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Bachelor's thesis

**EMOTIONS EXPRESSION IN COOKING SHOWS (BASED ON THE
REALITY TV SHOWS “MASTERCHEF” AND “MASTERCHEF
JUNIOR”)**

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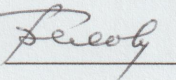
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ABSTRACT

Karina Shuklina. Emotions Expression in Cooking Shows (Based on the Reality TV Shows “MasterChef” and “MasterChef Junior”). – Bachelor’s thesis.

The bachelor’s thesis examines the ways emotions are expressed in cooking reality shows. The research is based on the idea that competitive culinary programs create emotionally intense situations in which participants openly react to stress, success, criticism, excitement and failure. The paper explores how these emotional states appear in contestants’ speech and behaviour, and what linguistic tools are used to communicate them in interaction.

The first chapter focuses on the theoretical background of the study. It reviews the concept of emotions expression in linguistics and discusses different approaches to the analysis of emotions in spoken discourse. Special attention is given to the linguistic levels through which emotions can be expressed, including lexical, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and prosodic features. The chapter also discusses the characteristics of media discourse, with a focus on cooking reality shows as a communicative space where emotional reactions become an important part of interaction.

The second chapter presents the analysis of emotions expression in cooking reality shows. The material for analysis includes ten episodes of the adult version of *MasterChef* (Season 14) and ten episodes of *MasterChef Junior* (Season 9). The study analyses both verbal and non-verbal expression of emotions in contestants’ communication. The verbal aspect includes lexical choices, sentence structure, intonation, pragmatic features and semantic patterns, while the non-verbal aspect focuses on gestures, facial expressions, crying, laughter, body movement and other visible emotional reactions. It also examines how judges communicate with the contestants and how emotionality is reflected in their feedback, instructions, support and criticism. The research applies comparative, descriptive-analytical, contextual and lexical-semantic methods, as well as observation and sampling.

The thesis demonstrates that emotional expression plays an essential role in the discourse of cooking reality shows and strongly influences communication

between contestants and judges. The study contributes to media linguistics and emotion studies by showing how emotions are constructed and communicated in reality television.

Key words: *cooking reality shows, emotions expression, spoken discourse, pragmatics, media communication.*

АНОТАЦІЯ

Шукліна К.М. Вираження емоцій у кулінарних шоу (на матеріалі реаліті-шоу «MasterChef» та «MasterChef Junior»). – Бакалаврська робота.

Бакалаврська робота присвячена дослідженню способів вираження емоцій у кулінарних реаліті-шоу. В основі дослідження лежить ідея про те, що змагальний формат кулінарних програм створює емоційно напружені ситуації, у яких учасники відкрито реагують на стрес, перемоги, невдачі, критику, хвилювання та радість. У роботі аналізується, як ці емоційні стани проявляються у мовленні та поведінці конкурсантів, а також які мовні засоби використовуються для передачі емоцій у процесі комунікації.

У першому розділі розглядаються теоретичні основи дослідження. Увага зосереджується на понятті вираження емоцій у лінгвістиці та основних підходах до вивчення емоцій у розмовному дискурсі. Окремо аналізуються мовні рівні, через які можуть передаватися емоції, зокрема лексичний, синтаксичний, семантичний, прагматичний і просодичний. Також у розділі розглядаються особливості медіадискурсу та специфіка кулінарних реаліті-шоу як комунікативного простору, у якому емоційні реакції стають важливою частиною взаємодії між учасниками та суддями.

Другий розділ містить аналіз вираження емоцій у кулінарних реаліті-шоу. Матеріалом дослідження стали десять епізодів дорослої версії *MasterChef* (14 сезон) та десять епізодів *MasterChef Junior* (9 сезон). У роботі аналізуються як вербальні, так і невербальні засоби вираження емоцій у комунікації учасників. До вербальних засобів належать лексика, синтаксичні конструкції, інтонація, прагматичні особливості та семантичні моделі, тоді як невербальний аспект охоплює жести, міміку, плач, сміх, рухи тіла та інші помітні емоційні реакції. Крім того, досліджується комунікація суддів з учасниками та емоційність, яка проявляється у їхніх коментарях, інструкціях, підтримці та критиці. Аналіз здійснюється із застосуванням порівняльного, описово-аналітичного, контекстуального та лексико-семантичного методів, а також методу спостереження і вибірки.

У результаті дослідження було встановлено, що емоційність є важливою складовою дискурсу кулінарних реаліті-шоу та значно впливає на комунікацію між учасниками й суддями. Робота робить внесок у дослідження медіалінгвістики та емотивної лінгвістики, демонструючи, яким чином емоції формуються та передаються у телевізійному реаліті-дискурсі.

Ключові слова: *кулінарні реаліті-шоу, вираження емоцій, розмовний дискурс, прагматика, медіакомунікація.*

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INTRODUCTION

Emotions are a fundamental part of human communication and play a key role in shaping meaning in everyday interaction. They are internal psychological states, and, at the same time, they are linguistic and social phenomena that become visible and audible in speech. In many cases, emotions are not expressed directly. Instead, they are encoded via vocabulary, grammar, intonation and pragmatic choices. For this reason, the study of emotional expression has long been considered an important area of research in Modern Linguistics. From a linguistic point of view, emotional meaning is closely connected with the speakers' construction of their utterances in specific communicative situations. It can become evident in explicit naming of feelings, but also through more indirect strategies such as evaluation or repetition. Because emotions are highly context-dependent, their interpretation often relies not only on what is said, but also on when, how and why it is said.

In spoken communication, emotional expression becomes especially dynamic, since it unfolds in real time and is influenced by immediate situational pressures. Media discourse, particularly reality television, provides a lot of material for observing such processes. Within this field, cooking competition shows stand out as a particularly relevant type of discourse, as they combine professional performance, public evaluation, time pressure and high levels of personal involvement.

Cooking shows such as *MasterChef* and *MasterChef Junior* create environments where emotional reactions are constantly triggered. Contestants are required to cook under strict time constraints while being observed and judged. Their speech reflects these conditions in a very direct and spontaneous way and this makes it possible to analyse how emotions are expressed in authentic communicative situations. The presence of both adult and child participants in these shows adds an

additional dimension to the analysis. Adults tend to display emotions in a more controlled way, while children often express feelings more directly and spontaneously. This contrast makes cooking shows particularly valuable for examining differences in emotional expression across age groups within the same communicative framework.

The relevance of this study is connected with the growing attention to spoken media discourse and the ways emotions are expressed in everyday communicative situations. Cooking reality shows provide a clear example of how emotional reactions are naturally reflected in speech during real-time interaction. This analysis makes it possible to observe how feelings are conveyed through language and how they become visible and audible in communication.

The aim of this work is to analyse the means of emotions expression in cooking reality shows, focusing on *MasterChef* (adult version) and *MasterChef Junior* (children's version).

To achieve this goal, the following **research objectives** have been outlined:

- 1) to define the concept of emotions in linguistic theory and outline the main characteristics of emotion expression in spoken discourse;
- 2) to reveal the linguistic means used to express emotions in cooking reality shows;
- 3) to identify how emotional expressions function in contestants' and judges' communication in different communicative situations;
- 4) to compare the patterns of emotional expression in the adult version of *MasterChef* and *MasterChef Junior*;
- 5) to identify and systematize the main verbal and non-verbal means of emotional expressions in cooking reality shows.

The object of the study is emotions in cooking shows.

The subject of the study is verbal and non-verbal means of expressing emotions used by participants and judges in the competitive cooking reality shows *MasterChef* and *MasterChef Junior*.

To address the set objectives, the following **research methods** were used:

- the comparative method, used to contrast emotions expression in adult and children's versions of cooking shows;
- the descriptive-analytical method, applied to identify and describe linguistic features of emotional speech;
- the contextual method, which allows interpreting emotional meanings in specific communicative situations;
- the lexical-semantic method, focused on the analysis of emotionally charged vocabulary and meaning structures;
- the method of observation and sampling, used for selecting and systematizing relevant episodes and speech fragments for analysis.

The materials for research consist of ten episodes from the adult version of *MasterChef* (Season 14) and ten episodes from *MasterChef Junior* (Season 9). These episodes include a wide range of competitive situations, such as individual and team challenges and judges' evaluations, where both verbal and non-verbal means of communication are actively used to express emotions.

The bachelor's thesis consists of an introduction, two chapters, conclusions to each chapter, conclusion and references.

1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF EMOTIONAL COMMUNICATION RESEARCH IN MODERN ENGLISH

1.1. The conceptualization of “emotion”

For a long time, emotions did not occupy a central place in linguistic research. Scholars were more interested in how language is structured and how it functions as a cognitive system. Because of this, emotional expression was often treated as something secondary, even though it is clearly present in everyday communication. In *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, Noam Chomsky focused mainly on “linguistic competence,” that is, the system of rules known by an ideal speaker-hearer, not the chaotic reality of how the language is actually used. His approach was concerned with the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences rather than with the emotional or interpersonal side of real speech [Chomsky 1965]. A notable contribution to the functional understanding of language was made by Karl Bühler, who proposed that language performs three main functions: representational, expressive and appellative [Bühler 1982]. The expressive function is especially important for the study of emotions, since it is connected with the speaker’s inner state and attitude. However, later linguistic theories still tended to give more attention to the representational function of language, which strengthened the idea of language mainly as a tool for conveying information and organizing thought.

A similar view can be observed in the works of Gustave Guillaume, whose theory of psychomechanics conceptualizes language as a mental process closely tied to thinking and the formation of ideas [Guillaume 1984]. In this approach, emotional expression is not completely absent, but it does not become the main focus of linguistic analysis. A different position was taken by Charles Bally, a representative of the Geneva School. He emphasized the expressive and evaluative aspects of language and argued that words may carry also subjective and emotional colouring

[Bally 1909]. In this sense, Bally's work is important because it treats emotion as a natural part of communication.

Despite these early insights, much of 20th-century linguistics remained focused on formal elements such as morphology and syntax. The influence of scholars like Noam Chomsky contributed to the prioritization of abstract linguistic competence over actual language use. As a result, emotional and pragmatic aspects of speech were often left outside the main field of linguistic investigation. Emotions were more commonly associated with psychology, while linguistics concentrated on language as a structural and cognitive system. This separation delayed the development of approaches that would study language and emotion together.

Toward the end of the 20th century, a significant shift occurred in the humanities and social sciences, often referred to as the "emotional turn." This shift involved a growing recognition that emotion is deeply connected to language and communication. It changed the way scholars looked at language, because emotions were no longer seen as something separate from communication. Instead, researchers started to argue that language should be studied together with its emotional and social functions [Lemmings, Brooks 2016]. Elinor Ochs and Bambi Schieffelin made an important contribution to this new perspective. They demonstrated that emotional meaning is closely connected with everyday linguistic practices and social interaction. Their well-known idea that "language has a heart" highlights the idea that emotions are not an additional or accidental part of speech. On the contrary, emotional expression is naturally built into communication and influences the way people understand each other [Ochs, Schieffelin 1989].

Modern studies of emotion in language also pay more attention to culture. Emotions may be universal in a general sense, but the way people describe and express them can differ from one language and culture to another. Scholars such as Anna Wierzbicka argue that different languages reflect different cultural models of

emotion and therefore do not always express feelings in the same way [Wierzbicka 1999]. This means that emotional expression cannot be analysed only as a set of linguistic forms. It also has to be understood through the cultural and social background in which communication takes place.

The development of linguistic thought shows that emotion was pushed aside mainly because earlier approaches were focused on language structure and cognition. As linguistics shifted toward studying language in use, the role of emotions became more visible. Today, emotions are seen as elements that shape meaning and interaction. At the same time, the growing interest in emotion across disciplines has led to the emergence of diverse approaches to its interpretation. The concept of emotion itself remains far from uniform, as it is examined from multiple perspectives, including psychology, sociology, linguistics, medicine and others.

To better understand the role of emotion in human experience, it is important to examine how the term “*emotion*” is interpreted across different disciplines. The word “*emotion*” comes from the French *émotion*, which is connected with the verb *émouvoir*, meaning “*to stir*” or “*to excite*.” This form goes back to the Latin *emovere*, which means “*to move*” or “*to disturb*” [Wiktionary]. Even the origin of the word reflects the dynamic and changeable nature of emotional experience. Robert Plutchik believes that, in general, emotions are understood as immediate subjective experiences that arise in response to internal or external stimuli and are reflected in language and communication [Plutchik 2001].

In psychology, emotion is usually treated as a complex process rather than a simple feeling. It may include bodily reactions and the way a person evaluates a particular situation [Ekman 1992]. Various theories have attempted to explain its nature, including physiological models, which link emotions to bodily reactions, and cognitive theories, which emphasize the role of interpretation and evaluation [Schachter, Singer 1962]. These views show that emotion cannot be something

isolated inside a person. It is shaped by both individual and social factors. According to Klaus Rainer Scherer, emotions often function as regulatory mechanisms that guide behaviour and influence decision-making [Scherer 2005]. Moreover, they are socially communicative phenomena, as they allow individuals to express attitudes and reactions to others [Ekman 1992]. In this sense, emotions can be viewed as a specific category of psychological states that both reflect and shape human interaction. Importantly, language plays a crucial role in this process, as it provides the means to name and describe emotional experience [Wierzbicka 1999].

From a linguistic perspective, the study of emotion is closely related to the concept of emotivity. While emotion belongs to the domain of psychology, emotivity refers to its verbal representation in language. Alba-Juez and Mackenzie define emotivity as the ability of linguistic units to convey emotional meaning or evoke emotional responses in communication [Alba-Juez, Mackenzie 2019]. In other words, emotivity can be understood as the linguistic realization of emotional experience, shaped by both cognitive processing and communicative intention. It involves both the expression of feelings and their interpretation within a specific context. A similar understanding can be found in the work of I.M. Litvinchuk, who defines emotivity as “the result of the intellectual interpretation of emotionality, which is transmitted in language and speech” [Літвінчук 2000]. The authors of *Kleines Wörterbuch der Stilkunde* define *Emotionalität*, which corresponds to the English term *emotivity*, as “the possible designation of the sum of emotional elements of the text, associated with mental experiences” [Krahl 1977]. According to the English-language Wiktionary, *emotivity* is “the condition of being emotive,” that is, either appealing to emotions or being related to emotion [Wiktionary].

