Covering Muslim women: Semantic macrostructures in BBC News

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Abstract
Despite a proliferation of research on Islam and Muslims in the media, very little work has focused on Muslim women, a much-debated social group that merits special consideration. This article aims to investigate how Muslim women are represented in BBC News website texts using a purpose-built corpus (1.9 million words in 3269 articles). The research employs analytical tools from the discourse-historical, socio-cognitive, and sociosemantic approaches to critical discourse studies. These are combined with corpus-based methodologies to investigate the semantic macrostructures that tend to be associated with Muslim women and the discursive strategies employed in the representation of the *hijab*. The study is novel in its exhaustive approach to identifying salient and underreported issues related to Muslim women in news discourse. It also introduces a more integrated analysis that combines manual and automated techniques and tackles the quantification of qualitative results where possible. Findings suggest that Muslim women's representations are largely restricted in terms of regional coverage. Semantic macrostructures related to conflict and crime are prevalent. The *hijab* remains a nodal discourse surrounding Muslim women whose function as a descriptive feature is often unclear, raising serious questions about its relevance. A number of recommendations are made for journalists to become cognizant of their own context models when reporting on Muslim women.

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Introduction

The research presented in this article forms part of a larger PhD project (Al-Hejin, 2012) that employs corpus linguistic techniques (keywords and collocation) and integrates them with various approaches from critical discourse analysis (CDA) to investigate the ways Muslim women (MW) are represented in two online news sources: the *BBC* and *Arab News*. For the purpose of this article, the discussion will be limited to keywords in the BBC to address the following questions: 1) What are the semantic macrostructures that tend to be associated with MW? 2) What are the discursive strategies employed in the representation of the *hijab*[1] and how do these reflect on MW?

There are two motivations for conducting this research. First, the BBC News website has arguably become one of the most widely read and influential news sources in the world (Barnett, 2011; BBC Global, 2007; BBC Governors, 2004: 43–45; BBC History, 2007; Hinde, 2005; Thurman, 2007: 289). Yet to the best of my knowledge there are no large-scale studies (to date) investigating the website's language on any given topic, certainly not within a corpus-based discourse analytical paradigm. Second, despite a growing interest in Islam and Muslims in the media (Baker et al., 2013: 96), very little work has been done with texts relating to Muslim *women*, which is surprising given their high profile and controversial status in Islam-related news (Baker et al., 2013: 197). Prejudiced discourses about MW may pass under the critical radar because analysts are reluctant to tackle news reports that appear to defend the rights of women. The real need to defend those rights should not, however, detract from critical engagement with texts that may (inadvertently) be perpetuating stereotypes and further prejudice.

This article will begin with a brief review of media studies and surveys relating to MW. Next I will explain the theoretical and methodological aspects underlying this research from CDA, the benefits of its combination with corpus linguistics, and how the corpus was constructed. The first research question is addressed with an analysis of the key semantic macrostructures in the corpus. The second research question is then addressed with a more detailed analysis of the discourse surrounding the *hijab* followed by some concluding remarks.

Why Muslim women?

CDA usually begins with the identification of a social problem that has a discursive aspect (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999: 60). The specific problem this research hopes to address is that a great deal of the Western[2] media's reporting about MW seems to reinforce certain stereotypes. A pervasive perception among British Muslims, for example, is that an enormous amount of negative stereotyping occurs in the coverage of Islam and Muslims in general (Abbas, 2001: 251; Ahmad, 2006). This perception is not unjustified when one considers the growing evidence of Islamophobia across different social spheres and media (Allen, 2010). Previous media studies report that MW tend to be represented as 'passive' and 'oppressed' (Mishra, 2007a, 2007b; Rahman, 2007; Roushanzamir, 2004). These and other studies also found an undue focus on the *hijab*, which tends to be associated with 'backwardness', 'oppression' and more recently 'terrorism' (Bullock, 2002: 126–127; Bullock and Jafri, 2000: 36; Kampmark, 2003: 101; Khiabany and

Williamson, 2008, 2011: 183; MacMaster and Lewis, 1998: 128). The most recent and comprehensive corpus-based analysis of Muslims in the British press by Baker et al. (2013) found that the fourth most common collocate of *Muslim* was *women* (*men* came in ninth place), thus confirming the centrality of MW as a semantic macrostructure in current media discourse about Muslims and Islam. The study also a reported a tendency to focus on the way MW dressed with a prevalence of negative predications surrounding the *hijab*.

How widespread are stereotypes about MW among non-Muslims in the West? Two opinion polls in Germany found that the most common themes respondents associated with Islam were the 'suppression of women' (93%) and 'terror' (83%) European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), 2006: 37). Similarly, a US Gallup poll found that 'gender inequality' was 'among the top responses American women give to the open-ended question: "What do you admire least about the Muslim or Islamic world?"' (Esposito and Mogahed, 2007: 99). According to another study, the top aspect US citizens found 'difficult to understand' about Islam was the 'oppression of women' (Esposito and Mogahed, 2007: 99). More recent polls found that 69% of respondents in Britain believed that 'Islam encourages the repression of women' (YouGov, 2010) and 'respect for women' was the lowest ranking positive characteristic associated with Muslims by non-Muslims in the US, Britain, France, Germany and Spain (Pew, 2011: 27).

Are these perceptions justified? What do the majority of Muslims think? The most comprehensive study to investigate the views of Muslims on both regional and global levels was conducted by Gallup between 2001 and 2007 (Esposito and Mogahed, 2007).[3] On a global level, it found that the majority of MW *and* men were in favour of women being able to vote, work and hold positions of leadership (pp. 102, 121), but MW were equally opposed to the idea that 'adopting Western values will help in their progress' (p. 107). An interesting finding on the regional level was that, despite media reports to the contrary, 81% of Iraqi women favoured the involvement of religious authorities in crafting family law. In fact, one of the 'most pronounced themes' to emerge globally from the open-ended question of what MW admired most about their own societies was 'faithful/sincere/attached to religious beliefs/adhere [to] or respect teachings of Islam' (p. 113). Finally, with the exception of Turkey, the study found no correlation between religiosity and opposition to women's rights in seven out of the eight countries where this phenomenon was investigated (p. 123).[4]

The clear discrepancy between the views of Muslims, especially women, and those expressed by non-Muslims in the survey data mentioned above suggests that misconceptions about MW remain widespread. Such misconceptions have serious consequences in educational and employment practices (EUMC, 2006: 12; Jafri, 1998: 35). Meshal (2003: 94), for example, found that a significant proportion of female Muslim university students across 10 Canadian cities 'reported incidents of overt discrimination related to the hijab: 34 per cent at work, 63 per cent with their non-Muslim peers and 39 per cent from professors'. Both personal accounts by MW (Robert, 2006: 210) and academic studies (Githens-Mazer and Lambert, 2010: 12; Muir and Smith, 2004: 31) point out that MW in *hijab* appear to be the preferred targets of Islamophobic hate crimes. The most extensive investigation of such crimes across Europe by Allen and Nielsen (2002) concludes:

The hijab seems to have become the primary visual identifier as a target for hatred, with Muslim women being routinely abused and attacked across those countries in the EU where Muslim women could be identified in this way. (p. 35)

The misperception and consequent mistreatment of MW in Western societies is therefore a very real social problem which this research aims to address by focusing a critical lens on news discourse. The production of major media organizations such as the BBC is a logical place to begin such an exploration. As major corporate entities, news organizations are not unrelated to other aspects of economic and political power. As such, their role in setting discursive norms for particular social groups is an extremely sensitive one (Richardson, 2007: 13; Van Dijk, 2000: 36).

