A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Renewal of Religious Discourse in Egypt Using Appraisal Theory

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Abstract:

This study critically analyses the spoken language used by the speakers using appraisal theory done by Martin and White (2005) as a framework for discourse analysis. The study linguistically analyses the debate between the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and Cairo University President about the issue of renewing religious discourse in Egypt. The analysis depends on applying the three main systems of appraisal theory: attitude, engagement, and graduation. Each system helps to understand how the speakers evaluate the content, engage with other perspectives, convey their stances on religious reform, and scale the intensity of the discourse. Within the broader framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study also tries to explore how religious discourse is constructed, challenged, and renewed in contemporary Egypt. The study is designed to be descriptive and qualitative. The results reveal that the speakers vary in using the three systems of appraisal to express their views and emotions about the renewal of religious discourse and the application of heritage in modern life.

Keywords: Appraisal Theory, Religious Discourse, Attitude, Engagement, Graduation.

1.0. Introduction

Religious discourse plays an important role in people's everyday lives and accordingly influences society. Religious discourse is an essential field of discussing interpersonal relations in social contexts. One of the most contentious issues among the Egyptian public is the renewal of religious discourse. The prolonged dispute over this issue is essentially a conflict between a secular-rationalist perspective of thinking maintained by intellectual elite, and a conservative-religious movement (Polka, 2003). Thus, this study tries to interpret the idea of renewing religious discourse to understand the evaluative language from the linguistic perspectives by analyzing the spoken language through appraisal systems. Therefore, it seeks to investigate the spoken language in the discourse between the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, and Dr. Mohamed El-Khosht, who is Cairo University President.

1.1. Rationale of the study

In light of the religious discourse, the renewal of religious discourse appears to be an influential and interesting topic that is worth studying for several reasons. The main reason for choosing this topic is to evaluate the spoken language and expressions used by the speakers to explain their cultural and moral values. This research paper represents the academic experience and the professional standing of each speaker. The second reason is to encourage critical thinking, promote a moderate understanding of Islam, counter extremist ideologies, and help believers engage with religious texts.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the present paper aims at analyzing the speaker's emotions and find out their stances and perspectives towards the renewing of religious discourse in Egypt by employing appraisal theory. Specifically, it analyses the language that the speakers use to approve or disapprove the renewal of religious discourse. Furthermore, it seeks to identify patterns of attitude, engagement, and graduation that used by the speakers in their discourse. Also, it explores the aspects of power manifestation, ideology, and authority throughout the discussion.

1.3. Questions of the Study

Based on the previously mentioned reasons, the study specifically aspires to find answers to the following questions:

1. What language features are used in El-Khosht and El-Tayyeb's discourse, based on the appraisal systems?
2. How does appraisal theory provide insights into the emotional, moral, and evaluative aspects of speakers toward religious discourse?
3. What are the discursive strategies used by the speakers to manage dialogic control and how do these strategies affect the representation of alternative viewpoints?

The researcher raises these questions to investigate how emotional responses, engagement strategies, and intensity shape narratives and opinions about renewing religious discourse in Egypt, applying heritage, and Western influence.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

Within the scope of the study, appraisal theory is used to analyze the data. It is an aspect of Halliday's Systematic Functional Linguistics theory (SFL). Martin and White (2005, p. 7) define appraisal theory as "an approach in linguistics study used to find out and identify someone's opinion about an object". According to Martin and White (2005, p. 9), appraisal theory aims to describe different ways of linguistic realization of interpersonal meanings in language use. Appraisal refers to the semantic resources, such as words, phrases, and structures that the speakers or writers employ to negotiate emotions, judgments, and valuations.

Therefore, appraisal theory explains how language expresses evaluations, attitudes, and emotional reactions. It analyzes how speakers or writers assess situations, people, and ideas, and how they express their feelings and judgments about situations or topics. According to Martin and White (2005, p. 30), appraisal theory has three main systems; attitude, engagement, and graduation. These systems explore how attitudes, judgments, values, stances, and emotional reactions are explicitly expressed in a discourse as well as how they could be more indirectly implied or assumed. The following table (1) shows a basic representation of the three systems of the appraisal

theory, attitude, engagement, and graduation according to Martin and White, (2005). In addition, the table outlines the subsystems of each main system.

