

Decoding the linguistic functions of emoji: A discourse analysis of messenger chats

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Abstract

This discourse analysis aimed to investigate the different emoji and its pragmatic illocutionary forces as used in messenger chats. The study utilized the qualitative content approach in identifying the different communicative uses of the emoji as reflected and as used in the context of online discourse. This explores the different signs and symbols in the form of emoji used by interactants in their computer-mediated exchange of discourse. Data revealed that the different symbols or emojis that represent the current state of being as used by interactants in their messenger chats are: church, sick emoji, morbid, confused, sad, crying, in love, like, wave, shocked, halo, bored or sleepy, and birthday emoji. The different linguistic functions reflected in the use of emoji are: expressive, interpretative, relational, politeness, emphatic, structural and referential functions. In terms of the illocutionary force, the illocutionary acts are: expressive, representative, directive and commissive. Emojis are what the modern times has to offer a different set of languages. This particular language, however, is in its infancy stage and still needs to be studied, and understood. Based on the results gathered, emojis are flexible types of languages that can either support the existing one by making more palatable on the online community or it will become the language itself in some cases. Nevertheless, the studies regarding these modern signs and symbols will prove to be fun, challenging and beneficial as it is constantly changing overtime by the course of technology.

Keywords: Linguistic functions, emoji, discourse analysis, messenger chats

1. Introduction

With the prevalence of 21st century technological innovation, computer-mediated discourse is a new trend of communication. People from different walks of life use different online platforms, which in one way or another facilitate the communication process despite of time and geographical difference. However, there may be difficulties when people try to convey their emotions, display sarcasm and convey a certain mood through text-based messages (Rupar, 2018). To address this, emojis have been widely used by Gen-Z learners in their daily online interactions (Al Rashdi, 2015). These emojis, as attached to messages, though not written nor spoken, have its linguistic meaning (Poulsen et. al. 2018).

According to Davis and Edburg (2018), the word emoji is actually from the Japanese language which means “e-mo-ji or picture-writing-character”. With technology, it provides us with semiotic resources that provide us convenience on the social media platform to further explain our intentions with minimal effort.

Unlike with face-to-face communication that a wide variety of functional verbal and nonverbal tools are used to facilitate the attainment of the communicative goal, computer mediated discourse such as forum, blog and chat messaging, make verbal communication incomplete due to absence of suprasegmental features and make it even impossible to achieve smooth and successful communication. Lupyán and Dale (2016) reported that there was a gradual decrease in the use of text-based slang, suggesting that emojis are replacing the functions served by text messages in recent years.

Alshenqeeti (2016) claimed that various studies have shown the increasing usage of emojis and other digital images that raise viable questions if these signages attached to messages have the potential to either be an emerging language rising along with the digital age, merely a trend among digital native youth with their new-fangled gadgets, or possibly degrading and devaluing the existing language and that would lead to a single functional language.

Undeniably, emojis in this digital era, have been increasingly popular and provide a unique way to express different emotions but even though these emerging facilitate interaction in text-based interaction, improper usage of these signs may lead to misunderstandings turning into arguments or offending people. The worst case may lead to serious legal stakes, such as a mishap between an innocent text misinterpreted as a sexually offensive message that may be sued for sexual harassment (Goldman, 2018).

Emojis, as used to supplement messages, should be done with caution since it would also risk both the sender and receiver of the message in an online platform of text-based messages where no intonations and paralinguistic codes available

to facilitate the communicative event (Rupar, 2018). It is in this reason that the researcher pursued this study in order to explore the different emojis and its pragmatic functions as used in messenger chats of digital native and to contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of socio-semiotic analysis.