Taken together, these definitions show that emotivity serves as a bridge between internal emotional experience and its external linguistic expression. Through emotivity, emotions become part of communication and can be interpreted

by others. Therefore, emotions should not be viewed only as private psychological states. They participate in the creation of meaning and are deeply embedded in language, which makes them one of the most challenging yet important areas of linguistic analysis.

As interest in emotions grew, linguistics also began to treat this issue more seriously. This led to the development of a separate research area, known as the linguistics of emotion or emotiology. It does not belong only to linguistics in a narrow sense, because the study of emotions also requires ideas from psychology, philosophy, sociology and cognitive science. This field studies how emotions are expressed in language, as well as how they influence discourse and interaction. Modern research no longer treats emotion as something secondary or accidental in language. On the contrary, many scholars argue that emotional meaning can appear at different levels of language and can influence the whole process of communication [Bednarek 2008].

The study of emotivity in linguistics shows that language and emotion are closely connected. Although there is still no single universal theory that explains emotivity completely, this area continues to develop actively. It brings together different approaches in order to explain how emotional experience becomes visible in language and how it shapes meaning in real communication.

1.2. Linguistic means of emotion expression in Modern English

Emotions are present in almost every sphere of human communication. They influence how people speak, react, evaluate situations and interact with others. Emotions can be expressed in various ways: as emotional reactions, which are an external method of expressing emotions, or as emotional states, which reflect a person's inner experiences but do not have an external expression. Since emotional reactions are an external way of expressing emotions, one of their elements includes expressing emotions through language: various exclamations, questions, cries or

emotionally coloured words. Emotive means of expression are closely connected with the category of emotiveness. This category can be understood as the verbal realization of emotions in speech, which makes communication more expressive [Вавринюк 2010].

Schwarz-Friesel offers a useful classification of emotional expression. According to the scholar, emotions can be shown on three main levels. The first one is physiological and includes bodily reactions such as trembling, blushing or other involuntary responses. The second level is non-verbal and includes gestures, facial expressions, laughter or crying. The third level is verbal, where emotions are expressed through linguistic means such as intonation, interjections, emotionally marked vocabulary and other language devices [Schwarz-Friesel 2015].

The study of emotional expression in English became especially important in the second half of the 20th century, when linguists began to pay more attention to the emotional component of lexical and grammatical units. Previously, the “emotional component” of the content side of lexical and grammatical phenomena was the subject of discussions, which addressed methodological problems such as “thinking and language,” “functions of language,” “language and speech” and others.

In Modern English, emotions are not expressed only by direct words naming feelings. Recent studies show that emotional meaning is created by the whole utterance and by the context in which it is used. For this reason, emotional expression should be viewed as a multi-level phenomenon. It may involve morphological, phonological, syntactic, lexical, semantic and pragmatic levels [Alba-Juez, Mackenzie 2019]. This approach helps explain why one and the same emotion may be stated directly in one case, while in another it may be suggested indirectly through tone, wording, structure or context.

At the syntactic level, emotional elements are expressed as exclamatory, interrogative, elliptical, inverted sentences, parenthetical elements, clichés (how, what a, such a) using emotive-enhancing structures (very much, how much, those, etc.). A recent study of English literary texts shows that exclamations and repeated forms are especially important for conveying emotive force and for making the text sound more emotionally vivid [Tsyntar, Kushneryk, Tonenchuk, Mudra, Bloshchynskyi 2022]. Exclamatory sentences usually show a strong and immediate reaction. For example, “*Oh, Miss Grey, how shocked you are! I am so glad!*” [Brontë 1996] combines an interjection with exclamatory form to intensify emotional involvement. Structures with *what* and *how*, as in “*What a horrible bastardy thing to do!*” [Mendelson 2008], also help highlight the speaker’s attitude. Repetition makes emotion more noticeable by stressing the same word or phrase several times. In “*I was grieved for him; I was grieved for the overthrow of all our air-built castles*” [Brontë 1996], the repeated phrase emphasizes sorrow. In “*Look! Look out there!*” [Harris 2007], repetition creates urgency and excitement. Partial constructions also convey emotional tension because they make speech sound broken or hesitant. For instance, “*Don’t. I am certain. I’m just not sure how ... Soon. Something*” [Mendelson 2008] reflects uncertainty, while “*I’m afraid it’s rather bad news ... he’s dead ... Terrible news ... terrible*” [Harris 2007] makes the message feel heavier through pauses and fragments.

In spoken English, emotions are often heard before they are fully understood from the words themselves. A sentence may sound calm, irritated, ironic or excited depending on the speaker’s intonation, pitch, loudness, stress and tempo. Linguistic descriptions of English prosody show that prosodic features are an essential part of meaning in speech, because they help listeners understand not only what is said, but also how it is said [Cruttenden 2014]. In oral communication, prosody often works

together with facial expression and gesture, which makes emotional meaning even stronger.

At the morphological level, emotions are linguistically encoded through specific affixes attached to words, thereby altering their connotations. For example, suffixes such as *-ard*, *-eer*, *-aster*, *-monger* may give a word a negative or dismissive tone. The word “*sluggard*,” for instance, contains the suffix *-ard*, which adds a critical shade of meaning connected with laziness [Cambridge Dictionary]. Other affixes, such as *-y*, *-let* and *-kin*, often create softer or more positive associations. “*Starlet*” is formed with the suffix *-let*, which often suggests smallness or something not fully developed yet. In this case, the word usually refers to a young actress who is only beginning to become famous [Cambridge Dictionary]. Compared with the word “*star*,” the word sounds softer.

At the lexical level, emotional elements verbalise emotional states. This occurs as the speaker expresses the emotion they are experiencing during the communicative act, using words like “*hope*,” “*happiness*,” or “*despair*.” This expression can also extend to assumptions about the emotional states of others based on contextual cues. Lexical emotion can also be directed toward another person, as in expressions like “*Poor you!*” or “*Poor kid!*”, where the speaker shows sympathy and reacts to someone else’s situation.

Emotional vocabulary is not limited to neutral words naming feelings. It may also include slang, jargon, euphemisms, dialectal words or even vulgarisms, especially in spoken language. Such words often make speech more vivid and natural. For example, the British slang word “*gobsmacked*” expresses strong surprise or shock in a more expressive way than a neutral word like surprised [Cambridge Dictionary].

Beyond lexical considerations, grammatical classifications offer additional insights into the expression of emotions. Emotive verbs, for instance, can be used to

convey different feelings, including states, actions and attitudes. For instance, “*to be sad*” signifies a state of sadness, while “*to fall in love*” denotes the formation of an emotional state. Emotive nouns, on the other hand, constitute a substantial portion of emotional vocabulary, comprising motivated words and nominalizations that denote emotional states and actions. For example, “*fury*,” “*euphoria*,” “*relief*,” “*affection*” and “*tenderness*” vividly depict various emotional states. Emotive adjectives describe a person’s emotional state or evaluate a situation emotionally, for instance “*happy*,” “*angry*,” “*anxious*,” “*excited*,” “*terrified*,” “*disappointed*” or “*proud*.” Emotive adverbs, in turn, show the emotional manner in which an action is performed, as in “*angrily*,” “*nervously*,” “*happily*,” “*sadly*,” “*anxiously*” or “*excitedly*.”

The semantic level is closely related to vocabulary, but it goes beyond the direct meaning of words. Here, emotional meaning often appears through connotations, associations, implication and figurative language. Metaphors and epithets are especially important because they allow speakers to describe emotions indirectly. For example, the idiom “*cold feet*” does not literally describe a physical condition, but refers to nervousness or hesitation before an important action [Alba-Juez, Mackenzie 2019].

At the pragmatic level, emotions depend strongly on context. The same phrase may express concern, irritation, support or irony depending on who says it, to whom and in what situation. Pragmatics helps explain how emotional meaning is created in real communication, where speaker intention, shared knowledge, social relations and context all influence interpretation. Therefore, emotional expression in Modern English is shaped by how language is actually used in interaction [Alba-Juez, Mackenzie 2019].

In linguistics, emotions are often studied through two main perspectives: semantic and metaphorical. The semantic approach looks at how particular emotions

are connected with typical situations. For example, fear usually appears in a situation of danger or uncertainty, while joy is often linked to success or pleasure. This approach helps explain why certain words or expressions are associated with specific emotional reactions. The metaphorical approach focuses on the way people describe emotions through images and comparisons. This idea was developed in detail by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, who showed that metaphors are not just decorative language. They help people understand abstract experiences, including emotions, through more concrete images [Lakoff, Johnson 1980]. For instance, people may describe anger as heat or sadness as heaviness. In this way, metaphor becomes an important tool for explaining emotions that are difficult to describe directly.

The linguistic study of emotions remains a difficult area because emotions themselves are complex and not always easy to define. People do not always understand or express their feelings clearly and language often has to convey very subtle emotional differences. For this reason, emotional meaning in Modern English cannot be reduced to one level of language. It is created through the interaction of vocabulary, idioms, metaphors, sentence structure, pragmatic context and prosody. All these elements work together and help speakers express emotional experience in different communicative situations.

1.3. Emotional communication in media discourse

At present, the concept of discourse does not have a single, fully established definition and is interpreted differently by various scholars. The lack of a clear and universally accepted definition can be explained by the broad use of the term, as well as its interdisciplinary status. Each academic discipline that engages with the concept of discourse offers its own perspective on its nature and characteristics, depending on the specific focus of the field of study.

The word “*discourse*” has a long history. It comes from Middle English *discours*, borrowed from Middle French, where it meant “*conversation*” or “*speech*.” Earlier, it goes back to the Latin *discursus*, from *discurrere*, meaning “*to run about*” [Wiktionary]. At first, the word was connected with physical movement, but later it developed a figurative meaning related to the movement of thought or reasoning between ideas.

In modern linguistics, discourse is usually understood as something broader than a single sentence. According to Van Dijk, discourse is a communicative event, understood as a complex unity of linguistic form and meaning, produced by participants in the process of interaction [Van Dijk 1997]. In a similar vein, Cook defines discourse as “stretches of language perceived to be meaningful, unified and purposive” [Cook 1989]. Stubbs interprets discourse as a unit of language at a level higher than a sentence or its part [Stubbs 1983].

Other scholars place more emphasis on language use and communication. Brown approaches discourse from a functional standpoint, describing it as “language in use” or “speech in the process of its application” [Brown 1983]. Fowler broadens this understanding by characterizing discourse as “a process of linguistic interaction between people with its integrity and complexity” [Fowler 1986]. Schiffrin views discourse as a phenomenon that “exists above other linguistic units” and as “a set of contextualized units of language use” [Schiffrin 1994]. Zagnitko, in turn, defines discourse as a speech-and-thought process that reproduces and forms complex linguistic structures, whose components are utterances and groups of utterances connected by discursive operations [Загнітко 2008].

It can be concluded that the concept of discourse is interpreted differently depending on the theoretical perspective. However, most scholars agree on its core characteristics. Discourse is language used in real communication. It is not limited to separate sentences, because it includes context, speaker intention, interaction and

meaning-making. Therefore, discourse can be viewed as a dynamic communicative process where linguistic form works together with social and situational factors.

Language can be studied in different spheres of use and this is why researchers usually distinguish several types of discourse. These include political, scientific, medical, legal and media discourse. For this research, media discourse is the most relevant, because cooking reality shows belong to televised communication and are created for a wide audience.

Media discourse, which is developing at an exceptionally rapid pace and is gaining increasing importance in contemporary society, is one of the most relevant phenomena in the 21st century. With the advancement of mass media and the expansion of virtual information spaces, media discourse has become a subject of growing scholarly interest and is increasingly attracting attention from researchers across different linguistic and interdisciplinary fields. In academic works, this phenomenon may be described by different terms, such as “*media language*,” “*mass media discourse*,” “*mass communication*” or “*media discourse*” among other related formulations. These names are not identical, but they all show that media communication is complex and includes different forms of public interaction.

In general, media discourse can be understood as communication created for a large audience through media channels. As noted by O’Keeffe, it represents communication produced for recipients who are typically not physically present and cannot respond immediately, which distinguishes it from everyday face-to-face interaction [O’Keeffe 2013]. At the same time, scholars emphasize that media discourse should not be reduced to texts alone. Fairclough views it as a complex discursive practice that includes not only the textual dimension but also processes of production and distribution of information in society [Fairclough 1995]. In addition, media discourse is frequently described as a specialized communicative activity operating in the sphere of mass communication. For instance, Grynyuk defines it as

a type of speech activity aimed at informing society about socially significant issues through media channels [Grynyuk 2022]. Tsaryk interprets media discourse as a complex semiotic system that integrates linguistic and informational components, functioning within the broader media space [Tsaryk 2024].

One of the main features of media discourse is its hybrid character. Media texts rarely perform only one function. They can inform, entertain, persuade and emotionally involve the audience at the same time. This is why media discourse is never completely neutral. As Norman Fairclough argues, media communication reflects social relations and can influence the way people understand reality [Fairclough 1995]. Van Dijk also notes that media discourse plays an important role in shaping public knowledge and opinions, since it controls not only what information is presented but also how it is interpreted [Van Dijk 1998].

The emotional side of media discourse is especially important for this study. Modern media try to make the audience feel involved. Scholars increasingly refer to the “*emotionalisation*” or “*affectivisation*” of discourse, highlighting the growing importance of emotional appeal in public communication [Wahl-Jorgensen 2019]. This is particularly visible in reality television, including cooking shows, where emotional reactions are part of the programme’s structure and help create audience engagement.

