A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF REPORTING VERBS USED BETWEEN BACHELOR'S THESES AND MASTER'S THESES BY CHINESE ENGLISH MAJORS

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การศึกษาเชิงเปรียบเทียบคำกริยานำในประโยครายงานข้อมูลที่นักศึกษาเอกภาษาอังกฤษชาวจีนใช้ระหว่างวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาตรีและปริญญาโท

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วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต
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เวิ่น ฉวงชิ่ง : การวิเคราะห์เปรียบต่างบทความวิจัยทางด้านวิศวกรรมอิเล็กทรอนิกส์ที่เขียนโดยชาวจีน ชาวไทยและเจ้าของภาษาอังกฤษ: โครงสร้างอัตถภาคและอนุวัจน์ และอัตถภาคความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างภาพกับข้อความ (A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF REPORTING VERBS USED BETWEEN BACHELOR'S THESES AND MASTER'S THESES BY CHINESE ENGLISH MAJORS) อาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา : ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ ดร.อิศรา ประมูลศุข, 183 หน้า.

คำสำคัญ: นักศึกษาเอกภาษาอังกฤษชาวจีน/วิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาตรี/อัตถภาคความสัมพันธ์/วิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาโท/คำกริยานำในประโยครายงานข้อมูล/การอ้างอิงผลงานผู้อื่น

สำหรับนักศึกษาเอกภาษาอังกฤษชาวจีน การเขียนวิทยานิพนธ์เป็นส่วนประกอบอันสำคัญของการประเมินผลเนื่องจากวิทยานิพนธ์เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการวัดความสำเร็จทางวิชาการ และเมื่อจำเพาะเจาะจงลงไป นักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรีจำเป็นต้องเขียนวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาตรี และนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาโทก็จำเป็นต้องเขียนวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาโทเช่นกัน สำหรับการเขียนงานวิชาการที่ต้องมีการอ้างอิงเป็นหลักแบบวิทยานิพนธ์นี้ คำกิริยานำในประโยครายงานข้อมูล ซึ่งจัดว่าเป็นแง่มุมที่สำคัญของการอ้างอิงผลงานผู้อื่นสามารถนำมาใช้เพื่ออ้างอิงเนื้อหาไปสู่แหล่งข้อมูลอื่นๆ และใช้เพื่อแสดงถึงตัวเลือกทางการเขียนที่สำคัญอีกด้วย (Hyland, 1999, 2002; Thompson & Ye, 1991) อย่างไรก็ตามจนกระทั่งทุกวันนี้ยังไม่มีการศึกษาใดที่สำรวจการใช้คำกิริยานำในประโยครายงานข้อมูลระหว่างวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาตรีและระดับปริญญาโทในบริบทของประเทศจีน เพื่อเป็นการเติมเต็มช่องว่างงานวิจัยในด้านนี้ งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้จะทำการวิเคราะห์และเปรียบเทียบการใช้คำกิริยานำในประโยครายงานข้อมูลในแต่ละบทของวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาตรี 30 เล่ม และวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาโท 30 เล่มที่แต่งโดยนักศึกษาวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษชาวจีน โดยมุ่งเน้นที่จะศึกษาว่าคำกิริยาดังกล่าวถูกใช้อย่างไรในวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาตรีและระดับปริญญาโท จากนั้นก็จะศึกษาเพื่อหาความเหมือนและความแตกต่างในการใช้คำกิริยา เหล่านั้นจะระหว่างวิทยานิพนธ์ทั้งสองระดับ

งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ใช้กรอบการจำแนกประเภทคำกิริยานำในประโยครายงานข้อมูลของ Hyland (2002) เพื่อศึกษาว่าผู้เขียนเหล่านี้ใช้คำกิริยาดังกล่าวเพื่อรายงานงานวิจัยก่อนหน้าอย่างไร (ศักยภาพความหมายตรง) และผู้เขียนเหล่านี้ประเมินแหล่งที่มาของข้อมูลที่อ้างอิงอย่างไร (หน้าที่ในการประเมิน) ผลการวิจัยเปิดเผยว่าคลังข้อมูลวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาตรีมีการใช้ คำกิริยานำในประโยครายงานข้อมูล 77 คำ โดยใช้ทั้งสิ้น 566 ครั้ง ในขณะที่คลังข้อมูลวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาโทมีการใช้คำกิริยานำในประโยครายงานข้อมูล 207 คำ โดยใช้ทั้งสิ้น 2357 ครั้ง กล่าวในภาพรวม ในส่วนของ

ศักยภาพความหมายตรงคำกิริยาที่ใช้ในการบอกกล่าวถูกพบมากที่สุดในคลังข้อมูลวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาตรี ในขณะที่คำกิริยาที่ใช้ในการวิจัยถูกพบมากที่สุดในชุดข้อมูลวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาโท ส่วนคำกิริยาที่ใช้ในการนึกคิดถูกใช้น้อยที่สุดในสองชุดข้อมูล ในด้านหน้าที่ในการประเมิน คำกิริยาที่ใช้บอกข้อเท็จจริงถูกใช้มากที่สุดในคลังข้อมูลวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาตรีในขณะที่คำกิริยาที่กล่าวถึงเรื่องอื่นที่ไม่ใช่ข้อเท็จจริงถูกใช้เยอะที่สุดในชุดข้อมูลวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาโท คำกิริยาบอกข้อมูลตรงกันข้ามหรือข้อมูลเชิงลบถูกใช้น้อยที่สุดในคลังข้อมูลทั้งสองชุด อย่างไรก็ตามผลการวิจัยยังระบุถึงความแตกต่างในการใช้คำกิริยานำในประโยครายงานข้อมูลที่ทั้งในด้านศักยภาพความหมายตรงและหน้าที่ในการประเมินในแต่ละบทของวิทยานิพนธ์ซึ่งเป็นผลมาจากลักษณะที่แตกต่างกันระหว่างวิทยานิพนธ์ทั้งสองชุดข้อมูลที่เป็นตัวแทนของการศึกษาที่แตกต่างกันสองระดับ นอกจากนี้ยังพบคำกิริยานำในประโยครายงานข้อมูลที่ไม่หลากหลายนักในบทผลการวิจัยและอภิปรายผล และบทสรุปของวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาตรีอีกด้วย เมื่อมองถึงประเด็นการใช้คำกิริยานำในประโยครายงานข้อมูลที่ไม่หลากหลายนักของนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรี งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้จึงเสนอกรอบที่เป็นมาตรฐานสำหรับนักศึกษาเหล่านี้ในการใช้คำกิริยานำในประโยครายงานข้อมูล ยิ่งไปกว่านั้นจากผลการวิจัยการศึกษานี้ยังเสนอแนวคิดเชิงปฏิบัติสำหรับการสอน การเรียนและการใช้คำกิริยานำในประโยครายงานข้อมูลสำหรับการเขียนวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาตรีหรือระดับปริญญาโทหรือแม้กระทั่งบทความวิชาการอื่นๆในบริบทประเทศจีนหรือในบริบทที่ใกล้เคียงกันอีกด้วย

สาขาวิชาภาษาต่างประเทศ ลายมือชื่อนักศึกษา Shuangqing Wen

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WEN SHUANGQING : A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF REPORTING VERBS USED BETWEEN BACHELOR'S THESES AND MASTER'S THESES BY CHINESE ENGLISH MAJORS. THESIS ADVISOR : ASST. PROF. ISSRA PRAMOOLSOOK, Ph.D., 183 PP.

Keyword: Chinese English Majors/ Bachelor's Thesis/ Master's Thesis/ Reporting Verbs/ Citation

For Chinese English majors, thesis writing is an essential constituent of assessment since it is submitted as partial fulfillment of requirements to determine their academic achievement. Specifically, an undergraduate student is required to complete a bachelor's thesis (BT), and a master's student is required to complete a master's thesis (MT). In writing these source-based academic texts, reporting verbs (RVs), as a crucial aspect of citation, can be used to attribute content to other sources and represent a significant rhetorical choice (Hyland, 1999, 2002; Thompson & Ye, 1991). However, to date, no study has investigated the use of RVs between BTs and MTs in the Chinese context. To bridge the research gap, this study was conducted to analyze and compare the use of RVs in each chapter of 30 complete BTs and 30 complete MTs written by Chinese English majors, finding out first how RVs are used in BTs and MTs, and second, the similarities and differences in using those RVs. Employing Hyland's (2002) classification framework, the current study aimed to explore how these writers use RVs to report previous studies (denotative potentials) and how they evaluate the reported sources (evaluative functions). The results revealed that the BT corpus contained 77 types and 566 tokens of RVs, whereas 207 types and 2,357 tokens of RVs were identified in the MT corpus. In general, regarding the denotative potentials of RVs, Discourse Act RVs were found predominant in the BT corpus, while Research Act RVs were found to prevail in the MT corpus. Cognition Act RVs were used least in both corpora. Concerning their evaluative functions, factive RVs were the most frequent in the BT corpus, while non-factive RVs were the most employed in the MT corpus. Negative RVs were used with the lowest frequency in both corpora. However, the results indicate that the variations in the use of RVs in terms of denotative potentials and evaluative functions in each of the five thesis chapters were due to the

distinct features between the two texts of the same genre but represents a different level of education. Moreover, a restricted range of RVs was identified in the BT Results and Discussion and Conclusion Chapters. Regarding undergraduate students' insufficient use of RVs, this study provided a more standardized framework for them to follow. Furthermore, based on these findings, this study then proposes practical implications for teaching, learning, and using this particular linguistic feature in writing BTs or MTs or even other academic texts in China as well as other similar contexts.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BT	Bachelor's Thesis
CNKI	China National Knowledge Infrastructure
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
ETSEM	English Teaching Syllabus for English Majors
ILrMRDC	Introduction-Literature Review-Methodology-Results and Discussion-Conclusion
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MOE	Ministry of Education
MT	Master's Thesis
NF	Normalized Frequency
NNEW	Non-native English Writer
QQM	Quanti-qualitative Methodology
Regex	Regular Expressions
RF	Raw Frequency
RV(s)	Reporting Verb(s)
TACTEM	Teaching Advisory Committee for Tertiary English Majors
UK	The United Kingdom
US	The United States

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers an overall description of the present study which is conducted to analyze and compare the use of reporting verbs between bachelor's theses and master's theses by Chinese English majors. It starts with the background information, providing the importance of English and English language teaching in China, the role of English language teaching in Chinese universities for English majors, the importance of thesis writing, and the importance of reporting verbs. Then, it presents a statement of problems, the rationale, the research purposes, the research questions, the significance of the study, the scope and limitation of the study, and definitions of key terms. Finally, the overall organization of this thesis will be introduced at the end of the chapter.

1.1 Research Background

1.1.1 Importance of English and English Language Teaching in China

With the development of information as well as globalization, English plays an increasingly important role in international communication and spreading around the world into almost all fields such as science and technology, education, medicine, trade and commerce, the Internet, and so on. Consequently, English is widely recognized as an International Language (Widdowson, 1997; Modiano, 1999; Jenkins, 2000), a lingua franca (House, 1999; Gnutzmann, 2000; Seidlhofer, 2001; Jenkins, 2007), a global language (Crystal, 1997), and a world language (Brutt-Griffler, 2002). Meanwhile, English is established as a tool and even a symbol of modernization, globalization, and economic prosperity (Schneider, 2014). China, as a developing country, has achieved rapid economic growth and an explosion in technological, commercial, and cultural exchanges with other parts of the world; as a result, it has aroused a vigorous tendency of the development of English in China.

Ever since China's reform and opening-up policy initiated in 1978, English has been promoted for more than four decades at different levels. Specifically, at the government level, English has been promoted for the nation's development, modernization, and internationalization (He, 2017). On a personal level, English has been promoted for increasing individuals' upward and outward mobility. That is, proficiency in English can earn plenty of social, economic, and educational opportunities; moreover, it plays a role as a passport to higher education at home or abroad, lucrative employment in a public or private sector, professional advancement, and social prestige (Hu, 2005). At the education level, English language teaching (ELT) is an issue of great significance in China. The promotion for English has been realized by lowering the age at which English is taught with the emergence of numerous Chinese-English bilingual kindergartens. Moreover, English has been designated as the first foreign language and a compulsory subject from Grade Three of primary school until the tertiary level, and this requirement is issued by China's Ministry of Education (MOE, 2001, 2007). Meanwhile, key examinations in the education system are designed and developed to ensure the importance of this subject, such as Senior High School Entrance Exam (Zhongkao), National University Entrance Qualifying Exam (Gaokao), and College English Test.

China, as the world's most populous nation with a population of over 1.3 billion, is also estimated to have the largest English-learning and -using population in the world (Crystal, 2008; Bolton et al, 2011; He, 2017). According to Wong (2019), it is estimated that more than 400 million people are learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in China in 2019. It reflects the reality that English has played a more and more indispensable role in China, and ELT has been highly regarded as an essential part of China's education.

This section provides a brief overview of the importance of English and ELT in China. In addition, ELT in Chinese universities for English majors will be specifically discussed in the following section.

1.1.2 ELT in Chinese Universities for English Majors

ELT is especially significant at the tertiary level due to the country's determination to cultivate talents with an adequate command of English for China's

ever-increasing integration into the world economy and globalization as well as the country's national development (Yu & Liu, 2018). With the increasing awareness of the importance of ELT and the growing demand for qualified personnel in society, ELT in Chinese universities for English majors has been an important field.

In the Chinese tertiary educational system, ELT for English majors is divided into three levels: bachelor's level, master's level, and doctoral level (MOE, 1981). The overall objective of English programs in Chinese universities is to develop English majors' language proficiency to an advanced/sophisticated and professional level (Wang, 2006). In addition, in China, ELT programs for English majors vary from university to university depending on the different training objectives in three types of universities: namely, international studies universities (waiguoyu daxue), comprehensive universities (zonghe daxue), and normal universities (shifan daxue) (Cheng & Wang, 2012). The international studies universities attach great importance to cultivate students to take positions in international affairs, international trade, and international cultural exchanges, or to work in the tourism industry. In the English departments of most comprehensive universities, the emphasis is usually put on the study of specialized areas, including British and American literature, linguistics, and translation. In the normal universities, students are required to learn ELT methodology in addition to receiving professional English training since the majority will become English teachers at the primary, secondary, or tertiary level after graduation.

1.1.3 Importance of Thesis Writing for Chinese English Majors

In the context of China's tertiary education, as a foreign language learning context, thesis writing is recognized as the last but most important task that English majors are required to fulfill in almost all universities and colleges. Thesis writing is seen as a critical factor to reinforce and test English majors' comprehensive abilities, including their scope of knowledge, language competence, basic theories, and academic capacity; their scientific research ability; and their creation and innovation spirits. Importantly, thesis writing is regarded as an essential constituent of assessment since it is submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements to determine English majors' academic achievement for obtaining a corresponding academic degree. To be specific, an undergraduate student completes a bachelor's thesis (BT) in English and

defends their BT to obtain a bachelor's degree; likewise, a master's student completes a master's thesis (MT) and defends it to obtain a master's degree. At the same time, the BT and MT are considered as a high-stake genre at the summit of a student's academic accomplishment. Therefore, it is widely acknowledged as a pivotal pass to graduation and culmination point in the whole tertiary study. Furthermore, the quality of thesis writing is one of the core indicators to assess the quality of talent training in a university, and it also can indirectly reflect the educational and academic level of its English faculty. As a consequence, for most Chinese universities and colleges, thesis writing is an indispensable project for English majors.

Thesis writing, as one kind of source-based academic writing, requires writers to incorporate and synthesize diverse sources of knowledge into an authoritative viewpoint appropriately and effectively. One of the most important realizations is that of citing other works. It is widely acknowledged that citation plays a key role in academic writing and is also regarded as an important communicative approach (Thompson & Ye, 1991; Hyland, 1999, 2002; White, 2004; Charles, 2006b). It enables the writer to acknowledge or take issue with the contributions of other researchers and, in displaying knowledge of the field, to establish their own academic authority and credibility. Therefore, during the process of producing a thesis, the ability to handle citations is of great importance for Chinese English majors.

1.1.4 Importance of Reporting Verbs

Besides the emphasis given to citation, reporting verbs (RVs) are regarded as the most important and prominent feature of citation in academic writing (Swales, 1990; Hyland, 1999, 2002; Bloch, 2010). As Hyland (2002) argues, the use of RVs is regarded as one of the most explicit ways of attributing content to other sources. Afterward, Hyland (2005) also emphasizes that the effect of citation can be affected by using RVs.

RVs can have a variety of rhetorical purposes, including establishing the personae or ethos of the writer, demonstrating the importance of the research, supporting the strength of one's claims, or showing the weaknesses in research, and providing an appropriate context of persuasion throughout the process of network building between the writer and the author as well as between the writer and the

reader (Latour, 1987; Hyland, 2002). Following the convention established by Thompson and Ye (1991), in the present study, “writer” refers to the person who is citing the previous claims, and “author” refers to the person who is being cited.

RV, an important rhetorical lexical device, can be used by writers to both report their claims or ideas and to precisely show the attitudes, opinions, or stances they have toward others’ claims (Thompson & Ye, 1991; Hyland, 1999, 2002). In other words, RVs are used to achieve the rhetorical impact of an academic text that often rests on the connections that writers make between their claims and others’ claims through evaluating each claim and showing their own attitude toward the claim they are making or reporting, signaling whether the claims are to be taken as accepted or not (Hyland, 2000; Hunston & Thompson, 2000).

Furthermore, in order to make claims believable, academic genres, such as BTs and MTs, are by their nature rhetorical instruments whose main purpose is to interact with readers, aiming to convince them that the claims are justifiable and significant. As Hunston (2000) affirms, the use of RVs can require a great deal of exactness in order to establish the credibility of both the writer and the claims so that there is a greater likelihood that the reader will accept the position the writer is taking. That is, RVs are one of the lexical devices that a writer must use in order to both express a stance and connect or align oneself with the readers by referring to previous claims and demonstrating the attitude they have toward others’ claims. Swales (1990) even says a RV can indicate what has not yet been studied, offering a gap to create a new research space.

There is no doubt that RVs play an essential role in thesis writing process for English majors, which can provide an appropriate context of persuasion throughout the process of building “writer-author engagement” and “writer-reader engagement”. Meanwhile, choosing an appropriate RV 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 (Hyland, 2002).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Significant as RVs are, the complex interaction between lexical choices and rhetorical purposes of RVs could pose challenges for non-native English writers (NNEWs) in their academic writing (Bruce, 1989; Thompson & Ye, 1991; Hyland, 2002; Pecorari, 2008; Bloch, 2010; Yeganeh & Boghayeri, 2015), and it is not an exception for Chinese English majors (Lou, 2013; Cao, 2017; Zhang, R. R., 2018; Wei & Liu, 2019).

A leading cause is the fact that writing a thesis in English is an important yet difficult task for NNEWs (Casanave & Hubbard, 1992; Dong, 1998; Paltridge, 2002, 2013), and this challenge becomes even greater for novice writers, such as undergraduate students and master's students (Hyland, 2002; Mansourizadeh & Ahmad, 2011; Doró, 2013; Holliday, 2016; Zhao, 2018; Zhang, R. R., 2018). In general, a thesis is regarded as the most sustained and complex piece of academic writing that the students undertake (Swales, 2004). In China, based on its academic degree regulations, English majors are required to complete and defend their thesis to obtain the corresponding degrees. In accordance with the *English Teaching Syllabus for English Majors* (ETSEM hereafter) issued by Teaching Advisory Committee for Tertiary English Majors (TACTEM hereafter) under China's MOE in 2000, undergraduate students need to write a BT in English of 3,000-5,000 words with smooth language, clear idea, well-organized structure, and substantial contents; not only language skills but also independent opinions and innovative ideas of the writing should be taken into consideration during the grading process. In terms of master's students, they are required to complete a MT in English around 20,000 words, which is expected to undertake scientific research through combining theoretical perspectives, analytical skills, and practical experiences of educational leadership.

However, it is considered that English as a second language (ESL) or EFL academic writers usually face two essential issues: syntax (language) difficulties and rhetorical difficulties (Kroll, 1990; Reid, 2006). Accordingly, Chinese English majors have encountered the same difficulties in completing their thesis in English (Cai, 2013; Gao & Bartlett, 2014; Bian & Wang, 2016; Jiang, 2019). It is worth pointing out that, in China, as a foreign language learning context, English majors have limited exposure to the language, especially outside the language classroom. Consequently, they encounter

language difficulties during the process of BT or MT writing since they may partially master English according to its entire linguistic system. Moreover, English majors are not only required to demonstrate knowledge related to their research but also using that knowledge to "argue logically and coherently the meaning of the research results" (Dong, 1998, p. 369). The aim is not only to diffuse knowledge but also to convince the readers to accept writers' viewpoints. Hence, the writers should construct a coherent and credible representation of themselves as well as their research and negotiate their relationship with the discourse community by referring to the works of other research and evaluating the works to demonstrate how the current work builds on or reworks past utterances. Like the situation described in Bloch (2010), the rhetorical context of an academic paper should combine the presentation of others' claims in a clear and concise manner with a review of previous related research, to situate the work and to build on the works of others.

Generally speaking, in order to make their own research credible and persuasive, thesis writers should provide concrete explanations for previous research, make induction for those researchers who have published works, reveal the gap between the previous and present research, and hold correct instance for conclusions (Swales, 1990). Therefore, in the process of reporting other's claims, using RVs is viewed as an important conversation approach in thesis writing, which can provide "maximum interpersonal and persuasive effect" (Hyland & Milton, 1999, p. 147). To some degree, the ability to use RVs appropriately and effectively is the reflection of the English academic writing ability. Olga (2008) emphasizes that high-quality academic papers can reveal one student's excellence; thus, he puts forward that the way and ability to use RVs can be regarded as an important criterion to evaluate students' academic writing ability.

Given its significance in thesis writing, Chinese English majors, undergraduate students and master's students, often find it difficult to choose appropriate RVs for reporting claims that can satisfy both the syntactic requirements and express their attitudes toward the claims (Lou, 2013; Cao, 2017; Zhang, R. R., 2018; Wei & Liu, 2019). In the first place, Chinese English majors are unfamiliar with the functional features of RVs when composing a BT or MT. The curriculum does not put enough weight on

teaching thesis writing, resulting in the lack of systematic guidance and supervision on teaching how to use RVs. What is more, due to the restriction of learning resources, there are not enough authentic English materials in the libraries of universities and colleges, and information on the latest academic trend in the university databases. As a result, Chinese English majors always lack linguistic resources to learn RVs and learn how to make the subtle distinctions between syntactic features and rhetorical functions of RVs. De Beaugrande (2001) confirms that relying on simple dictionary definitions is not always a useful strategy for expressing a writer's stance toward a claim since there is sometimes a disconnect between the meanings of words found in a dictionary and how they are commonly used in actual rhetorical contexts. In this case, Bloch (2010) demonstrates that "even if the student can make grammatically correct choices, the rhetorical impact of their claims may suffer if the RV is not appropriate" (p. 220). In addition, English majors often seem concerned with varying their lexical choices by randomly choosing a RV or substituting one RV for another without adequate consciousness of the subtleties of language necessary for reporting claims (Pecorari, 2008; Bloch, 2010, Yeganeh & Boghayeri, 2015). Like the situation described in Hyland and Milton (1999), Chinese novice writers are often unable to distinguish the subtle relationships between syntactic features and rhetorical functions when reporting a claim. These problems can result from a general lack of vocabulary development and can also directly reveal that students lack the understanding of the appropriate rhetorical strategies needed for situating claims and weaving them together with their own point of view (Hyland, 2002, 2008).

In sum, Chinese English majors, both undergraduate students and master's students have difficulties in using RVs appropriately and effectively when composing their BTs and MTs.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

In search of a possible solution to the problems proposed in the preceding section, or at least a deeper understanding of the related issues, the present study is motivated by both academic reasons and personal interests.

Firstly, in terms of the importance of RVs in academic writing, some researchers have been working on the empirical study of RVs in research articles (Thomas & Hawes, 1994; Hyland, 1999, 2002; Bloch, 2010; Jafarigohar & Mohammadkhani, 2015; Yeganeh & Boghayeri; 2015; Agbaglo, 2017; Yilmaz & Özdem Ertürk, 2017; Un-udom & Un-udom, 2020), and in theses and dissertations (Charles, 2006a, 2006b; Olga, 2008; Jalilifar, 2012; Jalilifar & Dabbi, 2012; Doró, 2013; Manan & Noor, 2014; Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015a, 2015b; Nguyen; 2017; Jarkovská & Kučírková, 2020), etc. In the Chinese context, despite the complexity of RVs in academic writing and the important role of BTs and MTs in English majors' academic accomplishment, very few studies have been conducted on how RVs are used in this genre. To be more specific, little attention has been paid to the use of RVs in MTs by Chinese English majors (e.g., Sun, 2009; Wang, H., 2011; Li, 2014; Lou, 2011; Hao, 2014; Jiang, 2015; Cao, 2017; Zhang, R. R., 2018), but studies on the thesis at the undergraduate level have been neglected. There are two reasons for this phenomenon. One is the accessibility of the texts. BTs are often difficult to obtain in the university library, and even more difficult to obtain from outside the university. Another reason comes from the belief that undergraduate research transmits received wisdom rather than creates new knowledge (Xu et al., 2016). However, it is significant to reveal how RVs are used in BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors, which can provide essential rhetorical resources that they can capitalize on when writing their theses or other academic writing. Nevertheless, there tends to be a scarcity of studies on how RVs are employed in both BT and MT writing, and it is still quite foreign to most thesis writers, advisors, and English instructors.

Secondly, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no study has been conducted to compare the use of RVs between complete BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors to date. It is commonly accepted that undergraduate students are referred to as novice learners of academic discourse, while master's students are referred to as novice researchers (Jalilifar & Dabbi, 2012; Jomaa & Bidin, 2019). Since they play different roles in the academic community, it is likely that they prefer to employ different RVs in the process of thesis writing depending on different academic purposes. Comparing the similarities and differences in the use of RVs between undergraduate students and master's students is helpful to explore insiders'

perspectives and their features. Despite its importance in scholarship, their similarities and differences in the use of RVs in each chapter of BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors are yet to be uncovered.

Finally, when it comes to the relationship between undergraduate students and master's students, they are two distinct yet related and successive writer groups. A master's student has completed an undergraduate study at a university or college and is undertaking further study at a more advanced level in order to raise their academic level of learning and specialized knowledge. Therefore, it is assumed that master's students have a better command of the use of RVs in thesis writing than undergraduate students do after two or three years of disciplinary and professional study. Identifying the similarities and differences in using RVs between BTs and MTs can shed some light on their development features, help undergraduate students learn from those more advanced students, and provide a clear view of how they transfer from novice writers into novice researchers after identifying the similarities and differences between the use of RVs by the two different writer groups. In this regard, no study to date has been undertaken to investigate their connections or disconnections.

On all accounts, there is an urgent need for a study that analyzes and compares the use of RVs between BTs and MTs, two texts of the same genre but represent two different levels of education, by Chinese English majors, to find out a possible solution to the problems pinpointed in the preceding section, or at least to deepen the understanding of the use of RVs in academic discourse.

1.4 Research Purposes

Concerning all concerns articulated in the previous sections, the present research will analyze and compare the use of RVs between BTs and MTs composed by Chinese English majors, aiming to find out first how RVs are used in BTs and MTs and second their similarities and differences in using RVs from the perspective of (1) how these writers use RVs to report previous studies (denotative potentials) and (2) how they evaluate the reported information (evaluative functions) on the basis of proposed framework adopted from the classification of RVs by Hyland (2002). The use of RVs will be analyzed in all five chapters of BTs and MTs; namely, Introduction, Literature

Review, Methodology, Results and Discussion, and Conclusion. Specifically, the objectives of the current study are:

1) To investigate the use of RVs in each chapter of BTs by Chinese English majors from the perspective of denotative potentials and evaluative functions

2) To investigate the use of RVs in each chapter of MTs by Chinese English majors from the perspective of denotative potentials and evaluative functions

3) To compare the use of RVs in each chapter between BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors to identify the similarities and differences

1.5 Research Questions

To fulfill the research purposes stated previously, this study attempts to answer the following three questions:

1) How are RVs used in each chapter of BTs by Chinese English majors from the perspective of denotative potentials and evaluative functions?

2) How are RVs used in each chapter of MTs by Chinese English majors from the perspective of denotative potentials and evaluative functions?

3) What are the similarities and differences in the use of RVs in each chapter between BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors?

1.6 Significance of the Study

RVs are a key feature in academic writing that can be used to introduce reports, allowing writers to convey both the kind of activities reported and to signal whether the claims are to be taken as accepted or not (Thomas & Hawes, 1994; Hyland, 2002). Acquiring the skills for using RVs appropriately and effectively not only can help writers integrate other's words or ideas into their writing, but also create an appropriate context for their research and make the results of their research public and persuasive. However, Chinese English majors always encounter difficulties in choosing RVs that can satisfy both the syntactic requirements and the rhetorical purposes in thesis writing. Therefore, the present study aims to compare the use of RVs in all five chapters between BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors, which provides a new perspective of analyzing RVs and broadens the knowledge about the use of RVs in BTs and MTs by

non-native English majors. It aims at helping both Chinese English majors and instructors solve the problems stated in the previous sections and, to some extent, enhancing the learning and teaching of English thesis writing.

Firstly, findings from the current effect to unveil the use of RVs in BTs and MTs will allow future English majors to follow the framework or suggestions proposed in this study to employ RVs in their thesis writing. To be more specific, identifying the use of RVs by going beyond texts and drawing on a broad range of qualitative meanings of each quantitative value can provide well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of how RVs are used in the actual rhetorical contexts. Accordingly, English majors can learn to use appropriate RVs in different chapters to fit their different communicative purposes in a similar genre with a clearer "rhetorical vision" rather than a pair of "blind eyes". Moreover, this study may deepen the understanding of RVs used in academic discourses, which might be helpful to raise thesis writers' awareness of using appropriate RVs and awareness of the stance indicated by RVs in thesis writing, or even in all kinds of academic writing.

Furthermore, comparing the use of RVs between BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors may provide a valuable description of the similarities and differences in how these thesis writers employ RVs in their ongoing conversation with their discourse community members. In addition, revealing the similarities and differences in using RVs between BTs and MTs, which are two texts of the same genre but represent two different levels of education, might shed some light on the development features of RVs used by the two writer groups. Meanwhile, using MTs produced by those more advanced students as a comparing reference might provide a more standardized writing convention and specification for undergraduate students to learn and then improve their ability to use RVs appropriately and effectively, thus hoping to compose a more articulate, fluent, and well-structured BT. To a certain extent, tracing from how these two levels of writers use RVs between BTs and MTs can help those students who have successfully completed an undergraduate study and plan to undertake further study at the successive, higher education level, have a clear view of where they will enter into and how they transfer from novice learners into novice researchers in terms of

the similarities and differences between the use of RVs by the two different writer groups.

Furthermore, exploring Chinese English majors' use of RVs in thesis writing hopes to help teachers, who are teaching or supervising English majors' thesis writing in Chinese context or even on other EFL contexts, have a clear and comprehensive view of students' difficulties in using RVs during the process of producing a thesis. Afterward, they can adjust their ways of BT and MT instruction for more effective teaching and learning and pay more attention to the guidance and supervision on increasing thesis writers' knowledge of the importance of RVs in thesis writing, raising their awareness of using RVs, and teaching them to use RVs appropriately and effectively. What is more, this study may draw the attention of administrators or faculty members who work in Chinese universities or colleges. Accordingly, much emphasis will be placed on the issues of teaching academic writing through the ways of offering the related courses, organizing various writing activities, and providing more learning resources.

Finally, the present study, to some extent, may raise more researchers' interest in studying RVs or some certain language patterns employed by non-native English students. Besides, the results of this study might contribute to the literature which has not received much attention on how NNEWs compose a thesis in English and use RVs within this specific genre.

1.7 Scope of the Study

Under the constraints on research design, data access, and time, the scope of the study are as follows:

1) This study aims to analyze the use of RVs in each chapter of 30 BTs and 30 MTs by Chinese English majors and then compare the use between these two texts of the same genre but two different levels of education to find out their similarities and differences from the perspective of denotative potentials and evaluative functions.

2) Sixty theses are selected and compiled into a final corpus. To be more specific, 30 BTs written by Chinese English major undergraduate students are collected from a single research site, i.e., the English Department of Kaili University, Guizhou Province, China. Thirty MTs written by Chinese English major master's students are selected from

15 universities around China by downloading them from China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) as a comparable corpus.

3) The analysis framework of RVs is based on the classification framework proposed by Hyland (2002). The reasons for the selection of this framework are provided in *Chapter 3*.

1.8 Definitions of Key Terms

In this chapter, the key terminologies used in the present study have the meanings stated:

Bachelor's Thesis

According to MOE (1981), bachelor's thesis (BT) in the present study is regarded as an essential academic task and a graduation research report for the four-year undergraduate program composed by Chinese English major undergraduate students for fulfilling a bachelor's degree, where the candidates are required to have a relatively good grasp of basic theories, specialized knowledge, and basic skills in the discipline concerned; and have initially acquired the ability to undertake scientific research or to engage in a special technical work.

Master's Thesis

In the present study, master's thesis (MT) is recognized as a graduation research report composed by Chinese English major master's students for fulfilling a master's degree in two- or three-year postgraduate program to prove that the candidates have a firm grasp of basic theories and systematic, specialized knowledge in the discipline concerned, and the ability to undertake scientific research or independently to engage in a special technical work (MOE, 1981).

Citation

Citation is the act of citing a reference to other sources or putting authorial reference into discourse, which are categorized as "integral" and "non-integral".

Reporting Verb

Reporting verb (RV) refers to a verb or a verb phrase used in reporting clauses in English academic discourses, in which it is used to convey reported information and express the citing writer's evaluative stance.

Writer(s)

Following the convention established by Thompson and Ye (1991), writer(s) in this study refers to the person who is citing the previous claims.

Author(s)

Following the convention established by Thompson and Ye (1991), author(s) in this study refers to the person who is being cited.

1.9 Chapter Summary and Thesis Structure

The whole thesis is composed of five chapters.

Chapter 1 is an introduction to this study, which presents the research background, a statement of the problems, the rationale, the research purposes, the research questions, the significance of the study, the scope and limitation of the study, definitions of key terms and organization of the thesis.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature related to the current study. Firstly, Chinese English major's BT and MT are introduced from the aspects of the definition, communicative purposes, and characteristics, respectively. The previous studies on Chinese English majors' BTs and MTs are reviewed. In addition, the definitions and classifications of citation and RV are presented separately. This chapter ends with the review of previous studies on the use of RVs in BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors, respectively.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology to be applied in this study. It starts with the research design. Then, it provides a detailed description of data collection in terms of data identification, selection of the texts, as well as corpus construction and management. Moreover, the third section presents the analysis framework, analysis tools, identification of RVs, and analysis procedures. The next section gives a report of the pilot study. This chapter ends with a chapter summary.

Chapter 4 sets out to elaborate and discuss the results obtained from the data. First, the results obtained from the BT corpus and MT corpus are presented and discuss to explore how RVs are used in each thesis chapter, respectively. Second, the third section compares these results obtained from the two corpora to find their similarities and differences in the use of RVs, and the possible reasons are explained.

Chapter 5 is the final chapter of this thesis. A summary of the major findings of the present study is presented. Then, pedagogical implications are provided for writing, supervising, and teaching writing of BTs and MTs. Finally, the limitations of the present study are clarified before providing recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter gives a review of the related literature serving as a foundation for the present study in six parts. Firstly, the definitions and distinctions of the terms *thesis* and *dissertation* will be presented to provide the background leading to the discussion of BTs and MTs. Then, it is followed by the introduction of Chinese English majors' BTs and MTs in terms of their definitions, communicative purposes, and characteristics, respectively. The third part reviews previous studies on Chinese English majors' BTs and MTs, respectively. Afterward, the definitions and classifications of citation and RVs will be presented in the fourth part. Moreover, part five focuses on the related previous studies on the use of RVs in BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors, respectively. Finally, this chapter ends with a summary.

2.1 Bachelor's Theses

2.1.1 Definitions and Communicative Purposes of Chinese English Majors' Bachelor's Theses

The term *thesis,* or its equivalent *dissertation*, has been defined by different researchers and scholars in different ways. Allison and Race (2004) define a dissertation or thesis as a research report. Thompson (2013) regards a thesis or dissertation as a text that is produced for the purpose of assessment, and the immediate audience is an examiner, or examiners. In the same vein, Evans et al. (2014) define a thesis as an extended argument and explain that "a thesis must demonstrate logical, structured, and defensible reasoning based on credible and verifiable evidence presented in such a way that it makes an original contribution to knowledge, as judged by experts in the field" (p. 1). In addition, the definition of *thesis* or *dissertation* has also been given in the academic field with regard mainly to the bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degrees. Lee and Casal (2014) define that a thesis or dissertation is a complex student-produced research genre that graduates are required to complete before they obtain master's

or doctoral degrees. However, Thompson (2013) and Evans et al. (2014) point out that there is no standard definition of *thesis* and *dissertation*. Based on the definitions above, in the present study, the terms *thesis* and *dissertation* refer to a research report submitted in support of candidature for assessment and an academic degree in higher education.

Furthermore, there exists a distinction between *thesis* and *dissertation* in different regions of the world. The detailed distinctions of *thesis* and *dissertation* are provided in Paltridge (2002). In the United Kingdom (UK) and UK-influenced educational settings, the term *thesis* refers to the research report submitted for a doctoral degree, and the term *dissertation* is the research report produced by undergraduate students or master's students. On the contrary, in the United States (US) and US-influenced settings, a *thesis* is undertaken by master's students for a master's degree whereas a *dissertation* is the required submission for the doctoral degree. In New Zealand, a *dissertation* is a smaller piece of work, while a *thesis* is a larger research report produced for a master's or doctoral degree. However, in Australia, the term *thesis* is used to refer to the document that a student creates to earn a degree at the bachelor, master's, or doctoral level. In the discourse community in China, a *thesis* is commonly used to refer to the research report composed by undergraduate, master's, and doctoral students. Therefore, following the Australian tradition, the term *thesis* is used throughout the present study to refer to the research report composed by Chinese English major undergraduate students and master's students.

As mentioned in *Section 1.1.2, Chapter 2*, in the Chinese tertiary educational system, academic degrees shall be of three levels: bachelor's degree, master's degree, and doctoral degree (MOE, 1981). Thesis writing is regarded as a partial fulfillment of the requirements to determine students' academic achievement of obtaining a corresponding academic degree. To be more specific, Chinese English major undergraduate students are required to complete and defend their thesis to obtain a bachelor's degree of arts. However, this particular thesis written by undergraduate students has been named differently in the existing literature. It has been used as "graduation thesis" (Zang, 2004), "graduation paper" (Huang, 2002), "bachelor's thesis" (Sun, 2004), "bachelor degree paper" (Wang, 2005), "bachelor's degree thesis"

(Ma, 2006), and “undergraduate thesis” (Wei, 2008) in previous studies. They can be interchangeably used to refer to the thesis written by undergraduate students; the term “bachelor’s thesis (BT)”, therefore, is adopted in this study since it is the most used in the academic literature.

Particularly, in China, according to ETSEM issued by TACTEM in 2000, undergraduate students need to write a BT in English of 3,000-5,000 words. According to the requirement formulated by English Department in Kaili University, English majors are required to write a BT at a minimum length of 5,000 words with smooth language, clear idea, well-organized structure, and substantial contents within the final year in the university. In addition, language skills and original thinking as well as innovative ideas of the writing should be taken into consideration during the grading process. While in the processes of selecting the topic, drafting, and revising, each student needs to interact regularly with a thesis advisor. According to ETSEM (TACTEM, 2000), there are two purposes of BT writing: one is to cultivate students’ comprehensive ability, guide their correct attitude toward learning, and develop their scientific research methods; the other is to emphasize the creation and innovation spirits and encourage them to generate original ideas and make bold attempts.

Furthermore, the communicative purpose of a BT is to convince the thesis defense committee that the BT writer has a relatively good grasp of basic theories, specialized knowledge, and basic skills of the English language; has the ability to solve problems, think independently, and generate original ideas; and has initially acquired the preliminary ability to undertake scientific research or to engage in a special technical work. In most universities and colleges in China, the BT writers must go through an oral defense and the defense committee normally comprise three faculty members, including a BT advisor and the other two teachers. As an assessment genre, whether the BT is passable needs to be evaluated by two evaluation criteria: the score of the oral defense and the score of BT writing based on a scoring rubric formulated by the department.

To sum up, in the present study, a Chinese English Major’s Bachelor’s Thesis is defined as an essential academic project and a graduation research report for the

four-year undergraduate program composed by Chinese English major undergraduate students as partial fulfillment of the requirements for a bachelor's degree.

2.1.2 Characteristics of Chinese English Majors' Bachelor's Theses

As Zang (2004) summarizes, there are three characteristics of Chinese English major's BTs, which are "scholarly", "original", and "formal".

