

The Imbaba Terrorist Cell Trial

An Examination of Question Types and Conversational Flouting

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Abstract

Forensic linguistics, as a branch of applied linguistics, has become a prominent field of research to explore and examine legal language used by lawyers, judges, defendants, and witnesses in courtroom proceedings. It applies linguistic theories to analyze judicial discourse and solve legal issues such as authorship identification, crime and witness's testimony (MacLeod and Grant, 2017). The present study utilizes forensic linguistics as a theoretical framework to examine language employed by the Counselor Mohammad Al-Saeed Al-Sherbiny and the witness Mohammad Husein Yaqub in the Imbaba terrorist cell trial in 2021. The Imbaba terrorist cell Trial is an Egyptian court case involving a group of terrorists who were charged with planning and engaging in terrorist activities including targeting civilians, bombing churches, and threatening national unity. The study delves into identifying the types of questions used by Counselor (prosecutor) Mohammad Al-Saeed Al-Sherbiny during the legal testimony of the Egyptian Islamic preacher Mohammad Husein Yaqub, as a witness, on the Imbaba terrorist cell. It endeavors to uncover the political and pragmatic functions behind the use of particular types of questions. Moreover, it aims to examine the witness's responses and explore the pragmatic and political implications of the deliberate flouting of Grice's maxims. To achieve the objectives of the research, this study adopts Griffith and Milne's (2006) Question Map and Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle. The findings reveal that the Counselor utilizes probing and open questions to elicit comprehensive responses and to uncover the Salafi and Jihadist religious and political ideological affiliations of the witness. However, unproductive questions such as leading questions and opinions or statements are also employed to constrain the witness's ability to provide elaborated answers and frame him as suspicious and aligned with terrorist activities which potentially affect public perception and the outcome of the legal proceedings. The analysis indicates that the witness flouts Grice's maxims, especially maxims of manner and relation to purposefully create ambiguity, evasion, and misdirection. This study contributes empirically to forensic linguistic literature by offering a rare linguistic analysis of a terrorist trial. It demonstrates how employing Griffith and Milne's question map and Grice's cooperative Principle uncovers the ideological and pragmatic implications of courtroom discourse.

Keywords: *Courtroom questioning, Forensic linguistics, Imbaba Terrorist Cell Trial, Grice's maxims, Griffith and Milne's Question Map*

1. Introduction

Imbaba cell is known as a terrorist group of militants who belong to Islamic State (ISIS). They have a distorted ideology in the sense that they kill civilians, innocents, bomb churches and threaten national unity. The leader of the cell is "Mohammad Hamdy Zaky" who admitted that the cell had attacked police, armed forces, and civilians. The cell was discovered in the early 2010, and Egyptian officials have subsequently executed numerous operations to dismantle it. These activities have resulted in the neutralization of multiple cell members. The arrested terrorists were transported to prison for trial. The defendants have declared that a prominent Islamic preacher, Mohammad Husein Yaqub, has perpetrated terrorist attacks against military and police forces. The terrorists claimed to have acquired knowledge from the sheikh Mohammad Husein Yaqub, thereafter embracing their ideologies and fatwas. (Arab Observer, 2021).

In 2021, The Cairo East Criminal Court brought Mohammad Husein Yaqub to provide a testimony and respond to the allegations attributed to him by Imbaba terrorist cell. It is worth clarifying that Mohammad Husein was brought to the court as a witness and at the same time to approve that his religious and political affiliation is not aligned with terrorists. The court is presided over by Counselor (Prosecutor), Mohammad Al-Saeed Al-Sherbiny, who questioned the witness Mohammad Husein Yaqub regarding his fatwas, ideologies, sermons, and publications. This study investigates the language employed by both the Counselor Mohammad Al-Saeed Al-Sherbiny and the witness Mohammad Husein Yaqub during legal testimony.

Drawing on the framework and tools of forensic linguistics, this study examines the pragmatic and ideological dimensions of courtroom questioning in the trial of Sheikh Mohammad Husein Yaqub, a prominent Egyptian Islamic preacher, during the 2021 Imbaba terrorist cell case. The analysis focuses on the discourse of Counselor Mohammad Al-Saeed Al-Sherbiny as he interrogates the witness, exploring both the types of questions used and the responses given by the witness Mohammad Husein Yaqub.

Specifically, this study adopts Griffith and Milne's (2006) Question Map to categorize and identify the types of questions employed by the Counselor, and Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle to examine the pragmatic and ideological functions of flouting Grice's maxims in the witness's responses. The objective is to uncover how linguistic choices and pragmatic strategies function not only to elicit or obscure information, but also to reveal underlying political and ideological positions. Given the broader public and media attention surrounding the trial, and the ideological implications associated with the witness's social influence, this analysis contributes to our understanding of how courtroom language constructs authority, narrative, and credibility.

By focusing on a case that has provoked widespread cultural and religious debate, this study provides insight into how courtroom discourse is strategically managed to influence legal judgment and public perception. In doing so, it positions forensic linguistics not just as a tool for textual analysis, but as a lens through which to examine the intersection of language, power, and ideology in legal settings. The significance of the study lies in uncovering the ideological and religious beliefs of the witness to the public and his credibility, rather than determining his legal guilt or innocence.

To this end, the current study endeavors to analyze and determine the types of questions raised by the Counselor "Al-Sherbiny" in addressing the witness "Mohammad Husein Yaqub". It does so by identifying and examining instances of flouting Grice's maxims and analyzing the pragmatic and political functions of doing so. Language is not neutral, and it is used to carry pragmatic functions whether in courtroom, social media, Facebook, news, etc. (Al-khawaldeh, Al Kayed, & Al-Khawaldeh, 2024). This research examines the pragmatic functions and meanings of questions and responses and seeks to answer:

1. How does the Counselor's questions seek to uncover the witness's religious and political ideology as a jihadist ideologue inciting terrorism?
2. How does the witness flout Grice's maxims in order to resist the ideological framing as a jihadist ideologue inciting terrorism?

2. Literature Review

Forensic linguistics as a field of applied linguistics has attracted the attention of several scholars and linguists to examine and analyze language used in courtrooms by judges, lawyers, witnesses, suspects,

criminals, police, etc. Olsson (2008) describes forensic linguistics as inquiring the interrelationship between language, crime and law, in which law includes legislation, law enforcement, judicial matters and disputes or proceedings in law. Ariani, Sajedi, & Sajedi (2014) shed light on the history and development of forensic linguistics, the discipline, and the use of linguistic evidence in legal proceedings. They show how forensic linguistics as a field has informed and aided legal and courtroom cases such as author identification, crimes, rapes, etc.

