the hope of winning the reader to his (writer's) side.

The existential process emphasises that something happens or exists. This process is usually realised by the verb 'be' or verbs that express existence such as occur, arise, exist. In clauses that reflect this process, the participant is referred to as the existent. The existent is normally a nominal group and follows the existential verb. The structure of the clause often begins with the pronoun *there*. Behavioural processes involve both mental and material processes. This process involves a behaver who performs actions. For this research, the focus has been on the material, mental, relational, and verbal processes. Thus, it is evident that statements made by the student writers reflect the various processes they are engaged in as they construct the literature review chapters of their doctoral theses.

4.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter presented results and analysed data gathered from the sampled data. The research questions generated served as a guide for the discussion. On the issue of reporting verbs, it was evident that the doctoral students use a variety of reporting verbs, but some select few are used more often, reflecting the students' familiarity with those verbs. The analysis revealed that the students make use of reporting verbs belonging to the Research Acts, Cognition Acts and Discourse Acts categories (Hyland

2002). The students use on average more Discourse Acts verbs (58%) compared to Research Acts (28%) and Cognition Acts (13%). The students construct sentences using the present simple tense, simple past tense and then the present perfect tense in the order of preference.

The chapter also dealt with the processes doctoral students in the Humanities use in the construction of the text in the literature review section of their theses using concepts of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) presented by Halliday (1994). The chapter closes by providing a summary of the discussion in the chapter. The next chapter provides some conclusions and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters provided background information on reporting verbs, review of related literature, research methodology and data collection process, analyses of the data and its interpretation. The thorough interpretation of data in this study focused on the objectives, research questions and theoretical framework of the study. The types, frequency and functions of the reporting verbs employed in the literature review sections of the selected doctoral theses were described. An extensive discussion was also presented on the processes the students are involved in as they construct the literature review chapters of their texts.

This chapter presents a conclusion to the present study. The chapter is organised into three major sections. First, a summary of the study is presented, taking into consideration the three research questions the study sought to address. This is then followed by a discussion on the limitations and implications of the findings made. The final section of this chapter provides recommendations for further studies arising from the findings of this study.

5.1 GENERAL SUMMARY

The present study sought to investigate how doctoral students use reporting verbs in the construction of the literature review chapters of their theses. The importance and use of reporting verbs particularly in the literature review section, and in academic writing in general is usually a problem for some students in the construction of the literature review sections of their theses. Some research from various parts of the world highlights the problems that students have with using reporting verbs, and a few acknowledge the importance of these verbs in writing. However, little is known about the use or otherwise of the phenomenon in the Ghanaian doctoral student's

academic writing in the Humanities. Therefore, this study was undertaken to investigate the types, frequency and the se of reporting verbs in the doctoral theses.

The present study examined theses in the Humanities, submitted to seven departments in the University of Ghana – Department of Linguistics, Department of Geography and Human Resource, Sociology, Psychology, Social Studies, Social Science, Marketing and Population Studies. Using the multistage sampling technique, a corpus of fifty-two doctoral theses from the College of Humanities was drawn for the study. The theses were downloaded from the institutional repository website of the University of Ghana. After reading through the literature review sections, the reporting verbs used were extracted, considering the context within which the verbs occurred.

An Analytical Concordance Tool (AntConc, version 3.5.8) was used to search for the reporting verbs. The model for analysing reporting verbs, suggested by Hyland (2002), was used as the analytical framework to analyse the data collected. The framework helped the researcher to gain insight into the linguistic choices of reporting verbs that doctoral students make in the construction of literature review chapters. The study largely followed the qualitative research paradigm, although some quantitative methods were also employed to illuminate the discussion. Qualitative content analysis was adapted to identify the various reporting verbs in the texts and to distinguish the types, frequencies, and various discourse functions of the verbs in the doctoral theses. This chapter presents a summary of the major findings of the study, draws conclusions, offers recommendations, and suggestions for future study.

5.2 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The key findings in this study are presented in relation to the research questions that the study sought to address.

1. RQ1: What reporting verbs are used in the doctoral theses of Humanities students?

In identifying the reporting verbs used in the literature review sections of the doctoral theses, the literature review sections of the doctoral theses were probed using AntConc. It was found that the students used many reporting verbs. These various reporting verbs belong to the three types of acts namely the Research Acts, Cognition Acts, and Discourse Acts respectively as categorised by Hyland (2002).

