



A Study of Semiotic and Linguistic Gap Between the Meaning and the Usage of Emoticons in Pakistani Society

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Abstract

Current research deals with the semiotic and linguistics gap between the actual meaning and the usage of Emoticons in Pakistani society. This study aimed to find out the gap between the meaning and the use of Emoticon and to examine the use and place of Emoticons as a form of language. This research also aimed to identify whether men or women tend to use Emoticons more frequently. To analyze the gap, a survey questionnaire was used having 45 questions as tool for collecting data from mobile phone users and 05 conversations have been analyzed using content analysis technique. According to the results, mobile phone users use Emoticons in their conversations without knowing what they mean, whether they have any referential or literal meaning or which conceptual categories they denote, they do not know the answers to all these questions. This research tried to give valuable suggestions in order to solve the problems of using Emoticons without proper understandings. On the basis of findings, it is suggested that Emoticons must not give false and fake expressions rather these Emoticons should prevent misapprehension and confusion and should be aligned with the receiver.

Keywords: Semiotic gap; Linguistics gap; Emoticon; Referential or literal meaning.

1. Introduction

A new generation of Emoticons called Emojis, is increasingly being used in mobile communication and social media. In the previous two years, more than ten billion Emojis were used on Twitter. Emojis are Unicode graphic symbols that are used as shorthand to express concepts, ideas and emotions (Novak *et al.*, 2015). A large part of our social interactions and relationships are taking place online and a large number of researchers and observers have turned their attention to study these interactions. Social networks like Twitter, Facebook and Whatsapp enable us to connect with people that are distant from us by chatting and using different Emoticons (Kwak *et al.*, 2010).

Emoticons have taken over the world of mobile phones, laptops and internet. Earlier there were words only to convey one's thoughts but now these Emoticons are used to represent moods, feelings or send as a reply. Whether someone is engaged in conversation with friends, family or the loved ones he/she often adds the small colorful faces with texts or without texts to convey one's thoughts to others. Text messages doesn't represent actual tone the way voice can, but Emoticons have bridged the gap by visually expressing our moods and feelings in more easiest and quickest way (Zarina, 2017).

Emotions are central informational signals in social cognition (Pessoa, 2009). During face to face interaction, these informational signals generally come from facial expressions. In order to communicate, people nowadays are using alternative means and channels of communication. When they are not physically present they use these Text-based communications channels. Facial expressions are not always available due to physical absence. The diffidence of pragmatic function and informational signals in social cognition has been linked with complexity in understanding other people (Kiesler *et al.*, 1984).

Emoticons are fixed representation of human facial expressions that are unnatural, deviant and iconic. Since 1982, Emoticons have become popular resource to enhance text-based communications (Vincent and Fortunati, 2009).

1.1. Background of the Study

A young scientist Scott E. Fahlman, on September 19, 1982, had gone through some communication troubles on his newly developed Bulletin Board at Carnegie Mellon University Net. People in Bulletin Board had difficulty in differentiating serious post from jokes and vice versa which often direct them to misinterpret. Mr. Fahlman's solution to this problem was very immediate and simple. He asked every person there to add two signs :) and :(in

their conversation so that they would be able to differentiate aim and intention of each post. He had no idea at that time, that he had unknowingly introduced a complete new concept in the world of Internet Language. Earlier they were known as smiley but later on named as more scientific term “Emoticons”. Since that day evolution of Emoticons begun and now it has spread to the internet world. Since the evolution, four decades have passed; these Emoticons have not only endured text based communications but also these Emoticons had turned to be irreplaceable, considerable division of the internet language and extremely rare around the world (Fahlman, 1982).

When the Emoticons were created in 1980s, many observers and analysts have explained this creation of Emoticons as fruitless effort for advancing internet communication efficiency. The finder of Internet Linguistics, David Crystal in the famous ‘Language and Internet (Crystal, 2001) argues that Emoticons at the time are potentially useful and helpful but tremendously simple and basic way of capturing some of the essential features of facial expressions but the semantic role of these Emoticons is limited. However, after two decades have passed, Emoticons not only endured but have turned into extremely rare and irreplaceable aspects of linguistics in the internet language (Crystal, 2001).

