'Ilm al-Tafsir and Critical Discourse Analysis:
A Methodological Comparison

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ABSTRACT

The methodology of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* and the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) highlight the similarities and differences in leveraging the text as research data beyond the level of the text's structure. Questions on similarities and differences between methodologies are addressed in the present study. This study, therefore, compares the similarities and the differences between the methodology of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* and the methodology of CDA. Based on the comparison, the present study also constructs a religious discourse analysis model. The selected methodology of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* is al-Sabuniy's in *Safwat al-Tafasir* (1979), while the chosen methodology of CDA is Fairclough's 3D (1992; 1995). The universal principle of discourse and the linguistic goals in the philosophy of language is applied in the analysis. Similarities and differences were identified in the production, meaning and interpretation. The findings strongly suggest that the two methodologies have circumstances which lead to the use of language, the production of language, the features of texts, the nature of meaning and the means of interpretation. One of the main focuses of the comparison is on the differences that constitute barriers to the adoption of CDA for religious discourse analysis, specifically the critical approach towards the sickle and the fixed elements. The obstacles to this alternative are presented in order to prove that there is a linguistic approach that is capable of linking language with social elements. The findings thus have implications for the relatively new methodology of religious discourse in linguistic studies.

Keywords: religious language; religious discourse analysis; comparative discourse analysis; *'ilm al-tafsir*; critical discourse analysis

INTRODUCTION

'Ilm al-Tafsir (the science of exegesis) is considered fundamental knowledge for understanding the contents of the holy Qur'an. Within this function, *'Ilm al-Tafsir* establishes the Qur'an as a linguistic corpus database and as part of a linguistic discourse. The data in the interpretation of the Qur'an, namely the revelation of word of God, aims not only to prove the existence of the relationship between the language and social process, but also aims to prove that the data can enhance faith and belief.

In the development of contemporary linguistics, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a field that harnesses text as language data in relation to social processes and practices. The critical characteristics of CDA make its methodology appropriate for application in the study of social sciences and humanities. Fairclough's CDA (1992) version, for example, grew rapidly through cross-field applications.

If the 'critical' features in CDA are used as a yardstick, then in Islamic studies, *'Ilm al-Tafsir* stands much earlier as an area that also uses data for the analysis of language. In the methodology of *'Ilm al-Tafsir*, the data analysis of language is not only meant to prove that there is a relationship between the language of social processes; it is also to increase faith and trust. With their critical features, both methodologies show similarities in terms of text

description. In this regard too, the two methodologies highlight similarities in terms of leveraging the text as the research data beyond the level of text structure to extend the elements of philosophy, such as metaphysics, ontology and axiology.

Therefore, some important questions arise. How do these similarities happen? Was there any influence of one methodology on the other? To answer these, both methodologies have to be examined, especially in order to construct the relevant approach in analysing religious discourse. In Muslim societies, such as in Malaysia, one of the linguistic challenges of analysing religious discourse is in identifying the appropriate model to link language with religious issues.

This article aims to (a) identify the similarities between the methodology of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* and CDA; (b) analyse the differences between the methodology of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* and CDA; and (c) construct a religious discourse analysis model based on the comparative analysis conducted.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section is divided into two parts: a discussion of the methodology of *'Ilm al-Tafsir*, and a discussion on CDA methodology.

METHODOLOGY OF *'ILM AL-TAFSIR*

'Ilm al-Tafsir is a discourse analysis method which aims to explain the meanings and to elaborate the contents of the Qur'an. By using *'Ilm al-Tafsir*, the istinbat (the process of deriving certain rules or meanings from a text) in Islamic law, for example, can be carried out properly. Without *'Ilm al-Tafsir*, there would be no correct understanding of various passages of the Qur'an, even though the Qur'an is often memorised and read repeatedly.

In the earliest stages of Qur'anic exegesis, the term *ma'ani* (lit. 'meanings') was the one most frequently used to denote exegesis. Around the third Hijri century, this term was supplanted by *ta'wil* (lit. 'to return to the beginning', 'to interpret' or 'to elaborate'). In the following century, this was gradually supplanted by the term *tafsir* after a long period of interchangeable usage. This is the current term used for Qur'anic exegesis. From the root *fassara* (lit. 'to interpret' or 'elucidate') or *asfara* (lit. 'to break'), the verbal noun *tafsir*, although occurring only once in the Qur'an, came to be used technically for Qur'anic exegesis around the fifth Hijri century (Esack, 2002, p. 128).