Table 1. The Basic Representation of the Appraisal Theory

Appraisal aspects				
Attitude	**Graduation**		**Engagement**	
Affect	Force	Intensification	Monogloss	
		Quantification		
Judgment		Attitudinal lexis	Heterogloss Dialogue Expansion/	Entertain
		Swearing words		Attribute
Appreciation	Focus	Sharpen (scaled up)		Concession
		Soften (scaled down)	Dialogue contraction	Proclaim
				Disclaim

As shown in the previous table, the attitude system includes three subcategories; affect, judgment, and appreciation. Attitude shows how feelings are expressed within texts, covering the categories of emotions, ethics, and aesthetics. Further, this system deals with the speaker's stance towards the content of the message. The attributes of an attitude system include the ability to be positive or negative, as well as explicit or implicit. Attitude consists of three subsystems; affect, judgment, and appreciation. Affect expresses negative or positive feelings and emotional reactions, such as happiness, sadness, anger, etc. Judgment involves making value judgments about various aspects, such as people's actions, ethics, and behaviors. It involves social esteem and sanction. Appreciation evaluates things, performances, processes, and abstract concepts, as good or bad, valuable or worthless, and beautiful or ugly. The following table (2) shows a basic representation of the attitude system of the appraisal theory according to Martin and White, (2005). Further, it presents the three subsystems of attitude; affect, judgment, and appreciation.

Table 2. Attitude System of Appraisal

Attitude						
Affect	Un/happiness	Judgment	Social Esteem	Normality	Appreciation	Reaction
	In/ security			Capacity		Composition
				Tenacity		Valuation
	Dis/satisfaction		Social Sanction	Veracity		
	Dis/inclination			Propriety		

Secondly, the engagement system examines the way speakers dialogically adapt and position themselves regarding their audience, perspectives, and ideas mentioned in the text. Martin and White (2005, p. 93) indicate that "the engagement model is interested in whether speakers and writers present themselves as standing with, as standing against, as undecided, or as neutral concerning other speakers and their value positions." Accordingly, this model "provides an overview of linguistic resources that speakers use to present their value views as something to be accepted or as something that needs to be questioned, resisted or rejected." It is based on two categories, monoglossic and heteroglossic voices.

Monoglossic utterances have no reference to viewpoints other than the speaker's. On the contrary, heteroglossic utterances have a reference to other perspectives and allow other voices to participate in the discourse. The heteroglossic category includes two techniques, expansion and contraction. The dialogue expansion technique opens the discourse for other voices to participate, but the contraction closes the space for other interactions. The following table (3) presents the model of the engagement system and its types. Therefore, it explains the lexical terms that may be used to convey this aspect.

Table 3. The Engagement system of Appraisal

Engagement System				
Monoglossic	Heteroglossic			
	Expansion		Contraction	
	Entertain	Uncertainty	Disclaim	reject / deny
	Attribute	Reference other voices	Proclaim	affirm

As presented in the previous table (3), the expansion technique uses entertain and attribute aspects to reference other voices. Entertain domain uses modal verbs to show certainty or uncertainty. Attribute uses reported verbs, such as ' say or 'claim'. While the contraction depends on proclaim or disclaim aspects to dismiss or acknowledge other voices. The speakers use negation to show disclaim or some terms, such as ' but' or 'however'. Proclaim aspect is expressed by endorsing or pronouncing methods.

The third subsystem is graduation which is concerned with the intensity or the strength of evaluations. The graduation aspect includes force, and focus. Force deals with the strength of the expressions or commitment to a particular evaluation. Focus determines where the evaluation is concentrated within the discourse. These systems allow speakers or writers to convey not only their opinions, but also the strength of their feelings or judgments. Thus, each utterance and sentence is analyzed in their discourse using the systems of attitude, engagement, and graduation. Consequently, the study focuses on the analysis of meanings, semantics, and every verbal interaction in context rather than grammatical forms.

