



Critical Discourse Analysis of English Islamic Digital Da'wah Messages: A Library Research Based on Fairclough's Model

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of digital media has fundamentally repositioned Islamic da'wah communication within an increasingly complex and contested discursive landscape. English-medium Islamic digital content, distributed across platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and dedicated Islamic websites, now constitutes a substantial body of discourse through which Muslim communicators negotiate questions of identity, authority, and religious meaning in the public sphere. Despite the growing volume of this discourse, critical scholarly attention to the linguistic and ideological dimensions of English Islamic digital da'wah remains comparatively underdeveloped. The present study addresses this gap by applying Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model encompassing text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice to the systematic examination of English-language Islamic da'wah messages in digital media contexts. Conducted through a rigorous library research methodology, the investigation draws upon theoretically grounded and empirically oriented scholarly sources published within the past three to five years. The research objectives are: (1) to identify the dominant textual features characterizing English Islamic digital da'wah; (2) to examine the discursive practices through which such messages are produced, circulated, and consumed; and (3) to situate these discursive practices within broader sociocultural conditions of meaning-making in the digital age. Findings reveal that English Islamic digital da'wah employs distinctive lexical choices, transitivity patterns, and intertextual strategies to construct particular representations of Islamic identity and authority. At the level of discursive practice, the content demonstrates systematic integration of scriptural intertextuality with contemporary digital genres. At the sociocultural level, these discourses reflect and negotiate tensions between global Islamic revivalism, Western liberal public

sphere norms, and platform-mediated attention economies. These findings advance understanding of the intersection between digital communication, religious discourse, and ideological construction in contemporary Muslim public life.

Keywords: *critical discourse analysis; digital da'wah; Fairclough's model; Islamic communication; English religious discourse*

INTRODUCTION

The intersection of religious communication and digital media constitutes one of the most dynamic and consequential areas of inquiry in contemporary communication studies. Within the Islamic tradition, the practice of da'wah understood as the purposeful invitation to Islam and the propagation of its teachings among both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences has undergone a profound transformation in the digital age, as communicators increasingly leverage the affordances of networked platforms to extend their reach, diversify their formats, and engage with audiences whose characteristics differ markedly from those addressed through traditional Islamic institutions. As Fairclough (2022) observes, changes in communicative practices are never merely technical or stylistic; they invariably reflect and reinforce deeper transformations in social relations, power structures, and ideological formations. It is precisely this insight that motivates the application of Critical Discourse Analysis to the study of English Islamic digital da'wah in the present research.

English has emerged as the predominant vehicular language of Islamic digital communication targeting international and diaspora Muslim audiences, as well as non-Muslim audiences seeking information about Islam. The choice of English as a medium of da'wah carries significant discursive implications, positioning Islamic communication within the global linguistic hierarchy while simultaneously enabling Muslim communicators to intervene in English-language discursive spaces that have historically been shaped by secular Western epistemologies. Wodak and Meyer (2022) argue that language choice in multilingual and multicultural contexts is never neutral; it indexes social positioning, cultural affiliations, and political orientations that exceed the purely communicative function of language. In the context of Islamic digital da'wah, the use of English thus constitutes a discursive strategy through which Muslim communicators negotiate their place within, and simultaneously challenge, the dominant structures of global media discourse.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as theorized by Norman Fairclough, offers a particularly powerful analytical framework for examining these dimensions of Islamic digital communication. Fairclough's three-dimensional

model conceptualizes discourse as simultaneously a linguistic text, a discursive practice involving the production and consumption of texts, and a sociocultural practice embedded in broader social and institutional contexts. This tripartite framework enables analysts to move systematically between close linguistic analysis and wider social critique, illuminating the ways in which textual choices both reflect and reproduce ideological positions and social power relations (Fairclough, 2022). When applied to da'wah discourse, this framework reveals not only what is said and how, but also who says it, through what institutional and technological channels, and within what broader configurations of social power and cultural meaning.

The significance of digital da'wah as a site of discursive and ideological contestation has been underscored by numerous scholars working at the intersection of Islamic studies, communication theory, and critical media studies. Bunt (2021) documents the rapid proliferation of English-language Islamic digital content following the rise of social media platforms, noting that digital da'wah now encompasses an extraordinarily diverse range of genres, styles, and ideological orientations. This diversity renders the field both rich and challenging for critical analysis: while the sheer volume and variety of content resists easy generalization, systematic analysis can identify shared discursive conventions and ideological tendencies that cut across individual texts and communicators. The library research methodology adopted in this study is designed precisely to achieve such systematic analysis through the comprehensive review and critical synthesis of existing scholarly literature.

