

**Deciphering Religious Ideologies in ISIS's *Rumiyah*:  
A Systemic-Functional Approach**

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**Abstract**

*This paper tries to reveal the religious ideologies in the discourse of ISIS's Rumiyah. The main objective of this paper is to present a linguistic investigation that might help in deciphering the underpinning ideologies beyond the mere linguistic form of Rumiyah's discourse. Two research questions are addressed in this paper: first, what are the main religious ideologies around which ISIS's discourse in Rumiyah revolve? Second, how can these religious ideologies be deciphered by linguistic tools? To achieve its purpose, the paper draws on Michael Halliday's (1985, 1994) systemic-functional approach, specifically his three semantic meta-functions: ideational, interpersonal and textual; and the semiotic functions represented in the three variables of register: field, tenor and mode. To decipher religious ideologies in the selected data at the semantic and semiotic levels, three main lexico-grammatical resources are employed: transitivity, mood and theme. Two main findings have been highlighted in this paper: First, ISIS's discourse in Rumiyah is semantically and semiotically structured around two main ideologies: jihad and jama'ah, which, in turn, tends to reformulate the social, political and religious attitudes of its readers. Second, by establishing a compatible point of contact between ideological discourse analysis and systemic-functional analysis, the paper shows that ISIS's Rumiyah is linguistically structured around one extremist opposition-oriented discourse that displays two irreconcilable ideologies: a positive triumphant selfness versus a negative beleaguered otherness.*

**Keywords:** religious ideologies; jihad; jama'aha; *Rumiyah*; systemic-functional model; semantic meta-functions; semiotic meta-functions

**1. Introduction**

During the last few years, the influence of ISIS's (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) ideology spread all over the world to the extent that made a large number of people join this organization. They are affected by the propagandist machine that this organization launched not only in Arabic but also in other languages, such as English, French and Russian. Those who joined ISIS did not have the ability to resist the deception discourse of its propaganda, which is mainly based on the use and abuse of language, and consequently fall victims to this extremist organization. From this context, there is a decisive need to tackle this problem from a linguistic point of view. This linguistic treatment is emphasized by Smith (2008) who reports that the emergence of some extremist religious movements, with their intentional discursive attempts to maintain their manipulative ideology, paves the way for more counter linguistic analysis, and opens new scopes of linguistic studies in the field of religious and ideological discourse.

It is noteworthy that the digital publications of ISIS are not confined to *Rumiyah*. However, this organization starts its first digital publication with its first magazine, *Dabiq*, which was firstly released in July 2014 and was ceased in July 2016 after the loss of the city of Dabiq. *Rumiyah* is launched to replace *Dabiq* as a propagandist continuation to ISIS's ideological agenda. For McKernan (2016), *Rumiyah* is considered one of the effective propagandist tools used by ISIS to communicate its ideologies. The selected issue of *Rumiyah*, which this study seeks to investigate, was collected from Al-Hayat Media Center, available at (<https://archive.org/search.php?query=rumiyah>).

The significance of selecting ISIS's *Rumiyah* to be linguistically investigated here can be attributed to the fact that it is the propagandist channel through which ISIS's ideology is encoded and conveyed to the whole world. Embracing such an ideological weight, ISIS's *Rumiyah* provides a type of ideological discourse that can be said to be worthy of linguistic research and textual analysis. Conducting a linguistic investigation of this magazine, which is stigmatized to be extremist, might help readers resist deceptive tactics and misleading information that basically depend on deceitful religious argumentations. As such, this paper might contribute to the field of ideological discourse studies.

This paper attempts to achieve two objectives. First, to present a linguistic investigation that might help in deciphering religious ideologies in *Rumiyah*'s discourse. Second, to highlight the significance of linguistic analysis to unmask ideological bias in religious discourse. To fulfill its objectives, this paper uses Halliday's systemic-functional model (1985, 1994). In doing so, this paper tries to explore how Halliday's approach is relevant to uncover hidden ideologies in *Rumiyah*, which helps pursue better linguistic interpretation of the magazine. This paper, therefore, seeks to answer two main research questions. First, what are the main religious ideologies around which ISIS's *discourse in Rumiyah* revolve? Second, how can these religious ideologies be deciphered by linguistic tools?

This paper is structured as follows. Section 1 is the abovementioned introduction. Section 2 offers theoretical preliminaries to the concept of ideology and to Michael Halliday's systemic-functional approach. Section 3 provides the theoretical framework of the study focusing on some analytically relevant lexico-grammatical tools of Halliday's systemic-functional model of language analysis, particularly in the light of the semantic and the semiotic functions of language, together with three lexico-grammatical resources: transitivity, mood and theme. Section 4 traces some previous studies that are relevant to the topic under investigation. Section 5 proposes the methodology of this paper, which

includes its adopted approach, corpus and procedures of data analysis. Section 6 presents the analysis, results and discussion of the research data. Section 7 is a conclusion that shows the most important findings of this paper and offers some recommendations for future research in the field.

## **2. Theoretical preliminaries**

### **2.1. Ideology**

Ideology has been a main area of concern within linguistic studies, in general and discourse studies, in particular (van Dijk 1995, 1997, 2001, 2004, 2006; Fairclough 1989; Fowler 1991). van Dijk (2001, p. 12) defines ideology as "a special form of social cognition shared by social groups," and argues that ideology is constituted by a number of ideas and beliefs, which "are not personal beliefs, but beliefs shared by groups" (ibid., p. 12). He maintains that ideologies are close to what he calls "socially shared group knowledge, such as the specific knowledge shared by students, linguists, feminists, stamp collectors or the citizens of Barcelona" (van Dijk, 2004, p. 16). Ideologies, then, form the basis of the social representations and practices of group members in society, including their discourse.

Ideologies "show a polarizing structure between US and THEM," (van Dijk, 1995, p. 139, capitals in original) which indicates that they may be visualized as "self-group schema" (ibid., p. 139). It can be assumed that each group is supposed to formulate its own conceptual schemata that frame its organizational patterns as well as its relationships with other groups. As such, ideologies "might be constructed from such group-defining categories as identity/membership, activities, goals, norms and values, social position and resources" (ibid., p. 139). These categories, therefore, are the main tenets that form the ideological schemata of any group in society. These schemata help different group members defend their own interests and communicate their ideological beliefs.

### **2.2. Systemic-functional linguistics**

Systemic-functional linguistics (SFL) is introduced and discussed by Michael Halliday (1978, 1979, 1985, 1989, 1994, 1998, 1999, 2003); Halliday and Hasan (1976); and Halliday and Matthiessen (1999, 2014). Halliday introduces this approach to end the traditional view that perceives language as a set of rules for specifying different grammatical structures, and establishing a new perspective towards the description of language that recognizes it as a resource and site of making meanings. SFL attempts to offer a description of the grammar of a language via exploring (deciphering) the meanings (ideologies) beyond the context of language use. Language, in a Hallidayan systemic-functional perspective,

is regarded as a semiotic medium of expressing and conveying particular purposes, and is selectively used and consumed to reflect contextual meanings of its users. The use of language, then, depends on selecting particular linguistic resources that are relevant to the context from which meanings are derived. This linguistic selection is manifested in lexicogrammatical choices that expose the underlying ideologies within their contextual environment.

Language for Cullip (2000) aims to construct meaning via the employment of selected lexicogrammatical features that entail the social purposes for which they are selected in a text. The different meanings that language conveys can be better understood (deciphered) by describing the grammatical resources that are used in texts. Here lies the relevance of SFL to the analysis and interpretation of meanings in texts because it, according to White (2000, p. ii), "can equip us to discover tendencies and patterns in texts which would otherwise remain hidden." The idea of discovering meanings in texts, therefore, is the core concern of SFL.

Within SFL framework, meanings are conveyed on three levels or "meta-functions": ideational, interpersonal and textual (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 30). The ideational function or as Thompson (2004, p. 30) terms it "experiential meta-function" deals with the content of the discourse message or its semantic components. These meta-functions can be realized in three aspects: processes, which are involved in discursive acts; the entities involved in these processes; and the circumstances in which these processes are practiced. The interpersonal meta-function sheds light on the relationship between discourse participants, that is, between the speaker/writer and his/her listeners/readers. The textual meta-function shows how different linguistic elements are cohesively interrelated to form the whole thematic structure of texts.

