Pakistani Visiting Cards as a Genre: Linguistic and Semiotic Insights into Professionalism

Danish Jameel
Master of Philosophy, National University of Modern Languages Faisalabad Campus (Islamabad)
Email: danishjameel2021@gmail.com
Ahsan Mahmood Akbar
Master of Philosophy, National University of Modern Languages Faisalabad Campus (Islamabad)
Email: ahsanthabal@gmail.com
Muhammad Farukh Arslan
Lecturer, Department of English, National University of Modern Languages, Faisalabad.
Email: Farukhgill99@gmail.com

Abstract
This study examines the ways in which linguistic duality is navigated through the linguistic and semiotic features of Pakistani Urdu and English business visiting cards, reviewing them as tools of professional and sociocultural representation. By adopting a genre-based analysis, this research explores how Pakistani professionals use a blend of Urdu and English languages on business cards to reflect both global and local identities. Data were collected from a sample of 30 business visiting cards across diverse industries, and analyzed using Swales' and Bhatia's model (1990) of move analysis framework alongside multimodal semiotic analysis that utilizes Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) semiotic framework to analyze non-verbal symbols, colors, and layouts that contribute to the visual semiotics of professionalism. Findings reveal that the use of English often conveys formality and international affiliation, while Urdu elements reinforce national identity and cultural and especially professional values, creating a unique bilingual identity that caters to both local and global audiences. This study contributes to the understanding of bilingualism in professional settings by demonstrating how language choice and design elements on business cards encapsulate professional status, sociocultural background, and intended audience perception. The findings hold implications for linguists and professionals alike, offering insight into the symbolic capital of bilingualism in Pakistani business contexts. There are moves and steps according to Bhatia's and Swales' models, they both generally include : Names ,credentials, services, contact information, consultation hours ,address, purpose and audience, communicative purpose, lexical and visual features ,and last but not least needs of the discourse community. These moves and steps are taken from the business visiting card of a doctor, and similarly these moves and steps vary from one visiting card holder to the other.

Keywords: Genre-Based Analysis, Linguistics, Semiotics, Professional Representation, Sociocultural Representation

1. Introduction

World has become a global village that has connected the people living in every nook and corner of the worId so the language of people of same professions has gained vital importance especially in polyglot societies like Pakistan. The use of business visiting cards for some specific purposes related to one particular expertise has become trendy into a genre analysis that holds deep roots in linguistic and semiotic meanings. These cards function as both means of sharing contact information and mirrors of cultural identity, social rank, and professional principles. These cards share the information, social prestige and of work values of these business cards holders.

1.1.Research Problem and Gap

A lot of work has been done in the field of genre analysis that include : Pakistani wedding cards, Ted Talks, Pakistani business emails, Argumentative Essays of Pakistani EFL

Learners, Acknowledgement Texts by Pakistani Master Level Theses Writers and last but not least Move Structure in Letters to Editor from English Newspapers of Pakistan. In this way a Genre based Linguistic and Semiotic Analysis of Pakistani Urdu-English Business Visiting Cards as a Vehicles of Professional and Sociocultural Representation remain little studied in educational research. Already existing researches focused on monolingual settings, missing the small details of bilingual communication in places with colonial histories. This document fills the niche through digging into how these business cards present business identity alongside cultural aspects, seeing how people of Pakistan communicate at work place.

1.2. Objectives and Research Questions

The main goal of this article is to explain linguistic and semiotic aspects in Urdu-English Pakistani business cards in special reference to the context of professional persona and social portrayal of the owners of these business cards. This study will answer the following research questions:

1. What linguistic and semiotic features characterize the bilingual representation on Pakistani Urdu-English business visiting cards?
2. How do linguistic and visual elements on Pakistani Urdu-English business visiting cards contribute to the construction of professional identity?
3. What genre-specific conventions emerge in the design and presentation of bilingual business visiting cards within Pakistan's corporate context?

1.3. Significance of the Study

The most notable aspects of this research article enrich the field of genre analysis, sociolinguistics, and semiotics that provides subtlety of bilingual business contacts in cross culture and postcolonial context. This research contributes to the fields of genre analysis, sociolinguistics, and semiotics by providing a nuanced understanding of bilingual business communication in a culturally diverse and postcolonial context. The results show how people communicate through using their cultural identities with their distinct speaking styles. They also help businessmen who use two languages at a same time in Pakistan.

