



<https://jrl.ui.ac.ir/?lang=en>

**Journal of Researches in Linguistics**  
 E-ISSN: 2322-3413  
 15(2), 53-64  
 Received: 21.06.2023 Accepted: 25.09.2023

**Research Paper**

**Discursive odds of a fraudulent scheme in cyberspace correspondence: A CDA approach**

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**Abstract**

Looking through the lens of forensic pragmatics, this study aims to critically analyze a typical textual sample of cyber-fraud correspondence as addressed to a candidate email-user. As such, the virtual correspondence which is written by a seemingly legitimate sender seems to be authorized in its claims to the extent that even the Gmail spam-identifying system has not report it as devious. Due to the questionable subject of such virtual correspondence(s) (VC) or cyberspace correspondence(s) (CC) being issued, that is the claim of offering a huge winning bid to the addressee and the significance of identifying the authenticity of such abrupt proposals, it can be hypothesized that such a text consists of fraudulent claims and therefore is subject to forensic cyber-crime examination. As such, the present study plans to provide a discursive analysis of an authentic sample based on a CDA procedure itself based on Fairclough’s (1989) formula presented in his influential book titled ‘Language and Power’. There are two main questions this study has aimed to answer: 1) How the text at hand lends itself to CDA analysis in terms of the main tenets of discursive manipulation proposed in Fairclough’s CDA formula? and 2) What manipulative patterns might be detected in a discursive piece of email correspondence allegedly presumed to be fraudulent. The main findings of this study are: 1) The lexical, sentential, and textual levels in the Fairclough’s CDA formula are applicable to the email-correspondence text at hand, though modified in accordance with the text’s discursal specifications, 2) The outcome of the CDA analysis of the cyberspace correspondence sample under study provided definitive clues to support the existence of manipulative intention(s) hidden in the text at hand, 3) The results might be applied to similar pieces of discourse at different levels of lexical, sentential, and textual composition.

**Keywords:** Cyber Text, Virtual Correspondence, Cyber Security, Cyber Forgery, CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis)

**1. Introduction**

We live in a world where the miscellany of linguacultures has entailed as necessary a dual concern for cross-cultural give-and-take. The miscellany of linguacultures requires a diversity of discourse types which itself entails a diversity of discursal functions. This being the case, such linguafunctional diversity lends itself to the exercise of power relations between the parties involved. Viewed as the territory of power struggle, the field of discourse in its growing diversity calls for a sound discursive judgment as a necessary requirement for securing mutual concessions. Among such discursal diversification, the ‘cyberspace discourse’ has emerged rapidly to be a dominant discursal tool; however, the security concerns over the discursive confrontations are emerging, too. The security concerns as such turn to be graver in the context of cyberspace since the cyberspace discourse due to its essential specificities is more susceptible to the anonymous manipulation of power. The problem of power practice as such is that it can be constructive or destructive, protective or abusive, and the problem gets more complicated where there is no direct conduit for sender-receiver presence and the discursive confrontation is mediated within the cyberworld of virtual identity. Here is where and when the concern(s) for ‘user safety’ in the cyberworld come to the play and disturb the seemingly serene courses of discursive action in the field. As such, there is always room as well as intention for

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perversion in the guise of technological provision. It is in referring to such dual role of cyberspace that Krause asserts “technology is a double-edged sword, consistently presenting us with benefits and disadvantages” (Krause, 2011, p. 1062). It is in line with the same idea that Crystal (2011, p. 122-134) expressly points to the use of a somehow “coded” language where individuals appear to plot an illegal act of some sort. Thus, he speaks of the necessity of differentiating between the conversations that are “innocent” and conversations which happen to build up a discursive pattern of suspicious act; the latter being critically notorious for their use of “suggestive [or manipulative] words and sentences” and to which online security is susceptible. Looking through this vintage point, this paper aims to critically analyze the text of an email correspondence in an attempt to identify the odds of an allegedly existing fraudulent scheme. This objective lends itself to be studied under the lens of CDA since such a discursive practice, i.e. cyber-discoursal texting, might have been planned to persuade the targeted receiver to exhibit manipulative responses. Here's where the question of ‘user safety in the cyberspace’ underlines the necessity for carrying out rigorous research to address the issue of cyber-forgery, what calls for the careful choice of a detecting tool to explore the field at hand, i.e. email discourse in the cyber-space. In so doing, the Fairclough’s approach to CDA (Fairclough, 1989) has been employed to analyze the text of some email correspondence as an authentic sample of cyberspace discourse.

## 2. Theoretical foundations

### 2.1 Fairclough’s CDA formula defined

Speaking of critical language study (CLS), Fairclough (1989) aims to critically analyze discourse as a unit of ‘social practice’, or *social interaction* for that matter, a critical method for studying language which focuses upon the linguistic elements and sets out to show up their generally hidden determinants in the system of social relationships as well-as hidden effects they may have upon that system. Fairclough (1995) sees discourse as the territory of exerting social effects where CDA can be a research tool “to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes” (p. 132). Viewed more specifically as critical discourse analysis or CDA, the main concern of critical study of language or more specifically ‘discourse’ is to give a critico-analytic reading to a piece of discourse so as to reveal the (conscious) working mechanisms behind the exercise of power through employing the discursive devices in a piece of text. This way, the critical study of discourse presented by Fairclough (1989) as CDA formula can be used as a practical approach or an instance of ‘thinking tools’, to use Bourdieu’s conception (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p.160), to detect such conscious thinking mechanisms.

