

Representation Of Nojoud's 'Early' Marriage: A CDA Of Online English-Language Yemeni Newspapers

Abduljalil al-Sharabi

agaleel@gmail.com

*School of Language Studies and Linguistics
Faculty of Social Science and Humanities
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

Noraini Ibrahim

nib@ukm.my

*School of Language Studies and Linguistics
Faculty of Social Science and Humanities
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

Nor Fariza Mohd Nor

fariza@ukm.my

*School of Language Studies and Linguistics
Faculty of Social Science and Humanities
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

Abstract

Online English-language newspapers in Yemen are considered official windows through which Yemen is portrayed to the global world. Investigating the representation of a Yemeni social event (the Nojoud's phenomenon) to foreign readers, this paper specifically aims to identify the discourses that the newspaper texts draw upon in representing 'early marriage' in Yemen. Besides, it investigates the assumptions that the texts presuppose and the way the social actors are identified. As a qualitative analytic research, Fairclough's critical discourse analysis as well as Kress and van Leeuwen's (critical) multimodal discourse analysis employed the micro and macro discourse analysis of the online version of *Yemen Times* newspaper. Data analysis reveals that the selected texts draw upon a number of foregrounded and backgrounded discourses in representing 'early marriage' in Yemen including backgrounded Yemeni legal discourse, backgrounded Sharia discourse of 'maturity', and foregrounded discourse of minimum age of 18, and foregrounded discourse of sexual abuse. Simultaneously, it is uncovered that the texts presuppose many assumptions such as 'marriage in Islam', 'puberty' and the 'age documentation' in Yemen. While some of the important social actors are absent, the main social actors in the represented case are mainly identified by 'overwordings' of the age. This paper ends by offering several suggestions and recommendations that would benefit EFL (Yemeni) students, teachers, curriculum designers, journalists and translators when dealing with English-language texts reporting on local phenomenon.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, semiotic analysis, representation, multimodality, 'early' marriage in Yemen.

Introduction

Marriage is best understood “within the context of many facets of culture including religion and ideology” (Stockard, 2002, p.2). In other words, marriage is culturally driven and hence, any discourse on marriage should take into consideration the cultural aspects of that society. However, the advent of capitalism, Anglo centrality, and the power of media in the contemporary global world, the cultural aspects are marginalized for the sake of the more ‘powerful parties’ to determine the so called ‘international standards’.

Yemen is an Arab Islamic country located on the Arabian Peninsula in Southwest Asia, with a population of more than 19.72 million (latest census in December 2004). As the way of life, Islam strongly respects equity, maintains dignity, and protects human beings. Muslims view marriage as the foundation of society and family life. From a practical aspect, an Islamic marriage is structured through legally enforceable rights and duties of both parties. In an atmosphere of love and respect, these rights and duties provide a framework for the balance of family life and the fulfillment of both partners.

In 2008, Nojoud ‘eight years old’, Reem ‘twelve years old’ and Arwa ‘nine years old’ were reported in *Yemen Times*, the first local English-language newspaper, as cases of ‘early marriage’ in Yemen. However, the Nojoud phenomenon, the focus of this study, was extensively covered. The case is that on 2 April 2008 Nojoud went to a court asking for *khula* or *divorce* (Appendix A), women’s right in Islam. Less than two weeks later, the same court annulled her marriage contract. This issue was taken up by foreign readers, and *Glamour Magazine* in New York awarded Nojoud and her lawyer Shada Nasser, honours for the year 2008. This was followed by the publication of a book; *I am Nojoud a 10 year old girl divorce*, by a French writer. Aside from the powerful media, this issue generated much interest and response through two global colonial means: the English language and the Internet, resulting in much discussion and debate in various websites and blogs.

Fowler (1987) states that in newspapers “there is no neutral representation of reality” (p.67). Bignell (1997) adds that “news is not just facts but representations produced in language and other signs like photographs” (p.81). Thus, the foci of this paper are as follows. First, how is the institution of marriage in Yemen represented in *Yemen Times* by Hamid Thabit, a Yemeni writer; second, how is that representation understood by the west; third, how is that perception used as a template to infuse marriages in Islamic culture; and finally, how ‘deviations’ from such perceptions though legal in the home countries, may be misrepresented and negatively portrayed by the western - based media. Because it is an issue of representation, a discourse-analytic approach is deemed appropriate.

This paper therefore aims to investigate the extent to which ‘marriage’ in Yemen and ‘its social actors’ have been represented by *Yemen Times* to its foreign readers with specific reference to the Nojoud’s phenomenon. In achieving this objective, the selected texts were analyzed to:

1. identify the discourses that the selected texts draw upon in representing 'early marriage' in Yemen;
2. find out the presuppositions that the texts take for granted; and
3. investigate the way these texts identify the 'social actors' of the institution of marriage in Yemen.

Theoretical Background: Fairclough's Approach of Media Discourse

Fairclough (1995) states that representation; construction of relation and construction of identities are present simultaneously in a text. This paper however, deals with representation only. Fairclough further adds that in seeing language as discourse and as 'social practice', the analyst has to move within three levels of analysis, and examine "the 'dialectical relationship' between texts, processes and their social conditions" (Fairclough, 1989, p.26). A dialectical relationship refers to a two-way process i.e. we can identify the social structure of a society from the use of its language and vice versa.

Representations in media texts are deemed to be ideological, which in turn contribute to producing or reproducing unequal relations of power and relation of domination (Fairclough, 1995, p.46). In this respect, Fairclough (1995) focuses on how events, situations, relationships and people are represented and, in the case of media texts, how the producers exercise their choices in producing their versions of reality. Hence, when texts are analysed in CDA, it is "an account of what choices are made" (Fairclough, 1995, p.103). Such an analysis involves two different levels. Micro analysis descriptively involves textual analysis and macro analysis interpretatively involves the discursive and social practices.

A) Textual Analysis

Identifying Discourse(s)

There are different terminologies for identifying a discourse, for example "a type of language associated with a particular representation from a specific point of view, of some social practice" (Fairclough, 1995, p.41), 'discourse representation', (Fairclough, 1992) and representational strategies (van Dijk, 1998). Besides, selections amongst available discourses are likely to be ideologically significant choices. According to Fairclough, communicative events and social practices are recontextualized differently depending on the goals, values and priorities of the communication in which they are recontextualized. This raises questions of truth, bias and manipulation which have been a major preoccupation in media analysis. Moreover, Fairclough affirms, in the analysis of texts, such differences of representation can be specified in terms of the use of different 'discourses' (Fairclough, 1995, p.118).

In addition, discourse can be identified and named at the two micro and macro levels. To identify discourses, Fairclough (1995) believes that discourses can be realized in the vocabulary and grammar of texts and that the analysis of collocations in texts is a way of linking the analysis of discourses to the linguistic analysis of texts. Moreover, discourses

are “constructions or significations of some domain of social practice from a particular perspective” (Fairclough, 1995, p.94). In other words, to facilitate identifying an abstract discourse, Fairclough suggests bordering a discourse by a domain ‘e.g. political’ and a perspective e.g. ‘Marxist’ so that the identified discourse is called ‘Marxist political discourse’ (Fairclough, 1995, p.94), or in case of this study e.g. ‘Yemeni legal discourse’.

A discourse can be foregrounded or backgrounded. ‘Foregrounding’ is used in this paper to refer to the ‘marked or emphasized discourses versus the unmarked or play down ‘backgrounded’ discourses used in the texts. Fairclough (1992) states that “making elements marked themes is a way of foregrounding them” (p.184).

