A Lexico-Grammatical Analysis of Patriotism, Nationalism, and the Palestinian Cause in Moroccan Football Ultras Discourse

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Abstract

This study aims to critically examine the discursive construction of themes such as patriotism, nationalism, and the Palestinian cause within the discourse of Moroccan football ultras. Utilizing Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional approach, the research conducts a lexico-grammatical analysis of 3 selected chants and 20 slogans by Moroccan ultras. The analysis specifically focuses on the two meta-functions proposed by Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which Fairclough incorporates into the initial stage of his three-dimensional model. Adopting a qualitative methodology, this study emphasizes the experiential, relational, and expressive values of the lexico-grammatical features in the ultras' discourse on patriotism, nationalism, and the Palestinian cause. This paper endeavours to address two key questions: Firstly, how are these themes discursively constructed through lexico-grammatical features? Secondly, how do lexico-grammatical features reveal ultra strategies when discussing these issues? The findings of this study revealed that Moroccan football ultras use diverse ideologically charged lexicon and linguistic techniques such as rewording, over-wording, synonymy, hyponymy, and antonymy to express patriotism and support for the Palestinian cause. They enhance emotional engagement through dysphemism and varying formalities, frequently employing SVO and SVC structures with material and mental processes while avoiding negative sentences. Also, nominalization is used to reinforce their commitment, and active voice highlights the agency of entities. Deictic pronouns and different grammatical modes - declarative, imperative, and interrogative- are employed to establish power relations within the discourse. The findings contribute to broader discussions on the role of sports culture in socio-political activism and lay the groundwork for future studies examining the interplay between sports discourse and socio-political dynamics in different cultural contexts.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most captivating aspects of football culture is the passion and fervour of its fans, whose unwavering support transcends mere spectatorship. Among these fans are ultras, a subculture of football supporters known for their passionate and often contentious displays of support. They are an organized group of football supporters, who dedicate their lives, investing their time and money to support their respective teams (Armstrong & Giulianotti, 1999; Giulianotti, 2002). The term derives from the ultrá-royaliste loyal supporters of the monarchy in the French Restoration (Testa, 2009). As a new cultural activity in the realm of football fandom, this phenomenon "first appeared in Italy in the sixties before it rapidly spread to other countries around the world, becoming a global phenomenon embraced by fans seeking to

express their loyalty and passion for their teams in unique and vibrant ways" (Doidge, Kossakowski, & Mintert, 2020, p. 2).

The ultras have become the most spectacular form of football fandom in the early twenty-first century (Doidge & Lieser, 2020). Known for their fervent support and colourful displays, ultras have established themselves as a prominent feature of the modern football landscape. Their actions, ranging from choreographed chants and elaborate tifos to more controversial behaviours such as pyrotechnics and clashes with authorities, have not only captured the attention of fellow fans but also garnered interest from scholars of social analysis. Football ultras' behaviour and discourse provide a rich field for study, offering insights into the dynamics of group identity, collective action, and the intersection of sports and society. As a global phenomenon, ultras transcend geographical and cultural boundaries, making them a compelling subject for researchers seeking to understand the complexities of contemporary fan culture and its broader sociopolitical implications. In this context, the current study opts for investigating the Moroccan football ultras that constitute one of the most visible groups within the world fandom.

In recent years and within this cultural tapestry, Moroccan football ultras have emerged as significant actors within the country's football landscape. According to Moroccan sociologist Abderrahim Bourkia (2018), their inception dates back to 2005 with the establishment of the first two ultras groups in Casablanca: The Green Boys ultras, who support Raja Club, and the Winners, who support Wydad. From then they have evolved into a powerful expression of collective identity and dissent. "The development of ultras in Morocco has been influenced to an extent by ultras in other countries, particularly Italy" (Rharib & Amara, 2014, p. 42). Likewise, the "ultras phenomenon in Morocco is perceived as an imitation of similar movements in neighbouring countries like Spain and Tunisia, where this fan culture is more established and visible" (Alomari, 2019, p. 3).

Moroccan football ultras have become increasingly prominent in public spaces, with their activism both inside and outside stadiums capturing the attention of the public and researchers alike. One aspect of their activism that has garnered particular interest is their use of various verbal and non-verbal activities like distinctive chants, catchy slogans, and vibrant displays which serve as a powerful form of expression and communication. This phenomenon highlights the increasing effect of ultras groups in Moroccan society and their ability to mobilize and engage with broader political and societal issues.

Initially, ultras were primarily known for their fervent support of their teams, characterized by sparkling displays of loyalty and enthusiasm in stadiums. However, over time, ultras' role has expanded to encompass broader sociopolitical issues, reflecting and influencing societal dynamics. This evolution has been shaped by various factors, including changes in football culture, advancements in communication technologies, and political developments. According to Bennis (2019), "the increasing use of stadiums as spaces for grassroots expression is a response to the decline of traditional institutions like political parties, civil associations, and labour syndicates in representing grassroots communities" (p. 6) (the author's translation). This shift allows communities to directly voice their concerns to policymakers, bypassing traditional channels of representation. Today, Moroccan football ultras are recognized not only for their passionate support but also for their activism and engagement with social and political issues, making them a significant and influential force within football fan culture worldwide.