Emoticon is typographic representation of human facial expressions such as :) and :(that are used to convey emotions in the text. Emoticons occur both in formal and non-formal context as they originated in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). The use of these Emoticons is not only limited in this context. These non-alphabetic characters can be read indirectly as for example: @ , :-/, :(and :) (Sanderson, 1993).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Pakistani mobile phone users believe Emoticons to be funny and suppose that these Emoticons embellish their conversation and they do not pay a little heed towards them. But for a Linguist and an analyst, it seems puzzling and confusing that how these superficial pictures enliven the text messages that have permeated computer mediated communication. They use Emoticons without knowing what they mean, whether they have any referential or literal meaning or which conceptual categories they denote. People in Pakistan use Emoticons without knowing the proper place and use them as a form of language. They are unaware of the semiotic and linguistic gap between the meaning and the use of Emoticons and have changed the actual meaning and are using according to their moods. This study aimed to fulfill the gap between the meaning and the use of Emoticon in Pakistani society.

1.3. Research Questions

This research aimed to answer these questions:

1. Is there any relationship between the form and type of the Emoticons (their actual meaning/conceptual meaning) or their communicative functions (their interpretations and usage in the text)?
2. What communication function do these Emoticons fulfill?
3. Are Emoticons used only to embellish a message?
4. Do Emoticons give relevant information to the text or these Emoticons create or prevent misunderstandings?
5. Do men or women use Emoticons frequently in their text based communication?

1.4 .Significance of Study

1. The study would be helpful for mobile phone users in understanding the actual meaning of Emoticons and they would be aware of the actual use of these Emoticons.
2. This study answers many questions about the conceptual and interpretative meaning of Emoticon.
3. This study is also helpful in differentiating between different Emoticons relating in their meanings.
4. The study also provides the semiotic and linguistic gap between the actual meanings and the meanings conveyed by the speaker/sender.
5. The study is also helpful for the researchers who want to find out the gap between the referential or literal meaning and conceptual categories of these Emoticons.

2. Literature Review

Four decades have passed to the evolution of Emoticons, developed by Fahlman (1982) and now these smiley faces are in great use by people who started creating different symbols to represent ideas and concepts. For instance, you could text Robot <(-_-)> to your friend. Here are some examples of Emoticons (smiley faces) with their meaning. Each Emoticon (symbols) or smiley face is sideways (Vangie, 2017).

2.1. Why do People use Emoticons?

According to Vangie (2017) when someone is involved in conversation he/she is unable to understand one’s ideas and feelings. For this purpose smiley face or Emoticons are used to achieve some results in text-based conversations. It shows that when a person is engaged in a conversation one’s voice or facial expressions change that is known as Emojis or Emoticons which help others to understand whether the person is currently involved in chatting is happy, smiling, laughing, upset or not happy with the conversation taking place.

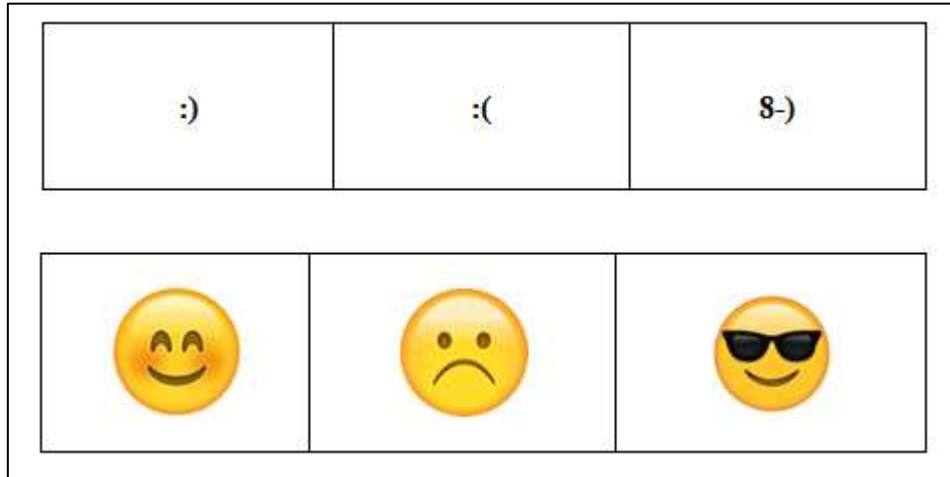
2.1.1. Examples of Text Smileys

If you were kidding with someone and says “get a life” the person currently involved in conversation would think that you are being so rude with your reply. But if you send the same message with a grinning smile Emoticon

or winking eye Emoticon the other person would take the meaning that you were smiling when you replied them and know that you were kidding or making jokes with them. In the face to face interaction you would smile or laugh conveying the message that I am joking around or kidding with you shown by facial expressions (Vangie, 2017).

