

## Emotions Effects and Interpretation of Language: Semantic Observation

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Ministry of Education

doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/ejells.2013/vol12n65469>

Published August 24, 2024

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**Citation:** Abdul-Kadhim I.A. (2024) Emotions Effects and Interpretation of Language: Semantic Observation, *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, Vol.12, No.6, pp.54-69

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**Abstract:** *This paper examines the influence of emotions on language comprehension from a semantic standpoint. It proposes that language has an impact on the regulation and expression of emotions, while emotions also affect language. Specifically, it suggests that emotions primarily have negative effects on the interpretation and importance of language in various contexts among diverse individuals. The paper adopts Ko'vecses' (2004) approach for linguistic lexical analysis of emotional words and categories in language. It applies this methodology to analyze two songs by male and female singers in the modern era. According to the affect-as-information theory and appraisal theory, it is determined that emotions can change the meaning of any language produced by human cognition. Language can express emotions through a range of words, symbols, and representations that relate to emotional context, gender distinctions, and the natural environment.*

**Keywords:** Semantics, Emotions, Emotional context, Appraisals, Semantic Relativity, Descriptive, figurative.

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### INTRODUCTION

The correlation between language and emotion is an intriguing subject examined by multiple fields, including psychology, linguistics, anthropology, and neuroscience. Language and emotion are intricate cognitive systems that have several interactions, shaping our perception, experience, and expression of feelings.

This paper explores the following **research questions** concerning this topic:

- 1- In what way can language influence the interpretation and magnitude of emotional encounters?

- 2- How can language communicate information on emotions in diverse contexts?
- 3- What is the influence of language on the conveyance of emotions in the concepts of males and females?

This paper, however, **hypothesizes** the following:

- 1- Language influences the control and manifestation of emotions, and conversely, emotions also affect language.
- 2- Emotions predominantly exert detrimental effects on the interpretation and significance of language in many contexts used by different people.

This paper seeks to provide a brief semantic depiction of the impact of emotions on language interpretations across many circumstances. The objective is to elucidate the primary significance in the domains of semantics, cognition, and meaning.

### **A Theoretical framework for emotions and language**

Conventional sense indicates that emotions are tangible entities that are largely unrelated to the linguistic labels we assign to them. However, current psychological constructionist theories suggest that language plays a crucial role in shaping both our experiences and perceptions of emotions. According to the psychological constructionist Conceptual Act Theory (CAT), an emotion is experienced when information from one's own body or others' bodies is given significance about the current circumstance, utilizing conceptual knowledge about emotions. The CAT suggests that “language plays a role in emotion because language supports the conceptual knowledge used to make meaning of sensations from the body and world in a given context” (Lindquist, 2015, p.1).

Without a doubt, the sentences uttered by persons have a profound effect on our emotions, and we can express our feelings or the emotions we perceive in others using language after the fact. However, it is widely believed that this encompasses the entire extent of the relationship between language and emotion. Multiple contemporary psychological models of emotion agree with this widely acknowledged perspective. These viewpoints suggest that emotions are physical expressions that are fundamentally distinct from language or conceptual thinking (Ekman and Cordaro, 2011; Panksepp, 2011; Shariff and Tracy, 2011; Fontaine et al., 2013). Below is a concise outline of several psychological models.

### **Affect-as-Information Theory**

How can people determine their approval or liking for a particular action or individual? As per the affect-as-information idea, emotions serve as a source of information. Similar to how our facial expressions convey our responses to others, our positive and negative emotions serve as indicators

of our internal states. Similar to numerous cognitive processes, emotional assessments typically occur at an unconscious level. Therefore, the availability of evaluative information derived from affective feelings can be quite beneficial. The “affect-as-information hypothesis assumes that people’s feelings inform them about what they like, want, and value” (Clore and Bar-Anan, 2007, p.1).

Affective reactions are types of assessment, and personally experiencing one's affective reactions provides insight that something positive or negative has been encountered. This information can be persuasive, as it encompasses not only thoughts, but also emotions, physical responses, and even behavior. Particular emotions, such as embarrassment, encompass separate cognitive processes, affective experiences, and outward manifestations, while generic moods are less diverse.

Affective states consist of two components: affective valence, which indicates the positive or negative nature of something, and affective arousal, which indicates its level of significance or immediacy. The majority of study mostly concentrates on valence, but, there has been a recent surge of studies investigating arousal as well. It has been discovered that when events are evaluated as significant, it triggers the production of adrenaline, leading to the consolidation of these events into long-term memory.

