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## A Critical Discourse Analysis of a Friday Sermon in Akre District

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### Abstract

This study examines the use of religious language in a Friday sermon, analysing a sermon delivered in Akre District, Kurdistan. Despite the fact that Friday sermon is a primary tool of communication in the Islamic community. Friday sermons have rarely been critically examined in Kurdistan Region, particularly in Akre District. The research aims at identifying linguistic patterns, rhetorical strategies, and sociocultural influences within this sermon using the three-dimensional framework of Critical Discourse Analysis proposed by Fairclough (1989), which includes textual analysis, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice. A qualitative method was applied to analyse a purposively selected sermon. The study used textual and contextual data, including spoken and written transcripts. The analysis revealed how the khatib used language to connect historical and contemporary events, emphasising justice and accountability when challenging oppression. The findings indicated how religious discourse can raise consciousness and awareness of people, influence sociopolitical thought, and promote social change, making language a powerful tool for transformation.

### Keywords:

Friday Sermon,  
Critical Discourse Analysis,  
Fairclough's Three-  
Dimensional Framework,  
Religious Discourse,  
Akre District



### About the Journal

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## 1. Introduction

Friday sermons play an important role in creating the religious and social awareness in Muslim communities. These public speeches which delivered on Fridays, serve as a tool through which religious leaders address current issues and reinforce values in the community and more specifically, teach, guide, and encourage people to follow Islamic values (Shalabi & Abdul Maqsood, 2006). In Kurdish, it is referred to as ووتاری ههینی 'Wutari Hayni' whereas in Arabic, it is termed خطبة الجمعة 'Khutbat al-Jumu'ah'.

In religion, language can be as a means for performing various tasks. The religious tasks are all done via language, almost, it would be hard to do the religious rituals without language. Balraj, Singh, and Abd Manan (2020) state that throughout history, language has been the major medium through which a religion has been represented. So it shows that language is regarded as a key factor for conveying the religious messages from the religious leaders to the congregation. Language is considered as a form of 'social practice' (Fairclough, 1989). Therefore, the way we use language can vary depending on the social context. When language is used in a manner that goes above the level of sentence, this is referred to as discourse (Stubbs, 1983).

Discourse can apply to both written and spoken language. Discourse Analysis, a field of linguistics, is described as the study of language that studies its use within the context of conversation or social interaction. McCarthy (2000) states that discourse analysis emphasises not just linguistic patterns but also the contextual framework of the text. It can be used for analysing a piece of writing, interaction or any non-verbal communication. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA henceforth) as a newly emerging offshoot of discourse, is a problem-oriented and multidisciplinary approach (Fairclough, 1995b). CDA is used for revealing hidden ideologies in both written and spoken discourse.

This study attempts to critically examine the linguistic features and socio-cultural processes of the Friday sermon delivered in Akre District. It is referred as 'ئاكری' in Kurdish and 'عقرا' 'Aqrah' in Arabic, is located in the Duhok Governorate of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, is characterised by its diversity and inter-religious coexistence. The city is home to both Muslims and non-Muslims, including Christians, some Yazidis, and historically, Jews. Across the district, a significant number of mosques conduct sermons, focusing primarily on religious and social themes, particularly the status quo of the region. Friday sermons are unified in mosques throughout Kurdistan Region. In other words, the sermons are produced and prepared by the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs for the khatibs to reinforce certain themes on a national level.

This linguistic study analyses religious discourse by applying tri-dimensional model of CDA proposed by Fairclough (1989). It is an analytical framework that consists of three phases; the first phase is description where formal features of a text are dealt. Second comes the interpretation, which studies text-interaction relations. The third phase is the explanation, which examines connections between text and social context (Fairclough, 1989).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Language and Religion

Language and religion are both regarded to be distinguishing and significant aspects of culture that not only interact with one another but also impact one another. Language and religion play an important role in how people interact with each other. There is such a clear link between language and religion all over the world that we cannot ignore it (Rahimi & Hematiyan, 2011). Balraj, Singh, and Abd Manan (2020) state that language has served as a primary medium for representing a religion. Certainly, other means such as religious traditions, symbols, and chants have been used. For a religion to endure among future generations, effective communication is essential, and language is fundamental in this process. However, Crystal (1964) examines the complex connection between language and religion, emphasising the essential function of language in expressing, interpreting, and propagating religious views, while also recognising

that linguistic misconceptions often create obstacles in religious conversation. There exists a profound relationship between language and religion, since language serves as a crucial medium for conveying religious ideals and rituals.

## 2.2 Religious Discourse

Discourse as language in use comes in many different fields, so there are many different types of that, such as religious discourse, political discourse, media discourse, medical discourse, and many more. Religious discourse is an interdisciplinary domain characterised by the interaction of several disciplines of study. Religious discourse is mostly verbal. It is released by a religious leader over several channels. They use language to convey their messages in order to achieve their objectives.

Religious discourse is dynamic in daily practice, influenced by social interaction, historical background, and evolving interpretations of religion throughout various groups (Pihlaja, 2021). Religious discourse is one type of discourse that can help ease conflicts and promote peaceful coexistence. In these situations, it is possible if the way people talk about things focuses on finding similarities and unity instead of differences and hostility. The religious background significantly influences conversation by offering a foundation for comprehending morality, ethics, and social standards. Religious doctrines often shape individuals' convictions about many social and ethical matters, affecting their viewpoints on topics of contention (Irfan & Rehman, 2023).

