

Semiotics Analysis of Cultural Representation in Pakistani Dramas Title Pages

Khadija Tul Kubra¹ Ayesha Murtza² Ruqyya Akhter³

1. Department of Applied Linguistics, Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan

2. Department of Applied Linguistics, Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan

3. Department of English Literature, Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan

Abstract

This semiotic study explores non-verbal components in communication with the help of visualization. Kress introduces the dictionary for the study of signs used in images representations. In this research, multimodal of Kress and Leeuwen is used for the elaboration of images. For this analysis, three title pages of 2015 to 2016 dramas are taken. By examining the textual relation with visual modes, frames, position of different signs, and the behind philosophy in image art are investigated.

Keywords: Cultural Semiotics, Textual Analysis, Multimodal, Pakistani Dramas Title Pages.

1. Introduction

Linguistics deals with the system of language but to understand the sense of any context, there is need to understand para-linguistic features. Behind the spoken language there is system of signs. Every object has some special meanings (signs) in them for particular community (Jakobson 1975). Semiotics is the system of signs in which signs give meanings to their interpreters; that is called “sign process” (Morris; 1938, Deely; 1990 & Koch, 1998). According to the Cassirer (1923) cultural semiotics is the subfield of semiotics. The symbolic form of cultural semiotics basically performs two functions; “sign system in a culture” (how different signs give different meanings to the culture) and “culture as sign system” (how participants of the culture live with their sign systems (Herder, 1784 & Tylor, 1871). Semiotics approach towards author deals with the traditions, norms, and values of every particular culture (Posner, 1991).

Signs convey those meanings which are not explicit to the audience. To convey the sign meanings of any culture three components are important; process, codes and media. In our normal routines some specific things process as sign, which is called “sign process” (Posner & Reinecke, 1977). Every sign system involves at least marks (signs), audience, and specific meanings, which are conveyed to particular community by this sign process. Sign process is multilayered. It varies from community to community. One sign system conveys proper meanings to those who share same system of signs. In one sign system, there are signifier (verbal utterance) and signified (mental image/ meanings) (Saussure, 1916). These signifiers and rules of particular culture develop the relationship among them (Noth, 1990). This relationship gives particular meanings in sign process. These signifiers and signified are the units of *codes* in sign process. These are different types of codes, which give multiple layers of meanings to sign process, natural, conventional and artifact codes (Keller & Ludtke, 1997).

The inherent codes are *natural codes*. These codes transfer from one generation to the other but these codes could be changed due to maturation. *Conventional codes* are established for promoting traditional norms (Cavalli Sforza & Felfman, 1981 & Nyiri, 1988). So, the community of living being belongs to the same species but have different cultures called *pseudo speciation* (Erikson, 1966 & Ebil-Eibesfeldt, 1979). The third component of sign system is *media*. In one sign process the same code system is conveyed in the consistent manners than it is called same shared medium. The cultural semiotics proceeds by sign system having set of codes with the help of particular medium. Transfer media of conveying message have some specific meanings in them. There are five types of media; biological, physical, technological, sociological and code related media (posner, 1985).

The *biological media* transfer to the recipient with the help of sensory abilities of mankind as through eyes, ears, nose, mouth/ tongue, or through senses of skin. The second media is *physical* one. In which physical make-up and chemical elements are used to transfer signs (posner et al, 1997-2004). Third media is based on *technological* resources to convey signs as, cameras, telescope etc. The most popular and rich media is sociological media this media is cluster of all above mediums. Social media involve museums, clubs, all broadcasting companies and websites (Giesecke, 1988 & Baltzer, 2001).

2. Modern Approaches towards Social Semiotics

Social semiotics is the sphere of meanings developer and meaning developing strategies. Halliday is one of the ancestors of this field, in *Language as social semiotics* 1978; he introduces three meta functions of signs. First is *Ideational meta-function*; specified ideology of the world. Second is *interpersonal meta-function*; in our surroundings people are specified special roles. Third is textual meta-function; sign relations with other signs in particular context and culture.

