

SILENCE, SPEECH, AND SUBJECTIVITY: A PSYCHOANALYTIC DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF LINGUISTIC EXPRESSION IN CONTEMPORARY PAKISTANI FICTION

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Abstract

This study examines the complex interplay between silence, speech, and subjectivity in contemporary Pakistani fiction, challenging the assumption that language functions as a transparent medium of expression. Specifically, it addresses the problem that existing scholarship largely overlooks the psychoanalytic and discursive dimensions of linguistic expression, particularly the role of silence as a meaning-producing element. The study aims to analyze how silence and speech operate as complementary discursive strategies in constructing subjectivity, while also exploring how psychoanalytic concepts such as repression, desire, and lack are embedded in linguistic patterns. The study is grounded in an integrated theoretical framework combining Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and psychoanalytic theory, particularly Freudian and Lacanian perspectives. Data were drawn from selected contemporary Pakistani fictional texts and were analyzed qualitatively using Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse analysis alongside psychoanalytic interpretation. Linguistic features such as pauses, ellipses, and fragmented dialogue were systematically examined. The findings revealed that silence functions as an active discursive strategy rather than a passive absence, and that speech and silence operate interdependently in shaping subjectivity. Furthermore, linguistic patterns reflected unconscious processes, including repression and lack, while also revealing socio-cultural constraints and forms of resistance. These findings have contributed to bridging the gap between discourse analysis and psychoanalytic literary criticism. In conclusion, the study establishes that silence is a productive element of discourse that plays a central role in identity construction. It recommends further interdisciplinary research integrating discourse analysis, psychoanalysis, and corpus-based approaches to deepen understanding of linguistic subjectivity.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Lacanian Theory, Pakistani Fiction, Psychoanalysis, Silence, Subjectivity

Introduction

Silence, often perceived as absence, constitutes nearly 60–70% of human communicative interaction when measured through pauses, omissions, and implied meanings in discourse (Jaworski, 1993). As Sigmund Freud famously asserted, *Where words fail, symptoms begin to*

speak (Freud, 1915/1957), foregrounding the unconscious dimensions of speech and silence. Consider, for instance, a recurring scene in contemporary Pakistani fiction where a female protagonist hesitates mid-sentence, leaving her thought incomplete; this pause is not emptiness but a dense site of repression, trauma, and resistance. What, then, does silence reveal that speech conceals? This question becomes particularly urgent in literary texts where language operates not merely as communication but as a psychological and ideological structure.

In this context, the present study examines silence, speech, and subjectivity through a psychoanalytic discourse analysis of linguistic expression in contemporary Pakistani fiction. Importantly, this topic is significant because language is not a neutral medium; rather, it is shaped by unconscious desires, socio-political constraints, and cultural norms. As recent developments in psychoanalytic linguistics and discourse studies suggest, silence functions as a meaningful signifier rather than a void (Lacan, 1977; Foucault, 1972). Therefore, understanding how characters articulate—or fail to articulate—their experiences provides insight into broader questions of identity formation, trauma, and power relations. While it may be assumed that readers recognize language as expressive, this study argues that linguistic expression in fiction is also deeply structured by repression, lack, and ideological forces.

Furthermore, despite growing scholarship on Pakistani fiction, a critical problem persists: existing studies predominantly focus on themes such as postcolonial identity, gender, and diaspora, often overlooking the micro-level linguistic and discursive mechanisms through which subjectivity is constructed. Consequently, the role of silence as a psychoanalytic and discursive phenomenon remains underexplored. Although earlier scholars such as Bhabha (1994) and Spivak (1988) addressed issues of voice and subalternity, they did not fully integrate psychoanalytic discourse analysis into literary linguistic practices. More recently, Zuboff (2019) and Couldry and Mejias (2019) have highlighted issues of control and representation, yet their focus is primarily on digital contexts rather than literary discourse.

Moreover, empirical and textual evidence from contemporary Pakistani fiction—such as the fragmented dialogues in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* and the restrained voices in Kamila Shamsie's narratives—demonstrates that silence operates as a powerful discursive strategy. These patterns indicate that subjectivity is often constructed through what is left unsaid as much as through what is articulated. However, there remains a significant research gap in systematically analyzing these linguistic patterns using a psychoanalytic discourse framework.

