

## **Representation of burka banning in France as represented in British and Persian Newspapers**

Arezoo Adibeik  
Lancaster University

### **Abstract**

The study of Burka and hijab banning in France have become the topic of major interest in recent years (see Moore, Mason and Lewis, 2008; Al Hejin ,2007; Posetti 2006; Scott, 2007). This paper, traces the histories and discourses supporting and neglecting the representation of burka banning in three British newspapers and tabloids (*The Guardian, The Times, The Sun*) and three Persian newspapers (*Resaalat, Shargh* and *Tehran Times*) during a nine month period from January to September 2010; following the event of French burka banning proposal by the then French president Nicolas Sarkozy, which was eventually passed on and approved by the senate on 14<sup>th</sup> of September 2010; I will be using Reisigl and Wodak's (2001) Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) and the strategic discursive devices within this approach in order to familiarise the readers to the notion of 'burka' for women from two separate ideological background (i.e. Christian / Islamic). Besides, this paper aims to focus on how veiled women are represented in British and Persian newspapers following the controversies on Hijab and burka banning issues. The findings show that while newspapers have different strategies in their way of representation due to their political trend, they all tend to contribute to similar constructions towards women who wear the burka. **Key words:** veil-banning, hijab, burka, Muslim women, Media, Discourse Historical Approach, discursive strategies

### **1. Introduction**

Both sex and religion are considered as important issues in broadcasting media and press. Over the past century, there have been numerous debates on veil banning. It has especially attracted increased press attention within the past few decades especially since 1989 following "the event that became known as the 'affaires des foulards' began on October 3, 1989, when three Muslim girls who refused to remove their headscarves were expelled from their middle school in the town of Creil, about thirty miles outside of Paris (Scott, 2007:22-23)".

In this paper, I will trace the histories and discourses supporting and neglecting the representation of full-face (henceforth, burka) banning in three British newspapers and tabloids and three Persian newspapers during a nine month period from January to September 2010 following the event of president Nicolas Sarkozy's burka banning proposal which was then passed on and approved by the senate on 14<sup>th</sup> of September 2010; using the discourse historical approach (DHA) and the strategic devices in order to show the representation of the notion of 'burka' for women in both Islamic and Christian ideologies. I shall be answering the following questions:

1. How are veiled women represented in British and Persian newspapers and what are the potential differences among these newspapers?
2. Which discursive strategies tend to appear more in such discourses?

A large number of news stories about the notion of the term 'veil' and 'hijab' have been triggered by politicians bringing the matter into the public consideration. Over the past decade, the appropriateness of Muslim women's dressing, particularly the burka has been the focus of often controversial media debates. As many scholars believe (e.g. Scott, 2007; Vaarakallio, 2010, Vorster, 2011) the burka debate has come to symbolise the clash of cultures: To be more precise, between the French secular interests and the Muslim religious beliefs. There are conflicting claims on this issue that regard it as a symbol of both oppression and freedom of expression. As Posetti (2006:2) argues in her report that "the media cannot be held solely responsible for the construction of national identity not blamed for social attitudes towards", what she considers as "minority cultures and religions ". On the other hand, she seems to support the claim that while the Western media usually sees itself as a democratic institution it still is biased against religious communities especially the Muslims. However, as stated previously, there have been some

negative issues towards the notion of 'hijab' and especially towards 'burka' in the western press. Having a brief look at the headlines of newspapers, which were related to such topics during the past decade, I have found that most fears of burka and niqab have their roots in the events following September 11, 2001 terror attacks and the suicide bombings and hostage takings in different parts of the world. For example the heart-breaking event of 'Beslan School Siege' on 3rd of September 2004 which was about Chechen Islamic extremists who murdered 344 people after taking 1200 hostage during just one day and among the hostage-takers were "female suicide bombers wearing the burka and niqab".<sup>1</sup> Moreover, this is only one of the many articles, which understandably lead to fear towards the women who wear the full-face covering garment 'the burka'. That is why the media are believed to have a strong impact on people. They do have great power over people's beliefs and assessments. Hence, with power comes great responsibility and that is the reason why the headlines of newspapers are of utmost importance.

This research also attempts to show that while newspapers have different strategies in the representation of veil banning due to their political standpoints, in some important ways they all contribute similar construction of the In-groups versus the Out-groups. I hope that this essay and its results shall help to highlight some significant and challenging issues regarding the representation of full-veil banning in France from the point of view of two different countries (UK and Iran) with diverse ideologies.

### **1.1. Definition of key terms**

Veil is a cover term, which refers to all forms of the Islamic veil (either headscarf or full-face veil). Because of confusions of the terms related to Islamic veils, in this section I shall define each type of Muslim women's veil, which is stated in this essay along with a pictorial

---

<sup>1</sup>. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/world/04/russian\\_s/html/1.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/world/04/russian_s/html/1.stm)

example, which I collected from BBC website <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10611398>> (Accessed: 5 April 2011).

