Teaching Reporting Verbs to English as a Second Language Undergraduate Writers in the Academic Context

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Abstract

This article reports on a pedagogical trial of teaching reporting verbs for source integration in a North American ESL (English as a second language) composition class. Source incorporation challenges many novice ESL writers in the academic context as they are unable to view writing as an interactional activity, which requires proper presentation of different sources. This problem is often manifested in their monotonous, ineffective choice of reporting verbs. Advancing Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (1978, 1994), Martin and White's Appraisal Theory (2005) further studies Interpersonal metafunction by focusing on speaker/writer attitude/evaluation in language use. It serves as the theoretical framework in this pedagogical trial which then helps student writers understand how reporting verbs could indicate different stances and create interactions in writing. This two-week pedagogical trial followed the teaching cycle of modelling, joint construction and independent construction recommended in the genre approach to help students to better deploy reporting verbs. Their writing samples before and after this pedagogical trial were collected, together with a final survey of their perceptions of the teaching activities, as evidence for the (in)efficiency of this pedagogical trial. Analysis of students' original and revised writings revealed progress but some lingering problems in their reporting verbs. Survey data indicated their enhanced understanding of why and how to integrate sources via reporting verbs, and their positive reactions to the teaching activities. Finally, the implications of this pedagogical intervention are discussed in the academic context for writing.

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Introduction

In academic writing, creating interactions between sources and writer's ideas is extremely important, as writers need to engage in conversations with others to advance knowledge (Kwon, Staples & Partridge, 2018; Lee,

Hitchcock & Casal (2018). However challenging, this is an essential writing skill to be developed. Second language (L2) writing studies on source incorporation have revealed students' general incompetence in this area (Charles, 2006a; Thompson & Ye, 1991; Wingate, 2012). One useful linguistic tool to create interaction in writings that utilize sources is reporting verbs (Bloch, 2010; Charles, 2006a, 2006b; Kwon, Staple & Partridge, 2018; Lee, Hitchcock & Casal, 2018; Thompson & Ye, 1991). Here, forms and semantic categories of reporting verbs (Charles, 2006a, 2006b; Thompson & Ye, 1991) have been widely studied, but the stance of reporting verbs (Coffin, 2009; Thompson & Ye, 1991) has not received much-deserved attention yet.

Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (1978, 1994) (hereafter, SFL) explores the quintessential nature of language. Its Interpersonal Metafunction considers language as a process of "social interaction", a "mode of doing" and a "way of acting" (Halliday & Hasan, 1985:17). Exploring the interpersonal aspect of language use, Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) furthers SFL and specifically investigates how entities are evaluated in terms of Attitude, Engagement and Graduation. These could be great resources to guide and assist students to understand the interactive nature of writing. However, the pedagogical application of SFL in the language-teaching field is scarce (McCabe, Gledhill & Liu, 2015). In 2015, *TESOL International Journal* devoted an entire issue to SFL. In that special issue, Cheung (2015) and Humphrey (2015) analyzed voice and stance in ESL writing from the SFL framework; however, their papers were not related to the teaching aspect. The lack of practice and attempts of SFL-based pedagogy in L2 writing still remains a problem.

This paper reports on a teaching trial using SFL-based genre pedagogy (Rose, 2011), focusing on reporting verbs from the Interpersonal aspect of language use, to scaffold ESL learners in writing. Targeting problems in reporting verbs by a group of ESL student writers in a first-year writing program in a North American university, the author/instructor utilized a simplified system of Appraisal (Martin & White, 2005) and designed a two-week teaching intervention on reporting verbs, guided by the genre approach of modelling, joint construction and independent construction (Derewianka, 1999; Gibbons, 2002; Hyland, 2007; Rose, 2011). To test the effectiveness of this teaching trial, these students' original and revised short in-class writings and argumentative research papers were compared to see if they were able to deploy reporting verbs more effectively. These students were also anonymously surveyed at the end of the intervention for their perspectives of this pedagogical intervention and understanding of reporting verbs. The results indicated their improvement in deploying reporting verbs with some lingering problems, their enhanced understanding of reporting verbs and positive reactions to the teaching activities. Pedagogical implications for SFL-based approach in the EAP (English for Academic Purpose) context for ESL

writing are discussed later.

