Friday Sermons in Mosques: Critical Discourse Analysis of Friday Sermons in Mosques.

Asst.Prof. Anwar Turki Atiyah
Iraq/University of Al-Qadisiyah/College of Computer Science and Information Technology
anwar.alsaadi@qu.edu.iq

Abstract

The current research examines Friday sermons (khutbahs) as institutionalized religious discourses based on the critical discourse analysis (CDA), and Pierre Bourdieu theory of language and symbolic power in particular. It also discusses the role of the modern khutbah not only as an activity of spiritual teaching but also as an organizational system that generates and reproduces moral norms, social action, and ideological legitimacy in the context of Muslim communities. Based on the qualitative research design, the paper will examine two chosen Friday sermon transcripts carried out in two distinct sociocultural settings in the period of 2020-2024. The three points of analysis include textual, discursive and social levels which are interrelated. The textual level recognizes the prevalent application of religio-ethical use of lexical frames, use of modality, use of metaphors, use of repetition and intertextuality reference to the narratives of Quran. On the discursive level, it shows how preachers can mobilize institutional power and symbolic capital to naturalize the current social problems, especially the environmental responsibility, as moral mandates that are divinely ordained. On the social level, the results indicate the role of khutbah discourse in reproduction of power relations and collective moral consciousness and normative expectations via legitimation and symbolic violence. The research finds that Friday sermons as sites of ideological production, is where religious authority, social norms and prescriptions of behavior, are respected and negotiated.

Key Words: Critical Discourse Analysis, Friday Sermons, Khutbah, Religious Rhetoric.

خطب الجمعة في المساجد: تحليل الخطاب النقدي لخطب الجمعة في المساجد

أ.م. انوار تركي عطية

الملخص

يتناول هذا البحث خطب الجمعة (الخطبة) بوصفها خطابات دينية مؤسسية، وذلك بالاستناد إلى منهج تحليل الخطاب النقدي(CDA) ، وبوجه خاص نظرية بيير بورديو في اللغة والسلطة الرمزية. كما يناقش دور الخطبة المعاصرة لا باعتبارها نشاطًا للتعليم الروحي فحسب، بل بوصفها أيضًا نظامًا تنظيميًا يُنتج ويُعيد إنتاج المعايير الأخلاقية، والممارسة الاجتماعية، والشرعية الأيديولوجية داخل المجتمعات الإسلامية. واعتمادًا على تصميم بحثي نوعي، يقوم البحث بتحليل نصّين مختارين لخطب جمعة أُلقيت في سياقين

اجتماعيين-ثقافيين مختلفين خلال الفترة ما بين 2020 و2024. ويرتكز التحليل على ثلاثة مستويات مترابطة، هي: المستوى النصي، والمستوى الخطابي، والمستوى الاجتماعي. فعلى المستوى النصي، يحدد البحث الاستخدام الشائع للأطر المعجمية الدينية-الأخلاقية، وتوظيف أساليب التوجيه(modalities) ، والاستعارات، والتكرار، والإحالات التناصيّة إلى السرديات القرآنية. أما على المستوى الخطابي، فيُظهر البحث كيف يوظّف الخطباء السلطة المؤسسية ورأس المال الرمزي من أجل تطبيع القضايا الاجتماعية المعاصرة—ولا سيما المسؤولية البيئية—وتقديمها بوصفها تكاليف أخلاقية ذات مصدر إلهي. وعلى المستوى الاجتماعي، تشير النتائج إلى دور خطاب الخطبة في إعادة إنتاج علاقات القوة، والوعي الأخلاقي الجمعي، والتوقعات المعيارية، وذلك من خلال آليات الشرعنة والعنف الرمزي. ويخلص البحث إلى أن خطب الجمعة، بوصفها مواقع لإنتاج الأيديولوجيا، تمثّل فضاءات تُمارَس فيها السلطة الدينية، وتُرسّخ المعايير الاجتماعية، وتُحدَّد أنماط السلوك المقبولة ويتم التفاوض حولها.

الكلمات المفتاحية : تحليل الخطاب النقدي، خطب الجمعة، الخطبة، البلاغة الدينية.

