A Cross-cultural Investigation of English and Turkish Research Article Abstracts in Educational Sciences

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Abstract. The abstracts are essential components of the research articles since scholars are highly likely to read the abstract first and decide to continue or stop reading the research article according to the content of the abstract. Therefore, writing an effective abstract is crucial in order to produce acceptable research articles in the international discourse community of specific disciplines. This study examines the rhetorical variations between Turkish and English research abstracts by adopting Swales' framework of move analysis (Swales, 2004). The results indicate that there are similarities between Turkish and English research abstracts in terms of the employment of moves and steps though there is a significant difference in the frequency of Move 2 where writers justify their work in their research field as a way of creating a niche. The rhetorical and lexicogrammatical divergences may be explained by both the characteristics of cultures and different expectations of the scientific communities, which results from situatedness of writing, but further research is required with a larger corpus. The study has both theoretical and pedagogical implications in that knowledge of these conventions will allow language educators to identify anomalies and enable MA and PHD students to internalise the accepted styles in international academic discourse.

Key words: genre analysis, academic discourse, abstracts, lexicogrammatical features, moves and steps.

Introduction

Research discourses have evolved for functional reasons and have gained considerable status as they are associated with power in Western society due to the control they have on both social and academic life (Hyland, 2009). More importantly, they have an impact on the lives of academicians as universities require academic staff to publish in major and peer-reviewed leading journals as a prerequisite for promotion and academic career advancement.

The research article is the prominent genre of the academy. The marketing of a research article starts with the abstracts where authors need to catch the attention of their audience and persuade them into reading their research articles. In the abstract, the general convention is that the author should highlight the importance and draw the reader into paper by focusing on the importance of his/ her research (Ibid., p.70).

The research article abstract competes for a research niche and audience achieved by stating centrality and showing that prior knowledge is somewhat incomplete in order to promote the research. In order to promote the research abstract, the author also uses argumentation, personal involvement and evaluative commentary.

As it is seen, the abstract is the point where the reader must be hooked. With rejection rates as high as 75 % in some fields, the research abstract is necessarily a highly promotional genre which is worth examining to enlighten relevant discourse communities (Connor, Nagelhout & Rozycki, 2008).

In order to shed a light on possible challenges that can be faced by Turkish students and scholars in writing an English research article and to suggest practical implications for them, this study attempts to do a genre-based contrastive analysis of textual and lexicogrammatical features of English and Turkish research article abstracts from a cross-cultural perspective.

Literature Review

Genre analysis as a method is used to find out cross-cultural differences in terms of rhetorical purpose, form, audience and textual features, such as lexicogrammatical ones in analysing writings. By using genre analysis, one can "gain insights into generic practices and disciplinary cultures embodied in the formal properties" (Loi & Evans, 2010). Genre-based contrastive rhetorical studies reveal specific rhetorical patterns, which might be culturally and contextually specific (Connor, 2003). These specific rhetorical patterns help scholars and students to gain a deeper insight into sociorhetorical features of different genres. Contrastive genre analysis provides a comprehensive account of specific texts as it both focuses on the social context in which the texts are produced and linguistic features of them.

The cross-cultural and disciplinary genre analysis of research article introductions and abstracts have been studied quite extensively in recent years (e.g. Loi & Evans, 2010; Martin, 2003; Pho, 2008). While early studies have focused on the general patterns of abstracts across various disciplines, more recent studies have explored and analysed the abstracts from a comparative cross-cultural perspective.

In a Turkish context, several contrastive studies have been conducted by analysing the academic writings of Turkish students and writing of native English speakers' writings. The results revealed that although some rhetorical preferences are apparent, culture is not an only factor to explain those differences, rhetorical differences can also be attributed to educational context, L2 level, topic, audience and bidirectional transfer (Enginarlar, 1990; Uysal, 2008).