Media discourse operates as a sphere of emotional communication through a wide range of linguistic and semiotic strategies. At the lexical level, emotionally loaded vocabulary (evaluative adjectives, intensifiers, expressive verbs) is used to convey attitudes and influence interpretation. At the syntactic level, emotional meaning may be expressed through exclamatory, interrogative, elliptical and inverted sentences, parenthetical elements, clichés such as *how*, *what a* and *such a*, as well as emotive-enhancing structures. At the pragmatic level, media texts often guide the audience’s emotional reaction by emphasizing some details and leaving

others in the background. This process is connected with framing, since the way an event is presented influences how it is interpreted by the audience [Entman 1993].

An important mechanism in emotional communication within media discourse is narrative construction. News stories, for example, are often structured as narratives with identifiable protagonists, conflicts, tension and resolutions. This makes events easier to follow and more emotionally engaging. Instead of presenting information as something abstract, media discourse often turns it into a human story that the audience can relate to. As noted by Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, personalization and dramatization are frequently used in media storytelling to increase emotional involvement [Wahl-Jorgensen 2019].

It is also important that modern media discourse is not limited to words. It usually combines speech, images, sound, music, editing and visual details. All these elements work together and can strengthen the emotional effect of the message. For example, a close-up shot, a pause, background music or a certain colour scheme may influence the viewer no less than the verbal text itself. This multimodal character of media communication allows emotions to be transmitted through several channels at the same time [Kress, Van Leeuwen 2006].

The rise of digital media has further transformed the emotional landscape of communication. Social media platforms, in particular, encourage immediacy and personal expression, which amplify emotional content. Users are not only consumers but also producers of discourse, actively participating in the circulation of emotionally charged messages. This participatory culture contributes to the rapid spread of emotions across networks, a phenomenon described as “*emotional contagion*” [Papacharissi 2014]. As a result, media discourse becomes more dynamic and decentralized, with emotions that can shape online interactions and collective responses.

From a cognitive perspective, the effectiveness of emotional communication in media can be explained by the interaction between affective and cognitive processes. Emotions influence how people perceive and remember information. Damasio emphasizes that emotion and cognition are closely connected, which means that emotional communication should not be treated as something secondary or accidental [Damasio 1994].

Media discourse can be viewed as a complex and evolving sphere of emotional communication in which information and emotion constantly interact. Consequently, the study of media discourse requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account not only linguistic forms, but also visual, cognitive, social and cultural factors.

1.4. Cooking shows as a genre of modern Media Discourse

Media, as a dynamic and multifaceted communicative environment, includes many different genres and formats. Some of them are mainly informative and some are more entertaining. Television and digital platforms are especially important in this system, because they shape the way people receive information and interact with media content. Cooking shows belong to this sphere and can be seen as one of the recognizable genres of contemporary media discourse.

A cooking show is a television genre focused on food preparation and the demonstration of culinary techniques, usually presented by chefs or culinary experts in a kitchen environment [Collins 2009]. Originally, they focused on the demonstration of culinary techniques, but later they have gradually evolved into complex communicative performances that involve narrative structures and strong elements of personalization. This development is also connected with the broader tendency toward infotainment, where the boundary between informing and entertaining the viewer becomes less clear [Bonner 2003].

The evolution of cooking shows also reflects changes in media culture and audience expectations. Collins notes that cooking shows have undergone significant changes over time. In her study *Watching What We Eat: The Evolution of Television Cooking Shows*, she argues that cooking shows have remained popular because they are flexible and able to adapt to new cultural and media demands. One of the most notable transformations identified by the researcher is the shift from traditional instructional programming toward formats that prioritize entertainment and lifestyle elements, often designed for international distribution and adaptation [Collins 2009].

In line with this tendency, modern cooking television has moved away from strictly step-by-step formats and developed into a diverse field that incorporates multiple subgenres while maintaining broad audience appeal. As Oren observes, one of the most significant developments in global food programming is the substantial change in tone and genre structure. In particular, the emergence and widespread popularity of competitive cooking formats, especially those broadcast in primetime, clearly illustrate this transition from instructional content to entertainment-oriented programming [Oren 2013].

The popularity of food-related television increased greatly in the early twenty-first century. De Solier observes that “in the early twenty-first century, much of the Western world is in the midst of a boom in food television” [De Solier 2005]. This tendency can also be seen in the establishment of specialized television channels dedicated exclusively to food content, such as the *Food Network* in the United States and *UK Food* in Great Britain. Although early programming on such channels often focused on culinary education, the genre gradually moved toward more entertaining and competitive formats [Collins 2009].

The classification of cooking shows as a distinct media genre has been addressed in early scholarly attempts to systematize their formats and communicative functions. One of the foundational frameworks was proposed by

Strange, who distinguishes several key types of cooking programs, namely “Tour-Educative,” “Raw-Educative,” “Cookery-Educative,” and “Personality.” In this typology, “Tour-Educative” refers to programs centred on travel and culinary exploration, while “Raw-Educative” focuses on the transformation of ingredients from their original state into completed dishes. The “Cookery-Educative” format is characterized by a host who demonstrates and explains cooking processes step by step, whereas the “Personality” type emphasizes the role of the presenter, whose individuality and performative presence introduce elements of entertainment into the program [Strange 1998].

With the further development of the genre, later studies have expanded this typology to reflect contemporary media trends. In particular, in the book *Food Discourse of Celebrity Chefs of Food Network*, the authors propose several additional formats, including “Cooking Live,” “Cooking Competitions,” “Food Talk Shows,” and “Food Reality Competitions.” “Cooking Live” involves real-time or audience-based interaction, where the host prepares food while engaging viewers. “Cooking Competitions” focus on rivalry between participants, who complete culinary tasks under time pressure, often with judging and elimination elements. “Food Talk Shows” combine discussion and food-related topics with emphasis on conversation rather than instruction. “Food Reality Competitions” integrate cooking with reality TV features and highlight participants’ emotions and personal stories alongside culinary challenges.

At the same time, strict genre boundaries are difficult to apply to cooking shows. Strange emphasizes that such programmes rarely exist in a completely pure form. Instead, they tend to overlap and combine elements from different categories and this results in hybrid formats. As the author notes, an analysis of the “internal mechanics” of such programs contributes to a deeper understanding of their “making

of meaning” [Strange 1998]. This suggests that cooking shows should be viewed as flexible and evolving communicative models.

From an industrial perspective, such transformations can also be explained by the strategies of television producers and media companies, who aim to reduce financial risks by relying on hybrid formats that combine several proven genres [Creeber 2015]. As a result, contemporary cooking shows often incorporate elements of reality television, competition, documentary storytelling and lifestyle programming. Among these, the so-called “gamedoc” format, defined by Hill as a hybrid of reality and competition in which “the ‘game’ is to find the ‘truth’ in the spectacle and performance environment” [Hill 2002], has become particularly influential.

A significant number of popular cooking programs can be understood through this hybrid model, especially competitive formats that dominate contemporary television schedules. Shows such as *MasterChef*, *Top Chef* and *The Great British Bake Off* exemplify this trend. These formats have achieved considerable success across both American and European markets and consistently attract large audiences.

A key feature of cooking shows as media discourse is their multimodal nature. They use not only speech, but also images, music, editing, camera angles and close-ups of food. Kress and van Leeuwen argue that multimodal texts create meaning through the combination of different semiotic resources [Kress, Van Leeuwen 2006]. In cooking shows, this is especially visible because the viewer understands the programme through both language and visual presentation.

Within media discourse, cooking shows also function as a space of emotional communication. They do not simply teach the audience how to cook. They create emotional experiences connected with taste, success, failure, identity and personal memory. This emotional effect is produced through evaluative vocabulary,

expressive intonation, personal stories and competitive situations. Adema notes that food media often uses positive evaluation and intensifiers to shape viewers' reactions to taste and appearance [Adema 2000].

Reality-based and competitive elements make this emotional dimension even stronger. Programs such as *MasterChef* or *The Great British Bake Off* rely on tension, conflict, success and failure as narrative drivers. These elements encourage viewers to sympathize with contestants and experience emotions together with them [Oren 2013].

Cooking shows also participate in the construction of cultural meanings. Food in such programmes is not only a dish or a product. It may represent family, tradition, national cuisine, lifestyle or social identity. Appadurai notes that food-related media can take part in creating cultural narratives and negotiating identity in a globalized world [Appadurai 1988].

Cooking shows can be viewed as an important genre of modern media discourse. Through language, body language, visuals and narrative structure, they can both provide information about food and influence viewers' emotions and perceptions.

Conclusion to Chapter 1

In Chapter 1 we have examined the theoretical basis for the study of emotional expression in modern English and it has shown that emotions should not be treated only as psychological experiences. In communication, they become part of meaning-making and are expressed through language, body behaviour, context and interaction. The review of linguistic approaches demonstrated that emotion was not always central to linguistic research, since earlier studies mainly focused on grammar and structure. However, later developments, especially the growing interest in language use and the “emotional turn,” made it possible to view emotions as an important component of communication.

We also clarified the difference between emotion and emotivity. Emotion refers mainly to an internal psychological state, while emotivity is connected with the way this state is represented and interpreted in language. This distinction is important for the present research because the analysis focuses not on emotions as private feelings, but on how they become visible and audible in speech. In this sense, emotivity helps explain how emotional experience is transformed into linguistic and communicative forms. The analysis of linguistic means of emotion expression showed that emotional meaning in modern English is created at several levels at once. It may appear through lexical units that name or evaluate emotions, syntactic structures such as exclamations, questions, repetitions and partial constructions, prosodic features such as pitch, stress, pauses and intonation, as well as it can be seen on semantic and pragmatic levels. This shows that emotional expression is usually formed by the whole utterance and by the situation in which it is used.

In media discourse, emotions become especially important in public communication. Media discourse does not only transmit information. It also shapes audience perception and emotional involvement. This is achieved through language, images, sound, editing, narrative structure and other semiotic resources. Because of this, emotional meaning in media should be analysed as multimodal and context-dependent. Within this framework, cooking shows can be seen as a clear example of how emotions are expressed in contemporary media. Their development from simple instructional programmes to entertainment formats shows that contemporary food television is built around much more than cooking. Competition, judging, personal stories, success, failure and tension make this genre emotionally rich. In cooking shows, food preparation becomes part of a broader communicative situation and emotions are created through speech, body language, visual presentation and narrative structure.

The findings of Chapter 1 confirm that emotional expression in Modern English should be viewed as a complex phenomenon. Its study requires a holistic approach that takes into account the interaction between language structure and socio-cultural factors.

2. EMOTIONS EXPRESSION IN COOKING SHOWS

Cooking shows have come a long way from just being about food. What started as straightforward demonstrations of technique and flavour has evolved into something far more psychologically loaded. It transformed into a genre where the food is almost secondary to the human drama surrounding it. Today's culinary competitions are emotionally charged environments where the stakes feel genuinely high and the pressure is designed to expose people at their most raw. The ticking clock, the desperate need to prove something to the judges, to yourself - all of that spills out not just in what people say, but in how they move and what their faces do. Emotion is not incidental to these shows. It is the product.

Adult cooking competitions and children's cooking shows treat emotion very differently. In adult formats, emotional expression is frequently associated with professional ambition, personal sacrifice, pressure and self-realization, whereas children's shows go the other way: sincerity, excitement, encouragement, a general assumption that everyone deserves to do well. That gap is exactly what makes them interesting to study together, as a window into how emotion actually works in English-language television.

The empirical basis of the research consists of transcripts selected from the American television projects *MasterChef* and *MasterChef Junior*. In total, twenty episodes were analysed, including ten episodes from the adult version of the show and ten episodes from the children's version. The selected material covers speech from both judges and contestants, so the analysis could approach emotional communication from multiple sides at once.

In the selected episodes, emotional expression is connected with a wide range of emotional states. In emotion studies, one of the most widely known approaches belongs to Paul Ekman. He argued for a group of basic emotions that could be recognized through facial expression and communicative behaviour. In his model,

the central emotions are anger, fear, sadness, happiness, disgust and surprise [Ekman 1992]. Robert Plutchik offered a psychoevolutionary classification. In his model, he distinguished eight primary emotions arranged in pairs of opposites: joy and sadness, anger and fear, trust and disgust, surprise and anticipation [Plutchik 1980]. These classifications are useful for the research because they help name the emotional states that repeatedly appear in the selected episodes of *MasterChef* and *MasterChef Junior*. However, the material of cooking reality shows does not always present emotions in their “pure” basic form. More often, basic emotions appear through more specific states shaped by the situation. For example, fear is realized as anxiety or nervousness, anger appears as irritation or frustration, sadness can be connected with disappointment, surprise may develop into shock or disbelief, joy is expressed through excitement, relief, pride or happiness after success.

2.1. Linguistic means of emotion expression in MasterChef and MasterChef Junior contestants’ speech

The speech of contestants in culinary reality shows is usually very emotional. Because they are constantly in stressful and competitive environments, with strict time limits and public judging, their way of speaking naturally becomes a rich source for studying how emotions are expressed in language. In the following analysis, the classification proposed by Laura Alba-Juez and J. Lachlan Mackenzie in *Emotion in Discourse* will be used as the theoretical basis for categorizing the linguistic means of emotion expression in contestants’ speech [Alba-Juez, Mackenzie 2019].

As discussed in the theoretical chapter, syntactic means of emotional expression include emotionally charged sentence structures such as exclamations, questions, elliptical and inverted constructions, parenthetical elements, fixed expressive phrases and various intensifying patterns.

