

Evaluative Functions of Reporting Evidentials in English Research Articles of Applied Linguistics

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Reporting evidentials are frequently used in Research Articles. Based on the data analysis of 50 English research articles of applied linguistics, the study shows that reporting evidentials not only function as indicating the information sources, but also have multiple evaluative functions. The analyses have proved this by showing the evaluative functions of reporting evidential in choosing different information sources and different realization forms. At the same time the persuasive effects and discourse implications of these different choices are also discussed.

Keywords: Reporting Evidential; English Research Articles; Evaluative Functions

Introduction

As a hot research issue in recent years, evidentiality has been studied from various perspectives (e.g. Aikhenvald, 2003, 2004; Chafe, 1986; Palmer, 1990, 2001; Mushin, 2000, 2001; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Hu, 1994, 1995; Fang, 2005; Tang, 2007; Yang, 2009, 2010). With different research focuses, goals and perspectives, these studies have provided us different understandings of evidentiality. Yet, up to now, few researchers have touched the evaluative functions of evidentiality, especially the functions of reporting evidential. As the frequently used evidential type in English research articles, it is necessary to study what reporting evidentials can do for the writer. Therefore, to fill this gap, this study intends to focus on the evaluative functions of reporting evidentials in English research articles, aiming to show how reporting evidential can help the writers to negotiate the relationship among the information, the writer and the reader.

Understanding of Evidentiality in the Current Study

As for what is evidentiality, there has been no consensus. There are narrow and broad understandings of it. For the working definition of evidentiality, the current study adopts the broad view of evidentiality.

First, it treats evidentiality as a semantic notion rather than a grammatical one and admits all the potential realization forms rather than the grammaticalised ones. It adopts the "one-to-many" approach in Systemic Functional Linguistics and admits the differences in different realizations for the same semantics.

Second, the study agrees that evidentiality is interpersonal by nature and negotiating the interpersonal relationship is one of the most important functions of evidentiality, but at the same

time it holds that the interpersonal functions of evidentiality are context-dependent. Only in certain concrete context, can the interpersonal functions of a certain evidential be decided. For instance, the reporting evidential *it is said* may perform different interpersonal functions in different contexts. It may denote the speaker's uncertainty of the source of saying, or it is a device for the speaker to conceal the information source and distance him or her from the information, or even escape from taking responsibility from the information. In this sense, context is much important in deciding the interpersonal functions of evidentials.

Third, evidentiality is much related to genre convention. Many factors will affect the adoption of evidentiality, and genre is undoubtedly one of them. Each genre has its own linguistic manifestations. As far as evidentiality is concerned, in different genres, the forms and distributions of evidentials are different. For example, such subjective evidentials as *I think*, *in my opinion* are not preferred in academic genres.

These understandings concerning evidentiality will decide the analytical orientation in the later part. This is also a starting point for the current research. It will examine in RAs what interpersonal functions reporting evidentials will perform and how they can help the writers to negotiate the relationship among the information, the writer and the reader.

Data and Methodology

English RAs of applied linguistics are chosen as the data. The corpus consists of 50 RAs in applied linguistics amounting to about 350,000 words. The journals selected for this study are: *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* (2004-2008), *Journal of English for Specific Purposes* (2004-2008), and *Journal of Pragmatics* (2004-2008). The data of RAs are confined to the same period because of the fact that genres are on the one hand quite stable in a certain period of time. On the other hand,

they are also in a state of constant evolution, as Fairclough (1992) notes, “a genre implies not only a particular text type, but also particular processes of producing, distributing and consuming text... Changes in social practice are both manifested on the plane of language in changes in the system of genre, and in part brought about by such changes”. The genre of RAs also may change over time. Therefore, in order to examine the linguistic features of RAs, the study chooses RAs published during the same time for the validity of the research results.

The data-coding of this research is done manually at the preliminary stage to identify and count all the potential lexical and discourse-based items that indicate different reporting evidential types. The material for data-coding includes the body of the articles, i.e. the complete text of the articles, excluding abstracts, notes, linguistic examples, tables, and figures. Then, Microsoft Office Excel is adopted to deal with the data and draw the figures accordingly. In addition, in order to take the context of evidentials into consideration to find the concordance patterns, a concordance software is also adopted. This quantitative approach is meant to identify the frequency of occurrences and to produce comparable data. The frequency of occurrence of each group of items is calculated in permillage.