First and foremost, the genre and subject matter of BTs are professional and scholarly. Writing, as one of the major kinds of language-based communication, features in four conventional modes of discourse (or rhetorical modes), consisting of narration, description, exposition, and argumentation. Zang (2004) states that BTs may cover more than one rhetorical mode since BT writing has the nature of exposition and argumentation. In addition, the subject matter of BTs focuses on one of the five major subject areas; namely, studies of British and American literature, English linguistics, cultural studies of English-speaking countries, teaching methodology, and translation studies.

Second, the BT must be an original piece of work composed by Chinese English majors. In other words, there is "no plagiarism" in BT writing (Tian & Duan, 2006) since it represents the students' culminating work and writing abilities. In order to encourage students to generate original ideas, undergraduate students are required to read various materials, review previous research, and consult with their thesis advisor as a basis for their generation of original ideas. Meanwhile, original opinions and innovative ideas of the writing are also taken as one of the evaluation criteria to assess Chinese English majors' BTs. Accordingly, in most universities and colleges in China, plagiarism check is required as an indispensable process and the similar index should be less than 30%, or it will be considered as plagiarism.

Finally, as a piece of academic writing, the structure of the BTs should be formal and complete. Generally speaking, there are strict requirements for thesis structure, format, and style. The structure of BTs should be written in a traditional format that encompasses the following components: a cover page with thesis title and author/advisor information, acknowledgments, an abstract and keywords in both English and Chinese, a table of contents, the main body, bibliography or more usually a reference section, and appendices (if any). As the most important component, the

main body of empirical study is generally composed of five distinct chapters, namely, *Introduction*, *Literature Review*, *Methodology*, *Results and Discussion*, and *Conclusion* though variations exist. All components of the BTs are indispensable in that the absence of any part will not only cause an incomplete structure of the thesis, but also affect the overall success of the thesis (Zang, 2004).

It is worth noting that for English majors at Kaili University, writing courses, such as Basic Writing, Intermediate Writing, and Academic Writing, are offered in Semesters 4, 5, and 6 of the four-year (8 semesters) Bachelor of Arts program, respectively. The aims are to practice and improve the students' writing skills. For instance, the students are expected to be able to write a variety of genres, such as abstracts, letters, business reports, argumentative essays, book reviews, short fiction, etc. At the same time, these writing courses are designed to lay the foundation and have preparations for writing a BT in Semester 7, which is undergraduate students' first piece of disciplinary writing, and also their first attempt at stepping into a field.

2.2 Master's Theses

2.2.1 Definitions and Communicative Purposes of Chinese English Majors' Master's Theses

As mentioned above, thesis writing is regarded as the essential and indispensable project for graduation, and it is required to be submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the corresponding degree. To graduate with a master's degree, Chinese English major master's students are also required to complete and defend their thesis. In the existing literature, this particular thesis has been named as "MA thesis" (Sun, 2009; Lou, 2011), "master's thesis" (Shao & Qin, 2010; Yang, 2014), and "master's degree thesis" (Xie & Chen, 2020), but they can be used interchangeably as synonyms. To be consistent with BTs, in the present study, master's thesis (MT) is adopted to refer to the research report produced by Chinese English major master's students; in addition, it is also the most used in academic literature.

Generally, Chinese English major master's students are required to complete a MT in English around 20,000 words in length within the final year in the university. It

is worth noticing that different departments have different requirements for the word count. MT is a kind of demonstration of independent and complicated work that master's students complete under the guidance of an individual advisor. According to the *Guidelines for Revising the Postgraduate Training Programs* issued by China's MOE (MOE, 1998), the purposes of completing a MT are to develop master's students' deeper knowledge and understanding of the field of study, to enhance their abilities of finding, analyzing, and solving problems existing in academic life, to improve their abilities to carry out scientific research or undertake specialized technical work, and to cultivate their creation and innovation abilities. At the same time, the completion of a MT can represent the MT writers' perseverance, discipline, and scholarly writing.

Aside from MT writing, the entire process of MT project also includes a thesis proposal and a thesis oral defense. The communicative purpose of MTs is to convince the thesis defense committee that the MT writer has completed an independent study; has a firm grasp of basic theories and systematic, specialized knowledge in the English language; and has the ability to undertake scientific research or engage independently in a special technical work after the master's degree program. Different from the BT defense committee, the MT defense committee is made up of three to five faculty members consisting of a chairman, vice-chairmen, and other members. If two-thirds of the board members agree, a decision can be made to award the candidate a master's degree.

In conclusion, in the present study, a MT is defined as a graduation research report composed by Chinese English major master's students based on previously taken courses as well as previous theoretical research on the topic and knowledge acquired in the academic field of study for fulfilling a master's degree requirements after the two- or three-year postgraduate program.

2.2.2 Characteristics of Chinese English Majors' Master's Theses

As Zhang (2007) summarizes, there are five major characteristics of Chinese English majors' MTs, which are "scholarly", "research-oriented", "original", "rigor", and "formal".

Firstly, as a piece of disciplinary and scholarly writing, a MT is required to devote to a certain subject matter in the disciplinary fields. Generally, there are five

subject areas for MTs, including studies of British and American literature, foreign linguistics and applied linguistics, cultural studies of English-speaking countries, teaching methodology, and translation and interpreting studies. MTs should be dedicated to the investigation of one of the five subject areas and have a positive effect on improving the academic level of the discipline concerned.

Secondly, a MT is a piece of research-oriented writing. Corresponding to the purpose of MT writing, completing a MT is required to apply or test a theory, concept, or method to determine its usefulness in solving problems or challenges in the particular field or discipline. The research task can be either theoretical, designed to evaluate and develop existing theory, or empirical, to explore an issue or problem by way of investigation or doing experiment, survey, interview, observation and so on. In addition, the students are required to have expertise in the particular field or discipline and have the ability to identify a research question and apply a clearly structured method to the justification and validation of facts, theories and opinions presented to form a precise argument.

Thirdly, MT must be an original work since it represents the master's students' culminating research and writing abilities. Originality does not mean that the research project is entirely new. For master's students, the originality criterion can be met if they continue to study an unresolved problem in such a way that is substantially different from prior approaches, methods, or theoretical frameworks and that has a reasonable prospect of adding to an understanding of the problem. In addition, replication of previous research meets the originality criterion if features are added to the replication that makes it possible to check on the procedures and findings of the previous study, thus making the replication more meritorious research than the replicated one (Mauch & Park, 2003).

The fourth characteristic of MTs is rigor. To attain rigor means to be characterized by strict accuracy and scrupulous honesty and to insist on precise distinctions among facts, implications, and suppositions. Furthermore, rigor is achieved by sticking to demonstrable facts when reporting procedures and results, by building on a foundation of facts when drawing conclusions, by specifying links to facts when inferring implications, by always bringing forward all relevant data, and by being both

self-critical and logical in reporting and when projecting needed research (Mauch & Park, 2003).

Finally, the structure of MTs is formal and complete. A MT should be written and organized following the MT writing requirements. The rigid and formal format encompasses the following elements: namely, a cover page with thesis title and author/advisor information, acknowledgments, an abstract and keywords in both English and Chinese, a table of contents, a list of tables and figures (if any), the main body, bibliography or more usually a references section, and appendices (if any). Importantly, the main body is generally composed of five traditional chapters, including *Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results and Discussion,* and *Conclusion* though variations exist.

According to China's Talent Cultivation Plan for master's students, a writing course is offered as a compulsory course. It is provided in Semester 2 or Semester 3 of the two- or three-year postgraduate program. It is worth noting that there are different curricula in different Departments. In some universities, the course is provided in the form of academic writing, but in others, this course combines academic research with thesis writing to train the mind to work in a scholarly way. Regardless of the course forms, the writing course takes a practice-based approach to develop, strengthen, and improve the students' writing skills, which also lays the foundation and has preparations for writing a MT in Semester 4 for obtaining a corresponding degree.

When it comes to the relationship between BTs and MTs, it is worth pointing out that they are two texts of the same genre but represent two different levels of education. Compared with BTs, MTs require more adequate knowledge of the field, should reach a higher academic level of scope and depth, and have higher and greater theoretical and practical values. On the other hand, BTs and MTs have certain characteristics in common. In the first place, BTs and MTs have the same general communicative purposes, which are assessment genre and are written for the assessment purpose. Secondly, both BTs and MTs are expected to follow the principles of scientific research design and implementation. In addition, the two texts follow a similar academic writing style written in such a way that shares similar structure, organization, and formatting conventions, such as the components of *Introduction,*

Literature Review, Methodology, Results and Discussion, and *Conclusion,* etc. Finally, both BTs and MTs require the writer, as a researcher, to produce an original work that adds to the body of knowledge in the field with which the research is associated.

2.3 Related Previous Studies on Chinese English Majors' Bachelor's Theses and Master's Theses

2.3.1 Related Previous Studies on Chinese English Majors' Bachelor's Theses

In the past two decades, innumerable studies have been conducted on Chinese English majors' BTs through a diversity of perspectives and methodologies, which generally fall into two broad lines. Most of the studies are comprehensive research which has examined the problems and weaknesses that exist in BT writing and proposed solutions to improve the quality of BTs (Sun, 2004; Ma, 2006; Luo, 2010; Zhu, 2013; Zhao, 2014; Wan, 2014; Wu & Chen, 2017). On the other hand, some studies have investigated particular rhetorical features of BTs by Chinese English majors, which cover the studies of move-step structures (Lu, 2008; Yang, 2014; Sun & Shi, 2017), lexical devices to construct evaluative meanings and realize interpersonal meanings, such as hedges (Feng & Zhou, 2007; Pan, 2007; Wu, G. Q., 2010), boosters (Wu, G. Q., 2010), engagement (Yao, 2010), attitude markers (Wu, G. Q., 2010; Wang, M., 2011), and RVs (Wu, J. S., 2010; Lou, 2013; Wu & Zhou, 2014).

Luo (2010) carries out an analysis of general problems in Chinese English majors' BTs. She analyzes 135 BTs written by English majors randomly collected from a Chinese university and she also conducts semi-structured interviews with 37 English majors to further investigate the current state of English majors' BT writing. Research findings reveal that there are five major problems in BT writing from students' aspect: (1) most students' attitude toward BT writing is not serious; (2) the titles of BTs tend to be broad and outdated, lacking innovation; (3) students are unaware of the importance of reviewing research literature and they also find it difficult to find references; (4) different degrees of grammatical and syntactic mistakes are made in half of the BTs and plagiarism is prevalent; (5) three-fourths of the students have difficulties in following the requirements of thesis format because of unfamiliarity with academic writing. Similarly, Wu and Chen (2017) conduct a study to investigate

problems of Chinese English majors' BTs and their findings are congruent with the results from the study by Luo (2010).

In addition, another study which focuses on investigating problems in 138 English majors' BTs from a Chinese university is Wan's (2014). From the perspectives of thesis structure and leaners' critical thinking, the results point out that some BTs lack some indispensable components in terms of structural integrity, such as literature review, methodology, or even conclusion, and all BTs exhibit problems of muddled thinking and logic confusion to different degrees. From the perspective of learners' language use, the findings reveal that the major problems English majors face are vague concepts of sentence types and sentence components, insufficient knowledge of part of speech, confusing use of tense and forms of singular and plural, and inflexible expression of language.

Zhao (2014) conducts a study to explore language difficulties faced by Chinese English majors in writing BTs. The results show that English majors' language difficulties in BT writing could be discussed from lexical, syntactic, and discourse levels. First, in terms of lexical problems, students have difficulties in choosing formal and neutral words in academic writing. Second, the grammatical problems in BT writing are mainly reflected in the use of person, tenses, and voice. Finally, the discourse problems are concerned with the logicality and coherence of a BT; that is, the content of some BTs is illogical, and the overall structure is unreasonable and not rigorous.

In addition to the studies on investigating the problems and weaknesses that exist in BT writing, some studies have drawn attention to examining particular rhetorical features in BTs by Chinese English majors. Feng and Zhou (2007) conduct a comparative analysis of the use of hedges in the Abstracts of 25 Chinese English majors' BTs and 25 native English writers' research articles. The results reveal a marked difference in the two groups' respective ways of using hedges. Native English writers tend to use hedges of modality, modulation, and attribution shields as a protective strategy for presenting precise and objective ideas in their academic writing. However, Chinese students are more inclined to use a restricted variety of hedges by adopting plausibility shields, showing less awareness of the function of modality and modulation; as a result, they have difficulties in showing their attitudes, opinions, or

stances toward the construed propositions or research entities. Different from Feng and Chen's (2007) study, Pan (2014) aims to compare the use of hedges in the Conclusion/Discussion chapter of BTs written by Chinese English majors and by American Psychology majors (native English writers). However, Pan (2014) provides similar findings with Feng and Chen's (2007), which indicates there is a large gap between Chinese students and native English writers. Chinese students are not fully aware of the pragmatic functions of hedges in academic writing and lack the proper application of hedging devices.

Furthermore, another comparative study of the features of frequency, structure, and stance of reporting verbs (RVs) in Chinese and British undergraduate students' BTs is conducted by Lou (2013). The corpus consists of 20 English majors' BTs from a Chinese university and 20 English BTs from *British Academic Written English*. The findings reveal that both Chinese and British students tend to use different RVs. However, Chinese students still face difficulties with using RVs effectively. She finds that compared with British BTs, the use of RVs in Chinese English majors' BTs show less variety. In addition, Chinese students prefer to use neutral RVs to express their positive stance and use direct citation without evaluation, and they are not likely to show their negative stance. The study highlights the importance of RVs in thesis writing, but also indicates that inadequacy is still clear in Chinese English majors' knowledge of the functions of RVs and awareness of the use of RVs.

2.3.2 Related Previous Studies on Chinese English Majors' Master's Theses

When it comes to the related previous studies focusing on Chinese English majors' MTs, different from the situation in BTs, a few studies have investigated the problems and weaknesses that exist in MTs and solutions to improve the quality of MTs (Jiang & Quan, 2008; Liu & Yang, 2012; Jia & Qiao, 2014; Zhang, J. H., 2018). Most of the attention have been paid to investigating the particular rhetorical features of Chinese English majors' MTs, for instance, move-step structures (Sun, 2010; Gao et al., 2011), lexical devices to construct evaluative meanings and realize interpersonal meanings, such as hedges (Wang, 2008; Wang, 2010; Song & Yao, 2017; Jiang & Wei, 2020); boosters (Song & Yao, 2017; Jiang & Wei, 2020), attitude markers (Song & Yao, 2017; Jiang & Wei, 2020), and RVs (Hu & Jiang, 2007; Sun, 2009; Lou, 2013).

J. H. Zhang (2018) conducts a study to examine problems in Chinese English majors' MTs by analyzing 1,154 MTs by Chinese English majors collected from CNKI from aspects of forms, topic selection, structure, teaching experiments, and literature review. His findings show that Chinese English majors' MTs have the following problems: lacking diversity in thesis form, lacking rigorous thesis topics, lacking strict structure organization, being formalistic in or lacking teaching experiments, and listing previous research in the Literature Review chapter without analysis and synthesis. Finally, the study emphasizes the importance of MT writing and provides some suggestions to improve MT quality.

Despite the studies focusing on the problems and weaknesses that exist in MTs, most scholars have paid attention to particular rhetorical features of MTs by Chinese English majors. Following Swales' CARS Model, a study on analyzing the generic structure of 100 MT Introduction chapters by Chinese English majors drawn from a Chinese university in the field of Applied Linguistics is conducted by Sun (2010). The analysis shows that the generic structure of Chinese English majors' MTs is basically consistent with Swales' framework, but there are still differences in the choice of specific "steps". Chinese English majors actively construct their role as a researcher in terms of "establishing a territory" and "occupying a niche"; however, in terms of "establishing a niche", they lack challenging and forceful means to create the research space, revealing that their learner status and cultural background have effects on this specific genre. Based on the findings of Sun's (2010) study, a modified model is put forward to help Chinese English majors improve their MT writing.

Song and Yao (2017) carry out a study to compare the use of hedges, boosters, and attitude markers in English Abstracts of Chinese English majors' MTs and of international journal articles, and then to explore the influencing factors. Their findings show that the frequency of hedges, boosters, and attitude markers used in Chinese English majors' MT Abstracts is lower than that in international journal Abstracts, and there exist significant differences. It shows that Chinese students' awareness of evaluative and interpersonal meanings of hedges, boosters, and attitude markers is obviously insufficient, mainly caused by the lack of stance marker knowledge in textbooks and teachers' neglect of teaching academic writing. Similar

findings are also found in Jiang and Wei's (2020) study. They indicate that Chinese English majors have a lower frequency on the use of hedges, boosters, and attitude markers in MTs than that in research articles written by international experts.

Furthermore, Sun (2009) carries out a study to explore the citation features in Introduction chapters of MTs by Chinese English majors from aspects of citation patterns, RVs, and tenses of RVs. Through a detailed analysis of 100 texts, the study reveals that most students have employed the RVs in the Introductions to help establish the research territory to create a research space. On the other hand, some problems have also been identified, such as a preference for a limited number of RVs. In addition, they frequently use positive RVs, indicating that they want to support their claims by referring to previous authoritative claims, but lacking critical evaluation of previous research.

It can be concluded that a small number of earlier studies have contributed to Chinese English majors' BTs and MTs, but it can hardly ever be exhaustive. Thesis is a piece of disciplinary and research-oriented writing that English majors have ever experienced, and it is longer and more structurally complex than any of the writing tasks they have completed. It still poses great challenges to Chinese English major undergraduate students and master's students. Despite the language challenges, they also face the rhetorical challenges in thesis writing. To be more specific, using RVs is one of the rhetorical difficulties that English majors have had, and they may lack and need knowledge of RVs. However, to date, the use of RVs in BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors has received little attention. It can be assumed that although Chinese English majors realize the problems that they encounter in writing BTs and MTs, they still do not know how to use RVs appropriately and effectively. For these reasons, there is an urgent need for more studies focusing on the use of RVs in BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors.

2.4 Reporting Verbs

RVs, as the key feature in academic writing, can enable writers to attribute content to other sources and allow them to convey both the kinds of activities reported and their evaluation of the reported information (Hyland, 2002). In order to provide a context for the following discussions on RVs, it is necessary, at this point, to introduce the role of citation in academic writing.

2.4.1 Definitions and Classifications of Citation

Tracking back to the start with the work of Swales (1986, 1990), much work has been focused on the examination of citation practices. According to Swales (1986), citation refers to an instrument for achieving the rhetorical purposes of the writer. Later, citation is defined by Hyland (1999) as "the attribution of propositional context to another source" and as "the central to the social context of persuasion" (p. 341). Hyland (1999) explains that citation can both provide justification for arguments and demonstrate the novelty of one's work. Moreover, Charles (2006b) defines citation as "a research report which has a specific reference point that is clearly identifiable" (p. 312). Based on those definitions, it can be concluded that citation is the act of citing a reference to other sources or putting authorial reference into discourse. By attributing propositional content to the existing literature and demonstrating accommodation to the community knowledge, research writers can display an allegiance to a particular discourse community, create a gap for their research, and establish the credibility and reliability of their works (Hyland, 1999, 2002; Jalilifar & Dabbi, 2012).

Furthermore, Swales (1990) makes a distinction between citation, which is categorized as "integral" and "non-integral". An integral citation refers to the one in which the name of the researcher appears as some sentence-element; while an non-integral citation is one in which the name of the researcher appears in brackets, or a number refers to the name, which appears somewhere. The main patterns are illustrated with constructed examples in *Table 2.1*.

Table 2.1 Integral and Non-integral Citation (Swales, 1990, p. 149)

Integral	Non-integral	
Brie (1988) showed that the moon is made of cheese.	Na Previous research has shown that the moon is made of cheese (Brie, 1988).	
The moon's cheesy composition was established by Brie (1988).	It has been shown that the moon is made of cheese (Brie, 1988).	Reporting +R
Brie's theory (1988) claims that the moon is made of cheese.	It has been established that the moon is made of cheese.	
Brie's (1988) theory of lunar composition has general support.	The moon is probably made of cheese (Brie, 1988).	
According to Brie (1988), the moon is made of cheese.	The moon may be made of cheese.	Non-reporting -R
	The moon may be made of cheese (but cf. Rock, 1989)	

It is worth noticing that the last column in *Table 2.1* is labeled +R or -R. The +R citations are *reporting*, which indicates that the writer employs a RV to introduce previous works. The -R citations are *non-reporting*, which means that there are no RVs used in the sentence.

Regarding the role of RVs, some researchers have reached a consensus that RVs are the most important and prominent features of citation in academic writing (Swales, 1990; Hyland, 1999, 2002; White, 2004; Bloch, 2010). Put simply, RVs are the key realization of citation in academic writing. Regarding their importance, the current study, therefore, focuses on the examination of RVs used in citation of academic paper.

2.4.2 Definitions of Reporting Verbs

As an important and prominent rhetorical feature in academic writing, RVs have gained a lot of researchers' attention. However, the concept of RVs has been defined differently by various researchers from different perspectives, and the researchers cannot agree on a universally accepted definition of RVs.

Some researchers propose that RVs are used to report the cited information or opinion. According to Swales (1990), RVs refer to the verbs that are used in reporting structure in order to talk about others' text. In the same vein, Bergler (1992, 1993) defines RVs as those verbs that can be used to report the speech toward a certain topic of others in the citation process. In addition, Thompson (1994) defines RVs as a kind of linguistic phenomenon when one language is used to refer to other diverse language segments. Halliday (1994) holds almost the same view and states RVs are also a linguistic phenomenon that functions as a linguistic representation. This linguistic phenomenon can be reached by a number of language elements, such as words, phrases sentence, or clauses, etc.

It can be concluded that these definitions emphasize the grammatical functions of RVs but ignore their evaluative functions. In addition, other researchers are taking the evaluative functions of RVs into consideration when giving the definitions of RVs.

Hunston (1995) points out that RVs are used to build the complicated layers of evaluation, and in the history field, RVs can be employed to suggest an intricate relationship between the citing writer and attributors. Moreover, RVs are defined by Charles (2006a) as the key means to construct the reporting writer's stance. She stresses that writers' attitude to the reported proposition offers an important opportunity for writers to position themselves within their disciplinary community by presenting their research in a more accepted. However, both Hunston (1995) and Charles (2006a) think highly of the evaluative functions of RVs.

Different from these definitions, Thompson and Ye (1991) and Hyland (1998) define RVs in terms of both denotative potentials and evaluative functions. Thompson and Ye (1991) define RVs as the verbs used in citation, which involve both the contents quoted from other sources and the signal of the presence of the writer's evaluation. They highlight that RVs can be used by writers to both report their own claims or ideas and to demonstrate the attitude writers have toward others' claims. Consistent with Thompson and Ye's (1991) opinion, Hyland (1998) claims that RVs, as one of the grammatical devices that writers use to express their own stance in an academic paper,

allow them to convey both the kind of activities reported and to express whether the claims are to be taken as accepted or not.

In a nutshell, based on the previous researchers, RV in the present study is defined as a verb or a verb phrase used in reporting clauses in English academic discourses, in which it is used to convey reported information or idea and express the citing writer's evaluative stance.

2.4.3 Classifications of Reporting Verbs

Up to now, many scholars have devoted themselves to studying RVs and have categorized RVs into different types from various perspectives. Among the great number of classifying ways, Thompson and Ye's (1991), Thomas and Hawes's (1994), and Hyland's (1999, 2002) classifications make great contribution, and they are the most accepted and consulted in academic writing. Therefore, these three classifications will be introduced separately in the following sections.

2.4.3.1 Thompson & Ye's (1991) Classification

Thompson and Ye (1991) are the earliest scholars who systematically classify RVs used in academic texts. They carry out a study to analyze RVs employed in the Introduction section of academic journal articles in diverse fields, including applied linguistics, public administration, geology, engineering, and veterinary science. They think that each RV conveys its denotative meaning and evaluative potential, both of which can be analyzed from the perspective of the writer and the author as shown in *Figure 2.1*.

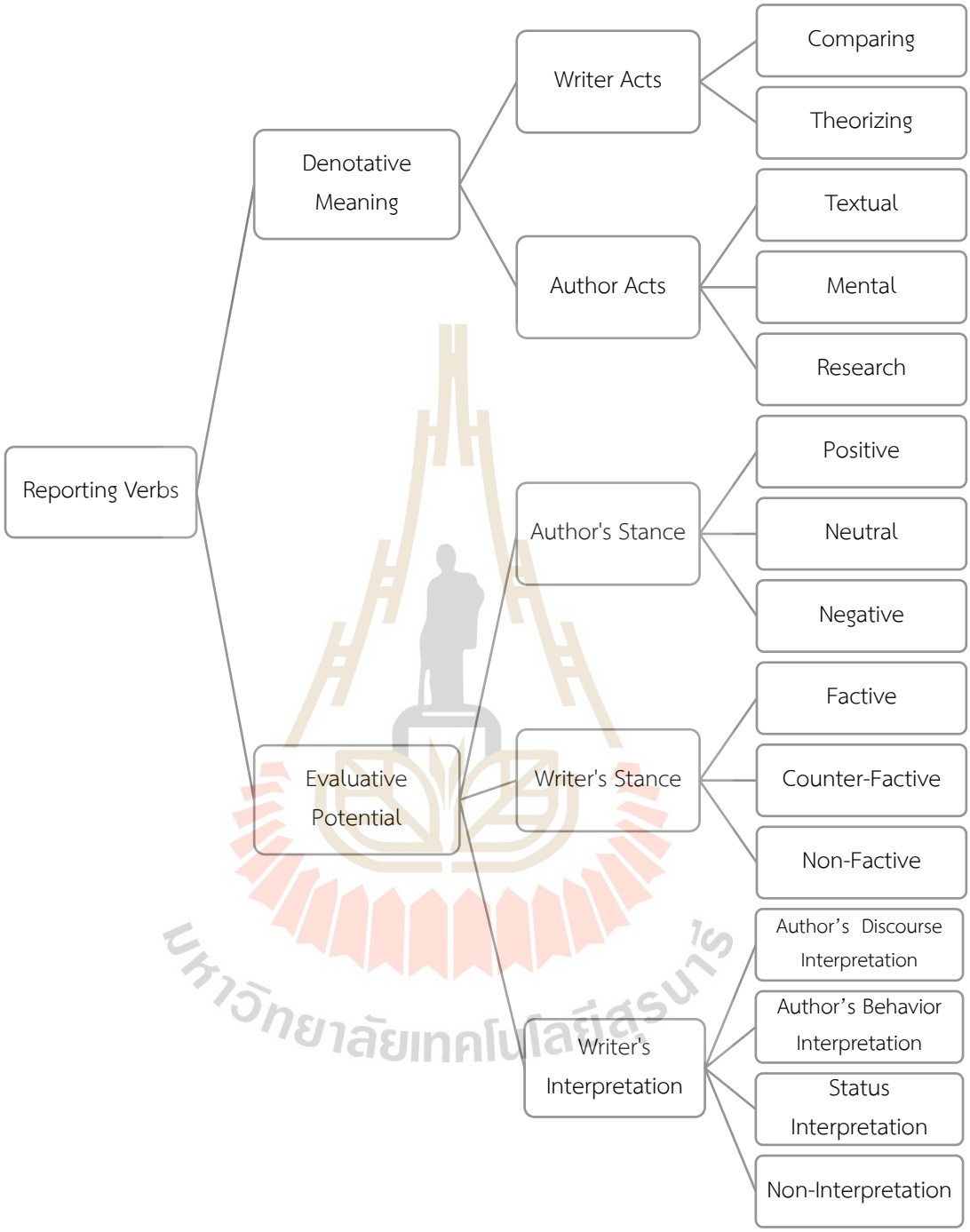


Figure 2.1 Thompson & Ye's (1991) Classification of Reporting Verbs

In terms of denotative meanings, RVs are divided into **theorizing** verbs and **comparing** verbs from the perspective of Writer Acts. **Theorizing** verbs refer to verbs which are used to indicate the use made by the writer of the author's work

in their own developing argument. **Comparing** verbs are those verbs that indicate the writer's placing of the author's work in a certain perspective, usually by means of comparison or contrast, such as *accord with, anticipate, correspond to,* or *contrast with*. In addition, RVs referring to Author Acts can be classified into **textual verbs**, **mental verbs**, and **research verbs**. **Textual verbs** refer to processes in which verbal expression is an obligatory component (e.g., *state, write, underline, point out*); **mental verbs** are verbs referring to mental processes (e.g., *believe, think, consider, focus on*); and **research verbs** refer to the verbs that are related to research activity or experimental procedures (e.g., *find, demonstrate*).

Regarding evaluative potentials, three factors are taken into consideration: author's stance, writer's stance, and writer's interpretation (Thompson & Ye, 1991). Author's stance refers to the author's attitude toward the validity of the reported information or opinion. There are three distinct options from the perspective of author's stance, which can be true/correct, false/incorrect or neither true nor false. Specifically, RVs are used to express **positive** attitude (e.g., *emphasize, accept*), **negative** attitude (e.g., *dismiss, dispute, refuse, object*), or **neutral** attitude (e.g., *assess, examine, undertake, or evaluate*) toward author's stance reported in academic discourses. Furthermore, in terms of writer's stance, Thompson and Ye (1991) identify three clear options which construct writers' stance of acceptance, neutrality, or rejection to the cited research through **factive** option (e.g., *improve, prove, shed light on*), **non-factive** option (e.g., *believe, examine, utilize*), and **counter-factive** option (e.g., *misuse, betray, ignore*), respectively.

Author's stance and writer's stance focus on the correctness of the reported information, while writer's interpretation emphasizes how the writer interprets the status of the reported information, which is composed of four options. First, **author's discourse interpretation** refers to the writer's interpretation of how the reported information fits into the author's text (e.g., *add, continue, comment*). **Author's behavior interpretation** is concerned with the writer's interpretation of the author's attitude or purpose in giving the reported information (e.g., *admit, criticize, insist*). **Status interpretation** refers to the writer's interpretation of the functional status of the reported information in the current work with verbs such as *account for,*

confirm, establish, solve, or *prove*. Finally, **non-interpretation** indicates that the writer interprets the reported information as objective (e.g., *adopt, employ, say, write*).

Thompson and Ye (1991) are the earliest scholars to give a systematic classification of RVs. They provide an analysis of the relationship between RVs and evaluation, and their classification puts emphasis on the important distinction between the position of the reporting writer and the source writer. However, as Thompson and Ye (1991) admit, the framework is not watertight. It involves a rather complex categorization system and allows considerable overlap between categories. One RV such as *analyze* can be treated as either a mental or a research process or both. Moreover, three categories of RVs in terms of evaluative potential are not always easy to be applied in detail. Thompson and Ye (1991) try to analyze the evaluative potential of RVs from the perspective of author's stance and of writer's stance, respectively, but ultimately, RVs are used by the writers to present their personal evaluation to the reported information. In addition, RVs from the three evaluative categories will confuse the reader. In other words, it is hard for the reader to tell what RVs suggest comes from the reporting writer or the reported author. According to Thompson and Ye (1991), it seems to be heterogeneous in choosing RVs with writer's interpretation.

In general, although there are some shortcomings exiting in the framework by Thompson and Ye (1991), it enlightens and lays a foundation for the detailed classification of RVs by further researchers.

2.4.3.2 Thomas & Hawes's (1994) Classification

Based on Thompson and Ye's (1991) classification, Thomas and Hawes (1994) conduct research into RVs employed in the medical journal articles. Referring to different kinds of activities or processes involved, Thomas and Hawes (1994) divide RVs into three categories: **Real-World Verbs** or **Experimental Activity Verbs** (verbs referring to real-world or experimental activities, e.g. *observe, find, show*), **Discourse Verbs** (verbs referring to activities that are linguistic in nature and involve interaction through speech or writing, e.g. *state, suggest, hypothesize*), and **Cognition Verbs** (verbs referring to mental activities of the researcher, e.g. *believe, consider, regard*). *Figure 2.2* illustrates Thomas and Hawes's (1994) framework.

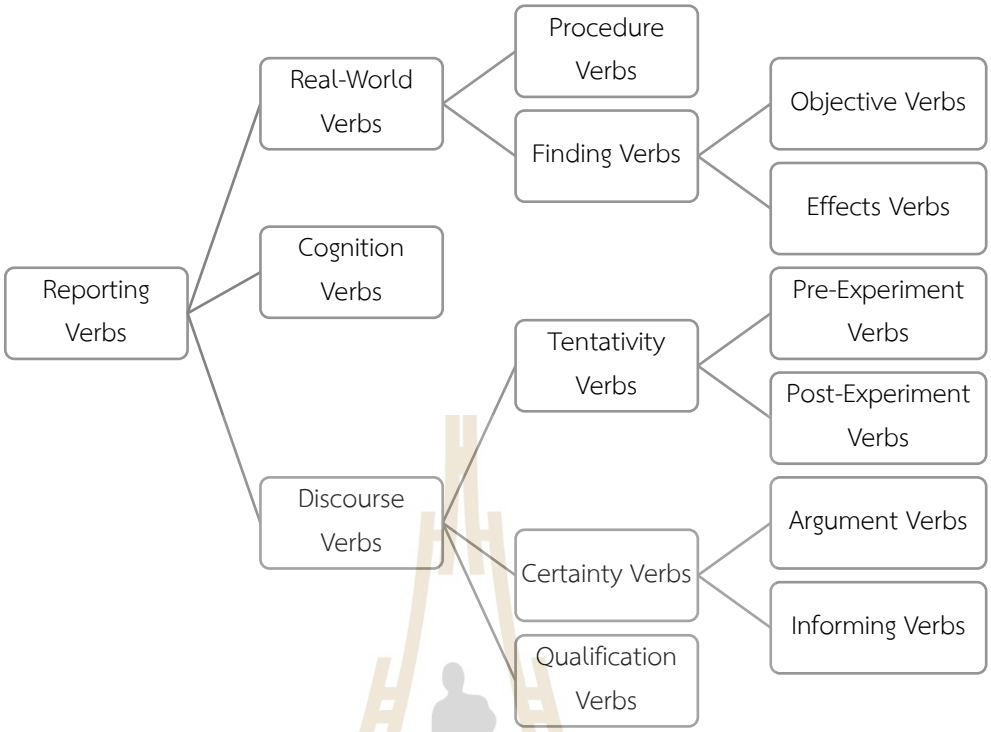


Figure 2.2 Thomas & Hawes's (1994) Classification of Reporting Verbs

Thomas and Hawes (1994) clarify that their classification of RVs is generally similar to Thompson and Ye's (1991) in terms of denotation. The category of Discourse verbs coincides with Thompson and Ye's textual verbs; Cognition verbs coincide with mental verbs, and Real-World/Experimental Activity verbs coincide with research verbs. Generally speaking, Thomas and Hawes's (1994) classification is more detailed than Thompson and Ye's (1991) classification from the perspective of denotation. They provide a more detailed network representing the options for RVs and the discourse implications of such choices. Nevertheless, the drawback of their classification is that they neglect the evaluative functions of RVs and the distinctions between the reporting writer and the reported author in identifying the source of this evaluation. Moreover, to a certain degree, overlap and ambiguity are exiting between the three primary categories because it is difficult to assign the RVs just to one single category (Thomas & Hawes, 1994).

However, Thomas and Hawes (1994) do make a contribution to the classification of RVs from the perspective of semantics and their classification leaves direct influence on Hyland's classification (1999).

2.4.3.3 Hyland's (2002) Classification

Drawing on two frameworks of RVs by Thompson and Ye (1991) as well as Thomas and Hawes (1994), Hyland (1999) conducts a study of RVs in academic journal articles across eight disciplines (applied linguistics, electronic engineering, magnetic physics, marketing, mechanical engineering, molecular biology, philosophy, and sociology), and classifies the RVs from the perspectives of denotation and evaluation as shown in *Figure 2.3*.

In terms of denotation, Hyland (1999) divide RVs into three distinguishable processes: **Research (Real-World) Acts** (verbs that represent experimental activities or actions carried out in the real world, e.g. *observe, discover, notice, show*), **Cognition Acts** (verbs that are related to the researcher's mental processes, e.g. *believe, conceptualize, suspect, assume, view*), and **Discourse Acts** (verbs that involve verbal expression of cognitive or research activities, e.g. *ascribe, discuss, hypothesize, report, state*) according to the type of activities referred to. It combines the categories of Author Act verbs by Thompson and Ye (1991) and of Real-World verbs by Thomas and Hawes (1994). Moreover, he employs the terms "discourse" and "cognition" for "textual" and "mental" verb categories in Thompson and Ye's (1991) classification, respectively.

In addition to choosing these denotative categories, writers also can exploit the evaluative potential of RVs to represent the reported information as true (**factive**), false (**counter-factive**), and **non-factive**, giving no clear signal. Furthermore, **non-factive** verbs allow the writer to ascribe a view to the source author as **positive**, **neutral**, **tentative**, or **critical**. It shows that Hyland (1999) simplifies the intricate classification of RVs in terms of evaluation.

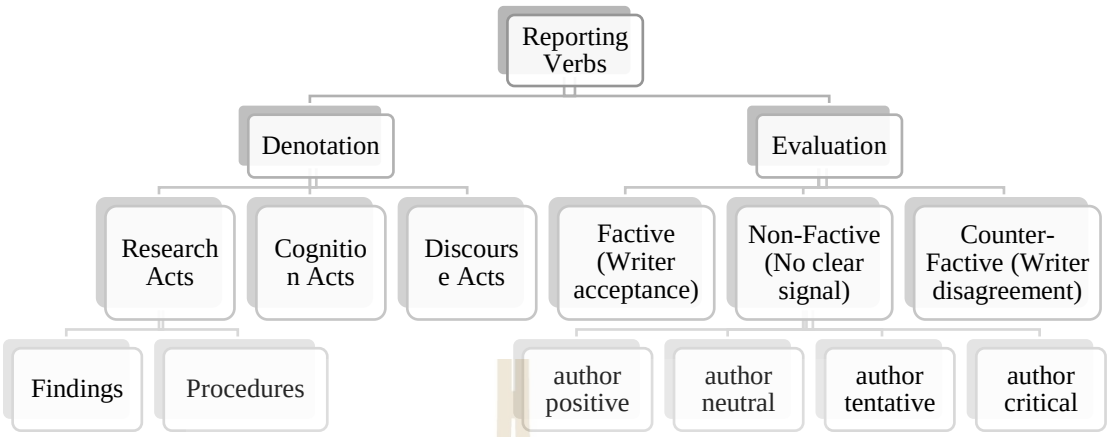


Figure 2.3 Hyland's (1999) Classification of Reporting Verbs (p. 350)

Although Hyland's (1999) classification simplifies Thompson and Ye's (1991) rather complex system and exploits evaluation potential of RVs absent from Thomas and Hawes's (1994), he does not provide a detailed scheme for writers to ascribe the evaluation to the reported author. Hyland (2002), building on his previous work, elaborates and provides a more insightful scheme of options which includes both the author's academic activities and the writer's evaluative judgments. He gives prominence to the reporting writer's choices by synthesizing these two perspectives.

Although the scheme retains Thompson and Ye's (1991) important insights, writers can vary their commitment by employing RVs which either imply a personal stance, such as *show, demonstrate, fail,* and *ignore*, or which attribute a position to the original author (*accuse, believe, dispute, urge*). Therefore, each of the process categories has a sub-set of evaluative options as showed in *Figure 2.4*.

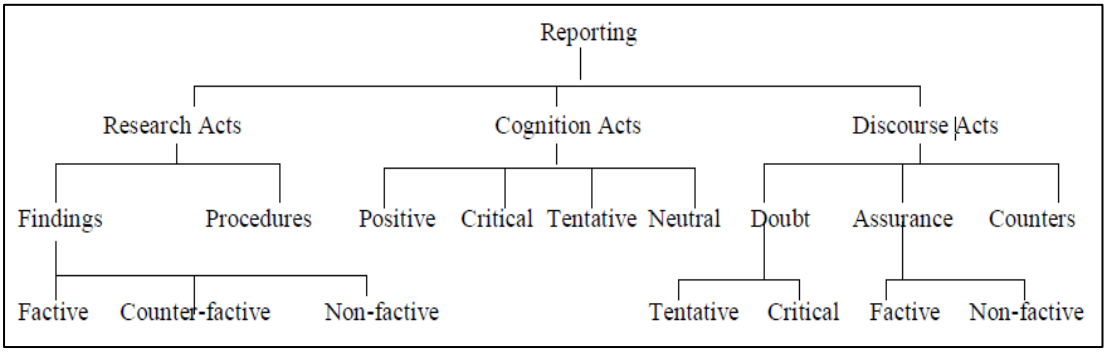


Figure 2.4 Hyland's (2002) Classification of Reporting Verbs (p. 119)

Within the **Findings** category of Research Acts, writers can acknowledge their acceptance of the authors' results or conclusions with **factive** verbs (e.g., *demonstrate, establish, show, solve, confirm*), portray the authors' judgments as false or incorrect to show a **counter-factive** stance (e.g., *fail, misunderstand, ignore, overlook*), or comment on research findings **non-factively,** with no clear attitudinal signal as to their reliability (e.g., *find, identify, observe, obtain*). In addition, according to Hyland (2002), verbs that refer to **Procedure** category carry no evaluation in themselves but simply report research task neutrally.

