Literacy Events and Literacy Practices: A Critical Discourse Study of Intersection of Class, Gender and Literacy in Pakistan

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Abstract

This article attempts to examine some of the literacy practices in middle class youth of Pakistan over 18 years of age and determine the relationship between literacies, gender and particular middle class social practices. Young men and women of Pakistan acquire multiple literacies depending upon different social institutions they find themselves in and different discourses they are exposed to during course of their lives. These social institutions in turn shape their outlook and mould them into desired individuals. The literacies which have been identified in the current research include school literacies; home literacies, leisure time literacies, oral literacies, media literacies, religious literacies and communication channels related literacies. In order to achieve its ends, this research analyzes discourse samples of students of the Department of English, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan which were collected using qualitative methods of open-ended questionnaire and case studies. The questionnaire was conducted with 16 research participants (8 male and 8 female students). The findings have been discussed with case studies of two research participants (1 male and 1 female).

Keywords

Literacy practices, Intersection of Class, Gender, Critical Discourse

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Introduction:

This study attempts to have an overview of different literacy practices and the way these literacy practices are incorporated in discourse practices of middle-class youth of Pakistan. Literacy practices within a certain echelon of society - as has been proposed by Street (1984, 1995) in his Ideological Model of Literacy - are always in tune with social set up, ideologies and world view of the individuals. The literacies imparted in a particular social institution, i.e. home, school, mosque/church etc. shape the minds and attitudes of a certain group of people and mould them in a desired shape. The exigency of this sort of research seems to be justified because of divergent misconceptions about the nature of literacy and schooling among the laypersons in Pakistani society. Generally, it is believed that schooling and literacy are almost synonymous and schools employing only autonomous model of literacy (Street, 1984, 1995) do the needful to literate the society. It is not completely true. Rather, it is ideological model of literacy which assumes far reaching importance and makes the individuals what they are and creates the sense of 'self' in them. This is the reason that compelled Cairney and Ruge (1998) to emphasize that "both the theoretical and cultural knowledge of how to use cultural linguistic and sociolinguistic information" is needed to develop the literacy in the individuals in true sense of the word.

Literacy and New Literacy Studies

As it has already been stated, the rationale for making investigation in the field of literacy practices rests in part on the claim that literacy, education and traditional schooling are almost synonymous. Hence, the answer to the question: What actually literacy is, is not that easy as it seems to be on the surface level because of association of the concept with varying theoretical fields. A very useful definition of literacy has been proposed by UNESCO:

Literacy means the "ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society." (UNESCO)

This definition attempts to encompass varying traditional concepts related to the term literacy. As far as "New Literacy Studies" (henceforth NLS) (Gee, 1991; Street, 1995) is concerned, it presents an altogether different outlook towards the field of literacy. It represents a new tradition because NLS focuses not so much on acquisition of skills, as in dominant approaches, but rather on what it means to think of literacy as a social practice (Street, 1995). Thus, this approach has led the researchers towards the recognition of multiple literacies varying according to time and space. NLS identifies the power relations associated with the concept of literacy which in turn facilitates the identification of dominant literacies and marginalized literacies in any social set up.

Literacy events and literacy practices

The concepts of literacy events and literacy practices (Heath, 1983; Street, 1984, 1995) are key to understanding literacy as a social phenomenon. Literacy events serve as a concrete evidence of literacy practices or "observable episodes" which arise from practices and are shaped by

them. In other words literacy event is a tool for examining the forms and functions of oral and written language. Literacy event could be defined as:

Any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants' interactions and their interpretive processes" (Heath, 1983:p. 93).

Some of the literacy events encountered by Barton and Hamilton (1998) in their research include:

- I. Writing in some notebook or register,
- II. Talking to someone about such writing,
- III. Reading a map,
- IV. Telling a story,
- V. Reading weather patterns etc.

