

Response to Islamophobia in the Arabic Islamic discourse: A critical discourse analysis

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Abstract: In the aftermath of September 11, Muslim scholars made numerous attempts to explain Islamophobia from the Islamic perspective; they presented arguments that are not addressed in the Western narrative. Two texts in Arabic by the prominent Muslim preacher, Mohammad Hassan and by the Muslim orator Fadhel Sliman are analysed from a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) viewpoint. This analysis aims to demonstrate how language is inextricably linked with ideology. This paper demonstrates that textual strategies in the Arabic Islamic discourse and their ideological implications show distinct characteristics some of which add to the present literature on discourse. The aim of the chosen texts is to educate and create solidarity between the speakers and the audience in fighting Islamophobia. The reliance of the speakers on tactics such as quoting from the Holy Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* to defend Islam, and choice of words and sentence structures may instigate discussions about the persuasive power of the Arabic Islamic narrative.

Keyword: Critical discourse analysis; Islamophobia; religious discourse; September 11; sermons.

Abstrak: Selapas berlakunya insiden September 2011, ramai pemikir Muslim membuat cadangan untuk menerangkan konsep Islamophobia daripada perspektif Islam demi untuk perbincangan yang tidak diberikan dalam naratif Barat. Dua tulisan dalam Bahasa Arab oleh penda’wah terkenal, Muhammad Hassan, dan oleh pemedato Muslim, Fadhel Slimen, dianalisis melalui sudut pandangan perbincangan kritis (CDA) demi untuk menunjukkan bagaimana bahasa berkait dengan ideologi dan retorik. Disamping itu juga, perbincangan

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turut menerangkan bagaimana pembentukan versi realiti dalam teks yang dipilih. Kertas kerja ini menunjukkan bahawa strategi teksual dalam perbincangan Arab secara Islamik dan implikasi ideologi menunjukkan bahawa terdapat beberapa ciri berbeza yang dapat menambah lagi persembahan perbincangan literatur yang sedia ada. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk mengajar dan membentuk kesatuan antara pengucap dengan khalayak dalam membincangkan Islamophobia. Tumpuan pembeda adalah terhadap taktik-taktik pergantungan seperti memetik ayat-ayat Al-Quran dan Hadith-hadith dalam mempertahankan Islam. Disamping itu juga, pemilihan perkataan dan struktur ayat mungkin menghasut perbincangan-perbincangan tentang kuasa pemujuk dalam jalan cerita Arab Islam.

Kata Kunci: Analisis perbincangan kritis; Islamophobia; perbicangan agama; Semtember 11; kutbah.

Potter and Wetherell's statement that "people are using their language to construct versions of the social world" (2001, p. 199) summarises the role people play in discourse. Astutely, the phrase "versions of the social world" is in essence the product of any discourse regardless of the topic of discussion. As we will soon discover, discourse is a web-like design of intermingling doctrines related to the world of politics, media, and religion. Each doctrine has its own agenda driven by an ideology and uses language as its indispensable tool. In the Arabic Islamic discourse, the Arabic language plays an irreplaceable role in the Islamic narrative. It is the language of the Qur'ān and Muslim literature. It is also the lingua-franca among Arab nations. The texts under scrutiny use both Modern Standard Arabic and dialectal forms to discuss the controversial Islamophobia that arose after September 11, 2001.

There is no shortage of literature examining Islamophobia (Morgan & Poynting, 2012; Poole & Richardson, 2006; Sheehi, 2011). The bulk of the work on Islamophobia is predominantly written from a non-Muslim perspective; hence, its discussion may be viewed as a skewed interpretation unrepresentative of what Muslims believe about this phenomenon. Morgan (as cited in Zeidan 2003, p. 3) believes that "every religion ought to be understood from its own standpoint for that is how it is understood by its adherents." It is essential to take into account how influential Muslim scholars view Islamophobia so that the understanding of Islam could be more objective and holistic. This will make combating Islamophobia more realistic. This is why many attempts were made by

Muslim scholars using various forms of communication such as social media to demystify Islam. The two texts under scrutiny sample some of the ideas and discussions that the average Muslim holds. In both texts, there are some implied ideologies. Firstly, the West should not attack Islam, simply because Islam's principles do not clash with the "civilised" West. Secondly, Islamophobia is partially an outcome of the uncharacteristic behaviour and conduct of some Muslims living in the West. Thirdly, Islamophobia can be combated if more efforts are made by Muslims to explain their religion to others. Finally and surprisingly, attempts made by Western institutions to stoke fears of Islam has paradoxically benefited Islam. It has raised the general public interest in Islam which led to an increase in Westerners embracing Islam since 9/11 (Bowen 2009).

The two texts are conducted predominantly in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and there is no shortage of literature describing the structural or semantic characteristics of the Arabic language, including Wright (1951), Suleiman (1989), Holes (1995). Al Sumurrai (2001, 2007, 2008), among others, have provided astute accounts and explanations of the Arabic language and the Qur'ān. However, there is a paucity of work in the field of Arabic discourse with the exception of Gully (1996-1997), Kammensjø (2005), and Al-Kohlani (2010). But the seminal work of Bazzi (2009) remains an authoritative account of discourse analysis in Arabic, particularly her semiotic approach in the analysis of the Arabic media. She demonstrates through discourse analysis (for instance transitivity) how the same news or events presented in Western media are interpreted or translated considerably different in the Arab media, each with its respective agenda and ideology.

