Native VS Non-native English Speaker`s Use of Hedges in Discussion Sections of Research Articles

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One of the most important features of academic discourse is the way that writers seek to modify the assertions that they make, toning down uncertain or potentially risky claims. These expressions of doubt are known as hedges. Hedging has proved to be a problematic aspect of language for second language learners. Therefore this study aimed to compare and contrast the frequency of incidence of hedges used in discussion sections of Medical Science(MS) and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research articles(RAs)written by English native and non-native(Iranian) writers, to determine whether there is a significant difference between natives and non-natives in their use of hedges. For this purpose the discussion sections in 16 research articles were randomly selected from international journals. The research articles were analyzed according to Hylands’ (1998) polypragmatic model of hedges. The analysis showed that the overall distribution of hedges in SLA articles is higher than in MS articles. The extent of difference between natives and non-natives use of hedges was assessed through chi-square test. The findings showed that the extent of difference in the use of either forms and functions of hedges by natives and non-natives was insignificant (p>0.05). These findings have implications for second language teachers and learners.