

# **MODERN IDEALS AND MUSLIM IDENTITY: HARMONY OR CONTRADICTION? - A TEXT LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE GÜLEN TEACHING AND MOVEMENT**

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## **Abstract**

At the global level there is an urgent need and increasing attention for a new sense of Muslim identity in harmony with modern realities. Fethullah Gülen, an educationalist, a religious guide and a peace maker, is one of the most persuasive and influential Turkish-Muslim voices in the contemporary world putting strong emphasis on peaceful coexistence and the synthesis of faith and reason in Western democracies through spirituality, religious diversity, dialogue and educational initiatives. This paper primarily examines how and to what extent Gülen's teachings and the world-wide volunteer movement inspired by him are contributing to the dynamic and cheerful coexistence of Muslims and non-Muslims. In order to explore and analyse this coexistence, the seven text linguistic principles (cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality) are applied to Gülen's teachings and his movement as an empirical case. Secondly, these text linguistic standards are modelled to social sciences as a new theoretical and methodological approach for exploring and analysing social movements and phenomena. The originality of this study is specified as the correlations between a movement and a text, and the processes of cognition, production and reproduction of knowledge and its dissemination and transition in the Muslim world, multicultural societies and liberal democracies. This research's practical relevance lies in the fact that it helps understand how the Gülen movement has been formed and accomplished, both nationally and internationally. Metaphorically, in this paper Fethullah Gülen has been considered as the writer; by-him-inspired movement refers to the text; and the readers are the transnational community and the whole humanity.

## Introduction

The modern world has been undergoing radical, social, economic, political and intellectual changes over the last several decades. Today there are increasing numbers of Muslims in Western democracies offering a model for society that is pluralist, participatory and wealthy in economic terms. However, the need for peaceful coexistence between Muslims and non-Muslims within and between nations has long been recognized (Carroll, 2007; Shadid & Van Koningsveld; 2002; Hunter, 1998; Esposito, 1999; Huntington, 1993). Consequently, both globally and locally, there is a growing need for a new sense of Muslim identity in harmony with modern ideals such as liberty, democracy, equality, justice, human rights, and freedom of thought and speech (Küçükcan, 2004; Kuru, 2003; Göle, 2000; Gülen, 1998, 2001; Heffner, 1998; Izzetbegovic, 1984; Rahman, 1982; Nasr, 1980). While people struggle to balance different, often opposing identities, there have been notable failures in attempts to make the world more integrated.

M. Fethullah Gülen, an educator, a religious scholar and peace activist, is one of the most influential contemporary Muslim voices encouraging peaceful coexistence and the synthesis of faith and reason in Western societies through democracy, citizenship, spirituality, multiculturalism, religious diversity, educational initiatives and intercultural and interfaith dialogue activities in the context of secular modernity (Celik & Valkenberg, 2007; Hunt & Aslandoğan, 2006; Celik, et al, 2005; Yavuz & Esposito, 2003; Sevindi, 2002). He has had a significant influence on the millions of people, especially the younger people with school-aged children, who became committed to the vision of global peace and progress through education and dialogue (Kurtz, 2001:155-160, 2005:380-381; Ates, Karakas & Ortayli, 2005). Nevertheless, Gülen is important to interfaith dialogue because he provides a source of inspiration for a new and cooperative approach to the Abrahamic religions (Valkenberg, 2006; Capan, 2007) and to a dialogue between civilizations (Carroll, 2007; Ünal & Williams, 2000), which aims to support dialogue, harmony and conciliation between people of different cultural and political backgrounds. Gülen's social movement, which concentrates on education, engages with Western society, and promotes dialogue with the adherents of Christianity, Jews and other faiths.

## Aim of the Study

This study<sup>1</sup> primarily examines how and to what extent Gülen's teaching and the worldwide movement inspired by him are contributing to the dynamic and peaceful coexistence of Muslims and non-Muslims. First, in order to explore and analyze this concept of coexistence, seven textual linguistic principles (cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality) (Bearugrande & Dressler, 1981; Van Dijk, 1998; Demir, 2004; Tas, 2004; Alan, 2005) are applied to Gülen's teaching and movement. Second, these linguistic standards are modelled on social sciences as a new theoretical and methodological approach for exploring and analyzing social movements and phenomena. The originality of this study is specified as the correlation between a movement and a text, and the processes of cognition, production and reproduction of knowledge and its dissemination and transition in the Muslim world, multicultural societies and liberal democracies. In this current study, Fethullah Gülen is—metaphorically—considered as the 'writer'; his teaching and movement refer to the 'text'; and the 'readers' are the members<sup>2</sup> of the Gülen

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1 The empirical study on which this study is based was carried out during the spring of 2007.

2 To use the term *member* does not imply in the current study a kind of formal organisation, which does not exist.

movement, the transnational community and the whole of humanity. This research's practical relevance lies in the fact that it helps describe the formation and success of Gülen teaching and movement.

## Methodology

In our study, we used case research strategy (Yin 2003; Ragin & Becker, 2002) involving an in-depth examination of a single instance or event: the case of the Gülen movement. It is an empirical inquiry that investigates the Gülen movement as a social phenomenon within its real-life context. Our case study includes qualitative evidence, relies on multiple sources of evidence and benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions of text linguistic analysis. It is a paradigmatic case which may be defined as an exemplar or prototype (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2002), and shows that the basic mechanisms, actors, motifs or background practices of the Gülen movement are studied in terms of 'exemplars' or 'paradigms'.

In addition to a systematic review of the relevant writings and speeches on and by Fethullah Gülen, a number of qualitative interviews with experts and his sympathisers<sup>3</sup> were used for a theoretical modelling. Further, we conducted internet, ethnographic, and participant observation research. The authors spent a total of 24 hours in community sites, and attended in major cultural and religious events like Ramadan Iftar Dinners in the Netherlands and abroad, gatherings, conversation groups, and meetings of members. The ethnographic research approach, broadly defined, is becoming an increasingly popular method for studying through the Internet because of the unique way it provides a flexible set of meanings that allowed for feedback, course corrections and discovery (Walcott, 1999). Baym (2000) used an ethnographic approach, grounded in a set of theories termed the practice approach, to study an online soap opera fan group. We used this approach in order to understand a community by looking at the activities in which the community members engage. This approach also emphasizes language activities as a community-substantiating force. Language practices are "microcosm of the communities in which they are used" (Lave & Wenger, 1991:22).

Furthermore, eleven semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face or via electronic mail—in either Turkish or English—lasting an average of one hour each. Qualitative interviewing is an excellent tool for the current study in which rich detail about the perspectives of participants is desired (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Interviewees were randomly chosen from a group of pre-selected experts and followers who know Gülen's movement and are well acquainted with his ideas and initiatives as well. It is of particular interest to investigate what these respondents think about the Gülen's teaching, how they interpret his discourses and actions, and how Gülen inspires and influences individuals in the movement that is associated with him. Interview questions were both open and close-ended and based on the seven text linguistic principles mentioned above. We prepared an interview protocol, and pre-tested the interview by interviewing a religious studies scholar and a member of the Gülen movement. The interview guide was modified according to the suggestions made by these people.

## Data Analysis

Directed data analysis was used to analyze the data collected from the qualitative interviews and participatory observations, while our themes and sub-themes served as an initial framework for content analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Hsieh & Huberman, 2005). Firstly,

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3 In this study, *sympathisers* refer to people who are inspired by Gülen's teaching.

existing literature was reviewed, and field notes were analysed to get a first (general) impression. Secondly, interview data were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Finally, interview contents were characterised and classified, and then discussed in the light of the observations of the authors. To improve our study's reliability and validity, we incorporated other sources, viewpoints and methods to some of the interviewees, and systematically asked them if we have accurately interpreted and recorded what they meant.

We begin with the exposition of some patterns of the Gülen teaching, and then we examine the main transitions in the movement. Next, we apply the metaphorical linguistic principles to by-him-inspired social movement. Finally, the study closes with conclusions and discussion resting on the evidence.