2.2. Emoticons and Emoji meaning

Some instant messages programs translate text smiley faces into graphic Emoticons. As we know Emoticons are pictorial representation of facial expressions and visual cues designed by typographic symbols (Rezabek and Cochenour, 1998). For instance, you can type out non- alphabetic characters to make a happy face :) which is followed by sad face :(and cool sunglasses 8-).



Emojis are the small pictures on Smartphone, I pads, Tablets and other electronic devices to convey emotions or any idea. For example, in facebook messenger or Chat box typing the character will automatically transformed into yellow face images known as Emojis. Facebook also offers a menu in chat box from where you can select a large number of different smiley images in the chat box (Vangie, 2017). On January 17, in a forum paper published in Trends in Cognitive Sciences, psychologists (Linda *et al.*, 2017) discussed Emojis and Emoticons as tools for analyzing how we communicate with one other in the digital age. It has been noticed that over 90% of online populations are using Emoticons and Emojis in their texts messages and Emails. Researchers are still wondering what the use of (~_^), (>_<), or =D can disclose about human behavior. Different studies have described that these Emoticons can help in cross-cultural communication and provide approaches into users' personalities, and information that could be ranging from linguistics to marketing (Linda *et al.*, 2017).

2.3. Gender Differences

In the use of Emoticon, Gender differences are frequently observed by Fullwood and Martino (2007); Witmer and Katzman (1997); Huffaker and Calvert (2005). It is proposed that teenage boys use Emoticon more obviously and frequently than teenage girls. Talking about current literature (Fullwood and Martino, 2007; Witmer and Katzman, 1997); found evidence and proposed that women use Emoticons more frequently than men, in Computer Mediated Communication. Use of Emoticons in CMC is greatly influenced by the gender of the partner to whom one is engaged in communication (Witmer and Katzman, 1997).

2.4. The Importance of Non-Verbal Cues

Pittenger and Smith (1966), states that human communication transfer information from one person to another and involves a mixture of signals. The most important function of communication is speech and language where both phonemes and sounds combine to make words that every individual can easily understand in their everyday communication. Pittenger and Smith (1966) demonstrated that non verbal form of communication that include signs, movements and gestures carry a significant amount of information about what is being communication. Tones of voices and gestures include raised fist, raised eyebrows are included in non verbal cues that humans used to communicate what they are trying to say. When one person is receiving its messages, different meanings and interpretations can be made. When one receives a given verbal cue, it include movements and gestures that significantly influence the dynamics of human relationships (Burgoon and Le Poire, 1999).

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Approach

The study used mixed method approach. In natural sciences and social sciences mixed method is a research approach where researcher collects and analyzes data both qualitatively and quantitatively within the same study (Bowers *et al.*, 2013). The study is exploratory in nature. Exploratory research is a research that is used to carry out for a problem or an issue that has not been examined or studied deeply and more clearly. This research intended to establish priorities and helps to find out the best research design for the research that is being conducted and the data

collection method (Rangarjan, 2013). This research aimed to explore the gap between the meaning and the use of Emoticon in Pakistani society. Pakistani users do not pay a little heed towards the actual meaning conveyed by the Emoticons rather they only use them to embellish their conversation and sometimes use even as a reply.

3.2. Participants

3.2.1. Population

Richards and Schmidt (2010), have defined population as any set of items which include individuals or group of individuals that share some common characteristics or traits, from which a sample of population can be taken. The target population of the present research consisted of participants from Government Sadiq College Women University Bahawalpur, Government Sadiq Egerton College Bahawalpur and The Islamia University of Bahawalpur. The accessible population consisted of participants from English and Psychology department. Both male and female were part of this population. For this purpose, a questionnaire was used which consisted of 45 items.

3.2.2. Sample

Current research aimed to highlight the views and opinions of Pakistani users regarding the forms and functions of Emoticons. In this study, for quantitative data analysis the data was collected from three institutes. It should be noted that 30 female participants from Government Sadiq College Women University Bahawalpur, 25 male participants and 10 female participants from Government Sadiq Egerton College Bahawalpur and 10 female participants and 25 male participants from The Islamia University of Bahawalpur were selected through random sampling method. This study involved 100 participants in all. Among these 100 users, 50 were female mobile phone users and 50 were male mobile phone users. The average age of participants was from 17 to 35 years.

