

Communicating Beyond the Conventional Functions: An Assessment of Newspaper Announcements

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Abstract

By default, all announcements notify listeners or readers of a given event, be it social, cultural, or religious. Newspaper personal or non-product advertisements tend to make audiences focus on its sponsors or the subject-matter of the announcements. Most personal announcements fall within the homely discourse genre. Scholars believe that careful examination of these types of announcements reveals further communications achieved beyond its primary functions and literal wordings. These communications could be within sociocultural or religious contexts. This critique reviews scholarly literature on how language is employed in a variety of newspaper announcements to convey much deeper sociocultural, religious, or political messages. The review focuses two types of genres, viz: congratulatory, and obituary and death announcements. Findings reveal that in congratulation and thank-you messages, a higher level of communication is achieved through various segments of such announcements, i.e. the use of multimodal, its position in the newspaper, etc. It shows how the announcements serve certain communicative purposes and how they are being influenced by factors such as gender and socioeconomic class. On the other hand, the literature reviewed on obituary and death announcements discloses how language is being utilized in the advent of death to communicate, not only to the deceased, but with wider audiences. The appraisal demonstrates how pages of newspaper death notice become platforms for eradicating social divisions and fighting the privileged groups. Another part of the evaluation discusses some contrasting conflicting views on the question of invoking God and religion in death rituals. As deceased persons are being celebrated and seen as martyrs in given cultures, others subscribe to notions that perceive death as personal choice and mere departure from the world. It is therefore recommended that more empirical works be conducted on congratulatory and other happy ceremony category of the newspaper announcements as the literature reviewed, so far, shows a very few scholarly works in that aspect of the genre.

Keywords: newspaper announcements, genre, homely discourse, congratulation, obituary, communicative functions

Introduction

Dynamism is the nature of human language in every setting, and language stands as the main instrument for social contacts. Part of human communication takes place by means of assortment of genres, be it in written texts, television programmes, music, print materials, or any kind of literature (Faleke & Alo, 2010; Acheoah, 2013; Lau, 2013). Genres, such as newspaper announcements, make contents communication-enabled (Fowler, 1989). The French origin word ‘genre’ has been “widely used in rhetoric, literary theory, media theory, and more recently linguistics” in a clear reference to a unique form of manuscript (Chandler, 1997). Haddad (2005) recollects that the perception of genre has long been used in the literary sphere at the detriment of other “non-literary genres” that were given a very minimal consideration over centuries (p. 60). In elaboration on Chandler’s (1997) categorization, it has been proposed that the idea of genre study “has been primarily nominological and typological in function” for nearly 2,000 years now. In other words, genre studies have shouldered the tasks of dividing various fields of knowledge into different types and provided names for each type. It is widely believed that in the 1980s, collective works of theorists worldwide centralized the concept of genre to “understanding the social, functional, and pragmatic dimensions of language use”. Halliday’s (1978), Miller’s (1984), and Bakhtin’s (1986) publications represent the induction of the “non-literary writing” in genre studies (Coe & Freedman, 1998, p. 136). Contrary to the primordial classifications of genres, present-day “media genres” have tendencies of clinching more to “specific forms” of genres other than “the universals” of the classical times such as tragedies and comedies. Therefore, some experts believe that as much as a large number of names for different genres exist, certainly there are scores of genres and sub-genres that are yet to be named (Allen, 1989; Wales, 1989; Fowler, 1989, as cited in Chandler, 1997, p. 1).

By way of definition, genres are mostly seen as “vague concepts” without clear-cut edges that need not to be put out of place (Finn & Kushmerick, 2006, p. 1507), and “fuzzy categories” with no essential and satisfactory status of description (Chandler, 1997, p. 3). Swales (1990), as cited in Finn and Kushmerick (2006), identifies genre as “a class of communicative events where there is some shared set of communicative purposes”. It has also been noted that genre

is “orthogonal to topic”. That is to say, materials dealing with the same subject matter may not necessarily originate from the same genre and the other way round. Moreover, it has been suggested that genre should be viewed as a usual outcome that resulted from the analysis of both the “text used” and “the language style” applied in a set of manuscripts (pp. 1507-8). Genre according to Karlgren’s (2004) perspective represents a process through which materials that are identical in style and spontaneity are put together in order to reach audiences taking part in an intended communication.