In academic domain, there are several studies that examine academic genres in terms of rhetorical variations. Martin (2003) compared English research paper abstracts with Spanish research papers abstracts. He argued that even though Spanish abstracts mainly follow the international conventions established by English-speaking academic community, they differ from English abstracts with regard to Move 2 in that the majority of English research abstracts created a niche with counter-claiming and indicating a gap steps while only 15 % of Spanish abstracts do so. Similarly, in a genre-based study of research grant proposal, Chinese research grant proposals were comparatively brief, rhetorically softer and more implicit than English research grant proposals, which can be attributable to various local contextualities, such as *face* and "networking concerns, research traditions, socio-political structure and economic conditions" (Connor et al., 2008). Recently, Loi and Evans, (2010) investigated the cultural differences in the organisation of English and Chinese research article introductions from the field of educational psychology. According to the results, Chinese authors showed a marked less preference in employing the moves of claiming centrality, indicating a gap and counter-claiming than English authors. The researchers suggested that those differences reflect some of the distinctive characteristics of two different cultures, English and Chinese in terms of *face*, explicitness and self-representation.

In another study examining linguistic realizations of rhetorical structures and authorial stance, Pho (2008) indicated that contrary to general assumption, there is a high degree self-mention in English research abstracts in the fields of applied linguistics and educational technology. He found out that linguistic realisations of moves are similar across disciplines. However, he stated that there is variation in terms of tense use in the realizations of moves.

Following other similar international studies in academic domain, the primary purpose of this research is to examine comparatively the research article abstracts written in English by native English speakers and the abstracts written in Turkish by native Turkish speakers with the aim of specifying the rhetorical differences in a genre-driven approach. Although considerable research has been devoted to the genre analysis of abstracts in different languages and disciplines so far, little research has been carried out to explore Turkish research article abstracts from a cross-cultural perspective. This study has an underlying pedagogical motivation because it attempts to help Turkish learners of English for Academic Purposes write effective English abstracts so as to meet the international scientific community's expectations. In order to fill the gap in this area, this study seeks to address the following questions:

1) What are the similarities and differences between Turkish and English research article abstracts in terms of the genre structures of moves and steps?

2) What are the socio-cultural differences that can be drawn from the different genre structures in Turkish and English research articles?

Methodology

1. Data Collection and Procedure

The corpus for this study consists of 40 research paper abstracts-20 Turkish and 20 English in the field of education. As Moreno argues that to achieve a maximum comparability, it is necessary to control relevant confounding factors (as cited in Connor et al., 2008). The academic discipline-field is a confounding factor. Therefore, this study attempts to control for it by collecting abstracts only from one major academic field (education). 20 Turkish research articles, written by native Turkish speakers, were selected from leading national journals, Hacettepe University Journal of Education, Gazi University Journal of Education Faculty, Ankara University Journal of Educational Sciences and Special Education Journal. Five abstracts from each journal were selected randomly from the recent publications that have been published since 2008. Similarly, 20 English research abstracts, written by native English speakers, were chosen from the most prestigious refereed journals in the field of education. These are Teaching and Teacher Education, Journal of Curriculum Studies, TESOL Quarterly and British Educational Journal. Five abstracts from each journal were selected randomly from the recent publications since 2008. To ensure that abstracts are written by native English speakers, the writers' biographies are checked. Observations are limited to the corpus. It is not the aim of this paper to make generalisations about the rhetorical structure preferences of the members of the international and Turkish scientific community in the education area.

2. Instrument

Swales's (2004) CARS (Create a Research Space) MODEL is used to analyse the moves and steps. Bhatia argued that the function of move analysis is "to interpret regularities of organisation in order to understand the rationale for the genre" (as cited in Connor et al., 2008, p.66). Past studies have confirmed that Swales's framework is a valid and reliable instrument for analysing research article introductions and abstracts in particular, other sections and even the whole research paper (Loi & Evans, 2010). The three moves which are defined as "the defined bounded communicative act that is designed to achieve one main communicative objective" are written below (Swales, 2004):

a. Move 1 – Establishing a research territory

b. Move 2 – Establishing a niche

c. Move 3 – Presenting the present work

The analysis is both quantitative and qualitative as the percentages of particular moves and steps in both Turkish and English research articles were calculated, and moves were analysed in terms of lexico-grammatical features and content.

