

Language Use, Emotional Expression, and Digital Communication Patterns among Younger Generations: A Survey-Based Study

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how younger generations use English in daily communication, with particular focus on language choice, emotional expression, and generational influence. Data were collected through a structured Google Form circulated among respondents from various age groups. A quantitative descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The sample consisted of 108 respondents, primarily within the age range of 18–27 years. Percentage-based survey analysis was carried out to interpret the responses.

The findings indicate that the majority of respondents switch between English and their native language depending on comfort and context, reflecting high linguistic flexibility. The study also highlights that younger generations prefer more direct emotional vocabulary and consciously adapt their style and tone to suit social situations. Overall, the results demonstrate that modern communication is flexible, adaptive, and emotionally driven, and that language use reflects psychological comfort, social identity, and digital influence.

Keywords: Language Use, Emotional Expression, Code-Switching, Digital Communication, Youth Communication, Mental Health Awareness

INTRODUCTION

Language and communication have continued to evolve with each generation. Younger generations have introduced significant shifts in linguistic behaviour influenced by social media, globalization, and changing psychological perspectives. Communication patterns vary depending on the audience, emotional state, and the platform being used. A majority of individuals frequently switch between their native language and English, indicating bilingual competence and contextual adaptability.

Exposure to global media has influenced vocabulary, slang, and expressive styles, while increasing awareness of mental health has encouraged greater openness in emotional expression. This study aims to analyse these linguistic and behavioural patterns through an online survey, focusing on how younger individuals perceive and adapt their communication practices in everyday interactions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language use and communication practices have undergone noticeable changes across generations, especially among younger population influenced by globalization and digital environments. According to research, by Puspita (2024) Generation Z frequently engages in code-switching between English and their native languages based on comfort, social setting, and emotional context. This corresponds with the findings of the present study, where most respondents showed flexible bilingual communication styles modifying their language choice according to the audience and situational ease.

Similarly, Ahmad (2024) explored bilingual communication habits within multilingual societies and concluded that code-switching functions as a means, for identity expression and emotional comfort rather than indicating language weakness. The study supports this viewpoint, as respondents indicated switching languages to convey emotions more naturally, supporting the idea that bilingualism enhances rather than limits communicative adaptability.

Digital communication has significantly impacted the way language is used in everyday interactions, especially among younger generations. Crystal (2001) explains that the growth of internet-based communication has promoted informal language structures, abbreviations, and flexible language usage. These changes have made English more adaptable and expressive in online and informal context.

Digital exposure has also been identified as a key factor of evolving communication styles. A systematic review by Chen and Li (2025) highlighted that social media platforms accelerate linguistic change by encouraging informal language, quick expression, and flexible tone changes across contexts. These findings correspond with the present study's observation that digital media profoundly affects vocabulary, tone, and expressive manner in informal communication, among younger generations.

Research on emotional expression shows that increased openness toward mental health has influenced how people share their emotions. According to Pennebaker (2017) openly expressing emotions via language improves emotional awareness and social connection. Younger generations are more comfortable using explicit emotional vocabulary, indicating a shift toward greater emotional openness in communication.

Discussion about mental health has become another influential factor in modern communication. Jelen (2023) showed that increased openness toward mental health has broadened emotional vocabulary and promoted more straightforward emotional disclosure among young adults. The present study reflects similar outcomes, with respondents reporting

clearer and more honest emotional expression, indicating a generational shift away from indirect or subtle communication styles.

Further supporting the psychological aspect of language use, Silva et al. (2025) emphasized that linguistic choices often mirror underlying emotional states and social awareness. This finding aligns with the current study's observation that respondents pay attention to both emotional tone and word choice when deciphering messages, indicating increased emotional literacy and empathy in communication.

Global media and cultural exposure have also impacted modern English usage. Thorne (2013) notes that social media and globalization encourage blended linguistic practices and the spread of global slang. In multilingual communities, this often results in code-switching between English and native languages, showing how English adapts to cultural and digital contexts.

Audience and social context also play a crucial role in shaping expression. According to Goffman's theory of self-presentation, individuals are found to modify their communicative behavior to manage social impressions (Goffman, 1959). The present study provides contemporary empirical support for this theory, as many respondents reported consciously changing vocabulary and tone for peer validation and social acceptance, especially in digital spaces.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To identify preferred languages and linguistic patterns in everyday communication.
2. To examine how audience, emotions, and communication platforms influence self-expression.
3. To analyse the influence of mental health awareness, identity, and emotions on communication styles.
4. To understand the impact of technology, social media, and global exposure on communication mindsets.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a quantitative descriptive survey design to identify common communication patterns among younger generations. A structured questionnaire consisting of ten items was created using Google Forms and circulated among participants from various age groups. Participation was voluntary, and anonymity was ensured.

