Genre-based Discourse Analysis of Wedding Invitation Cards in Iran

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Abstract—**Wedding Invitation is one of the important text genres. Having drawn on Swales' (1990) genre analysis approach and Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996) multimodality point of view on textual analysis, one case study has been conducted. The present study analyzed various expressions of wedding invitation genres in Iran in order to find generic and schematic structures as well as linguistic features in them and also communicative functions which were expressed by their generic components. Therefore, a corpus of 200 wedding invitations was randomly selected. Similarities and differences were found. The results revealed eight moves out of which one was optional. Moreover, the wedding invitation card pockets were analyzed and five moves have been found out of which three were optional. Furthermore, the lexico-grammatical features and schematic structure illustrated a series of socio-cultural values as well as Iranian and Islamic norms regarding men and women.**

Index Terms—**wedding invitation, genre analysis, schematic structures, linguistic features, lexico-grammatical features**

I. INTRODUCTION

Invitation is "a commemorative social action having the function of informing and requesting the presence or participation of a person(s) kindly and courteously to some place, gathering, entertainment, etc., or to do something" (Al-Ali, 2006). Wedding is one of the most memorable days in each person's life. Moreover, wedding in each society and each culture requires many preparations including wedding invitation. Wedding invitation builds the happiness of the couples and shares it by all. According to Al-Ali (2006), there are two types of invitations: written and spoken. Printed types of invitation include certain generic features compared to spoken types. Written wedding invitations include information such as the name of the bride and groom, place and time of the wedding. There are different kinds and styles of invitation cards. Also, various modes of invitation are presented. Iranians use a distinct manner in providing invitation cards for their wedding ceremonies. The analysis of such invitations will result in underlying facts regarding the explanations which are rooted in Iranian and Islamic culture as well as priorities of the couples and their families. A thorough analysis of invitation cards has not been analyzed before. Therefore, the present study aims at determining the component moves regarding the Iranian wedding invitation cards as well as Iranian wedding invitation card pockets.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Genre is a concept which is used in detailed formal and functional analysis. As Bhatia (2002) believes, genre is "multi-disciplinary" which is not only used in linguistic anthropology and discourse analysis, but also in cognitive science, sociology and even advertisement. Different definitions have been presented by various scholars. According to Dudley-Evans (1994), genre is a means of attaining a communicative goal in response to special rhetorical needs that will change based on the shifts in those needs. Swales (1990) describes genre as "a class of communicative events" which shares a set of communicative purposes as well as related structures, stylistic characteristics and content. Kress (1987) defines genre as "the term which describes that aspect of the form of the texts which is due to the effect of their production in particular social occasions" (p. 36).

Genre analysis, according to Allison and Ruiying (2004), "explores discourse features in the broad context of the communicative event, and attempts to provide the rationale of the discourse features in terms of authors' publicly retrievable intentions and institutional conventions". Moreover, genre analysis explains why and how differently language is used in various cultures and defines the language in smaller constituents called moves.

Recently, the significance of language in social life has been increased and there has been a great interest in the identification of genres in "homely" discourses (Miller, 1984) including birth, wedding and death announcements which are constructed text genres in societies on a daily basis.

A few studies have been conducted on wedding invitation genre. A study was conducted by Clynes and Henry (2004) to determine the extent to which Brunei university students were able to classify and clarify the linguistic features of the Brunei Malay wedding invitations. To this end, two groups of analyses were carried out. One analysis was done by the authors and the other was done by nine sophomore undergraduate students taking the English Genre Analysis course as part of their B.A. studies at University of Brunei Darussalam (UBD). The two groups analyzed at least three Bruneian wedding invitations in order to find elements such as moves (obligatory and optional), move order and also to state the communicative purpose of the genre as well as main key linguistic features in the genre. Based on the results, although the students were less successful at clarifying the linguistic features in terms of the overall communicative purposes of the genre, they managed to accurately classify and discuss the related moves and move order.