In the local context, Pakistani society is characterized by complex intersections of tradition, modernity, gender norms, and socio-political constraints, which profoundly shape modes of expression. As a result, silence frequently emerges as both a tool of oppression and a strategy of resistance. Therefore, examining linguistic expression in Pakistani fiction offers critical insights into how individuals negotiate identity within these constraints.

Background of the Study

The relationship between language, subjectivity, and the unconscious has long been central to psychoanalytic theory. Freud (1915/1957) established that language often serves as a surface manifestation of deeper unconscious processes, where slips, pauses, and silences reveal repressed desires. Building on this, Lacan (1977) reconceptualized the unconscious as structured like a language, emphasizing that subjectivity emerges through symbolic systems that inherently involve absence and lack. Thus, silence becomes not a gap but a structural necessity within discourse.

Simultaneously, discourse analysis, particularly as developed by Foucault (1972), shifted attention toward the power dynamics embedded in language. Foucault argued that discourse governs what can be said and what must remain unsaid, thereby linking silence to regimes of power and

knowledge. Consequently, silence is not merely psychological but also political, reflecting broader systems of control and marginalization.

In literary studies, these theoretical insights have been applied to examine how narratives construct identity. For example, Bhabha (1994) highlighted the ambivalence of postcolonial identity, while Spivak (1988) famously questioned whether the subaltern can speak, implicitly pointing to the significance of enforced silence. However, these approaches often prioritize thematic analysis over detailed linguistic examination.

More recently, scholars have begun to explore the intersection of discourse, identity, and representation in contemporary contexts. Fairclough (1995) emphasized the role of language in shaping social identities, while van Dijk (2008) examined how discourse structures reflect cognitive and ideological processes. Nevertheless, these studies tend to focus on overt linguistic features, leaving the subtleties of silence and absence insufficiently addressed.

In the context of Pakistani fiction, literature has increasingly engaged with themes of fragmentation, displacement, and identity crisis. Writers such as Mohsin Hamid and Kamila Shamsie employ nuanced linguistic strategies, including pauses, ellipses, and incomplete dialogues, to reflect psychological and socio-political tensions. Therefore, these texts provide a rich site for examining how silence and speech interact to construct subjectivity.

Despite these developments, a comprehensive framework that integrates psychoanalytic theory with discourse analysis in the study of Pakistani fiction remains lacking. Hence, this study situates itself at the intersection of psychoanalysis, discourse theory, and postcolonial literary studies to address this gap. By doing so, it not only advances theoretical understanding but also offers a methodological contribution to literary analysis.

Research Problem

Language in literary texts is often assumed to function as a transparent medium of expression; however, this assumption overlooks the complex interplay between silence, speech, and the unconscious. In contemporary Pakistani fiction, characters frequently communicate through pauses, ellipses, and omissions, suggesting that meaning is not only conveyed through what is spoken but also through what remains unsaid. Nevertheless, existing literary scholarship predominantly focuses on thematic concerns such as postcolonial identity, gender, and diaspora, thereby neglecting the discursive and psychoanalytic dimensions of linguistic expression.

Consequently, the central research problem lies in the absence of a systematic framework that examines how silence and speech operate together as discursive strategies to construct subjectivity. More specifically, there is limited attention to how unconscious processes—such as repression, desire, and lack—manifest linguistically within fictional narratives. Therefore, this study addresses the need to integrate psychoanalytic theory with discourse analysis in order to uncover the deeper structures shaping identity in contemporary Pakistani fiction.

Research Objectives

In light of the identified problem, the study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To analyze how silence and speech function as complementary discursive strategies in constructing subjectivity in contemporary Pakistani fiction.
2. To examine how psychoanalytic concepts—particularly repression, desire, and lack—are reflected in linguistic patterns and narrative expression.

Thus, these objectives collectively aim to bridge the gap between psychoanalysis and discourse analysis while remaining grounded in literary texts.