2. Literature Review

Genre analysis provides a framework for understanding how texts function within specific social contexts. Swales (1990) defines genres as "communicative events" characterized by specific linguistic and structural conventions aimed at achieving particular purposes. In the realm of business communication, genre analysis offers valuable insights into how language and visual elements work together to convey meaning and facilitate interaction.

(Shakeel & Arslan, 2023) The study analyzes the flags of 30 countries through the lens of semiotic theory, specifically employing Berger and Luckman's (1966) model. This model highlights three perspectives of meaning: precise meaning, designed meaning, and intended meaning, all within the framework of social constructionism. It extends the concept of precise meaning, which elicits specific responses from recipients. These meanings contribute to the ideology underlying the visual elements of the sign, signifier, and signified, as proposed by Saussure (1916). The study adopts a descriptive qualitative design to examine the flags of 30 countries, analyzing the signs (visuals) in terms of precise meaning, context or designed meaning (related to physical appearance), and intended meaning (as intended to be perceived). Furthermore, each country's dominance is intricately linked to its image and perspective, reflecting the significance they place on their flags, rooted in their background, history, and culture. The results reveal that each country conveys its ideology through its

choice of themes, colors, and patterns, reflecting socio-cultural patterns. The pride and sense of identity of each country are analyzed through their flag choices, which symbolize their historical journey towards statehood.

Faizullah, et.al. (2023) This study presented a semiotic analysis of Zeera plus biscuit advertisement by focusing on the sign systems and meanings embedded within this visual communication medium. In completing this research, this study used 1 zeera plus biscuit advertisement, as material used to determine the meaning of denotation and connotation signs using Roland Barthes'(1964) theory. This present study uses a qualitative approach to describe the semiotic phenomena of signs of denotation and connotation in Zeera plus biscuit. From the analysis, the study conducted verbal and non-verbal analysis of words, pictures, and colors of the advertisement. Through the application of semiotic theory, this study examines the various signs, and symbols employed in Zeera plus to convey messages, and create meaning. This analysis unravels the underlying semiotic structure and implications of Zeera Biscuit, shedding light on the complex relationship between consumers, producers, and the broader socio-cultural context. After analyzing verbal and non-verbal signs of Zeera plus biscuit advertisement based on Roland Barthes's semiotics theory, the study finds that verbal signs are more significant than non-verbal signs, but the differences are minor. This research contributes to the sympathetic of visual communication, Zeera plus design, and consumer culture, offering valuable perceptions for marketers, designers, and researchers in these fields.

(Kanwal, Arslan & Ullah, 2024), This study conducts a semiotic analysis of multinational brand advertisements in Pakistan to explore the role of verbal and non-verbal signs in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. Utilizing Roland Barthes' semiotic theory as a theoretical framework, the study examines ten prominent advertisements from multinational brands, including Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Surf Excel, Telenor, and others. Through purposive sampling and qualitative research methods, the study deconstructs each advertisement to identify and analyze verbal elements such as slogans and textual messages, as well as non-verbal elements like images, colors, and visual motifs. The analysis aims to uncover the underlying meanings, cultural associations, and intended messages conveyed by these advertisements, thereby providing insights into the semiotic strategies employed by multinational brands in the Pakistani market. The significance of the study lies in its contribution to our understanding of advertising practices and consumer behavior in a culturally diverse and rapidly evolving market landscape. The findings offer valuable implications for marketers, advertisers, and researchers seeking to create effective communication strategies and enhance brand engagement in Pakistan and similar contexts.