Literature Review

Halliday (1978, 1994, 2007) reiterated the importance of role relationship among language users under the Interpersonal Metafunction in SFL which conceptualizes language as meaning exchange activities. It focuses on how language constructs or negotiates relationship between users and expresses value judgments. Martin and White's Appraisal Theory (2005) furthers this line of study and is "concerned with the ways in which [language] resources… position the speaker/writer with respect to the value position being advanced and with respect to potential responses to their value position" (ibid:36). Here, we can investigate "the play of voices around opinions in discourse" (ibid:35) to see how attitudes are expressed. The Appraisal Theory comprises Attitude, which is on feelings, judgments and evaluations; Engagement, which is about sourcing attitude and voices; and Graduation, which is on the gradability of evaluation (pp. 35-37). Figure 1 presents a basic sketch of Appraisal system, based on Martin and White's 2005 figure.

Figure 1

Sketch of the APPRAISAL Theory (adapted from Martin & White, 2005: 38)
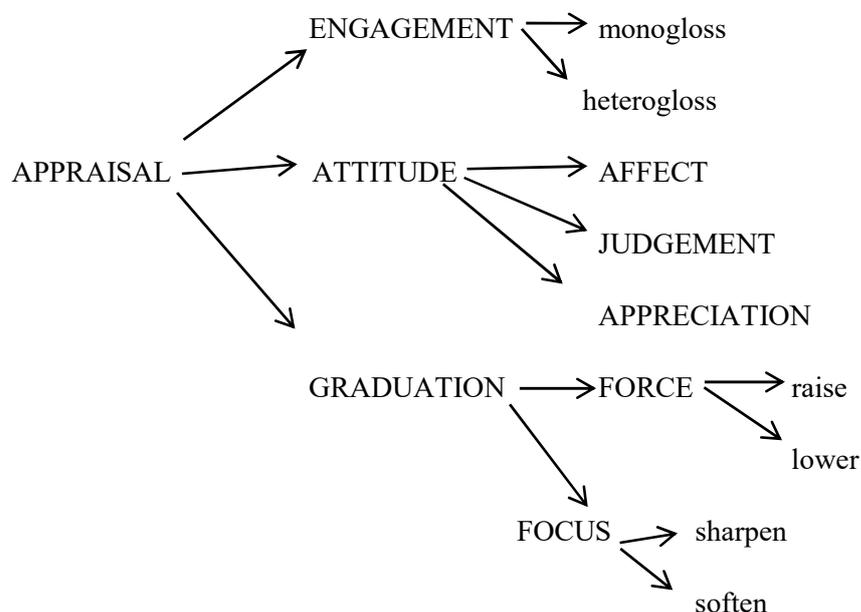
Considering complexity of this system and time allowed for teaching, the author/instructor simplified the Appraisal theory significantly for the targeted ESL student writers. Engagement was excluded in teaching; Attitude was simplified into "positive, neutral, negative" attitude towards what others say; and Graduation was simplified into three degrees of "strong, medium and weak". The idea of Attitude and Graduation was applied to reporting verbs to see how they could express author stance, writer attitude and interpretation towards other claims (Thompson & Ye, 1991). Following the common practice, "author" refers to authors of cited sources and "writer" refers to the writer of

the specific essay. Examples of reporting verbs showing positive attitude are "agree, support, concur, argue for, propose, confirm", etc., and for negative attitude are "challenge, disapprove, disagree, doubt, question, refute, dispute", etc., and for neutral attitude are "study, examine, report, find, indicate, reveal, address, present, view, analyze", etc. For Graduation, examples of strong reporting verbs are "stress, emphasize, affirm, insist, contradict, challenge, refute", etc., and examples of weak reporting verbs are "suggest, imply, propose, hypothesize, speculate", etc., and examples of medium reporting verbs are "show, express, list, comment, inform, discuss, mention", etc.

Many student writers do not understand why sources are needed and they just use sources superficially to comply with teacher requirement, to earn high marks (Stockall & Cole, 2016) and to avoid plagiarism. Mori (2017:20) regretted that the current teaching on source integration was mostly "a lesson on plagiarism and the three forms of source incorporation". Lee, Hitchcock and Casal (2018) echoed that surface forms of reporting verbs have been taught and studied more than stance. In reality, students need "to be taught how to create a 'conversation among voices'" (Mori, 2017:20). When students fail to conceptualize writing as an interpersonal activity, they cannot appreciate the value of sources in building their own voices, which should be based on their critical thinking of other voices. Hence, they either do not use sources, or use sources in patchwork without making connections to their voices, or make claims as if those are their ideas when they are not (Wingate, 2012).

