

Article

The Pragmatic and Semiotic Role of Emojis in Contemporary Digital Communication

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Abstract: The paper is located within the dynamic relationship between language and computing, with the central objective being an increase in knowledge about how individuals interact with digitally mediated communication. Precisely, the paper attempts to explore the use of emojis as a tool of the digitally mediated communication system from a linguistic perspective, especially within the pragmatic and socio-linguistic framework among Jordanian university students. The main objectives involve four dimensions: determining the usage of emojis by members of this community, explaining subjects' tendencies towards emojis while conducting online discourse, understanding the meanings of a selected list of emojis derived from the subjects' point of view, and exploring possible gender differences within the Jordanian culture. Methodologically, this work followed the triangulation approach, wherein three research instruments were used: an online survey distributed across the sample population, consisting of 500 Jordanian university students from both genders, corpus analysis; and expert interviews. The sociolinguistic aspect of the analysis revealed that demographic focused on gender as a social variable regarding, some effects on emoji preferences and interpretations among participants. Finally, it contextualizes its findings within the general theoretical framework provided by three functional language, in relation to the phatic, conative, and expressive functions situated within a Jordanian cultural context. It finds the end by placing at the forefront of interest the dire need for interdisciplinary collaborations in exploring digitally mediated communication from linguistic vantages, particularly against a changing landscape where language and technology are crossed.

Keywords: Emojis; Sociolinguistic; Synonymous Interpretations; Functions of language; Gender Differences

1. Introduction

1.1. Theoretical Background

A great deal of literature has been written on the development of new technologies and, hence, the widespread use in daily life of computer-mediated communication (CMC). Few authors enumerate the advantages of CMC, which include the enhancement of the continuity of individual communication [1]. A growing body of research has been exploring emojis, which are visual symbols in computer mediated communication (CMC). According to Bai, Dan, Mu and Yang (2019), emojis are increasingly used, on a regular basis, in network communication, with a greater degree of diversification [2]. For these authors, in addition to having special semantic and emotional features, emojis are closely related to such areas as marketing, law, health care and many other areas. Consequently, research on emojis has become a hot topic in the academic field, as an increasing number of scholars from the fields of computing, communication, marketing, behavioral science and so on are involved in studying them. Moreover, Gibson, Huang and Yu stress the utility of emojis, emoticons, GIFs and other 'graph icons', Herring and Dainas, inasmuch as they are conducive to clarification of the meaning of written text, Thompson and Filik, cited by Gibson, Huang and Yu, or

the addition of meaning to it. Some researchers have represented the interactional function of emojis as instances of the 'emotional work' that they perform in boosting social relationships, and as evidence of interlocutors' feelings [3]. This function has drawn attention to a variety of ways available for conveying such para-linguistic features as emotions, emojis, gestures, tone and stress. What has to be taken into consideration is the fact that emojis are the newest development in this regard. It is undeniably true that social media came to motivate a paradigm shift in the area of communication, serving concurrently as a channel for the migration of human interactions and communications into the virtual domain. The global count of active users of social media currently sits at 3.5 billion, according to Social Inc [4]. In particular, emojis become salient dimensions of discourse on social media, proving to be core elements in everyday conversational exchanges. This indispensability is a result of their ability to wrap up effectively the trail of emotions, ideas, and reactive expressions. They provide a layer of visual expression for digital conversations, which helps in conveying distinctions and tone in a way that sometimes may be very challenging to manifest with just text. They have been around from the classic smiley faces to several animals, foods, and gestures, indeed expressing a great range of emotions and ideas, and thus they are getting close to being a universal language across social media.

Perhaps the major contribution of emojis to communication lies in the ability to create more engaging and expressive ways of communication in several ways: breaking the text's total silence with tone and emotion, adding to the message one intends to put across, and helping in adding humor, sarcasm, excitement, or empathy to the message, thus enriching the experience of communication. Thirdly, emojis provide facial expressions and gestures to the text, which acts as non-verbal communication that adds depth and subtlety to the display of textual conversations. Moreover, emojis help in stating complex ideas or emotions clearly by even easing the communication of complex notions [5]. They also characterize communication by saving time and effort since they offer brief visual representations of feelings. Ultimately, emojis become a visual language that goes beyond linguistic and cultural barriers of limitations to create an active, expressive, and inclusive discourse in a digital environment [6].

