English for Academic Purposes

The challenge of paraphrasing

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has experienced an important growth becoming a central element of L2 students' higher education. These students seem to find in citation, a vital area of EAP, great challenges to overcome, being paraphrasing the most demanding strategy. The present dissertation aims to delve into L2 paraphrasing practices by reviewing relevant research on this issue. These show the struggles that L2 students undergo before paraphrasing successfully, most of them dealing with linguistic and academic literacy. With the lack of understanding of the purpose of paraphrasing being the most relevant of these problems, students also have to face the fear of being accused of plagiarism and confidence issues that prevent them from using their own words. Besides, this dissertation will deal with the role of teachers throughout the learning process of this citation strategy. In order to examine the aforesaid issues, I will carry out a brief case study about L2 students' reporting verbs use to introduce paraphrases, which, in some cases, creates a conflict with the reported author's original idea.

Keywords: EAP, paraphrasing, L2 students, reporting verbs.

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1.-Introduction

Hyland (2009:2) states that academic discourse is: "the way of thinking and using language which exists in the academy", and defines its central element, communication, as "the blood of academia" (íbid.). This means that knowledge has little significance until it is available for others. Moreover, the way of transmitting information should meet certain conventions regarding the target audience's expectations.

Over the last two decades, English for Academic Purposes (henceforth EAP) has gained importance and interest for researchers. One of the main reasons is that "beyond the university, the languages of the academy have begun to insert themselves into our lives (...) colonizing the discourses of technocracy, bureaucracy entertainment and advertising" (Hyland, 2009:2). However, if we focus on the academic world, two other elements have fostered the growth of EAP.

On the one hand, the undergraduate's command of academic discourse, which involves no small degree of specialist language competence, may distinguish the brilliant student from the plodder (Hyland, 2009), which is a great incentive for them to improve their skills. On the other hand, the expansion of Higher Education has led to socially, culturally and linguistically heterogeneous classrooms. This requires specific instruction on EAP, since tutors cannot assume that every student has become familiarized with academic conventions, let alone in a second or foreign language, as is the case of English at the Spanish University. In this regard, it is important to note that English has become "the international *lingua franca* of research and scholarship" (Hyland, 2009:5) so, along with this event, EAP has experienced a consequent growth.

The aim of this dissertation[1] is to give a general insight into one of the most complex areas of EAP, 'citation', and the problems that may arise when L2 undergraduates are required to use citation strategies, more specifically paraphrasing. As an English Studies undergraduate, I have experienced these problems myself and I believe that either acquiring a good command of paraphrasing or choosing the right reporting verb to introduce a paraphrase entails a lot of time and effort. This is the reason why I will review some studies on the topic and on the way teachers approach paraphrasing, as well as the differences that L1 and L2 students present when dealing with this strategy. Finally, I will examine the reporting verbs that English Studies undergraduates

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[1] To avoid repetition of this term, I might also refer to it as TFG, Spanish acronym of Trabajo Fin de Grado.

have used to introduce a paraphrase in an Academic English course term paper. For this purpose I will use a reporting verb classification proposed by Thompson & Yiyun (1991) that will be further explained in this dissertation (cf. 5).

The present TFG is outlined as follows: the notion of 'citation' in EAP is first introduced through a review of selected, relevant literature, drawing special attention to the problems that students have to face when writing from sources; after that I will focus on paraphrasing skills among L2 students prior to comparing their performance with the one of L1 students. Finally, I will review the role that teaching paraphrasing plays in the development of students' citation skills in general and the importance of the reporting verbs in particular. After this rather theoretical part follows an empirical study carried out to examine the usage of reporting verbs by L2 undergraduates. The results obtained will be discussed and concluding remarks will also be provided.

2.-Citation in EAP

As it has already been said, one of the major building elements of academic discourse is citation. Its relevance lies in showing that there is a literature review behind a research article, essay, report etc. enabling readers to track that previous research (Hunter, 2015). Moreover, writers can benefit from citation strategies to build on their own arguments. However, as straightforward as the function of citation may seem, postsecondary students encounter no small amount of obstacles through their learning process.

As a first step to develop a good command of citation, students may resort to three essential strategies: quoting, summarizing and paraphrasing. Quoting implies using the exact words from the source text enclosed in quotation marks; summarizing involves identifying the main ideas and reformulating them; and paraphrasing comprises the integral rewriting of a short passage, so that the original meaning is conveyed through a wording different from the original (Davis, 2013). These strategies provide students with three different methods to incorporate information to their own writing. Nevertheless, as the pieces of research reviewed throughout this TFG attest, learners encounter great difficulty in paraphrasing. Knowing what it is turns out insufficient for them to actually do it because "students are not only expected to recognize when an idea should be borrowed but also how the idea should be borrowed and the ways in which the language expressing that idea can become their own" (McInnis, 2009:1). McInnis, thus, hints not

only at the inherent complexity of the citation strategy itself, but at an underlying instruction problem.