Critique meets corpora

Compelling arguments have been made for combining corpus linguistics with CDA (see e.g., Baker, 2006; Baker and McEnery, 2005; Degano, 2007; Garzone and Santulli, 2004; Hardt-Mautner, 1995; Koller and Mautner, 2004; Mautner, 2005, 2009; Orpin, 2005; Partington et al., 2004; Stubbs, 1996, 1997). The corpus-based methodology adopted in this research aims to allow both dominant and underrepresented perspectives to emerge from the data through statistical rather than subjective criteria. This includes keywords, which effectively reveal lexical items or semantic fields that are statistically unique in one corpus when compared to another comparable corpus. Critical discourse analysts are often interested in *intertextuality*, which can refer to syntagmatic relations 'between elements which are actually present in the text' but also paradigmatic relations 'between what is actually present and what might have been present but is not – "significant absences"' (Fairclough, 2003: 36–37). Keyword analyses is an effective tool for detecting statistically significant absences. As Van Dijk (2009: 71) argues, 'theoretically omission is only a relevant property of a discourse when it can be shown that the omitted information is part of the mental model'. Keywords thus provide a means for documenting that dissenting or backgrounded discourses *exist* as manifestations of text producers' mental representations in alternative news corpora.

Aside from providing a more exhaustive picture, the quantitative indicators provided by the corpus data are employed as 'entry points' to conduct more qualitative textual analysis, which will draw on the following theoretical and methodological concepts from CDA.

A crucial component of micro-level analysis is language itself, which CDA has traditionally explored through functional grammar. According to this view, indebted to systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1978), the preference to employ one lexico-grammatical pattern over others, even if they are seemingly synonymous, does not merely result from formal constraints but reflects a text producer's (un)conscious motivation to convey a particular meaning or perform a particular function. *Transitivity*, which conventionally refers to whether or not verbs take objects, is used by functional grammarians to refer to the *process types* and *participants* expressed within a clause (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 170). Participants in *material* processes, for example, include the *actor* who performs the action and the *goal* (object) or *patient* (human)

receiving the action (pp. 179–181). A potential problem with such categorizations, as Van Leeuwen (1996) points out, is that 'there is no neat fit between sociological and linguistics categories' (p. 33). He therefore suggests a detailed network for the representation of social actors based in sociosemantic categorizations with a range of linguistic realizations for each case. Relevant categories include *classification*, which is based on established social categories such as sex, ethnicity or religion, and *physical identification*, which is based on visible characteristics such as *bearded men* and *veiled women* (p. 57). *Objectivation* is a metonymical form of impersonalization that refers to social actors in terms of places or objects they are typically associated with, such as *Israeli tanks entered the town* (p. 59).

Van Leeuwen's (1996) work has also influenced what Reisigl and Wodak (2001: 44) refer to in their discourse historical approach to CDA as a *discursive strategy*. Such a strategy is 'a more or less accurate and a more or less intentional plan of practices (including discursive practices) adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic aim' (p. 44). Three of these strategies are relevant to the current research. *Referential strategies* are words (usually nouns) chosen to refer to agents in a story (p. 45). For example, *Three **men** were questioned* is likely to activate a different context model (explained below) than *Three **Muslims** were questioned*. *Predicational strategies* refers to 'the very basic process and result of linguistically assigning qualities to persons, animals, objects, events, actions and social phenomena' (p. 54). *Perspectivation strategies* refers to the way speakers position themselves and the events they describe in the discourse (p. 81). This may be achieved through *framing*, which refers to the way a situation is defined based on organizational principles and one's subjective experience of an event (Goffman, 1974: 10–11). For example, a football match may be framed as 'another episode of bad refereeing' by one team but a 'resounding victory' by the other. The subjective process of framing a particular event is often realized through a sentence or phrase that captures the topic. In his earlier work on news discourse, Van Dijk (1988: 31) identifies *semantic macrostructures* as 'topics [that] belong to the global, macrolevel of discourse description'. Some semantic macrostructures may be expressed as *macropropositions* with an argument (e.g. *The economy . . .*) and a predicate (*. . . is in decline*). Given their topical focus, specialized news corpora provide fertile ground for semantic macrostructures across different texts on a larger scale which can be detected through quantitative analysis of lexical items such as keywords and collocation.

Some CDA approaches have been criticized for overlooking human cognition as a crucial interface between text and society (Chilton, 2005: 22–23). Van Dijk (2008: 16) attempts to address this complexity with the *context model*, which does not refer to the speech situation itself but to the participant's subjective mental representation of it (Van Dijk, 2009: 66). This entails mental representations of *local features* such as location and participants (including their own context models) as well as *global features* such as the political context. Context models are important because they control the pragmatic aspects of discourse. They might, for example, determine what a BBC journalist would consider relevant to readers based in part on his/her subjective mental representation of the readers' own context models. Context models also provide a theoretical explanation for the fact that individuals under identical social conditions often say/write different things (Van Dijk, 2006: 162). A theory of discourse that supplements textual, discursive

and social contexts with a cognitive component is therefore better equipped to account for individual variability.

The Muslim women corpora

The basic aim was to build two specialized corpora of as many articles as possible from the BBC and Arab News that mention MW. An automated search within the two websites' domains was based on two semantic categories: ISLAM and FEMALE.[5] To avoid circularity and negative discourse prosody,[6] the search terms were kept as generic or 'neutral' as possible within the two semantic categories, as follows:

> *Islam OR Islamic OR Muslim OR Moslim OR Muslims OR Moslims*
>
> *AND woman OR women OR female OR females*

The automated query was stopped when the location of the search terms was no longer in the main text but increasingly in the side panels (boilerplates) of the webpage showing links to other articles. The content of each link was then downloaded and saved as HTML code. Source code pages were manually examined to determine formal characteristics that could reliably isolate news articles in order to convert them into text files.[7]

Four issues needed to be addressed at this point. First, some files had one search term appear in the text and the other in unrelated links on the page. These were filtered out with a script verifying that both ISLAM and FEMALE were present in the main text. Second, many text files contained reader comments that were not demarcated by identifiable HTML code. Fortunately, most of these could be identified by their unusually large file size. The rest were identified with queries of phrases commonly used in reader comments, such as *your views* and *the following views reflect*. Third, there were some duplicate articles in the corpus, despite having unique link addresses. These were detected with a script that sought exact matches of the entire body of text between two or more files. The fourth issue relating to precision was that some articles might mention women and Islam, but not necessarily MW. This was addressed by running a script that identified the proximity (number of words) between ISLAM and FEMALE in each article. An examination of various thresholds showed that relevance to MW rarely occurred beyond a proximity of 100 words. Texts exceeding this threshold were excluded from the final versions of the BBC and Arab News corpora (henceforth BBCC and ANC), whose details are summarized in TABLE 1.

Key semantic macrostructures

This section addresses the first research question regarding the semantic macrostructures associated with MW using a keyword analysis of the BBCC with the ANC as a reference corpus.

Keywords and concordance lines were produced using WordSmith (Scott, 2010), a PC-based software suite of corpus tools. To be counted as keywords, lexical items had to meet the following statistical standards: frequency ≥ 3; p value $< 1.0E\text{-}11$; and a log-likelihood value (LL) ≥ 38.4. This produced 695 keywords that distinguish the BBCC

Table 1. MW corpora.

| | BBC | Arab News |
	Muslim Women Corpus (BBCC)	Muslim Women Corpus (ANC)
Time span	13/4/2001 to 11/6/2007	13/4/2001 to 11/6/2007
Articles	3269	3111
Tokens (word count)	1,896,230	2,255,908
Types (unique words)	42,759	45,892

from the ANC. Of these, 268 were manually categorized into potentially meaningful semantic categories as shown in TABLE 2. Remaining keywords such as *radio*, *government* and *paper* were considered too generic to be categorized in a useful way. When in doubt, the meaningfulness of a keyword was assessed with a cursory concordance analysis to ascertain its relevance to MW. Special consideration was given to keywords that were also collocates of *woman**.[8] Semantic categories in Table 2 are ordered by number of words; word lists within each semantic category are ordered by keyness (LL); words in bold are collocates of *woman**. The OTHER category was used to identify keywords that did not fit into the major categories but were potentially relevant to the representation of MW.[9]

The reliability of the categorizations In Table 2 was checked against key semantic categories identified by Wmatrix (Rayson, 2009), a web-based corpus annotation tool that compares corpora based on 'key concepts' indexed by a semantic tag set rather than individual lexical items.[10] The top 20 categories and their corresponding categories from the manual analysis in Table 2 are displayed in TABLE 3.