3.2.2.1. Sample of Participants

Institutes	Male Participants	Female Participants	Total
Govt Sadiq College Women University Bahawalpur	00	30	30
Govt Sadiq Egerton College Bahawalpur	25	10	35
The Islamia University of Bahawalpur	25	10	35
Total	50	50	100

For qualitative data analysis a set of 05 conversations were taken from Whats App and Face book, where Emoticons are used. These conversations were taken to analyze the difference between the actual meaning of Emoticons and the meanings taken by the users.

3.3. Data Collection Tool

The study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature and used mixed method research approach. In order to collect sufficient and applicable data for the research, a survey questionnaire was used as data collection instrument and analyzed by using SPSS. For qualitative data analysis conversations were taken from WhatsApp and Facebook for content analysis.

3.3.1. Survey Questionnaire

Questionnaire was used to find out views of Pakistani users regarding the semiotic and linguistic gap between the meaning and the use of Emoticons. For this purpose three types of questionnaire were used.

- General Background Questionnaire (GBQ) was given to students which involved their background and their personal information.
- Self Report Questionnaire (SRQ) is a type of survey questionnaire which involves asking participants about their feelings, emotions, concepts, ideas, and beliefs and so on. In this questionnaire respondents respond to the questions at their own without researcher's interference (Victor, 2006).
- Emoticons are the non verbal cues that can be used in any conversation i.e. Whatsapp, Facebook, and so on. For functional analysis of Emoticons, a questionnaire was used which consisted of text messages with Emoticons.

3.3.2. Content Analysis

For content analysis, a set of 05 conversations were taken from WhatsApp and Facebook where Emoticons are used. The data was analyzed qualitatively. These conversations were taken to analyze the difference between the actual meaning of Emoticons and the meaning taken by the users.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The quantitative data was analyzed by using SPSS (statistical package for social sciences), to find out correct answers to the research questions presented in questionnaire. The qualitative data was analyzed by content analysis technique.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1. Summary of the Findings

From the research conducted, it is concluded that people sometimes misinterpret the text but with the help of Emoticons, it is easy for them to interpret the text clearly. In Pakistan people use Emoticon without knowing its proper place and meaning, rather they are using them to embellish a message. Emoticons help people to create fun in chats as these Emoticons are small colorful faces showing emotions and feelings that is why people are using it in almost every conversation whether they are involved with their friends, family members or strangers. It can be clearly seen from the analysis that there is a clear gender difference in understanding and use of Emoticons. It is concluded that women use Emoticons much as compared to men. It is concluded that these Emoticons have become the most important part of conversation as these superficial pictures known as Emoticons are used to send as a reply in the text. These Emoticons are used both in formal and non-formal communication as these Emoticons enhance our communication.

4.2. General Background Questionnaire (GBQ)

General Background Questionnaire (GBQ) is a questionnaire that is used to take from participants which involves their background and their personal information. Some questions are given in the questionnaire and participants were asked to respond to the following questions by putting a tick in the relevant option or give response in writing where necessary. 100 participants were involved in this research. Among them 50 male participants and 50 female participants were involved. General background questions with participants' general information are given below.

Table-4.1. General background questions with participants' general information

Sr.no	Questions	Information	Male	Female	Total
1.	Age	15 to 20	10%	6%	8%
		21 to 25	38%	44%	41%
		26 to 30	52%	48%	50%
		31 and above	0%	2%	1%
2.	Phone type	Android	42%	52%	47%
		Num-pad	0%	0%	0%
		Tablet	4%	8%	6%
		I-phone	48%	36%	42%
		Any other	6%	4%	5%
3.	Phone usage per day	3-4 hrs	24%	16%	20%
		5-6 hrs	28%	46%	37%
		7-10 hrs	48%	38%	43%
4.	Application you use frequently	Whatsapp	58%	68%	63%
		Facebook	4%	10%	7%
		Messenger	38%	22%	30%
		LinkedIn	0	0	0
		Any other	0	0	0
5.	How long have you been using the Internet?	Less than 3 months	0	8%	4%
		3 to 12 months	8%	28%	18%
		1 to 4 years	56%	36%	46%
		5 years or more	36%	28%	32%

From General Background Questionnaire (GBQ), it is concluded that there is clear gender difference in background and in their personal information which includes their age, phone type, phone usage per day, application frequently used and the time consumed using internet.

