

Strategic use of social media IDs: critical perspectives on identity and interaction

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■ ABSTRACT ■

This study attempts to give a review of social media users' choice of a particular name for the sake of signaling identity cues and interaction with the others. The social media names could be classified into different categories such as traditional/cultural anthroponyms, nicknames and fictitious IDs etc. Out of these categories, it is the phenomenon of choice and construction of fictitious social media IDs by Pakistani social media users which has been reviewed and scrutinized in this particular article. This study examined fictitious IDs of Pakistani social media users from Critical Discourse Analysis and System Functional Linguistics perspectives and demonstrates how nationalistic, ethnic and religious identities are negotiated, constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed by the social media users through a particular ID choice.

Key Words

Discourse, anthroponyms, onomastic tradition, Pakistani social media IDs, Identity, lexico-grammatical features

1. Introduction

This article seeks to explore ideational and interpersonal metafunctions of Pakistani social media IDs and investigates how Pakistani social media users create signs in form of IDs and ascribe meaning to linguistic and cultural representations at both collective and individual levels. Building on the assumptions that choice of an ID on social media is an interactive act and that interpersonal and relational paradigms are always framed through personal identity clues, this section of the dissertation makes an attempt to discuss both syntactically and critically, the frameworks and ramifications of names and naming on Pakistani social media Websites. Considering the ID selection process as an act of identity assertion, the social media users take IDs as a means to signal a particular ideological stance, mainstream narrative or a counter-narrative standpoint. Thus, it could be assumed that there are certain hegemonic constructions and power relations embedded in Pakistani social media IDs text which need to be addressed and assessed.

A majority of Pakistani social media users choose traditional anthroponyms as social media IDs which are generally well-known in a pre-dominant Muslim society like Pakistan. Pakistani Muslims usually prefer names which have a semantic content but the use of nicknames as a system of address (which may not have a semantic content) is also quite popular with Pakistanis. As far as social media IDs are concerned, the majority of them do have some semantic content and are in form of descriptive phrases or clauses either in Urdu, English or a hybrid code. Whatever the language, social media IDs have a descriptive backing as they contain certain “associations to help individuate or to locate an individual in a social and cultural world” (Blount 139). It would be pertinent to mention Anderson in this connection who did a remarkable work on the grammar of names. In his seminal work, he gives a systematic account

of the syntax and semantics of names. Drawing on work in onomastics, philosophy, and linguistics, his work provides sub-categorization of names within a framework of syntactic categories. Furthermore, it attempts to connect the morpho-syntactic structure of the names to their semantic roles. Following such tradition of studying names and naming, this study attempts a systemic functional account of Pakistani social media IDs conventions. It must be mentioned at the outset that social media users either use traditional anthroponyms of their particular religio-sociocultural background or they create a fictitious ID in the form of a phrase or a clause. These are fictitious IDs which have been focused in this article for in-depth study and analysis. The reason for focusing on fictitious IDs is that the real/traditional names or anthroponyms used by social media users as IDs are generally with neutral polarity. These are the names which have not been selected or created by the users themselves, because real names are given to humans at the time of their birth. Though real names indicate personal identities of individuals—their ethnicity, national and religious background—but still individuals do not choose or create their names themselves. So, real anthroponyms sometimes are not a dependable indicator of a person's ideological beliefs. Contrarily, fictitious IDs on the social media are created by the individuals consciously and deliberately. Fictitious IDs reveal ideological and cognitive processes working behind individuals' religio-socio-cultural, historical and political phenomena perception. Because of such multi-facetedness of fictitious IDs, this study does not follow Anderson in bringing forth the morpho-syntactic framework of Pakistani real names or traditional anthroponyms.

The analysis in different sub-sections of this article on the following pages sketches the projected ideological and identity position of Pakistani Web-users via their linguistic choices. Furthermore, it makes an attempt to connect the IDs with the macro-propositions of the comments posted by the commenters under certain IDs. Through this, the choice of IDs

as a discursive strategy and as a strategy of control is analysed.

2. Sociopolitical context of the study

As this study deals with Pakistani social media IDs, it is pertinent to give a brief detail of the sociopolitical context these IDs emerge from. Pakistan has been characterized by a lack of policy continuity and weak implementation of reforms since its birth in 1947. There has always been unrest in its different provinces like KP and Balochistan which keeps the citizens unsettled and frustrated. Federal Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) at the western border of the country had been plagued with terrorism, bad governance and lawlessness since decades. As the country was created in the name of religion in 1947 so the official name of the country is Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Ever since the country was created, the religion and literal translation of scripture has been (mis)used to control the minds of the masses and resolve certain political, constitutional and social conflicts. Issues like poverty, limited resources, political instability, bad governance and military interventions have always kept the country under pressure, diverting attention from institutional reform to matters of an ad hoc nature. Government, be it democratic or military dictatorship—the country has witnessed four military dictatorships so far which during its sixty eight years of existence—generally does not deliver basic services effectively for which resources are already insufficient. Major urban centers in Pakistan like Karachi, Rawalpindi and Islamabad have witnessed civilian casualties due to terrorist attacks in last few years. The Pakistan Army has carried out successful counter-militancy operations in the north-western parts of the country and is still busy in a major crackdown against the terrorists in North Waziristan. However, the cost of this has been high and Pakistan has seen millions of conflict-affected internally displaced persons (IDPs). In addition to these, natural disasters like floods and droughts

also afflict the country quite frequently and government always proves out to be inefficient in managing such calamities. This results in mass migration from the affected areas to the urban areas and loss of human life and livestock. During crisis situation like these, thousands of people lose their houses, food and resources and are forced to live in camps. Such circumstances have brought about an aggression and disappointment in the people of Pakistan and this aggression and disappointment is very much evident in social media comments discourse and ID choices. Thus people come up with IDs like *Do Chor* [meaning two thieves which refer to two supposedly corrupt politicians of Pakistan] and *ZAANI KHAN* [meaning the adulterer Khan which is meant to insult a politician of Pakistan]. As the Websites making representative sample for the study (i.e. zemtv.com, awaztoday.com, dawn.com) either contain political talk shows of Pakistani TV channels or newspaper articles and news, this kind of IDs targeting political leaders make pretty much sense.

