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Emoji Conquers the World: Emojis as a Language Tool in Communication

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ABSTRACT

Communication is not just a matter of speaking, writing and interpreting words. It is a complex process that involves factors such as language, grammar, experience and non-verbal cues. Body language and facial expressions can tell what one is trying to express than what one actually says in face-to-face interactions. However, in text-based communication, these cues are not present and their absence can result in misunderstanding and confusion. Thus, the growth in computer-mediated communications has led to the use of conventions where motion affect is referenced pictorially using digital image or icon. This study aims to present an analysis of the usage of emojis in the flow of facebook conversation. Hence, the study covers the analysis of meaning and usage of emojis as communicating tool. The study is qualitative in nature and utilized the descriptive research method and relied heavily on contextual analysis or, in other words, it utilized the descriptive method and relied heavily on content analysis. The data used for analysis are in the form of conversations gathered through screen shots from the respondents. Interview was later on conducted with the respondents to complete the process. The data are the conversations gathered from the facebook accounts of the respondents. Interview was also utilized to validate the findings. The study revealed that emojis functioned as markers, intensifiers, teasers and strengtheners of speech acts. It was also found that the factors affecting the usage of emojis as language tool were the mood and emotions of the respondents, nature of conversation and the desire to be part of the trend.

Keywords: Language, culture, emojis, social media

Introduction

In the past, people used technology as a tool for making survival an easier attempt. In the modern-day world, technology is no longer a tool for survival but a means of communication and entertainment. Internet has already entered ordinary lives. Social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, are used by groups or individuals where they produce, share, and sometimes exchange ideas over the internet and in virtual communities. Online social media have gained surprising worldwide growth and popularity which has led to attracting attention from variety of researchers globally. Although with time, all generations have come to embrace the changes social network has brought about; teenagers and young adults are the most fanatic users of these sites.Social network is transforming the manner in which young people interact with their parents, peers, as well as how they make use of technology.This study sought the exploration of the role and responsibility of participating members, their contributions, and expectations from the effect of emojis. The data results to established factors that led to the usage of

emojis and application of emojis to everyday life for developing a further understanding in such graphics and limit misconception about messages with emojis. The study sought to find out if emojis were not limited to convey a specific emotion, but rather socio-cultural norms whose meaning varied depending on the identity of the speaker. The researchers of this study were also interested in finding how people utilized messages with emojis by investigating different aspects of emoji usage in social media.

Applying the concept of Semiotics to the study, the researches took into account the basic elements of the theory. As explained, an emoticon is a typographic symbol or a communication of ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange) characters used to express emotions and feelings in text-based Computer-mediated communication (CMC). According to semiotics, every sign - or everything that is by anyone taken as a sign - consists of two parts. The model was founded by Ferdinand de Saussure and takes into account the "signifier" which is the form of a sign and the "signified", meaning the concept that the sign represents.

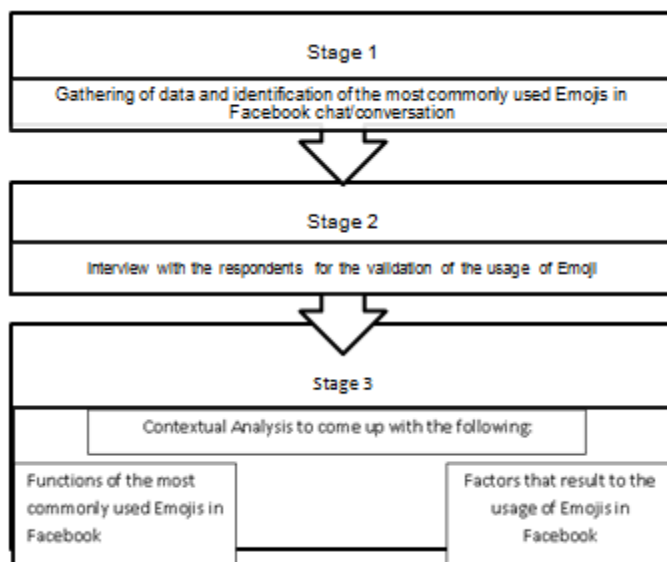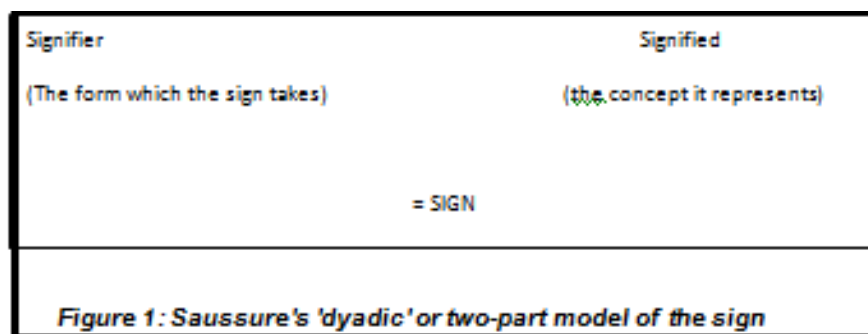Figure 1: Saussure's 'dyadic' or two-part model of the sign

