

0. Introduction

A prevailing belief commonly exists among sociologists and anthropologists that religion and language are the two main identity-makers of a community or a group of people (Ghosh). Therefore, people do not usually accept propositions in faith, and no one could force beliefs into others. However, among the current political events that breed more conflicts between religions, it becomes an insisting demand to clear the false image depicted of Islam in the West and clarify its misconception. Though it seems a daunting task to substitute beliefs or discuss matters that have been firmly established, the notion of how to persuade people has become an important subject which needs to be investigated.

Persuasion is a form of social influence. The social nature of persuasion is most clearly evident in a discourse between two or more interlocutors, since, according to discourse analysts, a speaker or a writer engaged in such discourse usually uses language in order to ask a question, deny a fact, or respond to a statement, and so on (Eemeren et al. 2).

This area of study can be approached from different perspectives. Psycholinguists, for instance, approach persuasion through examining the psychological tendencies of the receivers and what is going on in their minds when they are exposed to a persuasive message. Sociolinguists take the relationship between the persuader and the receiver into consideration to account for how the inequality or the social distance between the interlocutors affects the receivers' attitudes and behaviors and the way they respond to the message.

However, the researcher opts for the discourse analysis approach for it focuses mainly on the characteristics of the message intended to persuade and its structure.

Jucker indicates that if texts are identified as persuasive according to their influence on the receivers, persuasion becomes a perlocutionary effect and thus, necessitates the presence of a receiver (qtd. in Halmari 7). Nevertheless, receivers' reactions cannot always be detected and even the audience themselves are not always present. Thus, treating such data being investigated entails a specific definition of persuasion which specifies the internal characteristics of a persuasive text and excludes any external factors such as the audience, the speaker, the social relationship, etc. Accordingly, the definition of persuasion adopted in this study is those linguistic choices that aim at changing the behavior of others or strengthening their existing beliefs and behaviors (Halmari 5). This change in the receiver's attitude and beliefs should be voluntary not coercive.

Moreover, as a linguistic activity, persuasion usually takes the form of argument. The word argument, here, does not mean quarrels or squabbles. It is the practice of giving reasons for or against some claims (Hirschberg 1). Both argument and persuasion are interrelated but they are not synonyms. While the arguer accepts the existence of opposing views and argues in order to justify why his views deserve to be held, a persuader, on the other hand, attempts to influence the receiver to take his views for granted, i.e., there are no views worth holding than his. According to Fogelin and Armstrong, the difference between argument and persuasion is determined by the receiver's degree of agreement. He also points out that arguments

tend to emphasize logic, whereas persuasion tends to work on the audience's emotions and needs. However, real-world arguments should be a blend of the two (3).

The present study focuses mainly on the persuasive features of religious arguments, arguments raised by Da'waa speakers which discuss issues related to Islam, specifically those arguments upheld between Muslims and Christians where both parties strive hard to prove their views and refute the other's. Further, Jucker's criterion is the basis on which the researcher depends in deciding the persuasiveness of religious arguments. Jucker states that a text should be identified as persuasive if its "persuasive intention can be taken for granted" (qtd.in Halmari 23). Thus, the overall aim of this study is to test the authenticity of whether or not a religious discourse that aims at convincing and persuading people is linguistically reflected in a way that is consistent with the persuasive function of language.

0.1. Significance of the Study

Persuasion plays an important role in getting people change their attitude peacefully. It is widely known that Westerners highly value objective reasoning and consider the human reason to be the decisive tool in finding the truth. This does not mean that Easterners (Arabs) are not rational but it emphasizes that the effective way to approach western minds is through logic (Esene). This may be the cause behind the miscommunication between Westerners and Easterners. They think differently, and they present their arguments differently. However, Deedat, a Muslim scholar in comparative religion who died in 2005, enjoys a tremendous popularity in the West. His interesting debates, booklets, and books have led important figures and

thousands of people to Islam. Thus, his arguments may have specific features that appeal to the western mind, which makes it worth investigating.

