Framing English as a Foreign Language in Fatwa Discourse

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Abstract

Fatwa discourse is among the most effective and powerful instrumental discourse in Muslim communities as a source of knowledge, guidance, adaptation and change. Thus, this study aimed at investigating the discourse of fatwas on the ruling of learning and speaking English to reveal the role such fatwas have played in shaping the attitude towards the English language among Muslims. In doing so, the data, which comprised English and Arabic fatwas, were analysed utilising frame analysis to understand how the issue was framed. The results showed two main ideological overarching frames: an anti-English frame and a pro-English frame. The anti-English frame, which serves as a form of resistance/rejection, shaped English through the following sub-frames: necessity, *unArabic*, unIslamic, anti-imitation and consequence/ramification. On the other hand, the pro-English frame, which is a form of acceptance, ideated English through the frames of necessity and permissibility.

Keywords

Fatwas, religious discourse, frame analysis, resistance, rejection, acceptance

1. Introduction

For centuries, the Muslim world has been struggling to cope with emerging scientific, technical and cultural ideas of the West (Najjar 87). Modernity and globalisation, as some believe, pose challenges and threats to Islam and Muslim identity. The widespread of the Western cultural values, such as gender relations and dress codes, is generally viewed as a threat to the Islamic identity, as these values are alien to the Islamic culture. In the Arab world, Islam has always been one of the forces that has impacted and shaped life and thought equally. As Almaney and Alwan explain, Islam "determines the Arabs' conscious and unconscious reaction to their world" (35). In order to resolve such potentially problematic issues, Muslims often seek advice from their religious scholars through fatwas, which forms a significant legal basis in Arabic discourse to clarify the permissibility and ruling of specific actions and issues and simultaneously protect the identity of Muslims. Glasse defines fatwa as "[a] published opinion or decision regarding religious doctrine or law made by a recognised authority" (125). According to Bannerman, a fatwa can be related to "a weighty point of law" or

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social, ritual or political issues (243). However, fatwa is not a new concept in Islam. Issuing fatwa was a common practice during the Prophet's time. It is a result of *ijtihad* (legal reasoning/deduction) that signifies "the expenditure of effort in order to know the rules of law… [that is,] one should expend effort in the search [for knowledge] to the point where one feels in oneself a total incapacity to extend the search any further" (Calder et al., 255). Hence, a fatwa is an informed opinion, yet nonbinding.

Islamic discourse, accordingly, fatwa discourse, is heterogeneous, namely extremist, modernist and liberal. That is, there are various fatwas on the same topic, and their rulings may differ according to their approach, interpretation and understanding of the Quranic verses and Sunnah. Although "fatwas traditionally are issued by acclaimed jurists… or by an authoritative specialist body of Islamic scholars," in Islam there is "no centralised, international priestly hierarchy, [thus,] there is no uniform method for determining who can issue a valid fatwa" (Black and Hosen 408). Given that there is no hierarchy, Muslims can seek fatwas from any Islamic scholar, and given that fatwas are nonbinding, Muslims can accept or reject such rulings. Fatwas, like any intellectual activity, can be correct in a given place and time and wrong in another place andtime . Hence, they are usually revised from one time and place to another, because they must be "adaptable to social change, particularly where previous rulings have proven no longer suitable to the situation" (Black and Hosen 101). This means that fatwas will continue to be used as "instruments to cope with modern developments" to regulate social norms (Black and Hosen 423). Accordingly, fatwas can be viewed as either a facilitator or an impediment to social change and modern developments through legitimising or delegitimising emerging issues as applicable.

The importance of Saudi Arabia partially arises from the location of the holy cities of Mecca and Madina, which lie at the heart of Saudi Arabia. Since King Abdulaziz bin Saud founded Saudi Arabia in 1932, it has been enjoying unprecedented growth in different sectors, such as economy, health, education, science and technology. However, as a dominantly Muslim country, Saudi Arabia has a well-known national body of Muslim scholars, the Council of Senior Scholars, to issue fatwas on a vast array of topics. The very presence of an authorised religious body reflects the importance of fatwas in the Muslim community.