## **Fethullah Gülen and Some Characteristics of His Teaching**

Fethullah Gülen [1941], as a mark of respect, called 'Hodjaefendi' (esteemed teacher) by his followers and associates, has a considerable impact on the millions of participants in a social phenomenon called the Gülen movement (Yavuz & Esposito, 2003; Yilmaz, 2005). According to the respondents and existing literature, Gülen is an influential Muslim intellectual in the contemporary world who inspired an effective and social movement, including transnational education organizations, business networks like ISHAD and HOGIAF,<sup>4</sup> interfaith dialogue forums,<sup>5</sup> and multicultural encounters, and as a social innovator who develops a new sense of religiosity in touch with modern realities (Hunt & Aslandoğan, 2006; Yavuz & Esposito, 2003). He is also known for his contributions to world peace through his dialogue activities and educational initiatives (Michel, 2003). Gülen is of Turkish origin and can be seen as a product of the Republic of Turkey, having been born in Erzurum, in eastern Turkey, and having been formed by Islamic tradition in such a way that it has been a constant and fixed point of reference for his own personal life, his interpretations of the world, his teaching and actions (Weller, 2006:75-6). According to Gülen's (2004e:199), a believer does not hesitate to communicate with any kind of thought and system; while one foot should remain at the centre the other could be with other 'seventy-two nations', like a compass (Rumi's famous metaphor). He accents that Islam does not reject interaction with diverse cultures and change as long as what is to be appropriated does not contradict with the main pillars of Islam.

Gülen, known by some as 'a modern-day' Rumi<sup>6</sup>, is not only an individual but, in his life as well as his teaching, is also the inspirational figure for an emerging volunteer movement that originally took shape in his native country, but is now found throughout many parts of the world (idem; Celik, 2007). Influenced by Sufi traditions<sup>7</sup> of Islam, the Gülen movement's interpretation of the Turkish-Ottoman culture of tolerance have been criticized by both extreme

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4 ISHAD (Business Life Cooperation Association) as a Non-governmental and Non-profit NGO founded by a group of businessmen in 1993 in Istanbul; HOGIAF (Dutch Federation of Young Entrepreneurs) has been established in the Netherlands.

5 [www.interfaithdialog.org](http://www.interfaithdialog.org) ; [www.rumiform.org](http://www.rumiform.org) ; [www.dialoguesociety.org](http://www.dialoguesociety.org) ; [www.interfaithdialogues.org](http://www.interfaithdialogues.org) ; [www.indialogue.in](http://www.indialogue.in) ; and [www.intercultural.org.au](http://www.intercultural.org.au) are a few of the main community sites in English.

6 A series conference speeches, entitled 'From Rumi to Fethullah Gülen', held on 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 May 2007 in various cities in the Netherlands, discussed Fethullah Gülen as a representative of the Rumi's thoughts in the contemporary world. Mawlana Jalal ad-Din al-Rumi [1207-1273] is an outstanding poet and spiritual teacher of the thirteenth century (see Celik, 2007; Kandur, et al, 2006; Can, 2005).

7 The Sufi Tradition is one of the main channels of the Islamic heritage of thought and learning. The continual process of spiritual development in Sufism along a path of the innate human poverty, helplessness, and powerlessness before God is undertaken in the knowledge that everything comes from God.

secularists and Islamists. For Gülen (2004a:166), Sufism (tasawwuf)<sup>8</sup> is the spiritual life of Islam. It is a form of self-purification leading to inner dimension of Islamic spirituality, a deeper understanding of the divine acts, and a greater knowledge and love of the Divine. Gülen has been considered as a persuasive Muslim scholar who puts the individual and his or her spiritual, intellectual and personal development at the centre of everything (Celik & Alan, 2007; Akman, 2004; Sevindi, 2002; Ünal & Williams, 2000). Gülen proposes that his followers harmonize intellectuality with modernity, tasawwuf, Sufi-oriented spirituality and caring, humane activism (Michel, 2005). He has geared all his energies towards the regeneration of the Muslim spirit and towards evolving a new breed of idealistic Muslim youth who are modern, spiritual and rational, with a deep sense of belief in and love for humankind. Gülen's greatest intellectual achievement is the inspiration of a youth movement that began in the 1970s and developed into a dense web of transnational networks with millions of followers. The Gülen movement has established hundreds of schools and colleges, organized businessmen and entrepreneurs around a common platform, and set up two of the Turkey's largest daily newspapers (Zaman, Today's Zaman)<sup>9</sup>, two TV channels (Samanyolu, Mehtap), a radio station (Burc FM), a leading publishing house (Kaynak A.S.), and a number of periodical magazines and journals, such as Sızıntı (on culture and science), The Fountain (on scientific and spiritual thought), Yağmur (on literature), Ekoloji (on environmental issues), and Yeni Ümit (on religious sciences), Gonca (a children's magazine). Internationally, this movement has extended its reach of educational and media efforts to all parts of the globe (Agai, 2004). Gülen has lived in the United States since 1999 because of the repressive political atmosphere in Turkey, and due to personal health problems.

Gülen (1977; 1990) and his volunteer movement have set out to produce, what he calls, "the golden generation": a generation that can integrate Muslim identity with modern realities. Gülen has developed a model for human life whose social aspects have been brought to the fore. For it is impossible for someone who has not acquired an independent character to make a positive contribution to the social sphere. Gülen argues that the individual and collective happiness lie in disciplining three innate faculties (reason, anger, and lust)<sup>10</sup> to produce a young, "golden generation" that will learn theoretical aspects of "the middle way between modernity and tradition" (Kuru, 2003) and will bring it into practice. This generation is supposed to absorb and represent both modern realities and Muslim morality and identities through its mind, its behaviours and its spirituality. Gülen (2000b:7-8) symbolizes human beings as mirrors for God's names and attributes. Therefore, human beings are distinguished from the rest of creation because they have the honour of being responsible for making the Earth prosperous in God's name. In his teaching, Gülen (2005:5-10, 31-42) lays out a broad vision for a society and world led by individuals of spiritual, moral and intellectual excellence. He calls these people "ideal human" and describes their following eight characters and

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8 Sufism is the English translation of tasawwuf referring to mysticism in Islam. Thus, non-Muslim mystics should not be called Sufis, and expressions such as Islamic Sufism are problematic since Sufism is Islamic mysticism (Gokcek, 2005:357-364).

9 Zaman is a leading highly-qualified daily newspaper with more than ten world language editions, sometimes in a bilingual format. It is also the first Turkish daily to be published on the Internet. Today's Zaman appears in English and is the largest English newspaper in Turkey.

10 Since the time of Ibn Miskawayh (930-1030) human faculties or innate "drives" have been dealt with in three categories: reason, anger, and lust. He is a Muslim moralist, philosopher and historian. His moral treatise *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, influenced by the Aristotelian concept of the mean, is considered one of the best statements of Islamic philosophy. His universal history *Kitab Tajarib al-Umam wa Ta'aqub al-Himam* (Eclipse of the 'Abbasid Caliphate), was noted for its use of all available sources and greatly stimulated the development of Islamic historiography.

attributes: faith; love; a balanced view of science with the trio of reasoning, logic and consciousness; a re-evaluated view of humans, life, and the universe; free thinking and respect for freedom of thought; a habit to consultative and collective consciousness; mathematical thinking; and appreciate for art. Gülen's (2004a:289-302) entire endeavour is to emphatically stress the fact that, by virtue of drawing attention to the relationship between God and humankind, humanity's greatest virtue, ethically speaking, will be to attain the model of universal or ideal human (*al-insaan al-kaamil*). In fact, in his teaching, this is an opening that spells his ideal model for human beings who sacrifice their own life's pleasures—who, in a way, live for others (altruism). He argues that such a human being (e.g. Hacı Kemal Erimez)<sup>11</sup> can take as his or her basis only positive action in social arena.

Avoiding partisan politics, the movement developed an enlightenment project to combat social ills through a variety of educational, dialogue and media initiatives (Yılmaz, 2003; Saritoprak, 2005:325). Weller (2006:76) affirms that Gülen's teaching has been particularly aimed at encouraging the younger generations to encompass intellectual engagement with spiritual wisdom and to give expression to this through a commitment to serving the whole of humanity. As a result of this approach, his movement has invested heavily in the development of cultural centres as well as media outlets and educational institutions in Turkey, in the Central Asian regions after the fall of the Soviet Union, but also in Africa and North- and South America (Agai, 2003; Michel, 2003). Gülen is of the firm opinion that Turkish people have interpreted and applied Islam in a certain way so that it could be called 'Turkish Islam' or 'Anatolian Muslimness'<sup>12</sup> (Ünal & Williams, 2000:54–58). He states that:

Turkish Islam is composed of the main, unchanging principles of Islam found in the Qur'an and Sunnah,<sup>13</sup> as well as in the forms that its aspects open to interpretation assumed during Turkish history, together with Sufism. [...] This is why Turkish Islam always has been broader, deeper, more tolerant and inclusive, and based on love.[...] The Hanafi understanding and Turkish interpretation dominates [sic] more than three-fourths of the Islamic world. This understanding is very dear to me. If you like you can call this Turkish Islam. Just as I see no serious canonical obstacle to this, I don't think it should upset anyone. [...] The Turkish nation interpreted Islam in the areas open to interpretation [...] [I]t attained a very broad spectrum and became the religion of great states. For this reason, I think the Turkish Muslimness is appropriate. Another aspect of this is that in addition to profound devotion to the Qur'an and Sunnah, the Turks always have been open to Sufism, Islam's spiritual aspect. (Ünal and Williams 2000:43,52,56).

