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LAUGHING FACE WITH TEARS OF JOY
A STUDY OF THE PRODUCTION AND INTERPRETATION OF EMOJIS AMONG
SWEDISH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

Emojis are an increasingly popular addition to written smartphone communication. Since emojis are a rather new phenomena, there is a lot that we do not know about the usage and interpretation of emojis in written communication. This bachelor thesis focuses on the production and interpretation of emojis among Swedish university students, and through a focus group interview, possible functions, interpretations, and usages of emojis are explored. The aim is to find out what functions that the informants report, how these affect interpretation, and what the reported usage of emojis is. The theoretical background consists of previous studies in CMC, particularly that of Hård af Segerstad (2002) and Sugiyama (2015) in combination with studies of the relation between speech and writing (Chafe & Tannen, 1987). The results show that emojis are used as a divider between clauses, that they compensate for the lack of non-verbal cues in written communication, and that they are efficient emotional enhancers. In addition to this, the results also show that emojis can help manage the conversation climate. Furthermore, emojis are primarily used in settings that are hybrids of spoken and written language, and younger people use more emojis than older people. In conclusion, it can be said that emojis have an important part in the everyday written communication among contemporary people. The emojis are needed to convey additional information in messages, and helps prevent misunderstandings.

Keywords: emoji, emoji usage, language use, sociolinguistics, CMC, computer mediated communication, digital communication

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1. Introduction

Many of us have at some point come across **emojis**, i.e. graphic images that represent emotions, animals, foods and countless other object and concepts that can be used in, for instance, text messages and chat conversations. This paper will explore the reported functions and meanings of emojis in digital communication among Swedish university students through a focus group interview. Emojis are usually found on social media platforms and in various messaging services, and they are considered the successors of **emoticons**, i.e. faces made with simple keyboard characters, like :), that are used indicate the emotion of a message.

Emoticons were first introduced by Scott E. Fahlman at Carnegie Mellon University on September 19th, 1982 in a post on a message board suggesting the use of sideways faces to indicate whether the person writing was joking or not. Since then, several researchers have explored the topic of emoticons and their function in communication, among them Hård af Segerstad (2002) who investigated how Swedish speakers adapt to different kinds of **computer mediated communication** (henceforth CMC) methods, and found that emoticons play an important role to clarify messages in written communication online.

Since their introduction online, emoticons have undergone changes and advanced to contain more than just sideways faces, for example images imitating objects, such as <3 representing a sideways heart. **Kaomoji** are another kind of emoticons that resembles faces, but instead of being sideways, they are made using other keyboard characters, creating a face that is not sideways (i.e. ^_^). The kaomijis are commonly used in Japan, but according to Thompson and Filik (2016) their usage is spreading across cultures.

Contrary to faces done with keyboard characters, emojis are ready-made graphic images that a writer can pick from a specific keyboard, and there are currently more than 1500 emojis registered in the Unicode standard, where the first emojis were added in 2009. Since then, emojis have been given their own keyboards on smartphones (phones that have computer-like features such as internet connectivity and the capacity to use applications). More than half of the world's population report that they own a smartphone (Poushter, 2016), and in Sweden, as many as 77% of the population report that they own one (Davidsson & Findahl, 2015). With the number of smartphone users increasing, and different smartphone and social media platforms creating their own renderings of emojis, emojis are becoming an ever-growing presence in language users' everyday life.

Despite emojis being a presence in the lives of almost everyone who own a smartphone, and of anyone who ventures on the internet, their function in communications is still un-researched in linguistics. While emoticons have been subject to study for more than two decades, emoji research is still in its cradle. The questions as to *how* and *why* people use emoji still stand without an answer, and this paper wishes to bring clarity to the communicational purposes of their usage in everyday written language production.

2. Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to describe how Swedish university students report that they produce and interpret emojis in written online communication. More specifically, I would like to investigate the following questions:

- What functions of emojis in written communication are identified by the informants?
- How do these reported functions influence the interpretations of the emojis?
- How do the informants report that they use emojis in their everyday written communication?

2.1 Limitations

Since not all users' production and interpretation of emojis can be investigated in one go, the study is limited to Swedish university students. While this was partly a convenient sample, university students are also frequent internet and social media users, making them a great group for starting research discussions about emojis.

On a different note, the choice of method for the study, i.e. that of a qualitative focus group where the informants go in depth about the topic, came down to a decision based on an interest in collecting thoughts and ideas about how emojis are used in the group before moving on to more quantitative studies about interpretation and production of emojis.

3. Background

In order to properly investigate interpretation and production of emojis among Swedish university students, there are different linguistic aspects that need to be taken into account. For example, without establishing the relation between spoken and written language, emojis cannot be explored since they are part of a **hybrid** between the two.

Moreover, it is important to consider the features of CMC as well, because emojis exist in CMC, and as such, they interact with other features that are typical of the digital world. Furthermore, previous research about emoticons also needs to be taken into account, because while emoticons have been around for a long time, and thus have been researched, emojis are new to the field and can be expected to comply with some of the functions of emoticons.

Finally, previous studies of emojis have to be reviewed in order to establish what is known about them, and to be able to see whether or not Swedish university students adapt to more international usage, or if there are features specific for emojis in Swedish.

Emojis are pictures, and as such, their functions and interpretations can be far more varied than that of a lexeme. Furthermore, emojis can be divided into different categories, i.e. smileys and faces, animals and nature, food and drink, activity, travel and places, objects, symbols, and flags (Emojipedia, 2017).

3.1. Spoken versus Written Language

A study of emoji in online communication must consider the relationship between written and spoken language. It has long been known that there is a considerable difference between spoken and written language, and that the different modalities require different cues in order to ensure smooth communication. Chafe and Danielwicz (1987) collected spoken and written examples of language from 20 different informants to analyse what was characteristic of the different modes of expression. All samples were collected from lecturers and university students, who contributed with examples of conversations, lectures, informal letters, and academic papers, ensuring that not just one language style of each mode was accounted for. Using the collected data, Chafe and Danielwicz looked at vocabulary, clauses and other characteristics of the two different modes of language to see in what ways they differed.

The results showed that speech contains shorter clauses and makes use of less embedded phrases, such as prepositional phrases, as opposed to written language. This is attributed to speech being instantaneous and the speaker not having time to dwell on formulation and word choices in the same way as when writing.

Furthermore, spoken language is aligned linearly in time, instantaneous, and involves not only verbalisations but also gestures, facial expressions, and tone, among other things (Chafe & Danielwicz, 1987). Speakers have little time to ponder on word-choices, and editing cannot be done afterwards but has to be done on the go. For that reason, there is little variation in

vocabulary in spoken language, while written language makes use of a wide vocabulary and complex sentence structures (Linell, 2005).

Moreover, face-to-face conversations, which is typical of spoken language, exist in a direct context where the participants are physically present, while written language is more often than not meant to be read and interpreted in a different place from where it is produced. Because of this, written language is more explicit, and thus makes use of more, and longer, clauses in order to establish the context, whereas spoken language has direct feedback in the form of for example nodding to express understanding (Linell, 2005). In addition to this, written language can be planned ahead to a greater extent than spoken language, allowing the language user to edit and re-edit the text before it is finalised and recorded (ibid.)

With these different features of spoken and written language in mind, it is also important to note the explicit relationship between the two modes of language. Written language is based on the conventions and norms of spoken language, and far from every language has a system of writing, and far from every speaker is a writer (Linell, 2005; Chafe & Tannen, 1987). What is more is that written language is something that speakers have to be taught, while speech is a natural process for all humans alike (Linell, 2005; Chafe & Tannen, 1987). Nevertheless, this does not mean that one mode of language stands above the other, but the specific relation between the two is undoubtedly an important aspect in written language communication.

As a matter of fact, the two modes of language both offer a great variety of types, from colloquial slang used in chat rooms by teenagers, to informal dinner conversations among close friends, all kinds of language use is possible. Indeed, for several hundred years, or even longer, **hybrids** between written and spoken language have existed (Bolter, 2001). These **hybrids** make use of typical features that are found in speech or in writing, combining them. For example, in CMC, features that are typically used in speech like facial expression, are transferred into text creating a hybrid. Despite Chafe and Tannen (1987), among others, wanting to specify what is typical of one mode as opposed to another, and Linell (2005) arguing for the importance of spoken language, the two modes co-exist and depend on each other, and can never be fully separated from one another.

Non-verbal Cues. Because the conventions of written language are based on those of spoken language, ways for compensating for the lack of non-verbal cues in written communication have arisen. While natural signs, such as hesitation when speaking, are hard to mimic in writing, more conventionalised signs can indeed be imitated (Clark, 2005). Hård af

Segerstad (2002) reports that interjections can be spelled out in CMC, for example if a person makes a mistake in their writing, they can write “oops, I meant to say...”, using the “oops” to signal that they have made a mistake.

Furthermore, the intonation of an utterance can add meaning in speech, and “oh” pronounced with raising the intonation signals surprise, while “oh” with lowered intonation can signal disappointment (Clark, 2005). In writing, “oh” can be written down with the use of repeated vowels, like “oooooh, you meant...”, with the additional vowels indicating that the tone of “oh” is rising. The use of repeated vowels to indicate the intonation of a word or message is a common technique in CMC, and Hård af Segerstad (2002) argues that this is partly to make up for the lack of non-verbal cues, but also because repeating a character on a computer keyboard takes little to no extra effort.

Moreover, facial expressions can to some extent be transferred to writing through the use of emoticons, as argued by Dresner and Herring (2010). They divide emoticons into two types, those that map onto the face, i.e. :) meaning happy, and ;) meaning joking, and those that do not map onto the face, i.e. emoticons that have other functions than conveying emotional cues, for example to signal irony.

Although some emoticons can be seen as mapping directly onto the face, emoticons are conventional signs just as other parts of language, as their usage is fairly stable and the same characters are used over and over again to convey the same emotional cue (Hård af Segerstad, 2002). This means that emoticons are slightly different from an unintentional smile during a conversation. Furthermore, many non-verbal cues in conversations are motions and facial expressions that speakers are not aware of doing, but that still adds meaning to the utterances (Clark, 2005).

Similarly, gestures have an important part in face-to-face conversations, and speakers are to a great extent unaware of the gestures they are making. However, gestures are aligned with speech and serve a communicational purpose, helping the interlocutor interpret what the speaker is saying (Kendon, 2014). Because written language lacks the visibility of spoken language, gestures are not present in writing, and therefore written language needs to be more explicit than speech.

Common Ground in Discourse. During a conversation, speakers establish a common ground, or a mutual understanding of the known elements of the conversation, where referents are identified, and the speakers collaborate with each other in order to make the conversation

smooth. Clark (2005) argues that participants in a conversation always do their best to establish a common ground, and throughout the conversation, the speaker and interlocutor make continuous checks to ensure that the referents are understood.