In addition, genres are not written off by far as “features of texts, but are mediating frameworks between texts, makers and interpreters” (Chandler, 1997, p. 8). They are also seen as “... the text categories readily distinguished by mature speakers of a language” (Trosborg, 1997, p. 6, as cited in Haddad 2005, p. 60). Studies on genres are mainly concerned with “the analysis of language use in routine settings” (Al-Ali, 2005, p. 5). Instances of that include register and lexical examinations in particular fields. In fact, a considerable number of investigations have been carried out on text forms of genre. Such analyses are mostly academic, social and professional based (see for example, Mirador, 2000; Henry & Roseberry, 1996, 2001; Crossley, 2007, etc.).

Newspaper Announcements as Genres

Basically, it is assumed that all forms of announcements have a tendency of notifying readers or listeners about some happenings (Nwoye, 1992). Thus, personal announcements (Al-Khatib, 1997) or “non-product advertisements” refer to categories of announcements that “get the audience to think about who’s sponsoring the advertisement or the issue discussed” (Boveé et al., 1995, as cited in Behnam & Piadeh, 2005, p. 165). For example, congratulatory announcement genre has been classified by Al-Ali (2005) as one of the “important genres” though it has “received little attention from researchers” (p. 6). The likes of such genres have been tagged ‘homely’ discourses as they are “easily recognizable socially constructed text genres of everyday life”. Other assortment from the same ‘homely’ category includes wedding invitations, ceremony announcements, birth notices, obituaries, and marriage sample announcements (Miller, 1984; Hoberg, 1983, as cited in Al-Ali, 2005, p. 6; Otta et al., 1998). Researchers believe that a thorough examination of these types of announcements “uncovers social, cultural, and religious messages” (Ergin, 2012, p. 271).

Previous studies on newspaper announcements include most of what Miller (1984) characterized as ‘homely’ discourses. A number of empirical investigations have been carried out in a variety of newspaper announcement genres. Attempts have been made to examine beyond the literal contents of these announcements. Cultural and communicative implications of congratulatory notices have been discussed by Al-Khatib (1997). In obituaries and death announcements for instance, Afful (2012) categorizes that studies conducted by Marzol (2006), Fernandez (2006/2007), and Al-Ali (2005) examined “figurative” elements in the “language of obituaries” and death announcements. According to Afful (2012), related works done by the likes of Nwoye (1992), Booth (2002), Bonsu (2002; 2007), and Eid (2000), mostly focused on the “structure” and other “factor that influence the language” of the genre. Though, Bonsu’s (2002; 2007) works had some additional concern for the “schematic structure” of the obituaries (p. 120). Other sensitive sociocultural issues such as religion, race, gender, class and identity crises, etc., have also been examined in a number of obituary notices (Matiki, 2008; Ergin, 2010, 2012; Al-Ali, 2005). It is believed that careful examinations of these forms of announcements enable individuals to keep track of social changes (Jones, 2005).

Congratulatory Announcements and the Construction of Social Rapport

It is noteworthy that congratulatory announcements are regarded above all as “friendly social acts”. They are seen as “items or advertisements” that for the most part appear in newspapers on purpose to commemorate special occasions, thank individual(s) for remarkable performances carried out, or congratulate someone for a particular achievement or success. For example, upon the release of high school results, or the swearing-in of new cabinet members in Jordan, CAs may engage four pages of a single newspaper or more. Such announcements may feature once or more and, in some cases, could possibly continue to feature for some days to come (Al-Khatib, 1997, pp. 157-159). In an equivalent point of view, Holmes (1990) as cited in Al-Khatib (1997) proposes that:

A congratulation or thank-you announcement is a communicative act addressed to B’s face-needs and intended to praise or approve a particular achievement or action, and thus to strengthen good and healthy relations between A and B (where A is the announcer and B is the person congratulated or thanked) (p. 157).