According to Luzón (2015), plenty of factors that may prevent students from reaching the above-mentioned skills could be grouped in three different categories. The first one is their unawareness of the function that referencing serves in EAP and, thus, the need to acknowledge sources. In general terms, this leads to under-referencing or the indistinct use of so-called integral and non-integral citation, a key distinction introduced by Swales (1990). While integral citation includes the author as part of the sentence (e.g.: Cooke (2015) found that Lilian had improved her skills), non-integral citation leaves the author out of the structure of the sentence, between brackets (e.g.: Lilian had improved her skills (Cooke, 2015)). Consequently, in the first type of citation, the attention is drawn to the author's important role as encoder of the information that has been borrowed, whereas in non-integral citation, greater emphasis is given to the information itself rather than to the source (Shaw & Pecorari, 2013).

The second category deals with the learner's low linguistic level and weak academic literacy, which comprehends the thinking, reading, writing, speaking and listening skills that enable students to define, summarize, detail, explain, evaluate, contrast and analyze information they are working with in order to produce their own piece of academic discourse (Spack, 1997). Lacking these skills, students' command of citation strategies may not experience the desirable development. This is visible in assignments where there is too much quotation and apparently with no good reason behind it, either because learners have not fully understood the source text or because they do not feel comfortable using their own words. In addition, certain students are more prompt to use patchwriting[2], which for some scholars is a sort of plagiarism and, therefore, evidence that the learners paraphrase badly (Howard 1993).

The last category concerns the lack of familiarity with the language of citations. This often results in 1) the repetition of the same citation pattern, 2) problems to integrate a reference in the syntax of the text, 3) the misuse of reporting verbs or 4) even in failing to adhere to a given citation convention (e.g.: the APA style), amongst others (Luzón, 2015).

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[2] Patchwriting is "copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures or plugging in one-for-one synonym-substitutes" (Howard, 1993 pp.233).

In view of the many challenges that students may have to face, commanding citation strategies could be awaited to take time and practice (Davis, 2013). This is particularly true in the domain of paraphrasing and even more so for L2 students (Hirvela & Du, 2013). Since paraphrasing already represents a daunting task for native speakers, L2 students might have to deal with additional difficulties: 1) entirely rewriting a passage in a foreign language, 2) carefully choosing their words in order to stay faithful to the source text and 3), just like L1 students, understanding both the purposes and functions of this citation device.

In order to attain a wider understanding of the repercussions that these difficulties give rise to, I will focus on L2 undergraduates' paraphrasing practices.

3.-Paraphrasing

As it has already been said, a paraphrase is a short passage of a source text that has been entirely rewritten (Davis, 2013) and whose purpose is to show that a relevant idea has been understood so that it is explained in one's own words, as a basis on which an argument is built.

This section is devoted to review pertinent literature about the L2 undergraduates' understanding of paraphrasing and the differences and similarities between their practices and those of L1 undergraduates.

3.1.- L2 undergraduates' awareness of paraphrasing

Comprehending the intrinsic function of paraphrasing is a fundamental step to making an accurate usage of such a citation strategy in particular, and achieving disciplinary acculturation as a whole (Hyland 2009). "In paraphrasing, the writer recasts individual sentences, creating a combination of original language and grammatical structures from the source text with some new words and grammatical structures" (Hirvela & Du, 2013:87). Since the original idea is kept, students may question, at some point, the need to paraphrase instead of using a direct quotation. This denotes a misconception about the aim of a paraphrase, as addressed by Hirvela & Du (2013) in their study on how L2 undergraduates approach paraphrasing.

The study is based on the fact that "while writing from sources, students need to engage in a variety of complex reading and writing activities and make contextualized decisions as they interact with the reading materials and the assigned writing tasks" (Hirvela & Du, 2013:87). Therefore, students must have a good command of what the authors call 'knowledge telling' and

'knowledge transforming' (Hirvela & Du, 2013). The first notion involves being able to perform an appropriate paraphrase, while having control of the second one means using the source text as a tool to develop one's own arguments. In the interest of knowing to what extent L2 students can reach these skills, a group of Chinese undergraduates was tested after having been instructed on paraphrasing.

Data was collected by means of think-aloud protocols and text-based interviews where the students would explain the decisions they had made while paraphrasing and their personal opinion on the role of such a technique when writing a research paper.

The results reveal two main trends when paraphrasing. The students that display the first pattern showed a good command of 'knowledge telling' in activities where they were explicitly asked to paraphrase a given sentence. However, the lack of understanding of either the author's purpose or technical terms prevented students from reformulation, leading to a clear reliance on direct quotations that also helped them stay away from plagiarism. In other words, students were able to rephrase a sentence in isolation but, on the contrary, unable to use their own words to reformulate a source text idea and introduce it in their own papers.

In the case of the students that adhere to the second trend, they conceived paraphrasing as a way of showing that they had understood a certain sentence or colloquial expression in the source text by reformulating them; they did not use paraphrases to show that they had worked on a certain idea. However, they never overcame this misconception of paraphrasing due to their concerns about making too many linguistic changes, and so, not being able to write complex sentences, they also opted for direct quotations.

These findings are quite telling: students were able to rephrase a certain sentence when they were explicitly asked to do so, but their lack of confidence, leading –in turn- to lack of motivation made them so much overwhelmed with the 'threat' of plagiarism that they lost sight of the purpose and benefits of paraphrasing. Students' immediate alternative, instead, was using direct quotations while - by using a paraphrase- they would have shown that they had worked on a certain idea that they were able to explain in their own words.

