



RHETORICAL STRUCTURE OF RELIGIOUS NEWS WITH REFERENCE TO POPE FRANCIS' VISIT TO IRAQ AS A CASE STUDY IN ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS

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Cite This Article: Mohammed Ameen Kamil Jawad, "Rhetorical Structure of Religious News with Reference to Pope Francis' Visit to Iraq as a Case Study in English Newspapers", International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research in Arts and Humanities, Volume 8, Issue 1, Page Number 15-24, 2023.

Abstract:

This paper tackled a significant and rarely focussed on area of religious texts: religious news. This paper is concerned with the study of the rhetorical structure of religious news with a specific focus on Pope Francis' visit to Iraq as a case study in English leading newspapers: the Independent, the Guardian and the Financial Times. Such an inquiries have not been given its due attention in previous studies. Moreover, the general study of religious news is mostly lacked in many linguistic and rhetorical research dimensions. The data represented three news from three English British newspapers. The results showed that the news have been easily divided into three main parts: introduction, body and closing. The main rhetorical strategies in the introduction are hopes, appreciation and reverence. The main effective strategies in the body of news have been details, quotes, description, argument and motivation. Finally, the most influential rhetorical strategies in the closing part have been: messages, hopes and conclusions. Some strategies are not found, for example: greetings and final prayers.

1. Introduction:

This paper is concerned with the study of the rhetorical structure of religious news with a specific focus on Pope Francis' visit to Iraq as a case study in English leading newspapers. Such an inquiries have not been given its due attention in previous studies. Moreover, the general study of religious news is mostly lacked in many linguistic and rhetorical research dimensions. As such, the current paper stands itself to answer the following questions:

- What is the global rhetorical structure of religious news in English newspapers in data concerned with the historic visit of the Pope to Iraq 2021
- What are the rhetorical strategies that achieve rhetorical structure in such news?
- How are the parts of the rhetorical structure of news coherently connected in the overall discourse structure?

In relation to the aforementioned questions, the study aims to:

- Identify the global rhetorical structure of religious news in English newspapers in data concerned with the historic visit of the Pope to Iraq 2021.
- Pinpointing the rhetorical strategies that achieve rhetorical structure in such news.
- Showing the interrelations between the parts of religious news that construct their overall coherence.

To answer these questions and achieve the aims of the study, the following procedure is adopted:

- Reviewing literature on the Rhetorical Structure Theory.
- Choosing a Model for analysis.
- Selecting reliable data from different English newspapers to be the data of analysis.

2. Literature Review:

Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) is a theory of text organization developed in the 1980s as a result of exhaustive analyses of texts, described in Mann and Thompson (1988). Since then, the theory has enjoyed a large following developments, especially in computational linguistics, where it is often used to plan coherent text and to parse the structure of texts. Thus, this theory is a separate model of rhetoric that can be used, in its various developed models and frameworks, to analyse the rhetorical structure of different discourse types and genres. RST was popular since its very beginning. Citations of the 1988 article in journals begin in 1989 (Cornish, 1989). Other technical reports (Mann and Thompson, 1983) are cited even earlier (e.g., Grosz and Sidner, 1986; Hirschberg and Litman, 1987). RST is about how text works. It is a descriptive linguistic approach to a range of phenomena in the organization of discourse. The theory started with few assumptions about how written text functions, and how it involves words, phrases, grammatical structure, or other linguistic entities (Mann et al., 1992; Matthiessen and Thompson, 1988). This agnostic beginning was crucial in shaping the result. RST is intended to complement other text description methods. The most familiar kinds of linguistic description, about words, phrases, grammatical structure, semantics and pragmatics, all make contributions that are qualitatively distinct from those of RST. The theory was defined in a flexible, open way as a tool that could be adapted to various applications and linguistic situations. Thus, this theory is based on a collection of approaches taken from most linguistic levels, to be more practical, comprehensive and flexible in doing text analysis of many kinds of discourse in a variety of contexts.

2.1 The Meaning of Relations:

RST addresses text organization by means of relations, or specifically interrelations, that hold between parts of a text. It explains coherence by postulating a hierarchical, connected structure of texts, in which every part of a text has a role, a function to play, with respect to other parts in the text. The notion of text coherence through text relations is widely accepted, and the relations have also been called coherence relations, discourse relations or conjunctive relations in the literature. For instance, Asher and Lascarides (2003) use the term rhetorical relations, although their theory is different from RST. Generally speaking, RST provides a systematic way for an analyst (also called observer or judge) to annotate and interpret a text. If the annotation involves an entire text, or a fairly independent fragment, then the analyst seeks to find an annotation that includes every part of the text in one connected whole. An analysis is usually built by reading the text and constructing a diagram that resembles Figure 1. This is a title and summary, appearing at the top of an article in Scientific American magazine (Ramachandran and Anstis, 1986). The original text, broken into numbered units, is:

- [Title:] The Perception of Apparent Motion
- [Abstract:] When the motion of an intermittently seen object is ambiguous, Structure is being used. The third group points out that RST is thoroughly descriptive and does not put forth a causal Theory. All of these are commendable, valid arguments. The name of RST was chosen as a phrasal unit, distinctively best out of a collection of suggestions.
- The visual system resolves confusion
- By applying some tricks that reflect a built-in knowledge of properties of the physical world.

