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Recovering from cultural blindness: multimodal Positive Discourse Analysis of metaphors in hand-drawn sketches about Islam

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Abstract: This paper extends Nartey's model of Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA), examining the visual metaphors (VM) in the representations of Islamic identity. The paper highlights how hand-drawings operate as a positive discourse resisting negative accusations in hegemonic discourses about Islam. This PDA study is an intellectual proximity between semiotics, VMs and cultural studies. Through the constructed framework, I argue that PDA can utilize VMs to construct/construe homogeneity and inclusiveness. Through the findings of this study, we can construe the imageries as a reflection of the physical and cultural environments whose cognition is attained by examining how semiotic signs reflect and are reflected by conscious awareness and perception. A major criticism of PDA is its lack of contextual framing, that's why this paper provides a contextual framing mixing semiotic visuality and the sociocultural construal of discursive representation of Muslim identity. The interpretation of the findings is contextualized after the adaptation of the philosophical view of Molyneux's question, the issue of blindness from birth, and the capability of seeing things properly if someone, hypothetically, gains his sight again.

Keywords: culture; Islam; Molyneux's problem; multimodality; Positive Discourse Analysis; social semiotics; visual metaphors

1 Introduction

Discourses about Islam depict it as holding violent ideological beliefs instigating brutal practices against non-Muslims. Such preconceived knowledge about Islam

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negatively affects its recipients. The purpose of this paper is to elucidate, through drawings and sensual semiotic elements (SEs), how visual metaphors (VM) contribute to the construction of a new reality about Islam. Visual readings of metaphors in sketches are regarded as a medium that can express homogeneity and inclusiveness, i.e., a resisting discourse. A culture re-viewing of ‘what Islam is’ can be assimilated to recovering from blindness and can be a proposed answer to William Molyneux’s question (1665–1698). Molyneux posed a philosophical question about the relationship between perception and knowledge. A blind-born man who was taught to distinguish the shapes by touch, would he be able to distinguish them by sight if he recovered from his blindness? The problem is represented in his semiotic visualization of a cube and a sphere as follows:

Suppose a man born blind, and now adult, and taught by his touch to distinguish between a Cube, and a Sphere of the same metal, and nighly of the same bigness, so as to tell, when he felt one and t’other, which is the Cube, which the Sphere. Suppose then the Cube and Sphere placed on a Table, and the Blind Man to be made to see. Quære, whether by his sight, before he touched them, he could now distinguish, and tell, which is the Globe, which the Cube (Locke 1979 [1694], p. 146).

Molyneux’s question catches the attention of philosophers of mind whose main concern is with recognition concepts of experience reinforced by reflections on how recognition concepts work in other domains as well (Levin 2008, p. 21). Triggered by Molyneux’s question, this study, proposes that we can construe the abstractness of the imageries as a reflection of the true physical and cultural environment surrounding Islam. I argue that the positive cognition is attained by examining the real implication of the semiotic signs that are intended to positively create conscious awareness about Islam. Such representational construal can be utilized as a means of resistance to hegemonic discourses.

Sketching is a free hand-drawing that enables creativity and authenticity resulting from spontaneity and genuineness of the emotions behind such drawings (Otu and Oliodi 2020). Such hand-drawings, we claim, can be a multimodal positive discourse (MPD) that can change our knowledge and pre-established conceptions about Islam. In this study, the participants are encouraged to draw sketches allowing readers to culturally reinterpret them and to cognitively develop positive sociocultural viewpoints. The study raises the question of “How can visuals be used as a means of recovering from cultural blindness to awaken inclusion and suppress exclusion?”

2 Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA)

The term Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA), as introduced by Martin (2004), focused on the constructive ways of empowering the: (i) voice of the powerless to

contribute with their opinions, (ii) feelings and emotions by depending on empathy and communicating shared values, and (iii) narratives that support values and "...renovate discourses that enact a better world" (Martin 2004, p. 24). PDA is an analytical framework that expresses the concerns of the marginalized groups (Nartey 2020), lifts the public morale in the time of crises (Sultan and Rapi 2020) and creates public societal alignment and satisfaction (Calle-Díaz 2014). PDA focuses on the discourse that the public likes (Macgilchrist 2007). According to Nartey (2020), PDA represents an emerging research strand that falls under discourse analysis.

Criticism has leveled off against PDA as misleading (Wodak and Chilton 2005) or a form of propaganda (Flowerdew 2008). However, Barlett (2012) contends that PDA is evaluated according to the degree of harmony to which the roles of discourse are postulated without sacrificing the cultural identity. PDA, Barlette (2017) contends, is the practice that enables "...local communities to approach change with a full knowledge and esteem for their existing social practices and, because rather than in spite of this, not to fear change" (p. 213).

Barlette (2017) views CDA and PDA as two different approaches to discourse in which CDA focuses on domination and (in)equality. PDA centers on 'spaces of resistance' where the "dominant and dominated come together" (Barlette 2017, p. 217). It is an approach deployed as a form of resistance discourse to reveal the discursive representations and practices of leaders who resist oppressing ideologies (Nartey 2020). "Within PDA, resistance is not only considered to be a reaction to injustice and oppression, but also as a social action that can bring about progressive change and transformation in society" (Nartey 2020, p. 194). In addition to surging resistance and encouraging progressive social changes, discourse can be institutionally constructed to boost the morale and maintain the psychological state of the recipients.

While CDA approaches events critically for the service of power (Martin 2004), PDA examines these events from a positive standpoint "...valuing some aspect of social change – putting our values on the line in a way that is not demanded by critique" (Martin 2004, p. 8). PDA inspires and encourages rather than diversifies and dominates (Martin 2004). Nartey (2020) argues that PDA empowers the less powerful by using language to reveal inspiring messages "...of encouragement, hope and strength in times of difficulty, thereby, underscoring the main assumption of PDA" (p. 194). In this sense, as Nartey argues, PDA does not promote 'destructive behavior', rather, it views discourse from a positive angle that is different from the angle used to view the "current industrial civilization" (Stibbe 2017, p. 173). Khettab (2019) argues that while CDA utilizes deconstructive techniques of analysis, PDA reconstructs and focuses on how positively progressive the discourse is, so as to evaluate and maintain positive social change (Nartey 2020).

Positive discursive strategies strengthen groups, build communal identities and emancipate the discourse from CDA's ideological import.

PDA differs from Shi-Xu's (2016) Culture Discourse Studies approach, since it does not highlight ideological viewpoints (Nartey 2020), rather, it seeks to highlight cultural heritage and focus holistically on marginalized social groups while creating homogenous interrelations between them (Nartey 2020; Shi-Xu 2005, 2014, 2016).

