

# Gendered Expressions in Students' Desk Graffiti: A Linguistic Analysis

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## Abstract

Graffiti is the individual and open communication that enables students to express both linguistically and visually emotions, identities, and social experiences. Although most commonly perceived as vandalism or a disciplinary issue, recent academic literature regards graffiti as an important location of student identity, resistance, and self-expression. This paper explores the gendered linguistic representations of classroom desk graffiti done by male students and female students in segregated and colleges and universities in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Using the theory of Genderlect proposed by Deborah Tanner and the research conducted by Janet Holmes about the linguistic and gender determinants of speech, the research is based on the idea that gender affects communicative style and language preferences. Applying a combined analytical approach between Fairclough, van Dijk and Kress and van Leeuwen, the research paper determines the main linguistic characteristics that include adjectives, metaphors, choice of pronouns, symbolic processes, salience, polarization and memory forms. The results indicate gender-specific trends that are influenced by socialization, educational background, and school atmosphere and that graffiti is an important tool in the process of students negotiating identity, relationships, and emotionality.

**Keywords:** graffiti, linguistic expression, segregated, gender difference, open-coding, gender and language

## Introduction

Graffiti has become a world-wide phenomenon due to its abundance around everywhere capturing the attention of various scholars and researchers (Gadsay, 1995). Moreover, it has been termed as a "composite phenomenon" having

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the element of both childish prank and adult insults (Gopnik, 1990). In addition, (Abel and Buckley, 1997) take a different stance regarding it as a psychological phenomenon, a means of communication that is subjective free from all social restraints. Furthermore, the word "graffiti" is derived from an Italian word "graffito" which means scratching. Specifically, the meaning of the word signifies the technique of mural painting.

Over time, the meaning of the word has evolved and is now referred to as public writing or as any wall writing, picture, symbol or marking of any sort. For instance, it can be written anywhere. (Dundes, 1966) emphasized the need to separate all these writing thus formulated a name for restrooms graffiti called "latrinalia". In fact, there are various types of graffiti such as latrinalia, public (e.g. public transport), folk epigraphy, historical, tags and humorous graffiti. Until recently, for a long period of time graffiti was not considered a serious field of research until Regina Blume proposed graffiti as a means of communication. Moreover, graffiti has been affected by various factors; for example, it is considered to be the representation of specific culture (Cohan, 1975). In line with this idea, gender has also influenced graffiti highlighting differences in gender-based communication and interaction along with the distinct linguistics choices made by each gender. Similarly, the motivation to draw, the popularization and the aesthetics marked the path for research on graffiti (Gadsby, 1995).

### **Review of the Literature**

Scholars have analyzed how language and visual together construct and convey meaning in various context such as in posters, signage, banners and marketing ads etc. highlighting the socio-economic and linguistic landscape of an area or society. These researchers have paved way for another form of public writing such as graffiti encompassing the similar semiotic landscape with various qualities of being vernacular, anonymous, and artistic in nature.

#### **❖ Introduction to Graffiti as Self-Expression**

Graffiti is a common practice nowadays. People from diverse fields of life use graffiti as a means of communicating thoughts, emotions, ideas, identity, challenges, and general opinions. Wall graffiti, desk graffiti, and restroom graffiti by students in schools, colleges, and universities highlight various issues faced by students. A psychological study at Punjab University revealed that classroom graffiti reflects students' frustration, resistance, and suppressed identities (Sehgal, 2013). Graffiti

has become a source of self-expression, resistance, and communication for students (Manera, 2019).

#### ❖ **Graffiti as a Tool for Challenging Authority**

Moreover, the discourse analysis of graffiti in Jordanian schools showed that it was a tool for students to challenge and question authorities, thus depicting students' distress and frustration (Taamneh, 2024). Graffiti has taken various forms, such as graffiti in the form of tagging on classroom desks, which is also considered a means of self-branding and sharing personal opinions among students (Fusaro, 2022). It reflects their personal and academic identities (Fusaro, 2022).