In spoken discourse, common ground is established through both non-verbal and verbal cues, and references can be established based on the direct physical context of the conversation. Speakers can make use of deictic expressions, and eye-gaze and facial expressions play an important role in the play between the participants (Clark, 2005). An on-looker or over-hearer will not necessarily be able to keep up with the discourse because a person not engaged in the conversation will not be part of the continuous checks of the common ground (ibid.).

Furthermore, the discourse is created between the speaker and the interlocutor, and the interlocutor can notify the speaker when there is something that they do not understand. In addition to this, the speaker can modify her/his words if they notice that the interlocutor does not understand, making spoken discourse dynamic and ever-changing.

In written discourse, the common ground is established in a different way due to the lack of visual cues that can show if someone understands or not, instead, the speakers have to be more explicit and referents need to be named. Moreover, deictic expressions have to be left out because the direct physical context is lacking (Clark, 2005).

Writing Space. Written text is, and always has been, subject to the technologies of writing that are available (pen and paper, keyboards, waxboards). Bolter (2001) writes about the changes that writing and text have undergone historically, but also about the changes that are happening with digital advancements. Text has been framed in numerous different ways, from the wooden frame of wax boards, to interactive websites where the reader can follow links to other pages, i.e. hypertext (Bolter, 2001). This is not to say that the writing itself is conditioned due to the writing technology, but rather that the possible presentations of the text will depend on the technology of writing, and that these different technologies “involves different materials or different ways of deploying the writing materials” (Bolter, 2001, p. 19).

For example, when the printing press was introduced in the 15th century, text became easier to print and spread to the masses, and no longer needed to be hand-written. In this shift, the writing space changed from being an intricate weave of text covering an entire page, to pages with white margins due to the technique of printing (Bolter, 2001).

In the digital era, the presentation of text changed dramatically. Even though a lot of digital text follows the presentation of printed text, webpages often take on the form and

presentation of hand-written texts where the text consists of several smaller texts in an intricate weave. Additionally, webpages are often a mixture of text, graphic elements, and images (Bolter, 2001).

In a similar fashion, smartphones and messaging services such as *Telegram* and *WhatsApp* have integrated the function of adding graphical images straight into the text, and a conversation can consist of not only written words but also of videos and images. Kress (2010) argues that while writing may appear similar to images, it has to be interpreted and understood linearly, while an image, on the other hand, can be interpreted “in an order shaped by the interest of the ‘viewer’” (p. 81).

This means that the usage of emojis and other graphical elements in written communication can give rise to new ways of understanding and interacting with a text. This is similar to what Bolter (2001) addresses in regard of different writing technologies changing how writing can be perceived, and as such, a text that contains both writing and graphical elements can change how the reader views the text, i.e. that their gaze can be drawn towards the graphical element of the text first.

The Speech–Writing Continuum

Speech and writing are not binary opposites, but they consist of a continuum of different modes and forms of language. Chafe and Danielwicz (19987) argue that academic articles represents one end of the scale, and casual conversations the other. However, **hybrids** of speech and writing has existed since the classical era, with Platonic dialogue presenting a mix of typical elements of written and spoken language (Bolter, 2001). There are countless of varieties of language that are not typical representations of neither written nor spoken language.

For instance, CMC is a variety of written language where the language can take on different forms depending on the kind of writing that is going on. In online communication where all participants are online simultaneously, the dialogue will be very much like that of spoken discourse (Hård af Segerstad, 2002). An email, on the other hand, can have very different features depending on the context in which it is produced since it can either take on very spoken-like features in a context where the dialogue is quicker, or it can take on more features of typical written language where the text is longer, with complex sentence structures (ibid.).

As a matter of fact, Hård af Segerstad (2002) found that the more similar to face-to-face conversation online communication becomes, the more spoken-like the writing becomes. However, this is not to say that spoken and written language are two different modes that are

unrelated to each other. On the contrary, the relation between the two are mainly that of a continuum where different features are mixed and adapted to the specific context of the communication.

3.2 Previous Studies in CMC

The particular communication environment that modern technologies offer to its users takes part in shaping the way in which we communicate. When a new medium of writing is introduced, the way in which we are able to write can change dramatically, as discussed previously, and today's technology where language users can pick and choose how they communicate with one another plays a part in shaping the language expressions.

Hård af Segerstad (2002) investigated how Swedish speakers adapt to different modes of CMC. She explores four types of CMC: email, web chat, instant messaging and SMS. Her view is that CMC is neither spoken nor written language, but a hybrid between the two that does things that neither of the other two modes of language is able to achieve.

Furthermore, she divides digital communication into two types: **synchronous** and **asynchronous** communication. Synchronous digital communication is the kind of communication where the participants of the conversations are online and present as the conversation is happening, while asynchronous digital communication consists of conversations where the participants are not required to be online or present as the conversation is taking place.

This division stems from a time where being online meant that you had to sit by a computer, whereas today, most people who own a smartphone has instant access to the Internet. As such, a lot of digital communication can be considered something in-between synchronous and asynchronous since users can pick and choose what kind of programs that are allowed to notify them when they get a message or an email.

Nonetheless, the results of Hård af Segerstad's exploration of CMC showed that while synchronous modes of communications were characterised by playfulness, asynchronous modes complied with written language conventions to a greater extent. However, how these two modes of digital communication affect text production in societies where smartphones are almost constantly logged on to the Internet is so far unknown.

Moreover, some messaging apps of today allow their users to see when a person has seen a message, and an indication showing that the person is writing something can also be shown. In

addition to this, sometimes the users can also see if a message has been received, i.e. that the persons smartphone is powered on and is connected to the Internet.

These aspects of digital communication are aspects that means that visibility is becoming more present online, however, users can often change the setting in programs in apps to control what information is shared with the persons that they are communicating with, so information about the interlocutor's presence is not always available.

Typical Features of Computer Mediated Communication

CMC has been the subject of linguistic study for a long time, and the different variants and features of CMC have been thoroughly researched. However, CMC is a fast changing area, and technological advancements reform the linguistic expressions used by speakers, and as such, the field remains a relevant domain in linguistic research. Hård af Segerstad (2002) mapped out different typical features of CMC that Swedish speakers tend to use.

Space and Punctuation Marks. In Swedish CMC, both spaces between words and punctuation marks between clauses can be omitted (Hård af Segerstad, 2002). Punctuation marks can sometimes be replaced by emoticons or other symbols to indicate a clause break (ibid.). Furthermore, different punctuation marks can be repeated *ad nauseam*, which is probably a result of how little effort that is needed to write 50 question marks as opposed to just one (ibid.).

Another typical feature that Hård af Segerstad (2002) found was that messages were often typed all in lower-case letters, and sometimes in capital letters. She found that lower-case letters were used throughout a message because it demanded less effort than to type with alternatively lower-case and capital letters, which was sometimes done as well. While capital letters used for only one or two words could be used to indicate prosody, a message in all capital letters could be used to signal a tone of voice. Further, a message written in nothing but capital letters could be interpreted as being rude (Hård af Segerstad, 2002)

Spelling in CMC. Typical spelling of Swedish CMC differ from conventionalised spelling in Swedish (Hård af Segerstad, 2002). For example, words are often spelled in a 'spoken-like' way, i.e. the words are spelled in such a way that the writer and reader believes matches the pronunciation of the word, i.e. Swedish *det (it)* is spelled "d". Furthermore, letters are sometimes repeated and typos are common. Repetition of letters can be used to indicate the intonation and prosody of a words, for example *du är sååååå bra* ('you are sooooo good').

Swedish compounds such as *jättemycket* ('very much') were often split in two, i.e. *jätte mycket*, and the messages often contained typos. One explanation for this was that the writer was

writing fast and not double checking the spelling before sending the message, or because a phone could have a lack of Swedish compounds in the lexicon, thus correct it by splitting it in two.

Lexicon and Abbreviations in CMC. The most common words used in Swedish CMC were colloquial words, and some code switching between Swedish and English occurred (Hård af Segerstad, 2002). The code switching always made use of established English expressions rather than random words. Furthermore, communicational interjections such as *hmm* for thinking and *oh* for surprise were verbalised and spelled out in messages.

The use of abbreviations was attributed to the writers needing to save space and time by typing less (*ibid.*). Writers made use of both conventional and unconventional abbreviations in their messages. The unconventional abbreviations that were used still seemed to follow Swedish conventions for making abbreviations.

Emoticon Usage

Emoticons, or emotion icons, are the predecessors of emoji, and some of the previous research regarding emoticons will be investigated here. The main function of emoticons, according to Hård af Segerstad (2002) is to compensate for the lack of non-verbal cues in CMC. However, she also found that asterisks could be used in the same way, thus, instead of using a smiling emoticon, i.e. :), users could write **smiling** to achieve the same result.

Furthermore, the most commonly used emoticons are the most simple ones, i.e. :) , :(and other emoticons that consists of only a colon and an additional character, making them easy to type and easy for the reader to decipher (Hård af Segerstad, 2002). Likewise, Garrison et al. (2011) found that among a corpus of 59 instant messaging sessions, 73% of the emoticons used in the transcriptions consisted of three different emoticons (:) , :(and ;)) that were used over and over again. This suggests that the different kinds of emoticons that are used are limited in number, and writers tend to use emoticons that are easy to type and interpret. However, users can sometimes disregard this and instead opt for more complex emoticons as a way of playing with the language expression (Hård af Segerstad, 2002).

Important to note is that the study carried out by Garrison et al. (2011) only deals with English CMC, and the results are only contrasted against standard English, meaning that there is no information about how CMC differs cross-linguistically. Likewise, Hård af Segerstad's study only concerns Swedish CMC, however the features she found were contrasted against both standard Swedish and English CMC.

Hård af Segerstad (2002) found that Swedish CMC often aligns with English CMC, and uses features and phrases taken directly from English. In addition to this, she also found that in some cases the word order in Swedish CMC seemed to be influenced by English word order. Garrison et al. (2011), on the other hand, only mentions that English CMC differs from Standard English without further specifying what these differences are.

Emotional cues. As the name emotion icon indicates, **emoticons** are often used to indicate and strengthen certain emotions. Derks, Bos, and Grumbkow (2008a, 2008b) and Dresner and Herring (2010) both found that **emoticons** were used to indicate and enhance emotions. Derks et al. (2008a) analysed data collected from students with a mean age of 15 years where the students were asked to interpret a message containing emoticons. They found that **emoticons** are able to change the interpretation of a message from being negative to being positive, i.e. a negative message containing a smiling **emoticon** was interpreted as less negative than the same message without the emoticon.

In addition to this, Derks et al. (2008b) analysed data collected from an online psychology site in two parts, one part containing a questionnaire, the other part an experiment where the participants were part of a chat and then had to interpret and rate different messages in the chat. Here they found that emoticons could enhance the positivity or negativity of a message, as well as to express humour and emotions.

Similarly, Dresner and Herring (2010) analysed messages containing emoticons and found that negative criticism was interpreted as less negative with the use of a positive emoticon. However, they analysed the interpretation of the emoticon in this instance as an interpretation that does not map on to the face, i.e. that the interpretation is solely based on conventionalised norms in emoticon usage. Furthermore, they reported two other functions of emoticon: emotions that are mapped on the face, i.e. that :) means happy, and non-emotional cues mapped on the face, i.e. ;) means joking.

