

Literacy as a Social Practice: Mapping out Multimodal Literacy Practices in Middle-Class Beauty Salons

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: Literacy is a socio-culturally constructed activity that is deeply associated with social position and identity which varies according to different social and cultural contexts. The study explores multi-literacies as a new world of reading, writing multimodal and mediated practices which offers handling of tech tools, pictures, words, texts, as semiotic forms of communication in addition to the traditional notions of text.

Methodology: The study has adapted and employed qualitative approach and three-dimensional framework of Multi-Layering by (Bloome & Theodorou, 1988). Purposive sampling had been used for the selection of sample from four salons based on selected population of middle class areas of Rawalpindi city. Audio recordings, observations and field notes have been used as research instruments. The study has explored the use of multilingual, multimodal and covert strategies as a means to enhance and facilitate the beautician-client interaction with power imbalance in salon setting.

Findings & Conclusion: It is found through the analysis of data that beauticians maintain their dominance through coordinated actions using beauty artifacts along with multimodal mediated techniques in beauty procedures. Additionally, they extend the notion of customers' self-care to get them their aspired beauty looks to align with the society's desired beauty ideals.

Keywords: Multimodal Literacies, Social Practice, Mediated Actions, Identity, Power Asymmetries.

Introduction

Literacies are social practices, situated in social processes which locate individual action in socio-cultural domain by different ways of reading, writing and utilizing multimodal texts. These practices are observable in specific events and discourses which include understandings, values, and intentions that people attached to them, both individually and collectively (Street, 1984; Gee, 1996). The notion of literacy as fixed set of skills for reading and writing has been expanded to the concept of multimodal literacies which are necessary to evaluate, recognize, and produce messages with a daunting variety of consumer goods and increasingly intuitive tools (Wohlwend, 2009). The term multimodal literacy originates in social semiotics which refer to the study of language that combines two or more modes of meaning and each mode has its own specific task and function in the meaning-making process (Kress, 2010). A multimodal text involves coordination of not just written and spoken text but also accounts for

Article History

Received:
April 20, 2023

Revised:
June 26, 2023

Accepted:
June 27, 2023

Published:
June 30, 2023

the actions, images and materials i.e. turning the pages of the book, navigating or toggling the websites, and even clicking a mouse is considered to be a literacy skill in modern expanded definition of literacy.

The term multi-literacies focus on the multiple ways in which people draw on and combine the codes in their communicative repertoire when they speak and write. Multilingual literacy does not refer to multiple literacies associated with different cultures but, it accounts for multiple forms of literacy associated with diverse channels or modes like visual literacy, verbal, numerical literacy and so on (Cazden, 1996). Multi-literacies offer a new world of reading and writing practices with handling of symbols, pictures, words, texts, icons as semiotic forms of communication in addition to the traditional notion of grammar, lexicon and semantics. Moreover, multimodal-literacies also encompasses digital innovation by foregrounding mediated discourse strategies like usage of technological tools which require special expertise that is taken-for-granted literacy practices in our societies. Mediated actions are literacy performances that mark membership and mutual recognition within a particular field that shapes their access to hierarchal network of social positions and to more or less empowered positions in a respective field in a literacy event.

So, literacy is not being able to read & write only but also to utilize those skills in a socially appropriate context (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990). 'Literacy' and 'illiteracy' are socially constructed phenomena which are dictated by relations of powers in society. Relations of power relates to the interface between cultural identity & literacy learning. Literacy is a social construct which varies according to cultural context and there has been growing emphasis on the links between literacy and power structure within societies. There always exist asymmetrical power relations between different multilingual adult worlds which accounts for the opportunities, their linguistic and literary resources offer to them. Individuals often make creative use of their linguistic and multimodal resources to depict specific cultural identities and to negotiate their position with respect to institutional and non-institutional positioning. Hence, the current study focuses on participants negotiating and affirming their identities and social relations in middle class salons' public discourse through their language, multimodal literacy practices and mediated actions pertaining to power structures and ideologies of existing worlds.

Significance of the Study

The research study provides a significant contribution by focusing on not just written and spoken language but also on mediated actions i.e. physical actions with material objects. This unravels how verbal and non-verbal multimodal coordinated actions which are taken-for-granted multimodal literacy practices contribute to reveal power relations, identity building and expanded notions of literacy practices. Moreover, this study also exposes the workings of social practices interacting in local middle class context along with depiction of physical mediated actions interacting to constitute social practices contributing to the nexus of situating power relations and building identities circulating through global discourses.

Research Gap

The term multilingual literacies as a fixed set of reading and writing skills has been analyzed frequently in educational discourse however, there is a little work carried out on an expanded version of multilingual literacy practices accounting for multimodal literacies existing in public discourse. This study intends to fill this gap by providing a nexus of literacy and social practices linking and integrating by employing several verbal, nonverbal and mediated discourse strategies in middle-class salon discourse foregrounding power asymmetries and identity notions.

Research Questions

1. What are the multimodal literacy practices constructed and negotiated in middle class professional/public discourse of beauty salons?
2. How linguistic choices and mediated actions are being employed by social agents corresponding to power structures and identity in salon discourse?