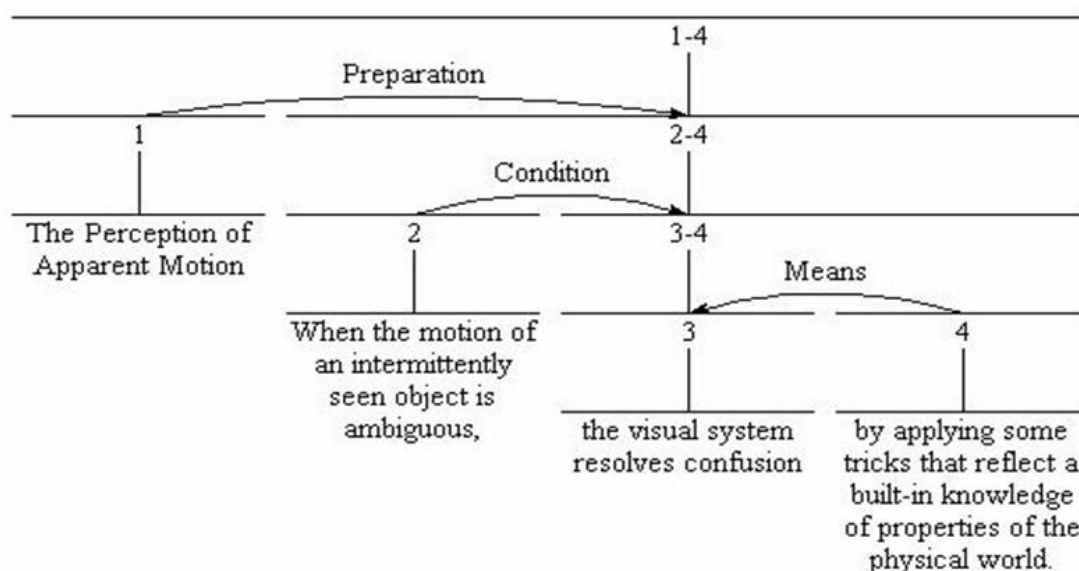


Figure 1: Diagram of an RST analysis

The main way in which one unit becomes connected to another is by adding an RST relation to the diagram. An example in Figure 1 is represented by the arrow from unit 2 to a span labelled 3-4. A span of text is at each end of an arrow, and the arrow is labelled with the name of a relation, in this case Condition. The arrowhead points to a span called the nucleus (units 3-4) and the arrow points away from another span called the satellite (unit 2). All units are also spans, and spans may be composed of more than one unit. The abstract representations in this type of diagrams are referred to as schemas.

2.2 Central Issues in RST:

There has been a surprising diversity of views in the literature concerning how RST characterizes its elements and their use. RST was intended and described as an open system with only a few fixed parts. The lists of relations and schemas were deliberately left open to avoid making claims about any fixed set. Adjacency, tree-shaped analyses, unique analyses without ambiguity, and the possibility of affirming multiple alternatives—all of these have been misunderstood in print. Another cluster of misunderstandings involves the use of independent clauses as the units of analysis. It was, in early descriptions of RST, a suggestion about how circularity could be avoided. This particular suggested selection of units has been taken as a fixed feature of RST, and even as a finding about coherence. And RST has more than once been taken as a draft of an explanatory theory of discourse structure rather than a descriptive system. (ibid)

2.3 What is the goal of RST Analyses?

RST's initial goal was the development of a theory that could aid in automatic generation of texts. It was also meant to be a general theory of how text works, and how coherence in text is achieved. Over the years, RST has been adopted by many researchers for very different purposes, making it difficult, at this point, to

describe RST in terms of one or two main goals. What we can propose is a set of characteristics that a theory such as RST would ideally possess, leading to explanations for the roles that RST can play. In initial descriptions of RST, and in subsequent discussions, two main characteristics are proposed: descriptive adequacy and cognitive plausibility (Sanders et al., 1992). A theory that is descriptively adequate is one that helps characterize the internal structure of texts, producing plausible text structures. Years of text analysis using RST have shown that RST is, indeed, useful to capture the underlying structure of texts. Furthermore, RST has proven to be adequate in computational implementations, in the automatic analysis of texts and in the generation of coherent text.

2.4 Underlying Assumptions in RST:

According to Mann and Thompson (1988), observations about text structure have led to a number of basic assumptions underlying RST:

1. Organization - Texts consist of functionally significant parts: the parts are elements of patterns in which parts are combined to create larger parts and whole texts. The assumption that text is organized is not controversial: the opposite - that texts do not commonly have an internal organization - is not defended seriously in the linguistic literature.

2. Unity and Coherence - To be recognized as a text, the writing must create a sense of overall unity to which every part contributes. The presence of this unity and coherence is uncontroversial, but there are diverse views of its source.

3. Hierarchy - Text are organized such that elementary parts are composed into larger parts, which in turn are composed into yet larger parts up to the scale of the whole text. Without specifying the nature of the parts or the principles of composition, the assumption of hierarchy contrasts with other assumptions about the patterns of text structure. For example, one could assume that text structure is formed by adjacency patterns or by linearly related chains of clauses or semantic propositions.

4. Homogeneity of Hierarchy - As indicated above, RST describes relational structure and its interaction with holistic and syntactic structure. Within relational structure, RST assumes homogeneity: there is one set of structural patterns available for organizing the text at every scale, from the largest, an element of holistic structure (e.g. letter body, magazine article body, possibly the whole text...) down to the smallest scale (possibly a two-clause combination).