Moroccan ultras construct a multi-layered discourse that extends beyond simple sport fandom; it becomes a potent socio-political commentary. Language, both spoken and visual, serves as the primary medium through which ultras engage with their world, communicate their

grievances, assert their place within the broader social fabric, and express their empathy towards international issues and causes namely the Palestinian cause which occupies a central place in their discourses. Thus, a special focus will be held on the linguistic strategies employed by ultras. A lexico-grammatical analysis as developed by MAK Halliday in his Systemic Functional Linguistics (1978, 1985) and integrated by Norman Fairclough in the first stage of his three-dimensional model (1989, 1995) will be adopted for this study.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1. Theoretical Framework
2.1.1. Systemic Functional Linguistics

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed by M.A.K. Halliday, is widely acknowledged for its ability to examine language as a social semiotic system, revealing ideologies and meanings embedded within discourse that often remain implicit to an audience. SFL views language as a resource for making meaning rather than merely conveying information, focusing on how language functions in various contexts to reflect and shape social realities (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

In Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Norman Fairclough's approach to textual analysis, particularly the "description" stage, is heavily influenced by SFL. Fairclough incorporates Halliday's framework to analyze texts at the lexico-grammatical level, focusing on vocabulary (lexis) and grammar to reveal how language shapes and is shaped by social forces. In this analysis, Fairclough introduces three key values of vocabulary and grammar: experiential, relational, and expressive values, each corresponding to Halliday's functions of language -ideational, interpersonal, and textual. These values help uncover how texts reflect, construct, and reinforce ideologies and social relationships (Fairclough, 1989).

2.1.2. Lexico-grammatical Analysis in Systemic Functional Linguistics

Halliday's SFL posits that language serves three main functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. The ideational function relates to representing experience and ideas; the interpersonal function handles social roles, attitudes, and relationships; and the textual function structures language into coherent messages (Halliday, 1994). Lexico-grammatical choices, such as word choice and syntactic structure, are fundamental to these functions, as they allow speakers and writers to shape how reality is represented, interpersonal dynamics are constructed, and information is organized.

Experiential Value: Representing Social Reality

Experiential value relates to how language represents social reality, reflecting the ideational function in Halliday's SFL, which focuses on how language organizes and expresses experiences, events, and actions. In analyzing experiential values, Fairclough examines choices at the lexico-grammatical level that contribute to the portrayal of specific realities, examining vocabulary, transitivity patterns, and nominalization to uncover underlying ideologies and power dynamics.

a. **Vocabulary Choices**: The specific words chosen to communicate a certain message are not value-free and at the same time they consciously or unconsciously try to deliver ideological standpoints. The way words are used and classified within the structure of talks tells a lot about the hidden goals or agendas. The over-wording of some aspects of reality rather than others is a patent sign of the speaker or writer's special concern. According to Fairclough (1992), over-wording is a sign of profound intense preoccupation, which may indicate that it is an emphasis on ideological struggle. Hence, the questions are how are different stylistic devices such as

over-wording, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy and metaphors used to construct ideology? How are words chosen to develop a relationship with the reader in terms of the formality of vocabulary? Are there euphemisms be they formal or informal? Which kinds of words are assigned to which group of people? What connotations do they convey?

b. Transitivity: Transitivity analysis, a core component of Halliday's SFL, examines how processes (actions, events, states) and participants (actors, goals, recipients) are represented in clauses. Transitivity shapes the core of the text representation. Fairclough (1995a) discusses transitivity in relation to the "structuring of the proposition" (p. 104). Thus, Fairclough adopts this approach to explore how agency and responsibility are assigned, as well as how power relations are portrayed. Active constructions make agency explicit, whereas passive constructions obscure the agent, possibly minimizing responsibility (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Fairclough, 1992).

c. Nominalization: Fairclough uses nominalization to reveal how certain processes or actions are turned into static concepts, often obscuring agency or process. For example, "the implementation of policy" removes the actor, making it unclear who is responsible for the action, thus neutralizing agency and presenting actions as objective or inevitable (Fairclough, 1989).

Relational Value: Constructing Social Relationships

Relational value aligns with the interpersonal function in SFL, which manages social roles, relationships, and interactions between speakers and listeners. Fairclough uses this analysis to explore how language constructs and reflects social hierarchies, degrees of formality, and relational positioning in discourse.

a. Formality and Word Choice: Vocabulary choices can convey relational dynamics, such as respect, familiarity, or authority. For instance, using formal language in official documents versus informal language in advertisements reflects different relational approaches and underlying power relations (Fairclough, 2001).

b. Pronouns and Relational Distance: Pronoun choices also have relational value, as they indicate levels of inclusivity or exclusivity. The use of "we" versus "they" can build solidarity or highlight division. In political speeches, "we" might be used to create a sense of unity, while "they" can emphasize otherness (Fairclough, 2003).

c. Mood and Modality

This analysis of mood in text examines how declarative, imperative, and interrogative forms enact various roles for the speaker and addressee. In declarative statements, the speaker/writer positions themselves as the giver or seeker of information. In imperatives, they request action, while in questions (both wh-questions and yes/no questions), they ask for information, placing the addressee in the role of information provider. Fairclough (1989) suggests that asymmetries in these modes reflect power dynamics, as asking or providing information typically conveys authority (p. 104). Modality is also essential in discourse analysis, focusing on relational and expressive values (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p. 123). Relational modality reflects the authority of one participant over another, while expressive modality assesses the speaker's certainty regarding a statement's truth. Modality is communicated through specific words (e.g., "may", "must", "it seems to me") and intonation, signalling varying degrees of certainty and authority.