He speaks of a "Turkish Muslimness" based on love, tolerance, dialogue, forgiveness, Sufism,

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11 See for more information on the book by Küçük (2006), entitled *Adanmış Bir Gönül İnsanı Hacı Ata*, focussed on his life and altruism.

12 Gülen was one of the first that used the term "Anatolian Muslimness" or "Turkish Muslimness" which was interpreted as a way of distancing Anatolian people's interpretations and experiences of Islam from those of others, especially the Wahhabi (Saudi) or Shiite radical interpretations.

13 Sunnah refers to the way of the Prophet Muhammad. It is the tradition recording his every act, word, and confirmation. It is the second source of Islamic legislation (the Qur'an being the first one). The Qur'an and authentic prophetic traditions enjoin Muslims to follow the Sunnah. It also defines what is stated in general terms in the Qur'an by referring to particular instances, and it defines the general principles underlying statements in the Qur'an that are in themselves specific and particular. Besides, the Sunnah (like the Quran which it embodies) is also concerned with moral guidance, so the Sunnah provides inspirations and the horizons for moral and spiritual instructions in all spheres of life, as well as providing the inspirations and horizons (limits) within which Islamic legislation may be effected. (see Ünal, 2006:1348).

and excluding harsh restrictions or fanaticism, demonstrating that this Islam is not in contradiction with the modern world. Turkish Islam represents the chain of development of the Central Asia-Seljuk-Ottoman and modern Turkey (Ünal & Williams, 2000:54-58).

Gülen's ethic can be summarized in a few key directives or recommendations, such as predicting and teaching peace, love, forgiveness and tolerance; seeking God's approval; remaining awake to your image of death and to your existential broods; doing good deeds (*hizmet*); and practicing humility, sacrifice, and self-criticism (Özdalga, 2003). In his teaching, he firmly argues that these are the fundamentals of Islam: whilst other things are accidental (Gülen, 2004e:71; 2004b; 2000a). Respondents accordingly indicated that his teaching aims at promoting these universal values to coexist harmoniously in an increasingly inter-dependent and plural world.

### **Three Main Transitions in the Gülen Movement**

The Gülen-inspired movement has undergone several changes and transitions and can be categorized into three main successive development stages since its inception in the 1960s. The first stage encompasses the period spanning the late 1960s and up to 1980. In these nurturing and planning years, Gülen gave numerous talks, sermons<sup>14</sup> and a series of conference-speeches organized by his followers and sympathizers. This enabled him to reach a more representative cross-section of the population and to attract the attention of the academic community, especially the students. In this period, he also concentrated on inspiring the foundation of student-dormitories and establishing *Işık Evler* (Light Houses) in various provinces in Anatolia. The objective behind the Light Houses is to provide students with a home, a network of friends and daily routine making it easier for them to abstain from indulging in religiously immoral acts and maintaining a spiritual lifestyle. The Light Houses are rented to accommodate students and have, on average, between 5-7 inhabitants. The second stage of the movement began in 1981 when Gülen retired as a state preacher. Throughout the 1980s, Gülen and members of the new Anatolian bourgeoisie inspired by his teachings began to invest in advancing educational attainment in Turkey by establishing schools and learning institutions across Anatolia (Hendrick, 2006:23). Since his retirement, Gülen has also concentrated his efforts on building an atmosphere resulting in dialogue and peace among the factions representing different ideologies, faiths and cultures. The third phase commenced in the 1990s and extends to the present. In the 1990s, political and economic developments in Turkey, the fall of the Soviet Union, the structural weakening of the Turkish state monopoly over information and capital flows, and global developments in communication and transformation technology all contributed to an emphasis being placed on international educational encounters and dialogue activities among the adherents of different religions, nations and civilizations (Kuru, 2005). To this end, Gülen visited and received leading figures, not only from the Turkish population, but from all over the world. Indeed, the dialogue and mutual understanding initiative is one of the cornerstones of evolution for the Gülen movement (Kurtz, 2005; Yilmaz, 2005; Celik & Valkenberg, 2007).

In short, the widening and deepening of the worldwide movement continues by virtue of his inspirational speeches and writings. His movement has gradually evolved and grown in various areas of Turkish life. Respondents stress that the movement has grown not as a

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<sup>14</sup> Most of Gülen's series sermons, talks, public speeches were recorded and transliterated into text format and with minor review published as books. This form of delivery was unheard of in the Muslim scholarly world where custom had it that matters be studied and presented in a rather loose-haphazard-style with no clear boundary.

political movement but as a social and spiritual one. Many respondent defines the movement as the human- and faith-based movement. New non-for-profit organizations in the domains of education, media, academic studies, business, health and dialogue have been founded. With its theoretical and practical aspects the movement—according to some respondents—offers new solutions for many social and cultural problems and attempts to construct a new Muslim identity in the modern era that meets the challenges of secularism and materialism. The style of the movement is accepted and the activities are supported by different ethnic and social groups in modern democracies.

## **Applying Seven Text Linguistic Principles To The Gülen Teaching And Movement**

By applying seven metaphorical text linguistic principles to the Gülen teaching and movement as an empiric case, we examine—in this section—the main assumption that modern ideals and Muslim identity are harmonizing or contradicting. Text is defined as a communicative occurrence that meets seven standards of textuality (Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981; Van Dijk, 1998). After briefly outlining each standard of textuality, we will apply questions regarding the correlation of these standards to the Gülen teaching and movement:

### ***1. Cohesion***

“When a text is analyzed in terms of cohesion, the continuity has an important role at a grammatical level. The continuity can be supported by sub-items which help to form and give meaning to a text” (Demir, 2004).

Cohesion refers to the grammatical unity of a text in which different components exist. Here the importance lays in the surface components, which depend on each other according to grammatical forms and conventions (Tas, 2004). The question we will answer is: What are the elements of social cohesion in the Gülen teaching and movement regarding the surface structure. The surface structure in a text is composed of tangible words, clauses and sentences. These explicit factors are interlinked through references, parallelisms or paraphrases. In the context of a social movement, the tacit factors are members, institutions, publications and activities. These elements in the Gülen movement are connected loosely to each other. There are no organic links among the related institutions. Each institution is independent and can survive even if all the rest become “extinct”.

The cohesion within this loose network is realized through reading and watching common media sources (Zaman, Samanyolu TV, Mehtap TV, Sızıntı magazine, the books of Gülen), sharing knowledge (correspondences, seminars, conferences), visiting the successful organizations (national and international), and applying the best practices (such as the Science Fairs of the educational centres in Turkey and Europe). With respect to the movement, the social cohesion is also expressed—according to the respondents—in social networks of people who are inspired by Gülen’s vision and make efforts on the territory of education, media and dialogue in which they are supported by business people.

On his website “fGülen.com” Gülen is described as an Islamic scholar dedicated to humanity and peace. He preaches and teaches about the importance of understanding and tolerance. According to the respondents, his message embraces all humanity and is deeply averse to atheism, injustice, anarchy and conflict (Bayramoğlu, 1995). His intercultural and interfaith dialogue call for social cohesion and a respect for education and an end to ignorance and dis-sension. His call for dialogue is bipartite. First, people should learn about the other’s cultural

identity, religious beliefs and spiritual values, and second, this knowledge should be used to learn more about their own moral and cultural values. One of the most important points in Gülen's texts and speeches is the toleration of differences in order to live together. The significant factors in his teaching are collective consciousness, shared vision, social responsibility, tolerance, respect, spiritual depth. In Gülen's writings (2004c:21; 1987:96-98), speeches and conversations there is no greater religious concept and action than love: "Love is the most essential element of every being, and it is the most radiant light, and it is the greatest power; able to resist and overcome all else." Everyone should make an effort for the well-being of the society in which people live. In order to promote social cohesion in Gülen's teaching, both education (a means developing forbearance) and dialogue are of eminent importance. Gülen stimulates people of different religious and ethnic groups in any society to have dialogues with each other so that they respect, understand each other, and in doing so ultimately cooperating in favour of the well-being of the society in which they live. The respondents characterise the individuals in the Gülen movement as peaceful within themselves (internal peace) and with their environments (external peace). They have an optimistic view for the future and put emphasis on living peacefully.