3.3 Previous Studies Concerning Emoji

While the term *emoji* may seem like a sibling to the predecessor *emoticon*, that is not the case. Emoji originated in Japan and the term *emoji* was imported together with the graphic images, meaning ‘picture character’ in Japanese (Sugiyama, 2015). In 2009, the first emojis were added to

the Unicode standard¹, and today the list contains more than 1500 different emoji. Today almost all mobile platforms offer their own rendering of emojis based on the Unicode standard, and emoji usage has increased, as reported by Eisenstein and Pavalanathan (2015). On Instagram, a social media platform where users are able to upload and edit pictures along with a caption, more than 50% of the posts contain emoji, and the social media platform has reportedly implemented the function to use emoji as hashtags (Dimson, 2015). One artist's fascination with emoji led to a crowdfunded translation of the classical novel *Moby Dick* into an emoji version called *Emoji Dick* where all of the more than 10 000 sentences were translated into only emojis.

Today, it seems like emojis are everywhere, and in 2015, Oxford Dictionaries (2016) chose an emoji as their “word of the year”. They motivated this by saying that the chosen emoji, “face with tears of joy” (see Picture 1), was the word that best described the mood and preoccupation of 2015. Furthermore, they add the “face with tears of joy” is the most commonly used emoji, making up approximately 20% of the emoji usage as logged by SwiftKey in 2015.



Picture 1. *The face with tears of joy emoji, chosen as the “word of the year” 2015 by Oxford Dictionaries.*

Moreover, they state that 2015 was the year that people started using emoji more, and that having an emoji as the word of the year reflects the changes in communication.

Because emojis are a relatively new phenomena in communication, the research is yet to uncover what their role is in online communication. However, so far, research seems to suggest that emoji can be used to enhance emotions and modify messages in the same way that emoticon does (Miller et al, 2016).

¹ The Unicode Standard specifies and encodes characters used in the digital environment to ensure that the characters translate across devices. Every character is given a specific number in order to enable different systems to identify and implement the corresponding character correctly. (Unicode, 2016)

Furthermore, studies suggest that just as emoticons, emojis tend to be placed either in the end of the message or between clauses (Sugiyama, 2015). Using emojis as punctuation marks was one of the functions of emojis that the participants in a series of Japanese focus groups made by Sugiyama (2015). In addition to this, in a data set consisting of 1.6 million tweets from 13 different countries, Novak et al. (2015) found that emojis are commonly placed in the end of a tweet. However, they did not proceed to analyse the placement of the emojis based on where in a clause they appeared, but only analysed them in relation to the beginning and the end of the tweet.

Emoji and Emoticon Usage. Pavalanathan and Eisenstein (2015) collected data from two user groups on Twitter, one that were emoji users, and one that were not emoji users. They looked at the users' emoji and emoticon usage at two times, one year apart, and found that emoticon usage decreased as emoji usage increased. However, the usage of negative emoticons, i.e. :(, did not show the same decrease as the other ones. They suggest that this is because there are less sad emoji faces than happy emoji faces.

Functions and Usage of Emoji

One of the main inspirations for the present study is the focus group study of Japanese teenagers' and young adults' self-reported use of emoji done by Sugiyama (2015). In the study, the groups discussed how they use and interpret emoji, and what factors affect their emoji usage.

Managing the Communication Climate. One of the ways in which emojis are used by Japanese teens, is to manage the communication climate (Sugiyama, 2015). By using emojis, the teenagers and young adults create a communication climate that is friendly. If they write to people they do not know very well without using any emojis, they could risk being seen as angry or unfriendly towards the other person (Sugiyama, 2015).

In addition to this, they use different emojis based on who they are talking to. When writing to a close friend, they are not as concerned with how the person will interpret the emojis as they are when they are talking to someone that they do not know. When getting to know someone new, it is important to use the right number and kind of emojis in order to not come across as too enthusiastic or to be seen as cold and unfriendly (Sugiyama, 2015).

Furthermore, the participants report that they do not use emoji when they are talking to a family member. They say that this is because when they are talking to a family member they do not need to show that they are friendly because the person will already know this, since they are family.

Expressing Personal Taste and Aesthetic. Emojis can be used to express your personal taste and aesthetic, according to the interviews done by Sugiyama (2015). The participants report that they have specific emoji that they always use, and that they believe shows their personal style. Some of the emojis that are discussed are labelled as *kawaii* ('cute'). Moreover, a person can be good at combining emojis with the text, and someone who is able to colour code and match their emojis is very good at using emojis (Sugiyama, 2015).

Cross-Platform Issues

In a recent study, Miller et al. (2016) investigated the sentiment and semantics of emojis within and across different mobile platforms. Because mobile phone providers need to make their own rendering of emoji based on the Unicode standard, an emoji may look different on an iPhone as compared to a Samsung phone, as can be seen in Picture 2. Miller et al. (2016) wanted to see if the interpretations of emoji would differ across different platforms, and thus did a study where participants had to rate the sentiment of different emoji on a negative to positive scale.

| No | Code | Brow. | Chart | Appl | Goog | Twtr. | One | FB | FBM | Sams. | Wind. | GMail | SB | DCM | KDDI | Name |
|----|---------|-------|-------|------|------|-------|-----|----|-----|-------|-------|-------|----|-----|------|---|
| 1 | U+1F608 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | grinning face |
| 2 | U+1F601 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | grinning face with smiling eyes |
| 3 | U+1F602 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | face with tears of joy |
| 4 | U+1F923 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | rolling on the floor laughing |
| 5 | U+1F603 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | smiling face with open mouth |
| 6 | U+1F604 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | smiling face with open mouth & smiling eyes |
| 7 | U+1F605 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | smiling face with open mouth & cold sweat |
| 8 | U+1F606 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | smiling face with open mouth & closed eyes |

Picture 1 An image of the presentation of different emoji renderings as listed in the Unicode. The emojis all have a unique code and a name describing them. The first row names the different platforms, i.e. brow. for browser (what an emoji looks like in the current internet browser), Appl for Apple phones, Goog for Google, Twtr. for the micro blog site Twitter, and so on.

(Screenshot from Unicode, 2016)

The findings revealed that the same emoji rendered on different platforms could be interpreted in different ways in regards to its sentiment, i.e. whether it was conceived as positive and negative. While this also occurred within the platform for certain emojis, the misconstrual rate was of such a low rate that they deemed it a result of certain Unicode characters being more ambiguous than others.

Furthermore, Miller et al. (2016) found that the semantic interpretation of emojis also differed across platforms. Participants reported different free-writing interpretations of the

different renderings of the same emoji. Again, there was a small rate of misconstrual within the platform, and these were again deemed a result of the characters themselves being ambiguous.

3.4 Sociolinguistic factors

There are many different factors that can influence why a certain group may use a certain language, and as such, emoji usage may be subject to sociolinguistic variation.

Youth language has always been looked down on by the older generation, which Kotsinas (2007) argues is due to differences between generations, and an inability of the older generation to acknowledge the creativity of youth language. Furthermore, she claims that another reason is that the older generation are preoccupied with what is lacking in the language rather than the new things that are introduced.

Japanese research of emoji usage among teenagers and young adults has found that while the teenagers do not make a distinction between male and female emoji usage, young adults believe that women use more emoji (Sugiyama, 2015). In addition to this, the young adults also reported that a man who uses a lot of emoji is perceived as feminine (ibid.).

As for gender differences, Einarsson (2009) writes that women are more likely to use prestigious language than men, and that men's use of less prestigious language creates a kind of "reversed prestige", i.e. that they can use less prestigious language just because they are free to do so. However, in the private sphere, women use more informal language than men (ibid.). Whether or not emojis belong to prestigious language or not has not been researched, however, since they seem to be primarily used in informal language, it can be assumed that they belong to the less prestigious end of language use.

On a similar note, Herring (2005) argues that gendered language persists in CMC, and that anonymous participants in an online conversation may give away their gender identity based on their language use. Herring further claims that men are more likely to write longer messages that are assertive, while women write shorter messages that are geared towards the interlocutor.

3.5 Summary of Background

To summarize, previous studies concerning emojis, emoticons, and CMC can be divided into three main categories for emojis: function, interpretation, and usage.

Function

Based on previous studies, there are some possible functions of emojis and emoticons that can be seen. First and foremost, there seems to be a tendency to use emoticons and emojis as punctuation marks, i.e. that their placement will be at the end of a clause, sometimes replacing the punctuation mark completely.

Additionally, emojis can be used as an emotional enhancer or to convey emotional cues as well as helping users to manage the conversation climate. Furthermore, Japanese teenagers and young adults use emojis to show their aesthetic taste, and to add personality to a message.

Interpretation

The functions of emojis and emoticons can have an effect on the interpretation of a message. For example, Japanese teenagers believe that when someone does not use emojis, the person is angry at them, thus the interpretation of a message can depend on there being emojis in the message itself. In addition to this, a message containing a lot of emojis can on the other hand be interpreted as too enthusiastic if the response does not contain a corresponding amount of emojis.

Moreover, there is a discrepancy across platforms, and certain emojis can be misinterpreted because they are rendered in a different way. On the other hand, some emojis tend to be interpreted differently even within a platform.

Usage

According to the reviewed material there are several factors that can influence a person's usage of emojis. Whether or not the writer knows the person he or she is addressing in writing can have an influence on how the person uses emojis, and some persons may have a specific set of emojis for specific persons. In addition to this, the speakers' relationship to the interlocutor can influence emoji usage, for example, family members' emoji usage can be different from emoji usage between friends.

Another factor that can affect the usage is the person's gender, at least according to Sugiyama's study where some of the informants suggest that women tend to use more emojis. However, in younger generations, it is suggested that this is changing, meaning that age could be another factor that can affect the usage.

4 Method

The chosen method for this study is a focus group interview, which was preceded by a pilot focus group to test the method. The method emphasizes the informants' own reported production and interpretation of emojis. Since emoji usage is still an un-researched area in linguistics, a focus group can help present ideas about possible functions, usages, and interpretations of emojis as perceived by emoji users.

The focus group consisted of five Swedish speaking university students. Inclusion criteria were that all participants should be acquainted with emojis in some form. The participants were not be required to own their own smartphone in order for a wide variety of ideas to be able to be brought forth during the focus group. This also ensured the possibility of including informants who do not use emojis themselves, but who have received emojis from others.

4.1 General Design of the Focus Group

The design of the focus group is based on previous research that has been done on focus groups and group dynamics. The main methods used are based on the research and guidelines proposed by Wibeck (2010), but Morgan (1998), and Stewart and Rook (2007) have also been used in the methodological design of the study .

Structure of the Focus Group.

