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EMOJI-RICH VS EMOJI-POOR COMMUNICATION ACROSS CULTURES

ВПЛИВ ІНТЕНСИВНОСТІ ВИКОРИСТАННЯ ЕМОДЗІ НА МІЖКУЛЬТУРНУ КОМУНІКАЦІЮ

Since digital communication is geographically unlimited, emojis have become a ubiquitous yet culturally sensitive means of expressing emotions and intent. The research question that is presented in this study is: How do cross-cultural trends relate to the use of emojis, emoji-intensive and emoji-light methods of communication, and the influence they have on the outcome of conversations, namely emotional clarity, perceived friendliness, and suitability? With the help of the mixed-methods design, we gathered and processed the information based on the controlled conversational simulations and participant surveys, including various cultural cohorts. Perceptions and emotional resonance were reviewed using sentiment analysis and qualitative feedback. The findings indicate that although there is a universal improvement in the expressiveness of emotions and warmth in interpersonal interaction by using emojis at a high density, there are considerable differences in their use across different cultures, in formal or sensitive situations. On the other hand, communication that is emoji-sparse is always viewed as more neutral and professional, regardless of the culture, at the expense of engagement perceived. These results demonstrate that although the main uses of emojis are universal, their practical use and social acceptability have their roots in cultural rules of communication. The research enhances a more refined view of computer-mediated communication, which can be used to understand how to engage in successful and

Оскільки цифрове спілкування не має географічних обмежень, емодзі стали повсюдним, проте культурно чутливим засобом вираження емоцій та намірів. У цьому дослідженні ставиться таке питання: як міжкультурні тенденції пов'язані з використанням емодзі, методами спілкування, що активно або мало використовують емодзі, та впливом, який вони мають на результати розмов, а саме на емоційну чіткість, сприйману дружелюбність та прийнятність? За допомогою дизайну змішаних методів зібрано та оброблено інформацію на основі контрольованих симуляцій розмов і опитувань учасників, включаючи різні культурні когорти. Сприйняття та емоційний резонанс оцінювалися за допомогою аналізу настроїв та якісних відгуків. Результати дослідження свідчать, що, хоча і є загальне покращення виразності емоцій та теплоти у міжособистісному спілкуванні при використанні емодзі у великій кількості, існують значні відмінності у їх застосуванні в різних культурах та у формальних або чутливих ситуаціях. З іншого боку, спілкування з обмеженою кількістю емодзі завжди сприймається як більш нейтральне та професійне, незалежно від культури, хоча й зменшується сприйнята залученість. Ці результати демонструють, що, хоча основні способи використання емодзі є універсальними, їх практичне застосування та соціальна прийнятність беруть початок із культурних правил комунікації. Дослідження дозволяє отримати більш

culturally sensitive digital communication using the global platforms.

детальне уявлення про мережеве спілкування, яке можна використовувати для розуміння того, як брати участь у успішній та культурно чутливій цифровій комунікації за допомогою глобальних платформ.

Introduction

Nowadays, emojis no longer constitute mere pictographs but have become a widespread language in communication through computer-mediated communication (CMC) and can express feelings, intentions, and contextual overtones (Barbieri et al., 2018; Derks et al., 2008). The fact that they are used worldwide highlights a primary human desire to add emotional and nonverbal communication to text-based interactions and alleviate the constraints of plain text (Riordan, 2017; Lo, 2008). Availability of emojis on different platforms and national borders indicates the presence of a strong, normative role, and some researchers even claim that emojis have become a global visual language, uniting the users and overcoming the generational gap (George et al., 2023). Nonetheless, behind this facade of cultural acceptance is a woven web of cultural difference that disproves the idea of an absolutely universal emoji vocabulary.

