

**RESEARCH PAPER****Economy and Self: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Written Expressions of Elite and Non-Elite School Students****<sup>1</sup>Fariha Anjum, <sup>2</sup> Dr. Durr-e- Nayab\* and <sup>3</sup> Dr. Tariq Khan**

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**Corresponding Author**      [durrenayab@wum.edu.pk](mailto:durrenayab@wum.edu.pk)**ABSTRACT**

The concept of self is inherently dynamic and lacks definitive boundaries. It encompasses the integration of various psychological, social, and cultural factors to form a coherent sense of self. The present research intends to investigate how economy and formal literacy impact the language-based self-expression of selected secondary school students, recognizing the fluidity and complexity of self-construction and representation. For this purpose, the researcher has implied an amended model by drawing upon Fairclough's (1997) Critical Discourse Analysis, Gee's (1999) Cultural Model of Discourse and Street's (1984) Ideological Model of Literacy. The data collected is in the form of written essays taken from 200 randomly chosen students from elite and non-elite schools which is analyzed at word, sentence and discourse level. The research findings reveal perceptible differences in student perceptions based on socioeconomic backgrounds, influencing their self-construction; economy and literacy significantly impact individuals' opportunities and surroundings. This research will aid future studies in exploring how factors like race, ethnicity, and gender intersect to shape self-construction and representation among secondary school students.

**Keywords:**      CDA, Economy, Elite and Non-elite Students, Formal Literacy, Self**Introduction**

"In the social jungle of human existence there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity" (Erikson, 1968, p. 130). The development of self or identity is central to the human existence. Human beings are prompted to attain a sense of self and a coherent way to articulate it. It is the sense of self and the construction of identity, which enables us to get the warmth of psychological well-being and to experience ourselves as worthy and admirable beings.

The present study aims to examine the development and representation of identity through language used by the students of Matric and O Levels in the form of an essay about self. Here the self is taken as the constructed image of the students which determines that how do they feel about themselves. The current study attempts to find out that how the students of secondary level represent their selves with the help of language they use. In addition, it seeks to investigate how different variables such as gender, economy, class status and literacy affect self-building among the students and their representation via the use of language. The researcher aims to find out the role of economy and formal literacy in the construction and representation of students' identity at secondary level. The diversity in terms of economy effects the individual consciousness towards their identity and they code their changing identities in language.

## Literature Review

Sugimura et al., (2015) discussed that the cultural pathways in identity formation remains limited, particularly in Asian cultures where youth often prioritize group adaptation over individual uniqueness. Their study investigated that how Japanese emerging adults navigate identity development within the context of societal and relational dynamics. By examining the interplay between cultural self-construction (independence and interdependence) and identity processes (commitment, exploration, reconsideration) in both domains, the study sheds light on the nuanced relationship between identity formation and well-being. Results revealed that while relational identity is influenced by both independence and interdependence, societal identity is predominantly associated with independence. Furthermore, both forms of self-construction and identity positively correlate with well-being among Japanese emerging adults, suggesting a balance between individual expression and relational harmony. The present study corresponds to this in a way that it deals with the self construction of the students involving the factors of economy and formal literacy which somehow related to societal and relational dynamics.

In Mohsin's (2018) study, she examined the interplay between formal literacy and self-construction using data collected from both government and private colleges in 2017-18. Employing an amended research model derived from Fairclough's (2012) Critical Discourse Analysis and Street's (1984) Ideological Literacy Model she analyzed the data and underscored a significant correlation between formal literacy and the construction and representation of self. The study primarily focused on the identity development of female students in both rural and urban public and private colleges. This current research aligns with Mohsin's work, aiming to explore the relationship between formal literacy and self, with an additional focus on the influence of the economy. Additionally, data for this study were sourced from secondary-level government and private schools, with a specific emphasis on discerning differences in personality development between elite and non elite secondary school students.

## Theoretical Framework

Self-construction is a matter that is being discussed across several disciplines. The prime focus of present research is on the construction and representation of identity by the secondary level students of elite and non-elite schools in Multan, Pakistan, through their written discourse. The present study aims to find out the ways the students of government and private schools represent themselves by their written language. Self-identification may provide a suitable path to get the desirable future. There are some theorists who have given theories relevant to the present research which have been used to develop the theoretical framework after evaluating them critically.

