

Postulating hypotheses in experimental doctoral dissertations on Applied Linguistics: A qualitative investigation into rhetorical shifts and linguistic mechanisms [Formulación de hipótesis en tesis doctorales de tipo experimental en el ámbito de la Lingüística Aplicada: Una investigación cualitativa sobre cambios retóricos y mecanismos lingüísticos]

Abstract

The extent to which research hypotheses need to be incorporated in experimental studies often becomes a subject of discussion among academics supervising the writing of theses and dissertations. While writers are concerned about how hypotheses can be strategically linked with other elements in research reports to effectively present an introductory chapter, instructors are considering ways of guiding learners to use the appropriate language in postulating research hypotheses. Using an analytical framework developed by Swales (1990 & 2004) and specialist informants' qualitative data, this largely qualitative investigation looks into a corpus of experimental doctoral dissertations submitted to 32 American universities from 2001 to 2009 in order to ascertain (i) the degree to which research hypotheses need to be presented in dissertation introductions, (ii) how hypotheses are strategically linked with other rhetorical segments, and (iii) the salient linguistic mechanisms used to achieve the communicative functions. This study has revealed (i) how writers shift from pertinent communicative moves to the postulation of hypotheses, and (ii) the gamut of major language choices employed to postulate these hypotheses. The findings can be used to prepare teaching materials that help learners comprehend and employ the rhetorical strategies and linguistic mechanisms needed in postulating hypotheses in research reports.