Endoen's process of the social division of labour can be considered as the Gülen movement's main tenant. In the movement, different groups deal with different voluntary services that complete the surface structure. Different institutions and their functions complete and help each other like the components of a house: door, windows and roof etc together make a house. The sacrifices made by the pioneers of the movement and their responsibility are very important factors for the continuity of the movement. Having no worldly expectations is an effective virtue for the new followers. The transnational aspect of the Gülen movement is regarded as a healthy interaction and dialogue with all peoples without any discrimination. The members of the community have two main goals: to attain the consent of God and to represent the perfect character of Prophet Muhammad.

An alternative explanation of the Gülen movement's social cohesion from a surface structure perspective would come from human basic needs. 'Light Houses' and youth hostels along with dormitory schools and university preparatory courses provide for the individuals' intellectual, spiritual, physiological, safety and belonging needs. Volunteers from around the globe involved in the Gülen movement provide shelter and guidance, and all of this for the sake of friendship and support for each other—regardless of ethnicity, religion or wealth. Furthermore, the international aspect of the movement furnishes a great deal of vision, self esteem, great achievements and dignity.

## 2. Coherence

Coherence is the continuity of senses in a text. Cohesion deals with the surface structure whereas coherence deals with the deep structure (experiences or thoughts). In this section, we will give an answer to the following question: What are the elements of social coherence in the Gülen teaching and movement regarding the deep structure?

The deep structure of a text is related to intangible concepts such reputation, trust, and social capital. Culture and tradition are not limited to the tangible. Styles of life, customs, aesthetic sensibilities, and ideas are intangible, invisible aspects of culture and tradition. The continuity of sense is the base of coherence. The Gülen movement has a particular shared vision: to serve humanity for the sake of God. "*Hizmet*" (service) is a key concept which binds members and institutions. Gülen frequently used concept of *dar al-hizmet* (country of service). It means, if one's intention is to serve Islam by presenting a good example, the one can stay

wherever one desires (Yilmaz, 2003:234). In the countries where sympathizers reside, they utilize this concept and either establish interfaith organizations, associations, and societies or are in close contact with “People of the Book”.<sup>15</sup> Without the concept of *hizmet*, which is utterly represented by the personality of Gülen, the movement may keep its cohesion but probably lose its coherence. Being the servants of One God, and the “*ummah*” (community) of one Prophet, reading one Book (the *Qur’an*) and turning to one “*kiblah*” (prayer direction) are the most significant spiritual ties among the members, and of course the whole Muslim global *ummah*.

The majority of the respondents indicate that there is no contradiction in Gülen’s texts, speeches and actions. There is a social coherence between the local and the global. This means that members of the movement experience no serious problem between the local and the global, and have a holistic perspective. Common values unite people. Thus, common concepts such as compassion, love, tolerance, and dialogue are internalized through conversations and common media, and knowledge sharing. One respondent stated:

“Owing to the principles of diversity, love and dialogue, the movement does not focus on instilling Islamic principles, but instead, opts to teach what Gülen consider the ‘universal principles’, like compassion, generosity, kindness and humility. Gülen’s idea is that you change the world and build peace through education, educating others to consider interfaith and intercultural dialogue, to be modern and change the world through the education within an ethical framework. He proposes an education of the heart and soul as well as of the mind and character, aimed at reviving and invigorating the whole being to achieve competence and provide goods and services useful to humanity.”

Dialogue, peace, tolerance, compassion, and forgiveness are the key elements of social cohesion in Gülen’s teaching and movement. The respondents stress that Gülen’s understanding of tolerance is the acceptance of differences that arise from dialogue in order to further the wider goal of cooperation among all strata of the society. To him, tolerance is based on the idea of charity, or love, and therefore is a duty to God (Agai, 2003:64).

Gülen (1997:60) states that a peaceful social life depends on the balance and dialogue between the two non-hierarchical groups of people in the society: elite (rich) and common (poor) people. He contends that this dialogue and balance, which will manifest itself in peace, is based on care and compassion on the part of the elite or the rich, and respect and obedience on the part of the common people or the poor. The unbalance between these two has destroyed social peace for the last several centuries, especially in Europe’s social upheavals, all of which are rooted in the century-old struggle between labour and capital. Gülen’s followers and experts pointed out that he developed a modern and innovative education model pertaining to the combination of spirituality with intellect, reason with revelation, and mind with heart, which is applied in Turkey but also in many other countries.<sup>16</sup> According to Gülen,

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15 The term “People of the Book” or *Ahl al-kitab* is mentioned in the *Qur’an* twenty-four times, referring to Christians and Jews in particular. The context of these *Qur’anic* references varies. Some of these verses praise the People of the Book for their righteousness and good deeds and faith in the Afterlife (*Qur’an* 3.113). Other verses rebuke the People of the Book for not following the way of God (*Qur’an* 3.99). A group of these verses invite the People of the Book to a common ground between Muslims and themselves (*Qur’an* 3.64). Another group of these verses indicates an intimate relationship between Muslims and Christians (*Qur’an* 5.82). The relationship between Muslims and the People of the Book, Jews and Christians, has been a subject of discussion among Muslims throughout the centuries.

16 Given the lack to integration between scientific knowledge and spiritual and ethical values, Gülen and his followers introduced a new style of education reconciling these elements.

education is vital for both societies and individuals (Ünal & Williams, 2000:306), and is the best way to serve humanity and to establish a sincere dialogue with other cultures and religions (Michel, 2005, 2006; Bakar, 2005; Gülen, 1987). Gülen's teachings are seen to be, especially by Turkish Muslims, as a new guideline for practicing Muslim morality in modern societies.

Another significant element of social coherence of the movement is consultation which means reaching consensus among followers and to resolve common issues and possible problems. Gülen (2005:43-58) teaches that mutual consultation is the first condition for the success of a decision made on any issue related to society. Before they put one step they talk about all probable consequences. They call their activities "serving" and they see themselves as servants. Servanthood is a central theme in Gülen's teaching (Gülen, 2007a,b,c). A continuous need for a deep spirituality in the movement is also a remarkable aspect of the social coherence. The members of the movement believe that everything they have is a gift of God. Their activities are just a prayer of thanks for those gifts. They believe that social development is only possible when individuals are developed in heart and mind. Love is stronger than hate. For this goal they spend their time and money even if they are without sufficient means themselves.

The deep structure could also be perceived as the backbone of the Gülen movement, the unique explanation as to the degree of dedication and commitment to the voluntary activities. The very basic questions facing humanity have yet to be answered and neither philosophy nor any other field of hard science has been truly successful in answering fundamental questions such as: Who are we? What is our purpose on this planet? Is there an afterlife where the soul will be rewarded or punished for deeds done on earth? The previous section, focusing on the surface structure of the Gülen movement has only portrayed an earth-bound set of explanations; however, the real engine of activity in Gülen movement comes from the above listed question and attempts to provide the most satisfying answers. These activities gave birth to a new understanding of education where spirituality and positivism were brought together and proved that religion and science are not mutually exclusive but perfectly complementary.

According to several respondents, the notion 'identity' lies in the basis of the social cohesion of the Gülen movement. Gülen preaches that a human being develops his or her own identity by attaching importance to his or her own historical background, and that with regard to the Turkish society or nation, mainly to the religious values (e.g. Sufi Islam, tasawwuf), which were playing a prominent role in their history. This identity—resting on historical and religious values—is in two respects of importance for the social cohesion in the surface structure: (a) People who know their own identity, have a strong basis and therefore it is not threatening for them to have a dialogue with the other. Each one shows respect for each other's cultural and religious identity. As people have the idea that their identity is respected and accepted, they are able to go easier into a dialogue and they are rather willing to work together on common interests and issues in the society. (b) Those who have found their identity in religious values, will discover that their goal lies in the obtaining of the approval of God. This approval can be obtained by "love for the creation for the sake of the Creator". Striving for this approval and the understanding that love for fellow human beings is a condition for the tolerance that necessarily is to go in dialogue with the other(s) in their context. It is also a precondition to deploy self for the welfare of the others and of the society; a goal that will ultimately lead to social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

### 3. *Intentionality*

The writer of a book produces a text to achieve a specific goal. This may be the expression of oneself, informing others, criticizing, and so forth. Whatever the aim is, the text must be produced in a cohesive and coherent way so that it serves for the text-producer's intention (Tas, idem).