As for the relationship between the Arabic language, ideology, and rhetoric, there is a paucity of literature in this respect with the exception of Abdel-Latif (2005), Abdul-Raof (2006), and Singh, Kaur, and Thuraisingam (2011). For instance, Abdel-Latif (2005) provides a detailed analysis of the concept of *balāghah* (art of eloquence) in Arabic. He makes the point that eloquence could be used to manipulate, influence, and control the Arab audience. As for Abdul-Raof (2006), his treatment of rhetoric is like a child-first-step in the treatment of rhetoric in Arabic. It, however, remains somewhat more of an instructional and pedagogical work than a critique. This short literature review shows that work is still needed to explain how the Arabic language is used

to argue, defend, and explain controversial and topical issues such as Islamophobia. Hence, the aim of this article is to demonstrate through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) how the Arabic texts perform these tasks with the imbedded ideologies, which may espouse some of the theoretical aspects of discourse analysis.

Theoretical background

This article examines the texts with the CDA and Systemic Functional Linguistics. According to Partridge (2006, p. 178), “the aim of a critical approach to discourse analysis is to help reveal some of these “hidden” and often out of sight values, positions and perspectives.” Discourse is never arbitrary. According to Kress (as cited in Paltridge, 2006, p. 183), Critical Discourse Analysis views that “the relationship between language and meaning is never arbitrary in that the choice of a particular genre or rhetorical strategy brings with it particular presuppositions, meanings, ideologies and intentions.” Furthermore, Eggins (1994, p. 10) argues that “our use of language will also be influenced by our ideological positions: the values we hold (consciously or unconsciously), the biases and perspectives we adopt.”

Discourse needs to be analysed in context (Paltridge, 2006). According to Simpson (1993, p. 5), “language is not used in a contextless vacuum; rather, it is used in a host of discourse contexts, contexts which are impregnated with the ideology of social systems and institutions.” In the treatment of Islamophobia, one must allow for various dimensions such as racism, education, or degree of knowledge about Islam in the West, and how Muslim scholars construct their own conception of reality to defend Islam.

Besides context, intertextuality is a significant tenet in CDA analysis. It is designed to see how different texts link to ideas or topics (Wodak, 2011). This is bolstered by Locke (2004, p. 16) who stated that “any utterance is a link in a very complexly organised chain of other utterances.” Intertextuality is significant, because texts usually have some profound and imbedded ideas or ideologies that need to be contrasted and investigated further.

Ideology is a prominent theme in CDA. Simpson (1993) defines it as “the taken-for-granted assumptions, beliefs and value systems which are shared collectively by social groups.” Billig (2001) expands this

definition further by asserting that the utterance can carry a “habit” and “belief” that are deeply ingrained in the speaker’s consciousness. This is a valid view particularly in religious narratives. In the Islamic tradition, many ideologies that are perceived to be natural and reasonable in Islam, such as the Islamic law that dictates that women cannot travel alone without the company of a relative, may clash with the Western ideology of women’s right to travel freely.

In addition, in analysing any discourse, one should be careful about how speakers use language “to construct versions of the social world” (Potter & Wetherell, 2001, p. 199). In other words, the language used in the discourse, when carefully crafted, may involve either the omitting or inclusion of resources (Potter & Wetherell 2001, p. 199).

It is through knowledge of how to manipulate language that the speaker achieves power. Foucault (as cited in Hall, 2001) links knowledge with power and believes that the link is not simply linear, but has a web-like structure. When knowledge is linked to power, even if it is surmised, it makes itself true. Fairclough (1989, p. 36) adds to the definition of ideology by stating that it manifests itself with power either through consent or coercion. Linking this to the Islamic tradition, one finds that Imams and religious figures who have a weight in the Islamic community do not usually operate individually but work under institutions or organisations that operate with their own agendas and ethos. Hence, language is carefully chosen, and texts in Fairclough’s (1989, p. 97) words become “ideologically creative.”

Methodology

The two Arabic texts used in this analysis are based on the speech of two known Muslim scholars who have a strong following in the Islamic community, both in the Islamic world and in the West. The first text is a forty-four minutes video recording of the cleric Mohammad Hassan (2014) (MH henceforth). MH is an Egyptian *Salafī* cleric who has a strong following in many Arab countries. His speech is mostly in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) which contrasts with the second text; a forty-three minute video recording of an interview with Doctor Fadhel Sliman (FS) conducted by Mohammad Iwadhi. FS, an Egyptian orator, is the founder of *Jusūr* (Bridges foundation); an international organisation aiming at training Muslim speakers on how to present Islam. FS is also known for his evocative film “Jihad against Terrorism”, a response to the

film titled “Obsession” that was allegedly funded by the Clarion Fund.¹ Furthermore, FS has conducted numerous workshops and seminars in the USA about Islam and the West. His most effective work is translated in the production of short films such as *al-ījāz fī sharḥ al-Islām* (Islam in Brief) and *al-Islām, dīn salām aw ḥarb?* (Islam, a religion of peace or war?).² MH’s speech and FS’s interview are transcribed verbatim.³

In the analysis of these two texts, qualitative and quantitative methods are used to outline the main arguments put forward by the speakers, to determine the strategies used by the subjects for convincing the listener, and the type of language used in the discourse. Hence, the discourse analysis will be based on description, interpretation of discourse in context, followed by a discussion to assess the effectiveness of the two texts.

The texts and views of Islamophobia

The next two sections outline the main arguments forwarded in the two chosen texts followed by a detailed discussion of their textual strategies and their imbedded ideologies. This strategy follows Hall’s (1975) method of text analysis where he identified three stages of examination, namely “a long preliminary soak in the text, which allows the analyst to focus on particular issues while preserving the “big picture”; a close reading of the chosen text and preliminary identification of discursive strategies and themes; and an interpretation of the findings within the larger framework of the study” (as cited in El-Nawawy & Khamis, 2009, p. 18). Discussing the textual strategies includes genre, sentence structure, agency, cohesion through repetition, and synonyms.