1. Introduction

1.1 Friday Sermons History and its place in Islam.

Friday sermons (khutbahs) do not only serve as an obligatory procedure of the Islamic ritual practice but as institutionalized discursive activities whereby the religious power, community, and sets of morals are produced and reproduced. According to Jassim and Ali (2024), the khutbah is a form of organized communicative space in which religious meanings are contextualised, justified and propagated to a community group, and as such, reinforced religious as well as a sense of collective belonging. In addition to the ritual aspect, sermons often concern the real-life issues in the modern world, which makes religious discourse a way to bridge the gap between the teachings of the doctrine and reality (pp. 118-120).

Hasan (202) notes that the contemporary Friday sermons are more and more adopting issues like ethical behavior, social responsibility and community cohesion both indicating wider societal interests and at the same time regulating conduct using religious moral frameworks. Khutbahs are linguistically based, as they are using well-thought rhetorical strategies of repetition, evaluative and emotive language, metaphorical framing, and appeals to divine authority to convince the congregants and influence their moral reasoning (pp. 256-259). As Rahman (2024, p. 79) maintains, such persuasive means allow making the sermons highly influential on the formation of beliefs and the social behavior and upholding of normative expectations and maintaining ideological hierarchies among Muslim communities.

Altogether, these researches emphasize the necessity of the critical analytical approach that would be able to describe how the religious language acts not only on the level of meaning but also on the level of power, ideology, and social control.

In a more critical attitude, discourse is not only a reflection but a factor in social reality construction and sustenance. According to Fairclough (1995, p. 23), institutional discourses, including religious sermons, affect both textual, interactional, and social levels and thus allow institutionalizing the specific worldview and power relations (Fairclough, 1995, p. 23). In this context, the Friday sermons may be interpreted as the locations where the religious ideology is expressed and naturalized using the repetitive language patterns and rhetorical structures. By framing moral judgments and social prescriptions as those approved by God, khutbahs are therefore facilitating what Fairclough refers to as the naturalization of ideology whereby the social constructs of norms are viewed as a commonsense or unquestionable truth. This is how the persuasive power of the sermon is heightened and its ability to control behavior, maintain hierarchies and influence collectively morally-consciousness among Muslim communities is augmented (Fairclough, 1995, pp. 27).

It is also worth noting that Friday sermon is a peculiar genre of discourse since it is situated in a sacred and a social space at the same time. Although the textual content in many cases is prescribed using the immutable scripture, its delivery and interpretation are entrenched at the social practice level characterized by Fairclough where language is a tool of social control. Through the lens of CDA, we are able to view these sermons and how the imams are using their epistemic and moral authority to not only impart religious knowledge, but also to create a particular social reality among the congregation. This metamorphosis of abstract theological ideas into tangible moral obligations, i.e. the repositioning of environmental stewardship as a divine trust (amanah), shows how religious rhetoric can make normal all kinds of worldview and direct communal action.

In addition, this is the ideological role of Friday sermons that has been highlighted in more recent discourse-analytical research. Sukirman et al. (2022) argue that "Friday sermons function as a medium through which religious ideology is communicated and legitimized, allowing preachers to embed moral values and social norms within religious discourse that is perceived as authoritative and unquestionable by congregants" (p. 242). This observation strengthens the argument that khutbahs do not simply serve the effect of spiritual education, but institutionalized discursive practice, which defines the collective moral consciousness. Incorporating social norms and ideological assumptions into sacred language, the sermons may have an increased persuasiveness and serve in the process of naturalization of a specific worldview. It is on the basis of such findings that the Critical Discourse Analysis can be used to analyze Friday sermons because CDA allows the researcher to determine how religious authority, moral regulation and social hierarchy are constructed and maintained through sermon discourse.

Collectively, these results are foreshadowed by the Friday sermon as a unique discourse genre the persuasiveness of which is located precisely in its location in the dilemma of sacred textual authority and lived social practice, a duality that makes khutbah discourse particularly vulnerable to Critical Discourse Analysis.

Friday sermons (khutbahs) are institutionalized discursive practices where religious power, moral codes and societal demands are produced and reproduced in a methodical way. According to Awad and Qasim (2019), the khutbah is a designed communicative event that involves disequilibrium of power with the khatib in the role of epistemic and moral authority over the congregation who occupy the role of a receptive audience (pp. 7980). By means of a skillful choice of words, repetition, and a large number of intertextual allusions to the Quran and the Hadith, preachers make their messages sound more convincing and legitimize moral advice as divinely approved (Awad and Qasim, 2019, pp. 80–83). Such rhetoric techniques allow the khutbah discourses to naturalize social conventions and ideological presumptions, and offer them as a matter of commonsense and unquestioned truth that is inherent in the sacred language (pp. 8385).