Later, Al-Ali (2006) conducted a study including two frameworks of discourse analysis, genre analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA). He analyzed 200 Arabic written wedding invitations which were collected by 45 undergraduate Arab students at Jordan University of Science and Technology as part of an elective course in discourse analysis. The results indicated eight obligatory and nonobligatory generic components that generally appear in Jordanian wedding invitation cards. Moreover, CDA results indicated "how religious affiliation and masculine kinship authority not only construct and shape text component selection but also color the lexical choices and naming practices" (Al-Ali, 2006).

Moreover, Momani and Al-Refaei (2010) investigated 55 invitation cards in order to find the generic structures of wedding invitations in Jordanian society and considered cultural representations of this genre. The results revealed six obligatory and two optional moves.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The present paper considers various representations as well as expressions regarding written wedding invitation in Iran in order to reflect on generic structures including organizational, linguistic and rhetorical structures as well as socio-cultural communicative functions which are presented in these social communicative samples of genre research. To this end, the present study focuses on Swalesian genre move analysis approach. Swales (1990) suggested a genre move analysis including three moves in order to scrutinize as well as describe the constituents of introductions in research articles including "establishing a territory, establishing a niche, and occupying the niche" (p.141). He proposed a systematic approach in order to examine genre using different "moves" within a text. According to Swales (1981), moves are segments of a text including a variety of linguistic elements such as syntax, lexicon, as well as illocutionary propositions which give consistency to the segments and indicate the discourse content. Therefore, the functional components of genres are likely to illustrate textual as well as lexico-grammatical aspects in order to simplify the recognition of genres. However, according to Mauranen (1993), "these features do not constitute obligatory or definitory criteria for genres" (p. 18). Genre move analysis is used to illustrate how the logical sequence of ideas is bound up by a set of writing conventions" (Kong, 1998). Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) present a multimodality approach on textual analysis. Based on what they stated, this approach rejects linguistic items as the only meaning-construction tool and refers to space, position, color, size, and picture as valuable semiotic tools.

According to Martin and Christie (1984) and Ventola (1989), genres consist of a series of moves in order to characterize the purpose of a socio-cultural practice in general. Therefore, wedding invitations can be analyzed as represented move structure of a text including recognizing generic component moves as well as examining the ways the functional components are utilized. Various moves have different sizes. A move generally "contains at least one proposition" (Connor and Mauranen, 1999). However, moves may contain one sentence, two sentences or more and even a clause or a phrase (Dobios, 1997; Swales, 1990). In Iran, wedding invitations as well as other announcements illustrate various kinds of genre texts including the generic aspects and also communicative functions.

IV. METHODOLOGY AND CORPUS CONSTRUCTION

A sample of 200 wedding invitation cards was randomly selected. After collecting the data, similarities and differences in generic components within various Iranian wedding invitation cards were considered. As mentioned earlier, the present study focuses on Swales' (1990) genre move analysis method within which the schematic structures of wedding invitation genre including communicative goals, sub-rhetorical components (moves), lexico-grammatical features and content were investigated. Moreover, Kress and Van Leeuwen' (1996) perspective on textual analysis was considered.

A. Generic Component Moves and Linguistic Features

Iranian wedding invitation cards were analyzed and eight component moves were found. The eight component moves include opening, stating the first name of the bride and groom, stating the marriage, invitation messages, stating the last

name of the bride and groom, stating the time of the ceremony, stating the location of the wedding ceremony and stating the request of the inviters (Figure 1).

B. First Move: Opening

The first move found in Iranian wedding invitation cards is opening. This move is obligatory and has found in all 200 samples. There are two types of opening. One type refers to stating the opening in Arabic, for example, *Yaa Latiif, Hoval Mahboob, Hoval Mojiib*, or the direct quotation of Quran verse, *In the Name of God*. And the second type refers to stating the opening in Persian including words, phrases, clauses or sentences. The translations of some examples are: *In the Name of God Who Created Love, In the Name of God Who Created the Universe*. The size and fonts of the openings vary from one card type to another. Moreover, as what is pointed out in Clynes and Henry (2004) and Al-Ali (2006), stating the name of God in the opening not only is a part of Islamic tradition but also conveys the wishes of God's blessing in order to protect the bride and groom.