1.1 Theoretical lens

Linguistic Functions of Emojis

a.) Expressive Functions

One of the most natural and obvious functions of emoji, and before them emoticons, relies on their ability to bring CMD closer to oral communication by mimicking paraverbal cues, such as facial expressions and gestures. Expressive emoji allow speakers to convey emotions in a conversation or to add emotional value to verbal content. These emotions are mapped directly onto physical expression (Dresner & Herring, 2010): happiness can be expressed with a “smiling face” emoji, anger with an “angry face” emoji or support with a “raised fist” emoji, for example (Schneebeli, 2017).

b.) Interpretative Functions

In face-to-face conversation, non-verbal cues like facial expressions and laughter are not only tools for expressing emotions, but also for altering the meaning of a message. In CMD, interpretative emoji replace these features and work as indications to how a sent message should be understood by the receiver (Herring & Dainas, 2017). Some researchers state that interpretative emoji act as “tone” modifiers (Cramer et al., 2016), in opposition to expressive emoji which affect the “mood” of the message. These emoji guide the interpretation of a message, and by doing this they can help clarify the intention of the speaker and eliminate potential misunderstandings between interlocutors (Amaghlobeli, 2012).

c.) Relational Functions

Emoji can also be used to maintain and manage relationships between CMD speakers. Like eye-contact or laughter in face-to-face conversation, they can have a phatic role and work as indicators of closeness (Maccoccia & Gauducheu, 2007) or markers of familiarity between users (Spina, 2018). Messages accompanied by emoji are perceived as more pleasant and as displaying a higher level of intimacy (Janssen et al., 2014; Tang & Hew, 2019). But even though they can be a very efficient tool for increasing intimacy in digital relationships, research has shown that relational emoji used in already intimate relationships (e.g. between romantic partners) do not have the same effect (Rodrigues et al., 2017).

d.) Politeness Functions

Another function of emoji concerns their capacity to work as linguistic hedges, according to the politeness theory introduced by Brown and Levinson (1987). Inspired by the concept of face introduced by Goffman (1967), they analyzed the conversational strategies used by speakers to weaken potential face-threatening speech acts (e.g. request, order, criticism, disagreement, accusation). One of these strategies is the addition of lexical softeners, or linguistic hedges, in a message: words and expressions, such as please or maybe, that mitigate the threatening value of a speech act. Maccoccia and Gauducheu (2007) identified emoticons used with the same purpose as these linguistic hedges and called them “politeness emoji”.

e.) Emphatic Functions

There are two different manners in which emoji can have an emphatic function. First, emoji can emphasize an emotion or a stance that has already been expressed through the verbal content of the message. By “mirroring” the emotional content of the message in a redundant way, they reinforce its value (Amaghlobeli, 2012; Schneebeli, 2017).

f.) Structural Functions

As mentioned, emoji sometimes play the same role as punctuation marks. Early CMD researchers compared their structural function to that of laughter in face-to-face speech, because laughter is able to “punctuate” oral conversation (Provine et al., 2007). Emoji are often found in final position of messages, similarly to full stops (“.”), and can be used to indicate the end of a message. To a lesser extent, emoji can also be used between clauses inside a single message (Markman & Oshima, 2007)

g.) Referential Functions

Referential emoji, also called representational emoji (Beißwenger & Pappert, 2019), are emoji used as referents of the concept that they represent. They can be used as substitutes for a word that they refer to (Amaghlobeli, 2012; Cramer et al., 2016). I

Speech Act Theory

Speech act theory (Searle, 1968; Searle and Searle, 1969; Searle, 1976) views human utterances not just as stating propositions but more of a way of getting things done with words. In other words, the theory is the concept of act that explains how speakers use language to achieve intended actions and how hearers comprehend intended meaning of what is being said. Speech act theory was initiated by J. L. Austin's (1962) idea of performative utterances that grounded on the following idea: The basic units of communication have locutionary meaning (the literal meaning of the utterance-linguistics), illocutionary meaning (the social function or the anticipated force of the utterance), and perlocutionary force (the actual effect produced by the utterance in each context-on the receiver). Searle (1976) classifies illocutionary acts into five categories. They are representatives (or assertives), directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations.