Literacy practices on the other hand are described as the general cultural ways of utilizing written language which people draw upon in their lives. In the simplest sense literacy practices are what people do with literacy (Barton and Hamilton, 1998). This definition leads to infer that literacy practices involve a wide range of social phenomenon which includes cultural values, attitudes, feelings, and social relationships. Literacy practices tend to investigate the very nature of literacy itself. They focus on the way the people in a particular setting construct literacy. Literacy practices are not only individual but also social. They are abstract values and rules about literacy (Barton, 1994). Hence the values, beliefs, and models that are disseminated through literacy events will be classified as literacy practices.

Autonomous and Ideological Models of Literacy

The researches in NLS led Street (1995) to introduce the concepts of autonomous and ideological models of literacy. Autonomous model of literacy is based on the assumption that literacy in itself--autonomously--could affect the cognitive skills of the poor, villagers or "illiterate" in general and it would eventually improve the economic prospects of the "illiterate". In other words the autonomous approach towards literacy simply imposes the western conceptions of literacy onto other cultures or within a country those of one class or cultural group onto others.

In contrast to autonomous model of literacy, there stands ideological model of literacy. Ideological model of literacy disguises the cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin the literacy. Then, these cultural and ideological assumptions can then be presented as though they are neutral and universal because they are also always embedded in social practices.

1. This study

1.1 Defining middle class

The purpose of this study is to undertake an investigation into the literacies/ literacy practices of middle class youth of Pakistan. To have an idea of what group constitutes the middle class of a society, let us have a look at two definitions of middle class given by two economists. First

of these economists is Gilbert (1997), who while making an attempt to define middle class identifies two groups (upper middle class and lower middle class) within this echelon society. He defines upper middle class as highly educated (often with graduate degrees), most commonly salaried, professionals and middle management with large work autonomy and lower middle class as semi-professionals and craftsmen with a roughly average standard of living. Most have some college education and are white collar.

The second definition has been proposed by Warner (1960) who defines upper-middle class as professionals with a college education, and more often with postgraduate degrees like MBAs, Ph.D.s, MDs, JDs, MSs, etc. (e.g., doctors, dentists, lawyers, bankers, corporate executives, head teachers, university professors, scientists, pharmacists, airline pilots, ship captains, actuaries, high level civil servants, politicians, and military officers, architects, artists, writers, poets, and musicians. He defines lower-middle class as low-paid white-collar workers, but not manual laborers. Often hold Associates or Bachelor degrees. (e.g., police officers, fire fighters, primary and high school teachers, engineers, accountants, nurses, municipal office workers and low to mid-level civil servants, sales representatives, non-management office workers, clergy, technicians, small business owners.

1.2 Middle class in Pakistan

According to a research conducted by Standard Chartered Bank, Pakistan has strong middle class comprising of 30 million people Dr. Ishrat Husain, Ex-Governor (2 December 1999 - 1 December 2005) of the State Bank of Pakistan has also mentioned same strength of middle class in one of his address which he made in Expo 2005 Conference, at Karachi on February 3, 2005.

1.3 Research participants

Ten participants took part in the study. They were all students of English language and literature enrolled in MA and BS programs at the Department of English, Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan. The participants selected for present research belonged to upper and lower middle-class echelons of Pakistani society and were above 18 years of age. They were of varying level of proficiency and interests but all of them were capable of identifying and providing a comprehensive detail of their literacy practices from different phases of their lives.

Out of these ten informants, two (one male and one female) were eventually chosen to present an in-depth profile of their literacy practices. The selection of these case studies helped to represent a wide range of literacies on the one hand, and to get a gender balance on the other.

1.4 Method and procedure

In order to collect discourse samples and to make present study more objective and less leading an open-ended questionnaire (Appendix1) was used to conduct a survey. The survey was conducted on January 20, 2013 which elicited meaningful answers from the students using the participants' own knowledge and experiences. The research was carried out in following steps:

1st Step: In first step, the questionnaire was handed over to 16 respondents (6 males and 6 females). They were asked to give detailed answers of all the given questions given in the questionnaire. Ten respondents out of 12 (8 males and 8 females) returned the questionnaire within the prescribed time limit.

