



Cultural discourse embedded in truck scripts

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Abstract

The bond between a driver and his truck has been the subject of many famous films. If not actual adoration of the vehicle, it certainly is the destiny shared between a living human and a running machine, both heading for a common destination. Who and what else can replace this bond? Here, we see the truck bearing decorations, bumper sticks, script, and pictures of animate and inanimate objects all reflecting the taste and psyche of the driver. This study aims to introduce a thematic analysis into this picturesque look of over a thousand trucks with specific focus on scripts borne by trailers based on the assumption that content of scripts would be representing inner worlds of truck drivers. Photographed as well as internet-based data related to vehicles provided the source for this study. Scripts were thematised, and categorized observing nationality of origin of license plates. With its findings, the study yields valuable results regarding values and beliefs truck drivers of different nationalities hold to themselves. A variety of psychological profiles, harboring feelings such as sadness, joy, dejection, rejection, love, disappointments, anger, vengeance, etc., all expressed through scripts was also surfaced in this study.

Keywords: Scripts; truck scripts; textual analysis; culture; culture and language.

1. Introduction

Discourse analysis is a kind of term that mainly focuses on social issues reproduced by text and talk in social contexts (Van Dijk, 2001). That's to say, it is an approach taking a critical view of conventional social psychology and pointing out the role of language in daily life (Potter and Edwards, 1996). Discourse analysis has been used with various meanings (Brown and Yule, 1983; Potter and Edwards, 1996), while assisting several disciplines like sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and philosophical linguistics in which scholars use different dimensions of the discourse terminology. For instance, sociolinguists particularly focus on the structure of social interaction declared in conversations while stressing the features of social context. In other words, they state the real occasions of language in use and work with transcribed spoken data (Brown and Yule, 1983).

The script "Aldırma Gönül" (=Never Mind Heart) on the truck in the famous film, *The Girl with the Red Scarf*, is well known by those who watched this film. The film, one of the masterpieces in Turkish Cinema, was produced in 1977 and directed by Atıf Yılmaz based on the short story, *The Red Scarf*, by Chinghiz Aitmatov, about a country girl falling in love with a truck driver from Istanbul (Selvi Boylum Al Yazmalım, n.d.). We remember that whenever this movie is watched, eyes of audience get moistened since the film reflects a sad love story with a theme based on questioning the essence of true love, which the main female character utters that true love is sacrifice, devotion and giving.

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Truck scripts project our emotions, values, and beliefs. Just like the culture of nomadic horsemen in which men are identified with their horses, the same tradition is seen with regard to truck drivers in which drivers are identified with their trucks in the same way. This culture is seen reflected upon emotional utterances in love messages given in texts. In a sense, these scripts in a way reflect truck drivers' proverbs (Cemiloğlu, 2002). Truck scripts are not very prevalent across cultures. This scarcity has led us to focus only on trucks in Turkic and Indian cultures. The scripts on these trucks have themes such as love, passion, endeavor, thankfulness, faith, humor and even rules; and are found either on the front or the rear part of the vehicles. In other words, truck drivers bear rather interesting inscriptions on their trucks, which reflect their inner worlds. Besides, traffic rules are also given a place on trucks. One can see warnings such as *Horn Please; Use Dipper at Night*, and *Wait for Side*, a situation commonly encountered, for instance, in India.

A text symbolizes a case of language in use, being written or spoken, a sample of language act which has been formed in a natural way without intervention. Such cases as a lecture, a conversation, a recipe, a scientific research paper, a newspaper article, a course book, a novel, etc. can all be given as examples of a text (Stubbs, 1996). Textual analysis, on the other hand, is a method for communication researchers to explain or interpret the characteristics of a document. It focuses on outlining the content and functions of each theme found in texts (McKee, 2003; Frey, Botan and Kreps, 1999). Upon the analysis of texts, some scholars use methods related to the humanist tradition, while some approach the issue referring to a positivist tradition. The former contains interpretation, and looks for meaning (Bernard and Ryan, 1998) while the latter covers transformation of texts into codes that indicate messages as well as employing quantitative methods to find out patterns in relations between these codes (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Bernard and Ryan, 1998; Shapire and Markoff, 1997). In a thematic text analysis, one examines the occurrences of themes or concepts (Roberts, 1997). It is a kind of pattern identification within a text, where themes emerge form categories for analysis (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2008; Braun and Clarke, 2006). When we unpack a text, it is necessary to keep in mind that it is not available to see the meaning directly from both verbal and visual textual signs (Janks, 1997). If we do not take the context of both production and reception into consideration, it does not seem likely to properly analyze the text through textual analysis alone (Fairclough, 1995).