1.5. Methodology

The study is based on a qualitative method for a comprehensive interpretation of the discourse. It uses several linguistic tools for analyzing the data, such as appraisal framework, CDA theory, and Intertextuality technique. Intertextuality is used to show how texts are connected to each other and influenced by other texts.

According to Fairclough (1992, p. 85), Intertextuality is defined as "a discourse representation or strategy that examines how quoted utterances are selected, changed, and ultimately contextualized. " The data are analyzed based on the three systems of appraisal; attitude, engagement, and graduation. The theory of CDA is also employed in the analysis to explore the dynamics of power and authority used in the discourse.

1.6. Data Collection

The data is collected from the debate between Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayyeb and Dr. El-Khosht about the renewal of religious discourse in Egypt. They discuss this issue on the international conference under the title of 'The International Conference for the Renewal of Islamic Thought and Sciences' On January 28-29, 2020. The study depends on spoken language used by the speakers. The analytical framework is based on the three systems of appraisal theory: attitude, engagement, and graduation. Furthermore, CDA theory is used to construct social identities, relationships, and power dynamics.

The data is collected from a video form as a main source through [Al-Azhar's YouTube channel](). Additionally, the full video is widely covered by some Egyptian and international news platforms, such as Masrawy, CBC Egypt, and YouTube channels. The researcher downloads a video about the debate between Dr. Al-Khosht and Ahmed Al-Tayyeb with a length of around 66 minutes. The debate mainly consists of two male speakers: Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayyeb and Dr. Othman El-Khosht. The main topic of their spoken discourse is the renewal of religious discourse and applying heritage in Egypt. The data is collected according to some requirements, such as the relevance, influence, and importance of the suggested topic of renewing religious discourse. The discourse of both speakers is carefully transcribed verbatim from the video.

Consequently, the researcher transcribes each utterance said by the speakers, from spoken form into a written form, to help in classifying and analyzing the data. The transcription focuses not only on the spoken words but also on the significant pauses, emphases, and any audience comments that could provide additional context for the analysis. The process of the transcription involves several reviews and cross-

referencing through available official transcripts or conference documents, so that the researcher can ensure the accuracy of the original discourse.

Following up, the researcher translates each word and utterance in the discourse by the speakers from Arabic into English. The researcher translates the texts by herself using the help of some websites, such as Google Translate and Reverso. The translation process is carried out with a focus on maintaining the source of language used, such as rhetorical devices, cultural references, and idiomatic expressions, which are crucial for a comprehensive discourse analysis. The analysis is based on using the original text language to preserve the integrity of the discourse. The researcher applies this cross-language approach to ensure that the interpretation of the text will be understood in a way that is correlated to the speakers' intentions, particularly when analyzing rhetorical strategies or cultural and religious concepts.

1.7. Literature Review

Many studies, research, and academic articles explain the use of appraisal theory in written and spoken discourse. Fortanet-Gómez (2022) studies the interpersonal dimensions of some interviews, following a qualitative discourse analysis. He applied appraisal theory by Martin and White (2005) to the interpretation of experienced researchers' responses in an interview on open access. The results reveal that the researchers mainly evaluate human behavior, namely judgment, relate open access with an ethical attitude, consequently assess it positively, and make use of personal engagement when they have to give a negative assessment about the new European policy. Moreover, the findings show many doubts and hesitations in the researchers' views expressed by the appraisal of verbal and non-verbal resources in their answers.

Similarly, Alkahtani (2020) examines the attitude shifts in President Hosni Mubarak's speeches during the Arab Spring Uprising in 2011. He adopts appraisal theory by Martin and White as a framework to analyze the data. He selects three discourses of Mubarak about demonstrations to explore. In terms of the linguistic devices, he uses pronouns, intensification, reiteration, lexical selection, and metaphor to reflect appraisal domains. Charts and diagrams are utilized to illustrate the distribution of each domain and frequency. The results reveal that the attitude of

Mubarak has changed throughout his speeches. His first speech was unrealistic. The second was less emotive and more assertive. On the other hand, his third speech was full of subliminal authoritative messages and lengthy. Moreover, it has a lack of sympathy.