Words in the 'dead', 'warfare . . .' and 'violent/angry' categories corresponded to those in the WAR, VIOLENCE and CONFLICT category. 'Government' and 'personal names' related to POLITICS and SOCIAL ACTORS respectively. Words appearing in the 'law and order' and 'crime' categories were the same as those in the CRIME category. 'Clothing and personal belongings' related to the HIJAB category. 'Speech: communicative' referred to an overuse of the present tense reporting verbs *says*, *say*, and *claims*, which were categorized under OTHER. Other categories such as 'the media' and 'games' were not particularly relevant to MW.[11] In any case, the consistency of the Wmatrix categories with those identified in the manual analysis suggests it was reliable.

The following sections will provide a detailed investigation of these semantic categories based on further queries, concordance analysis and the discourse analytical tools outlined above.

Geography

Geography keywords were explored using targeted queries of the 48 Muslim-majority countries where Muslims form at least 50% of the population (Pew, 2009). The top seven countries receiving a coverage of at least 5% of articles were (in descending order) Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Palestine (Israel), Iran, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The high

Table 2. Key semantic categories in BBCC compared to ANC.

Semantic category	Keywords
GEOGRAPHY	Nigeria, Bosnian, London, Nigerian, Wales, Dutch, Nigeria's, Uzbek, Serb, **Iranian**, Somali, Abuja, Kabul, Falluja, Somalia, England, Moscow, **Afghanistan**, Turkish, Hague, Russia, Australian, Russian, EU, Lagos, Israeli, Srebrenica, Ireland, Ethiopia, Welsh, Birmingham, Tashkent, Mecca, Ethiopian, Soviet, French, Serbs, Mali, Kent, Cardiff, Iran, Indonesia, Uzbekistan, Netherlands, Glasgow, **British**, Bali, African, Mogadishu, Leeds, Liverpool, Afghans, Britain, Turkey, Irish, Bosnia, Basra, Andijan, Turkey's, Tajik, Gaza, Iraq, Kaduna, Africa's, Scottish, Kano, Scotland, Iranians, Zamfara, UK's, Tajikistan, Chinese, Africa, Indonesia's, Kenya, Australia, **Palestinian**, Iran's, Timbuktu, Baghdad, Manchester, Mauritania, Ivory, Blackburn, Malay, Sahara, Kurdish, Nablus, Zanzibar, Italian, Bangladesh, Tehran, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Kyrgyzstan, Italy, Chechen, Bradford, Tanzania, Montenegro, Serbian, Madrid
WAR, CONFLICT and VIOLENCE	defence, attack, suicide, attacks, militant, **killed**, died, bomb, death, ceasefire, militants, hostage, **bombers**, asylum, bombings, **violence**, hostages, refugees, gunmen, rebels, **bomber**, coup, dead, killings, kills, bombing, fled, troops, protests, conflict, armoured, injured, tensions, clashes, seized, military, attacked, tension, fighting, shot, armed, targets, blast, riots, die, threat, attackers, forces, army, threats
SOCIAL ACTORS	Taleban, Mujahideen, Jenkins, Hamza, MCB, UN, Hirsi, Obasanjo, Kilroy, Gogh, Amina, Khatami, Straw, Aceh, Bigley, Ayatollah, Iqbal, Fortuyn, Jack, Ayaan, Begum, Bunglawala, Jirga, Galloway, Mullah, Mawdudi, Blunkett, Gul, Prescott, MCB's, Tamil, Hamas, Saadawi, Yasser, Shah, Mladic, Gogh's, Polisario, Gordon
CRIME	police, trial, court, sentence, tribunal, arrested, offences, sentenced, alleged, jury, stoning, convicted, arrest, judgement, drugs, sentences, murder, punishments, guilty, released, charges, jailed, jail, rape, prostitutes, prosecution, indicted, arrests, suspected, inquiry, possessing, acid, solicitor, stoned, cocaine, charged, flogging
HIJAB	headscarf, **wear**, **headscarves**, veils, jilbab, **wearing**, burka
RELIGIOUS SPECTRUM	hardline, radical, conservative, hardliners, Islamist, strict, radicalization
OTHER	says, **say**, claims, Mr, Ms, Mrs, Miss, film, polio, gay, adultery, controversial, row, under, sex, alcohol, music, immunization, vote, voting, pageant, football, censorship, widespread, homosexuality, **banned**

coverage of countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine was largely due to war and conflict. Saudi Arabia is a special case since Arab News naturally devotes much of its coverage to local events, but coverage of Saudi Arabia in the BBCC was still relatively high at 5.6%, hence its inclusion in the top seven. MW reporting therefore focuses on

Table 3. Key semantic categories in BBCC compared to ANC (Wmatrix).

Key semantic category according to Wmatrix	LL	Corresponding category from the manual analyses in Table 2
1. Politics	1419	POLITICS
2. The media: TV, radio and cinema	1411	–
3. Other proper names	1346	–
4. Law and order	1274	CRIME
5. Dead	1217	WAR, CONFLICT and VIOLENCE
6. Geographical names	1195	GEOGRAPHY
7. Warfare, defence and the army; weapons	776	WAR, CONFLICT and VIOLENCE
8. Violent/angry	729	WAR, CONFLICT and VIOLENCE
9. Government	698	POLITICS
10. Personal names	476	SOCIAL ACTORS
11. People: Male	455	–
12. The Media: Newspapers, etc.	366	–
13. Entertainment generally	256	–
14. Crime	233	CRIME
15. Speech: Communicative	200	OTHER
16. Moving, coming and going	190	–
17. Clothes and personal belongings	170	HIJAB
18. Games	136	–
19. Time: Ending	122	–
20. Measurement: Distance	117	–

seven countries where only 33% of Muslim-majority countries' population resides, which amounts to 26% of the world's total Muslim population (Pew, 2009). A combined query of these seven countries shows they occur in 56% (*n* = 1823) of BBCC articles. This disproportionality is illustrated in FIGURE 1.

It would not make journalistic sense to expect coverage that is proportional to population size. Conflicts and political tensions are understandably higher on the news agenda and these tend to dominate the limited space news organizations have for international coverage. The inevitable result of this, however, is that the overall representation of MW in the BBCC is largely restricted to certain countries, which elides their diversity across cultures in different and less troubled parts of the world. Moreover, if 'Muslimness' is only considered relevant in contexts of war and conflict and hardly ever in other news items, such as social or economic development, it follows that readers are more likely to associate MW with violence and 'bad' news, which is the focus of the section that follows.

War and crime

The second largest semantic macrostructure in the BBCC was WAR, CONFLICT and VIOLENCE (henceforth WAR). As mentioned, the prominence of this category is likely the result of the news genre itself since war and conflict rate high on the scale of
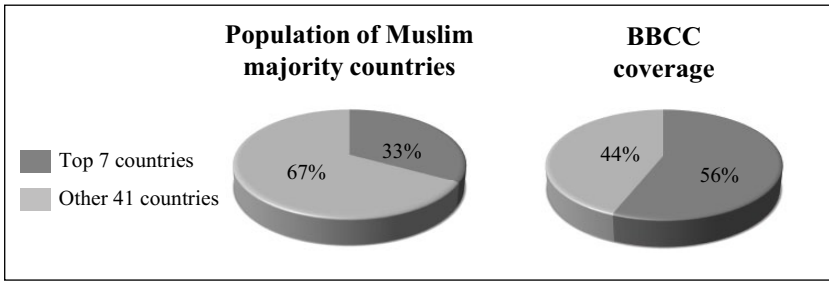
Figure 1. Coverage of Muslim-majority countries.