1. Representatives: refers to the act of expressing belief such as asserting, explaining, claiming and reporting.
2. Directives: refers to the act of expressing desire such as requesting, advising, suggesting, commanding, questioning and ordering.
3. Commissives: refers to the act of expressing intention such as promising, threatening, offering and refusing.
4. Expressives: refers to the act of expressing emotions such as apologizing, complimenting, thanking, blaming and praising.
5. Declarations: this illocutionary act does not express any emotional or psychological state but involves act such as declaring peace/war, hiring/ firing someone from a job or naming a candidate.

1.2. Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the different emojis used by Gen-Z students in their messenger chats?
2. What are the different linguistic functions of emojis as used in messenger chats?
3. What are the illocutionary forces of the emoji as used in the messenger chats?

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This is a qualitative study employing discourse analysis to describe and analyze the different illocutionary force committed by participants in using emojis in their messenger chats. This discourse analysis allows the

researcher to thoroughly analyze the gathered linguistic corpora and distinguish the pragmatic functions of the emojis and how these affect the meaning of the utterance in a computer-mediated exchange of discourse.

Samples of everyday conversations on the Messenger chats were analyzed using Searle's Speech Act Theory in order to extrapolate the role of these emerging signs in the advent of digital advancements on the attainment of the communicative goal in casual and daily online conversations.

Discourse analysis, as a linguistic approach, seeks to investigate the different functions of language in creating meaning in communication and how these meanings were created specially in the use messaging applications and in the use of different emojis while engaging in a communicative event. This further elucidates how these emerging ways of expressing emotions and elaborating intentions alter and affect the intended messages to convey towards another participants in the conversation.

Essentially, this also explores how emoji helps the sender of the message intensifies his intentions to create a cohesive and coherent communication.

2.2 Research Materials

This qualitative-discourse analysis study utilized the authentic exchange of messenger chats which utilized the different emojis of the application. In order to have a broader understanding of the study, different individual were asked as source of the research material. Usual daily conversations with emojis as way of expressing and elaborating the messages were treated as data of the study. These linguistic corpora will be treated for analysis to extrapolate the different illocutionary forces committed by participants while engaging in a computer mediated discourse. Fourteen (13) samples were used as bases of elaborating the linguistic functions and illocutionary forces of emojis as used in sample exchange of discourse.

2.3 Data Collection Procedure

The corpora that were collected for analysis are considered secondary data since these are the exchange of conversations between users of the Messenger chat application. Wolf (2016) stated that any information that has been obtained by others from any public domain is referred to as secondary data. It's usually free or inexpensive to access, and it can provide a strong foundation for any ongoing research if you know where to seek for it and how to assess its value and usefulness.

Primarily, the researcher sought the authorization and approval of the senders to make use of the daily exchange of conversations as linguistic corpora. The selected corpora were meticulously classified according to its pragmatic functions and were thoroughly explained to attain the purpose of the study.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis as it entails, refers to the process of making deductions from the linguistic corpora gathered. This could be done through analytical and logical arguments to recognize the patterns, connections, or themes. The researcher examined and made an evaluation of the conversations using emoji to identify the different illocutionary forces committed by participants in the use of emoji while engaging in their casual online conversations.

Kamalu & Osisanwo (2015) argued that discourse analysis is concerned with more than just the study of formal characteristics of language; it is also concerned with how language is utilized in social and cultural settings. As a result, discourse analysis investigates the link between language (written, verbal – conversation, structured forms of discussion) and the settings in which it is employed.

In order to exemplify the different speech acts committed by senders, discourse analysis is used for comprehensive data extrapolation. The results were stated in order to answer the question of the study. Generated explanations in the selected examples in the conversation or messenger chats were provided in order to find out and to highlight the different emojis used and how these affect the course of the computer mediated discourse.

3. Results

Shown below are the different emojis and their corresponding illocutionary force and intended meaning as used in the conversations.

