

# Media Representation of the Islamic Law: A Case Study of Ashtiani's Stoning

Ahlam Alharbi and Mona Bahmani<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Drawing on principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) the proposed study tried to reveal media portrayal of the Islamic law in general and stoning in particular. In order to achieve this purpose, quantitative and qualitative analysis was conducted on the coverage of the Ashtiani's case in eight English-Language European newspapers to examine the discursive strategies of ENGAGEMENT (Martin & White 2005), in turn, reveal the news writers' positions regarding stoning as an Islamic practice. The current study has demonstrated that far from merely reporting events, news writers have univocally shown that one of their main jobs is to present reality (news events) based on their perspective even though they may challenge some of the readers' through employing contracting and expanding heteroglossic strategies. At the same time, (in)direct quotations have been employed extensively to delegate, or at least share, the responsibility of these propositions.

**Keywords:** Islamic law; stoning; media discourse; appraisal framework; engagement; subjectivity

## 1 Introduction

The most pivotal aspiration of critical discourse analysis (henceforth, CDA) as a type of discourse analytical research is to observe and scrutinize the ways in which hegemony, inequality, control, social power abuse, asymmetrical power relations, and dominance are instantiated, practiced, reproduced, and resisted in social and political context through discourse, i.e., people's text and talk (Fowler, Hodge, Kress & Trew 1979; Kress 1985; Wodak 1989; Kress 1990; Hodge & Kress 1993; Van Leeuwen 1993; Fairclough 1995a; Fairclough 1995b; Haidar & Rodriguez 1995; Fairclough & Wodak 1997; Fairclough 2001; Meyer 2001; Van Dijk, 2001a; van Dijk, 2001b; Wodak 2001). Therefore who engages in CDA, by and large, is

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<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author

interested in not only understanding but also *challenging* the ways of revelation and manifestation of dominant and ruling ideologies in language or in non-linguistic phenomena such as image (McKinlay & McVittie 2008: 12).

Such a theoretical background encourages CDA investigators to align themselves with the theory of “ruling class and ruling ideas” (Marx & Engels 1965), which assert that ruling ideas in every epoch are under the ownership of ruling class. Ruling class is the class which has the resources of material production at its disposal and as a result rules the resources of mental production (Marx & Engels 2006: 9). To sum up, ruling class is the class which is “the controlling *material* force of society is at the same time its controlling *intellectual* force” (2006: 9). In the same vein, Gramsci (2006) reminds us of the importance of *material organization*, which aimed at sustaining, defending, and improving the theoretical or ideological “front”, in the study of how practically the ideological framework of a ruling class is systematized in a discourse (2006: 16). One of the dynamic parts of these ideological structuring manufactures is *media*. The role of media in representing realities or as Macdonald (2003) a little gently suggests, in *helping to construct versions of reality* is cogent and undeniable (14). Bridges and Brunt (1981) emphasize,

What [the media] “produce” is, precisely representations of the social world, images, descriptions, explanations and frames for understanding how the world is and why it works as it is said and shown to work. And, amongst other kinds of ideological labour, the media construct for us a definition of what *race* is, what meaning the imagery of race carries, and what “the problem of race” is understood to be. (35)

With an eye on the productivity of media in the construction of what “Islam” or “Islamic legislation” or “femininity” might mean, this paper attempts to make use of CDA along with the appraisal theory (Martin & White 2005) to find the strategies of ENGAGEMENT through which media exercise their subjectivity. Among the different subsystems of the APPRAISAL framework, ENGAGEMENT best describes the effective negotiation of the writer’s interaction to create a (contrastive) stance in argumentation. As Fairclough (1992a) the notion of intertextuality offers “a perspective of both reading and writing texts as a way of looking at a text’s interactions with prior texts, writers, readers, and conventions” (Wang 2006: 73). According to Bakhtin (1981), all utterances exist “against a backdrop of other concrete utterances on the same theme, a background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view and value judgments...pregnant with responses and objections” (281). Fairclough (1992a) further explains, “[a]ll utterances ... are populated, and indeed constituted by snatches of other’s utterances, more

or less explicit or complete” (102). Hence, this study focuses primarily on intertextuality as it examines the instances in which news writers appropriate other texts and comments to make them their own and further provide their ideas in their own texts to reveal their ideology implicitly. The present study has aimed at answering In the same vein, ENGAGEMENT, which is one subsystem of the APPRAISAL framework developed by Martin and White (2005), “construes texts as being informed by other texts (actual and potential), and sees audiences entering into complex dialogues with these texts rather than passively receiving their meaning” (Tan 2008: 3). ENGAGEMENT is also concerned with “the ways in which values are sourced and readers aligned” (Martin & Rose 2003: 22).

Richardson (2007) admits that, amongst the different approaches to CDA, he is satisfied with Fairclough’s approach (37). According to Fairclough’s model of CDA, texts cannot be understood or viewed in isolation; they should be examined in relation to the other texts (Richardson 2007: 100). In short, *intertextuality* is central to his model (100).

With an eye on the productivity of media in the construction of what “Islam”, “Islamic legislation”, and “femininity” might mean, this paper attempts to make use of CDA along with the APPRAISAL theory (Martin & White 2005) to examine the strategies of ENGAGEMENT through which media exercise their subjectivity in discussing one of the most debated issues in the Western media, namely stoning. It aims at addressing the following questions: (1) what are the most frequent positions news writers hold? (2) how can monoglossy/hereroglossy of value positions, being advanced in news discourse, be traced back through ENGAGEMENT system? and (3) how do news writers evaluate stoning as an Islamic practice through engaging into direct/ indirect quotations?