As a domain of the study, argumentative Islamic discourse, which is transmitted through the medium of English, needs further investigation. Also, the strategies used by Deedat as being one of the Da'waa speakers or writers to persuade and convince their audience should be studied extensively, too. Allah says "and argue with them in a way that is better" (Quran 16:125) (Al-Hilali and Khan 351). Westerners and Easterners have different mentalities. Accordingly, addressing or appealing to the Western mind may not be an easy mission. Thus, the significance of the study lies in the following:

1. since most persuasion studies focus on how attitudes and beliefs are often affected by a persuasive message, the study shifts this focus to the message itself, its lexis and structure, to shed more light on how the message is linguistically formed to be highly persuasive;
2. as the study probes the underlying discourse structure of the persuasive message, it may give insight on how the persuasive message can be effectively constructed;
3. the study may give insights to other researchers to probe the other aspects of the persuasive message such as the paralinguistic or phonological features which increase and confirm the power of persuasion in religious discourse, mainly, in oral debates;
4. the study might be of fruitful outcomes in Da'waa domain as it analyzes the persuasive language of a prominent Islamic figure. It may increase the

Muslim speaker's awareness of how to call to Islam and communicate with the non-Muslims, as it points out the important strategies which Da'waa speakers are supposed to be equipped with;

5. the study may help to enrich the reader's knowledge of the controversial issues in Christianity for which Islam has the appropriate answers.

0.2. Questions of the Study:

This research addresses the following head question:

1. Does a religious argument, directed to non-Muslims, employ certain strategies in designing its message to make it more persuasive?

Accordingly, the following sub-questions arise:

2. Does a persuasive religious argument have a specific discourse structure?
3. Does a persuasive religious argument manifest certain linguistic features which are highly persuasive in terms of lexis?
4. Does a persuasive religious argument employ specific textual devices that reinforce the power of persuasion?

0.3. Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. to investigate the organizational structure of the persuasive message presented by the persuader;
2. to point out the persuasive strategies manipulated in the argumentative discourse;

3. to identify the prominent linguistic features and textual devices in the persuasive religious arguments;
4. to investigate to what extent these linguistic features and devices collectively add to the persuasive quality of these arguments.

0.4. Data of the Study

The data of this study is derived from the first volume of Deedat's (1993) *The Choice: Islam and Christianity*. This volume consists of four parts. Each part discusses a separate subject. However, the focus of the study will be centered on the first three parts which discuss issues related to Prophet Muhammed. These three parts are entitled respectively as follows: "**What the Bible Says about Muhammed (PBUH)**", "**Muhammed (PBUH) the Natural Successor to Christ (PBUH)**" and "**Muhammed (PBUH) the Greatest**". The fourth part is excluded for it deals with another topic, the Qur'anic miracles.

The first volume is selected because it deals with the general outstanding issues that are divisive between Islam and Christianity. However, the second volume is concerned with testing divergent doctrines quoted from different Bibles for the purpose of visualizing the shortcomings and the contradictory views within their poles-apart biblical versions. It also includes complex details that need profound knowledge of Christianity; which is beyond the scope of the study

Within the first volume, samples to be analyzed are selected based on the text type; i.e. only argumentative texts are selected. Thus, the study focuses on the texts which take the form of a dialogue, or samples of speech where

Deedat discusses conflicting points between Islam and Christianity where there are no active participants taking turn with him. However, it excludes the parts where Deedat presents a prolonged speech that does not show opposing views, such as when he discusses the teaching of Islam or the miracles of the Qur'an.

The number of selected samples is 30 argumentative texts. All are labelled in Appendix D. The arguments are numbered from 1-30. It is important to mention that the titles of the arguments appeared in the appendices are given by Deedat himself. Moreover, the numeration of the arguments is based on the segmentation found in the original texts. Thus, these numbers do not mean that the numerated sample discusses a separate claim or proposition. Samples are only numbered to facilitate reference to any of them within the body of analysis. The segmentation of the data into appeals and strategies are tabulated and posted into Appendices A, B and C. Appendix A includes all the rational strategies used in the data tabulated and exemplified. Appendix B comprises the strategies employed to express the credibility appeal, they are all tabulated and exemplified as well. Appendix C includes the classification of affective strategies.

