

HEDGING DEVICES BY NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCHERS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to examine the frequency and different types of hedging devices in Discussion sections of Research Articles (RAs) in the area of Psychology. To this end, 20 RAs in English were selected from the leading journal; 10 by native English speaker researchers and 10 by Iranian researchers. After categorizing hedging devices based on Salager-Meyer's (1994) taxonomy, chi-square procedure utilized and it was found that there was no significant difference between native and non-native writers in terms of utilizing hedging devices in their Discussion sections.

Key words: Hedging devices, RAs, Discussion, Native and Non-native.

INTRODUCTION

Academic writing like the other written forms involves interpersonal relationship between author and readers (Nasiri, 2011). One of the genres of academic writing is Research Articles (RAs) (Swales, 1990). In writing RAs in a particular discipline authors should consider the conventions of the discipline (Widdowson, 1984; Hyland, 1999). One of the conventions is how to use hedging devices in presenting information. Hedging is a basic feature in academic discourse that enables academic writers to show their certainty and doubt towards their statements, to show the amount of confidence they put on their claim, and to start a dialog with their readers (Rounds 1982).

Review of the Related Literature

Iida (2007) conducted a research in medical discipline based on English written articles; eight by Japanese researchers and eight articles written by American researchers. The findings of her research indicated that despite slight variation in types of hedges used by two groups, there was no significant difference in the frequency of hedges in English written medical RAs in all sections of the articles. Winardi (2009) in his study analyzed the use of hedging devices by American and Chinese linguists in ten research articles of applied linguistics, five written by American authors and the other five by Chinese researchers. His research's finding showed that both groups seem to be equally proficient in using various hedging devices, although they may vary in types of hedges. He finally concluded, it would appear that American and Chinese writers are more influenced by their discipline than their nationality. Because of the novelty of the exploring the role of hedging devices in academic area, this study tries to look at the frequency and types of hedging devices in Psychology articles.

Research Question

Is there any significant difference between native and non-native Psychology articles in terms of the frequency and types of hedging devices in their discussion section?

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between native and non-native Psychology articles in terms of the frequency and types of hedging devices in their discussion section.

METHOD

Corpus

The corpus of the study was 20 English written Psychology articles from the leading journals written by different authors; 10 articles written by Native English Speakers (NESs) and the other 10 by Non-Native Iranian Authors (NNIA).

Procedure

After selecting the articles from the leading journals, the author selected the Discussion sections of the articles because of the importance of the section and its heavily hedged nature (Swales, 1990). Then the researcher read the selected section carefully to determine the hedges based on the Salager-Meyer's (1994) taxonomy. The taxonomy included 5 main types which are as follow:

Type 1) Shields, such as *can, could, may, might, would, to appear, to seem, probably, to suggest*.

Type 2) Approximators of degree, quantity, frequency and time: e.g., *approximately, about, often, occasionally*.

Type 3) Authors' personal doubt and direct involvement, such as *I believe, to our knowledge, it is our view that*.

Type 4) Emotionally-charged intensifiers, such as *extremely difficult/interesting, of particular importance, unexpectedly, surprisingly, etc*.

Type 5) Compound hedges, the examples are: *could be suggested, would seem likely, would seem somewhat*.

After determining the hedges, Chi-square procedure was used to show whether or not there was any significant difference between the 2 groups of writer in utilizing the hedging devices.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Frequencies of hedges in Discussion section of English written Psychology RAs by NESs & NNIA

Hedges types	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Type 5	Total
Writers	F.	F.	F.	F.	F.	F.
NESs	98	48	9	10	6	171
NNIAs	72	51	6	8	8	145

As Table 1 reveals, the two groups of writers used type 1 (Shields) hedges as the most frequently ones. Native English writers employed 98 hedges while their Iranian counterparts in their English writings employed 72 hedges out of the total number of 171, 145, respectively. What Table 1 reveals about type 2 (Approximators) hedges is that NESs employed 48 out of total and IRWs utilized 51 in articles. The result of type 3 (Authors' personal doubt and direct involvement) hedges shows that 9 and 6 hedges of this type used by NESs and NNIA, respectively. The frequency of type 4 (Emotionally-charged intensifiers) hedges for NESs was 10 and for NNIA was 8. Type 5 (compound hedges) hedges' frequency in English texts was 6 for the first group and 8 for the second group. The findings are supported by the chi-square procedure in Table 2 to answer the research question.

Table 2: Chi-square for the frequency of hedges sections written by NESs and NNIAAs

Chi-square= 3.06	Degree of freedom= 4					Critical chi-square= 9.49
Hedging type	1	2	3	4	5	
NESs	F. 98	F. 48	F. 9	F. 10	F. 6	
NNIAAs	F. 72	F. 51	F. 6	F. 8	F. 8	

Since the chi-square observed value (3.06) at 4 degrees of freedom in Discussion section of English written Psychology RAs written by NESs and NNIAAs is lower than the critical chi-square (9.49), it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between the frequencies of hedges in this two compared groups. It means that the writings of Iranians are influenced by their discipline rather than their own language and culture.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The data analysis revealed that all research writers used type 1 (Shields) hedges as the most frequent ones. This finding is supported by the findings of Salager-Meyer (1994) and Trimble (1985) who stated that the most frequently used hedging device in articles was shield category. The results showed that both groups of writers had the same attitude towards using hedging in this discipline while writing in English. This finding is concurrent with the findings of the previous studies, such as Winardi's (2009) and Mohammadi Khahan (2006) which showed that the equality in using hedges between native and non-native researchers seems to be related the fact that writers are more influenced by their discipline than their nationality. Therefore, as Sina Nasiri (2011) claims in his asset research in this filed of study, it can be concluded that the disciplinary backgrounds overcome the nationality and cultural backgrounds. This helps Iranian authors to be easily accepted by their community-mates in the globe.

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