2nd Step: In second step, the data was organized by identification of varying literacies embedded in wide range of literacy practices and literacy events.

3rd Step: In third step, two case studies were selected for detailed discussion to reveal the richness and diversity of literacies/ literacy practices among the middle-class youth of Pakistani society.

1. Data analysis

1.1 Literacy types

The data reveals that literacies could be categorized into different types depending upon distinct domains and/or social institutions where they occur. The few of the broader categories of the literacies which were identified in the current research include:

- I. School literacies
- II. Home literacies
- III. Literacy: a leisure Activity
- IV. Oral literacies
- V. Media literacies
- VI. Religious literacies
- VII. Communication channels related literacies

In the current research, the terms ‘literacies’ and ‘literacy practices’ have been used synonymously because the notion ‘literacies’ actually refers to different ‘literacy practices’ which are time and space specific.

Now, all the above given literacies would be discussed with the selected case studies.

(The acronyms and brief personal information of all other respondents who participated in the research has been given in Appendix 2). Due to ethical considerations, the acronyms of participants’ names are mentioned instead of full names.

1.2 Case studies

MD (Male)

MD is a student of Masters in English literature (4th semester) at Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan. Unlike most of the other respondents, he was immediately interested in sharing his literacy history and was happy to take up the questionnaire. MD belongs to a lower middle class family of Pakistan that is firmly rooted in Pakistani cultural and social traditions. He father runs a small business and is a religious man. When MD was asked for a brief description of his family, he wrote:

My father is a hard worker and open hearted man who bore great losses but never lost heart. My mother is a house-wife. She is highly skilled in her household affairs.

(Throughout the paper, the actual words taken from the hand written scripts of the respondents have been quoted in italics).

ST (Female)

ST is a student of BS (English) 8th semester at Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan. She filled in the questionnaire with great interest and gave detailed answers to all the questions. Unlike most of the other respondents, she is habitual of diary writing which she believes is simple but effective way to develop and enhance great understanding of oneself.

ST belongs to an upper middle class family of Pakistan. Her father is a business man and her brother a flying officer in Pakistan air force. After having lived in a joint family for many years, her parents started a nuclear family. Describing her joint family experiences, she said:

We were having joint family system and we were fifteen cousins and I was the youngest of them all.

On following pages of the paper, different literacies will be discussed with these two case studies.

a. School literacies

According to International Reading Association, National Council of Teachers of English in United States (2006), middle and high school teachers must instruct their students about improving their literacy (reading and writing) skills in addition to the content knowledge of their particular subject.

In Pakistan, unfortunately, the school teachers do not really make effort to develop content knowledge and improve literacy skills in the students. In the current research both the respondents revealed that at their schools no effort was ever made to reach and reconcile above given standards in the field of education. They revealed that their teachers never instructed them anything apart from teaching the course books whose content they believe do not meet the international standard. They never recommended any book and never gave a talk on something general and interesting. According to ST:

Unfortunately, I do not have a good educational background. I am from Rajan Pur, a backward area. There were no good educational institutes. So, I passed my matriculation from “High School” a government institute. Teachers were nice but not as proficient.... They never recommend me anything or any book that was not included in our syllabus. Some teachers did not even bother to complete the syllabus.

Similarly, MD is of the view:

Teaching procedure at schools comprises of cramming. The major drawback of our educational system is that it is devoid of practicality and logic.