PDA is used to analyze discourses in various contexts as in political conflicts (Calle-Díaz 2014; Sultan and Rapi 2020), disability rights activists (Hughes 2018), pandemic crisis (Ali and Jawad 2023), and family counseling posts in Facebook (El-Waki 2018). The role of PDA in these contexts, among others, is to construct positive and solidary context as a means of resisting the negative discourses prevailing at the time of conflicts. This is the kind of discourse that creates homogeneity rather than constructing hegemony among members of the communities. The role of this study, thus, is to address the gap resulting from culturally understudied multimodal discourses using PDA. Thus, PDA of multimodal hand-drawing sketches, hopefully, provides methodological insights about creating/modifying the perception of undervalued communities and creating the knowledge that is sufficient to perceive how culturally different/similar these communities are.

3 Visual metaphors in the discourse of hand-drawings

Metaphors, as a rhetoric form, identify things/ideas in terms of attributes of others (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). This figurative language prevails in everyday communication to perform referential, quantification and motivating actions and can, thus, be used as a means of resisting dominant ideologies (Musolff 2004).

Visual studies emphasize the interconnection between rhetoric and multimodality. "Multimodal rhetoric contains a variety of visual, verbal and other sensory information that is often contradictory, distracting and confusing" (Jeldsen and Hess 2021, p. 328). Pflaeging and Stöckl (2021) commend the practical combination of text and image and their effects on the mental perception of the receiver. The rhetorical implications of such multimodal representations, Forceville (2017) contends, can be reflected in drawings and animations. The metaphoric conceptualization of such multimodal rhetoric representations is crucial for narrative arts and its interpretation which is conditioned by cultural knowledge (Fauconnier and Turner 2002; Musolff 2004). Hand-drawings (i.e., a metaphoric art that is composed of SEs) have been studied in terms of topography, image component size, color coding and layout

which are considered as critical elements in the visualization of the discourse of hand-drawn sketches (Pflaeging and Stöckl 2021).

Serig (2006) describes the mental processes involved in VMs cognition as complex networks associated with sensory experiential elements. In his study, Serig (2006) identifies the conceptual structure of VMs and relates it to the metaphoric thinking. To him, the emotive inflections of rhetoric arts are interconnected, i.e., “[i]f the cognitive view of metaphor relies on the blending of concepts, and concepts derive from the play of the affective with the intellectual, then this appears to set art practices as an arena for the study of metaphor” (Serig 2006, p. 230). So, this study addresses the process of conceptualizing the metaphoric meanings based on how the SEs are perceived within their cultural context.

4 Methodology

4.1 Data collection

The corpus of this study was collected in three steps. First, the researcher conducted a sixty-minute induction and tutorial session to familiarize the participants with the study’s aims, objectives, and context. Seventy-five participants, whose age ranges from 16 to 22 years, have given their informed consents to join the study after answering all their questions. Although not all students are Muslims, Christians students show enthusiasm to participate in the study.

Second, a semi-structured interview was conducted to make the participants cognizant with some of the prevailing anti-Islam ideologies. Third, the participants were required to react in hand-drawing to the study’s main research question of “how to improve the Muslims’ image?”. Among the topics that were discussed in this interview are the respondents’ understanding of what represents terrorism, racism, brutality, fanaticism, and ignorance. The respondents’ understanding is viewed in the current study to function as a stimulus for the respondents’ way(s) to resist stereotypes and sociocultural marginalization. The interview’s discussion is intended to prompt the respondents to illustrate their resistance of such negative ideologies using hand-drawings as a practice of resistance.

4.1.1 Analytical procedures

Figure 1 illustrates the analytical steps followed in this study. As a first layer of analysis, I started by decomposing the corpus into SEs, annotating these elements using Ledin and Machin (2018). As a second layer of analysis, I explained the relationship between these SEs and the source/target metaphoric domains using Lakoff

and Johnson (1980). In this step, all the sketches were thematically and structurally classified, according to the recurrent visual patterns, into metaphoric groupings. In the third layer of analysis, I related the microstructure (findings from steps 1 and 2) and presumed how the discourse of sketches, with its VMs, creates a language of resistance within the framework of Narthey's (2020) PDA. This macro-analysis is carried out to interpret how the discourse of resistance overcomes (or not) the cultural impediments that prevent the voices of some sociocultural communities.

It is argued that, using metaphors, PDA can counter-frame the mainstream discourse (Macgilchrist 2007) which is the intention of this study. This study, thus, seeks to analyze how the verbal and visual representations are used to resist the discourses with negative attributes about Islam. The findings, then, were framed within Molyneux's philosophy which relates the 'perception' of visual imageries to the 'knowledge' and construal of the reflected actions, identities and values connoted by these imageries.

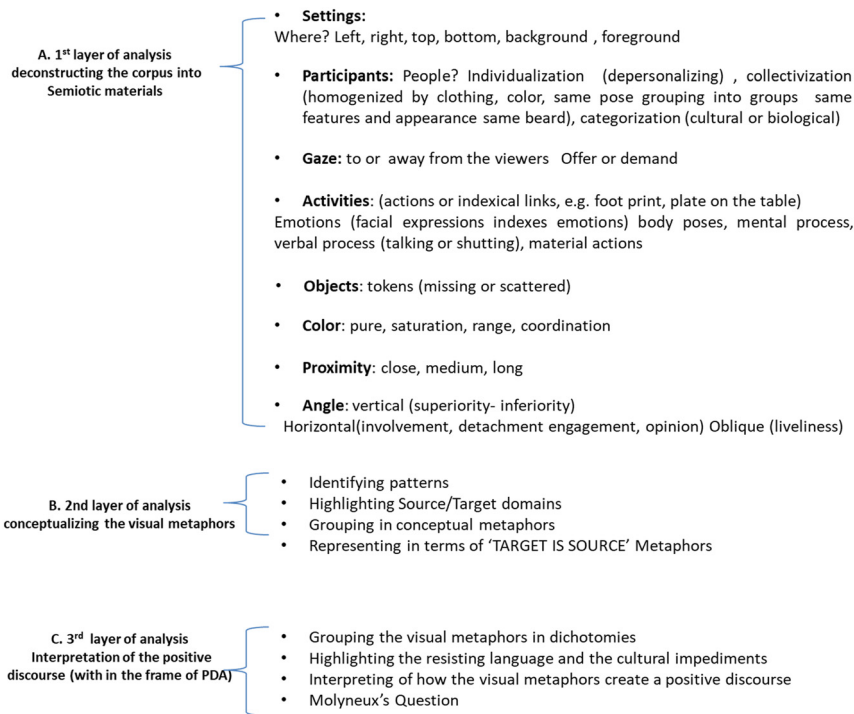


Figure 1: Procedural steps of analysis.