According to Al-Khatib (1997), scholarly findings indicate that these types of announcements are “widely known and heavily used” in many Arab societies (p. 158). The practice may be in a way or the other related to the fact sociocultural and family issues are still crucial in most Arab states. In Jordan for instance, like most other Arab communities, societal values necessitate individuals to have loyalty to families and clans, and also maintain good relationship with friends and relatives (Al-Ali, 2005; Al-Khatib, 1997). Scholars compare congratulatory and thanking announcements to the act of “apologizing” as both acts are used to maintain healthy rapports involving human beings. It keeps alive social balance, and at the same time, it has been characterized as suitable instances of “face-supportive acts”. Generally, congratulating, thanking and apologizing focus on the “addressee’s face needs”; therefore, each of these acts always aspire to attain the addressee’s “positive face wants” (Holmes, 1988, 1990; Leech, 1983; Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987; Harris, 1984, as cited in Al-Khatib, 1997, p. 167).

For example, Al-Khatib (1997) has examined the cultural and communicative functions of congratulation and thank-you messages in five issues selected from two Jordanian national newspapers. The investigation found out that apart from the major role of such announcements in extending congratulations and appreciations, it also reveals a big deal of information related to the addressee(s). In other words, these announcements provide excess information further than the occasion itself. In that order, the researcher discovered that the outcome of this study fall in the same line with Nwoye’s (1992) and Fries’s (1990a, 1990b) conclusions that some obituary notices go beyond the death announcement in terms of communicative functions. The findings of Al-Khatib’s (1997) inquiry also show that congratulation and thank-you announcement congratulate and advertise at the same time, and that there is a kind of determining link between the announcement and a number of socio-cultural matters. Considering outcomes of other previous investigations (i.e. Sperber & Wilson, 1986; Kachru, 1982), the study finalizes that for “language and its functions” to be properly understood it should be employed “as a means of communication” (p. 169).

Within a framework that revisited the concept of genre and genrelet, a total number of 385 marriage announcements and congratulations from British and Syrian newspapers have been collected over a span of five years and analyzed by Haddad (2005). In the study, a literal translation of the British announcements into the Syrian Arabic was attempted. This

particular hypothesis suggests some kind of additional room that would accommodate situations where “subgenres/subgenrelets” engage a variety of positions “along the conventionalism continuum” (p. 57). The term ‘genrelet’ was originally adopted from Hatim (1993) by Haddad (1995) where she claims that “genre and genrelet are both recognised by language community”, and that genrelet “...is highly conventionalised in the sense that ... it operates within constraints imposed by both structure as well as language...” (pp. 25-26). In order to elaborate more on the assertion above, Haddad (2005) visualizes that:

Genre and genrelet lie at opposite ends of a continuum. At one end lie the less conventionalised genres where creativity is highly appreciated and the violation of generic rules is welcome (e.g. novels, poems, short stories, etc.). On the other end of the continuum lie the most conventionalised genres (i.e. genrelets) where creativity is not appreciated and violation of generic conventions is frowned upon. The space between the two ends is occupied by different genres with different degrees of conventionalisation. While some of these genres are closer to the genre zone (editorials, news reports, letters to the editor, etc.), others are closer to the genrelet zone (e.g. recipes, weather forecasts) (pp. 61-62).

Findings of Haddad’s (2005) analysis revealed that a single type of marriage announcements/congratulations is adopted in Syrian newspapers; while three different ways apply in the British style based on the nature of events, viz: a variety that takes care of announcements of marriages only; another one where marriages announcements are followed by congratulations and; a situation where not more than congratulations alone are announced. Besides, in an attempt to compare a word-to-word translation of the two different announcements, there appears to be a lot of disharmonies particularly with the Syrian standard at the “levels of registers, pragmatics, and semiotics”. The research work recommends some amendments so as to enable a “target text” meet up with requirements of the “target culture” in order to satisfy the anticipations of the “target text receiver” (p. 78).

To sum it up, Al-Khatib’s (1997) work has examined the sociocultural and communicative motives of congratulatory announcements within the Jordanian context. On the other hand, Haddad (2005) compared Syrian marriage announcements and congratulations with the British types of the similar genres. Both Jordanian and Syrian societies represented in the

research works share a lot of common sociocultural values. The language goes far beyond occasions and points toward a considerable relationship between the contents of the announcements and the societal norms (Al-Khatib, 1997).