Presuppositions

Presuppositions are implicit and explicit “propositions which are taken by the producer of the text as already established or ‘given’” (Fairclough, 1992, p.120). Fairclough states that exploring implicit propositions is one question that can be asked whenever one representation is selected over other available ones (Fairclough, 1992, p.14). He further adds that “presuppositions help establish represented realities as convincing”, and that achieving accuracy of a text is a matter of positioning the reader through presuppositions as someone who is already familiar with the culture and community represented (Fairclough, 1992, p.107).

Presuppositions are marked in a variety of ways in newspaper texts. Richardson (2007) lists four linguistic structures common to presupposed meaning; three of them are originally listed by Reah (cited in Richardson, 2007, p.63) and one which he calls “nominal presuppositions”. First, certain words invoke presupposed meaning in their very use; for example, ‘forget’ presupposes a great deal, including an attempt to remember. Second, the definite article ‘the’ and possessive articles ‘his’ and ‘her’ trigger presuppositions. Third, presuppositions are present in ‘wh-questions’. Fourth, nominal presuppositions can be triggered by nouns and adjectives used to qualify noun phrases.

Naming and Reference (Identification)

Richardson (2007) states that “the way that people are named in news discourse can have significant impact on the way in which people are viewed [or represented]” (p.49), (cf. Fairclough (1992), ‘overwording’). He further adds that we all simultaneously possess a range of identities that could be used to describe us equally accurately but not with the same meaning (p.49).

B) Discursive Practice

Discursive practice is a facet of hegemonic struggle, which involves processes of text production, distribution, and consumptions. It works in both conventional and creative ways, which contributes to reproducing as well as transforming society (Fairclough, 1992). He states that intertextual analysis of media texts is a bridge between the ‘text’ and ‘discourse practice’ dimensions in his framework. Richardson (2007) states “it is at this

stage that analysis becomes discourse analysis rather than textual analysis” (p.39). Meanwhile, it is important to see the relationship between discourse and social structure as dialectical i.e. a two-way relationship.

C) Sociocultural Practice

Richardson (2007) states it is at this stage that the discourse analysis moves to the level of critical discourse analysis. Similarly, Fairclough (1989) adds that this dimension covers “both the immediate conditions of the situational context (i.e. the social context of a newspaper) and the more remote conditions of institutional and social structure” (p.26). This broader view would help evoke the wider sociocultural practices and ideology of the Yemeni society. Meanwhile, the study of the social practices of news discourse assumes a dialectical relationship between society and journalism.

Thus, the focus of this paper at this dimension is on the ideological practices. This means that discourse constitutes, naturalizes, sustains and changes significations of the world from diverse positions in power relations (Fairclough, 1992). In understanding ideology, Fairclough writes, “I [sic] shall understand ideologies to be significations/constructions of reality (the physical world, social relations, social identities), which are built into various dimensions of the forms/meanings of discursive practices, and which contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination” (p.87).

Kress and van Leeuwen’s Approach of Semiotic texts

Like Fairclough’s framework of media discourse, Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) approach of multimodal communication draws on the systemic functional model of language (Halliday, 1985). Here Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) identify three functions of semiotic language; organizational, interpersonal and representational functions. The focus of this paper is on the representational function, which is used to portray an experience, or a version of ‘the way things are’. According to them, representation is a “scale running from maximum abstraction to maximum representation of pictorial detail, [and that] [a]n image may show every detail of the represented participants: the individual strands of hair, the pores in the skin, the creases in the clothes, ... or it may abstract from detail to a greater or lesser degree” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006, p.161). Meanwhile, the representation of detail is “amplified, exaggerated, and more than real” (p.167).

Furthermore, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that images have representative meaning. Similarly, Guijarro and Sanz (2008) state that, like linguistic structures, “visual structures and visual processes within them are associated with participants’ role and with specific circumstances” (p.1604). Therefore, the analysis of images in representational terms requires the identification of the represented participants, the process or the activity described the qualities of the participants and the circumstances in which the action is being developed.

To this end, the authors believe that a clear critical discourse analysis for analysing semiotic texts has yet to be developed. However, in the light of Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, the authors argue that representational function of a visual text should be critically uncovered within a three-dimensional analysis; organizational analysis (semiotic analysis), interpersonal analysis (discourse analysis) and representational analysis (critical discourse analysis).

A) Semiotic Analysis

Kress and van Leeuwen (1998) state that the layout of a traditional newspaper involves three signifying systems; information value, framing and salience. These systems serve to bring the various elements of the page together into a coherent and meaningful whole.

These systems together would help in identifying the representational meanings of the layout of the online version of *Yemen Times*. *Information value* provides the placement of elements with the specific informational values attached to the various 'zones' of the image: left and right, top and bottom, centre and margin. Moreover, *the system of salience* refers to the "degree to which an element draws attention to itself, due to its size, its place in the foreground or its overlapping of other elements, its colour, its tonal values, its sharpness or definition, and other features" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1998, p.210). It is "a particularly important principle in positioning of newsbites, and interacts with the representational principle of classification" (Knox, 2007, p.37). A greater proximity to the top of the home page of an online newspaper for instance, means greater salience. In addition, *framing* is related to the presence or absence of framing devices that disconnects or connects elements of the image, signifying that they belong or do not belong together in some sense (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Elements may be strongly or weakly framed. The stronger the framing, the more the elements in different frames are presented as separate units of information.

B) Discursive Analysis

This dimension deals with two aspects of discursivity; production and distribution. Production refers to "the articulation in material form of semiotic products or events" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, p.21) and affects the design and the quality, weight or colour of the represented event. In case of this paper, production refers to the designer of the web page of the online newspaper and the type and resolution of the camera used for taking the represented photographs of the represented social actors or events. It also includes the person who has taken these photographs.

Distribution refers to "the technical 're-coding of semiotic products and events'" (Knox, 2001). The impact of the internet on the packaging, distribution, delivery and reception of news in newspaper has been profound. All forms of communication can now be encoded, stored and distributed using the Internet (Knox, 2007). Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) state that communication takes place when there is articulation and interpretation. They add that interpreters need to supply semiotic knowledge at four levels; design, discourse, production and distribution.

C) Sociocultural Analysis

Knox (2007) states the development of online newspapers has far-reaching implications on significant social and cultural phenomena. It is reported that “representational meanings present a version for the way things are” (p.31). One important visual means by which representational meanings are understood is visual classification. In visual classification, visual objects of approximately the same size and shape are identified.

van Leeuwen suggests that representation can be seen as the recontextualization of social practices. Represented social practices are transformed in ways, which are determined by the concerns of values and purposes of the text in its own social practice. He further suggests eight primary elements of a social practice: its participants, their activities, the circumstances of activities, the tools and dress that prescribed the eligibility criteria for participation, performance indicators for activities, and reactions of participants to each other (cited in Fairclough, 1995, p.114-115). Therefore, these elements are used as tools to investigate the semiotic elements in the selected texts.

