

Genre Analysis of Grief and Happy Expressions in Pakistani Society

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the utilization of schematic structures and linguistic features in messages pertaining to death and marriage within the context of Pakistani society. By examining two contrasting emotions, the research seeks to discern how individuals in Pakistan express themselves through specific communicative moves and linguistic choices. A total of sixty samples, encompassing both Urdu and English languages, were meticulously selected and analyzed—thirty samples of marriage cards and thirty of condolence messages sourced from various newspapers. Employing Swales' (1990) genre analysis framework, the study scrutinized the selected messages and writings on marriage cards. The findings indicated a consistent utilization of certain moves across these messages, with some moves being optional. Furthermore, the study revealed the profound cultural cohesion within Pakistani society, evidenced by the abundant use of cultural references in both marriage cards and condolence messages. Additionally, similar to other societies such as English-speaking ones, the use of euphemism is prevalent, underscoring a universal tendency to soften harsh realities through gentle language.

Keywords: Schematic structures, linguistic features, moves, euphemism, condolence messages

1. Introduction

Language permeates every facet of society, intertwining with various aspects such as gender, social class, education, and the media. Sociolinguistics, as a field, delves into this intricate relationship between language and society, shedding light on language attitudes, identity construction, and linguistic evolution. Through studies on language biases and social identity markers, researchers have revealed how language reflects and shapes societal norms and perceptions.

Cultural values and traditions significantly influence language use, with each culture exhibiting distinct linguistic patterns and communication styles. In Pakistan, where Islam holds sway as both a religion and a way of life, cultural practices and social

events are deeply intertwined with religious beliefs. Events like marriage ceremonies and funerals serve as crucial touchstones in Pakistani culture, with marriage cards and condolence messages serving as primary modes of communication for these occasions.

This study aims to explore the schematic structures and linguistic features employed in marriage cards and condolence messages within Pakistani society. By analyzing these messages, expressed in both English and Urdu, we aim to decipher the socio-cultural dynamics and linguistic nuances prevalent in Pakistani customs and traditions. Key questions guiding this research include the comparison of schematic moves and linguistic features across languages, the presence of cultural references, and the use of euphemisms.

1.1 Significance of the Study

This research holds paramount importance in unraveling the intricacies of Pakistani culture through an exploration of marriage cards and condolence messages. By delving into these opposite ends of the emotional spectrum, we gain insight into the collective behaviors and linguistic practices of Pakistani society. Furthermore, this study sheds light on the bilingualism prevalent in expressing Pakistani traditions and highlights the indigenization of English within the society. Insights garnered from this research can inspire further investigations in sociolinguistics, fostering a deeper understanding of the relationship between language and society, particularly in bilingual contexts.

The significance of this area lies in its relevance to sociolinguistic research, given the pivotal role of marriage and death ceremonies in Pakistani social gatherings. These events serve as crucibles for linguistic expression, shaping and reflecting societal norms and values. By examining the use of Urdu and English in these emotional and traditional contexts, researchers can elucidate the intricate interplay between language and society. This underexplored area within linguistics in Pakistan offers a rich terrain for unraveling the linguistic and social tapestry of Pakistani society, focusing specifically on cultural references, euphemisms, and aphorisms within marriage cards and condolence messages. Through this multifaceted approach, we aim to illuminate diverse facets of the relationship between language and society, contributing to a nuanced understanding of Pakistani cultural practices and linguistic norms.

2. Literature Review

The current research delves into the realm of sociolinguistics, aiming to elucidate the intricate relationship between language and society. Sociolinguists strive to decipher the motivations behind language usage within communities, exploring the choices individuals make in their linguistic expressions (Holmes, 1992). It's essential to

distinguish sociolinguistics from the sociology of language; while the former prioritizes language's role in society, the latter examines society's relationship with language (Hudson, 1996). This study emphasizes unraveling the complex interplay between language, society, and bilingualism, particularly within the context of Pakistani culture.

In social interactions, euphemisms abound, especially in sensitive contexts such as death ceremonies or political discussions, where delicate expressions are preferred to avoid discomfort (KAOSA-AD, 2009). Euphemisms serve to soften harsh or blunt language, promoting social politeness and avoiding offense (Stern, 1968). Condolence messages, as a form of discourse, are utilized to convey sympathy and support during times of mourning, often appearing in newspapers following high-profile deaths or tragedies. While previous studies have examined the structure and linguistic features of condolence messages, cultural variations in these expressions remain underexplored.