Limitations of the Study and Issues of Data Collection

The study has covered only four middle class beauty salons in Rawalpindi city, however, it provides the opportunity for in-depth analysis of the rich data collected. Some owners refused to allow audio recording; so notes taking was also used as a tool. So, the owners, who did not allow audio recording, we took permission for notes taking, so this flexibility allow to continue data collection and a different perspective as a participant observer. In two salons we recorded audios, and in the two parlors we took notes as a participant observer. The next problem was that sometimes there are more than one client, and more than one procedure was going on, so the audio had various sounds including the disturbing noises of the surroundings. So, the transcription was a difficult task, but it is the characteristic of real life environment and adds authenticity. Lastly, some customers were conscious of audio recording and notes taking, but gradually, we observed that they were accustomed and their attention diverted to the procedure.

Literature Review

Literacies have different meaning for individuals & groups within & between societies. It is a socio-culturally constructed activity which varies according to different social and cultural settings. Literacy activities arise due to larger political, cultural and economic forces of a given society so neither their structure nor their functions can be understood outside of the societal context (Scribner, 1987). Literacy as a social practice accounts for making sense of variations in the uses and meanings of literacy in different contexts rather than merely relying on barren notions of dominant contemporary discourse about society. Social practices are deeply associated with social position and identity. Multiple literacy practices are linked with different domains of public life across and within cultures.

According to Barton and Hamilton (2000) literacy practices are neither random nor accidental but are given their structure by social institutions which may include family, education or commercial sphere. Therefore, some practices are more dominant, visible and influential than others patterned by social institutions and power relations. Just as social status, our beauty standards are always pervasive across cultures that are partially or wholly acquired through different techniques and methods. Thus, beauty salons are one of the medium through which people tend to acquire their desired beauty standards. Feminine beauty is a socially constructed and highly fluid phenomena which can be enhanced through cosmetics, ornamentation and clothing (Abid, Liaquat, & Malik, 2021). Therefore, in social interaction there are several multimodal literacy practices involved in salon discourse which unravel power asymmetries, hidden identities and ideologies of prevailing dominant contexts.

The study by Eisenlauer and Karatza (2020) showcased eight research papers that explored multimodal literacies in educational settings and multimodal genres that contribute for the better understanding of individual modes working together to produce coherent and cohesive multimodal texts. The research findings suggest that incorporating multimodal strategies in university syllabi and language learning; fosters multimodal awareness, tailor digital meaning-making practices in EFL context, enhance language acquisition at university level by using music as mode and develop popularization of expert knowledge. Moreover, in terms of other multimodal genres, multimodal literacy contributes to the ideational, interpersonal, and textual meaning in TED talks, inter-semiosis serves as highly resourceful mode in meaning-making in a large scale language examination context, while visual and linguistic features of communicative and persuasive strategies on tourism website facilitates discursive construction of identity and culture of respective destinations.

Appearance management can function as an important outlet for self-expression. A study was conducted by Ward, Keady and Campbell (2016) to analyze narrative building and body work involved in dementia care in hair salons. The study generated a close and detailed description of perspectives of diverse stakeholders of 'salon-chat' by situating it in a context that gave meaning to events and practices of salon-based relationships. The findings revealed that the social interactions are mirrored by collaborated bodily movements and facilitated by inter-sensory practices. Moreover, the matrix of intersecting forces that

includes economic, biographical, cultural and environmental considerations influence the styling practices and narrative practices of participants.

Multimodal activities accounts for procedural logic and sequencing patterns that bring alignment to coordinate talk and practices in service-assessment hair salons (Oshima & Streeck, 2015). The study revealed that there is no fixed relationship between coordinated conversation practices either people manipulate this relationship on moment by moment basis to achieve required progress and task. Furthermore, there are stream of actions that involves multiple level of contexts which foreground participant's differential identities in professionalized communication. Fairclough (1992) suggest that people often make choices about the structure and design of clauses to signify knowledge and belief.

The study by Wohlwend (2009) examined the nonverbal and material meanings of multimodal texts in makeover show by Mediated-Discourse analysis (MDA). The study proposed the significance of mediated actions with material artifacts in identity-building practices of global discourses. Furthermore, the study recommended to design mediated encounters in literary classroom so that students will be able to socially positioned themselves by tacitly valued literacy practices. The review of relevant literature suggests that there has been gap of research studies encompassing multimodal literacies in public discourses corresponding to power differences and identity depiction along with no emphases has been paid to extended version of literacy i.e. to situate it in socially-appropriate context.

