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

Due to English abstracts are vitally useful for scholars in their academic endeavors, it is necessary to understand the current linguistic differences which often occur in abstracts written by native English scientists and Chinese scientists. In order to improve the writing quality in a graduate English writing course, this paper researches abstract sections and linguistic features by double contrastive analyses between translated English abstracts (Ta) and native English one (Ea) and between Ta and original Chinese one (Ca). Using Bhatia's model, this paper systematically analyzed 80 abstracts from different fields and divided them into four parts: introduction, method, result and conclusion, identifies the linguistic features of each part. For the comparison between Ta and Ea, the verb tense, passive voice, modal verbs, first person pronoun and length of section were discussed. For the comparison between Ca and Ta, the translation of scientific terms, numeric figures and units, and the syntactic divisions were examined. Additionally, data processing was performed using statistical tools such as SPSS and Chi-square tests. The results show the similarities and differences between Ta and Ca in terms of moves, tenses and voices, indicating that it is necessary for Chinese writers to gain a deeper understanding of the nuances of English writing and to understand the structural differences between the two styles. Consequently, there is a need for teaching materials that highlight these language differences to improve English academic writing skills for graduate students. The study also suggests that further research is needed to understand the potential causes of these differences in order to provide a more convincing explanation and improve academic writing in non-native English speakers.

Key words: Abstract sections, linguistic features, double contrastive analyses