Also, Friday sermons are highly important in the process of defining the abstract theological concepts into practical moral and social commands applicable in our daily lives. As Awad and Qasim (2019) show, khutbahs often have to deal with the modern social issue, such as work ethics, psychological distress, or family relations, and reinvent it in terms of Islamic morality, thus closing the gap between the religious doctrine and the lived social reality (p. 81-84). By so doing, sermons control societal behavior, strengthen moral action, and hold ideological stratifications among the Muslim societies (pp. 81–85). The study is based on Relevance Theory, but it also highlights that khutbahs serve as arenas of ideological production and moral control, which explains why Critical Discourse Analysis can be relevant in revealing how religious authority, power relations, and social norms are language practices that construct and reproduce in Friday sermons (Awad and Qasim, 2019, pp. 84-86).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The main idea of the study is to analyze how the framing of meaning, social behavior and ideology are structured in the Friday sermons (khutbahs) so as to strengthen or challenge the ideological constructs within the Muslim communities. Through the study of linguistic decisions, rhetoric communication, and thematic content of these sermons, the paper aims to identify how the discourse of religion is expressed as a means of social influence, moral direction, and transfer of values. By so doing, this research will emphasize how sermon can be interpreted as a manifestation of social, cultural and political forces at the larger level, but also how

sermon may be viewed as a source of negotiating power, a source of reinforcing regularities, and a source of influencing communal action.

1.3 Problem Statement

The khutbahs (Friday sermons) are one of the key arenas of moral direction, religious education, and social control in Muslim societies. In spite of their importance, very little research has been done to investigate how khutbahs language, rhetoric, and discourse work to influence social behavior, affirm ideological organization, and support community conventions. Although, the previous literature has focused on religious discourse in general, there is a paucity of studies that apply Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to the mechanism of conducting a study on the linguistic characteristics, persuasive techniques, and social functions of Friday sermons in modern settings. Besides, the importance of khutbahs as a negotiating tool of social hierarchy, gender roles, and culture or political impact, is unexplored. This disjunction restrains our knowledge of the functioning of religious discourse as a source of spiritual education and as a system of social control and transmission of ideology and provides an important part of modern Islamic practice with a lack of study.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Which linguistic and discursive forms have become common in the modern Friday sermons?

2. What do these sermons reproduce power relations and social norms?

3. How do sermons change, convince, shape beliefs and actions of congregants?

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Determine and interpret the linguistic patterns and discursive patterns used in modern Friday sermons such as lexical and metaphorical, repetition, and rhetorical strategies.

2. Take into account how khutbah reinforces or harms the relations of power, social norms and ideological structures and underline the way khutbah conditions the expectations of the community and the relations of power.

3. Investigate how sermons impact beliefs, attitudes and behavior of congregants and how it works in terms of moral guidance, persuasion and social teaching.

4. Give information on the larger social, cultural and political implications of religious discourse that will add to the comprehension of the mediation of religion and morality and communal life through Islamic sermons.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

• Khutbah: An official oratory or sermon made in a mosque, prior to the prayer of congregation on Friday. It is used as a main means of religious education and social-ethical orientation in the Muslim society (Saeed, 2003, p. 142).

Khatib: The speaker or preacher who gives the khutbah. The khatib has been traditionally known as a person of authority who bridges the texts of the sacred and the social requirements of the congregation (Antoun, 1989, p. 102).

Ideology A collective of representations or beliefs, usually in the interest of one group, that influence the perception of reality. In CDA, it is considered as a process of setting up and sustaining power relations (van Dijk, 1998, pp. 24-26).

Naturalization: The rhetorical act of making ideas or notions that are socially or historically constructed appear as common sense or something that is divinely ordained. This renders some ideologies as absolute to the extent of having no beginnings on particular social power structures (Fairclough, 1995, p. 27).

• Epistemic Authority: It is a type of authority based on the knowledge of specialization. In religion, it means that a preacher has a right to specify what is considered truth depending on the texts they have access to and understand (Sofi Bapir & Abdulla, 2024, p. 14).

2. Previous Studies

Eldin (2014) demonstrates how religious sermons, as the example of Amr Khalid preaching in Egypt, are formed as an ideologically structured discourse where the language is strategically used in order to form the beliefs of shared beliefs, negotiate the power relations, and align the preacher cognitively and emotionally with his audience through persuasion and modality (pp. 68 -70).