Expressive Value: Communicating Evaluative Judgments

a. Expressive value corresponds to Halliday's concept of appraisal, which reflects subjective evaluation, emotions, and attitudes within discourse. This value relates to the speaker or writer's subjective stance and reveals ideological positions through evaluative language and expressive grammatical choices.

b. Evaluative Vocabulary: Word choices often carry implicit evaluations or judgments, reflecting approval, disapproval, or neutrality. For instance, describing a protest as "riotous" versus "peaceful" or a government action as "progressive" versus "radical" implies different stances and ideologies (Fairclough, 1989). The use of positive or negative connotations in adjectives and adverbs provides insight into the text producer's perspective and value system.

c. Hedges and Intensifiers: Expressive values also emerge through hedging (e.g., "somewhat", "perhaps") or intensifiers (e.g., "absolutely", "very") that express certainty, doubt, or intensity of feelings. These lexical choices reveal subjective stances and attitudes, which can align the reader with a particular evaluative perspective (Fairclough, 2003).

3. METHODOLOGY
3.1. Research Method

The study employs qualitative research, focusing on detailed analysis rather than quantification. Qualitative research is mainly concerned with the ability to encapsulate the nature of individual thoughts, actions and expressions in everyday life in order to give them meaning (Wodak & Busch, 2004, p. 105). Thus, a highly qualitative approach, specifically tailored for this research, is employed to identify the underlying discursive strategies used by Moroccan football ultras to encode their ideological viewpoints through language that reflects a profound blend of passion for their nation, a sense of national collective identity, and a heartfelt commitment to championing the rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people. Besides, the choice of this approach lies in the fact that it enables a deeper exploration of a specific phenomenon like that of football ultras. It provides a full insight into the cognitive and affective aspects of the world of fandom. Also, it allows for a better understanding of psychological factors such as affects and cognition which are important in sports fandom (Jones, 1997).

3.2. Research Questions

In examining these texts, this study endeavours to address the following two key research questions: **1).** How do Moroccan ultras employ lexico-grammatical choices to express themes of patriotism, nationalism, and support for the Palestinian cause? **2).** In what ways do these lexico-grammatical structures reflect underlying ideologies and collective sentiments towards national identity and solidarity with the Palestinian cause? So, by addressing these questions, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersection between sports, language, and other socio-political issues in Morocco.

3.3. Data collection procedure
The dataset for this study comprises 3 chants and 20 slogans. Data collection was drawn from various sources, such as ultras YouTube channels, and ultras Facebook pages. The data within the corpus of Moroccan football ultras' discourse manifests a linguistic mosaic with a myriad of codes. These linguistic expressions span standardized Arabic, Moroccan Arabic, French, Italian, English, Tamazight, and more. Acknowledging this linguistic diversity, the researcher has opted to translate the entire dataset into English. The coding procedures involved a systematic approach to identify recurrent patterns and themes within the ultras' discourse. Initial codes were generated through a careful reading of the data, identifying key phrases or concepts that captured the essence of each thematic category. These initial codes were then organized into three themes; patriotism, nationalism, and the Palestinian cause.

3.4. Data analysis procedure
The analysis of these themes category involves a detailed analysis of the experiential, relational, and expressive values embedded in the lexico-grammatical choices of Moroccan football ultras. In exploring the experiential values, attention is directed towards the classification schemes utilized by ultras, pinpointing ideologically contested words and

scrutinizing linguistic strategies like over-lexicalization, involving rewording and overwording. Additionally, the analysis delves into meaning relations, encompassing synonymy, hyponymy, and antonymy as linguistic tools. Regarding relational values, the researcher concentrates on euphemism and dysphemism strategies, along with formality and informality. Turning to expressive values, the focus narrows down to words carrying specific meanings and emotions tied to diverse belief systems within the ultras' lexicon.

In examining the experiential values of grammatical choices, the analysis concentrates on the transitivity system, particularly on process types involving actors and patients, active and passive voices, and nominalization that directs attention to the action or process itself, regardless of the participants involved. The study also delves into the positivity and negativity of sentences employed by ultras. Regarding relational values, a critical analysis of sentence modes (declarative, imperative, and grammatical questions), aims to unravel the underlying meanings of these grammatical decisions and their influence on shaping the relations between participants. Besides, deictic pronouns are scrutinized to provide insights into Moroccan football ultras' perceptions of power dynamics and their attempts to assert agency within the discourse. Lastly, the analysis of expressive values in grammatical features focuses on decisions made by Moroccan football ultras that not only convey information but also emotions, subjectivity, and ideological positions. These choices contribute to shaping sentence tone, emphasis, and meaning, enabling ultras to convey a message that extends beyond factual information.

4. FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS
4.1. Vocabulary Level
4.1.1. Experiential Values of Vocabulary

Among many other categories that stand out prominently in the discourse of Moroccan football ultras' discourse, we find the intricate interplay of patriotism, nationalism, and fervent advocacy for the Palestinian cause. These themes are thornily woven into the fabric of the ultras' expressions, reflecting a profound blend of passion for their nation, a sense of national collective identity, and a heartfelt commitment to championing the rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people. As we delve into their discourse, we embark on a journey to explore how these themes shape their experiential, relational and emotional world.

Moroccan football ultras words draw upon many classification schemes to voice out their patriotism, nationalism and solidarity with the Palestinian cause. These classification schemes revolve around various aspects of national identity, belonging, and attachment. Each scheme reflects a different facet of how ultras groups perceive and express their connection to their homeland, culture, symbols, and values as the case with the following used words "الوطن" (homeland), "سنفديه" "الصحراء" (Sahara), "المغرب" (Morocco), "ملكنا" (our king), "الراية" (flag), "الوفاء" (loyalty), "عدم المساومة" (non-compromise), "مقاوم" (resistant), "حب" (love), "الوفاء" (loyalty), "عدم المساومة" (sacrifice), "الحرية" (freedom)…etc. Additionally, some of these schemes touch upon the complex political and social dynamics related to issues such as territorial integrity, diplomatic relations, and historical challenges, all of which influence the discourse around Palestinian cause as it is revealed in these words; "فلسطين" (Palestine), "القدس" (Jerusalem), "غزة" (Gazza), "رفح" (Rafah), "الصهاينة" (Israel), "اليهود" (Jews), "إسرائيل" (Israel), "رام الله" (Rama Allah), "زعماء العرب" (Arab leaders), "التطبيع" (normalization), "تحرير" (libertization), "قضيتنا الأزلية" (our eternal cause), "خيانة" (betrayal)…etc. Generally, these schemes reflect Moroccan football ultras' deeply held beliefs in the importance of preserving their nation's identity, standing up for their values, sticking to their territorial integrity, stressing their loyalty to their king and expressing their unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian cause amidst the political and social complexities of the region.