1.2. Precautions in the Use of Emojis

These days, the use of emojis has become a very common feature that helps in easily conveying mood and expression. In addition, the messages from emojis are comprehensibly decipherable only with keen awareness of the context in which they are used. Absence of such contextual awareness can give rise to miscommunication or misunderstanding, as the very same emoji may mislead with disparate meanings in different situational settings. Such consequences may be driven by the following:

- a. Emojis are subject to personal and cultural interpretation.
- b. Understanding the context is central to the correct deciphering of the messages provided by the emojis, and avoiding miscommunications or misunderstandings.

1.3. Research Gap

Sick et al. (2023) noted that researchers have developed a grid of emojis for cross-cultural purposes in response to the cultural differences in emojis focused on food-related emotions, which reflects established cultural characteristics [7]. This difference is not only found between countries, but also within the same country. For these authors, emojis further show a high degree of context-sensitivity in cross-language communication, meaning that they are highly dependent on their linguistic and textual environment [8]. With this work, we hope to address questions regarding gender differences in emoji usage, preferences, and frequency as they relate to Jordanian culture. While some researchers contend that little is known, others counter that there has been sufficient research on gender-based disparities but not consistently based on sociolinguistic factors. This study aims to close this hole in earlier research. This study focuses on how undergraduate students use emojis in text conversations and advances the fields of sociolinguistics and pragmatics. The tenor of Tomono (2023) argument is that emojis and other graph icons tend to be commonly analyzed in terms of the way they provide some scaffolding for textual communications [9]. This problematic has been framed differently by researchers: Some talk about graph icons as representing emotions or as conducive to "the calibration of emotional states" [10].

In this section, a review is made of some of the theoretical assumptions underpinning these claims. An additional common way for the analysis of graph icons is to look upon them as being comparable to the way gestures

function in co-presence communication. According to Logi and Zappavigna (2024), GIFs represent the bodily acts of contributors and are “demonstrations of affective non-verbal expressions” [11]. This study proposes that this role can be fulfilled by Relevance Theory (RT). The underlying principle of (RT) is that, in all types of communication, senders of messages seek to be optimally relevant to their addressees. Furthermore, this inclination toward optimizing relevance is ingrained in humans’ brains, which means they are activated automatically at a largely subconscious level [12]. Relevance Theory aims at accomplishing the most elevated intellectual impact the slightest exertion, i.e., achieving the highest cognitive effect with the least possible effort. The choice of the emojis is, therefore expected to be a cost-effect trade-off. This research intends to resolve the deep-rooted problem of miscommunication arising from the divergent meanings of emojis. In this respect, the domain under consideration with respect to the emojis is presented herein.

1.4. Research Problem

One of the pragmatic distinctions between the employment of graph icons and physical motions according to these authors is the order in which they are used. This is because, unlike in spoken interaction, where people often use gestures, facial expressions, gaze, and body posture while speaking, in online text chats, graph icons typically are delivered as, or as part of, turns, and they end up in specific sequential spaces within a string of other turns [13]. Moreover, there seems to be a difference in the way sequential organization of turns works in online textual interaction in terms of how turns work face-to-face. Few authors argue that graph icons should be taken as part of this ‘disorder’ since they can result in the same types of ‘misplacement’ phenomena that are common to text, such as ‘phantom adjacency’, where contributions end up in sequentially adjacent turns and have the appearance of having a sequential relationship when they, in fact, do not. These authors also note that graph icons are “deliberative” in the sense that they are composed rather than “emanated” at a moment when gestures may become embodied and be produced pre-reflexively as modalities of being [14].

This study mainly seeks to find out whether emojis would have synonymous interpretations with reference to gender preferences in certain contexts. Our claim is motivated by the assumptions that (1) Emojis hold meaning, and (2) the shape of the letters in any language represents a symbol and the combination of the letters represents the meaning of words; and (3) words have synonyms. The findings of such a research endeavor will be connected with the findings of previous work regarding emojis correspondences. Such studies include Kralj Novak et al. (2015), who have proposed a model of analysis, which shows how smartphone users tend to use emojis that are based on a vast data set collected from the most popular emojis being used, and who have provided a tentative formalization of sentiment of emojis [15].