Conducting textual analysis refers to a conscious assumption at some of the most likely interpretations that may be produced out of the text in question (McKee, 2003). To sum up, textual analysis is an approach that scholars pursue to portray and depict the features of a text or image whose objective is to define the content, framework, and functions of the themes involved in the given texts (Frey, Botan and Kreps, 1999).

With all these in mind, this study focuses on the themes reflecting messages from truck drivers who come from different cultural backgrounds. To achieve this, textual analysis was put into practice. Thus, utilizing textual analysis principles we set out conducting this piece of research with the following research questions in mind.

Research questions

This study focuses on the occurrences of specific messages or themes embedded in texts from a variety of truck scripts representing different characteristics, and aims to seek answers to the following research questions:

1. What themes emerge in scripts borne on trucks?
2. Do themes emerging in scripts placed on trucks display variation considering national differences, that is, between Turkish and Indian drivers? If so, in what ways?

Data Collection

The data for this study was collected from vehicles photographed on motorways and truck garages, as well as truck pictures supplied from an internet-based inquiry. While the data regarding trucks in Turkey came from both real scenes, such as roads and garages (in provinces of Adana and Mersin), and internet based-inquiry, the data concerning India was completely elicited from internet-based resources. The online data covered a number of sources provided by Santosh, 2012; Listelist, 2014; Mehrotra, 2015; MyIndiaPictures, 2015; Jagran Post Editorial, 2015; Bhavesh, 2016; Holidify, 2016; Yesilperi, 2016; Sabah, n.d.; Internethaber, n.d.; Gelinarabamiz, n.d.; Trendhaber, n.d.; Haberciniz, n.d.; Yazete, n.d.; Takilnet, n.d. Following the data elicitation process, the scripts on the trucks were thematised, and categorized according to license plates of nationality origins.

Instruments

For this study, a total of 297 trucks (150 Turkish, 147 Indian) were utilized as instruments. Regarding origins of license plates (given in parentheses) according to provinces in Turkey, we can see 40 from Adana (01), 12 from Ankara (06), 12 from İstanbul (34), 10 from İzmir (35), eight from Antalya (07), eight from Mersin (33), five from Malatya (44), five from Niğde (51), four from Manisa (45), three from Bursa (16), three from Muğla (48), three from Giresun (28), two from Gaziantep (27), two from Çanakkale (17), two from Hatay (31), two from Urfa (63), two from Zonguldak (67), two from Yalova (77), two from Kırıkkale (71), one from Adıyaman (02), one from Afyon (03), one from Aydın (09), one from Balıkesir (10), one from Burdur (15), one from Çankırı (18), one from Denizli (20), one from Edirne (22), one from Elazığ (23), one from Eskişehir (26), one from Kars (36), one from Kayseri (38), one from Kocaeli (41), one from Konya (42), one from Kahramanmaraş (46), one from Muş (49), one from Ordu (52), one from Sakarya (54), one from Samsun (55), one from Trabzon (61), one from Tunceli (62), one from Uşak (64), and one from Karabük (78), and concerning India, we studied 30 from Haryana (HR), 23 from Rajasthan (RJ), 22 from Maharashtra (MH), 12 from Goa (GA), 11 from Delhi (DL), nine from Madhya Pradesh (MP), eight from Karnataka (KA), six from Himachal Pradesh (HP), six from Gujarat (GJ), four from Meghalaya (ML), two from Tamil Nadu (TN), two from Manipur (MN), two from Andhra Pradesh (AP), two from Chandigarh (CH), two from Assam (AS), two from West Bengal (WB), two from Uttar Pradesh (UP), and two from Punjab (PB).

Data Analysis and Results

Truck scripts were examined with a special focus on the research questions posed in the study. Thus, content analysis was carried out in order to define the nature of the texts, diversity of this nature, messages transmitted, and diversity of such messages depending on different nationality origins of plates. In our thematic analysis, SPSS (v20.0) was utilized for frequency of emerging themes and their significance of dispersion (Chi-square values).