3. Multidimensional values of Pakistani social media ID choices: a Faircloughian perspective

The ID choices made by Pakistani social media users are either in form of phrases or clauses. The phrases are realized either as single lexemes or nominal groups or prepositional phrases (using Hallidayian terms) (Halliday, Halliday & Mattheissen). Furthermore, the phrases could be classified as Muslim names, Urdu phrases, English phrases or a hybrid English-Urdu phrases. These names choices could be analyzed appropriately following Fairclough's proposed set of formal features of discourse; namely *experiential*, *relational* and *expressive*. It is assumed that outlining these features would take the analysis further by elaborating the context of name choices and users' motivations for opting for these names (110-111).

The definitions of given three notions above; *experiential*, *relational* and *expressive*, are of great importance to the understanding of the framework. By looking at experiential values CDA attempts to show how ‘the text producer’s experience of the natural or social world’ (Fairclough 110-111) effects and is shown in a text. Social media users’ supposed worldview, ideology and mental modal can be identified by assessing formal features of their discourse paradigm with experiential value. Relational values may identify the perceived interaction or social relationship between the text producers and its recipients which include both readers and fellow commenters or alternative text producers. The third dimension, expressive value, provides an insight into ‘the text producer’s evaluation (in the widest sense) of the bit of the reality it relates to’ (Fairclough 110-111). Through this dimension, both text producers and recipients make an identification of the text’s social identities.

4. Rationale of the study

The following analysis on Pakistani social media users’ choice of their IDs is quite significant as it is based on the assumption that the trends regarding ID choice are not limited to Pakistan but are more or less universal and uniform.

The study has chosen the comments in the three Websites (zemt看, awaztoday, and dawn) mainly because of greater frequency of occurrence of comments on these Websites. The greater frequency of occurrence invariably leads one to infer that these Websites are visited by more Pakistani web-users as compared to the rest. Many Websites were visited for study of comments and users’ ID in this research which include:

www.pakistantv.tv, www.ultatv.com, www.getpakistan.tv, www.thenews.com.pk, www.Jang.com.pk etc. Out of these, the selected Websites (i.e. zemt看,

awaztoday, and dawn) seem to be the most popular and the popularity was gauged—as stated earlier—by the number of comments posted on these Websites. The greater number of comments posted and large number of users visiting these IDs make these Websites representative of Pakistani social media. Moreover, the nature of comments and users' IDs on more popular social media Websites like Facebook and Twitter seem to be different from these Websites because on these Websites the users are not supposed to reveal their identity openly and could either choose whatever fictitious ID they like or post the comments anonymously expressing their ideological stance without any inhibition. This is one of the trends which make these Websites ideologically significant.

The findings on the following pages would reveal that the zemtv website users adopt fictitious names more than the rest. The reason for this could be that zemtv Website administration was not moderating and deleting the offensive comments posted on its discussion threads strictly some two months ago. It was in July-August 2014 that the administrators decided to get a little stricter and take care of offensive and insulting language posted on its discussion threads. After this, the nature of comments and IDs on zemtv.com showed a remarkable difference. The comments' language became less offensive, and the frequency of fictitious IDs lowered. This trend still continues and could be observed on latest pages of the Website.

5. The construction of social media IDs corpus

The corpus are made up of users IDs from comment section of Pakistani political talk show websites (www.zemtv.com & www.awaztv.com) and one of Pakistan's leading English newspaper website (www.dawn.com). The user IDs and comments from December 1, 2013 to March 10, 2014

were scrutinized to draw the data. A total of twenty (20) TV talk shows and sixty (60) newspaper articles and blogs containing eighteen hundred (1800) IDs and comments on Pakistan's political scenario were analyzed. As this article focuses on the ID choices made by the users, only IDs were focused for in depth analysis and scrutiny. For this purpose, Fairclough's dimensions or stages of discourse analysis, description, interpretation and explanation have been taken into consideration. At the linguistic level—the level of critical identification of ID choices—the linguistic representations of those IDs (or user names) have been regarded significant and singled out which “cause semantic tension or incongruity as a result of a shift in the use of a word or phrase from its original context or domain of use to another context where it is not expected to occur” (Ezefeiika 181). These transferences could be multipurpose in intention. The supposed intentions could be interactional or interpersonal: ideology assertion, propagation and dissemination or (de)personalization of self for the sake of alternative identity construction. Following these criteria, it could be assumed that the linguistic representations of fictitious IDs have been personalized and de-conventionalized by social media users. Because of such strategies on their part, the linguistic choices made by the social media users/commenters exhibit semantic depth. The cognitive criterion enables the interpretation of social media users' mental model inherently working behind the ID choices and the ontological association between them and their peers. Thus, an attempt has been made to resolve the incongruity or the semantic shift in naming strategies by postulating underlying intentions, purposes and aggression. Finally, in the pragmatic dimension, it is assumed that the rhetorical, emotive and persuasive potentials of the ID choices could be revealed. The positive or negative evaluations implicit in ID choices with respect to political and ideological issues in question make up the core of this article.