4.1.2 Research questions

Through the methodology adopted, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do the available semiotic resources construct visual metaphors about Islam (source and target domains)?
2. How can PDA utilize metaphors to resist reinforced hegemonic depictions and stereotypes about Islam?
3. How can(not) cultural difference blind social participants from perceiving (constructed) reality of the undervalued socio-cultural communities?

5 Analysis

On analyzing the data drawn from the interviews, participants agreed that Islam had been negatively tainted with misinterpretations and is being accused to be ‘barbaric’, ‘violent’, and proliferating ‘fierce hatred’, ‘oppressive’, and ‘terroristic’ practices. Participants argued that discourses about Islam consider it a hegemonic force and source of domination that must be repressed. The interviewees asserted that positive Islamic practices, concepts, and values have long been ignored and de-emphasized. Within this conceptualization about Islam, this section proceeds with a micro-linguistic analysis of the corpus of the sketches which are visually deconstructed into SEs. Recurrent patterns are identified and metaphoric implications are, then, deduced and labeled as VMs.

When participants were asked to visually depict how to construct positive imageries about Islam, they emphasized several conceptualized notions, beliefs, and practices in their hand-drawings. In many of their drawings, participants embodied some of the ways with which Islam had encouraged integration and homogeneity. The interview yields in the subjects depicting multimodal imageries mirroring a set of resisting attitudes (e.g., peace, homogeneity, tolerance acceptance, and equality) that can be construed through the following visual metaphoric conceptualization.

5.1 ISLAM IS LOVE–MERCY–FESTIVITY–SERENITY–PEACE

The following set of images witness the recurrence of some visual elements such as mosques, persons, hearts, etc. These semiotics elements are used with intended compositions to connote various beliefs that, when culturally read, can resist some ideological stereotypical views about Islam.

In Figure 2 sketch (A), the metaphoric image ISLAM IS LOVE is created by visualizing two hands as an index of supplication. The source domain LOVE is visualized by the *heart*, an icon of inner feelings which connotes clinging to affection to resist the perception of Islam as a religion of hatred. With a textual element of the deity's name 'Allah' in the center, the heart implies that serenity is accomplished by keeping divinity in its core. Interestingly, the hand and the heart represent parts of the human body performing external and internal practices. Composition in this sketch is marked by the centralization of all its objects. The image is drawn from a bird's-eye view where the heart is foregrounded and fully perceived with the name of deity inside. Although the whole sketch is drawn with a pencil in black and white, the sketcher perceived the heart as having a shade to give 3D dimensional deepness. It is an obligatory interconnected conjunctive relationship between the three depicted objects, *heart*, *hands*, and *Allah*.

In sketch (B), the metaphoric image ISLAM IS MERCY is reflected in the *heart* in addition to the *mosque*. The size of the SEs, however, is very crucial in signifying the intended meaning. That is, the heart incubates a globe which connotes universal emotions. This construction has the same size as the mosque which bears religious implications. Such equality of size reflects their equality in importance. Foregrounded, the heart is positioned in the bottom right corner of the image in

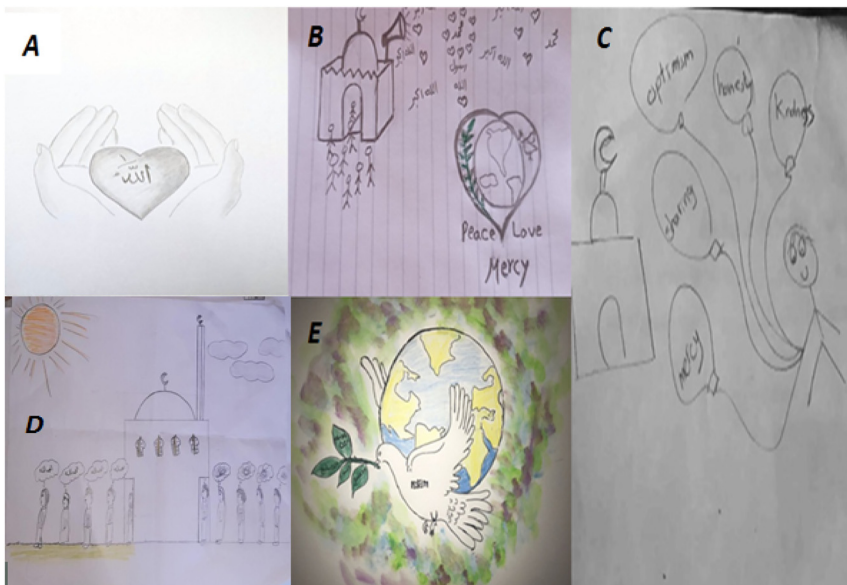


Figure 2: ISLAM IS LOVE—MERCY—FESTIVITY—SERENITY—PEACE.

comparison with the mosque which is, not completely backgrounded, positioned in the top left corner. Due to the right-to-left linearity of the Arabic language, this may be assimilated to theme-rheme organization of ideas. This oppositional construction reflects the cultural orientation of the Arabic language.

As textual metaphors are composed of lexical choices, VMs, in sketch (B), are composed using SEs. For instance, the sketcher customized two sets of objects, namely, the mosque and its peripheries (microphone, speech, Muslim worshiper) and peace with its embedded constituents (heart, dove, olive branch, and textual referential) to create a S–V–O syntagmatic relationship with their components and a paradigmatic relationship with the other sets of elements. That is, the microphone represents the action performed or the ‘verb’ (calling for obligatory love), and the Muslims entering the mosque represent the grammatical ‘object’ affected by the process of calling, while the ‘subject’ is conceptualised in the mosque which is performing the action of calling. The same S–V–O syntagmatic relationship is represented in the heart which possess (v.to have) the embedded globe and the other elements to express the meaning of owning the world with ‘love, peace and mercy’ as textually represented in the drawing. In doing so, the collective heart objects were shown as coming out in profusion from the mosque’s mounted microphone that is on par to the call for prayers to intensify the semantic effect. Drawing the hearts as broadcasted via the microphone on par of prayers’ calls loads the depiction with a sense of urgency and an appearance of a fundamental and binding activity like that of prayer. Sketch (B) is a visual metaphoric representation of *MERCY* (resisting the ideology of the brutality of Islam) where both cultural and religious implications are represented in the process of praying and the process of Azan (Call for pray) as well as the written text of the name of the Prophet Muhammed. The cultural implications of the SEs are reflected in an invisible speech bubble getting out of the microphone (small hearts) which conforms with the large heart embracing the globe.