As for the nature of the texts, the data yielded both linguistic and nonlinguistic representation of messages. While linguistic representations were categorized as *begrudging*, *destiny*, *distrust*, *education*, *evil-eye*, *faith*, *friendship*, *grief*, *hope*, *hometown*, *let-things-go*, *loneliness*, *longing*, *love*, *marriage*, *names*, *nicknames*, *pangs of love*, *place names*, *self-esteem*, *threat*, *tolerance*, *traffic rules*, *loyalty*, and *warning*, the nonlinguistic data consisted of *pictures*. The results are presented in tabular forms for all themes, starting with the highest frequency of emergence and ending with the lowest.

Turkish Truck Scripts

In this group of themes, we observed both linguistic and nonlinguistic representations. In the former, 22 themes indicating *faith* (13.4%), *pangs of love* (11.9%), *hometown* (10.4%), *nicknames* (9.9%), *love* (9.4%), *self-esteem* (8.9%), *names* (8.9%), *grief* (4.5%), *loneliness* (2.5%), *hope* (2.5%), *let-things-go* (2.5%), *destiny* (2.5%), *threat* (2.0%), *warning* (2.0%), *friendship* (1.5%), *begrudging* (1.5%),

distrust (1.5%), *education* (1.5%), *tolerance* (1.0%), *longing* (1.0%), *marriage* (0.5%), and *loyalty* (0.5%) were detected. As for the nonlinguistic representations, 22 pictures (mainly of females and scarcely of animals) were observed. In Table 1, we can see the themes and related frequencies pertaining to Turkish truck scripts.

Table 1

Themes from Turkish Trucks

Linguistic Themes	ToM	%	Nonlinguistic Themes	ToM	%
Faith	27	13.4	Pictures	22	100
Pangs of love	24	11.9			
Hometown	21	10.4			
Nicknames	20	9.9			
Love	19	9.4			
Self-esteem	18	8.9			
Name	18	8.9			
Grief	9	4.5			
Loneliness	5	2.5			
Hope	5	2.5			
Let-things-go	5	2.5			
Destiny	5	2.5			
Threat	4	2.0			
Warning	4	2.0			
Friendship	3	1.5			
Begrudging	3	1.5			
Distrust	3	1.5			
Education	3	1.5			
Tolerance	2	1.0			
Longing	2	1.0			
Marriage	1	0.5			
Loyalty	1	0.5			
Total	202	100			
Chi-Square (Asymp. Sig)	0.000		0.000		

As can be observed from Table 1, *faith* in the Turkish truck scripts emerged as the strongest linguistic theme, followed by *pangs of love*, *hometown*, *nicknames*, *love*, *self-esteem*, *names*, *grief*, *loneliness*, *hope*, *let-things-go*, *destiny*, *threat*, *warning*, *friendship*, *begrudging*, *distrust*, *education*, *tolerance*, *longing*, *marriage*, and *loyalty*. Samples from Turkish truck scripts reflecting these themes, and pictures are presented below:

Faith:



God Bless!



Be entrusted to Allah!

Pangs of Love:



The arrow of separation is well off the bow. My heart, be prepared to be shot through any moment. So, that's up to you, my beach beauty.



Let this lonely darkness claim my life. Would you dare think that I would be knocked down by this artificial separation?

Hometown:



S/he is from Midyat.



S/he is from Kızıltepe.

Nicknames:



The Rose of Arab.



Young Captain.

Love:



They can't erase you from my heart.



If loving you is wrong, I don't want what is right.

Self-esteem:



We are busy living the life that you yearn for.



We are on stage. Keep on watching us.

Name:



Muhammed Mustafa.



My life, Ali.

Grief:



My fake world, replete with agony.



Let my smile be the cover of the pains that I suffer.

Loneliness:



Even Nescafe (instant coffee) is three in one, yet I am still alone.



We are not bus drivers to have a hostess: we are not taxi drivers to have a chick: we are only truck drivers, so may us have a safe journey.

Hope:



Can you unshatter the dreams that already are shattered?



We were told that we would have better days ahead of us. How far are we yet to go?

Let-things-go:



In this life, I've learnt to sometimes suffer and sometimes to ignore.



No Problem!

Destiny:



Fate is not for sale so that I could buy the best.



Unreachable love has vanished, and misery continues.

Threat:



Know who you are!



I'll be your nightmare!

