Coercive Power Enactment: The Case of Multimodal Interruptions

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Abstract

Building upon Fairclough's (1989) stages of critical discourse analysis, i.e. the micro level text (discourse) analysis, and the macro level processing (ideology) and social (power) analyses, the present paper foregrounds some ideological facilitators of institutional power enactment, which are multimodal interruptions of professors in the last parts of M.A viva sessions. These verbal and nonverbal interruptions or discourse types are taken-for-granted by all the academic people, and these beliefs are ideologically held and transferred to others, since they are legitimately and naturally re-produced, though having the form of a coercive power. This paper presents a new understanding of power, by urging that power in the present study is both non-modern and coercive, as opposed to Van Dijk (1996), discussing the features of a modern power as being 'persuasive and manipulative' rather than 'coercive or incentive.' The data consisted of four main themes: (1) Verbal & nonverbal commands; (2) Interruptive comments and explanations; (3) Gatekeeping power including (a) Time management, and (b) knowledge management; and (4) Interruptive activities. This paper has implications for applying CDA in higher education and especially in face-to-face oral exams as opposed to blind peer reviews, where the coercive power takes the place of collaboration.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis; Professorial Power Enactment; Higher Education

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1. Introduction

Power has been a key concept in critical discourse studies for it comes from the society itself (Ritchie, Rigano, & Lowry, 2000). Jones & Stilwell Peccei (1999) defined it as a kind of force 'to persuade people to act voluntarily in the way you want' (p. 38). This is very much similar to Fairclough (1989). He stated that it is the exerting of a kind of hidden force "through the manufacture of consent to or at least acquiescence towards it" (p. 4), linking power to ideology and commonsensicality. There is also a view of it, discussing a kind of power exerted through alliances and integrating people, or much the same as Fairclough's (1989) notion of manufacturing consent (Thornton & Reynolds, 2006).

Ideology was first introduced by followers of Karl Marx, notably Louis Althusser. It is philosophically implicit in people's minds. Power exercise is gradually achieved through influencing on ideologies. Ideology is thus a key term in critical language studies. In Faiclough's (1989) words, it is through 'wining others consent' that power holders can exercise and keep their power. Van Dijk (2006) pointed out that there was a shortcoming in the discourse studies for the negligence of cognition. He stated that in the academic literature there is such a big gap which should be filled with the inclusion of cognition. He conceded that no power can ever be exerted to the mindless.

Power can be as a product and as a process (Bloom, et al., 2005). Regarded as a product, it is introduced as a unilateral measurable object, or a kind of static thing that one has, while the others do not have. In fact, this is a traditional view of power for this kind of power can have the capacity of transferring from a powerful to his next generation and it fails to consider the dynamic socio-cultural aspects and epistemologies. Power as a process is dynamic and jointly shaping, which can change from time to time and its locus is inside the society, relations, ideologies, and events, and it is an indispensable element in

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education which has a lot to do with naturalizing some specific discourse orders. Power as a process is revealed by Van Dijk (1996) who considers dimensions of the question '*who may speak or write to whom, about what, when, and in what context,* or *who may participate in such communicative events in various recipient roles'* (p. 86). An example for this, relevant to this study, is a control coming when acquiring information and knowledge. The naturalized relations of professors and students can be well suggestive of this type of power. Power holders need others to naturalize their actions in order to transfer their powers. This is supported by Lee & Tiedens's (2001) study which has a very interesting discussion on power holders who need others to naturalize their power. It seems that they have interdependent relations putting them in a network of relations and connections. They are socially embedded and interdependent on others. Likewise, the modern power enactment seems 'jointly produced' and not 'unilaterally imposed on others.' The reason is that power takes the form of power only and only when accepted by others as natural (Van Dijk, 1993).