He also demonstrates that the sermons by Khalid mobilize several ideological modes, including unification, legitimation, narrativization, and reification, and make use of classical tactics of persuasion (ethos, pathos, logos) to naturalize the moral authority, evoke a sense of collective identity and direct the audience interpretation of social/religious reality (pp. 70-73).

Lastly, Eldin explains that modality is an essential linguistic feature of authority, ideological devotion in religious speech by showing the confidence, authority, and

compulsive position of the preacher and confirmation of persuasion and audience obedience to a larger socio-cognitive system of CDA (p. 71).

Agu et al. (2018) demonstrate that Friday sermons in three mosques in the town of Yola, Adamawa State, are linguistically organized in order to convince the congregants based on the simple diction, the diversity of sentence type, and mostly on affirmative constructions, the combination of which does increase the semantic clarity and communicative effectiveness of the sermons in question (pp. 948-952).

They also demonstrate that the lexicographic and syntactic patterns of sermons, which are analyzed through Lexical Functional Grammar, serve the sermonic purpose of inviting the worshippers to action, which is the syntactic simplicity adjusted by the religious and moral teachings and, thus, entailing easy understanding and acceptance among the audience (pp. 952). Lastly, the authors show that the use of understandable and transparent forms of linguistic in Islamic sermons plays a crucial role in helping the faithful internalize the religious teachings and translate them into social and behavioral codes and this is why they suggest simplicity and structural clarity to be the guiding principles in making the sermons effective (pp. 955).

The discursive space of religious sermons, as demonstrated by KhosraviNik and Unger (2023) is dynamic, which makes religion, ideology, and power come into collision, showing how modern preaching reflects and transforms social identities, moral standards and political orientations within particular sociocultural settings (p. 25).

They also demonstrate that sermons are executed by using overlaid discursive practices, including evaluative language, moral polarization, interdiscursivity, and contextual framing, to authorize authority, create in-groups and out-groups, and naturalize the existence of a certain worldview in the name of religious teaching (p. 699).

Belhaj (2023) demonstrates that online sermons by Tareq Oubrou in France serve as a reformist counter-discourse to re-define the Muslim loyalty to non-Muslims and re-code loyalty as an ethical, civic, and contractual commitment that fits into French citizenship (pp. 1-3).

He also shows how the rhetorical tactics of Oubrou is characterised by terminological clarification, contextualised interpretation of the Quran, selective use of the Arabic and French languages and digital mediation to shape religious authority and counter radical discourses that are disseminated in the online and mosque-based preaching (p. 47).

2.1 Gaps in Existing Research

However, even when it comes to religious sermons as an ideological and persuasive speech, despite the increasing amount of scholarly work on the topic, there are a number of gaps in it. To begin with, although earlier research has effectively shown how sermons are positioned as a source of power, persuasion, and ideological reproduction (e.g., Eldin, 2014; KhosraviNik and Unger, 2023; Bapir and Abdulla, 2025), most studies have focused on the ideological roles at the macro-level but micro-linguistic characteristics of sermons, which have yet to be integrated in a long-term systematic way in a variety of sociopolitical settings.

Second, despite the fact that some studies explicitly address the frames of Critical Discourse Analysis, more specifically, the works by Fairclough and the socio-cognitive theories, the lack of comparative or cross-contextual studies on how the same discursive strategies work differently across regions, cultures, or channels of delivery (e.g., the traditional mosque sermons and online sermons) can still be observed. This means that the relation between local sociopolitical circumstances and sermon discourse has not been adequately theorized.

Third, the current literature is normally biased toward the preacher and sermon text and pays relatively limited attention to reception by the audience, interpretive variability, or the practical implications of sermons to their daily social activities. Although the concept of persuasion and influence are usually presupposed, they are seldom empirically interrogated concerning negotiating, resisting, or reinterpreting sermonic messages among the congregants.

Lastly, although some new-found interest has been shown in the topic of reformist and counter-hegemonic discourses (e.g., Belhaj, 2023), the internal tensions of the religious discourse (e.g. the contradiction between ethical universalism, citizenship, and exclusivism religious beliefs) has not been explored to an extent. This gap highlights the necessity of more studies that critically look at how sermons negotiate, integrate or conceal such tensions in today pluralistic societies.