Another important aspect in SFL approach, which is employed in text analysis, is register. This concept has three dimensions, or as Halliday (1978, p. 33) puts it, "semiotic functions": field, tenor and mode. The term 'field' means the subject-matter and the purpose of the communication; 'mode' shows the way through which communicative acts occur; and 'tenor' is concerned with the relationship between participants. In other words, Hudson (2001, p. 49) clarifies that 'field' deals with the notion of "whyness" beyond the act of communication, that is, the reason for the employment of particular linguistic tools, and the purpose of their use; 'mode' refers to the notion of "howness", that is, how communicative purposes are produced; and 'tenor' exposes the notion of 'to whom', which means the way the speaker can realize the distance between him and his addressees.

Crucially, Halliday (1978) points out that there is a connection between the three meta-functions of language and the three variables of register or semiotic functions. From the brief assessment so far of the two types of functions (i.e. the meta-functions and the semiotic functions) of language, we can notice that they are fused together. The ideational meta-function copes with the variable of field, the interpersonal meta-function connects with tenor, and the textual meta-function relates to mode. This harmonious relationship between these functions confirms the connection between context and language, which SF approach advocates (see also Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

### 3. Theoretical framework

On the basis of the above preliminaries, the adopted framework of this paper casts a theoretical focus on Halliday's lexico-grammatical resources that are relevant to the analysis of the semantic and semiotic functions in *Rumiyah's* discourse. Since the clause is "the central processing unit in the lexicogrammar," (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 10) through which "meanings of different kinds are mapped into an integrated grammatical structure," (ibid., p. 10) the lexico-grammatical resources, will be discussed in the light of the three "principal systems of the clause: Transitivity, Mood and Theme" (ibid., p. 10, capitals in original). The first (transitivity) discusses the linguistic resources used to decipher religious ideologies that comprise the ideational field in *Rumiyah's* discourse; the second (mood) demonstrates the interpersonal tenor between discourse participants, which also functions to communicate the religious ideologies pragmatically; and the third (theme) presents the textual mode through which these ideologies are cohesively arranged and, then, linguistically developed to produce the whole discourse of *Rumiyah*. Each linguistic resource is discussed in the subsections below.

#### 3.1. Transitivity resource

Transitivity is a lexico-grammatical resource that is used to realize the ideational meaning of texts. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 213), transitivity "provides the lexicogrammatical resources for construing a quantum of change in the flow of events as a figure - as a configuration of elements centered on a process." They maintain that these processes have different types and "each process type constitutes a distinct model or schema for construing a particular domain of experience as a figure of a particular kind" (ibid., p. 213). Clauses of different process types, then, "make distinctive contributions to the construal of experience in text" (ibid., p. 219). The notion of experience, therefore, determines the type of process in clauses. Transitivity, in the Hallidayan

sense, perceives clauses as consisting of three main elements: participants, processes and circumstances. The concept of process is lexico-grammatically realized through verbs that communicate particular participant roles, indicate general meanings, and express circumstantial aspects of clause production concerning time, place, manner, and setting (ibid., p. 220).

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, pp. 214-20) classify processes into six types: material, behavioral, mental, verbal, relational (attributive-identifying) and existential. Accordingly, for them, material processes, on the one hand, communicate the general meaning of doing or happening and assign the participant role of an 'actor', who does things for another person, who is considered as 'beneficiary' as in: ISIS built a mosque for its soldiers, where 'ISIS' assigns the participant role of an 'actor', a 'mosque' is a 'goal' and 'soldiers' is 'beneficiary'. Behavioral processes, on the other hand, convey the meaning of 'behaving' and allocate the participant role of a 'beholder' as in: Jack is laughing, where 'Jack' is a 'beholder'. Further, mental processes indicate the general meaning of 'sensing', 'seeing', 'feeling', 'thinking' etc., and gives the participant role of a 'senser' as in: ISIS hates Christians, where 'ISIS' has the participant role of a 'senser'.

As for verbal processes, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) maintain, they communicate the meaning of 'saying' and assign the participant role of a 'sayer', who says something (verbiage) to someone (receiver) as in: ISIS told its soldiers a story, where 'ISIS' is a 'sayer', 'soldiers' is a 'receiver' and a 'story' is 'verbiage'. In terms of relational processes, they are divided into two sub-processes: attributive and identifying. Attributive processes express the meaning of 'attributing' and carry the semantic role of a 'carrier', while identifying processes suggest the general meaning of 'identifying' and take on the participant role of an 'identifier'. The last type of processes is the existential, which conveys the meaning of 'existing'. In existential processes, "clauses are unique in that the Subject is not a participant but rather the item *there*, which represents only 'existence', not the participant that exists; this participant comes after the Process" (ibid., p. 220, capitals and italic in original). (see also Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999)

In transitivity system, circumstances, being the third main element of a clause, are "associated with the process," (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 220) and "are almost always optional augmentations of the clause" (ibid., p. 221). They expand the concept of process "temporally, spatially, causally, and so on"; however, unlike participants, "they are not directly involved in the process" (ibid., p. 221). Circumstances, therefore, tell us where, when, why and how a clausal process is implemented.

Further, unlike processes that are realized by verbal groups and participants that are realized by nominal groups, circumstances are linguistically realized by adverbial groups, including time (e.g. yesterday), place (e.g. in my office), manner (e.g. quickly) and prepositional phrases (e.g. at home) (ibid., p. 222).

### 3.2. Mood resource

Mood, for Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 97), is "the major interpersonal system of the clause" because "it provides interactants involved in dialogue with the resources for giving or demanding a commodity, either information or goods-&-services...with the resources for enacting speech functions (speech acts) through the grammar of the clause." In other words, mood refers to the grammatical pattern through which discourse is delivered on the clause level. Mood in *Rumiyah* is lexico-grammatically realized in three ways: lexicalization, speech acts and modality. Each resource has its own turn in the subsections below.

#### 3.2.1. Lexicalization

Using specific lexis to reflect mood is an important characteristic of discourse, in general and ideological discourse, in particular. Fairclough emphasizes the importance of lexis in analyzing texts and argues that "the structure of a vocabulary is ideologically based" (Fairclough, 1989, p.115) because speakers/writers can encode their ideology in vocabulary. This ideological weight of words is also reported by Fowler (1991) who points out that words usually carry the ideological belief of their users. Words in SFL function as "the direct realization of terms in grammatical systems" (Halliday& Matthiessen, 2014, p. 64). Consequently, within SFL framework, lexis and grammar "are the two poles of a single cline" (ibid., p. 64). When a particular word is chosen in text, it reflects "the kind of authority behind it" and "the positive or negative loading" of its use (ibid., p. 64).

Within texts, "lexis is organized into networks of lexical relations" (Halliday& Matthiessen, 2014, p. 643). Antonymy is one lexical relation through which words are employed in this paper. As such, oppositional words are used to communicate the interpersonal mood in *Rumiyah's* discourse. Importantly, this oppositional interpersonal mood is employed to convey positive and negative attitudes between participants in discourse. This is also reported by van Dijk (1993, p. 263) who argues that lexical style, through the choice of words that imply negative or positive evaluation, is utilized by speakers/writers to present themselves (in-group) positively and their opponents (out-group) negatively.

### 3.2.2. Speech acts

Another concept of communicating mood in *Rumiyaḥ's* discourse is speech acts. Speech act theory was introduced in the work of many language philosophers, including Austin (1962); Searle (1969, 1979); Grice (1975); Yule (1996); Short (1996) and Thomas (1995). Short (1996, p. 195) suggests that "when people say things, they don't just say things" but "they also perform acts by saying what they do." These actions, which are performed by utterances, are called 'speech acts'. Yule (1996, p. 47) also clarifies that in English, speech acts "are commonly given more specific labels, such as apology, complaint, compliment, invitation, promise, or request." Further, Fowler (1991, p. 88) proposes that a speech act "is a form of words which, if spoken or written in appropriate conditions, under appropriate conventions, actually constitutes the performance of an action."

In SFL perspective, speech acts (speech functions) have different forms within clause structure. In this regard, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 97) argue:

A free major clause is either indicative (giving or demanding information) or imperative (demanding goods-&-services) in mood; if indicative, it is either declarative (giving information) or interrogative (demanding information); if interrogative, it is either 'yes/no' interrogative or 'WH-' interrogative.