The current paper is divided into seven sections. After this introductory part, the study gives a religious background on stoning in Islam followed by a brief overview of obstreperous case of S. M. Ashtiani. In addition, a synopsis account of the ENGAGEMENT system and monoglissity vs. heteroglisity of value positions, covering three main issues of evaluative language, i.e., denying dialogic diversity, contracting dialogic diversity, and expanding dialogic diversity, is presented. This is followed by the data collection and a detailed analysis of the corpus under investigation. Last but not least, the discussion and conclusion parts are presented in an attempt to give comprehensive answers to the research questions based on the findings of selected data analysis, and suggestions for further studies.

## **2 Background of the Study**

### **2.1 Stoning in Islam**

Stoning (Arabic, *rajm*) is a form of punishment in which the convicted criminal is penalized by having stones thrown at him/her, generally by a crowd. To understand stoning as a punishment in Islamic criminal law and its rationalization, one should know that in Islam the *Holy Qur'an*, is the principal source of every form of Islamic thought. It is also the Qur'an that gives religious validity and authority to every other religious thought. Yet, in the part of the Islamic sciences, which comprises the injunctions and laws of *Shari'ah*, the Qur'an contains only the general principles. Thus, clarification and elaboration of their details, for instance the manner of accomplishing the daily prayers, fasting, exchanging merchandise, and the like can be fully explained only by referring to the traditions of the Holy Prophet, i.e., *Sunnah* (Allamah Tabataba'i 2006: 138-139).

Rape, incest, and adultery under Islamic criminal law all are subjected to *ha'ad*<sup>2</sup> punishment (Zarrokh 2008: 3); nevertheless, the case of stoning is exclusively related to adultery or *zina*. As Norman (2005) puts it, while the Qur'an does not address the issue of rape directly, it explicitly denounces *zina* as one of the most serious sins in Islam in at least twenty-seven verses (1). *Zina*, which is applied to both adultery and fornication, is punishable when the adulterer or the adulteress is of age, sane, in control of his or her action and cognizant of the illicit nature of his or her act (Zarrokh 2008: 3). *Zina* is punishable by 100 lashes (Qur'an 24:2), for the unmarried person, men and women alike. On the other hand, the married persons, there are *hadithes*<sup>3</sup> which illustrates the Prophet differentiated between *consensual* and *nonconsensual* intercourse, i.e., person who is found guilty of adultery and fornication, though the term *zinaw* as applied to both (Norman 2005: 2) and this fact reveals and underlines should be executed by stoning based on the Islam's commitment to justice and to women's dignity; yet more important apparent proof of this claim is its *Sunnah* (Shafaat 2003: 1). The requirements for evidence of *zina*, i.e., aside from confession, are four affirming close-eyewitnesses males who all satisfy the requirements of *tazkiyah al-shuhood* (credibility of witnesses) were necessary to prove that sexual misconduct occurred (Qur'an 24: 4), in clear terms, i.e., they all). More specifically, these witnesses should see the actual process of penetration which is really rare to happen (Norman 2005: 5). If any of the witnesses testifies that he sees them naked, or he describes certain positions or movements, it is not sufficient to prove that *zina* took place (Abdullah 2010).

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<sup>2</sup> *Ha'ad* crimes (prescribed punishment) are crimes with fixed punishment in the Qur'an and *Sunnah* (Alasti 2007: 6).

<sup>3</sup> *Hadith* (singular form of plural Arabic *a'hadith*) is collection of writings that document the sayings and actions of the Holy Prophet

Islamicists believe such requirements exhibit the outlook of Islam to Islamic society in the way that (a) while it forbids all sexual relations outside of marriage; Qur'an does not call for legal intervention unless the illegal act becomes one of public obscenity (Azam 1997; Quraishi 1997; Alwazir 2004) and (b) as Norman (2005: 2) puts it, they strongly protect women against slander: "those who accuse chaste women, and then are unable to produce four witnesses, flog them with eighty stripes..." (Qur'an 24: 4). It is noteworthy to mention that "singling out women for punishment based only on accusations or assumptions has no basis in Islam" (Alwazir 2004: 7). The Qur'an obviously indicates that slander (Arabic *qazf*), is also a serious sin in Islam and guarantees that a woman's reputation cannot be wrongly slandered, by preventing false accusations, and by pointing out that "a woman's word to swear her innocence is sufficient to both preserve her reputation and result in punishment of her accusers" (Alwazir 2004: 6).

## **2.2 The Case of S. M. Ashtiani**

Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani (born 1967) is an Iranian woman who is convicted for committing murder, manslaughter and adultery, based on a report by Sharifi, head of East Azerbaijan Province's judiciary. She has been under sentence of stoning as a result of her self-confessed and proven adultery under the Iranian government's interpretation of Islamic law since 2007. International Committee against Stoning and Mission Free Iran on 26<sup>th</sup> of June, 2010 published a letter which was written by Ashtiani's two children, Farideh and Sajad, asking the entire the world to save their mother. The letter brought a more prevalent consideration to her case in 2010 as a result of grassroots campaigning through social networking sites that led to the letters being passed along to mainstream mass media. On September 8, 2010, Mehmanparast, a spokesman for the Iranian foreign ministry announced that the stoning sentence of Ashtiani is stayed; although she is due to be hanged for murdering her husband.

## **3 Theoretical Background**

As noted in the introduction, this study locates itself within the field of CDA, which is a theory of discourse as well as a method for analyzing it (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999: 16). Within the framework of CDA, the current study investigates how media represent the Islamic law in general and stoning in particular by shedding light on the resources of intersubjective stance (or ENGAGEMENT) in the selected articles that have discussed the issue of S. M. Ashtiani who attracted media attention and caused an international outcry. Needless to say, many politicians and human rights activists have

declared statements and commented on the punishment of stoning. It goes without saying that the media have reported their statements extensively.