So far, it is evident that studies reviewed in this segment of the critique are linked to what Al-Ali (2005) tagged as “happy ceremonies” are few and fall within the Arabian continuum (p. 8). The literature has shown very little or no evidence of similar empirical investigations carried on congratulatory messages outside the Arab world. It also shows that this category of the ‘homely discourse’ genre (Miller, 1984), is not receiving the required attention from the research community.

Sociocultural Identity and Class Struggle in Death Announcements

A different set of studies focused on obituary announcements. A pragmatic study of newspaper obituary declarations in Malawi has been carried out by Matiki (2008). Following Gasparov’s (1977) typology of discourses, the investigation sampled 63 death notices from two newspapers in Malawi. The analysis involved both sociolinguistic and communicative features of the notices. Findings of the analysis indicate that notices of obituaries in the Malawian social context embrace both public and private dichotomies. That is to say, obituary matters, though being absolutely private, its conduct entails public participation. The language of the obituary notices speaks to both the deceased and the general public as well. The results of the study show that the language of death notices in Malawi still maintains that African oral tradition properties despite the modernity and westernization. It likewise virtually mirrors a number of sources of the new Malawian experiences.

In a completely different approach to Matiki (2008), Ergin (2010) studied death notices from the perspective of being vigorous mechanisms for power struggle, class distinction, gender, religious, and ethnic prejudices in the Turkish framework. The researcher believes that death announcements in Turkey apparently put emphasis on “social divisions” instead of eliminating it. Drawing from an approximate 2554 sampled death announcements published in a foremost Turkish daily between 1970 and 2006, the investigation assumes that the notices are “particularly suited” for the purposes mentioned earlier. Findings of the study indicated how certain ethnicity are portrayed as “privileged groups” in the announcements at the detriment of the minorities such as people with Jewish, Armenian, or Greek ancestry (p.

194). Moreover, results of the study show how death announcements of men, mostly Muslims, have the tendency of displaying elements of high social status compared to those of non-Muslims and women. On the basis of what happens to be the socio-political reality of the present-day Turkey, the investigation concludes that the continuous depiction of non-Muslims and the minorities as the less privileged in death announcements symbolizes a great social inequality in the country.

Paralleled to Matiki's (2008) conclusions mostly based on the idea of the African Triple Heritage (Mazrui, 1986), (i.e. African traditional culture, Christian/Islamic culture, and the Western culture), Ergin's (2010) findings sound more of an advocacy for social change and justice. Though, an academic inquiry into meanings further than the ordinary language of the death announcements in Turkish setting, results of the study presuppose that it is more or less a kind of evaluation of previous lives. The outcomes also point out that it is the rhetoric of "power" that exemplifies death notices genre in the country. That is to say, "symbolically articulated social boundaries" remain intact even in the "world of death" (p. 176). It is remarkable to assume that a sharp contrast exists between these two investigations, viz: Matiki (2008) and Ergin (2010). Contrary to many cultures, Matiki's (2008) study indicates that in Malawi obituaries are basically "addressed to the deceased rather than the reading public" (p. 29). More so, features from the triangle of the African, Christian/Islamic, and Western traditions have successfully been incorporated into the death notices. It is noteworthy that the Malawian society still maintains its traditional African way of living, and at the same time, it does not take a softer line in pursuing the modern-day ideals. On the other hand, Ergin's (2010) research work has indicated that in the last 30 years or so, death announcements in Turkey have been used as platforms for promoting "ethnic inequalities" and social "prestige and distinction". Notwithstanding the survey links the Turkish elite-class with publication of death announcements over the time as it usually costs some substantial amounts of money. In terms of addressing the general public, the research has established that specific audiences have been communicated with in recent death announcements (p. 194).

Faraway from the African traditions and the "long and complex history of westernization" in Turkey (Ergin, 2010, p. 176), an assessment with findings a bit similar to that of the latter was carried out by Endres in 1984. On the representation of culture and values of a given society in obituaries, Endres (1984) insists that a logical study of obituaries is likely to say something

with reference to the cultural ideals of a particular community. Such analysis may as well put in the picture a little about the social orientation as well as the professionalism of its publishers. In an attempt to investigate this theory, Endres (1984) sampled a number of obituary announcements in four different weekly newspapers published in the State of Ohio across some years in the 19th century. Findings of the examination revealed that most of the obituaries analyzed belonged to famous men in the society. In women obituaries, matrimonial status were clearly mentioned, but neither educational nor job-related information were included. With this outcome, the study finalizes that it has become clear how societal values and editors' orientation have been represented in the announcements.