'newsworthiness' (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001: 279). The fact that only 14% of BBCC articles were reporting on MW themselves indicates that the BBC was reporting on war zones in which MW happen to reside more often than it was reporting on MW who happen to reside in war zones. In any case, the number (50) and statistical significance of keywords belonging to this semantic category in the BBCC is rather striking compared to other categories. Table 2 also seems to display a strong association of MW with contexts of CRIME (37 keywords).

What roles do MW actually play in the contexts of WAR and CRIME? Are they terrorists, targets or 'collateral damage'? Are they perpetrators, victims or innocent bystanders? A systemic way of addressing these questions from a linguistic perspective is to consider *transitivity*. To investigate this, WAR keywords relevant to MW were targeted by restricting a query to contexts where the node word occurred within a ±3 span of FEMALE (wom*n|girl*|female*). This resulted in 458:329:10.1%[12] hits in which MW could be classified in different participant roles in the material processes of WAR. The results are summarized in TABLE 4.[13]

The results show that MW in WAR are patients (victims) in the vast majority of cases (8.1% of BBCC articles) and actors in a much smaller proportion (2.1%). Interestingly, as actors, MW were more likely to be female suicide bombers than anything else (94:45:1.4%). Note that *bomber** was also a consistent collocate of *woman**, but even here MW were often patients on the receiving end of material processes (23:10:0.3%). This pattern is illustrated Concordance 1.

The concordance reveals a verbal pattern in which MW suicide bombers are being *used*, *deployed* and *sent*. It suggests they have no agency; causation is attributed almost exclusively to the groups they are affiliated with. Their predication as mere 'tools' trivializes their role as self-determined social actors. In the extended version of the BBCC (1997–2007), no female suicide bombings are mentioned before 2002, suggesting that this is a relatively new dimension to MW's identity in news discourse.

A similar query of CRIME resulted in 198:139:4.3% concordances, which were categorized in TABLE 5. Here MW were victims of sexual violence (15%) and other forms of violence (8%) in a combined 23 percent of concordances relating them to CRIME. In another 52.5 percent, MW were accused charged, arrested, on trial for, or receiving sentences for various crimes. What counts as criminal offence is of course relative to local laws. This relativity is important since sexual relations outside marriage, for example,

Table 4. Transitivity in WAR.

Frequency	%	Articles	% articles	MW in WAR contexts are …
331	72.3	264	8.1	Patients: victims
33	7.2	25	0.8	Actors: other
35	7.6	24	0.7	Actors: suicide bombers with agency
36	7.9	24	0.7	Suicide bombers in non-material processes (e.g. equative or verbal)
23	5	10	0.3	Actors: suicide bombers without agency

N Concordance
36 herself up in Jerusalem. After that, armed groups began to deploy women as suicide attackers, in the hope that they would find it easier to avoid Israeli security checks.
37 with being suicide bombers. "It removes a major threat because such an unusual attack using female suicide bombers would have caused a lot of damage," a senior
38 movements with an Islamic inflection, the advantages of using women as suicide bombers can override cultural arguments against their involvement. A woman is less
39 blew herself up in Jerusalem. After that, armed groups began to deploy women as suicide attackers, in the hope that they would find it easier to avoid Israeli security
40 has decided in order to evade these security precautions to send a woman suicide bomber on this occasion. Q: [Israeli Government spokesman] Jonathan Peled makes
41 be among those most commonly chosen for suicide missions by the Tigers. Women bombers have also been used by Kurdish guerrilla groups operating in Turkey. Like the
42 is responsible for much of the shock their attacks create. Using women [in suicide attacks] transgresses on what is acceptable in Arab society Magnus Ranstorp
43 Erez crossing marked the first time the Islamic Hamas movement had used a female bomber. This week's temporary freeze on movement came weeks after Israel eased a
44 at a nearby industrial complex. 3 of 6 Islamic militants said they used a female bomber for the first time because of security "obstacles" facing male
45 "It removes a major threat because such an unusual attack using female suicide bombers would have caused a lot of damage," a senior unnamed Pakistani security
46 al-Qaeda. Exception or rule? Other experts disagree, arguing that the use of women bombers alienates the conservative Muslim constituency from which the militants draw
47 BBC's Middle East analyst Roger Hardy says the network's occasional use of female bombers defies its conservative ideologues, who have argued that women can best
48 who objected to schoolchildren being targeted. He later killed the two female bombers by using a remote-control device to detonate the explosives attached to their
49 the attack with the secular al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, said it used a woman suicide bomber for the first time to make detection more difficult. The security zone at the Erez
50 2005, eight people were killed in the Iraqi town of Talafar by a woman suicide bomber said to have been sent by al-Qaeda. But the BBC's Middle East analyst Roger
51 Ranstorp Terrorism expert For the militants, therefore, deploying women suicide bombers remains a fraught tactic - instead of new recruits, it risks attracting revulsion.
52 woman bomber kills Israelis The Islamic militant group Hamas has used a female bomber for the first time in a suicide attack which killed four Israelis on the border with
53 cause than a religious one. Experts remain divided over whether female suicide bombers will be more widely deployed by al-Qaeda, whose conservative philosophy
54 Erez crossing marked the first time the Islamic Hamas movement has used a female bomber. A statement from the Israeli military said: "In line with a political decision and

Concordance 1. MW suicide bombers.

Table 5. Transitivity in CRIME.

Frequency	%	Articles	% articles	MW in CRIME contexts are . . .
104	52.5	70	2.1	Actors accused of prostitution, adultery or indecency
30	15.2	25	0.8	Patients as victims of sexual violence
16	8.1	15	0.5	Patients as victims of other physical violence or threat of violence
22	11.1	15	0.5	Actors accused of suicide bombings/aiding terrorism
16	8.1	10	0.3	Actors accused of working against the government
10	5.1	10	0.3	Actors accused of breaking other laws

are unlikely to lead to criminal charges in Western contexts, but are quite likely to do so in some Islamic states. This may explain why such stories are considered newsworthy by the BBC to the extent that over half of the CRIME concordances involved charges of prostitution, adultery or indecency. The victimization of MW was also manifested in their collocation with *killed* and *violence*. A concordance analysis of kill* within a ±3 span of FEMALE (106:91:2.8%) showed that 28% of concordances (30:23:0.7%) reported so-called 'honour' killings of MW by their family members for allegedly having sexual

Table 6. RELIGIOUS SPECTRUM in relation to MW.

Frequency	Articles	% articles	Attribute MW's oppression to . . .
69	59	1.8	STRICTNESS
68	57	1.7	ISLAM + HARDLINE
56	52	1.6	CONSERVATISM
37	32	1	FUNDAMENTALISM
25	20	0.6	ISLAMISM
18	17	0.6	EXTREMISM
14	14	0.4	RADICALISM

relationships outside marriage – a cultural practice Islamic law rejects, but one with which it is often erroneously associated. The remaining 72% reported various contexts of WAR in which MW had been killed; 31% included the killing of women and children (33:31:0.9%).

The religious spectrum

The RELIGIOUS SPECTRUM category includes referential and predicational strategies that attempt to distinguish Muslims along a 'spectrum' ranging from 'moderate' to 'extreme'. *Moderate* and *mainstream* were not keywords, but their premodification of Muslim(s) in the BBCC (42:34:1.0%) was significantly lower (LL = 52.4; p < .001) than *fundamentalist*, *extremist*, *radical*, *conservative*, *hardline* and *strict* (139:129:3.9%). This corroborates findings by Baker et al. (2013: 166) that the moderate majority tends to receive far less attention in the British press than those on the negative end of that spectrum.

The oppression of MW was usually attributed to 'strict' Muslims, 'hardliners', 'conservatives' and 'fundamentalists', as summarized in TABLE 6.

