Hedges, Boosters and Lexical Invisibility: A Comparative Study of Discussion Section of Research Articles Written by Native and Non-native Writers in Applied Linguistics

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This study examined the frequency, forms and functions of hedges and boosters in the discussion sections of research articles written by Native and Non-native writers in Applied Linguistics. The study comprised of two phases, in the first phase, a corpus of 20 research articles written by Native writers were compared with 20 research articles written by Non-native (Persian) EFL learners. Taking Hyland's (2005) metadiscourse model, the data were analyzed in terms of both lexicogrammatical forms and functions of hedges and boosters. The findings of the study showed that the discussion sections of Native research articles contained more hedges than Non-native Iranian research articles. Based on the results of Chi-Square test, there was a significant difference among the use of different hedge forms and hedge functions in Native and Non-native Iranian articles. However, Non-native articles contained more boosters than native articles. The results of Chi-Square test revealed a significant difference between booster forms and functions in both groups of articles. As for the second phase of the study in which EFL learners’ awareness towards hedges and boosters was examined, 40 Iranian EFL male and female MA students were asked to do a translation, a reading comprehension and a certainty/uncertainty judgment task. Also a number of them were randomly chosen for two interviews to analyze their awareness towards hedges and boosters in different texts. The results of the second phase of the
study suggested that Iranian EFL learners tend to ignore hedges more than boosters in academic texts. The findings of this study might have implications for the material designers to develop materials which reflect the natural frequency and functions of hedges and boosters in their work. Moreover the study can suggest pedagogical exercises to increase students' awareness of hedges and boosters in EAP settings. Keywords: Metadiscourse, Hedge, Booster, Lexical Invisibility