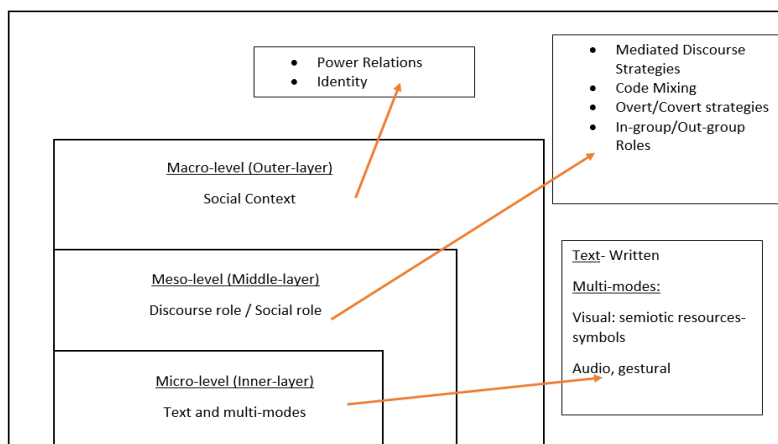
Research Methodology

The research approach to the present study is qualitative in nature. Purposive sampling has been used to collect data from four parlors for the period of four weeks with 5-7 hours a day in each setting. Audio recordings, observations and field notes have been used as research instruments for the purpose of data collection. The data includes the advertising images of salons, rate lists, notes for keeping appointments and conversations between clients and service providers. Two salon services are being selected for the purpose of analyzing beautician-client conversations offering rich data which are hair treatment and skincare services.

Theoretical Framework

The data has been analyzed using the method of Multi-layering (Bloome & Theodorou, 1988) with adapted three-dimensional framework. This approach offers comprehensive three layers of analysis with the focus moving from; inner layer i.e. Micro-level which involve an ethno-methodological analysis of interactions of Provider and Client in salons focusing on the roles assumed by each participant, through a middle layer i.e. Meso-level in which different strategies used by participants are examined and quantified, to the outer layer or social context i.e. Macro level corresponding to various identities, power relations and ideologies.

Figure 1: *Three-Dimensional Adapted Framework of Multi-Layering by (Bloome & Theodorou, 1988)*



Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection consisted of qualitative methods that include surveying of intended locale of study to determine the distribution, availability and real nature of salon services to middle-class clients. Audio recordings and observations of participants were conducted over the period of four weeks until data saturation is reached. Diaries and field notes were kept by the researchers throughout the period of fieldwork. We spent 5-7 hours a day in each setting and during this time we recorded and observed almost 26 interactions that were engaged in different salon services. During this phase, we observed and collected all in-situ literacies in salons, mediating salon-based relationships which includes visuals, text and semiotic modes employed during provider-client interactions. The beauty salons services are covered into two broader categories of Hair care and skin care services. In hair care services, haircut, hair dye and hair styling are observed while in skin care services facial, pedicure/manicure and face wax/thread are counted on.

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Table 1: *Services Exhibited in Middle-Class Beauty Salons*

Parlor Name	Skin Care Services			Hair Care Services			Total
	Pedicure/Manicure	Facial	Face Wax/Threading	Hair Cut	Hair Dye	Hair style	
Parlor 1	1	1	3	1	-	6	36
Parlor 2	2	-	4	-	-	6	
Parlor 3	1	1	3	2	3	10	14
Parlor 4	2	2	3	3	4	14	

Mostly, customers visited with their mothers, sisters, children or friends. Few came alone. Teenagers took services under the guidance of their mothers while young ladies and mature ladies decide themselves about what service to have and what products or style to choose. Generally, skin and hair are the two important aspects of the personality which are visible, hence, the clients mostly visit salons either for their skin care or hair care (Candelario & Ginetta , 2000).

Micro-level (Inner layer analysis)

In middle class parlors, multimodal literacy practices reflect the way the professional practices are carried out by integrating various modes. So, the middle class salons encourage and transform the beauty procedure into collaborative activities where both beauticians and clients work cooperatively to have desired outcomes, looks and styles. Each beauty procedure has a set procedural sequence, where beauticians are in power to guide, instruct and direct, and clients follow the instructions. They use specific products according to skin type, skin problem, customers demand and needs. and other concerns budget. Moreover, the middle class salon staff and owner use their own jargon and special terms of the techniques and services to communicate effectively and efficiently.

Special Vocabulary (Jargon)

The first level of analysis starts with the micro level, i.e. the inner layer which focuses on the use of the language with symbols, signs and images. In middle class beauty salons, the interaction between beauticians and clients is rich due to multilingual and multidimensional aspects to engage the client. Usually the names of the brands and products are mentioned in the discussion and consultation of the client. The option of various products and procedures with its rates are given to the customers who then negotiate for the rates and further inquire the difference in terms of its effectiveness, result, and side-effects.

Table 2: Jargon or Special Terms used in Middle class Beauty Salons

Services	Jargon
Terms used for face wax/thread	<i>Normal wax - Fruit wax – threading – plucking – arch shape – round shape – skin tight – skin neat – treatment application</i>
Terms used for pedicure & manicure	<i>Dermacos pedicure & manicure - Foot massage- Leg massage - Nail cut – nail file -Nail shape -Normal pedicure - Round shape -Whitening pedicure & manicure – polisher – square shape – scrub – smooth feel</i>
Terms used for Facial	<i>Arqe gulab - Dermacos – balck-heads - bleach – Fruit facial –face polish - herbal facial - Light hand massage – skin polisher – toner - Whitening facial</i>
Terms used for Haircut	<i>Back layers - Back length -Back V- Blow dry – Bob cut - Cut fresh - Dead end – dead hair -layers – layering - pony - puff- Round back – hair partition – steps - Straight bob - Straight cut -Side flick – Step cut – side partition -</i>
Terms used for Hair Dye & hair styling	<i>Ash – braid - Burgundy – cool shade- Copper shade – Hair Botox – Iron – Iron straight - Highlights - Golden tone – greenish ash –keratin - rebounding - reflection – subtle highlights – mid colour – mid beige - Pantz fibre -root touch – patch touch - shade book - Pantz fibre – root growth - straightening – rebounding – warm shade – wavy</i>
Terms used for Hairstyling	<i>Braid – braid beads – blow dry – bun – curls – loose curls / tight curls - straightening – outward blow dry – inward blowdry – in-french knot / out French knot - Iron – iron straightening – loose curls – dead straight – front puff – setting spray – side partition -</i>