The respondents listed following literacy practices from their primary schools:

- I. Course book reading
- II. Written class work
- III. Cramming the lesson

At high schools, they reported, the literacy practices are greatly influenced by teachers and peer groups. Most of the students develop very close association with the friends at school and share many literacy practices with them. This fact is substantiated by the experience of MD and ST. Talking about the influence his friends made on his literary history, MD recalled:

Most of my friends didn't recommend me any book except my one dearest friend. (Ishafaq Ahmad, Bano Qudsiya, Stephen's seven habits of highly effective people and Dawn newspaper).

Similarly, ST commented:

My friends always recommended me to read many things. One of my friends recommended me to read Bano Qudsiya and Ishfaq Ahmad. One of them recommended me to read Zaad-e-Rah.

b. Home literacies

Families or home environment has great influence on the literacy development in children. Researches in early literacy development (T. Rogers, Marshall & Tyson, 2006) have identified that families play a very crucial role in success and failure of the students at school (cited in Lee, 2009). Cairney and Ruge (1998) also reiterate that home literacies are dependent on school literacies to a great extent and latter seems to have unmistakable impact on the former. They have identified four purposes of literacies in home and class room:

- I. literacy for establishing and maintaining relationships
- II. literacy for accessing or displaying information
- III. literacy for pleasure/or self expression
- IV. literacy for skills development

Literacy for establishing and maintaining relationships

Every individual establishes and then maintains different social associations and relationships in his/her life. In the following discussion we would observe how blood relations like parents (at home) and social relations like friends (at school) influenced literacies/literacy practices of ST and MD. MD believes that literacy practices at the home are developed under the guidance and influence of parents. One of such literacy practice is bedtime stories which he believes serves to bring mother and child closer to each another:

(Bedtime stories) cause to develop the association between mom and the child.

Then he talked about his interest in reading religious books at home which he added was developed because he wanted to make his father happy:

My father likes and wants me read Islamic books like 'Tauseef' and 'Sirat-un-Nabi'

Similarly, as it has already been discussed in the above heading, literacy practices could also bring friends closer both at home and school:

Most of my friends didn't recommend me any book except my one dearest friend. (Ishafaq Ahmad, Bano Qudsiya, Stephen's seven habits of highly effective people and Dawn newspaper).

I learnt how to offer prayer first from my father and refined this practice through my friend. I learnt it in my childhood.

ST talked about oral literacies that she got from her parents. Her parents always taught her how to maintain different relations in their joint family:

(I have learnt from my mother) to love and to respect everybody. She strictly forbade me to hurt anybody as life is too short to be wasted in hating.

(My father has taught me) to love and respect my relations and to give and give and never expect. He advised me: Never use unfair means in any field of life.

ST is very closely attached with her mother. To express what this bond with her mother means to her, she shared an excerpt on mother child relationship from Mirza Adeb's book *Matti ka Diya*:

Abba ji mujhe maarte thay to ammi bacha leti thin. Ek din maine socha agar ammi pitayi karein gi to abba ji kia karein ge? ? ? ye dekhne k liye maine ammi ka kehna na maana. Unhon ne kaha bazaar se dahi laa do. Maine na laya. Unhon ne saalan kam diya to maine ziada israar kiya. Unhon ne kaha k peerhi k ooper beth kar roti khayi main zameen per dari bicha ker beth gaya, kapre maile kar diye, mera lehja gustakhana tha. Mujhe poori tawaqqo thi k ammi zaroor maarein gi. Lekin unhon ne mujhe seene se laga ker kaha...kyun dilawar puttar ! maan sadqe, to bimaar to nahin? Us waqt mere aansoo na rukte thay.

(Translation in English) When father beat me, my mother used to save me. One day I thought if my mother beat me ever what would my father do? To find this, I did not obey my mother. She asked me to bring some yogurt from bazaar, I did not do it. When she gave me some gravy, I insisted for more. She asked me to sit on a stool to eat my lunch. I spread a sheet on the floor and ate on it. My accent was rude. I was sure; my mother would beat me today. But to my surprise she took me in her arms and said: Dilaawar, my dearest son, what happened to you? Are you alright? I could not stop my tears at that moment.