### 2.2 Fairclough’s CDA formula: conceptual framework

Here some clarification on certain key terms in the so-called Fairclough’s CDA formula is due. Basically, a key concept in Fairclough’s CDA formula is the idea of ‘ideology’, which is a concept with a variability of senses. However, the main sense of the idea of ‘ideology’ concerns the fact that “all ideology is in one way or another to do with positioning subjects” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 105) in their ‘ideological struggle’, which is itself a related key concept in this regard. One must add that the term ‘ideology’ in its more straightforward sense refers to the “instrumental ideology of language” where “language” is used “as a tool for getting things done” (p. 115). This is this latter sense of the term ‘ideology’ which particularly applies to the present study. This being said, the dichotomy of ‘rewording’ and ‘overwording’ are closely related in a CDA analysis discussion as such. As a lexical value in the present formula, ‘rewording’ ‘refers to the case where’ “an existing, dominant, and naturalized, wording is being systematically replaced by another one in conscious opposition to it” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 114). It is to be noted that ‘overwording’ means “an unusually high degree of wording, often involving many words which are near synonyms. Overwording shows preoccupation with some aspect of reality - which may indicate that it is a focus of ideological struggle” (p. 115). In ‘rewording’ and specially in ‘overwording’ the core concepts are the same and the two lexical values as such are worked in a piece of discourse through the conceptualizations of the same idea, yet in different forms. However, ‘rewording’ as a lexical value turns mostly around the use of collocative items, though they may contain oppositional concepts at their core. As such, as it is the lexical value of ‘overwording’ which has been mostly applicable to the text at hand and its discursive content, the other alternative, that is *rewording*, has only been pointed to at the definitional level and no mention of the CDA analysis with ‘rewording’ at its center is provided here. ‘Then comes’ the ‘metaphorical representation’, is a lexical move where ‘any aspect of experience can be represented in terms of any number of metaphors, and it is the relationship between alternative metaphors that is of particular interest here, for different metaphors have different ideological attachments.’ (p. 119). These being said, in the next section, some studies in the related literature will be reviewed.

## 3. Cyber-fraud correspondence in a glance

In a world satiated with the internet, obtaining a sound judgment as to what is to be considered a reliable text in the cyber-space is a must both for fulfilling the possible expectations raised in the stage of global communication and for assuring our safety and integrity in the face of such probably ongoing exchanges. Speaking of the nature of “the Net” as a powerful tool for “sharing information without boundaries” and its “ability for global communications in a heartbeat”,



<https://doi.org/10.22108/jrl.2023.138133.1764>

Krause (2011) refers to the internet as “a platform for illicit and unethical shenanigans” (p. 1062). In a different yet compatible tone, Crystal (2011, p. 123), referring to the probable detriments arising from the discursive dimensions of ‘internet linguistics’, states that “[i]ndividual sentences, viewed in isolation, may appear to be quite innocent”, and he further adds, “when viewed as part of a sequence with other sentences does a picture emerge of a hidden intension”. Underscoring the necessity for a deepening of the criminological knowledge about cybercrime, Wall (2008, pp. 45-58), while pointing to “a large gap in our understanding of cybercrime”, maintains that “cybercrimes certainly do exist, but they are being looked at through the wrong lens”. Calling the virtual environment a “second home”, Williams (2010, p. 103) gives fair warning about the emergence of “new forms of sociopathic behaviour, which present themselves in abundance, being disregarded due to their ‘virtual status’, while similar crimes in the real world are subject to intensive investigation”. Williams (2010) then places emphasis on the necessity of “having to incorporate justice models, regulatory frameworks and security patrols” in the online environments in order to be able to “curtail any disruptive or potentially harmful behaviour” (p. 103). Viewed as such, researches have been carried out to tackle with the issue at hand from a different angle. Among such studies, one can refer to a study by Chilwa (2009) who has adopted a pro-discourse approach to explore the issue of “digital deceptions” placed in emails known as ‘419’; where he concludes that the receiver-hoaxing communication as a genre “has become a regular part of our internet experience, and is not likely to be extinct in the near future” (p. 635). Mention also can be made of another study by Freiermuth (2011, p. 123) which refers to the so-called ‘419’ email as “a popular tool used by scammers to entice their victims”. Mention can be made also of two recent preliminary papers which have examined subjects such as 1) the anatomical structure of cyber-forgery correspondence in view of their general lingua-thematic message composition (Mehrpooya and Nowroozadeh, 2022) and 2) the developmental structure of the episodic scenario laid out in a basic typology of cyber-fraud correspondence (Nowroozadeh and Mehrpooya, 2022). As such, both outlined papers, viewing the issue of cyber-fraud correspondence from the point of discourse analysis, have underlined the criticality of “cyber-fraud correspondence” as a serious issue in today’s digital give-and-take. As seen, the employment of CDA analysis does not seem to be a special-purpose reference tool to tackle with the issue of discursal manipulation in cyberspace discourse and the researches are more of the category- and pattern-seeking nature. More importantly still, having a glance at the related literature suggests that the majority of research papers published in the field of CDA are dedicated to analysing pro-politics discourse(s), depending on the situational and societal as well as historical priorities of the target communities where the studies are conducted. Therefore, there sounds to be an empirical gap concerning the dedication of more pro-CDA efforts to address the issue of discursive manipulation in cyberspace correspondence. This being said, the discourse of cyber-fraud correspondence is justified to be given an in-depth critical analysis, a critical need the present study has planned to address via a CDA approach.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Discourse as unit of DA/CDA

As a unit of textual communication, discourse is a tangible asset to be used for the critical analysis of language; however, the term ‘discourse’ has been defined and implemented differently across different streams of scholarship and disciplines. Viewed from the standpoint of discourse analysis (DA), a piece of discourse is to be regarded as an event of ‘social interaction’ (Fairclough, 1989). Looking through the critical lens of discourse analysis, Fairclough (1989) emphasizes that one of CDA’s main concerns has to do with revealing the conscious working mechanisms behind the exercise of power through employing the discursive devices. In the same vein, Van Dijk (2005) emphasizes: “Indeed, many of the ways power abuse operates in communication, as is the case for manipulation, involve specific knowledge strategies in discourse” (p. 72). Based on what was just stated, one such means of investigation to be kept fairly at our disposal in carrying out research into the issue of cyber-forgery can be Discourse Analysis (DA), or Critical Discourse Analysis for that matter. As duly pointed to by Henderson (2010, p. 12), Fairclough identifies a discursive event “as simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice and an instance of social practice”. For Crystal (2008), “discourse [...] is a set of utterances which constitute any recognizable *speech event*” (p. 148). In this regard, a piece of discursive text has been used to provoke a favorable response through constructing a theatrical discursive scenario, thus securing addressee’s consent. As such, the point of focus maintained by the present research is to explore the issue of cyber-forgery allegedly presumed to be hidden behind an exemplary piece of discourse, what has assumed to further initiate a series of online email correspondences. That being said, the criterion for selecting the sample text has been the authenticity of the email correspondence itself decided upon via the ‘expert judgement’ provided by three referees.