With emphasis on result analysis, this study is expected to pave the way for future research in Semantics, Discourse Analysis, and Sociolinguistics with Computer Technology. It is therefore expected to be a modest contribution in a relatively new trend which has started emerging recently in the field of Linguistics. Concisely, it may open up a new field of inquiry or a new analysis perspective to look at language from a critical discourse analysis (CDA) perspective. Furthermore, it seeks to explore a new category of synonyms in the field of semantics. Also, it would open a new path in sociolinguistic studies in terms of gender preferences using ubiquitous emojis. A final note worthy of attention here is that para-linguistic features (e.g., face expressions, body movements, etc.) are best realized in face-to-face communication since people can see and hear each other. Nevertheless, people can hardly observe such features within online communication; consequently, they tend to use emojis and emoticons to show their facial expressions and express their feelings.

2. Cultural Differences in Emojis

The interpretation of emojis in most cases is culture-based. This will hopefully help in the acknowledgment and respect for diverse identities and nuanced differences in experiences that individuals show, as has been given in the following example:

2.1. Facial Expressions

Emojis represent facial expressions, such as smiling, winking, or frowning, which are generally understood across cultures. However, some cultures may interpret certain facial expressions differently based on their unique

social and cultural contexts.

2.2. Gesture and Body Language

Emojis depicting hand gestures or body language can also vary in meaning. For instance, the “OK” 🤞 hand gesture may have positive connotations in some cultures but could be considered offensive or inappropriate in others.

3. Research Design

3.1. Research Objectives

This present study aims to reach the following objectives:

1. To explore the semiotics and the language functions of the emojis used by undergraduate students in Jordan.
2. To figure out the gender variation in students’ online interaction based on the Jordanian cultural context.
3. To find out what kinds of emojis are preferred by Jordanian male and female students and what patterns they reveal.
4. To see if the undergraduate students prefer using Snapchat messages to Facebook messages for their chatting privacy.

3.2. Research Questions

The first two questions were adapted from the suggestions of Alshboul and Rababah [16].

1. What are the language functions of the emojis used by undergraduate student Facebookers in Jordanian universities?
2. How are emojis used by Jordanian university students in online interactions?
3. What kinds of emojis are preferred by Jordanian male and female university students and what patterns do they reveal?
4. Do males and females prefer using Snapchat platform to Facebook for their chatting privacy?

3.3. Significance of the Study

With respect to the literature review, in a way, it is a pioneer in exploring the functions of emojis among Jordanian university students since this is the first study about the topic. This novelty is shown through the following aspects:

1. Application of Jakobson’s functional language theory.
2. Attention to the gender variation.
3. The utilization of the new version of Relevance Theory.

4. Literature Review

Emojis provide a non-verbal avenue for communication in a text-based environment. They can act emotively, conveying feeling and/or eliciting a response to a situation [17]. Emojis can also take on conative functions by changing the behavior or attitude of the receiver According to Herring and Wall, emojis can additionally be used to initiate or maintain social relationships—phatic function—and for emphasis/humor, poetic function, but can also refer to an object or concept, referential function [18].

Some research suggests that the use of emojis differs between the two genders. Previous research showed that females used more frequent emojis, showing more emotions in usage than their male counterparts. The study on emoji use among Jordanian university students shall be looking into whether exactly the same pattern of usage by gender comes about within this particular social and cultural context. Emojis are widely admitted to function in the same manner as non-verbal communication clues to convey emotions in face-to-face communication including facial expressions and gestures. Jameel (2025) states that “interaction as well as interpersonal relations can be enhanced by the use of emojis as they include, when used in computer-mediated communication, the same features of non-verbal cues used in face-to-face communication” [19]. Linguists, however, might be rather interested in study-

ing the pragmatic and semiotic dimensions of emojis: what kind of emotions can be signaled by emojis, and what emotional tone is added to communication [20]. Regardless of tongue, spoken languages are often accompanied by emotional and physical cues such as the tone of the voice, the gestures made by the face or the hands, and other visual items.

