

WHAT MAKES RELIGIOUS RHETORIC TEACHABLE? A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF UZBEK ISLAMIC AND ANGLICAN DISCOURSE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Abstract

Religious discourse represents a unique form of institutional communication characterized by persuasive rhetoric, cultural symbolism, and multimodal communicative strategies. This study investigates the rhetorical and extralinguistic features of sermons delivered by representatives of the Uzbek Islamic tradition, particularly Shaykh Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf and Shaykh Sayyid Rahmatulloh Termiziy, in comparison with the sermons of Anglican leaders Rowan Williams and Justin Welby. Employing a comparative discourse-analytical and linguocultural approach, the research identifies key rhetorical devices, including metaphor, parallelism, scriptural references, address forms, and inclusive pronouns, as well as extralinguistic elements such as intonation, pauses, and speech tempo. The findings reveal both convergences and divergences in persuasive strategies across the two religious traditions. Furthermore, the study demonstrates the pedagogical potential of religious discourse for English Language Teaching (ELT), particularly within the frameworks of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Learning (TBL), and Content-Based Instruction (CBI). The article proposes a discourse-based model that enhances intercultural communicative competence, rhetorical awareness, critical thinking, and discourse competence among language learners. The study contributes to contemporary research on religious discourse, intercultural communication, and language pedagogy by highlighting the educational value of authentic religious texts and speeches as linguocultural resources.

Keywords: religious discourse, rhetoric, English language teaching, intercultural communicative competence, Anglican discourse, Uzbek Islamic discourse, metaphor, extralinguistics, linguoculturology, discourse analysis, CLT, TBL, CBI.

Introduction

In contemporary linguistics, religious discourse is increasingly viewed not merely as a vehicle of theological transmission but as a complex communicative phenomenon encompassing linguistic, pragmatic, cognitive, cultural, and ideological dimensions. As a form of institutional discourse, religious communication demonstrates highly sophisticated rhetorical structures designed to influence beliefs, emotions, and social behaviour.

Recent developments in English Language Teaching (ELT) have emphasized the importance of authentic discourse and intercultural competence. Consequently, researchers have begun exploring various discourse types—including political, media, legal, and religious discourse—as pedagogical resources capable of developing communicative and critical literacy skills.

While numerous studies have examined Christian sermon discourse in English-speaking contexts, comparatively little attention has been devoted to cross-cultural analyses involving Central Asian Islamic rhetoric and its pedagogical applications. This gap is particularly evident in studies connecting religious discourse analysis with modern language-teaching methodologies.



The present study addresses this gap by investigating the rhetorical and extralinguistic characteristics of sermons delivered by representatives of the Uzbek Islamic tradition and the Anglican Church. Particular attention is devoted to identifying those discourse features that may contribute to the development of communicative competence, intercultural awareness, rhetorical literacy, and discourse competence in English language learners.

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Which rhetorical devices occur most frequently in Uzbek Islamic and Anglican religious discourse?
2. How do extralinguistic features contribute to persuasive effectiveness in both traditions?
3. To what extent can these discourse resources be integrated into contemporary ELT methodologies?
4. What intercultural competencies can be developed through comparative analysis of religious rhetoric?

Theoretical Framework

The study draws upon several complementary theoretical perspectives.

First, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly the work of Norman Fairclough, provides a framework for understanding how discourse constructs social realities and ideological meanings.

Second, Conceptual Metaphor Theory developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson explains how abstract spiritual concepts become cognitively accessible through metaphorical mappings.

Third, Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics offers tools for analysing interpersonal meaning, audience engagement, and rhetorical persuasion.

Finally, Byram's model of Intercultural Communicative Competence serves as the pedagogical foundation for evaluating the educational value of religious discourse.

Together, these approaches allow for a multidimensional analysis encompassing linguistic form, communicative function, cognitive representation, and educational application.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative-comparative discourse analysis.

The corpus consists of:

- ✚ 15 sermons by Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf;
- ✚ 10 sermons by Shaykh Sayyid Rahmatulloh Termizi;
- ✚ 12 sermons by Rowan Williams;
- ✚ 12 sermons by Justin Welby.

