

Identity Construction through Language: An Examination of Billboards of Pakistani Automobile Workshops

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: The study aims to explore the identity construction through language in the billboards of Pakistani automobile workshops. Language employed by the billboards communicates important messages to the costumers and constructs identity of the producers/ owners/ mechanics.

Methodology: Focusing on the language of billboards and the connection between language and identity, the study employs qualitative research method; and the data is collected from three localities in the form of pictures of billboard. The model adapted for the current research incorporates three theoretical approaches: Bhatia's (1992) 'Single Discourse Unit', Tajfel's (1979) 'Social Identity Theory' and Woodward's (1997) 'Theory of Identity and Representation'.

Results and Conclusion: The analysis shows how the language choices used to make headlines and body text of these billboards contribute in constructing different identities including professional, ethnic, community identity and in group and out-group membership.

Key words: Language, Identity, Domain, Billboards, Automobile Workshop.

Article History

Received:
March 23, 2023

Revised:
June 15, 2023

Accepted:
June 19, 2023

Published:
June 22, 2023

Introduction

All human beings create identities through language. Language is not simply an assortment of words but an entity that connects an individual to his/her family, society and ethnic groups. It is such a power concept that it has the ability to shape one's personal and social identities. It is the principal factor through which people can distinguish whether a stranger belongs to their group or not. Languages symbolize identities and are used to signal identities of those who speak them. Furthermore, language is a tool that people from different groups and social classes use to project their associations. Suleiman (2006) reiterates the fact that identities are employed to construct languages as a category of self-definition and in the same way languages support and encourage these identities. This paper aims to examine the relationship of language and identity as exhibited on the billboards of Pakistani automobile workshops.

Background of the Current Research

An automobile workshop is an establishment where vehicles/ automobiles are repaired and maintained by mechanics, technicians and experts. The billboard of an automobile workshop is typically the large

outdoor advertising structure typically found outside the workshop. It advertises every service that the workshop offers. It introduces the logo, special services and name of the owner to the community. The language of billboard is an important factor in communicating the intended message/s to the readers and potential customers. It influences and induces the customers to visit the workshop and to avail the services. The producers of the billboards skillfully employ the language to suit their purpose. They employ a particular language to create multiple identities of the mechanics, technicians and workshop owners. The workshop owners get the billboards made from the painters but it is important to mention that the information they want to advertise is provided to the painters by the owner of the workshop. Automobile workshop is a complex but an important domain in the Pakistani context when it comes to research. The linguistic choices employed in this domain are quite interesting, and provide insights into the literacy practices as well as everyday communication of the mechanics and owners of these workshops with customers.

The Research Gap and Significance

We do not find sizeable research in the domain of automobile workshops, and particularly from the linguistic point of view there is a significant research gap. In order to fulfill that gap, the current research intends to examine the linguistic practices exhibited on the billboards of the selected automobile workshops of Rawalpindi and the surrounding areas in a hundred kilometer radius. The research also aims to examine the relationship between language and identity construction on the billboards.

Research Question

Following are the questions designed for the current research:

1. What are the linguistic practices exhibited on the billboards of the selected auto-mobile workshops?
2. What kind of identities- professional, social and ethnic- are created through the language employed by the billboards of selected auto-mobile workshops?

Literature Review

This section provides an overall review of the literature that sets the underpinnings for the current research. It also introduces and explains the basic concepts such as identity, and the relationship of language and identity; and embeds these concepts in the previous researches that help in identifying the research gap.

Starting with the concept of identity it is important to notice Sabic, H. (2016) who refers to (Potowski, K., Rothman, J., 2011) and expresses the fact that identity can be looked at something that is being regularly built and negotiated by the human beings throughout their lives by interacting with others. So by looking at the notion of how to define identity exactly it can be seen that in the etymological sense, the word has roots from Latin “idem” which means “same”. However in reality, the establishing of similarities and differences among the individuals is referred to as Identity. Identities are built in multiple ways including linguistic and social practices. The term ‘identity’ has many facets and so it is required to be assessed from several perspectives. These perspectives include personal, cultural, societal and relational elements. Identity plays an important role in the lives of humans as at some point in life individuals are anxious to comprehend themselves as well as the associations among self and others. The individuals’ sense of belonging to one or many groups, the identification of certain common characteristics and differences with others in the community are some of the elements of identity. Thus an important aspect of a person’s individuality is to discover his or her presence within the social context with reference to the similarities and differences. So, individuals are required to be able to identifying and translating the information of several perceptions which are displayed in their heritage languages, target languages and instructional languages and consequently they are multi-linguals. It is through the interplay of language/s in a society that people become aware of themselves as well as of others. “At the most basic level, identity emerges in