The companions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), such as Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali, Ibn 'Abbas, Ibn Mas'ud, Zayd ibn Thabit, Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr and their successors, such as Mujahid, 'Ali, 'Ikrimah, Qatadah, Hasan al-Basri, Sa'id ibn Jubayr and Zayd ibn Aslam in Madinah, and their followers such as 'Abd al-Rahman and Malik ibn Anas were all regarded as the founders of the various branches of *'ulum al-Qur'an* (the sciences of the Qur'an) including *'Ilm al-Tafsir* (Thameem, 2008, p. 90).

If one is to consider *mufassirun* (exegetists) as those who collect the commentary or those who comment on some Qur'anic verses or traditions, then one must start with 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As (d.684). Their exegesis represents an integration of the views of the companions and the successors. Unfortunately, most of their exegeses have not survived in written form. (Thameem, 2008, p. 91).

Ibn Jarir al-Tabari succeeded them and wrote a magnificent exegesis. He was also regarded as the first exegete who presented various channels of transmission and gave to some, a degree of preference over others, as he also presented *'i'rab* (syntax) and *istinbat* (the process of deriving certain rules or meanings from a text) to develop legal rulings. The

reverence for this work remains well established in the world of Qur'anic exegesis (Thameem, 2008, p. 91).

There are three types of *'Ilm al-Tafsir*: *al-tafsir bi al-ma'thur* or *al-riwayat* (by transmission/narration), *al-tafsir bi al-ma'qul* or *al-dirayat* (by knowledge) and *al-tafsir al-isyariy* (by indication) (al-Sabuniy, 1988). *'Ilm al-Tafsir* can also be classified according to various criteria:

a) By approach (linguistic, literal);
b) By source (Qur'an, *sunnah*, *ijtihad*, inference (*isitinbat*)); and
c) By subject matter ((*tafsir mawdhu'i*); terms and words (*tafsir bi al-alfaz wa al-kalimat)*; jurispudence (*tafsir fiqhi*); sufism (*tafsir sufi*), philosophy (*tafsir falsafi*); science (*tafsir 'ilmi*); linguistics (*tafsir lughawi*); literature (*tafsir adabi);* social science *(tafsir ijtima'i)*, empiricism *(tafsir tajribi)*; and sectarianism (*tafsir 'aqdi)* such as Sunnite *or* Shiite).

The importance of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* can be related to various factors:

a) when the companions of the Prophet who were referred to because of their expertise in religious issues passed away, there was a need to write discourse more systematically;
b) the spread of Islam across the Arab world must be accompanied by systematic discourse analysis in order to explain and describe the comprehensive content of Islam;
c) the explanation of the meaning of the Qur'an must be initially provided in Arabic as the language of the Qur'an is Arabic.

In contemporary Muslim scholarship, Fazlur Rahman, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd and Muhammad Arkoun are among the rare exceptions who were influenced by the Western methodologies and dealt in hermeneutics. Fazlur Rahman and Muhammad Arkoun emphasise the need to reconstruct the historical context and the background of each (Qur'anic) text or period and for greater consideration to be given to the aesthetics of reception: how a discourse is received by its listeners and readers. Meanwhile, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd stresses the Arabic nature of the text's origin and the need to approach it as an Arabic literary work (Esack, 2002, p. 143).

Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (2005) in *Isykaliyat al-Qira'ah wa Aliyyat al-Ta'wil* analyses the aesthetics of al-Qur'an. He highlights the problem of determining the ultimate meaning of the Qur'anic texts, and also suggests that hermeneutics be brought into the interpretation of the Qur'an. From 1995 until his death in 2010, he lived in exile in the Netherlands after his approaches to Qur'anic studies – promoting a human-centred hermeneutics and applying methods derived from semiotics, literary theory and criticism to the study of Islamic scripture – caused controversy in academic, religious and political circles.

Traditional *tafsir* activity has always been categorised and these categories – *Shi'ite*, *Mu'tazilite*, *Abbasid*, *Ash'arite*, etc. – are acknowledged to say something about the affiliations, ideology, period, and social horizons of the commentator. Connections between the subject of interpretation, the interpreter and the audience are rarely made. When this is the case, it is usually done with the intention of disparaging the work or the author, or to underline the theological prejudices of the author (Esack, 2002, p. 143).

Given the highly subjective nature of interpretation, which is guided by the allegorical framework assumed by the mind, and the goals of hermeneutics, which have been used to criticise, expose, and find weaknesses in the Bible, the methodology of hermeneutics is rejected by most Muslim philosophers. Wan Mohd. Nor (2007) contends that whatever action equates *'Ilm al-Tafsir* to hermeneutics, especially in terms of methodology, is an outrage to Allah and the Prophet.