## 2.3 Religious Discourse and Ideology

Language is an important part of any society. It is a form of 'social practice' (Fairclough, 1989). According to Fairclough (1989) and van Dijk (1998), language is one of the most powerful ways for propagating ideas. There is a link between discourse and social behaviors (Fairclough, 1989). As a strong organization, religion shapes religious discourse in a certain way. People who are religious scholars and have special standing in society can control what most people do and think.

Fairclough (1989) expands the notion of ideology by asserting that it expresses through power, either via consent or compulsion. In the context of Islamic tradition, it is evident that khatibs and influential religious personalities typically do not function independently; rather, they collaborate inside institutions or organizations that possess distinct agendas and ethos. Consequently, language is deliberately selected, and texts, as Fairclough (1989, p. 97) indicates, become "ideologically creative."

Religious discourse serves to position individuals inside specific frameworks, leading them to embrace diverse beliefs as natural and commonsensical. Religious leaders transmit specific beliefs and ideologies through their sermons. The collective consciousness of a society is influenced by ideologically charged discourses. The religious discourse is ideologically oriented and symbolises a specific worldview (Noor, 2017).

Durkheim (1995) states that there is a correlation between ideology and religion. He studied the reality that underlies religions, referring to collective conduct as collective representation in action. He argued that religions, like other social organizations, establish the norms for reasoning and behavior, which become a part of common sense and position individuals in a position of obedience.

It is clear that religious leaders frequently employ a variety of linguistic strategies to cultivate religious ideologies in the audience and to evoke an emotional response. It demonstrates that the impact of ideology on religious lectures can alter the attitudes and mindsets of individuals. Similar to other forms of discourse, religious discourse is a stimulating subject to investigate. The Friday sermons that serve as religious discourse are a platform for sharing of specific ideologies in order to influence and attract the attention of congregants. Friday sermon is a discourse that requires examination for its message or content.

## 2.4 Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA, as an approach to discourse analysis examines language use through the lens of the critical perspective of language. CDA is a study that analyses speech through the lens of language, culture, power dynamics, and social relations. CDA can uncover the hidden political or religious intentions underlying texts inside social contexts, including belief systems, religious doctrines, and cultural norms.

CDA sees “discourse – language use in speech and writing as a form of social practice” (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 303) and considers the ‘context of language use’ to be crucial. It is assumed that there is a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive occurrence and the context, institution, and social structure that frame it when discourse is defined as a social practice. This is meant to be the case when discourse is represented as a social practice. The central concept of CDA claims that texts have recurrent patterns and expressions that are integrated into ‘social practice’, with an emphasis on the propagation of ideologies and power dynamics through language (Sherwani, 2011).

CDA studies the interaction between discourse and society, emphasising how each shapes the other. CDA focuses on the expression or resistance of power, dominance, and inequality by groups, examining the underlying ideologies that shape these texts. CDA sees discourse as a social practice and recognises the relation between language and power (Fairclough, 1989).

Fairclough (2000) asserts that CDA involves not merely language structure but also social practices and cultural processes. Consequently, CDA addresses power relations, showing how power ideologies are created within interaction. van Dijk (2001, p. 466) confirms that “Critical Discourse Analysis is discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social-power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.” Bhatia, Flowerdew and Jones (2008, p. 196) state that “CDA views discourse and society as mutually constitutive, that is to say that a society is not possible without discourse and discourse cannot exist without social interaction.” This means that CDA assumes that discourse and society are both essential to each other. So society is impossible without discourse and discourse is impossible without social context. But people who are taking part might not know how strong or weak they are in the discourse. In fact, it is CDA’s job to show these connections. In fact, CDA can help change the way people interact and interact with each other.

## 2.5 Fairclough’s Framework: Three-Dimensional Approach

Norman Fairclough is regarded as the prominent co-founder of CDA due to his written contributions, which have substantially advanced CDA as both an approach and an emerging academic discipline. He has subsequently published different books. Furthermore, Fairclough’s viewpoint on CDA is notably marked by his renowned three-dimensional framework. Fairclough (1989) argues that language constitutes a sort of ‘social practice’. As it is socially constructed, it can effectively regulate or influence our knowledge, identity, or social relationships, so forming our social reality.

In a number of his seminal books, such as *Language and Power* (1989), *Discourse and Social Change* (1992), and *Critical Discourse Analysis* (1995), Fairclough presented a three-dimensional framework that could be used to establish a connection between the micro levels of language usage and the more general features of social practice.

Fairclough’s theory is founded on Halliday’s systemic functional linguistics, which seeks to analyse language according to the social tasks it fulfills (Meyer, 2001). Fairclough (1992) elaborates his critical discourse analytical framework to link language with social and political thought, which he terms a ‘social theory of discourse.’ Richardson (2007, p. 37) asserts that “Fairclough’s model of CDA, in my view, provides a more accessible method of doing CDA than alternative theoretical approaches.”

