

# The Linguistic Aspects of Emojis in Conversation and Based on Mental Health

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## Abstract

The Emoji has become one of the greatest innovations in sector of communication since it delivers emotions and personalization to messages in digital platform. Other than that emojis can be used as a mental health indicator. This review paper is based on analyzing various research papers on the linguistic aspects of emojis, some of them also describing about mental health related situations on the uses of emojis. The previous papers did not analyze the facts of how the usage is related to grammatical competency or it can be applicable that way. This paper is focused on that. This paper is also relevant on how emoji usage is related to linguistic aspects; from semantic, pragmatic point of view. This paper couldn't focus broadly on how mental health can be depicted or analyze in a broad way. Future works should be focused on those facts.

**Keywords:** Emoji, Semantics, Pragmatics, Mental Health, Grammatical Competency

## Introduction

Today, emojis are no less an important part of communication than they are in the digital era. These small demonstrative objects are to embody feelings, concepts, or things and thus improve how we communicate them. While text can be quite boring at times, emojis help add the necessary emotions to fill the conversation and make it more personal and real. For example, if a receiver is using a dove emoji 🕊️, it could mean an angel's presence, freedom, or comfort, and if a receiver is using a broken heart emoji 💔, it could mean the receiver actually feels sadder than what they are conveying. With the help of these symbols, people can express emotions that would be hard to describe with words. They are most useful in computer-mediated communication since there is no nonverbal context such as gestures, facial expressions, or even intonation. They become emotional 'transmission channels' through which users are able to convey love, hope, or even sorrow in a more concrete manner. Due to frequent shifts in the trends, technologies, and even culture as to specific use of emojis the issue of continuously shifting meanings and roles of emojis should be examined further.

To address them, this review paper aims to, describe various roles of emojis in digital communication, discuss the impact of emojis on the process of conveying emotions and social relations and briefly consider the cultural-context and emoji-interpreting aspects. As for this, it is the objective of the present study to distil a less stereotyped view on emoji uses and meanings against the backdrop of contemporary globalized new media communications. This paper aims at explaining mental health and how it can be used to improve the efficiency of support groups in answering the present review's research question. The literature for this paper is informed by a variety of academic publications and empirical research themes

that address the linguistic and cultural aspects of emojis icon in digital media and several sectors.

## Review

To explore this newly emerged communication phenomena and its connection to language, this study takes help of semantics and pragmatics to evaluate the interpretation of certain conversation. In 1999, Japanese designer Shigetaka Kurita conceived the first collection of emojis for a mobile phone platform and created a collection of 176 little pictures, resulting in the initial development of emoji. In the beginning, they were mostly used in Japan. By 2010 the epidemic has garnered worldwide recognition. While emojis are sometimes likened to gestures, they are not authentic motions but rather reduced, standardized representations of them (Ferrari, 2023). This discussion also deliberated how emojis have limitations as linguistic tool as they have meticulous grammatical structures. Enrique Ferrari in his writing explores that while some researchers have examined potential syntactic or grammatical arrangement of emojis, the prevailing consensus is that they do not conform the structure of verbal or written language (Ferrari, 2023). Another article showed how people can predict their emotions and mental health conditions according to the use of emoji. In the same article, it is found that a dataset has been established which is related to suicide and in which it contains 25k emoji posts (2,329 suicide-related posts and 22,722 posts for the control group users) filtered from about 1.3 million crawled Reddit data. Based on our current understanding, SuicidEmoji represents the inaugural dataset focused on emojis related to suicide. Specifically, to gain a deeper insight into the complexities associated with emoji-based natural language (Zhang et al., 2024).

### /SuicideWatch

i'm suicidal when im not h\*\*\*. how to improve my n\*\*\*l state...???



### /SuicideWatch

I don't know what will come f\*\*t, my "success" or my death?

I get severe c\*\*\*t pain from anxiety and stress. Sometimes I wish it would hurt more.

I haven't killed myself Bc I believe in k\*\*\*a, and well I guess the hurt I would c\*\*\*e by taking my own life w\*\*d release more negative energy.

### /Teenagers

Anyone else h\*\*\* that dream where the m\*\*\*e is a time bomb?

😏Just me? Okay...