Kress develops the critical approach towards social semiotics in “*Language as Ideology*” (Kress & Hodge,

1979). In “*Social Semiotics*” 1988, they develop the resources for images study similar as language study. They said:

Traditional semiotics likes to assume that the relevant meanings are frozen and fixed in the text itself, to be extracted and decoded by the analyst by reference to a coding system that is impersonal and neutral, and universal for users of the code. Social semiotics cannot assume that texts produce exactly the meanings and effects that their authors hope for: it is precisely the struggles and their uncertain outcomes that must be studied at the level of social action, and their effects in the production of meaning. (Hodge & Kress, 1988:12)

Social semiotics interprets the whole context not only the text context (Hodge & Kress, 1988). The visual structures are the grammatical units to explain the particular meanings of social experience and forms (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996).

In “*Language and power*” theoretical and practical issues of critical discourse analysis is discussed to manipulate the philosophy behind the visual arts (Simpson & Mayr, 2010).

3. Research Questions

1. In what ways dramas title logos contributes towards their theme representations?
2. What non-verbal communicative strategies are associated towards women role in society?
3. Which characteristics of visual modes are used?

4. Methodology

Qualitative approach is used to interpret the title logos of Pakistani dramas. For this purpose I use mixed semiotic approaches to extract meanings from visual logs.

4.1 Data

Three dramas’ title logos are used to interpret, taken from the recent years 2015 to 2016. These dramas are particularly on women issues in Pakistani culture.

5. Theoretical Interpretations of Semiotic Approaches

Visual images have many signs in itself to interpret their hidden meanings (Bignell, 2002). All the components in image arts, which convey some meanings called sign. In this study all linguistic and non-linguistic features of Pakistani dramas title logos are interpreted by using Kress model.

In semiotics representation of visual images all modes must have semantic meanings as the part of non-verbal components (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). “In general, social semiotics deals different signs with relation of cultural specific meanings”(Hodge & Kress, 1988).

5.1 Textual Analysis

In figure 1; logo of Pakistani drama serial is displayed. In this logo drama producer uses the title “*Zindgi Gulzar Ha*” which is in the form of complete sentence. The literal meanings of this sentence, contradict with the women caption rather positively relate with the male caption. This caption of statement gives serious effect as well as comic sense at the same time, which arouses the curiosity among audience to explore it. The adjective sentence communicates with image signs. There is title relationship with whole play philosophy. This ambiguous and intellectually fascinating “logo” has the ability to attract their victims and motivate them to explore (Simpson & Mayr, 2010; 93). If any textual material adds reasonable mark in visual representation it is called conjunctive adjuncts (Halliday, 1994). One example of conjunctive adjunct is this; text represents very casual statement having big philosophy. Same is in the case of title “*Zindgi Gulzar Ha*”. This title basically communicates with the men character and also differentiates the role of male and female. The male life and female life have distinct philosophies. Title statement represents positive adjective, but this statement true for male and opposite for female in image. Beasley and Danesi (2002) state “the ultimate goal of creating an appropriate image for whole work is to embed it into social consciousness”. Male and female lives of this logo are mythical identities.

In figure 2; title of drama is as “*Khathputli*”. This one word is closely linked to the Pakistani custom play. In that event hand-made “*Khathputlis*” are presented to show special finger dance. This is also known as proverb of Urdu language, in sense of having fully dependent personality; the person who cannot do anything without permission of their foreman. The title text of this drama has direct relation with the theme of this play. The symbolic identity is associated with the adjective title of this play. This text has the negative relation with the image of girl. This symbolic title arouses the curiosity and attraction toward exploring the story. “Mimic representation of conversational style in logos is the use of disjunctive syntax (Delin, 2000). In this strategy logos contain any one or two textual components without verb or subject. Kress and Leeuwen (2006) said “there are number of coherent alternative ways of reading logos”.

In figure 3; title of drama is “*Zid*” which is meant by “persistence in their decisions”. This word is raising negative and serious effect in their thematic relation. Title is taken for those girls, who are independent in their

thinking and want to follow their own philosophies of life, but due to social norms the attitude is denoted their life as negative sign. The title text is contrasted with the modern approach of female freedom. The purpose is to point out female attitude in negative way that they must be failure in life, if they violate social norms. The title of this drama has the mythical relationship among text, male and female character. Fowler (1985) said title wording have the relationship among features of habitat, believes, and values of community.

6. Multimodal Analysis

Kress and Van Leeuwen's multimodal approach is used to interpret social organization of semiotics. In this work position of sign, mode, and framing is tool kit to analysis.