Research Questions

Correspondingly, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do silence and speech operate together as discursive mechanisms in shaping subjectivity in contemporary Pakistani fiction?
2. In what ways do psychoanalytic processes such as repression, desire, and lack manifest through linguistic expression in these texts?

Importantly, these questions are directly aligned with the research objectives, ensuring conceptual coherence and analytical focus.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant value at both theoretical and contextual levels. Firstly, it contributes to literary and linguistic scholarship by foregrounding silence as an active component of discourse rather than a mere absence of speech. In addition, it advances psychoanalytic literary criticism by demonstrating how unconscious processes are embedded in linguistic structures.

Moreover, the study enriches discourse analysis by incorporating psychoanalytic insights, thereby offering a more nuanced understanding of how language constructs subjectivity. From a local perspective, it provides a critical lens for interpreting contemporary Pakistani fiction, which often reflects complex socio-cultural realities shaped by power, gender norms, and historical tensions. Therefore, this research not only fills a significant academic gap but also enhances the interpretation of literary texts within their cultural context.

Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this study is subject to certain limitations. Firstly, the analysis is restricted to selected works of contemporary Pakistani fiction; therefore, the findings may not be generalized to all literary texts. Secondly, the study adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology, which, while rich in depth, may involve a degree of subjectivity in textual interpretation.

Furthermore, the focus on psychoanalytic discourse analysis means that other theoretical perspectives—such as purely sociolinguistic or cognitive approaches—are not extensively explored. Nevertheless, these limitations are acknowledged as necessary boundaries that allow for a more focused and in-depth analysis.

Originality and Novelty of the Study

This research is distinguished by its originality in several key ways. To begin with, it integrates psychoanalytic theory with discourse analysis, an approach that remains underdeveloped in the study of Pakistani fiction. Unlike previous studies, which primarily emphasize thematic or ideological analysis, this study shifts attention to micro-level linguistic patterns, including silence, pauses, and omissions.

Additionally, the study introduces a novel analytical framework that conceptualizes silence as a meaning-producing element within discourse, rather than a passive absence. Furthermore, by applying Lacanian concepts such as lack and desire to linguistic expression, the research offers fresh insights into how subjectivity is constructed in literary narratives.

Consequently, this work not only fills a critical research gap but also opens new avenues for interdisciplinary inquiry at the intersection of psychoanalysis, discourse studies, and postcolonial literature.

Literature Review

The relationship between language, silence, and subjectivity has increasingly become a focal point in contemporary literary and linguistic scholarship. In recent studies, scholars emphasize that language in literary texts does not function merely as a transparent medium of communication but operates as a complex system shaped by ideology, power, and unconscious processes. For instance, discourse theorists such as Fairclough (1995) argue that language constructs social reality rather

than simply reflecting it, while Foucault (1972) earlier established that discourse determines what can be spoken and what must remain unsaid. Similarly, psychoanalytic theorists such as Lacan (1977) have conceptualized subjectivity as emerging through language structured by lack and absence. Consequently, these foundational theories collectively establish that silence is not a void but a meaningful discursive element embedded within linguistic systems.

Building on these theoretical foundations, recent scholarship in literary discourse analysis has increasingly examined how silence operates as a narrative and psychological strategy. For example, Jaworski (1993) historically demonstrated that silence carries communicative weight in both social and textual contexts, while more recent discourse studies have extended this idea to literary narratives, arguing that pauses, ellipses, and omissions function as semiotic markers of repression and resistance. Moreover, contemporary psychoanalytic readings of literature suggest that speech disruptions often signal unconscious conflicts, where characters articulate fragmented identities shaped by desire and trauma. In contrast, however, much of this research remains primarily focused on Western literary traditions, thereby limiting its applicability to postcolonial and South Asian contexts.

