



University of Zabol

Faculty of Humanities and Literature

Department of English

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching  
English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)

**Subject:**

Lexical Bundles in the Discussion Section of Research Articles in  
Applied Linguistics: A Contrastive Analysis of Quantitative, Qualitative,  
and Mixed Methods Research

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## **Abstract**

Lexical bundles, defined by Biber and Barbieri (2007) as “building blocks of discourse” (p. 263), vary across disciplines, genres, and rhetorical structures. Knowledge of lexical bundles can contribute to better understanding of academic texts, more fluent language use, and to the sense that a speaker or writer is a legitimate member of a given community of practice. Over the last two decades, research investigating LBs in discipline-based texts has contributed to our knowledge of multi-word sequences and our understanding of disciplinary variation. Nonetheless, there continue to be important spaces to be filled in the literature. Le and Harrington (2015), for instance, note that the occurrence of lexical bundles across methodological paradigms (quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods) in research articles remains under-explored. This exploratory, comparative study aimed to fill this lacuna. First, the paper presents the most frequent lexical bundles in the discussion sections of 150 research articles in the field of applied linguistics. Second, it reports on the structural and functional patterns of these lexical bundles. Lastly, it reports on the extent to which quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research articles are similar or different with respect to the frequency, structural, and functional patterns of their lexical bundles. The findings provide preliminary evidence that different methodological paradigms call for different sets of lexical bundles. Structural analysis showed that the three research paradigms use mostly *noun* and *prepositional phrases* in their discussion sections of RAs. The paradigms were also found to be similar in terms of how the LBs in each function (i.e., whether the LBs were research-oriented, text-oriented, or participant-oriented). Interestingly, there were some LBs which served two or more functions simultaneously in a single occurrence. Findings from this study may be of interest to L2 educators, EAP teachers, and learners.

**Keywords:** Applied linguistics, Discussion, Qualitative, Quantitative, Lexical bundles, Mixed methods