6.1 Position of Sign

Placement of sign is very important phenomena in developing representative logos. Different signs in one image represent different meanings about story. As in figure 1; male and female life is relate with their happiness as sign of successful life. The major portion of this logo consists of two individual identities; ones' life success is being related with their facial expressions as semiotic sign. The title is placed in the center, which shows the central or controlling ideology of all the signs. Girl image is comparatively big in whole logo which is showing hardness of her life and serious roll in the society.

In figure 2; title is placed in the center of the image because whole story and visual semiotics of this logo revolve around its verbal wording. Most of the photographic area of whole logo consists on theme of "khatputli" while one side showing image of depressed girl. The 'khatputli' has the cultural specific sign of under-supervision of foreman. In this logo the role of symbolic image is being related with the life of girl.

In figure 3; many signs are emerged. The sign of developed society in the form of urbanization placed as background of image. In front of this three younger identities are emerged. In the for-front of this image the text title is placed. These three signs of this logo have mythical relation. Urbanization and development in background working as the roots of the issue and other two sign are emerged on that ideology. Due to modernization youngsters are victimized, in which majority are females. Title in the front of logo, work as the resulting attitude of whole advancement. So, the place of signs in logos has very symbolic relationship with the theme of art. These placements arouse the attentions and curiosity among the audience. According to the Bignell (2002) sign has the positive connotation as signifier for signified.

6.2 Mode

Socially and culturally recognized signs work as mode (meaning container). Halliday presents three meta-functions of mode. One is color represents identity. Second color represents the social position of identity as resource. Third color represents relationship with background and with other signs for coherent effect (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2009).

In figure 1; girl major picture is gray-black, which show the social position of this girl and all life realities of suffering that she is facing. In the same figure, girl is standing with a man and now image color is red. Red color is associated with love of life and inner happiness. So, red dress of girl is mythical representation of girl's life after getting marriage.

In figure 2; girl is in white dress. White color is cultural mark for women in Asian society. Women are banned to wear different colors except white; in case of divorced or widow. In this figure color of girl's dress tells her story. As colors are mark of charm of girls' life are banned by the society in which she moves.

In figure 3; background color has the harmony with both girls dresses color. It indicates that symbol of modernism in background only effecting on girls. The road color in the background relate with man dress. It indicates that men are struggling a lot for moving forward but the attitude of girls in negative sense affected by the modern developments.

So, the color and symbolic resources in visual semiotics closely work to tell the social norms and regularities in our arts. While in dramas production these modes purely working for exploring our social setup.

6.3 Framing

In figure 1; first two images are framed apart to show the contradiction social standards. In the same frame both identities are placed together in the bottom. It indicates that solution of all the problems of girl's life is in the relation with man. It brings cohesion in their lives.

In figure 2; girl image is in one border and the symbolic image on the other border. The edge of title image touches the symbolic image. This factor is solving ideological war of society. Society is treating the girl like symbol "khatputli" but in actual text title and symbol are connected together, which is meant for fun. While girl is human character and has distinct role than play. So, there is need to understand to distinguish roles of two identities at their own place.

In figure 3; three identities are connected to create emerging effect, it indicates that the role of man and

women in society is closely connected. The relation of background framing with front identities is pointing reasons of their attitude in present age.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) said; the more close identities show the information unity among them. They also said; the space between the identities shows different relations among participants and viewers (2006).

7. Conclusion

This is the semiotics study of Pakistani Dramas title logos. The purpose was to see the semiotics role to understand non-verbal communication. How semiotics communicates towards social positions of different signs. The semiotics analysis of all three logos tells the important role of visual signs in communication. The place of signs, framing them with relation of other identities, different colors and gestures; in short way communicate the whole purpose of their art.

Visual semiotics analysis motivates the readers to know the very serious issues in our society. Title pages of social plays work as the advertisement of drama production. These representations tell how the story will raise and about the final issue. Under discussion dramas, the women social issues are highlighted. Women are still dependent to move in society on males. If they adopt modern trends as in figure 3; their attitude is being treated negatively and they automatically removed from circle. So, semiotics play very comprehensive role towards understanding para-linguistic features. In this genre no research has been conducted. For future research more data should be interpreted and researcher should investigate in more depth.

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Appendix



Figure 1: "Zindgi Gulzar Ha" drama serial title image (2015).



Figure 2: "Khathputhli" drama serial title image (2016).



Figure 3: "Zid" drama serial title image (2015).