Emojis also play a basic socio-emotional role in online writing by substituting non-verbal cues people usually have during in-person communication, to introduce emotional context to otherwise perfunctory text (Boutet et al., 2021). They ease emotional clarity and ambiguity and enhance the communicative experience through affective cues (McShane et al., 2021). Emojis are more useful than just a means of emotional expression, and decoding the world in terms of social relationships, as they are employed to establish solidarity, make requests softer, and keep relationships alive online (Skovholt et al., 2014). However, the qualia of these functions are culturally determined. The cross-cultural studies in the field of psychology have always discovered universal and culture-specific means of expressing emotions, a dichotomy that is directly echoed in the use of emojis (Guntuku et al., 2019). Although emojis may help to have inter-cultural communication and make sure that people can communicate their feelings more accurately and avoid misunderstandings, they can also be interpreted differently in various cultures and, in certain instances, their use can even evoke feelings of defensiveness (Chen, 2023).

Taking into consideration this multi-layered interaction between the universalist and cultural particularity of emojis, the proposed study will contribute to the available cross-cultural research. This study aims to explain

how emoji patterns, which are embedded in a culture, can affect the perceived friendliness, emotional clarity, and appropriateness of communication between Eastern and Western communicators in digital communication by examining the effects of the density of emojis on the perceived friendliness, emotional clarity, and appropriateness of communication.

Research Objectives

To compare the effect of using emojis in communication and using emojis deprived of emotion on the understanding of emotions, perceived friendliness, and user interaction.

To find out the perceived contextual appropriateness of emoji density in a formal and informal digital environment.

To determine and examine cross-cultural disparities in the perception and consequences of emoji-rich and emoji-scarce communication.

Research Questions

What is the effect of emoji density (rich vs. poor) on perceived emotional precision and user experience of digital communication?

How does emoji content affect the impression of friendliness and situational propriety of interpersonal digital communication?

What is the moderating effect of cultural backgrounds on the attitudes of these conversational outcomes with emoji density?

Literature Review

The use of emojis across the globe has made them a major ingredient in computer-mediated communication (CMC) as they are visual representations that aid in the expression of feelings, intentions, and contextual interpretation (Barbieri et al., 2018; Derks et al., 2008). The amount of their use on different platforms underlines the necessity to make the text-based interaction evocative of emotions on a universal scale (Riordan, 2017; Lo, 2008). Even some scholars go as far as to assume that emojis have become a global visual language that can overcome generational and cultural barriers (George et al., 2023). Nevertheless, at this layer of apparent international tolerance, there is a complicated web of cultural diversity that puts the idea of an exceptionally universal emoji vocabulary into question.

The use of emojis is essentially a replacement of facial expressions, tone, and gestures in online communication, which is otherwise nonverbal (Prada et al., 2022). They make emotional transparency, decrease ambiguity, and make the communicative experience richer through critical affective cues (McShane et al., 2021). Their usefulness goes beyond the emotional expression to the control of interpersonal relationships, an indicator of politeness, and strengthening of social bonds (Jones et al., 2020). However, the use of these functions is so ingrained in the work of culture. Cross-cultural psychology studies have always found both universal and culture-specific patterns in the expression of emotions, which are directly manifested

in the use of emojis (Guntuku et al., 2019). On the one side, emojis can be used to communicate in intercultural contexts with subtle emotions, minimizing the risk of misunderstanding, but, on the other hand, emojis are perceived differently in different cultures, and the use of these elements can even provoke a defensive reaction (Chen, 2023).

These differences in culture have been officially recorded in big empirical studies. A seminal analysis of Twitter data by Li et al. (2019) found that the categories and frequency of emojis employed are an excellent source of information on the cultural differences, finding that the use of emojis with preference corresponds with the Cultural Dimensions Model by Hofstede. It was also confirmed by Lu et al. (2016) in their study of smartphone users, which revealed that the preferences of users in various countries are considerably different, which provides strong indicators of cultural differences. In their study, Guntuku et al. (2019) specifically focused on the East-West dichotomy and compared emoji usage between Eastern (China, Japan) and Western (United States, United Kingdom, Canada) nations, which showed familiar normative and culture-specific patterns. The difference in frequency relative to the context and topic association of emojis was found to be significant, and their analysis was mapped to more profound cultural ideas.

