



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



## Exploring Non-Linguistic Features of Malay Hari Raya E-Cards

Salihah Abdullah, Juliana Mohd Nor

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i1/11523> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i1/11523

**Received:** 03 November 2021, **Revised:** 07 December 2021, **Accepted:** 26 December 2021

**Published Online:** 12 January 2022

**In-Text Citation:** (Abdullah & Nor, 2022)

**To Cite this Article:** Abdullah, S., & Nor, J. M. (2022). Exploring Non-Linguistic Features of Malay Hari Raya E-Cards. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(1), 1076–1083s.

**Copyright:** © 2022 The Author(s)

Published by Human Resource Management Academic Research Society ([www.hrmars.com](http://www.hrmars.com))

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

**Vol. 12, No. 1, 2022, Pg. 1076 – 1083**

<http://hrmars.com/index.php/pages/detail/IJARBSS>

JOURNAL HOMEPAGE

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at  
<http://hrmars.com/index.php/pages/detail/publication-ethics>



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



[www.hrmar.com](http://www.hrmar.com)

ISSN: 2222-6990

## Exploring Non-Linguistic Features of Malay Hari Raya E-Cards

Salihah Abdullah, Juliana Mohd Nor

Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Terengganu,

Kuala Terengganu Campus, Malaysia

Email: salih537@uitm.edu.my

### Abstract

Greeting cards are a form of communication between people that are used to exchange messages or sentiments for special occasions that are culturally or personally significant. Studies on greeting cards vary and range from those based on design, function, purpose, and impact. The purpose of this study was to identify the non-linguistic features of Malay Raya e-cards and the rationale of using the features especially in terms of its sociocultural and religious beliefs and practices in this genre. To explore non-linguistic features, 70 Malay Raya e-cards obtained from official e-mails between 2020 and 2021 were analysed using Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996) Multimodality Theory. The theory explains the relationship between social practice and written discourse and denies linguistic choice as the only device in meaning-making. The findings of the study revealed several non-linguistic features which are significant to portray the uniqueness of Malay culture, and the Malaysian corporate culture. It is clear from the finding that Malay Raya e-card is a venue worth researching as it may provide many information that may be useful to the future of greeting card in society. It is also hoped that there will be more studies conducted to explore more on the non-linguistic side of the language use

**Keywords:** Malay Raya E-cards, Greeting Cards, Technology, Non-Linguistic Features, Socio-Cultural Values

### Introduction

The arrival of the postman during Ramadan in the past was much awaited. As apart from the usual letters, he would also deliver Hari Raya greeting cards from relatives and friends near and far. But with the advent of sophisticated technologies, the physical Hari Raya cards are being increasingly replaced by electronic greeting cards sent through the social media including WhatsApp, Telegram and Facebook.

Electronic greeting card is also known as e-card, i-card, digital postcard, cyber greeting card or digital greeting card. The advantages of these virtual cards include the ease of sending them to many recipients, being environmentally friendly compared to paper or hard copy cards and highly customizable content. Senders can make customizations that cover a variety of backgrounds and text fonts including some such as cursive writing, graphic images, cartoon

style animations, videos and sometimes music. Virtual card recipients will receive the card via email. Then the card can be viewed, played, copied, printed, and so on.

Therefore, this study aims to:

- identify the common non-linguistic features of Malay Raya e-cards.
- explore the reasons of using the non-linguistic features in e- cards.

### **Literature Review**

Over time, years since it began, greeting cards have evolved from homemade card to nationally produced by household companies, such as Hallmark and American Greetings. In Malaysia, many of the festive greeting cards are printed out by local companies and these companies are replaced with even smaller companies as years went by. With the development of new technologies, greeting cards are seeing a shift from paper cards to e-cards. There are many reasons for the shift. One of them could be because technology allows for more interactivity between sender and receiver. For example, e-cards or electronic greeting cards allow the use of computer application that applies Augmented reality aesthetics to be part of the content of the greeting card. The use of computer application has allowed customers to get a version of greeting card with the details they want along with a lively and innovative animation complete with sound (Asmaraihanah, 2019). According to her also, other than the inclusion of augmented reality aesthetics, the move from using paper-based card towards e-cards is more appealing because they are a much more affordable solution.

