Exploring Authorial Voice in Verb-Control Citations: An Inter-disciplinary Study of Ph.D. Theses

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Abstract

Verb-Control citations signify purposeful communication between the theses writers and readers. The earlier researches on references or citations used in theses and research articles focused on showing differences in general, lesser data, and partial analysis (Jalilifar, 2012). Furthermore, the research on Verb-Control citations/reporting verbs (Factives, Non-Factives, Counter-Factives) needs to be explored in Pakistan's academic context. This research explores the Ph.D. theses, deliberating over the choice of reporting verbs employed as Verb-Control citations. The study was conducted across Ph.D. dissertations namely, English (Linguistics, Literature), English Language Teaching (ELT), Biological Studies (Bio-Technology, Botany, Zoology), and Social Sciences (Education, Psychology, Political Science) in a non-English academic environment. AntConc was employed to analyze the data. Thompson &Ye's (1991) study, "Evaluation in the reporting verbs used in academic papers", was used as a theoretical model. Hence, the writers of the Ph.D. theses were found more inclined to use Non-Factives as against other forms of reporting verbs. Besides others, the basic reason behind these variations is the predominance of the verbs related to tests, experimentations along with the words referring to scientific procedures in Biological Sciences.

Keywords: academic discourse, verb-control citation, reporting verbs, factives, non-factives, counter-factives.

1. Introduction

Academic discourse needs citations, which enable the research authors to mention the previous researches to put their arguments into a larger situation. These practices justify the novel claims or positions regarding the findings presented. Precisely, citation denotes the "attribution of propositional content to other sources" (Hyland 1999, p.341), a strategy adopted by the authors including their voices and pronouncing their approach regarding the authors quoted. It is significant to identify how a writer cites the prior studies and their authors. This preferential attitude of the writer does not keep constant; instead, it changes perpetually, shaping his/her argument in a way to represent his/her response to the work being cited. This linguistic behavior of the writer can be reflected in the reporting verbs, making their voice more pronounced, bringing intra-discipline, and inter-discipline peculiarity to the work done (Hu & Wang, 2014). Verb-Control citations may also be employed to bring up the author's outlook to the cited source and thus improve the persuasion and eloquence of the argument, which may also add to the smooth transition and cohesiveness of the write up as argued, by Thompson and Zhou (2000). In this way, apart from mentioning the

general significance of Verb-Control citations, reporting verbs are utilized to take a particular position towards stated evidence or idea and assess it as factual or fictional; at times, evading to constrain him/herself to the reality of the information, the author may point it to the source (Hyland & Jiang, 2019). Verb-Control citations, therefore, have always been of interest to the researchers (Thompson & Tribble, 2001; Shoostari & Jalilifar, 2010; Monreal & Salom, 2011; Athar, 2014; Hu &Wang, 2014; Yilmaz & Özdem, 2017; Bruhn, 2018; Peng, 2019; Toledo, 2020). The foccus of these studies were interaction in written academic discourse, the writers' endeavor to display the findings of their studies and convince the readers. Using such strategies, the academicians relate their argument to the works conducted mentioning their "personal feelings, attitudes, judgments or assessments, to express their stance" (Biber*et. al*, 1999, p. 966). Writers' opinions, approaches, or associations to the readers, have been denoted as follows: 'attitude' by Swales (2014) and Mohammad (2020), 'stance' by Lee, *et. al.* (2018), Toledo (2020), and Yu (2020), and 'evaluation' by Bruhn (2018).

The previous research works, despite their valuable works on citations, have also hinted to several gaps, for instance, the limited scope of analysis, minor sizes of corpora, and constrained generalizability to other subjects and regions (Jalilifar, 2012). Jalilfar suggests directing similar researches to meet the problems faced in a non-native context. Hence, this study analyzes Verb-Control citations, used in Ph.D. theses, across three major disciplines such as English Studies, Biological Sciences, and Social Sciences. In this way, a corpus was built of 90 literature review (LR) chapters of Ph.D. theses (30 per discipline). The study was delimited to 100 citations per thesis. AntConc was employed to analyze the data. Thompson &Ye's (1991) study was used as a theoretical model. The study focused on Integral Citations, specifically Verb-Control citations.