5. Relational Composition - The principal structural pattern in multisentential text is relational: a small set of highly recurrent relations holding between pairs of parts is used to link parts together to form larger parts. There are several kinds of alternative assumptions used by various researchers. In one, structural patterns are patterns of constituent categories (analogous to the mechanisms of certain grammars). In another, structural patterns are by nature semantic: they are necessarily patterns of subject matter, e.g. temporal or causal chains. Note that RST does not assume that all structuring is relational, nor that relational structure excludes semantic structuring, nor that all patterns are based on simple pairs. The RST assumption is that relational patterns are strongly dominant.

6. Asymmetry of Relations - The most common type of text structuring relation is an asymmetric class, called nucleus-satellite relations in RST. This class is asymmetric because one member of a pair of text spans is more central (the nucleus) and one more peripheral (the satellite). Further, a text part that is the nucleus for some text-structuring relation will have functional similarities with other nuclei. There are other theories of text structure that also recognize this.

7. Nature of Relations - Text structuring relations are functional; the character that they all share can be stated in terms of the categories of effects that they produce. They can be described in terms of the purposes of the writer, the writer's assumptions about the reader, and certain propositional patterns in the subject matter of the text. The text structuring relations reflect the writer's options of organization and presentation; it is in this sense that an RST structure is "rhetorical."

3. Model of Analysis:

This section will be devoted to the model of analysis. Noermanzah et al. (2019) developed a model for analyzing rhetorical structures in religious texts, especially speeches. This model seems to be suitable for the aims of the current study since it is concerned with religious news. According to the model, the rhetorical structure contains the following parts: 1) in the introduction using the method: (a) opening remarks in the form of opening greetings of prayer, prayer, and general greetings, greetings to the participants; (b) the transition of congratulations, clarification, thanksgiving to the God Almighty, and the introduction of the torso in the form of a central theme; and (c) appreciation, prayer, and hope. 2) On the trunk or content section using the method: (a) additional information; (b) quotations; (c) description; (d) example; (e) application; (f) argumentation; (g) expectations; (h) rewards; (i) orders; (j) question and answer with information; (k) messages; (l) the conclusion; (m) additional information; (n) an appointment; and (o) respect. Figure (2) below summarizes the main strategies of rhetorical structure.

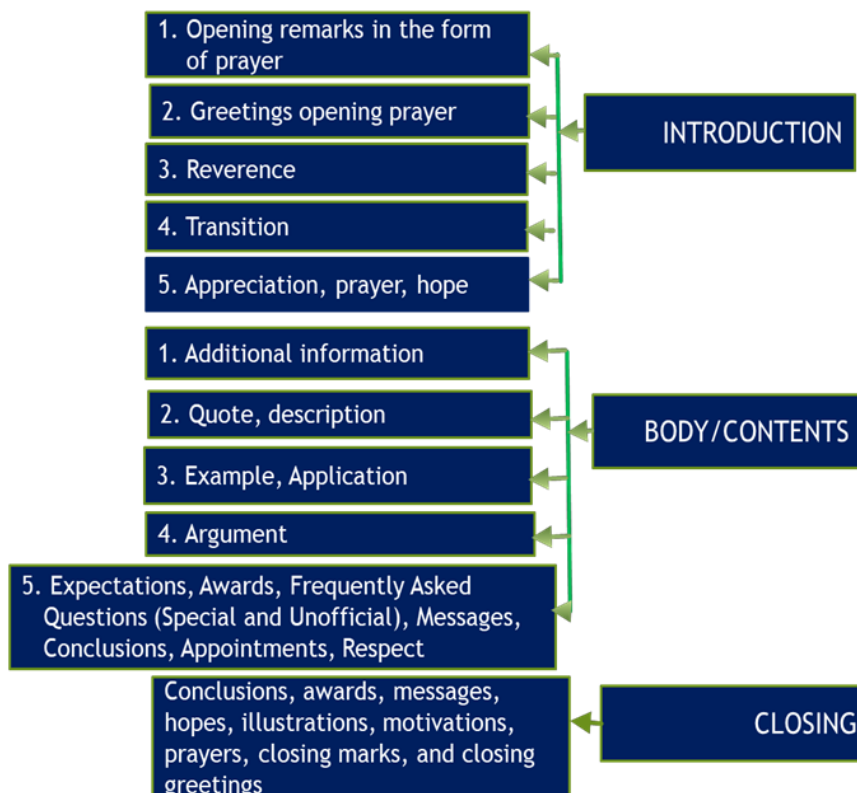


Figure 2: Model of Analysis

4. Data Analysis and Results:

Here, the analysis of three news will be qualitatively analyzed in the light of the model presented above. The three news are taken from three leading English British newspapers: the Independent, the Guardian and the Financial Times. The following are illustrative selected examples of the data:

Text 1: ‘Erase the language of war’: Pope Francis in historic meeting with Iraq’s top Shia cleric

Grand ayatollah Ali al-Sistani says Christians should be able to live in peace and coexistence in Iraq. On the second day of his whirlwind tour of the country, Francis travelled from Baghdad to the southern holy city of Najaf. Ayatollah al-Sistani, 90, a highly influential cleric both at home and abroad, has played a large role in the modern history of Iraq. Thousands of people volunteered to fight Isis on his advice in 2014, while a speech he gave in 2019 led to the resignation of the then prime minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi. The private meeting between the two religious leaders was held in al-Sistani’s humble home, located down a narrow alley in Najaf, and lasted roughly 45 minutes. It is likely to have touched on the country’s dwindling Christian population. Following the meeting, al-Sistani said in a statement: “Religious and spiritual leadership must play a big role to put a stop to tragedy ... and urge sides, especially great powers, to make wisdom and sense prevail and erase the language of war.”