The use of greeting cards in paper or electronic form serves many purposes other than just for greetings. According to Hussain, Qadeer and Asif (2021), cards sent to others may have other communicative purpose other than the specific purpose for which it is sent to receiver such as imparting aesthetic pleasure to the receivers and showing off sender's status, wealth and class. Apart from individual usage and purpose, greeting cards may also be a tool of communication for business communication for companies and institution. Ana Lucu (2008) stated that companies use as key image of the greeting cards the logo or colours representing them. Thus, greeting card may serve as a symbol that represents the company or institution behind the design. Designs including images and colours in greetings cards are non-linguistic cues that send specific messages other than the words used for greetings. Notably, the design of the image should reflect the corporate culture so that customers may easily recognize which company the card represents (You, 2013). Thus, the purpose of greeting cards is delivered through its non-linguistic cues.

With regards to design, the selection of the pictures, images, or visuals on a greeting card are ideal for spreading messages because they are easy to gain attention. According to Yamirudeng and Osman (2018), the picture leaves a more lasting impression in the mind of the readers or viewers compared to words heard or read. According to Mitchell (2005), the society is now obsessed with images and media has shaped a general culture that shows a reduction in application of language into images. This is supported by a study conducted by Yuszaidy and Ghaddaffi (2015) on the impact of new media on the value system of Malays in Malaysia who found that the boom of information technology is accelerating which allows the internet to offer various facilities such as text, graphics, pictures and so on. Majeed, Sahroof and Masroor (2021) who studied non-linguistic features of wedding cards in Pakistan

stated that all these features reveal social, cultural, religious, and economical status and traditions prevailing in the current society of Pakistan. Even the use of colors may have significance meaning in the design and message that a greeting card conveys. Alghamdi (2020) noted that in Islamic holiday greeting cards, some common colours are used for reasons that may have something to do with recreating the sky shades at sunrise or sunsets as all Islamic holidays happen during or at the rising or setting of the sun, and the significant of Ramadan nights.

Aside from religious imagery, cultural related imagery is also common in greeting cards. In Malaysia, the designer's creation is characteristically influenced by the Malaysian national culture (Siek & Lee, 2021). Cultural images are important for each ethnic group to showcase their own festive season traditions as noted by Siek (2021) who studied Ang Pow design by Malaysians. You (2013) claimed that due to the geographical position and cultural issues, for Christmas card colour design, people from Finland and Chinese tend to have different preferences. Certain images associated with culture are also popular. One example is the Moroccan brass lanterns that are embellished with different designs that are influenced by the local or Islamic art and then pierced with hundreds of drills, so the light reflects the beautiful shades on surfaces (Alghamdi, 2020). These are common designs that become non-linguistic elements that appear in holiday or festive seasons greeting cards.

### **Methodology**

The study design is qualitative in nature. According to Mohd Majid (2005), descriptive research aims to explain something which relate to an event, development, or experience. A sample of 70 Malay Raya e-cards were analyzed. All the cards were obtained from official emails between 2020 and 2021. This research was specifically conducted to analyze the special features of non-linguistic in the e-cards and sociocultural norms found in this type of discourse. This analysis of non-linguistic features focuses on the Multimodality Theory of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996).

### **Result and Discussion**

All Raya greeting e-cards contain language features such as Salam Aidilfitri, year of migration (the hijra year) and follow with wording of Maaf Zahir Batin (may you forgive us). However, this study focused more on non-linguistic e-card features. E-cards use certain non-linguistic features that contribute to achieving the intended communicative goals. The most communicative non-linguistic element in all e-cards investigated was the image/picture. The analysis found six common pictures that are often used in Malay Raya e-cards, namely logo, digital photo, mosque, crescent moon, lantern / bamboo lamp, and ketupat.

#### *Logo*

All e-cards include logo to represent the institution, followed by the name of the respective faculty, school or department. Out of 70 e-cards, 60 of them included logos such as Facebook, Twitter, website, and Instagram. The use of these logos shows the institution is moving in line with current technological developments. For example, the use of Facebook helps many institutions to share various latest information to students and prospective students. It helps create promotions and update the status of the institution. By having many followers an institution gets many students. This builds the profile of the institution so that it is better known and easier to do business. If students have any problems or questions, they can directly

go to the official website if they want to know more. With this, the institutions can invent the brand themselves and stimulate readers to visit the websites.



Figure 1: Logo

### Digital Photo

The second non-linguistic feature used in e-cards under investigation is the digital photos. The e-cards used the photos as their background. These custom photo e-cards appear to be gaining popularity and are specially designed for a particular person or purpose. For example, photo of the staff, faculty building, iconic building, hotel, and training centre of the institution. The photo plays a prominent role in the style and design of the e-cards and make them special, eye-catching, and elegant for the receivers. Moreover, senders tend to include beautiful and attractive images to make their greeting e-cards memorable, distinct, and unique (Salmaweh, 2020). Attractive photographic images may attract the attention of the readers and play a factor in ensuring the achievement of the intended communicative goals of the e-cards. The sample below shows the photo of the staff with traditional costumes and iconic/faculty building of the institution as the background.

