



ABSTRACT

The present article examines metadiscourse features in Spanish and Arabic languages by comparing the use of hedges and boosters in linguistics research articles published within these languages. Based on a corpus of 90 articles collected from 6 journals of linguistics, this study seeks to detect the main similarities and differences in the use of hedges and boosters in native Spanish and native Arabic linguistics research articles. The quantitative analyses showed that the overall use of hedges and boosters in Spanish research articles is higher than in the Arabic ones. The results are especially helpful for Spanish and Arabic as a second language teaching situations.

METHODOLOGY

Corpus

- To address the above research questions, a corpus was compiled. It consists of 90 research articles (RAs) published during 2000 and 2014 in national journals in Spanish and Arabic-language journals within the the discipline of linguistics as indicated in Table 1 below.

	Spanish sub-corpus	Arabic sub-corpus
No. of RAs	45	45
No. of journals from which RAs were taken	3	3
No. of RAs taken from each journal	15	15
Average length of RA	8000	3000
Total number of tokens	354,745	82,788

Then, PDF files of the research articles were converted to Text documents to enable the further analysis. Metadiscourse features were searched electronically in the whole Spanish corpus using Wordsmith Tools (Version 5.0) (Scott, 2008) Once obtained, each feature was carefully analyzed in context to ensure it functioned as a metadiscourse marker.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The quantitative analyses showed that the overall use of hedges and boosters in Spanish research articles is higher than in the Arabic ones. While the Spanish authors used in their writings significantly more hedges than boosters, on the contrary their Arab colleagues used more boosters than hedges.

Findings

Frequency of the use of hedges and boosters in the two sub-corpora

	Spanish sub-corpus		Arabic sub-corpus	
	Raw number	Per 10,000 words	Raw number	Per 10,000 words
Hedges	2996	84.4	210	25.4
Boosters	1527	43	311	37.6

The figures represent total number of occurrences of hedges and boosters in a particular sub-corpus.

Statistical significance measures are not given since the figures are preliminary only.

CONCLUSIONS

There are numbers of suggestions that might be taken to proceed with the research offered here. First, this study has focused only on two types of interactional metadiscourse - further investigation will need to include interactive as well as another interactional metadiscourse features. Second, the study has been performed in a single discipline. To develop more comprehensive understanding of the use of metadiscourse, perhaps it is necessary to examine different disciplines.

The results could have a significant impact on the area of teaching and learning Arabic as a second language in a Spanish context. When differences are found to exist across texts and cultures, they can then be explained to students.

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