

Pragmatic similarities between the sections ‘abstract’, ‘introduction’ and ‘state of research’ in German and Chinese articles on linguistics

Scientific or academic writing is a key competence of scientific and academic work, even for university students (see Ehlich/Steets 2003, p. 1). New knowledge is presented in academic articles and therefore the academic articles are an important object of research (see Yang/Allison 2003, p. 365 f.).

According to studies conducted by Kwan (2006, p. 51 ff.), the sections ‘introduction’ and ‘state of research’ belong to the same macro structure and therefore exhibit numerous similarities. As a result, certain speech acts are also repeated in these sections. We can assume that these repetitions fulfil a mandatory function and are therefore unavoidable. Consequently, it is necessary to analyze which speech acts are repeated in the respective sections. So far, previous research on scientific/academic articles has focused mainly on the investigation of only one section of the research articles, rarely ever on two.

In this paper, I will compare the sections ‘abstract’, ‘introduction’ and ‘state of research’ in German and Chinese research or academic articles in order to identify the shared interactions between these three sections. The following three guiding questions will be investigated:

- 1) What are the similarities between the sections ‘abstract’, ‘introduction’ and ‘state of research’?
- 2) Which speech acts are repeated in which sections? And why are they repeated?
- 3) Which speech acts are used most often in which section of the text and are therefore particularly relevant?

To identify the similarities between the sections, we must first compare their macro structures. This approach enables us to discern the speech acts that are repeated in the sections. First the German and then the Chinese texts are analyzed to investigate the purpose of these speech acts in the different sections of the text. The aim is to show which of these speech acts are particularly relevant in which sections of the text.

Initially, the macro structures, the steps and the sub-steps in the three sections of the text in both languages are qualitatively compared to determine what their similarity is and why repetitions occur. For this purpose, the frequencies of such repeated steps and sub-steps were determined by means of quantitative analysis in order to determine the degree of concrete similarities and thus to verify these qualitative results.

Repetitions should be avoided in scientific journal articles. The fact that the same speech acts are frequently repeated in some sections leads to the assumption that these repetitions have important functions and are therefore justified. One of the results shows that ‘the establishment and occupation of a niche’ is repeated in all three sections and in both languages. It can therefore be concluded that all three sections share the same main function, namely to ‘establish the territory of the author’s own research’.

The similarities between the three German and Chinese sections are that they all realize ‘establishment of the niche’ and ‘occupation of the niche’ as the main purpose and the shared speech acts to ‘occupy the niche’ and ‘highlight the purpose of own research’ are

fully realized (100%) in abstracts and introductions. The difference between the two languages is that they apply other speech act to 'establish and occupy the niche'. In the three German sections, the primary purpose of the speech acts 'identifying the research gap' is to 'establish the niche' but there is no common speech act to 'occupy the niche'. By contrast, in the Chinese sections, the speech act 'importance/necessity of own research' is used to 'establish the niche' and 'highlight applications of own research' as well as 'highlight the purpose of own research' to 'occupy the niche'.

In addition, the similarity between German text sections 'abstract' and 'introduction' is greater than that between the German text sections 'introductions' and 'state of research'. This also applies to the Chinese language: German abstracts as well as German introductions not only realize the same purposes 'Establishment and occupation of the niche', but also their primary speech acts are the same. According to Kwan (2006, p. 51 ff.), the sections 'introduction' and 'state of research' are very similar. According to the results of this analysis, the text sections 'Introduction' is much more similar to the 'Abstract' than the 'State of Research'.

On the whole, repetitions of the same speech act in German sections occur less frequently than in Chinese sections because German sections have fewer shared speech acts than Chinese sections: In the three Chinese sections, the speech acts 'importance/necessity of own research' and 'highlighting applications of own research' as well as 'highlighting the purpose of own research' are mandatorily repeated to 'establish the niche' and 'occupy the niche' respectively. By contrast, only the 'research gap' is repeated to 'establish the niche' in the three corresponding German sections. A further difference is that the speech act 'highlighting the purpose of own research' to 'occupy the niche' is only repeated in the German sections 'abstract' and 'introduction' and the speech act 'defining the research question' is only repeated in the German sections 'introduction' and 'state of research'. This means that the purpose of 'establishing the niche' in German sections is achieved with the help of the same speech acts while there are very few shared speech acts to 'occupy the niche'.

One result of this empirical analysis is that some speech actions not only occur in many sections of the text but are recursively used several times in the same section of the text. For example, the research gap often appears both in the 'introductions' and in the text sections 'state of research' and recursively several times in these same sections (see 4.2 and 6.). Moreover, the commonality of these three sections of the text is that they have all treated the literature in different ways and with different purposes. For future research, it is necessary to address these different treatments of literature in the various sections of the text.

References

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