### 4.2 Objectives of the study

This study is qualitative in nature and employs a content-mining approach to achieve its dual purposes: Firstly, by employing the Fairclough’s CDA formula to examine a discursal sample of cyberspace correspondence, this study aims to clarify how the text at hand lends itself to CDA analysis in terms of the main tenets of discursive manipulation; and secondly, by detecting the probable trace(s) of a manipulative scheme running through the text, this study aims to explore what lingua-thematic patterns might be detected in a typical piece of email correspondence allegedly presumed to be fraudulent. As such, the procedure adopted to achieve the above two-fold goal is to critically read and analyze a



purposively-selected sample of email correspondence presumably judged to contain a devious intention. Thus, the procedure employed in this study is one of analyzing a text and detecting the shady items supposed to be supporting the existence of some cyber-forgery intention.

Thus, the rationale behind carrying out this analytical study is the hypothetical presumption that cyberspace correspondence can be used as a deliberate discursive action to manipulate an email candidate into favorable reaction. It is hypothesized that the analysis of such an initiatory case when juxtaposed and compared with other similar cases can be used as the groundwork based on which more reliable predictions will be made regarding the issue at hand. In practical terms, based on the results of this study and its further replicative administrations in the future certain preventive measures may consequently be proffered in regard to fostering the issue of awareness-raising as it might be required of the end-users in their everyday discursive cyberspace encounters. One should notice that the sample text to be critically analyzed is one of articulate composition suggestively written to be regarded as admissible and legitimate by the accustomed email receiver, legitimate to the extent that even the Gmail spam-identifying system did not report it as 'spam'. Thus, in the notable absence of such alarming identification by an authorized email service, the act of rendering such a critical analysis is justified, firstly to bring the existence of such discursive applications into the readers' awareness just to raise their consciousness regarding the probable ill-intention or misuse which might have sparked off such a practice; and secondly to provide an instance of the possibility of proposing an exemplary model of textual analysis via employing the procedural modules of critical discourse analysis, i.e. CDA. However, having no wish to induce the public attitude with skepticism, assertion must be made that this study will cherish no hope to becloud the users' peace of mind in their everyday cyber encounters.

### 4.3 Research questions

Based on the two-fold goal of the study that is to investigate the feasibility of employing a CDA-oriented formula to analyze and detect the probably existing traces of a veiled intention of cyber-forgery in a sample of email correspondence, the present study has aimed to address the following research questions: 1) How the text at hand lends itself to CDA analysis in terms of the main tenets of discursive manipulation proposed in Fairclough's CDA formula? The answer to the first question is to be provided by employing the most relevant tenets of Fairclough's CDA formula applicable to the discursive text at hand. The second question which actually aims to provide discursive details to documentatively substantiate the answer to the first question will be: 2) What manipulative patterns might be detected in a discursive piece of email correspondence allegedly presumed to be fraudulent. The answer to the second question is to be provided by detecting the probable trace(s) of a manipulative scheme running through the text based on employing relevant tenets of Fairclough's CDA formula. In the next section, the research procedure to address the above-mentioned questions will follow.

### 4.4 Fairclough's CDA formula: A procedural framework

As previously stated, the procedural framework for the CDA analysis in this article is based on Fairclough's CDA formula (1989). The so-called CDA formula as proposed by Fairclough involves three main levels of analysis consisting of 1) Vocabulary 2) Grammar and 3) Textual structures. Each level is examined according to certain values in the related questions raised: Firstly, The level of 'vocabulary' touches upon the experiential, relational, expressive, and metaphoric values; secondly, the level of 'grammar' touches upon the experiential, relational, expressive, and sentential values; and thirdly, the level of 'textual structures' touches upon some extra-sentential values such as interactional conventions and large-scale structures. The ten formal values mentioned, 'formal' used in relevance to form *vs* sense dichotomy, have some sub-elements which are to be located and examined in a CDA analysis with respect to their role in the whole manipulative scenario. However, the selection of the pro-CDA evaluative items and their related elaborations must be conducted on the basis of the discursual features of the text under study. As for the present study, the use of such lexical mechanisms as 'overwording', 'formal/informal' dichotomy, 'metaphorical representation' from the first level, the pro-sentential dichotomies as 'agency', 'nominalization', and 'active/passive', 'positive/negative', and 'coordination/subordination' [forms] from the second level, as well as the 'interactional' conventions, i.e. SV structures as well as intertextual relations from the third level have been dealt with and analyzed in terms of their discursual role in the text, each in its due turn.

### 4.5 Research procedure

The text to be analyzed in this CDA Analysis is an authentic piece of discourse initiating a multi-item series of cyberspace correspondence exchanged between a seemingly legitimate addresser and a chosen email-user as the addressee. In so doing, using the CDA formula already pointed to, the selected text has been analyzed and probed for the items of manipulative scheme. The criterion for detecting the problematic parts in the text has been based on raising the most applicable questions in the Fairclough's CDA formula as their discursual proof(s) might be located in the text under study. Statedly, the criterion procedure itself is "organized around ten main questions (and some sub-questions) which can be asked of a text" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 110), what is to be regarded just as a 'guide' and should not be treated as a 'blue print' or 'holy writ', to use Fairclough's terminology. Therefore, the existing set of the ten main questions and



<https://doi.org/10.22108/jrl.2023.138133.1764>

their sub-questions are modifiable in their application and are open to adaptable recasting, i.e. being eliminated or augmented, all depending on the specifications of the text under analysis. Due to the nature of the study, the procedure of text analysis has been performed to collect the intended data, a process which has resulted in verbal, non-numerical data. The collected data has then been analyzed primarily on the basis of the most relevant tenets adopted from Fairclough’s CDA formula. In this phase, the collected data, or the problematic items for that matter, will be analyzed and any manipulative patterns emerging will be identified and clarified in terms of the functional significance each might acquire in the manipulative process.

5. Data Analysis

In what follows, the discursive analysis of a so-called *Congratulations Letter* addressing an e-mail user, who is allegedly stated to be a lottery-winning candidate, is provided. The assumption is that the cyber-text at hand is a case of fraudulent correspondence and contains certain discursive manipulative elements that are suggestive of the critical issue to be examined. To this respect, the CDA formula of discourse analysis provided by Fairclough (1989) has been employed to approach the case in point. Below follows the cyber-correspondence text in its co-textual format. The point is that, to keep the confidentiality and avoid the bias resulting from the limited access to sufficient data, the name and details of the concerned addressee are erased from the sample online letter under study.