discourse through the temporary roles and orientations assumed by the participants. Those roles contribute to the formation of subjectivity and inter subjectivity in discourse. Roles in conversations create subject in discourse” (Buchholtz, M., Hall, K., 2004, pg. 20). Thus, identities cannot be absolutely separate, they are always in relation to the other existing identities. Therefore, it can be established that identity is described by the help of other identities. In this context it can be clearly seen that language is a marker of identity. It also influences to make an individual’s social perception of the self and others.

Personal identity, however, is an individual’s conception of the self and it captures what an individual believes about his or her own self. According to Joseph (2004) the relationship of identity and language is that identity must be based on some kind of common experience. He explains that linguistic identity has to begin with the “name” as in common usage this is the primary meaning of identity. To him identity is basically a matter of language.” In his view, the basis of personal identity is names which are “occupying a privileged place within the language. There is a particular part of grammar reserved for names” (Joseph, 2004, pg.11). In an interesting discussion of personal names as indexes of personal ethnic and religious histories, the author has pleaded for their inclusion in linguistic analysis. He has further discussed how language spread and identity are features of globalization; and he has the significance of language and its implications for the survival of ethnic and religious identities.

As Llamas explains in her work, “language mediated attribution of identity to individuals is so ingrained in human social affairs that we consider a person lacking a name also to lack identity” (Llamas, 2010, pg.9). So, it can be seen that individuals can refer themselves or they refer to another as well. This is done by separating themselves from the others by their names.

The relationship of language and identity is quite significant. Having a relationship where identity can be symbolized by language and similarly language is employed to show identity of its speakers. Furthermore, individuals use language to classify others based on the language that is spoken by an individual. For every person language is an important aspect of life for making the sense of the world. Language is It is a crucial way in which humans express their feelings. It is a uniquely human gift, central to the experience of being human. It is necessary in order to communicate and is extraordinarily important for each individual. It starts as soon as being an infant. “They hear language while they are still in the womb, and their first years are spent absorbing language. The words of an individual’s language represent the cultural beliefs and ideas of the group to which he or she belongs” (Barry, 2014). An individual’s native language closely tied to his or her sense of personal identity. Language is inevitable for the personal development. The sole purpose of languages is not communication because in that case all languages would need to sound more or less the same; through languages people negotiate their self and personality with others (Watt, D., Llamas, C., Johnson, D.E., (2010).

Language not only influences individual’s identity but also group identities are shaped by it. People in different professions create their professional identities as individuals and as members of the professional group through language that is exhibited not only orally but also through multiple artifacts related to the profession. So, visiting cards, letter-heads, billboards, websites, face-book pages etc. reflect these identities.

Language and literacies are institutionalized as well. So, for instance schools at one hand shape and form the language of young children, but on the other hand literacy practices observed at school create the identities of these young children. Javed & Rasul (2020) have examined the multi-literacies and multilingual literacies of young children to trace their social identities, and to see how they impact their current and future social identities. Bucholtz & Hall (2005) have also discussed the connection of identity and interaction from a socio-cultural linguistic perspective in their discourse studies.

Methodology

This section deals with the methodology employed for the current research. It introduces the sample, theoretical framework and current framework of the research. Moreover, it clarifies the reader about the nature of the research and process of analysis carried out by the researchers.

Research Design (Qualitative)

Qualitative research design deals with the collection and analysis of data which is non numerical. Usually this type of data involves text, video and audios and the purpose is to identify the perceptions or occurrences. It can also be employed in order to seek in depth insight into a problem or generate new ideas for research. The current research has employed qualitative research method to analyse the data.