#### ❖ **Educational Significance of Graffiti**

Furthermore, classroom graffiti has also been helpful for educators, facilitating them in fulfilling students' educational needs and becoming a didactic resource for educators (Andrade-Flor et al., 2023). Along with the positive use of graffiti, it can also be used to induce negativity and propagate violence, as a study proved that, according to SORs in Utah high schools, graffiti was used to formulate gangs, creating an array of disobedience and violence (Van Leuven, 2015). Similarly, graffiti in Turkish high schools became an example of rebellion and adherence to institutional norms and values (Unlu, 2017).

#### ❖ **Gender and Graffiti**

Graffiti is not limited to students and educators; rather, it has been equally influenced by different genders, highlighting the social, cultural, religious, historical, geographical, and political factors involved in shaping gender-based norms and values. Gender-based graffiti is more prominent in public and private spaces such as restrooms, walls, and transport. A study showed that graffiti in private restrooms of girls and boys in two colleges in the U.S. revealed the social tension that different genders undergo based on societal gender norms. The study showed that boys' graffiti was more prejudiced, humorous, and sexual in nature, whereas girls were more inclined toward politics (Schreer & Strichartz, 1997).

#### ❖ **Cultural Influences on Gendered Graffiti**

Moreover, another study showed that graffiti patterns in public and private restrooms by men and women across different countries (Brazil, Italy, Spain, the U.S., and Germany) were universal, but the content was shaped by cultural factors (Teixeira et al., 2003). Graffiti in public spaces and public transport in Bontoc,

Mountain Province, served as a medium for marginalized voices (Fagsao & Cayabas, 2019).

### ❖ **Gender-Based Linguistic Patterns in Graffiti**

A corpus-based linguistic analysis of graffiti across different universities in Pakistan showed that men's graffiti covered the subjects of politics and power dominance, whereas women's graffiti was more inclined toward poetry, romance, and personal struggles (Peteet, 2023). A similar study conducted in two same-sex colleges in Quetta showed that women used more expletives than men and outnumbered men as graffiti writers (Khosa & Ramakrishna, 2023).

There is a lot of research available showing graffiti role and usage in public and private spaces depicting it as a source for self-expression, identity formation, resistance, gender communication and challenging of societal norms and values. But there lies a significant gap in understanding the linguistic and semiotic aspect of students' desk graffiti using the combination of Fairclough, van Dijk and Kress and van Leeuwen model to study gendered expressions particularly in segregated educational settings in Islamabad, Pakistan.

It has commonly been observed that students of colleges and universities express their emotions through desk graffiti. The desk graffiti shows a variety of student's linguistic and semiotic expressions including: adjectives, adverbs, metaphors, pronoun, symbolic process, salience, polarization, positive self-representation and negative others presentation, episodic memory and social memory. It remains to be investigated whether these writings target specific gender or not and how these expressions vary between college and university educational institutes.

This study will help to understand the influence of gender on linguistic choices in graffiti, particularly in classroom desk writing. The findings of the study will provide educators with an insight into students' language use, helping them to address their educational and emotional needs. Moreover, it will help university administrators to formulate alternative platforms or activities for students to express their thoughts and ideas constructively, reducing the desk graffiti.

### **Methodology**

The methodology of the current study explicitly describes the research design, method of data collection, sample size and technique, coding process, use of Python and chatgpt in generation of visuals to provide in-detail analysis.

### ❖ **Research Design**

The study incorporates mixed-method approach. (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017) defines it as an approach that involves collecting, analyzing and incorporating both the qualitative and quantitative data in a study to provide detail exploration of the problem. The research using linguistic analysis which is defined as the study of “the structure of language in its many forms and functions” (Crystal, 2008) aim to analyse the linguistic features in students’ desk graffiti that reveal gendered expressions and unique patterns of communication, as (Chomsky, 1965) states that linguistic analysis uncovers the underlying rules that govern a language in use. Along with linguistic analysis, thematic analysis is also used to organize the prevailing themes in students’ desk graffiti.