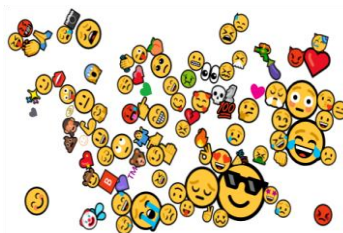
**/Self**  
 Wish my wife happy birthday! I've d\*\*\* to ask you guys for help! :) May I ask you to r\*\*\* wishes video for my wife? . I'd like to \*\*\*e her o\*\*\*e gift from around the world.

**Figure 1: Some examples with emojis posted by users in different subreddits (e.g., /SuicideWatch, /Teenagers, /Self).**

The SuicideReddit dataset compiles posts related to suicide from the “/SuicideWatch” subreddit, spanning from December 2008 to January 2021. This platform serves as a space for individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts to express their struggles, while the control group consists of posts from the “/teenagers” subreddit. Similarly, the Robin dataset is derived from the “/SuicideWatch” subreddit along with 13 other supplementary subreddits (such as /CasualConversation, /self, /TIFU), commencing in 2019. Despite the presence of posts regarding suicidal ideation from “/SuicideWatch.”



(a) Suicide-related posts.



(b) Control group users' posts.

**Figure 2: The emoji word clouds from suicide-related and control posts displaying the most frequent emojis (Zhang et al., 2024).**

Emojis enhance readability of written content by transmitting emotional intricacies that may be hard to adequately convey solely via verbal or written approaches (Kaye et al., 2016). Janine Carrole in her article investigated how emoji can be used and preference could be explained by three factors: mental health, personality and prosocial behavior; in that a questionnaire was completed consisting of five measures by 222 participants and both Pearson correlations and multiple relations were conducted on the data where the findings indicated prosocial behavior significantly related to frequency, attitudes and motivations towards emoji use as well as to positive emoji preference (Kaye et al., 2016). In a research investigation examining the efficacy of emojis as a screening assessment tool for depressive symptoms (Lingthusiasm & Gawne, 2019) discovered that certain negative emojis, such as the sad face, successfully detected

individuals demonstrating depressive symptoms, implying that they might be utilized not only to enhance textual communication but also to reflect the individuals' prevailing emotions (Kaye et al., 2016).

Emojis are a subset of what Dresner and Herring (2017) categorize as 'graphicons' - graphical icons that include many graphical elements present on social media platforms, including emoticons, stickers, graphics interchange formats (GIFs), photos, and visual recordings. Semiotic research concerning emojis has evolved beyond examining their attitudinal implications to acknowledging their semantic, pragmatic, and phatic roles within texts (Danesi, 2017), often paralleling the contribution of gesture to semiosis (Lingthusiasm & Gawne, 2019). The outcomes of that research were investigated in a research entitled where the authors Logi and Zappavigna have enquired the sociolinguistic features of emoji, exploring how emoji use is distributed across text genres, and by age, gender, race and cultural context (Logi & Zappavigna, 2023). The pragmatic point of view of using emoji on social platforms incorporate their communicative capabilities beyond their literal meaning. Emojis play a number of roles in enhancing the efficacy of digital communication. In digital communication, the absence of non verbal cues enhances the chances of misinterpretation, primarily in relation to the emotional disposition of the sender. Emojis help to determine possible misunderstanding of tone in communication by representing emotions or attitudes in graphical form (Danesi, 2017).

For instance, a phrase may contain dark features, yet using a smiling emoji 😊 will change it into being lighter, friendly, and accessible. This gets rid of possible aggressiveness or directness of the message, making the general tone good in a way. This is especially important in the online setting, where other media of communication may sometimes be regarded as impersonal or guarded – more especially the written word. Using such emojis as happy faces, the user modifies the perceived objective of the communication, boosting emotional and relational attachment with the recipient of the communication (Kelly & Watts, 2015).

Emoji enables better understanding of what people convey in their messages when writing alone may put into words or may be misunderstood. This feature is especially relevant when the intonation and the emotional load of the words are impossible to determine by the printed text.