Interactional Sequence with Customers

The interaction of the owner and workers of the salon with the clients is welcoming. They always start with greetings. The parlors have a particular type of initial interaction and opening of conversation pattern. After the greeting, the next sentence is always: “Aap ne kia karwana hai?” [What services do you want to have?]. Such sequence is common in all parlors. That is the professional way of dealing with clients and to attend them with the prescribed norms of the salons. When they get the response, then they refer the client to the person who is specialized in that domain. In two salons, the workers are with specific job to be done while in the rest of the two parlors only one helper is with the owner. Without any delay, they received the customers, ask about their needs and refer them to the specific person or if the person is busy with another client then ask them to sit and wait for their turn.

Multimodal Strategies

The multimodal strategies in salon beautician-client interaction provide the meaning to events and practices of salon-centered relationships. These interactions are not limited to only oral exchange but also manifest in coordinated bodily movement. As Ward, Keady and Campbell (2016) explain that the participants’ physical gestures and actions reflect and complement their communication, that enhance the overall interaction. Participants not only engage in terms of their hearing and listening rather incorporate other sensory modalities such as touch and sight to weave the rich dynamics of social interaction.

Table 3: Multimodal Literacies Employed during Procedures

Service Type	Instances of code-mixing	English Translation
Skin Care Services (wax/threading, facial, pedi/manicure)	<i>Aap skin tight kerein, chorrein, yahan se aise rakhein tau tight ho ga</i>	<i>Tighten the skin, leave it, keep it like this from here, it will be tight</i>
	<i>Aap ki shape kerni hai, deikhein yahan se itne baal nikalon gi</i>	<i>You want to shape your eye brow, see how much hair I will remove from here.</i>
	<i>Idhr kuch baal extra hain, nikalnein hon gai lekin shape kharab nahi ho gi</i>	<i>Here, there are some hairs, need to pull out, but your eye brow will not be de-shaped.</i>
	<i>tongue rakhein lips ki side pe</i>	<i>Keep the tongue on the side of the lips.</i>
	<i>Paon aise rakhein seedhay, thorra dheela kerein. Abhi dip nahi kerna</i>	<i>Keep feet straight,like this, torso relaxed. Don't dip yet.</i>
Hair care services (haircut, dye & styling)	<i>ye ab check ker lein (provide hand- mirror) theek hai</i> —	<i>Check it now (provide hand-mirror) - Ok</i>
	<i>Is tarah apni fingers se aise baalon mein phairo, is tarah volume bhi rahe ga aur set bhi ho jaen gai</i>	<i>In this way, like this, run your fingers through hair. In this way, volume will remain and hair will be set.</i>
	<i>Shade book le aao – is mein se choose kerein</i>	<i>Bring the shade-book. Select from it.</i>
	<i>Aapka pehla color dark tha na, ab aap subtle highlights karwaein, ye deikhein</i>	<i>Your previous hair colour was dark, now do have subtle high lights, look at this.</i>
	<i>Highlights aap ke baalon mein yahan se strat ho ke end tak aayen gi</i>	<i>The highlights will be in your hair from here till end.</i>

Consequently, the multilingual literacy strategies of beauty parlors practiced through technical jargon, interactional sequences and multimodal strategies. These are significantly establishing the coordinated discourse of communication in middle-class salons which often claim their technical expertise, power domination and interactive conversational sequences that accounts for successful communication.

Meso-Level (Middle Layer Analysis)

Following are the aspects of Meso- level analysis:

Mediated Literacy Strategies Practiced in Salons

Mediated literacy strategies involve engaging in physical actions using object to interact with the surrounding material and social environment (Wertsch, 1991). Mediated actions can be seen as literacy performances that not only indicate belonging but also reveal activities within a specific domain that influences the level of access to a hierarchical network of social positions and more or less empowered roles within a literacy event.

In middle class salons various beautifying techniques are employed that requires the use of tools, gadgets and parlor appliances in set of specific sequence to complete the procedure. The staff working in the middle class salons are well-trained on how to effectively and safely use of instruments and tools used in providing beauty services. The most common service provided is removing unwanted facial and body hair either by applying wax or using thread. Specific thread, thin, soft, is used for facial hair removal and shaping the eye brows. The workers are trained to skillfully move the tread on the face to capture the hair, trap it within the thread and twist the thread to pull it out. The rhythmic twisting of the thread, gripped one end through teeth and other between the finders, removes the unwanted hair. The set sequence followed is to offer the seat to the customer, then apply talcum powder, ask the customer to tight the skin under the eye brow.

