

## Genre Analysis: A Study of Pakistani Wedding Invitation Cards

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**Abstract** *The present study has examined the Pakistani wedding invitation cards. The objectives of this study are to conduct the genre analysis of wedding cards i.e. to analyze the moves, its order, communicative purpose and nature; and to explore the micro-linguistic features of the language of wedding invitation cards. For this purpose, fifty Baraat invitation cards, Mehndi invitation cards and wedding cards envelopes each was selected for the analysis by using models proposed by Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993). The results revealed eleven moves in Baraat invitation cards, ten in Mehndi cards and five in wedding cards envelopes out of which some are optional and some are obligatory depending on the frequency of its occurrence in wedding cards. For the analysis of micro-linguistic features, Bhatia's model (1993) has been used. The micro-linguistic analysis includes sentence complexity, length of the sentence, verb, nouns, conjunctions and prepositions.*

**Key Words:** Genre Analysis, Invitation Cards, Micro-linguistic analysis, Discourse Analysis

## Introduction

Invitation is a memorial and honorary social action. The function of an invitation is to inform and ask the guest for their presence or participation in some gathering, event, place, meeting etc. Invitations can be either in written or spoken form (Al-Ali, 2006). Spoken invitation can be through telephonic calls or it can be face to face while written invitations are sent to others either through post or by directly giving it to the guests. Nowadays, social media, text messages and emails are also used for the invitations. Since invitations are for sent for different purposes, all the invitations have specific characteristics that make them different from one other in terms of their design, language, audience, purpose, and non-linguistic features as well. For example, wedding invitations are different in their design, communicative purpose, audience and language from other types of invitations.

A wedding invitation card is not only a piece of paper but also a sign of joy and happiness. It is socially constructed and referred by Johns (1997) as "Homely Discourse". A wedding invitation is considered as a starting step for the wedding ceremony because guests will be notified about the ceremony. According to Clynes and Henry (2004) Wedding invitation cards have conventionalized and demarked structure. Wedding invitations are in written or spoken form. Written invitations are more formal and structured than spoken invitations. There is a certain structure and pattern which is followed in the written invitations. The most popular way of inviting people to the wedding is through wedding cards which are published and distributed about a week or two prior to the weddings. Family, relatives, friends, neighbors are invited to

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join the event; all the important information is mentioned in the card regarding the date, day, time, and venue of the event. Names of the family members along with their contact numbers are also mentioned in case of any confusion.

Nowadays, a lot of variation is used in the wedding invitation cards in terms of its linguistic and non-linguistic features such as language choice, design, color, font size, shape etc. Selecting appropriate wedding cards is very important. People use different styles to make their wedding cards unique and memorable. Some years ago, wedding cards were usually simple and only contained the necessary information but now it contains different images and accessories such as ribbons, chocolates, flowers, and colors to make them beautiful and unique.

## Literature Review

The most influential definition of genre is given by [Swales \(1990\)](#) and [Bhatia \(1993\)](#). Swales describes that genre is a series of communicative events, the members of each event share set of communicative purposes. [Bhatia \(1993\)](#) defines genre as a recognizable communicative event. It has specific communicative purpose, identified and mutually understood by the members of the particular discourse community in which it occurs. Most often, it is highly structuralized and conventionalized along with constraints in terms of its intent, form, positioning, and functional value. These constraints, however, are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially recognized purposes.

According to [Sawalmeh \(2015\)](#), the definitions given by [Swales \(1990\)](#) and [Bhatia \(1993\)](#) are not different from each other: rather, they are complementary, which together give a detailed description of genre in ESP. The common features of genre are:

- a) Genres are considered as familiar communicative events, having communicative purpose, identified and understood by the participants of discourse community in which it occur.
- b) Genres are structured and conventionalized, have certain constraints on intentions as well as on lexico-grammatical features.
- c) Members of particular discourse community have more knowledge and understanding about genres than those who are outsiders/new in a community.
- d) The generic resources are often exploited by the expert members of discourse communities to show their private as well as organizational intentions in socially recognized purposes.
- e) Genres are social actions that are set in disciplinary, professional and institutional communities and reflect the culture in disciplinary and organizational setting.
- f) All genres in disciplinary and professional setting have their own integrity that is identified through factors related to text, discursive and context.

## Research Methodology

The present study has used the mixed method approach i.e. use of both the qualitative as well as quantitative research methods. A sample of fifty wedding invitations cards (Baraat and Mehndi) and fifty wedding cards envelopes was selected for the present study from several sources i.e. family, friends, neighbors and relatives. Convenient sampling was used for collecting the data. Wedding cards were mostly collected from city of Rawalpindi and Islamabad while few of the wedding cards are collected from other cities as well. The analysis of wedding cards is divided into three categories: First, wedding invitation cards were analyzed textually at two levels i.e. macro level and micro level. The analysis at micro level deals with lexico-grammatical features that occur in wedding invitation text.