Forensic linguistics has also been prevalent in examining questioning practice in courtroom. It assists in identifying the effects of types of questions on the legal proceedings and results. Wylie, Kaila, Shanna and Angela (2024) conducted a forensic analysis to assess lawyer questioning practices of children in Canadian courtrooms. The findings of the study revealed that the lawyers seldom ask open questions and focus on questions that do not elicit elaborated responses. Regarding the witnesses, they provided elaborated responses to open questions. The study showed that the lawyers resorted to closed questions that restrict children's ability to respond.

A recent study which contributes to courtroom trial on terrorism case is Chukwuma (2025) who examined juridical truth making in a Nigerian terrorism trial through analyzing how evidence such as intelligence reports is used in courtroom. The study showed how judges, prosecutors, and intelligence agents shape the legal definition of terrorism via evidentiary discourse. Moreover, Chukwuma confirmed the challenges of unverifiable evidence and how they influence the treatment of the accused individuals. Chukwuma's study is relevant to the current study in that it illustrates the interpretive and performative nature of courtroom proceedings. It shows how courtroom discourse serves broader political and ideological implications.

In addition to the linguistic analysis of courtroom questions, Boglelele (2022) proposed an ethnographic approach to courtroom which positions terrorism trial within a broader social, political and institutional context. This approach examines the terrorist trial by using three interrelated levels: micro level of courtroom interaction and self representation; meso level of knowledge production and discursive practices, and macro level of societal structures which include the impact of class, gender, and race. The study illustrated how courtroom discourse such as questioning and narrative framing contributes to framing terrorism as social and legal category. This study aligns with the present study in the sense that it shows how language used in courtroom carries ideological and political function.

Catoto (2022) employed Griffith's (2006) Question map and Grice's (1975) cooperative principle as theoretical frameworks of textual analysis to identify the different types of questions asked during court proceeding of five different cases such as murder, rape, theft and robbery. Using Grice's cooperation principle, this forensic investigation examined also the answers provided by suspects, witnesses, and victims, determining whether they were answered or violated. The findings showed that different types of questions were utilized during courtroom proceedings. Since they provided clarification on the events that occurred, productive questions including open question (*can you describe what happened that night?*) were seen as appropriate question types because they provided clarification of the key events and helped establishing facts. Conversely, the court forbids the use of unproductive questions, such as opinion/statement questions and leading questions (*you were angry when you hit him, weren't you?*), because they introduce bias, constrain answers, and present statements rather than inquiries. Moreover, they lack sufficient information to provide replies that could resolve the issue. Catoto demonstrated that such unproductive questions are discouraged in the courtroom because they influence testimony and lead to untruthful responses. Three maxims were observed by the witnesses "Maxims of Manner, Quantity and relation". Questions were carefully answered aligning with the context. However, these maxims were also violated in certain contexts.

Mortensen (2020) conducted a forensic analysis study comparing the questioning of witnesses and defendants in American and Danish criminal courtroom interaction of one American and three Danish

criminal trials. The study delved in to compare two different approaches to adversarial legal practices to examine the linguistic and interactional features of American and Danish courtroom questioning and their strategic and legal cultural underpinning. The findings revealed that compared to their American counterparts, Danish prosecutors and defense lawyers employed declarative questions noticeably more frequently, particularly during direct examinations. The noticeable differences between the American and Danish direct examinations clearly call for linguistic, legal, and cultural explanations. The American direct examinations feature no declarative questions, contrasting to the Danish direct examinations, which are filled with them. This suggests that there may be cultural differences in court room interrogations; and while this is important to bear in mind, it is not the explicit focus in this study.

In the same vein, Hu (2020) examined courtroom questioning as a dynamic process of adaptation to the various contextual factors, especially the psychological motivations in legal settings. The study aimed to describe the strategies adopted by questioners in Chinese courtroom trials, and to examine the complexity, functionality, and dynamics of the strategies in courtroom questioning. The findings showed that different strategies were employed in the process of questioners' making adaptation to their psychological motivations such as repetition, reformulation and juxtaposition. Repetition is used for the benefit of the non-participating audience and a question cycle to elicit confession. Reformulation is carefully employed to realize adaptation so as to either facilitate comprehension in direct examination or elicit damaging testimony in cross-examination. Juxtaposition is rarely used to discredit the respondent by formulating a contrast or contradiction. This study is relevant to the present research in the sense that both highlight how questioning is strategically and systematically adopted in courtroom to perform pragmatic and ideological functions.

In another study, Hu (2019) conducted a forensic study to examine the courtroom questioning as a dynamic process of adaptation to the institutional power by recourse to intimidation and topic management. The study concluded by emphasizing the role of institutional power in courtroom. The power gives the questioner to choose certain linguistic choices and types of questions that bring the defendant and criminals under the control of the authority of the courtroom.

Surveying the aforementioned studies shows the importance of questions in legal proceedings and cross-examination hearings. We can summarize the key issues as all the previous studies underscore the functional and strategic role of courtroom questioning in shaping and framing the legal outcomes. They highlight how employing particular types of questions influence the clarity of witness testimony and construct political and ideological instances. This has relevance for the current study in that they justify the adoption of Griffith and Milne's (2006) Question Map and Grice's Cooperative Principle as effective tools for analyzing courtroom discourse and provide a comparative foundation that supports the focus of the current study. The present study builds on these studies by applying the same theoretical frameworks to examine types of questions and flouting of maxims in the trial of the witness "Mohammad Husein Yaqub" in a court case that hasn't been examined yet.

3. Methodology

3.1. Griffith and Milne's (2006) Question Map (GQM)

Griffith and Milne categorize questions in the courtroom into eight types, distinguishing between productive and non-productive categories (Griffiths and Milne, 2006, p. 182). Although Griffith and Milne's question map is originated and developed for analyzing police interview, the typology of the questions forms can be effectively applied to courtroom's examinations because both courtroom discourse and police interview share structural similarities. In other words, the types of questions used in both cases influence the elicitation of information and limit and constrain the defendant and witness's responses. Moreover, many studies have adopted Griffith and Milne's framework in analyzing courtroom examinations yielding valuable insights such as Catoto (2022) and Coulthard (2010). Griffith and Milne

(2006) distinguish the following question types: 1. Productive questions which encourage clarification, elaboration and detailed responses, thereby aiding in understanding factual narrative. 2. Non-productive questions which hinder and limit the flow of communication by confusing and restricting the respondent.

Productive questions: those that are designed to allow the witness or interviewee to provide a comprehensive and detailed responses. They include:

1. Open questions are characterized by permitting a comprehensive spectrum of responses. These questions promote more extensive and precise responses from interviewees.
2. Probing questions are more intrusive and need specific answers. They usually begin with wh-question words such as who, what, why, where, when, which, or how. These are suitable for acquiring more information subsequent to an original account.
3. Suitable closed yes/no questions employed at the conclusion of a topic when open and probing questions have been fully explored. They are generally employed to delineate legal arguments.

