



GENDER AND THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF EMOTION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF URDU– ENGLISH BILINGUALS' EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

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Abstract

This study explores the ways Urdu–English bilingual speakers respond emotionally to the narratives presented to them in Urdu and English language. The study analyzes the perception of male and female participants to provide a systematic comparison between both genders. Responses to the English ‘Andy’ and Urdu ‘Ahmed’ versions of the narrative were thematically analyzed using Pavlenko’s (2008) theory of differential emotional resonance across the bilingual’s languages, Wierzbicka’s (1999) cultural scripts theory of emotion, and Lutz’s (1990) theory of engendered emotion discourse. Findings reveal that male participants’ responses shifted from the emotionally distant and evaluative mode in English to the markedly relationally oriented and sympathetic mode in Urdu, while the females’ responses were relatively relationally oriented, and sympathetic in both languages with the inter-lingual shift limited mainly to intensification of specific family members in Urdu, especially mothers. The findings build upon the bilingual-emotion theory by revealing the phenomenon of change from ‘indifference’ to ‘sympathy’.

Keywords: *Bilingual Emotions, Code-Switching, Cultural Scripts, Emotional Resonance, Gender and Emotion, Narrative Elicitation, Pakistan, Urdu–English Bilingualism.*

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

Language offers a framework through which people perceive, understand, and communicate emotions. For bilingual speakers, emotional experience may be facilitated through more than one linguistic and ethnic system, making bilingualism a significant site for investigating the relationship between language and emotion. Research in this area has established around two major viewpoints. Universalist scholars argue that emotions such as anger, fear, happiness and sadness, are biologically grounded and therefore mainly universal across cultures (Ekman, 1992). In contrast, relativist and constructionist researchers contend that languages differ in the ways they theorize and categorize emotional experience, considering that emotion words often represent culturally specific meanings rather than direct counterparts across languages (Wierzbicka, 1986). Modern scholarship generally adopts a middle position, recognizing universal physiological foundations while identifying that emotional interpretation and expression are strongly swayed by language and culture.

Bilingual speakers occupy a unique place within this debate as they move between linguistic schemes that carry different cultural values, histories, and emotional relations. Research demonstrates that bilinguals often possess language specific emotional repertoires and that sentiment words often lack complete conceptual likeness across languages (Pavlenko, 2005). Studies further suggest that first tongues tend to carry stronger emotional quality because they are acquired in emotionally rich family settings, whereas second languages are frequently associated with official educational environments.

Pakistani context delivers an especially pertinent setting for exploring these issues. Urdu and English coexist as chief languages but occupy distinct communal functions. Urdu is primarily linked with family interaction, and everyday social life, and religion while English remains allied to higher education, administration, and official advancement (Rahman, 1996). This difference raises an important question: Does language choice effect how Urdu English bilinguals emotionally assess the same situation? A pilot study for the present research considering four male Urdu English bilinguals addressed this question through a narrative elicitation task modified from Panayiotou (2004). Participants responded to an English narrative featuring ‘Andy’, a Harvard educated professional in Boston, and later to a culturally localized Urdu version featuring ‘Ahmed’, a NUST-educated engineer in Islamabad.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Although bilingualism and language of emotion form a well-known area of inquiry in research, most experimental studies have focused on North American and European language pairs. The research involving Urdu-English bilinguals remains narrow, and existing Pakistani studies have focused primarily on language attitudes, policy, and code switching practices rather than emotional expression. The second gap in existing literature pertains to gender, most of researches regarding English-to-Urdu emotional shift considered only male participants despite wide evidence that gender influences emotive discourse. It remains unknown whether

the female bilinguals show similar patterns or whether gender arbitrates cross linguistic emotional responses. The present research addresses this gap through a balanced sample of female and male Urdu English bilinguals.

1.3. Research Objectives

The study pursues the following objectives:

1. To examine the extent and direction of any shift in emotional expression, from relative indifference toward relative sympathy, in male and female Urdu–English bilinguals’ written responses to an identical narrative presented in English and in Urdu.
2. To compare male and female participants’ use of emotion vocabulary and relational or family-oriented references across the English and Urdu versions of the narrative.
3. To interpret the resulting patterns through an integrated theoretical framework combining bilingual emotional-resonance theory, cultural scripts theory, and theories of gendered emotion discourse.

1.4. Research Questions

The present study answers the following research questions:

1. To what extent, and in what direction, do male and female Urdu–English bilinguals’ emotional responses shift between an English-language version and a culturally localized Urdu-language version of an identical narrative?
2. What lexical and discursive features, emotion words, relational and family references, code-switching, and translation equivalence, distinguish male and female participants’ accounts in each language?
3. How can the observed patterns be explained through the combined lenses of bilingual emotional resonance, cultural emotion scripts, and gendered emotion discourse?

1.5. Significance of the Study

The present study contributes in the existing research by extending the research on bilingual emotional resonance and ethnic scripts to the Urdu–English context while mixing perspectives on gendered speech. Empirically, it provides us one of the first gender balanced dataset examining emotional expression among Urdu–English bilinguals. The research is also significant in terms of empirical, theoretical, and practical grounds. It covers Pavlenko’s (2005) concept of differential emotional resonance and Wierzbicka’s (1999) Cultural Scripts Framework, both developed mainly with reference to European language pairs into an Urdu–English, while concurrently integrating a third theoretical strand, drawn from Lutz (1990), Brody and Hall (2000), and Tannen (1990), addressing the gendering of emotional discourse itself. Very few studies have attempted to these three aspects into direct dialogue using a single and controlled dataset.

