On Grammatical Metaphors: A Corpus-Based Reflection on the Academic Texts Written in the Field of Environmental Management

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Abstract : Considering the necessity of conducting research and publishing academic papers during Master's and Ph.D. programs, graduate students are in dire need of improving their writing skills through either writing courses or self-study planning. One key feature that could aid academic papers to look more sophisticated is the application of grammatical metaphors (GMs). These types of metaphors represent the 'non-congruent' and 'implicit' ways of decoding meaning through which one grammatical category is replaced by another, more implied counterpart, which can alter the readers' understanding of the text as well. Although a number of studies have been conducted on the application of GMs across various disciplines, almost none has been devoted to the field of environmental management, and the scope of the previous studies has been relatively limited compared to the present work. In the current study, attempts were made to analyze different types of GMs used in academic papers published in top-tiered journals in the field of environmental management, and make a list of the most frequently used GMs based on their functions in this particular discipline to make the teaching of academic writing courses more explicit and the composition of academic texts more well-structured. To fulfill these purposes, a corpus-based analysis based on the two theoretical models of Martin et al. (1997) and Liardet (2014) was run. Through two stages of manual analysis and concordancers, ten recent academic articles entailing 132490 words published in two prestigious journals were precisely scrutinized. The results yielded that through the whole IMRaD sections of the articles, among all types of ideational GMs, material processes were the most frequent types. The second and the third ranks would apply to the relational and mental categories, respectively. Regarding the use of interpersonal GMs, objective expanding metaphors were the highest in number. In contrast, subjective interpersonal metaphors, either expanding or contracting, were the least significant. This would suggest that scholars in the field of Environmental Management tended to shift the focus on the main procedures and explain technical phenomenon in detail, rather than to compare and contrast other statements and subjective beliefs. Moreover, since no instances of verbal ideational metaphors were detected, it could be deduced that the act of 'saying or articulating' something might be against the standards of the academic genre. One other assumption would be that the application of ideational GMs is context-embedded and that the more technical they are, the least frequent they become. For further studies, it is suggested that the employment of GMs to be studied in a wider scope and other disciplines, and the third type of GMs known as 'textual' metaphors to be included as well.