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**Language, Power, and Revivalism in Islamic Literature: A CDA of Dr. Israr Ahmad's The Rise and Decline of the Muslim Ummah**



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**Abstract**

The present study aims to investigate how social reality, ideology and power relations are constructed in translated work of Dr Israr Ahmad's *Rise and Decline of Muslim Ummah* through Fairclough's (2013) model of critical discourse analysis. The CDA framework proceeds toward a qualitative and interpretive research design adopting the three dimensions: textual analysis (social events), discursive practices (social practices) and socio-historical context (social structures). The findings showed interdiscursivity (political, religious and historical) was strategically mobilized within the text along with the evaluative lexis, mapping the metaphors to naturalize the reading of history and authorise a legitimate program of Islamic revivalism.

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis, Ideology, Power Relation, Revivalism, Socio-Religious Discourse, Muslim Ummah And Fairclough (2013)

**Introduction**

Religious discourse generally refers to language used in religious text, sermons, teachings and activities to express ideas, values and moral worldviews. It is both spiritual and social, influencing identities, conventions, and power dynamics within groups and communities.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) investigates religious discourse as a social activity in which language, ideology, and power are intertwined. According to the CDA, religious books and sermons do more than simply reflect religion; they actively establish authority, legitimize beliefs, and govern conduct. Fairclough's dialectical-relational paradigm is especially valuable since it connects textual features (such as modality, evaluation, and intertextuality) to discursive practices (production and interpretation) and broader socio-cultural structures (ideology, domination, and hegemony).

Dr Ahmad's translated work *Rise and Decline of the Muslim Ummah* is an example of modern Islamic revivalist discourse through the lens of Quranic teleology, the text presents a comprehensive philosophy of history. The writer establishes that the rise and decline are framed as the results of moral obedience or disobedience of divine laws. The writer does not determine history materially but construct it through immutable divine principles (sovereignty all belongs to Allah). This framing makes the text an ideological outcome or work as it explains the decline, imposes responsibility, delegitimize the latest world views and instigate the readers toward overall collective revival. From critical discourse analysis such text is not only descriptive but also performative as the text under discussion produces social meaning, justifies power relation and places social actors in a moral hierarchy. Fairclough's (2013) dialectical-relational model offers an appropriate analytical framework for the said purpose. This framework relates discourse to social structures, historical processes and institutions dialectically. The discourse can be seen as shaping and being shaped by colonialism, global powers and nationalism by non-discursive social realities.

Although Dr Ahmad's translated works are discussed in Islamic studies, revivalist literature and teleology and rarely subjected to systematic linguistic critical analysis.

Here the gap emphasizes the role of language in construction of meaning and for a CDA oriented examination to see foregrounded linguistic strategies, ideological effects and discursive formations. The study addresses this gap and applies Fairclough's CDA framework (2013) to the translated texts of Rise and Decline of Muslim Ummah. It demonstrates how religious discourse operates as social practice which constructs the reading of history in a moralized view point, legitimizes revivalist authority and challenges to colonialism and secular narratives. By doing all, this study contributes to an interdisciplinary research at the intersection of religious studies, linguistics and social theory.

### **Literature Review**

A study by Cipriani (2002) was conducted on written sermons of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God. The researcher identified the manifestations of power in the sermons. A discourse analysis was applied, which focused mainly on the relationship between discourse and society. The findings of this study suggested that language has a deep connection with its social environment. Another study in 2022 by Hashmi et al. was conducted on former Muslims' socio-religious discourse on social media by analysing its performatives and speech acts. The findings suggested that former Muslims only performed on social media to construct a certain discourse about religion, and expressed themselves by showing all five types of speech acts. The analysis of speech acts helped the researchers to identify the concerns of former Muslims.