1.6. Delimitation of the Study

This research focuses on eight Urdu–English bilingual adults living in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The participants’ first language is Urdu and have learnt English through formal education and have at least sixteen years of education. Data was collected through responses

to a culturally matched English and Urdu narrative and examined qualitatively. Several limitations have to be considered regarding the present research. The sample size, N=8, is relatively small, that is selected through convenient sampling rather than random sampling. The findings for the present research are therefore, interpretive rather than statistically generalizable to larger population of Urdu-English Bilinguals.

1.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were taken care of while collecting the data and analyzing the results. The participants of this research provided the informed consent and were well aware of the aims and procedures of this study. The participation was voluntary and confidentiality was maintained through pseudonyms and transcripts were shared with participants for confirmation. Ethical guidelines were followed which were consistent with the academic research standards. Informed consent was obtained with the procedure of initial pilot study as well. Participation was voluntary, and participants reserved the right to withdraw at any stage without consequence.

2. Literature Review

A thorough review of literature in the aimed research area was carried out which revealed a number of perspectives by different theorists and researchers.

2.1. Language and Emotion: Universalist and Relativist Perspectives

The relationship amongst language and emotion has been fashioned by debate between universalist and relativist approaches. Universalists assert that emotions have biological foundations and are recognizable across cultures (Ekman, 1992). Relativists give the argument that emotional concepts are ethnically and linguistically mediated, which means that languages classify emotional experience differently (Wierzbicka, 1986). Linguistic anthropologists emphasize that emotions are not merely inner states but are generally constructed and exchanged through discourse (Lutz & Abu-Lughod, 1990). The modern research acknowledges both aspects: that biological and sociocultural influences (Pavlenko, 2005).

2.2. Bilingualism and Emotional Resonance: The L1–L2 Asymmetry

If emotional concepts are partially constituted through language, then a bilingual speaker's two languages may be expected to afford different emotive experiences of the same content. This is the main claim of Pavlenko's (2005) research program on bilingualism and emotion. Pavlenko (2005) argues that bilinguals develop different 'emotional repertoires' in each of their languages shaped by the contexts in which each language was developed and used, a language acquired at home and associated with caregiving and childhood tends to retain a robust emotional charge than a language acquired later, in formal or institutional settings.

Pavlenko (2008) furthers this argument particularly to the bilingual lexicon and proposes that emotive words and emotion laden words occupy a special standing within bilingual memory and that the models of the bilingual lexicon need to check for the frequent absence of full conceptual correspondence between an emotive word in one language and its translation in the other. This asymmetry is termed as the 'foreign language effect' in subsequent

research. Harris (2014) reviews a considerable body of psychophysiological evidence which shows that emotionally charged material, including reprimands, swear words, and expression of endearment, typically produces weaker skin conductance and other autonomic replies when encountered with a speaker's second language than with their first.

Harris (2014) attributes this 'affective coolness' of the second language to the more thoughtful, less embodied, and often more institutionally facilitated circumstances of its acquisitions compared to the emotionally saturated, caregiver-mediated acquisition of first language. Dewaele (2008) in a large-scale questionnaire study of multilinguals, found that participants overpoweringly rated their first language as language in which words such as 'I love you' and the swear words carried greatest emotional weight, even among highly skillful and frequent users of additional languages.

The picture, though, is not uniformly one directional. Marian and Kaushanskaya (2008), studied the Russian English bilinguals' autobiographical narratives studying immigration, found out that participants in fact used more emotive words when narrating in their second language (English) rather than their first (Russian), and that the strengthening of emotive language tracked participants' language of preference instead of simple order of acquisition. Likewise, (El-Dakhs, 2023) study of Arabic English bilinguals' autobiographical narratives observed both the occurrence and the valence of emotion words produced in English and in Arabic, talking about the same first-language /second-language emotionality question for a different bilingual population and supporting the conclusion that the relationship is more nuanced than a simple 'L1 is always more emotional' pattern would predict. Altogether, this element of research suggests that the relationship between bilinguals' languages and their emotional resonance is not simply matter of 'L1= more emotional, L2= less emotional,' but is sensitive to the specific emotional concept, topic being discussed, and the socio cultural associations each language carries for each individual speaker. The latter more nuanced strand of the literature motivates the present study's design. Rather than only asking whether one language is globally 'more emotional' than the other, the study examines whether any specific narrative, one that centers ageing parents, filial obligation and the tension between family responsibility and personal ambition elicits systematically different emotional framings depending on which language, and which culturally coded protagonist name and setting, is used to present it. This question was first raised in the context of Urdu-English bilingualism by Panayiotou's (2004) original study of Greek-English bilinguals, on which the present narrative stimulus is based, and which found that bilingual participants displayed markedly different emotional reactions to equivalent stimuli depending on the language and cultural framing in which the stimulus was presented, a finding the original Pakistani pilot study replicated using an Urdu-English adaptation of the same instrument.