Saudi Arabia has never been colonised; hence, it has never experienced the long-term impact of missionary activities. Nevertheless, due to the importance of English as a lingua franca, the Saudi government has encouraged the learning of English. Billions of dollars have been spent over the decades "for English teachers' recruitment, language labs, curriculum development, and teachers' training" (Rahman and Alhaisoni 114). Due to the spread of English education in Saudi Arabia, a growing religious discourse, including fatwas, have discouraged Muslims from learning and speaking English. Such fatwas have created a

dichotomy between acceptance and rejection. Whereas learning per se is undeniably permissible; yet, learning and speaking English has been viewed differently by different groups in the society. Such discourses and fatwas have resulted in uncertainty and confusion among the people concerning the practice of learning English. Although fatwas are nonbinding opinions, as mentioned earlier, many Muslims feel otherwise. Hence, a hostile attitude and debate "on how English should be taught and for what purposes, have… persisted" (Elyas and Picard 34). This hostile attitude is not unique to the Muslim world in the Saudi context. Hopkyns (2017) argues that "running through the headlines with regard to the English language," one could conclude that newspapers in the Gulf region – from the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Oman – primarily focus on three themes: "the seductive nature of English, declining levels of Arabic, and the need for bolstering local cultural identity" (20).

Things took a sudden turn in 2016 when the Saudi 2030 Vision was introduced to deliver a rapid series of economic and cultural reforms to change Saudi Arabia's economic landscape. With these reforms, attitudes of many towards English and the West have changed. Therefore, it has become necessary to examine the old fatwa discourse on learning and speaking of English to reveal the dynamics of acceptance and rejection within this discourse that has shaped people's attitude in the past forty years. Accordingly, this study analyses the different frames of acceptance and rejection in selected fatwas. The purpose of the current paper is threefold: to uncover how fatwas discursively discusses the ruling of learning and speaking of English; communicates resistance/rejection, hence discouragement; and finally, legitimises/delegitimises the learning and speaking of English.

2. Fatwa as Discourse

Traditionally, a fatwa has two parts: the first part initiates a question concerning an issue, and the second part constitutes a scholar's answer to the question (Kaptein 115). In the Quran, fatwas signify "asking for a definitive answer" and "giving a definitive answer" (Masud et al.). Hence, fatwa discourse is a dialogical activity (Awass xiv). As mentioned earlier, fatwas are non-binding; they are informed opinions that may vary from one scholar to another. As such, scholars usually cite Quranic verses or hadiths to provide credibility and acceptability to the fatwas. However, as Masud et al. argue, fatwa contents vary according to the scholar's level of competence and the questioner's status. That is, it ranges from nontechnical answers to well-developed and reasoned ones that utilise holy citations and methods of deduction. Regarding the types of fatwas, Masud et al. suggest that there are two types, namely "minor" and "major." Minor fatwas are private and involve an explanation of the law, instructions on correct social behaviour or suggestions for settling disputes. Minor fatwas cause social stability

by providing instructions to run social affairs. On the other hand, major fatwas are given for public affairs in addressing "an unprecedented and difficult issue," such as political issues involving a declaration of war or peace "as well as administrative and fiscal measures and reforms" (Masud et al. 1).

Fatwas contribute to the stability of Muslim communities as their function is to educate and inform Muslims of the rulings on new issues (Caeiro 661). Hence, fatwas are useful in ensuring smooth governance of society, as they "have a long-standing role in the legitimisation of new social and economic practices" (Black and Hosen 412). It is important to note that fatwas, according to Masud et al., are issued taking into consideration local legal cultures and their usages. These variables, as well as the orientation and the schools of thought the scholars belong to, will have a significant impact on the interpretation of Islamic laws and, subsequently, the fatwas.

Issuing fatwas is a common feature in Muslim societies, and as Caeiro posits, they are "a meeting point between legal theory and social practice" (661) Through these fatwas, one can uncover "the thoughts, feelings, experiences and ordeals of people. Any rejection of the worldliness of the fatwa genre would make nonsense of their form and contents" (Mathee 85). Likewise, Caeiro argues that fatwas provide "unique windows into the projects, desires and fears of Muslim individuals and communities living in specific contexts" (81). Hence, fatwa discourse, as social discursive discourse, is not only "a form of knowledge" or a source of guidance, but also a form to "naturally generate power and control" (Caeiro 14). Reviewing the available literature on fatwas, Caeiro explains that there are "four interrelated thematic levels: fatwas as legal tools, as social instruments, as political discourses and as doctrinal reform devices" (661). In this study, fatwas, as a dominant religious discourse, is viewed as a social instrument for shaping, preserving and changing society, particularly in the learning and speaking of English in Saudi Arabia.

