Lexical bundles in Applied Linguistics articles: exploring writer, sub-discipline and subgenre variations

The use of lexical bundles, as one particular type of word combinations, in different genres and disciplines has received extensive attention in academic discourse research. Nevertheless, the degree to which these idiomatic fixed expressions are affected by L1/L2 writing, sub-disciplines and subgenres has remained under-researched. Accordingly, the present study sets out to explore the frequency, types and functional characteristics of lexical bundles (LBs) in 290 applied linguistics research articles (RAs) written in English: 140 articles written by English as a native language writers (ENL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) Iranian writers (60 of the former as opposed to 80 of the latter), 170 RAs of three sub-disciplines of applied linguistics, and finally, 377 subgenre parts of articles, i.e. abstracts, introductions, and conclusions. The findings indicate that Iranian EFL writers used fewer bundles with different functional types compared with the ENL writers. Also, results suggest that while sub-disciplines of applied linguistics do not vary significantly in terms of frequency of bundles, there exist some slight but noteworthy functional variations. Finally, the analysis of subgenres reveals both frequency and functional variations, with ‘abstract’ embracing the highest amount of LBs. Some pedagogical implications of the study for EAP writing courses are also discussed.