## Data Analysis

The macro-linguistic analysis includes the move analysis of Pakistani wedding invitation cards, which is based upon [Swales \(1990\)](#) model of move-analysis. The analysis revealed eleven component moves in Baraat cards, ten moves in the Mehndi cards and five moves in wedding cards envelopes, which will be discussed below in detail.

### Move Analysis of Baraat Cards

The first move found in Baraat card is the "Opening" move. It is an optional move and exists in 68% invitation cards. This move has few opening varieties i.e. use of Holy Quran verse, Tasmiya or its English translation (In the name of Allah, the most beneficent & the most merciful), or the poetic verses (Two lives, two hearts joined together in friendship, united forever in love). The communicative purpose for using Quranic verse or Tasmiya according to [Gonsalves \(2010\)](#) is to bestow blessings of Allah on the couple for their life ahead and shows the strong belief of Muslims on the religion that Muslims always start their work with the name the Allah. Al-Zubaidi (2017) states, the use of literary language i.e. poetic verses make the wedding text more compelling and effective and wedding card becomes memorable.

The Second move of Baraat invitation cards is "Stating the Name of the Inviters". It is also an optional move and occurs in 98% of the cards. The function of this move is to mention the name of inviters who are inviting the guests and hosting the ceremony. In Baraat cards, inviters are mostly parents of the couple because they are guardian and head of the family. If the father of bride or groom is not alive, late is written with his name or in some cases, mother, brother, uncle or grandfather of the couple becomes the inviter of the wedding ceremony. Professional (Wing Commander, Retd, Capt. ®), religious (Haji, Syed) and social (Awan, Raja) titles are frequently used with the name of inviters. According to [Al-Ali \(2006\)](#), these titles are self-promoting and represent the social status of an individual.

The third optional move of Baraat wedding cards is "Requesting the Presence of the Guests". The function of this move is to request the guests for their participation in the wedding. According to Al-Zubaidi (2017), this move is the backbone of wedding invitation card. The purpose of a wedding invitation itself is to invite the guests. However, with the use of this move, the inviters courteously and cordially ask the invitees to attend the ceremony. This move occurs in 98% of the cards.

The next move in the Baraat wedding cards is "Stating the Name of the Couple". The function of this move is to identify the name of the bride and groom getting married. It is an obligatory move for stating the groom's name while an optional move for the brides. In the Baraat wedding cards, two varieties are observed, either name of the bride is written or it is written by her father's name with phrase "daughter of". According to [Mirzaei and Eslami \(2013\)](#), minimal reference to the name of bride shows a traditional preference to avoid stating her name in the public. "Late" is used with the name of parents if they are not alive, such as *D/o ch. Muhammad Riyasat (late)*. Honorific titles are also used with the name of the couple and parents as mentioned in second move.

An important move of Baraat invitation cards is "stating date and day of the ceremony". The communicative purpose of this move is to tell the guests when the ceremony will take places. Both the day and date of the ceremony is mentioned in the cards. It is observed that day is always written before the date, "Inshallah" is also written. It is found that day is an optional variant and date is an obligatory variant of this move. Date of the ceremony is mentioned according to Gregorian format and there is no mention of Islamic dates in the wedding cards because people are more habitual of using the Gregorian calendar. From the examination of Pakistani wedding cards, it is noted that Baraat wedding ceremony is held mostly on Saturday i.e. 52% for the Baraat ceremony.

Sixth move "Stating Time of the ceremony" is another important and obligatory move of Baraat invitation cards; the purpose is to tell the guests about the timing i.e. at what time event will start. Either Baraat takes place at afternoon or in the evening therefore, 'Am' or 'Pm' is written with it. It is noted that

time is mostly stated in 12-hour format; only three Baraat cards have mentioned the timing of the ceremony in 24-hour format.

The seventh move is stating the venue of the wedding ceremony. It is an obligatory move of the Baraat card issued by the Bride's family and an optional move in the groom's card. Full address is mentioned with the venue. This move has three steps, in first step, the name of the venue is mentioned, in the second step, location of the venue is mentioned and in the third step, phone number is written.

Another optional move of Baraat wedding card is "Stating name of the family members". The communicative function of this move is to state the name of close family members who are going to welcome, serve and entertain the guests in the wedding ceremony. This move has two sections i.e. "RSVP" and "Looking forward". The function of both the varieties is same. It is noted that honorific titles are used in this move as well. Such as use of Advocate, Doctor, Syed, Haji, Raja, Malik etc. Nickname of a person is also used, for example, Khaldi, Bobby. It is also observed that if some family members are coming from abroad then name of country is written with their names such as Saudi Arabic, UAE etc.

