ปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อการใช้งานอีโมจิในการสื่อสารผ่าน
Facebook Messenger ของนักศึกษาปริญญาตรี

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้สำรวจปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิพลต่อการใช้อีโมจิของนักศึกษาปริญญาตรีในการสื่อสารผ่าน เฟซบุ๊กเมสเซนเจอร์ โดยใช้วิธีการผสมผสานระหว่างการสำรวจข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณจากแบบสอบถามและข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพจากการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง คำถามเปิด และข้อมูลการสนทนาจริง เก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลจากนักศึกษา 143 คนผ่าน Google Forms (ตามหลักการของ Discourse Completion Task หรือ DCT) โดยมีการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง คำถามเปิด และข้อมูลการสนทนาจริง วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลการสนทนาจากผู้เข้าร่วม 5% (10 คน) ของกลุ่มตัวอย่าง ผลการศึกษาเผยให้เห็นถึงความชอบในการใช้งานข้อความแบบผสมผสานกับอีโมจิ เพื่อเพิ่มการแสดงออกทางอารมณ์ การเพิ่มประสิทธิภาพการสื่อสาร ความสะดวกหรือประหยัดเวลา ความสนุกสนานหรือการมีส่วนร่วม ความเป็นทางการหรือความเหมาะสม และความคลุมเครือหรือการตีความผิด ผลการศึกษาระบุถึงอุปสรรคต่าง ๆ ที่อาจเกิดขึ้นขณะการสื่อสารผ่านอีโมจิ เช่น การตีความผิดพลาดและการขาดความระมัดระวังในการเลือกใช้ในสถานการณ์แบบเป็นทางการ เป็นต้น นอกจากนี้ การวิเคราะห์วาทกรรมสื่อหลากรูปแบบในการวิจัยนี้ได้เน้นถึงผลกระทบที่สำคัญของอีโมจิต่อน้ำเสียง และอารมณ์ของการโต้ตอบ ซึ่งช่วยให้เข้าใจการสื่อสารดิจิทัลของนักศึกษาปริญญาตรีในประเทศไทยได้ลึกซึ้งยิ่งขึ้น

คำสำคัญ: อีโมจิ การสื่อสารดิจิทัล เฟซบุ๊กเมสเซนเจอร์ นักศึกษาปริญญาตรี การวิเคราะห์วาทกรรมสื่อหลากรูปแบบ

Factors Influencing Undergraduate Students' Use of Emojis in Facebook Messenger Communication

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Abstract

This study explores the factors influencing undergraduate students' use of emojis in Facebook Messenger communication through a mixed-methods approach, incorporating quantitative data collected through Google Forms surveys (Discourse Completion Task or DCT) and qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions, and real chat data. Data were collected from 143 students using Google Forms, with semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions, and real chat data analysis involving 5% (10 participants) of the sample. The findings revealed a preference for combining text and emojis to enhance clarity, emotional expression, and engagement. Key themes included the role of emojis. Common themes included expression of emotions, enhancement of communication, convenience or time-saving, fun or engagement, formality or appropriateness, and ambiguity or misinterpretation. Challenges such as potential misinterpretation and the need for careful use in formal settings are discussed. Using Multimodal Discourse Analysis, this study highlights emojis' significant impact on the tone and mood of interactions, contributing to a deeper understanding of digital communication among Thai undergraduate students.

Keywords: Emojis, Digital Communication, Facebook Messenger, Undergraduate Students, Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Introduction

In today's digital age, emojis have become fundamental to online communication, acting as essential visual cues that enhance text-based messages. Researchers such as Kaye et al. (2017) emphasize the importance of understanding how these icons influence communication, particularly among undergraduate students, to improve digital literacy and interaction effectiveness. Social media platforms, including Facebook, have transformed communication by offering diverse tools for emotional expression and interaction (Tian et al., 2017). Despite the widespread use of emojis, a significant gap remains in understanding how they are employed and interpreted across different cultural and social contexts (Alshenqeeti, 2016).