Azyumardi (2012) observes that some great Iranian text analysts, such as Ali Shariati and Murtadha Mutahhari, prefer to use hermeneutics as their approach to understand the Qur'an rather than exegesis. Azyumardi (2012) also argues that their Shiite understanding is different to Sunni understanding, which influenced them to become more dynamic and appealing in pursuing the ideas of the Qur'an. Therefore, they have reached the same standard as Western philosophers in terms of the philosophy movement (Azyumardi, 2012).

According to Abdullah Mahmud (1985, p. 276), in order to preserve the meaning and interpretation of the Qur'an, there are general guidelines for the methodology of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* to be followed by all exegetists, issued by the High Council for Islamic Affairs, Egyptian Ministry of Endowment, in the 1960s. He lists some important guidance related to the meaning and interpretation in *'Ilm al-Tafsir* as below:

a. A short introduction or background for every *surah* must be provided;
b. Outer and inner meanings for *ayat mutasyabihat* must be provided; and
c. Interpretation for verses which contain factual knowledge must be made.

In terms of the qualifications of an exegetist, Hofmann (2005, p. 55) remarks that Imam Ibn Taimiyah, even in the thirteenth century, 600 years after the Prophet, would only admit interpretation of the Qur'an (i) by itself, (ii) as given by the Prophet in his *sunnah* and (iii) by his companions and their immediate successors. He was not entirely against drawing conclusions by analogy. But he rejected the rationalistic approach (*al-tafsir bi al-ra'y*) to exegesis applied by al-Zamakhsyari, a famous commentator who was his contemporary.

Whereas the kind and classification of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* have received much attention, less is known about the comparison of its methodology between forms of exegesis, especially from the perspectives of linguistics and the philosophy of language. Generally, the term 'methodology' is used by *'Ilm al-Tafsir* researchers when referring to how to explain the meaning of the Qur'an itself, *hadith*, statements of the companions or personal opinions.

von Denffer (1983, pp. 3-142) compares the content of three examples of contemporary exegesis, which are *Tafsir al-Manar*, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* and *Tafhim al-Qur'an*. He summarises that *Tafsir al-Manar* for the first time in modern history attempted to relate, to some extent, the Qur'anic message to the actual situation of the Muslim *ummah* in the contemporary world. And here, for the first time in centuries, *tafsir* is no longer restricted to purely an academic exercise and intellectual stimulus, but regains social and political significance. This is upheld and further elaborated in the two other books von Denffer (1983) refers to.

Apart from these three main books of *tafsir*, numerous other attempts have been made to interpret the Qur'an in the contemporary age. All efforts of *tafsir* are, however, apart from their varying degrees of utility and reliability, only human efforts to present the Qur'anic message in accordance with the needs and requirements of the age. Therefore in the final analysis they can be only faint reflections of the Qur'an as the word of God, against which all human efforts are inadequate, incomplete and of only limited validity. This basic principle, which all exegetists make the starting point of their work, should also be remembered well by the readers of the books of *tafsir*, so as to remain aware of the actual book from Allah, the Qur'an, upon which all exegesis and explanation rests (von Denffer, 1983, p. 143).

CDA METHODOLOGY

Discourse analysis is used to study the organisation of language above the sentence or above the clause, and therefore to study larger linguistic units, such as conversational exchanges or written texts. It follows that discourse analysis is also concerned with language in use in social contexts, and in particular with interaction or dialogue between speakers (Stubbs, 1983, p. 1).

This widely used version of contemporary linguistic analysis offers a repeatable method capable of tackling data, regardless of its positionality and verifiability. Simpson and Mayr (2010, p. 51) express that CDA is the most comprehensive attempt to develop a theory of the interconnectedness of discourse, power, ideology and social structure in the large and loosely grouped body of work.

The term 'discourse' can refer to anything from a historical monument, a policy, a political strategy, narratives in a restricted or broad sense of the term, text, talk, a speech and topic-related conversations, to language *per se* (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). The term typically refers to news texts, advertisements, political interviews and speeches, doctor-patient interactions, counselling sessions, job interviews or other so-called 'unequal encounters' (Simpson and Mayr, 2010, p. 51).

In terms of the meaning of 'critical', the objects under investigation do not have to be related to negative or exceptionally 'serious' social or political experiences or events. Any social phenomenon lends itself to critical investigation, to be challenged and not taken for granted (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Simpson and Mayr (2010, p. 51) are of the view that 'critical' signals a departure from the more descriptive goals of discourse analysis, where the focus has been more on describing and detailing linguistic features than on *why* and *how* these features are produced.

The historical background of 'critical' extends to Karl Marx's critical theory. According to Honneth (2010, p. 972), critical theory is an approach to social analysis pioneered in the early 1930s by theorists associated with the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt such as Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse. Fairclough (2001, p. 233) stresses that the Frankfurt School was one of the main elements in the formation of 'Western' Marxism, and resisted the reduction of culture to an epiphenomenal reflection of economy; cultural processes have their own effects on social life, and constitute a domain of struggle.

