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Discourse and Identity Construction among Algerian Salafis on Facebook: An Online Ethnographic Study

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First of All, all Thanks are to Allah

Praise to the Almighty for all the support and help

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my mother, father,

family, all my dear friends,

and more importantly,

to all my teachers from primary school to university.

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Abstract

Based on the tenets of discourse-centred online ethnography, this qualitative study investigates how identity can be discursively generated, reproduced and co-constructed among an Islamic religious grouping in Algeria known as Salafis within the genre of Social Networking Sites, taking as a case in point Facebook as it is the most famous and highly used social media platform nowadays. Adopting Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin 's (2008) sociological model of implicit and explicit identity claims on SNSs and leaning on Fairclough's (2003) critical discourse analytical tools and Van Djik's (2006) ideological square model, the study explores the armoury of linguistic and multimodal strategies employed in the presentation and construction of the Salafi identity on Facebook. The findings of the present research showed that the Algerian Salafis in this study represented their Salafi identity on Facebook through diverse textual and multimodal discursive practices including: nicknames, profile pictures (static practices), informative Salafi publications, ideological publications, and exclusive/inclusive discourse in status updates (dynamic discursive practices). Moreover, another key resource of identification and alignment within Salafism is the dominant use of Standard Arabic on Facebook and its 'sacred' status among these people. These findings showed how identity is dynamic and mostly discursively "shown" rather than "told" on social media platforms and reflected the role of language as a social practice in the modern digital world. The findings of this study have a number of implications for the study of discourse and identity on social media as well as the study of the social phenomena through the lens of SNSs.

***Keywords*:** Discourse; Facebook; Identity; Salafis; Self-presentation

Table of Contents

List of Tables II
List of Figures XIV
List of Abbreviations XVII

General Introduction 1

Background 1

Statement of the Problem and Research Objectives 2

Orientation of the Research and Terminological Clarification 6

Research Questions 7

Methodology 8

Structure and Content of the Thesis 9

Chapter 1

Language and Communication in the Digital World

Introduction 14

1.1. Communication in the New Age 14

1.1.1. The Information Age and the Internet 15

1.1.2. Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) 18

1.1.2.1. Definition 18

1.1.2.2. Basic Concepts in Computer Mediated Communication 19

1.1.2.3. Computer Mediated Communication Modes 21

1.1.2.4. Computer Mediated Communication: an Interdisciplinary Field 24

1.2. Computer Mediated Discourse (CMD) 26

1.2.1. Defining Computer Mediated Discourse 26

1.2.2. Technical Classification of Computer Mediated Discourse 27

1.2.2.1. Synchronicity 27

1.2.2.2. Audience 28

1.2.3. Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) 28

1.2.4. Variability in Computer Mediated Discourse 32

1.2.4.1. Medium and Channel 32

1.2.4.2. Writing System and Online Communication: ASCII and its Consequences 33

1.2.4.3. Linguistic Variables 36

1.2.4.4. Conversation 39

1.2.4.5. Social Variability 40

1.2.4.6. Social Interaction 42

1.2.5. Computer Mediated Discourse: Multilingual Scholarship 43

Conclusion 44

Chapter Two

Social Media and Discourse 2.0

Introduction 47

2.1. The New Internet: a Shift in the Medium 47

2.1.1. From Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 48

2.1.2. What is Web 2.0? 48

2.2.3. Web 1.0 vs. Web 2.0: Basic Technical and Content Differences 50

2.2. Social Media 51

2.2.1. Social Networking Sites (SNSs) 52

2.2.2. Facebook **55**

2.2.2.1. Facebook at a Glance **55**

2.2.2.2. Basic Affordances **56**

2.2.2.2.1. The Profile **57**

2.2.2.2.2. ‘Friending’ and Friends List **57**

2.2.2.2.3. Status Updates **58**

2.2.2.2.4. Comments **59**

2.2.2.2.5. Private Messaging **59**

2.2.2.2.6. The Wall/Timeline **59**

2.2.2.2.7. News Feed **60**

2.2.2.3. Facebook as a Social Media Utility **60**

2.2.2.4. Components of Facebook as an Online Social Networking Utility

2.3. Discourse 2.0 **62**

2.3.1. Discourse 2.0 Classification **64**

2.3.1.1. Familiar Discursive Aspects **64**

2.3.1.2. Reconfigured Discursive Aspects **65**

2.3.1.3. Emergent Discursive Aspects **65**

2.3.1.3.1. Collaborative Text Production **67**

2.3.1.3.2. Multimodal Communication **68**

2.3.1.3.3. Researching Emergent Aspects **68**

2.3.2. Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives **70**

Conclusion **71**

Chapter 3

The Networked Self: Discourse and Identity on Social Networking Sites

Introduction	**74**
3.1. Identity: Basic Concepts and Theories	**77**
3.1.1. Defining Identity	**77**
3.1.2. Identity: A Dynamic Process	**78**
3.1.3. Social Identity Theory (SIT): Affiliation and Alignment	**79**
3.1.4. Goffman's Impression Management Theory	**82**
3.1.5. Language and Identity	**82**
3.2. Performing Identity and Presenting the Self on SNSs	**85**
3.2.1. The Virtual Identity and Disembodiment on SNSs	**85**
3.2.2. Anonymity, Pseudonymity and Nonymity	**87**
3.2.3. Writing the Self into Being	**89**
3.2.4. Zhao Grasmuck and Martin Sociological Identity Model	**92**
3.2.5. Naming and Identity Construction Online	**96**
3.2.6. Language Choice and Identity on SNSs	**98**
3.2.7. Multimodality and Identity on SNSs	**99**
3.2.8. Stance-taking on SNSs	**100**
Conclusion	**102**

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

Introduction	**105**
4.1. The Research Methodological Approach	**106**
4.1.1. The Online Ethnography	**107**

4.1.2. Critical Aspects of the Online Ethnographic Research 109
4.1.2.1. Gaining Access to the Setting 109
4.1.2.2. Identity Authenticity of Online Participants 111
4.1.2.3. The Researcher's Identity 111
4.1.3. Ethics of the Online Ethnography 114
4.1.4. The Research Method: Discourse-Centred Online Ethnography (DCOE) 115
4.2. Procedures 118
4.2.1. Defining the Research Setting and Objectives 119
4.2.1.1. Why Facebook? 119
4.2.1.2. Why Salafis in Algeria? 120
4.2.1.3. The Sociolinguistic Framework 120
4.2.2. The population 122
4.2.3. Research Questions 122
4.2.4. Accessing the Setting and Lurking 123
4.2.4.1. 'Being there' on Facebook 123
4.2.4.2. Lurking 124
4.2.5. Sampling and Participants' Recruitment 125
4.2.5.1. Recruiting the Key Participant (P_0) 125
4.2.5.2. Recruiting Participants and Forming the Final Sample 127
4.2.6. Data Collection 129
4.2.6.1. Online Participant Observation 129
4.2.6.2. Interviews 132
Conclusion 134

Chapter Five

Results: Analysis and Interpretations

Introduction 137

5.1. Displaying Salafism through Static Discursive Practices: Naming and Profile Picture 137

5.1.1. The User's Facebook Name 139

5.1.1.1. Nicknames vs. Real Names 139

5.1.1.2. Categories of Nicknames 140

5.1.1.2.1. Nicknames with Fatherhood Reference/Real Name + Origin 141

5.1.1.2.2. Nicknames with Fatherhood Reference/ User's First Name + Salafi Affiliation 143

5.1.1.3. Interpretations 144

5.1.1.3.1. Using a Nickname: is it to hide the Real Self? 145

5.1.1.3.2. Aligning within Salafism through Nicknames 147

5.1.1.3.3. The Use of Arabic Transcript in Nicknames 150

5.1.2. Salafism through the Profile Picture 153

5.1.2.1. The Textual-content Pictures 154

5.1.2.1.1. Pictures including Quranic Verses/Prophet's Hadiths 155

5.1.2.1.2. Pictures with a Salafi Saying or Wisdom 156

5.1.2.1.3. Pictures with a tText showing belonging to Salafism 157

5.1.2.1.4. Pictures including the User's Nickname 158

5.1.2.2. The Visual-content Pictures 159

5.1.2.2.1. Pictures Displaying Physical Aspects of Salafis 159

5.1.2.2.2. Pictures Displaying Documents or Materials of Salafism 162

5.1.2.2.3. Pictures Displaying Saudi Arabia's Flag 164

5.1.2.3. Deductions 166

5.2. Displaying Salafism through the Dynamic Discursive Practices 167

5.2.1. The Informative Religious Publications 168

5.2.1.1. The Dominance of Informative Salafi Publications 169

5.2.1.2. The Content and Form of the Publication 170

5.2.1.2.1. The Textual Discourse 171

5.2.1.2.2. The Multimodal Discourse 172

5.2.1.3. Quoting in the Publications and its Implications 176

5.2.2. The Inclusive/Inclusive Discourse: Identification and Alignment within Salafism 179

5.2.3. The Ideological Discourse and Affiliation to Salafism 187

5.2.3.1. The Opposed Ideological Discourse 188

5.2.3.1.1. The Ideological Modification of Terms 189

5.2.3.1.2. The Multimodal Ideological Opposing Discourse 194

5.2.3.2. The Ideological Discourse of Allegiance 198

5.2.4. Language Choice and Meta-linguistic Discourse: The 'Sacred' Standard Arabic 204

5.2.4.1. Language Choice 204

5.2.4.2. Meta-linguistic Discourse 211

Conclusion 215

Chapter Six

Discussion and Conclusions

Introduction 218

6.1. Salafism through Facebook Discourse (answers to the research questions) 218

6.2. Discourse and the Dynamic Nature of Identity **222**

6.3. Nicknaming on Social Media Platforms **223**

6.4. Facebook: a Home for Liberated Linguistic Practices **224**

6.5. Facebook and Ideology: the People's Media **225**

6.6. Facebook: a Rich Source of Social Data **227**

6.7. Limitations and Future Research **228**

Conclusion **229**

General Conclusion **230**

References **232**

Appendices **263**

Appendix A.

Appendix B.

List of Tables

Table 1.1. Types of Communication in CMC **27**

Table 1.2. Earlier Approaches to the Classification of Discourse **29**

Table 1.3. Herring's (2007) Multi-faceted Classification of CMD **31**

Table 1.4. Various CMD Studies prior to Social Media Emergence **43**

Table 2.1. A general comparison between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 **50**

Table 2.2. Multimodal Communication as an Additional Level of CMDA **71**

Table 3.1. Enumerative and Narrative Self-description **93**

Table. 4.1. Practical Guidelines for Doing DCOE **117**

Table 5.1. Types of Facebook Names **140**

Table 5.2. Nicknames Categories **141**

Table 5.3. Profile Pictures Categories **154**

Table 5.4. Language Choice in the Different Discursive Practices on Facebook **205**

List of Figures

Figure 1.1. CMC Modes **21**

Figure 1.2. CMC Branches **25**

Figure 1.3. The ASCII Character Set **34**

Figure 2.1. From Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 **49**

Figure 2.2. Web 2.0 Sites Timeline **50**

Figure 2.3. SNSs' launch Timeline **53**

Figure 2.4. A conversation with image quotes from a Community blog **69**

Figure 3.1. Identity play: 'On the internet nobody knows you are a dog'. **86**

Figure 3.2. A Continuum of Identity Manipulation **88**

Figure 3.3. Zhao et al.'s Identity Construction Model **92**

Figure 4.1. Procedures of the Field Study **118**

Figure 4.2. Participants Recruitment and Sampling **128**

Figure 5.1. Discursive Practices Categorisation **138**

Figure 5.3. Nickname Formation: Category 1- Option A **142**

Figure 5.4. Nickname Formation: Category 1– Option B **143**

Figure 5.5. Nicknames Formation - Category 2 **144**

Figure 5.6. Advice of a Participant for his Friends to write their Facebook names in Arabic Transcript. **150**

Figure 5.7. The Profile Picture in Facebook **153**

Figure. 5.8. A Textual Profile Picture with a Quranic verse/Hadith **155**

Figure. 5.9. A Textual Picture with a Salafi saying or wisdom **156**

Figure 5.10. A Profile Picture with a text that displays Salafi Identity **157**

Figure 5.11. Profile Pictures including texts that display the user's Facebook name **158**

Figure 5.12. Pictures Displaying Physical Aspects of Salafis **159**

Figure 5.13. A Profile Picture with a Salafi Document **162**

Figure 5. 14. A Profile Picture with Saudi Arabia's Flag **164**

Figure 5.15. Discursive practices and strategies employed in Identity construction and self presentation **167**

Figure 5.16. Facebook Publications Frequency and Distribution **168**

Figure 5.17. The Textual Discourse in the Informative Salafi Publications **171**

Figure 5.18. Multimodal Informative Publications: Da'wa Cards. **173**

Figure 5.19. The User-generated Multimodal Informative Discourse **175**

Figure 5.20. Quoting and Citation in Informative Salafi Publications **176**

Figure 5.21. The Salafis' Identification through Lexical Terms **180**

Figure 5.22. The Lexical and Semantic Identification and Dis-identification in Status Updates **183**

Figure 5.23. In-group Addressing Terms to Members within Salafism **185**

Figure 5.24. The Salafis' Ideological Discourse on Facebook **187**

Figure 5.25. The Lexical Reconfiguration of Terms **190**

Figure 5.26. The Ideological Modification of Muslim Brotherhood's Official Name **191**

Figure 5.27. The Modified Official Name in the Opposing Ideological Discourse towards Al-Jazeera Channel **192**

Figure 5.28. The Multimodal Ideological Opposing Discourse **195**

Figure 5.29. The Ideological Allegiance Discourse **199**

Figure 5.30. The Multimodal Ideological Allegiance Discourse **201**

Figure 5.31. The use of Standard Arabic in Arabic transcript in Informal Discourse on Facebook **207**

Figure 5.32. The Use of Standard Arabic in Comments posted to Informal Publications on Facebook **209**

Figure 5.33. The Status of Arabic in Meta-linguistic Discourse on Facebook **212**

Figure 5.34. The Meta-linguistic Discourse on the Use of French in Algeria **213**

List of Abbreviations

CMC	**Computer Mediated Communication**
CMD	**Computer Mediated Discourse**
CMDA	**Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis**
DCOE	**Discourse-Centred Online Ethnography**
SIT	**Social Identity Theory**
SNSs	**Social Networking Sites**

General Introduction

Background

Man is sociable by nature. We are meant to communicate and connect with each other. Communication among humans has always been shaped by the development of communication technologies. Thanks to the astonishing breakthroughs in communication technology and internet in the last decade, Social Networking Sites (SNSs), such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, emerged as the modern face of human communication and became a social phenomenon in a very short time. According to the latest statistics on SNSs, there are over 2.8 billion active social media users worldwide, with about 22% increase only in the last year (Hutchinson, 2017, para.1). Indeed, the impact of social media and its presence in the modern life is quite apparent. Nothing would better illustrate how social media is fast growing and how its effects are extending to the society as a whole than the tremendous economical growth of its corporations which are worth hundreds of billions today. For instance, Facebook's founder and CEO, Mark Zuckerburg, is ranked fifth richest person on Earth just at his thirty three years old with net worth of 71 billion dollars according to the recent article, '*Richest people in the world: Forbes' top 20 billionaires, 2018'*, published on CBS News.

Indeed, social media has gone phenomenal and become a social landmark in a few years. It quickly penetrated people's life leading to a revolution in sociability and communication. This made social media very intriguing for researchers from a variety of disciplines including media, communication, marketing, education, politics and language studies. Social media usually refers in the academic literature to those novel electronic platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr and YouTube that support social interaction and user-generated content in the form of a textual and multimodal human discourse (text, audio, video, and

images). Therefore, it is basically of great theoretical and practical interest to scholars of computer-mediated discourse and lies today at the heart of sociolinguistics and discourse research.

Statement of the Problem and Research Objectives

The Sociolinguistic research into social media has been slow to get off the ground (Androutsopoulos, 2006a, p.1). However, the case is truly changing today as sociolinguists are more aware and attracted to the social dynamics of Social Networking Sites. According to Seargeant and Tagg (2014), SNSs offer a rich field of study for socially oriented linguistics because, basically, they are a novel and major form of communication that demands a thorough exploration (p. 5). They add, "of particular relevance to sociolinguistics, however, are two fundamental social dynamics at the heart of social network site (SNS) use:

- Identity: the presentation of self (i.e. issues that pivot around notions of identity),
- Community: the building and maintenance of networked relationships (i.e. issues relating to concepts of community)" (p.5).

This study falls within this area of the sociolinguistics of social media which belongs to the broader area of computer mediated discourse. More precisely, it is discourse-oriented and focuses on the first dynamics: identity and discourse on SNSs. Great body of research has been conducted thus far on the discursive mechanisms through which identity is constructed and presented on social media platforms. This kind of research focused on both personal and social identities of people. The dynamics of identity received more attention as it is related to one's belonging to social groupings where identity and self-presentation is a crucial process that affects the human's social life as a whole. Social groupings in different cultures and on a variety of social platforms have been studied such as hip hop youth groups, university students, work groupings, sports clubs and customers' reviews pages (see Chapters 2 and 3).

However, religious affiliation is one social identity aspect that has received little attention and has been rarely addressed in social media discourse. More importantly, researching the discourse of identity and self-presentation on Facebook from an ethnographic perspective in Algeria, especially among religious groupings, is still sparse and the number of studies that have been conducted focused mainly on code-switching and language choice (see Khedhir, 2011 and Ganaoui, 2012).

Therefore, this study was conducted as an exploratory work that sheds light on this aspect of identity which is tied to one's belonging to a specific religious grouping and how such an identity is discursively constructed and presented on social media. More precisely, it is a qualitative study that aims at investigating the different discursive and linguistic practices among the members of a sub-religious Islamic group within Algeria known as Salafism and the role these practices play in the construction of identity and self-presentation on Facebook. It seeks to analyse the discourse of self-presentation among a group of Algerian Salafis on Facebook and how this would help in a better understanding of the concept of identity and language as a social practice within society.

The choice of conducting this study was fuelled by two overarching reasons: the first one is related to the online setting which is social media (precisely Facebook), and the second to the social group under investigation. Indeed, these two factors, together with the sociolinguistic situation in Algeria, build the setting of the present research.

The choice of "Salafis" as the religious grouping to study was a result of a personal experience. Being part of Facebook and other social media as researcher in the field of language studies is inspirational as you notice things people would consider ordinary everyday-behaviours when it comes to discursive practices. I really had such an experience. I remember I received once a notification on Facebook that one of my friends has changed his

Facebook profile name. It was a new creative nickname totally different to his old one. His old one was his real name but the new one became 'أبو الياس محمد القسنطيني' (Abu Illyess Mohamed Al Qassantini). I noticed that he had used his real name before but then he was using a nickname of a specific kind. Moreover, his old name was written in Romanized transcript but the new one was in Arabic transcript**.** Chatting with him, I figured out that he became affiliated with an Islamic doctrine known as Salafism and the choice of this new nickname was affected by his new identity and it had a deep social meaning. Investigating the doctrine further, I noticed Salafis have specific identity features strongly tied to their religious beliefs and ideology making them socially different (in certain aspects) within the Algerian society. These informal observations raised a number of questions about discourse and Salafism on Facebook in Algeria and the role language plays in such a relation (an area which is still not seriously investigated by researchers in discourse studies and sociolinguistics in Algeria). Therefore, this research was conducted to tackle this issue formally and academically as an attempt to add some knowledge to this area.

Moreover, as aforementioned, social media discourse is reckoned to be inherently constitutive of identity and its novelty is very intriguing for researchers in sociolinguistics and discourse studies as they encompass new practices. Choosing to work on Facebook specifically was fuelled by the popularity and high use of this platform among people. Therefore, it encompasses a large amount of social and linguistic data that needs investigation and analysis. This helps in the deep understanding of novel social phenomena and human behaviours (see Chapter 2 for further details). In addition, the considerable number of studies that had been conducted in the western world was an extra motive for conducting this research as it provides a theoretical and methodological guiding that facilitates the work.

The sociolinguistic situation in Algeria is an important aspect of the research setting as language and discourse are the focus of the study and the subjects are part of the Algerian

speech community. Over 99% of Algerians are Muslim, for example, but qualitative and survey research finds that they vary in their degree of religious observance and attitudes about social and political issues (see Jamal & Tessler 2008; Tessler 2002). Basically, Algeria is a diglossic community where two varieties of Arabic are present in the nation (Zaboot, 2010, p.202). The first variety which is Standard Arabic is of *high status* and used in formal and official contexts such as newspapers, mosque and administration. The second variety, known as Colloquial Arabic, is of *low status* and used in informal contexts and everyday interactions among Algerians**.**

In addition to being a diglossic community, the Algerian society is also multi-lingual. French is a second language in Algeria and most Algerians have a considerable command of that language. Moreover, although not spread like Arabic and spoken in some regions in Algeria, Berber is a third language that has been determined as an official language in Algeria by the government recently (Benstead and Reif, 2013, p. 88). A recent study of SMS messages found that 21% of a non-systematic sample of 50 messages sent by Algerians aged 18-25 were in French (Mostari, 2009), while studies of graffiti in Kabyle find use and mixing of all three languages (Dourari, 2002), with political messages often written in French (Kahina 2012). Abbaci argues that youth are self-consciously constructing a new identity that is not Arabo-, Berbero-, Francophone and embraces an affirmation of plural identity that is absent from institutional discourse and official language policy (2011, p. 11). Many analysts of Algeria have assumed that the three main language groups have different attitudes toward a variety of issues, one of which is greater secularism and orientation toward Western as opposed to Islamic culture, with the stereotype that Berberophones and Francophones are more open to Western, secular influence than Arabophones (Benstead and Rift, 2013, p. 89). Moreover, in online situations, recent studies such as Khidher (2014) and Ganoui (2012) found that Algerians use Romanised Arabic (using Roman letters in writing Standard and

Colloquial Arabic) in addition to their Standard Arabic, Colloquial Arabic and French codes. So, being part of this sociolinguistic situation, Algerian Salafis' linguistic repertoire consists of three basic codes: Standard Arabic, Colloquial Arabic (Algerian Dialect) and French, in addition to the written forms of these varieties in Arabic or Romanised transcript online.

Orientation of the Research and Terminological Clarifications

For the scope of the present research to be clear-cut and to avoid any connotative or subjective understandings or interpretations, there are two crucial issues related to the orientation of the research and the religious group under investigation which must be clarified. First, the present research is discourse-oriented and not religious-oriented. I am not interested in Salafism as a sect and an ideology within Islam and the research does not investigate, evaluate or critise its principles and beliefs in any way. Thus, given the the sociolinguistic scope of the research, my primary focus is only on how Salafism is constructed and presented in the Algerian Salafis' discourse and language on Facebook.

The second issue – and it is of greater importance in here - is related to the use of the term "Salafis" to refer to the group under investigation in the present work. Indeed, as put by Commins (2015, p.151), in the current Islamic discourse, two terms are used to refer to the group: 'Salafis' and 'Wahhabis'. The usage of the term 'Salafi' today refers to someone who embraces Salafism (Arabic: *Salafiyyah*). Salafism is a way (*manhaj*) whose members advocate literal interpretation of Islamic teachings as enjoined by Prophet Muhammad (peace and bless be upon him) and subsequently practised by the early pious predecessors know as the *Salaf al-Salih.* The term 'Wahhabi' is used to refer to someone who follows Wahhabism or the teachings of Muhhamad Bin Abdul Wahhab. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was born in Najd in 1703 in todays Saudi Arabia. According to this preacher, Muslims at that time in Saudi Arabia and other Islamic regions were acting what is considered shirk (associating Allah with others), and returned to the days of jahiliyyah (ignorance or pre-Islamic period). Ibn Abd al-

Wahhab rose as reviver to reform the Muslims under the banner of “true” Islam –Salafism- and get rid of such “heretical” practices (Bin Ali and Bin Sudiman, 2016).

Because of certain religious and ideological considerations, some scholars use the two terms interchangeably while others (mainly the group’s rivals) consider them as two different terms and use the term ‘Wahhabis’ instead of ‘Salafis’ to name the group. Indeed, “Salafis” do not prefer to ba called “Wahhabis” because this name “stigmatizes the doctrine as the ravings of a misguided preacher” and labelling it as a new way (manhaj) created by Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and not the “true” way of Salaf (pious) (Commins, p.152, 2015). Commins adds, Ibn 'Abel al-Wahhab and his disciples do not consider themselves as bringing something new but reviving the “true” Islam as delivered by the Prophet Muhhamad (peace and bless be upon him), and therefore, prefer the term “Salafis”.

Thus, using one term or the other is going to raise some connotative implications among both sides. To solve the dilemma of which term to use in the present work without implying connotation, I referred to one ethical principle of the ethnographic method which states that the researcher must confer the group he studies and use the terms they prefer for themselves. Accordingly, I objectively decided to use the term “Salafis” and not “Wahhabis” to refer to the group in my research. Along the same vein, I would like to confirm that the ideas and religious ideology presented in the thesis are those of the research participants and do not belong to me in any way.

Research Questions

Along the same vein in previous qualitative ethnographic research, the present research adopts the ‘grounded theory’ as the guiding approach in the structuring and procedures of conducting the field study. Accordingly, ‘theory/hypothesis’ is being generated and not tested as the researcher has no priori knowledge or information and his aim in this work is to gain a

deep understanding of the social phenomenon under investigation. Thus, no hypothesis was set for the present research and I relied only on research questions as the study's guidlines.

Given the research setting and objectives, the following research questions have been raised:

1- What are the different discursive practices the Algerian Salafis in this study employ in constructing their identity and presenting themselves on Facebook?
2- What aspects of identity / self are displayed by the Algerian Salafis in this study on Facebook? How this is negotiated?
3- How is Salafism shaping the practices and behaviours of the members in this study?
4- What status Standard Arabic has among these people and what role does it play in the identity performance?
5- How do these people perceive Facebook and what attitudes do they have towards the common linguistic practices among Algerians (language choice/ transcript choice)?
6- How does the study of religious identity through social media discourse contribute to a better understanding of the concept of identity and human behaviour in general?

Methodology

Given the qualitative nature of the present research and along the same vein in previous ethnographies of discourse and identity on social media, the selected research method that better fits the present study is the discourse-centred online ethnography (DCOE). Accordingly, as entailed by the DCOE, the procedures followed in conducting this research are as follows (they are briefly mentioned; for a detailed analysis, see Chapter4):

- Defining the Research Setting and Objectives: who to study, where and what for?

- Accessing the setting/group and starting lurking

- Recruiting participants and building the sample

- Data collection: participant observation on Facebook and documentation, Participants' interviewing, and data analysis and interpretation.

. The analysis and interpretation of the data are based on Zhao et al's (2008) identity model, critical discourse analysis analytical tools (Fairclough, 2003) and Van Djik's (2006) ideology square model. These analytical models reflect the multidisciplinary nature of the study which is the result of the sociological discourse approach adopted in the research: discourse is language beyond the sentence level as a social practice.

Structure and Content of the Thesis

The thesis consists of six chapters: three theoretical chapters and three practical chapters for the field study. Though the research investigates Salafis as a religious grouping, I did not devote a separate chapter for Salafism as the work is discourse-oriented and not religious-oriented. In other words, as aforementioned, I am not interested primarily in Salafism as a religious doctrine and its beliefs and ideology from a religious perspective, but how its members construct their identity through discourse on Facebook. Therefore, I referred to Salafism as part of describing the sample and subjects in the field study procedures' section.

Chapter one functions as a foundational theoretical background that introduces readers (especially novice students and researchers) to language and communication in the digital world and the novel discipline of computer mediated discourse CMD which represents the research area of the present study. In other words, it defines digital discourse in its academic context. More precisely, it aims at highlighting the different theories, approaches, methods and developments within CMD so that the reader would be able to cope with the ideas presented in the following chapters.

Chapter two highlights “Discourse 2.0” or “social media discourse” as a recent form of CMD that, indeed, represents the setting of the present research. It offers an overview on the new form of digital space known as Web 2.0 and its features and affordances. Then, light is shed on discourse 2.0 (discourse on Web 2.0) and what makes it different from previous CMD. The major focus in this chapter is on Social Networking Sites, mainly Facebook (highlighting the technical and social affordances), along with language, discourse and communication in these novel platforms which are very intriguing for sociolinguists and discourse analysts.

Chapter three is devoted to identity performance and self presentation on social media. More precisely, light is shed on identity construction and self-representation on Facebook via the armoury of textual and multimodal discursive practices. The chapter functions as a conceptual framework. Hence, it is based on two pillars:

- The basic concepts and theories related to the notion of identity
- Performing identity and presenting the self on SNSs through discourse.

Moreover, I included a number of pioneering recent studies that investigated this dynamics; they function as a synthesis of previous research that guided and inspired the current work.

Chapter four is devoted to the method adopted for this study: the discourse-centred online ethnography. It starts with a methodological background that positions the method within the broader ethnographic qualitative approach. The chapter includes a detailed presentation of the subjects, sampling and participants’ recruitment, procedures of data collection and analysis, and ethical issues in conducting the field study.

In chapter five, the different findings of the study are presented, analysed and interpreted. Because of the qualitative nature of the research and diversity of the data, the results and their interpretation are included within the same chapter as I found it more useful and practical to interpret the findings alongside their analysis. However, I divided the chapter

into five sections where each section tackles a specific aspect. As such, the reader will not lose track of the details and their interpretations. Indeed, this is based on the "grounded theory" guiding which is often followed in the generation and organisation of findings in the qualitative research.

Chapter six is devoted to the discussion of the research findings in the light of previous and recent studies that investigated social media discourse and identity. The chapter aims at highlighting the significance of the present research and what knowledge is deducted accordingly. It also pinpoints to some findings which are challenging to previous research conclusions especially those related to the nature of social media language, linguistic habits and creative discourse practices. The chapter ends up with the limitations of the present study and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 1

Language and Communication in the Digital World

Introduction 14

1.1.Communication in the New Age 14

1.1.1. The Information Age and the Internet 15

1.1.2. Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) 18

1.1.2.1.Definition 18

1.1.2.2.Basic Concepts in Computer Mediated Communication 19

1.1.2.3.Computer Mediated Communication Modes 21

1.1.2.4.Computer Mediated Communication: an Interdisciplinary Field 24

1.2.Computer Mediated Discourse (CMD) 26

1.2.1. Defining CMD 26

1.2.2. Technical Classification of CMD 27

1.2.2.1.Synchronicity 27

1.2.2.2. Audience 28

1.2.3. Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) 28

1.2.4. Variability in CMD 32

1.2.4.1.Medium and Channel 32

1.2.4.2.Writing System and Online Communication: ASCII and its Consequences 33

1.2.4.3.Linguistic Variables 36

1.2.4.4.Conversation 39

1.2.4.5.Social Variability 40

1.2.4.6.Social Interaction 42

1.2.5. Computer Mediated Discourse Multilingual Scholarship **43**

Conclusion **44**

Introduction

Since its emergence, online communication has been intriguing for researchers and scholars from a variety of fields. Most commonly are linguists and discourse analysts as communication lies at the heart of their research interests. This led to the emergence of Computer Mediated Discourse (CMD) as a new discipline that encompasses all studies related to language and discourse in the digital world including social media discourse. Therefore, this chapter functions as a foundational theoretical background that introduces readers to the novel discipline of CMD. In other words, it defines digital discourse in its academic context and aims at highlighting the different theories, approaches, methods and developments within CMD so that the reader would be able to cope with the ideas presented in the following chapters.

1.1. Communication in the New Age

One of the most accurate terms to describe today's world is 'the age of technology'. The number of devices and machines around us is huge and technology has become inseparable from our lives. Broadly speaking, *Technology* is defined as the mechanisms through which "people modify the natural world to suit their own purposes [originating] from the Greek word 'techne', meaning 'art' or 'artifice' or 'craft': technology literally means the act of making or crafting" (ITEA, 2000:2). In other words, it refers to the creative means, techniques and systems used to "extend human abilities and to satisfy human needs and wants" (ITEA, 2000:2).

Ranging from simple items such as a pen or spoon to extremely complicated machines such as satellites or drones, we are deeply affected by these technologies that have changed and are still changing every side of our lives. As put by Barton and Lee (2013), the latter idea "has been associated with many innovations throughout history, including the development of

the printing press, newspapers, cameras, the postal service, radio and telephones [and] it is becoming central in how we think about contemporary change in digital technologies" (p.1). For instance, Marshall McLuhan referred to this phenomenon more than 40 years ago in relation to television and said that our life (including us, families, schools, neighbourhoods, companies, governments, and our social relations) is changing "dramatically" due to electric technology which forcibly push us to "reconsider and re-evaluate practically" everything around us (1967, p. 8).

1.1.1. The Information Age and the Internet

Speaking about electronic technology and its deep effects on human life, first thing comes to mind is the communication technologies. These technologies have been developed in an unprecedented rapid way since the 19th century. However, as Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic indicated (2004), the outstanding jump that had been made in these technologies is computerization. Starting from "Charles Babbage's development of a mechanical calculator in the 1820s, then Alan Turing's contribution of code breakers in the 1940s, until reaching the Apple Corporation's use of microprocessors in the late 1970s", communication was transformed into digital (p. 25). Thanks to that, they add, we are living today in what is called the Information Age.

Thanks to the breakthroughs in computer technologies in the last decades, human-to-human communication moved to the next level. Sitting behind the screens of computers (including all devices alike), people nowadays are interacting with each other while being in different places around the world. However, this would have never been achieved without a network and "written messages could be transmitted only if there were a system for linking machines together" (Baron, 2008, p. 12). This linking system is what is referred to as the *internet*.

In recent years, the internet has become a truly global communication network. The *'Digital in 2017: Global Overview'* report from "We Are Social" and "Hootsuite" has revealed that more than half of the world's population (about 4 billion) now uses the internet (Kemp, 2017, para.1). Internet services have become so common that the city of Budapest has installed an "@" sign on a central street to inform locals and visitors of the presence of a cybercafé (Danet and Herring, 2007, p. 3). The internet is an almost global network connecting millions of computers. Using a number of agreed formats (known as protocols), users are able to transfer data (or files) from one computer to the next (Leiner et al, 1997, p. 102). It has become today one of the things taken for granted worldwide. Almost all fields are based on this system for the accomplishment of communication tasks and data retrieval such as banks, public institutions, universities, companies and personal uses.

This novel system of communication emerged back in the 1960s with the creation of computer networks in the USA. These networks were basically created for National defence purposes as an effective way for data transfer (Rheingold, 1993, p. 5). Over time, the same binary coding system developed for sending numbers was used for transmitting language. ARPANET (the U.S. Department of Defense's Advanced Research Projects Agency Network) was built between 1968 and 1969, under a contract with Bolt Beranek and Newman (Baron, 2008, p.13). However, in a very short time and thanks to their fame and novelty at that time, they quickly spread to civil life and became the new means of communication among people (Hafner and Lyon, 1996). Used by computer scientists in the 1970s, then businessmen and academics in companies, organisations and universities in the 1980s, Computer networks immediately moved to popular use facilitated by the commercial internet service providers in the 1990s (Herring, 2001, p. 612). ARAPANET (big Network sponsored by US defence department) was replaced by the global network internet in the 1980s and it

included 58000 networks with about 150 million users in 1999 (Petrazzini and Kibati, 1999, p.32). Baron (2008) described this jump in the Internet saying that:

> [i]n the early 1990s, Tim Berners-Lee designed the World Wide Web, essentially a collection of software tools and protocols that make it relatively easy for computers to communicate across the Internet. The most important step toward user-friendliness was the emergence of tools for searching the web ..... In 1993, Marc Andreessen at the University of Illinois created the web browser Mosaic, the commercial version of which, Netscape, appeared in 1994. Microsoft's Internet Explorer followed in July 1995. In September 1998, Google made its debut. By March 2007, roughly 3.8 billion Google searches were being done in the United States per month (p. 13).

According to Thurlow et al. (2004, p.14), in the 1990s, desks of managers, teachers, university students, doctors, businessmen, journalists all had personal computers on them. However, before that time, the academic interest did not turn their attention to communication among humans through computers and all their focus was on information processing, hardware, and data transfer; this is known as Human-Computer Interaction (HCI). They add, scholars did not turn their attention to CMC only by the beginning of the 1995 thanks to the outstanding impact and popularity computers and the internet made in the society (pp.14-15).

It is common in the academic world that coining new names for emerging disciplines is the first basic stage in setting a clear-cut foundation for a new discipline. As far as CMC is concerned, (Baron, 2008, p11) said that researchers coined a number of terms as first attempts

to denote online language such ‘‘interactive written discourse,’’ ‘‘e-mail style,’’ or ‘‘electronic language.’’, and the famous David Crystal’s ‘‘Netspeak’’. However, she adds, it was only “in the 1980s [that] the term ‘‘computer-mediated communication,’’ more commonly known as CMC, emerged to encompass a range of platforms used for conversing online, including email, listservs, chat, or instant messaging” and the recent social media platforms (p.11).

This brief historical overview of Communication via computer technologies revealed the quick and fast-growing field of CMC and how it presented a novel approach to the study of human communication. In the following, Computer Mediated Communication is defined in its academic context. However, CMC was not explored in detail as the main focus of the chapter is Computer Mediated Discourse (CMD). For further readings on CMC, one can refer to Thurlow et al. (2004), Herring (1996b, 2004 and 2002) and Santoro (1995).

1.1.2. Computer Mediated Communication

As put by Baron (2008), “once you have the requisite equipment (a computer, a mobile phone) and have managed the access fees, it’s far simpler and less expensive to communicate with people not physically present than at any time in human history” (p. 4). This emergent communication is what is referred to in the academic field as Computer Mediated Communication (CMC).

1.1.2.1. Definition

As Gerry Santoro (1995, p. 11) has put it, “at its broadest, CMC can encompass virtually all computer uses including such diverse applications as statistical analysis programs, remote-sensing systems, and financial modelling programs, all fit within the concept of human communication”. In other words, CMC is “the process by which people create, exchange, and

perceive information using networked telecommunications systems that facilitate encoding, transmitting, and decoding messages" (December, 1995, para.2). It is defined also as the process of human communication via computers, involving people, situated in particular contexts, engaging in processes to shape media for a variety of purposes (December, 1997, para.3).

As a pioneer within the field, Susan Herring (1996b) defines CMC as the "communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers" (p.1). In fact, practically speaking, CMC is mainly interested in human interpersonal communication on, through and about the internet and web. This is reflected in the scholarly works and journals that have CMC as their subject of research such as *Computers in Human behaviour, the journal of computer mediated communication* and *the Journal of online behaviour* (Thurlow et al., pp.15-16).

Based on the above definitions, CMC is simply the field of study which takes as its subject of study the communication between humans via computer technologies (PC, mobile phone, etc.). It was relatively difficult to give a clear and easily understood definition for CMC in the early years of its emergence due to its novelty among people. Nowadays, CMC would be easily understood thanks to the great popularity and outstanding fame of communication taking place in the social networking sites such as Facebook. For instance, CMC would study the communication we are daily having with our friends on Facebook which is in the form of posts, publications, sharing, and comments.

1.1.2.2. Basic Concepts in Computer Mediated Communication

Based on Thurlow et al. (2004, pp. 17-20), there are three basic concepts on which the field of CMC is built: communication, mediation and computer. A brief review of these

concepts is useful and would help the reader understand the points to be discussed along the forthcoming chapters.

- Communication: refers in CMC to human communication (not media communication) as it is the result of social interaction and it is characterized by the following**:**

- Communication is dynamic (a process that derives its meaning from the context of use).
- It is also transactional (a conversation between people with exchanging roles back and forth between speaker and listener).

- Communication is multifunctional, i.e. it serves multiple functions for people (informative, emotive, directive, declarative, etc).
- Communication is multimodal: meaning is constructed not only through language but also through other modes such as vocal (e.g. tone of voice, accent, volume, pauses), movement (e.g. facial expression, gestures, posture), physical appearance (e.g. height, weight, skin colour), artefacts (e.g. lighting, décor, fashion), and use of space (e.g. body orientation, touch, distance).

- Mediation: According to the *Twenty-first Century Dictionary, to mediate* means to convey or transmit something or to act as a medium for something, and a medium is through which something is transmitted or conveyed be it a message, sound, feeling, etc. There are three layers which mediate communication: psychological, cultural and social. However, in CMC another layer is added. It is 'technological mediation'. The latter refers to computer machines and networks through which messages and communication is transmitted such as computers and internet.

- Computer: in CMC, the term 'computer' refers to the technologies through which communication is being conveyed such as PC, Mobiles, etc. It is not the 'informatics' which

is the focus because CMC is not interested in technical issues such CD-ROM, Information systems and so on which are studied within IT branches.

1.1.2.3. Computer Mediated Communication Modes

Since it emergence in the late 1960s, CMC has witnessed an outstanding development in the options it offers to the users for communication. The chronological order (Figure 1.1) reflects the fast growing of CMC modes in just two decades starting from Email in the early 1970s till the emergence of social networking sites such as Facebook at the beginning of the second millennium.

1971	***Email***
1971	***Early Computer Conferencing***
1979	***MUDs (Multi-User Dungeons/Dimensions)***
1980	***Newsgroups***
1986	***Listservs***
1980s, early 1990s	***Early Instant Messaging (IM) (e.g., UNIX talk, ytalk, ntalk)***
1988	***IRC (Internet Relay Chat)***
1990	***MOOs (MUDs, Object Oriented)***
1992	***Text Messaging on Mobile Phones***
1996	***ICQ (''I Seek You'') (modern IM system)***
1997	***AIM (America Online Instant Messenger)***
1997	***Blogs (Web Logs)***
2003	***Second Life***
2003	***MySpace***
2004	***Facebook***
2005	***YouTube***

Figure 1.1. CMC Modes (Baron, 2008, p.14)

Among the famous and widely used modes all over the world are Email, Text Messaging, Instant Messaging, and recently Social Networking Sites. As an attempt to offer readers with some basic technical features, a simple description of these modes is included in the following:

- E-mail: from its name, one can figure out what the word '"email" stands for. The "E" letter in the word refers to "electronic", and "mail" refers to the mail (what we send to others through the post-office such as letters, documents, gifts, cards and so on). As defined by Baron (2008, p.16), an E-mail is a mail which is transmitted electronically between people using computers (and technologies alike) via a network. Without question, the e-mail became the killer application among people especially in professional areas thanks to the availability of the Internet and the decreasing costs of computer hardware and connectivity. It became nowadays "indispensable part of modern work and play, love and war" (Baron, 2008, p.16). In principle, email is a one-to-one asynchronous medium. Most of people have an email especially people in the academic and business world. One is able to create an email through accessing platforms such as Gmail, Yahoo, or Hotmail. The user is asked to choose a user name and an email ID and a password. Successfully creating an email, the user possesses an account through which he transfers messages to other people mainly for professional and academic purposes. For instance, we apply to universities through sending online applications and proposal through email. Also, we apply for a job by sending a CV via email to the company in purpose.

Much has been written about email, but curiously, we have very little tangible data beyond anecdotes. Due to fear of refusal by people, researchers avoid investigating e-mail in academic studies as it seems something personal. Consequently, most of research in computer-mediated communication focused on one-to-many modes such as chat-groups,

newsgroups and blogs, “where the researcher can pull quasi-public transcripts off of the Internet” (Baron, 2008, p.16).

- Text Messaging: we are all familiar with the “messages” option in our mobiles. Having the option logo as “an envelope”, it enables the users to type a message and send it to another one. The result is a text message transmitted between two people through mobile phones. The network through which these messages are transmitted is called “GSM” (Global System for Mobile Telecommunications). As Baron put it:

> On the GSM system, texting was known as SMS, standing for Short Message Service. In everyday parlance, most people spoke of SMS as meaning ‘‘short text messaging.’’ With time, GSM turned SMS into a highly lucrative business, particularly because the costs per transmission were lower than for voice calls. Teenagers and young adults—whose funds were generally limited—became heavy users of the service, creating an immensely popular mobile language medium in the process (2008, p.17)

- Instant Messaging: simply, instant messaging refers to the action of exchanging messages between two people at the same time. Although it emerged in the 1980s, Instant Messaging was popular until the launching of the two then famous applications: ICQ in 1996 and then of America Online Instant Messenger (AIM) in 1997 (see Baron, 2003; Herring, 2002). As put by Baron (2010), “[i]n the United States, AIM was the predominant IM platform among teenagers and young adults in the early 2000s, although MSN Messenger and Yahoo! Messenger were commonly used as well” (p.6).

Basically, the difference between email and IM is synchronicity: IM is synchronous, while Email is asynchronous. For example, speaking with a friend of you on Facebook's Messenger is an instant messaging. You send a message and expect a reply instantly. So, it is like face-to-face chat: synchronic. According to Baron 2010, "most studies of IM .... have looked at the social dimensions of the medium (e.g., who uses it, how often, for what purposes). With a few exceptions, there has been little detailed empirical analysis of the linguistic character of IM" (p.6). Instant Messaging has witnessed serious changes and become famous and more useful with the emergence of Social Networking Sites and received more attention from researchers (see Chapter 2).

- Social Networking Sites (SNSs): these are the famous recent websites and online platforms that enable users to communicate with each other in a more social way. They are presented in detail in Chapter 2.