On the same continent, an extensive analysis of newspaper obituary announcements – that explored how American values and changes in cultural trends during the 19th and early 20th century were represented in the notices – was conducted by Hume (2000). As a case of study of a complete book, the writer examined the growing “changing attitudes about death” as manifested with respect to social class, gender, and race. According to her, obituaries might not be the most reliable sources historically, but at the same time, they “link published memories of individual lives with generational or family memory...” (Hume, 2000, as cited in Jones, 2005, p. 10). Both research works conducted by Endres (1984) and Hume (2000) investigated issues that are linked with American cultural ideals and values as represented in the obituaries sometime in the 19th century. Interestingly, both investigations focus on similar social issues such as class distinction, race, gender, etc., and how these factors manifest in the announcements.

Research has established the fact that living humans attempt to maintain certain fantasies and construct mental images to keep alive fading contacts with deceased persons. Such practices arise from the significance associated with human interactions with one another. Undoubtedly, most of these communications that are essentially intended for the deceased individuals are placed in public domains (Archer, 2001; Bowlby, 1980; Bromley & Nimocks, 2005). Evidences of such traditions could be found in different societies (see for example Alali, 1993; Matiki, 2008; Nwoye, 1992, etc.). Considering this reality, Bromley and Nimocks (2005) wonder why such an “intimate communication” would be subjected to public consumption. They came up with an empirical study that questions the rationale behind choosing a newspaper ad as a medium for communicating with a deceased person. In a search

for appropriate answers to these rhetorical questions, a mixed-mode investigation using Burke's method of dramatic criticism was carried out. The study sampled 191 In Memoriam(IM) advertisements that appeared in the *Wisconsin State Journal* newspaper. Results of the investigation show that the ads have twofold addressees. Basically, it is meant to keep the relationship between the senders and the deceased unharmed, at the same time, making it public signifies how much the deceased person is cherished and loved.

Conclusions arrived at by Bromley and Nimocks (2005) above somehow fall in line with Ergin's (2010) results. While Bromley and Nimocks (2005) finalize that the language of the IMs published in Madison address both the deceased and the public as well, but Ergin's (2010) analysis shows that death announcements in Turkey speak more to the public. According to his findings, such announcements supposed to be instruments for fighting social inequality. He believes that Turkish death announcements are basically meant to promote "social divisions" and propagate for the "privileged groups" in the country. Therefore, they serve as platforms for marginalizing the minority and the non-Muslims as well (p. 194).

Promotion of Religiosity in Death Announcements

In the former "Arab Palestine" and "Transjordan" territories that became the present-day Jordan, two discrete types of obituary announcements were born out of the "sociocultural norms, practices and beliefs" of the society. These forms include the ordinary deaths and the "martyr's wedding" announcements in Jordanian daily newspapers (Al-Ali, 2005, p. 9). Due to conflicts between Arabs and the Israelites that involved a number of uprisings in the Middle-East since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 (Asmar, 2001), deaths and burials have become daily routines. Being the main host to the Palestinian refugees, Jordanians have been part of the struggle all the way. Palestinians consider the idea of dying in a fight against the Israeli domination as martyrdom. Therefore, in this part of the world, martyrs' deaths are highly celebrated; congratulatory messages are received from relatives and well-wishers for some number of days.