The current study is particularly relevant in Thailand, where digital communication is prevalent among teenagers and young adults (Madden, 2013). By focusing on undergraduate students, the current study seeks to uncover patterns and preferences in emoji usage and explore how these symbols impact online interactions (Cheung et al., 2011). Understanding these dynamics is crucial for enhancing the clarity and effectiveness of digital communication in educational and social contexts.

Since this study focuses on how emojis enhance meaning in communication through their interaction with text, Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) is the most appropriate framework. As discussed by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002), MDA examines how different modes, such as text, visuals, and symbols, interact to construct meaning. This study uses MDA as an abbreviation for clarity and conciseness, given its frequent reference throughout the research.

The primary objective is to analyze the prevalence and factors influencing emoji use among undergraduate students. MDA provides a focused lens to explore how emojis, as visual cues, enrich digital communication by adding emotional depth, clarifying tone, and enhancing clarity. This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and

qualitative data, to examine the interplay between text and emojis in digital messaging. Like other semiotic resources like color, emojis help prevent misunderstandings and create more nuanced, effective communication by complementing textual elements.

The current study combines quantitative data collected through the Discourse Completion Task (DCT), which includes questionnaires with fill-in-the-blank, ranking and multiple-choice questions influenced by Conversational Analysis (CA). Additionally, qualitative insights are gathered from semi-structured interviews, open-ended (from DCT) and real chat data to comprehensively understand emoji use.

The findings from the current study will offer valuable insights for educators, designers who create the new emojis design, and communicators. By identifying the factors driving emoji usage and the challenges in their interpretation, the current study aims to enhance the effectiveness of digital communication. The insights will inform strategies for fostering more inclusive and expressive online interactions. Ultimately, the study's beneficiaries include online users seeking clearer communication, educators looking to integrate emojis into digital literacy programs, designers optimizing emoji features, and policymakers developing guidelines for respectful and effective digital interactions.

Research Question

The current study is guided by the following research questions, which aim to explore the specific ways in which emojis are used by undergraduate students in Thailand when communicating via Facebook Messenger

1. What are the prevalent forms of communication utilized by undergraduate students in Thailand on Facebook Messenger?

2. What are the key factors that influence students' choices when using text-only messages, emojis-only messages, or a combination of both in their communication?

These questions are designed to provide a thorough understanding of how undergraduate students engage with digital communication tools and how their use of emojis shapes their interactions within this medium.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the current study are closely aligned with the research questions. They aim to identify and explore the factors that drive the use of emojis in Facebook Messenger communication among Thai undergraduate students. Specifically, the research objectives are as follows:

1. To identify the most commonly used forms of Facebook Messenger communication, such as text-only messages, emoji-only messages, and mixed text and emoji messages.

2. To investigate the key factors influencing students' choices when selecting text, emojis, or a combination of both in their digital communications.

3. To explore how cultural and contextual factors, including social norms and communication purposes, influence emoji usage among Thai students.

Research Hypothesis

The current study is based on the following hypotheses, which propose the relationships between emoji usage and communication effectiveness among undergraduate students in Thailand:

1. Thai undergraduate students prefer to combine text and emojis in their Facebook Messenger communications to enhance the clarity of their messages, express emotions, and maintain engagement.

2. The use of emojis is significantly influenced by cultural and social contexts, with Thai students showing preferences that align with specific communication norms and practices.

3. Emojis contribute to varying levels of understanding and misinterpretation, depending on the context in which they are used. Formal

and informal settings, in particular, influence how emojis are perceived and understood.

These hypotheses were tested through both quantitative and qualitative methods, providing a comprehensive view of the factors that shape emoji usage among Thai undergraduate students.

Research Scope

The study involves 143 undergraduate students from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at a northeastern Thai higher education institution. Initially, 300 participants were selected from first to fourth-year students majoring in English and studying Linguistics. However, due to 157 fourth-year students being engaged in internships, they could not participate, leaving a final sample of 143 students.

The researcher's experience and familiarity with the institution gained through four years of study and an additional year of work offered valuable contextual insights into the students' communication practices and emoji usage. This background provided a meaningful lens through which communication challenges were observed, allowing for a more contextually grounded exploration of emoji use. While personal experience alone cannot fully eliminate bias, it enriched the research design by aligning the study's focus with the students' realities, ensuring that practical concerns were thoughtfully addressed. Consequently, this familiarity likely enhanced the accuracy and relevance of the findings, offering nuanced perspectives on the dynamics of emoji usage within this specific academic environment.