Hjelm (2014) conducted a study on the critical sociology of religion. A critical discourse analysis was applied to analyse the construction, reproduction, and transformation of inequality in religion. The analysis was done by using the three aspects of CDA: textual analysis, conceptual analysis, and in-depth analysis. The findings of the study provided the importance of CDA to critically analyse the sociology of religion. It also emphasized the analysis of social inequality in religion and its role in public discourse. A study in 2011 was conducted by Rizwan on Majlis-e-Hussain from the CDA perspective. The aim was to analyse the religious conventions and ideology followed by the use of linguistic devices. The researcher analysed the social problems and power relations in the Shi'ah community. Recontextualization was also used to justify the Shi'ah's traditions with Quranic verses. The findings of the study suggested the multipurpose nature of the Majlis and its impact on the human mind.

Eid (2019) investigated the sociolinguistic functions of code switching in Friday sermons in Jordan. The analysis was conducted on the sermons, and three forms of code switching were identified. The study concluded that using code switching by imams is contextual and establishes rapport and cultural acceptance. It revealed the preachers' background. It also emphasized the influence it has on the minds of audience. Similarly, in 2023, another researcher explored the persuasive strategies and linguistic features in Islamic sermons using discourse analysis. The researcher compared sermons from different speakers and identified their linguistic and persuasive features. Lexical and grammatical choices, rhetorical devices, emotions, and religious storytelling were analysed in those selected Islamic sermons. The findings suggested the importance of collaboration in the linguistic field in Islamic studies by emphasizing the language use in sermons and its importance in understanding religious discourse better. The study contributed in shaping Islamic

beliefs and attitudes.

In 2025, some other researchers conducted a study on religious discourse to investigate the politics of faith in modern power relations. Researchers explored the language, symbolism in religion to examine power and its influence on the public. They also analysed the authority it has in the socio-political domain across different contexts. The findings of the study showed the strategic use of faith for political gains. Another study by Bapir et al. in 2025 examined religious language in Friday sermons by using critical discourse analysis by Fairclough. Researchers investigated linguistic patterns, rhetorical devices, and their influence on the audience. Both spoken and written data were used to analyse the language used by the khatib to connect the relationship of historical events and justice. The findings of the study suggested the awareness in the audience's minds of how sermons shape and influence socio-political thought and encourage change.

On the other hand, some researchers in 2015 conducted a discourse analysis on Christian and Islamic sermons. The researchers analysed twenty utterances from Christian and Islamic sermons. Clauses, adjectives, allusions, and sentence fragments from the sermons were analysed. Other cohesive and coherent devices were also examined. Along with these, persuasive strategies were analysed as well. The findings of the study concluded that the similar communicative features in both the Christian and Islamic sermons and the messages they convey to the people contain same persuasive notions. Akhimien et al. (2018) conducted a study on the conversational features and discourse strategies in sermons of Pastor E. A. Adeboye. The findings included the role of both the verbal and non-verbal communication features in sermons. It further concluded that the sermons consist of discourse strategies to engage the audience and communicate the message clearly.

Scholarly engagement with socio-religious discourse has increasingly emphasized the role of language as a central mechanism through which ideology, authority, and power are constructed and disseminated. Within this broad field, religious revivalist texts, sermons, and translated religious discourse have attracted critical attention due to their capacity to shape collective beliefs, moral orientations, and political consciousness. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a robust analytical framework for examining how such texts function not merely as spiritual guidance but as instruments of ideological persuasion and socio-political mobilization.

Early foundational work in CDA, particularly by Norman Fairclough, conceptualizes discourse as a form of social practice in which language both reflects and reproduces power relations (Fairclough, 1995). Fairclough's three-dimensional model textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice have been widely employed in studies of religious discourse to uncover how lexical choices, modality, and intertextuality contribute to ideological reproduction. His framework is especially relevant for analysing translated religious texts, where ideological meanings may be recontextualized for new audiences through linguistic shifts and interpretive mediation.

Within Islamic studies, scholars have examined revivalist and reformist Islamic discourse as a key site of ideological construction. Talal Asad (1986) argues that religious discourse must be understood in relation to institutional power and historical context, emphasizing how authoritative religious meanings are produced and regulated. Building on this perspective, studies of modern Islamic preaching and revivalist movements highlight how language is used to frame Islam as a

comprehensive socio-political system rather than a purely spiritual faith (Eickelman & Piscatori, 1996). These studies demonstrate that revivalist discourse often employs evaluative and normative language to define moral binaries such as belief versus disbelief, obedience versus deviation, and authenticity versus corruption.

Critical analyses of Islamic sermons and religious speeches further illustrate how power is discursively enacted through claims of divine authority. For instance, Teun A. van Dijk (2006) emphasizes the role of ideology in controlling mental models and social cognition. His socio-cognitive approach has been applied to religious texts to show how repeated rhetorical patterns—such as positive self-presentation of the in-group and negative other-presentation of out-groups—serve to legitimize dominance and exclusion. Such strategies are particularly salient in revivalist Islamic discourse, where collective identity is often foregrounded through pronoun use (“we,” “they”) and moral evaluation.

Parallel insights emerge from studies of Christian sermons and evangelical discourse, which offer valuable comparative perspectives for socio-religious CDA. Research on Christian preaching demonstrates that sermons frequently function as persuasive texts that blend theological doctrine with socio-political messaging. For example, Wodak and Meyer (2009) show that religious sermons often mobilize narrative structures, metaphors, and emotive appeals to naturalize ideological positions. Similarly, analyses of evangelical sermons reveal how authority is constructed through scriptural intertextuality and the strategic use of modality to express certainty, obligation, and moral inevitability (Charteris-Black, 2011). These findings are significant because they highlight that religio-political persuasion is not unique to Islamic discourse but is also a broader phenomenon across faith traditions.

The issue of translation in religious discourse has also received growing scholarly attention. Translation is no longer viewed as a neutral linguistic transfer but as an ideological act that reshapes meaning across cultural and political contexts (Baker, 2006). In the case of Islamic texts translated into English, scholars argue that translation can amplify, soften, or reframe ideological messages depending on lexical selection, syntactic restructuring, and explanatory additions (Hatim & Mason, 1997). From a CDA perspective, translated religious texts become sites where ideology is renegotiated for global audiences, often aligning religious teachings with contemporary political concerns such as governance, resistance, or moral reform.

Despite the expanding body of research on religious discourse and CDA, a noticeable gap remains in the systematic analysis of English translations of South Asian Islamic revivalist figures, particularly with respect to how power and ideology are discursively reconstructed for transnational readerships. Existing studies tend to focus either on original Arabic or Urdu sermons or on Western Christian contexts, leaving translated Islamic discourse underexplored. This gap is particularly significant given the global circulation of English-language Islamic literature and its influence on diasporic and international Muslim communities.

In response to this gap, the present study positions itself at the intersection of CDA, translation studies, and socio-religious discourse analysis. By examining the English translated works of Dr. Israr Ahmad, the study builds on existing scholarship while extending it to a context that has received limited critical attention. Drawing on Fairclough’s model, van Dijk’s ideological framework, and insights from sermon analysis across religious traditions, this research aims to illuminate how religio-political ideology and power relations are linguistically constructed, mediated, and

propagated through translated Islamic discourse.

### **Foundation and Development in Critical Discourse Analysis**

On the basis of an interdisciplinary approach critical discourse analysis emerged by studying language in relation to ideology, power and social inequality. Fairclough (1989-95), Van Dijk (1998) and Wodak (2001) are fundamental contributors in establishing texts as source of production and resistance of dominance. Fairclough's contribution however is distinguished as it is based on critical social theory and dialectical relationship between social structure and discourse. Fairclough further refined and expanded his model on dialectical-relational practice by relating it to social practice. Discourse is considered as one element among others as institutional practices, material conditions and power relations that dialectically interact. This model helps researchers to expand the textual analysis by exploring how language is linked to macro level ideological formations.

### **Discourse, Power and Ideology**

Ideology is not just an explicit system of beliefs but an implicit meaning structure rooted deeply in language and social practices (Fairclough 1995). Discourse naturalizes ideology while presenting it as society contingent and interpretation as inevitable common sense. Van Dijk argues that discourse shapes mental models to social actions through cognitive dimension of ideology, legitimization and absolutism in which religious discourse usually operates. On the basis that all claims are anchored in divine authority which function as mechanics for mobilization, social control and resistance. Therefore, CDA scholars highlight religious discourse as a key site for reproduction of ideologies.

### **Religious Discourse and Critical Discourse Analysis**

Initially CDA focused institutional, media and political discourses but recently it addresses religious discourses as well. Studies revealed how religious text constructs identity, authority and moral boundaries using religious discourses like Christian sermons, Islamic preaching and interfaith discussions. Religious discourse may overlap with social or political discourse in contexts of mobilisation and conflict as presented by Chilton (2004) and Richardson (2007).

Quranic intertextuality legitimizes arguments in Islamic contexts by embedding sacred text within contemporary texts. The speakers and writers recontextualize revelation to serve for modern ideological purpose. Blending of history, politics and theology interdiscursivity enables Islamic revivalist discourse to be analysed through the Fairclough's (2013) dialectical-relational model of CDA.

### **Historical Narratives and Revivalist Islamic Discourse**

A cyclic philosophy of history is usually employed in Islamic revivalist discourse where decline follows moral decay and revival follows reform. Scholars of political Islam point out that such a discourse serve for mobilization and explanatory functions as well. They assign collective responsibility and prescribe solution by simplifying complex socio-political and historical facts as moral causality.

Dr Ahmad's translated works however include critiques on western modernity with post-colonial anxieties with other traditions. He frames and blames Western colonization as ideological corruption and material domination, thus producing a

revivalist discourse that put a challenge to secular nationalism and create counter hegemonic narrative. This can be viewed as an alternative modernity based on religious authority.

### **Research Gap with Contribution**

Linguistic analysis of revivalist Islamic text is still limited although interest in religious discourse is increasing particularly in the contexts of Fairclough model (2013). Existing studies focus on theological interpretation and political impact rather than discursive constructions. This study, therefore, offers a systematic CDA of the translation of Rise and Decline of Muslim Ummah and examines how social mobilization and ideological reproduction is done through language. The study integrates Islamic revivalism with CDA and opens a debate on the relation of ideology, power and language which contributes to understanding contemporary religious movements.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design and Paradigm**

The study falls in the domain of critical interactive research paradigm aligned with dialectical-relational approach presented by Fairclough (2013). This paradigm assumed that language is a form of social practice which is not a neutral medium of communication through which ideologies, hegemonic structures and power relations are not only raised and produced but also maintained and even sometime resisted. The research is explanatory and qualitative as it describes the linguistic factors and also explain the relation between broad social historical and ideological structures that shape Muslim revivalist discourse. The primary data for the current study is the English translation of Dr Israr Ahmad's Rise and Decline of Muslim Ummah.

#### **Research Questions**

How the concepts of rise, decline and revival are constructed in the translated text of Rise and Decline of Muslim Ummah?

What discursive strategies are used to legitimize the religious, moral and political discourse in the text?

How power relation is represented among Muslims, colonial forces and Muslim actors?

In what ways historical interpretation is shaped by intertextuality with Quranic verses and Hadith to construct ideology?

How does the reader is positioned, by discourse, morally responsible as an agent collectively within this revivalist project?

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Coding Procedure**

As informed by Fairclough's analytical categories the analysis followed a multi-stage systematic coding process.

#### **Textual level (Open Coding)**

For the evaluative Lexis, metaphors, transitivity patterns, use of pronouns, modality and lexical opposition i.e. obedience / disobedience, revival and decay text was repeatedly read.

Codes were assigned at the initial level e.g. divine, moral, collective identity evaluation and divine causality.

**Discursive Practice (Lexical Level)**

The codes were further grouped into higher discursive strategies such as authorisation through scripture, moralization of history legitimization and collectivization. Intertextuality and interdiscursivity were described at the stage.

**Social Structure Level (Selective Coding)**

Discursive strategies were mapped at this stage at a macro level: ideological formation, critiques of secular nationalism, anti-colonial counter discourse and Islamic revivalism.

Here the examination enabled the research to see how discourse interacts with social structures dialectically.

**Validity and Reliability**

To ensure reliability coding decisions were defined by Fairclough's model (2013). A code book was specially made for each category with definition and examples. The data was re-coded after sometime to ensure coder consistency.

Through theoretical triangulation validity was ensured by focusing on CDA, post-colonial studies and sociology of religion. Extensive textual quotations were given for integration.