Text 1 refers to the speech by MH. He wrote several religious books on faith and *da‘wah* (propagation of faith). One of his prominent books is *Aḥdāth al-nihāyah wa-nihāyat al-‘ālam* (Events of the End and the End of the World). He regularly appears on television stations including *al-Raḥmah* from which this text is taken. This speech is also available on YouTube and possibly in other formats since Islamic websites have exploded in recent years with various aims and agendas. According to El-Nawawi and Khamis (2009, p. 1), “some of these sites were launched by authoritative religious clerics as virtual extensions of conventional Islamic institutions, while others are simply attempts by ordinary individuals, with no formal religious education or training, to create an online public space for discourse about Islam.”

In this passionate and emotive text, MH puts forward three main arguments. First, that fear of Islam is real and reflected mainly in media and the Web. Second, the accusations against Islam are imbalanced and are mainly based on one or two aspects of Islam, which is the application of *ḥadd* punishments such as whipping and the cutting of hands. The main arguments put forward against Islam are solely based on one branch of Islamic practice whereas other Islamic foundations such as creed, prayer, and social dealings have been overlooked.⁴ Third, MH emphasises the point in various places in his discourse that there is no compulsion in Islam.

In the second text, Mohammad Iwadhi interviews Fadhel Sliman where the latter puts forward most of the arguments. The second text contrasts with the first text on different levels: linguistically, ideologically, and rhetorically. The language used in Sliman's dialogue is a mixture of MSA, colloquial Egyptian Arabic, and Gulf Arabic (Kuwaiti dialect). In his introduction, Iwadhi sets the scene by presenting the subject of Islamophobia in a negative light and describes it as "horror" and an "awful painting". Fadhel Sliman starts his argument by stating that Islamophobia did not begin in the aftermath of September 11, but began when Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) declared his message in Mecca. Before Muhammad proclaimed prophethood, he was known to his people as "the truthful one" and "the "trusted one", but after the revelation, animosity began towards him and his followers. He was named "the liar" and "the magician". Guillaume (1954) says that in the early stages of the conflict the Meccans tried to discredit Muhammad by ridicule and accusations of sorcery, and finally of downright fraud in that he got his ideas from a foreigner. FS argues that early animosity towards the Prophet was not intentionally directed to the Prophet himself but towards the message itself. This is because Islam, according to Sliman, was revolutionary as it brought with it new ideas such as the abolition of slavery, raising the status of women, by giving them a right to inherit, and the prohibition of the killing of young girls.

Sliman also points out that the events that happened in the last twenty-five years have angered many Muslims and have forced some to commit acts of violence in retaliation. For instance, *The Satanic Verses* by Salam Rushdie, the Dutch film that demonises Islam, the Danish cartoons of the Prophet, the prohibition of wearing the *ḥijāb* and *niqāb* in France, the desecration of the Qur'ān in the lavatories of Guantanamo

prison, the burning of the Qur'ān in America, and the prohibition of building mosque minarets in Switzerland. These events have angered Muslims worldwide.

Functional characteristics of the texts

This section outlines the general characteristics of both texts taking into consideration context, genre, and rhetoric. The discussion will progress to the linguistic element including choice of sentence structure and words. Prior to discussing the texts, it is crucial to distinguish between two types of discourses, or in Baḥr al-'Ulūm's (2010) words, *al-khiṭāb al-dīnī* (religious discourse) and *al-khiṭāb al-Islāmī* (Islamic discourse). In Baḥr al-'Ulūm's description, the religious discourse is static while the Islamic discourse is more dynamic, open to interpretation, changing with modern times, and addresses the challenges that Muslims face today. Islamic discourse, in Baḥr al-'Ulūm's words, is "a human creation and an inspiration from the blessed texts." In effect, he adds that the Islamic Arabic discourse "needs innovation so it becomes in tune with the times we live in" (Baḥr al-'Ulūm, 2010, p. 27).

The Islamic discourse by the *'ulāmā'* has special characteristics, some of which are learned and carried through tradition. The evidence is that the sermon's arguments are bolstered by quotations from the Holy Qur'ān or *ḥadīth*. These are usually followed by historical examples. It is rare for clerics to quote from secular sources with the exception of a paucity of Arabic poems or proverbial stories. For instance, in Text 1, MH quotes a short poem composed by a poet whose name was left unmentioned.⁵ In Text 2, a brief reference was made to the Syrian poet Adonis.

There is almost no personal utterance or argument discussed without being substantiated by a quote from these two sources. Understandably, the Islamic discourse relies heavily on the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*. In fact, Abū Zahw (1967, p. 588) cites that the Imam al-Shāfi'ī, the Muslim Jurist, quoted in his poem that "all science except for the Qur'ān is a waste - [Also] except *ḥadīth* and jurisprudence in religion and that true knowledge/science is related to religion, apart from that it is Satan's whisperings." Though one cannot determine with accuracy the context of the Imam al-Shāfi'ī's poem and whether he values modern sciences as opposed to religious sciences, what is certain is that according to Abū Zahw (1967), al-Shāfi'ī had astute knowledge of the Qur'ān and

Sunnah, and that he wrote the books himself and dictated them to his pupils. He principally warned people against abandoning the Qur'ān and Sunnah. This may explain al-Shāfi'ī's stance mirrored in the poem quoted above.