Research on condolence messages has highlighted their conventionalized structure and linguistic patterns, with recurring phrases and expressions across different messages (Watson & Harrigan, 2016). These messages serve various functions, including expressing empathy, fostering social cohesion, and challenging dominant narratives (Tucker & O'Brien, 2017). Additionally, studies have explored the intended audience and discourse community of condolence messages, revealing differences in addressing close relatives versus broader societal groups (Baider & De-Nour, 1986; Ferguson & MacRaild, 2014).

Euphemism usage, as Wardhaugh (2002) suggests, often stems from societal taboos or cultural norms, leading individuals to employ indirect language to address sensitive topics. In some cultures, like the Kabana of Papua New Guinea or the Nupe of West Africa, linguistic practices reflect strict conventions regarding polite conversation and taboo subjects (Crowley, 1992; Nadel, 1954). Understanding the nuances of euphemistic language and cultural taboos contributes to a deeper comprehension of societal norms and communication dynamics.

[The] metaphor is not just a matter of language, but of thought and reason. The language is secondary. The mapping is primary, in that it sanctions the use of source domain language and inference patterns for target domain concepts. (Lackoff 1993, p. 308)

For centuries people have been determined not to use the term “*death*” directly and nowadays they still search for substitutions. That is why there exist many euphemisms for the topic. He claims that consideration of feelings of family members and fear of unknown constitutes the motivations for euphemistic substitutions (Jakhova

2010, p. 16). Holder (2008) claims that there are different euphemisms used for death like: *to pass away, pass on the other side, pass over, pass into the next world, leave the land of the living, go to heaven, go to our rest, go to a better place, go to our long home, go west, go under, sleep away, return to ashes.*

The theologian Antoine Vergote emphasized the "cultural reality" of religion, which he defined as "the entirety of the linguistic expressions, emotions and, actions and signs that refer to a supernatural being or supernatural beings Religion covers all the spheres of everyday life. Cultural references are used, firstly because most of the time it becomes difficult to make substitution, effective like cultural reference, and secondly to strengthen the message as H Abdul-Raof explains:

The non Qur'anic verse would not deliver the same effect as it has lost its rhetorical effect and is superfluous in meaning. Non-Qur'anic Arabic texts mostly employ cohesive elements but the Qur'an uses both cohesive and rhetorical elements in every verse (H Abdul-Raof 2001).

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a constructivist approach within the realm of sociolinguistics, focusing on the formation and interpretation of societal structures (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The data collection process entails gathering written materials from newspapers and marriage cards, making it a qualitative and quantitative investigation. Quantitatively, the study involves quantifying the data by analyzing the frequency and percentage of specific moves employed in the collected samples. Subsequently, the paper proceeds to develop discussions based on the findings.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The research paper adopts Swales' (1990) framework of move analysis, considering condolence messages and marriage cards as distinct genres with specific communicative goals and rhetorical units. According to Swales, each genre exhibits unique lexico-grammatical features and follows a specific schematic structure. By adhering to this theoretical framework, the study explores the schematic structure and linguistic features of the collected data, aiding in the identification of the constituents that distinguish condolence messages and marriage cards as genres. This theoretical framework also guides the formulation of research questions, focusing on the analysis of schematic structures and linguistic features.

3.2 Data Collection

Sixty samples of marriage cards and condolence messages are collected, comprising fifteen samples each in English and Urdu languages. The samples are systematically analyzed and quantified from two perspectives: schematic structure (move analysis) and linguistic features. Additionally, emphasis is placed on exploring the integration of cultural elements within the language of the data. Each sample undergoes thorough examination to identify euphemistic phrases and cultural references, which are then analyzed within the context of Pakistani society and Islam to gain insights into societal norms and values. Furthermore, a comparison is drawn between the cultural references and euphemisms found in Urdu and English languages to determine any similarities or differences. Given the common root of Islam, comparisons of cultural references yield insightful findings.