He added that Christians, like all other Iraqis, should be able to live in peace and coexistence. For his part, Pope Francis thanked al-Sistani for having “raised his voice in defence of the weakest”, according to the Vatican. After the historic meeting of the two religious leaders, Iraq’s prime minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi tweeted that 6 March would now be known as the National Day of Tolerance and Coexistence. Due to militant attacks and Isis’s takeover, hundreds of thousands of Christian Iraqis have fled the country in recent years, with the religious minority’s population falling from more than a million in 2003 to around 200,000 today. Francis landed in Iraq on Friday and, speaking from Baghdad’s presidential palace, called for “an end to acts of violence and extremism” in the country. “Iraq has suffered the disastrous effects of wars, the scourge of terrorism and sectarian conflicts often grounded in a fundamentalism incapable of accepting the peaceful coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups,” he added. On Friday, the Catholic leader also visited a church in Baghdad where 50 worshippers were murdered by Islamist gunmen in 2010. He said their deaths were a reminder that “violence or the shedding of blood is incompatible with authentic religious teachings”.

After his time in Najaf, the Pope travelled to the ruins of Ur, the birthplace of the prophet Abraham, a prophet common to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. He told an interfaith group there: “This is true religiosity: to worship God and to love our neighbor.” Francis will head to Mosul – a city devastated by Isis - on Sunday, and will bless churches used as firing ranges by the militant group. His visit comes shortly after a wave of rocket attacks and suicide bombings in Iraq, as well as a rise in coronavirus infections. Christians in Iraq have stressed the important of the papal visit and the need for change in the country. Earlier this week, Jameel, 32, a Christian

from Qaraqosh in northern Iraq, told The Independent: "A lot of world leaders and people have refused to come to Iraq because of the security situation so it is important that he has decided to visit despite the potential dangers." "We know this will bring hope – but we need action and change," he added.

(Web Source: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/pope-iraq-visit-shiite-cleric-alsistani-b1813357.html>)

Analysis:

The Title:

According to the model, this news starts with the title in which we find a call or summon for the stop of wars all over the world. It is not an ordinary title since it gives us clear hints of the whole news and this represent the core of the Pope's visit to Iraq. This topic will be found to be repeatedly focused throughout the news in many places, and this creates the global coherence of the text.

The Introduction:

The introduction of the news involves the following strategies:

- **Reverence:** this reflects the writer's deep respect for the orientation of the Pope where the city of Najaf was described as a 'holy' city: (Francis travelled from Baghdad to the southern holy city of Najaf)
- **Appreciation:** this strategy is also employed in the introduction of the news in text (1) above, where the Grand Ayatollah is appreciated as the most influential spiritual leader of the Shia Muslims and is an international figure as well: (Ayatollah al-Sistani, 90, a highly influential cleric both at home and abroad, has played a large role in the modern history of Iraq)

This appreciation and admission of his role is followed by some details and examples that prove this description: (Thousands of people volunteered to fight Isis on his advice in 2014, while a speech he gave in 2019 led to the resignation of the then prime minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi)

Such details represent his positive effect and contrl of the while sphere in the new Iraq. Even the word 'Ayatollah' is intentionally used since it reflects a great religious title for Muslims and to differentiate it from Iranian leaders who are generally described as 'Mullas' in most western media and press.

The Body:

This is the most important part of the religious news since it includes the main contents. The following rhetorical structure strategies have been used:

- **Additional Information:** In the beginning of the body, more information is added to clarify the nature of the Pope's visit and its goal. (The private meeting between the two religious leaders was held in al-Sistani's humble home, located down a narrow alley in Najaf, and lasted roughly 45 minutes. It is likely to have touched on the country's dwindling Christian population)

Here, one can notice that the religious side has been affirmed, the description of Sistani's house a a simple and humble building (kind of appreciation again), and the focus of the meeting on the Christian life in Iraq in postwar situations.

- **Message and Quote:** These two strategies are utilized where a quote from Grand Ayatollah has been elicited and it involves a message to eliminate the effects of wars and save the souls of people in different places in the world: (Religious and spiritual leadership must play a big role to put a stop to tragedy ... and urge sides, especially great powers, to make wisdom and sense prevail and erase the language of war)
- **Respect:** in this news we find that Pope expressed his respect and thankfulness to Grand Ayatollah Sistani in many places to show his positive evaluation: (For his part, Pope Francis thanked al-Sistani for having "raised his voice in defence of the weakest", according to the Vatican)
- **Award and Expectation:** these two strategies are found in the news where prime minister awarded the meeting's day and even an expected future importance to be memorized every year: (Iraq's prime minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi tweeted that 6 March would now be known as the National Day of Tolerance and Coexistence)
- **Argument:** This strategy is used in the following statement: (Due to militant attacks and Isis's takeover, hundreds of thousands of Christian Iraqis have fled the country in recent years, with the religious minority's population falling from more than a million in 2003 to around 200,000 today)

It is an argument of cause and result, where the reason of the immigration of most Christians in Iraq was the result of violence against them. Justifications and the use ffigures and statistical numeration represent an evidence for he serious situations of Christians and other minorities in postwar Iraq.