Meanwhile, as language is a living entity, it changes with new social trends. Hence, emerging linguistic forms and nomenclatures keep appearing, and emojis are an illustration of that. In conventional texts, writers' creativity of expression is restricted by the existing alphabet systems, yet using emojis to convey social and emotional depiction enables them to rely on new ways of understanding and expression through a visual representation instead of written texts [21]. With reference to the similarities between hieroglyphs and character writing in Chinese, Seghers et al. (2021) assert that the two forms can convey different meanings based on what characters or pictograms the string contains. Similarly, emojis put the emphasis on tone and meaning in an emerging variety of an ancient language and format of communication. The use of emojis is frequently compared to that of metaphor, and GIFs are believed to express non-reality-based attitudes. For that reason, they are likened to irony [22]. Like metaphors, emojis offer a basic plan for the addressee to interpret the communicator's emotion that corresponds to a specific context. The emojis used in communication relate what the communicator thinks or feels to the visual presentation of an image through the association of a selected facial expression that enables the communicator to guide the addressee to construct an emoji-based understanding of the communicator's feelings. As a consequence, the image of the facial expression would give the recipient an impression or a number of weak implicatures and non-propositional effects reflecting the feeling and state of mind of the communicator. For instance, if the communicator writes a text to inform a friend that their car was stolen, and uses an emoji of a crying face, the selection of this particular emoji is justified simply by its resemblance to the expression of crying, which helps with the recovery of the intended emotions. Upon emoji reception, the addressee can easily recover the impression of the sender's emotions within the context of the car theft. In case something is less serious, such as hitting your toe against a piece of furniture, it will evoke a weaker impression of discomfort. If it is something less costly, say, stubbing a little toe against a corner, then the impression of sadness will be somewhat weakened. In the same context, the smiley-face emoji 😊 and the angry emoji 😡 are always selected because of their respective resemblance to a smile, an expression of happiness, or to a facial expression reflecting anger. The degree of happiness instigated by a smiley face may vary in intensity from one situation to another. For example, when the smiley face emoji is associated with a piece of good news about promotion, it will bring up more intense feelings of happiness than in another context where you have found a small biscuit in a kitchen drawer when you thought you had run out of biscuits. The selection of a certain emoji will help the recipient discover what kind of impact is conveyed by the communicator and in what context the exchange has to be interpreted. In other words, it is the communicator who decides, through emoji selection, what impression of the feeling is created and how it should be interpreted [23].

Emojis Semantics:

While studying the meaning of emojis, researchers focused on a variety of aspects such as the supplementary information, particularly irony, that emojis enrich a text with emotional valence and indirect meaning [24]. Yet other researchers further investigated the ratings and norms of emoji meaning [25]. Given the large variety of communicative roles played by emojis, these different uses offer a fertile ground for researchers interested in investigating emoji meaning [26]. As far as the interface of semantics or pragmatics is concerned, commitment can admittedly help with the exploration of the meaning-making operation—the speaker's intended meaning is associated to what we think he has committed himself to doing. Research has recently investigated this association through inferences, such as presuppositions, implicatures, and explicatures. The connection that the present research has established so far links the notions of commitment, expression directness, and meaning: an expression with a higher level of directness will probably reflect greater commitment and stronger meaning. As the content communicated by an implicature, for example, is less direct than that literally expressed, the speaker's commitment to the implicated content is lower than his commitment to the content expressed directly. Researchers do not agree about a universal definition of commitment, yet its degree can be tested by examining to what extent speakers are committed to some propositions. Deniability is another perspective that can be used in this respect [27]: in an indirect (i.e., implicated) expression of content the speaker is theoretically given the possibility of denying the hearer's understanding of the intended meaning of their utterance, whereas a directly expressed utterance does not give the speaker that possibility. In a recent proposal by Reins and Wiegmann [28], it is claimed that a speaker can only be said to have

lied if he has committed himself to the content in the utterance.

5. Methodology

The study has adopted the research methodologies that would help in acquiring, analysing, and showing the data in order to evaluate synonymous interpretations of emojis among young Jordanian male and female university students. The results have undergone qualitative analysis. In light of the fact that both terms refer to the concept of design, this study will provide a technical definition of the terms “qualitative” and “quantitative” (as opposed, for example, to measurement). If a design’s goal is to ascertain influence, and it depends on something other than evidence for the counterfactual to draw a causal conclusion, such design will be regarded as qualitative. This kind of study examined a group of people’s behavior through a case study. The study concentrated on how men and women use emojis differently and their reasons for doing so. A survey was given out to participants, some Snapchat messages were corpus analyzed, and emoji designers and programmers were interviewed as part of the data collection process. Then, triangulation was used on the data from these three sensors. The questionnaire’s questions were designed to find out respondents’ views on the use of emojis and identify the participants who would be observed. The corpus analysis was done to glean more knowledge from the participants’ real-world data. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses were performed on the study’s data (both the corpus and the interview) (for the questionnaire).

5.1. Survey Analysis

The sample for the current study, which was defined as a subset of a population, was made up of (500) Jordanian university students, including male (123) and female (377) students who were enrolled in various faculties.