### ❖ **Data Collection**

The data for this study contains written graffiti inscribed by male and female students at college and university level. The data was collected from segregated colleges and university in Islamabad, Pakistan.

### ❖ **Sampling Technique**

A purposive sampling technique was used to collect data from segregated public and private female and male colleges and public university in Islamabad, Pakistan to show equal representation of graffiti expression by both female and male students.

### ❖ **Sample Size**

The sample included 1363 pictures of classroom desks. Which was taken from segregated public and private colleges and public university in Islamabad, Pakistan. Out of 1363 pictures, 1108 written expressions of female and male students at college and university levels were extracted and transcribed.

### ❖ **Data Collection Method**

The primary data was collected in the form of photographs using mobile phone from female and male colleges and university separately. The pictures of only those desk that contain written graffiti in the form of sentences and phrases was taken as it allows for more structured analysis.

### ❖ **Coding Process**

The collected data was manually coded to extract the main themes using Braun and Clarke (2006) technique for better understanding, comparing and organizing of data. Following the initial coding the data was coded into major and then minor themes after which four categories formed female college data, female university data, male college data and male university data. This enable to understand the center themes in male and female graffiti which further help analyse the linguistic expression under these themes.

### ❖ **Use of ChatGPT and Python**

ChatGPT was used to generate Python codes and Python 3.13 was used to get the percentage of the frequently occurring minor themes in the data. As well as the frequency of major themes at female and male college and university level. The linguistic analysis was conducted and selective data was tabulated and analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

### ❖ **Data Visualization**

Python was used to make frequency heat maps to show the frequency of the major themes at each level then histogram was created to show linguistic and emotional intensity between female and male expression. Later a thematic map was then created using python to show the link between major and minor themes to give an overall view of the analysis.

### **Analytical Framework**

The study will apply linguistic analysis to examine the linguistic choices in female and male students classroom desk graffiti at college and university level by using an integrated model combining Fairclough, van Dijk and Kress and van Leeuwen model to extract the linguistic features such as features including adjectives/adverbs, metaphors, pronoun choice, symbolic process, salience, polarization, positive self/ negative others presentation, episodic memory and social memory that aligns with the current study. This model helped understand the textual and visual graffiti by students and the underlying ideologies and patterns. It also highlights the role of society in shaping and preserving these ideologies, in-turn affecting how female and male students interact with in segregated colleges and university

## Theoretical Framework

This study will incorporate Tannen Deborah's theory of Genderlects, according to which gender differences create linguistic differences in communication (Tannen, 1990). The meaning in communication between men and women is developed through connections. As Tannen emphasizes, women make meaningful connections by using "rapport talk" driven by praise and external validation, infusing more supportive and expressive use of words to show emotions and convey feelings. In contrast, men use more direct "report talk," seeking status among their peers while discussing sports, money, and business (Tannen, 1990). Moreover, these differences in communication also pertain to differences in dialect, depicting communication between adult men and women as a form of cross-cultural communication (Tannen, 1990, p. 18). Tannen further emphasizes this idea and provides various conversational routines to prove that differences in men's and women's socialization, which stem from childhood experiences, can lead to conflict in relationships during adulthood (Tannen, 1990). As a result, women's conversations contain more questions, fewer jokes, and are more concerned with intimacy, while men's conversations typically involve more jokes, fewer questions, and stories aimed at asserting their status.

Gender and language are interrelated, and their effects are predominant in every social setting (Janet, 2003), and gender is often termed as a "pervasive social category" (Weatherall, 2000, p. 287). Gender affects how we interact with others and how we are perceived by them (Kitzinger, 2002). Moreover, it acts as "an organizing device in society, an ideological map, setting up the criteria to be assessed by others and to assess others" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p. 87). Janet emphasizes that gender is viewed from a social lens, which is why men and women deploy their masculinity and femininity according to context and situation. For instance, women tend to use more hedges and politeness while speaking, whereas men often show dominance, securing their status in the workplace (Holmes, 2014).