W: Skin tight karein, ... chorrein, aise nahi, ye fingers yahan rakhein, aise [Tighten the skin, leave it! Not like this, put these fingers here, like this.]

The closing of that session is always by offering a hand-mirror with the comments:

W: Check ker lein ... theek hai. [check it now,Ok!]

Another method is the use of wax for hair removal. The wax is melted in wax-machine on specific temperature. The workers know the appropriate temperature for body wax and for face wax. The apply the wax on the skin through cotton patch and pull it in the opposite direction of the hair to remove them from root. The result is the smooth, hair-free skin.

Light aa gae? Wax-machine on karo, temperature deikh lena. [The power is back. Turn on the wax-machine. Check the temperature.]

In hair styling, beauticians know the common hair styles like French-braid, hair straightening through blow dry and iron, bun, and tight curls and loose curls with flat iron. Similarly, they know the haircuts like bob, layers and step cutting. But, clients also come up with some specific hair style and the ask them to copy the same. In such contexts, the beauticians use their knowledge and expertise to handle the artefacts and provide the clients their specific needs where clients rely on them. Two out of four parlors have other hair treatments known as keratin, rebounding, and hair Botox.

Code Mixing Strategies

Code-mixing is one of the important aspects observed in the middle class parlors' conversation. Parlor owners and workers frequently mix English code in Urdu language. No instance of code-switching is noticed which reveals the fact that in middle class parlors, the workers, owners and clients are not fluent in English. The type of code-mixing found is intra-sentential code-mixing, it is worth mentioning that the owners and workers code-mix a lot. The use of English in Urdu sentence construction help them to assert their professional identity and expert knowledge. They use English vocabulary to refer to the names of the products that is the real need of the situation as the products names are English. On the other hand, the use of English terms enables the beauticians to convey the specific information related to the product and procedure accurately and effectively. As some are famous and commonly known brands, so the customers are familiar with some of the products. Moreover, if the customer is not familiar with any of the English brand or procedure, the English term will be the source to meet high end standards in the salons and impress the clients.

Table 4: Product Names & Service Categories in Middle Class Beauty Salons

Service Category	Product name	Available options
Facial	<i>Golden Girl, Dermacos, Jensen</i>	<i>Simple facial, face polish, Face cleansing, herbal facial, whitening facial, fruit facial, Jensen facial</i>
Manicure / Pedicure	<i>Golden Girl, Dermacos, Jensen</i>	<i>Simple pedi/mani, herbal pedi/mani. Whitening pedi/mani</i>
Hair Dye	<i>Vella, Keune, Laoreal, Schauf</i>	<i>Full dye, streaking, highlights, low lights, Hair botox, Keratine, rebounding</i>
Face Wax	<i>Simple wax, Fruit wax</i>	<i>Full face wax, upper lips wax, eye brow wax</i>

For example, in face care services, the products used are *Golden Girl*, *Dermacos*, and *Jenson*, are English terms. Similarly, *Vella*, *Laoreal*, *Keune*, and *Schwarzkopf* are the brands for hair dye and hair straightening which are predominantly English forms. So we can take it as a situational and occupational need of codemixing in public discourse. Throughout the conversation, owner and workers not only take lead in the discussion but they also dominate the talk.

Table 5: Code-mixing During Consultation

Service Type	Instances of code-mixing	English Translation
Skin Care Services (wax/threading, facial, pedi/manicure)	<i>Aap ki shape kerni hai, ya sirf neat kerna hai</i>	<i>Do you want to have a proper shape or just neat it?</i>
	<i><u>Idhr</u> kuch baal extra hain, nikalnein hon gai lekin shape kharab nahi ho gi</i>	<i>There is some extra hair, I will pull them out, but the shape would not be affected.</i>
	<i>aap ki skin pe light dane aur spots hein, Aap fruit facial try kerein</i>	<i>Your skin is grainy and spotty, try fruit facial.</i>
	<i>Nails cut karon ya file ker don?</i>	<i>Should I cut the nails or file them?</i>
	<i>Nails ki kia shape rakhti hain?</i>	<i>What shape for nails do you want?</i>
Hair care services (haircut, dye & styling)	<i>Ye sara dead end hai, is ke baghair baal neat nahi ho ga, itna taui cut kerna ho ga</i>	<i>It's all dead hair, without cutting, it won't look neat. I have to cut that much part.</i>
	<i>ye jo aap pony ki height bata rahi hain us mein straight cut ki length yahan tak aaey gi</i>	<i>The height of the pony, that you are telling, will be that much.</i>
	<i>dekho aap school going age ki ho, garmi bhi itni hai tau koi braid krara lo wo zayada suit kare gi</i>	<i>Look! You are a school going girl, it's too hot, so get it tie in a braid that will suit you.</i>
	<i>Acha, theek hia, aap ko na copper shade chaheye, na reddish tone chaheya</i>	<i>Well! You don't want copper shade nor reddish tone</i>
	<i>Beige acha ahi, na cool hai na warm, neutral tone hai</i>	<i>Beige is good; neither cool nor warm, a neutral tone</i>

In-group/Outgroup Role of Participants

There are certain roles specified in beautician- client professional discourse which outperforms their status, actions and roles assigned accordingly. The beauticians have a special superiority and complete control over in the form of giving instructions and guidance to the clients what to do and clients obey them. In some instances, clients might ask questions for clarity but they never challenge their knowledge, and expertise. They do share their fears about some procedures which is satisfied by the beauty professionals. During the time consuming procedures, it is observed that customers and beauticians involve in chit chat and merge their group specified boundaries. During such conversation apart from general discussions, clients sometimes ask certain problems, and curies:

C: mery paon ki skin winters mein bohat hard ho jato hai aur cracks bhi parr jate. [My feet become very hard in winter and also my feet crack.]