5.2. Corpus Analysis

Five Snapchat interactions were discarded either because the students were not cooperative or because cultural sensitivity was at stake. Three specific language functions were focused upon, using qualitative methods.

6. Findings

6.1. The Survey Findings

By carefully investigating the survey, we can suggest that users are conscious of the different meanings attributed to emojis, and this consciousness is an important clue in establishing interpersonal relationships among interlocutors. However, the meaning of the emojis is very far from being homogeneous among all users. Moreover, emoji preferences and meanings are contingent upon several demographic and social factors: gender, university degree, type of university, name of university, and faculty.

6.1.1. Frequency of Use

A majority of students reported using emojis frequently in their Facebook and Snapchat interactions.

6.1.2. Gender Differences

Consistent with previous research, females reported using a wider range of emojis and for a broader variety of emotions compared to males. Males tended to favor emojis expressing amusement and approval (e.g., pleading hand 🙏).

6.1.3. Motivations for Use

Students primarily used emojis to express emotions more effectively (72% of respondents), add humor or lightness (60%), and strengthen social connections (56%).

6.2. The Corpus Analysis Findings

Using the basic premises of Jakobson’s functional language theory, the following findings can be displayed as in the following:

6.2.1. The Expressive Function

With regard to the sensitivity of the Jordanian culture towards private issues, males and females use different ways and emojis in their Snapchats. According to Jacobson’s model, the main signs and evidence for the expressive function of emojis are markers of the subjectivity involvement that involve first-person pronouns, emotively charged diction, punctuation marks, and most importantly, evidence of the sender’s bias that is reflected by choosing one emoji over another. This is further explained in the following **Figure 1**, which is a screenshot of some emojis in the Snapchat chatting between female and male students.

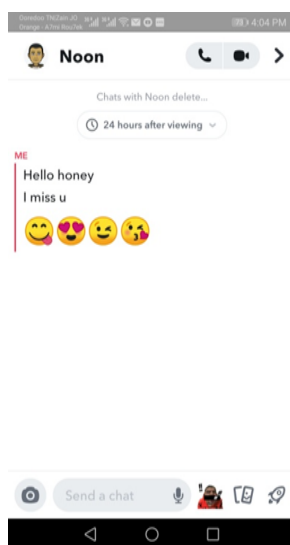


Figure 1. Screenshot of some emojis in the Snapchat chat between female and male students.

6.2.2. The Conative Function

Linguistically, this is usually reflected in the use of such indices as second-person pronouns, the vocative form or direct appeal, the imperative and interrogative moods, and some particular punctuation and formatting devices. In the context of emojis, Twinkle Face, Blowing Kiss, Face with Tongue, and Lips with Cosmetics normally carry out certain commissive and directive speech acts. This is because they explicitly intend to convey a request to the addressee, as shown in **Figure 2**, which is a Snapchat chat between a male and a female.



Figure 2. Screenshot of some emojis in the Snapchat chatting between female and male students.

Such examples included emojis requesting favors (pleading hands 🙏), encouraging responses (thinking face 🤔), or conveying urgency (fire 🔥).

6.2.3. The Phatic Function

The fear of censorship is much more in females, particularly considering the cultural context of Jordan. This can be observed from the phatic function in a Snapchat message sent by a Jordanian female student to her male university colleague. She initiated the message with a Hands-Up emoji as a way to greet him, with Arabic words asking about his health with a Sick emoji. She set words to emotions—line closing—with two expressive Emojis: Hand over Mouth and Face Blowing Kiss as mentioned in **Figure 3**.



Figure 3. Screenshot of some emojis in the Snapchat chatting between female and male students.

Accordingly, these emojis helped establish or maintain social connections. Examples included greetings (waving hand 🙌) and goodbyes (smiling face 😊).

6.2.4. Sensitivity to Censorship across Genders

The present study assumes that in the Jordanian cultural context, females generally tend to exhibit higher productivity and more self-restraint in their expression through Snapchat messages. This sentiment can be ascribed to the sensitivity towards taboo subjects that demonstrate articulated differences between the two genders. The following are emoticons that are used to depict the stylistic variation prevalent in communication between the two genders that are typically characterized by high emotional express as depicted in **Figure 4**.