Regarding intentionality we will focus on the following questions: a) What is Gülen's intention? b) What is the ultimate ideal behind Gülen's teaching and movement? and c) How does the movement avoid irrelevant messages and/or actions regarding his intentions and vision?

The respondents stress that Gülen's ultimate intention is to be accepted, loved and honoured by God. He frequently states that there is no attractive goal beyond this one (Gülen, 2007a,b,c). In order to reach this goal he serves humanity, encourages everyone to solve universal problems such as ignorance, poverty and disunity, respects the rights of God, the rights of human beings, the rights of creatures, and the rights of his own soul, promotes what is good, right and beautiful, and discourages what is bad, wrong and awful. According to Gülen, belief necessitates a climate of freedom, peace and stability to flourish and breathe. In justification of this point, Gülen states that the Qur'an, in reference to the Hudaibiyah Pact,<sup>17</sup> considers peace as victory for the believers; a believer must always seek to establish peace and stability. Furthermore, the constructive form of activism required the dismantling of discord, disunity and division. In the respondents' opinion, Gülen is of the firm opinion that the existing social tension and ideological rifts in Turkey and abroad need to be overcome and this can only be achieved through dialogue, tolerance and understanding. Therefore, the initial objective behind worldwide dialogue initiatives was to calm public tension, normalize relations and create a sense of mutual trust and tolerance. In addition to the aforementioned arguments Gülen's experts and followers who we interviewed, pointed out that Gülen's intention and ultimate ideal bears primarily on his faith and concerns basic theological foundations:

"Gülen's ultimate aim is to have the consent of God. His teaching is premised on the belief that there is no aim or reward beyond the approval and love of God. The easiest way to acquire this is obeying the rules explained by the Prophet Muhammad, and imitating the Prophet's way of life. Gülen's purpose is not to be or becoming a leader, he would rather be a slave and servant. He has so many followers even he does not have a desire to lead. He regards his 'reputation' as a credit from God, and uses this to motivate people. One who cannot manage his or her worldly desires cannot rehabilitate someone else. Gülen never 'contaminates' the realities, and does not 'shade' the realities with any personal interest. Therefore the messages reflects what is in his mind and heart and illuminates people. Gülen always interrogates himself and never deceives himself. He practices what he preaches. It is this sincere and honest search for reality that has won him millions of followers all over the world. His followers are disciples of sincerity, honesty and compassion."

An overwhelming majority of the respondents emphasised that Gülen's intention is to produce a humane world and to contribute to world peace. All his movement's activities are done for the sake of such a peaceful world and a harmonious coexistence. This peace and harmony can be realized through the cultivation of eternal happiness based on attaining the consent and love of God. Every activity or message should be considered as God's will. In

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<sup>17</sup> Hudaibiyah Pact (Treaty) was signed between the Muslims and Mekkan Polytheists agreeing to a period of peace. Almost a year after the Battle of Trench in 627 C.E., 5 A.H., the Messenger left for Makkah for a minor pilgrimage with his 1.400 and so Companions. However, the Quraysh did not let them do the pilgrimage. After negotiations, a treaty was signed at al-Hudaibiyah 12 miles away from Makkah (Ünal, 2006:1338).

his teaching, Gülen (2004e:52) frequently emphasizes this ultimate goal of attaining the approval of God. The respondents affirmatively say that as a religious intellectual and peace activist, Gülen has influenced a whole generation of Muslims throughout the world, and inspired them to play an important role in charity and education projects and foundations. His aim has always been to profess Islam's universal message; to serve people regardless of faith, colour, or national origin. In other words, Gülen strives for a peaceful society, in which there is space for dialogue and diversity. He has the conviction that reconciliation between modern society and religious values based on the Turkish-Ottoman model of tolerance and drawn from Sufi-Islam is a condition for this peaceful society. To this end, Gülen proposes that education serves as a tool to be used to establishing a culture of peace, stating: "Education is the most effective and common tongue for relations with others. We are trying our best to do this; we have no other intentions" (Ünal & Williams, 2000:331). Indeed, worldwide peace is indicated as his ultimate purpose, and is a long gain. In this regard, education is utilized as a major medium. To one respondent, the short term gain Gülen has in mind is however the birthing of an example generation, a generation of 'role models' who can exert influence on the society in particular, and the world in general. He promotes a holistic education aiming to educate responsible citizens and empathetic human beings who are open to science and rationality, as well as the religious morality (Aslandoğan & Çetin, 2006:31-54).

Gülen's intentions have always been questioned and thus questions concerning his mindset, and convictions were answered in various ways by the respective people include leading journalists, academics, TV personalities, politicians, and Turkish and foreign state authorities (Ünal & Williams, 2000; Ates, Karakas & Ortayli, 2005). Interestingly, a small group, bred by the power of the positions that they occupy, blinded by their 19th century understanding of the state model, accuse Gülen of attempting to "take over state control and bring 'darkness'". However, Gülen, never made choices for "himself" but lived—and thought how to live—for others. If there is an ultimate goal—one that limits itself to this world—that would be none other than truly understanding religion of Islam in its entirety, which enlightens the contested minds and souls of today's Muslims and engaging with other groups. The movement's intention can also be understood and explained through a functionalist approach. The functionalists (Rosamond, 2000) argue that cooperation and coordination in the sectors rather than politics bring new areas of cooperation dependent upon the success of the previous attempts. (Spill-over effect). The movement considers politics as a secondary importance and focuses on technical issues like economic, cooperation and social interaction. Technical issues can be considered as a general framework. Affirmably, one respondent indicates that Gülen's understanding rests upon a tripod encompassing life's 'economic, cultural, and spiritual aspects. The tripod of economics, education, and religion is the main dynamic of his view's vitality.

According to another interviewee, Gülen claims that the modern world is plagued by the individual's lack of faith, and in particular, the failure to adopt scientific methods while preserving moral values and belief in God. Gülen contends that faith can be scientifically proven, and science benefits from, and indeed requires, a moral foundation from religion (Bakar, 2005). In insisting that science not be separated from religion, Gülen (Kiyimba, et al, 1998:32-60) argues that there is no contradiction between religion and science.

With respect to avoiding irrelevant messages and actions regarding Gülen's intention and vision, the respondents stress that his followers do not deal with politics. Common interests are regarded as more important than the personal ones. Self-criticism and self control make the movement's members proactive. They are not busy with the circle of interest, but are focused on the circle of influence. Moreover, the respondents argue that cooperation and

collaboration both in his native country Turkey and abroad bring new opportunities for common projects and dialogue. The activities supporting the national and international interests are accepted by different societies. Once again, the members abstain from politics, and for they want to contribute to the well-being of the society in a concrete and practical way. Over the years the movement, has developed a culture of ignorance towards negative publicity or messages. Instead, Gülen calls for putting the best of hearts into action, streamlines each days activities with the light of faith and continue to serve Islam while continuing to fight prejudice and develops a constructive culture of dialogue. This, however, does not mean that the movement keeps quiet on political issues, on the contrary, the media and education tools are used as a way to get in touch with the rest of the world and provide all there is to know in a constructive and a transparent way.

#### ***4. Acceptability***

“Readers of a text receive that text for various purposes. Reading a text means expecting something from it. Consequently, for the matching of readers’ expectations with what is meant in the text, there must be a coherent and cohesive set of components forming it. In this sense, the type of the text and readers’ intention as well as the producer’s intention must build a whole body. This is, to some extent, dependent on such factors as text-type, cultural setting and the desirability of goals. For example, if the topic is about sports yet the body of the text focuses on some irrelevant subject matters other than sports, then it cannot be acceptable for a reader who wants to read something about a branch of sport” (Tas, idem).

Using this text linguistic principle, the following questions will be answered: a) Who are the “readers” of Gülen’s teaching and movement and what do they expect? b) Do the intentions of Gülen and his community’s situation build a whole body? c) Are there any unacceptable messages and/or actions?