### **1.1.1. Different types of Muslim women's veils**

**1.1.1.1. Hijab:** The word 'Hijab' is usually a term used for covering the hair. It is an Arabic term meaning 'barrier' or 'partition'. According to Bardan (1995c,P.22) "the word 'Hijab' or 'veil' signified covering the face and was used as a generic term in nineteenth and early twentieth century Egypt". The type most commonly worn in the West is a square scarf that covers the head and neck but leaves the face clear.



**Figure 1. Hijab**

**1.1.1.2. Burka** is the most concealing of all Islamic veils. It covers the entire face and body, leaving only a mesh screen to see through.



**Figure 2. Burka (Burqa)**

**1.1.1.3. Niqab** refers to a full-face veil that does not cover the eyes. i.e. it is a veil for the face, which leaves the area around the eyes clear. However, it may be worn with a separate eye veil. It may also be worn with an accompanying headscarf.



**Figure 3. Niqab**

## **1.2. Significance of study**

The significant effect of the 'affaires des foulards' in France was to make the headscarves an emblem of a difference that could be integrated. France with its long traditions of secularism had called for the outlawing all 'conspicuous' signs of religious affiliation in public schools. Consequently, such discriminations tend to marginalize Muslims, which is highly likely to make them isolated. This seems to be a great problem facing both sides either French government or Muslim populations living in France. Interestingly, they both share the idea that there is a political reason behind this debate and they may both be right if one is looking at the whole situation without bias.

## **2. Data Collection and Methodology**

### **2.1. Data Collection**

As a first step, I retrieved the stories related to burka banning issues in British newspapers from Lexis Nexis database, using the key words veil / burka banning in France. Among the UK broad sheets and tabloids, I chose one liberal quality newspaper *the Guardian*, one conservative quality newspaper *the Times* and one tabloid newspaper *the Sun* for my analysis. I chose these newspapers due to their different political stances. I did almost the same procedure for Persian newspapers by searching the same key terms in both Persian and English language in Magiran.com, which is considered to be one of the databases for Persian language news documents. I chose a traditional conservative right-winged newspaper called *Resaalat* (= 'the Prophecy') and a reformist or left-winged party newspaper *Shargh* (= 'the East') along with an

English language daily newspaper *Tehran Times* whose general policy was based on the late Ayatollah Beheshti's statement: " The Tehran Times is not the newspaper of the government; it must be a loud voice of the Islamic Revolution and the loudspeaker of the oppressed people of the world."<sup>2</sup>

## **2.2. Methodology**

My analysis is largely based on Wodak's (2001) Discourse Historical Approach (henceforth, DHA). The sample data was based on a 9-month period from January 2010 through to 15<sup>th</sup> September 2010. The following table shows the name of the newspapers as well as the frequency of the numbers of articles relevant to my analysis plus the publishing dates.

---

<sup>2</sup> . [http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index\\_info.asp?I=A](http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_info.asp?I=A)

**Table 1. Data collection information**

	<b>Names of the newspapers used in the data</b>	<b>Political Stance</b>	<b>Published Date(s)</b>
<b>British Newspapers</b>	The Guardian	Centre-left Liberal quality newspaper	January 26, 2010 April 22, 2010 September 15, 2010
	The Times	Centre-right conservative quality newspaper	May 19, 2010 July 14, 2010
	The Sun	Right-wing populist tabloid	July 21, 2010 July 29, 2010
<b>Persian Newspapers</b>	Tehran Times	Centre-right conservative	January 26, 2010 April 22, 2010 May 20, 2010 July 21, 2010
	Resaalat	Conservative-right winged	April 27, 2010
	Shargh	Reformist/left-winged	July 15, 2010

As can be seen in the table, the British newspapers allocated 7 articles (3 belong to the Guardian, 2 to the Times and 2 to the Sun) related to burka banning while the Persian newspapers allocate 6 articles (4 belong to Tehran Times, 1 in Resaalat and 1 in Shargh).

The five-level analytical method of DHA approach consists of: 1) referential strategies (naming) 2) predication strategies 3) argumentative strategies 4) perspectivisation 5) mitigation and intensification strategies. However, because of space restrictions, I shall focus only on two of the most salient strategies which occurred more frequently in my analysis: the referential and predicational strategies<sup>3</sup>.