Results And Discussion

1. Analysis of Structural Units

The general structural units, which are introduction, methods, results and conclusion, are identified and shown in Table 1 below. The results indicate that the Introduction

unit is the most frequent element in both groups of the abstracts. Also, the analysis reveals that although both groups of abstracts are similar in terms of the introduction, methods and results units, there is a strong tendency to omit the Conclusion unit in Turkish research abstracts, which is a finding that represents a highly significant difference of $p<0.01$ (t=2.757, p=0.009). These results are parallel to the findings of Martin (2003) in that the frequency of occurrence of the Conclusion unit is higher in the English abstracts than Spanish abstracts in his study. In the conclusion unit, authors make their final claims regarding the significance of their study in accordance with the results. The reason why Turkish research article abstracts include fewer conclusion units might be attributed to the influence of academic writing instruction and use of face-saving strategy by Turkish scholars. Additionally, English writing tends to be writer-responsible in that it is the responsibility of the writer to present his/ her arguments clearly and explicitly so that the readers can understand the writer's points easily (Hinds, 1987).

Table 1. Frequency of Occurrence and Distribution Units in the Abstracts.

	English		Turkish	
	N	*Percentage, %*	*N*	*Percentage, %*
Introduction	20	100	20	100
Methods	19	95	17	85
Results	17	85	14	70
Conclusion	16	80	8	40

With regard to the present moves and steps, the findings are shown in the table below:

Table 2. Frequency and Distribution of Moves and Steps in the Abstracts.

	English		Turkish	
	N	*Percentage, %*	*N*	*Percentage, %*
Move 1 – Estalishing a territory	12	60	8	40
Step 1 – Claming centrality	5	25	5	25
Step 2 – Making topic generalizations	5	25	2	10
Step 3 – Reviewing items of previous research	3	15	4	20
Move 2 – Establishing a niche	9	45	1	5
Step 1A – Counter-claiming	3	15	—	—
Step 1B – Indicating a gap	8	40	—	—
Step 1C – Question-raising	2	10	1	5
Step 1D – Continuing a tradition	—	—	—	—
Move 3 – Presenting the present work	20	100	20	100
Step 1A – Outlinining purposes	6	30	14	70
Step 1B – Announcing present research	16	80	18	90
Step 2 – Announcing principal findings	17	85	16	80
Step 3 – Indicating research abstract structure	5	25	3	15
Step 4 – Claiming the significance of the study	6	30	—	—

As it is seen from the table, both English and Turkish research abstracts are similar in terms of realisation of the Move 3 and Move 1, which is consistent with the findings of Martin (2003) who argued that there is a common practice with regard to Move 3 in Spanish and English research abstracts. However, the step 4 within Move 3 is different. Whereas the value of 30 % of English research abstracts is established through the indication of the significance of the study, none of Turkish research abstracts have that step, which is a significant difference (t=2,854 p=0.01, p≤ 0.01) that may show the sharpness of English rhetoric in those abstracts examined. This result is parallel to what Loi and Evans (2010) found out in their research examining Chinese and English research abstracts as 15 % of English research abstracts claimed the significance of the study while only 5 % of Chinese research abstracts did so. Turkish authors' preference for implicitness and the nature of their research articles which may include replication studies might cause this highly significant difference in Step 4 within Move 3.

The examples below indicate how different steps are employed within Move 3 in both Turkish and English research article abstracts. The example below shows how the research article abstract claimed the significance of the study with the words "…contribute to extending the knowledge base of TESOL".

Move 3. Step 4. Claiming the significance of the study

[E-11] The article nevertheless contends that his story will **contribute** to extending the knowledge base of TESOL….

In Step 3 within Move 3, the writers generally present their research article structures by briefly mentioning the organization of their paper. This step is exemplified below:

Move 3. Step 3. Indicating a research article structure

[E-6] Knowledge, representation and then praxis are discussed.

[T-20] Çalışmanın **birinci bölümünde** …… hakkında bilgi verilmiştir. **İkinci bölümde** ise ….. hususlar tartışılmıştır. (In the first section the study, information about …… is given. In this section, ….. points are discussed.)

In Step 2 within Move 3, scholars briefly provide the results they have found out in the abstracts as in the examples below:

Move 3. Step 2. Announcing principal findings

[E-18] **It was found out** that there is a shortage of properly controlled …….