Literacy for pleasure/or self expression

Literacy not only gives skills and the knowledge to the individuals but it also provides means for pleasure and self expression. Both MD and ST use their literacy (reading and writing) skills to please themselves and to express their feelings and emotions whenever they are sad and depressed. Revealing his passion for writing poetry MD said:

I write Urdu poetry to express what I feel. This gives me happiness and I feel good.

I long to write, write the things I feel deeply. I want to search out and explore the phenomenon of life in this world and hereafter by the dint of my own experience...

Talking about how his literacy practices in adolescence helped him to alleviate his distress and frustration, he said:

Teenage proved out to be a landmark. I was in despair and frustration. I was searching out for some encouraging writing that would take me out of despair. Stories of successful and contented people were my centre of interest to read.

Somewhat similar experience was shared by ST who uses diary writing for catharsis whenever she is distressed and lonely:

Whenever I am sad and miss my home. I note down my feelings on my diary, but on the very next day when I am back to normal I take that page off my diary. I do not want anybody know my personal feelings. I do not share the things which hurt me; I just note those things in my diary.

Literacy for accessing or displaying information

It would be more appropriate to discuss this and the next heading under the first category of school literacies. But they are being discussed here as they are linked with Cairney and Ruge's (1998) four purposes of school and home literacies which have been introduced in this section. According to Oxford dictionary of English (2005) to be literate means having information and knowledge. As it is the generally agreed connotation of the term literacy, our respondents also believe the same. Most of their literacy practices at school and home involve accessing information through textbooks, newspapers television and internet. So, MD informed:

Commenting on the utility of Internet he said: I access the web to familiarize myself with latest trends and information.

Commenting on his favorite TV programs he said: Most of the things shown on discovery and National Geographic are liked by me. Because they show how nature works.

Similarly, ST added:(My parents) insist me to read newspapers daily.

My father recommends me to read the newspaper daily with full concentration, to be up-to-date and aware of current affairs.

Literacy for skills development

It is a commonly held belief that one must read and write to get some skills, which would eventually lead him/her to find some job. For this purpose, young people must have proper guidance about their future job prospects. But our youth does not seem to have a proper sense of direction as far as their career planning is concerned. This argument is strengthened by the comments of ST who is doing BS (English) but has no idea how beneficial her degree could be for her in future:

I did BS after I got disheartened because I could not get admission in medical college. I want to do CSS. I am doing BS (English) just like that. I do not know whether it is going to be helpful for me for the preparation of CSS exams or not.

Similarly, MD revealed that he is not studying for acquiring any particular skill. He dismissed the idea of relationship between literacy and job prospects by saying:

Literacy is not for getting some job only. Rather I consider literacy something that brings about some change in oneself.

Literacy for pleasure

This category is related to Cairney and Ruge's (1998) third purpose of home and school literacies, i.e. Literacy for pleasure/or self-expression. In the current research, most of the respondents reveal that they study Urdu and English literature in their spare time for pleasure. Otherwise, they are too occupied with their academic assignments to get some time for pleasure reading. ST while sharing her leisure time reading habits added:

I read extra stuff that is not included in my syllabus only when I have some spare time. Mostly, when there are some off days at the end of the semester. I love to read Urdu literature; both poetry and prose both. Sometimes, in hostels when I am too sad then I read the tragic novels by Umaira Ahmad and Bano Qudsiya.