Cognition Act verbs can handle evaluation differently, not only allowing writers to take a personal stance on the reported information or opinion, but also attributing a particular attitude to the author (Hyland, 2002). There are four clear options that writers can portray the author's position toward the reported information: (1) the author having a **positive** attitude and accepting it as true or correct with verbs such as *agree, concur, hold, know, think,* or *understand*; (2) the author holding a **tentative** view toward the reported matter (e.g. *believe, doubt, speculate, suppose, suspect*); (3) the author holding a **critical** attitude (e.g. *disagree, dispute, not think*); and (4) the author taking a **neutral** stance toward the proposition (e.g. *picture, conceive, anticipate, reflect*).

Employing Discourse Act verbs allows the writers to convey an evaluation of the cited material by either taking responsibility for their interpretation, conveying their uncertainty or assurance of the correctness of the claims reported, or attributing a qualification to the author (Hyland, 2002). Discourse Act verbs, which express the writer's view directly, can be divided into **Doubt** and **Assurance** categories. Those which express doubt about the reported claims are further divided into verbs which are **tentative** (e.g., *postulate, hypothesize, indicate, intimate, suggest*) and **critical** (e.g., *evade, exaggerate, not account, not make point*). Assurance verbs introduce cited material by either neutrally informing readers of the author's position (**non-factive**) (e.g., *state, describe, discuss, report, answer, define, summarize*) or supporting the writer's own position (**factive**) (e.g., *argue, affirm, explain, note, point out, claim*). **Counters**, the last sub-category of Discourse Act verbs, can be employed

by writers to express the cited author's own reservations or objections to the correctness of the reported message instead of taking responsibility for the evaluation as in **Doubt** verbs (e.g., *deny, critique, challenge, attack, question, warn, refute, rule out*). Thompson and Ye (1991) call such attributions Author Acts, which are used to either support writers' opposition to a proposition or to demolish an opposing argument.

Hyland's (2002) classification offers a more detailed, complete, and clear taxonomy of distinguishing the use of RVs in academic writing. Moreover, it is wieldy acknowledged and extensively applied in the previous research for analyzing RVs. Importantly, it is far more elaborate and practical than other classification frameworks. Therefore, it is more suitable for the current study to analyze the use of RVs in each chapter of BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors. The reasons why to adopt Hyland's (2002) classification framework of RVs will be depicted in detail in *Chapter 3*.

2.5 Related Previous Studies on Reporting Verbs

Following the pioneering studies concerning theoretical descriptions of the classifications of RVs by the researchers presented in the previous section, some researchers have worked on the empirical study of RVs in academic writing, such as research articles (Thomas & Hawes, 1994; Hyland, 1999, 2002; Bloch, 2010; Yeganeh & Boghayeri; 2015) as well as theses and dissertations (Charles, 2006a, 2006b; Olga, 2008; Jalilifar & Dabbi, 2012; Doró, 2013; Manan & Noor, 2014; Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015a, 2015b), etc. In the Chinese context, many empirical studies on RVs in academic writing have also been conducted by scholars. Generally speaking, previous research has examined RVs in a diverse range of writing settings, such as studies on RVs by Chinese English majors, comparative studies on RVs between Chinese English majors and native English speakers, and comparative studies on RVs between Chinese English majors and international experts.

2.5.1 Related Previous Studies on Reporting Verbs of Chinese English Majors' Bachelor's Theses

It is widely acknowledged that RV, as a rhetorical lexical device, allows the writer to convey the kind of activities reported and precisely distinguish an attitude toward that information, signaling whether the claims are to be taken as accepted or not (Hyland, 1999). In addition, the use of RVs can require a great deal of exactness in order to establish the credibility of both the writer and the claims, so as to persuade the reader of the validity and soundness of the writer's claims. In terms of the importance of RVs, some studies have been conducted on RVs in Chinese EFL learners' academic writings to investigate the use of RVs (Chen, 2010; Chen, 2011; Zhang, 2012; Sun, 2019).

Chen (2011) analyzes the RVs used in 244 argumentative writings by Chinese English major undergraduate students. The results show that Chinese students excessively use textual RVs and non-factive RVs, and their use of RVs is vague and general. The findings also reflect Chinese undergraduate students' poor ability to employ RVs to express their stance in academic writing. In addition, Zhang (2012) conducts a study to examine how RVs are used in research articles by Chinese learners. He analyzes a corpus of 118 research articles and finds that Chinese learners prefer to use Discourse RVs than Research RVs and Cognition RVs. The results also reveal that Chinese learners can employ different RVs to report others' ideas and claims so as to show their cumulative construction of knowledge, but they are inclined to use neutral RVs and do not express the attitude they have toward others' claims. Zhang (2012) indicates that it might be influenced by Chinese traditional culture, so Chinese learners tend to express their attitude and stance indirectly. Different from the previous two studies, Sun (2019) collects 300 English abstracts of journal papers by Chinese learners and foreign learners and constructs two corpora to explore the use of RVs. The results show that although Chinese learners' awareness of the use of RVs has been strengthened gradually, compared with foreign learners, the use of RVs is still less and relatively single in variety. Simply put, these studies provide a basic situation of how RVs used in academic writing by Chinese learners and point out that Chinese learners have difficulties in using RVs appropriately and effectively.

However, despite the importance of RVs in thesis writing, very few empirical investigations have been focused on the use of RVs in BTs by Chinese English majors, which seems to be ignored. In the past two decades, only two empirical studies regarding the RVs in BTs by Chinese English majors have been conducted.

The use of RVs has been featured in the cross-cultural study on BTs by Chinese English learners and native English speakers. Lou (2013) carries out a cross-cultural study to compare the use of RVs in BTs composed by Chinese English majors and that of native English speakers. Analyzing a corpus of 20 Chinese English majors' BTs and 20 British undergraduate students' BTs from *British Academic Written English*, the results show that both Chinese and British students tend to use different RVs. However, Chinese students still face difficulties with using RVs effectively. She finds that compared with British BTs, the use of RVs in Chinese English majors' BTs show less variety. In addition, Chinese students prefer to use neutral RVs to express positive stance and use direct citation without evaluation, and they are not likely to use negative stance. The study indicates that inadequacy is still clear in Chinese English majors' knowledge of the functions of RVs and awareness of the use of RVs. The difficulty in the use of RVs is further confirmed by Wu and Zhou (2014).

In addition to the comparative study above, another comparative study has been conducted to analyze the use of RVs between Chinese English majors and international experts. It is believed that comparing international experts' academic papers published in international journals with Chinese English majors' BTs can provide a more standardized writing mode and specification for Chinese students. Wu and Zhou (2014) employ a corpus-based analysis to investigate the use of RVs in 78 BTs by Chinese English majors and in 67 articles published in international journals of Applied Linguistics by expert writers. Through a comparative analysis of the two writer groups, the research results show that Chinese English majors use fewer RVs and a more limited range of RV types than expert writers. It is also found that although Chinese English majors have grasped some skills in using RVs, they underuse RVs like *find* and *argue* and overuse *say* and *believe*. The results indicate that Chinese English majors lack the knowledge of the functions of RVs and awareness of the use of RVs.

It is worth pointing out that BTs appear to be an indispensable part of the undergraduate program in Chinese universities or colleges, and they are regarded as the culmination of a four-year undergraduate program. However, there are very few empirical studies on the use of RVs in BTs by Chinese English majors, which remains a rarely-researched area. As mentioned in *Section 1.3, Chapter 1*, there are two reasons for this situation. One comes from the accessibility of the texts; another reason comes from the belief that research on undergraduate level transmits received wisdom rather than creates new knowledge (Xu et al., 2016). It can be claimed the rarity of the studies in this field; therefore, there is a need to investigate the use of RVs in BTs by Chinese English majors to have a deeper understanding of how RVs are used in this genre.

2.5.2 Related Previous Studies on Reporting Verbs of Chinese English Majors' Master's Theses

Compared with the number of studies on RVs in BTs, there are more studies conducted on the use of RVs in MTs by Chinese English majors. These studies are carried out from three different aspects as mentioned above. Sun (2009) explores the use of RVs in the Introduction chapters of 100 MTs by Chinese English majors. The results reveal that most students have employed the RVs in the Introduction chapters of their MTs, and the most frequently used RVs include *point, propose,* and *argue.* However, some problems have also been identified. Chinese students show a preference for a limited number of RVs. In addition, they frequently use positive RVs, indicating that they want to support their claims by referring to previous authoritative claims, but few evaluative RVs are used in their thesis. These findings reveal some problems with the use of RVs in MT writing, but it must be pointed out that the data in Sun's (2009) study is limited to the Introduction chapter only. The findings from other chapters of MTs may produce different results.

Different from Sun (2009), based on Hyland's (1999) classification framework of RVs, Hao (2014) carries out a corpus-based investigation into the use of RVs in the Literature Review chapters of 35 MTs by Chinese English majors. The analysis of the general distribution of RVs in the Literature Review chapters of MTs implies that Chinese master's students have noticed the importance of RVs. Specifically, the results reveal that the RVs from Discourse verb category have the highest percentage of

occurrence (47.5%), among which *hold, conclude,* and *point out* are the most frequently used RVs. The results also demonstrate that Chinese master's students show a tendency toward Research verbs as their second priority (45.3%) (e.g., *study, investigate, analyze*), and Research verbs of process account for 74.0% of the total occurrence of Research verbs, indicating that Chinese English majors focus more on the research process than on the research findings. Cognition verbs (7.2%) are the least used in the Literature Review chapters of MTs by Chinese English majors. It can be noted that the distribution of RVs in Hao's (2014) study is different from the results of Sun (2009), which is confirmed that the findings from different chapters of MTs produce different results. However, in this study, the deep investigation of RVs from the perspective of evaluation is ignored.

Furthermore, another study on the use of RVs in all chapters of 50 MTs by Chinese English majors is conducted by Lou (2011). She adopts Thompson and Ye's (1991) classification of RVs to investigate how RVs are employed in terms of both denotative and evaluative functions. The findings show that the most frequently used RVs are different from those in Sun (2009) and Hao (2014). The top three RVs used in Lou's (2011) corpus are *find, point out,* and *state*. In addition, from the perspective of denotative meaning, the RVs from Discourse Act category have the highest percentage of occurrence (61.4%), followed by Research Act and Cognition Act categories, which record 25.5% and 13.1% of the total number of RV occurrences in the data, respectively. The results coincide with the analysis results by Hyland (2002) in the field of Applied Linguistics. Concerning their evaluative meanings, the results show that positive RVs are the most frequently adopted category (67.8%), followed by negative RVs (24.2%) and neutral verbs RVs (8.0%). In agreement with Sun (2009), evaluative RVs rarely appear in the corpus. Further analysis in this study points out that Chinese students have difficulties in choosing RVs appropriately. They inappropriately use the negative RVs to express the positive attitude, which implies that they are unaware of how RVs are used in actual rhetorical contexts. Given these findings, Lou (2011) concludes that the lack of linguistic resources to learn RVs causes the problem, and Chinese students need more resources to learn how to employ RVs appropriately and effectively.

Aside from the first three studies focusing on the Chinese English majors' MTs only, the use of RVs has also been featured in a number of cross-cultural studies on MTs by Chinese English majors and native English writers. These studies intend to generate a better understanding of the similarities and differences between Chinese English majors and native English writers to help Chinese English majors improve their ability to employ RVs in thesis writing successfully.

Following Hyland's (2002) classification of RVs, H. Wang (2011) makes an investigation into RVs in Literature Reviews in 50 MTs by Chinese English majors and native English speakers. The results reveal that there are some considerable similarities and remarkable differences in the use of RVs between the two corpora. In general, the density of RVs in Literature Reviews in MTs by native English speakers is higher than that in MTs by Chinese English majors. As far as the type of RVs is concerned, Discourse verbs and Research verbs are preferred in both corpora whereas more Research verbs and Cognition verbs appear in Chinese English majors' MTs. These findings can give a basic description of the similarities and differences of the use of RVs between Chinese English majors and native English speakers, but only one of the chapters of MTs has been investigated. Therefore, the comprehensive investigation of complete MTs is needed for further studies.

Li (2014) conducts a study to explore the similarities and differences in using RVs through a contrastive analysis between 30 MTs by Chinese English major master's students and 30 MTs by native English speakers. Generally speaking, American students use more tokens and 2 fewer types than Chinese master's students. In terms of evaluative functions, the results show that both Chinese master's students and American students prefer to use positive RVs and seldom use negative RVs while the numbers of neutral RVs are similar. As for denotative potentials, both two writer groups have preference in using Discourse verbs while Cognition verbs are seldom used. The numbers of three categories of RVs in MTs by American students are higher than in Chinese master's students. The findings indicate that both Chinese master's students and American students are able to use different RVs to construct their own study while it is also clear that native speakers perform better than Chinese master's students.

According to this study, the gap between Chinese English majors and native English speakers is getting narrower.

Except for the comparative studies above, scholars also analyze the usage of RVs in MTs between Chinese English majors and international experts. Using international experts' academic papers published in international journals as comparing references can provide a more standardized writing mode and specification for Chinese students.

According to Hyland's (2002) classification framework of RVs, Jiang (2015) conducts a comparative study to explore the RVs used in Literature Reviews in 30 MTs by Chinese English majors and 78 journal articles by international experts. The findings obtained from Jiang's (2015) study are consistent with the tendency pointed by H. Wang (2011). It is found that both two writer groups tend to use more Discourse verbs than Research verbs and Cognition verbs, but RVs used by expert writers are richer and more diverse. It is worth noticing that this study focuses on the Literature Review chapter only, causing the findings to be applied in a limited range.

Moreover, Cao (2017) carries out a similar study to examine how RVs are used in 10 complete MTs by Chinese English majors and 15 published journal papers in Applied Linguistics but adopting Thompson and Ye's (1991) classification framework of RVs. The findings show that the standard frequency of RVs in MTs is much lower than that in journal papers. To be more specific, in terms of denotative potentials, the total amount of RVs in journal papers is more than in MTs, which shows that expert writers prefer to use more RVs to organize and develop research papers naturally and logically. In terms of evaluative functions, the frequency of RVs in MTs by Chinese English majors takes up only half of those in published journal papers. However, the small-sized corpus in this study might have an impact on the results.

Similarly, based on Hyland's (1999) classification framework of RVs, R. R. Zhang (2018) conducts a comparative study to analyze the usage of RVs in 15 complete MTs by Chinese English majors and 15 academic journal articles by international experts from the perspectives of denotation and evaluation. The research finds that there is a similar distribution of various categories of RVs in MTs by Chinese English majors and in academic articles by international experts. However, compared with their

use in experts' writings, RVs used in the MTs by Chinese English majors are smaller in amount and narrower in range, which corroborates the results from Cao's (2017) study. In terms of denotation, international experts use more RVs tokens than Chinese master's students, but the two writer groups share something in common in the distribution of the three categories of RVs. RVs from Discourse verbs category show the highest percentage of occurrence in the two corpora, followed by Research verbs and Cognition verbs categories. Such a ranking is in line with the analysis results by Hyland (1999) and Lou (2011). In terms of evaluation, both international scholars and Chinese master's students favor the use of non-factive RVs, and factive RVs is their second priority, which is consistent with the results of Hyland (1999). Finally, R. R. Zhang (2018) concludes that Chinese master's students can select proper types of RVs for different academic purposes, but inadequacy is still clear in their knowledge of the functions of RVs, academic writing ability, and awareness of cross-cultural differences.

This review of previous literature can be concluded that although the use of RVs in academic writing by Chinese English majors has gained much attention from scholars, there is no doubt that there is a scarcity of studies on how RVs are employed in BT and MT writing by Chinese English majors. It is far from sufficient for revealing how these writers use RVs in BTs or MTs. Furthermore, previous studies that focus on comparing the use of RVs between Chinese English majors and native English speakers or international experts can provide a more standardized model for Chinese undergraduate and master's students to identify their similarities and differences in the use of RVs, realize their drawbacks, and then enhance their ability to use appropriate RVs. The present study attempts to take MTs as a reference to compare the use of RVs between BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors, which will provide a new perspective and valuable description of how these thesis writers employ RVs in their thesis writing.

Firstly, revealing the similarities and differences in using RVs between BTs and MTs, which are two texts of the same genre but represent two different but successive levels of education, might shed some light on the features of RVs used by the two writer groups. Besides, using MTs produced by more advanced students as a comparing reference hopes to provide a more standardized writing mode and specification for undergraduate students to learn how to use RVs appropriately and

effectively in their thesis writing, or even in all kinds of academic discourses. At the same time, it might provide those students, who have completed an undergraduate study and plan to undertake further study at the successive, higher education level, with a clearer view of how to transfer from novice writers into novice researchers in terms of the similarities and differences between the use of RVs by the two different writer groups. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no study has been conducted to analyze and compare the use of RVs between Chinese English majors' BTs and MTs. To fill this gap, the current study serves as the first comparative study to analyze the use of RVs in complete BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors to find out their similarities and differences in terms of denotative potentials and evaluative functions.

2.6 Chapter Summary

In an attempt to situate the present research into the existing knowledge and academic development, the theoretical foundations on the main topics have been provided in this chapter. Firstly, the definitions, communicative purposes, and characteristics of BTs and MTs are provided separately. Subsequently, the review of previous related studies on Chinese English majors' BTs and MTs is presented. It follows with the different definitions and classifications of RVs. Finally, previous related studies on the use of RVs in BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors are discussed separately. The research methodology implemented in this study will be elaborated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides details of the research methodology of the current study. It starts with the research design to reveal the outline of this study to be conducted. A detailed description of data collection comes afterward, including data identification, the selection of the texts, corpus construction, and corpus management. Then, the details on data analysis regarding the analysis framework, analysis tools, identification of RVs, and analysis procedures are presented. It is followed by the design of the pilot study, providing its corpus, analysis procedures, results and discussion, and implications for the main study. Finally, this chapter ends with a summary.

3.1 Research Design

This study aims to analyze and compare the use of RVs in BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors, and attempts to answer the following three questions:

1) How are RVs used in each chapter of BTs by Chinese English majors from the perspective of denotative potentials and evaluative functions?

2) How are RVs used in each chapter of MTs by Chinese English majors from the perspective of denotative potentials and evaluative functions?

3) What are the similarities and differences in the use of RVs in each chapter between BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors?

For the sake of achieving the goals of this study, a quanti-qualitative methodology (QQM) was employed, which integrates quantitative techniques into a qualitative method. It is believed that the use of QQM makes the research results more empirically transparent and permits the collection of richer and more multifaceted data (Grim et al., 2006). Of the QQM used in this study, in the first stage, some quantitative-type techniques were applied as an integral part of the qualitative process to do the numerical analysis of the data, leading to an interpretation of the results. In the second stage, qualitative analysis was adopted as the main research method, which can

provide specific linguistic features, functions, and meanings in the context. To be more specific, the qualitative analysis was applied in this study to investigate how RVs are used in BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors and then compare their similarities and differences in using RVs. As suggested by Weber (1990), the highest quality content-analytic studies should use both quantitative and qualitative analysis of texts. A QQM, therefore, is appropriate for the current study, hoping to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the object of study.

In addition, the flowchart of the research methodology is depicted in *Figure 3.1* to show the general processes to conduct the present study.

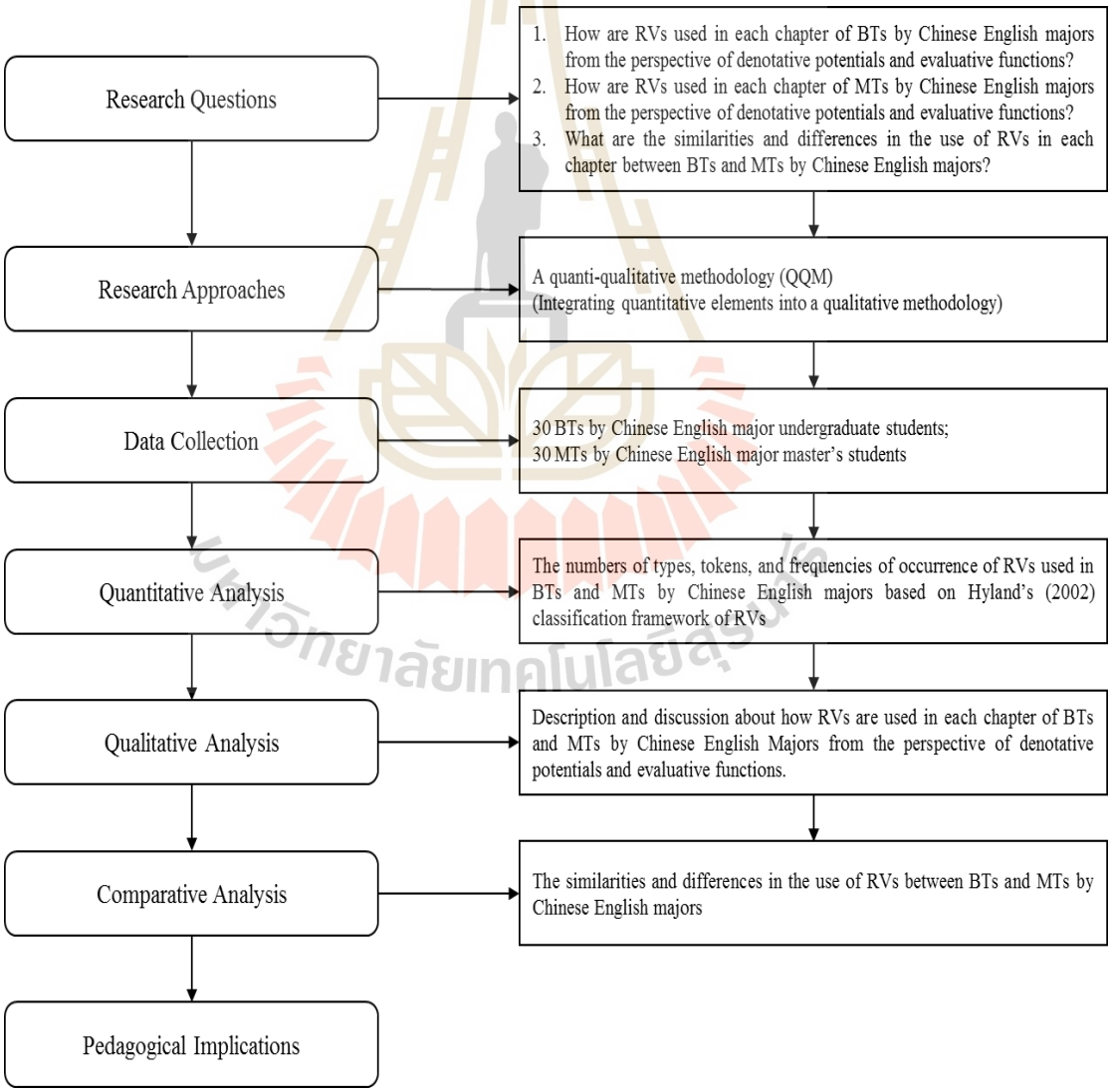


Figure 3.1 The Flowchart of Research Methodology of the Present Study

3.2 Data Collection

This section gives the detailed explanation of the data identification, the selection of texts as well as the corpus construction and management for data analysis.

3.2.1 Data Identification

There are three reasons to explain why the present researcher decided to analyze Chinese English majors' BTs and MTs are demonstrated as follows. Firstly, thesis writing is of importance for English majors in almost all universities and colleges in China. It is regarded as an indispensable task English majors are required to fulfill before graduation and as partial fulfillment of the requirements to assess and determine their academic achievement for obtaining a corresponding academic degree. Secondly, thesis is the result of the long-term effect of English majors, reflecting the highest level of their written language use, and it contains a large amount of information. Therefore, thesis is the best-written language material for studying RVs, and it is believed that it can achieve the research purposes of this study. However, Chinese English majors have difficulties in choosing RVs appropriately and effectively when completing their thesis in English, especially for novice writers, such as undergraduate and master's students. Last but most importantly, up to this point, the present researcher is not aware of any single piece of research that has been conducted to analyze the use of RVs between BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors to date.

Given all the considerations, the present researcher decided to analyze and compare the use of RVs between BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors, hoping that the findings of this study would shed some light on improving Chinese English majors' ability to use RVs appropriately and effectively, and further, on improving their academic writing ability.

3.2.2 Selection of the Texts

In the present study, the research data were derived from two target sources: BTs written by Chinese English major undergraduate students and MTs written by Chinese English major master's students. To fulfill the purposes of the present study, 60 theses were selected to form as the raw corpus, consisting of 30 complete BTs and 30 complete MTs.

To ensure the comparability of the two corpora, and further, to ensure the reliability of this study, several criteria were laid down when selecting text materials. According to Krzeszowski's (1990) three-dimensional contrasting model, data used in comparative analysis should be consistent in three aspects: namely, register, style, and subject. Firstly, a preliminary survey was conducted to investigate the organizational structure of all theses, and the results showed that the majority of empirical theses follow the "ILrMRDC" format. Therefore, a purposeful sampling method was employed to select the theses that are composed of five chapters; namely, Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results and Discussion, and Conclusion, ensuring consistency in style. Secondly, these theses were selected from the fields of Applied Linguistics and Teaching Methodology to guarantee the consistency in register and subject. It is worth noting that major branches of Applied Linguistics include discourse analysis, second language acquisition, and pragmatics, which mainly focus on the study of linguistic theories including English morphology, syntax, semantics, etymology, rhetoric, stylistics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics. In addition, theses in the field of Teaching Methodology cover a wide range of studies that focus on the examination of various teaching methodologies, such as task-based learning, cooperative learning, or the communicative approach in the teaching of four English skills which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Finally, the selected theses were produced during the years 2018-2020 since they are the latest written theses, and this selection is expected to show the trends in the writing of this genre and to warrant the representativeness of the current practice of thesis writing by Chinese English majors.

Out of a pool of 140 BTs written by English majors collected from Kaili University, 57 BTs (40.7%) met the criteria. Ultimately, 30 BTs were randomly selected as one of the raw corpora. The rationale for the corpus size is provided at the end of the current section. With the permission from the Dean of the English Department of Kaili University, an electronic version of BTs in the form of ".docx" files was collected via e-mail with the help of one instructor who is working at Kaili University. There are three reasons to explain the choice of Kaili University. The first reason is the accessibility of the data. It is possible and manageable for the researcher to gain access to collect BTs from Kaili University where she obtained her bachelor's degree. The

second reason has to do with practicality. Regarding the outbreak of COVID-19, collecting data from Kaili University is convenient for the researcher since she is not allowed to go back to China. Finally, Kaili University is chosen because there have not been any studies on the use of RVs in written academic discourse in this university before, which is hopefully to help expand studies in this field.

Furthermore, 30 MTs were downloaded from a pool of 356 MTs as a comparable corpus to the first one of BTs from CNKI, a key national online repository in China under the lead of Tsinghua University. In order to guarantee the representativeness of the text sources, 30 MTs were selected from 15 universities (two from each) in various regions of China. Of the 15 universities, five universities are randomly chosen from "985 Project", which is a project for founding world-class universities; five universities from "211 Project", which is a project of national key universities and colleges; and five universities are common universities. While meeting the above-mentioned criteria, all MTs selected were of the highest downloading rate, which shows that the quality of these theses receives most of the scholars' recognition. In *Table 3.1*, the list of the 15 selected universities for this study is provided.

Table 3.1 The List of the 15 Selected Universities for the MT Corpus

	Name of University
985 Project	Dalian University of Technology
	Huazhong University of Science and Technology
	Jilin University
	Shandong University
	Wuhan University
211 Project	Beijing Foreign Studies University
	Nanjing Normal University
	Shanxi Normal University
	Southwest University
	Xinjiang University
Common University	Dalian University of Foreign Languages
	Guangxi Normal University
	Sichuan Normal University
	Yunnan Normal University
	Zhejiang Normal University

In addition, it is worth pointing out the reasons for the selection of the two different corpora as the research data. First, Kaili University is a local comprehensive higher education institution in Guizhou Province, China. There is no master's degree program in English studies at Kaili University. Therefore, it is not feasible to conduct a case study at Kaili University. Second, it is beyond the researcher's ability to obtain BTs from more universities in the same way as to collect MTs. Different from MTs, there is no open access repository that contains BTs in China. In general, given the importance of BTs to a university, BTs are stored in the university libraries and are not available for loan, especially to individuals. Otherwise, in some universities or colleges, the BTs awarded as "*Thesis of Distinction*" are provided to their students for reference only. In addition, BTs are often difficult to be obtained by an individual who is not studying or working in the university since access request should be approved by the Dean or Vice-Dean of the English Department of the university. As a novice researcher, it is difficult for the present researcher to establish rapport with school leaders in more universities and get their access permission. Therefore, regarding the present researcher's incapacity, the present research, in an effort to keep it manageable on the basis of research accessibility and availability, collected BTs from Kaili University alone and collected MTs from 15 universities around China by downloading them from CNKI.

In terms of the corpus size, three reasons account for the selection of 60 thesis corpus in this study. First, Biber (1993) suggests that the appropriate size of corpus should not be too big to manage or too small to be representative. As argued by Kennedy (1998) and Ghadessy et al. (2001), the corpora between 100,000 and 500,000 words may be effective for specific research questions, such as the use of RVs discussed in this study. Second, McEnery et al. (2006) point out that the size of the corpus needed is determined on the purpose for which it is intended. Through the researcher's review of the existing literature, when it comes to studying the use of RVs in a single chapter or a couple of chapters of BTs or MTs, previous studies have arbitrarily used different sizes of corpus ranging from 10 to 30 pieces (Wang, M., 2011; Lou, 2013; Li, 2014; Cao, 2017; Zhang, R. R., 2018; Zhao, 2018). It can be illustrated that 30 BTs and 30 MTs might be relatively large and sufficient to analyze the use of RVs in

all the five chapters, and they are expected to exhibit high frequency of occurrence of RVs in the two corpora. Finally, the present study focuses on only the lexical level of RVs, and it is conducted by one researcher in an allotted time. Therefore, this chosen number of corpus size seems to be manageable and substantial enough to provide a comprehensive picture of how RVs are used in BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors.

3.2.3 Corpus Construction and Management

After the selection of 30 complete BTs and 30 complete MTs by Chinese English majors, corpus management was facilitated to handle the texts to ensure the rigor and success of further data analysis.

As mentioned above, 30 MTs were downloaded from CNKI in the form of ".caj", which are not editable. Therefore, it is necessary to convert the form of 30 MTs from ".caj" into ".docx" to ensure the convenience of subsequent management. After converting the form of the 30 MTs, the researcher gave the converted files a thorough check in case that there exists any inconsistency between the converted files and the original ones.

To manage the corpus, the first step was to code the data. Two corpora were built in the present study. Accordingly, 30 BTs were randomly coded from BT01 to BT30, and 30 MTs were randomly coded from MT01 to MT30 for ease of reference and the anonymity of thesis writers.

The next step was to clean up the texts by excluding all irrelevant components. Since the focus of this study is on the language used within the main body of the texts, and not on the visual representation of data or ideational illustrations, all images, diagrams, figures, and tables, together with auxiliary texts such as abstracts, keywords, acknowledgments, references, appendixes, page numbers, footnotes, and covers including thesis titles, information of student and advisor, degree confirmation sheets were discarded. That is, only the essential written texts in the core elements of Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results and Discussion, and Conclusion chapters included in the final corpus.

Thirdly, each of the cleaned-up BT was divided into five individual chapters according to the organizational structure of the thesis, namely, the Introduction, the Literature Review, the Methodology, the Results and Discussion, and the Conclusion.

In the same way, each of the cleaned-up MT was also divided into five separate chapters.

Next, all divided chapters were regrouped and recoded as a corresponding sub-corpus. In terms of the BT corpus, they were coded as Introductions 1 to 30 (BT01I - BT30I), Literature Reviews 1 to 30 (BT01Lr - BT30Lr), Methodologies 1 to 30 (BT01M - BT30M), Results and Discussions 1 to 30 (BT01RD - BT30RD), and Conclusions 1 to 30 (BT01C - BT30C), respectively. In the same way, the respective chapters of MTs were randomly coded as Introductions 1 to 30 (MT01I - MT30I), Literature Reviews 1 to 30 (MT01Lr - MT30Lr), Methodologies 1 to 30 (MT01M - MT30M), Results and Discussions 1 to 30 (MT01RD - MT30RD), and Conclusions 1 to 30 (MT01C - MT30C), respectively.

Finally, they were copied and pasted onto a separate file for the ease of the subsequent analyses. After corpus management, the final corpora were built to investigate the use of RVs in BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors. The basic information of the two corpora is shown, as follows:

Table 3.2 Basic Information of BT Corpus and MT Corpus

	Thesis Total	Word Total	Average Word
BT Corpus	30	147,539	4,918
MT Corpus	30	492,819	16,427

From *Table 3.2*, the total length of the final corpus of BTs contains 147,539 words, ranging from 3,652 to 7,353 words, with an average length of 4,918 words. In terms of the final corpus of MTs, the total length contains 492,819 words, ranging from 11,278 to 24,775 words, and the average length is 16,427 words. Since there was a difference in the size of these two corpora, a normalization formula was adapted to normalize the frequency using a *base of normalization* to produce a **normalized frequency (NF).** As McEnery and Hardie (2012) emphasize, in order to accurately compare two corpora (or sub-corpora) of different sizes, generating NFs for the corpora being compared is essential and allows for an accurate comparison of corpora. Therefore, based on the calculation from McEnery and Hardie (2012, p. 49), in the present study, the researcher employed the NFs of per 10,000 words, which could

guarantee the comparison across the results of these two corpora. The calculation would be as follows:

$$NF = \frac{number\ of\ examples\ of\ the\ word\ in\ the\ whole\ corpus}{size\ of\ corpus} \times 10000$$

After corpus construction and management, the two corpora were built for subsequent analysis, and it will be specifically discussed in the next section.

3.3 Data Analysis

This section discusses the analysis framework, analysis tools, identification of RVs, and the detailed procedures of data analysis.

3.3.1 Analysis Framework

In terms of the research purposes of the current study, Hyland's (2002) classification framework of RVs was adopted. The reasons for employing this framework are elaborated as follows.

In the first place, Hyland's (2002) classification framework is a revision of his own modified framework (1999) based on Thompson and Ye's (1991) as well as Thomas and Hawes's (1994), and it is widely acknowledged and extensively applied in previous research for analyzing RVs, such as H. Wang (2011), Jiang (2015), and Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015a, 2015b). In addition, Hyland's (2002) is a comprehensive and clear taxonomy for classifying RVs since it takes both the research activities and attitudinal judgments into consideration, containing the key factors in reporting process of academic writing. It is a reasonable simplification of a rather complex categorization by Thompson and Ye's (1991) that separates evaluation from reporting and allows considerable overlap between categories. Furthermore, Hyland's (2002) framework maintains a clear distinction between author and writer in identifying the source of their evaluation, which is absent in Thomas and Hawes's (1994). Importantly, Hyland's (2002) framework is far more elaborate and practical than other classification frameworks, so that it is more suitable for the current study to categorize RVs. Finally, the list of RVs taken from Hyland's (2002) research is presented in *Appendix A*.

3.3.2 Analysis Tools

Two kinds of software were employed as the main analysis tools in the current study: AntConc and Microsoft Excel. This part will give a brief introduction to all of them. Furthermore, how each of the two tools helps the analysis of the two corpora is illustrated.

3.3.2.1 AntConc

The AntConc version 3.5.8 (Anthony, 2019), which is the latest version, is adopted in this study. It is a corpus analysis toolkit programed by Laurence Anthony, the Director of the Centre for English Language Education at Waseda University, Japan. The reasons for choosing AntConc as an analysis tool for the current study are as follows:

Firstly, AntConc is a freeware, multi-platform, multi-purposes corpus analysis application, making it ideal for anyone with a limited budget, and runs either Windows, Macintosh OS X, or Linux/Unix based systems. Secondly, it is a lightweight, simple, and easy-to-use corpus analysis toolkit that has been shown to be extremely effective, with the added benefit of an intuitive graphical user interface. Thirdly, it is equipped with a comprehensive set of tools, including a powerful concordancer, word and keyword frequency generators, tools for cluster and lexical bundle analysis, and a word distribution plot (Anthony, 2005). *Table 3.3* gives a brief description to each of the seven sub-tools, respectively. Finally, search terms can be defined as full regular expressions (Regex) in AntConc, offering the user access to extremely powerful and complex searches.

Table 3.3 List of Seven Tools of AntConc and Their Functions (Anthony, 2019, p. 2)

Tool	Main Function
Concordance Tool	To show search results in a “KWIC” (Keyword in Context) format. This allows users to see how words and phrases are commonly used in a corpus of texts.
Concordance Plot Tool	To show search results plotted as a “barcode” structure. This allows users to see the position where search results appear in target texts.
File View Tool	To show the text of individual files. This allows users to investigate in more detail the results generated in other tools of AntConc.

Table 3.3 List of Seven Tools of AntConc and Their Functions (Anthony, 2019, p. 2) (Continued)

Tool	Main Function
Clusters/N-Grams	To show clusters based on the search condition. It summarizes the results generated in the Concordance Tool or Concordance Plot Tool. It also scans the entire corpus for "N" (e.g., 1 word, 2 words, ...) length clusters. This allows users to find common expressions in a corpus.
Collocates	To show the collocates of a search term. This allows users to investigate non-sequential patterns in language.
Word List	To count all the words in the corpus and present them in an ordered list. This allows users to quickly find which words are the most frequent in a corpus.
Keyword List	To show the which words are unusually frequent (or infrequent) in the corpus in comparison with the words in a reference corpus. This allows users to identify characteristic words in the corpus, for example, as part of a genre or ESP study.

In the present study, the research purposes are to investigate the use of RVs in BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors. AntConc can efficiently fulfill the purposes of this study, from the accessibility and features it has, since it can identify RVs occurred in the two corpora. As Anthony (2005) points out, using a reasonably large corpus, concordance programs can find and display a huge number of examples of a specific word or phrase in varied contexts and situations quickly and efficiently. Therefore, the Concordance Tool of AntConc has a wide range of features that make it an effective tool and it was adopted to retrieve and locate all RVs in the analyzed texts in this study, which could save a lot of time and energy for the researcher and ensure the accuracy of the research results. What is more, the File View Tool was employed to help the researcher find the context in which the RVs appear when needed.

3.3.2.2 Microsoft Excel

Microsoft Excel is a spreadsheet program developed by Microsoft. It features calculation, graphing tools, pivot tables, and a macro programming language. Importantly, it is a powerful data visualization and analysis tool, making it easy to

analyze large amounts of data. With powerful filtering, sorting, and searching tools, the user can narrow down the criteria easily and quickly. Moreover, Microsoft Excel's graphing capabilities allow the user to compare the data easily and effectively.

Due to its accessibility and user-friendliness, Microsoft Excel was employed in this study to work out data by gathering and recording the numbers of types, tokens, and frequency of occurrence of RVs in the two corpora and doing the statistical calculation. Meanwhile, it is convenient for the researcher to analyze the similarities and differences between the two corpora.

3.3.3 Identification of Reporting Verbs

As for successful data analysis and accurate identification of RVs, based on Swales' (1990) and Thomas and Hawes's (1994) studies, three reporting structures containing RVs were identified, each of which is explained and illustrated as follows:

1) The names of agents of processes were used in the subject position in the reporting sentence. For example:

(a) Brie (1998) showed that the moon is made of cheese.

(Swales, 1990, p. 149)

2) The names of agents of processes were of a "by-adjunct" in the reporting sentence. For example:

(b) The moon's cheesy composition was established by Brie (1998).

(Swales, 1990, p. 149)

3) A generalized term or certain metalinguistic text term was found to function as subject/agent in the reporting sentences. For example:

(c) Brie's theory (1998) claims that the moon is made of cheese.

(d) It has shown that the moon is made of cheese (Brie, 1998)

(Swales, 1990, p. 149)

3.3.4 Analysis Procedures

As mentioned above, data analysis of this study integrated quantitative techniques into a qualitative method. That is, the quantitative-type techniques were strategically applied as an integral part to do the numerical analysis of the qualitative data. The overall data analysis process is outlined in *Figure 3.2*, serving as a flowchart

for showing the design and development of the analysis process; in addition, a fuller explanation will follow.