Jacobson, R. (1960) presented a remarkable model of language in which he implies that language is not linked with a single context rather it shows its connection with many contexts. Jacobson, R. (1960) put forward three functions of language:

- Referential
- Textual
- Communicative

Grumperz and Hymes (1972) by working together have developed some tools to evaluate the language in its digressive context. For the present research the theoretical framework has been devised by drawing upon Fairclough's (1995) Critical s analysis, Gee's (1999) Cultural model of discourse and Street's (1984) ideological model of literacy. The analytical categories include Marxist, normative and explanatory critique.

## Material and Methods

In this research, the researcher is dealing with the data that is qualitative in nature as it reflects the attitude of the people, belonging to different backgrounds, through the use of language. However, this research also involves the quantitative analysis of the data in order to determine the extent to which a particular theme has occurred regarding self-construction and representation. For data collection, essays on self are taken from the participants selected by random sampling. In order to find out the way economy contributes to the construction of one's self, the analysis of the data is done at the level of word, sentence and discourse.

The key data collection includes the detailed essay written by randomly chosen 200 respondents of elite (Beaconhouse School) and no-elite schools (Comprehensive Girls High School Bosan Road and Government Boys High School Islamia Daulat Gate) in Multan, Pakistan. The descriptive essays collected from the students regarding their selves not only allowed the researcher to obtain statistical information, but also provide the researcher with diverse vocabulary that will indicate that how, through the usage of linguistic variety, male and female students of elite and non-elite schools create their self-image. The analysis of this data will help the researcher to unfold the identity of the male and female school students. For the current research the subjects have been grouped into two categories i.e.

- Government and Private Schools
- Male and Female students

**Table 1**  
**Categorization of Elite and non-Elite male and female Students**

Elite Schools		Non-Elite School	
O Levels		Matric	
Males	Females	Males	Females
50	50	50	50

## Data Collection and Sampling

Data is collected from 100 students of elite school and 100 students of non-elite schools in Multan, Pakistan. The collected data comprises the essays about self. Students were given the papers in which they were supposed to write about their self, family, religion, desires etc.

The technique of stratified sampling was used to collect data from the participants. Students willing to participate were divided into smaller groups in order to collect the samples efficiently. After the division of the students into small groups, students were randomly selected from each group. This is how the samples for the analysis were gathered. For the present research, the population comprises the students of secondary level (school students) so here we have two groups for sampling, one is the elite school and other is non-elite school (Government and Private school). Implying the above-mentioned sampling strategy, schools were selected for collection of data. Later on, in each school, students were divided into another strata i.e. males and females. Before collecting the data, permission was taken from the school heads. All the ethics regarding the data collection were followed.

## Operational Framework

A revised model is designed according to current data by creating an interface between the Street (1984), Gee (1999) and Fairclough (1997) models. The purpose behind applying this triangulation of three theories is to determine the diction used by secondary school students belonging to different social and cultural background, having different economic status and literacy levels. For present study, Street's Ideological model of literacy

is appropriate as it examine literacy from a socio-cultural perspective that often comprises different ideologies. It is of vital importance because three dimensions of literacy such as language usage, the cultural element that focuses on meaning and individual socialization are interlocked. This model is culturally sensitive and focuses on the power struggles. In addition, the researcher seeks to reveal self-construction through several discourse choices that consider Gee's cultural discourse model, which states that meanings are found in language and are related to the perceptions of people and their interpretation of discourse. Moreover, from a discursive perspective, the cultural model serves as a mean to observe the creation of identity, considering the ideas, behaviors and values as the basis of knowledge.