The questionnaire included multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions focusing on language preference, emotional expression, digital influence, and mental health awareness. A total of 108 respondents completed the survey. Percentage-based analysis was used to interpret the data, with auto-generated charts from Google Forms supporting the analysis. The results were examined to understand how communication choices varied across contexts and audiences.

ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONS

The analysis revealed that most respondents frequently use both English and their native language, indicating bilingual flexibility. Audience emerged as the strongest factor influencing communication style, followed by emotional state and platform of interaction. A majority of respondents agreed that openness toward mental health and identity has changed how English is used today.

Respondents reported frequently adjusting vocabulary, tone, and slang to align with peers on online platforms. When expressing emotions, preferences varied between direct verbal expression, emojis, humour, and indirect cues. Most respondents indicated that they interpret emotional messages by considering both words and emotional tone, suggesting heightened emotional awareness and empathy.

Exposure to global media was identified as a major influence on communication mindset, followed by social and cultural change and mental health awareness.

1) What language do you use the most often in your daily life? f

What language do you use the most often in your daily life—both in speech and writing?
108 responses

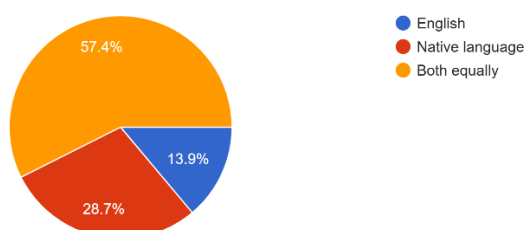


Figure 1

2) When you speak or write in English, what usually affects the way you express yourself (your choice of words, tone, or attitude)?

The person I'm communicating with	47 (43.5%)
My emotions/mood	29 (26.9%)
The platform I'm using	24 (22.2%)
My personal values/beliefs	8 (7.4%)

3) Do you think your generation's openness to mental health, identity, and emotions has changed how English is used today?

Yes	76 (70.4%)
Maybe	26 (24.1%)
No	6 (5.6%)

4) How often do you adjust your language (vocabulary, tone, or slang) to fit in with your peers on online platforms?

How often do you adjust your language (vocabulary, tone, or slang) to fit in with your peers on online platforms?
108 responses

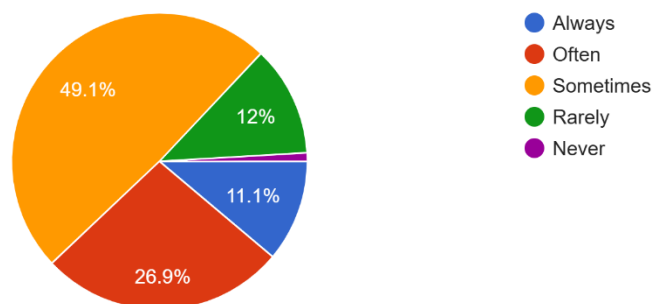


Figure 2

5) When expressing emotions, which mode feels most natural to you?

When expressing emotions, which mode feels most natural to you?

108 responses

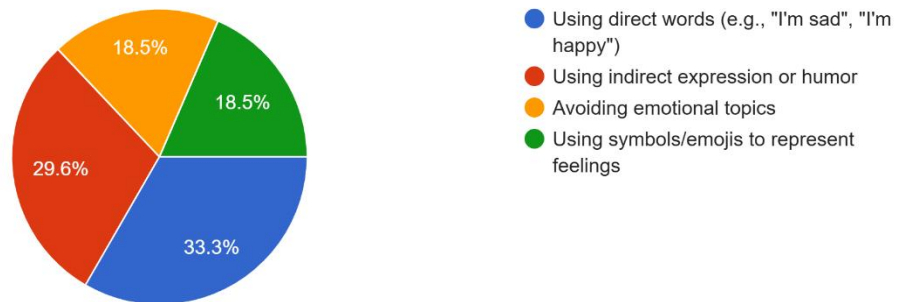


Figure 3

6) How do you process emotional messages (texts, posts, etc.) from others?

- Analyze both words & feelings: 58 (53.7%)
- Connect with emotional tone: 27 (25%)
- Interpret logically: 21 (19.4%)
- Ignore emotion, focus on facts: 2 (1.9%)

7) Do you feel your way of expressing yourself changes slightly when you speak or write in English compared to your native language?