Originally, critical theory sought to use Marxist-inspired analysis to resist the structures of totalitarianism and 'instrumental reason' it took to be associated with capitalism. Since then, it has progressively moved away from an exclusively 'Marxist' orientation to examine different forms of social and political domination and to offer a critique that is meant to contribute to the emancipation of those dominated (Honneth, 2010, p. 972).

The use of CDA by a network of scholars emerged in the early 1990s. CDA contains a number of theories and methodologies that are distinguished by several schools of thought and approach. Among the CDA scholars are Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen and Ruth Wodak (Wodak and Meyer, 2009).

In general, the language functions of CDA suggest interpreting discourse production practices, and description of social practices in the discourse. CDA is not interested in investigating a linguistic unit *per se* but in studying social phenomema which are neccessarily complex and thus require a multi-disciplinary and multi-methodical approach (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

Chouliaraki (2008) views this social phenomenon as part of the multi-functionality of semiotic practice. Multi-functionality assumes that every semiotic mode, language and image, creates meaning that fulfils more than one social function simultaneously. Whereas the first social function of semiosis is the need to name and represent the world, the second, the 'ideational' function, is the need to engage in interaction and relate to other people, the 'interpersonal' function of semiosis.

According to Chouliaraki (2008), CDA as part of the broad hermeneutic tradition, is a context-specific and historically-sensitive research approach that does not simply provide us with a tool-kit of categories for the analysis of power. Chouliaraki (2008) also illustrates two key thinkers in the field of discourse culture: Habermas and Derrida.

Habermas represents a power-oriented analysis of discursive communication in public life. Habermas' so-called discourse ethics seeks to provide an analysis of culture with a measure that distinguishes ethical from unethical, fair from unfair, and manipulative from genuine communication (Chouliaraki, 2008).

Taking a different point of view, Derrida represents a textualist approach to discourse analysis. Derrida's deconstructivist method stems from a critical engagement not with hermeneutic, as does Habermas', but with structuralism. Derrida offers a situated account of human culture as discourse, which tends to reduce power to linguistic oppositions within texts and to limit social agency to the regimes of action provided by texts themselves (Chouliaraki, 2008).

Fairclough (2001, p. 240) remarks on the methodology of CDA by using interactional analysis within CDA, which can be represented by linguistic/semiotic analysis of text; interdiscursive analysis of interaction; and social analysis of interaction. He explains that the aim of the analysis is to show how semiotic, including linguistics and properties of the text connect with what is going on socially in the interaction. What CDA claims is that this connection is interdiscursively mediated: that what is going on socially is, in part, what is going on interdiscursively in the text, i.e. how it brings together particular genres and discourses, and that the interdiscursive work of the text materialises in its linguistic and other semiotic features.

Relatively, little attention has been paid to the comparison between CDA and other discourse analysis approaches. One of the major comparisons made is an analysis by Wodak and Meyer (2009). In terms of differences, they found that:

a. CDA follows a different and critical approach to problems, since it endeavours to make explicit power relations that are frequently obfuscated and hidden, and then to derive results which are also of practical relevance;
b. CDA can only be understood with reference to the context;
c. CDA is open to the broadest range of factors exerting an influence on texts;
d. CDA does not take the relation between language and society to be simply deterministic but invokes an idea of *mediation*.

In terms of similarities with other discourse analysis approaches, Wodak and Meyer (2009, p. 22) noticed that:

a. CDA generally sees the methods and procedures used for the analysis of discourse as a hermeneutic process, although this characteristic is not completely evident in the positioning of every author;
b. Hermeneutics in CDA can be understood as the method of grasping and producing meaning relations;
c. The hermeneutic interpretation process in CDA requires detailed documentation because the meaning of one part can only be understood in the context of the whole;
d. CDA has an interest in social processes of power, hierarchy-building, exclusion and subordination.

DATA FOR ANALYSIS

The analysed data are the methodology of *'Ilm al-Tafsir*, which has been used by exegetists, as well as the methodology of CDA which has been applied by discourse analysts. The selected methodology of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* is al-Sabuniy's in *Safwat al-Tafasir* (1979), while the selected methodology of CDA is Fairclough's (1992; 1995). 'Methodology' refers to the whole process of analysing texts including the procedure in *'Ilm al-Tafsir* and CDA.

