

Abs-2

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Lexico-grammatical properties of abstracts and research articles: A corpus-based study of scientific discourse from multiple disciplines

The main goal of this PhD-thesis is to gain insight into linguistic characteristics of abstracts in direct comparison with their respective RAs, finding differences and similarities between them. Abstracts themselves have been a "rather neglected social artefact of disciplinary life" (Hyland 2000: 83) and such a direct analysis comparing abstracts to their RAs has been largely disregarded by present linguistic research (Swales 1990: 181). For this reason, this study aims to systematically explore observable linguistic features at both lexical and grammatical levels, and evaluate them qualitatively and quantitatively. The investigation of linguistic variation between abstracts and their RAs across disciplines is another important goal of this study, since different communities may deploy linguistic features in discourse differently (Halliday & Martin 1993; Wignell et al. 1993; Wignell 1998). Finally, based on statistical evaluation of obtained data, this thesis aims to position abstracts and RAs in a broader linguistic context addressing the issue of the linguistic relationship between abstracts and RAs.

In order to investigate authentic usage of language, this study is performed over a corpus of abstracts and their respective RAs from scientific journal of several disciplines. The disciplines under study are computer science, linguistics, biology, and mechanical engineering. The design, processing, annotation and query of the corpus under study follows the current standards recommended by corpus linguistics methods (e.g., Biber 1993; McEnery & Wilson 2001; Sinclair 1991).

The criteria for the selection of linguistic features for the systematic quantitative analysis of the corpus follows not only preeminent work on corpus-based quantitative linguistic analysis (e.g., Biber 1988, 1995, 2006) but also is recursively based on primary data directly obtained from the corpus under study. Lastly, the evaluation of the results is substantiated by current and traditional statistical methods and practices (e.g., Baayen 2008; Gries 2006, 2007, 2008a,b, 2009).

This work, however, is not free from theoretical underpinnings. As Oesterreicher (2001: 1564) points out, theoretical assumptions are always present in any linguistic analysis. Desirable for this study is a linguistic theory that considers the functional variation of language and the context of situation in which this variation takes place, thereby delivering a systematic analytical framework for lexical and grammatical qualitative and quantitative analysis of linguistic features of this variation. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL; Halliday & Hasan 1989; Halliday 2004) fulfils these needs, since the interest in functional variation of language is inherent in SFL (Halliday 2004: 33ff). Hence, SFL and corpus linguistics will be the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this research.

This paper will show the results, discuss the methodology used, and present the outcomes of this thesis.

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