### **3. The historical events prior to burka banning in France**

According to Scott (2007:22) the debates about whether girls should wear Islamic hijab in public schools in France, erupted at three separate chronological sequences: in 1989, 1994 and 2003. I shall describe these events briefly: In 1989, three Muslim girls were expelled from their school because they refused to remove their headscarves. Following that event, the minister of education, Farnçois Bayrou, decreed on September 20, 1994 that any 'ostentatious' signs of religious affiliation would henceforth be prohibited in all schools (Scott, 2007: 26). Finally, in 2003, the question of headscarves was first brought to national attention by the then minister of interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, who recommended headscarf banning which was approved by French MPs in the next year, leading to President Jacques Chirac's call for the prohibition of headscarves in 2004. Furthermore, during this time concerns about terrorism after the attacks of September 11, 2001 in the US was one of the justifications for this ruling and hijab banning proposals (Scott, 2007: 30). Such decisions were mostly because of the fact that French public consider hijab as *the problem of Islam* due to their secular system (*Ibid*). What the chronological sequence reflects is a hardening of the government's position in reaction to the steady growing political influence of the anti-immigrant far right. Scott (2007) argues that headscarves are dangerously political in their challenge to the principles of the secular republic of which France is a part. Such views are claimed to be in association with Islamism and terrorism and therefore,

---

<sup>3</sup>. NB. Other strategies were also noticed which can be discussed in a separate article.



they might create Islamophobia. Accordingly, the years between 1989 and 2003 have raised a dramatic increase in international attention towards political Islam. Some French Political leaders relate France's social problems to 'immigrants' and therefore refuse to accept them in their schools if they (i.e.the 'immigrants') did not dress in conformity with the secular standards. In fact, they are made to embrace the values and identity of the French (Scott: 2007, 36-39). With that said, there are different factors in veil banning in France, which are based on issues like: 1) Racism 2) secularism 3) individualism and 4) sexuality (Scott, 2007: 45). Each of these factors was the salient elements emphasized in all my data while exploring the implications of burka banning in France. For example in the Guardian (September 15, 2010) we can see the significance of such bases (secularity and individuality) in the president's speech as underlined below:

*The president said the burqa had no place in a secular society committed to women's rights.*

#### **4. The representation of 'women'**

Much of the recent work on the representation of women in the media points to their misinterpretation (cf. Booth 1980). Some studies (see Scott, 2007; Moore, Mason and Lewis, 2008), however, venture further to show how women have been incorporated and represented into journalism. I will point out to the representation of women and burka banning in France, which has become a controversial issue in the media recently. The French Senate passed the bill, which prohibited face-covering in public places, on September 14, 2010. It should be noted that it was previously passed by the National Assembly of France on 13 July the same year. What is more salient about this proposal is that, first of all burkas prevent the ability to identify someone; as it is explicitly stated in the Times (July 14, 2010) by a Muslim woman who says that: *"I felt comfortable knowing that my face would not be known"*. Secondly, it is inconsistent with

France's values i.e. French secular system and is against women's rights. As it is believed covering the face is a symbol of 'extremism' and ignoring 'individual identity'. Additionally, it is considered a threat towards the French society, which leads to the concept of Islamophobia and more specifically terrorism. As of the beginning of the year 2010 the bill, which proposed burka banning had been debated for several months. At first partial bans were proposed and later on it was turned to a total face veil banning which was approved by the Senate. The law was enforced as of 11 April, 2011.

Furthermore, as Posseti (2006: 3) points out negative stereotyping and reactionary reporting tend to historically typify coverage of Islam and Muslims. She further indicates that "Muslim women are almost invariably portrayed as oppressed and veiled, a terrorist threat or exotic, sexualized beings". In similar vein, Lambert and Githens-Mazer (2010: 64) in a section on *Media portrayal of Muslim women* report that media stories, in a Muslim woman's view, have nearly always been negative surrounding scandal, abuse or focus on oppression of those who wear it. They further stress that despite the fact that there are many extraordinary individuals who are strong-minded, courageous and beautiful Muslim women who proudly wear Islamic dress, none of them are portrayed in the media as such ( Ibid: 67). Thus, positive stories or portrayals of Muslim women are not considered as newsworthy which apparently shows bias of media in portraying them. In the next section, I shall discuss the burka banning discourses from a DHA point of view.

##### **5. DHA analysis of ' discourses about burka banning in France'**

My analysis on media coverage of both British and Persian newspapers is based upon two complementary pieces of research from DHA perspective. The results of the text analysis and the discourse topics of the headlines of newspapers can be grouped in terms of different periods and

events on the one hand and as I stated earlier in the methodology section, there are differences in the political stances of newspapers for example, the tabloids vs. broadsheets; conservatives vs. liberals on the other hand. Hence, there could also be questions formulating the representations of burka banning in France as reflected in UK liberal and conservative newspapers during a nine-month period which lead to the Senate's approval of Burka banning in France. What follows then in terms of overall conclusions, however, is a tribute of some of the general discursive strategies of burka banning based on the text analysis.

In an overview analysis of the UK newspapers, we can observe that for example MPs and Nikolas Sarkozy are the major social actors in French burka banning debates, which are considered as Self in the French context. Women who wear burka on the other hand, are mostly assumed to belong to other social groups and hence, are different social actors (i.e. Others). This matter is also related to 'power' as an asymmetric relationship among social actors with different social positions. The major CDA studies on the Self and Other representation within Wodak's (2001) DHA have developed as salient methodologies and at the same time proposed several analytical categories through which the representation of these in-groups and out-groups in discourse are accounted for.