Previous Studies

At the textual level of analysis, research on representation in newspapers has been done by Hakam (2009) on the cartoon controversy, Lean (2007) on the discourse representation of two Malaysian Prime Ministers, Alford (2005) for the ESL policy and Guidelines for the Queensland schools (Australia), Pan (2002) for the right-of-abode issue in postcolonial Hong Kong, and Fairclough (1995) for an air attack on Iraq. At the discursive level of analysis, research had been done by Li (2009) for the relation between the United States and China and by Hoepfner (2006) for the analysis of an advertisement campaign for body care products. At the sociocultural level of analysis, research about representation in newspapers has been done by Bhatia (2009) for the changing perceptions of terrorism by the Bush administration, Pastor (2006) for Mexican elections, Haig (2005) about constructing ideologies, Pietikainen (2004) for ethnic representations in Finnish news, Oktar (2001) for ideological orientations in Turkey, and Magalhaes (1995) for gender relations in Brazil. From a semiotic perspective, a number of studies has drawn on multimodality to investigate multimodal communication in traditional hard-copy newspapers (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1998), text books (Guijarro & Sanz, 2008), online newspapers (Knox, 2007) and website (Kok, 2004).

Conceptual Framework of This Study

Based on the above theoretical and methodological orientation and as depicted in Figure 1, the conceptual framework for this study is based on media discourse as ‘social practice’ (Fairclough 1989, 1992, 1995; Richardson, 2007), and on multimodality of texts (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 1998, 2001; Knox, 2007).

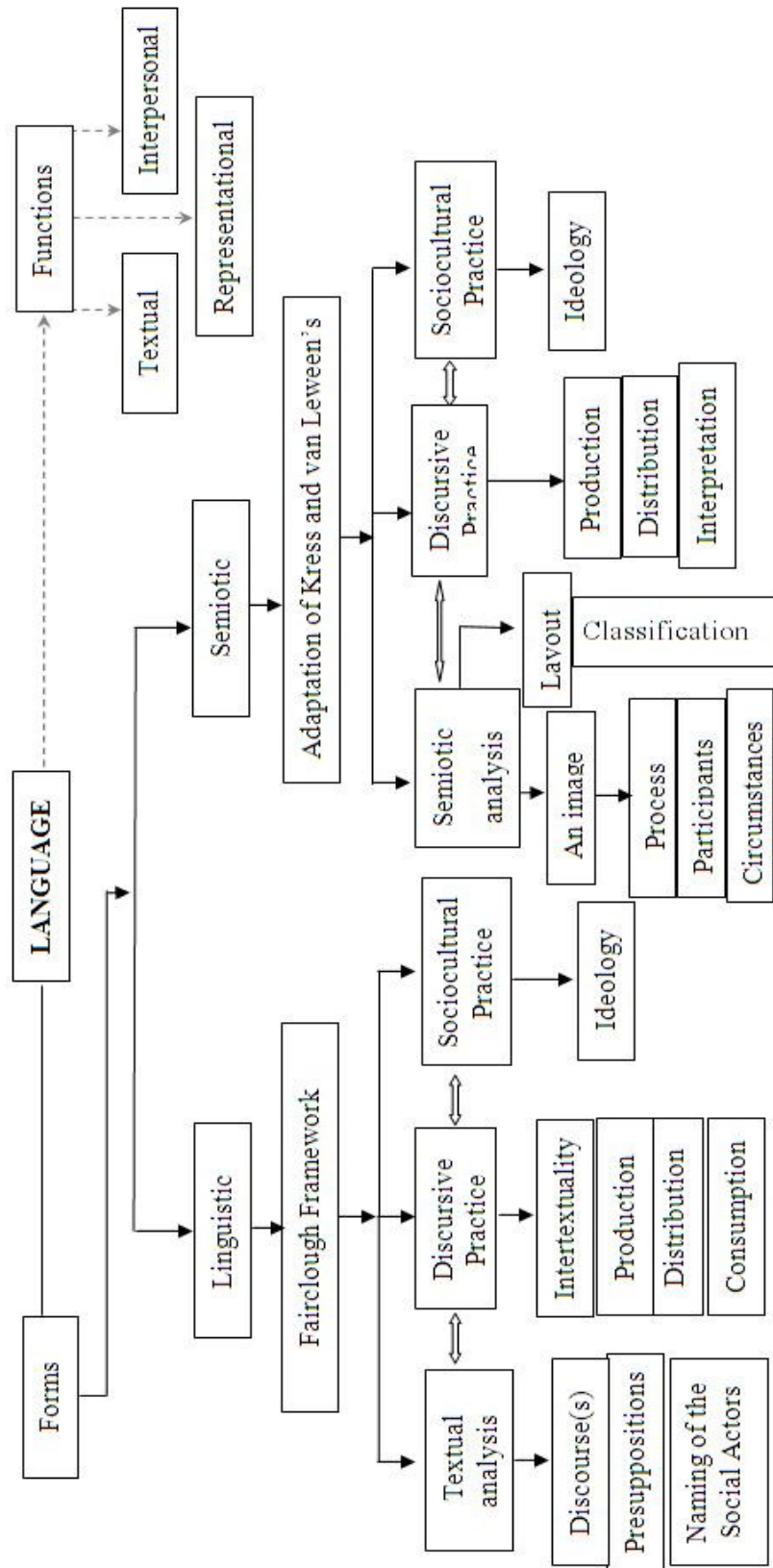


Figure 1: CDA conceptual framework for analyzing online newspapers

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative analytic research paradigm. Analytical studies are based on “analyzing documents or current situations through sound reasoning” (al-Samawi 2000, p.87) and in this case, the print media, with their representations of reality and social relationships are a rich source of data for research projects (Mautner, 2008).

In employing CDA, Wodak and Meyer (2001, p.32) indicate that there is “no accepted canon data collection”. However, it must be interdisciplinary and its description of the object of investigation must be from different perspectives, as a symbiotic relationship exists between analysis and data collection. At the same time, Fairclough (1992) and Mautner (2008) state that the nature of the data required for an analysis varies according to the project and the research questions, and that certain general principles need to be kept in mind such as adequate information on the archive. ‘Moments of crisis’, which refer to instances in the discourse where there is evidence that things are going wrong, have been recommended as a selection strategy.

While text selection must be judiciously carried out, Mautner (2008) further adds that in an investigation of a particular event, an important criterion could also be the chain of events - when and what comes before and after it. In addition, Stockwell (2007) suggests that as a means of achieving a focus in analysis, a researcher may restrict his data to one story on one day across a selection of newspapers, or one story over two weeks. Hence, once the text has been identified (Mautner, 2008) from a ‘universe of discourse’, the required sample can be selected.

The texts selected on Nojoud were articles published in 2008, from online newspapers (though broadsheets were available too) and downloaded from their websites. This collection procedure was due to logistic reasons and accessibility. These soft copies were then printed out and stored. Such data collection from the Internet was also purposive as the objective of the study was to analyze the texts that are made published and consumed by the international readers. However, to collect the responses and comments from the international readers, the authors had to access other sites and blogs where the responses and articles were posted because *Yemen Times* does not have the facility of the online message board.

Based on the premise above, the series of articles on the Nojoud phenomenon written by Hamid Thabit of *Yemen Times* were selected. Five issues that emerged were then selected for analysis (Table 1).

Table 1: The selected texts written by Hamed Thabit of *Yemen Times*

Date	Headline of article
10/4/2008	For the first time in Yemen 8-year-old girl asks for divorce in court
14/4/2008	Parliament refuses to legislate minimum age for marriage
17/4/2008	8-year-old girl's divorce is finalized while a law to prevent early marriage stalls
01/5/2008	Religious leaders support banning early marriage in Yemen
09/6/2008	Minister of Social Affairs calls for amending marriage age

Procedures for data analysis

The selected articles were coded (marked with capital letters and numbered and so were the lines, e.g. A1.L17 which refers to line number 17 of the first article). The unit of analysis is a clause. It comprises the 'processes', 'participants' and 'the circumstances'. Meanwhile, the 'vocabulary' and 'grammar' of a clause are the tools for analysis. This analysis moves from the textual analysis (at the descriptive level) to the discourse analysis (at the interpretative level) to reach the critical discourse analysis (at the explanation level). The following diagram (Figure 2) illustrates the procedures for the linguistic analysis.