As clarified in the above quote, Halliday and Matthiessen perceive speech acts to have three major moods: declarative, imperative and interrogative. There are other classifications for speech acts that can be said to be relevant to Halliday and Matthiessen's above categories. On the basis of the relationship between a structure and a function, speech acts, for Yule (1996), are divided into direct and indirect. According to Austin (1962), the action performed by producing an utterance consists of three related acts: (1) locutionary act, which is the basic act of utterance; (2) illocutionary act, which is performed via the communicative force of an utterance; and (3) perlocutionary act, which depends on the circumstances and intended to have an effect. Further, Searle (1979, p. viii) classifies speech acts into five types: "assertives, directives, expressives, commissives, and declaratives." Clarifying Searle's classifications of speech acts, Ryckebusch and Marcos (2004, p. 884) state that 'assertives' are descriptions of the state of the world; 'directives' are utterances that aim at getting one's partner to do something; 'expressives' state the speaker's attitude about the state of the world; 'commissives' commit the speaker to perform some future action; 'declaratives' are propositions that modify the state of the world by the sheer fact that they are uttered by a

person of appropriate status. For analytical purposes, this paper utilizes only three types of Searle's above classifications: the declaratives, the directives and the commissives. Both declarative and commissive moods assign the speech function of a statement, whereas the directive mood assigns the speech function of a command. The three moods are communicatively delivered in the affirmative or negative forms.

### 3.2.3. Modality

The third resource for expressing mood in *Rumiyah* is modality. To Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 691), modality "refers to the area of meaning that lies between yes and no- the intermediate ground between positive and negative polarity" and, thus, its meaning "will depend on the underlying speech function of the clause." They proceed to classify modality into four types: "probability, usuality, obligation and inclination" (ibid., p. 691). Each type can be realized according to the mood of the clause, that is, if the clause, on the one hand, is a proposition, modality is realized then as indicative, or with some degree of probability and usuality. If the clause, on the other hand, is a proposal, modality will be realized as imperative, or with some degree of obligation or inclination (ibid., p. 691).

Depending on the authority exercised by speakers or writers, Fairclough (1989, pp. 126-127) offers a similar classification of modality in which he differentiates two types: "relational modality" and "expressive modality." In relational modality, the authority is practiced by one participant over another, while in expressive modality; it is a matter of the speaker's authority with regard to the truth or probability of a representation of reality. Fairclough argues that "modality is expressed by modal auxiliary verbs like *may*, *might*, *must*, *should*, *can*, *can't*, *ought*, but also by various other formal features including adverbs and tense" (ibid., p. 127). Fairclough maintains that there is overlap between the modal auxiliaries which mark expressive modality and those which mark relational modality (ibid., p. 129). He clarifies that "we find *may* associated with the meaning of 'possibility' as well as 'permission', and *must* associated with 'certainty' as well as obligation. We also find *can't* 'impossible'; *should* 'probable'; and others" (Italics in original). Fairclough (ibid., p. 129), however, stresses that "modality is not just a matter of modal auxiliaries." He proposes that modality can be expressed by using 'tense' as in his example "your library books are due and your library card may not be used until they are returned" (ibid., p. 127). Here, expressive

modality is expressed by means of the present tense 'are' in "your library books are due." The verb 'are' carries a commitment of the speaker to the truth of his proposition.

Furthermore, Fowler (1991, pp. 85-87) proposes four types of modality: truth, obligation, permission and desirability. Again, for analytical purposes, only two types of modality are used in this paper: truth and obligation modalities. Truth modality, on the one hand, can be expressed by modal auxiliaries represented in 'will' and adverbs of certitude such as 'certainly'. This type of modality shows that the speaker's assumption is completely true and is used to express "a high level of certitude" (Flowerdew, 2002, p. 219). Obligation modality, on the other hand, can be realized by the use of some modal auxiliaries, such as 'must', 'should' or 'ought to'. This type draws the recipient's attention to the necessity of carrying out the speaker's proposition (*ibid.*, p. 219).

### 3.3. Theme resource

Theme "gives the clause its character as a message," (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 83) and makes it contribute to the flow of discourse. It is considered to be "the element the speaker selects for 'grounding' what he is going on to say" (*ibid.*, p. 83). In SFL, Theme "is associated with the first position in the clause," (Halliday, 1979, p. 67) and is always related to the concept of Rheme. Both terms are complementary in shaping the textual development of a text. This harmonizing nature stems from the fact that Theme is considered "the point of departure of the message" and Rheme "as the part of the clause which develops the Theme" (Halliday, 1994, p. 37). The two concepts contribute to the final textual meaning of texts.

Within texts, Theme is organized in a way that makes it relevant to their overall meaning. To Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), writers/speakers have the freedom to select the appropriate Theme that contributes to the thematic structure of a clause. They proceed to argue that "the choice of clause Themes plays a fundamental part in the way discourse is organized; it is this, in fact, that constitutes what has been called the 'method of development' of the text" (*ibid.*, p. 126). Theme can function as a participant, a circumstance or a process, and is realized in different ways; by nominal groups, adverbial groups or prepositional phrases. Importantly, Theme contains one, and only one, of these experiential elements, i.e. participant, circumstance, and process. This means that the "Theme of a clause ends with the first constituent that is participant, circumstance or process" (*ibid.*, p. 105). This constituent, in its textual function, is referred to as "the topical Theme" (*ibid.*, p. 105). In other words, a clause Theme starts in the very beginning of the clause and

extends up to include only the first experiential element in such a clause, either participant, circumstance or process. All clause constituents that come after that are called Rheme (ibid., p. 112).

Based on what is noted above, the structure Theme+ Rheme constitutes the clause structure and contributes to its overall textual meaning. However, there is another textual resource which also adds to the flow of discourse in texts, that is, information or, as termed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 115), "information unit," which means "a structure made up of two functions, the New and the Given" (Capitals in original). The 'Given' refers to "what is already known or predictable" or "recoverable to the listener [reader]," while the 'New' comprises "what is new or unpredictable" or "not recoverable to the listener [reader]" (ibid., pp. 116-118). Although the structures Theme +Rheme and Given +New are different in the sense that the former is "speaker-oriented," while the latter is "listener [reader]-oriented," (ibid., p. 120) they remain complementary in shaping the textual meaning of the clause.

#### 4. Previous studies

Much research has been conducted to highlight the relationship between ideological structures and discursive ones by using different linguistic models of analysis. In the light of this paper, ideological and discursive structures are religiously-based. According to Brown (2011), religious discourse is a type of discourse that depends on the use of religious language that depends entirely on religious texts. This type of discourse has not extensively been explored or discussed by discourse analysts. However, it has got much interest and significance from scholars in discourse studies during the last few years, particularly with the emergence of some religious extremist movements, such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS. The following lines review some recent studies that apply different linguistic approaches to tackle ideological themes in religious discourse.

One study, which addresses religious ideologies in discourse, was presented by Rizwan (2011). This study offered a linguistic investigation of religious ideologies and conventions of discourse in some selected speeches that were delivered on the martyrdom of Hussain. Rizwan's study adopted a critical discourse analysis approach in the analysis of the selected speeches, and used two levels of analysis. The first was the lexical level, which focused on some discursive strategies that were mainly based on the selection of words. The second was the pragmatic level, which examined some pragmatic phenomena, such as implicatures and politeness strategies. The study showed the way religious ideology of

Shia was linguistically reflected in the speeches via lexical and pragmatic dimensions.

A significant study, which directly deals with the type of discourse of ISIS, can be traced in Georges's (2014). It presented a discourse analysis of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's sermon on 4 July 2014. The study also drew on critical discourse analysis to analyze the selected data. Georges's study focused on the clarification of the linguistic tactics that were used in ISIS's discourse to form what is called the *Muslim Ummah*. It concentrated on the lexical choices in Al-Baghdadi's sermon as well as notions of agency through the employment of specific pronouns. The study concluded that language can be skillfully used to construct different ideologies of its users.

Further, Schmid's (2015) studied the religious discourse of ISIS from an argumentative point of view. This study concentrated on the notions of propaganda and persuasion tactics used in the discourse of ISIS. It used an interdisciplinary counter-narrative approach in data analysis, and demonstrated the effectiveness of the argumentative persuasive discourse in reshaping the attitudes of individuals. Schmid's study concluded that argumentation and counter argumentation strategies were not enough to resist ISIS's extremist ideology, and therefore, the study recommended more other relevant and systematic approaches to face ISIS's ideological agenda.

A clear and direct reference to ISIS's discourse, in general and its digital publications, in particular can be found in Azman's (2016). This study discussed the different ways ISIS employs to communicate its principles. It traced the propaganda stages that were depicted in fifteen issues of ISIS premier magazine *Dabiq*; and exposed the ways through which ISIS's propaganda in *Dabiq* addressed issues, such as calling Christians to adopt Islam, rationalizing ISIS animosity towards the West, and increasing the emphasis on the expansion of Caliphate beyond Iraq and Syria. This study referred briefly to *Rumiyaḥ*, the second magazine of ISIS, stating that ISIS continues its propaganda strategies through *Rumiyaḥ* by praying for the conquest of Constantinople and Rome, fortifying the faith of ISIS followers, promoting ISIS global Caliphate, and calling for 'lone wolf' attacks. The study concluded that both *Dabiq* and *Rumiyaḥ* instigate and breed more violence and attacks against those

who do not adopt ISIS's ideological beliefs. The study recommended that war confrontation is not enough to fight ISIS's ideology; a counter ideological propaganda is also needed to stop its fast expansion.