#### Amended Model for analysis:

- Ideological Model
- Cultural Mode
- CDA

**Table 2**  
**Data Analysis Tools**

Implicature/Presupposition/Assumption	Use of Pronouns
Comparison	Difference
Metaphor	

#### Results and Discussion

**Table 3**  
**Written expressions of the elite and non- elite school participants regarding religion**

1. Religion	
2. Elite School Students	3. Non-Elite School Students
4. I'm a labeled Muslim as I'm still in the process of discovering and searching.	5. I'm a good Muslim
6. I'm no one but the servant of Allah	7. I'm a Sunni Muslim.
8. Islam is the ticket to Jannah and I'm its follower.	9. Allah is power.
10. I'm an average Muslim	11. I'm a real Muslim
12. I try to fulfill religious duties	13. I offer prayer regularly
14. Allah has blessed me with the best. ALHAMDULILLAH for everything.	15. I will do good deeds and in return Allah will give me Jannat

As the individual's religious values are concerned, there can be no certainty in this regard because it is generally assumed that a person's religious beliefs refer to a force or something divine or purely powerful that helps us in performing some particular acts or prevents us from doing some other acts. Thus, one point is very certain that there can be no utter finality regarding the definition of beliefs or morality where religious values are involved. The researchers have associated religious values of the students, obtained from them in written form, with their self to examine their influence in the construction and representation of their self. Fairclough (1995) argues that "no use of language is ideology-free". Particular form of language used by an individual represents the kind of self one carries, so the lexical items involving religious connotations used by the students is a strong evidence that religion plays an important role in their self construction and representation. Some chunks selected from the written discourses of the participants are cited here which serve to illustrate the significance of religion in self construction.

Most of the students have used adjectives while writing about the religion to which they belong. They have added the adjectives average, good, labeled with Muslim which

indicate that they have distinguished themselves from the other students. These adjectives carry the essence of their perspectives i.e. what do they think about themselves. Usage of such adjectives has not only distinguished the self of one student from the other but it has also categorized the term Muslim. Here the question is what has made students realize that this is a particular category of Muslims to which they belong? There is the involvement of two important factors here: one is the economy and the other is formal literacy.

According to Street (1999), in several ways, from educational to developmental purposes, the traditional view operates from the premise that literacy can freely influence many social and cognitive activities. Formal literacy plays a significant role in enhancing the vocabulary of the students thus enabling them to gain a wider approach of viewing the things. This not only provides them with the multiple perspectives but also enables them to get an unlimited access to the knowledge of their religion. Formal literacy in private schools is found to carry more weightage as compared to the government schools. It serves as the medium of providing the students with knowledgeable words, thus enabling them to understand and distinguish themselves from others in a better way. The use of adjective 'average' indicates that the student carries sound knowledge about this term and self as a part of this category. Here the student has tried to illustrate the idea that in this world there do exist some people who do carry the tag of a particular religion but don't follow the values related to it. The participant under discussion has used the adjective Labeled for such category.

One of the participants under discussion has used the adjective 'average' with Muslim to illustrate that he considers himself as a good Muslim instead he is categorizing himself in the list of those who do follow Islam in its real form. The third category includes the sect along with the religion written by the participant of non-elite school which refers to those Muslim who understand and recognize their sect different from others. For them being a Muslim is not enough, the sub division is required for clarity.

Here it's another point that carries much significance that economy and formal literacy are interrelated. In Pakistan where literacy rate is one of the most common issue, one can gain the access to formal literacy only by means of wealth. The students belonging to private schools, where there is a huge difference in the fee structure as compared to the government schools, get the maximum exposure to the literate environment. Whereas in government schools, the students may get deprived of such environment due to the lack of educational infra structure. 3 out of 50 government school students have written I'm a good Muslim. No one else has added any other adjective with the noun Muslim.

In terms of interest, more government school students exhibited their inclination towards religion. Marx viewed religion as a mean of resistance by the people belonging to working class against their adverse or poor living conditions. According to him "The first requisite for the happiness of the people is the abolition of religion." Poor or the working-class people seek contentment from their religion. As it is mentioned by one of the government school girls the purpose of my life is to do good deeds in order to get the reward in the form of Jannah. Here the lexicalization used by the student indicates that she awaits reward in the afterlife. It also shows that student believes in the afterlife and she is ready to put back all the worldly rewards for the sake of the eternal one.