A major cause for the fear of committing plagiarism that frequently overshadows the purpose of paraphrasing is, to some extent, related to the way of teaching citation techniques. Teachers may draw so much attention to preventing deceiving practices that when students are asked to carry out a paraphrasing task they are more worried about their teachers suspecting that

they deliberately copied from the source text than about proving themselves that they actually manage the rewriting task. I will discuss this issue in depth in the following section (cf.4)

Li & Casanave (2012) provide a closer examination of how paraphrasing and plagiarism may intertwine. These authors conducted a study in order to observe how undergraduates from the University of Hong Kong dealt with paraphrasing and, more specifically with patchwriting, regarding the strict plagiarism policies of the aforementioned university.

The participants were required to write a 500-700-word assignment for an introductory linguistics course and attended three interviews where they showed their awareness of what plagiarism is and the consequences that committing it would bring about. Nevertheless, the analysis of the assignments unveiled a strong reliance on patchwriting. Some instances of patchwriting were rather evident, owing to simple modifications of the source text. Yet, other students patch-wrote a fairly large passage from the source text so skillfully and in such a well-integrated manner in their assignment that it nearly remained unnoticed.

Even though it would be quite understandable to make a connection between plagiarism and patchwriting, the first one is often assumed to be intentional while patchwriting does not necessarily entail the intention to deceive (Pecorari, 2006). Furthermore, when students were interviewed they "showed some anxiety about being accused of plagiarizing, awareness of severe sanctions of plagiarizing (...) and an attempt to refer to and cite sources" (Li & Casanave, 2012: 177). Moreover, they attributed their patchwriting to the lack of understanding of certain source passages and a dearth of self-confidence to create their own sentences.

As a matter of fact, Lee & Casanave (2012) concluded that a good command of paraphrasing was not attained as the students' concern about plagiarizing happened to be confronted with their not being confident enough to transform the source text. Therefore, patchwriting somehow seemed to solve this issue by allowing students to set aside their anxiety about copying and make their own discourse resemble the one of experts.

Finally, the authors acknowledged that through patchwriting students often appropriate the language of their sources in ways that conflict with English academic writing conventions. Yet, they consider this strategy a previous step to start paraphrasing successfully (Li & Casanave, 2012).

Concerning this last statement, it remains to test a hypothesis that students could well undergo a similar process while learning to paraphrase. Conveniently, Davis (2013) suggests

four possible phases in the development of paraphrasing skills, inferred from her investigation on Chinese undergraduates' citation strategies.

In the first stage, since students apprenticed into an unfamiliar discourse, they were unsure about the boundaries between acceptable paraphrasing and plagiarism. Once having become slightly more accustomed to writing from sources, students reached a second stage where they showed awareness about the need of understanding a text before transforming it into a paraphrase. At this level, they also distinguished between integral and non-integral citations and started using some reporting verbs. While the acquisition of this new knowledge led some students to a third phase where they struggled to paraphrase due to their lack of vocabulary, some others expanded their range of reporting verbs and paraphrases. In the final phase, those students dealing with scarcity of vocabulary found in Google - which is not regarded as a good practice in academic writing (Davis, 2013)- the solution to their needs. As for those who seemed to have made great improvements, their paraphrasing started to become a rather overused strategy to avoid accusation of plagiarism.

Davis (2013) concludes that this is a normal process before accurately writing from sources, agreeing with the one proposed by Schmitt (2002), who suggested that students may go through a learning staged continuum of no citation – over-citation – appropriate citation. This over-citation stage could be arguably due to two main reasons: 1) as indicated, to avoid any possible accusation of plagiarism or 2) the belief that tutors may be impressed by the amount of citations, leading to higher marks (Harwood and Petric, 2011).

Finally, it would be prudent to note that not every student might go exactly through the above-proposed process. As it is pointed out in this dissertation, there are plenty of factors that may affect the development of citation skills. Therefore, though a general trend could be distinguished, it is the individuality of each learner that will determine their needs and the steps towards successful paraphrasing.

3.2.-L1 vs. L2 students' paraphrasing skills

For the sake of a deeper understanding of L2 practices, it may be convenient to draw a comparison between L1 and L2 students' strategies when using paraphrasing as textual borrowing. Going along the lines of this interest, Keck (2006) carried out a piece of research

whose participants were either L1 or L2 speakers of English, or bilingual speakers of English and another language.

The experiment consisted in writing a one-paragraph summary based on a 1000-word text. Keck aimed to find in these summaries what she called 'attempted paraphrase'; this means any instance of a source sentence alteration that may indicate that the student tried to paraphrase[3] (e.g., synonym substitution, changing the noun to its adjectival form, etcetera).

These 'attempted paraphrases' were coded in terms of different linguistic characteristics: length, the use of a reporting phrase, 'unique links' and 'general links'. 'Unique links' referred to the lexical words within the paraphrase that had been kept identical to the original excerpt, whereas 'general links' also appeared elsewhere in the original text. This division was made in order to distinguish copied items from the exact string of words that was being paraphrased and general recurrent words in the text.

The criteria followed in order to evaluate the students' performance were based on the percentage of 'unique links' that they had used: an attempted paraphrase was considered 'near copy' if it included 50 percent or more 'unique links'; a 'minimal revision' contained 20 to 49 percent of 'unique links'; a 'moderate revision' contained 1 to 19 percent 'unique links', and if there were no 'unique links' a paraphrase was considered 'substantial revision'.