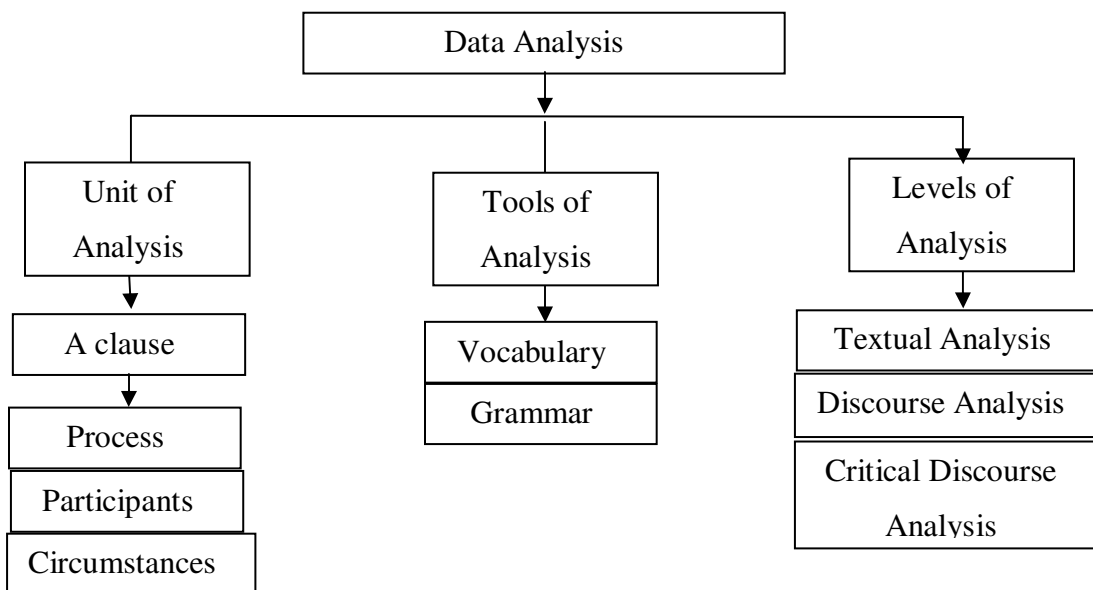


Figure 2: Flow chart representing the procedure for linguistic data analysis

The representational semiotic metafunction is revealed in the represented participants, the process or activity described and the circumstances in which the action is being developed. An integrated analysis of the three dimensions is employed. For this purpose,

the units of analysis are the ‘layout’ and the ‘image’. The following diagram (Figure 3) illustrates the procedures for the semiotic analysis.

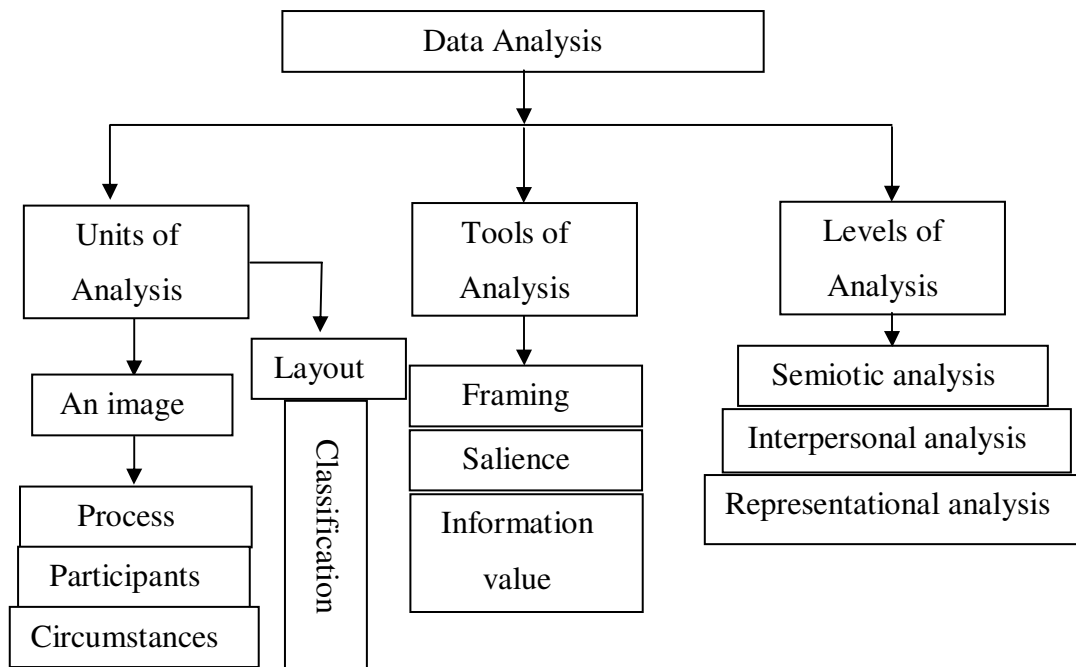


Figure 3: Flow chart representing the procedures for semiotic data analysis

Sample of data analysis

The following is a linguistic and semiotic analysis for one of the selected articles (Appendix A and B). Each analysis comprises the textual, discursive and sociocultural analysis.

Linguistic Analysis

A) Textual Analysis

There are three layers at this stage: identification of available discourses; presuppositions; and naming the social actors.

1. Identified Discourses

Yemeni legal discourse is backgrounded in the text. This discourse is presented with the words, *civil law, a contract of marriage, ready or mature* (A1. L35-39). Similarly, paternal discourse of abuse and violence is presented through a familial association between Nojoud and her father. In this discourse, it is the collocation of the word *father* with *must, beat, and forced* (A1.L12, L4, and L6-7). At the same time, a discourse of child can be identified in (A1.L7) *the child*, (A1.5) *she arrived at court by herself* (A1.9), *she is underage* (A1.17), *I* (Nojoud) *had no idea as to what a marriage is* (A1.20),

whenever I (Nojoud) wanted to play in the yard (A1.44), may be after a few years the same thing will happen to her again, (A1.L45-46) we are planning to put her in Dar Al-Rahama{a non-governmental organization that works with children}.

Again, the discourse of divorce is foregrounded in the headlines as follows: the four distinct voices in the data: the writer; Nojoud; Shatha Ali Nasser; and the husband. The unnamed husband was in fact, a quote, which shows an absence of space allocated to him.

- (A1.L1) *for the first time in Yemen 8 year-old girl asks for divorce in court (the headline)*
- (A1. L7-8) *the child also asked for a divorce (the writer statement)*
- (A1. L14) *I asked and begged my mother, father, and aunt to help me to get divorced (Nojoud's quotation)*
- (A1. L22) *I just want to have a respectful life and divorce him (Nojoud's quotation)*
- (A1. L33) *Nojoud arrived by herself to court asking just for a divorce (Shatha Ali Nasser)*
- (A1. L28) *if the judge or other people insist that I divorce her, I will do it (the man's quotation)*

In addition, discourse of sexual abuse is shown in two ways: direct quotation attributed to Nojoud and through a conduit - the writer and the lawyer. This discourse is represented lexically in the underlined words below:

- (A1.L16-17) *"he used to do bad things with me"*
- (A1.L20) *"Whenever I wanted to play in the yard he beat me and asked me to go to the bedroom with him"*.
- (A1. L17) *"I have no idea as to what a marriage is".*
- (A1. L41) *Nojoud did not get married, but she was raped by a 30-year old man*

Similarly, this discourse is portrayed in Faez's (the husband) representation in words like *force* (A1.L4, L6, L12, L13-L17, L41) and *sexual abuse* (A1.L17).