Table 1: Emojis and its pragmatic Functions as used in computer -mediated discourse

Emoji	Linguistic Functions	Illocutionary Force
1. 	Referential	Representative
2. 	Expressive	Representative
3. 	Interepretative	Expressive
4. 	Expressive	Expressive/Commissive
5. 	Politeness	Expressive
6. 	Referential	Expressive
7. 	Politeness	Expressive
8. 	Expressive	Expressive
9. 	Politeness	Expressive
10. 	Structural	Expressive
11. 	Expressive	Expressive
12. 	Relational	Expressive
13. 	Expressive	Expressive

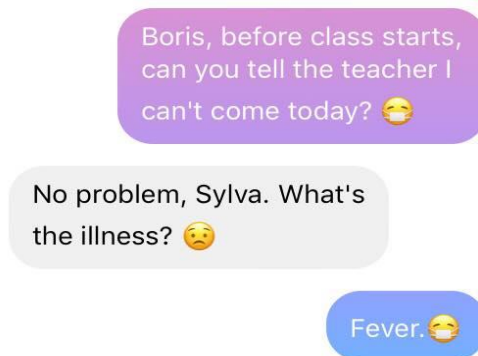
4. Discussion

The discussion of the results is arranged and presented according to the six (6) classification of the linguistic function of emoji namely: Expressive, Interpretative, Relational, Politeness, Emphatic and Referential. Further discussion is made based on Searle's classification of Illocutionary Acts which are representative, expressive, commissive, directive and declaration.

Linguistic Functions of Emojis

1. Expressive Function

Sample 1: Sick emoji

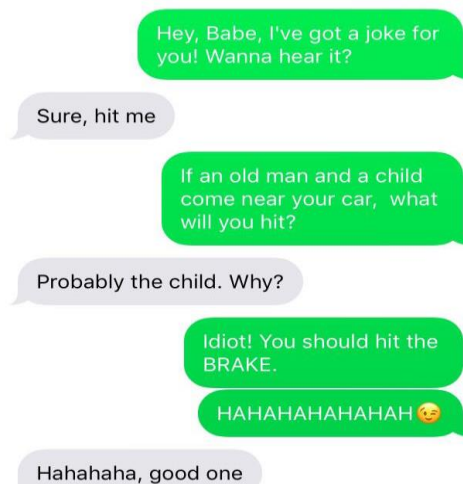


In a computer-mediated discourse, the natural and obvious function of emojis is to mimic paraverbal cues such as expressions and gestures. Expressive emojis allow interactants to convey emotions in messenger conversations or to add emotional value to verbal content. These emotions are mapped directly onto physical expression (Dresner & Herring, 2010).

As exemplified in the sample messenger chats, we see a student texting his classmate that he would not be able to school within that day, including a sick emoji at the end of his sentence. According to Kannan and Shreya (2017) emojis represent numerous emotions and even phrases. Based on how weak the emoji looks and how he has his mouth covered indicates that the person is experiencing an illness.

While emojis may be easy to read, such as the example, the sick emoji however, is ambiguous which according to Goldman (2018) that ambiguity of these emojis may lead to misunderstanding. But the emoji clearly means that the sender of the emoji is, without a doubt, sick. Telling it as a state of being, this emoji as used in the conversation is an example of committing a Representative Illocutionary act.

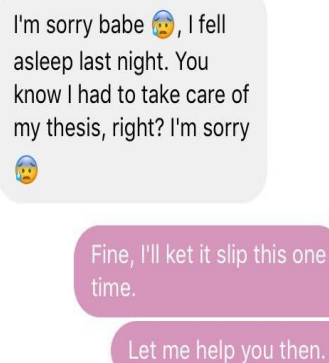
Sample 2: Morbid emoji



In this example, it is observed that both conversations told a morbid and offensive joke. According to Wibowo et. al (2017) the emoji set that barrier and simply was giving out the sign “did you get it”? and changed the impression of that offensive joke to the other person. The emoji served as a supporting role in that message in keeping that joke is a joke and not an insult (Ptaszynski et al, 2011).