Figure 2: Research Paradigm

In speech, if a speaker ever wishes to reach out and talk to followers and fans face-to-face, here's some good news: an emoticon might be the next best thing. Scientists have discovered that when we look at a smiley face online, the same very specific parts of the brain are activated as when we look at a real human face. This only works in the left-to-right format. In other words, humans now read ":-)" the same way as a human face, but not "(-:".Sparkes (2014cited Churches 1982), "Emoticons are a new form of language that we're producing, and to decode that language we've produced a new pattern of brain activity,"

When interpreting the emoticons used in a computer message, they are understood as added features. They are not understood as a simple message "I am happy", but contextually analyzed in two ways: technically and culturally. In technical context, the :) thus not appear as having any meaning in itself, but it is considered as a part of the sentence. Same as we are using different tones of our voice or mimics in oral communication, the emoticon adds emotion to the message. This "technical entity" of text

and :) is itself contextualized to cultural experience. This means: that a smiling face not necessarily means friendliness or happiness. It might also stand for falseness, a hidden lie, etiquette or simply superficiality.

The research paradigm presents the three stages rendered to complete the study. Stage 1 shows the process which started with gathering data in the form of screen shots of conversations from the respondents, followed by the frequency count of all the present emojis in the conversation. Stage 2 infers the utilization of interview; this is to validate the emojis used as for their implication in the conversation. Stage 3, shows the process of using Contextual Analysis to figure out the functions and factors of the emojis used in the conversation.

Purpose of the Study

Students – This study would profit students on how they would make use of Emoji and know its effectiveness in all the mediums of communication appropriate for its use. As Emoji is part of the social construct today, learning the psychology behind it can improve the learning, if incorporated in lessons, in an efficient way.

Teachers – Through this study, instructors will be able to further understand their students in this trend of communication. They can also incorporate new teaching strategies by using emojis in the classroom setting.

Netizens – This study may lead netizens to realize their responsibilities as internet users, improve their awareness of the trend, and be equipped of the accurate usage of emojis. Other than that, the study's diversity can improve social networking communication and etiquettes in a large scale.

Techies – This study would help them know the new trends of emoji as a language tool in communication.

Future Researchers – This study may serve as a workable reference in the conduct of a study along the same line as emoji is arguably one of the few studies that are new and interesting in many different fields.

Objectives/Research Questions

This study aimed to the overall implication of Emoji in language and communication. Specifically, the study aimed to explore the following sub problems:

1. What are the most commonly used emojis used by the respondents in the flow of conversation on Facebook?
2. What are the general functions of emoji as a tool of communication?
3. What are the factors affecting the usage of emoji as a language tool?

Literature Review

Studies say that by using emoticons can make senders appear friendlier and even make them happier offline. Receivers of the message interpret the message distinctly with the presence of emoticons; it makes it possible to realize directly a person's mood. Emoji are popular digital pictograms that can appear in text messages, emails, and on social media platforms. These characters are generally understood as a light-hearted, almost comedic form of communication, but they have a rich and complex socioeconomic history that precedes the range of mobile devices where they commonly appear. Beginning with the rise of the iconic "smiley" face in the second half of the twentieth century, the emoji as a cultural form has emerged out of typographic habits, corporate strategies, copyright claims, online chat rooms, and technical standards disputes. As a genial and widespread vernacular form, emoji now serve to smooth out the rough edges of digital life. Further,

other users argue that, to understand affect's current place within contemporary capitalism users need to consider this face.