Moreover, ideologically contested words are present in the language used to address ultras' patriotism, nationalism and solidarity with the Palestinian cause. Although these contested words bear different meanings depending on the ideological perspective, ultras deliberately use them to convey their strong attachment to their homeland's symbols, values and leaders as well as their full adoption and unwavering support for the Palestinian cause. Besides, these words serve as tools for ultras to communicate their perspective and rally their supporters around a particular stance. Also, ultras make use of this terminology to illustrate how language is employed as a means of ideological expression and mobilization and thereby underscores the interwoven nature of language and ideology within their discourse. For the sake of illustration, they have used these words "الاحتلال" (colonialisation), "قاومي" (resist), "كابرانات المرادية" (militants of Almoradiya palace), "التطبيع" (normalization), "خيانة" (betrayal), "الصحراء" (Sahara), "الأمازيغية" (Tamazight)…etc.

Likewise, the strategic manipulation of language by Moroccan football ultras when discussing patriotism, nationalism, and solidarity with the Palestinian cause underscores their deliberate efforts to convey the multifaceted nature of these themes. Through employing techniques such as rewording and over-wording, the ultras aim to capture the intricacies and complexities associated with these issues. They skillfully select a diverse array of words and phrases to amplify the depth of their convictions and emphasize the significance of the topics they address. For example, they use these words "الوطن" (homeland), "وطني" (my homeland), "وطننا" (our homeland), "بلادي" (my country), "راية البلاد" (the flag of the country), "حمرا وخضرة" (the flag is red and green), "الصحراء" (Sahara), "صحرائه" (its Sahara), "صحرائنا" (our Sahara), "الراية" (our king), "ملكنا" (Palestine), "فلسطين" (the most beautiful of the countries), "زينة لبلدان" (Jerusalem), "اليهود" (Jews), "القدس" (Rama Allah), "رام الله" (Rafah), "رفح" (Gazza), "غزة", "الصهاينة" (Zionists)…etc. In brief, this intentional use of rewording and overwording demonstrates Moroccan football ultras' commitment to conveying their perspective effectively and evoking a strong emotional response from their audience.

Similarly, Moroccan football ultras use strategies of synonymy, antonymy, and hyponymy when discussing patriotism, nationalism, and solidarity with the Palestinian cause to achieve specific ideological and communicative goals. Firstly, the use of synonyms allows ultras to amplify the impact of their message by conveying the same idea through different linguistic choices. This strategy serves to emphasize the importance and depth of their convictions, resonating with their audience on various levels. They utilize synonyms for words like "الوطن" (homeland), "الراية" (flag), "الصحراء" (Sahara), "الملك" (king) to create a richer and more nuanced portrayal of their attachment and commitment to their nation and its symbols. Similarly, words such as "الاحتلال" (colonialization), "إسرائيل" (Israel), "اليهود" (Jews), "الصهاينة" (Zionists) portray the aggressive image of the Zionists and their illegal preoccupation of the Palestinian territories. Secondly, the employment of antonyms helps Moroccan ultras contrast opposing concepts, reinforcing their ideological stance and highlighting the choices they reject. Through antonymy, they emphasize the distinction between terms like "الولاء" (loyalty) and "الخيانة" (betrayal), "المقاومة" (resistance) and "التطبيع" (normalization), "الوطن" (homeland) and "الاحتلال" (occupation). This strategy reinforces their commitment to certain values and positions to others. Thirdly, ultras use hyponyms to delve into the subtleties of their discourse. They use specific words that belong to a larger semantic category to emphasize different aspects of their message. For instance, using terms related to "Sahara" such as "صحرائه" (its Sahara) and "صحرائنا" (our Sahara) highlight different dimensions of their territorial identity. Equally, employing hyponyms related to "فلسطين" (Palestine) like "Gazza", "Rafah", "Rama Allah" and "Jerusalem" enable them to evoke a more comprehensive understanding of their solidarity with the Palestinian cause.

4.1.2. Relational Values of Vocabulary

The words chosen by Moroccan football ultras carry profound relational values that contribute to the creation and reinforcement of social relationships among various participants. These word choices not only convey their message about patriotism and the Palestinian cause but also play a role in shaping and solidifying existing relationships. Specifically, these linguistic choices establish connections between ultras and entities such as their homeland, king, Arab leaders, Jews, and the Algerian regime.