Below, is a short survey of the volume's three parts. The survey aims to introduce the data being examined later in the analysis.

- The first part entitled '**What the Bible Says About Mohammed (PBUH)**', Deedat argues with an African priest named Van Heerden about what the holy sacred Book, the Bible, has foretold about the coming of the final Messenger, Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). The argument

comes in the form of a dialogue. Deedat states directly his main claim at the beginning by questioning the receiver, the priest, "What does the Bible say about Mohammed?"(4).

- Regarding the second part of the volume, entitled: "**Muhummed (PBUH) the Natural Successor to the Christ (PBUH)**", Deedat is discussing the legitimacy of the succession of Prophet Muhummed (PBUH). This part is the longest and the most detailed one. It is concerned with tracing the key expressions used to denote the coming of the successor messenger, such as 'the Holy Spirit', 'the Spirit of the Truth' and ' the Holy Ghost', in a number of Biblical Versions. Deedat attempts to prove that these expressions all refer to Prophet Muhummed not Jesus or any other Divine messengers.
- The third part entitled "**Muhummed (PBUH) the Greatest**" is concerned with presenting the views of well-known figures from different religious background: Christian, Jewish and Hindu, about Prophet Muhummed (PBUH). He cites their words and mentions their names to convince the reader that Prophet Muhummed is the greatest leader who will ever be the chosen hero for any one, and to back up his claim that this great leader is the best and final messenger to humanity.

0.4.1. Who is Deedat?

Ahmed Hussein Deedat (July 1, 1918 – August 8, 2005) is a Muslim author, lecturer, orator and scholar of comparative religion. He is best known for his numerous inter-religious public debates with Christian priests and lecturers. Most of his arguments are centered around Islam, Christianity and the Bible.

According to David Wasteland, a scholar in religious studies, Deedat aimed at providing Muslims with theological tools for defending themselves against the intense missionary strivings of many Christian denominations. He used English instead of Arabic, or any other language, to get his message across to Muslim minorities in the western world. Deedat devoted himself to a host of activities over three decades:

- He has been calling to Islam for 40 years.
- He was the Life President and the founder of the Islamic Propagation Centre International (IPCI).
- He was the winner of King Faisal Award in 1986.

0.5. Limitations of the Study

The research is of limited scope:

1. it is confined to the Islamic argumentative discourse written in English rather than Arabic or any other language;
2. it concentrates mainly on one book of Deedat's works, entitled The Choice: Islam and Christianity, Vol.1;
3. The study tackles only thirty samples from the corpus. Ten samples from each part.

0.6. Division of the Study

This study is organized into 5 chapters in addition to the introduction. The introduction introduces the basic components of the study, its questions and objectives. It also sheds light on the significance of the study and states its limitations.

Chapter I presents the theoretical preliminaries, i.e., the model of analysis and the method designed for the study. It also gives a comprehensive review of the related studies carried out in the same area.

Chapters II, III and IV are devoted to analyze the data. Chapter II describes how the arguments are structured in terms of persuasive appeals and investigate the persuasive strategies manipulated there. Chapter III is concerned with analyzing the linguistic features that characterize the persuasive message. Chapter IV focuses on the textual devices employed in the argumentative texts and their role in enhancing the persuasive power of the message.

Finally, Chapter V discusses the findings, pedagogical implications and sets forth suggestions for further studies.

Chapter I: Theoretical Preliminaries

1.1. Introductory overview?

1.2. Models of the Study

1.2.1. Aristotelian Framework (Logos, Pathos and Ethos)

1.2.2. Connor and Lauer's (1985) Model

1.2.3. Salmi-Tolonen's (2005) Model

1.2.4. Dafouz's (2007)

1.3. Method of Analysis

1.4. Review of Literature

1.3.1. Persuasion Studies on social issues

1.3.2. Persuasion Studies on Literary Works

1.3.3. Persuasion Studies on Mass Media

1.3.4. Persuasion Studies on Press Materials

1.3.5. Persuasion Studies in the field of TEFL

1.3.6. Persuasion Studies on Religious Texts