2. Presuppositions

A1. *For the first time in Yemen 8-year-old girl asks for divorce in court* (the headline). Here, the choice of the 'verbal process' *asks for* presupposes a movement or an action. The gendered collective noun is qualified with an *8-year-old*. The use of the word *divorce* serves two presuppositions. Firstly, it is explicitly presupposed that a marriage has already been performed. This will raise an issue of 'consummation of marriage' vis-à-vis its validity with regard to the age of the social actors in the eyes of the international consumers of the text. Secondly, it would appear that *divorce* not 'khula' is a women's right in Islam.

3. Naming and Reference of Social Actors

The analysis of the study data shows that the ‘social actors’ in the institution of marriage in Yemen are represented by the use of age and marriage relationship. Nojoud is foregrounded and is referred to by the writer as *(an) eight-year-old girl* (A1.L3), *the child* (A1.L7), and *underage* (A1.L9). Further, the writer uses the collocation of children’s innocence in *(Nojoud) had no idea as to what a marriage is* (A1.17), and *whenever I (Nojoud) wanted to play in the yard*, (A1.20).

In contrast, Faez is backgrounded and identified by his age *a 30-year-old man*, his full name *Faez Ali Thamer* (A1.L7), *man 22 years her senior* (A1.L7) and as *a husband* (A1.L8, L11, L16, L30, L38).

The findings also reveal that other important ‘social actors’ notably, her father, mother-in-law, father-in-law are not mentioned.

B) Discursive Practices

On discursive practice analysis, the external intertextuality reveals the hegemonic struggle on the issues of age and *divorce*. In the former, when Nojoud’s mother was interviewed by *Los Angeles Times*, the headline read, *YEMEN: The child bride who sought a divorce and dared to dream big*. According to Daragahi (2008, June 12), the excerpt on Nojoud’s birthday was as in the report below:

“At one point, I asked Nojoud’s mother to clear up the question of her daughter’s age. Some reports had her at 8 years old. “She’s 10,” the mother said. “What was her birthday?” I asked. “I don’t know,” she replied. “There were no birth certificates in our village.” “So how do you know she’s 10?” I asked. “Well, we moved to Sana[’a] when she was 3, and that was seven years ago,” she said.

Four months after publishing its first article, *Yemen Times* published an article entitled “Nojoud goes back to school” (issue No. 1191). It starts with *Ten year-old divorced Nojoud*, and a quote of how *Nojoud and her eight-year-old sister Hifa are able to go to school*. It is interesting to note that Nojoud’s age has changed from 8 to 10. Hence the question that arises is, on what basis was the age determined? The sociocultural dimension would help explain this ambiguity.

On the issue of divorce, the same article states, *Nojoud was the first girl of her age in Yemen to receive a court marriage annulment*. This shows that what had happened was an annulment of the marriage contract. Similarly, in representing this event, the BBC News did not highlight the exact age of the man. In both cases, Nojoud’s exact age was revealed but not the husband’s.

In terms of discursive practice, there are two issues here. As power behind the discourse, it may be seen that *Yemen Times* has aligned Nojoud’s phenomenon alongside ‘women rights’, the notion of ‘freedom of press’, and ‘democracy’. Hamid, the writer with a

heterocultural background of Arabic and English, may subscribe to a worldview that may be incongruent to the Yemeni society. Writing for an international audience with exposure to worldwide changes, capitalism and the power of the media perhaps have ideologically changed him. Hence, Hamid's ideational representations of some practices of the Yemeni society may not be in concert with and the reality of the Yemeni Islamic society. On power behind the discourse, it must be mentioned that the chief editor of *Yemen times* is a female.

It cannot be denied that Nojoud's phenomenon is a Yemeni sociocultural phenomenon. It is distributed via two global tools: English language (global readers) and the Internet. Ease of accessibility through the Internet has paved the way for the production, consumption, interpretation and storage of the text by consumers who are not within the physical domicile. International readers, notably from the west have imposed their sociocultural norms and practices against that of the Yemeni society. The award by Glamour Magazine New York and the book published by the French journalist are testimony of this.

C) Sociocultural Practices

In order to determine the sociocultural practices let us turn to the setting and the social actors. Yemen is a democratic country where freedom of journalism is guaranteed. According to the Saba News Agency (2009, p.2), article 4 (Press and Publications law) states:

The press shall be independent and shall have full freedom to practise its vocation. It shall serve society, form public opinion and express its different outlooks within the context of Islamic creed, within the basic principles of the Constitution, and the goals of the Yemeni Revolution and the aim of solidifying of national unity.

Hence the press enjoys complete freedom as expressed in the first sentence. In the second sentence, the law stipulates, "*it shall serve the society... within the context of Islamic creed*". To interpret the law, one must be knowledgeable in the Islamic creed. Hence it is crucial to evoke Islamic principles to explain the ambiguity revealed in the textual analysis and the discursive analysis.

Khula (to take off) is one "step in reform introduced by the Prophet for amelioration of the conditions of women". It is a term that refers to "a dissolution of marriage by an agreement made between the parties to the marriage on giving some consideration to the husband for release of the wife from the marriage tie...the woman obtained the release [is called] the mukhluaia" (Verma, 1975, p.188). Similarly, there are four ways for dissolution of valid marriage including divorce, and cancellation of the marriage (Verma, 1975, p.138). Islamic shariah also deems that "majority is attained on puberty". Puberty is then defined as "in the case of a boy is 12 years and in the case of a girl it is 9 years (Verma, 1975, p.233).

Meanwhile, marriage at early stages is culturally rooted in the Yemeni society. Salem (2004) report that traditionally, in the Yemeni society, the girl will live with the husband's family after marriage. Her role is then generally limited to domestic responsibilities, while the husband earns money for the extended family. The same study also reveals that all segments of Yemeni society place a high value is placed on the virginity and moral virtue of girls. As a result, families are pressured to marry their girls earlier so as to reduce the possibility of pre-marital sex. According to the Yemeni customs especially in rural areas, a new family is formed within the boundaries of the main family.

Semiotic Analysis

The semiotic analysis examines the super structure of the layout of the online version of *Yemen Times* (Appendix B) and focuses on the two images (photographs). Therefore, the organizational analysis of the systems of information value, salience and framing of the layout form a representational experience or a version of 'the way things are'.

A) Layout

The *information value* of the vertical default home page of *Yemen Times* appears to cover about 70% of the screen while the remaining part is left blank. Horizontally, the page can be seen as one 'head' and two 'tails'. The 'head' is the default computer screen, while the tail is the part of the home page that a reader needs to vertically scroll the page to see the bottom of the homepage (Knox, 2007).