ENGAGEMENT system is subdivided into (as Martin (2004) put it, “[a]ppraisal is regionalized as three interacting domains – ATTITUDE, ENGAGEMENT, and GRADUATION” (324). This study focuses primarily on intertextuality as it examines the instances in which news writers appropriate other texts and comments to make them their own and further provide their ideas in their own texts to reveal their ideology implicitly. ENGAGEMENT system is subdivided into (a) the *undialogizedmonogloss*, “which ignores that diversity” (6) and (b) the *dialogic heterogloss*, “which acknowledges in some way the diversity associated with all utterances (Miller 2004: 5) and (b) the *undialogizedmonogloss*, “which ignores that diversity” (6). The current paper examines such perspective of the writers of the articles under the investigation to probe the positioning of the writers towards stoning as an Islamic practice within the heterogeneity of politicians’ positions and worldviews. It is well known that “[w]riters negotiate the arguability of their utterances in a text by presenting the proposition as either extra-vocalized information (information which has been attributed to another) or as bare assertion (information which has not been attributed and which must therefore belong to the writer) (Jovanovic-Krstic 2008: 164). According to Martin and White (2005), heteroglossic resources are divided into categories based on whether they are “dialogically denying”, “dialogically contractive”, or “dialogically expansive” in their intersubjective functionality (102). Such distinctions shows the degree to which an utterance ignores other perspectives (dialogically denying), challenges and limits prior perspectives (dialogically contractive), or allows other dialogically alternative positions and voices (dialogically expansion) (p.102). The following summarizes the key ENGAGEMENT resources grouping them together under the previous headings highlighting the pivotal terms of dialogistic positioning which are related to the different sub-choices within ENGAGEMENTdepicted in the data.

- **Denying Dialogic Diversity (monoglossic):**

- **Bare Assertion:** “An utterance which does not employany value of *engagement*. Such an utterance ignoresthe dialogic potential in an utterance” (Mei 2006: 351). Monoglossic bare assertion or (heteroglossic disengagement) refers to evaluations which are introduced into discourse via bare assertions. Such propositions are declared absolutely without acknowledging any other alternative positions in terms of these particular evaluations and without recognizing any continuing debate within which such propositions

operate (White 2003a: 263). According to Bakhtin (1935), such resources are “monoglossic” or “undialogized” (427).

- **Contracting Dialogistic Diversity:** dialogistically contractive sources function to exclude any alternatives and align the putative reader “into the value position which is being advanced ... by the text” (Martin & White, 2005: 127).
- **Disclaim:** is the textual resources that invoke that prior statements are “rejected, replaced, or dismissed irrelevant or some way communicatively inactive” (White 2003b website). It is divided into denial and counter-expectation
  - ◆ **Denial** or negation, from a dialogistic perspective, is a resource to introduce an alternative (positive) position into the dialog by acknowledging it in order to reject it (Martin & White, 2005, p.118), for example, *The military action won't damage the relationship between our country and our allies*. Martin and White (2005) explain that denial is one of the mechanisms of positioning in terms of alignment and putative readers (118). Denying which indicates disalignment with a prior view may align “the reader into a position of opposition to [this prior view]” (Martin & White, 2005, p.119). On the other hand, denial might be against the putative readers, especially against beliefs or ideas the writer thinks his readers are subject to (119).
  - ◆ **Counter-Expectation** is the second subtype of disclaim and it presents the current proposition which encounters a prior proposition, for example, *Surprisingly, this military action has not damaged the relationship between our country and our allies*. This mechanism is as dialogistic as denial in that it invokes an alternative (contrary) position. Counter-expectations are revealed through conjunctions, connectives, and adjuncts/adverbials such as *although, but, even though, however, only, surprisingly*, etc. Martin and White (2005) indicate that counters are like denials “in that they project on the [reader’s] particular beliefs or expectations” (121).
- **Proclaim** refers to the textual resources that “limit the scope of dialogistic alternatives in the ongoing colloquy (Martin & White

2005: 121). Proclaim is divided into concur, pronounce, and endorse.

- ◆ **Concur** (or expect) refers to the resources which indicate that the writer is in an agreement with a prior projected dialogic position of the putative reader. Such a relationship is revealed through locutions, e.g. *of course, naturally, admittedly, not surprisingly, etc.* (Martin & Whit 2005: 122), for example, *Of course the military action will damage the relationship between our country and our allies.* In addition, such concurrence might be realized through rhetorical questions by which the writer assumes no answer is needed because it is obvious (123). Such formulations show “the shared value or belief as [being universal]” (123-124).
- ◆ **Pronouncement** refers to resources that “involve authorial emphases or explicit authorial interventions or interpolations” (127). For example, *I contend, the facts of the matter, undeniably, you must agree that, etc.* These textual resources constitute “an overt intervention into the text by the authorial voice – an interpolation of the authorial presence so as to assert or insist upon the value or warrantability of the proposition” (127-128). Although “such formulations acknowledge the heteroglossic diversity [,] . . . they set the authorial voice against that diversity, presenting that voice as challenging or heading off a particular dialogic alternative” (130). In such formulations, the writer may confront the putative reader or a third party on the behalf of the reader.
- ◆ **Endorsement** is concerned with the “formulations by which propositions sourced to external sources are construed by the authorial voice as correct, valid, undeniable or otherwise maximally warrantable” (126), for example, *show, demonstrate, prove, find, point out, etc.* Such resources show how “the authorial voice enters into a dialogic relationship of alignment with the [the utterances of a prior] speaker” (126). In these formulations, “the internal [authorial] voice takes over responsibility for the proposition, or at least shares responsibility for it with the cited source”.