As one linguistic means for Appraisal, reporting verbs can facilitate creation and maintenance of connection between sources and enable writers to display their stance toward others (Hyland, 2007) such as mere presentation, support, criticism or question. Student writers could benefit greatly from this important tool to create interactions between themselves and sources they use in their own writing. Bloch (2010) created a corpus to teach reporting verbs, which included stance of reporting verbs as one important category. Though this is very useful as teaching materials, there is not much pedagogical support and suggestions in this area. Most studies on reporting verbs targeted at analysis of student writings, not on teaching (Charles, 2006a, 2006b; Kwon, Staple & Partridge, 2018; Lee, Hitchcock & Casal, 2018; Thompson & Ye, 1991). Using genre approach to teach reporting verbs with theoretical support from Appraisal Theory could be an effective way to help ESL student writers understand its value so that they can deploy reporting verbs more effectively.

Genre approach of the Sydney School chooses functional grammar as its linguistic framework, with an interventionist social goal to "redistribut[e] semiotic resources through education" (Rose, 2011:209). Its perspective "is social rather than cognitive", and it is a "stratified, metafunctional, multimodal theory of text in social context" (ibid). Genre pedagogy features a teaching-learning cycle of "modelling, joint construction, and independent construction" (Derewianka, 1999; Gibbons, 2002; Hyland, 2007; Rose, 2011) to provide step-by-step scaffolding to students. In teaching writing, "modelling" is to "introduce a model of the genre to the class" to let them "become familiar with its purpose and features" by choosing or composing "a text which is similar to the one to be written later" (Derewianka, 1999:7). After that, students could "participate in the group writing of a text in the chosen genre" (ibid:8) in various forms in the stage of "joint construction". Once students

understand the purposes, functions and features of the genre, the class can move on to "independent construction". Gibbons (2002:67) added that the curriculum cycle was not limited to a single class and may take weeks, and the joint construction stage should be "teacher-guided" but not "teacher-dominated". She provided suggestions such as introducing some meta-language in the modelling stage, eliciting student contribution in the joint writing stage, designing drafting/editing/peer editing/teacher conference activities in the independent construction stage in writing classes. Gibbons also effectively justified the need for explicit teaching and argued that "while imagination and ownership are important concepts in teaching writing, they are insufficient to ensure that all students, especially those less familiar with the language of school, will learn to write in a broad range of contexts" (ibid:68).

The current teaching trial on reporting verbs followed those suggestions by providing meta-language and explicitly teaching the simplified concept of Appraisal related to reporting verbs in the modelling stage, eliciting students' input in the joint construction stage and designing multi-step assistances in the independent construction stage. The ultimate purpose of this teaching trial is to test if ESL student writers could deploy reporting verbs more effectively when they receive instruction on how to use language strategically to create an interactive sense of writing.

The Pedagogical Trial

Background

Being a college composition instructor for ESL students for many years, the author has repetitively witnessed students' frustration at source incorporation. One common problem is the students' monotonous choice of "say, write, think" as the main reporting verbs when quoting others' ideas. As many student writers are unable to use reporting verbs meaningfully to create the interactional and dialogic sense among sources, I decided to implement a pedagogical intervention on this. SFL provides powerful linguistic tools to explain the interactional nature of language use in writing, and the SFL-related genre pedagogy has been proven to be effective in language teaching (Hyland, 2007; Rose, 2011). So they served as the theoretical frame and teaching method for the designed activities. Due to time concern, a simplified version of Appraisal Theory (Attitude and Graduation) was adapted to teach reporting verbs.

This teaching trial was conducted in a first-year ESL composition class in a North American University. In the composition program, ESL students need to complete the same writing tasks as L1 English writers in other classes, one of which is the research argumentative paper (hereafter RA), in which they must express their stance on a controversial issue, using support from outside sources. As the instructor, I value process writing and require students to take several steps from generating ideas, outlining, drafting, getting feedback to revising before they turn in the final papers. In the semester of this pedagogical trial, there were 16 ESL students from four continents with various L1s, ranging from early 20s to 30s in age. They have all met the university admission requirement in English proficiency, and have taken the first composition course in the previous semester at the same

university. This 2-week/4-class pedagogical intervention adopted the curriculum cycle of modelling, joint construction and independent construction from the genre approach (Derewianka, 1999; Gibbons, 2002; Hyland, 2007; Rose, 2011).

Sequence of Activities in this Teaching Trial

In order to test the effectiveness of this teaching trial, other than the teaching activities, a draft and revised version of a short in-class writing and a long researched argumentative essay from each student were collected. The purpose was to examine students' deployment of reporting verbs before and after instruction as evidence for the (in)efficiency of this teaching trial. Table 1 presents the sequence of all activities in this teaching trial.