Van Dijk (1996) stated that power limits the freedom of action, and affects knowledge, ideas or ideologies. He also stipulated that power makes 'centers of power' or 'elite groups.' This term is borrowed from him to refer to those whose knowledge creates superiority over the others. Jäger (2001) confirmed this idea by mentioning that discourses exert power as agents of knowledge. He indicated that the kind of knowledge which resides in discourses makes one powerful and the other powerless. This is further reinforced by Van Dijk (1993), considering a hierarchy of power in the society in which some small groups have the right to plan, make decisions, and manage others. These were also called 'power elites.' In other words, Van Dijk (1996) stated that power is connected with 'privileged access to valued social resources, such as wealth, jobs, status, or

indeed, a preferential access to public discourse and communication' (p. 85). Lack of power is also evaluated by lack of access to discourse (Van Dijk, 1993). This implies that lacking sources of power limits the access to a range of discourses. It is linked to the institutional context of academics, in which members of the elite group legitimately have access to some discourses while the others may not! The issue of who gave them this access lies in the extent to which the issue seems legitimate. The students' lack of access seems naturalized! On the one hand, this can be an aspect of power, and on the other, it can be an aspect of ideology. Needless to say, both power and ideology are involved in the process of access, for this is the ideology which gives access to some, and is also linked to the previous contexts, in the name of intertextuality, and is hence reinforced by means of the cognition.

The role of cognition and ideology in retrieving the past background knowledge on the process of any interaction with members of the elite group makes a coherent background for continuing the previous taken-for-granted discourses without even a minor change. Contrary to the discussion on access and the power of the elite groups for having a special knowledge and expertise, Carter (2008) regarded the oral exams as a 'dialogue between equals' (p. 371). If interactions in oral exams are dialogues between equals, then logically equals seem to have equal access to discourses. So, there will be an urge for exploring and foregrounding the fixed and naturalized ideologies and changing the static frameworks of cognition in favor of a third model of power in Bloom, et al.'s (2005) categorization of power, i.e. 'power with' rather than 'power over'.

'Much 'modern' power in democratic societies is persuasive and manipulative rather than coercive (using force), or incentive, such as the explicit issuing of commands, orders, threats or economic sanctions' (Van Dijk, 1996, p. 85). Van Dijk

referred to the nature of the modern power as influencing people by entering their minds invisibly. Also, in academic settings, if there is any power, it is expected to be a modern, not a coercive one. Kantek & Gezer's (2010) study confirmed this argumentation suggesting that students expected the 'expert power' rather than the 'coercive power', parallel with the special knowledge they possess. However, the present study probes a non-modern form of power, evident in the elite group's multimodal interruptions, which is coercive and quite distinguished from Van Dijk's stipulation on a modern power being persuasive.

Critical Discourse Analysis has been introduced as an analytical tool through which analysts can get into the discourses for exploring any asymmetrical orders. Kress states that critical studies of language have from the beginning had a political stance when speaking of 'altering inequitable distributions of economic, cultural and political goods in contemporary societies.' (1996, p. 15). The purpose has been to bring inequalities into crisis by disclosing its workings and its effects to make a more equitable society. Fairclough (1995) stated that "Discourse is use of language seen as a form of social practice, and discourse analysis is analysis of how texts work within socio-cultural practice" (p. 7). By this, he asserts that discourse should not get separated from its social and cultural roots. Hence, 'critical discourse analysis is an *approach*, a way of looking at texts' (Huckin, 2000, p. 12). Huckin (2000) also adds that the task of an analyst is to confirm, explain, and foreground the existing relations of power in an elaborate manner to others.

This study works in Fairclough's (1989) triangle of discourse, ideology, and power, which are the micro and macro level aspects of the critical discourse analysis. Discourse is the language used in social practices; and ideology is regarded as the interface between text and interpretation, or the way social actors produce and understand discourses coherently. The third macro level is called explanation, for it explains social contexts and social problems. This stage is a step ahead of the interpretation stage in the sense that it looks for hegemonic

features. It seeks to see how discourse can lead to differentiation and categorization of people in a given society, or why and how some people exercise power over the others! The purpose of the present paper is first and foremost foregrounding the fixed power enforcing ideologies and raising the consciousness in academic settings, where 'power above' seems not relevant. As a social world problem, verbal and nonverbal discourses and interruptions are deliberately identified and then they are brought to the notice and challenge.

'Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) holds much promise for educational research. Researchers using CDA can describe, interpret, and explain the relationships among language and important educational issues' (Rogers, 2004, p. 1). So, education can be regarded as a major setting for 'the reproduction of social relations, including representation and identity formation, but also for possibilities of change' (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, p. 451).