Repetition is one of the most frequent linguistic devices used for emotional intensification in both *MasterChef* and *MasterChef Junior*. Repetition refers to the

explicit or implicit reiteration of lexical meanings and semantic-structural components of syntactic constructions [Сидоренко 2017]. Prof. V.A. Kukharencо defines repetition as a recurrence of the same word, word combination, phrase for two or more times [Кухаренко 2000]. In the adult version of *MasterChef*, repetition often appears in moments of intense pressure during cooking tasks. For example, contestants repeatedly use imperative constructions as a way of pushing themselves forward and staying focused: “**Come on, come on, come on, come on! Let's go, baby! Let's go, baby! Let's go!**” [MC S14E05], “**Come on, dough. Come on, dough. Dough not fail me now**” [MC S14E05] or “**Come on, come on, come on, come on, come on**” [MC S14E06]. In these cases, repetition seems to mirror the urgency of the situation, as well as the contestants’ anxiety caused by strict time limits. A similar pattern can be observed when contestants are overwhelmed and struggling to think clearly. In the example “**What can I do? What can I do? What can I do? What can I do? What can I do?**” [MC S14E13], the repeated interrogative structure demonstrates stress and the inability to make decisions quickly under pressure. In other moments, repetition takes on a slightly different role and is used as a form of self-calming. For instance, in “**Okay, okay, okay, okay, okay. Breathe, Becks. Breathe, Becks, breathe. Oh, shoot. Okay, breathe, breathe, breathe, breathe**” [MC S14E17], repeated words and phrases seem to function as a way of regaining control and reducing panic. Repetition also appears in group communication, especially in team challenges where contestants try to motivate each other. This can be observed in group motivational chants such as “**Let's go. Go, go, go, go, go! Go, millennials! Go, go, go, go, go, go! Let's go, let's go!**” [MC S14E05], “**Let's go! Keep going, millennials. Keep going. Let's go! We've got this now**” [MC S14E06] or “**Whoo! Let's go, blue! Let's go, let's go, let's go**” [MC S14E07]. In these examples, repeated imperatives create rhythmic speech patterns that reinforce team spirit and competitive drive.

In *MasterChef Junior*, repetition is even more noticeable and emotionally direct, which may be connected to the more spontaneous nature of children's speech. For instance, "**Oh, my gosh! Oh, my gosh! Oh, my gosh!**" [MCJ S09E01] clearly shows excitement and surprise, while "**Please, please, please**" [MCJ S09E01] reflects strong hope and emotional dependence on the outcome. Repetition is also used to verbalize panic and confusion, as in "**Where's my spoon? Where's my spoon?**" [MCJ S09E01], "**So, I'm like, 'uh, what do I do? What do I do?'**" [MCJ S09E03] and "**Okay, so what are we making? What are we making?**" [MCJ S09E03]. These repeated structures imitate spontaneous thinking aloud and often appear when children are under pressure. Children also actively use repetition in cooperative communication during team challenges. For example, "*Kristell, we don't have time. We only have five minutes. – I know, I know, I know!*" [MCJ S09E03] and "*Hurry. These plates, these plates. We still have to – I know, I know, I know. Lydia, Lydia!*" [MCJ S09E03] show how repetition intensifies urgency and anxiety, and how participants try to coordinate under time pressure. In addition, repetition can express joy and positive emotional release after success. This is especially visible in the example "**Yes! We won! We won! Yeah! Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes**" [MCJ S09E03], where repeated affirmative constructions reflect excitement and relief.

A related syntactic phenomenon is parallelism, or parallel construction, which contributes to emotional emphasis through repeated grammatical patterns. In the adult version, this can be observed in examples such as "***I'm feeling confident about the flavour in my soup. I'm feeling confident about my presentation***" [MC S14E18] and "***I am feeling pretty confident. Flavors are there, the aesthetics are there***" [MC S14E18]. The repeated syntactic structures reinforce the speakers' confidence. Similarly, in *MasterChef Junior*, one contestant says, "***I love going fishing all the time. I love going hunting. I love my dirt bike and my goat cart***" [MCJ S09E02].

The repetition of “*I love*” places emphasis on joy and attachment to hobbies that form part of the child’s identity.

Exclamatory sentences are another common syntactic feature used to express emotions in both *MasterChef* and *MasterChef Junior*. In the adult version, exclamatory constructions frequently accompany moments of frustration or pressure. For example, one contestant exclaims, “*What a freaking mess. I don’t know what else to do!*” [MC S14E08]. Here, the exclamatory sentence emphasizes frustration and panic caused by problems during cooking. In another example, “*This little squash is the most difficult thing to cook! Takes forever!*” [MC S14E07], the speaker’s irritation becomes noticeable because of the short, emotionally loaded exclamations. At the same time, exclamatory constructions are also used to express positive emotions, as seen in “*Top three! Whoo! This is the moment I’ve been waiting for*” [MC S14E17] or “*I’m a top dish! Finally. I have it. I have it in me*” [MC S14E10]. They reflect excitement after successful performances. Similar emotional emphasis appears in reactions such as “*I’m so happy for Michael!*” [MC S14E19]. Here, the exclamation shows happiness for another person.

In *MasterChef Junior*, exclamatory sentences appear even more frequently and are emotionally vivid. Children use exclamatory constructions to show amazement and enthusiasm, as can be seen in the examples: “*This pantry is awesome! I love it. There’re so many amazing things!*” [MCJ S09E01], “*We have treasure chest! This is awesome! Wow! This is so cool!*” [MCJ S09E02] or “*It’s basketball themed! This is awesome*” [MCJ S09E03]. In more stressful situations, exclamations often express anxiety or nervousness, as in “*This is so stressful!*” [MCJ S09E03]. Children also use exclamatory constructions to express excitement and joy, as in “*I’m in the finale! I’m so excited!*” [MCJ S09E08] or “*Yes! I’m top three!*” [MCJ S09E02].

Interrogative sentences in both versions of the show often function as emotional expressions rather than genuine requests for information. In many cases, these questions are rhetorical and seem to reflect the speaker thinking out loud under pressure. In the adult version of the show, interrogative constructions commonly appear during stressful or emotionally difficult moments. For example, one contestant asks, *“What did I get myself into? ... How am I going to do this?”* [MC S14E07]. These rhetorical questions demonstrate anxiety and fear of failure while leading a team challenge. A similar emotional effect can be seen in the longer sequence: *“I’m so torn. Do I take out the millennials when they’re already down a person? Or do I take out Gen Z? Who I think are gonna struggle in this challenge? Or do I give it to the Gen X?”* [MC S14E06]. The repeated questioning reflects hesitation and uncertainty as the contestant struggles to make a decision. In other situations, short interrogative reactions intensify shock or disbelief, as in *“Are you kidding?”* [MC S14E08]. Questions may also be used humorously. When one contestant jokes about turning seventy and asks, *“Can you imagine 70 candles on a cake?”* [MC S14E08], the interrogative form creates comic exaggeration but it still keeps the emotional tone light and expressive.

In *MasterChef Junior*, interrogative sentences often sound even more emotionally charged because children tend to react immediately and verbally process emotions as they occur. One contestant, overwhelmed by the idea of cooking alongside Gordon Ramsay, exclaims, *“I gotta keep up with Chef Gordon? The number one? The goat? The best chef in the world? I have to keep up with him?”* [MCJ S09E08]. The rapid sequence of questions reflects admiration and panic at the same time. Another contestant repeatedly asks, *“What if the chicken’s not juicy enough? If it’s dry? If the skin’s not crispy enough?”* [MCJ S09E03], openly verbalizing anxiety and fear of failure during a challenge. Questions are also used to express surprise and disbelief. When judges announce that four dishes are at the top,

a child immediately reacts: *“Tonight we'll be tasting all of your dishes and there are four dishes that we felt were at the top of the class. – Four?”* [MCJ S09E05]. Although grammatically simple, the question communicates clear emotional shock.

In the speech of adult contestants, emotional intensity is often strengthened through exclamatory cliché patterns such as *“such a”* and *“what a.”* For example, the statement *“**What a** freaking mess. I don't know what else to do!”* [MC S14E08] is produced when the contestant has serious problems with her dish. The phrase with *“what a”* highlights the speaker's frustration and panic. A similar effect can be seen in *“This is **such a** difficult challenge because we had to work backwards, while we usually work forwards from a dish”* [MC S14E17]. Here, the construction *“such a”* intensifies the perception of the task as unusually stressful and mentally demanding. The emotional tension becomes even more noticeable in the following comment: *“Don't know **what the** (bleep) I'm doing”* [MC S14E17], which reflects confusion and pressure under unfamiliar cooking conditions. At the same time, these structures are not limited to negative emotions. The same structure may also express positive emotions. In the phrase *“Top three! Whoo! This is the moment I've been waiting for. It feels like **such a relief**”* [MC S14E17], the construction *“such a relief”* intensifies the contestant's feeling of emotional release after successfully reaching the top three. The construction helps underline the shift from anxiety to excitement and relief.

Intensifiers are widely used in both adult and children's speech in *MasterChef* to amplify emotional states. In the speech of adult contestants, intensification is frequently achieved through adverbs like *“really,” “so,” “super,” “extremely”* and *“definitely.”* For example, in the statement *“I'm feeling **super** anxious knowing there's a mystery box challenge on the first day”* [MC S14E05], the word *“super”* increases the emotional weight of anxiety and highlights the pressure of the situation. A similar effect appears in *“I'm **definitely** taking a big risk with this dish”* [MC S14E05], where *“definitely”* reinforces determination while also suggesting

awareness of possible failure. Positive emotions are intensified in much the same way. Contestants often rely on “so” to communicate excitement or satisfaction, as in “*And it's just **so** exciting to see*” [MC S14E05] or “*It feels **so** amazing to win the first immunity pin*” [MC S14E05]. These constructions are simple, but they sound emotionally natural in spontaneous speech and help make the speaker’s reaction more expressive.

Intensifiers also appear in statements connected with confidence or evaluation. In “*My dish is **definitely** top of my generation*” [MC S14E05], the speaker uses “*definitely*” to strengthen personal certainty and confidence about the dish. Sometimes emotional intensity is reinforced not only through intensifiers themselves but also through repetition. One contestant admits: “*I'm **really, really** struggling. I've never cooked dry-aged duck. It's **really, really** tricky*” [MC S14E06]. The repeated “*really*” reflects stress and makes the difficulty of the task feel more immediate.

In particularly stressful moments, contestants often combine several intensifying elements within the same utterance. This can be seen in Sunshine’s reaction: “*I am **so** overwhelmed by the disadvantage of this cheese. I don't even know where to go from here. My dish is already **so** aged. This is **really** bad*” [MC S14E06]. Here, expressions such as “*so overwhelmed*,” “*so aged*” and “*really bad*” work together to build a stronger sense of anxiety and emotional distress. A contestant comments: “*This sucks **a lot**. I felt **so** good throughout the challenge, and then to see the panna cottas come out not set, it was **pretty** terrible*” [MC S14E13]. Expressions such as “*a lot*” and “*pretty terrible*” strengthen disappointment and frustration. Emotional pressure reaches an even higher level in statements like “***Absolutely the most** stressful thing I've ever done in my life*” [MC S14E15], where “*absolutely*” and the superlative construction combine to maximize stress and anxiety. Positive emotions are intensified just as strongly, especially after successful

performances. One contestant says, “*I am **so** excited right now. It’s been **so** long since I’ve been at the top*” [MC S14E13]. “*So excited*” and “*so long*” emphasize excitement and personal achievement. In another example, “*I **could not be more** excited. I made the top ten. I’m so glad that I’m immune...*” [MC S14E13], the comparative structure “*could not be more*” functions as a maximal intensifier, suggesting the strongest possible emotional reaction of joy.

In *MasterChef Junior*, children regularly use simple but highly expressive forms such as “*I am **super** excited*” [MCJ S09E02], “*I’m **so** happy I got lobster*” [MCJ S09E02] or “*I’m **so** excited*” [MCJ S09E03]. These examples clearly express excitement and joy. Children also tend to stack intensifiers together, which makes their speech sound especially spontaneous. This can be seen in the statement “*I want to make my dad **super-duper ultra** proud*” [MCJ S09E02]. The accumulation of “*super*,” “*duper*” and “*ultra*” reflects an attempt to maximize emotional expression and shows pride and strong desire for approval.

Stress and nervousness are intensified in similar ways. Expressions such as “*I’m **super-duper** scared*” [MCJ S09E05], “*I’m **really** getting nervous*” [MCJ S09E03] and “*I’m feeling **pretty** excited and a little nervous*” [MCJ S09E07] show how children openly verbalize fear and nervousness with the help of intensifiers. In some cases, several emotions are intensified at once. One contestant says, “*I am literally multitasking on a new level. It is **so** fun and **so** cool and scary*” [MCJ S09E08]. The repeated “*so*” reinforces excitement and fear simultaneously, which reflects the emotionally mixed nature of competitive situations.

Syntactic means of emotional expression in *MasterChef* are frequently reinforced through emphatic structures that intensify contestants’ emotions. One noticeable feature is the use of cleft-like constructions and demonstrative emphasis, which help speakers draw attention to the part of the utterance that feels emotionally important to them at that moment. This can be seen in the statement “***This is the***

challenge that everybody fears” [MC S14E15], said during the wall challenge. The structure places strong emphasis on the word “*challenge*,” presenting it almost as a symbol of stress and possible failure within the competition. The contestant continues, “*Wow, it's the wall... seeing it, it is daunting. It's huge*” [MC S14E15]. The short evaluative sentences and repeated use of “it” create a dramatic effect and reflect a mixture of fear and admiration.

Another expressive syntactic feature is emphatic “*do*,” which contestants use to make emotions sound more sincere or personally meaningful. In Anna’s statement “*I **do** care about these guys. I don't want them to go home*” [MC S14E07], the auxiliary “*do*” is not grammatically necessary, yet it adds emotional force to the utterance. It seems to function as a way of insisting on the genuineness of her concern and emotional attachment to the other contestants. This moment appears after a self-critical reflection: “*I think I could have done a better job... I just feel like crying. I'm scared*” [MC S14E07]. Here, guilt and sadness are expressed more openly through the combination of self-criticism and emotional confession.