Warning:



The Angel of Death never bluffs. Beware Rizean!



Earth covers the fault of a driver.

Friendship:



All your friends vanish in time of need. So, my advice to you my friend, go it alone!



Friendship based on interest disappears in hard times.

Begrudging:



Our joy has become others' sorrows.



Stop begrudging me. And if I am mistaken, let it remain between you and me.

Distrust:



Believe what you live and not what you hear.



I'd rather have a brave enemy rather than a perfidious friend.

Education:



Education is a must.



Education is a must.

Tolerance:



I can no longer tolerate your caprice and stupidities.



Child, stop nagging; dad is tired.

Longing:



Day at skyline and tears in separation are beautiful.

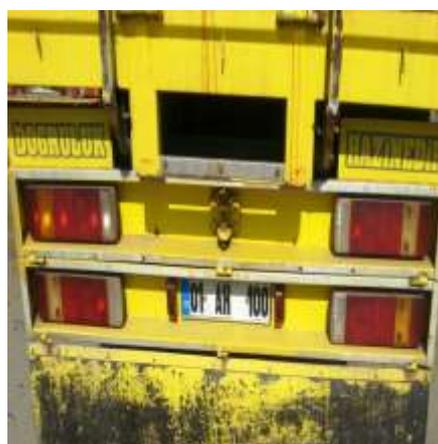


The best of what I had was my childhood in skinny body. The life of this child was either rap or hip-hop!

Loyalty and Marriage:



Aunts, what happened to the days when you pinched our cheeks and said you would marry off your daughters to us?



Honesty is virtue.

Pictures:



Female characters.



A hunting eagle.

Indian Truck Scripts

In Indian truck scripts also, we observed both linguistic and nonlinguistic representations. In the linguistic category, 16 themes, with a total of 181 occurrences, emerged from our analysis: *traffic rules* (58.7%), *mother blessing* (10.8%), *love* (6.6%), *pangs of love* (5.4%), *names* (4.8%), *faith* (2.4%), *place name* (2.4%), *destiny* (1.8%), *evil-eye* (1.8%), *self-esteem* (1.2%), *patriotism* (1.2%), *loyalty* (0.6%), *threat* (0.6%), *warning* (0.6%), *education* (0.6%), and *marriage* (0.6%). As for nonlinguistic representations, we detected 97 *pictures* in total. In Table 2, we can see both the linguistic and nonlinguistic themes with their pertaining frequency of emergence.

Table 2

Themes from Indian Trucks

Linguistic Themes	ToM	%	Nonlinguistic Themes	ToM	%
Traffic rules	98	58.7	Pictures	97	100
Mother blessing	18	10.8			
Love	11	6.6			
Pangs of love	9	5.4			
Names	8	4.8			
Faith	4	2.4			
Place names	4	2.4			
Destiny	3	1.8			
Evil-eye	3	1.8			
Self-esteem	2	1.2			
Patriotism	2	1.2			
Loyalty	1	0.6			
Threat	1	0.6			

Warning	1	0.6
Education	1	0.6
Marriage	1	0.6
Total	167	100
Chi-Square (Asymp. Sig)	0.000	0.000

From Table 2, we can clearly observe that the theme *traffic rules*, has predominantly topped the list of linguistic themes, followed by *mother blessing*, *love*, *pangs of love*, *names*, *faith*, *place names*, *destiny*, *evil-eye*, *self-esteem*, *patriotism*, *loyalty*, *threat*, *warning*, *education*, and *marriage*. Samples from truck scripts reflecting these themes are presented below:

Traffic rules:



Horn Please/ Use Dipper at Night/ Wait for Side.



Speed 40 km./ Horn Please/ Use Dipper at Night.

Mother blessing:



Blessing of mother (text above the bumper rod).



Blessing of mother (text above the bumper rod).

Love:



Love for Sale 99% Discount.

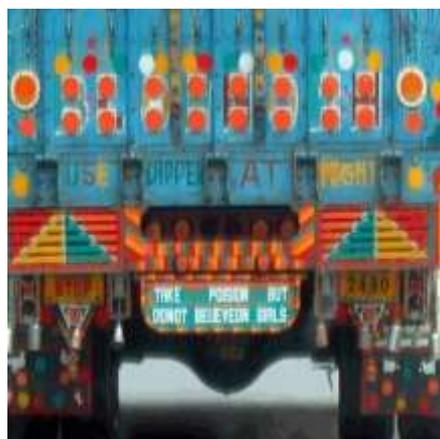


Don't smile baby. I will fall in love with you.