Faizullah, et.al (2024) Packaging speaks louder than words, and this study brings to light how the semiotics behind Pakistani biscuit packaging manipulates consumer perceptions. The research aimed to explore the interaction of linguistic and visual messages in packaging, focusing on how they convey cultural meanings and influence consumer behavior. Employing Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory (1964) as the conceptual framework, the research employed a qualitative semiotic analysis method to analyze one hundred biscuit packaging samples from ten prominent Pakistani brands. Data was collected through open-ended questionnaires from 200 mass communication students at Government College University, Faisalabad. The major findings revealed that the interplay of linguistic elements—such as brand names, slogans, and descriptions—with visual features like colors, symbols, and images, constructs a powerful narrative that not only shapes brand identity but also deceives consumer perception by masking the true nature of the product. The study broadened Barthes' framework by proposing the inclusion of new semiotic dimensions, such

as digital and ethical messages, to better interpret modern packaging strategies. This research contributes significantly to the fields of linguistics, marketing, and design, highlighting that the semiotic analysis of packaging is crucial for understanding consumer engagement and brand success in the Pakistani market. It also provides insights for future studies on how packaging can be used ethically to communicate product authenticity and cultural relevance. Social semiotics complements genre analysis by emphasizing the study of signs, symbols, and visual elements within a text. Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar framework is particularly useful for analyzing the semiotic resources on business visiting cards. It allows for a detailed examination of how typography, color, and spatial arrangement contribute to the construction of meaning in a bilingual context. The study highlighted that Pakistani acknowledgements often deviate from Hyland's (2004b) three-move model, blending it with Al-Ali's (2010) framework and incorporating culturally specific elements like Islamic references. Pakistani researchers, such as Mahmood and Yasmin (2017), have investigated argumentative essay writing, highlighting issues like weak organizational structure and limited genre awareness among students. Their work emphasizes the need for culturally contextualized teaching strategies to improve rhetorical and persuasive writing skills. For precise referencing, consult their studies published in reputable journals. In Pakistan, Mansoor (2009) studied linguistic features of business correspondence, emphasizing the role of English as a lingua franca.

Arslan et.al (2023) The research was to find out the different layers of meaning and different interpretations of meaning on the cover pages of Pakistani dramas through semiotic analysis. For this purpose, six cover pages of different Pakistani dramas were selected and analyzed in terms of semiotics. The size, color, dresses, and facial expressions were deeply analyzed. The analysis showed that there were multiple meanings that were conveyed to the audience through different schemes of colors, dresses, and styles presented on the cover pages of dramas. Different major aspects of society were also analyzed, like religious, social, cultural, etc. It was investigated how these aspects were portrayed on the cover pages of dramas. The study revealed that semiotic analysis helps the audience understand the hidden meanings of the cover pages. It also helped to know what the theme of the story was and what the characteristics of the characters were.

Ahmad and Mahmood (2011) explored cultural influences on email communication in the corporate sector. Rehman and Bilal (2015) examined the generic structure of business emails, identifying moves specific to Pakistani businesses. These studies highlight the evolving dynamics of business communication in Pakistan. In Pakistan, Ali and Aslam (2015) analyzed wedding invitation cards, identifying cultural and linguistic features reflecting local traditions. Hussain and Fatima (2017) explored the semiotic and rhetorical patterns in Pakistani wedding invitations, emphasizing their communicative purposes. These studies highlight the role of genre analysis in understanding cultural expressions. Despite their significance, research on wedding invitations remains limited in the Pakistani context. Miranda (2018) highlights the emergence of new communication genres facilitated by the internet, with TED Talks exemplifying this trend. As a nonprofit, TED disseminates ideas globally through concise, accessible talks and educational content, such as TED-EDs, showcasing innovation in knowledge-sharing platforms.

Research on bilingual communication in postcolonial contexts highlights the intricate relationship between language and identity. English often signifies professionalism and global connectivity, while native languages, such as Urdu, are tied to cultural identity and local authenticity. Scholars like Pennycook (2001) and Bhatt (2008) explore the role of

English in South Asian settings, emphasizing its status as a marker of social class and professional stature.

3. Methodology

3.1. Genre Analysis of Pakistani Business Cards

This document outlines the Key moves and steps based on Bhatia's and Swales' (1990) genre analysis frameworks. The focus is on Pakistani business cards from linguistic and semiotic perspectives.

1.2. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative approach, grounded in genre analysis and social semiotics, to examine the linguistic and semiotic dimensions of Pakistani Urdu-English business visiting cards. This methodological framework allows for an in-depth exploration of how genre conventions and cultural symbols convey professional identity and sociocultural values.