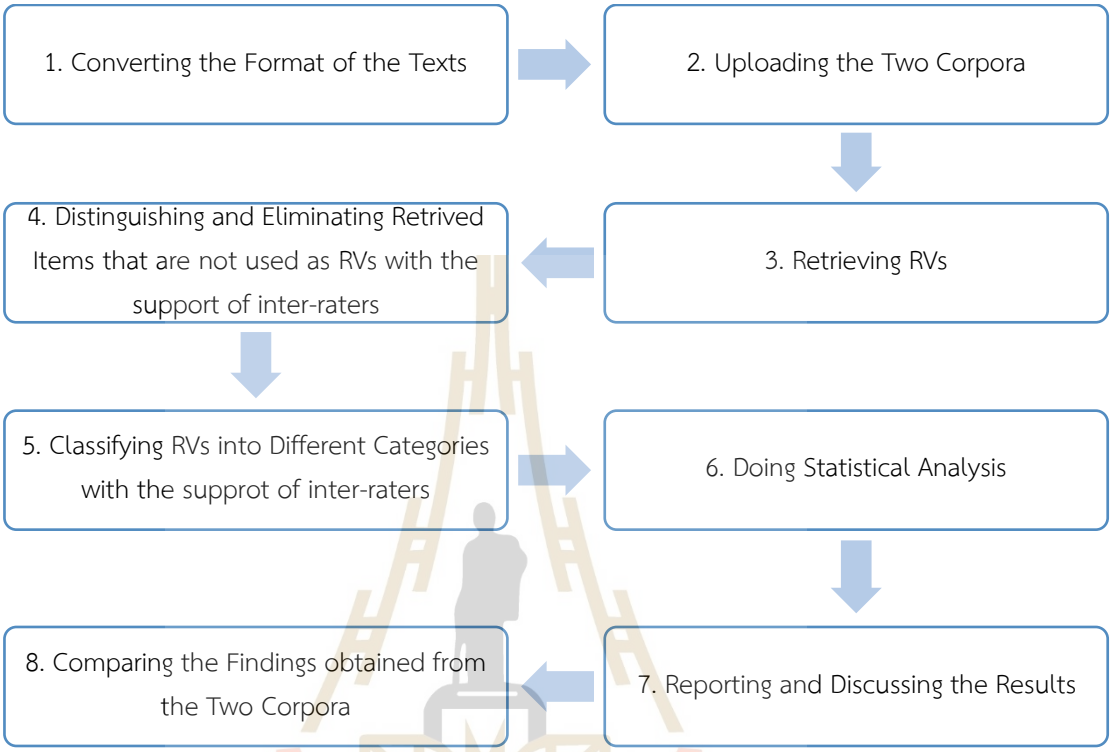


Figure 3.2 The Flowchart of Data Analysis Procedures

Step 1 was to convert the format of the texts. All managed texts were converted from ".docx" into ".txt" files using the Plain text since the AntConc can only identify files in this format. After converting the format of all the texts, the researcher gave the converted files a thorough check to guarantee there was no inconsistency between the converted files and the original ones.

Step 2 was to upload the two corpora. In order for the convenience to conduct the comparative study on RVs used in five different chapters, all text files in each corresponding sub-corpus in BT corpus and MT corpus were uploaded onto AntConc Concordance separately to search for the target items.

Step 3 was to retrieve RVs. Precise and accurate retrieval is of great importance to subsequent data analysis, closely related to the credibility of the research findings. Based on the list of RVs taken from Hyland's (2002), in the current study, 67 RVs were identified as possible RVs that appear in the two corpora, and then,

they were entered in the search column of AntConc to be located within each corpus. Afterward, AntConc Concordance was used to retrieve and locate all these 67 RVs. Meanwhile, the Regex was ticked to include all word classes of each RV sought for. That is, it could position all the root and inflectional forms of a certain word when the search term was set to be regex. What is more, in order for the concordance to search for all RVs that occurred in the two corpora, the Regex for the conventional ways of reporting clauses (e.g., APA and MLA styles starting with one or many authors' surnames, followed by the year of publication or page in round brackets) were created. It is worth noting that all decisions were made to make sure that not any RV was ignored.

To assure the reliability and credibility of the analysis, one inter-rater who is a Ph.D. candidate and has some shared knowledge and expertise in the field of discourse analysis was invited to analyze the corpus data with the present researcher. The invited inter-rater was trained before conducting the data analysis in order for her to have a clear view and understanding of the analysis framework and identification of RVs. After the practice stage, the invited inter-rater and the researcher analyzed the data independently, and then the results from both the raters were compared to seek mutual agreement. Consequently, the two raters achieved 90.3% agreement.

Step 4 was to distinguish and eliminate those items that were not used as RVs based on the criteria to identify RVs provided in *Section 3.3.3*. As Swales states (1990), some RVs are problematic because they can be read in mainly two ways depending on whether they are interpreted as reporting or not. Therefore, thorough checking was conducted to check if each RV that appears in concordance lines functions as RV or not with the help of manual work. It is worth noting that the invited inter-rater and the researcher discussed together during this process to ensure the reliability of the analysis.

Step 5 was to classify all retrieved RVs. According to Hyland's (2002) classification framework stated in *Section 2.4.3.3, Chapter 2*, all RVs were classified into three main categories (*Research Acts*, *Cognition Acts*, and *Discourse Acts*) in terms of types of activities, and then divided into sub-set categories in terms of their evaluative functions. To guarantee the credibility of the classification, the invited inter-rater and

the researcher classified the retrieved RVs independently, and then the results from both raters were compared to seek mutual agreement. In terms of the unsettled issues, the researcher's advisor with extensive experience in discourse analysis was invited as the second inter-rater and consulted for a final decision.

Step 6 was the statistical analysis of the data. The numbers of types and tokens of RVs were revealed to show the general distribution of RVs in BT corpus and MT corpus (in per chapter and in the whole thesis corpus). It is worth noting that the number of tokens is the frequency count from each RV that occurs in the corpus, and the number of types is the number of each type of the RVs that occurs in the corpus. In the first place, the **Raw Frequency (RF)** of types and tokens of RVs were calculated, which were simply the plain numbers. Secondly, the **NF** was calculated. As mentioned above, owing to the unbalanced size of the two corpora, the results were normalized per 10,000 words to allow for comparison across the two corpora of different word sizes. Finally, in order to reveal the proposition of each type of RVs in the total and in order for comparation, percentages of results for each type of RV were presented through the formula as **Percentage = RF ÷ total number of RVs in corresponding corpus × 100%**. The results of the statistical data were gathered and recorded in the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

Step 7 was to report and discuss the results. Specifically, the data were reported and discussed in detail to reveal how RVs are used in each chapter of BTs by Chinese English majors from the perspective of denotative potentials and evaluative functions to answer Research Question 1. In the same way, how RVs are used in each chapter of MTs by Chinese English majors from the perspective of denotative potentials and evaluative functions was revealed to answer Research Question 2.

Step 8 was to compare the findings obtained from the two corpora. To answer Research Question 3, the findings obtained from BTs and MTs were compared to find out their similarities and differences. The detailed analysis revealed the use of RVs by these different levels of English majors in China. Furthermore, some pedagogical suggestions were put forward for English majors, advisors, and instructors to improve their learning and teaching of English BT and MT writing, and to some extent, even enhance their specialty in academic writing in the Chinese context.

It is worth noting that the analysis did not follow the steps sequentially and some procedures were repeated when necessary.

3.4 Pilot Study

A pilot study is a small-scale preliminary study designed to test various aspects of the methods to be used on a large-scale research project (Porta, 2008). As Mauch and Park (2003) emphasize, a pilot study can be employed as a tool in determining, in a preliminary fashion, the potentialities and perils of almost any research idea. For the sake of enhancing the quality of the main study and minimizing the likelihood of unexpected delays and possible failure, in the present research, a pilot study was conducted in advance of the main study (1) to assess the feasibility and workability of the research project which intends to analyze and compare the use of RVs between BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors and (2) to explore whether any adjustments are needed in order to conduct the main study successfully.

3.4.1 Corpus and Procedures of the Pilot Study

Two corpora were built for the pilot study: one was composed of 30 BT Introductions; the other was composed of 30 MT Introductions. That is, only the Introduction chapters are investigated for the pilot study. It is worth noting that these 30 BT Introductions and 30 MT Introductions were extracted from the main corpus and the results will be reported as a part of the "ILrMRDC" in the main study. The total length of BTI is 20,313 words, ranging from 635 to 1,369 words, and the average length is 677 words. In terms of MT Introductions, the total length is 41,892 words, ranging from 709 to 2,399 words, and the average length is 1,396 words.

The pilot study was conducted according to the procedures designed for the main study stated in *Section 3.3.4*.

3.4.2 Results and Discussion of the Pilot Study

The data used in the pilot study were the Introduction Chapters extracted from the two main corpora, and the results and discussion of the pilot study would be presented as a prat of the main study. A decision, therefore, was made to move them to *Chapter 4* in the final thesis. As for the findings of the pilot study, please refer to *Section 4.1.2* (RVs used in the BT Introduction Chapters), *Section 4.2.2* (RVs used in

the MT Introduction Chapters), and *Section 4.3.2* (comparative analysis of RVs used between BT Introduction Chapters and MT Introduction Chapters), respectively.

3.4.3 Implications for the Main Study

The findings obtained from the pilot study indicated the feasibility and workability of the present research project. However, during the pilot study, the researcher encountered one problem, which will be discussed first and the refinements to the main study will be provided.

The problem was the difficulty of distinguishing a RV from verb that is functioning as reporting or not. It was easy to identify RVs from clearly reporting patterns as provided in *Section 3.3.3*, which accounted for the majority of the cases in the two corpora. However, one concern over the identification of RVs was raised. For example,

Move is defined as "segment of text that is shaped and constrained by a particular communicative function" (Holmes, 1997, p. 325).

This sentence can be interpreted into at least three readings:

a. Move is defined by Holmes (1997) as …

b. Holmes (1997) define move as …

c. Move is … (Holmes, 1997).

The verb "define" in the first two interpretations functions as an RV. Alternatively, the statement could be read without RV as is shown in the last interpretation. Two instances adopted from Hyland's study (2002) are illustrated below (Examples 1 and 2) and he identifies that "regard" and "consider" function as RVs.

(1) Chomsky <u>regards</u> scientific work as, by definition, characterized by a high level of …

(2) Sacc is <u>considered</u> a nomen confusum (Hughes, 1958) …

(Hyland, 2002, pp.128-130)

Combining Swales' (1990) study as mentioned in *Section 3.3.3* and Hyland's (2002) study, a clearer guideline for the identification was established and it suggests a more accurate identification of RVs for the main study to meet the objectives of the current research. Therefore, in the present study, the verb "*define*" in the example shown above and similar instances with the verbs "*consider*", "*regard*", and "*treat*"

were considered as RVs because those verbs can be interpreted in such possible readings functioning as RVs. Accordingly, the present researcher and the invited inter-rater became more acquainted with the uniform criteria for RVs identification.

Furthermore, several implications for the main study can be summarized. First, it has been proved that the AntConc employed as the concordance tool in the present study is an effective tool. Second, Hyland's (2002) classification framework of RVs is practicable and suitable for this study to classify RVs. Third, the analysis procedures designed for the main study are feasible and valid. In conclusion, from this pilot analysis, it has been proved that the research methodology designed for the project in the main study will follow is feasible and workable; therefore, the main study will follow this research design to meet the objectives of the present study.

3.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the detailed information about the methodology of the present research have been outlined. It provides a description of the research design. Then, the section of data collection presents the data identification, the selection of the texts as well as corpus construction and management. The data analysis which includes analysis framework, analysis tools, identification of RVs, and analysis procedures is elaborated. Finally, the report of the pilot study is followed. The research findings and relevant discussions will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of this study in detail and conducts a discussion on how RVs are used in 30 BTs and 30 MTs by Chinese English majors. *Section 4.1* provides the results and discussion of how RVs are used in BTs by Chinese English majors to answer Research Question 1: how are RVs used in each chapter of BTs by Chinese English majors from the perspective of denotative potentials and evaluative functions? *Section 4.2* reports the results and discussion on the use of RVs in MTs to answer Research Question 2: how are RVs used in each chapter of MTs by Chinese English majors from the perspective of denotative potentials and evaluative functions? In *Section 4.3*, a comparative analysis of RVs used between the two texts is conducted to answer Research Question 3: what are the similarities and differences in the use of RVs in each Chapter between BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors? Finally, a summary of this chapter is presented in *Section 4.4*.

4.1 Analysis of Reporting Verbs Used in Bachelor's Theses by Chinese English Majors

4.1.1 Overall Findings

As shown in *Table 4.1*, it offers a general picture of RVs used in 30 BTs by Chinese English majors, which lays the foundation for the detailed analysis of RVs in terms of their denotative potentials and evaluative functions. It is worth pointing out that the raw frequency (RF) of occurrence of RVs and normalized frequency (NF) of the number of occurrences per 10,000 words were both given. In general, 77 types and 566 tokens of RVs out of 147,539 words were used in the 30 BTs, totally counting 5.2 types and 38.4 tokens per 10,000 words.

Table 4.1 RVs Used in 30 BTs by Chinese English Majors

	RF	NF
Types	77	5.2
Tokens	566	38.4

Table 4.2 shows a clear view of all RVs that occurred in 30 BTs by Chinese English majors. These undergraduate students used 77 different verbs to introduce previous sources, although more than a quarter of all cases in the corpus occurred only once. It also can be inferred that these students were aware of using different RVs. In addition, it is evident that the most frequent form found in the corpus is *point out* (76 occurrences), followed by *believe* (54 occurrences), *propose* (49 occurrences), *say* (28 occurrences), and *indicate* (27 occurrences). This finding is partly in agreement with that of Hyland (2002) where *argue*, *suggest*, *show*, *explain*, *find*, and *point out* were found to be the most frequent RVs, and that of Nguyen (2017) where *state*, *suggest*, *define*, *find*, and *say* were found to be the most common RVs in the Vietnamese students' theses. This finding can reflect that writers in different contexts with different language background might use different RVs. To be specific, the first factor is the first language (L1) transfer in the second language (L2) writing. Transfer can be regarded both as a learning device and as a learning strategy in L2 writing, which means that L2 writers use transfer as a tool to learn or as a means to convey their meaning (Mahmoud, 2000; Karim & Nassaji, 2013). Therefore, L1 transfer has an impact on L2 writers' writing in general and language use in particular. The second factor is related to the diversity of the settings in which English is composed and its writing is taught and learned. These writer groups are from different education areas where the ways to train academic writing are various. The third one is the discourse community the writer addresses. As Hyland (2002) points out, the ways writers choose to present information varies according to the discourse communities they inhabit (Hyland, 2002). Therefore, these writers from different contexts with different language backgrounds use different RVs in their writing.

Table 4.2. List of RVs in 30 BTs by Chinese English Majors

1. point out (76)	17. conclude (8)	33. deem (3)	49. issue (2)	65. focus on (1)
2. believe (54)	18. conduct (8)	34. describe (3)	50. offer (2)	66. improve (1)
3. propose (49)	19. state (8)	35. develop (3)	51. prove (2)	67. investigate (1)
4. say (28)	20. design (7)	36. list (3)	52. publish (2)	68. make (an) explanation (1)
5. indicate (27)	21. emphasize (7)	37. refer (3)	53. stress (2)	69. notice (1)
6. find (24)	22. mention (7)	38. adopt (2)	54. sum up (2)	70. oppose (1)
7. put forward (23)	23. analyze (6)	39. advocate (2)	55. write (2)	71. predict (1)
8. think (22)	24. explain (6)	40. apply (2)	56. affirm (1)	72. present (1)
9. show (18)	25. explore (5)	41. argue (2)	57. answer (1)	73. regard (1)
10. study (18)	26. claim (4)	42. call (2)	58. attribute (1)	74. research (1)
11. divide (14)	27. introduce (4)	43. classify (2)	59. carry out (1)	75. separate (1)
12. define (13)	28. make (a) study (4)	44. compare (2)	60. combine (1)	76. survey (1)
13. hold (11)	29. provide (4)	45. demonstrate (2)	61. compile (1)	77. use (1)
14. discuss (10)	30. come up with (3)	46. do (2)	62. contribute (1)	
15. summarize (10)	31. consider (3)	47. elaborate (2)	63. distribute (1)	
16. suggest (9)	32. create (3)	48. express (2)	64. expound (1)	

*(*The number in brackets indicates the frequency of RVs that occurred in 30 BTs by Chinese English Majors.)*

Table 4.3 provides an overview of RVs in each chapter of 30 BTs by Chinese English majors. Firstly, RVs were densely present in the Literature Review Chapters, accounting for more than four-fifths of the total number of RVs identified in the BT corpus. Secondly, it is followed by those in the Introduction Chapters, representing 14.84% of the total RVs recorded in the data. Thirdly, there was a relatively low number of RVs in the other three chapters; namely, Results and Discussion, Methodology, and Conclusion (1.14%, 0.71%, and 0.18%, respectively). This finding is partially in line with Nguyen's (2017) study in which the distribution of RVs used in Vietnamese students' theses ranged from Literature Review, Introduction, Methodology, Conclusion, as well as Results and Discussion Chapters.

The finding indicates that the Literature Review chapter, as a crucial part-genre of a thesis, is the reporting-dense chapter, where its communicative purpose is to review the existing knowledge on what has been done in the context of a topic.

This finding is in tandem with those of Soler-Monreal and Gil-Salom (2011) and Nguyen (2017) in which Literature Review chapters were found to be the main place for reporting. It can be drawing that those Chinese English major undergraduate students have the awareness of using RVs. However, the low frequency of RV use in the Results and Discussion and Conclusion Chapters, to a certain extent, is likely to reflect these students' little knowledge of using RVs appropriately and effectively in these chapters to achieve their communicative purposes.

Table 4.3 General Distribution of RVs in Terms of Denotative Potentials and Evaluative Functions in 30 BTs

Category/ Sub-category	I	LR	M	RD	C	Total	%
Research Acts	**16**	**133**	**2**	**2**	**0**	**153**	**27.03**
Findings	10	67	0	1	0	79	13.96
Factive	2	21	0	0	0	23	4.06
Counter-Factive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non-Factive	8	46	0	1	0	56	9.89
Procedures	6	66	2	1	0	74	13.07
Cognition Acts	**9**	**85**	**0**	**3**	**0**	**97**	**17.14**
Positive	4	32	0	2	0	38	6.71
Critical	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tentative	5	51	0	1	0	57	10.07
Neutral	0	2	0	0	0	2	0.35
Discourse Acts	**59**	**251**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**316**	**55.83**
Doubt	20	71	0	1	0	92	16.25
Tentative	20	71	0	1	0	92	16.25
Critical	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assurance	39	179	2	2	1	223	39.40
Factive	20	107	1	1	1	130	22.97
Non-Factive	19	72	1	1	0	93	16.43
Counters	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.18
Total	**84**	**469**	**4**	**8**	**1**	**566**	**100**
%	**14.84**	**82.86**	**0.71**	**1.41**	**0.18**	**100**	

Based on Hyland's (2002) classification framework, RVs can be classified into different categories in terms of their denotative potentials and evaluative functions. All RVs identified in the BT corpus, therefore, are classified based on his framework and provided in *Appendix B*. Regarding their denotative categorizations, as indicated in *Table 4.3*, the RVs from the *Discourse Act* category had the highest frequency, representing 55.83% of all the RVs identified in the corpus of 30 BTs. The *Research Act RVs* with more than a quarter (27.03%) ranked second. The *Cognition Act RVs* accounted for the least used category, which is 17.14% of the total number of RVs found in the data. It is worth noting that this trend in using RVs resonates with the findings of using RVs by Hyland (2002), Jiang (2015), Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015a, 2015b), and Agbaglo (2017). In addition, Hyland (2002) explains that this tendency characterizes the discursive nature of soft disciplines to which the field of this target corpus belongs.

Regarding the evaluative categorizations, *factive RVs*, accounting for 27.03% of the total RVs identified in the BTs, were employed the most. It is followed by *non-factive* RVs and *tentative RVs*, which were tied for second place (26.32% and 26.32%, respectively). The finding reveals that the frequency of use of these three types of RVs is quite close, which tends to indicate that these students can adopt a wide range of RVs to introduce the works of other researchers. However, these students avoided using negative RVs to explicitly rebut or criticize previous research as seen through the absence of *critical* verbs, the avoidance of using *counter-factive* verbs, and one instance of the *counter* verb.

It is worth pointing out that the further interpretation and discussion of how RVs are used in each chapter of the 30 BTs will be conducted in the following sections.

4.1.2 Reporting Verbs Used in the Introduction Chapters

Table 4.4 provides an overall picture of RVs used in 30 BT Introductions. There is a total of 29 types and 84 instances of RVs, counting 14.3 types and 41.4 tokens per 10,000 words.

Table 4.4 RVs in 30 BT Introduction Chapters

	RF	NF
Types	29	14.3
Tokens	84	41.4

The most common verbs in the corpus were *point out* (14 occurrences), *say* (11 occurrences), *indicate* (8 occurrences), *propose* (7 occurrences), and *believe* (5 occurrences) ranked the fifth with *find* (5 occurrences) (*Table 4.5*). This finding is partly in agreement with Nguyen and Pramoolsook's (2015b) study which found that *state*, *find*, *suggest*, *develop*, and *point out* were the common verbs used in the Introductions of Vietnamese students' theses.

Table 4.5 List of RVs in 30 BT Introduction Chapters

1. point out (14)	9. state (3)	17. compare (1)	25. refer (1)
2. say (11)	10. emphasize (2)	18. conduct (1)	26. issue (1)
3. indicate (8)	11. hold (2)	19. deem (1)	27. sum up (1)
4. propose (7)	12. put forward (2)	20. define (1)	28. summarize (1)
5. believe (5)	13. show (2)	21. explain (1)	29. think (1)
6. find (5)	14. suggest (2)	22. explore (1)	
7. divide (3)	15. study (1)	23. express (1)	
8. mention (3)	16. claim (1)	24. list (1)	

*(*The number in brackets indicates the frequency of RVs that occurred in 30 BT Introduction Chapters.)*

As indicated in *Table 4.6*, the frequency of RVs was calculated and distributed based on their denotative potentials and evaluative functions. In the case of distribution of RVs in denotative/process categories, the highest number of RVs used in BT Introductions was *Discourse Act* verbs, accounting for 70.24% of the total number of RVs found in the corpus. *Research Act RVs* ranked second, representing 19.5%, whereas *Cognition Act RVs* had the lowest percentage which is 10.71%. As mentioned in *Section 4.1.1*, this trend in using RVs is in line with the findings of using RVs by Hyland (2002), Jiang (2015), Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015a, 2015b), and Agbaglo (2017).

Table 4.6 Distribution of RVs in Terms of Denotative and Evaluative Classifications in BT Introduction Chapters

Category/Sub-category	RF	%
Research Acts	**16**	**19.05**
Findings	10	11.90
Factive	2	2.38
Counter-Factive	0	0
Non-Factive	8	9.52
Procedures	6	7.14
Cognition Acts	**9**	**10.71**
Positive	4	4.76
Critical	0	0
Tentative	5	5.95
Neutral	0	0
Discourse Acts	**59**	**70.24**
Doubt	20	23.81
Tentative	20	23.81
Critical	0	0
Assurance	39	46.43
Factive	20	23.81
Non-Factive	19	22.62
Counters	0	0
TOTAL	**84**	**100**

The greater use of *Discourse Act RVs* is related to the key role an Introduction chapter plays in a thesis. The communicative purpose of an Introduction chapter is to create a research space for the writer (Swales & Feak, 1994). It is in the Introduction that the writer makes claims for the centrality or significance of the research in question and begins to outline the overall argument of the thesis (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). Therefore, the use of *Discourse Act RVs* may take effect in the Introduction chapter to achieve the move of establishing a research territory through introducing a topic and occupying the niche through presenting the purpose. In addition, as explained in Hyland (2002), the greater use of *Discourse Act RVs* is more appropriate in an argument schema which more readily regards explicit interpretation, speculation, and arguments

as “accepted aspects of knowledge” (p. 126). Meanwhile, the use of *Discourse Act RVs* allows writers to expedite the verbal exploration of related issues, facilitating qualitative arguments that rest on finely delineated interpretations and conceptualizations. As illustrated in Examples 1a-c, *Research Act RVs*, “*indicate*”, “*explain*”, and “*point out*”, were employed to verbally report the claims of other researchers, which can construct factual reliability and establish a specific context of the knowledge.

(1a) *Liu Qiong (2016) indicates that in the process of implementing Task-based language teaching, teachers will set different ones according to different articles.* (BT11I) (Discourse Act Doubt Tentative)

(1b) *Bao (2016) explained that attributive clauses are divided into restrictive attributive clause and non-restrictive attributive clause*. (BT30I) (Discourse Act Assurance Factive)

(1c) *Xing Shiwei (2017) pointed out that the first need of society for talent is the ability to communicate, which is also the basic skills that everyone needs to have.* (BT24I) (Discourse Act Assurance Factive)

Cognition Act RVs were employed far less than the other two categories of RVs in the BT Introductions. Only nine instances of *Cognition Act* verbs were identified in the corpus. As illustrated in Examples 2a and 2b, Chinese English major undergraduate students used some of *Cognition Act RVs* such as “*hold*” and “*believe*” to represent previous research as proceeding from the interpretive operations or verbal accounts of researchers, which emphasizes the role that reasoning and argument play in the construction of knowledge.

(2a) *Li Jing (2019) holds that Task-based learning is based on participation, experience, interaction, communication and cooperation, which can…* (BT11I) (Cognition Act Positive)

(2b) *Zhang (2018) believes that cooperative learning can create opportunities for language practice and exercise learners’ ability to resolve problems.* (BT13I) (Cognition Act Tentative)

As argued by Liu and Wang (2019), Chinese students' infrequent use of *Cognition Act RVs* might be related to the fact that the subjective feature of this behavior does not conform to the requirements of academic writing. Moreover, the Introduction chapter plays an important role as guidance in providing fundamental knowledge, introducing the topic of the research, attracting readers' attention, and helping readers understand the content the writers are analyzing. Therefore, it is inappropriate to use too many mental verbs in the Introduction chapter since extensive use of mental verbs might have an impact upon the objective introduction of a research.

In terms of the two sub-categories of *Research Act RVs*, undergraduate students preferred to employ *Finding RVs* (11.90%) than *Procedure RVs* (7.14%) in the BT Introduction Chapters. This finding tends to indicate these undergraduate students' preference for emphasizing the results/findings gained from the previous studies.

Regarding the evaluative categorizations of RVs, *non-factive RVs* ranked the highest in the BT Introductions, taking up to 32.14% of the total number of RVs, followed by the *tentative* and *factive RVs* (29.76% and 26.19%, respectively). This finding is in accord with those of previous studies by Hyland (2002) and Jalilifar (2012) in which *non-factive* verbs were found to prevail. In Examples 3a and 3b, *non-factive RVs* (*find* and *state*) were employed to report the previous information neutrally, giving no clear signal to express their attitude toward the reported information. The finding tends to indicate that the preference for *non-factive RVs* can help undergraduate students neutrally comment on the cited sources and inform the reader of the writers' positions to the cited sources, providing an acknowledgment of previous research without appearing to corrupt it with personal judgment.

(3a) *Yang (2017) <u>found</u> that an active classroom atmosphere can alleviate fatigue in class.* (BT07I) (Research Act Finding Non-factive)

(3b) *Zhai Lijuan (2014) also <u>stated</u> that lead-in is an important part of English teaching.* (BT26I) (Discourse Act Assurance Non-factive)

It is worth pointing out that no negative RVs were found in the BT Introduction Chapters. This finding resonates with Agbaglo's (2017) study where the same results were obtained. This finding tends to reflect that these undergraduate

students avoided using any negative RVs to explicitly rebut or criticize previous researchers or their works in the Introduction Chapters, which aims at providing background information in an objective way. As Hyland (2002) argues, an explicit rebuttal of other researchers is "a serious face-threatening act in academic writing, and such violation of interpersonal conventions is likely to expose the writer to retaliation or the disapproval of publishing gatekeepers" (p. 128).

4.1.3 Reporting Verbs Used in the Literature Review Chapters

Table 4.7 contains detailed information on the total number of RVs used in the 30 BT Literature Review Chapters. As it is seen, Chinese English major undergraduate students used 76 types and 469 tokens of RVs in Literature Reviews, in which the total number of the words in the corpus is 42,336 words. Accordingly, undergraduate students used 18.0 types and 110.8 tokens of RVs per 10,000 words.

Table 4.7 RVs in 30 BT Literature Review Chapters

	RF	NF
Types	76	18.0
Tokens	469	110.8

It is evident that RVs used in the Literature Reviews by undergraduate students are larger in amount and wider in range when compared with those used in the Introductions. This finding is in line with the communicative purpose of the Literature Review chapter, where its communicative purpose is to contextualize the writer's research (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007), showing that they are familiar with the previous research on the topic or background theory related to the research, or both, and indicating their understanding of the relevance or implication to the study being conducted.

As can be seen in *Table 4.8*, similar to the findings on the RVs used in the Introduction Chapters, the most frequent RV found in the Literature Reviews was *point out* (60 occurrences). It is followed by *believe* (49 occurrences), *propose* (42 occurrences), *put forward* (20 occurrences), and *think* (20 occurrences). This finding, however, is different from the study of Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015a) that found

state, *define*, *suggest*, *claim*, and *find/say* to be the most common RVs in the Literature Review Chapters of Vietnamese postgraduates' theses. It demonstrates that those different writers exhibit distinct preferences for different RVs due to the different contexts they inhabit.

Table 4.8 List of RVs Used in 30 BT Literature Review Chapters

1. point out (61)	20. suggest (6)	39. classify (2)	58. contribute (1)
2. believe (49)	21. emphasize (5)	40. consider (2)	59. deem (1)
3. propose (42)	22. state (5)	41. demonstrate (2)	60. distribute (1)
4. put forward (20)	23. explain (4)	42. do (2)	61. expound (1)
5. think (20)	24. explore (4)	43. elaborate (2)	62. express (1)
6. indicate (19)	25. introduce (4)	44. list (2)	63. focus (1)
7. find (18)	26. make (a) study (4)	45. offer (2)	64. improve (1)
8. say (16)	27. mention (4)	46. prove (2)	65. investigate (1)
9. show (16)	28. provide (4)	47. publish (2)	66. issue (1)
10. study (16)	29. claim (3)	48. refer (2)	67. make (an) explanation (1)
11. define (12)	30. come up with (3)	49. stress (2)	68. notice (1)
12. divide (11)	31. create (3)	50. write (2)	69. oppose (1)
13. discuss (9)	32. describe (3)	51. affirm (1)	70. predict (1)
14. hold (9)	33. develop (3)	52. answer (1)	71. present (1)
15. summarize (9)	34. adopt (2)	53. attribute (1)	72. regard (1)
16. conclude (8)	35. advocate (2)	54. carry out (1)	73. separate (1)
17. conduct (7)	36. apply (2)	55. combine (1)	74. sum up (1)
18. analyze (6)	37. argue (2)	56. compare (1)	75. survey (1)
19. design (6)	38. call (2)	57. compile (1)	76. use (1)

*(*The number in brackets indicates the frequency of RVs that occurred in 30 BT Literature Review Chapters)*

In *Table 4.9*, a picture of the general distribution of RVs in terms of denotative and evaluative classifications used in the BT Literature Reviews is provided.

Regarding their denotative categorizations, RVs categorized in *Discourse Acts* were found predominant, accounting for 53.52% of the total number of RVs found in the current corpus. The second rank was *Research Act RVs* with more than a quarter (28.36%). The least used category of RVs was *Cognition Act* verbs, representing 18.12%

of the total occurrences of RVs in the corpus. Similar to the finding on the RVs in the Introductions, the trend of using RVs in the Literature Review Chapters is in line with the findings by Hyland (2002), Jiang (2015), Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015a, 2015b), and Agbaglo (2017). Meanwhile, such tendency of RV employment reflects the discursive nature of soft disciplines to which the field of this study belongs (Hyland, 2002).

Table 4.9 Distribution of RVs in Terms of Denotative and Evaluative Classifications in BT Literature Review Chapters

Category/Sub-category	RF	%
Research Acts	**133**	**28.36**
Findings	67	14.29
Factive	21	4.48
Counter-Factive	0	0
Non-Factive	46	9.81
Procedures	66	14.07
Cognition Acts	**85**	**18.12**
Positive	32	6.82
Critical	0	0
Tentative	51	10.87
Neutral	2	0.43
Discourse Acts	**251**	**53.52**
Doubt	71	15.14
Tentative	71	15.14
Critical	0	0
Assurance	179	38.17
Factive	107	22.81
Non-Factive	72	15.35
Counters	1	0.21
TOTAL	**469**	**100**

As argued in *Section 4.1.2*, the greater use of *Discourse Act RVs* is more appropriate in an argument schema that more readily regards explicit interpretation, speculation, and arguments as "accepted aspects of knowledge" (p. 126). In Examples

4a-c, some of *Discourse Act RVs* such as "*suggest*" "*argue*" and "*discuss*" were used to verbally report the voices of established scholars, constructing factual reliability, and establishing a specific context of the knowledge. Moreover, the employment of *Discourse Act RVs* allows writers to expedite the verbal exploration of related issues. To some extent, these students' preference for *Discourse Act RVs* reflects that these RVs were more common to undergraduate students, and they were more exposed to these verbs (Manor & Noor, 2014).

(4a) *As Chomsky (1965) suggested that language learning is not a mechanical process of establishing language habits, language learning is dynamic internalization process.* (BT24LR) (Discourse Act Doubt Tentative)

(4b) *Freud (1925) argues that individual anxiety is in danger of subjective consciousness, which can be seen as the subconscious to an alert when anxiety.* (BT17LR) (Discourse Act Assurance Factive)

(4c) *Tang (2009) and Zhang (2011) discussed the essential of Chinese language input in English teaching.* (BT20LR) (Discourse Act Assurance Non-factive)

Cognition Act RVs, which are concerned with the researcher's mental processes, were employed as the lowest percentage of the three main categories. As shown in Examples 5a-c, Chinese undergraduate students employed some *Cognition Act RVs* (*think*, *deem*, and *believe*) to report the claims of previous researchers, emphasizing the role that reasoning and argument play in the construction of knowledge. However, the low employment of *Cognition Act RVs* in the BT Literature Review Chapters demonstrates that undergraduate students were unwilling to use mental verbs to depict previous literature in terms of the cited author's theorizing and mental activities. As explained in Hyland (2002), although *Cognition Act RVs* have a great effect on personal interpretation in knowledge negotiation, they are employed to give prominence to the role of human agency in constructing claims, and often the fallibility. Therefore, these verbs may make them seem to be too subjective, thereby affecting the reliability of their arguments.

(5a) *Chaudron (1988) thinks that corrective feedback has more than one meaning.* (BT09LR) (Cognition Act Positive)

(5b) *Richards (1986) deems that people have reading obstacles when they run into problems in the English reading process.* (BT12LR) (Cognition Act Positive)

(5c) *Nunan (2006) even believes that action research can give teachers the power to master their career development.* (BT05LR) (Cognition Act Tentative)

Research Act RVs can be divided into *Finding verbs* and *Procedure verbs* (Hyland, 2002). Similar to the finding on RVs in the BT Introduction Chapters, the results reveal that undergraduate students preferred to employ *Finding RVs* (14.29%) than *Procedure RVs* (14.07%) in the BT Literature Review Chapters. However, the almost equal employment of the two categories tends to indicate that these undergraduate students stated the results/findings gained from the previous studies as much as their research procedures in these chapters.

Regarding the evaluative functions of RVs, *factive RVs*, which accounted for 27.3% of the total RVs identified in the BT Literature Review Chapters, were found to prevail. It is followed by *tentative* and *non-factive RVs* (26.01% and 25.16%, respectively). This finding accords with the study by Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015b) who attributed the prominent use of *factive RVs*. It reveals that this group of writers tended to take an explicit stance toward the cited sources through their preference of *factive RVs* in both describing the reported sources and supporting their own arguments by attributing a high degree of confidence to the proposition by the original author. As illustrated in Examples 6a-c, undergraduate students employed "*point out*" "*put forward*" and "*show*" to report the claims of prior researchers and express their positive attitude toward the reported claims, signaling their acceptance of them.

(6a) *Hammory (1999) once pointed out that the cultivation of communicative competence should be adapted to the direction of the cultivation of English communicative competence...* (BT04LR) (Discourse Act Assurance Factive)

(6b) *Preiss and Wheeless (1990) put forward that listening anxiety consists of three factors: primary anxiety, secondary anxiety and information processing, and three factors interrelated with each other.* (BT17LR) (Discourse Act Assurance Factive)

(6c) *Young (1990), Elkhafaifi (2005) et al have shown that Foreign Language Anxiety has a negative correlation with academic performance.* (BT27LR) (Research Act Finding Factive)

In this study, the negative RVs had the lowest occurrence in the BT Literature Reviews. The result shows that only one instance of negative RV (0.2%) was found. As exemplified below, the writer employed the *Discourse Act Counter RV (oppose)* to express the original author's objection to the view on "teacher as the center" and then to support his view (child-centered teaching model) (in Example 7).

(7) *Dewey, an American child psychologist and educator, first came up with a child-centered idea... Dewey strongly opposes the teacher as the center.* (BT03LR) (Discourse Act Counter)

This finding tends to reveal that undergraduate students were unwilling to use negative RVs to report the works of others to give a negative assessment on their viewpoints and they rather positioned themselves as either *factive*, *tentative*, or *non-factive* to the sources they were reporting. In addition, the fact that negative RVs are rarely employed in the current corpus also confirms Hyland's (2002) claim that in academic writing, explicit refutation of other researchers is regarded as a serious face-threatening act, which has the potential to subject the writer to retaliation or the rejection of publishing gatekeepers.

4.1.4 Reporting Verbs Used in the Methodology Chapters

Table 4.10 provides an overview of RVs used in the 30 BT Methodology Chapters. As it is seen, Chinese English major undergraduate students used 4 types and 4 tokens of RVs in the current corpus, in which the total number of the words in the current corpus is 22,378 words. Accordingly, undergraduate students used 1.8 types and 1.8 tokens of RVs per 10,000 words.

Table 4.10 RVs in 30 BT Methodology Chapters

	RF	NF
Types	4	1.8
Tokens	4	1.8

Table 4.11 provides the division of RVs used in the 30 BT Methodology Chapters according to their denotative and evaluative classifications. It is found that few RVs were used in the corpus (4 occurrences). This finding contradicts the results obtained from the BT Introduction and Literature Review Chapters. However, it accords with the study by Nguyen (2017) where few RVs were found in the Methodology Chapters.

Table 4.11 Distribution of RVs in Terms of Denotative and Evaluative Classifications in BT Methodology Chapters

Category/Sub-category	RF	%
Research Acts	**2**	**50**
Findings	0	0
Factive	0	0
Counter-Factive	0	0
Non-Factive	0	0
Procedures	2	50
Cognition Acts	**0**	**0**
Positive	0	0
Critical	0	0
Tentative	0	0
Neutral	0	0
Discourse Acts	**2**	**50**
Doubt	0	0
Tentative	0	0
Critical	0	0
Assurance	2	50
Factive	1	25
Non-Factive	1	25
Counters	0	0
TOTAL	**4**	**100**

To be more specific, there were two instances of *Research Act RVs* (50%) and two instances of *Discourse Act RVs* (50%) employed in the Methodology Chapters. *Cognition Act RVs* were found to be absent in the current corpus. As the following two examples show, the *Research Act Procedure RVs* "*design*" and "*research*" were employed to report what had been done by previous researchers, which emphasizes the research processes, carrying no evaluation but simply reporting it neutrally (in Examples 8a-b).

(8a) *A vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire, written in Chinese, including twenty-four vocabulary learning strategies, was designed by Schmitt (2004).* (BT10M) (Research Act Procedure)

(8b) *Deng (2018) researched the discrepancies between appositive clauses and attributive clauses.* (BT30M) (Research Act Procedure)

In Example 9a, "*explain*", as a *Discourse Act factive* verb, was employed to make information or opinion reported from a previous study persuasive, so that to support the writer's argument. Furthermore, "*discuss*" is a *Discourse Act non-factive RV* which was used to objectively pass information reported, neutrally informing readers of the author's position (in Example 9b).

(9a) *She (Deng, 2018) explained the differences between appositive clause and attributive clause from several aspects.* (BT30M) (Discourse Act Assurance Factive)

(9b) *Pan (2016) also discussed the teaching of English grammar attributive clause in senior high school.* (BT30M) (Discourse Act Assurance Non-factive)

It is noteworthy that the presence of few RVs in this chapter can be attributed to the role a Methodology chapter plays in a thesis. The communicative purpose of a Methodology chapter is to describe how the research was conducted and how the data were obtained and analyzed. It develops an explanation as to why the research method(s) under discussion have been chosen (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). Therefore, writers might focus on presenting research method(s) and procedure(s) instead of reporting others' opinions, except for some frameworks or achievements

adapted from previous scholars. In this case, RVs are used in a small number in this chapter.

4.1.5 Reporting Verbs Used in the Results and Discussion Chapters

As it can be seen in *Table 4.12*, a general picture of RVs used in the 30 Results and Discussion Chapters is presented. It reveals that undergraduate students used 8 types and 8 tokens of RVs in the corpus with a total of 45,950 words, after normalizing, 1.7 types and 1.7 tokens of RVs used per 10,000 words.

Table 4.12 RVs in 30 BT Results and Discussion Chapters

	RF	NF
Types	8	1.7
Tokens	8	1.7

Table 4.13 shows a common trend in using RVs in the 30 BT Results and Discussion Chapters. The overall finding in the current corpus is partly different from the findings on RVs used in their previous three chapters (Introduction, Literature Review, and Methodology Chapters).

In the case of their denotative potentials, both *Discourse Act RVs* and *Cognition Act RVs* were found to be the most prominent (37.5% and 37.5%, respectively), followed by *Research Act RVs* (25%). In the case of their evaluative functions, both *non-factive RVs* (25%), *positive RVs* (25%), and *tentative RVs* (25%) were found to prevail, followed by *factive* ones (12.5%). All eight instances of RVs identified in the corpus are exemplified and discussed as follows.

Table 4.13 Distribution of RVs in Terms of Denotative and Evaluative Classifications in BT Results and Discussion Chapters

Category/Sub-category	RF	%
Research Acts	**2**	**25.00**
Findings	0	12.50
Factive	0	0
Counter-Factive	0	0
Non-Factive	1	12.50
Procedures	1	12.50

Table 4.13 Distribution of RVs in Terms of Denotative and Evaluative Classifications in BT Results and Discussion Chapters (Continued)

Category/Sub-category	RF	%
Cognition Acts	**3**	**37.50**
Positive	2	25.00
Critical	0	0
Tentative	1	12.50
Neutral	0	0
Discourse Acts	**3**	**37.50**
Doubt	1	12.50
Tentative	1	12.50
Critical	0	0
Assurance	2	25.00
Factive	1	12.50
Non-Factive	1	12.50
Counters	0	0
TOTAL	**8**	**100**

As shown in Examples 10a and 10b, two *Cognition Act positive RVs*, "*think*" and "*deem*", were employed to present the authors' opinion to support the writers' findings.

(10a) *However, Jiang (2011) thought the main causes of non-English major students' listening anxiety were self-image, listening proficiency and strategies, teaching atmosphere, test and negative evaluation.* (BT17RD) (Cognition Act Positive)

(10b) *Zeng (2014) deemed that major sources of the restlessness arose from nervousness in English listening, short of confident, terrible English foundation and the pressure provided by instructors.* (BT17RD) (Cognition Act Positive)

Furthermore, another *Cognition Act RV* (*consider*) was employed in reporting the topic (the causes of listening anxiety) and then expressing the tentative stance toward the information reported (in Example 11).

(11) *Liu (2006) considered that the causes of listening anxiety included characteristics of listening activity, characteristics of listening material and characteristics of listening tasks.* (BT17RD) (Cognition Act Tentative)

As illustrated in Example 12a, "*point out*", as a *Discourse Assurance* verb, was used to introduce the cited material factively and to support the writer's claim. Moreover, "*say*", which was categorized in the same category, was used to report the information non-factively, neutrally informing the readers of the author's position (in Example 12b). One *tentative RV* (*suggest*) under the *Doubt* verb group was employed to report the previous source tentatively (in Example 12c)

(12a) *Hu Chundong once pointed out that the situation includes: the situation of real life, the situation of simulated communication, the situation of performance, the situation of intuitive teaching aids and the situation of imagination.* (BT25RD) (Discourse Act Assurance Factive)

(12b) *... as the previous researcher said, the process of cooperative learning should be student-centered.* (BT13RD) (Discourse Act Assurance Non-factive)

(12c) *Li (2016) suggested that good learning motivation can fully mobilize students' enthusiasm and initiative...* (BT21RD) (Discourse Act Doubt Tentative)

In Example 13a, the *Research Procedure RV* (*study*) was employed to report what has been done by the author, emphasizing the research procedure. Afterward, one *non-factive RV* (*find*) categorized in the *Research Finding* category was used to report what the research has found neutrally, emphasizing the research findings (in Example 13b).

(13a) *Deng (2015) studied the relationship between listening anxiety, listening level and meta-cognitive awareness among 253 Chinese non-English majors.* (BT17RD) (Research Act Procedure)

(13b) *It is found that listening anxiety can reduce students' listening ability, and listening anxiety is negatively correlated with listening meta-cognitive awareness.* (BT17RD) (Research Act Finding Non-factive)

Similar to the findings on RVs in the Introduction and Methodology Chapters, negative RVs (*critical* verbs in *Cognition Acts* and *Discourse Acts*, *counter-factive* verbs in *Research Acts*, and *counter verbs* in *Discourse Acts*) and *neutral RVs* were absent in the corpus. Meanwhile, the finding also resonates with that of Agbaglo (2017) where negative *RVs* had no occurrence. The absence of negative RVs confirms Hyland's (2002) claim that using negative verbs to explicitly rebut or directly criticize other researchers is a face-threatening behavior in academic writing, which may have a damaging result to publication opportunity.

Although the major results obtained from the current corpus, to a certain extent, reveal that these undergraduate students were aware of using RVs to link their research into the discourse community they inhabit, it is evident that limited RVs were used in the current corpus, which might affect achieving its rhetorical (persuasive) purposes. It is worth noting that a Results and Discussion chapter, as the key sub-genre of a thesis, is where the writers should present results/findings, interpret the results and make claims about their meaning and significance, and then move beyond their data and integrate the results of their study with existing theory and research (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). Therefore, the presence of a limited number of RVs tends to partly reveal that these undergraduate students did not sufficiently argue and discuss their results/findings in the light of existing research studies. As argued by Nguyen (2017), it could not help the results of their studies be situated in the existing body of knowledge in the literature. Three reasons might be the case. One reason for this is that Chinese undergraduate students, as novice learners of academic discourse, were not fully aware of the rhetorical functions of RVs. Secondly, these students were likely to be unfamiliar with using RVs to achieve the communicative purposes of the Results and Discussion chapters. Finally, as explained by Hyland (2002), the restricted range of verbs reflects students' deficit of vocabulary and low level of language proficiency.

4.1.6 Reporting Verbs Used in the Conclusion Chapters

As can be seen in *Table 4.14*, it provides the RVs used in the BT Conclusion Chapters, consisting of 16,582 words. The result shows that Chinese English major undergraduate students used 1 type and 1 token of RV in the current corpus.

Table 4.14 RVs in 30 BT Conclusion Chapters

	RF	NF
Types	1	0.6
Tokens	1	0.6

As exemplified in Example 14, the *Discourse Assurance factive RV* (*put forward*) was employed to report the claim of a previous researcher (Henricksen) and to support the writer's suggestions (applying the connectionism to English language vocabulary learning) provided in the Conclusion Chapter.

(14) *Based on the theory of connectionism, Henricksen (1999) has <u>put forward</u> a new explanation about the formation and the development of vocabulary learning.* (BT10C) (Discourse Act Assurance Factive)

It is worth noting that the Conclusion chapter of a thesis is where writers both summarize and "wrap up" their work to state the significance of what they have found out (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). In the Conclusion chapter, therefore, it is necessary to link their local contributions into the existing literature so as to persuade readers of their ideas as emphasized by Nguyen (2017). However, it is found that these undergraduate students in the present study rarely used RVs in their Conclusion Chapters to effectively integrate the voices of previous researchers into their writing. As discussed in *Section 4.1.5*, the reasons for this case are students' unawareness of the rhetorical functions of RVs, their unfamiliarity with using RVs to achieve the communicative purposes of Conclusion chapters, and their deficit of vocabulary.

4.2 Analysis of Reporting Verbs Used in Master's Theses by Chinese English Majors

4.2.1 Overall Findings

Table 4.15 offers a general picture of RVs used in 30 MTs by Chinese English majors, which consists of 492,819 words. In general, there were 207 types and 2,357 tokens of RVs that occurred in the 30 MTs, totally counting 4.2 types and 47.8 tokens per 10,000 words.

Table 4.15 RVs Used in 30 MTs by Chinese English Majors

	RF	NF
Types	207	4.2
Tokens	2357	47.8

Table 4.16 shows an overview of all RVs that occurred in 30 MTs by Chinese English majors. It is worth noting that during the process of coding and classifying the RVs, the word "*represent*" that occurred two times in the current corpus was misused both grammatically and semantically; therefore, a decision was made by the present researcher and her advisor to delete it from the list of RVs in 30 MTs. Consequently, these master's students used 207 different RVs in total to introduce previous sources, although more than a quarter of all cases in the corpus occurred only once. It also can be inferred that these students were aware of using different RVs. In addition, the results show that the most frequent form found in the corpus is *find* (147 occurrences), followed by *point out* (125 occurrences), *propose* (120 occurrences), *put forward* (101 occurrences), and *conduct* (73 occurrences). This finding is partly in line with Hyland's (2002) study in which *argue*, *suggest*, *show*, *explain*, *find*, and *point out* were found to be the common RVs, and Nguyen's (2017) study in which *state*, *suggest*, *define*, *find*, and *say* were found to be the most frequent RVs in the Vietnamese students' MTs. It can be inferred that although writers in different contexts might prefer different RVs, they have something in common when choosing RVs in reporting.

Table 4.16 List of RVs in 30 MTs by Chinese English Majors

1. find (147)	53. confirm (10)	105. release (3)	157. declare (1)
2. point out (125)	54. discover (10)	106. review (3)	158. dedicate (1)
3. propose (120)	55. identify (10)	107. separate (3)	159. deem (1)
4. put forward (101)	56. choose (9)	108. stipulate (3)	160. devise (1)
5. conduct (73)	57. research (9)	109. test (3)	161. devote (1)
6. believe (70)	58. comment (8)	110. treat (3)	162. dissect (1)
7. define (68)	59. draw (a) conclusion (8)	111. validate (3)	163. draw attention (1)
8. show (60)	60. find out (8)	112. achieve (2)	164. elucidate (1)
9. state (54)	61. make (an) analysis (8)	113. add (2)	165. embark on (1)
10. hold (53)	62. support (8)	114. coin (2)	166. experiment (1)
11. suggest (52)	63. admit (7)	115. complete (2)	167. expose (1)
12. study (51)	64. expound (7)	116. concentrate on (2)	168. form (1)
13. claim (49)	65. implement (7)	117. conceptualize (2)	169. formulate (1)
14. investigate (48)	66. notice (7)	118. construct (2)	170. found (1)
15. explore (46)	67. select (7)	119. express (2)	171. highlight (1)
16. argue (45)	68. agree (6)	120. extend (2)	172. imply (1)
17. think (38)	69. categorize (6)	121. extract (2)	173. involve (1)
18. examine (37)	70. elaborate (6)	122. improve (2)	174. issue (1)
19. analyze (34)	71. employ (6)	123. initiate a research (2)	175. iterate (1)
20. carry out (31)	72. make (a) conclusion (6)	124. justify (2)	176. juxtapose (1)
21. conclude (29)	73. observe (6)	125. launch (2)	177. lay the foundation (1)
22. emphasize (29)	74. probe into (6)	126. make (a) comparison (2)	178. look into (1)
23. regard (29)	75. raise (6)	127. make (a) research (2)	179. make a distinction (1)
24. indicate (27)	76. take (6)	128. make (a) summary (2)	180. make effort(s) to (1)
25. report (26)	77. collect (5)	129. make (a) survey (2)	181. make use
26. divide (25)	78. illustrate (5)	130. realize (2)	182. manifest (1)
27. summarize (25)	79. interview (5)	131. recommend (2)	183. measure (1)
28. develop (24)	80. maintain (5)	132. replicate (2)	184. merge (1)
29. focus (on) (24)	81. pay attention to (5)	133. search (2)	185. modify (1)
30. reveal (24)	82. refer (5)	134. set out (2)	186. name (1)
31. say (24)	83 stress (5)	135. sum up (2)	187. not regard (1)
32. use (23)	84. come up with (4)	136. survey (2)	188. offer (1)
33. compare (22)	85. compile (4)	137. testify (2)	189. optimize (1)
34. design (22)	86. contend (4)	138. utilize (2)	190. posit (1)
35. prove (22)	87. establish (4)	139. verify (2)	191. process (1)
36. discuss (20)	88. evaluate (4)	140. view (2)	192. promulgate (1)
37. mention (19)	89. expand (4)	141. acknowledge (1)	193. question (1)
38. do (17)	90. include (4)	142. adapt (1)	194. reframe (1)
39. describe (16)	91. insist (4)	143. address (1)	195. refute (1)

Table 4.16 List of RVs in 30 MTs by Chinese English Majors (Continued)

40. explain (16)	92. write (4)	144. advise (1)	196. revise (1)
41. classify (15)	93. advocate (3)	145. assert (1)	197. serve (as) (1)
42. consider (15)	94. assess (3)	146. attest (1)	198. set up (1)
43. give (out) (15)	95. combine (3)	147. assume (1)	199. specify (1)
44. introduce (15)	96. create (3)	148. attach importance to (1)	200. speculate (1)
45. adopt (14)	97. criticize (3)	149. attribute (1)	201. suspect (1)
46. make (a) study (14)	98. display (3)	150. call (1)	202. tag (1)
47. provide (14)	99 distinguish (3)	151. clarify (1)	203. uncover (1)
48. demonstrate (13)	100. figure out (3)	152. consent (1)	204. underline (1)
49. publish (13)	101. generalize (3)	153. contrast (1)	205. usher (1)
50. note (12)	102. list (3)	154. content (1)	206. voice (1)
51. present (11)	103. make (an) exploration (3)	155. convince (1)	207. work (1)
52. apply (10)	104. rebut (3)	156. deal (1)	

*(*The number in brackets indicates the frequency of RVs that occurred in 30 MTs by Chinese English Majors.)*

Table 4.17 provides a clear picture of RVs used in each chapter of 30 MTs produced by Chinese English majors. Firstly, RVs were heavily present in the Literature Review Chapters, accounting for more than five-quarters of the total number of RVs identified in the 30 MTs. Secondly, it is followed by those in the Introduction Chapters, representing 7.42% of the total RVs recorded in the data, and Results and Discussion Chapters, representing 6.41%. Thirdly, there was a relatively low number of RVs in the other two chapters; namely, Methodology Chapters and Conclusion Chapters (2.46% and 1.10%, respectively). This finding corresponds with Nguyen's (2017) study, in which the use of RVs in the Vietnamese students' theses is distributed in the Literature Review, Introduction, Methodology, Conclusion, and Results and Discussion from highest to lowest.

Table 4.17 General Distribution of RVs in Terms of Denotative Potentials and Evaluative Functions in 30 MTs

Category/ Sub-category	I	LR	M	RD	C	Total	% of total
Research Acts	**53**	**944**	**24**	**62**	**7**	**1090**	**46.25**
Findings	19	373	9	46	5	452	19.18
Factive	10	90	3	18	2	123	5.22
Counter-Factive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non-Factive	9	283	6	28	3	329	13.96
Procedures	34	571	15	16	2	638	27.07
Cognition Acts	**24**	**200**	**7**	**10**	**0**	**241**	**10.22**
Positive	15	115	2	6	0	138	5.85
Critical	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tentative	9	80	5	2	0	96	4.07
Neutral	0	5	0	2	0	7	0.30
Discourse Acts	**98**	**803**	**27**	**79**	**19**	**1026**	**43.53**
Doubt	22	191	2	15	8	238	10.10
Tentative	21	191	2	15	8	237	10.06
Critical	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.04
Assurance	74	606	25	64	11	780	33.09
Factive	49	329	14	46	6	444	18.84
Non-Factive	25	277	11	18	5	336	14.26
Counters	2	6	0	0	0	8	0.34
Total	**175**	**1947**	**58**	**151**	**26**	**2357**	**100**
% of total	**7.42**	**82.61**	**2.46**	**6.41**	**1.10**	**100**	

Employing Hyland's (2002) classification framework, RVs are classified into different categories in terms of their denotative potentials and evaluative functions. All RVs identified in the MT corpus, therefore, are classified based on the adopted framework, and it is provided in *Appendix C*. It is worth pointing out that compared with Hyland's (2002) list, a large number of new RVs are added to his taxonomy. In terms of the denotative categorizations, as indicated in *Table 4.17*, the RVs from the *Research Act* category had the highest frequency, representing 46.25% of all RVs identified in the corpus of 30 MTs, followed by *Discourse Act RVs* used as the second

priority (43.53%), and *Cognition Act RVs* accounted for the least used category (10.22%). Although this trend in using RVs contradicts the results from the findings of using RVs by Hyland (2002), Jiang (2015), Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015a, 2015b), and Agbaglo (2017), it accords with those of Manan and Noor (2014) and Un-udom and Un-udom (2020) where *Research Act RVs* were found predominant.

Regarding the evaluative categorizations, *non-factive RVs*, accounting for 28.22% of the total RVs identified in the MTs, were employed the most. It is followed by *factive* RVs and *tentative RVs* (24.06% and 14.13%, respectively). This finding is in line with those of previous studies by Hyland (2002) and Jalilifar (2012) where *non-factive* RVs were found predominant. However, these students avoided using negative RVs to explicitly rebut or criticize previous research since few instances of the negative verbs were found in the corpus.

It is worth pointing out that the further interpretation and detailed discussion of how RVs are used in each chapter of the MT corpus will be conducted in the following sections.

4.2.2 Reporting Verbs Used in the Introduction Chapters

Table 4.18 provides the overall picture of RVs used in 30 MT Introduction Chapters which consists of 41,892 words. It indicates that Chinese English major master's students used 69 types and 175 tokens of RVs in the corpus. After normalizing, these students used 16.5 types and 41.8 tokens of RVs per 10,000 words.

Table 4.18 RVs in 30 MT Introduction Chapters

	RF	NF
Types	69	16.5
Tokens	175	41.8

As shown in *Table 4.19*, the most common RVs in the current MT Introduction corpus are *point out* (19 occurrences), followed by *propose* (11 occurrences), *put forward* (10 occurrences), *focus* (7 occurrences), and *study* (7 occurrences). This finding is partly in agreement with Hyland's (2002) study in which *suggest*, *argue*, *show*, *explain*, *find*, and *point out* were found to be the most frequent

RVs in research articles and Nguyen and Pramoolsook's (2015b) study which found that *state*, *find*, *suggest*, *develop*, and *point out* were the common verbs used in the Introduction Chapters of Vietnamese postgraduates' theses. The findings indicate that although these writers use certain common RVs, they have a different potential range of items to draw on, and this different preference suggests a different conventionalization in the ways that the materials are reported in different contexts due to different language background of these writers (Jarkovská & Kučírková, 2020).

Table 4.19 List of RVs in 30 MT Introduction Chapters

1. point out (19)	19. refer (3)	37. consent (1)	55. question (1)
2. propose (11)	20.suggest (3)	38. contribute (1)	56. rebut (1)
3. put forward (10)	21. classify (2)	39. dedicate (1)	57. reframe (1)
4. focus (7)	22. confirm (2)	40. demonstrate (1)	58. release (1)
5. study (7)	23. discuss (2)	41. devise (1)	59. report (1)
6. conduct (6)	24. do (2)	42. elaborate (1)	60. research (1)
7. consider (6)	25. mention (2)	43. embark on (1)	61. say (1)
8. define (5)	26. publish (2)	44. examine (1)	62. serve (1)
9. regard (5)	27. reveal (2)	45. explore (1)	63. speculate (1)
10. show (5)	28. search (2)	46. hold (1)	64. summarize (1)
11. state (5)	29. stipulate (2)	47. introduce (1)	65. support (1)
12. claim (4)	30. think (2)	48. investigate (1)	66. suspect (1)
13. indicate (4)	31. address (1)	49. involve (1)	67. treat (1)
14. analyze (3)	32. admit (1)	50. lay the foundation (1)	68. uncover (1)
15. argue (3)	33. agree (1)	51. make effort(s) to (1)	69. usher (1)
16. carry out (3)	34. compare (1)	52. not regard (1)	
17. emphasize (3)	35. concentrate (1)	53. pay attention to (1)	
18. find (3)	36. conceptualize (1)	54. prove (1)	

*(*The number in brackets indicates the frequency of RVs that occurred in the MT Introduction Chapters.)*

Furthermore, *Table 4.20* provides a fairly clear distribution of RVs used in the current MT Introduction corpus in terms of their denotative potentials and evaluative functions.

Regarding the denotative categorizations, the RVs categorized in *Discourse Act RVs* were employed the most, accounting for 56.00% of the total number of RVs found in the corpus. The second rank of the use of RVs was *Research Act RVs* with more than a quarter (30.29%). The least used category of RVs was *Cognition Act* verbs, representing 13.71% of the total occurrences of RVs in the corpus. This trend in using RVs resonates with the findings by Hyland (2002), Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015a, 2015b), Jiang (2015), and Agbaglo (2017). The discursive nature of soft disciplines, to which the field of this target corpus belongs, is characterized by such tendency of RV employment (Hyland, 2002).

Table 4.20 Distribution of RVs in Terms of Denotative and Evaluative Classifications in MT Introduction Chapters

Category/Sub-category	RF	%
Research Acts	**53**	**30.29**
Findings	19	10.86
Factive	10	5.71
Counter-Factive	0	0
Non-Factive	9	5.14
Procedures	34	19.43
Cognition Acts	**24**	**13.71**
Positive	15	8.57
Critical	0	0
Tentative	9	5.14
Neutral	0	0
Discourse Acts	**98**	**56.00**
Doubt	22	12.57
Tentative	21	12.00
Critical	1	0.57
Assurance	74	42.29
Factive	49	28.00
Non-Factive	25	14.29
Counters	2	1.14
TOTAL	**175**	**100**

Hyland (2002) claims that the predominant use of *Discourse Act RVs* is more appropriate in an argument schema which more readily regards explicit interpretation, speculation, and argument as "accepted aspects of knowledge" (p. 126). As illustrated in Examples 15a-c, *Research Act RVs*, "*claim*", "*suggest*", and "*state*", were employed to verbally report the claims of previous researchers, allowing for constructing factual reliability and establishing a specific context of the knowledge. Moreover, the greater use of *Discourse Act* forms can help these master's students expedite the verbal explanation of the reported materials, facilitating qualitative arguments which rest on finely delineated interpretations and conceptualizations.

(15a) *Jespersen (1924) claimed that "a language would be a difficult thing to handle if its speakers had the burden imposed on them of remembering every little item separately" (p. 85).* (MT24I) (Discourse Act Assurance Factive)

(15b) *Wang and Wang (2003) suggested that the content of academic English should be strengthened by setting up public English curriculum, increasing the training of listening and speaking skills, and cultivating students' abilities to communicate in English.* (MT10I) (Discourse Act Doubt Tentative)

(15c) *Truscott (1996) stated that WCF was ineffective and even detrimental to the extent to which students can learn.* (MT08I) (Discourse Act Assurance Non-factive)

Cognition Act RVs were employed with the lowest percentage of the three process categories. In Examples 16a-c, Chinese English major master's students employed some *Cognition Act RVs*, such as "*agree*", "*hold*", and "*consider*", to report previous research as proceeding from the interpretive operations or verbal accounts of researchers, emphasizing the role that reasoning and argument play in knowledge construction.

(16a) *Cunningsworth (2002) and Ur (2000) agree that textbooks serve as a syllabus in some places where the learning and teaching objectives have already been set.* (MT27I) (Cognition Act Positive)

(16b) *Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 293) held the view that "cohesion is a necessary though not a sufficient condition for the creation of text".* (MT13I) (Cognition Act Positive)

(16c) *As a kind of the integrated reading-to-write tasks, the continuation task has been considered by Wang (2012) that can offer opportunities for writers to combine reading and writing.* (MT03I) (Cognition Act Tentative)

Although *Cognition Act RVs* play a greater role in personal interpretation in knowledge negotiation, as argued by Hyland (2002), they are employed to depict previous information in terms of the cited author's mental activities, thereby giving prominence to the role of human agency in constructing claims, and often making misinterpretation. Moreover, the Introduction chapter serves as a guide for providing fundamental knowledge, introducing the topic of the research, attracting readers' attention, and helping readers understand the content the writers are analyzing. At the same time, the fact that the subjective feature of the greater use of *Cognition Act RVs* does not conform to the requirements of academic writing (Liu & Wang, 2019). Accordingly, these students are far less likely to use *Cognition Act RVs* in their Introduction Chapters since extensive use of mental verbs might have an impact upon the objective introduction of a research.

Following Hyland's (2002) classification framework, *Research Act RVs* can be divided into two general categories in terms of the statements of findings or procedures. In the MT Introductions, master's students tended to use *Procedure RVs* (19.43%) than *Finding RVs* (10.86%). In Examples 17a-c, some of the *Research Procedure RVs* such as "*analyze"*, "*conduct*", and "*explore*" were employed to report what prior research has found, emphasizing the procedures conducted in the previous research. The finding implies that these master's students, as novice researchers, prefer employing *Procedure verbs* to refer to the procedural aspects of previous researchers' investigations, emphasizing their concrete objective research procedures.

(17a) *Lantolf & Bobrova (2012) analyze the cultural variations in the dominant conceptual metaphors, their mappings and entailments,*

and modalities chosen in constructing metaphors. (MT05I) (Research Act Procedure)

(17b) *Li Jingliang and Cai Jinxu (2001) conducted a research on the article errors in English writing.* (MT09I) (Research Act Procedure)

(17c) *Chen Wanzhen (2002) studied the collection errors made by the students majoring in English from PLA Foreign Languages University.* (MT09I) (Research Act Procedure)

Concerning their evaluative categorizations, *factive RVs* were found to be the most employed category, taking up 33.71% of the total number of RVs identified in the MT Introduction Chapters, followed by *non-factive RVs* and *tentative RVs* (19.43% and 17.14%, respectively). This trend in using RVs accords with the study by Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015b) in which similar results were found. The finding reveals that these master's students tended to take an explicit attitude toward the cited materials, as seen by their preference of employing *factive RVs* to describe the claims reported and support their own argument by giving the original authors' proposition a high degree of confidence. As illustrated in Examples 18a-b, two *factive RVs*, "*confirm*" and "*support*", were used to show the writers' positive attitude toward the reported claims and signal their acceptance of the claims.

(18a) *Biber & Finegan (1989) also confirm this essential feature of academic writing.* (MT14I) (Discourse Act Finding Factive)

(18b) *…learners who receive focused feedback will have a better acquisition than those who receive unfocused feedback in that they are more likely to have a clear understanding of the nature of errors and … recent studies (e.g. Sheen, 2007; Sheen, Wright & Moldawa, 2009; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009; Chen et.al., 2013) have also supported this claim.* (MT08I) (Discourse Act Assurance Factive)

It is worth noting that master's students avoided explicit rebuttal or direct confrontation with previous researchers through the avoidance of using *counter-factive RVs* (in *Research Act RVs*) and *critical RVs* (in *Cognition Act RVs*). The result shows that only three instances of negative RVs were found in the MT Introductions (1.71%). As

shown in Examples 19a and 19b below, two negative RVs, "*question*" and "*rebut*", were employed to attribute the position of responsibility for the evaluation to the cited author's own objections to the correctness of the reported information. However, in Example 19c, the writer employed the verb "*not regard*", which belongs to the *Discourse Act Doubt verb*, to express that she held a negative attitude toward the reported information, and then to support her own view on the reported topic (academic discourse).

(19a) *However, Dörnyei (2005) questioned the applicability of integrativeness with the worldwide development of English. (MTI06) (Discourse Act Counter)*

(19b) *Facing the shocking conclusion made by Truscott (1996), scholars represented by Ferris (1999) rebutted that Truscotf's speculation is premature. (MTI08) (Discourse Act Counter)*

(19c) *Nevertheless, in the opinion of some discourse analysts during the past few decades, they do not regard that the academic discourse should be regarded as completely objective (Hunston, 1993, 1994; Hunston & Thompson, 2001). (MTI14) (Discourse Act Doubt Critical)*

Although three negative RVs were used to offer a negative assessment of others' viewpoints, those RVs are drawn from the category of *Discourse Acts*, focusing on the cited authors' interpretation or texts, rather than their research. It is potentially a less challenging form of criticism since they avoid direct attack on the author's competence or reputation (Thompson &Ye, 1991; Hyland, 2002). Furthermore, the fact that negative RVs are rarely employed in the current corpus also confirms Hyland's (2002) claim of their that such act is a serious face-threatening act in academic writing.

4.2.3 Reporting Verbs Used in the Literature Review Chapters

Table 4.21 provides the overview of RVs used in the corpus of 30 MT Literature Review Chapters, which consists of 160,867 words. It shows that Chinese English major master's students used 184 types and 1,947 tokens of RVs in the corpus. After normalizing, they used 11.4 types and 121.0 tokens of RVs per 10,000 words.

Table 4.21 RVs in 30 MT Literature Review Chapters

	RF	NF
Types	184	11.4
Tokens	1947	121.0

The results imply that RVs used in the Literature Review Chapters by master's students are much larger in amount and wider in range when compared with those used in the MT Introduction Chapters. This finding is confirmed to characterize the communicative purpose embodied in a Literature Review chapter where its communicative purpose is to contextualize the writer's research (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007), showing that they are familiar with the previous research on the topic or background theory related to the research, or both, and indicating their understanding of the relevance or implication to the study being conducted.

As provided in *Table 4.22*, the most frequent RV used in the current Literature Review corpus was *find* (123 occurrences), followed by *propose* (99 occurrences), *point out* (74 occurrences), *put forward* (72 occurrences), and *believe* (67 occurrences). This finding is most consistent with the finding on the RVs used in the MT Introduction Chapters and is partly consistent with Hyland's (2002) study, where *suggest*, *argue*, *show*, *explain*, *find*, and *point out* were found to be the most common verbs. However, this finding does not confirm the study of Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015a) that found *state*, *define*, *suggest*, *claim*, and *find/say* the most common RVs in the Literature Reviews of Vietnamese postgraduates' theses. As discussed in *Section 4.2.2*, the findings reveal that although these writers in different contexts prefer some common RVs, they still have a different potential range of items to draw on, and such different preference indicates a different conventionalization in the ways of referencing the work of others in different contexts.

Table 4.22 List of RVs in 30 MT Literature Review Chapters

1. find (123)	47. note (11)	93. criticize (3)	139. assert (1)
2. propose (99)	48. apply (10)	94. display (3)	140. attach importance to (1)
3. put forward (81)	49. present (10)	95. distinguish (3)	141. call (1)
4. point out (80)	50. publish (10)	96. figure out (3)	142. clarify (1)
5. believe (67)	51. choose (9)	97. generalize (3)	143. conceptualize (1)
6. define (62)	52. discover (9)	98. make (an) exploration (3)	144. contrast (1)
7. conduct (60)	53. identify (9)	99. review (3)	145. content (1)
8. hold (46)	54. comment (8)	100. separate (3)	146. convince (1)
9. investigate (46)	55. draw (a) conclusion (8)	101. test (3)	147. deal (1)
10. show (45)	56. find out (8)	102. validate (3)	148. declare (1)
11. explore (44)	57. make (an) analysis (8)	103. achieve (2)	149. deem (1)
12. study (44)	58. research (8)	104. add (2)	150. devote (1)
13. state (40)	59. consider (7)	105. advocate (2)	151. dissect (1)
14. claim (39)	60. demonstrate (7)	106. coin (2)	152. draw attention (1)
15. suggest (39)	61. expound (7)	107. complete (2)	153. elucidate (1)
16. think (35)	62. implement (7)	108. construct (2)	154. experiment (1)
17. examine (34)	63. select (7)	109. express (2)	155. expose (1)
18. argue (32)	64. admit (6)	110. extend (2)	156. form (1)
19. analyze (31)	65. employ (6)	111. extract (2)	157. found (1)
20. conclude (27)	66. make (a) conclusion (6)	112.improve (2)	158. imply (1)
21. carry out (26)	67. take (6)	113. initiate a research (2)	159. issue (1)
22. emphasize (24)	68. agree (5)	114. justify (2)	160. iterate (1)
23. divide (23)	69. categorize (5)	115. launch (2)	161. juxtapose (1)
24. regard (23)	70. collect (5)	116. list (2)	162. look into (1)
25. summarize (23)	71. confirm (5)	117. make (a) comparison (2)	163. make a distinction (1)
26. use (21)	72. elaborate (5)	118. make (a) research (2)	164. make use (1)
27. compare (20)	73. illustrate (5)	119. make (a) summary (2)	165. manifest (1)
28. develop (20)	74. interview (5)	120. make (a) survey (2)	166. measure (1)
29. report (20)	75. maintain (5)	121. raise (2)	167. merge (1)
30. design (19)	76. notice (5)	122. realize (2)	168. modify (1)
31. indicate (19)	77. observe (5)	123. rebut (2)	169. name (1)
32. discuss (18)	78.probe into (5)	124. recommend (2)	170. offer (1)
33. reveal (18)	79. come up with (4)	125. refer (2)	171. optimize (1)
34. focus (on) (17)	80. establish (4)	126. release (2)	172. posit (1)
35. say (17)	81. evaluate (4)	127. replicate (2)	173. process (1)
36. mention (16)	82. expand (4)	128. set out (2)	174. promulgate (1)
37. prove (16)	83. include (4)	129. sum up (2)	175. refute (1)
38. describe (14)	84. insist (4)	130. survey (2)	176. revise (1)
39. give (out) (14)	85. pay attention to (4)	131. testify (2)	177. set up (1)

Table 4.22 List of RVs in 30 MT Literature Review Chapters (Continued)

40. provide (14)	86. stress (4)	132. treat (2)	178. specify (1)
41. adopt (13)	87. support (4)	133. verify (2)	179. stipulate (1)
42. introduce (13)	88. assess (3)	134. view (2)	180. tag (1)
43. make (a) study (13)	89. combine (3)	135. write (2)	181. underline (1)
44. explain (12)	90. compile (3)	136. acknowledge (1)	182. utilize (1)
45. classify (11)	91. contend (3)	137. adapt (1)	183. voice (1)
46. do (11)	92. create (3)	138. advise (1)	184. work (1)

*(*The number in brackets indicates the frequency of RVs that occurred in 30 MT Literature Review Chapters.)*

Table 4.23 provides a clear distribution of RVs used in the current MT Literature Review corpus in terms of their denotative and evaluative functions. Regarding the denotative categorizations, the RVs categorized in *Research Act RVs* had the highest frequency, accounting for 48.49% of the total number of RVs found in the corpus. The second rank was *Discourse Act RVs* (41.24%). The least used category was *Cognition Act* verbs, representing 10.27% of the total occurrences of RVs in the corpus. Although this finding contradicts the results from the MT Introductions, it accords with those of Manan and Noor (2014) and Un-udom and Un-udom (2020) where *Research Act RVs* were found predominant.

Table 4.23 Distribution of RVs in Terms of Denotative and Evaluative Classifications in MT Literature Review Chapters

Category/Sub-category	RF	%
Research Acts	**944**	**48.49**
Findings	373	19.16
Factive	90	4.62
Counter-Factive	0	0
Non-Factive	283	14.54
Procedures	571	29.33
Cognition Acts	**200**	**10.27**
Positive	115	5.90
Critical	0	0
Tentative	80	4.11
Neutral	5	0.26

Table 4.23 Distribution of RVs in Terms of Denotative and Evaluative Classifications in MT Literature Review Chapters (Continued)

Category/Sub-category	RF	%
Discourse Acts	**803**	**41.24**
Doubt	191	9.81
Tentative	191	9.81
Critical	0	0
Assurance	606	31.12
Factive	329	16.90
Non-Factive	277	14.23
Counters	6	0.31
TOTAL	**1947**	**100**

Hyland (2002) claims that the predilection for *Research Act RVs* helps convey an experimental explanatory schema, which regards research activity as "an inductive, impersonal and empirically-based endeavor" (p. 126). This finding demonstrates that these master's students preferred to employ *Research Act RVs* to report experimental activities or actions carried out by the previous researchers in the Literature Review Chapters, emphasizing that the reported facts are shown to emerge from experimental activities rather than discursive practices, and the legitimacy of the information rests securely on the non-contingent, socially invariant standards of research procedures (Hyland, 2002). Meanwhile, it is also associated with the communicative purposes of a Literature Review chapter. It is the place where writers need to review the existing knowledge on what has been done in the context of a topic. As can be seen in Examples 20a-b below, *Research Act RVs*, "*study*", "*investigate*", "*compare*" and "*find*", were employed in reporting previous research in statements of findings or procedures.

(20a) *Zhang Chun (2014) <u>studied</u> how to cultivate students' thinking disposition in classroom discussions and games. He mainly <u>investigated</u> how to promote the development of students' thinking disposition in English teaching from the perspective of learning activities…* (MT01LR) (Research Act Procedure)

(20b) *Esmaeili (2002) also compared integrated writing scores with independent writing scores and found that the ESL participants achieved significantly higher scores in the integrated than in the independent writing task. (MT03LR)* (Research Act Finding Non-factive) (Research Act Procedure)

Meanwhile, in terms of the sub-categories of *Research Act RVs*, master's students preferred to use *Procedure RVs* (29.33%) over *Finding RVs* (19.16%). The finding reflects that these students, as novice researchers of academic discourse, were more likely to report the research procedures that have been conducted by previous researchers than the research results that have been found.

Like the findings in the MT Introductions, *Cognition Act RVs* were the least used category in the MT Literature Reviews. As illustrated in Examples 21a-c, master's students used some *Cognition Act RVs* such as "*think*", "*consider*", and "*notice*" to report previous research as proceeding from the interpretive operations or verbal accounts of researchers to a certain extent, highlighting the importance of reasoning and argument in knowledge construction.

(21a) *Hutchinson and Waters (1987) thought that target-centered needs analysis decides the destination of learners and it …* (MT10LR) (Cognition Act Positive)

(21b) *Wiseman (2001) considers that ICC contains knowledge, skills and motivation required to communicate with people from different cultures effectively and appropriately.* (MT15LR) (Cognition Act Tentative)

(21c) *Caballero (2009) notices that cultural background influences both the choice of source domain in purely verbal metaphors describing wines and the choice of pictures in the advertisements.* (MT05LR)) (Cognition Act Neutral)

Although, as argued in Hyland (2002), *Cognition Act RVs* play a larger part in personal interpretation in knowledge negotiation, they are used to depict previous materials in terms of the author's reasoning and mental activities, which emphasizes

the importance of human agency in making claims and often makes misinterpretation. Moreover, the subjective feature of Chinese writers' greater use of *Cognition Act RVs* might not comply to the requirements of academic writing (Liu & Wang, 2019). Accordingly, these students are far less likely to use *Cognition Act RVs* in the Literature Review Chapter since extensive use of mental verbs might affect the objective introduction of research background information or research context.

Considering the evaluative categories of RVs, *non-factive RVs* were found the most, representing 28.75% of the total number of RVs recorded in the current MT Literature Review corpus, followed by *factive RVs* and *tentative RVs* (21.52% and 13.92%, respectively). This finding is different from the finding in the MT Introduction Chapters. In Examples 22a-c, *non-factive RVs* like "*reveal*", "*define*", and "*state*" were used to report the claims of others neutrally and give no clear signal to express their stance toward the reported claims. This finding reveals that master's students' preference for *non-factive-RVs* can help them neutrally comment on the cited information and inform the readers of the writers' positions to the information, providing an acknowledgment of previous research without appearing to corrupt it with personal judgment.

(22a) *Power, Cook and Meyer (1979) revealed that surroundings played an important part in writing apprehension.* (MT18LR) (Research Act Finding Non-factive)

(22b) *Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) defined foreign language anxiety as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to …".* (MT21LR) (Discourse Act Assurance Non-factive)

(22c) *Wray (2002) also stated that lexical chunks can be of great benefit to language fluency and accuracy*. (MT24LR) (Discourse Act Assurance Non-factive)

Like the findings on RVs in MT Introduction Chapters, master's students avoided explicitly rebutting or directly attacking previous researchers through the avoidance of using *counter-factive RVs* (in *Research Acts*), absence of *critical RVs* (in *Cognition Acts and Discourse Acts*), and few occurrences of *counter RVs* (in *Research Acts*). Among 1,947 RVs, only six instances of negative RVs were found in the current corpus (0.31%). As can be seen in Examples 23a-c below, three negative RVs, "*criticize*"

"*rebut*", and "*refute*", were used to refute the claims of previous researchers to either support their own opposition to a position or to demolish an opposing argument.

(23a) *Nuttall (2002) criticizes such phenomenon that most teachers always resort to the traditional grammar-based teaching method to teach students.* (MT12LR) (Discourse Act Counter)

(23b) *Truscott (1996) rebutted that the truth is that there are some longitudinal studies and their findings are also in line with his conclusion.* (MT08LR) (Discourse Act Counter)

(23c) *Schmidt (1983) refutes Krashen's comprehensible input by the research on…* (MT26LR) (Discourse Act Counter)

It is worth noting that master's students' employment of those negative RVs attributes the position of responsibility for the evaluation to the cited author's own objections to the correctness of the reported information instead of taking responsibility for the evaluation. At the same time, those RVs are drawn from the category of *Discourse Acts*, focusing on the cited authors' interpretation or texts, rather than their research. Thompson and Ye (1991) and Hyland (2002) explain that it may be a less challenging form of criticism because it avoids direct attack on the author's competence or reputation. As argued in *Section 4.2.2*, in academic writing, explicit rebuttal to other researchers is a serious face-threatening act, and such violation of interpersonal conventions is likely to cause the publishing gatekeepers to retaliate or oppose the writer (Hyland, 2002).

4.2.4 Reporting Verbs Used in the Methodology Chapters

Table 4.24 provides an overall picture of RVs used in 30 MT Methodology Chapters, consisting of 67,064 words. As can be seen, Chinese English major master's students used 34 types and 58 tokens of RVs in the current corpus. In other words, they used 5.1 types and 8.6 tokens of RVs per 10,000 words.

Table 4.24 RVs in 30 MT Methodology Chapters

	RF	NF
Types	34	5.1
Tokens	58	8.6

The results reveal that RVs used in the Methodology Chapters by master's students are much smaller in amount and narrower in range when compared with those used in the previous two chapters, that is, Introduction and Literature Review Chapters. The infrequent use of RVs in the current chapters can be attributed to the role a Methodology chapter plays in a thesis. Its communicative purposes are to describe how the research was carried out and how the data were collected and processed, which provides the rationale for the research design under discussion (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). Accordingly, these master's students might be more likely to present research method(s) and procedure(s) rather than reporting others' viewpoints, except for some frameworks or achievements adapted from previous scholars. In this case, RVs are thus used in a small number in these chapters.