All these gaps point to the fact that a more integrative, context-specific, and critically reflexive manner of studying religious sermons, one that cuts across linguistic analysis and sociopolitical realities and audience-focused approaches, is needed.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study uses Pierre Bourdieu's *Language and Symbolic Power* (1990) in order to examine the Friday sermons (khutbahs), which are institutionalized practices of power, within a particular linguistic marketplace. Bourdieu was preoccupied with

power. He took a particular interest in the so-called soft forms of domination, which are not coercive and are actually hard to notice, by which, in his opinion, numerous inequalities are reproduced. His own language has been subject to a good deal of criticism, especially on his employment of what is termed unusually long sentences containing several subordinate clauses, a form of sentence which he carefully justified, in somewhat paranoid language, as being essential to preempt any potential mis-interpretation of his work, particularly where it appears in quotation by his critics.

The success of the religious speech in this model is not based on the shape of the speech, but rather on the delegated power of the orator and the institutional environment where the speech is presented. As Bourdieu argues, "the power of words is nothing other than the delegated power of the spokesperson" whose discourse testifies to "the guarantee of delegation which is vested in him" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 107).

The khatib, then, is not only a speaker, but he is someone who is authorized to speak and his authority is found beyond the language itself. This outside source of power is represented by what Bourdieu figuratively refers to as the skeptron-the object that makes the right to speak-in a wat which demonstrates that "authority comes to language from outside" and that language merely "manifests and symbolizes it" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 109). This symbolic legitimacy is bestowed in the mosque as the institutional environment, as the khutbah has been turned into a power act instead of an objective religious speech.

At the core of this is the concentration and mobilization of symbolic capital, which helps the sermon to act as an image of symbolic violence which means a form of domination that is disguised as a legitimate guidance. Bourdieu notes that "the authorized spokesperson is only able to use words to act on other agents… because his speech concentrates within it the accumulated symbolic capital of the group which has delegated him" (1991, pp. 109–110). This power is further enhanced by the rituality of Friday prayer that Bourdieu calls social magic under which discourse only works under certain institutional and ritualized circumstances. As he explains, "the efficacy of the performative utterance presupposes a set of social relations, an institution, by virtue of which a particular individual… is authorized to speak" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 111). So, the moral injunctions in the khutbah are not only successful due to their religious nature, but due to the fact that they are said at the appropriate time, place and by the appropriate person. Since framed in terms of Quranic and prophetical terminology, the conditional social norms, like obedience, charity or environmental responsibility, are made into an unquestioned divine imperative, showing that symbolic violence can be executed through consent as

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opposed to coercion. Lastly, the Bourdieu's theory puts emphasis on the active construction of social reality through the sermons that construct the collective perception and strengthen societal order. He defines symbolic power as "a power of constructing reality… which contributes fundamentally to the reproduction of the social order" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 408). The sermon shapes congregants' understanding of the social world by actively producing meaning through acts of naming, categorization, and moral evaluation.

According to Bourdieu, 1991, "the act of naming helps to establish the structure of this world, and does so all the more significantly the more widely it is recognized, i.e. authorized" (p. 106). In addition, the model of preacher and congregation provides the example of the so-called "alchemy of representation," in which "the representative creates the group which creates him" (1991, p. 248). The imam is the mouth piece of the community, but at the same time he creates the same community when he is expressed in the name of the community. The Friday sermon, in this regard, also serves as a reproduction mechanism which perpetuates the religious power, community unity, and ideological continuity by offering the same as the natural truth, the sacred truth and the self-evident truth.

4. Methodology

This paper will be based on qualitative research design and critical Discourse analysis (CDA) will be used to rise the meaning, persuasive tactics, and societal suggesting that is embedded in the modern-day Friday sermons. Through CDA, the study transcends a superficial textual comprehension to the study of how language creates ideology, supports social norms and mediates power relations in Muslim societies. The qualitative methodology will enable the profound study of both explicit and implicit messages presented in sermons, with the focus being on how the discourse defines beliefs, behaviors and the values that are shared by a community.

4.1 Data Collection

In this research, two transcripts of Friday sermons in various mosques will be chosen nowadays. The sample will be selected with the purpose to achieve geographic and theological background, and the target audience diversity so that a more complete picture of how sermons operate within different social and cultural realities could be acquired. The sources on which transcripts will be collected include publicly available sources or directly through the administrations of mosques with permission.

5. Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Sermon 1

Linguistic and Discursive Forms

Religio-ethical lexical frames are extensively used in the sermon as the Quranic command khalifa is reworded as a responsibility to environmental care with an intergenerational scope. As the sermon (2025) states, "We are being told that our duty is to care for the planet and ensure that it is left in a good condition for the next generation" (para. 2), to place care of the environment as a non-discretionary but mandatory issue in the religious domain. This process represents what Bourdieu is expressing when he argues that "the discourse on the work is not a simple side-effect … but a moment which is part of the production of the work, of its meaning and value" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 170). In this regard, the sermon is not just commenting on the issue of environmental responsibility, but, in fact, this makes its own moral value through the process of entrenching it in the discourse of the sacred.

The association of the Islamic discourse with non-religious environmental terms e.g., "Very simply put, this is the concept of Sustainable Development which many people speak of in our modern time" (Mahed, 2025, para. 4)—is an example of how the sermon works within the nomos of the religious field. Bourdieu clarifies that nomos is more of a basic law that comprises principles of vision and partition "fundamental law" organizing what can be understood as a valid and meaningful perception of legitimate things (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 61). The translation of the contemporary environmental ideas into the Islamic theological terminology makes the sermon correspond the modern ecological issues to the prevailing classificatory logic of the religious domain to make them accepted as authoritative in the moral sense.

2. Reproduction of Power Relations and Social Norms

The sermon enhances the authority of the khatib, as it constructs the element of environment accountability as retelling canonical religious narratives and rhetorical inquiry. The case of the Prophet Nuh and his Ark being taken as the example of sight—"What is the Ark that our communities and governments need to construct to protect our environment and leave it in a better state for future generations?" (Mahed, 2025, para. 6)— acts as a symbolical machine that naturalizes the present-day environmental action as the continuation of divine precedence. This is an indication of Bourdieu who claims that symbolic efficacy cannot be found in language, but in. "the relationship between the properties of discourses, the properties of the person who pronounces them and the properties of the institution which authorizes him to pronounce them" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 109).

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Moreover, such inclusive formulations as "This means that we need to be even more cognisant of the planet as we are one with it" (Mahed, 2025, para. 8) function as tools of classification that lash congregants into one moral community. By this kind of discourse, the social norms on environmental responsibility are reproduced no longer as debatable moral stances, but as self-evident expectation in religious membership. Bourdieusianly, the sermon solidifies field-related differences that make the perception and behavior consistent, so that they fit into the prevailing moral order.

3. Persuasion, Belief Formation, and Behavioral Influence

The sermon shifts between the theological framing and practical imperatives with moral exhortation which connects belief and action: "Let us be aware of our environment and do our best to save it, even if we just pick up an empty bottle…" (Mahed, 2025, para. 10). This shift is a good illustration of the manner in which discourse exists at both the linguistic market and the linguistic habitus. As Bourdieu notes, "every speech act … is an encounter between the socially constructed dispositions of the linguistic habitus and the structures of the linguistic market" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 37). The success of this kind of exhortations lies on the compatibility of the internalized religious dispositions of the congregants and the institutional power of the mosque.

Making the most ordinary activities connected to the eschatological reward. — "increase our good actions for the next life"—the sermon transforms the images of the congregants and the social reality and the moral duty. This conforms to the fact that Bourdieu notes that symbolic action is directed towards to "produce and impose representations of the social world" capable of shaping collective behavior by acting on agents' perceptions (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 127). The sermon, therefore serves not only as a guide but as a reproduction in a social system and makes environmental care a religiously approved activity that sustains community belonging, ethical discipline and submissiveness to established religious management.

The sermon says:

Therefore we can see that the protection of our environment is embedded in our religion. This means that we need to be aware of what is happening around us in the real world. This is very important in the time we living in as so much is happening around us and impacting our lives. We see droughts and floods and fires ravaging the planet and sometimes we ask what does Islam say about these events? (Mahed, 2025, para. 5).