Al-Sabuniyis Sheikh Muhammad Ali al-Sabuniy,a contemporary Muslim scholar,

thinker and exegete from Syria. *Safwat al-Tafasir* is widely used by Muslim academicians and students worldwide. Al-Sabuniy has produced another exegesis entitled *Tafsir Mukhtasar Ibn Kathir*, which is the abridged version of the exegesis of Ibn Kathir entitled *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim.* His methodology in *Safwat al-Tafāsīr* (1979) is chronologically illustrated in Table 1:

TABLE 1. Al-Sabuniy's Methodology (1979)

Name of Surah
a. Background (the features, themes, topics and contents of the surah, and the place of revelation i.e. either Mecca or Medina)
↓
b. Relevance/naming/virtue of the surah (the relevance, etymology, and goodness of the surah)
↓
c. Lexical and semantic (the literal meaning of selected words, and the definitions given by scholars)
↓
d. Occasion of revelation (the reason or cause of revelation with specific time and place)
↓
e. Interpretation (the understanding of al-Sabuniy towards the meanings of the verse supported by other exegete interpretations)
↓
f. Rhetoric (the various forms of the verse explaining the inner or outer meaning)
↓
g. Significance (the importance of the surah, and the issues mentioned in the surah)

The justification of al-Sabuniy's methodology is based on the systematic structure of his methodology, which consists of:

1. Context (background, relevance/naming/virtue of the surah and occasion of revelation) – the macro level;
2. Text (lexical, semantic and rhetoric) – the micro level;
3. Interpretation (interpretation and significance) – carried out based on a macro-micro analysis.

Fairclough, who is currently Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at Lancaster University, developed a model referred to as the 'three-dimensional CDA model', in order to explain his CDA approach in *Discourse and Social Change* (1992), and *Media Discourse* (1995). This model assumes that every use of language in communication has three dimensions: the text (description stage), discursive practice/discourse (interpretation stage) and social practice/socio-cultural elements (explanation stage). Fairclough's model of CDA can be observed in Figure 1.

This model suggests that all analysis must focus on (Fairclough, 1992; 1995):

1. Text features (TEXT), which consists of formal features (such as vocabulary, grammar, syntax and coherence) from the discourse and genre which can be understood linguistically;
2. Text production and text use (DISCOURSE DISCURSIVE PRACTICE) are concerned with the relationship between text and interaction – with seeing the text as the product of a process of production and as a resource in the process of interpretation; and

3. Social practice (SOCIAL PRACTICE/SOCIOCULTURE) refers broadly to communication events that are concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context − with the social determination of the process of production and interpretation, and their social effects.

The justification of Fairclough's methodology is referred to text and context dimensions that he proposed in his model.

The analysis procedure begins with similarities and will be followed by a discussion of the differences between the methodologies. The paradigm of analysis will be based on the universal principle of discourse and the linguistic goals in the philosophy of language in both methodologies.

Text production

TEXT (1992; 1995)

Text use

DISCURSIVE PRACTICE (1992)
DISCOURSE PRACTICE (1995)

SOCIAL PRACTICE (1992)
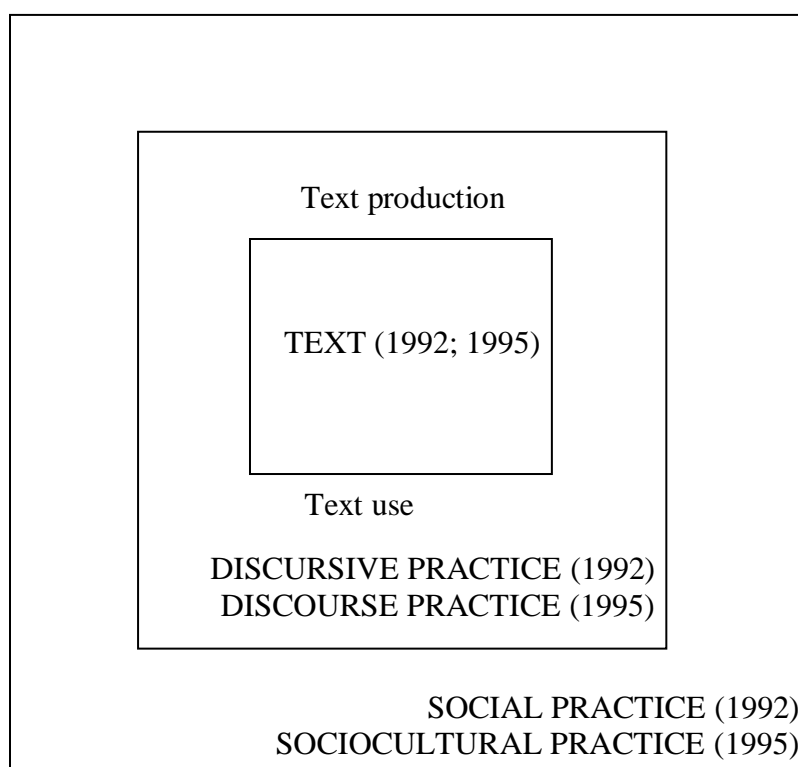SOCIOCULTURAL PRACTICE (1995)

FIGURE 1. Fairclough's CDA Model

ANALYSIS

This section is divided into three parts: an analysis of the similarities of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* and CDA, an analysis of the differences of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* and CDA, and the implications of constructing a religious discourse analysis model.