According to Reisigl and Wodak (2009: 90), the DHA considers intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between utterances, texts, genres and discourses as well as extra-linguistic social / sociological variables, the history of an organization or institution and situational frames. Intertextuality means that texts are linked to each other, as in veil banning issue which started in 1989 and which was then lead to burka banning in September 2010 all the texts are linked to each other. They are connected both in the past and in the present. Such connections according to Resigl and Wodak (2009) are established through different references

either via references to the same events or by allusions or evocations to some other texts and events.

## **5.1. Naming and Referential Strategy**

### **5.1.1. British Newspapers**

In this section, I shall discuss the ways in which people are named in news discourses that according to Richardson (2007: 49) can have significant impact on the ways they are viewed. Furthermore, he argues that we all simultaneously process a range of identities, roles and characteristics that could be used to describe us equally accurate but not with the same meaning (*ibid*). The manner in which social actors are named identifies not only the groups that they are associated with (or at least the groups that the reader / writer want them to be associated with) it can also signal the relationship between the manner and the named. Reisigl and Wodak (2009) have called these naming options 'the referential strategies' of a text. According to them, choosing to describe Self and Others is likely to serve different psychological, social or political purposes on the side of both readers and writers. The following is a simple example of naming strategy used in the Guardian newspaper:

***Nicolas Sarkozy** has ordered the French government to prepare legislation...*

(The Guardian, April 22, 2010)

In this example 'Nicolas Sarkozy' is the social actor as highlighted in bold. He does the act of '*ordering*'. Hence, we may understand that he is the one who has power over the French government even if we do not know his role as the (then) French president.

Furthermore, by looking at all three articles, I observed that this newspaper tends to use more quotations, which means that the author(s)<sup>4</sup> of the articles are in fact trying to distance

---

<sup>4</sup> . NB. The same person (Lizzy Davies) was the author of all three articles I have found about this particular topic in the Guardian newspaper. Therefore, we may not be able to conclude 100% that this is the strategy of the newspaper

themselves from what had already been said. I counted 23 instances of such quotations in all the articles found in *the Guardian* during the mentioned period. An example of such cases can be detected as follows in a section of an article entitled as (**Senate in France votes for Muslim face veil ban**, *The Guardian*, September 15, 2010):

*After six months of "mediation" and a period during which police are likely to be given detailed instructions on how to apply the law, the first penalties are expected to be seen early next year. They will consist of fines of euros 150 for those found wearing a face-covering veil as well as, or instead of, a "citizenship course".*

*[...] Supporters of the ban - including Nicolas Sarkozy, who has said the full Islamic veil "is not welcome" on French soil - say it is a move made primarily in defence of women's rights and secularism.*

Furthermore, *the Guardian* focuses more frequently on the banning of burka with 31 cases supporting it and the controversies it raises. While in two articles from *the Times* and *the Sun* there are 5 and 7 cases respectively which support the banning of burka.

Another important keyword which is highly associated with 'burka' is the word 'Women'. It appears that *the Guardian* and *the Times* tend to use more unmarked 'women' (with 12 and 8 cases respectively) rather than the marked 'Muslim women' which appears 5 times in *the Sun* but only 3 times in *the Guardian* and twice in *the Times*. As an illustration, women in an article written by Houriya Ahmed in *the Times* ( July 14, 2010) are represented as unmarked 'women' and not as 'Muslim women' which is being marked in another article from the same newspaper, written by Charles Bremner in the same newspaper, entitled as ( '**Burka rage' scuffle as cabinet**

---

itself. We definitely need a larger corpus with different authors in the same newspaper to come across such a conclusion.

**debates veil ban**, May 19, 2010). The term 'Burka rage' in the title already insinuates violence. Although this article is a very short one, the sense of 'rage' and 'disrespect' about those who wear the 'burka' is being evoked. The writer's disparaging remarks by mentioning the story of 'a Muslim woman' explicitly shows the emotional 'anger' and 'violence' against such women in France. Moreover, as it is believed by some religious leaders the anti-Muslim feelings is being incited by the government. The other interesting fact about this article is that, on the one hand, 'the Muslim woman'<sup>5</sup> is referred to by her name, three times in the text as 'Zlodie' and thus suggests the assaulted woman's identity as a foreigner perhaps and displays her remarkable difference from the 'two passers-by'. Moreover, the ones who had assaulted her were referred to as 'mother and daughter', which identifies these two social actors' kinship. Thus, I think this kind of relationship tends to show Self- strength and unity of French nationals whereas the reference to the Muslim woman's name appears to emphasise on her Other-ness and solitude state. As Richardson (2007: 49) indicates such naming options tend to choose and describe the individual's identity and in this case, it might mean the social value of French kinship, which is of utmost importance in France's secular system than any other kinship. Another interesting point here is that the mother is described as a lawyer, hence, it can be said that she might be thinking that she had the right to take the law into her own hands. Also a reference to her job could insinuate that she is well-educated while as we can see, there is no reference to the Muslim woman's job which can indicate that she is either jobless or not educated.