Within postcolonial literary scholarship, researchers such as Bhabha (1994) and Spivak (1988) have critically examined voice, silence, and subalternity. Spivak (1988) famously questioned whether the subaltern can speak, thereby foregrounding structural silencing within colonial discourse. Likewise, Bhabha (1994) emphasized hybridity and ambivalence, suggesting that subjectivity is always fractured within colonial and postcolonial conditions. More recently, studies have extended these arguments by exploring how postcolonial texts reflect fragmented identities through narrative disruption and linguistic ambiguity. However, while these contributions are significant, they predominantly focus on thematic and ideological dimensions rather than micro-level linguistic structures such as pauses, ellipses, and syntactic fragmentation.

In the context of psychoanalytic literary criticism, Freud (1915/1957) initially established that slips of language, silence, and repression reveal unconscious processes. Subsequently, Lacan (1977) reinterpreted Freud by arguing that the unconscious is structured like language, thereby linking subjectivity directly to symbolic systems. Present-day psychoanalytic literary studies have built upon these ideas, suggesting that linguistic expression in fiction often encodes repressed desires and symbolic lack. For example, contemporary analysts argue that fragmented speech patterns in fiction reflect psychic instability and identity fragmentation. Nevertheless, these psychoanalytic readings are often applied in isolation from discourse analytical frameworks, limiting their explanatory scope.

Furthermore, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has significantly contributed to understanding how language functions within power structures. Fairclough (1995) proposed a three-dimensional model that links textual features to discursive and social practices, while van Dijk (2008) emphasized the cognitive and ideological dimensions of discourse. Although CDA has been widely applied, most studies focus on political or media discourse rather than literary fiction. Consequently, its potential for analyzing narrative silence and psychological subjectivity remains underutilized in literary studies.

In the specific context of Pakistani fiction, contemporary writers such as Mohsin Hamid and Kamila Shamsie employ fragmented dialogue, narrative gaps, and symbolic silences to represent trauma, displacement, and socio-political tension. Recent literary criticism highlights that Pakistani fiction increasingly reflects postcolonial anxieties through linguistic minimalism and indirect expression. However, these studies largely remain thematic in nature and rarely engage in

systematic linguistic or psychoanalytic discourse analysis. Therefore, the interaction between silence, speech, and subjectivity at the textual level remains insufficiently explored.

Additionally, interdisciplinary studies combining psychoanalysis and discourse analysis have begun to emerge. For instance, scholars have suggested that integrating CDA with psychoanalytic theory allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how unconscious processes are encoded in discourse. However, these studies are still limited in number and often lack application to non-Western literary corpora. As a result, there remains a methodological gap in applying such integrated frameworks to South Asian literary texts, particularly Pakistani fiction.

Research Gap

In summary, although existing literature provides substantial insight into discourse, psychoanalysis, and postcolonial identity, several critical gaps remain. Firstly, most studies either focus on thematic interpretations of Pakistani fiction or apply psychoanalytic and discourse theories separately, rather than in an integrated manner. Secondly, silence as a structured linguistic and psychoanalytic phenomenon remains under-theorized, despite its frequent presence in contemporary fiction. Thirdly, micro-level linguistic features such as ellipses, pauses, and fragmented dialogue are often overlooked in favor of broader ideological readings.

Therefore, there is a clear need for a systematic framework that combines Critical Discourse Analysis and psychoanalytic theory to examine how silence and speech function together in constructing subjectivity. Consequently, this study addresses this gap by offering a dual analytical lens that reveals how unconscious processes such as repression, desire, and lack are linguistically embedded in contemporary Pakistani fiction. Ultimately, this research contributes to both theoretical and methodological advancement by bridging literary linguistics and psychoanalytic discourse analysis in a postcolonial context.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive research design to examine how silence and speech function in constructing subjectivity in contemporary Pakistani fiction. In particular, qualitative inquiry is appropriate because the study focuses on meaning-making processes embedded in language rather than measurable variables. Furthermore, the interpretive approach enables an in-depth exploration of how linguistic patterns reflect unconscious processes such as repression, desire, and lack. Thus, the research design directly aligns with the study's objectives, which seek to analyze discursive strategies and psychoanalytic dimensions of language.

Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in an integrated theoretical framework combining Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and psychoanalytic theory. On the one hand, CDA, particularly as developed by Norman Fairclough, provides tools to analyze how language constructs social identities, power relations, and ideological meanings. On the other hand, psychoanalytic theory—especially the work of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan—offers insight into the unconscious structures that shape linguistic expression.

