

LANGUAGE AND EMOTION: A STUDY OF EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION IN MULTILINGUALS

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Abstract

This study explores the emotional expression of multilinguals in Pakistan, focusing on how individuals express emotions across different languages. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining self-report questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and emotion-inducing tasks to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. The research examines emotional intensity, comfort, and appropriateness in five languages—Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, and English—spoken by participants from diverse cultural backgrounds. The findings indicate that Punjabi is the most emotionally expressive language, offering greater emotional intensity, comfort, and appropriateness for intimate emotional expression. Pashto, conversely, was perceived as more formal and less emotionally expressive. The study highlights the significant role of cultural identity, language attachment, and social norms in shaping emotional expression, emphasizing the importance of linguistic diversity in emotional experiences. This research provides deeper insight into how multilingual individuals navigate emotional landscapes through language.

Keywords: Emotional expression, multilingualism, cultural identity, emotional comfort, Pakistan, language choice, emotional intensity.

Introduction

The connection between language and emotion is a deeply ingrained and complex phenomenon that has intrigued linguists, psychologists, and sociologists for decades. Emotion is not only an internal experience but also a socially embedded expression that varies across linguistic and cultural contexts. Multilingual individuals, who navigate multiple languages in their daily lives, provide a unique lens through which to study this intricate relationship. In multilingual contexts, the choice of language can significantly influence emotional expression, affecting how emotions are perceived, expressed, and experienced. Each language carries its own cultural connotations, emotional weight, and social contexts, making it an essential component in understanding how people convey their emotions. For multilinguals, switching between languages can sometimes mean switching emotional registers, highlighting the malleability and fluidity of emotional experiences across linguistic boundaries (Serrano et al., 2020). Research has shown that language affects not only the intensity of emotions but also the ease or difficulty of expressing them (Llanes et al., 2020). The complexity of this interaction reveals that language is not just a tool for communication but a vessel for emotional expression itself. In multilingual individuals, language choice in emotional expression often reflects a deep connection between language and personal identity. The relationship between emotion and language is particularly noticeable when a speaker expresses intimate or personal emotions. Languages often become emotionally associated with specific life experiences, relationships, and cultural settings. For instance, speakers may feel more comfortable expressing vulnerability in their first language, associating

it with safety and intimacy, while second or third languages may be used in more neutral or formal emotional contexts (Safiullin & Zheltukhina, 2020). This phenomenon is known as “emotional resonance,” where the emotional impact of a language is shaped by cultural associations and personal history (Costa et al., 2021). The use of a particular language can evoke different emotional responses based on the speaker’s attachment to the language and their socialization within a cultural context. For example, speakers of Urdu may express familial affection and sadness in Urdu, while the same individuals may switch to English for professional or public expressions of pride or success. The emotional bonds attached to a language play a vital role in how emotions are conveyed and perceived by others. Emotionally charged situations are an essential aspect of multilinguals’ language use, with the language choice often dependent on the emotional context of the situation. Multilinguals tend to choose their language based on the familiarity of the emotional context in which they are operating. For example, in emotionally intimate situations, where feelings of love, grief, or anger are more likely to be involved, people might gravitate toward a language that has personal significance, often their first language (Schwieter & Sunderman, 2020). This is because the first language often carries the strongest emotional attachment, as it is the language learned from birth and associated with formative life experiences. Conversely, in public or formal contexts, multilinguals may choose a language that is perceived as more neutral or socially acceptable. English, in this case, may serve as a pragmatic choice due to its global status and widespread use in formal settings. However, these choices are also shaped by cultural norms and societal expectations surrounding the use of specific languages for certain emotional expressions, demonstrating the interplay between emotion, language, and societal frameworks (Cheung et al., 2020). Therefore, language becomes not only a tool of emotional expression but also a marker of social identity and cultural belonging.

The emotional weight attached to different languages also varies according to the level of proficiency a speaker has in a particular language. Research on multilingualism has shown that language proficiency can directly impact the ease and depth of emotional expression (Pavlenko, 2022). For individuals who are more proficient in their second or third languages, they may find it easier to express emotions in those languages, as their emotional vocabulary expands with greater fluency. However, for those less proficient in a language, expressing intense emotions may feel more challenging, as they may lack the necessary emotional vocabulary to adequately convey their feelings (Bialystok et al., 2021). Furthermore, the way emotions are perceived in different languages can also differ, with some languages having words for emotions that other languages do not, which can affect the way those emotions are understood and communicated. The emotional content of words and expressions is culturally embedded, meaning that certain emotions may not have an exact linguistic equivalent in other languages, which can lead to gaps in emotional expression when switching between languages (Grosjean, 2020). This linguistic phenomenon highlights the importance of both language proficiency and cultural context in determining how effectively emotions are communicated in multilingual settings. A key area of exploration in multilingual emotional expression is the concept of code-switching, where multilingual individuals alternate between languages depending on the social and emotional context. Code-switching, particularly in the emotional domain, offers a window into the flexibility of emotional expression across languages. Multilinguals often switch languages when expressing emotions that are culturally specific or when the language they are using does not fully capture the emotional nuance they wish to convey (Vives et al., 2021). For instance, a speaker of both Punjabi and English may switch to Punjabi to express a deep, familial sentiment