### **Use of pronoun (1st person I, We)**

Most often the participants of both government and private schools have used the first- person pronoun in their essays. Some of the chunks containing first person pronoun are following:

*I'm an average Muslim.*  
*We are Sunni Muslims*

In the written discourse the use of the 1st person pronoun suggests several aspects, such as the writers' possession of concepts and declaration of their role both as objectivism and subjectivism and their references to authority on various topics Ivanic and Camps (2001). The pronoun I as first person has numerous connotations, like being used for assurance, independent thoughts, credit taking and self-representation as a separate self from others or advancing from objective to subjective approach. So, as discussed in the data analysis segment, these participants have used the 1st person pronoun, which is very explicit about self-construction. The 1st person pronoun can reflect the expression of the authorial 'I', which symbolizes the author's independency level. It may also indicate that the author has greater control as well as commanding authority. By using first person pronoun, the author expresses himself as the creator of meaning. By looking at the collected data it is evident that the private school students have shown more certainty about the self-possessed by them as they have used more 1st person pronoun 'I'. On the other hand, the first-person pronoun 'We' which refers to unity is more frequently used by government school students.

### **Metaphor**

Conboy (2007) indicated that metaphors are often used to convince or make a strong sense of ideology. Here some of the sentences used by the students of both elite and non-elite schools in their written essays require attention.

*Allah is power  
Islam is the ticket to Jannah.*

Language is something that cannot be set apart from the metaphor. The use of metaphor indicates that the degree of certainty is transferred from the one who writes to the one who rereads or from the one who speaks to the one who listen Lakoff (1995). The metaphors used in the religion related self segment is quite clear here. One government school student has presented the ideology that Allah is power which represents his trust in the One he follows. Here power is used as a metaphor to give a clear presentation of Allah. The other Government school student has referred Islam as a Ticket to Jannah. This is how he has metaphorically represented his point of view regarding this existed world and the life hereafter. Metaphors add clarity to the concepts. Through the given samples, it is evident that religious ideologies are incorporated particularly into poor or middle-class people. Although there is no certainty that religion nullifies this universe rather than the next world is connected with the worldly conducts, so it is just the self-denial of the material world that the person is directly or indirectly compelled to reject this world for the afterlife.

### **Difference**

Benwell (2006) opined that Identifications occurs through the process of differentiation. Here in terms of construction and self-representation, the following chunks of the written discourse, one from private school student and the other from Government school student.

*Allah has blessed me with the best. ALHAMDULILLAH for everything.  
I will do good deeds and in return Allah will give me Jannat.*

Another significant point is that one of the students belonging to private school has thanked Allah for all the things she possesses. It indicates that Allah has blessed her with all the best things in life which the student of Government school is lacking and waiting for the good things to happen in the afterlife. These two sentences demonstrate the life style of the private and government school student indirectly. As stated earlier, data from two different categories has been collected and most of the government school participants have given the impression that this world is nothing more than just an illusion or a false impression, so

one thing is quite evident and notable, which is subtly perpetuated that poor or working-class people are so often driven by the religious notions and are convinced to compromise their worldly pleasures for sake of reward in the afterlife. Thus, the relationship between impoverishment and religion is very much clear. Another significant thing about the current discussion is the notion of representing oneself differently from others. There are 4 more government school students who have written about the afterlife reward due to the lack of resources in the worldly life. On the other hand, private school students have somehow shown their access to the worldly pleasures and resources, hence talked less about the afterlife.

## Identity

**Table 4**  
**Written expressions of the elite and non- elite school participants regarding identity**

<b>Identity</b>	
<b>Elite School Students</b>	<b>Non-Elite School Students</b>
My name is Rayyan Ali	I'm a boy
You are what you think you are and I think that I'm a confident and bold person.	I'm a student
I'm from Multan	I live at home
I'm the apple of my parent's eyes	My family loves me
I love my mother only	I love my family
I belong to Mughal caste	My family is Gujjar

## Comparison

Fairclough (2003) discussed that the individual identity of a person tends to serve as the pride that one holds to be a distinct self. Some of the examples extracted from the data reveals that majority of the elite school students mentioned their full name while writing about self. However, the non-elite school students were comparatively less in number who revealed their names. Instead of the names they revealed their gender. This indicates that the non-elite school students were hesitant in making themselves recognized so, they used an alternative way to express who they are by writing

*I'm a boy.*

The indefinite article represents the insignificance of something. Something that does not stand out and cannot be recognized individually.