The aforementioned studies provide discussions on ideological and religious discourse analysis, presenting them from various angles, varying from the use of theoretical and analytical perspectives to the employment of argumentative ones. This paper, however, adopts Halliday's systemic-functional approach in the analysis of the selected data to show how different religious ideologies encoded in *Rumiyah* can be deciphered by means of particular systemic functional linguistics tools.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1. Approach of the study

This paper employs Michael Halliday's systemic-functional model. This theoretical approach, as discussed earlier, allows the interweaving of different linguistic levels in the ideological analysis of texts and talks. Two main levels of analysis are adopted here: the semantic and the semiotic. The former deals with the ideational, interpersonal and textual dimensions of clause meanings, whereas the latter focuses on the register variables of field, tenor and mode, which constitute the context of situation of *Rumiyah*.

### 5.2. Corpus and data collection

The corpus of this study consists of one issue of *Rumiyah* (issue No. 1), which is launched by ISIS's propaganda system. *Rumiyah* is a digital magazine which is published monthly by Al-Hayat Media Center, and was firstly released in September 2016. The selected issue consists of 38 pages constituting 7 articles preceded by a foreword and followed by a part entitled 'News'. The title 'Rumiyah' has a pragmatic indication that carries a direct call for ISIS's affiliates to direct their attacks to the West represented in Rome, which the title 'Rumiyah' is derived from.

### 5.3. Procedure

The analytical procedure proposed in this paper embraces two systemic functional levels of analysis: the textual, represented in the lexico-grammatical resources that are semantically realized in the ideational, interpersonal and textual levels of analysis; and the contextual, manifested in the analysis of the semiotic functions represented in the three variables of register: field, tenor and mode. Both levels of analysis are analytically incorporated to decipher hidden religious ideologies in the discourse of ISIS's *Rumiyah*.

## 6. Data analysis and results

### 6.1. Religious ideologies from a semantic perspective

The religious ideologies rooted in ISIS's *Rumiyah* can be semantically deciphered on three levels of analysis: the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual.

#### 6.1.1. Ideational analysis

On the ideational level of analysis, ISIS's religious ideologies can be traced through three participant roles that dominate the whole discourse of *Rumiyah*: Actor, Carrier, and Sayer. These ideationally-based participant roles reflect the semantic dimension of ISIS's ideologies on the clause level. Each participant role will be discussed in isolation in the following subsections.

##### 6.1.1.1. The Actor ISIS

In many parts of *Rumiyah*'s discourse, ISIS is assigned the participant role of an Actor who proficiently does things to show its competency. This can be shown in the following extracts:

(1) The Islamic State established various bodies responsible for preventing the

people from wronging one another. (*Rumiyah*, issue 1, p. 11)

(2) The Islamic State battled its way out of Huraytan. (*ibid.*, p. 16)

(3) The soldiers of the Khilafah took control of vast territory, including a number of villages south of the city of Shaddadi. (*ibid.*, p. 22)

(4) The soldiers of the Khilafah also assaulted the village of Albu Salman. The assault began with an istishhadi brother setting out towards a gathering of murtaddin. (*ibid.*, p. 23)

(5) A number of Islamic State soldiers carried out an attack on a large group of Rafidi. (*ibid.*, p. 24)

(6) Two soldiers of the Islamic State launched an attack on members of the Russian police force. (*ibid.*, p. 26)

(7) 30 soldiers of the Khilafah stormed the Marawi prison and succeeded, by the grace of Allah, in freeing 30 prisoners. (*ibid.*, p. 26)

(8) The soldiers of the Khilafah conducted a raid on a group of murtaddin in the village of 'Inad. (*ibid.*, p. 23)

(9) The soldiers of the Khilafah continue waging war on the forces of kufr. (*ibid.*, p. 22)

(10) The soldiers of the Islamic State succeeded in damaging 4 Abrams tanks. (*ibid.*, p. 25)

The above extracts represent ISIS materially as an Actor who targets a particular ideological goal. All clausal processes in the above extracts are associated with the meaning that someone (being an Actor) is doing something to another person (being a goal) in a specific circumstantial

environment including time, place and manner. This copes with the basic idea beyond transitivity system, which enables us to express the transitivity formula: who does what to whom, where, when and how.

The material processes employed in the above extracts are linguistically realized through the verbs *established*, *battled*, *took control*, *assaulted*, *carried out*, *launched*, *stormed*, *conducted*, *waging*, and *succeeded in*. Noticeably, these verbs are semantically marked as processes that carry the connotative meaning of war, and demonstrate a discourse of conflict between two parties: the ISIS as a participant and its opponents as a goal. Such a type of discourse attempts to achieve two discursive purposes: first, to show ISIS's competency and power as a victorious group; second, to attract more affiliates to the organization. Here, ISIS tries to convey that war (jihad in ISIS's view point) against its opponents (disbelievers or 'mushrikin' in ISIS's words) is the ultimate goal it targets.

Crucially, the selection of such processes, with their ideologically-loaded semantics, reflects the intimate relationship between language and power. Such a connection is described by Bloor and Bloor (1995, p. 233) who argue that "political or national power can be reflected in the language and the language in turn can reinforce such power." They clarify that "the exertion of power by individuals... is often revealed in the form of the language," (ibid., p. 234) that is because language, according to Fairclough (1989, p. 35), "is both a site of and a stake in class struggle and those who exercise power through language must constantly be involved in struggle with others to defend (or lose) their position." Obviously, ISIS's linguistic power, which is conveyed by the skillful use of the above ideologically-based verbs, aims to channel one of its basic religious ideologies, that is, jihad.

ISIS continues to demonstrate its competency, manifested in its ability to organize its interior affairs, through the employment of the material process *established* in extract (1) above. This material process is accompanied by the goal *various bodies* and followed by the beneficiary *responsible for preventing the people from wronging one another*. Here, ISIS is assigned the participant role of a competent Actor who shows ability and skill as a true religion-bearer and manager of its territory. In this regard, ISIS attempts to publicize another religious ideology, that is, jama'aha (forming one Muslim community ruled by the same rules). Now, ISIS appears as an authoritative organization that exerts all efforts to organize its interior affairs. The following table demonstrates an ideational analysis of the Actor ISIS.

Table 1. The Actor ISIS in *Rumiyaḥ*

Actor	Material process	Goal	Beneficiary	Total occurrence	Number of indicative occurrence
ISIS/ ISIS's Soldiers	established	various bodies	for preventing the people from wronging one another	12	3
	battled	its way out	Huraytan	1	1
	took control	vast territory	of the city of Shaddadi	7	7
	assaulted	the village of Albu Salman	a gathering of murtaddin	4	3
	carried out	an attack	on a large group of Rafidi	7	5
	launched	an attack	on members of the Russian police force	5	5
	stormed	the Marawi prison	freeing 30 prisoners	3	2
	conducted	a raid	on a group of murtaddin	5	1
	waging	jihad	shirk/criminals	9	2
	waging	war	the forces of kufr	3	1
	succeeded in	damaging	4 Abrams tanks	2	2

The above table shows a number of material processes that are employed to communicate the concept of jihad through the Actor ISIS. The table clarifies the high frequency of some processes, such as *established*, *waging*, *took control* and *carried out*, and the low frequency of other processes, such as *battled*, *assaulted*, *launched*, *stormed*, *conducted*, and *succeeded in*. However, both high and low frequency processes are indicative in deciphering the concept of jihad.

#### 6.1.1.2. The Carrier ISIS

The religious ideologies of ISIS's *Rumiyaḥ* are ideationally continued to be divulged when ISIS's soldiers are assigned the participant role of a Carrier. This is conducted by using some attributive processes as is the case in the following extracts:

(1) They are the elite of His creation; those of His slaves whom He has chosen to become martyrs. (*Rumiyaḥ*, issue 1, p. 3)

(2) Among the believers are men. (*ibid.*, p. 14)

The above extracts demonstrate the employment of some attributive processes that delineate ISIS's soldiers as a Carrier, and emphasize some religious ideologies beyond the mere linguistic expressions used in the

extracts. On the level of the clause, the above extracts show the Carrier ISIS through the positive presentation of its affiliates. The clauses: *they are the elite of His creation, He has chosen to become martyrs and among the believers are men* aim to describe ISIS's soldiers positively. The selection of the words: *elite, martyrs, believers, and men* indicate good qualities attribution to ISIS's members. Obviously, the positive description of ISIS's members targets two goals: first, to beautify those who joined the organization by attributing good qualities to them; second, to highlight jihad as the main religious ideology of ISIS. Those who fight against ISIS's opponents are described to be *men, believers, elite and martyrs*. By contrast, the opposite of these good qualities are attributed to ISIS's opponents. So, if a person wants to be an elite believer who deserves manhood and martyrdom, he should adhere himself to jihad.