The religious convictions of MW themselves were hardly reported and they were rarely associated with this RELIGIOUS SPECTRUM. Predications such as *hardline*, *strict*, *Islamist*, *conservative*, *extremist* or *fundamentalist* applied almost exclusively to Muslim men. This corroborates a misconception observed by a number of scholars that all that is negative or hostile in the Muslim 'Other' is perpetrated by men, while women are merely passive victims moving with the tide (Afshar et al., 2005; Elia, 2006; Ho, 2007; Razack, 2004). In contrast to Muslim men, therefore, it appears that MW somehow reside outside the RELIGIOUS SPECTRUM, although those who wear the HIJAB are sometimes predicated with fundamentalism, as will be shown in following section.

HIJAB in the BBCC

The remaining major key semantic macrostructure in the BBCC was the HIJAB, which was mentioned in the headlines and/or leads of 28% (n = 132) of articles about MW. Moreover, HIJAB was amongst the top semantic categories collocating with *woman** in the BBCC. The HIJAB therefore remains a nodal semantic macrostructure when it comes

to MW in news discourse, which validates the second research question regarding the discursive strategies associated with the ʜɪᴊᴀʙ. The following query was used to address this question as it includes the most common terms and spelling variations used for HIJAB:

> veil*|headscarf*|cover*|burqa*|burka*|ni?ab*|h?jab*|jilbab*|chador*|abaya*[14]

This returned 2,207:625:19.1% unique concordances of ʜɪᴊᴀʙ in the BBCC (excluding metaphorical usage such as *veiled threats*). TABLE 7 summarizes how these concordances were categorized by ʜɪᴊᴀʙ type (columns) and the various referential and predicational strategies associated with each type (rows). Referential and predicational strategies are ordered by the number of articles in which they appear.

The first observation that can be made about predication is that there was a range of contradictory descriptions surrounding the ʜɪᴊᴀʙ. This is to be expected since the corpus contains over two thousand references to this practice, reflecting a variety of Islamic contexts. Moreover, journalists are expected to provide a balanced account, which often entails contrasting viewpoints on a given issue. What concerns us here, however, is the 'net result' so to speak – what is the overall picture that emerges from the BBC's coverage of the ʜɪᴊᴀʙ and how does it reflect on MW?

In terms of referential strategies, BBCC articles often failed to specify the types of ʜɪᴊᴀʙ they were referring to. The ambiguity of *veil* and *cover* necessitated subcategorizing them in Table 7 as either a) referring to the ʜɪᴊᴀʙ in general, b) referring to the face veil in particular or c) ambiguous, meaning the veil type was not made explicit but there was sufficient contextual evidence (outside the text) that the full veil was intended. For example, in the context of the Jack Straw veil controversy,[15] most of the debate focused on the issue of covering the face, making it crucial to specify the ʜɪᴊᴀʙ type. Yet many articles simply used the term *veil* without specification, which could potentially mislead readers into generalizing what was said to the headscarf. The lemma *veil** appears in 56 headlines, only two of which specify its type. One might overlook such omissions in headlines in view of their generic constraints to be concise, but veil type was routinely unspecified in the by-lines, leads and bodies of articles where specification was called for. In some cases it was only specified in passing in the latter part of the article, which for many readers is too late. Table 7 reports 125:56:1.7% examples of ambiguous *veil**, which were likely to leave readers, especially those reading for gist, confused about crucial details in this controversy. Some could mistakenly have concluded that the antagonism by some UK politicians towards Muslims had reached a level where even the headscarf was no longer tolerable.

A related referential strategy in the context of the French headscarf ban was to subsume the ʜɪᴊᴀʙ under the general categories of 'religious symbol' (39:37:1.1%) or 'political statement' (19:13:0.4%). Such references are problematic for many MW because they elide the fact that, unlike other religious symbols, the headscarf serves the practical function of delineating the private and public spheres in everyday Muslim life. Moreover, displaying a symbol can imply that the person wearing it is making a deliberate statement of affiliation with a given group. Although making a statement *can* be one of the reasons women wear the ʜɪᴊᴀʙ, it would be reductive to presume this motivation for most

Table 7. Reference and predication of HIJAB.

Reference and predication	Veil			Cover			Headscarf	Hijab	Burqa	Niqab	Jilbab	Chador	Abaya	Predication totals		
	General	Face	Ambiguous	General	Face	Ambiguous								Freq.	Articles	%
Other	96	74	37	37	3		173	58	21	23	22	9	4	557	253	7.74
Discriminated against	24	12	4	2	4		97	15	5	1				164	107	3.27
Imposed	45	5	17	23	2	6	10	8	27		1	3	5	152	93	2.84
Description of MW	30	7	1	11	2		49	12	11		1	10	5	139	121	3.70
Banned	13	7	5	2	1		82	3	16	6				135	81	2.48
Defending the right to wear it	13	22	4	6	1		32	17	5	9	3			112	69	2.11
Issue	15	13	9				43	3			2			85	60	1.84
Inappropriate/ unwelcome	6	27	7	2	4		22	1	10	4	1			84	58	1.77
Security concerns	16	6		3	4		2		33	3		3		70	36	1.10
Other negative predication	17	8	4	8	3		11	7	5			1		64	53	1.62
Impedes integration	2	36	13	1	5		3			1				61	43	1.32
Types of veil	6	1		11	1		17	5	2	5	5	3		56	40	1.22
MW who reject it	11	3	2	2			17	4	6			7		52	33	1.01
Row		6	9				21	2		1	3			42	35	1.07
Becoming popular	10	5	1	7			8	7	1			2		41	29	0.89
Symbol	3		1	1			25	9						39	37	1.13
Not required in Islam	4	5	2	3	2		4	1	2	2	12			37	24	0.73
Required in Islam	8	3	2	5	1		6	6		1	4		1	37	27	0.83
Non-MW wearing it	5			7			1		9				12	34	20	0.61

Table 7. (Continued)

Reference and predication	Veil			Cover			Headscarf	Hijab	Burqa	Niqab	Jilbab	Chador	Abaya	Predication totals		
	General	Face	Ambiguous	General	Face	Ambiguous								Freq.	Articles	%
Oppresses MW	4	7		2			14	1	3					31	24	0.73
Few MW wear it		6	1	5			4	6	11	4				31	22	0.67
Chosen by MW	7	4		4			3		2	1		1		30	26	0.80
Extremism/militancy	7	1	1	2		1	13	13	3			3		29	26	0.80
Benefits/normalcy	2	3					8	13						27	20	0.61
Political statement	2			3			11		2	2				19	13	0.40
Impedes communication	1	7	3	2	1				2	1		1		17	15	0.46
Conservative					1		4	3	2			5		15	15	0.46
Religious act	7						2	1		3	1			15	6	0.18
Fundamentalism	2						6	1			1			11	9	0.28
Identity			1				2	4		2				11	9	0.28
Non-issue for non-Muslims	2		1		1		5	1					1	10	9	0.28
HIJAB type totals																
Freq.	358	271	125	149	33	7	695	188	176	69	61	48	27			
Articles	207	77	56	113	28	5	252	88	74	22	14	29	11			
%	6.33	2.36	1.71	3.46	0.86	0.15	7.71	2.69	2.26	1	0.43	0.89	0.34			

N Concordance

31	Saudis criticise US dress-code change Saudi clerics insist all women wear head-to-toe robes Saudi officials have criticised a US decision to lift its
32	occasionally a woman passes by, made anonymous and invisible by her head-to-toe covering - the burkha - which leaves only a tiny mesh over the
33	And I am not exactly appearing on camera swathed in a black cape from head to toe like the Iranian TV presenters. Clothes aside, I have been attacked
34	she said to me, "Cover your fringe!" I was by now used to being draped from head to foot in nun-like garb, the inevitable headscarf and a full length black
35	aspect is that they are all wearing Islamic dress; including some draped from head to toe in the all enveloping chador. It's part of a new drive to give women
36	will kill hundreds of infidels," said the woman, covered in a black robe from head to foot and flanked by several other women. "Even if we die, thousands of
37	dilemma Women in their 30s describe going to weddings shrouded from head to toe and without any make-up or nail polish for fear of being stopped at
38	Their female accomplices were almost more terrifying, covered from head to foot in black, their veils bearing Islamic slogans, their waists wrapped
39	government, with strict gender segregation and making women wear the head-to-toe chador. "The country's true problems are unemployment and
40	are segregated in public places, cannot drive cars and must be covered from head to toe when in public. Officials promised that women would be part of the
41	code for Kashmiri women, threatening to shoot women if they failed to wear head-to-toe veils. The group was also accused of carrying out an acid attack

Concordance 2. Head to toe/foot.

hijab-wearing women in the West who want to dress modestly without necessarily making any 'statements', political or otherwise.