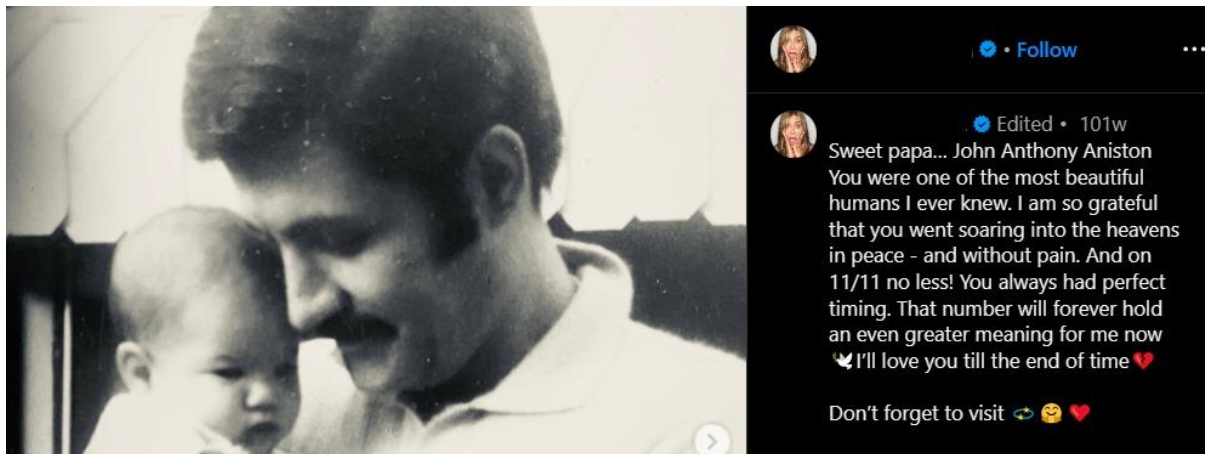
For example, when sarcasm comes in or joking around, the receiver cannot necessarily distinguish that the sender has the intention of having fun not business. It is possible to attempt to humiliate a given interlocutor while informing them of something: the presence of a winking emoji (😉) can mean that a given message should be received with certain humor hence diminishing the possibility of misinterpretation. As one more signal of decision not to play the negative game, the wording like “good job on the project” may be taken literally as positive, even if sarcastic. The winking emoji also points out that the message is meant to be funny or provocative (Dresner & Herring, 2010). Furthermore, studies demonstrate that emojis serve as efficient weapons for clarifying text by offering emotional indicators that influence the conversational tone. Riordan investigates how non-emoticon emojis, that is symbols and objects, reduce uncertainty in in communication. Emoticons, for instance the wink, explain banter or irony since the actual word may be insufficient in offering the customer a sense of humor within the text (Riordan, 2017). In this paper, emojis are described as playing an essential role in promoting interaction in the informal communication domain. These mechanisms enable users to express warm sentiments, agreements, or acknowledgments to their counterparts in a very anonymous way, which makes such tools crucial for maintaining relationships within digital communication. The finalists of emojis tend to be used as brief responses, which represent simple verbal gestures such as electronic nods and smiles in face-to-face communication, like the heart (❤️) or thumbs-up (👍). The responses given here can convey how one

is with one, encourage or approve without requiring additional interactions that make communication good and healthy (Kelly & Watts, 2015).

In that, following Kaye et al writing it is mentioned that emojis can increase relational closeness because they facilitate communication and engender positive communication. These basic functions help amplify the closeness of the relationship because they allow the person to express feelings and compliments and recognize what the other has said without worrying too much about composing long messages. This can be specifically beneficial in group conversations or versatile Web environments within which the communication pattern is critical. As with other forms of nonverbal communication during face-to-face communication, emojis can also be seen as a digital substitute in face-to-face communication; they bring value and clarify interaction. For tone, intent, and emotion, in non-speech or practical communication, physical gestures such as a nod, a smile, or a raised eyebrow are required. It is these gestures that add meaning and help the listener to understand the message that was passed beyond the actual content of information passed in word form. Because there is no interpersonal touch in digital communication, emojis have emerged to overlay this aspect of the conversations, making the communications more personal, expressive, and more human-like, as Gawne and McCulloch describe (Lingthusiasm & Gawne, 2019).