In this way, the present study explores the interactive status of academic speculations by observing the usual employment of the verbs reporting other sources as signs of standpoint in a non-English author's research work. The issue of authorial voice was investigated from two different angles, like frequency value and semantic or thematic value of reporting verbs. Hence, questions have been raised to define the boundaries of this study. The verbs reporting others' works have been grouped into Factives, Non-Factives, and Counter-Factives. The findings suggested that Non-Factive verbs exceeded the other two types of reporting verbs, used as Verb-Control citations. This study recommends that thesis writers need to use various verb choices which may make their arguments persuasive. These strategies may also enhance the rhetorical effects of the arguments developed.

2. Literature Review

Academic discourse refers to the point that intricate public accomplishments like instructing the learners, indicating scholarship, propagating thoughts, creating awareness, and gathering information rely on language to accomplish (Hyland, 1999). All these academic genres of teaching and learning such as books, compositions, seminar demonstrations, theses, lectures, and research papers are essential to education and knowledge creation. Language is instrumental in framing issues, inferring thoughts, and apprehend problems in habits concerning to specific disciplines or groups, while practicing these, the academicians construct collective truths and subjective uniqueness by the virtue of these academic endeavors (Hyland, 2009).

A skilled writer is thoughtful of his readers in a way similar to an able communicator. Sinclair (1988) assumes that writing is an interactive process even though it is done in isolation and an author has to be more communicative than a speaker to fulfill the demands of a wide range of readership. Interface by the authors in a research paper or other academic texts needs more effort on their parts to present their research findings in a manner cogent enough to convince their audience in accepting the claims made. In this way, the research writers attempt to associate their arguments to the studies conducted earlier, at the same time mentioning their frame of mind, attitudes, conclusions as well as valuations (Sirijanchuen & Gampper, 2018). Previous researchers have focused on various discursive practices, namely hedging (Hyland, 2009; Farnia, *et. al.*, 2018), theme (Pourghasemian, *et. al.*, 2018), reporting verbs (Yu, 2020; Kwon, *et. al.*, 2018; Marti, *et. al.*2019), tense usage (CHEN, 2009; Varga & Gradečak-Erdeljić, 2017), Meta-discourse (Hyland, 1997; Yousif, *et. al.*, 2019). Different writers have indicated the writers' thoughts, outlooks, and associations with the readers, in terms of attitude (Halliday & Matthiessen 2013), stance (Tahamtan, & Bornmann, 2019), and assessment or evaluation (Bruhn, 2018).

Verb-Control citations are employed as a researcher to mention attitude to the source cited and thus improve the expressiveness of the thought concerning 'evaluative coherence' of the argument (Thompson & Zhou, 2000; Marti, et. al., 2019). Added to this, the research writers take a subjective position just before reporting evidence and appraise it as factual or fictional, choosing reporting verbs keeping in view the academic norms of their particular discipline. Similarly, a writer may attribute a position to the original author at times to avoid committing him/herself to the certainty of the conveyed information (Hyland & Jiang, 2019).

So the space for further study and research gets open here that as a non-native like in Pakistan what kind of strategies are taken up to align oneself to a specific discourse community through putting their voice as authors of the academic discourses. The studies conducted so far, have focused more on personal pronouns, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs along with such phrases and lexical bundles in terms of quantity as a partial issue. Secondly, the majority of the writers conducted corpus-based studies to find frequencies of citations and report verbs to know the general trend and attitude of the writers without going through deep into the matter. Thirdly, all these studies were conducted abroad in their vernacular culture and academic environment, mostly on the academic writings of pure or natural sciences and physical sciences. The issue undertaken needs to be explored more in Pakistan as a non-native academic context. In this way, the present study was conducted to answer the questions mentioned below:

1. How do the research writers cite the preceding works, across the subjects, through using Verb-Control citations?
2. What are the various reporting verbs used and how are these preferred by the writers across disciplines?
3. How does a reporting verb make the author's voice more explicit when juxtaposed to the writers of other disciplines?