According to recent statistics, Facebook Messenger continues to be a dominant communication platform in Thailand, with over 51 million users by the end of 2022, many of whom are between the ages of 18 and 34 (Degenhard, 2023). This demographic aligns with the target population of the current study, making Facebook Messenger an ideal platform for examining emoji usage. By focusing on Thai undergraduate students, the current study offers valuable insights into how emojis function as part of

the digital communication landscape within this specific cultural and social context.

Research Methods

1. Data collection procedures

The current study employed a mixed-methods approach to explore emoji usage among undergraduate students. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to address the research questions effectively.

1.1 Quantitative Data Collection

To ensure validity and reliability, the questionnaire underwent evaluation using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) Form for Experts. Two experts were invited to review the questionnaire: one with expertise in discourse analysis and the other specializing in educational research and communication studies. Both experts were selected based on their experience with digital communication and linguistics, ensuring their feedback aligned with the study's focus.

The researcher formally requested their input by providing an overview of the current study objectives and research questions and a draft of the questionnaire. The experts assessed each question using a scoring system (+1 = appropriate, 0 = unclear, -1 = inappropriate) and provided feedback on wording, structure, and relevance. For example, one expert suggested rephrasing questions to better capture students' motivations for emoji usage, ensuring alignment with the theoretical framework. Another expert recommended adding more open-ended questions to allow participants greater freedom in expressing their thoughts, improving the qualitative depth of the study.

Based on the feedback, several questions were revised to enhance clarity and relevance. The experts awarded a score of 13 out of 13, indicating that the questionnaire met the validity criteria. This thorough evaluation ensured that the survey instrument was robust, well-structured, and aligned with the study's aims, contributing to the reliability of the collected data.

1.2 Qualitative Data Collection

Data saturation is pivotal in qualitative research, as it ensures that no new themes or insights emerge from additional data collection. Mason (2010) suggests that saturation can often be achieved with a small sample size, while Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) support this by demonstrating that meaningful insights can be obtained from as few as 6-12 interviews. This perspective aligns with Creswell and Poth's (2016) emphasis on achieving detailed understanding rather than relying on large participant numbers. Therefore, involving 5% of the total sample (10 participants) in the current study's semi-structured interviews and real chat data analysis is considered both sufficient and productive.

The semi-structured interviews focused on the students' perceptions of emoji use in digital communication, exploring themes such as the emotional and social functions of emojis, the influence of context on emoji interpretation, and challenges encountered during emoji usage. These interview questions were carefully crafted based on expert input and the researcher's experience, ensuring cultural relevance and contextual appropriateness for the Thai context. Furthermore, real chat data was collected from the same 5% of participants who consented to share anonymized excerpts of their conversations on Facebook Messenger. This authentic data provided valuable insights into the nuanced use of emojis in everyday interactions, offering a deeper understanding of both the intended and perceived functions of emojis in real communication settings.

2. Data analysis

The data analysis involved a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of emoji usage among Thai undergraduate students.

2.1 Quantitative Analysis:

The quantitative data from the surveys were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, mean scores, and ranking orders, were

calculated to identify patterns and trends in emoji use. Correlation analysis was also performed to explore relationships between variables, such as the frequency of emoji use and the students' perceptions of its effectiveness in communication.

2.2 Qualitative Analysis:

The qualitative data, including interview transcripts and real chat data, were subjected to thematic analysis, following the framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This involved coding the data to identify recurring themes related to the emotional, social, and contextual functions of emojis in digital communication. The thematic analysis allowed for a deeper exploration of how emojis contribute to the tone and meaning of online interactions, particularly within the cultural context of Thai undergraduate students.

Theoretical Concepts and Research Frameworks

The current study is grounded in two key theoretical frameworks: Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) and Conversation Analysis (CA). These frameworks provide a lens through which the role of emojis in communication can be examined, particularly in relation to how they interact with text to convey meaning.

1. Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA)

As conceptualized by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002), MDA offers a comprehensive approach to understanding how different modes of communication, such as text, images, and symbols, combine to create meaning. In the current study context, emojis are considered resources that contribute to the construction of meaning in digital communication. Unlike traditional discourse analysis, which focuses primarily on spoken or written text, MDA allows for examining how visual elements like emojis function alongside text to enhance or alter its meaning. This framework is particularly relevant to the current study because researchers analyze three distinct modes of communication: text-only, emoji-only, and the combination of

text and emojis. MDA enables the researchers to explore how each mode individually and collectively contributes to meaning-making, making it the ideal theoretical lens for understanding the nuances of these multimodal interactions.

2. Conversation Analysis (CA)

CA principles guided the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) design, focusing on how participants manage interaction structures, such as turn-taking, conversation breakdowns, and cues to signal understanding or emotion (Sacks et al., 1974). In the current study, CA was applied to analyze how emojis function within digital conversations, particularly their role in managing interpersonal interactions and conveying social and emotional cues.

While previous studies have not fully utilized Conversation Analysis (CA) frameworks to examine emoji usage, the current study draws inspiration from CA principles in developing the Discourse Completion Task (DCT). Specifically, CA's focus on conversational structures such as turn-taking, interaction management, and signaling emotional cues guided the design of DCT scenarios to elicit authentic communication patterns. The findings from the study reveal that emojis play a similar role in enhancing interactional clarity, managing tone, and expressing emotions, as CA principles would suggest in other conversational contexts.

By integrating this framework, the current study offers a comprehensive view of how emojis contribute to communication in both formal and informal digital settings.

The current study investigates emoji usage among Thai undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger, addressing a notable gap in the existing body of research on digital communication. While several studies have explored the role of emojis in communication across various cultural contexts, very few have specifically examined their use in Thailand. For instance, Alshboul and Rababah's (2021) research at Jadara University in Jordan highlighted how cultural nuances influence the functions of emojis, reflecting local norms and linguistic practices. This study emphasizes the

importance of cultural context in shaping emoji use. A theme echoed in Algharabali and Taqi's (2018) study at the College of Basic Education in Kuwait found that emojis are shaped by educational and cultural norms, influencing how students communicate.

In contrast, research conducted in the United States, such as the study by Cramer et al. (2016), suggests that emojis are primarily employed to convey emotions and manage conversations, with cultural factors playing a role in guiding their interpretation. These studies, while insightful, focus on contexts outside of Southeast Asia, leaving a gap in understanding how emojis function within the Thai cultural framework.

Broader studies, such as "Facebook Sentiment: Reactions and Emojis" by Tian et al. (2017), have shown that emoji usage varies significantly across platforms and demographics, revealing complex interactions between emojis and linguistic texts. However, such studies do not address the specific patterns of emoji usage in the Thai context, where Facebook Messenger is a dominant platform for both personal and academic communication among young adults.

Thus, the current study fills this research gap by focusing on the unique cultural and social dynamics that influence emoji use among Thai undergraduate students. Doing so contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of digital communication in Thailand, particularly how cultural context shapes the use and interpretation of emojis, an area that remains underexplored in existing literature.

Definition of Specific Terms

1. Emojis: In the current study, emojis are digital icons used to express emotions, ideas, or situations, enhancing communication through visual cues.

2. Facebook Messenger: In the current study, Facebook Messenger is an instant messaging platform that supports text, voice, video, and emoji use, which is central to understanding students' digital communication.

3. Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA): In the current study, MDA examines how text, images, and sounds interact to create meaning in communication.

4. Conversation Analysis (CA): In the current study, CA analyzes interaction patterns, such as turn-taking and emotional cues, guiding the design of research tools.

5. Discourse Completion Task (DCT): The current study, DCT simulates conversations to gather natural language and emoji usage data.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were strictly followed throughout the current study process. All participants provided informed consent prior to their participation, ensuring they were aware of the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any time. Data privacy and confidentiality were maintained, with all identifiable information removed from the final data set. The research instruments and procedures were reviewed and approved by education, linguistics, and digital communication experts to ensure methodological rigor and adherence to ethical standards.