C. Second Move: Stating the First Name of the Bride and Groom

The second move refers to stating the first name of the bride and groom which is obligatory and was presented in all 200 samples. One significant difference was found in stating the name of the bride before the groom or the name of the groom before the bride. In the past, the first names of the grooms and in turn the names of the grooms' fathers were stated first since in fact, they are the host of the wedding ceremony. However, the first name of the bride was stated before the name of the groom in 134 wedding invitation cards of the analyzed data. It illustrates that this order becomes common more and more. The reason refers to the religion of Muslims, Islam, in which the equality of men and women has been mentioned. The name of the bride was not almost written in traditional wedding invitation cards and the word "lady" was stated instead. The reason refers to the religion and family preferences. It was believed that just the family members should know the name of the bride.

Furthermore, another option is available. Wedding invitation cards including the name of the bride before the name of the groom can be printed for the families of the bride. On the other hand, wedding invitation cards including the name of the groom before the name of the bride can be printed for the families of the groom.

D. Third Move: Stating the Marriage

The third move regarding the wedding invitation cards of Iranians is stating the marriage. This move announces that the bride and groom will soon be announced as husband and wife. Selecting the phrases and sentences conveying the marriage of the bride and groom, the size and font of the writing are also different from one card style to another. However, all of them have a same content of wedding invitation announcement genre which is a report of wedding and it was presented in all 200 samples.

E. Forth Move: Invitation Messages

The fourth move which is found in all 200 samples of wedding invitation cards is invitation messages. This part is essential, clearly illustrates the communicative purpose of wedding invitation and requests the guest participation in the celebrations.

F. Fifth Move: Stating the Last Name of the Bride and Groom

The fifth move refers to stating the last name of the bride and groom. Moreover, the first names of the bride's and groom's fathers maybe stated. Moreover, the title *Haaj* which means the person who has performed pilgrimage was stated before the fathers' names in 32 samples. However, other titles indicating the academic qualification or social position such as doctor, engineer, lawyer or pharmacist were not available in contrast to Jordanian culture which was mentioned in the study of Momani and Al-Refaei (2010). Moreover, this move can be stated immediately after the first names of the couples in a separate line as what has been found in 57 analysis samples.

G. Sixth Move: Stating the Time of the Ceremony

The sixth move found in Iranian wedding invitation cards is stating the time of the ceremony. This move includes information such as the day, the month, the year, the time (hour) and the duration of the ceremony. Therefore, this move is obligatory and was found in all 200 samples.

H. Seventh Move: Stating the Location of the Ceremony

The seventh obligatory move which is found in all 200 wedding invitation cards is stating the location of the ceremony. Wedding ceremonies can be held in the house of groom's parents, hotels, wedding halls or gardens. The address must be presented in detailed information and without any confusion.

I. Stating the Request of the Inviters

This move is optional and asks the invitees for not bringing the cameras or video recorders. As long as almost all Iranian families would like to have their own privacy while performing different activities, the invitees are kindly requested to consider that. The fact also refers to the inviters' religion, Islam, since they do not want that their photographs and films be seen by others. Therefore a simple sentence can be mentioned or even a small picture

illustrating the situation may be printed. This optional move was found in 31 samples out of 200 samples of wedding invitation cards.
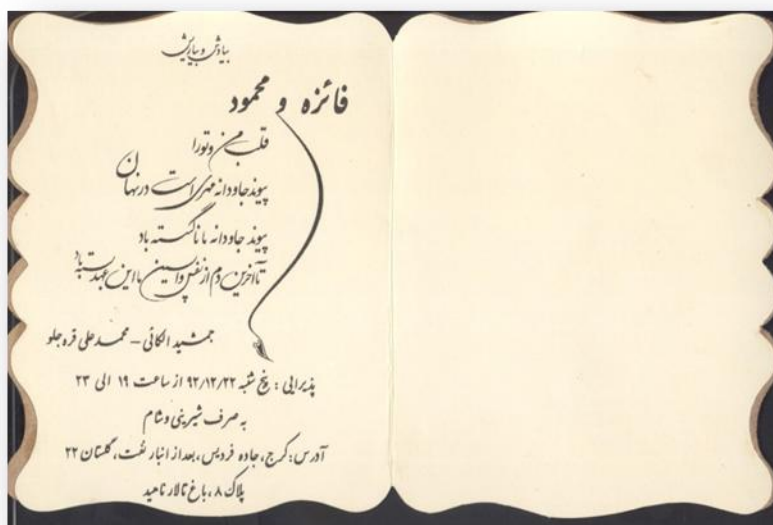