Sketch (C) comprises SEs that depict the metaphoric image of *ISLAM IS FESTIVITY*. Again, the *mosques* are the key visual element that symbolizes a social institution that constructs not a religious realm only but also festive cultural world. The metaphor of festivity (resisting melancholy) is constructed by the *balloon seller* who is gazing to the audience and asking them to perform a social action of hold/buying the balloons, inside which quotes of Islamic values are inscribed. The balloon seller is one of the represented participants whose significance reflects cultural-specific significance. As a cultural ritual in Islam, selling balloons to families is common in feasts to spread happiness. To support this idea, the sketcher draws circular-shaped *balloons* with textual references inside to emphasise the *mottos* of inclusiveness, mercy, and hope. In contrast, the depiction of the mosque with straight lines creates a dichotomy between the two shapes. Numbers are

critical in this sketch; it is only one mosque implying monotheism and five balloons are inspired by the number of the pillars of Islam. These numerical implications are asserted by the sketcher when interviewed about his view of the SEs in the drawing. The interviewee asserted that, by the repetition of the drawings of the balloons with their textual elements, the sketch is intended to resist the negative representations about Islam, i.e. a religion of 'kindness', not violence, 'mercy' not injustice, 'honesty' not mischief, etc.

Sketch (D) is a visual depiction of the metaphor ISLAM IS SERENITY (no distress or distraction). The *mosque* and *worshiper* as SEs play a role in the visual composition of the metaphoric meaning. Interestingly, the arrangements of these SEs affect the focus of the reader who can easily identify the right-to-left alignment of the depicted objects. In this sense, the image of serenity can be metaphorically inferred through the Arabic right-to-left linearity. The sketcher intended to divide the drawing into two halves with parallel course of actions. A dynamic VM is narratively created by depicting settings (*landscape*), characters (*worshippers*), and actions (*performing prayers*). A billow of *clouds* was placed on the right-hand side of the image to indicate a sense of desolation and despair while the *sun* with its *yellow color* was configured on the left-hand side to mark hope and serenity. The material action of walking inside the mosque is the tool to index the performance of religious rituals. The sketcher organised the SEs in the right half of the drawing with people having disrupted emotional states of mind. This is parallel to the left half which comprises a sun and people in a positive and active state of mind which assimilates to what Fontana (1994) said about daylight and sun that they mark divine activities corresponding to joy and happiness. The *windows* in the mosque maybe interpreted as a means of letting the divine light to pass through. According to Fontana (1994), "a window admits the light of God to a church or a temple" (p. 77). The SEs depict a sense of right-to-left motion. The drawing of the represented participants is generic, i.e., emotions and appearance can easily be relatable and identifiable by any reader; their faces and body postures are not drawn to specify a social group over the other. Numbering again plays a meaningful role as the member of the people entering the mosque is five which is equal to those getting out of it. This may help in achieving harmony between the SEs in the sketch.

Sketch (E) represents the metaphor of ISLAM IS PEACE (as opposed to war). "The importance of war and peace in human affairs is reflected in a rich symbolic vocabulary" (Fontana 1994, p. 72). The hand-drawing utilizes the classical symbolism of the '*dove and olive branch*' as the classical metaphoric representation of peace; "A symbol of the great flood, when the dove brought an olive branch to Noah" (p. 72). Centered in the sketch, the world peace is represented as the core of the PD about Islam. The sketcher uses *color tone* to distinguish the various levels of the green color. As a color of peace and welfare, the *green color* prevails in the drawing.

The *blue colors* in the globe represent water areas while the land is represented in yellow. The utilization of this color scheme creates a visual context where the dove is holding the whole world over its shoulder. Interestingly, to obviate any misinterpretation of the symbol of dove, the sketcher used the word 'Islam' (target domain) on the body of the dove (source domain).

5.2 ISLAM IS ADVISORY—DISCIPLINARY—HYGIENE—HELP

The semiotic patterns in the following set of sketches create the metaphors that connote dynamicity and positive practices embedded in the Islamic commandments.

In Figure 3, sketch (F), to resist the perception of Islam as a religion of carelessness, the metaphor ISLAM IS ADVISORY can be induced. This image is constructed by the Arabic right-to-left motion indexed by the *footsteps* of the represented participant moving towards his 'goal', i.e., *mosque*. The equal size of the *worshippers* and the mosque signifies the equal importance of these objects. There is a verbal message activating the motion of the worshiper. It is a speech produced by worshipper asserting the importance of walking to the mosque and sharing the dynamic practice of prayers with other Muslims. Although the walk towards the mosque is individually indexed, the collective behavior of praying inside the mosque is implicitly understood. With minimum semiotic resources and a salient cultural knowledge, we can conceive a communal action inside the mosque even if this is not explicitly drawn in the sketch. Although the normal orientational direction of the worshipper to have his back towards the audience, the sketcher opted for emphasising the relaxing and caring facial expressions and eye-gaze towards the audience and textually advising them to gain the rewards promised to those who pray in the mosque.

Sketch (G) reflects the metaphor ISLAM IS DISCIPLINARY. The imagery depicts dynamic participants grouped in six pairs performing six different good deeds. The performed actions have socio-cultural implications that oppose recklessness. The depicted practices revolve around the 'centralized' *Holy Book* 'Quran' which is highlighted in the drawing. Sociologically, the good deed of helping others is reflected in the male character who is *leaving his chair for a pregnant woman*. Another positive deed called by Muslims is the social behavior of following the *etiquette* of moving up and down stairs with keeping your right side to allow others to get up and down freely. This behavior is visually and verbally represented by the stairs with a verbal message *يمين 'right'*. In the sketch, all the human figures have equal sizes. The high angle imagery allows the reader to capture all the actions simultaneously as if they are neutral unified action taking place in all aspects of life.

Sketch (H) depicts the metaphor ISLAM IS HYGIENE. The SEs reinforce the conceptualisation of a Muslims *removing filths and dirt* as a core practice of Islamic



Figure 3: ISLAM IS ADVISORY–DISCIPLINARY–HYGIENE–HELP.

rituals. Interestingly, the building represented has a cross over it which marks Christianity. The quote, however, is part of an Islamic Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad *النظافة من الإيمان* ‘Cleanness is next to godliness’. This depicts the homogeneity, integration, and inclusiveness within the conception of the participant who drew this sketch. The building is represented in a set of *blocks* “which marks the availability and the countability of the actions performed in front of this construction”, as explained by the sketcher. The female cleaner identifies the sketcher gender. As a female, the sketcher argued that she is cleaning freely unveiled. Her size in comparison to the dirt reflects her full control over the *dirt*. “Only with few cultural knowledge about such relationship between the drawn elements, we can recognize the message sent by this sketch”, the sketcher asserted.

