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Using Critical Discourse Analysis to Explore Authentic Research Article: A Focus on Practical Argumentation Theory

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Abstract

As a dominant genre of academic writing, research papers can be considered as the locus of reproduction concerning asymmetrical power relations and dominance. Through a purposive sampling consisting of the analysis and evaluation of an argument, the purpose of this study was to divulge the power and ideology latent in the discussion section of the research articles to raise second language learners' awareness of the epistemological foundations and methodological goals and values of the ideologies behind the texts as social structures. By using a practical reasoning framework as an evaluative tool to analyze a text presented in the discussion part of arguments published in research articles, the analysis revealed that the scientific viewpoints exhibit themselves as the premises of these arguments. These world views maintain the dominance of the papers on global academic and social discourses. Understanding the ideological purpose of the article genre is crucial for promoting democratic and equitable education. This assertion highlights the importance of recognizing this function.

Keywords: research papers, argumentation, practical argumentation, ideology

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1. Introduction

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an area of discourse analysis which opposes the existing common-sense relations of power in support of the marginalized. This is legally positioned by Van Dijk (1998) who acknowledged that CDA is a kind of tool that mainly explores how power abuse, dominance, and manipulation are exercised, reproduced and recognized or possibly struggled in the social and institutional settings. He specifies that through such actions, discourse analysts become critical to comprehend, analyze and eventually examine and reject social inequality in different settings.

Different approaches of CDA try to describe relationships between the language of discourse and its relevant macrostructure of society to clarify the discourse production and interpretation process. CDA aims to reveal hidden along with clear features of language use that cover unfair, ideological, and discriminative impacts (Meyer, 2001). The aim of CDA is to liberate the oppressed group from the cycle of power abuse imposed and controlled by the dominant party, granting them power and freedom (Fairclough, 1989; Malmir & Taji, 2021; Shakoury & Makarova, 2021).

In the academic context, CDA fosters learners' critical language awareness (Nasution et al., 2020). Practically, EFL students can utilize CDA techniques to analyze a transcript and discover the covert meaning and discover the link between discourse, ideology, and power (Khajeh & Khanmohammad, 2011; Rahimi & Sharififar, 2015). Especially, in text-based areas where genre portrays an important role, Fairclough and Fairclough's (2012) visions for fostering language and power interactions would contribute to strategic support for the improvement of discourse production through the classification of discourse patterns, clause relations, and genres (Dudley-Evans, 2001). This attempt is intended to meet the power of diversity by inducing the critical theory and critical pedagogy to a more academically demanding and powerful view (Kincheloe, 2008).

According to Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000), academic knowledge is seen as a significant arena for the perpetuation of social connections. It is associated with the learning goals where Second Language (L2) students are required to be able to understand communicative competencies, generic structures, and language features of texts in general and discussion texts, in particular, as one of some types of argumentative texts (Nasution et al., 2020). Recommendation or evaluation is a reasonable conclusion that covers the writer's idea or position (Knapp & Watkins, 2005).

Writing critiques has been considered an important impact on scientific and academic knowledge production. According to Swales and Feak (2012), critique is a complex expression that can convey several meanings; but, the most commonly recognized view of critique is the skill of the writers to deliver a revision of earlier claims followed by a critical evaluation of these claims. Academic conflict has been in part placed inside this domain of study on critique writing (Cheng & Unsworth, 2016). But, the progression of criticizing prior knowledge is not as clear-cut as it appears

and calls for macro and micro strategies in order for writers to deliver appropriate evidence for their counterclaims (Hyland, 1998).