2. Context
Van Dijk (2009) linked context to social cognition and culture. He discussed that "the similarities and differences in the way people in different societies understand communicative situations and the way these are consequential for text and talk have just been described as 'cultural' (Van Dijk, 2009, p. 156). Fairclough (1989) referred to the power coming from the conventions and formality of institutional contexts as 'power behind discourse'. So, studying power needs 'an understanding of the context in which public relations operate; that is, as a socially embedded profession' (Edwards, 2006, p. 229). This view regards power as connected with the context, without which it is not possible to understand the phenomenon. It is justified that no power exists in the absence of others, and as mentioned above, power holders need a context or others in order to enact their power. While dealing with students' attitudes and the general context of oral exams, a more specific

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discussion on Iranian cultural system, higher education, and face-to-face oral exams settings is rendered here.

Some students regard thesis processes as businesslike, if positively thought about and a penal if negatively thought about (Ylijoki, 2001). M.A. students' confusion and fear on theses processes are discussed in this study. Also as reported, some M.A. students go through an unknown stage which fearfully prompts them to seek assistance from their advisors and supervisors, prior to their defense sessions. There have been very few studies on the way examiners judge the quality and quantity of a research work and the way it is reported. Nor is there a clear-cut explanation on how examiners assess this process (Mullins & Kiley, 2002). It is added that the processes of scoring are also very much subjective and vague and need more research. According to some anecdotal evidence, despite general rules, there are not enough instructions in specific cases such as deciding on a topic, starting the research, and finally holding mock sessions for Iranian newcomer M.A. students. Also there cannot be seen any obvious definition of the nature of M.A. theses. The scarcity of studies on M.A procedures can augment perplexities. This unknown stage may lead panicky students to be tolerant of power exercise. Abound in academic casual talks, students need to get their certificates to enter the job market; and, if they fail to be successful in this important stage, they may have to experience financial hardship of repaying tuitions, retaking the course, and the like. Having this corollary in mind, students can be led to obeying the rules and standards as well as commands in a viva voce. The final part of an M.A. or Ph.D. is viewed as a crucial stage. Recski (2005) discussed Ph.D. oral exams and disclosed some features and conditions while stipulating that, for an outsider visiting a viva voce, it may seem like a 'battle for power.' This power-bearing setting normally makes one group powerful and the other powerless. The powerless is eventually led to be passive or

tolerant. Henceforth, this unknown so-called battlefield can provide fear and silence in some cases.

Eslami-Rasekh, et. al (2010) stated that the Iranian cultural system possesses a hierarchy of politeness. For being regarded as 'polite', Iranian cultural and religious maxims have emphasized on turn-taking, and not interruptions, in any interactive context. This is in line with the study by Shafiee - Nahrkhalaji et. al (2013), stating that silence patterns in Iranian university classrooms are considered as politeness by students. Silence is often resorted to as a strategy to prevent from face loss. Sharifian (2007) also discusses on 'face' as the most significant ideological schema in Iranian cultural beliefs. The same politeness strategy applies to higher education and the viva voce, where it is believed that silence, passivity or toleration, not resistance, can be a better conduct in order to be considered as polite or save one's face! Quite reverse, it seems that this strategy does not hold for professors who naturally interrupt the defending students. Interestingly, it seems that there should be a reason for professors' disobeying the cultural and religious principles of turn-taking.

Highlighted by colleagues in casual talks, the traditional teacher-centered atmosphere of education in Iran and the thirst for getting certificates can be among other reasons for legitimating and tolerating power enforcing discourses in academic settings, which are yet to be studied. It is a traditional view of remaining passive in the processes of students' learning and understanding. As oral exams are thought of as meetings for increasing the capabilities and information, hence considering cultural differences and naturalizing interruptions seems significant in this regard. This can be well seen in the study of Hamdhaidari, Agahi & Papzan (2008), suggesting that some reforms are necessary in Iranian higher education, leading to widening the access. It seems like an urge towards academic decentralization, which is conducted by consciousness raising

and foregrounding the taken-for-granted beliefs. This reform helps students to gain their voice in the knowledge making process of their studies. This action agenda is manifest in the word 'critical' which is part and parcel of CDA. Critical means to carefully examine, to creatively reveal the commonsensical beliefs, to challenge the traditional settings, and to make trouble in the calm and naturalized structures.