The readers are both the insiders, the members of the movement from all segments of the society, and the whole of humanity. More precisely, the readers of Gülen’s teaching are students, academics, businessmen, alumni of universities, the whole society, and the secular segment in Turkey, Africa, Asia, Australia, America and Europe. Probably, the insider expect to be inspired and motivated by Gülen’s preaching, through his example as a guide for their life and activities. Academics and other highly educated people are able to reproduce an image reflecting the nature and characteristics of Gülen’s preaching and his movement. Academics thus have the important role of bringing the ideas and teaching to the readers of the movement.

The distinction between “were” and “are” shall be introduced in defining Gülen’s ‘readers’, his movement’s members. During the movement’s early years, the readers were a rather overlooked minority that the state considered as “harmless” as long as they were “minority” and lacked any capability of intellectualism that would raise critique and give birth to any sort of progressive activity that would foster “the minority values”. As the movement proved its sincere intentions over the decades and the fruits of new approach to education became tangible, the readers of Gülen’s movement have expanded greatly. Today they constitute a large array of professionals in almost every field, from the business world to academia, and interestingly followers of other beliefs—even agnostics. The main engine of the movement is faith based on the Gülen’s teaching of Islam. The movement is like a firm body that can mobilize and adapt itself into new situations rapidly – despite its ever growing size. Those who are inspired by his texts and speeches regard themselves as pious, however there are also other people supporting educational and dialogue activities. A respondent stresses that

the members of the movement expect to see the fruits of their efforts (and they have already been seeing those), and the humanity is waiting for the useful solutions of the movement (and so many have already witnessed those). Another respondent indicated that they do not have a common expectation.

The overwhelming majority of the respondents argue that Gülen's intention and the situation of the movement build a whole body:

Although Gülen's vision is far beyond those of members, the community represents the teaching and ideals very effectively. Especially, the humbleness, sincerity and altruism of the young teachers and businessmen are a significant dynamic in the movement. The movement grows every day, but those who accept the main Gülen's ideas constitute the character of the movement. Readers of the movement include all parts of the society. They are the different segments of the whole body. They expect to learn how to evaluate the teachings of the Prophet and the Qur'an as well as their responsibilities and potential contributions. Representatives of the movement express their understanding and purpose to everybody with whom they are in touch. Readers want to be participant in the process and they act in accordance with Gülen's views.

One unacceptable action within the movement is lying idle, instead of either seeking spiritual endowment or providing it. Further, the movement may sometimes be associated only with Turkish culture and even missionary endeavour, however, it has a broader and global character, which facilitates the integration and social harmony. Another important point is that each member knows only to what he or she is closely related. Nobody knows and deals with every activity. In addition, in such a fast growing movement, personal interpretations may sometimes be wrong, and these cannot be generalized.

Briefly, Gülen's approach to intercultural and interfaith dialogue and peaceful coexistence has been criticised from two diametrically opposed points of view (Celik & Valkenberg, 2007). On the one hand, those who are opposed to dialogue argue that this will lead to the assimilation of Muslim identity and that Muslim distinctiveness must not be compromised even to the degree of giving precedence to matters and grounds of common concern and belief. Gülen's response to this is: "Islam is clear, cogent and coherent and is in no doubt about its values and therefore does not fear integration" (Yildirim, 1998). Not only radical Islamic groups and nationalistic circles in Turkey opposed Gülen's dialogue with members of other religions, the adherents of the Kemalist state ideology in Turkey also see the Gülen movement as a threat to the secular and laicized nature of the Turkish Republic (Modern Turkey) and its political and societal institutions (Yilmaz, 2005:385-411; Saritoprak & Griffith, 2005:336). On the other end of the spectrum, those in favour of celebrating pluralism and cultural diversity have also criticised Gülen for placing far too much emphasis in meeting on common ground issues. According to interviews with Gülen's followers and experts, this common ground approach is not targeted at those in favour of engagement and dialogue but at those who are not. By emphasising matters of common belief and interest, Gülen is attempting—as a role model—to persuade people that human beings have sufficient commonality to build a peaceful future. On the contrary, some respondents stress that Gülen's efforts and underlying philosophy regarding dialogue and tolerance may be seen as a political strategy to avoid convulsive debate on laicism which were introduced by Atatürk in Turkey to create an secular political culture. However, one of these respondents sees Gülen as an important figure who discusses secularism by bringing constantly the importance of dialogue and tolerance to the fore. To many respondents, suspicions that Gülen would want to take over and to establish an Islamic state are completely unfounded. He maintains the conviction that power lies in the practicing a positive influence on the society, through the combining of integrity, spiritual values, and

professionalism in the context of modern life.

### 5. *Informativity*

“Informativity is concerned with how unexpected/expected or known/unknown are the occurrences in the text. This is an unnegegligible standard for an effective text, which can be grouped as: First order informativity, second order informativity, third order informativity. The first requires ordinary trivial knowledge such as articles, prepositions et cetera. It is not about the content, thus it receives little attention; the second, normal standards, is content related; the third, is a much attention-demanding occurrence which is caused by discontinuity and discrepancies” (Tas, idem).

The questions are thus: a) What makes the Gülen teaching and movement unique? b) How do they manage the balance known/unknown for their “readers”?

According to some respondents, the uniqueness of the Gülen movement can be seen as two fold. On one hand, it provides a new perception of spirituality and science, on the other hand an unprecedented degree of commitment, loyalty and sincerity with no intentions of seeking worldly flattery. Following the enlightenment, “religion” has been criticized for not providing satisfying answers for the new centuries and dismissing scientific endeavours. Gülen’s movement seeks for the “best fit” between modernity and spirituality. Gülen (1997)<sup>18</sup> has openly and constantly stated that a committed Muslim shall not only read the book of Islam, but must also “read” the book of universe—since the universe is also a verse, an art work of the Creator. Only then, the true harmony between universe and religion can emerge. The metaphor used for this is that of a bird needing two wings to fly; hence the universe and spirituality are these two wings. Gülen’s teaching is not intended just for some intellectual goals, but for spiritual richness. To respondents, Gülen’s compassion, sincerity and altruism are unique. Members practice what they preach. People soar intellectually, socially and spiritually by the support of the movement. The positive developments manifest very quickly. Further, the discourse of “individual and society”, and “local and global” makes the Gülen movement unique.

One respondent makes known that it is their clarity and originality of perception of social, scientific, educational and cultural issues that makes the Gülen movement so unique. The fact that the members combine the ‘old’ and new is also unique to this movement. Dialogue concerns not only accepting and respecting the other in his or her own position, but also sharing one’s own cultural and religious values in the context of the other. Sharing implies that people should learn about the other’s cultural identity, religious beliefs and spiritual values, of religious understandings and scientific results, of the modern man and religious conviction within an individual.

In his teaching, Gülen also (Çapan, 2005) argues: “There is no such thing as a Muslim terrorist; a terrorist cannot be Muslim; a Muslim cannot be a terrorist.” He declares that from

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18 Gülen describes and defines Qur’ân in his book, entitled *Fatiha Üzerine Mülâhazalar [Considerations on the Chapter Fatiha]*, as follow: “Qur’ân is an eternal translation of the great book of the universe. Yes, the universe is a book. It is needed for a reader to read this book, which is well-organized with all of its verses and pages. The reader is human and the interpretation of this book is Qur’ân. God has sent Qur’ân as a translation of the universe to the human beings who can not grasp the universe’s immense, deep meaning and its huge vision. This meaning that we cannot easily understand by looking at the big pages and phrases of the universe, we can see at a first glance in the Qur’ân, the Miraculous. This is a favour for the human beings. God is the one to make the universe book speak. As the others’ thoughts upon the universe would be wrong, it is also the same with humans. The Universe is the universe of Allah, Qur’ân is the speech of Allah and humans are the slaves of God. God is the one to establish the interrelation between these three.”

the point of view of Islamic criteria nobody can justify or permit suicide and terrorist attacks. Someone whose knowledge of Islam is limited to the headlines of the daily newspapers is likely to believe that this religion teaches terrorism, suicide attacks, oppression of women, and hatred for those outside its community. Gülen's alliance of civilizations—as apposed to the “clash of civilizations” —offers a perspective from which this sustainable peaceful coexistence can be made possible. Gülen's perspective shows that through cooperativeness and dialogue groups can come to see that they share common virtues and ideas not simply incompatible differences (Carroll, 2007).