In sketch (I) the metaphor *ISLAM IS HELP* (not repression), the represented participants are looking towards the audience to express their feelings when someone is *giving the other money to help* them. A *Money* note is centralized, and the stretched arms form a vector connecting the two participants. Who is giving whom the money is not clear. The sketcher argues that it is a common attitudinal belief in the Islamic repertoire to hide the charity in order not to hurt the emotions of the poor. The image sought to show this hideous activity and a textual representation of the importance of charity is stated to highlight what the visualisation is about. The size of the two

participants is equal to signify no one is inferior/superior to the 'Other'. Indexing the action of the 'giving', the hands are backgrounded behind the money which is marked by the dollar sign which is signify that "giving charity is not restricted to Arab Muslims only", the interviewee argued.

An obvious reason to the assaultive narrative about Islam is the reservoir of ideological suspicions against the actions practiced and exercised by Muslims. The underrepresentation of Muslim positive practices towards the society fosters the participants to produce this set of drawings.

5.3 ISLAM IS HOMOGENEITY–EQUALITY–FREEDOM–UNITY

Discourse about Islam accuse it of being discriminatory and hegemonic over the. The following set of sketches depicts a positive metaphorical imagery about Islam. The metaphor ISLAM IS HOMOGENEITY–EQUALITY–FREEDOM–UNITY reflect how the sketchers believe 'what real Islam is'.

Figure 4 sketch (J) depicts the metaphor ISLAM IS HOMOGENEITY (resisting hegemony) with attributes about Christianity and Islam. First, the sketcher utilizes the language of clothes which, according to Barthes (2004), functions as a grammar within the context of the discourse. The two represented participants wear *cloaks*, *head-caps*, and simple *clogs*. These garments reflect the religious identities. Although both characters are from different religions, they are positioned in the same locality. They are adjacent to each other, with minimum physical, thus, social distance. The accessories they wear, *cross* and prayer *beads* '*sebha*', along with their beards function as extra informational support to further reinforce knowledge about their identity. Their religious identity is boosted visually through the huge cross and crescent which are drawn in big size in the background. Their size is large in comparison to the surrounding SEs. After being acquainted with these cultural parameters, this image can be interpreted as a depiction of unity, equality, and commonality to obviate any religious conflicts called for by Islam.

Sketch (K) also fosters the metaphor ISLAM IS EQUALITY. The visual elements resist the ideology of Islam is a religion of inequality. Visually, the drawing displays three pairs of people who are stereotypically described to be powerless and inferior within the Islamic culture. The metaphor is depicted with dynamic actions indexed in the mental communicative processes between the *priest* and the *Sheikh* as both are having their face to the viewer and their *eye-gaze* is mirroring their peaceful state of mind. The second pair is represented as exchanging objects, *flower bunch* as a marker of sentimental affection with the children. The third pair uses the technique of gazing to the viewer to show exchanged kindness and inner satisfaction of the old people.



Figure 4: ISLAM IS HOMOGENITY–EQUALITY–FREEDOM–UNITY.

Interestingly, these dynamic actions are represented on one horizontal line reflecting emotional stability of the sketched participants.

Sketch (L) is a representation of the metaphor ISLAM IS FREEDOM (not oppression). The imagery explicates timely development of a female student proceeding through her education to get graduated till she practices medicine. The sketch resembles a *flowchart*, and the use of arrows symbolizes the transformational phases of her development. Gender issues are visually reflected in the *sartorial* language of the represented female. The drawing of her clothes helps in marking the development of the character and shaping her sociocultural role as well as her independent identity through her education and profession. The temporal metaphor connotes phases to empowering women. This metaphor represents a resisting voice against the accusation of Islam that it opposes educating the females and allowing them to have a profession. The sketcher here claims that Islam “...is not a patriarchal belief. Men and women have the same rights, one of which is education. Citizenship is not evaluated by the biological sex, but by the effectiveness in the society. Women in Islam are well educated effective members in the society”, the interviewee emphasized.

In sketch (M), the implication of the metaphor of ISLAM IS UNITY (not dividedness) can be inferred by the unification of some SEs and the duality of others. Duality is explicitly represented in: *two lighthouses* where Islam and Christianity are on top, *two-finger sign of victory*, *two Sheikhs* walking together and *two hands* holding each other. This duality can be contrasted with *unary* symbolization of some religious beliefs which socio-culturally and conceptually are *one* in number. The sketcher portrays the *Ka'ba* (one construction for pilgrimage), *Quran* (one Holy Book), *Allahu Akbar* (one God), and a sole *devil*. Dynamically depicted, the *devil* is cutting the vector connecting the semiotic binary of the *Muslim* and the *Christian* participants, thus, increasing the distance between them. The sketch identifies the Muslim and the Christian with tools that have religious implications: a prayer *beads* and a *cross*, respectively. The devil is related to a *thought bubble* which marks a mental process of instigating for war and killing which is further stressed by the icon of guns which signify enmity. Interestingly, the portrayal of the devil has a political implication where the devil symbolizes the USA, “a symbol of the western controlling oppressive country”, an interviewee asserted.

This set depicts Islam as a belief that seeks homogeneity and inclusiveness. The holistic description of social members can be noticed, and people are categorized not according to their religion but according to their social effectiveness in the society. With a verbal intertextuality the sketch recalls the genre of *Islamic Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad* in the genre hand-drawings and this is manifested in the two commandments استوصوا بالنصارى خيراً ‘take care of your fellow Christians’ and ليس منا من لم يعطف على صغيرنا و يوقر كبيرنا “Anyone who does not show mercy to our children nor acknowledge the right of our old people is not one of us”. Gender stereotypical schema about Muslim women was contested and objectification of females, which have been acclaimed in the western discourse, are refuted.

5.4 ISLAM IS FUTURE-LIGHT

The connection between Islam and light is authenticated in the Quranic verses and this is represented verbally in the four sketches. A common feature in this set is the conceptualization of light as a source of positivity which is, also, opted to be verbally rather than visually.

Figure 5 sketch (N) visualizes the metaphor ISLAM IS FUTURE (in contrast to reactionary). The metaphor is attained through the utilization of the geometrical circularity of shapes: the *sun* (a marker of a new beginning, smoothness, and completion) and the *Islamic Minaret* (a marker of height and authenticity) (Bonner 2017). The *crescent* on the top of the minaret, also, displays temporal reference to night. Yet, in the context, crescent is culturally recognized as a symbol of Islam in day and night; sun and crescent are traditionally perceived as temporal markers. The verbal element inside the sun asserts the temporal reference to the future.