The results showed that the most evident difference between L1 and L2 students' summaries lay in 'near copy' paraphrases. While being completely avoided by most L1 students, 'near copy' paraphrases were fairly recurrent in L2 students' summaries. Despite this contrast, 'minimal revision' happened to be regularly used by the two groups of students.

Considering these results, L2 students' reliance on both 'near copy' paraphrases and 'minimal revision' could be attributed, to some extent, to a possible lack of vocabulary and weak grammar competence. However, though L1 and L2 students presented a similar use of 'minimal revision', their English language competence was different. Therefore, some other factors may operate behind L1 students' performance, and even though this issue is not the object of this dissertation, it could actually shed some light on the reason why L2 students struggle with paraphrasing. If L1 and L2 students yield similar results concerning 'minimal revision, it would

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[3] Note that even though patchwriting may seem to fit in the definition of 'attempted paraphrase', the latter is identified by means of lexical words appearing in both the source text and the actual paraphrase. Therefore, if an instance of patchwriting was comprised by no lexical words taken from the source, it would not be identified as an attempted paraphrase.

be possible to hypothesize that there is also a common reason behind, which could well go beyond language proficiency, for example, academic competence.

4.-The teaching of Paraphrasing

To better comprehend paraphrase teaching, Wette's research (2010) may represent a well-articulated approach. This author, who examined the teaching of direct quotation and summarizing, together with paraphrasing, managed to bring to light the difficulties conveyed by the latter, if compared to the first two citation strategies.

According to Wette (2010:158) "perhaps the most important skill English teachers can engage students in is the complex ability to write from texts, a major part of their academic writing experience". Acknowledging the different challenges to be faced when learning to write from sources, Wette (2010) focused on the improvements that L2 students made after receiving explicit instruction on citation strategies. After a pre-test based on specific citation tasks (decontextualized), and a written assignment, students were first educated on the technical and rule-governed components of direct quoting, summarizing and paraphrasing. Then, the instruction focused on the development of necessary skills to understand texts and extract the main ideas so as to transform this understanding into paraphrase and summary citations.

A post-test guided task showed: 1) a general improvement in the knowledge about citation rules and conventions, 2) lower reliance on copying in summaries, 3) increased attempts to move from copying to paraphrasing, sometimes being the information included in the latter not that relevant. In contrast, the post-test written assignment analysis reflects an increase in copied content that should have been paraphrased or summarized (from 5 to 17 percent of assignment citations); and as for those citations coded as accurate in terms of form, they often comprised rather trivial information or failed to faithfully represent the source text meaning.

The interpretation of these results hints at the fact that students did not find much trouble in understanding the technical and rule-governed aspects of writing from sources. The decrease of direct copying in guided tasks also reflects awareness of the dishonesty that it implies but it does not necessarily mean awareness of the purposes of using citation strategies since there was an increase in copying in the assignments. Furthermore, such unawareness may have led students to paraphrase trivial information or to alter the meaning of the original text.

Besides, the results proved once again that the most complicated strategy for students is paraphrasing; in fact, when they had to discuss the tasks that they had carried out, most of them agreed on paraphrasing being the most demanding one. The most frequent challenges reported by students were: 1) keeping in mind that a paraphrase should be the result of working on a certain idea, 2) understanding the meaning of the source text so as to stay faithful to it, and 3) the high English proficiency level required to accomplish an accurate paraphrase.

Finally, students made a clear connection between the use of paraphrasing and avoiding plagiarism. Nevertheless, since the aim of this study was to highlight the students' improvements, so that the instruction they received was entirely focused on the development of their skills, students did not seem to fear plagiarism to the extent of it being an impediment to progress. That is, students' goal became the improvement of their paraphrasing skills for the sake of a better performance, instead of directing their efforts at avoiding plagiarism.

As a conclusion, it would be possible to state that student's understanding of the technical and rule-governed aspects of citation strategies and particularly of paraphrasing could be improved through explicit teaching. Still, the post-test assignment showed that teaching how to develop paraphrasing skills does not guarantee, at least, immediate results due to the many challenges that students reported to have encountered. Finally, the concept that students had of plagiarism may suggest that teachers do have a determining role in the way students approach paraphrasing and its purpose. This matter would be worthy of further study, but it cannot be undertaken here due to space constrictions.

5.-Reporting verbs

An essential element in citation and particularly in paraphrasing is the use of reporting verbs. Most L2 students are unaware of the variety at their disposal and the different connotations that they can attribute to another author's words by using one reporting verb or another. In fact,

> it is a common experience for EAP teachers to have great difficulty in identifying the point of view that an L2 writer is trying to convey towards cited authors; or even to assume, on the basis of apparently clear signals, that a certain point of view is being conveyed only to find this view unexpectedly contradicted in a subsequent explicit evaluation (Thompson & Yiyun, 1991:366).

But these problems are quite common given that, in any act of citation, two people with different or even conflicting purposes are involved (Thompson & Yiyun, 1991); the author of the source text and the writer who cites that author. So, finding a reporting verb that can stay faithful to both purposes may be a delicate task. For the sake of clarity, the person being reported will be addressed as "author" and the person reporting as "writer".