Pavlenko's (2005) work remains integral to bilingual emotion research. She argues that bilinguals progress language-specific emotional repertoires which are shaped by acquisition, history and usage patterns. Languages which are learnt in emotionally rich family environments

frequently carry stronger affective connotations than those learnt later in institutional settings. The supporting evidence for this argument comes from psychophysiological studies which demonstrate reduced emotional responses in the second languages, a process frequently termed as foreign-language effect (Caldwell-Harris, 2014). Similarly, Dewaele (2008) found out that multilinguals often consider their first language as emotionally more powerful than the other. We cannot deny the fact that emotional quality is not determined only by the order of acquisition. Marian and Kaushanskaya (2008) argued that bilinguals occasionally use more emotionally charged language in their preferred language no matter whether it is their second or first language. El-Dakhs et al. (2023) likewise demonstrates that emotional expression depends mostly on context, topic and sociocultural associations. These findings illustrate that emotional resonance is dynamic rather than static.

2.3. Cultural Scripts and the Construction of Emotion

The Cultural Scripts Theory examines how language activates culturally communal understandings about appropriate behavior and feelings (Wierzbicka, 1999). In the present research, the English Narrative may activate a script highlighting individual achievement and personal success, whereas the Urdu account may activate expectations regarding family obligation, social responsibility and filial duty. Such scripts actually influence how the participants interpret identical situations and assess protagonists' actions.

2.4. Code-Switching, Translation, and Emotion Vocabulary

Code-switching in the linguistics represents an important part of bilingual communication and frequently becomes prominent in emotionally expressive interactions. Dewaele (2010), in his research, found that bilinguals regularly switch languages when discussing their personal matters and that women often report higher levels of emotion related code-switching than men. Emotional vocabulary also stances challenges for translation because apparent counterparts often differ in connotation, intensity, and cultural significance (Pavlenko, 2008).

Previous English Urdu findings mostly indicate asymmetries in lexical accessibility. English terms such as 'goals', 'priorities', and 'balance' are readily borrowed into Urdu language, whereas Urdu expressions which are associated with pity and sympathy may not appear as readily in English replies. These patterns confirm the nonequivalence of emotional vocabularies across different languages.

2.5. Gender, Language, and Emotional Expression

Research steadily identifies gender as an important variable in emotional communication. Brody and Hall (2000) claim that emotional display rules are generally learned and often differ for both men and women. Lutz (1990) further illustrates that emotional discourse itself is gendered with emotionality habitually associated with femininity and sagacity with masculinity. Tannen's (1990) division between rapport talk and report-talk similarly suggests that women are more inclined to emphasize personal connections and relationships. On the other hand, men focus more on evaluation and information exchange.

Although a lot of work has been done from the perspective of communication and language in gender, there is a dearth of literature on bilingual emotional studies. The present study, therefore, examines whether language-related emotional shifts are different between males and female Urdu-English bilinguals.

2.6. Urdu–English Bilingualism in the Pakistani Sociolinguistic Context

Pakistan's linguistic research reflects a functional difference between English and Urdu. Urdu remains a symbol of nationwide identity and is central to social and family interaction, whereas English as language dominates the government, government, and professional domains (Rahman, 1996). Many bilinguals associate Urdu with childhood emotional experiences and socialization, and English is linked to formal and institutional contexts. This socio linguistic arrangement bring into line closely the theories of emotional resonance and provides a significant context for investigating bilingual emotional expression.

2.7. Research Gap

A thorough review of the literature reveals that there are four major gaps in existing research. The first one is that the bilingual emotion research is usually dominated by Western language pairs. Secondly, Urdu–English Bilingual Emotionality is an aspect that is understudied. Third, the aspect of gender has seldom been perceived as a controlled variable in bilingual emotion research. Fourth, combined effect of cultural scripts, emotional resonance and gendered discourse has not been methodically examined in Pakistan. The present study addresses the stated gaps through gender-balanced qualitative research design.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The present study adopts the Qualitative Interpretive Design by using comparative narrative elicitation. The stated approach is appropriate as the research seeks to understand how bilingual speakers build emotional meaning rather than quantifying emotional states. This design attempts to do within-subject language comparison with between-subject gender comparison.

3.2. Population

The population of the present research includes all the males and females with sixteen years of education from Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The target population's first language is Urdu while they have learnt English through academic and professional settings.

3.3. Sample

The sample for the present research are four male participants (Javed, Imran, Nadeem and Noman), and four female participants (Sawaira, Maryam, Faiza, and Nimra) who are the residents of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. All the participants have sixteen years of formal education and they have acquired Urdu as their first language while they learnt English through educational and professional settings.

3.4. Sampling Technique

The technique for data collection for this study is convenient sampling as the data was collected as per the accessibility, availability and ready willingness of the participants.

3.5. Research Instrument

Data was collected through a narrative-elicitation assignment adapted from Panayiotou (2004). Participants were asked to respond to two culturally confined but structurally equivalent narratives. The English version presented Andy, a Harvard-educated professional from Boston, whereas the Urdu version featured Ahmed, a NUST uni-educated engineer living in Islamabad. After giving each narrative, the participants answered two open-ended questions regarding their feelings and advice in the form of an interview.

3.6. Data Collection Procedure

Data was collection in two phases. The participants actually first responded to the English narrative and after the period of approximately one week, responded to the Urdu version. The gap reduced memory effects and encouraged honest and independent responses. Recorded interview responses were transcribed and patterned for accuracy. Supplementary interview data from the initial male pilot was retained as supporting evidence.