1.1.2.4. Computer Mediated Communication: An Interdisciplinary Field

CMC is multi-discipline and attracts the attention of scholars from different fields. As showed in (Figure 1.2), different disciplines are interested in this type of communication and take it as there arena of research such as journalism, anthropology, sociology, social psychology, marketing, etc. However, it is of greater importance to Linguistics and linguists are concerned with CMC more than any other scholars. As illustrated in Figure 1.2, Linguistic studies lie at the heart of CMC and is referred to as CMD which stands for computer mediated Discourse. As put by Herring (2001):

> Most CMC currently in use is text-based, that is, messages are typed on a computer keyboard and read as text on a computer screen, typically by a person or persons at a different location from the message sender. Text-based CMC takes a variety of

forms (e.g. e-mail, discussion groups, real-time chat, virtual reality role-playing games) whose linguistic properties vary depending on the kind of messaging system used and the social and cultural context embedding particular instances of use. These characteristics of the medium have important consequences for understanding the nature of computer-mediated language. (p. 612)

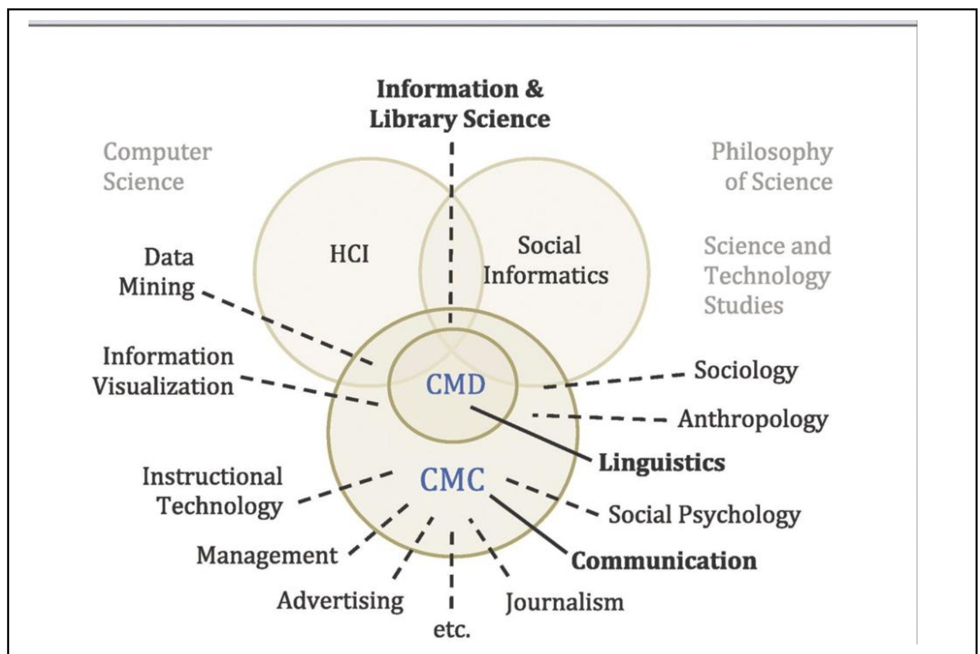


Figure 1.2. CMC Branches (Herring, 2004)

In the following section, CMD is explored in detail with focus on research that has been conducted thus far around the world. Also, some methodological approaches are stated and current and future trends in Computer mediated Discourse are referred to.

1.2. Computer Mediated Discourse (CMD)

The terms "discourse" and "discourse analysis" have different meanings to scholars in different fields. According to Shiffrin et al. 2004, among linguists, "discourse" has generally been defined as anything "beyond the sentence." For others (suc as Fasold 1990, p.65), the study of discourse is the study of language use. These definitions have in common a focus on specific instances or spates of language (p.1). However, critical theorists and those influenced by them, they add, can speak of "discourse of power" and "discourses of racism," where the term "discourses" not only becomes a count noun, but further refers to a broad conglomeration of linguistic and non-linguistic social practices and ideological assumptions that together construct power or racism (p.1). According to Jaworski and Coupland's definition of "discourse" (1999, pp.1-3), discourse can be put as (this is the approach adopted in this study):

1. Anything beyond the sentence level
2. Language Use
3. A variety of social practices that include linguistic and non-linguistic language.

1.2.1. Defining Computer Mediated Discourse

As mentioned earlier, the breakthroughs in computer technologies led to the emergence of a new discourse: "Digital Discourse" or as known in the literature "Computer Mediated Discourse". According to Androutsopoulos and Beißwenger (2008) "in the last decade, CMD has attracted a great deal of research attention from linguistic—especially pragmatic, discourse-analytic, and sociolinguistic—perspectives" (p.1). As put by Herring (2001), "the study of computer-mediated discourse ... is a specialization within the broader interdisciplinary study of computer-mediated communication (CMC) [see Figure 1.1.], distinguished by its focus on language and language use in computer networked environments, and by its use of methods of discourse analysis to address that focus" and CMD can be defined as "the communication

produced when human beings interact with one another by transmitting messages via networked computers" (p. 612). In other words, CMD studies the discourse produced when people send an email, post a comment or status on Facebook, tweet on Twitter, or chat through whatsapp or messenger. These are just famous types of digital discourse. In fact, the number of digitized communication is huge thanks to the ongoing development of digital technologies and applications. Simply, CMD is the analysis of digital discourse.

1.2.2. Technical Classification of Computer Mediated Discourse

The technological features or what is referred to as medium variables have a great impact on communication via computer networks. This results in a discourse with different features. In fact, CMD can be classified on the basis of two main factors: Synchronicity and audience (one-to-one vs. many-to-many) as illustrated in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1. Types of Communication in CMC (Baron, 2010, p.1)

Synchronicity / **Audience**	***Asynchronous***	***Synchronous***
One-to-one	Email, texting on mobile phones	Instant messaging
One-to-many	Newsgroups, listservs, blogs,Myspace, Facebook, YouTube, flickr, twitter.	Muds, MOOs, Chat, Second life

1.2.2.1. Synchronicity

One important feature of CMD is synchronicity (Baron, 2008, 2010; Kiesler et al., 1984). Synchronous CMD occurs when sender and receiver of a message are both logged at the same time and messages are being exchanged instantly, while asynchronous CMD does not require

interlocutors to be physically present at the time of interaction (Herring, 2001, p. 615). As represented in Table 1.1, Synchronous modes include Instant Messaging (IM), Second Life, MOOs, Muds. A common example of synchronous communication is chatting via Messenger. In this type of communication we are sending messages and receiving others from our friends we are talking to instantly since we are both online and ready for reply. The best example for asynchronous CMD is the email. When we send an email to a person we are not expecting an instant answer as the receiver is not logged in at that time; reply might come after one day for instance.

1.2.2.2. Audience

The second parameter on which CMD is classified is whether "the communication is one-to-one (i.e., between two people) or one-to-many (i.e., messages being broadcast to multiple potential interlocutors) (Baron, 2010, p.1). In other words, in one-to-one communication, the sender of the messages targets only one person on the other side of the screen such as sending an SMS to a friend via mobile service. However, if it is one-to-many or many-to-many, the messages targets more than one person (a public) like in posting a photo of your graduation on Facebook. As illustrated in Table 1.1, one-to-many (many-to-many) modes include chat rooms, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, My Space, Flickr.

1.2.2. Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA)

Confronted with the new affordances of CMC, researchers opted for a classification of CMD that would contribute in the facilitation of its analysis and use (Herring, 2007, p.4). As put by Herring (2007) "CMDA adapts methods from the study of spoken and written discourse to computer-mediated communication data. Discourse analysts have traditionally classified discourse into types according to various criteria [including] modality, number of

discourse participants, text type or discourse type, and genre or register" (p. 4), as shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2. Earlier Approaches to the Classification of Discourse (Herring, 2007, p. 5)

Classification criteria	Types	Invoked by
Modality (means of production/reception)	speech, writing	Chafe and Danielewicz (1987)
Number of discourse participants	monologue, dialogue, polylogue	Dooley and Levinsohn (2001)
Text/Discourse type	conversation, narrative, exhortation, exposition, etc.	Longacre (1996); Virtanen (1992)
Genre/Register[1]	casual chat, interview, public lecture, personal letter, short story, scientific research article, etc.	Biber (1988); Swales (1990)

Many attempts had been made by researcher to classify CMD starting from the 1980s. These early attempts have questioned the nature of CMD in terms of languages modalities: written and spoken. Scholars such as Maynor (1994), Ferrara, Brunner & Whittemore (1991) and Murray (1990) raised the question whether the language of the internet is "written" since it is produced through typing or "speech" as it includes many features of orality or something in between. These studies "tended to over-generalize about computer-mediated language, as if CMD was a single, homogeneous genre or communication type" (Herring, 2007, p.2). Crystal (2001) coined the term "Netspeak" for the language of the internet that was posited accordingly as a new global variety of language characterized by abbreviations, nonstandard spelling, emoticons and other speech features. However, with the domestication of the internet worldwide and the spread of CMC, it became obvious that Computer mediated discourse is more complex and variable thanks to the various technical and situational factors (Cherny, 1999; Herring, 1996).

However, the most famous and precise classification is that of Susan Herring which was presented in her article '*A Faceted Classification Scheme for Computer-Mediated Discourse'* in 2007. Her classification scheme is "a faceted lens through which to view CMD data in order to facilitate linguistic analysis, especially research conducted in the discourse analysis, conversation analysis, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics traditions" (Herring, 2007, p.4).

Adapted from library and information science, the faceted classification approach is based on facets which are "categories or concepts of the same inherent type. A faceted scheme has several facets and each facet may have several terms, or possible values, e.g., a faceted classification scheme for wine might include the facets (and terms) "grape varietal" (riesling, cabernet, sauvignon, etc.), "region" (Napa Valley, Rhine, Bordeaux, etc.), and "year" (2001, 2002, etc.) (Herring, 2007, p.9)

This classification model proposed by Herring covers the major factors that affect language and language use online. It focuses on the many facets of the online context and how they are leading to linguistic and discursive variability in CMD. The faceted classification scheme is based on the assumption that CMD is affected by two major factors: one is technological referred to as *'medium'* and the other is social referred to as '*situation'* Thus, the model is divided into two dimensions: *medium factors* and *situational factors* (Table 1.3).

The first set of categories describes technological features of computer-mediated communication systems. These are determined by messaging protocols, servers and clients, as well as the associated hardware, software, and interfaces of users' computers, in as much as it is possible for the researcher to obtain such information. The inclusion of a set of technological factors in the approach does not assume that the computer medium exercises a determining influence on communication in all cases, although each factor has been observed

to affect communication in at least some instances. One reason for including medium factors as a separate set is, precisely, to attempt to discover under what circumstances specific system features affect communication, and in what ways (Herring, 2007, p.11) .

Table 1.3. Herring's (2007) Multi-faceted Classification of CMD (p.11)

Medium factors	Synchronicity	Synchronous-asynchronous
	Message transmission	One-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-many
	Persistence of the transcript	Ephemeral-archived
	Size of message	Amount of text conveyed
	Channels of communication	Words, images, sound, video
	Privacy settings	Public, semi-public, semi-private, private contexts
	Anonymous	Extent to which the participants' identities are represented within a site
	Message format	Architectures for displaying interactions
Situation Factors	Participation structure	Number of participants involved
	Participants characteristics	Stated or assumed demographic and ideological characteristics
	Purpose	Goals of interaction (either at individual or group level)
	Topic	Subject matter
	Tone	Formal or informal
	Norms	Accepted practices established by the group
	Code	Language variety and choice of script

The second set consists of social factors associated with the situation or context of communication. These include information about the participants, their relationships to one another, purposes for communicating, what they are communicating about, and the kind of

language they use to communicate (cf. Baym, 1995; Hymes, 1974). The inclusion of a set of situation factors assumes that context can shape communication in significant ways, although it does not assume that any given factor is always influential. The particular factors included in the model described below have all been observed to condition variation in at least some CMD contexts (Herring, 2007, p.11).

1.2.3. Variability in CMD

As argued in the previous section, discourse online is not homogeneous and varies from one context to another depending on a number of technical and sociolinguistic factors. This views is the basis of CMD research that investigated the features and variation of this kind of discourse from different perspectives and approaches. This notion is presented in this section with focus on five aspects: medium and channel, writing systems, linguistic variables, conversation, social variability and social interaction.

1.24.1. Medium and Channel

The internet is a different medium of communication to writing and speaking and has its specific features (Herring, 2001, p. 615). Accordingly, Researchers in the field of CMC, and more specifically CMD, do not treat CMD as a form of writing transmitted by electronic means but a new form of communication shaped by medium effects (Murray, 1988, p. 370)

The nature of CMD makes it slower than speech (conversation) due to the time typing takes in comparison to speaking, and faster than writing (such as letters) (Herring, 2001, p. 617). One more thing is related to target audience; while distributing to the public (mainly unknown), privacy of messages can be managed also (King, 1996, p.121). Also, what characterizes CMD from other media is that it offers the users to communicate in groups, i.e. many people communicating with each other at the same time like in chat rooms (Herring, 1999a). According to Herring, “for these and other reasons, participants typically experience

CMD as distinct from either writing or speaking, sometimes as a blend of the two, but in any event subject to its own constraints and potentialities" (2001, p. 614).

According to Daft and Lengel's view (1984), unlike face-to-face communication which is a rich medium (visual, auditory, gestural, etc), CMD is a "lean" medium where information is only textual and available just through the visual channel (p.200). Accordingly, some scholars view CMD as "impoverished" and unsuitable for social interaction (Baron, 1984). However, as Herring (2001, p. 615) put it, "there is ample evidence that users compensate textually for missing auditory and gestural cues, and that CMD can be richly expressive".

1.2.4.2. Writing Systems and Online Communication: ASCII and its Consequences

As mentioned earlier, with the emergence of the internet back in the 1960s, the need for a character encoding system arose. Character encoding is "a system that associates a set of natural language characters, typically an alphabet, with a set of something else, usually numbers or electrical pulses, in order to permit computers and other electronic equipment to efficiently process, store and communicate character-oriented information" ("ASCII: A Brief History", 2006).

At that time, it was difficult for computers to do so due to the different encoding protocols adapted by different manufacturers. Therefore, IT researchers started working on a unified system that would facilitate communication between different kinds of computers. Consequently, researchers came up with the ASCII (pronounced AS-kee) (Figure 1.3). According to Danet and Herring (2007), the ASCII is the "American Standard Code for Information Interchange [that was] established in the 1960s and it contains 128 seven-bit codes (unique combinations of 1's and 0's), 95 of which are available for use as graphical characters. This character set is based on the Roman alphabet and the sounds of the English language" (p. 8). "The ASCII is one of the most successful software standards ever

developed. It is based on the characters used to write the English language..... : the 26 upper case (i.e., capital) and the 26 lower case (i.e., small) letters of the alphabet, the Arabic numerals, punctuation marks and a variety of other symbols (e.g., the ampersand, the equals sign, the 'at' symbol and the dollar sign)" ("ASCII: A Brief History", 2006).

```
  ! " # $ % & ' ( ) * + , - . /
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 : ; < = > ?
@ A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O
P Q R S T U V W X Y Z [ \ ] ^ _
` a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o
p q r s t u v w x y z { | } ~
```

Figure 1.3. The ASCII Character Set

(Cited in Danet and Herring, 2007, p.9)

With the spread of the Internet worldwide, users from different countries and with various languages started using the system and this led to the emergence of a major communication problem due to the limitedness of the ASCII. The ASCII inventors could not anticipate that this text transmission protocol is limited to languages with the Roman writing transcript such as English, French and Italian (Danet and Herring, 2007, p.8-9).

According to Danet and Herring (2007), "[t]he ASCII character set has privileged English online. Whether it concerns HTML (the mark up language for webpages), domain names on the Web (URLs), email addresses, or the content of instant messages, email, discussion list postings, and chat, speakers of many languages have faced varying degrees of difficulty" (p.9). They add, only few Scandinavian languages' characters are missing in the ASCII and Scandinavians suffer least, but this still cause some embarrassing problems (p.9).

For instance, the three letters of the Swedish alphabet, å, ä, and ö are missing in the ASCII and without the two dots over the "o," the name of the town 'Horby' in Sweden means "fornication village" (Pargman, 1998). Another example is Hawaiian, which is written in Roman characters with additional use of macrons. Warschauer and Donaghy (1997) note that "incorporation of diacritical marks is crucial, since they define meaning in Hawaiian; for example, 'pau' means 'finished', 'paÿu' means 'soot', 'paÿü' means 'moist', and 'päÿü' means 'skirt' " (p. 353).

Indeed, the ASCII caused serious communication problems for speakers of languages such as Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, Russian, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese whose writing system is non-Roman and being based on special character sets for word processing and online communication (Danet and Herring, 2007, p.9). In 1998, the editors of *Foreign Policy* claimed that "English remains the only language that can be used without distortion on virtually every computer in the world" (quoted in Fishman, 1998, p. 34). Since then, the situation has improved. Nevertheless, many people today still cannot assume that their interlocutors will be able to read messages containing characters other than basic ASCII, even if their own computers accommodate their non-English language needs. Problems engendered by the dominance of the ASCII character set online might lead some to speak of "typographic imperialism" as a subcategory of linguistic imperialism (Pargman & Palme, 2004). In the light of these circumstances, a number of questions were raised and addressed in CMD research such as: "How have people communicating online in languages with different sounds and different writing systems adapted to the constraints of ASCII environments? What problems have they encountered, what progress has been made in solving these problems, and what remains to be done**?"** (Danet and Herring, 2007, p. 9)**.**

1.2.4.3. Linguistic Variables

It is common that computer mediated language is "less correct, complex and coherent than standard written language" (Herring, 2001, p. 617). According to Baron (1984, p.131), it was predicted that participants in computer conferences would use "fewer subordinate clauses and a narrower range of vocabulary" and the expressive functions of language would decrease by time due to computer communication.

One of the salient features of Computer mediated language is that it is not standard (Crystal, 2001). Mainly, this is not due to errors caused by linguistic incompetence or inattention but because users tend to economize on typing effort, mimic spoken language features, or express themselves creatively (Herring, 1998a). This notion is strengthened by Murray's (1990, pp.43-4) study where he observed that "computer science professionals using synchronous CMD in a workplace environment delete subject pronouns, determiners, and auxiliaries; use abbreviations; do not correct typos; and do not used mixed case" as illustrated in the following exchange between Les and Brian:

(1) Les1: as it stands now, meeting on *weds*?

(2) Les2: instead of *tues*

(3) Brian1: idiot Hess seemed to think you were there *tues* morning

(4) Brian2: *thot* that *mtg* from 9 to 10 would solve

(5) Brian3: if you not in *ny* I'm going to have *mtg* changed to *wedne*

As can be observed in the example, users tend to use shortened versions of original standard words such: '*Wedne'* instead of '*Wednesday', 'mtg'* instead of *'meeting', 'thot'* instead of *'thought', etc.* These patterns are very common and used by users from different languages. Textual representation of auditory information such as laughter, prosody, and other

non-language sounds is another common practice in computer mediated language. The following Mackinnon's (1995) example illustrates the practice:

Al, hahahahahahahhahahahahahahahahahahahahaa *sniff* waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhh I laughed, i cried. . . . that post was GREAT! :-) Amusedly, -Mirth

According to Herring (2001), these practices reflect how users manage themselves to cover their expressive needs in light of the limitations imposed by the computer medium, and "this results in a linguistic variety that, despite being produced by written-like means, frequently contains features of orality" (p. 618). She adds, synchronous modes of CMD impose temporal constraints on users that result in a reduction of linguistic complexity relative to asynchronous modes. For instance, in her study of InterChange use in educational settings, Ko (1996) found that users used fewer complements, more stranded prepositions, and shorter words in comparison to formal writing. She also found that the Interchange messages had lower average frequencies of lexical density, ration of nouns to verbs and attributive adjectives. Ko argues that this is due to the heavy burden of production and processing Interchange imposed on users where they have to type quickly and leave little time for message planning. However, as stated by Herring (2001, p. 618) in asynchronous modes, users have the needed time to form and edit their messages.

The many studies that have been conducted in English-based communication thus far proved that CMC tends to display both speech-like and written language characteristics as well as digital ones (Baron, 2000; Crystal, 2001; Danet, 2001; Herring, 1996b, 2001; Yates, 1996a). One of the common variables that affect CMC is synchronicity: synchronous modes tend to be more speechlike than asynchronous ones (Baron, 2000; Cherny, 1999; Herring, 2001; Ko, 1996; Werry, 1996). However, many features are shared across modes: the

emoticon or “smiley face”; abbreviations (LOL, “laughing out loud”), rebus writing (‘cu’ for “see you”), and a tendency toward speech-like informality (Danet and Herring, 2007, p.112).

The limitations imposed by the ASCII which were stated earlier led users to search for solutions to cover the writing gaps they face when communicating online. In his study of how speakers of Serbian, German, and other languages have compensated for the limitations of ASCII in Internet Relay Chat (IRC), Elke Hentschel (1998), points out that, “German IRC users write ae, oe, ue and ss for ä, ö, ü and ß; Serbian IRC’ers just write the basic letter without the diacritic sign; Russian users … make use of the English transcription of the Russian letters, and the Japanese use special ANSI escape control sequences to represent the Kanji signs” (para.22).

In many other languages, users improvised through using the Roman alphabet (included in the ASCII) in writing instead of the conventional script of their native language (Danet and Herring, 2007, p.10). One of the first studies to investigate the Romanization in writing online was John Paolillo’s (1996) study of the Usenet newsgroup ***soc.culture.punjab*** in which Punjabi (written in an Iindic or Arabic script) was written by users in the Roman script. In another similar study, Gao (2001) investigated how Chinese students in the United States used the Roman alphabet to represent the Chinese characters and inserting numbers next to syllables to indicate tone in emails. In Greek, Androutsopoulos & Hinnenkamp (2001); Georgakopoulou (1997, 2004) have also documented the use of Romanization in writing in both emails and chat.

In Arab countries which are characterized by *diglossia* (Ferguson, 1959) where high prestige, written, literary, classical Arabic coexists with a low-prestige, local spoken variety, users online resort to Romanization to type when communicating online. For example, Some users in Dubai “script switch,” alternating between conventional, right-to-left Arabic script

and Arabic rendered left to right in the Roman alphabet As in Greek, Arabic Internet users also use numerals to represent sounds of Arabic that cannot otherwise be represented in the Roman alphabet (Berjaoui, 2001; Palfreyman & Al Khalil, 2003; Warschauer, El Said, & Zohry, 2002).

Hsi-Yao Su (2007) identifies four creative uses of writing systems on Taiwanese BBSs: rendering the sounds of English in Chinese characters, rendering Taiwanese (normally not written) in Chinese characters, writing Taiwanese accented Mandarin in Chinese characters, and recycling a transliteration alphabet ordinarily used in elementary education. There is a strong component of playfulness in the use of these systems. Patterns of adaptation are quite different in Hong Kong (Lee, 2007b, 2007c). Whereas Taiwanese users play with Chinese characters, Hong Kong users prefer using the Roman alphabet to represent Cantonese elements.

In fact, the ASCII has been developed through time in an attempt to cover the typing gaps in other languages and the character set has been expanded to facilitate the use of specific languages or groups of languages (Danet and Herring, 2007, p.11). However, the Roman alphabet serves more languages than any other script and more than 80 scripts awaited encoding as of 2005 (Anderson, 2005).

1.2.4.4. Conversation

Along the same vein in structural studies, Herring (2001) claims that “text-only CMD is sometimes claimed to be interactionally incoherent, due to limitations imposed by computer messaging systems on turn-taking” (p. 19). One of the obstacles presented to conversation in computer-mediated communication is the unpredictable and lengthy gaps between messages, and the overlap of exchanges (Cherny, 1999; Lunsford, 1996). CMC Interaction management is complicated due to two features of the medium: (1) messages are not posted according to

what they respond to but their sequence of reception in the system and (2) the absence of audiovisual cues hinders simultaneous feedback between users (Herring, 1999a). These problems generally occur in multi-participant synchronous CMD such as chatting rooms and to overcome such obstacles users rely on 'addressivity' which is mentioning to whom the message is addressed and for what (Herring, 2001, p.19). Although still present in some situations, these obstacles are disappearing nowadays with the development of SNSs.

The problem of message reference in internet interactions occurs in asynchronous CMD such as discussion groups. To overcome such a problem, users rely on 'linking' which is the practice of referring explicitly to the content of a previous message in one's response (Baym, 1996; Herring, 1996b), as for example when a message begins, "I would like to respond to Diana's comment about land mines." Quoting, or copying portions of a previous message in one's response (Severinson Eklundh and Macdonald, 1994), may also function as a type of linking.

1.2.4.5. Social Variability

The continuous fast development in the internet platforms and technologies are changing the nature of computer mediated communication. In its early days, computer mediated communication was believed to be suitable only for the exchange and circulation of data and information, and not for social interaction and communication (Baron 1984; Kiesler et al. 1984). It was also thought of as a utopian, egalitarian space where people are liberated and could participate freely and democratically as social status cues (gender, colour, age, ethnicity, etc) are "filtered out" (Landow, 1994; Poster, 1990). Herring (2001) stated that although not that ideal, social life on the internet (by the late of 1990s and beginning of 2000s) became intriguing for discourse analysts, sociolinguists, and sociologists as it offers

rich social data (p. 620). More precisely, she adds, social factors (such as participant demographics and situational context) caused deep variation in the use and choice of language in CMC (p. 621).

Social signs of variation in CMD are various. For instance, sophisticated language and adherence to prescriptive norms are markers of participants' educational level which are displayed unconsciously (Herring, 1998a); interests and life experiences included in the message relatively reveal the user's age (Herring, 1998c). User's gender is the most salient social variable in the online environments which is indicated via the choice of personal nicknames in discussion groups and chat rooms such as Cover_Girl, sexychica, shy_boy, and GTBastard (Herring, 2001, p. 621). On a less conscious level, participants "give off" gender information through adherence to culturally prescribed gendered interactional norms, sometimes interacting in ways that exaggerate the binary opposition between femaleness and maleness, for example by engaging in stereotyped behaviors such as supportiveness and coyness for females, and ritual insults and sexual pursuit of females for males (Hall, 1996; Herring, 1998c). Other linguistic behaviours for which (presumably unconscious) gender differences have been observed in CMD include message length, assertiveness (Herring, 1993), politeness (Herring, 1994, 1996a), and aggression (Cherny, 1994; Collins-Jarvis, 1997), including "flaming" (Herring, 1994).

Variation in CMD is also conditioned by situational factors that constitute the context of the communication. Different participation structures (Baym, 1996) such as one-to-one, one-to-many, or many-to-many; the distinction between public and private exchanges; and the degree of anonymity provided by the system all have potential consequences for language use. Participants' previous experience, both off and on the Internet, also shapes linguistic behavior; thus users may transfer terms and practices from off-line cultures into CMD (Baym, 1995). Over time, computer-mediated groups develop norms of practice regarding "how

things are done" and what constitutes socially desirable behavior; these may then be codified in "Frequently Asked Question" documents (Voth, 1999) and netiquette guidelines (e.g. Shea, 1994). Norms vary considerably from context to context; for example, flaming is proscribed in many academic discussion groups, but positively valued in the Usenet newsgroup alt.flame (Smith, McLaughlin & Osborne, 1997). This last example points to the importance of communication purpose – recreational, professional, pedagogical, creative, etc. – in shaping language use. Social and pedagogical IRC, for example, may differ widely in level of formality, use of directive speech acts, and topical coherence (Herring and Nix, 1997). Discourse topic and activity type (such as "greeting", "exchanging information," "flaming," etc.) also condition linguistic variation. Thus, for example, contractions are used more often in discussing "fun" topics (such as profanity) than serious topics on an academic linguistics discussion list, and more often in information exchanges than in extended debates (Herring, 1999c). Regarding these findings, Herring (2001) argued that "socially motivated variation show that CMD, despite being mediated by "impersonal" machines, reflects the social realities of its users" (p. 622).

1.2.4.6. Social Interaction

In addition to being shaped by social circumstances, CMD constitutes social practice in and of itself (Herring, 2007, p. 622). Text-only CMD is a surprisingly effective way to "do" interactional work, in that it allows users to choose their words with greater care, and reveals less of their doubts and insecurities, than does spontaneous speech (Sproull and Kiesler, 1991). Thus, participants negotiate, intimidate, joke, tease, and flirt (and in some cases, have sex and get married) on the Internet, often without having ever met their interlocutors face to face. Computer users have developed a number of compensatory strategies to replace social cues normally conveyed by other channels in face-to-face interaction. The best known of these is the use of emoticons, or sideways "smiley faces" composed of ascii characters

(Raymond, 1993; Reid, 1991), to represent facial expressions. While the prototypical emoticon, a smile :-), usually functions to indicate happiness or friendly intent, emoticons cue other interactional frames as well: for example, a winking face sticking its tongue out, ;-p (as if to say “NYA nya nya NYA nya”), can signal flirtatious teasing, and Danet et al. (1997) describe a spontaneous IRC “party” where emoticons were creatively deployed to represent the activity of smoking marijuana. In addition to facial expressions, physical actions can be represented textually. Typed actions such as <grin> and *yawn* may serve as contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1982) for a playful or relaxed discourse frame. From this and other research into on-line social interaction, language emerges as a powerful strategic resource – indeed, the primary resource – for creating social reality in text-based CMC (Herring, 2001, p. 623).

1.2.4. Computer Mediated Discourse: Multinigual Scholarship

The novelty of computer mediated discourse was intriguing for researchers from a variety of disciplines and countries all over the world. This resulted in a big number of studies with different perspectives, approaches and objectives and that were conducted in various sociolinguistic spaces and cultures. Table 1.4 includes pioneering studies that were conducted in different places in the world until the emergence of Social Networking Sites where researchers started approaching CMD differently. Thus, these studies are an illustration of the diversity of CMD research.

Table 1.4. Various CMD Studies prior to Social Media Emergence (Danet and Herring, pp. 25-26) ***(Appendix B)***

Conclusion

In the beginning of the chapter, it was argued that language in the digital world is not homogeneous and varies depending on different situational and medium factors. Therefore, it has been very intriguing for discourse analysts and sociolinguists interested in the novel linguistic and discursive phenomena encompassed in this online context. This led to the emergence of CMD as a novel discipline within the broader field of CMC studies. This chapter tackled CMD focusing on the basic theories, approaches and variation that occurred in such a discourse along the rapid development in digital communication technologies. These details are useful as they represent a theoretical foundation upon which readers - specifically those with no solid background on CMD - would rely to understand the information and ideas highlighted in the forthcoming chapters.

Chapter Two

Social Media and Discourse 2.0

Introduction 47

2.1. The New Internet: a Shift in the Medium 47

2.1.1. From Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 48

2.1.2. What is Web 2.0? 48

2.2.3. Web 1.0 vs. Web 2.0: Basic Technical and Content Differences 50

2.2. Social Media 51

2.2.1. Social Networking Sites (SNSs) 52

2.2.2. Facebook 55

2.2.2.1. Facebook at a Glance 55

2.2.2.2. Basic Affordances 56

2.2.2.2.1. The Profile 57

2.2.2.2.2. 'Friending' and Friends List 57

2.2.2.2.3. Status Updates 58

2.2.2.2.4. Comments 59

2.2.2.2.5. Private Messaging 59

2.2.2.2.6. The Wall/Timeline 59

2.2.2.2.7. News Feed 60

2.2.2.3. Facebook as a Social Media Utility 60

2.2.2.4. Components of Facebook as an Online Social Networking Utility

2.3. Discourse 2.0 62

2.3.1. Discourse 2.0 Classification 64

2.3.1.1. Familiar Discursive Aspects **64**

2.3.1.2. Reconfigured Discursive Aspects **65**

2.3.1.3. Emergent Discursive Aspects **65**

2.3.1.3.1. Collaborative Text Production **67**

2.3.1.3.2. Multimodal Communication **68**

2.3.1.3.3. Researching Emergent Aspects **68**

2.3.2. Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives **70**

Conclusion **71**

Introduction

The present chapter highlights this very recent form of CMD which is referred to as "Discourse 2.0" or "social media discourse" that, indeed, represents the arena of the present research. According to Herring (2013), CMC has been transforming recently from taking place in "stand-alone clients such as emails and instant messaging programs to juxtaposition with other content" that support information exchange or entertainment in converged media on Web 2.0 sites such as text comments on Flickr; video responses to YouTube videos; text (and voice) chat during multiplayer online games, "talk" pages associated with Wikipedia articles; interpersonal and group exchanges on Twitter; status updates and comments on Facebook profiles (pp. 4-5).

This chapter starts with an overview of the new form of digital space known as Web 2.0 and its features and affordances. Then, light is shed on discourse 2.0 (discourse on Web 2.0) and what makes it different from previous CMD. The major focus in this chapter is on Social Networking Sites, mainly Facebook (highlighting the technical and social affordances), along with language, discourse and communication in these novel platforms which are very intriguing for sociolinguists and discourse analysts.

2.1. The New Internet: a Shift in the Medium

Since its creation in the 1960s, the internet has witnessed great transformations thanks to the breakthroughs in electronics and communication technologies. One of the radical shifts was the creation of *the websites* which take part of the *World Wide Web.* According to Herring (2013), the *World Wide Web* is a concept that was first introduced by the physicist Tim Berners-Lee in 1990 (p.2). Simply, the websites we daily access while surfing on the net (such as the famous global ones: Google, Yahoo, Wikipedia, and Facebook, or other specialised ones such as websites of sports, fashion and education) are what constitute the

World Wide Web. She adds, the websites of the mid 1990s were "single-authored, fairly static documents; they included personal homepages, lists of frequently asked questions (FAQs), and ecommerce sites" (p.2). These sites constitute what referred to as the Web 1.0.

2.1.1. From Web 1.0 to Web 2.0

In the late 1990s, the internet shifted toward more dynamic, interactive websites, the content of which could be—and often was—updated frequently and which allowed users to leave comments on the site. These sites foreshadowed what later came to be called Web 2.0 (Herring, 2013, p.2). As put by Solomon and Schrum (2007):

> We no longer just find and use information; the Web is now a participatory, interactive place where we create information collaboratively and share the results. Everyone can participate thanks to social networking and collaborative tools and the abundance of Web sites that allow us to post journals, photos, movies, and more. The Web is no longer a one-way street where someone controls the content. Anyone can control content in a Web 2.0 world (p.8).

2.2.2. What is Web 2.0?

The term web 2.0 was first used in 2004 by Tim O'reilly in a conference he called for named 'web 2.0 conference that gathered businessmen and economists (O'reilly, 2005). Web 2.0 is used to refer to the internet as "an interpersonal resource rather than solely an informational network" (Zappavignia, 2012, p.2). According to Wikipedia (2011b) and other online sources, it refers to changing trends in, and new uses of, web technology and web design, especially involving participatory information sharing; user-generated content; an

ethic of collaboration; and use of the web as a social platform. In other words, Web 2.0 is used to “enact relationships rather than simply share information” (Zappavigna, 2012, p.2).

Sites such as as blogs, wikis, social network sites, and media-sharing sites are also referred to as Web 2.0 (Herring, 2013, p.2). In fact, the shift towards Web 2.0 was a result of the development of older Web 1.0 websites in terms of options of participation and content editing. This phenomenon is referred to by Herring (2013, p5) as “Convergent Media Computer mediated Communication” (CMCMC). Figure 2.1 exemplifies the case:

Web 1.0		**Web 2.0**
DoubleClick	-->	Google AdSense
Ofoto	-->	Flickr
Akamai	-->	BitTorrent
mp3.com	-->	Napster
Britannica Online	-->	Wikipedia
personal websites	-->	Blogging
Evite	-->	upcoming.org and EVDB
domain name speculation	-->	search engine optimization
page views	-->	cost per click
screen scraping	-->	web services
Publishing	-->	Participation
content management systems	-->	Wikis
directories (taxonomy)	-->	tagging ("folksonomy")
Stickiness	-->	Syndication

Figure 2.1. From Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 (O’reilly, 2005)

Another approach to web 2.0 is based on the chronological order of the creation or appearance of the different sites as illustrated in Figure 2.2:

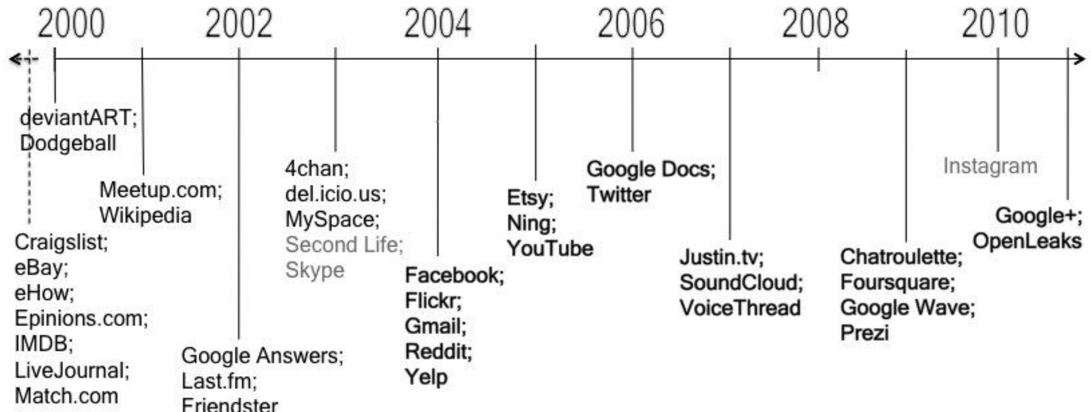


Figure 2.2. Web 2.0 Sites Timeline (Herring, 2013, p.3)

Thus, Web 2.0 can be redefined as "the web-based platforms that emerged as popular in the first decade of the twenty-first century, and that incorporate user-generated content and social interaction, often alongside or in response to structures or (multimedia) content provided by the sites themselves" (Herring, 2013, p.4).

2.2.3. Web 1.0 vs. Web 2.0: Basic Technical and Content Differences

The shift from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 is reflected in the transformation of specific aspects of content production and use in the websites which have big impact on discourse (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. A general comparison between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 (adapted from Hsu and Park, 2011, p.2)

	Web 1.0	Web 2.0
Mode of usage	Read	Write and contribute
Unit of content	Page	Record
State	Static	Dynamic
How content is viewed	Web browser	Browsers, RSS (Really Simple Syndication) readers, mobile devices, etc.
Creation of content	By website authors	By everyone
Domain of	Web designers and geeks	A new culture of public research?

The first aspect of transformation is the mode of usage which refers to what extent the users or visitors of a certain website can contribute to the content. In Web 1.0 sites, users or visitors can only read the content without reacting or adding to it. However, in Web 2.0 users can create content, share it and contribute to it. The second aspect is the unit of content: in Web 1.0 content is stored in pages; in Web 2.0 it is recorded in a chronological order such as Facebook news feed. The third one is state of using the content: Web 1.0 is static and users cannot interact or exchange ideas about the content; Web 2.0 is dynamic and users interact with each other, react to each others' actions, and can represent their attitudes and opinions. The fifth aspect refers to accessing content: Web 1.0 sites are accessed through web browser such as Mozilla Firefox or Google chrome; in addition to browsers, Web 2.0 websites are also accessed through mobile devices and RSSs. The most important aspect of transformation is related to the creation of content. In Web 1.0, content is created only by authors of the website such as the articles found in Britannica Online. In Web 2.0, the content is a result of communication between people (everyone can participate) such as posting a comment to a certain publication on Facebook or a video on Youtube.

2.2. Social Media

Researchers interested in discourse and language in use adapted the term social media to refer "to the internet-based sites and services that promote social interaction between participants" (Page, Barton, Unger and Zappavigna, 2014, p.5). Famous social media sites include blogs, discussion forums, wikis, podcasting, content sharing sites (YouTube and Flickr) and virtual worlds and most commonly social networking sites. In fact, based on this definition and how Web 2.0 was defined earlier, it can be said that the term *social media* and *Web 2.0* are used interchangeably with a little preference for the term *social media* in discourse studies (Thurlow and Morzsec, 2011; Zappavigna, 2012, Page et al. 2014).

2.2.1. Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

The recent deep transformation in the web made it “a place where you participated; a dynamic space that was shaped .... by your own actions and contributions” (Seargeant and Tagg, 2014, p2). Social network sites have become recently, and very quickly, amongst the most used sites on the web (Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2012).

It can be said that the real emergence of a Social Networking Site was in the late 1990s (Figure 2.3). As shown in the figure, the last two decades has witnessed a quick and accelerated emergence of Social Networking Sites especially between the years 2002-2006 where we can observe the launch of about six sites consecutively including the famous Twitter and Facebook in the years 2005-2006. This inspired the famous social software analyst Clay Shirky (2003) to come up with the term *YASNS* which stands for “Yet Another Social Networking Service”. boyd and Ellison (2008) stated that:

> “most [SNSs] took the form of profile-centric sites, trying to replicate the early success of Friendster or target specific demographics .... As the social media and user-generated content phenomena grew, websites focused on media sharing began implementing SNS features and becoming SNSs themselves. Examples include Flickr (photo sharing), Last.FM (music listening habits), and YouTube (video sharing). (p. 216)

The tremendous fame social media platforms have gained would push people to take Social Networking Sites for granted. However, a clear and accurate definition of SNSs is highly demanded especially when addressed in scientific research. boyd and Ellison define SNSs as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a

connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (2008, p. 211).

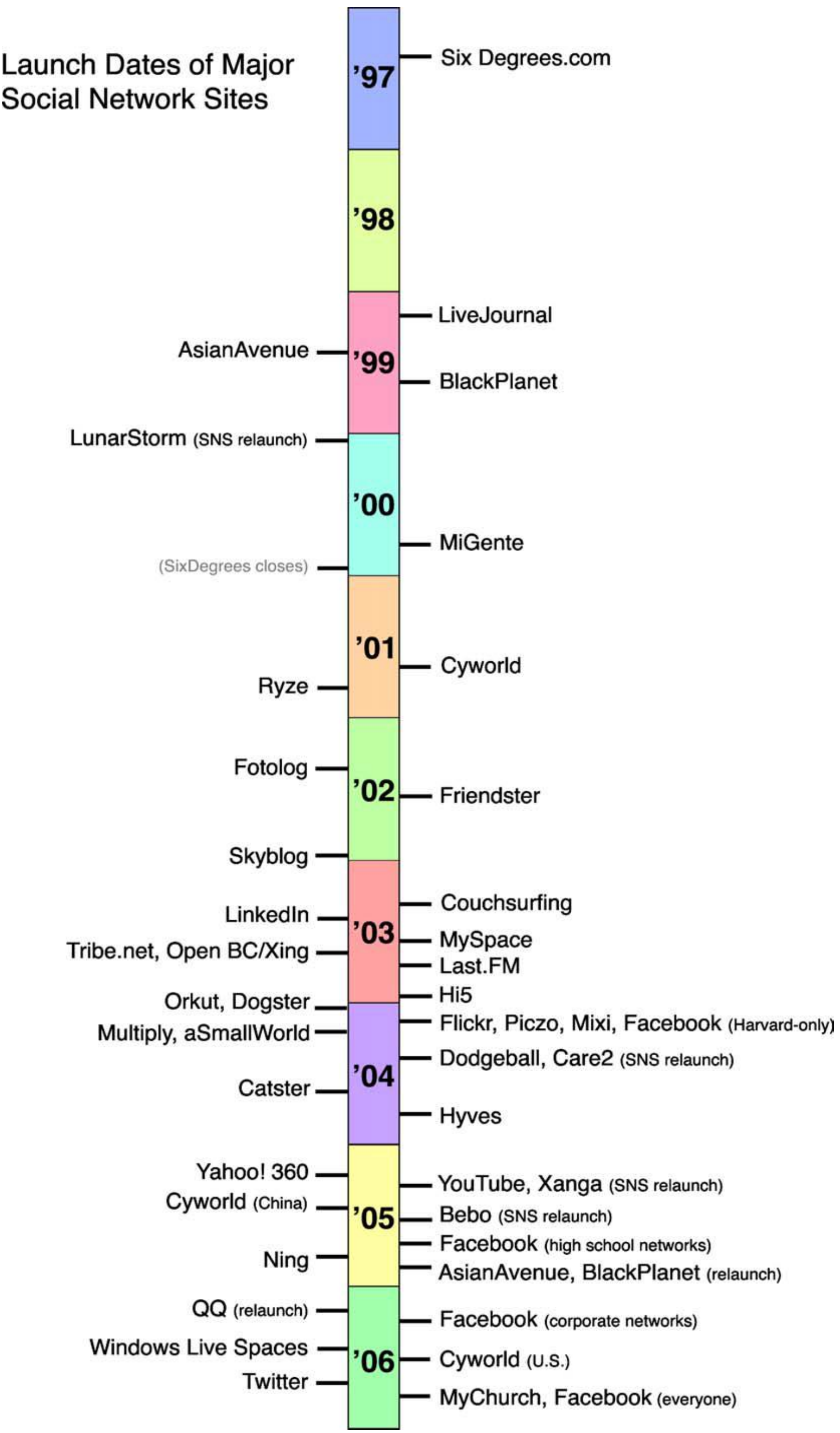


Figure 2.3. SNSs' launch Timeline (boyd and Ellison, 2008, p. 215).

Approaching SNSs from a functional point of view, Zappavigna (2012) also states that "most SNSs have in common a number of basic functions: profile creation, the ability to generate a list of affiliated users, privacy customization, and a mechanism for viewing the activities of affiliated users. These affiliated users are often referred to as 'friends' (e.g. Facebook friends) or 'followers' (e.g. Twitter followers)" (p.5). For a better understanding of this definition, we can apply it to Facebook as it is the most familiar among the other SNSs. On Facebook, we have personal profiles where we build a network of friends through inviting them or accepting their invitations. In addition, we can view or visit others profiles and go through their networks. Simply put, "SNSs are services with which users create an online profile about themselves with the goal of connecting with other people and being findable" (Zappavigna, 2012, p.5). boyd (2010, p. 39) categorises SNSs as a genre of 'networked publics' involving an 'imagined collective' arising from particular permutations of users, their practices and the affordances of technology. In terms of the content of SNS, boyd suggests four basic affordances:

1- Persistence (capture and archiving of content)
2- Replicability (duplication of content)
3- Scalability (broad visibility of content)
4- Searchability (access to content via search).

Zappavigna (2012) comments on these features saying that "[they], particularly persistence and searchability, mean that [Facebook] afford an opportunity to collect and analyse many different aspects of online discourse" (p. 5). Parrish (2010) pointed out that "the large volume of discourse data available for the public on SNSs offers a fascinating window on social life (cited in Zappavigna, 2012).

Another key feature which is related to content on SNSs is response to time where it is most of the time displayed in a chronological order (Zappavigna, 2012, p.4). He stated that

"many commentators describe the emergence of a 'real-time web'; that is, a paradigm whereby web content is streamed to users via syndication". This means that users are notified with the current events and actions of others in their social network at the moment they happen and they can access and react to the information at any time.

2.2.2. Facebook

As mentioned earlier, examples of Social Networking Sites are numerous. However, among the common SNSs nowadays, Facebook stands out as the most famous and highly used platform around the world. Indeed, this platform represents the context of the present research and light is shed on Facebook in the coming section with focus on its technical and communicative features which shape discourse on this network

2.2.2.1. Facebook at a Glance

First created in 2004 by the Harvard University student Mark Zuckerberg and his colleagues as an intra-campus social network, Facebook became the most popular and highly used SNS among university students in the US in a very short time (Cassidy, 2006). It then expanded to allow high school campuses to join in 2005, commercial organisations in 2006 and later on any member of the public could join Facebook (Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin, 2008, p. 1820, Schonfeld, 2008).

Nowadays, it has become more than a site on the web; it is a global social phenomenon and this is reflected in the up-to-date statistics. As of the latest statistics published by Facebook Inc as part of their Second Quarter Report of the year 2017:

- Worldwide, there are over 2.01 billion users of Facebook which is 17 percent increase year over year.

- 1.32 billion people on average that log onto Facebook are daily active users.

- Age 25 to 34, at 29% of users, is the most common age demographic.