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling is employed for the data collection and is generally applied in qualitative research for the purpose of detection and selection of the data which is rich in information. For the sample, billboards of 42 automobile workshops from Rawalpindi and the surrounding areas within 100 kilometers are selected which includes areas from Rawalpindi city, Murree, Gujar Khan and Dinnah. The sample is collected keeping in mind two social classes of Pakistan; the middle-middle class and the lower middle class. The areas from where the workshops are selected are identified by the outlook and the knowledge of the social class of Pakistan. The researchers' knowledge of auto-mobile workshop is also taken into account. The sample is collected in the form of pictures of the billboards that are displayed outside the workshops. The following table contains in alphabetical order the names of the workshops from where the data is selected:

Table 1: *Tabular representation of the selected workshops*

1. Abdullah Engineering Works	23. Majid Wheel Alignment Center
2. Abdul Rehman and Rehan diesel Laboratory.	24. Manzoor Abbas Engineering Works
3. Akbar Autos	25. Mazhar Auto Store
4. Al Hassan Auto Workshop	26. M. Latif and Brothers
5. Al Noor Engineering Works	27. Muhammed Lateef Auto Workshop
6. Ameen Auto works	28. Naseem Mechanical Workshop
7. Amjad Engineering Works	29. New Irfan Auto Workshop
8. Asif Engineering Works	30. Niazi Auto Workshop
9. Auto Mobile AC Mechanical Electrical Engineering Services	31. Omer Auto Parts
10. Badshah Khan Toyota and Honda center	32. Pak-Japan Auto Parts
11. Bismillah Auto Mobile Workshop	33. Rafique Khan Auto Mechanic
12. Badar Munir Electroplating	34. Ramzan Autos
13. Car AC	35. Rehan Alignment
14. Car Cooling Center Auto Electrician	36. Sher Ali auto workshop
15. Computerized Car Air Conditioning, Gas Charging & General Electrician Works.	37. Sohail Auto Workshop
16. Haider Ali Car cooling Centre	38. Taj Autos' Engineering Works
17. Hameed Shah and Arshad Auto Electrician and Mechanical Diagnostic Expert	39. Usman Traders
18. Hassan Ali Auto Gear Box	40. Yousaf auto mechanic and Engineering works
19. Irfan Autos and Workshop	41. Zeeshan EFI Auto Electrician
20. Jameel Autos	42. Zeeshan Wheel Allignment Center
21. Kashmir Repairing center	
22. Khan auto Workshop	

It is pertinent to mention here that the current paper is based on a larger project that has examined language and literacy practices in different domains of life. From the domain of automobile workshops as mentioned earlier 42 billboard images are gathered. Many of these billboards exhibit visuals/ images along with language. However, since the current paper only focuses on language and identity construction, the images/ non-linguistic visuals are not taken into account during the analysis of data for the current paper.

Theoretical Framework for the Research

For the current study, the theoretical framework is taken from Tajfel's (1979), Bhatia (1992), and Woodward (1997). Bhatia (1992:196) terms advertising billboards as a "single discourse unit". This single discourse unit has four components, that are the Headlines, the Body Copy, the Signature Line, and The Slogan. The purpose of utilizing this framework is that it looks at the whole advertisement as a single discourse. This takes into consideration the overall intention and objective. Furthermore, it also offers a systematic approach to explore the discourse of billboards by keeping in view the four components.

Secondly, this study also draws on Tajfel's (1979) social identity theory. Tajfel (1979) proposed that the groups (e.g. social class, family, football team etc.) which people belong to are an important source of pride and self-esteem for them. Groups give us a sense of social identity: a sense of belonging to the social world. According to Tajfel (1979), the individuals adapt and change their identity as they socialize between different social groups. So an individual's world is divided into "them" and "us" by a process of social categorization. This categorization allows the individuals to classify the others into different groups socially. Tajfel has proposed that stereotyping (i.e. putting people into groups and categories) is based on a normal cognitive process: the tendency to group things together. In doing so we tend to exaggerate two aspects:

1. The differences between groups
2. The similarities in the group

According to this, the individual and group identity can be evaluated by both; the similarities and the differences. In order to categorize and examine various identity constructs in the discourse of advertisements, the theoretical underpinnings of investigating similarities and differences have been used.