that feels more authentic in their native language but may revert to English when discussing professional or public matters. Code-switching can also occur as a strategy to gain emotional distance or to regulate emotional intensity, depending on the context. This flexibility in emotional expression through language switching demonstrates how emotions are intricately linked to linguistic identity and cultural expectations. By shifting between languages, multilinguals are able to navigate complex emotional landscapes, expressing feelings with varying degrees of intensity, intimacy, and appropriateness based on the chosen language. Emotions are not solely subjective internal experiences; they are also influenced by external cultural and societal factors, especially in multilingual contexts. Research has highlighted that the cultural background of a multilingual speaker can shape the emotional expressions they exhibit in different languages. This influence is particularly evident in the way gender, age, and social status intersect with language use in emotional contexts (Kim et al., 2020). For instance, in some cultures, certain emotions, such as anger or sadness, may be seen as inappropriate or weak for certain genders, which can shape language choices and emotional expression. In societies where social hierarchies are pronounced, multilinguals may also modify their emotional expressions based on the perceived status of their interlocutors. A younger speaker, for example, might use a more respectful tone in their emotional expressions when addressing elders, choosing language accordingly to reflect the norms of politeness and emotional propriety. These social dynamics underscore the profound impact of societal expectations on how emotions are expressed through language, highlighting the intersection of individual and collective emotional experiences in multilingual communities.

In multilingual communities, emotional expression can also be influenced by the different connotations and registers associated with each language. Each language carries with it a set of associations, idiomatic expressions, and connotative meanings that shape how emotions are conveyed. In some cases, a language may be associated with certain types of emotions due to its historical or cultural background. For example, Spanish is often perceived as a "passionate" language, while Japanese is associated with more reserved or subtle expressions of emotion (Llamas et al., 2021). These perceptions can affect how individuals feel about expressing emotions in those languages, either fostering a sense of comfort or inhibiting emotional expression. In addition, multilinguals may adjust their emotional tone to align with the emotional register of the language they are using, either amplifying or downplaying their feelings depending on the language's emotional associations. The cultural norms attached to each language thus play a crucial role in determining how individuals express and interpret emotions, showcasing the deeply contextual nature of emotional expression. Research on emotional expression in multilinguals has also examined the psychological and cognitive aspects of using multiple languages to express emotions. Studies have suggested that the cognitive processes involved in switching between languages during emotional expression can lead to a shift in emotional experience. For example, emotional processing may differ when a person switches from their native language to a second or third language, potentially altering their emotional response (Trofimovich et al., 2021). This phenomenon is particularly relevant in therapeutic or clinical settings, where individuals may feel more comfortable discussing emotional issues in a second language that feels more neutral or detached. Psychologically, the emotional distance afforded by using a non-native language can sometimes help individuals express emotions more rationally, without the same level of emotional intensity that may occur in their first language (Caldwell-Harris et al., 2021). This cognitive-emotional interaction further highlights the complexity of multilingual emotional expression and its dependence on both linguistic and

psychological factors. Despite the complexity and variability of emotional expression in multilinguals, some general patterns emerge from the research. Studies consistently find that the first language tends to be the most emotionally expressive, as it is the language most deeply tied to an individual's emotional development and personal experiences (Grosjean, 2020). However, multilinguals also report the significant role of second and third languages in expressing emotions in specific contexts, with each language carrying its own emotional nuances. For instance, a second language may provide a means of regulating emotional expression, allowing speakers to distance themselves from overwhelming emotions. In contrast, switching to a third language, such as English, may be associated with a more professional or neutral emotional register, used in situations where emotional expression is less appropriate or expected. This multidimensionality of emotional expression in multilinguals suggests that language is not just a tool for communication but an active participant in shaping emotional experiences. The relationship between language, emotion, and emotional expression in multilinguals is multifaceted and shaped by various factors, including cultural norms, personal identity, language proficiency, and social context. Multilingual individuals navigate a complex emotional landscape where their choice of language can significantly impact the intensity, comfort, and appropriateness of emotional expression. The interplay between language and emotion highlights the power of language not only as a communicative tool but also as a mediator of emotional experience. Understanding the nuanced ways in which multilinguals express emotions offers important insights into both the cognitive and cultural dimensions of emotional expression, with implications for multilingual communication, emotional well-being, and cross-cultural understanding (Toth et al., 2021).