W: Hmm, dead skin aati hai na, aap regular pedicure lia karein, acha wala. [Hmm the feet got dead skin. Get a regula pedicure, good one.]

C: Han koshish kerti hon.][Hmm I try.]

W: Aap at least once a month tau lein na, aur raat ko vasline lagaya kerein. [You should take it once a month at least. And apply Vaseline at night.]

The treatment procedure beauticians act as a knowledgeable source to resolve the beauty related issues of the customers. They also capitalize on the opportunity to motivate their clients to have regular sessions. Moreover, the chit-chat during the procedure also establish the link and foster their relationship. Moreover, the middle class salons have collaborative activities that revolves round the hairstylist. Customers bring the reference images of the haircut from online sources and the hair stylist describes and explains the actual hair cut to translate it to the understanding of their client. The hairstylist discusses, elaborates and negotiates the final look by having all the considerations, and personal preferences of the customer.

Mother: Is ki cutting karani hai,(Teenage daughter) [She needs a haircut.]

W: ji aa jaen aap - batao kaisa cut chaheye --- [fine, come on! Tell me what style do you want?]

Mother: dekhao pic, [show the picture!.]

C: mein ne length choti nahi karani [I don't want short length.]

W: hairstyle ki pic dekhaen. [Show me the hair style picture.]

C: bas mujhe itni length mein straight cut chaheye, [I just need a straight cut to that length.]

W: acha, acha, ye dekhein. [Well, look at this] (zoom in the pic) ye straight cut nahi hai, ye layers hi hui hui hain. [It is not a straight cut; it is in layers]

C: overall length short na ho. [Overall, length should not be short.]

W: theek hai me thorra lamba rakhti hon , ye jo aap dekha rahi hain is mein ye dekhein yahan, thorri layers di hui hain. [Ok, I keep it long. See, what you are showing me here, that part is in layers.]

C: Theek hai, peechay se layers ker dein. [Ok, do cut in layers from back.]

W: Layers theek lagain gi. [Layers will be fine.]

Middle class salon workers coordinate their talks with actions which transcends professional boundaries into in-group connections. The beauticians with their skills, professional demeanor, active attention, and expert advice not only improve the clients' physical outlook but gain their trust which transform the mere interaction into a shared bond of experience and understanding.

Covert Strategies Employed During Beautician-Client Interactions

Customers dealing is an important part of beauty profession. It is observed that the beauticians engage in conversation with the clients to motivate them for specific procedure or the use of specific brand. Moreover, the beauticians do not have a rate list. When they are asked about it, they reply that they do not keep the rate list instead on special events, like Eid, they print pamphlet to be distributed locally having special deals and packages. The customers of these salons are from middle class background, so they ask about the rate except for the common routine procedure i.e. face wax or thread. The beauticians do bargain with the clients, and give them special discount that help them to retain the client and their trust.

There is no display of any product or brand on the shelves. All the products used are kept within the cupboards, and workers / owners have them in bowl according to the requirement, and clients don't know what the actual cream, lotion, or dye is applied. Such strategy serves dual purpose, one is that the customers do not get the information of their products so they will be dependent on the beauticians, second there might be possibility that they don't use the brand what they claim.

W: kon sa facial lain gi. [Which facial do you want?]

C: hmm meri skin dry hai , kon sa theek rahe ga? [Hmm my skin is dry; which one will be fine?]

W: meray khayal mein fruit facial le lein. [I think take fruit facial]

C: acha us ke kia charges hain . [Ok, what are the charges?]

W: – 3000 -

C: hmmm ye tau zayada hain, dermacos 2000 ka hai na. [hmmm that's more, Dermacos is in 2000/-or not]

W: oho price ko chorrein pehle ye bataein aap ne karwana hai fruit facial. [oho, forget the price; first tell me do you want to have fruit facial?]

C: han karwa tau lon. [yes, I can give it a try.]

W: chalein aap first time karwa rahi hai tau aap ko discount ho jaey ga. [ok, for you, as you are going to have it for the first time, so I will give you discount.]

C: smile, kitan discount? [how much discount?]

W: chalein aap ko first time 2500 mein ker don gi. [ok, for you for the first time, it will be in price of 2500.]]

C: Ammm chalein theek hai. [Ammm ok, done.]

The literacy practices including mediated strategies, code mixing, in-group /out group roles and covert literacy strategies in middle class parlors allow customers and beauticians to engage in the salon activities in collaboration, fostering their relationship, and assert the superiority and dominance of beauticians. Overall, it establishes the credibility of beauticians to provide care & meet customers' aspired beauty styles.