In the course of the current study, the model developed by Fairclough (1989) was used as a toolkit of analysis. This model is referred to as the ‘three-dimensional framework,’ and it is

applied for the purpose of analysing speech, including political, religious, or social discourse. (Fairclough, 1989) presents a methodological framework for the practical use of CDA. It offers a three-dimensional paradigm for discourse analysis. This framework can be described as follows:

- Discourse as text: It pertains to the linguistic characteristics and structure of specific occurrences of talk. It involves selections and patterns in language, grammar, cohesiveness, and text structure. It can be categorised under four primary headings: vocabulary, grammar, cohesiveness, and text structure. Vocabulary pertains to individual words; grammar addresses the combination of words into phrases and clauses; cohesion relates to the linkage of clauses and sentences; and text structure involves the overall organizational characteristics of texts (Fairclough, 1989).
- Discourse as discursive practice: Discursive practice depends on social circumstances, the processes of text production, consumption, and distribution involved in discursive practice alter depending on the sort of discourse being engaged in (Fairclough, 1992). “The discourse practice dimension of the communicative event involves various aspects of the processes of text production and text consumption.” (Fairclough, 1995a cited in Richardson, 2007, p. 39). At this point, the analysis shifts from textual analysis to discourse analysis, examining texts in light of the social contexts surrounding their creation and reception. Discourse shapes how texts are produced and consumed, acting as a mediator between textual and sociocultural practice. Understanding texts entails more than just encoding and decoding meanings based on the encoder’s purpose; it also entails professional procedures and organizational routines grounded in specific power and social relations (Richardson, 2007)
- Discourse as social practice: Sociocultural practice refers to the social and cultural activities that involve the communicative event. “fully rounded critical discourse analysis should involve an analysis of the text’s ‘socio-cultural practice’ or ‘the social and cultural goings-on which the communicative event is part of’ (Fairclough, 1995a cited in Richardson, 2007, p. 42), he also argues that it may operate at many levels of abstraction, covering the immediate situational context, the institutional practices surrounding the event, or the broader societal and cultural backgrounds. Fairclough (1989) focuses on the connection between social context and interaction, considering the social constraints of interpretation and production, as well as their social effects. This dimension allows for an examination and explanation of the concealed dynamics of power relations, language, and ideology through two contexts: social context and institutional context (Fairclough, 1995a).

Consequently, in Fairclough’s framework, CDA researchers must undertake the tasks of description, interpretation, and explanation (Fairclough, 1989, p. 26):

- Description is the stage which is concerned with formal properties of the text.
- Interpretation is 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.
- Explanation is 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 three processes are, in point of fact, closely related to one another, and none of them are required in order to complete the process. It is possible to uncover previously concealed knowledge regarding linguistic, inter-textual, and social elements through the process of analysing religious discourse if the three sequential processes are brought together. For the purpose of this paper, an analysis of the Friday sermon that was given by a khatib in Akre District was proposed. In order to uncover the concealed ideologies from a variety of points of view, a comprehensive and specific investigation of the religious discourse was carried out, with Fairclough's three-dimensional modal serving as the foundation.

The fundamental goal of Fairclough’s approach, which is predicated on the idea that the texts are ambiguous and cannot be analysed in isolation because “they can only be understood in relation to webs of other texts and in relation to the social context,” has been argued by

(Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 70). This indicates that texts can never be comprehended or analysed in an isolation; rather, they can only be understood in the context of larger texts and social networks.

Fairclough's model is important to discourse since it links text to social interactions directly. According to Fairclough (1989), production and interpretation activities result in text and meaning productions. These activities involve social context, which influences the circumstances under which texts are generated and interpreted. Therefore, these three elements are required for a critical study of any discourse in order to peel back the layers of the texts pertaining to power dynamics, social injustices, and hidden motivations. Analysing a text's 'external' relations involves examining how it relates to other aspects of social events as well as, more broadly, to social behaviors and social institutions inside society. According to Fairclough (2003), analysing how texts are portrayed in Actions, Identities, and Representations is a crucial part of determining how these texts relate to other aspects of social events. This model's most significant trait is its comprehensive structure, which goes beyond the descriptive and gives special consideration to the social function of language. According to the CDA manifesto's tenets, a discursive event is examined not just as a text but also as its production and interpretation in relation to a broader social environment (Statham, 2022).

In order to bring the discussion on CDA to a close, we will be drawing from Fairclough's approach, which places a significant emphasis on the changes that occur in genres, discourse patterns, as well as societal and cultural structures, styles, and the functional role of text as a component of broader discourse practice. In this manner, for the goal of this research, the researchers employ CDA as an analytical framework for the purpose of analysing religious discourse. This includes the analysis of a Friday sermon conducted in Akre District. In particular, the researchers make use of Fairclough's (1989) model of the three-dimensional framework, as was discussed earlier.

## 2.6 Friday Sermon

"The Friday sermon that is referred to as *خطبة الجمعة* 'Khutbat al-Jumu'ah' in Arabic, is known as the speech that praises Allah, blessed His Messenger, may peace and blessings be upon him (PBUH), prays for Muslims, and tells them what they need to do" (Hajilan, 2002, p. 22 & Al-Kasani, 1986, p. 262). This speech is continuously given by the speaker before Friday prayer and after it has started, with the aim of giving it out loud while standing in front of a large enough crowd to achieve the goal.