3. Method

Building upon constructivist and more precisely and specifically advocacy/participatory philosophical positions, and regarding discourse as a social practice, this qualitative study uncovers power bearing discourses, ideologies, and actions which are invisibly fixed in the form of institutional conventions. It took benefit from 'social and linguistic analyses of discourse, thus integrating analysis at the macro level of social structure with analysis at the micro level of social action' (Henderson, 2005, p. 5). Relying on the triangle of discourse, ideology, and power, and making a novel use of critical discourse analysis as a new approach for investigating interactions in oral exams, the data of the present study went through three steps of coding, organizing, and thematizing. For example, it is presumed that the verbal and nonverbal interruptions in the data of the study are made by holding naturalized social and ideological beliefs, producing, reproducing, and reinforcing socio-cultural beliefs in colleges.

Specific methods of this study were a long term observation as well as a detailed contextual analysis. The data of this study were taken from the natural setting of two colleges, specifically from 5 viva voce sessions, of majors related to the English Language and Literature Departments in two universities in the west of Iran. The specific locations and identities will not be revealed for ethical considerations. The data were recorded by a handy camera in a one-year time span, while asking permission from the defending students and professors; that is, all participants were informed that the sessions are filmed for

research purposes. The participants were M.A. defending students and all professors present in the oral exams and all their interactions were focused for the analysis.

The visible element, discourse orders or specific discourse types, are in line with social orders or types of social events. Language above sentence, verbal or nonverbal discourse is the realization of social events. As stated by (Fairclough, 1989), that 'actual discourse is determined by socially constituted *orders of discourse,* and sets of conventions associated with social institutions' (p.17), it is obvious that a critical analyst can get into the processes running inside the minds (to reveal power in discourse) and out in the society (to reveal power behind discourse). Through carefully examining orders of discourse, ideological assumptions stuck to the minds of social actors, and power asymmetries, inequalities, dominance, control, manipulation, class differentiations, hierarchical relations of super-ordinates and subordinates, etc. can be explored. Jones & Stilwell Peccei (1999) defined this control as a kind of force 'to persuade people to act voluntarily in the way you want' (p. 38). This control may even limit the actions and freedom. It is elaborated on by Van Dijk (1996), stating that social power 'limits the freedom of action of the others, or influencing their knowledge, attitudes or ideologies' (p. 84).

Applying both micro and macro levels of analysis, the present paper tries to explore: (a) what linguistic and semiotic strategies are used by the students, advisors, supervisors, external and internal examiners, and the audiences in a viva voce; (b) how taken-for-granted ideologies pave the way for one group to exert power in discourse; and (c) what super-ordinate and subordinate relations exist in a viva voce. In sections 4.1 and 4.2, a micro level of analysis and in sections 4.3 and 4.4 a macro level of analysis have been taken in order to further probe the data. The data consisted of 150 minutes of filmed sessions, in which 397 modes of interruption were observed. Using

thematic coding and categorizing the data, four main themes emerged: (1) Verbal & nonverbal commands; (2) Comments and explanations; (3) Gatekeeping power including (a) Time management, and (b) Knowledge management; and (4) Interruptive actions.

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages of the Themes Found in the Data

Themes of interruption		Frequency	Percentage
Verbal & nonverbal commands		128	32.24
Comments & explanations		133	33.50
Gatekeeping power	Time management	36	9.06
	Knowledge management	68	17.12
Interruptive activities		32	8.06
Total		397	100

It is noteworthy to state that the subtheme of expressions has socio-cultural meanings and shows power potentials in Persian semiotic discourses, explored at a macro level of analysis in this study. However, this codification is very much dependent on the researcher's background and subjectivities, hence no claim of generalizability is made. The data both affect and are determined by the researcher's cognitive and value system, as an insider. Huckin (2000) states that the task of an analyst is to confirm, explain, and communicate the existing relations of power in a detailed manner to others, and this process passes its way through the cognitive system. The cognitive part was added by Van Dijk (2009) who embarked on an action for considering cognition as an indispensable element.