*For instance, The Iraqi populace has vivid recollections of the gruesome occurrences on April 4th, 2003. However, their remembrance of the events that unfolded from March 19th to March 24th may be less prominent. During this period, the bombing commenced with a restricted scope, consisting of around 1,700 military sorties and the deployment of 504 cruise missiles. Subsequently, Baghdad was invaded a few days after the airport skirmish, resulting in the loss of more than 1,000 lives.*

The theory of affect-as-information was proposed by Schwarz and Clore 1983-1990. The psychological essence of this theory suggests that individuals mistakenly assign their reaction to an unrelated object as a result of their pre-existing state (Forgas, 2017, p. 93). Experiment shreds of evidence show that people mostly rely on their “mood” as a cue for deriving their evaluative reaction judgments. The development of this theory by the same psychologist is called (feeling-as-information theory). It explains how subjective experiences, such as emotions, mood, physiological sensations, and metacognitive experiences influence personal judgment. This assumption posits that individuals actively acknowledge their emotions as a means of obtaining information, whereas distinct emotions yield varying sorts of information. While emotions evoked by the subject of evaluation offer reliable insights, emotions stemming from an unrelated stimulus can misguide us. The utilization of emotions as a means of obtaining information adheres to the

same fundamental principles as the utilization of any other sort of information. Primarily, individuals do not depend on their emotions when they ascribe them to a different origin, hence diminishing their informative significance for the given job. The interpretation of emotions by individuals is influenced by the specific question they are trying to answer; hence, conclusions drawn from feelings are influenced by the context and can be easily changed.

Feelings not only serve as a basis for making judgments but also provide us with information about the nature of our current circumstances. Our mental processes are specifically adapted to match the demands of the situation (Shwarz, 2010, p.2).

### **Appraisal Theory**

Without a doubt, the sentences uttered by persons have a profound effect on our emotions, and we are able to express our own feelings or the emotions we perceive in others using language after the fact. However, it is widely believed that this encompasses the entire extent of the relationship between language and emotion. Multiple contemporary psychological models of emotion are in agreement with this widely acknowledged perspective. These viewpoints suggest that emotions are physical expressions that are fundamentally distinct from language or conceptual thinking (Ekman and Cordaro, 2011; Panksepp, 2011; Shariff and Tracy, 2011; Fontaine et al., 2013). Below is a concise outline of several psychological models. . The fundamental concept underlying appraisal theories is that emotions are triggered and distinguished by the process of appraisal. Appraisal involves assigning values to several elements, such as the relevance of goals, the congruence or incongruence of goals, the level of expectedness, the degree of control, and the sense of agency (Moors, 2017, p, 1).

The core assumption of this theory is that emotions are triggered by assessments (appraisals) of events and situations (Roseman and Smith, 2001, p.3).

*For instance, heartbreak is felt when experienced upon learning about the passing of a distant acquaintance because it is triggered by the evaluation that something sought has been definitively lost and cannot be regained.*

The general assumptions of this theory are the following:

- 1- Emotions are distinguished based on evaluations (appraisals).
- 2- Variations in evaluation can explain the variations in emotional reactions among individuals and throughout time.
- 3- Any circumstances that are assigned the same evaluation pattern will elicit the same emotional response.

- 4- Appraisals come before and evoke feelings.
- 5- The appraisal process increases the likelihood that emotions will be suitable responses to the settings in which they arise.
- 6- Modifications in the evaluation process may explain the variations in emotion that occur as a result of both developmental and clinical factors.
- 7- Conflicting, involuntary, or improper appraisals may contribute to illogical features of emotions.

### **Semantics and Emotional Context**

Both semantics and emotional contexts significantly influence our comprehension and utilization of language. Semantics pertains to the significance of words and sentences, whereas emotional contexts encompass the sentiments and atmospheres linked to words, sentences, or events. The way we perceive, experience, and express our emotions, as well as the judgments and decisions we make based on language, can be influenced by both semantics and emotional situations. An important inquiry regarding the connection between language and emotion is the data that language communicates about emotion.