## Analysis

The data analysis was carried out using the mixed-method approach to examine the major linguistic features of female and male classroom desk graffiti at college and university level. The quantitative analysis of the research involves open coding of the extracted data to identify the prevailing major themes in graffiti at female and male segregated college and university level. The linguistic features of the female and male graffiti at each level were recognized using the integrated linguistic model

incorporating Fairclough, van Dijk and Kress and van Leeuwen model. The data was then tabulated and the percentages of the themes were also calculated using python. The qualitative analysis includes the in-depth analysis of the linguistic features in the light of the model supported by the data. Moreover, the images provide a visual description and a comparative view of female and male graffiti at each level. Following table 1.1 shows the qualitative and quantitative analysis of female college students about female and male students at college and university level.

Table.1.1 Linguistic Expressions of Female students about Female and Male Students at College Level.

Sr. No	Major Theme	Sub-Theme	Female Expression about Female (Female →Female)	Female Expression about Male (Female →Male)	Percentage	Linguistic Features for Female to Female Expression	Linguistic Features for Female to Male Expression	Additional Notes
1	Identity Formation	Showing one's identity	Areesha 2019 < 3		7%	Symbolic Process		(Female →Female) Emphasizing the need for recognition, Memory Formation
		Branding one 'self	Galaxy Queen		0.5%	Adjective/ Adverb		(Female →Female) showing self-appreciation
		Attitude	Bitch with a buddy friend		0.5%	Positive Self Presentation		(Female →Female) It shows positive self-image and attitude
		Use of Slang	LOL loud	Pookie	2%	Adjective/Adverb	Adjective/ Adverb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Female →Female) Shows fun and entertainment</li> <li>(Female →Male) highlights appreciation and innocence</li> </ul>

		Personal Interest	Thenos 203 is Extra Best	Hi! BTS	18%	Adjective/Adverb	Symbolic Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Female →Female) Interest in movie characters</li> <li>(Female →Male) An act of greeting and praising K-Pop Singers band.</li> </ul>
		Religious Belief	Halal food only		0.5%	Social Memory		(Female →Female) Prioritizing religious obligations
		Political Values		804 IK?	0.9%	Symbolic Reference		(Female →Male) Symbolic reference to political figure
2	Peer Interaction	Social Bonding	Ayesha and Maria best friends	"M ♥ N"	4%	Adjective/Adverb	Symbolic Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Female →Female) Showing close friendships</li> <li>(Female →Male) Symbolic representation of affection</li> </ul>
		Use of Slang	COOKED YALL		4.9%	Polarization		(Female →Female) Expressing the victory of one 'self and the defeat of others
		Discussion Between Friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mazak kar rahe ho. Brorj (Are you joking Brorj)</li> <li>bato churrail muskan</li> </ul>		8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pronoun Choice</li> <li>Polarization</li> </ul>		(Female →Female) Joking around and calling nick names

			azeem from habiba riaz (Tell witch Muskan Azeem from Hibba Riaz)				
		Commenting	Ayesha jhoot bol rahe hai she is not topper (Ayesha is lying she is not a topper)		0.9%	Polarization	(Female →Female) Highlighting the reality or truth
		Questioning	why you copying me		0.5%	Pronoun Choice	(Female →Female) expressing the need for privacy
		Positive Remarks	ur so Beautif ul look at me		1%	Adjective/ Adverb	(Female →Female) Showing affection through encouragement
		Expressing Emotions	Be Alright! No and never		7%	Adjective/ Adverb	(Female →Female) Suggesting to focus on oneself
		Memory Formation	15 days in Farwell		0.9%	Episodic Memory	(Female →Female) Expressing sadness for departure
		Sarcasm	Ayesha is cool na just kidding she is Darakoo		0.5%	Adjective/Adv erb	(Female →Female) Depicting friendship, jokes and frankness
		Humor	Suske & Sakura moment		1.4%	Symbolic Process	(Female →Female) Highlighting a "brain rot" or poor quality material
		Greeting	Hi, How r u dude?		0.9%	Positive Self/ Other Presentation	(Female →Female) Showing friendly and caring