Demonstrative pronouns such as “*this*,” “*that*” and “*these*” also carry emotional weight in contestants’ speech. For example, in the reaction “***This** can't be real. They think that I did a good job. **That's** amazing*” [MC S14E06], the repeated demonstratives reflect disbelief and shock after receiving positive feedback from the judges. The success feels difficult for the contestant to fully process and the demonstratives reinforce this sense of unreality. A similar effect appears in “***This** is the moment I've been waiting for*” [MC S14E17]. Here, “*this*” marks the situation as unique and emotionally significant. The following statement, “*I'm so close to winning the MasterChef trophy...*” [MC S14E17], further strengthens the idea that the contestant sees this moment as the culmination of long-term effort and emotional anticipation.

Prosodic means of emotional expression play a significant role in both *MasterChef* and *MasterChef Junior*. In many situations, the way something is said becomes just as emotionally meaningful as the actual wording. In the adult version of the show, prosody often reflects anxiety, tension, urgency or relief during stressful cooking challenges. One clear example appears in the interaction: “*So, what's this supposed to look like in the middle? – It's supposed to be a medium rare. – Let's see how you did. – Oh, gosh... – Oh, not so bad! – Oh. Very good job*” [MC S14E06]. Before the steak is cut open, the contestant says “*Oh, gosh*” in a hesitant and noticeably nervous tone. The lowered voice and pause communicate anxiety and fear of failure even before the judges react. Once the steak is revealed successfully, the intonation changes almost immediately. “*Oh, not so bad!*” sounds lighter and more relaxed, showing relief.

A similar use of intonation can be observed during team challenges, where pressure and time limits become especially intense. In the sentence “*We've got to get the steaks in the pan **now***” [MC S14E07], the word “now” receives strong stress, which emphasizes urgency and the need for immediate action. Stress placement is also important in moments of criticism. When Warren comments, “*Anna is spending **a lot of** time on details*” [MC S14E07], the phrase “*a lot of*” is pronounced with clear emphasis, which makes the criticism sound stronger and reveals frustration and irritation with the slow pace of work.

Pauses and changes in voice quality often signal emotional vulnerability as well. In one scene, a contestant reflects on a failed panna cotta and says “*I definitely got ambitious. I just wanted to kind of convey my creativity, my ideas. Technique wasn't fully there, so...*” [MC S14E13]. The sentence trails off and the speaker’s voice becomes unstable, almost breaking into tears. The unfinished intonation and hesitation make the disappointment and sadness feel genuine and emotionally raw.

Prosody is not limited to negative emotions, however. It is also used to create warmth and emotional closeness between contestants. In the exchange “*Can I have some of that flour? Are you done with it? – Here you go. – Oh, you're amazing!*” [MC S14E05], the final phrase is pronounced with playful, almost sing-song intonation. The tonal shift briefly suspends the pressure of competition and shows friendliness and gratitude.

In *MasterChef Junior*, prosodic emotional expression tends to be even more obvious and exaggerated. For example, in the emotionally intense statement “*My pecans are burnt, and this cannot happen... Oh, no, it's burnt... If I don't get this right, then I could go home. Come on. Dang it!*” [MCJ S09E06], the child speaks with a shaky, nervous intonation that is close to crying. The voice quality expresses panic and fear of elimination. Emotional frustration can also be heard very clearly through tone and volume. During a team challenge, one contestant shouts “*Guys! What are you working on?*” [MCJ S09E03] in a sharp and irritated tone because teammates are not following her instructions. The raised volume and harsh stress pattern communicate irritation and loss of control under pressure.

Positive emotions are also clearly marked through prosody. In “*This pantry is awesome! I love it*” [MCJ S09E01], the word “*awesome*” is pronounced loudly and with a noticeably high pitch, which intensifies the feeling of excitement and amazement. Children’s reactions after victories are often especially loud and high-pitched. In one episode, contestants celebrate by screaming “*Yeah!*”, jumping and waving their hands after winning a challenge [MCJ S09E04]. The extremely high pitch of their voices strengthens the emotional effect and makes the excitement feel immediate and genuine. Surprise is also frequently expressed through intonation. In the reaction “*Look at the eyeballs! They're moving*” [MCJ S09E04], the phrase “*They're moving*” is pronounced with rising intonation, reflecting shock and amazement.

Children also use stretched vowels and exaggerated pitch variation. One contestant says “*I live on the farm in the middle of **nowhere***” [MCJ S09E02], while stretching the word “*nowhere*,” making the statement sound more expressive and emotionally coloured. A similar effect appears in “*The talent here at MasterChef is **insane**... that has **a lot** of pressure*” [MCJ S09E02], where the words “*insane*” and “*a lot*” receive strong emphatic stress. In this case, prosody reinforces admiration and nervousness at the same time.

Lexical means of emotional expression constitute one of the central levels through which emotions are verbalized in discourse. In the context of *MasterChef* and *MasterChef Junior*, lexical means are especially prominent due to the high-pressure and emotionally charged nature of the competition, where participants constantly evaluate their experiences in real time.

In the adult version of *MasterChef*, one of the most dominant positive emotional states is relief combined with excitement after winning or gaining safety in the competition. This is clearly visible in “*It **feels so amazing** to win the first immunity pin*” [MC S14E05], where emotional release is directly triggered by gaining protection from elimination. The expression “*feels so amazing*” does not only indicate happiness but also relief from competitive pressure. A similar structure appears in “*I am **thrilled** to save my entire team with this immunity pin*” [MC S14E10], where “*thrilled*” encodes heightened excitement combined with responsibility, showing that emotional intensity increases when success affects not only the individual but the whole team.

Another important category is self-pride and accomplishment after completing difficult cooking tasks. This is reflected in “*I am **extremely proud** of myself*” [MC S14E17], where pride is explicitly self-directed and functions as emotional evaluation of performance. The same pattern appears in “*Looking at this*

dish, you know, I'm proud of it" [MC S14E17], where emotional satisfaction is reflective, emerging after judging one's own output.

Excitement is triggered by opportunity and high-level competition exposure, especially when contestants enter advanced stages of the show. This is visible in "*I am so excited right now*" [MC S14E13] and "*Walking into the MasterChef kitchen as one of the top five is just the most incredible experience*" [MC S14E17]. The adjective "*incredible*" signals emotional amplification, suggesting that the experience is perceived as beyond normal expectations. There is also a form of positive emotional stabilization after success, where contestants express calm satisfaction after intense pressure. For example, "*I feel so good winning this challenge for my team*" [MC S14E06] shows emotional stabilization after uncertainty, where "*feel so good*" reflects both relief and regained control.

Negative emotions in the adult dataset are not limited to simple frustration but cover a wider spectrum of psychological states, including anxiety, fear of failure, emotional overwhelm and disappointment. One of the most frequent patterns is emotional anxiety caused by uncertainty and external evaluation. This is visible in "*It does not feel good being bottom three, and I'm really praying that the judges like my food*" [MC S14E06]. The verb "*praying*" intensifies emotional dependency on external judgment, showing not just hope, but fear of negative evaluation disguised as hope. A similar structure appears in "*I hope this dish doesn't send me home*" [MC S14E13], where anxiety is condensed into a short anticipatory statement. Here, the emotion is fear of elimination. The emotional weight comes from the context: "*send me home*" functions as a euphemism for failure and exit from the competition.

Another recurring emotional state is confusion and loss of control under pressure, which is reflected in "*I am flustered. That was a tough challenge*" [MC S14E17]. The adjective "*flustered*" indicates cognitive overload, where the

contestant is mentally disorganized due to task complexity. This type of emotional response is also reinforced in “*This is wildly **stressful**. This is **way more stressful** than I thought it would be*” [MC S14E18], where stress is explicitly escalated through repetition and comparative structure “*way more than I thought,*” showing a mismatch between expectation and reality.

Disappointment and emotional downturn after performance failure are clearly expressed in “*I’m feeling kind of **defeated***” [MC S14E15]. The word “*defeated*” signals not just a single mistake but a temporary collapse of confidence and motivation. This is strengthened by “*I’m so **frustrated** right now*” [MC S14E17], where frustration is directly linked to inability to control cooking conditions or meet judges’ expectations.

In *MasterChef Junior*, emotional expression is more immediate and spontaneous. Children express emotions as direct reactions to experience, taste, competition excitement and simple enjoyment.

One of the most frequent positive emotional states is pure excitement triggered by novelty and experience itself. This is clearly seen in “*This is **awesome!** Wow! This is so **cool!***” [MCJ S09E03], “*I have never cooked in a dress like this. Everyone looks **fantastic**. Not going to lie, I look **fantastic** too*” [MCJ S09E04] or “*We have treasure chest! This is **awesome!** Wow! This is so **cool!***” [MCJ S09E02]. The emotion here is instant excitement and sensory enthusiasm, triggered by the environment and challenge atmosphere. Similarly, “*I’m so **excited**. I love pancakes*” [MCJ S09E06] shows a combination of excitement and personal preference. The verb “*love*” shows direct emotional attachment, which is typical for children’s emotional expression.

Joy and enthusiasm are also frequently expressed linked to winning or being in a favourable position in the competition. In “*I’m the winning chef! Let’s go. I’m so **proud***” [MCJ S09E02], joy is expressed through direct self-identification, where

“I’m the winning chef” signals victory, while *“I’m so proud”* reflects self-satisfaction and emotional fulfilment. A similar pattern appears in *“I’m so excited because, I mean, I’m in the ‘MasterChef’ finale. It just **feels amazing** because this has always been my dream, and I really never thought I’d get this far”* [MCJ S09E09], where excitement is directly tied to reaching the finale. The emotion is reinforced through *“I’m so excited”* and *“It just feels amazing,”* while the reference to a lifelong dream and unexpected success intensifies the sense of joy and achievement.

Negative emotional expression in children is highly direct and often intensified through simple lexical markers without mitigation. One of the most dominant emotions is fear, especially in relation to judges and elimination pressure. For instance, *“I **feel very nervous** because I’m walking down the plank”* [MCJ S09E02] explicitly names anxiety, while also linking it to a stressful situation. Fear is also reinforced through evaluative and situational expressions such as *“But it looks like it’s gonna be a team challenge, for sure. — Oh, **this is scary**”* [MCJ S09E03], where *“this is scary”* functions as a direct emotional label triggered by anticipation of difficulty and responsibility. In *“I **feel so bad** for Brayon and I’m just really really **scared** because Gordon Ramsay is **scary**”* [MCJ S09E04], fear is intensified through repetition and externalized onto authority *“Gordon Ramsay is scary.”*

Anxiety and nervousness also appear as dominant emotional states, often expressed through explicit self-report constructions such as *“I’m so **nervous**”* [MCJ S09E02] and *“I’m feeling pretty **nervous**”* [MCJ S09E03]. Sadness is also clearly verbalized, though less frequently than fear and nervousness. In *“I **am really sad** that I’m in the bottom three again”* [MCJ S09E02], sadness is explicitly named and directly linked to disappointment.

Interjections are one of the most immediately recognizable lexical markers of emotional expression in both *MasterChef* and *MasterChef Junior*. In the speech of

adult contestants, interjections are especially common in high-pressure situations. For example, emotional excitement and competitive enthusiasm are expressed through utterances such as “*Come on, come on, come on, come on! Let's go, baby! Let's go, baby! Let's go!*” [MC S14E05], “*Yeah! **Whoo!** — **Whoa!***” [MC S14E05] and “***Whoo!** — **Whoo!** — **Oh!***” [MC S14E10]. Surprise and admiration are verbalized through exclamations like “*We got the boxes? **Oh, my gosh***” [MC S14E05], “***Oh, my gosh.** — **Oh, no!** — Okay! This is crazy! — **What?** The dreaded wall!*” [MC S14E15], “***Whoa!** — Let's go! **Whoo!** — **Oh, wow!** Do y'all see the MasterChef logo there?*” [MC S14E07]. Interjections also frequently appear when contestants experience stress or emotional overload. In moments of frustration or panic, speech becomes fragmented and filled with short emotional outbursts such as “***Oh, my gosh. Seriously?***” [MC S14E05], “***Holy moly!***” [MC S14E07] or “***Damn it... Disaster today. Just complete disaster***” [MC S14E10]. A similar effect can be seen in more emotionally intense reactions like “***Oh, no!** I'm a chicken with my head cut right now*” [MC S14E13] or “***No. Oh, Lord***” [MC S14E15], where interjections contribute to a sense of panic and loss of control. At the same time, they can also mark emotional release. After particularly stressful moments, contestants often shift into relief through short exclamations, as in “***Oh, my God. Whoo! Oof,** that was crazy!*” [MC S14E08].

In *MasterChef Junior*, interjections appear even more frequently and tend to sound more spontaneous and emotionally unfiltered. Young contestants actively use exclamations such as “*Oh, my gosh!*”, “*Whoa!*”, “*Wow!*”, “*Oh!*”, “*Yes!*”, “*Oh, no!*”, “*Eww!*” and “*What?*” For example, during stressful cooking situations contestants repeatedly use exclamatory markers to verbalize panic and anxiety: “***Oh, no!** — What happened? — Come on. — His pecans, they're smoking. They're burnt, I think. — **Oh goodness. Oh no,** this is not good*” [MCJ S09E06], “***Oh no.** I'm making a full ice cream dessert. I have never made ice cream before and I'm not*

good with most desserts” [MCJ S09E06] or “**Oh my goodness.** *It was hard keeping up with Chef Ramsay breaking down the duck, so how am I supposed to keep up with him doing this whole entire cook?*” [MCJ S09E08]. Similarly, repeated interjections are used to express confusion and excitement simultaneously. In “**Whoa! — What? — What are those? — What? — Welcome back, guys. — What's going on? What's going on?**” [MCJ S09E08], the short questions and exclamations overlap, showing confusion and excitement at the same time. A similar pattern appears in “**Whoa! — Whoa! This is awesome! — What? — What? — Whoa! — Yo, it's a dinosaur! It's so fun! — It's a time machine! A time machine!**” [MCJ S09E07], where shock quickly shifts into enthusiasm.