These statistics make Facebook on top of social media platforms. Wasike and Cook (2010) describe the Facebook phenomenon saying that "Never before have so many people gathered to communicate through a single medium" as they are doing on this site (p. 1).

2.2.2.2. Basic Affordances

The technological and communicative features of SNSs have great impact on discourse and language use**.** SNSs offer unique affordances to users through enabling people not only to meet others but also to "articulate and make visible their social networks" (boyd and Ellison, 2008, p. 2011). Generally, SNSs share the same basic features: 'the profile', 'friends list', 'Public comments', 'private messaging', 'stream- based updates', 'Wall' and 'News Feed'. Most SNSs encompass such techniques; others might have extra ones or apply different mechanisms to these same features. However, beyond these ones, boyd and Ellison states that:

> SNSs vary greatly in their features and user base. Some have photo-sharing or video-sharing capabilities; others have built-in blogging and instant messaging technology. There are mobile specific SNSs (e.g., Dodgeball), but some web-based SNSs also support limited mobile interactions (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, and Cyworld). (2008, p. 214)

On the basis of Herring's CMDA model, these features are included in the technological factors. Accordingly, they have an impact on discourse and language use and should be considered by researchers in their analysis.

2.2.2.2.1. The profile

One of the basic and key features of Social Networking Sites is 'the profile'. The profile represents the user as a member in the site and it is the page where one "type [himself] into being" (Sundén, 2003, p. 3). It is the user's space where he interacts, communicates and represents himself. The creation of the profile is the first step to join Facebook. Usually, the user is supposed to fill in information sections provided by the site such as name, date of birth, location, interests, and often an 'about me' section where the user describes himself narratively. Additionally, Facebook demands from the user to select a photo for his profile. The profile is not isolated; it is a part of a network and its visibility within this network is crucial. boyd and Ellison (2008) noted that:

> The visibility of a profile varies by site and according to user discretion. By default, profiles on Friendster and Tribe.net are crawled by search engines, making them visible to anyone, regardless of whether or not the viewer has an account.... Facebook takes a different approach—by default, users who are part of the same ''network'' can view each other's profiles, unless a profile owner has decided to deny permission to those in their network. (p. 213)

However, on Facebook, participants are allowed to determine access to their data through limiting the visibility of their profiles to a specific audience making them "semi-public" (boyd, 2010, p. 43).

2.2.2.2.2. 'Friending' and Friends List

The friends list includes the other users to whom the person is connected and with whom he builds relationships. According to boyd and Ellison (2008), "The public display of connections is a crucial component of SNSs. The Friends list contains links to each Friend's profile, enabling viewers to traverse the network graph by clicking through the Friends lists"

(p. 213). On Facebook, these relationships are referred to as "Friends". Having a friend on Facebook is achieved through sending a 'Friend Request' to another user who must click on 'Accept the Request' for the friendship to be accomplished. Facebook allows the users to manage who can send them friend requests through the 'Privacy' section. For instance, some users might disable receiving 'Friend Requests' entirely. All 'Friends' of the user appear in his 'Friends List'.

The term "Friends" holds a relatively different meaning in Facebook to that in everyday life because people connect for various reasons (boyd, 2006a). According to boyd (2010), "the public articulation of Friends on [Facebook] is not simply an act of social accounting ..... The listing of Friends is both political and social. In choosing who to include as Friends, participants more frequently consider the implications of excluding or explicitly rejecting a person as opposed to the benefits of including them" (p. 44).

2.2.2.2.3. Status Updates

Most SNSs include features through which users broadcast content on the site sharing it with friends and people in their network. This feature is known as "status-updates" on Facebook (and also MySpace) where the content is shared with friends who can react to these updates in different ways such as 'like' and 'comment'(boyd, 2010, p. 45). Usually, status posted by a user on the site are automatically broadcasted to his friends and people in his network via notifying them that something new is being published. It is this option through which users express themselves and perform their identities on Facebook. Status updates are, therefore, a "form of self-representation online" (Lee, 2014, p. 98). Through status updates, users express their emotions and feelings, give information about something, react to an event or situation, seek help and that sort of things. Therefore, they represent the basic source of data for researchers within language, discourse and communication.

2.2.2.2.4. Comments

SNSs enable users to comment through leaving a message on their Friends' profiles or to an action (status update, event, comment, etc) of a friend on the site (boyd and Ellison, 2008, p. 213). Comments might be in the form of a text, picture, emoticon, or multimodal message. Although labelled differently, the feature of 'comments' is common in most of SNSs because it represents a quintessential aspect of these sites which is interaction with others and reaction to their practices. boyd (2010) refers to an important aspect of comments as being "not simply a dialogue between two interlocutors, but a performance of social connection before a broader audience" (p. 45). On Facebook, there is a commenting space attached to the publication the user wants to comment on; all he has to do is writing his comment then clicks on the 'publish' icon. Users are notified when another one in their network post a comment to their publications. Thus, comment exchange on Facebook is an interactive process.

2.2.2.2.5. Private Messaging

Private Messaging refers to the mails (messages) people send directly to a friend's account on the SNS itself. This technique is added to most SNSs as a result of Herring's (2013) notion of convergent media (CMCM). Facebook private messaging service enables people to send messages to their friends on Facebook via an option already integrated to the site itself. Private Messaging is similar to emails but it is achieved without accessing to one's mail box and mailing directly via the SNS.

2.2.2.2.6. The Wall / Timeline

According to Kelsey, "what the Wall does is to gather whatever a person has been up to. It [is] kind of like a roundup or summary of news .If you've posted a picture, joined a group, or made some comments, they'll show up on the Wall (2010, p.32). However, since December

2011, Facebook has changed the wall feature into the Timeline feature where the actions of the user are classified in a chronological way (Wikipedia, 2017).

2.2.2.2.7. News Feed

The News Feed in Facebook is where things can get really interesting. It is one of the things that is completely your own—a stream of all your friends' activity, accessible from the 'Home' link at the top of the Facebook screen (Kelsey, 2010, p. 38). When we access to our Facebook account, we are directed to the 'Home' section which displays all the activities in our network such as: 'a friends comments to your photo', 'today is the birthday of', 'a friend published a video' and so on. Put simply, the News Feed is a display of updates. People are notified when a new action appear through a 'Notification' feature on top of the Facebook screen in a red color circle with the number of actions.

2.2.2.3. Facebook as a Social Media Utility

As aforementioned, Facebook includes several features, such as communication through private or public messages, a chat, online fora, photos, videos, links, a personal Wall, and News Feed, where friends or participants can post their messages and comment on topics. These features are being transformed and developed constantly, and new ones are added as well. Although it shares some features of other social networking sites, Facebook affords its users a unique a unique experience of online social networking.

Basically, Facebook functions as "a cross between a tool for meeting new people [i.e. friends] and a platform for networking with people you already know" (Baron 2008, p.84). The first step towards experiencing Facebook is through signing up. Joining Facebook is achieved through a process that starts with the creation of a homepage that includes explicit information about the user's identity such as sex, religion, political affiliation, etc. Moreover,

the user is asked standard questions about other details as a means of completing the homepage creation. Users are able to personalize their pages and modify whatever information they want, as well as the content of their profiles. This is becoming a crucial means of managing identity construction and self-representation, lifestyle and social relationships (Livingstone, 2008, p. 393).

Describing Facebook use among college students, Webb, Wilson, Hodges, Smith and Zakeri (2012) stated that this social platform "provides college students mechanisms for communicating with peers in a focused and meaningful way. College life focuses on academic and social community; joining interest oriented communities on Facebook (e.g., fan groups for movies, musical groups, sports teams, and so on as well as interest-based groups around common interests, activities, and hobbies) can provide a lonely student with a strong sense of belonging" (p.5). In another study, Walther et al. (2008) noted that, "[E]ven when previously unacquainted individuals meet offline at college, they check the other's Facebook profile to learn more about that person and whether there are any common friends or experiences" (p. 31). Facebook relationships can represent and function as strong ties (family and close friends) or weak ties (acquaintances) (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Ellison et al., 2007). Facebook promotes primarily weak ties among college students (Lewis & West, 2009).

According to Webb et al. (2012), "Facebook is not one homogenous group of users. Instead, Facebook users create subgroups every day where individuals can find acceptance and camaraderie among like-minded users. Representations of minority philosophies, ethnicities, and sexual orientations may be convenient and relatively safe for Facebook users" (p.6). Indeed, researchers have examined aspects of minority representation on Facebook (Honeycutt & Cunliffe, 2010; Walther, 2009; Wasike & Cook, 2010). Such groups may offer a sense of belonging and opportunities for expression that are less restrictive than face-to-face interaction where issues of acceptance and negative stereotyping may arise. In sum, Facebook

offers a virtual reality where users can display, identify, and find others like themselves (Webb et al., 2012).

Why is Facebook so popular with college students? The answer may lie in its many uses or functions. In addition to the obvious roles of providing a venue to display identity (DeAndrea et al., 2010; Grasmuck et al., 2009; Zhao et al., 2008) and for communication with other users (Page, 2010; Pempek et al., 2009), "checking Facebook" can become "deeply integrated in users' daily lives through specific routines and rituals" (Debatin et al., 2009, p. 83) as well as a ready source of social drama (Gozzi, 2010). Further, a recent survey reported that Facebook can serve six additional functions in users' lives: pastime, affection, fashion, share problems, sociability, and social information (QuanHasse & Young, 2010).

Previous research on Facebook has examined many interesting aspects of homepages including language use (Honeycutt & Cunliffe, 2010) and the narrative potential of status updates (Page, 2010), as well as aspects of Facebook friendships including perceptions of the number of friends (Tong, Van der Heide, & Langwell, 2008), maintenance of Facebook friendships (Ellison et al., 2007) and quality of Facebook friendships (Baker & Oswald, 2010). Further, researchers have examined political activism on Facebook (Langlois, Elmer, McKelvey, & Devereaux, 2009), and the political participation of Facebook users (Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009).

2.2.2.4. Components of Facebook as an Online Social Networking Utility

In online initial interactions, users' biological sex may remain unknown. However, Thomson (2006) posited that even in such situations, gender manifests in the language usage. Once manifest, users' biological sex can play a significant role in mediated communicative behavior, as females tend to self-disclose more to close friends than males and display greater sociability than males (Igarashi, Takai, & Yoshida, 2005). Previous researchers reported

differences in Facebook behaviors by biological sex (Taraszow et al., 2010; Walther et al., 2008; Wang, Moon, Kwon, Evans, & Stefanone, 2010). However, the full extent of the influence of biological sex in online communication remains unknown.

Users may employ social media to meet their relational goals (e.g., to meet potential friends and dating partners). To achieve these goals, users often attempt to manage impressions they make on others (Walther et al., 2008). Some users choose to disclose their relational goals on Facebook, while others do not. This study assessed disclosure of relational goals to discover its potential relationship with anonymity and connectedness.While some users provide many information bits about self-identity, other users find it advantageous to develop online profiles that disclose little personal information. Stritzke et al. (2004) claimed that this control over levels of anonymity can lead some users to feel more comfortable with higher levels of self-disclosure. Indeed, Debatin et al. (2009) reported that users "claimed to understand privacy issues, yet reported uploading large amounts of personal information" (p. 83). Conversely, Bardini and Horvath (1995) argued that users who consciously prepare online images often face the dialectic of revealing positive self-information versus the uncertainty about appropriate disclosure. Thus, some users may be high self-disclosers on Facebook, while others may choose to maintain high levels of anonymity.

Given that social media consist of users, user groups, and the messages between them, it seemed reasonable to assess Facebook connectedness by counting the number of friends, number of groups, and number of wall postings on sampled homepages. According to Goodman (2007), online social media provide users means to express their personalities and views in a public forum. Facebook provides many ways for users to express their personalities and views including applications and the posting of photographs.

2.3. Discourse 2.0

Because of the aforementioned specific communication features affordances of social media (Web 2.0), the emerging discourse in this space is different to that of Web 1.0. Thus, scholars coined the word Discourse 2.0 to refer to this new discourse resulting from people's communication and interaction on social media websites. A common example is Facebook discourse in the form of status updates and comments. These discursive practices have their own linguistic, communicative and semiotic features which are strongly tied to the new affordances offered by Facebook and other social networking sites (for further details see Chapter 3).

According to Herring (2013, p.5-6), Discourse 2.0 represents a rich research arena for CMDA as it encompasses new types of content to be analyzed like status updates, text annotations on video, tags on social bookmarking sites, and edits on wikis. New contexts must also be considered—for example, social network sites based on geographic location—as well as new (mass media) audiences, including in other languages and cultures. She adds, Discourse 2.0 manifests new usage patterns, as well, such as media coactivity, or near-simultaneous multiple activities on a single platform (Herring et al. 2009) and multi-authorship, or joint discourse production (Androutsopoulos 2011; Nishimura 2011).The above reflect, in part, new affordances made available by new communication technologies: text chat in multiplayer online games (MOGs); collaboratively editable environments such as wikis; friending and friend circles on social network sites; social tagging and recommender systems; and so forth.

2.3.1. Discourse 2.0 Classification

For a better understanding of the concept discourse 2.0, the explanation starts with a classification of discourse in web 2.0 into three categories. One of the most famous and

practically effective classifications is that of Susan Herring (2013) where discourse 2.0 is divided into: familiar, reconfigured and emergent.

2.3.1.1. Familiar Discursive Aspects

Familiar aspects of discourse 2.0 are those which are the same as of Web 1.0 discourse and having the same features. Most of Web 2.0 discourse phenomena are familiar because communication is still considerably (till this moment) textual among web users and include popular discursive practices such as code switching, nonstandard typography and orthography, gender differences, flaming, and email hoaxes and scams. According to Herring (2013, p.10):

> Familiar Discourse 2.0 phenomena lend themselves readily to CMDA in its current form, since they are the kinds of phenomena the paradigm was designed to address. The challenges they pose mainly concern identification: familiar phenomena may be mistaken [as] new .... or assumed to be different by virtue of the passage of time (as in the case of online gender styles). There is a need to trace relevant antecedents to gain perspective where familiar online discourse phenomena are concerned, in order to do conscientious research. This, in turn, requires some familiarity with earlier CMDA research. Alternatively, familiar phenomena may simply be passed over by researchers in favor of newer, more exotic CMD phenomena.

2.3.1.2. Reconfigured Discursive Aspects

Reconfiguration of discourse 2.0 aspects is the reshaping of some CMD aspects which resulted in new communicative practices such as "personal status messages, quoting others'

messages, small stories, and customized advertising spam—which might ..... appear new but have traceable online antecedents—as well as reconfigurations of such familiar phenomena as topical coherence, turn-taking, threading, and intertextuality" (Herring, 2013, p.10).

One of the common examples of such reconfigured aspects is status updates on Facebook which were the focus of Lee's (2011) study of Hong Kong users. She focused on the communicative functions of status updates produced before and after Facebook changed the default response format from "[Name] is" (with the third-person singular form of the verb "to be") to simply "[Name]":

1. Amy is in a good mood.
2. Snow is "I've seen you in the shadow."
3. Kenneth quitting facebook.
4. Ariel thinks that no news is good news.
5. Katy: ?

Example 1 is a grammatical sentence formed from the prompt "Amy [name of user] is." Example 2 is also built on the "name is" prompt, but what follows ("I've seen you in the shadow") is a song lyric; the result is not a grammatical sentence. Status update 3 ("Kenneth quitting facebook") is also ungrammatical, but for a different reason: it lacks the auxiliary verb "is," which by this time had been omitted from the default Facebook prompt. The presence, explicit or implicit, of "is" in the Facebook response format thus results in some status descriptions that are syntactically nonstandard

The update in 4 ("Ariel thinks that no news is good news"), in contrast, is syntactically well formed, but pragmatically appropriate in the simple present tense only if Ariel's thinking is generally true, which is not the most likely interpretation in this context (it is more likely that Ariel is responding to some specific news, or lack thereof).

This use of simple present tense is presumably a carryover of the simple present tense of the former "is" in the prompt. Its use in place of, say, the present progressive lends the utterance a performative feel, as if Ariel performs the act of thinking that no news is good news by typing it. Finally, if Katy's status update in 5—consisting of only a question mark (presumably to indicate that she is confused or does not know what to say) — is treated as an utterance, it is both syntactically and pragmatically ill formed.

Herring (2013, p. 10) says that the utterances of that kind are not entirely novel but have their precedents in Internet Relay Chat (IRC) and MUDs and MOOs. However, she adds:

> Status updates do not simply reproduce these earlier practices. Rather, they have been structurally and functionally reconfigured in comparison to action descriptions and emotes. Syntactically, the inclusion of "is" in an earlier version of Facebook has led to a greater use of "is" constructions, even when these are not prescriptively correct. One of my Facebook friends has continued to start each of his updates with "[Name] is," inserting the "is" as a stylistic affectation even when another finite verb is present in the utterance, e.g., "[Name] is has a headache." Functionally, status updates on Twitter and Facebook serve as prompts that trigger comment threads, unlike the earlier constructions, which were single utterances.

Thus, it is obvious that although reconfigured aspects of discourse 2.0 have precedents in Web 1.0 discourse, they are reshaped in a way that resulted in different communicative and linguistic features. This is the result of the new affordances Web 2.0 sites offer to users.

2.3.1.3. Emergent Discursive Practices

Emergent aspects of discourse 2.0 are those novel and unprecedented practices which came along with the new features of the web 2.0 sites such as multimodality and

intersexuality. Common examples of such practices include the dynamic collaborative discourse that takes place on wikis, conversational video exchanges, conversational exchanges via image texts, and multimodal conversation more generally.

2.3.1.3.1. Collaborative Text Production

Collaborative text production refers to the "democratic and anarchic" authorship of a text by many writers on online sites such as the famous Wikipedia where all can modify or add to the article without a central power (Herring, 2013, p.15). Simply put, this is the opposite of the type of texts and authorship of article on an online encyclopaedia such as *Britannica* where content is controlled by a central organisation and authorship is limited only to those working for Britannica organisation. The focus in Wikipedia and sites as such is on the process of addition, deletion or alteration of the text (which is preserved in history pages of the website) rather than the product (Wagner, 2004, p.270). According to Herring (2013), "The anarchic nature of contribution to Wikipedia, in combination with the platform's ease of updating and technical affordances that make process visible, results in a discourse context that seems qualitatively unprecedented" (p.15).

2.3.1.3.2. Multimodal Communication

One of the most famous affordances of Web 2.0 sites that led to the emergence of new discursive aspects is multimodality: "the use of channels other than text, and semiotic systems other than verbal language" (Herring, 2013, p. 15) to create meaning and communicate online. One of the studies that analysed multimodal communication in online environments is that of McDonald (2007) who investigated the conversational exchanges of still webcam images on a graphical community blog. He found that users follow four strategies to achieve coherence across images:

1. ***positional play*** (for example, showing a picture in which a person is pointing to another picture on the site that is outside the picture frame),

2. *Animation*

3. *Text-in-image*

4. ***Image quotes:*** In image quotes, a picture or part of a picture posted by a previous contributor is used, sometimes with modification, in a response, as illustrated in the sequence in Fgure 2.4.

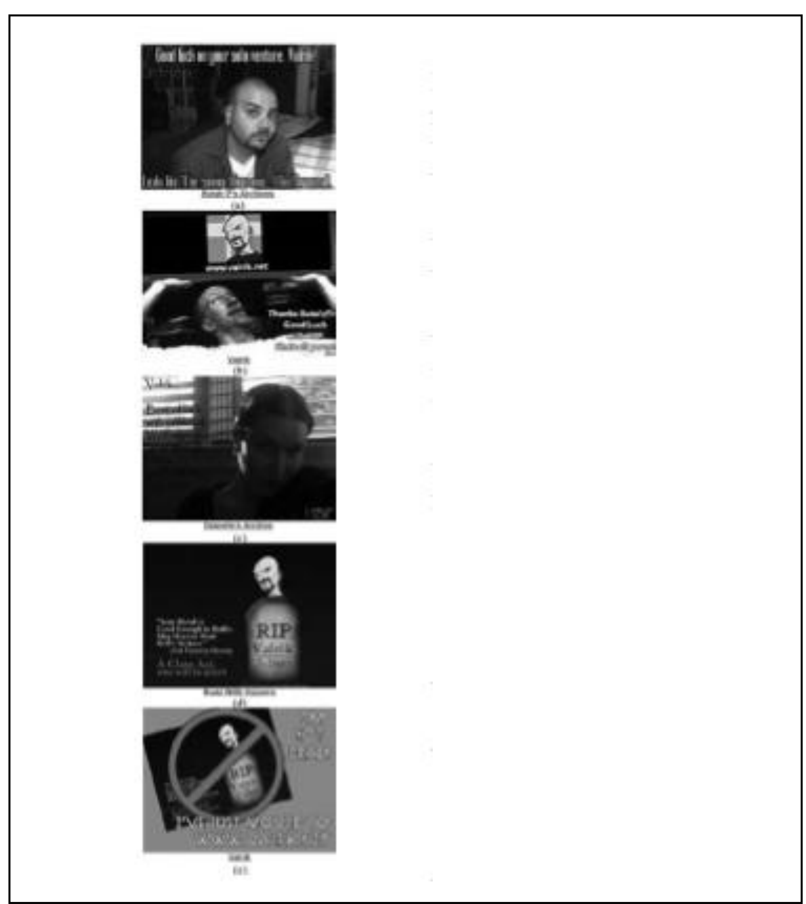


Figure 2.4. A conversation with image quotes from a Community blog (McDonald, 2007)

The easy-use and availability of visual multimodal channels (videos and images) in the new web has shaped and still shape the way people communicate. Herring (2013, p.16) commentate on this phenomenon saying that:

> In the pre-internet era, videos (or films) were sometimes made that responded to other videos (or films), but this practice was restricted mostly to artistic contexts due to the cost and special equipment required. Video is now cheaper and easier to create, enabling qualitatively different kinds of communication to take place. And although images with text have been around since the first illuminated manuscripts and include such familiar genres as comics and children's books, dynamic image texts that develop collaboratively .... appear to be a recent phenomenon—one enabled by popular access to drawing and photo modification software.

2.3.1.3.3. Researching Emergent Aspects

Regardless of the few studies that have been included earlier, Herring (2013, p.19) admits that researching emergent discourse aspects, especially multimodal communication, on new Web 2.0 environments – social networking sites - is still lacking. She points out to the need of drawing upon new methods and techniques outside linguistics such as visual semiotics in the analysis of multimodal discourse. Accordingly, the question being raised is whether multimodal discourse can be analysed using the existing paradigm of CMDA, or a new level of analysis is required. As an attempt to cover the latter question, Herring suggests an analytical format that would incorporate multimodal discourse into the traditional CMDA paradigm as shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2. Multimodal Communication as an Additional Level of CMDA (Herring, 2013, p.20)

Level	Issues	Phenomena	Methods
Multimodal communication	Mode effects, cross-mode coherence, reference and address management, generation and spread of graphical meaning units, media coactivity, etc.	Mode choice, text-in-image, image quotes, spatial and temporal positionality and deixis, animation, etc.	Social semiotics, visual content analysis, film studies (?)

2.3.2. Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives

In the light of the aforementioned and quick shifts in social media communication modes, a lot needs to be searched and investigated in Discourse 2.0 especially for discourse analysts. Herring's (2013) Discourse 2.0 Classification leads to a number of new theoretical and methodological insights. In Discourse 2.0 analysis, technological medium facets (Herring, 2007) that are of great relevance are media convergence and multimodality (use of visual and meta-linguistic channels); social factors (Herring 2007) that are relevant include communicative context, cultural context, anonymity and number of participants (Herring, 2013, p. 20). One of the most intriguing and "urgently needed in future research is integrated multimodal analysis" (Herring, 2013, p.21). One form of social media that attracts the attention of researchers (especially those working in multimodality and intertextuality) the most is Social Networking Sites (SNSs) as being the most commonly used social media technology that generates a huge volume of multimedia discourse (Zappavigna, 2012, p.5). Moreover, these social platforms are connecting people in unprecedented ways through new

and sophisticated affordances that led to the emergence of specific linguistic and discursive practices.

Conclusion

It has been argued in this chapter that the shift from the formal institutional digital discourse towards a more social one with the emergence of social media platforms such as SNSs was intriguing for sociolinguists and presented them, and still does, with novel sociolinguistic phenomena**.** Moreover, since the focus of the present research is Facebook, I included in this chapter the key features, concepts and studies which are crucial components in any research investigating discourse and identity on this platform. Thus, it provides readers with all technical and discourse-related information about the arena of the present research which is SNSs and Facebook.

Chapter 3

The Networked Self: Discourse and Identity on Social Networking Sites

Introduction 74
3.1. Identity: Basic Concepts and Theories 77
3.1.1. Defining Identity 77
3.1.2. Identity: A Dynamic Process 78
3.1.3. Social Identity Theory (SIT): Affiliation and Alignment 79
3.1.4. Goffman's Impression Management Theory 82
3.1.5. Language and Identity 82
3.2. Performing Identity and Presenting the Self on SNSs 85
3.2.1. The Virtual Identity and Disembodiment on SNSs 85
3.2.2. Anonymity, Pseudonymity and Nonymity 87
3.2.3. Writing the Self into Being 89
3.2.4. Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin's Sociological Identity Model 92
3.2.5. Naming and Identity Construction Online 96
3.2.6. Language Choice and Identity on SNSs 98
3.2.7. Multimodality and Identity on SNSs 99
3.2.8. Stance-taking on SNSs 100
Conclusion 102

Introduction

Social media encompasses a huge and diverse volume of social and communicative data. Consequently, it attracted the attention of researchers from a variety of disciplines including discourse analysis and sociolinguistics, media studies, social science, political science, communication science, etc. As expressed by boyd and Ellison (2008, p. 2019), generally, SNSs research focuses on four major axes: Impression management and friendship performance, networks and network structure, online/offline connections, privacy issues.

Among the four axes, impression management and friendship performance is the one which is of quite relevance to discourse and language in use studies. According to Seargeant and Tagg (2014):

> One of the results of the rise of sites such as Facebook is that they have transformed the ways in which people can interact. They do not simply offer an alternative way of engaging in the same forms of communicative interaction that were available prior to their emergence; they also provide a number of notably different communicative dynamics and structures..... [SNSs] are having a profound effect on the linguistic and communicative practices in which people engage, as well as the social groupings and networks they create. (p. 2).

Because of the social nature of SNSs and their support of interaction between people, "[they] constitute an important research context for scholars investigating processes of impression management, self-presentation, and friendship performance" (boyd and Ellison, 2008, p. 2019). Most of the current research in social media discourse is enlightened by this focus.

As expressed in Chapter 1, Herring's CMDA model (2004, 2001) informed and grounded the sociolinguistics of online language in recent years. However, with the rise of SNSs and their growing popularity, researchers "wanted to push the field a little further and suggested a more refined and perhaps also up-to-date research agenda for sociolinguists interested in new media" (Thurlow and Mroczek, 2011, p. xx). The current research is inspired by the following Jannis Androutsopoulos's (2006b) suggestions:

- The need to challenge exaggerated assumptions about the distinctiveness of new media language;

- The need to move beyond early (i.e., 1990s) computer-mediated communication's simplistic characterization of—and concern for— asynchronous and synchronous technologies;

- The need to shift away from an undue emphasis on the linguistic (or orthographic) features of new media language and, related to this, the hybrid nature of new media genres;

- The need also to shift from "medium-related" to more ethnographically grounded "user-related" approaches.

Coping up with the development of SNSs, Androutsopoulos (2010) continued promoting the discourse-ethnographic social media research. He calls now for moving beyond a one-track interest in the formal features of new media language (e.g., spelling and orthography) and a preoccupation with delineating individual discourse genres; instead, greater attention should be paid to the situated practices of new media users (i.e., communicators) and the intertexuality and heteroglossia inherent in new media convergence (i.e., people's use of multiple media and often in the same new media format, as in social networking profiles).

Along the same vein, Alexandra Georgakopoulou (2003, 2006) suggests the following:

- ensuring that the study of language is grounded in a concern for the broader sociocultural practices and inequalities of communities (or social networks);
- always considering the connections between online and offline practices, and between different technologies;
- a general move toward emphasizing the contextual and particularistic nature of new media language;
- relying on the combination of both quantitative and qualitative (particularly ethnographic) research methods.

Sociolinguistic research into social media has been slow to get off the ground (Androutsopoulos, 2006a, p.1). However, the case is truly changing today as sociolinguists are more aware and attracted to the social dynamics of Social Networking Sites. According to Seargeant and Tagg (2014), SNSs offer a rich field of study for socially oriented linguistics because, basically, they are a novel and major form of communication that demands a thorough exploration (p. 5). They add, "of particular relevance to sociolinguistics, however, are two fundamental social dynamics at the heart of social network site (SNS) use:

- Identity: the presentation of self (i.e. issues that pivot around notions of identity),
- Community: the building and maintenance of networked relationships (i.e. issues relating to concepts of community)" (p.5).

Given that the present research is interested in the first dynamics, this chapter is devoted to identity performance and self presentation on social media. More precisely, light is shed on identity construction and self-representation on Facebook via the armoury of textual and

multimodal discursive practices. The chapter functions as a conceptual framework. Hence, it is based on two pillars:

- The basic concepts and theories related to the notion of identity
- Performing identity and presenting the self on SNSs through discourse.

Moreover, I included a number of pioneering recent studies that investigated this dynamics which function as a synthesis of previous research that guided and inspired the current work.

3.1. Identity: Basic Concepts and Theories

This section is devoted to the notion of identity and functions as a conceptual background. It posits the notion within its sociological and discourse context with focus on the basic theories and approaches that guide every research related to discourse and identity today.

3.1.1. Defining Identity

Although common it seems, identity, as a concept, is not easy to define. Thurlow et al. (2004) state that "identity is really all about addressing the simple question 'Who am I?' " (p. 6). This is referred to as 'self-concept' which encompasses all the thoughts and feelings of a person in reference to himself as an object (Rosenberg, 1986) and identity is the aspect of the self "by which we are known to others" (Altheide, 2000, p.2).

Thus, identity can be defined as the positioning of self and other (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 586). Moreover, it refers to the different ways in which people and groups are distinguished from other people and groups in their social relations (Jenkins, 1996, p. 4). According to these concepts, it can be stated that identity is a social practice which is based on two aspects: "the one has to do with absolute sameness, while the other encompasses a notion of distinctiveness" (Georgalou, 2010, p.42).

3.1.2. Identity: A Dynamic Process

According to Thurlow et al. (2004):

> Identity isn't only a matter of what we think about ourselves or what we tell others about ourselves. Other people too have a say in our social identity, which is based on (3) what others think about who we are, and (4) the stories they tell about us – either to our face or to other people! In fact, our identity is like a constant dialogue between them and us..... our sense of 'I' is put together in relationship with other people. It's why scholars also talk about identity construction (p. 96)

As a social practice, identity is constructed through "who we think ourselves to be, how we wish others to perceive us, and how they actually perceive us" (Wood and Smith, 2005, p. 52). It is therefore a public process that is established through the fusion between "identity announcement" and "identity placement" (Stone, 1981, p. 188).

Identity is neither natural nor static but multi-faceted (Lemke, 2007, p.19). As mentioned earlier, it is socially constructed and therefore should be viewed as "a condition of being or becoming that is constantly renewed, confirmed or transformed, at the individual or collective level" (Triandafyllidou & Wodak, 2003, p. 210). Hall (1990) comments on this notion saying that identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact and we should think instead of identity as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process. He adds, "Identity is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past". (p. 225).

This dynamic feature is the basis of the sociolinguistic approach towards identity. According to Seargent and Tagg, in Sociolinguistics, it is predominantly perceived as not a

stable, pre-determined property of individuals that resides in the abstract mind, but a set of resources people rely on to present and express themselves (2014, p. 5). Moreover, as Lee (2014) suggests, in sociolinguistics, it is more useful and practical to approach identity as plural rather than singular. In other words, it is more accurate to speak about an individual's 'identities', at least in the sense that different aspects of a person's identity may be foregrounded or sidelined at given times (pp. 91-92).

3.1.3. Social Identity Theory (SIT): Affiliation and Alignment

A useful division of identity is that of 'social identity' and 'personal/individual identity' (Donath, 2006). Fairclough defines 'personal/individual identity' as the identity which is acquired by the person through his life when one is having interests and hobbies and it is something private or related to the person as an individual (2003, pp. 160-161, 223). However, the person is not living individually in a society. People live in groups and this defines their social identities. Because of it is social nature, it is 'social identity' which is of great relevance in social psychology and sociolinguistics. The concept of 'social identity' was mostly developed by Tajfal.

Tajfel's Social Identity Theory is one of the most influential and inspiring theories in researching social identity (see e.g. Grzelak and Jarymowicz 2000). According to SIT, "social identity, [as put by Tajfel], is part of an individual's self-concept that derives from his/her membership in a given social category, together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership, shared with other members of this category" (Sokol, 2012, p. 3). In other words, 'social identity' model defines the 'self' as part of a collective where its features are determined and negotiated. People identify themselves as belonging to this group and 'not belonging' to that group through performing certain actions and following specific traditions and behaviours. Put simply, Tajfel and Forgas (1981,

describe social identity in saying that "we are what we are because they are not what we are" (p. 124).

One salient part of identity construction is performing distinctiveness from others and at the same time, as put by Seargent and Tagg, "by aligning oneself with different groups, opinions and cultural issues" (2014, p.9). Social groups are defined as "collectivities of individuals who interact and form social relationships. Primary groups are small and [often] defined by face-to-face interaction; secondary groups are larger and each member does not directly interact with every other (e.g. associations) (Penguin Dictionary of Sociology, 1988). In other words, "a social group is where members are all persons who are classified together on the basis of some social/psychological factor(s). There is some degree of interrelatedness or interdependence among group members" (Penguin Dictionary of Psychology, 1988). There are different cultural and social parameters based on which people build their groups such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, ideology.

As Leppänen et al. (2014) argued, "identification is best conceptualized as a dynamic and multifaceted process involving affinity, alignment, emotional attachment and ideological notions of togetherness". Thus, according to them, identities are constructed in active processes of identification and self-understanding, seeking or eschewing commonality, connectedness and groupness (p. 114). Along the same vein, Seargent and Tagg (2014) indicate that "identity performance cannot be discussed in isolation from the communities with which individuals align themselves and the ways in which those communities establish and maintain the relationships that comprise them" (p. 9).

The construction of social identity is based on the building of the sense of "We" which links the person with others in the groups he belongs to (even with the unknown others),

despite the lack of direct experience (Grzelak and Jarymowicz, 2000). As put by Sokol (2012):

> The establishment of the mental construct "We" is ensued by the development of other forms of identification with others, such as the sense of social bond and community, or willingness to cooperate. Social identity may also be based on the symbolic affiliation to a social group: "We" may relate to a social group which we would like to belong to. Moreover, the formation of the so-called "abstract We" comes from the direct identification not with other individuals but their shared beliefs, values or goals. Consequently, social identity is shaped regardless of any real or symbolic membership in a social group (p.3).

Through group building and bonding, 'social identity' becomes more dynamic and collective referred to as 'group / collective identity'. Snow (2001) argues that "collective identities tend to be more fluid, tentative, and transient than categorically based social identities" In fact, it is not a matter of having 'social vs. collective identities': 'social identities' evolve into 'group identities' when people engage in the creation of 'we-ness' through building bonds with each other and belonging to groups.

The creation of the 'We' concept results in the distinction between 'Us' and 'Others'. This can be experienced by every one of us. In our life, there are people who are similar to us, and those who are different to us. The people like us are those with whom we share things; the others are those we feel they do not share a certain feature or aspect with us. Commenting on this notion, Duszak (2002a) states that "we must have reasons for wanting to belong with some, and for not wanting to belong with others. Such feelings of social inclusion and

exclusion develop on the basis of our values, beliefs, styles of living, our experiences and expectations" (p. 1). She adds, we are affiliated and aligned within groups of people like us and non-aligned with others; this is accomplished through the performance of solidarity and detachment. Moreover, in social interactions, people tend for finding "signs of proximity and those of distance [such as] symbols, gender and ethnic appearance, apparent age, patterns of action, logos on T-shrit and, most importantly, words that are said" (Duszak, 2002a, p. 1).

3.1.4. Goffman's Impression Management Theory

The inspiring work of Goffman (1959) set the foundation for the study of identity in sociolinguistics. Goffman's theory directs most research of identity and language nowadays. He wrote extensively on the different ways in which people perform their identities and present themselves in everyday life drawing upon a variety of linguistic and semiotic resources. Goffman's theory states that identity is performed through impression management or as he refers to it: "Face work". 'Face work' indicates that people present a certain aspect of their identities depending on their intentions, needs and the circumstances of interaction. It is a kind of "role playing" or "putting on a mask" to perform a certain identity as a process of impression management. To generate the desired impression on others, people manipulate a number of resources such as language, manner, and appearance.

A key aspect within Goffman's theory is language use. Seargent and Tagg (2014) use Goffman's approach to indicate that, "both the identity cues that are 'given' – through deliberate and conscious management – and those which are 'given off' – less consciously revealed in interaction – are mediated not through face-to-face co-presence, but primarily through language use" (p. 6) .

Put simply, rather than speaking of 'identity' as singular, we should speak of 'identities' of a person that are constructed continuously in everyday interactions depending on the

communicative intentions of the person. This achieved through generating a desired impression on people in social encounters where the most basic resource of identity construction is language.

3.1.5. Language and Identity

Language represents a crucial unit alongside the other semiotic units of the communication process among human beings. In addition to its role in the creation of meaning, it also says a lot about the identities of its users. This is salient, for example, in the role 'accent' plays in telling where one comes from. As put by Sokol (2012), "the understanding we have of others and ourselves as persons is largely constructed through diverse linguistic practices we engage in" (p. 2). Diversity is a common feature of language (Language varieties) making them a means for handling social relationships and identify collectivities (Crystal, 1998). In other words, "there is an indexical correlation between the social context of a given linguistic interaction and the linguistic forms (…): the variables of social stratification are given concrete expression in the linguistic choices of actors" (Foley, 1997, p. 313). So, social identities are constructed and managed through discourse and by different linguistic practices and mechanisms (Duszak, 2002a, p. 1).

Within sociolinguistics, a number of concepts have been introduced in relation to social identities construction. Among the traditional approaches is the concept of 'speech community' that proposes group membership on the basis of a shared code, i.e. people speaking the same language/code form a community. Another competing concept is that of 'community of practice' which defines a community on the basis of a shared practice members engage in (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992). For instance, video games' players might constitute a community of practice. Other concepts include 'groupings' or 'small cultures' (Holliday, 1999) and 'networks' of interacting individuals that, as Gumperz and

Levinson (1996, p. 12) argue, “may constitute effective ‘sub-cultures’, nested communities within communities (…) but that they can also cross-cut linguistic and social boundaries of all sorts, creating regional and even global patterns of shared, similar communicative strategies in specialist networks”. At the discourse level, Swales (1990) introduced the concept of ‘discourse communities’ that refers to grouping based on the discourse of a given domain and occupational identities such as medicine, law, economics, and sports discourses.

Research of language and identity within sociolinguistics is vast. However, according to Duszak (2002, p. 5), there are two major profiles of research into the role language plays in the construction of social identities and presentation of the self:

a) **Language Choice:** studies of *bilingualism, code-switching and language variation* focus on how language choice is related to national and ethnic identities. In fact, “Studies in language variation have documented a variety of features, whether phonetic, lexical or syntactic, that contribute to the construction of speaker identities in terms of particular ethnolects, slangs, regional or social dialects where speakers are categorized on the basis of the type of language that they own” (Duszak, 2002, p. 6). In other words, the choice to use a given language (or a language variety) is tightly related to signalling a certain social identity in a given context.
b) **Critical Discourse Analysis:** critical discourse analysis focuses on the interpretations of texts to expose the writer’s position towards a certain subject or object. The latter is referred to as “polarization of attitudes [which] is normal in that researchers strive to show that the we-discourses under scrutiny are prejudicial discourses because they intentionally defend the interests of a particular in-group” (Duszak, 2002, p. 6).

3.2. Performing Identity and Presenting the Self on SNSs

Identity has been defined earlier in this chapter as: who we think we are, how we want others to perceive us, and how this is achieved. In fact, CMC research has focused more on the second fragment of this definition: how we want others to perceive us; this is referred to as *self-presentation* (Wood and Smith, 2005, p. 52). The reason behind that is the fact that self-presentation is a dynamic performative act which is reflected in the discursive and communicative practices of the individual.

Social media is a rich space for self-presentation and identity construction as it supports user-generated performances and offers the users unprecedented affordances to express their selves. It is so thanks to two reasons, "firstly, because the circumstances in which people perform identity online, and the resources they have with which to do this, are in many respects different from offline situations; and, secondly, because the novelty and distinctiveness of online interaction bring to the fore many of these contemporary constructivist ideas about the nature of identity" (Seargent and Tagg, 2015, p. 6).

3.2.1. The Virtual Identity and Disembodiment on SNSs

In face-to-face interactions, the presence of the physical body limits people's ability to claim an identity which is different to their physical characteristics such as race, gender, looks and nonverbal characteristics (Zhao et al. 2008, p. 1817). This is something we experience everyday in our social encounters with others. We recognize people's identities and social affiliation through their physical bodies. For instance, we recognize some young as followers of Hip Hop culture or others as members of a religious and ethnic group just on the basis of what they wear. However, interaction online is entirely different. In an article published on July, 5, 1993 in the *New Yorker,* how identity is performed online - humouredly described as *'on the Internet, nobody knows you're dog'* - was introduced as shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1. Identity play: 'On the internet nobody knows you are a dog'. (Adapted from the New Yorker of July, 5, 1993, Paul Steiner)

People interact with each other online without being physically present in the same place and most of face-to-face interaction cues are invisible. This resulted in new strategies and mechanisms of identity construction. As put by Zhao et al. (2008), "as the corporeal body is detached from social encounters in the online environment, it becomes possible for individuals to interact with one another on the internet in fully disembodied text mode" (p. 1817).

So, disembodiment is a salient feature of online communication which has a great impact on identity construction and self-presentation. One of the common results of disembodied communication online is *role playing*. Describing this practice online, Sherry Turkle wrote:

> You can be whoever you want to be. You can completely redefine yourself if you want. You don't have to worry about the slots other

> people put you in as much. They don't look at your body and make assumptions. They don't hear your accent and make assumptions. All they see are your words (1995, p.184).

We often come across this kind of people on Facebook. Males have a profile that represents a female or the opposite. Also, a student may play the role of being a teacher through the use of a variety of representational elements and communicative practices that would serve the action. Indeed, role playing in online environments is "an empowering process" (Zhao et al. 2008, p. 1818). Research has proved that the absence of physical "gating features" such as stigmatized look, stuttering and shyness gives certain disadvantaged people the opportunity to bypass the obstacles that hinder that ability to construct desired identities in face-to-face interactions (McKenna et al., 2002).

3.2.2. Anonymity, Pseudonymity and Nonymity

In addition to the absence of the corporeal body online, there is another key feature of social encounters in online environments which is related to the user's disclosure of personal information. When people create personal profiles on SNSs, they are supposed to provide names and other personal information as basic elements to successfully accomplish the operation. People are free to decide what information to disclose and how to be perceived by others in their networks (Wood and Smith, 2005, p. 59). In other words, users can choose to be unknown through creating new names for their profiles which are entirely different to their real ones and displaying no personal data: this is called *anonymity*. Others might choose to use pseudonyms that disclose only a part of their real names and few personal data: this is referred to as *pseudonymity*. Also, some people might choose to present their real selves through using real names and personal information: this is known as *nonymity*. In fact, as put by Marx (1999), these choices are performed along a continuum of identification as introduced in Figure 3.2. At one end of this continuum would be the nearly emptied state of

anonymity. Wood and Smith (2005) describe this saying that "along the continuum would be differing levels of an invented self-representing pseudonymity. At the opposite end, then, would be the identity presented in real life (or as close as one could get to it through the limited stimuli of mediating technologies)" (p. 59).

The decision to be anonymous, pseudonymous or real on SNSs is based on people's purposes and needs while social networking. In some situations, people participate online anonymously to protect their safety while communicating some important messages that would not be communicated otherwise such as political and religious taboos. However, others might make use of anonymity offered online in a negative way through committing crimes (Wood and Smith, 2005, p. 60) like child abuse and hacking. Users can also create a nickname which reflects a specific aspect of their identities or the identities they desire for. For instance, in chatting rooms users often choose nicknames that would attract the audience and help them start a relation or conversation with others.

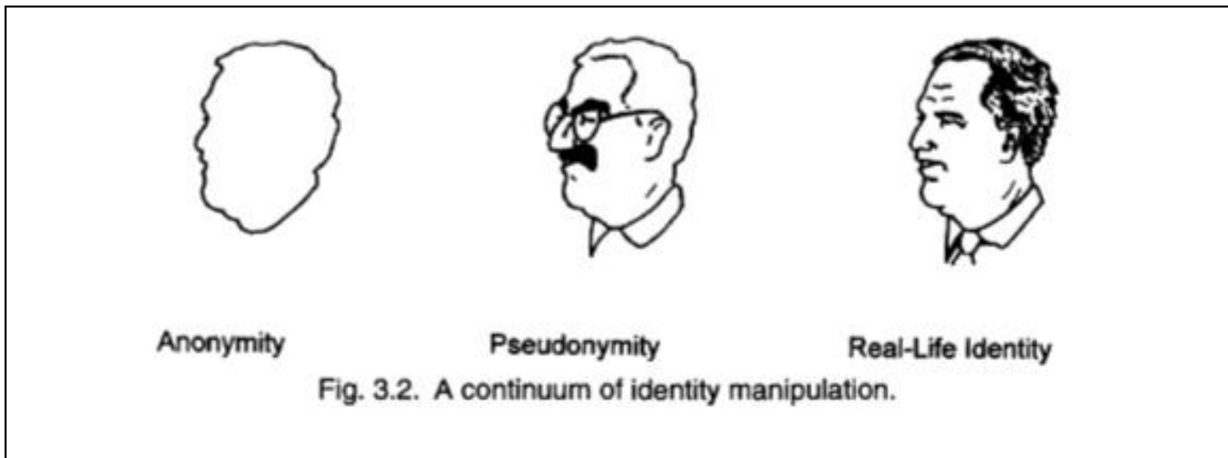


Figure 3.2. A Continuum of Identity Manipulation (Wood and Smith, 2005, p. 59)

With the advent of SNSs, people nowadays are offered the opportunity to go online with their real personalities as they interact with people they know (family, friends, classmates,

etc). This *nonymity* is common on Facebook where people engage in what Zhao (2006) calls "anchored relationships". In this situation, people are basically identified through the use of legal names, residency and institutional affiliation (Marx, 1999, p.102). However, anchored relationships online do not refer only to relations between people who know each other offline as it refers also to individuals who are nonymous online but still do not know each other offline (Zhao et al., 2008, p. 1818). For example, we can find individuals on Facebook using their real names and personal information and having friends they met only through this site.