The Carrier ISIS is ideationally evidenced through a constant and regular allusion to Islamic religious sources, specifically, Quran and Hadith (the Prophet Muhammad's sayings and traditions). This is done by attributing every act of violence and killing, misinterpretably, to religious scripture (Quran and Hadith). This is clearly shown in extract (1) above. The relational clause: *among believers are men*, is directly quoted from the Holy Quran. Importantly, this attempts to draw a brilliant picture to those who carry out these violent actions and classify them, deceptively, with Sahabah (The Prophet Muhammad's Companions). Certainly, the Carrier ISIS displays a positive attitude towards its affiliates by the positively-attitude clauses used to describe them. The following table presents an ideational analysis of the Carrier ISIS.

Table 2. The Carrier ISIS in *Rumiyah*

Carrier	Relational process	Attribute	Total occurrence	Number of indicative occurrence
ISIS's soldiers	are	elite	1	1
	become	martyrs	1	1
	are	men	1	1
	are	believers	1	1
	are	prevented	1	1
	are	able and living	1	1

Despite the very low frequencies of relational processes that are used to describe the Carrier ISIS's soldiers in the above table, they are significant in presenting them positively. ISIS and its soldiers have captured all good attributes in *Rumiyah*.

### 6.1.1.3. The Sayer ISIS

From the very beginning of *Rumiyaḥ*, ISIS has been assigned the participant role of a Sayer who authoritatively addresses scrupulous readers. The following extracts clarify how the Sayer ISIS communicates its religious ideologies:

(1) We consider them (ISIS's soldiers) to be those who emerged as fighters for Allah's cause, seeking shahadah without turning back.

(*Rumiyaḥ*, issue 1, p. 3)

(2) We advise the Muslims in general and the soldiers of the Islamic State in particular not to wrong one another. (*ibid.*, p. 12)

(3) We ask Allah to accept the Husayni Qurashi Shaykh and grant him a lofty place in paradise. We ask Allah to alleviate this hardship for us.

(*ibid.*, p. 37)

The above extracts show ISIS as a Sayer who holds responsibility and gives advice as it addresses the same participant by the verbal processes *consider*, *advise* and *ask*. Indicatively, these verbal processes are preceded by the first person plural pronoun *we*, which is used inclusively to show unity, solidarity and competency of the speaker. Of course, the use of pronouns is "one of the major tools of persuasion used by politicians" (Inigo-Mora, 2004, p. 37) because they show intimacy and solidarity with the addressees. Here, ISIS's discourse employs the first person plural *we* to communicate two meanings: first, to assure readers that they all share the same fate; second, to show that ISIS is authoritative enough to speak on behalf of all its members. This atmosphere of solidarity indicates a feeling of closeness and intimacy, which, to Fowler (1995, p. 176), aims "to imply community of interest and consensus of belief." Now, the Sayer ISIS tries to communicate another religious ideology, that is, *jama'aha*. This is clearly emphasized in extract (2) above in which the Sayer ISIS is verbally committed to adopt the role of an advice-giver who calls for *Muslims in general and the soldiers of the Islamic State in particular not to wrong one another*.

In extract (1), ISIS speaks to its soldiers describing them as *fighters for Allah's cause*. The prepositional phrase *without turning back* tend to emphasize the courage of its soldiers as well as their readiness to sacrifice themselves in their jihad against enemies. Also important in extract (3) that ISIS is ideationally represented as a Sayer who suffers from the death of one of its leading soldiers. The sorrow-loaded clause *we ask Allah to alleviate this hardship for us* shows a sympathetic ISIS who senses the suffering of others, specifically its soldiers. Now, the Sayer ISIS tries to communicate the meaning that only Allah is able to ease and

lessen the suffering caused by the death of one of its soldiers. The following table displays an ideational analysis of the Sayer ISIS.

Table 3. The Sayer ISIS in *Rumiyah*

Sayer	Verbal process	Receiver	Total occurrence	Number of indicative occurrence
ISIS	consider	ISIS's soldiers	1	1
	advise	Muslims	1	1
	ask Allah	Husayni Qurashi Shaykh	4	4

As displayed in the above table, the verbal processes *consider*, *advise* and *ask* are low in frequency, but they are very indicative in delineating ISIS as a Sayer.

Importantly, in some discursive situations, ISIS adopts the participant role of an indirect Sayer as in the following extracts:

- (1) The people of falsehood constantly attempt to make the death of righteous men...into a sign foretelling the breaking of muwahiddin.  
(*Rumiyah*, issue 1, p. 2)
- (2) The media office of Tarabulus Wilayah mentioned that fierce confrontations took place between the mujahidin and the murtaddin in the neighborhood of Ithnayn. (ibid., p. 25)

In extract (1), ISIS's discourse shows an indirect Sayer who addresses its members all over the world, whom it calls *muwahiddin* (true believers), not to listen to their enemies' attempts to undermine their will in jihad. In this case, ISIS is assigned the participant role of an indirect Sayer whose main goal is to address a target receiver in a particular ideological context. The temporal adverb *constantly* aims to convey a sense of continuity to the misrepresentation process committed by *the people of falsehood* against *righteous men*. This, in turn, communicates two things: the first relates to ISIS main religious ideology, which emphasizes that the war (jihad) against ISIS's opponents should continue its course regardless of the constant attempts to downplay ISIS's activities; and the second regards ISIS's image on the part of its affiliates, which seeks to communicate a well-competent Sayer who has never been shaken by the death of any of its members. This meaning is verbally communicated by the Sayer ISIS in extract (2) above in which the verbal process *mentioned* is employed to confirm that ISIS is still standing in the war field against its enemies. Clearly, the associative meanings of the skillfully selected adjective *fierce* and the pluralized *confrontations* attempt to positively present ISIS's jihad both in quality and quantity. Furthermore, the use of

the two semantically contradicted words *mujahidin* and *murtaddin* reflects a religiously-based ideological discourse that displays an oppositional discourse of US and THEM (see van Dijk, 1993, 1997).

### 6.1.2. Interpersonal analysis

Interpersonally, ISIS's religious ideologies have been deciphered by the employment of some discursive strategies that are pragmatically-based. On this level of analysis, the focus will be laid on the manner through which ISIS's *Rumiyah* interpersonally conveys its intended ideologies. In this regard, some discursive strategies, including oppositional lexicalization and relational values of words, including mood and modality have been skillfully employed to reveal ISIS's religious ideologies.

#### 6.1.2.1. Oppositional lexicalization

The religious ideology of jihad is interpersonally reflected in *Rumiyah*'s discourse via the employment of some positive and negative lexis. This ploy has been used to characterize the relationship between two different groups: ISIS and its opponents. Throughout the discourse of *Rumiyah*, a number of ideology-oriented vocabularies have been used to describe each group. Consequently, words, such as *believers*, *muwahiddin*, *mujahidin*, and *martyrs* have been semantically antonymized by *disbelievers*, *mushrikin*, *murtaddin*, *tawaghit* and *kuffar*. The same oppositional lexicalization is also conveyed on the phrase level. This is clearly shown in phrases, such as *righteous men*, *fighters for Allah's cause*, *persevering brothers* and *lions of the Ummah*, which are oppositionally counterparted by phrases, such as *enemies of Allah*, *people of falsehood*, *wicked scholars* and *Rafidi murtaddin*.

Crucially, this diametrically opposed lexicalization is intended to reflect an in-group positive presentation and an out-group negative presentation, which is based on the choice of words and phrases that imply positive or negative evaluation. This also supports the idea that writers/speakers can encode their ideology in vocabulary through wording and meaning relations. The use of ideologically contested words in ISIS's *Rumiyah*, therefore, is highly indicative in two ways: first, it emphasizes the meaning of jihad as one of the main religious ideologies of ISIS that is reflected by the use of words and phrases whose meanings connote the meaning of jihad, whether associatively or incompatibly; second, it demonstrates the interpersonal relationship between ISIS as a positively self-presented in-group and its opponents as a negatively other-presented out-group. The following table shows the number of occurrence of positive and negative lexicalization in the selected issue of *Rumiyah*.