- **Expanding Dialogistic Diversity:** dialogistically expansive sources function to include alternative voices and positions. It is divided into “entertain” and “attribute”.
- **Entertain** is “those wording by which the authorial voice indicates that its position is but one of a number of possible positions and thereby ... makes dialogic space for the possibilities. [That is,] the authorial voice *entertains* those dialogic alternatives” (Martin & Whit 2005: 104). It is divided into “evidence” and “likelihood”. The formulations of this sub-category allow some space for “alternative voices and value positions” (108). Dialogistically, the locutions of both *evidence* and *likelihood* “construe a heteroglossic backdrop for the text by overtly grounding the proposition in the contingent, individual subjectivity of the [writer] and thereby recognizing that” this proposition is a possible one among alternative propositions which are available in the current context (105).
  - ◆ **Evidence** is a sub-category of entertain and “includes evidence or appearance-based postulations” (105) through the use of some formulations, for instance, *it seems that, there is evidence which indicates that, etc.*, and specific types of rhetorical questions which do not assume a particular answer but are used to imply that there is “some proposition that holds” (105).
  - ◆ **Likelihood** is one type of the assessments a writer may make via modal auxiliaries (might, could, should, etc.), modal adjuncts (probably, perhaps, definitely, etc.), modal attributes (it is possible that, it is likely that, etc.), formulations of ‘the *in my view* type’, and some mental verbs/‘attribute projections’ (I think that, I believe that, etc.) (105).
- **Attribute** refers to formulations that “disassociate the proposition from the text’s internal authorial voice by attributing it to some external source”; needless to say, such formulations may achieve through grammar of reported speech (111). Propositions might be framed via means of “communicative process verbs” such as *said*, or verbs of mental processes such as *believe* and *suspect*. This sub-category includes nominalizations of such processes such as *someone’s assertion that* or *someone’s belief that*, besides adverbial adjuncts such as *according to someone* or *in someone’s view* (111). It goes without saying that in some cases the external voice is not

specified such as *it is said that* (112). In this case, such a formulation is called “hearsay”.

- ◆ **Acknowledge** is the first sub-category of attribute. Martin and White (2005) explain that such formulations are dialogic because they “associate the proposition being advanced with voices and/or propositions which are external to that of the text itself and present the authorial voice as engaging interactively with those voices” (112). They add, this is how “they overtly construe the communicative setting as heteroglossic” (112). On the other hand, they are dialogic because “they ground the viewpoint conveyed by the proposition in an explicit subjectivity thereby signaling that it is individual and contingent and therefore but one of possible dialogic option” (113).
- ◆ **Distance**, the second sub-category of attribute, refers to formulations through which the writer distancing “the authorial voice from the attributed material” (113). Typically, it is realized by means of reporting verb such as *claim* or “scare” quotes. Such formulations are dialogistically expansive. That is, they “explicitly ground the proposition in an individualized, contingent subjectivity, that of some external source” (114). Unlike acknowledgement, such formulations present “the authorial voice as explicitly declining to take responsibility for the proposition [; hence,] they maximize the space for dialogistic alternatives” (114).
- ◆ **Hearsay** is the third sub-category of attribute where the writer uses some resources such as “It was said”.

#### **4 Data Collection and Methodology**

The data set for the analysis is comprised of some illustrative and representative samples of articles, discussing the issue S. M. Ashtiani, collected from eight English newspapers, namely *The Times*, the *Agence France Presses*, the *States News Service*, *The Australian*, the *Associated Press News*, *The Guardian*, *The Reuters News*, and *The Canadian Press*. Using “Fictiva software”, the study ran a search for the following keyword: *SakinehMohammadiAshtiani*. The data is limited to an eleven - month time period (January, 2010 to November, 2010). The search produced 623 hits in all the selected newspapers (see, Table 1). These articles have been coded by

Factiva software and these codes appear in the appendix (A to H). These eight newspapers are rated by Factiva as being amongst the first newspapers that discussed this issue the most.

In the analysis, the focus is on the type of engagement with other voices/positions (monogloss, heterogloss) to identify the sources of evaluations and how authors construct monoglossic and heteroglossic positions in media discourse.

Table 1 Data Set

The Newspaper	N	%	No. of Articles with Instances of ENGAGEMENT
<b>The Times</b>	215	34.51%	31 (14.41%)
<b>Agence France Presses</b>	149	23.91%	32 (21.47%)
<b>States News Service</b>	52	8.34%	19 (36.53%)
<b>The Australian</b>	49	7.86%	7 (14.28%)
<b>Associated Press News</b>	45	7.22%	13 (28.88%)
<b>The Guardian</b>	40	6.42%	4 (10%)
<b>Reuters News</b>	38	6.09%	13 (34.21%)
<b>The Canadian Press</b>	35	5.61%	4 (11.42%)
<b>Total</b>	8	623	100%
			123 (19.74%)

Newspapers are chosen as a target of the current research because of crucial importance of this medium in contemporary society and the critical role it has played in framing our worldview of reality. According to Van Dijk (2000a), journalists are “central agents” in the process of formulating the discourse and partners in the process of re/producing phenomena such as racism. The current study aims at showing how journalists may promote (mis)conceptions regarding the *Islamic law* in general and stoning in particular through investigating how the resources of ENGAGEMENT they employ in their texts.

## 5 Data Analysis

Table 2 presents the different strategies of the intertextual representations of the data under investigation.