The general structure for the focus group is unstructured, i.e. the informants are the ones who are leading the conversation, and very few questions are asked during the session. As such, the results are authentic in regards to the informants themselves deciding which aspects that are to be considered more important than others. In addition to this, the interview is not made up of questions that the informant have to answer one by one, but the focus is on creating a dynamic conversation where all persons involved feel free to share their thoughts.

While the session was led mainly by the participants themselves, a moderator is present to start the conversations, hand out stimulus material, and ensure that the discussions do not leave the topic. The sessions starts out with the moderator asking an opening question to start off the conversation, and then the informants are thereafter allowed to talk for a while. When the conversation fades out, the informants are handed stimulus material, i.e. examples of emoji usage, that they are to discuss.

Interview Guide

In order for the moderator to ensure that the informants are staying on topic, an interview guide was used (see Appendix A for the full interview guide). The interview guide consisted of different questions and aspects that were related to the topic at hand. However, the point of the questions was not to be asked during the session, but to act as a guide for the moderator. Hence, the questions in the interview guide were never asked, apart from the opening question.

Designing the Interview Guide. As previously stated, the main purpose of the interview guide was to function as a help to the moderator during the session. As such, the interview guide has a list of possible functions and usages of emojis as well as a list of all the examples that will be shown, and a short text about the emoji usage in each example.

The questions and topics present in the interview guide were first and foremost based on the research questions, i.e. they concern the function, interpretation, and usage of emojis. In the first draft of the interview guide, only the functions and interpretations were listed in the question, and during the pilot test it was discovered that this resulted in a focus group where the informants did not quite understand what they were to do due to the limited feedback given from the moderator.

As a result of this, the interview guide was remodelled to incorporate actual questions even though the moderator was not to engage in the discussions. The questions then worked as a checklist for the moderator to keep track of the questions that were addressed. Some examples of the questions that can be found in the interview guide are as follows:

Why do you use emojis?

When do you use emojis?

Can emojis be interpreted in different ways?

Do adults and teenagers use emojis in different ways?

Opening Question. One of the most important aspects for a successful focus group is the introduction of the session to the informants. The opening question needs to on the one hand introduce the topic and what is expected of the informants, and on the other hand to clarify the role of the moderator. As such, the wording of the question is important as to ensure that the informants will be thoroughly engaged in the discussions. Previous research has shown that an opening question that puts too much emphasis on the moderator leads to the risk of the informants turning to the moderator for questions, whereas a question where the moderator does

not mention their role has the risk of making the informants unsure about what is expected of them (Wibeck, 2010).

Based on this information, the opening question for the pilot study was that of a brief question about what emojis are and how the informants use them:

Så, vad är emojis och hur använder ni dem? *So, what are emojis and how do you use them?*

In the pilot focus group, the discussions never took off and the informants reported afterwards that they were not sure what they were supposed to discuss. As such, the opening question was modified in order to make the informants engage in emoji discussions in a different ways, and the focus of the question was that of the informants' own emoji usage:

Utgångspunkten är att ni ska diskutera hur ni använder emojis, vad de betyder för er och hur viktiga ni anser att de är. Ni får jättegärna börja med att berätta hur ni använder emojis. *The idea is that you should discuss how you use emojis, what they mean to you, and how important you believe that they are. Please feel free to start with informing everyone about how you use emojis yourself.*

The opening question was preceded by general information about the focus group, the role of the moderator, and the aim of the research in order to ensure that all informants had the same information about the session.

Stimulus Material

After the initial theme, the informants were given 21 examples of messages (see Appendix C for a full list of the examples), one at a time, that varied in their emoji usage. This stimulus material consisted of authentic messages and conversations written by persons of different ages and genders. All examples were collected through Facebook, where friends and family were asked to provide screenshots of what they considered to be their everyday usage of emojis.

Editing the Stimulus Material. Some of the examples were edited so that the informants could be presented with two versions of the same message, one without the emoji (Picture 3) and one with the emoji (Picture 4). They were first presented with the message without the emoji,

and then the original message. They were able to look at and compare the two messages, and the examples were not removed until a different message was presented.



Hej! Räkor och kräftor står i kylan. Nyckeln ligger ute, under tunnan för askan.

Picture 3 "Hi! Shrimps and crayfish are in the fridge. The key is outside, under the barrel for ashes."

The reasoning for removing emojis in some of the examples was to see if the informants would interpret a message differently based on the presence of the emoji, and by being able to present the text without the emoji before handing out the example with the emoji, prompted discussions about how the emojis affected the interpretation of the message as a whole.



Hej! Räkor och kräftor står i kylan. Nyckeln ligger ute, under tunnan för askan. 🥲

Picture 4 The original message, containing one emoji.

Location

The recording of the focus group interview took place in the LARM-studio of the Humanities laboratory at Lund University. The LARM-studio is a professional recording studio for audio and video. The studio consists of one large room for recordings, and one smaller room for the recording equipment.

Furthermore, the focus group interview took place during the day, and took around 90 minutes. The informants and the moderator were all sat around a circular table facing each other in order to encourage discussions. The recording was done by a professional audio technician using a Thuresson CM 402 microphone, which was placed in the middle of the table.

Participants

The focus group consists of five Swedish speaking university students, a number chosen based on previous studies concerning focus groups (Wibeck, 2010). Having five informants ensures that all participants are able to take part in the discussions (Wibeck, 2010).

The ages of the participants ranged from 26 to 61. Four of the participants were acquainted with each other from before. The four participants who knew each other from before all studied general linguistics and the fifth student studied gender studies. The session ended up taking longer than one hour due to the participants being very talkative. All participants had encountered emojis before, and all but one reported using emojis regularly.

In this thesis, the names of the participants have all been changed, and they are named alphabetically, the youngest starting on A. In addition to this, the names are also more or less gender neutral, mainly because the gender of the informants are not discussed further. The reason for this is partly because in such a qualitative study, and the results can be seen as a pilot for more thorough investigation involving more participants.

The informants are as follows: Alexis, 26, Billie, 27, Calico, 29, Demi, 43, and finally, Even, 61.

Informed Consent and Anonymity

All participants were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix B) where they agree to their participation in the study. At the same time, information about data handling and the purpose of the study was handed out in order for the participants to know what was expected of them and how the data would be used in the study, i.e. that their names would be changed and their discussions would be reported in written form. Furthermore, they were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw their participation if needed. They were also informed that the interview would be recorded, and about how the recording would be handled.

In order for the participants to have anonymity in the study, all names in the recordings have been modified in the transcriptions. This is to ensure that the participants remain anonymous throughout the study.

The information given in the consent form was all based on the guidelines provided by CODEX, following rules and regulations laid down by the Swedish Research Council and the Centre for research ethics and bioethics. CODEX suggests that researchers should always inform participants about the purpose of the study, the overall plan for the research, how the collected data will be handled, and that participation is voluntary (CODEX, 2016).

4.2 Transcription, Coding, and Analysis of Focus Interview

In terms of how the gathered information has been processed, the focus group interview was time-coded using Microsoft Excel. Each minute of the interview was tagged in terms of what the informants were discussing, and which example they were discussing. The tags that were used were simple words that could describe what the informants were talking about, for example “punctuation marks”, “age”, “interlocutor”, and “interpretation”.

After this was done, some of the entries in the Excel sheet had additional commentary added in order to make the file easier to search through. This was then followed by a process where important parts of the interview were transcribed, i.e. parts where the informants were discussing aspects related to the research questions.

For the purpose of this paper, the emojis' function, interpretation, and usage have not been analysed based on their category. In the pilot study, it was found that there was not enough stimulus material representing the different categories of emojis to make a substantial analysis.

The themes identified (age, interlocutor etc.) have been compared with previous studies, and some of the reported answers and thoughts were transcribed and translated. In addition to this, some of the collected data has also been added to tables to provide an overview of the results.

The focus of the transcription was on the content of what the informants say, and as such, the transcriptions follow standard Swedish orthography in order to make the content first and centre rather than the language expression. As such, details of pronunciation, repetitions, and phrases signalling agreement were not transcribed.

As for the translation of the transcription, the focus of these is also on the content. This means that the translations focus on the meaning of the source transcription rather than giving a word-by-word translation. A word-by-word translation could result in misinterpretations because idiomatic expressions would not be translated.

5 Results

The results are presented under three main categories: function, interpretation, and usage. The three categories have some overlap due to them being interdependent, this is especially salient for the sections about function and interpretation.

5.1 Function

In terms of the functions that are identified by the informants, the main function is suggested to be that of emojis used as an emotional enhancer. However, all informants do not agree with this being the main function. The results have been summarised in Table 1, where a plus means that the particular informant mentions or explicitly agrees with the function, n/a marks if there is no information about a particular informant’s view on the matter, and a minus means that the informant has stated that they do not agree with the function.

| | Alexis, 26 | Billie, 27 | Calico, 29 | Demi, 43 | Even, 61 |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|----------|----------|
| Punctuation mark | + | + | + | + | n/a |
| Emotional enhancer | - | + | + | + | + |
| Communication climate | + | + | + | + | - |
| Personal aesthetic | + | - | - | - | - |
| To represent objects | - | - | - | n/a | n/a |
| Relationship maintenance | + | + | + | n/a | n/a |
| Confirm that a message is read | + | + | + | + | - |

Table 1: Functions of emojis. The table shows which functions that the informants report that emojis have. A plus and green background means that they believe that emojis have the specific function, a minus and red background means that they do not believe that emojis have that function and n/a and yellow background means that there is no information available about the informant’s view on the matter.

Punctuation marks. All but one of the informants report that emojis can be used as a punctuation mark. Calico repeatedly points out that the emojis used in the examples are placed between clauses, and that they do not disrupt the grammatical unity in the message.

Demi says that he prefers to have the emoji follow the punctuation mark, i.e. that there should be both an emoji and a punctuation mark. Thus, the placement of the emoji would be the same, but whether or not the emojis would function as a punctuation mark is unclear.

Both Billie and Alexis report that they believe that emojis can be used as punctuation marks, and that when an emoji is present there is no need to use an actual punctuation mark unless it is needed to clarify something.

Even, on the other hand, does not address whether or not emojis can be used as punctuation mark. However, Even does comment on the inconsistent use of punctuation marks in the example messages.

- Billie: Här använder de det lite som punkt också, de skriver någonting och sen för att förstärka eller förtydliga budskapet i meningen innan så använder de emojis efter. [00.09.24] *They use it a bit like a punctuation mark here, they write something and then to enhance or clarify the meaning of the text, they use emojis after.*
- Calico: Här är det också så att emojiin, de funkar som satsindelare istället för punkter. [00.36.15] *And here too, the emojis work as clause markers instead of punctuation marks.*
- Demi: Jag hade nog satt en punkt och sen haft en smiley. [00.39.03] *I would probably have had a punctuation mark and then a smiley.*

Emotional Enhancer. Calico, Billie, and Demi all claim that the main function of emojis is that of an emotional enhancer. Billie also emphasises that emojis are *enhancers*:

- Billie: Jag tänker att det är mer en förstärkare, att det är inte något måste utan mer om man vill förstärka någon känsla [00.01.52] *I think that it is more of an enhancer, that you don't have to but if you want to you can enhance an emotion.*

Even also reports that emojis are used to show emotions, and particularly anger. Alexis, on the other hand, claims that emojis do not enhance emotions, but rather that they function as unexpected graphic elements in the text that can make the reader smile, and create an inside joke between the participants of the conversation.

