۸۷/۱۱۰۱۱۲۴
۸۷/۱۰۷۸

In the Name of God

۱۰۷۸۵۶

University of Isfahan
Faculty of Foreign Languages
Department of English

PhD Thesis

A Contrastive Intercultural Investigation of the Introduction and Discussion Sections of Applied Linguistics Research Articles

Supervisor:
Dr. Zohreh Kassaian

Advisors:
Dr. Mansoor Tavakoli
Dr. Aliasghar Mirbagherifard

By:
Zahra Amirian

۱۰۶۸۵۶

دانشگاه اصفهان
دانشکده زبانهای خارجی
گروه زبان انگلیسی

پایان نامه ی دکتری رشته زبان انگلیسی گرایش آموزش زبان

بررسی مقابله ای بین فرهنگی بخش های مقدمه و بحث مقالات پژوهشی زبانشناسی کاربردی

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زهرا امیریان

۱۳۸۷ /۹/ ۲۳

تیرماه ۱۳۸۷

۱۰۶۸۵۶

Acknowledgements

The accomplishment of the present study would have been impossible without the guidance, assistance, and encouragement of some people to whom I am sincerely grateful.

I would like to express my first and heartiest thanks to Dr. Zohreh Kassaian, my thesis supervisor, for her invaluable advice and guidance. Her support with abundant patience and encouragement is greatly valued.

I also wish to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Mansoor Tavakoli, my first advisor, for his useful advice, insightful comments as well as the unfailing attention and numerous hours he devoted to the revision of my thesis drafts. Special thanks are due to Dr. Ali Asghar Mirbagherifard, my second advisor, for his advice and helpful insights on research writing in Iran.

Additionally, I wish to thank Professor John Swales and Betty Samraj who provided me with the most recent models for the analysis of the corpora of my study.

I would like to thank all the professors of the English department of University of Isfahan whose classes I had the honor to attend.

I am also really grateful to my friends for their assistance and contribution to the data collection and data analysis stages of my work.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks go to my family for their patience, cordial support, and continual encouragement especially to my husband for his care and encouragement during the course of my studies.

Abstract

This study was motivated by the growing concern of Persian researchers to get their research reports published in English in order to gain an international readership. These researchers often face serious problems when they attempt to publish their articles in English international journals. In order to find the causes of the problems which may even lead to failure in publication, the following questions were addressed:

What are the moves, the steps, and the lexico-grammatical features used to realize the communicative purpose of published English research articles (RAs) and are these moves and steps different from those of unpublished English RAs?

In order to answer these questions, thirty published English RAs and thirty published Persian RAs were randomly selected from the well-known applied linguistics journals of the two languages. A corpus of thirty unpublished English RAs written by Persian EFL writers was also randomly selected from a larger population of unpublished RAs.

The RAs underwent two phases of analysis. In the qualitative phase, the move schemas, the steps, and the lexico-grammatical features of the Introduction and the Discussion sections of the three groups of RAs were identified. In the quantitative phase, the frequencies of the rhetorical moves and the steps were first tallied across the three corpora. Then, Mann-Whitney tests were employed in order to see whether the frequency differences between parallel moves and steps of published and unpublished English RAs were significant. In the next stage, Kruscal-Wallis tests were employed in order to examine whether the frequency differences among the parallel moves and steps of the three RA groups were significant.

The results revealed significant differences in frequency, sequence, and even communicative functions of the moves and steps across the three RA groups in general and between the published and unpublished English RAs in particular. The differences may be partly due to the EFL writers' insufficient knowledge of the communicative conventions of RA writing in English and partly due to the influence of cultural conventions associated with RA writing in writers' first language. Consequently, unpublished RAs may show textual elements, organizing strategies, and lexico-grammatical features alien in frequency and sequence to the published English RAs.

The results may have implications for EFL writers/researchers who wish to get their papers published in international journals.
Key words: genre, research articles, moves, steps, lexico-grammatical features

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