CONGRATULATION S!! MICROSOFT MEGA JACKPOT END OF YEAR LOTTERY WINNER...DRAW NO:1593

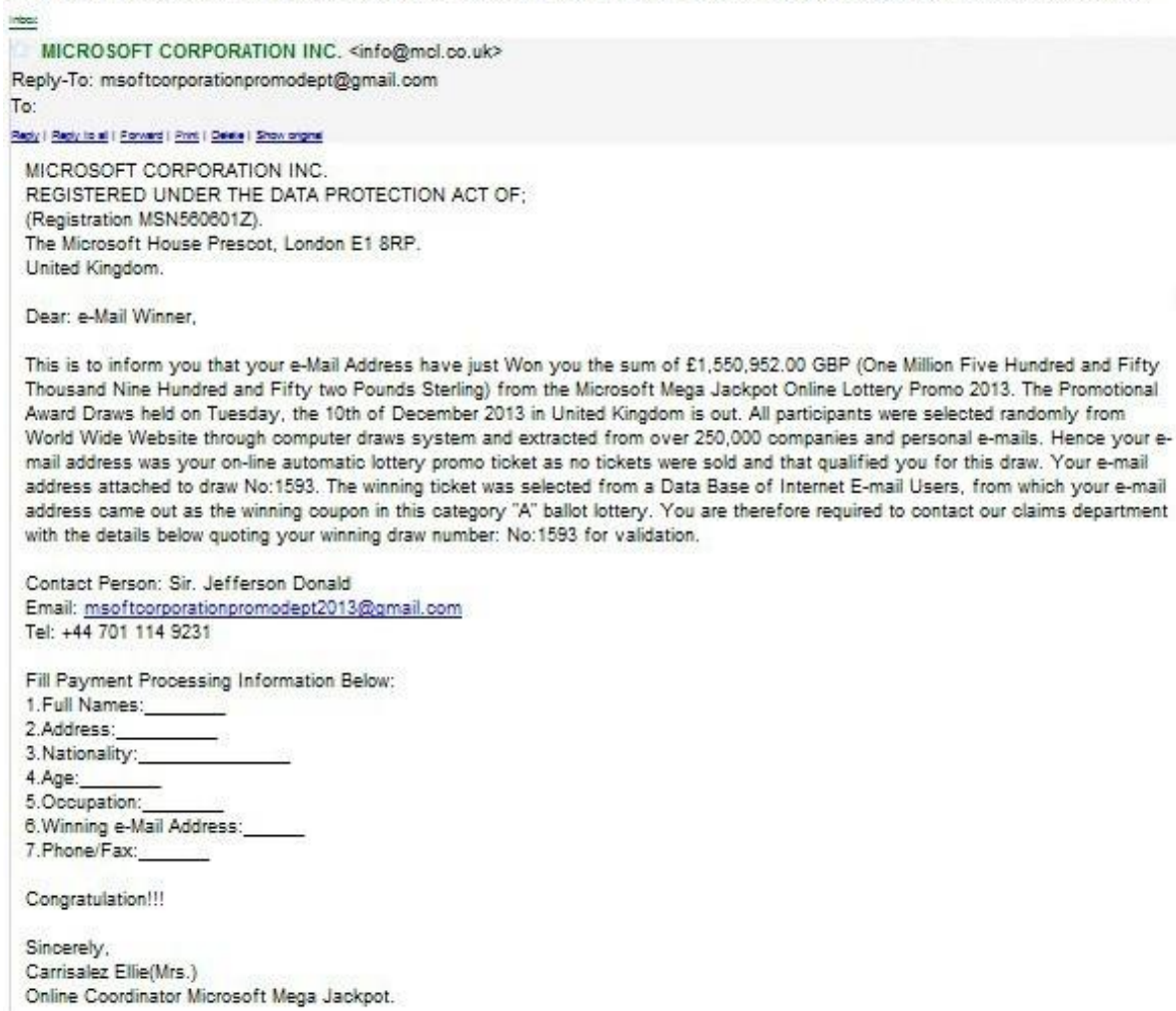


Figure 1. Image of a so-called Congratulations Letter addressing an e-mail-user as a lottery-winning candidate

Noting that the case in point as a *congratulation letter*, includes the initial correspondence text centering on an alleged lottery-winning case, the following analysis is proposed – yet in the broader dimension of discoursal rather than sentential level – which is a detailed perusal of the main letter to be examined from the perspective of CDA. Here it should be underlined that not all the categorical questions provided in the Fairclough’s 1989 version of CDA formula has been, and actually are to be, addressed and answered, since any text has its own specific textual features and thus



possesses its own specific bones of discussion. Therefore, the following analysis will reflect a marked preference for the more pertinent questions applicable to the case under study.

## 6. A CDA analysis of the main text

Having a preliminary précis of the probable intention insinuated from the discursive scenario at hand, the primary focus in the rest of this article will be on critically analyzing a certain set of existing formal features in the initial cyber-correspondence text which altogether are thought to possibly attain the major intention predefined by the text producers, that is the “particular choices from among the options (e.g. of vocabulary or grammar) available in the discourse types which the text draws upon” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 110). As such, the initial CDA examination of the text at hand has to do with the ‘experiential value’ of certain words. It is to be stated that there is a foregrounding of the idea of *chance* and *fortuity* in the textual project at issue, what is to be realized by a high degree of over-wording and metaphorical representation present in the text. Mention here also needs to be made of the ‘causality’ role given to ‘chance’ or ‘fortuity’, hence foregrounding the ‘agency’ of ‘chance/fortuity’ or ‘mere coincidence’ at work in lieu of ‘human labor’ or his/her ‘conscious effort’. This can be related to that state defined by Fairclough as “who is represented as causing what to happen, who is represented as doing what to whom” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 51), what is also given the terminological designation of “causality” in Fairclough’s formula. Notwithstanding the fact that Fairclough’s terminological designation of “causality” is expressed in a different semantico-syntactic shading wherein the process of “nominalization” works just to give “causality” an “unspecified” status in identity (Fairclough, 1989, p. 51). As for this, the causative sentence “your eMail Address has just Won you the sum of ...” – NB: The use of initial large-scale letters in ‘eMail Address’ and ‘Won’ as opposed to small-scale letter in ‘your’ is suggestive here – clearly shows such a state of ‘causality/agency’ for chance /fortuity as confronted by the lack of causality/agency as such on the human side. To refer to the idea of “over-wording”, it should be noted that this state is defined by Fairclough (1989) as “an unusually high degree of wording, often involving many words which are near synonyms”, itself showing a “preoccupation with some aspect of reality” (p. 115). These being said, such a state of *over-wording* is to be seen in such instances as follows:

### 6.1 Over-wording on the idea of ‘chance’ and promise of ‘winning’

Before embarking on what discursive devices substantiate and support the idea of ‘**chance**’ and promise of ‘**winning**’, a preliminary note on the potential of commonsensical, or ideological for that matter, assumptions dominating the whole discursive act in the case at hand is due. Yet, in spite of the commonsensical perception of the word ‘ideology’ in the mainstream CDA discourse being found in particular relevance to sociopolitical practices, it should be restated that the application of the term ‘ideology’ in its most pertinent sense to the present study refers to the “instrumental ideology of language” where “language” is used “as a tool for getting things done” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 115). This being said, as for the case in point, notes need to be taken that ‘fraudulence’ as a social practice in the real world has turned also to be a commonsensical scheme which has found its way to the virtual world. Referring to what was stated in regard to the concept of ‘ideology’ in its most applicable sense related to the present study, the discursive context of the fraudulent scheme present in the text under study can be analyzed as follows: The ‘idea of living in a better world’ as one commonsensical, and therefore ideological, assumption stands in complementary collaboration with another socially accepted convention, that is the idea of ‘lottery winning’, or ‘chance’ for that matter, only to form a powerful scheme of ‘fraudulence’. In the context of the ideological struggle as such, one party, i.e. email sender, plans to use the language manipulatively to construct a text which contains a message for a candidate user, i.e. email receiver, who is going to be victimized via manipulative persuasion. Here, the lottery-winning discourse is used by the fraudster to manipulatively persuade the subject and provoke in him/her a possible response in favor of taking the bait. Given that, the present case study aims to identify the discursive odds of such a fraudulent scheme in a typical sample of cyberspace correspondence. Let’s go through the related analytical proof:

6.1.1. The ‘Dear: e-Mail Winner’ in the salutation of the letter. The mere use of the addressing item ‘Dear’ in an email which is supposed to issue an official announcement, however unequivocally conventional it might seem, inculcates a sense of ‘solidarity’ in CDA terms and gives the addressee a feel of ‘affinity’ to perceive the other party more openly. This state of receptive perception is to be pursued by the overtone of the repetitive application of the possessive pronoun ‘your’ before the phrase ‘e-Mail address’, and further over-emphasized by the personificatory assignment of the winning attribution to ‘e-Mail’, a metaphorical transfer of an attribute from one domain of use to another which itself gains more of a concrete significance through the use of capitalization. According to Fairclough (1989), every move in writing a piece of discourse can ‘reinforce’ the text message ‘visually’. Fairclough himself brings the example of italicization (see pp. 79-80), he writes: “Even the typeface in which the headline is printed seems to have been chosen to evoke the [...] paradigm”. This is what may also be called the ‘representational side’ of the text. The use of capitalization is to be expressedly seen in the beginning line of the letter ‘your e-Mail Address have just Won you the sum of £1,550,952.00 GBP’;

6.1.2 The title phrase ‘Lottery Promo’, again with the initials capitalized, in the title ‘Microsoft Mega Jackpot Online Lottery Promo 2013’, gives more formality to the text, what in its own right helps the formal scenario of the



<https://doi.org/10.22108/jrl.2023.138133.1764>

discursive act to be enacted more plausibly.

6.1.3. The mention of the word 'Draw', meaning to choose at random (Collins English Dictionary & Thesaurus, 2002), whose verbal sense in its cognitive import appears to be suggestive of the randomness of 'chance' or 'lot'. The proclamation statement reads: 'The Promotional Award Draws held on Tuesday, the 10th of December 2013 in United Kingdom is out';

6.1.4. The arbitrariness and fortuitousness of choice through being 'selected randomly' by 'computer draws system' in the statement: 'All participants were selected randomly from World Wide Website through computer draws system and extracted from over 250,000 companies and personal e-mails';

6.1.5. The attribution of 'agency' role to the receiver's e-mail address in the face of obfuscation of human 'agency' once again suggests itself in the following statement: 'Hence your e-mail address was your on-line automatic lottery promo ticket...';

6.1.6. The emphasis on the non-voluntary nature of such a gain through laying stress on the emphatic un-salability of 'tickets' firstly shows itself by way of negation. It secondly suggests itself through denying the agency role on the side of the receiver by choosing 'sold' in lieu of 'bought'. As such, it makes such a state of attribution/denial more emphatic by designating it to be a 'qualification' for the 'draw', what is proclaimed in the statement: 'no tickets were sold and that qualified you for this draw';

6.1.7. As previously explained, the word 'Draw' means to choose at random, a verbal sense whose cognitive import, appears to be suggestive of the randomness of 'chance' or 'lot'. Associating the receiver's 'e-mail address' to the action of drawing, while assigning a number to the 'draw' to give it more validity and liability through substantiating the claim to its occurrence in similar cases, what is proclaimed in the statement: 'Your e-mail address attached to draw No:1593';

6.1.8. Using the modificatory progressive participle 'winning' for the word 'ticket' to emphasize the fortuitous nature of such a selection, in: 'The winning ticket was selected from a Data Base of Internet E-mail Users'; and making such a sense more forcible by further bringing the verb 'came out' which in its semantic plainness tells of the straightforwardness of such a win, a sense which is to be over-emphasized by further including the synonymous phrase 'winning coupon' and finally implying a sense of superiority to be associated with such a choice by the selection of the capital case 'A' and placing it in quotes as modifier, a designation which has been followed by the word 'ballot' just to transfer a sense of superiority in secrecy, what is proclaimed in the statement: 'from which your e-mail address came out as the winning coupon in this category "A" ballot lottery';