As in the case of the home page of an online newspaper, the most important part is 'the heading'. At the top of the layout, the logo of *Yemen Times* is foregrounded. Below the logo, there is a tool bar which comprises some sections (*About, Subscribe, Advertise, and Search*). This tool bar is supported by another bar; that is information of an issue; (i.e. day, date, volume, etc.). The analysis of the 'heading' reveals that the left-side of the layout of *Yemen Times* comprises four sections, namely: *News, Opinion, Feature* and *Services*. These blue sections comprise red sub-sections. The focus of this research is on the 'News' section or 'newsbites' which comprises four sub-sections namely: *Top News, Local, Youth* and *Business*. The selected articles for this research are positioned on the 'Top News' and 'Local News'. As for the right-side of the layout, it is used as an advertising and promotional part where some links or photographs are listed at this edge of the layout.

Unlike Kress and van Leeuwen's (1998) framework of the front pages of the traditional newspapers, the analysis of this online version of newspaper reveals that the 'New-Given' are the opposite. In other words, the 'New' communicative event is presented on the left side (not on the right side) of the online newspaper. The 'Center' is not applicable to online newspapers. The 'ideal-Real' positions are not like the traditional newspaper. Unlike the traditional newspaper, the reader of an online newspaper needs to scroll the page vertically.

The analysis of *the system of salience* reveals that apart from the use of black for the written text, the layout comprises two colours, red and yellow and blue. Blue is used for the outer layout comprising the logo and the main sections. Red is used for the sub-sections of each main section. Yellow however, is used for the main facilities in its main blue bar. Although the layout usually uses white to illustrate the written texts (like the traditional newspapers), the findings also reveal that the non-white background is sometimes used to represent important events like the third selected article of in this study. The layout uses black for the written texts. The headlines, which are usually in red (for attention grabbing), may also be in other colours. Hyperlinks to the main story may be in the same colour as the headline.

Different font sizes are used in the layout in descending order with the logo taking the largest, followed by the main sections, subheadings and the written text taking the smallest. Similarly, horizontal black lines are used to distinguish a communicative event from another.

In short, the above descriptions are congruent to that of an impersonal design (Knox, 2007) which contributes to an impression of objectivity in news reporting. The web site of *Yemen Times* shows that the graphic and layout designers are in-house members of the newspapers. Ramzy Alawi and Bassam Ahmed (both graphic and layout designers) and Walid Al-Saqqaf (the webmaster) are locals. The design of the layout appears to be stable in all the issues and this may suggest that keeping the same layout is an indicator of stability between the producers and consumers of the text.

As colours and shapes are culture and context-based, it can be assumed that the choices made on *Yemen Times* reflect the cultural perspective of its society.

B) Images

Faez's Image



Figure 4: Faez's photo

Semiotic modes play a vital role in representing an event and icon in this case; the social actors. Figure 4 is an image of Faez as depicted in the newspaper. It is in colour and full frontal of his face. However, the face is not fully revealed. His eyes have been

covered with a black band, similar to images of criminals whose identities have yet to be revealed. In contrast, his identity is revealed, albeit as ‘the husband’. When information like the name here has been deliberately left out, the referent for the image is the status, and in this case, it is ‘the husband’.

The caption is also shown like a mugshot and that he is behind bars with his fingers on the bar, striking a pose of resignation. His unkempt hair, moustache and the sallow cheeks seem to reveal a man older than ‘in his 20s’. This photograph was taken by the author of the article (Hamid Thabit), but the setting is not disclosed.

Nojoud’s Image



Figure 5: The first photo of Nojoud

In contrast to ‘the husband’ above, Figure 5 is the first photo of Nojoud, also taken by the writer. Again it is a frontal image, but here it is three-quarters of the body, showing her in a black hijab, which is usually worn by Yemeni female adults (not children) when they are outdoors. Hence, if this image was shown to foreign readers, who have no cultural notion of the relationship between the choice of dressing, this knowledge is lost. However, to a reader familiar with Yemeni culture, then the status (adulthood) of the subject can be determined.

The background seems like a building which could be her home. Her small physique in contrast to the background seems to prove her age and the socio-economic status of the family. In the photograph, Nojoud appears to be at ease. However, in Yemen as it is the case with Saudi Arabia, taking photographs of girls is a sensitive matter. Photographs are only allowed depending on the purpose of the photograph and the age of the girl.

Findings of Analysis

Based on the separate linguistic analysis and the integrated semiotic analysis, the following presentation reports the findings and the achievements of each research objective in this paper.

1. The integrated critical discourse analysis of the data shows that ‘marriage’ in Yemen is misrepresented in the selected texts. The texts draw upon a number of discourses.

Table 1.2 below is a representation of the identified discourses revealed at the textual descriptive analysis. The status of the discourse, i.e. whether it is foregrounded or backgrounded is then stated. Based on the total amount of the selected data and the given space for each identified discourse, a four-point approximate scale was developed. *Very high* refers to the maximum coverage, *High* shows the high amount of coverage, *Medium* shows a moderate coverage, and *Low* shows the minimum coverage. The last column reveals the holistic ‘shape’ of a discourse after moving through the integrated ‘interpretative’ and/or ‘explanative’ analyses. These views were shaped during the analysis process especially at the sociocultural level.

Table 2: The identified discourses

Identified discourse at the textual analysis	Position		Given Space	Holistic view of discourses
	Fore	Back		
Yemeni Legal discourse		X	Medium	Stable
Sharia discourse of ‘maturity’		X	Medium	Sharia discourse of puberty
Discourse of marriage excluding sexual intercourse		X	Low	Stable
Discourse of challenge	X		Medium	Propagandised
Discourse of age	X		High	Discourse of approximate age
Paternal discourse of violence	X		Medium	Illogical
Discourse of a child	X		Medium	Not specific age
Discourse of divorce	X		High	Discourse of khula
Discourse of sexual abuse	X		High	Overgeneralized
A collocated discourse of ‘early marriage’ with early pregnancy		X	Low	Overgeneralized
Discourse of minimum age of 18	X		Very high	Alien discourse
Discourse of foreign appeal	X		High	influence of alien power
Discourse of awareness		X	Medium	With western eye
Discourse of parliamentary division		X	Medium	Propagandised

Let us take one identified discourse as an example. In the Shariah discourse of ‘maturity’, the sociocultural analysis reveals that the term ‘puberty’ in the Islamic law is misrepresented in the selected texts as equivalent to a western term, ‘maturity’. In other words, according to the Islamic marriage law, it is ‘puberty’ that determines the applicability of marriage. The imposition of the term ‘maturity’ to the Yemeni Islamic context is a form of misrepresentation. The solution thus is to (consciously) replace the

word ‘maturity’ with ‘puberty’ thereby unpacking the reality of the Islamic marriage. It is thus a choice, with a realization that the Arabic word ‘boologh’ is not equivalent to the English word ‘maturity’ but to the word ‘puberty’. Added to this, Islam will be represented as a religion and not way of life.

2. The holistic analysis of the study data reveals that the texts, especially the headlines contain many assumptions in their representation of ‘early marriage’ in Yemen such as ‘divorce’, ‘marriage in Islam’, ‘puberty’ and the age documentation in Yemen.

The texts presuppose that ‘divorce’ in Islam is a woman’s right. As ‘khula’ is not equivalent to divorce, foreign readers have expressed their disagreement with the texts. A foreign reader has expressed her surprise that *the girl has to pay a certain amount of money to her ex-husband in order to get divorce*.

In addition, it is found that age is misrepresented. By citing the exact age of the main social actors, there is a presupposition by both the producer and the consumers of the texts – of documentations of birth in Yemen. This is rather apparent as the discursive analysis which shows that neither the producer of the text nor the consumers have questioned the matter of age in the Yemeni society or the age of the represented social actors in Nojoud’s phenomenon. Besides, the intertextual analysis reveals that there is heterogeneity in the matter of the age of the two social actors.