Pangs of Love:



Believe A Snake But Not A Girl.



Take Poison But Do not Believe On (=in) Girls.

Names:



Truck driver's name — Raju Banna (text above the bumper rod).



Meena (a Sanskrit baby name).

Faith:



In Trust We God (=In God We Trust).



Trust In God.

Place names:



This tree of Neem is not less than Sandal, Lucknow is no less than London.



'Want to come to Khandala? Don't leave my side, love': Inventing a new style of flirting before it was cool. (=Or maybe this was for the truck).

Destiny:



"It is not my hobby madam; driving 1081 is my necessity". (=1081 is the truck number).



It translates, "The lamp is dimmed, the atmosphere is orangish. Look lord Birbal your truck has arrived.". (=The meaning probably is

Loyalty and Marriage:

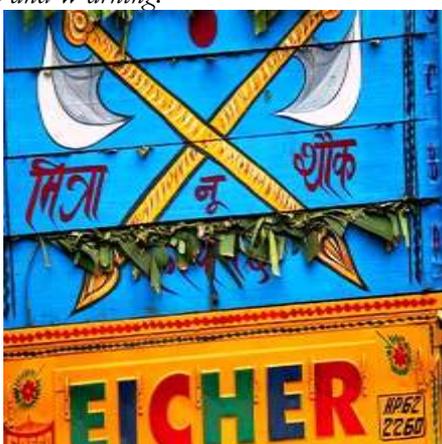


"Trust is hallucination, truth is false".



No Love, No Kiss. Only For Marriage.

Threat and Warning:



I am fond of weapons.



Overtake me if you dare, else have patience and follow.

Education:



1st text. Give a thought to the thought, what you will take along when you will die.

Paintings:

Flower figure.



Female character.

Comparison of the Themes from Turkish and Indian Trucks

As was observed from the data of this study, both linguistic and nonlinguistic representations emerged from the scripts of both Turkish and Indian instruments. In the Turkish data, a total of 202 occurrences of 22 themes were detected, while 167 occurrences of 16 themes were observed in the Indian truck scripts. As for nonlinguistic representations, pictures reflecting similar themes in both cultures surfaced with varying frequencies, the Indian representations more than quadrupling the Turkish representations.

Table 3

Comparison of the Themes from Turkish and Indian Trucks

Themes	Turkish		Indian	
	ToM	%	ToM	%
Faith	27	13.4	4	2.4
Pangs of love	24	11.9	9	5.4
Hometown	21	10.4	-	-
Nicknames	20	9.9	-	-
Love	19	9.4	11	6.6
Self-esteem	18	8.9	2	1.2
Names	18	8.9	8	4.8
Grief	9	4.5	-	-
Loneliness	5	2.5	-	-
Hope	5	2.5	-	-
Let-things-go	5	2.5	-	-
Destiny	5	2.5	3	1.8

Threat	4	2.0	1	0.6
Warning	4	2.0	1	0.6
Friendship	3	1.5	-	-
Begrudging	3	1.5	-	-
Distrust	3	1.5	-	-
Education	3	1.5	1	0.6
Tolerance	2	1.0	-	-
Longing	2	1.0	-	-
Marriage	1	0.5	1	0.6
Loyalty	1	0.5	1	0.6
Traffic rules	-	-	98	58.7
Mother blessing	-	-	18	10.8
Place names	-	-	4	2.4
Evil-eye	-	-	3	1.8
Patriotism	-	-	2	1.2
Total	202	100	167	100
Nonlinguistic Themes				
Pictures	22	100	97	100
Chi-Square (Asymp. Sig)	0.000			0.000