Through their language, the ultras establish a strong bond of love and loyalty with their homeland and king, as seen in the phrase "ملكنا واحد محمد السادس" (Our king is one, Mohammed VI), which highlights mutual respect and affection for the Moroccan king. Additionally, the description "صحراؤنا الغالية" (our precious Sahara) reflects the deep connection between ultras and the broader Moroccan population, emphasizing the significance of the Sahara to their shared identity. Conversely, the word choices convey a stance against Arab leaders and Israel. The term "الإخوة الأعداء" (enemy brothers) captures the strained relationship between ultras and other Moroccans who are critical to Arab leaders for not adequately advocating for Palestinian rights. The words "حبيبتي يا فلسطين" (Palestine sweetheart) and "زينة لبلدان" (the most beautiful of the countries) underscore the enduring love for Palestine within the hearts of Moroccan ultras, Muslims, and Arabs in general. At the same time, expressions like "اليهود لي ظالمين" (Jewish the oppressors) and "الصهاينة" (Zionists) reveal a sense of animosity towards Jewish people, depicting them as transgressors and oppressors. Lastly, the term "كابرانات المرادية" (the militants of Moradia palace) indicates a tense relationship between ultras and the Algerian regime, which opposes Moroccan territorial integrity.

In a nutshell, the chosen words and phrases employed by Moroccan football ultras in their discourse reflect their complex web of relationships and their deep emotions towards various entities, while also serving as a tool for conveying their ideological stance on patriotism, nationalism, and the Palestinian cause.

In terms of the emotional impact conveyed through words for relational purposes, Moroccan ultras strategically employ more forceful and direct language that carries both positive and negative connotations, owing to the intricate network of relationships mentioned earlier. They utilize dysphemistic terms to characterize their interactions with Arab leaders, Jewish individuals, and the Algerian regime, employing words such as "كابرانات" (militants), "الصهاينة" (Zionists), "الظالمين" (oppressors), "الأعداء" (enemies), "الخونة" (traitors), and the like. The ultras' deliberate avoidance of euphemistic language in favour of dysphemism holds significant ideological implications. This choice reflects their deeply rooted convictions, their refusal to mitigate their standpoint, and their resolute determination to address issues such as Arab leaders' perceived hesitance in defending Palestine, Israel's violations of Palestinian rights, and the Algerian regime's opposition to Morocco's territorial integrity in the Sahara region. This linguistic strategy serves as a powerful means for Moroccan ultras to articulate their perspective, challenge these entities through direct criticism, and establish a sense of unity with others who share similar perspectives.

Furthermore, Moroccan football ultras strategically adopt a formal linguistic style, utilizing standard Arabic language and vocabulary to demarcate the relationship between them and other targeted participants when engaging in discussions concerning patriotism, nationalism, and solidarity with the Palestinian cause. This deliberate choice serves distinct ideological and communicative purposes. It aims to convey a sense of seriousness, legitimacy, and authority to their discourse, aligning with the gravity of the topics they address. They employ a formal register for the sake of emphasizing the significance of their message and position themselves as informed and conscientious commentators on these critical matters.

Also, the use of standard Arabic helps to bridge the linguistic and dialectical differences among their diverse addressed participants who have formal and high social statuses as kings, Arab leaders, and Algerian and Israeli officials. Besides, this formal style serves to facilitate a broader reach and understanding of their ideas regarding these sensitive issues. This linguistic strategy also allows them to tap into the rich historical and cultural heritage associated with the Arabic language, underscoring their connection to the broader Arab world and the historical struggles they invoke.

As a way of illustration, Curva Sud ultras use this style ''ملكنا واحد محمد السادس'' (our king is one, Mohammed VI) and Matadores ultras use ''كونه ملكنا.. سنفديه بدمنا'' (as he is our king, we will sacrifice him with our blood) to reveal the loyal relation with their king and at the same time ensure his powerful and formal position. Likewise, Winners ultras stress the relationship with Moroccan Sahara by saying ''من صحرائنا الغالية، أقسمنا على الوفاء'' (from our precious Sahara, we swore to be loyal). Also, Curva Sud and Black Army ultras in two graffiti declare their antagonism to Israel via these messages ''لا للتطبيع مع إسرائيل'' (no to normalization with Israel) and ''ناموا يا زعماء وجددوا للصهاينة الولاء'' (sleep, O! Arab leaders and renew loyalty to the Zionists). Crazy Boys ultras through this banner ''منبت الأحرار، مهد الحرية، والصحراء في مغربها يا كابرانات المرادية'' (the cradle of the free, the cradle of freedom, and the Sahara in its Morocco, O! militants of Moradia palace) demonstrate their relation of enmity with the Algerian system who stands as a stumbling block to Morocco's territorial integrity.

In summary, the implementation of a formal linguistic style holds multifaceted ideological implications. It exhibits Moroccan football ultras' dedication to their homeland, their solidarity with the Palestinian cause, and their differentiation from Arab, Israeli, and Algerian leaders they perceive as detrimental to these principles. This strategic linguistic choice serves as a powerful tool for conveying their convictions, expressing unity, and articulating their beliefs within the broader framework of their discourse.

4.1.3. Expressive Values of Vocabulary

Words encompass meanings and emotions known as expressive values. These values mirror Moroccan ultras' beliefs and viewpoints regarding patriotism, nationalism, and their support for the Palestinian cause. The words they choose to use are not random; they are carefully chosen to reflect their intense emotions and strong viewpoints about these issues. Each word contributes to creating a vivid and emotionally charged portrayal of their perspective especially their feelings of love, respect, loyalty and veneration to their king Mohamed VI, homeland and Sahara on the one side and feelings of disrespect, antagonism and enmity with Arab, Israeli Leaders, and Algerian regime. In this context, they employ potent and fervent language, imbuing these words with distinct meanings and intense emotions. For example, instead of saying "we love our homeland, Sahara, and king", they describe and label them as ''الغالية'' ''سنفديه بدمنا'' (we will sacrifice him with our blood), ''ملكنا واحد'' (our king is one), ''أقسمنا على الوفاء'' (we swore to be loyal), (precious), …etc. However, instead of saying "we hate Israel, Arab and Algerian leaders", they say ''الصهاينة'' (Zionists), ''الخونة'' (traitors), ''المطبعين'' (normalizers), ''كابرانات'' (Militants)…etc. These words are crafted to elicit powerful feelings of love and loyalty as well as of hate and enmity. Simply put, they purposefully employ these particular terms to highlight their loyalty and allegiance to their nation and king, as well as their rejection of actions and stances that run counter to their beliefs.