The next move of Baraat invitations cards is "Reminder for the Guests". It is an optional move. It only occurs in two of the cards. The communicative purpose of this move is to make the guests remember the date. In one of the cards, calendar is pasted on the backside of the card; date is marked on it so that people will remember the date of the momentous and memorable day. It is a reminder for the guests to be there on the specific day.

The tenth move is "Note for the Guests". It is also an optional move. The function of this move is to provide the guests with some important additional information about the wedding ceremony. It is found in 2% of Baraat cards. The important note found in Baraat wedding card is:

- Invitees are advised to carry their invitation cards in person due to prevailing security conditions. The invitation card and CNIC may be checked at entry point. Please avoid taking pictures; function photographers will entertain everyone. Thanks

The last move of Baraat wedding cards is "Stating Name of the Publishing Company". It is an optional move and exists only in three Baraat cards. The purpose is to advertise the name of the publishing company who has printed the wedding cards. It is printed on the cards from the publishing company. The name of the publishing company with its telephone number and address is mentioned on the card.

### Move Analysis of Mehndi Cards

The first move of Mehndi invitation cards is the "Opening" move. It is found only in six cards, therefore, considered as an optional move. According to [Sawalmeh \(2015\)](#), the communicative function of this move is to promote marriage according to Islam ([Sawalmeh, 2015](#)). In Mehndi cards, three opening varieties are found i.e. use of Tasmiya, translation of Tasmiya and the poetic verse as discussed above.

The second move of Mehndi invitation cards is "Stating the name of the inviters". As the first move, it is also an optional move and only exists in twenty-two cards. The communicative function of this move is to mention the name of the inviters who are arranging the ceremony. In the Mehndi cards, the inviters of the ceremony are mostly sisters, nieces and cousins. In some of the cards, inviters are parents of the bride and groom as well. Title related to cast is also used with the name of the inviters in Mehndi invitation cards.

After "Stating the name of the inviters", the third move is "Requesting the presence of the guests". The communicative purpose of this move is to give invitation to the guest for the wedding events; the language used in Mehndi cards is less formal than the Baraat cards such as "Invite you on the colorful traditional evening of..." It is also an optional move, occurs in 84% of the Mehndi invitation cards.

The next move of Mehndi invitation cards is an obligatory move, which is 'Stating the name of the Ceremony'. The communicative function performed through this move is to notify the guests about a particular event.

The fifth move in the Mehndi cards refers to “Stating the name of the Couple”. It is an optional move, occurs in 96% cards and the purpose is to identify the marrying couple, either by stating the first name of bride and groom or by father's name. Titles are also used in Mehndi cards with the name of couple.

Sixth move “Stating day and date of the ceremony” is an obligatory move. The communicative purpose of this move is to tell the guests when the ceremony will take place. “Inshallah” either in English or in Urdu is also written in some of the Mehndi cards. Day is mostly written before the date of the ceremony. Date is mostly written in the format of DD/MM/YYYY.

An obligatory move of the Mehndi cards is “Stating the time of the ceremony”. The communicative purpose performed through this move is to tell the guests when the function will start. One card has mentioned the time of the ceremony in the form of the sentence as “*You have to be there when 6 ticks the clock*”. In most of the Mehndi cards, time is mentioned in the format of 12-hours.

The next move of the Mehndi card is “Stating the venue of the ceremony”. The communicative function of this move is to state the name of the place where the event is going to be held. Full address is mentioned. It is an obligatory move of Mehndi card.

The ninth move found in the Mehndi cards is “Stating the name of the family members”. This is an optional move and the communicative purpose is to make the guests identify the members of the brides and grooms' family who will welcome the guests. In the Mehndi cards “Awaiting eyes”, “Looking forward” or “Awaiting to welcome” are used for this move.

The tenth and last move found in the invitation cards of Mehndi is the “closing” move. It is an optional move and occurs in only one Mehndi card. The purpose is to ensure the guests that they are very special, their presence in the ceremony is highly appreciated, and they will make the ceremony pleasant with their participation and prayers. Such as use of statement in the end “*Your presence and blessing are the best gift we can receive*”.

### Move Analysis of Wedding Cards Envelope

From the analysis of wedding cards' envelope, it is found that it also contains certain moves. The moves are found in the outer and inner envelope of the wedding cards.

The first move of wedding card's envelopes is “Opening” move. It is an optional move and contains the use of Tasmiya, translation of Quranic verse, Hadith, poetic verses, prayer or wedding invitation message. Either this move exists in the outer or inner envelope on the outer or inner side of the inner envelope. The communicative purpose of Tasmiya, translation of Quranic verse and prayer is to have blessing of Allah and poetic verses and invitation messages are used to make the wedding cards unique. This move exists in 60% wedding card envelopes.