Conclusion of the Findings, Discussion and Suggestions

The findings of this study highlight the nuanced role of emojis in digital communication among Thai undergraduate students. Both quantitative and qualitative data reveal that students strategically combine text with emojis to enhance clarity, express emotions, and maintain engagement. Specifically, 55.2% of participants preferred a combination of text and emojis, 51.7% used emojis to fill conversational gaps, and 50.3% found them effective in conveying emotions (See more in figure1). These results demonstrate that emojis are essential tools for simplifying interactions and improving communication precision across various contexts.

Several factors influence emoji usage among the students. Platform familiarity emerged as a significant factor, with students frequently

engaging with Facebook Messenger for over five hours daily, highlighting its convenience and accessibility. Social norms and cultural expectations also play a key role, as students use emojis to maintain politeness and avoid conflict during interactions. Furthermore, students reported that emojis save time by reducing ambiguity and making messages clearer, emphasizing their value in fast-paced conversations where efficiency is critical.

The qualitative data, collected through semi-structured interviews, real chat responses, and open-ended questions, provides further insights into the nuanced use of emojis. The thematic analysis of open-ended questions, semi-structured interviews, and real chat data provides key insights into how college students use emojis on Facebook Messenger. Common themes include expression of emotions, enhancement of communication, convenience or time-saving, fun or engagement, formality or appropriateness, and ambiguity or misinterpretation, showing how emojis are embedded in various aspects of digital interactions.

Emojis play a significant role in expressing emotions that text alone cannot fully capture. In the open-ended responses, one participant shared, "It's always good to use both because it can help me convey all of my feelings in the text" (Appendix A #2), while another noted, "Emojis can replace emotions that we do not want to express in words" (Appendix A #19). These insights are echoed in interviews, with participant 2.7 explaining, "Sometimes plain text can't convey our emotions. I like using emojis to express real feelings." Real chat data also reflects this trend, with nine out of ten participants in adolescent relationships combining text and emojis to express affection, humor, and emotional nuance.

Emojis also enhance communication by adding clarity and tone to digital conversations. Participants highlighted that emojis make messages more meaningful and easier to understand. One respondent remarked, "Emojis enhance the meaning of messages and save time expressing feelings" (Appendix A #21). Interview participants also emphasized this, with participant 6.4 explainings, "If we type 'okay' with a smiling emoji, readers will understand

it clearly." Real chat data supports these findings, showing that participants used emojis to clarify intent, especially in emotionally sensitive conversations.

Convenience and time-saving emerged as other key themes. Participants found that emojis could quickly convey complex emotions, making communication more efficient. One respondent shared, "Using emojis can replace words and save time" (Appendix A #36). Participant 2.2 agreed, "Sometimes I'm lazy to type, and emojis can express my feelings." This efficiency is evident in real chat data, particularly in alcohol-influenced conversations, where participants used emojis to communicate emotions without lengthy explanations.

Emojis also contribute to making conversations more fun and engaging. In the open-ended responses, one participant noted, "Using emojis is fun; it makes the conversation more friendly" (Appendix A #29). Participant 3.7 from the interviews echoed this sentiment: "If we use emojis, it's more playful." Real chat data reveals that participants often used emojis to create lighthearted and enjoyable interactions in relationship contexts.

Despite their benefits, participants are mindful of the context in which emojis are used, especially in formal settings. One participant stated, "I don't use emojis in formal conversations with teachers" (Appendix A #45), while participant 4.9 from the interviews added, "If I talk with adults, maybe I will use fewer emojis." This trend is reflected in the real chat data, where university-related conversations were strictly text-only, showing participants' awareness of the need for professionalism and appropriateness in academic contexts.

However, emojis can sometimes introduce ambiguity and misinterpretation. Participants acknowledged that the meanings of some emojis could vary between individuals, leading to confusion. One respondent remarked, "Some emojis can have multiple meanings, which can be confusing" (Appendix A #103). Interview data also highlights this issue, with participant 8.8 explaining, "Sometimes I don't know if they're speaking from the heart or just kidding." Real chat data from alcohol-related conversations

demonstrates similar challenges, as participants occasionally struggled to ensure their intended tone was understood.