Table 2 Resources of Intertextual Representation

Newspaper	Intertextual Resources	Total
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	Direct Quotes		Indirect Quotes		Description <sup>4</sup>		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
The Times	38	23%	8	5%	2	1%	48
Agence France Presses	28	17%	10	6%	5	3%	43
States News Service	14	8%	3	2%	2	1%	19
The Australian	8	5%	3	2%	2	1%	13
Associated Press News	8	5%	8	5%	3	2%	19
The Guardian	6	4%	0	0%	0	0%	6
Reuters News	9	5%	1	1%	4	2%	14
The Canadian Press	4	2%	1	1%	1	1%	6
Total	115	68%	34	20%	19	11%	168
X <sup>2</sup>	95.250						

(critical  $x^2 = 4.303$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ ,  $df = 2$ )

From Table 2, it is notable that the three main intertextual resources identified in the data are direct quotes, indirect quotes, and description. It is also notable that the writers in the data relied heavily on *direct quotes*. When these intertextual resources are compared amongst themselves, the frequency ordering is of crucial importance as well. The comparison shows that direct and indirect quotes are one of the most frequent sources in the data under investigation. In other words, writers employed extensively direct quotes that are attributed to personal and identified sources who are key people with high status in the political world such as Mr. Bush, William Hague, Dilma Rousseff, Yvette Cooper, to reconstruct the image and the reality of stoning.

The second most frequent source of intertextuality is *indirect quotes* which are also attributed to personal and identified sources with high status that have great political influence in the entire world. Needless to say, indirect quotes have the same functions of direct quotes. By way of contrast, the least frequent source of intertextuality is *description* in which the source is not identified; yet, the readers can easily realize and recall the speakers whose statements were repeated and echoed continuously in the news discourse without attributing these statements to their sources. The X<sup>2</sup> of the total intertextual resources seems to be critical. That is, the presence of such strategies is highly significant.

Hence, these writers have employed these quotes, both direct and indirect, to illustrate authoritative opinions which are believed to be the most influential. Resorting to the fallacy of such key tools in argumentation, i.e.,

<sup>4</sup> attributions of unidentified sources

*authority* and *evidentiality*– the terms are van Dijk’s (2000b) - is helpful in two ways: a) audiences often believe in key persons; hence, writers do not need to justify their perspectives and; b) putting the finger of blame to authoritative figures, writers freely and with no excuse maneuver on the subject and spread out their viewpoints and propositions. Furthermore, such intertextual sources indirectly limit readers’ freedom of choice due to the fact that writers and journalists act coercively by choosing whom to report from and whom not. On the contrary, readers may not have access to those who hold a different opinion and whom the newspapers choose not to quote from. As stated previously, the present study also focuses on the linguistic and discursive strategies and resources of speaker-hearer alignment and/or alienation in each newspaper. Table 3 below summarizes the result of ENGAGEMENT analysis of the data under investigation.

Table 3 ENGAGEMENT Resources in the Data

Newspapers	ENGAGEMENT Resources											
	Monoglossic		Heteroglossic					Expansion		Total		
			Contraction		Disclaim							
	Bare Assertions		Proclaim		Disclaim			Entertain		Attribute		
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
The Times	25	6%	43	11%	12	3%	6	1%	39	10%	125	31%
Agence France Presses	20	5%	16	4%	2	0%	40	10%	19	5%	97	24%
States News Service	16	4%	11	3%	1	0%	13	3%	16	4%	57	14%
The Australian	8	2%	8	2%	1	0%	9	2%	9	2%	35	9%
Associated Press News	12	3%	6	1%	0	0%	3	1%	8	2%	29	7%
The Guardian	1	0%	7	2%	3	1%	0	0%	7	2%	18	4%
Reuters News	4	1%	13	3%	0	0%	0	0%	15	4%	32	8%
The Canadian Press	0	0%	4	1%	0	0%	1	0%	5	1%	9	2%
Total	86	21%	108	27%	19	5%	72	18%	118	29%	402	100%

The total frequency of the resources employed in the data is of crucial importance as it helps to reveal the ideology of the writers implied in the text. As seen from Table 3, one of the results is in line with the previous result from Table 2, i.e., the direct and indirect quotations. From Table 3, it is very apparent that the newspapers under investigation relied on the ‘attribute’ strategy. The total percentage of this resource made up 29% of all the resources. The second most pivotal resource that is present in all the selected articles as well is ‘proclaim’, which is a crucial resource in these articles. Mostly, it is as important as ‘attribute’. It nearly made up 27% of the employed resources of ENGAGEMENT. The third most frequent resource is ‘bare assertion’. Although it accounted for 21% of the data, a few

newspapers have scarcely employed it due to its ideological function of disregarding any dialogic potential in any position. The other two resources, namely ‘entertain’ and ‘disclaim’, were of less importance, compromising no more than 18% and 5% respectively. It is worth pointing out that the *Agence France* and the *States News Service* utilized the ‘entertain’ resource in a significant manner.

Table 4 below demonstrates the differences between the observed and expected of both the monoglossic and heteroglossic instances as well as contraction and expansion ones based on the *Chi-Square* test which presents the statistical difference between the two sets of frequencies.

Table 4 Chi-Square Test Result

Monoglossic	Heteroglossic	X <sup>2</sup>
86	299	117.842
Contraction	Expansion	X <sup>2</sup>
127	190	12.521

(critical  $x^2 = 12.706$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ ,  $df = 1$ )

Generally, the higher the *Chi-Square* value, the bigger the difference between the observed and the expected frequencies. Based on the pie chart for the observed and expected instances of the above strategies, the *Chi-square* analysis has revealed that there is a meaningful difference between monoglossity and heteroglossity in the selected corpus. This is maybe due to the fact that writers attempted to suppress and rule out other alternative propositions and not to allow readers’ interventions. By way of contrast, there is no meaningful difference between contraction and expansion. In other words, the observed frequencies are not significantly different from those predicted for contraction and expansion.