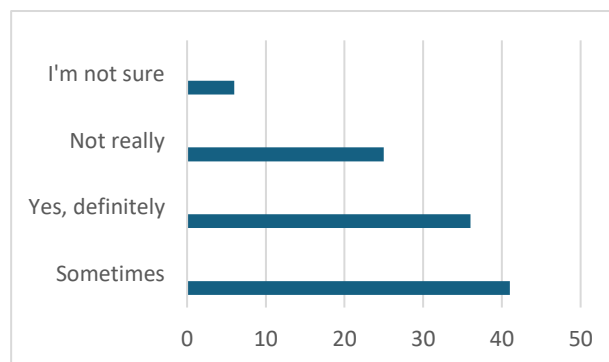


Figure 4

8) Do you think exposure to global media (movies, music, internet) has changed your natural communication style in English?

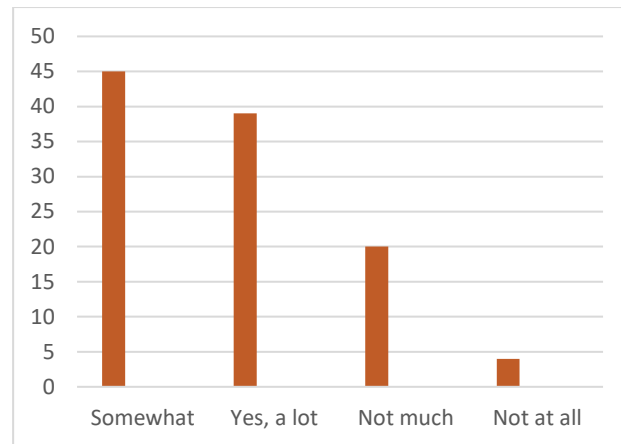


Figure 5

9) What do you think influences your generation's communication mindset the most?

- Digital exposure & technology: 48 (44.4%)
- Social/cultural change: 27 (25%)
- Mental health awareness: 22 (20.4%)

10) Which statement best represents your communication thinking style?

Which statement best represents your communication thinking style?

108 responses

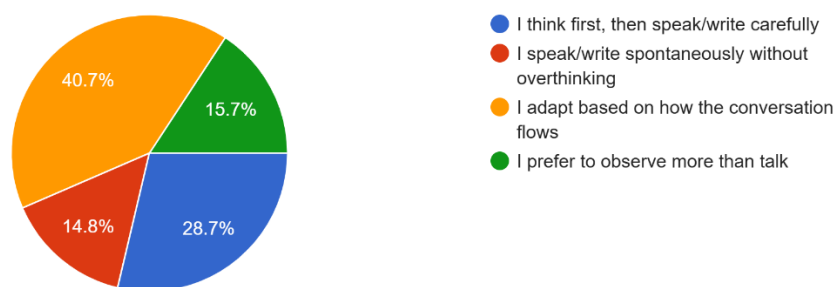


Figure 6

KEY FINDINGS

- Code-switching emerged as a core communicative pattern among respondents, reflecting flexible linguistic identity shaped by comfort and emotional ease.
- Communication style varied significantly based on audience, indicating adaptive and psychologically driven expression.
- Digital culture enhanced fluency in informal English, encouraging the use of slang, emojis, and expressive language.
- Increased mental health awareness expanded emotional vocabulary and promoted clearer emotional expression.
- Online environments strongly influenced language modification for peer validation and social acceptance.
- Respondents demonstrated increased empathy by attending to both emotional tone and word choice when interpreting messages.

LIMITATIONS

- The sample size was limited.
- Most respondents belonged to the 18–27 age group, affecting generational diversity.
- Data were collected through self-reported responses, which may involve personal bias.
- The study focused primarily on online communication rather than face-to-face interaction.

FUTURE SCOPE

Future research may include participants from a wider range of generations to enable comparative analysis. Qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups may provide deeper insights into emotional expression. Observational studies of real-life communication contexts could further enrich understanding.

CONCLUSION

The findings suggest that younger generations have developed communication styles that are adaptive, emotionally open, and influenced by technology and cultural change. Most respondents were bilingual and adjusted their expression based on audience and context. Digital media was found to play a significant role in shaping vocabulary, tone, and emotional expression.

The study highlights the need to recognize emotionally expressive, bilingual, and adaptive communication as defining features of contemporary interaction. Increased openness toward

mental health further suggests that educational and professional environments should encourage inclusive and emotionally respectful communication practices.

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