The use of the morbid emoji in the sample chat can be classified as Expressive Illocutionary force as it manifested a joke or humorous banter. This evidently shows that both participants of the conversation have mutually understood that the word “*Idiot!*” is used as expression of immense joy and not the other way around as it is manifested in this line “*Hahahahaha, good one!*” as the receiver’s response to sender’s joke.

Sample 3: Sad emoji

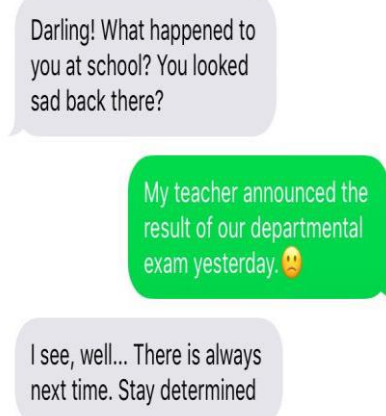


As shown above, the use of the sad emoji shows regret and sincerity for the mistake that has been committed. Emojis are, according to Alshenqeeti (2016), used to display the tone, intent, and emotion of the sender. The use of the emoji in the situation according to Kannan and Shreya (2017) was it made the conversation more emotional and interactive which enhanced the online conversation. Unlike the other one, it lacked emotion and resulted in a negative response by the other person.

It is evident that the exchange of messenger chats indicates the two processes that an expressive emoji can function in a computer-mediated discourse. Expressive emoji are able to indicate that the emotional state of the speaker when sending the message (Marcoccia & Gauducheu , 2007). Expressive emoji work as “indicators of affective states” (Dresner & Herring, 2010; Na’aman et al., 2017) as illustrated in this line “ *I’m sorry babe 😞 , I fell asleep last night. You know I had to take care of my thesis right ? I’m sorry 😞.*

This response of the receiver also exposed the emotional value of a message even if no emotion is present in the verbal part of the text (Cramer et al., 2016). In this case, emoji play the role of “indicators of stance”, showing how a speaker stands in a conversation (Schneebeil, 2017). In the same way, they can be used to react to a previous message in a conversation, or to a situation, as expressed in the line “*Fine, I’ll let it slip this one time. Let me help you then.* This response as reaction to the sender’s apology towards his girlfriend is an example of a Commissive Illocutionary act where the receiver made an offer or commitment that she will help the sender in doing his thesis.

Sample 4: Sad emoji



Another example of an identical situation with the use of emoji and the other does not. Observably, the conversation on the left is more favourable as the person expresses concern due to the display of the unhappy emoji being used indicating that the situation at school was negative. According to Ptazynski et. al. (2011) and Alshenqeeti (2016) that certain emojis act as supportive roles in text-based communication will enrich the sentence by providing hints of emotions from the sender.

The response of the receiver “*My teacher announced the result of our departmental exam yesterday. ☹*” is clearly an expression of disappointment that the he was not able to pass the departmental exam administered by his teacher. The emoji expressing intense sadness explicates that this utterance is an example of Expressive Illocutionary act.

2. Interpretative Function

Sample 5: Morbid emoji



In face-to-face conversation, non-verbal cues like facial expressions and laughter are not only tools for expressing emotions, but also for altering the meaning of a message. In CMD, interpretative emoji replace these features and work as indications to how a sent message should be understood by the receiver (Herring & Dainas, 2017). Some researchers state that interpretative emoji act as “tone” modifiers (Cramer et al., 2016), in opposition to expressive emoji which affect the “mood” of the message. These emoji guide the interpretation of a message, and by doing this they can help clarify the intention of the speaker and eliminate potential misunderstandings between interlocutors (Amaghlobeli, 2012).

The messenger chats show how the presence of an emoji can influence the interpretation of a message: the “grinning face with smiling eyes” emoji suggests that the speaker does not believe the receiver’s response “*Nope, sorry, no idea*”. The receivers’ reply “*I swear! I have no idea. I also wasn’t me, I was at my room*” is an utterance emphasizing the she was not responsible of stealing some cash. The single emoji repeatedly used by her sister can be interpreted as she was getting blamed for the stolen money. Spina (2018) refers to such emoji as pragmatic markers, as they allow users to “infer contextually appropriate meanings in text”, in the same way as the “contextualization cues” in oral discourse, as theorized by Gumperz (1982).