These variations are evident in different patterns of using and interpreting them. An example is that in Western cultures, the positive emotion emoji rate is the highest, and in Eastern ones, the contextual and subtle forms of emotion are prevalent (Wang et al., 2024). Such semantic differences suggest that cultural background is one of the key factors that determine the use and interpretation of emojis. It is also complicated by the fact that personal characteristics like age, gender, and culture are of great influence on understanding emojis (Chen et al., 2024). These trends have deep origins, which can be traced even in the period of pre-emoticon emoticons. The authors Park et al. (2013) examined the semantic and social features of emoticon use on Twitter and found that they are socio-cultural conventions and that their meaning is different depending on the speaker, and particular styles such as Western horizontal :) And Eastern vertical [ˆ _ ˆ] emoticons circulate through the social networks.

Experimental studies also give additional support to culturally moti-vated usage. The series of experiments carried out by Togans et al. (2021) looked at cross-cultural variations in emoticons and emoji utilization, and the experimenters concluded that East Asians utilized much more Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) cues in general and demonstrated more situational sensitivity (i.e., employed more situationally-congruent cues) than Americans. It was positively linked to scores of collectivism and interdependent self-construal, and this supported the idea that emojis can play a face-management role as higher politeness issues in collectivistic societies. This is in line with what Sun et al. (2022) established that cultural identification with individualism and collectivism is a major factor in the

interpretation and choice of emojis widely used in South Korea by the Americans.

On a smaller level, platform and functional differences have been analyzed. Ge-Stadnyk (2021) discovered that the most common speech act in conjunction with emoji sequences in both Weibo and Twitter was Claim, but the emojis themselves had different, and the most prominently used functions: on Twitter, the emojis served a stance and action purpose much more often, whereas on Weibo, they served a concept purpose more oftentimes. It indicates that the pragmatic application of emojis could be culturally skewed even in cases when the textual communication is comparable. Moreover, the studies on the emoji preference, frequency of use, and meaning may differ greatly among different cultural and gender groups in a single country, becoming a "cultural thermometer of the virtual world" (Alzara & Mellor, 2025).

There is, hence, a high possibility of miscommunication. Due to the nature of some emojis and the presence of cross-cultural differences in interpretation, they may cause misunderstandings and unwanted social blunders. This is compounded by the fact that, according to the findings, people from other cultures place more weight on the eyes versus the mouth of emojis when decoding emotions, and Westerners use the mouth and Easterners the eyes, similar to how it is when interacting in person (Gao & VanderLaan, 2020). What one culture might take as a friendly gesture can be construed as being too close or even offensive in another culture, making it very difficult to engage in cross-cultural digital communication.

Summing up, the available literature is very clear in its affirmation that although emojis have some universal appeal, the way they are interpreted, used, and accepted in society is seriously governed by cultural norms. This poses a serious naivety gap in the explanation of how such abstract cultural dimensions are applied to tangible communication, results in regulated, comparative contexts, especially in analyzing the direct effect of emoji density (emoji-rich vs. emoji-poor communication) between Eastern and Western cultures.

Methodology

The goal of the study was to thoroughly explore the effect of the number of emojis in a message on the manner in which individuals interpret and respond to a conversation, and whether individuals in other cultures respond differently. We adopted a mixed-method approach to obtain a full picture, which implies that we have gathered not only numbers (such as ratings on a scale) but also personal opinions (such as written comments) of our participants.

We started by employing 300 participants online. We particularly sought a varied sample, and we had 150 subjects who considered themselves to be part of Eastern culture (China, Japan, and South Korea) as well as 150 who considered themselves part of Western culture (United States,

United Kingdom, and Canada). All of them were frequent users of digital communication apps such as WhatsApp, Instagram, or Twitter, and each one of them felt comfortable using emojis in their everyday life.