In summary, the combined analysis of open-ended questions, interviews, and real chat data demonstrates that emojis play a crucial role in enhancing emotional expression, communication efficiency, and engagement. However, students also adapt their use based on context, avoiding emojis in formal settings while acknowledging the potential for ambiguity. When used strategically, the findings emphasize that emojis enrich digital interactions, balancing emotional nuance with contextual appropriateness.

The findings above align with Algharabali and Taqi's (2018) study in Kuwait, where emojis soften messages and enhance politeness. Similarly, Thai students in this study used emojis to mitigate harsh tones. For example, participant 6.4 explained, "If we type 'okay' with a smiling emoji, readers will understand it clearly," reflecting how emojis help clarify intent and maintain positive interactions. In contrast, Alshboul and Rababah's (2021) research in Jordan found that emojis often emphasize textual content, indicating that although the core functions of emojis remain similar across cultures, the nuances of their use vary. Additionally, Cramer et al. (2016) observed that U.S. users frequently employ emojis to convey subtle emotional states. Still, these uses may lead to misinterpretations in cross-cultural interactions where emoji meanings differ. Tian et al. (2017) further highlighted that emoji usage on Facebook often aligns with platform-specific reactions such as "like" or "love." However, this study found that Thai students use emojis primarily in personal and academic settings, indicating the importance of both cultural and platform-specific factors in shaping emoji usage.

Despite the valuable insights the current study provides, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The focus on undergraduate students limits the generalizability of the findings, as the results may not fully represent the broader population. Future research should explore more diverse demographics to better understand emoji usage across different groups. Additionally, incorporating objective methods such as behavioral analysis

may help mitigate biases inherent in self-reported data. Expanding the scope to other popular platforms like Instagram or LINE could reveal new patterns and provide further insights into digital communication practices.

Overall, the current study offers practical pathways for linguists, educators, and communication professionals by underscoring the importance of culture in emoji interpretation. It highlights the need for inclusive and effective communication strategies that account for cultural nuances and platform-specific dynamics, contributing to developing more meaningful and impactful digital interactions.

Figure 1

Bar Chart of Emoji Usage Preferences
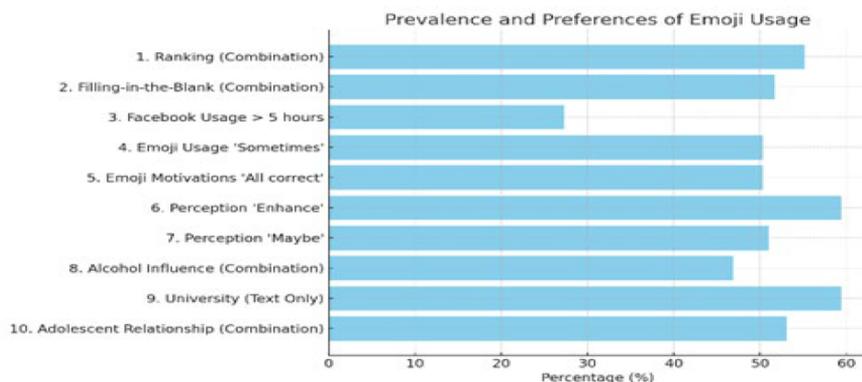
Source: Data collected from undergraduate participants through the Discourse Completion Task (DCT), designed with fill-in-the-blank, ranking, and multiple-choice questions inspired by Conversational Analysis (CA) principles. This data reflects the preferences reported by participants in the current study.

Figure 1 presents the emoji usage preferences among undergraduate students, highlighting the frequency and context of emoji use across different communication methods. The bar chart visualizes several key data points obtained from survey responses:

55.2% of participants preferred using a combination of text and emojis, indicating a strong preference for mixed communication that enhances clarity and emotional expression.

51.7% selected the "Combination" option in fill-in-the-blank exercises, further reinforcing the appeal of blended text and emoji messages.

27.3% of students reported spending more than five hours daily on Facebook Messenger, suggesting heavy reliance on this platform for communication.

50.3% stated they use emojis "sometimes", reflecting moderate but consistent usage to convey emotions or tone.

50.3% selected all four emoji motivations (emotion, clarity, time-saving, and meaning), indicating the multifunctional nature of emojis.

59.4% of participants perceived that emojis enhance communication, supporting the idea that emojis help clarify intent.