In fact, the importance of quoting from religious texts in the Islamic discourse, especially in Friday sermons, seems to be a subliminal imperative, unlike other sermons found in other Islamic nations such as Malaysia where secular quotes are used (Singh et al., 2011). However, one concedes that quotes from secular sources are used by some contemporary Arab scholars such as Tareq al-Suwaidan who, in one of his series, quoted John Kennedy stating: “*yajib ‘alā al-bashariyyah an taḍa‘a ḥaddan lil-ḥurūb qabla ‘an taḍa‘a al-ḥurūb ḥaddan lil-bashariyyah*” (Mankind must put an end to wars before wars put an end to mankind).⁶

Islamic sources do encourage that knowledge could be taken or adopted from secular sources, including from non-Muslims. It was narrated that Ali stated that “knowledge is the believer’s utmost aspiration, so take it even from the hands of the polytheists, and don’t feel conceited to take wisdom from whoever” (Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, 1994, p. 422).

Furthermore, narratives in the form of personal stories aim at engaging the listener or congregation and they play a role in the convincing process. In Text 1, MH made the narrative personal in several parts of his speech when, for instance, he stated that if he should make a mistake, Islam should not be judged. In addition, when he was addressing Muslim youth by explaining to them the rules of da‘wah, he used personal accounts to strengthen his message by emphasising that he cannot guarantee that his own son would follow the teachings of Islam, as in: «By Allah I don’t control it (*hidāyah* – “guidance”), by Allah I don’t control my son’s guidance.”

Genre and context

The characteristics of the Islamic speech operates within the boundaries of context and genre. Halliday (1978, 1989) emphasises the importance of context and suggests that it is comprised of field, mode, and tenor. Eggins (1994, p. 52) defines *field* as “what the language is being used to talk about,” *mode* as “the role language is playing in the interaction” and *tenor* as “the role relationships between the interactants.”

Applying field, mode, and tenor to both texts, one finds that the mode needs an undivided attention, as no one could deny the importance of context in language choice, be it formal or informal. Eggins (1994, p. 53) uses the term “distance” that could be interpreted as spatial/ interpersonal or experiential. Spatial distance deals with “situations according to the possibilities of immediate feedback between the interactants.” The experiential distance deals with the “distance between language and the social process occurring.” Applying this to both texts, one may summarise it in the following:

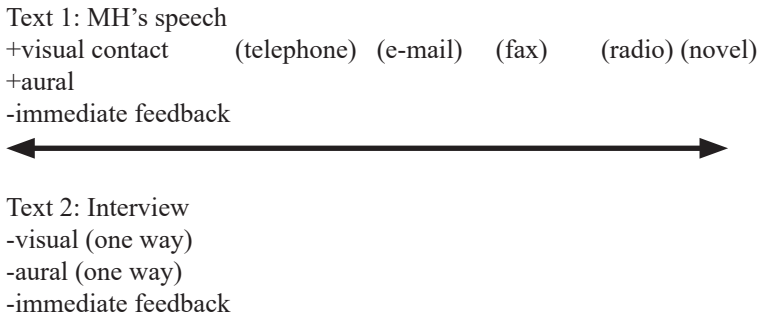


Figure 1: Spatial/interpersonal distance
Source: adapted from Eggins (1994, p. 54)

Figure 1 shows that both texts are placed at the left-hand end of the continuum where the visual contact between the speaker and the audience is only present in Text 1. In contrast, because it is a broadcast show, Text 2 shows one-way interaction with both visual and aural. The two texts do not have immediate feedback from the audience where in Text 1, for instance, the feedback is not expected as the speech could not be interrupted.

As for the experiential distance, this is summarised in the following figure (Figure 2):

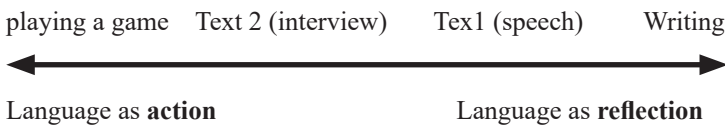


Figure 2. The experiential distance continuum
Source: adapted from Eggins (1994, p. 54)

Figure 2 shows that both texts are placed in the centre of the continuum as they do not have the characteristics to have been labelled as “language as action” or “language as reflection.” For instance, the examples given by Eggins (1994, p. 54) show that in one end of the continuum “playing a game” signifies language as action and “writing” as an example of language for reflection. Hence, the two texts do not sit in at the extreme end of the continuum because neither is completely interactive or completely reflective. This hinges primarily on the difference that exists between the spoken and the written discourse.

Unlike the carefully written discourse, the spontaneous spoken discourse, according to Halliday (1989), has specific characteristics, such as mistakes brief sentences, hesitations, and silences. This does not suggest that every spoken discourse is inherently arbitrary. Kress (1991, p. 86) maintains that the linguistic features of a discourse are never arbitrary and that “the form” should not be ignored which includes genre, rhetorical strategies with specific presuppositions, lexicalisation, and syntax.

Eggins (1994, p. 34) defines genre as “the context of culture” and Text 1 is in effect a religious speech that is encouraged in Islam. It is considered a form of *ḥalaqāt al-dhikr* (meetings for the purpose of invocation of God). This is evident in the following Qur’ānic verse: “And keep thy soul content with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His Face; and let not Thine eyes pass beyond them, seeking the pomp and glitter of this Life; no obey any whose heart We have permitted to neglect the remembrance of Us, one who follows his own desires, whose case has gone beyond all bounds” (18:28) (‘Alī, 2006)

As for the register or “context of situation”, Islamic speeches deal with present-day issues related to the Islamic world. These are devised to inform, argue, and ultimately inspire the congregation to do good deeds and to be better Muslims. The content is chosen beforehand and usually incorporates additional sub-themes. However, in impromptu speeches, the speaker may change topics, but the topics usually share similar sub-themes. However, diction varies according to the audience. It is usually conducted in classical Arabic. The voice pitch is usually high and noticeably similar to Friday sermons. It is encouraged in the Islamic tradition, following

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.), that the Imam raises his voice and be passionate about what he says.

