

The Study of Familiarity of Iranian ESP Teachers and ESP Course Learners with Academic Rhetoric within a Systemic Functional Grammar at Graduate Level

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Abstract

Publication of research articles (RAs) in English seems a challenging task for native and non-native writers. The acquisition of rhetorical structure and function grammar can be very helpful for academicians to achieve the wanted goal which is, of course, the publication of their RAs. This study aims to investigate the current level of familiarity to academic rhetoric within a systematic functional grammar among the Iranian ESP teachers and ESP course learners. The participants of the study consist of 10 ESP teachers and 85 learners at M.A and PhD level at Ilam state university and Islamic Azad university of Ilam. Data collected through self-report questionnaires with 22 items. The finding of this study revealed that the familiarity of ESP teachers with structures is too high and learners are high.

Keywords: Academic Rhetoric, Systemic Functional Grammar, ESP Teachers, ESP Learners

1. Introduction

Writing has become central in today's schools and universities as a measure for academic success. Students work hard to learn how to make more informed decisions about their writing and gain more control over improvement of English writing skill (Jahin, 2012). Therefore, the acquisition of rhetorical structure and function grammar (Halliday, 1985) can be very helpful for academicians to achieve the wanted goal which is, of course, the publication of their RAs. one of the main concerns of the writers is the publication of research articles which can reward their authors and writers high reputation and become a kind of motivation for them to perpetuate the advancement in their vocations (Kanoksilapatham, 2007). These worthwhile issues have urged writers to focus on writing for publication. However as long as writing is regarded to be a culturally bounded phenomenon (Kaplan, 1966) publication of research articles in English seems a challenging task for native and non-native writers. Therefore, for a long time academic genre analysis has been announced to assist writers to come up with their wishes. The kernel organization of segments of RAs can to a great extent determine their publication (Belcher & Braine, 1995; Swales, 1990; Kelly & Bazerman, 2003). There are some influential factors in an acceptable organization of academic texts, one of which is the realization of academic conventions. It is generally believed that being aware of principles dominating the standardized structure of academic research articles can lead to successful publication. Acquisition of rhetorical structure and functional grammar can prepare the ground for academicians to achieve goal of publication of their papers. (Halliday, 1985)

The purpose of this study is to investigate the extent of familiarity of ESP teachers and ESP course students with writing skills, based on CARS model and systemic functional grammar (SFG). Scholars who are non-native speakers (NNS) may receive inadequate training in the skills required to write scientific English, and may even be unaware of the various language and procedural issues involved in gaining acceptance from their own discourse community. The study of English language teachers' cognitions and its relationship to teachers' classroom practices have recently been the focus of language teaching and teacher education (Borg, 2006 & 2010). However, rarely have the studies delved into teachers' knowledge about grammar (reviewed by Borg, 2001) or investigated the relationships between teachers' knowledge about grammar and teachers' actions (Borg, 2003; Sanchez, 2010).

The main reason for the non-native authors' failure for article publication is the violation of maxims dominating the research article in journals (Hyland and Hamp-Lyons, 2002). However, it is generally believed that writing the academic papers is a challenging matter for non native speakers (NNS). In line with the previous research, the present study is

important both theoretical and practical aspects. At the theoretical level, the findings of the study are expected to broaden our view about the related literature and would help us get much more inclusive picture of how the familiarity of ESP teachers and learners with academic rhetoric within a systematic functional grammar, reflective the writing for publication. Practically, the findings will help ESP teachers and learners get aware of the importance of these variables in their academic writing and to achieve the publication of papers. The previous studies rarely have studies delved into teachers' knowledge about grammar (reviewed by Borg, 2001) or investigated the relationships between teachers' knowledge about grammar and teachers' actions (Borg, 2003; Sanchez, 2010). The present study set out to investigate the ESP teachers & learners' familiarity with academic language and with SFG at graduate levels (MA & PhD). It seems important to determine any unique characteristic of teachers which are considered as effective factors in both teaching and learning process. (Walker, 2010)

1.1 Systemic Functional Grammar

Systemic functional linguists are concerned with the way languages are used by their users in a specific context. In other words, systematic Functional Grammar tries to speculate the way linguistic forms are handled in order to convey meanings in a socio-cultural environment. In the systematic Functional Grammar (SFG) tripartite systems are coexisting (Fetzer, 2008). According to Hallidayan theory structure, structure of a language embraces the realization of the system of that language. Therefore, structure is the surface-level manifestation of grammar. There is also a very close relation between functions of language and language itself. The contribution of systemic grammar has been materialized in different perspectives (Borshev and Partee, 2002; Fries, 1994, 1995, Martin, 1992). The proponents of SFG approach maintain that discourse does not allow linguistic forms to be purposelessly organized. In fact, linguistic elements bear a specific function in their own right. In other words discourse analysis tries to penetrate deeply into the interwoven relationship between syntax and semantics. The generic moves also facilitate the development of well-organized RAs. Moves in genre analysis play the role of traffic sign indicating main headings and points of the whole text of articles. (Khani & Mansoori Nejad 2010).