Table 4. Positive and negative lexicalization in *Rumiyah*

Positive in-group lexis		Negative out-group lexis	
Word	Number of occurrence	Word	Number of occurrence
mujahidin	25	murtaddin	42
brothers	20	mushrikin	20
believers	13	kafir	18
righteous	9	kuffar	12
fighters	4	taghut	10
victorious	3	disbelievers	9
shuhada	2	kufr	9
muwahiddin	2	tawaghit	7
martyrs	1	enemies	5
martyrdom	1	enemy	5
righteousness	1	tyrants	4
worshipers	1	mushrik	3
lions	1	fools	2
elite	1	wicked	1

The above table demonstrates that there are some words that are frequently used to describe ISIS's affiliates positively and its opponents negatively. The high frequency of words, such as *mujahidin*, *brothers* and *believers*, on the positive side; and *murtaddin*, *mushrikin*, *kafir* and *kuffar*, on the negative side, indicates the conflicting way ISIS perceives its members and opponents.

#### 6.1.2.2. Mood

Another discursive tactic, which is used to communicate ISIS's religious ideologies in *Rumiyah*, is Mood. This concept reflects the relational values between participants in discourse. Mood is realized in ISIS's *Rumiyah* through two lexico-grammatical patterns: the first is speech acts, which are manifested in the type of clause structure used in discourse, that is, the way of delivering the clause; declaratively, directly, or commissively. The second pattern is modality, which refers to all the non-propositional elements of a sentence, and is also demonstrated through two types of modality: truth modality and obligation modality.

##### 6.1.2.2.1. Speech acts

Concerning speech acts, ISIS uses three types of speech acts: the declarative, the directive and the commissive. The following extracts add more clarification:

- (1) This is the way of the muwahiddin in every time and place. Whenever a generation of them passes, another generation follows, holding the banner of Tawhid overhead while plunging anew into

the battle for Islam, which continues to be waged against shirk and its people. (*Rumiyaḥ*, issue 1, p. 3)

(2) By waging war against shirk and subjecting the people to the rule of the Lord of all creation, the greater injustice is eliminated. (*ibid.*, p. 10)

(3) The great gate of jihad with wealth is left wide open for the women who will make deals with their Lord, deals that will never end poorly.

(*ibid.*, p. 20)

(4) Anyone who is neither a Muslim nor a dhimmi kafir ... is a hostile tyrant deserving aggression. (*ibid.*, p. 34)

(5) The duty to fight the tyrants – the mushrikin – is clear and established.

(*ibid.*, pp. 34-35)

(6) Shedding the blood of a non-dhimmi kafir is not sinful, but is rather Rewarded with Jannah. (*ibid.*, p. 35)

The above extracts show different grammatical patterns of declarative sentences that are used to communicate jihad. Obviously, all above statements revolve around the theme of jihad, which is delineated as the ultimate goal of ISIS. This is reflected by the use of some expressions, such as *the battle for Islam, to be waged against shirk, waging war against shirk, the great gate of jihad ...is left, shedding the blood of...* and *fight the tyrants-mushrikin*. These clauses explicitly emphasize the significance of jihad in ISIS's ideological agenda.

On the interpersonal level, the above statements carry some discursive expressions that delineate the relationship between ISIS and its opponents: first, through the dexterous employment of religiously-based words, they refer to two groups: the first group includes *muwahhidin, Tawhid, Islam, jihad, rewarded* and *jannah*, whereas the second group includes *shirk, injustice, dhimmi kafir, tyrant, hostile, sinful* and *mushrikin*. Again, this emphasizes the in-group/out-group polarization in *Rumiyaḥ*'s discourse; those who adhere themselves to ISIS's religious ideologies (jihad and jama'aha) are members of the in-group, who are positively presented; and those who refused ISIS's ideologies are out-group enemy members, who are negatively presented. Also noticeable is the different parts of speech used in the description of the in/out-group in the above statements. Some are used to describe an action, as is the case with the words: *rewarded, shedding* and *waging*; others are employed to describe entities, such as *muwahhidin* and *mushrikin*; and a third group is used to describe a state, as in *sinful* and *hostile*. Consequently, ISIS communicates its religious ideologies interpersonally by making use of

the declarative mood on the different levels of word classes: the verb, the noun and the adjective.

Another interpersonal observation lies in the grammatical use of the nominal gerund and the simple present tense. In terms of nominal gerunds, they are represented in *holding*, *plunging*, *waging* and *shedding* in extracts (1, 2, 6, respectively). All these gerunds function as nouns of non-finite clauses within the larger structures of their sentences. As such, they serve as subjects of the larger sentences and add a sense of continuity to action. The meaning of such gerund clauses, then, may be: you (ISIS's soldiers) should continue holding the banner of Tawhid, waging war against shirk, and shedding the blood of a non-dhimmi kafir because these things are *not sinful* and are *rewarded with Jannah*. Concerning the use of the simple present tense in *is*, *passes*, *follows* and *continues*, they are utilized to reflect a commitment of ISIS to the truth of its proposition.

A further observation relates to the addressee's gender, that is, it is not only male participants who are supposed to commit themselves to ISIS's jihad, but women are discursively addressed as another discourse participant to share the same ideology of jihad as well. In extract (3) above, women are instigated to carry out a specific type of jihad, that is, *jihad with wealth*. This type of jihad, as understood from its name, is based on giving money to the so-called Islamic State so as to be used in military operations. Here, a new dimension of ISIS's jihad is stated; it is a type of jihad that is no longer committed physically but, rather, financially. This new notion of jihad is emphasized in two ways: first, through the use of the two adjectives *great* and *wide* in *great gate* and *wide open*, which adds more flexibility to the way through which women can give their wealth to ISIS; second, by the use of the truth modal *will* in *deals that will never end poorly*, which has two functions: first, it indicates a high level of certitude beyond ISIS declaration concerning jihad of wealth; second, it shows ISIS as a promise-bearer who uses future promises to manipulatively communicate its message.

Now comes the role of the directive ISIS, which is interpersonally communicated through the use of imperatives that are employed to accentuate its religious ideologies. Consider the following extracts:

- (1) Stand and die upon that for which your brother died.  
(*Rumiyah*, issue 1, p. 3)

- (2) O lions of the Ummah... follow the path of these righteous souls for there is no other path. (ibid., p. 17)
- (3) The Khilafah has called for you to mobilize from your dens to alleviate the pain afflicting the hearts of the Muslims by striking the kuffar in their homelands. (ibid., p. 17)
- (4) So here before you are the doors of jihad – unhinged, and in their lands! Light the ground beneath them aflame and scorch them with terror. Kill them on the streets...stab them, shoot them, poison them, and run them down with your vehicles. (ibid., P. 17)
- (5) Let not them and their false claims of having knowledge mislead you. (ibid., P. 30)
- (6) So the command of Allah ... is to fight until there is no fitnah, i.e. evident shirk in the obedience of Allah, and until no manifest authority is given to any rule except to that of the True King. (ibid., P. 34)

The above extracts demonstrate a strongly directed message of jihad through a number of imperatives. Using imperatives in discourse, according to Yule (1996) allow speakers to address their recipients clearly and directly and, thus, to practice power over them. Here, ISIS attempts to create a direct communicative channel with its recipients through which it can communicate its religious ideologies. Obviously, the use of such imperatives constitutes the meaning of jihad both explicitly and implicitly. As shown in the above extracts, verbs, such as *striking*, *scorch*, *kill*, *stab*, *shoot*, *poison*, *run down*, and *fight* comprise a direct call towards violent action against ISIS's opponents, whereas verbs like *stand*, *die*, *follow*, and *mobilize* are indirect references to the same idea of jihad. The implicit jihad here is conveyed by the fact that acts of standing, dying, following, and mobilizing can be only realized via completing the course of ISIS's soldiers who died in their fighting against enemies. This meaning is confirmed by ISIS's direct call to its members to *follow the path of these righteous souls* in extract (2) above, where the implicit jihad is also conveyed by the causality sentence, *for there is no other path*.