In the questionnaire she has mentioned ten books/authors, out of them nine are from Urdu literature and remaining one is Holy Quran. Books/ authors mentioned by ST include:

- I. Holy Quran
- II. Matti ka Diya by Mirza Adeeb
- III. Mano Salwa bu Umaira Ahmad
- IV. Mere Khawab Reza Reza by Maha Malik
- V. Peer-i-Kamil by Umaira Ahmad
- VI. Raja Gidh by Bano Qudsiya
- VII. Beheshti Zewar
- VIII. Fazail-i-Amal
- IX. Aleem-ul-Haq Haqi
- X. Raheem Gul

MD seems to have more philosophical bent of mind than other respondents. So, the books on philosophy and logic attract him. Commenting on his reading habits, he said:

I like to read any piece of work, including some sort of philosophy based on logic, an outcome of the life long experience of some successful person

He mentioned three authors and three books in the questionnaire. All three books mentioned by him are religious books. Books/ authors mentioned by MD include:

- I. Holy Quran
- II. Ashfaq Ahmad
- III. Bano Qudsiya
- IV. Stephen
- V. Tauseef
- VI. Seerat-un-Nabi

1.4 Oral literacies (Oracy)

In his work, *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word* (1982) Ong talks about the transition from oral culture to written culture. He talks about the use of technologies of written words for communication and how fundamental shift happens in an individual's thought coinciding with the transition from orality (world of sound) to literacy (world of thought). Pakistan is basically an oral culture where different social and cultural traditions and values

are bequeathed to young generation through the word of mouth. In the current research respondents shared different experiences, life principles and beliefs which they received from their parents and grand parents either in form of advices or through observations and social practices.

MD has learnt a lot from his parents. Though his parents are not well educated but they have been providing best possible social training and knowledge to their son. Recollecting the values and life principles he has been learning from his mother since his childhood, he commented:

My mother is not having bookish knowledge but real. Management of household affairs is the legacy I am acquiring from my mother. Moreover, she is very realistic and is trying hard to teach me how to move in the society.

Similarly, he has learnt a lot from his father as well:

I am trying to learn from my father not to give up, not to cease effort and not to lose heart whatever may be the circumstances before us.

Following the traditions set by his parents; he also guides and instructs his younger siblings:

My siblings are younger to me they consult me in most of their affairs.

Our other respondent ST also shared somewhat similar experiences with us. Talking about life principles and values she learnt from her parents she said:

I have learnt from my parents to love respect others. They always taught me: Never expect anything from others. Leave everything thing to Allah.

1.5 Religious literacies

As it has been substantiated by the responses of the research participants, religion undoubtedly plays very crucial role in the literacy development of the young ones especially at home. The religious literacy practices as shared by all the respondents include:

- I. Learning how to recite Holy Quran
- II. Learning how to offer prayer
- III. Learning different moral lessons from stories from the life of Prophet (PBUH) and Holy Quran
- IV. Learning lessons from Ahadiths

Following are excerpts from the questionnaire of both the respondents giving us an insight into their religious practices:

MD:

- I. I learnt how to recite Holy Quran when I was in 5th class from a Molvi Sahib. But now I am very weak in it.
- II. I learnt how to offer prayer first from my father and refined this practice through my friend. I learnt it in my childhood.

- III. Most of the part of Holy Quran consists of stories, instructing us and showing us the right path. Hence, it is the basic source of knowledge and lesson. I learn very much from real stories of different circumstances faced by the people around me.

ST:

- I. Alhamdulillah, I learnt how to recite Holy Quran from a Qari Sahab. I completed my Holy Quran at the age of six and half years.
- II. The Qari Sahab used to put his turban on my head and declare me Imam. This was the technique used by him to teach me how to offer prayer.
- III. There are many things which I learnt from different books. Once I read in a book: Hazrat Mohammad (PBUH) said, when a person who is loved by Allah prays, Hazrat Jibrail says, 'O Allah, your creature is asking for something'. Allah replies 'Wait; let him ask many times, I like his voice'! Subhan Allah

1.6 Media literacies

According to Silverblatt (2001) media literacy encompasses the study of different types of media ranging from print, photography, film, radio, and television. Being media literate, an individual is assumed to have the power to make independent judgments about media consumption. Media like other forms of literacy events encodes different 'texts' which are decoded by the media consumers. Media literacy, as Silverblatt (2001) argues, promotes awareness of interactive media content as a "text" that provides insight into one's contemporary culture and oneself. In the current research, the respondents showed interest in following form of media:

- I. Indian Movies
- II. English Movies
- III. Television Programs
- IV. National Geographic Channel
- V. Discovery Channel
- VI. Different news channels, Geo News
- VII. Fashion channel
- VIII. Islamic Programs, i.e.
- IX. Peace TV and
- X. Quran TV
- XI. TV dramas/ plays

Now let us have a look at the media consumption in our two case studies:

MD:

I like funny English movies for they remove tension.