Interjections in *MasterChef Junior* are also actively used to express negative reactions. For example, during a challenge involving seaweed, contestants react with a chain of emotionally charged interjections: “**Oh my god! — Oh! — This is disgusting. — Oh, it smells so bad. — Eww**” [MCJ S09E02]. A similar emotional pattern appears in Episode 5, where contestants were required to cook with ingredients they personally hated. Their reactions include short but emotionally loaded utterances such as “**Oh, disgusting**” [MCJ S09E05] and “**Eww**” [MCJ S09E05], which function as direct verbal manifestations of disgust. Another example, “**Oh, disgusting. — Nasty. — They smell terrible. — Eww**” [MCJ S09E05], demonstrates how children use both interjections and evaluative statements in order to intensify emotional expression.

At the semantic level, emotional expression in *MasterChef* emerges through meaning that often goes beyond the literal sense of words. In the adult version of *MasterChef*, conceptual metaphors are especially common in moments of stress and emotional overload. For example, the statement “My **heart is in my throat**” [MC S14E05] links fear to a bodily sensation, making anxiety feel almost physical. In a similar way, “*I feel like the **world is spinning around me***” [MC S14E05] conveys

confusion and emotional overload through the idea of losing stability. Contestants also frequently use metaphorical images connected with destruction or chaos. In the phrase “*It feels like a **train wreck**, but stay with me*” [MC S14E07], the expression “*train wreck*” no longer refers to a literal accident but helps communicate panic and the feeling that the situation is getting out of control.

Adult contestants also tend to exaggerate emotionally difficult situations in order to stress their intensity. Phrases such as “*This is **the most difficult** thing to cook!*” [MC S14E07] or “*It’s **absolutely insane***” [MC S14E17] encode intensity through superlative or extreme adjectives and it makes emotional reactions sound stronger. Similar emotional colouring can be seen in expressions like “*This is **craziness***” [MC S14E15], “*This is **wildly stressful***” [MC S14E18]. They both encode stress and emotional overload directly in lexical choice, while “*It feels **so amazing** to win the first immunity pin*” [MC S14E05] uses “*amazing*” as a semantic marker of joy and peak positive affect. Similarly, “*I am so **overwhelmed***” [MC S14E06] encodes emotional saturation through the adjective “*overwhelmed*,” which semantically presupposes stress and loss of control.

Figurative bodily imagery recurs in adult contestants' speech. In “***My heart just drops** because I know that they're not set*” [MC S14E13], disappointment and panic are expressed through the metaphorical movement of the heart. Similarly, in “***I put my whole heart on this plate**, my culture, my generation*” [MC S14E05], the word “heart” carries pride and personal identity rather than its literal meaning. In both cases, figurative language frames cooking as an act bound to emotional experience.

In *MasterChef Junior*, emotional meaning is often even more expressive and imaginative. Children regularly use dramatic comparisons and emotionally vivid descriptions to communicate different emotions. For example, oysters are described as “*The nightmares under my bed*” [MCJ S09E05]. The image transforms an

unpleasant ingredient in the language of childhood fear. In another example, “*The talent here at MasterChef is **insane***” [MCJ S09E02], the word “*insane*” is used to express admiration in a strongly exaggerated way.

Children’s speech also contains many emotionally absolute evaluations. Contestants often describe situations as the “best,” “worst,” or “most stressful” experiences, using the superlatives. This can be seen in “*This is **the most stress I’ve ever felt***” [MCJ S09E09], where emotional pressure and anxiety are presented as something extreme and overwhelming. A comparable pattern appears in reactions to exciting events or guests. For example, one contestant exclaims “*Oh, my gosh. That’s **the best thing** ever. I want to throw some hoops*” [MCJ S09E03]. The phrase “*best thing ever*” exaggerates the emotional reaction and presents the experience as uniquely exciting from the child’s perspective, expressing joy and enthusiasm.

Figurative bodily expressions also appear in *MasterChef Junior*. For instance, “*My **heart is beating so fast***” [MCJ S09E03] ties anxiety to a concrete physical sensation, while “*My **nerves are getting the best of me***” [MCJ S09E07] presents nervousness as something powerful enough to control behaviour.

At the pragmatic level, emotional meaning depends less on individual words and more on the situation in which they are spoken. In *MasterChef*, contestants constantly communicate under pressure: they are being judged, evaluated, compared to others and, in many cases, fighting to stay in the competition. Because of this, even relatively simple phrases often carry additional emotional meaning. In the adult version of the show, pragmatic emotional meaning is closely bound to the competitive atmosphere and the authority of the judges. For example, the statement “*I’m just **hoping** the judges feel like it’s elevated enough*” [MC S14E05] sounds like more than a simple expression of hope. In context, it reflects anxiety and dependence on the judges’ approval and awareness that the contestant’s future in the competition depends on their evaluation. A similar pragmatic effect appears in “*I am really*

praying that the judges like my food” [MC S14E06]. The verb “*praying*” is not used literally here. Instead, it emphasizes fear of failure and the contestant’s lack of control over the outcome.

Adult contestants also tend to soften emotional statements in situations where they try to maintain composure in front of others. Rather than openly admitting panic, they often use more restrained formulations. For instance, “*I’m feeling **not that confident***” [MC S14E15] indirectly shows insecurity and self-doubt through understatement. In a similar way, “***I’m not in a good place** right now*” [MC S14E13] signals emotional distress without describing it openly. However, when the pressure becomes too intense, this restraint sometimes disappears. This can be seen in the phrase “***I’m freaking out** internally right now*” [MC S14E07], where the contestant verbalizes panic and fear much more directly.

Pragmatic emotional meaning is also apparent during team challenges, where contestants use language not only to express feelings but also to influence others emotionally. “*We got to get our head in the game*” [MC S09E04] functions as a motivational directive rather than a neutral observation. It expresses urgency and collective pressure while also trying to reduce panic within the team. Similarly, the reflection “*Being team captain was stressful... it was intense... but at the end of the day, I know that all of us did our best*” [MC S14E07] shifts attention away from individual frustration and toward collective support, showing stress and relief.

In *MasterChef Junior*, children tend to verbalize emotions directly without softening them. For example, “*I don’t want to go home*” [MCJ S09E01] openly communicates fear of elimination and emotional attachment to the competition. “*I’m very worried*” [MCJ S09E08] expresses anxiety without any attempt at emotional distancing.

Children frequently use speech as a form of self-encouragement during stressful situations. In “*I think I got this in the bag*” [MCJ S09E06], the contestant

attempts to sound confident despite the uncertainty of the challenge. Pragmatically, such phrases often function as emotional self-support rather than objective evaluations of the situation, expressing hope and an attempt to control nervousness.

2.2. Non-verbal emotional expression in MasterChef and MasterChef Junior contestants' behaviour

In competitive cooking shows, emotion shows up in the body as much as in speech. In cooking shows, contestants regularly communicate emotion through gestures, facial expressions, body movements, crying, laughter, nervous habits and visible physical tension. As mentioned in the theoretical part of this research, Schwarz-Friesel identifies three major levels of emotional expression. The first is physiological: trembling, blushing and other involuntary bodily responses. The second is non-verbal: gestures, facial expressions, laughter, crying. The third is linguistic, realized through verbal means [Schwarz-Friesel 2015].

In the adult version of the show, physiological reactions are most visible in moments of stress, fear of elimination, uncertainty and emotional vulnerability. Emotional tension is often reflected through breathing changes and involuntary bodily reactions. For example, after hearing that she is safe from elimination, one contestant immediately exhales in relief: *“Anna, you’ve got the immunity pin, so you are safe from elimination tonight”* with the tension releasing visibly through breath [MC S14E07]. Another contestant, struggling with an unfamiliar ingredient, repeatedly tries to regulate breathing: *“I’m really, really struggling. I’ve never cooked dry-aged duck. It’s really, really tricky. – (exhales) – Breathe.”* [MC S14E06]. In this example, exhaling becomes part of emotional self-control and it demonstrates how physiological reactions function as visible indicators of psychological stress and nervousness. Similar reactions occur in situations of competitive pressure. One participant openly verbalizes the physical sensation of

stress by saying, “*Like, my heart is in my throat*” [MC S14E05], which is not literal, but only conveys both an intensified heartbeat and anxiety combined with fear.

Trembling is another common physiological response among adult contestants. One participant, speaking about his deceased mother, begins to cry and visibly shake as he says “*I would just tell her thank you...*” [MC S14E18]. The trembling here reflects deep personal grief rather than competition-related stress. In another scene, nervous excitement becomes physically observable when a contestant laughs and admits: “*My hands are shaking*” [MC S14E06], while the trembling is clearly visible on screen. Shock can also trigger immediate involuntary reactions. During a double elimination announcement, contestants collectively gasp after hearing “*Leaving tonight is ... Geags. And ... Anna*” [MC S14E08]. The gasping reaction reflects sudden disbelief and emotional shock, which is intensified by the unexpected elimination of two contestants at once.

In *MasterChef Junior*, physiological reactions tend to be more spontaneous and less controlled than in the adult show. Children display greater emotional openness and limited capacity to suppress visible stress. Fear and discomfort are frequently expressed through bodily tension and trembling. A child contestant reacts to squid with immediate rejection: “*I hate squid. Hate calamari. Eww*” [MCJ S09E02], while physically trembling from disgust and anxiety. Groaning recurs as an audible physiological response under competitive pressure. One participant, overwhelmed by multitasking, says, “*This is so hard, juggling four pans*” [MCJ S09E07], accompanied by groans that convey stress, physical and emotional exhaustion simultaneously. Another child contestant experiences intense anxiety while preparing a flambé dish: “*I’ve only flambéed once ever, and it was in this kitchen, and it was so scary. (groans) I’m trying to stay focused, but I’m freaking out*” [MCJ S09E09]. The groaning, combined with the confession of fear, reflects a connection between stress and involuntary bodily response that the child makes no

attempt to manage. Children's emotional states are also clearly visible through facial expressions and signs of nervousness. One contestant admits, "*Right now, I'm just a bit worried for the red team*" [MCJ S09E03], with visible strain on the face. Another gives the internal sensation direct expression: "*My heart is beating so fast*" [MCJ S09E03], naming the accelerated heartbeat as an immediate bodily signal of anxiety.

Non-verbal communication in *MasterChef* is highly expressive and often strengthens emotional meaning beyond what is said verbally. Adult contestants regularly use gestures, facial expressions, body movement, laughter and crying to show their emotional reactions. Excitement is commonly accompanied by energetic body movements. One contestant repeatedly shouts, "*Come on, come on, come on, come on! Let's go, baby! Let's go, baby! Let's go!*" while clapping and slightly jumping [MC S14E05]. In this case, gesture and movement expand on what the words already express, intensifying excitement and competitive energy. Happiness and affection are also reinforced through laughter and smiling. In one scene, a contestant reacts emotionally because he sees his childhood picture and says, "*Oh, my god. Isn't he adorable? Just look at that face. But, anyhow...*" [MC S14E05]. The laughter that follows softens the interaction and adds warmth and amusement that the words do not fully capture.

Collective excitement among adult contestants is especially visible in group reactions. After hearing "*Welcome to the top 20 of 'MasterChef: Generations,'*" contestants immediately respond through cheering and clapping [MC S14E05]. A similar collective reaction can be seen in another scene filled with cheering and shouting: "*Wow! Oh, my gosh! Let's go! Come on, millennials!*" [MC S14E06]. Here, emotion is not only individual but shared and it is strengthened not only through voices but also through coordinated gestures and energetic body language. Relief and happiness are also expressed through physical contact. After learning team results, contestants embrace and smile [MC S14E06]. Smiling frequently

marks successful outcomes. When asked whether the meat was cooked correctly, one contestant simply answers “*Yeah*” while smiling happily [MC S14E06].

Gestures are a consistent indicator of emotional intensity among adult contestants. During moments of excitement, contestants raise and throw their hands upward while cheering enthusiastically [MC S14E07]. In one team victory scene, contestants scream, jump, cry from happiness and even run forward after hearing: “*Congratulations... Red team!*” [MC S14E07]. Emotion here is not merely spoken but enacted through the whole body, showing joy and collective triumph. Surprise registers most clearly in the face. When Kamay is named the creator of the best cake, her eyebrows rise and her mouth opens in visible shock before any verbal response follows [MC S14E08]. Similar reactions appear when contestants hear unexpected challenge instructions. One participant opens his mouth and grabs his head in shock after hearing they must use aged ingredients [MC S14E06]. Another reacts to an unfamiliar vegetable by physically holding his head while saying, “*How am I gonna cook this thing?*” [MC S14E07]. The gesture communicates panic and confusion more powerfully than the words themselves.

Laughter in the adult version of the show often appears in emotionally overloaded situations, where it reflects nervousness or disbelief rather than pure amusement. For example, after being told she created the best cake, Becca reacts with shocked laughter: “*Are you serious?*” [MC S14E08]. In another scene, nervous chuckling appears during moments of uncertainty: “*Uh... (chuckles)*” [MC S14E07]. Facial expressions are particularly important in conveying shock and disbelief. During the unexpected double elimination, contestants raise eyebrows and open their mouths immediately after hearing Anna’s name announced [MC S14E08]. One contestant visually imitates the head’s explosion while describing entering the kitchen as “*mind-blowing*” [MC S14E05]. He uses physical movement to intensify emotional meaning and make surprise visible.

Crying occurs with notable frequency in the adult show. Contestants cry in response to criticism and elimination pressure. One participant begins crying while judges criticize her dish [MC S14E05], while another contestant similarly cries throughout negative feedback [MC S14E06]. Emotional support between contestants is also communicated physically and emotionally, as in exchanges such as *“I love you. — It's okay. Love you, baby,”* while Becca is crying [MC S14E07]. Anna also cries after her cake is criticized and she fears elimination, while another contestant tries to calm her by saying *“Shh. Just breathe”* [MC S14E08]. Importantly, tears are not limited to sadness. In one interaction with a judge, a contestant corrects any such assumption: *“No, these are happy tears”* [MC S14E10]. The situations demonstrate that crying in the competition can equally express happiness and sadness, depending on the context.