Proceeding with the same directive mood, ISIS also communicates another religious ideology, that is, jama'aha. This concept is reflected by the two noun phrases *lions of the Ummah* and *the Khilafah* in extracts (2, 3) above. Crucially, the word *Ummah*, on the one hand, can be considered a synonym for the word 'jama'aha' since both connote the meaning of a unified community. The word *Khilafah*, on the other hand, was used

during the period of al-Sahabah's rule (the Prophet Muhammad's Companions). During such a period, all Muslim countries were ruled by one Khalifah (ruler) to whom every political, religious, social and economic issues were related. ISIS calls for resuming such *Khilafah* by achieving jama'aha. Importantly, this *Khilafah* cannot be achieved except by a unanimous agreement upon one and only one ruler for all Muslim countries. This, in turn, requires (on ISIS's part) all Muslims to be one unified community. Thereupon, the sense of jama'aha can be inferred from the sense of both *Ummah* and *Khilafah*. The three concepts are a semantic augmentation of each other.

It is important to mention here that both jihad and jama'aha, as main religious ideologies of ISIS, can also be deciphered by the employment of rhetorical questions that communicate indirect commands. Consider the following extract:

- (1) How can the disbelievers ever dream of safety and security while Muslims suffer anywhere in the world and while the rule of Allah is mockingly replaced by manmade monstrosities of democracy?

(*Rumiyah*, issue 1, P. 36)

The above ISIS's rhetorical question is employed here not to get an answer but to instigate an action. This type of questions is asked in order not only to make a statement but also to communicate a command. In the case of the above extract, both declarative and directive functions are indirectly performed by an interrogative form, which is often used for inquires, rather than directly by a statement or an imperative. From this proposition, ISIS's rhetorical question above carries the meaning: You (soldiers of ISIS) should not leave the disbelievers live in peace while ISIS's members suffer, so wage wars against them.

Another significant mood utilized in ISIS's *Rumiyah* to convey its religious ideologies is delivered commissively. Here are some extracts:

- (1) We will not rest from our jihad except beneath the olive trees of Rumiyah (Rome)." (*Rumiyah*, issue 1, p. 1)
- (2) By Allah's permission, their slaying will not harm the Islamic State as long as it proceeds upon Tawhid and the Sunnah. (ibid., P. 3)
- (3) They [disbelievers] shall shed many tears when Allah places over them ...one of the many soldiers and brothers of Abu Muhammad who will inflict them with a far worse torment. (ibid., p. 3)
- (4) Through your sacrifices, this Ummah will be victorious. (ibid., p. 17)

ISIS's clauses: *we will not rest from our jihad, their slaying will not harm the Islamic State, they shall shed many tears, we would have made effort to open the door...* and *this Ummah will be victorious* carry a strong commitment to some future actions that are expressed in the manner of vowing, threatening and promising, respectively. ISIS's commissive mood above has been characterized by three things: first, all commissives above revolve around the meanings of jihad and jama'aha. Both concepts have commissively been represented explicitly, through vowing in extracts (1, 2), and implicitly, through threatening and promising in extracts (3, 4), respectively; second, all commissives have been confirmed by the use of the truth modal *will*. This adds a sense of certitude and credibility to the pragmatic message of the commissive mood; third, the idea of jama'aha, which is indirectly communicated by the commissive *this Ummah will be victorious* in extract (4) above, is preconditioned by the prepositional phrase *through your sacrifices*. This conditional promise aims to influence the attitudes of ISIS's soldiers and drive them to offer more sacrifices in order for the *Ummah* to be *victorious*. Further, this conditional promise has two functions: literal and ideological. Literally, it implies a direct instigation for ISIS's soldiers to wage more military operations against their enemies; and ideologically, it emphasizes the complementary nature between jihad and jama'aha as main religious ideologies of ISIS's *Rumiyaḥ*. This ideological integration, for ISIS, is manifested by the fact that jama'aha can only be realized through acts of killing and violence, which represents (on ISIS's part) the main pillars of jihad.

#### 6.1.2.2.2. Modality

As for modality, ISIS employs two types of modality: obligation modality and truth modality. Both types aim to convey ISIS's jihad and jama'aha. Consider the following extracts:

- (1) This religion will remain established and will not be damaged by the death of any person. (*Rumiyaḥ*, issue 1, P. 2)
- (2) A generation has been born in the Islamic state... that will not accept humiliation. (*ibid.*, P. 37)

ISIS utilizes the truth modal 'will' in the clauses: *will remain*, *will not be damaged*, and *will not accept* in the above extracts to communicate trustworthiness, and to prove the validity of its arguments. Crucially, the use of truth modals reflects the degree of certitude which is often connected with the notion of authority a discourse participant practices

over another. Here, by employing the truth modal *will*, ISIS tries to establish itself as having the discourse access of authority over its members, which makes it appear as a religion defender. This authoritative role is not only stated by the use of the truth modal *will* in extract (1) above, but also by the antonyms *established* and *damaged*. The meanings of the two words, however incompatible, remain complementary in confirming the concepts of jihad and jama'aha.

Another important type of modality, which is employed in ISIS's *Rumiyah*, is obligation modality. This type of modality is expressed by modals, such as 'must' and 'shall' as in the following extracts:

- (1) Men shall continue to be employed by Allah to frustrate the kuffar.  
(*Rumiyah*, issue 1, p. 3)
- (2) Muslims currently living in Dar al-Kufr must be reminded that the blood of the disbelievers is halal. (*ibid.*, P. 36)

The obligation modals *shall* in *men shall continue* and *must* in *must be reminded* reflect the power of ISIS over its members. This nonreciprocal relationship of power is employed in discourse situations, where one powerful participant dominates another. ISIS uses this type of modality to impose its own ideology over their recipients. The use of the agentless passive in *Muslims must be reminded* in extract (2) above signifies to "leave causality and agency unclear" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 125). As such, this grammatical feature can be said to have an experiential value in the sense that it leaves the responsibility of 'reminding' Muslims unspecified. Consequently, people all over the world, who believe in ISIS's ideological agenda, are responsible for reminding Muslims that *the blood of the disbelievers is halal*. In Islamic traditions, the word *halal* carries the speech function of permission and, therefore, affirms the associative meaning of ISIS's jihad. The following table presents the frequencies of 'will', 'must' and 'shall' in *Rumiyah*.

Table 5. Truth and obligation modals in *Rumiyah*

Truth Modality			Obligation Modality		
Word	Total occurrence	Number of indicative occurrence	Word	Total occurrence	Number of indicative occurrence
Will	71	25	must	6	4
			shall	9	2

The above table clarifies that the truth modal 'will' and the obligation modals 'must' and 'shall' have total frequencies of 71, 6 and 9, respectively. Only 25, 4 and 2 occurrences of them are indicative in conveying the concepts of jihad and jama'aha.

### 6.1.3. Textual analysis

Now, it is time to show how the selected issue is cohesively arranged in a way that makes it appear in a clearly perceivable discursive pattern. Obviously, *Rumiyah's* discourse is textually structured in two levels: internally, through patterns of ideational, interpersonal and textual meaning; and externally, by means of the structure of its context of situation. Internally, at the ideational level, on the one hand, jihad and jama'aha have been realized through ISIS's participant roles of Actor, Carrier and Sayer. These ideational meanings communicate the authoritative, competent and authentic identity of ISIS. The interpersonal level, on the other hand, shows the dominant ISIS whose discourse has been structured around an oppositional relationship between in-group and out-group members. As for the textual level, the selected issue is delivered in a written form through a number of articles that topically address the two concepts of jihad and jama'aha. The following table shows how jihad and jama'aha are textually represented in the discourse of *Rumiyah*:

Table 6. Literal and associative representation of jihad and jama'aha in *Rumiyah*

Literal representation				Associative representation			
Jihad		Jama'aha		Jihad		Jama'aha	
Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency
jihad	59	jama'aha	19	war	11	Khilafah	25
				killing	32	Ummah	7
				attacks	6		

The above table clarifies that jihad and jama'aha have been communicated literally with frequency of 59 and 19, respectively, whereas the two concepts have been conveyed associatively with the words *war* (11 occurrences), *killing* (32 occurrences) and *attacks* (6 occurrences) for jihad; and *Khilafah* (25 occurrences) and *Ummah* (7 occurrences) for jama'aha. This indicates that ISIS has communicated its religious ideologies both implicitly and explicitly.

Externally, *Rumiyah* has been textualized through the structure of the context of situation in which it operates. From the very beginning of the selected issue, ISIS highlights its topical themes: jihad and jama'aha around them the rest of *Rumiyah's* discourse revolves. These themes have been made explicit in the cover page of the selected issue, where some words related to one of ISIS's members are quoted in a way that directly emphasizes one of the main themes of ISIS's *Rumiyah*. It runs as follows: *O muwahhidin, rejoice, for by Allah, we will not rest from our jihad except beneath the olive trees of Rumiyah (Rome).* (*Rumiyah*, issue 1, p.