6.1.9. The chain of lexical manipulation is to be concluded by the last line where the choice of the legal words 'required' (in 'required to contact'), 'claims' (in 'claims department'), and 'quoting' (in 'quoting your winning draw number') are meant to inculcate a sense of verbal officiality or accreditation to make the asserted claims more credible. Such verbal credibility is overemphasized by the ultimate statement of the word 'validation' as the aetiological justification for assigning a number to the 'winning draw'. This is while all these have been previously presaged by providing the parallel chain of numbers already pointed to, what is to complete the cycle of chance-validity, itself to be proclaimed in the statement: 'You are therefore required to contact our claims department with the details below quoting your winning draw number: No:1593 for validation';

6.1.10. A penultimate point worthy of particular attention here is the shift from using the capitalization as a stylistic technique, as in such words as e-Mail, Winner, Address, Won, Lottery, Award, and Draw towards a lack of initial-letter-capitalization in almost the second half of the text. This dynamic shift in itself is parallel to the transitory movement perception by the receiver of the new-to-old information. That is by interpolating such a shift, the sender is directing the addressee along an assumed line of increasing taken-for-grantedness, thus promoting the credence and acceptability of the status quo with regard to the proposed information. In other words, the transition from the old to new information manifested as such brings with itself, and in fact inculcates, a sense of credibility and proclivity to be felt by the receiver; simply put, the receiver gets used to the text and information it gives in a more credible way.

6.1.11. Ultimately, in this regard, such a state of credence and credibility is throughout substantiated and reinforced by the inclusion of certain numbers, i.e. address number(s), the registration code in heading, the dates, the total sums (over-emphasized by worded numbers in case of the assumed win amount), number of companies and personal e-mails, the draw number, telephone number(s); what, as previously stated, conspires with the text's trajectory of over-wording and contributes to the text's probable pre-designed working assumptions.

## 6.2. Choice of certain words

The next CDA question has to do with the choice of certain words which according to Fairclough (1989) "depends on, and helps create, social relationships between participants" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 116). As for the case in point, the degree of formality with which the text is so interlaced brings with itself a sense of verbal officiality or accreditation; though it is prominently, yet spuriously and inconsistently, displayed. This sense of verbal officiality or accreditation augments the credibility of the text message more verbally, what is, of course, transmitted by the vocabulary used within certain sentential structures. The instances of 'word choice' follow:

6.2.1 The first instance of 'word choice' is to be found in the way the initial sentence opens the text: 'This is to



inform you...’, a sense of formality which is to be buttressed by the length of the sentence, the occasional use of capitalization, as well as the flow of numerical information and the way the numbers are provided in letters/words. As such, it begins the text with a sense of legality, or legitimacy for that matter, and by making it more officially marked laces it with more verbal creditability.

6.2.2 Such formality is further retained by the choice of such words as held, extracted from, hence, qualified, winning coupon, ballot (lottery), (lottery) promo, required to contact, claims department, quoting, validation (though such formality appears to waver and contain apparent inconsistency at certain points -- either due to insufficient knowledge on the side of the sender and itself a possible reason to pinpoint the counterfeit identity of the text producer or as the result of seemingly deliberate choice of certain collocations to embellish the text with more conventional jargon words: is out, tickets ...sold).

6.2.3 A further clue that is suggestive of the presence of formality as such is the use of such titles/honorifics as Sir and Mrs. in the sections under the contact person and signature respectively, what makes referencing to the title referees sound more authoritative.

### 6.3 Use of certain metaphors or symbolic elements

Another line of argument in this study comes from the use of certain metaphors or symbolic elements which according to Fairclough are “means of representing one aspect of experience in terms of another” (Fairclough, 1989, p.119). Such an aspect of experience when represented in metaphoric terms, or metaphorical phraseology for that matter, results in a kind of extended metaphoric-discursive scheme being formed, itself having a variety of systemic and semantic shades attached to that.

6.3.1 Among such symbolic codes of expression are the metaphoric names or designatory phrases for certain virtual institutions, i.e. Microsoft Mega Jackpot Online Lottery Promo 2013, Promotional Award Draws, World Wide Website, Data Base of Internet E-mail Users. As stated in the section under **Fairclough’s CDA Formula: Conceptual Framework**, Fairclough (1989) writes of the discursive element of ‘metaphorical representation’, which is a lexical move where ‘any aspect of experience can be represented in terms of any number of metaphors, and it is the relationship between alternative metaphors that is of particular interest here, for different metaphors have different ideological attachments.’ (p. 119). Apart from the enriching lexical import the application of metaphoric names or designatory phrases for certain virtual institutions might bring to the internet language, a “metaphor” in its entirety “has also assumed a broader range of applicability in the discourse of the computer science, what has led to a cognitive-affective interplay between the user and the computer metaphoric application” (Mehrpooya and Nowroozzadeh, 2013, p. 405). This is the existence of such a cognitive-affective play by the metaphor(s) that involves the receptor more with the discursive message.

6.3.2 Furthermore, from the middle of the text, that is ‘Hence your e-mail address was your on-line automatic lottery promo ticket...’, another line of metaphorical phraseology is extended in such terminological expressions seemingly based on a purpose-built premise, i.e. winning ticket, winning coupon, “A” ballot lottery, winning draw number, all having to do somehow with the idea of metaphorphizing the e-mail address. As stated before, the cyberspace discourse is laced with the metaphors and such a metaphoric load will enmesh the end-users’ cognitive, as well as emotive, perception with the figurative interplay it might run in the discursual flow. According to Mehrpooya and Nowroozzadeh (2013, p. 406), “these metaphors are but the windows worked in the grand scientific edifice of computer [or cyberspace] discourse through which the users can be linked to the certain life events and social and cultural facts intended to recall” (Bracketed part mine). This is how a metaphoric element can promote the perceptibility, and consequently the credibility, of the discursive message of a piece of text, be it either consciously or unconsciously. Such a metaphoric load is further extended and sustained through employing certain verbs such as sold, attached, selected, came out, etc. all deriving their assumed validity from the figurative proposition referred to above.