The third framework that the current study has utilized is Woodward's (1997) theory of identity and representation. This proposes that the identity is created using representational system. This system carries meaning in a way that certain vocabulary items have specific connotations for a particular individual or group and this connotation is the identity. "Thus, language can be used to construct identities through representation as well as differences" (Blomquist, 2009:12). This view seems extremely relevant as various identities such as group, professional and ethnic are examined in the current study. By utilizing this framework, the analysis is carried out focusing on the slogans, signature sentences, the headlines and the body text of the billboards. The analysis also focuses on the instances where codes have been switched. So, in order to analyze the identities formed in the billboards, identity theories of similarity, difference and representation are employed.

Practical Framework for the Current Research

Having outlined the theoretical framework in the previous section, this section introduces the practical framework for the current research by presenting the model that will be used to analyze and identify the relationship of language and identity construction through auto workshop billboards. The practical framework for the current research is illustrated below:

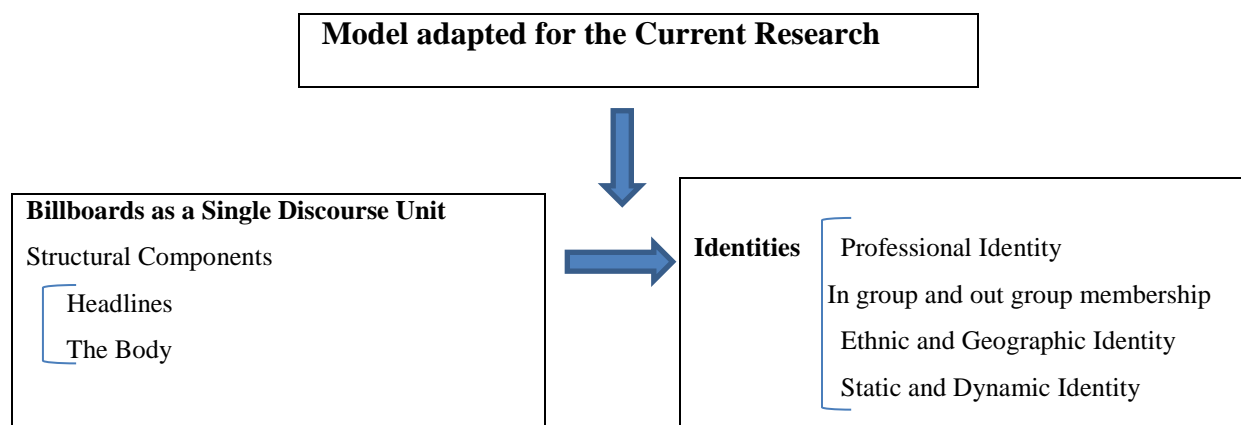


Figure 1: *Research Model*

Data Presentation and Analysis

In this section the collected data is analysed by using the framework presented in the previous section. Although billboards rely on linguistic as well as non-linguistic structures in order to convey the idea, the study focuses on pure linguistic elements to analyse the language adopted to create different kind of identities. Language is considered to be the main instrument and fundamental part of identity construction. In order to construct the comprehensive analysis of the billboards the data is analysed against the two structural components of billboards (Bhatia, 1992) as detailed above. The two structural components (the headline and the body) cater to the formation of different identities in the billboards. The headlines and the body play a significant role in creating professional, ethnic and social identities of the auto-workshop owners through billboards. Language employs certain words and phrases which serve as identity markers in creating social identity of the producers. The in-depth analysis of the data by taking into account the headlines and the body of the billboards implies that four different types of identities are being constructed in the billboards: professional identity, in group and out group membership, ethnic identity and community based identity. The following section deals with the analysis of different identities constructed through the language used on the billboards.