								attitude among friends
		Nicknaming	"annu g"		0.9%	Social Memory		(Female →Female) Representing understanding, and affection between friends
		Personal Opinion	THIS WHOLE IDEA IS STUPID		0.5%	Adjective/ Adverb		(Female →Female) Showing one's stance on a particular situation
3.	Institutional Experiences	Academics Stress	Math me fail		0.9%	Adjective/ Adverb		(Female →Female) Highlighting tension for Math's paper
		Attitude towards Educators	BRUH plz mam I beg you to stop		2%	Pronoun Choice		(Female →Female) Expressing boredom and overwhelming response to ongoing lecture
		Attitude towards Institute	I Freaking hate school		0.5%	Polarization		(Female →Female) Highlighting frustration and negative attitude towards institute
		Academic Progress	I am very happy because I have begun nB		0.5%	Pronoun Choice		(Female →Female) Showing gratitude/ optimistic attitude to new beginnings
4.	Gendered Expression	Interest in Opposite Gender	Love IU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>perfect umar satti.M. U</li> <li>Sehzad Ra Baccha</li> </ul>	8%	Symbolic Process	Adjective/ Adverb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Female →Female) Expressing love for the Korean Actress</li> <li>(Female →Male) Showing appreciation</li> </ul>

								on and affection
		Romantic Expressions		Love him	0.9%		Symbolic Process	(Female →Male) Symbolic expression of affection and likeness
5.	Abusive Language	Cursing	FUCK SCHO OL		3%	Polarization		(Female →Female) Overwhelming disgust and negative opinion toward school
		Abusive Words	Hazhay fuck you		0.9%	Pronoun Choice		(Female →Female) showing hatred toward other
		Insulting Language	I HATE YOU		0.9%	Pronoun Choice		(Female →Female) Expressing disgust toward others
		Racism	Niggi		0.5%	Polarization		(Female →Female) Showing hatred to black skin tone a reference to black niggers
		Bullying	r u Crazy??		0.5%	Adjective/ Adverb		(Female →Female) Questioning others choices and mental health
		Threat	Be in your limits or u'll see		0.5%	Pronoun Choice		(Female →Female) Marking of clear boundary or territory

### Analysis of Identity Formation in Female College Graffiti

Students often write names and draw emoji to mark their identity within classroom space. Approximately 7% of the female students at college level express their

identity through graffiti. For instance, the example “Areesha 2019 < 3” contains the name “Areesha” and the heart emoji “< 3” which carry symbolic meaning, reflecting the writer’s need for recognition and affection. This inscription reflects how female students at college level desire for acknowledgment and the need to be remembered by the peers. This shows how vital identity is for female students at college level and how it helps them get recognition and acceptance among peers.

Similarly, the inscription such as “Galaxy Queen” marks 0.5% of the female graffiti which incorporates the use of adjective. In this example the adjective “Galaxy” signifies high self-esteem, confidence and positive self-representation. Such expressions are common in female graffiti, it also highlights the hidden desire for recognition and shows how self-expression are connected to the construction of an individual identity at college level.

### **Analysis of Peer Interaction in Female College Graffiti**

Peer interaction through graffiti writing serves as a tool for building relationships and to share common interest among students. The data show that 1% of female students at college level express positive remarks through graffiti. For example, the inscription “ur so Beautiful look at me” employs an adjective “Beautiful” which reflects the writer’s praise for the addressee. The use of pronoun “ur” further highlights that the expression is personal and directed at specific peer. This inscription explains how female at college level interact in a social setting and maintain relationship build on positive remarks, appreciation and encouragement.

Moreover, 4.9% of female student’s interact through slangs such as “COOKED YALL”. This inscription shows polarization where the writer expresses his victory and defeat “COOKED” of the addressee “YALL”. Such expression are friendly and involve fun and playful teasing of others as the word “COOKED” refers to the fooling of others or getting stuck in series of misfortunate situation. Such expression are common in female students’ graffiti at college level, often expressing fun, support and encouragement for the peers. This shows how female students negotiate friendship and social interactions within classroom environment.