Table 1 is the tabulated thematic codification including frequencies of occurrence and percentages of each. As mentioned above, sometimes the nonverbal data required understanding of the Persian socio-cultural and semiotic system. In Persian, head and hand movements, raising eyebrows and

eyework may show a different meaning. For instance, in one case, an advisor twirled his eyes to show his reluctance in continuing a specific subject, thus making the student shift the focus. The verbal data, for the most part, consisted of commands among which widespread uses of phrases such as 'wrap it up, wait, go ahead' and the like were noticed, which were mainly direct and short, and comments and explanations which were rather long and took some time. The following excerpt is a piece of Persian interaction and its translation, taken from an oral exam of Pure Linguistics, which included both verbal and nonverbal interruptions of professors. In Iran, interactions in some oral exams are half in Persian and half in English. The symbol # shows interruptions.

۱. دانشجو: همانگونه که می بینید، در داده های من #

استاد راهنما: از این قسمت رد شو و کار رو جمع کن، چون تکراری است.

۲. داور خارجی: دلیل استفاده از این مدل را توضیح بده.

دانشجو: بله، چون مبنای مطالعه من #

استاد راهنما: اتفاقا من هم توجیه نشدم و این سوال بنده هم هست.

۳. دانشجو: چارچوب نظری پایان نامه بنده از # (ورود استاد مشاور به اتاق دفاع)

استاد راهنما: سلام دکتر جان، خوش آمدی. بفرما اینجا بنشین.

۴. دانشجو: حال به نتیجه گیری می رسم که #

استاد راهنما: (به ساعتش نگاه می کند و خطاب به دانشجو همزمان با حرکت دست چشم اشاره می کند که کافی است.)

دانشجو: استاد فقط یک دقیقه!

۵. داور داخلی: از لحاظ فرمت چند مورد بود که همه را نوشتم و حتما باید تصحیح کنی.

دانشجو: ممنونم، ولی در ویرایش جدیدی که خدمتتون ارسال کردم #

داور داخلی: من که چیزی ندیدم!

1. Student: As you see, in my data #
Supervisor: Skip this part and wrap it up, since it is repetitive.

2. External examiner: Explain the reason of using this model.
Student: Yes, since the basis of my study is #
   Supervisor: I was not justified either, and to be honest it is my question, too.
3. Student: The theoretical framework of my thesis # (advisor enters the room)
                                     Supervisor: Hi Dr., welcome, come and sit here.
4. Student: Now, I get to the conclusion that #
Supervisor: (looks at his watch and with his hand and eye movements wants the student to finish it)
                                     Student: Just a minute, professor!
5. Internal examiner: Regarding the format, there were some cases that I wrote and you have to correct them all. Student: Thanks, but in the new edition that I sent you #
                                     Internal examiner: I saw nothing!

   The above excerpt consists of some cases of verbal and nonverbal interruptions, mentioned earlier. Examples like these will be discussed later.

4. Analysis

Foucault (1977) considered examinations as an implicit coercive gatekeeping process, and regarding this, in the following subsections, it is seen how interruption in its various forms leads to the control and power enactment. Interestingly, interruption was not reciprocally justified. As it is seen in the examples below, professors' interruptions were regarded as legitimate since no resisting sign was seen, while students' interruptive discourses, though very few if any, were not commonly legitimate or natural! The following first two subsections, *verbal & nonverbal commands,* and *comments & explanations*, are based on a micro analysis, for they focus on micro features of discourse like imperative and declarative modes of discourse. The other two, *gatekeeping*, and *interruptive actions*, are based on a macro analysis, for they mainly focus on ideological and social means of discourse. It is worthy of note to mention that in

this study the micro and macro structures are interrelated and at times mixed.