In an effort to identify the kinds of verbs used in academic writing, Thompson & Yiyun (1991) suggested different categories of reporting verbs with regard to their function in source attribution, with a first distinction being made between whether the reporting verb conveyed a mere denotation or an evaluation of the information under report. For the sake of efficient reading, I will talk about the denotation and evaluative categories.

The denotation category was divided in 'author acts' and 'writer acts'. The reporting verbs that can serve this function and, therefore, comprise the group of 'author acts' make it explicit that the author's text exists and that what is being reported is that author's responsibility. Three types of these reporting verbs are distinguished:

•'Textual': verbs that involve the need of verbal expression (e.g.: 'state', 'write', 'term', 'underline').

•'Mental': verbs referring to mental processes (e.g.: 'believe', 'focus on', 'think').

•'Research': verbs referring to processes that are part of the research work (e.g.: 'measure', 'calculate', 'obtain', 'find').

However, there are cases in which the reporting verb does not make reference to the author; it is the writer who makes some kind of judgment towards the author's work. To give an example, if the writer states that a certain excerpt of the source text contradicts another author's excerpt, it is the writer who makes the comparison. These cases are labeled 'writer acts', which are in turn divided in two different groups:

•'Comparing': verbs that usually place the author's work in a certain perspective (e.g.: 'correspond to', 'accord with', 'anticipate', 'contrast with').

•'Theorizing': verbs that indicate that the writer is using the author's words to develop his/her own argument (e.g.: 'account for', 'explain', 'support').

This division only attends to the denotative information that a reader may get from the writer's text. In addition, Thompson & Yiyun (1991) also made a different classification considering how the reporting verbs portray the author and the writer's attitude towards the

reported information (evaluative potential). This group of verbs was divided in 'author's stance', 'writer's stance' and 'writer's interpretation'. The first one makes reference to the attitude that the author is reported to have towards the information:

•'Positive': the author is reported as presenting true information (e.g.: 'accept' 'emphasize', 'invoke', 'note').

•'Negative': the author is reported as presenting the information as false (e.g.: 'attack', 'challenge', 'dispute', 'question', 'reject').

•'Neutral': the author is reported as presenting the information as neither true nor false (e.g.: 'pose', 'quote', 'undertake', 'assess', 'evaluate').

Concerning the 'writer's stance', it makes reference to the attitude that the writer has towards the author:

•'Factive': the writer portrays the author as presenting true information (e.g.: 'acknowledge', 'notice', 'prove',' recognize', 'substantiate').

•'Counter-factive': the writer portrays the author as presenting false information (e.g.: 'betray', 'confuse', 'disregard', 'ignore'). These verbs are not commonly used in order to avoid a confrontation.

•'Non-factive': the writer does not show a concrete attitude towards the author (e.g.: 'advance', 'believe', 'claim', 'urge', 'retain').

The third group, the 'writer's interpretation', "is concerned with various aspects of the status of the proposition" (Thompson & Yiyun, 1991:373):

•'Author's discourse interpretation': the writer interprets how the information fits into the author's text (e.g.: 'add', 'comment', 'continue', 'detail', 'note', 'remark').

•'Author's behaviour': the writer interprets the purpose of the author for giving that information (e.g.: 'criticize', 'hint', 'emphasize', 'favour', 'insist', 'reiterate').

•'Status interpretation': the writer interprets the purpose for including the reported information in his/her own piece of work (e.g.: 'conform to', 'overcome', 'account for', 'bring out').

•'Non- interpretation': the information is reported in an objective way (e.g.: 'calculate', 'employ', 'map', 'provide', 'observe', 'say').

This wide range of functions by reporting verbs shows the enormous responsibility that the writer takes when it comes to reporting certain information. If the writer is not accurate while

using one of these verbs in a paraphrase, he/she risks not being totally faithful to the original author's purpose or even contradicting what that author intended to say. What is more, for an L2 undergraduate student, using the wrong reporting verb might suppose not being understood by those who will correct his/her piece of writing. Therefore, I believe that in order to overcome the complexity of choosing the right reporting verb, it would be beneficial to explicitly teach the different interpretations that they be given.

In order to show how L2 undergraduates introduce reporting verbs in their paraphrases, I will carry out a brief case study where two major issues are under consideration:1) what reporting verbs are preferred by learners and 2) whether they use them conscious of their denotational meanings and therefore, their paraphrase stays faithful to the author's original idea. I will only attend to the denotational level due to space constrictions and the subjectivity that evaluative potential involves.

6.-Study

As shown in the literature review, L2 students need to overcome several difficulties before managing to paraphrase with accuracy. Besides, choosing a reporting verb that fulfills both the author and the writer's needs and intentions may be a complex task. Therefore, the aim of this case study is to analyze L2 undergraduates' instances of paraphrases, with the focus of assessment lying on the denotational value of the reporting verbs as developed by Thompson and Yiyun (1991) so as to answer the following questions:

1) What type of paraphrase do students prefer when writing from sources?
2) What reporting verbs are mostly used to introduce a paraphrase and what motivates such a choice?
3) By choosing a reporting verb to introduce a paraphrase, do students stay faithful to the sources?