1.2 Rhetoric

Rhetoric is the art which seeks to capture in opportune moments that which is appropriate and attempts to suggest that which is possible. Rhetoric is an artistic undertaking which concerns itself with the how, then when and what of expression and understands the why of purpose. (John Poulakos, contemporary rhetorical theory edited by John Louis Lucaites, Celeste Michelle Condit, Sally Caudill). Theory of rhetoric: is obviously fundamental to contrastive rhetoric. It is interested in assessing the direct or indirect effect of communication on the hearer or reader. Kaplan's first model of contrastive rhetoric was based on Aristotelian rhetoric and Logic. Naturally, rhetoric, and especially modern rhetoric, is interested in the situational relativity of communicative effectiveness. Research on writing as a social construction of meaning has shown the value of examining perceptions and beliefs about literacy and learning in writing classrooms (Hulletal, 1991). Based on theory of rhetoric, writing as communication and persuasion is affected by audience.

1.3 Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

ESP was and is a controversial issue among EFL teachers and others. ESP teaching develops procedures appropriate for learners whose main purpose is learning English for a purpose other than just learning the language system (Davoodifard and Eslami Rasekh, 2005), the meaning of the word "specific" that goes with the term English for Specific Purposes does not mean "specialized", and the aim of teaching ESP is not to teach special terminology or jargon in a specific field of study (Maleki, 2005), ESP teachers play important role in their field. Rarely, have the studies delved into teachers' knowledge about grammar (reviewed by Borg, 2001) or investigated the relationships between teachers' knowledge about grammar and teachers' actions (Borg, 2003; Sanchez, 2010).

From the book of Dudley Evans (1998) entitled 'Developments in English for Special Purposes' it is said that The Absolute Characteristic of ESP is:

1. ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner.
2. ESP is related in content either in its theme and topics to particular activities, special discipline and occupation; it makes use of the underlying methodology.
3. ESP is centered on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.
4. ESP is contrast with 'General English'.

There is a summary of the advantages of learning ESP according Strevens (1988) and those points are:

1. Learning ESP does not waste any time, because it focuses on the learner's need.
2. This field of study is relevant to the learner and it is successful in imparting learning.
3. ESP is more cost effective than 'General English' because of various specific works and there is eagerness of the learners to know more about the material.

Based on the above discussion, the following research questions are raised:

1. To what extent are Iranian ESP teachers and learner familiar with academic rhetoric within the systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) model?

2. Is there any relationship between teachers and learners' gender, degree and experience with their familiarity with academic rhetoric?

2. Method

2.1 participants and procedure

Ten ESP teachers who are teaching at 10 fields of study including computer, chemistry, architecture, commercial management, accounting, agriculture engineer, politics, psychologist, law, electrical engineering and 85 learners participated in this study. They were drawn from two universities in Iran, Ilam state university and Islamic Azad University. All the participants hold M.A and PhD degrees. All the subjects of the study were invited to participate in the survey to answer to questionnaires.

2.2 Instrument

Self-report questionnaire was used in this study. Set of data collected through a questionnaire that was developed based on the current systemic functional grammar model of academic rhetoric including CARS model. When the questionnaires were finalized, a pilot study was run to revise the questionnaires. Then the necessary revisions and modifications were done and some factors were added to make the items more clear and detailed. After permission, it distributed among ESP teachers and learners at Ilam state university and Azad university of Ilam at 10 field of study. In general, it took two months to distribute and collect all the questionnaires. T.Test and one way ANOVA are the two analytical procedures which were used in order to the gather data in this study.

2.3 Data analysis

The accumulated data were analyzed using descriptive statistics through frequency tables. Inferential statistics was also employed to display any possible significant differences based on the frequency tables. Chi-square technique, with a significance of $P=0.05$ was utilized in order to signify the possible differences among the variables. After administering the questionnaires, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were utilized to analyze the collected data. Descriptive statistics are used to describe the basic features of the data in a study. They provide simple summaries about the sample and the measures. Together with simple graphics analysis, they form the basis of virtually every quantitative analysis of data.