Figure 1. Component Moves of the Wedding Invitation Cards

V. NON-LINGUISTIC FEATURES AND THE ANALYSIS OF CARD POCKETS

Iranian wedding invitations vary in printed forms, layouts, graphics as well as cardboards and their colors. Ribbons, borders, flowers, images including rings, roses, and hearts or such images are features available on cardboards. Varieties of writing styles, different sizes as well as fonts for different moves, centered alignment of some or all moves are also among non-linguistic features. These varieties clearly differentiate the wedding invitation genre from other invitation genres. Having analyzed the card pockets, four moves have been found out of which four were optional and one was obligatory. Four optional moves include messages, stating the first name of the bride and groom, specifying the inviter and stating the date of the wedding ceremony. One obligatory move is stating the names of the invitees.

A. Messages

The first optional move which was found in wedding invitation card pockets is messages. This move announces good news and is stated as *Message of Happiness, Happy wedding or wedding Day* (Figure 2). The font and size of the move vary significantly according to families' interests. This optional move was found in 82 samples.
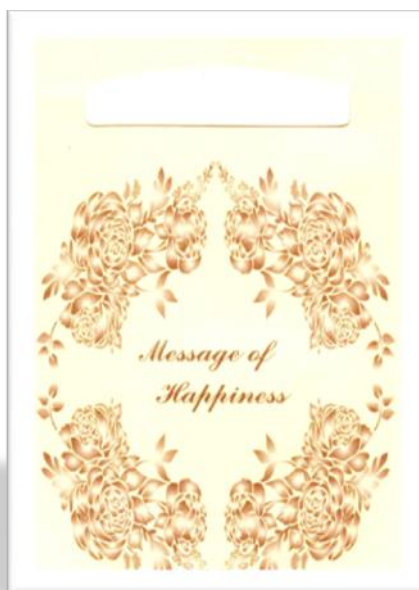

Figure 2. Messages on the Wedding Invitation Cards

B. Stating the First Name of the Bride and Groom

The second move which is also optional and is found in 89 samples is stating the first name of the bride and groom in order to announce to whom the wedding invitation card belongs. Moreover, this move may be stated on the cover of the wedding invitation cards (Figure 3).
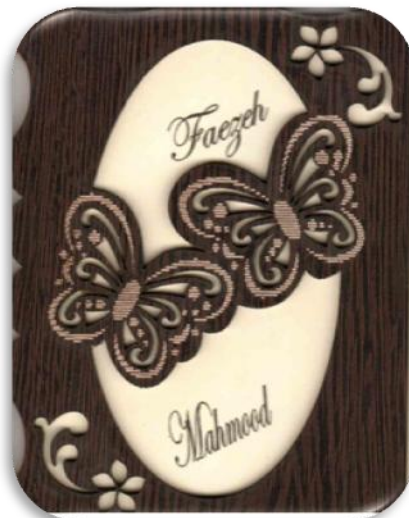

Figure 3. Stating the First Name of the Bride and Groom on the Cover of the Wedding Invitation Cards

C. Stating the Date of the Wedding Ceremony

The third optional move which was found on the card pockets is stating the date of the wedding ceremony. It can be simply stated as 22/12/92 (13/03/2014). This optional move was found in 58 samples of wedding invitation card pockets.

