THE EXPRESSION OF EMOTIONS IN SPEECH: AGE AND GENDER PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract. People express emotions in different ways, even when they experience similar situations. Some communicate their feelings openly, while others rely on indirect remarks, changes in tone, or carefully chosen words. These differences are influenced by linguistic experience, social expectations, cultural background, and the circumstances in which communication takes place. This article examines emotional expression in speech from the perspectives of age and gender, with particular attention to vocabulary, intonation, directness, and pragmatic choices. Drawing on research in linguistics, psychology, and interpersonal communication, the study considers how emotional expression develops across the lifespan and how gender-related expectations may influence the ways feelings are communicated and interpreted.

Keywords: emotional expression, speech, age, gender, sociolinguistics, emotional vocabulary, prosody, interpersonal communication.

Introduction. Emotions are an inseparable part of everyday communication. People express pleasure when something goes well, disappointment when expectations are not met, concern when someone faces difficulties, and frustration when communication breaks down. Yet these feelings do not always appear in speech in the same way. One person may say, *"I am really upset about what happened,"* while another may simply remark, *"I did not expect that from you."* Both statements can communicate disappointment, but they differ in directness, emphasis, and the amount of emotional information they make explicit.

Such differences make emotional speech an important subject for linguistic research. The way people express feelings depends not only on the emotions they experience but also on the words available to them, their relationship with the listener, and their understanding of what is appropriate in a particular situation. Intonation, rhythm, pauses, repetition, and voice quality may further influence how an utterance is understood.

Materials and Methods. The study adopts a qualitative, descriptive, and comparative approach based on scholarly literature concerning emotional language, language development, sociolinguistics, and interpersonal communication. It examines how speakers use words, grammatical structures, intonation, and pragmatic strategies to express feelings and how these choices may be associated with age and gender-related social expectations.

Results and Discussion

How Emotions Are Expressed Through Language. People do not always name their emotions directly. Sometimes they say exactly how they feel: "I am disappointed," "I feel relieved," or "I am worried about the interview." In other situations, the emotion is communicated through an evaluation or a description of what has happened. The statement "I worked so hard for this result" may express pride, frustration, or disappointment, depending on the circumstances.

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The choice of words can make an emotional message more or less explicit. Compare "I dislike your decision" with "I am extremely disappointed by your decision." Both express a negative reaction, but the second identifies the speaker's emotional state more clearly and intensifies its impact.

Repetition and emphatic expressions can also strengthen emotional meaning. A person who says, "I really, really appreciate your help" communicates gratitude with greater emphasis than someone who simply says, "Thank you." However, the effect of such expressions depends on the relationship between the speakers and the expectations of the situation.

Intonation can be equally important. A short response such as "That's great" may convey genuine happiness, polite acknowledgment, or sarcasm. Listeners interpret it by considering how the words are spoken and what has happened in the conversation. Consequently, emotional speech cannot be studied adequately by examining vocabulary alone.

Lindquist (2017) discusses the relationship between language and emotional experience, emphasizing that emotion words contribute to the ways people understand and organize their feelings. This perspective helps explain why having a rich emotional vocabulary may support more precise communication: speakers can distinguish between related experiences rather than describing every negative feeling as sadness or every positive feeling as happiness.

Age and Changes in Emotional Expression. The way people talk about emotions develops alongside their language skills and social experience. Young children often express feelings directly because they are still learning how to describe complex psychological states. A child might say, "I am angry because you took my toy," making the feeling and its immediate cause explicit.

As children develop, they become more capable of explaining emotional experiences and distinguishing between similar feelings. They may learn to describe not only sadness but also disappointment, embarrassment, jealousy, or guilt. These distinctions help speakers communicate more precisely and enable listeners to understand the reasons behind their reactions.

Nook et al. (2020) examined the development of emotion comprehension and abstraction from childhood to adulthood. Their findings suggest that understanding emotional concepts involves a gradual process that extends beyond simply learning emotion words. This is relevant to emotional speech because the ability to describe a feeling accurately depends partly on how well the speaker understands that feeling.

Adolescence brings additional changes. Young people become increasingly aware of how their words may affect friendships, group relationships, and social acceptance. As a result, they may choose to express emotions differently depending on the audience. An adolescent might openly discuss disappointment with a close friend but avoid revealing the same feelings in front of classmates.

Adults also adapt their emotional language to different settings. In professional communication, for example, a speaker may express disagreement through a carefully worded statement rather than an openly emotional response. In a close personal relationship, the same individual may communicate feelings more directly.

These examples illustrate the importance of social experience, but they do not establish a universal progression from direct to indirect speech. Some adults prefer open emotional expression, while some younger speakers are highly restrained. Age may expand the range of available strategies, but the choice among them depends on the individual and the situation.

Gender-Related Expectations and Emotional Speech. Gender is relevant to emotional communication partly because people learn social expectations about how feelings should be expressed.

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From an early age, individuals may receive different responses when they show fear, sadness, anger, or affection. These experiences can influence their willingness to discuss emotions and the linguistic strategies they use.

In some communities, women may be encouraged to discuss personal feelings openly and to use language that emphasizes emotional connection. Men, in certain social environments, may be encouraged to maintain emotional restraint or avoid expressions that could be interpreted as vulnerability. Such patterns can influence communication, but they should not be treated as natural or universal differences between women and men.

Gender expectations can influence not only the way emotions are expressed but also the way they are interpreted. The same assertive statement may be perceived as confidence in one speaker and aggression in another. Similarly, open expressions of sadness may be viewed sympathetically in one context but negatively in another. Such differences reveal that judgments about emotional speech are partly shaped by social expectations.

Conclusion. Emotional expression in speech involves more than selecting words that name particular feelings. It also depends on how speakers organize their sentences, use intonation, communicate indirectly, and adapt their language to the people around them. Age can influence emotional vocabulary and the range of strategies available to speakers, while gender-related expectations may affect both emotional expression and the way that expression is judged. Nevertheless, these influences should not be treated as fixed rules. People of the same age or gender can communicate emotions in very different ways, and similarities between individuals may be more important than group-level differences in particular situations. Cultural background, personal experience, personality, and communicative purpose must therefore remain central to the analysis.

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