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Socio-cultural Study of Written Invitation Cards in Iraqi Society

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Abstract

The present study explores the nature of analyzing invitation cards in Iraqi society from a sociocultural point of view . It attempts to systemize the various generic written invitation cards which are used for the purpose of inviting in Iraqi society and to highlight the socio – pragmatic constraints governing their use . The major aspects of inviting were examined :- inviting , style of writing and the types of the cards . The problem of this study is the difference between written and spoken wedding invitation . Invitation is the most important part in in Iraqi society because it clarifies or reflects the civility and the politeness of the inviter to the invitees . There is a big differences between spoken and written invitation . Most people in some societies tend to use spoken invitation which is the opposite of written invitation card. Written invitation is more respectable and more acceptable way for invitation . Written invitation make the invitees feel happy , feel with respectability and also this form of invitation stimulate them to open the invitation and read it although they know what will be written inside it and this form of invitation pay most of the invitees to retained the written cards special feelings when they read a wonderful phrases inside . This study is intended to quantitatively and qualitatively conduct a type of analysis for the purpose of determining discourse structures and key linguistic patterns which characterize the moves of the type of Arabic invitation cards produced in Iraqi society. This study aims at differentiating

between different types of written invitation cards in order to determine what the generic components that have in comm. Particularly, it aims at showing the effects of some socio-cultural and pragmatic factors that may determine the content and structure of such written forms of invitations. This study show different written invitation types in Iraq through identifying various generic and schematic structures , linguistic features and also communicative functions .This study concludes that the use genre move analysis illustrate how the logical sequence of ideas is bound up by a set of writing conventions and social norms and by the use of these generic moves different types of cards can be identified here.

Estudio Sociocultural De Tarjetas De Invitación Escritas En La Sociedad Iraquí

Resumen

El presente estudio explora la naturaleza del análisis de las tarjetas de invitación en la sociedad iraquí desde un punto de vista sociocultural. Intenta sistematizar las diversas tarjetas de invitación genéricas escritas que se utilizan con el propósito de invitar a la sociedad iraquí y resaltar las restricciones socio-pragmáticas que rigen su uso. Se examinaron los aspectos principales de la invitación: invitación, estilo de escritura y los tipos de tarjetas. El problema de este estudio es la diferencia entre la invitación de boda escrita y oral. La invitación es la parte más importante en la sociedad iraquí porque aclara o refleja la cortesía y la cortesía de quien invita a los invitados. Hay una gran diferencia entre la invitación oral y escrita. La mayoría de las personas en algunas sociedades tienden a usar la invitación oral, que es lo opuesto a la tarjeta de invitación escrita. La invitación escrita es una forma más respetable y más aceptable de invitación. La invitación escrita hace que los invitados se sientan felices, se sientan respetables y también esta forma de invitación los estimula a abrir la invitación y leerla, aunque saben lo que se escribirá en ella y esta forma de invitación paga a la mayoría de los invitados para retener las tarjetas escritas. especial sentimientos cuando leen frases maravillosas por dentro. El objetivo de este estudio es realizar un tipo de análisis cuantitativo y cualitativo con el fin de determinar las estructuras del discurso y los patrones lingüísticos clave que caracterizan los movimientos del tipo de tarjetas de invitación en árabe producidas en la sociedad iraquí. Este estudio tiene como objetivo diferenciar entre los diferentes tipos de tarjetas de invitación escritas para

determinar cuáles son los componentes genéricos que tienen en la comunicación. En particular, tiene como objetivo mostrar los efectos de algunos factores socioculturales y pragmáticos que pueden determinar el contenido y la estructura de tales tarjetas. formas escritas de invitaciones. Este estudio muestra diferentes tipos de invitaciones escritas en Iraq a través de la identificación de varias estructuras genéricas y esquemáticas, características lingüísticas y también funciones comunicativas. Este estudio concluye que el análisis de movimiento de género de uso ilustra cómo la secuencia lógica de ideas está unida por un conjunto de convenciones de escritura y Las normas sociales y el uso de estos movimientos genéricos pueden identificar diferentes tipos de cartas aquí.