3. Methodology

The following procedure was adopted to derive a conclusion and answer the research questions.

3.1.   Corpus/Sample of the Study

A corpus was built which comprised of the literature reviews of 90 theses consisting of 30 each from English Studies, Social Sciences, and Biological Sciences, with three sub-disciplines in each: Biotechnology, Botany, Zoology (Biological Sciences); Linguistics, English Language Teaching (ELT), Literature (English Studies); Education, Political Science, Psychology (Social Sciences). The most recent available theses were chosen on a purposive basis. The corpus was constructed in plain text. Thus exploration was carried out in a corpus amounting to more than one and half million (1500000) words, using both quantitative as well as qualitative methods.

3.2.   Corpus Analysis Tools

The corpus was analyzed using a concordance programme along with human judgment incorporated. The instances of these verbs were counted out of an average number, as 100 citations per thesis, 1000 per subject, and 3000 per discipline. Thus illustrating the issue, based upon the works done by Thompson and Ye (1991), the reporting verbs were analyzed and assigned to different categories conferring to the nature of the function and to the intended meaning the writers wanted to deduce. In this way, the verbs in each category were analyzed in terms of frequency as well as the evaluative significance of Verb-Control citations.

3.3.   Methods and Instruments

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were adopted to conduct the research. The methods adopted were planned to conduct an interdisciplinary and intradisciplinary analysis of reporting verbs to know the frequency counts as well as the evaluative significance of the verbs. The analyses were made through Concordance which meant to know the frequencies of the various reporting verbs found in the corpus. Secondly, using the same option, the analyses were done to know the type or varieties of the verbs used in the various disciplines. The frequency count was done manually as was done by Hanania and Akhtar (1985) providing a guideline for the current study. In summary, the analyses were done through AntConc with human assistance/judgment incorporated. Thus the analyses assisted in identifying some of the impelling reasons in choosing a particular verb hinting at the writer's inclination to the study quoted as well as the norms of citing others in a specific discipline. The subject-specific verbs and the verbs used commonly by all the writers across the discipline have been mentioned and discussed as well.

3.4.   Delimitation of the Study

The population consists of the theses submitted in or after 2011 to 2015. The size of the population is 1000 theses of three disciplines: English Studies, Biological Sciences, and Social Sciences. Furthermore, it was delimited to the literature review sections, 1000 citations per subject,

and 3000 per discipline, focusing on integral citations with reporting verbs (citation acts as an agent that controls a verb).

4. Results and Discussions

The occurrences of different verbs reporting previous studies as were found in the theses across Social Sciences, English Studies, and Biological Sciences were analyzed. The results obtained for the three disciplines along with their respective discussions upon each are as follows:

4.1. Reporting Verbs Used in Social Sciences

It is mentioned in Table 1 below that the total number of Verb-Control citations used in Social Sciences is 669. This type of citations was observed the most in Education (293 out of 669) against those in Political Science (130 out of 669) and Psychology (246 out of 669). In other words, the writers' inclination to use this reporting pattern is the highest in Education (43.80%) as compared to Psychology (36.77%) and Political Science (19.43%). Its further sub-variant, namely Factives is the most frequently occurring (362 out of 669) form of reporting verbs, even more than Non-Factives (301 out of 669). Hence, it stands 54.11% as against Non-Factives (44.99%) and also Counter-Factives (0.89%). Similarly, the table shows the comparative frequencies of Factives in the corpora of Psychology (149 out of 362), Education (136 out of 362), as well as Political Science (76 out of 362). In this way, Psychology registered the highest in terms of the occurrences of Factives as reporting citations. Likewise, Education (155 out of 301) stands the highest, in terms of using Non-Factives, as contrasted by Political Science (52 out of 301), as well as Psychology (94 out of 301). Counter-Factives are the least chosen options of Verb-Control citations. The overall number of this form of reporting verbs used is six which is the lowest in number as compared to Factive verbs that stand the highest, and Non-Factives happen to occur lesser than these, placed in the middle.