However, further on, Alexis agrees when Calico says that two emojis are used as emotional enhancers on an ellipsis when discussing the example in Picture 5. On the other hand, Alexis argues that the ellipsis itself is enough to convey the emotions that are represented by the emojis, i.e. that the ellipsis expresses the same emotions as the emojis in Picture 5: distress and panic. Calico agrees, but stresses that the emojis are enhancing the emotion that can be conveyed in the ellipsis, that an exam weekend is not something to look forward to.

Hejje! Förlåt att jag inte svarat på snap om vi är i lkpg nu i helgen, svaret är nästa helg. Nu är det tentahelg... 😄😓 Vi funderar på om ni är hemma nästa helg och om ni isf har en soffa till låns lördag natt? 🤔

Picture 5 From example 1, where the informants discuss emojis as emotional enhancers of an ellipsis.

"Hi! Sorry that I didn't reply on snap about if we're in Linköping this weekend, the answer is next weekend. This is an exam weekend... [emojis] We were wondering if you are home next weekend and if you have a couch available on Saturday night? [emoji]"

In regards to the same example, the informants also discuss the function of the 'thinking face' emoji. It seems that they all agree that when a question is posed, and there is a clear question mark, using an emoji that is thinking can make the emotional cue too strong. There seems to be a consensus that there is no need to have a 'thinking face' to indicate that a question is a question, making the emoji redundant.

In addition to this, emojis can be used as an emotional response to something instead of using words. In a particular case discussed by the informants, the emotional response consisted of the 'flushed face' emoji, as can be seen in Picture 6.

Tack men det är lugnt, åt en intressant kombo med jordnötter, rökt lax o några skivor kalkon

Men tack för omtanken

😳😳 kylskåpsrensning!

Picture 6 Emojis functioning as an emotional response, according to the informants. "Thanks but it is okay, ate an interesting combo with peanuts, smoked salmon and a few slices of turkey. But thanks for the thought" "[emojis] cleaning the fridge!"

Managing the Communication Climate. The informants all report that emojis can help manage the communication climate, but how emojis do this is something that they do not agree on. While Even reports that angry emojis can be used to show a person that you are angry, Billie, Calico, and Alexis all say that they prefer to abstain from emoji usage when they are angry in a way to signal that they are not in a good mood.

Alexis reports that she uses emojis as a way of making silly remarks, be unexpected, and to establish inside jokes between friends, as can be seen in Quote 2.

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Alexis: Det är nog mer ett tramsigt tillägg för att peppa igång stämningen med ganska oväntade emojis som är tagna ur sitt sammanhang. [00.02.58]</p> | <p><i>It is more of a silly remark in order to psych up the mood with unexpected emojis that are taken out of context.</i></p> |
|--|--|

While the other informants do not initially agree with this, both Calico and Demi admit that they can use emojis more randomly just to add a silly tone to the message. However, Calico adds that if emojis are used in that way, their communicative purpose is lost. Alexis does not agree, and argues that the emojis then gain a communicative purpose in being unexpected, and that they thus function to establish relationships. Demi agrees with Alexis, and adds that while it may not be the main function of emojis, their colourful presence can play a part in making a conversation more friendly.

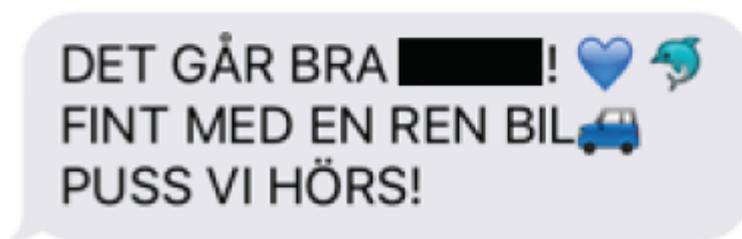
In addition to this, some of the informants say that they are affected by how many, and what kind of, emojis that the person they are communicating with uses. Furthermore, Alexis reports that there have been occasions when a person has thought that they are angry because they do not use a lot of emojis in messages.

Demi also adds that a person can use emojis in order to show their interest, and remarks that a user who uses a lot of emojis will come across as enthusiastic. On the same note, the informants start talking about the excessive use of heart emojis in some of the messages (see for instance example 2 in Appendix C). Calico has a theory that a single heart emoji has lost part of its strength because they are being over-used, and that is the reason for using more than one at a time. Furthermore, Calico states that the purpose of using a heart emoji is to be friendly, and to show persons that you care about them.

As a reaction to this, Demi explains that using more than one heart emoji, or using heart emojis all the time, can mean that a person does not care at all, that they are just sending hearts to everyone. Billie agrees with this and says that excessive use of any kind of emoji makes them mean less, as if the person writing is just smashing the emoji keyboard in order to fit as many as possible in a message.

Moreover, the informants discuss usage of emojis among friends, and agree that close friends do not need to use a lot of emojis. Partly because they know each other well enough to interpret a message based only on the writing, but also because they do not have anything to prove in regards to the relation between the participants in the conversation.

Relationship maintenance. In a similar manner, the informants also report that one function of emojis is that of relationship maintenance. They adapt the way they use emojis based on the interlocutor's emoji usage, and Alexis says that the emojis that they use in conversation are mainly based on the emojis that the other person is using.



Picture 7 One of the messages where an object emoji is used. "IT IS GOING WELL! [emojis] NICE WITH A CLEAN CAR [emoji] KISSES TALK TO YOU LATER!"

Representing Objects. The informants all report that they do not use emojis to represent objects, i.e. to remove the word car and instead use a car emoji, but Calico says that she has friends who could do this. The others agree, and say that using emojis to represent words, like a rebus, is something other people might do. However, when discussing an example containing a car emoji, and the message itself contains the word car, the informants find the emoji repetitive and redundant, as in Picture 7.

Personal Aesthetic. None of the informants report that they use emojis as means of expressing their personal aesthetic, however, they do discuss the messages in Picture 7 as being an artistic expression from the point of view of having the emojis in matching colours. In addition to this, Calico makes a comment that the types of emojis that a person chooses can reflect something about their personality.

Confirming that a Message has been Read. Emojis can be used to indicate that the message has been seen without having to write a message. The informant report that using the thumbs-up emoji is an efficient way of doing this, but that smartphones that have the function of showing if the message has been read is more convenient than opening the emoji keyboard to find the right emoji. However, they also report that sending a message rather than just looking at the message is a more polite way to do this.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>Alexis: Men det här är några som snart ska ses, och då finns det ingen poäng i att skriva långa sms till varandra. Svaret där är ganska givet, det hade också kunnat vara tummen upp eller glad smiley.</p> | <p>But this is people who are meeting up soon, and there is no reason to write long messages to each other. The answer is pretty given, it may as well have been a thumbs-up or a happy smiley.</p> |
| <p>Calico: Det hade också kunnat vara bara såhär 'visat 11:23'</p> | <p>It could also have been just 'shown 11:23'</p> |

Calico also reports that she would rather use a quicker way to send a confirmation, for example to use a quick key for a thumbs up that is available on *Facebook Messenger*, Billie, on the other hand, likes the use of a hand emoji, even though it takes longer time to open the emoji keyboard and select an emoji.



Picture 8. First example: “Exam on Friday [emoji]” and second example: “Tonsillitus [emoji]” “But nooooo”, “Oh no [emojis]” “And an exam on Friday [emoji]” First only the exam-message is presented, then the informants also see the message in context with the other messages.

5.2 Interpretation

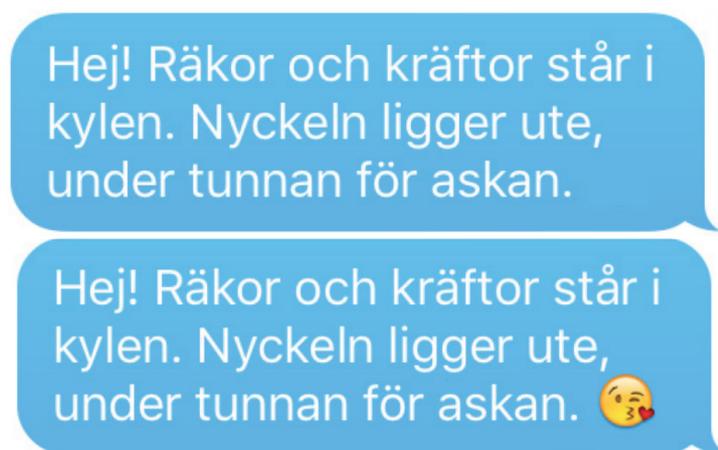
The interpretations of emojis are closely linked to the function that they have in the conversation, and the interpretation can be affected by the emojis that are used. Similarly, some emojis will not change the interpretation of a message, but rather add dimension or enhance aspects in the message. The main interpretations that the informants identify have to do with how emojis affect the interpretation of a message, and how the number of emojis can affect how the message is interpreted, as well as the intentions of the writer. In Table 2, the four main interpretations are

presented along with the different informants' views on the matter. Not all informants agree on what a certain number of emojis mean, or if a message without emojis can be interpreted as signalling anger.

| | Alexis, 26 | Billie, 27 | Calico, 29 | Demi, 43 | Even, 61 |
|--|------------|------------|------------|----------|----------|
| Lack of emojis interpreted as anger | + | + | + | + | - |
| A large number of emojis as enthusiasm | + | + | n/a | + | n/a |
| Emojis can add friendliness | + | + | + | + | n/a |
| A large number of emojis can harm sincerity of a message | - | n/a | + | + | n/a |

Table 2: Interpretation of Emojis. The left hand column shows the different interpretations of messages based on the usage and function of emojis as identified by the informants. The plus indicates that the informant identifies the interpretation, the minus means that the informant does not identify the interpretation, and n/a means that there is no information available about the informant's view on the matter.

Varying interpretation of the same emoji. One emoji can be interpreted in more than one way depending on the context where it appears. The informants all agree that the emoji used in the first message of Picture 8 means something different in the first message alone, as compared to what it means in context with the other messages in the conversation.



Picture 9 The edited and the unedited version of the message. "Hi! Shrimps and crayfish are in the fridge. The key is outside, under the barrel for ashes."

That is, that the emoji in the first example on Picture 8, which they were given on its own first, is rolling its eyes because writing exams are hard, and the person is not prepared. However, when the emoji is presented in the context of being sick and then having an exam, the informants say that they interpret the emoji as looking away, and showing that having an exam when you are

sick is just not a good thing, and any other week being sick would have been fine, but not this week when there is an exam.