Interview, such as Text 2, are becoming increasingly common in the Arab/Muslim world, particularly on television channels. These encourage the sharing of ideas on pressing issues. Islamic websites, Television Channels like Al-Jazeera, YouTube, and other forms of dissemination are used.⁷

Interviews of this kind are also political. They deal with current issues affecting the Arab/Muslim world and are designed to argue a point of view and ultimately to inform and educate the congregation and audience. These interviews are usually conducted in MSA. Sometimes, colloquial Arabic is used, usually a dialect that is more familiar with the audience. For instance, it is unlikely that in an interview with a Tunisian politician that the interviewee will be speaking Tunisian Arabic, but rather he or she would accommodate his/her language so the message is understood by the wider Arab audience.

Sentence structure

Scrutinising the notion of a sentence or a phrase in the spoken discourse is rather problematic, especially concerning the Arabic language. Unlike the written word, the sentence boundaries in spoken Arabic are not clearly marked. In fact, finding the sentence boundaries also seemed problematic in the written discourse due to the “unreliability of its punctuation system” as pointed out by al-Kohlani (2010, p. 190). This is exacerbated by the usually lengthy sentences, discourse elements such as ellipsis, anaphora, and discourse markers.

It is important, therefore, to add to the discussion of both texts the semantic criteria in order to identify the sentence boundaries. However, Kammensjø (as cited in al-Kohlani 2010, p. 201) concedes that relying on semantics to define sentence boundaries is a “subjective affair, since relationships of content exist only in the minds of language users.” Both intonation and rhythm, it should be noted, are fundamental characteristics of the spoken narrative.⁸

Syntactically, the majority of sentences in both texts use the declarative mode. This use is evident in both texts where Islamic sermons or speeches do not involve the congregation by asking or answering questions. There is a spatial and interpersonal distance between the

Imam/presenter and the congregation. In Friday sermons, for example, it is strictly forbidden to interrupt the Imam's speech, including chatter among the congregation. There is evidence suggesting the dominant use of declaratives in religious sermons in other parts of the world, which are confirmed by Taiwo (1995), as cited in Singh et al. (2011, p. 394).

The declarative mode in MSA has various sentence structures, Verb-Subject-Object (VSO) being the common word order. Any other structural forms such as SVO or VOS are according to Suleiman (1989, p. 215) "motivated by a purpose." That purpose is linked with rhetoric, an integral part of *'ilm al-ma'ānī* as defined by Abdul-Raof (2006, p. 97) as "the pragmatic functions of word order." The study of *'ilm al-ma'ānī* is interrelated to semantic syntax and discourse analysis. Al Sumurrai (2007) labels the change of structure in Arabic as *taqdīm and ta'khīr* (foregrounding) and (backgrounding), respectively.

Scrutinising Text 1, we find that the SVO word order with a clear agent and participants is the most predominant type, for instance:

Text 1:

- a. *anā ad'ūhu faqaṭ lil-dīn*
(I only invite religion to him)
- b. *Al-Islām al-'aẓīm yuharrim al-dimā'*
(The great Islam prohibits killing)

There exist numerous sentences without a clear agent whereby "we" could mean either the speaker himself or the whole Muslim congregation. This is to confirm solidarity with the congregation. Fairclough (1989, p. 71) suggests that "more recently, there has been a shift towards a system based upon *solidarity* rather than power." However, Nu'ayyim (2011) believes that the employment of the first personal pronouns have other reasons. First, the use of the pronoun "I" is legitimate if it is not repeated too often in the speech. If overused, then the speech may be interpreted that the presenter is a source of authority. He adds that when the pronoun "we" is used instead, the audience may analyse the presenter's utterance positively as one accepts an idea from a group or organisation far easier than from an individual. Nu'ayyim (2011, p. 186) believes that it is more difficult for the audience to reject the pronoun "we" which is absent from their sight in comparison to the pronoun "I" who is standing in front of them. For example:

Text 1: It is our honour that we speak about Islam, and we explain its characteristics

In Text 2, the declarative mode also dominates FS's speech. The majority of sentence structures follow the VSO word order. In many instances, the subject is either vague or referred to by ellipsis. For instance:

(a) VSO

fa-bada'ū yaqūlūn anna al-muslimīn nās kweyyisīn
(and [they] started saying that Muslims are good people)

With a clear subject and agent:

wa-'amalnā hādhā al-film
(and we produced this film)

The SVO word order is used when it is important to mention the agent, for instance:

a. with first personal pronoun

anā lā aqūl al-ghāyah tubarrir al-wasīlah
(I am not saying that the end justifies the means)

b. with third person singular

Al-islamophobia ẓallat mawjūdah fī urubbā al-masīhiyyah
tūl al-qurūn al-wusṭā
(Islamophobia remained in existence in medieval Europe all during the Middle Ages)

faṣūrat al-Islām aṣbaḥat tūḍa 'u fī kull makān
(and the image of Islam is becoming available everywhere)

Table 1 shows that Text 1 and Text 2 use verbs conjugated with the third person singular/plural form more than in the first person/plural counterpart. It demonstrates that most of the actions are attributed to either "he" or "they". Table 1 also shows that MH uses more personal opinion in the form of "I" and "we" than in Text 2. In other words, the opinions expressed by MH seem to be more personal. In contrast, in Text 2, the verbs used with the third person demonstrate that the action is attributed to the "other", and at times this agent is vague. For instance,