The order of the appearance of the newspaper in Table 3 represents the order of the frequency of these resources. The newspaper with the highest frequency, viz., 31%, is *The Times* with 215 articles published in 11 months. On the other hand, the newspaper with the least frequency, namely 2%, is *The Canadian*. Another important point to note is that 79% of the propositions made in the text were heterogloss; whereas 21% of these propositions were monogloss. In the heterogloss locutions, it is evident the dominance of dialogic expansion which accounted for 47% of the propositions; on the other hand, dialogic contraction made up 32% of the resources. There are a number of interesting examples of these resources in the data. The following sections present these different resources in order of frequency.

### 5.1 Expanding Dialogistic Diversity

As mentioned above, the first most frequent strategy is the ‘attribute’ resource, especially ‘acknowledgement’. In intertextual terms, attributions are relegated to specified sources that are authoritative. Writers usually have the choice of aligning or dis-aligning themselves with these positions through acknowledging the attributed material or distancing themselves from these materials. Some of these propositions in the data described stoning as being *a human rights violation, an abhorrent, barbaric, unacceptable, unjust, unfair, inhumane, brutal, nonsense, archaic punishment*, etc. In addition, stoning was referred to as being *an affront to any sense of moral or human decency that isolates Islam and has no place in a civilized society, which is a form of torture and a practice of another age specifically the Middle Ages*. Such statements were attributed to the speakers using ‘said’. In the data under investigation, the writers acknowledged these attributions; however, the use of ‘said’ is dialogistically expansive and, to some extent, neutral. That is, the authorial voice is not specified; yet, the co-text showed that these writers aligned and associated themselves closely to the evaluative statements of politicians and authoritative sources, more specifically those that evaluated such a practice negatively. Such an exercise is evident in the frequency of the ‘attribute’ strategy and the statements that echoed negative evaluations and which were stated barely in the data (see, section 5.3). Accordingly, the option of *attribute (acknowledge)* carried a high potential for being accepted. Needless to say, such propositions that were quoted and bare assertions can shed light on the selected aspects of stoning that reconstructed its reality according to their ideology. Another subtype of attribute, i.e., *distance*, acts as a way to distance the writer explicitly from what have been said and at the same time shows implicitly that the writer holds a different perspective. For example, the writer in the example below (1) dialogistically expanded alternatives positions by disassociating himself from what he referred to as ‘a claim’; thus, according to him, stoning might not be Islamic and if so it should not be practiced any more.

- The Government of Iran claimed that those practices were Islamic, she said, adding that that was not the case, as many Muslim countries did not adhere to such laws. (Document SNS0000020101109e6b9003ak)

The writer has further maximized the space for dialogistic alternatives by adding another explicit denial saying that this is not the case due to some Muslims countries that do not adhere to this law. It is worth pointing out that

this reasoning is not logical. Saying that this is not Islamic because Muslim countries do not apply it is not sufficient evidence.

## 5.2 Contracting Dialogistic Diversity

‘Contracting’ is the second most frequent strategy. Amongst the contracting heterogloss locutions, proclamations, especially endorsement, were an important strategy deployed by the institutional voices. The utterances in the examples below are dialogically contractive and usually such a strategy aims at suppressing alternative propositions.

- The UN resolution, which will be adopted in December, expressed “deep concern at serious ongoing human rights violations” Iran, including torture, flogging, amputations and stoning. (Document T000000020101120e6bk000m1)
- The stoning sentence for adultery received global media attention, with the EU calling it “barbaric”, the Vatican pleading for clemency and Brazil offering Ashtiani asylum. (Document LBA0000020101116e6bg000ij)
- European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso said Tuesday in his first State of the Union address to parliament that he is “appalled” by the news of the sentencing, and called it “barbaric beyond words”. (Document BNW0000020100908e6970000c)
- The stoning sentence triggered an outcry in the West which has labelled it “barbaric.” (Document AFPR000020101111e6bb005by)

The endorsement in these propositions is, to some extent, neutral that helped to delegate the responsibility of the news writers of what was said. Most of these statements that were reported have evaluated stoning negatively. Some of these statements were also echoed in the propositions that were asserted barely (see, section 5.3). Hence, based on the co-text, one can conclude that these writers implicitly aligned themselves to these perspectives. In addition, the news writers also employed “concurrence” through which the writers overtly and coercively showed that the audience is in an agreement with the writers sharing the same knowledge. The following is exemplifying:

- There are aspects of stoning which are particularly abhorrent ... (Document AFPR000020100910e69a005sq)

In example (6), the description of the abhorrence of stoning is double-concurred by the writer through the use of ‘particularly’ to contract the space of dialogic alternatives and not to allow the reader to argue against. In some instances in the data, the institutional voices were closed down the space for dialogic alternatives as well by positioning themselves as rejecting contrary positions through disclamations (dis-endorsement), specifically denial and counter expectation. It is important to note that disclaim resources are among the least resourced in the data. The following are some selected examples:

- The Prophet’s surprisingly liberal stance on claims of extramarital sex was shaped by personal experience. (Document T000000020101106e6b60000y)
- However, stoning to death is not mentioned in the Koran or the Hadith, the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. (Document T000000020101106e6b60000y)
- The Government of Iran claimed that those practices were Islamic, she said, adding that that was not the case, as many Muslim countries did not adhere to such laws. (Document SNS0000020101109e6b9003ak)