Our research consisted of the development of seemingly real, text-messaging dialogues. To portray some of the typical forms of digital communication, we came up with three different situations. The former was no more than a chat between friends about what they were going to do on the weekend. The second one was an emotional support talk, whereby one party tells the other person about a personal issue, such as having a stressful day in the workplace. The third one was a professional exchange where one of the colleagues requests another colleague to assist him or her with some work-related activity. We developed two versions in each of these three scenarios. The initial one was emoji-heavy, which is, we added a lot of emojis, which are just in line with the conversation, such as smiley faces, laughing, and hearts in the informal chat, or supportive and sad faces in the emotional one. The second version was an emoji-poor version, where all the emojis have been taken out; otherwise, the words are the same. This enabled us to be certain that the variations in the feelings of people were due to the emojis, and not the text itself.

The participants were selected randomly into one of the three scenario groups (casual, emotional, or professional). Each of the participants was then asked to read both the emoji-rich and the emoji-poor version of the scenario that they were given. We crossed out the order to ensure that having read one version did not affect the opinion that they had on the second version. Fifty percent of the participants were exposed to the emoji-rich version, and the other half were exposed to the emoji-poor version.

Participants were provided with a comprehensive survey immediately after they had read each version of the conversation. In this survey, the participants were required to respond to particular statements on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questions were meant to be used to assess the most important results to us (or, to be more precise, the clarity of the feelings being expressed by the sender, the attractiveness of the sender, the level of engagement between the user and the sender, and the appropriateness of the use of emojis to the situation at hand). There were also open-ended questions in the survey, including a question of how the emojis (or the absence of emojis) made you feel about who you are communicating with, to obtain additional personal and detailed explanations.

In order to analyze all this information, we applied two key techni-ques. To test the number ratings of the surveys, we applied statistical tests first. The tests assisted us in computing the mean rating disparity in the emoji-abundant and emoji-deficient conversations. They also enabled us to determine whether these differences were greater or lesser among the participants of Eastern cultures than those of the Western cultures. Second, in the case of the written comments, we conducted thematic analysis. This

entailed reading through all the comments so as to establish the popular themes and repetitive ideas. To say it differently, when several individuals wrote that they found the emoji-poor professional message more serious and credible, that would become a significant theme.

During the whole process, we focused on ethical research practices. All the participants had clear information about the purpose of the study and gave their consent before participation. Their responses were utterly confidential and they could discontinue the survey whenever they wished. The painstaking and thorough way in which we did this enabled us to collect good and solid evidence regarding the authentic effect of using emojis in our online discussions.

1. Theoretical Framework

The framework of the study is constructed around three theories that are also interconnected, which explain the purpose of emoji density in intercultural communication. It is based on the Social Presence Theory, which determines that communication media vary in terms of allowing salience of a fellow person to be transmitted. This principle is later reiterated by other media theory frameworks, according to which nature of the lean digital media is described as lacking the non-verbal expressive nature of non-verbal communication, the gap that is frequently filled with emojis (Daft & Lengel, 1986). This theory is essential in the way people employ the given cues to achieve a human touch in the virtual world (Gunawardena, 1995). Digital communication using text is regarded as low presence due to the fact that it deprives the communication of nonverbal communication features such as facial expressions and the tone of voice. Emojis are the digital replacements of these lost cues, bringing the human aspect of the computer-mediated communication back. This is why the messages with a lot of emojis tend to make it easier to see emotions and make it look friendlier, as they add the feeling that there is a real emotional person behind the messages.

Media Richness Theory provides a very important point since it states that the effectiveness of communication should be based on the ability to match the complexity of a message with the relative richness of a medium. Emojis enhance a relatively flat piece of text with added emotional and contextually detailed detail, which can be missing in the words alone. An ordinary okay is not clear but okay with an emoji makes it clear that he meant well. This theory describes how the density matters of emojis: messages of high complexity (emojis) can be better received through richer communication, but simple information can be overwhelming. It also indicates the explanation of why optimum richness is context-specific, which explains why professional communication (where clarity is of utmost importance) is frequently well-served by the reduced use of emojis.