Questions often arise as to why we need to study fatwas, and in line with this study, why we need to view fatwas as a discourse. To answer these questions, Whisnant argues:

> Discourses assume that ideas structure social spaces, and therefore ideas can play a significant role in historical change… because ideas produce historical transformation and not simply reflect them, discourse theory teaches us to be very attentive to small shifts in how ideas are expressed in language (4).

Alsharif emphasises the importance of Islamic religious discourse "at the forefront of public and academic interest of Arab and Muslim scholars and researchers" (22); yet, to date, there has not been a systematic study of fatwa discourse. Discourse analysis may critically reveal the internal dynamics of

the fatwas that led to the formation of some Muslims' attitudes towards English as a language.

3. Frame Analysis

Frame analysis is employed to investigate the selected fatwas to reveal the different constructions of Muslims' attitudes towards English.   Being the first to highlight the idea of frames, Goffman defines it as a "schematic of interpretation" (30). To frame is to be selective regarding aspects related to one's perceived reality in order to make these aspects more salient in one's discourse (Entman 52). By selecting specific aspects, the speaker makes them "more noticeable, meaningful or memorable to audiences" (53). In doing so, a speaker promotes his/her version of reality. It is worth noting that placement, repetition or association with familiar and accepted symbols can make any information more salient. Accordingly, as Pan and Kosicki argue, framing intensifies specific parts of an issue to appear as more important and thereby influence one's judgment (53). It is similar to the frame of a picture that "separates it from the wall and from other possibilities" (Altheide 232). Frames are significant as they provide speakers and audience with identified versions of one's reality to understand events and ideologies around them.

Framing is basically a discourse tool to shape the process of agenda selection and thereby offer a positive or a negative perspective on an issue. Put differently, frames, according to Clarke, identify what and how to discuss an event and what will not be discussed (270). Through this process of selection, speakers select possible and available frames, such as religio or secularism frames. In discourse analysis, such frames are identified through speaker's selection of lexical items, metaphors and images. Hence, through frames, an individual can promote his version of reality. In addition, they can provide the audience, as Scheufele notes, with possible "cognitive shortcuts or heuristics for efficiently processing new information, especially for issues that audience members are not very familiar with" (23). Speakers, influenced by existing built-in frames that organise their belief system, continuously make framing judgments consciously and unconsciously to choose what to say and do (Entman 53).

Entman argues that frames can be unveiled in the process of communication at four locations: the sender, within the text itself, with the receiver and within a culture. The present study is concerned with fatwas, hence texts (52). Besides, Entman explains that frames can be manifested in any given text by the presence or absence of specific words, phrases, images or sources of information that can reinforce facts or judgments (52). Thus, frame analysis can reveal the underlying and subtle ideological foundation that may influence the audience's perception and judgment of the reality structured in a given discourse.

In the present study, viewing fatwas as a discourse adds to the concept of framing by revealing the significance and the reasoning behind the inclusion and exclusion of some aspects, information or perspectives. Uncovering the different

frames employed in the fatwas under investigation can reveal how these frames shape issues of learning and speaking English and, hence, the attitude towards English as a language in Saudi Arabia.

4. Methodology
The data of the present study comprises representative fatwas that are available online. Using Google search engine, the following keywords were used in both languages (Arabic and English) to collect the data: *fatwas*, *learning English, speaking English, ruling, permissibility* and *Islam*. The distribution of fatwas collected is as follows: English fatwas (N=6) and Arabic fatwas (N=19). As noted earlier, fatwas consist of two parts, i.e., a question and an answer. This study examined only the answers that addressed the ruling on learning and speaking English. Also, as noted earlier, such fatwas are minor as they are private, and asked either in a private setting or in a group, and involve instructions or suggestions on correct social behaviour (Masud et al.).

Table 1 presents the frames that are derived from the discourse analysis of the fatwas.