Text 2:

hum yurīdūn 'an yubarrirū al-iḥtilāl li-anfusihim
(They want to justify the occupation for themselves)

*yazunnu ba 'd al-mukhṭi'īn anna al-Islammophobia bada'at
bi-aḥdāth 11 September*

(some people wrongly think that Islamophobia began with
September 11)

Table 1: Verb frequency in Text 1/Text 2

Text 1/Text 2	1 st person singular/ plural “I, We”	3 rd person singular/ plural “He, They”	Percentage
Text 1 (141 verbs)	71	170	40%
Text 2 (122 verbs)	21	101	20%

Exclamative, rhetorical, and tag questions carry ideological messages. This is in contrast to the declarative clause. In MH's speech, there are a number of exclamative sentences which are expressed emotionally. According to Eggins (1994, p. 177), exclamatives are a mixture of interrogative and declarative forms, such as:

Text 1:

Mā arwa 'a al-Islām wa-mā akmalahu wa-mā ajmalah
(How wonderful, comprehensive and beautiful Islam!)

yā lal 'ajab
(how amazing!)

Text 2:

qullī iz-zāy mā yithāgimch al-Islām
(how could Islam not be attacked!)

These textual strategies are reflected in the form of the use of the pronoun “we”. The frequency of verbs conjugated in the third person and sentence choice (declarative vs. exclamative) can be understood ideologically. Firstly, by using “we”, the speaker seeks solidarity with the congregation. There is a subliminal message that fighting Islamophobia is a problem for all Muslims; hence, the boundary between the speaker and the audience is blurred. Secondly, the use of exclamative sentence hints to the emotive stance of the speaker as discussed earlier.⁹

Rhetoric

Rhetoric is a very important pragmatic tool in Arabic. It is, in Abdul-Raof's words (2006, p. 1), “the flesh and blood of the Arabic language. It is a linguistic discipline that aims to sharpen up and upgrade the

linguistic competence of writing and speaking.” In Text 1, there are many instances of rhetorical expressions with the aim of emphasis and speech embellishment that could have an immense emotive impact on the listener. For instance: “What an honour I raise my head and every Muslim believer in one God raises his head to embrace the planets of Gemini [to affirm that] he belongs to the religion of the Lord of Earth and Heaven.”

The same observation applies to the following phrases where the same expression could have been expressed as “Islam is Muhammad’s final message”, but instead he states:

wa-al-Islām dīn lubnat al-tamām wa-misk al-khitām
Muhammad

(and Islam is the perfect finishing stone and Muhammad is the perfect completion [to this religion]).

Embellishment could be used in the form of *al-saj’* (assonance), as in:

Text 1:

*fahwa al-ni‘mah al-kubrā wa-al-minnah al-‘uzmā wa-al-
hidāyah al-tāmmah*

(It [Islam] is the greatest blessing, the greatest gift and the full guidance)

Rhetoric can take the form of questions. MH’s choice of this style is not random. It is part of delivering an effective speech. According to Abdul-Raof (2006, p. xiii), “Arabic rhetoric is concerned with effective interpersonal communication. To deliver an effective speech requires the delivery of relevant information to the addressee in order to attract his or her attention.”

MH’s use of rhetorical questions, as in the example below, claims that Muslims have every right to be proud of the teachings of Islam. He uses this strategy in the following instances as in: “Isn’t it your right to be proud of this great Islam?”

In Text 2, there are also instances of rhetorical questions in several parts in the conversation including: “Is (this) religion (Islam) worth defending or not?”

Direct speech is also used in Text 1, for instance in MH’s speech:

*fayā ayyuhā al-Muslim anta lasta maqtū'a al-nasab bal
nasabuka mumtadd fi 'umq al-tārīkh*

(O Muslim! You are not cut off from (your) lineage but
your lineage is extended deeply in history).

He also made a direct speech to the Muslim youth using colloquial Arabic insinuating that Muslim youth may misinterpret his speech; hence, they may misunderstand the true spirit of *da'wah* by saying: *khallī bālkum yā shabāb!* (take notice young people!), *hayyā ihfazūhā* (go and memorise this verse).

Disclaimers

Disclaimers are also used particularly in Text 1. The study of disclaimers is noteworthy for the discourse analyst. According to Hewitt and Skotes (1975, p. 3), "a disclaimer is a verbal device employed to ward off and defeat in advance doubts and negative typifications which may result from intended conduct."

An interesting example is found in Text 1 where MH states, after vehemently defending his faith by outlining Islam's positive main characteristics and so forth, that Islam does not need to be defended as expressed in the following disclaimer:

Text 1, MH:

Islam...By Allah, we do not need to defend it. This is a psychological defeat which I refuse completely, Islam is not accused (...) Islam is not accused and it is not in the witness box in order for us to defend it. It is not any scholar's duty to think that he is defending Islam.

Furthermore, in Text 2, we find the interviewer uses disclaimers, for instance:

Iwadhi: *muqtana' bi-kalāmik wa-lākin ...*
(I am convinced with what you have said, but ...)

Power of words and lexical cohesion

The expressive nature of words is linked to *balāghah* (art of eloquence). According to Abdel-Latif (2005), *balāghah*'s role is to persuade and convince the audience. Hence, word choice is rarely selected haphazardly, especially in carefully constructed discourses, such as the religious

discourse. Abdel-Latif (2005, p. 9) sees word usage as playing a dual role in the Islamic society, as there are “individuals who consider the word as a powerful medium to get what they wish for. Others see it as a form of power that may cause them to lose their freedom and may be their existence.”