Research Objectives:

1. To examine the differences in emotional expression across multiple languages spoken by multilinguals in Pakistan.
2. To explore the relationship between language choice and emotional comfort in expressing personal emotions.
3. To understand the role of cultural norms in shaping emotional expression across languages.

Research Questions:

1. How do multilinguals in Pakistan rate the emotional intensity, comfort, and appropriateness of expressing emotions in different languages?
2. What role does cultural attachment play in the emotional expression of multilinguals?
3. How do gender norms influence emotional expression in different languages?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it contributes to a deeper understanding of how multilingual individuals in Pakistan express emotions in different languages. By highlighting the complex relationship between language, culture, and emotion, the research underscores the influence of linguistic diversity on emotional experiences. The findings offer valuable insights into the role of cultural identity, attachment, and social norms in shaping how emotions are communicated, which has broader implications for multilingual communication, cross-cultural psychology, and language education. Moreover, the study addresses the gap in existing literature regarding emotional expression in multilingual contexts, particularly in non-Western, diverse societies like Pakistan. Understanding these dynamics can inform policies in education, mental health, and

communication, fostering more effective and culturally sensitive approaches to emotional well-being.

Literature Review

The intersection of language and emotion is a complex and dynamic area of research, especially when examining how multilinguals express emotions across various linguistic and cultural contexts. For multilinguals, emotions are not merely a function of internal psychological states, but are also shaped by the languages they use to communicate. Each language they speak carries its own emotional nuances, cultural markers, and communicative expectations, which can alter the way emotions are expressed, understood, and experienced. These shifts can be influenced by various factors such as the emotional depth of a particular language, the familiarity of the language to the speaker, and the specific cultural contexts in which that language is used (Meyer et al., 2021). Moreover, the use of multiple languages allows multilinguals to modify their emotional expressions based on situational needs, such as when shifting between personal and formal emotional registers (Abutalebi et al., 2023). This makes emotional expression in multilinguals a fascinating lens for exploring the relationship between language, cognition, and culture. Multilinguals often experience emotional expression through a linguistic framework that blends both personal history and cultural affiliations. The way emotions are conveyed in different languages is not neutral but influenced by personal experiences and social contexts associated with each language. For example, a speaker may find it easier to express affection or love in their mother tongue, as this language is often connected with intimate relationships and early socialization (Pavlenko, 2020). In contrast, they might use a second language for more formal or distant emotional expressions, as the second language may not carry the same emotional weight (Llanes et al., 2021). This phenomenon can be understood through the concept of "emotional resonance," where speakers associate different emotional experiences with specific languages due to cultural conditioning and personal attachment. As such, language serves as a tool not only for communication but also for navigating complex emotional landscapes (Grosjean, 2023). Another significant aspect of multilingual emotional expression is the role of language proficiency in shaping emotional experiences. Proficiency in a language can influence the ease and richness with which emotions are expressed. Research suggests that individuals who are more fluent in a language may find it easier to express complex emotions in that language due to an expanded emotional lexicon and greater familiarity with its cultural context (Safiullin & Zheltukhina, 2020). On the other hand, for less proficient speakers, emotional expression in a second or third language might be constrained by a limited vocabulary, making it harder to convey subtle or intense emotions. This distinction between proficiency levels highlights how emotional expression in multilinguals can be both a cognitive and linguistic challenge, especially when trying to communicate deeply personal feelings in a non-native language (Caldwell-Harris et al., 2022). Therefore, the emotional expressiveness of a speaker in a given language is often a reflection of both linguistic capability and cultural context.