[T-18] **Sonuçta** cinsiyetin çocukların kullandığı bilgi stratejileri üzerinde etkili bir faktör olmadığı… (**In conclusion**, gender is not an affective factor on information strategies that children use…)

In Step 1B within Move 3, Turkish and English authors present their research by describing the focus, scope and the direction of their studies. The examples are as follows:

Move 3. Step 1B. Announcing present research

[E-11] **This article discusses** the life and career of a Tamil teacher of English….

[T-13] **Bu makalede**, sözlü kültür incelemelerinin eğitim/ yetişkin okuryazarlığı alanına sunabileceği olası açılımlar **ele alınmaktadır**. (**This article focuses** on potential effects of oral culture studies on the field of education/ adult literacy.)

Turkish and English authors present the purposes of their articles in Step 1A within Move 3 as in the examples below. Turkish authors outline the purposes of their studies more frequently than English authors (please see Table 2). As the abstracts serve to promote the research article, English authors might give more importance to claiming the significance and centrality of their research rather than outlining their purposes explicitly.

Move 3. Step 1A. Outlining purposes

[E-18] The **purpose** of this article is to review the evidence to date for any effect….

[T-1] Bu araştırmanın **temel amacı**.... (**The main purpose of this study** is ….)

The examples below illustrate how the steps of Move 1 similarly occur in the research article abstracts of both languages.

Move 1. Step 3. Reviewing items of previous research

[E-13] We illustrate **the discussion with data** ….. in particular types of educational provision.

[T-10] Katılımcılara …. tarafından geliştirilen .... ölçeği uygulanmıştır. (A scale …….**developed by** …. was administered to the participants.)

Move 1. Step 2. Making topic generalizations

[E-8] **The curricula** teachers teach **are intimately bound with** who they are.

[T-20] **Gizli müfredatın içeriğini**, toplum tarafından onaylanan tutum ve davranışlar oluşturmakta ve bu müfredat **genellikle yazılı olarak ifade edilmemektedir**. (Attitudes and behaviours approved by the society **constitute the content** of the hidden curriculum, and this curriculum is not set forth generally in written form).

In Step 1 within Move 1, both English and Turkish authors present the value of their research by claiming centrality. The examples below indicate that the value of the research is established by stating that the research topic is a significant research area.

Move 1. Step 1. Claiming centrality

[E-1] The proliferation of instruments ……. is of **particular interest**.

[T-5] Ülkemizde 2005 yılında uygulanmaya başlayan matematik eğitimi program ile derslerde material kullanımı **oldukça önem kazanmıştır**. (Material use in classes **has gained a lot of importance** with maths education program that started in 2005).

The biggest difference between the English and Turkish research abstracts is related to the frequency of occurrence of Move 2 in which writers justify their work in their related research filed, which shows consistency with two studies that concluded English research papers included that communicative category far more than the research papers written in Spanish and Chinese in the literature review (Loi & Evans, 2010; Martin, 2003). In this study, whereas 45 % of the English research abstracts included that communicative category, this move is only present in 5 % of the Turkish abstracts, which is a highly significant difference (t=3.210 p=0.003, p<0.01) that may indicate the strength of English rhetoric in the English abstracts examined. Specifically, no Turkish research abstract has indicated a gap in the literature while 40 % of the English abstracts used that rhetorical strategy as in the example below:

Move 2. Step 1B. Indicating a gap

[E-8] The literature on multicultural and anti-oppressive education **does not adequately examine** teachers' emotions….

Move 2. Step 1A. Counter-claiming

[E-6] This paper offers an **alternative argument**….

Move 2. Step 1C. Question-raising

[E-13] …**but how can we understand** the classroom as just one of the sites….?

[T-9] …..ve bu bilgileri eğitim ve öğretim sürecinde **nasıl uygulayabiliriz?**... (How can we apply this information into education process?)

It is clear from the abovementioned examples that English authors take a critical stance when they make a counterclaim and indicate a research gap while Turkish authors do not have these communicative intentions in their abstracts. The lack of a critical stance in Turkish research article abstracts might be regarded as face-saving strategy as it is claimed by other scholars (Loi & Evans, 2010; Martin, 2003). Also, as there are fewer research studies in Turkish academic

discourse community in comparison with English academic discourse community, the limited number of research studies in local discourse community may not necessitate criticizing the others' work or establishing a research niche as it is argued by Martin (2003).