6. Classification scheme: fictitious vs. traditional anthroponyms

As Fairclough asserts, a classification scheme is “a particular way of dividing up some aspect of reality which is built upon a particular ideological representation of that reality” (115). The verbal text of Pakistani social media users exhibits a dual classification scheme that seems to map opposing values. For ease of discussion, these opposing schemes could be termed as fictitious IDs vs. traditional anthroponyms. Table 1 indicates the name or ID choices made by social media users to index above mentioned opposing realities. As table indicates some IDs have been placed in the middle column, because these can arguably be said not to fit into either of the binary classification columns. These IDs are ambiguous: it is not clear/obvious whether they are fictitious/sarcastic names or the real/traditional ones. This issue aside, however, the fictitious and traditional name contrast shows the following. On the one hand, there is a distinct effort to retain the label of truthfulness and honesty as signalled by making traditional or full names ID choices. The traditional name IDs make the message recipients consciously recall text producers’ ethnic/national background. On this point, it could be surmised that ID choices remain in tune with Pakistani social media users’ comments which show obvious religio-cultural indoctrination (see Table 4). On the other hand, there is a conscious or obvious effort on the part of social media users with fictitious IDs to expose their ideological make up and create presupposition in the message recipients about the content of their message. The echoes of ideological underpinning could be experienced from the following ID in the form a nominal phrase: ‘*Dil Dil Pakistan*’. This ID implies ‘Pakistan is my heart’ thus expressing nationalism and patriotism. Then there are some other IDs in the form of whole hybrid bilingual clauses like ‘Eliminate *Khawarijis*’, where *Khawarijis* implies banned militant organization *Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan*.

The Pakistani social media users hence express their divided up identities in multiple ways depending upon the kind of comments they are making and the way they prefer to project themselves in front of text recipients. The underlying ideological motivation seems to stem from a multivalent desire to project a coherent and sound identity and overcome their identity crisis. This results in a somewhat schizophrenic mentality that is manifested in multiple ways, most prominently in the form of aggressive or combatant speech. The constant debate about what makes a good Muslim and a good Pakistani and what constitutes a national identity are, it is argued, the consequence of multiple opposing tensions operating in collective Pakistani psyche. In today's Pakistan, there are multiple yet ambiguous facets of religious and national identity and so are the people who try to come up to certain standards they have set for themselves. This tension, ambiguity and lack of clarity are very much obvious in the ID choices which social media users make on social media discussion forums.

Table 1: Classification Schemes: Actual anthroponyms vs. fictitious IDs

Actual anthroponyms	Ambiguous and ambivalent IDs	Fictitious IDs
Sajid Nadeem	<i>Pheena</i> (small or short nosed man)	<i>Jibreel Farishta</i> (Gabriel, the angel)
Haseen Abbas Madani	<i>Ghul</i> (noise)	Avatar
J Shahid	<i>Zuta</i> (Meaningless ID)	Taliban Khan
Y Khan	<i>Shirjan</i> (Meaningless ID)	Neo
Hamid Muhammad	<i>Moolana</i> (the Muslim scholar)	<i>Buzdil Army</i> (the coward Army)
Salman	Jabir <i>Bhai</i> Dubai (Jabir brother Dubai)	Dawood Ibrahime Dxb
Zahid		TTpeE
		<i>Zalmay</i> (Cruel men)
		<i>Dil Dil</i> Pakistan (Pakistan is my heart.)
		<i>Gunnam</i> (Nameless)
		Eliminate <i>Khawarjis</i> (Eliminate Taliban.)

7. Corpus: Identification of fictitious anthroponyms on the Pakistani social media web-sites

Some 1800 comments from the above- mentioned websites (www.zemtv.com, www.awaztoday.tv, and www.dawn.com) were analysed for the identification of variety of anthroponyms and IDs they carried. Out of these 1800 IDs, 1000 IDs were randomly selected from Zemtv website because the frequency of posted comments on zemtv website is much greater than the other two. Out of these 1000 IDs, 32% (N=319) fall under the category of fictitious IDs; 41% (N=409) fell under the category of traditional anthroponyms and rest of 27% (N=272) comprised of ambiguous or ambivalent IDs. Almost 500 IDs were randomly selected from awaztoday.tv website. Out of these 500 IDs, 95% (N=473) fall under the category of real anthroponyms, 01% (N=07) fall under the category of ambiguous or ambivalent IDs and rest of 04% (N=20) comprises of fictitious IDs. Similar results were obtained from Dawn newspaper website where the ratio of IDs categorization (out of 300 IDs) went as following: traditional anthroponyms: 90% (N=272), ambiguous and ambivalent IDs 03% (N=09) and fictitious IDs 07% (N=19). Some of the fictitious IDs identified in the Pakistani social media web-sites are enlisted in Table 2 below.