A psychologist Albert Mehrabian, once in a while he judge a study, determined in the 1950s that only 7 percent of communication is verbal, while 38 percent is vocal and 55 percent is personal. This is well and good for face-to-face communication showed, but when we're texting or chatting, 93 percent of our communicative tools are negated. The simpleness of emoji design means that there is a lot of room for interpretation and context-based adaptations, which makes them applicable in many situations. They become part of the user'svocabulary without needing definitions. Furthermore, emojis improves technological communication, supplying basics present in face-to-face communication that are often wanting from written conversations. They can be used to show emotion that cannot be formulated entirely in words and change of tone in messages, by constituting them more cheerful or removing sarcasm. This makes sense when we consider that communication is about not only words but also hand gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice (Schnoebelen, 2011).

According to Dr. Anne Mahoney, a historical linguist and professor, she explained that emojis are everywhere in communication, but in very specific ways. She said that emojis work as either rebuses—hint devices that use pictures to represent words or parts of words—or adverbs. They are rebuses when people replace nouns with pictures, either of the objects themselves or of objects that sound like the word. This is not fundamentally different from writing 'c u l8r,' just cuter,". They are adverbs when users "include a picture representing their mental state, whether that's a face with a suitable expression, a book representing all the work they should be doing, a theater mask indicating they've just been cast in a play and are delighted, or whatever else,"(Mahoney, 2011).

A 2008 study found that emoticon users experience a "positive effect on enjoyment, personal interaction, perceived information richness, and perceived usefulness." The study added that emoticons are "not just enjoyable to use, but also a valuable addition to communication methods." This affects the academic performance of a student, as all of these are essential to learning. According to Swyft Media, 74 percent of people in the U.S. regularly use stickers, emoticons or emojis in their online conversation, sending an average 4 of 96 emojis or stickers per day. All this adds up to a total of 6 billion emoticons or stickers flying around the world every day on mobile messaging apps. In business, a University of Missouri-St. Louis study wanted to test how people perceive smiley faces in a work email as compared to a social email. Researchers sent 2 types of email messages to a group – one a flirtatious message, another extending a job interview request – and added emoticons to some of each. The researchers discovered that the smiley faces in both type of fictional emails made the recipient like the sender more and feel that the sender liked them more. In a 2013 study, 152 professionals read an email message both with and without smiley emoticons that were part of a fictional workplace situation (Swyft, 2008).

Methodology

The study used the qualitative approach of research. Qualitative research is usually context sensitive and encompasses a broad spectrum of theoretical and methodological premises (Eberle and Elliker, 2005). The researchers used the said design in: (1) unfolding of information from messages that uses graphics; (2) scrutinizing these conversations; and, (3) requiring context analysis of the data and interview from the respondents.Thus, the study is highly qualitative in nature.

The study utilized the Descriptive Research. This method empowers the researchers to interpret the theoretical meaning of the findings and hypothesis development for further studies.

Descriptive method encompasses all the data gathered useful in adjusting or meeting the existing phenomenon. Context analysis and interview were employed to interpret and measure the meaning of the data of the study the researchers wish to know. This also crucially includes frequency measuring. In this study, this method involved determined information.

The study relies heavily on Contextual Analysis. Contextual Analysis is simply an analysis of a text (in whatever medium, including multi-media) that helps a researcher to assess that text within the context of its historical and cultural setting,but also in terms of its textuality – or the qualities that characterize the text as a text. That is why the researchers promptly decided to use this method because emojis are, besides the fact that texts are involved inthe study itself in which the researchers are going to interpret situationally, it is in the domain of a cultural and social setting that is meticulously in need of evaluation. A contextual analysis combines features of formal analysis with features of "cultural archeology, " or the systematic study of social, political, economic, philosophical, religious, and aesthetic conditions that were (or can be assumed to have been) in place at the time and place when the text was created. And this is very rampant in an emoji-based conversation throughout any social medium which it uses. Emojis are like symbols that are used in situations that may alter its meaning, such as the use of irony. In respect, and conclusion, therefore, continues to strengthen the fact that using content analysis in discovering emojis and its implications and interpretation is the most appropriate method the researchers had conducted.