4. Results and Discussion

The analysis of condolence messages and marriage cards reveals distinct moves characteristic of each genre, underscoring their differentiation. Condolence messages exhibit a total of ten distinct moves, reflecting various aspects of the communicative act. These moves include the acknowledgment of the news, references to the deceased, recollection of memories, cultural or religious references, expressions of sympathy, condolences to the family, condolences to the specific community of the deceased, wishes for the soul of the deceased, closure, and address.

Among these moves, six were identified as obligatory, while the remaining three were deemed optional. The determination of obligatory moves was based on their frequency in the data. Moves with a frequency exceeding 50% were considered obligatory, whereas those with a lower occurrence rate were classified as optional. Consequently, moves such as expressing sympathy to the family and community, and wishing for the deceased to rest in peace, emerged as optional moves, each exhibiting a frequency below the 50% threshold.

Table 1

Schematic Structure of Condolence Messages

Schematic Structure	Frequency out of 30	(%)
Move 1: Acknowledgment of the news	29	96.7
Move 2: Acknowledgment of the deceased	26	86.7
Move 5: Cultural/religious reference in the beginning	28	93.3
Move 3: Acknowledgment of the memories of the deceased	28	93.3
Move 4: Expression of sympathy	20	66.7

Move 5: Expression of sympathy to the family	10	33.3
Move 6: Expression of sympathy to the community	7	23.3
Move 7: Wish/prays for the deceased to be in heaven	5	16.7
Move 8: Closure	22	73.3
Move 9: Address	30	100

However, the researchers identified six moves in marriage cards. Among these, only one move, namely cultural/religious reference at the beginning, was found to be optional, with a frequency of 43.3%. The remaining five moves, including announcing the news, naming the couple, extending invitations to individuals and families, offering good wishes/prayers for the couple, and specifying dates and venue, were determined to be obligatory moves, as they each had an occurrence rate exceeding 75% in the data.

Table 2

Schematic Structure in Marriage Cards

Schematic Structure	Frequency out of 30	(%)
Move 1: Giving the news	30	100
Move 2: Naming the Couple	28	93.3
Move 3: Good Wishes/Prays for the Couple	23	76.7
Move 4: Invitation to individuals with family	30	100
Move 5: Cultural/religious reference in the beginning	13	43.3
Move 6: Dates and Venue	30	100

The data presented in the table above, outlining the schematic structure of marriage cards, indicates a higher level of conventionality compared to condolence messages. Marriage cards predominantly exhibit a strict pattern, with only one move being used optionally, while the remaining moves are conventional, with higher frequencies and percentages. In contrast, condolence messages show a relatively higher proportion of optional moves, with three out of ten moves being categorized as such, constituting around 30% of the data. This suggests that marriage cards adhere more strictly to established conventions and linguistic features than condolence messages.

The use of cultural references is prevalent in both marriage cards and condolence messages within Pakistani society. Marriage, being a cultural ritual observed worldwide, entails specific language and rituals associated with each religion. In Pakistan, where Islam is the predominant religion, cultural practices are deeply intertwined with Islamic beliefs. Despite the presence of various sects within Islam, there are commonalities in the practice of Islam in Pakistan, which have become traditional customs within the society. Consequently, Islamic references and symbols are commonly incorporated into marriage cards, whether written in Urdu or English. For the analysis, fifteen marriage cards in English and fifteen in Urdu were selected.

A prominent Islamic reference frequently found in both English and Urdu cards is the phrase "In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful," written in Arabic script on Urdu cards. This verse from the Holy Quran signifies the Muslim belief in commencing every endeavor with the name of Allah to seek blessings. Many cards feature this verse prominently on the inside or cover pages, despite the modernized designs and patterns facilitated by technological advancements. Its inclusion underscores the deep-rooted belief among Muslims that invoking this verse ensures the success and sanctity of their endeavors. Notably, in five English cards, this verse was also presented in Arabic script.

Another common cultural reference observed in both Urdu and English cards is the term "INSHALLAH," meaning "by the Will of Allah." This phrase reflects the Islamic belief that all actions are subject to the will of Allah, and nothing can occur without His consent. Numerous cultural anecdotes and stories emphasize the importance of uttering "INSHALLAH" before undertaking any task, suggesting that failure to do so may lead to delays or obstacles. These narratives serve to reinforce the significance of acknowledging divine will in every aspect of life, emphasizing the integral role of faith in shaping cultural practices within Pakistani society.