From the perspective of Searle’s Illocutionary acts, “*I swear! I have no idea. I also wasn’t me, I was at my room*” can be classified as Representative as it used by the receiver in asserting that she was not responsible of the stealing his brother’s cash.

3. Relational Function

Sample 7: Birthday Emoji

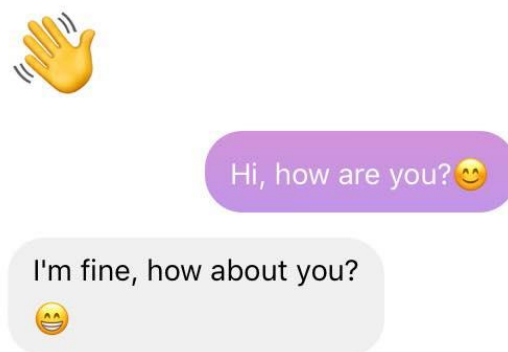


One of the functions of emoji in a computer mediated discourse is to manage and maintain relationships between interactants. Emoji also have a phatic role and work as indicators of the degree of familiarity like an eye contact or laughter in a face-to-face conversation (Marcoccia & Gaudecheau, 2007; Escoufflaire, 2020) or markers of familiarity between users (Spina, 2018; Escoufflaire, 2020).

In the exchange of messenger chats, the greeting of Speaker 1 “*Happy Birthday*”, with emoji of a cake and ribbons, created a vibrant atmosphere of the natal day celebration. Messages accompanied by emoji are perceived as more pleasant and display a higher level of intimacy (Janssen et al., 2014; Tang & Hew, 2019; Escoufflaire, 2020). Emoji act as used in this discourse supported the sentence of Speaker 1 (Ptazynski et. al. 2011) and (Alshenqeeti, 2016) making his greetings more colourful and livelier with all the celebratory emoji being used.

In the parlance of illocutionary acts, this birthday greeting emoji functions Expressive speech act as it connotes a happy greetings on someone’s natal day.

Sample 8: Wave emoji



This another example of the relational function of the emoji as the “wave emoji” basically saying or greeting the other person. According to Kannan and Shreya (2017) and Hakami (2017) that the use emojis make numerous activity and phrases, and in this particular example, the wave emoji is an icon of a hand waving to someone meaning it is greeting someone or saying “hi” or “hello”. This essentially means that emoji can have an “economizing” phatic function, when they are used as a tool of maintaining conversational connection between interactants when words are not used to initiate the conversation (Beißwenger & Pappert, 2019).

Sending this “wave emoji” can certainly be interpreted that the interactant 1 initiates the computer-

mediated conversation (Kelly & Watts, 2015). The reply “*Hi, how are you*” by the other participant of the discourse also signifies that she is available to discuss and talk anything about them.

4. Politeness Function

Sample 9: Like emoji



Here we have the “like” emoji, a widely used emoji that can either show satisfaction or discontentment. In this example it shows and indicates that the person is, indeed, alright from the occurrence yesterday and follows up with a like emoji at the end of his sentence to solidify that nothing was wrong with him. However, his friend does not believe him/her and still apologized, he misinterpreted the emoji and thought the like was a façade to hide his anger which according to Goldman (2018) that failing to understand emojis and their meaning may result to misinterpretation. It is important for us to know what these emojis mean since failing to do so would result in misinterpretation (Bosch & Revilla, 2018).

