

Comparative Study of Emoji Usage in between Japanese and Sri Lankan University Students

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Abstract

At present, Internet has become widespread, and people interact with each other through the Internet in a globalised society. Especially young people use SNS widely. When communicating via SNS, "Emoji", which is a nonverbal communication element, is used. Sri Lankan university students use a lot of emojis in SNS communication. Sri Lankan Japanese language learners often meet Japanese university students and communicate via SNS. Different cultural backgrounds may have different meanings of emojis in each society. If the meaning of the emoji is different, the way of understanding differs from the sender to the receiver, which may cause communication problems. For this study, an online questionnaire survey was conducted among 50 Japanese university students and 50 Sri Lankan university students to find out similarities and differences of emoji usage and investigate the manner in which the use of emojis affects the communication of university students in both countries. This survey found two similarities in the use of emojis between Sri Lankans and Japanese university students. In both Japan and Sri Lanka, females use more emojis than men, and they use emojis more frequently, and both university students use emojis mostly to communicate with their "best friends," "ordinary friends," and "family and relatives". On the contrary, the university students in Sri Lanka use emojis with the highest priority on friendship with the other person, regardless of their hierarchical relationship, while the Japanese students do not consider the friendliness with the other party when using emojis. In addition, extracting the top three most frequent pictograms used by university students in both the countries and analysing their meanings, found that even the same emojis have different meanings according to university students in two countries. From the above results, it is considered that the use of emojis in SNS communication may cause a communication gap between university students in Japan and Sri Lanka.

Key words: Communication, Emoji, Intercultural Communication, Nonverbal Communication, SNS

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