Non-productive questions: those that are used to hinder communication and often lead to incomplete and misleading responses. They are discouraged in courtroom proceeding. They include:

4. Inappropriate closed yes/no questions may resemble appropriate closed questions in wording but are utilized at incorrect moments during the interview, rendering them unproductive. They either permit evasive interviewees to provide less detailed responses or restrict the range of available answers.
5. Leading Questions that imply a specific response in formal interview content directed at an interviewee.
6. Multiple questions that include several sub-questions posed simultaneously. This complicates the determination of which question the interviewee is expected to address. Multiple questions also encompass various conceptual questions. This is a scenario in which an interviewer inquires about two concepts simultaneously.
7. Forced-choice questions that provide the interviewee with a restricted set of response options.
8. Opinion or statement defined as posing an opinion or putting statements to an interviewee as opposed to asking a question.

3.2. The cooperation principle and Grice's maxims

The other framework of analysis to be employed in this study is Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle. In his influential work "Logic and conversation", Grice (1975) introduces the Cooperative Principle and maxims as a descriptive framework to illustrate how people communicate effectively. The main idea of the cooperative principle is how participants make their contributions suitable to the purpose of the conversation. Grice divides the Cooperative Principle into four maxims, which participant tend to follow in conversation to communicate effectively. These maxims are:

Maxim of Quantity: make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange). Do not make your contribution more informative than is required. This maxim emphasizes providing the right amount of information—neither too little nor too much.

Maxim of Quality: do not say what you believe to be false. Do not say that for which you lack sufficient evidence. This maxim focuses on the importance of truthfulness and reliability in communication.

Maxim of Relation: be relevant. This maxim assumes that contributions to the conversation are relevant and related to the topic of conversation.

Maxim of Manner: avoid obscurity of expression. Avoid ambiguity. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity). Be orderly. This maxim entails clarity and organized way of communication to make message easily understood.

Grice confirms that participants sometimes deliberately flout these maxims to imply and communicate underlying meanings and implicature. These implied meanings can be understood by listeners through context and the assumption that the speaker is still generally adhering to the cooperative principle.

3.3. Data Collection

This study is a descriptive qualitative study that examines types of questions used in courtroom during legal proceedings. Data were obtained from the official website of “Sada Elbalad channel”, which broadcast the video recording of court trial live as verified by Egyptian official TV channels. The testimony of the sheik “Mohammad Husein Yaqub” along with the questioning conducted by the Counselor “Mohammad Al-Saeed Al-Sherbiny” are chosen. The recording was captured directly from the channel using high-quality audio-visual equipment. For the reliability, the video is part of the public broadcast of a formal legal proceeding which is also shown on Egyptian TV channels and YouTube. Care was taken to ensure that the recording captured the entirety of the proceeding without any interruptions or omissions. Then, the recorded data were transcribed and translated into English considering the linguistic and cultural considerations of the original language. For example, in the recording, the Counselor said in Arabic “ما اسباب تغيبك عن المحاكمة؟”. This question is translated into English “*What are the reasons for your absence?*” The translation was reviewed by native Arabic speaker fluent in English to ensure clarity.

3.4. Data Analysis

The first stage of data analysis involved categorizing the types of questions, based on Griffith’s (2006) question map, employed by Counselor in addressing the witness within the court proceedings. In the second stage, questions are classified according to their types in relation to Griffith’s (2006) question map. After that, a textual analysis is conducted to uncover the underlying pragmatic and political implications. The analysis includes examining several aspects of language use, including syntactic structures, lexical choices, and discourse markers. The analysis of the lexical choices involves identifying key terms, phrases and vocabularies that convey certainty, authority, or ambiguity. The second stage of data analysis is based on Grice’s maxims. In this stage, all responses that include flouting of the four maxims “quantity, quality, relevance and manner” are identified and critically analyzed to determine social, political and pragmatic implications of witness’s responses.

4. Results

This chapter presents the types of questions (Griffith and Milne (2006) used in the courtroom proceedings and the responses that flout Grice’s maxims (1975). Table 1 shows the frequency of each type of questions used in the courtroom in questioning the witnesses. Table 2 represents the frequency of Flouting of Grice’s maxims.

Table 1.

Frequency of each type of questions

Type of question	Frequency of questions	Example
1. Productive questions		
Open questions	5	<i>What is Salafī thought and its content?</i>

Probing questions	14	<i>Why do you strive to spread the message?</i>
Appropriate closed yes/no questions	1	<i>Do you hear about Al-Qaeda?</i>
2. Non-productive questions		
Inappropriate closed yes/no questions	4	<i>Does your speech have an impact on people?.</i>
Leading questions	2	<i>What is the reason for your continuous request to send blessings upon the Prophet?</i>
Multiple questions	1	<i>Have you read or studied some opinions?.</i>
Forced choice questions		
Opinion or statement	3	<i>What is your interpretation of what one of the defendants decided that he is executing the instructions of Abu Ishaq, MohammadHassan, MohammadHussein Ya'qub, and Mostafa El-Adawi?</i>
Total	30	

A noteworthy disparity between productive and non-productive asking methods can be shown in Table 1, which displays the frequency of various question types asked to the witness, Mohammad Husein Yaqub. Probing questions were most commonly employed among the productive questions (14 times), signifying an important focus on getting the respondent to provide comprehensive, elaborate, or clarifying answers. Employing such type of question communicates that the Counselor intentionally pursues a deeper level of investigation in an effort to elicit more complex or illuminating responses. Moreover, using five open questions indicated an attempt to promote unstructured, unrestrained responses, which is significant in forensic or investigative proceedings. However, compared to more exploratory asking strategies, the usage of appropriate closed yes/no questions was minimal (just one case), indicating a restricted dependence on simple binary-answer questions.

However, the category of unproductive questions highlights certain limitations on the effectiveness of question. Four instances of unproductive closed yes/no questions were identified, indicating that these questions may have constrained responses, leading to simplified or less informative answers. Two instances of leading questions suggest potential bias in the interviewing process, as they may have influenced the respondent's answers instead of facilitating independent recollection. The Counselor rarely posed Multiple questions, as many questions were asked only once, making it difficult for witness to comprehend or deliver precise responses. Clearly, there were no forced-choice questions, signifying the absence of restricted responses. However, there were three occurrences of opinions or statements, suggesting that the Counselor may have deliberately employed declarative statements or personal viewpoints instead of objective questions, potentially affecting the responses.