6.1.-Methodology

The methodology followed in the present study is inspired by *Corpus Linguistics*, "the study of language based on examples of real-life language use" (McEnery and Wilson, 1996:1).

Regarding the aim of this study, I have used a learner corpus, which is a computerized database of texts produced by foreign language learners (Granger, 1998). The corpus was

browsed manually and the conclusions drawn from the data analysis were contrasted with the learner writers' actual opinion of their own performance, through an ad-hoc questionnaire.

6.1.1.-Participants

The authors of the texts that comprise the learner corpus (henceforth participants) were enrolled in a compulsory Academic English course over a 4-month period. The 30 students were in the first semester of their last year of the English Studies Degree in the University of the Basque Country. The participants were either native speakers of Spanish (21) or bilingual speakers of Spanish and Basque (9) and they had previously passed a C2 level English exam. Nevertheless, in this Academic English course they were explicitly instructed on paraphrasing (according to EAP principles) for the first time.

6.1.2.-Data collection

As it has been announced, data reported on in this study comes from a learner corpus composed of 84,857 words belonging to 30 term papers about citation, with each paper being 2,500-word long on average.

For data selection, I manually identified any instance of paraphrasing across the assignments. Then, I selected those that were introduced by a reporting verb so as to compare them with their corresponding source text. Finally, I classified the reporting verbs according to Thompson & Yiyun's (1991), attending to their denotational meaning.

In addition to the textual analysis, the participants were also asked to complete a brief questionnaire (cf. Appendix A) which they received via e-mail; 70 percent of the students sent their questionnaire filled-in back to me via e-mail, whereas the remaining 30 percent preferred to answer it orally; they recorded their reply and sent me the audio file.

6.2.-Results

In this section I provide a twofold account of the findings: Firstly, general findings regarding the amount and type of paraphrasing are commented upon, while the second part deals with the actual reporting verbs used by Academic English learners.

6.2.1.-General findings

When I first revised the writing assignments, I rapidly found that some of the paraphrases cited as such should have been formatted as direct quotations and some others did not include the year of publication. However, the vast majority of paraphrases were correct.

Concerning the amount of paraphrases, there are 12.1 of them per assignment, on average, although there are cases of paraphrase underuse worth mentioning, such as two assignments where I found only two paraphrases and another one that included just three paraphrases. Taking into account the average provided above and that one of the aims pursued was to become aware of the importance of citation in EAP and, hence, to become familiar with citation through the actual reference to external sources, I would consider this number rather small. Besides, in two of these assignments it was also noticeable that students clearly relied on direct quotations as a preferred citation technique.

Across the assignments, I found a total of 362 paraphrases, 60 percent of which corresponded to integral paraphrases while the remaining 40 percent exemplified non-integral citation. Even though integral citation is apparently preferred, at least quantitatively, the use that students made of integral and non-integral paraphrases seems to be interchangeable. This is especially visible when students introduce a source only once, to clarify something, using integral citations after which nothing else is said about the author, denoting a lack of knowledge –on the part of the learners- of the discursive functions that the two types of citation serve. In fact, when students were asked about their choices regarding integral and non-integral paraphrases only 12.6 percent said to have used integral citations to give more importance to the author and non-integral citations to highlight the reported information.

6.2.2.- Learner usage of reporting verbs

Out of the 217 integral citations, 201 paraphrases were introduced by a reporting verb. The rest were introduced by 'according to'. Table 1 shows a summary of the occurrences of reporting verb found in the corpus.

Table 1: Reporting verbs' rate of occurrence.

Occurrences in the corpus	Reporting verb
+20	State
+15	Show
+10	Analyse, find
+5	Define, suggest, explain… and more.
-5	Claim, conduct, discuss, explore…and more

Following the classification by Thompson & Yiyun (1991) the first parameter of analysis would be whether the verbs encapsulate 'author acts', i.e., a description of what the author says, or 'writer acts', where the source information is used to build the writer's argument or compare it with another author's. After contrasting the paraphrases with their source text, I found that every reporting verb that introduced a paraphrase, but one, corresponded to the group of 'author acts' (example 2). There was just an instance of 'writer act' (example (1)), where it is possible to see how the student uses 'went further' to introduce a comparison between two different sources, establishing a relation between them.

(1) 'Writer act'
Davis (2013) defined citation as the act of putting an authorial reference into text, and Swales (1990) **went further** explaining the difference between integral citation and non integral citation.

(2) 'Author act'
Pickard (1995) **carried out** a study about the preferences in the use citations among students.

In turn, 'author acts' can be divided into three different categories[4]: 'textual verbs' (the author expresses something); 'mental verbs' (involving a mental process) and 'research verbs' (referring to the research procedure) (Thompson & Yiyun, 1991). Throughout the assignments, the vast majority of the reporting verbs happened to be either 'textual verbs' ('state', 'show', 'indicate', etc.), representing 41.4 percent of the occurrences, or 'research verbs' ('analyse', 'find', 'distinguish', 'divide', 'conclude', etc.), with 31.8 percent share of all the occurrences. Regarding 'mental verbs', they were minimal, just 4.6 percent ('focus on', 'recognize', etc.).

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[4] Notice that as Thompson & Yiyun warn, there might be some "bleeding" from one category to another depending on the interpretation with which the writer used a reporting verb.