Imposed

Topping the list of negative predications was that the HIJAB is imposed on MW (152:93:2.8%). This was more common with *cover* (17% of concordances), *burqa* (14%) and *veil* (8%) than other types. MW were most commonly predicated as victims of dress code enforcement in Indian-administered Kashmir (34%), Afghanistan (18%) and Iran (15%). While dress code enforcement of the HIJAB undoubtedly occurs in some Muslim states, there is sufficient evidence that many MW choose to wear it whether they reside in an environment that requires it or not. The reasons may be religious, cultural, social, practical, political or a combination of these (Abu Odeh, 1993: 34–35; Ahmed, 2005: 164; Bullock, 2002: 87–122; Hoodfar, 2003: 11). For many MW the *hijab* is primarily an act of worship (Ameli and Merali, 2006; Mahmood, 2001: 202-235 in refs list; Meshal, 2003: 90; Robert, 2006: 180; Zine, 2006: 245); this central motivation is often overlooked in Western academic scholarship (Barlas, 2005: 104; Roald, 2001: 9). Combining predications expressing such motivations in Table 7, including *chosen by MW*, *benefits/normalcy*, *identity* and *religious act*, provides an overall measure of instances where the HIJAB was portrayed as a choice MW make.[16] Even when combined (83:47:1.4%), such predications were still significantly less frequent based on dispersion than those portraying the HIJAB as imposed (LL = 14.8; $p < 0.001$), suggesting a general tendency in the BBC to represent the HIJAB as something MW are forced to wear.

Another prominent predication was that the HIJAB was inappropriate or unwelcome in certain contexts (84:58:1.8%), such as French public schools and Turkish universities. *Other negative predication* denotes instances where predication of the HIJAB was explicitly negative or hyperbolic (65:54:1.7%):

Mayor Jan Creemers said he brought it forward because **old people were afraid and children cried** when women started appearing in long black robes with their faces covered […] (BBCC 3267)

'He (Straw) was expressing an important opinion which is that **veils suck – which they do**,' Mr Rushdie told BBC radio. (BBCC 3597)

Other examples in this category used *objectivation*, where MW wearing face veils were described as 'ghostly figures' and 'silent shadows'. An examination of word clusters associated with *head* revealed that the pattern *(from) head to toe/foot* was frequently used to describe fully veiled MW (41:39:1.2%). The cluster's discourse prosody was clearly negative as it was preceded by verbal constructions such as *made invisible/anonymous by*, *swathed*, *draped*, *covered in black*, *shrouded* and *making women wear*. A sample of these is shown in Concordance 2:

Obstacle to progress

A macroproposition implicit in at least eight articles was that MW would not be able to achieve their full potential if they continue to wear the HIJAB. Consider the following examples:

(a)   Ms Nomani's family fully supports her campaign [caption].
She sees herself as a **progressive modern woman** who is also religious: there is no contradiction in her mind. Ms Nomani comes from a deeply religious Muslim family, but one which she says tries to embody the spirit of Islam rather than the outward symbols such as **wearing veils**. (BBCC 15138)

(b)   Her campaign has generated international interest [caption].
'I was the first Saudi woman to appear on a newspaper cover **without a veil**,' she says. 'I have become a media darling there. People in Saudi feel proud that somebody from there can do that, they feel like I am doing something.' (BBCC 2668)

(c)   Saudi custom imposes many restrictions on women [caption].
She [Hussa] is a **modern** Saudi businesswoman – western-educated, **unveiled** and willing to take a chance. (BBCC 5451)

Such articles typically tell individual success stories of MW who challenge their environment to gain rights, the novelty of which ranks highly on the newsworthiness scale (Bednarek and Caple, 2014: 146). The protagonist is represented in very positive terms and perhaps deservedly so, but that positivity is often erroneously associated with, and in some cases reduced to, a rejection of the HIJAB.[17] This is further illustrated in an article about Lubna Al-Olayan, a Saudi business leader who was named one of *Time* magazine's 100 world's most influential people of 2005. As a comparison, Al-Olayan appeared in five articles in the Arab News website and one in the BBC, with the following headlines:

Khadija bint Khuwailid Center: The **Starting Point** [for women] (ANC 94125)

Women '**Own**' Some 1,500 Companies (ANC 94112)

'Women's **Empowerment** a Must' (ANC 93898)

Baroness Uddin – the **First** and Only Muslim Woman in British Parliament (ANC 38420)

Elite Saudi [women's] Group **Blazing** a Trail (ANC 38362)

Unveiled women anger Saudi cleric (BBCC 2254)

The semantic macrostructures illustrated by the words in bold in the above headlines control the 'gist' of what readers take away from the article (Van Dijk, 2001: 102). They illustrate the contrasting ways the two news organizations framed that particular success story, specifically suggesting that Al-Olayan's primary relevance in Arab News (i.e. that which made her newsworthy) was her setting an example of success despite the restrictions women face in the Saudi business world. Her only mention in the BBCC, on the other hand, appeared under a headline indicating that her primary relevance was her defiance of the HIJAB.

Integration, communication and religious requirements

Other arguments, specifically against face veils in the UK, were (re)instigated in Jack Straw's editorial (see note 15). These were intertextually echoed in BBC articles and discussion fora in the months that followed. One argument was that they impeded integration by expressing 'separateness' from the rest of society (61:43:1.3%); the second was that they formed a physical barrier to communication (17:15:0.5%); and the third was that face veils were not an Islamic requirement but merely a cultural practice. The sentiment behind this heightened concern about the way MW dress could be attributed to a wider social trend in British politics, specifically Tony Blair's New Labour government, away from 'multiculturalism' towards 'integration', especially following the London 7/7 bombings in 2005. The associated discursive shift can be illustrated in the following examples:

> The sight of a Muslim woman wearing a veil elicits little interest in modern Britain. (BBCC 2727)

> In Britain, girls wear headscarves without any problem – I don't see why it should be a problem in France. (BBCC 2197)

This can be contrasted with the integrationist discourse which became more prevalent following the 7/7 bombings:

> So when Leader of the Commons Jack Straw raised the question of the veil's role in **integration, or rather the lack of it**, the ensuing debate was hardly surprising. Many Muslims agree with Jack Straw that **the veil is a bad idea**. (BBCC 3738)

The face veil had suddenly become a 'visible statement of separation and difference' (Jack Straw, BBCC 3581) and a 'mark of separation' (Tony Blair, BBCC 13384).[18] Following the London bombings, face veils also became a 'threat to security' (70:36:1.1%). Such concerns linked MW wearing the HIJAB with extremism and/or militancy (29:26:0.8%):

> For many, **militancy and headscarves** are a way of expressing anger and forging an identity. (BBCC 2550)

> Many secular Turks regard the headscarf as a threat – a symbol of **radical Islam**. (BBCC 3423)

'We are under attack from **extreme** Muslim people here. If you look at what happens in the world, in Chechnya, those women wearing the burka are **a symbol of death**.' (BBCC 1532)

On the positive side of Table 7, there was acknowledgement that MW wearing the HIJAB were discriminated against (164:107:3.3%); calls defending MW's rights to wear it, by both Muslims and non-Muslims, were also reported (112:69:2.1%). Increases in the number of MW wearing the HIJAB (41:29:0.9%) were reported in Iran, Turkey, Egypt, the UK and Afghanistan, although in the latter case it was usually attributed to fear of the Taliban. Perhaps the most important predication of the HIJAB was what it meant to MW themselves, but the BBCC provides relatively few examples of this. Only a small proportion of articles reported MW talking about the perceived benefits or normalcy of the HIJAB (27:20:0.6%) or describing it as an essential part of their identity (11:9:0.3%). There were even fewer examples of MW referring to it as a religious act (15:6:0.2%). It is perhaps the secular nature of contemporary Western reporting that marginalizes such explanations, despite the centrality of religion in motivating MW to wear the HIJAB in the first place. This dismissal of theist motivations is not unique to news reporting and occurs in Western academic discourse, as was mentioned earlier under 'imposed'.