From the Research Acts, it was found that as part of the research process, the students employed Research Acts verbs to specify experimental activity conducted in the real world. These verbs usually occurred in statements related to findings of previous authors or procedures. The procedural verbs were used to present methods employed in the cited sources. The writers also employed factive verbs to show acceptance of findings, counter factive verbs to show disapproval of findings, and non-factive verbs to remain neutral on the findings.

Cognition Acts verbs were used to depict the authors' attitudes towards the reported information. Attitudes presented were mainly positive, or valid as compared to tentative, critical and neutral attitudes.

Discourse Acts verbs were the most employed to evaluate the cited information. Some of the verbs were employed to express the authors' views of doubt and assurance. Doubt was expressed critically and tentatively. Assurance was

expressed non-factively and factively. Some counter verbs were also employed to refute the claims of authors, though they were few. It is concluded that the students make use of reporting verbs from the three categories (Research, Cognition and Discourse Acts). The main list of the reporting verbs that were found in the theses is provided (refer to Table 4.1). The students also used strong, neutral, and tentative reporting verbs in their theses to make claims, refute arguments and declare their stance.

2. RQ2: How often do reporting verbs occur in the theses of doctoral students in the Humanities?

In response to this research question, the frequency of occurrence of the reporting verbs in the data was analysed and percentages of occurrence obtained. The instance of correct use of a reporting verb in the statements in the theses was noted and recorded. A frequency table was generated to show the percentage of usage. It was found that some reporting verbs were used more frequently than others while some were of low usage. The occurrence of twenty (20) of the most popular verbs employed in the data are as follows:

> found (388), argue (381), note (341), agree (252), show (251), indicate (207), explain (189), report (184), suggested (148), identify (145), observe (140), define (90), point out (78), discuss (75), demonstrate (68), fail (67), confirm (58), find (57), describe (53), believe (40)

There were reporting verbs that had moderate use and some that had low usage. The last twenty reporting verbs used are as follows:

> think (10), hypothesise (10), question (9), conceptualize (9), not account (8), disagree (6), challenge (6), obtain (6), plot (5),

calculate (4), understand (4), suppose (3), solve (3), warn (3), not make (2), critique (1), anticipate (1), dispute (1), doubt (1), exaggerate (1).

There were reporting verbs that students did not employ at all in their theses. Students do not put much premium on these reporting verbs in making claims or in supporting their arguments and hence their low patronage.

3. RQ3: What are the discourse functions of the reporting verbs used in the theses of doctoral students in the Humanities?

The analysis revealed that the use of reporting verbs in the literature review sections of the doctoral theses serves some functions which include argument presentation, references to previous research, agreement with previous research, disagreement with findings, emphasis, evaluation and examination.

Concerning tense usage, the students use simple present tense, past simple tense and present perfect tense in making their claims in reporting the literature. Of these three, the student writers prefer to use on average, simple present tense (45%), simple past tense (37%) and present perfect tense (18%) in decreasing order of choice. The results of this study have been explained in terms of social constructionism and Systemic Functional Grammar with illustrative examples to bring out their usages.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study encountered some challenges in getting the necessary information or data required for the study.

(1) At the time of collecting the literature review chapters for the study, there were very few theses uploaded online from the College of Humanities. Thus, the theses in the Humanities, available online were used.

(2) It was realised that some literature review chapters in the theses were not eponymous. Some of the chapters were not necessarily focused on literature review; they were merged as sub-sections with the introductory chapter (usually Chapter 1) with a few embedded in the Methodology section or a later chapter. Extracting the literature review sections in such theses was difficult, and to resolve this challenge, purposive sampling was used to deselect such theses (Bruce 1994) and to concentrate on theses that had the literature review as a separate chapter.

(3) Finally, regarding the analysis of the discourse functions of the reporting verbs, identification of the verb functions was difficult especially when the same verb was used tentatively in one clause and strongly in another. An illustration of this is presented in the two sentences below:

a. Sampson and Laub (1993) **argue** that behavioural change is a function of the individual's involvement in conventional social roles (DT16).

b. With this definition, I **argue** that CF is not always applied to students' faulty structures (DT44).

The context within which the reporting verbs occurred helped resolve these difficulties.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This research examined literature review chapters of theses written by doctoral students in the Humanities. It is important to realise that these theses were written

by non-native speakers of English. This research revealed that different types of reporting verbs are used frequently in the construction of literature review chapters of doctoral theses. The reporting verbs were from the Discourse Acts, Cognition Acts and Research Acts categories of Hyland's (2002) classification. The Discourse Acts verbs category had by far the highest frequency of occurrence of reporting verb use compared to the Cognition Acts and Research Acts categories.