3.2.3. Writing the Self into Being Online

According to Wood and Smith (2005), "in the presentation of self [online], one is not recognized by one's physical appearance, but through one's verbal behaviours" (p. 60). While communicating online, we basically create meaning through words. However, because of the disembodiment of CMC, words do more than communicating meaning: they communicate identities of the users**.** For instance, because of the absence of the physical cues, people cannot know whether we are upset or happy if we do not write so. This type of text-based computer mediated interaction offers users more opportunities to construct and perform different aspects and features of their identities (Turkle 1995; Baym 2010), "basically through linguistic means" (Barton and Lee, 2013, p. 68). Indeed, "the use of language is ... of immense importance in cyberspace, for it is through the use of language that people construct their identities. Language is thus the primary vehicle for establishing one's own and perceiving another's online persona" (Wood and Smith, 2005, p. 60).

According to Seargent and Tagg (2014), "on social media, to use Goffman's (1959) terms, both the identity cues that are 'given' – through deliberate and conscious management – and those which are 'given off' – less consciously revealed in interaction – are mediated not through face-to-face co-presence, but primarily through language use" (p.6). As Vásquez

(2014) puts it, “words, language, and discourse continue to serve as key resources in the presentation of self online and in the construction of identities in social media” (p. 68).

boyd’s (2001, p. 119) suggestion that identities on social media are about ‘writing oneself into being’ is particularly apt, as it highlights the fact that they are, in many cases, performed not through the spoken word but predominantly through the written. This makes available for identity construction a particular set of visual resources, including typography (Vaisman, 2011), orthography (Tagg, 2012) and the creative combining of different scripts (Palfreyman & Al Khalil, 2003; Su, 2007; Tagg & Seargeant, 2012). And with the continued integration of multimedia affordances into social media platforms, these visual semiotic resources extend to the use of photos and images (both moving and still) (Androutsopoulos, 2010), which are becoming an increasingly important aspect of self-representation.

In researching identity in social media, early studies such as Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007; Joinson, 2001; Gibbs, Ellison & Heino, 2006; Gonzales & Hancock, 2008 and Lampe, Ellison & Steinfield, 2007 were limited to the users’ profiles as a source of data. They restricted their focus only to demographic information provided in the profile such as name, age, sex, and ‘about me’ section. This analytic over-emphasis on the user profile is problematic, as pointed out several years ago by Marwick (2005), because the range of resources for constructing the self is restricted by the platform designers’ decisions about relevant information categories, as opposed to the user’s own notions of what is relevant. As put by Vasquez (2014), “individuals posting online clearly have a much wider range of discursive resources at their disposal to perform identity, which inevitably extend beyond the boundaries suggested by a particular platform’s profile structure Accordingly, more recent research has begun to attend to identity in social media beyond merely the categories found in the user profile” (p.67). Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin’s (2008) study of the identities of Facebook users focused primarily on the personal profile pages, but also took into

consideration information found in participants' photos. Similarly, Bolander and Locher's (2010) pilot study of ten Facebook users, in addition to profile information, also included textual data found in users' status updates. Along the same vein, Georgalou (2015), Lee (2014) and Zappavigna (2012) shifted their interest, in addition to profile information, to discursive practices performed by users in social media through status updates and comments.

Internet scholar Sherry Turkle's (1999, p. 643) observation that online 'self-presentation is written in text' remains as true today as it was over two decades ago. However, what has changed since Turkle's pioneering adventures in cyberspace, is an expanded conceptualization of online 'texts,' which includes the increasing options for multimodal forms of self presentation that are now available to internet users. Nevertheless, words, language, and discourse continue to serve as key resources in the presentation of self online and in the construction of identities in social media. As communication researchers Wood and Smith (2005) explain, 'both what people say about themselves and how they behave with others contribute to the perception of personal identity online.

The use of language is consequently of immense importance in cyberspace, for it is through the use of language that people construct their identities' (p. 60). Within the fields of sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, there is widespread recognition that language is central to creating, performing, and negotiating one's identities (e.g. Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Bucholz & Hall, 2005); however, as put by Vasquez (2014), the linguistic construction of identity in social media especially in SNSs is still rarely touched on by researchers (p.68).

3.2.4. Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin's Sociological Identity Model

As aforementioned, there is an ever growing interest in identity construction and self-presentation on SNSs among scholars within sociolinguistics and discourse studies recently. One of these prominent studies is that of Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin (2008) which investigated identity construction on Facebook as a newly emerged nonymous online environment. They found that the identities produced on Facebook differ from those produced in anonymous online environments. They argued that Facebook users claim their identities implicitly rather than explicitly: they "show rather than tell" and stress group and consumer identities over personally narrated ones. On the basis of this research, Zhao and his colleagues came up with a model of how identity is being constructed on Facebook as illustrated in Figure 3.3.

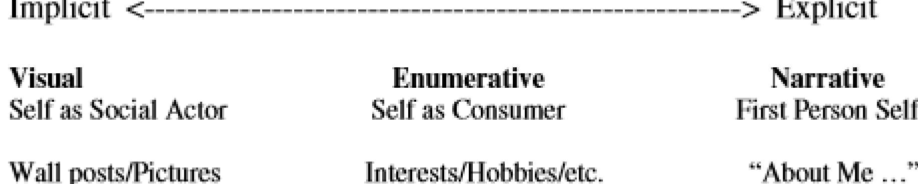


Figure 3.3. Zhao et al.'s Identity Construction Model (Zhao et al., 2008, p. 1824)

The model distinguishes the modes and strategies of self-presentation on Facebook along a continuum from implicit to explicit identity claims. As indicated by Zhao et al., (2008), the first one is the visual strategy as the most implicit identity claim which involves "the display of photos and pictures uploaded by the users themselves or pictures along with comments posted to their accounts by others (known as *wall posts)"* (p. 1824). They add:

> The visual self - projected via the inclusion of large numbers of peer photographs – can be tought of as the "self as social actor." It is as if the user is saying, "Watch me and know me by my friends," By "showing without telling," Facebook users sough to make certain implicit identity claims aimed at generating desired impressions on their viewers especially in terms of the depth and extent of their social ties (p. 1824).

The second claim is what they refer to as "the cultural self" or "the self of consumption preferences and tastes". Zhao et al. (2008) indicated that the users engage in "enumerative cultural self-description when they simply list a set of cultural preferences that they think define them" (p. 1825). These preferences include interests and hobbies such as quotes, movies, sports, songs, music, artists, books, TV-shows, etc and are usually expressed in the self-description section on Facebook. The following table shows the different enumerative and narrative self-descriptions on Facebook:

Table 3.1. Enumerative and Narrative Self-description (Zhao et al., 2008, p. 1825)

Enumerative description	Mean	Users responded	
		N	%
Interest	4.9	46	73.0
Quote	4.3	45	71.4
Movie	8.1	41	65.1
Music	8.3	41	65.1
Book	2.7	36	57.1
Activity	3.5	36	57.1
TV-show	4.2	30	47.6
Narrative description			
About Me		42	66.7
1–2 short sentences		23	36.5
1–2 short paragraphs		14	22.3
Long paragraphs		5	7.9

The third strategy is the most explicit identity claim and involves verbal descriptions of self. On Facebook, users introduce and describe themselves in narrative in the 'About Me' section. The researchers found that this identity claim represented the least elaborated among the strategies and more than half of these users wrote just one or two sentences.

On The basis of explicit/implicit identity claims, Zhao et al. (2008) concluded that users in their sample:

1- Preferred the most implicit claim which involves dense displays of profile photos and wall posts, followed by highly enumerated lists of cultural preferences, and finally the minimalist first person "about me" section.
2- Tend to "show" rather than "tell" who they are: "a better way to present oneself is .... to display rather than describe oneself" (p. 1826)

Zhao et al. (2008) state that their study has many important implications for the understanding of identity construction and its social dimensions:

1- Identity is "a social product" and not something innate in a person.
2- "True selves", "real selves" and "hoped-for possible selves" are products of social situations.
3- The online world and the offline world are not separate spaces.
4- "Facebook enables the users to present themselves in ways that can reasonably bypass 'gating obstacles' and create the hoped-for selves they are unable to establish in the offline world.
5- The findings challenge the distinction between "real selves" and "virtual selves": Facebook identities are real and not virtual.

3.2.5. Naming and Identity Construction Online

A Name is the first thing we acquire the day we are born. It is something essential in humans' life and as Sociologist Richard D. Alford states, ethnographic research has not found yet a society or group where the members have not names (Alford 1988, p. 1). Being such an important social phenomenon was intriguing and attracted the attention of researchers from a variety of disciplines such as onomastics, anthropology, sociopsychology, sociology, human geography and sociolinguistics (Helleland et al., 2012, p.1).

Names function as a means for us to form an opinion about who the person, whose name we see or hear, "is". Based on our preconceived notions about other people's names we draw conclusions about their gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, social positions, and maybe even religious beliefs (Hagstrom, 2012, p.83). Within Sociolinguitiscs, the question of names and identities was the core of research. A more recent approach is to elucidate names as identity bearers and identity markers. Shakespeare's often quoted words "What's in a name?" in the play Romeo and Juliet have been applied in many ways to say something about the meaning of names, and they are also valid when it comes to what constitutes the identity of a person (Helleland et al. 2012, p.2)

Most of sociolinguistic research on names is ethnographic and focused on the social functions of names and nicknames and their role in self-presentation and identity construction. In their study of compound surnames among Educated Yuruba married women in Nigeria, Fakuade et al. (2013) found that some of the social factors which are found to be responsible for the use of compound surnames by married women include education, religion and exposure to western culture. They argue further that this practice among educated Yoruba married women is indicative of erosion of this aspect of Yoruba tradition as a result of contact with Islam and the West. Another sociolinguistic study was conducted by Barany et al. (2014)

about the Kurdish names in Kurdistan of Iraq and they argued that names are more than just words and have a deep social meaning and are a crucial part of people's identities.

These studies and many more alike have addressed naming and identities in real life or what is referred to as off-line life and all concluded that the choices people make to choose names are not arbitrary but selected on the basis of cultural, ethnic and religious factors to express a specific identity. However, nowadays the notion of naming is getting more and more attention than it has ever had with the rise of social media and SNSs that promotes self-representation and identity construction which is completely different to real life.

Questions such as what kinds of names are used, why, and how they are perceived, seem all the more relevant as more and more people spend more and more time in virtual worlds (Hagstrom, 2012, p. 89). The first step in the creation of a personal account on SNSs is choosing a name that would identify you in the network. It can be the user's real name, but most of the time, as Hagstrom (2012) states, they are particular names coined for a particular purpose. The latter are what is referred to as nicknames (creative names). She adds, unlike in the off-line world, where names are one of several factors through which we recognise and differentiate people, here it is often the only distinguishing factor (p.87). The variety of nicks provides a rich corpus for psychological, socio-anthropological and sociolinguistic studies. Just as the names and nicknames used by people in real-world society may enlighten us about characteristics and trends in that society, so IRC nicks can shed light on the emergent virtual society. References to collective cultural, ethnic, and religious themes in nicknames might indicate that the individual belongs to a certain social group (Beshar-Israeli, 1995).

Haya Bechar-Israeli (1995) was one of the first studies to address the subject of nicknames and identity on IRC (internet relay chat). She found that the nicknames users choose are very important to them. They are an inherent part of their Net- identity, and even of their "real-life" identity. Only rarely did the IRCers in this study use their real names. The

largest category was that of nicks related to the self in some way, referring to character traits, physical appearance, the physiological or psychological state of the self, or the person's profession or hobbies. Other works were Tingstad's (2003) study of chatroom nicknames chosen by children in two chat rooms which were categorized into 16 categories such as animals, well-known people and places, Heisler & Crabill's (2006) study of how different e-mail names are perceived, and Hagstrom (2012) study of the use of nicknames in different virtual platforms such as online gaming and virtual communities.

With the outstanding development of Social Networking Sites in the last decade, researchers have shifted their interest to identities on these sites and devoted some part of their work to naming as it is a crucial part of that phenomenon. Facebook took the greatest attention of scholars and studies were numerous. Examples of such studies include: Shafie et al.'s (2012) study of naming, profile pictures and languages among Malysian university students on Facebook; Zhao et al.'s (2008) study of identity construction on Facebook and nonymity among university students in a large Northeastern city in the United States, and Georgalou's (2015) study of identity construction among Greek users of Facebook (naming was one of the aspects investigated in this study). All these studies concluded that nicknames are more important in the construction of identities and self-representation in online settings than in the real world. This is because in real life many other aspects help in marking people's identities such as clothes, physical appearance, etc, however, in the virtual world you can rely only on the user's name to form a first impression and decide what group, ethnicity, class, or religion one belongs to.

3.2.6. Language Choice and Identity on SNSs

What was once a utopian classical belief that English is the language of the internet and other languages are rarely found online has been radically changing recently with the transformations in the digital space. Daniel Dor (2004, p.99) argues that with changing

economic relations between nations, "[t]he Net is going to be a predominantly non-English-language medium". David Crystal once acknowledged the global status of English in his book English as a Global Language (1997). However, he changed his conclusion in the last decade and suggested that the web indeed is not only "a home to all linguistic styles within a language; it offers a home to all languages" (Crystal 2006, p. 229). With the fast domestication of the internet worldwide, according to Internet World Stats (2010), nowadays about 73 per cent of internet users in the world have a first language other than English and the percentage is growing daily.

The book of *the Multilingual Internet* (Danet and Herring, 2007, see Chapter 1) covers studies of a wide range of languages and geographical locations. A number of studies focus on the co-existence of English and other languages, and how internet users often write in languages which are normally restricted to spoken contexts. For instance, Warschauer et al. (2002) demonstrate the extensive use of romanized Arabic in informal email and chat messages in Egypt; Lee (2007a,b) examines creative forms of written Cantonese in Hong Kong-based instant messages; and Androutsopoulos (2007) discusses code-switching in German based Persian and Greek diasporic discussion forums. Since then multilingualism or mixed language writing on the internet has also become a key research direction in the field of digital discourse (Sebba et al. 2012). Such research has shown that "online users know very well how to deploy their linguistic resources in different contexts for different purposes and to different people" (Barton and Lee, 2013, p. 56).

With the emergence of social media platforms and Web 2.0, multilingualism is becoming more common and prevailing. As put by Barton and Lee (2013), "[i]n the age of Web 2.0, new online media are easy to get started on and ordinary web users have unprecedented power of choice and creativity, which is quite different from traditional web sites in the so-called Web 1.0 generation, where the choice of website language lies with a single web author" (p.

43). They add, with the advent of social media and Web 2.0 technologies, we expect that self-generated content in social media such as YouTube and Flickr to further encourage and reinforce multilingual writing online (p. 44).

Because social media practices are all about "writing the self into being' and pivot around identity negotiation, language choice is strongly tied to identity and self-presentation on platforms such as SNSs. This issue has been intriguing for researchers recently and great research has been conducted accordingly. For instance, Lee (2014) investigated language choice and self-presentation on Facebook among university students in Hong Kong. He proved that "social media participants constantly present different aspects of identity through careful choice of language according to their audience and the technological affordances of different platforms" (p. 94).

3.2.7. Multimodality and Identity on Social Media

The modern social media technical affordances offer users unprecedented way of communication. People now are able to create meaning through a variety of semiotic resources (spoken and written language, sound, image, colour, and design) making communication 'social' in a new way (Baym, 2001, pp.6-10). Indeed, multimodality is not new and has been around us for long such as in texts found in newspapers and school textbooks. However, this type of texts is official and institutional and ordinary people have no chance in creating or modifying these materials whereas in social media "multimodal content can be co-created and constantly edited by multiple users" (Barton and Lee, 2013, p. 30).

As put by Leppanen et al. (2014), "communication in social media involves not only resources provided by language(s), but also other semiotic resources – textual forms and patterns, still and moving images, sounds and cultural discourses – as well as the mobilization of these in processes of decontextualization and recontextualization. The language of social

media is thus woven from multiple and intertwined semiotic materials (see Blommaert & Rampton, 2011) which are socially significant and culturally valuable to the immediate participants and groups involved" (p. 113). For instance, in their study '*Banal Globalization? Embodied Actions and Mediated Practices in Tourists' Online Photo Sharing',* Thurlow and Jaworski (2011) investigated the multimodal discursive practices on Flickr and how they employed in identity negotiation. They were interested in "the way words, visual imagery, nonverbal behavior, space, and material culture are used to construct tourist identities, to organize host– tourist relations, to represent and manage tourist sites, and to produce/ perpetuate the meanings or ideologies of both tourism and globalization" (p. 221) and proved that multimodality is becoming a fashionable effective way of sociability on SNSs such as Flickr.

Because almost all people have a Facebook account today, multimodality is something we all experience and perform every time we communicate. For example, we make humour with our friends on Facebook just through publishing a funny meme upon which we exchange funny comments and sarcasm. Even comments can be multiomodal; Facebook offers us to comment through pictures and emoticons for instance. More common are the status updates where we create discourse through designed texts in colours and fonts combined with pictures or even videos. Multimodality is so diverse and enriched daily along the fast development in technological affordances in social media and communication online.

3.2.8. Stance-taking on SNSs

As put by Barton and Lee (2013, p. 31), stance has been a very useful concept in linguistics, bringing together a wide range of work that has been concerned with understanding how utterances' meanings are expressed and how speakers (or writers) address their audience. Stance can be broadly defined as a position taken by a speaker in relation to

what is said and to whom the utterance is directed. Linguistic studies of stance range from examining the grammar and lexis of utterances through to critical discourse analysis of stances embedded in political speeches, for instance. At a micro-level, a speaker's stance can be understood by looking into specific linguistic features such as the choice of verbs and sentence structures. For example, the clause 'I think' is often used to introduce a statement in which an opinion is embedded. This is not a random choice. When one says 'I think I know what I am doing', the speaker is expressing a certain degree of certainty, which could have been weakened by introducing the statement with 'I guess'. Cognitive verbs such as 'think' and 'know' are thus a key marker of what is called epistemic stances, stances that assert certainties, beliefs, and knowledge. Epistemic stance can be contrasted with affective stance where speakers express their attitudes and feelings about what they utter, as in 'I love the way this chapter is written!' (see Jaffe, 2009 for further details).

Barton and Lee see stance as a central concept that frames our understanding of how opinions are expressed in online media. Many Web 2.0 sites and social media are stance-rich environments. The perceived affordances of the writing spaces encourage the production, sharing, discussion, and evaluation of public opinions through textual means. YouTube is an excellent example of a platform that is rich in stance and acts of stance-taking. The video posters may express their opinions on a certain topic through speech in their videos; at the same time, viewers can evaluate the videos by giving them 'likes' or 'dislikes', or by leaving written comments. Commenting is indeed a key site of stance-taking in many popular Web 2.0 sites including Flickr and Facebook. On these sites, stance is not taken by one single speaker or writer, but is constantly created and renegotiated collaboratively by a networked public.

In traditional communicative contexts such as a face-to-face conversation, stance-taking is often performed through speech or writing. However, in social media, "multimodal stance-

taking is made possible in many global online sites" (Barton and Lee, 2013, p.32). On Flickr, people may focus on a particular genre of photos (e.g. black and white self portraits) with written tags such as 'me' to present a particular sense of self to their target viewers. Multilingual users may choose to switch between languages. All these are practices and resources of stance-taking that were certainly not common in the pre-Web 2.0 era. Thus, at a broader level, understanding acts of stance-taking is crucial in understanding how identities are constructed in new online spaces. It also becomes clear that stance-taking is not just a linguistic act but a situated practice that should be understood in the context of communication.

Conclusion

In sum, identity construction and self-presentation on social media can be summarized in the saying introduced earlier in this chapter: *"writing the self into being" and "showing rather than telling"*. These two notions state that identity is a dynamic entity which is performed and presented on social media platforms implicitly through language and discourse. As expressed along this chapter, the process of identity construction and self-presentation on SNSs such as Facebook, Twitter and Flickr is operated differently to the traditional face-to-face context. First, people are not physically present on SNSs and this disembodiment makes language the key resource of identity work in this context. Second, SNSs offer new discursive affordances to the users such as multimodal means of communication (pictures, sounds, videos, colours, etc). So, people employ an armoury of textual and multimodal discursive practices to construct their identities and present themselves on SNSs. Indeed, these notions are the guidelines that determine the scope of the present research.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

Introduction 105

4.1. The Research Methodological Approach 106

4.1.1. The Online Ethnography 107

4.1.2. Critical Aspects of the Online Ethnographic Research 109

4.1.2.1. Gaining Access to the Setting 109

4.1.2.2. Identity Authenticity of Online Participants 111

4.1.2.3. The Researcher's Identity 111

4.1.3. Ethics of the Online Ethnography 114

4.1.4. The Research Method: Discourse-Centred Online Ethnography (DCOE) 115

4.2. Procedures 118

4.2.1. Defining the Research Setting and Objectives 119

4.2.1.1.Why Facebook? 119

4.2.1.2.Why Salafis in Algeria? 120

4.2.1.3.The Sociolinguistic Framework 120

4.2.2. The population 122

4.2.3. Research Questions 122

4.2.4. Accessing the Setting and Lurking 123

4.2.4.1.'Being there' on Facebook 123

4.2.4.2. Lurking 124

4.2.5. Sampling and Participants' Recruitment 125

4.2.5.1.Recruiting the Key Participant (P_0) 125

4.2.5.2.Recruiting Participants and Forming the Final Sample 127

4.2.6. Data Collection 129

4.2.6.1. Online Participant Observation **129**

4.2.6.2. Interviews **132**

Conclusion **134**

"Discursive practices are the heart of our enterprise as ethnographic researchers" (Markham, 2005, p. 806).

Introduction

The aim of the present study is to investigate the different discursive practices of identity and self-presentation on Facebook among a sub-religious group in Algeria known as Salafis**.** The focus is on the textual and multimodal practices Salafis employ to construct and present their Salafi identity on Facebook and how this is perceived by them. This study falls within the discipline of social media discourse which focuses mainly on identity performances on SNSs (see Chapter 3). Most of recent research that focused on discursive practices and identity performance on social media was ethnographic in nature. More precisely, the Discourse-Centred Online Ethnography approach has been widely adopted by researchers in such studies (Androutspoulos, 2006b, 2007; Georgalou, 2015; Lee, 2007, 2014; Leppanen et al. 2014; Vasquez, 2014).

Given the fact that this work follows the same line of research, the Discourse-Centred Online Ethnography has been selected as the most suitable method for data collection and analysis. Moreover, regarding the interdisciplinary nature of the study, I supported my DCOE with: Zhao et al.'s (2008) model (see chapter 3), SIT model (Chapter 3) and Fairclough's (2003) and Van Djiks (2006)' critical discourse analytical tools in the categorization and analysis of data. Georgalou's (2015) and Lee's (2014) studies were very inspirational and helpful in guiding and directing the present research. This chapter introduces the method adopted for this study with focus on subjects, sampling and participants' recruitment, procedures of data collection and analysis, and ethical issues in conducting the field study.

4.1. The Research Methodological Approach

The present research is a qualitative study which is approached ethnographically. The purpose is not reaching generalisations but deep understanding of the different discursive practices of identity construction and self-presentation among Salafis in Algeria on Facebook. It is based on Hymes' (1974 and 1996) Ethnography of Communication (for further details, see Saville-Troike, 2003) which aims at gaining deep understanding of:

1. Patterns of communication and social relationships accomplished through language in a community or group.
2. The social meaning of different ways of using language by taking into account participants' awareness and interpretation of their practices, and by relating language to the social categories and activities of a community (rather than to abstract macro-sociological classifications)".

Ethnography is defined as the "description of individuals, groups or cultures in their own environment over a (long) period of time. As such, ethnography is not explicitly wed to a specific set of methods, but commonly the utilized methods are qualitative in nature (e.g. observations and unstructured interviews)" (Skageby, 2011, p. 411). This method offers the researcher to observe how people construct, re-construct, and make meanings (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p. 25). As put by Gatson (2011), "[i]n a basic sense of the mechanics of what it is that an ethnographer does (goes to a site, observes the location, the interactions, the boundaries, talks to or observes the inhabitants, records or transcribes all such observations and interactions, reads one's transcriptions, observes or talks more, transcribes more, and finally prepares a narrative wherein theory emerges or is tested), he is correct" (p. 518). Along the same vein, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) state that "the ethnographer participates, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time,

watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned" (p. 2).

Based on the aforementioned, the steps the ethnographer follows in conducting his research are as follows:

1- Defining the setting (group and location)
2- Accessing the group to be studied
3- Systematic participants' observation (documentation of practices)
4- Interviewing participants (to gain a user's perspective towards the issue being investigated.
5- Writing a narrative that generates or tests a theory about the issue investigated.

4.1.1. The Online Ethnography

Recently, ethnographers within the field of language and discourse have broadened their scope to include the online context responding to calls from researchers such as Garcia, Standlee, Benchkoff and Cui (2009) who stated that:

> [to] continue to effectively explore some of the main and enduring concerns of ethnographic research (such as the nature of specific social worlds and subcultures; the construction of identity; the beliefs, values, and world views underlying human action and social life; and the experience of everyday life) ethnographers must incorporate the Internet and CMC into their research to adequately understand social life in contemporary society. (p. 53)

The same notion was referred to by Skitka and Sargis (2006) saying that "turning to the Internet for data collection […] prompts one to think outside of the traditional box and leads to creative methods and measurements" (p. 543). Attempting at transferring the principles and

techniques of ethnography to settings of CMC, researchers have coined many terms such as "virtual ethnography" (Hine, 2000), "network ethnography" (Howard, 2002), "netnography" (Kozinets, 2002), "cyber ethnography" (Domínguez et al., 2007), "webnography" (Puri, 2007), and “Online Ethnography” (Garcia et al., 2009) which is used in the current research.

According to Skageby (2011), “[o]nline ethnography is a qualitative approach to data collection in virtual communities. As such, its aim is usually to look beyond amounts and distributions and to try to unearth the deeper reasons for behaviours or sentiments (i.e. “why?”)” (p. 411). He adds, to answer this question, the online ethnography must acknowledge that people’s behaviours and practices are often situated “situated in specific communities and with specific communication technologies” (p. 411).

Transferring the principles of ethnography to online settings obliges the researcher to adjust and alter his techniques to accommodate to the new CMC setting. In other words, the offline setting is different to the online one in terms of researcher’s interaction with the participants. While in the offline setting the researcher is physically present with the subjects, he is only electronically present where both the researcher and the subjects are invisible to each other in online settings. Therefore, participant observation, documentation and interviewing of participants are conducted in a different way depending on the specificities of the setting and research. This raises essential ethical issues that must be respected by the online ethnographer.

However, the online ethnography has many advantages. In online settings, data is archived and saved which allow the researcher to access it any time he wants. Moreover, online ethnography saves the researchers time, effort and money. It allows the researcher to recruit and contact participants who live far away from his place in a very short time. It also enables him to contact many people easily. More importantly, the online ethnographer can interview

participants through online applications such as Messenger on Facebook while sitting at home behind a screen without scheduling a meeting at the participant's home, library or coffee-shop.

4.1.2. Critical Aspects of the Online Ethnographic Research

In conducting an online ethnographic research, especially a discourse-centred one, the researcher is dealing with human subjects and personal data in an unphysical world. Therefore, I had to consider certain critical aspects that affect my research. These aspects include accessing the setting, the identity of online participants, the researcher's identity and the researcher's self presentation to the subjects. Managing these aspects is crucial for the study to be conducted effectively and for the authenticity and reliability of the results as explained in the following sub-sections. .

4.1.2.1. Gaining Access to the Setting

In conducting an online ethnographic research, gaining access to the setting being studied is an essential step which is successfully achieved through displaying cultural competence of the norms of the group under investigation (Garcia et al. 2009, p.59). In other words, the researcher must build a background about the different norms and rules of participation within the group he studies so that he knows where to put his feet and how to gain the members' trust. This is important both ethically and methodologically as the researcher would be able accordingly to take permission for conducting his research and at the same time gather naturally occurred data of undisturbed subjects.

This strategy was followed by Cherny (1999) in her study of MUDs (multiplayer online computer gaming networks). Her access to the field was facilitated thanks to participating in the activity before beginning her study where she writes that "[b]eing a participant first, and sharing the community's response to much media coverage of MUDs, I no doubt had an easier entree as a researcher" (Cherny 1999, p. 301). Another technique a researcher might

use is presenting himself as a sympathizer with the group he studies as was done by LeBesco in her study of "fat positive" USENET discussion groups, she presented herself as "one of us"; she writes:

> Part of my introduction, aside from my academic credentials, explained my interest in studying online conversations about fat as stemming from my personal experience of corpulence. I positioned myself as someone who had lost weight and would no longer be considered "fat" by what I imagined to be their standards, but as someone who respected and still wished to participate in many of the struggles waged in fat communities. (LeBesco 2004, p. 66)

Researchers can also rely on the electronic affordances such as IM and private conversations with a specific participant to learn the norms and rules of a particular online setting as recommended by Catterall and Maclaran (2002). They guided the researcher towards the use of private conversation with a member "to seek advice on how to comport oneself within the community, the most productive times to visit the room, and so forth" (Catterall and Maclaran, 2002, p. 231).

These different techniques are helpful for the researcher in his attempt to deal with the dilemma of accessing the online research setting. It is up to the researcher to choose which techniques is the most appropriate to gain access to the group he studies as the online settings differ. Whether deciding to lurk or not, the online ethnographer, as stated by Garcia et al, "should attempt to experience the online site the same way that actual participants routinely experience it" (2009, p. 60).

4.1.2.2. Identity Authenticity of Online Participants

The identity of the online participants is tied to one salient aspect of online setting which is anonymity (see chapter 3). The researcher is confronted with the dilemma of verifying the participants' real identities. Therefore, he must consider this notion and find solutions to verify his research participants (Cherny, 1999). In some online settings, participants usually go on with their real identities and do not try to hide or role play as reported by Koufaris (2001) of his study of a newsgroup on organ transplant recipients, who "always use their real names and talk about their real personal lives without hesitation." (p. 227). In other settings, participants hide their real identities especially if this is supported or facilitated by the website as in Livia's (1999) study of "Minitel" (a French chat room that require pseudonyms and forbids the use of identifiers like phone number, address, etc). Such situations cause serious difficulties for researchers to verify research subjects' information (Garcia et al., 2009, p. 68).

In handling these problems, online ethnographers follow different strategies. Turkle (1995) decided "not to report on my own findings [from online interviews] unless I have met the Internet user in person rather than simply in persona" (p. 324). Others, such as Taylor (1999) and Kozinets (1998), considered unauthentic identities as natural and part of social life not only offline settings. Therefore, they consider them as a valuable part of their data.

4.1.2.3. The Researcher's Identity

While conducting an online ethnographic research, the researcher must take into consideration his own identity and not only the participants' identities**.** The reason is that "[t]he researcher's identity can affect how conspicuous they are in the setting and the likelihood that potential informants will be willing to talk to them" (Garcia et al., 2009, p. 71). In other words, the identity of the researcher has a role in the success of gaining access to the setting and data collection. Researchers follow different approaches to present themselves in

the online ethnographic research depending on the specific features of the online setting. Garcia et al. (2009, p. 71) mentioned three examples that followed different approaches:

Example 1: In her study of a "virtual pub" known as "BlueSky", Kendall (2002) started studying this group as an anonymous guest to figure out later that this strategy was "not appreciated" (p. 18). Therefore, she changed her strategy through deciding to choose a nickname "Copperhead, whose aggressive and poisonous connotations might allow me both to fit in and to feel somewhat protected" that fits this "aggressive, male-oriented space" (Kendall 2002, p.18). So, Kendall approach was to use a nickname that fits the norms of participation in the online group she studied.

Example 2: Christine Hine (2000) studied the Internet as used by supporters, producers, and consumers of news about a famous murder case. She presented herself using her real name. More precisely, she used her first name "Christine" instead of Chris (what she is usually called), to present a less threatening image to potential research subjects and thus enable her to collect more data. While "Chris" is gender neutral, the name Christine is clearly female.

Example 3: Ayers (2004, p. 263) describes a research project on feminist activists comparing "two social movement groups: one that exists in cyberspace and one that exists in the physical world."Ayers conducted interviews in both settings, representing himself (accurately) as a male researcher. Ayers concluded that some subjects in the online study were not being authentic in their responses; some of the responses he received were fictitious or condescending. He concludes that these types of responses occurred because he had identified himself as a male researcher. He suggests that a male researcher working in this type of politicized female setting must take extra pains to create rapport with his research subjects before engaging in the study.

A key factor that is tightly related to the researcher's identity is his physical absence in the online setting where participants cannot see or hear him. Accordingly, the researcher must

have a set of skills to successfully gain access to the setting that he studies and recruit potential subjects (Garcia et al., 2009, p. 72). Gaining access to the group and recruit participants is achieved when the researcher gains the trust of the research subjects, i.e. the subjects feel comfortable with the presence of the researcher among them and be natural in their practices. Therefore, online ethnographers used different techniques such as Hine (2000) who referred subjects to her university Web page to verify her identity and authenticity of her research; Taylor (1999) who provided subjects in the space he studies with a URL that directs them to information about his research (p. 446); and Cherny (1999) who attached a message that explains her research and aims to her character in the online space. The researcher must be cautious when designing the web site or page he uses to recruit participants because, for instance, if he "only chose clip art that represented males, it would be possible that females felt excluded .... The text style may attract or exclude certain groups of young people" (Maczewski, Storey, and Hoskins 2004, p. 68).

Recently, SNSs have changed the way the researcher might approach potential participants. Researchers working on sites such as Facebook (Georgalou 2015, Lee 2014) and twitter (Zappavigna, 2012) profit from the sociability offered on these spaces that facilitate the recruitment of potential participants. Unlike old spaces such as blogs and newsgroups, researchers now can join platforms such as Facebook easily through creating a profile that displays their identities and targets a specific group of users. Moreover, they can build relations with subjects quickly through IM services and Friendship options in the same platform.

So, while conducting an online ethnographic research, the researcher must take into consideration his research participants' identities and his own identity as they both have a great impact on the recruitment of potential participants and data availability and reliability.

This is managed in different ways depending on the online space being studied and the research's objectives.

4.1.3. Ethics of the Online Ethnography

Ethical issues in ethnographic research are quintessential as the researcher is dealing with human subjects and their personal information and data. Therefore, it is highly demanded that the ethical basics and regulations of conducting an ethnographic study must be adhered to. These include ethics related to research participants' personal data, data consultation and collection, and the publication of data.

The researcher must be cautious about what is "private" and what is "public" in online situations. Garcia et al. (2009, p. 75) refer to the controversy around the nature of websites saying that some people consider these spaces similar to magazines and TV shows, "and hence are intentionally and inherently public", but for others some internet spaces are "private. So that the researcher does not violate the ethics of research, he must consider the privacy of the setting he studies when collecting and using data. In other words, even if the researcher can access data which is publicly available, he must check first if it is considered private by its users. Then, he must take permission before consulting or using data.

The second ethical issue is related to the disclosure of the researcher's identity to the subjects of his research. Indeed, as stated by Garcia et al. (2009, p. 75), there is no one precise and correct answer for whether, when and how the researcher should disclose his identity and research intentions; it depends on the online setting and subjects being studied. However, the online ethnographer must consider the setting he studies and decides upon the best method to disclose his identity to participants as it is highly demanded in ethnographic ethics.

Third, and more importantly, the researcher must take permission from the research participants before consulting, collecting and publishing their data as part of his research.

This is referred to as “informant consent”. Moreover, it is up to the participants to decide whether the researcher reveals their identities (real names) in his study or refer to them anonymously or via nicknames.

These ethics can be summarized in the following: lurking, issues of boundaries, social presence, and group entry and membership. I adopted the following basic ethical guidelines (following Mann & Stewart, 2000):

1. Data can only be collected for specific, legitimate purpose.
2. Participants have access to materials collected about them.
3. My online profile will include information explicitly identifying me as a researcher with intent to monitor actions within the site.
4. Consent must be sought prior to any inclusion of materials in the manuscript / dissertation.
5. Identities will be obscured through blurring photos and using pseudonyms (whenever required by the participants).

4.1.4. The Research Method: Discourse-Centred Online Ethnography (DCOE)

The online ethnographic method that best fits this discourse-oriented research and serves the aim of the study is the *discourse-centred online ethnography* proposed by Androutsopoulos (2008). According to Androutsopoulos the “first wave” of language-focused CMC research focused on the structural features of language that are shaped by new media and data was detached from its social and discursive context. He adds, the “second wave” shifted to pragmatic, sociolinguistic and discursive side of communication on the internet where data collection involves direct contact with users (surveys, interviews, and participant observation), but log data ("log data” is used in the sense of Herring (2004, p. 339) to refer to "characters, words, utterances, messages, exchanges, threads, archives, etc.”) still dominates (2008, pp. 1-2).

Androutsopoulos considers research which is entirely based on log data as “not ideally positioned to examine participants' discourse practices and perspectives or to relate these practices and perspectives to observable patterns of language use” (2008, p.2). He based his point of view on the fact that such practices include:

- questions about people's motivations for the use of particular linguistic resources online and the meanings they attach to those resources.
- people's awareness and evaluation of linguistic diversity online
- their knowledge about the origin and circulation of linguistic innovations in CMC
- the relationship between participants' and researchers' interpretations. (pp. 1-2)

Therefore, Androutsopoulos (2008) suggested going beyond what is observable on the screen, proposing the new method called *discourse-centred online ethnography*. The Discourse-centred online ethnography (DCOE) is a method which “combines the systematic observation of selected sites of online discourse with direct contact with its social actors. It thus encompasses, and extends beyond, systematic observation, which is part of Herring's computer-mediated discourse analysis (2004) framework and other language-focused CMC work” (Androutsopoulos, 2008, p. 2). He adds, “DCOE uses ethnographic insights as a backdrop to the selection, analysis, and interpretation of log data, in order to illuminate relations between digital texts and their production and reception practices”. Put simply, DCOE is not limited to linguistic and discursive data online but supplement it with two more kinds of data:

- **Screen-based data**: centres on systematic and painstaking observation of online activities of participants.
- **Participant-based data**: draws upon direct (face-to-face or mediated) engagement with online actors to gain user’s attitudes and perspectives.

Practically, Androutsopoulos (2008) provided basic guidelines for the application of the two steps of DCOE in online environments (Table 4.1). These guidelines can be shaped by the researcher depending on the online setting he studies and his research limitations.

To sum up, the procedures the researcher follows in conducting an online ethnographic research - specifically DCOE - are as follows:

1- Defining setting and research perspective

2- Making a cultural entrance

3- Qualitative online data collection: participant observation (re-observation), documentation and noting, and interviews

4- Analysis and presentation of results.

Table. 4.1. Practical Guidelines for Doing DCOE (Androutsopoulos, 2008, p. 6)

Practice-derived guidelines for systematic observation:
1) Examine relationships and processes rather than isolated artefacts
2) Move from core to periphery of a field
3) Repeat observation
4) Maintain openness
5) Use all available technology
6) Use observation insights as guidance for further sampling
Practice-derived guidelines for contact with Internet actors:
1) Contacts should be limited, non-random, and include various participation formats
2) Pay attention to the initial contact
3) Formulate and customise interview guidelines
4) Confront participants with (their own) material
5) Seek repeated and prolonged contacts
6) Make use of alternative techniques whenever possible

4.2. Procedures

This section presents in detail the steps followed in conducting the field study for the present research. The steps are ordered from first to last following the DCOE method process. Indeed, the DCOE was adapted and shaped according to the Facebook setting, research aims and the different methodological limitations imposed by the online setting. The steps are illustrated in Figure 4.1.

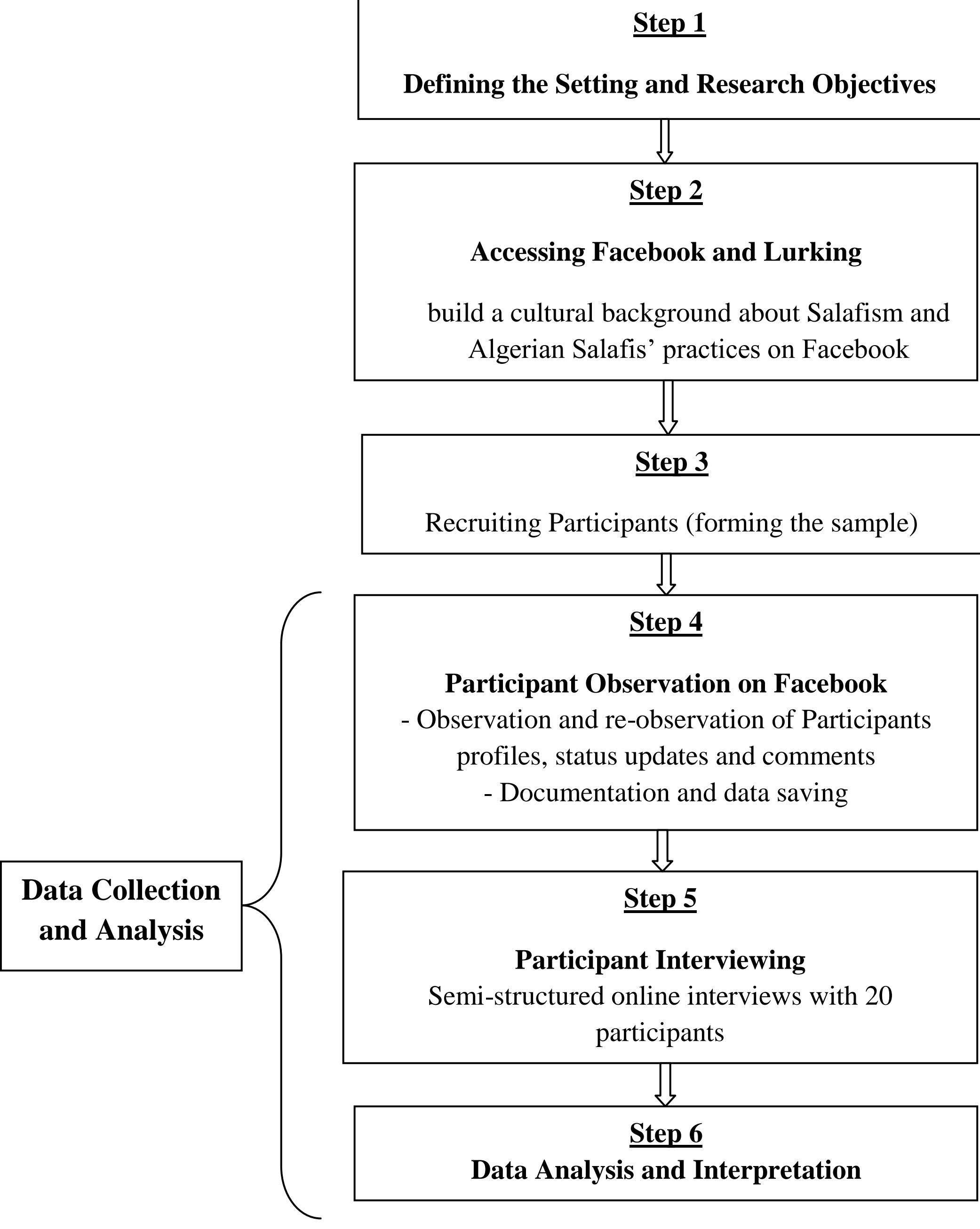


Figure 4.1. Procedures of the Field Study

4.2.7. Defining the Research Setting and Objectives

The focus of the present of research is investigating the different discursive and linguistic practices of a sub-religious group's members within Algeria known as Salafism, and the role these practices play in the construction of identity and self-presentation on Facebook. Put simply, it seeks at analysing the discourse of self presentation among a group of Salafis on Facebook. The choice of conducting this study is fuelled by two overarching reasons: the first one is related to the online setting which is social media (precisely Facebook), and the second to the social group which is Salafis in Algeria. Indeed, these two factors, together with the sociolinguistic situation in Algeria, build the setting of the research.

.2.1.1. Why Facebook?

First, as it has been expressed earlier, social media discourse is reckoned to be inherently constitutive of identity and its novelty is very intriguing for researchers in sociolinguistics and discourse studies as they encompass new practices. Choosing to work on Facebook specifically is fuelled by the popularity and high use of this platform among people. Therefore, it encompasses a large amount of social and linguistic data that needs investigation and analysis. This helps in the deep understanding of novel social phenomena and human behaviours (see Chapter 2 for further details). In addition, the considerable number of studies that have been conducted in the western world was an extra motive for conducting this research as it provides a theoretical and methodological guiding that facilitates the work. More importantly, researching the discourse of identity and self-presentation on Facebook from an ethnographic perspective in Algeria, especially among religious groupings, is still sparse and the number of studies that have been conducted focused mainly on code-switching (see Khedhir, 2011 and Ganaoui, 2012).

4.2.7.1. Why Salafis in Algeria?

Being part of Facebook and other social media as a researcher in the field of language studies is inspirational as you notice things people would consider ordinary everyday behaviours when it comes to discursive practices. I really had such an experience. I remember I received once a notification on Facebook that one of my friends has changed his Facebook profile name. It was a new creative nickname totally different to his old one. His old one was his real name but the new one became **'أبو الياس محمد القسنطيني'** (Abu Illyess Mohamed Al Qassantini). I noticed that he used his real name before but now he is using a nickname of a specific kind. Moreover, his old name was written in Romanized transcript but the new one is in Arabic transcript**.** Chatting with him, I figured out that he became affiliated with an Islamic doctrine known as Salafism and the choice of this new nickname was affected by his new identity and it had a deep social meaning. Investigating the doctrine further, I noticed Salafis have specific identity features strongly tied to their religious beliefs and ideology making them socially different (in certain aspects) within the Algerian society. These informal observations raised a number of questions about discourse and Salafism on Facebook in Algeria and the role language plays in such a relation (an area which is still not seriously investigated by researchers in discourse studies and sociolinguistics in Algeria). Therefore, this research was conducted to tackle this issue formally and academically as an attempt to add some knowledge to this area.