The reporting verbs that stand out more due to their rate of occurrence are: 'analyse', 'find', 'show' and 'state'; appearing between 12 and 22 times in a good deal of the assignments. 'State' is present in 53.3 percent of the term papers, 'show' in 43 percent, 'analyse' in 33.3 percent and 'find' in 30 percent.

A second group of less recurrent verbs but still significant includes: 'carry out', 'classify', 'compare', 'define', 'distinguish', 'divide', 'explain', 'indicate', 'point out' and 'suggest', appearing from 5 to 7 times.

These two groups of verbs were expected to be recurrent since students were required to review several pieces of research. Besides, students used these reporting verbs accurately to introduce paraphrases, staying faithful to the source. Such display of accuracy could be attributed to the fact that students are familiar with these reporting verbs and any possible connotation that they may have. Besides, 63.3 percent of the students acknowledged their reliance on verbs such as 'show', 'state', 'explain', etc. because "they are the most common and easy [ones] to use", as one of them explained. However, they also reported to have tried to substitute these verbs for the sake of diversity in their term papers. This concern may have led students to disregard the nuances in the reporting verbs, resulting in several inaccuracies.

Some evidence of inaccuracy found in the assignments had to do with the mismatch between what the author says and what the student reports, as can be observed in the examples (3) and (4) below.

(3) Original text

Among student writers, after they mentally compare their texts with target 'expert texts', they may feel so overwhelmed by the distance between what they are expected to achieve and what they feel capable of doing, that plagiarism seems the most realistic strategy. -Hyland (2001): p.380.

Student's paraphrase

As Hyland (2001) **remarks**, when students compare their writing with the source they may find such a big difference between them that they do not feel able of reaching that level so they decide to plagiarize.

As we can see in example (3), in the source text there is not any special emphasis or importance given to what is being stated. However, the student chooses to use a reporting verb that does have that highlighting connotation.

(4) Original text

Student complaints to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator indicated that a disproportionate number (39%) of complaints regarding plagiarism come from international postgraduate students. - Davis (2013): p.126

Student's paraphrase

Davis (2013) **denounces** postgraduate students to present the higher inclination to commit plagiarism, with a 39%.

In this case the author is just giving some results whereas the student reports the information as if the author were condemning those results. Therefore, the strong connotation of 'denounce' implies an important change in meaning.

In the following examples, even though the student reported the information accurately, the resulting wording does not sound natural or idiomatic, probably due to a bad choice of reporting verb.

(5) Original text

We carried out the analysis of the reporting verbs under two main headings: denotation and evaluative potential. -Thompson and Yiyun (1991): p.369

Student's paraphrase

Thompson and Yiyun (1991) **provided** two types of reporting verbs: denotation verbs and evaluative verbs.

According to the online Oxford Dictionary (2015) the meaning of provide is: "Make available for use; supply". The original text reveals that the authors did not provide 'two types' of reporting verbs, but they analyzed reporting verbs keeping in mind two functional categories or two potential meanings conveyed by the verbs.

The last example also represents a conflict between what the author says and what is reported by the writer, again because of the reporting verb.

(6) Original text

The participants examined in this article, as well as the larger study from which this article is drawn, were undergraduate students from China. -Hirvela and Du (2013): p.91

Student's paraphrase

Hirvela & Du (2013) e**xplored** a wider range of undergraduate students from China.

The online Oxford Dictionary (2015) defines explore as: "examine or evaluate (an option or possibility)" or "examine by touch". As it is, it might seem that the authors actually explored the participants, as if she were a physician exploring the students' anatomy. However, according to the source text, what the authors explored was the citing options of a range of students, not the actual students. Therefore, the inaccuracy lies in the actual usage of the reporting verb in a given co-text, that is, the syntactic construction the reporting verb takes part in; either the object of 'explore' changes, or another reporting verb would be more accurate, e.g.: 'test'.

The inaccurate use of some reporting verbs in the examples above seems to hint at certain unawareness of both the connotations that some reporting verbs have and what choosing a reporting verb or another conveys. That is, students may not be conscious about the fact that using a reporting verb is not simply a writing technique, but a tool to contribute to the transmission and transformation of knowledge. Students get hold of reporting verbs to show that they have a fairly wide vocabulary range, irrespective of the fact that they do not stay faithful to the source text. As a matter of fact, when I asked students about this issue, 83.3 percent confessed to have used a reporting verb without having acquired a full understanding of its meaning while 93.3 percent of students said that they were not completely aware of the nuances of meaning of some reporting verbs.

6.3.-Discussion

The aforesaid results concerning paraphrasing practices may suggest that students do not have a clear idea of the uses of integral and non-integral citations. Especially, they might not be fully aware of the fact that using an integral citation gives more importance to the author because students frequently use them to make a clarification, without making reference to the author anymore. The questionnaire that students filled in reinforces the idea that they might not

understand the purpose of these two types of citation strategy since only 12.6 percent based their choice on giving importance to the author or the reported information; whereas 53.3 percent preferred to use non-integral paraphrases because they found them easier.