Vebrina and Hamzah (2019) explain the evaluative language produced by a food blogger or a YouTube user with content about reviewing food. The research is based on a descriptive qualitative method. They evaluate the language produced by the blogger (Mike Chen) concerning appraisal theory by Martin and Rose (2003) and Martin and White (2005). This study focuses on finding out the most frequent aspect of appraisal in five videos of Mike Chen while reviewing foods. The data is collected from five videos from Mike Chen's YouTube account. They explore all the elements of attitude and graduation used in the videos to analyze each sentence uttered. All utterances produced by Mike Chen are transcribed into text for data analysis. They reveal that the most prominent aspect in the attitude element is the appreciation and the most prominent aspects in the graduation element are intensifiers and metaphors.

A lot of studies are conducted in relation to discourse but studies on religious discourse are very rare. To date, there are almost no previous studies or research using appraisal theory to analyze the renewal of religious discourse in Egypt. Therefore, this study is intended to fill this gap in the literature. A research paper was conducted to analyze spoken religious discourse by Alhamshary (2019). He selects a speech by Dr. Ahmed El-Tayyeb on the occasion of the Prophet's birth. The researcher uses Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) theoretical framework, systematic language grammar, to analyze the data. The data is collected from the recorded file in the YouTube and then is subtitled in Arabic. The results show that Dr. El-Tayyeb throughout his speech seeks to encourage people to keep their faith complete by holding the Qur'an and Sunnah together. He employs the quasi-logical persuasion technique which is based on the logical structure of his usual speeches. He, also, employs the analogical persuasion approach to compare between applying Sunnah and not applying Sunnah in Islam.

Another study by Sharaf Eldein (2014) investigates the Islamic discourse and traces the ideological devices in Amr Khalid's sermons. He tries to show how Amr Khalid, an Egyptian Muslim activist and television preacher, employs language in

sermons and how he reflects the common conceptual structures and interrelationships between him and his audience. The study uses CDA as an approach for analysis.

Another linguistic factor that has a significant impact on the religious discourse analysis is the use of translation versus transliteration of religious terms. A study by El Sheikh and Saleh (2011) investigates two different types of Islamic written discourse in Western countries. The articles are from the site of Imam Hendi (USA) and the Da'wah Internet site of Australia. The researchers aim to explore the issue of value judgments on the content of these examples. They identify some semantic markers of each of the two types of religious discourse in question, with reference to the use of translated versus transliterated religious terms. This study reveals that the language users use transliterated religious terms rather than translations. Also, it shows that the transliterated religious terms reflect an exclusive attitude rather than an inclusive one. Moreover, the transliterated religious terms are regarded as a linguistic marker that might advocate the hatred of the religious other. And, the use of translation does not require the presence of a positive attitude towards the religious others.

1.8. Data Analysis

This paper analyses the discourse of Professor Mohamed Othman El-Khosht while he presents his perspective on renewing the religious discourse in Egypt. In addition, it analyses the Al-Azhar Grand Imam, Sheikh Ahmed El-Tayyeb responses to El-Khosht's point of view. El-Khosht comments on the idea of renewal, saying:

"لابد من تجديد علم أصول الدين بالعودة إلى المنابع الصافية: القرآن الكريم وما صح من السنة النبوية المطهرة، فالتجديد يقتضى تغيير طرق التفكير، وتغيير رؤية العالم يجب أن تقوم على رؤية جديدة عصرية على القرآن الكريم بوصفه كتابا إلهيًا مقدسا يصلح لكل العصور ولكل الأزمان".

It is necessary to renew the science of fundamentals of religion by returning to the pure sources: The Qur'an and what is authentic from the purified Sunnah of the Prophet. So, change requires changing ways of thinking and the way the world perceives us. Changing the perception of the world must be based on a new modern vision about the Holy Qur'an, being a sacred book that is appropriate for all eras and times.