4.2. Grammatical Features Level
4.2.1. Experiential Values of Grammatical Features

Moroccan football ultras' experiential world is not only encoded in vocabulary but also grammatical choices. These grammatical processes, whether (SVO, SVC, or SV), implemented while tackling the issues of patriotism, nationalism and solidarity with the Palestinian cause are not just linguistic forms but carry inherent ideological weights that reflect their beliefs and

attitudes. For instance, Winners ultras in "ناد مقاوم، على راية البلاد لا يساوم" :(1948-2023) "١٩٤٨ـ٢٠٢٣" Resistant club, on the flag of the country does not compromise) use SVO structure with a material process which indicate an action carried out by the subject "Resistant club". Also, Winners in "من صحرائنا الغالية، أقسمنا على الوفاء" (from our precious Sahara, we swore to be loyal) use SVC structure with a mental process which represents the act of making a promise. The action is followed by an attribution as a complement to "to be loyal", which provides more information about the action of swearing. Likewise, Hercules ultras in " الصحراء مغربية ولو كره الحاقدون" (the Sahara is Moroccan, even if the envious hate it) use SVO structure with the verb "is" as a linking verb (also known as a copula), and it connects the subject to its complement, which provides additional information about the subject. The process type is attributive in nature, as it attributes the quality of being Moroccan to the Sahara.

Correspondingly, Matadores ultras in "كونه ملكنا .. سنفديه بدمنا" (as he is our king, we will sacrifice him with our blood) employ SVC structure with a relational/ attributive process represented in the verb "will sacrifice" that connects the subject to its complement, which provides additional information about the subject. Black Army and Green Boys in " إتفاق التطبيع خيانة للقدس" (normalization agreement is a betrayal to Jerusalem) use SVO structure with relational/ attributive process where the verb "is" functions to relate the subject "Normalization agreement" to the object "a betrayal to Jerusalem" and attribute a quality to the subject. Also, in "التطبيع يتمدد" (normalization is expanding) use SV structure with a material process, where the verb "is" indicates a state or action being carried out by the subject "normalization". The predicate "expanding" describes the nature of the process…etc.

The variation in sentence structures reflects the ultras' multifaceted approach to these issues. For example, using SVO structures with material processes emphasizes concrete actions and agency, as in sentences like "resistant club, on the flag of the country, does not compromise" and "the Sahara is Moroccan, even if the envious hate it". These constructions assert their stance with conviction. In contrast, SVC structures with mental processes, such as "from our precious Sahara, we swore to be loyal", highlight their emotional and cognitive commitment. The ultras are presenting their loyalty as a mental act, underlining the depth of their dedication. Furthermore, employing relational or attributive processes in sentences like "as he is our king, we will sacrifice him with our blood" and "normalization agreement is a betrayal to Jerusalem" illustrates how the ultras establish connections between entities. These structures serve to underscore the significance of relationships and qualities associated with the subjects.

Quintessentially, the grammatical choices mirror Moroccan football ultras' ideological commitment and emotional attachment to their homeland, symbols, values, and the Palestinian cause. The strategic use of different sentence structures and processes allows them to convey their beliefs, emphasizing the importance of their convictions while addressing complex issues and relationships within their discourse.

Most of the aforementioned sentences' structures and verb choices emphasize different agents and their roles in the actions. The ultras often position themselves or other entities as agents to convey their stance and viewpoints concerning patriotism, nationalism, and solidarity with the Palestinian cause. Still, most of the sentences are put in active voice which makes the agents clear as in the case of "ناد مقاوم، على راية البلاد لا يساوم" (resistant club, on the flag of the country, does not compromise) and in other instances is unclear but it is implied as in this sentence "إتفاق التطبيع خيانة للقدس" (normalization agreement is a betrayal to Jerusalem). The use of the active voice underscores ultras' ideological stance of defending their homeland and king and criticizing and condemning other agents like Zionists and Arab leaders for their active role

in depriving the Palestinian people of their legitimate rights as in the "enemy brothers and Jewish who oppress you".

Within the same route, the utilization of nominalization by Moroccan football ultras serves as a distinctive grammatical tool that holds experiential implications. Through nominalization, they endeavour to transform their patriotic and nationalistic deeds into nouns, thus presenting these actions as substantial and warranting increased attention due to their emotional significance and pertinence to their lives and the Moroccan populace as a whole. This grammatical device also underscores their allegiance to the Palestinian cause, positioning their support as a central theme within their discourse. Thus, they use nominalization intending to encapsulate the gravity of their actions and sentiments, reinforce the crucial role of these issues within their collective identity and stress the importance of the Palestinian cause in the broader context of their beliefs and values. For instance, they use these nominalized words "تحرير" (libertizing), "التطبيع" (normalization), "الاحتلال" (colonialization), "ظلم" (unfairness), "منبت" (origin), "الوفاء" (loyalty), "الولاء" (allegiance), "اتفاق" (agreement), "استيقاظ" (awakening), "مهد" (cradle)…etc.

In a nutshell, nominalization empowers Moroccan football ultras to present their viewpoints as enduring principles, to express their deep-seated emotions, and to frame their causes as essential aspects of their identity and collective consciousness. This linguistic strategy is integral to their discourse's ideological foundation, solidifying their commitment to patriotism, nationalism, and the Palestinian cause while also underscoring the gravity of the issues at hand.