Table 1
Current Fatwa Frames

No.	Frames	Explanation
1	Consequence/ramification	This frame highlights the consequences of learning English that are seen as not permissible and against the teachings of Islam.
2	Anti-imitation	Anti-imitation frames learning English as a form of imitating non-Muslims. Imitating non-Muslims is not permissible; hence, learning English is not permissible either.
3	UnIslamic	This is the only indirect frame, which is a result of the anti-imitation and consequence frames. Accordingly, learning English is un-Islamic.
4	UnArabic	This topic frames English as unArabic, which is generally perceived as the language and identity of Islam and Muslims, particularly in Saudi Arabia.
5	Necessity	This topic frames English as permissible when it is a necessity. For example, when it is needed to call non-Muslims to Islam.

| 6 | Permissibility | This topic frames learning in general and learning a language such as English in particular as a permissible act. However, this ruling is limited and restricted by the above frames. |

Frame analysis suits the purpose of this study, as it reveals how our experience, thereof our attitudes, is framed and organised. In qualitative content analysis, frame analysis is utilised to reveal the different frames that are employed in the selected fatwas. It is worth noting that in this qualitative analysis, the illustrative examples taken from the Arabic fatwas were translated by the author. In addition, descriptive statistics were used to support the qualitative discussion of the analysis.

5. Results

Understanding the different attitudes towards English from an Islamic point of view requires an examination of the representations of English that are communicated in the interaction under investigation, i.e., the selected fatwas. These representations can be revealed through uncovering the employed tacit frames, namely, the "underlying structures of belief, perception and appreciation" (Schon and Rein 23) that partly shaped the attitude of some Muslims, as these frames can generate meanings and attitudes; hence, actions. In the selected fatwas, six frames were identified, as follows: permissibility, necessity, unArabic, unIslamic, anti-imitation and consequence/ramification.

Table 2 presents the frequency of the employed frames organised from the lowest to the highest. It is evident that the least frequent frames are *consequence/ramification* frame (8%), *anti-imitation* frame (10%) and *unIslamic* frame (12%). On the other hand, the most frequently employed frames are *unArabic* frame (19%), *necessity* frame (24%), and *permissibility* frame (27%). This quantitative view asserts that the basis of the ruling of learning and speaking English is not religious, as the percentage of the *permissibility* frame is double than the Islamic frame. Hence, the qualitative content analysis below starts with the most frequently employed frames as they are crucial in shaping and understanding the different attitudes towards English as a language.

Table 2
Frequency of Frames

No.	Frames	Frequency	Percentage
1	Consequence/ramification	7	8
2	Anti-imitation	8	10
3	UnIslamic	10	12

4	UnArabic	16	19
5	Necessity	20	24
6	Permissibility	22	27
Total		73	100

The most frequently employed frame is the *permissibility* frame, which comprises 27% of all the utilised frames. In the fatwas under investigation, *permissibility* frame was dominant as these fatwas explained the ruling of learning per se and learning languages, including English. Below are some illustrative examples of fatwas.

1. "Learning is a means."
2. "As for (the ruling of) learning a language other than the Arabic language, then it is not prohibited."
3. "…without prohibiting anyone from speaking in a language other than Arabic."
4. "Learning languages is an important requirement that is legitimate in Islam … It is permissible to speak in languages other than Arabic."
5. "It is allowed to use their language."
6. "The basic principle is that learning English, economics or public administration is permissible."
7. "There is no reason not to learn English."
8. "Learning a language other than Arabic is permissible."

The examples above show how the practice of learning and speaking English is permissible. This frame, as noted earlier, is the dominant frame. It establishes the ruling of learning in general and learning English or a foreign language in particular. The *permissibility* frame lays the foundation of the argument throughout the fatwas. However, this acceptance faces resistance/rejection in the same discourse and the same fatwa. That is, *permissibility* is reframed through five frames. The first frame is the necessity frame, which limits permissibility and the cases where learning English is allowed. The following are some representative examples:

9. "But when it is necessary, it is permissible to use [English] only as much as needed, and the prohibition [to speak the language] shall be eliminated."
10. "Muslims are better off not speaking and writing in a foreign tongue when there is no need to do so."
11. "Speaking nonArabic for no reason is hypocrisy or a way that leads to it."
12. "If there is a need for it as a means of calling people to Allaah, then learning it may be obligatory. If there is no need to learn it, then do not occupy

your time with that or let it distract you from things which are more important and more beneficial."

13. "Learning languages is an important requirement that is legitimate in Islam given the people's need for it, and in order to benefit nonArabic speakers and teach them about Islam and call them to it. As for speaking in English without a need, it is disliked."