The framework is then completed by the Communication Accommodation Theory that elucidates the social and cultural aspects of the use of

emojis. It examines the way individuals change their communication in order to highlight similarities (convergence) or differences (divergence). As individuals send emojis that identify with the style of the person they are talking to, they create a rapport with convergence. The problem of cultural differences in interpreting emojis is critical in this case; in case Eastern and Western participants have different standards, convergence efforts can go awry, thereby leading to misunderstanding. This theory is the reason cultural background mediates the effects of emojis- individuals adapt to various communication norms. High density of emojis may appear over-emotional to Western users, whereas low density may appear impersonal to Eastern users.

All these theories form a complete framework. There is a theory that describes the relevance of emojis to human interaction, which is Social Presence Theory. Media Richness Theory describes the influence of the density of emojis on the effectiveness of communication. Communication Accommodation Theory helps to understand why the issues of cultural differences do not disappear in emojis use. This combined view anticipates that communication enriched in emoji positively relates to social presence and clarity of emotion, especially in emotional situations, and that cultural background is systematically related to emoji decoding and suitability. The framework sheds light on how the same individual may employ the use of a large number of emojis to their friends and few in the workplace, and how the same amount of emojis used may be seen as appropriate in one culture and improper in another, which is crucial to the study of digital communication across cultures.

2. Results

The overall data analysis of the responses obtained with 300 respondents of the Eastern and Western cultural groups provided a very complicated, nuanced image of the ways emoji density impacts the final results of conversations. The findings depicted both dramatic general trends and numerous cultural differences that directly answer the research questions and tasks in relation to emotional clarity, perceived friendliness, user engagement, and suitability of different communication scenarios.

The quantitative data made it clear that messages that are rich in emojis always scored higher than those that are emoji-poor in terms of clarity of emotion and engagement of the user in all three communicative contexts. Paired t-tests were used to statistically analyze the data and showed that there was a significant difference ($p < 0.001$) between the two conditions, and the effect size (Cohen's d) was large (greater than 0.8) in casual and emotional scenarios.

The respondents in the casual conversation condition also gave emoji-rich messages 1.9 points higher on the 5-point emotional clarity scale than their emoji-poor counterparts. The average rating of emoji-rich messages was

4.3 (0.6) as compared to 2.4 (0.8) of emoji-poor messages. This trend was further increased in the emotional support scenario in which the presence of emojis had a 2.2-point difference (4.5 +0.5 versus 2.3 +0.9). Respondents always cited emojis as important emotional triggers that made the emotions of the sender unambiguous. One of the participants of the West was a bit more detailed, citing that when I read the version with only text, I had to decide whether my friend was really excited about what was going on or was simply being polite. The emojis, in particular, the party popper and smiling faces, made their excitement look authentic and physical.

The thematic analysis of qualitative responses showed that there were three main mechanisms by which emojis increased emotional clarity: they gave visual cues of emotion that substituted missing nonverbal information, they made textual messages potentially confusing clearer, and they made messages more emotionally weighted. Most of the respondents used terms such as flat, robotic, and emotionless to describe emoji-poor messages and used words like vibrant, human, and emotion-driven to describe emoji-rich messages. This emotional improvement was directly transferred into the score of increase of user engagement, with emojis-rich messages rated 1.7 points higher on average in any scenario. The participants said that they felt more connected to the conversation partner and more involved in the conversation when there were emojis.

Although the very positive results were observed concerning the emotional expressiveness, the difference in favor of emoji-enhanced communication disappeared entirely in the workplace, which also demonstrates a key condition of successful emoji usage. The outcome was quite opposite in the professional case, where emoji-poor message scores were considered much more appropriate (mean = 4.2 +0.5) compared to emoji-rich messages (mean = 2.1 +0.9), a difference of 2.1 points, which was significant ($p < 0.001$).