One of the most important and instructive techniques that plays an effective role in changing the attitudes and views of people and society as a whole is the Islamic Friday sermon. This sermon is delivered on Fridays. Religious orators have the ability to touch audiences on both an emotional and intellectual level by using language that is compelling in order to accomplish the goals of the Friday sermon (Mahmood & Kasim, 2019). As part of their prayer, Muslims always make time to listen to the Friday sermon. Friday sermons are very important to Muslims because they happen every week. This is because Friday sermons could be a good way to teach. It is because of this that the tone, content, and style of the lecture are all very important. If the sermon that is supposed to be given on Friday is given wrong, it will have a huge effect. Giving talks on Fridays is an important way for preachers and other religious leaders to guide Muslims.

## 2.7 Friday Sermons in Akre District

There is no a significant difference between the city of Akre, which is situated in the Duhok Governorate of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, (historically, Akre District was part of the Nineveh Governorate, but recently linked to the Duhok Governorate by the Kurdish authority) and other towns in Kurdistan Region, since the sermons delivered in Akre adhere to the same manner as those delivered in other places. In spite of this, it has a distinctive style that distinguishes it from other places, as shown by inquiries conducted by the researcher with several local preachers. These are the topics that the sermons intend to cover:

1. Social sermons that advocate for security, coexistence, enhance collaboration, and reject

hatred and injustice.

2. General religious lectures on traditions, places of worship, and rituals at mosques and communal prayer settings.
3. Sermons about the family that stressed how important it is to be a part of the family, respect parents, and have an Islamic education.
4. Sermons about education and culture, special themes, teachers' roles, the value of education, and getting people to learn.

The majority of sermons in Akre mosque are delivered in both Kurdish and Arabic. The primary components, which include the structure of the sermon, the introduction, verses from the Quran, prophetic hadiths, wisdom sayings and proverbs, are presented in Arabic. These elements are then translated, explained, and interpreted in the Badinan Kurdish dialect.

When compared to other areas, Akre is distinguished by the fact that the khatibs mostly relate the sermons to the ongoing situations. The sermons are primarily social and religious in nature, with a primary emphasis on security, peace and collaboration. This is due to the fact that along with Muslims, the city is also home to non-Muslims, such as Christians, some Yazidis, and Jews in the past.

### 2.8 Previous Studies Related to Religious Discourse

While several studies have examined how language is used in political and social contexts, there has been comparatively less focus on language use in religious contexts. This section outlines previous linguistic studies concerning language and religion, specifically those examining religious discourse as addressed by various scholars and researchers in linguistics through diverse approaches and perspectives across multiple languages and genres. More particularly CDA approach. This section outlines a range of previous studies related to the objectives of the current research.

Certain studies have focused on a specific genre of religious speech, namely Friday sermons. Aziz and Fattah (2024) conducted this research at the mosques of the Raparin Administration in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. The study was done in Kurdish, entitled *هێماکانی توندرووی نایینی له* [=*The Signs of Religious Violence in Religious Discourse Friday's Speech in the Raparin Administration as an Example*]. In this study, four Friday sermons were chosen for examination using critical discourse analysis employing the Fairclough Model, known as the three-dimensional framework. The collected data related to four distinct mosques. All the sermons were related to the New Year celebration. The researchers focused on the use of language for leading and educating individuals, particularly as employed by religious leaders within mostly Muslim communities. Furthermore, the researchers asserted that religious leaders exerted influence on Muslims and have the capacity to rule people in the name of their religion. Muslims' participation in such a celebration is considered banned (haram) in Islam, as affirmed by all (Khatibs) who provided their comments. Consequently, they recommended that individuals refrain from commemorating this specific day. The researchers found out that such discussions might possibly reinforce extremist ideologies and violence among the youth. The researchers discovered that these sermons, filled with hatred, might harm the community.

Several studies have examined Friday sermons from a linguistic perspective. This study, as done by Alenezi (2019), is a discourse analysis that examined 12 sermons delivered on the first Friday of each month in 2016 in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This study employed qualitative methods grounded in systemic functional linguistics (SFL). The researcher conducted an analysis of religious discourse using the discourse analysis approach, specifically employing the Attitude System of Appraisal theory to examine the construction of meanings in sermons. This theory's application demonstrated correlations between the 12 sermons in Arabic and English regarding goals, distribution of the Attitude System, and primary topic referents. This study analysed the discourse of Islamic religious leaders, focusing on its alignment with and construction of social attitudes and values. It also investigated the contextual meanings of

language and their role in the reconstruction of society and culture. The study sought to identify linguistic patterns in the structure of sermons delivered by Khatibs and to evaluate lexical selections in accordance with Martin and Rose's (2003) Appraisal theory, thereby enhancing the understanding of persuasive strategies employed in these sermons. The study's results demonstrated that SFL's Appraisal theory served as an effective instrument in discourse analysis for identifying patterns of attitude expression. This study aimed to evaluate Islamic Friday sermons from a linguistic perspective, focusing on the patterns of attitude and evaluative strategies employed to negotiate social relationships.

Sukirman et al. (2022) wanted to explain the ideology conveyed by preachers through Friday sermons, defined as local wisdom in Palopo City. The analytical technique employed is CDA, following Fairclough's framework of (1989), which examines discourse in relation to social and cultural processes. This research pertains to cultural studies and possesses interpretive qualities aimed at explaining the ideas or concepts embedded in the sermon. This study employed a qualitative methodology to analyse and interpret research data. The data produced from words, phrases, and sentences covers religious and social ideologies, used for data acquisition through a recording instrument. The data source was derived from the preacher's narrative, reflecting local wisdom expressions. The data collected were from natural settings and were obtained directly from the research subjects without any alterations or modifications to their original form. The data were analysed through descriptive, interpretive, and explanatory techniques. The findings indicated that the integration of ideological narratives with local wisdom in the Friday sermons enhanced the reasoning abilities and appeal of the people. Worshipers were motivated, influenced, and encouraged to enhance their pious social behavior. The primary purpose of the sermon was to invite, influence, and persuade the audience to adopt a noble attitude and engage in religious practices.