The respondents indicate that Gülen gives importance to timing. He does not prioritize the matters that the sympathisers of his movement is not ready for where the global conjuncture is not suitable. Thus, the current unknown matters (probably some new projects concerning art and aesthetics) are delayed within the community, and the known enterprises of education, the media and dialogue are prioritized. Everyone can get something from a text depending of his own position. The openness of the movement and the readiness for change reduce the difference between the known and the unknown. The movement is not closed. It interacts with different societies, and consequently develops new discourses according to changing circumstances. In this regard, the members' attitudes towards modernity and globalization are contingent.

In order to understand the balance between the known and unknown within the Gülen movement, one must seek to understand the “destiny” and the way it is portrayed within Islam. What is unknown for mankind is an “absolute knowledge” for the world beyond, therefore a sincere patience is required. However, once again, this patience is an “active patience” as Gülen describes it. In simple words, the knowledge comes to those who seek it. In his teaching, Gülen takes also known elements (e.g., current problems, scientific results) and couples these at a deeper spiritual and religious content, which perhaps was less known (unknown).

## **6. *Situationality***

“A text also must be relevant to a situation of occurrence. This is related to the context and the situation the reader is in. Here we can conclude that different people in different situations can take away different meanings from the same text. But what is important here is that the text must present the knowledge to make sense with a minimum use of words (maximum economy). Otherwise, it may even not be received at all” (Tas, idem).

In this section we will answer the following questions related to situationality. a) What is the context for the Gülen teaching and movement? b) How they decide what to do for a specific situation?

As a leading faith-based movement with a universal educational and interfaith agenda, the Gülen movement aims to promote creative and positive relations between the West and the Muslim world and articulate a constructive position on issues such as democracy, multiculturalism, globalization, and intercultural dialogue in the context of secular modernity (Celik & Valkenberg, 2007; Hunt & Aslandoğan, 2006). The Turkish Muslims in particular, and the global community in general, is the context of the movement. The acclimatization of the teaching to the specific cultural environment in each country is realized through sympathisers living in this country. It is a movement in which social cohesion and commitment, an ethical sense of responsibility, a free and critical mentality and a universal view of aesthetic and culture are prerequisites. In sum, Islam, Prophet Muhammad, the contemporary world, and the history of mankind provide the context for Gülen's teaching. The Gülen's discourse and activities should be regarded in a religious context. What gives a sense to the actions of

the followers is “belief”. Additionally, the movement produces its own role models (Gülen, 2004d), which help to solve new problems and adapt to new environments, by comparing these models and by remaining loyal to the main discourse. The context of the movement is first and foremost the situation around secularisation and modernisation in the Republic of Turkey. In its context the movement is, in first instance, an alternative form of modernization opposite the modernization in which no space is for religion, as through the Kemalism has been proposed.

The respondents stress that the Gülen movement is not based on a one dimensional process. In the movement there are different groups of people with different backgrounds and aims. Some people focus on the educational aspects, some focus on media and others in different sectors. They are the components of the whole pictures. Although the voluntaries of the movements are in different places and position, they have the same purpose: “Assent to God”. Because of “*Sahs-i Manevi*” (Common Spiritual Identity) members focus on their responsibility and aware of commonality of their purpose.

The sympathisers exchange ideas, benchmark and apply best practices. The decision making processes are democratic. The opinions of senior members are regarded. Those who have expertise, merit and talent direct the activities. Nevertheless, since the events of September 11th, the terrorist bombings in Madrid and London, and the murders of Pim Fortuyn and of Theo van Gogh in the Netherlands the loyalty of Muslim citizens and the compatibility of Islam with liberal democracies have come into question throughout world (Celik & Valkenberg, 2007). These incidents have come to symbolize the supposed threat of aggressive Islam to the peaceful West. Muslims have become a dangerous “other” in many discourses, evoking Islamophobia. As an inspiring and leading figure of the movement Gülen’s interpretation and clarification related to such a specific situation are significant guidelines for the members about how to react to this volatile situation in which people of different nations, cultures and civilizations now find themselves.

Finally, the context of Gülen movement does not really show great discrepancies in different parts of the world. This is due to the same sources that the movement refers to and the methods of interpretation that is accepted with unanimity. The beauty in the unanimity of the movement is the result from sincere commitment to the sources of Islam. This is due to Gülen himself minimizes his role within the movement and repeatedly underlining the achievements of the movement and any future successes to come cannot be bounded to the few figures within the movement but to the unanimity, brotherhood and faith. The movement constantly refers to the fact that “there are things to be done” and there are “subcontractors” none of the “subcontracting figure” can claim achievements as his or her own but the success of all.

## **7. Intertextuality**

“During the reading process our stored knowledge, experience, previous readings all affects the present reading perception. That is why the production and the reception of a given text depend on the participants’ knowledge of other texts. If a text is produced without making use of any particular knowledge which the reader is supposed to know, it may not be an appropriate text. Especially when it refers to well-known texts or things or people, it is much better” (Tas, idem).

From this perspective we will search for answers to the following questions: a) What are the relations of the Gülen teaching and movement with other communities? b) How they produce knowledge and action regarding the current situation of the “readers”? c) What are their references?

The respondents stress that “positive action” is a foremost and guiding principle of the movement. Members naturally eulogize their movement and formulate a positive attitude in all area, but do not disrespect or disregard others by claiming that the only philanthropic and constructive group is theirs. They should move away from all attitudes and behaviours that might lead the public to fight, conflict, pessimism or tension (Ergene, 2005). In his life, Gülen emphasizes an apolitical, proactive and constructive type of activism. Members are open for cooperation and collaboration. They dislike criticizing and insulting the other groups even if they have different priorities. It is also essential to realize sustainable dialogue and cooperation with people from other different persuasions and philosophies to coexist peacefully. Some of Gülen’s public initiatives to establish contacts in the field of interfaith dialogue became issues for public debate in the 1990s. Gülen considers dialogue necessary in order to increase mutual understanding. To this end, he has helped to establish the Journalists and Writers Foundation<sup>19</sup> in 1994, that organizes activities to promote dialogue and tolerance among all strata of the society—activities that have been welcomed by people from almost all walks of life. Other Gülen inspired organizations include the Abant Platform, the Intercultural Dialogue Platform and The Dialogue Eurasia Platform, where Turkish intellectuals meet with political and religious leaders from various backgrounds. Gülen visited and received prominent religious leaders, not only from among the Turkish population, but from all over the world. Pope John Paul II at the Vatican, the late John O’Connor, Archbishop of New York, Leon Levy, former president of The Anti-Defamation League are among many leading representatives of world religions with whom Gülen has met to discuss dialogue and take initiatives in this respect. In Turkey, he had frequent meetings with the Vatican’s Ambassador, the Patriarchs of the Orthodox and Armenian communities, the Chief Rabbi of the Jewish community and many other leading figures in Turkey. These meetings exemplify his sincere commitment to dialogue between people of faith. Furthermore, his paper on ‘The Necessity of Interfaith Dialogue’ is of paramount importance for intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, since it has been presented at the Parliament of the World’s Religions in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1999.

Some of Gülen’s ideas are similar to those of other faith-based communities or movements because Islam is a religion of peace and constitutes their ideational framework and basis of solidarity, yet some of them oppose such issues as interfaith dialogue. The ones who disturb peace and brotherhood shall redefine their understanding of religion and the way that it is reflected on their lives. The ones with contested minds and souls shall only seek the bits and pieces of religion that would “justify” their activities. The ones who seek total understanding and endowment of religion and enrichment of spirituality shall only foster peace, not among themselves but among the humanity. This is the defining principle of Gülen’s movement in relation to other communities, be it Muslim or any other faith tradition.

Self and the “other” separation can not be observed in the Gülen movement. Instead of ignoring them, the movement prefers to accept ‘others’ in their own position and try to find common denominators. Some excerpts from the interviews:

“The movement during their relations with other communities reflects the need for dialogue and common values that all communities should dedicate themselves to protect. The movement produces its knowledge based on teachings of the Prophet and Qur’an itself. In specific cases, Gülen also refers to the Bible and other religious books as well as historical memories that most of the people aware them. The knowledge and logic of action of the movement are not new in nature but the methodology and the language they use is contemporary. The action plan and knowledge

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19 See: the website of the Journalists and Writers Foundation: [www.gyv.org.tr](http://www.gyv.org.tr)

is produced from and intertwined web of information networks within the Gülen movement, the “readers” come up with their local agenda and ideas that possibly could be realized within a certain time period. Following this, the ways as to “how to achieve the goals” are sought within the local segment and in close consultation with each others and with other parts of the world where the similar ideas have already been realized. As far the references are concerned, the one and only references are the main sources of Islam and the community life that was pursued during the early days of Islam, the era of peace.”

