English abstracts serve as crucial tools for scholars, particularly for Chinese graduate students encountering English academic writing. Understanding the linguistic disparities between abstracts authored by native English speakers and Chinese scientists is essential for educational purposes.

This study conducts a contrastive analysis of abstracts from Chinese and English journals to identify key differences in linguistic features and structural composition, focusing on the abstracts of journal articles. A sample of 80 abstracts was randomly selected across 20 different fields, including theoretical and applied natural sciences, social sciences, medical science, and economy. The abstracts were categorized into four sections and analyzed for linguistic characteristics such as verb tense, passive voice usage, modal verbs, first-person pronouns, and section length.

The contrastive analysis revealed that Chinese abstracts tend to be more verbose in the introduction section and less standardized in structure compared to English abstracts. Notable differences were found in verb tense usage and passive voice frequency, indicating a less nuanced understanding of tense functions and variations in the conceptualization of event agency.

The findings suggest that Chinese graduate students require comprehensive course materials with concrete data to grasp the nuances of academic writing in English. Further research is needed to explore the reasons behind these linguistic preferences and to develop effective educational strategies.