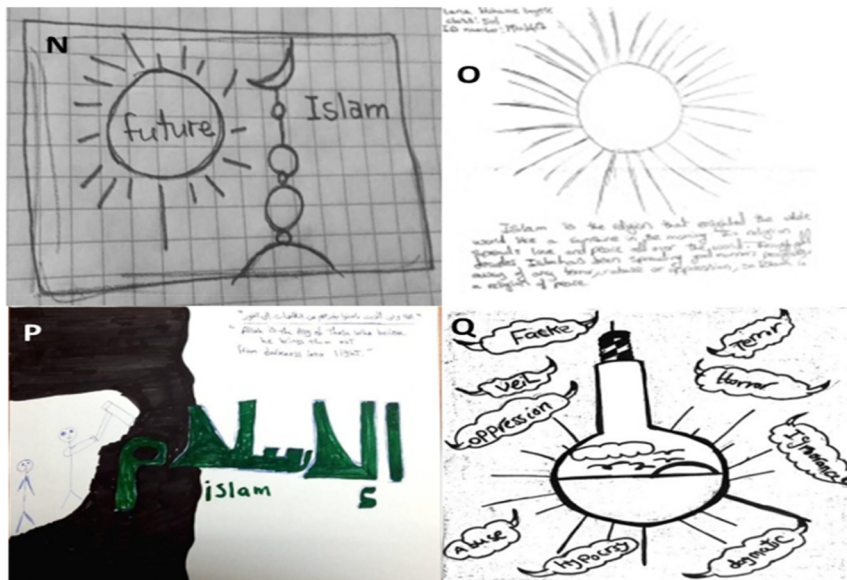


Figure 5: ISLAM IS FUTURE-LIGHT.

Metaphorically, the sketch connotes that Islam guides the humanity to the future and not just the past. The holistic interpretation of the sketch implies that the sun rises with the emergence of Islam. "Islam is the religion that gets people out of darkness", an interview cited. According to the interviewees, Islam is the light that leads the world to the future.

Sketches (O, P, and Q) manifest the iconic utilization of the sun to construct the metaphor ISLAM IS LIGHT (as opposed to darkness). Sketch (O) relies more on a verbal illustration to support the intended proposition.

In addition to the sun, which is centralized, the following verbal commentary is inscribed underneath to textually represent the metaphor of ISLAM IS PEACE:

Islam is the religion that enlightened the whole world like a sunshine in the morning. This religion spreads love and peace all over the world. Through all decades Islam has been spreading good manners peacefully, away of any terror, abuse or oppression, so Islam is a religion of peace.

Using simile, Islam is assimilated to ‘sunshine’. The metaphor is extended for the light is spreading peace, which in turn overcomes the negative practices that had been attributed to it. Islam is dynamically described to practice positive changes (spreading good manners) against stereotypical attributes (of terror, abuse, and oppression). In sketch (O), the power of Islam is assimilated to the positive power and the light of the sun illuminates the good and eliminates the evil from the whole world.

In sketch (P), the drawer divides the scenery into two halves, one representing darkness and the other representing light. The *calligraphical drawing* of the word الإسلام ‘Islam’ is anchored linking the two halves. Visually, a physical action is metaphorically represented; a real Muslim is the one digging through hardships to reach the *light* of Islam. The sketch connotes dynamic movement and physical action. The *axe* in the man’s hand is a tool that implies the difficulty of penetrating this hard blockade towards the light. The hollowness of the surrounding *vacuum* in the left half indexes accomplished hard work and progressive achievement. The whole meaning is boosted by intertextuality and the use of a Quranic verse *الله ولي الذين آمنوا يخرجهم من الظلمات الى النور* ‘Allah is the ally of those who believe. He brings them out from darkness into the light’ (Surat Al-Baqara, Verse 257).

In sketch (Q), a centrally positioned *light bulb* has a light house merged in its body. Metaphorically, the light house and the light bulb boost the ideas embedded within its frames. Within the frame of the bulb, several SEs quoted from the nature (*birds, clouds, and a sun*) to metaphorically imply relaxation, serenity, and peace of mind. This integration of light and nature conveys virtual positive feelings. Further, these feelings of peace and tranquility are challenged if a person gets out of this virtual frame, i.e., bulb glass. The external attributes are anchored to the bulb, oppression, terror, abuse, etc. All of which are metaphorically prohibited to enter the realms of the bulb. The centralization of the circular shape of the bulb, along with the straight vectors, connects it to the challenges outside the core of the Islam. The whole composition highlights positivity and resists negative attributes about Islam.

5.5 ISLAM IS TOLERANCE

The following sketches directly refute the OTHERness of Islam. The dominating discourse about Islam seeks to segregate and isolate Muslims as the BAD OTHER. The SEs in this set of images depicts the metaphor ISLAM IS TOLERANCE (as opposed to violence).

The metaphor in Figure 6 sketch (R) is dynamic; it is a narrative visualization as it comprises characters, settings, and a plot. In this sketch, a Muslim is visualized as

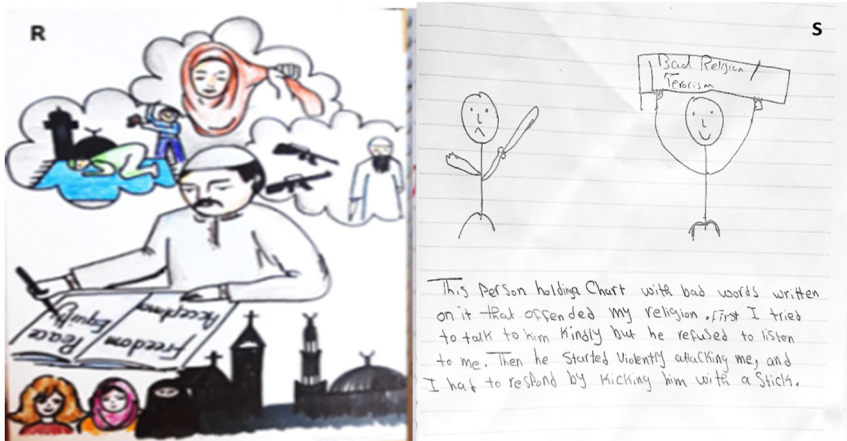


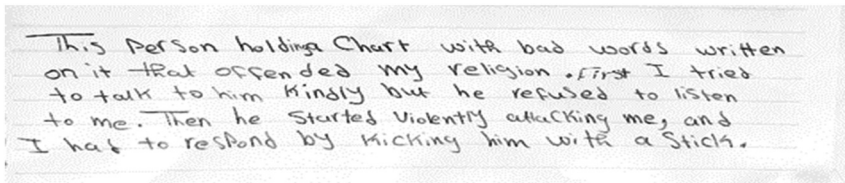
Figure 6: ISLAM IS TOLERANCE.

having *mental thoughts* of the pre-conceived ideologies about the violence of Islam. The depicted participant is performing a mental cognition and is inscribing his resisting thoughts peacefully in his note. In the bottom of the sketch, the objects are depicted in binaries where accusations of the exclusion of some social groups are rebutted. The positioning of the adjacent participants describes how homogenous and united Islam is. An *unveiled* woman is positioned side by side with a woman in *veil* and another in *Niqab*. Also, the power of unity between Christianity and Islam is metonymically described by the adjacent institutional buildings of the *mosque* and the *church*. The syntagmatic alignment of the objects helps in creating an image of unity and brotherhood.