Although the study is dominantly qualitative in nature, the proponents incorporated a very minimal statistical treatment in summarizing the results. Thus, during the tallying, the advocates tabulated the data for an easier interpretation of the results. In the latter part, the researchers focused on the analysis of the functions of the most commonly used emojis in the recorded utterances with the use of content analysis. The functions were extracted and incorporated from the researches relating, if not directly stating the functions of so (Fraser, 2009; Blakemore, 1988; Bolden, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2009; Howe, 1991; Johnson, 2002; Raymond, 2004; Schiffrin, 1987).

Findings

The findings of the study are summarized as follows:

Emojis are widely used not only once, but a couple of times by a single user. The most commonly used emojis by the respondents in the flow of conversation on facebook are the following: Face with Tears of Joy, Face Throwing A Kiss, Smiling Face with Rosy Cheeks, Smiling Face with an Open Mouth, Loudly Crying face, Smiling Face, Smiling Face With Heart-Shaped Eyes, Smiling Face with open Mouth and Closed Eyes, Thumbs up Sign, Sad Face, Heart, Tongue-Sticking Out, Grinning Emoji, and the Winking Emoji. Through frequency count, emojis used by the respondents have totaled to 1195.

Based on the findings, Emojis can be sorted into the following functions:

Marker

Emojis functioned as markers of the respondents' facial expressions. Respondents used emojis to express or let the receiver of the message perceive what do they feel or look like behind the screen; whether they are happy, interested, or affectionate towards the people they talk to.

Intensifier

It was found out that Emojis served as modifier that makes no contribution to the propositional meaning of a clause but serves to enhance and give additional emotional context to the word it modifies.

Teaser

Emojis were used as teasers in conversation observed mostly by respondents who reply with just the pictographs. The users do this whenever they spam the person they talk to when they don't have anything to say yet or to exaggerate the conversation.

Strengtheners of Speech Acts

It was found out that emojis hedge speech acts which are directed to the respondents' positive and negative faces and therefore strengthen speech acts such as: thanks, greetings, approval, sarcasm, and regret.

The factors affecting the usage of emoji as a language tool are: (1) mood and emotion of the respondents, (2) nature of the conversationof the respondents and the persons they are talking to, and (3) the desire to go with the flow or with what's trendy.

All in all, there were 54 types of emojis reflected in the table and each emoji were used more than once in s specified conversation. There were a total of 1195 Emojis gathered from the 40 respondents.

Discussion

These are carved out of the 27 types of emojis that appeared in the data of all the conversations by the respondents. Thus, these ranked emojis served as its most frequently used in terms of usage.

In Kelly's A Linguistic Study of the Understanding of Emoticons and Emoji in Text Messages (2015) it is said there that when it comes to emoji, it requires us to consider whether these signifiers are widely understood in Facebook and, if so, how omnipresent and uniform that understanding is. The general consensus is that emoticons are used as a non-verbal emphasizer of emotions without answering the question as to whether these emoticons are universally understood.

Table 2

The most commonly used emoji (ranked according to frequency)

Rank	Emoji	Frequency
1		252
2		114
3		80
4		72
5		71
6		69
7		60
8		51
9		39
10		33
11		32
12		27
13		24
14		23

In the process of analyzing conversation from the respondents, the researchers sorted out the different functions of emojis which were present in the data.

Dresner and Herring in 2010 presented three communicative functions in their study, one of which is a marker. In linguistics, markers serve as a free or bound morpheme that indicates the grammatical function of the marked word, phrase, or sentence. Emojis

served as marker for the respondents' facial expressions to show happiness, interest, affection, and other type of expressions.