Reflexivity was ensured by researcher's interpretive mind engraved in linguistic evidence.

**Ethical considerations**

No human participation is involved in the study as the research analysis only the publicly available text material. However ethical responsibility was assured in reporting author's reviews accurately and recontextualization was avoided.

**Analysis and Findings**

The coding framework was based on Fairclough (2013). Lexical choices, metaphors and mortality were looked for meaning making and evaluation of social events. For social practice interdiscursivity and intertextuality were pointed out for genre mixing and legitimization. Authority resistance and revivalism were noted through hegemony, power and ideology representational features for social structure.

**Textual level****Coded Excerpts from Text**

Here conditional modality threatens authority and legitimacy.

“Western dominance is not accidental but a consequence of our abandonment of Divine guidance”. The linguistic feature here is moral causality and passive voice that naturalize decline as ordained divinity.

“Islam was reduced to rituals, divorced from collective responsibility”. Here ummah is portrayed as powerless and directionless with the help of a dehumanizing metaphor. “Political freedom without ideological clarity only deepens slavery”. CDA interprets it as total collapse and total moral degradation.

**Discourse Practice level coded Excerpts**

“The Quran ceased to be a living force and became a ceremonial symbol”.

Here othering as discursive strategy reinforces in-group / out-group for ideological functioning in the context of colonial powers and internal deviants.

“The Muslim Ummah today has been reduced to a body without a soul”.

The discursive strategy for collectivisation used through these words ‘we, Ummah’ which constructs shared responsibility as ideological functioning.

Obedience and disobedience used as mobilisation in Rise and Decline of Muslim Ummah and functions as simplifying history into binary moral position.

Authorization is created by frequent Quranic citations to legitimize claims from history.

**Social Structure Level****Coded Excerpts**

In this booklet, themes are represented through discursive patterns that create social effect. Divine sovereignty as an authority legitimizes secular policies. To present west as an ‘oppressor’, a counter hegemonic narrative in the form of anti-colonialism was constructed through the following lines.

“For the revivalism, a call for or organized struggle could lead to collective action”.

**Conclusion**

The study took the English translated said book of Dr Israr Ahmad as a discursive artefact placed at the intersection of language, ideology and social practice by applying dialectical-relational model of critical discourse analysis by Fairclough (2013). Beyond the descriptive reading, the research has demonstrated how text construct decline and how it legitimizes revivalist ideology and exercises power through discursive and linguistic strategies systematically.

The study revealed the central role of modality, metaphor, evaluative language and causal attribution at textual level while framing ideological and moral decline. The linguistic choices, not only describe social reality but also restrict other readings and naturalize its ideological assumption. In this way language becomes a tool to shape moral obligation and collective orientations.

The strategic use of intertextuality and interdiscursivity is highlighted through discursive practices. The epistemic authority of the text is established by drawing heavily upon Quranic historiography, anti-colonial discourse and civilizational narratives. In this way religious discourse recontextualize different discourses to validate ideological coherence and reaches a broader audience.

The study found out that this discourse at social practice level contributes to reproducing revivalist ideology and construct positions that are rooted in moral discipline, collective responsibility and ideological commitment. In terms of Fairclough model the discourse challenges secular modernity, puts forward a hegemonic struggle and adopts some modern discursive forms. Thus a dialectical tension is produced that highlights the complexity of ideological discourse in current socio-religious discourse.

The study expands the use of Fairclough’s CDA dialectical and relational model for the analysis of the given revivalist discourse. Secondly the study of the given text considered it as a socio political discourse not a purely theological text.

The study, however, acknowledges the limitations of the translated work, scope and

subjectivity. The study also generates opportunities for further research work based on Corpus assisted or Corpus based research to examine revivalist text further.

In conclusion, the study affirms that discourse is a source of social practice implicated deeply in production and reproduction of power and ideology relationship as proposed by Fairclough. However, it demonstrates language as a source in shaping historical understanding, moral evaluation, ideological struggle and social imagination. Thus such analysis contributes toward the relevance of CDA for probing deep into the discursive foundations of current ideological and social movements.

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