3.7. Theoretical Framework

The current research integrates three theoretical perspectives. Pavlenko's theory of emotional resonance which explains the differences in emotional engagement across languages. Wierzbicka's cultural scripts theory which explains how language activates ethnically specific understandings of social conditions. Gender theories which are derived from Lutz (1990), Brody and Hall (2000), and Tannen (1990) are taken which account for differences in emotional discourse between women men. Together, these frameworks provide comprehensive basis for constructing the findings.

3.8. Data Analysis Procedure

The present study analyzes the first gender-balanced Urdu-English dataset of its type: eight bilingual speakers, matched with education and language background, responding to an identical narrative stimulus in both languages. The qualitative design considered for this research makes it possible to unravel the effect of language, English versus Urdu, from the effect of gender (male versus female) considering emotional expression, a difference that the existing literature, including the male-only pilot study on which this study builds, has not been able to make. The pilot study for this study demonstrated this apparatus when participants expressed greater compassion toward Ahmed than toward Andy despite the narratives' structural likeness. This particular finding supports the view that emotive discourse reflects cultural evaluation and also the personal feelings. The collected data was analyzed manually as the data set was quite small and easily manageable manually.

The collected transcribed data including sixteen feelings and advice response pairs (eight participants having two language versions), along with the supplementary interview transcripts from the male sub sample, were analyzed manually using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase procedure manually. The procedure was

conducted following these steps: familiarization with the full data set, generation of initial codes, assembling of codes into themes, review and refinement of themes against the dataset, naming the final themes and production of the analytic narrative presented in Chapter Four. The analysis focused on evaluative judgments, emotional vocabulary, relational references, and translation non-equivalence. Comparison was conducted across both languages, within the gender groups, and between the genders.

Transcribed data was analyzed manually keeping the following points in the light of conceptual framework considered for the present study. The manual analysis focused on the following themes devised on the basis of literature review discussed in chapter 2: (a) explicit emotion and empathy vocabulary (including expressions of sympathy, pity, sorrow, joy, sorrow and happiness) (b) evaluative or judgmental stance (including descriptions of the protagonist as ‘selfish’, ‘ambitious’, ‘competent’, or ‘hardworking’) (c) relational and family-oriented references (e.g., mentions of the protagonist’s mother, fiancée, family, or social circle) (d) cases of apparent translation non-equivalence, where the term central to one language’s answer had no volunteered counterpart in the other. The analyzed data was then compared along three axes: within-participant: English version versus Urdu version, within-gender (across four participants of each gender), between-gender (male sub-sample versus female sub-sample).

The presence or absence of the themes across participants was tabularized to support the qualitative judgment, these tabulations are the descriptive outlines of the qualitative analysis and are not proposed as inferential statistics, consistent with the purposive, small sample. Trustworthiness was improved through triangulation, member-checking, thick description and peer debriefing. The participants reviewed the transcripts for accuracy and findings were reinforced through direct textual evidence. Comparisons which were conducted across languages, participants, and data sources strengthened the credibility and dependability of the research.

4. Data Analysis, Discussion, and Findings

4.1. Overview of the Analysis

The study examined sixteen feelings-and-advice response pairs including four male respondents: Imran, Javed, Noman, Nadeem and four female respondents : Maryam, Sawaira, Faiza, Nimra. English-Urdu versions of Ahmed and Andy’s narratives were distributed among male and female respondents with a gap of one week. After collecting the responses, analysis was carried out in different phases. The responses of the male participants were compared to the responses the female respondents.

4.2. Gendered Perspective: Responses to the English-Language version (Andy)

For the male group, the responses to Andy are grouped around an evaluative, achievement oriented style of discourse that lacks the explicit vocabulary of emotions. It was Imran’s response that is the most extreme: he stated that Andy is “pathetic”, that he’s “sacrificing everything just to materialize his own goals”. Andy’s lack of care for his mother and other family members is “totally selfish”. None of the following sympathy, pity, etc. was

mentioned. Javed was a bit more neutral, saying he feels “just ok for him” and giving him a piece of advice that is formulated in terms of “Andy’s social circle” but not a specific name. Both Noman and Nadeem were more positive, but only about Andy’s work and career prospects, not his relationships. Noman said he was “feeling good about him” because he was “not escaping,” given his situation, and advises Andy to “keep on working hard”; Nadeem said that, “with his situation,” Andy is “feeling good about himself; he is very ambitious,” but that he should “keep a balance.” There is no explicit reference to Andy’s mother in any of the four male respondents.

The female participants’ answers to Andy’s narrative are quite different from the male respondents. All four participants raised some aspect of concern about the implications of Andy’s decisions in his relationships and two (Maryam and Faiza) employ explicit emotion vocabulary in English. Maryam’s glaringly evaluative and effectively explicit comment, “I feel quite happy for Andy, but at the same time, sad as well,” is a direct response to Andy’s hard work, which she characterizes as “a good and rare thing,” while the other male responses collected for Andy’s perspective were not as effectively explicit or evaluative. Faiza’s answer is also split: she said that Andy is “a good man,” but he is “overly ambitious,” but then adds that “your mother who brought you in this world,” is important, and that Andy’s neglecting this relationship is “quite upsetting.” Sawaira didn’t use the emotion words to talk about Andy, nor did she used the words to assess his character, but she used them in relation to his situation and said, “He loves his family.” Nimra also referred to his situation and not his character, as she said, “Andy should pay attention to his family, friends, his girlfriend, he should pay attention to the life that is his support.”