The maximally contractive propositions and the underlined ENGAGEMENT resources above were formulated by the news writers to invoke and replace prior propositions, namely stoning is an Islamic practice. The propositions in the examples (7-9) and mother instances in the data revolved mainly around the legislation of stoning as an Islamic practice. These propositions promoted the idea that stoning is not an Islamic practice, although some may believe it is. Even if it belongs to Islam, writers tried to show that stoning is a form of old-dated practices and it is not practiced any more in most Islamic countries. The negation of the possible alternative did not only invoke the positive, i.e., stoning is an Islamic practice, but it also introduced ‘polarity’ into the discourse through introducing a counter-expectation. Using such resources enabled the writers to align the reader into a position of opposition to stoning. This is expressed not only by the denial but also by the fact that the writers provided argumentative material to support the denial of the prior propositions. In short, employing the different sub-strategies of contracting dialogistic diversity helped to exclude any alternatives that may confirm that stoning is a legislated Islamic practice as well as align the readers into the propositions stated in these newspapers.

### 5.3 Denying Dialogic Diversity

White (2003a) explains, barely assertions are usually connected to consensual “knowledge” or “versions-of-events which are seen as “fact”—that is to say, with propositions held to be unproblematic and generally “known” or “accepted” in the current communicative context” (p.263). Nevertheless, some of the evaluations of the bare assertions that are depicted in the corpus were not generally accepted, at least from the perspective of the Muslims who believe in stoning, or known by the common people, in particular non-Muslims. From Table 3, it is apparent that the number of bare assertions in some of the selected newspapers is not considerably high. Yet, there are a considerable number of key evaluations that is formulated monoglossically in some newspapers such as *The Times*, *the Agence France*, and the *States News Service*. One of the most pivotal evaluations in the selected newspapers was related to the construction of Iran, as being a violator of human rights whose rulers, who represent barbarism, are regressing to the Middle Ages.

- Ms.Ashtiani has come to symbolise the barbarity of Iran’s rulers. (Document T000000020100828e68s000a1)

Through using such monoglossic assertions, the writer took it for granted that practicing stoning by Iran was a sign of its unfair judiciary and barbarism. Such a proposition which was represented as being unchallenged statements represented explicitly Iran, and implicitly stoning, in a negative way. Through bare assertions, newspapers labeled Iran as a violator of human rights, in particular women’s rights, because of their application of stoning which is an Islamic practice as many Muslims believe. In other words, stoning, which is considered as a violation of human rights from the writers’ perspective, was expressed monoglossically as being unproblematic, well known, and agreed on.

Furthermore, some bare assertions in the selected newspapers directly and explicitly reconstructed the image of stoning itself from the writers’ point of view echoing the statements of the political figures whose statements were cited.

- The rise in executions mirrors a surge in brutal punishments in recent months, including amputations, stoning and floggings. (Document T000000020101027e6ar000aq)
- This is a barbaric punishment (Document AFPR000020101103e6b30063m)
- Stoning is a form of terrorism. (Document APRS000020100730e67u0029s)

As noted above, these examples (11-13) echoed many of the (in)direct quotes of some of the politicians who commented on stoning. In these examples, writers did not only describe stoning as a brutal punishment, but also persistently used continual propositions that establish a serious implicit conflict between Islam and modernity. These assertions helped in introducing Islam and Islamic practices as being from another age. The extravagant frequency of such statements in the data left no space for readers to doubt in the veracity of such statements that promote the idea that stoning, and to a lesser degree Islam, is barbaric and outdated. By constructing these bare assertions as single voiced did not allow any dialogistic alternatives that one may recognize or get engaged with. In short, the combination of the bare assertions and the negative evaluations of the writers established an authorial assertiveness as well as a particular relationship between author and readership. Through such monoglossic and undialogized propositions, writers attempted to align their readers coercively to these propositions, challenge those who might disagree with them, and exclude a vast majority of Muslims' voices. In short, as White (2003a) explains, these bare assertions "represents a particular intersubjective stand" (265).

## **6 Discussion**

The close investigation of corpus showed that APPRAISAL framework in general and ENGAGEMENT in particular is one of the analytical tools that can reveal the positions writers may hold towards the topic under discussion. Fairclough (1992b: 290) explains, the intertextuality of discourse complicates the processes of interpretation because one has to work out how to the different elements can fit in the discourse meaningfully; however, ENGAGEMENT resources help to understand the different alternative perspectives and propositions news writers choose to negotiate other propositions on their behalves and their readers'. Keeping in mind the CDA/Appraisal theory-method linkage, this study conducted an interpersonal analysis of the intertextuality in the writers' news discourse in order to unwrap how the image of stoning as an Islamic practice has been (mis)represented in the data under investigation. A common theme throughout the paper here is that the propositions in which textual production was conventionalized and constructed upon are the same propositions which powerful figures proposed to construct the image of stoning. The current study also pointed to the pivotal role not only of the texts, but also the heterogeneous ways in which different parties in a given setting contextualize the same ideas from different perspectives. News writers

reported Ashtiani's case focusing on representing the idea of stoning, rather than the case itself, from a Western point of view.

By analyzing intertextuality, researchers aimed to reveal the position of these newspapers towards stoning. To some extent, it is very evident how the newspapers were so careful in commenting on this issue as a result of its sensitivity. Thus, they relied heavily on (in)direct quotation, which have dual actions: (1) to persuade the readers and most importantly (2) to shift the blame in case the readers are not satisfied with what has been said. Although the writers significantly used quotations in a neutral way to express the speakers' perspectives regarding stoning, they rarely distanced themselves from the speakers they cited. Furthermore, they reestablished these perspectives in their statements that were barely asserted; a factor that may help to closely associate these writers to the attributed statements.