4.2.1. Age

The analyzed data cumulatively shows that there are 8% participants from age group 15 to 20 years, 41% participants from age group 21 to 25 years, 50% from age group 26 to 30 years, and 1% participants from age 31 and above are involved in this research.

4.2.2. Phone Type

The analyzed data cumulatively shows that 47% participants are using Android, 6% participants are using Tablet, and 42% participants are using I phone, and 6% participants are using other phone types.

4.2.3. Phone usage Per Day

The analyzed data cumulatively shows that 20% participants are using mobile phones 3-4 hours per day, 37% participants are using mobile phones 5-6 hours per day, and 43% participants are using mobile phones 7-10 hours per day.

4.2.4. Application you use Frequently

The analyzed data cumulatively shows that 63% participants are using WhatsApp, 7% participants are using Facebook, and 30% participants are using messenger.

4.2.5. How long have you been using the Internet?

The analyzed data cumulatively shows that 4% participants are using Internets for less than 3 months, 18% participants are using Internet for 3 to 12 months, 46% participants are using Internet for 1 to 4 years, and 32% participants are using Internet for 5 years or more.

4.3. Self-Report Questionnaire (SRQ)

Self-Report questionnaire is used in this research. This questionnaire involves 30 questions. Participants were directed to indicate the level of agreement by marking (tick) in the box of their own choice. Analysis of these questions based on their categories is given below:

4.3.1. Use of Emoticons

According to [Vangie \(2017\)](#) when someone is involved in conversation he/she is unable to understand one's ideas and feelings. For this purpose smiley face or emoticons are used to achieve some results in text-based chats. It shows that when a person is engaged in a conversation one's voice or facial expressions changes known as Emojis or Emoticons which help others to understand whether the person is currently involved in chatting is happy, smiling, laughing, upset or not happy with the conversation taking place. Highest mean score of use of Emoticons is 3.99 and the lowest mean score is 3.16. Use of Emoticons with their mean scores is given below:

Table-4.2. Use of Emoticons with their mean scores

Sr.no	Statements	Mean
1.	You always use emoticons in your conversations (Whatsapp, Messanger, Text messages).	3.68
2.	Use of Emoticons in conversation enhances textual communication.	3.16
3.	You give feedback by using Emoticons in any communication.	3.61
4.	You use Emoticons with friends, family members and strangers.	3.46
5.	You use Emoticons to create fun in your chats	3.9
6.	You use Emoticons both in formal and non-formal conversations.	3.32
7.	You use Emoticons to tell about both good and bad news.	3.99
8.	You use Emoticons to express your feelings.	4.08
9.	You use Emoticons to Embellish your messages.	3.81
10.	You use Emoticon when you are NOT in a good mood.	3.58

4.3.2. Purpose

Emotions are central informational signals in social cognition ([Pessoa, 2009](#)). During face to face interaction, information generally comes from the expressions of face. In order to communicate, people nowadays are using alternative means and channels of communication. When they are not physically present they use these Text-based communications channels. Facial expressions are not always available due to physical absence. The diffidence of pragmatic function and informational signals in social cognition has been linked with complexity in understanding other people ([Kiesler et al., 1984](#)). Highest mean score of purpose of Emoticon is 3.95 and the lowest mean score is 3.53. Purposes of Emoticons with their mean scores are given below:

Table-4.3. Purposes of Emoticons with their mean scores

Sr.no	Statements	Mean
1.	Emoticons enhance expressions clearly in the text.	3.9
2.	Emoticons give false and fake expressions in conversations.	3.59
3.	Emoticons are sometimes used to convey message.	3.92
4.	Emoticons have bridged the gap by visually expressing our moods and feelings in more easy and quickest way.	3.79
5.	Emoticons represent actual tone of message in the way voice cannot.	3.69
6.	Emoticons are being used as alternative means and channels of communication.	3.71
7.	Emotions are central informational signals used in conversations.	3.95
8.	It's appropriate to send Emoticons to other people besides your relatives or friends.	3.53
9.	Emoticons are fixed representation of human facial expressions.	3.8