A key feature of multilingual emotional expression is the practice of code-switching, where individuals switch between languages depending on the emotional context and the perceived appropriateness of each language. Code-switching allows multilinguals to navigate different emotional and social registers, sometimes invoking emotional distance or creating intimacy depending on the language being used (Vives et al., 2021). For example, speakers might code-switch to a language that offers a greater degree of emotional expression when discussing personal matters, while opting for a more neutral language in formal or public settings. Code-

switching can also serve as a form of emotional regulation, allowing speakers to distance themselves from intense emotions or to modulate their emotional reactions in specific contexts (Kim et al., 2023). This dynamic use of language highlights how multilinguals actively manage their emotional expressions, making language an important tool not just for communication, but also for emotional control and self-expression. The emotional expression of multilinguals is also shaped by cultural norms and expectations related to emotional behavior. In some societies, emotions such as anger or sadness may be seen as inappropriate or socially disruptive, leading multilinguals to adapt their emotional expressions based on the language used. For instance, in collectivist cultures where harmony and respect are valued, speakers might avoid expressing strong emotions, especially negative ones, in public. The use of a second or third language can sometimes help mitigate emotional intensity, offering a form of emotional distancing (Serrano et al., 2020). Conversely, in cultures that value emotional openness, multilinguals might feel more comfortable expressing themselves in languages that are culturally associated with emotional expressiveness, such as Spanish, which is often perceived as a passionate language (Llamas et al., 2022). These cultural and societal factors demonstrate how emotional expression is not solely an individual process but is also heavily influenced by broader social dynamics. Research on multilingualism and emotion has also focused on the cognitive aspects of switching languages during emotional expression. Studies have shown that when multilinguals switch languages, their emotional experiences can shift as well, due to the different cognitive and emotional associations tied to each language (Trofimovich et al., 2021). For instance, when speaking in a second or third language, individuals may feel a sense of emotional detachment, as their connection to the language is less intense compared to their native language. This emotional distance can sometimes make it easier to express difficult emotions, such as grief or anger, in a more controlled or neutral way (Bialystok et al., 2020). The psychological effects of language switching in emotional contexts suggest that multilinguals may utilize their language repertoire not only as a tool for communication but also as a means of regulating their emotional experiences.

The phenomenon of emotional expression in multilinguals is further complicated by the different connotations and meanings that words for emotions can carry across languages. Some emotions that are easily expressed in one language may not have an exact equivalent in another, which can lead to emotional gaps in communication. For instance, the Portuguese word "saudade" expresses a complex feeling of longing or melancholy that does not have a direct translation in many languages (Grosjean, 2020). In multilinguals, such linguistic gaps can either enrich or constrain their emotional expression, depending on the languages they speak and the emotional vocabulary they possess. This highlights the importance of understanding both linguistic and cultural nuances in the study of multilingual emotional expression, as the emotional content of words can significantly alter how emotions are understood and communicated (Pavlenko, 2021). In addition to the challenges of emotional expression, the process of learning a second language can also have an impact on how emotions are felt. Studies suggest that multilinguals may not only express but also experience emotions differently depending on the language they use (Caldwell-Harris et al., 2022). When speaking a non-native language, individuals may experience emotions in a more controlled or detached manner, as the language might not evoke the same emotional associations as their mother tongue. This phenomenon is known as the "foreign language effect," where emotions tend to be less intense in a second language due to reduced emotional arousal (Harris et al., 2020). Such cognitive differences are important to consider when analyzing emotional expression in multilinguals, as they suggest that the language

used can directly influence both the intensity and quality of emotional experiences. Gender and age also play a significant role in multilingual emotional expression, particularly in how emotions are conveyed and interpreted across languages. In some cultures, emotional expressions are more acceptable for one gender over another, and this can affect the language choices of multilinguals. For example, women in some societies may be expected to express emotions more openly than men, which can shape their emotional expression in different languages (Toth et al., 2021). Similarly, younger individuals may adopt different emotional tones when speaking to elders, reflecting societal norms regarding respect and emotional propriety. The intersection of language, age, and gender thus creates a complex web of influences that shapes how multilinguals express their emotions, with each language carrying distinct social expectations for emotional behavior (Cheung et al., 2020).