The qualitative information was very informative on this turnaround. The language employed by the participants of both cultural groups to explain their negative reactions towards emojis used in professional communication was strikingly similar. Such words as unprofessional, not serious, distracting, and undermining credibility were very common in Eastern and Western replies. One of the western members (35, UK) said, When I saw the winking face and the thumbs-up on what was a professional request, I was instantly questioned at the judgment and professionalism of the person who had sent the message. It was not right for the situation. A participant (31, Japan) who was actually an Eastern supported this statement, saying that clarity and respect are essential in a work environment. The emojis helped to make the message casual and reduce the seriousness of the task under discussion.

This trend brings to the fore a general realization that various communicative situations will require various norms of expressiveness. Although emojis improve the connection between people in less formal environments, they are seen as breaking professional etiquette and may undermine the gravity of work communication. Cultural appropriateness

appears to be the agreeable limitation of emoji effectiveness that cuts across cultures, based on what the consensus across cultures indicates.

The overall data analysis of the responses obtained with 300 respondents of the Eastern and Western cultural groups provided a very complicated, nuanced image of the ways emoji density impacts the final results of conversations. The findings depicted both dramatic general trends and numerous cultural differences that directly answer the research questions and tasks in relation to emotional clarity, perceived friendliness, user engagement, and suitability of different communication scenarios.

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This trend brings to the fore a general realization that various communicative situations will require various norms of expressiveness. Although emojis improve the connection between people in less formal environments, they are seen as breaking professional etiquette and may undermine the gravity of work communication. Cultural appropriateness appears to be the agreeable limitation of emoji effectiveness that cuts across cultures, based on what the consensus across cultures indicates.

3. Discussion and Conclusions

This study aimed to examine the subtle contribution of emoji density in online communication and further compare its relevance across cultures between Eastern and Western end users. The results form a very clear but complicated picture. Emojis are not only the elements of decor but significant communicative tools, the effectiveness of which is predetermined by a fragile combination of universal psychological laws and firmly embedded cultural standards. The conclusions that were made as a result of the analysis give substantive responses to the research questions and have considerable implications for the theory and practice of computer-mediated communication.

The findings strongly prove that communication with emojis makes emotional understanding, perceived friendliness, and involvement of user in informal and emotional situations universal. The respondents in the two cultural groups were also consistent in that messages that had a greater number of emojis were perceived as warmer, more emotionally open, and more interpersonally welcoming. This result is highly indicative of the theoretical assumption that emojis serve as efficient alternatives to nonverbal expression, and this kind of approach satisfies one of the most important human requirements: the ability to express their emotions through text.

Nevertheless, this advantage expresses an important boundary condition in workplaces, where the communication with emojis is predominantly favored cross-culturally. The professional appropriateness agreement shows that the contextual norms may, in some cases, override the cultural differences in order to establish common expectations on communicative restraint in formal settings.

The greatest contribution of this study is that it sheds light on how these general trends are mediated by cultural background. Although the two categories of participants found emojis helpful in casual situations, Eastern participants were more tolerant of, and expected a greater variety of circumstances permitting the use of emojis. Their perceptions were less direct and context-specific, and they saw emojis as the means of preserving relational balance instead of just conveying personal feeling. Western respondents, though compliant with emojis, had more logical interpretations and more concerns regarding possible overuse. These similarities are an exact representation of the larger cultural aspects found in the literature, specifically the collectivistic relational maintenance orientations of Eastern culture in comparison with the Western focus on direct expression.

This study has had a number of significant implications on the theoretical knowledge of computer-mediated communication. First, it builds upon the Social Presence Theory by showing that the ability of a medium to be warm and human is open to change, systematically depending not only on the cultural background but also on the communicative situation. Second, it builds upon Media Richness Theory, demonstrating that the richness injected by emojis is culturally coded; what is appropriate richness in one cultural context can be viewed as excess in another. Third, the results give concrete evidence supporting the idea of culturally-implanted visual literacy, indicating that proficiency regarding digital visual clues entails not only a technical, conceptualized comprehension but a cultural knowledge that influences interpretation and application.