In *MasterChef Junior*, non-verbal emotional communication tends to be much more spontaneous and physically expressive compared to the adult version. Children often show their emotions through gestures, jumping, running, facial expressions and uncontrolled reactions. Shock is usually shown right away through instinctive body language. One child reacts with *“Oh my god”* while covering the mouth with a hand in disbelief [MCJ S09E02] that shows surprise even without further explanation. Even disgust is strongly visible, especially through facial expressions such as grimacing when reacting to certain ingredients like tomatoes [MCJ S09E05]. In some cases, gestures are used almost like a way of “acting out” what they are saying. While talking about farm life, a child spreads both arms wide to make the description more vivid and expressive [MCJ S09E02]. Fear and nervousness among children are communicated through visibly vulnerable body language. A contestant cries while admitting, *“Right now I'm so scared because who knows what is going to happen to me”* [MCJ S09E02]. Another child says, *“I'm like nervous as a wreck”*

and covers his face with their hands, almost as if trying to hide from the stress of the situation [MCJ S09E02].

At the same time, positive emotions are expressed through highly energetic movement. After winning, one contestant shouts, “*I’m the winning chef! Let’s go!*” while gesturing actively and almost jumping [MCJ S09E02]. Group reactions are especially strong in *MasterChef Junior*. Children often react together with jumping, screaming and laughing during announcements or victories. Reactions such as “*Yeah!*” are accompanied by jumping [MCJ S09E03], while the appearance of the Harlem Globetrotters leads to loud cheering and jumping [MCJ S09E03]. In another scene, children scream, laugh, stomp their feet and run in place while shouting excitedly [MCJ S09E03].

Children’s emotional communication is often highly kinetic. During team challenges, they may jump and wave their hands nervously and they will be shouting instructions to teammates at the same time [MCJ S09E03]. One child repeatedly shifts weight from one foot to another while expressing concern about team performance, showing nervous restlessness physically [MCJ S09E04]. Surprise is consistently conveyed through widened eyes and open mouths, as seen in reactions like “*Wait. Oh, my gosh!*” [MCJ S09E03] or repeated shocked “*What — What? — What?*” responses [MCJ S09E04].

Crying is particularly frequent and emotionally open among child contestants. Elimination scenes often include visible tears and sniffing [MCJ S09E01]. One child begins crying after being burned during a challenge, while another captain cries because the team lost [MCJ S09E03]. Emotional vulnerability is openly displayed without attempts to conceal it. In one especially emotional interaction, a contestant cries because the plating looks terrible, while other children immediately comfort him by hugging him and repeatedly saying, “*You’re good, dude. You’re good*” [MCJ

S09E08]. In this scene, crying expresses disappointment and distress, while the hugs and repeated reassurance express sympathy and support.

2.3. Pragmatic and emotional features of judges' communication

At the pragmatic level, judges' communication in cooking reality shows is shaped by the specific interactional context of competition, where speech is closely linked to control, evaluation, guidance and emotional regulation. Meaning is not fixed in the words themselves but emerges through situational roles: judges as authorities, contestants as performers under pressure and the kitchen as a high-stakes evaluative space. Because of this, the same type of utterance may function as instruction, encouragement, criticism or emotional support depending on timing and context. This pragmatic flexibility becomes especially visible when comparing the adult and children's versions of the show.

In the adult version, judges' communication is strongly authority-driven and often direct, with a clear focus on controlling the cooking process and intensifying performance pressure. Directive speech acts are particularly frequent and are realized through short, urgent imperatives: *"Guys, if you're using pressure cookers... Get them on, get 'em going. Get 'em closed"* [MC S14E05], *"Get that pressure cooker up to pressure and get that thing moving"* [MC S14E05], *"Please, please, please, please get your ribeye cooked"* [MC S14E06], *"Cook it more"* [MC S14E15], *"Be ready"* [MC S14E15] and *"Make sure you're tasting everything"* [MC S14E18]. The short syntactic constructions and repetitive patterning amplify emotional pressure and anxiety in the kitchen, while also reinforcing the judges' authority. These utterances function not merely as instructions but as instruments of emotional control.

Mentoring in the adult version combines professional expertise with emotional involvement. Judges frequently guide contestants through technical culinary decisions while simultaneously evaluating their performance. This can be

observed in statements such as *“Sounds promising, but make sure you really think about the plating, okay? Yes? Focus on the execution”* [MC S14E06], *“Can I suggest you turn it up? ... And get it smoking”* [MC S14E06], *“So, taste that as you go, and make sure they’re nicely seasoned as well”* [MC S14E10] and *“Make sure you’re tasting the whole time. If that gets too reduced, gets too bitter, think of the things that can help interact with the bitterness”* [MC S14E10]. Such utterances pragmatically combine instruction and evaluation, showing judges as both experts and mentors. At the same time, they also create controlled tension, because the contestant is reminded that every technical decision may lead either to confidence and relief or to anxiety and failure.

Positive emotional evaluation in the adult version is highly expressive. Judges intensify praise through evaluative adjectives and emphatic constructions. Examples include *“Your New York strip is cooked to utter perfection”* [MC S14E15], *“Purée is just silky smooth”* [MC S14E15], *“Restaurant quality, like the two behind you. Well bloody done”* [MC S14E18], *“Michael, you’ve cooked this venison beautifully”* [MC S14E19] and *“This is so impressive”* [MC S14E15]. Judges also personalize emotional evaluation through statements such as *“You just cooked your best dish of the entire season so far”* [MC S14E10] and *“That’s a bold move. It’s a joy to taste”* [MC S14E10]. These utterances express admiration and satisfaction, while also reinforcing contestants’ pride and sense of professional achievement.

Negative evaluation in the adult version is significantly more direct. Judges use strongly evaluative and sometimes metaphorical criticism. For example, contestants’ dishes are described through expressions such as *“It literally tastes like spicy baby food”* [MC S14E05], *“It looked like a dish we’d see on TikTok. But unfortunately, it tasted like one, too”* [MC S14E06], *“This looks like it was plated at a buffet line”* [MC S14E06], *“It’s like charcoal”* [MC S14E07], *“Every component is flawed”* [MC S14E08], and *“The whole performance on that meat*

station was an embarrassment” [MC S14E07]. These comments express disappointment and dissatisfaction. They also create shame and embarrassment for contestants because the criticism is public and strongly worded. Emotional pressure is intensified further through repetition and abrupt syntactic structures: “*Stop. Stop*” [MC S14E07], “*That is not good enough*” [MC S14E07] and “*We're destroying ourselves*” [MC S14E07]. The abruptness of these phrases shows anger and loss of patience. Pragmatically, such utterances function as immediate performance interruption and emotional escalation. They create frustration and fear of failure, especially because they are delivered under strict time pressure.

Interpersonal address in the adult version demonstrates a balance between familiarity and hierarchy. Judges often use emotionally expressive vocatives and informal forms of address that personalize interaction while maintaining authority. For example, “*Geags. My man!*” [MC S14E05], “*Madam*” [MC S14E06], “*Buddy*” [MC S14E10], “*Young man*” [MC S14E15] and “*Girl*” [MC S14E15]. These forms of address may soften tension and create brief moments of warmth or encouragement, but they do not remove the hierarchical structure of the interaction. Humour operates similarly. Humorous remarks often reduce tension, for instance: “*You just ripped your pants? – Yes (laughs)*” [MC S14E13], “*You've had worse*” [MC S14E13] and “*And that sweat inside the mashed potatoes is adding the saltiness now, right?*” [MC S14E13]. In these cases, humor helps release nervousness and awkwardness, allowing contestants to laugh at stressful or embarrassing moments instead of experiencing only pressure.

In the children’s version of the show, judges’ communication demonstrates a noticeably different pragmatic orientation. Emotional support and encouragement are the dominant aims, and directive speech is softened through inclusive language and motivational phrasing. Judges frequently encourage children through utterances such as “*Let’s go, guys*” [MCJ S09E01], “*Guys, 10 minutes gone, 50 minutes to go.*

Come on, speed up” [MCJ S09E01], *“So, taste, taste, taste”* [MCJ S09E03], *“Last two minutes! Let's go!”* [MCJ S09E03], *“Come on, guys. Get your duck in the pan. Quick, quick”* [MCJ S09E08], and *“Get moving. Please don't fall behind”* [MCJ S09E08]. These utterances still express urgency and pressure, but the emotional tone is less threatening than in the adult version. The judges try to activate the children and prevent panic rather than increase fear. Even instructional corrections remain emotionally supportive, for example: *“Just one thing to keep in mind: prawns cook up super-fast”* [MCJ S09E02], *“You want the water to come to a bubble”* [MCJ S09E02] and *“Don't overcook them”* [MCJ S09E02]. These comments are connected with care and guidance, because the judge corrects the child without humiliation or harshness.

Collaborative mentoring is especially prominent with child contestants. Judges frequently involve contestants in reflective culinary thinking through questions and cooperative interaction, for example: *“What do we need to focus on now?”* [MCJ S09E03], *“So, we need to focus on the steak. — Steak. — The mashed potatoes. — Mashed potatoes. — And the sauce”* [MCJ S09E03], *“I love the colour greens. Love the idea of the crispy bacon on there. But make sure it's crispy. I can still see bits of fat on there. What does crispy mean?”* [MCJ S09E04], *“Can you taste that for me? And you tell me what does that need?”* [MCJ S09E04] and *“You know you should come with a smaller pan like that. So, it stays hot you know what I'm saying sweetie?”* [MCJ S09E04]. The emotions behind these utterances are patience and encouragement. The judges do not simply correct the children. They lead them toward the answer. This helps reduce nervousness and confusion.

Positive evaluation in the children's version is openly enthusiastic. Judges use expressive adjectives and intensifiers to reinforce confidence and emotional motivation: *“It looks incredible”* [MCJ S09E01], *“This was a gorgeous dish. Absolutely restaurant quality”* [MCJ S09E08], *“The duck is cooked beautifully”*

[MCJ S09E08], *“I’m just blown away. This is just amazing”* [MCJ S09E09], *“It was definitely the best dish I tasted all night”* [MCJ S09E10]. These comments express admiration and joy. They are also emotionally protective, because strong praise helps children feel recognized and less afraid of failure. Emotional admiration is intensified through utterances such as *“Amazing. Honestly. Who is this Bryson? Who is this guy?”* [MCJ S09E10]. Here, the rhetorical questions make praise sound spontaneous and playful, which strengthens the child’s pride and confidence after successful performance.

Negative evaluation in the children’s version is considerably mitigated and emotionally softened. Judges avoid harsh criticism and instead frame mistakes as opportunities for improvement. This can be observed in statements such as *“You just need it, to kind of, manage your time a little bit better”* [MCJ S09E02] *“The flavour’s there, right? It’s just the execution that you rushed”* [MCJ S09E02], *“I think this one is just a little bit sad”* [MCJ S09E02] and *“The octopus was a miss but it’s a very challenging protein to nail”* [MCJ S09E02]. These comments still express disappointment or concern about the dish, but they are shaped carefully so that the child does not feel rejected. The emotional effect is different from adult criticism, because instead of producing shame or embarrassment, criticism is turned into guidance and emotional support.

Address in the children’s version is warmer and more affectionate. Judges use endearing vocatives that establish closeness and signal support: *“Young man”* [MCJ S09E01], *“Bud”* [MCJ S09E01], *“My darling”* [MCJ S09E01], *“Sweetie”* [MCJ S09E04], *“Young lady”* [MCJ S09E05] and *“Hey, young man. You got this”* [MCJ S09E07]. These forms of address create emotional warmth and help reduce fear and anxiety. They also make the interaction sound more personal, which is especially important because children are more emotionally vulnerable in competitive situations.

Humour and playfulness in *MasterChef Junior* often blur the line between judging and playing and that changes the whole tone of interaction in the kitchen. Instead of staying in a strict “judge-contestant” setup, communication sometimes slips into something much more relaxed and spontaneous. In one moment, a child casually turns to the judge and challenges him: *“One more thing, Gordon. — Yes? — You want a race to the door? — Let’s go”* [MCJ S09E06]. What follows is not just a joke in words, they actually run. The emotion behind this moment is joy and playful excitement. The judge takes part in the race, moving out of his usual authoritative role and literally engaging with the child on their level. It feels less like a competition for a moment and more like shared play. Something similar happens when a child simply doesn’t respond during cooking. The judge tries to guide her: *“It looks incredible. You’ve got these chicken thighs. Is there any seasoning on top of there, Remy?”* [MCJ S09E06]. There’s no reaction, so he repeats, *“Earth to Remy. Earth to Remy”* [MCJ S09E06] and then keeps trying in a more playful way while moving closer. It comes across more like a joking attempt to “pull her back” into the moment without creating pressure or conflict. The emotion behind this scene is gentle amusement and concern. A different kind of playfulness appears in the “spelling” moment: *“Give me an S. — S. — Give me an A. — A. — Give me an L. — L. — Give me a T. — T. — What have we got? — Salt! — Use it, girl!”* [MCJ S09E01]. Here, the instruction turns into a kind of game. The emotional effect is encouragement.

The pragmatic and emotional features of judges’ communication differ significantly in the adult and children’s versions of the cooking competition. In communication with adults, judges rely more heavily on authority and direct criticism, whereas interaction with children is characterized by encouragement, emotional support, mitigation and collaborative mentoring.

2.4. Comparison of emotional and communicative behaviour in MasterChef (adult vs junior versions)

In both versions of the cooking reality show, judges communicate in ways that are emotionally intense, but the way this intensity is expressed is not the same. The overall pattern changes depending on whether they are interacting with adults or children.

One thing that looks quite similar in both versions is how the judge behaves during elimination. When he announces who is going home, he tends to tilt his head forward a bit, almost like a small bow, and his voice drops into a softer, more restrained tone. This change in posture and intonation makes the moment feel heavier and more emotional in both the adult and children's shows.

