

A contrastive Genre Analysis on English Abstracts of Chinese and English Journals

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ABSTRACT: This research attempts to compare and identify the move structure of the English abstracts in the field of logistics written by second-language and native authors. The move-step structure will be further outlined and compared, and the steps will be analyzed from a micro perspective for an exploration of their communicative functions. The typical IMRD pattern is not applicable to the abstracts in the selected journals. The results show that the move application in abstracts written by second-language authors are fixed in content but various in arrangement, while the moves in abstracts written by native authors are diversified including some necessary moves and optional moves, and all of them are arranged to serve for a communicative purpose. Besides, the author summarizes some strategies in writing abstracts: flexible adoption of moves; complete move structure; reasonable and logical steps.

Key words: abstracts; move-step; communicative purpose; strategies

INTRODUCTION

Abstract is an epitome of a whole article, which conveys a brief introduction of the article in question, and guides the readers to quickly grasp the gist. As an important and necessary part of an article, abstract is characterized by its independent discourse structure and lexical features. At present, there are abundant researches on the genre analysis on the abstracts of academic papers, but few researches are concerning about the genre analysis on journals, especially in a comparative way. Ten journals are selected randomly from CNKI and EBSCO as the research objects. This research attempts to explore the genre structures of the journals in the field of logistics, compare the differences between the abstracts written by second-language and native authors, and analyze how the moves and steps achieve the communicative purpose, which aims at summarizing some useful strategies in writing abstracts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Move-step analysis has become a standard approach for analyzing genre in ESP, and each genre has its own moves and steps, which are aimed to realizing the communicative purpose. This method has been applied in various texts, especially in legal texts, economic texts and abstracts of scientific journals and academic papers. Yin Hongwu conducted a research on the move structure of international treaties, which presents a typical schema of legal texts. Jiang Ting, Zhao Xia and Zeng lin built a move-step model for Chinese arbitration awards, and the results show that the moves and typical linguistic features contribute to conveying the communicative purpose. In the existing literature, the move-step analysis is most frequently applied in analyzing the abstracts of scientific journals and academic papers, and they respectively has their own move-step structures. The author has read four researches on the move-step analysis of scientific journals, and they all share a common move structure, which is background-subject matter-method-result-conclusion. While in academic papers, scholars prefer to adopt IMRD move structure.

METHODOLOGY

The author selects ten journals both from CNKI and EBSCO

randomly for the consideration of accessibility and representativity. Here the author will conduct the research in a quantitative way, and classify the 10 Chinese and English journals into two groups. Firstly, selecting one sample randomly, analyzing its moves and steps and roughly proposing an assumption; secondly, analyzing the remaining nine samples in the same way and figuring out whether they conform to the assumption; thirdly, calculating the percentage and comparing the differences; fourthly, exploring how the moves and steps achieve the communicative purpose.

DISCUSSION

The author firstly labels the five Chinese journals into T1, T2, T3, T4 and T5, then another five English journals into T6, T7, T8, T9 and T10. The abstract of the T1 is selected to be analyzed, which presents a clear move structure of background-subject matter in question-problems-solution. The author supposes that the remaining texts will basically follow this structure, because it has contained the necessary information for conveying a communicative purpose of an abstract. In fact, this structure is quite different from the IMRD structure for abstracts proposed by Bhatia.

The author continues to explore the moves in another five abstracts in English journals under the same move structure framework. However, it fails. In the foreign journals, the abstracts are quite different both in contents and structures, neither the contents nor the structures share some common regulations. The arrangements of moves vary from one another. However, the method move appears in each abstract, and the objective move and solution move rank the second. Here the author considers these two moves as the necessary moves, while the others, such as background move, problems move are optional ones.

The author finds that the moves in the abstracts of foreign journals are both more complete and detailed than those in Chinese journals. Foreign authors apply more moves to convey the communicative purpose in the abstracts, and a more complete organization of the moves can achieve this intention. The solution move ranks the top, which is as high as 90%. While the result move only accounts for 10%, which is quite different from the abstracts of other kinds of texts. All of the five Chinese authors adopts the background move in their abstracts, while only one native author adopts it. Even in Chinese abstracts, the content of background move accounts for a large percentage. It's an optional move. Chinese authors tend to give a detailed background information in the abstracts, which conforms to the Chinese thinking method: when talking about some issues, it's more acceptable to introduce the macro information. Subject matter in question move is more frequently adopted than the background move, which falls into the group of necessary move. It helps the readers grasp what the author will be discussed about in the research, and it is an obligatory part included in the author's communicative purpose. In fact, the author considers the objective move as an necessary move in abstracts, because it clearly demonstrates the significance of the research. However, it is not adopted in the abstract written by Chinese author, which is an opposite

situation in that of foreign author. Problem move and solution move are two frequently adopted moves, and this problem-solution pattern reveals what and how the authors conduct in their researches. In this part, there is no great difference between the abstracts of Chinese and foreign authors. Foreign authors pay more attention to method move than Chinese authors. In the abstracts written by Chinese authors, only solution is presented without any description of the methods they apply. However, foreign authors seem to emphasize much on this part, they briefly introduce how the research problem is solved, which presents a logical illustration and better conveys the communicative purpose. Result move is the least adopted move in the selected texts. After analyzing and comparing, the author finds that, unlike other kinds of abstracts, in logistics journals, the result move is not usually presented in the abstracts, because the emphasis is put on the presentation of practical operations, such as methods and solutions.

CONCLUSION

Based on the selected texts, the author conducts a research in a quantitative method. The contents of the abstracts are segmented for a move-step analysis. The author explores the internal structure through analysis, comparison and statistics. The result shows that, the move-step structure in the English abstracts written by second language authors are fixed in structure but various in arrangement, which follows the background-subject matter in question-problems-solution pattern. While in the English abstract written by native authors, the patterns are more diversified, among which are necessary moves and optional moves. Besides, the native authors tend to write the abstract in the first-person narration, which involves the author's participation and interactivity into the research, while the in the abstracts written by Chinese authors, the passive voice is preferred. The author also identifies the steps in each move accordingly, and every step is equipped with its own functions which contributes the move to achieve the communicative purpose. The abstracts of the journals in the field of logistics are different from other kinds of abstracts, and the typical IMRD pattern is not applicable here. From the comparison and analysis, the author thinks that the abstracts written by native authors can better present the communicative purpose to the readers, due to the more complete and detailed moves. In abstract writing, it's of utmost importance to reflect the essence of

the whole research. Here the author provides some strategies based on the research results: firstly, necessary moves and optional moves can be selected flexibly; secondly, complete move structure should be taken into consideration; thirdly, steps should be reasonably and logically adopted to contribute the moves to realize the communicative purpose.

However, for the limitation of the author's experience and the limitation of the sample volume, there maybe some flaws in the research result. This research can be further conducted from a micro perspective, which can focus on the lexical features and conventional expressions in each step, in order to explore how these words and expressions achieve a better communicative purpose.

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