1 . Introduction

Written invitation card is a very important part of any invitation ,since even in oral invitation people tend to make invitation cards in order to reflect their respect and politeness for others. Written invitation card announces good information to relatives and friends to know when, where, and what the occasion of the invitation that will take place because in any invitation the inviter needs to know some basic information about what time, the date, the location and the purpose behind such an invitation. All these information of the written invitation will help the inviters to clear up any confusion and prevent those writers to show up clearly , too late ,or to get up the wrong day , date and the location of the invitation.

To understand the main characteristics of written invitations in Iraq, to make it more obvious , these cards should be written in terms of its social norms and conventions which give special styles for such occasions .In Iraqi society the socio- cultural aspects influence the most aspects of one's life which in turn influence the styles and modes of such written invitations. Iraqi society like other societies in the Middle East is considered to be a developing society that has rapid witnessed , development , and progress of everyday life, but it keeps observing its norms and traditions in all aspects of peoples'

The objective of this study is to determine rhetorical text structure and key linguistic features of Iraqi written invitation cards to find out how socio cultural and religious norms are reflected in these forms of cards and to identify different written cards which are used

for different occasions and purposes.

1 . 1 Definitions of invitation

Invitation in AL-Ali's definition is "a communicative social action having the function of informing and requesting the presence or participation of a person(s) kindly to some place, gathering entertainment or to do something".

So, invitation is a communicative purpose which is used to inform people that an invitation is going to be held in a specific time and place to call upon them to participate in this occasion by their presence .

In Iraqi culture as in all cultures the written wedding invitation card is characterized by certain textual and linguistic features that distinguish it from other types of written forms .

It is a traditional text in which socio cultural as well as religious conventions play a huge role. Written invitations belong to a group of texts referred to by

Miller (1984 , 151 – 167) as homely discourse which includes 'everyday language' as AL-Ali (2006 , 692) argues. Announcement text of everyday life such as birth, weddings and recognizable (homely discourse) that is widely known to people all over the world .

Invitations are considered to be directive speech acts since they attempt to get the hearer to do something (Searle (1979 , 16). At the same time invitations are considered to be commissive according to Searle (1979 , 16) in that they commit the speaker to a future course of action . Invitation can be expressed both in spoken and written forms . Clark and Isaac (1990 , 493 – 509) state that a usual and unambiguous invitation includes some fixed sections , such as reference to time, mention of place and a request for response . The main factor which makes invitations different from one to another is the context of the use i.e. each type of invitation is created in a specific condition . According to AL-Ali (2006 , 691-714) There are different types of written invitations which include certain features compared to spoken types .. There are different kinds and styles of invitation cards , also various modes of invitation that will be presented in this work .

1 . 2 Social and cultural aspects of Written Invitation

At first it is very important to know what is meant by culture . Longman dictionary of contemporary English (2011 : 411) defines culture as “ the beliefs way of life art and customs that are shared and accepted by people in a particular society “ Samovar , porter and McDaniel (as cited in AL-Ali 2006 ; 4) share the same view indicating that culture is “ the deposit of knowledge , experience , beliefs , values attitudes , hierarchies , religious , roles and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving “ . Culture shapes people’s world perception and their language . Through language, the culture of certain people often directs their actions beliefs , norms and behavior Aremu (2011 : 135) .

In order to understand how written invitation articulate the communicative purposes of the social occasions ,one needs to take into account the social practices relate to it. A comprehensive understanding of social event has an important effect on both the construction of texts and their interpretations . Miller (1984 : 151) argues that “ understanding of type can help account for the ways we encounter , interpret react to , and create particular texts “ .

In order to specify the way in which a particular type is conventionally structured and interpreted . It is very important to refer to the socio cultural context from which that type text derives its meaning . Holmes (2013 : 40) believes that when members use language to express meaning the language they use is influenced by complex components of that situation . These components include the participants the social situational context , the topic and the function of linguistic features which reflect the influence of these components .