### 6.4 The experiential values attached to the grammatical features

A further point of discursive concern has to do with the experiential values attached to the grammatical features used. This has to do, first, with the question of foregrounding the *agency* role attached to the *e-mail-address* as the winning ticket, in a sense that all such declarative sentences are attributed to the e-mail address as the *agent* and are expressed in *active voice*. Here again, the ‘causality’ role has been given to the ‘e-mail address’ and not to the human entity as receiver of the email, thus foregrounding the ‘agency’ role of ‘chance/fortuity’ or ‘mere coincidence’ at work in lieu of ‘human labor’ or his/her ‘conscious effort’. The instances here are in active voice, the subject (S) is “an untypically inanimate agent” of an “action process”, “attribution process”, or “event process” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 123). Worthwhile to mention that Fairclough’s use of the term ‘agency’ here receives a specific emphasis and fairly relates to the same idea in Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL was proposed by Halliday and his followers during the 1960s (O’Donnell, 2012, p. 1)); however, it should be noted that it is the deliberate “obfuscation of the agency” which is more the locus of attention here.

6.4.1 The following examples exhibit the “absence of a non-human agency” in their make-up:

- [Y]our e-Mail Address have just Won you the sum of £1,550,952.00 GBP;



<https://doi.org/10.22108/jrl.2023.138133.1764>



- [Y]our e-mail address was your on-line automatic lottery promo ticket;
- Your e-mail address attached to draw No:1593;
- [Y]our e-mail address came out as the winning coupon in this category "A" ballot lottery.

6.4.2 On the other hand, regarding the fact that the concerned Persian receiver in the case in point as well as in many of non-Anglo-American language settings may have the assumption of T/V distinction in mind, the use of the pronoun You and certain titles and honorifics in the formal context of the letter is commonsensically taken as a V case. The fact is that the use of 'you' in English discourse is an unequivocally single option, as contrasted with the Latin 'tu vs vos' (so the contrastive acronym T/V) - 'to vs shoma' in Persian is similar to Latin - what can, anecdotally put, be regarded as a Hobson's choice, a free but single option. The fact is that the single choice of 'you' in such a text, though it might seem unequivocal, can be construed as a sign of 'respect' or 'estimation' or else, all on the basis of its textual cum co-textual surrounding features. As such, this sense of 'estimableness' is a possible impression which might be conveyed and received in a text; thus, this sense in itself can raise the 'perceivability', and 'credibility' for that matter, of the text and its message. The same justificatory analysis in terms of giving a sense of 'estimableness' to the subject applies to the use of honorifics, i.e. Sir, in the text. In addition, the obfuscation of agency in the initial sentence 'This is to inform you...', in spite of the explicit mentioning of a concerned organization in the heading as well as the further mentions of a Sir (Jefferson Donald) and a Mrs. (Carrisalez Ellie) in the signature, is established and further honed by the use of passive voice in certain following statements.

6.4.3 A direct informative statement (All participants were selected randomly ... and extracted from, no tickets were sold, the winning ticket was selected from) is proposed. This is to be more amplified by the inanimate agency attributed to the e-mail address in: your e-mail address was your on-line automatic lottery promo ticket, [y]our e-mail address attached to draw No:1593 (this case can be an instance of passive voice as well), your e-mail address came out as the winning coupon.)

6.4.4 This postulation can be ultimately pronounced and validated by the use of the performative act in the sentence: You are therefore required to contact our claims department with the details below quoting your winning draw number.

6.4.5 All these leave the grounds for agency, causality, or responsibility on the part of the sender unclear.

6.4.6 Another point to be investigated is the use of the pronouns 'we' & 'you'. Not only there is no mention of the pronoun 'we', nor is there any clear reference to a certain identity formation in the text as stated in the previous part. This in itself may be suggestive of the fact that the senders while providing some designatory identities, if not pseudonyms, in the heading as well as in the contact person section and the signature, which in such text types may be the least noticed parts, had had no wish to point to the 'inclusive' 'we' -- in the body of the letter perhaps as the most salient part of the message -- 'inclusive' in the sense pinpointed by Fairclough "of the reader as well as the writer" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 127). Nor is there any reference to the 'exclusive' 'we', still to refer to the writer/addresser "plus one or more others, but not including the 'addressee(s)'" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 127-8). Here the addresser recedes into the background only to bring the pursued 'you' to the fore. Thus, as for the pronoun 'you', which is to be sensed as the foregrounded addressee, though not as prominent as the inanimate e-mail address rephrased as the winning ticket, we see a belated yet topicalized occurrence of this pronoun in the last sentence, albeit in passive SV pattern (Subject + Verb); where the 'you' entity is required to take the probable bait. In fact, as it is perversely permeated throughout the text, the possessive pronoun 'your' can be perceived to have outweighed the 'you' pronoun and thrown it into the shade. As a matter of fact, such topicalized object as 'you' owes its own identity to, and indeed derives that identity from, such instances of nominalization, itself a discursive device, as in: your e-Mail Address (Four times of occurrence), your on-line automatic lottery promo ticket (once), your winning draw number (once). Add to these lines of reasoning, the single occurrence of the objective pronoun 'you' in a dilatory position in the following clause '... that qualified you for this draw' (NB).

### 6.5 The expressive values the grammatical features offer

As for what expressive values the grammatical features may appear to offer, there is almost no trace of using any modal auxiliaries in the text under question as the authenticity claims are all evidenced by simple taken-for-granted statements. Giving a sense of certainty to the subject in the present text augments the credibility of the text message. As defined by Richards and Schmidt (2010, p. 369) the modals "indicate attitudes of the speaker/ writer towards the state or event expressed by another verb, i.e. which indicate different types of **modality**". The function of auxiliary modals thus may be contrasted with the state-of-the-fact verbal tenses where an event or state is expressed by a single verb with absolute or near certainty, which is similar to the taken-for-granted statements in the text at hand. Explained as such, this issue of raising a sense of 'certainty' is related to the theme of CDA analysis as proposed in this study.

6.5.1 Therefore, the claim of authenticity appears to be taken on:

- Initially by the beginning declarative form: This is to inform,
- Further expressive clues retained by a series of statement-of-the-fact simple forms, in both active and passive voice,
- What is eventually culminated by the imperative form of: You are ... required to. Notice that here the pronoun 'you' finds a secondary status that is subjective to an external agency issuing the imperative direction.



### 6.6 Infusing a sense of probable acceptability into the message

The next critical point turns around infusing a sense of probable acceptability into the message, what appears to realize in the existence of certain formal features which have to do with the relationship between the text and outside situational context as well as other individual references, that is the function of 'intertextuality'. Here, however, before proceeding to provide the pertinent analysis in this regard, a marginal note is due in regard to explaining the notions of text, textuality, and intertextuality all in complementary go-togetherness with one another.