***The Muslim woman**, named only as **Zlodie**, told reporters that she had been leaving a shoe store in Trignac, near St Nazaire, when two passers-by, apparently **mother and daughter**, made derogatory remarks before telling her: "Go back to your own country." **The mother, a***

---

<sup>5</sup>. NB. the use of definite article

lawyer, allegedly tried to tear off the niqab worn by Zlodie-at which point the two began trading slaps before being separated by shop assistants, Zlodie said. "Things got nasty," she added. "The older woman grabbed my veil to the point of ripping it off." ('Burka rage' scuffle as cabinet debates veil ban, *The Times*, May 19, 2010).

Additionally, there is a remarkably high frequency of references to 'war' metaphors in the account of burka banning event. For example, *the Sun* (July 29, 2010) writes:

*Militant Ayman al-Zawahri described a move by France to outlaw the hijab head-dress as one of "shameless war"... "You are mujahedat (female holy warriors) in the most important battlefield. "Every single woman who defends her veil is a holy warrior in the face of the secular Western crusade."*

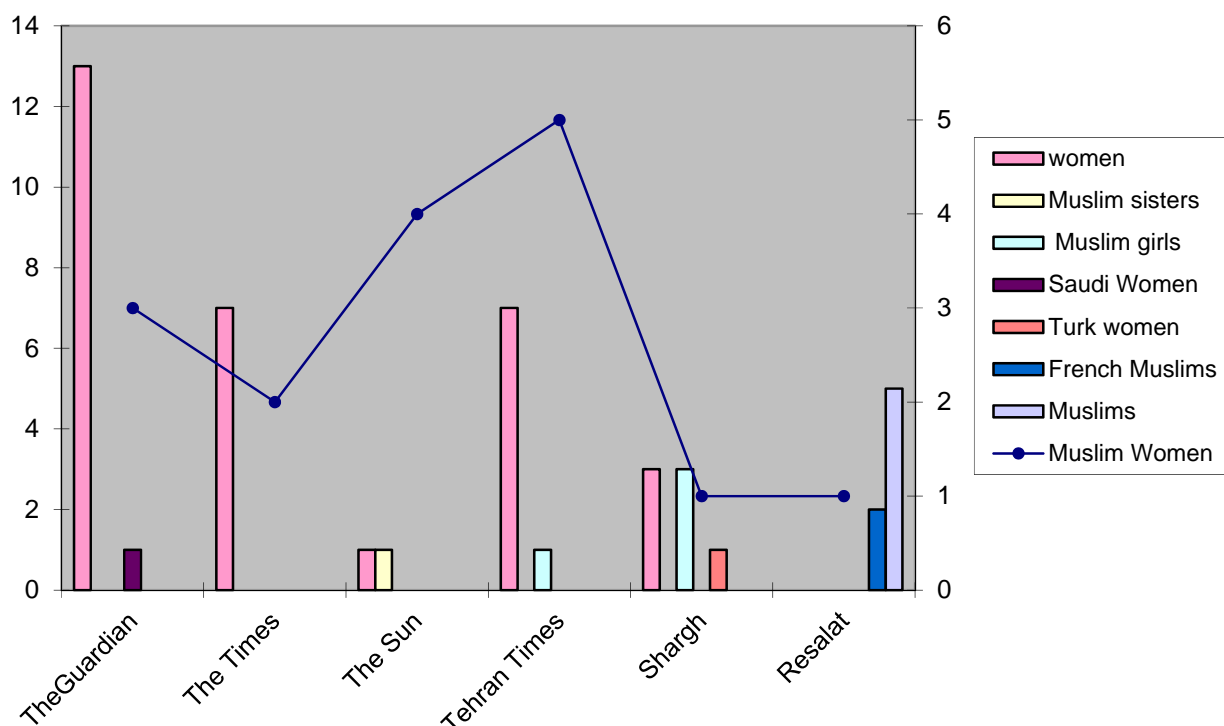
Again, several issues might be provoked from such metaphors in this example, one of which could be 'hostility' towards French secularity. The other issue could be the extreme religious ideologies of some Muslims about the holiness of war against western beliefs. In the following section, I will discuss the same strategies used in a Muslim country's beliefs and in particular I will focus on three Persian language newspapers as mentioned in section (2.1).