4.3.3. Misinterpretations/Misunderstandings

Pakistani mobile phone users believe Emoticons to be funny and suppose that these Emoticons embellish their conversation and they do pay little heed towards them. But for a Linguist and an analyst, it seems confusing and

puzzling that how superficial pictures enliven the text messages that have permeated computer mediated communication. They use Emoticons without knowing what they mean, whether they have any referential or literal meaning or which conceptual categories they denote. Highest mean score in Misinterpretations/Misunderstandings is 3.59 and the lowest mean score is 3.1. Statements of Misinterpretations/Misunderstandings of Emoticons with their mean scores are given below:

Table-4.4. Misinterpretations/Misunderstandings of Emoticons with their mean scores

Sr.no	Statements	Mean
1.	Emoticons give relevant information to the text and create or prevent misunderstandings.	3.59
2.	Without Emoticons you have difficulty in differentiating serious post from jokes and vice versa.	3.1
3.	Without Emoticons or facial expressions you often lead messages to misinterpret.	3.28

4.3.4. Gender Differences

In the use of Emoticon, Gender differences are frequently examined by Fullwood and Martino (2007); Witmer and Katzman (1997); (Huffaker and Calvert, 2005). It is proposed that teenage boys use Emoticon more obviously and frequently than teenage girls. Talking about current literature, Fullwood and Martino (2007); Witmer and Katzman (1997) found evidence and proposed that women use Emoticons more frequently than men, in Computer Mediated Communication. Use of Emoticons in CMC is greatly influenced by the gender of the partner to whom one is engaged in communication. Highest mean score in Gender differences is 3.89 and the lowest mean score is 3.12. In the use of Emoticons, Gender differences with their mean scores are given below:



Table-4.5. Gender differences with their mean scores






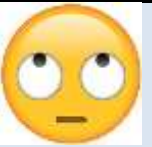

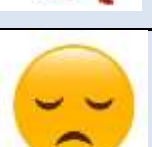




Sr.no	Statements	Mean
1.	Women use Emoticons frequently in their text based communication.	3.23
2.	Men use Emoticons frequently in their text based communication	3.49
3.	Both males and females use Emoticon for different purposes.	3.89
4.	Males use Emoticon in a more teasing manner and sarcastic tone.	3.12
5.	Females tend to use Emoticons in order to create humorous messages.	3.41
6.	The use of Emoticon in CMC is greatly influenced by the sex of the partner to whom one is engaged in communication	3.22
7.	When males are involved in communication with females, they tend to adopt their ways of expressing feelings and emotions.	3.23
8.	Teenage boys use emoticon more frequently than teenage girls.	3.12


4.4. Functional analysis of Emoticons

Emoticons are the non verbal cues that can be used in any conversation i.e. Whatsapp, Facebook, Imo, and Skype and so on. For functional analysis of Emoticons a questionnaire is used which consist of 15 items from text messages with Emoticons. For each of the given questions, participants were directed to select the statement that best explains or that is closest to what the speaker or the sender is feeling. They were asked to imagine that the Sender or speaker is saying these statements to them during any conversation. Ten standard meanings of Emoticons were given in the questionnaire and the participants had to select from them to explain the meaning of Emoticons by their understandings. Functional analysis of Emoticons is given below:

Table-4.6. Functional analysis of Emoticons

Sr. no	Emoticons' actual meaning	Emoticon	Male		Female		Total	
			correct	Incorrect	Correct	Incorrect	correct	Incorrect
1.	Standard smile shows joyfulness/gratified happiness/content		49%	51%	46%	54%	47.5%	52.5%
2.	Grinning Face With Smiling Eyes shows joyfulness/gratified happiness/content		69%	31%	61%	39%	65%	35%

3.	Super sad face shows sadness/ depression/ emotionally down		56%	44%	81%	19%	68.5%	31.5%
4.	Face Screaming in Fear shows Surprised/ distressed/ startled/fear		48%	52%	32%	68%	40%	60%
5.	Depressed face shows sadness/ depression/ emotionally down		57%	43%	71%	29%	64%	36%
6.	Dark sunglasses face shows state of being cool/ satisfied/ positive affirmation		35%	65%	28%	72%	31.5%	68.5%
7.	Angry face shows anger/ dissatisfaction/ frustration/ Annoyance		83%	17%	93%	7%	88%	12%
8.	Face with rolling eyes shows contempt/ disdain/ disapproval/boredom		56%	44%	49%	51%	52.5%	47.5%
9.	Dancing girl Emoticon shows joyfulness/ sense of fun/positive affirmation /playful		43%	57%	51%	49%	47%	53%
10.	Sad face shows sadness/ depression/ emotionally down		79%	21%	72%	28%	75.5%	24.5%
11.	Face With Tears of Joy shows happiness/ intense laughter/ laughing hard		39%	61%	65%	35%	52%	48%
12.	Smiling Face With Heart-Eyes shows feeling of love/ infatuation/ adoration		88%	12%	92%	8%	90%	10%
13.	Face throwing a kiss shows feeling of love/ infatuation/ adoration		92%	8%	97%	3%	94.5%	5.5%
14.	Crying face shows Inconsolable grief/ intense feeling of being emotionally down		59%	41%	64%	36%	61.5%	38.5%