Classification of Reporting Evidential and Its Lexicogrammatical Realizations in English RAs

Based on the genre convention of English RAs, in the current research, reporting evidentials are classified into two types according to the information source: other-reporting and self-reporting evidentials. Self-reporting evidentials indicate that information comes from whatever related to the writer’s own research, e.g. *I, we, our, my, our analysis, our research, this article, and the participants involved in the experiments* and so on, while other-reporting evidentials indicate that information is from the extra sources other than the writer’s own research.

Our data survey indicates that reporting evidentials are the most important and frequently adopted evidentials. They have various types of realizations.

First, (*author + date*) form is a conventional way to realize reporting evidentials. For example:

- 1) Such evaluations can be said to be averrals which are expressed as though deriving from a source, in this case, implied consensus (*Hunston, 2000*).

In Example (1), the evidential (*Hunston, 2000*) indicate the information comes from *Hunston*. At the same time it provides a way for the writer to give a summary or generalization of the cited information. This type of evidentials is typical in RAs.

This type also includes (*website*) which indicates the information source is a certain website rather than an author. For example:

- 2) Negative judgments can also be made implicitly, with absence of items that carry negative values, but with tokens that evoke negative judgements from readers (<http://www.rammatics.com/appraisal/appraisalGuide/UnFrame/dstage2-Attitude-judgment.htm>).

Example (2) reveals that the internet provides an alternative source of information. However, this type is not very frequently adopted in the data and only several cases are found.

Second, reporting evidentials can be realized by verbal forms: *verb + that* structure, *be verbed* structure, *it is verbed* structure

and *as* structure.

The structure *verb + that* is a way in which the writer can show the specific information source, either human or non-human, specific or unspecific. This form presents the information source as the theme, which foregrounds the information source rather than the cited information. For example:

- 3) Tannen has **demonstrated that** controlling others involves them in a relationship (power entailing solidarity), the same way that claiming intimacy has an element of control (solidarity entailing power).
- 4) **This body of literature suggests that** L2 learners’ relationship with their advisors dramatically impact their participation in academic literacy projects and, by extension, their attempts to gain admittance into target discourse communities.
- 5) **Belcher’s research suggests that** a critical factor in high-level academic literacy activities is the quality and kind of relationship that L2 learners develop with their advisors.
- 6) **Many researchers have argued that** genre knowledge plays a pivotal role in advanced academic literacy.

In the above examples, by foregrounding the information sources, the writers put more value on the information sources rather than the information itself, which shows the writers’ respect for other researchers. The examples also show that the information may be human, as in (3) and (6), or inhuman, as in (4) and (5). It may be specific, as in (3) and (5), or unspecific, as in (4) and (6).

The structures of *be verbed* and *it is verbed* allow the writer to omit the information source for whatever reasons. Consider the following two examples.

- 7) **It is assumed that** established genres such as case histories, experimental research reports and editorials constitute a natural part of readings in the medical sciences.
- 8) As can be seen in examples below, the DM *te was found* to function mainly as an information state marker and mostly marked shared and assumed knowledge between the speaker and the addressee.

In Examples (7) and (8), instead of explicitly indicating the information sources, the writers choose to conceal them. In this case, the writers pay more attention to the reported information rather than where the information comes. The writers may not know the information source or they find no necessity to point it out. What they value is just the cited information, which is different from the case of the structure of *verb+ that*.

Reporting evidentials can also be realized by *as verb(ed)* structure. Some examples of *as* structure are given below.

- 9) However, **as Hyland (1998a) adds**, expressions of certainty work towards the acceptance of by addressing readers as knowledgeable peers who are familiar with the ideas presented and able to follow the author’s reasoning.
- 10) Moreover, **as noted above**, these labels are interactive: their use affects the reader’s perception of the propositions and so enables the readers to perceive the organization and meaning that the writer intends.

As verb(ed) structure is often chosen by the writer because of the flexibility of its occurrence. It can occur either at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of a clause. It is also a kind of

textual meta-discourse which can smooth and guide the reader's understanding of the writer's argumentation, as in Example (10). This point will be elaborated in the following chapter.