1.3. Data Collection

An intentional sample of 30 Pakistani Urdu-English business visiting cards was gathered from various professional fields: healthcare, law, education, printing press, last but not least book depots. These miscellaneous specimens provide a detailed analysis of business interaction within several types of facets of life and purposive sample of 30 Pakistani Urdu-English business visiting cards was collected from diverse professional sectors, including finance, law, academia, healthcare, and technology. This varied sample enables a comprehensive analysis of professional communication across different industries. The networking cards were obtained with the approval of the business owners securing accuracy and diversity in stylistic features.

1.4. Data Analysis

Urdu-English business cards were gathered, both languages: Urdu and English languages were seen side by side often, while sometimes Urdu was written in highlighted form and sometimes English vice versa. Colors, images, layout for cultural and professional meanings were observed and seen. It was also observed that all these things were used according to the status and social prestige, cultural background and social identity. The data analysis follows a three-tiered process. First, genre analysis is conducted to identify linguistic and structural patterns. Second, Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar framework is applied to decode semiotic resources, focusing on typography, color, layout, and cultural symbols. Finally, findings are interpreted within the context of Pakistani bilingualism and cultural values, drawing insights into identity construction.
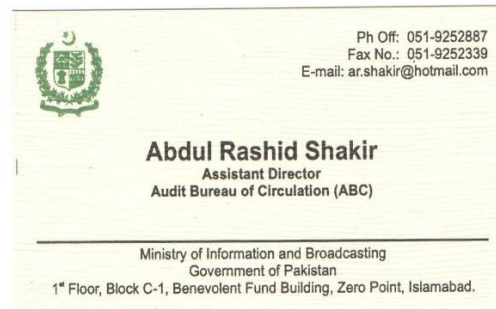
KEY MOVES AND STEPS

Following moves and steps are considered crucial for analyzing the genre of business cards. They are grounded in the principles of genre analysis as established by Bhatia and Swales (1990).

Key Moves
- 1. Identifying the profession or role (Explicit profession identification).
- 2. Branding through logos or symbols (Semiotic markers).
- 3. Contact facilitation (Provision of primary contact details).
- 4. Establishing credibility (Inclusion of certifications, qualifications, or affiliations).
- 5. Location specification (Physical or digital address representation).
- 6. Tagline or motto inclusion (Highlighting unique professional philosophy).
- 7. Language choice and tone (Formal vs. casual depending on the audience).
- 8. Design and layout structure (Hierarchical organization of information).
- 9. Audience engagement (Cultural and linguistic appropriateness).
- 10. Call-to-action feature (Encouraging immediate communication).

Key Steps
- 1. Mentioning a professional designation clearly.
- 2. Placing the logo prominently for easy recognition.
- 3. Prioritizing primary contact details like phone and email.
- 4. Using colors and fonts associated with the profession.
- 5. Including social media or website links as secondary contact modes.
- 6. Highlighting core services or areas of expertise.
- 7. Ensuring concise and readable text layout.

- 8. Customizing based on cultural norms (e.g., Urdu-English code-switching).
- 9. Incorporating industry-specific imagery or icons.
- 10. Organizing content sequentially (e.g., name, designation, contact).

Optional Moves and Steps

The following moves and steps are considered less relevant or unnecessary for the analysis of business cards. They may distract from the core objectives of professional communication.

Optional Moves
- 1. Use of poetic or literary quotes (Non-professional impression).
- 2. Inclusion of overly personal information (Irrelevant details like hobbies).
- 3. Redundant repetition of information (E.g., contact details in multiple places).
- 4. Excessive use of decorative elements (Distracting design choices).
- 5. Overemphasis on one language (Ignoring bilingual needs).
- 6. Background imagery that obscures text (Aesthetic over practicality).
- 7. Unconventional fonts (Deviating from readability standards).
- 8. Overloading the card with text (Limited space for effective communication).
- 9. Abstract slogans unrelated to profession (Loss of purpose).
- 10. Non-standard card dimensions (Logistical inconvenience).