HAHAAHHA

IT'S PRECISE THO

anyway dude, you didn't change anything with me tho

if something did, it's for the better

I found a newfound respect towards you

cause you treat a guitar like a woman 🙂

and that's what it should be!

Thank you man, I did know that you'll undertand me 🙂 You just understand things in different views, its like hidden power 🙂

Take for example the conversation above. The respondent used the said emoji in a casual conversation with a friend and it gave only an honest representation on how he felt like during the time of the conversation.

Intensifier is a linguistic term (but not a proper lexical category) for a modifier that makes no contribution to the propositional meaning of a clause but serves to enhance and give additional emotional context to the word it modifies.

The face with tears of joy emoji is used by the respondents to imply uncontrollable laughter that may also depend on the context or nature of their conversation; usually to emphasize jokes or something they find funny.

In the sample conversation below, the respondent who used the emoji intends to talk in joking manner while reminding the person she's talking to about something she wants to borrow.

Wait nagcharge phone ko hahaha

Sgesgee hahaha pnapaalala ko lang 😂😂

APR 30, 1:14 PM

Nathan send mo ha! Hahaha

Emojis function as teasers for respondents because they use it to laugh at or criticize (someone) in a way that is either friendly or playful.

The tongue-sticking out emoji is used exclusively for teasing purposes and, sometimes, for light jokes that occurs in conversations. There are also cases in which this emoji is used to fill in the spaces of conversations. It frequently occurs between lovers' conversations when they are flirting.

Gratitude means thanks and appreciation. It is also the quality of being thankful, readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.

wag,k po magbiro ng ganun

Hehehe

heeeee

😝😝😝

😳😦

Oh bkit

wala nmn po mommy ko

Sige puta pag ako di natuwa paparefund ko 150 namin

Pati 150 ng lahat nung tao dun

Pati food

For sure HAHA hoy oa na

Ayt see you tomorrow thank uou so much 😘😘😘😘😘

The face throwing a kiss emoji is used by the respondents to imply a sign of gratitude, and support; it is also their way of showing their affection towards that person. It is mainly a facial translation; in fact of words "I love you" from its sender.

In the following screenshot, the given context is that the sender is showing gratitude towards the receiver for agreeing to come with her to an event.

In the end though, Walther's thought in The Impacts of Emoticons on Message Interpretation in Computer-Mediated Communication (2001) still rings true that Emoticons are graphic representations of facial expressions that many e-mail users and other forms of social media usage embed in their messages. These symbols are widely known and commonly recognized among computer-mediated communication (CMC) users, and they are described by most observers as substituting for the nonverbal cues that are missing from CMC incomparison to face-to-face communication.

Their empirical impacts, however, are undocumented. An experiment sought to determine the effects of three common emoticons on message interpretations. Hypotheses drawn from literature on nonverbal communication reflect several plausible relationships between emoticons and verbal messages. The results indicate that emoticons' contributions were outweighed by verbal content, but a negativity effect appeared such that any negative message aspect—verbal or graphic—shifts message interpretation in the direction of the negative element.

In the study, it was found that there were different factors that affect the respondents in using emoji in conversations. These factors were established through the interview with the respondents.

According to Saussure, in the widespread of social media today, emotions are playing an important role in communication. Emojis represents a facial expression, which shows a person's feelings or mood. Because of the absence of body language in social media, emoticons are more popular than ever.

They offer another tone and feeling of a written text and improve the receiver's interpretation about something that has being an idea in a certain conversation. These realistic representations of feelings alter the manner people communicate; they make it quicker and easier. The use of emojis allows individuals to immediately make sense when added to any conversation. They show point of view either outside of language or within a reciprocally understood language. Emojis are also being favored among people who may not be as soothing in showing their feelings in words. Other studies say that by using emoticons can make you appear friendlier and even make you happier offline. People interpret the message distinctly with the presence of emoticons; it makes it possible to realize directly a person's mood.

Another factor that affects the respondents in using emojis is the nature of the conversation they are having. For instance, one respondent didn't use much emojis since they are only talking about borrowing a book. In another case, one respondent aggressively used emojis to express endearment with the person he is talking to.These cases happen because of the respondents consideration on how much emoji would they put to the conversation that may also depend on the person they talk to.