In the above-mentioned examples some of the students have just mentioned their names, some have revealed their age as well whereas there are a few participants who have disclosed interesting facts about their personality. One elite school boy has expressed his self in a metaphorical way.

*I'm the apple of my parents' eyes.*

Friedan (2010) reveals that if the person is satisfied, safe and self embracing without any remorse s/he is able to make him/herself satisfy whatever s/he is intending to get or what one can become.

*You are what you think you are" and I think that I'm a confident and bold person.*

Specific jargon has been used by the participant in the above cited example to reflect his constructed identity by revealing some facts related to his personality. In this example the participant has attempted to portray himself distinct from others by using metaphorical

language. He considers himself as one who doesn't fear to face difficulties. From such an expression the self- confidence of the participants can be observed that is influenced by various socio- economical and socio-political factors. It can also be implied here that the participant might be enjoying all the socio economical facilities, hence has expressed his identity in a distinct way. Through this expression the message that is been imparted by the participant is that one should think good of him/herself. One should never underestimate or lose positivity in one's self.

It is generally observed that people belonging to elite class who are more vulnerable to the social setting, are more likely to be literate and are brave enough to present their identity in terms of naming. This assumption is also followed in the present research, out of 100 elite school participants 68 have exposed their names whereas in non-elite school out of 100, 33 participants have exposed their names.

The discussion mentioned above regarding the disclosure of the name indicates that the Government school students may have given the opportunity to make themselves literate and have obtained the level of trust to disclose their identity at the name level. Whereas there may be other factors that have driven the private school participants to conceal their identity at name level. Williams and Mohammed (2009) argued that by keeping one's identity unrevealed, an individual with masked stigmatizing identity may prevent discrimination and therefore, the route from stigma to adverse effects will less likely to be a direct consequence of the discrimination as it is with recognizable identities. However, the act of holding a secret identity can put burden that are not directly linked to discrimination, but can cause similar detrimental consequences on physical as well as on mental health (Pachankis, 2007)

### Implicature

The act of implying meaning beyond the literal sense refers to implicature. Reah (2001) opines that language serves as an important tool for expressing a certain viewpoint when used implicitly. Given below are the sentences where the participants have used this technique of implicature:

*I love my mother only.*

One of the elite school girl m mentioned love for her mother and made it limited to her by using the word 'only'. This implies that she may not have the same feelings of love for any other member of her family. While on the other hand many of the non-elite school students expressed their love for the whole family.

*I love my family.*

**Table 5**  
**The percentage of revelation of identity by the elite and non- elite school participants.**

Revelation of identity	No. of Elite School Students	No. of Non-Elite School Students
Full Name	68	33
Age	37	26
Gender	12	39
Caste	21	12
Religion	47	54
Family	53	32



## **Conclusion**

Self is a fluid term with which no finality can be added. However, economy and formal literacy plays a vital role in the development of one's identity. These two factors along with some other social factors helps the individuals to present their self in a better way, thus bringing a visible difference in the self construction and representation of elite and non-elite school students through their written discourse.

The samples collected from the elite and non-elite school participants in written form have noticeable differences in terms of their identity, family background and religion. The elite school participants have expressed their selves in a better way by using metaphors, implicature etc. as compared to the non-elite school participants who have barely used any such technique in their writing. Throughout the research the element of economy has been identify has a major factor in the development of self. It makes visible differences between the elite and non-elite school students. There lies a visible difference in the perceptions of the students with different socioeconomic background which ultimately leads towards these differences in the construction of identity. Economy and literacy is responsible for bringing a visible change in the people's surroundings, providing them with different opportunities depending upon their economic status and offering them different exposures to the world therefore, brining changes in the development of their personalities which can be observed through their language.

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