14. "Rather, learning English might be compulsory if it has become the only means to call non-Arabic speakers to Islam, i.e., if we are unable to call them to Islam unless we learn their language to be able to communicate with them."

15. "Learning English to call people to Islam is a must."

16. "To learn a foreign language when it is needed is legitimate, how if it is a vessel of science and technical progress, as it is today? Then learning it will be a collective obligation to receive the useful science for our nation."

It should be noted that the *necessity* frame is the second most frequently utilised frame in the data under investigation (24%). The examples above reveal how acceptance is met with resistance through a set of predetermined conditions in most fatwas. From the perspective of the *necessity* frame, as the examples above showed, learning and speaking English is allowed when it is necessary. This limitation can imply that when it is not necessary, it is not allowed or at least discouraged to learn or speak English. Although it seems that many scholars refrained from saying it, some fatwas go further by indicating that when it is not necessary, English is not acceptable (see examples 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13). Moreover, these fatwas defined and identified the needs and the cases when such a language is needed. Necessity, according to these fatwas, is calling people to Islam (as in examples 12, 13, 14 and 15) and a means to communicate and translate knowledge to the Muslim world. It is worth noting that in example 9, the permissibility of speaking English (when it is needed) is that it is permitted but discouraged by saying "to speak only as much as needed." Through framing what is necessary and what is not, these fatwas introduced another resistance/rejection factor to learning and speaking English and accepted learning and speaking the language as long as it is within the religious context.

Another frame that indicates resistance/rejection is the third most frequent frame, namely *unArabic*, which comprises 15% of the data. The *unArabic* frame plays a crucial role in framing the attitude and perception of English: simply, it is not Arabic. Below are some examples:

17. "A Muslim should not speak a language other than Arabic without the need if he can speak Arabic, because the Arabic language is the symbol of Islam and its people."

18. "… to replace the Arabic language with a foreign language is tantamount to replacing the best with the lowest (less important)."

19. "This is what is happening these days, English is the holiest language, a man feels flattered that his son knows how to speak English even if he is ignorant about the grammar of Arabic; this is detrimental [to the Muslim society]."

20. "What we should avoid is to take English as an alternative to Arabic (i.e., replacing Arabic with English), this is not permissible, and we have heard some fools speaking English instead of Arabic."

21. "First of all, there is a difference between those whose first language is not Arabic and those whose first language is Arabic. As for those whose first language is Arabic, unlike the other group, preserving Arabic is a collective obligation, so if Muslims neglect Arabic and as a result, it is threatened with extinction, then all Muslims will be sinners."

22. "Those who know the virtues and importance of Arabic know that they should take care of Arabic, especially that the Islamic rituals such as prayers are not acceptable unless you recite the Quran in Arabic. Thus, Muslims everywhere learn Arabic regardless of their race and ethnicity. They are keen on preserving Allah's revelation."

23. "Some people rant in English, believing that learning English is a virtue disdaining Arabic; there is no doubt this is very dangerous."

24. "Speaking English should not mean that you should be interested in this language alone and neglect Arabic. No, you must care and learn Arabic and its Islamic science."

In the above examples, resistance/rejection is persistent, showing that English cannot replace Arabic; that is, English is not as good or relevant as Arabic. English is not as important as Arabic. This *unArabic* frame indicates that English is viewed as a threat to the Islamic and Muslim identity and culture, as some people may consider it superior to Arabic (see examples 19 and 23). This frame is employed in these fatwas to discourage people from learning English, fearing that Arabic would be neglected (examples 20 and 24). Hence, it discourages people from using it without a need; instead, they are advised and encouraged to learn and use Arabic because preserving Arabic is a collective responsibility of all Arabs and Muslims (example no. 21), and Arabic is more important for preserving identity than English (example 18).

The third instance of resistance/rejection is the result of the *unIslamic* frame, and overlaps with the anti-imitation and *consequence/ramification* frames. Accordingly, it will be discussed within these two frames. Firstly, the fatwas that represent the *unIslamic* frame within the anti-imitation frame, are those that prohibit imitating non-Muslims. Below are some examples:

25. "As this constitutes imitation of the non-Arabs, which is disliked, as we have already mentioned."