It can also be interpreted that this emoji also functions as linguistic hedge or politeness strategy as introduced by Brown and Levinson (1987). Emoji can be taken as conversational strategy used by speakers to mitigate the potential damages it may cause to the positive or negative face wants of the interactants. Marcoccia and Gauduchau (2007) identified emoticons used with the same purpose as these linguistic hedges and called them “politeness emoji”. Many researchers also explored the use of emoji as linguistic hedges or politeness strategies in computer-mediated discourse. Skovholt et al. (2014) found emoji used to soften various types of face-threatening acts in a corpus of workplace emails, while Alden (2019) investigated their presence in online discussion forums.

In example above, the like emoji accompanied the response “*Nope, don't worry about it. I'm ok.*” to the question of interactant 1 “*About what happened yesterday, are you still angry?*” can make the speech act less threatening towards the positive face-wants of the interactant 1.

The use of like emoji as response to the question “*About what happened yesterday, are you still angry?*” is an example of Expressive stating that the speaker assures that everything is fine between him and the other participant of the conversation.

Sample 10: Halo emoji



This is a “halo” emoji, the halo represents the kindness being shown. According to Wibowo et.

al. (2017) that people would generate impressions with existing information, and in this example he used his previous act of kindness and created this message that is equal to his act of generosity. It displays the innocence of simply helping another person brings him joy and asking for help another time would not be a bother. According to Hakami (2017) that emoji represented kindness, compliments to the halo being the most notable feature.

The illocutionary act manifested in this exchange of conversation is Expressive as the response of the receiver expresses how pleased he is in helping his friend.

5. Emphatic Function

Sample 11: Crying emoji



Emojis aren't solely just for expressing love, it is also used show respect (Goldman, 2018). Observing the right picture, the first person gave his/her condolences but instead of feeling sorry, that person reacted cold as she tried to adjust to the feeling the other person felt, which that person thought that she did not care. Proper understanding of meaning between these emojis is important to avoid any misunderstandings (Bosch & Revilla, 2018).

Sample 12: Smiley emoji



Here is another smiley emoji but the difference between this and the other smiling or laughing emojis is that this one represents suppressed hatred. In this example, the person is offended by the other person as his reply was emotionless and came out sarcastic. Ptazynski et al (2011) and Alshenqeeti (2016) stated that this emoji acted as a supportive role, where it was put at the end of a sentence in order for the sentence to sound more dynamic.

Then, emphatic emoji can also strengthen the value of other identical emoji in a message (Cramer et al., 2016). The analysis of data provided by Swiftkey (a virtual keyboard software used on Android and Apple devices) showed that all of the most used combinations of emoji were sequences of the same emoji, and that more than half of emoji bigrams, trigrams and quadrigrams are repeated emoji (Medlock & McCulloch, 2016). In their paper on emoji as "beat gestures", McCulloch and Gawne (2018) stated that the emphatic role played by the repetition of emoji was similar to the emphasis generated by the use of repeated gestures in face-to-face conversation (for example, putting your thumb up and moving your hand up and down adds emphasis to the positive value of the thumbs-up). Just like verbal intensifiers (adjectives or adverbs), emphatic emoji only appear to work

when linked to another unit which carries the emphasized value, whether this unit is a word or another emoji (Schneebeli, 2017)

6. Referential Function

Sample 13: Church emoji



The “church emoji” is not a very common emoji but people use these types of emojis along with the “house” and “school emoji” to quickly reply that they are in that particular location. As defined by emojiopedia.org, a church building is generally associated with Christian denominations for quiet prayer, churches hold regular worship services, weddings, baptisms and funerals.

The emoji serves as a convenient alternative than words which conveniently is understood and expressed (Xian Lu et. al., 2016). As observed in the conversation, instead of replying with the place or being specific and telling the details. The other person instead used a church emoji, to which his friend then understands without further detail (Yakin & Totu, 2014).

In the sample exchange of conversation, the linguistic function of the church emoji is Referential. This is also called representational emoji (Beißwenger & Pappert, 2019), in which it is used as referents of the concept that they represent. They can be used as substitutes for a word that they refer to (Amaghlobeli, 2012; Cramer et al., 2016).