We can see a clear difference between the two formats when we look at similar team challenge situations. In the children's version, when mistakes happen in cooking, the judge still reacts quite directly but the tone remains more controlled and instructional. For instance, when the blue team serves undercooked meat, the reaction is firm but still focused on guidance: *"Hey, Captain, blue team. Come here. Remy, come here. What's going on here? — The steak's still rare. — That's not acceptable. You can see that, right? That's not even pink, is it? — No. — This is not okay. Take that back into your team. It's from the same customer. — Look at me. If we continue cooking food like this, you're going to lose the challenge. Do you want to lose? — No, Chef. — Do you want to lose? — No, Chef. — Then get your act together, both of you, get in there, get your team around. Yes? — Okay. — And demand better standards. — Yes, sir. — Prove it. Let's go"* [MCJ S09E04]. The judge's words express concern and controlled irritation, but they are also meant to prevent fear and confusion from taking over the team. In contrast, the adult version shows a much more intense and emotionally charged reaction when the dish is completely overcooked. Here the judge's response becomes sharper, more

confrontational: *“Oh, the colour of those. — This is burnt. Okay. — It's like (bleep) charcoal. — Blue team? — Yes, sir. — Come here. All of you. We got charcoal filet mignons. That's what we're serving LAFC. Would you eat that? — No. — Would you eat that? — No, Chef. — Would you? Would you? — No, Chef. — (bleep) (and throws a piece of meat across the set). That's gross. Get a grip. — Yes, sir. — All of you. — Yes, sir”* [MCJ S14E08]. In this case, the emotions are anger and disappointment. Both versions deal with the same kind of mistake, but the communicative style changes significantly. With adults, the judge tends to use stronger, more direct language. In the children's version, however, even when the same problem occurs, the message is adjusted so that it sounds less harsh and more guiding, where correction is still present but softened. Because of this difference in tone, the overall interaction also feels different. Adult interactions feel more confrontational and authority-driven, while children's interactions are shaped more by guidance and encouragement.

What can be noticed even before the competition starts is that the children's version often has a much more playful and staged atmosphere. Judges sometimes appear in costumes that match the theme of the challenge. For example, in an “Under the sea” episode, they show up dressed as a pirate, a mermaid, a crab and a diver, which sets a light and playful tone from the very beginning [MCJ S09E02]. In another staged moment, there is even a short skit with a “younger version” of a judge, where he appears in a time-travel scenario and comments, *“I told you that was a bad idea”* [MCJ S09E07]. These scenes create amusement and surprise before the actual cooking begins. They also help reduce anxiety among children, because the competitive setting is presented through play.

At the same time, the adult version tends to move in a completely different emotional direction, especially under stress. When the pressure increases, the language becomes stronger and sometimes even censored. This can be seen in

moments such as *“Where's the sauce? Where is the (bleep) sauce?”* [MC S14E07], *“My steak is not looking very appetizing to me. It kind of looks a little grey and if you don't pull off a good crust... And Gordon, Joe or Aarón rips into that dish... Like, you're going home. So, we're in some deep water. Oh. — (sighs) — (bleep)”* [MC S14E06] and *“Blue cheese, blue cheese, blue cheese. Where the (bleep) is blue cheese?”* [MC S14E06]. These examples express panic, nervousness, irritation and fear of failure. These examples also show that it is not only the presence of censored words that matters, but the way stress affects the overall structure of speech. The result is a form of speech where emotion is carried not just through vocabulary, but through disorganised and hurried expression patterns that reflect the intensity of the situation.

In the adult version of the show, judges themselves also occasionally use censored strong language, which is not typical for the children's format. For instance, one judge openly reacts with surprise and disbelief while still evaluating the dish: *“I will be honest, I never thought in my career I'd say I love the plating of a (bleep) meatloaf, but this one, it looks so good”* [MC S14E05]. Even though the comment is positive overall, the use of censored language highlights how unusual and emotionally striking the situation is for the judge. The emotion here is not anger but surprise mixed with admiration. In another moment, frustration becomes much more visible as the judge reacts to an undercooked dish and immediately takes control of the situation: *“Oh, my God. That's not cooked. (bleep). Just stop. Stop. Red team, time out. Stop. That is not good enough. It's raw. Come on, guys”* [MC S14E07]. Here, the judge's speech conveys shock and irritation, because the mistake is serious and must be stopped immediately. A similar case occurs when the judge is confronted with chaotic teamwork and an unexpected action from a contestant: *“I have idea. Hey, Warren! — Yes, Horacio? What? What are you doing? — Be ready. — I'm ready. — Oh, (bleep). — Okay, I'm gonna throw you one. — Ah! — Is it good*

or bad? — Cook it more. Cook it more. There you go. — It would help if you turned the gas on. — (bleep) hell” [MC S14E15]. The reactions “*Oh, (bleep)*” and “*(bleep) hell*” appear at the moment of disbelief after a contestant throws polenta over the station so that another participant can try it. The emotions behind this exchange are disbelief and confusion but the scene also contains a certain comic absurdity because the action itself is unexpected and chaotic.

In contrast, communication in the children’s version remains physically and emotionally softer even when judges are giving instructions. They often lower themselves to the child’s level, leaning forward to reduce physical distance and to create a more supportive interaction. This can be seen in the episode where the judge says, “*That's a lot to do, okay? Be careful. Make sure that that batter is nice and crispy. Okay?*” [MCJ S09E05]. During this moment, he is leaning toward the child and speaking in a slightly lowered, almost careful tone, as if trying not to increase pressure but still guide the task. The judge is concerned and tries to encourage the child. The same pattern can be noticed when the judge speaks to Michael: “*Michael, I need you to multitask. You're the captain for a reason, okay? So, get to the pork chop seasoned and they have to be all cooked off...*” [MCJ S09E04]. In this case, the judge again positions himself physically closer to the child, maintaining eye level while giving instructions. This makes the directive sound less harsh, even though the content remains firm. The judge still expects responsibility from the child, but he tries to build confidence rather than fear.

Conclusion to Chapter 2

The study of the selected episodes of *MasterChef* and *MasterChef Junior* shows that modern cooking competitions are not just about cooking skills, but also about constant emotions expression. Emotions are present in almost every stage of interaction. Emotionality in the shows is closely connected with competition pressure, time limits, criticism, teamwork, success and fear of elimination, which

makes the discourse highly expressive and emotionally rich throughout almost every interaction.

The research confirmed that adult and child contestants express emotions differently both verbally and non-verbally. Adult participants more often demonstrate stress through emotionally intensified vocabulary, repetitions, rhetorical questions, censored expressions and abrupt syntactic constructions. Their emotional reactions are frequently linked to panic, frustration, competitive anxiety and fear of making mistakes. Children's emotional speech, in contrast, appears more open and less controlled. Young contestants openly verbalize excitement, worry, happiness, disappointment and confidence through simple evaluative language, direct emotional statements, repetitions, exclamations and playful interaction. Children also tend to externalize emotions physically more actively through crying, laughter, jumping, hugging and exaggerated gestures.

The analysis also revealed significant differences in judges' communicative behaviour depending on the age group of contestants. In the adult version, judges' discourse is characterized by stronger authority, direct criticism, emotional pressure, sarcasm and confrontational evaluative comments. Communication often becomes emotionally tense during mistakes in team challenges or stressful cooking situations, where both judges and contestants may use censored language and emotionally intensified reactions. In *MasterChef Junior*, however, judges use a softer communicative style. Their interaction with children is more supportive and playful. Judges frequently use encouragement, affectionate forms of address, humour, games, softer intonation and supportive body language. Even criticism in the children's version is usually mitigated and presented as guidance rather than punishment.

The analysis of *MasterChef* and *MasterChef Junior* makes it clear that emotions expression forms the basis of communication in cooking reality shows and

directly influences the interaction between contestants and judges. The study demonstrates that emotional discourse in cooking shows is shaped by age, competitive environment, interpersonal relations and pragmatic goals of communication, which makes emotions one of the defining components of the genre.

CONCLUSION

The bachelor's thesis studied how emotions are expressed in cooking reality shows and focused on both verbal and non-verbal forms of emotional communication. The material of the research included ten episodes from the adult version of *MasterChef* (Season 14) and ten episodes from *MasterChef Junior* (Season 9). On the basis of the analysed material, several conclusions can be made.

The theoretical part of the work showed that emotions should be understood not only as inner psychological experiences, but also as communicative phenomena that become visible in speech and interaction. In spoken discourse, emotions may appear through vocabulary, sentence structure, intonation, meaning, context and pragmatic intention. For this reason, emotional expression cannot be explained only through separate emotional words. It is usually formed through the combination of several linguistic and communicative elements. This is especially relevant for media discourse, where speech is spontaneous and closely connected with the situation. Cooking reality shows are useful for such analysis because they include competition, time pressure, judging, personal stories and live emotional reactions.

The practical part of the research showed that *MasterChef* and *MasterChef Junior* are strongly emotional types of media discourse. Even though the main topic of these programmes is cooking, the communication in them is built around much more than food. Contestants constantly respond to stress, mistakes, judges' comments, team conflicts, victories and the possibility of leaving the competition. As a result, emotional expression becomes one of the main features of the genre.

At the verbal level, emotions are expressed through repetitions, exclamatory and interrogative sentences, intensifiers, evaluative words, interjections, metaphors and direct statements about feelings. In the adult version of *MasterChef*, repetition is often connected with pressure. Adult contestants use repeated phrases to calm themselves or react to stress. Their speech also contains rhetorical questions,

emphatic constructions and emotionally coloured vocabulary, especially in moments of confusion, frustration, anxiety or relief. In *MasterChef Junior*, emotional speech is usually more open and immediate. Children often use repeated interjections, simple emotional adjectives, exclamations and strong intensifiers such as “*super excited*,” “*super-duper scared*” or “*the best thing ever*.” Their speech is less controlled and more spontaneous. They often express feelings as soon as they appear, without trying to hide or soften them. Because of this, children’s emotional discourse seems more direct and expressive than the speech of adult contestants.

The semantic analysis also showed differences between the two versions. Both adults and children use figurative language to describe emotions, but they do it in different ways. Adult contestants often use metaphors connected with the body, chaos, pressure or loss of control. Through such images, they describe fear, stress, panic or disappointment. Children’s figurative expressions are more imaginative and often connected with childhood experience and exaggerated evaluation. They may compare unpleasant food to nightmares.

Prosody was another important element of emotions expression. In the adult version, emotions were often shown through pauses, hesitation, emphatic stress and changes in voice quality. In the children’s version, prosody was more exaggerated. Children often used high pitch, shouting, squealing, stretched vowels and unstable voice when they were excited or frustrated.

The analysis of non-verbal behaviour proved that emotions in cooking shows are expressed not only through words. Adult contestants showed their emotions through sighing, trembling, nervous laughter, crying, smiling, gasping, hugging, raising their hands or holding their head. In *MasterChef Junior*, non-verbal expression was even more visible. Children often jumped, screamed, laughed, cried, covered their faces, hugged each other and reacted with exaggerated facial expressions. Their emotional behaviour was more physical and less restrained.

The study also showed that judges play an important role in shaping the emotional atmosphere of the show. In the adult version, judges usually speak in a stricter and more authority-based way. Their communication includes direct instructions, sharp criticism, evaluative comments, sarcasm and sometimes censored strong language. In difficult or stressful moments, their speech may increase pressure on contestants through short commands and confrontational feedback. At the same time, judges also use praise and humour, so their communication combines control and emotional involvement. In *MasterChef Junior*, judges change their communicative style. They speak more softly and use more encouragement trying to protect the children emotionally. Their criticism is usually less harsh and is often presented as advice. They also use affectionate forms of address and sometimes playful interaction. Their body language is also different: judges often bend down, lean closer to children and speak on their level. Games, jokes, costumes and playful scenes make the children's version emotionally safer and less intimidating. The comparison of the two versions showed that similar situations may be presented in very different ways. Serious mistakes in the adult version are usually followed by stronger criticism and higher emotional pressure. In the children's version, mistakes are still corrected, but the response is usually more supportive and instructional.

Thus, the analysis confirms that emotions expression in *MasterChef* and *MasterChef Junior* is closely connected with the whole structure of the shows. The contestants' reactions, judges' comments, voice, facial expressions and body movements all work together to create the emotional atmosphere of the competition. The emotions in cooking reality shows are not separate from the competition itself. They help shape the interaction between participants and make the genre more dynamic and engaging. For this reason, the analysis of such programmes contributes to a broader understanding of how emotions are expressed and interpreted in contemporary English-language media.

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58. MC S14E08 – MasterChef. Season 14. Episode 8. Birthday Bakes [Television series episode]. Fox Broadcasting Company, 2024. 14 August.
59. MC S14E10 – MasterChef. Season 14. Episode 10. Beer Necessities [Television series episode]. Fox Broadcasting Company, 2024. 21 August.
60. MC S14E13 – MasterChef. Season 14. Episode 13. Storm's a Brewin' [Television series episode]. Fox Broadcasting Company, 2024. 28 August.

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- 62.MC S14E17 – MasterChef. Season 14. Episode 17. Semi-Final [Television series episode]. Fox Broadcasting Company, 2024. 11 September.
- 63.MC S14E18 – MasterChef. Season 14. Episode 18. Finale: Part One [Television series episode]. Fox Broadcasting Company, 2024. 18 September.
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- 72.MCJ S09E08 – MasterChef Junior. Season 9. Episode 8. Gordon Demo [Television series episode]. Fox Broadcasting Company, 2024. 6 May.

- 73.MCJ S09E09 – MasterChef Junior. Season 9. Episode 9. Finale Part 1
[Television series episode]. Fox Broadcasting Company, 2024. 13 May.
- 74.MCJ S09E10 – MasterChef Junior. Season 9. Episode 10. Finale Part 2
[Television series episode]. Fox Broadcasting Company, 2024. 20 May.