Equally, an important characteristic of how ultras convey their experiences through grammar is their intentional avoidance of employing negative sentences. Instead, they opt for positive sentence structures, aiming to affirm their deep affection for the homeland, their commitment to territorial integrity, and their respect for King Mohamed VI. Yet, they use positive sentences to strongly condemn the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and criticize the Arab leaders for their normalization with Israel and betrayal of Palestine's historical rights. Similarly, they covertly denounce the Algerian interference in the Moroccan Sahara and stand against Morocco's sovereignty over its southern regions. The strategic use of positive sentences carries profound ideological implications. First, the ultras' intentional use of positive sentences allows them to wield rhetorical power and convey their message more efficiently and straightforwardly. Second, the use of the three aforementioned structures in the positive reveals openly the degree of patriotism and reverence of their king and overt opposition to the other entities targeted by their discourse.

4.2.2. Relational Values of Grammatical Features

In addition to the experiential values, grammatical choices discussed earlier also have relational values. Power relations are revealed by the mode of sentences whether it is declarative, imperative or in the form of grammatical question. The analysis of these modes will spell out the type of relationships that are established between the participants (Moroccan ultras, homeland, king, Arab leaders, Israeli officials, and Algerian regime). To start with, Moroccan ultras use declarative sentences to emphasize their relationship of mutual respect and love between them and their homeland, Sahara and king Mohamed VI. For example, Hercules ultras use declarative mode in "حب الوطن فالقلب، يعلم بيه غير الرب، حمرا وخضرة الراية" (love for the homeland in the heart, known only by God, the flag is red and green) and Winners ultras in "من صحرائنا الغالية، أقسمنا على الوفاء" (from our precious Sahara, we swore to be loyal). In this context, declarative sentences are not only used to make statements and convey information but also to express positions, beliefs, and emotions, often emphasizing loyalty, love, and unity. In a nutshell, declaratives position the ultras as devoted supporters of the nation and its symbols.

Besides, Moroccan football ultras also deploy the imperative mode to give commands, instructions, or requests. This mode is employed to direct actions and encourage behaviours, often with a sense of urgency as shown in the following examples by Green Boys ultras in their chant "رجاوي فلسطيني" (Rajaoui Palestinian) and Curva Sud and Black Army ultras via banners respectively; "قاومي ربينا يحميك من ظلم الإخوة العديان واليهود لي ظالمين فيك" (resist, our God protects you from the unfairness of enemy brothers and Jewish who oppress you), "أغيثوا غزة" (save Gazza), and "لا للتطبيع مع إسرائيل" (no to normalization with Israel). These Imperative sentences reflect a call to action on the part of Gazza to resist the injustice of the Arab brothers and at the same time call the world to save Gazza and Arabs not to normalize their relation with Israel as a transgressing power. They establish a relationship where the ultras position themselves as advocates for certain causes and encourage others to take a stand against perceived injustices. They also imply a certain level of authority and influence, positioning the ultras as activists and influencers within the discourse.

Likewise, grammatical questions, as another grammatical strategy, are used to ask questions and seek information and clarification. In the ultras' discourse, they are employed to challenge, provoke thought, and express skepticism about the integrity of international community while dealing with the Palestinian issue as it is revealed by these examples by Green Boys and Curva Che ultras "رجاوي .. فلسطيني، لا لا لا لا لا، حبيت نمشي شكون يديني؟" (Rajawi .. Palestinian, no no no no no, I want to go, who will take me?) and "واش التنديد والإنسانية ما كيشملش فلسطين الأبية؟" (does condemnation not include resistant unyielding Palestine?). Grammatical questions engage the audience and challenge the status quo. They create a sense of dialogue and introspection, encouraging reflection on issues of patriotism, nationalism, and solidarity. These questions also establish a relationship of inquiry and critical thinking between the ultras and the participants, suggesting a quest for deeper understanding and meaningful action.

Pronouns are another grammatical category which is excessively used in Moroccan football ultras discourse. Deictic pronouns play a crucial role within Fairclaugh's framework, as they shape power dynamics, express solidarity, emphasize ideological positions, and establish emotional connections. The way they use pronouns in their communication provides valuable insights into the power relations, especially when they are addressing their national symbols like their homeland and king as well as the Arab leader, Israeli leaders and Algerian regime. The choice of pronouns sheds light on how the ultras perceive all these participants. So, to situate each participant in the discourse, they use different deictic pronouns which construct a dichotomy between different participants included in the discourse.

Deictic pronouns are used to position various participants in the discourse and signify power relations. The ultras use pronouns like "you" and "we" to refer to different entities, indicating a complex network of relationships. For instance, the use of "you" in "ربينا يحميك من ظلم الإخوة العديان واليهود لي ظالمين فيك" (God protects *you* from the unfairness of enemy brothers and Jewish who oppress *you*) positions Moroccan ultras as supporters and the addressed entity as a recipient of that protection. Besides, pronouns like "we" and "our" are used to create a sense of collective identity and solidarity. When the ultras say "من صحرائنا الغالية، أقسمنا على الوفاء" (From *our* precious Sahara, *we* swore to be loyal), they establish a shared identity with the Sahara region and express their commitment to it. The use of "our king" and "our blood" in "كونه ملكنا .. سنفديه بدمنا" (as he is *our* king, we will sacrifice him with *our* blood) signifies a strong sense of belonging and loyalty.