### **Analysis of Institutional Experiences in Female College Graffiti**

Graffiti has become a medium for resistance and self-expression among students, particularly in relation to the teachers and institution. The data reveal that 2% of female student’s graffiti at college level contains expressions and attitude towards the teachers. For instance, the inscription “BRUH plz mam I beg you to stop” reflects

student's boredom and overwhelming response to academic pressure and constant flow of information. The pronoun choice "you" shows it is directed towards the teacher but the use slang "BRUH" adds humor and also softens the tone of the inscription. This expression reflects student's frustration and a need for understanding from the teachers. This example shows how female students at college level regulate academic stress through graffiti.

Similarly, 0.5% of female graffiti celebrates academic progress evident in the example, "I am very happy because I have begun 11B" employs the use of pronoun "I" by the writers to show academic success and confidence in one's ability to achieve more. It also highlights the writer's optimistic attitude to step into a new academic year. Such expressions show diverse emotions and experiences that of female students at college level confronts during their academic journey from frustration and exhaustion to celebrating new beginnings.

### **Analysis of Gendered Expression in Female College Graffiti**

Graffiti serve as a medium for negotiating gender roles and expectations within particular society. The data show that 8% of female student's graffiti at college level contains allusions to opposite genders. The inscription, for example "perfect umar satti. M. U" shows a symbolic process that reflects praise and affection for the opposite gender. The use of complete name "umar satti" along with the adjective "perfect" highlights writer's attachment and attraction. The use of abbreviation "M.U" adds a silent or coded expression, communicating feelings in a discreet way. This example shows that the gendered expressions in female graffiti at college level are often positive and appreciative towards the opposite gender.

### **Analysis of Abusive Language in Female College Graffiti**

Abusive language in graffiti writing is often marked with hatred, physical and verbal abuse, bullying and racism towards peers, teachers or institution within classroom environment. The data show that 0.9% of female graffiti is marked by the use of abusive words toward peers. For example, the inscription "Hazhay fuck you" shows verbal abuse and hatred towards the peer. The pronoun choice of "you" along with the name "Hazhay" shows that the attack is personalized and explicitly directed toward a specific peer. This example highlights how female students at college level use graffiti to express anger and how it is often limited to verbal abuse rather than physical abuse. The use of English swear word "fuck" shows the influence of globally used linguistic expressions or practices and how the use of foreign abusive words has normalized among the students.

The verbal abuse in female graffiti also constitutes 0.9% use of insulting language such as the inscription, “I HATE YOU” demonstrates the use of pronoun “I” by the writer to explicitly show hatred, embedded in personal grudges towards the addressee “YOU”. This inscription also shows how female students draw boundaries and articulate their negative emotions within classroom settings. Such expressions often appear in female student’s graffiti which incorporates the use of insulting and threatening language, bullying, cursing and racism.

Similarly, separate analysis was carried out for male college and female university and male university. The analysis of the data revealed that the theme of identity formation, peer interaction and gendered expression dominated the student’s graffiti at each level as shown in the frequency heat map.