Optional Steps
- 1. Including personal anecdotes or stories.
- 2. Designing cards in a language not understood by the audience.
- 3. Using slang or informal language.
- 4. Including outdated or irrelevant qualifications.
- 5. Listing services that are no longer offered.
- 6. Using offensive or culturally inappropriate symbols.
- 7. Adding excessive technical jargon.
- 8. Incorporating QR codes without explanation or relevance.
- 9. Experimenting with non-traditional shapes (E.g., circular cards).
- 10. Neglecting proofreading for errors.

Genre Analysis of Business Cards (Based on Uploaded Data)

This study provides an analysis of business cards based on the uploaded images. It identifies important and unimportant moves and steps in accordance with Bhatia's and Swales' genre analysis frameworks.

1. Key Moves and Steps

Based on the business cards provided, the following moves and steps are considered necessary for effective communication and professional representation.

KEY MOVES
- 1. Clearly mentioning the professional role or service (e.g., 'Legal Consultant', 'Beauty Parlor').
- 2. Incorporating a professional logo or symbol to enhance brand recognition.
- 3. Providing accurate and detailed contact information (e.g., phone numbers, email addresses).
- 4. Highlighting key services or expertise areas (e.g., 'Civil, Criminal, Family Law').

- 5. Including location details for easy accessibility (e.g., office address or clinic location).
- 6. Using taglines or expertise indicators to reinforce credibility (e.g., 'Expert in Bridal Makeup').
- 7. Integrating bilingual text to cater to diverse audiences (e.g., English and Urdu).
- 8. Displaying operating hours to inform potential clients of availability.
- 9. Providing secondary contact modes like WhatsApp numbers for convenience.
- 10. Structuring the layout for optimal readability and professional aesthetics.

Key Steps

- 1. Positioning the professional title prominently (e.g., 'Dr.', 'Advocate').
- 2. Ensuring the logo is placed where it draws immediate attention.
- 3. Listing multiple contact options for accessibility (e.g., landline, mobile, WhatsApp).
- 4. Highlighting certifications or affiliations for trust-building.
- 5. Using a clear font style and size to enhance readability.
- 6. Maintaining a consistent color scheme aligned with the profession.
- 7. Including images or icons related to the field (e.g., houses for real estate).
- 8. Ensuring cultural relevance in design and language use.
- 9. Providing step-by-step guidance (e.g., 'Call for an appointment').
- 10. Displaying expertise-specific terms for audience targeting (e.g., 'ENT Specialist').

2. Unimportant Moves and Steps

The following moves and steps are deemed unnecessary or less relevant for the genre of business cards.

Optional Moves

- 1. Overloading the card with excessive text (reduces clarity).
- 2. Using personal images unrelated to the profession (e.g., irrelevant decor).
- 3. Incorporating irrelevant slogans or poetic phrases.
- 4. Including informal language or slang in professional settings.
- 5. Using overly decorative or complex designs that detract from key information.
- 6. Overemphasizing one aspect of the service while neglecting others.
- 7. Ignoring bilingual needs when targeting diverse audiences.
- 8. Adding too many colors or fonts, causing visual clutter.
- 9. Failing to organize content logically (e.g., randomly placed text).
- 10. Including unrelated images or clip art that confuse the viewer.

Optional Steps

- 1. Listing unnecessary personal details (e.g., marital status).
- 2. Adding irrelevant or outdated certifications.
- 3. Using ambiguous terms that confuse the audience.
- 4. Including QR codes without clear purpose or explanation.
- 5. Using fonts that are too small to read comfortably.
- 6. Overloading the card with excessive contact details.
- 7. Placing decorative elements that obscure important information.
- 8. Using non-standard shapes that reduce practicality.
- 9. Adding irrelevant quotes or sayings unrelated to the service.
- 10. Ignoring alignment and spacing, leading to a messy appearance.

FINDINGS

The analysis of Pakistani Urdu-English business visiting cards reveals distinct patterns in linguistic and semiotic choices that reflect the professional identity and sociocultural affiliations of Pakistani business professionals. Three main themes emerged: bilingual language structure and hierarchy, symbolic representation of cultural identity, and visual markers of authority and status.

