**Argumentation through Critical Reading of English Newspapers: Classroom Practices in a Chinese University**

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Abstract: Teaching argumentation has long been a focus of research in science education, and it is suggested in existing research that argumentation can be taught within language and literacy programs. However, a quick survey of literature on science education readily reveals that little is known about this language/literacy-based approach to argumentation in China. Thus, an exploratory study was design to chart possibilities and problems in integrating argumentation with a university level EFL course focusing on identification and critical evaluation of arguments in media representations. Classroom practices in the study, which involves 120 second-year English majors in a typical university in China, took the form of workshop. In the workshop, didactic instruction, which has been confirmed by earlier research as an effective means of teaching higher order thinking skills, was the dominant mode of input in class, and Toulmin’s model of argumentation was employed as the instructional and analytical framework. Student works were analyzed at the end of the course in reference to Toulmin’s model, and it reveals salient polarization in student learning: while a sizable portion of the cohort (about 30 %) experienced difficulty in identifying arguments, around 10% of them demonstrated the ability to critically analyze an argument. Although a myriad of factors may be responsible for the polarization, it is argued that EFL programs provides possibilities for teaching argumentation, even in China where students have been taught to forget thinking for a long time.

Keywords: argumentation, EFL learners in China, Toulmin’s model, didactic instruction, polarization in student learning

Contributor bio:

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