15.	Winking Face shows sense of fun/positive affirmation /playful		54%	46%	31%	69%	42.5%	57.5%
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From [Table 4.6](#) it is clear that there is a clear gender difference in understanding and use of Emoticons in text messages or other conversations. People use Emoticons without knowing what they mean whether they have any referential meaning or they denote something. They are using it without proper understanding. It can be analyzed from functional analysis of Emoticons that people are using them according to their moods, or to make fun in chats or to embellish a message.

4.5. Content Analysis

In research, content analysis is a technique that is used to study document, textual material that involves pictures, audios, or videos. This technique is used by social scientist in social sciences in order to make sustainable and valid references by coding interpreting textual material ([Alan, 2011](#)). For content analysis 5 conversations using Emoticons were taken from WhatsApp and Facebook.

Through the data collected and observed, it is concluded that these Emoticons have become the most important part of conversation as these Emoticons are used to send as a reply in the text to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations. These Emoticons are used both in formal and non-formal communication as these Emoticons enhance our communication.

5. Justification of Research Questions

The study was on Emoticons. First research question of current study was to find out the relationship between the actual meaning and the interpretative meaning of these Emoticons. It is found that there is relationship between the communicative meaning and the conceptual meaning of Emoticons in a text, which allows a sender to send a message knowing that the receiver will comprehend what has been said. It is analyzed from the data collected that if one person is sending a message using Emoticons, the other person involved in the conversation will understand the actual meaning conveyed by these Emoticons e.g. if someone asks the other how he is and the other replies with an ill Emoticon or sad Emoticons showing that he is not well. These types of usage of Emoticons in any conversation shows the connectivity between the actual meaning and the meaning conveyed in a text. In chapter 4, conversation no 1, it can be clearly seen the relationship between the actual meaning and the interpretative meaning of Emoticons. Here in this picture receiver is making request and the speaker is denying to help with a Thinking Face Emoticon showing he is pondering or may be deep in thought whether he can help him or not. At the end receiver warns him for future with an angry face shows his anger and dissatisfaction that is clearly understood by the other person engaged in conversation. In a conversation, both sender and receiver are involved in communication by using facial expressions (Emoticons) where both understand the actual meanings being sent.

The second question was to describe which communication functions do Emoticons fulfill? In this research it is analyzed from the data collected that the Emoticons have become the most important part of our everyday conversations. These small yellow face images serve several communicative functions. According to [Searle \(1976\)](#) classification of illocutionary acts, it can be said that these Emoticons are used to make request, to order, to make statements to express emotions and feelings etc. It is found that Emoticons are used to convey message in a text. It is also observed that these Emoticons are sometimes used as a reply in the text, e.g. if a sender asks her friend what she is doing and the receiver replies with a lipstick shows that she is busy in doing makeup, here the sender will easily understand what is being conveyed to her. It is also found that Emoticons have bridged the gap by visually expressing our emotions and moods. It is observed from the data collected that these Emoticons are alternative means of communication and central informational signals in any conversation.

The third question was to find out; do these Emoticons used simply to embellish a message? It is analyzed from the data collected and analyzed that Emoticons are to some extent used to embellish a text message e.g. if a person asks his friend what he is eating, the other replies by saying he is eating burger with a burger Emoticon. It shows that adding Emoticon means to embellish a text message. It is also found that these Emoticons are used to create fun in the chats. Fourth question was to find whether these Emoticons give relevant information to the text or they create or prevent misunderstandings? It is observed from the conversations and the data collected through questionnaire that sometimes these Emoticons create misunderstandings where one person use it ironically in text message and create misunderstandings. On the other hand, these Emoticons prevent misunderstanding by adding a small colorful Emoticon for conveying actual meaning of Emoticon in text messages. It is also observed that without Emoticon people find it to difficult in differentiating between serious posts from jokes and vice versa. These Emoticons seems to be avoiding misinterpretations by providing the actual emotion or feeling in conversation.