Combined, the baseline comparison indicates that prior to any language change, the two gender groups respond to the same stimulus in English in different ways. The male baseline is marked by “report-talk” (Tannen, 1990), third person judgements about Andy’s characteristics, choices and future, and by affect (when named at all) in the form of a moral evaluation (“selfish”). A consistent theme of Andy’s ambition to place existing relationships (and family, friends, a girlfriend) at risk, rather than merely casting doubt on his character (as the female baseline does), and the naming of mixed feelings (Maryam), an emotional consequence (upsetting, Faiza), and the naming of an emotional consequence that is still not mixed feelings (upsetting, Faiza), are all elements of what Tannen (1990) calls “rapport-talk” which is very evident in the female baseline. This pattern is similar to Brody and Hall (2000) who wrote about “display rules” for emotions, the social norm that permits the social actor to name his/her emotions and attend to the relational consequences.

4.3. Empathy over Criticism: Responses to the Urdu-Language Version (Ahmed)

For the males, the change to Urdu-language version elicits the appearance of an explicit empathy or sympathy which was completely absent in the corresponding English version. Imran, who earlier called Andy “totally selfish”, then quoted that, “Ahmed has set wrong priorities” and “due to that I feel pity for Ahmed, I can simply sympathize with him.” Javed,

who had been “just ok” with Andy, stated that “Somehow, I am not very happy with this,” and, in the subsequent interview, straight out says that he has an “emotional attachment” to Ahmed, that he is “one of his friends”. When asked for Ahmed, Noman said, “I will pray for your success,” but for Andy he only stated, “I am working hard.”

There exists a different picture for the female participants. None of the four add an empathy term in Ahmed’s condition. For Maryam, the same bipolar “happy/sad” pattern as she had for Andy reappears for Ahmed, and without a statement of relative weighting being explicit in Andy’s response, she said: “I feel quite happy and sad for him but the feeling of sadness is dominating.” The advice she gave to Ahmed also changed entirely from what she gave to Andy, “live in balance, support, motivation and encouragement” to a general philosophy: “The emotional connection and what makes us human beings is the key, otherwise human beings are nothing but robots.”

Second, Ahmed’s condition is an explicit kinship frame, which is not present in the case of Andy; for Sawaira and Nimra, this was explicitly presented: “Ahmed as my close friend, I can understand his goal, and understand his thoughts”, and “As a closest friend, I can understand Ahmed’s situation”. For Sawaira, the reframing of the advice was coupled with the change in perspective to second-person, as she stated “Ahmed I know you set goals for yourself, You don’t think about your family”, while Andy’s is third person “I want to give advice him”. Third, for Faiza, Ahmed’s condition came with a negatively valence personal moral investment, rendering her first-person evaluative comment about the family connections, “I don’t have any good feelings about him” then explicit in her advice, “Without his mother his wishes cannot be fulfilled, and he cannot be successful.”

These responses have been listed in side-by-side fashion for each of the eight participants in Table 4.1, enabling the patterns outlined above to be directly compared across the entire set of responses.

Table 4.1: Comparative Summary of Responses to the Andy (English) and Ahmed (Urdu) Versions

Pseudonym	Gender	Responses to Andy (English Version)	Responses to Ahmed (Urdu Version)
Imran	Male	<i>“I simply feel pathetic for Andy totally selfish”</i> , dismissive, moralising tone; no empathy vocabulary; Andy’s situation read as proof of “typical materialistic” character.	<i>“Ahmed has set wrong priorities I feel pity for Ahmed I can simply sympathize with him”</i> , explicit pity and sympathy emerge for the first time.
Javed	Male	<i>“I’m feeling just ok for him take care of himself & his social circle”</i> , minimal affect; generic relational reference (“social circle”).	<i>“Somehow, I am not very happy with this his family and his aged mother”</i> , concern emerges; aged mother foregrounded; in interview, describes “emotional attachment”

			and treats Ahmed as “one of his friends.”
Noman	Male	“I’m feeling good about him he should keep on working hard for the achievement of his goals” , approving, achievement-oriented; no kin named.	“I will pray for his success one day he will be pride for his mother and fiancée” , devotional register; specific kin named; interview confirms emotions “felt deeply” only for Ahmed.
Nadeem	Male	“he is very ambitious he should try to keep a balance in his life” , approving with caution; “family” named only generically.	“he has an old mother his all relations are being compromised I feel sorry for him” , explicit empathy term; specific, divorced/ageing mother named.
Maryam	Female	“I feel quite happy for Andy but sad as well he will lose the support that such relations can provide” , mixed affect already explicit; generic “family and friends.”	“I feel quite happy and sad for him but the feeling of sadness is dominating without feelings human beings are no more than robots” , sadness intensifies; advice becomes a philosophical statement on emotional connection.
Sawaira	Female	“Andy is intelligent and hardworking He loves his family” , trait-evaluative, third-person framing; relationship with family read positively.	“Ahmed as my close friend, I can understand his thoughts” / “Ahmed, I know you set goals for yourself” , explicit friend-framing; shift to direct second-person address.
Faiza	Female	“he is a good man overly ambitious your mother who brought you in this world quite upsetting” , moral framing already present; mother referenced generically.	“Regarding the family connections, I have no good feelings about him without his mother his wishes cannot be fulfilled” , intensified personal/moral investment; mother foregrounded as condition for success.
Nimra	Female	“Andy is a hardworking man should give attention to his family, friends and his girlfriend neglecting the life that is his support” , evaluative; generic relations named.	“As a closest friend, I can understand Ahmed’s situation give her some time so that she can heal from her wound” , friend-framing; mother’s divorce and emotional “wound” foregrounded and elaborated.