- **Motivation:** this strategy is also employed in many places in this religious news. Some quotations and speeches by the Pope can be used to motivate others to stop wars and to live together regardless of the people's religious and ethnic backgrounds: (called for "an end to acts of violence and extremism" in the country)

(He said their deaths were a reminder that "violence or the shedding of blood is incompatible with authentic religious teachings"). His calls are motivations to quit fight and violence in Iraq and all the world.

- **Closing:** The end of the news seems to utilize the following rhetorical textual strategies:

- **Illustrations and Hopes:** The closing part of this news is characterized by the deployment of the strategies of giving illustrations that are accompanied with hopes: (Christians in Iraq have stressed the important of the papal visit and the need for change in the country)

Here, hope is explicitly expressed in this extract to emphasize that the future of the Christian minority will change. The hopes are motivated more by the end of the news with more illustration in: (Earlier this week, Jameel, 32, a Christian from Qaraqosh in northern Iraq, told *The Independent*: “A lot of world leaders and people have refused to come to Iraq because of the security situation so it is important that he has decided to visit despite the potential dangers)

Text 2: Pope Francis meets Grand Ayatollah Sistani on historic Iraq tour

Pope Francis has had a symbolic meeting with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, one of the most senior clerics in Shia Islam, in Iraq’s holy city of Najaf. The historic meeting in Sistani’s home was months in the making, with every detail painstakingly discussed and negotiated between the ayatollah’s office and the Vatican. When the time came, the 84-year-old pontiff’s convoy, led by a bullet-proof vehicle, pull up along Najaf’s narrow and column-lined Rasool Street, which culminates at the golden-domed Imam Ali Shrine, one of the most revered sites in the world for Shia. He then walked the few metres to Sistani’s modest home, which the cleric has rented for decades. A group of Iraqis wearing traditional clothes welcomed him outside. As a masked Francis entered the doorway a few white doves were released in a sign of peace. The closed-door meeting was to touch on issues plaguing Iraq’s Christian minority. Sistani is a deeply revered figure in Shia-majority Iraq and his opinions on religious and other matters are sought by Shia worldwide. For Iraq’s dwindling Christian minority a show of solidarity from Sistani could help secure their place in Iraq after years of displacement - and, they hope, ease intimidation from Shia militiamen against their community. The visit was carried live on Iraqi television and residents cheered the meeting of two respected faith leaders. “We welcome the pope’s visit to Iraq and especially to the holy city of Najaf and his meeting with Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani,” said Najaf resident Haidar Al-Ilyawi. “It is an historic visit and hope it will be good for Iraq and the Iraqi people.”

The pope arrived in Baghdad for the first ever papal visit to Iraq amid tight security and concerns about the impact of his trip on rising Covid infection rates. His presence was “a duty towards a land that has been martyred for so many years”, Francis said shortly before landing. A Vatican spokesperson said the trip was “an act of love to a country that has suffered terribly over recent decades”. Despite worries about the risks of his visit amid rising Covid rates in Iraq, a largely unmasked choir sang as Francis was greeted by the Iraqi prime minister, Mustafa al-Kadhimi. Both men removed their face masks, shook hands and spoke sitting less than 2 metres apart. The 84-year-old pope, his entourage and 75 media representatives travelling with the Vatican delegation have been vaccinated against Covid, but most Iraqis have not. Hundreds of people had gathered along the airport road with hopes of catching a glimpse of the pope’s plane touching down. Billboards showing Francis with the slogan “We are all brothers” are on display in central Baghdad, and Iraqi and Vatican flags are lining streets. Security has been increased during the visit, said Tahsin al-Khafaji, the spokesperson for Iraq’s joint operations. “The whole world will be watching,” he said. The high stakes will give Iraqi forces “motivation to achieve this visit with safety and peace”, he added. Instead of his customary open-sided popemobile, Francis is travelling in an armoured car, as well as making longer journeys between regions by plane and helicopter. The Vatican and Iraqi authorities have played down the threat of Covid and insisted that social distancing, crowd control and other healthcare measures will be enforced.

At a meeting with Iraq’s president, Barham Salih, inside the heavily fortified Green Zone, Francis said Iraqis of all faiths deserved to have the same rights and protections as the Shia Muslim majority. He said: “Only if we learn to look beyond our differences and see each other as members of the same human family will we be able to begin an effective process of rebuilding and leave to future generations a better, more just and more humane world.” He added: “The age-old presence of Christians in this land, and their contributions to the life of the nation, constitute a rich heritage that they wish to continue to place at the service of all.” Francis called for an end to “acts of violence and extremism, factions and intolerance” and urged Iraqi officials to “combat the scourge of corruption, misuse of power and disregard for law”. Salih said it was “impossible to imagine the Middle East without Christians” and that their continued migration would have dire consequences. Later the pope addressed the faithful at the Our Lady of Salvation church in Baghdad’s commercial Karrada district, where attendance was restricted to enable social distancing. In 2010 Islamist militants stormed the church and killed 44 worshippers, two priests and several security force personnel in one of the bloodiest attacks on Iraq’s Christians. Francis thanked his fellow clergy for remaining close to Iraq’s beleaguered Christians, who he said had paid “the ultimate price of their fidelity to the Lord and his church”. The pope was also due honour the dead in a Mosul square surrounded by shells of destroyed churches and meet Christians who have returned to the town of Qaraqosh – as well as blessing their church, which was used as a firing range by Isis. Many Christians fled when Isis militants swept through towns across the Nineveh plains in 2014, destroying churches and homes.