Construction of Professional Identity

Hughes (2013) has worked on professional identities and he defines professional identity as the attitudes, values, knowledge, beliefs and skills shared with others within a professional group. He considers “how the broad historical, socio-political and educational landscapes have influenced the notion” of his professional self. Through the models of reflective thought he explains “how these have contributed to the construction of a robust professional identity through re-engagement with the morality” of his practice Hughes (2013, p.2).

Professional identity is a vehicle for understanding the interaction between the work organization and identity and its consequences for the service users and organizations served by professionals. According to the definition in this study, the concept of “professional identity” is divided in two: personal professional identity, which is the practitioner’s sense of belonging to and solidarity with the profession, and group professional identity, which includes the features attributed to the profession, both by those who belong to it and by those who do not practice it, and makes it possible to discern between professions. To figure out how language creates professional identity in the billboards, the current paper has focused on Bhatia’s (1992) structural components, ‘headlines’ and the ‘body text’.

The headline is the window to display the central idea of a billboard. It is the title, printed in larger font size that summarizes the substance of the piece. In order to analyze the language and its connection to the construction of identity the headlines of the billboards are analyzed to note where in the billboards the language played a role in identity construction. The titles of the billboards represent the most important

part of the text. This is the reason why the names of the owners of these workshop are added in the titles of these billboards. In the selected data 34 out of the 42 billboards have the name of the owner as the main text in the title for example *Abdul Rehman and Rehan Diesel Laboratory*, *Akbar Autos*, *Hassan Ali Auto Gear Box*, *Irfan Autos and Workshop* and *Jameel Autos* to name a few of them. However, 4 out of 42 billboards reveal the specialization as the main text of the heading in contrast to the names of the workshop owners. This can be seen in the billboards of *Auto Mobile AC Mechanical Electrical Engineering Services*, *Car AC*, *Car Cooling Center*, *Auto Electrician* and *Computerized Car Air Conditioning*, *Gas Charging & General Electrician Works*. Interestingly all the 42 billboards have linguistic choices like auto parts, auto workshop, engineering works, auto laboratory, wheel alignment and repairing following the names of the owners. This choice reveals the professional identity markers in the headings of the billboards. These linguistic items like *engineering*, *specialist*, *laboratory expert* and *Kamani maker* depict the specialization of a particular skills associated with the workshop. The examples given below indicate the construction of professional identity of the auto-mobile workshops in the headlines and body text of the billboards. It can be clearly seen from the examples that the billboards construct the identity of these outlets and their mechanics/ owners as professionals who have command of their profession and are skillful.



Figure 2: Examples of Billboards showing Professional Identity

So, for instance in these examples, ‘*Specialist in Hybrid Battery, Catalyst Converter*’ refers to the owner of the workshop as a professional and specialist of a specific skill in terms of repairing vehicles. Apart from choice of these linguistic items the use of the particular brands like Toyota & Honda in the title of the billboards of these workshops also reveals the level of professional identity that the owners want to represent. These linguistic choices also single out the outlet for only these brands of automobiles. The example mentioned above has ‘*EFI auto Electrician*’ which is a referential strategy that serves as the identity marker and grabs the attention of the reader and attracts the potential customers. It is important however, that only 3 billboards have used this strategy. Apart from these linguistics items 2 billboards have used the word ‘*ustad*’ in the title which is a jargon used in the automobile industry to show that the referred person is a specialist to the extent that they also teach it to the new ones who have recently joined the field. These identity markers in the headings not only convey the meaning and message to the consumers but also grab the attention of the potential customers and create visibility. The examples indicate that the language of headings of these billboards plays a significant role in constructing the professional identities of the people in a particular context of the automobile industry.