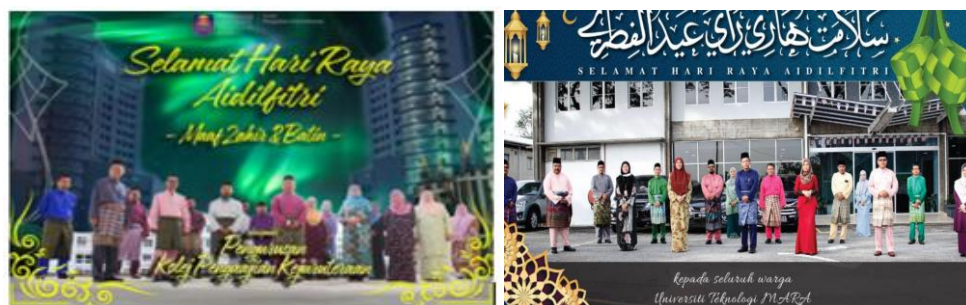


Figure 2: Digital photo

### Mosque

Mosque is the third most common non-linguistic feature applied in Malay Raya e-cards. The image of the mosque is popular as the Eid prayer must be performed in congregation in the mosque. Images of Muslims wearing new clothes they have bought for the occasion heading over to the local mosque to wish friends, family and the local community is a popular image that often appear on Raya greeting cards, be it on paper or virtually. "Eid Mubarak" which is the traditional Eid greeting, which signifies blessed feast/festival, is also used in the context of happy Eid and blessed celebration. The period after the prayer is always a good opportunity to meet, embrace and exchange greetings with one another, give gifts and visit one another. It signifies the spirit of Hari Raya when many Muslims take this opportunity to invite their friends, neighbours, co-workers, and classmates to their Eid festivities.



Figure 3: Mosque

#### *Crescent Moon*

The fourth feature is the crescent moon. The crescent of the new moon symbolizes the beginning and the end of fasting during Ramadan. Otherwise known as the new moon, in Islam, its appearance marks the beginning of a new month in the Muslim lunar calendar. Like the start of Ramadan, the date of Eid is established by sighting the crescent moon, which generally appears one night after the new moon, and marks the onset of the month of Shawwal, the tenth of the Islamic Hijri calendar. Although the crescent moon is known as an international symbol of Islam, this symbol did not originate with Islam. Historically, it is claimed to be adopted for the first time by the city of Byzantine later known as Istanbul. Besides that, the mystical tradition known as Sufism uses the moon as a symbol of the heart responsive to the light of truth. Thus, due to the symbol's strong association with Islam, the crescent moon is most recognizable image used in advertisement for Eid celebrations.



Figure 4: Crescent moon

#### *Lantern/ Bamboo oil lamp/ Bright light*

Another popular choice of image to represent the message of Raya festivities is the use of lanterns / bamboo oil lamps / bright lights. These are symbols associated with Ramadan celebrations. This is the fifth element found in the e-cards. The element of celebration is regarded as an enjoyable celebratory event to share with loved ones. The tradition of burning lamps is to welcome and enliven the night of Lailatul Qadar which is believed to be one night among the last ten nights of Ramadan. Most think it is on the 27<sup>th</sup>. night of Ramadan. Besides, it is also considered as an entertainment for the community every night during Ramadan. Any candle or lantern indicates the symbol of hope to light the way from the darkness. Ramadan lanterns are decorative lanterns crafted specifically for the holy month. Houses are decorated with twinkling fairy lights, or the more traditional paraffin-fuelled lamps made from tin cans or bamboo sticks are a common sight at night during Ramadan, and children play with sparklers, lanterns, and rocket fireworks to mark the end of Ramadan. The choice of colours is also significantly important. Brightly coloured lights are most popular, and the common hues of choice are green, yellow, and gold which can also be seen adorning the mosques and the government offices during the celebration.



