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Abstract

Discussion (and/or other closing) (DC) sections of research articles in English-medium journals are difficult to write, especially when English is not a first language. This intercultural rhetoric research explores whether greater effort is made to promote research in English than in Spanish. I drew ten pairs of comparable DC sections from the EXEMPRAES (exemplary empirical research articles in English and Spanish) Corpus. I systematically annotated these sections for their communicative functions, and, for the first time, my annotations were validated by the article authors, themselves. Additionally, I used an online survey to understand the authors’ promotional behaviour. This innovative mixed methodology confirmed that the social scientists in the study were more promotional in English than in Spanish. Authors in English highlighted more positive aspects of their studies and applications of their results. In contrast, Spanish authors were more neutral, focussing largely on statements of contribution and relevance to the zeitgeist. Revealing how different levels of culture (unstated communication principles, knowledge areas, socialisation processes and research assessment policies) affect the inclusion of specific communicative functions demonstrates how social scientists’ promotional approaches in DC sections are complex and merit further attention. Implications for the teaching of academic writing in English are drawn.

Keywords: promotion, research article, discussion section, genre analysis, intercultural rhetoric