As shown in this extract, the speaker expresses a positive and strong attitude of the necessity towards the renewal of religious discourse, as indicated by the imperative expression "لابد من" ("It is necessary to"). He suggests a high degree of obligation toward the renewal of religious discourse. The phrase "المنابع الصافية" ("the pure sources") suggests a positive evaluation of these sources and emphasizes their purity and authenticity. The phrase "القرآن الكريم بوصفه كتابا إلهيآ" asserts the positive judgment of the Qur'an. Thus, he appreciates its significance in guiding religious knowledge and practices. The speaker shows his desire to change and adaptation in religious interpretations, as indicated by the phrases "تغيير طرق التفكير" and "تغيير رؤية العالم".

As for the engagement system, the speaker uses the monoglossic voice in his speech and he does not engage with other perspectives. He uses assertive statements to show alignment with the necessity of renewal, as indicated by the imperative "لابد من تجديد" and "فالتجديد يقتضى تغيير". The speaker aligns with the positive evaluation of the Qur'an and the Sunnah by referring to them as "المنابع الصافية" ("the pure sources"). The text does not explicitly acknowledge other voices.

As for the graduation system, the use of the strong language "لابد من" and "يجب" "أن تقوم على" expresses a high degree of force and intensity towards the renewal. The positive evaluation of the Qur'an and the Sunnah is described with moderate intensity, conveyed through the phrase "المنابع الصافية". The adjective "pure" intensifies the description of the Qur'an and Sunnah. The use of the word "صح" intensifies the reliability and credibility of the Sunnah. The verb "يقتضى" expresses a high intensity for the necessity to change, emphasizing that it is not optional but crucial. The adjectives "divine" and "holy" intensify the reverence and sanctity of the Qur'an. The words "تغيير طرق التفكير" and "تغيير رؤية العالم" express a moderate intensity. Moreover, the description of the Qur'an as "يصلح لكل العصور ولكل الأزمان" clarifies an appraisal of its universality and values attributed to the topic. On the other hand, El-Tayyeb replies to El-Khosht, saying;

"حضرتك قلت كرئيس للجامعة إن التجديد هو مثل أن تُجدد منزل والدك دون أن تسكن فيه وتتركه لتسكن في بيت جديد وانتقل إلى بيت جديد. تشبيه تجديد الخطاب الديني بعملية ترميم بناء قديم مثل بيت الوالد ما هو الإ إهمال وترك وإعلان الفرقه لبيت الوالد، مع احترامى. التجديد فى بيت الوالد لابد أن يكون فى بيت الوالد، بدل من طوب أخضر أو لبن أعيده مرة إخرى بما يناسب أنماط البناء الحديث المعاصر."

You said, as a university president, that renewal is like renovating your father's house without living in it, and then leaving it to live in a new house and move to a new house. Comparing the renewal of religious discourse to the process of restoring an old building, such as the father's house, is considering as neglect, abandonment, and a announcing the division of the father's house, with all due my respect. Renewal in the father's house must be in the father's house, instead of green or mud to rebuild it again in a way that suits modern and contemporary building styles.

As for the attitude system, the speaker's tone reflects his positive affect and concern for Islamic tradition and applying heritage. Also, he conveys a strong negative judgment of the comparison El-Khosht made: " تشبيه تجديد الخطاب الديني بعملية ترميم بناء قديم مثل بيت الوالد". He rejects the comparison mentioned by the university president and considers it immoral. The sentence " ما هو الإ إهمال وترك وإعلان الفرقه لبيت الوالد" implies a strong negative judgment of the president's view that is ethically inappropriate. The term " بيت الوالد " symbolizes Islamic tradition and heritage, which the speaker appreciates and values. This simile is used to indicate the necessity of renewing appropriately, rather than being replaced or abandoned. Moreover, this simile is used as a negative metaphor to indicate criticism, and it suggests a break from tradition rather than an adaptation.

Regarding the engagement system, this extract is based on highly heteroglossic voice. The speaker engages with another perspectives rather than presenting a single authoritative truth, depending on the dialogic contraction technique. His words directly criticize what mentioned by the president. The sentence " تشبيه تجديد الخطاب الديني بعملية.........." acknowledges a contrasting viewpoint about the president's simile of the renewal. Therefore, the speaker expresses a denial and rejection of the president's perspective. Also, he uses denial words to express his criticism of the simile, such as " إهمال وترك وإعلان الفرقه". The use of the modal verb " must" (لابد) conveys a firm stance that rejects other views. The phrase " ما هو الإ" is a strong contract that is used to close the space for counterarguments. Additionally, the speaker acknowledges by attribute method the president's perspective by referencing it directly, by saying "كرئيس للجامعة ...، حضرتك ".