The second move of the wedding card's envelope is “stating the name of the inviter”. It contains the name of the inviter of the wedding from whom the card has been sent to the invitees. The function performed through this move is to announce the inviters' name. The name of the inviters or family name is written on the outer envelope of the wedding card. It is an optional move and exists in one wedding card's envelope.

The third move of wedding envelope is also an optional move, which is “Stating first name of the bride and groom”. The function of this move is to announce the name of couple to whom the wedding invitation card belongs. The outer envelopes carry the name of couple. Only 24% envelopes have this move.

The next move on wedding invitation card envelopes is “stating the names of the invitees”. It is an obligatory move because it is necessary to write the name of the invitees to whom the card will be delivered. The name of the invitee is written either with the phrase “with family” or without the phrase depending upon how many family members are invited to the wedding ceremony. This move exists in all the wedding cards envelopes.

The last move found in wedding card envelopes is “Stating the name of the publishing company”, which has designed and published the wedding cards. It is an optional move; name of the publishing company, its phone number, its website and Card number are given on the card's envelopes. The name of the company is written by the publishers; the purpose is to advertise their company but it is not mandatory that publishing company always mention their names on the cards. The names of the companies are written in English as well as in Urdu. This move exists in 82% of the wedding envelopes.

### Micro-Linguistic Features of Wedding Invitation Cards

This section explores the micro-linguistic features of wedding cards by following second step of Bhatia's (1993) seven-step model. The micro-linguistic analysis investigates syntactic features of Pakistani wedding invitation cards to express each move more explicitly.

Sentence complexity examines the structure of the move at sentence level. The first “opening” move has use of nominal sentence, simple sentence, compound sentence, Complex sentence and compound complex sentence, depending upon the variety of move used. The second move “Stating name of the inviters” and third move “Requesting the presence of the guests” combines to make a full sentence. While the other moves of the wedding cards mostly consist of nouns only.

After examining sentence complexity, sentence length is determined by calculating the words in moves “Opening”, “Requesting the presence of the guests”, “Closing”, “Note for the guest” and “Reminder for the guests” because these moves consist of sentence. The words in the move “Opening” range from thirteen to forty-two. The move, “Requesting the presence of the guests” consists of two to thirteen words. The “closing” move has eleven words. The move “reminder for the guest” has minimum of three and maximum of sixteen words. The last move that consists of sentence is “note for the guests”, has thirty-six words. Tenses are identified from the same moves. Analysis of the moves indicates the use of present simple passive, present continuous, present perfect and future simple tense.

The Pakistani wedding invitation cards have more use of nouns than any other parts of speech. All the moves in Pakistani wedding cards consist of nouns. Moreover, both the common and proper nouns are used. Use of pronoun is found in the “opening”, “requesting the presence of the guests”, “closing” and “note for the guests” moves. Adjectives are used in “Opening” move “requesting the presence of the guest” move and “closing” move. Use of preposition and conjunctions are also found in certain moves.

### Conclusion

The present study has analyzed the genre of Pakistani wedding invitation cards in terms of textual analysis (move analysis and micro-linguistic analysis), and norms on the structure and use of language in a wedding text. The move analysis of Baraat cards has revealed eleven component moves. Depending upon their occurrence in each card and percentage, they are classified as obligatory and optional moves. The moves that occurred in 100% of the wedding cards are termed as obligatory moves and the moves that do not occur in 100% of the cards are optional moves. Ten component moves are present in Mehndi invitation cards out of which four moves are obligatory and six are optional. The moves found in wedding cards' envelope are five: out of which four are optional and only one move is obligatory. The overall communicative purpose of wedding invitation cards is giving invitation to the guests to marriage ceremony while each move also contributes to the overall communicative purpose of the genre. The second objective is to study the micro-linguistic features in the wedding texts. The common features found in wedding invitation cards are sentence complexity, length of the sentence, verb, nouns, conjunctions and prepositions. Four types of sentences i.e. simple, compound, complex and compound complex are found which are used in 'opening' move, 'requesting the presence of the guests' move, 'closing' move and 'note for the guests' move. Nominal sentence is also used in the opening variety 'translation of Tasmiya'. The length of the sentence is determined by counting the words present in each move. The length of the

sentence has a maximum of forty-three and minimum three words. After determining the type and length of the sentence, form of verb is found in these moves. Present tense and future tense are commonly used tenses. Mostly moves of the Pakistani wedding texts are characterized by nouns. Use of both the common and proper nouns is found in the moves. Other than nouns, use of pronouns, adjective and conjunction is also found.

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