Third, non-verbal reporting evidentials include noun patterns or adjuncts. The typical nouns and adjuncts are such as *fact, observation, agreement, finding, view, claim, evidence, argument, suggestion, according to X, in X's data, in X's view, in X's terms* and so on.

In this type of realization, the most frequently-used noun is *fact* which nearly constitutes 90% of the nouns as reporting evidentials, as shown in Example (11).

11) The use of nouns to construct stance in academic writing has so far attracted little attention, despite ***the fact that*** several researchers have identified a group of nouns which offer the possibility of incorporating interpersonal meanings in the text.

The use of nouns as reporting evidentials have its own peculiar functions and characteristics. In some cases, the information source may be concealed. In addition, this form can also provide the writer with chances to evaluate the information source, e.g. *One further interesting finding, the most striking finding for Harwood, Thomson's groundbreaking study*. Furthermore, nouns allow the process to be a participant which can not be argued, negated and so on. Therefore, they have more persuasive power and they make it more possible for the reader to accept what the writer expresses.

The adjunct *according to* is frequently adopted to indicate information source, which typically occurs at the beginning and gives prominence to information source. This type of realization is very objective because it just indicates information source without any of the writer's evaluation of information

source and cited information.

12) ***According to Swales (1996)***, these are genres that "operate to support and validate the manufacture of knowledge directly as part of the publishing process itself or indirectly by underpinning the academic administrative processes of hiring, promotion and departmental review."

In Example (12), the writer chooses the adjunct "*according to*" to indicate the information source and shows no evaluations of the information source and the information itself. This type of reporting evidentials are identical to the objective nature of RAs.

Table 1 will present a clear picture of the lexicogrammatical realizations of reporting evidential in English RAs of Applied Linguistics.

Evaluative Functions of Reporting Evidential

Based on the descriptive result of Section 3, in this section, we will look at the evaluative functions of reporting evidential in four aspects: the phraseological patterns of reporting evidential, the evaluative functions of information sources, the evaluative functions of reporting verbs and evaluative functions of nouns.

Phraseological Patterns of Reporting Evidentials

First consider the distribution pattern of reporting evidentials in RAs, as is shown in the **Table 2**.

As seen from **Table 2**, to express reporting evidentiality, the writer prefers verbal forms, either in active forms or in passive forms. Verbal forms nearly constitute 61.4% of all the realization forms. The second frequently used forms are (*author* +

Table 1.
Lexicogrammatical realizations of reporting evidentials.

Evidential type	Realization type	Lexicogrammatical realizations	Typical examples
		(Author + year) or (website + year)	(Hunston, 2000)
		<i>Verb that</i> structure, <i>be verbed</i> structure,	X argue, maintain, found, ... that
Reporting evidential types	Verbal realization	<i>It is ved</i> structure	It is argued, it has been revealed
		<i>As</i> structure	As indicated by...
	Non-verbal realization	Noun that	Fact, observation, agreement, finding, view, claim,
		Adjunct	According to X, in X's data, in X's view

Table 2.
Distribution of reporting evidentials.

Realization forms		Other-reporting	Self-reporting	Total & percentage	
	Author/date	647	0	647	30.7%
Verbal	<i>Verb that</i> structure	400	550	950	
	<i>(It) is ved</i> structure	53	50	103	61.4%
	<i>As</i> structure.	70	107	177	
Non-verbal	<i>Noun that</i>	117	3	120	
	Adjunct	37	10	47	7.9%

date) forms, constituting 30.7%. Therefore, verbal forms are prominent in reporting evidentials. The effect of this foregrounding feature will be discussed in Section 4.3. The results also show that (*author + date*) convention is a very specific form of reporting evidentials in RAs. It generally occurs at the end of a proposition with the only purpose of indicating the information source of that proposition. For example:

(13) It sends the message to teachers that voice is critically important, and this message, if passed down to students, may result in learners who are more concerned with identity than ideas (Stapleton, 2002).