While using emojis appears to be universal because of their unification in appearance, their reception and application can be pretty heterogeneous regarding culture, community, and the used application. Instead, they become fossilized within some communities to the extent that their semantics become not just special or layered but heavily tied up with certain experiences and community membership. In some groups, at least, several emojis may come to possess connotations different from those of the common or dictionary definitions. For instance, the peach emoji (🍑) signifies a fruit at one point, gives an acknowledgment about butts in different cultures due to the shape. Similarly, the aubergine emoji (🍆), though a vegetable, has become an important sign for the male genitalia in many internet-related areas. Such changes in meaning are evident to show that emojis operate within culturally prescribed paradigms, and using an emoji is actually a way of conveying a message that is understandable to those in the same group of culture or jungle (Danesi, 2017). Indeed, in numerous scenarios, emojis not only go beyond the straightforward semantics they refer to but can also function as cultural tools for delivering comedy, a sexual double entendre, or even a statement of sexual orientation (Danesi, 2017).

In a research article Rahman et al. discussed grammatical competency, whereas in another article by Marcel Danesi is reviewed and explored by Laura Kerslake and Rupert Wegerif enlightened about Emoji Competence which refers to the ability to effectively use and understand emojis in digital communication (Danesi, 2017). As established by Danesi in *The Semiotics of Emoji*, it is a mastery competency composed of the capability to meaningfully slot emojis and to correctly interpret their usage. According to him, emoji competency is parallel to cultural competency; hence, this does not convincingly suggest that the level of emoji language is enough for interpreting language.



The perspective of the given emojis which are used in the post has their own linguistic features from semantic and pragmatic point of view highlighting the emotional depth of the post and add visual layer to the text itself in digital communication.

Starting with the emoticon of dove 🕊️ which shows peace, serenity, freedom and spiritual tranquility. In this text this emoji is suggesting father John Anthony Aniston's passing was a serene transition to afterlife. Here this certain emoji conveys calmness and acceptance and assemble another important spiritual layer of the text where it would be difficult to capture with the word alone. The second emoji which has been used here is broken heart 💔 suggesting grief, loss, sorrow and deep emotional pain. The sparkle emoji ✨ gives hint of something otherworldly, magical, often hitting at positivity and hope. Here in the text this emoji suggested the lingering emotions of connectivity with the departed soul which aligns with the concept of 'Visual metaphors' of Danesi in his writing *The Semiotics of Emoji: The Rise of Visual Language in the Age of the Internet* (Danesi, 2017) According to Arafah and Hasyim it can also be referred as a possibility of reunion or visitation in a non-literal, spiritual form (Hasyim, 2019). The hugging emoji 🤗 shows empathy and comfort. Semantically it serves as a form of hug – an attempt to reassure a beloved and want clinginess even in the absence of the loved one. According to Logi and Zappavigna, emojis of this nature are to establish conversational 'tone of affection,' meaning or reassurance (Logi & Zappavigna, 2023). From the perspective of Arafah and Hasyim, emoji is a connector between emotions in which users can share feelings which are sometimes hard to put into words. In this respect, the hugging face is rather an effective tool that helps the author to express affectionate memory (Hasyim, 2019). The red heart emoji ❤️ depicts eternal love, strong affection for the authors father. Danesi perceives emojis as 'emotive tools, 'which are forms of signifying interpersonal emotions and enriching the Semantic prosody of the text. The red heart also should be listed here as it refers to a strong positive emotion between two individuals. When combined with devotion, this emoji places an additional layer of more profound and specific meaning on the crafted text of love (Danesi, 2017). As Grosz et al. (2023) rightly point out emojis serve to amplify the written text; They enhance the text with some affective cues (Grosz et al., 2023). In this case the heart emoji does not simply add relation to the words but forms part of meaning, which in this case is said to be rock solid and a connection beyond this life. The red heart, therefore, has an additional meaning as to suggest that the relationship transcends physical life, making the emoji not only a shorthand for affection, but a symbol that is understood by everyone in digital interaction (Grosz et al., 2023). This emoji work as connotative intensifier. It heightens the emotive tone and makes the sentiment of love more vivid and

accessible to readers. It connects written language and visual semiotics; it captures additional qualia that enrich the signal and the tone of the conveyed information.