Previous scholarship on CDA and Islamic discourse has predominantly focused on Arabic-medium texts and on news media representations of Islam and Muslims, leaving English-medium da'wah content relatively understudied from a critical discourse perspective. Studies that do address English Islamic communication tend to adopt sociolinguistic or rhetorical frameworks that, while valuable, do not fully capture the ideological dimensions of discursive practice that CDA brings into analytical focus. As Rahimi and Riasati (2021) observe, CDA's explicit attention to the relationship between discourse and power makes it uniquely suited for examining religious communication, where questions of authority, legitimacy, and ideological positioning are of central importance. The present study seeks to fill this lacuna by applying Fairclough's model specifically to English Islamic digital da'wah, contributing a critical perspective that complements and extends existing sociolinguistic and rhetorical analyses.

The theoretical foundations of this research draw upon several interconnected bodies of scholarship. First, the study engages with Fairclough's evolving conceptualization of CDA, particularly his work on the relationship

between discourse, ideology, and social change, which provides the analytical architecture for the investigation (Fairclough, 2022). Second, the study draws upon scholarship in digital rhetoric and platform studies, which theorizes how the technical affordances of digital platforms shape the discursive conditions of possibility for online communication (Gries & Brooke, 2022). Third, the research engages with literature on Islamic communication and da'wah studies, providing the domain-specific context necessary for informed interpretation of the discursive phenomena under examination (Bunt, 2021). The integration of these three theoretical traditions enables a rich, multidimensional analysis that accounts for the linguistic, technological, and socioreligious dimensions of English Islamic digital da'wah.

Methodologically, the study adopts a systematic library research approach, which Creswell and Poth (2022) characterize as a rigorous mode of scholarly inquiry in which the researcher synthesizes existing theoretical and empirical knowledge to generate well-grounded analytical conclusions. This approach is particularly appropriate for the present investigation given the extensive body of CDA scholarship available for methodological guidance, the substantial literature on digital Islamic communication, and the need for a theoretically grounded framework that can meaningfully organize and interpret the diversity of empirical phenomena encountered in English Islamic digital da'wah. The systematic nature of the library research methodology ensures that the study's conclusions are grounded in a comprehensive and critically evaluated body of evidence rather than in selective or unsystematic engagement with the literature.

The study is organized as follows. The subsequent section presents the methodological approach in detail, specifying the procedures for source identification, selection, and analysis employed in the library research. The results and discussion section presents the findings of the systematic literature analysis, organized according to the three dimensions of Fairclough's model: text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice. The concluding section synthesizes the key findings, identifies their theoretical and practical implications, and proposes directions for future empirical research.

METHOD

The present study employs a systematic library research methodology, also designated as desk research or systematic literature review, as its primary mode of inquiry. This methodological choice is grounded in the recognition that a comprehensive and critically informed analysis of discursive phenomena in English Islamic digital da'wah requires engagement with a substantial body of theoretical and empirical scholarship that has accumulated across multiple

academic disciplines. As articulated by Snyder (2022), systematic library research constitutes a scientifically rigorous approach to knowledge synthesis that enables researchers to identify patterns, reconcile contradictions, and generate theoretically grounded conclusions from the existing scholarly literature in a field.

The data sources for this investigation comprise two principal categories. First, the study draws upon scholarly books published within the five-year period from 2020 to 2025, with priority accorded to works that make foundational theoretical contributions to Critical Discourse Analysis, digital communication studies, and Islamic communication. Second, the study incorporates peer-reviewed journal articles published within the three-year window from 2022 to 2025, drawn from internationally reputed journals indexed in Scopus and the Web of Science, as well as nationally accredited Indonesian journals listed in the SINTA (Science and Technology Index) database. Sources were identified through systematic keyword searches in Google Scholar, JSTOR, EBSCO, and ProQuest databases, using search terms including “Critical Discourse Analysis Islamic,” “Fairclough da’wah,” “digital religious discourse,” and closely related combinations.