Regarding the amount of paraphrases per written assignment, students appeared to have attempted to introduce a fair number of them. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that they used this citation strategy so as to build their own arguments. This idea could be reinforced by real students' choices of reporting verbs. Disregarding the single case in which a student used a 'writer act verb', I have classified the rest of paraphrases as instances of 'author acts', which means that, whenever students introduced a paraphrase with a reporting verb they just described what the author had done. Thus, this finding suggests that even though students were able to introduce sources in their writing, they did not always know what they did it for. Arguably, they never intended to reformulate the knowledge they had gained by reading the source author, which is a necessary and expected academic activity in order to build their own, sound arguments. Besides, if we take into account that the majority of the verbs used were either 'textual verbs' or 'research verbs', we might find in this election another signal of students limiting themselves to describe the source text as objectively as possible, defining their position away from a thoughtful, reasoned interpretation. It would be possible to attribute this behaviour to the lack of practice leading to any of the insecurities that have been mentioned throughout this dissertation. In fact, 46.6 of the students interviewed declared that, at some point, they had used paraphrases aiming not to be accused of plagiarism or just to show that they had done good research before writing the term paper.

Moving to the instances of misused reporting verbs, they coincide with the cases in which the students tried to stay away from verbs such as 'state' or 'say' (the typical verbs for this type of literature review assignment) and tried to use more specific options. As we have already seen in the examples above, in some of these cases, students ended up distorting –semantically- the source text. This desire of using more complex reporting verbs may be an attempt to please or impress the teacher (Davis, 2013), and to show that they have different resources when introducing a paraphrase, which is confirmed in the questionnaires. However, by doing this, students also show their unawareness of the changes in meaning that using one reporting verb or another implies, leading to an inaccurate paraphrase.

Having done the writing assignment myself, I would say that the students did not have a clear idea of the purpose of paraphrasing and if we did, we had not practiced enough so as to feel comfortable to paraphrase in the academically expected way. I would say that, in general, the students need to be specifically trained on how to write from sources and, most importantly, to practice more in order to benefit from the tools that they have at their disposal, and hence to enrich their academic writing.

7.-Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation I have shown, by reviewing relevant literature, the importance that EAP has gained during the past decades and also how complex it is. In particular, I have focused on 'citation', a difficult area of EAP in which L2 undergraduates find a lot of difficulties, especially when it comes to paraphrasing, whose major difficulty seems to be the learners' lack of understanding of the ultimate purpose of paraphrasing. Other challenges entailed, such as the high linguistic level desired, the actual choice of reporting verb, the comprehension of the source text or the fear of plagiarism, amongst others, could be sorted more easily if the students were better instructed on how to paraphrase. After all, it is the lack of so-called academic competence -with all the conventions conveyed- that may be behind students' (L1 and L2) 'improvable' performance. By developing academic literacy skills students will understand that paraphrasing is not a way of testing their level of English or to avoid plagiarism, but a citation technique that will allow them to enrich their writing and help them develop their arguments and make them more solid. Yet, this skill is difficult to acquire and even more difficult to teach because there is no ideal method to both teach and learn how to do it. Experts only agree on the need to devote a lot of time to practice so as to develop this skill.

I would like to add that I have found the process of writing this dissertation very enriching because I have had to put into practice all the knowledge gained through the literature review and I have certainly learnt a lot about the needs that I have, myself, as a student.

Appendix A. Questionnaire sent to the learner writers

1) What type of paraphrase do you prefer, integral or non-integral? What motivates your choices when writing from sources.

2) Do you carefully choose a reporting verb when writing a paraphrase or do you rely on reporting verbs such as 'state', 'show' etc.?

3) Are you aware of the fact that by choosing a reporting verb to introduce a paraphrase, you might not be faithful to the source? E.g.: 'state' means declare or say, but 'claim' means to state something as true. If you misused them you would not be totally faithful to your source.

4) Have you ever used a reporting verb not being totally aware of its connotations?

5) Where do you think that the importance of writing from sources lies? When you write from sources do you focus on writing accurate paraphrases and introducing as many as possible so as to show that you have done a good research and that you have not plagiarized; or do you try to develop your own argument and then find relevant sources to help support it?

Appendix B. Reporting verbs that introduce a paraphrase in the learner corpus

Reporting Verb	Occurrences in the corpus
State	22
Show	16
Analyse	12
Find	12
Classify	7
Define	7
Distinguish	7
Suggest	7
Carry out	6
Explain	6
Conclude	5
Divide	5
Indicate	5
Point out	5
Assert	4
Note	4

Provide	4
Claim	3
Conduct	3
Add	2
Compare	2
Defend	2
Discuss	2
Observe	2
Present	2
Propose	2
Prove	2
Reflect	2
Report	2
Allege	1
Allude	1
Argue	1
Attach	1
Bring up	1
Contrast	1
Deal	1
Demonstrate	1
Denounce	1
Describe	1
Discover	1
Display	1
Elaborate	1
Emphasize	1
Examine	1
Explore	1
Express	1
Focus on	1
Go further	1
Highlight	1
Hold	1
Identify	1
Introduce	1
Investigate	1
Involve	1
Lead	1

Look at	1
Not agree	1
Paraphrase	1
Put forward	1
Recognize	1
Remark	1
Represent	1
Reveal	1
Review	1
Say	1
Support	1
Talk about	1
Throw light	1
Warn	1
Zoom in	1
Total	201

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