2. Lexicogrammatical Features

a) Hedges

These are devices that allow information to be presented as an opinion rather than fact. Even though there are very few hedging devices in Turkish research abstracts, there are several hedging devices in English research abstracts that allow discourse community to open a discursive space to dispute interpretations, which is compatible with the expectations of Anglophone research community (Hyland, 2009).

[E-16] We found out that teachers' thinking about their professionalism **may** be construed as….

b) Attitude Markers

They indicate the writer's affective attitude to propositions, conveying surprise, agreement and importance (Ibid.).

When the lexical choice is examined, while Turkish research abstracts have a more neutral position, there is a trend that English research abstracts include more attitude markers than Turkish research abstracts, which is a consistent finding with Loi and Evan's study (2010) in that they also found that there is a strong tendency of attitude markers use in English research abstracts than Chinese abstracts. The examples:

[E-2] An **essential** understanding from this research….

[E-18]… there have been **surprisingly** few papers….

[T-6] Son yıllarda … özerklik kavramına **hatırı sayılır bir ilgi** oluşmuştur. (There has been considerable interest in the concept of self-determination in recent years.)

c) Self-mention

It is a conscious choice by writers to adopt a particular stance by using first person pronouns and possessive adjectives. In 4 of the English research abstracts, writers have shown presence by using personal markers while there is no self-mention in Turkish research abstracts, which is a parallel finding to Pho's results (2008) in that there is author involvement by using first personal pronouns in English applied linguistics and educational technology abstracts.

[E-3] **I** attempt here to begin to fill that gap…

[E-14] As such **I** regard agency as….

d) Verb Tenses and Voice

In Turkish research abstracts, there is a strong tendency to use simple present tense with passive voice. Only small amount of the Turkish research abstracts include active voice use. On the other hand, in the English research abstracts, although the prominent tense is simple present tense, present perfect tense is used in most of the realizations of the steps of topic generalizations and claiming

centrality. Also, while indicating the principal findings, simple past tense is used. Overall, in the English research abstracts, both active and passive voices are used. These findings are consistent with Pho's study (2008).

3. Socio-cultural Differences Underlying the Differences

Rhetorical variations between research abstracts in Turkish and English can be attributed to various factors such as cultural traits, the expectations of local context, personal choice of writers and the influence of English writing norms on the writing norms of Turkish culture as it is stated in the literature review. Although it is clear that culture is not only factor to explain those differences, some features of research abstracts may be attributed to it.

The absence of claiming the significance of the studies and indicating a gap in Turkish research abstracts might be thought as an avoidance of taking a strong critical stance, which may result from face saving. Also, they may avoid using overly assertive expressions in indicating a research a gap or simply not indicating it. However, this difference may also be attributable to less competitiveness of getting published in Turkish journals.

The greater degree of explicitness in English research abstracts may reflect the low-context communication of English-speaking societies. Also, as it is seen in the research abstracts, native English speakers are more clear and explicit while having an argument than Turkish authors. However, rather than culture, this difference can also be explained by the different expectations of the scientific communities and situatedness of writing.

Lastly, the presence of self-representation in English research abstracts might reflect the assertiveness of English-speaking societies as individualistic culture have a tendency to use interpersonal pronouns while collectivist cultures tend to drop the personal pronoun (I). Nevertheless, the concepts of individualistic and collectivist are too complex and dynamic to justify that use. Also, it may depend on the personal choice of the authors.

Conclusion

This study indicates that the scholars of both the international and Turkish scientific community showed a clear preference for the use of Move 3, which can be regarded as an obligatory rhetorical element as it presents in all the research abstracts in the corpus. However, significant differences were found out in Move 2, which may result from the degree of competitiveness and the audience of those scientific communities. This may be due to the fact that the number of scholars in Turkish scientific community makes it unnecessary to establish a niche by criticising the others' works. Nevertheless, there might be other possible explanations for these differences. Therefore, further research is needed.