On the basis of this sociocultural reality, a study by Al-Ali was conducted in 2005 to examine the manifestations of solidarity and the promotion of pride in obituary announcements in the Jordanian society. The main purpose of the study was to detect common structures and the communicative roles of the announcements through its generic components using Swalesian

(1990) move analysis. The investigation worked on a random sample of 200 and identified two varieties of obituaries: normal and the “martyr’s wedding” announcements. Nine repeated components have been pinpointed by the research (Al-Ali, 2005, p. 5). Unlike situations where death announcements mostly communicate more with the deceased (Matiki, 2008), and the other way round (Ergin, 2010), death announcer in Jordan takes “pride and honor” in the announcement and calls for “celebration” rather than grief (Al-Ali, 2005, p. 28). It is worth mentioning that some scholars hold on to some neutral views when it comes to dealing with sad happenings such as mourning. They presuppose that it is natural for humans to seek refuge in the supernatural world searching for solace whenever a tragedy of passing away befalls (Marrone, 1999; Austin & Lennings, 1993, as cited in Ergin, 2012).

Differently, the question of religiosity in the language of death announcements faces serious debates in the secular-Westernized Turkey today. Since 1923, Islam has always been in a logger head with the state institutionalized secularism (Davison, 2003). In Turkey, major boundary spheres are drawn based on religious inclination (Ergin, 2012). Contrary to the Palestinian perception of death, Ergin (2012) conducted an analysis within a framework of “large-scale cultural change” that places Turkish death announcements in “threefold classification”. The study sampled 2,812 announcements published by *Hürriyet* newspaper dating from 1970 to 2009. Using multiple approaches, the study examined the way the society perceives death across time, i.e. the traditional, modern, and the postmodern approaches (p. 276). These approaches represent the very “authority” being invoked by the announcements. Traditionally, the “authority” belongs to God and religion. Deceased persons are considered to have arrived in the “afterlife”, the “better place”, and have united with “God’s grace”. In the modern approach to death, medicine takes the lead over religion, while “self” becomes the “authority” in the postmodern approach to death. In this approach, death signifies “loss” and “departure” from this life. (Walter, 1994; Bath, 2010, as cited in Ergin, 2012, p. 276). Ergin’s (2012) assessment notices that Turkish death announcements speak the “postmodern language of loss” that sees death as just a “departure” from this world, but not as “arrival in another world” (pp. 276-7).

Findings of the inquiry show that the 1970s and 1980s witnessed a tremendous increase in the use of the “secular term *Tanrı*” for God, while the “conservative term *Allah*” dominated the 1990s upward. Though, outcome of the research does not necessarily attributes the “Godly”

period to any factor necessitating change in the “representation of religiosity” in Turkey, rather, it considers it as becoming a “norm” in the announcements. Notwithstanding, the emergence of an Islamic party as a winner of the General Elections in 1991 and 1995 might have a lot to do with the phenomenon. Therefore, the study concludes that postmodern death rituals centre on “personal choice” at the detriment of medicine and religion. Secondly, death procedurals are responsive to political orientations, religious inclinations, and sociocultural transformations. Finally, results of the study confirm the notions of social divisions and class struggle even in the realm of death (Ergin, 2012, pp. 286-9).

Generally, Al-Ali’s (2005) and Ergin’s (2012) assessments symbolize an absolute contrast. Extreme discrepancies between the two dichotomies are not coincidental. Both have entirely different theoretical perspectives as much as the art of bereavement is concerned. In the Jordanian case study for instance, features of the language used in death announcements fall within the ‘premodern’ or the ‘traditional’ category where preference is given to God or religion. More so, compared to the Turkish long history of westernization, Jordanians are still identified as agrarian and clannish community with a long history of conflicts with the Israeli forces (Al-Khatib, 1997). As stated earlier, with the notion of ‘Arab-Palestine’ and ‘Transjordan’, there is no sharp discrimination between Jordanians and Palestinians. Boutrus (1963) cites in Al-Ali (2005) that “Jordan is thus the inheritor of the Palestinian traditions and the contemporary history of the Palestine fragment can only be told in conjunction with the present history of Jordan” (p. 20). It is worth noting that announcements for virtually all cases of “martyrdom” that occurred in the “West Bank” (the present day Palestine territory) are placed in Jordanian dailies (Al-Ali, 2005, p. 8).