One of the main crucial themes some of these propositions of the authorial voice have proposed is Islam vs. Modernity, which has become a pivotal slogan and a prevailed propaganda in the selected discourse concerning stoning and Islamic law. In addition, the writers implemented dialogically expansion to include alternatives voices and positions and show the likelihood of the unfairness of the Iranian judgment system as it still practices old-dated Islam and did not *harmonize* itself with other "modern Islamic countries" which do not practice such a barbaric "old-fashion Islamic law". Through frequently attributing such a practice to Iran only, the writers showed Iran as being deviant. In short, the case of dialogically expansion is interesting because, at a close look, they acted to contract the scope of point of view. In other words, instead of raising the possibility that Iran was applying Islamic legislations, news writers raised the probability of the unfairness of Iran law and its violation of human rights, specifically women. Hence, the writers only included the selected negative views about Iran striking through the other possible positions.

By the same token, bare assertions helped in obscuring the possibility of dialogic alternatives. More specifically, these propositions showed that stoning is not an Islamic practice, and this reality is not controversial in the Islamic world either, which is not true. This is not true simply because of the polarity these writers created through using the denial strategy. Claiming that such a practice is not Islamic introduces other voices who claim that this practice is Islamic. Needless to say, many Iranian speakers clarified that this is an Islamic practice and not an Iranian practice. Yet, their statements were not reported or challenged by the news writers.

In short, the analysis provided us the opportunity to examine how different ideologies and perspective could be constructed and challenged through discursive practices and how lexicogrammatical and discursive

resources were used and valued by media to discuss sensitive topics. More specifically, the news writers utilized the external voice to comment on stoning; yet, from the analysis it is evident that the media presented a single perspective and position with respect to stoning challenging and denying the other possible positions. In spite of the high frequency of the expanding heteroglossic positions, the analysis showed that the perspective that stoning, which is barbaric, outdated, and un-Islamic, is a well-established set of beliefs in the discourse of the data. Hence, the readers were not given any choice but to align themselves to such a perspective which in some way could not be avoided.

## **7 Conclusion**

As noted in the introduction, this study locates itself within the field of CDA, which is a theory of discourse as well as a method for analyzing it (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999: 16). In addition, the systematic functional approach that Martin and White (2005) develop provided a comprehensive framework to examine discourse from different perspectives. Within the framework of CDA, the current study investigates how media represented Islamic law in general and stoning in particular by shedding light on the resources of intersubjective stance (or ENGAGEMENT) in the selected articles that discussed the issue of S. M. Ashtiani, who attracted media attention and caused an international outcry. Although this paper is limited to one subsystem of APPRAISAL, it could be suggested that news writers align themselves in different ways to the influential political figures who evaluated stoning in a negative way and whom they chose to cite in order to challenge any voice which may present a different perspective. Yet, to have a broader perspective of how stoning has been appraised in mass media discourse, a more comprehensive analysis that goes beyond these resources is required and encouraged to shed light on how stoning has been appraised through examining the other two subsystems of the APPRAISAL framework: ATTITUDE and GRADUATION.

## **Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Professor Farzad Sharifian, Monash University, as well as the anonymous reviewers for their valuable insightful advices on the first draft of this paper.

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### **Bionotes**

Ahlam Al-Harbi (Ph.D. in Linguistics) is a lecturer at the English Department in the Faculty of Arts, Taif University, Saudi Arabia. She is also accredited by ATN-APTS as a freelance translator. Her primary research interests are sociolinguistics, critical discourse analysis, media/political discourse, feminine studies, and forensic linguistics. She has a TEFL

certificate from International TEFL Teacher Training and the Forensic Linguistics First Certificate from the Forensic Linguistics Institute.

Mona Bahmani (M.A. in English Language Teaching), since completion of her master's thesis on euphemization and derogation in political discourse with a special focus on the case of war in Gaza in 2010, has been a lecturer in the Department of Linguistics and Foreign Languages (Faculty of Humanities) at the Payam -e- Noor University of Khuzestan (PNU), Iran. Her principal research interests are critical discourse analysis, cognitive semantics, and TEFL studies.

## **Appendix**

### **Factiva Codes for News**

The Times

Document T000000020101120e6bk000m1  
Document T000000020101117e6bh0001j  
Document T000000020101116e6bg000af  
Document T000000020101115e6bf00020  
Document T000000020101113e6bd000cm  
Document T000000020101112e6bc0008p  
Document T000000020101111e6bb0008n  
Document T000000020101109e6b9000bn  
Document T000000020101108e6b80000l  
Document T000000020101106e6b6000ef  
Document T000000020101106e6b60000o  
Document T000000020101106e6b6000ht  
Document T000000020101106e6b60000y  
Document T000000020101105e6b5000br  
Document T000000020101105e6b5000bo  
Document T000000020101104e6b4000e2  
Document T000000020101103e6b3000hf  
Document T000000020101102e6b2000c5  
Document T000000020101102e6b2000b1  
Document T000000020101029e6at0007e  
Document T000000020101029e6at0000b  
Document T000000020101027e6ar000aq  
Document T000000020101025e6ap0003l  
Document T000000020101022e6am000el  
Document T000000020101021e6al000ex  
Document T000000020101020e6ak0001k

Document T000000020101016e6ag000ik  
Document T000000020101015e6af000b0  
Document T000000020101013e6ad000ag  
Document T000000020101013e6ad000cf  
Document T000000020101012e6ac0006p  
Document T000000020101007e6a700008  
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Document T000000020100915e69e0002v  
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#### Agence France Presses

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Document AFPR000020101116e6bg0069h  
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