Table 1: Intra-discipline Analysis1 of Verb-Control citations in Social Sciences

Types of Reporting Verbs	Education	Political Science	Psychology	Total	Total in %
Factives	137	76	149	362	54.1%
Non-Factives	155	52	94	301	44.9%
Counter-Factives	1	2	3	6	0.89%
Total/Percent	293/43.80%	130/19.4%	246/36.77%	669	100%

4.2. Reporting Verbs Used in English Studies

It is revealed in Table 2, given below, that the total frequencies of Verb-control citations are found in the theses of English are 893. This form of citations has got maximum frequencies in Linguistics (376 out of 893) against those in ELT (336 out of 893), and Literature (181 out of 893). In other words, the writers' interest in using this pattern is maximum in Linguistics (42.10%) as against ELT (37.62%) and Literature (20.27%). Factives are the more frequently occurring (319 out

of 893) forms of reporting verbs, but less than Non-Factives (564 out of 893). Hence, it stands 35.72% as compared to Non-Factives (63.16%) and Counter-Factives (1.2%). The data obtained also mentioned the relative numbers of Factives in Linguistics (142), ELT (141), and Literature (36). Thus, Linguistics is registered with the maximum occurrences of Factives. Non-Factives (564 out of 893) are the most preferred verbs as against Factives (319) in English Studies. Total occurrences of this form are 63.16 % as compared to Factives' 35.72 % and Counter-Factives' 1.2 %. Similarly, Linguistics (228) stands the highest as contrasted by ELT (195), and Literature (141). Lastly, Counter-Factive is quite uncommon among the variants of Verb-Control citations. The total range of reporting verbs used is up to10, being the lowest in number as compared to Factives and Non-Factives, the highest. The maximum occurrences (6 out of 10) were found in Linguistics as compared to those in Literature (4) and ELT (0).

Table 2: Intra-discipline Analysis of Verb-Control citations in English Studies

Types of Reporting Verbs	ELT	Linguistics	Literature	Total	Total in %
Factives	141	142	36	319	35.7%
Non-Factives	195	228	141	564	63.16%
Counter-Factives	0	6	4	10	1.2%
Total/Percent	336/37.62%	376/42.10%	181/20.27%	893	100%

4.3.   Reporting Verbs Used in Biological Sciences

It is mentioned in table 3 below that the number of these verbs, used in Biological Sciences, is 844. These forms of citations have occurred the most in Zoology (321/ 38.03%) against those in Botany (250/ 29.62%) and those in Biotechnology (173/ 20.50%). In this way, the writers' interest in using this pattern is the maximum in Zoology as compared to Botany and Biotechnology. Factives occurred only 70 times, far lesser than Non-Factives (774) in Biological Sciences. Hence, it is 8.29% as against Non-Factives (91.71%) as well as Counter-Factives (0 %).   It further shows the Frequencies of Factives in Botany (38), Biotechnology (17), and Zoology (15).

Table 3: Intra-discipline Analysis of Verb-Control citations in Biological sciences

Types of Reporting Verbs	Biotechnology	Botany	Zoology	Total	Total in%
Factives	17	38	15	70	8.29%
Non-Factives	156	212	306	774	91.71%
Counter-Factives	0	0	0	0	0%
Total/Percent	173/20.50%	250/29.62%	321/38.03%	844	100%

Thus, Botany stands the highest in terms of frequencies of this type of reporting verbs. Contrary to this, Non-Factives (774 out of 844) were used most frequently as compared to Factives (70) and Counter-Factives (0). The occurrences of these verbs are the highest ever (91.17 %) as against Factives' 8.29 % and Counter-Factives' 0 %. Likewise, Zoology (306) stands the highest, using this verb form, as compared to Botany (212), and Biotechnology (156). As usual, Counter-

Factive is one of the least preferred variants of reporting verbs. Its total contribution to the overall number of reporting verbs used is zero, the lowest as compared to Factives and Non-Factives, the highest.