Likewise, the choice of pronouns can create divisions and boundaries. Phrases like "لا قبلتي بالتطبيع وما قبلوا" (no consolation for those who sold their homeland) and "عزاء لمن باع وطنه بك" (you accepted normalization, but they did not accept you) employ pronouns to differentiate between those who are part of a certain ideology or group and those who are not. This

emphasizes exclusion and underscores ideological differences. What is more, deictic pronouns can reflect hierarchical relationships. In (as he is our king, *we* will sacrifice him with *our* blood), the pronoun "our" indicates ownership and loyalty to the king. The use of "our king" reinforces the ultras' allegiance to the monarchy and also implies a hierarchical structure where the king holds a position of authority. Furthermore, pronouns like "you" and "me" are used to establish an emotional connection and empathy. The phrase " ما نسمح فيك يا غزة، مالكري عليا بعيدة، يا رفح يا رام الله" (*I* will not let *you* Gaza, even though *you* are far from *me*, O! Rafah, O! Ramallah) portrays a sense of closeness and concern for Palestine though it is a distant place. The use of "me" and the direct address "O! Rafah, O! Ramallah" evoke a personal connection.

4.2.3. Expressive Values of Grammatical Features

Here the emphasis lies on the grammatical choices employed by Moroccan football ultras, which not only divulge information but also express emotions, subjectivity, and ideological viewpoints. These selections shape sentence tone, emphasis, and meaning, enabling Moroccan ultras to convey messages that extend beyond factual details. Hence, Moroccan ultras utilize various linguistic components such as verb tenses, adjectives, sentence mode and more to articulate their emotions. For instance, the ultras utilize the verb "to be" in simple present tense as an expressive modality of certainty to affirm their sentiments of love, reverence, and dedication toward their homeland and king, as seen in sentences like "our king is one, Mohammed VI", "we will sacrifice him with our blood", "the Sahara is Moroccan", "the flag is red and green", and so forth. Similarly, to underscore the difficult yet insurmountable nature of the Arab leaders' awakening, they opt for the verb "to be" instead of "can't" as a modal verb that conveys impossibility as in this example "the awakening of the Arabs is more difficult than the liberation of Palestine".

Moreover, their communication is replete with adjectives that vividly depict the depth of their affection and dedication to their homeland and the Moroccan Sahara. Terms like "loyal", "unyielding", and "ready for sacrifice" are utilized to articulate the extent of their emotional commitment. Additionally, they employ adjectives to strongly criticize and voice their disillusionment with the conspiracy of Arab leaders against Palestine, employing words like "enemy brothers", "traitors", and "indifferent". Furthermore, their sentiments of disdain for the Israeli racist regime are conveyed through adjectives such as "oppressors", "Zionists", and "occupationists". These adjectives heighten the intensity of their emotions, creating a vivid portrayal of their profound love and allegiance as well as disappointment and antagonism.

Equally, declarative and imperative sentences and grammatical questions discussed earlier are tools that intensify the emotional impact of Moroccan football ultras' discourse. They allow ultras to effectively communicate their emotions of patriotism and love of national symbols and evoke empathy from their audience regarding the transgression that Palestine is doomed to. Declarative sentences, which make direct statements, allow ultras to express their emotions with clarity and assertiveness. For example, when they state "love for the homeland is in the heart" and "as he is our king, we will sacrifice him with our blood", the message is straightforward, leaving no room for ambiguity. This directness emphasizes their strong emotions of love and sacrifice. On the other hand, grammatical questions, such as "Rajawi .. Palestinian, no no no no no, I want to go, who will take me?" and "does condemnation not include resistant unyielding Palestine?" evoke a sense of strong desire, determination, and eagerness in the first statement and a feeling of frustration since the international community does not show enough support for Palestine's struggles and challenges as the case with other causes.

In brief, these language components weave a complex fabric of expressions, conveying not solely Moroccan football ultras' sentiments of love for their nation and dedication to it, but also highlighting the pressing nature, significance, and gravity of the Palestinian cause that

demands global empathy. The selection of these elements represents a deliberate tactic employed by the ultras to awaken the consciousness of all Moroccans, encouraging them to cherish their national symbols and unite against any force that aims to disrupt stability and detach Morocco from its Sahara and monarchy. Additionally, these choices serve to underscore the pivotal position of the Palestinian cause for the Moroccan populace and emphasize its legitimacy.

5. CONCLUSION

Moroccan football ultras as new agents within public spaces namely with their charged discourse, that not only supports their team but also touches different sociopolitical issues, has grabbed the attention of researchers from different fields. Hence, the main thrust of this study was to critically investigate their produced discourse and reveal how they use language to construct their identities and voice their experiential and relational worlds regarding various themes and issues specifically the assertion of their patriotism, nationalism, and their firm adoption of Palestinian cause. This study endeavored to provide a deeper insight of how Moroccan football ultras construct and convey these themes through their discourse. The application of a lexico-grammatical approach as it is used by Fairclough in his three-dimensional model namely in his description stage that integrates the Hallidyan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) reveals that ultras strategically employ ideologically charged lexico-grammatical choices, such as material and mental processes, nominalization, and various grammatical modes, to assert agency and reinforce emotional engagement. Through techniques like rewording, synonymy, and dysphemism, ultras shape a powerful collective voice that reflects their stance on socio-political issues central to their identity and values.

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APPENDICES

Data source 1 (for slogans): https://www.facebook.com/A9WAULTRASWORLD

Data source 2 (for chants): YouTube

AUTHOR'S BIO

Dr. Mohammed EL Hadifi *holds a PhD from Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra, Morocco. His research centers on applied linguistics, with a particular focus on critically analyzing the discourse of social movements, specifically within football ultras communities. His additional research interests encompass Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), and pragmatics. Dr. EL Hadifi has also served as an EFL high school teacher for over 14 years.*