A Critical Discourse Analysis-Based Investigation of Researcher Identity in Mixed Methods Applied Linguistics Research Articles

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

It is believed that we can provide our learners with the appropriate language devices in writing through which they can increase their knowledge of linguistic and structural pattern in written texts. Besides, concepts such as identity and culture are included in written texts. Therefore, it is essential to focus on identity in education. In other words, writers show their identities in their writings. Consequently, when researchers write their research articles they manifest their professional identities in their academic writings. However, there has been little focus on this essential concept. Thus, the current study seeks to address this gap in the language education domain, and investigates how mixed methods researchers project their identities into research articles written in English from the point of view of Critical Discourse Analysis.

2. Methodology

Four mixed methods research articles written in English were selected among different research articles published in leading applied linguistics journals including and to be analyzed. In order to have a framework to analyze the data, we devised a model of researcher identity from previous taxonomies in CDA including the patterns of inclusion/exclusion, activation/passivation, and individualization/assimilation (van Leeuwen, 2008), transitivity pattern (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004), the why this way and not that way tool, the significance building tool, the relationships building tool, the connections building tool, the intertextuality tool (Gee, 2014), the code glosses tool, and the self-mentions tool (Hyland, 2004). Afterwards, based on the devised model, we analyzed the corpus critically to see whether mixed methods researchers have a particular pattern to project their identities into their writings. To do so, the main social actors were identified. In other words, teacher, learner, and textbook were identified as denominators.

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3. Discussion

The theme of these four mixed methods research articles was “teacher education”. Data analysis showed that the mixed methods researchers tried to follow the predetermined format of article writing; however, they added few sections related to their own article. In other words, they tried to have the pre-determined sections such as introduction, methodology, results, and discussion. They added few sections which were specifically related to the topic of their article. Furthermore, considering the employment of social actors it was found that “teacher”, and “textbook” were included more than being excluded but this is not the case regarding “learner”. This can be due to the fact that the mixed methods researchers intended to deemphasize the role of learners in their writings. Moreover, “teacher” was the most included social actor with the “textbook” in the second position and the “learner” in the third position. This shows the fact that since the theme of the articles was teacher education, the authors tried to include “teachers” more than “leaners” and “textbooks” to show the important role of the teacher in any educational system. Furthermore, they focused on “textbook” as a non-human social actor in their writing and they included it more than excluded.

In addition, the activation/passivation pattern indicates that the occurrence of activation regarding “teacher” is nearly similar to the occurrence of passivation which shows that the mixed methods researchers were conservative in employing active and passive voice in their writing regarding “teacher” and tried to show the teacher as a dynamic force in some parts of their writing regarding actions such as complimenting, performing, arguing, etc. and as the object of the verb regarding actions such as controlling, observing, comparing, etc. in other parts of the texts to have an unbiased viewpoint.

It is worth mentioning that the writers employed different ways in representing the pattern of individualization/assimilation. “Teacher” was assimilated more than being individualized. Concerning learners, similar pattern could be seen. Concerning transitivity, we can see that authors employed mental, material, behavioral, and relational processes more than the verbal process. Also, the writers used relative clauses to help the readers grasp the concepts in the texts better. They, similarly, used frame markers to refer to discourse acts and stages in the argument; it means that they explicitly refer to discourse shifts or text stages. The authors also employed hedges which indicate the author’s doubt. Moreover, the writers used attitude markers to show the importance of the different concepts and their attitude to the textual information. The reason for using attitude markers can be that mixed methods researchers might use this tool when they are relying greatly on their personal convictions and ideas in order to influence their readers. Additionally, they used engagement markers to have a relationship with their readers, and they employed transitions almost frequently in their research articles. The writers employed these devices in their writings so that they can show their readers how different parts of texts were connected to one another.
These researchers also used evidentials to document their claims, and to give credit to the people whose ideas were used in texts. On the other hand, they tried not to use evidentials very frequently since they might feel that using frequent citations indicate lack of originality. In addition, they did not use code glosses very frequently in their writings. Therefore, they thought that the reader could realize the intended meaning of the elements in text; so, there was no need to elaborate on it more by using these devices.

Besides, they used self-mention devices showing that although they did not try to show their presence explicitly in most parts of their writings, they had a balance in that regard and whenever they found it necessary they used self-mentions rather than other terms such as “the researcher” to show their powerful authorial presence.

4. Conclusion
This study tried to examine how mixed methods applied linguistics researcher’s project their identities into their research articles. The results seem to imply that they followed certain patterns in their articles by using specific linguistic devices. They employed all subdivisions of the devised model. We couldn’t find any study on researcher identity; however, we found different studies in the field of identity in general, and this study was in line with these previous studies. The findings of the current study would be beneficial for language teachers, learners, and educators to help them become more self-conscious about representing their identities in the content of the textbooks and research articles. One of the strengths of this study, therefore, is that it gives hints to the writers that their readers learn beyond their words; and in research articles they not only present informational content, but also they represent their identities.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Applied linguistics, Researcher identity, mixed methods research articles.

Reference