The few who have returned have struggled to find work, with many blaming discriminatory practices in the public sector, Iraq’s largest employer. Since 2003 public jobs have been mostly controlled by majority Shia political elites, leaving Christians feeling marginalised. There were an estimated 1.4 million Christians in Iraq

before the US-led invasion in 2003, but now the number is believed to be about 250,000. Fuad Hussein, Iraq's foreign minister, said Iraqis were eager to welcome Francis's "message of peace and tolerance" and described the visit as a historic meeting between the "minaret and the bells". (Web source: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/05/pope-francis-baghdad-iraq-tour>)

Analysis:

The Title:

The title of this news is highly effective and important. It also gives us hints of the main topic and the ideas that will be the focus of the news. The main point here is that the meeting between the two religious leaders, Pope Francis and Grand Ayatollah Sistani, was described as a 'historic' one.

The Introduction:

The introduction of this religious news is characterized by the use of the following rhetorical strategies:

- **Reverence and appreciation:** This news opens with a positive appreciation and great reverence for the meeting (symbolic and historic), specially for the Shia leader describing him as " the most senior clerics in Shia Islam". Moreover, the city of Najaf is labeled as a 'holy' one.

(Pope Francis has had a symbolic meeting with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, one of the most senior clerics in Shia Islam, in Iraq's holy city of Najaf)

The body:

The body or content of this news is shown to have the following strategies:

- **Details and examples:** Many details of the description of the visit and the nature of the place, streets, vehicle, holy shrine of Imam Ali, house and other examples related to the religious visit have been clearly presented: (the 84-year-old pontiff's convoy, led by a bullet-proof vehicle, pull up along Najaf's narrow and column-lined Rasool Street, which culminates at the golden-domed Imam Ali Shrine, one of the most revered sites in the world for Shia. He then walked the few metres to Sistani's modest home, which the cleric has rented for decades)
- **Description:** this strategy is frequently used in this and other news on the Pope's visit to Iraq. Preparations and clothes are well described: (A group of Iraqis wearing traditional clothes welcomed him outside)
- **Messages:** This is one the most effective and frequently used rhetorical strategy in the news. It is repeatedly resorted to since the main aim of religious meetings is to provoke human and peaceful messages of coexistence and mutual cooperation. The main message was to live together as Muslims and Christians, as indicated in the following examples: (The closed-door meeting was to touch on issues plaguing Iraq's Christian minority)

(For Iraq's dwindling Christian minority a show of solidarity from Sistani could help secure their place in Iraq after years of displacement))

- **Respect:** This rhetorical textual device is utilized in many places to show the writer's and Pope's respect towards the religious leader al-Sistani. He is represented as an international and influential figure whose words are followed and obeyed by millions all over the world: (Sistani is a deeply revered figure in Shia-majority Iraq and his opinions on religious and other matters are sought by Shia worldwide)
- **Hope and Quote:** these two strategies are presented by the writers of the news where some quotes from ordinary local people were cited expressing happiness, cheer and hope for change in the Iraqi situation after the Pope's historic visit to Iraq: (We welcome the pope's visit to Iraq and especially to the holy city of Najaf and his meeting with Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani," said Najaf resident Haidar Al-Ilyawi. "It is an historic visit and hope it will be good for Iraq and the Iraqi people)

This quote reflects Iraqi famous hospitality and welcoming spirit.

- **Argument:** this strategy is employed by the Vatican spokesman who insisted that the justification and reason behind this symbolic visit was the Pope's love for Iraq as people and as a sacred place of worshipping, and to help them witness postwar recovery: (A Vatican spokesperson said the trip was "an act of love to a country that has suffered terribly over recent decades")
- **Motivation:** this strategy is clearly indicated in the following example: ("The whole world will be watching," he said. The high stakes will give Iraqi forces "motivation to achieve this visit with safety and peace", he added)

This visit will hopefully achieve motivation for coexistence, tolerance and peaceful living.

- **Details and Illustrations:** some details and illustrations of the life and disasters confronted by minorities, especially Christians, were presented in the news. The faced death, migration, homelessness and bloodshed: (The pope was also due honour the dead in a Mosul square surrounded by shells of destroyed churches and meet Christians who have returned to the town of Qaraqosh – as well as blessing their church, which was used as a firing range by Isis. Many Christians fled when Isis militants swept through towns across the Nineveh plains in 2014, destroying churches and homes). Details on how houses, churches and building were damaged by terrorists were apparently presented in this religious news.

Closing:

The end of this news incorporates the following strategies:

- **Illustration:** some statements involve the use of figures or numbers to illustrate the serious situation of minorities with specific reference to Christians: (There were an estimated 1.4 million Christians in Iraq before the US-led invasion in 2003, but now the number is believed to be about 250,000)
- **Conclusion and quote:** The conclusion of the news seems to be quoted from a minister's speech where the whole news is summarized, and we notice that what is mentioned in the title is repeated in the conclusion that the meeting was a historic one. Moreover, the main topic of the news (peace and tolerance) is focused to keep global coherence in the news: (Fuad Hussein, Iraq's foreign minister, said Iraqis were eager to welcome Francis's "message of peace and tolerance" and described the visit as a historic meeting between the "minaret and the bells")

Text 3: Pope Francis meets Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani Pontiff brings a message of hope to Iraq as it tries to recover from years of sectarian violence