On the other hand, novice writers (EFL learners) whose official language is other than English have more difficulty understanding the content of English-language journals than native students of English. This is because the curriculum and the materials taught in their educational system are trained in a language other than English in a way that they have difficulty understanding and reading texts published in English. Such a factor can be due to the occurrence of some problems such as a lack of language learning skills, lack of a good educational system to teach them to read, and frequent failure in English lessons that increase their lack of motivation (Zhao, 2017). Thus, helping such students to discover the ideologies included in texts helps them to become familiar with the structure of such articles and their critical analysis, to improve their linguistic power in rejecting and confirming the findings of the published articles. Therefore, it is suggested that the application of CDA methodology in non-native contexts, make them familiar with the application of CDA frameworks to explore the ideological underpinnings of the papers to help them foster their critical awareness in general and to improve their ideological assumptions in their discussions of their findings, in particular.

Using the most recent framework presented by Fairclough et al. (2012), the purpose of this paper is to analyze papers published in applied linguistics journals to help students and writers have a practical reasoning tactic and evaluations of the texts. The result of such action helps them to improve their general knowledge and to help them get familiar with the fundamental concepts of the role of CDA with argumentation theory in written discourse. On the other hand, studying the ideological foundations that the research articles have through the practical reasoning framework (Fairclough et al., 2012), can be an elucidating path for the readers to revise their attitudes and replace them with new ones.

2. Review of the Literature

Researchers can use academic genres to examine the writing conventions, social practices, and values of a specific discipline and research community (Bondi & Hyland, 2006). Among these genres, research articles are especially valuable for investigation because they undergo a rigorous review process, which gives them credibility and recognition through publication (Johns & Swales, 2002).

Generally, the discussion section is widely recognized as a crucial component of articles. In this section, the authors assert how their findings align with and enhance disciplinary knowledge. The discussion section marks a shift in focus from the study's results to their broader implications (Swales, 1990). In Dentistry, the discussion section holds particular significance, being regarded as the most important part of the research report. It is in this section that the writer interprets and examines the significance of the findings, compares them to other research, and explores new

theories or explanations derived from existing data (Von Fraunhofer, 2010). Similarly, in Applied Linguistics, the discussion section serves to discuss the significance of the results, compare them to previous research, and consider theoretical contributions and explanations for why the results occurred as they did (Bitchener, 2010).

The use of a genre-based approach has been employed to examine the discussion sections in various disciplines, such as Biomedicine (Dubois, 1997), Chemical Engineering (Peng, 1987), and Social Sciences (Lewin et al., 2001). While the studies demonstrate variations in the number and types of moves across different disciplines, researchers like Dubois (1997) and Lewin et al. (2001) propose that these differences may be attributed not to the specific disciplines under investigation, but to variations in the methods and definitions employed by the researchers. According to various research studies, the discussion section is often characterized by repeated cycles of moves. These move cycles are typically organized around the findings related to the research questions. This pattern has been observed by researchers such as Basturkmen (2009), Peng (1987), Yang & Allison (2003), and Hopkins & Dudley-Evans (1988),

Previous research has shown that discussions in RA papers follow a pattern of move cycles, which will be referred to as move sequences in this study (Basturkmen, 2009; Swales, 1990). However, the findings on the identification of research as a form of linguistic practice leading to the domination of one group over others are inconsistent. While numerous studies have explored the intersection of language/discourse, power, and ideology, very few have considered research as a struggle, if any. We seek to highlight how the interests involved in RAs, along with the associated beliefs and worldviews, are reflected in the practical arguments and pedagogical discussions of RAs. These arguments advocate for specific actions, and this article aims to illustrate how these actions can create an unequal relationship between Western neoliberal publishing companies or policymakers and EFL teachers and students worldwide.