Table 2.
Flouting Grice's maxims

Maxim	Frequency of Flouting Grice's maxims
Quantity	7
Quality	3
Relation	8
Manner	10

Table 2 signals that the most frequently flouting maxim is the maxim of manner which occurs 10 times. This indicates that the witness consistently exploited vagueness, ambiguity and complex language in his statements. This could be considered as an intentional strategy to obscure the truth, avoid providing direct answers, or create confusion to mislead the counselor. The second most prevalent flouting involved the maxim of relation occurring eight times. This indicates that a significant responses contained irrelevant information, potentially as a strategy to divert attention, shift the subject of the question, or create confusion. It may be a strategy to prevent dishonesty towards the Counselor or to avoid self-incrimination. The flouting of the maxim of quantity occurred seven times, indicating that the witness supplied either excessive irrelevant information or insufficient details. This could be regarded as an attempt to manipulate the narrative, either by exaggerating or omitting crucial elements that could change the perception of case. The results also reveal that the maxim of quality was the least frequently violated maxim which occurs three times. This suggests that deception and lying were not commonly observed. This may be linked to a desire to elude potential legal repercussions or to utilize strategic ambiguity rather than outright falsehoods to minimize the risk of being discovered.

5. Analysis

5.1. Productive Questions

These questions are considered the most efficient and appropriate technique for questioning witnesses, defendants, and victims in trial proceedings . Their objective is to extract essential information and resolve ambiguities in the cases under investigation. Witnesses must make a commitment to deliver comprehensive and truthful testimony. Courtroom questioning is crucial for obtaining significant information, which ultimately underpins the determinations made by judges and counselors.

5.1.1. Open Questions

An open question is one of the primary types described by Griffith and Milne (2006). It is utilized by the Counselor to elicit further elaboration and affirmation from the witnesses regarding the case. As shown in the results table, Counselor utilized this form of questioning five times to generate comprehensive, narrative responses. These questions urge the witness to offer detailed views without guidance from the Counselor. The witness, Mohammad Husein Yaqub, was posed questions including:

1. Counselor: What is Salafi thought and its content?

Witness: this question is directed to Salafi preachers.

2.Counselor: Explain the Takfiri Salafi thought?

Witness: I know that Salafism is Salafism, and Takfirism is Takfirism.

3.Counselor: What is meant by the Imam and the Caliph?

Witness: The Imam is the Caliph of the Muslims whom the people of authority have supported, and the Caliph is the one whom all Muslims have pledged allegiance to worldwide.

Both questions 1 and 2 seek to establish and identify the ideological foundations of the witness's beliefs. Question one directs the inquiry into Salafi ideology which is a conservative Islamic group with strict thoughts. The second question extends the scope of the inquiry to Takfiri Salafi thoughts, a radical and terrorist group. By joining the two questions together, the counselor invites the witness to establish a clear distinction between the two Islamic groups. Moreover, the Counselor utilizes open questions to promote the witness to provide an informative and comprehensive response that reflects his religious and political ideology and to counter the terrorists' allegations that they learned terrorist beliefs from the witness. The questions focus on critical concepts including "Salafi and Takfiri." to uncover the witness's ideology and identify whether he carries extremist beliefs as a Muslim preacher. Question three introduces another two related concepts "Imam" and Caliph" to Salafi and Takfiri. These concepts are ideologically loaded and considered central to the debate of extreme Islam. The use of lexical chains (a set of semantically related words that construct ideological framework in discourse), "Salafi, Takfiri, Imam and Caliph" in open questions reflects the underlying meanings and messages that the Counselor seeks to understand and validate. The Counselor's questions encourage the witness to show and position himself on the legitimacy of Islam.

4.Counselor :What is the reason for the multiple names of terrorist groups, and do they differ in ideology and content?

Witness: I do not know, and I do not know these names and personalities.

5.Counselor: What do you know about Fares Abu Jandal?

Witness: It is the first time I hear about him, and the judge told him that it came in one of the leaflets of the Daesh organization that fighting the abstaining sect is an obligation from the obligations of religion.

Question 4 engages with the several names and movements of extremists. By using such open question, the Counselor probes the underlying beliefs of the witness to uncover his familiarity with the terrorist ideological distinctions. The counselor seeks to identify witness's alignment or ignorance of terrorist's ideology. The witness's response may show a strategic distancing or unfamiliarity with terrorist's beliefs. Question 5 as an open question probes the witness's knowledge regarding the well-known terrorist figure "Fares Abu Jandal". The question seeks to uncover any connection between the witness' beliefs and the terrorist (Fares). This question implies an associative indication meant to examine the witness's ideological dissociation from terrorism. Moreover, the question communicates important observations regarding the common conviction held by both the witness and the terrorist as religious figures.

5.1.2. Probing Questions

This form of question is utilized in courtrooms by the Counselor to explore particular areas of interest more thoroughly. This method can be useful but necessitates precise execution to prevent the introduction of prejudice or the imposition of unreasonable pressure on the witness. The Counselor posed 14 probing questions to the witness, Mohammad Husein Yaqub, as detailed below.

6.Counselor: What are the reasons for your absence?

Witness: I thank the court, and the reason for my absence is due to illness and prolapsed disc, and I have medical reports that confirm the validity of my words. Additionally, I asked one of the lawyers about attendance and he told me that attendance is optional.

7.Counselor: What is your perspective of religion?

Witness: Religion consists of scholars and worshipers, and I was raised in a religious family; my grandfather was Sheikh Ya'qub and my father was Hussein Ya'qub. I do not issue fatwas, but rather consult scholars and seeks their advice, and I have no relation to politics

Question 6 and 7 are probing questions that aim to elicit comprehensive and detailed contextual information from the witness. The Counselor starts the testimony by question 6, asking the witness about his absence from the courtroom. The probing question indicates that the witness's absence indicates reluctance or avoidance. significant and requires satisfactory explanation. This suggests an implicit suspicion or a necessity to explicate accountability. The question also illustrates the power dynamics by positioning the witness under a sense of responsibility by the counselor. Questions 7 shifts the focus to the ideological ground by asking the witness about his theological position. The counselor utilizes such question to uncover the witness's personal beliefs by identifying his religious convictions and doctrine. Thus, the Counselor could make a judgment based on the witness's response.

8.Counselor: What types of books do you read?

Witness: I have read many books, including those al-Tabari and al-Qurtubi.

9.Counselor: What are your academic qualifications?

Witness: I am a graduate of a diploma in teaching, and everything I say is based on personal efforts through my readings.

The above questions 8 and 9 serve as probing questions to unfold the epistemological and intellectual legitimacy of the witness's religious discourse. These two questions carry dual functions: first, they reflect the source of witness's knowledge, and assess his intellectual ability to engage in and deliver religious discourse. The Counselor utilizes question 8 to implicitly probe the ideological orientations of the witness by identifying the authors he engages with. Furthermore, question 9 undermines the institutional credibility of the witness as a formal religious authority. The Counselor intends to uncover the educational status of the witness who is not authorized to be a Muslim religious figure.