4.2.7.2.The Sociolinguistic Framework

The sociolinguistic situation in Algeria is an important aspect of the research setting as language and discourse are the focus of the study and the subjects are part of such the Algerian speech community. Over 99% of Algerians are Muslim, for example, but qualitative and survey research finds that they vary in their degree of religious observance and attitudes about social and political issues (see Jamal & Tessler 2008; Tessler 2002). Basically, Algeria

is a diglossic community where two varieties of Arabic are present in the nation (Zaboot, 2010, p.202). The first variety which is Standard Arabic is of *high status* and used in formal and official contexts such as newspapers, mosque and administration. The second variety, known as Colloquial Arabic, is of *low status* and used in informal contexts and everyday interactions among Algerians**.**

In addition to being a diglossic community, the Algerian society is also multi-lingual. French is a second language in Algeria and most Algerians have a considerable command of that language. Moreover, although not spread like Arabic and spoken is specific places in Algeria, Tamazight is a third language that has been determined as an official language in Algeria by the government recently (Benstead and Rift, 2013, p. 88). A recent study of SMS messages found that 21% of a non-systematic sample of 50 messages sent by Algerians aged 18-25 were in French (Mostari, 2009), while studies of graffiti in Kabyle find use and mixing of all three languages (Dourari 2002), with political messages often written in French (Kahina 2012). Abbaci argues that youth are self-consciously constructing a new identity that is not Arabo-, Berbero-, Francophone and embraces an affirmation of plural identity that is absent from institutional discourse and official language policy (2011, p. 11). Many analysts of Algeria have assumed that the three main language groups have different attitudes toward a variety of issues, one of which is greater secularism and orientation toward Western as opposed to Islamic culture, with the stereotype that Berberophones and Francophones are more open to Western, secular influence than Arabophones (Benstead and Retf, 2013, p. 89). Moreover, in online situations, recent studies such as Khidher (2014) and Ganoui (2012) found that Algerians use Romanised Arabic (using Roman letters in writing Standard and Colloquial Arabic) in addition to their Standard Arabic, Colloquial Arabic and French codes. So, being part of this sociolinguistic situation, Algerian Salafis' linguistic repertoire consists

of three basic codes: Standard Arabic, Colloquial Arabic (Algerian Dialect) and French, in addition to the written forms of these varieties in Arabic or Romanised transcript online. .

4.2.8. The population

The social grouping studied in the present research is the Algerian Salafis (a sub-religious group in Algeria). People might have an idea about what the word 'Salafis' refer to, but few are familiar with the ideology, principles and beliefs of this religious grouping. Thus, this section sheds some light on the social grouping and highlights briefly its characteristics and principles enabling a better understanding of the ideas and concepts included in the research**.** Salafis in Algeria are a minority where the majority of Algerians follow the Islamic jurisprudence doctrine known as 'the Maliki Doctrine' (Morrow, 2014, p.82)**.**

Salafis are fundamentalists who believe in a return to the original ways of Islam. The word 'Salafi' comes from the Arabic phrase, 'as-salaf as-saliheen', which refers to the first three generations of Muslims (starting with the Companions of the Prophet), otherwise known as the Pious Predecessors. Modern-day Salafis believe that there is a need to get back to these ideals, instead of following teachings which have become, in their eyes, corrupted in the intervening centuries. The 100-year-old Sunni-based Salafi school of thought aspires to emulate the ways of the Prophet Mohammed. Recognisable from their distinctive long white robes, long beards and flowing head scarf, Salafis are socially and religiously ultra - conservative ("What is Salafism?, Jan, 2015). Regarding their linguistic ideology, Salafis consider Standard Arabic as 'holy' and supposed to be the only language used by Muslims in all their interactions. The use of Western languages, mainly French and English, is a violation of the Real Islamic principles especially when not really needed. Moreover, they consider it strongly tied to their Salafi identity and a great marker of it.

4.2.3. Research Questions

Given the research setting and objectives stated in the previous section, the following research questions have been raised:

1- What are the different discursive practices Algerian Salafis employ in constructing their identity and presenting themselves on Facebook?
2- What aspects of identity / self are displayed by Algerian Salafis on Facebook? Which among these aspects is dominant?
3- How Salafism is shaping the users' Facebook practices?
4- What status Standard Arabic has among Algerian Salafis and what role does it play in the identity performance on Facebook?
5- How Algerian Salafis perceive Facebook and what attitudes do they have towards the common linguistic practices among Algerians (language choice/ transcript choice)?

4.2.4. Accessing the Setting and Lurking

After defining the research setting and the questions to be touched in this study, the next step was building a cultural background about Salafism and Algerian Salafis' norms of interaction on Facebook so that I can successfully make my *entrance*. In other words, having such a background and knowing how to get in touch with the subjects appropriately are essential in gaining the trust of the potential participants. Therefore, I relied on the ethnographic technique called "Lurking". For lurking to be conducted on Facebook, the researcher must first be a member of the site, i.e. he must have a Facebook account or profile that allows him to use the site.

4.2.4.1. 'Being there' on Facebook

Unlike websites where people can consult the content without membership, Facebook demands from the users subscription to be part of the network. Moreover, to conduct research on this site, the researcher must be skilful in using Facebook and familiar with the affordances. I joined Facebook in 2009 and have always been there since then. This allowed me to use it easily and skilfully. In fact, I relied on my personal profile in conducting this research for a number of reasons that are explained in the forthcoming sections. This helped

me a lot in gaining time and effort in conducting this research as I was using it in an automatic way without technical mistakes that would cost me the loss of data. So, I could accordingly start my lurking.

4.2.4.2. Lurking

"Lurking*"* is to observe the participants interactions and practices without participation or being a member in the group (Garcia et al., 2009, p. 58). Online ethnographers perceive lurking differently. Some researchers consider lurking as the first basic step in an online ethnographic research that helps in gaining valuable information about the participants and the field (Kozinets and Handelman, 1998, p. 477). One crucial notion in the unobtrusive observation is the ethics of lurking. The ethical question which is often raised in lurking is "What happens to the privacy and integrity of the people we study?" and it calls for the need to disclose one's identity as an online researcher (Sveningsson, 2004, p. 47). Whether the researcher has the right to observe the subjects' practices and interactions unobtrusively or must take permission first has been controversial among online ethnographers. In some cases, if the identity of the researcher is revealed and informant consent is demanded, participants' anonymity might be sacrificed and naturally occurring behaviour might be disturbed (Soukup, 1999).

For lurking to be advantageous for both researcher and subjects, Chen, Hall, and Johns (2004) suggested that researchers are encouraged to lurk first just to familiarize themselves with the setting and the subjects but not collect data or use it unless permitted or identified as researchers. Indeed, it is this view which is adopted in this research. Accordingly, I started lurking on different pages of Salafism and profiles of Salafis in Algeria. I lurked on pages and profiles which are open for public, i.e. those that allow the user to consult the content without *requesting membership* or *friendship*. I consulted tens of pages of Salafism on Facebook especially those made by Algerians to learn deeply about the principles and beliefs of this

Islamic doctrine. Moreover, I focused on their discourse about Facebook and how they perceive it. I lurked also on hundreds of Salafis profiles (personal data, status, comments, pictures, photos, etc.) to build a background about their identities, discursive practices, norms of interaction, and attitudes towards the use of Facebook.

Based on the background I built through lurking, I determined my strategy in recruiting potential participants, how much data is needed and which data is relevant and which is not. Simply, lurking showed me where to put my feet. Indeed, I lurked in an invisible way to the subjects and consulted their profiles without their permission. Therefore, respecting the research ethics, all data that have been consulted was neither saved nor used later in the research.

4.2.5. Sampling and Participants' Recruitment

Regarding the qualitative nature of the present research, the selection of the sample was based on the guidelines of online ethnographic research (Garcia et al. 2009). Following these qualitative guidelines, the selection of the sample in online ethnography must be systematic and not random, i.e. a sample that gives rich and relevant data. The latter was based on the background I gained via lurking. One key observation was the ultra-conservative identity of Algerian Salafis - especially on Facebook - who do not interact easily with strangers. Accordingly, I relied on the technique of 'snowball sampling' where the researcher is helped by the already recruited participants to recruit new potential participants. So, the basis was having an intermediate to reach new participants. The 'snowball sampling' was applied partially in here as explained in this section.

4.2.6.1. Recruiting the Key Participant (P_0)

As a first step in my systematic recruiting of potential participants, I chose to build a friendship with one Salafi user on Facebook who would help me later in recruiting others. This was achieved through the 'friendship request' option on Facebook. I sent requests to

users with active and dynamic profiles and a considerable number of friends. After many attempts, I got accepted by one participant who meets my recruiting criteria. He was a male whose age was 28 years old from Telemssan, Algeria. He has a university degree and has been on Facebook since 2013. I would refer to him in here as **'ابو عبد الرحمان' -'Abu Abd Al-rahman'** (part of his Facebook name) to protect his privacy.

After being a Facebook friend with **'Abu Abd Al-rahman'**, I became a member of his friends' network. This means I could receive in my newsfeed all the activities of the participant and his friends. I started first getting in touch with him through reacting to his publications and status through 'Like' and sometimes 'Comment' options. Then, I contacted him through 'Messenger' to initiate a friends' chat. I preferred not to present myself directly from the beginning as a researcher, but to start chatting as a new friend as done in ordinary situations among Facebookers. The purpose was to build a strong tie with **'Abu Abd Al-rahman'** who would work as a 'guide' for me later on along my field work. One advantage I had was being at the same age with 'Abu Abd Al-rahman' what helped us to understand each other easily. After being a close friend to this participant on Facebook and felt that he was comfortable with me, I decided to reveal my research intentions and purpose. I presented myself to the participant through chatting in Messenger as a researcher from Mentouri Brothers University, Constantine, Algeria, condcuting a PhD research. Therefore, I explained to him my topic and research objectives. Moreover, I ensured that all personal information and data he provides is going to be confidential and none of it would be used or published without his permission to avoid any mistrust and negative reactions from the participant.

'Abu Abd Al-rahman' was very welcoming and enthusiastic about helping me in my research. He permitted me to use whatever data I want from his profile or chatting we have. More importantly, He agreed to suggest and contact other potential participants among his Salafi friends on Facebook. So, my work with this participant allowed me to learn deeply

about the norms of interaction with Algerian Salafis and how to impress them appropriately and gain their trust. For the recruitment of potential Participants to be successful, he advised me to change some basic aspects (all these modifications are related to Salafis practices and attitudes that are going to be explained in detail in Chapter 5) of my profile as follows:

1. Change my Facebook name transcript from Roman into Arabic: I changed my name from 'Faysal Saoudi' into **'فيصل سعودي'**.
2. Change my profile picture and cover page picture into others acceptable among the Salafi community on Facebook.
3. Delete any content - if any - that is perceived as inappropriate among the Salafi community such as songs, political status, women pictures, etc.

I did not create a new profile but I kept my original one for the reasons mentioned before. I just re-designed my profile as advised by **'Abu Abd Al-rahman'.**

4.2.5.2. Recruiting Participants and Forming the Final Sample

I selected **Abu Abd Al-rahman's** friends' network to target potential participants. This network consists of 400 friends among which the majority (365 friends) are Salafis. With the help of the participant, my recruiting strategy was systematic based on the following factors:

1- Algerian: the participant must be an Algerian Salafi.

2- Authenticity: the participant must be a real Salafi in this offline world, i.e. not someone playing the identity of a Salafi on Facebook while he is not a Salafi in reality.

3- Active users: the participant must be a daily user of Facebook.

4- Not a new salafi: those who adapted Salafism newly were not selected since their experience on Facebook as Salafis is very short.

This operation yielded into 155 participants (among 365 friends). Then, all these participants were contacted by **'ابو عبد الرحمان' - 'Abu Abd Al-rahman'** who introduced me

and explained my research intentions and objectives to these participants. Only 80 among these accepted participating in the study. I sent friendship requests to all these participants and became a *friend* of them on Facebook. Thus, I gained my access (entrée) successfully to the setting I want to study.

However, I selected only 29 among these 80 participants to be studied due to the following methodological limitations:

- Time: PhD thesis duration is limited to three years in our department.
- The Large amount of online data: I limited the number of participants to what I could manage and analyse.

Accordingly, my final sample consisted of 30 participants (29 + **P_0: 'Abu Abd Al-rahman'**) as shown in Figure 4.2. The 30 research participants are all males because **'Abu Abd Al-rahman's** network consists only of male friends (Salafis do not befriend females on Facebook, i.e. males interact only with males, and females interact only with females). Consequently, I could not contact and recruit female participants as they do not accept friendship requests from males.

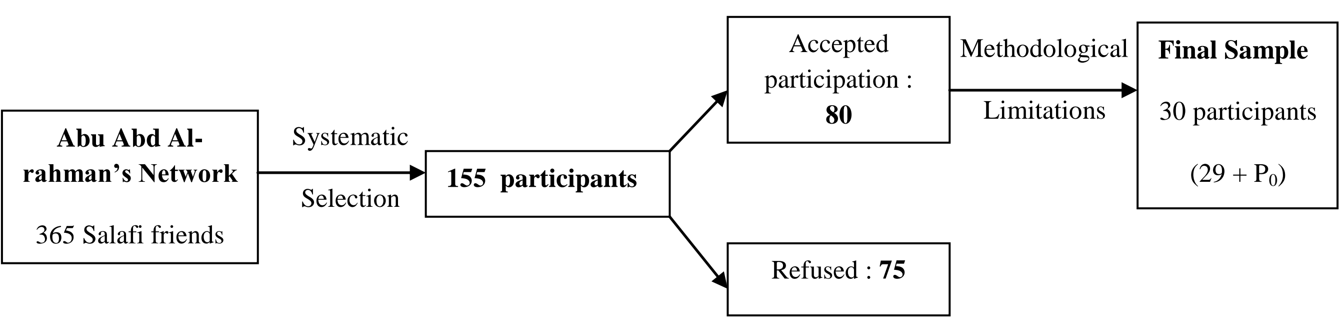


Figure 4.2. Participants Recruitment and Sampling

After selecting my final sample, I contacted the 29 participants through Messenger for having the 'Informant Consent' (the participant's acceptance of using his data in the research). Thus, I explained my research intentions and objectives for each one in detail and ensured confidentiality of all data. Then, I took permission to consult, save and use data found on their profiles and related to their practices on Facebook and publish it later in my research. All participants gave me permission and we agreed on a specific mechanism in doing so (expressed in the coming section).

4.2.6. Data Collection

After recruiting my research participants and having their informant consent, I started collecting research data. Because the research is discourse-oriented, the data collected included only the discursive practices of identity construction among the participants on Facebook (data which is not discursive such as media practices, gaming, use of applications and marketing were not targeted in data collection).

Applying the DCOE, the data was of two types: screen-based data and participants-based data. The screen-based data was collected through online participant observation of participants' profiles and timelines throughout a year (January 2015 and Decembre 2015). This includes the discursive practices from:

1. **The Profile data:** the user's name and profile pictures.
2. **The Timeline (News Feed) data:** status updates and comments.

Participants-based data was collected through semi-structured online interviews with the research participants. This includes the participants' attitudes and perceptions towards a number of predetermined aspects of identity construction and self presentation that emerged from the participant observation stage.

4.2.4.1. Online Participant Observation

Participant observation is a basic step in the ethnographic research**.** The researcher in online research observes "text and images on a computer screen rather than people in offline settings" (Garcia et al., 2009, p 58). Participant observation in online settings is different to that in the offline world, and therefore, its techniques must be adjusted (Garcia et al., 2009, p. 57). In online ethnography, observation is shaped by the following factors:

1- Invisibility: the researcher and the subjects are invisible to each other.
2- Field notes are changed with technologically recorded events, practices, interactions and locations
3- Nature of online data: textual and visual material rather than people speaking and interacting
4- Multimodal data: textual, visual, audio, etc.

The online setting being studied differs from one website to another depending on the technical affordances provided. Some sites are open to the public where the researcher can observe the interaction of users without participating or being a member in the site. However, in some other sites, the researcher must be a member of the website or the group he studies so that he can observe the participants. For instance, Walstrom (2004a and 2004b) uses the term "participant-experiencer" instead of "participant-observer" to refer to the researcher's role in the online setting. This term "entails the role of active contributor to the group being studied. This role specifically refers to a researcher who has personal experience with the central problem being discussed by group participants" (Walstrom, 2004 a, p. 175).

Using the term "experiencer" in the place of observer is accurate and helpful in such settings like the online support group as the researcher cannot directly observe the other members of the group but experience what it is like to participate in the group by reading and

posting messages to the group. Schaap (2002), writing about his ethnographic work in MUDs (online locations where participants interact via constructed characters) notes that:

> My observations are purely textual and I haven't met any of my informants face to face. While this poses some unorthodox problems, I believe that one learns to speak and listen, or rather write and read in this world just as one would in a particular physical locale. After a while one starts to discern what kind of conversation one is having, which clues to pick up on and when informants are reluctant to speak about a certain subject. (Schaap, 2002, pp. 29-30)

On Facebook, participant observation is employed easily once the researcher becomes a 'friend' with his research participants because he is allowed to access information on their profiles and timelines. Gatson (2011) argues that reading online content itself is a form of interaction and when we read online content, we are already "in", in a real way because most online content is read (interpreted), and not necessarily interacted with by adding the reader's own post (pp. 251-252). Therefore, the observation of Facebook timelines falls under the method of participant observation.

Accordingly, I conducted my participant observation through visiting each participant's profile and timeline (mainly status updates and comments) and going through all their practices in detail each time I receive a notification of a new publication or activity of the participants. I created a file for each participant that includes all his Facebook data that was relevant to the research. This data was saved through the IT technique called *'screen capture'*. Through this technique, I captured the zone on the screen that includes the selected data then saved it in the participant's file. Thus, I had a file for each participant that includes all his information and practices (which are relevant to my research) on Facebook throughout a year.

The ethnogpraphers' presence in the setting studied might affect the authenticity and spontaneousity of the subjects' practices. Therefore, to confirm the authenticity and spontaneousity of the data collected, I repeatidly compared it to previous data in the participants' profiles prior to my entrance to the setting and starting interacting with the participants.

4.2.6.2. Interviews

A basic pillar within the online ethnography is conducting interviews with participants. The researcher can conduct online, offline or both kinds of interviews. Depending on the research's characteristics and objectives, the online ethnographer chooses which kind of interview he conducts. Online interviews are a very useful tool in conducting online ethnographic research that have been used in a number of studies like Williams and Copes (2005) who relied on online interviews to support their participant observation and focused discussions in order to expand on themes that emerged from earlier analyses. Schaap's (2002) used online interviews in his study of fantasy role play games in MUDs. This technique is often conducted in the form of asynchronous text-based interviews such as emails (Garcia et al., 2009, p. 66). However, in recent years, synchronous modes such as IM in SNSs are gaining fame among researchers in conducting online interviews as they replicate oral synchronous communication in offline interviews (Mann and Stewart, 2002) and save the researcher's time and effort in scheduling interviewing with different participants offline.

Participants' interviews in online ethnographic studies are often semi-structured with open-ended questions such as in Androutsoupolos (2008) and Georgalou (2015). These researchers argue that semi-structured interviews must contain only big titles and major issues that emerged from observation and log data of participants. These issues work as guidelines for the interview and offer the participants freedom to refer or speak about other points they

view as important for the research. Such strategy reflects the essences of online ethnographic research which is a ‘user-centred research’ and offers deep understanding of the issue investigated from a participants’ perspective.

Following these studies, I relied in my research on semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. I selected the 20 most active and experienced participants on Facebook among the 30 participants in my sample for interviewing. The reason behind interviewing the participants was to gain a deeper understanding of their practices from a ‘user perspective’. This helped in analysing and interpreting the results on the basis of participants’ answers and not only my own interpretations.

Based on the data collected through participant-observation, the interview touched five major axes:

1- Exchanging personal and general information for building a friendly atmosphere
2- Principles and beliefs of Salafis
3- The nature of and reasons behind the various discursive practices on Facebook
4- Attitudes towards Arabic and other languages
5- Attitudes towards Facebook and its use

All interviews were conducted online. I used *Messenger* (the instant messaging application of Facebook) in interviewing the 20 participants who felt comfortable being interviewed as such. Because participants do not prefer video chatting and consider it inappropriate, they preferred to be interviewed in writing or voice calls.

The interviews were conducted in Standard Arabic because the participants prefer and find this code as the most appropriate. Thus, it was necessary to use Standard Arabic to ensure that the participants were comfortable during the interview and, consequently, having spontaneous naturally-occurring answers. In fact, this preference of using Standard Arabic in

interviews is by itself a practice that is analysed and interpreted in the study. The average time for interviews was 50 minutes. I conducted all interviews synchronously in one session to ensure spontaneous answers from participants. Each participant's interview was saved through *screen capture* in his file.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented thoroughly the procedures I followed in conducting my field study applying the DCOE. As a summary, the first step was defining the research setting and objectives. Then, I accessed the arena of my research and started lurking to build a background about my research setting and subjects**.** Having built the required background, I selected the Facebook network from which I selected and formed my sample later. After selecting the network, I recruited the key (first) participant (P_0) who helped me in recruiting the other subjects of my sample and making my *entrance*. I moved after that to the collection of my data through online participant observation and documentation, then interviews. Having collected and organised the required data, I started my analysis and interpretation of the results forming my manuscript.

Chapter Five

Results: Analysis and Interpretations

Introduction 137

5.1. Displaying Salafism through Static Discursive Practices: Naming and Profile Picture 137

5.1.1. The User's Facebook Name 139

5.1.1.1. Nicknames vs. Real Names 139

5.1.1.2.Categories of Nicknames 140

5.1.1.2.1. Nicknames with Fatherhood Reference / Real Name + Origin 141

5.1.1.2.2. Nicknames with Fatherhood Reference/ User's First Name + Salafi Affiliation 143

5.1.1.3. Interpretations 144

5.1.1.3.1. Using a Nickname: is it to hide the Real Self? 145

5.1.1.3.2. Aligning within Salafism through Nicknames 147

5.1.1.3.3. The Use of Arabic Transcript in Nicknames 150

5.1.2. Salafism through the Profile Picture 153

5.1.2.1. The Textual-content Pictures 154

5.1.2.1.1. Pictures including Quranic Verses / Prophet's Hadiths 155

5.1.2.1.2. Pictures with a Salafi Saying or Wisdom 156

5.1.2.1.3. Pictures with a tText showing belonging to Salafism 157

5.1.2.1.4. Pictures including the User's Nickname 158

5.1.2.2. The Visual-content Pictures 159

5.1.2.2.1. Pictures Displaying Physical Aspects of Salafis 159

5.1.2.2.2. Pictures Displaying Documents or Materials of Salafism 162

5.1.2.2.3. Pictures Displaying Saudi Arabia's Flag 164

5.1.2.3. Deductions 166

5.2. Displaying Salafism through the Dynamic Discursive Practices 167

5.2.1. The Informative Religious Publications 168

5.2.1.1. The Dominance of Informative Salafi Publications 169

5.2.1.2. The Content and Form of the Publication 170

5.2.1.2.1. The Textual Discourse 171

5.2.1.2.2. The Multimodal Discourse 172

5.2.1.3. Quoting in the Publications and its Implications 176

5.2.2. The Inclusive/Inclusive Discourse: Identification and Alignment within Salafism 179

5.2.3. The Ideological Discourse and Affiliation to Salafism 187

5.2.3.1. The Opposed Ideological Discourse 188

5.2.3.1.1. The Ideological Modification of Terms 189

5.2.3.1.2. The Multimodal Ideological Opposing Discourse 194

5.2.3.2. The Ideological Discourse of Allegiance 198

5.2.4. Language Choice and Meta-linguistic Discourse: The 'Sacred' Standard Arabic 204

5.2.4.1. Language Choice 204

5.2.4.2. Meta-linguistic Discourse 211

Conclusion 215

Introduction

In this chapter, the different findings of the study are presented, analysed and interpreted. Because of the qualitative nature of the research and diversity of the data, the results and interpretation are included within the same chapter as I found it more useful and clearer to analyse and interpret the findings alongside their presentation and analysis. As such, the reader will not lose track of the details and their interpretations. However, the chapter is divided into sections on according to the different aspects of the discursive practices employed by the participants in this study. Indeed, this is based on the "grounded theory" guiding which is often followed in the generation and organisation of findings in the qualitative research.

I included in the presentation of the results excerpts of original data such as status updates, comments and original interviews' answers of participants that may include spelling and grammar mistakes**.** These excerpts are included as screen captures**.** Moreover, because all data was in Arabic, I translated the content of the data presented in English whenever needed. In addition, the religious ideas and beliefs presented in this chapter are those of the participants' and do not belong to me or represent my own views.

Applying the Discourse-Centred Online Ethnography, data collected was of two sorts: *screen-based data* (collected through participant observation), and *participant-based data* (collected through interviews). The former represents the primary source for raw data; the latter was not used in this study as a source of primary data (except for few cases) but as a basis for the interpretation of the results. Following Georgalou (2015), Lee (2012) and Farquhar (2009), the identity construction practices were divided into two types: 'Static' vs. 'Dynamic' practices (both belong to screen-based data) as shown in Figure 5.1.

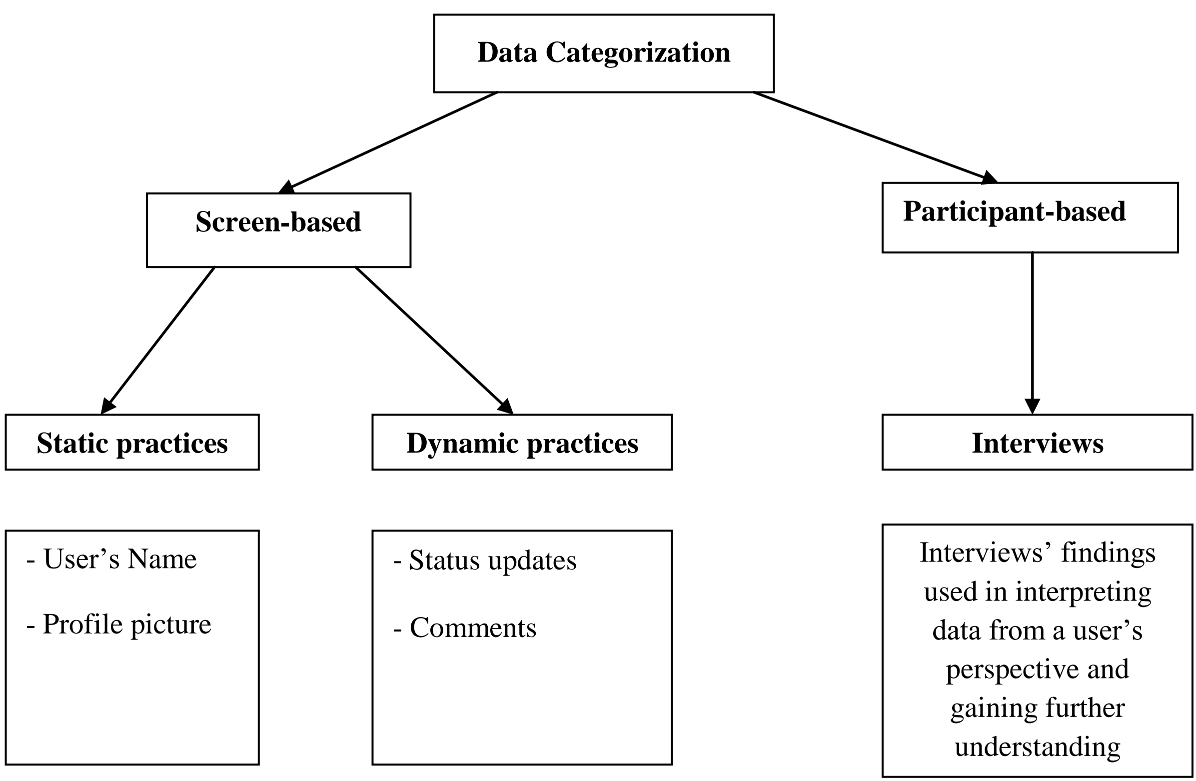


Figure 5.1. Discursive Practices Categorisation

The presentation of the findings in the following sections is organized according to the categorisation of screen-based data; the participant-based data is used to strengthen the interpretation of the screen based-data. In other words, the two types of data are complementary to each other. Participant-based data is mentioned in this chapter - whenever needed – together with screen based data. However, some issues are raised and referred to only in interviews, and therefore, would be presented separately.

5.1. Displaying Salafism through Static Discursive Practices: Naming and Profile Picture

Static Discursive practices are those aspects of the user's identity on Facebook which are not updated frequently and do not generate much interactivity among users (Farquhar, 2009, p. 99). Given the discourse-oriented focus of the research, the static discursive practices which are relevant in this study are:

- The user's Facebook name
- The profile picture.

It was found in this study that Algerian Salafi users' static discursive practices have an essential role in identity performance and self presentation process as presented in the following sub-sections.

5.1.1. The User's Facebook Name

The study revealed that the participants' choice of their names on Facebook is a basic discursive practice employed in presenting themselves and constructing their identities on Facebook. Zhao et al. (2008) argued that users generally prefer to use their real names on Facebook as they apt for "anchored relationships". However, it was found in this study that the case is completely the opposite: most participants prefer to use a nickname which is formed in a specific mechanism and have a certain sociolinguistic function.

5.1.1.1. Nicknames vs. Real Names

Results showed that nicknames were common among the participants on Facebook and only few used their real names (the choice of real names in here is an exception that is explained in the forthcoming). The results obtained from the investigation of the participants' choice between real names and nicknames for their Facebook profiles are presented in Table 5.1. About 94 % of the nicknames are creative names of the participants' real names, whereas, only 6% kept their real names as their profiles' names. The table shows that most of the

participants of the study prefer to create new names for their Facebook profiles rather than using the real names. Another key finding is that all names either nicknames or real names of users were written in Arabic Transcript, i.e. the use of Arabic letters and not the Romanized ones (Latin letters).

Table 5.1. Types of Facebook Names

<table>
<tr><th>Type</th><th>Distribution</th><th>Percentage</th><th>Transcript</th></tr>
<tr><td>Nicknames</td><td>28</td><td>94 %</td><td rowspan="2">Arabic Transcript</td></tr>
<tr><td>Real names</td><td>2</td><td>6%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Toral</td><td>30</td><td>100 %</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

5.1.2.2. Categories of Nicknames

The data in this section is related to the categories (kinds) of nicknames the participants use for their Facebook profiles, their characteristics and the mechanisms of their formation. Table 5.2 includes a detailed categorisation of these nicknames. Data showed that there are two main categories or types of nicknames:

a- Nicknames with **fatherhood reference/ first name** + **place of origin reference**.

b- Nicknames with **fatherhood reference / first name** + **religious affiliation reference**.

Briefly, ***fatherhood status*** reference is a word used by the participant to express his fatherhood status through the use of the word **'Abu'** – أبو which is: 'father of' followed by the name of his elder son. ***First name*** refers to the user's name (official name). ***Place of origin*** refers to words used by participants to show where they come from (country, town, place of

origin). ***Religious affiliation*** refers to words used to show the users' belonging to a certain religious group or doctrine which is Salafism in this study.

It is highly important to mention that to use the participants' nicknames in this section as examples for analysis, I took permission from the users that their names are going to appear in the manuscript with all confidentiality and privacy. The majority refused. Thus, I used only the names of those who agreed to do so.

Table 5.2. Nicknames Categories

Nicknames categories	**Distribution**	**Percentages**	**Transcript**
Fatherhood reference/ first name + origin	18	64%	Arabic Transcript
Fatherhood reference / first name + religious affiliation	10	36%	
Total	28	100 %	

5.1.2.2.1. Nicknames with Fatherhood Reference / Real Name + Origin

This pattern represents 64 % of the choices and was highly preferred by the users. All the nicknames in this category are in Arabic transcript. There are two options of nicknames that fall in this category: "nicknames with fatherhood reference + origin" and "nicknames with first name + origin" which are explained in detail in the following:

a. Nicknames with (fatherhood reference + place of origin)

The constituents of this name are a fatherhood reference word that is followed by the place of origin. This is achieved through using the Fatherhood reference word **'Abu' أبو-** **(father of) + name of elder child** followed by a word that refers to the user's place of origin such as **country, town or state**. These nicknames were common among married participants. However, in some cases, single participants chose such kinds of names with imaginative son's

name. If we take for instance one of the study participants' nickname, **"ابو هادي الجزائري ''Abu Hadi el Djazairi'' (Abu Hadi the Algerian)**, we can observe in forming this name, the user selected words that reflect his fatherhood status "**Abu Hadi"** which can be translated as "the father of Hadi (his son's name)", and a second word that reflects his country of origin "El Djazairi" (the Algerian). Although the first part reflects a fatherhood status, single Salafi users also used this kind of nicknames. Figure 5.3. illustrates how this category of nicknames is formed by Salafi participants.

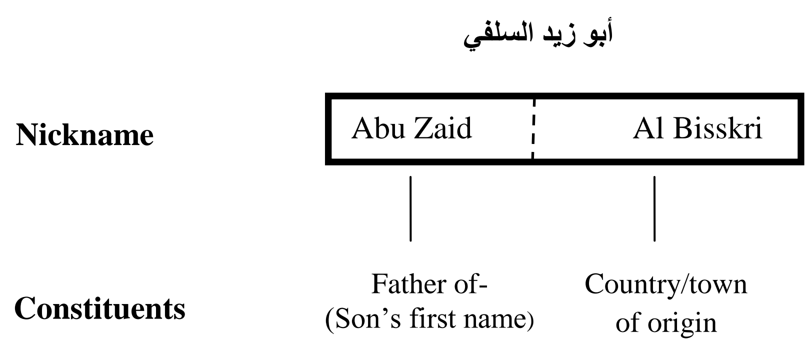


Figure 5.3. Nickname Formation: Category 1- Option A

b. Nicknames with 'first name + place of origin'

These nicknames are formed through the use of the user's first name followed by his country or town of origin. For instance, one of the participants' name in this category was: **فارس الوهراني - Faris el Wahrani (Faris the Oranian).** In this example, it can be observed that the first part of the name is the user's first name **"Faris",** followed by an adjective **Al Wahrani (the Oranian)** that refers to his town of origin which is "Oran". Examples of such nicknames vary according to the participants' places of origin such as **"Al Qasantini" ('the Constantinian' from Constantine), "Al Annabi" (the Anabian from Annaba)** and so on.

The use of the user's full name instead of the first name is also an option in this kind of nicknames. The mechanism of formation of these nicknames is represented in Figure 5.4.

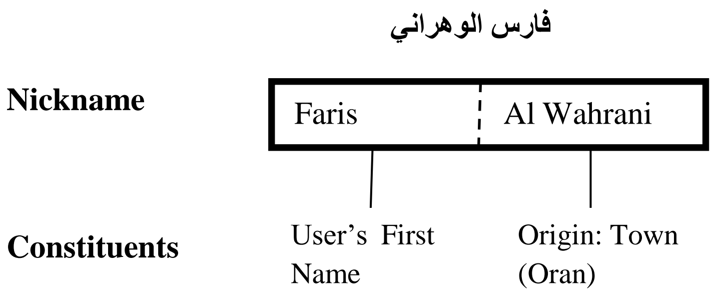


Figure 5.4. Nickname Formation: Category 1– Option B

5.1.2.2.2. Nicknames with Fatherhood Reference/ user's First Name + Salafi Affiliation

The second category of nicknames represents 36% of the cases. Here also there are two options: either using in the first part of the nickname 'fatherhood reference' or the 'first name of the user'. In forming these nicknames, the participants use words that reflect their fatherhood status or their first name as explained in the following example, followed by words that mark their religious affiliation to the doctrine of Salafism. The following example illustrates the case: "**Abu Ahmed El Salafi" -** **"أبو أحمد السلفي"** . The word that refers to Salafism affiliation in this example is **'السلفي'** **'al Salafi'** and it has other synonyms that all shows affiliation to Salafism and are used the same way among other participants such as **'الأثري'** **'Al Athari'** and **'السني '** **'Al Sunni'**. The mechanism of forming such kind of nicknames is represented in Figure 5.5.

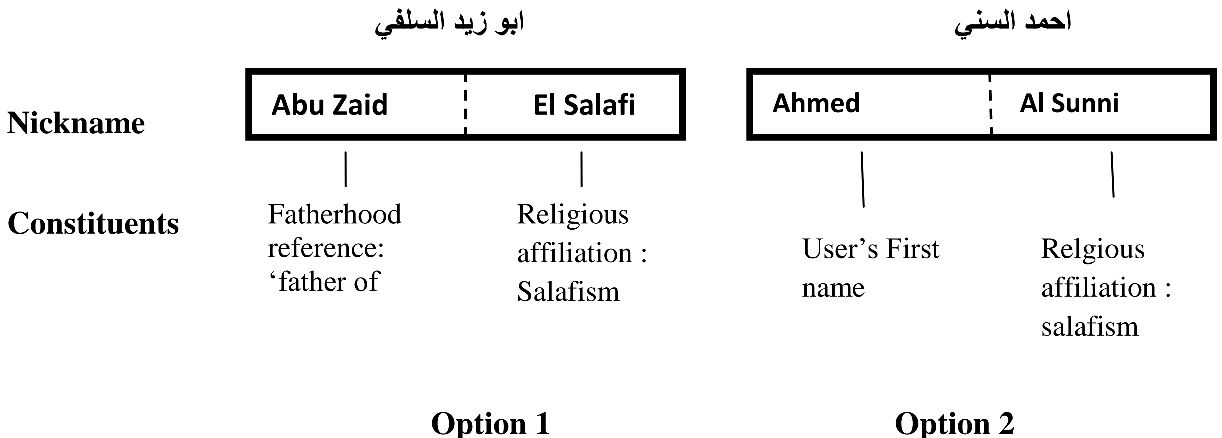


Figure 5.5. Nicknames Formation - Category 2

5.1.2.3. Interpretations

As has been stated before, approaching the research ethnographically is so helpful in reaching better understanding and interpretation of the present study which is achieved mostly through interviews with participants. Therefore, this section represents the interpretation of the data stated in the previous section on the basis of the interviews I conducted with the participants. As far as naming practices are concerned, interpreting the data is figuring out reasons behind the choices participants made for the nicknames, why such mechanisms of nicknames formation appeared and how does it relate to the notion of self-presentation and identity construction on Facebook. The results expressed above show two major categories of nicknames. Also, one important finding is that all nicknames were written in Arabic transcript and the roman one which is common among users of Facebook in Algeria never appeared in the names. In the following, the interpretation of the data is organised according to the questions or sections of interviews.

5.1.1.3.1. Using a Nickname: is it to hide the Real Self?

Using a nickname rather than the real name for the Facebook profile is mainly interpreted as hiding one's real identity while joining social networks (see chapter 3). However, the participants of this study stated that this was not the case. Interviews revealed that the majority of them answered the question related to this point with "no", i.e. the use of nicknames was not for the sake of being unknown on Facebook. As stated by one of the interviewees **'أبو سلافة التلمساني'- 'Abu Sulafa Al Tilamssani'** (I am using his full Facebook name in here as permitted by him):

<u>سعودي (الباحث):</u> هل استعمالك لاسم مستعار لحسابك بالفايسبوك هدفه اخفاء هويتك الحقيقية ؟

<u>ابوسلافة</u>: لا على الاطلاق. انما استعمالي للإسم المستعارله هدف أهم من ذلك. قمت باختيار اسم مستعار مشكل بطريقة معينة كما تلاحظ ليس لاخفاء هويتي الحقيقية بل لإبراز هويتي السلفية بشكل جلي. وهذا الامر لايمكن تحقيقه من خلال اسمي الحقيقي الذي هو اسم جزائري عادي لا يدل على اي هوية معينة باستثناء انني ذكر عربي.

> *<u>Saoudi (the researcher):</u> Do you use a nickname on Facebook to hide your real identity?*
>
> *<u>Abu Sulafa (participant):</u> No at all. This choice is much important than this. I chose to use a creative name for my Facebook profile not because I do not want to be unknown and hide my real identity, but I used this name to express my Salafi Identity. This cannot be achieved if I use my real name which is Algerian and says nothing more than I am male and Arabian.*

This kind of answers was recurrent among the interviewees who strengthened the same idea. Almost all of the interviewees expressed the importance of creating a nickname for their Facebook profiles because if they use their real names, they will not be able to express

themselves as Salafis. This is due to the fact that although "Algerian real names" may reveal some identity aspects such as gender and ethnicity, they are neutral when it comes to religious identity and affiliation.

Answering the same question, Another participant, referred to in here as **'ابوروئيا'– 'Abu Roaia'**, explained further how the choice of a nickname serve as a Salafi identity marker:

ابو رؤيا: في الحقيقة، الاسماء المستعارة من طرف الاخوة السلفيين لحسابهم في الفايسبوك ليست عشوائية أو فردية. انما هي عبارة عن 'كنى' (جمع كنية) والتي تعتبر من السنة. فلقد كان الرسول – صلى الله عليه وسلم - يحب الكنى.

Abu Roaia: Indeed, the names chosen by the Salafi brothers for their Facebook accounts are not random or individual preferences. These are nicknames; nicknaming is part of Sunnah. The prophet (peace and bless be upon him) liked nicknaming.

The notion referred to by this participant is essential as it refers to a quintessential aspect of the Salafi identity: total imitation of the prophet Mohammed's (peace and bless be upon him) behaviours and practices. Thus, using a nickname which is formed in a specific way (explained in the coming section) for the Facebook profile is a Salafi practice, and therefore, a marker of the Salafi identity. This cannot be practiced in the offline world as people's names are predetermined and socially restricted.

These findings prove that nicknames play an important role in self-representation on Social Networking Sites (SNSs); they are not just a subscription procedure demanded by Facebook and SNSs to create an account, but a crucial discursive practice in identity negotiation and presenting one's self. More broadly, it can be clearly stated accordingly that Facebook offers its users new possibilities for self-representation and identity construction, and enables people to communicate and interact in more freely than in offline life.

The other important part of the interviews touched on the notion of the mechanisms Salafis used to form nicknames for their Facebook profiles. This is going to be explained in the following section in detail.

5.1.1.3.2. Aligning within Salafism through Nicknames

As aforementioned, there are two categories of nicknames Salafis chose for their Facebook profiles: nicknames with *fatherhood naming/ real name + origin* and *fatherhood/real name+ Salafi affiliation*. These nicknames are used by Salafis to represent themselves on Facebook as Salafis. They play the same role in self-representation but function differently.

In both categories, the first part of the nickname is a noun (grammatically speaking). As stated before, it might be the user's *first name* such as 'أسامة' - 'Ossama'. It might also be a *fatherhood status* such as 'Abu Sami' which demanded more investigation with participants. When asked about the nature of the latter choice, the research participants referred to this practice of nicknaming as a tradition common among the prophet Mohammed (peace and bless be upon him), his companions and their followers. This practice still exists in the Middle East countries today. However, this type of nicknaming is not common among the Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia). The second part of the nickname is an adjective and has a more important function.

The nicknames that show the origins of the users are considered as indirect references to identity and the nicknames that show Salafi affiliation are direct ones. So, applying Zhao et al. (2008) model, it can be stated that the nicknames that display the origin of the user are *implicit discursive practices* and the ones that display the Salafi identity are *explicit discursive practices*.

The questions I relied on to investigate the mechanisms Salafi Facebookers used to form a nickname were organized according to the choices participants made. Each participant was asked a question related to the type of nickname he chose.

Interviewees who chose the first category of nicknames which is '*nicknames with fatherhood reference and place of origin'* revealed that the purpose behind using these names is not to show personal or national identity (being a father and coming from a certain country or town) as the name expresses. As a sample of such a choice, the participant **'ابو**** الجزائري'** – '**Abu ***** Al-djazairi'** (I am hiding part of his name in here because he chose so) answered:

سعودي (الباحث): اسمك في الفايسبوك عبارة عن اسم مستعار او كنية مشكل من 'أبو****' و 'الجزائري' ، فما هي طبيعة اختيارك لهذا الاسم وأسس تشكيله ؟

أبو*** الجزائري**: الجزء الأول هو تقليد اسلامي عربي أصيل حيث كان الرسول محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم والصحابة والتابعين من بعدهم يحبون تكنية بعضهم البعض بأبو فلان أو أبو فلانة – تبعا للولد البكر – أما الجزء الثاني فهو منتشر بين الأخوة السلفيين على الفايسبوك و هو كلمة تدل على البلد أو المدينة أو المنطقة التي ينحدر منها الشخص وهذه ممارسة مشهورة في تسمية علمائنا مثل 'البخاري' نسبة الى بلاد 'بخارى' و 'الألباني' من 'ألبانيا' و الأمثلة كثيرة.

Saoudi (the researcher): *your Facebook name is a pseudonym or nickname that is formed from 'Abu *****' and 'Al-djazairi', why is it formed this way?*

Abu* Al-djazairi:*** *the first part is a kind of nicknaming which is a genuine common Islamic and Arabic practice. The prophet Mohammed (peace and bless be upon him), his companions, and their followers liked to nickname each other saying for instance 'Abu Amine (eldest son)' or 'Abu Amina (eldest dautghter)'. The second part is a practice which is common among the Salafi brothers; it refers to the country, town or area the person comes*

from. It is famous in the names of our clerks and scholars such as 'Al-bukhari' (from Bukhara in Aghanistan) and Al-albani (from Albania). There are plenty of such examples.

These nicknames are an imitation of the names of famous scholars and Ulamah of Sunnah such as Al Bukhari (from Bukhara- a town in Uzbekistan), Al Albani (From Albania), etc. Therefore, the participants chose to form their Facebook names to be similar to the names of the doctrine's famous clerks and priests to represent themselves as Salafis. Accordingly, it can be stated that the use of nicknames on Facebook among Salafis in Algeria was used as a technique to express one's identity and religious affiliation through alignment and membership within a religious group. In fact, the use of nicknames among Salafis reflects the doctrine's pricniple of total imitation of the 'Salaf' (the prophet's companions and their followers).

The second group of participants chose nicknames that directly refer to the user's affiliation to Salafism (category 2 of nicknames). The interviews of this category pointed out to the importance of showing their Salafi identity in a direct clear way on the diversified and rich online space of Facebook. For instance, one among the interviewees in this group, 'أبو **** السلفي' – 'Abu ****Al-salafi' (I am hiding half of his Facebook name because he chose so) explained such a practice as follows:

<u>سعودي (الباحث):</u> ما سبب استعمالك لكلمة 'السلفي' في اسمك على الفايسبوك؟

<u>أبو **** السلفي:</u> بالنسبة لي فأنا أميل أكثر الى ان أبراز أنني سلفي بطريقة مباشرة و واضحة خاصة بالنسبة للاشخاض الذين اتواصل معهم من غير السلفيين.

<u>Saoudi (the researcher):</u> *why do you use the word 'Salafi' in your Facebook name?*

<u>Abu **** Al-salafi</u>*: for me, I prefer to use present myself as a Salafi in a direct and clear way especially for those Facebook friends and people I interact with on Facebook.*

The answers of the interviewees were typical. They reflect the utility of explicit nicknames in showing the Salafi identity of userss to people who are not Salafis on Facebook. This cannot be achieved through the nicknames that implicitly refer to Salafi Identity as non Salafis have no idea about the beliefs, principles and preferences of Salafis.