The *thought bubble* comprises icons of violence which are attributed to Muslims. The VM within the first thought bubble is interpreted as attacks to Muslims. It indexes violent practices against Muslims where a prayer is threatened by a fanatic. Conversely, in the thought bubble, the man is praying on a blue mat which signifies peace and tranquility. In this bubble, the mosque is backgrounded in silhouette but the action of the man threatening the worshipper is highlighted. The second bubble includes another metaphor of a woman in veil and an index of violence against her is metonymically highlighted by a gripping hand of an anonymous individual. *Color* is significantly used to contest the stereotypical significance of *black* color of veil; the sketcher drew it in *orange*, a color of happiness and positivity. The third bubble includes a man with the classical garment of Muslims where beards and clothes mark his belief of the importance of the traditional appearance of a Muslim. However, according to the sketcher, the guns

symbolize brutality and violence against Muslims who cling to their right of clothing. Using these visual elements, the upper and the lower parts of the sketch explicate a contrasting signification of the conflicting cultural beliefs which are based on the unawareness of what Islam is and what it calls for (represented in the middle part of the image).

In sketch (S), the metaphoric imagery is constructed by symbols that connote mental cognition and structural reading of proximity between the characters and their eye gaze. The *banner* and the *stick* are symbolic tools used to attack and counterattack. These tools are held tightly by the depicted participants, and violence is indexed by the grip of the banner and the stick. The two participants are gazing to challenge each other with distance explicated between them. This visual space (as claimed too by St. Clair 2000) implies a social distance between them and their ideological beliefs. The banner comprises negative verbal message ‘Bad Religion/Terrorism’ which attacks Islam. The verbal explanation underneath illustrates the steps of resisting such attack:



The peaceful path of ‘talking’ was initially taken to resist the attacks, and when rejected the man was kicked with a stick. When interviewed, the sketcher argued that the text in the banner is generic and a general description for Islam is a result of individualistic violent practices of fanatics. “Even if these practices are not accepted by Muslims and Islam, the ‘Other’ still views Islam as a religion of brutality”, an interviewee asserted. The image is intended by the sketcher as a portrayal of individualistic behaviors that do not belong to the core of Islam. In general, attack-versus-resistance is a conceptualized meaning reflected in this set of sketches through mental processes which create a narrative between the SEs. These mental processes represent the voices of the marginalised participants.

6 Discussion: visualizing resistance

PDA, unlike CDA, fosters homogeneity between members of the less understood sociocultural communities. While CDA focuses critically on unequal power relations and ideologies, PDA emphasizes the positive messages within these

discourses by promoting positive practices rather than affirming their negative associations and confirming them as stereotypes. That is, PDA is considered as a discourse of resisting previous hegemonic discourse that CDA has long been promoting about Islam and Muslim communities.

In this study, the visual representation of metaphors highlights how the discourse of hand-drawn sketches can depict positive messages about Islam through semiotic constituents (e.g., symbols, colors, composition, etc.). This contributes to the methodological approach to PD by helping in constructing the experience of those who lack knowledge about the socio-cultural practices of Islam which has long been stereotyped within the realm of hegemonic discourses.

VMs can, thus, advance our understanding of PDA by providing an alternative methodological and theoretical framework for the analysis of the multimodal discourse of resistance which promotes positive social change and challenge negative stereotypes among culturally different communities.

The MPD analysis in this study recalls imageries from the source domain of humane senses in an attempt to resist the stereotypical attacks about Islam (Figure 7).

The VMs as seen in Figure 7 represents what Islam is(not). The list of source and target domains in Figure 7 is the resulting domains that are deduced after observing the recurrent patterns and the implying SEs. These source and target domains are set in dichotomies as the depicted attitudes/behaviors/actions in the sketches versus their resisting counterparts that are schematically and stereotypically perceived.

The list of the dichotomies in Figure 7 resulted from the recurrent imagery patterns of human emotions and external static and dynamic motifs. Depicted by symbols (e.g., *mosque*, *balloons*, *church*, calligraphy, *sun*, etc.), actions (e.g., *walking*, *giving*, *touching*, *holding*, etc.), and senses (e.g., *touch* and *sight*), these human attributes and practices help in describing people as belonging into homogenous (not hegemonic) social groups sharing the same cultural and innate behaviors.

The analysis uncovers how participants, through their visual representations, depict the positive traits which resists the stereotypical attributes about Islam. “Islam is a global religion, yet attacked by rigid people who do not know its core and are blinded of its positive attributes and is always described as a religion of oppression, intolerance, inequality, etc.”, an interviewee asserted. From this description, the study resurrected Molyneux’s question by experimenting cultural visualization through perception and knowledge.

In this positive cultural approach, the sketchers claim that potential receivers of the visual codes in the drawings lack the dynamic symbol-decoding capabilities. By dynamic, they mean the behavioral phenomena and the ongoing developments of the reactions in the embedded codes/icons/symbols as well as their effects on both the sender and the receiver in relation to their spatio-temporal contexts.

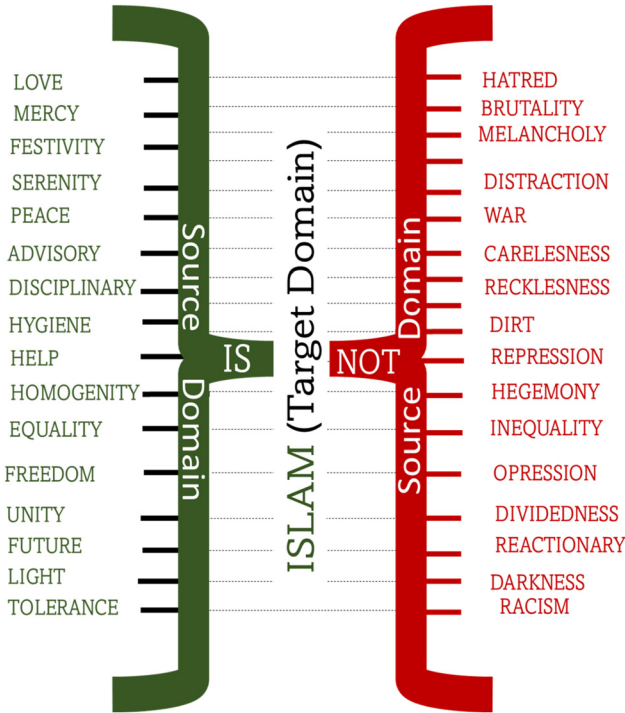


Figure 7: Source/target domains in hand-drawn sketches.