4.1 Verbal & nonverbal commands

Verbal and nonverbal commands were frequently observed in the corpus of this study, by which supervisors, advisors, external and internal examiners interrupted the defending students in different parts of oral exams. Being both verbal and nonverbal, these commands were responded to quite naturally by the defending students. It is worthy of note that 32.24 percent of all interruptions were related to professors' coercive commands. The main discursive feature of these interruptions was direct imperative statements, even lacking the hedging words like 'please', which shows the directness and coercion of requests. Some of professors' positive and negative imperative and interruptive statements are below, occurring 128 times in the corpus of the study:

[1] Wrap it up!
[2] Go ahead!
[3] Wait, wait, wait… What are you talking about?
[4] Don't skip this important part!
[5] Don't mix them.
[6] Don't repeat this part.
[7] Don't beat around the bush.
[8] Go to the main issues.
[9] Come on! It is a big claim! Don't say it again.
[10] Show your other slides.
[11] Internal examiner addressing the student: Turn the heater on, it is cold.

Likewise, there were some nonverbal commands, or silent discourses. Multimodality considered high, low, and somehow accusatory tones of discourse, hesitations, upright or sitting postures and folded or extended arms, body language, gazes, eye contacts, pointing with head and hand, facial expressions, etc. As mentioned before, at times they tapped into the cultural understanding of Persian semiotics. However, all of them were

completely comprehended by the defending students. For instance, professors' head and hand movements, twirling the eyes, and facial expressions all shifted the defending students' focus, and made him or her stop the flow of speech towards a specific direction for a short moment in order to act in accord with the professors' requests.

Interestingly, this subsection is interconnected with hidden ideologies, for this reason we can see a micro feature of imperative statements is at the service of an ideological understanding of macro structures and then leads to re-producing interruptive discourses. Hence, cognition plays a great role in reinforcing and transferring the natural ideologies to others. As an example, a professor resorts to verbal or nonverbal imperative statements to make a change in the student's speech. S/he stops the student's speech by means of the discourses, and the student understands that s/he must act and respond according to the professor's request. Gradually, this toleration is reproduced and transferred to the other defending students. So, a micro feature of imperatives penetrates into the ideologies and leads to toleration.

4.2 Comments and explanations

In the present study, most interruptions were in this mode of discourse. While some of the defending students were speaking, some professors interrupted them, using declarative statements in order to explain some parts or state their comments. This most common theme included 33.50 percent of the data. Instances of these are below:

[1] Supervisor addressing the student: yes, he (the external examiner) is right. As I advised you before, it needs more elaboration.

[2] It seems to me that you do not care about punctuation.

[3] You must have run a pilot study.

[4] I cannot see your index. It is necessary to add it here.

[5] Even now, I rarely understand some parts of your analysis. It is vague!

[6] I wonder why you wrote 14 pages on it. Can you justify me?

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[7] I guess he (the defending student) wants to relate it to the previous section.

[8] My surmise is that your concluding part was to some extent biased.

[9] I cannot accept this part on women's beliefs, though your data is suggestive of it.

[10] She (the defending student) has collected a good corpus, but I do not know why her

examples are few.

[11] In the first page, the translation of systemic-functional theory is really problematic by itself. You should change it totally to Persian.

[12] It's a wrong style. It is so easy to change all of these.

[13] In two or three cases, you have mentioned Halliday's theory through someone else that for example Mr. X says this about Halliday's theory, while it's not correct. Halliday himself should be brought directly.

As it is seen, professors' comments were the main cause of the above interruptive statements. However, they were not interpreted as interruptions by the defending students, since they were normally responded to. In these examples, the professors felt a need to explain and mention their ideas. However, they did so just during the oral exam sesions. This part also mixes the micro and macro structures of reinforcing ideologies, since the professors regarded a right for themselves to interrupt and comment. This right is the interface to naturalized ideologies. So, these interruptive comments were considered as quite legitimate.

4.3 Gatekeeping

According to Fairclough (1989), the first type of *power in discourse* (a power coming from the language itself, not the conventions), is face-to-face power, which is an unequal encounter when a person or group has the most to say or naturally interrupts more and generally controls the settings and subjects. It is very often seen in traditionally managed classes where the teacher talked more, interrupted more, and more importantly controlled the class, topics, time, etc. It is a kind of control over actions or a kind of coercion in which one group has the final say-so. Controlling the actions of people or making

people change something can be suggestive of having some kind of power.