The passage exploits forms of persuasion that connect belief to action and invoke the credibility of the speaker and the mosque to justify being a good shepherd of the environment by using concrete examples such as droughts, floods and fires to make moral obligations concrete and provoking moral thinking through inquiries such as what does Islam say?- in Bourdieuian terms, this is how the linguistic habitus of the congregants (internalized religious predispositions and moral sensibilities) interacts with the linguistic market of the mosque (institutional authority and discourse valued) to create perceptions

5.2 Sermon 2

1. Linguistic and Discursive Forms

Environmental stewardship is theologically-based and normatively-constraining as it forms part of the ecological responsibility embedded in the Quranic notion of vicegerency (khilāfa), in MUIS sermon. The sermon declares, "Humankind are the vicegerents on this earth… and they will be greatly rewarded" (Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura [MUIS], 2021, para. 1). This rhetorical positioning of stewardship does not just present it as a religious obligation, but as a discursively authoritative moral obligation. This, in Bourdieusian terms reflects the concept that "every speech act…is an encounter between… the socially constructed dispositions of the linguistic habitus" and "the structures of the linguistic market" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 37), in which the language of the sermon strikes as valid and authoritative in the religious sphere. The religious and epistemic discourse are also connected in the sermon as the practical engagement is taught there: "We should follow the development of climate change… Educate ourselves about the steps we can take…" (MUIS, 2021, para. 3), and so to change abstract obligation into social practice. The discursive approach satisfies Objective 1 through the example of how words and commands are used to encode ecological stewardship as a significant religious and social category.

Moreover, the fact that the sermon also appeals to the health of theological legitimacy as well as the contemporary consciousness points to Bourdieu point of view that legitimate discourse is not only descriptive, but also constitutive of meaning. As Bourdieu notes, "the discourse on the work is not a simple side-effect… but a moment which is part of the production of the work, of its meaning and value" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 170). The religious language in the sermon helps in creating environmental stewardship as a normative object that holds value in the life of Muslim communities, and not as a secular value.

The sermon says, "this is our responsibility. This is a sign of taqwa and our faith, as emphasised in the previous verses" (MUIS, 2021, para. 1). This passage

involves the use of declarative sentences and religious framing to formulate the concepts of environmental stewardship as a moral and religious duty. The phrases and terms that provide linguistic connections between ecological action and spiritual identity, such as "this is our responsibility" and "a sign of taqwa and our faith", entrench the authority of the discourse. This example of religio-ethical language use illustrates that sermons incorporate social norms and values in the daily communication activities, which defines the knowledge of how to act among listeners.

2. Reproduction of Power Relations and Social Norms

The sermon takes advantage of the institutional status of the khatib and the mosque to strengthen the communal norms by using moral discourse. By making environmental mismanagement a moral failure-—"if we are not committed to fulfil the responsibility… we will then contribute to the destruction…Is this what we wish to do?" (MUIS, 2021, para. 2)— the khutbah formalizes social norms of moral behavior. This replicates normative relations of power through associating obedience with divine and social order.

This is in line with the fact that successful discourse relies on its connection to the speaker as well as to the institution that legitimizes the speech as it is said by Bourdieu: "…efforts to find… the source of their symbolic efficacy are destined to fail as long as they do not establish the relationship between… the person who pronounces them and the institution which authorizes him to pronounce them" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 109).

The environmental message is also made normative in this sermon since it is said by an authorized religious figure and incorporated into the institutionalized ritual of Friday prayer. Consequently, ecological responsibility is naturalized as a moral requirement in the Muslim community to support preexisting struggles of religious validity and social legitimacy.

Also, the message of the sermon holds to field-specific nomos, the "fundamental laws… which function to divide and align perceptions into categories" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 132).

The khutbah establishes normative categories by differentiating between practitioners and non-practitioners of their vicegerency responsibilities in the religious sphere that frame the perception and action in the moral domain.

The sermon says:

Today, this world is witnessing environmental crisis due to the greed of humankind. We are aware of the serious impact of climate change. Our generation

might not experience the severe consequences, but if we are not committed to fulfil the responsibility of protecting the environment, we will then contribute to the destruction that will be faced by future generations. Is this what we wish to do? Do we want to pass on destruction to the next generation? There are two things we can immediately work on. (MUIS, 2021, para. 2),

The sermon excerpt constructs environmental responsibility as both a moral and religious obligation, thereby embedding specific social norms into the audience's consciousness. By framing the crisis as the result of *"the greed of humankind"* and emphasizing intergenerational accountability, the discourse positions listeners within a moral hierarchy: those who act responsibly are aligned with divine and ethical authority, while those who fail to act are morally culpable.

From a Bourdieusian perspective, this discourse exemplifies the reproduction of symbolic power. The speaker, as a religious authority, leverages the sermon's institutional platform to define legitimate knowledge and moral behavior, effectively shaping what counts as proper conduct regarding environmental stewardship. By posing rhetorical questions such as *"Is this what we wish to do? Do we want to pass on destruction to the next generation?"*, the sermon constructs social pressure that normalizes proactive environmental engagement as the expected standard. In doing so, the sermon reproduces social norms that merge religious duty with contemporary ecological consciousness, reinforcing the speaker's position as a mediator of both ethical and social legitimacy.