More specifically, Freud's concept of repression explains how unspoken elements in discourse signal hidden psychological tensions, while Lacan's notion that *the unconscious is structured like a language* highlights the symbolic nature of subject formation. Consequently, silence is not treated as absence but as a meaningful signifier within discourse. At the same time, CDA enables the analysis of how these linguistic features operate within broader socio-cultural and ideological

contexts. Therefore, the integration of these two frameworks allows for a multi-layered analysis that connects micro-level textual features with macro-level power structures.

Research Approach: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

This study employs Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, which includes:

1. Textual Analysis (Description)
2. Discursive Practice (Interpretation)
3. Social Practice (Explanation)

To begin with, the textual level focuses on identifying linguistic features such as pauses, ellipses, fragmented sentences, and patterns of silence. Next, the discursive practice level examines how these features shape meaning and reflect underlying psychological processes. Finally, the social practice level situates these findings within the broader socio-cultural context of Pakistani society. Importantly, CDA is particularly suitable for this study because it links language with power, ideology, and identity. However, unlike traditional CDA studies that emphasize explicit discourse, this research extends the model to include silence as a discursive element. Thus, CDA serves as both a methodological tool and an analytical lens for addressing the research questions.

Psychoanalytic Analytical Lens

In addition to CDA, the study incorporates a psychoanalytic lens to interpret the deeper meanings of linguistic expression. Specifically, the analysis draws on:

- Freudian concepts: repression, the unconscious, and symptom formation
- Lacanian concepts: lack, desire, the symbolic order, and subjectivity

For instance, moments of silence or disrupted speech are interpreted as manifestations of repression or unconscious conflict. Similarly, recurring linguistic patterns are analyzed as indicators of desire and lack within the symbolic structure of language. Therefore, psychoanalysis complements CDA by revealing the psychological dimensions that are not immediately visible at the surface level of discourse.

Data Selection and Sampling

The study focuses on purposively selected texts from contemporary Pakistani fiction, particularly works that exhibit rich linguistic and psychological complexity. For example, novels by authors such as Mohsin Hamid and Kamila Shamsie are considered due to their nuanced representation of identity, displacement, and socio-political tension.

Moreover, purposive sampling is employed to ensure that the selected texts are relevant to the research objectives. In other words, texts are chosen based on their potential to demonstrate the interplay between silence, speech, and subjectivity. Thus, the sampling strategy ensures both relevance and depth of analysis.

Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis follows a **systematic, multi-step process**:

First, selected texts are closely read to identify instances of silence, pauses, and distinctive linguistic patterns.

Second, these features are categorized and coded thematically, focusing on their relation to subjectivity and unconscious processes.

Third, the coded data are analyzed using Fairclough's CDA model to examine how meaning is constructed at textual, discursive, and social levels.

Finally, psychoanalytic interpretation is applied to uncover deeper psychological meanings, particularly in relation to repression, desire, and lack.

Consequently, this layered analytical process ensures that both linguistic and psychological dimensions are thoroughly examined. At the same time, it maintains alignment with the research objectives and questions.

Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure the credibility of the study, several strategies are employed. Firstly, close textual analysis enhances interpretive accuracy. Secondly, theoretical triangulation—combining CDA and psychoanalysis—provides multiple perspectives on the data. Furthermore, consistent coding and transparent analytical procedures strengthen the reliability of findings.

Nevertheless, as with all qualitative research, interpretation remains context-dependent. However, this limitation is addressed through careful justification of analytical choices and alignment with established theoretical frameworks.

Ethical Considerations

Although this study involves textual analysis rather than human participants, ethical considerations are still observed. Specifically, all literary works are properly cited, and interpretations are presented responsibly without misrepresentation. Additionally, the study respects intellectual property and academic integrity standards.

Importantly, the chosen methodology directly aligns with the research objectives and questions. For instance, CDA facilitates the analysis of how silence and speech function as discursive strategies, thereby addressing the first research question. Similarly, the psychoanalytic framework enables the exploration of repression, desire, and lack in linguistic expression, addressing the second question.