Chloe Cornish in Beirut, Miles Johnson in Rome, Asmaa al-Omar in Istanbul MARCH 6 2021 21 Print this page The head of the Catholic Church met Iraq's most eminent Shia Muslim cleric on Saturday in an iconic interfaith meeting on the second day of his historic visit to Iraq. During a 45-minute meeting at Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani's simple home in Najaf, which the hermetic cleric rarely leaves, Pope Francis thanked the 90-year-old "for speaking up - together with the Shia community - in defence of those most vulnerable and persecuted". Sistani's office said he had highlighted the role of spiritual leadership in addressing "humanity's challenges", including poverty, oppression and injustice. Sistani is the "closest Shia Islam has to a Pope," according to Hayder al-Khoei, director of foreign relations at the al-Khoei Institute. "They're both champions of dialogue, they both stress the need for social cohesion, condemning violence in the name of religion," said Khoei, who has met both men. This weekend's papal visit, the first to a Middle Eastern country devastated by sectarian violence since the US-led invasion in 2003, has been a chance to celebrate Iraq's rich religious diversity and to underline the importance of tolerance. "Inside the Pope's heart, I feel there's a sort of a call to come to a region that's in flames," said Cardinal Louis Sako, speaking as Iraqis smartened up churches, archaeological sites and even a stadium, all locations where Francis will deliver a rare message of hope. But the trip, the first by a head of state to Iraq for years and the Pope's first overseas trip during the pandemic, has sparked concern about security and the spread of coronavirus in a country that this week saw caseloads hit a record high. Over three days the pontiff will travel the length of Iraq, from the historic birthplace of Abraham, revered in monotheistic religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam, in the south, to the northern Ninewa plains, meeting representatives from Iraq's many religious sects and ethnic groups.

The Pope will visit the ruined city of Mosul, where Isis's leader declared its self-proclaimed caliphate and its fighters ruled with medieval brutality. He will also lead mass in a Baghdad cathedral near a church where terrorists gunned down worshippers in 2010, and in a stadium in the Kurdistan Region's capital Erbil, which became a safe haven for Christians fleeing Isis's blitzkrieg across north Iraq's diverse communities in 2014. While there is no open conflict, Iraq remains tense. This week alone, 10 rockets exploded in an Iraqi air base housing US troops. The attack has not been claimed, but follows a series of assaults by Iran-backed Iraqi militants on facilities housing US personnel. A Vatican official said that the Pope's security was the host country's responsibility, although it is possible, the official added, that more Papal security guards would travel than usual. Iraq has provided few details, but wire reports suggest as many as 10,000 soldiers will be mobilised. Travel will be by helicopter and a closed car, which the Vatican said would probably be more heavily armoured than the regular Pope-mobile. Although the Pope has had two doses of the BioNTech/Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine, and his entourage will have been vaccinated, health experts fear the impact of large crowds on efforts to contain the pandemic. Dr Navid Madani, a virologist, told AP that the welcome for Pope Francis "could potentially lead to unsafe or superspreading risks". Iraq's coronavirus caseload hit a record high of 5,173 two days before the trip. For the Vatican, the trip furthers the Pope's efforts to strengthen relations with the Muslim world, extending his message of encouraging "fraternity and social friendship" outlined in his 2020 "Brothers All" encyclical. People of all faiths have endured devastating sectarian violence following the 2003 invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein. Then the country was torn apart by Islamist extremists Isis who especially targeted the Yazidi religious minority in what the UN has classified as a genocide. Christians also suffered in Isis's rampage through their northern homelands. "After the liberation of our areas [from Isis], the government didn't participate in the rebuilding to earn people's trust," said Father Majeed Hazem Atallah, secretary of the Syriac Catholic Archdiocese of Mosul and its affiliates. "The church rebuilt the houses."

Christians now number 500,000 in Iraq, a third of what they once were, and a fraction of the 40m population. Some see the visit as an encouragement to Iraq's Christian denominations not to give up on their homeland. The visit also demonstrates that Iraq is "part of the moderate international community that is combating extremism, combating intolerance", said Abbas Kadhim, director of the Atlantic Council's Iraq Initiative. Iraq is "trying to emancipate itself from this hideous struggle between the US and Iran", said Maria Fantappie, an Italian special adviser for MENA at the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue. The Vatican's outreach

comes at a time Iraq “desperately needs multilateralism”, she added. For many Iraqis, the sudden rush of road-fixing along the Pope’s route is a sharp contrast with general neglect. Nor is everyone optimistic that a papal visit can heal divisions. But Cardinal Sako said he was hopeful that the Pope’s message of tolerance could be translated into a “reality of goodness”. “Otherwise, we will remain miserable and we will tear each other down and destroy this country that is a cradle of Akkadian and Sumerian and Islamic and Christian civilisations, and then what’s the result?” said Sako. “Nothing.” (Web source: <https://www.ft.com/content/f1d81773-afa9-46d0-82f1-589661f5d5de>)

Analysis:

The Title:

The title of this news presents the general outline and main theme of the news where humanistic message of the Pope is highlighted. The meeting in Najaf is described as a call for anti-sectarian post-war situation.