2.1. CDA as a Research Tool

In the 1970s and 1980s, CDA emerged as an independent approach to teaching and research (Fairclough et al., 2012). CDA combines the study of discourse (how language is used in social contexts) with critical social science. Numerous critical studies have focused on the way 'Us' vs 'Them' (in-group vs out-group, 'Self' vs 'Other', and 'We' vs 'They') are represented in various issues such as racism, gender, class discrimination, ethnic bias, regional language, and other social injustices that have a semiotic aspect (KhosraviNik, 2010). CDA involves analyzing language and action as a means of critique (Blommaert, 2005). In Fairclough's (2010) framework, language is seen as an abstract concept referred to as social structure, while action or event represents the concrete level of social life. These two levels are interconnected through social practice. In this study, the worldviews, ontological and epistemological assumptions, and methodological beliefs of authors are viewed as social structures. Research is considered a social practice, and the discussion

section of an empirical research article, which is argumentative in nature, is seen as a social event or action. According to Blommaert (2005), these three levels serve as sites where ideology and power are present, with power being particularly important in CDA. The analysis aims to uncover both obvious and concealed instances of dominance, discrimination, power, and control in language, as stated by Wodak (1995).

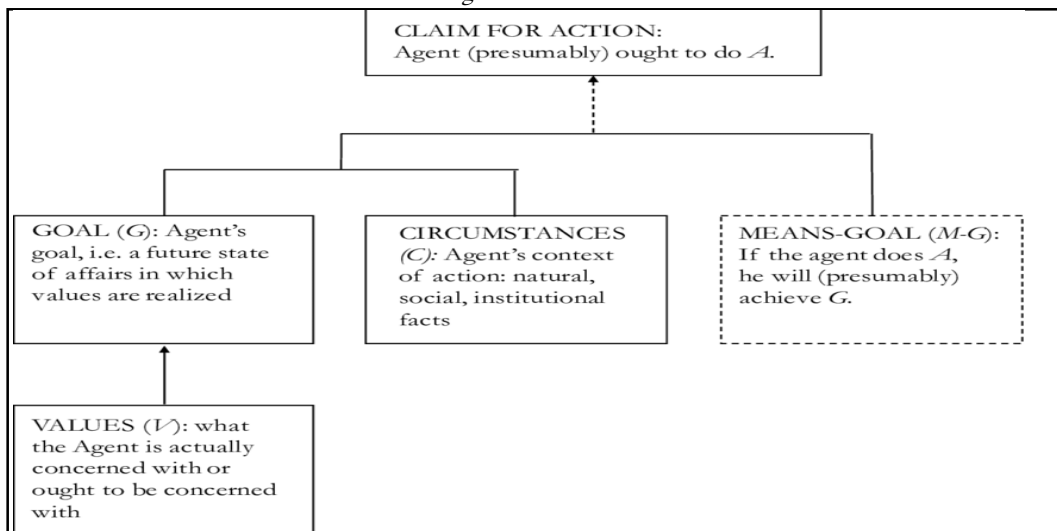
The focus of this study is on research articles as a type of argumentative genre in language use, particularly the practical type. Argumentation is a complex speech act that has both an illocutionary and a perlocutionary dimension (Fairclough et al., 2012). People use argumentation to take certain actions, which can have both overt and covert effects. Overt effects include providing information about a specific subject, while covert effects involve manipulation and ideological functions. Manipulation refers to the act of concealing the truth and presenting reasons that seemingly support a claim, but actually serve other intentions. It involves insincerely speaking and intentionally attempting to deceive the addressees, while also violating normative appropriateness. Ideologies, on the other hand, are meanings that serve power intentions. According to Fairclough (1995), ideology refers to the unequal ability to control the production, distribution, and consumption of texts in specific sociocultural contexts, which consequently influences the forms of these texts. Fairclough et al. (2012) argue that ideologies present the ideas and beliefs of a specific group as being in the public's best interest.

In response to the ideas mentioned above, the present study employed a practical reasoning framework (Fairclough et al., 2012) to examine the manipulative and ideological functions of research articles. The proposed framework (Fairclough et al., 2012) has also drawn on other theories such as pragma-dialectics (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004) and Searle's (2010) theory of constructing social reality through speech acts. Despite the recognition by scholars (Walton, 2013) of the importance of practical reasoning in decision-making and knowledge production, applied linguistics issues tend to overlook this significance. Fairclough and Fairclough (2011) note that there has been no effort to study practical arguments in any discursive practice.