In Iraq , social practices and values effect many aspects of people’s life , Therefore understanding socio cultural factors is regarded very essential in interpreting the structure or text of written invitation card .

In this regard , Ventola (1987 : 41) views culture as a determinant factor of type as a purposeful social event , which in turn affects writing habits , so written invitation cards are considered to be products of social interaction in any culture with rhetorical purposes that specify their common structure .

1.3 Discourse and Genre

The analysis of language has received a lot of attention for a long time. Recently, a significant interest has paid to the study of genre analysis which has developed out of the study of discourse analysis. Bhatia(1993)says that discourse analysis starts with analyzing the surface structure of linguistic description, then the analysis has extended to the analysis of language description as discourse , then getting to genre analysis means the description of language as explanation.

Discourse according to Kress(1989:19)is “the institutional modes of speaking and writing which give expression to particular attitudes towards areas of socio-cultural activity”. So, discourse for Kress is a motivation of a text ,since these modes enable the speaker/writer to know whether to say, do or write something or not. According to the above view, a mode can be detected from the surface level of description to a deeper description of language and there are number of discourses that operate within everyone’s social group and how these group can understand and use such discourses according to the ideologies the adopt.

Briefly, for Kress discourse is a motivation of any written or spoken text . Swales (1990)provides a similar view by saying that the schematic structure through which the communicative purpose is articulated the results of social practices and conventions. Genre according to Swales is “a class of communicative event”, since it shares it shares a set of communicative purposes , related structures ,content, and stylistic characteristics.Similarly, Brazerman (1994:79-101)sees genre as “a socio-psychological category defined by a structural arrangement of textual features”. Connor(2000)supports this view by adding that “genre leads ultimately to the understanding of culture “He assures that” genre does not exist in isolation but as part of a structural system of interacting genres each performing complementary social action”.

On the other hand, Bhatia (2004:20)views discourse as genre and he extends the analysis the textual product to incorporate context so as to find out the ways of constructions ,interpretation, and the using of the text in specific institutional or professional contexts in order to

achieve specific goals. Bhatia(Ibid:10) assures that:

“Investigation of conventionalized or institutionalized genres in the context of specific institutional and disciplinary practices, procedures and cultures , is a means for understanding how members of specific discourse communities construct , interpret and use the genres to achieve their community goals and why they write them the way they do”.

Allison and Ruiying (2004:265)ascertains Bhatia’s view by saying that:

“ 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’ publically retrievable intentions and institutional conventions”.

Leeuwen(2005:121)states that the reason behind the use of context instead of the text is that the text become ‘typical’ since in the production of such texts people tend to follow certain rules as; prescriptions, traditions, ingrained habits , role models,etc. that may affect in one way or another the three typical characteristics of genres such as; content, form, and function.

So, genre is model that serves as an example of constructing new issues in the same field in any specific discourse community.

According to the above views, genre is “the term which describes that aspect of texts which due to the effect of their production in particular social occasion”. This means that genre helps everyone to understand how texts interact and how they shape meaning in relation to complex social system(Kress,1987:36) .

1.4 Homely Discourse and Genre

Homely discourse was first introduced by Miller(1984)who refers to it as “everyday language”. So, homely discourse “is a term which refers to a genre of socially constructed text of discourse such as, invitation, congratulation, thank-you notes and obituaries”.

In a daily basis, the significance of language in social life has been increased especially in the identification of genres in “homely discourse “which including invitation, birth, wedding and death announcement(Miller,1984).

Homely discourse is defined by Johns (1997:6)as “a recognizable

socially constructed text genres of everyday life". Thus ,homely discourse includes all kinds of invitations(i.e. spoken and written) in order to enable people share these occasions inside and outside academic and professional settings in everyday language .Also, this homely discourse enable people to begin reading or writing a text with confidence and to evokes readers and writers with certain expectations about the form and content and to understand the central purpose that such texts serve within communities.