### **5.1.2. Persian Newspapers**

With respect to Persian data, however, we can see that critics of the veil are regarded as 'extremists and 'radicals', in essence. The discursive construction in such data includes various strategies. 'Women' are represented most frequently as 'women', and to a lesser extent 'Muslim women' and the least as 'French Muslims'. Figure 4 shows the frequency of the representation of women in a corpus of 5154 words<sup>6</sup> in both British and Persian newspapers.

---

<sup>6</sup>. I already had the word count of the articles, so I was able to calculate the whole number of words in the corpus I used.



**Figure 4. The representation of 'women' in British and Persian newspapers (The Guardian, The Times, The Sun, Tehran Times, Shargh, Resaalat)**

As can be seen in the graph (Figure 4), *the Guardian* newspaper shows a high increase in the use of 'women' while in *Resaalat* newspaper we cannot see any traces of 'women' and interestingly it appears that *Resaalat* tends to use the plural noun 'Muslims' as a cover term, for both men and women in an article entitled as "**Élysée Palace<sup>7</sup> against the Islamic hijab (veil)**". The Persian newspapers tend to use more marked adjectives with women wearing the burka such as 'Muslim girls/women', also with their national identities like 'Turk women', 'French Muslims', and even more interestingly generalize them with the religious term 'Muslims' regardless of their sex<sup>8</sup>. It might be the case here that being a Muslim is more important than being a woman. i.e.

<sup>7</sup>. Here a metonym 'Élysée Palace' is used to refer to the French government. In fact, a metonymy is a figure of speech used in rhetoric in which a thing or concept is not called by its own name but by the name of something intimately associated with that thing or concept.

<sup>8</sup>. As discussed in section 1.3.1. of this paper, the veil is utilized mostly by women.



men and women are equal in the eyes of the Lord according to the Koran. Besides, it should be noted that the Koran does not always emphasize on gender discrimination when it describes the followers of Islam (the Muslims). Therefore, this might be one reason for using the plural noun 'Muslims' here. Another reason, at the same time might be this issue that in Islamic ideology and according to the holy Koran, 'women' are under the protection of men<sup>9</sup>. Hence, the women are not mentioned frequently because they are under men's control and protection.

Another equally important point about the graph is that the marked 'Muslim women' tends to appear more in *Tehran Times* among the Persian newspapers and then in *the Sun* among the British newspapers. As can be seen in the graph, there is a steady increase in the use of 'Muslim women' in *Tehran Times*, which interestingly has a sudden fall in *Resaalat* and *Shargh*.

As for referencing, in Persian newspapers, we can notice 'sleep' related metaphors. Such as 'France falsely considers itself as the cradle of democracy and freedom' (Resaalat, April 27, 2010)

The metaphors (e.g. cradle of democracy) and metonymies (e.g. Élysée Palace) that are referred to in here are usually sarcastic and negative towards the French government. In the following section, I shall discuss the predicational strategies used in both British and Persian newspapers.

## **5.2. Predicational strategy**

### **5.2.1. British Newspapers**

As discussed in the previous section, referential strategies as described by Resigl and Wodak (2001,2009) bear the outline of value judgements. Also such strategies are what Richardson (2007: 52) considers as relevant to the analysis of newspapers and the choice of words they use

---

<sup>9</sup>. (4:34)"Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because God has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. "

to represent more directly the values and characteristics of social actors. Richardson (2004:90) [c.f. Al-Hejin (2007:11)] argues that the social position of Muslim women is often associated with negative predication such as being 'oppressed ' and ' backward '. In his view then predication might be a physical predicate, which is typical of the way tabloids describe people. For example in (**War on veil ban**, *The Sun*, July 29, 2010) the article shows numerous predications, which are mostly connecting terrorism and women to one another i.e. it implies that Muslim women have ties to the Al-Qaeda terrorist group:

**TERROR group al-Qaeda's second in command** has called on **Muslim women** to become "holy warriors" and fight the ban on face veils.

Furthermore, according to Richardson (2007: 53) "Predication is also used to criticise, undermine and vilify certain social actors". In *the Guardian* we can see negative predications such as 'recalcitrant', 'denounced', 'walking prison', 'debasement', 'stigmatised', 'isolation', 'reprimanded' against those who wear the burka. In the Times, however, 'oppressing', 'outraged', 'disparaging remarks' and 'punished' are more notable. Therefore, it could be concluded that British newspapers seem to agree more or less with the French position on veil banning issues as one of headlines clearly shows their position: MPs playing **silly** burkas ( *The Sun*, July 21, 2010). The predication 'silly' in this headline could definitely be considered as a very offensive remark towards both women who wear it in particular as well as to Muslims in general. We may also take this very interesting example in an article entitled (**A Niqab is a Symbol of misogyny. It should not be banned Houriya Ahmed**, *The Times*, July 14, 2010) reporting a Muslim woman's <sup>10</sup> personal experience of wearing a 'niqab' and her change of mind towards it. When at first I read this headline, I was quite confused. To me this headline was a bit ambiguous and I