The language used in Islamic Friday sermons has drawn interest from various researchers across multiple perspectives. Alkhaldeh (2022) analysed deixis in Friday sermons through the lens of discourse analysis and pragmatics. Applying Levinson's Framework, this study analyses three primary types of deixis: personal, temporal and spatial, with an emphasis on their forms, features, frequency, and functions. The corpus consisted of 70 sermons collected by the researcher from multiple online sources. The research employed both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to achieve its objectives. The findings indicated that the three deictic types were prevalent in the language of the respective corpus, with the personal type being the most common, deictically referencing various referents whose interpretation depended on the contextual circumstances of their occurrence. The preachers employed deixis as an effective tool within the corpus to fulfill various functions at both the discourse and pragmatic levels. Their role was to promote solidarity, closeness, and politeness between the preachers and their audience. The findings indicated that the three types (personal, temporal, and spatial) were prevalent in the corpus, displaying a range of features and functions at the discursive and pragmatic levels. All were observed to indicate distinct referents within their contextual occurrences. As an effective tool in sermonic discourse, they served various functions at both the discourse and pragmatic levels. Their function served as a discourse strategy to persuade listeners by directing their attention, engaging them with the sermon's message, and ensuring the text's cohesion and coherence.

Just like those mentioned above, the current study stands out for focusing on the specific sociocultural and linguistic environment of Akre District, where sermon delivered in Arabic and Kurdish almost symbolized the region's diversity. By linking past events with the present, this study has shown how sermons can lead to justice, responsibility, and social consciousness. The employment of Fairclough's three-dimensional model crosses linguistic patterns to look into the wider social and cultural dimensions of religious discourse, giving a study within the unique and contextual background.

### 3. Methodology and Data Collection

The research approach provided a necessary framework by limiting the study to an exclusively qualitative method because the data of the study have been taken from texts. In the study, methods and procedures are outlined for analysing and describing the patterns of discourse and structure of Friday sermon conducted in Akre District. This work aims at conducting an analysis using the principles and methods of CDA with the application of Fairclough Three-dimensional Model (1989).

The main research instruments are the researchers themselves. The researchers collected and examined the data of the selected Friday sermon delivered in Akre District. The researchers will try to do this study, starting from collecting, examining and analysing data and explaining the result of the study. To obtain the data, the researchers have first tried to collect the data and then translate into English language. Then the researchers have chosen the data which is relevant to the problem of the study. The main data source of this study is the Friday sermon conducted in Akre District. There are some stages in analysing the data; first the researchers will try to get comprehension of the texts. Second, the researchers will try to analyse discourse using Fairclough's three-dimensional work theory in CDA (1989). Then the researchers will elicit the conclusion of the study.

The research design employed is CDA, facilitating an examination of the selected speeches to reveal underlying social issues, power dynamics, and ideological constructs present within them. The sampling strategy enabled the purposive selection of the speech. The data collection processes outlined the methodology employed by the researchers in gathering the data. The data analysis explained the processes undertaken by the researchers in analysing the data. The researchers are thus able to analyse the data free from prejudices and biases that could undermine the research quality.

#### 3.1 Ethical Considerations of the Current Research

When this study was being done, ethics were considered very significant because gathering data is a very private process. Since the researchers intended to keep the khatib's identity and the name of the mosque anonymous, they chose not to share any information about the religious leader and the place where he preached the congregants. The study only focuses on the content of the sermon and the patterns of language, not on the khatib's identity or the mosque where the sermon was delivered. The researchers used the speech delivered by a religious leader in Akre District that was open to the public. In order to be considered ethical, one must adhere to the code of behaviour that has developed over the years in order to maintain a professional practice that is approved (Kumar, 2011). As a result, the researchers confirmed that the study adheres to the rules of ethics.

It is unethical for the researcher to have a biased perspective. According to Kumar (2011), bias may be defined as an intentional effort to either conceal the results of the research or to present something in a manner that is disproportionate to the reality of the situation. Within the context of uncovering the ideas and intents that lie behind the current Friday sermon that was presented by a khatib, the researchers who were conducting the study made an organised effort to avoid being biased, choosing a highly biased sample, or using an invalid tool.

### 4. Results and Discussion

#### Introduction

The Friday sermon entitled *عبرمت ومرگرتن ل كهفتنا زالمان* [=taking lessons from the fall of oppressors], was delivered on December 13, 2024, in a mosque located in Akre District. The khatib spoke to the congregation, focusing on the revolution that had been taking place in Syria, where the tyrant Bashar Al-Assad had fallen after decades of oppression. The khatib compared past events with present realities with their effects on injustice and oppression. This study adopted Fairclough's (1989) three-dimensional model in CDA, analysing the sermon in three dimensions; textual analysis, discursive practice, and socio-cultural relevance of the text.