In addition, the sociocultural practice reveals that the age calculation and documentation were not questioned. Age calculation, especially in rural areas, is usually counted by the Hijrah calendar; which is 11 days less than the solar calendar. As for age documentation in Yemen, it is influenced by many factors such as family literacy, the geographical location and the economic situation of a family. Interestingly, one finds that the usual birth date for many Yemeni passport holders is documented as 1 January. This indicates that the matter of age documentation in Yemen is a matter of estimation for many Yemeni families and this is supported by a United Nations report (2009, p.2) which states:

there is no sufficient awareness of the importance of civil registration in the public. People come to register a vital event only when it is absolutely necessary (for school or for other documents). As a result, the registration coverage is incomplete, especially for the remote areas in the country.

3. In achieving the third objective, the holistic analysis shows that while the two main social actors are identified by ‘overwordings’ of the age and the marriage relation ‘the husband’, some other important social actors were absent.

The linguistic analysis reveals that the space given to Nojoud is more than the space given to Faez. The texts draw the attention of their readers by ‘overwordings’ of the age: 8 – year-old girl’ versus ‘30 -year-old man’. In fact, there is no evidence to prove the social actors’ exact age. While Nojoud is foregrounded by her age, Faez is

backgrounded and identified by his age and by his marital status – the husband. In contrast however, Nojoud is never identified as a wife. Moreover, it is revealed that although marriage in Yemen is a relation between families and not individuals, Nojoud's father is silenced and the other social actors like Nojoud's mother, and Nojoud's mother-in-law are absent.

Like the linguistic analysis, the semiotic analysis reveals that Faez is backgrounded. His image appears only once unlike Nojoud, who is foregrounded with five photographs. Unlike the linguistic analysis, the semiotic analysis reveals that Nojoud's appearance does not support her image of an 8-year-old girl. The black hijab worn is customary for adult Yemeni girls when they are outdoors. If she were really a child, she would be without a hijab outdoors.

Conclusion

This paper has delineated how marriage in Yemen and its social actors were misrepresented. By applying CDA and a focus of discursive and sociocultural practices through the analysis of texts and multimodality, the representations by the *Yemen Times* practices have been proven to be flawed. It is recommended therefore that an understanding of key concepts in marriage and divorce be investigated within the norms of the Shariah. In other words, there is a need to isolate the alien components from the Islamic concepts of 'zawaj' and 'nikah'.

This research has contributed to CDA through the conceptual framework for analysing online newspapers in Yemen. This framework can be used to analyze similar modern texts of online newspapers where the focus is on both the linguistic and the semiotic forms of language.

The framework has provided a critical multimodal analysis of semiotic texts where an analysis needs to move within three levels of analysis; that is to analyze the 'dialectical' relationship between the semiotic modes, discursive processes and their sociocultural orders. In other words, the semiotic analysis has been expanded from the 'whatness' at the descriptive level (semiotic analysis), through the 'howness' at the interpretive level (discourse analysis) to the 'whyness' at the explanation level (critical multimodal discourse analysis).

This same research can be repeated with a larger corpus of the same or more online English-language newspapers. More multimodal visual and verbal texts can be included for a more comprehensive analysis of the micro and macro analysis of online newspapers. Ideologies of online newspapers can also be compared and contrasted in different newspapers i.e. in editorials. Blogs and other online Websites are also good potential domains for further research.

It is also emphasized that language is an important medium through which ideologies are conveyed or contested. In order to become aware of the hidden ideological power of discourse, readers need to become equipped with critical tools for analysis. This is

necessary, according to Fairclough (1989), “to help increase consciousness of how language contributes to the domination of some people by others, because consciousness is the first step towards emancipation” (p.1). The English-language education pages of (online) newspapers are also a great potential domain that needs to be investigated. They are considered a great source for EFL students to improve their English. These pages; however, might transmit ideologies that contradict with the home culture of these students. Moreover, the findings of this study recommend that our students should be equipped with tools such as those employed in this research, to critically analyse and uncover how language is used to promote ideologies in their texts.

Thus, in order to raise critical consciousness regarding media discourse, the authors feel that teachers need to be exposed to an understanding of Islamic terminologies, the definition of ideology, and news and its social and individual functions. These terminologies must be incorporated into the reading strategies of the particular discourse for the students. Moreover, teachers need to be exposed to methodological tools such as those used in this study, particularly to encourage our students to become critical readers.

Last but not least, journalists should take into consideration the role of both the Internet and the foreign language-English language. In other words, journalists should keep in mind the usage of the foreign language terminologies in representing the normality of a local culture.

References

- Alford, J. (2005). *Discursive patterns in ESL policy: Competing discourses in the new 'Education Queensland' ESL policy and guidelines document*. Proc. Hamilton. (Online) Retrieved 23 May 2009, from <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/1012/>
- Al-Samawi, A. (2000). *Introduction to research techniques in linguistics and literature*. Sana'a: Awan.
- Bhatia, A. (2009). The discourses of terrorism. *Journal of pragmatics*, 41, 279-289.
- Bignell, J. (1997). *Media semiotics an introduction*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Daragahi, B. (2008). The child bride who sought a divorce. *Los Angeles Times*. (Online) Retrieved 12 June 2008, from <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/babylonbeyond/2008/06/yemen-meeting-t.html>
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. UK: Longman Group.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media discourse*. London: Edward Arnold.

- Fowler, R. (1987). The intervention of the media in the reproduction of power. In I. M. Zavala, T. van Dijk, & D. M., Diaz (Eds.), *Approaches to discourse, poetic and psychiatry* (pp. 67-80). Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Guijarro, J., & Sanz, M. (2008). Compositional, interpersonal and representational meanings in a children's narrative: A multimodal discourse analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 40, 1601-1619. (Online) Retrieved 22 May 2009, from www.esvier.com/locate/pragmatics
- Haig, E. S. (2005). *Media representations of political discourse: A critical discourse study of four reports of Prime Minister's Question*. (Online) Retrieved 17 April 2009, from <http://www.lang.nagoyau.ac.jp/tagen/media/journal/200503/haig/haig.pdf>
- Hakam, J. (2009). The cartoons controversy: a critical discourse analysis of English-language Arab Newspaper discourse. *Discourse & Society*, 20, 33-57.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1985). *An introduction to functional grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hamid Tabet (2008). For the first time in Yemen 8 year-old girl asks for divorce. *Yemen Times*. (Online) Retrieved 17 April, 2009 from http://www.yementimes.com/defaultdet.aspx?SUB_ID=25055
- Hoepfner, Y. (2006). *Analysing the beauty advertisement discourse: Dove's campaign for real beauty*. (Online) Retrieved 23 May 2009, from <http://www.discourseanalysis.de/media/pdfs/Hoepfner%202006%20Dove.pdf>
- Knox, J. (2007). Visual-verbal communication on online newspaper home pages. *Visual Communication*, 6, 19-53.
- Kok, K. C. (2004). Multisemiotic mediation in hypertexts. In K.L. O'Halloran (Ed.), *Multimodal discourse analysis: Systemic functional perspectives* (pp. 131-162). London: Continuum.
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (1998). Front pages: the (critical) analysis of newspaper layout. In B. A. Garrett (Ed.), *Approaches to Media Discourse* (pp. 186-219). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal discourse: the modes and media of contemporary communication*. London: Arnold.
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design second edition*. London: Routledge.
- Lean, M. L. (2007). Passing the baton: A discourse representation of two Malaysian premiers. In P. T. C. Ho (Ed.), *Discourse Analysis Volume* (pp. 128-141). Singapore: Marshall Cavendish.