An in-depth analysis of lexicogrammatical structure (Halliday, Halliday &Mattheissen, Eggin) of fictitious IDs reveal that they could be categorized into clauses and phrases/groups with some further sub-classification. Most of the phrases making up fictitious IDs are noun phrases (90%, N=403). Occasionally, a prepositional phrase also happens to occur as a fictitious ID (2%, N=09). Furthermore, the data indicate that IDs in form of a clause occur rarely (06%, N=27). When they do occur in form of a clause, it is imperative clause which is preferred (05%, N=19) by the social-media users. Through imperative clauses social media users implicitly command

and order other users, thus expressing their anger and giving vent to their aggression.

After imperative clauses, relational clauses (01%, N=03) also appear now and then. Through behavioural clauses, the social media users negotiate the identity of some participant with text recipients.

Finally, it is pertinent to mention here that there emerged another type or class of social media IDs randomly selected by Pakistani commenters which does not fall into any of the above-mentioned category. This category include exclamatives (*ha ha ha* or *he he he*), emoticons (:-/, ☺), symbols or alphabets (., A to Z) and email ids (See Table 3). As this category, presumably, is difficult to analyse using selected theoretical framework (i.e. Critical Discourse Analysis and Systemic Functional Linguistics) so has been left out and not considered for detailed explanation, elaboration and discussion in the following sections of the article.

Table 2: Some of the Fictitious IDs

Sr. #	Date/Thread/website	Fictitious IDs	Literal Translation
1	12-03-2014/When Killers become patriot/dawn	Kalash Wala	A man from Kalash
2	12-03-2014/Why I won't be cheering for Afridi anymore/dawn	Last island	
3	16-02-2014/Apas ki baat/awaztoday	Politics is BUSINESS IN PAKISTAN	
4	27-01-2014/On the front/awaztoday	/.	
5	16-01-2014/Capital Talk/awaztoday	INDIA	
6	11-03-2014/Newseye/zemtv	himmatwala	A courageous man
7	25-01-2014/Jirga/zemtv	EASY LOAD	
8	28-02-2014/Apas ki baat/zemtv	SindhSultan	The Sultan of Sindh
9	10-03-2014/Kharra sach/zemtv	2 CHOOR	Two Thieves
10	03-03-2014/Off the record/zemtv	WhiteLion	

Table 3: Corpus

Total IDs studied	1800	
IDs from Zemt.com	1000	
Traditional anthroponyms	319	32%
Ambiguous/ambivalent IDs	272	27%
Fictitious IDs	409	41%
IDs from Awaztoday.com	500	
Traditional anthroponyms	473	95%
Ambiguous/ ambivalent IDs	7	1%
Fictitious IDs	20	4%
IDs from Dawn.com	300	
Traditional anthroponyms	272	90%
Ambiguous/ ambivalent IDs	09	3%
Fictitious IDs	19	7%
Total Fictitious IDs	409+20+ 19 = 448	
Noun Phrases	403	90%
Prepositional Phrases	09	2%
Clauses	27	6%
Imperative clauses	23	5%
Relational clauses	04	1%
Symbols and exclamatives etc.	18	

Table 4: Fictitious IDs in sync with comments' themes

IDs	Comment posted	Date/ Thread
<i>nabi pak ka gulam (Holy Prophet's slave)</i>	Greetings Sir Zaid Hamid. It is pity that whole Pakistan is ready to destroy itself nowadays. These are the times when we call a liar truthful and declare truthful a liar. Keep saying this and die a painful death. Pakistanis deserve this.	March 7, 2014 /Debate with Zaid Hamid comments thread

	The time is near when you would be the worst nation on this earth to Holy Allah. O Pakistanis, Holy Allah does not send people like Zaid Hamid again. Otherwise you would be annihilated.	
	If some one knows , How many Pakistanis are Killed By MQM and Altaf Hussain Jaffri since 1985... March 7, 2014	
PADRI and JAFFRI (The Priest and the Shia)	Why this Shia and Qadiani Media donot talk about these People Killed by MQM ?????? Why Pakistani Shia and Qadiani Establishments donot talk about these people Killed by MQM ??????	<i>/Debate with Zaid Hamid</i> comments thread

8. Lexicogrammatical classification of Pakistani Social Media Users' IDs

In the discussion that follows, lexicogrammatical categories of social media IDs from different comments threads have been presented. Along with categorization, an attempt has been made to interpret the ID choice with a certain grammatical form in relation to the comment posted by that particular user. Fairclough's categories of discourse analysis (Description, interpretation and explanation) proved out to be very beneficial in this regard.

A. Noun Phrases as social media IDs

Tables 1, 2 and 4 above show many noun phrases used by social media users as IDs. Though same IDs and subsequent comments could have been used for analysis in this section but it has been preferred that the IDs other than those shown in the above-given tables should be discussed in this section. As the IDs corpus compiled for this section is quite extensive, it is assumed that using a variety of IDs would yield more insightful and diversified results.

IDs and Comments: Noun phrases as social media IDs (see F. Id 1 to F. Id 5)

(F. Id 1.) DREAM TEAM

Dream	Team
Pre-modifier	Head
Noun as an epithet	Noun

Here ‘F. Id’ stands for ‘fictitious ID’ and 1 is sequence number assigned to the posted comment and ID for the sake of discussion on the subsequent pages. The comment posted by DREAM TEAM is bilingual. The translation and interpretation of Urdu words has been given in brackets. Same has been done with the comments on the following pages.

Comment posted by DREAM TEAM:

—“DREAM TEAM FOR PAKISTAN .