By contrast, there were ample examples of MW who disagreed with the practice of HIJAB (52:33:1.0%). These included explicit and implicit criticisms as well as reports of MW removing the HIJAB when given the chance:

'However, I [Jack Straw] can't recall a single occasion when a lady has refused to lift her veil; most seem relieved I have asked.' (BBCC 11093)

The adjective *relieved* in the above example implies that most MW visiting Straw's surgery would rather remove their face veils when asked. It also implies that MW are too timid to act on their own accord – hence the need for outsider 'help' and the reproduction of the Orientalist theme of 'white men saving brown women from brown men' (Spivak, 1988: 297).

There were some examples of non-Muslims expressing that they had no particular reservations about the HIJAB (10:9:0.3%), but these were infrequent compared to those framing the HIJAB as an *issue* (85:60:1.9%) and a *row* (42:35:1%), not to mention the second highest predication of the HIJAB (mostly the *headscarf*) as a practice that is or may potentially be *banned* (135:81:2.5%). Other negative predications associated the HIJAB with the oppression of MW (31:24:0.7%), conservatism (15:15:0.5%) and fundamentalism (11:9:0.3%).

An analysis of quantification and scalar implicatures suggests the BBC exaggerated public support for a veil ban in the UK:

Survey finds **support** for veil ban [headline] **One in three people** would support a ban on the Muslim face-covering veil in public places, a survey suggests. Asked if the veils should be prohibited in airports and at passport control, **six out of 10 agreed**. (BBCC 15749)

A poll commissioned by the BBC suggests that **the majority** of people want to ban Muslim women from wearing the veil in some public places. (BBCC 15753)

The headline and lead in the first example are misleadingly framed by foregrounding the 'support' theme for the veil ban. It is not until the seventh paragraph that contrary percentages are quoted: 33% of respondents supported a ban on the full-face veil in public places, 56% rejected the idea and 10% were undecided. In other words, the majority of respondents were actually *against* the ban, which calls into question the foregrounding of its support. Van Dijk (1988: 144) points out that the promotion of lower-level macro-propositions, in this case 'some people support a veil ban', to a higher position in the thematic structure, especially the headline, can lead to mystification which affects readers' interpretation of the text as a whole.

Relevance

Description of MW in Table 7 describes concordances where HIJAB-wearing MW were mentioned, usually in passing, as part of a general description of a scene in a news story (139:121:3.7%). These were apparently 'neutral' descriptions but, as Van Leeuwen (1996: 58) points out in his explanation of *physical identification*, 'physical attributes tend to have connotations, and these can be used to obliquely classify or functionalise social actors'. A critical reader might indeed question the relevance of the HIJAB in these particular contexts:

> Groups of women **clad in Islamic hijab** have been seen frequenting Mr Amin's compound where they sit waiting for news about the former dictator's condition. (BBCC 2011)

> 'Nothing happened to [Israeli Prime Minister Ariel] Sharon when Palestinian refugees were massacred,' said one woman **through a black veil which only revealed her eyes**. (BBCC 1183)

Careful examination of context is crucial to making any assessment of relevance and potentially the writer's context model surrounding a particular news event. The second example above comes from an article reporting the reactions of New Yorker Muslims to the US bombings in Afghanistan in 2001. They were denouncing both the 9/11 attacks and those by the US in Afghanistan. They were also voicing their concern about a perceived double standard in US foreign policy when it comes to bringing war criminals to justice. In this context, the woman was referring to Ariel Sharon's role in the 1982 massacre of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. Yet the legitimacy of her grievance seems to be subverted by an elaborate and essentially irrelevant description of her *niqab*, which begs the question of what relevance her form of dress has to the issue at hand. Could it be an intimation that this form of HIJAB is typical of those who oppose the state of Israel? Or is it simply an innocent description? This is difficult to determine, but the overall findings suggest that some BBC journalists' context models of MW entail a preoccupation with the HIJAB that detracts from more pertinent issues and impedes objectivity in reporting. The following statement by a (female) BBC journalist acknowledges this tendency:

> Time and again, the women I met in Jeddah and Riyadh insisted how women dressed was not the priority, that reform in Saudi Arabia was about other things. (BBCC 1410)

Irrelevant physical identification is in fact a violation of the British Editors' Code of Practice, which states that 'details of an individual's race, colour, religion, sexual orientation, physical or mental illness or disability must be avoided unless *genuinely relevant* to the story' (PCC, 2012: 12.2, my emphasis).

Concluding remarks

This article has focused on keywords emerging from a corpus of BBC News website texts mentioning MW compared to a parallel corpus from Arab News. Three methodological aspects set this research apart from previous studies: 1) The corpus included articles focusing on MW, but in the large majority MW were mentioned only in passing. This necessitated additional steps in the analyses to verify that the keyword in question was actually relevant to MW, but it provided a uniquely comprehensive and more exhaustive analysis of MW's representation in news discourse. 2) The research demonstrated a more integrated approach to combining CDA with corpus linguistics in two respects. The first was to allow for the analysis to oscillate between queries and (more) qualitative analyses, which often entailed interruptions, starting over and re-evaluating analytical categories. The second was to utilize quantification, not only as a starting point that guided the qualitative analysis in less subjective ways, but also as one that was re-employed throughout the analysis to document the extent to which a given linguistic phenomenon was present in the discourse (dispersion). It is, after all, important to ascertain whether a pattern is present in 50 articles or just five. This is not to suggest that everything the analyst comes across should be quantified, as this can detract from valuable time he/she needs to reflect on and interpret meanings in context. Nor is it to suggest that infrequent phenomena are insignificant – a single extract can often be more telling than a page- full of concordance lines. Overall, it must be acknowledged that a corpus-based approach to CDA comes at a cost. The analyst constantly has to negotiate the inherent tensions between breadth and depth, a skill that improves as familiarity with the corpus increases. 3) Manual tagging was conducted in conjunction with automated tagging of key semantic categories in Wmatrix. This was a more thorough technique because it accounted for *all* words that collectively make a semantic category significant within a corpus, which is usually not feasible via manual means. It was also an effective way of checking the reliability of the analyst's manual categorizations. Manual categorization is naturally more sophisticated, dynamic and context sensitive than automatic tagging, but it may be compromised if the analyst already has certain categories in mind which he/she merely wants to confirm. Accordingly, analysts are strongly advised to conduct the manual analysis *before* the automated one, so as to avoid being influenced by the latter.

Findings indicate that news coverage of MW was geographically disproportionate as 53% of the BBC's reporting was largely restricted to only seven out of 48 Muslim majority countries. Extensive concordance analysis of the keywords was conducted to address the first research question regarding the topics that tend to be associated with MW. WAR and CRIME were clearly the primary semantic macrostructures in which MW usually

played the role of passive victims. This was evident in their semantic role as participants in material processes which tended to communicate an apparent lack of agency even in reports of them carrying out suicide bombings.