10.Counselor:Why do you strive to spread the message?

Witness: I work, and it is upon Allah to convey my messages, and I urge people to pray, and my speech to them is for the general public.

11.Counselor : What are your affiliations?

Witness: I do not belong to a party or group, and I say they have their own methodology.

The aforementioned WH interrogatives 10 and 11 are crucial for exposing the witness's underlying ideological alignment and motivations. Question 10 suggests an underlying message, as the verb 'strive' frames the act of preaching as intentional endeavor to attain specific objectives and goals. The use of the verb "strive" connotes intended purpose and determination. The Counselor asks about the witness's "affiliations" in questions 11 to position the witness within specific ideological and political stances. The use of "affiliations" in the plural form implicitly indicates the possibility of hidden associations. The question aims to uncover whether the witness is formally associated with religious or political groups.

12.Counselor :What is the ruling on joining terrorist groups?

Witness: I do not know because I cannot judge them whether what they do is right or wrong.

13. Counselor :What do you know about Jabhat al-Nusra and the Muslim Brotherhood?

Witness: I know that the Muslim Brotherhood "filled the world", and that Sheikh Hassan al-Banna, after the collapse of the Islamic Caliph, called people to it and sought to reach power.

14.Counselor :What do you know about Daesh ideology?

Witness: I do not know anything.

Here, the aforementioned probing questions are employed to extract comprehensive information and test the witness's ideological stances regarding well-known terrorist figures and organization. The questions are discursively loaded in the sense that the witness should have knowledge about these terrorist groups. The Counselor emphasizes terms such as "terrorist, Jabhat al-Nusra, Daesh, Sayyid Qutb" as a presumption that the witness has connections or decisive opinions on these terrorist groups. Such questions exert pressure on the witness, compelling him to reply in accordance with those expectations. The Counselor employs his authority in question 12 to compel the witness to render a religious judgment regarding joining "Daesh." This prescriptive judgment aims to shape public opinion, particularly among young individuals regarded as students of the witness. The Counselor escalates the ideological pressure on the witness in question 13 by asking directly about "Jabhat al-Nusra and Muslim Brotherhood". The Counselor may want to enforce the witness to respond especially about "Muslim Brotherhood" which is one of the active and powerful Islamic organization in Egypt.

5.1.3. Appropriate closed yes/no questions

This type of question is used by Counselor to confirm certain facts and clarify specific point. The witness was asked:

15. Counselor : Do you hear about Al-Qaeda?

Witness: Like what you hear from the media. The judge responded: I don't hear.

Question 15 is considered an appropriate yes/no question within Griffith's framework. It is used to confirm specific point of knowledge rather than obtaining elaboration. The questions presupposes specific indications in the sense that the witness somehow has a connection with Al-Qaeda. However, the Counselor intends to stress and focus on the idea of "al-Qaeda" (a terrorist's group) by asking closed yes/no question to position the witness in clear stance as to whether he is with or against such terrorist group. The witness's response is an informative affirmation to the public that Islam is not associated with terrorism. In relation to the research question 1, the Counselor intends to reflect the witness's ideological association by a simple and clear confirmation in form of yes or no answer.

5.2. Non-productive questions

The non-productive questions are not allowed in courtroom because they jeopardize the witness and put him in risk. They are not effective to the trial proceedings and hinder the flow of communication and testimony. In such cases, the witness has the right to reject response.

5.2.1. Inappropriate closed yes/no questions

This type of question is not favored in court as it jeopardizes the witness. An inappropriate closed yes/no question presupposes incorrect information and constrains the witness, thereby rendering him unable to respond affirmatively or negatively. The Counselor asked the witness:

1. Counselor: Does your speech have an impact on people?.

Witness: When I stand on the pulpit and deliver the Friday sermon, I don't feel anyone in front of me, and I address Allah, and my message is directed to the general public of the committed and the youth.

2. Counselor: Has your advocacy and speech influenced the youth and the committed?

Witness: I tell people to send blessings upon the Prophet because I strive in the field of the science of hearts and the science of the path to Allah.

Questions 1 and 2 are not appropriate in legal testimony because they limit and constrain the witness to

respond in binary form which incriminates him or frames him negatively. These questions drag the witness into rhetorical trap. On the one hand, if he responds affirmatively, then he will be aligned with inciting terrorist ideology and influencing the young people to join terrorist groups. On the other hand, the negative response could be deemed deceitful and detrimental to his standing as a religious preacher. These questions position the witness within a narrative of accountability. They presume that the witness's advocacy and speeches are not only effective but are responsible for inciting terrorists. The use of "youth and the committed" in question 2 reveals that those people who are influenced by the witness's speeches are susceptible to terrorist and Jihadist ideology. The questions aim to underscore the notion that the religious discourses presented by the witness "Mohammad Husein Yaqub" have promoted and framed terrorist ideology. Furthermore, the Counselor reiterated the question and asked the witness:

3.Counselor : (repeated the question a second time): Have you heard about Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden?

Witness: I do not know his ideology or his case.

Question 3 can be interpreted as serving ideological and rhetorical purposes. Even it seems simple but it is loaded with pragmatic implications. It presupposes that the witness is associated with one of the globally known terrorist. By invoking the terrorist "Osama bin Laden" and " Al-Qaeda", the Counselor implicitly positions the witness within a discursive frame of extremists and terrorists. Thus, question 3 is utilized by the Counselor to create a discursive link between the witness's religious discourse and terrorist's ideology. The repetition of the question further indicates a strategic intent in which the Counselor form a discursive pressure forcing the witness into a position of either to align or disalign with terrorists.

5.2.2. Leading questions

A leading question is an inappropriate type of question that guides the witness toward specific answers due to its implicit assumptions and presuppositions, which may influence the witness's responses. This type of question is deliberately employed to direct the witness toward specific responses. The subsequent question is categorized as leading question.

4.Counselor: What is the reason for your continuous request to send blessings upon the Prophet?

Witness: Basically, I love the Prophet.

Question 4 is a non-productive question that carries pragmatic and ideological functions. While the question simply asks about a religious practice, it uses a tone of suspicion framing the "continuous request to send blessing..." as an inappropriate practice carrying hidden motives beyond the religious purpose. The question does not elicit any legal information. Rather, it rhetorically reinforces underlying accusation that the witness uses such "blessing" manipulatively. This question reflects the Counselor's strategic questioning to depict the witness's discourse as ideologically loaded and aligned with terrorists and extremists.

5.2.3. Multiple questions

The testimony contains simply a single multiple question. This question is considered as inappropriate as it is not properly related to the trial proceeding and hinders the flow of communication. The Counselor asked the witness:

5.Counselor . Have you read or studied some opinions?.