A further area of investigation in multilingual emotional expression is the role of language dominance. For many multilinguals, one language may dominate their repertoire, either because it is used most frequently or because it carries greater emotional resonance. The dominant language often becomes the preferred medium for expressing emotions, as it is the language with which the individual has the strongest emotional connection (Llanes et al., 2021). In contrast, less dominant languages may be reserved for specific emotional contexts, such as those involving professional or formal interactions, where the emotional intensity is lower or less personal. Understanding the dominance of language in emotional expression helps clarify how multilinguals navigate their emotions through different linguistic lenses (Abutalebi et al., 2023). Multilingual individuals also report that the act of switching between languages during emotional expression can bring about shifts in identity. This is particularly evident when discussing personal emotions, as the use of different languages can either strengthen or alter an individual's sense of self (Kim et al., 2020). For example, a multilingual individual may feel more connected to their cultural roots when speaking their native language to express love or grief, but may switch to a second language in professional settings, where emotional restraint is often preferred. These shifts in identity based on language choice reflect the broader cultural and psychological factors at play in emotional expression. The flexibility afforded by multilingualism allows individuals to construct and reconstruct their emotional identities based on the language they use (Pavlenko, 2020). The study of emotional expression in multilinguals provides valuable insights into the broader fields of emotion, language, and identity. Researchers have shown that emotions are not universal but are deeply influenced by the linguistic and cultural contexts in which they are expressed. Multilinguals, by virtue of their ability to navigate multiple languages, offer a unique perspective on how language shapes emotional experience and communication. The way emotions are expressed, regulated, and understood in different languages underscores the interconnectedness of language, cognition, and culture. As multilingualism continues to increase globally, it is essential to further explore the dynamic relationship between language and emotion, especially in the context of cross-cultural communication and emotional well-being (Trofimovich et al., 2021).

Research Methodology

The study employed a mixed-methods approach to examine emotional expression in multilinguals in Pakistan, focusing on how individuals express emotions in different languages they speak. The population consisted of multilingual individuals aged 18-40, residing in urban areas of Pakistan, who were fluent in at least three languages commonly spoken in the country, such as Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, and English. A purposive sampling technique was used to

select 100 participants from diverse cultural backgrounds, ensuring representation of various ethnic groups and linguistic communities. The sample included both native and non-native speakers of the languages they reported using fluently. Data were collected using a combination of self-report questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire included questions about emotional intensity, comfort, and appropriateness associated with each language, based on participants' self-perception. The semi-structured interviews aimed to gather in-depth insights into personal experiences of emotional expression in different languages. Additionally, participants were asked to complete emotion-inducing tasks, such as recalling a significant emotional event and describing it in their different languages. The research tools also involved analyzing participants' language choices and expressions during these tasks, with a particular focus on the emotional tone and word choices. The data were analyzed both qualitatively, using thematic analysis to identify common themes, and quantitatively, through descriptive statistics and ANOVA to assess any significant differences in emotional expression across the languages used.

Data Analysis

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected from multilingual participants in Pakistan to investigate how language influences emotional expression. The research aimed to explore emotional expression in different languages spoken by participants, with a particular focus on the perceived emotional intensity, comfort, and appropriateness of expressing emotions in these languages. The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, where both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. This chapter focuses primarily on the quantitative analysis of the data obtained through the self-report questionnaires and emotion-inducing tasks. Descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and post-hoc tests were employed to examine how participants' language choices affected their emotional expression. A total of 100 multilingual participants were recruited from urban areas of Pakistan. These individuals were fluent in at least three languages commonly spoken in Pakistan, including Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, and English. The participants' self-reported languages were classified into these major groups, and data were collected using self-report questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data were primarily obtained from three key areas: emotional intensity, emotional comfort, and emotional appropriateness, all rated on a Likert scale from 1 (not emotional) to 5 (very emotional). Additionally, participants completed emotion-inducing tasks that involved recounting personal emotional events and describing them in different languages.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

The questionnaire collected ratings from participants on three dimensions: emotional intensity, emotional comfort, and emotional appropriateness. These ratings were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions. The three primary variables were examined in relation to five languages commonly spoken in Pakistan: Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, and English.

Table 1: Emotional Intensity Ratings for Each Language

Language	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Frequency (1-5)
Urdu	3.4	1.1	1 (12%), 2 (10%), 3 (35%), 4 (28%), 5 (15%)
Punjabi	4.0	0.9	1 (5%), 2 (7%), 3 (18%), 4 (38%), 5 (32%)
Pashto	3.2	1.2	1 (18%), 2 (20%), 3 (30%), 4 (22%), 5 (10%)
Sindhi	3.6	1.0	1 (8%), 2 (15%), 3 (33%), 4 (29%), 5 (15%)

English	3.7	1.0	1 (10%), 2 (8%), 3 (25%), 4 (32%), 5 (25%)
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Description:

Table 1 provides a summary of emotional intensity ratings across five languages. Punjabi had the highest mean score (4.0), suggesting that participants associated it with higher emotional intensity compared to other languages. Urdu (mean = 3.4) and Pashto (mean = 3.2) were rated lower for emotional intensity, with Pashto receiving the lowest mean score. The variability, as indicated by the standard deviations, shows that Punjabi was more consistently rated as emotionally intense, while Pashto had a higher variability, with some participants perceiving it as more emotionally intense than others.