In Example (13), to show that the proposition “*It sends the message to teachers that voice is ...*” comes from the other source other than the writer himself, he chooses (*author + date*) form. Compared with other forms, (*author + date*) forms are the objective ways to present the information sources in that the writer only reveals where the information is from without any subjective intrusion into the proposition. The writer will leave his “imprint” on choosing how to indicate the information sources. When he chooses (*author + date*) forms, he will be quite distanced from the proposition. It is the cited authors, but not the writer, who bear the full responsibility for the validity of the proposition. This kind of form is also identical to the objective nature of RAs in which not too much subjectivity is involved.

Another important point peculiar to (*author + date*) form is that by indicating the exact date, sometimes with exact page number (e.g. Stapleton, 2002: p. 187), the reliability of the propositions is greatly improved. It can be certain enough that the reader tends to believe the information with specific sources. Therefore, this form contributes much to the persuasive and rhetorical purposes of the whole genre. First, it can improve the reliability of the information. Second, the improved reliability adds to the credibility of the writer. The writer will be made more detached from the information presented, therefore with less commitment and responsibility for the validity of the information. Third, the form is almost the most objective way for the writer to present the information from other sources, which consolidates the objectivity of RAs.

As shown above, (*author + date*) forms are an objective way to function as reporting evidentials, but it is a different picture for verbal and noun forms as evidentials. The choice of reporting verbs and nouns will show the writer’s subjective evaluation of the reported information and also the information sources. Sections 4.3 and 4.4 will elaborate the evaluative functions of reporting verbs and nouns as reporting evidentials.

Evaluative Functions of Information Source

In addition to the evaluative potential in different phraselogical patterns of reporting evidentials, the choice of information source is also evaluative in function and related to the overall persuasion of RAs.

As can be seen in Table 3, specific human sources are most frequently chosen as information sources. Non-human and concealed sources are relatively low in frequencies. However, the different distributions between other-reporting and self-reporting should be devoted much attention to. In other-reporting, the writer tends to choose specific human sources which constitute 88.6% of the total number. This shows that in presenting others’ work, the writer gives much prominence to the cited authors than the cited information. In so doing, there are at least two persuasive effects. First, by giving prominence to the cited authors, the writer will show his respect for the previous related researchers, which helps to build a professional persona. Second, this strategy adds much to the reliability of information and also the credibility of the writer. Nesler et al. (1993) points out that people tend to accept beliefs, knowledge, and opinions from what they see as authoritative, trustworthy, or credible sources, such as scholars, professionals, experts or reliable media. In addition, with reference to specific sources, the reliability of information will be improved. For example, Hu (1994) points out that a specific source will add to the reliability of information because the reader has specific persons and sources to refer to.

The situation is different for self-reporting evidentials. The prominent information source adopted by the writer is non-human source (62.7%), including the findings, data, figures, analysis, tables and so on. This is different from other-reporting evidentials. However, they have the similar ultimate purposes. When presenting his own work, in order to let the facts speak for themselves, the writer tends to choose the research as the information sources, such as *the research shows* rather than *we show*. In so doing, the reliability of information is improved and at the same time contributes to the objectivity of RAs because not so many *Is* and *wes* are involved. When the writer chooses human sources as information sources, in addition to *Is* and *wes*, it is worth noting that the participants in the research are chosen as the information sources, e.g. the interviewees and the research participants. This also adds to the reliability of the information, for these people are direct experiencers and eyewitnesses of the information presented.

The above discussion has shown that choosing different information sources is also meaningful and evaluative. It also presents the differences between other-reporting evidentials and

Table 3.
Information sources of reporting evidentials.

Information sources		Other-reporting		Self-reporting		Total reporting	
Human	Specific	1037	88.6%	83	14.3%	1120	64%
	Unspecific	7	0.6%	13	2.3%	20	1.1%
Non-human		37	3.2%	363	62.7%	400	22.9%
Concealed		90	7.6%	120	20.7%	210	12%
Total		1171	100%	579	100%	1750	100%

self-reporting evidentials in this respect. In spite of the differences, they both serve the ultimate persuasive purpose of RAs.

Evaluative Functions of Verbs as Reporting Evidentials

Verbal forms are the most frequently adopted in RAs to function as reporting evidentials. By adopting verbal forms, the writer does not just show where the information is from. Instead, he presents his subjective evaluation. This section will focus on the evaluative functions of reporting verbs.