---

<sup>10</sup> . the writer of the article

will illustrate why. The term 'misogyny' means 'the hatred of women' [From Greek miso- (hate) + gyne (woman)]. And according to the writer of this article "A Niqab is a symbol of misogyny" and hence a sign of oppression and hatred towards women who wear it. The second sentence of the headline, however, says that " It [the niqab] *shouldn't be* banned Houriya Ahmed". The readers might have the same impression as I had here 'why something which causes hatred of women, *shouldn't be banned?*' The answer could be discovered within the text itself. It seems that the writer agrees more or less to a partial ban of the garment. Yet, she considers a 'total ban' as a 'plain draconian' in other words too harsh and severe. She adds that the French lawmakers are making a 'terrible mistake' by voting to the ban of such face covering Islamic veils. As she argues ' it is not the business of governments to enforce women to wear the veil or not'. Interestingly, in the same article we can see several contradictions one of which has just been stated and the other is that in the first few lines of the article, the writer considers hijab (headscarf) as 'a symbol of modesty' as it is represented in Islamic beliefs on the one hand and regards 'niqab' (which is also a type of hijab but not a religious requirement) as 'a symbol of misogyny' on the other. The word 'Islamophobic' also suggests that the writer whose name apparently shows that she belongs to an Islamic background, believes implicitly that wearing a 'niqab' might understandably create 'Islamophobia' in the western societies. Consequently, the chosen referential strategies perform a function within the current text. In other words, not only do they project meaning and social values onto the referent, which in here is 'Houriya Ahmed', but also they might employ that other social actors (e.g. Women) are referred to and represented as well. On the whole, Houriya Ahmed, the writer of the Niqab article, emphasizes that her early 'ideological square', as Van Dijk (1997) puts it especially with regard to 'niqab' and more precisely the women who wear this garment, is characterised by a positive self-representation

since she also used to wear it. However, at the same time it is not clear from her account why she herself decided not to wear it when she came to Britain. At the beginning of the article she clearly says that ' *I grew up in a liberal household in the Middle East where religious practice was never forced on me. But when I was 17 I made the choice to wear the hijab* ' Here is the conflicting point, in the first sentence she says that she came from a liberal family background who did not force her to wear the garment yet at the age of 17 she is forced to wear the hijab. Who forced her is not mentioned. Moreover, it is not clear that how she decided not to wear the hijab when she came to Britain; whether it was the society's influence or her own choice is not explicitly mentioned.

### **5.2.2. Persian Newspapers**

In the Persian data, as can be expected there are more traces of negative attitude towards those who *ban* the burka and more positive attitude towards burka wearing despite the fact that Iranian women rarely wear burka. In *Shargh* newspaper I found only three subtle examples of predication in a 980-word article while in *Resaalat* newspaper I detected 11 peculiar examples within a 483-word article, which was quite remarkable. Some of them are as follows:

*Nicolas Sarkozy, the racist President of France, still refuses to allow Islamic hijab in French Schools. Meanwhile, France 'falsly' considers itself as the cradle of democracy and freedom.*

*(Resaalat, April 27, 2010)*

Another example from the same newspaper comes as follows:

*A claim, which is apparently absurd...*

The use of predications ' falsly' and 'absurd' seem to condense prejudices in a very specific way considering the fact that the latter is an offensive remark.

Overall, *Resaalat* tends to insinuate a negative position towards the social actors by using the predications I have underlined above. Finally, in *Tehran Times*, I noted some interesting examples of both positive and negative implications of predication. Such as:

*Gerin stressed the need to move 'progressively' toward a law banning the attire<sup>11</sup>. (Tehran Times, January 26, 2010) (Positive)*

*[...] they consider such drastic step unnecessary (Tehran Times, January 26, 2010). (Negative)*

Hence, we may conclude that *Tehran Times* seems to be more or less moderate in using predicational strategies among other two newspapers.

## **6. Summary and concluding remarks**

This essay was a DHA investigation into the representation of 'women wearing burka' and 'burka banning in France' during a 9-month period from January to September 2010. The findings show that while newspapers have different strategies in their way of representation due to their political trend, in essence, they all tend to contribute to similar constructions towards women who wear the burka and the controversies that banning this garment causes within British and Persian Newspapers. As it was expected, the construction of 'women wearing burka' in the structure of newspapers in Iran, namely *Tehran Times* and *Resaalat*, highlights similar discursive strategies of negativisation towards the banning issue whereas the British newspapers especially *the Sun* tends to have a positive attitude towards it. The selected Persian newspapers despite their epistemological trends tend to use more of marked adjectives with women than the British newspapers. Overall, the data would seem to suggest that: the burka signifies both religious and cultural incompatibilities in different ideologies. With that said, I do not claim that this could be regarded as a generalised fact, far from it, because the number of articles is not equally

---

<sup>11</sup> . 'Attire' means clothes, especially fine or formal ones.

distributed. Yet, what I intended to clarify in this paper is to show the differences between two rather distinctive ideologies which are reflected in these newspapers.