Table 4.25 List of RVs in 30 MT Methodology Chapters

1. point out (5)	10. emphasize (2)	19. compile (1)	28. make (a) study (1)
2. put forward (5)	11. hold (2)	20. confirm (1)	29. mention (1)
3. develop (3)	12. raise (2)	21. consider (1)	30. prove (1)
4. find (3)	13. regard (2)	22. contend (1)	31. publish (1)
5. believe (2)	14. say (2)	23. define (1)	32. suggest (1)
6. claim (2)	15. state (2)	24. demonstrate (1)	33. summarize (1)
7. conduct (2)	16. use (2)	25. divide (1)	34. write (1)
8. design (2)	17. assume (1)	26. formulate (1)	
9. do (2)	18. classify (1)	27. give (1)	

*(*The number in brackets indicates the frequency of RVs that occurred in 30 MT Methodology Chapters)*

Furthermore, the most common RVs used in the current corpus were *point out* (5 occurrences), *put forward* (5 occurrences), *develop* (3 occurrences), and *find* (3 occurrences) (*Table 4.25*). This finding is most consistent with the findings on RVs in the MT Introduction Chapters and Literature Review Chapters. In addition to these most common RVs, 11 of the remaining verbs occurred twice and 17 occurred only once.

Table 4.26 provides the clear division of RVs used in the MT Methodology Chapters based on the denotative potentials and evaluation functions of RVs.

Table 4.26 Distribution of RVs in Terms of Denotative and Evaluative Classifications in MT Methodology Chapters

Category/Sub-category	RF	%
Research Acts	**24**	**41.38**
Findings	9	15.52
Factive	3	5.17
Counter-Factive	0	0
Non-Factive	6	10.34
Procedures	15	25.86
Cognition Acts	**7**	**12.07**
Positive	2	3.45
Critical	0	0
Tentative	5	8.62
Neutral	0	0
Discourse Acts	**27**	**46.55**
Doubt	2	3.45
Tentative	2	3.45
Critical	0	0
Assurance	25	43.10
Factive	14	24.14
Non-Factive	11	18.97
Counters	0	0
TOTAL	**58**	**100**

In terms of their denotative categorizations, the RVs categorized in *Discourse Act RVs* recorded the highest frequency of occurrence, accounting for 46.55% of the total occurrences of RVs in the current corpus, followed by *Research Act RVs* which recorded 41.38% of the total RVs identified in the corpus, and *Cognition Act RVs*, which had the lowest percentage (12.07%). Although this finding contradicts the results on RVs in the MT Literature Reviews, it accords with the trend of RVs used in the MT Introductions and that of Hyland (2002), Jiang (2015), Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015a,

2015b), and Agbaglo (2017). Hyland (2002) also argues that this tendency characterizes the discursive nature of soft disciplines to which the field of this target corpus belongs. Moreover, the frequency of the use of *Discourse Act RVs* is close to *Research Act RVs*. This tends to indicate that linguistic activities or verbal expression of previous studies were emphasized as much as their experimental activities or actions.

As illustrated in Examples 24a-c, *Research Act RVs*, such as "*suggest*", "*point out*", and "*say*" were employed to verbally report the claims of established scholars, which can construct factual reliability, establish a specific context of the knowledge in the Methodology Chapters, and describe how the research was conducted based on those cited claims.

(24a) *Dörnyei (2009, p.38) suggested that "the self approach may not be appropriate for pre-secondary students".* (MT23M) (Research Act Doubt Tentative)

(24b) *McNamara et al. (2014) point out that Coh-Metrix easability components display a more complete picture of text difficulty or text ease that emerge from linguistic characteristics of texts.* (MT07M) (Research Act Assurance Factive)

(24c) *Qin (2016) says Cronbach alpha not only can be used for detecting the internal consistency in every part of questionnaire and also the whole questionnaire.* (MT10M) (Research Act Assurance Non-factive)

On the other hand, the use of *Research Act RVs* in the Methodology Chapter helps to convey an experimental explanatory schema. To be more specific, master's students' preference for *Research Act RVs* can report experimental activities or actions carried out by the previous researchers, which emphasizes that the reported facts are shown to emerge from experimental activities (Hyland, 2002). As illustrated in Examples 25a-c below, *Research Act RVs* such as "*prove*", "*develop*", and "*find*" were employed in the Methodology Chapters to report previous research in statements of findings or procedures.

(25a) *Li Li, Chen Zhian & Jiang Yuhong (2006) have proved that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this questionnaire is 0.836*. (MT22M) (Research Act Finding Factive)

(25b) *Since it is first <u>developed</u> by Laurence Anthony in 2002, the software keeps updating each year until today*. (MT17M) (Research Act Procedure)

(25c) *The reliability of the questionnaire and the subscales was <u>conducted</u> by Cheng (2004)*. (MT18M) (Research Act Procedure)

Similar to the findings in the MT Introduction and Literature Review Chapters, in terms of the sub-categories of *Research Act RVs*, master's students used *Procedure RVs* (25.86%) more frequently than *Finding RVs* (15.52%). The finding demonstrates that these students were more likely to report on research procedures performed by previous researchers than on research results that have been discovered.

Furthermore, *Cognition Act RVs* were the least used category in the MT Methodology Chapters. As exemplified in Examples 26a-c, some *Cognition Act RVs* (*hold*, *believe*, and *consider*) were used by master's students to report previous research as proceeding from the interpretive operations or verbal accounts of researchers, emphasizing the role that reasoning and argument play in knowledge construction.

(26a) *Babbie (1995) also emphasizes the importance of a pilot study. He <u>holds</u> the opinion that before questionnaires are spread on a large scale, they are required to be tested, developed and adjusted.* (MT15M) (Cognition Act Positive)

(26b) *Li and Wu (2016) <u>believed</u> that autonomous learning ability refers to the ability to study consciously and actively in a proper way on the basis of existing knowledge.* (MT30M) (Cognition Act Tentative)

(26c) *Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) <u>considered</u> that the semi-structured interview can be regarded as a flexible research tool to get more abundant and unpredictable data which is…* (MT01M) (Cognition Act Tentative)

The infrequent use of *Cognition Act RVs* might be caused by the following three reasons. Firstly, extensive use of *Cognition Act RVs* which are concerned with the author's theorizing and mental activities is more likely to make misinterpretations

(Hyland, 2002). Secondly, considering the communicative purposes of Methodology Chapters, it is inappropriate to use a large number of RVs. Thirdly, the subjective feature of the frequent use of *Cognition Act RVs* does not conform to the requirements of academic writing (Liu & Wang, 2019). Therefore, a small number of *Cognition Act RVs* were employed since extensive use of mental verbs might have an impact upon the objective introduction of a research methodology.

In terms of the evaluative categorizations of RVs, it is interesting to find that both *factive RVs* and *non-factive RVs* were equally used in the MT Methodology Chapters, being equally ranked the most (29.31% and 29.31%, respectively). It is followed by *tentative RVs* and *positive RVs* (12.07% and 3.45%, respectively). In Examples 27a and 27b, these students used *factive verbs* such as "*confirm*" and "*emphasize*" to show their positive attitude toward the claims of previous researchers and signal their acceptance of them.

(27a) *Hancioglu and Eldridge (2007) confirm that the 2000 headwords in the list still provide approximately 80% text coverage in written English.* (MT27M) (Research Act Finding Factive)

(27b) *Anderson (1984) emphasizes that readability formulas, by their very nature, do not consider factors such as the maturity, interest, motivation and experience of students as references for the reading level of materials.* (MT07M) (Discourse Act Assurance Factive)

Moreover, the *non-factive* verbs "*divide*" and "*state*" were used to neutrally cite the material of others and give no clear signal to express their stance toward the reported information (in Examples 28a-b).

(28a) *Pérez-Sobrino (2016b) further divides them into several types…* (MT05M) (Research Act Finding Non-factive)

(28b) *As stated by Macintyre (2009), eastern culture differs from western culture in the construction of self and it is important to take cultural factors into account.* (MT06M) (Discourse Act Assurance Non-factive)

This finding tends to indicate that these master's students are willing to employ those two categories of RVs in their MT Methodology Chapters to construct a

coherent and credible representativeness of their research design by attributing propositional content to the existing literature.

Like the findings on the Introduction and Literature Review Chapters, these master's students avoided explicitly rebutting or directly criticizing previous research. The results show that no negative RVs were found in the current MT Methodology corpus, that is, the absence of *critical* verbs (in *Cognition Acts* and *Discourse Acts*), *counter* verbs (in *Discourse Acts*), and *counter-factive* verbs (in *Research Acts*). To a certain extent, it is associated with the communicative purposes of a Methodology chapter in which it is inappropriate to attack previous researchers and their research. In addition, it also confirms Hyland's (2002) claim that negative assessment or explicit rebuttal of others can sound like a challenge to previous research being cited.

4.2.5 Reporting Verbs Used in the Results and Discussion Chapters

In the case of total number of RVs found in the MT Results and Discussion Chapters (*Table 4.27*), 51 types and 151 tokens of RVs were used by Chinese English major master's students. The current corpus consists of 175,111 words. Accordingly, they used 2.9 types and 8.6 tokens of RVs per 10,000 words. The results reveal that RVs used in the MT Results and Discussion Chapters by master's students are much smaller in amount and narrower in range when compared with those used in the MT Introduction and Literature Review Chapters, but larger in amount and wider in range when compared with those used in the MT Methodology Chapters.

Table 4.27 RVs in 30 MT Results and Discussion Chapters

	RF	NF
Types	51	2.9
Tokens	151	8.6

As shown in *Table 4.28*, the most frequent RVs used in the current corpus were *find* (17 occurrences) and *point out* (17 occurrences), being equally ranked first, followed by *argue* (10 occurrences), *show* (9 occurrences), and *propose* (8 occurrences). This finding is most consistent with the results on RVs found in previous MT Introduction, Literature Review, and Methodology Chapters. This finding indicates

that these master's students tended to use a specific range of RVs even in the different chapters. Meanwhile, it also accords with that of Hyland's (2002) study in which *suggest*, *argue*, *show*, *explain*, *find*, and *point out* were found to be the most common verbs.

Table 4.28 List of RVs in 30 MT Results and Discussion Chapters

1. find (17)	12. put forward (4)	23. do (2)	34. consider (1)	45. note (1)
2. point out (17)	13. say (4)	24. notice (2)	35. describe (1)	46. observe (1)
3. argue (10)	14. suggest (4)	25. raise (2)	36. develop (1)	47. probe into (1)
4. show (9)	15. indicate (3)	26. adopt (1)	37. discover (1)	48. stress (1)
5. propose (8)	16. prove (3)	27. advocate (1)	38. divide (1)	49. think (1)
6. report (5)	17. reveal (3)	28. attest (1)	39. examine (1)	50. utilize (1)
7. claim (4)	18. state (3)	29. attribute (1)	40. explore (1)	51. write (1)
8. conduct (4)	19. support (3)	30. believe (1)	41. identify (1)	
9. demonstrate (4)	20. carry out (2)	31. categorize (1)	42. introduce (1)	
10. explain (4)	21. conclude (2)	32. classify (1)	43. investigate (1)	
11. hold (4)	22. confirm (2)	33. compare (1)	44. list (1)	

*(*The number in brackets indicates the frequency of RVs that occurred in 30 MT Results-Discussion Chapters)*

Table 4.29 provides a clear distribution of RVs used in the MT Results and Discussion Chapters in terms of the denotative potentials and evaluation functions of RVs. In the case of distribution of RVs in denotative categorizations, the highest number of verbs used belonged to the *Discourse Act* category, recording 52.32% of the total number of RVs identified in the data. *Research Act RVs* ranked second, having 41.06% of the total number of RVs recorded in the data. *Cognition Act RVs* had the lowest number, accounting for 6.62%. This finding is consistent with the findings on RVs used in the Introduction and Methodology Chapters. In addition, this trend also accords with the findings of previous studies, such as Hyland (2002), Jiang (2015), Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015a, 2015b), and Agbaglo (2017).

Table 4.29 Distribution of RVs in Terms of Denotative and Evaluative Classifications in MT Results and Discussion Chapters

Category/Sub-category	RF	%
Research Acts	**62**	**41.06**
Findings	46	30.46
Factive	18	11.92
Counter-Factive	0	0
Non-Factive	28	18.54
Procedures	16	10.60
Cognition Acts	**10**	**6.62**
Positive	6	3.97
Critical	0	0
Tentative	2	1.32
Neutral	2	1.32
Discourse Acts	**79**	**52.32**
Doubt	15	9.93
Tentative	15	9.93
Critical	0	0
Assurance	64	42.38
Factive	46	30.46
Non-Factive	18	11.92
Counters	0	0
TOTAL	**151**	**100**

As argued by Hyland (2002), the dominant use of *Discourse Act RVs* is more appropriate in an argument schema. As exemplified in Examples 29a-c, *Research Act RVs*, "*argue*", "*report*", and "*propose*", were employed to verbally report the propositions of others, and these explicit interpretation, speculation and arguments are regarded as "accepted aspects of knowledge" (Hyland, 2002, p. 126) in these Results and Discussion Chapters.

(29a) *Crossley, Kyle & McNamara (2016b) <u>argued</u> that the quality of English writing cannot be predicted by local and text cohesion and…* (MT13RD) (Research Act Assurance Factive)

(29b) *Nelson et al. (2012) report that Coh-Metrix text easability components provide a multidimensional approach to evaluating the readability of texts.* (MT07RD) (Research Act Assurance Non-factive)

(29c) *Dörnyei (2009) has proposed that a positive learning experience affects learners' motivated behavior positively.* (MT23RD) (Research Act Doubt Tentative)

The results show that *Cognition Act RVs* were the least used category in the MT Results and Discussion Chapters (6.62%). As exemplified in Examples 30a-c, some *Cognition Act RVs* such as "*hold*" "*consider*" and "*notice*" were used by master's students to report previous research as proceeding from the interpretive operations or verbal accounts of researchers, emphasizing the role that reasoning and argument play in knowledge construction.

(30a) *Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) hold the view that two major kinds of modifications should be distinguished: internal modifications and external modifications.* (MT25RD) (Cognition Act Positive)

(30b) *Gong (2015) considered that the development of thinking disposition is not only the goal of the English course, but also the process of English teaching.* (MT01RD) (Cognition Act Tentative)

(30c) *Hu & Cao (2011) notice that boosters occur more frequently in the abstracts published in English-medium journals, and report no statistically significant difference between the two.* (MT14RD) (Cognition Act Neutral)

There are three reasons for the seldom use of *Cognition Act RVs* in the current MT corpus. The first reason can be the nature of *Cognition Act RVs* which are concerned with the author's mental processes. Therefore, the use of *Cognition Act RVs* portrays the cited work in terms of the author's theorizing and mental activities. The second reason is attributed to the communicative purposes of the Results and Discussion chapter. It is the place where writers should typically use language for rhetorical (persuasive) purposes (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007) to establish their voices as credible. The last reason is related to the fact that the subjective feature of the use of

Cognition Act RVs, speculating on the mental processes of the authors, does not conform to the requirements of academic writing with objectivity characteristics. Therefore, a small number of *Cognition Act RVs* were used because extensive use of those mental verbs might affect the presentation and discussion of research results.

Furthermore, it is interesting to find that master's students preferred *Research Act Finding* verbs (30.46%) to *Research Act Procedure* verbs (10.60%) in the MT Results and Discussion Chapters. This finding contradicts those of MT Introduction, Literature Review, and Methodology Chapters. It is worth noting that a Results and Discussion chapter is where writers need to present and discuss the results/findings (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). To be more specific, writers not only need to report results, but also to comment on results by comparing results with existing literature, evaluating results, or giving reasons. Therefore, the greater use of *Finding RVs* is more appropriate in the Results and Discussion chapters.

In the case of distribution of RVs in evaluative categorizations, the highest number of verbs used belonged to *factive RVs*, recording 42.38% of the total number of RVs identified in the data, followed by *non-factive* and *tentative* ones (30.46% and 11.26%, respectively). This trend is consistent with the findings on RVs in the MT Introduction Chapters. At the same time, it also accords with the study by Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015b) in which similar results were found.

As illustrated in Examples 31a-c, some *factive RVs*, such as "*demonstrate*", "*support*", and "*explain*", were used to show the writers' positive attitude toward the reported claims and signal their acceptance of the claims.

(31a) *As Orton's (2009) research <u>demonstrates</u>...the view that English could carry Chinese interests and values back into the world and in the long run even facilitate Chinese to replace English as the global language*. (MT23RD) (Research Act Finding Factive)

(31b) *The outcome of the medium level of writing anxiety is <u>supported</u> by Guo and Fan's study (2009) and Jiao's research (2015)*. (MT21RD) (Discourse Act Assurance Factive)

(31c) *Sheen (2007) explained the result from the perspective of attention and awareness in foreign language learning raised by Schmidt (1995).* (MT08RD) (Discourse Act Assurance Factive)

This finding reveals that these master's students tended to take an explicit attitude toward the cited materials in the Results and Discussion Chapters. Their preference of employing *factive RVs* not only can report previous materials to construct factual reliability, but also support their own results/findings and help them be situated in the existing body of knowledge in the literature by attributing a high degree of confidence to the proposition by the original author. As Jalilifar (2012) points out, more *factive* verbs should be used in the Results chapters to argue for the reported results to be positioned into the literature.

Like the finding on the Methodology Chapters, no negative RVs were found in the MT Results and Discussion corpus. This tends to indicate that these master's students avoided explicitly rebutting or directly criticizing previous research. To a certain extent, it is associated with the communicative purposes of the Results and Discussion Chapter since it is inappropriate to directly refute or attack previous research in these chapters. In addition, these master's students realize that explicit rebuttal of other researchers is a serious face-threatening behavior in academic writing (Hyland, 2002), and the absence of negative RVs can help them avoid retaliation or disapproval from publishing gatekeepers.

4.2.6 Reporting Verbs Used in the Conclusion Chapters

As it can be seen in *Table 4.30*, an overview of RVs used in 30 MT Conclusion Chapters is provided. It reveals that master's students used 15 types and 26 tokens of RVs in the current corpus with a total of 47,945 words. After normalization, they used 3.1 types and 5.4 tokens of RVs per 10,000 words.

Table 4.30 RVs in 30 MT Conclusion Chapters

	RF	NF
Types	15	3.1
Tokens	26	5.4

Compared with the use of RVs in the previous four chapters (Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, and Results and Discussion Chapters), it is found that RVs were used least frequently in the Conclusion Chapters. A Conclusion chapter, usually the last part of a thesis, is where the writers need to sum up and "warp up" their work to state the significance of what they have found out (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007, p. 150) through summarizing the study, evaluating the study, or making deductions from the research (Chen & Kuo, 2012). Therefore, it is necessary to link their local contributions into the existing literature and so persuade readers of their ideas as emphasized by Nguyen (2017). However, compared with the previous four chapters, it is not the main place where writers should focus on reporting the information of previous research.

As shown in *Table 4.31*, different from the RVs used in the previous chapters of the current MT corpus in which "*point out*" or "*find*" were the most common RVs, *suggest* (5 occurrences) was found to be the most frequent, followed by *point out* (4 occurrences), *state* (4 occurrences), and *propose* (2 occurrences). The other 11 RVs (among 15 verbs) had a low frequency of occurrences, which occurred only once. This finding is consistent with that of Hyland's (2002) where *suggest* was found to be the most frequent RV in the applied linguistics articles and Nguyen's (2014) where *suggest* was the most common verb used in the Conclusion Chapters of Vietnamese students' theses.

Table 4.31 List of RVs in 30 MT Conclusion Chapters

1. suggest (5)	4. propose (2)	7. design (1)	10. indicate (1)	13. put forward (1)
2. point out (4)	5. conduct (1)	8. find (1)	11. present (1)	14. reveal (1)
3. state (4)	6. describe (1)	9. highlight (1)	12. prove (1)	15. show (1)

*(*The number in brackets indicates the frequency of RVs that occurred in 30 MT Conclusion Chapters)*

Furthermore, *Table 4.32* provides the clear classification of 26 RVs identified in the current MT Conclusion corpus according to their denotative potentials and evaluative functions as categorized by Hyland (2002). In terms of their denotative categorizations, like the findings on RVs used in the Introduction, Methodology, as well

as Results and Conclusion Chapters, RVs categorized in the *Discourse Acts* occupied a large proportion of the total number of RVs identified in the data, representing 73.08%. *Research Act RVs* had 26.92% of the total number of RVs recorded in the data, while *Cognition Act RVs* had no occurrence in the data.

Table 4.32 Distribution of RVs in Terms of Denotative and Evaluative Classifications in MT Conclusion Chapters

Category/Sub-category	RF	%
Research Acts	**7**	**26.92**
Findings	5	19.23
Factive	2	7.69
Counter-Factive	0	0
Non-Factive	3	11.54
Procedures	2	7.69
Cognition Acts	**0**	**0**
Positive	0	0
Critical	0	0
Tentative	0	0
Neutral	0	0
Discourse Acts	**19**	**73.08**
Doubt	8	30.77
Tentative	8	30.77
Critical	0	0
Assurance	11	42.31
Factive	6	23.08
Non-Factive	5	19.23
Counters	0	0
TOTAL	**26**	**100**

To be more specific, the greater use of *Discourse Act RVs* can help these master's students expedite the verbal explanation of the reported information, which is more appropriate in an argument schema to regard interpretation, speculation, and argument as "accepted aspects of knowledge" (Hyland, 2002, p. 126). As illustrated in Examples 32a-c, *Research Act RVs* such as "*suggest*" "state" and "*point out*" were

used to verbally report the claims of previous researchers, which can help achieve the step of *drawing pedagogic implications* in the MT Conclusion Chapters through constructing credibility and merit of the reported claims.

(32a) *Tsai and Cheng (2004) suggested that teachers should pay more attention to help and show their students a positive and realistic perception of their writing performance for the development of their writing skills…* (MT18C) (Discourse Act Doubt Tentative)

(32b) *As MacIntyre (2009) stated, we have to acknowledge that the interpretation of L2 selves is culture-bound, thus it is important to take cultural effects into account.* (MT06C) (Discourse Act Assurance Non-factive)

(32c) *As Nation (1990) points out, the point of corpus-based investigations on high frequency words lies in that they can provide more reliable information than intuition does.* (MT27C) (Discourse Act Assurance Factive)

Furthermore, a small number of *Research Act RVs* were employed in the MT Conclusion Chapters. In Examples 33a-c, "*prove*" "*find*" and "*conduct*" were used to report previous research in the statement of findings or procedures, which tends to emphasize their experimental activities or actions.

(*33a*) *Zhang's (2016) study also proved that medical students did not know specific genres and sentence structures in medical English writing*. (MT10C) (Research Act Finding Factive)

(*33b*) *Papi (2010) found that ideal L2 self can also contributes to intended effort indirectly, via impacting the students' English learning experience*. (MT23C) (Research Act Finding Non-factive)

(*33c*) *There are a few studies (Zhang, 2011; Zhang & Liu, 2013; Liu & Wang, 2015; Zhu & Wang, 2015) which have been conducted on the colligation and semantic prosody of particular words and structures.* (MT17C) (Research Act Procedure)

In terms of the sub-categories of *Research Act RVs*, master's students preferred *Finding RVs* to *Procedure RVs*, which is consistent with those in Results and Discussion Chapters. It indicates that these students tended to report the findings gained from the previous research. Meanwhile, it is associated with the communicative purposes of a Conclusion Chapter where writers need to summarize their work (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). Therefore, it is more appropriate to emphasize the research findings in these chapters.

Regarding the evaluative categorizations of RVs, it is interesting to find that *factive*, *non-factive*, and *tentative RVs* were equally used in the MT Conclusion Chapters (30.78%, 30.78%, and 30.78%, respectively). This finding reveals that these master's students are willing to employ those three categories of RVs in their MT Conclusion Chapters to help state the significance of what they have found out. Some examples are listed in the following Examples 34a-c.

(*34a*) *Kress (2003) once pointed out that two different modalities may be employed to convey the same meaning, but their functions are different in communication process*. (MT27C) (Discourse Act Assurance Factive)

(*34b*) *As revealed by Pan and Block (2011), university teachers and students in Beijing consider English a key to "China's internationalization and globalization" (p.400).* (MT23C) (MT23C) (Research Act Finding Non-factive)

(*34c*) *… in line with many previous studies (e.g. Ferris, 1999, 2006; Sheen, 2007; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010a; Shintani, Ellis & Suzuki, 2014; Shintani & Ellis, 2015), which indicate that teachers do not need to be worried about the harm that their feedback may cast on students…* (MT08C) (Discourse Act Doubt Tentative)

Example 34a shows that the *factive RV* (*point out*) was used to report the previous claim on the topic (the use of multimodality in language teaching) and show their positive attitude toward it so that to support the pedagogical implications provided for English teaching. In addition, in Example 34b, the *non-factive RV* (*reveal*) was used by the writer to introduce the claim of others but give no clear signal of their

attitude toward the reported claim. Finally, as illustrated in Example 34c, the *RV* (*indicate*) was used to report the claims of others, showing a tentative view toward it. It is worth noting that all *tentative RVs* that occurred in this current corpus were drawn from the *Research Act Doubt* category which attributes the tentative attitude to the cited authors, instead of taking responsibility for writers' evaluation.

It is noticeable that in Conclusion Chapters, master's students avoided using any negative RVs to portray previous researchers' viewpoints. It might be associated with the communicative purposes of a Conclusion chapter where students should summarize the study, evaluate the study, and provide deductions, implications, and recommendations for further studies (Chen & Kuo, 2012). Therefore, it is inappropriate to give explicit rebuttal or direct attack on previous research in the concluding chapter of a thesis.

4.3 Comparative Analysis of the Use of Reporting Verbs between Bachelor's Theses and Master's Theses

This section will summarize and interpret the similarities and differences in the use of RVs between the BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors.

4.3.1 Overall Findings

The current section offers a general description of RVs used in the BTs and MTs, which lays a foundation for the detailed analysis of RVs used in each chapter of the two texts.

In the first place, *Table 4.33* provides an overall picture of the total amount of RVs used in the two corpora. It shows that a total number of 77 types of RVs were used in the BTs, counting 5.2 per 10,000 words, while 207 types of RVs were used in the MTs, which counts 4.2 per 10,000 words. In terms of the tokens, there were 566 RVs used in 30 BTs, totally counting 38.4 per 10,000 words, while there were 2,357 tokens of RVs used in the MTs, which counts 47.8 per 10,000 words.

Table 4.33 RVs Used in 30 BTs and 30 MTs by Chinese English Majors

Corpus	Type		Token	
	RF	NF	RF	NF
BTs	77	5.2	566	38.4
MTs	207	4.2	2357	47.8

It can be inferred that RVs used by undergraduate students were smaller in amount but wider in range when compared with those by master's students. Although there is no obvious difference in using different types of RVs between the two corpora, this case might be attributed to these students' inappropriate strategy to choose RVs in composing their theses. Specifically, undergraduate students were concerned with varying their choices by randomly choosing a RV or substituting one RV for another based on dictionary definitions without adequate consciousness of the subtle distinctions between syntactic features and rhetorical functions of RVs. Nonetheless, it can be concluded that both writer groups have a wider range of linguistic options to draw on, but master's students have higher awareness to use RVs frequently than undergraduate do.

For more detailed analysis, the top fifteen most frequently adopted RVs in 30 BTs and 30 MTs are listed in *Table 4.34* to show whether the two writer groups have the same tendency in using RVs. It is noticed that nine RVs out of 15 are employed in the two corpora. They are *point out*, *believe*, *propose*, *find*, *put forward*, *show*, *study*, *define*, and *hold*. These overlapped words suggest that Chinese English major undergraduate students and master's students share similar preferences on the choice of RVs. However, at the same time, there are also slight differences in their favored RVs. For example, *say*, *indicate*, and *think*, are only frequently used in the BTs by undergraduate students, while master's students show a preference to *conduct*, *state*, and *suggest*. To summarize, the two writer groups share similar preferences when choosing RVs, but there also exist some slight differences in their favored RVs.

Table 4.34 The Top 15 Most Frequent RVs in 30 BTs and 30 MTs

Rank	BTs	MTs
1	point out	find
2	believe	point out
3	propose	propose
4	say	put forward
5	indicate	conduct
6	find	believe
7	put forward	define
8	think	show
9	show	state
10	study	hold
11	divide	suggest
12	define	study
13	hold	claim
14	discuss	investigate
15	summarize	explore

Furthermore, as shown in *Figure 4.1*, the general distribution of RVs used in each chapter of 30 BTs and 30 MTs is provided. It is worth noting that the use of RVs in each chapter of the two corpora is equally distributed. Firstly, RVs were densely used in the Literature Review Chapters, accounting for more than four-fifths of the total number of RVs identified in the BTs and MTs (82.86% and 82.61%, respectively). Secondly, it is followed by those in the Introduction Chapters (14.84% and 7.42%, respectively) and Results and Discussion Chapters (1.41% and 6.41%, respectively). Thirdly, there was a relatively low number of RVs in the other two chapters; namely, Methodology Chapters (0.71% and 2.46%, respectively) and Conclusion Chapters (0.18% and 1.10%, respectively).

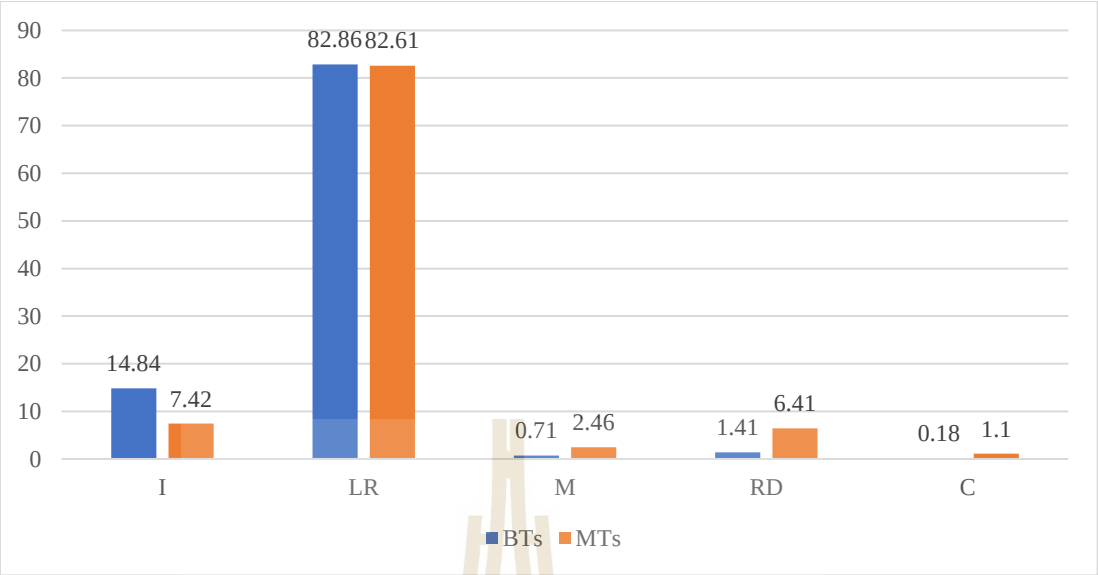


Figure 4.1 General Distribution of RVs Used in Each Chapter of 30 BTs and 30 MTs

This finding indicates that the Literature Review Chapter is the reporting-dense chapter, where its communicative purpose is to review the existing knowledge on what has been done in the context of a topic. As discussed in *Sections 4.1.1* and *4.2.1*, it is in tandem with the findings of Soler-Monreal and Gil-Salom (2011) and Nguyen (2017) in which Literature Review Chapters were found to be the main place where RVs are most concentrated. Furthermore, the same trend of using RVs in complete BTs and MTs indicates that these Chinese English major students have a certain tendency to use RVs differently in different chapters with different communicative purposes. A detailed analysis of their use of RVs in each chapter will be presented in the following sections.

Specifically, according to Hyland's (2002) classification framework of RVs, *Table 4.35* provides a fairly clear picture of the distribution of RVs used in each chapter of BTs and MTs in terms of their denotative potentials and evaluative functions.

Table 4.35 Distribution of RVs Used in Each Chapter of 30 BTs and 30 MTs in Terms of Denotative Potentials and Evaluative Functions

Category/ Sub-category	BTs		MTs	
	RF	NF	RF	NF
Research Acts	**153**	**10.4**	**1090**	**22.1**
Findings	79	5.4	452	9.2
Factive	23	1.6	123	2.5
Counter-Factive	0	0	0	0
Non-Factive	56	3.8	329	6.8
Procedures	74	5.0	638	12.9
Cognition Acts	**97**	**6.6**	**241**	**4.9**
Positive	38	2.6	138	2.8
Critical	0	0	0	0
Tentative	57	3.9	96	2.0
Neutral	2	0.1	7	0.1
Discourse Acts	**316**	**21.4**	**1026**	**20.8**
Doubt	92	6.2	238	4.8
Tentative	92	6.2	237	4.8
Critical	0	0	1	0.02
Assurance	223	15.1	780	15.8
Factive	130	8.8	444	9.0
Non-Factive	93	6.3	336	6.8
Counters	1	0.1	8	0.2
TOTAL	**566**	**38.4**	**2357**	**47.8**

One obvious difference can be found in the use of RVs in terms of their denotative potentials. As shown in *Figure 4.2*, RVs from the *Discourse Act* category show the highest frequency in the BT corpus, while RVs from the *Research Act* category were the most prominent in the MT corpus. However, one striking similarity can be found that RVs from the *Cognition Act* category were infrequently used in both corpora.

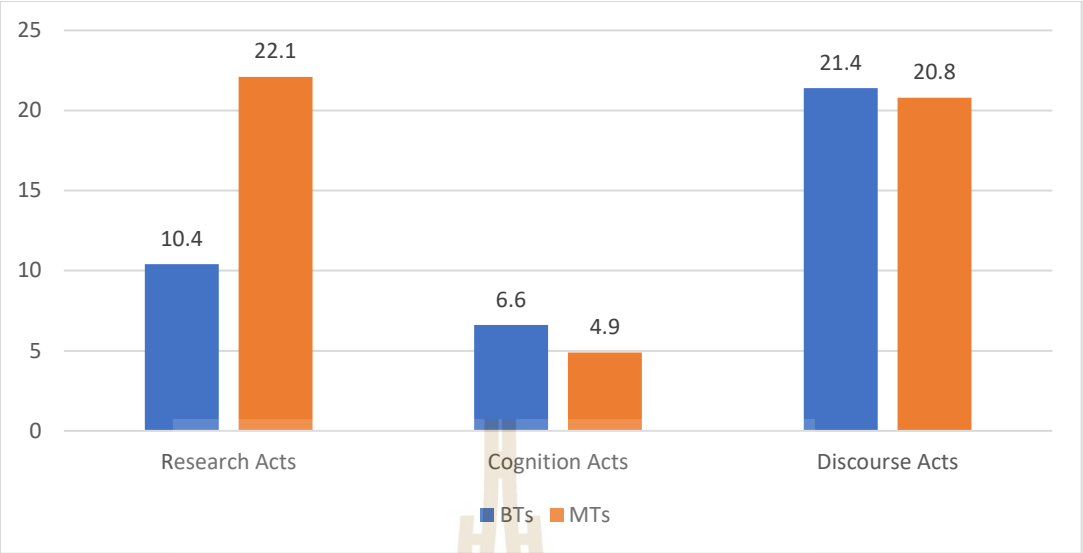


Figure 4.2 Distribution of RVs Used in BTs and MTs in Terms of Denotative Potentials

Overall, these findings tend to indicate that undergraduate students are inclined to use *Discourse Act RVs*, while master's students are inclined to use *Research Act RVs* in their thesis writing. However, neither of the two writer groups tend to use *Cognition Act RVs* frequently.

As *Figure 4.3* presents, from the perspective of the evaluative functions of RVs, two similarities and one difference in the use of RVs between the two corpora are found. The first similarity is that *factive*, *non-factive*, and *tentative RVs* were extensively used in both BT corpus and MT corpus. The second similarity is that *positive RVs*, *neutral RVs*, and *negative RVs* were employed with a relatively low frequency in the two corpora. However, there also exist differences in their favored RVs. *Factive RVs* were found to be the most prominent in the BT corpus, while *non-factive RVs* were found the most used in the MT corpus.

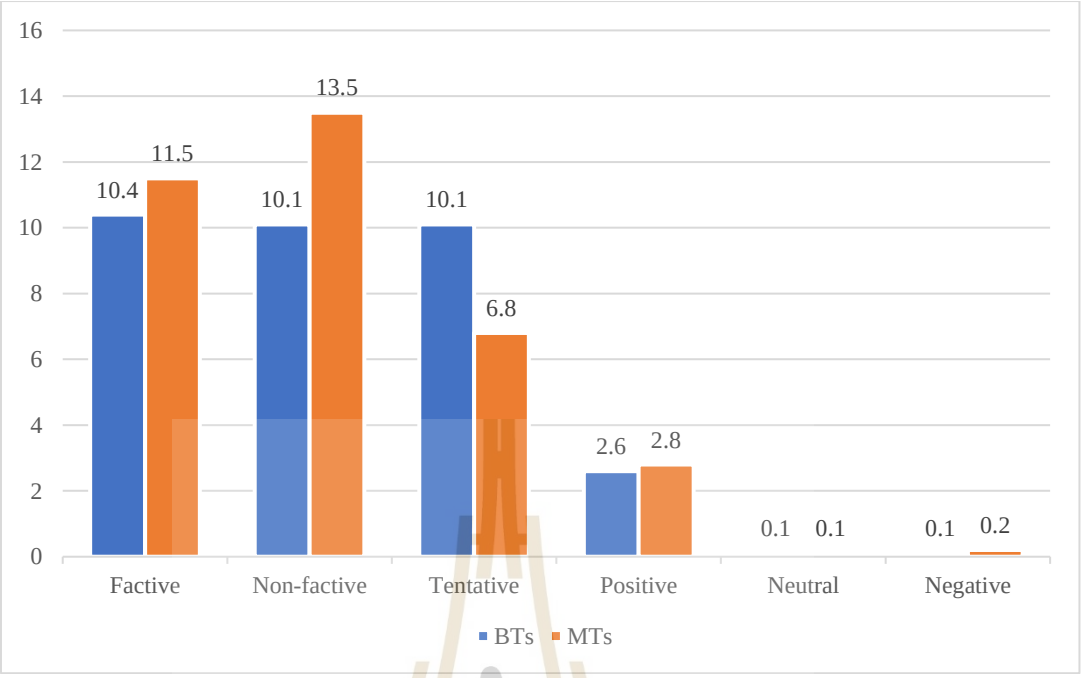


Figure 4.3 Distribution of RVs Used in BTs and MTs in Terms of Evaluative Functions

These results indicate that both undergraduate students and master's students have a similar tendency to use *factive*, *non-factive*, and *tentative RVs* to show their stance toward the reported message and to avoid using negative RVs to give critical comments on the reported information throughout the process of composing their theses. However, there also exist differences in their favored RVs.

The detailed analysis and discussion of RVs used in each chapter of BTs and MTs will be conducted in the following sections, which provide a more comprehensive picture.

4.3.2 Reporting Verbs Used in the Introduction Chapters

Table 4.36 provides the overall picture of RVs used in 30 BT Introduction Chapters and 30 MT Introduction Chapters. It shows that undergraduate students used 14.3 types and 41.4 tokens of RVs per 10,000 words, while master's students used 16.5 types and 41.8 tokens of RVs per 10,000 words. This finding indicates that there is no obvious difference in the use of RVs between the two corpora since the different types and tokens of RVs employed in the BTs were as much as those used in MTs, but RVs

used in the BT Introductions were relatively narrower in range and smaller in amount when compared with those used in the MT Introductions.

Table 4.36 RVs Used in Introduction Chapters between 30 BTs and 30 MTs

Corpus	Type		Token	
	RF	NF	RF	NF
BT Introduction	29	14.3	84	41.4
MT Introduction	69	16.5	175	41.8

The findings could be concluded that both undergraduate students and master's students have acquired the usage of RVs to some degree. However, master's students have a wider range of linguistic options to draw on and have higher awareness to use RVs frequently than undergraduate students do. In addition, they are likely to show a high level of knowledge in applying RVs to report the work of others during the process of composing the Introduction chapters of their theses.

For more detailed analysis, the top five most common RVs in the current two corpora are listed as follows. As provided in *Section 4.1.1*, the most common verbs in the corpus were *point out*, *say*, *indicate*, *propose*, and *believe* ranked fifth with *find*. *Section 4.2.1* shows that the most common RV in the MT Introduction corpus were *point out*, *propose*, *put forward*, *focus on*, and *study*. It is noticeable that *point out* is the most frequent RV used in both corpora and *propose* is also the overlapped word. The findings reveal that although the two groups of writers share a similar preference for the choice of RVs, there also exist differences in their favored RVs.

Further discussion on comparing the use of RVs in terms of their denotative potentials and evaluative functions based on Hyland's (2002) classification framework is conducted. As *Table 4.37* shows, it provides a general distribution of RVs used in the Introduction Chapters of 30 BTs and 30 MTs by Chinese English majors.