Verbal communication conveys personal encounters, indicating that analyzing language can provide insights into the essence of emotions. Language effectively conveys emotion through nearly every facet (Lindquist, 2021, p.92). Computational linguistics may now utilize computer science and mathematics technologies to condense vast spoken language databases and uncover the unprecedented range of semantic meanings conveyed by language. One particularly intriguing pursuit is the utilization of the organization of verbal communication to inquire about human comprehension of emotion concepts, as well as concepts in general (i.e., semantics).

Jackson et al., 2019 employed a computational linguistics methodology to investigate the comprehension of 24 emotion categories such as **love, fear, anger, joy, sadness**, and grief in 2,474 languages worldwide.

### **Emotions and Linguistic Relativity**

One of the recent studies dealing with language and emotions was conducted by Wang, Hu and Zhuo (2018). It is a semantics analysis of how learners' emotional tendencies can affect the process of learning and carrying out their linguistic tasks. Among many results "emotional punctuation and emoticons have effects on enhancing or weakening sentiment words. The difference is that emotional punctuation and emoticons have weaker affect intensity compared with degree adverbs" is the prominent one (p.6).

The linguistic-relativity hypothesis, often known as the Sapir/Whorf hypothesis, suggests that language has a causal impact on the mind and practices. This idea was initially discussed by Humboldt in 1836/1988 and then expanded upon by Sapir in 1949, after inspiration from Whorf in 1956. The term 'language' in this context, 'language' often refers to the specific language tools provided by a particular language. 'Thought' pertains to the process of conceptualization, where the brain organizes emotions into categories. 'Practices' encompass the behaviors and habits exhibited by speakers.

The generic linguistic-relativity hypothesis proposes that language has the potential to impact thoughts, specifically those related to the mind. In the realm of emotions, we can hypothesize that language can influence two aspects: the conceptualization of emotions, aligning with the generic hypothesis, and the experience of emotions. This could be done because the resources accessible in a particular language prioritize the expression and communication of some emotions more than others. Consequently, this can influence emotional cues and the level of responsiveness to these cues, all of which contribute to the overall emotional experience. Regarding emotions, the inquiry is not solely focused on whether language may impact our thoughts, but also on whether language can affect our feelings (Ponsonnet, 2022, p.68-9). Figure (1) represents the linguistic-relativity hypothesis.

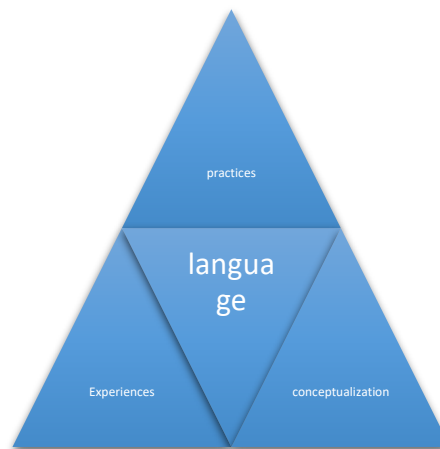


Figure (1) Emotional linguistic-relativity hypothesis.

Indeed, it is reasonable to suggest that our conceptualization of emotions has an impact on our experience of them. This introduces an alternative, albeit indirect, potential connection between language and our emotional state. French stands out by possessing a term,

dépayement that specifically refers to the enjoyment derived from being in an unfamiliar and distinct location. If the presence of such a word facilitates the ability of French speakers to comprehend the related emotional states, it is possible that it also enhances their likelihood of experiencing these experiences. This feedback effect also occurs when language influences practices. Undoubtedly, our behaviors regarding emotions, such as our routines for managing emotions, or the level of attention and type of support we receive for our emotional states are highly likely to impact our emotional well-being (and this is presumably a self-repeating process).

To put it in simple words, the linguistic-relativity hypothesis posits that the language we use has the potential to shape our cognitive processes, perception, and emotional expression. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, named after linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, is an idea that has been presented in several forms.

### **Language and Expressing Emotions**

The English language encompasses numerous terms that denote emotions such as love, joy, fear, and rage. First and foremost, it is crucial to distinguish between expressive and descriptive emotion terms, terminologies, or expressions. Feelings can be conveyed by specific words to express emotions. Examples include feces! When feeling rage, it is noteworthy. Similarly, when feeling delighted or amazed, one may express "yuk!" to convey sentiments of repulsion, among other emotions. The extent to which all emotions may be effectively communicated by this method, the specific emotions that cannot be well expressed, and the underlying causes for this constraint are yet uncertain. Alternative emotion names can effectively communicate the precise emotions they represent or are linked to.