D. Specifying the Inviter

The fourth optional move which is found in 75 samples of wedding invitation card pockets is specifying the inviter. This move includes the first name as well as the last name of the bride's or groom's father. Moreover, this move can be stated on the back of the wedding invitation cards instead the wedding invitation card pockets. The first name as well as the last name of the bride's father is written on the cards which would be sent to the relatives of the bride's and the first name as well as the last name of the groom's father is written on the cards which would be sent to the relatives of the groom to specify the inviter (Figure 4).
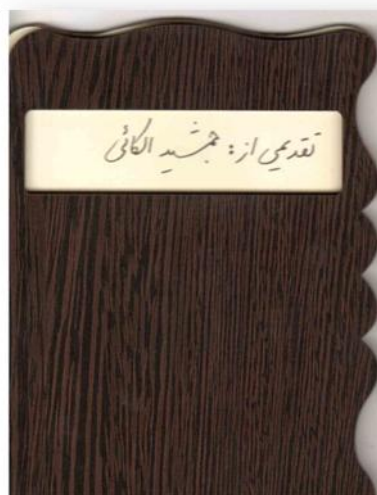

Figure 4. Specifying the Inviter on Wedding Invitation Cards

E. Stating the Names of the Invitees

The fifth move on wedding invitation card pockets which is obligatory is stating the names of the invitees. In all the 200 analyzed cards, the family names of the men were presented and phrases such as *along with the family* was followed. The reason refers to the fact that men are the head of the families (Figure 5).
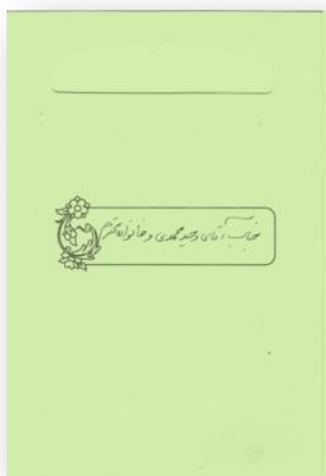

Figure 5. Stating the Names of the Invitees on Wedding Invitation Card Pockets

VI. CONCLUSION

Wedding is one of the most important days in each person's life and it requires many preparation including wedding invitation cards. The present study focused on Swales' (1990) genre analysis approach and Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996) multimodality point of view on textual analysis. Therefore, one case study has been conducted. Various expressions of wedding invitation genre in Iran were analyzed in order to find its generic and schematic structures and linguistic features. Also, communicative functions which were expressed by their generic components were found. A sample of 200 wedding invitations was randomly selected. Similarities and differences were found. Eight component moves were found that one of them was optional. The seven obligatory moves were opening, stating the first name of the bride and groom, stating the marriage, invitation messages, stating the last name of the bride and groom, stating the time of the ceremony, and stating the location of the wedding ceremony. And the optional move was stating the request of the inviters.

Moreover, the wedding invitation card pockets were analyzed and five moves have been found. Four component moves were optional and one component move was obligatory. Messages, stating the first name of the bride and groom, stating the date of the wedding ceremony, specifying the inviter, and stating the names of the invitees were among the distinguished moves on the wedding invitation cards.

Furthermore, the lexico-grammatical features and schematic structure illustrated a series of socio-cultural values as well as norms in Iran and Islam regarding men and women. Each religion and each society has some factors that should be believed and followed by the people of that religion and society. As Goodenough (1984) states, "a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members" (p. 36). Wedding invitations like other homely genres are social events in different cultures with a rhetorical intention managing generic structures. Moreover, communicative and rhetorical choices as well as purposes of genres convey not only the social factors of the participants, but also their religious beliefs since in Sapir's (1949) perspective, culture represents both socially inherited factors and religious aspects. Therefore, social as well as religious constituents which have been appeared in the structure of wedding invitation genres are presented.

Considering all the moves presented above, first significant similarity between Iranian wedding invitation cards and the results of Clynes and Henry's (2004) and Al-Ali's (2006) studies, is stating the name of God in the opening not only a part of Islam but also conveys the wishes of God's blessing in order to protect the bride and groom.

Two significant differences also exist between the present study and Momani and Al-Refaei (2010). First, in contrast to Jordanian society (Momani and Al-Refaei, 2010), the first names of the couples were stated before the names of their fathers. Second, the title *Haaj* which means the person who has performed pilgrimage can be stated before the names. However, other titles indicating the academic qualification or social position such as doctor, engineer, lawyer or pharmacist were not available in contrast to Jordanian culture which was mentioned in the study of Momani and Al-Refaei (2010).

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