Table 3

Cultural Reference in Marriage Cards

Sr.	Cultural Reference	No. of times used in English	No. of times used in Urdu
1	In the Name of Allah the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful	7	6
2	IN SH ALLAH	8	5
3	May Allah Guide this marriage to the best of understanding, happiness, prosperity, success and a righteous path. Amen	4	9
4	Barat	15	15
5	Walima	15	15
6	Marriages are decided in Heaven but performed on earth	10	3
7	Allah	5	8

Another cultural reference was a prayer which was found in five English cards. It goes: "May Allah Guide this marriage to the best of understanding, happiness, prosperity, success and a righteous path. Amen." This prayer also signifies Islamic belief. The belief is that after praying to Allah, the work goes smooth and with His Help, Blessings, and Will. Muslims believe that prayer can also change luck, and by praying all the evils in the task are dispelled. This prayer was also found in seven Urdu cards. As Urdu cards are got

printed by mostly cultural families or by those who are less illiterate. They are also found very staunch in their belief having very less westernized influences.

One more cultural reference found in majority cards was the word ‘Barat’, translated as ‘wedding ceremony’ in English cards. This is a peculiar Islamic ritual that bridegroom’s family goes to the home or to the marriage hall in present times, and takes the bride from their back to bridegroom’s home. This act also shows the respect which is given to the bride and her family. On this occasion mostly, “Nikah” is performed, which is another cultural reference. Verses from Holy Quran are recited followed by prayers for the prosperity and safety of the couple. However, in modern times, paper work of marriage is also done on this occasion. Sometimes it also happens that paper work is completed before these ceremonies. But going of the bridegroom with his family to fetch the bride is considered a very compulsory ritual.

There is also another compulsory ritual named as ‘Walima’ in Urdu cards and translated as ‘Dinner’ or ‘Lunch’, as the time suits, in English cards. This meal is respected by all Muslim families as it is the Sunnah (the sacred ways of Holy Prophet Muhammad SAW). This is organized from bridegroom’s side. Normally it is on the day after the wedding ceremony. Everyone from bride’s side and bridegroom’s side is invited to enjoy the hearty meal. The act of ‘Nikah’ can be done in private but it is considered compulsory that the meal should be made public, though the gatherings can be limited. This act shows that in Islam marriage is not just a sacred contract between two families. It is also a social reality, where everyone in the society is conveyed the message that the marriage has taken place between the two specific members of society. Islamic society is based on the concept of social solidarity and brotherhood. This makes it very closely and tightly knit. Therefore, most of the rituals and events are made public.

Another cultural reference found in two English cards and four Urdu cards was a statement that went like “Marriages are decided in Heaven but performed on earth”. In this statement there is a strong reference to Islamic belief that marriage is decided by none other than Allah. One more interesting fact noted by the researchers was that in nineteen cards, both Urdu and English, the word ‘Allah’ was written instead of ‘God’. This also shows a very special Islamic belief that there cannot be any comparison to ‘Allah’ the only God, Who is neither the father nor the son of any one, and Who is Unique and the Only. This reference is to differentiate the Muslims from other religions that this particular Name cannot be translated by anyone. It is a distinct Name.

Rest of the writing on marriage cards stated the names of the people involved in the ceremony, timings, and venues for different gatherings. As marriage ceremony is a

happy event, therefore, there is no need for the use of euphemisms. The researchers have also not found any euphemism on marriage cards.

In condolence messages, printed in both Urdu and English Newspapers, there were also Islamic references. The most commonly found reference was the prayer 'May his soul rest in peace'. This prayer shows the Islamic belief that even after the death of a Muslim, prayer can be made for him. Because, according to Islamic belief, body goes to the grave, while soul lives and passes through various stages. And the prayers done after the death are beneficial for the deceased Muslim. Another reference found in Urdu as well as English condolence messages was that of 'Jannat' or 'Heaven'. This is also a Muslim belief that a person after his death goes to Heaven which is his final abode. There was also found a statement in Urdu as well as English condolence messages that 'Maut Barhaq Hai' which means, 'Death comes to all'. This is in relation to the verse from the Holy Quran that every living being has to taste death. The researchers also found a verse from Holy Quran written on the top of messages which goes: "Inna Lillahe Wa Inna Ilaihe Rajeeon" which means, "Verily, 'Surely we belong to God and to Him shall we return'".

