

Corpus Linguistics and the Writing of Abstracts: Raising Awareness of Cultural Practice in the Face of Globalisation

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Processes of globalisation have strengthened the position of English as a global language in science and technology as well as in higher education as studies receive higher exposure when published in English journals and more students further their education in English speaking institutions. Hence these days, researchers and postgraduate students alike need to be aware of the linguistic conventions in their field so as to be or become part of their 'global' discourse community. Corpus-based research has received increased attention in the field of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) as the analysis of existing spoken and/or written corpora helps ascertain patterns of authentic language use across cultural and linguistic settings, times and 'genres'. However, specific discourse communities cannot be considered static entities; they undergo change over time through processes of negotiation and transdisciplinary collaboration. Today's internationalisation of higher education further entails that speech communities are becoming increasingly diverse. Accordingly, it no longer suffice in the teaching of writing for EAP to uphold the writings of first language (L1) speakers of English as the only 'perfect' models of written communication. As the audience of other speakers of English increases in numbers, raising learners' awareness of the changes in and diverse patterns of research writing becomes a core pursuit in the teaching of academic writing. This paper focuses on the language patterns used in research abstracts. To incorporate the writing of a diverse community, it applies a contrastive approach to analysing the lexico-grammar and rhetorical 'move' patterns across three corpora: abstracts in the fields of Language and Learning at the tertiary level and Engineering by L1 English writers, L1 Chinese-L2 English writers and L1 Chinese writers, respectively. The findings of this study may provide novice writers deeper insight into the similarities and differences of writing abstracts across languages and disciplines as well as tools for negotiation and expression of their 'voice' in local and 'global' discourse communities.