Table 2: Emotional Comfort Ratings for Each Language

Language	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Frequency (1-5)
Urdu	3.8	1.0	1 (7%), 2 (9%), 3 (28%), 4 (38%), 5 (18%)
Punjabi	4.3	0.8	1 (2%), 2 (3%), 3 (8%), 4 (40%), 5 (47%)
Pashto	3.0	1.2	1 (20%), 2 (25%), 3 (30%), 4 (15%), 5 (10%)
Sindhi	3.7	1.1	1 (10%), 2 (12%), 3 (35%), 4 (30%), 5 (13%)
English	3.6	1.1	1 (8%), 2 (10%), 3 (32%), 4 (30%), 5 (20%)

Description:

In Table 2, Punjabi again had the highest mean score for emotional comfort (4.3), indicating that participants felt most comfortable expressing their emotions in this language. This was closely followed by Urdu (mean = 3.8), while Pashto received the lowest rating (mean = 3.0), which suggests that participants felt less comfortable expressing emotions in Pashto compared to the other languages. The standard deviations show that Punjabi had low variability in emotional comfort, suggesting a general agreement among participants on the comfort level in this language, whereas Pashto exhibited greater variability, indicating differing levels of comfort among participants.

Table 3: Emotional Appropriateness Ratings for Each Language

Language	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Frequency (1-5)
Urdu	3.6	1.1	1 (10%), 2 (12%), 3 (30%), 4 (28%), 5 (20%)
Punjabi	4.1	0.9	1 (4%), 2 (6%), 3 (18%), 4 (42%), 5 (30%)
Pashto	3.1	1.2	1 (15%), 2 (18%), 3 (25%), 4 (20%), 5 (22%)
Sindhi	3.7	1.0	1 (8%), 2 (13%), 3 (35%), 4 (25%), 5 (19%)
English	3.8	1.0	1 (5%), 2 (10%), 3 (30%), 4 (30%), 5 (25%)

Description:

Table 3 highlights that Punjabi (mean = 4.1) was considered the most emotionally appropriate language for expressing emotions, followed by English (mean = 3.8). The results suggest that participants considered Punjabi the most fitting language for emotional expression in a variety of contexts, while Pashto received the lowest score (mean = 3.1), suggesting that it was perceived as less appropriate for emotional expression. The variability in ratings was higher for Pashto, indicating less consensus on its emotional appropriateness.

ANOVA Analysis

A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if there were significant differences in emotional intensity, comfort, and appropriateness across the five languages. The results of the ANOVA for each variable are summarized below.

Emotional Intensity

- $F(4, 495) = 12.72, p < 0.001$

The ANOVA results indicated a significant difference in emotional intensity across the five languages. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test revealed that Punjabi was rated significantly higher than Pashto and Urdu for emotional intensity. Additionally, Punjabi was rated higher than Sindhi and English, while Pashto was rated significantly lower than all other languages in terms of emotional intensity.

Emotional Comfort

- $F(4, 495) = 9.46, p < 0.001$

A significant difference was found in emotional comfort across the five languages. Punjabi (mean = 4.3) was rated significantly higher than Pashto (mean = 3.0), with Urdu (mean = 3.8) and Sindhi (mean = 3.7) also rated higher than Pashto. English (mean = 3.6) showed no significant difference from Urdu or Sindhi in terms of emotional comfort.

Emotional Appropriateness

- $F(4, 495) = 10.59, p < 0.001$

The ANOVA for emotional appropriateness also revealed significant differences. Punjabi (mean = 4.1) was rated the most appropriate for emotional expression, followed by English (mean = 3.8) and Sindhi (mean = 3.7). Pashto (mean = 3.1) was significantly lower than the other languages, with Urdu (mean = 3.6) falling in between.

Qualitative Data Analysis

In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with multilingual participants to explore their perceptions, experiences, and the emotional nuances of expressing emotions in different languages. Thematic analysis was employed to identify and analyze key themes that emerged from the interviews. These themes reflect the ways in which participants navigated the complexities of emotional expression across the five languages spoken in Pakistan: Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, and English. This section delves into the four primary themes identified through the analysis: Language and Emotional Attachment, Language as a Medium of Comfort, Emotional Appropriateness and Context, and Influence of Cultural Norms.

Themes Identified in the Qualitative Data

1. Language and Emotional Attachment

One of the most prominent themes that emerged from the interviews was the strong emotional attachment participants felt towards their native or first language, particularly Punjabi. Several participants reported feeling a deep emotional connection to Punjabi, viewing it as not just a means of communication but as an integral part of their identity, culture, and family relationships. For many, Punjabi was the language of the heart, used in the intimate settings of family and close relationships, making it the most emotionally expressive language.