26. "The basic principle is that it is not permissible to imitate the Jews, the Christians and the *A'âjim* ([western and native English-speaking]non-Arabs), and it is an obligation to do the opposite of what they do, in accordance with several religious texts addressing this issue, and … to use their language and imitate their accent and gestures while speaking their language, as this indicates some affection and a hearty sympathy towards them."
27. "The spread of English learning is a form of colonialism and us being the colonised."
28. "If a person uses a foreign language not intending to imitate non-Muslims, then it is permissible."
29. "Arabs speaking a language other than Arabic is a form of imitation of [western and native English-speaking] non-Arabs. If it is without a need, then it is not permissible."
30. "We witness some Arabs who are not interested in Arabic as a result of imitating and admiring the West and their spurious civilisation."
31. "To use a language other than Arabic, which is the symbol of Islam and language of the Quran… is disliked, as it is a form of imitation."
32. "Using English when it is not needed is forbidden because it is a form of imitation."

In the examples above, the fatwas appear to promote the idea, that Arabs speaking English or any language other than Arabic is a form of imitation. Imitation, in general, may not be perceived as negative, but imitation of Western languages and cultures, in particular, is considered unIslamic by certain groups of people in the community. This gives rise to the unIslamic frame which shapes the views of these Arab Muslims towards English. This frame presents resistance/rejection to the idea of learning and speaking English altogether. As a result, the anti-imitation frame, and in turn the unIslamic frame, shows that English or any foreign language is viewed as a threat to Islam and Islamic identity and culture; therefore, its use is discouraged.

As noted above, the second frame that gives rise to the unIslamic frame is the consequence/ramification frame. The following examples illustrate the use of this frame:

33. "It is also feared for the child that if he learns English, he will not suffice with just speaking it, rather he may try to read books. He will pick up English books and read English literature or any other type of literature….and so a great harm will take place… we do not know what (evils) are in those books. It has been mentioned that the books which are designed to teach English contain some evils."

34. "I say that I object and view that we are on dangerous grounds when teaching our young children the English language, since it may become their main language."

35. "Being accustomed to a certain language greatly affects the mind, morals and religion."

36. "Learning English is permissible if it will not cause any harm and weaken the faith."

37. "Some children may not be able to talk to their parents in Arabic, and this causes a blot on their Islamic identity."

38. "Speaking non-Arabic for no reason is hypocrisy or a way that leads to it."

In the instances above, the consequences or ramifications of learning English are deemed unIslamic. It discourages learning English not because it is not permissible, but because there might be impermissible consequences such as reading books that contain unIslamic material (example 33); children learning English may take it as their first language (example 34); languages affect the mind, morals and religion (example 35); learning English may lead to weakening of one's Arabic, which leads to the erasure of the Islamic identity (example 37. Here, the Islamic identity is synonymous with the Islamic identity, as every citizen in Saudi Arabia is or should be Muslim. Example 36 allows the learning of English as long it does not cause any harm. All these consequences mentioned are deemed unIslamic. Therefore, this frame gives rise to the *unIslamic* frame as well. The consequence/ramification frame indicates that English is viewed as a threat to Islam and Islamic identity.

6. Discussion

The analysis reveals two main ideological overarching frames: an anti-English frame and a pro-English frame. The anti-English frame, which serves as a form of resistance/rejection, shaped attitudes toward English through the following sub-frames: necessity (means) frame, *unArabic* frame, unIslamic frame, anti-imitation frame and consequence/ ramification frame. On the other hand, the pro-English frame, which is a form of acceptance, framed English through necessity frame and permissibility frame. It should be noted that the necessity frame, as shown in the examples above, was employed to achieve both ideological goals, i.e., acceptance with resistance/rejection. Table 3 below shows the distribution of the types of frames in the data.

Table 3
Frequency of Types of Frames

Pro-English (Acceptance)	Pro/Anti-English (Acceptance/Rejection)	Anti-English (Rejection)

Frame Type	%	Frame Type	%	Frame Type	%
Permissibility	27	Necessity	24	Un-Arabic	19
				Un-Islamic	12
				Anti-imitation	10
				Consequence/ramification	8
Total	27	Total	24	Total	49