So, homely discourse gives everyone who reads a text a full and complete summary of the content of such written text ,since it enables us to know, expect, and conclude the purpose of the text from its title.

In this study, homely discourse is the aim of the written invitation cards In Iraqi society .

1.5 Genre and Move as Sociolinguistic Activities

Nowadays, the participants are able to achieve particular goals by using the term genre ‘which is thought to be referring to a sociolinguistic activity(Henry and Roseberry,2001).

To understand a complete purposive text which represents a social activity ,two perspectives must be considered:

The first one identifies the generic structure of the text which is based on its genre category membership, which in turn involves reference to the context of any culture.

The second one describes the immediate contextual functions which is based on its register through the existence of lexical and syntactic linguistic structures(AL-Ali,2003). Vergaro(2004:187-88)ascertains this views that genre is a social activity which is identified by communicative purposes since this social genre can be recognizable by its clearly understandable by its users.

people can construct the meaning of language from any speech community in order to recognize communicative events which instances of particular genres to assign particular terms or labels to these events.

To understand the organization and articulation the communicative event of any social occasion can be understandable by the use of the genre invitation. Miller(1984) and Kress(1989)emphasize the

importance of understanding the social occasion at which the text emerges for the interpretation of the generic construction. Miller(1984:151)states that “a social understanding of genre can enable the participants of such social occasion to encounter,interpret,react to and to create particular genre to share their effects on the form of texts which are constructed in these social situations”.

Bhatia (1997)defines genre as “a class of texts characterized by a specific function that tends to produce distinctive structural patterns”. Bhatia assures that there is no universal form of discourse to structure knowledge and that most of the institutionalized forms of discourse are constructed, interpreted and used socially.Thus,genre is “a concept which is used in detailed formal and functional analysis”. Genre is “multi –disciplinary “since it is not only used in in discourse analysis ,but also in cognitive linguistic and sociology.

Genre is a means of attaining a communicative social goal as a response to special rhetorical demands that will change the shifts on those needs.

So, the central aim of a genre analyst is exploring the construction of a genre so as to identify the term ‘move’ to get the allowable order of the move and the key of the main linguistic features.

The term ‘move’ is admired by Swales(1990) who proposes a systematic approach to examine genre by using different moves. These moves are developed lately by Bhatia(1993).This term is applied to different professional and academic settings. Here , the term ‘move’ is used to refer to each meaningful component unit which conveys a rhetorical function Swales(1981)states that the functional components are used to explain textual as well as lexico-grammatical features to simplify the recognition of genres. So, move is any meaningful unit that is presented by lexical or linguistic forms(-grammatical aspects)to convey a specific goal.Mauranen (1993:18) assures Swale’s opinion by saying “these features do not constitute obligatory or definitely criteria for genres” .Kong (1998)ascertains that “genre move analysis is used to illustrate how the logical sequence of ideas is bound up by a set of writing conventions”.

The members of the community are engaged in the communicative purpose of any social activity especially when each move combines

with another move. Genre analysis according to Allison and Ruiying (2004) explains why and how language is used in different cultures and language can be defined in terms of smaller constituents called 'moves'. Connor and Mauranen (1999) believe that that "a genre generally contains at least one proposition". Vergaro(2004:184) believes that the analysis of any text means to assign a pragmatic function to stretch the language and to build the schematic structure in order to achieve its communicative purposes. The units of analyzing moves may be a sentence , a clause ,a or even a word. The analyzing of moves is not clear-cut and it is very hard to identify each move separately because each move is embedded within each other syntactically.

In this study, the different types of written invitation in Iraqi society can be identified according to their social connotations.