Table 1

Sequence of activities in the teaching trial

Sequence	Materials Collected	Teaching Activities
before the teaching trial	draft 1 of RA essay	no
class 1	draft 1 of short in-class writing	students write in class to express their views on a topic
class 2	No	explicit instruction on reporting verbs from the Interpersonal perspective
class 3	No	modelling and joint construction of deploying reporting verbs at individual sentence level
class 4	No	modelling and joint construction of deploying reporting verbs at paragraph level
after the teaching trial	survey on teaching and reporting verbs revised short in-class writing and RA essay	no

Collecting and Analyzing Students' Writing Samples and Survey

To ensure validity and reliability in analyzing students' writing samples, each student was assigned a number, and they were told to put the same number, instead of their names, on their writings. All sentences in their writings containing sources and/or reporting verbs were hand-picked for analysis. The author kept two clean sets of copies, and separately coded reporting verbs in each paper twice, with a 3-week interval in between. The categories of Attitudes (Positive, Negative and Neutral) and

Graduation (Strong, Weak and Medium) were found to be the same in both codings, and the same reporting verbs were identified both times. This ensured the data coding reliability. An anonymous survey was issued at the end of the teaching intervention on students' perceptions of the teaching activities and their understanding of reporting verbs. The survey had several open-ended questions on students' current understanding of reporting verbs, and their responses to what worked and what did not work in the teaching activities. Two sample sentences with the same quotation but different reporting verbs were also included in the survey to get students' evaluations on different reporting verbs to further probe their understanding of the value of reporting verbs.

Teaching Activities

Before the Intervention

Before the teaching intervention, these students had already received instruction on Modern Language Association citation for works-cited page and in-text citation format. When asked why they need to cite other people's ideas, most responded that it was required to avoid plagiarism. A few mentioned that this could support their own points. Most ESL students in this class had little idea of why they should document sources. Their researched argumentative essay draft 1 were collected and their deployment of reporting verbs were analyzed. The results will be later presented in Table 3.

Pedagogical Intervention Sequence

Class one

In class one, students were asked to complete an in-class short paragraph writing on a controversial issue. Three short readings with different stances on the issue (positive, negative, neutral) were provided to the students, and students were asked to use all of them to help them argue for or against the issue in one or two paragraphs. The instructor did not explain the content and stance of those reading materials. This short assignment was designed because students in Doolan and Fitzsimmons-Doolan's (2016) study could not perform long assignments as successfully as minor ones in source incorporation. I was interested to see if my students would demonstrate the same behavioral differences in short writings and long writings for reporting verbs, and if so, the pedagogical implications of this. Analysis of reporting verbs in their short in-class writings will be presented in Table 2 later.

Class Two

Class two was explicit instruction on source incorporation and reporting verbs. The class started with a hypothetical conversational scenario of the students wanting to join a debate. Two strategies were offered: one was to cut in directly with their opinion; the other was "I have been listening to you for some time, and I understand what is being discussed. Here is what I think." Unanimously, the students chose the second one as it gave them legitimacy to participate in the conversation. This idea was then extended to writing to help students understand that writing relies on the same concept of

interpersonal interaction between writers, readers and other authors. The instruction emphasized that to write effectively, writers can benefit from deploying a variety of reporting verbs to represent other sources, respond to other sources with critical evaluation and make sources talk to each other. Students were then shown several citations led by different reporting verbs with the same content, and they were asked to judge if those different reporting verbs influenced their interpretation of the author's attitude towards what was cited: "Smith says/announces/challenges/supports/explains that…". Students were able to gauge the effects of different reporting verbs successfully. The explicit teaching of reporting verbs introduced metalanguage of Stance (negative, neutral, positive) and Graduation (strong, medium, weak) from the Appraisal Theory, hoping to make the idea easily accepted within the class hour by those students. In the explicit teaching, students were also provided with a list of common reporting verbs and were directed to categorize those verbs into positive, neutral, negative groups, first individually then in groups. Then the whole class checked the answer together. The same activity was used for graduation of reporting verbs. This explicit instruction aimed at enhancing student' knowledge of usage and function of reporting verbs to appreciate how reporting verbs could strategically reflect various stances in writing.

Class Three

Class three modelled using reporting verbs for sources at the sentence level, followed by joint construction. The class started with an in-depth analysis of one of the three previously provided readings. The whole class examined some selected words/sentences, which reflected the stance of the writing and functions of the selected parts- illustrating, defining, discussing, showing results, providing details, expressing ideas, explaining, showing different views, etc. Then different reporting verbs were explained to show how to represent others' ideas at the sentence level in a more meaningful way. After three modelling examples, students were encouraged to provide reporting verbs on their own for other sentences. When we finished practicing different reporting verbs for this reading, the class moved on to the joint construction stage and the students followed suit to represent ideas in the other two readings by choosing different reporting verbs at the sentence level in groups. Finally, each group presented one sentence to the class for peer feedback on effectiveness of their reporting verbs and sentences.