Next Prime Minister of Pakistan..... Veena Malik Khan. (Jamela Disco *Wali*) [Jamela, the disco lady implying dancing girl or whore)
President*Sheda Telley Marasi*. (Sheda Telley, the low caste musician implying a politician Shaikh Rasheed who has been degraded with derogatory nick name and by designating a derogatory profession)

Culter Minsiter for Film industry.....Imran Khan GoldSmith Seta White (The politician has been insulted by linking him up with his ex-wife who is a Jew, and with his ex-girlfriend who was mother of his illegitimate daughter)

Defence Minister.....Mushraf Comando.

...*Qadiani. Marzia* (Supposed Qadiani sect of Musharraf being targeted)

Alcholic and Drug Minister*Alltaf Kali Mata* (Altaf the black goddess) ... Syed Altaf Hussain Jaffri... *Irani Matam Wala* (One who beats his chest. Shia sect of Altaf Hussain being targeted) ...

(*Aapas ki baat*, February 28, 2014: zemtv.com)

(F. Id. 2.) Free Sindh

Free	Sindh
Pre-modifier	Head
Epithet	Noun

Comment posted by Free Sindh:

Fuk taliban fuk fukistan army all these pakhtoon and punjabies (Two of Pakistani ethnic groups) are terrorists fuk all of them and fuk their so called shariah. Free Sindh and Balochistan, Fukistan is a failed and a terrorists state. Jiye Sindh (*Capital Talk*, March 5, 2014: zemtv.com)

(F. Id. 3) *jagga jallaad*

(Jagga, the executioner)

Jagga	Jallad (The executioner)
Head	post-modifier
Noun	Noun as an epithet

Comment posted by *jagga jallad*:

Nawaz (The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif) *gunja* (baldy) is full of shit and making fool of nation. he telling nation cock and bull story. he is very *coming* (cunning) and he keeping media and nation busy in Musharraf case and now peace talks with taliban. he knows he has no time to *waist* (waste) and he hurriedly selling national assets to his relatives and putting money in his secret big pockets...(*Jirga*, February 8, 2014: zemtv.com)

(F. Id. 4) Punjabi

Punjabi
Head
Noun

Comment posted by Punjabi:

kia punjab ka koi eak thana be essa ha, jehaan begare rashwat ke percha daraj hotta ha.....???? (Is there a single police station in Punjab where one can lodge complaint without bribe?) kia police ab awam se reshwat ne lete.....???????????? (Does Police not accept the bribe from the public?) kia nawaz sharif ore shebaz sharif ne elections main hamesha ke tara dhnadhli ne ke.....???????? [Have Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif not rigged the polls like (they) always (do)?]... (Kal Tak, January , 272014: awaztoday)

(F. Id. 5) *Azad Khayal*

(Free Thought, implying a free thinker or a liberal)

Azad (free)	Khayal
Pre-modifier	(thought)
Epithet	Head
	Noun

Comment posted by *Azad Khayal*:

As a young child I was told that "Islam is the last message and it's good for all times". What I understood from that was that there are general guiding principals that you can probably say are not dependant on time. But some people seem to get totally the wrong end of the stick. I wonder how they justify using all the amenities of the modern world. (Pakistani law prohibiting underage marriage un-Islamic, March 11, 2014: dawn)

Discussion: Noun Phrases as social media IDs (based on F. Id 1 to F. Id 2)

Texts F. Id. 1 to F. Id. 5 illustrate the conceptual schema of Pakistani general public implying that Pakistani leadership does not exhibit good governance which should be based on “the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a nation’s affair” (Agere 02). All

five IDs above represent the gist or essence of the respective comments of the commenters. The first ID 'DREAM TEAM' reflects sarcasm. Through this sarcastic ID and comment the commenter presents the worst possible scenario (in his/her conception) for administrative and executive positions of the country. The commenter's intolerance for musicians, dancers, Shias, Qadianis, Jews and adultery is quite obvious. The selected ID, DREAM TEAM, actually reflects commenter's aggression and unacceptability for pluralism and multiculturalism and multi-ethnicism. The second, third and fourth IDs are nationalistic where the commenters express concerns for sad state of affairs in the country and express their dissatisfaction with the government's performance. The element of aggression and anger is once again very much obvious in these three textual instances. The last comment is comparatively moderate where the commenter 'Azad Khayal' expresses his/her dissatisfaction with religious scholars' particular and supposedly biased interpretations of religious credos.

In all the noun phrases above, the heads (team, Sindh, jagga, khayal, Punjabi) seem to be neutral with no apparent polarity or value judgement attached. The social media users have made use of pre-modifiers (dream, azad, free) and post-modifiers (the executioner) very tactfully which encode the desired effect and identity clues in their respective IDs. Thus through the critical evaluation and interpretation of their respective IDs, the above-mentioned social media commenters could be identified as follows (see Table 5):

Table 5: IDs and identification

IDs	Assumed Identities
Dream Team	A Pakistani Sunni Muslim who is unhappy with the current leadership of the country
Free Sindh	A Sindhi nationalist who wishes to see Sindh province of Pakistan as a separate autonomous street
<i>Jagga Jallad</i>	An aggressive Pakistani who hates ruling group of the country

<i>Azad Khayal</i>	A liberal Pakistani who seems to be anti-religious extremism
Punjabi	A Pakistani citizen from Punjab who does not endorse government's policies

B. Prepositional phrases as IDs

ID and Comment: Prepositional Phrases as IDs (F. Id. 7)

(F. Id. 6) *Lahore Se* (From Lahore)

Lahore	se
	(From)
Pre-modifier	Head
Noun	Preposition

Comment posted by *Lahore se*:

Soon after this show after watching Sheikh Rasheed on TV PM of PAKISTAN Mr.Noora Shareef called Hindu god "Altaf Kalia" and said. Oooooo Baaj Rang Balliiiiii Oooooo Baaj Ranj Baliiii Wacht on TV sheeda Tali Defaming us every gali gali [(Sheeda Tallii) is defaming us in every street (of Pakistan).] Do somethin O Baj Rang Bali *Key iss ki zaban phir na chali* [(That his tongue should not work anymore). It implies that PM Nawaz Sharif would request Altaf Hussain, another political leader of Pakistan, to murder Shaikh Rasheed.] (*On the Front* February 19, 2014: Zemtv)

Discussion: Prepositional phrase as social media IDs (based on F. Id. 6)

The prepositional phrases have been used as IDs very rarely (02 %) by social media commenters of Pakistan. The preposition here has been used to signal identity clue to other social media users: the commenter is from Lahore and the Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr. Nawaz Sharif is also from Lahore. The commenter is trying to debunk the myth that Prime Minister of Pakistan is popular with the people of Lahore. The comment is racist, religious extremist, anti-Hindus and anti-India. Through

this kind of comment from a person from Lahore, the commenter implies that the people of Lahore do not like closer ties with India as it is wished by Pakistani Prime minister. It also implies that Pakistani politicians are corrupt and murderers.

C. Imperative clauses as social media IDs

IDs and Comments: Imperative clauses as social media IDs (Based on comments from F. Id. 7 to F. Id. 9)

(F. Id. 7) LOVE PAKISTAN

Love	Pakistan
Pro: mental	Phenomenon
TRANSITIVITY:	
Mental Clause	
Predicator	Compliment
REDIDUE	

Comment posted by LOVE PAKISTAN:

sh rasheed is cheap and boring *maskhara* (joker) and nothing else shame on sh rasheed

sharam say doob maro (Die of shame) and now leave ur seat mr. cartoon u better join some circus as a joker (March 12, 2014, Faisla Awam Ka: zemtv)

(F.Id. 8) *Mulla maro* (Kill Mulla)

	Mulla (The Muslim Priest)	Maro (Kill)
Experiential Metafunction	Goal	Pro: material
	Transitivity: Material Clause	
Interpersonal Metafunction	Compliment	Predicator
	RESIDUE	

Comment posted by *Mulla Maro*:

Why don't we park religion for a while and think of a peaceful way to live life. Word of present God seems to inflict same amount of hardship , as once sun worshipers once faced. All these copy cat religions seems to be written originally by Jews and recompiled by Christians and Muslims.

... (News eye March 11, 2014:zemtv.com)

(F. Id. 9) CENSOR_ME_I_DARE_YA

Censor	me	I	dare	ya
Pro:material	Goal	Sayer	Pro:verbal	Receiver
TRANSITIVITY:		TRANSITIVITY:		
Material Clause		Verbal Clause		
Dependent	Clause β	Independent	Clause α	
taxis: Hypotaxis				
logocosemantic relationship:	Projection-L			
Predicator	Compliment	Subject	Predicator	Compliment
REDIDUE		MOOD	RESIDUE	

Comment posted by CENSOR_ME_I_DARE_YA :

You DO realise that most of the 'great females' you cited here are little more than mascots. Other than Asma Jahangir, that is, who is just a terrible person...As for the rest:

Malala: Outspoken, bright girl egged on by considerably less likable father...

Ayesha Farooq: ISPR doing PR. It is not like the air force is actually going see any action.

Sharmeen Chinoy: Made doc regarding vitriolage victims, which the Academy liked because it targeted Pakistan, a safe target...Finally, why target Shahid Afridi at this time? After the India match?...Is he now expected to be aware and sympathetic to the latest imported trends in third wave feminism?

Please raise this issue. (*Why I won't be cheering for Afridi anymore*, March 11, 2014, dawn)

Discussion: Imperative clauses as social media IDs (based on comments

from F. Id. 7 to F. Id. 9)

The use of imperative mood or command as an ID by the Pakistani social media users is of great significance. It reflects deep-rooted Islamic discourse for achieving social justice. “It actually forms the basis for the existence of government in Islam. The Islamic teaching states that it is duty of every Muslim to stand solid against any act of injustice and dishonest sinful behavior” (Spruill 53). This is how the absolute commandment regarding standing against evil is stated in Quran:

“Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting all people that is good (Islam) and enjoining *Al-Maruf* (Islamic monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do) and forbidding *Al-Munkar* (polytheism and disbelief and all that Islam has forbidden). It is they who are successful.” (The Noble Quran , Al Imran 104: 88).

Thus commanding what is right, according to Muslim version of good and evil, and forbidding what is wrong becomes a reigning discourse in a Muslim society whereby the nation of Islam forcefully fights off supposed social and religious evils. The Muslims believe that

“if we ignore this principle and in the face of wrong we do not react in any way, then this means that in a spiritual and moral sense we are dead. Abd allah ibn Mas’ud was once asked, ‘Who are the living dead?’ and he replied, ‘Those who never command something good and never forbid something bad’. A similar point is made in that well known Hadith in which the Prophet (pbuh) is reported to have said: ‘If one of you sees something wrong, let him change it with his hand; if he cannot, then with his tongue; if he cannot, then with his heart and this is the weakest faith.’ Some versions add: ‘there is no part of faith behind that, not even so much as a mustard seed’” (Shafaat 1987: para 02).