The practical reasoning framework proposed by Fairclough et al. (2012), includes circumstantial premise, goal and value premise, means–goal premise, and the claim for action. The means is a conjecture to transmit the current situation to the future state of affairs or the goal. The alternatives to these means are unreasonable. The framework of Fairclough et al. (2012) is depicted in Figure 1 which consists of the agent is in circumstance (C), the agent has a goal (G); Therefore, if the agent does the Action (A) in C, then G will be achieved (see figure 1).

Figure 1

A Framework for the Structure of Practical Arguments



3. Methodology

3.1. Data

The academic article discussions in the field of applied linguistics, focusing specifically on second and foreign language learning and teaching were selected. This field was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, there is a lack of comparative studies on English discussions within this discipline, which creates a clear gap in the literature. Additionally, as applied linguists who regularly read academic papers in reputable English journals, we possess insider knowledge of the discourse practices within the relevant sub-communities. To select the sample, we used purposeful sampling and chose five journals that focused on teaching English or related subjects in applied linguistics. From these journals, we selected a few articles. To make the study more manageable and due to space limitations, we chose one journal (ESP). Using a small-sized and purposeful sampling approach, we selected one article and an argument from the practical discussion section of the Research Articles (RAs). Although the main focus was on the discussion section, the entire article was examined to gain a better understanding of the text and to identify other elements such as value that were presented in different sections. The data in this study consists of the analysis and evaluation of an argument written by two Chinese authors (Zhou & Liu, 2021) following a philosophy that the use of conditional structures helps L2 learners' academic writing.

3.2. Sampling Procedure

Deliberately sampled, small and emerging samples are key features of qualitative data. These features were considered in this study. The discussion section in this text is accompanied by assigned numbers in square brackets for easier reference during the analysis and evaluation stages. These

numbers correspond to the reconstructed premises or claims in the analysis and evaluation section. The argument was reconstructed using van Eemeren and Grootendorst's (2015) transformational operations. In the evaluation stage, we asked three types of critical questions to normatively critique the argument and uncover any contradictions or rationalizations. These questions aim to criticize the acceptability of premises, challenge the relation between premises and the claim, and rebuke the claim by highlighting its negative consequences. Following the evaluation stage, we conducted an explanatory critique using Searle's (2010) social ontology theory and ideology theory to reveal the ideological intentions of the empiricist type of academic discourse.

3.3. The Framework

As mentioned earlier, the framework applied in this study is Fairclough et al.'s (2012) practical reasoning. This framework includes four main components: circumstantial premise, goal premise, value premise, and the claim for action. These components together form an argument, which is a set of statements where some premises support a claim. The value premise, which informs the goal and the context of action, is implicit in RAs. The goal represents the desired future state of affairs that the arguer aims to achieve. The circumstantial premise, which problematizes the current state of affairs, is typically found in the introduction or sometimes restated in the conclusion. The proposed action, or the claim, serves as the means to achieve the determined goal(s) and is connected to the means-end premise. This framework consists of two stages: analysis and evaluation. During the analysis stage, the argument is reconstructed using transformational operations such as deletion, addition, and substitution, as the framework does not provide guidance on constructing an argument. The evaluation stage involves asking critical questions to conduct normative critique. Additionally, Searle's social ontology theory is employed for explanatory critique.