Anger and irritation. The informants discuss the lack of emojis as being interpreted as anger and/or irritation. While Even says that anger can be expressed with emojis, the other informants claim that anger is not expressed with emojis. Thus, they can interpret a person as being angry based on the lack of emojis in a message.

Enthusiasm. Further, Demi reports that he interprets excessive use of emojis as a sign of enthusiasm and interest. Billie says that she finds it hard to read and interpret messages that contain a lot of emojis, and that the emojis disrupt the flow of the text. Further, the emojis takes attention from what is actually written, and as such, risks damaging the interpretation.

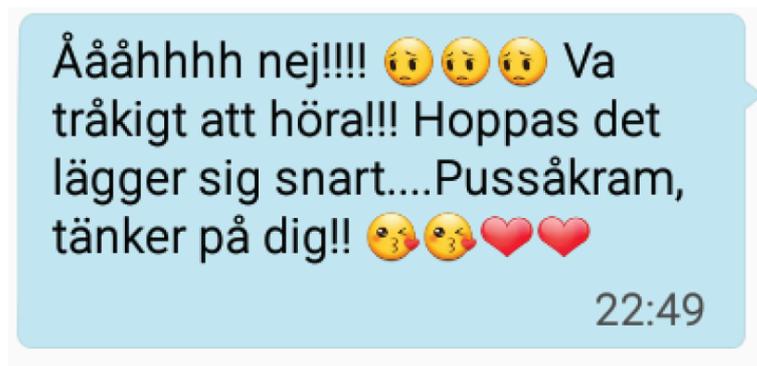
Friendliness. In picture 9, the emoji has been removed from the message. The informants are first presented with the edited message, without the emoji, and after discussing that message the original message is presented. They all report that the interpretation of the message does not change at all, and that the main purpose of the message is to convey information.

| | |
|---|---|
| Calico: Föräldrar till ett barn, det är bara informationsförmedling. [00.48.33] | <i>Parents to a child, nothing but conveying information.</i> |
|---|---|

| | |
|--|---|
| Alexis: Exakt såhär hade min pappa kunnat skriva. [00.48.40] | <i>My dad could have written exactly like this.</i> |
|--|---|

Further, they discuss the potential writer of the message, believing it to be a parent wanting to inform their child about something. When the original message is presented, this claim remains the same:

| | |
|---|--|
| Calico: Det är fortfarande en förälder, fast som har lärt sig använda emojis [00.49.30] | <i>It is still a parent, but a parent who has learned how to use emojis.</i> |
|---|--|



Picture 10. A message containing a large number of emojis. "Ooooooh no!!!! [emojis] That is not good to hear!!! I hope it feels better soon.... Hugsandkisses, thinking about you!! [emojis]"

Truthfulness. Excessive use of emojis can signal that the writer is exaggerating and not being truthful. Calico says that she is not sure whether or not the person writing in Picture 10 is being sincere in their compassion or not based on the emoji usage. Demi agrees and believe that the person writing may be trying to compensate for something. Alexis, on the other hand, disagrees completely and says that the excessive use of emojis is only a person preference and nothing to be suspicious about.

5.2 Usage

During the discussions, the informants talk both about their own usage of emojis in relation to the emoji usage in the stimulus material, and the emoji usage presented in the examples. The informants report that they do not use emojis in all types of digital communication.

Even is the only informant who reports that he does not use emojis at all. The other informants all say they use emojis, but in varying degrees. The informants who are under 30 have a higher rate of reported emoji usage, at least according to Table 3. None of the informants report that gender can affect the usage. However, they discuss age as factor in emoji usage at several points during the interview.

| | Alexis, 26 | Billie, 27 | Calico, 29 | Demi, 43 | Even, 61 |
|---------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|----------|----------|
| Uses in email | - | - | - | - | - |
| Relationship-specific usage | + | + | + | + | - |
| Does not use emojis when angry | + | + | + | n/a | n/a |
| Uses face emojis | - | + | + | + | n/a |
| Age can affect the usage of emojis | + | + | + | n/a | n/a |
| Gender can affect the usage of emojis | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |

Table 3: Usage of emojis. The left-hand column list different usages of emojis, and the other columns shows if an informants report that they use emoji in such a way. A plus means that they report that they use emojis in that way, minus that they do not comply with that usage, and n/a means that there is no information about that usage in the collected data.

Where to use emojis. The informants all report that they do not use emojis in all messages, and that some types of digital communication is not suitable for emojis. Even is the only one who does not use emojis at all, and the only contact he has had with emojis is when a stepson writes to him and uses angry emojis.

Calico reports that she uses emojis primarily in text messages and on social media, and not usually in emails. If she does use it in emails, the purpose is to lighten the mood and make the message friendlier. Billie also reports that she uses emojis on social media and in messages, but not in emails at all, and so does Demi. Furthermore, Demi also adds that he believes that using emojis in emails is something that is slowly dying out, that people tend to write more formally in emails. However, he also says that when an email becomes more like a chat, i.e. that the messages are shorter and the response time is shortened, emojis can be used in the same way as it would be used in messages and on social media. Alexis reports that she does not use emojis in emails, and that they are mostly restricted to her social media activity.

Alexis further states that her 11-year-old sister uses emojis everywhere and all the time, and often sending nothing but a series of emojis in a message, and that her sister's friends does so too.

Relationship-specific Usage. Alexis says that she uses different emojis for different persons, and that she can use specific emojis as inside jokes with her friends without them having a specific meaning.

Billie also reports that she uses different emojis for different people, and that she can send more ambiguous emojis to people that she knows well. She also reports that she is affected by what kind and how many emojis the other person is using, adapting her own usage to fit into the conversation. Calico agrees with this and adds that she would not send a heart emoji to a person she knows does not use the heart emoji at all.

Signalling Anger. In connection with the informants' general discussion about emoji usage, they start talking about their usage when they are irritated or angry at someone. Even says that his stepson uses angry emojis in messages to him when he is angry, and Calico and Billie says that they would not use an angry emoji in a message to the person they are angry with. Alexis agrees, and says that she uses shorter clauses, and always ends with a punctuation mark if she is angry.

Calico also says that she can use an angry emoji when talking to someone else about the person she is angry with, but she would never send it directly to the person who she is angry with.

Faces and other emojis. Alexis reports that she barely uses face emojis at all, and reacts on the excessive use of face emojis in some of the messages. The other informants say that they almost exclusively use face emojis.

Alexis: Jag använder inte så mycket ansiktsmilisar, *I don't use a lot of face smilies, I think it's*
det är mest det jag reagerar på, att det är *mostly that I am reacting to, that there are*
väldigt många ansikten. *a lot of faces.*

Demi Det är nog nästan det enda jag använder, *I think that's almost the only thing I*
och tummen upp. *use, and thumbs up.*

Age and Emoji Usage. Several of the informants interpret messages that contain excessive use of emojis as being produced by younger persons, while messages with few emoji, and especially containing punctuation marks and conforming to writing conventions, as produced by adults.

Alexis states that her younger sister uses a lot of emojis, and particularly the heart emoji, on all social media platforms and in messages. When example 19-19b is shown, she says that they could be written by her sister. In addition to this, Calico says that the persons who are writing the messages must be very young for using so many emojis.

The messages where there are very few or no emojis present are often interpreted as being produced by adults. In example 7 (see appendix), Calico argues that the first message must be produced by someone who is older based on the emoji being a fairly regular one and that the punctuation mark is placed behind the emoji. She also adds that the simple smiling emoji could be a result of the person making a regular emoticon, and that the phone then autocorrects this to one of the more basic emojis.

Gendered Usage. The informants do not discuss emoji from a perspective of gender during the session.

6 Discussion

The results of the focus group interview both confirm and contradict some of the previous studies concerning emoticon and emoji usage. This section starts with an overall discussion of emojis and their role in written language production before moving into the specific areas of their functions, interpretations, and usage.

As discussed in the theoretical background, CMC, and in its extension emojis, exist in a sort of **hybrid** that is somewhere in-between spoken and written language. Nevertheless, CMC is a growing ground for different types of language, and the results suggests that emojis belong in certain parts of digital communication, mainly those parts that are synchronous and thus closer to spoken language.

This could be a result of what Hård af Segerstad (2002) discusses in regards to spoken-like features of CMC, that it is more likely that a conversation has more spoken-like features the more similar to face-to-face conversation it is. This also seems to be the case for emojis, with the results showing that the informants initially say that they do not use emojis in emails, but then add that if an email becomes more like a chat, i.e. more like a face-to-face conversation, they may use emojis. Based on this, it seems to be likely that digital communication has a continuum of its own, much like the continuum of spoken and written language.

One of the main themes of CMC is the need to save space and time in the communication (Hård af Segerstad, 2002). While emojis certainly allow speakers to save space by adding nuances and emotional cues without having to write them down, the aspect of saving time is lost because the users need to change to a different keyboard, where they then need to locate the right emoji. As such, emoji usage does not necessarily allow the writer to save time. However, the results show that some of the informants are aware of the extra time it takes to use emojis, they believe that it is worth it if it clarifies the message or makes it more polite and friendly.

In addition to this, despite emojis taking extra time to add to a message, one reason to do so could be to make sure that the reader will not misinterpret or get the idea that the writer is angry or irritated. Since the results show that the informants prefers to use 'simple' emojis when communicating with persons they do now know well, this could be argued to be the case. Similar to previous studies concerning **emoticons**, the emojis that are easy to interpret are the ones that the informants seem to prefer, at least unless the emojis are used as inside jokes.

On a similar note, despite modern technology allowing readers to, in some cases, see when a message has been received and read by the other person, the informants think it is better to somehow reply, and that emojis are an efficient tool for doing this. While previous studies shows that time-efficiency is important in CMC, with some room for playful language expressions, it seems that the positive parts of using emojis as enhancers and to manage the communication climate are far more important than saving time.

Moreover, the potential misinterpretations of emojis because of cross-platform issues is something that is briefly acknowledged by the informants, but it is not discussed any further, suggesting that the informants are aware of this, but that it is not something they consider in their everyday written communication while using emojis.

6.1 Function

The reported functions of emojis as presented in the results suggest that emojis can be used to achieve a myriad of different effects in communication, from adding unexpected elements to a message, to clarifying feelings, and act as emotional responses to messages.

Emojis enhance emotions, they clarify messages, and they can help manage the conversation climate. Sometimes they can be used to show personal taste, and they can represent inside jokes between friends.

Non-verbal cues. The results show that emojis can indeed be used to compensate for the lack of non-verbal cues in written communication, as well as to enhance other means of compensation, such as an ellipsis. While there is no one-to-one correspondence between non-verbal cues and emojis, there are certainly similar functions that can be found in both areas, and as such, emojis can be considered efficient in conveying non-verbal cues.

As such, there seems to be a will to express non-verbal cues in written communication, and to take after features of spoken language in writing. From this perspective, emojis become an important part in digital communication, alongside other features that can be used.

In addition to this, all but one of the informants say that face or hand emojis are the types of emojis that they use the most, and that emojis representing objects are not something they incorporate in their text. This could be a sign of how emojis compensate for the lack of gestures and facial expressions in text. Further, since emoji often refer to the whole message, this could be seen as similar to how gestures are synchronized with speech (Kendon, 2014).

