

1. Speaker's Expression of 'Self': Discourse of Physically Disabled Student in Academic Setting

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Abstract:

The way we perceive and present ourselves is the foundation of our social construction; an individual or group relationship. A particular discourse stems from the social or cultural background, power or social status and can be the best means to open an avenue to peep into individual's sense of self and identity. To be healthy in itself becomes identity when one compares oneself with unhealthy ones; grounding on this assumption, this paper critically examines the discourse of physically disabled student aiming to discuss the realization of his identity and impression of self as expressed through words. I applied Goffman's model as a comprehensive approach to analyze the data to understand the role of health in identity formation. While identity and self will be used largely as synonyms, the attempt is made to analyze the respondent's perception of his self and identity as a social construction. The findings examined within the context of ideological and cultural background and interpreted in the light of Althusser's (1971) ideological framework. The paper concludes by stating that identity is the product of social relationships implicitly formed in the ideological background and is a source of motivation and expectations to transform one into social being capable of expressive control.

Keywords:

Identity; Power; Self; Ideology; Discourse

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"The self is an effect of a performance, the way in which we present ourselves in everyday life."

(Goffman, 1969: p. 28)

Broadly speaking, identity is a marker attributed to the attempt to integrate and differentiate a sense of self along different personal and social dimensions. Often, the attempt to define identity and self-rely on the representation of self i.e., psychological construction about us as an individual in terms of how we are identified by others and what we are identifying with. The sense of self and identity are something we are supposed to have; they are characteristics of an internal makeup as who we are as persons and individual.

Identity is our unique possession which distinguishes us from other people. It also implies an association with a social group. Identity is not only the identification with others on the basis of biological, cultural and social features but it is also 'to be myself' in a social situation in which I find myself to be defined.

Erikson in his work *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, (1968) considers adolescence as a crucial phase to form an identity, in which conflict arises between identity and role confusion. By becoming more self-aware of weaknesses, strengths and confident in one's unique qualities a young person can progress to the adult stage. He explains in each of his eight stages how passing through the course of self-definition and self-reflection adolescents attain a coherent and unified sense of self that persists over time.

James Marcia in *Identity in Adolescence*, in *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*, ed. Joseph Adelson (1980) identifies four 'identity statuses' i.e. "foreclosure," "diffusion," "moratorium," "achievement". In these stages by following others, changing and making new commitments finally individual reaches where he sees available choices clearly and can make a decision about who s/he wishes to become.

Goffman (*Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (1968) and Foucault (*Discipline and Punish* (1977) in their works give us sense of the socially constructed self and identity. Where Goffman explains how the violation of social norms can lead to stigmatized identity Foucault talks in

length about power and knowledge and how it works in the construction of self to constitute our roles for us.

Michael L. Hecht & HyeJeong Choi argue in their work *The Communication Theory of Identity as a Framework for Health Message Design (2012)* that people's identities govern the formation of their attitudes, behaviours and beliefs. As a result, they have studied identity to determine its effects on individuals' health choices, actions and values, under the assumption that identity and health are inseparably entwined. Whereas Michael and HyeJeong traced the effects of identity on individual's health I am analyzing the process in reverse to check the effects of health in determination and formation of identity. Using Goffman's model of self and identity (1968) I will analyze how physically disabled person being a part of some situation implicitly offers self-impression to his observer, to make them believe in his attributes which he appears to possess to construct his identity.

To write this paper I interviewed a physically disabled student of Public Sector University. I used discourse analysis approach to describe, explain and interpret the discourse that framed the self-perception of physically disabled student to find out how his identity been effected by disability. I have also analyzed whether it was a disability or any ideological state apparatus (ISA) that played a vital role in shaping his perception of world and himself as revealed in his discourse while entering into a process of identification in situated social practice. The data source is a transcript of an interview that was recorded and transcribed.

My analysis is based on the answers to three questions: i) *How did you decide to take admission in MA English?* ii) *How do you see yourself in university* iii) *Did disability affect your life?*

Using Goffman's model of self and identity (1968) I tried to analyze how a person by expressing his self in discourse, constructs his social, personal and ego identity.

Goffman (1968) In *Stigma* describes three identity types a) Social Identity b) Personal Identity c) Ego Identity. Society produces attributes and characterizes people in these categories of identity.