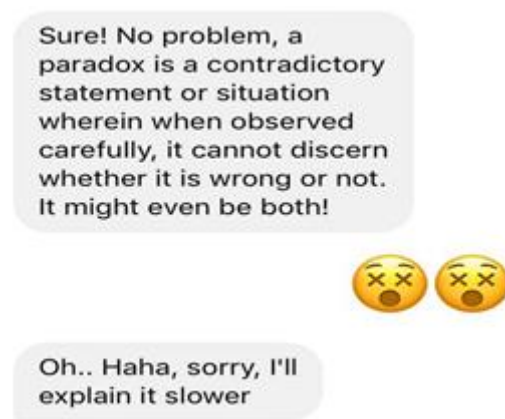
This is another way of informing the other participant of the conversation that the sender plans to go to church on Sunday, that this utterance, in the form of emoji, is considered as Representative Illocutionary act. As defined by Searle in his Speech Act theory, this illocutionary force is committed by the participant of the conversation when he/she is expressing the belief such as asserting, explaining and reporting.

Sample 14: Sleepy emoji



This is the bored or sleepy emoji, it is particularly used, as shown on the example, to represent boredom and as stated by Bosch and Revilla (2018) that emojis such as this provide shortcuts of sentences and phrases. Scrutinizing the example shows that this emoji is used specifically when the thing being shared does not interest that person, and instead of using a bunch of sentences explaining why a person does not like it. However, this is quite rude and may draw anger towards that person being too blunt on the thing being shared. Improper and blunt use of emojis may lead to severe misunderstandings (Goldman, 2018).

Sample 15: Confusion emoji



This is an example of where the emoji replaces a word or a phrase and is understood as a word or sentence like “confusion” and “too much info”. According to Wibowo et al. (2017) and Hsieh and Tseng (2015), even though that it lacked structure or even words, the emojis were enough to explain on how he felt. But the most notable is “there is too much information” because of the present evidence such as the previous long message from his/her friend.

7. Structural Function

Sample 16: Love emoji



Emoji sometimes play the same role as punctuation marks. Some researchers of Computer-mediated Discourse compared their structural function to that of laughter in face-to-face type of conversations because laughter is able to “punctuate” oral conversation (Provine et al., 2007). The final position of emoji in chats is similar with full stops and can be interpreted as the end of the message.

The conversation is a concrete example in which the emoji replaces or is a perfect substitute for the word-love. As stated by Wibowo et al. (2017) and Hsieh and Tseng (2015) regardless of the words used, emojis have the capability to explain itself when used correctly. According to Alshenqeeti (2016) emojis may be a new language trying to overthrow the current language and leech of it until it becomes a single functional language.

To a lesser extent, there are emoji that are used between clauses inside a single chats ((Markman & Oshima, 2007). These emoji are used to mark a topic inside the speakers' conversational turn. Sampietro (2016) observes that messages in which emoji occur almost never contain regular punctuation marks suggesting that emoji are good functional substitutes for some punctuation marks in computer mediated conversations. Thus, emoji can be considered as one of the convenient tools in managing conversations (Cramer et al., 2016). They function like punctuation marks and can work as syntactic markers inside a sentence or inside a message, signalling different structural boundaries depending on their position (Amaghlobeli, 2012; Spina, 2018).

In the parlance of illocutionary acts, this heart or love emoji functions as Expressive speech act as it connotes a feeling of expressing the speaker's love towards his receiver of the message.

5. Conclusions

As what the study has found out, emojis are what the modern times has to offer a different set of languages. This particular language, however, is not yet explored by many researchers and further studies should be conducted to understand more their uses and functions. One kind of emoji may function differently depending on the context and users, but these can certainly help users or speakers to convey the exact emotion of the message in computer-mediated discourse. Based on the results gathered, emojis are flexible types of languages that can either support the existing one by making more palatable on the online community or it will become the language itself in some aspects and contexts.

Nevertheless, the studies regarding these modern signs and symbols will prove to be fun, challenging and beneficial as it is constantly changing overtime by the course of technology.

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