Class Four

Class four focused on using reporting verbs at the paragraph level to make use of multiple sources, followed by joint construction to teach students how to integrate various sources in writing. To help them see the interaction of sources, students first compared and linked ideas in the three readings: similar and different ideas/sentences, sentences as evidence/example, sentences that express author point, sentences that explain, etc. Afterwards, the class examined a written paragraph on this topic, which used these three readings, to analyze if reporting verbs were used properly across sentences to reflect source stance and create interactions between sources in the entire paragraph. Good usages

were selected together with bad usages of reporting verbs. Students then paired up to revise ineffective use of reporting verbs and sources in that sample paragraph. The final activity discussed effectiveness of students' revisions on reporting verbs and their reasons for revisions. Class four was the last class in this pedagogical intervention.

After the intervention

After class four, students were asked to revise their previous in-class short writings and researched argumentative essay, focusing on source incorporation and reporting verbs, which were later collected to examine usage of reporting verbs. There was no extra help for them to revise the short in-class writing, but they went through peer review and individual conference with the instructor to revise their RA essays. According to the provided peer review guideline, students had to evaluate source incorporation and reporting verbs in peer writing. The instructor also discussed at least one instance of their source usage and reporting verbs with the students in the individual conference session. Other than the two revised writing tasks, students were also issued a survey to get their perceptions of the effectiveness of the teaching activities and their current understanding of reporting verbs.

Analysis of reporting verbs in writings before and after the pedagogical trial

Before the teaching trial, students' RA paper and short in-class writing were collected. After the teaching trial, their revised short in-class writings and revised RA paper were collected to analyze their use of reporting verbs. The small data size does not suffice for statistical analysis, so only descriptive quantitative data of reporting verbs in these four sets of writings are reported. Information of total number and percentage of reporting verbs and the Attitude and Graduation of reporting verbs are presented. Reporting verbs that were used once or twice in the data are defined as low frequency, those of three or four times are defined as medium frequency, and those of five times and more are defined as high frequency. Percentage is calculated as the number of each category divided by the total number of word count. Table 2 compares the descriptive data of reporting verbs in the draft and revised version of the short in-class writing. Table 3 compares the descriptive data of reporting verbs in the draft and revised version of the researched argumentative paper.

Table 2

Descriptive Data of Reporting Verbs in In-class Writings: Draft and Revised

Draft			Revised		
word count #	reporting verbs #	% of reporting verbs	word count #	reporting verbs #	% of reporting verbs
3884	38	0.97%	4775	58	1.2%
high frequency	medium frequency	low frequency	high frequency	medium frequency	low frequency
22 0.56%	6 0.16%	10 0.25%	13 0.27%	21 0.44%	24 0.5%
Stance Positive	Negative	Neutral	Stance Positive	Negative	Neutral
1 0.03%	0 0%	37 0.95%	13 0.27%	3 0.06%	42 0.88%
Graduation Strong	Medium	Weak	Graduation Strong	Medium	Weak
2 0.05%	34 0.87%	2 0.05%	14 0.29%	39 0.82%	5 0.1%

Quantitatively, in the draft of the short in-class writing, although students used medium-frequency reporting verbs "state and explain" (3 each) and some low-frequency reporting verbs such as "suggest, see, point, indicate, report, compare, prove, believe, imply" (10 in total), they highly relied on two reporting verbs to introduce sources: "say" (12) and "show" (10). This reflected their limited choice and lack of awareness of the value of reporting verbs. Their reporting verbs dominantly expressed a neutral attitude and a medium degree of that attitude (37 and 34 out of the total 38 reporting verbs respectively). These clearly distanced student writers from the sources without showing their stance and commitment, which did not help them engage in meaningful conversations with other sources. Overall, this reflected their low competence in this area. In comparison, in their revised short in-class writings, other than two high frequency reporting verbs of "show" (8) and "emphasize" (5), they used more diverse reporting verbs such as "confirm, support, point" (4 each), "say, argue, claim" (3 each), "explain, suggest, argue against, state" (2 each), and "prompt, imply, report, defend, compare, affirm, endorse, echo, indicate, review, prove, declare, illustrate, reason, discuss, cast doubt on" (1 each). Take the word "say" for example, in the draft, it was used 12 times in total and that number dropped to 3 in the revised version, which indicated students' efforts to use other more effective reporting verbs to replace it. Though students' reporting verbs still largely showed their neutral stance (42 out of 58 reporting verbs), they were also able to show positive stance (13) and negative attitude (3) more often, as those numbers apparently increased from the 1 instance

of positive attitude and zero instance of negative attitude in the draft. Similarly, even though they still relied on medium degree reporting verbs (39 out of 58 reporting verbs), the instance of strong attitude increased from 2 in the draft to 14, and that of weak attitude increased from 2 to 5 in the revision.