*Witness: I take what I want. The judge responded that it is supposed to read the whole book.
Jacob replied: I take what I want.*

In the light of forensic linguistics, question 5 is non-productive because it disrupts the communicative flow and makes confusion. The question is structurally ambiguous carrying two non-equivalent semantically verbs “read, and study”. Thus, the witness finds it difficult to either respond to the verb study or read. From pragmatic point of view, the question lacks clear referents; which opinions are being referred and which books or articles are being read. The question doesn’t address specific incidents or piece of information. The Counselor frames the witness as someone who is engaged with ideological and religious material in selective manner, thus questioning his credibility. The question operates rhetorically to support the narrative that the witness is somehow inciting terrorists by his religious speeches. The question shows how courtroom discourse is not merely truth finding but a strategic means to construct ideological stances. Moreover, the multiple questions aim to assess the witness's educational background, specifically regarding obtaining a certificate from accredited universities. The Counselor is aware that the witness lacks an official university credential in religion and has acquired knowledge from Muslim religious Sheikhs. The question serves as a warning discourse indicating that the witness is prohibited legally from teaching Islamic beliefs and delivering sermons in the mosque.

5.2.4. Opinion or statement

Opinion and statement questions are a type of inappropriate question structured as statements or assertions rather than direct questions. Such questions are employed to manipulate testimony or exert pressure on the witness to provide self-incriminating responses. The Counselor posed the following questions to the witness:

6. *Counselor :What is your interpretation of what one of the defendants decided that he is executing the instructions of Abu Ishaq, MohammadHassan, MohammadHussein Ya'qub, and Mostafa El-Adawi?*

Witness: Mohammad Husein Yaqub addresses the committed, while I address the public.

7. *Counselor: What do you say about the extremists' statements that Jihad in the path of Allah is committing terrorist acts targeting state institutions?*

Witness: These are ignorant people, and their minds are what led them to this because any child with a phone with three definitions knows how to see things weirder than imagination on the internet, so he is a sea, if he dives into it, he will be led astray clearly.

The aforementioned questions are formulated as assertion rather than inquires. These types of questions are not preferred in courtroom proceedings since they obscure the line between interrogation and discursive manipulation, enforcing the witness to respond to the embedded assumption that frames the witness in incriminating stance. Questions 6 and 7 are not designed to elicit information rather to position the witness in certain ideological associations and in a defensive stance. In example 6, the Counselor intends to confirm what the “defendant” has claimed through the use of “opinion or statement”. The statement implies a shared ideological religious beliefs link between witness and the defendant. The Counselor creates pluralism between religious authority and terrorists. Since the name of the witness is one of the list of ideologues, the Counselor attributes responsibility to the witness. Relatively, question 7 carries ideological functions in the sense that it combines and relates the concept “Jihad” with terrorist acts. This question presupposes that the witness is ideologically engaged with advocating the concept “Jihad” in his speeches. At last, both questions carry ideological implications.

5.3. Flouting of Maxims

Flouting of Grice's maxims frequently occur in legal proceedings and cross-examination when the witness,

or accused neglect to comply with the four maxims of "quantity, quality, relation, manner" established by Grice (1975). Flouting maxims carries pragmatic functions through specific strategies for specific purposes (Al-Mazari & Rababah, 2024). This section provides a textual and critical examination of the witness Mohammad Husein Yaqub's responses to the counselor's questions.

4.3.1. flouting of maxim of quantity

The flouting of the maxim of quantity emerges when the speaker conveys information that is either excessive or insufficient. The response is uninformative due to either the omission of essential information or the provision of superfluous details. The subsequent instances demonstrated the flouting of the maxim of quantity in the testimony of the witness "Mohammad Husein Yaqub).

Counselor: What are the reasons for your absence?

The witness : I thank the court, and the reason for my absence is due to illness and prolapsed disc, and I have medical reports that confirm the validity of my words. Additionally, I asked one of the lawyers about attendance and he told me that attendance is optional.

In the aforementioned instances, It seems that the witness flouts the maxim of quantity by providing worthless information that is neither informative nor essential to the question. However, such elaboration may serve pragmatic functions in the courtroom context. The expression of gratitude and the supporting medical details function as a strategic way for face-saving and self-legitimization. The witness's response serves to present himself as respectful and aligned with the courtroom norms and policy. Thus, while the response flouts the maxim of quantity technically, it pragmatically fulfills persuasive function. This suggests that what is considered pragmatic flouting in Grice's lens might be a discursive strategy in forensic context.

Counselor: Since when did you start your Islamic advocacy?

Witness: My Islamic advocacy began in 1978, and it was from pulpits, mosques, and through television channels.

While the Counselor asks for temporal answer, the witness provides additional information that related to the place and platform of his advocacy. This inclusion appears to flout the maxim of quantity and suggests pragmatic function in the sense that to shift the focus from specific timeline to a broader context of religious activities. Rhetorically, the flouting of the maxim of quantity serves as positioning the witness as credible figure by highlighting his visibility across prominent social platforms. Moreover, the witness's response could be interpreted as distracting strategy to the Counselor to remain him tentative. Thus, the flouting of the maxim of quantity is a self-legitimization strategy aims to reinforce a positive image of the witness as a religious preacher.

Counselor: Is there a Caliph now?

Witness: There is no Caliph because Muslims have not agreed on one, and the ruler of the state is the authority.

This response appears to flout the maxim of quantity in the sense that the answer should be either yes or no. However, the witness provides elaborated response that communicates the reason for the absence of "Caliph" now and legitimize the authority of the state ruler. This response seems plausible as a strategic way for distancing himself from any alignment to the terrorist's ideology. By explicitly stating that the "ruler of the state is the authority", the witness intends to confirm his stance with the state political legitimacy. Therefore, rejecting any association with the radical Islamic ideologies.

5.3.2. Flouting maxim of quality

The flouting of the maxim of quality occurs when the speaker fails to convey the truth or presents innocent information. Complying with the maxim of quality necessitates refraining from disseminating inaccurate and misleading information. Speakers may employ several techniques to flouts maxim of

quality, including making untrue assertions, presenting literally inaccurate statements while anticipating the listener to deduce the intended meaning, or utilizing figurative language such as metaphor to influence the listener.

The witness flouts maxim of quality when the Counselor asked him about his affiliations.

Counselor : What are your affiliations?

Witness: I do not belong to a party or group, and I say they have their own methodology.

The witness in the above example flouts the maxim of quality. His advocacy journey is well-known as Salafi Islamic preacher. The witness's response "I don't belong to a party or group" carries suspicion and invites scrutiny. The addition of the evaluative statement "they have their own methodology" functions pragmatically as saving strategy to avoid suspicion and keeping a plausible deniability. Flouting the maxim of quality reveals ideological purpose that allows the speaker to position himself neutral and independent from any Islamic terrorist, extremist and Jihadist organizations.