The study, hopefully, seeks to answer Molyneux’s question by explaining how the perception of the VMs can foster our knowledge about culturally different communities such as Muslims’ communities and their beliefs, norms, and values. The analysis, thus, can be regarded as an extension of the experiment raised in Molyneux’s question to consider the powerful role of visual imagery in shaping our understanding of social and cultural issues.

From a cultural point of view, the study poses the question of “Shall we see the conformity between us if our blindness is recovered? Will the blind, if recovered from blindness, identify what Islam is (not)?” (Figure 8).

The discourse of hand-drawn sketches, as illustrated in Figure 8, can metaphorically be represented in two geometrical shapes: spherical ‘globe-like’ object (positive attributes) that resists the rigid ‘cube-like’ object (negative attributes).

The argument here could be based on the perception and the cognition of the concepts referred to by the metaphoric imageries which visually construct the knowledge about Muslim communities. So, to emulate Molyneux’s problem, a *culturally* blind-from-birth individual will not decode the SEs expressed by the

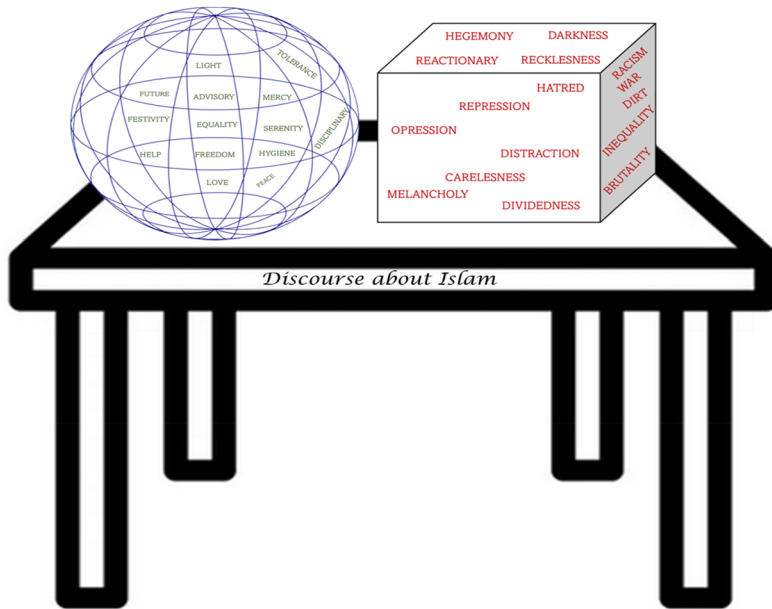


Figure 8: Molyneux's problem and Islam.

producer of the VMs unless the perception of these SEs is similar to the knowledge cognized in his/her own culture.

Thus, the sketchers here sought to use a discourse of resistance by using visual codes that they hope to have mutually perceptual significances. The semiotic evaluation in the current PD approach is based not only on its esthetic compositional constructs but also on the sketchers' capability of transmitting reality and not the constructed reality about Islam. By 'reality' I mean real beliefs, attitudes, and values of Islam that are depicted to resist attacks against Islam.

The sketchers deployed abstract SEs that triggers internal emotional and intellectual awareness. The sketchers also used the physical cultural-based architectural grammatical structure (Jencks 1972) which reflects external context about Islam. Such internal–external depictions create homogeneity between the inner feelings and the external surroundings of the Muslim participants. The interaction of the internal/external structures can be exemplified in the semiotic representations of mosques and churches, as religious institutions in conjunction with the practices and feelings practiced around them.

To culturally 'regain sight', the multimodal positive discourse should be used a means of overcoming the blindness caused by stereotypes and under-representation

of the marginalize communities. Positive discourse can create an ideal imagery of the political communities using multimodal semiotic codings to elucidate positive social meanings such as embracement, love, affection, etc.

The study hypothetically raised the question: “How can visuals be used as a means of recovering from cultural blindness to awaken inclusion and suppress exclusion?”. We argue in this study that the multimodal positive discourse of sketches can be regarded as the voice of the powerless who are badly spoken about in other discourses. Recipients are now given the chance to *see* Muslims as people with empathy and values. Recipients are given the choice to *regard* Muslims as dynamic actors who are capable changing the world into a better world. Recipients can now *envision* who Muslims are(not). By disseminating positive messages, the multimodal positive discourse of the sketches enables its producers to empower and lift the morale of those who think of themselves as inferior. The sketches can, hence, be regarded as the *spectacles* that revive the *sight* of the culturally blind who do not *envisage* cultural heritage, hope, strength, and love.

7 Conclusions

Hand-drawn sketches represent a shared culture of experiences from heads to hands and from hands to heads. These drawings reflect the epitomized consensual socio-cultural agreement on the propositional values creating a multimodal positive discourse. The sketches do not represent a religious discourse; rather, they represent a cultural production of a resisting discourse which can be interpreted as a strategy of homogeneous relations between the social groups as well as their relations with the contextual surrounding.

To answer RQ-1, the study expounds the utilization of VMs about Islam using various SEs that reinforce positive attributes about Islam. Islam, as a target domain, is ascribed attributes form various source domains of LOVE, UNITY, LIGHT, PURITY, etc. SEs, such as sun, mosques, light, etc., are deployed to connote positive attributes about Islam. Semiotic patterns succeeded in classifying the sketches into VMs which in turn send messages about what Islam is (not).

RQ-2 posits inquiries about how the PD is utilized by the sketcher to resist negative attributes about Islam. The answer can be inferred from the visualized metaphors (RQ-1) which help in the perception of reality (and not the constructed reality). Positive self-presentation is asserted through the visual metaphoric assertions and textual elements (verbal citation from Quranic verses and proverbs); both accentuate the rhetorical implications, inclusiveness, and homogeneity of the divergent points of view about Islam.

Answering RQ-3, the study presented a contextualization of the cultural-bound representation of Islam. This is assimilated to cultural blindness which is interpreted within the frame of Molyneux's problem. The study asserts that cultural difference can block social participants with different cultural backgrounds from understanding each other simply because they do not understand their language (visual and textual). Thus, we argue that multimodal PDA can be regarded as a methodological approach for analyzing the multimodal discourses. Such understanding can promote the *perception* of the visual representational structure and foster positive *knowledge* about Islam and similar undervalued communities. Resisting negative constructed reality, PD represents all participants holistically and inclusively as one whole not dividing them into marginalized and empowered. PD, thus, can positively foreground cultural commonalities which can bring about progressive changes and transformations in societies.

8 Further research

Further research can be conducted using the same methodological framework to uncover the cultural differences between undervalued communities based on various variables (e.g., gender, ethnicity, etc.). Also, researchers can conduct studies about how to positively affect perception to shape knowledge to maintain intercultural communication and foster positive social change among communities. Multimodal discourse can also be investigated from different modes, e.g., sounds, motion pictures, etc.

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