Besides these cultural references in condolence messages there was mentioning of the name of the deceased and of the moaning party, or there were also thanks for all those who prayed for the deceased or came to the funeral. Funeral or 'Janaza' is also an Islamic reference which shows a very important Islamic ritual. It is the prayer for the deceased in which the dead body is kept in front in a special cot wrapped in clothes, and Muslims offer prayer while standing. This prayer is for the peace and ease of the dead. It is also important for Muslims to attend funeral because it is important belief of the Muslims that they should remember death, which is a reality and comes to all.

Table 4

Use of Cultural References in Condolence Messages

Sr.	Cultural Reference	Frequency (English)	Frequency (Urdu)
1	May his soul rest in peace	15	13
2	'Jannat' or 'Heaven'	3	2
3	'Maut Barhaq Hai' or 'Death comes to all'	10	9
4	"Inna Lillahe Wa Inna Ilaihe Rajeeon" or 'Surely we belong to God and to Him shall we return'	11	17

There are notable similarities in the utilization of cultural references between condolence messages and marriage cards. Both often commence with the invocation "In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful," underscoring the Islamic

influence. Additionally, the term "Allah" is frequently invoked in both types of messages, emphasizing the centrality of religious faith. Another shared cultural reference is the use of "InshAllah" when discussing future plans, reflecting the acknowledgment of divine will. However, due to the differing purposes of these messages, other cultural references diverge significantly, as illustrated in Table 3 and Table 4.

Furthermore, the linguistic features employed in the data exhibit notable variations. Euphemistic phrases are commonly utilized to convey sentiments, particularly in condolence messages. English condolence messages often employ phrases such as "to pass away," "go to heaven," and "meet his Lord" instead of the direct term "death," reflecting a universal tendency to soften the impact of painful realities. In contrast, Urdu condolence messages frequently use the word "Intiqal," translated as "transfer," rooted in the Islamic belief in the transition to the afterlife. Additionally, the phrase "Khaliqi Haqeeqi say ja milay," meaning "met his real Creator," emphasizes the fundamental Islamic belief in the eventual meeting with the Creator. These euphemisms serve to alleviate the harshness of death and instill hope and psychological support by reaffirming the continuity of existence beyond physical life.

The analysis of condolence messages and marriage cards underscores several key points. Each genre adheres to a distinct schematic structure and employs specific linguistic features, contributing to their uniqueness. Moreover, in Pakistani society, where Islam predominates, religious influences permeate all aspects of life, including both joyous and sorrowful occasions. While there may be diversity among Islamic sects, certain cultural realities and expressions are shared across the Muslim community. Future research could explore whether all sects employ similar cultural expressions and linguistic features. Additionally, the use of euphemisms for sensitive topics transcends Pakistani society, indicating a universal phenomenon observed in various cultures. Overall, these findings highlight the profound influence of religion and cultural norms on language use and expression across diverse societal contexts.

5. Conclusion

This research delved into the schematic structure, linguistic nuances, and cultural references evident in expressions of both sorrowful and joyous events in Pakistan. The findings provide insight into how Pakistanis commemorate their cultural and social occasions and the depth of their religious adherence. It is apparent that every society commemorates such events in alignment with its prevailing ideology. In the case of Pakistani society, Islam permeates every facet of life, reflecting its profound influence on cultural practices and social norms. The analysis of samples, gathered in both Urdu and English languages, underscores the deeply ingrained cultural identity of Pakistani society,

characterized by abundant cultural references in both celebratory and mournful contexts. Furthermore, this study addresses the use of euphemisms, revealing their prevalence in Pakistani society as a means to soften the harsh reality of death. While Urdu condolence messages exhibit unique conventions, the overarching influence of Islam is evident in the pervasive use of euphemistic phrases. This research suggests avenues for further exploration, such as investigating the variations in the use of cultural references and euphemisms across different Islamic sects and minority religions in Pakistan. Such endeavors would enrich our understanding of the foundational elements of Pakistani society and its cultural fabric.

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