However, the usage of emojis is not fully conventionalized, and as such the interpretations of emojis can differ from person to person. Nonetheless, emojis can help make communication smoother, and they can sometimes convey meanings that would take both skill and time to write.

Furthermore, emojis can replace punctuation marks, aligning with previous studies that report the same thing (Hård af Segerstad, 2002; Sugiyama, 2015). They are almost always placed

between clauses, and when an emoji is placed somewhere else the fluency of the text can be harmed. As such, their function as clause dividers seems to be fairly conventionalized.

On a different note, emojis are also part of the establishing of common ground between the speaker, i.e. that in a conversation the participants will establish a specific usage for emojis, and then stick to that. This ties in with the communication management that emojis represent, and emojis thus become an important part in the common ground that is established. Common ground then, as argued by Clark (2005), is essential for communication, and thus also for the functions of emojis.

6.2 Interpretation

As for the interpretation of emojis, the emoji usage can supposedly reveal information about the user. For example, the number of emojis that are used can indicate the age of the person writing, at least according to the informants.

First and foremost, not using emojis can result in the reader believing that the writer is angry or irritated. As such, the interpretation of a message being friendly can partly be based on the presence of emojis. Additionally, a message containing a lot of emojis can on the other hand be interpreted as too enthusiastic, something also reported in Japanese emoji studies (Sugiyama, 2015). This suggests that there is a balance when it comes to the number of emojis, that not too many and not too few, will mean that the emojis can function as enhancers, clarifiers and such without being subject to the reader interpreting the writer's potential emotional status, i.e. if they are angry or enthusiastic.

On a similar note, a large number of emojis in a message can disrupt the fluency of the text for the reader, and thus harm the interpretation of the message. According to Kress (2010), graphical elements in a text will draw the attention of the viewer, and as such, using a lot of emojis in a message can indeed be distracting for the reader. However, if emojis are placed between clauses this is less likely to happen.

However, in some cases emojis are needed in order to make a harsh message seem less harsh, just as emoticons have previously been found to make criticism seem less negative (Dresner & Herring, 2010).

In addition to this, the interpretation of emojis is linked with the context and function of the emoji that is being used. One emoji can be interpreted as conveying different emotional cues depending on the topic of the conversation. Similarly, the interpretation of emojis as emotional

enhancers or 'silly remarks' depends on the function of the emojis, meaning that the interpretation is not only linked to the graphic image that the emoji is, but also tightly bound to the context and function of the emoji.

6.3 Usage

The usage of emojis is influenced by different factors, and one factor that the informants repeatedly came back to was that of age. Examples where there were a lot of emojis present were often deemed as being written by younger persons, while messages that had small number of emojis, or where the emoji was combined with a punctuation mark, were deemed as being written by the older generation. Much like research in youth language suggests, young persons are perceived as using and introducing new features into the language, and as emojis are a relatively new feature in written communication, excessive emoji usage is attributed to younger generations (Kotsinas, 2007).

In addition to this, the informants' reported usage of emoji shows that the younger participants use emojis to a greater extent than the older participants. However, the reported usage cannot be compared to actual usage, and as such, the possibility that age is an important factor in emoji usage is only a possibility at this stage.

Gender, on the other hand, was not something that was discussed in regards to the emojis that were used. Even though there is research suggesting that men and women use language in slightly different ways, the results do now show any indication that such is the case in emoji usage among Swedish speakers. As a contrast to this, the Japanese emoji study found that the young adults attributed excessive emoji usage as a feminine style of writing. However, the younger generation did not necessarily believe this (Sugiyama, 2015). This could mean that the norms of feminine and masculine language expression is changing, or that emoji usage is such a new area that these norms have not been established yet.

In regards to the informants' own emoji usage, for the most part they use emojis in accordance with the functions and interpretations that they reported, with the exception of the one informant who does not use emojis at all. This informant is also the oldest of the informants, meaning that it could be a results of different language use across different generations, as mentioned before (Kotsinas, 2007).

6.4 Method discussion

The chosen method for this study, a focus group interview, has the advantage of providing qualitative results that have not been conditioned by leading questions. As such, the results are close to that of the informants' authentic thoughts and ideas about emojis. In addition to this, the method allows for in-depth analysis of functions and interpretations of emojis, something that a quantitative study would not have been able to provide.

While focus group interviews are not a commodity in linguistic research, in an area like emojis where there is not a lot of previous research, such a method has the benefit of providing information of the possible functions of emojis in communication. As such, the results of this study provides a starting point for further research in the area, and can help guide future studies in how to approach the field of emojis in communication.

However, since the results are based on such a small number of people, the results cannot be overgeneralized to how emojis are used and interpreted by everyone. Nevertheless, the results provide an important venture point for further investigations in this area, presenting a number of possible functions and interpretations of emojis. Had a qualitative method like a survey been used instead, the results would have been more focused on generalizations of usage of emoji.

Furthermore, a survey would have had to be grounded in assumptions about emojis that have not yet been researched, and as such, a focus group interview is a good starting point for finding information about the functions and interpretations of emojis.

Yet another method that could have been used is that of only collecting messages, and then analyzing these using previous studies and to try and establish what actual emoji usage looks like. In that case, the functions and interpretation of emojis would have been based on the researchers intuition rather than emoji users' own ideas about the topic.

In addition to this, analyzing messages would have given results that were more oriented towards explaining differences using age and gender since the collected data could be seen to be more representative of general emoji usage. However, in the chosen method ideas about how age influences emoji usage came up, giving results of how emojis are perceived as being different in different generations.

7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the results show that emojis are used in many ways, and their functions and interpretation can vary depending on the context. Additionally, which kind and how many emojis that should be used is something that persons can disagree on, but it is not conceived as a problem since speakers adapt to each other and create a common ground for their emoji usage.

It seems that when given the choice, **hybrids** between spoken and written languages are used in written communication. In these hybrids, new means of language expression are explored and continuously added. In addition to this, the will to compensate for the lack of non-verbal cues is very strong, and speaker will use the means available to compensate for this lack.

As such, the means that are enabled through emojis, such as conversation climate managing, emotional cues, enhancers and clarifiers, are an important part in digital communication. They enable speakers to communicate more smoothly, and helps the interpretation of messages even though they are sometimes ambiguous and looks different on different platforms.

What functions of emojis are identified? The informants identified several functions for emojis, but maybe the most common one that they came back to was that of emojis as **emotional enhancers**, or to convey **emotional cues** in general. In addition to this, another important function is that of **managing the conversation climate**, i.e. to make sure that the messages are perceived as friendly, and avoid that the reader interprets the message as angry.

Furthermore, emojis are also an efficient tool for politely showing the other person that you have read something, or to give a **reaction** to a message that does not necessarily need a long reply. Emojis also play an important role in **relationship maintenance**, and they can be used as inside jokes. Finally, emojis function as **clause dividers**.

How do the reported functions influence interpretations? As stated earlier, the interpretations of emojis is closely tied to their function. In regard to emojis as enhancers and emotional cues, the interpretation will be based on the **context** where the emoji appears, but often the emotion that is being conveyed is already present in the text. Using a lot of emojis can signal **enthusiasm**, and not using any at all can signal **anger**, meaning that the function of conversation climate manager is closely linked to how a message can be interpreted as either friendly or unfriendly depending on the emoji usage. On a similar note, a serious message containing a lot of emojis can be interpreted as insincere, indicating that once again, the conversation climate managing using emojis is an important aspect.

How do the informants report that they use emojis? The oldest of the informant does not use emojis at all, but all the others use emojis. The only time that all informants agree on an aspect of usage, is that they do not use emojis in emails. A reason for this could be that emails are not typically perceived as informal digital communication, and it is this not seen as similar to face-to-face conversations.

The informants' emoji usage is primarily restricted to **hybrids** between spoken and written language. They use emojis for **relationship maintenance**, and establish a common ground in terms of their emoji usage with the person they are speaking to. Further, face and hand emojis are the most popular ones to use in the group, an indication that it is indeed non-verbal cues that they compensate for.

7.1 Suggestions for further study

Further study is needed on emojis in order fully understand their role in written online communication. While this study has provided qualitative data of possible functions, interpretations, and usages of emojis, quantitative research is needed to analyse actual emoji usage and give an understanding of general tendencies in regards to emojis.

This would shed light on some of the sociolinguistic aspects discussed in this paper, and would also be an important study in regards to how speakers compensate for the lack of non-verbal cues. Further, study concerning different types of digital communication and emojis is needed to establish where emojis are used, and if they have the same functions say for example comment sections as they have in private messages.

Similarly, studies concerning the different categories of emojis, and their usage, is needed to establish how the different emojis are used. As shown in the results of this study, the users seem to prefer "face emojis", and as such, studies investigating the different categories to see if there are noticeable differences between how the different categories are used and interpreted are needed to uncover their purpose in language production.

Additionally, how different age groups use and interpret emojis would also need to be researched, since the results suggest that the usage can reveal the age group of the writer, thus preconceived ideas about how age groups use emojis exist. A comparative study looking at emoji usage and interpretation among teenagers and adults would be of interest to dig deeper into this part of emoji usage.

Furthermore, cross-linguistic studies that look at how emojis are used in different language communities would provide great information about how graphic images, that look the same in all language communities, are influenced by the language and culture.

Finally, more studies concerning cross-platform emoji usage, and issues related to this is needed in order to see how different renderings of emojis can lead to misinterpretations. In a similar manner, experiments where certain aspects of the images are changed, say for example the eyebrows of one emoji are put on another face emoji, could be an interesting investigation into how language users interpret the images in communication.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

Öppningsfråga

Hej och välkomna till den här fokusgruppen! Jätteroligt att ni vill vara med! Som ni vet kommer samtalet att handla om emojis. Ni kommer att få diskutera fritt runt ämnet och jag kommer så gott det går att hålla mig utanför diskussionerna. Utgångspunkten är att ni ska diskutera hur ni använder emojis, vad de betyder för er och hur viktiga ni anser att de är. Ni får jättegärna börja med att berätta hur ni använder emojis.

- Del av textproduktion?
 - Hur viktigt är det med emojisar i meddelanden?
- Funktion
 - Vad har de för funktion?
 - Varför använder ni emojisar?
 - När använder ni emojisar?
 - Hur påverkar emojisar kommunikationsklimatet?
- Stimulusmaterial
 - Text med emojis
 - Diskutera/jämföra
 - Riktiga exempel
 - Egenkonstruerade exempel
- Användning och tolkning
 - Använder vuxna och tonåringar emojis på samma sätt?
 - Finns det ett rätt sätt att använda emojis?
 - Kan en emoji tolkas på olika sätt?
 - Tolkas ett meddelande på olika sätt beroende på om det innehåller emoji eller inte?