As far as body text is concerned, it one of the key components of the billboards and appears directly under the headlines. The text is typically in smaller font and gives more insight into the products that are being sold or the services that are being provided. Most of the times it is also accompanied by non-linguistic visuals/ images/ pictures etc. The body text of the billboards makes a promise to the readers about the services they offer, stating what they discover if they continue to read. In 5 out of 42 billboards the use of the word ‘specialist’ serves as the identity marker to identify the person mentioned in the title as some specialist and create the person’s professional identity. This signifier ‘specialist’ allures the potential customers to visit them. In the body of the billboard-text a lot of jargon is used like *ball joint, gear box, denting, painting, bras, zinc, gold plating, buff, digital gas charging, self, generator, wiring repairing, air conditioning & heating system, power steering, front wheel, hybrid works* and *electrical works*. Majority of the sample billboards that is 32 out of 42 have body-text that follows the headlines. However, 10 out of 42 billboards do not have any body text to support the title. The title is only followed by the contact number or the address of the workshop outlet. In 8 out of 42 billboards the use of the adjective, *tassali-bakhsh* (satisfactory) is a manifestation of the use of a persuasive strategy by the producer of the text to attract the potential customers; it grabs the attention of the customers and reveals the professionalism in the work offered by the outlet.

In-group and Out-group Membership

Generally, In-group is defined as a social or professional group to which a person identifies as a member. Out-group membership means that an individual does not identify with the norms of a particular group. For the auto-workshop owners/ mechanics an in-group is the group or the community of the workshop owners and mechanics they belong to, and their collective practices. whereas, out-group means not following the norms and practices of the particular group. The analysis of the data indicates that the language employed by the billboards producers make the owners a member of in group. It is normally seen that the car repairing outlets are present in groups at a particular place or in a market; they do not exist as independent shops. This adherence to the in-group identity is very strong in the selected billboards as well as they all have similar linguistic choices and structures. *Specialist in car, specialist in AC services, specialist in gear and steering, specialist in Toyota, Honda and specialist computerized wheel alignment, Petrol, diesel and CNG cars, charging system, Car AC* are the commonly used linguistic items in the selected data. These linguistic choices mark an affiliation within that social group distancing themselves from other social groups belonging to other professions. The examples of in-group membership are presented below:



Figure 3: *Examples of Billboards showing In-group Membership*

The above mentioned examples from the data indicate that the language through the similarity and representation creates an in-group identity and membership of the workshop owners. Language often signals which social group we belong to as the linguistic choices and repertoire indicate that either people belong to an in-group membership or out-group membership. On the other hand, language also plays role in precluding people from social groups. It is also seen that a few billboards do not adhere to the norms of the social group and have added the text that is different from the rest of the group. This is done to maintain the individual identity of the outlets in the group of the outlets. The lexical item ‘*ustad*’, is used

in the title of the 2 whereas in the body of the 7 billboards. The word, ‘*ustad*’ is locally used for the community of automobile repair industry and it serves as the marker of adhering to the in-group identity.

In out-group membership, group members have nothing in common other than the group to which they were assigned. The linguistic choices of a few of the billboards symbolize the out group membership. One out of 42 billboards has used bilingual text as English language is used with the Urdu language to divert from the norm where 40 billboards have used only Urdu language. It can also be seen that only 2 out of 42 billboards used English as the language of advertising on the billboard. The title as well as the body of the billboard is in the English language. These practices are different from the rest of the group. This unique trait creates a difference which constructs a unique out group membership of the producers of the billboards. The following examples reveal the out group membership through the use of linguistic choices:



Figure 4: Examples of Billboards showing Out-group Membership

In these two examples the strategy of using English language is adopted to serve as the aid in promoting the modern and educated identity of the auto-workshop owners to attract the target customers. In short, the choice of words has played a huge role in constructing the identities that adhere to the social group they belong to and focus more on the commonalities rather than differences when it comes to the in group and out group membership.

Construction of Ethnic and Geographic Identity

Ethnic identity is a self-categorizing concept in which an individual is identified with an ethnic group and its cultural identity. Ethnic identity is a multidimensional concept that includes commitment or attachment to a particular ethnic group and its values and beliefs. A person’s sense of ethnic group membership, evaluation, and salience of this membership for personal identity can change over time, as a result of exploration, and also in the context of other social and institutional realities (Phinney & Ong, 2007). This section deals with how the structural components of language deal with the ethnic identity construction in auto-workshop billboards. In the selected sample of 42 billboards, only 3 reveal the ethnic identity construction through the word choices used. The sample depicts certain ethnic markers of caste for instance ‘*Khan*’ and ‘*Niazi*’. These textual features construct different ethnic identities based on the caste, beliefs and practices of each individual community. By highlighting the ethnicity related markers in the headlines, the language has created a concept of differentiation from other ethnicities, which seeks the attention of a particular ethnic group as through differentiation created by linguistic choices the text tries to establish commitment to a group with which one has ancestral links. This construction of ethnic identity contributes in establishing rapport with the target group. It is crucial to mention that the concept of ethnic identification has a great significance in the Pakistani context, headlines of the billboards try to create an identity which attract the customers of the same ethnic group to avail their services.