3.4. Analysis and Evaluation

3.5. Text

The title of the selected article is 'If it had been conducted with a larger database...: A comparison of If-constructions in Chinese L2 learners' published in ESP journal. To contextualize and allow a better understanding of what was undertaken in this study, the concluding remarks section of the article is presented. Zhou & Liu's (2021) argumentation is as follows:

[1] Undeniably, the developing mastery of If-constructions does not come naturally and automatically. [2] As Byrne and Johnson-Laird (2010) argue, conditionals should be investigated with respect to the tactical options that the writers have at their disposal when they use this constructional pattern. [3] Chinese L2 writers can make progress by explicitly noticing the ways in which If-constructions are deployed and factuality and objectivity are valued in the disciplinary discourse community, as noted

by Thompson (2001). [4] It is also advisable that the categories and interpersonal functions of If-constructions should be identified and differentiated in the process of teaching instruction. [5] For instance, a wider range of resources to express conditional meaning, such as less congruent forms of conditional meaning making in RAs adverbial phrases (Parkinson, 2011), may be recommended in English for academic writing classes in the Chinese context. [6] Also, the implied conditionality of pragmatic conditionals might be made explicit to Chinese L2 learner writers so that they may attend to them as a way to make a consensus with readers.

3.6. Analysis of the Text

The first step, according to the model employed, is to study the manuscript to find and reconstruct the argument, the one constituent of which is the debatable reconstruction given above and which is to be evaluated in the next phase. The reconstruction of the argument is done following Eemeren et al. (2015) by applying addition, substitution and deletion transformational operations as follows:

Claim: [2] Conditionals should be investigated with respect to the tactical options that the writers have at their disposal when they use this constructional pattern.

Circumstantial Premise: This premise is reconstructed from the materials in the section of the article under analysis. Since numbers 1-6 are allocated to the selective part of the study which is pertinent to our analysis, number 1 is given to the statements related to this premise. This statement is as follows: [1] Undeniably, the developing mastery of If-constructions does not come naturally and automatically.

Goal Premise: [5] For instance, a wider range of resources to express conditional meaning, such as less congruent forms of conditional meaning-making in RAs adverbial phrases (Parkinson, 2011), may be recommended in English for academic writing classes in the Chinese context. [6] Also, the implied conditionality of pragmatic conditionals might be made explicit to Chinese L2 learner writers so that they may attend to them as a way to make a consensus with readers.

Value Premise: The hidden value premise can be the teaching of adverbial phrases (if-constructions, in particular) in L2 Chinese academic writing.

Means-end Premise: The text proposes some means to achieve immediate goals such as a [5] wider range of resources to express conditional meaning and [6] use of pragmatic conditionals for L2 Chinese writers.

Evaluation of the text (Normative Critique)

Based on Fairclough et al. (2012), a number of critical questions are asked at this stage; critical questioning of the premises such as the value premise and consequence of the proposed action can contribute to normative critique. Normative critique has to do with manipulation

which refers to the arguer's commitment to premises that is due to something different from what is stated. In the following section, we start with critical questions related to the claim and then continue with the questions proposed for evaluating other elements or aspects of the argument.

3.7. Questions Challenging the Claim

Q1. "Will the action really deliver the goal? Is it sufficient in view of the goals?" (Fairclough et al., 2012, p.160).

The desired action is [2] conditionals should be investigated with respect to the tactical options that the writers have at their disposal when they use this constructional pattern. The goals of the statement are [5] a wider range of resources to express conditional meaning, such as less congruent forms of conditional meaning making in RAs adverbial phrases (Parkinson, 2011), which may be recommended in English for academic writing classes in the Chinese context. [6] Also, the implied conditionality of pragmatic conditionals might be made explicit to Chinese L2 learner writers so that they may attend to them as a way to make a consensus with readers. By comparing the action with the stated goals, it is inferred that the action may contribute to the goal but it is not sufficient. In [2] the authors just emphasize the tactical options that the writers have at their disposal when they use this constructional pattern while recent literature espouses the selective psychological uses of options to if-contractions in L2 writing contexts (Cariani & Rips, 2016; Vidal & Baratgin, 2017). Despite what is proposed in [2] conditionals should be investigated with respect to the tactical options that the writers have at their disposal when they use this constructional pattern is not only insufficient but also detrimental. Although the authors have emphasized the use of tactical options in L2 writing contexts, they paid no due attention to the different structures where the real world is the only one among the possible. Different ways of constructing and reconstructing the conditionals can bring about numerous changes which, to some extent, differ from the real world. Through this intuitive background for the semantics, we obtain a set of worlds in which the actual world is only one of the possible alternatives for the final evaluation when the if-construct is initially true. According to Fairclough (1989), the words 'should', 'focus' and 'in particular' and the like, convey a sense of emphasis and obligation. 'Should' particularly shows relational modality. It conveys the authority of the writer over the reader.