Following is a quote which MD watched on TV: I have weak memory thereby am not able to see the forms only shadows which most of the time dwell in my heart and mind.

ST:

There are many TV programs that proved out to be beneficial for me in my personal life. There are many Islamic programs and plays with moral lessons which proved out to be beneficial for me in my everyday life.

I like the movies Baghban and Fashion. Baghban is about what children actually do with their parents when they are in need of their support in their old age. I also like the movie Fashion which shows the problems which are faced by the girls in showbiz.

1.7 Communication channels related literacies

21st century has seen revolution in the field of communication channels. The most popular communication channels of 21st century include:

- I. Internet
- II. Mobile Phones and social media
- III. Telephones

Out of above given communication channels, social media would be focused in current discussion. Since 1993, when text messages appeared in Europe for the first time their popularity is continuously on the rise (Baron, 2008). People all over the world have been using their cell phones to send text messages to friends and relatives for years now. Before explosion of social media, chat rooms and e-messengers have also served as very effective literacy events imparting different literacies to the people. In Pakistan, social media apps like Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter have become very powerful literacy events. People not only communicate through social media but also use them as a means of disseminating different literacy practices. Hence, social media are being used to instruct the people through sharing different quotes, religious texts, poetry, and news reports and so on. In May 2009, Mobilink and UNESCO decided to use mobile phones to increase access to literacy among adolescent girls in rural areas of Pakistan. This is an evidence of popularity of technology and its utility as an effective tool for imparting literacy. The method is believed to be far reaching than conventional print based post-literacy programmes in maintaining the interest and in keeping the literacy skills alive. Now days the youth in Pakistan exchange information, quotes, anecdotes, Quranic verses, Ahadiths and jokes through social media.

Sharing the sort of social media posts they prefer, our respondents gave varying responses. Now we are reproducing the responses from both of our case studies to have a glimpse of texts they generally share with their peers.

MD did not share any particular text he gave following general statement:

Jokes and funny social media posts are my favorite. People are already depressed and I don't want to bother them by serious discussions.

ST on the other hand wrote down two of her social media posts in the questionnaire. One of them is joke and other is a philosophical text:

Sardar to Patha: ye sent message kia hota hai. Pathan: Khocha tum to bilkul akhrot hai. Sent message hota hai sent wala message.

As I grew up, I've learnt that even the person, who is not supposed to let you down, probably will. You will have your heart broken and you will break other's too. You will fight with your best friend and you will cry because time is flying. So, take a lot of pictures, laugh too much, forgive and love like you have never been hurt. Life comes with no guarantees, no timeouts, and no second chances. So, live it to the fullest. Tell someone what he really means to you., dance in the rain, hold someone's hand, comfort a friend, take chances, fall in love, live every moment, because every moment spend is a second of happiness that you'll never get back.

