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Title
Discourse Community or Cultural Conventions:
Rhetorical Analysis of Research Abstracts

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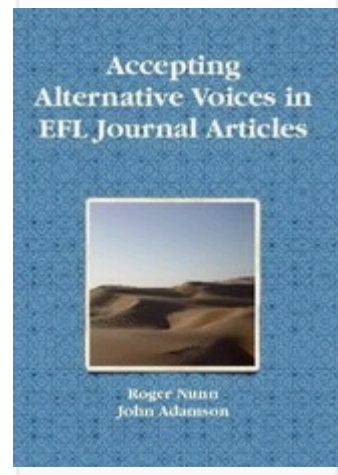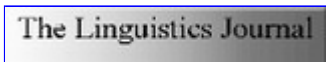
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Abstract
Rhetorical needs and conventions of various genres have been studied by researchers such as Swales (1990), Bhatia (1993), Dudley-Evans (1994), Ozturk (2006), and others. Such studies would help researchers across borders to develop awareness and mastery over these conventions which would finally lead to formation of specific genres. Some scholars believe that researchers are influenced by their native language writing culture. On the other hand, some other researchers are of the opinion that in the light of familiarity with a particular genre some cognitive structuring or socio-rhetorical networks are established. Consequently, these networks create assimilation within a particular discourse community because it is assumed that these networks are discourse community properties rather than being cultural or national properties.

Appealing to Bhatia's argument for similarity of contextual configuration of research article introductions with research article abstract, in this study we analyze the generic structure of the moves as an index of rhetorical behavior and attitude towards certain genre and discourse type, or cultural community, by English and Persian speakers while writing research article abstracts in English. Sixty abstracts

written by these two groups were analyzed to find the trends in establishing a territory, establishing a niche, and occupying a niche as set conventions or moves for writing abstracts.

The analysis of the results revealed that, in general, both groups responded similarly to using such moves. The groups differed only at micro-level analysis when the sub-moves were compared. However, the difference was limited to their preference for announcing the present research which is a subcategory of occupying a niche move. No further difference was found in using these conventions. The findings suggest that in the field of applied linguistics, research article abstract writers manifest their affinity to rhetorical behavior of discourse community rather than to their national community and native language writing culture.

Key words: Rhetoric, Abstracts, Cultural Conventions, Discourse