It is commonly believed that words such as anger and angry, joy and cheerful, melancholy and depressed are used similarly. It is crucial to recognize that in certain circumstances, descriptive emotion expressions can also express precise emotions. An example of this idea is the expression "I love you!" where the term "love" is used to both describe and communicate the feeling of love (Ko'vecses, 2004, p.2-3).

The descriptive and expressive emotion concepts can be compared to Searle's (1990) categories of assertive and expressive. Speech actions can be categorized based on their function. Descriptive terms play a confident function, but expressive terms usually make up expressive speech acts. The fundamental descriptive classifications of emotions can be succinctly summarized as follows:

- ❖ Basic Emotions: love, joy, anger, fear and sadness

❖ Less basic Emotions: rage, wrath, annoyance, indignation, fright, terror, and horror.

The other classification of emotional words is the figurative one. The words and expressions used do not explicitly designate specific types of emotions, and the matter at hand is not the degree of fundamental or archetypal nature of the term or expression. The figurative terms and phrases in this category represent several elements of emotional notions, including their strength, origin, influence, and other related factors.

They possess the ability to be metaphorical and metonymical. The metaphorical expressions are instances of conceptual metaphors as defined by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Conceptual metaphors provide a connection between two separate domains or concepts. One of the domains is generally characterized by a greater emphasis on physicality or concreteness, whereas the other domain is more abstract (p.4).

## **A Case Study Analysis**

### **Methodology**

Oster (2019) presents an intercultural analysis of multiple anger-related emotion terms in two different languages. The objective is to assess variations and parallels in the control and manifestation of these emotions. His study utilizes a synthesis of two methodologies. The text begins by conducting a detailed examination of emotion words, utilizing concepts from cognitive semantics, such as conceptual metaphor and metonymy, along with a methodology based on analyzing large collections of texts, known as corpora. This methodology incorporates important linguistic concepts like semantic preference and semantic prosody. The methodology employed in his study is a corpus-based analysis of emotion lexemes, which is closely aligned with Kövecses' lexical approach (Oster, 2019, p. 37-8).

Building upon Kövecses' models of linguistic lexical analysis of emotional words and categories in language, this paper utilizes the same methodological framework to analyze two emotional songs in a case study.

### **The Data**

These songs are (Someone Like You) by the British female singer Adele (2011) and (Happy) by the American male singer (Pharrell Williams) in (2014).

-Someone like you

*I heard that you're settled down*

*That you found a girl and you're married now*



*I heard that your dreams came true  
Guess she gave you things, I didn't give to you  
Old friend, why are you so shy?  
Ain't like you to hold back or hide from the light  
I hate to turn up out of the blue, uninvited  
But I couldn't stay away, I couldn't fight it  
I had hoped you'd see my face  
And that you'd be reminded that for me, it isn't over  
Never mind, I'll find someone like you  
I wish nothing but the best for you, too  
"Don't forget me," I beg  
I remember you said  
"Sometimes it lasts in love, but sometimes it hurts instead"  
"Sometimes it lasts in love, but sometimes it hurts instead"  
You know how the time flies  
Only yesterday was the time of our lives  
We were born and raised in a summer haze  
Bound by the surprise of our glory days  
I hate to turn up out of the blue, uninvited  
But I couldn't stay away, I couldn't fight it  
I had hoped you'd see my face  
And that you'd be reminded that for me, it isn't over  
Never mind, I'll find someone like you  
I wish nothing but the best for you, too*

*"Don't forget me, " I begged*

*I remember you said*

*"Sometimes it lasts in love, but sometimes it hurts instead"*

*Nothing compares, no worries or cares*

*Regrets and mistakes, they're memories made*

*Who would have known how bittersweet this would taste?*

*Never mind, I'll find someone like you*

*I wish nothing but the best for you*

*"Don't forget me," I beg*

*I remember you said*

*"Sometimes it lasts in love, but sometimes it hurts instead"*

*Never mind, I'll find someone like you*

*I wish nothing but the best for you, too*

*"Don't forget me," I begged*

*I remember you said*

*"Sometimes it lasts in love, but sometimes it hurts instead"*

*"Sometimes it lasts in love, but sometimes it hurts instead"*

(Retrieved from: <https://www.kkbox.com/sg/en/song/LXfZtc3RU4YI78UnkJ> )

The song is written by the singer herself Adele Laurie Blue Adkins with the assistance of her friend Daniel Dodd Wilson. It is considered one of the saddest lyric songs written in 2000<sup>th</sup>.