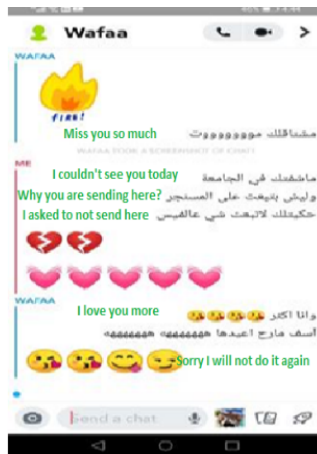


Figure 4. Screenshot of some emojis in the Snapchat chatting between female and male students.

6.2.5. Emotive Function

The most frequent use of emojis served to express emotions, with a wide range including happiness, laughter, sadness, anger, and surprise. Examples include the following emojis: laughing face 😄, crying face 😭, and red heart ❤️.

6.3. Findings Pertaining to the Interview

To this effect, the present study designed three questions to be sent to twelve interviewees, who were expert programmers and developers of emoji designing to make this study more blended, following these questions:

1. To what extent do you take gender variation into consideration when designing emojis? Are you particularly sensitive to whether the users are males or females?
2. To what extent do you pay attention to cultural specificity? How do you accommodate the cultural taboos and restrictions imposed on the nature of the exchanges between young people of different sexes within the Jordanian culture?
3. How do the previous two variables affect your strategies in designing emojis? (provide technical as well as ethical considerations).

The responses obtained from the subjects also outlined a visible degree of sensitization among emoji lovers on differences of gender variation. Besides, such responses highlighted a deep admiration for cultural sensitivity, especially on the most sensitive topics considered taboo. The interviewees agreed that these were influential variables changing their methodological approach toward emoji design. Besides, Snapchats' platform was born to support provoked privacy and security, especially discreet guarantee in message exchanges between different genders.

7. Discussion

The findings of the study similar to other findings [16], provide robust support for the multifaceted linguistic functions served by emojis in online communication within the milieu of Jordanian university students. Emphatically, the emotive function emerged as predominant, indicative of a pronounced inclination towards effectively conveying emotions within a text-based medium. Moreover, the conative and phatic functions elucidate the pivotal role of emojis in shaping responses and fostering social interconnectedness, both integral components of online discourse as discussed by Danesi (2019). Notably, the phatic function resonates with the informal and playful tenor characterizing communication platforms such as Snapchat [29].

As supported by findings from Nixon (2024) [30], the gender disparities in emoji employment, as observed, partially align with extant scholarship. The predilection among females for articulating a broader spectrum of emotions mirrors established findings; however, the study does not delineate a conspicuous dichotomy in overall emoji utilization frequency between genders. Such nuanced findings may be ascribed to idiosyncrasies within the sample cohort or the prevailing cultural landscape of Jordan.

Conclusively, the study underscores the indispensability of emojis in augmenting communication efficacy among Jordanian university students. Emojis serve as efficacious tools in transcending the constraints inherent in text-based interaction by imbuing exchanges with emotional depth and social cues as seen in the study of Alshenqeeti [31]. This discernment carries significant implications for educators and social media platforms alike, as they navigate strategies aimed at optimizing communication and user engagement among the digitally literate populace of Jordan.

8. Contribution of the Study

The present study claims three types of contribution: theoretical, practical and pedagogical.

8.1. Theoretical Contribution

1. As seen from the vantage point of Relevance Theory the use of emojis proves to be a cost-effect trade-off in communication. In other words, emojis prove to be capable of achieving the highest cognitive effect with the least possible effort as mentioned in **Figure 5**.

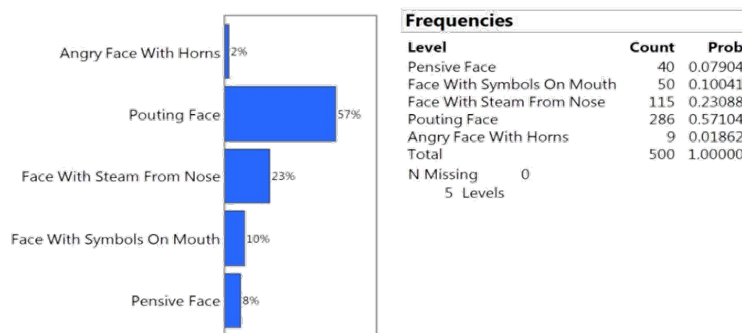


Figure 5. The use of emojis proves to be a cost-effect trade-off in communication.

