A Contrastive Analysis on Abstracts of Research Papers in Chinese and English Journals

In oreder to help Chinese graduate students in their English academic writing courses, the current linguistic differences in abstracts between native English scientists and Chinese scientists should be understood. The abstracts analyzed in this study focused on those used in journal articles/theses, which should provide a brief summary of each of the main sections of the paper. Abstract sections and linguistic features were studied by double contrastive analyses between translated English abstracts (Ta) and native English ones (Ea) and between Ta and original Chinese ones(Ca). The data in moves of each section in Ta and Ea shows that Chinese writers tend to express more in the introduction section than orther section, while the data in distribution of verb tenses and vocies in abstracts of Ta and Ea shows that there are similarities and differences in sections. The reasons for these data results are as follows the fact that some journals in China do not have standardized requirements on the abstracts may cause neglected or missed out sections by Chinese authors. The difference of tenses indicates that Chinese writers are not thoroughly aware of the subtle meaning of tenses and the functions they play although the writers understand some grammatical rules. The reason for the different use of voice may have to do with negative transfer and different concepts about the doer of an event. Conclusion shows that carefully prepared course material with sufficiently concrete data is necessary for graduate students to understand the differences between the two languages in academic writing.