Counselor: What is the reason for the multiple names of terrorist groups, and do they differ in ideology and content?

Witness: I do not know, and I do not know these names and personalities.

Counselor: What do you know about Daesh ideology?

Witness: I do not know anything.

The witness keeps repeating the claim that he does not know any essential information about the terrorist ideology. While it is impossible to confirm definitively whether the witness possesses knowledge about terrorist, the response can still carries ideological and pragmatic implications. The denial is interpreted as a strategic self-protection and avoidance of incrimination. Furthermore, the denial ideologically construct dissociation from terrorist group. The witness's answer may be considered a flouting of the maxim of quality which somehow serves as distancing the witness from any legal responsibility and connection to Jihadist and extremist groups.

5.3.3. Flouting maxim of relation

The maxim of relation confirms that the speaker must give relevant information regarding the subject of question. If the speaker's response is irrelevant or evasive, he/she violates the maxim of relation. Speakers also flouts the maxim of relation by providing responses that are not immediately relevant to the question or occasionally make indirect replies due to a misinterpretation of the question. The Counselor asked the witness about his absence of the courtroom.

Counselor: What are the reasons for your absence?

The witness: I express my gratitude to the court, and my absence is attributable to illness and a prolapsed disc, for which I possess medical documentation that substantiates my claims. I inquired with one of the lawyers regarding attendance, and he informed me that it is voluntary.

While the witness provides a superficial response relevant to the question, the witness flouts the maxim of relation by providing detailed information that diverts from the core point of the question. The question is about the reasons of his absence, but the witness starts by greetings, then by providing irrelevant argument "I inquired with one of the lawyer....". The witness can be more cooperative and make his contribution more direct and relevant to the question. The pragmatic functions of the witness's response can be understood as a strategic shift of the focus from the explanation of absence to more wide narrative that confirms the witness's respect and obedience to the legal procedures and his personal suffering. This discursive strategy allows the witness to distance himself from ideological framing. By providing detailed

explanation with tangible evidence, the witness resists any attempt to frame and depict him as religious preacher inciting terrorists or Jihadist ideologue.

Counselor: Does your speech have an impact on people?

Witness: When I stand on the pulpit and deliver the Friday sermon, I don't feel anyone in front of me, and I address Allah, and my message is directed to the general public of the committed and the youth.

In the above exchange, the witness flouts the maxim of relation by offering an answer that is not directly relevant to the Counselor's question. The expected response to the Counselor's question is to confirm, deny, or qualify the impact of his speech on audience. The witness's response is irrelevant and focused on the spiritual aspect "I don't feel anyone in front of me, and I address Allah". This response distracts the attention from the impact of his speech on audience to the personal experience and issues. By employing this technique, the witness shift and resist the ideological frame as inciting terrorists and a religious preacher who influences the public. Thus, flouting the maxim of relation is a rhetorical strategy to shift the ideological framework of the witness as Jihadist ideologue. If the witness has confessed that he has a strong influence on the public, then it could be a hard evidence that the witness is responsible of teaching Islamic radicalization extremism.

Counselor: Why do you strive to spread the message?

Witness: I work, and it is upon Allah to convey my messages, and I urge people to pray, and my speech to them is for the general public.

In the above exchange, the witness strategically flouts the maxim of relation to resist the ideological depiction that the Counselor draws for him as Jihadist ideologue inciting terrorism. The witness intentionally avoids providing a direct response to the question "Why do you strive to spread the message?" by redirecting the focus to the divine agency "it is upon Allah to convey my messages". The flouting of maxim of relation deflects the the attention of the Counselor from any ideological framing and and portrays his speech and advocacy as spiritual rather than political. The witness's response prevents the Counselor from framing a connection between the witness's speeches and any radical content. Additionally, the witness employs abstract language such as "it is upon Allah", "I work", and "general public" to create ambiguity and obscure the truth. These discursive techniques are employed to construct a defensive narrative against the legal questions from the Counselor. Flouting the maxim of relation is evident when the Counselor asked about "Al-Qaeda".

Counselor: Do you hear about Al-Qaeda?

Witness: Like what you hear from the media

Counselor: What is the ruling on joining a terrorist group?

Witness: It is not permissible to be biased towards a person and follow him absolutely except for one person, who is our Master Muhammad, and one should only be affiliated with the companions' group.

5.3.4. Flouting of maxim of manner

The maxim of manner necessitates that the speaker provides clear and organized responses. The speaker violates the maxim of manner by providing confusing statements that hinder the listener's ability to deduce the intended meaning. Therefore, the speaker should avoid language with ambiguous interpretations, as it can be unclear to the listener. The maxim of manner was violated nine times during the testimony.

Counselor: What is your perspective of religion?

Witness: Religion consists of scholars and worshipers, and I raised up in a religious family; my

grandfather was Sheikh Ya'qub and my father was Hussein Ya'qub. I do not issue fatwas, but rather consults scholars and seeks their advice, and I have no relation to politics

It is clear that the witness flouts the maxim of manner in the above exchange which requires the speakers to be orderly and clear in their responses. When the Counselor asks the witness a direct and straightforward question “what is your perspective of religion?”, the witness provides a distracting and ambiguous response that lacks coherence. Instead of offering an answer of the personal and theological perspective, the witness introduces information about his family “my grandfather was Sheikh Ya'qub” and then makes a shift to denying his authority to issue “fatwa”. Furthermore, the witness distances himself from any relation to politics “*I have no relation to politics*”. The flouting of maxim of manner is a kind of manipulation in which the witness introduces a scattered response that lacks a clear argument with multiple topics that obscure the truth and witness’s perspective on religion. The obscurity and lack of coherence hinders the Counselor to infer the intended meaning and extract a coherent ideological position. In doing this, the witness resists any ideological framework as an authoritative religious and political figure incriminating in inciting terrorism. Flouting maxim of manner is transparent in the following extract when the Counselor asks whether the witness’s speech influences individuals:

Counselor: Does your speech have an impact on people?

Witness: When I stand on the pulpit and deliver the Friday sermon, I don't feel anyone in front of me, and I address Allah, and my message is directed to the general public of the committed and the youth

The witness flouts maxim of manner when he answers the Counselor’s question that probes the witness’ speech influence on people. It is clear that the response “When I stand on the pulpit and deliver the Friday sermon” is not direct and straightforward to the focus of the question. Instead of illustrating his potential social and psychological impact of his sermon on public, the witness distracts the attention of the Counselor to by an ambiguous response that is not coherent. The witness’ response “I address Allah” lacks clarity and blurs the line between the religious message and public influence. Through his evasive response, the witness intends to distance himself from any explicit acknowledgment of ideological sway and manipulation over his audience. Flouting the maxim of manner is employed as a protective technique to resist Counselor’s attempt to frame a link between the witness’s religious sermons and inciting terrorism.