Based on all these findings, it is proved that Salafis through the use of these nicknames see themselves as Salafis more than anything else related to their identity (ethnicity, class, education, nationality, etc). Thus, it can be stated that Salafis use nicknames that promote religious group identity rather than personal identity. Although the nicknames they used may refer in some of their parts to personal aspects such as being a father, as it has been explained before, the real reason was to show a Salafi identity and not a personal one.

5.1.1.3.3. The Use of Arabic Transcript in Nicknames

The results aforementioned showed that all research participants whether using a nickname or a real name wrote their names in the Arabic transcript. This ideology is rooted in the Salafi belief. The use of foreign languages and, more specifically, the roman transcript is considered a taboo and entails a lost Islamic identity according to the doctrine. All interviewees stated that the use of Arabic transcript for their nicknames on Facebook is one of the doctrine's principles and the use of the Roman one is considered a violation of the group's rules and is against the real Salafi identity. The status update in Figure 5.6 illustrates the case.

Translation of Publication Content:

I would like to advise you my brothers in Allah – May Allah Protect you- change your Facebook names into the language of Quran and paradise [Arabic] * brother's advice*

Figure 5.6. A Participant's advice for his Friends to write their Facebook names in Arabic Transcript.

In this status, the user is advising people in his Facebook network (and all those who can access his content such as friends of friends) to change their Facebook names into Arabic, i.e. those who write their names in the Roman transcript must change it into the Arabic transcript. First, he is making this advice because, according to him, he observed that it is common among Algerian users to write their names in the Roman transcript. Accordingly, he refers in his advice indirectly to the fact that using the Roman transcript in names is inappropriate among Muslims; they must use the Arabic transcript because Arabic has a holy status and is the language of Quran and paradise.

Investigating this point with the research participants, one of the interviewee answered (referred to in here as *participant* because he chose to be anonymous):

<u>سعودي (الباحث):</u> لاحظت أن اسمك مكتوب باللغة العربية، وكذلك الحال بالنسبة لأسماء السلفيين الاخرين المشاركين في هذا البحث، فما هي خلفيات هذا الخيار؟

<u>المشترك:</u> الاسم جزء رئيسي من هوية الانسان، و كتابته بالحروف اللاتينية بالنسبة لي مناف للهوية الاسلامية العربية. لذلك يجب علينا كتابته بالحروف العربية كوننا عربا و فوق ذلك مسلمين.

<u>*Saoudi (the researcher):*</u> *I observed that your Facebook name and that of other research participants is written in Arabic, what can you say about the nature of this choice?*

<u>*The Participant:*</u> *the name is a basic pillar in one's identity. Writing it in the Roman transcript is contradictory to the Islamic and Arabic identity. That is why we must write our names on Facebook in Arabic as Arabs and more importantly, as Muslim .*

This participant relates the use of the transcript directly to identity. He points out that the use of Roman transcript in the Facebook name is not accepted since we are Muslims and Arabs. Put simply, Salafis consider this practice as inappropriate and because they are ultra-

conservative when it comes to identity issues, they use the Arabic transcript in their Facebook names.

Along the same vein, another participant answered this question as the following:

المشترك: هل رأيت شخصا من الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية يكتب اسم الفايسبوك الخاص به بالحروف العربية او حروف أخرى غير الحروف الرومانية؟ بالطبع لا. بالنسبة لي، كتابة الاسم بالحروف الرومانية يعبر عن هوية اسلامية ضعيفة ومهتزة.

The participant: *have you ever seen someone from USA using the Arabic transcript for his Facebook profile name? Of course no. I consider the use of roman transcript in names a direct sign of a weak Islamic identity.*

The participant is making a very important relation between the choice of the writing transcript and the user's identity. He argues that people from other nationalities like Americans do not use the Arabic transcript for instance in writing their names because Arabic is not part of their identities. In other words, he wanted to say that writing your names in a foreign transcript like the Romanized one is marker of a lost identity among Muslims. Thus, it is argued that the transcript is more than a linguistic or technical choice among the Algerian Salafis. It is strongly tied to their identity and functions as a salient marker of real Muslim identity according to them.

In fact, almost all of the answers supported the same idea. This proves that the choice of writing the Facebook name in the Arabic transcript among Salafis is not a personal preference of an individual but entailed by the principles and rules within Salafism which considers such behaviour very inappropriate. In addition to the mechanisms of nicknaming referred to before, this discursive practice has a deep social function and it plays an important role in self-representation and identity construction.

5.1.3. Salafism through the Profile Picture

One of the most useful features the modern SNSs such as Facebook offer to the users is the use of pictures in communication. People now can communicate and express themselves, in addition to texts, via pictures and videos. As stated in Chapter 3, in the creation of a profile, the user has to choose a profile picture that would appear tied to his account name on Facebook (Figure 5.7). This picture is very important since it is the first thing that appears for other users in his network (friends, and or friends of friends) with his name. Simply, together with the name, the profile picture is the face of the user and his identifier on Facebook. Because discourse is approached in this study as encompassing the different semiotic means

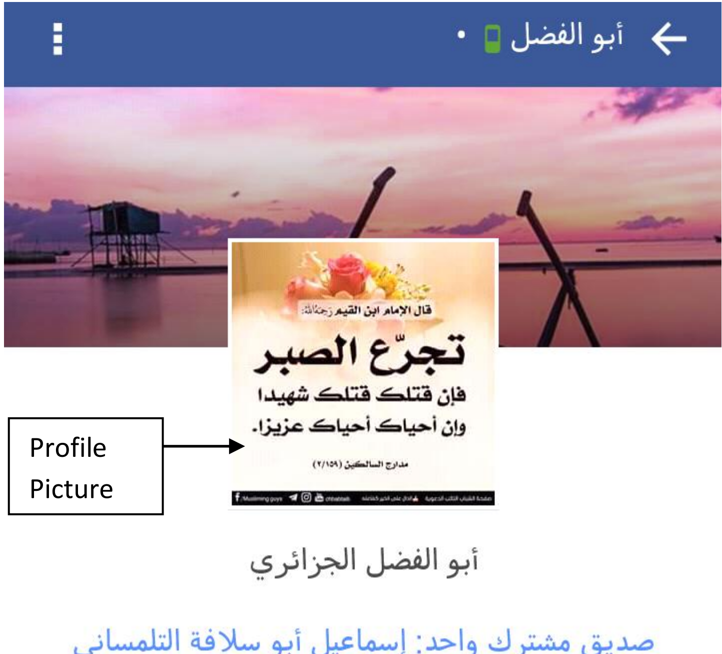


Figure 5.7. The Profile Picture in Facebook

users employ to create meaning, pictures are considered as a discursive practice which is quite relevant in identity construction and self presentation on Facebook.

The pictures the participants choose for their profiles were collected and categorised on the basis of their content. Then, they were coded via creating a name for each category.

Accordingly, two major categories emerged: *textual-content images* and *visual-content images*. The findings are included in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3. Profile Pictures Categories

Profile Picture Category	Sample	Type
Textual-content Pictures		***a- Verse/Hadith***
		b- Salafi Saying/Fatwa
		c- Defining/referring to Salafism
		d- User's nickname
Visual-content Pictures		***a- Displaying physical aspects***
		b- Displaying a Salafi document or material
		c- Displaying KSA's Flag

5.1.2.1. Textual-content Pictures

Profile pictures with textual content display texts with different genres and meanings. Accordingly, this category was divided into four types:

- Pictures with verses from Quran or a Prophet's Hadith (holy saying) (Figure. 5.8),
- Pictures with a Salafi principle or belief (wisdom or fatwa) (Figure. 5.9).
- Pictures with a phrase/sentence about Salafism (Figure. 5.10).
- Pictures including the user's Facebook nickname (Figure 5.11)

5.1.2.1.1. Pictures including Quranic Verses / Prophet's Hadiths

. This type of pictures includes a verse from the Quran or Prophet Mohammed's (peace and bless be upon him) hadith as illustrated in Figure 5.8. Results showed that the text in these pictures is often multimodal, i.e. not formed only of linguistic elements but also meta-linguistic features such as colours, shading, aesthetic design, writing style, background, etc; this is just for making the picture attractive and it has no effect on its symbolization. Thus, it is the content of the text in such pictures which is relevant in the process of identity negotiation.

Figure. 5.8. A Textual Profile Picture with a Quranic verse/Hadith

The profile picture (Figure 5.8.) includes a verse from the Quran that speaks about judgement day when we are all back to Allah. This type of pictures might include also a Hadith that refers to a religious issue which is of great concern to Salafis and expresses one of their beliefs or principles. For instance, in another participant's picture displayed a Hadith that expresses those who follows the exact commandments and principles of the Prophet Mohammed (peace and bless be upon him) as the successful and rightful ones.

5.1.2.1.2. Pictures with a Salafi Saying or Wisdom

This is the second type of pictures that falls within the category of textual pictures. This type is very common among participants and usually includes a saying, fatwa or wisdom of a companion (prophet's friend) or followers of companions, or a Salafi priest from the earlier or modern era. It should be mentioned here that the sayings are limited to these kinds of people because they represent Salafism and other priests and scholars. In fact, choosing a picture with a saying of a non-Salafi priest or scholar is prohibited. One more important feature of these pictures is authorship (citation) where the name of the author is included. In the example in Figure 5.9, we can observe that the saying belongs to one of the holy scholars of Salafism, Ibn Taymiya, and it expresses the importance of Tawhid (monotheism) which is the core of the Salafi belief. The picture is multimodal designed in an aesthetic way through colourful and stylistic writing.

Figure. 5.9. A Textual Picture with a Salafi saying or wisdom

This type of pictures is like the previous one; it displays one's belonging to Salafism implicitly. One cannot easily figure out that the user is a Salafi if does not rely on other

practices and identity clues on Facebook. However, it is less implicit because, as mentioned before, Salafism rarely choose a profile picture with a saying of someone who is not Salafi.

5.1.2.1.3. Pictures with a Text showing belonging to Salafism

This type of pictures includes a phrase or sentence that expresses the user's belonging to Salafism or defines what Salafism is in an explicit way (Figure 5.10.). As an example of such a choice, the picture in Figure 5.10. includes a text that defines Salafism. The text in the picture

Translation of the Picture content:
Salafism
Salafism is not a political party, an organization or association
Salafism
Salafism refers to following the Quran and Sunnah (prophet's practice of Islam) as understood by the Salaf (prophet's companions)

Figure 5.10. A Profile Picture with a text that displays Salafi Identity

starts with determining *what Salafism is not,* then moves to defining *what Salafism is*. This practice is referred two in Chapter 3 and expresses the idea that identity construction is not performed only through showing one's belonging to a group, but also through showing 'what one is not'. Accordingly, this kind of pictures functions the same way nicknames with Salafism reference, such as **أبو****السلفي** - **Abu** **** **Al-salafi** (Category 2 of nicknames): they explicitly displays the user's Salafi identity.

Another option that was common among this type of profile pictures is a picture including a text that says *'I do not befriend women and I do not accept their friendship requests'*. This type of texts reflects one crucial aspect in the Salafi identity: it is forbidden to befriend the other gender, i.e. women befriend women and men befriend men. This is also considered as an implicit discursive marker of the Salafi identity among the participants.

5.1.2.1.4. Pictures including the User's Nickname

In this type of profile pictures, the text included is the user's Facebook name. Through the use of some software programs and applications, the user can create a picture that includes his name. It can be designed in an artistic and aesthetic way according to his preferences (Figure 5.11). This kind of pictures reflects the high status of the nicknames Algerian Salafis choose for their Facebook profiles.

Figure 5.11. Profile Pictures including texts that display the user's Facebook name

5.1.2.2. The Visual-content Pictures

Unlike the textual-content profile pictures, the pictures in this category do not include a text but an image. Based on the content (object displayed) of the image, there are three types of profile pictures participant chose:

- Pictures with physical aspects of Salafis
- Pictures with objects and documents symbolizing Salafim
- Pictures with Saudi Arabia flag

As most of the pictures in this category display the Salafi identity implicitly, I relied on the interviews with the participants to interpret how these profile pictures function in identity construction among Algerian Salafis on Facebook and what social meaning is embedded in them.

5.1.2.2.1. Pictures Displaying Physical Aspects of Salafis

This type of profile pictures displays a physical aspect of the participant. They might be 'real personal pictures' taken by the Salafi or artificial images (computer made) as illustrated in the samples 1, 2, 3 in Figure 5.12.

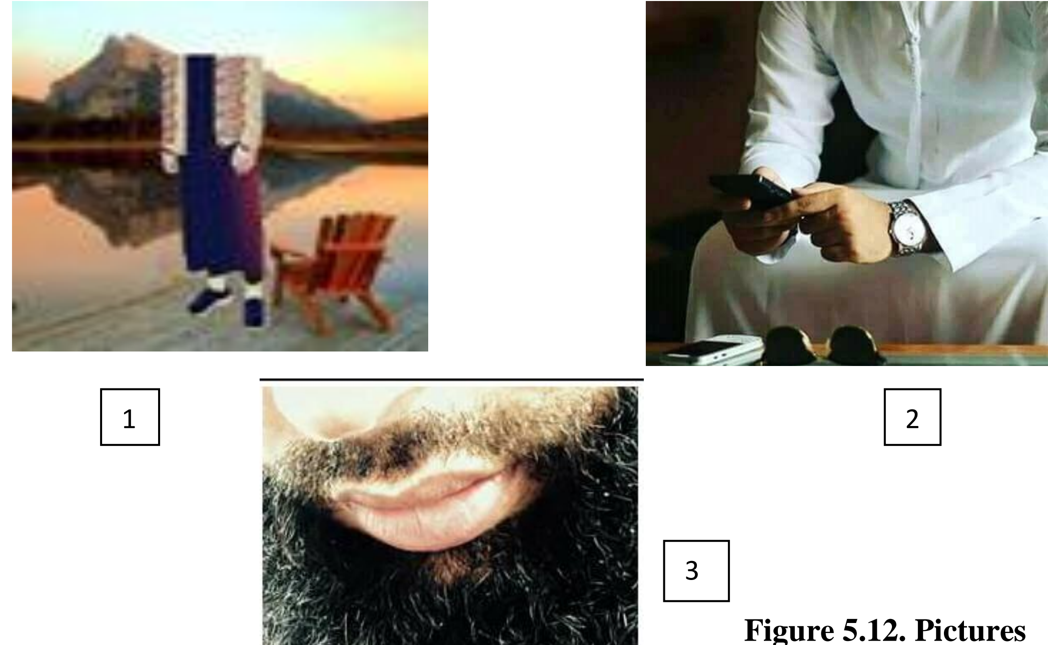


Figure 5.12. Pictures Displaying Physical Aspects of Salafis

These pictures symbolize the common physical aspects of Salafism:

- ***Picture 1*** is computer-designed and includes an artificial image that displays the Salafi clothing. Analysed in detail, the picture shows that the trouser is short and this is one of the salient physical aspects of Salafis.

- ***Picture 2*** is real and taken by the user; it shows the robe more clearly as another salient aspect of Salafism.

- ***Picture 3*** is real also and shows the user's beard.

The Physical aspects displayed in these pictures refer to the way Salafis dress and look. This includes their famous clothes such as the robe, hat, short trousers and the Salafi beard. They dress and look so because they imitate the prophet's Mohammed (peace and bless be upon him) way of dressing and looking. Thus, the way Salafis dress and look is part of their identity. They are usually distinguished by their clothes and beards in the real world. To display this aspect of the Salafi identity on Facebook (where the physical aspect is absent), the research participants dropped upon the profile pictures.

In addition to the physical aspect displayed, a common feature among this type of profile pictures, either real or artificial, is that the head is never shown. More precisely, it is the eyes which are hidden and never shown. The question raised in here was: why the eyes are hidden in these pictures? This was investigated in the interviews with the research participants. In the following interview excerpt, the participant **'ابو سلافة'** - '**Abu Sulafa**' interpreted this phenomenon saying :

سعودي (الباحث): دائما الصور التي يختارها السلفيين (الذين كانوا جزأ من الدراسة) كصورة لحساب الفايسبوك، يكون فيها الرأس مخفي أو العينين مخفيين اذا كانت صورة لشخص. ما السبب وراء ذلك؟

أبوسلافة: هذا النوع من الصور يسمى صور ذوات الأرواح، وتصوير ذوات الأرواح ونشر صورهم محرم تحريما شديدا. ولذلك فإننا نتحفظ كثيرا على استعمالها في الفايسبوك، وان كان ولابد من استعمالها

فيجب طمس العينين أواخفاء الرأس بالكلية وبذلك تصبح صورة لغير ذات الأرواح. لأن ما يجعل الصورة لذات الأرواح هو وجود الرأس أو العينين. وهذا يمثل أحد معتقداتنا.

Saoudi (the researcher): *usually, the profile pictures Salafis (in this research) choose do not include the head or have the eyes blurred (covered). Why is that?*

Abu Sulafa: *this can of pictures is called 'pictures of living creatures'. Taking pictures of living creatures and publishing their pictures is highly forbidden for us. We are ultra-conservative about this and if one is obliged to use such a picture, he must blur the face or eyes, or cut the head form it. Thus, it is changed into a non-living creature picture (what makes it a living-creature's picture is the head and the eyes). This represents one of our Salafi beliefs.*

Abu Sulafa's explanation of this practice is typical and the answers of other interviewees were similar. They all revealed that the users choose pictures with hidden face and eyes or headless ones because they adhere to a Salafi fatwa (religious rule) which forbids the use of human beings and animals' pictures (living creatures). Therefore, this practice is an implicit marker of the Salafi identity.

Based on these findings, it can be stated that the profile pictures that display the physical aspects of Algerian Salafis on Facebook are as important as those with textual content in identity construction and self-presentation. Because of the disembodiment of Facebook, Algerian Salafis relied on this type of pictures as an alternative practice for displaying their clothes and looks in the real world. Moreover, because the beliefs and the doctrine's principles, Algerian Salafis are cautious about the structure of the picture: pictures of living creatures must be headless or eye-blurred.

5.1.2.2.2. Pictures Displaying Documents or Materials of Salafism

Profile pictures of this type include a religious document of the Salafism doctrine such as books, magazines, pamphlets, etc. These pictures display the cover page of the document as illustrated in Figure 5.13. For instance, in this figure, the user's profile picture displays the cover page of a book. The book's author is 'Al-sheikh Rabi' Ibn Hadi Al-madkhali' who is one of the modern Salafi clerks and considered as the leading scholar of Salafism nowadays.

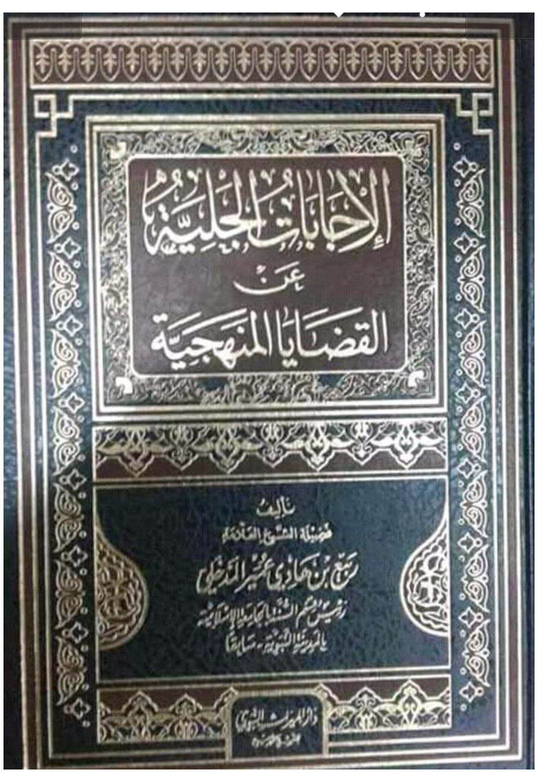


Figure 5.13. Profile Picture with a Salafi Document

.The question raised in here is 'why choosing the cover page of such documents as a profile picture'. Therefore, I investigated this issue with the participant **'الجزائري *****' - '****** Al-djazairi'** whose profile picture is presented in Figure 5.13:

سعودي (الباحث): صورة بروفايلك عبارة عن صورة لكتاب للشيخ ربيع المدخلي، ممكن من فضلك توضح لنا سبب هذا الاختيار؟

***** الجزائري: الكتب التي نقرأها نحن السلفيين تحدد الأفكار التي نتبعها و لذلك فهي أحد مميزات السلفي من غير السلفي. فكما يقول الشيخ العلامة ابن باديس: "إننا نعرف عقلية الرجل من معرفتنا بالكتب التي يطالعها، فمن لا نرى له عناية بكتب السنة فإننا لا نثق بعلمه في الدين".

Saoudi (the researcher): your profile picture displays the cover page of Al-sheikh Rabie Al-madkhali's book. Would you please clarify this choice?

***** Al-djazairi: the books we read as Salafis determine the ideas, beliefs and principles we follow. Therefore, they are a differentiating factor between the Salafi and non-Salafi. As the great clerk Ibn Badiss (an Algerian religious scholar), "We recognize man's affiliation from the books he reads and consults, and he who does not rely on the books of Sunnah (referring to Salafism) is unreliable.*

The participant relates the choice of the book's cover page as a profile picture to a Salafi principle which states that the books the man read define who he is he. In other words, the Salafi person is supposed to read and rely only on the books which are written by Salafi clerks, theologians and scholars. Otherwise, he would not be a real Salafi. As noticed in the participant's answer, he strengthens his explanation with a quote from Ibn Badiss that emphasizes the same idea. Accordingly, this practice reflects the great role books play in defining one's affiliation to Salafism as it represents sensitivity and conservativeness of Salafis in differentiating themselves from others. Therefore, it can be concluded that the choice of profile pictures of this kind an implicit semiotic and discursive practice in identity performance and self-presentation among Algerian Salafis on Facebook.

5.1.2.2.3. Pictures Displaying Saudi Arabia’s Flag

Some research participants’ profile pictures were the flag of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) as illustrated in Figure 5.14 (personal data is blurred in black due to confidentiality issues). In such profile pictures, the flag might be ordinary or redesigned with slight modification. For instance, in the figure below, the flag is in the form of a wing. However, it is not the design of the flag which is matters. It is the choice of the flag itself which is relevant and has implications in the present study.

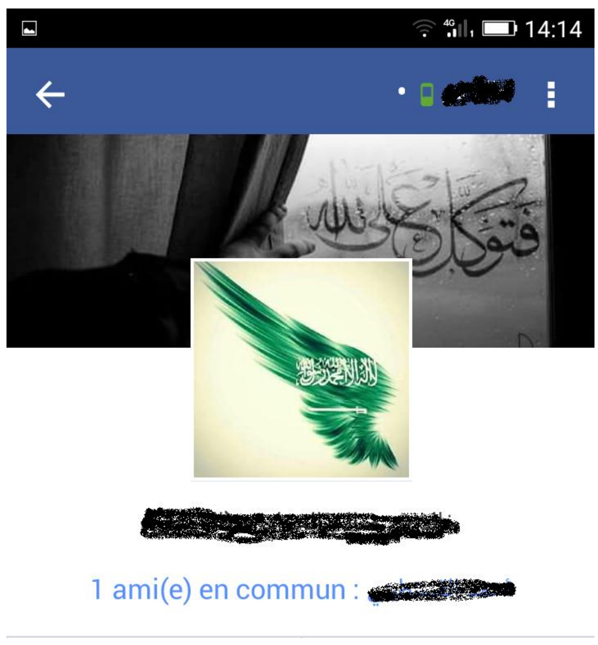


Figure 5. 14. A Profile Picture with Saudi Arabia’s Flag

Given the fact that the research participants are Algerians, the choice of another country’s flag, and specifically Saud Arabia, was unexpected and exceptional. Generally, people choose the flag of their country and not another country’s. Therefore, I went back to the interviewees for investigating this choice and how it is related to the Salafi identity. One typical answer was that of the participant **'عماد'- ‘Imad’**:

سعودي (الباحث): هل ممكن من فضلك توضح لنا طبيعة اختيارك لعلم السعودية كصورة بروفايلك في الفايسبوك في حين انك جزائري؟

عماد: هذا ليس اختيارا سياسيا أو قوميا. و إنما اختيارا مبنيا على كون السعودية بلاد الحرمين الشريفين وموطن الرسول عليه الصلاة والسلام. السعودية اليوم بالنسبة لنا بلاد الاسلام الحقيقي، فهي بلاد التوحيد والسنة والعلماء السلفيين الثقات. كما أنها تنشر المنهج الحق في العالم.

Saoudi (the researcher): you are Algerian, but you use the flag of Saudi Arabia as your Facebook profile picture. Would you please explain this choice?

Imad: this is not a political or nationalistic choice. We use such a profile picture because Saudi Arabia is the country of the Two Holy Mosques (Noble Sanctuaries) and the land of the prophet Mohammed (peace and bless be upon him). Today, it represents the real Islam; it is the country of Tawhid (pure monotheism in Islam) and Salafi trustful scholars and clerks as it spreads the real Islam (Salafism according to the participant) all over the world.

Based on Imad and other interviewees' explanations, the choice of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's flag as a profile picture has nothing to do with one's national affiliation. Therefore, using the flag of Saudi Arabia as a profile picture does not mean showing one's belonging to this country. However, it is a religious choice which reflects the holy status Saudi Arabia has among Algerian Salafis. It is sacred because it represents Salafism according to Salafis. Thus, Algerian Salafis show allegiance to Saudi Arabia through their Facebook profile picture. Discursively, this practice is interpreted as one of the implicit identity markers of Salafism on Facebook. This allegiance is also performed through the dynamic discursive practices among Algerian Salafis and is presented later on.

5.1.2.3. Deductions

The profile pictures chosen by the Algerian Salafis in this study for their Facebook profiles are divided into two categories: textual-content and visual-content pictures. Profile pictures in the first category might be: pictures with a Quranic verse or prophet's Hadith, pictures with a Salafi saying or Fatwa, pictures with a text defining or referring to Salafism, pictures with the user's nickname. Profile pictures in the second category are not textual but visual. These might be pictures that display the physical aspects of the Salafi individual, pictures that display religious and educational documents of the Salafism doctrine, pictures with KSA's flag. While Zhao et al. (2008) sociological model placed the 'picture' as an "implicit" visual practice, this study revealed that the profile pictures might be employed as a means for presenting along with the nicknames Algerian Salafis choose on Facebook both *explicitly* and *implicitly*.

Although such a practice is static and does not generate a significant interaction in the Facebook network, the choice of the profile picture is an essential marker of the Algerian Salafis' Salafi identity. Algerian Salafis studies in this research do not select randomly the profile picture. They choose it systematically with the intention of displaying the Salafi self. Thus, the profile picture reflects how the Algerian Salafis see themselves. In other words, this practice proves that they consider themselves *Salafis* more than any other aspect of their identity. It is this very aspect which Algerian Salafis prioritize and want to show to others.

5.2. Displaying Salafism through the Dynamic Discursive Practices

As stated before, dynamic practices on Facebook refer to content published by users on their Facebook walls through status updates (wall posts) and comments. These appear in the newsfeed of each member in the user's network. Therefore, they generate reaction and are a subject of interaction among friends. As argued in Zhao et al. (2008), Farquhar (2009) and Georgalou (2015), wall posts are implicit practices of identity construction and self presentation where one is 'showing rather than telling' who he is (see Chapter 3 for further details).

In the present study, the focus was on status updates as the source of discursive practices. After analysing the content of the research participants' status updates, it was found that the Salafi identity was constructed and presented through four types of discursive practices (Figure 5.15) and with varying percentages of publications (Figure 5.16):

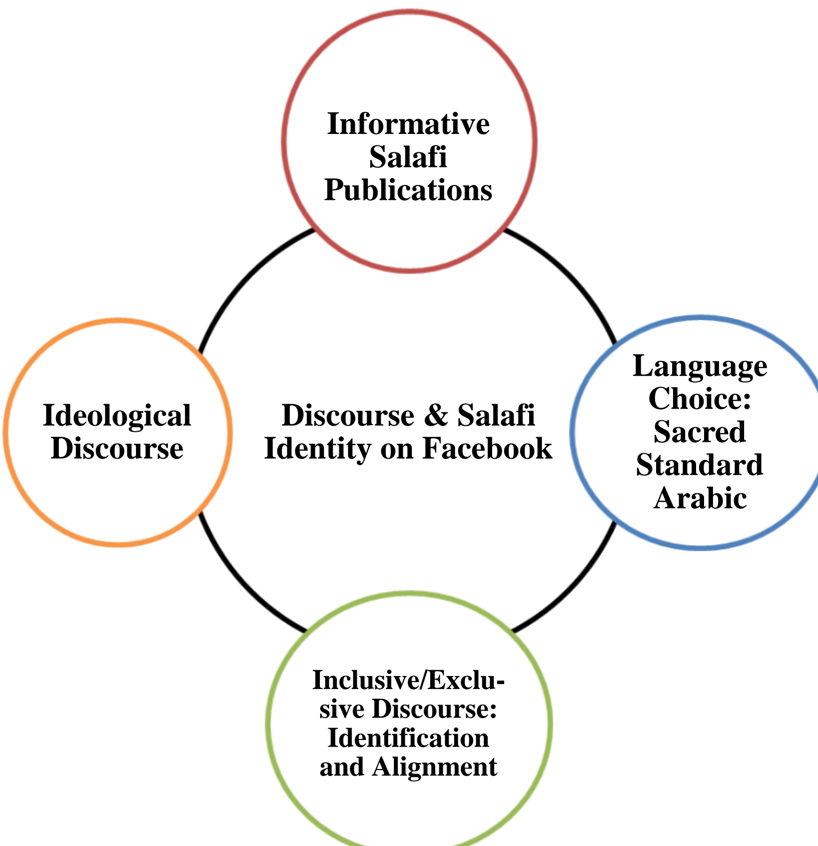


Figure 5.15. Types of Discursive practices employed in Identity construction and self presentation.

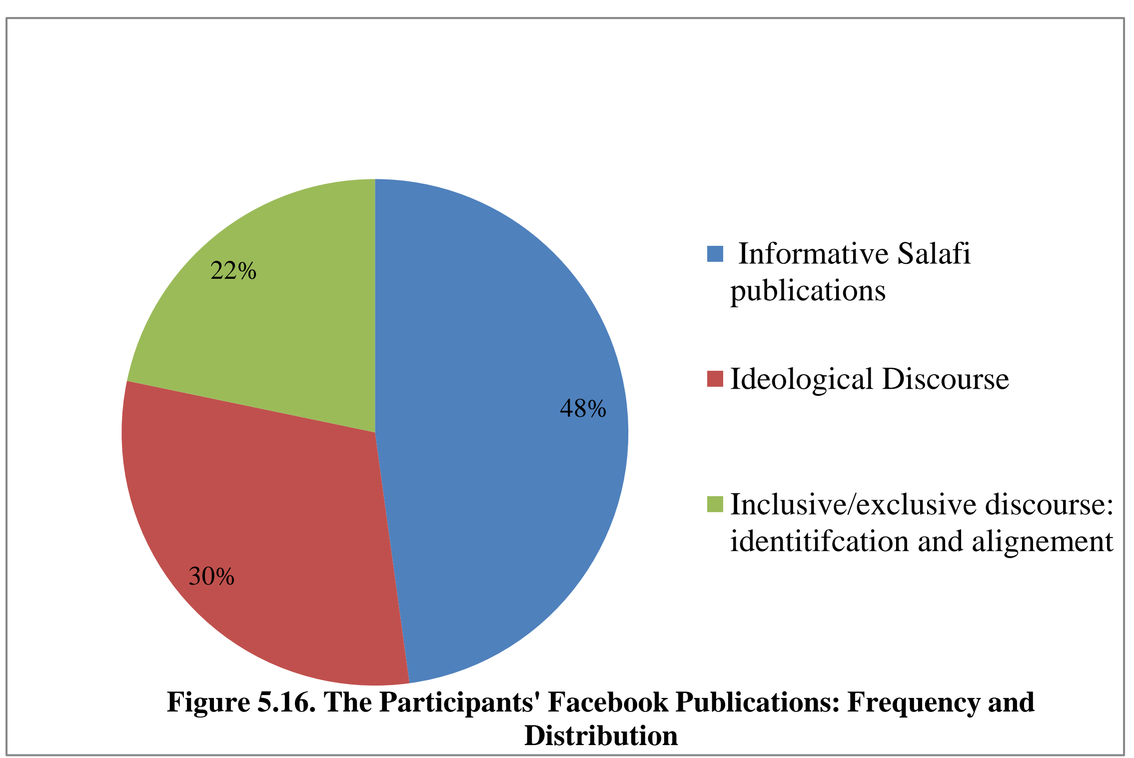


Figure 5.16. The Participants' Facebook Publications: Frequency and Distribution

As illustrated in Figure 5.16, the informative religious publications were more frequent (48 %), followed by ideological discourse publications (30 %). Publications of identification and alignment with the Salafism group (22 %).

In addition to the type of the discursive practice, findings revealed that the choice of language is involved in identity construction and self-presentation among the research participants and was strongly tied to their Salafi identity. These findings are analysed in detail in the following sections. Then, how each discursive practice is related to the construction of the Salafi identity is interpreted on the basis of explanations provided by the research participants in the interviews.

5.2.1. The Informative Salafi Publications

This type of discourse refers to status updates with religious content. Through these updates, the research participants publish religious Islamic information on Facebook such as a verse form the Quran, prophet's (peace and bless be upon him) hadith, saying and mainly fatwa and rules.

5.2.1.1. The Dominance of Informative Salafi Publications

Results showed that such a type of discourse was dominant among the research participants. It represented 48 % of total publications. This significant dominance required more investigation with the participants to figure out reasons behind this practice. Having raised this issue with the participant **'أبوسلافة التلمساني' - 'Abu Sulafa Al-tilamssani',** he explained this practice as :

<u>سعودي (الباحث):</u> بعد جمع البيانات المتعلقة بمنشوراتك تبين أن نسبة كبيرة منها هي معلومات اسلامية: الفتاوى والأحكام والفوائد العلمية. ما هي دلالات هذه الممارسة؟

<u>أبو سلافة:</u> هذا الأمر جد مهم. فأنا استخدم الفايسبوك أساسا للدعوة الى الله من خلال نشر الفوائد الاسلامية و الفتاوى والأحكام. فحسابي في الفايسبوك صفحة لنشر هذه المعلومات أكثر منه حساب للتواصل مع الأصدقاء و اللهو. فالدعوة الى الله أحد الأصول في منهجنا السلفي وهو أهم الأسباب التي تدفعني لاستخدام هذا الموقع.

<u>Saoudi (the researcher):</u> The data I collected show that a big percentage of the participants' publications are religious information such as rules, fatwa and avails. What is the significance of such a practice?

<u>Abu Sulafa:</u> This is very important. I use Facebook for Da'wa to Allah through publishing Islamic avails, Fatwa, rules and all this kind of information. My Facebook is a page for spreading this Islamic information more than being an account through which I contact and interact with my friends or entertain. Da'wa is a basic principle in Salafism and is the most important reason behind my use of Facebook.

The participant Abu Sulafa related the dominance of informative religious publications in his activity on Facebook to the purpose behind his use of the network. He said that he uses

Facebook primarily for Da'wa which is a kind of missionary activity of familiarizing people with the Islamic rules, principles, beliefs and fatwa. This is achieved through publishing this information directly on his Facebook. Thus, these publications are consulted and accessed by all members in his network on Facebook and even for others who are not in the network in some cases. Abu Sulafa expresses the nature of his activity on Facebook saying that he is not there for entertainment, playing or socializing; he uses Facebook for a holy reason. Another important notion the participant refers to is that Da'wa to Allah and Islam is one of the basic principles of Salafism. In fact, all the interviewees explained similarly this practice and Abu Sulafa's answer was typical.

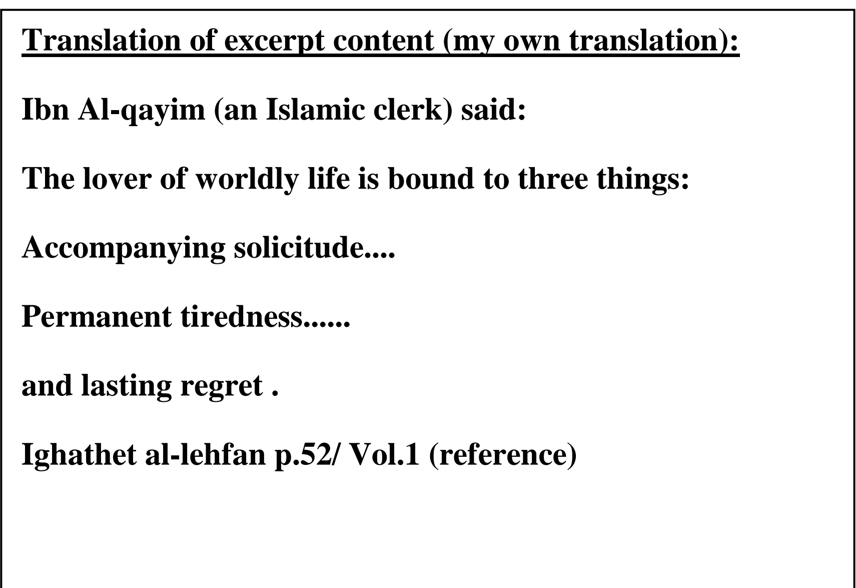
Thus, the dominance of informative religious publications among the research participants on Facebook is related to one basic Salafi principle which is Da'wa to Allah. Based on these findings and their interpretation, it can be stated that the informative religious publications are a discursive practice through the Salafi identity is being *shown rather than told*. Salafism is implicitly imbedded in this practice. Moreover, while previous studies have argued that Facebook is mainly used for socializing, meeting friends, expressing feelings and sharing experiences (Zhao et al. 2008, Georgalou, 2015, Farquhar, 2009, Shafie et al. 2012), the findings of this study revealed that among the Algerian Salafis studied the case was different: they do not use Facebook for socialization and fun, but for a holy purpose which is Da'wa to Allah (calling people to Islam and spreading its true teachings and principles).

5.2.1.2.The Content and Form of the Publication

In terms of discourse structure, informative religious publications are of two sorts: ***Textual and Multimodal***. In addition to the structure of this discursive practice, the content is very significant as highlighted in the forthcoming. Thus, both the structure and content of research participants' status updates are analysed and highlighted.

5.2.1.2.1. Textual Discourse

In this type of discourse, meaning is constructed only through linguistic means. Results showed that the research participants rely generally on one technique in the creation of such discourse: *quoting*. In other words, in publishing textual updates with religious content, they rely on direct quoting as illustrated in Figure 5.17.



Translation of excerpt content (my own translation):

Ibn Al-qayim (an Islamic clerk) said:

The lover of worldly life is bound to three things:

Accompanying solicitude....

Permanent tiredness......

and lasting regret .

Ighathet al-lehfan p.52/ Vol.1 (reference)

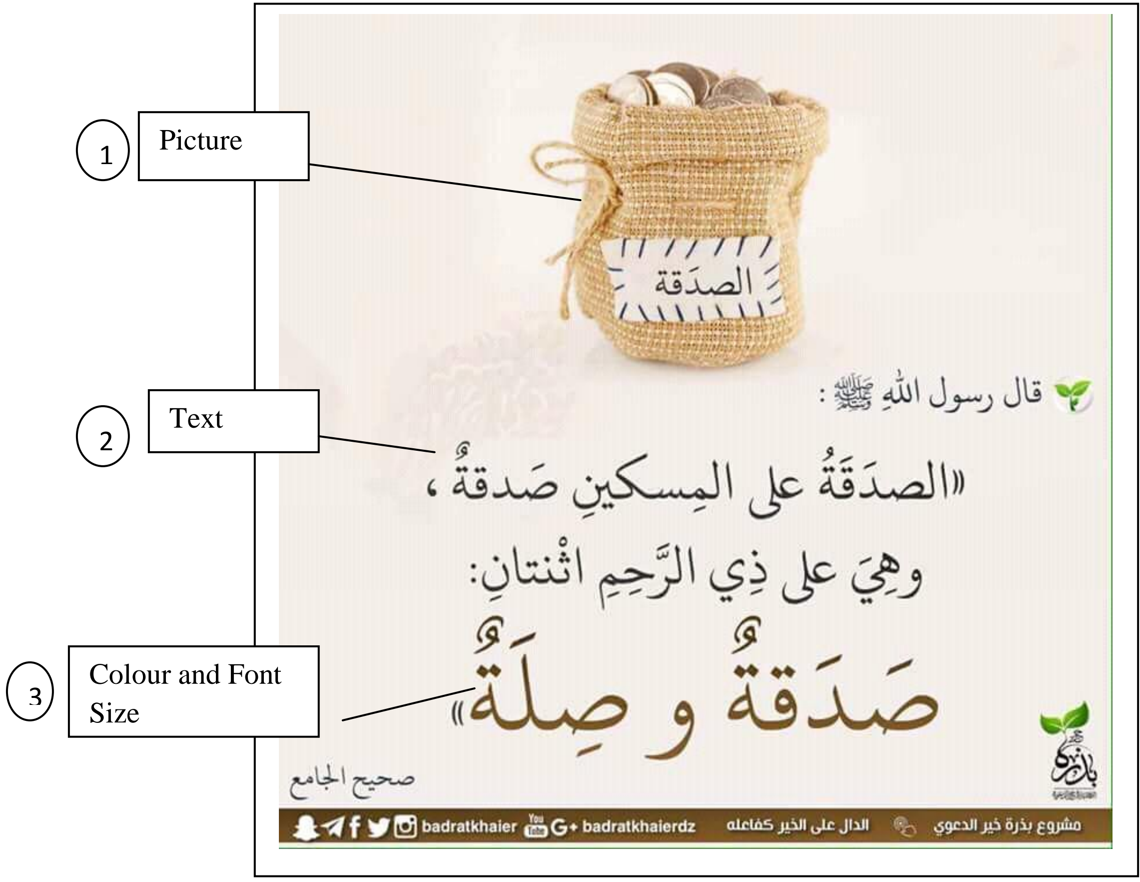
Figure 5.17. The Textual Discourse in the Informative Salafi Publications

The publication in the excerpt (Figure 5.17) is a quote formed only through textual means. It is produced in black in a written form. No other semiotic means of meaning creation such as colouring, shading, images or videos are used. This textual informative religious publication are created either through writing the text in the status update box on one's Facebook wall or via sharing it from a page or another's wall directly. Another type of such a discourse is the multimodal discourse upon which light is shed in the following section.

5.2.1.2.2. The Multimodal Discourse

Multimodal discourse refers to the discourse where meaning is constructed via a variety of semiotic means such as text, image, audio, video, colours, style, etc (see Chapter 2 for more details). Facebook affords the users the options to publish ready-made multimodal discourse in the form of *pictures* or create their own multimodal discourse (through enabling users to create meaning through the use of different semiotic means in one status or publication). These two practices are illustrated in Figure 5.18 and Figure 5.19.

The informative publication in Figure 5.18 is called *Da'wa Card*. These publications are called *Da'wa Cards* as they are used in publishing religious information and knowledge about Islam in the form of cards which are ready-made multimodal discourses in picture format. They are created by specialized Facebook pages through computer software that enables multimodal designing and editing of content, i.e. creating meaning via blending texts, images, colours, and writing styles in one discourse. Da'wa cards are designed in an artistic way giving them an aesthetic form. They are directly published by the user the same way pictures are published or shared on Facebook. The content cannot be edited by the user but a tag can be added to it as allowed by Facebook.



Translation of Content:

The prophet (peace and bless be upon him) said:

“A Donation to the poor is nothing but a donation, but to the siblings is two things: a donation and a family link” - Sahih Al-jame’a [reference]

Figure 5.18. Multimodal Informative Publications: Da’wa Cards.

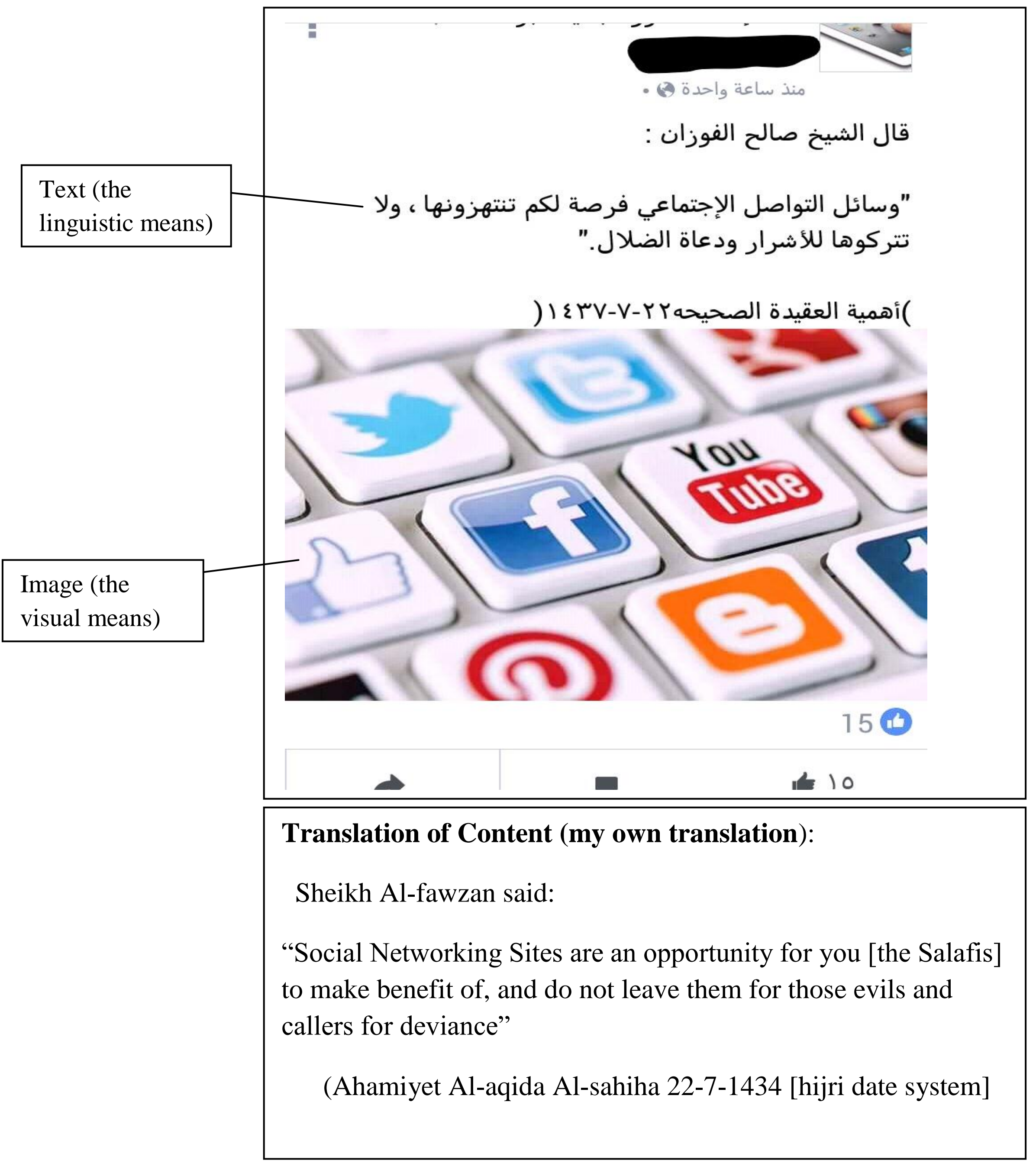
As a sample, the card in Figure 5.18 displays a prophet Mohammed’s (peace and bless be upon him) hadith about the benefits of donation to one’s siblings. This discourse is multimodal because we can observe three components of semiotic means through which meaning is generated:

1- The picture: a bag of money coins on which written 'صدقة' that means ‘donation’. This picture symbolizes the money donated.
2- The text: this represents the core part of discourse as it includes the hadith and meaning is basically constructed through this text.
3- Colour and font size: as observed in the card, the phrase **'صدقة وصلة'** which means **‘a donation and a family link’** is in *brown* which is a different colour to that of the whole text that is written in *black.* Moreover, the font size is bigger to that of the whole text.