THE SIMILARITIES OF *'ILM AL-TAFSIR* AND CDA

There are seven elements to consider: the background, the suitability of the verse before and after, the linguistic characteristics, the reasons for the text production, the interpretation, the rhetoric and the significance.

The seven elements of the methodology of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* used by al-Sabuniy were also used in the methodology of CDA by Fairclough. For example, al-Sabuniy applied these seven elements in a systematic order in three volumes of his exegesis. The three-dimensional CDA model by Fairclough also applies to the three elements; text, discourse practice and social processes.

The most similar feature is the analysis procedure of the text. There were seven elements in *'Ilm al-Tafsir* which occurred in CDA: i.e. background, the relevance of verse, linguistic feature, circumstances of revelation, interpretation, rhetoric, and significance. Table 2 below sets out these similarities.

TABLE 2. The Similarities between *'Ilm al-Tafsir* and CDA

'Ilm al-Tafsir	CDA
a. Background	(Text)
b. Relevance...	a. Lexical and semantic
c. Lexical and semantic	b. Rhetoric
d. Occasion of revelation	(Discourse Practice)
e. Interpretation	c. Production (Background, occasion of revelation, relevance of verse before and after)
f. Rhetoric	d. Use (Significance)
g. Significance	(Social Practice)
	e. Interpretation

▪ ▪ ▪ ▪ *Similarity of discourse practice*
▬▬▬ *Similarity of text*
▬ ▬ ▬ *Similarity of social practice*

All these seven elements of *'Ilm al-Tafsir*, which were applied by al-Sabuniy, were also applied by Fairclough's CDA. As a comparison, the Fairclough's 3D model applied these elements in text, discourse practise, and social process. Text is formed of rhetorical, lexical and semantic elements in al-Sabuniy's. Discourse practice through discourse production and discourse use is structured by background, occasion of revelation, relevance and significance of text in al-Sabuniy's. Social process is similar to interpretation in al-Sabuniy's.

These universal linguistic principles of discourse are identified through the production, meaning and interpretation of language. In these three dimensions, both methodologies have circumstances that lead to the use of language, the production of language, the features of texts, the nature of meaning, the features of interpretation and the means of interpretation.

In terms of the circumstances that lead to the use of language, both methodologies emphasise the use of language as data on social relations. Language has been given a role which both methodologies portray as a reflection of social processes, which must be interpreted. In order to make sure that language can be understood, it must be interpreted by connecting it to social practices and social understandings.

In general, where production of language is concerned, the two methodologies similarly apply the production stages. This means that there must be an adequate procedure of explanation and interpretation. This also shows that the established methodology of interpretation has linguistic and philosophical strategies in making explanations and interpretations, i.e. by identifying the fundamental issues and problems, analysing them, and proposing the appropriate solutions to overcome them. The similarities involve at least the background of the text and the significance.

One of the more significant aspects is that in the features of texts, the most similar are lexical and semantic. The proper meaning of key words has been given as well as the internal meaning in semantics. The meaning given represents the belief and the value of the person involved in interpretation. Apart from this, semiotics and syntax also apply to both methodologies, where belief and identity rhetorically take part in the meaning. In analysing the linguistic elements, some theories have been used in both methodologies, for example, the use of systemic functional linguistics in CDA and the use of Abdul Qahir al-Jurjaniy's theory of *al-Nazm* in Arabic linguistics, particularly in Arabic religious texts like the Qur'an and *hadith*.

In the nature of meaning, the degree of similarity is very minimal. This is a very difficult element to compare because each methodology has its own background. The similarity, however, can be seen in linguistic meaning. There are multiple meanings in some particular words or sentences which need to be interpreted; al-Sabuniy names this *ahkam* or *mutasyabihat*, and Fairclough calls it *personal deixis* which refers to two personal 'deictic centres' or positioning of the discourser with respect to two different identities.

In terms of the means of interpretation, the similarity is based on the authoritative relationship between text and interaction. Both methodologies deal with explanation, interpretation and commentary by referring to other entities which have authority. The methodology of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* refers to the Qur'an itself while the methodology of CDA refers to the text itself as a resource in the process of interpretation. The terms used in CDA such as intertextuality and assumption also have similar concepts as *'Ilm al-Tafsir*, such as the use of various stories inside a story and the use of assumptions made by previous exegetes.