3. Persuasion, Belief Formation, and Behavioral Influence

The sermon shifts between theological style and practice, essentially transforming symbolic power into behavior. This much-needed appeal to watch, to study, to do is electric with its religious incentive and hope of eternal gain: "This includes adopting the various ways to ensure… our actions will positively impact… our environment" (MUIS, 2021, para. 1). This agrees with the notion of Bourdieu that the symbolic capital helps discourse to influence beliefs and practices within the society: "every speech act… is an encounter… between the socially constructed dispositions of the linguistic habitus…" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 37). The sermon register, comprising of duty, moral consequence and spiritual promise, disinterests individual dispositions and institutional structures in such a way that made belief a practice.

Further, having placed ecological stewardship as a shared ethical enterprise, the sermon appeals to what Bourdieu (1990) calls the creation of representations that can intervene into the social world:

"Specifically political action is possible… because one can act on the social world by acting on their knowledge of this world… by producing, reproducing or destroying the representations that make groups visible for themselves and for others" (p. 127).

In the MUIS sermon, environmental stewardship is discursively rendered as a collective Islamic identity marker—making the group *visible to itself* as morally responsible and socially accountable. In this way, the sermon aligns personal piety with communal ethics and ongoing socio-ecological action.

The sermon says, "Do we not care about the environment, or are we just being selfish and only think about our personal comfort, ease, or even greed? We should put in the effort to know more about climate change and its consequences" (MUIS, 2021, para. 3). Rhetorical questions and moral framing are employed in the sermon to convince the listeners that environmental inaction is a selfish act, and knowledge and engagement are morally and spiritually right. The speaker influences the world to believe in and comply with behavior change by making the issue of climate change a responsibility and an indicator of moral right or wrongness. Bourdieusianly, this conversation replicates symbolic power, which entails bolstering the authority of the speaker to be the judge of how to behave in the right environmental way.

6. Conclusion

This paper has discussed Friday sermons (khutbahs) as institutionalized religious speech by applying the Critical Discourse Analysis approach with specific references to the theory of language and symbolic power proposed by Pierre Bourdieu. The study has revealed that khutbahs do not serve as instruments of spiritual education only, but as forms of discursiveness that generate and recreate moral norms, social expectations and ideological legitimacy by examining two modern sermons that were preached in varying sociocultural settings.

On the textual and discursive levels, the analysis showed the persistence of the use of religio-ethical lexical frames, intertextual allusion to the Quranic stories, modality, repetition, rhetoric questioning. These rhetoricizing techniques exist to naturalize the social concerns, most famously environmental responsibility, through the refiguration of the latter as divinely ordained responsibilities instead of social contingencies and negotiable concerns. The sermons in Bourdieusian view can be said to act in a particular linguistic market where religious language has a strong symbolic value, moral injunctions can be taken as a truth based on the divine authority.

On the social level, the results show that Friday sermons are at the center of reproducing the power relations and collective moral consciousness. Institutional power of the mosque and epistemic power of the khatib makes it possible to make sermon discourse a kind of symbolic power, and, under certain circumstances, even symbolic violence, when social norms and rules of behavior are enforced by consent, but not by force. An example of this is environmental stewardship which is discursively formed as a symbol of faith, piety and communal belonging, hence, making individual actions consistent with larger ideological and ethical systems that are approved by religious authority.

In addition, the paper has also demonstrated how khutbah discourse mediates between abstract theological and concrete social practice. When translated into the language of the Islamic duty, vicegerency (khilāfa) and accountability to God, the sermons are the formulations of the beliefs as well as the actions in a manner that consolidates the religious identity and the social discipline. This validates the claim made by Bourdieu that discourse is not only a reflection of the reality, but also a contributor to building and maintaining social order.

To sum up, Friday sermons become strong objects of the ideological production where the language, religion, and power meet. The CDA with the theoretical framework of Bourdieu proves to be effective in revealing how khutbahs authorize the norms, control the behavior, and reproduce the symbolic power among Muslim communities. Future studies can be further developed to encompass audience reception, comparative cross-cultural studies, or longitudinal studies that can be used to enlarge the current work in terms of understanding how sermon discourse is negotiated, opposed, or reinterpreted in daily social life.

7. References

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