In this text, emojis are placed deliberately to complement emotional content and create deeper meanings that would contribute to an overall message. They are all relevant to the sentimental mood of the text and also fix certain feelings connected with remembering the beloved, with love and longing. The dove emoji 🕊️, pragmatically, also acts as an “emotion signifier,” being associated with abstract ideas of the passage, such as peace, freedom, and spiritual elevation. Li and Yang insist that such ‘emotion signifiers’ are often used in digital communication to express complicated emotions and put into place hermeneutic dimensions that written words may fail to convey. By using this specific symbol / the dove emoji, the message acquires an additional layer of comfort, as the theme of the farewell is inarguably ‘peaceful.’ Through the dove symbol, the writer buttresses the notion of a smooth transition; thus, in a similar vein, emojis represent feelings that cannot be easily expressed in words (Li & Yang, 2018). In digital media communication, high-frequency emojis, such as doves, act as non-verbal cues during live communications. They assist in controlling bodily responses to certain feelings and contribute to the encoding of feelings that are abstract or religious. Also, Li and Yang argue that the use of tags like the dove emblem that represents basic feelings yet is understood in all cultures can ensure cross virtues of emotional comprehension. In this way, this visual abridgment thus also allows the readers to carry a sympathetic tone, an expression of the emotions of farewell that can be easily understood at first glance (Li & Yang, 2018). The uses of the ‘broken heart’ symbol: 💔 emojis like this one serve as an ‘emotion intensifier’, thus making the sadness expressed in this message –more intense. More than that, by providing a visual representation of heartbreak, this emoji strengthens the emotion the reader receives and turns the symbol into real for the receiver of the text. According to Ochulor et al., symbols like the heartbroken symbol do more than express sadness but enrich the emotional content of the text message. Such a visual substantialization is most useful when it comes to evoking an empathetic reaction: through it, readers can emotionally connect with the text in ways that plain text alone does not capture as powerfully (Ochulor et al., 2023). The broken heart is one of the few mechanisms to maintain common emotional references, intensifying and prolonging grief in the context of digital communication. Li and Yang argue that such emojis are useful in helping depict multilayered feelings that would otherwise be difficult to express through conventional type, especially in cases where contextual information is absent due to the new electronic arrangements for communication. This broken heart emoji symbolizes the complex, individualistic sorrow conveyed in the farewell message and generates an impact that unites readers and urges them to participate in communication based on the perspectives of understanding and identification (Li & Yang, 2018). The use of sparkles emoji ✨ has highly pragmatic meanings in modern conversation and, therefore, in contexts where emotions of, for example, remembering, hoping, or being accompanied by a spiritual figure are aimed. This emoji operates as a symbol of continuity and ethereality, of permanency and aura, ensuring the spiritually perseverant that the deceased will “come back to,” visit, or can always be remembered. Li and Yang note that symbols such as “sparkles” are often called “parallel emotion signals” for a reason: because they enhance the emotional context in a way that, if not for text alone, could possibly be achieved. Here, the sparkles themselves give a slightly warm message to readers that lets them receive a hopeful and lasting presence with the death (Li & Yang, 2018). In digital communication, such visual cues are rather useful for conveying complicated feelings that would otherwise be vague. As pointed out by McCulloch and Gawne, emojis put the texts into a different view; for example, sparkles introduce the category of the magical world into the text, and consequently, messages are able to describe themes that are not expressible in