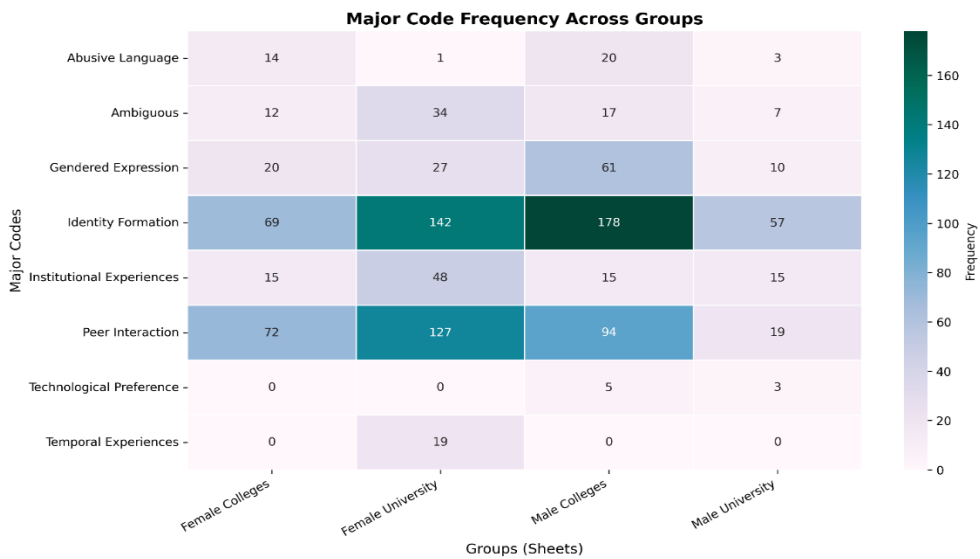


Figure 1.2 Showing the Frequency of Major Themes across Female and Male Colleges and University Level

Moreover, the data was compared using histogram to further again insight into the linguistic complexity and emotional variation in student’s desk graffiti at college level. The comparison showed female graffiti at college level was highly emotional and displayed simple lexical pattern. However, the female at university level display complicated linguistic variation and stable emotional intensity. Similarly, male graffiti at college level demonstrated higher linguistic complexity but lower emotional intensity. Whereas, male at university level also stable linguistic complexity and emotional variation. This show how gender affect the linguistic

expressions of female and male students at college and university. Furthermore, it highlights the effect of age and education on student's graffiti.

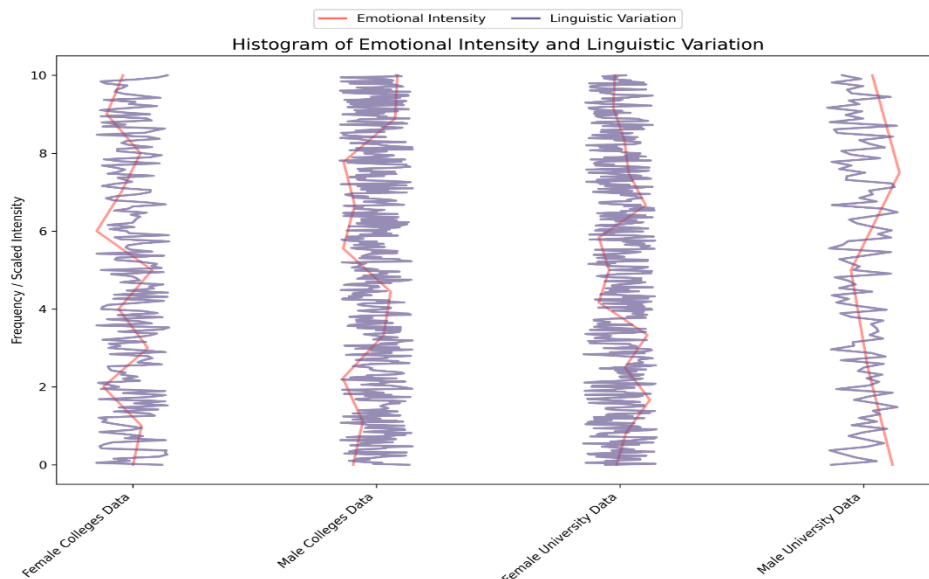


Figure 1.3 Showing the Emotional Intensity and Linguistic Variation in Female and Male Students Desk Graffiti at College and University Level

## Findings and Discussion

The desk graffiti analysis of students showed that there were five significant thematic categories in all datasets, identity formation, peer interaction, institutional experiences, gendered expressions, and abusive language. These themes were mainly common in female and male learners of college and university levels, albeit with significant variations in the emotional undertones, language use and expression patterns.