Table 4.37 Distribution of RVs Used in Introduction Chapters of 30 BTs and 30 MTs in Terms of Denotative Potentials and Evaluative Functions

Category/Sub-category	BTs		MTs	
	RF	NF	RF	NF
Research Acts	**16**	**7.9**	**53**	**12.7**
Findings	10	4.9	19	4.5
Factive	2	1.0	10	2.4
Counter-Factive	0	0	0	0
Non-Factive	8	3.9	9	2.1
Procedures	6	3.0	34	8.1
Cognition Acts	**9**	**4.4**	**24**	**5.7**
Positive	4	2.0	15	3.6
Critical	0	0	0	0
Tentative	5	2.5	9	2.1
Neutral	0	0	0	0
Discourse Acts	**59**	**29.0**	**98**	**23.4**
Doubt	20	9.8	22	5.3
Tentative	20	9.8	21	5.0
Critical	0	0	1	0.2
Assurance	39	19.2	74	17.7
Factive	20	9.8	49	14.1
Non-Factive	19	9.4	25	6.0
Counters	0	0	2	0.5
TOTAL	**84**	**41.4**	**175**	**41.8**

As *Figure 4.4* shows, the most striking similarity in the use of RVs between the BT Introduction corpus and MT Introduction corpus lies in the distribution of RVs in terms of their denotative categories. It shows that RVs from the *Discourse Act* category were used the most, followed by *Research Act RVs* used as second and *Cognition Act RVs* used the least in both corpora. This finding tends to indicate that the two writer groups have a similar tendency to use certain categories of RVs, and such tendency characterizes the discursive nature of soft disciplines to which the field of this corpus belongs (Hyland, 2002).

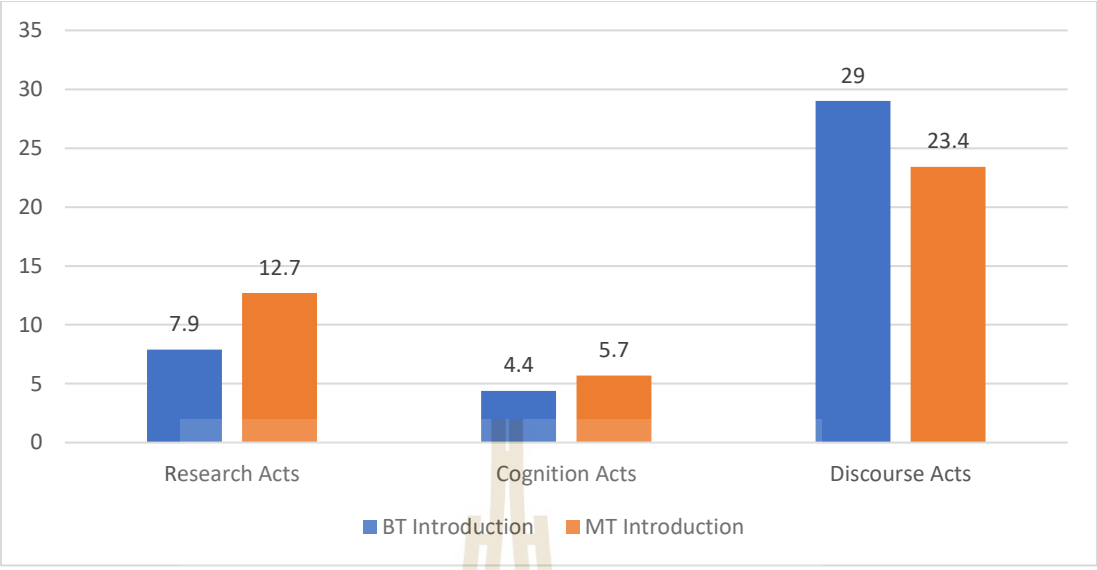


Figure 4.4 Distribution of RVs Used in Introduction Chapters of 30 BTs and 30 MTs in Terms of Denotative Potentials

According to Hyland (2002), *Research Act RVs* can be divided into two general categories in terms of the statements of findings or procedures. Accordingly, one obvious difference can be found between the two corpora in light of the employment of sub-categories of *Research Act RVs* (Table 4.37). *Finding RVs* (4.9 per 10,000 words) were used more frequently than *Procedure RVs* (3.0 per 10,000 words) in the BT Introduction Chapters; on the contrary, *Procedure RVs* (13.71 per 10,000 words) occurred more frequently than *Finding RVs* (10.86 per 10,000 words) in the MT Introduction Chapters. This difference can be inferred that these undergraduate students who are novice learners of academic discourse are inclined to use more *Finding verbs* to report the results/findings of previous research, avoiding corrupting the processes of previous research. In contrast, master's students, as novice researchers, prefer employing *Procedure verbs* to refer to the procedural aspects of previous researchers' investigations, emphasizing their concrete objective research procedures.

Regarding the evaluative functions of RVs, *Figure 4.5* gives an overview of the comparison of the use of RVs between BT Introductions and MT Introductions.

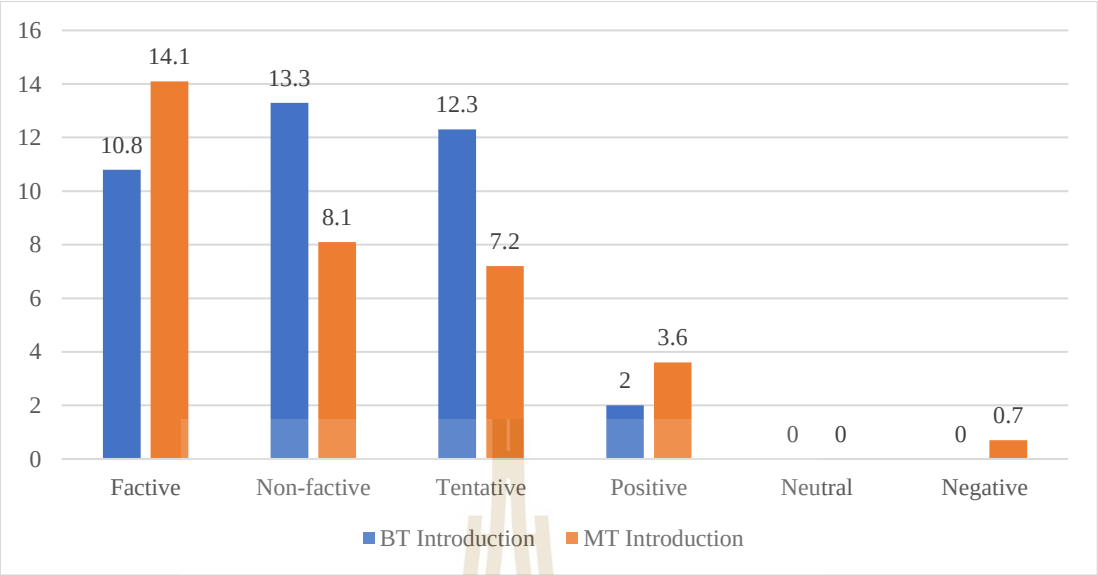


Figure 4.5 Distribution of RVs Used in Introduction Chapters of 30 BTs and 30 MTs in Terms of Evaluative Functions

One similarity is that *factive*, *non-factive*, and *tentative RVs* were used extensively in both BT corpus and MT corpus. It indicates that these three categories of verbs are the most common RVs used in thesis writing to integrate the voices of established scholars into their writing and it is in line with the findings of Nguyen (2017), Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015a, 2015b), and Agbaglo (2017).

Another similarity is that *positive RVs*, *neutral RVs*, and *negative RVs* were employed with a relatively low frequency in the two corpora. The infrequent use of *positive RVs* and *neutral RVs* is attributed to the small number of *Cognition Act RVs* to which they belong. In addition, the seldom use or even absence of negative RVs reflects that these Chinese English major students avoided using negative RVs to explicitly rebut or criticize previous researchers or their works in the Introduction chapter where its communicative purpose is to provide background information in an objective way. The reason might be that explicit rebuttal or confrontation with previous researchers is a face-threatening act in academic writing, which might expose the writer to retaliation or the rejection of publishing gatekeepers.

However, there also exist differences. *Non-factive RVs* were the most prominent in the BT corpus, while *factive RVs* were found the most used in the MT corpus. This difference in the use of RVs between BTs and MTs in their Introduction

Chapters suggests that writers composing the same genre but represents different levels of education prefer different RV category in different chapter of their theses.

4.3.3 Reporting Verbs Used in the Literature Review Chapters

Table 4.38 provides the overall picture of RVs used in 30 BT Literature Review Chapters and 30 MT Literature Review Chapters. It shows that undergraduate students used 18.0 types and 110.8 tokens of RVs per 10,000 words, while master's students used 11.4 types and 121.0 tokens of RVs per 10,000 words. It is interesting to find that RVs used in the BT Literature Review corpus were relatively wider in range but smaller in amount when compared with those used in the MT Literature Review corpus.

Table 4.38 RVs Used in Literature Review Chapters between 30 BTs and 30 MTs

Corpus	Type		Token	
	RF	NF	RF	NF
BT Literature Review	76	18.0	469	110.8
MT Literature Review	184	11.4	1947	121.0

This finding indicates that both undergraduate and master's students have acquired the ability to use RVs to engage with research and build their arguments. Although master's students have higher awareness to use RVs frequently than undergraduate students do, the latter has a wider range of linguistic options to draw on when compared with those of the former. The reason for this result might be these undergraduate students' inappropriate strategy to choose RVs in composing their theses. Undergraduate students, as novice learners, were concerned with varying their choices by randomly choosing a RV or substituting one RV for another based on dictionary definitions without adequate consciousness of the subtle distinctions between syntactic features and rhetorical functions of RVs. In fact, compared with the BT Literature Review corpus, a large number of RVs in the MT Literature Review corpus have not been found in Hyland's (2002) study which provides a list of 67 types of RVs. The new RVs identified in the current corpus are added into his category, based on their denotative potentials and evaluative functions.

As discussed in *Sections 4.1.2* and *4.2.2*, the top five most common RVs in the current two corpora are listed. The most common verb in the BT Literature Reviews was *point out*, followed by *believe*, *propose*, *put forward*, and *think*. The most frequent RV found in the MT Introduction corpus was *find*, followed by *propose*, *point out*, *put forward*, and *believe*. It is worth pointing out that although the most common RVs used in the two corpora are different, there was a clear similarity in the forms preferred by the two writer groups since there were four overlapped words. The findings reveal that these undergraduate students and master's students share a similar preference for the choice of RVs in their Literature Review Chapters.

According to the classification framework proposed by Hyland (2002), *Table 4.39* provides an overall picture of RVs used in the BT Literature Reviews and MT Literature Reviews in terms of their denotative potentials and evaluative functions.

Table 4.39 Distribution of RVs Used in Literature Review Chapters of 30 BTs and 30 MTs in Terms of Denotative Potentials and Evaluative Functions

Category/Sub-category	BTs		MTs	
	RF	NF	RF	NF
Research Acts	**133**	**31.4**	**944**	**58.7**
Findings	67	15.8	373	23.2
Factive	21	5.0	90	5.6
Counter-Factive	0	0	0	0
Non-Factive	46	10.9	283	17.6
Procedures	66	15.6	571	35.5
Cognition Acts	**85**	**20.1**	**200**	**12.4**
Positive	32	7.6	115	7.1
Critical	0	0	0	0
Tentative	51	12.0	80	5.0
Neutral	2	0.5	5	0.3
Discourse Acts	**251**	**59.3**	**803**	**49.9**
Doubt	71	16.8	191	11.9
Tentative	71	16.8	191	11.9
Critical	0	0	0	0
Assurance	179	42.3	606	37.7
Factive	107	25.3	329	20.5
Non-Factive	72	17.0	277	17.2
Counters	1	0.2	6	0.4
TOTAL	**469**	**110.8**	**1947**	**121.0**

Two differences and one similarity between the BT Literature Review corpus and MT Literature Review corpus lie in the denotative potentials of RVs (in *Figure 4.6*).

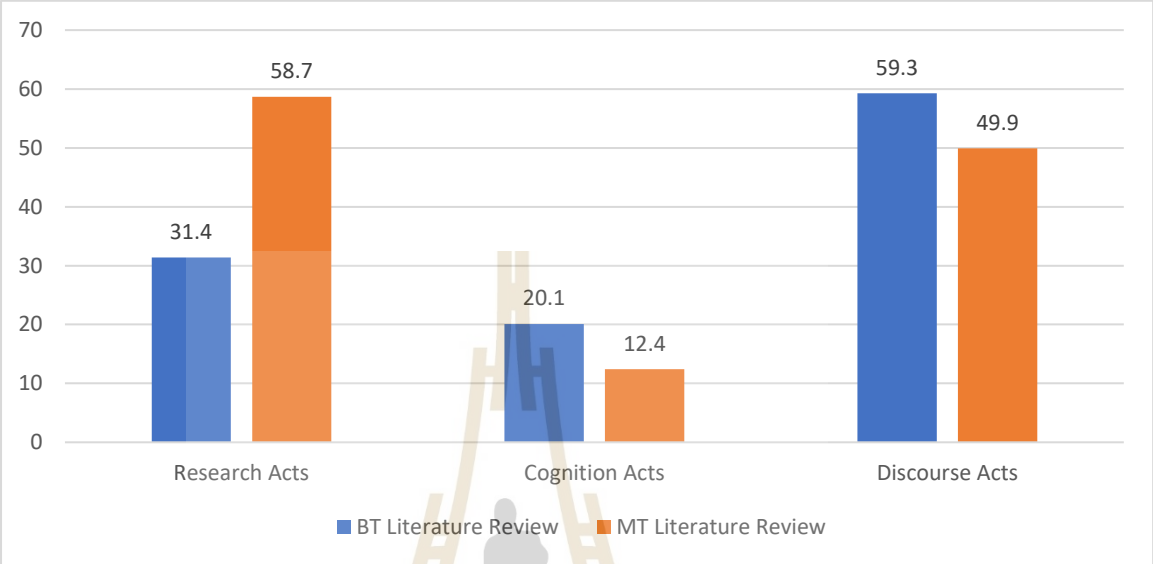


Figure 4.6 Distribution of RVs used in Literature Review Chapters of 30 BTs and 30 MTs in Terms of Denotative Potentials

First, one difference is that RVs are not distributed equally in the current two corpora. To be more specific, RVs from the *Discourse Act* category were used the most in the BT Literature Review Chapters, whereas *Research Act RVs* were the most prominent in the MT Literature Review Chapters. The reason for this difference may be caused by the distinct preference the two writer groups exhibit and their knowledge on the use of RVs to achieve different communicative purposes of different chapters.

Another distinct difference between the two corpora lies in the use of *Research Act RVs* which can be divided into two categories in terms of the statements of findings or procedures. That is, *Finding RVs* (15.8 per 10,000 words) were used more than *Procedure RVs* (15.6 per 10,000 words) in the BT Literature Review corpus; on the contrary, *Procedure RVs* (29.33 per 10,000 words) were employed more than *Finding RVs* (19.16 per 10,000 words) in the MT Literature Review corpus. As discussed in *Section 4.3.2*, this difference can be inferred that these undergraduate students are inclined to use more *Finding verbs* to report the results/findings of previous research, whereas master's students prefer to use *Procedure verbs* to refer to the procedural

aspects of previous researchers' investigations, emphasizing their concrete objective research procedures.

The similarity between the two corpora can be found in using *Cognition Act RVs*. It is noticeable that *Cognition Act RVs* were least used in both corpora since these verbs are employed to depict previous materials in terms of the author's mental activities, thereby giving prominence to the role of human agency in constructing claims, and often making misinterpretations. Moreover, Liu and Wang (2019) also claim that the subjective feature of the greater use of *Cognition Act RVs* does not meet the requirements of academic writing.

Furthermore, as shown in *Figure 4.7*, a general distribution of RVs used in the Literature Review Chapters between BTs and MTs was provided regarding their evaluative functions. Two similarities and one difference in the use of RVs between the two corpora are found.

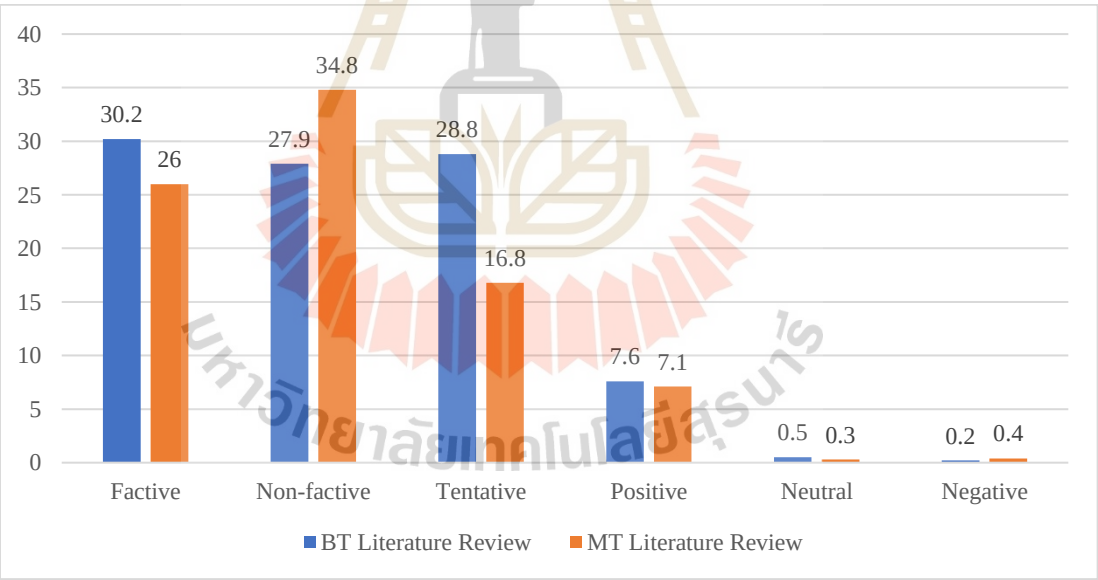


Figure 4.7 Distribution of RVs Used in Literature Review Chapters of 30 BTs and 30 MTs in Terms of Evaluative Functions

The first similarity is that *factive*, *non-factive*, and *tentative RVs* were used extensively in both the BT Literature Review corpus and MT Literature Review corpus. It indicates that these three categories of verbs are the most common RVs used in thesis writing to integrate the voices of established scholars into their writing. This

finding is consistent with those of Nguyen (2017), Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015a, 2015b), and Agbaglo (2017).

The second similarity is that *positive RVs*, *neutral RVs*, and *negative RVs* were employed with a low frequency in both corpora. The reason for the infrequent use of *positive RVs* and *neutral RVs* is the infrequent use of *Cognition Act RVs* to which these two types of RVs belong. In addition, few instances of negative RVs that occurred in the two corpora indicates the two writer groups' avoidance of explicit rebuttal or confrontation with previous researchers since it is a face-threatening behavior in academic writing (Hyland, 2002).

However, one difference can be found between the two corpora in their favored RVs. *Factive RVs* were the most prominent in the BT Literature Review corpus, while *non-factive RVs* were found the most used in the MT Literature Review corpus. This difference in the use of RVs between the current two corpora can be explained by the three assumptions of the present researcher. The first reason might be attributed to the fact that these two writer groups who compose these two texts are from two different education levels. The undergraduate study provides the "grounding" within a field or subject, whereas master's level explores the students further to attain a higher level of proficiency and to specialize in a particular topic, field, or discipline area. Therefore, variables in English teaching mode affect students' language use. The second reason might be the distinct communicative purposes that undergraduate and master's students have since the former has a great tendency to focus and comment on previous studies to establish the credibility of their own studies by using *factive RVs*, whereas the latter prefer to display their familiarity with the filed knowledge by using a large number of *non-factive RVs*. Thirdly, these students' different preferences for RVs could be due to their different understanding of the communicative purposes of literature review chapters that they had in mind when composing their theses. In addition to these factors, others such as individual writers' choice, language background, and an awareness of the functions served by different RVs might also lead to this difference (Jalilifar, 2012).

4.3.4 Reporting Verbs Used in the Methodology Chapters

Table 4.40 provides the overall picture of RVs used in 30 BT Methodology Chapters and 30 MT Methodology Chapters. According to *Table 4.40*, undergraduate students used 1.8 types and 1.8 tokens of RVs per 10,000 words, while master's students used 5.1 types and 8.6 tokens of RVs per 10,000 words. This finding indicates that RVs used in the MT Methodology Chapters were richer in both type and amount when compared with those used in the BT Methodology Chapters.

Table 4.40 RVs used in Methodology Chapters between 30 BTs and 30 MTs

Corpus	Type		Token	
	RF	NF	RF	NF
BT Methodology	4	1.8	4	1.8
MT Methodology	34	5.1	58	8.6

For detailed comparison of similarities and differences in the use of RVs, the general distribution of RVs used in the Methodology Chapters between 30 BTs and 30 MTs is provided in *Table 4.41* in items of the denotative potentials and evaluative functions of RVs.

Table 4.41 Distribution of RVs Used in Methodology Chapters of 30 BTs and 30 MTs in Terms of Denotative Potentials and Evaluative Functions

Category/Sub-category	BTs		MTs	
	RF	NF	RF	NF
Research Acts	**2**	**0.9**	**24**	**3.6**
Findings	0	0	9	1.3
Factive	0	0	3	0.4
Counter-Factive	0	0	0	0
Non-Factive	0	0	6	0.9
Procedures	2	0.9	15	2.2
Cognition Acts	**0**	**0**	**7**	**1.0**
Positive	0	0	2	0.3
Critical	0	0	0	0
Tentative	0	0	5	0.7
Neutral	0	0	0	0

Table 4.41 Distribution of RVs Used in Methodology Chapters of 30 BTs and 30 MTs in Terms of Denotative Potentials and Evaluative Functions (Continued)

Category/Sub-category	BTs		MTs	
	RF	NF	RF	NF
Discourse Acts	**2**	**0.9**	**27**	**4.0**
Doubt	0	0	2	0.3
Tentative	0	0	2	0.3
Critical	0	0	0	0
Assurance	2	0.9	25	3.7
Factive	1	0.4	14	2.1
Non-Factive	1	0.4	11	1.6
Counters	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**4**	**1.8**	**58**	**8.6**

Figure 4.8 provides the division of RVs used between the BT Methodology Chapters and MT Methodology Chapters in terms of the denotative potentials of RVs. As discussed in *Section 4.1.4*, four RVs (*design*, *research*, *explain*, and *discuss*) were used in the BT Methodology corpus. Accordingly, *Research Acts RVs* and *Discourse Act RVs* were equally employed in the current BT Methodology corpus (50% and 50%, respectively). Although the total amount of RVs is small, some typical verbs are still used in order to make full use of scholars' achievements. Moving the gaze to the MT Methodology Chapters, RVs from the *Discourse Act* category were found to prevail, followed by *Research Act RVs* and *Cognition Act RVs.*

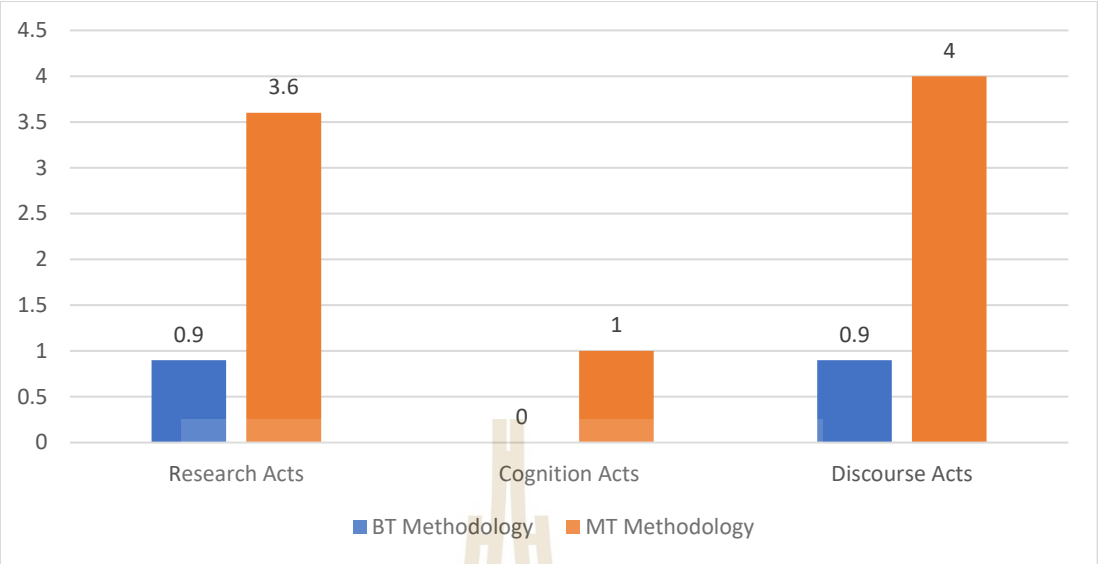


Figure 4.8 Distribution of RVs used in Methodology Chapters of 30 BTs and 30 MTs in Terms of Denotative Potentials

One similarity found is that *Discourse Act RVs* and *Research Act RVs* were used frequently by both undergraduate students and master's students. The possible reason for this similarity is that these two categories of RVs can help to convey a verbal exploration or experimental explanatory of the related previous research and to construct knowledge of the research topic and its factual reliability.

However, one obvious difference between the two corpora lies in the use of *Cognition Act RVs*. It is worth noting that although *Cognition Act RVs* were used far less than the other two categories in the MT Methodology corpus, not even one *Cognition Act RV* was used in the BT Methodology corpus. This finding suggests that RVs used by master's students were more diverse than those by undergraduate students. Therefore, to a certain extent, master's students are likely to demonstrate a high level of competence in using RVs to integrate the voices of established researchers into their writing.

Concerning the evaluative categorizations of RVs, one similarity between the two corpora could be found (in *Figure 4.9*). It is interesting to find that both *factive RVs* and *non-factive RVs* were equally used in the BT Methodology corpus and MT Methodology corpus, being similarly ranked the most. This finding reveals that both the two writer groups have a similar tendency to use *factive* and *non-factive RVs* in

these Methodology Chapters. Meanwhile, the greater use of *factive RVs* to report previous information can help writers support their research design.

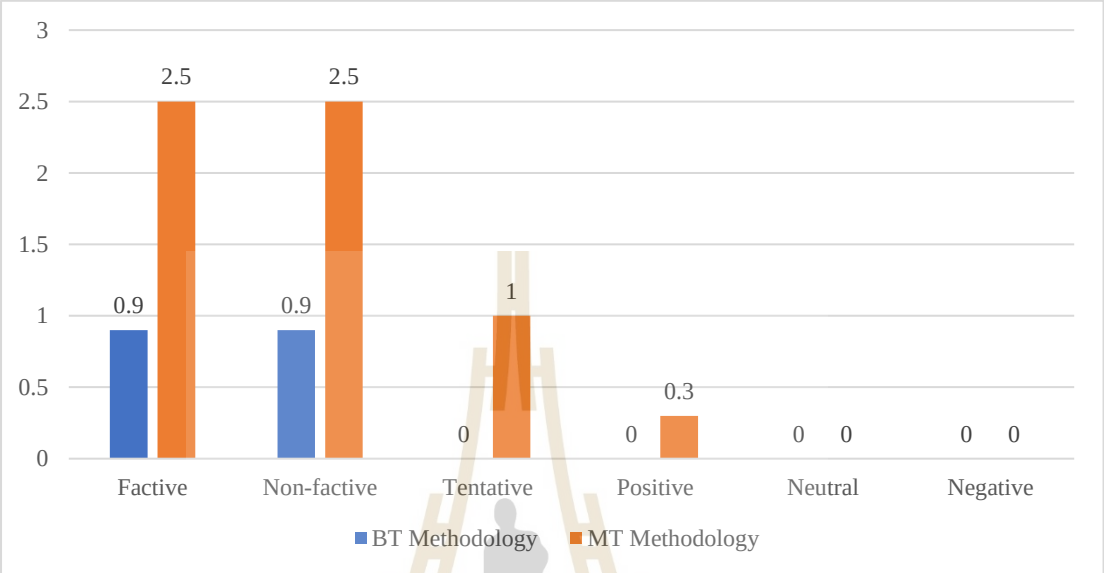


Figure 4.9 Distribution of RVs Used in Methodology Chapters of 30 BTs and 30 MTs in Terms of Evaluative Functions

However, one distinct difference also can be found. The other two types of RVs, *tentative* and *positive* RVs, were employed in the MT Methodology Chapters, but not in the BT Methodology Chapters at all. This finding tends to suggest that master's students show more flexibility and variations in the choice of RVs than undergraduate students do.

To summarize, identifying the similarities and differences in the use of RVs between the BT Methodology and MT Methodology indicates that although both undergraduate and master's students, to some degree, have demonstrated their ability to use RVs, the latter have a better mastery in the use of RVs to report the work of others during the process of composing the Methodology chapters of their theses. These undergraduate students can learn from these more advanced students to use more effective RVs to achieve certain functions within the text and communicate authorial stance (Liardét & Black, 2019). To be more specific, they can use more diverse RVs in their BT Methodology Chapters to construct a coherent and credible

representation of their research design and negotiate their relationship with the disciplinary discourse community.

4.3.5 Reporting Verbs Used in the Results and Discussion Chapters

Table 4.42 provides the overview of RVs used in 30 BT Results and Discussion Chapters and 30 MT Results and Discussion Chapters. It shows that undergraduate students used 1.7 types and 1.7 tokens of RVs per 10,000 words, while master's students used 2.9 types and 8.6 tokens of RVs per 10,000 words. This finding suggests that RVs used in the BT Results and Discussion Chapters were narrower in range and smaller in amount when compared with those used in the MT Results and Discussion Chapters.

Table 4.42 RVs Used in Results and Discussion Chapters between 30 BTs and 30 MTs

Corpus	Type		Token	
	RF	NF	RF	NF
BT Results and Discussion	8	1.7	8	1.7
MT Results and Discussion	51	2.9	151	8.6

For detailed comparative analysis of the use of RVs, the general distribution of RVs used in the Results and Discussion Chapters between 30 BTs and 30 MTs is provided in *Table 4.43* based on the denotative potentials and evaluative functions of RVs.

Table 4.43 Distribution of RVs Used in Results and Discussion Chapters of 30 BTs and 30 MTs in Terms of Denotative Potentials and Evaluative Functions

Category/Sub-category	BTs		MTs	
	RF	NF	RF	NF
Research Acts	**2**	**0.4**	**62**	**3.5**
Findings	0	0	46	2.6
Factive	0	0	18	1.0
Counter-Factive	0	0	0	0
Non-Factive	1	0.2	28	4.6
Procedures	1	0.2	16	0.9
Cognition Acts	**3**	**0.6**	**10**	**0.6**
Positive	2	0.4	6	0.3

Table 4.43 Distribution of RVs Used in Results and Discussion Chapters of 30 BTs and 30 MTs in Terms of Denotative Potentials and Evaluative Functions (Continued)

Category/Sub-category	BTs		MTs	
	RF	NF	RF	NF
Critical	0	0	0	0
Tentative	1	0.2	2	0.1
Neutral	0	0	2	0.1
Discourse Acts	**3**	**0.6**	**79**	**4.5**
Doubt	1	0.2	15	0.9
Tentative	1	0.2	15	0.9
Critical	0	0	0	0
Assurance	2	0.4	64	3.7
Factive	1	0.2	46	2.6
Non-Factive	1	0.2	18	1.0
Counters	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**8**	**1.7**	**151**	**8.6**

As provided in *Figure 4.10*, similarity and difference in the use of RVs between the BT Results and Discussion Chapters and MT Results and Discussion Chapters can be identified in terms of the denotative potentials of RVs.

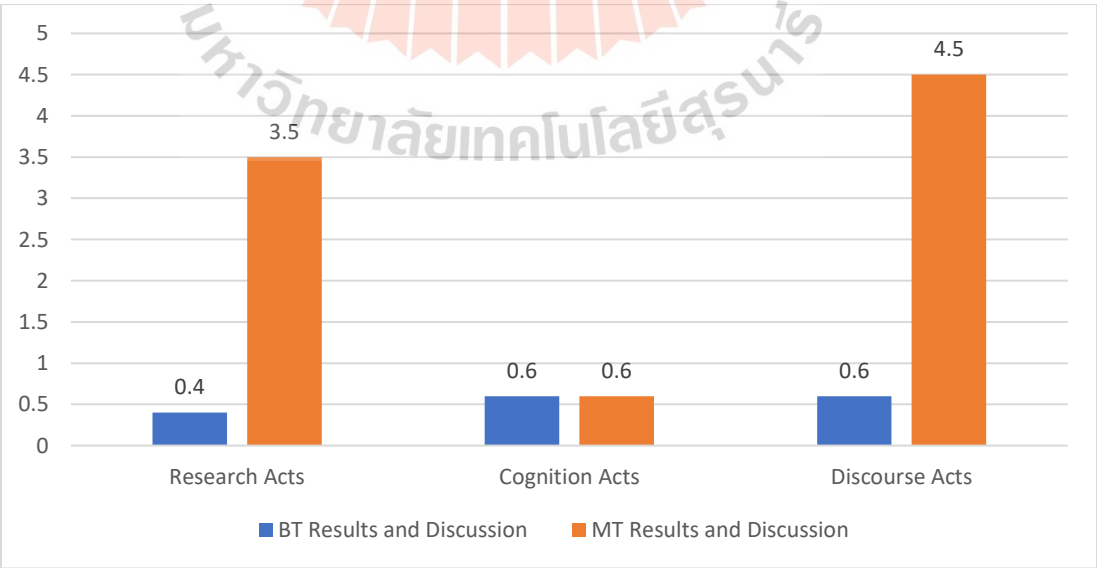


Figure 4.10 Distribution of RVs Used in Results and Discussion Chapters of 30 BTs and 30 MTs in Terms of Denotative Potentials

One similarity exists in the use of *Discourse Act RVs*. It is interesting to find that *Discourse Act RVs* were used the most in both corpora. This finding indicates that both undergraduate and master's students preferred to use *Discourse Act RVs*. This similarity might be caused by the claim that the dominant use of these RVs is appropriate in an argument schema and allows students to expedite the verbal exploration of related issues when discussing their results/findings.

One obvious difference lies in the use of *Cognition Act RVs*. Specifically, *Cognition Act RVs* were found to be the most used in the BT Results and Discussion Chapters, while they were found to be the least used in the MT Results and Discussion Chapters. This discrepancy could be caused by undergraduate students' inappropriate use of *Cognition Act RVs* in these chapters and the reasons will be provided below.

Furthermore, as shown in *Figure 4.11*, one distinct difference can be found in the use of RVs between the current two corpora in terms of the evaluative functions of RVs. It can be seen that *non-factive*, *tentative*, and *positive RVs* were equally used the most in the BT Results and Discussion corpus; however, *factive RVs* were found predominant in the MT Results and Discussion corpus. This difference could be caused by the different nature of the two writer groups who exhibit distinct preferences for different types of RVs.

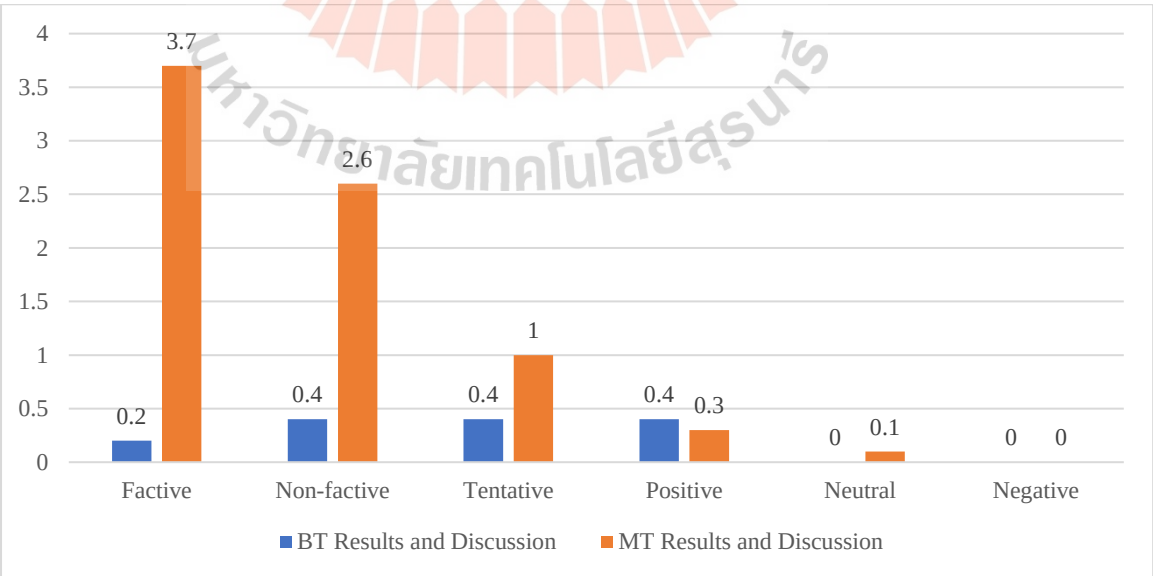


Figure 4.11 Distribution of RVs Used in Results and Discussion Chapters of 30 BTs and 30 MTs in Terms of Evaluative Functions

In addition, one noticeable similarity is that both undergraduate students and master's students avoided explicitly rebutting or directly confronting previous researchers as seen through the avoidance of using any negative RVs (*critical*, *counter*, and *counter-factive RVs*). The possible reason for this similarity is that an explicit refutation of other researchers, which is taken as a serious face-threatening act, might lead to retaliation or the rejection of the publishing gatekeeper (Hyland, 2002).

In general, based on these similarities and differences identified in the use of RVs between the BT Results and Discussion corpus and MT Results and Discussion corpus, it shows that master's students have a wider range of linguistic options to draw on and have higher awareness to use RVs frequently than undergraduate students do. Moreover, master's students are likely to show a high level of knowledge in applying RVs to report the work of others when reporting and discussing their results/findings based on those of previous works. It is worth noting that, to a certain degree, these undergraduate students' use of RVs in the Results and Discussion chapters is quite unsuitable and ineffective when compared with master's students.

The limited use of RVs in these chapters might affect achieving its rhetorical (persuasive) purposes and the preference for *non-factive* and *tentative RVs* might not help students establish the credibility and merit of their studies. A Results and Discussion chapter is the place where the writers present results/findings, interpret the results and make claims about their meaning and significance, and then move beyond their data and integrate the results of their study with existing theory and research (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). Therefore, the presence of a small number of RVs often indicates to some extent that these undergraduate students did not sufficiently argue and discuss their results/findings based on existing research. As Nguyen (2017) explains, the lack of sufficient argument and discussion could not help these students situate the results of their studies in the existing body of knowledge in the literature. Furthermore, Jalilifar (2012) points out that more *factive RVs* should be used in the Results chapters to argue for the reported results to be positioned into the existing literature.

When composing the Results and Discussion Chapters, undergraduate students, therefore, can use diverse RVs like *Discourse* and *Research Act RVs* to

construct factual reliability and help the findings of their studies be situated in the existing body of knowledge in the literature. Regarding the evaluative functions of RVs, they can employ *factive RVs* to discuss or explain their results/findings and establish them as credible by comparing with the existing literature, evaluating their results, or accounting for the results.

4.3.6 Reporting Verbs Used in the Conclusion Chapters

Table 4.44 provides a picture of RVs between the BT Conclusion Chapters and the MT Conclusion Chapters. As presented in *Section 4.1.6*, there was only one RV (*put forward*) used in the BT Conclusion corpus, counting 0.6 per 10,000 words. In the MT Conclusion corpus, there were 3.1 types and 5.4 tokens of RVs per 10,000 words.

Table 4.44 RVs Used in Conclusion Chapters between 30 BTs and 30 MTs

Corpus	Type		Token	
	RF	NF	RF	NF
BT Results and Discussion	1	0.6	1	0.6
MT Results and Discussion	15	3.1	26	5.4

Although RVs were used least frequently in the Conclusion Chapters of both corpora, it is obvious that RVs used in the MT Conclusion Chapters were more than those used in the BT Conclusion Chapters in terms of both types and tokens of RVs. It indicates that RVs used by undergraduate students were smaller in amount and narrower in range when compared with those by master's students.

For a detailed comparative analysis of the use of RVs, *Figure 4.12* provides the distribution of RV used between the BT Conclusion Chapters and the MT Conclusion Chapters in terms of the denotative potentials of RVs. The finding shows that only one *Discourse Act RV* was used in the BT Conclusion Chapters. However, two categories of RVs were used in the MT Conclusion Chapters, among which *Discourse Act RVs* were used more frequently than *Research Act RVs*.