Knowledge management is a type of Fairclough's (1989) face-to-face power. As the name suggests, it has to do with organizing the materials and controlling the sessions. It's a feature of powerful people who have the right and power to consider some types of responsibilities for themselves including shaping argument structures (redefining, restructuring, rewording, etc.), and specifying the time. This shaping of knowledge, however, is a face-to-face unequal encounter in which somebody's version of the subject has the most weight and somebody has the most to control and to say.

Van Dijk (1996) stated that "power is *based* on privileged access to valued social resources, such as wealth, jobs, status, or indeed, a preferential access to public discourse and communication" (p. 85), implying that not possessing any of the above-mentioned sources of power limits the access. This is linked to the institutional context of universities in which members of the elite group have the access to some discourses while the students do not, as Van Dijk (1993) stated that being powerless can be noticed by lack of access to some orders of discourse. The issue of who gave this access to them and how it was possible to be followed by all lies in the extent to which the issue seems legitimate. He also speaks about the scope of access elsewhere that it involves the time when some powerful people 'take the initiative for communicative events, as well as the ways they control the various other properties of discourse, such as turn taking, sequencing, topics' (p. 87). In the present study, members of the elite group initiate the discussions, control the time and setting, shift the topics, etc. through interruptive discourses. The issue of access has a cognitive interface reinforcing the status quo through the minds of people, for this is the status of having power which considers access for some,

and also it is linked to the previous contexts and hence is reinforced by means of cognition, or more precisely ideology.

In this study, 26.18 percent of the interruptions indicated the professors' time and knowledge management, so called control over actions and cognition (mind control). Related to the main theme of this study, these time and knowledge managements were interruptive discourses. Time management can be sometimes related to the limitations. Below, there are some examples of time management and then knowledge management:

[1] Dr. X (the external examiner) is going to get back to his city. So, your presentation should be at most 20 minutes.

[2] You know this presentation is the third one today, and we are all tired. Try to make it as short as possible.

[3] This part is repetitive, no need to speak about it any further.

[4] Now, you need to go to your models.

[5] Since we are pressed by the time, just make sure to correct these parts.

[6] You have 15 minutes to go through your main subject, and 5-10 minutes to answer the questions asked.

[7] It is the third time that I remind you of the time.

[8] You ought to consider that we have a limited time for presentations.

[9] I guess it is not the right time to discuss this issue.

[10] Supervisor (pointing to his watch): It is going to take long!

All the defending students in the corpus of this study responded to the above-mentioned statements with affirmative sentences like 'yes, sure professor', 'just a minute', 'sorry for taking your time', 'ok, I will end it up soon' and so on, thus tolerating and reinforcing the commonsensical managing power. The second interruptive category of gatekeeping is knowledge management. Examples appear below:

[1] You can go through the theories and models.

[2] I guess it should be in your introduction.

[3] It seems that his part is not relevant here.

[4] No need to state your detailed data gathering steps.

[5] Here it is important to focus on your theories and analysis.

[6] Instead of table 4.3, I want some more explanation on table 4.2.

[7] I do not prefer lengthy discussions. It is much better to be concise.

[8] It would be great if you explain this part more.

[9] When we want you to skip this part, it means this subject is not necessary.

[10] As Dr. X can truly observe, you have failed to bring more examples in this part.

[11] I think the part 2.3.5 is redundant.

[12] You have written 'I conclude that, I, I, I…' these things make the thesis inglorious and turn it to a personal experience.

[13] Your literature review should be very comprehensive, but you've referred to just three or four threads.

[14] When you write impersonal things, you shouldn't use 'I,' rather, they must be written in passive forms.

It is noteworthy that sometimes having the gatekeeping power can lead to stating personal beliefs, as in the case of examples 2, 3, and 11.

4.4 Interruptive activities

Interruptive actions, which are also rooted in hidden ideological beliefs, were reinforced by the cognitive interface, without which their occurrence was not justified. These interruptive actions included a range of actions like entering and leaving the room, having phone calls, changing the place of sitting, and so on.