- Li, J. (2009). Intertextuality and national identity: Discourse of national conflicts in daily newspapers in the United States and China. *Discourse and Society*, 20, 85-121.
- Magalhaes, M. (1995). A critical discourse analysis of gender relations in Brazil. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 23, 183-197.
- Mautner, G. (2008). Analyzing newspapers, magazines and other print media. In K. Wodak (Ed.), *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences* (pp. 30-53). China: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Oktar, L. (2001). The ideological organization of representational processes in the presentation of us and them. *Discourse and Society*, 12, 313-364.
- Pan, X. (2002). Consensus behind disputes: a critical discourse analysis of the media coverage of the right-of-abode issue in postcolonial Hong Kong. *Media, Culture & Society*, 24, 49-68.
- Pastor, J. C. (2006). *Constructing problems and solutions for indigenous people: a critical discourse analysis about identity and cultural violence in Mexican main political platform*. MA. Thesis, University of East Anglia. (Online) Retrieved 23 May 2009, from <http://juanchobarron.googlepages.com/Masterdissertation.pdf>
- Pietikäinen, S. (2004). Indigenous identity in print: Representations of the Sami in the news discourse. *Discourse and Society*, 14, 581-609.
- Richardson, J. (2007). *Analysing newspapers: An approach from critical discourse analysis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Saba News Agency. (2009). *Press and publications law*. (Online) Retrieved 30 April 2009, from <http://www.sabanews.net/ar/news44000.htm>
- Salem, A. (2004). *Early marriage a challenge to development*. (Online) Retrieved 23 May 2009, from <http://www.hoodonline.org/print.php?sid=584>
- Stockard, J. (2002). *Marriage in culture: Practice and meaning across diverse societies*. New York: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Stockwell, P. (2007). *Sociolinguistics*. London: Routledge.
- United Nations, (2009). *Technical report on the status of civil registration and vital statistics in ESCWA region, United Nations*. (Online) Retrieved 30 May 2009, from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/vitalstatkb/Attachment100.aspx>
- van Dijk, T. (1998). *Ideology: A multidisciplinary introduction*. London: Sage Publisher.
- Verma, B. R. (1975). *Muslim marriage and dissolution*. Allahbad: J. N. Bagga Publishers.
- Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2001). *Methods of critical discourse analysis*. London: Sage publications.

Appendix A

Issue No. (1145) dated 10-13 April 2008

1 For the first time in Yemen
2 **8-year-old girl asks for divorce in court**

By: Hamed Thabet

3 SANA'A, April 9 - An eight-year-old girl decided last week to go the Sana'a
4 West Court to prosecute her father, who forced her to marry a 30-year-old
5 man. Nojoud Muhammed Nasser arrived at court by herself on Wednesday,
6 April 2, looking for a judge to handle her case against her father, Muhammed
7 Nasser, who forced her two months ago to marry Faez Ali Thamer, a man 22
8 years her senior. The child also asked for a divorce, accusing her husband
9 of sexual and domestic abuse. According to Yemeni law, Nojoud cannot
10 prosecute, as she is underage. However, court judge Muhammed Al-Qathi
11 heard her complaint and subsequently ordered the arrests of both her father
and husband.



12 "My father beat me and told me that I must marry this man, and if I did not, I
13 would be raped and no law and no sheikh in this country would help me. I
14 refused but I couldn't stop the marriage," Nojoud Nasser told the Yemen Times.
15 "I asked and begged my mother, father, and aunt to help me to get divorced. They answered,
'We can do nothing. If you want you can go to court by yourself.' So this is what I have done," she
said.

Nojoud Muhammed Nasse
YT Photo by Hamed Thab

16 Nasser said that she was exposed to sexual abuse and domestic violence by her husband. "He
17 used to do bad things to me, and I had no idea as to what a marriage is. I would run from one
18 room to another in order to escape, but in the end he would catch me and beat me and then
19 continued to do what he wanted. I cried so much but no one listened to me. One day I ran away
from him and came to the court and talked to them."

20
21 "Whenever I wanted to play in the yard he beat me and asked me to go to the bedroom with him.
22 This lasted for two months," added Nasser. "He was too tough with me, and whenever I asked
23 him for mercy, he beat me and slapped me and then used me. I just want to have a respectful life
and divorce him."

24
25 Nasser's uncle, who does not want to reveal his name, is following the case now as her guardian.
26 According to her uncle, after Muhammed Nasser, the girl's father, lost his job as a garbage truck
driver in Hajjah, he became a beggar, and soon after suffered from mental problems.

27
Thamer is in jail now. "Yes I was intimate with her, but I have done nothing wrong, as she is my
wife and I have the right and no one can stop me," he said. "But if

28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47



The husband YT Photo by Hamed Thabet

the judge or other people insist that I divorce her, I will do it, it's ok."

So far, no accusations have been made against her father, who was later released due to health problems, or Nasser's husband, who will remain in jail for further investigation.

"So far there is no case and no charges, as Nojoud arrived by herself to court asking just for a divorce," said Shatha Ali Nasser, a lawyer in the Supreme Court who is following Nojoud Nasser's story.

Shatha Ali Nasser confirmed that item number 15 in Yemeni civil law reads that "no girl or boy can get married before the age of 15." However, this item was amended in 1998 so parents could make a contract of marriage between their children even if they are under the age of 15. But the husband cannot be intimate with her until she is ready or mature," said Nasser. "This law is highly dangerous because it brings an end to a young girl's happiness and future fruitful life. Nojoud did not get married, but she was raped by a 30-year old man."

Nasser confirmed that Nojoud Nasser's case is not the first of its kind in Yemen, but it is the first time that a girl went to court by herself to ask for a divorce.

"We are not planning to return Nojoud to her family. Who knows? Maybe after a few years the same thing will happen to her again," said Shatha Ali Nasser. "We are planning to put her in Dar Al-Rahama [an non-governmental organization that works with children], where she can have a better life and education. We do not want her family to pay her expenses, as they are poor."

Appendix B (Yemen Times Online Layout)

The image displays two screenshots of the Yemen Times Online website. The top screenshot shows the homepage with a navigation menu, a search bar, and several news articles. The main article is titled "8-year-old girl's divorce is finalized while a law to prevent early marriage stalls". Below the article is a photo of a young girl, Nojoud, receiving gifts. The bottom screenshot shows the same article in a more detailed view, including a byline "By: Hamed Thabet" and a longer text block. The website layout includes a header with the "YEMEN TIMES" logo, a navigation bar with "About", "Subscribe", and "Advertise", and a sidebar with "News", "Opinion", and "Feature" sections. The browser interface shows the URL "http://www.yementimes.com/index.shtml?1147" and the date "Sunday June 21, 2009".

About the authors

Abduljalil al-Sharabi is a Ph.D student at the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. His research interests are Islamisation of language, critical discourse analysis and pragmatics.

Noraini Ibrahim (Ph.D) is Associate Professor at the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. She has a keen interest in ESP, forensic linguistics and institutional discourse.

Nor Fariza Mohd Nor (Ph.D) is Senior Lecturer at the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Her research interests include discourse analysis as well as discourse and IT. She is involved in research in e-learning, online reading and IT, and bridging digital divide for the rural community.