From Table 3, the *anti-English* frame (49%) is nearly double that of the *pro-English* frame (27%). This shows that the fatwa discourse on the ruling of learning and speaking English discourages it; however, it does so purely on an Islamic basis. That is, the resistance/rejection attitude is a result of viewing English, which is a foreign language and culture, as a threat to Islam. Further, there are two main types of threats, i.e., realistic and symbolic. The symbolic threat is the most relevant for the current study. It is, as Stephan and Stephan explain, a result of perceived difference in "values, norms and beliefs" (qtd. in Simonovits 55). Further, 19% of the employed anti-English subframes are unArabic. In other words, almost a third of the resistance/rejection frames revolves around Arabic as the language of Arab Muslims, which in turn indicates that it is an issue of identity and culture, not religion. This fear is not specific to the Muslim context, as movements of rejection or resistance is society are a natural reaction to an influx of any foreign culture (Appadurai 26). The second source of resistance/rejection is the *anti-imitation* frame. It is known that imitation is a crucial issue, as imitation may result in changes in identity, culture and values. Hence, it is deemed unIslamic. Similarly, the consequences of learning English are viewed unIslamic as these ramifications pose a threat to culture, values and identity. As mentioned earlier, culture and identity in Saudi Arabia are deeply grounded as Islamic.

Another way to view these ideological frames is from a continuum perspective. From the ideological continuum of fatwa discourse on the ruling of learning and speaking English (see figure 1), it is evident that there are two opposite ends, i.e., *permissibility* (acceptance) or legitimisation (27%) and *unIslamic* (rejection) or delegitimisation (12%), and in between, there are various degrees of acceptance or rejection. Nevertheless, this continuum reveals that the *permissibility* percentage overweighs that of the *unIslamic* frame. Hence, the ruling of learning and speaking English is framed, employing different frames other than these two extremes. The English language thrives in between the two extremes.

←**Acceptance**   **English Language**   **Rejection**→
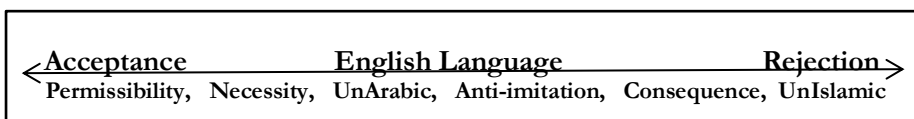**Permissibility, Necessity, UnArabic, Anti-imitation, Consequence, UnIslamic**

Figure 1. The Ideological Continuum of Fatwa Discourse

7. Conclusion

The narrative of the ruling on learning and speaking of English has a hierarchical structure. Therefore, they should be viewed from a macro/micro perspective to reveal the legitimisation issues. At the macro-level, fatwa discourse legitimises learning and speaking English, as learning is permissible (a macro topic). This legitimisation takes place in a very straightforward fashion by declaring that learning in general and learning a foreign language, in particular, is permissible. On the other hand, at the micro-level, there are micro issues that delegitimise it, such as necessity, unArabic, imitation, the consequences of learning a foreign language and the unIslamic aspects that might be involved in doing so.

It is worth noting that these frames are echoed in a study conducted by Hopkyns in 2017. The three themes, running through the headlines in the Gulf countries' newspapers with regard to the English language are similar to the frames that are revealed in the fatwas. It seems that this is not only the stand of religious scholars, but also educators and journalists. Nevertheless, Hopkyns points out that many studies showed that Arabs in the Gulf area generally have a positive attitude towards English (21).

Despite resistance and rejection, English continues to thrive in many Muslim countries, especially in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Ministry of Education, representing the Saudi government, states that English is "the Latin of the contemporary world" (Aldabbagh 3). That is, as Latin, English has become the dominant language of science, research and technology. Accordingly, the ministry has been revising, updating and expanding the teaching of English in schools. In 2004, the Ministry of Education started requiring English to be taught from the sixth grade, and since 2012, the language has been taught starting from grade four. With the introduction of the Saudi 2030 Vision, the Ministry of Education has become aware of the importance of aligning the educational system and its courses, especially science, technology and English, with the goals of the vision. English can be a transformational force and the incorporation of English courses in schools will contribute towards the Saudi 2030 Vision to "enable youth to get their rightful place in the job market" (Baloch 44). Fatwa appears to have negatively affected some parts of the community regarding the use of the English language, but in others, it fails to stop the language's presence and growth. Nevertheless, fatwa discourse is essential in shaping the mindset of the Muslim world, and due to this, they are continuously revised to keep up with the needs of the changing times.

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