According to Goffman Social identity is about the characteristics that is ascribed by social classifications such as gender, class and age and is based on relations, definitions and concerns of others. Personal identity born and dies with a person and is about those signs and marks that make us unique with in society and recognizes us as an individual in present, past and future e.g. fingerprints. Ego identity is about how we feel about our self, how we exist in the world and who we are.

The following conversation took place entirely in English.

001. Mehnaz Khan (MK): How did you decide to take admission in MA English?

002. Respondent (PB): Should I go for Pashto , Urdu or English?

(The respondent prefers to speak in English)

003.MK: Any Language

004. PB: Actually I was very fond of English,

005. When I reached FSc,

006. I did FSc in Pre-Medical

007. My brother insisted me to go for private medical college

008. But I decided not to go there

009. And I turned to literature side

010. Then I took admission in university to get close to literature.

011.MK: How do you see yourself in university?

012. PB: Miss I tell you one thing very frankly

013. That I moved throughout the Pakistan

014. I met different people

015. Everywhere I get respect

016. And Alhamdulillah

017. M confidant regarding gifted quality

018. I do not feel any sort of hesitation

019. And living free everywhere

020. But my main point is that once I decide to reach the goal I never give up

021. MK: Did this disability affect your life?

022. PB: No... No... I say categorically no.

023. I am feeling very healthy

024. ALLAH gave me each and everything

025. He granted me each and everything

026. I consider myself that I am very lucky person

027. That ALLAH chose me for a speciality....

028. I am not regretted...I am telling

029. Because ALLAH gave me the courage and boosted me to fight the situation, the terms

030. To fight for the right of people, for my parents, for poor

0231. I tell you that nowadays m busy here in university but I am a part of politics

032. I am a part of PTI¹

¹ The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf commonly known as PTI is a political party in Pakistan, which is founded by former Pakistani cricketer Imran Khan.

- 033.** Imran Khan² gave me this platform
034. It's an honour for me
035. That's why I consider that he is a great person he is the real hero
036. Once I told him that you are not the tiger of Pakistan but you are the tiger of South Asia
037. He is the charismatic person
038. I see in him many things when I met him I explored him
039. I told you once I decide to explore thing I explore

Looking at the above discourse the first thing which caught my attention is the use of pronoun 'I' throughout the conversation, there is no shift from 'I' to 'we' while referring to himself. It shows that the sense of individualism is a bit higher than collectivism and it also shows the emphasis on himself, his power and authority as LL.007, 008 symbolize that he has the power to control his life and make decisions. It also shows that he is least influenced by other's choice and he has the authority to impose his decision and reject someone else's and that his choice is important for him (L.008). Construction of this type of image may project an egocentric yet strong figure. The use of active voice also projects the strong and firm figure behind the disabled physique. Asking for language choice in L.002 and then preferring English over Urdu and Pashto may suggest that he does not only conforms to his academic setting but he also relates to the very mundane attitude of many of the Pakhtoons who prefers the English Language over the native and national language and considers it a symbol of superiority.

The answer to the second question is a bit indirect because PB did not answer the question by stating his position in university rather PB in LL.013, 014 preferred referring to his travelling across the country and meeting different people who limited the way to make sense of his answer. It provided the variable viewpoints about his place in institute; it seems as if he avoids to speak about his relation with university fellows. Answering indirectly by referring to 'respect' that he has got in country from his countrymen gives an idea that either he has not been given his due place and respect or love in university or he does not value his given place in the institute; some possibilities are not uttered or even thought of when the respondent approaches from a certain viewpoint.

I can say that his sense of self is evolving More from the respect and love of his countryman the way he is received and recognized during his visits across the country. In L.020 the confidence, the sense of self that he expresses is not what he knew about himself but it is because of how he came to know from the response of the others. The image of his reality is drawn by people who, being the part of his culture hold his hand (being disabled) to elevate his sense of being. His sense of self is high because

² Imran Khan is former cricketer and a Pakistani politician. In the late twentieth century he played international cricket for two decades and entered politics after retirement.

he believes in himself and his belief is the outcome of the love and trust of people. Self-confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy and the directness of the statement in L.020 and 039 constructs PB's Ego identity which is about how we feel about our self, how we exist in the world and who we are (Goofman, 1968). The image of being strong, confident, focused and having the courage to explore others shows how he feels about himself.