4.4. A Cross-Linguistic Shift and the Gendered Perspective

The cross-linguistic shift is explored through a comparison of the mechanical phenomenon for males and females. The male and female sub-samples are not just different in the content , they are also different in the type of movement between Andy and Ahmed responses. The movement in all four male participants can be best described as a change in

valence or the overall emotion disposition of the response from a neutral-to-critical (Andy) to a warm-to-sympathetic (Ahmed).

The change of stance, expressed by negating any sympathy with Andy in Imran's first response, is followed a week later by a response that explicitly appeals to pity and sympathy for Ahmed. In the cases of Javed, Noman and Nadeem, the shift is a bit less extreme, the Ahmed response in each case does not set itself against the Andy response, rather it is one that is simply somewhat less engaged or perhaps a bit more approving, but in each case the Ahmed response includes an affective dimension (concern, prayer, sorrow) that was not present in the Andy response in English. For Ahmed, Maryam's empathy with Andy ("happy sad as well he will lose the support") is a more personally charged concern, "the feeling of sadness is dominating," and a generalization of philosophy. For Ahmed, Sawaira and Nimra's relational orientation to Andy (he loves his family; give attention to his family, friends and his girlfriend) becomes an explicit claim to personal proximity (my close friend; a closest friend), and for Sawaira, especially, a change in addressee from him to you. The type of shift for each participant is summarized below in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Type and Direction of the Cross-Linguistic Emotional Shift

Pseudonym	Gender	Baseline (English/Andy) Stance	Urdu/Ahmed Stance	Type of Cross-Linguistic Shift
Imran	Male	Dismissive/critical ("totally selfish"); no empathy vocabulary	Explicit pity and sympathy ("pity sympathize")	Categorical valence reversal: critical → sympathetic
Javed	Male	Minimal affect ("just ok"); generic social circle	Concern emerges; aged mother foregrounded; "emotional attachment friend"	Valence shift + relational reframing (stranger → friend)
Noman	Male	Approving/achievement-oriented; no kin named	Devotional sympathy ("will pray felt these emotions deeply")	Register shift: approval → devotional sympathy
Nadeem	Male	Approving with caution ("keep a balance"); generic family	Explicit empathy ("I feel sorry"); divorced mother specified	Intensification + new empathy term + relational specification
Maryam	Female	Mixed affect (happy/sad); concern about lost support	Same bipolar frame, sadness now dominant; philosophical elaboration	Intensification of existing concern (no valence reversal)
Sawaira	Female	Trait-evaluative, third person ("loves his family")	Friend-framing; second-person direct address	Relational reframing: evaluator → friend/confidant
Faiza	Female	Moral framing; mother referenced generically ("upsetting")	"No good feelings", intensified personal investment; mother foregrounded	Intensification of personal/moral investment (valence

				remains mixed/negative)
Nimra	Female	Evaluative; generic family/friends/girlfriend named	Friend-framing; mother's divorce and "wound" elaborated	Relational reframing + mother-specific elaboration

From Table 4.2, there are two additional observations. First, the size of the shift seemed to be related to the amount of space available for the participants' English criterion to move toward sympathy, since the male English baseline was, on average, closer to the "indifferent" end of the scale, as reported by Tannen (1990) and reported by Lutz (1990), the Urdu condition had more room to move toward sympathy. The Urdu condition, being sympathetically and relationally oriented, is less discernible in the presence of sympathy, and more in the presence of intimacy (the "friend" frame), specificity (naming the mother's divorce), or intensity (the "sadness is dominating"). Second, every participant in the eight shows here evidences of change of degree between Andy and Ahmed conditions that bilinguals' "emotional reaction shifts with shift in language". The below given table, Table 4.3 is an extension of the family-reference comparison of all 8 participants.

Table 4.3: Family and Relational References, by Participant, Language Version, and Gender

Pseudonym	Gender	Relations Named – Andy (English)	Relations Named – Ahmed (Urdu)
Imran	Male	Mother, all other relations, family, friends, social circle	Mother, fiancée, relatives
Javed	Male	Social circle (no individual kin named)	Family, aged mother, relatives, mother, fiancée
Noman	Male	(no relation named)	Mother, fiancée
Nadeem	Male	Family (generic)	Old mother, fiancée, divorced mother, family, relations
Maryam	Female	Family, friends, loved ones (generic)	Relationships, loved ones, "human beings" (generic; no individual kin named)
Sawaira	Female	Family (generic)	Family, friends (generic; no individual kin named)
Faiza	Female	Family (generic), mother, "precious ones"	Family connections, loved ones, mother
Nimra	Female	Family, friends, girlfriend	Mother (divorced, repeated), fiancée, family

Two trends are seen in Table 4.3. The first, which is apparent in both gender groups, is the tendency to reference the "relational" more specifically and to shift from general terms like "family", "social circle" or "loved ones" to more individuated terms in the Urdu responses, Ahmed ones, particularly the mother. This is most striking with those who responded with the generic term for 'family' or 'friends and his girlfriend'. Noman's Andy response did not mention any individual at all, while Nadeem's does and repeats the mother's divorce and

‘wound’ in the mother’s feelings, and Nimra’s response contained a repeated focus on the mother’s divorce and emotional ‘wound’.

