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Formulating identity in academic writing across cultures: n-grams in Introduction sections

Language and identity are claimed to be constitutive of knowledge production and thus become integral to writing. In this article, I start from the premise that a relationship between knowledge construction and academic text production is negotiated in intercultural contexts (cf. Connor 2008) under the constraints of social, cultural and personal factors (cf. Canagarajah 2002). As reported by scholarly work (Swales 2004; Bhatia 2004) this relationship is reflected at a textual level in a range of linguistic and discursal conventions that are commonly agreed for successful English-medium scholarly exchange. Further, this relationship is to be understood as constituting a frame of reference for the inquiry into language and identity-related questions. In this study I take the case of the biomedical discourse community to examine and illustrate the two different textual responses of L1 English and L2 English (Spanish) scholars publishing research in international English-medium journals. Essentially, I analyse the linguistic expression of disciplinary identity when culture (i.e. a different linguistic background) is factored into scientific discourse. Corpus results suggest that the research article is a negotiated intercultural space which promotes a shared disciplinary identity across cultures to provide a temporarily stable ground for further social action. However, results also indicate that the linguistic expression of identity throughout the different rhetorical sections of a research article does not completely erase cultural identities and that it is difficult to disengage references to these in English-medium academic writing practices.