Abstract:

This study examined the structure and language of abstracts written in English by Chinese authors and compared them to those by native English-speaking authors. Understanding these differences is crucial to help Chinese graduate students in their English academic writing courses by understand the current linguistic differences.

A total of 80 abstracts were analyzed: 40 were authored by native English speakers, and 40 were translations from Chinese to English. Each abstract was segmented into Introduction, Methods, Results, and Conclusions (IMRC). Various linguistic features were identified and compared, including verb tenses, passive voice, modal verbs, first-person pronouns, and section lengths. Meanwhile, statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS software.

The study found that Chinese authors often write longer introductions but provide less detail in the Methods, Results, and Conclusions sections compared to native English speakers, indicating a significant imbalance. And from the perspective of linguistic features, it shows significant differences in tense usage between Chinese authors and English authors, particularly in sections like Introduction, which is prevalent for Chinese authors to use active voice. This reflects a nuanced understanding gap in tense subtleties despite grammatical knowledge. Additionally, Chinese writers employ more passive voice in English abstracts, potentially due to negative transfer and differing concepts of event doers in their native language.

In conclusion, these findings suggest that Chinese authors should strive to achieve a better balance of information across different sections of their abstracts. Providing guidance and training in abstract writing can help Chinese graduate students to better understand and have a deeper insight.

Key words: data analyses, Contrastive Analysis, linguistic features