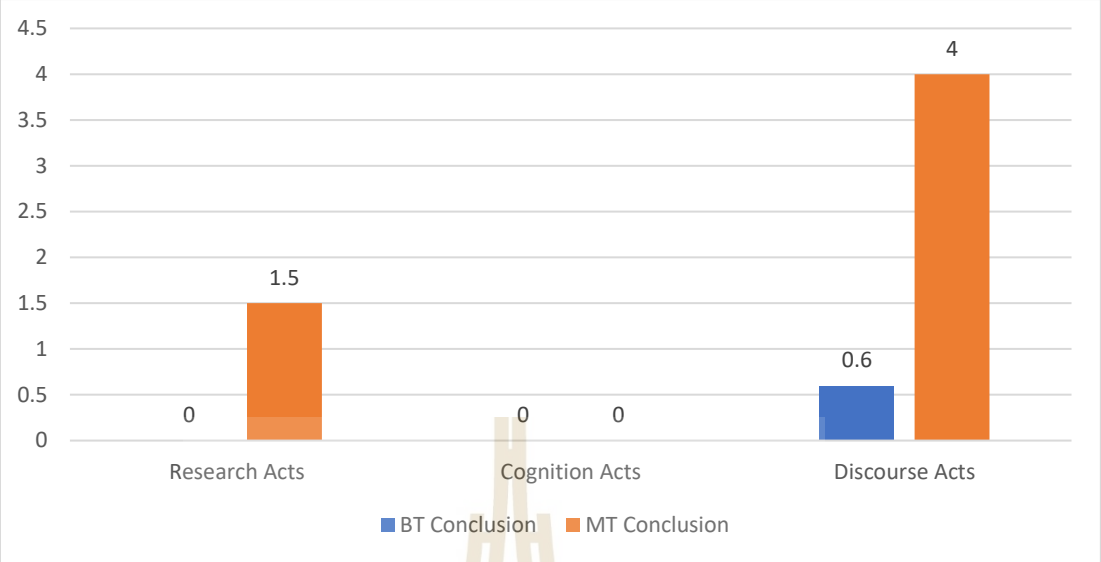


Figure 4.12 Distribution of RVs Used in Conclusion Chapters of 30 BTs and 30 MTs in Terms of Denotative Potentials

Moreover, *Figure 4.13* presents the distribution of RV used between the BT Conclusion Chapters and the MT Conclusion Chapters in terms of the evaluative functions of RVs. Only one *factive RV* was employed in the current BT corpus. Differently, *factive*, *non-factive*, and *tentative* RVs were equally employed by master's students in the MT Conclusion corpus.

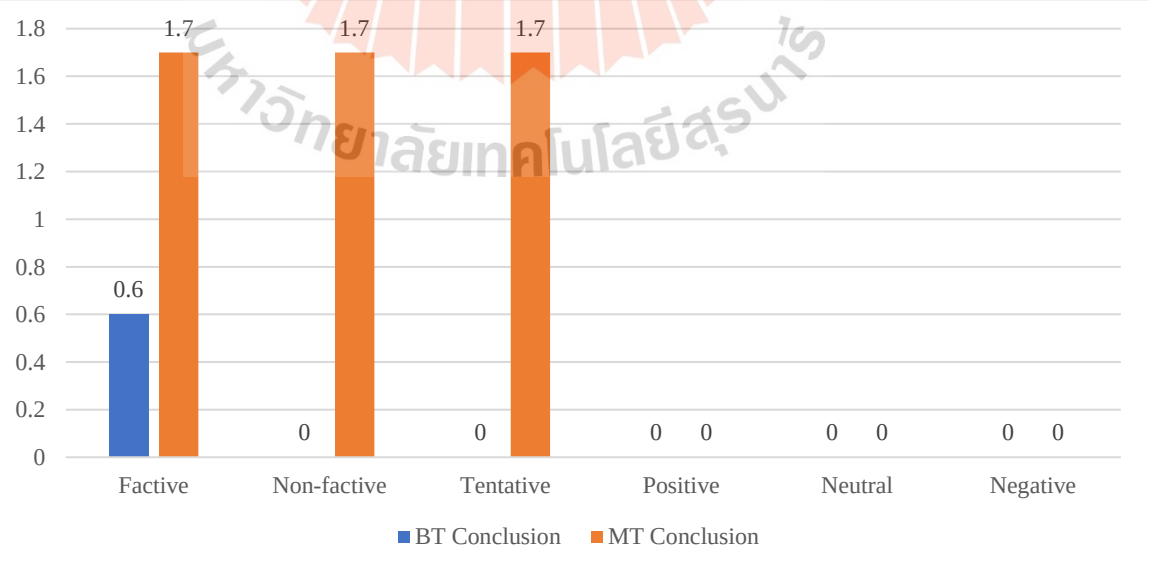


Figure 4.13 Distribution of RVs Used in Conclusion Chapters of 30 BTs and 30 MTs in Terms of Evaluative Functions

Through comparing the use of RVs between the BT Conclusion Chapters and the MT Conclusion Chapters, it is evident that master's students have a wider range of linguistic options to draw on and a higher awareness to use RVs than undergraduate students do in order to make their arguments more convincing in the concluding chapter of a thesis. As pointed out in *Section 4.1.6*, there are three reasons why undergraduate students rarely used RVs in their Conclusion Chapters to integrate the voices of established scholars into their writing. One is that Chinese undergraduate students, as novice learners of academic discourse, were not fully aware of the rhetorical functions of RVs. Secondly, these students were likely to be unfamiliar with using RVs to achieve the communicative purposes of the Conclusion chapter where they also need to refer to other studies to provide support or justifications for their research findings. Finally, as explained by Hyland (2002), the restricted range of verbs, to a certain extent, reflects these students' deficit of vocabulary and low level of language proficiency.

It is worth noting that a Conclusion chapter of a thesis is where writers need to summarize and "wrap up" their work in order to state the significance of what they have found out (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007) through summarizing the study, evaluating the study, or making deductions from the study (Chen & Kuo, 2012). Therefore, it is vital to link their local contributions into the existing literature and so persuade readers of their voices as emphasized by Nguyen (2017). Therefore, in the process of writing the concluding chapter of a thesis, these undergraduate students can learn from those more advanced master's students. First, undergraduate students can employ *Discourse Act RVs* or *Research Act RVs* in the Conclusion Chapters to situate themselves within a disciplinary framework, make their claims against a backdrop of existing perspectives, and establish their voices as credible. Furthermore, undergraduate students can choose *factive RVs* to report the information of previous research so that provide support or justifications for the conclusions, evaluations, or deductions (implications or suggestions) made from their studies and make them more persuasive.

To summarize, based on the comprehensive exploration of the use of RVs in each chapter of BTs and MTs composed by Chinese English majors, the findings tend to indicate that both Chinese English major undergraduate students and master's

students realize the importance of using RVs to integrate the previous work into their thesis writing, which can indicate the writers' understanding of the previous work, make them members of that disciplinary community, and help them promote their works. Concerning the similarities and differences in the use of RVs in BTs and MTs, they can be summarized as follows.

Firstly, the different tendencies to RVs may be due to the different roles they play in the academic community. In the Chinese context, BTs are regarded as the first piece of disciplinary writing, and they are also students' first attempt at stepping into a field. Undergraduate students, therefore, are regarded as novice learners of academic discourse. However, master's students have completed an undergraduate study and are undertaking further study at a more advanced level in order to raise their academic level of learning and specialized knowledge, so they are regarded as novice researchers. Therefore, the findings show that these two writer groups have different preferences for different RVs when reporting the work of other researchers, which sheds some light on their different features of using RVs in the two texts of the same genre. Moreover, the findings indicate that master's students have a better mastery in the use of RVs than that of undergraduate students and have a greater tendency to establish strong support for their claims and make their research more persuasive within the text by employing appropriate and effective RVs to report the work of others and use them in the cumulative construction of knowledge.

Secondly, the way that RVs are manifested in the two texts might reflect the context in which RVs are used by these two writer groups. One of the determining elements of this context is audience. In the Chinese context, undergraduate students write the BTs to convince the thesis defense committee that they are qualified to obtain their academic degrees, so their potential audience includes their advisors and thesis committee members. When it comes to master's students, in addition to the thesis committee members, in most universities in China, their MTs will be uploaded to CNKI where they address a wider research community and face a variety of audiences at home and even abroad. Therefore, to a certain degree, master's students need a greater awareness of employing RVs than undergraduate students do, so they need to construct factual reliability of their own claims by reporting the work of other

researchers, and at the same time express their own stance toward the reported message to show they are prepared to stand behind their words.

Finally, as argued by Jalilifar and Dabbi (2012), the size of the discourse community writers address determines the way they shape their intentions. Undergraduate students address a small discourse community compared to master's students who address a much greater and more diverse discourse community. To some extent, master's students are required to meet a higher degree of conformity to academic conventions with more expectations than undergraduate students are. Therefore, these two writer groups exhibit differences in the use of RVs, their preferences for particular categories, and in the frequencies of individual verb forms they employed.

The present study suggests that the identified rhetorical similarities and differences in RV practices in the BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors mark the underlying rationale for choosing different RVs to create a maximum effect to suit the writers' different citation in BT and MT writing contexts.

4.4 Chapter Summary

The present chapter presented the results of the use of RVs in each chapter of BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors from the perspective of denotative potentials and evaluative functions and then provided further analysis and discussion on the research results related to the three research questions. First, it provided a detailed picture of the use of RVs in each chapter of BTs and MTs separately. Second, the comparative analysis was conducted to find out their similarities and differences in using RVs between each chapter of BTs and MTs by Chinese English majors. In the next chapter, a summary of findings, pedagogical implications, limitations and recommendations for future research will be presented.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

The final chapter of this thesis will first summarize the major findings of the present study. Then, pedagogical implications will be provided for writing, supervising, and teaching writing of BTs and MTs. Finally, limitations of the present study will be clarified, and recommendations for further research will be also provided.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The present study was conducted to analyze and compare the use of RVs in the five chapters of 30 BTs and 30 MTs composed by Chinese English majors, aiming to explore first how RVs were used in BTs and MTs, respectively, and second, their similarities and differences in using those RVs. Employing Hyland's (2002) classification framework, the issues in focus include (1) how these writers used RVs to report previous sources (denotative potentials) and (2) how they evaluated the cited sources (evaluative functions). The main findings obtained from this study can be summarized, as follows.

Firstly, *Table 5.1* presents a summary of the total number of RVs used between 30 BT corpus and 30 MT corpus. There are two major findings. First, in general, RVs used in the BT corpus were smaller in amount but relatively wider in range when compared with those used in the MT corpus. Second, regarding the use of RVs in each thesis chapter, except for the use of RVs in the Literature Review corpora where undergraduate students used fewer tokens but more types than master's students, in the Introduction, Methodology, Results and Discussion, and Conclusion Chapters, RVs used by the former were smaller in amount and narrower in range when compared with those used by the latter.

Table 5.1 Total Number of RVs Used in Each Chapter of 30 BT Corpus and 30 MT Corpus

			BT Corpus	MT Corpus
Introduction Chapters	Type	RF	29	69
		NF	14.3	16.5
	Token	RF	84	175
		NF	41.4	41.8
Literature Review Chapters	Type	RF	76	184
		NF	18	11.4
	Token	RF	469	1947
		NF	110.8	121
Methodology Chapters	Type	RF	4	34
		NF	1.8	5.1
	Token	RF	4	58
		NF	1.8	8.6
Results and Discussion Chapters	Type	RF	8	51
		NF	1.7	2.9
	Token	RF	8	151
		NF	1.7	8.6
Conclusion Chapters	Type	RF	1	15
		NF	0.6	3.1
	Token	RF	1	26
		NF	0.6	5.4
Total	Type	RF	77	207
		NF	5.2	4.2
	Token	RF	566	2357
		NF	38.4	47.8

(***Note**: *RF=Raw frequency; NF=Normalized frequency per 10,000 words*)

Secondly, *Figure 5.1* shows the general distribution of RVs used in each chapter of 30 BTs and 30 MTs. The findings reveal that the distribution of RVs in the five chapters of the two corpora is the same. Specifically, RVs were heavily employed in the Literature Review Chapters, followed by those in the Introduction, Results and Discussion, Methodology, and Conclusion Chapters. Meanwhile, this finding reflects the

role RVs play in these different thesis chapters with different communicative purposes. For instance, the Literature Review chapter of a thesis is where RVs are most concentrated (Soler-Monreal & Gil-Salom, 2011; Nguyen, 2017) since other sources should be effectively integrated into it.

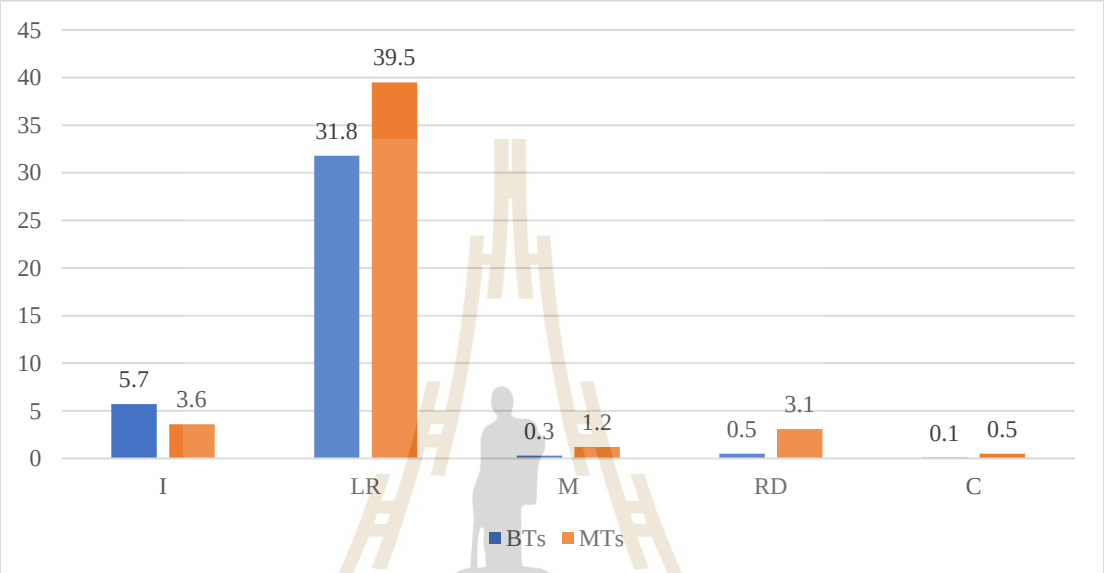


Figure 5.1 General Distribution of RVs Used in Each Chapter of 30 BT Corpus and 30 MT Corpus

Thirdly, based on Hyland's (2002) classification framework, *Figure 5.2* provides a clear picture of the distribution of RVs used in the five chapters between the BT corpus and MT corpus in terms of their denotative categories.

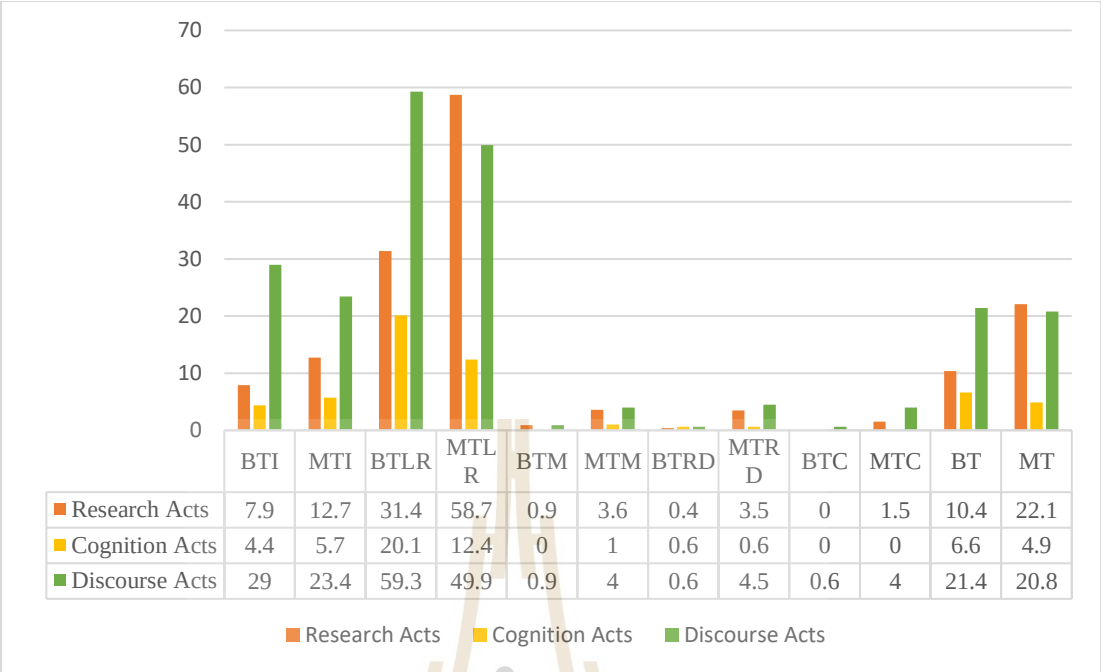


Figure 5.2 Distribution of RVs Used in Each Chapter of BT Corpus and MT Corpus in Terms of Denotative Potentials

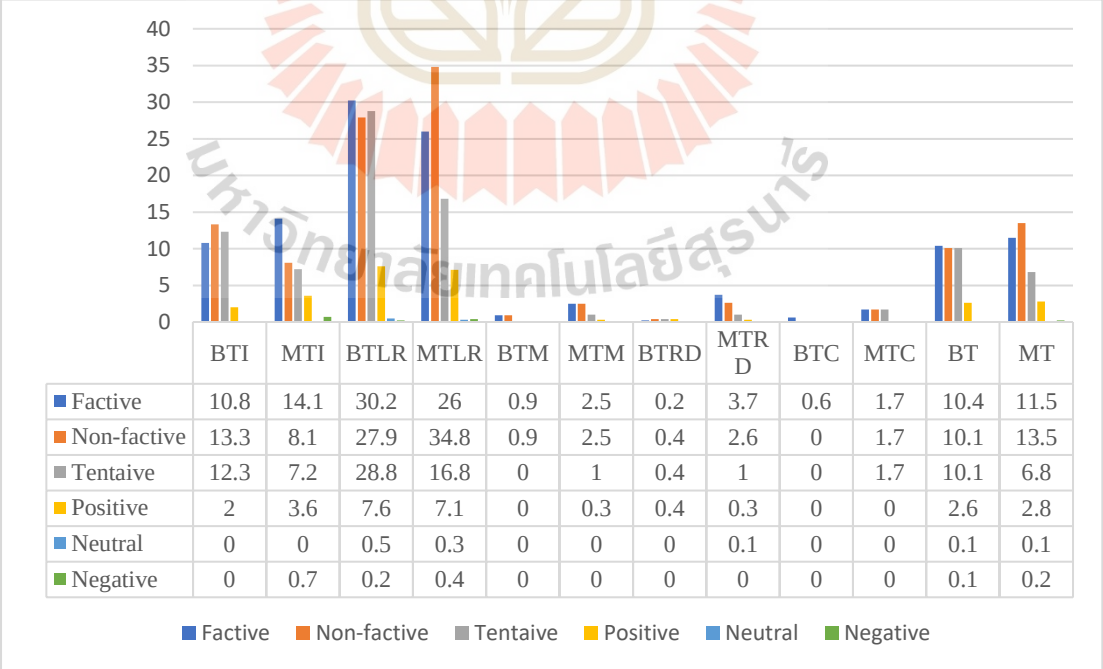
The findings reveal that *Discourse Act RVs* occurred with the highest frequency in the BT corpus, while *Research Act RVs* were used the most in the MT corpus with regard to the total number of RVs identified in this study. *Cognition Act RVs* were the least used category in both BT and MT corpora. In terms of the use of RVs in each of the five chapters, RVs from the category of *Discourse Acts* show the highest proportion in the Introduction, Methodology, Results and Discussion, and Conclusion Chapters in both of the BT corpus and MT corpus. In addition, *Cognition Act RVs* were least employed or even absent in the Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, and Conclusion Chapters in both corpora.

Considering the variations of the use of RVs between each chapter of the BT corpus and MT corpus, the findings reveal that *Discourse Act RVs* were found to predominant in the BT Literature Review Chapters, while *Research Acts RVs* were found to prevail in the MT Literature Review Chapters. *Discourse Act RVs* and *Research Act RVs* were equally employed with the highest frequency in the BT Methodology corpus. Also, both *Discourse Act RVs* and *Cognition Act RVs* were used with the highest frequency in the BT Results and Discussion Chapters, while *Discourse Act RVs* were

used with the highest frequency in the MT Results and Discussion Chapters, followed by *Research Act RVs* as the second and *Cognition Act RVs* with the least frequency.

Fourthly, in *Figure 5.3*, an overall picture of the distribution of RVs used in the five chapters between the BT corpus and MT corpus in terms of their evaluative categories is given. The findings suggest that, in general, *factive*, *non-factive*, and *tentative RVs* were extensively used in both BT corpus and MT corpus, but *positive*, *neutral*, and *negative RVs* were used with a low frequency in the two corpora.

Regarding the use of RVs in each chapter of the BT corpus and MT corpus, the findings indicate four important issues. First, *factive* and *non-factive RVs* were equally used in the Methodology Chapters in both corpora. Secondly, in the Methodology Chapters, *factive RVs* were used with the highest frequency in both corpora. Thirdly, negative RVs (*critical* verbs in *Cognition Acts* and *Discourse Acts*, *counter-factive* verbs in *Research Acts*, and *counter verbs* in *Discourse Acts*) were absent in the Methodology, Results and Discussion, as well as in Conclusion Chapters in both BT corpus and MT corpus. Lastly, *Cognition Act neutral RVs* were absent in the Introduction, Methodology, and Conclusion Chapters in both of the corpora.



	BTI	MTI	BTLR	MTLR	BTM	MTM	BTRD	MTRD	BTC	MTC	BT	MT
Factive	10.8	14.1	30.2	26	0.9	2.5	0.2	3.7	0.6	1.7	10.4	11.5
Non-factive	13.3	8.1	27.9	34.8	0.9	2.5	0.4	2.6	0	1.7	10.1	13.5
Tentaive	12.3	7.2	28.8	16.8	0	1	0.4	1	0	1.7	10.1	6.8
Positive	2	3.6	7.6	7.1	0	0.3	0.4	0.3	0	0	2.6	2.8
Neutral	0	0	0.5	0.3	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.1	0.1
Negative	0	0.7	0.2	0.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.2

Figure 5.3 Distribution of RVs Used in Each Chapter of BT Corpus and MT Corpus in Terms of Evaluative Functions

Furthermore, some variations of the use of RVs in each of the five chapters were also identified. To begin with, in the Introduction Chapters, *non-factive RVs* were the most prominent in the BT corpus but *factive RVs* were used with the highest frequency in the MT corpus. On the contrary, in the Literature Review Chapters, *factive RVs* were used the most frequently in the BT corpus while *non-factive RVs* were the most employed in the MT corpus. Also, *non-factive*, *tentative*, and *positive* RVs were equally employed the most in the Results and Discussion Chapters of BT corpus; however, *factive RVs* were found predominant in the Results and Discussion Chapters of MT corpus.

Finally, in terms of the verb forms used in the BT corpus and MT corpus, the results show that 77 types of RVs were used in the BT corpus, and 207 types of RVs were used in the MT corpus. It is noteworthy that a total of 70 types of RVs overlapped in both corpora (*Figure 5.4*). Accordingly, 7 types of RVs were only used in the BT corpus, and 137 types of RVs were used in the MT corpus. To sum up, there were 214 different types of RVs used in the current corpus, and they are listed in *Table 5.2*.

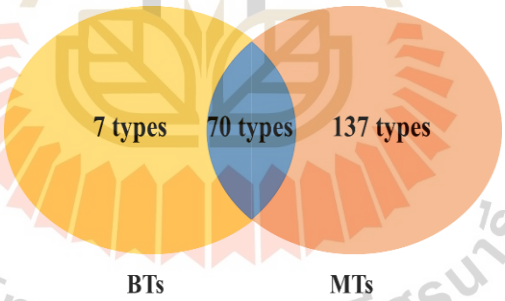


Figure 5.4 Types of RVs Used in the 30 BT Corpus and 30 MT Corpus

The findings indicate that although undergraduate students had a wider range of RVs to draw on when compared with those of master's students, a large number of RVs used in the MT corpus have not been in the BT corpus. In the meanwhile, they were also absent in the list of Hyland's (2002) study. These new RVs identified in the two corpora are added into his category based on the denotative potentials and evaluative functions of RVs. Three reasons can be attributed to the fact that a large number of new RVs not accounted for Hyland's (2002) study are identified in 30 BTs and especially 30 MTs by Chinese English majors. First, in the context of China's tertiary

education, writing courses are offered to English majors to train and improve their writing skills. For instance, for these undergraduate students, Basic Writing, Intermediate Writing, and Academic Writing are offered in Semesters 4, 5, and 6 of the four-year Bachelor of Arts program, respectively. For the master's students, the Academic Writing course is normally offered in Semester 2 or Semester 3 of two- or three-year Master of Arts program. Therefore, these Chinese English major students, to a certain degree, have been influenced by formal instruction on academic wiring. The second reason is attributed to the different genres analyzed and the different research subjects involved. Hyland (2002) analyzed the use of RVs in research articles which are shorter in length and concise in scope when compared with the MTs analyzed in the present study. Third, Hyland's (2002) study was conducted in 2002 when scarcity of studies focused on RVs. With the increased attention on analyzing RVs and much emphasis on using RVs, these students' awareness is raised on using RVs to construct their credibility. Therefore, a large number of RVs are identified in this current study, which can contribute to the existing literature on RVs.

Table 5.2. List of RVs in 30 BTs and 30 MTs by Chinese English Majors

affirm	answer	contribute	distribute	make (an) explanation
oppose	predict	divide	investigate	refer
adopt	compare	do	issue	regard
advocate	compile	elaborate	list	research
analyze	conclude	emphasize	make (a) study	say
apply	conduct	explain	mention	separate
argue	consider	explore	notice	show
attribute	create	expound	offer	state
believe	deem	express	point out	stress
call	define	find	present	study
carry out	demonstrate	focus (on)	propose	suggest
claim	describe	hold	prove	sum up
classify	design	improve	provide	summarize
combine	develop	indicate	publish	survey
come up with	discuss	introduce	put forward	think
achieve	convince	found	use	write
acknowledge	criticize	generalize	make effort(s) to	review
adapt	deal	give (out)	make use	revise

Table 5.2. List of RVs in 30 BTs and 30 MTs by Chinese English Majors (Continued)

add	declare	highlight	manifest	search
address	dedicate	identify	measure	select
admit	devise	illustrate	merge	serve (as)
advise	devote	implement	modify	set (out)
agree	discover	imply	name	set up
assert	display	include	not regard	specify
assess	dissect	initiate research	note	speculate
assume	distinguish	insist	observe	stipulate
attach importance to	draw (a) conclusion	interview	optimize	support
attest	draw attention	involve	pay attention to	suspect
categorize	elucidate	iterate	posit	tag
choose	embark on	justify	probe into	take
clarify	employ	juxtapose	process	test
coin	establish	launch	promulgate	testify
collect	evaluate	lay the foundation	question	treat
comment	examine	look into	raise	uncover
complete	expand	maintain	realize	underline
concentrate on	experiment	make (a) comparison	rebut	usher
conceptualize	expose	make (a) conclusion	recommend	utilize
confirm	extend	make (a) research	reframe	validate
consent	extract	make (a) summary	refute	verify
construct	figure out	make (a) survey	release	view
contend	find out	make (an) analysis	replicate	voice
content	form	make (an) exploration	report	work
contrast	formulate	make a distinction	reveal	

(**Note: verbs in yellow are those RVs that were only used in the BT corpus; verbs in blue are those RVs that were used in both BT corpus and MT corpus; verbs in red are those RVs that were used in the MT corpus.*)

To summarize, this study finds some similarities and differences in the use of RVs in each chapter of 30 BTs and 30 MTs written by Chinese English majors in both aspects of denotative potentials and evaluative functions. The findings suggest that these two writer groups who composed the same genre but represented two different levels of education exhibited different use of RVs in certain chapters of a thesis. However, the findings also demonstrate that undergraduate students were not fully aware of the

sufficient and effective use of RVs in the Results and Discission as well as Conclusion chapters. In contrast, master's students showed a greater awareness and a higher ability to use RVs in each thesis chapter to integrate other diverse sources into their writing, interact their claims with others' claims, and then make their voices justifiable and credible. Therefore, this finding suggests that it is necessary for these writers to learn and to be taught about the use of this linguistic feature in academic writing in general, and thesis writing in particular.

5.2 Pedagogical Implications

The major findings of this study have some implications for thesis writing, for thesis supervision, for classroom writing instruction, as well as for course designers.

Firstly, for final-year undergraduate students and master's students, a better and explicit understanding of what lies behind the RV choices will facilitate them to use those verbs in their writing since the use of RVs is not only a lexical choice but also a significant rhetorical choice (Thompson & Ye, 1991; Thomas & Hawes, 1994; Hyland 1999, 2002). Meanwhile, this comprehensive understanding equips students not only with increased knowledge about the subtle distinctions between lexical features and rhetorical functions of RVs but also a heightened awareness of using appropriate and effective RVs to clearly report other sources and precisely show a stance toward the cited information, which is a cost-effective way to increase their writing credibility among discourse community members. Furthermore, by comparing the use of RVs in each of the five chapters between BTs and MTs, a comprehensive description of the similarities and differences in using RVs was unveiled. On the one hand, it sheds some light on the features of RVs used by these two writer groups who represent two different levels of education, which demonstrates the distinct preferences they exhibit and the underlying rationale for choosing RVs to create a maximum effect to suit the writers' different citations in BT and MT writing contexts. On the other hand, revealing their similarities and differences in the employment of RVs can help undergraduate students learn from those more advanced students. Some suggestions were provided for them to choose appropriate and effective RVs in the overall writing process. The key to making the choice is acquiring knowledge about the syntactic features and

rhetorical functions of RVs and about the specific communicative purposes associated with a particular thesis chapter. Moreover, a large number of RVs which are added to Hyland's (2002) framework are listed in the Appendices B and C, and they provide students with more choices when composing their BTs or MTs, or even other academic texts.

Secondly, pedagogical implications can also be provided for thesis advisors who are guiding and supervising students' thesis writing. Given the significance of the use of RVs in evidence-based thesis writing, establishing stance awareness is also a significant aspect of thesis guidance and supervision because students' advisors may not pay due care and attention to the way students cited the works of others in general and used RVs in particular (Jalilifar, 2012). This study to a certain degree can increase these advisors' attention to students' use of RVs, which can also guide students on how to effectively integrate other sources of knowledge into their writing and improve the quality of their thesis writing. Furthermore, drawing on the similarities and differences between undergraduate students and master's students might help the advisors especially for those who mentor both undergraduate and master's students adjust their ways of BT and MT instruction.

Thirdly, this study could also benefit instructors in teaching thesis writing. Un-udom and Un-udom (2020) point out that studying the real use of a particular language in a natural setting can lead to a reliable resource for instruction tools. By exploring Chinese English majors' use of RVs, an overall picture of how RVs were used by these two writer groups who represented two levels of education was unveiled. Meanwhile, the findings also reveal these writers' deficiencies in choosing effective RVs during the process of composing their theses, especially undergraduate students. Accordingly, with the increasing attention to RVs, the instructors might realize that explicit instruction on the accurate and appropriate use of RVs should be introduced and taught in the classroom to equip the students with more knowledge on this linguistic feature. The integration of RV practice into instruction-based writing should be implemented, and emphasis should be placed on teaching the usage of RVs which have various functions and rhetorical effects on academic writing. For instance, a data-driven learning strategy is useful for teaching and learning RVs (Bloch, 2010). In the

composition classroom, data-driven learning involves looking for relevant instances of a lexical item and then deducing which example is most relevant for the grammatical problems needed to be solved. Correspondingly, the instructors can use materials to capture how RVs are used in the specific rhetorical environment they teach and to illustrate the processes of choosing an appropriate and effective RV to express their intent, rather than providing isolated and decontextualized sentences alone.

Finally, this study might have a pedagogical insight for course designers. Much emphasis should be placed on the issue of teaching English writing. Accordingly, it might contribute to shaping up syllabi of academic English courses at all institutions where English is learned as a foreign language, enhancing students' understanding of the elements of academic writing and the use of RVs in citation practices. For instance, the list of RVs identified in the BT and MT corpora were classified into different categories based on Hyland's (2002) classification framework and they can be used as references for students to choose from.

5.3 Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

This study is not without limitations, and these limitations will be clarified in the final part of the thesis. Moreover, the attention to these unbridged gaps by further research can lead to improvements in the analysis of RVs in thesis writing or even other academic genres.

Firstly, the present study limits itself in exploring the use of RVs focusing on forms and functions in terms of their denotative potentials and evaluative functions. More perspectives concerned with RVs such as the use of tense and voice should be combined into further studies since they also can carry the writer's stance toward the research reported (Swales, 1990). Meanwhile, choosing tense and voice forms in RV practices is often another challenge the ESL/EFL students face (Thomas & Hawes, 1994; Jarkovská & Kučírková, 2020). Further research, therefore, can benefit from analyzing tense and voice deployed in the use of RVs to depict a more comprehensive picture of RV practices, extend the knowledge of the usage of tense and voice, and help students choose the verb tenses and their voice in thesis writing more effectively.

Secondly, the present study has focused on two subject matters in the disciplinary fields (applied linguistics and teaching methodology), and the remaining three subfields (literature, culture, and translation) that Chinese English majors undertake were not included in the current research. With a corpus more representative, further research could be conducted through expanding the data sources that include all the five subfields of English discipline, which would shed more light on the use of RVs by English majors and provide a broader range of RV options available and accessible to these students. Moreover, future endeavors can also be made to investigate the nuanced variations across the subfields, and the generated results would provide valuable information on the research topics discussed to facilitate the teaching and learning of thesis writing.

Thirdly, for the accessibility of this study, the current corpus-based study was conducted based on mere text analysis of BTs and MTs composed by Chinese English majors. Consequently, these writers' ideas, knowledge, or decisions in using RVs or what difficulties they encountered throughout the process of writing their theses were not known. Further studies, therefore, could use more research methods/techniques to collect data on these aspects, such as questionnaires or interviews. For example, an interview-based approach could be employed to probe a deeper understanding of the practice of English thesis writing (BTs and MTs), and particularly, the employment of RV by these two groups of Chinese writers. Moreover, further research can benefit from conducting the triangulation of data collection methods, and their results would be more comprehensive and reliable.

Lastly, as mentioned in *Chapter 1*, a limitation on data collection design was admitted in this study. Due to the present researcher's incapacity, it is impossible to collect BTs from more universities in the same way as to collect MTs. Therefore, the present study, in an effort to keep it manageable based on research accessibility, collected 30 BTs from a single university in China. The findings, therefore, may not be generalizable to the diversity of settings in which English thesis is composed and its writing is taught and learned. Accordingly, an attempt should be made to expand the research sources from more other universities across China so as to make the sample

of BTs more representative and thus make the findings of further studies more generalizable.

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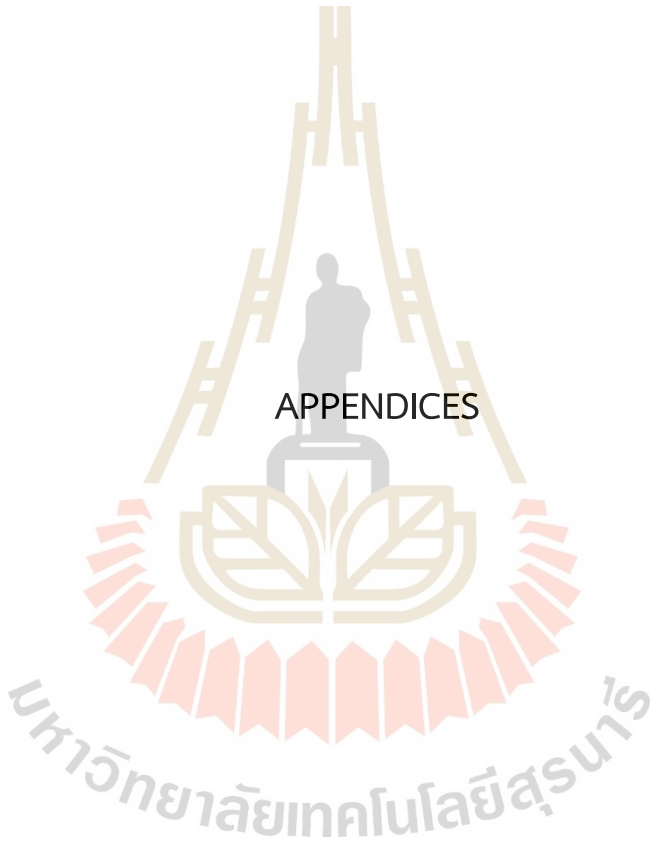
APPENDICES



APPENDIX A

List of RVs Taken from Hyland's (2002) Study (pp. 118-121)

Research Acts	Findings	Factive	demonstrate, establish, show, solve, confirm
		Counter-factive	fail, misunderstand, ignore, overlook
		Non-factive	find, identify, observe, obtain
	Procedures		analyze, review, study, replicate, compare, investigate
Cognition Acts	Positive		agree, concur, hold, know, think, understand
	Critical		disagree, dispute, not think
	Tentative		believe, doubt, speculate, suppose, suspect
	Neutral		picture, conceive, anticipate, reflect
Discourse Acts	Doubt	Tentative	postulate, hypothesize, indicate, intimate, suggest
		Critical	evade, exaggerate, not account, not make point
	Assurance	Factive	argue, affirm, explain, note, point out, claim
		Non-factive	state, describe, discuss, report, answer, define, summarize
	Counters		deny, critique, challenge, attack, question, warn, refute, rule out

APPENDIX B

LIST OF REPORTING VERBS IDENTIFIED IN BACHELOR'S THESES BY CHINESE ENGLISH MAJORS

Research Acts	Findings	Factive	show, demonstrate, prove, contribute
		Counter-factive	
		Non-factive	find, divide, introduce, provide, classify, list, offer, distribute, present, separate
	Procedures		study, conduct, analyze, design, explore, make (a) study, create, develop, adopt, apply, do, publish, carry out, combine, compare, compile, improve, investigate, issue, survey, use, research
Cognition Acts	Positive		think, hold, attribute, deem, focus
	Critical		
	Tentative		believe, consider
	Neutral		notice, predict
Discourse Acts	Doubt	Tentative	propose, indicate, suggest, mention
		Critical	
	Assurance	Factive	point out, put forward, emphasize, explain, claim, come up with, advocate, argue, elaborate, stress, affirm, expound, make (an) explanation
		Non-factive	say, define, discuss, summarize, conclude, state, describe, call, refer, write, answer, express, regard, sum up
	Counter		oppose

APPENDIX C

LIST OF REPORTING VERBS IDENTIFIED IN MASTER'S THESES BY CHINESE ENGLISH MAJORS

Research Acts	Findings	Factive	show, prove, demonstrate, confirm, establish, display, coin, justify, testify, verify, declare, contribute, manifest
		Counter-factive	
		Non-factive	find, find out, divide, reveal, give (out), provide, introduce, classify, present, discover, identify, categorize, illustrate, observe, distinguish, figure out, separate, list, expose, make a distinction, modify offer, specify, uncover
	Procedures		conduct, investigate, explore, study, examine, analyze, carry out, use, compare, develop, design, adopt, make (a) study, do, apply, publish, choose, make (an) analysis, research, implement, select, employ, take, collect, interview, probe into, evaluate, expand, include, assess, combine, compile, create, make (an) exploration, review, test, achieve, complete, construct, extend, extract, improve, initiate (a) research, launch, make (a) comparison, make (a) research, make (a) survey, release, replicate, set (out), survey, adapt, contrast, deal, devote, dissect, experiment, form, found, issue, juxtapose, look into, make use, measure, merge, optimize, process, set up, tag, utilize, work, search, embark (on), reframe, formulate

Cognition Acts	Positive		hold, think, focus (on), agree, pay attention to, generalize, realize, attach importance to, content, concentrate (on), consent, deem, attribute
	Critical		
	Tentative		believe, consider, contend, view, conceptualize, speculate, suspect, assume
	Neutral		notice
Discourse Acts	Doubt	Tentative	propose, suggest, indicate, mention, comment, admit, recommend, advise, imply
		Critical	not regard
	Assurance	Factive	point out, put forward, claim, argue, emphasize, explain, note, expound, elaborate, maintain, come up with, insist, stress, support, validate, add, advocate, acknowledge, assert, clarify, convince, iterate, posit, promulgate, revise, stipulate, underline, highlight, attest, dedicate, devise, lay the foundation on, make effort(s) to, serve, usher
		Non-factive	define, state, conclude, regard, summarize, report, discuss, say, describe, draw (a) conclusion, make (a) conclusion, express, make (a) summary, raise, refer, sum up, treat, write, call, draw attention, elucidate, name, voice, address, involve
	Counter		criticize, rebut, refute, question

CURRICULUM VITAE

Shuangqing Wen, female, was born on 5th January 1996, in Leishan, Guizhou Province, China. She graduated from Kaili University in 2018 with a bachelor's degree of Arts in English. From 2018-2021, she pursued her M.A. in English Language Studies at the School of Foreign Languages, Institute of Social Technology, Suranaree University of Technology, Thailand. Her research interests include discourse analysis and academic writing. She published a research article in the Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics in September 2021.