4.4.   Inter Discipline Analysis of Reporting Verbs

Table 4: Inter discipline Analysis of Verb-Control citations

Types of Reporting Verbs	Social Sciences	English Studies	Biological Sciences	Total	Total in%
Factives	362	319	70	751	31.21%
Non-Factives	301	564	774	1639	68.12%
Counter-Factives	6	10	0	16	0.66%
Total/Percent	669/ 27.80%	893/ 37.11%	844/35.07%	2406	100%

Table 5: Lists of Factive Reporting Verbs across Disciplines

English Studies	Social Sciences	Biological Sciences	Factives Used in Common
1. Suggested	1. Envisages	1. Associated	1. Suggested
2. , Define	2. Insisted	2. Indicated	2. Define
3. Presented	3. Termed	3. Illustrated	3. Presented
4. Emphasize	4. Admits	4. Subjected	4. Emphasize
5. Point out	5. Advanced	5. Proved	5. Point out
6. Support	6. Articulated	6. Agree	6. Support
7. Preferred	7. Strongly	7. Confirmed	7. Preferred
8. Identified	claimed	8. Reconfirmed	8. Identified
9. Argue	8. Contended	9. Distinguished	9. Argue
10. Developed			10. Developed
11. Concluded			11. Concluded
12. Considered			12. Considered
13. Held			13. Held
14. Explained			14. Explained
15. Accentuated			15. Accentuated for
16. For			16. Postulated
17. Postulated			17. Stressed
18. Stressed			18. Define
19. Define			19. Elucidated
20. Elucidated			20. Theorize
21. Theorize			21. Coined
22. Coined			22. Attested
23. Attested,			23. Hypothesized
24. Hypothesized			24. English
25. English			25. Studies
26. Studies			26. Established
27. Established			27. Addressed
28. Addressed			28. Recommended
29. Recommended			

It is revealed in Table 4 that the number of these reporting verbs, across the disciplines, is 2406. These verbs were observed the most in English Studies (893/ 37.11%) as against those in Biological Sciences (844/ 35.07 %) or Social Sciences (669/ 27.80%). So, the writers' interest in using this pattern is the maximum in English Studies as compared to Social Sciences as well as Biological Sciences. Factives occurred 751 times in the data of citations, far lesser than Non-Factives (1639). Thus, Factives are 31.21 % as contrasted by Non-Factives (68.12%) as well as Counter-Factives (0.66 %). Likewise, the relative instances of Factives occurred in Social Sciences (362/751) are the highest, as against English Studies (319/751), and Biological studies (70/751). Added to these, Non-Factives are the highly preferred (1639 or 68.12%) as compared to the other forms, namely Factives (751/ 31.21%) and counter-Factives (16/ 0.66 %).

Therefore, Biological sciences (774) stand the highest, in using Non-Factives, as against those in Social Sciences (301), and in English Studies (564). Lastly, Counter-Factive is one of the least preferred types of reporting verbs. Its total contribution to the overall number of reporting verbs used is 16 or 0.66 % as the lowest in occurrence as compared to Factives and Non-Factives (See Table 4).

4.5.   Factive Reporting Verbs, Found Across Disciplines

Reporting verbs used by the writers reflecting evaluative norms of various disciplines can be seen in the list, mentioned above. It shows that the verbs used by the writers in the theses of English studies coincide with the verbs found in all the three disciplines. In summary, these verb types occur in common across the theses of all selected disciplines. The writers by employing Factive verbs aim to admit the standpoint held by the previous researchers. The terms other than these, found in Biological Sciences, were those referring to scientific procedures and processes such as tests, experimentations, or other subjects' specific phenomena. This occurrence reveals that such discursive practices line up the writers with the values as well as philosophies that upkeep particular identity, says Hyland (1999). The theses writers in social sciences made the same choices as were those found in both, the English studies as well as in Biological sciences. The verbs held widely were usually the same except for only a few such as "envisage", "insisted", "termed", "admitted", "strongly claimed", "advanced", "articulated", and "contented" (Table 5).