In this multimodal discourse, there is a linguistic and meta-linguistic meaning. The linguistic meaning is semantically imbedded in the words of the hadith’s text that speaks about the avails of donation to family. Then, the meta-linguistic meaning is putting emphasis on a specific phrase through a different colour and font size to show its importance. This meta-linguistic creation of a specific meaning within discourse is an alternative to *stress* used in speaking to put emphasis on a specific word or phrase to show its importance.

The second type of multimodal informative discourse among the research participants is created by the user himself through publishing a picture with a text tagged above it. This option is available on Facebook in the status updating box on top of one’s page. This discourse is illustrated in Figure 5.19. As presented in Figure 5.19, discourse in the participant’s publication is multimodal: constructed through textual and visual (picture/image) means. The publication is a saying of a modern Salafi clerk an scholar, Sheikh Al-fawzan, that speaks about the necessity for Salafis to embark into SNSs and do not leave for bad people who call others for deviance. Discourse consists of the *saying text* together with *a picture* that symbolizes Social Networking Sites through logos. The text and picture consist the same discourse but are separated from each other; the text is above and the picture is down. This is the structural difference between this type of multimodal informative

publications and Da’wa Cards. However, they are both informative publications with religious content.



Translation of Content (my own translation):

Sheikh Al-fawzan said:

“Social Networking Sites are an opportunity for you [the Salafis] to make benefit of, and do not leave them for those evils and callers for deviance”

(Ahamiyet Al-aqida Al-sahiha 22-7-1434 [hijri date system]

Figure 5.19.The User-generated Multimodal Informative Discourse

5.2.1.3. Quoting in the Publications and its Implications

One common discursive practice in all the informative religious publications is adhering to the academic regulations of quoting others' materials. As identified in Figure 5.20, the participant is acknowledging the clerk in publishing his saying. The publication consists of: the author's name, quoted content, and citation. These are the three formal components of a quote.

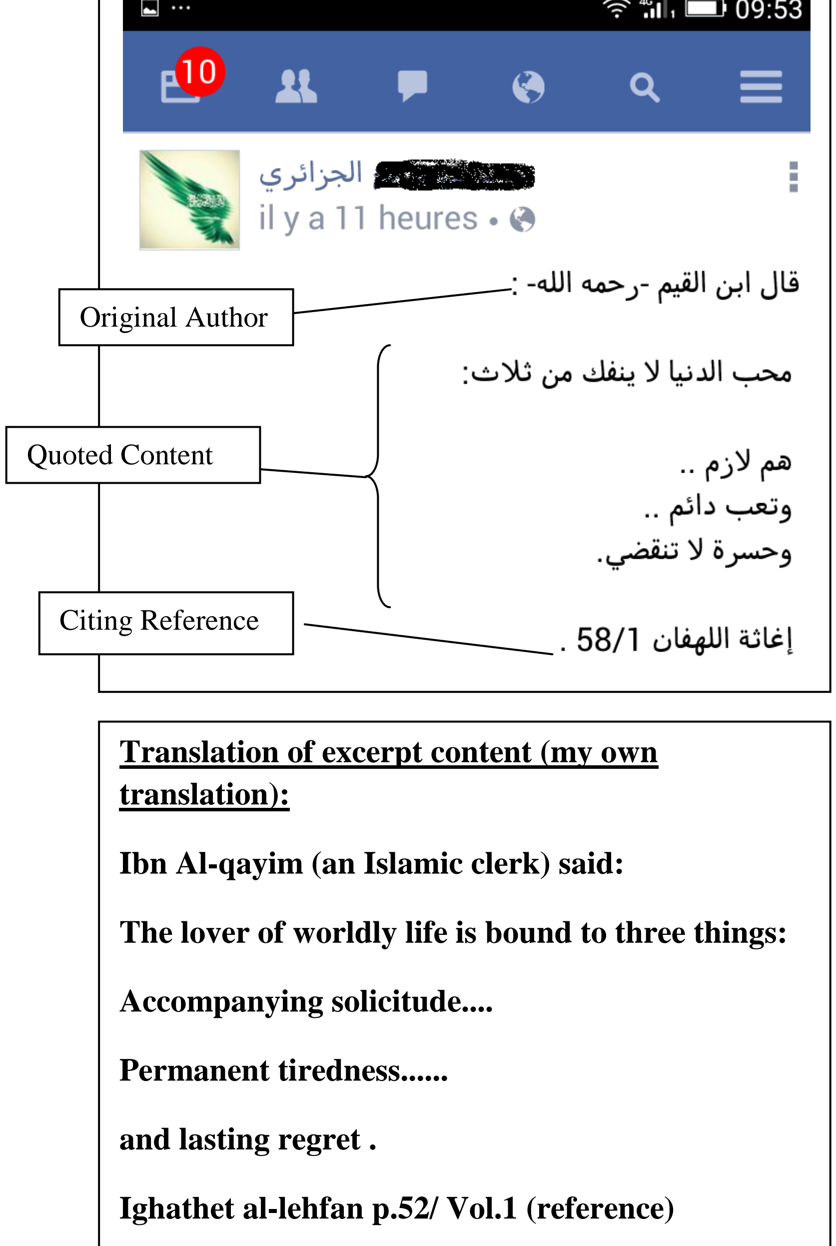


Figure 5.20. Quoting and Citation in Informative Salafi Publications

The participant in this publication is following the same regulations of quoting others in the academic field. This discursive practice was common among all the other participants: they acknowledge the original author whenever they quote. While citing the verse or hadith is ordinary, accurate citing of clerks' sayings or writings raised the question: "Why would they quote following the academic regulations in a public informal space?" For answering the question, I referred to the research participants in the interviews. The participant **'**** الجزائري'** – **'**** Al-djazairi'** (the stars hide the first part of the participant's name due to confidentiality) said:

سعودي (الباحث): لاحظت من خلال البيانات التي جمعتها أنكم دائما ما تتبعون القواعد الأكاديمية للإقتباس عند نشركلام العلماء والفقهاء، يعني تذكرون المصدربدقة كما في المنشورات العلمية والأكاديمية. ما السبب في ذلك؟

***** الجزائري: يعود اتباع القواعد الأكاديمية عند الإقتباس الى سببين. الأول هو الأمانة العلمية والمصداقية، فهذا النوع من المنشورات يخص دين الله عزوجل ولا يجوز أن ينشر الإنسان شيئا بدون ذكر المصدر الرئيسي خاصة في حسابه للفايسبوك لان هذا سيؤثر على مصداقية المعلومة. السبب الثاني وهو الأهم، أن مصدر المعلومة مهم جدا خاصة الفتاوى والمعتقدات. فالمصدر يجب أن يكون عالما سلفيا من أهل السنة من الثقات ممن يؤخذ عنهم الدين. فنحن لا ننشر الا لعلمائنا السلفيين الذين لديهم المنهج الصحيح، منهج السلف.

Saoudi (the researcher): I observed in the data I collected that you always adhere to the academic regulation in quoting (acknowledging the source accurately) when you publish religious content of Islamic clerks and scholars. What is the reason behind that?

***** Al-djazairi: in fact, there two reasons for this practice. The first one is honesty and reliability; these publications are related to the holy and almighty Allah's religion and it is*

forbidden to publish something without acknowledging the original resource especially on Facebook as this would deteriorate the reliability of the information. The second reason is the most important one; the source of the information, especially fatwa and beliefs, is crucial. It must be a Salafi clerk or scholar among Ahl al-sunnah (the people of sunnah) who are trustful and from whom we take our religion. We publish indeed only for our Salafi clerks and scholars who have got the rightful Islam, Islam of Salaf.

The participant **** Al-djazairi gave two reasons for adhering to the academic regulations of quoting others' materials while publishing on Facebook which is an informal non-academic space. The first one is honesty as they consider publishing someone's words without acknowledging him *forbidden* and act of lie even if it is on Facebook. The second and most important one according to him, and all other interviewees, is related to the nature of the reference. The participants stated that they do not publish informative religious publications of scholars and clerks *who are not Salafis*. Salafis consider other Islamic groups' beliefs and principles as wrong. Therefore, they publish only for the trustful Salafi scholars and clerks whose sayings, thoughts and fatwa represent the correct Islam as presented by the prophet Mohammed (peace and bless be upon him). Accordingly, the informative religious publications do not include any *Islamic information* but only *Salafi information* (beliefs, principles, sayings and fatwa).

Thus, this discursive practice marks one salient aspect of the Salafi Identity that is high religiosity and ultra-conservativeness. Moreover, it is a practice through which Algerian Salafis are showing belonging to Salafism and distinctiveness from other Islamic groups. They are implicitly aligning themselves with other Salafis through giving a great importance in mentioning the original source of the publication. Thus, it is an indirect identification process within Salafism practised by the Algerian Salafis in this study on Facebook.

To sum up, this study revealed that the informative religious publications of the Algerian Salafis (in this study) on Facebook are of two kinds: textual and multimodal discursive practices (Da'wa cards and user-generated multimodal discourse) which are both generally in the form of quotes. These publications were very common among these people in their activity on Facebook because of one Salafi principle that calls for spreading Salafism as the correct and pure Islam to others. Moreover, a basic practice in this discourse was adhering to the academic regulations of quoting on the informal Facebook: acknowledge the original source. This practice is confirms the reliability of the publication as it must conform to Salafism (other Islamic groups' publications are rejected). Accordingly, the Salafi identity is implicitly constructed and presented through these practices among the Algerian Salafis on Facebook in this study. This conforms to the approach presented in previous scholarship which states that identity is dynamic and performed rather than static and residing in the mind.

5.2.2. The Inclusive/ Exclusive Discourse: Identification and Alignment within Salafism

The inclusive/exclusive discourse represents the second type of Facebook discursive practices through which identity is performed in the research particpants' publications. As shown in Figure 5.16 earlier, this discourse represents only 22 % of the publications. It is often a sociability discourse where the participants are getting in touch or checking on each other. Indeed, it is significant as it encompasses a variety of discursive means of identification and dis-identification on Facebook as illustrated in the forthcoming cases.

Identification within Salafism is mainly performed through lexical items (terms) the participants use in their discourse to refer to themselves and people in the group they belong to. This is illustrated in Figure 5.21 which presents a status update published by the research participant **'الوهراني' – 'Al-wahrani'.** In this status update, he greets his friends on Facebook.

Translation of Content:

Peace and Allah's mercy and blessing be upon you

[Islamic greeting] <u>Ahl Al-sunnah</u> [the Sunni]

wherever you are.

Figure 5.21. The Salafis' Identification through Lexical Terms

In the status, the participant is greeting the people he names as 'Ahl Al-sunnah' (the Sunni). For a better understanding of how the term 'Ahl Al-sunnah' is employed and referring to what exactly, it was necessary to go back to the participant in the interview:

سعودي (الباحث): من هم 'أهل السنة' الذين تقوم بتحيتهم في منشورك؟

الوهراني: أهل السنة هم أصدقائي السلفيين على الفايسبوك.

سعودي: هذا يعني أنكم لا تطلقون علي غير السلفيين أهل السنة؟

الوهراني: نعم، فأهل السنة هم الذين يتبعون سنة الرسول عليه لصلاة والسلام. وفي معتقدنا من لا ينتهج المنهج السلفي في وقتنا الحالي فهو لا يتبع السنة الصحيحة. لذلك فنحن السلفيين هم أهل السنة.

Saoudi (the researcher): who are these 'Ahl Al-sunna' you are greeting in your publication?

Al-wahrani: 'Ahl Al-sunnah' are my Salafi friends on Facebook.

Saoudi: this means that the term 'Ahl Al-sunnah' is used only to refer to the Salafis and not to others who do not follow Salafism, does not it?

Al-wahrani: Yes. Ahl Al-sunnah are those who follow the prophet Mohammed's (peace and bless be upon him) exact guiding and principles. In our beliefs, he who does not follow Salafism nowadays is not following these guiding and principles. Thus, we, the Salafis, are Ahl Al-sunnah.

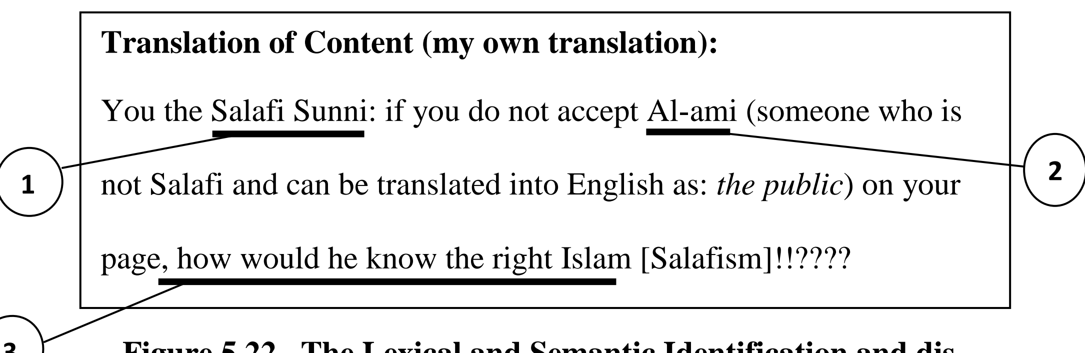
According to the participant, Ahl Al-sunnah is a name given to the Salafis and means *people who follow Sunnah* (the prophet's guiding and principles). Then, he states that the term is used exclusively for Salafis and never for non-Salafis because of a belief within Salafism which entails that non-Salafis follow the *wrong* way of Islam. Likewise, if you follow Salafism you are following Sunnah; if you do not, you are not, and therefore, cannot be called Ahl Al-sunnah. Simply put, calling the Salafis Ahl Al-sunnah means that *the non-Salafis are not Ahl Al-sunnah.* Thus, it is evident in this example that the participant is discursively making a classification that distinguishes between 'who *we* are' and 'who *they* are'. Indeed, this example is typical and represents a common identification perspective among the Algerian Salafis in the study. They all follow this identification behaviour in their status updates through the use of other names such as **'أهل الأثر' - 'Ahl Al-athar'** and **'اهل الحديث''Ahl Al-hadith'**. The words **'الأثر' – 'Al-athar'** (which means the islamic heritage of the prophet Mohammed peace and bless be upon him) and **'الحديث'– 'Al-hadith'** (used to refer to those who follow exactly the sayings of the prophet peace and bless be upon him) are both

synonyms of **'السنة'- Sunnah.** These terms are evidence of ‘Us’ vs. ‘Others’ identification in the research participants discourse.

The latter ‘*we vs. they’* identification practice is more salient in the excerpt in Figure 5.22 which is a Facebook publication for another research participant (I refer to him in here as *participant* for confidentiality). The participant addresses other Salafis in his publication: he advises them to accept other people who are not Salafis in their Facebook pages; otherwise these people would not know the right Islam (as introduced by Salafism). There are two discursive elements which are relevant in the process of identification and dis-identification among the research participants in this publication: lexical (elements 1 & 2) and implicit semantic meaning (element 3).

The lexical elements 1 & 2 in the status update (Figure 5.22) are two names that refer to two different groups. The participant uses the term **'السلفي السني'** - **‘Salafi Sunni’** (element 1) to refer to his people: Salafis (people he is addressing in his status update), and the term **'العامي'** - **‘Al-ami’ (the Public)** to refer to others who are not Salafis. In element 3, the participant says “how would he know the right Islam?” which means (semantic element): how the others who are not Salafis are going to know Salafism, the correct Islam. Thus, the participant is asserting: *We*, the Salafis, follow the right and correct Islam, and *they,* who are not Salafis (the public), do not follow the right and correct Islam because they do not know it. This kind of identification is purely based on religious classification.

The latter findings present another discursive practice through which the Algerian Salafis perform their Salafi identity on Facebook. While the informative religious publications display the high-religiosity, ultra-conservativeness and Da’wa to Allah as one aspect of the Salafi identity, the ‘*We vs. They’* discourse displays how Salafis identify and discriminate themselves from others.



Translation of Content (my own translation):

You the Salafi Sunni: if you do not accept Al-ami (someone who is not Salafi and can be translated into English as: *the public*) on your page, how would he know the right Islam [Salafism]!!????

1 2 3

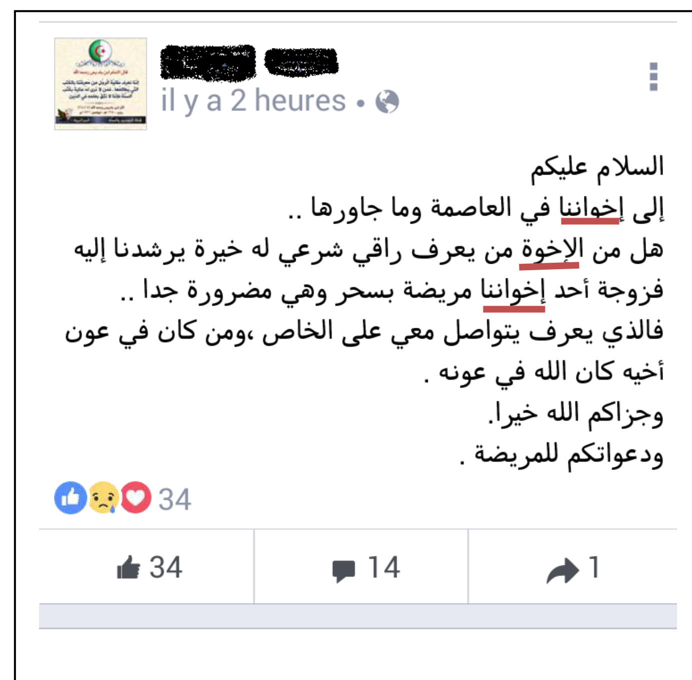
Figure 5.22. The Lexical and Semantic Identification and dis-identification in status updates

In addition to the aforementioned discursive elements in identifying *themselves* and *others* (Salafism vs. other Islamic groupings), the results showed that the research participants also align within Salafism through the *in-group* addressing terms. The four excerpts in Figure 5.23

are samples of status updates that highlight the way the research participants call members in their group (other Salafis).

Translation of Content :

Our kind **brother** 'صيد الزمان' –'Sayd Al-zaman' is absent recently, and we do not know why. I would like to request from all **the brothers** – those who have an idea about his absence – to end our worry May Allah reward you with goodness [Islamic gratitude expression].



Translation of Content:

Peace be upon you [Islamic greeting],

To ***our brothers*** in Algiers and its surroundings,

Are there any one among ***the brothers*** who knows an experienced Raqi Char'i [someone who spiritually heals people with Quran]? We need his contact information because **a *brother's*** wife is very sick.......

Please contact me in private,
He who helps his brother will be helped by Allah, may Allah reward you with goodness, your prayers for her

Figure 5.23. In-group Addressing Terms to Members within Salafism

In the excerpts included in Figure 5.23, the underlined words in red (bold and italicized in the translated version) are referential terms to the audience the research participants are addressing in their publications. For determining who *this audience* is, the issue was raised with the research participants in the interviews. The interviewees revealed that *the audience* in these publications (Figure 5.23) is only the Salafis in their Facebook network and not those who are not. Accordingly, they call someone **'brother'** or **'sister'** only if he/she is Salafi. Based on these results, the terms are:

* **Male Salafis:** ***'الأخ'*** – ***'brother'*** (singular form) or ***'الإخوة'*** - ***'brothers'*** (plural form).

* **Female Salafis:** ***'الأخت'*** – ***'sister'*** (singular form) and ***'الأخوات'*** **-** ***'sisters'*** (plural forms)**.** Because it is forbidden to befriend the other gender, Female Salafis are not part of the research participants' Facebook networks. The terms spotted in the publications are for referring to Female Salafis and not addressing them.

The terms **'الأخ' - 'brother'** and **'الأخت' - 'sister'** are actually used for family members: biological relation. Used among the Salafis to refer to each other on Facebook, these terms prove that the Salafis are more than online friends. The tie among these people is as strong as the family's. Otherwise, how would one explain calling someone you knew only on Facebook **'brother'**? Because Salafism is sacred among Salafis as it represents the pure Islam, Salafis are real brothers and sisters although biologically not. This is a strong tie is determined by one's religious affiliation to Salafism an nothing else (it is crucial to disambiguate between the term **'الإخوة'– 'brothers'** used among Salafis and **'الإخوان'** – **'Brotherhood'** which refers to a Sunni islamist organisation. These two terms are radically different as presented in the coming sections).

Based on these notions, the terms **'الأخ'** – **'brother'** and **'الأخت'- 'sister'** are used implicitly within the Facebook discourse of Salafis to perform identification and dis-

identification within Salafism. Similarly to the terms that differentiate between Salafis and other Islamic groups, in-group terms symbolize the strong tie among Salafis on Facebook, and therefore, one important aspect is being displayed. Thus, this discursive practice is showing that Salafism is like a *fraternity*.

5.2.3. The Ideological Discourse and Affiliation to Salafism

The ideological discourse is related to the expression of shared systems of social meanings, attitudes and beliefs within a specific group through discursive practices (see Chapter 3 for details). This discursive practice is very common on Facebook and strongly tied to users' identities because it reflects their beliefs, principles and ideas. As illustrated in Figure 5.16 earlier, ideological discourse was the second most common discourse among the research participants' publications on Facebook (30 %). The issues raised are how the ideological discourse is related to Salafi identity construction and self-presentation on Facebook among the Algerian Salafis and what discursive practices are employed.

Results showed that the participants' ideological discourse is divided into two types: *opposed discourse* and *allegiance discourse* (Figure 5.24). The opposed discourse expresses negative stances towards the Arab Spring, the Muslim Brotherhood organization and related issues; the allegiance discourse expresses positive views towards Saudi Arabia and its affairs.

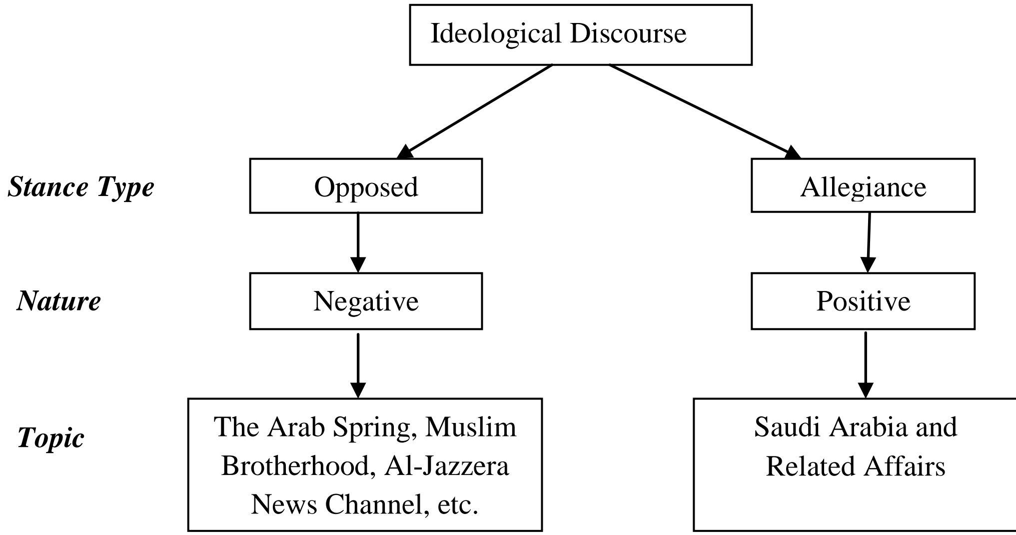


Figure 5.24. The Salafis' Ideological Discourse on Facebook

The latter topics are the major current affairs in the Arab world in the period of data collection. They are considered as religio-political issues in this study because they are political affairs with Islamic backgrounds within Salafism. The model adopted in the deconstruction of ideology in this discourse is the critical discourse analysis model (CDA). The critical discourse analysis, and more precisely, ideology discourse analysis (Van Djik, 2006) proposes an analytical model which states that ideology is implicitly imbedded in the words of people (see Chapter 4 for more details). This model illustrates the so-called 'Us and Them discourse' where the beliefs and principles of *one's group (Us)* are deemed *good* and *other's (them) are bad.*

5.2.3.1. The Opposed Ideological Discourse

In opposed discourse, the participants expressed a negative stance toward the Arab Spring, the Muslim Brotherhood and related issues. The Arab Spring was a series of anti-government revolutions, protests and uprising rebellions in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) that first started on 17 Decembre 2010 in Tunisia, then spread later on to other countries such as Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Syria (Micallef, 2016, para.2-3). It affected profoundly this region. In the last 7 years, every political, economic or social event in the MENA was related in a way or another to the Arab Spring. Having different backgrounds and ideologies, intellectuals, scholars and Islamic doctrines were deeply divided into Pros and Cons towards the Arab Spring. The Muslim Brotherhood (*Al-ikhwan al-Muslimun*) is a Sunni Islamist organisation that was founded in Egypt by the Islamic scholar Hassan al-Banna in 1928. It has the model of political activism combined with Islamic charity work to reach the real Islamic society. Its core ideology is "focused on reform of existing political systems in the Arab world" who are considered as secular and against Islam ("What is Muslim Brotherhood?", June 18, 2017).

The findings of the present study revealed that the research participants were radically against the Arab Spring, the Muslim Brotherhood and related issues and organizations. Based on the critical discourse analysis approach and Van Djik's (2006) ideology square analytical model, the ideological opposed stance was performed discursively on Facebook among the research participants basically through two means: *ideological modification of official terms* and *multimodal meaning creation*. There are other elements in this discourse, but the focus in this study is on these two means because of two reasons. On the one hand, they are novel strategies facilitated by social media affordances. On the other hand, the basic interest of the present study in not a critical analysis of discourse and therefore the focus was on these two elements due to time and effort limitations.

5.2.3.1.1. The Ideological Modification of Terms

One strategy the research participants followed to reflect their opposed ideology was the modification of the official terms used to refer to groups, organizations or personalities which are considered opposing. In other words, in writing about issues related to these opposing subjects, they do not use the common term but a reformulated version of it (of their own) that ideologically displays a specific negative meaning as presented in Figure 5.25.

The excerpt in Figure 5.25 is a publication of one of the research participants about the Muslim Brotherhood. The discourse in the publication is ideological because the participant is opposing this group and its principle of "ally with the devil for the interest of the group". In other words, the Muslim Brotherhood prioritizes the interest of the group (which is the good interest also of all Muslims according to them) over everything else and would make it by any means even if it requires alliance with the devil himself. This principle is prohibited in Salafism and considered a very sinful deed. Because of that, the participant is expressing his ideological opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood.

Translation of Content:

This is the habit of the group of failure, the Traitors of Muslims, May Allah shame them. And as one of them says - their greatest, “we ally with the devil for the interest of the group”.

Figure 5.25. The Lexical Reconfiguration of Terms

This opposed ideology is performed through the modification of the official name of the group as illustrated in the underlined words (in red) in Figure 5.25. To refer to the organization of the Muslim Brotherhood, the participant does not use in his publication the official name **'الإخوان المسلمين'** but reformulates it into **'خوان المسلمين'** – khawan Al-Moslimin. The lexical modification was performed through the *replacement* of the first word in the term: **'الإخوان'** to **'خوان'**. The new word is approximately similar in Arabic spelling to the original (differs only in one letter) but has a contradictory meaning. The meaning changed completely from **'الإخوان المسلمين'** that means ***the Muslim Brothers,*** to **'خوان المسلمين'** that means ***traitors of***

***Muslims*.** Thus, the participant's opposing ideology towards the Muslim Brotherhood organization was imbedded in the term he uses to refer to the organization as a group of traitors and not Muslim brothers with beneficial projects to Islam.

Following the official terms' modification strategy, the research participants used a variety of names to refer to the Muslim Brotherhood as presented in **Figure 5.26**. All of these names are a result of the ideological modification of the official name. They have *a negative meaning* which reflects the opposing stance of the participants towards the organization.

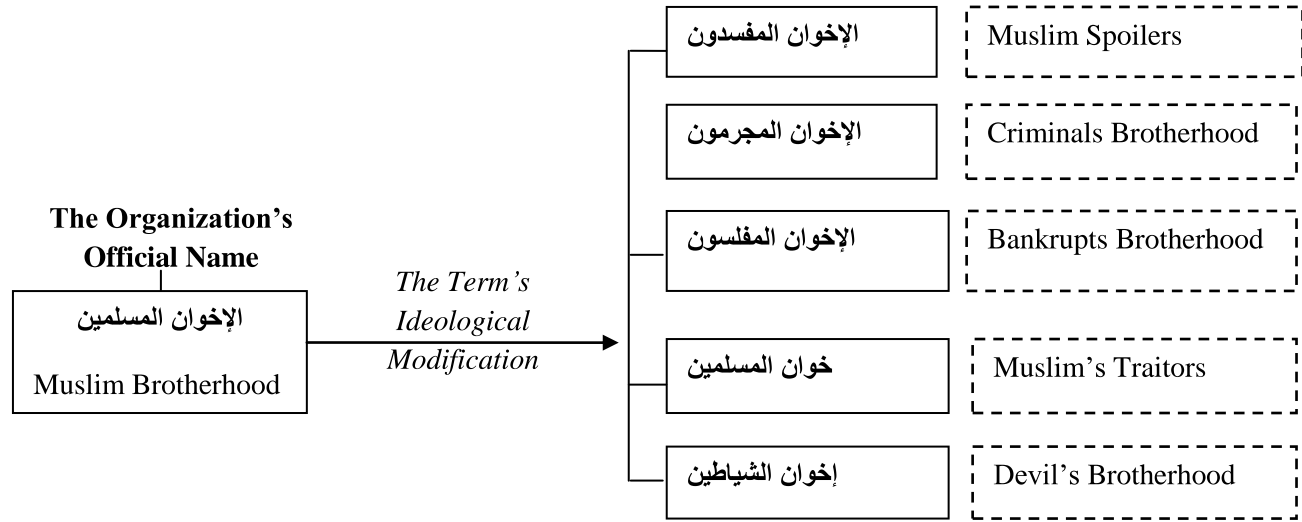


Figure 5.26. The Ideological Modification of the Muslim Brotherhood's Official Name

All the five terms in Figure 5.26 hold a negative representation of the Muslim Brotherhood. They are formed by the research participants in a systematic way to meet two needs: closer in form (spelling in Arabic) to the original name and reflects a negative status. The negative label the participants give to the organization is equivalent to one of the principles in Van Djik's (2006) ideological square: *the representation of the other or 'Them' as negative.* This is salient in the meaning of the names which are all labelling the Muslim Brotherhood as: a group of spoilers, bankrupts, criminals and traitors working for the devil.

Another line of opposition within the ideological discourse of the participants on Facebook is related to organizations or institutions with affiliation to the Muslim Brotherhood such as Al-Jazeera news channel. In the excerpt in Figure 5.27, the participant constructs an opposing ideological discourse towards the Qatari news channel Al-Jazeera which is considered by the Salafis as part of the Muslim Brotherhood. It spreads the organization's ideology of supporting and pushing peoples in the Arab countries to rebel against their governments. In this Facebook publication, the participant expresses his opposition towards Al-Jazeera because - according to him- it is behind the propaganda that led Arab peoples to revolt against their presidents and destroy their countries in a dirty civil war and trying to do so in Algeria.

Translation of Content:

O' the people of Algeria

Al-Khinzeera [the Pig] Channel, after destroying Syria, Yemen, Egypt and Tunisia is surprised how your country has not fallen yet and the army has not turned over the government in a dirty civil war.

Figure 5.27. The Modified Official Name in the Opposing Ideological Discourse towards Al-Jazeera Channel

To refer to the channel in his discourse, the participant uses an alternating term (underlined in red) and not the official one in Arabic. He uses **'الخنزيرة' – Al-Khinzeera** which means **'pig'** in place of the official term which is **'الجزيرة' (Al-Jazeera).** The word 'pig' in Islamic and Arabic culture has a negative connotation and usually used as a label for dirty and bad things. It is chosen by the participant in his publication in its feminine form to sound similar in spelling to the official name of the news channel in Arabic. Thus, the new term is closer in form to the original one but holds a negative meaning: the channel is labelled as dirty and bad with evil agendas. Thus, the participant in his publication is expressing the opposing ideology through presenting the other – represented by Al-Jazeera- as evil and enemy to the Arab countries and Algeria.

Another line of opposition applying the strategy of ideological modification of official terms is that against famous theologians and scholars of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Arab Spring. Two of the most targeted biggest personalities by the participants in their publications are Sayyid Qutb and Yusuf al-Qaradawi. Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) was Egyptian author, educator, Islamic theorist, poet, and the leading member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s and the 1960s; in 1966, he was convicted of plotting the assassination of Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser and was executed by hanging (Shepard, 2017). He is one of the most influential figures within the Muslim Brotherhood whose ideas and philosophy shapes the organizations ideology. Yusuf al-Qaradawi (b.1926) is also a famous Egyptian but modern Islamic theologian and scholar who is considered as the greatest theorist of the Muslim Brotherhood today (Halverson, 2017).

The participants in their opposing Facebook discourse do not refer to the two personalities with their official names but through modified versions of the names as in the following:

- referring to **'يوسف القرضاوي' - Yusuf al-Qaradawi**, they use the name : **'يوسف القردضاوي' – Yusuf al-Qardadawi'.** The new name is formed through inserting the letter **'د' – 'd'** in the middle of the second word in the official name. This modification is giving the name a new meaning. In the word **'القردضاوي' – al-Qardadawi : the part '-القرد' – 'al-Qard-'** means *monkey*.. The word *monkey* connotes a negative meaning in Islam and Arabic culture referring to '*bad and ugliness'.* Thus, the participants through the use of this name are illustrating the scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi as a bad theologian.

- referring to **'سيد قطب' – Sayyid Qutb,** the participant follow the same strategy as for Yusuf al-Qaradawi. They use usually the name : **'سيئ قطب' – 'Sayyi Qutb'.** This new name is formed through replacing the letter **'د'- 'd'** in the first word of the official name with the letter **'ء' – '?'** (sound like the glottal stop). The word **'سيئ' – 'Sayyi''** means literally in Arabic **'bad'.** Hence, in using this name the participants are illustrating the scholar Sayyid Qutb as 'a bad scholar'.

These names which are used by the participants to refer to Sayyid Qutb and Yusuf al-Qaradawi are formed systematically and purposefully to connote a negative meaning in the opposing discourse. Thus, this practice is reflecting the participants' opposing stance towards these two personalities. The reason why the participants are opposing Sayyid Qutb and Yusuf al-Qaradawi is the opposing Islamic ideologies mainly that related to armed struggle against the Arabic regimes and the Arab Spring. This ideology is the result of Sayyid Qutb's theories and ideas which are promoted and supported today by al-Qardawi and that is radically refused and banned by Salafism. Thus, these two scholars are the fathers of death and blood in Islam.

5.2.3.1.2. The Multimodal Ideological Opposing Discourse

In addition to textual practices presented in the previous section, the opposing ideology towards the Muslim Brotherhood and related institutions can be discursively constructed through multimodal means. This is exemplified in the Facebook publication in Figure 5.28 in

which the participant is generating an opposing discourse towards the Arab Spring and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Translation of Textual Content:

A meaningful Picture …..

The revolutions of the **Hebrew Spring** were planned by the Jews and executed by **the Bankrupts Brotherhood** and the **Takfiris Kharijits** in our Arabic countries as shown in the picture.

Figure 5.28. The Multimodal Ideological Opposing Discourse

The discourse in the publication is multimodal: the use of *text* and *image* to generate meaning. In the text, the underlined terms in red refer to the ideological lexical modification

mentioned in the previous section. The first is **'الربيع العربي' [Al-rabi' Al-arabi – 'The Arab Spring']** which was changed into **'الربيع العبري' [Al-rabi' Al-ibri – 'the Hebrew Spring].** The participant modified the term through changing the first word from **'العربي'- 'the Arab'** into **'العبري' – 'the Hebrew'.** He chose this word to replace the original one in the official term because, on the one hand, it has approximately the same spelling form and, on the other hand, it connotes an ideological negative meaning. The word 'Hebrew' connotes a negative meaning (trick and guile) in the Islamic and Arabic culture because it is related to the Israeli and the Jews who are the divine enemies of Muslims and Arabs. They are behind all catastrophes, problems and instability in the Islamic world according to the Muslims and the Arabs. Therefore, the participant is expressing his opposing ideology towards the 'Arab Spring' through renaming it 'the Hebrew Spring' which implies that these revolutions named the Arab Spring are nothing but an evil strategy by the Jews to destroy the Arab World. Indeed, this is explicitly presented in his words in the publication where he says that these revolutions "are planned by the Jews".

The participant continues his text relating the 'Hebrew Spring' planned by the Jews to the '**Bankrupt Brotherhood'** and the **Takfiris Kharijits. 'The Bankrupts Brotherhood**' is an ideologically modified term which refers to the 'Muslim Brotherhood' as aforementioned**.** According to Salafism**,** the **Takfiris Kharijits** are Islamic groupings with a radical Jihadi thought towards the non-Muslims (according to them). They consider the Arabic governments as secular, traitors and non-Muslims who must be fought against and stripped out of their governorship in armed struggle.

In addition to the latter textual elements, meaning is generated in the publication (Figure 5.28) through the visual means: *image*. The image in the publication shows a person lying on a sofa and watching TV. The TV displays the map of the Arab World with explosion fire in some countries. The burning countries are Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Egypt. In the middle, there

is the flag of Israel in the Palestine. The person in the image is wearing the Jewish Hat which indicates that he is Jews. He is lying down on the sofa comfortably with hands attached behind his head. All these imagery elements are forming scenery which tells: the Jews are watching happily the Arab World burn. The image is employed in here to emphasize the meaning intended by the participant as images are louder than words as said.

The textual and imagery elements in the publication build a multimodal discourse which expresses the full concept or idea of: the Arab Spring is a group of devastating revolutions that were planned by the Jews and executed by the Muslim Brotherhood and Takfiris Kharijits in the Arab World. While the Arab countries like Yemen, Syria and Egypt are burning, the Jews are watching happily their plan being executed successfully without shooting a single bullet. Thus, this multimodal discourse reflects the Salafi participant's ideology which opposes the Arab Spring and condemns the Muslim Brotherhood and Takfiris Kharijits for realizing the Jews devastating plan in the region.

The publications presented thus far in this section are typical samples of how the ideological opposing discourse is constructed among the Algerian Salafis in this study. Light was shed upon two discursive practices: the ideological modification of official terms and images as being novel and having great role in meaning generation. The ideological modification of official terms and selective images with an implicit meaning are a reflection of one of the basic principles in Van Djik's ideology square model: representing *'Them'* and their ideas and beliefs negatively. The *'Them'* in the ideological opposing discourse are the Muslim Brotherhood's members, affiliated institutions and personalities. Moreover, anyone adopting the organisation's ideology is considered as the *other* for the research participants.

The 'Them' discursive aspect is part of the dichotomy 'Us and Them'. These two pillars of the ideological discourse are inseparable: the existence of one means the existence of the

other. Through expressing the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology and affiliated institutions and personalities – the *'Them'*- negatively in their opposing discourse, the research participants are indirectly expressing their ideology and beliefs – the 'Us'- positively. In other words, in opposing the ideology which backs the Arab Spring and expressing it negatively through discursive practices, the participants are implicitly expressing positively their ideology of *prohibition of revolutions against* the regimes and consider it as religiously correct and rightful. The *'Us'* positive discourse among the Algerian Salafis in this study is presented in the following section.

5.2.3.2. The Ideological Discourse of Allegiance

Parallel to the opposing discourse, the research participants constructed an allegiance discourse through which they support a certain ideology or issue related to their doctrine (see Figure 5.24. in Section: ideological discourse). Given the religio-political nature of the discourse studied in this section, allegiance is approached as the Algerian Salafis loyalty to the Salafism religi-political ideology. Results showed that the line of ideological allegiance among the research participants' Facebook publications was expressing allegiance to Saudi Arabia (KSA) and its affairs. In the allegiance discourse, the participants are always presenting KSA, its king and regime, and related issues positively. This is achieved through a number of discursive practices as shown in the following samples of the participants' Facebook publications.

The publication in Figure 5.29 represents the three frequently used discursive elements in the creation of the allegiance discourse to Saudi Arabia. The three elements are underlined in red in the figure and numbered respectively in the English version in the translation box.

Translation of Content:

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a blessed Salafi country; only he who hates Islam, hates this country. 1

2

May Allah support its king, and endures its glory ...... Amen.

3

Figure 5.29. The Ideological Allegiance Discourse

The first element (1) represents the practice of *complimenting*. In the phrase *'a blessed Salafi country'*, the participant is using two adjectives to describe KSA positively: *Salafi* and *blessed*. The word 'Salafi' refers to the country as being on the right way of Islam that was determined by the prophet Mohammed (peace and bless be upon him), and therefore applying Islam at a nation's level. The word 'blessed' gives KSA a holy status since blessing comes from Allah only to what is sacred and representing rightfulness in Islam. After complimenting KSA as the sacred Salafi country, the participant moves to an *inclusive/exclusive discourse* in element two (2) where he states that "only he who hates Islam, hates this country". Through the use of terms such as *only* and *hates,* the participant is performing a classification discourse: those who hate Saudi Arabia as haters of Islam itself, and thereby those who love it are real Muslims. Thus, according to the participant, one's attitudes towards Saudi Arabia determine his inclusion or exclusion from the Islam's enemies circle. In other words, if he is with Saudi Arabia, then he is with Islam; if he is not, then he is an enemy of Islam. In element three (3), the participant is praying to Allah to protect Saudi Arabia and its king and endure their glory. These are positive prayers that reflect the participant's love and support for the country and its regime. Someone who is opposing Saud Arabia never pray positively for it.. Employing the three discursive elements in his publication, the participant constructed an allegiance discourse towards KSA. This allegiance discourse defined the participant and those like him (the 'Us') as supporters of the sacred country and real Muslims, and those opposing (the 'Them') as the enemies of Saudi Arabia and Islam. Applying Van Djik's (2006) model, the discourse in this publication is promoting the 'Us' ideology and beliefs, and underestimating those of 'Them'.

The concept of 'Us vs. Them' in allegiance discourse towards Saudi Arabia is further highlighted in the publication in Figure 5.30. Meaning is generated in the publication through multimodality where the 'Us vs. Them' discourse is generated through text, image and design.

Figure 5.30. The Multimodal Ideological Allegiance Discourse

The publication is in picture format. It is not created by the participant himself but someone else (usually Salafi pages on Facebook) through the use of a specific software program. The topic of the picture is the attack and opposition of some Islamic groupings and doctrines on Saudi Arabia. The discourse generated in the picture is ideological because it represents Saudi Arabia positively and the groupings negatively.

Building upon the Arabic proverb which literally means 'the Sky is never hurt by dogs' barking' – whose English equivalent is 'Dogs bark, but the caravan keeps on' -the designer

creates the multimodal discourse in the picture. On top of the picture, the flag representing Saudi Arabia is placed to illustrate it as the sky. At the bottom, there are three dogs that represent the three Islamic groupings: Sufis, Shiites and the Muslim Brotherhood. The dogs are raising their heads up to the sky and barking. This visualisation is a pictorial representation of the proverb. Between the flag and the dogs, there is a writing which says: *'Dogs bark, but the caravan keeps on' (proverb) - Continue your barking; it fits you.* These words are addressed to the three Islamic groups. At the bottom of the picture, under the dogs, there is a text which states that: Saudi Arabia is hated only by people belonging to groupings with deviated beliefs and principles, and loved only by Muwahideen (real Salafi Muslims who fulfil monotheism and belief in the oneness of Allah). All the discursive elements in the picture generate the meaning of: Saudi Arabia keeps moving on her projects and executing her plans and policies, and the Shiites, Sufis and Muslim Brotherhood are nothing but dogs barking at the sky. Moreover, an important notion in the publication is the classification of people depending on their attitudes towards Saudi Arabia. Those with Saudi Arabia are Muwahideen: Salafis; those who are against Saudi Arabia belong to Islamic groupings with deviated beliefs and ideologies.

Thus, Saudi Arabia is presented positively and those 'opposing Islamic groupings' negatively. This is an ideological discursive representation, and publishing such a discourse on his Facebook, the participant is supporting the content. He is thereby expressing his allegiance to Saudi Arabia implicitly and aligning himself within Salafis and Muwahideen. Along the same vein in the publication in Figure 5.29, allegiance to Saudi Arabia is discursively set as a basic principle that differentiates Salafis from other Islamic groupings. The two publications introduced in this section as samples are typical of the discursive strategies and techniques used by the Algerian Salafis in the study to construct their allegiance discourse.

The findings in the previous two sections revealed that the Algerian Salafis in this study employed the religio-political ideological discourse on Facebook to identify and align themselves within Salafism and dis-identify from other Islamic groupings mainly the Muslim Brotherhood. This was systematically achieved through the use of different strategies and two lines of ideology emerged: opposing and allegiance discourse.