### Textual Analysis Dimension (Description)

Discourse as text pertains to the linguistic characteristics and structure of specific occurrences of talk. It involves selections and patterns in language (vocabulary), grammar, cohesiveness, and text structure. Textual analysis examines both the presence and absence of elements within the text, as every component of textual material is a product of deliberate decision (Richardson, 2007).

In terms of vocabulary analysis, this sermon contained a rich vocabulary so as to reflect the ideological and rhetorical objectives of the khatib. The antonym pair of *زالم* [=oppressor] vs. *مزلوم* [=oppressed] featured throughout the sermon and pointed to the level of difference between the tyrants and the suffering people. Such words as *ففقير و ژار* [=poor], *خملك* [=people], *هولاگو* [=Hulagu] and *خودئ تهعالا* [=Allah, the Exalted] appeared in repetition to stress social roles and internal roles in power relations, with the oppressed victims and the oppressor as cruel and unjust. The pronoun *ته*, *تو* [=you] was usually directed against the deposed Syrian president and indirectly addressed his actions and fall as a leader. This particular use of language personalizes a criticism, making it feel very direct and confrontational. In using words like *زولم* [oppression] and *تهعدای* [=transgression], such words have negative connotations; they were employed strategically to demonstrate moral failure on the part of oppressors. The same applied to words like *عدالمت* [=justice] and *نعمت* [= blessing], which emphasised good qualities. On the whole, that vocabulary was powerful and evocative towards inspiring the congregation to think about justice and accountability. The sermon consisted of a great use of vocabulary that really inspired people to wake up and reflect on justice and accountability.

The sermon also had a rich and complicated structure in the grammar that played quite an important role in emphasising key points through a number of linguistic strategies. One such prominent way that the khatib employed was ‘passive voice’, which charged the action and de-emphasized agents performing it. Phrases such as *زولم يا* [=Time is changed], *زومن تيته گوهرين*. [=Time is changed], *ففقير و ژار لي هاتنه محروم کرن*. [=poor people were deprived from it] referred to issues regarding depersonalization of the agents and concentrating on the actions. The sermon was dominated by complex sentences, as the causes and their subsequent effects were interwoven. For instance, sentences like *ومختئ كو خهلك بي ئمربيا خودئ* *تهعالا دكمت، تهر كئ ئمري خودئ تهعالا دكمت، ئهف خهلك دئ گلهكئ سقك بيت ل نك خودئ تهعالا، چ قهدرو قيمت* *نك خودئ تهعالا نامينيت*. [=When people disobey Allah and abandon His commands, they become insignificant in the sight of Allah and hold no value from Allah, the Exalted], relating disobedience with its divine outcomes, which made the audience think deep. The Sermon had negative sentences that highlighted the failures of rulers and the punishment for disobedience to Allah. This is exemplified by *شوكري خودئ تهعالا ناكمن سمر فان نيعمنا*. [=They do not thank Allah for these blessings], and *ههكه هنگ فاجر نهان خودئ تهعالا ئهم موصلمتي سمر هنگو نهذكرين*. [=If you were not immoral, Allah wouldn't impose us on you]. The application of negatives is a moral criticism in itself, forcing the audience to consider some alternative paths of righteousness. In addition, conditional statements were included in the sermon as the khatib examined the hypothetical situations and potential consequences. For instance, *ههكمر دونيا بو وان كهسا مابايا ئمويت*, *ئهمف دونيايه نعت گمشته مه*. [=If those came before us had stayed alive, we wouldn't have lived in this world]. *ههكمر بيتو مولك مابايا ل دهستي وان ملوكيت بهري مه دا، بهري مه هاتي، ئهمف مولكه نهذكرمته*. [=If the properties had remained in the hand of the former kings, who came before us, these properties would not now have been held by the kings of our era]. This marked a contrast between past and present. The khatib also used language that made strong emphasis in some phrases like *ئهم نيعمتهتيت كو خودئ تهعالا دايبئ*. [=The blessings that Allah has provided them with] and *نابينا جهنمئ و بهشتئ دا كو دئ گاز يهك هيتن*. [=Between Paradise and Hell, there will be a call]. This could be efficient tool for bringing the audience to the key points like divine blessings and the Day of Judgment.

In terms of cohesion, the khatib employed various cohesive devices to ensure that ideas flow logically, linking historical narratives, Quranic references, and contemporary events in such a

way as to highlight the sermon's main points. The khatib used connectors such as *وَمَخْتَى* [=when] and *بَلَى* [=but] rather frequently to continue with logical flows of ideas, especially when narrating some sort of historical event or comparing past and present oppressors. For example, *[=When he moved into the palace of Musta'sim, he commanded to fetch Musta'sim]*. The action and result were linked in the narrative to keep the audience interested. The khatib's use of tenses was a mixture of both present and past. When the khatib looked back on the past, for instance, describing an event in history as past, present tense turned up in the sentence: *بهری حق کرنی کو نہف برکہ یا تہڑی پہ ل زیری* [=They saw that this pond is full of the red gold], this shifting might confuse the audience. The mentioning of events, people, and Quranic verses have anchored the message of the sermon in lessons from history and then into the practice in today's field. Merging lessons from history with the present world. For example, comparing the toppling of Bashar al-Assad with that of historical characters like Musta'sim has truly made the comment coherent under moral and social dimensions. The khatib beautifully transitioned from the storytelling to action-oriented language in the message flow. Thus, these techniques brought around varied issues into a single clear message that spoke of history, religion, and social issues, prompting the audience to reflect deeply.