4.6.   Non-Factive Reporting Verbs, Found Across Disciplines

The Non-Factives refer to an attitude where the research writers try to keep neutral and mention the statement merely as a part of helpful information. The verb items used by the research writers in the theses of English studies were those as preferred by the writers across all the three disciplines (See the list in Table 6). The given list also reveals that the variety of verbs occurred in the theses of Biological sciences is far more extended as contrasted by the verbs mentioned in the column of English studies and in social sciences. Therefore, it seems that the writers in natural, pure, and applied sciences require the type of reporting verbs, which refer to scientific procedures like tests and experimentations along with the commonly preferred verb items. As per its definition, Non-Factives give no clear signal as to signify the writers' attitude towards the previous author's statement or opinion, state Thompson and Ye (1991).

Table 6: List of Non-Factive Reporting Verbs across Disciplines

English Studies	Social Sciences	Biological Sciences	Non-Factives Used in Common
1. Conducted,	1. Quoted,	1. Recorded	1. Conducted
2. Found	2. Encompasses	2. Enlisted	2. Found
3. Studied	3. Contributed	3. Described	3. Studied
4. Cross-examined	4. Limits	4. Screened	4. Cross-examined
5. Operationalized	5. Enlarged	5. Recognized	5. Operationalized
6. Contrasted		6. Observed	6. Contrasted
7. Divided		7. Estimated	7. Divided
8. Investigated		8. Adopted	8. Investigated
9. Evaluated		9. Modified	9. Evaluated
10. Used		10. Experimented	10. Used
11. Carried out		11. Made	11. Carried out
12. Believe		12. Revealed	12. Believe
13. Propose		13. Evolved	13. Propose
14. Discussed		14. Examined	14. Discussed
15. Claimed		15. Devised	15. Claimed
16. Explored		16. Demonstrated	16. Explored
17. Stated		17. Discovered	17. Stated
		18. Verified	
		19. Collected	
		20. Worked	
		21. Compared	
		22. Formulated	
		23. Measured	
		24. Performed	
		25. Detected	
		26. Transformed	
		27. Cloned	
		28. Isolated	
		29. Assessed	
		30. Formulated	
		31. Measured	
		32. Performed	
		33. Detected	
		34. Transformed	
		35. Isolated	

4.7. Counter-Factive Reporting Verbs, Found Across Disciplines

The list given below reveals that the writers also used some Counter-Factives to encounter or disapprove the previous works and to create a space for the study being conducted. It was found that the research writers in Biological Sciences evaded these verbs, while those in English studies and Social sciences used some of these verbs as can be seen in the list mentioned below in Table 7. The writers in Biological Sciences attempted to align themselves with the tradition of the scientific

disciplines. In this way, the writers in all three sub-disciplines, namely, Biotechnology, Botany and Zoology, did not choose to encounter or disapprove the outcomes of the previous works. These judgments are also verified by Hyland's (1999) findings where he mentions that only the Humanities and Social Sciences contained the verbs like Counter-Factives, which considered the evidence as undependable. The theses analyzed for the current study were found with only a few occurrences, such as, refuted, criticize, challenged, disapproved, ignored, strongly criticized, condemn, does not agree, and failed to find, where the writer's tone meant to disapprove or challenge the conclusion of the previous authors. A side purpose at the same time seems to create a space for the new study may also be concluded from such expressions. Hence, it is proved that t even in a non-native context, the research writers registered to show solidarity with their discipline community.

Table 7: List of Counter-Factive Reporting Verbs across Disciplines

English Studies	Social Sciences	Biological Sciences	Counter-Factives Used in Common
1. Criticize, 2. Challenged, 3. Refuted, 4. Condemns, 5. Ignored	1. Criticize, 2. Challenged, 3. Does not agree 4. Disapproved, 5. Strongly 6. criticized, 7. Failed to find	---- -----	1. Criticize, 2. Challenged,