Macro Level (Outer Layer Analysis): Recurrent Themes

Communication at beauty salon is central to foster connection between beauticians, clients and available beauty practices. The beauticians at the middle-class beauty parlor are well aware of the fact to how to entice customers to choose their beauty services, satisfy their needs and requirements, all adjusting within their budgetary constraints. Through meticulous qualitative analysis, an inductive approach is employed that have yielded the recurrent themes that shape the distinct identities of the beauticians working at these middle class parlors. Two key themes namely 'professionalism' and 'personal branding' are related to their 'expert identity'; while 'aspirational beauty', and 'customer care' are closely tied to their 'entrepreneurial identity'.

Professionalism

The important aspect of professionalism is discipline. The concept of professionalism in job is described by Rava & Pal (2019), as: “to plug into their clients’ aspirations and expectations of “good service”, this very process of “professionalization” across job domains has fixated on inculcating ‘soft skills’, ‘good attitude’, ‘hygiene’ and more recently, ‘digital skills’ among service-workers.” (p 175:3). In middle class beauty salons, defined set of opening, conversation, organized set of events for each service, with directive comments are all the part of salon professionalism. Each parlor’s beautician converse with the client to understand what services are required, then what are their preferences for specific procedure. The normal routine work of face wax / thread, and normal mani/pedicure does not have specific preferences. But, haircut, hair dye, hair styles and facials do have. The service provider carefully listens to the customer and ask relevant questions, and then guide them if necessary. Such professional handling, along with their knowledge of products, procedures, and techniques make them authoritative and powerful in the context. Customers not only rely on them, rather they trust their information, suggestion and advices as we have observed that none of the customer, argues, challenges or contradict them. This power-dynamics impacts on the decision-making of the clients and also foster their relationship with each other.

The beauticians of the salons communicate with their clients to explain which product is used for specific service, what is the best option (shade, haircut, or style) for them and give their recommendation and suggestions. Beauticians are the experts, guide, mediator, and knowledgeable of the field exhibit their understanding of current beauty trends and techniques to strengthen their professional identities and personal expertise.

O: shade book le ke aao , aap ye dekhain, aap ko ash kaisa laga. [Bring the shade book! See this, How did you like ash (shade)?]

C: nahi! [No]

O: theek hai ise bhi chorr dein. [Ok, leave it too.]

C: ye tau greenish sa ho jata hai. [It turns into greenish (tone).]

O: ji, ye ash tone hai na,,, lekin aap ko zayada reflection nahi chaheye , ye deikhain is shade mein bohat subtle highlights ayen gi. [Yes, it is ash tone, falls under greenish tone.. But you don’t want much reflection (in your hair). See this, in this shade you will get very subtle highlights.]

C: ji, ye acha lag raha hai. [Yes, it looks good.] theek hai ye wala ker dein. [Ok, let’s do it.]

Personal Branding

The beauticians of the middle class salons cater for the budget limits of middle class customers and ensure them that they are providing best services at minimum price. They ask the customers to compare their rate with market current rates, and usually hint on that they have not increase the charges despite the significant rise in prices and inflation. They build on their unique identity around the ‘best price with best services’. For example, the facial services require the information about clients’ need and concerns along with their budget range. Facial is expensive as compare to face wax/thread and Pedi / Manicure services. In middle class salons, the initial conversation between beauticians and customers is to determine the needs of clients, allergies if any and budget. Their communication sometimes helps the customers by customizing the procedure. For example, if the customer is reluctant to have full facial service due to charges, beauticians suggest them to have skin polisher or skin bleach at least. The customers who want facial services desire for clean and lighter skin. So, it is observed that the beauticians mostly suggest and convince them for whitening facial. Similarly, if there is a past history of allergy, then herbal facial, and for dry skin fruit facial.

W: *bleech lein gi. [will bleech.]*

C: *ji, ji bleach bhi kerni hai, us ke charges alag tau nahi. [yes bleaching has to be done. Its charges are separate?]*

W: *nahi, nahi, hamari bleech facial mein shamil hai, hum is ke extra charge nahi kerte. [No, no, our bleach is included in facial fee. We do not charge extra for it.]*

Beauticians specifically highlight the unique aspect of their services to grab the attention of their customers and compare it with rest of the parlors. Their consistent and confident communication reinforce the trust and the image of the worker as a specialist in the beauty market with unique expertise.

O: *hamare bohat se client hain jo barray barray parlours pe jaate aur hair dye ke baad baalon ka hashar hota hai. [we have lot of clients who do visit big salons, and after hair dye, hair becomes damaged.]*

C: *acha .. [well..]*

O: *hum glossing kerta hai jis se balon ki shine wohi rahti hai aur hair dye ke chemical process se jo damage hua hota wo bhi repaire ho jata hai . [We apply glossing which makes the hair supple, and also repairs the damage caused by the chemical process of dying.]*

C: *hmmm acha hai, ye tau bohat acha hai. [Well, that's very good.]*

Professional or Expert Identity

The significant aspect of the salon interaction is that it establishes and reconstructs the expert identities of beauticians. In customer dealing, they exhibit their knowledge and expertise in various domains of skin and hair care procedures. They demonstrate their specialized knowledge through suggestions, recommendations, and to their queries and problems. Beauticians provide consultancies and actively listen to the customers for their preferences, concerns, and come up with specific customized solutions.