The following example of this subcategory occurred a lot in oral exam sessions where the professors used their cell phones, while the students never did so. In this example, an advisor's phone rang, and he answered while exiting the room:

Advisor: Hello, I'm in a meeting…

He exited the room, and got back after 2 or 3 minutes, and when coming back all the professors stood up for respecting his entrance. After sitting, he asked if the presentation takes longer or not. The examples of this sort can be suggestive of a power asymmetry. Below are some other examples of this kind:

[1] **Internal examiner (walking):** Dr. X, let me come close to you in order to see your notes.

[2] **Supervisor (on the phone):** Hi, how is your work going on?

[3] **Professors and the audience (all standing up upon Dr. X's coming):** Welcome Dr. X.
[4] **External examiner (preparing to leave):** Sorry, I have to leave the session now, since I have a ticket.
[5] **Supervisor (while ringing his phone)**: Hello Mr. X, can you call me in the afternoon?
[6] **Higher Education official** (entering the room with some workers): I was told to change the decoration and add a table to the room.
[7] **Supervisor (leaving the room)**: I will get back soon.

All these interruptive activities occurred while the defending students were speaking and defending their theses. However, the physical setting of viva sessions including the light, temperature, noise, easiness, facilities like computers, projector, etc., though may inappropriate in some cases, were not considered as interruptive in this study. For example, the quality of some physical apparatus was not suitable, and no defending student in my data objected the inappropriateness. They can be focused in another study.

5. Discussion
In this study, CDA took a critical stance towards the way discourse was used by different professors. Hence, critically analyzing the verbal and nonverbal interactions in the oral exams, the present study focused on different features of the interactions, hoping to see into the processes running among different community members and also to find out what it is that the word 'defense' has been applied for. Since 'defense' connotes the word 'attack', and an invisible attack-defense situation can be implied.

The main purpose of this paper was to show how coercion is visibly and naturally exercised, which is in contrast with Van Dijk's (1996) description of a modern power. Linked to a broader social context, oral exams showed some hidden relationships causing hierarchical orders among the members of this specific community. Since the oral exams abounded with

tactful relations of students, examiners, advisors, supervisors, and the audience, there was also a question of how ideology is mediated through discourses. Searching for the meaning making systems of social actors, a deeper layer of the commonsensical and naturalized schemata already shaped in the minds of all communicators in oral exams was explored. So, the cognitive interface played a very important role as a connector which shaped the whole ideologies and made the imbalances. In the present study, verbal and nonverbal interruptions were considered as possible and natural occurrences which posed no problem even if they caused students to deviate from the main topic, but the interesting point was that they were regarded as naturalized. Since the oral exam is one of the places in which cultural and institutional principles are shaped, reshaped, we may be reinforcing asymmetrical power relations in academic settings, by naturalizing the taken-for-granted interactions. By so doing, these interactions are internalized and transferred to the next generation in oral exams.

It is expected that colleges and universities in the modern world proceed towards a status in which there are no superordinate subordinate relations, where instead they turn to arenas of communicative and interactive negotiations in which everybody has the voice and the right to declare beliefs and the ability to manage and control the conditions to some extant. Hopefully, there seems to be some strategies for lessoning the effects of power in or behind discourse. One of them may be questioning and objecting the status quo. Regarding oral exams, we may ask for reforms in verbal and nonverbal discourses, and we may change them to more equal encounters in which exercising power of any kind seems unnatural and odd. This implies that there are many emancipatory alternatives available.

Using Fairclough's (1989) principle of 'marrying awareness and practice', this study tried to turn the consciousness into practice by injecting awareness into our everyday discursive

practices. In this regard, the discourse we purposefully use in real communications must be accompanied by consciousness about power relations, cultural issues, etc. Since unless foregrounded, legitimating interruptions or other power markers is not overt for all social actors, rethinking and raising consciousness seems necessary.

It is hoped that the results of this study help both students and educators to better understand the features of a viva voce, as well as bring about change in the traditionally held oral exams which reinforced power and inequality. Similar studies leading to raising consciousness in different educational contexts are suggested especially in interactions of students and teachers in schools, universities, EFL private institutes and all educational contexts where there may be some super-ordinate and subordinate relations. It is hoped that inequality disappears from the academic and educational settings in a near future.

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