Thus commanding becomes a righteous act which different sects of Muslim

proudly do and find justifications in preaching their particular version of Islam. The preference of imperative clause with command as an ID by Pakistanis could be interpreted in this connection. By projecting their identity as the self-proclaimed preachers of goodness, these social media commenters are upholding a righteous and moralistic stance. They are giving judgments about others, dismissing others' views and ideas as false and unworthy and using aggressive language. At interpersonal metafunction level, the commandments are just made up of RESIDUE with elliptical 'you' of MOOD element. This invariably leads one to believe that such forceful commandments are for every Pakistani irrespective of their sectarian and ethnic differences. Same is the case, if we look at the experiential metafunction of these IDs. The mental and material processes choice of the commenters reflects a particular worldview: command the fellow countrypersons to do noble deeds. Now let us have a look at the lack of thematic unity or thematic incongruity between the commenters' selection of IDs and posted comments.

In the case of comments reproduced above, the first commenter LOVE PAKISTAN (see F. Id. 7) reflects his/her hate for a Pakistani politician and his/her ID implies that these politicians are not well-wishers of the country and whoever follows them is not a patriot. The second comment (see F. Id. 8) posted by *Mulla Maro* reflects the mindset of a person who is disappointed with the religions of the world and believes that all the religions of the world should be set aside and people should be free from religious biases. The third commenter (F. Id. 9 CENSOR_ME_I_DARE_YA) is showing his disregard for the achievements of some of the prominent Pakistani women. Apparently, all these comments do not seem to preach Islamic commandment of spreading righteousness and uprooting evil in their comments but the ID choices made by these commenters give an altogether different message. Their IDs reflect rigidity and intolerance for anything which does not align with their ideologies. The most liberal

commenter of these three seems to be *Mulla Maro* but he/she also seems to be entrenched in the discursive practice of taking strict action (like killing) against the wrong doers. Similarly F. Id. 7 and F. Id. 8 also express more condemnation for Pakistani politicians and prominent Pakistani women respectively than appreciation for their achievements.

It invariably leads one to infer that it is quite difficult to break free from the prevalent discursive practices of one's particular culture. As comments posting is a mediated practice and involves a degree of interaction with the other commenters of the same thread, the comments producers unknowingly / unconsciously follow and reflect the same discursive practices which they apparently and supposedly do not wish to be associated with.

D. Relational clauses as social media IDs

IDs and Comments: Relational clauses as social media IDs (F .Id. 10 and F. Id. 11)

(F. Id. 10) Sing is King

	Singh	is	King
Experiential Metafunction	Token	Pro: Relational	Value
	TRANSITIVITY: Relational Clause, Identifying		
Interpersonal Metafunction	Subject	Finite	Compliment
	MOOD		RESIDUE

Comment posted by Singh is King:

I am deeply grieved to hear sad story of Mama Qadir and rest of my sisters and brothers. I pray, may Allah help them all. (Capital-talk, March 5, 2014: zemtv)

(F. Id. 11) *israel randi hai* • (Israel is a whore.)

	Israel	randi	hai
	Israel	whore	is
Experiential Metafunction	Token	Value	Pro: Relational
		TRANSITIVITY: Relational Clause, Identifying	
Interpersonal Metafunction	Subject	Predicator	Finite
	MOOD RESIDUE		MOOD

Comment posted by *Israel randi hai*:

Geo = Jew (Aj Kamran Khan ke saath , January 28,2014: zemtv.com)

Discussion: Relational clauses as social media IDs (based on F .Id. 10 and F. Id. 11)

The use of relational clauses as social media ID is very rare with Pakistani users. These clauses give very useful clues about conceptual schema of both commenters and presupposed comment recipients. The first commenter (see F.id.10) in this section uses a recontextualized and interdiscursive textual instance as an ID. The choice of a Hindi film song and film title as an ID easily convince the text recipients that the commenter should be identified with those sections of Pakistani society who are comparatively moderate and peaceful. In contrast to this, the second commenter (see F.Id. 11) is full of hate for Israel and Jews, and (s)he is linking up GEO a leading Pakistani channels with Jews who are considered foes and anti-Islam by most of the Pakistanis.

9. Direct/indirect identity clues and linguistic choices

Table 6 proposes a summary of the linguistic choices for fictitious IDs with inherent direct and indirect identity clues as they were supposedly conceptualized by the social media users. It is expected that this step in

textual analysis would enable one to appreciate grammatical choices contrived by social media text producers strategically to enhance rhetorical impact of their respective fictitious IDs and ideological and interactive potential of these IDs.

The direct and indirect identity clues thus emerged provide sufficient explanation of ideational conceptualizations foregrounded or backgrounded in the IDs' text. It would be pertinent to mention here that this study defines 'direct identity clue' either as a proper name or as a well-known ethnic or nationalistic group title which a commenter assumes for him or herself as a text producer such as Punjabi, Sindh, Pakistan etc. The direct identity clues either point exclusively to the commenters/text producers or to the whole group of which the commenter/text producer is just one representative. 'Indirect identity clues', on the other hand are diverse and complex and lead one to deduce commenters' identity through critical evaluation of thematic content of the comment posted and linking it up with functional-semantic dimensions of the ID.