1.9 Generic Component Moves and Linguistic Features

The analysis of the present corpus at hand revealed that the schematic structure of Iraqi written invitation cards is built around (6) component moves that generally come in the following sequential order :-

First Move: Opening

Opening means to begin the invitation with "The Name of Allah , most Gracious and most Merciful" in Arabic *مي حرلا ن م حرلا ل ا ل ل ا م س ب* .Nowadays, this move cannot be found in most written invitation in Iraqi society while others state this move since most people believe that stating the name of Allah as an opening in their invitation is a part of their Islamic tradition and to convey best wishes and blessings of Allah to the inviter. S, this move is optional since it does not appear in all the written invitation cards.

Second Move: Stating the Name of the Inviter

This move is obligatory in Iraqi written invitation since it shows who is the inviter. This move appears widely in wedding invitation cards to state the name of the groom's father before the name of the groom himself while the name of the bride is optional .

Third Move: Invitation Message

This move is obligatory and essential in all Iraqi written invitation

since this move illustrates clearly the communicative purpose behind any invitation to request the guests' participation in such occasion.

Fourth Move: Stating the Time of the Invitation

This move states the time about when the invitation will take place. This move includes information about the day, month, year (these information are, time (hour) and the duration of the invitation in any written invitation.

Fifth Move: Stating the Location of the Invitation

This move states the place about where the invitation will take place. this move includes information about the place of holding the invitation which may be in the house as in most wedding invitations, hotels, halls, gardens, etc. The address must be presented in detailed in order to eliminate the inviter's confusion.

Sixth Move: Stating the Request of the Inviters

This move is optional, since the inviter asks the invitees for not bringing cameras or video recorders or even not shooting at all. This move shows the inviter's religious Islam, since they do not want their photographs and films to be seen by others especially in wedding invitations. As a conclusion in a written invitation, a simple sentence can be mentioned or even a picture as symbol at the end of the invitation card.

2. Data Analysis

Invitation is a commemorative social action having the function of information and requesting the presence or participation of a person kindly and politely to some place gathering entertainment. or to do something Al – Ali (2006 : 691). Invitations are of three types : general, special, and Electronic forms in Iraqi society by adopting the term genre as a social activity and which is the core in this study. There are six generic component moves are found in this study depending on Kress and Leeuwen (1996) analysis. Some of these moves are obligatory while others are not by considering the cultural norms of Iraqi society.

The following explanations will show the analysis of these invitation cards that are taken from many sources of Iraqi society especially from different districts in Iraqi society :-

1- some people especially in AL-Alam which is a district related Salahaddin governorate adopt this form of invitation which is a general invitation as in (figure 1) in their wedding because this type reflects their habits and they want to reflect their kindly , generosity and extent their love to others The form of this type is a big poster which is hanged on the walls of buildings, inside it the inviter who writes the name of the groom’s father and the name of the groom in addition they mention the place and the time without any pictures or images .At the end of this invitation , there is a note of” do not throw bullets”..



Figure (1)

While other people prefer to tabling the picture of the groom in another type of wedding invitation as in figure(2) With general invitation from Zakho(وخاز) (to AL-Fao(وافل),i.e. from the north to the south of Iraq)to show their kindly , generosity and extent their love to others from different districts.



Figure (2)

2- This invitation is an academic invitation to attend the discussion of Master Thesis in the university of Tikrit . It begins with stating the name of Allah , the name of the student , the content(message) of

the invitation, the time, place, with the note at the end the invitation is general to all.



Figure(3)



figure (4)

The invitation of figure (4) is similar to the invitation in figure (3) except the conclusion of the last invitation ,since it ends with the stating “welcome to the distinguished guests”.

For the same occasion the inviter may use another form of written invitation cards for special persons such as ,friends , teachers , committee of discussion , and even special relatives as in figure (5):



Figure (5)

In this special invitation , the inviter is quite satisfied to open the invitation with greeting, stating the purpose of invitation , the time, place, and at the end the name of the inviter , since the guests will know previously the purpose behind such an invitation. Also the inviter will show the general invitation as in figure (4) and the special one as in figure (5) as a state in the social media such as facebook,whatsup viber, Skype ,etc.