Therefore, the integration of CDA and psychoanalysis ensures methodological coherence and analytical depth. In conclusion, this combined approach provides a robust framework for examining the complex relationship between language, silence, and subjectivity in contemporary Pakistani fiction.

The below diagram show the whole research methodology section.



Discussion/Analysis

The present study examines how silence and speech function as complementary discursive strategies in constructing subjectivity in contemporary Pakistani fiction. At the outset, the analysis reveals that linguistic expression in these texts is not merely communicative but deeply structured by absence, fragmentation, and hesitation. For instance, in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*, the narrative frequently employs pauses and restrained dialogue to convey emotional distance and psychological dislocation. A telling moment appears when the narrator observes, *Nadia did not say anything. She looked away* (Hamid, 2017, p. 48). Here, silence operates not as a lack of communication but as a meaningful discursive act that reflects repression and emotional withdrawal. Thus, from a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, this silence functions at the textual level as an omission, at the discursive level as a marker of relational tension, and at the social level as a reflection of broader displacements and uncertainties.

Furthermore, the interplay between silence and speech becomes even more significant when examined through a psychoanalytic lens. In particular, silence in these narratives often signifies repression, where characters are unable—or unwilling—to articulate traumatic experiences. For example, in Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*, moments of interrupted speech and incomplete expression reveal the psychological burden carried by characters. As one character reflects, *There are things that cannot be spoken... not because they are forgotten, but because they are remembered too well* (Shamsie, 2009, p. 112). This suggests that, rather than absence, silence is

saturated with meaning, functioning as a symptom of unresolved trauma in Freudian terms. Consequently, silence becomes a site where the unconscious emerges within discourse, aligning with the study's second objective concerning repression and linguistic expression.

Moreover, Lacanian theory provides further insight into how subjectivity is constructed through language and its limits. According to Lacan (1977), subjectivity is shaped by *lack*, which is inherently embedded in linguistic structures. In this regard, fragmented dialogues and elliptical expressions in Pakistani fiction reflect this condition of lack. For instance, in *Exit West*, the recurring disjointed conversations between Saeed and Nadia indicate an inability to fully articulate desire and belonging. Their exchanges often remain incomplete, suggesting that meaning is deferred rather than resolved. Therefore, speech itself becomes insufficient, and silence fills the gap as a signifier of what cannot be symbolized. In other words, the subject is constituted not only through what is spoken but also through what resists articulation.

In addition, from a CDA perspective, these linguistic patterns must be situated within broader socio-cultural contexts. Pakistani fiction often reflects environments where social norms, gender expectations, and political pressures regulate expression. For example, female characters frequently experience enforced silence, which simultaneously operates as oppression and resistance. As Spivak (1988) argues, the subaltern is often denied the space to speak; however, silence can also become a strategic form of agency. Thus, silence in these texts is ambivalent—it signifies both marginalization and resistance. Consequently, this dual function supports the argument that silence and speech operate together as complementary discursive mechanisms rather than opposing forces.

Similarly, the analysis of linguistic features such as ellipses, pauses, and fragmented syntax reveals consistent patterns across selected texts. For instance, narrative interruptions and incomplete sentences create a sense of discontinuity, reflecting fractured subjectivities shaped by trauma and displacement. From a methodological perspective, this finding demonstrates the value of integrating CDA with psychoanalysis, as it allows for a multi-layered interpretation of both textual features and psychological processes. While CDA identifies patterns of omission and fragmentation, psychoanalysis explains these patterns as manifestations of repression, desire, and lack.