Keeping Goffman's view in mind PB's personal identity is his physical disability which distinguishes him among other people. Strong negation of the affect of disability in L.022, repetition of the same sense in LL. 024,025 considering himself lucky and special in LL.026,027 are strong markers of the fact that how religious state apparatus is working to make him a good subject by accepting his reality and situation. "The individual is *interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection*, i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection 'all by himself'" (Althusser,1971: p.182). As individual can be identified in relation to the context, in which he is placed, so PB is making gestures (Saying Alhamdulillah, repeating ALLAH, gifted quality, lucky, special) *all by himself* and claiming to be happy and satisfied, bearing in patience the condition in which God has placed him as in LL.024-030 PB is conveying the same sense (of being rooted in Religion) in different words. Words like special and lucky implicate different ideas and ideologies (False consciousness) where its validity begins to be questioned. The truth about himself (being disabled) is different and is supported in different words to highlight different kinds of facts.

LL.0 24-030 expresses mutually contradictory views. The variability in respondent's response results from the accepted fact of disability, opinion about himself and the goal to fight for other's rights which bring different aspects into sight. Using words like 'fight' demonstrates that still there are things to be right.

L.030 shows PB's sense of societal responsibility to all members of society. First talking about himself immediately he talks of people, parents and poor it means he identifies with them and tries to create solidarity; being deprived he has the goal to fight for the deprived once although the sense of deprivation is not evident in his words but his answers implicitly point to his lack. In his words, he tries to convey the strong sense of self-efficacy since he feels that he has control over his life to meet the challenges he is expected to meet or to get out of difficult situations. Because of a high sense of himself, he does not only expect to alter his life but also the lives of others (parents, poor). By idealizing his role he is trying to conform to societal and cultural norms. In LL.032,033 he is associating himself with politics and Imran Khan, as person's identity is rooted in his identification in what he associated himself with, so his associations point towards his desire for power and politics. While in L. 030 talking about people, immediately in L.032 he proclaims that he is the part of politics,

PTI, here I believe that it is in his unconscious that to serve his people, family and poor he has to be the part of politics to get power. Besides this once again he constitutes his social identity (Goofman) in terms of other people. Notice that Reference to interaction with Imran Khan and calling him tiger of Asia is suggestive of his political geography, considering himself as an active member of the political party he tries to establish his image of a seeker of a powerful functional unit of society.

From above discussion, one can say that identity is the product of social relationships implicitly formed in the ideological background and is a source of motivation and expectations. The words which seem naturally slipping out are the product of ideological intervention, but actually, it proves that if things are to be then it has to be what it must be. And that's how unconscious "Recognition" of our own selves as ideological subjects gives us "consciousness" to feel a responsibility (Althusser, 1971: p.173).

Man as a social being naturally lives in ideology, therefore, he is an ideological subject practising rituals of everyday life (handshake, have a name of one's own) "(Althusser, 1971: p.171). In fact, this entire discourse is a good example of how religious ISA is reflecting behind the words and how ideology transforms us to become a "good subject". And all the good subjects work 'all by themselves' (ideology) (Althusser, 1971: p.181) because "They are inserted into practices governed by the rituals of the ISAs. They 'recognize' the existing state of affairs (*das Bestehende*), that 'it really is true that it is so and not otherwise', and that they must be obedient to God, to their conscience, to the priest, to de Gaulle, to the boss, to the engineer, that thou shalt 'love thy neighbour as thyself'" (Althusser, 1971: p.181)

I argue that central to the construction of self is the perception of human emotions and imagination because it is the means by which we imagine and see the world and the existence of others in the world. Through the analysis of the student's discourse, I conclude that Being deprived he identifies with deprived ones to fight for their rights to feel more like a beneficial individual of society. The picture that emerges from interview talk is that how physically disabled person can become his or her own agent of change even when the present physical status limits his ability for professional development and learning and how he can idealize and realize himself to transform into social being capable of 'expressive control' (Manning, 1992: p. 42). As Bakhtin (1984, p. 287) puts it: "To mean to communicate... To be means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself. A person has no internal, sovereign territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary; looking inside himself, he looks into the eyes of another or with the eyes of another."

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