Sometimes belongingness to a certain geographical area is also used as an identity marker. By using certain words such as *Kashmir* and *Pak-Japan* as the headline text the adherence to a geographic area and a geography based community is depicted as we can see here:



Figure 5: Examples of Billboards showing Geography based Identity

Static and Dynamic Identity

The process of identity formation requires a certain level of awareness as it involves individuals to make a conscious decision that impacts a shift in their identity. Static Identity revolves around a single affiliation which is fixed. However, the concept of dynamic identity looks at multiple meanings of the same identity and has a flexible approach towards a particular identity. This in fact refers to a shift of a static identity to yet another angle of the same identity. According to this approach identity is fluid and also changes from one situation to another in a particular context. This section deals with the static and dynamic identity construction in the selected sample of billboards through the use of linguistic choices. The language of the billboards mainly projects a static identity; however, in a few cases we see a dynamic identity construction of these automobile outlets. For example, the text on one billboard indicates the shift in identity of the mechanics 'M Latif and Brothers' to 'Lahore Walay'. The identity shift from the real name of the owners to 'Lahore Walay' changes the entire context of the identity of the person and contributes in multiple meanings thus creating a dynamic identity. Similarly in another example the addition of the phrase 'Pak Army Contractor' employs the shift of identity. This shift is on purpose to show authentic affiliations with a particular institution in order to establish the authenticity of the outlet and to attract the consumers. In the data only 2 out of 42 billboards portray the patterns of dynamic identity.



Figure 6: Examples of Billboards showing Dynamic Identity

Both of these examples show how identity can be renegotiated.

Results

The analysis of data has revealed that the construction of social identity through language of the billboards is an intricate process. Language choices made on these billboards need to be studied carefully as language is not only an assortment of words to convey the meaning, but it is a tool that indicates a person's profession, ethnic affiliations and membership of a social group. It can be a marker of social identity, capable of binding and dividing groups and sub-groups. This is same as Buchholtz, M., Hall, K., (2004) indicates the fact that identities are not seen and constituted as separate entities, they are being constituted in relation to others.

The analysis has also revealed that the billboards of auto-mobile workshops employ headlines and body text to construct various identities. However, in a few cases only headlines constitute the text and there is no body. Linguistic choices act as identity markers to contribute in constructing the identities of the

workshop owners and mechanics as Watt, D., Llamas, C., Johnson, D.E., (2010) believe that languages are a tool through which people negotiate their self and personality with others.

Professional identity is the major type of identity found as exhibited on the billboards. The owners/mechanics and workers are portrayed as the specialists in the field. The analysis of the selected data also reveals that the automobile professionals also adhere to the norms of the in-group identity. This is in relation to Javed & Rasul (2020) as the study shows that literacies are institutionalized as well. Language also serves in creating the community identity on the billboards: all the workshop owners/mechanics belong to one community and share a sense of ownership in the community. The use of a few ethnic and geographic linguistic markers which contribute in creating ethnic identities of the auto-mobile mechanics is also seen. It is crucial to mention that ethnic identity serves as a discursive practice in the discourse of billboards which persuades the customers of the same ethnic group and makes them a potential customer. Sometimes a dynamic aspect of identity is added to a static identity by mentioning a special affiliation to a special person or a particular group or institution.

By taking into account Bhatia's (1992) structural components of identity, it is concluded that the discourse of auto-mobile billboards can project multiple identities of the owners to persuade the target customers to be the potential ones.

Acknowledgments

None.


Conflict of Interest

Authors declared no conflict of interest.

Funding Source

The authors received no funding to conduct this study.

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