**Title:** A comparative study of research questions written by L1 English authors and Chinese EFL scholars

**Abstract:**

Research questions are pivotal to structuring academic research, yet the formulation of RQs has been understudied. This comparative study examines the types, structures, and integration of RQs in English research articles authored by native English-speaking scholars and Chinese English as a Foreign Language scholars. A corpus of 300 RAs in the field of applied linguistics was analyzed, revealing that both groups utilized RQ types in a descending order: descriptive, contingent, comparative, explanatory, and normative. The study introduces a refined classification framework for RQs, integrating form and function within a hierarchical structure. Both L1 English and Chinese EFL writers demonstrated a sophisticated approach to constructing RQs in parallel, progressive, and parallel-progressive patterns. However, the study identified that Chinese EFL scholars less frequently employed inter-step shifts that integrate RQs into the broader text, potentially impacting the rhetorical effectiveness of their research presentation. The findings emphasize the importance of rhetorically connecting RQs within the research context and provide implications for English for Academic Purposes instruction, encouraging a focus on the hierarchical and linguistic aspects of formulating RQs. The study concludes by highlighting the need for further research to generalize these findings across disciplines and to explore cross-disciplinary variations in RQ formulation.