In RAs, reporting verbs do not simply function to indicate the sources of the information reported, but they also reveal the writer's own position. The selection of an appropriate reporting verb allows the writer to intrude into the discourse to signal his assessment of the evidential status of the reported proposition and to demonstrate his commitment. For example, the verbs *say* and *insist* in *He says/insists he is innocent* differ in discourse implications in that *insist* explicitly conveys the speaker's insistence on the part of the information presented.

Sometimes, reporting verbs are used with adverbials (e.g. *As sb correctly asserts*). This explicitly evaluative strategy allows the writer to open a discursive space within which the writer either exploits his opposition to the reported message or to build on it. However, this is not a common case in RAs. Most of the time, the writer chooses to intrude into the proposition implicitly.

Hyland (1999: pp. 349-350) finds that reporting verbs in academic texts, such as *X observe, X advocate, X establish, X ignore, X fail*, and so on, can help the writer to differentiate his various degrees of commitment to the cited messages, which at the same time demonstrate implicitly the writer's personal stances towards the cited authors.

Thompson (1991) agrees with Hyland on the evaluative functions of reporting verbs in academic discourse. As Thompson & Ye's (1991) ground-breaking study shows, the choice of reporting verbs is a key feature which enables the writer to position his work in relation to that of other members of the discipline. Their study offers a threefold analysis of the evaluative potential of reporting verbs (Thompson & Ye, 1991: pp. 372-373). First, reporting verbs show the cited author's stances towards the information. Second, reporting verbs can construct the writer's stance of acceptance, neutrality or rejection of the cited research. Third, they allow the writer's interpretation of the author's behaviors or discourse.

Thompson and Ye (1991) also distinguish three categories of reporting verbs according to the activities they perform: "textual" verbs in which there is an obligatory element of verbal expression (e.g., *state, write*); "mental" verbs, which refer to mental processes (e.g. *think, believe*); and "research" verbs, which refer to the processes that are part of research activity (e.g. *find, demonstrate*).

Later studies such as those by Thomas & Hawes (1994) and Hyland (2002) also admit the evaluative functions of reporting verbs. Hyland's category of reporting verbs, which are diverged from Thomson and Ye's rather complex system, is shown in **Figure 1**. The figure clearly shows Hyland's opinion toward the evaluative functions of reporting verbs.

The above has shown that many researchers have paid much attention to the evaluative functions of reporting verbs. The use of a reporting verb to introduce the work of others is also a significant rhetorical choice (Hunston, 1993; Tadros, 1993;

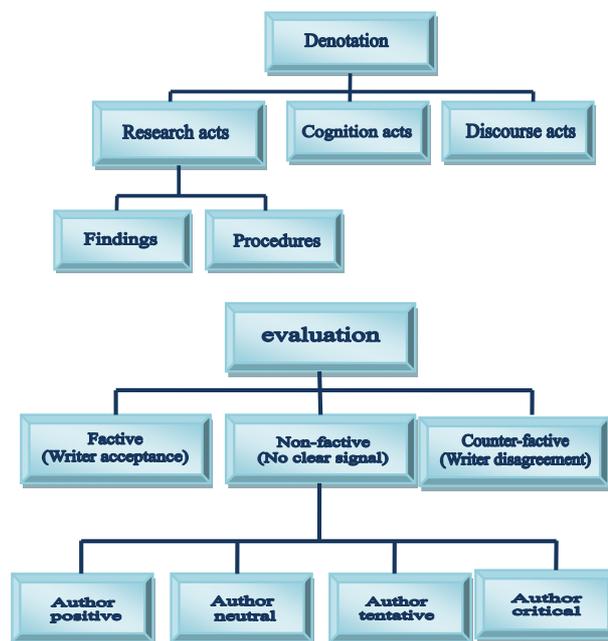


Figure 1.
Categories of reporting verbs (after Hyland, 1999: p. 350).

Thomas & Hawes, 1994; Thompson & Ye, 1991). The importance of these verbs lies in the fact that they allow the writer to convey clearly the kind of activity reported and to distinguish an attitude to that information, signaling whether the claims are to be accepted or not.