Qualitatively speaking, their reporting verbs in the revised version indicated both positive stance "confirm, support, claim, affirm, endorse, prove" and negative stance "argue against, cast doubt on". Students also differentiated strong reporting verbs "emphasize, declare, confirm" from weak reporting verbs "suggest, imply" in the revision. Some students indicated functions of the cited ideas with reporting verbs such as "compare, review, illustrate, reason, explain", and interactions between different sources, such as "defend, endorse, echo, confirm, argue against, cast doubt on". Many students created dialogues between sources in their revisions. Some examples are provided here, all taken from the students' revised version:

1. While Schlichter prompts the need…, Leung implies that… (student 3)
2. Sager emphasized the need for…. This is then echoed by the FBI statistics … (student 6)
3. Different from Sager's ideas, Schlichter argues against this… (student 7)
4. Sager argues that…, but Leung defends that… (student 11)
5. This is one of the supporting reasons…. Another supporting statement is endorsed by Schlichter … (student 12).
6. We see that Leung emphasizes that…, but I do not agree with this statement because… (student 14).

All these evidence these students' progress in deploying reporting verbs to properly indicate attitude of sources to create dialogues in their revised writings. It is indeed inspiring to witness such obvious improvement in students' writings just after a short period of instruction.

Will students improve usage of reporting verbs in a longer and more demanding writing assignment when they need to pay more attention to bigger issues of content and structure? Will the teaching trial help students to actually employ this knowledge in writing? To answer that question, students' researched argumentative drafts (collected before the teaching trial) and their revised RA paper (after the teaching trial) were compared for their use of reporting verbs. Table 3 presents this comparison in the draft and revised version of their RA paper.

Table 3

Descriptive Data of Reporting Verbs in Researched Argument Paper: Draft and Revised

Draft			**Revised**		
word count #	reporting verbs #	% of reporting verbs	word count #	reporting verbs #	% of reporting verbs
24653	69	0.28%	38583	156	0.4%
high frequency	medium frequency	low frequency	high frequency	medium frequency	low frequency
56 0.23%	0 0%	13 0.05%	97 0.25%	31 0.08%	28 0.07%
Stance			Stance		
Positive	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Neutral
1 0%	0 0%	68 0.28%	21 0.05%	1 0%	134 0.35%
Graduation			Graduation		
Strong	Medium	Weak	Strong	Medium	Weak
1 0%	68 0.28%	0 0%	26 0.07%	119 0.31%	11 0.02%

Quantitatively speaking, these students used fewer reporting verbs in their RA draft, and relied mostly on a few high frequency neutral attitude, medium degree reporting verbs: "say" (24), "state" (16) and "show" (16). Other reporting verbs of "find, argue, conclude, point" (2 each) and "note, report, add, mention, believe" (1 each) were used at low frequency. In the draft, out of the 69 reporting verbs, "believe" was the only one showing positive stance and strong attitude; the rest were all neutral, medium degree reporting verbs. It is clear that students' use of reporting verbs in the draft was limited and ineffective. In comparison, their reporting verbs increased from 69 to 156 in the revision, and were more diversified: "say" (17), "state, show" (15), "confirm" (11), "add" (10), "claim" (9), "argue, explain, report, estimate" (5 each), "note, discuss, observe, find" (4 each), "highlight, mention, conclude, emphasize, imply" (3 each), "see, suggest, assert, support, define" (2 each), and "announce, prove, believe, compare, command, raise an interesting point, reveal, worry, survey, point out, stress, put, quote, agree, comment, defend, insist, declare" (1 each). More reporting verbs in the revision showed positive stance "confirm, assert, support, prove, believe, raise an interesting point, insist, declare, agree", which was an apparent increase from the one positive stance in the draft. In the draft, there was no negative stance reporting verb, and in the revision, there was only one such verb "worry". Possible explanation for this might be that students focused more on finding sources that support rather than contradict them, hoping to make their argument stronger that way. They also used more reporting verbs showing strong (26) and weak degree (11) in the revision; in the draft, there was only one reporting verb showing strong degree. So even though most of their reporting verbs still showed neutral stance and medium degree, the students indeed deployed more diversified reporting verbs and

showed various stances and degrees.

Qualitatively speaking, "say, show, state" still remained as their top choice of reporting verbs, which indicated some lingering issues of reporting verbs in a more demanding writing. When their attention was redirected to larger concerns of argument, content, structure, they could not spare time or energy to carefully select specific and proper reporting verbs, unlike what they did in the short in-class writing when they were not cognitively over-taxed. Despite that lingering problem, students have chosen a much wider variety of reporting verbs to indicate positive and negative stances and strong and weak degrees more often. Some of their reporting verbs were not even in the provided list to them. Students could also indicate functions of cited ideas and create dialogues with reporting verbs. Some examples are presented here, all taken from the revised RA essays:

7. According to Adam's article, people think… This statement agrees with the controversial issue. (student 3)
8. Reece asserts that…. His paper is not an anomaly: there are many studies linking … (student 6)
9. Kataguiri … argued that …. Besides that, according to the Institute of Geography and Statistics, the latest population research confirmed that… (student 7)
10. Wanyama agrees with Karachi and Arowolo that …, as he comments that… (student 12)
11. From his article I learnt that … when he states that … (student 4)

Overall, students have demonstrated improvement in reporting verbs and source incorporation in both revisions of the short in-class writings and RA essays, and the changes of reporting verbs were more noticeable in the revised short writings.

Analysis of Survey data

After they submitted their revised RA essays, those sixteen students were surveyed anonymously to probe their current understanding of source incorporation, reporting verbs and the usefulness of the pedagogical intervention. Compared with their initial responses of why sources are needed in writing, more students mentioned the following reasons: supporting ideas (12), giving credible argument (12), adding reliable information/evidence (11), seeing differences between ideas (10), gaining credibility as a writer (9), backing up own writing (9), avoiding plagiarism (9), directing interested readers for more readings (6), making the paper stronger (6), and showing other ideas (5). When asked about how they chose ideas to be cited in their writing, ten students answered that they would read short articles more carefully but glance over long articles to locate sentences for possible quotations, and five students indicated they spent a lot of time reading and comparing different sources. For the importance of understanding and indicating attitudes of outside sources, 14 agreed that it was important as they need to mention (counter)argument in writing, to see things from different views, to understand why others disapprove or support an idea, and not to misinterpret others' works. Only

two students felt it was not important to do so as their ideas did not depend on other authors' attitudes. 13 students emphasized that they relied on reporting verbs to indicate source stance and even listed some reporting verbs as examples in their answers.

The students were also given two sentences to probe their preference for reporting verbs. Sentence A was "X mentions that 'a direct quotation'". B was "There are many ways to teach pronunciation. One of such methods, as suggested by X, is 'the same direct quotation'". 11 students chose B because "it has an introduction of the idea and prove it with a quote", "it connects the writer's idea to the outside source's idea", and "it is the correct way to use outside source". One student explained that "B sounds convincing and the reader will understand the writer stance. In A, we do not know if the writer agrees or disagrees". These showed their understanding of interaction between sources and writer ideas. Five students chose A because it was easy to read, which was somewhat unexpected and indicated different student understandings. The final question was on their perception of the pedagogical intervention. All but one student answered that it was useful/helpful, as it opened their eyes to different attitudes they did not know before; it helped them understand the role of reporting verbs so that they could use various reporting verbs rather than repeat the same reporting verbs; and the revision helped them gain confidence when they saw how much better they could perform. Seven students wished for more similar activities and more detailed explanations. One student did not feel it helpful as he/she "expect[ed] the professor to go around in the class working with each and every student, so they use the sources correct and not just telling the students in a big class". This questionnaire clearly indicates students' enhanced awareness and better knowledge of source incorporation and reporting verbs, proving the effect of such a short-term pedagogical intervention on reporting verbs. Most of the students have benefited from the teaching intervention, which has broadened their mind to the interactive nature of writing and the important roles of reporting verbs.

Discussion and Conclusion

In order to become a better communicator, ESL student writers need to conceptualize writing as an interactive activity. They should develop the knowledge that stance representation is quintessential in writing, and reporting verbs are instrumental to do so to create interactions. Those students' short writings and RA drafts before the pedagogical intervention reflected their lack of knowledge of source incorporation and how reporting verbs could help them write a better paper to communicate with other sources and their readers. Their revised short in-class writings and RA essays strongly evidenced the effectiveness of explicit instruction on reporting verbs, as their writing samples have demonstrated noticeable improvement in source incorporation and reporting verbs. The final survey data also confirmed the effectiveness of this teaching trial which adopted the genre approach. Genre approach has been shown to be effective in teaching students the purposes and stages in different writings (Hyland, 2007; Rose, 2011); this pedagogical trial indicated that it was also helpful to focus on some particular aspects of writing. Since helping students understand the functions of citations is

much needed in composition classes (Lee, Hitchcock & Casal, 2018), the genre approach could be adopted in ESL writing classes to achieve that purpose.