Table 2: Cohesion in Text 1

	Experiential Value		
synonymy	<i>imtihān</i> (belittlement)	<i>ih̥tiqār</i>	contempt
	' <i>adl</i> (justice)	<i>inṣāf</i>	equity
	<i>raḥmah</i> (mercy)	<i>samāhah</i>	mercy
	<i>bāghiyah</i> (adulterer)	<i>zāniyah</i>	adulterer
	<i>zulm</i> (oppression)	<i>istibdād-kabt</i>	injustice
	<i>khalq</i> (creation)	' <i>abād</i>	humankind
	<i>intiḳāl</i> (shift)	<i>tahawwul</i>	change
Antonymy	<i>ih̥tiqār</i> (contempt)	<i>takrīm</i>	honouring
	<i>raḥmah</i> (mercy)	<i>zulm</i>	oppression
Hyponymy (superordinate)	<i>bilādanā miṣr</i> (our country Egypt)		
Hyponym	<i>ṭā'ifah</i> (group)	<i>Al-muslimīn</i>	Muslims
		<i>Al-naṣārā</i>	Christians
		<i>Al-aqbāṭ</i>	Copts
Repetition	<i>dīn</i> (religion)	<i>fakayfa yuhākkam dīn 'aẓīm, dīn al-qur'ān wa-al-sunnah, dīn al-'adl, dīn al-ḥikmah, dīn al-raḥmah, dīn al-samāhah</i>	
		How could a great religion be judged, religion of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, the religion of justice, the religion of wisdom, the religion of mercy, the religion of tolerance!	
	<i>ba'atha</i> (to send) <i>jā'a bi-</i> (brought with) <i>al-Islām</i> (Islam)	<i>bal ba'atha bi-al-Islām Nūh, bal ba'atha bi-al-Islām Ibrāhīm, bal jā'a bi-al-Islām 'Īsā, bal jā'a bi-al-Islām Yūsuf</i>	
		But (Allah) sent Noah with (the message of) Islam, but (Allah) sent Ibrahim with (the message of) Islam, but Jesus brought in (the religion) of Islam, but Joseph brought Islam.	

Word choice also plays a cohesive and ideological role. Discourse, according to Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 288), “does not wander at

random from one topic to another but runs on reasonably systematic lines with a certain consistency of topic and predictability of development.”

Due to the limitation of this study, emphasis will be placed on lexical cohesion. Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 288) classify lexical cohesion into reiteration and collocation. Tables 2 and 3 reveal that cohesion is established predominantly in the form of synonymy and repetition in both texts.

Table 3: Cohesion in Text 2

	Experiential Value		
synonymy	<i>ru' b</i> (horror/panic)	<i>khawf/takhwīf</i>	fear/fearing
	<i>al-ṣūrah</i> (the picture)	<i>al-lawḥah/al-rusūm</i>	The picture/drawings
	<i>tahrīr</i> (emancipation)	<i>ḥurriyyah</i>	freedom
	<i>al-amr</i> (the issue)	<i>mas'alah/miḥwar</i>	issue/question
	<i>al-ma'rasah</i> (fight/struggle)	<i>ḥujūm</i>	attack
	<i>indimāj</i> (integration)	<i>insijām</i>	harmony
Antonymy	<i>ṣādiq</i> (truthful)	<i>kadhḥāb</i>	liar
	<i>mabda'</i> (principle)	<i>taṭbīq</i>	practice
	<i>aslamū</i> (they reverted to Islam)	<i>irtaddat</i>	She renounced Islam
Hyponymy	<i>āliyyah</i> (mechanism)	<i>tawzī'</i>	distribution
		<i>tarwīj</i>	promotion
		<i>ḥujūm</i>	attack
		<i>takhwīf</i>	causing fearing

Using synonymy places an emphasis on comprehension. In other words, the speakers are ensuring that the audience understands the message. This is particularly important because of the dichotomy that exists between MSA/Colloquial Arabic; not every Arab speaker is capable of understanding MSA.¹⁰ For instance, in Text 1 it is easier to understand the word *zāniyah* (adulterer) than its *bāghiyah* counterpart. A similar observation applies for the word *amr* than *miḥwar* (issue). There seems an overall assumption that the listener/viewer is an educated person who is familiar with the religious jargon. However, even if the speech is not understood, one finds that eloquence in Arabic is greatly adored by the Arabs and consequently they are easily influenced by it, often emotionally, and not intellectually (Abdel-Latif, 2005, p. 28).

Repetition is also well used in both texts, particularly in MH's speech. According to Tannen (2007, p. 59), repetition occurs for production, comprehension, connection, and interaction. By production, the speaker promotes fluency by creating a paradigm, like the following example in Text 1:

*fakayfa yuhakkam dīn 'azīm, dīn al-Qur'ān wa-al-sunnah,
dīn al-'adl, dīn al-ḥikmah, dīn al-raḥmah, dīn al-samāḥah?*

(How could a great religion be judged, the religion of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, the religion of justice, the religion of wisdom, the religion of mercy, and the religion of tolerance?)

This is a feature inherent in rhetorical Arabic discourse, as Johnstone (1991, p. 109) states, “paradigmatic patterning, and the repetition and parataxis associated with paradigmatic patterning, are keys to how the Arabic texts in the corpus are built.”