In a study conducted by Kelly in 2015, she found out that 70% of her respondents interpret the emoticon/ emojis differently, depending on who wrote the message. Theories of implicature attempt to explain the recovery of actual and intended meaning; foremost among these is Relevance Theory, which proposes that implicature is recovered through a process by which the greatest degree of understanding is achieved through the least effort. The understanding is therefore of importance. The sender or receiver of a message relies on the context, in combination with the requisite pre-knowledge, in order to understand or make the message understood. A 2008 study found that emoticon users experience a "positive effect on enjoyment, personal interaction, perceived information richness, and perceived usefulness." The study added that emoticons are "not just enjoyable to use, but also a valuable addition to communication methods."

Most of the respondents use emoji nowadays because they find it as a good foundation of nonverbal expression, which makes communication easier for them. And one main factor that triggers the respondents to use emoji is because emojis are mainstream - these icons are used by almost everyone, all over the world. Since people nowadays don't want to be left behind, they go with the trend.

The key to using emoticons correctly is to use them sparingly and in the right setting. Emojis standout in crowded inboxes. They're eye-catching; they convey emotion that's difficult to sum up in words. Emojis don't take up a lot of space a good subject line is around 50 characters. An emoji conveys a message in just one character. Emojis are a

hit right now, emojis are the "in thing." Adding them to your subject line shows your brand is embracing the times.

Studies show that friendlier communication leads to a happier life and emoji can contribute directly to that positive outcome. And that's why most of the respondents really tend to use emoji a lot**.**

Limitations

This study entitled, "Emoji Conquers the World: Emojis as a Language Tool in Communication" focused on gathering and analyzing emojis commonly used among random respondents who used emojis as a tool in their everyday conversation. The conversations were gathered to present a description of the emojis and they were used in statements or conversation.

In addition, this study only covered the analysis of the general idea on the meaning of each emoji and its usage as communicating tool. The study also looked into some barriers or factors in communicating using these emojis as a language tool. Furthermore, the researchers analyzed how the emojis function based on a particular situation of the respondents. However, this study only intended to set and explain the implication of the emojis in all fields concerning conversational purposes.

Recommendation and Conclusion

Emojis are widely used not only once, but a couple of times by a single user. The most commonly used emojis by the respondents in the flow of conversation on facebook are the following: Face with Tears of Joy, Face Throwing A Kiss, Smiling Face with Rosy Cheeks, Smiling Face with an Open Mouth, Loudly Crying face, Smiling Face, Smiling Face With Heart-Shaped Eyes, Smiling Face with open Mouth and Closed Eyes, Thumbs up Sign, Sad Face, Heart, Tongue-Sticking Out, Grinning Emoji, and the Winking Emoji. Through frequency count, emojis used by the respondents have totaled to 1195.

Based on the findings, the researchers were able to come up with the following conclusions:

1. Respondents use each type of emoji a lot of times by spamming (or flooding) another user.
2. Emojis can have various functions depending on the user such as Markers, Intensifiers, Teasers, and Strengtheners of the Different Speech Acts.
3. There are also different factors that trigger the user or affect them in using emojis in the flow of conversation. These factors include   Mood   and Emotion, the Nature of the Conversation or the People they talk to, and the Desire to be in Trend or to go with the flow.

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommend these practical suggestions that will improve the situation or solve the problem investigated in the study:

1. Language teachers may introduce the findings in this study to the students taking up a degree in any language-related course to plant awareness among them regarding emojis, which is a phenomenon in the social media setting. And
2. For researchers who are going to dwell deeper into the study of Emoji and Emoticons, they may with the Language that people use when it comes to applying emoji and use the study as guide to generating desired implicature.
3. For other researchers who are into the concept of why people *spam* Emoji on chat whenever they use them, they can refer to this study for foundational cases.
4. This study is a good basis for further study of other communicating tools aside from the emojis. Further study may use the strategies employed by   the

researchers to come up with another analysis of the functions of the usage of emoji as a language tool to Communicate in 21st Century.

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