These three forms are related to the same communicative purpose which to attend the discussion of Thesis Master.

3-Another form of invitation , is a “Scientific Symposium” as in figure (6):



Figure (6)

In this genre of invitation, one can see three parts of this form .From the left , there are the names of the preparatory commission, the lecturers, and the supervision. Inthe middle , there will be the message of the invitation , time , place of the invitation. In the left , there will be an additional information about the content of the symposium such as ,the topics and the aims behind holding this symposium. The conclusion of this invitation can

be found in the middle at the end by using expressions as “Your presence is an appreciation of creativity”.

The following figure (7) is similar to figure(6) in the style of forming this invitation. Except that from content of figure(7), everyone can understand that this invitation is to attend the exhibition of calligraphy and painting and the left part of this invitation is restricted to mention the names of the participants which is different from figure (6).



Figure(7)

4- The following invitations take the same form, but with different messages which can be recognized by the invitees’.

The invitation in figure (8) is a graduation party. The invitation begins with stating the name of the inviter that refers to the students of English department (college), their name in this invitation, the time, place, and with a conclusion in ‘your presence the concert is getting louder’.

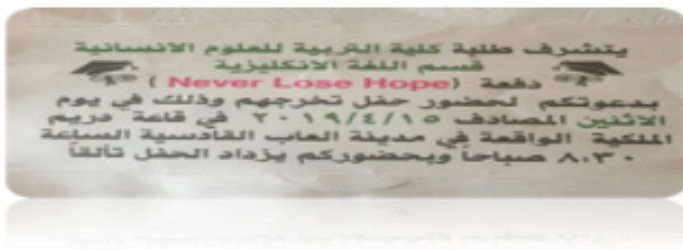


Figure (8)



Figure (11)

The following invitation in figure (12) form its content ,it is invitation to participate in the International Conference for Scientific Research which is specialized for professors and researchers with stating he place , time , with additional information about the conference .



Figure(12)



Figure (13)

Invitation in figure (13) is a special invitation for the artist Thayer Hammed

This invitation begins with the name of the invitation itself which is Baghdad International Flower Festival ,with stating the location the duration of the time . at the end the name of the inviter is written .



Figure(14)

In figure (14) , this invitation about the 97th anniversary of the foundation of the Iraqi police of Salahaddin Governorate . This invitation starts with the name of Allah , the purpose behind this invitation , the inviter Police Directorate (which is not a name of a person) the place and the time of this invitation. At the end , there is the name of the police leader .

Conclusion

Iraqi society is considered to be a close and conservative society. Their people are tending to use spoken invitation because they find it easy , inexpensive and it saves the time but in fact this is unacceptable way for written invitation cards because spoken invitation does not make the invitees taste the respectability from the inviter and it looks like a formal invitation. It denigrates the value and the dignity of the invitees

In Iraq , social practices and values affect many aspects of people's

life , Therefore understanding socio cultural factors is regarded very essential in interpreting the structure of the text of written invitation card.

written invitation cards are considered to be products of social interaction in any culture with rhetorical purposes that specify their common structure

after the analyses of the (13) written invitation cards , the results show that the genre form is the most important thing to construct the type of invitation. Through this genre form , everyone can identify that if it is a general or special invitation and the purpose behind such an invitation. Also the main important moves that are considered as obligatory moves cards are . the name of the inviter that will be a name of person ,administration of school , group of students,etc. Also the message (content) of the invitation is the most important thing in these cards in order to know the purpose behind such invitations. The time and he location of holding these invitation are essential in these cars. At the same time , there are optional moves, such as ,stating the name of Allah and the conclusions of these invitations ,since there are some expressions which are used at the end of some card as “with thanking, with respect, in your presence we are proud and proud,etc. According to the socio-cultural norms and conventions of Iraqi society, the inviters use the same form of the written invitation cards and show it in the social media to invite as much as possible of their friends and relatives and to show their generosity and love to others.

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