Figure 5: Lantern/ Bamboo oil lamp/ Bright lights

### *Ketupat*

Ketupat is the sixth non-linguistic element found in e-cards. It is made from common white rice and wrapped in a diamond-shaped container of woven coconut palm leaves. Ketupat is very closely associated with the tradition of Eid celebration and eaten in the Malay Archipelago when celebrating the feast. The festival is incomplete without ketupat. For Muslims, Eid Al-Fitr is a big day for celebrating the New Year of Islam. Ketupat symbolizes forgiveness and blessings. The tradition of making the ketupat started a few generations ago and became a tradition in certain ceremonies as a main meal. This activity is considered as a culture since it has been passed down through generations and has become a symbol to identify the community (Kamil & Osman, 2016). With the spread of Islam, it has brought with it one of the cultural traditions, that is, serving ketupat during Eid feast. Ketupat is usually eaten while visiting other family members. After ketupat has been cooked and dried, it is gifted to neighbours/family/relatives as a symbol of togetherness.



Figure 6: Ketupat

### **Conclusion**

In summary, there are six non-linguistic features which are portrayed in Malay Raya greeting e-cards. The features are logo, digital photo, mosque, crescent moon, lantern / bamboo oil lamp, and ketupat. These features are considered significant to Malays, due to the uniqueness of portraying the Malay culture (Hassan et al, 2008). The nature of these non-linguistic features also is related to Islam. Despite that Islam has no official religious symbols, some common visuals appear in some cultural celebrations such as the crescent, stars, lanterns, and sheep (Alghamdi, 2020). The inclusion of corporate logo inside a greeting card also signifies that festive greeting card is a tool for business communication. You (2013) stated that the overall design of the image use for corporate greeting card should reflect the corporate culture. The findings of this study obviously show that visual images can serve as non-linguistic cues that are also important in representing cultures and messages.

All in all, this study is limited due to the lack of studies and research done on non-linguistic aspects of greeting card design. Thus, further future study should explore more on the non-linguistic side of language usage.

## References

- Lucu, A. O. (2008) Greeting cards–instrument in promoting company image. Retrieved from [https://manager.faa.ro/archive/manager\\_07/articles/704.pdf](https://manager.faa.ro/archive/manager_07/articles/704.pdf)
- Alghamdi, A. A. (2020) Contribution of Visual Representation of Islamic Celebrations. *WIT Transactions on The Built Environment*, 197, 179-186.
- Raihanah, A. B. M. S. (2019). Greeting Malaysia with Augmented Reality. (Bachelor's degree Dissertation. Unisza). Retrieved from <http://myfik.unisza.edu.my/www/fyp/fyp18sem2/report/47934.pdf>
- Hassan, H., Habil, H., & Nasir, Z.M. (2008). Persuasive strategies of tourism discourse. In H. Habil, & H. Hassan (Eds.), *New Perspectives in Language and Communication Research* (pp. 1-19). Johor: UTM Press.
- Hussain, R., Qadeer, H., & Asif, M. (2021). 'Settled in the Heaven and Celebrated on Earth': A Sociolinguistic Study of Written Wedding Invitation Genre in Pakistan. *Research Journal of Social Sciences and Economics Review*, 2(2), 342-352.
- Kamil, N. E. M., & Osman, M. N. (2016). The elements of culture values on Malay traditional food wrapping: Ketupat. *Ideology Journal*, Fakulti Seni Lukis dan Seni Reka, UiTM.
- Kress, G., and van Leeuwen, T. (1996, 2006). *Reading Image- The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.
- Majeed, H., Sahroof, T., & Masroor, F. (2021). Genre Analysis of Pakistani Wedding Invitation Cards. *Erevna: Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, 5(1).
- Konting, M. M. (2005). *Kaedah Penyelidikan Pendidikan*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Mitchell, W. J. T. (2006). *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Sawalmeh, M. H. M. (2020). Exploring Non-linguistic patterns of Jordanian Written Wedding Invitations: A Multimodal Perspective, *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 3(3), 174-181. Retrieved from <http://al-kindipublisher.com/index.php/ijllt/article/view/119>
- Siek, H. L., & Lee, C. E. (2021). The Influence of National Cultural Attributes on Locally Produced Designs: Case Study of Malaysian Design. *the iafor*, 6(1), 23-43.
- Yamirudeng & Osman. (2018), Penilaian formatif bahan pengajaran dan pembelajaran Bahasa Melayu sebagai Bahasa Asing di Thailand <https://ejournal.upsi.edu.my/index.php/PENDETA/article/view/2820/2134>
- You, X. (2013). Insights into greeting cards to enhance the business communication and relation between Finnish and Chinese companies. (Masters Dissertation. Aalto University). Retrieved from [https://aaltodoc.aalto.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/10857/hse\\_thesis\\_13298.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://aaltodoc.aalto.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/10857/hse_thesis_13298.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)