In light of the graduation system, the speaker uses highly intensified language through the force and focus techniques. The speaker expresses his dissatisfaction with

the president's simile by using strong lexical intensifiers, such as "إهمال" , "الترك", and "إعلان الفرقه". The modal verb "لابد" indicates a high degree of obligation. The phrase " أخضر أو لبن أعيده مرة إخرى بما يناسب أنماط البناء الحديث المعاصر " intensifies the value of traditional methods over modern ones. The repetition of the simile "بيت الوالد " suggests intensified reinforcement. On the other hand, the speaker sharpens his discourse by using these previous strong terms. Also, the speaker chooses words that soften the overall tone by acknowledging the president's authority, position, and respect. For instance, the use of the expression "مع احترامى " shows respect to El-Khosht.

1.9. Findings of the Study

The analysis reveals that the speakers, Dr. Ahmed El-Tayyeb and Dr. Mohamed El-Khosht, use the three main systems of appraisal theory in their discourse about the renewal of religious discourse in Egypt, such as the attitude, engagement, and graduation. Furthermore, they employ various strategies and techniques to express their stances and perspectives. In relation to El-Khosht's discourse, the study reveals that he employs the three systems of appraisal framework. At the beginning of his speech, El-Khosht expresses a positive attitude towards renewing the science of fundamentals of religion and returning to authentic sources. He uses strong lexical locutions and terms to suggest high obligation and urgency to renew and develop the science of religion. He calls for forming a new religious mind and establishing a new foundation with new concepts, language, and vocabulary. Therefore, he supports the idea of creating a new heritage to cope with the current modern life. El-Khosht's statements assert the necessity of renewal. He expresses his ideas in a monoglossic voice to highlight his authority and the urgency of the matter. He leaves no space for others to express their perspectives or opposing views. Thus, he depends on the dialogue contraction technique in his discourse.

With reference to Dr. Ahmed El-Tayyeb's discourse, the study shows that he utilizes the three systems of appraisal to express his views and reply to El-Khosht's suggestions for renewal. His language reveals a complex attitude towards heritage. It reflects a criticism of El-Khosht's discourse about heritage with an appreciation for its historical vital role. He uses a strong attitude to highlight the significance and transformative power of heritage's role in shaping Arab culture, history, and identity. Therefore, he opposes the oversimplified portrayal of his educational background and

the Islamic scholars. El-Tayyeb's engagement is based on a monoglossic- single voice, allowing no room for others to contrast his perspective. His discourse depends on a dialogue contraction technique to support his ideas about heritage and he sometimes opens the dialogue to align with past scholars.

1.10. Conclusion

The present paper critically examines the renewal of religious discourse in Egypt using Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) as a framework for discourse analysis. Through an exploration of attitude, engagement, and graduation, the study highlights how linguistic choices shape evaluations of religious reform, construct ideological positions, and influence public perception. Briefly, the study employs the appraisal framework to carefully understand how speakers interact and express attitudes, engage with their audience, evaluate behaviors, and modulate the intensity and focus of their messages. Thus, it reveals how the speaker's feelings are expressed through an attitude system and how evaluation is conveyed implicitly and explicitly. In conclusion, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the connection between language and religious change in Egypt. It highlights the need for a balanced, inclusive, and dialogic approach to religious renewal. Thus, it acknowledges the importance and value of heritage in modern life. The engagement subsystem of appraisal shows how the speakers navigate between authoritative assertions and dialogic inclusivity. The graduation subsystem shows how the speakers change the degree of their intensity, force, and focus of their evaluations to enhance or moderate their messages. To sum up, this thesis explores various critical dimensions of religious discourse, philosophical education, the significance of heritage in modern life, and the complex relationship between tradition and modernity.

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