This study totally agrees the evaluative function of reporting verbs. The following will discuss the evaluative functions of reporting verbs as evidentials. To categorize reporting verbs, the book adopts the classification of Francis et al. (1996) for *V that clause* pattern. According to his classification, three groups of reporting verbs are categorized in our corpus: ARGUE group, THINK group, SHOW and FIND group. The explanations and verb samples are adapted from Francis et al. (1996: pp. 97-101), as shown in the following:

A: ARGUE verbs are concerned with writing and other forms of communication, e.g., *argue, suggest, point out, write, conclude, claim, add, maintain, propose, imply, mention*.

B: THINK verbs are concerned with thinking, including having a belief; knowing, understanding, hoping, fearing, e.g., *think, assume, feel, hold, believe*.

C: SHOW and FIND verbs are concerned with indicating a fact or situation or with coming to know or think something, e.g., *show, demonstrate, reveal, find, observe, discover, indicate*.

It is important to note that the categorization of verbs is dependent on the context where the verbs occur. That is, a verb can occur in more than one group, and the context needs to be examined in order to determine the appropriate category the verb belongs to. For example, the verb *observe* can appear in FIND group when it refers to the visual evidence with the meaning of "noticing" and also can be in ARGUE group when it refers to the language activity.

This categorization may overlap or be similar to those of

Thompson and Ye's and Hyland's. ARGUE verbs parallel the textual group and discourse group, THINK group, the mental and cognition group and SHOW and FIND group, the research group. In spite of the similarities and overlaps, the categorization adapted from Francis et al. (1996) is chosen by the current study for the following two reasons. First, this categorization reveals better the ways information is acquired, either through language activity (ARGUE verbs), through visual channel (FIND verbs), or through thinking (THINK verbs). Second, verbs of different categorizations may denote a line of different commitment and certainty. For example, FIND and SHOW group tend to bear high certainty than the other two groups in that FIND and SHOW verbs are always factive. They indicate different degrees of reliability of information.

Based on the above categorization, a statistic picture of reporting verbs in NS corpus is presented in **Table 4**.

Table 4 shows the distribution of verb groups in reporting evidential type. There are great differences in the distribution of verbal groups and also between other-reporting evidential type and self-reporting evidential type. It shows that THINK verbs are seldom adopted as reporting evidentials. Especially in self-reporting evidential type, no THINK groups occur, which can be explained by the fact that this book categorizes THINK group with self sources as brief evidentials. However, for the other two types of verbs, significant differences are presented. In other-reporting evidential type, ARGUE verbs predominate. In fact, 61.1% of the total appear with an ARGUE verb. The most frequently adopted ARGUE verbs are *argue*, *point out*, *suggest*, *claim* which constitute nearly half of the total number, as shown in the following examples.

14) *Swales (1990) suggests that* citation convention (numerical or author/date) may affect the choice between integral and non-integral and *he argues that* numerical conventions predispose the writer to use non-integral citation.

15) *As Johns and Swales (2002: p. 13) point out*, uncertainty over "what role there might be for a personal voice" is one area of difficulty that affects student writing at all levels, including the thesis.

The situation is quite different for self-reporting evidentials. Unlike other-reporting evidentials, FIND and SHOW verbs predominate with the occurrence of 73.6% of the total. FIND

and SHOW verbs are mainly concerned with the writer's own researches, such as the results, situations, findings and analyses. For example:

16) *Our study of conversation in noisy settings shows that* there are also identifiable patterns in the ways that noise and impaired language perception during conversation affect grammatical and discourse structures, language processing, language use, and patterns of interaction in conversations.

17) *Our data has demonstrated that* the acoustic constraints have clear repercussions on grammatical constructions, including effects on utterance lengths, grammatical complexity, and questioning strategies.

The two examples above show that the information sources of self-reporting evidentials are mainly about the writer's own study such as *our data*, *our study* and so on. In fact, our study has found very low percentage of personal pronouns such as *I* and *we* for information sources. This finding is also different from that of other-reporting evidentials, which can be explained by the fact that when referring to other sources, the writer tends to give prominence to the cited authors themselves, while when referring to self sources, he will put more value on the studies rather than the writer himself. This is a persuasive strategy. When presenting his own studies and researches, the writer lets his studies and researches speak for themselves, but not his own subjective demonstration. This strategy of "objectiveness" adds to the reliability of information. Thus, the reader will be more likely to accept the claims the writer makes.