- (Happy) on the other hand, is also written and sung by the same person (Pharrell Williams). The lyric of this song is:

*It might seem crazy what I am 'bout to say*

*Sunshine, she's here, you can take a break*

*I'm a hot air balloon that could go to space*

*With the air, like I don't care, baby by the way*

*Huh (Because I'm happy)*

*Clap along if you feel like a room without a roof*

*(Because I'm happy)*

*Clap along if you feel like happiness is the truth*

*(Because I'm happy)*

*Clap along if you know what happiness is to you*

*(Because I'm happy)*

*Clap along if you feel like that's what you wanna do*

*Here come bad news talking this and that (Yeah)*

*Well give me all you got, don't hold back (Yeah)*

*Well I should probably warn you I'll be just fine (Yeah)*

*No offense to you don't waste your time*

*Here's why*

*Clap along if you feel like a room without a roof*

*(Because I'm happy)*

*Clap along if you feel like happiness is the truth*

*(Because I'm happy)*

*Clap along if you know what happiness is to you*

*(Because I'm happy)*

*Clap along if you feel like that's what you wanna do*

*Uh, bring me down*

*Can't nothing, bring me down*

*My level's too high to bring me down*

*Can't nothing, bring me down, I said*

*Bring me down, can't nothing*

*Bring me down*

*My level's too high to bring me down*

*Can't nothing, bring me down, I said*

*Clap along if you feel like a room without a roof*

*(Because I'm happy)*

*Clap along if you feel like happiness is the truth*

*(Because I'm happy)*

*Clap along if you know what happiness is to you*

*(Because I'm happy)*

*Clap along if you feel like that's what you wanna do*

*Clap along if you feel like a room without a roof*

*(Because I'm happy)*

*Clap along if you feel like happiness is the truth*

*(Because I'm happy)*

*Clap along if you know what happiness is to you*

*(Because I'm happy)*

*Clap along if you feel like that's what you wanna do*

*Uh, bring me down (Happy, happy, happy, happy)*

*Can't nothing (Happy, happy, happy, happy)*

*Bring me down, my level's too high*

*To bring me down (Happy, happy, happy, happy)*

*Can't nothing (Happy, happy, happy, happy)*

*Bring me down, I said*

*Clap along if you feel like a room without a roof*

*(Because I'm happy)*

*Clap along if you feel like happiness is the truth*

*(Because I'm happy)*

*Clap along if you know what happiness is to you (ayy, ayy, ayy)*

*(Because I'm happy)*

*Clap along if you feel like that's what you wanna do*

*Clap along if you feel like a room without a roof*

*(Because I'm happy)*

*Clap along if you feel like happiness is the truth*

*(Because I'm happy)*

*Clap along if you know what happiness is to you (hey)*

*(Because I'm happy)*

*Clap along if you feel like that's what you wanna do* (Retrieved from:

<https://genius.com/Pharrell-williams-happy-lyrics>)

The rationale for selecting two distinct songs composed by a man and a female vocalist is to evaluate the disparities in lexical choices of emotional terms employed in each song.

## **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

The distinction between the two songs is in their emotional essence: Happiness encompasses a spectrum of feelings, akin to a vibrant rainbow. An array of hues and tints from the fortuitousness of serendipity to the joyfulness of felicity from the state of cozy happiness. On the other hand, Sadness is a tumultuous surge of emotions. An intense vortex of cumulonimbus clouds and precipitation from the state of being alone and isolated amidst the sorrow of hiraeth Transitioning from a state of despair to a state of chronic low-grade depression known as dysthymia.