Conclusion

The study described is clearly a very limited attempt to provide the idea of varying literacy practices in Pakistani society. But it does illustrate certain trends and attitudes which reflect range of literacies among middle class Pakistani youth. In this study, it was found that reading Urdu literature is most important literacy practice among youth. As revealed by our informants, there are different reasons for preferring a particular literacy practice over the other which include parental influence, associations with peers, personal likes and dislikes and inclination towards religion. The data revealed that preference for a particular literacy is bound to time and space and keep changing gradually. Contrary to general misconception about their nature, literacies are not stagnant, inflexible, fixed or specific; rather they are dynamic and flexible which mould themselves depending upon the demands of a particular era. For example, social media were quite unheard of in Pakistan some ten to fifteen years ago, but now they have assumed such popularity as international organizations like United Nations intend to use them as a literacy providing tool in rural areas of Pakistan. Undoubtedly, all the literacies identified and discussed in this paper are significant. They are generally influenced by cultural, religious, communal and social practices. This wide range of literacies plays a decisive role not only in social and personal development of an individual but also in development of a nation as a whole.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire: Literacy Practices

Section 1: Background Information of the Respondents

Name:

Academic Qualification:

Age:

Gender:

Nationality:

First Language:

Place of Origin:

Give a brief introduction of your family background.

Section 2: Literacy Practices of Respondents:

Part 1

- I. What sort of books do you like to read?
- II. What sort of things do you like to write? What particular writing practices please you?
- III. Did you learn anything from a book or short story?

- IV. Did you acquire any job/particular skill/future planning related literacy?
- V. Are you satisfied with the content of textbooks you studied at school?
- VI. Would you please share the procedure of instruction at your schools and colleges?
- VII. Do you believe the teachers should provide some information other than textbooks in the classrooms?

Part 2

- I. What is the most important thing that you learnt from your mother?
- II. What is the most important thing that learnt from your father?
- III. Were you habitual of bedtime stories in your childhood? Do you like this activity? If yes, why?
- IV. Did you develop reading habit in your childhood? If yes, what did you read?
- V. Did you develop reading habit in your adolescent/ teenage? If yes, what did you read?
- VI. Did your parents ever recommend you to read anything? If yes, what particular thing they did they recommend?
- VII. Did you siblings/ cousins recommend you anything to read? If yes, what particular thing did they recommend?

Part 3

- I. Did you learn how to offer prayer? When and from whom?
- II. Did you learn how to recite Holy Quran? When and from whom?
- III. Did you recite Holy Quran regularly?
- IV. What particular thing/book was recommended to you by your Moulvi Sahib/ religious instructor?
- V. Why did you learn from that?
- VI. What role did you parents play in your religious education?
- VII. What role did you family traditions play in your religious education?

Part 4

- I. Do you like to go for netsurfing/ facebook/ chatrooms? If yes, what sort of conversation do you like to have?
- II. What sort of social media messages do you like to send and receive?
- III. Share something you posted on a social media platform?
- IV. Did you learn anything from some television program?
- V. Share some important TV program/show/character/ movie that you like the most. And also state why you do like it?

- VI. Did anything that you watched on TV or in movies prove out to be beneficial for you in your personal life?
- VII. Share some particular thing that you watched on TV and got benefited from it.

Appendix 2

A brief introduction to respondent

Sr. #	Names of Respondents	Academic Qualification	Gender	Nationality	First Language	Place of Origin
1	ST	BS (English) 8 th Semester	Female	Pakistani	Urdu	Rajanpur
2	MH	BS (English) 6 th Semester	Female	Pakistani	Urdu	India (Delhi)
3	ZS	BS (English) 6 th Semester	Female	Pakistani	Sirayeki	Multan
4	LT	BS (English) 8 th Semester	Female	Pakistani	Punjabi	Shorkot
5	UV	BS (English) 6 th Semester	Female	Pakistani	Punjabi	Bahawalpur
6	MD	MA English (4 th Semester)	Male	Pakistani	Sirayeki	Multan
7	MI	MA English (4 th Semester)	Male	Pakistani	Sirayeki	Multan
8	FA	MA English (4 th Semester)	Male	Pakistani	Sirayeki	Jehaniyan
9	MZ	MA English (4 th Semester)	Male	Pakistani	Punjabi	Multan
10	M N	MA English (4 th Semester)	Male	Pakistani	Sirayeki	Multan