It was found from the study that even though the doctoral students used reporting verbs frequently, there are some limitations in use, particularly with counter verbs. The students do not directly refute, disagree, and criticise the views of other authors. In most cases, they remain neutral to propositions. Verb choices are made to reflect the different types of social interactions in various disciplines. Based on the relationship between the nature of writing in the Humanities and verb choices, it can be concluded that the reporting verbs are used within an academic community or in a social environment. The impact of the discourse community in which the writing takes place is evident. The various types of reporting verbs discussed in the study are purposeful in the doctoral thesis genre. As such, exploiting reporting verbs to achieve maximum effects involves an understanding of the communicative purposes of the different reporting verbs.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Drawing on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:
Reporting verbs should be taught in all academic literacy classes. Training of writing instructors may be necessary to better assist students in the effective use of reporting verbs in thesis and academic writing. In addition, lecturers should be motivated to use corpus-based data in teaching reporting verbs instead of a mere list of them to enable students achieve a much more practical grasp.

Also, a study could be conducted to observe whether student writers from other non-native English backgrounds are aware of the functions of reporting verbs they employ in the construction of the literature review chapters of their theses. In a study of this kind, students from various disciplines could be interviewed to find out whether there are any variations as far as student consciousness of the use of reporting verbs in academic writing is concerned.

A lot more attention must be given to the teaching and use of reporting verbs in all disciplines and even at the undergraduate level. A study could be done to examine how the verbs are used by postgraduate students in other disciplines. A comparative study focusing on soft and hard sciences and undergraduate written genres and postgraduate written genres would also be interesting.

Moreover, the functions of reporting verbs when combined or integrated with the aims of literature review writing as proposed by Bitchener (2010) and discussed in Section 2.4, will enable students to acquire the skill and master the art of producing good literature reviews, which will put them in good standing and confident in writing research reviews.

Further, the influence of the mother tongue and choice of reporting verbs may also be investigated. This is because Ghana is a multilingual country with over 70 indigenous languages, although English is a second language and a medium of instruction and communication. In doing such research, it would be necessary, for example, to select participants with different mother tongues to watch a small sketch (drama) and thereafter require them to write an essay in English summarising their observations. Such texts could be analysed for the various reporting verbs and their evaluative functions. Further studies could examine other verb features such as tense and aspect, modality, and voice and how these apply to academic writing.

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Appendix 1.1: Programmes under Colleges within the University of Ghana

- College of Basic and Applied Sciences
  - School of Agriculture
  - School of Biological Sciences
  - School of Engineering
  - School of Physical and Mathematical
-
- College of Education
  - School of Continuing and Distance Education
  - School of Education and Leadership
  - School of Information and Communication Studies
  -
- College of Health Sciences
  - School of Biomedical and Allied Health Sciences
  - School of Medicine and Dentistry
  - School of Pharmacy
  - School of Public Health
-
- College of Humanities
  - Business School
  - School of Arts
  - School of Languages
  - School of Performing Arts
  - School of Social Sciences

Appendix 1.2: Departments under the College of Humanities

Business School

- Department of Accounting
- Department of Banking and Finance
- Department of Marketing and Consumer Management
- Department of Operations and Management Information Systems
- Department of Organisation and Human Resource Management
- Department of Public Administration and Health Service Management
- Risk Management and Insurance

School of Arts

- Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies
- Department of History
- Department of Philosophy and Classics
- Department of Religions

School of Languages

- Department of Arabic
- Department of English
- Department of French
- Department of Linguistics
- Department of Modern Languages
- Department of Russian
- Department of Spanish

School of Performing Arts

- Department of Dance Studies
- Department of Music

- Department of Theatre Arts

School of Social Sciences

- Department of Economics
- Department of Geography and Resource Development
- Department of Political Science
- Department of Psychology
- Department of Social Work
- Department of Sociology
- Economic Policy Management

Appendix 2.1: Estimating sample size for study

Yamane (1967) Formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2}.$$

where

n = Number of the sample size required;

N = total population and;

e = error level based on the choice of confidence level.

Given:

N = the population (i.e. the number of theses in the UG database for Humanities @August 2018 = 108)

e = error level based on the choice of confidence level.

Computation for the error level based on Confidence Level (CL). The confidence interval is between 90%-99%. The researcher chose 90% CL for better accuracy.

e = 100% - Confidence level =100% - 90%= 10% = 0.10

Sample size to be used

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} = \frac{108}{l + 108\ (0.1)^2} = 108\ /2.08$$

$$= 51.9 \approx 52$$

Therefore 52 completed PhD theses were purposefully selected from the database and subjected to analysis.