words. This quality of emojis makes it possible for communicators to put depth and meaning in messages that can be understood by all parties as far as different feelings, including throwback, honor, and hope, are concerned. The sparkles emoji in this context can thus be said to represent a kind of ‘visual referent’ for emotions tied to memory – memory as a kind of mnemonic – making the role of the sparkles emoji all the more potent for the spiritual or symbolic rather than the explicit or didactic (Lingthusiasm & Gawne, 2019). As Danesi noted, emojis are examples of modern semiotic tools that help as a bridge of cultural or emotional differences, in a way, becoming a universal sign in users’ digital communication. The sparkles emoji is visually appealing and has the air of magic; this is a symbol that is easily recognizable across cultures, which speaks for itself in the sphere of emotional writing where readers would be able to gather meaning related to presence, memory, and connection adduced to emojis by Danesi (Danesi, 2017). The “Hugging face” emoji 🤗, which is commonly used in writing, performs a performative emotional role whereby the writer shows warmth, physical touch, and caring to the recipient. This emoji emerges more in the socio-emotional aspect, functioning as an emblem of comfort, understanding, and affection. According to Danesi, emojis like the hugging face create a digital approximation of physical gestures, such as a hug, which in face-to-face interactions would serve to convey warmth and care (Danesi, 2017). Li and Yang note that such emojis are relatively often used as ‘interactional,’ which perpetuate positive relational feelings in interaction through the graphical affirmation of positivity and support. This function is critical in bearing in mind that, unlike physical communication, the emotional aspects, such as tone of voice and demeanor, are not present. The hugging face thus steps in to complete this by serving as the “supportive gesture” inside the text to try to build connection and create the emotions of togetherness (Li & Yang, 2018). Isn’t it quite poetic when people employ hugging face emojis, especially when saying goodbye or in memory of something or someone? The embrace seems to suggest that the relationship is continuing after the physical send-off. As McCulloch and Gawne wrote in the case of such emojis, they may be signs of continued relational interest, which means that affection and support will continue even if physical connection is denied. This emotional relation is so important in messages where the sender wants to express constant love and the anticipation of continuous intimacy (Lingthusiasm & Gawne, 2019).

. Red Heart ❤️: This clue is known worldwide as a sign of love and relationship and converts the message into an unshakeable love appeal. Other learnings presented here have been found that emojis such as the heart often act as backchannel cues and portray affection whilst strengthening relational closeness within the text (Li & Yang, 2018).

A series of these emojis gives a reader an idea of a multi-layered emotional process of coming to terms with the death, on the one hand, and acknowledging the loss and grieving, on the other hand, with love. Studies evaluating the use of emojis in mental health discourse show that the use of these signs simplifies the expression of certain feelings that language fails to capture. For instance, the use of the dove and broken heart emojis reflects both acceptance of loss, the purity of the soul, and the depth of its emotional impact on the writer. This subtlety in the usage of signs makes the message relatable for the audience, which was the purpose of the collective mourning the user might have needed for psychological consolation (Dresner & Herring, 2010).

From a mental health perspective, emojis allow a patient a simple, nonverbal way to convey feelings when those feelings are particularly volatile. Employing emojis in grief-related messages indicate a shift in which individuals seek help from the internet groups. This corresponds with research in online mental health groups, where individuals often want emotional validation using expressive symbols, which may enhance emotional resilience when peers provide support (Gu et al., 2023).



In the article named “A Study Among Professionals Learning English: Importance of Grammatical Competence”, Rahman et al. discussed grammatical competency and its role in effective communication (Rahman et al., 2018). Similar to the importance of grammatical uses in effective communication, emojis are also required to use effectively because they vary according to the situation. For example, while using emojis appear to be universal because of their unification in their appearance, their reception and application can be quite heterogenous with regards to culture, community, and the used application. Instead, they become fossilized within some communities to the extent that their semantics becomes not just special or layered but heavily tied up with certain experiences and community membership. In some groups at least, several emojis may come to possess connotations different from those of the common or dictionary definitions. Like the peach emoji (🍑) signifies fruit at one point, gives an acknowledgment about butts in different cultures due to the shape. Similarly, the aubergine emoji (🍆), though a vegetable, has become an important sign for the male genitalia in many internet-related areas. Such changes in meanings are evident to show that emojis operate within culturally prescribed paradigms and using an emoji is actually a way of conveying message that is understandable to those in the same group of culture or jungle (Danesi, 2017). For this reason, similar to providing importance in teaching English Language (Hasan et al., 2016), emoji knowledge is also required adequate academic exposure for effective communication. Moreover, this teaching process of the emojis based on situation and context needs to engage the learner actively with motivating learning style and enjoyable techniques what teachers are expected to follow while conducting a course (Akter et al., 2021). In the clinical sector emoji can be used as a media of deciphering the tone, mode and inner meaning of a message by analyzing the emoji the used and with the help of this various support groups can extend their help facilities by just analyzing the data in the digital platforms of the people.

## Conclusion

The use of emojis is now one of the key skills in today’s world and the efficient usage of them matters. Same as knowing about grammar helps to write the text properly, knowing about the use of emojis can also help in digital communication. Sharing knowledge about using emojis appropriate to the situation or the company of people you are addressing will assist in being understood better and thus communicate more effectively.

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