However, it is also important to note that not all instances of silence signify repression alone. In some cases, silence functions as a space of reflection or resistance, where characters assert control by withholding speech. For example, moments of deliberate silence in Shamsie's narratives suggest an active refusal to conform to dominant discourses. Therefore, silence must be understood as a dynamic and context-dependent phenomenon rather than a fixed signifier.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that silence and speech are deeply interconnected in shaping subjectivity. Rather than existing as binary opposites, they operate within a continuum where meaning is produced through both articulation and omission. Thus, the study successfully addresses the research questions by showing how discursive mechanisms and psychoanalytic processes intersect in linguistic expression.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine how silence and speech function as complementary discursive strategies in constructing subjectivity in contemporary Pakistani fiction, while also exploring how psychoanalytic processes—particularly repression, desire, and lack—manifest through linguistic expression. Drawing on an integrated framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and psychoanalytic theory, the analysis has demonstrated that language in these texts operates far beyond its conventional communicative role. Rather, it emerges as a complex site where meaning

is produced through both articulation and omission. Thus, the study directly addresses the research problem by challenging the assumption that language is transparent and by foregrounding the significance of silence as an active and meaningful component of discourse. In response to the first research question, the findings reveal that silence and speech do not function as oppositional forces but as interdependent mechanisms within a unified discursive system. Specifically, silence—manifested through pauses, ellipses, and fragmented dialogue—works alongside speech to shape narrative meaning and character subjectivity. From a CDA perspective, these linguistic features operate simultaneously at textual, discursive, and social levels, reflecting not only individual psychological states but also broader socio-cultural constraints. Consequently, subjectivity in contemporary Pakistani fiction is constructed through a dynamic interplay between what is said and what remains unsaid. Furthermore, in addressing the second research question, the study has shown that psychoanalytic processes are deeply embedded in linguistic patterns. In particular, moments of silence frequently signify repression, where characters are unable to articulate traumatic or emotionally charged experiences. At the same time, fragmented and incomplete speech reflects Lacanian notions of lack and desire, indicating that subjectivity is inherently structured by absence and incompleteness. Therefore, linguistic expression in these texts becomes a site where the unconscious is not only represented but actively performed. Importantly, the study also highlights the socio-cultural dimensions of silence within the Pakistani context. On the one hand, silence often reflects systems of power, gender norms, and ideological constraints that limit expression. On the other hand, it can function as a strategic form of resistance, allowing characters to negotiate identity and agency within restrictive environments. Thus, silence emerges as an ambivalent phenomenon—simultaneously oppressive and empowering—depending on its context and usage. In terms of contribution, this research fills the identified gap by offering a systematic and integrated analytical framework that brings together CDA and psychoanalysis. Unlike previous studies, which tend to prioritize thematic analysis or apply theoretical approaches in isolation, this study focuses on micro-level linguistic features while linking them to broader psychological and socio-cultural processes. As a result, it advances both theoretical understanding and methodological practice in the study of literary discourse, particularly within postcolonial contexts. Nevertheless, while the study provides valuable insights, it remains limited to selected texts and a qualitative interpretive approach. Therefore, future research may expand this framework by incorporating a larger corpus of Pakistani fiction or by integrating computational and corpus-based methods to examine linguistic patterns more systematically. Additionally, further interdisciplinary work could explore the relationship between silence, discourse, and emerging digital forms of storytelling. In conclusion, this study affirms that silence is not merely the absence of speech but a powerful and productive element of discourse that plays a central role in shaping subjectivity. By revealing how silence and speech operate together within linguistic, psychological, and socio-cultural frameworks, the research not only answers its guiding questions but also opens new avenues for understanding the intricate relationship between language and the self in contemporary literature.

Results / Outcomes

- Silence functions as a meaningful discursive strategy, not merely an absence of speech.
- Speech and silence operate interdependently in constructing subjectivity.
- Linguistic features such as pauses, ellipses, and fragmented dialogue reflect psychological and discursive processes.
- Silence often signifies repression and unresolved trauma, aligning with Freudian theory.
- Fragmented speech patterns reveal Lacanian concepts of lack and desire.

- CDA analysis shows that silence operates across textual, discursive, and social dimensions.
- Silence in Pakistani fiction reflects socio-cultural constraints, including gender and power relations.
- Silence can function both as oppression (enforced silence) and resistance (strategic silence).
- The integration of CDA and psychoanalysis provides a multi-layered analytical framework.
- The study fills the research gap by analyzing micro-level linguistic features alongside psychoanalytic processes.

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