## References

- Al-Hejin, B. (2007). Representation of the Muslim veil in the BBC News Website: A critical Discourse Analysis. MRes dissertation in Applied Linguistics, Lancaster University.
- Barden, M. (1995c.). *Feminists, Islam, and nation: gender and the making of modern Egypt*. Princeton University Press
- Booth, J. (1980). 'Watching the Family'. *Women and Media*. In H. Baehr's edn. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Javed Rasool, G. (1987). Women in Islamic Ideology. *Social Scientist*. 15 (2): 62-65.
- KhosraviNik, M. (2010). The representation of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants in British Newspapers. *Journal of Language and Politics*. 9 (1):1-28.
- KhosraviNik, M. (2009). The representation of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants in British Newspapers during the Balkan Conflict (1999) and the British general election (2005). *Discourse and Society*. 20 (4): 477-498.
- Lambert, R. and J.Githens-Mazer. (2010). *Islamophobia and anti-muslim hate crime: UK case studies 2010*. European Muslim Research centre: University of Exeter.
- McCausland / NSW Anti Discrimination Board. (2003). *Race for the headlines: Racism and media discourse*. Sydney: Anti-Discrimination Board of New South Wales.
- Moore, K., Mason, P. and Lewis, J. (2008). *Images of Islam in the UK: The representation of British Muslims in the National Print News Media 2000-2008*. Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies: Cardiff University.
- Posetti, J. (2006). Media representation of the hijab. *Journalism in Multicultural Australia*. <[http://www.reportingdiversity.org.au/cs\\_one.pdf](http://www.reportingdiversity.org.au/cs_one.pdf) >
- Reisigl, M. and Wodak, R. (2001). *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of racism and anti-semitism*. London: Routledge.
- Reisigl, M. and Wodak, R. (2009). The Discourse Historical Approach. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. In R.Wodak and M.Meyer (Eds). *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage. pp.87-121.
- Richardson, J. E. (2004). *Misrepresenting Islam: The racism and Rhetoric of British Broadsheet Newspapers*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Richardson, J. (2007). *Analyzing Newspapers: An approach from critical discourse analysis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Scott, J.W. (2007). *Politics of the veil*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Van Dijk, T. (1997). The study of Discourse. In Van Dijk (ed.). *Discourse as structure and process*. Vol1. London: Sage
- Vaarakallio, S. (2010). *Veiled Phobia: The French republican dress code*. Reuters Institute for the study of Journalism: University of Oxford. <[https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/fileadmin/documents/Publications/fellows\\_papers/2009-2010/VEILED\\_PHOBIAS.pdf](https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/fileadmin/documents/Publications/fellows_papers/2009-2010/VEILED_PHOBIAS.pdf)>
- Vorster J.M. (2011). Banning the Burka? An ethical appraisal. *Journal of reformed Theology*. 5: 86-103.

**Web sources:**

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10611398>  
[http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index\\_info.asp?I=A](http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_info.asp?I=A)  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/7292194.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/7292194.stm) (accessed: 5 April, 2011)  
<http://www.jannah.org/qurantrans/quran4.html>  
<http://www.magiran.com/nptoc.asp?mgid=2387&number=1226>  
<http://www.magiran.com/nptoc.asp?mgid=2829&number=7246>  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2010/may/23/france-veil-ban-burqa>

**Newspaper articles:**

French government prepares total ban on burqa and niqab The Guardian (London) - Final Edition, April 22, 2010 Thursday, GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL PAGES; Pg. 29, 379 words, Lizzy Davies, Calais

Senate in France votes for Muslim face veil ban The Guardian (London) - Final Edition, September 15, 2010 Wednesday, GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL PAGES; Pg. 17, 490 words, Lizzy Davies Paris

MPs playing silly burkas The Sun (England), July 21, 2010 Wednesday, LETTERS; Pg. 47, 451 words

A niqab is a symbol of misogyny. It shouldn't be banned Houriya Ahmed The Times (London), July 14, 2010 Wednesday, EDITORIAL; Pg. 20, 451 words, Houriya Ahmed

Partial burka ban to be recommended to French parliament: Committee to warn MPs against total prohibition Bar on full veil when using public services urged The Guardian (London) - Final Edition, January 26, 2010 Tuesday, GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL PAGES; Pg. 20, 795 words, Lizzy Davies Paris

WAR ON VEIL BAN The Sun (England), July 29, 2010 Thursday, NEWS; Pg. 2, 113 words

'Burka rage' scuffle as Cabinet debates veil ban The Times (London), May 19, 2010 Wednesday, NEWS; Pg. 34, 185 words, Charles Bremner.