In opposing discourse, the users employed two main techniques: lexical modifications of official terms and multimodal representation (different semiotic means). This discourse generally targets the Muslim Brotherhood because it represents the religio-political rival of Salafism and is the Islamic grouping with the ideology of Arab Spring and armed struggle against the regimes. Indeed, it is this very principle which differentiates Salafis from the Muslim Brotherhood. Salafis are radically against the ideology of struggle against the regimes that fuelled the Arabic Spring and consider it a cruel ideology that is totally against the Prophet Mohammed's (peace and bless be upon him) guiding. Thus, the opposing discourse to the Muslim Brotherhood and its ideology was a discursive alignment within Salafism.

Allegiance discourse to Saudi Arabia was constructed to express support and love of the country. This was performed through: complementing, praying and multimodal discursive representation. Allegiance to Saudi Arabia is set among the Algerian Salafis studied as a classification principle that differentiates Salafis from other groupings with deviated ideologies and beliefs (according to Salafism). Since Saudi Arabia represents the pure Islam and Salafism and is the server of Tawhid around the world, it is a principle within Salafism to consider the country sacred that must be loved and respected.

Applying Van Djik's ideological model, the two types of the religio-political discourse are a reflection of the dichotomy *'Us vs. Them'*: the 'Us' ideology is expressed positively and promoted while the 'Them' Ideology is expressed negatively and underestimated. Thus, the Salafi identity was presented and expressed on Facebook via the ideological discourse.

5.2.4. Language Choice and Meta-linguistic Discourse: The 'Sacred' Standard Arabic

In addition to the discursive practices highlighted in previous sections which were employed in Salafi identity and self-presentation, language used in constructing such practices is itself relevant in this operation. This issue is based onto two pillars: Language choice and the research participants' meta-linguistic discourse on Facebook**.** Indeed, the latter is complementary to the former as it expresses the participants' attitudes and beliefs towards language. This helps in better interpretation of the data and a deep understanding of how language choice on Facebook is tied to the Salafi identity. This directs the analysis and interpretation of results in the following sections.

5.2.4.1. Language Choice

The language used in the Algerian Salafis' Facebook discourse is as significant as the content of the discourse itself in identity performance and self-presentation. As stated earlier, the Algerian Salafis linguistic repertoire includes Standard Arabic, Colloquial Algerian Arabic and French. Moreover, given the Facebook online context, they have two transcripts that can be used: *Arabic Transcript and Romanized Transcript*. These represent the codes and transcripts among which the user can select for his discourse on Facebook. In other words, the participant has to choose among these codes and transcripts which to use in the static discourse (such as his Facebook name) and dynamic one including informative Salafi publications, (dis)-identification discourse, ideological discourse, in addition to comments posted for others' publications and socialisations publications.

The findings are illustrated in Tables 5.4 which summarizes what language and transcript is used in the participants' various status updates and comments on Facebook (*Facebook names* are not included in this section as they are presented earlier in the section of 'static discursive practices'). The possible codes in the participants' repertoire that can be used on Facebook include: Standard Arabic in Arabic Transcript (SA-AT), Standard Arabic in

Roman Transcript (SA-RT), Colloquial Arabic in Arabic Transcript (CoA- AT), Colloquial Arabic in Roman Transcript (CoA-RT), French in Arabic Transcript (F- AT) and French in Roman Transcript (F-RT).

Table 5.4. Language Choice in the Different Discursive Practices on Facebook

Code &transcript / ***Publications***	SA - AT	SA-RT	CoA-AT	CoA-RT	F-AT	F-RT
Status Updates						
Informative religious publications	X					
Identification discourse	X					
Ideological discourse	X					
Socialization	X		limited			
Humour and entertainment	X		limited			
Comments	X					

As shown in the table, among the six possible codes, only two were used: Standard Arabic written in Arabic transcript (SA-AT) and Colloquial Arabic written in Arabic transcript (CoA-AT). Standard Arabic in Arabic transcript dominates the choices; it is used as the code of communication in most of the publications. Colloquial Arabic was not common and is used alongside Standard Arabic only in some publications of socialization, humour or entertainment. However, the research participants' publications were never written in

Standard or Colloquial Arabic in Roman transcript or French in Arabic or Roman transcript. In other words, the research participants never use the Roman transcript or French while communicating on Facebook.

Except for a few number of publications, the research participants used Standard Arabic in Arabic transcript even when communicating informally either in their status updates or comments to their friends' publications. The excerpts in Figure 5.31 are samples of informal discourse in status updates. In Excerpt 1, the participant writes a status update to express his admiration of the beautiful horizon light in Bab Al-Banyan Beach in Algiers, Algeria. This is a personal publication where the participant expresses his feelings and experience. Excerpt 2 is a socialization status update where the participant congratulates a friend for his wedding and praying for Allah to bless him and make the wedding happy. Excerpt 3 is a kind of entertaining status update where the participant is sharing a personal event with his friends: he found a ring. Excerpt 4 is a humorous status update where the participant is making fun with his friends about 'being single' and suffering of doing their own stuff themselves such as sewing their clothes like the guy in the picture. As shown in all excerpts, the text of the status update is written in Standard Arabic using the Arabic transcript.

So, although the discourse of these publications is informal and the expected language would be Colloquial Arabic or French, the research participants use Standard Arabic in Arabic transcript which is normally limited to official formal contexts. The use of Standard Arabic written in Arabic transcript in formal publications such as religious informative status updates conforms to Ferguson's (1959) diglossia concept: the high variety of Arabic is used in formal and official contexts such as religion. However, it does not conform to the second pillar of this concept which states that Colloquial Arabic (Low variety) is used in informal contexts such as humour and entertainment.

Figure 5.31. The use of Standard Arabic in Arabic transcript in Informal Discourse on Facebook

Along the same vein in status updates, comments posted by the research participants to others' Facebook publications are usually written in Standard Arabic in Arabic transcript. In formal official discourse such as informative religious and ideological publications, the use of Standard Arabic in Arabic transcript is expected as stated earlier. In other words, the religious and political context (official) justifies the use of Standard Arabic. For instance, participants generally post *thanking* comments to informative religious publications in Standard Arabic in Arabic transcript (Classical):

- جزاك الله خيرا [Jazak Allah khayren] – May Allah reward you!

- بارك الله فيك [Baraka Allah fika] – May Allah bless you!

- احسن الله إليك [Ahssana Allah ilayka] – May Allah do good to you!

Comments posted to informal publications were also generally written in Standard Arabic using Arabic transcript as shown in the samples included in Figure 5.32. The two excerpts represent comments posted by the research participants to informal publications such as socialization, humour and entertainment status updates:

- **Excerpt 1** is a picture published by the participant **'اسماعيل أبو سلافة التلمساني' – Ismail Abu Sulafa Al-Tilimsani** that includes his Facebook name written an aesthetic way through a certain designing program. This picture is a topic of conversation via comments between him and his friend **'عبد المؤمن أبوأروى' – Abd Al-Moumin Abu Arwa.** The latter comments the publication saying that the design of the name is beautiful and requests from Abu Sulafa to make one for him. Then, Abu Sulafa replies to him saying that it was not him who made it but another one and he has to keep his name secret. Abu Arwa expresses his understanding through thanking Abu Sulafa and praying Allah to protect them all.

- **Excerpt 2** is a status update posted by the participant **'مراد أبو صهيب صانعي' - Morad Abu Sohaib Sani'** checking about his friend Abu Sulfa who has been absent on Facebook for a

while. Different friends comment to the publication expressing that they miss ‘Abu Sulufa’ whom they have not seen for a long time on Facebook.

Both excerpts are informal interactions since they are conversations among friends on Facebook about informal topics and the exchange of comments is similar to chatting. All comments are written in Standard Arabic using the Arabic transcript. So, similarly to language chosen in informal status updates, comments posted to such publications by the research participants were also written in Standard Arabic using the Arabic transcript.

Figure 5.32. The Use of Standard Arabic in Comments posted to Informal Publications on Facebook

The samples in the Figures 5.31 and 5.32 illustrate another key feature which is common in the Algerian Salafis' discourse on Facebook at the linguistic level (structure): the use of Standard Arabic written in Arabic transcript in informal status updates and comments resulted, linguistically, in a formal-like discourse. As illustrated in the excerpts in Figures, no instances of what Crystal (2001, 2007) calls 'Netspeak' are found in the Algerian Salafis' discourse on Facebook: no emoticons, no acronyms (such as LOL, MDR among Algerian users), no doubled letters in words (such as 'amazzzzzing'), and no contractions. Put simply, the common linguistic features which were proven worldwide to characterize language on the Internet, especially on social media, were very rare in the Algerian Salafis discourse.

Indeed, previous studies conducted in different contexts and languages proved that users on social media generally use colloquial varieties and informal language while communicating on sites such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. As long as the Algerian sociolinguistic situation on Facebook is concerned, it was found that users use colloquial Arabic which is written in Roman transcript and sometimes Arabic transcript on their Facebook personal and informal interactions and practices (expressing feelings and daily experiences and events, humour, entertaining, etc) (see Ganaoui, 2012, Khider, 2014, Warschauer, El Said, & Zohry, 2002). However, the findings of the present study are challenging: unlike what is common on Facebook among Algerians, the research participants do not use colloquial Arabic (Algerian dialect) in their informal publications but Standard Arabic. Moreover, they never use the Roman Transcript in writing and practices such as abbreviations, contractions, doubled letters and emoticons were rare. Why Standard Arabic in Arabic transcript dominates the publications of the Algerian Salafis even the informal ones and how does this relate to identity construction and self-presentation is highlighted in the coming section that focuses on meta-linguistic discourse.

5.2.4.2. Meta-linguistic Discourse

Meta-linguistic discourse refers to that type of publications on Facebook where the users speak about or discuss issues on language itself. This discourse is novel in discourse studies and help a lot in better understanding of users' practices and attitudes towards language especially in ethnographic studies on social media.

Meta-linguistic publications were common among the research participants to speak about Standard Arabic and linguistic practices in general. More precisely, they reflect on language choice on Facebook and the identity implications of such a choice. Thus, most of this discourse is ideological as illustrated in the research participants' publications in this section. The publication in Figure 5.33 is a picture that includes a text which speaks about the use of Standard Arabic and its status. The text consists of two quotes: the first one is taken from 'Al-Islah' magazine which is a Salafi magazine in Algeria; the second are the words of Al Sheikh Ibn Badis (1889-1940) who is considered by Salafis as their great Imam (priest) and scholar in Algeria.

The topic of this discourse is the use of other languages, mainly French as it is the case in Algeria, rather than Arabic. The first quote states that Arabic is the most beautiful language with which Allah glorified Muslims and it is shameful that these people are neglecting Arabic and using other languages. Accordingly, Arabic is strongly tied to Allah and Islam, and therefore, sacred. Moreover, it is considered superior to all other languages as it is related to the right religion which is Islam. Thus, using other languages such as French among Algerians is not tolerated in Salafism and considered shameful. The second quote is complementary to the first idea. It stresses the sacredness of Arabic as it is the language of Islam which is the core of Muslim's life. Put simply, Arabic is more than a language for Salafis and it is superior to all other languages because it is the language of Islam. So, this discourse is meta-linguistic since it is discussing language itself and its status among its users.

Translation of Content

It is shame on a nation - that Allah glorified with the most beautiful language, the complete religion and the honourable book that was written in the letters of this language- to leave its language and neglect it
(Al-Islah Magazine – 47)

Ibn Badiss said – May Allah rest his soul- said:
And if we spend our most effort in teaching of Arabic, it is because Arabic id the language of Islam which is the basic of our life and the source of our happiness
(Ibn Badiss, 3/257)

Figure 5.33. The Status of Arabic in Meta-linguistic Discourse on Facebook

It reflects the attitudes and beliefs of Salafis towards Arabic and its use. By publishing this publication, the participant is expressing his own Salafi beliefs and attitudes towards this language and what it means for him to use other languages rather than Arabic. Thus, Arabic is one of the Salafi basics: using other languages rather than Arabic is prohibited within Salafism.

A crucial point regarding language choice among Algerian Salafis is the common use of French in Algerian society. This issue was frequently addressed in the research participants' meta-linguistic discourse on Facebook. Figure 5.34 includes two excerpts that illustrated such a discourse. Indeed, this type of discourse is generally multi-modal as shown

Figure 5.34. The Meta-linguistic Discourse on the Use of French in

in the excerpts which enables the participants to express their ideology and attitudes towards the use of French by Algerians effectively.

In excerpt 1, the discourse is constructed through two discursive elements: the text and the picture. The picture displays an Algerian miserable mother holding a starving undressed child in her arms. The text is related to the picture; it states that what we see in the picture is a result of the starvation caused by the French colonisation in Algeria in 1868. Thus, the participant expresses the brutality and criminality of France in Algeria. Then, he states that this is France that the Algerian sons of France are using its language today and trying to apply its systems in the Muslim Algeria. He labels those who speak French and use it in their life as 'the sons of France' which means they are people with allegiance to France, i.e. traitors in the Algerian culture. In excerpt 2, the same line of discourse is found. The participant uses a picture of torture chair that was used by the French to torture the Algerians during the colonisation. Again, the brutality and criminality of France is expressed. The participant then addresses those Algerians and wonders how comes that the language of that France is used by some people in Algeria.

Accordingly, the use of French is considered a very negative practice as it is the language of the religious and historic enemy of the Algerians. This meta-linguistic discourse is a reflection of the Algerian Salafis' ideology towards the use of French in Algeria. Among these people, French is prohibited and used only by those who are affiliated to France. Therefore, it is a marker of identity. Indeed, this ideology towards French is based on a principle within Salafism which states that the use of foreign languages among Muslims is prohibited and restricted only to essential needs. This conforms to what the participants declared in the interviews: they all believe that the use of foreign languages, such as French among Algerians, 'is a marker of lost identity'. They are ultra-conservative when it comes to foreign languages.

The Algerian Salafis' meta-linguistic discourse revealed crucial attitudes and beliefs towards Standard Arabic and the use of French and foreign languages by Muslims. Standard Arabic is sacred and superior to all languages since it the language of Islam. Foreign languages are the languages of Kufar (non-muslims) and it is highly prohibited within Salafism to use these languages (except for essential needs). In fact, the holy status Standard Arabic has among Salafis makes it superior even to Arabic dialects (colloquial Arabic). That is why they do not tolerate the modifications in Standard Arabic; they consider these changes as harming to Arabic which must be protected accordingly. Thus, language choice and linguistic practices are markers of the Salafi identity: Salafis do not use foreign languages and care about Standard Arabic.

These notions explain why Standard Arabic dominates in the Algerian Salafis Facebook discourse in this study. Standard Arabic was used even in informal contexts on Facebook because it is sacred and the only language that must be used by real Muslims. French and Romanized transcript was never used by these people because it is prohibited within Salafism. Any such a practice is therefore a marker of a lost Islamic identity. Moreover, the common features that characterize Arabic on Facebook among Algerians such as the use of Roman transcript, informal style, emoticons, acronyms, doubled or repeated letters within a word, etc are negatively perceived by the Algerian Salafis in the study; they avoid such practices in their discourse to protect Arabic from this harmful change.

Conclusion

This chapter depicted how I started up with nothing in mind but few assumptions and guesses about the people I decided to study in this research and their practices on Facebook and ended up with a number of findings which show that the Algerian Salafis in this study employed an armoury of discursive practices in the construction of identity and self-

presentation on Facebook. Either consciously or unconsciously done, what the Algerian Salafis do on Facebook was an implicit marker of their Salafism. In other words, their profiles were a reflection of who they are. Most of what these people do on Facebook was religious in nature and displayed their ultra-conservativeness. Moreover, in a way or another, it reflected how they care a lot about their Salafi identity and being different to other groupings. More importantly, language played a crucial role in this operation and was the key resource of identification and self-presentation. Thus, it is clear that social media discourse lies at the heart of our expertise as sociolinguists and discourse analysts.

Chapter Six

Discussion and Conclusions

Introduction **218**

6.1. Salafism through Facebook Discourse (answers to the research questions) **218**

6.2. Discourse and the Dynamic Nature of Identity **222**

6.3. Nicknaming on Social Media Platforms **223**

6.4. Facebook: a Home for Liberated Linguistic Practices **224**

6.5. Facebook and Ideology: the People's Media **225**

6.6. Facebook: a Rich Source of Social Data **227**

6.7. Limitations and Future Research **228**

Conclusion **229**

General Conclusion **230**

References **232**

Appendices **263**

Appendix A. **263**

Appendix B. **264**

Introduction

In the light of previous and recent research of discourse and identity on social media as well as the studies that have investigated language as a social practice, the findings of the present study are discussed and reflected on in this chapter. This discussion would be an attempt to add some knowledge and offer new insights to the study of discourse, identity and social media. They are related to a number of sociolinguistic and discourse themes including religious identity and social media, discourse and identity construction on Facebook and social media, the role language plays in shaping society and how it reflects its social structures and memebers' behaviours and Facebook as a social phenomenon and source of social data. The chapter concludes with expressing the limitations of the present study and suggestions for future research.

6.1. Salafism through Facebook Discourse (answers to the research questions)

The findings of the present research revealed that the Algerian Salafis (who took part of this study) construct their Salafi identity and present themselves on Facebook via an armoury of diverse discursive practices. Some are static including: nicknames and profile picture choice. The majority are dynamic including: informative Salafi publications, ideological discourse (opposing and allegiance discourse), inclusive/exclusive discourse in socialisation publications, the use of Standard Arabic as the dominant code of communication and Facebook meta-discourse on language choice. Moreover, it was found that there are certain creative and novel practices the Algerian Salafis in this study dropped upon as effective semiotic means in the identity and self-presentation process.

One important discursive interpretation in this research is related to what aspect of identity is displayed by the Algerian Salafis on Facebook (Salafi identity vs. personal/individual identities). Given the nature of the Algerian Salafis' discursive practices on Facebook, most

of their publications are characterized by: first, no personal content related to the social and personal life of the user is included; second, the content of all the publications expresses the principles, beliefs and ideology of Salafism. Consequently, it is their Salafi identity which was salient and none of their identity aspects rather than ‘being a Salafi’ was performed and presented on Facebook. Put simply, their Facebook profiles are reflections of their Salafim. Thus, it is the collective (group) religious identity which is prioritized over the personal one among the Algerian Salafis. In other words, this is the way Salafis define and perceive themselves. Indeed, this reflects that the other aspects such as being for instance Algerian, male, married or single are not of great importance to the Algerian Salafis, and it is their religious belonging which represents the essence of their identity as religion is sacred. In other words, they are saying through their Facebook: ‘We are Salafis’. This confirms the approach usually adopted in the current social media studies which states that the term *‘identities’* in the plural, is more accurate than *‘identity’*(see Chap. 3 for further details) where the user decides upon which identity he displays depending on the circumstances and his personal intentions and purposes.

Moreover, the heavy publication of informative Salafi publications and rareness of personal and social publications depicts the ultra-conservativeness of the Algerian Salafis when it comes to social media. They do not use Facebook the same way others do. People usually use Facebook for sharing with friends and others their social experiences (success in study, marriage, newborn babies, etc), daily activities (going to cinema, watching a soccer game, eating out, visiting a new place or travelling) expressing personal feelings and attitudes or speaking about events or news. None of these were common among the Algerian Salafis. They are pragmatic in their use of Facebook and social media primarily for religious purposes: they use it only for ‘good reasons’ which are - according to them- promoting Salafism and spreading its teachings and principles among others. They consider their

practices on Facebook a kind of worship for which Allah would reward them. Indeed, this reflects the way Algerian Salafis perceive social interactions and the great role Salafism play in shaping their social practices.

In addition to the informative Salafi publications, the ideological discourse formed by the users in their publications on Facebook is another essential and key resource for identification. Both the ideological discourse of opposition against the so-called ‘nowadays enemies’ for Salafis (mainly the Muslim Brotherhood) and allegiance discourse to Saudi Arabia as the promoter of Salafism are implicit representation of the Salafi identity. They are employed in constructing the ‘us vs. Them’ discourse. In this discourse, the users employed creative means of ideological identification such as the reconfiguration of terms and names and the use of multimodal means. These practices are the result of the affordances of Facebook and social media. Prior to the emergence of social media platforms, ideological discourse was authoritative and institutional formed only by official institutions such as the governmental departments, newspapers and news channels. The public could rarely construct such a discourse as they do not have the platforms and means to do so. Social media liberated the mass and offered ordinary people the chance to express themselves and construct ideological discourse of identification and alignment within their social groups.

The other marker of Salafism within the publications of the users is the exclusive/inclusive discourse in the socialization status updates. In these publications, the Algerian Salafis were differentiating themselves from other groupings and making an alignment practice within Salafism. This reflects that the basis of identification among Salafis is the religious affiliation to the different groupings within Islam. They were not aligning themselves on the basis of ethnicity, nationality, gender or other social factors, but on belonging to Salafism. This is a reflection of the importance of alignment within Salafism among these people and how they perceive others belonging to other groupings. In other words, Salafism is the basic and key

factor of the Algerian Salafis social identity. It defines, shapes and affects almost every aspect of their life.

In addition to all these discursive practices, the choice of language on Facebook appeared to be a crucial marker of identity. The Algerian Salafis in this study used Standard Arabic written in Arabic transcript as the only code of communication in all their formal and informal interactions on Facebook. Moreover, their language was formal in most of the cases and did not include any features of what Crystal (2001) calls ‘Netspeak’ as mentioned in detail earlier in this chapter. Such findings prove that Facebook provides novel phenomena for sociolinguistics and previous findings and assumptions need to be addressed repeatedly in different contexts. Moreover, such linguistic and discursive practices are evidence of the way Facebook is shaping social life through its affordances which are not available in offline. For instance, unlike what they do in Facebook, the people studied in this study are not able to use Standard Arabic in informal contexts in real life in Algeria because it would be inappropriate and odd to do so among Algerians. However, they could make so on Facebook because they feel liberated on this platform where social constraints of that kind collapse. Thus, the practices of social groupings on Facebook and social media in general might be different to the offline ones and need more investigation and analysis.

All the Algerian Salafis’ aforementioned discursive practices on Facebook in this study were based on the guiding of Salafism. The way they behave on Facebook is shaped by their Salafi beliefs and principles and not personal or other social factors. For instance, the selection of Facebook names and pictures or language choice was determined by principles stated by Salafism. Thus, their practices on Facebook originate from a single source. This reflects the strong bound Salafism is making between its members. Their social behaviours and practices on Facebook are identical the same way their clothes and looks are offline. In the light of these notions, how identity is discursively constructed and performed among the

Algerian Salafis in this study might be representative of how this is achieved among all Algerian Salafis as long as the person is a real Salafi and adhere to the principles of Salafism. However, this claim of generalization needs more research and broader analysis for it can be validated and applied formally in academic research.

6.2. Discourse and the Dynamic Nature of Identity

Along the same vein in recent studies (cf. Farquhar, 2009, Georgalou, 2015, Lee, 2014, Zhao et al. 2008) that argued that identity on social media is a dynamic process that is performed discursively, the present research proved that discourse is the key resource for identity construction and self-presentation in social media platforms such as Facebook. Blending together textual and multimodal means in meaning creation, users are able to express themselves effectively in the light of the disembodiment imposed by the digital medium. Language, in its broader sense, has been found to play a crucial role in the process of identity construction and self-presentation on Facebook in this study. In fact, this conforms to Baron's (2001) famous statement of 'writing the self into being' on social media. For instance, the nicknames the Algerian Salafis in this study form for their Facebook account signal the Salafi identity the same way the dressing style of these people (the robe and shortened trousers) does in the offline world.

The same is performed through the choice of the profile picture. The various types of the profile pictures (see Sec. 1 in this chapter) were all chosen deliberately and reflected the user's Salafism. These two findings would give new insights about the role of static discursive practices in the process of identity construction and self-presentation on Facebook and social media in general. Different to recent studies such as Farquhar (2009), Georgalou (2015) and Zhao et al. (2008) who argued that static discursive practices have a marginal role in identity construction and self presentation among Facebook users, and therefore, were not

taken into account in their studies, this kind of practices were found essential and are employed by the users in the identity and self-presentation process. However, they are still less important than the dynamic discursive practices which represent the key resource of identity negotiation on Facebook.

The dynamic discursive practices employed by the Algerian Salafis in this study are clear reflections of the dynamic process and performance of the self on Facebook conforming to the notion of “showing rather than telling” in identity work on social media (though few cases were direct representation of the self). In other words, these dynamic practices are not direct display of the self where the user is telling other ‘this is me’; he is usually implicitly showing who he is through a variety of discursive means where both the content and form functioned as markers and means of identification. For example, the informative publications with Salafi content were dominant among the users in this study marking one fundamental within Salafism: ‘our duty is to spread and call for the real pure Islam’ (Salafism according to them). Also, the common practice of quoting and accurate citing in such publications is another implicit marker of the Salafi identity as it relates to the principle of ‘publishing only credible and reliable writings and ideas of Salafi scholars and priests’. So, it is obvious accordingly that discourse is an implicit reflection of the identity on Facebook in a continuous dynamic process.

6.3. Nicknaming on Social Media Platforms

In this study, it was found that nicknaming is a discursive strategy that plays an important role in identity construction and self-presentation on Facebook. Indeed, such a finding challenges previous studies in some ways. First, in Zhao et al.’s (2008) study, it was found that the group investigated used their real names for their Facebook accounts and not nicknames or pseudo. Accordingly, the researchers explained this saying that on Facebook people usually use their real names as the usual and primary purpose in using this social

media platform is to get connected and socialize with family, friends and aquintances where there is no need to go anonymous (what they called "anchored relationships").

However, in this study, it was found that it is not always the case on Facebook; nicknames might also be a choice. Second, nicknames have always been related to anonymity as a privacy-protector and safety strategy online (cf. Bechar Israili, 1995; Tingstad, 2003). In other words, people choose to use nicknames online to hide their real identities and protect themselves from any abuse or fraud and to manage one's privacy in this space. On the contratry, this study proved that nicknames are not always used to hide one's real identity for privacy and safety considerations; they are also used in some circumstances to display a specific identity on online spaces such as social media platforms.

Such findings prove that Facebook and social media platforms are very diverse and home for a big number of circumstances and practices. Therefore, this diversity urges for longitudinal and numerous studies for achieving a solid background and significant understanding of social phenomena on Facebook and social media platforms in general. Moreover, as a result of the daily developmement of social media platforms affordances, novel phenomena are emerging continuously. This must be taken into consideration in the sociolinguistic, discourse and social research of social media.

6.4. Facebook: a Home for Liberated Linguistic Practices

The findings related to the linguistic practices in the present study revealed that Facebook offers its users a liberated space for using language and constructing their discourse according to their needs and preferences. The Algerian Salafis in this study used language differently to what is expected on social media in terms of the linguistic structure and language choice. The structure of their language was different to that common among users of Facebook and social media in general. It is common and has been stated in many works such as Crystal (2001, 2007), Warschauer, El Said, & Zohry (2002) and Palfreyman and al Khalil (2003) and Baron

(2008) that the language of social interaction online is non-standard, relatively informal and characterized by structural features such as the use of contractions and doubled letters in words, the use of emojis alongside words, the absence of punctuation and violation of grammar rules as in '*fni pctr, LOL*' for 'funny picture, I am laughing out loud'. Such features were not found in the Algerian Salafis' (in this study) language on Facebook. Their language was similar to the standard language found in official and academic writings and documents such as newspapers or books.

In terms of language choice, as aforementioned in chapter 5, the Algerian Salafis in this study used Standard Arabic in all their interactions whether they are formal or informal. This contradicts to Ferguson's (1959) diglossia which states that Arabic, in Arab societies and communities, has two varieties: one is 'high' (standard) used in official and formal situations; the other is 'low' (colloquial) used in informal situations such as friends' conversations.

Thus, the Algerian Salafis in this study went beyond the sociolinguistic constraints for using language on both the structural and code choice levels. These two findings prove that on Facebook people are free to use language to meet their needs, principles and beliefs and are liberated from the many constraints and limitations they face in their communities or imposed by the different sociolinguistic contexts. This pinpoints to the need of approaching social phenomena on Facebook, especially that related to discourse and language, as diverse and changing through time, space and users. In other words, because Facebook is a free and liberating space, users get rid of the different constraints resulting in varying and diverde practices which are not common.

6.5. Facebook and Ideology: the People's Media.

The findings related to the ideological Facebook publications in this study revealed that social media offers ordinary people the platform to contrcut a discourse where to express their

opinions, views, allegiance and power manipulation. People investigated in this research could create a discourse similar to that found on newspapers where ideology is constructed and displayed through language and other semitotic means. These people could express a certain view towards the world and negotiate power in relation to other groupings such as the Muslim Brotherhood. This is a reflection of how social media sites such as Facebook are being the voice of the ordinary people.

This kind of discourse is usually constructed on mass media (newspapers, magazines, TV channels and official websites) by official institutions and parties such as goverment departments, political parties, organisations and religious institutions. These platforms are not open for the public; ordinary people cannot create their own discourse to express their views and ideologies on a newspaper or a TV channel. However, this authoritative feature is absent on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter allowing the creation of the people's discourse. As argued in Georgalou (2015), this study proves that ideological discourse on SNSs represents a crucial aspect of people's identity. Thus, research investigating discourse and identity on social media should take into consideration ideology imbedded in the publications.

From a methodological perspective, the present research proved that the critical discourse analysis analytical tools (Fairclough, 2003; Van Djik, 2006) are effective in investigating how ideological discourse is a marker of the user's identity on SNSs where there are no authoritative regulations for discourse constrcution. They allow the analysis of the implicit identity markers imbedded in the words and pictures of the users. However, it is the researcher's role to adapt such analystical methods to his research as he encounters novel and creative linguistic and discursive practices on social media. For instance, as aforementioned, the users in this study creatively reconfigured the official names and terms used to refer to their rivals or opposed sides in a way to express them negatively. Such a strategy is novel and

presents the researcher with challenging tasks for analysis because critical discourse analsysis is not usually dealing with ideology imbedded in the structure of words. Moreover, discourse on social media is becoming increasingly multimodal where the audio-visual aspect is playing an important role in the creation of meaning. Therefore, it is highly demamnded that the researcher covers this aspect in his analysis for a better analysis of the implicit identity markers in ideological discourse.

6.6. Facebook: a Rich Source of Social Data

Based on all the aforementioned deductions, Facebook is proved to be a rich source of social data. The different practices of users on this platform are solid evidence of their identities, beliefs, principles and preferences. People are now spending considerable time on Facebook and billions around the world are active users of this platform. Facebook is more than an application in a mobile used for fun or a game in a computer for entertainment; it has become a part of our life today. What we do on Facebook is not 'virtual' (with the classical meaning of the word which might illustrate it as unreal). Based on the findings of the present study and previous research, I would argue that the lines between the online and the offline space are blurred especially with this enhancement of sociability on social media platforms.

This resonates in the huge interest of big firms, corporations, companies and even governmental institutions on Facebook. They are spending a lot to understand people's behaviours and attitudes through their practices on Facebook so that this kind of data would be used later for the planning of their policies and strategies. The role discourse analysts and sociolinguists play in this operation is great because most communication on this platform is discursive. Thus, Facebook lies at the heart of discourse studies and sociolinguistics. Moreover, researching Facebook from a sociolinguistic perspective would not contribute only to the study of language and its relation to society; it provides also data that would contribute

to research within other disciplines such as social, political, media and communication studies.

6.7. Limitations and Future Research

The present study was constrained by a number of methodological limitations given the qualitative and online nature of the research. First, the study included only males in the analysis. As a man, it was impossible to include female Algerian Salafis because they do not befriend or interact with males on Facebook. Therefore, I could not access and use data on their profiles without having 'informant consent' as this would violate the ethics of the online ethnographic research. Accordingly, the findings of the present research are limited only to male Algerian Salafis. Second, the qualitative nature of the research required a small sample as the purpose is to reach deep understanding of the phenomenon under investigated and not generalisations. Thus, the findings are limited to the Algerian Salafis in this study (though the findings of the present research might be generalized to all Algerian Salafis if supported by further research as mentioned above). These findings can be used as a solid background upon which future research will be based. Third, only Salafis of Algerian nationality were included in the study because of the sociolinguistic factor. Salafis from other countries have different sociolinguistic situations and linguistic repertoires. Therefore, their linguistic and discursive practices would differ from those of Salafis in Algeria. Thus, the findings of this research are limited to the Algerian Salafis and cannot be applied to others from other countries even if they are from the Arab World.

In the light of these limitations, I would suggest that future research can be initiated through covering such limitations and gaps. Therefore, female researchers within discourse analysis and sociolinguistics can address identity construction and self-presentation among female Algerian Salafis as they can contact such participants and recruit them for the study.

Moreover, investigating the process of identity construction and self-presentation among Salafis in other countries (especially in Arab countries) and compare the findings in different sociolinguistic contexts would contribute in further understanding of the phenomenon. Also, quantitative research that investigates the phenomenon among Salafis is needed to complement the qualitative one. Other social groups in Algeria with specific social features, ideologies and affiliations can be investigated also as an attempt in understanding the Algerian society in general and how it is shaped and changing. Broadly speaking, as stated before, Facebook is offering a rich area for sociolinguistic research as it encompasses novel linguistic, discursive and communicative practices which are changing daily with the continuous development in social media platform. Therefore, researchers, especially in Algeria, must be aware of such changes and include them in their scope of analysis within discourse studies and sociolinguistics.

Conclusion

The number of implications and conclusions that have been introduced in this chapter would help in the broader understanding of the religious identity in the modern societies. The understanding of the Salafi identity in this study through the lens of Facebook discourse and the findings that have been reached might be helpful for policy makers and strategies' planners in Algeria to deal wisely with the presence of some sub-religious groups in the Algerian society. More precisely, such data that is extracted from Facebook or any other social media platform might be used along side other data obtained from sociological and religious studies to provide a solid background upon which policies and society organisation can be based.

General Conclusion

Based on the findings and deductions of the present research and inspired by Baron's (2001) famous statement of 'writing the self into being' on social media, I would describe our practices on Facebook as: *you are what you do on Facebook*. Everything we do on this platform represents one piece of many that construct our identity. A profile picture that seems so simple and taken-for-granted choice on Facebook might reveal a lot about who we are. More importantly is the language we use on Facebook and how do we construct our discourse. For instance, as shown in this research, using a nickname which is formed in a specific way and written in the Arabic transcript functions as a marker of Salafism and has a great importance among the Algerian Salafis. What you publish frequently on Facebook is also an implicit marker of who you are.

From a methodological perspective, I would argue at the end of this research that the findings and conclusions emanated from the online ethnographic research give deep understanding of the social phenomena on social media platforms such as Facebook. More precisely, because most practices on Facebook are discursive, adopting a discourse-centred ethnographic approach in investigating Facebook phenomena is useful and practical as it enables a user-centred understanding of the phenomenon. In other words, studying a certain phenomenon on Facebook from the lens of its users is more accurate than relying only on one's own analysis and interpretations as a researcher. Indeed, social media is in an ongoing change and many affordances and options are added daily. This would inevitably lead to novel linguistic and discursive practices and phenomena worth investigation. Because such a change is moving towards a more multimodal type of communication, we should, as researchers within the field of social media discourse and sociolinguistics, update our skills and techniques to cope with such a change in the data and contexts.

Although great research has been conducted recently on social media discourse in the western world thus far, studies of that kind are still lacking in the Arab World and especially Algeria according to what I experienced in conducting the present research. The number of studies that has been conducted in the Arab World are serious attempts and efforts to set a foundation for the study of discourse on social media. However, they might not be enough if compared to the large amount of data and the diversity of practices and phenomena on social media which are of great interest to sociolinguists and discourse analysts. Therefore, conducting more studies of that kind would help a lot in developing Arabic social media discourse studies and broadening the scope of traditional sociolinguistics and discourse analysis in the region.

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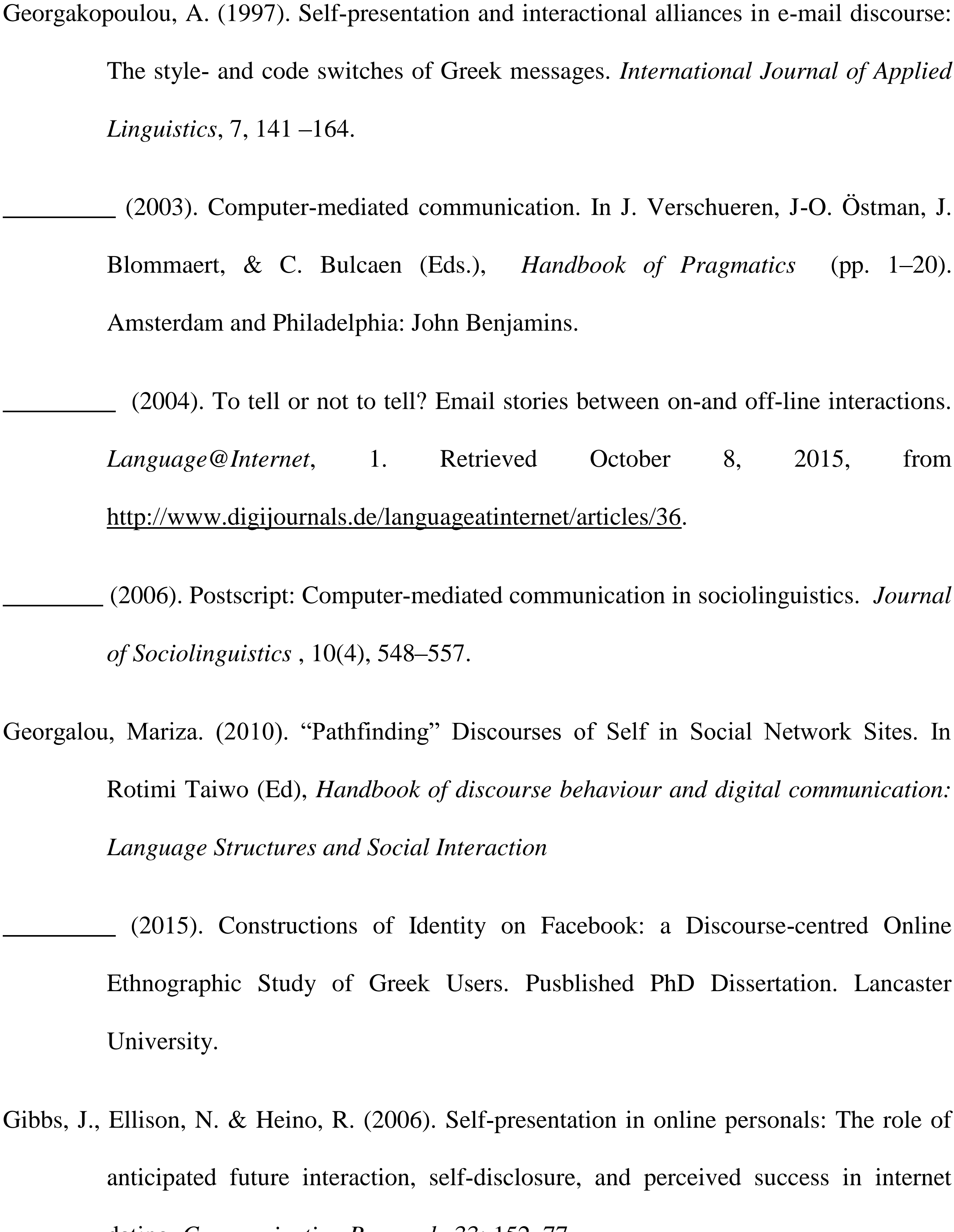

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Appendices

Appendix A. Romanized Symbols of the Arabic Letters

Letter	IPA	Letter	IPA
ء [3]	ʔ	ص	sˤ
ا	aː	ض	dˤ
ب	b	ط	tˤ
ت	t	ظ	ðˤ~zˤ
ث	θ	ع	ʕ
ج	d͡ʒ~g~ʒ	غ	ɣ
ح	ħ	ف [8]	f
خ	x	ق [8]	q
د	d	ك	k
ذ	ð	ل	l
ر	r	م	m
ز	z	ن	n
س	s	ه	h
ش	ʃ	و	w, uː
		ي [9]	j, iː

Appendix B

Table 1.4. Various CMD Studies prior to Social Media Emergence (Danet and Herring, pp. 25-26)

Synchronicity/CMC mode	**Population**	**Language(s)**	**Focus**	**Researcher**
		Asynchronous		
Personal email	High school, university students	Cantonese, English	Code mixing, representation of Cantonese, romanization	Lee
Personal email	Young professionals 23-36 years old	Classical, colloquial Egyptian Arabic, English	Language choice	Warschauer et al.
BBSs	University students, young people	Taiwanese, Taiwanese accented Mandarin, English	Writing systems, dialects	Su
Discussion list	Medical students	English, French, german, Italian,	Language choice over time	Durham
Discussion list	University, Faculty staff	Portugese	Politeness, gender	Oliveira
Discussion list	E.U citizens, all	Multiple,	Language choice,	Wodak & Wright

	ages	English	dominance	
BBSs on fan websites	Young people	Japanese	Orthography and typography	Nishimura
Local Usenet newsgroups	Computer science students	Catalan, Spanish	Netspeak and Spanish interference in Catalan; issues for machine translation	Climent et al.
Discussion lists, newsgroup	Unspecified, presumably adults all ages	Greek " greeklish"	Romanization, uses and features of greeklish, relation between greeklish and English borrowing	Tseliga
Web-based diasporic discussion forums	Adolescents, young adults migrants, children of migrants to germany	German, Persian, hindi, Punjabi, other Indian languages, greeklish	Language choice, code switching	Aandroutsopoulos
SMS (mobile phone text messages)	University students, young people	French	Orthography and typography	Anis
Synchronous				
Instant messaging	Female students	Arabic, ASCII-ized gulf Arabic	Orthography and typography	Palfreyman and Al Khalil
ICQ chat	High school, university	Cantonese, English	Code-mixing,	

	students		representations of Cantonese, Romanization	
Webchat	Young people	Thai	Turn taking, gender	Panyametheekul & Herring
Chatroom	Housewives	Japanese	Kaomoji (Japanese emoticons), gender	Katsuno & Yano
Chat	Young professionals 24-36 years old	Classical, colloquial Egyptian Arabic, English	Language choice	Warschauer et al.
Graphical chat	Unspecified	English, miscellaneous European languages	Language choice	Axelsson et al.

Résumé

Cette recherche vise à étudier la relation entre l'identité, le discours et la langue sur le réseau social Facebook entre un groupe Islamique en Algérie connus sons le nom de 'Salafistes' ou comme certains l'appellent 'Wahhabites'. Plus précisément, la recherche est qualitative et vise à analyser les différentes pratiques linguistiques et stratèges du discours utilisées par ce groupe pour former leur identité salafiste et présentation de leur soi sur Facebook. En raison de la nature qualitative de la recherche, ses objectifs et sa focalisation sur le discours, sa réalisation était basée sur la méthodologie appelée "L'ethnographie Online" (l'ethnographie de discours sur l'internet). L'analyse et l'interprétation des résultats ont été basées sur : le modèle sociologique de Zhao, Grasmuck et Martin (2008) de pratiques explicites et implicites de formation de l'identité sur les réseaux sociaux, les outils d'analyse critiques de discours de Fairclough (2003) et le modèle idéologique de Van Djik (2006). Cette étude a montrée que le groupe de Salafistes dans cette recherche utilisent plusieurs pratiques et stratèges de discours de différente nature sémiotique (textuelle et visuelle) pour former et présenter leur identité sur Facebook : formations des pseudonymes, sélections des images pour le comptes Facebook avec des connotations spécifiques, publications à contenu ancestral salafiste, publications idéologique et le discours d'inclusion/exclusion de l'autre. En plus de ces stratèges, l'utilisation prédominante de la langue Arabe Classique (avec la transcription Arabe) et sa statu "sacrée" chez le groupe était l'un des éléments discursifs les plus importants de l'identité salafistes. Ces résultats ont révèlent que l'identité est dynamique et généralement "montré" au lieu d'être "raconté" à travers le discours sur les réseaux sociaux. Elles reflètent aussi le rôle de la langue comme un pratique sociale et non seulement en tant qu'outil de communication. Cette recherche en résulte un ensemble d'implications pour l'étude de l'identité et du discours, et l'étude des phénomènes sociaux en général à travers les différentes pratiques sur les réseaux sociaux.

Mots Clés : Facebook; l'identité; le discours; présentation de soi; réseaux sociaux; les Salafistes.

الملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة العلاقة بين الهوية و الخطاب واللغة على موقع التواصل الاجتماعي الفيسبوك عند مجموعة دينية إسلامية في الجزائر تعرف بالسلفيين أو كما يطلق عليها البعض الوهابيين. بشكل أدق، هذا البحث ذو المقاربة النوعية يهدف إلى تحليل مختلف الممارسات اللغوية واستراتيجيات الخطاب المتبعة من طرف المجموعة لتشكيل هويتهم السلفية وإبرازذاتهم على الفيسبوك. ونظرا للطبيعة النوعية للبحث، أهدافه وتركيزه على الخطاب، فقد تم الأعتماد في إنجازه على المنهجية المسماة 'الإثنوغرافيا الشبكية لدراسة اللغة والخطاب' (إثنوغرافيا الخطاب على الانترنيت). كما أنه تم الإعتماد في تحليل وتفسير النتائج على نموذج زاو وغراسموك ومارتن (2008) للممارسات الصريحة والضمنية لتشكيل الهوية على مواقع التواصل الإجتماعي، أدوات التحليل النقدي للخطاب لفيركلو (2003) والنموذج الإديولوجي للهوية لفان ديك (2006). ولقدت بينت هذة الدراسة أن مجموعة السلفيين في هذا البحث قد اعتمدوا على ممارسات واستراتجيات خطابية ذات وسائط سيميائية متعددة (خاصة لغوية-صورية) لتشكيل وإبرازهويتهم السلفية على الفيسبوك تتمثل في: تشكيل أسماء مستعارة، اختيار صورلحساب الفيسبوك ذات دلالات محددة، منشورات ذات محتوى سلفي، منشورات إديولوجية وخطاب الإنتماء- إقصاء الأخر. بالإضافة إلى هذة الإستراتيجيات، فإن الإستعمال الغالب للغة العربية الفصحى بالخط العربي ومكانتها "المقدسة" عند المجموعة كانت أحد أهم الركائزالخطابية للهوية السلفية. لقد أثبتت هذة النتائج أن الهوية ديناميكية و يتم عادة "إبرازها" عوضا عن "سردها" من خلال الخطاب على مواقع التواصل الإجتماعي. كما عكست الدور الذي تلعبه اللغة كممارسة إجتماعية وليس فقط كأداة للتواصل. ولهتة النتائج مجموعة من المتضمنات بالنسبة لدراسة الهوية والخطاب ودراسة الظواهر الإجتماعية عموما من خلال مختلف الممارسات على مواقع التواصل الإجتماعي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: إبراز الهوية – الخطاب- السلفيين - الهوية - فايسبوك - مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي.