Referencing Phrases

- Reporting Verbs and message
- Reporting structures and attitudes to knowledge
- Useful referencing phrases

Introduction

Writers of academic texts often use many of the following reporting verbs when constructing their texts. A mistake that some people make is to choose any verb on the list. In other words, they choose a verb they have not already used just to avoid repetition. However, this can be misleading. When you look more closely at the verbs and some of the meanings they have, you will see there are subtle differences. What is more you can use these differences to your advantage when constructing your text. For example, you can put forward your opinion by using a certain verb; you can show how much you support the particular perspective or proposition being referenced, and you can indicate a controversy or doubt.

1. Reporting verbs and message

Task

1. Read the following table of reporting verbs.
2. Add the verbs from the list below, into the table. There will be some overlap, and you can make new categories.

To check suggested answers go to the last page

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledge</th>
<th>Ask</th>
<th>Confirm</th>
<th>Determine</th>
<th>Express</th>
<th>Infer</th>
<th>Reject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Add</td>
<td>Assert</td>
<td>Contend</td>
<td>Discuss</td>
<td>Formulate</td>
<td>List</td>
<td>Reveal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admit</td>
<td>Assume</td>
<td>Convey</td>
<td>Doubt</td>
<td>Identify</td>
<td>Maintain</td>
<td>Show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advise</td>
<td>Caution</td>
<td>Declare</td>
<td>Endorse</td>
<td>Illustrate</td>
<td>Postulate</td>
<td>State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate</td>
<td>Concede</td>
<td>Define</td>
<td>Establish</td>
<td>Imply</td>
<td>Propose</td>
<td>Stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Concentrate</td>
<td>Deny</td>
<td>Examine</td>
<td>Include</td>
<td>Presume</td>
<td>Suggest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argue</td>
<td>Condone</td>
<td>Describe</td>
<td>Explore</td>
<td>Indicate</td>
<td>Refute</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of reporting verbs</td>
<td>The message</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Say, write, document, report, study</td>
<td>Giving factual information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>View, believe, think, regard, consider, reflect</td>
<td>What the author thought</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorise, assess, examine, use, compare, contrast, focus on, explain Emphasise, invoke, note, point out, reason, posit, hypothesise, remark, detail</td>
<td>The procedure/ How the author did it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find, observe, obtain, associate, conclude, recommend</td>
<td>What the author found</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge, dismiss, dispute, diverge from, object to, oppose,</td>
<td>Considers the cited author’s position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate, identify, improve, recognize, substantiate, highlight, confirm, prove</td>
<td>Your evaluation of the work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confuse, disregard, ignore, misuse, neglect, misinterpret, generalize, insist</td>
<td>Your negative evaluation of the work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Chen (2001, p. 81) ‘Ways of knowing, ways of citing: a study of Chinese graduate students’ citation behaviour in thesis writing’

2. Reporting structures and attitudes to knowledge

Task: fill in the empty cells in the table by matching the Attitude with the Example and Comment (The first one is done for you)

1. There are new views identified by a particular author
2. Controversy
3. This knowledge not questioned.
4. The cited writer’s perception might be challenged
5. The cited writer’s perception is acknowledged
6. Acknowledges (potential) controversy’

To check your answers go to the last page
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude to knowledge</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 This knowledge is not questioned.</td>
<td>There are other forms of plagiarism which are more sophisticated and are harder to detect (Martin 1994).</td>
<td>The message to the reader is that this information is not disputed. The reference is smoothly integrated into text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other forms of plagiarism which are more sophisticated and harder to detect have been reported by Martin (1994).</td>
<td>The term ‘have been reported’ tells the reader that there might be new ways of understanding the problem. The author within the sentence tells us that he found the forms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It has been suggested that there are other forms of plagiarism which are more sophisticated and are harder to detect (Martin 1994).</td>
<td>This also indicates that not everybody sees the situation this way. The word ‘suggest’ is not very persuasive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It has been argued that there are other forms of plagiarism which are more sophisticated and are harder to detect (Martin 1994).</td>
<td>There are different academic opinions on this. The term ‘argued’ indicates clear positions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Martin (1994) studied instances of plagiarism and found that… Martin’s analysis reveals that…</td>
<td>Putting the writer’s name in the text lets your reader know that this writer did significant work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Martin (1994) claims that…</td>
<td>The term ‘claim’ can imply that others could have different perception or that the claim might not be verified.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


3. Useful phrases for referencing

Some of these examples will be inappropriate for some disciplines (for example, social science and empirical science subjects would avoid expressions using the first person.) You may need to consult written work in your own discipline to be sure which examples are acceptable.

NOTE: Square brackets […] indicate that words can be either used or omitted. Obliques (/) indicate that either alternative is acceptable.

1. Stating the view of another person on a topic
"Smith claims that... "Smith thinks that... "Smith’s argument is that...
"Smith’s conclusion is that...
"Smith’s claim is that...
"Smith's point is that... "Smith's point of view is that...
"According to Smith...
"From Smith's point of view...
"The point of Smith's article/paper is that...
"The substance of Smith's article/paper is that...
"The upshot of Smith's argument/paper/article is that...
"Smith's work/data allows him to draw the conclusion that...
"Smith's work/data leads him to the conclusion that...
"Some theorists, such as Smith (1989) think that...
"It is thought by some theorists, for example, Jones (1980) and Smith (1989) that...

2. Attributing a view to another person (when you are not quite sure)
"Smith's claim seems to be that...
"Smith seems to be claiming that...
"Smith's argument seems to be that...
"Smith's conclusion seems to be that...
The point of Smith's article seems to be that...
(Use any of the examples in (2) and add "seems to". Exceptions: This cannot be used for the examples:
" From Smith's point of view...
"According to Smith..." and " It is thought by some theorists...

3. Drawing a conclusion using the work of others
"The conclusion of [all] this is that...
"The result of [all] this is that...
"An outcome of this is that...
"An upshot of this is that...
"A consequence of this is that...
"When Smith's work is looked at closely it is seen that...
"When Smith's argument is analysed it can be seen that...
"Looking at Smith's work/argument [in detail]
"Analysing Smith's data shows that...
"Developing Smith's work/argument to its logical conclusion shows that...
"It can be seen/shown that...
"One possible consequence of Smith's work is [that]...
"From Smith's work it can be determined that...
"One outcome of Smith's work is [that]...
"The following point can be brought out of Smith's work...
"The following argument can be brought out of Smith's work...
"Using Smith's work it is possible to show that.../argue that...
"Using the work of Smith (1980) and Jones (1989) it can be shown that.../argued that...

4. Disagreeing with the views of others
"I will argue/shall be arguing against Smith's view that...
"My argument against Smith is that...
"My disagreement with Smith is that...
"Unlike Smith, I want to suggest/claim/argue/propose...
"Contrary to the views of Smith, I will/shall be/it will/shall...
"In contrast to Smith's view/argument/data...
"The argument being advanced here is opposed to that of Smith...
"It does not seem to follow from Smith's work/data that....
"Analysing Smith's work in this way, it can be seen/one can see that...
"Problems arise in Smith's work [when it is seen that]...
"The point I am making/being made [here] is that Smith's argument/data/conclusion does not follow.

5. Agreeing with the views of others
"As Smith says...
"I agree with Smith's point [that]...
"This is also Smith's view...
"I will argue a similar view to that of Smith here.
"Here I am following the work of Smith...
"Following from Smith's point...
"I agree with Smith in so far as...
"Not unlike Smith (1980), I am suggesting/proposing/arguing...
"I agree with Smith in respect of his point [that]...
"Along the lines of Smith (1980), I am suggesting/claiming/arguing/putting forward...
"The view I am putting forward here is largely in agreement with [that of] Smith.
"The argument being put forward espoused here is similar to that of Smith (1980).

6. Pointing out assumptions
"This assumes that... "Smith assumes that... "Smith's assumption is that...
"Assuming...[then] it follows that...
"The following assumption is being made here...
"One/An assumption of this view is that...
"The point being assumed here is that...
"The assumption on which this depends is...
"The assumption behind this view is [the point that]...
"Smith's argument depends on the assumption that...

Davies, M. (Monash Language Centre), Adapted from a list of terms (Unilearn)

Answers

Answers to the Reporting verbs and message task

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<td>2 Controversy</td>
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Answers to the Attitudes to knowledge task

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