3. Results

3.1 Demographics of participants

The current study encompassed 10 ESP teachers who are teaching at 10 fields at Islamic Azad university of Ilam and 85 M.A& PhD learners at Ilam state university and Islamic Azad university of Ilam. The detailed tables of the participants' information are displayed below.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of participants

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Age	20-24	17	17.9%
	25-29	46	48.4%
	30-34	17	17.9%
	35-39	7	7.4%
	40-44	3	3.2%
	45- up	5	5.3%
Gender	Male	38	40%
	Female	57	60%
Education level	Master	81	85.3%
	Doctoral	14	14.7%

As the above table indicates, ESP teachers and learners in the study were categorized into 6 age groups as follows (20-24), (25-29), (30-34), (35-39),(40-44),(45-up). 38 (40%) of whom were males and 57 (60%) were females. Moreover, a large proportion of participants were at M.A (85.3%) and (7.14%) of whom were at PhD level.

3.2 Frequency Distribution of respondents in terms of Rhetoric and Systemic Functional Grammar usage

Table (2) represents the absolute, relative, valid and cumulative frequency Percent distribution of respondents in terms of rhetoric and systemic Functional Grammar usage.

Table 2. Variable Frequency distribution of respondents in terms Rhetoric and Systemic Functional Grammar usage

	Absolute Frequency percent	Relative Frequency percent	Valid frequency percent	Cumulative frequency percent
Too high	3	3.2	3.2	3.2
High	28	29.5	29.5	32.6
Intermediate	42	44.2	44.2	76.8
Low	18	18.9	18.9	95.8
Too low	4	4.2	4.2	100.0
Total	95	100.0	100.0	----

Based on the above table, only 3.2 percent of the respondents have been too highly familiar with rhetoric and systemic Functional Grammar and in high, intermediate, low and too low levels, the participants' familiarity was 29.5, 44.2, 18.9 and 4.2 respectively.

4. Investigating research questions and hypotheses

In this paper, two questions are formulated which are discussed one by one. The first research question is trying to find the degree of familiarity of Iranian ESP teachers and learners with Academic Rhetoric and Systemic Functional Grammar. In the following the first question and its related hypothesis is presented:

Research Question1: To what extent are Iranian ESP teachers and learner familiar with academic rhetoric within the systematic Functional Grammar (SFG) model?

Hypothesis 1: Familiarity of ESP teachers and learners in Iran with Academic Rhetoric and a systemic Functional grammar is high.

The obtained results from the distributed questionnaire regarding this question are presented in the following table.

group * redastoor Crosstabulation(table 3)

		redastoor					Total	
		5	4	3	2	1		
ESP	teacher	Count	1	8	1	0	0	10
		% within group	10.0%	80.0%	10.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	learner	count	2	20	41	18	4	85
		% within group	2.4%	23.5%	48.2%	21.2%	4.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	3	28	42	18	4	95
		% within group	3.2%	29.5%	44.2%	18.9%	4.2%	100.0%

As the above table (4.8), 90 percent of ESP teachers' familiarity with rhetoric and systemic functional grammar is too high and high, whereas, approximately 33 percent of learners are at too high and high level. The results show statistically significant differences between the ESP teachers and ESP course learners, and this is indicating a positive impact of graduate level in essay writing ability.

As stated earlier, this paper is going to address two questions, one of which was discussed. Now, we are going to see whether there is any relationship between teachers' and learners gender, degree and experience with their familiarity with academic rhetoric. This relation is formalized in the following question and its related hypothesis.

Research Question2: Is there any relationship between teachers and learners' gender, degree and experience with their familiarity with academic rhetoric?

Hypothesis 2: There is no relationship between teachers and learners' gender, degree and experience with their familiarity with academic rhetoric.

Since the above question and hypothesis include three independent variables, so it has been try to formulate a hypothesis, for each variable in three separate subsidiary hypotheses.

Hypothesis 2.1: There is no a meaningful difference for familiarity with academic rhetoric within the systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) model among men and women.

The t-test is used to verify this hypothesis. The male and female mean scores are presented in the following table.

Tables 4. mean scores of men and women for familiarity with academic rhetoric within the systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)

		Group Statistics			
	sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Rhetoric	MALE	38	56.8684	12.24341	1.98614
	FEMALE	57	58.9649	12.01779	1.59180

As table (4) shows, the mean for male subject's are 56.8684 and for female respondents are 58.9649. Based on this table, it cannot be concluded that whether this difference is meaningful or not. Accordingly, the following independent samples test was run to deal with this issue.

Table 5. Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.350	.555	-.827	93	.410	-2.09649	2.53575	-7.13200	2.93901

Based on the calculated value of t which is (-.827) and a significance level greater than 0.05(.410), there is no significant difference between men and women regarding their familiarity with academic rhetoric within SFG.

So, the the statistical null hypothesis (H0) is accepted.