Table 6: Direct and indirect identity clues via linguistic choices

Linguistic Classification of IDs		
	Direct Identity Clues	Indirect Identity Clues
Noun phrase	Proper noun	Epithet
		Fictitious title
		Common noun
Prepositional phrase	Proper noun	Preposition
		Epithet
		Fictitious title
		Common noun
Imperative clause: command	Proper noun	Verb
		Common noun
Relational clause: declarative	Proper noun	Common noun
		Epithet

In the following section, the broader implications of fictitious IDs are discussed and an attempt is made to find the answers to questions like how fictitious IDs use explains ideological stance of different sections of Pakistani society and what their implications are for critical language awareness.

10. Discussion and concluding remarks

This study was based on the assertion that “one of the most obvious linguistic means of establishing people’s identity is through the giving and using of names” (Thorborrow 123). Like in everyday life, individuals on social media Websites attempt to be distinguished from other members of in-groups and out-groups by the means of some title or ID. On Pakistani social media Websites, the social media users could be identified as representatives of a particular group through evaluation of their chosen IDs. The chosen ID designates individuals as aggressive upholders, disseminators and propagators of certain ideological beliefs. It has been observed that social media ID construction practices or linguistic preferences for IDs creation vary from group to group. The ID choices could be part of overall structural paradigm of a discussion thread where individual establish and negotiate their identity in relation to other members of the group. Sometimes they post and endorse a particular ideological standpoint and choose their IDs accordingly and sometimes they post a counter-argument. Whatever the reason, the most interesting kind of IDs in this regard is that of fictitious one which has been analyzed in this particular strand of dissertation. The way different commenters address and interact with each other in social media discussion/comments threads depends upon the degree of agreement, disagreement and hostility towards supposed national, ethnic, sectarian and religious affiliations of the participants involved. Social media IDs and terms of address have important implications

and effects on the participants in a conversational exchange. In her study of American address terms, Susan Ervin-Tripp describes how a black American doctor was insulted by a white American policeman through the choice of derogatory address terms (22).

Furthermore, this study recognizes preferences for particular types of linguistic representation of IDs on the part of Pakistani social media users. Their choice of certain linguistic strategies plays an important role in establishing their identities and facilitating their interaction with the others. As tables (see Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5) given above suggest that the use of noun phrases is one of the most frequently used strategy to give clue about a commenters' ideational and interpersonal background. The use of imperatives and relational clauses comes after noun phrases. It is through the tactful use of low ranked constituents within noun phrases and clauses (nouns, epithets and verbs) that the solidarity with in-group members is sought for and distance with the out-group members is maintained. Thus it could be surmised that social identity is not something individuals can always determine on their own; it is intertwined with other factors one of them being how they are perceived by the 'others' or out-group members. So, it could be maintained that social media users do not attempt to conceive of identity as a purely individual matter. Through choice of a range of IDs, they build up perception of themselves in relation to the others.

Another very important aspect of social media ID choice is that of maintaining the status and prestige within their particular social group. In a multilingual society like Pakistan, this status could be constructed through the use of language of prestige or a bilingual code in various ways. Being able to show that they can use English language appropriately, the question of identity becomes even more marked for Pakistani social media commenters. This is the reason that the most of the comments (N=865, 48%) of the comments of the representative sample have been posted

in English. Out of rest of the (N=935, 52%) comments, 30% (N=279) are in a bilingual code in varying degrees. This is because of the fact that the social media users take into account who they are interacting with and what they are posting about, and alter their language style accordingly. This could be linked with Bell's (1984) concept of audience design that provides a theoretical account of the reasons why speakers change the way they talk depending on the situation and context they are talking in. According to Thornborrow:

This account is based on the premises that people are mainly seeking to show solidarity and approval in their dealings with others, and one way that speakers can do this is through linguistic convergence, i.e. by changing their patterns of speech to fit more closely with those of the person they happen to be talking to (Giles and Powesland, 1975; Giles and Sinclair, 1979). In some situations, speakers may choose not to converge, but instead to either maintain their own variety (linguistic maintenance), or move to a more extreme variety of their dialect (linguistic divergence), in order to emphasise the difference between themselves and the person or people they are talking to (131).

Thus most of the commenters seem to show convergence with linguistic conventions of the thread they are following. Most of the commenters on Dawn (90%) and Awaztoday (95%) Website were found to be posting comments with Pakistani anthroponyms . The frequency of fictitious anthroponyms on these Websites had been relatively low. It shows the convergence with the prevalent convention set by the majority of the page followers. Similarly, the overall language for both posting comments and assuming IDs on Dawn news Website is less offensive and less aggressive as compared to that of Zemt看 and Awaztoday Websites. Additionally, all the comments (N=300, 100%) posted on Dawn news Website have been in English (because this is an English newspaper) which exhibits the educated and literate readership of the newspaper. Almost half of the

comments on Zentv (N=520, 52%) and Awaztoday (N=220, 44%) websites have been in English. Though all the videos posted on the websites are in Urdu language; still almost half of the commenters prefer to post the comments and IDs in English language. Arguably, there could be multiple reasons for this, such as wish to be identified as an educated person or the prevalent practice of a multilingual society where members of a speech community could choose any language they know depending on context they are in and type of interlocutors they are interacting with and so on.

Summing up, this study attempted to bring to light the way Pakistani social media users project their identities through their ID choices on social media Websites. It was based on the assumption that choosing a regular anthroponym remains somewhat neutral and does not give the immediate clues about ideational and experiential value of the comments posted. The fictitious IDs which commenters deliberately choose are more ideology loaded and give clues about mental model worldview of a particular group of text producers/ text recipients and audience design of a particular discussion/comments thread.

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