51.0% expressed uncertainty ("Maybe") about whether emojis enhance clarity in all contexts, highlighting potential variability in interpretation.

In alcohol-influenced conversations, 46.9% used a combination of text and emojis, reflecting how emojis can express emotions or humor.

59.4% of participants relied on text-only communication in university-related contexts, emphasizing professionalism and clarity.

53.1% preferred a combination of text and emojis in adolescent relationship contexts, showing that emojis foster emotional expression and engagement.

The chart provides insights into how students adapt their emoji usage based on context, such as balancing playfulness in personal conversations with professionalism in academic settings. These preferences align with the study's findings that emojis function as tools for emotional clarity, time-saving, and engagement, though their use varies depending on the communication scenario.

Figure 2

Real chat data

(University).　　　　　(Adolescent Relationship)　　　　(Alcohol influence)

Source: Data from participants with informed consent.

Figure 2 presents chat excerpts analyzed through thematic analysis, revealing key themes: emotional expression, engagement and playfulness, time-saving and efficiency, ambiguity management, and formality. In personal conversations, emojis express affection and humor, fostering emotional connections. Students avoided emojis in formal settings, such as academic interactions, to maintain professionalism. Alcohol-influenced chats showed mixed-use, with emojis adding humor but also causing occasional ambiguity, as one participant noted, "Sometimes I don't know if they're speaking from the heart or just kidding."

The analysis shows that students adapt their emoji use based on context, balancing playfulness with professionalism to match the conversation's tone and intent.

Appendices

Appendix A

Open-Ended Text Responses

These responses were collected from open-ended questions, offering insights into participants' perspectives on emoji usage:

1. *"It's always good to use both because it can help me convey all of my feelings in the text."* (Appendix A #2)

2. *"Emojis can replace emotions that we do not want to express in words."* (Appendix A #19)

3. *"Emojis enhance the meaning of messages and save time expressing feelings."* (Appendix A #21)

4. *"Using emojis can replace words and save time while showing our emotions."* (Appendix A #36)

5. *"They save time in responses sometimes."* (Appendix A #67)

6. *"Using emojis is fun; it makes the conversation more friendly and spicy."* (Appendix A #29)

7. *"Emojis are a way to express emotions, adding color to conversations."* (Appendix A #59)

8. *"I don't use emojis in formal conversations with teachers because they seem less respectful."* (Appendix A #45)

9. *"Emojis are good but should be used appropriately because some might be misunderstood."* (Appendix A #62)

10. *"Emojis have no language, so sometimes they might not convey the intended feeling."* (Appendix A #17)

11. *"Some emojis can have multiple meanings, which can be confusing."* (Appendix A #103)

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interview Responses

Below are selected quotes from semi-structured interviews that highlight participants' views and experiences:

Emotional Expression:

"I use emojis in every sentence because I feel it reflects our true intentions the most." (Participant #2.5)

"Sometimes plain text can't convey our emotions. I like using emojis to express real feelings." (Participant #2.7)

"I think it's the best way to express my feelings." (Participant #2.9)

"The text is not enough for showing the feeling of me, because I'm an energetic girl." (Participant #2.10)

"It helps convey emotions better because they represent facial expressions and gestures." (Participant #3.1)

Enhancing Communication:

"If we type 'okay' with a smiling emoji, readers will understand it clearly." (Participant #6.4)

"For official purposes, we should avoid using them sometimes." (Participant #4.4)

Convenience and Time-Saving:

"Sometimes I'm lazy to type, and emojis can express my feelings." (Participant #2.2)

Ambiguity and Misinterpretation:

"Sometimes when chatting with my partner, I don't know if they're speaking from the heart or just kidding." (Participant #8.8)

"If someone smiles at us, we don't really know what they think." (Participant #8.3)

"The squinting eyes emoji upset me, so I called my partner to check if they understood us." (Participant #8.5)

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

While preparing the current research paper, the researchers utilized AI (ChatGPT) tools to assist in arranging words and refining grammar. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and took full responsibility for the content of the publication. It is important to note that while the AI facilitated the structural aspects of writing, all conceptual ideas and informational content were independently developed and articulated by the authors.

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