The analytical procedure proceeded through three sequential stages aligned with Fairclough’s three-dimensional model: (1) analysis of textual features, including lexical choices, grammatical patterns, and intertextual references identified in the reviewed literature; (2) analysis of discursive practices, encompassing the production, distribution, and consumption patterns of digital da’wah content; and (3) analysis of sociocultural practices situating these discourses within broader social and ideological contexts. Inclusion criteria required relevance to the study’s central themes, credibility of publication venue, and adherence to the publication date windows specified above.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Textual Dimension: Linguistic Features of English Islamic Digital Da’wah

The systematic analysis of scholarly literature bearing on the textual dimension of English Islamic digital da’wah reveals a coherent set of linguistic features that distinguish this discursive variety from both secular digital communication and traditional Arabic-medium Islamic scholarly writing. At the lexical level, English Islamic digital da’wah is characterized by the systematic integration of Arabic Islamic terminology within English discourse, creating a hybridized register that simultaneously signals Islamic authenticity and ensures accessibility to English-speaking audiences. Terms such as *tawakkul* (reliance upon God), *taqwa* (God-consciousness), *ummah* (Muslim community), and

istiqamah (steadfastness) appear with high frequency in da'wah texts, accompanied by English glosses or contextual explanations that serve both pedagogical and identity-marking functions. As Rahimi and Riasati (2021) demonstrate in their CDA study of Islamic online communication, this code-mixing practice constitutes a deliberate discursive strategy through which communicators position themselves as authentically Islamic while remaining communicatively accessible to the target audience.

Transitivity analysis, one of the core tools of systemic functional linguistics employed within Fairclough's textual analytical framework, reveals distinctive patterns in the way agency and causality are constructed in English Islamic digital da'wah texts. Research reviewed in this study consistently identifies a tendency toward what systemic-functional linguists term "divine agency" constructions, in which God (Allah) is positioned as the primary active agent of positive outcomes, while human actors appear predominantly in passive or beneficiary roles. This transitivity pattern performs important ideological work: it constructs a theological worldview in which human striving is meaningful but ultimately dependent upon divine will, reinforcing the Islamic theological concept of *tawfiq* (divine enablement). Fairclough (2022) notes that transitivity choices are among the most ideologically consequential grammatical decisions a communicator makes, as they determine which actors are represented as powerful, agentive, and causally responsible for events.

Modality patterns in English Islamic digital da'wah also merit close analytical attention. The reviewed literature indicates that da'wah texts typically employ a complex modality system that combines high-certainty epistemic modality (reflecting confidence in Islamic theological claims grounded in scriptural authority) with relatively low deontic modality (reflecting a preference for invitation and encouragement over command and obligation in addressing non-specialist audiences). Wodak and Meyer (2022) observe that this modality configuration is characteristic of persuasive religious discourse that aims to convert or invite rather than to command or compel, aligning with the Quranic injunction of "no compulsion in religion" (*la ikraha fid-din*) that undergirds the ethical framework of Islamic da'wah communication. The modality choices in digital da'wah thus simultaneously reflect theological commitments and serve rhetorical functions.

2. Discursive Practice Dimension: Production, Distribution, and Consumption of Da'wah Texts

The discursive practice dimension of Fairclough's model directs analytical attention to the institutional and social processes through which texts are produced, circulated, and consumed. In the context of English Islamic digital

da'wah, this dimension reveals a distinctive productive economy that differs substantially from both traditional Islamic scholarly publishing and mainstream digital content creation. As documented by Bunt (2021), English Islamic digital da'wah is produced by a diverse array of actors, including formally trained Islamic scholars, self-taught Islamic communicators, Islamic educational institutions, and Muslim-majority countries' official religious bodies. The heterogeneity of this productive field means that da'wah texts vary considerably in their degree of scholarly rigor, institutional backing, and ideological orientation, creating a complex and contested discursive landscape.

Intertextuality constitutes a particularly salient feature of the discursive practices observed in English Islamic digital da'wah. Fairclough's model distinguishes between manifest intertextuality, in which specific other texts are explicitly referenced, quoted, or responded to, and constitutive intertextuality (interdiscursivity), in which texts draw upon broader discursive conventions, genres, and formations without explicit attribution. Both forms are prominently present in English Islamic digital da'wah. Manifest intertextuality is most visibly expressed through the citation of Quranic verses and prophetic traditions (hadith), which function as primary authoritative anchors for da'wah arguments and simultaneously index the communicator's scholarly credibility. Gries and Brooke (2022) observe that the strategic deployment of scriptural citation in digital religious communication serves both an evidentiary function (substantiating claims) and an interpellative function (hailing audiences as members of a scripturally grounded community).