Fifth question was to find out whether men or women use Emoticons frequently in their text based communication and it is observed from the data collected and analyzed that women use Emoticons much as compared to men in their text-based conversations. It is observed that when males are engaged in any conversation they try to adopt their own ways and standards of using Emoticons. It is also found that males use Emoticons in sarcastic tone whereas females use these Emoticons in humorous way. Findings show that the usage of Emoticons in

any conversation is dependent on the sex to whom one is engaged in conversation. To sum up, it can be said that women use Emoticons frequently as compared to men in Text-based conversation.

6. Conclusions and Suggestions

6.1. Conclusions

Emoticon is a picture or an icon that support the accurate meaning of the message. It is concluded that these Emoticon are used to strength the message or sometimes used to give feedbacks. If the sender gives appreciation or compliment in text message, he/she add superficial picture relating to message so that receiver will feel the effect of emotion. It is concluded that Emoticon will reinforce the given emotion so that the effect of emotion will duplicate. The communication process will run better after understanding effect of emotion. Through research data collected and analyzed it is concluded that Emoticons help to express emotions, feelings, thoughts and ideas with universally known facial expressions by using digital media. You always use emoticons in your conversations (Whatsapp, Messenger, Text messages). It is concluded that mobile phone users use Emoticons in conversation to enhance textual communication. For giving feedback these Emoticons are used not only with family members and friends but also with strangers. These Emoticons are used in both formal and non-formal conversations and to tell of any good or bad news. As these Emoticons enhance expressions clearly in the text people use them to give feedback in the conversation. These Emoticons are used to convey message and to create fun in the conversation. It can be said that Emoticons have bridged the gap by visually expressing our moods and feelings in more easy and quickest way as these emoticons are being used as alternative means and channels of communication. It is concluded that people find it difficult in differentiating serious post from jokes and vice versa and these misunderstandings leads message to be misinterpreted. A clear gender difference is observed in using Emoticons that men use Emoticons in a more teasing manner and sarcastic tone whereas women use Emoticons in order to create humorous messages. It should be noted here that the use of Emoticon in CMC is greatly influenced by the sex of the partner to whom one is engaged in communication as it is observed that when men are engaged in conversation with women they tend to use Emoticons more frequently as compared to women and adopt their standard of expressing feelings and emotions.

6.2. Suggestions

In the light of above mentioned findings and conclusions, some recommendations for future study are made:

1. Current research suggests that Emoticons should be used appropriately so that the message can represent the sender's emotion and have strong and powerful effect (Stark and Crawford, 2015).
2. Use of Emoticons or Emoji should match with the message e.g. a text message in which one person gives warning message must include angry Emoticon instead of happy ones and so on.
3. There are so many Emoticons available, it is important for a person to understand the meaning behind your plans to use it. It is suggested that you need not to start randomly and unknowingly using Emoticons without knowing the proper meaning and strategy. It is also suggested that these emoticons that you are using in your text messages, are aligned with the receiver.
4. It is suggested that one must use Emoticons to encourage real-time engagement.
5. It is suggested that one must avoid creating confusing messages by wrong Emoticons in conversations.
6. Using Emoticons in conversation can help communication. It is suggested that these Emoticons are as simple as smiley faces that can be used to break the ice and encourage conversation.
7. It is also suggested that one must understand the correct place and time to use Emoticons. It is observed that few people use Emoticons in both formal and informal conversations, with friends, family members and strangers, it seems quite inappropriate to use Emoticons with everyone in every situation. It is suggested that there is need to understand the correct time and place to use Emoticons, in this way use of Emoticons aren't going to be inappropriate in any situation.
8. It is also suggested that Emoticons used in conversation must not give fake and false expressions rather these Emoticons should prevent misapprehension and confusion.
9. It is also suggested that Emoticons must give relevant information to the text and prevent misunderstandings. It is also suggested that people should use Emoticons in their Whatsapp conversations or in the text messages or messenger as these Emoticons are used in order to express feelings and sometimes used to convey message by sending Emoticons (smiley face) related to that message.

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