From Table 3, supremacy of *faith* (13.4%) in the linguistic category is rather conspicuous in Turkish truck scripts, while such occurrence remained only at 2.4% in Indian truck scripts. Besides, the theme *pangs of love* (11.9%) in the Turkish truck scripts emerged as the second strongest linguistic theme, whereas it occurred with a frequency of 5.4% in Indian scripts. The following themes are *hometown* (10.4%) and *nicknames* (9.9%) in Turkish scripts with no such occurrences in the Indian truck scripts. Furthermore, the theme *love* in Turkish truck scripts emerged with a percentage of 9.4% outnumbering the occurrence of its counterpart in Indian scripts (6.6%). *Self-esteem*, with 8.9%, in Turkish truck scripts significantly outnumbered its correspondent (1.2%) in Indian truck scripts. With 8.9%, the theme, *names*, in Turkish truck scripts also outnumbered its Indian correspondent (4.8%). Although no such occurrences were observed in Indian truck scripts, the themes, *grief* (4.5%), *loneliness* (2.5%), *hope* (2.5%), and *let-things-go* (2.5%), emerged in Turkish representations. Moreover, slight emergences were observed both in Turkish and Indian truck scripts; *destiny*, with 2.5% in Turkish scripts and 1.8% in Indian scripts, *threat*, with 2.0% in Turkish scripts and 0.6% in Indian counterparts, *warning*, with 2.0% in Turkish scripts and 0.6% in Indian representations, and *education*, with 1.5% in Turkish scripts and 0.6% in Indian equivalents display a variety of themes with slight-occurring percentages. The themes, *friendship* (1.5%), *begrudging* (1.5%), *distrust* (1.5%), *tolerance* (1.0%), *longing* (1.0%), occurred with rather small percentages in Turkish truck scripts, while no such themes emerged in Indian truck scripts. Themes, such as *loyalty* and *marriage* were encountered only once in both Turkish and Indian truck scripts. On the other hand, although not seen in Turkish truck scripts, *traffic rules* (58.7%), *mother blessing* (10.8%), *place names* (2.4%), *evil-eye* (1.8%), and *patriotism* (1.2%) were

observed only in Indian truck scripts. As for nonlinguistic representations, with 97 occurrences, *pictures* (mainly of flower, female, and animal figures) were detected with a more significant occurrence in Indian truck scripts compared to its Turkish correspondent with 22 occurrences.

Discussion and Conclusion

Imagine you are on a motorway trailing a truck, or got stuck in a rather traffic-congested environment. Right before your own eyes appears a text on a truck drifting you far away from where you are into an imaginary world of the very truck driver driving a vehicle that stands only a couple of meters ahead of you. You might be driving on a motorway to or from Adana in Turkey or to or from New Delhi in India. And here, you see a plethora of scripts reflecting all kinds of emotions and feelings deeply seated in the very person heading for a destination in front of you. This variety of representation paved our path to bring together that linguistic and nonlinguistic data existing on the trucks steered by individuals belonging to rather diverse cultural backgrounds. Hence, our study revealed that while there are commonalities between scriptural and pictorial representations between Turkish and Indian trucks, diversity can conspicuously be observed in both of the data sets. For instance, while all the themes cited in the study are common for both cultures, dominance of some particular themes – *faith* for Turkish, and *traffic rules* for Indian – clearly displays a different pattern of a world view. On the other hand, while *love* (with its variant, *pangs of love*) come second in the Turkish data, we see *mother blessing* in the Indian data occupying this place. This finding is clearly in line with Rambachan's (2001) views in this matter where women in Indian society are valued and respected particularly for their roles as wives and mothers. The truck scripts representing the theme, *pangs of love*, are the outcome of an *arabesque* tradition which came to describe the entire migrant culture formed at the peripheries of Turkish cities (Özbek, 1997). This culture refers to poverty, pains, pangs of love, and stressful life of migrants dwelling in suburban habitats. The same culture may be attributed to the Indian society indeed, having the same type of migrant life styles in the mentioned big Indian provinces. Moreover, *hometown* is another dominantly occurring theme represented in Turkish truck scripts. Other themes follow suit with varying frequencies.

Lastly, nonlinguistic forms on both Turkish and Indian trucks were seen with differing and common contents. For instance, while the Turkish data was heavily dominated by pictures of women, and scarcely, of animals, the Indian's (fourfold of that of the Turkish) included mainly motives of flowers, and scarcely, of females, and animals. This may be attributed to the fact that for comprehending human nature socially and psychologically, sign systems are used for interaction with other living beings to discover our potential for thought and social actions (Fawcett, 2015), and trucks, in our case, with their scripts contribute to this communicative act representing feelings, emotions, and thoughts of a driver population in both Turkish and Indian societies. Here, we see a culture deeply seated in a society being voiced and transmitted through a soundless speech which reads the minds and the hearts of the very individuals on steering wheels.

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