Interdiscursivity in English Islamic digital da'wah manifests through the appropriation of discursive conventions from a range of contemporary genres, including motivational speaking, therapeutic self-help discourse, documentary narration, and journalistic reporting. This generic hybridization enables da'wah communicators to leverage the cultural familiarity and emotional resonance of these established genres while infusing them with Islamic content and theological framing. Rahimi and Riasati (2021) identify this practice as a form of "discursive colonization in reverse," in which Islamic communicators strategically colonize secular digital genres with Islamic meaning, appropriating the formal conventions of these genres while redirecting their ideological content toward Islamic communicative objectives. This discursive strategy reflects a sophisticated awareness of the conditions of reception in digital media environments, where audiences accustomed to specific genre conventions are more likely to engage with content that meets familiar formal expectations.

3. Sociocultural Practice Dimension: Ideology, Power, and Identity in Digital Da'wah

The sociocultural practice dimension of Fairclough's model situates discourse within the broader social, cultural, and ideological contexts in which it is produced and consumed. For English Islamic digital da'wah, this dimension reveals a set of fundamental tensions and negotiations that shape the character of this discursive field. The most pervasive of these tensions concerns the positioning of Islamic discourse within the liberal secular public sphere that continues to dominate English-language global media. English Islamic digital da'wah must navigate the ideological norms and epistemic conventions of this public sphere which typically privileges secular rationality, individual autonomy, and universal human rights frameworks—while remaining committed to an Islamic theological worldview that operates from fundamentally different epistemological premises. As Wodak and Meyer (2022) argue, such discursive navigation inevitably involves complex ideological negotiations that leave their traces in the textual and discursive features of the resulting communication.

The question of Islamic authority and its construction in digital da'wah constitutes another critically important dimension of the sociocultural context. Traditional Islamic scholarly authority derived from formally recognized chains of transmission, institutional credentials, and community endorsement within established Islamic scholarly networks. The digital environment has profoundly destabilized these traditional authority structures, enabling individuals without formal Islamic credentials to amass large audiences and significant discursive influence through the skillful deployment of digital media affordances. As Bunt (2021) documents, this democratization of Islamic public discourse has generated significant tensions within Muslim communities regarding the criteria for legitimate da'wah authority, the appropriate relationship between charismatic digital appeal and scholarly qualification, and the responsibilities of platform providers toward content quality and theological accuracy.

The relationship between English Islamic digital da'wah and broader configurations of geopolitical power also warrants critical attention from the sociocultural practice perspective. The global dominance of English as a medium of digital communication means that English-medium da'wah simultaneously benefits from and is constrained by the structural power asymmetries that characterize global linguistic capitalism. Muslim communicators who produce

da'wah in English gain access to a vastly larger potential audience than those working in minority languages, but they must also contend with the ideological presuppositions embedded in English-language digital discourse and the platform governance norms established by predominantly Western technology companies. Fairclough (2022) reminds analysts that language is never a neutral medium but always carries the ideological sedimentations of its social history, a consideration of particular importance when analyzing the deployment of English in the service of Islamic communicative objectives.

4. Synthesis: CDA Contributions to Islamic Digital Da'wah Studies

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CONCLUSION

This library research has applied Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis model to a systematic examination of English Islamic digital da'wah messages, drawing upon a comprehensive body of theoretical and empirical scholarly literature. The investigation has generated a set of analytically grounded insights organized across the three dimensions of Fairclough's framework, illuminating the distinctive textual features, discursive

practices, and sociocultural contexts that characterize this significant and growing body of religious communication.

At the textual level, English Islamic digital da'wah is characterized by a hybridized register that integrates Arabic Islamic terminology within English discourse, strategic transitivity patterns that construct divine agency, and a distinctive modality system reflecting the theological and rhetorical commitments of Islamic invitation. At the level of discursive practice, the field is defined by intertextual strategies that deploy scriptural authority and interdiscursive strategies that appropriate secular digital genres for Islamic communicative purposes. At the sociocultural level, English Islamic digital da'wah operates within a field structured by fundamental tensions between Islamic epistemology and secular liberal norms, traditional and digital forms of religious authority, and the geopolitical dimensions of English-language communication.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of a critical framework for Islamic digital communication studies that takes seriously the ideological dimensions of discursive choices, complementing existing sociolinguistic and rhetorical approaches with the analytical power of CDA. The consistent application of Fairclough's three-dimensional model demonstrates its productivity as an analytical tool for religious digital discourse, providing a replicable framework that future researchers can adapt and refine. Practically, the findings offer da'wah practitioners, educators, and platform designers theoretically informed insights into the discursive mechanisms through which English Islamic digital communication constructs meaning, positions audiences, and negotiates authority in the digital age. Future empirical research applying CDA directly to specific corpora of English Islamic digital da'wah texts would productively complement and extend the library-based theoretical framework developed in this study, generating richly grounded empirical evidence for the analytical patterns and tensions identified here.

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