There are important questions that arise. How can these similarities happen? Is it by chance or is it because of the influence of the methodology on other methodologies? If there is any influence, how did it occur?

From a historical viewpoint, it is possible that those similarities are rooted in cultural relations between the West and Islam in the interpretation of the Bible since the Middle Ages, particularly the Old Testament. As affirmed by Wan Mohd. Nor (2007), quoting Gray outlook (1926) and Carmy (1989), 'The influence is also a result of their introduction to Arabic grammar and rhetoric.'

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN *'ILM AL-TAFSIR* AND CDA

The most fundamental difference is the goal of both methodologies. The methodology of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* is not only to analyse language data in order to prove the existence of a relationship between the language and social processes, but also to prove that the language can increase faith and trust in Allah. In contrast, the CDA methodology is to criticise, expose, and find weakness in the discourser. The practices of social processes in CDA tend to show that the concept of 'deconstruction' can be applied to religious texts. However, the linguistic elements in CDA are still used to analyse religious texts by combining them with a theological framework.

There is a difference between material and spiritual elements in the epistemology and ontology of language in the two methodologies. In the methodology of *'Ilm al-Tafsir*, interpretation is widely linked to both vertical (God-man) and horizontal (man-man-nature) relationships, such as living in the world and living in the hereafter. On the other hand, interpretation in the methodology of CDA only covers horizontal (man-man-nature) relationships without addressing vertical (God-man) relationships. Therefore, CDA is not adequate enough to be used in addressing vertical (God-man) relationship.

The differences of 'the epistemology of language' in both methodologies are clearly supported by Islamisation and Westernisation. Islamisation in this context as defined by Al-Attas (cf. Mohamed Aslam, 2009, p. 18) is the liberation of man from magical, mythological, animistic and national-cultural traditions (as opposed to Islam), and from secular control over his reason and language. Westernisation, on the other hand, is a process whereby societies adopt Western culture such as language that was secularised and freed from religious influences. Language in the Western secular tradition has been made into a tool to be used by colonialists, politicians, missionaries, and ethnocentric interest groups to promote their ideologies and impose their cultural standards (Sayyid, 1986). Therefore, the methodology of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* is a manifestation of the Islamisation of knowledge, which regards the Qur'an as not value-free. In contrast, the methodology of CDA reflects a Westernisation of knowledge which has been developed within Western traditions by promoting critical theory

as a core concept.

The second difference is the presence of the dividing line that distinguishes *'Ilm al-Tafsir* and CDA. *'Ilm al-Tafsir* studies authentic sources, i.e. sources that have authority, while CDA studies sources that are non-authentic in terms of power and ideology, i.e. sources that are accepted by a society and rejected by other societies. Thus, the nature of the interpretation of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* is contained within the framework of interpretation of revelation, while the nature of CDA is very subjective, as guided by the allegorical framework assumed by reason or ideology.

The methodology of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* is based on revealed knowledge, while the methodology of CDA is based on human knowledge. In addition, the methodology of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* deals with Allah's words in the Holy Book of the Qur'an, while, the methodology of CDA deals with human knowledge. Analysing revealed knowledge by using the methodology of CDA is apparently not suitable because of its principal association with human-based epistemology rather than a sacred role of God's revelation.

The methodologies have different emphases on behaviour and system. The methodology of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* posits that the behaviour of language is more important than the system of language because a standard behaviour of language is able to unify different kinds of languages. However, the methodology of CDA emphasises language as a system because language is a tool to systematically criticise, expose and find weaknesses in the discourse.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF CONSTRUCTING THE MODEL

This methodology comparison enables us to construct a model of the discourse analysis of religious texts apart from the Qur'an. Both methodologies share linguistic elements which are text features and discourse practice. To combine both methodologies, it is important to use an adequate and accurate framework that represent the 'religious' element in the analysis. The negative influences of post-modernism and hermeneutics are avoided.

There is a Qur'anic guidance which promotes the use of language within vertical (God-man) relationship and horizontal (man-man-nature) relationship. This guidance is obtained from surah Fussilat verse 33. Allah s.w.t. says:

> Who is better in speech than one who calls (men) to Allah,
> works righteousness, and says, 'I am of those who bow in
> Islam.'

(Surah Fussilat, 41: 33)

In his interpretation of the verse, al-Sabuniy (1979), states that the person who has the best language is the person that has the following three characteristics simultaneously, namely:

a. Call others to believe (*tauhidiah*) in Allah;
b. Doing good deeds; and
c. Making Islam their religion.

The first feature is the use of language by calling others to believe (*tauhidiah*) through compliance with Allah's command by encouraging one another, advising each other and reminding each other. The second is to do good deeds and leave aside disobedience. The third is holding firmly to Islam as a religion that puts God at the peak of all things.
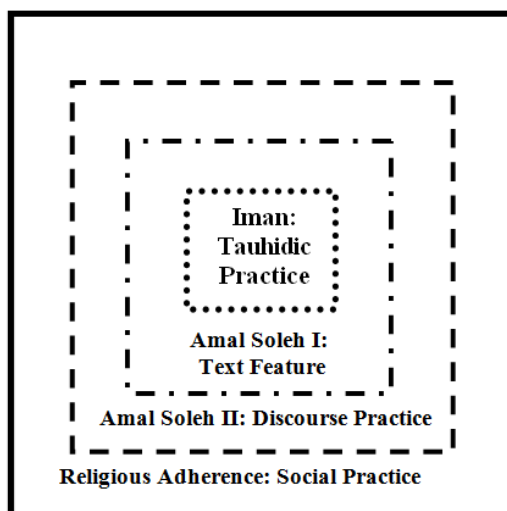
FIGURE 2. Model of Religious Discourse Analysis

Holding on to Islam as a religion (religious adherence) is suitably referred to as social process, while good deeds fit under discourse practice and text features. Social process, discourse practice and text feature are the process and the product of faith (*iman*). In this context, sequentially, from the dimension of faith, i.e. *tauhidiah* practices, will result in dimensions of righteousness in the conduct of text features and discourse, as well as religious dimensions.

This model combines the vertical relationship (God-man) with the horizontal relationship (man-man-nature), as shown in Figure 2.

In this model, each element is separated by different lines to reflect the different division. In between *amal soleh* I (good work I) and *amal soleh* II (good work II), there are dotted broken lines, which mark the two-dimensional form of good works. Between dimensions of *amal soleh* II (good work II and religious adherence, there is a dashed line, while in between *amal soleh* I (good work I) and *iman* (faith), there is a dotted line. The dotted line and the dashed line show the sequence elements that the *amal soleh* follows after the *iman* in a circle called worship.

CONCLUSION

The disparities found between the methodology of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* and the methodology of CDA is more minimal in comparison to the similarities. The differences that exist involve the goals of parsing the meaning of 'religion' in the practice of discourse and social practice. There is, however, no difference between both methodologies in terms of the procedure of analysis of the text.

In this regard, the goal difference could be addressed through the modification of the application. The modification involves either an improvement or a refinement. In Malaysia, some examples of improvements were made by Sanat Md. Nasir (2005), while in Egypt the sample of purification was presented by Dalal El Gemei (2000).

Munif Zarirruddin Fikri (2008) has discussed the improvement and the refinement in his article *Critical Discourse Analysis Applications in the Analysis of Religious Discourse*. According to him, the improvements made are the goals that involve the addition of the religious elements in life that must be highlighted, while the refinement is the purification process that involves discourse as practices which are not separate from religious control.

At the same time, the improvements and the refinements must also be evaluated in an order that reflects the desire and determination of discourse analysis researchers who want to

put the actual function of linguistics in religious discourse, and want to prove that linguistics has contributed to religious discourse. In addition, Munif Zarirruddin Fikri (2008) suggested that the exploration of functional discourse analysis in Islamic heritages should be taken more seriously and more systematically, including highlighting the principles of discourse analysis from the Qur'an and *hadith*.

The linguistic methodology of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* incorporates the ability to connect language with social elements, just like CDA. The ratio of the linguistic elements provided by both methodologies is also almost the same, which is half of the entire procedure of analysis.

Hence, the equation of linguistic elements that exist in both analysis procedures has shown that the methodology of discourse analysis in the *'Ilm al-Tafsir* framework is not a new phenomenon in the context of Arabic linguistics, but is older than discourse analysis within the framework of discourse in English. The equation also shows that there are shared elements of a universal discourse, in particular between Arabic and English linguistics.

These universal elements have also been applied in the Malay discourse analysis (Idris, 2006; Idris, Norsimah & Mohammad Fadzeli, 2014) as well as in the Japanese language analysis (Maserah & Idris, 2012) and in the Vietnamese media language analysis (Vo, 2013). Idris (2012) stresses that these elements represent an approach to language as a communication system and identifying meaningful ways of understanding, and investigating language as a notion of human communication system.

The model constructed based on the comparative analysis is able to discuss the sickle and the fixed elements in Islam, as well as to prove that there is a linguistic approach that is capable of linking language with social elements. Religious issues in Muslim communities, such as in Malaysia, like the use of 'Allah' word by non-Muslims, apostasy (*takfir*), 'Tuhan Samseng' (God is a gangster), *hudud*, heresy, deviant teachings, etc. can be analysed from Islamic linguistic perspective. This is one of significant contributions of linguistics in the social development process.

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