The Introduction:

The introduction of this religious news is composed of the following rhetorical strategies:

- **Reverence:** this strategy is employed in the introduction to express respect and estimation of both the Pope and Grand Ayatollah who is represented as the most influential Islamic leader in Shia Islam. The meeting is similarly described as a historic one which greases the wheels of interreligious dialogue: (The head of the Catholic Church met Iraq’s most eminent Shia Muslim cleric on Saturday in an iconic interfaith meeting on the second day of his historic visit to Iraq)
- **Description:** The house and isolation of Grand cleric were clearly described with a focus on its simplicity and humility: (During a 45-minute meeting at Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani’s simple home in Najaf, which the hermetic cleric rarely leaves)
- **Appreciation:** This strategy is used to show the Pope's thankfulness for Ayatollah Sistani who supported the rights of minorities, especially those of the Christians: (Pope Francis thanked the 90-year-old “for speaking up - together with the Shia community - in defence of those most vulnerable and persecuted”)
- **Hope and Quote:** These two strategies have been used to express one of the representatives of Najaf Hawza (grandson of Imam Khoie, Al-Sistanis' teacher), Hayder Al-Khoie, who expressed his hopes that the meeting will enhance the change towards human and religious cohesion and coexistence: (Sistani is the “closest Shia Islam has to a Pope,” according to Hayder al-Khoei, director of foreign relations at the al-Khoei Institute. “They’re both champions of dialogue, they both stress the need for social cohesion, condemning violence in the name of religion,” said Khoie, who has met both men)
- **Details and examples:** then, the news presented some examples of the details of this historic visit concentrating on religious sites and places of sectarian fights: (Over three days the pontiff will travel the length of Iraq, from the historic birthplace of Abraham, revered in monotheistic religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam, in the south, to the northern Ninewa plains, meeting representatives from Iraq’s many religious sects and ethnic groups)

The Body:

In the development of the religious news, the following rhetorical strategies have been found to be utilized:

- **Additional Information:** Some more informative bits of the plan of the Pope and how his visit will be are presented: (The Pope will visit the ruined city of Mosul, where Isis’s leader declared its self-proclaimed caliphate and its fighters ruled with medieval brutality)
- **Prayers and Expectations:** These strategies are found in the following extract where the pope's prayers were highlighted with a reference to what is expected during his visit: (He will also lead mass in a Baghdad cathedral near a church where terrorists gunned down worshippers in 2010, and in a stadium in the Kurdistan Region’s capital Erbil, which became a safe haven for Christians fleeing Isis’s blitzkrieg across north Iraq’s diverse communities in 2014)
- **Argument:** This strategy is intentionally used in this news to convince the readers of two things: Iraq is unsafe place to live and Iran-back fighters control the situation in Iraq. Numbers, accusations and emphasis have been utilized to invoke the argument: (This week alone, 10 rockets exploded in an Iraqi air base housing US troops. The attack has not been claimed, but follows a serious of assaults by Iran-backed Iraqi militants on facilities housing US personnel)
- **Additional Information:** again, more information is added to show some details of the Pope's visit to Iraq; they include the movement and security of Pope Francis: (Iraq has provided few details, but wire reports suggest as many as 10,000 soldiers will be mobilised. Travel will be by helicopter and a closed car, which the Vatican said would probably be more heavily armoured than the regular Pope-mobile)
- **Expectations:** Some expectations of the Poe's health and the danger of crowds on this situation are presented by specialists and doctors: (Dr Navid Madani, a virologist, told AP that the welcome for Pope

Francis “could potentially lead to unsafe or superspreading risks”. Iraq’s coronavirus caseload hit a record high of 5,173 two days before the trip)

- **Quote:** A quotation by one of the Iraqi cardinals was cited to reinforce this news focusing on what happened to Christians' houses after subsequent wars and unsettlements: (“After the liberation of our areas [from Isis], the government didn’t participate in the rebuilding to earn people’s trust,” said Father Majeed Hazem Atallah, secretary of the Syriac Catholic Archdiocese of Mosul and its affiliates. “The church rebuilt the houses.”))
- **Hope and Award:** some extracts involve hopes and expected awards of the Pope's historic visit to Iraq. It is hoped that it will enhance interreligious dialogue and human coexistence: (Some see the visit as an encouragement to Iraq’s Christian denominations not to give up on their homeland. The visit also demonstrates that Iraq is “part of the moderate international community that is combating extremism, combating intolerance”, said Abbas Kadhim, director of the Atlantic Council’s Iraq Initiative)

Closing:

The end of this religious news is incorporated by the use of the following strategies:

- **Message and hope:** The concluding part of the news includes important messages and hopes that are expressed by Cardinal Sako, the most influential Christian figure in Iraq: (But Cardinal Sako said he was hopeful that the Pope’s message of tolerance could be translated into a “reality of goodness”. “Otherwise, we will remain miserable and we will tear each other down and destroy this country that is a cradle of Akkadian and Sumerian and Islamic and Christian civilisations, and then what’s the result?” said Sako. “Nothing)

5. Conclusion:

This paper tackled a significant and rarely focussed on area of religious texts: religious news. The analysis showed that there are specific characteristics in such a kind of genre. Many rhetorical strategies have been used by the writers of this news. The English press can be said to have similar strategies as the data analysis revealed to express religious aspects in news making. Titles presented the main themes and thesis statements of what will follow in each news. The news has been easily divided into three main parts: introduction, body and closing. The main rhetorical strategies in the introduction are hopes, appreciation and reverence. The main effective strategies in the body of news have been details, quotes, description, argument and motivation. Finally, the most influential rhetorical strategies in the closing part have been: messages, hopes and conclusions. Some strategies are not found, for example: greetings and final prayers. Religious news includes important human messages that should be rhetorically analysed in order to have a closer understanding of the framing of such news.

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