Hypothesis 2.2: There are significant differences among different age to familiarity with academic rhetoric within the systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) model.

F test is used to verify this hypothesis. In the following table, the mean scores of different groups are presented.

Table 6. RHETORIC AND SFG

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Scores	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2951.770	5	590.354	4.873	.001
Within Groups	10782.714	89	121.154		
Total	13734.484	94			

Based on the above table, the F-statistic equals 4.873 and the significance level is 0.001. Therefore, the above hypothesis is accepted. That is, there are significant differences.

Hypothesis 2.3: There are significant differences among the participants with educational degree to familiarity with academic rhetoric within the systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) model

The t-test is used to verify this hypothesis. Again, the mean scores are presented in table 7.

Table 7. The Mean of participants based on educational degree to familiarity with academic rhetoric within the systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)

	reeducation dimension	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Rhetoric and SFG	1.00	81	71.7160	11.18284	1.24254
	2.00	14	86.3571	9.49175	2.53678

This table shows a difference between the mean scores. We don't know exactly whether this attested difference is meaningful or not. Therefore, independent samples test was run again for this purpose.

Table 8. Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower		Upper
Rhetoric SFG	Equal variances assumed	1.188	.278	-4.614	93	.000	-14.64109	3.17286	-20.94176	-8.34042

Based on the calculated value of t which is (-4.614) and a significance level less than 0.05(0.000), there is a significant difference between the participants with different educational degrees, so the statistical H1 is accepted.

The role of contrastive rhetoric in applied linguistics is significant and reflects the enhanced role of teaching writing in ESL, EFL, and FL instruction. Contrastive rhetoric research is interdisciplinary; it draws on several related fields of study such as text linguistics, composition pedagogy, and literacy development.

Hypothesis2: There are no a meaningful differences among ESP teachers and learners to familiarity with academic rhetoric within the systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) model

The t-test is used to verify this hypothesis. In the following table, the mean scores of different groups are presented.

Table 9. Group Statistics

group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Rhetoric and SFG ESP Teacher	10	85.7000	9.64999	3.05159
learner	85	72.4824	11.61548	1.25988

This table shows a difference between the mean scores. We don't know exactly whether this attested difference is meaningful or not. Therefore, independent samples test was run again for this purpose.

Table 10. Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower		Upper
Rhetoric andSFG	Equal variances assumed	1.3	.244	3.456	93	.001	13.21765	3.82454	5.62286	20.81244

Based on the calculated value of t which is (3.456) and a significance level is less than 0.05 (0/001), there are significant differences among ESP teachers and learners to familiarity about the academic rhetoric and SFG so the above hypothesis H1 is accepted.

5. Discussion & Conclusion

The present study investigated the extent of familiarity of ESP teachers and learners with academic rhetoric within a systematic functional grammar at graduate levels (MA& PhD) and estimated the relationships among this familiarity with age, educational degree and gender variables. Statistical analyses were done via spss. T.Test and one way ANOVA were the analytical procedures which used in this study. The results of the current study revealed that Iranian ESP teachers are more familiar than the learners with academic language based on their educational degrees and their experiences. This study upon the analyses of the data indicated that educational degree and age variables have positive reciprocal relationships with each other but the gender variable was not effect on the findings. ESP teachers need to help the learner overcome their negative English essay writing ability affect by adopting a comprehensive approach to teaching writing that could meet strategic linguistic and psychological needs.

The results of this study revealed that the Iranian learners as a non-native speakers are not more familiar with systematic functional grammar specifically academic rhetoric. So, the main reason for the non-native authors' failure for article publication is unfamiliarity with these structures; another reason is the violation of maxims dominating the research

article in journals (Hyland and Hamp-Lyons, 2002). However, it is generally believed that writing the academic papers is a challenging matter for Iranian learners. Therefore, English has been a compulsory subject in the Iranian educational curriculum, and knowledge of the English writing is considered a top priority for all them. There are some limitations that should be taken into consideration. First, is that only 10 ESP teachers and 85 learners were investigated in this study, which limits the generalizability of the results and by surveying a larger number of participants may have different performance. Secondly, it is that of gender distribution. Almost two third of our participants were females. Thus, it was logically impossible to control for potential sex effects. Thirdly, all of the measurement that were used in this study were self-report questionnaires and therefore prone to response bias. The upshots of the present study open up a number of promising directions for further investigations. To resolve the limited diversity of the context of the study, similar studies are critically needed in a variety of cities in order to see whether the results will be the same as or different from the results of the present study.

Further investigation is needed to find ways to how Iranian ESP teachers and how the learners can perform their writing and publication of research articles (RAS). These worthwhile issues have urged writers to focus on writing for publication.

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