Finally, by connection and interaction, Tannen (2007) believes that repetition serves as a tool to create an interpersonal relationship between the speaker and the audience. The “accomplishment of social goals” occurs by re-establishing and ensuring that the message is being received. In Tannen's (2007, p. 61) words, “repetition not only ties parts of discourse to other parts, but it bonds participants to the discourse and to each other, linking individual speakers in a conversation and in relationships.”

Besides repetition, the choice of words could play an ideological role. Hence words such as *muntasib* (belonging to) and *mutarabbis* “prowling” could have an ideological significance. Contextually, in Text 1, MH puts forward an argument that Islam should not be judged on the basis of Muslims' conduct or on those who are “members” of this religion. Hence, the word *muntasib* denotes “membership” but its choice can be understood ideologically pointing to the existence of two types of Muslims, Muslims by inheritance and those by conviction. As for the word *mutarabbis* “prowling”, it has a negative connotation and it is used by MH to invoke the idea that indeed Islam is being scrutinised. By using this expression, MH attempts to debunk some of the myths attached to Islam, Muslims, and Islamists including those who paint Islam as if it were a blood thirsty religion, an Islam that desires to implement the cutting of hands, whipping, and accusing people.

By using a string of descriptive and repetitive words about the splendour of Islam, MH attempts to convince the listener about the positive characteristics of Islam. For instance, he mentions in several parts of his speech that Islam is the religion of Qur'ān and *hadīth*, the religion of equality, the religion of wisdom, the religion of mercy, the religion of forgiveness, and a religion that prohibits oppression whether be it towards a Muslim or an unbeliever.

Van Dijk (1995) believes that “the major dimension of discourse meaning controlled by ideologies is the selection of word meaning through *lexicalization*.” However, Van Dijk (1995) asserts that not all words carry ideological meanings, particularly when they are not used literally. For instance, the word “crusade” infamously used by George W. Bush after the 9/11 attack, may and may not carry its literal sense; however, it has now gained acceptance in literature to denote “a serious fight or campaign”. However, the word is hardly used by Muslim scholars in the non-literal sense because of its significant association with the Crusade Wars. This puts forward the importance of context and the meaning of the whole sentence as stressed by Van Dijk (1995, p. 262) “in order for meanings to be interpreted as embodying ideological positions, we need to analyse the whole sentence, if not the whole text and (context).”

Short critique of the texts and implication to Islamophobia

The foregoing analysis of the texts in terms of their functional properties gives a clear account of the way the speakers perceive Islamophobia. Both texts defend Islam vehemently and at times emotively to persuade the listener through various textual strategies such as repetition, lexicalisation, and rhetoric. These strategies serve a view that Islamophobia is not a new phenomenon and that it is an outcome of not considering Islam as a whole and complete religion.

Both texts attempt to demystify Islam by explaining its positive characteristics and hence correcting the false assumptions. However, only small references to practical solutions have been made by Text 2 to stamp out Islamophobia. One cannot ascertain the degree of success of the two texts as it is tied with context, purpose, and ideology. Yet, both texts offer intricate textual properties that have embedded ideological purposes. These properties aim at ensuring that the message is understood, convincing, and that solidarity with the listener is

maintained and subliminally that the listener propagate the message elsewhere.

Conclusion

The two texts attempt to summarise some of the arguments that are popular among Muslims in the treatment of Islamophobia. They offer an alternative viewpoint, some of which is dissimilar to the Western narrative. Using a combination of analytical tools such as CDA and Systemic Functional Grammar, the article critically analyses these two texts. The result shows that both texts use textual strategies to attract, hold interest, persuade, and ultimately to gain solidarity with the audience and to disseminate the views of speakers globally. These strategies are reflected at the word and sentential levels. The choice of words through synonymy and antonymy, repetition and sentence types, such as exclamative vs. declarative, ensure that the message is understood by the audience. These strategies, directly or indirectly, influence the listener's viewpoint. Noticeably, both texts have minimised personal opinion and relied almost solely on quotes from either the Qur'ān or *ḥadīth*. This is expected and confirms that ideology plays a vital role in the adoption of textual strategies by their speakers. Finally, additional research is needed, both qualitatively and quantitatively in order to determine how the Islamic discourse relates and communicates with secular sources.

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Endnotes

1. Clarion Fund is a right wing Israeli organisation allegedly linked to the United States of America. It was claimed that that Clarion Fund “produces and distributes hysterical films aimed at warning Americans about Radical Islam. The group use documentary films to paint a negative image of Islam by distributing these on the web and college campuses.” http://theamericanmuslim.org/tam.php/features/articles/clarion-fund#_edn1

2. ar.wikipedia.org

3. Source of Text 1: Hassan, M. (2014, March 20). *Al-khawf min al-Islām* [Audio file]. Retrieved December 3, 2013 from <http://ar.islamway.net/lesson/107832>. Source of Text 2: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xegi6YMkoaE>. Further information about the aims of BridgesFoundation is available at <http://www.youtube.com/user/BridgesFoundation/about>.
4. For further reading about *ḥadd* punishments, see El-Awa (1982).
5. He quoted the poet Qādī 'Iyād: “*wa mimmā zādānī sharafan wa tayhan, wa kidtu bi'akhmaṣī 'aṭa'u ath-thurayyā*”
6. Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=19&v=cRzU96s6d0U>.
7. El-Nawawy & Khamis (2009) discusses the context and purpose of these Islamic websites.
8. Halliday (1989, p. 48) and others such as O'Connor (1973) and Schiffrin (1987) place importance of the intonation and rhythm and how they contribute to discourse.
9. Due to the restricting length of the paper, one should explore the emotive nature of the Arabic text.
10. See Ferguson (1971) for further discussion on the diglossic nature of Arabic.

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