One respondent claims that “Necessity is the mother of invention”. Physical, mental, social and spiritual needs of the “readers” are nurtured by the movement. Practical needs urge members to find optimal and innovative solutions. Sharing knowledge and meritocracy are basic principles. Wisdom is also a very important aspect of the activities in the movement. So they attempt to develop modern science and religious knowledge. They try to do this via books, articles, universities, institutions, media etc. The primary references are religious. The secondary ones are related to the local and universal values. In sum, The Qur’an, Prophet Muhammad, the universe, science and their consciences are the main references and sources. They also refer to Gülen’s texts, speeches and actions very frequently.<sup>20</sup>

Gülen’s movement summons Muslims to be aware that Islam teaches the need for dialogue and peace and that Muslims are called to be agents and witnesses to God’s universal mercy. As support for his views, Gülen employs his broad knowledge of the Islamic tradition to bring together the Qur’anic Scripture, the hadith reports from Prophet Muhammad, and the jurisprudences—the insights of Muslim scholars down through the ages. Gülen (2004e:214) writes, “The Qur’an urges peace, order, and accord. It aims at universal peace and order and opposes conflicts and dissensions. It is interesting that the Qur’an calls for actions acceptable to God ‘sound actions to bring peace and order’” Gülen calls for humanity to begin with tolerance and dialogue because in such an atmosphere peace follows of its own accord. In fact, Gülen envisions a world order and a new civilization growing towards global tolerance. The ever changing and growing structure within the movement facilitates knowledge production and transfer. New information, which was produced in a critical and clever way, also helps to reproduce information. Change of priorities causes change of activities. A more closed and local movement before the 1990s is now an open and global movement.

## Conclusion and Discussion

Based on extended research findings, this study challenges in sociological and methodological sense the linguistic analysis of a social phenomenon by applying seven metaphorical principles of textuality to the Gülen teaching and movement. Provided we refrain from over-generalization, our case study research is not methodologically invalid simply because a selected case cannot be presumed to be representative of entire populations. Concretely, we have learned that this metaphorical approach for exploring and analyzing a movement or an activity provides useful pointers and encourages the form of ‘out-of-the-box’ thinking. Indeed, the theoretical perspective and methodological approach of this study can be used to examine social movements emerging in other countries. The application of the seven

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20 Gülen derives much strength from leading religious scholars and Sufi masters of the past in whose footsteps he follows. The example of the personalities of the history of Islam, such as Junayd al-Baghdadi [d.910], Imam al-Ghazali [1058-1111], Ahmad Yasawi [d.1166], Mawlana Jalal ad-Din al-Rumi [1207-1273], Yunus Emre [1238-1320], Imam Rabbani [1564-1624], Niyazi-I Misri [1618-1694], Shah Waliyullah Muhaddith of Delhi [1702-1762], Mawlana Khalid al-Baghdadi [d.1827] and Bediüzzaman Said Nursi [1876-1960], has had an inspiring effect on Gülen. It is most likely that apart from referring to Prophet Muhammad and his Companions, Gülen is also referring to such religious figures when he is saying that dialogue is not something that he has invented.

textual linguistic principles (cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality) to Gülen's teaching and movement is helpful in exploring and describing the impacts and implementations of his movement in different countries. Our analysis shows that Gülen is revealing a dynamic interpretation of Islam that is both compatible with and critical of modernity and Muslim tradition.

We can arguably say that the Gülen movement's global vision has been shaped along with the lines of Gülen's teaching. His teaching is a doctrine of love, peace, dialogue and tolerance and includes—in first instance—ideological lessons that seek to find and enact solutions for Muslim's social problems grappling with modern world, rather than it only contains theological messages that aim at preserving 'Islamic Faith' in the age of secular heresy. The present article contends that this growing faith-based movement constitutes a changing Diasporic community defying clichés and common stereotypes about Muslims and non-Muslims alike. This article also notes that the Turkish community is part of the emerging 'Islam' in the context of secular modernity and has its own diversity in the expression of Turkish-Muslim identity throughout the world. The movement examined here is a social and dynamic movement that is global, human-oriented, faith-based, non-state, non-profit, non-violent, and voluntary. The Gülen's teaching emphasizes an understanding that is based on science and religion, and has now spread through educational institutions, media outlets and dialogical centres in Europe, America, Australia, Asia and Africa. Although the movement's members live in different countries, societies and nations, they share the same values, principles and have formed similar attitudes. In this study, we underscore Kuru's observation (2005) that the Gülen movement demonstrated the contextual change and diversity in the Muslim world as it relates to modernity, liberalism and democracy. This article concludes that the Gülen's movement represents a new expression of Islam, and instigates the art of living together with differences in modern democracies. Gülen and the members of his movement see modern ideals and Muslim identity as compatible and complementary instead of contradictory. Hence, the movement's existence should be seen as an opportunity to establish a bridge between modern ideals and the Muslim identity. "Anatolian Muslimness"<sup>21</sup> as represented by the Gülen movement can be a source of process of dialogue and mutual understanding between Muslims and the West. For instance, the Turkish Cultural Centre, which is located in New York City, organized "The Annual Ramadan Friendship Dinner" on October 5th of 2006 at the Waldorf Astoria.<sup>22</sup> The dinner was dedicated to mutual understanding, dialogue, and tolerance among peoples of different cultures and faiths. This can be seen as a concrete example of this process occurring. Certainly, an ontological and historical examination of "Anatolian Muslimness" is needed to shed more lights on the origins and dynamics of the Gülen movement.

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21 Gülen was one of the first that used the term "Anatolian Muslimness" or "Turkish Muslimness" which was interpreted as a way of distancing Anatolian people's interpretations and experiences of Islam from those of others, especially the Wahhabi (Saudi) or Shiite radical interpretations. He writes of a "Turkish Muslimness" based on love, tolerance, dialogue, forgiveness, Sufism and excluding harsh restrictions or fanaticism, demonstrating that this Islam is not in contradiction with the modern world. Turkish Islam represents the chain of development of the Central Asia-Seljuk-Ottoman and modern Turkey (Ünal & Williams, 2000:54-58).

22 The Turkish Cultural Center is an institution committed to community involvement. The organization hopes to be a forum of international cultural exchange while promoting Turkish Cultural Heritage. The theme of the night was "Respect to Sacred Values". The speakers at the night were as follows: Hon. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton; Hon. Omer Onhon, Consulate General of Turkey; Assistant Director of FBI Mark Mershon; Rabbi Arthur Scheiner; Father Thomas Michel; Dr. Gazi Erdem; Hon. State Senator Liz Krueger; and Hon. State Senator Carl Kruger. More than 800 guests had the joy to observe Ramadan Dinner with the performance of Ercan Dereyayla's Turkish Music Group and Whirling Dervishes (<http://turkishculturalcenter.com>)

Gülen movement that emerged in late 1960s in Turkey and received recognition from the international community for his bold defence of religious tolerance, compassionate love and mutual understanding from an Islamic perspective and his criticism of both bigotry and zealotry in the form of religious extremism. We can arguably say that dialogical forms of understanding remain the best prospects for understanding the other and creating cohesion and a peaceful atmosphere in the societies. Accordingly, Gülen sees dialogue as an essential element of modern conflict management, and proposes universal and multicultural education as a way to achieve feasible dialogue and peace. In addition, his teaching and movement focus on intercultural dialogue as an instrument for alternative dispute resolution, social mediation and peaceful coexistence within the context of cultural, ethnic and religious divisions, hierarchies, rivalries and conflicts that are grounded in socio-economic and political realities.

In conclusion, the Gülen movement that has spread all over the world, is illustrative of the fact that a majority of the Muslim population in European and other countries do not perceive a contradiction between modern ideals (e.g. democracy, equality, justice, human rights, and freedom of thought and expression) and their attachment to Muslim identity. The sociological result of this dialectic is a European-Islamic synthesis, a new identity uniting a Muslim identity with modernity into one subject position, a merging of Islamic values and Western ideals. The concepts of dialogue, love, forgiveness and tolerance are important universal values in Gülen's teaching and movement and are elementary in nature. Gülen also links dialogue to diversity and exchange to achieve coexistence and ultimately, peace, among the world's people. Thus, the movement associated with him can be characterized as a civic peace movement using educational projects, media initiatives and dialogue activities to promote a lasting peaceful coexistence for the sake of a new, 'golden generation'.