1) Here, one theme of ISIS's discourse in *Rumiyah* is overtly decided by the word 'jihad', which also carries a direct call for more military operations against ISIS's opponents.

Furthermore, *Rumiyah's* topical themes have been developed throughout its articles. This topical development, in a Hallidayan perspective, is termed Rheme. This textual Rheme is intentionally religionized, by a rigid reinterpretation of Quran and Hadith, to communicate two textual meanings. The first is to hide the underpinning extremist ideologies of ISIS. The second is to project the structure of the context of situation onto the text of *Rumiyah*. This has been stated by the organized and recurrent employment of religious texts, particularly the Holy Quran and Hadith. The selected issue has witnessed several scriptural quotes to describe who ISIS's members are, how they are different from others and what their properties are. The following table displays the source and the number of occurrence of scriptural quotes in *Rumiyah*.

Table 7. Source and number of scriptural quotes in *Rumiyah*

Source of scriptural quotes	Number of occurrence	Total occurrence of quotes
Quran	66	114
Hadith	48	

The above table shows that *Rumiyah* witnesses 66 quotes from Quran and other 48 quotes from Hadith. This clarifies the significant part religious quotes play in *Rumiyah's* discourse, which aims to emphasize the concepts of jihad and jama'aha as deeply-rooted notions in Islamic religious sources.

## **6.2. Religious ideologies from a semiotic perspective: Collecting them together**

The focus of this part of the analysis is to shed light on the correlation between the textual and the contextual; that is, to show the harmonious relationship among the different analytical strands used in this paper. This complementary connection is manifested in pairs: ideational/field, interpersonal/tenor, and textual/mode. This is analytically conducted within the scope of semiotic functions analysis that denotes the contextual atmosphere of ISIS's *Rumiyah*. This level of analysis constitutes the three variables of register: field, tenor and mode.

### **6.2.1. Field**

In terms of the contextual variable of field, all articles in the selected issue have been directed towards two particular concepts: jihad and

jama'aha. Ideationally, *Rumiyah's* discourse demonstrates that these concepts are the main themes in almost all articles of *Rumiyah*. This ideological centrality is realized by ISIS via adopting the participant roles of Actor, Carrier and Sayer that reformulate the whole field of *Rumiyah's* selected issue (see Subsection 6.1.1 above).

This indicates that there are three discursive field pillars in *Rumiyah's* discourse: ISIS as a speaker, who is assigned the participant role of an Actor, Carrier and Sayer; a theme, which is intentionally religionized and topically oriented towards jihad and jama'aha; and a receiver whose cognitive background is targeted to be changed literally and ideologically. The three ISIS's participant roles add to the thematic intensity of *Rumiyah's* selected issue. ISIS as an Actor concentrates on its competency in carrying out different military operations against its enemies. The Carrier ISIS delineates the movement's attitudes towards its affiliates and enemies by attributing good qualities to in-group members and bad qualities to out-group ones. As for the Sayer ISIS, it shows itself as authoritative enough to speak on behalf of all Muslims all over the world. Significantly, the Actor, Carrier and Sayer ISIS are ideationally employed to assure two things: first, the religious identity this organization tries to institutionalize; second, the targeted goals it seeks to realize: jihad and jama'aha (see Subsection 6.1.1 above).

### 6.2.2. Tenor

Concerning the register variable of tenor, both jihad and jama'aha have interpersonally been communicated by means of Mood. This is discursively reflected via lexicalization, speech acts and modality that are pragmatically incorporated to construct the relationship between ISIS and its addressees. Lexically, ISIS's discourse in *Rumiyah* has shown its religious ideologies through a clear picture of two oppositional parties; the first is represented by ISIS and its members, while the second is represented by ISIS's opponents. Throughout *Rumiyah's* articles, a clear relationship has been established between a righteous 'We' group, who adhered itself to ISIS's ideological agenda and a sinful 'They' group, who opposed its beliefs. The description of the two groups shows the kind and nature of relationship between ISIS and others. It is a relationship which attempts to create an opposition-oriented discourse. (see Subsection 6.1.2 above).

As for speech acts, ISIS adopts three moods in addressing its readers: the declarative, the directive and the commissive. Each mood shows ISIS as authoritative, powerful and competent, respectively. The three moods have pragmatically been utilized to reflect the two ideologies of jihad and

jama'aha. Importantly, ISIS's discursive movement among the three clause patterns indicates its complete domination over its members. This is not astonishing since any ideologically brainwashed mind is completely ready to swallow different speech moods. Modality also has its share in describing the interpersonal relationship in *Rumiyah's* discourse. (see Subsection 6.1.2 above).

### 6.2.3. Mode

On the level of mode, the religious ideologies of jihad and jama'aha are expressed in a written verbal mode. This is conducted through the overall clause structures of the selected issue, which are textualized semantically and semiotically, to decipher the religious ideologies of ISIS's *Rumiyah*. Both jihad and jama'aha are recurrent themes in *Rumiyah*. These concepts are textually developed as central topics of ISIS's discourse. This thematic topicality constitutes the structure of Theme + Rheme, where jihad and jama'aha comprise the Theme of discourse and the rest of *Rumiyah's* discourse presents Rheme through which it is textually developed. Such a text development reflects what is noted by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 115) as "information unit," which manifests itself in two types of information: Given, which represents jihad and jama'aha as topical themes that are discursively supported by religious quotes from Quran and Hadith, as old information; and New, which refers to information, unrecoverable to readers, and is concerned with the development of such topical themes throughout *Rumiyah's* discourse (see Subsection 6.1.3 above).

As alluded above, jihad and jama'aha, being the topical themes of *Rumiyah's* discourse, are religiously presented via Theme + Rheme and Given + New structures. This is clearly shown by the dexterous use of some quotes from Quran and Hadith, which are intentionally selected and ideologically interpreted in a way that supports the thematic development of jihad and jama'aha. These religious quotes are conceived to create a thematic balance between Theme/Rheme and Given/New structures in *Rumiyah*. Obviously, ISIS's discourse in *Rumiyah* displays a religious discourse genre in which linguistic tools are utilized to target extremist political and religious goals (see Subsection 6.1.3 above).

## 7. Conclusion

The paper offered a systemic-functional linguistics analysis to reveal religious ideologies in ISIS's *Rumiyah*. The analysis demonstrated that ISIS's discourse in *Rumiyah* addressed two main ideologies: jihad and jama'aha. These ideologies have been traced and reflected both semantically, through patterns of ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings; and semiotically, by the structure of the context of situation, which is communicated by the different variables of register: field, tenor

and mode. The semantics and semiotics of these ideological concepts have shown an increasing emphasis on religious ideas that promote extremism and violence against the other; and create a group-oriented religious discourse, which abounds in meticulous ideological and discursive structures that aim to intensify "the ideological polarization between ingroups and outgroups" (van Dijk, 2006, p. 115).

It is linguistically evidenced that ISIS's religious ideologies, which are encoded in *Rumiyah*'s discourse, attempt to represent ISIS as a legitimate religious organization. This signifies to attract more affiliates to its ideological agenda. The complete dependence on religious scriptures, particularly Quran and Hadith, reflects a skillful employment of emotive language, which directly targets Muslim readers, specifically who do not have better religious explanatory background for a right interpretation of the recurrent scriptural quotes that are used every now and then in *Rumiyah*. Indicatively, this adds (on the part of ISIS) a sense of legitimacy, credibility and authenticity to ISIS's discourse.

The analysis of the selected data also showed that applying Halliday's systemic-functional approach to decipher the religious ideologies of ISIS is linguistically relevant. This model of analysis clarified that ISIS's *Rumiyah* is apparently a propagandist protrusion to a specific ideological agenda. The textual organization of the magazine and its contextual atmosphere are integrated to produce the final discursive image of ISIS. This image is semantically and semiotically delineated to establish a legitimate positive self-presentation to ISIS in a way that, on the surface, displays a reciprocal persuasive type of discourse, while, implicitly, shows a nonreciprocal extremist one. This, in turn, enables this movement to implant its extremist ideologies and to advocate its schematic violent goals. These acts are perceived to be prerequisites of what is described as "totalitarian ideology" (Shorten, 2017, p. 147).

Finally, for future research, this paper suggests the employment of Halliday's systemic-functional approach to the study of the discursive strategies of religionization in ISIS's *Rumiyah* and other religiously moderate digital publications. This might reveal different discourse strategies, which might result in a multifaceted religious discourse. Also recommended is an extensive study of lexicalization in ISIS's *Rumiyah*, which might also display different characteristics of a new religious discourse genre that has its own principles, goals and vocabulary.

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