The manipulative effect of the structures (optional use of tactical options) causes the authors to suggest an action that restricts the agency of instructors and L2 students, preventing them from accessing more suitable learning options and deceiving them to rely on the dominant system of this argument.

Q2. "What alternative means should be considered?" (Fairclough et al., 2012, p. 61)

Focusing in particular on if-constructions can hinder learners' autonomy. The authors point out that [4] It is also advisable that the categories and interpersonal functions of If-constructions

should be identified and differentiated in the process of teaching instruction. Here, the dominant role has been given to teachers. They provide opportunities for L2 learners to attend to If-constructions by drawing explicitly on them. They are dependent on them to tell them what to do. This sustains an unequal power relationship between them.

3.8. Questions Challenging the Argument

Q1. "Is the situation described in a rationally acceptable way?" (Fairclough et al., 2012, p.67)

The situation has not been described in a rationally acceptable way. A number of studies conducted on learning other skills of language have not been referred to. It has not mentioned, on what ground, using If-constructions in L2 writing is more important than L1. The authors do not mention any study with contradictory results or any study which highlights the significance of the psychological processes, approaches and theories in this regard. The study does not specify whether the teacher or students like to use conditionals in their writing. It does not speculate on what ground the conditionals are important when the medium of instruction is L2. Ignoring different ways of delineation the context of action and presenting a single determination of the circumstances as the only way of understanding the situation can show that this specification 'holds the potential for deception and manipulation' (Fairclough et al., 2012, p. 93).

Q2. "Are the values that underlie the action rationally acceptable?" (Fairclough et al., 2012, p.67)

According to Fairclough et al. (2012), there exist two ways in which values enter an argument: as *desire dependence reasons* and as *desire independence reasons*. The former is counted as a value premise and the latter is considered as a part of the circumstantial premise. The hidden value premise can be the teaching of adverbial phrases (if-constructions, in particular) in L2 Chinese academic writing. According to Fairclough et al. (2012), "if the values, other premises and the claim withstand critical questions, they are rationally acceptable" (p.98). The implementation of adverbial phrases in L2 writing is effective in achieving the goal but it is not sufficient. Thus, if the consequent is also true in the actual world, the conditional is automatically validated. Bearing this in mind, a unified formal semantics that could explain our understanding of connected and unconnected conditionals would be effectiveness. That we should take heed of young L2 writers' attitudes about and reactions to conditionals is supported by an international concern that demotivation for language may begin in early adolescence (Thorner & Kikuchi, 2019). The value premise of this argument is not explicitly presented, so it may be interpreted that the author has considered research as a value-free practice.

Q3. "Should the agent consider other values?" (Fairclough et al., 2012, p. 67).

Based on the response to the previous question, it is clear that the value underlying this study can lead to dissatisfaction, disappointment, and frustration among learners. Therefore, it is necessary to choose a value that can promote enjoyment, motivation, progress, and learning among

students. This value can create a distinction between learners who have access to necessary resources and those who do not. It also results in the dominance of some over others. Hence, it would be more valuable to provide modified input that is suitable for learners' levels and culturally appropriate. This input should be scientifically modified and delivered at school under the supervision of professional teachers. This approach would promote fairness and eliminate discrimination between students.

3.9. Explanatory Critique of the Text

To carry out explanatory critique, Searle's (2010) social ontology theory has been used. It declares that all human social-institutional reality "is created in its initial existence and maintained in its continued existence by a single, logico-linguistic operation" (p. 201). This operation is "a Status Function Declaration", a function assigned to a status by means of a declarative speech act. "Status functions are the vehicles of power in society" (Fairclough et al., 2012, p.73). Searle (2010) states that "all human reality is constructed and maintained by logical linguistic structures similar to a status function declaration" (p.13). Creating social reality means creating and managing social power relations among people (Searle, 2010).

In practical arguments, premises of argumentation are reasons for action. This action is carried out by social agents. Premises are determined by social structures since they are manifestations of rules, regulations, and obligations of the social structures. Therefore, social structures restrict the agency and actions of social agents due to constructing unequal relations of power. On the other hand, performing the action shows it is collectively recognized and accepted by social agents. This leads to the maintenance of the social structure (Fairclough et al., 2011). In the present text, this discussion is applied.

The circumstantial premise of the argument under analysis shows that the author tends to problematize the context of action in a way that enhances the subjectivity of the study and his tendency to use If-constructions. Accordingly, technical words have been selected as the object of study. The problems have been specified to show that the learners have encountered some sources of inefficiencies that prevent their progress.

The reality has been constructed to portray the inadequacy of the educational system and unsatisfactory production of knowledge to make profitable decisions such as relying too heavily on tactical options would be an unfortunate waste of time and would likely lead to student demotivation.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to explore the manipulative and ideological functions of the written articles in journals. To this end, Fairclough et al. (2012) practical reasoning framework for the selected text has been applied. The reconstruction of the argument was carried

out by means of Van Eemeren et al.'s. (2015) transformational operations of deletion, addition and substitution since Fairclough et al. (2012) framework does not explain how to reconstruct the argument.

After the reconstruction of the arguments at the analysis stage, the evaluation stage was conducted by asking a number of critical questions for the purpose of normative critique to reveal contradiction or rationalization in the reconstructed argument. This stage was followed by explanatory critique which was accomplished through Searle's (2010) social ontology theory and ideology theory to unmask the ideological functions of the discourse.

The question of how the arguments of RAs manipulate L2 writers was raised through the normative critique of the argument or the evaluation stage. This was done by asking two types of questions: questions that aim to refute the claim and questions that challenge the argument. These two types of questions revealed that different premises are determined in a way that leads to the claim. This made the arguer define the problem that is usually inherent in the circumstantial premise, and the goal and means-end premises not to reveal the truth but to support the claim. Therefore, the argument(s) which are presented to convince readers to apply them in their instructional practices can be examples of what is referred to as rationalization by Fairclough et al. (2012). Therefore, the author of the selected text seems to internalize the values or discourses of a particular discourse and then reproduce them as premises (reasons) for some hidden purposes, not for the sake of what he is arguing (real effectiveness of the claim).

Most premises and claims of the argument did not withstand critical questions, which casts doubt on their rational acceptability and reasonability. Questioning the consequences of the claims indicated the possibility of undesirable impacts which would undermine the goals or jeopardize the L2 writers' autonomy. By delineating these problems and challenging the reconstructed argument of the selected text, attempts have been made to uncover the contradictions between the author's theories, worldviews and assumptions and to unmask the researcher's manipulative attempts to partially present the truth and reality to maintain his domination over L2 students and instructors.

To answer the question of how the use of tactical options that writers should have at their disposal has an ideological influence on L2 writers exploratory critique was used to explain the ideological function of the mentioned text. To this end, Searle's social ontology theory (2010) as well as ideology theory was applied. Searle's constitutive rule is "X function as Y in context C". Therefore, a piece of paper (X) acts as a research article (Y) in L2 context (C). This piece of paper should be consistent with specific rules and regulations to be considered as a research article. These rules and regulations provide it with deontic power to bring about some changes in educational situations.

The context of action or circumstantial premise in the selected text has been defined in a narrow, limited and atomistic way in which the main problem is assigned to a specific linguistic item (L2 context only).

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