In this dimension, the structure of the text also emphasised, examining how the sermon was organised, including its sections, paragraphing, and use of rhetorical devices. The khatib organised the sermon into various sections, addressing different themes such as historical events, the failures of rulers, and moral lessons. However, the flow of the sermon was disorganised, especially when mentioning some scholars of the religion of Islam. Indeed, the connection between the message was lost because it diverted the central topic of learning from the failures of tyrants. During his entire speech, the khatib employed a lot of rhetorical devices. Most prominent was repetition of terms such as *زالم* [=oppressor], *مہزلوم* [=oppressed], and reference to *خودئ نہعلا* [=Allah, the Exalted] to emphasise the power versus slavery dichotomy. The khatib used a large number of rhetorical questions with which he instilled ponderings into the minds of the audience, such as *بڑچی نہف حوکمہ حصتا حصتا دہوامی ناکہن؟* [=Why do these authorities not last forever?] and *بہلی کمنگی تہیارا داخلی دی دستینیکہت؟* [=But when does the internal collapse start?]. These questions do not expect answers; instead, those questions demanded that the audience think deeply about their content. The narrative included while telling historical and contemporary examples was compared like that between the fall of Bashar Al-Assad to that of Al- Musta'sim during the Mongol invasion. This device created a link between the two worlds within the confines of space and time because it was intended to make the message from the sermon more relatable and impactful. Moreover, the khatib used comparisons and contrasts in order to emphasise on moral and social decay, for example, *خملکک* [=People were not as cowardly as they are now], showing comparison between the bravery of people of old time to cowardice of these days. On the whole, although the format of the sermon text took different rhetorical strategies to make the message clear, there were few gaps in the cohesiveness. Framing of information in the form of stories and morals kept in the audience and related themes to the socio-political aspect of their lives.

### **Discursive Practice Dimension (Interpretation)**

Discourse as discursive practice depends on social circumstances, the processes of text production, consumption, and distribution involved in discursive practice alter depending on the sort of discourse being engaged in (Fairclough, 1992).

This dimension focuses on text production partially, which covers the producer, context, intentions, and benefits of the discourse. In this sermon, the khatib or preacher was the producer; he delivered the message from the pulpit of a mosque situated on the outskirts of Akre. The sermon was motivated by the sociopolitical events that were ongoing in Syria, where a revolution had overthrown the tyrannical rule of Bashar Al-Assad. The most important intention of the khatib was to draw a parallel between historical injustices and contemporary events, pointing out the fall of the oppressive ruler. He wished to remind both the rulers and the public

of what happened as a result of injustice, transgression, and disobedience to Allah. Through historical narratives, such as that of Hulagu and Al-Mustasim, the khatib highlighted how the repetition of corrupt leadership is leading to the collapse of a society. He aimed at motivating the congregation to reflect on those lessons themselves and apply them to their contemporary context. It educated the audience, warned the present oppressors indirectly, and urged justice and reform in governance. The sermon also indirectly benefited the larger Muslim community in creating awareness of the need for the rule of just and equal treatment and calling for accountability among rulers.

While consuming the text, the khatib tuned his sermon to resonate with the audience by bringing in historical and current contexts that the congregation could identify with. The khatib called the audience *برائيت بسلامان* [=brothers of the Muslims] with the purpose of uniting them in a cause. The khatib then spoke to their moral and spiritual consciousness and would call for the members who suffered oppression to demand their rights. Informally, that approach could inspire the congregants to act because it evoked the sense of one's being a part of a divinely created change while strengthening belief in Allah's final justice. Bringing to light some of the atrocities perpetrated by oppressive rulers, and then relating these to divine retribution, not only prompted emotional responses from the congregation but also led them to reflect critically on their current socio-political realities. The khatib also implicitly suggested that people need to speak out against injustice, even in the name of religion or political power. Finally, invoking the fight for rights and change might prompt the audience to think about their own responsibility in bringing change in personal as well as collective terms. Such narratives as that of the conquest of Baghdad by Hulagu reminded the audience of past lessons and framed present struggles as part of a larger pattern. In short, the khatib used rhetorical strategies that would engage the audience into saying that the sermon was a call to bring an end to oppression, to seek justice, and to reflect on the lessons of history from the Islamic perspective.

According to second dimension dealing with distribution, the khatib employed both traditional and digital channels for delivering the sermon. Most importantly, the sermon has been oral from a mosque pulpit which was able to engage and affect the local audience in the outskirts of Akre immediately. The mosque served as a critical medium targeting a largely Muslim audience familiar with religious and historic narratives. The khatib, however, reached even farther when he broadcast his sermon via his personal social platform, accessible not only to the physical congregation but also to audiences online. Given such strategic use of the social media space, one could deduce that the audience imagined above would logically be larger than the local audience and possibly include people outside the immediate sociocultural context. Thus, reaching his audiences both immediate and geographically distant was achieved by using these means, increasing the pertinence of his message. The primary control of his distribution corresponded directly to the khatib, thus giving him autonomy on how to form and disseminate the discourse.

