ATTITUDES ABOUT PRESCRIPTIVE GRAMMAR IN ESL AND EFL TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Laura Eickhoff

Abstract

There is often a disparity between what is deemed prescriptively correct under the rules of standard English grammar and native-speaker norms within different varieties, which results in multiple options for classroom grammar instruction for second language learners. This study presents findings on L2 learners' attitudes towards different prescriptive and descriptive forms of grammar in cases where learning formal textbook grammar may not match many native speakers' speech patterns. Additionally, it explores how ESL and EFL students' attitudes about grammar coincide with or differ from those of their teachers. One hundred eight English language learners and instructors in the United States and China were surveyed to measure awareness of and attitudes towards standard and non-standard grammar in spoken English and how varying perceptions may affect the learning environment. Results indicated that many teachers' prioritization of prescriptive norms for their students is often in contrast to the native-speaker norms that students report to prefer. Additionally, native speakers often report a stigmatized perception of some prescriptively correct forms. All groups reported a higher preference for prescriptive grammar in writing than in speaking, citing formality and permanence as determining differences between the two modes of communication.
DIFFERENCES IN HEDGING IN L1 AND L2 ENGLISH ESSAYS ACROSS TWO GENRES

Jennifer Brooke

Abstract

The ability to hedge or qualify commitment to a claim is an important aspect of academic writing because it allows writers to position themselves to their audience. Research indicates that L2 English writers struggle to hedge effectively, with studies such as Hyland and Milton (1997) and Hinkel (2005) demonstrating that they use less sophisticated hedges and a more limited range of hedges than L1 English writers do. However, no study has used human judgments to explore whether words traditionally considered hedges actually function as hedges in sentential context. In the current study, two measures of raters’ judgments are reported in relation to raw frequency of each item. Then, patterns of hedging are contrasted across genre (timed versus untimed) and English nativeness (L1 versus L2 English writers). Results indicate significant differences in judged versus raw frequencies and for some hedging devices between genres and between native speakers and non-native speakers. Implications are given for data collection, materials development, and assessment.
Abstract

Lexical bundles, also referred to as “multi-word sequences” (Biber et al., 2004), “formulaic language” (Wray & Perkins, 2000), prefabricated routines and patterns (prefabs) (Erman & Warren, 2000), or chunks elsewhere, have been defined by Hyland (2012) as “statistically the most frequent recurring sequences of words in any collection of texts” (p. 150). Such sequences of words have received considerable attention in corpus studies in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) as there seems to be a general consensus in the field of corpus linguistics that (a) experts in different discourse communities combine words in different ways to convey field-specific meanings and serve a variety of rhetorical functions, and (b) control of field-specific bundles is a key component of language production – be it written or spoken (for further discussion, see Biber et al., 2004, 2007; Cortes, 2004, 2006; Hyland, 2007, 2008, 2012). The present study explored the structures and functions of four-word bundles in medical research articles in a corpus of 1.1 million words. Over 200 bundles were identified and the analysis indicated (1) a predominance in medical articles of lexical bundles beginning with noun phrases or prepositional phrases, (2) a more frequent use of research-oriented bundles compared to participant-oriented and text-oriented bundles, and (3) an extremely low frequency of specialized lexical items in the identified bundles. These results, as well as their pedagogical implications, are discussed in this paper.
Building on existing research on the role of motivation in language learning, the present study investigated the relationship between the motivation and oral proficiency of college-level learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Rwanda, where there are limited opportunities for English input and use. The study is guided by the following research questions: a) What is the status of oral proficiency and motivation in university EFL learners in Rwanda, and b) Is there a relationship between their proficiency and motivation? Data collection tools included a survey (106 students) and recorded interviews with students (41) and teachers (3). Interviews with students served as qualitative data and as speech samples for rating by five native speakers of English for accentedness, comprehensibility, and fluency. Some motivation constructs reported in the literature were found to work somewhat differently for the current population, specifically items related to the **Ideal L2 Self** and **Integrative Motivation** contributed to one construct identified in the current study as **Integration into the Global Community**. Results from the survey and interviews with both students and teachers revealed that the students were highly motivated although their oral proficiency was average. Correlation analyses were conducted to gauge the relationship between students’ motivation to learn English and their rater-assessed scores for the three facets of oral proficiency. Findings revealed generally weak correlations with only one significant coefficient between the **Ideal L2 Self** and accentedness. Discussion includes pedagogical recommendations appropriate for the learning context to increase learners’ exposure to and opportunities to use English. Avenues for future research are also proposed.