The notions of text, textuality, and intertextuality are closely interrelated ideas in discussions of discourse analysis. As a pre-theoretical concept employed in linguistics, a 'text' refers to "a stretch of language recorded for the purpose of analysis and description" (Crystal, 2008, p. 481). In the wider dimension of context with its socio-cultural reference(s), 'textuality' refers to "the attributes that distinguish the text as an object of enquiry", then, "if read in isolation from the broader social matrix in which it is inherently a part, a text becomes incomplete and indeterminate" (Rhiney, 2010, p. 2809-10). As such, in analyzing a text as a piece of discourse, the socio-cultural roles interplayed by different entities in the context are of special significance. Therefore, as far as a text exists and stands in connection with its surrounding context, it has attributes which might entail its 'textuality' as an essential feature of its relation with the context. Relatedly, looking at Julia Kristeva's formulation of 'intertextuality' (1960s), Abrams and Harpham (2015, p. 398) state: "any text is in fact an "intertext"—the site of an intersection of numberless other texts, and existing only through its relations to other texts". Regarding the fact that any text is produced and placed within the wider context of its situational and referential surroundings, one has to admit that the production of no text occurs in a 'void'; and the cyber-texts are not exceptions either as they are the virtual tools to act within the context of the cyberspace. It is in the same regard that Ryan (1999) writes: "The idea of doing things with text also prevails in the case of electronic writing" (p. 99). These being said in terms of the existence of certain formal items in a text having to do with 'intertextuality', the so-called elements, regardless of whether the outside entities can be identified in the micro-world of virtuality or the macro-world of the reality, are to be marked within the text.

6.6.1 Regarding the issue of 'intertextuality', certain real or virtual items employed in the make-up of the text under analysis follow:

- Microsoft Corporation Inc.,
- The Data Protection Act of;[?] (Registration MSN560601Z). The Microsoft House Prescott, London E1 8RP. United Kingdom [question mark: my emphasis],
- Microsoft Mega Jackpot Online Lottery Promo 2013,
- Promotional Award Draws,
- World Wide Website,
- Data Base of Internet E-mail Users,
- [C]laims department.
- msoftcorporationpromodept2013@gmail.com
- Tel: +44 701 114 9231

6.6.2 One interesting point to be stressed here is the liberty with which the actor(s) behind designing such a discursive scheme managed to bring into play certain fabricative virtual designations as 'World Wide Website'; what can be regarded as a typical example of pseudo-intertextuality.

6.6.3 As for the individual referential entities, the following are to be spotted:

- Sir. Jefferson Donald
- Carrisalez Ellie (Mrs.)
- Online Coordinator Microsoft Mega Jackpot.

### 6.7 Progressive transition in the text from declarative to directive function

Last but not least, the ultimate point to be made here concerns the existence of a larger-scale discursive structure which binds this single piece of text together:

6.7.1 Finally comes the progressive transitory function in the text structure from the declarative toward directive end. What is to be culminated by the formulaic request for certain personal tidings being provided as the 'Payment Processing Information' (what may be already accessible online or can be obtained through a simple search). However, the request for filling up such information by the concerned addressee is aimed to meet the 'validation' or 'authenticity' claim in favor of further probable exploitations of related information by the alleged agents.

As seen, to answer the research questions posed in this study, the CDA formula for text analysis was used. In so doing, the techniques in CDA procedure as provided by Fairclough (1989) and found applicable to the text under study were used to help reveal the planned manipulation of discourse by the alleged sender cum fraudster. In fine, the hypothesis that the text sender might have used textual manipulation as a powerful means of swaying the receiver's decision to one's favor is supported. Viewing the act of 'Cyberspace correspondence exchange' as speech event, or event of cyber-social interaction for that matter, the results of employing the CDA procedural framework, as provided in Fairclough CDA formula (1989), to analyze a sample of cyberspace discourse with 'appears to be in favor of the applicability of the so-called techniques in order for unthreading the supposedly alleged manipulative intention(s)



hidden behind the text.

## 7. Conclusion

Though some might believe that the advent of any new cyberspace technology brings with itself certain myth-makings about the possible consequences originating from such ‘virtual incomers’, it seems reasonable to think of such a skepticism as healthy in part; however, mythologizing is one thing but optimistic naivety is another. In the context of cyberspace as is the case with other modes of communication, it is possible as well as probable to use whatever discursual means and matters to establish a sense of ‘rapport’ with an addressee, just to simulate a replica of reality based on a make-believe security scenario. As shown in the present analysis, certain discursive clues at lexical, sentential, textual, and intertextual levels can be found in a piece of cyber-discourse, or a cyber-text for that matter, which though varying in terms of their manipulative import, might be altogether capable of alluring an addressee into admitting an unknown, fake agency as a valid one. Thus, such a scheme is to be set up by proposing the dubious promise of fulfilling what the victim wants via textual manipulation. Adopting a CDA approach to analyze such text types can be helpful in revealing the likelihood of cyber forgery where manipulative acting upon discourse may allure users engaged in online activity to a wrong course of action within the cyberspace. Therefore, the present study has aimed to provide a CDA analysis of an authentic cyber-text assumedly bound to enact a discursive scenario of textual manipulation in the cyber world. In so doing, referring to some major and minor queries raised in the CDA formula provided by N. Fairclough (1989), which has been meant to act as ‘a guide and not a blueprint’ in this regard, this study has addressed the question of the existence of probable discursive clues suggestive of planned manipulative action upon cyber-space discourse users. The outcome of the results obtained, firstly, verifies the applicability of applying the CDA formula (Fairclough, 1989) as a viable research proposition to analyzing the text type at hand, i.e. the text of cyberspace correspondence addressed to a candidate email-user allegedly nominated for lottery-winning, at the lexical, sentential, and textual levels (though modified in accordance with the text’s discursual specifications); and secondly, it provides a list of manipulative discursive elements in the form of lingua-thematic patterns to be detected upon analyzing such typical pieces of cyberspace discourse via CDA formula. As such, this CDA analytical rendition as a sample model is to be presented to the law, language, and internet researchers as well as the interested end-users and readers as a cautionary note towards a more critical consideration of such online encounters, hence helping to increase the necessary awareness of the field under study and avoid the probable consequences of getting involved in such fraudulent schemes.

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