2. This study skillfully employed the three language functions of Jakobson’s communication model according to Stein (2023) [32]. In addition, this study has shown how emojis rely on the same perceptual and cognitive processes for identification and integration involved in reading (words/sentences).

8.2. Practical Contribution

The study was a case for the efficiency of emojis in interaction and communication between interlocutors among students in Jordan. What is more, emojis could turn into a plausible professional tool for communication that overcomes the hurdles of gender and culture sensitivities.

8.3. Pedagogical Contribution

The attention to online education during the COVID-19 pandemic provided a fertile ground for the emergence of emojis as an assistive tool in sending messages between interlocutors, especially female and male students. In addition, just as online teaching abolished distance between teachers and learners, so emojis abolished distances between lovers and mates in a very conservative society among Jordanian university students.

9. Suggestions

The last part reflects on theoretical insights for practical applications to further knowledge of emoji communication. Based on the presented results, we outline recommendations entitled:

1. Emojis provide a practical means of communication in special education settings, primarily for those who may not be able to express themselves verbally. Emojis make it easy for such persons to communicate due to the number of messages that can be conveyed, hence fostering inclusive communication.
2. Including the use of emojis as a means of communication means assured consideration in interdisciplinary studies done by sociologists, political scientists, and expert specialists in the fields of computer science and computer engineering. With constant use as a means of digital interaction, emojis represent a wide area of study in multiple fields promising to yield insights into social dynamics and technological progress.
3. With the advent of Artificial Intelligence, computer engineers and software developers are also brainstorming the ways emojis can be implemented even in the development of logistical programs for the ease of communication in different contexts. The fact that emojis can be a resort to major breakthroughs in communication solutions, reiterates the need for interdisciplinary work in order to bring out full-fledged efficacy with technological advances.

10. Conclusions

Emojis have developed into a significant part of online discourse among Jordanian university students. In view of this, the current study seeks to tease out the complex linguistic functions that an emoji can play and examines possible gender differences in its use. Based on this, the study identifies how emojis work on specific social media platforms, operationalizing an attempt at distinguishing their subtle flavors of meaning in human communication. The participants also purposefully employ emojis because they are completely aware that they can have a variety of

meanings. Additionally, the vast majority of the sample can quickly identify the intent behind emojis when they are used or transmitted by others. Additionally, interpretations vary from student to student based on their gender, the faculties they attend, and other factors, as it is discovered that “Faculty” goes along with the impact these emojis have on both sides (senders and receivers). Moreover, this study has also focused on the expressive or emotive functions by using some of the emojis in Snapchat messages between the two genders of students instead of using other social media platforms as a result of the cultural sensitivity to privacy in the Jordanian context.

This research avails of the conative, phatic, and expressive functions of Jakobson’s tripartite framework in defining the communications spectrum that emojis have the potential to support. Contrary to a priori, emojis do trigger similar perceptual and cognitive operations in the process of understanding, just like any linguistic component; however, they do exhibit a distinctive patterning. Furthermore, it emphasizes the expressive or emotive functions of emoji usages as noted in Snapchat exchanges between genders. This was deliberately selected due to cultural privacy norms that prevail in Jordan. Consistent with previous research, females reported using a wider range of emojis and for a wider variety of emotions compared to males. Males tended to favor emojis expressing amusement and approval.

In other words, despite the constant change and increasing pervasiveness—with growing diversity and becoming a must-use in everyday talk—emojis are still part of CMC. If they share several elements with human language, such as arbitrariness, basically emojis represent channels for digital mediation in expression within the modern paradigms of communication. Students primarily used emojis to express emotions more effectively (72% of respondents), add humor or lightness (60%), and strengthen social connections (56%). Moreover, the present study assumes that in the Jordanian cultural context, females generally tend to exhibit higher productivity and more self-restraint in their expression through Snapchat messages. This sentiment can be ascribed to the sensitivity towards taboo subjects that demonstrate articulated differences between the two genders.

Funding

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Institutional Review Board Statement

Ethical review and approval were waived for this study. As the present study involved minimal risk to participants, additional ethical review was deemed unnecessary.

Informed Consent Statement

Written (or verbal) informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to the interviews/surveys. Participants were informed that their data would be anonymized and used for academic research purposes only.

Data Availability Statement

The data used in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest. The funder had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

AI Use Statement

The author used Gemini to improve the language and readability of this manuscript during the drafting process. Following this, the author reviewed and edited the content, and take full responsibility for the final version.

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