

Chapter 12

Linguistic Markers in Individuals With Symptoms of Depression in Bi–Multilingual Context

Anbu Savekar

National Institute of Technology Raipur, India

Shashikanta Tarai

National Institute of Technology Raipur, India

Moksha Singh

National Institute of Technology Raipur, India

ABSTRACT

Depression has been identified as the most prevalent mental disorder worldwide. Due to the stigma of mental illness, the population remains unidentified, undiagnosed, and untreated. Various studies have been carried out to detect and track depression following symptoms of dichotomous thinking, absolutist thinking, linguistic markers, and linguistic behavior. However, there is little study focused on the linguistic behavior of bilingual and multilingual with anxiety and depression. This chapter aims to identify the bi-multilingual linguistic markers by analyzing the recorded verbal content of depressive discourse resulting from life situations and stressors causing anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation. Different contextual domains of word usage, content words, function words (pronouns), and negative valance words have been identified as indicators of psychological process affecting cognitive behavior, emotional health, and mental illness. These findings are discussed within the framework of Beck's model of depression to support the linguistic connection to mental illness-depression.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing levels of strain, anxiety and unending pressure of life events, adversities and constant life stress have been identified to be a source and trigger for depression (Fried et al., 2015; Mehl et al., 2017). The consistent source of stressors conjures depression particularly in interpersonal relationships demonstrating the bi-directional link between stress and depression (Hammen, 2015). According to WHO report (2017), depression is a common mental disorder that affects the people of all age group. The mental illness is considered a major cause of neural disability, neurodegeneration and most likely to incur suicide (Tarai et al., 2016). The onset of depression often goes undetected until it erupts into dysfunctional behavior, emotional disability, psychotic episode and even suicidality (Briggs et al., 2018; Stafford, 2018). The cause of depression could be biological, medical, social, situational, relational, or psychological. Most often mental illness remains untreated, undiagnosed and unidentified due to the stigma associated with mental health (Corrigan et al., 2014). A study by Beck and Alford (2009), has provided insights into understanding depression which assists both patients and their caregivers. Beck's study (1979), has established an understanding of depression as a cognitive disorder, whereas depression according to Fossati (2018), is a disorder with both emotional and cognitive symptoms in which cognition is the key element responsible for functional and social outcomes. Both linguists and psychologists agree that language is an effective medium indicating the emotional, psychological states and behavioural changes (Pennebaker & Stone, 2003; Rude et al., 2004; Pennebaker et al., 2003; Chung & Pennebaker, 2007). Language also identifies personality traits and emotional changes which are echoed in not only in the verbal communication of an individual but also in online digital communication between individuals (Boyd & Pennebaker, 2017; De Chaudhary et al., 2013). The key to understanding oneself and others is understanding emotions. Study of language is the most apt mode to understand emotions as language represents emotions and emotions enhance the use of language (Dewaele, 2010; Argaman, 2010; Yule, 2016). The increasing accuracy of emotion detection in text and transcript analysis has paved the way for numerous uses ranging from utilization in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to preventing suicide. As established, at every dimension and structure of language (the syntactic and semantic elements), there is an expression of emotion in the style and content (Jedud, 2018).

Studies have been carried out on the use of language of the depressed and control group on cognitive functions associated with depression and those vulnerable to depression and what emerged was the predominant use of negative valance words and self-focus as in use of first-person pronoun "I" (Rude et al., 2010; Fossati, 2018). Emotional intensity in verbal communication is expressed by the use of intensifiers, the use of emotion words, repetitions, the use of first-person singular pronoun, the use of metaphors, and the use of exclamations (Argaman, 2010). The study of linguistic markers of severely stressed and depressed, can identify one who is on the threshold of chronic state, thereby facilitate early detection, care, handling and treatment. LeMoult and Gotlib (2018), pointed out the need to improve the approach towards the identification, prevention of depression and also refining cognitive models of depression to decrease the prevalence and severity as a debilitating emotional and mental disorder. Past study has identified the linguistic markers in major depressive disorders (Trifu et al., 2017), including bi-lingual context to find out words in use in the depression forums online in English and Spanish (Ramirez et al., 2008). However, the current study intends to identify the Hindi-English linguistic markers in bi-lingual context as prevalent in the state of Chhattisgarh in India.

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