Women in the college created very expressive and emotive graffiti. They often featured adjectives, affirmations and symbolic allusions as well as personal comments that highlighted relationships, aestheticism, and social attachment. Conversely, the female university graffiti were more emotionally stable, intellectually thoughtful and balanced in their language use, which were indicative of cognitive and social maturity.

Male college graffiti was more linguistically complex, humorous, assertive, and competitive. Slang, teasing, coded references, confrontational tones were found more by male students than female students. Comparatively, graffiti on the male side of the university became more restrained, socially conscious, and less impulsive, as well as more emotionally controlled and more socially moderated communication.

When the four groups are subjected to a comparative study, it is evident that there are developmental and gender patterns of female college, male college, female university and male university. College graffiti of females is based on emotional displays, friendship identifiers, identity formation and symbolic value, but university graffiti of females is based on more mature, opinionated and metaphorical communication. The graffiti of male college, however, is characterised by linguistic audacity, humour, and dominance whereas that of male university reflects a growing restraint, stability, and social conscious expression. These comparisons demonstrate that gender and educational level are two factors that affect linguistic practices of students, their communication styles, and the emotional texture of their graffiti.

The quantitative aspect of the study, which is based on open coding and Python-based analysis, proved that the most common themes that occurred in all groups were identity formation, peer interaction, and gendered expressions. Female college graffiti had the most percentage of emotional expressive entries, whereas male college graffiti had the most percentage of linguistically rich and competitive expressions. The comparison of the histogram and heatmap showed a definite development pattern; the level of emotions decreases and the level of linguistic stability grows between college and university among both sexes. These findings corroborate the qualitative results and visually show how age, environment and academic exposure affect graffiti behaviors.

The trends of the data are close to the Genderlect Theory by Deborah Tannen. The graffiti of female students, particularly at the college level, circulates around the aspect of rapport talk that focuses on emotional attachment, praise, bonding through relations and expressiveness in the form of symbols. Their application of adjectives, metaphors, positive comments and supportive language is also in line with the argument by Tannen that women use words as a way of keeping their distance and social harmony.

On the other hand, graffiti by male students depicts report talk, in which language is employed to establish status, showcase humor, challenge other students, and dominate. Competitive tone, use of slang, teasing, and confrontation expressions all confirm the fact that men tend to speak in a manner that ensures hierarchy but not intimacy as argued by Tannen.

The change that is witnessed between college and university when both genders are more controlled, stable, and reflective in their communication is indicative that linguistic maturity and gendered socialization collide with each other. This confirms the relevance of Genderlect Theory in the practice of institutional graffiti and proves the combination of gender and age in the use of language in informal writing.

Combined, the results indicate that desk graffiti is a rich communicative tool that students can use to negotiate identity, emotional moods, develop social relations, and react to institutional demands. Along with the level of studies, gender is an important factor that forms the linguistic and emotional texture of these inscriptions. This paper demonstrates that graffiti is not a haphazard act of vandalization, but a window into the lived experiences, social relations and communicative identities of the students in learning environments.

## **Conclusion**

This paper aimed at investigating the gendered use of language in the desk graffiti of students in segregated colleges and co-educational colleges and universities in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The results indicate that gender and level of study have a great impact on student communication using graffiti. The communication patterns of female college students are more emotionally expressive, relational and metaphorical, and female university students are more balanced, reflective and mature. Male college students are more characterized by linguistic complexity, assertiveness, humor and confrontation whereas male university students have more controlled, socially-aware and steady linguistic selection.

Such trends point to graffiti as a significant communicative act and not a vandalistic act. Graffiti allow students to bargain identity, express emotional and academic pressures, and establish social relations in institutional contexts. The developmental change that is evident in the cases of college to university in both sexes also help to show that linguistic behavior is influenced by age, socialization and academic setting.

In general, the research concludes that desk graffiti gives a distinct perspective into the emotional worlds of students, gender communication patterns, and lived experiences in learning environments. The identification of graffiti as expressive literacy may assist educators and administrators to be more aware of the needs of students and offer less harmful ways of communication and self-expression.

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