The analysis suggests that English research abstracts greatly reflect Swales's (2004) CARS model, which indicates that English research abstracts tend to be more rhetorically complex and strong than Turkish research abstracts.

Another important conclusion is that English research abstracts seem to be more successful than Turkish research

abstracts in terms of promoting the studies as they use more attitude markers, indicate a gap in the literature and claim the significance of their study, which may stem from the writer-responsibility of English language (Hinds, 1987).

Although some links between socio-cultural factors have been established with the rhetorical features of Turkish and English research abstracts in the previous section, this study does not account for these variations on the basis of only socio-cultural factors. As it is stated before, language, culture, educational contexts, individual differences, economic conditions, political circumstances, conventions of publishers and scholarly societies play a role in rhetorical features of the texts.

1) Limitations of the Study

This study cannot be generalized to indicate the rhetorical patterns of English and Turkish research abstracts as it consists of relatively small corpus which consists of 40 research abstracts in total. Also, though there has been attempt to restrict the field factor to education, it is still a broad area because the conventions of English language teaching field can be different from the conventions of curriculum studies field. Additionally, making an argument by just analysing the text may not give very valid results as the researcher does not know the intentions of the writer. Furthermore, it might have been better if the inter-rater reliability had been established in identifying moves and steps.

2) Implications and Suggestions for Further Research

As data show, Turkish research abstracts seem to be a bit far from meeting the conventions of research abstracts in the international community. Taking this point into consideration, this article has a few pedagogical implications for English for Academic Purposes, especially for Turkish MA and PHD students who aim to get published. With self-directed genre-driven analysis, metacognitive awareness of prospective academicians is a significant part of the learning process to internalise the accepted styles in the research community. In order to develop this awareness, it is suggested that portfolio can be used to develop the awareness of that particular research genres to reflect on the results of the

analysis and examination of those genres. Strategies, such as identifying appropriate lexical choice and organisational characteristics can be useful.

Further research is necessary to clarify what extent socio-cultural factors, readers' expectations and situatedness explain for the rhetorical differences in research abstracts by using larger corpus and member-checking (knowing authors' intentions). Also, contrastive analyses on this genre across different languages and different disciplines with ethnographic and longitudinal studies can shed more light on the rhetorical variations.

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Duygu Çandarlı

Angliškų ir turkiškų tiriamųjų edukacinių straipsnių santraukų tarpkultūrinis tyrimas

Santrauka

Santrauka – esminė kiekvieno mokslinio straipsnio dalis, kadangi labai tikėtina, jog mokslininkai visų pirma skaito santrauką ir iš jos turinio sprendžia, ar skaityti straipsnį. Taigi, norėdami tarptautinei specifinių disciplinų diskurso bendruomenei pateikti patrauklų tiriamąjį straipsnį, svarbu tinkamai parengti santrauką. Šis mokslinis tyrimas remiasi Swaleso retorinio judėjimo analizės modeliu (angl. move analysis) ir analizuoja turkų ir anglų kalbomis parengtų tiriamųjų darbų santraukų retorinę kaitą. Rezultatai rodo, kad tarp turkų ir anglų kalbų tyrimų santraukų pasitaiko judėjimo ir žingsnių (angl. moves and steps) panašumų, tačiau pastebimi dideli skirtumai judėjimo Nr. 2 (angl. Move 2) periodiškume, kai autoriai sukuria nišą ir taip pateisina savo darbą tam tikroje tyrimų srityje. Šie retoriniai ir leksiniai-gramatiniai skirtumai gali būti paaiškinti tiek kultūriniais bruožais, tiek skirtingais mokslinių bendruomenių lūkesčiais, kurie atsiranda priklausomai nuo rašymo aplinkos, tačiau tam reikia atlikti tolimesnius didesnių tekstų rinkinių tyrimus. Tiriamasis darbas reikšmingas ir teorine, ir pedagogine prasme, o žinios apie įsigalėjusias normas leis kalbos pedagogams atpažinti anomalijas bei suteiks galimybę magistrantūros ir doktorantūros studentams tarptautiniame akademiniame diskurse internalizuoti priimtinus stilius.

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