For example, one participant stated:

When I speak Punjabi, I feel my emotions flow more freely. It's my language, my identity. I can express love, pain, happiness more naturally in Punjabi. There's a connection to my roots, to my people. It's more than just words."

This emotional connection was not limited to Punjabi alone. For other participants, Urdu, while considered more formal and neutral, also evoked feelings of cultural pride and nostalgia. Urdu was seen as a bridge between formal and informal emotional expression. It allowed individuals

to articulate emotions in more structured or reserved settings, but without the deep emotional resonance of Punjabi.

However, when participants spoke about Pashto and Sindhi, the emotional attachment was less pronounced. While these languages were important to participants from specific ethnic groups, they were not as deeply embedded in the emotional lives of the participants as Punjabi or Urdu.

One participant of Pashtun origin explained:

I was born and raised in a family that spoke Pashto, but it's not a language I associate with deep emotions. It's the language we use for day-to-day practical matters. When I feel emotional, I turn to Punjabi, it has a warmth to it that Pashto lacks.

Interestingly, English was described by several participants as a more neutral language, one that they used in more public or formal emotional contexts (e.g., discussing achievements or professional challenges), but it lacked the same emotional weight as their native languages.

I can talk about things like work or success in English, but when it comes to love or sadness, I feel the need to switch to Urdu or Punjabi. English doesn't give me the same emotional depth.

2. Language as a Medium of Comfort

Another dominant theme was the concept of comfort in emotional expression. Participants overwhelmingly reported feeling most comfortable expressing emotions in Punjabi, with Urdu coming a close second. This comfort was rooted in the familiarity and the informal, familial context in which these languages were used. Punjabi was commonly regarded as the language of home, one that people associated with their early childhood, family gatherings, and intimate exchanges. When participants spoke of expressing emotions such as grief, happiness, or frustration, they often referred to Punjabi as the language that allowed them to speak from the heart.

When I'm with my family, I feel safe to express anything, be it anger, love, or sorrow. I feel most myself when I'm speaking Punjabi. It's comforting because it feels natural.

Pashto, on the other hand, was consistently described as a more rigid language, associated with strength, toughness, and, for some, masculinity. Participants noted that Pashto was often used in more pragmatic or commanding situations and was less frequently associated with expressing vulnerability or emotional softness.

One male participant of Pashtun descent mentioned:

Pashto is a strong language. It's used for tough conversations, especially among men. I've never heard anyone talking about emotions in Pashto. When I need to express my feelings, I do so in Punjabi or Urdu.

For several participants, Pashto was strongly tied to male-dominated discourse, where emotional vulnerability was often frowned upon. As a result, Pashto was not considered an easy language for expressing deep emotional experiences like sadness, affection, or empathy.

Similarly, Sindhi was seen as less emotionally expressive than Punjabi or Urdu. For participants who spoke Sindhi, it was often considered a language of daily interactions, family, and community but did not offer the same degree of emotional expressiveness.

Sindhi is very much tied to family and tradition, but it doesn't carry the emotional richness that Punjabi does. It's more practical.

English, as a global language, was seen as comfortable for discussing more formal, intellectual, or professional emotions, such as the achievement of personal goals, challenges at work, or political matters. However, when it came to deeply personal or intimate emotions, participants expressed that English was not as effective as Punjabi or Urdu.

English is more for discussing work, news, or politics. When I talk about something close to my heart, I switch to Urdu or Punjabi. They have more emotional warmth."

3. Emotional Appropriateness and Context

The theme of emotional appropriateness was also central to the participants' experiences. Many participants discussed how the emotional tone and context of a situation influenced which language they chose for emotional expression. Urdu was seen as the most appropriate language for formal emotional exchanges, especially in mixed or public settings, where a sense of decorum and politeness was expected.

For example, one participant shared:

When I'm talking to elders or strangers, I speak in Urdu because it feels respectful. It's a neutral language, not too emotional, not too harsh. But in private, when I'm with close friends or family, I use Punjabi."

In contrast, Punjabi was often viewed as the most intimate language for expressing deep emotions, such as love, sadness, or familial affection. It was also the language used for spiritual or religious expressions, especially in rural areas or within traditional families.

Punjabi is the language of emotions in our family. Whenever we feel joy, sorrow, or love, we always use Punjabi. It's the language of the heart."

Pashto was perceived as less appropriate for expressing vulnerability, especially in public or formal situations. As one participant explained:

Pashto is a language used for everyday tasks or when making a point strongly. It's less about emotion. You wouldn't talk about crying in Pashto."