To sum up, the choice of reporting verbs in reporting evidential type positions the writer in relation to the reported authors and the reported information. With different reporting verbs, the writer shows his evaluation and stances towards the reported authors and the reported information.

Evaluative Functions of Nouns as Reporting Evidentials

The above has shown that (*author + date*) and reporting verbs are often adopted in reporting evidential type in RAs. In spite of this, significant numbers of nouns as reporting evidentials (e.g. *fact*, *finding*, *evidence*, *suggestion*, and *observation*) also occur in the data. These nouns often occur with *that*-clause

Table 4.
Distribution of the verb groups in reporting evidentials.

Verb groups	Other-reporting		Self-reporting	
	% of total	The most frequent verbs (total number of occurrence)	% of total	The most frequent verbs (total number of occurrence)
ARGUE group	61.1	Argue 70 Point out 43 Suggest 40 Claim 37	26.4	Suggest 70 Explain 33 Note 23 State 20
THINK group	3.8	Assume 10 Think 3 Hold 3	0	0
FIND and SHOW group	35.1	Show 43 Note 20 Reveal 17 Observe 13 Indicate 10	73.6	Show 117 Find 100 Reveal 63 Indicate 53 Demonstrate 13

(e.g. *Swales' suggestion that review of literature does not only occur...*). It is thought that the use of noun with *that*-clause as reporting evidentials is worthy of study for their distinct evaluative functions. This pattern enables the writer to give his evaluations of the propositions following *that*. Nouns as evidentials have their specific advantages. In fact, Biber et al. (1999) have stated that nouns are one of the primary devices used to express the writer's evaluation and stance in academic writing. Based on the close examination of this pattern used in the corpus, their evaluative functions will be shown in the following, which will indicate how these nouns can help the writer express his own evaluations and construct a convincing argument.

First, evaluative functions of nouns as evidentials are realized by choosing appropriate nouns. The use of *Noun that-clause* pattern encapsulates the proposition in the clause, summarizing and representing it to the reader, which enables the writer to incorporate his own evaluations of the propositions through the choice of different types of nouns. Biber et al. (1999) find that the evaluative functions of nouns may either be attitudinal or epistemic. They show the writer's evaluation of and different degrees of commitment to the information. For example, the use of "*suggestion*" is very different from the nouns of "*claim*", "*findings*", or "*fact*".

Thus, in order to understand the evaluative functions of nouns as reporting evidentials, it is necessary to examine the nouns that occur in this pattern. To categorize these nouns, the dissertation adopts the semantic criteria by Francis et al.

The categories of nouns as evidentials are as follows:

Fact and Findings Group: these nouns refer to the facts, or the findings in the research (e.g. *fact, findings, observation*).

Idea group: these nouns refer to belief, ideas, wishes, and thought processes (e.g. *suggestion, idea, assumption, view, belief*).

Argument Group: these nouns refer to something that is written or spoken (e.g. *argument, claim, point, agreement*).

Table 3 shows the different frequencies of the occurrence of every category of nouns as evidentials in the corpus.

Table 5 shows that there are significant differences among the categories of nouns as reporting evidentials. The writer particularly favors the noun category of **Fact and Finding** which nearly constitutes 73% of the total number of nouns as evidentials. This result shows that by using nouns indicating **Fact and Finding**, the writer puts more value on the factual status of the information presented. If something is presented as a fact or a finding, a reader is more likely to accept it. Therefore, this type of knowledge may occupy higher reliability than the other two types. In this sense, choosing an appropriate noun is critical for the reader's acceptance of the claims.

Second, nouns as reporting evidentials provide the writer with a relatively objective way to evaluate. Different from other

Table 5.
Categories of nouns as evidentials.

Noun category	Raw data	Frequency per 1000 words
Fact and finding	87	0.277
Idea	23	0.075
Argument	10	0.032
Total	120	0.384

types of reporting evidentials, nouns as evidentials can facilitate the construction of a seemingly 'objective' evaluation of the proposition in the *that* clause since the writer can avoid indicating the source of the proposition just as verbs as evidentials do (excluding the passive forms of verbs). In fact, the data has shown that the majority of the nouns as evidentials do not occur with specific names or personal pronouns for the purpose of attribution. Actually only 6 cases of nouns are found to occur with the sources, which comprise 16.7% of all the cases. The absence of information sources enables the writer to obscure the origin of any evaluation that is carried out. Therefore, the information appears objective and is less open to dispute.