They have their own specialized jargon and terminology which ascertain their understanding of beauty-industry specific terms and concepts and also reveals their expert knowledge. Their proficiency in beauty procedures, reinforce their expert identity. Customers witness their commitment, focus on precision and details which further build their confidence and trust, and helping to institute the beautician as an authority figure within the salon settings.

Aspirational Beauty

Communication in beauty parlors allows clients to express their desired identities and preferences. Clients communicate their personal style, beauty aspirations, and self-image through conversations with stylists and by providing visual references. Through such communication, clients seek to create or enhance their identities, aligning their appearance with their self-perception and societal ideals of beauty.

W: *kon sa wala dermacos sada ya dermacos whitening. [which one, plain, or dermacos whitening (facial).]*

C: *hmmmm sada hi ker dein. [Hmmm do the plain one.]*

W: *price mein itna difference nahi hai, sada 2000 hai aur whitening 2200 hai. Whitening lein, skin fair ho jae gi. [There isn't much difference in price. Plain is in 2000, and whitening is in 2200. Have a whitening (facial) your skin will be fair.]*

C: *acha , phir whitening ker dein. [Well, then do whitening facial.]*

W: *ji, aa jaen . [Ok, come on]*

Eurocentric beauty ideals are followed in the middle class beauty salons. As mentioned earlier that the foreign beauty products are used. The local products too have English terms like ‘Golden Girl’. The beauticians have positive affirming communication, couple with their suggestions and compliments. Such interaction augments the client’s physical outlook and sharing the trendy beauty ideals.

Customer Care

The literacy skills of middle class beauticians center around the customer care and satisfaction. They not only promote physical beauty but also the well-being of clients. Normal routine beauty services related to skin care and hair care includes massage that is relaxing experience for the customers. Two salons specifically mention and emphasize that their facial, manicure and pedicure include good massage techniques that no other parlor would offer in the same package. Throughout the beauty procedure, the workers follow the hygienic practices by cleaning the pedicure utensils, fill fresh warm water, use clean tools and gadget, and neat towels. They are trained to offer comfortable and relaxing experience for the clients' satisfaction.

O: Ab hum gloss dein gai. [Now we will apply gloss.]

C: wo kia hai. [What's that?]

O: colour se aap ke baalon ke cuticles khul gaey hain, gloss se wo close ho jate hai , hamare hair treatment ka ye compulsory part hai, is ke baghair nahi ham jane daite, isi liye aap dekhey gi ke hamaray hair procedure ke baaad baaal damage nahi hote. [Hair Dye opens the hair cuticles, gloss will close them. It's a compulsory part of our hair treatment. We won't let our client go without it. That's why you will see that our hair procedure does not cause hair damage.]

C: acha acha. [That's good.]

Entrepreneurial Identity

Salon professionals have their own business goals and visions that is reflected through their unique selling points, and their literacy practices and strategies. Their overall professional attitude, customers care, expertise, and brand identity is their success and build their market reputation. Clients can have their appointments for desired services but all the salons have an open-doors policy and welcome walk-ins during working hours to accommodate their needs. Salons owner and workers maintain diary to record the appointments. Only one salon owner has a specific 'color card' to note the specific hair treatment with date to follow up procedures. This record keeping practice not only differentiate the salon from the rest but also build a future relation with the customer. Such personalized treatment is compelling and engaging to target their desired audience. So, the overall customer care and satisfaction and branding efforts strengthen their entrepreneurial identity through their professional ability to differentiate their salon and attract the customers.

Conclusion

Individuals have a range of literacies that are associated with different domains of private and public life. Their literacy practices are situated in broader social relations that accounts for the construction and negotiation of relationships in a public discourse by employing various multimodal literacy practices. Languages and literacies are taken as vital symbolic resources in the construction of new identities and for negotiating new relationships. Code switching in interactions come to be symbolically meaningful in the discourses of mainly middle class world corresponding to different ideologies. There has been difference of discourses and form of knowledge between institutionally empowered and institutionally disempowered. Social identities are depicted through participant's literary practices and they continue to negotiate their identities in order to fit in or not to fit in existing social processes. It has been observed that participants resist some identities while aspiring others by employing various linguistic choices. The significant aspect of the implementation of such literacy practices in middle class salons is that it establishes and reconstructs the beauticians' identities which are influenced by the factors such as professional demeanor, customer care, personal preferences within current trends, and the expertise of beauty procedures.

The future researchers can explore the use of multimodal mediated literacy strategies beyond the middle class parlors to other institutionalized settings, and public discourses in order to unveil how literacy

strategies can be adapted or implemented effectively with its extended notions with respect to social context. Moreover, the work can be integrated with the culturally specified notions of literacy practices to see what socioeconomic as well as cultural benefits it can have in multicultural settings.

Acknowledgments

None


Conflict of Interest


Authors declared no conflict of interest.


Funding Source

Authors received funding from FJWU, Rawalpindi to conduct this study.

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