The research also contributes to the research on cross-cultural communication in the digital world. The observation that simple emotional displays using emojis are universally recognizable and that more specific social processes are culturally specific is indicative of a more complex digital communication relying on the idea of universal and cultural specifics co-existing. That is why the global popularity of emojis and the constant risk of cross-cultural confusion, even in the case of seemingly universal symbols, are explained.

The practical use of these results is enormous to people and organizations that work in digital global contexts. In personal communication, the user is expected to be aware of the fact that their emoji patterns are cultural styles of communication that may not necessarily cross cultural boundaries. Eastern communicators would think that western counterparts may value high density of emojis as being too emotional or fake, and western

communicators need to know that their eastern partners would view low density of emojis as cold or impersonal. It is essential to develop this metacultural awareness, i.e., being aware of how other people perceive oneself in terms of their communication style, to conduct successful cross-cultural interaction by means of digital communication.

In professional and organizational settings, these results indicate that the culturally-focused communication rules should be applied instead of the uniform policies. Digital communication styles should be somewhat flexible as well because global organizations must be cognizant that expectations regarding appropriate professional communication are different across cultures. International team training should contain certain instructions regarding cross-cultural digital etiquette that should cover not only the language difference but also the differences in using visual means of communication, such as emojis.

This research can also make valuable contributions to platform designers and developers. Emoji recommendation algorithms and autocorrect need to be developed with cultural parameters to propose emoji use that is culturally and contextually appropriate. Interfaces can be improved by providing culturally-specific emojis keyboards or by providing instructions in form of tooltips on what common cross-cultural differences in understanding ambiguous emojis could be.

Although this research gives useful information, there are a number of weaknesses that ought to be recognized. Controlled conversational simulations, though methodologically needed, might not sufficiently reflect the intricacies of the genuine-world digital communication in which relationships, history, and current context may have an impact on emoji interpretation. The sample size was also not that large, and it was culturally diverse only to a certain degree, which might restrict external validity to the population with other demographic variables.

There are some promising directions that should be studied in the future. Adaptation patterns and learning might be seen with the help of longitudinal studies of how the use of emojis in cross-cultural relationships changes over time. Some domain-specific results may be obtained by investigating the use of emojis in particular professional settings (e.g., healthcare, education, international business). Studies that investigate the nature of individual differences among cultural groups (e.g., personality traits, foreign language proficiency, or intercultural experience) would assist in narrowing our view of the issues that moderately influence cultural patterns. Also, since the standards of emoji keep changing, and other new types of visual communication are introduced, one will have to do additional studies to observe how cultural patterns are adjusted to the shifts in the field.

Overall, the present study shows that successful use of emojis in the digitized globalized world demands both general principles and cultural specifics of the interpretation. It is established that although emojis may serve as a ubiquitous language by being pictorial and thus universal, there is a large

gap between how the emojis set is perceived and how the standard emoji set is perceived, proving the idea of a universal visual language (Kimura-Thollander & Kumar, 2019). Empirical research indicates the existence of emoji-emotion associations and usage patterns between different platforms and national settings, like Twitter and Weibo (Li & Guntuku, 2019; Kejriwal et al., 2021). Moreover, certain cultural beliefs of certain groups, such as the Malays, Chinese and the Indians in Malaysia, may result in different interpretations and subsequent semantic misinterpretation of the same emoji (Yazid et al., 2025). Hence, the savvy digital speakers will be the ones that will be able to maneuver not only the universal grammar of the emojis but also their regional dialects and learn to strategically use them depending on the context, audience and purpose. Digital communication is still tying people together due to geographical and cultural boundaries, so this type of visual-cultural literacy is not only beneficial, but it is a tool that is necessary to achieve meaningful and error-free relationships in the digital world across the globe.

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