On the other hand, moves for secularization coupled with waves of modernization that have been taking place in Turkey since the 1920s until date has actually had tremendous impacts on the sociopolitical atmosphere of the country (Ergin, 2010). Due to the westernization, Islamic heritage suffered a lot of setbacks and, subsequently, lost grounds to western ideals. Use of language has become so a decisive factor in various sociopolitical debates (Aytürk, 2004). These in addition to other factors may somehow justify the Ergin’s (2012) conclusions. As the Jordanians commemorate martyrdom and congratulate the family of the ‘martyr’, Ergin’s (2012) findings attribute the use of the word “*Allah*” in Turkish death announcements to being a “norm” and politically motivated. It also suggests the invoking of

“personal” authority in death rituals, at the same time, sees the death as mere departure from this life, not arrival in the hereafter (p. 286-9).

Conclusion

This critique has evaluated literature on two types of newspaper announcements genre, viz: congratulatory and death notices. It has become clear that both happy and sad announcements genres have explicit communicative motives (Al-Ali, 2005). The aim of this assessment was to examine how communications are attained far beyond the literal wordings and the usual functions of various newspaper announcements (Al-Khatib, 1997). While some notices remain within the parameters of their primary role, this review discloses how it could be utilized to convey much more complex sociocultural, religious, political messages, etc. (Ergin, 2012). Nevertheless, it has become vivid from the literature that most of the empirical works dealing with happy ceremonies are few and peculiar to Arab societies, whereas death related studies are very common representing various cultures.

The review shows that though congratulatory announcements are basically for maintaining social harmony and rapport, at the same time it serves as a kind of advertisements that promote much about the addresses. The ads say more beyond the ordinary messages of congratulating or thanking. For instance, in the Arab world, these ads are employed in strengthening societal normal and family loyalty. Its language represents the typical agrarian, tribal, and the family centred pattern of living in Arabia (Al-Khatib, 1997; Al-Ali, 2005). Cultural peculiarities of the Arabs become much clearer when contrasted with other cultures, i.e. the Syrian and the British marriage announcements and congratulations (Haddad, 2005). It is worth noting that most studies on congratulatory related matters reviewed in this presentation were carried out within the Arab world alone. As a result, it has become apparent that these types of ‘homely discourse’ genres (Miller, 1984), despite being so significant, receive less attention from researchers (Al-Ali, 2005). Therefore, it is recommended that approaches of other cultures toward announcing congratulatory related occasions should be investigated.

On the other end, a number of research works have been carried out on death announcements and obituaries. Interestingly enough, though in the world of death, these ads mostly serve as platforms where deceased individuals are highly celebrated and their life stories stylishly

rewritten (Bromley & Nimocks, 2005). The review has assessed how the combination of the African Triple Heritage, (the African tradition, Western tradition, and the Islamic/Christian tradition) (Mazrui, 1986), manifest in the Malawian death announcements. In other words, the evaluation shows how the African identity of deceased persons maintains itself and survives the waves of modernity and westernization in Malawi. Even though it is made in public newspapers but such ads are directed to deceased persons in Malawi. Contrary to the Malawian approach, this evaluation indicates that most death announcements in Turkey target the reading public. Apart from celebrating people and rewriting their life stories in such ads (Bromley & Nimocks, 2005), Turkish death announcements are seen as avenue for promoting sociocultural biases, class differences, gender and race discrimination, etc. (Ergin, 2010).

In conclusion, the way elements of religiosity manifest in the language of mourning have been discussed in this critique. For example, it may sound unusual that the tone of announcements in some Arab communities calls for celebration and joy instead of grief. This review discloses that individuals who pass away in the course of fighting the Israeli forces in the Palestinian territory are highly celebrated and regarded as martyrs. In such occurrence, family members and relatives distribute presents to members of their community, receive visitors and celebrate for not less than three days. Consequently, “for Muslims, this concept has become a cult”, and above all that, “youths want to die as martyrs, and even boast about it” (Al-Ali, 2005, p. 9). In a different dichotomy, the review reveals that the Turkish society have a kind of postmodern approach to death where it is perceived as an ordinary departure from this life, but not necessarily arriving at the hereafter. This method does not consider the authorities of God, religion, or medicine to be invoked into the language of death announcement; rather it prefers the notion of “personal choice” and “private expressions of grief” (Ergin, 2012, p. 276). Undoubtedly, Al-Ali’s (2005) and Ergin’s (2012) suppositions represent two extremes when it comes to how religion is incorporated into matters related to death and bereavement.

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