Mori (2017:7) represented a group of scholars and classroom practitioners' belief in the power of helping students view language as fundamentally dialogic and understand "how speakers evaluate ideas, express stance towards individual, and overall interact with the world and the people". Mori's suggested activities of discussion of stances, categorization of verbs, experiment with verbs to see their appropriateness and comparison of student drafts were included in this reported pedagogical trial. When students could conceptualize writing as dialogues between themselves, sources and readers, they would value proper deployment of reporting verbs and sources as an interpersonal strategy to help them build their voices. First-year student writers in composition classes learn writing skills to prepare them for future content-based academic writing, which definitely requires expressing and building their voices on sources. If our students leave our classes with a superficial understanding of the surface format of source usage without understanding the essential reasons of why and how sources could help them express their own voices in their future communities, we are not doing our job to help them face those challenges. Halliday's Interpersonal metafunction makes explicit understanding of this aspect of language use easier, and the Appraisal theory provides explanatory tools to teach students how to deploy linguistic means to create better interpersonal interactions in writing. Hopefully, this brief pedagogical trial adds evidence to the effectiveness of how SFL-based teaching could enlighten students who are not familiar with the genre and convention of writing to understand the function and reasons behind their writing choices in the academic context.

The pedagogical cycle of modelling, joint construction and independent construction in the genre approach (Derewianka, 1999; Gibbons, 2002; Rose, 2011) also provides effective scaffolding to student writers. One quintessential goal of genre approach is to redistribute semiotic sources through education (Rose, 2011) and help disadvantaged students master those sources. Writing in the EAP context is one such context where the genre and writing convention is unknown to outsiders and challenging to novices, which desperately needs to be decoded to new members. Not every novice writer can succeed on their own; and even when they do, this is a long, hard process through failures. Applying genre approach in teaching writing for the academic purposes could be a shortcut to the students, and the teaching effectiveness of genre approach in the language teaching field outside the EAP context has already been proved (Hyland, 2007; Rose, 2011). In this teaching trial, the modelling stage provided explicit instruction in conjunction with simplified idea of the Appraisal Theory to help student writers understand the concept. The collaborated stage elicited students' input to work with each other and with the instructor to improve the writing in terms of reporting verbs. These two steps have ensured students' improved performance in reporting verbs in their individual writings later. Analysis of students' original and revised writings (long and short) in reporting verbs before and after this teaching trail added evidence to the effectiveness of such a pedagogical approach in the EAP context.

Like Doolan and Fitzsimmons-Doolan's (2016) participants who performed better in minor assignments than major assignments after an 8-week teaching, my students have also made more apparent progress in the short writing assignments in source incorporation and reporting verbs than the long, more demanding argumentative paper. They still showed some lingering problems of reporting verbs in the longer argumentative essays. Several reasons could explain this somewhat disappointing behavior: students have spent much more time discussing the sources for the short writing than the longer argumentative essays; students have received extensive help in the short writings but not as much in writing the argumentative essays; there was much less to consider in the short writing than in the long argumentative essays (overall structure, coherence, content, more sources); writing skills accumulate and improve gradually over time, this one-time two-week pedagogical trial is not enough for students to master the skills completely. So in order to better facilitate ESL student writers to create proper interaction and presentation of sources in their writings, this knowledge needs to be revisited frequently, and students need more help along the way to finally master this skill. This is another important pedagogical implication from this teaching trial. In line with this, regretfully, I was not able to collect those students' writings in the following semester to examine the longitudinal effect of this teaching trial on students' deployment of reporting verbs.

McCabe, Gledhill & Liu (2015) lamented at the lack of SFL-related pedagogy in language teaching and called for more studies on that. The teaching trial reported in this paper answered that call and shedded light on how genre approach, in conjunction with SFL knowledge, could help student writers to a great extent in the EAP context of writing. This pedagogical trial only lasted two weeks. Given more time, repeated instruction on the same skill or instruction on other aspects of source incorporation could be explicitly delivered in class to better help ESL students appreciate that writing is not a monologue but a carefully-crafted dialogue that enables them to interact with various related parties, to talk to others more convincingly, and to make themselves more credible writers.

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