### **Sociocultural Practice Dimension (Explanation)**

Discourse as social practice refers to the social and cultural activities that involve the communicative event. "fully rounded critical discourse analysis should involve an analysis of the text's 'socio-cultural practice' or 'the social and cultural goings-on which the communicative event is part of'" (Fairclough, 1995a cited in Richardson, 2007, p. 42).

In fact, the sermon of the khatib turned out to be situational in the socio-cultural context of Akre District and the surrounding region by emphasizing the relations between the religion, politics, and social justice. The khatib has used this specific mosque as a religious space to preach and attend to political and social deliberation, authenticating him as a moral authority challenging power structures. Through his claim of religious leadership position, he persuaded the audience to acknowledge oppression effects and appreciate the meaning of justice.

The power and ideology through gesturing addressed both dominance and subordination. The khatib, however, did make a call to target someone like Bashar Al-Assad and intended the sermon against historical tyrants such as Al-Musta'sim of the Abbasid Caliphate. Aligning

between ancient and modern injustices emphasised the Islamic ideological framework opposing tyranny and advocating accountability toward Allah. Its critique extended to contemporary Muslim rulers with lack of justice in their governance, implicitly challenging the existing status quo that amounts to seeking reforms.

The sermon itself highlighted much concerning social change and transformation through the call to protect the oppressed and incite the audience to resist injustice. The message urged the congregation to actively assert their rights while preaching leaders to exercise their responsibilities to serve people equitably. This converts the discourse into striving for transforming existing social structures that foster inequality and oppression.

Culturally and historically, the khatib invoked Islam and history to provide context and build argument. He linked events in the past, like the invasion of Baghdad by Hulagu or the corruption of the historical Muslim rulers, to the very lessons he drew for today. In this intertextual way, it made stronger the norms of culture that demand justice and accountability while reproaching the misuse of power.

The sermon was indeed a counter-hegemonic discourse seeking to counter dominant ideologies that support and justify oppression, and also to call for a fair distribution of power within the governance system. The khatib emphasised that justice is a universal value, even though it is demanded in non-Muslim states and therefore allows an expanded understanding of good governance that transcends religious endorsement. This combination of historical references, ideological critique, and appeals for reform made the sermon a strong socio-cultural commentary meant to stir within the community.

Table 1: The Textual, Discursive and Sociocultural Analysis of the Sermon

Dimension	Aspects	Summary
<b>Textual Analysis</b>	Vocabulary	Rich and evocative – employing of antonyms (e.g. oppressor vs. oppressed), redundancies, and loaded words like injustice, justice, and blessing.
	Grammar	Grammatical structures such as passive voice, complexity, negation, and conditionality serve to ensure reflection upon moral judgment and their possible consequences.
	Cohesion	Cohesive devices: connectors such as ‘when’ and ‘but’, changes in tense, intertextual references.
	Structure	Some parts appear to lack coherence, but various rhetorical devices are used to heighten the conscious and moral perception of the disparity in power.
<b>Discursive Practice</b>	Production	Conducted by a religious leader from the mosque, inspired by the sociopolitical events in Syria; meant to draw parallelism between oppression in history and contemporary times.
	Consumption	Sounded captivating both in the moral and intellectual sense, forcing an utter meditation on justice and accountability.
	Distribution	Shared in the mosque and transmitted digitally through social media, thus furthering the reach of the sermons beyond the local congregation.
<b>Sociocultural Practice</b>	Power & Ideology	Criticism of tyranny, past and present, in the Islam frame was for justice and accountability.
	Social Change	Encouraged resistance against oppression with reforms in governance.
	Cultural-Historical context	Used Islamic history to legitimize calls for justice.
	Counter-Hegemony	Put into contest dominant violent ideologies and promote universal justice.

Table 1 provides a summary of the aspects of the sermon under scrutiny. It encompasses the textual, discursive and sociocultural analysis of the Friday sermon.

## 5. Conclusion

Analysis of the sermon under Fairclough's three dimensions revealed the interaction of language, context, and culture in getting across a very powerful message about justice and accountability. The khatib employed wordings, grammar, and narratives spanning between the past and the present political crisis to create a division between the oppressors and the oppressed. Past lessons such as the fall of tyrannical rulers were linked with currently existing realities and the khatib urged the audience to reason and act against injustice. Given that the sermon was offered at a mosque while being transmitted via social media, the sermon reached both local and global audiences so as to realise the call against oppression. Using religious and cultural references, the khatib set for himself a moral framework that countered corrupt leadership and instead gave hope for change. Such analysis showed that discourse can be used as a pedagogic tool for awareness raising and the promotion of social change; thus, discourse emerged powerfully as the sermon, by which words incite the cause of justice and accountability in people. Over all, by using Critical Discourse Analysis, the analysis of this Friday sermon uncovered how language was used to have impact on the congregation morally, socially and even politically.

## 6. Suggestions and Recommendations

The researchers suggest the following domains for doing further research studies on Friday sermons in Akre District in the field of linguistics.

- 1) The investigation of the khatib's sermon exposed an evident phenomenon of code-switching and code-mixing, with particular affinity to Arabic, as compared to Kurdish. We suggest the sociolinguistic connotations of such code-switching and code-mixing forms, especially in sermons and other formal speeches.
- 2) The khatib used stories while comparing the past with the present, which added more depth and consciousness to the message. Subsequent inquiry should, therefore, focus more on this storytelling technique through narrative analysis under discourse analysis approach.

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