

A Linguistic Study on Emojis Used in Online Communication

R. R. T. Kaumadi Bandara¹

Department of Linguistics

Abstract

Emojis are small symbols that are used to express feelings and thoughts through text messages. They were derived from computer-mediated communication and they contribute to enhance social relations in this digital era. Due to the convenience of using emotional expressions, they have been popular among the young generation in smartphone texting and online communication. Globally, the usage of emojis is increasing dramatically. A few problematic facts could be identified regarding the use of emojis. How does each emoji signify its meaning? How does the communicator use them as a part of language without confusion? The objective of this study is to investigate how each emoji has obtained a universally accepted meaning and how they are clearly understood without confusion. This study is designed as a qualitative study where the purpose is to investigate solutions for the undermentioned issues. Conducting observational research studying the use of symbols in some WhatsApp chats seemed to be the most appropriate research method. The result of the research proved that emojis do not have an autonomous existence. They do not have an exact meaning and their meaning may vary according to the situation. Yet emojis do not differ according to the language and they can be used with any language in the same manner. What emojis express is always interacts with the textual context. The results also showed that the communicator should know the usage of emojis for effective communication. Therefore, it can be admitted that emojis are semantically diverse and they always relate to the context. To understand the message clearly, the receiver has to concern the emoji with its textual context.

Keywords: Emoji, Emotional Expressions, Communication, Context, Symbols

¹ *kaumadibandara4@gmail.com*