4.8. Discussion

The writers by employing Factive verbs aim to admit the standpoint held by the previous researchers, Non-Factives refer to an attitude where the research writers seem to keep neutral and give the statement only as a part of helpful information. Similarly, a writer may attribute a position to the original author; at times to avoid committing him/herself to the certainty of the conveyed information (Hyland & Jiang, 2019). Contrary to these, Counter-Factives encounter or disapprove of the previous works and create a space for the study conducted. As mentioned earlier in the tables, Non-Factives are the most preferred (68.12%) as compared to Factives (31.21%) and Counter-Factives (0.66 %). At the other end, Counter-Factive were preferred the least, as its total contribution to the overall number is 0.66 %, the lowest as compared to Factives and Non-Factives.To analyze further, the given lists indicate that the choices of verbs occurred in the theses of Biological sciences are far more than the verbs chosen in English studies and also in Social sciences. It is also suggested that the writers in natural, pure, or other sciences require the type of reporting verbs that refer to scientific procedures such as tests and experimentations (Yilmaz &Özdem, 2017). Thus, the number of choices is increased in Biological Sciences which are added further by the commonly preferred verb items. In this way, the writers in Biological Sciences attempted to align themselves with the tradition of the scientific disciplines (Athar, 2014; Hu &Wang, 2014). That is why the writers in all three sub-disciplines Biotechnology, Botany, and Zoology did not choose to encounter or disapprove the outcomes of the previous works. These judgments are also verified by Hyland's (1999) and Toledo's (2020) findings where they mention that only Humanities and Social Sciences contained the verbs like Counter-Factives. Thus, these practices line up the writers with the values as well as philosophies that upkeep particular identity, says Hyland (1999).

Hence, the inclination of the writers using subject-specific verb types is a purposive academic approach (Bruhn, 2018; Peng, 2019). This is also argued that the stress on just reporting specific evidence, without employing a suitable form of reporting verb, would tantamount to omission or misjudging the intention (Thompson & Ye, 1991). They emphasize that the assessment of another's work is to indicate the point of view (Thompson &Ye, 1991). Hyland (1999) further argues that such analysis indicates a quite perfect dissection of the categories equivalent to the usual difference between hard and soft disciplines. Thus the writers must be thoughtful of the responses of their addressees, expecting the discourse specific knowledge, academic norms, and interpersonal anticipations (Rorty, 1979).

5. Conclusion

The study explored how the writers take a position while citing others and how they prefer one verb over the other. This study was meant to investigate these practices of citing others in Ph.D. theses as an academic genre. The study was mainly focused more on reporting verbs as mentioning stance by the researchers in a non-English academic situation. The issue of authorial voice was investigated from two different angles, like frequency value and semantic value of reporting verbs. Hence some questions were formulated to define the boundaries of this study. The first question was about the verb choices the writers used when referring to previous studies. The categories presumed for this purpose were those adopted by Thompson & Ye's (1991) and the results confirmed that apart from various citation patterns, all the three types of Verb-Control citation, namely, Factives, Non-Factives, and Counter-Factives were present in the corpus, built out of three different disciplines. The second question was aimed at exploring the frequency value of various forms of reporting verbs, in each discipline as well as across the disciplines. The findings suggested that Non-Factive verbs exceeded the other two types of reporting verbs, used as Verb-Control citations. The third question was put to explore the variety of reporting verbs which made the author's voice more explicit in terms of the writers' discipline. To answer this question, it was found that the writer's discursive behavior, as suggested by the data was subject purposive. Factives, as the term, suggest admitting the standpoint held by the previous researchers, were employed less by the theses writers in all the three disciplines. Contrary to this, by using Non-Factives, the writers attributed a position to the original authors, at times avoided committing themselves to the certainty of the already conveyed information. Eventually, the subject-specific choices of reporting verbs by the researchers mention the author's voices in terms of Factives, Non-Factives, and Counter-Factives. Thus, the findings of the present study have tried to fill the gap regarding discursive practices as to how to use reporting verbs in Verb-Control citations in theses conducted in Pakistan.

Finally, the study concludes that appropriate use of reporting verbs can be considered as one important way to enhance the quality of a study and make one's argument more effective. Similarly, Novice writers are suggested to learn these techniques to excel in identifying the authors' voice or intended meaning. This inter-disciplinary comparison would help the research students to know more about these rhetorical practices and explore new ways for further studies. More importantly, future researchers should focus on inter-section analysis to know the section specific trends in terms of verbs choices. Future researches should be directed at exploring the use of reporting verbs, in terms of tense and voice, among various disciplines.

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