1. Bilingual Language Structure and Hierarchy

The visiting cards usually display a structured language hierarchy, with Urdu predominantly occupying positions of prominence, such as the top left or center and sometimes English vice versa according to the need of an hour . This placement signifies English's role as a marker of formality, professionalism, and prestige. In contrast, Urdu is often used in subtler areas, emphasizing its connection to national identity and cultural heritage. This division illustrates how Pakistani professionals navigate dual identities: projecting an image aligned with global business standards through English while grounding themselves in local values with Urdu.

2. Symbolic Representation of Cultural Identity

Semiotic elements, including traditional patterns, national symbols (e.g., crescent and star motifs), and culturally resonant color schemes (such as green for Pakistani identity), frequently appear on these cards. For example, legal professionals often incorporate emblems of scales or gavels, merging Western symbols of justice with Urdu phrases invoking notions of integrity and respect. This blending of symbols reveals a genre-specific approach to projecting a professional image while subtly honoring cultural roots.

3. Visual Markers of Authority and Status

Typography, layout, and font size serve as visual indicators of professional rank and corporate standing. Senior professionals tend to use bold, large fonts, with substantial spacing around their names and titles, lending a sense of authority. Conversely, junior professionals employ more modest layouts with less emphasis on typographic embellishments. Such visual markers indicate social hierarchy, signaling levels of authority and experience within the business culture.

These findings indicate that Pakistani business visiting cards function as rich sites of identity construction, where bilingual language use, cultural symbolism, and visual cues converge to project professionalism, social standing, and cultural allegiance.

6. DISCUSSION

This section contextualizes the findings within the theoretical framework of genre analysis and social semiotics, emphasizing the significance of bilingualism, identity construction, and cultural representation on Pakistani business visiting cards.

1. Linguistic Hierarchies in Bilingual Contexts

The observed hierarchy between English and Urdu on Pakistani business visiting cards reflects a broader sociolinguistic trend in postcolonial societies. As Bhatt (2008) argues, English serves as a global lingua franca in professional domains, symbolizing modernity, economic power, and cross-border communication. In contrast, Urdu embodies nationalism and cultural heritage. This hierarchical arrangement indicates a form of "code-switching," where language choice is determined by social context and target audience, positioning English as a symbol of professional authority and Urdu as a cultural anchor.

2. Semiotic Representation of Cultural Identity

The inclusion of culturally significant symbols (e.g., national colors, motifs) on the cards underscores the role of semiotic resources in identity construction. Drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar, these symbols can be interpreted as semiotic modes representing cultural belonging and heritage. In a genre traditionally associated with global business culture, these elements offer a subtle counter-narrative, embedding Pakistani identity within a professional framework. This integration aligns with Pennycook's (2001) perspective on "transcultural flows," suggesting that the cards serve as vehicles for hybrid identities, blending global business practices with local cultural values.

3. Visual Indicators of Authority and Social Hierarchy

The variation in font size, typography, and spatial arrangement observed on these cards signifies professional status, reinforcing social hierarchy within the Pakistani business context. These findings echo Bourdieu's (1986) concept of "symbolic capital," where visible markers such as title prominence and font boldness signal authority, experience, and professional distinction. In Pakistani society, where respect for hierarchy remains strong, these visual markers provide subtle cues to the cardholder's rank, aligning with Swales' (1990) definition of genre as a structured form of communication reflecting societal norms and hierarchies.

7. CONCLUSION

This research highlights the linguistic and semiotic dimensions of Pakistani Urdu-English business visiting cards, emphasizing their role as significant artifacts in the negotiation of professional identity and sociocultural representation. The findings reveal that these cards serve not only as vehicles for professional communication but also as texts that embody the complexities of navigating bilingual identities in a rapidly globalizing world.

The analysis indicates that English, while dominant, coexists with Urdu, facilitating a dialogue between global professionalism and local cultural authenticity. The incorporation of cultural symbols and visual elements further enriches the narrative, offering insights into how professionals in Pakistan negotiate their identities in various socio-economic contexts.

Implications for Future Research

This study opens avenues for further research into other genres of communication within bilingual contexts, exploring how similar dynamics play out in different professional settings. Future research could expand on the role of digital business cards and their impact on identity representation in the increasingly online professional landscape. Additionally, comparative studies involving business visiting cards from other multilingual societies could provide a broader understanding of how cultural and linguistic intersections shape professional identities globally.

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