The second pattern is a contrast between the gender groups. In the case of three of four male participants (Javed, Noman, Nadeem), the generic-to-specific is accompanied by and, arguably, precedes the emergence of new empathy vocabulary "pity" and "prayer" or "sorrow" do not occur until the mother has been named specifically. This co-occurrence is less consistent among the female participants. In her advice to Andy and to Ahmed, Faiza referred to the ‘mother’ and not ‘mother’ in the context of the language switch, but rather the surrounding evaluative frame; from ‘upsetting’ to ‘I have no good feelings about him’. In contrast, Maryam’s response towards Ahmed is less relational than her response towards Andy, with the former ("family and friends") being replaced by a generic term ("relationships human beings") while the emotional and philosophical content is enhanced. For at least some female participants, then, the cultural script-governed definition of family relations and the emotional intensification are different processes, they do not necessarily go together, and in the case of the male participants in this sample, they seem to be tightly linked. The use of code switching, lexical borrowing, and translation non-equivalence was discussed.

4.5. Data Discussion and Findings

The analysis found that for the selected Urdu–English bilinguals, Urdu, the first language, the language of home and kin is able to provide a more emotionally and relationally elaborated register than English, the acquired second language, the language of formal education and professional life (Rahman, 1996). But the direction and nature of this shift varies between the two sub-samples: it is, in each instance, a shift towards emotional engagement, which was largely absent in Urdu, and towards relational engagement, which is present in English already; for the female sub-sample, emotional and relational engagement is already present in English, and the Urdu condition adds a significance, elaboration or re-framing of the former rather than introduces it (Caldwell-Harris, 2014).

The findings suggest that it is not gender that determines whether a shift will occur or not; but rather what is the starting point for Andy from which the shift will take place. This is overlapping with Brody and Hall’s (2000) account of the "gendered" emotional display rules and with Tannen’s (1990) distinction between “report-talk” and “rapport-talk”, the male baseline in this dataset does not include a strong emotional register; the Urdu condition exhibits a greater emotional register in the form of sympathy (the “relationship” frame), or specificity (naming the mother’s divorce, her “wound”), or intensity (“sadness is dominating”), rather than as a “new” register of emotion (Lutz’s, 1990).

The analysis revealed some of these features: (1) explicit empathy vocabulary (pity, sympathy, prayer, sorrow), which was newly emergent in the case of Ahmed and already present in the Urdu condition, in different lexical forms, in the responses of the females in the case of Andy; (2) kinship/friendship framing, which occurred only in the the case of Ahmed for three participants across the genders (pity, compromise, balance, and priorities, goals and

objectives); (3) and, for the male sub-sample specifically, the presence of unmarked English-origin lexical borrowings (pity, priorities, goals and objectives, compromised, balance) filled in the gap within Urdu responses, and the absence of English translations for the Urdu empathy vocabulary that emerges in the Ahmed responses (pity, sympathy, prayer, sorrow). The most obvious finding drawn from the collected data was that these three layers exist at different levels and together control the response of each participant. The change of name, institution and city between the English and Urdu versions served to trigger Wierzbicka's cultural-scripts mechanism, which is independent of gender.

By contrast, the script-activation seemed to be added on top of a starting point that is determined by gender; a report-talk, low-affect was the starting point for the male participants and a rapport-talk, concern-present was the starting point for the female participants. The overall English-Urdu difference is larger for men than for women in this dataset, in Pavlenko's differential-resonance account because Urdu has the culturally resonant family-oriented script and the English starting point leaves more space for that script to show up as a shift; it is not because Urdu is "more emotional" for men than women in any absolute sense.

This analysis reveals five major findings. First, the study confirms that Urdu-English bilinguals' emotional reactions to an identical story swapped between its English and Urdu presentations, with a directly comparable female sample, for the first time. Second, this cross-linguistic shift itself is gendered, that is, the shift from indifference/criticism to explicit sympathy/pity/prayer is found in male participants, while the intensification, specification, or re-framing of such a baseline English response is found in female participants, the English responses of whom already show some level of concern and relational framing. Thirdly, the family and relational references transition from generic to specific, individualized ones, namely the mother, for the majority of the male and female participants, but with greater association with the new empathetic vocabulary for the male sub-sample than the female sub-sample. Fourth, the spontaneous use of "my friend" by both male and female participants in the case of Ahmed, but not in the case of Andy, points to a tendency for the cultural-script-activation mechanism that is triggered through the name and setting of the Urdu version to be relatively independent of gender, despite the gender influence on the baseline it builds upon.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the constructions of emotions by Urdu-English bilingual when they answer an identical narrative about a high-achieving professional who has sacrificed his/her family relationship in order to attain success in his/her career, in both languages (English and Urdu). The study found a significant change from emotional indifference to sympathy in four male Urdu-English bilinguals as they moved from English ("Andy") to Urdu ("Ahmed") version of the narrative and balanced gendered sample of 8 participants (4 male, 4 female) allowing for a systematic comparison of the role of gender as it mediated the relationship between language and emotional expression. The participants' responses to the emotion vocabulary, evaluative stance, relational and family references, code switching, and