Third, evaluation of nouns as reporting evidentials is multi-layering. Nouns as reporting evidentials are sometimes without a head. For example, with no specific names or personal pronouns to indicate the information sources, they have the function of multi-layering evaluation. By multi-layering, it is explained by reference to the notions of attribution and averral (Sinclair, 1986; Tadros, 1993). According to Sinclair, a text is made up of propositions which may be put forward by the writer (averrals) or attributed by the writer to some other person or entity (attributions). In RAs, all assertions are taken to be averrals, unless the writer clearly shows the source of the assertions. In making an averral, the writer is responsible for the veracity of the proposition advanced. Consider the following examples.

18) Specifically, the use of parentheses by the Spanish writers ($p = 0.0016$) put forward *the idea that* Spanish opinion columns may exhibit a greater freedom to include what the English-speaking rhetorical principles consider "supplementary or digressive" material.

19) As far as the limitations observed by Samraj (2002) are concerned, the introduction of an optional step (step 2), "presenting positive justification", in Move 2 accounts for her first criticism, and *Swales' (2004) suggestion that* review of literature does not only occur throughout the introduction but can occur throughout the article as a whole accounts for her second criticism.

In Example (18), no information source is indicated. Thus, it is the writer who is responsible for the truth of the statement and it is the writer who holds the idea of "*Spanish opinion columns may exhibit a greater...*". However, in (19), the information source is clearly indicated through "*Swales*". It is *Swales* not the writer who takes the responsibility for the statement "*review of literature does not only occur throughout...*". However, it is only superficially so. As Sinclair (1986) points out, it is the writer who bears the ultimate responsibility for all the propositions in his texts. In this sense, all the attributions are also averrals. It is the writer who bears the responsibility for the whole statement "*As far as the limitations observed...*" and for the choice of the noun "*suggestion*". In this case, superficially, the information source "*Swales*" seems to be responsible for the statement. Actually the writer's own evaluation is also incorporated in it. For example, he chooses the noun "*suggestion*" rather than "*claim*" or "*finding*", which shows that even in attribution, the writer's evaluation is also revealed.

Thus, the evaluation of nouns as reporting evidential is sometimes multi-layering. In such cases, writers show their evaluations which they assign to others or entities, but which simultaneously express their own positions. This multi-layering

of evaluation provides a resource which writers can adopt to incorporate their own evaluations, while appearing to report that of others.

Fourth, nouns as evidentials make a verbal process an entity or phenomenon, such as “*suggestion*” rather than “*suggest*”. It appears that what the writer presents is something that exists in the world and it is more likely for the reader to accept what has existed in the world than what others say.

Fifth, in addition to the above evaluative functions and characteristics of nouns as reporting evidentials, it is also found that in some examples the nouns are modified by attributives such as “*general finding, the most striking finding for Harwood, another important, though not surprising finding*” and so on. Allowing different modifiers to modify nouns as evidentials may also be a great advantage for the writer to add explicit evaluations toward propositions.

In sum, nouns as evidentials have great evaluative potential and provide the writer with an alternative to present the information with his own evaluations and stances.

Conclusion

This study has shown that in construing reporting evidential type, the writer has great power because he has various linguistic forms to choose for his presentation. How the writer chooses to present information is as important as the information he wants to present. Just as Berkenkotter & Huckin (1995) say, “you are what you cite”. No matter what kind of forms he chooses, the writer leaves his imprint there and expresses his evaluation or stance. The analyses have proved this by showing the evaluative functions in choosing different information sources and different realization forms. At the same time it shows the persuasive effects and discourse implications of these different choices.

This study intends to help to raise the writers’ awareness in choosing reporting evidentials in RA writing. Theoretically, it is a beginning to study what evidentiality can do for the language users other than indicating the information source. It may lay a foundation for the future research and provide orientation for further study. There are more areas to be further studied. First, the functions of other evidential types can be further studied; Second, because of the genre convention, evidential use in other genres, even evidential use across genres is worthy of more research; Third, evidential use in different cultures may vary, which is believed to be an interesting topic in evidential study.

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