Counselor: Have you read or studied some opinions?

Witness: I take what I want. The Counselor responded that it is supposed to read the whole book.

Witness replied: I take what I want.

In the above examples, the witness flouts the maxim of manner. The Counselor asks the witness “*Have you read or studied some opinions?*”. The question is direct and clear but the witness replies with vague response “*I take what I want*”. This statement is not specific and ambiguous. It opens to multiple interpretations. The ambiguity is further compounded when the Counselor attempts to reiterate the question “*it is supposed to read the whole book*”, but the witness reiterates the statement “*I take what I want*”. It seems that the witness insists to provide unclear answer instead of elaborating and explaining his engagement with the books or text he reads. This persistent lack of transparency flouts maxim of manner and obstructs the Counselor’s attempt to discover the witness’s ideological and political ground.

6. Discussion

This research sought to investigate the types of questions asked by the Counselor and the witness’s flouting of Grice’s maxims in the Imbaba terrorist cell case of 2021. Building on Griffith and Milne’s

(2006) question typology and the Cooperative Principle of Grice (1975), the findings broaden the role of courtroom discourse not solely as a method of retrieving facts, but as a force to construct ideological narratives and regulate public opinion. In this chapter, the findings are placed within the existing literature of forensic linguistics to assess how they contribute to scholarly understanding of legal-linguistic interaction, and particularly of political and ideological trials.

First, the use of productive and non-productive questions is consistent with research that has already highlighted the strategic use of question types by lawyers in legal settings. In line with Catoto (2022), who discovered that open and probing types of questions enable the eliciting of trustworthy testimony, the present work reaffirms that Egyptian Counselor Al-Sherbiny used such types of questions mainly to obtain elaborate, ideology-loaded answers from the witness. In contrast to existing research mainly dealing with information eliciting, though, this research unveils how the use of productive questions further included framing religious ideologies and probing the correspondence between the witness's theological language and extremist ideologies.

Most importantly, the analysis of non-productive questions enriches the literature by illustrating how courtroom examination can be utilized not simply to get answers but to ideologically entrap the witness. Consistently with observations in Bögelein et al. (2022), who wrote that courtroom discourse operates on several levels of discursive activity, the present findings illustrate how non-productive questions, and notably leading and opinion-statement types, operated to subtly align the witness with jihadist figures and discursive traditions. This is consistent with the argument that courtroom interrogation, particularly in terrorism cases, moves beyond interrogating on matters of fact and becomes a performative exercise of political alignment and dissociation.

The research also affords empirical evidence for Hu (2020, 2019), who contends that courtroom questions are adjusted according to institutional and psychological power relations. In this instance, the Counselor's questioning explicitly discloses an asymmetrical power relation fashioned to pressure the witness into ideological clarification or self-justification, regardless of whether the questions were ethically or legally neutral. The encounter discloses the courtroom as a place where linguistic strategies are employed to construct religious legitimacy or delegitimize opposition discourses or marginal discourses.

In regard to Grice's maxims, the witness's repeated flouting, especially of the manner and relation maxims, illustrates a resistant discursive mode not systematically examined in existing courtroom research. While existing work (e.g., Al-Mazari & Rababah, 2024) has found maxim flouting in Arabic media discourse to be a pragmatic form of negotiation or avoidance, this research is among the first to use this perspective to analyze Arabic courtroom discourse, in this case in a terrorism setting. It reveals that maxim flouting serves not as simply a linguistic deviation but as an instrument of discursive resistance. The witness's evasive, imprecise, or off-topic responses operated to refrain from incriminating replies while nonetheless participating in the Counselor's discursive agenda. This extends the use of Grice's theory by documenting how conversational implicature works under high-stakes legal settings marked by institutional power and ideological struggle.

Additionally, this research is notable in that it localizes forensic linguistic analysis in an Arabic sociopolitical landscape, which has been underrepresented in the mainstream literature. A majority of research to date, like Mortensen (2020) on courtroom styles in Denmark and America or Wylie et al. (2024) on Canadian courtroom interrogatives, has focused on Western legal cultures. The present research brings new insights by exploring how religious and political ideologies are linguistically constructed and negotiated in Egyptian courtroom contexts, especially in the sensitive area of terrorism trials.

In conclusion, this study contributes to forensic linguistic research by: (1) expansion of Griffith and Milne's functional use from investigative interviews to politically charged courtroom exchanges, (2) extending Grice's theory of cooperative communication to cover strategic flouting in defense of law and ideological dissociation, (3) emphasizing how question design is used to support or resist ideological narratives in legal discourse, and (4) adding an Arabic-language courtroom case to the existing literature that is predominantly geared towards English-speaking contexts. In the end, the results confirm the non-neutrality of courtroom speech, illustrating how answering and questioning techniques are mechanisms of discursive power, ideological framing, and resistance in trials of public and political importance.

Conclusion

The present research has carried out a forensic linguistic analysis of an Egyptian courtroom testimony of a well-know religious preacher “ Mohammad Husein Yaqub” during Imbab terrorist cell trial. It adopts Griffith and Milne's (2006) Question Map and Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle to analyze types of questions asked by the Counselor and how they are employed to uncover the witness's underlying ideological and political stances regarding inciting terrorism through his speeches and sermons. Moreover, the study aimed to examine how maxims are flouted by the witness's answers to resist the ideological and political positions as Jihadist ideologue inciting terrorism. The findings indicated that basically, the Counselor employed probing and open questions to elicit detailed answers capable of disclosing the ideological affiliations of the witness. At the same time, through leading, closed, and opinion based questioning, the witness was framed by a particular ideological affiliations, namely that of a Salafi or Jihadist sympathizer, reinforcing his depiction as an assumed Islamist radical instead of a dispassionate religious scholar.

The analysis further demonstrated that the witness frequently flouted the maxims of manner and relation that seemed to be strategic tool to obscure straightforward answers, avoid potentially incriminating interpretations, and resist any alignment with extremist and terrorist ideology. Such flouting functioned as a pragmatically resistant response to Counselor's discourse framing and ideological forces. This study has demonstrated how courtroom questioning is not an neutral act of extracting information but a discursive process that constructs and entrenches ideological positions. This research has instead persisted in staying true to its central forensic linguistic goal of exploring the political and pragmatic forces of language use within courts. Further studies are recommend to build upon these findings by examining further courtroom testimonies and shed further light on language strategy during terrorism and ideological conflict cases.

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