translation (non-)equivalence were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006), with an integrated framework that included the theories of differential bilingual emotional resonance (Pavlenko, 2008) and cultural scripts (Wierzbicka, 1999), as well as theories of gendered emotion discourse (Brody & Hall, 2000).

The study confirmed that the participants in the study, all eight, made some noticeable change in how they construed emotions in the English and Urdu versions of the narrative, thus confirming that emotional construct is not a language-independent phenomenon for these bilinguals (Pavlenko, 2005). However, this change was not uniform by gender, it was a critical difference. In the case of the male participants, responses in English to Andy were evaluative, achievement-oriented, and mostly lacked the use of empathetic vocabulary, in one case explicitly dismissive of Ahmed (“totally selfish”), while Urdu-language responses to Ahmed were all the time accompanied with an empathy word and, in each case, Ahmed’s mother was explicitly named, rather than being referred to generally (pity, sympathy, prayer, sorrow).

Another finding that transcended this gender difference was that both a male (Javed in interview) and two female (Sawaira, Nimra) participants spontaneously constructed Ahmed as “my friend”, while never constructing Andy in the same way, indicating that the cultural-script-activation resulting from the Urdu version’s change of name, institution, and city (Wierzbicka, 1999) was somewhat independent of gender, though it was influenced by the gender of the baseline onto which it is superimposed. And the code switching provided with the evidence that the Urdu responses contained unmarked English origin loan words for achievement related vocabulary (priorities, goals and objectives, balance, compromised), while Urdu empathy vocabulary was not translated, was clearly documented in the male sub-sample, but not in the female sub-sample in the same detail as in the original pilot because of the way the data was collected.

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Appendix A: Narrative Stimulus , English Version (“Andy”)

Participants were presented with the following vignette, adapted from Panayiotou (2004), and were then asked the two questions reproduced below. Responses were audio-recorded and/or written, then transcribed for analysis.

Appendix “A”

Andy, a person close to you, is a 30-year-old Harvard graduate. He has an MBA (Master's in Business Administration). He is an accomplished, successful and determined young man who is currently working as a business analyst for a large multinational corporation in Boston. He says that he is very ambitious and that his ultimate goal is to manage his own company. He works late hours and, at the sacrifice of his friendships and family obligations, including his elderly divorced mother and his girlfriend, he has devoted all of his time and energy to his work. He says that this is absolutely necessary if he is going to become successful.

Elicitation Questions (English Version)

1. What are your feelings about Andy?
2. What piece of advice would you give to Andy?

Appendix B: Narrative Stimulus , Urdu Version (“Ahmed”)

One week after completing the English-version task, participants were presented with the following culturally localized Urdu-language vignette. The vignette is identical in structure and content to the English version, with the protagonist's name, educational institution, occupation, and city changed to Ahmed, NUST, chemical engineering, and Islamabad respectively. The corresponding Urdu-language elicitation questions follow; an English gloss is provided beneath each item for the convenience of readers who do not read Urdu. The gloss is provided for reference only and was not shown to participants.

30 سالہ احمد، جو آپ کا ایک قریبی دوست ہے، NUST سے انجینئرنگ کر چکا ہے۔ وہ ایک کامیاب اور بلند حوصلہ نوجوان ہے جو کہ اب اسلام آباد کی ایک مشہور کمپنی میں بطور کیمیکل انجینئر کام کر رہا ہے۔ وہ بہت پر عزم ہے اور اس کا مقصد ایک دن اپنی کمپنی بنانا ہے۔ وہ رات دیر تک کام کرتا ہے اور اپنی دوستیوں اور خاندانی فرائض کی قربانی دیتا ہے اور اسی لیے اپنی طلاق یافتہ ماں اور منگیترا کو بھی وقت نہیں دے سکتا۔ اس نے اپنی ساری توانائی اور وقت کام میں وقف کر دی ہے۔ وہ کہتا ہے کہ کامیاب ہونے کیلئے یہ بہت ضروری ہے۔

English gloss (for reference): "Ahmed, a 30-year-old who is a close friend of yours, has completed his engineering degree from NUST. He is a successful and highly ambitious young man who is now working as a chemical engineer at a well-known company in Islamabad. He is very determined, and his goal is to one day build his own company. He works late into the night and sacrifices his friendships and family obligations, and for this reason he cannot give time to his ageing, divorced mother and his fiancée either. He has devoted all of his energy and time to his work. He says that this is very necessary in order to become successful."

Elicitation Questions (Urdu Version)

1. آپ کے احمد کے بارے میں کیا احساسات ہیں؟

English gloss: "What are your feelings about Ahmed?"

2. آپ احمد کو کیا مشورہ دیں گے؟

English gloss: "What advice would you give to Ahmed?"