The HIJAB clearly remains a nodal semantic macrostructure when it comes to the reporting on MW. Another contribution of this research was therefore to conduct a detailed analysis of the referential and predicational strategies associated with the HIJAB in all its forms. In terms of referential strategies, journalists often failed to specify the form of HIJAB they were referring to, which was particularly problematic in contexts such as the 'veil row' where the debate centred around HIJAB-types. In terms of predicational strategies, from a functional linguistic perspective, Martin (2000: 145–146) differentiates between appraisal of persons, referred to as *judgement,* and appraisal of objects or concepts, referred to as *appreciation*. The distinction is an important one because it reflects a higher value and sensitivity ascribed to human subjects. Although there was judgement of HIJAB-wearing women in the BBCC, appreciation was far more common since the appraisal was directed at the HIJAB itself. However, the cognitive effects of judgement and appreciation seem difficult to tease apart in this context. For example, the French President's appraisal of the headscarf as 'aggressive' (BBCC 2179) may be classified as appreciation, but one cannot claim that such criticisms are purely about a piece of cloth. The physical and psychological contiguity between MW and their HIJAB causes a metonymic shift in which the negativity surrounding the target domain is mapped back onto the source. The President's criticisms are therefore judgements as much as they are appreciations; one might even speculate that the latter are sometimes exploited as a pretext for the former. Prejudice in the form of appreciation about a piece of cloth is less likely to raise objections than judgement about the human subject wearing it, even though the resulting negative effect on readers' perceptions of MW may be the same.

The dominant macroproposition about the HIJAB in the BBCC was that it is imposed on MW. This view was usually predicated on the assumption that MW are passive, submissive and unwilling or unable to improve their own wellbeing. It also implied they need the support of others capable of raising their awareness regarding their own plight and how to overcome it. There was occasional acknowledgement that MW often wear the HIJAB by choice, but then they were predicated with one or more of the following attributes:

- suffering from false consciousness;
- refusing to integrate into Western societies;
- ignoring the communicational needs of others;
- flouting security procedures designed to prevent crime and terrorism;
- endorsing fundamentalist values;
- expressing aggression and militancy;
- stubbornly going beyond the requirements of their own religion;
- performing a disservice to the cause of women's rights;

The false consciousness argument is inherently ethnocentric as it acknowledges the power of discourse over subjects but presumes that Western culture is somehow immune to such influences. Most troubling perhaps is that such arguments render whatever input HIJAB-wearing MW have as immaterial. What would be the point of reporting the views of someone who is 'brainwashed'?

France's *Liberation* [newspaper] agrees that Muslim women who took part in the demonstration [against the headscarf ban] may have been **manipulated**. (BBCC 2200)

Negative predications were rarely applicable to 'rational', 'progressive' and 'moderate' MW who oppose the HIJAB, making such 'native informants' the preferred choice for feature articles and 'success stories' involving MW (Zine and Bullock, 2002: ii). Such views may have been more congruent with prevailing social representations (context models) in the West about MW. MW were occasionally afforded the space to demystify the HIJAB to BBC readers, emphasizing that it was essentially a non-issue, but such instances were few and far between. Many BBC articles also displayed a peculiar pattern of mentioning the HIJAB in contexts where it was essentially irrelevant. In such instances the HIJAB seemed to function as a signifier that fit the picture of political groups or viewed the article framed as being 'extreme'.

An awareness of the quantitative and qualitative findings in this research should help readers become more critical of dominant macrostructures pertaining to MW in news discourse. On their part, reporters, journalists and news editors are advised to a) problematize prevalent predications of MW and the HIJAB; b) afford a more diverse range of MW more textual space, not merely those who fit the mould of Western liberal 'success stories'; c) avoid mentioning the HIJAB when describing MW unless it is genuinely relevant to the events being reported; and d) be clear about the form of HIJAB being referred to.

Acknowledgements

Funding

Notes

1. Except where specified, the term *hijab* is used to refer to all forms of head, face and/or body coverings used by Muslim Women. *Hijab* is a general term used to refer to the practice of MW covering themselves in public. Other common terms used in English news discourse include the following (note: most of these refer to different things in different languages and contexts): *headscarf* refers to covering the hair (usually including the ears and neck); niqab refers to covering the face (usually with the eyes exposed); veil is often ambiguous as it may refer to the *hijab* in general or specific forms such as the headscarf or *niqab*; *abaya*, most common in the Gulf states, refers to a body-length gown with sleeves; *jilbab* refers to covering the head along with the upper half or the entire body; chador, used in Iran, is also a body-length cover placed over the head but is open in the front; *burqa* (known as *chadri* in Afghanistan) covers the entire body with a concealing net around the eyes.
2. For want of better terms, I use 'West' and 'Western' as a geographical shorthand for the cultural heritage of Australia, New Zealand, Western Europe, the UK and North America, which is broadly liberal democratic, nominally Judeo-Christian and secular.

3. The study surveyed a random sample that was statistically representative of 90% of the world's Muslim population with ±3 point margin of error. It included 'tens of thousands of hour-long, face-to-face interviews' with Muslims in 35 countries (Esposito and Mogahed, 2007: xi).
4. This correlation was investigated in Iran, Pakistan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and Turkey.
5. Words in SMALL UPPERCASE font denote semantic categories.
6. *Discourse prosody*, also referred to as *semantic prosody* (Louw, 1993 Sinclair, 1991) extends the concept of collocation from semantic to pragmatic meanings that reflect text producers' attitudes (Stubbs, 2001: 65).
7. Perl programming scripts were used for automated search queries and file conversions. I am most grateful to Sebastian Hoffmann for his help in this regard.
8. The asterisk '*' denotes the lemma which in this case includes *woman* and *women*.
9. Keywords in the OTHER category could not be discussed here due to limitations of space.
10. The cut-off point in Wmatrix was kept at LL > 6.63 (*p* < 0.01) rather than the more stringent one used to filter the keywords (LL ≥ 38.4; *p* < 1.0E-11). This allowed for more keywords to be included in the automated semantic keyness analysis.
11. The 'games' category included some coverage of sporting events, but its significance was largely inflated by mistagging 'MCB' (the Muslim Council of Britain) (*n* = 169) as a game/sport.
12. The notation '458:329:10.1%' means 458 concordance lines in 329 articles which make up 10.1% of articles in the BBCC.
13. '%' = proportion of occurrence within the semantic category; 'articles' = number of articles (dispersion); and '% articles' = proportion of articles relative to the total number of articles in the corpus (relative dispersion).
14. '?' stands for a single arbitrary character in search queries which helps to find spelling variations such as *burqa* and *burka*.
15. In October 2006, Jack Straw, then Labour MP and Leader of the House of Commons, published an editorial in the *Lancashire Telegraph* which argued that the full-face veil was a 'mark of separation' that prevents Muslims from fully integrating into British society. Straw's comments triggered a 'veil row' in the media where any news report relating to the *hijab* became headline news.
16. The notion of 'choice' requires some qualification considering the social, political, cultural and sexual pressures influencing clothing behaviour which exist in *all* societies. My use of the term 'choice' in reference to the *hijab* should not imply that such decisions are ever free of such influences. I do, however, believe that it is possible to differentiate self-reported motivations that are intrinsic (e.g. a personal desire not to be exposed) from those that are extrinsic (e.g. avoiding ridicule from others).
17. This research does not incorporate multimodal analysis, but it is worth noting that 'success stories' tended to juxtapose their texts with very positive images of unveiled MW, which may be more congruent with prevalent social representations of 'progress'. Such images contrasted sharply with the depersonalized ones routinely used to portray 'average' MW in HIJAB.
18. Straw received considerable praise from fellow politicians for starting a 'good and healthy' debate and resisting accusations that he had caused any offence to MW (BBCC 3610). Four years later, he actually made a public apology in which he expressed his regret for 'triggering a ferocious public debate which may have adversely impacted on the Muslim community' (Walker, 2010: electronic source). Curiously, with the exception of the *Daily Mail*, that apology received virtually no coverage in the major news outlets, including the BBC.

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