This study conducts a contrastive analysis of abstracts in research papers from Chinese and English journals to identify linguistic differences that may affect the academic writing of Chinese graduate students. The research focuses on the abstracts of journal articles, utilizing a sample of 80 English abstracts, including both authentic English abstracts (Ea) and translated abstracts from Chinese (Ta), alongside their original Chinese counterparts (Ca). The abstracts are categorized into four sections: introduction, method, result, and conclusion, following Bhatia’s model. A comparative linguistic analysis is performed, examining verb tenses, passive voice, modal verbs, first-person pronouns, and section lengths.

The findings reveal that Chinese writers tend to be more verbose in the introduction section and may neglect other sections due to the lack of standardized abstract requirements in some Chinese journals. The study also highlights a significant difference in the use of verb tenses between Ea and Ta, with Chinese writers showing less awareness of the nuanced meanings and functions of tenses. The use of passive voice is more prevalent in Ea, suggesting a possible negative transfer from Chinese writing habits or differing concepts about the event doer.

The paper concludes that graduate students require well-prepared course materials with concrete data to understand the linguistic disparities in academic writing between the two languages. Further research is needed to explore the underlying reasons for these differences, providing students with a deeper understanding of the subtleties in English texts.

Key words: contrastive analysis, linguistic differences, academic writing, language structure, abstract comparison.