The song "Someone Like You" by *Adele* has numerous lexical emotion words that effectively express the speaker's sentiments of sadness, nostalgia, and hope:

- 1- Regret: The speaker conveys remorse about the loss of her boyfriend and her inability to bring him happiness. She employs terms such as "sorry," "mistake," and "apologize" to demonstrate her regret.
- 2- Sorrow: The speaker conveys a deep feeling of sadness at the termination of the relationship and the fact that her beloved has found solace with another individual. She employs terms such as "cry", "hurt", "broken", and "pain" to vividly convey her profound sadness.
- 3- Love: The speaker conveys affection for her ex-partner and the recollections they had experienced together. She employs terms such as "love," "dreams," "blessed," and "treasure" to express her fondness.
- 4- Hope: The speaker expresses optimism in discovering a new someone who will bring her joy and possess qualities similar to her previous partner. She employs words such as "hope," "find," "someone," and "like" to convey her optimistic outlook.
- 5- The lyrics of "Someone Like You" contain numerous metaphors that symbolize various emotional states, such as love being portrayed as a voyage, heartbreak as a tangible ache, and time as a remedial power. In addition, Adele's use of metaphors establishes a connection between the audience and the songwriter's personal experiences, evoking similar emotional journeys.

These lexical emotion words facilitate the listener's comprehension of the speaker's emotional state and foster empathy toward her sentiments. Additionally, they establish a juxtaposition between the speaker's and the ex-lover's emotional states, with the speaker appearing content and at ease, while she continues to grapple with difficulties and yearning.

The song "Happy" by Pharrell Williams contains several lexical emotion terms that effectively depict the singer's optimistic and lively mood:

- 1- Happy: This is the primary emotional term utilized in the song, reiterated in both the chorus and the title. It signifies experiencing or displaying satisfaction or contentment.
- 2- Clap: A verb denoting the activity of expressing happiness through the act of clapping one's hands or cheering. Additionally, it conveys a notion of rhythm and melody.
- 3- Exciting: An adjective used to describe something that elicits immense enthusiasm and anticipation. It implies that the vocalist is anticipating or relishing something in the current moment.
- 4- Fine: An adjective denoting a state of being good or satisfactory. It signifies that the vocalist is unperturbed by any issues or concerns.

A figure of speech employing an implicit contrast involving two dissimilar entities that possess shared attributes. When Pharrell says "I'm a hot air balloon that can go to space", he is not a real hot air balloon. What characteristic does he possess in common with a hot air balloon? This signifies his profound contentment.

An analysis of Adele's song "Someone Like You" and Pharrell Williams' song "Happy" might examine how the two songs employ distinct metaphors to convey differing sentiments and moods.

Adele's composition employs metaphoric representations of voyage, anguish, and recuperation to articulate her emotions of profound sorrow, remorse, and optimism after the departure of her beloved. As an illustration, she vocalizes the lyrics "I had anticipated that you would perceive my countenance and be reminded/that for me, it is not yet concluded" and "Occasionally, love endures but occasionally, it causes pain instead". These analogies imply that she is still in the process of recuperation and has not yet progressed beyond her prior experiences.

Pharrell's song employs metaphors of clapping, sunshine, and air to express his emotions of elation, enthusiasm, and liberation. As an illustration, he vocalizes the lyrics "Clap along if you feel like a room without a roof" and "Here come bad news talking this and that / Well, give me all you got, and don't hold it back / Well, I should probably warn you I'll be just fine / No offense to you, don't waste your time." These metaphors imply his contentment in the present and his indifference towards any concerns or anxieties.

The two songs exhibit contrasting tones and moods, which mirror the distinct feelings and views of the vocalists. Adele's song exhibits a melancholic, wistful, and sanguine tone, whereas Pharrell's song embodies a joyful, lively, and sanguine tone. Adele's song evokes a gloomy, sentimental, and romantic ambiance, whereas Pharrell's song elicits a joyful, vibrant, and playful atmosphere.

## **CONCLUSION**

Semantics is the discipline that investigates the meaning of language, as well as how words and sentences convey meaning. Emotions are complex psychological states that involve perceptions, thoughts, behaviors, and physiological responses. The selection of words used to convey emotions in certain emotional situations is influenced by the relationship between semantics and emotions. Theories such as affect-as-information theory, appraisal theory, and generative linguistic relativity are used together to analyze the meaning of a given piece of language.

Males and females may exhibit linguistic differences in the expression of their emotions, such as the contrasting cases of Adele and Pharrell. The appraisal theory of semantics explains the

distinction in emotions by suggesting that they emerge and are differentiated based on an evaluation of the stimulus or circumstance, considering criteria such as their significance, consistency, anticipation, influence, and authority. The appraisal theory of emotions explains how various emotions can arise from a single input, depending on how the individual evaluates it.

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