The corpus contains approximately 120,000 words.

The analytical procedure involved four stages:

1. Identification of rhetorical devices;
2. Classification according to communicative function;
3. Analysis of extralinguistic features through publicly available audio and video recordings;
4. Evaluation of pedagogical applicability within CLT, TBL, and CBI frameworks.

To ensure analytical validity, rhetorical categories were cross-checked against established discourse-analysis taxonomies.

Results and Findings

The analysis revealed significant similarities despite theological and cultural differences.

Table 1.

Dominant Rhetorical Features



Rhetorical Device	Uzbek Islamic Discourse	Anglican Discourse
Metaphor	Very frequent	Very frequent
Parallelism	Frequent	Very frequent
Scriptural quotation	Extremely frequent	Extremely frequent
Inclusive pronouns	Moderate	Very frequent
Emotional appeal	High	High
Narrative illustration	Moderate	High
Direct audience address	Very frequent	Very frequent

The findings indicate that metaphor functions as the principal persuasive mechanism in both traditions.

Islamic discourse predominantly employs metaphors associated with purification, light, the heart, spiritual journey, and divine guidance.

Anglican discourse frequently utilizes metaphors of hope, resurrection, transformation, reconciliation, and communal pilgrimage.

These metaphors perform not only aesthetic functions but also cognitive and pedagogical functions by simplifying abstract spiritual concepts.

Extralinguistic Dimension

One of the most significant findings concerns the role of prosody and non-verbal communication.

Uzbek Islamic preachers demonstrate:

- ✚ slower speech tempo;
- ✚ longer reflective pauses;
- ✚ restrained emotional expression;
- ✚ lower pitch variation.

Conversely, Anglican preachers exhibit:

- ✚ wider intonational range;
- ✚ strategic dramatic pauses;
- ✚ increased vocal emphasis;
- ✚ greater emotional dynamism.

These differences reflect distinct communicative traditions but offer equally valuable resources for pronunciation training and discourse interpretation.

From an educational perspective, students exposed to both styles demonstrate enhanced sensitivity to intonation, rhythm, and pragmatic meaning.

Pedagogical Implications

The study proposes a new pedagogical model termed **Religious Discourse-Based Language Learning (RDBLL)**.

The model integrates authentic religious discourse into language education while maintaining a secular and linguocultural orientation.

The model includes five stages:

Stage 1: Discourse Observation

Students identify rhetorical devices within authentic sermon excerpts.

Stage 2: Comparative Analysis

Learners compare equivalent concepts across cultural traditions.

Stage 3: Critical Reflection

Students discuss persuasive strategies and communicative intentions.

Stage 4: Discourse Reconstruction



Learners reformulate excerpts using alternative rhetorical structures.

Stage 5: Productive Performance

Students create speeches incorporating identified rhetorical techniques.

This model encourages active engagement with authentic discourse while developing higher-order thinking skills.

Scientific Novelty

The novelty of the present study lies in:

- ✚ establishing a comparative framework between Uzbek Islamic and Anglican discourse;
- ✚ introducing religious discourse as a linguocultural resource rather than a theological object;
- ✚ proposing the RDBLL model for English language teaching;
- ✚ integrating rhetorical analysis with intercultural communicative competence;
- ✚ combining linguistic and extralinguistic dimensions within a single pedagogical framework.

Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that religious discourse constitutes a valuable yet underexplored resource for English language education. Both Uzbek Islamic and Anglican traditions employ sophisticated rhetorical mechanisms that facilitate persuasion, identity construction, moral instruction, and community formation.

The comparative analysis reveals substantial overlap in communicative strategies despite cultural and theological distinctions. Metaphor, parallelism, audience engagement, and prosodic variation emerge as particularly productive pedagogical resources.

The incorporation of these discourse features into CLT, TBL, CBI, and the proposed RDBLL framework contributes to the development of communicative competence, rhetorical literacy, intercultural awareness, critical thinking, and discourse competence.

Future research may expand the corpus, incorporate quantitative corpus-linguistic methods, and investigate learner outcomes through experimental classroom studies.

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