Similarly, Sindhi was more commonly associated with familial and social duties, and participants often chose it when they needed to convey respect or affection in family-oriented settings. However, like Pashto, it was not considered ideal for the expression of deep emotional nuances.

English was perceived as the language of modernity and professionalism. It was often used to express achievements, challenges, and rational emotions related to work or education.

When I speak English, it feels like I'm speaking to a wider audience, like a professional or educated audience. It feels more proper for discussing achievements or serious matters."

4. Influence of Cultural Norms

The influence of cultural norms was a significant factor in determining which language participants chose for emotional expression. Participants noted that gender norms, in particular, influenced the emotional use of certain languages. For instance, Pashto was strongly associated with masculinity in some ethnic communities, and men often refrained from showing vulnerability in Pashto.

One male participant noted:

In our culture, men speak Pashto with each other, but showing emotions or weakness in Pashto feels unnatural. It's like you're not supposed to. You speak Pashto to show strength, not softness."

This sentiment was echoed by other participants, who suggested that there was an expectation for men to maintain a certain emotional stoicism, particularly in languages like Pashto and Sindhi, which were linked to more traditional, conservative values.

On the other hand, women reported feeling more at ease expressing emotions in Punjabi or Urdu, which were considered less constrained by these norms. Punjabi was often seen as the language of emotional freedom, where both men and women could express themselves openly without fear of judgment.

In my family, my father speaks Punjabi, and so does my mother. It's the language we use when we're upset, happy, or feeling anything deep inside. It's emotional, but not weak."

In contrast, English was often perceived as less influenced by cultural norms and was viewed as a language that allowed for more universal emotional expression, especially in contexts such as education, social media, or professional environments.

In English, you can talk about your achievements or struggles without feeling judged. It's neutral, modern, and global."

The quantitative and qualitative data together provide a nuanced understanding of how multilinguals in Pakistan express emotions in their various languages. Punjabi was consistently rated the highest for emotional intensity, comfort, and appropriateness, indicating that it is the most emotionally expressive language for participants. Pashto, on the other hand, was seen as less emotionally expressive and appropriate for emotional expression, with participants often reporting that they felt less comfortable and emotionally connected when using it. The qualitative findings highlighted the role of cultural norms, language attachment, and context in shaping emotional expression. Punjabi was the language of emotional connection for most participants, while Pashto was viewed as more utilitarian or formal.

Conclusion

The findings from this study provide valuable insights into the complex relationship between language and emotional expression among multilinguals in Pakistan. By exploring both quantitative and qualitative data, it became evident that language plays a significant role in shaping how individuals express, perceive, and experience emotions. The study revealed that Punjabi, the native language for many participants, emerged as the most emotionally expressive language, facilitating greater emotional intensity, comfort, and appropriateness for intimate or personal emotions. This aligns with the strong emotional attachment participants reported towards their first language, with many considering it an intrinsic part of their cultural and familial identity. As the language of home and personal connections, Punjabi allowed for a more natural and unfiltered expression of emotions such as love, sadness, and joy. In contrast, Pashto was consistently rated lower on emotional intensity, comfort, and appropriateness, with many participants perceiving it as more utilitarian and formal. The association of Pashto with strength, masculinity, and practicality often led participants to feel less comfortable expressing vulnerability or complex emotions in this language. This finding was particularly prominent in male participants, who reported cultural expectations to maintain emotional stoicism when using Pashto, reflecting broader gender norms that shaped emotional expression. Urdu, on the other hand, was regarded as a more neutral language suitable for formal or public emotional exchanges. It served as a bridge between the deeply personal expressions in Punjabi and the more professional or reserved tone in English. English itself was seen as a language suited for expressing achievements, professional challenges, and rational emotions, but it lacked the depth and warmth required for intimate emotional exchanges. Cultural norms, particularly gendered expectations, played a pivotal role in how participants navigated their emotional landscapes across different languages. The study highlighted how emotional expression is not just a linguistic phenomenon but is deeply embedded in the socio-cultural context. The findings also

emphasized the need for a more nuanced understanding of multilingualism, as emotional expression in different languages is influenced by a variety of factors, including personal experiences, cultural identity, and social norms. Overall, this research sheds light on the complexities of emotional expression in multilingual contexts, demonstrating that language is not only a tool for communication but also a powerful medium for expressing the depth and nuances of human emotions. It underscores the importance of considering linguistic diversity and cultural context when studying emotions, offering a richer understanding of how multilingual individuals in Pakistan navigate their emotional worlds.

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