Jag kommer nu att visa er några exempel där emojis används i meddelanden mellan olika personer. Jag vill att ni ska diskutera hur ni förstår dessa emojis, om ni skulle kunna använda dem på samma sätt och varför en specifik emoji används.

Kort beskrivning av exempel:

1. "neutral", två på rad, både i texten och i slutet. Tre hjärtan på rad. – används de på ett bra sätt?
2. Många emojis, många hjärtan, mitt i, på slutet. Överallt – vad har de för funktion?
3. En emoji per meddelande. Konstigt leende och cool – är det ett bra sätt att använda det på?
4. Flexande arm, ingen annan kontext
 - a. I kontext med tidigare meddelande
5. Färgkoordinerat – vem skulle använda så? Varför är det så?
6. Inga emojis – hur påverkar det konversationen? Varför drar ni de slutsatserna?
7. Ena använder endast en, den andra använder många emojis – varför? Hur gamla är de som skriver?
8. Sprutan? Hur förstår ni den? Vad gör grisen där? – den andra använder bara en, varför? Skulle ni kunna skriva såhär? Till vem?
9. Räkorna, utan emoji
 - a. Förändras hur ni tolkar denna? Vad säger emoji?
 - b. Tolkar ni det på samma sätt när ni har svaret? Hur är placeringen på emoji?
Punkt efter emoji.
10. En lång rad med emojis – pinsamt?
11. Olika, hjärtan och glada gubbar. – använder ni det såhär? Vem är det som skriver? Vad säger de olika emojisarna? Två meddelande saknar emoji, är de annorlunda?
12. Kort konvo, endast en emoji som svar. Vad betyder den? Skulle ni skriva så?
13. Nästan varje mening har en emoji. – hur är användningen? Skulle ni skriva så?
14. Ena använder en åt gången, svaret innehåller minst tre på rad. – vad betyder det när man använder flera?
15. Partytenta – används de på ett bra sätt här?
16. Två emojis i början – vilka skriver? Skulle ni använda det på samma sätt?
17. Vad betyder emoji? Skulle ni använda den så?
 - a. Vad betyder den nu? Påverkas den av vad den är svar till?
18. Inga emojis – skulle ni skriva såhär? Vad betyder emoji? Används den på ett bra sätt?
19. Bara emojis – skulle ni kunna skriva såhär? Vad betyder det?
 - a. Vad betyder det nu? Skulle ni kunna skriva såhär?

20. Inga emojis – skulle ni kunna skriva såhär? Vem är det som skriver?

21. Många emojis – använder ni emojis såhär? Varför är det så många?

Appendix B

Consent Form

Samtycke till deltagande i studie kring användandet av emojis

- 1. Bakgrund och syfte** Syftet med den här studien är att undersöka och jämföra hur universitetsstudenter använder och förstår emojis i skriftlig kommunikation.

- 2. Hur går studien till?** Studien består av en fokusgrupp där deltagarna får diskutera sin egen användning och tolkning av emojis. Samtalen spelas in och kommer sedan att till viss del transkriberas för att ge en bild av hur användandet och tolkningen ser ut. Det kommer även finnas möjlighet att bidra med ytterligare information i form av egna meddelanden.

- 3. Hantering av inspelning och data** Delar av inspelningarna kommer att transkriberas, alltså att skrivas ned. Insamlade data kommer att anonymiseras, likaså kommer transkriptionerna att vara anonymiserade. Handledare och examinator kommer kunna få tillgång till inspelningen och eventuella rådata.

- 4. Frivillighet** Deltagande i studien är helt frivilligt, och det är när som helst möjligt att avbryta sitt deltagande. Du kan när som helst kontakta mig för att dra tillbaka din medverkan.

- 5. Ansvariga** **Kajsa Gullberg**
tfnr: 0701433837
Mail: ka0806gu-s@student.lu.se
Handledare: Victoria Johansson
Mail: victoria.johansson@ling.lu.se

Informerat samtycke

- Jag bekräftar att jag har tagit del av information kring studien.
- Jag ger mitt samtycke till deltagande i studien.
- Jag är medveten om att deltagandet i studien är helt frivilligt och att jag kan välja att avbryta mitt deltagande när som helst under studien.
- Jag tillåter att insamlad information hanteras så som specificerat i den skriftliga informationen.
- Jag ger mitt godkännande till inspelning av gruppsamtalet jag deltar i.

Datum/ort

Namn-teckning

Namn-förtydligande

Appendix C
Stimulus material

1

fredag 19:41

Hejje! Förlåt att jag inte svarat på snap om vi är i lkpg nu i helgen, svaret är nästa helg. Nu är det tentahelg...😓😓 Vi funderar på om ni är hemma nästa helg och om ni isf har en soffa till låns lördag natt?😓

Det är lugnt, jag är däckad av tidernas värsta förkyldning! Det är så illa att jag tom tröttnat på [REDACTED]!! Självklart har vi vår soffa till låns ❤️❤️❤️

3

Känns i benen redan nu...ser inte fram emot imorgon 😓

8 OKT. KL. 07:49

Haha de är bra ju! Blire resultat av de 😎

2

mån 4 apr. 17:21

Hej min fina! Ska du på zumba ikväll??😓 Jag kan hämta upp dig!😓

Givetvis får du åka med hem också😓😓😓

Nä jag ska på kpu utbildning. Tack ändå o dansa lugnt!!😓

Men dåå😓 Hade hoppats att du skulle komma😓 Ja jag ska försöka dansa lugnt😓 Var rädd om dig. Hörs snart❤️😓

❤️❤️❤️

4

Hahah, det låter bra! Vi får prata med [REDACTED]! Är så sugen på ett riktigt party💪

4b

Jaha! Ja jag skriver
högskoleprovet på dagen så jag
kan behöva supa bort några
sorger 😊

Hahah, det låter bra! Vi får prata
med [REDACTED]! Är så sugen på ett
riktigt party 🍷

6

Ok ska jag ta med något?

8 OKT. 15:09

Nä bara sprit!!!

Trevligt! Hur dags!

Kom vid 18-tiden

Om du har lust kan du ju komm och äta med oss
ikväll så kan vi läsa Tokyo guiden

8 OKT. 13:13

5

MEN GUD VAD MYSIGT!! DET
BLIR JÄTTEKUL FÖR ER OCH
FIRA DIN FÖDELSEDAG [REDACTED]!
😍 MYS ORDENTLIGT 💙👉
JA GÖR DET SNÄLLA 💙👉

ÄLSKAR STORA VERSALER 😄
JAG OCH [REDACTED] TVÄTTAR
BILEN 🙌😄

JAG VET ATT DU GÖR DET 😄
GÅR DET BRA? BLIR DEN REN?
HÄLSA [REDACTED] 💙👉

DET GÅR JÄTTEBRA 😄 [REDACTED]
ÄR LITE RÄDD, HAN ÄR
DUKTIG! HAN HÄLSAR
TILLBAKA 😄💚👉
PUSS VI HÖRS.

DET GÅR BRA [REDACTED]! 💙👉
FINT MED EN REN BIL 🚗
PUSS VI HÖRS!

7

Hej! Har nu varit med [REDACTED]
och [REDACTED] till Blanktjärn, vilken
fin vandring 😊. Lite blåst och
snö, bli nog en tidig kväll idag.
Kram [REDACTED]

Hej! Åh! 😍 visst är det fint? 😊
vad härligt med en dag i
naturen, jag har precis skrivit
en 6h tenta 😄 hoppas det gick
vägen. Hälsa alla i [REDACTED] ❤️

Levererat

8

Frågan är om vi skall sova över på the sheep island or IF we Both are going to sleep here för vi kommer ju inte sova bra inatt i tält och vi kommer bli ofrivilligt svettiga 🤢 +myggor! Och då är vi ej utvilade till måndag 🏕️🔪 har lite myggångest och sätta upp tält ångest 😬😄 hehe va tycker duuu?

lör 23 juli 12:35

Nu tycker jag vi tältar, vi får sova bra söndag-måndag 😊

Jajajja 🏕️🔪

9

Hej! Råkor och kräftor står i kylan. Nyckeln ligger ute, under tunnan för askan.

9b

Hej! Råkor och kräftor står i kylan. Nyckeln ligger ute, under tunnan för askan. 😊

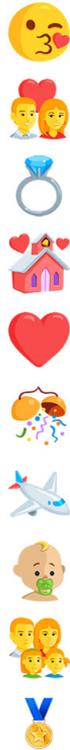
9c

Hej! Råkor och kräftor står i kylan. Nyckeln ligger ute, under tunnan för askan. 😊

Perfekt! Tack 😊. Hur mycket kostade det?

519 kvittot ligger i påsen. Inga problem 😊

10



12

Cyklar nu 🤔

fredag 11:22



11

Tittar du på 4an? 😘

Japp men jag började kolla nu 😊

Aha. Blir nog bra. 👍❤️

Ok 😊👍

Gillar Tommy

Dags att byta däck. Kommer halka nu.

Ajdå, får fixa det 😊

Mm jag får väl åka buss 😞

Men sluta 😂 du kan få låna din gamla pärla om du är snäll

13

Åh jaaa! Ben&Jerrys är sååå gott! Såg du att de har extrapris på Coop?

Yes! 😊 NEJ!? 😞 Jag såg att de hade på ICA, så köpte där. 40 kr kostade den. Vad gick den för på Coop? 😞 Säkert värsta förlustaffären nu då 🙄

Haha nej då, de tar 39,95 säkert 😊😂

Hahaha tack 😂😂

14

Mitt knä har svullnat upp sen dagens träning så kan inte hänga med ut... 😞 men hoppas ni får en härlig kväll hälsa de andra mega kram ❤️

22:44

Åååhhhh nej!!!! 😞😞😞 Va tråkigt att höra!!! Hoppas det lägger sig snart....Pussåkram, tänker på dig!! 😘😘❤️❤️

22:49

16

Säg till om jag ska komma förbi med ngt 😊

Exakt allt som inte behövde tillagad

👉👉👉 Kyllåpsrensning!

Men tack för omtanken

Tack men det är lugnt, åt en intressant kombo med jordnötter, rökt lax o några skivor kalkon

Behöver du ngt? Godis?

15

O hjärnan 😊

God morgon! Nä det är nog allt. Ett gott humör! 😊

Levererat

Vad mer? 😊

Go morron! Att få med sig idag: miniräknare penna sudd leg nått att äta 🍷

i förrgår 06:59

17

Å tenta på fredag 😊

20

jag råkade dela den på
min tidslinje, så jag tog
bort den direkt

rip

Rekt

men 6 år idag

det är dags att skaffa
barn snart

Galet

Ja

Ska vi ha gravidbilder?

21

Kanon! 🥰🥰👍👍🥰🥰

11:30

Hörde ditt meddelande nyss!
Vad bra att man iaf kan se
filmerna - det är ju ändå det
viktigaste! Håller tummarna för
att det funkar bättre i England!

🥰🥰💕💕

19:05

Jepp, det är nog min dvd som
är lite gammal å sliten 🥰
🥰 men det funkar iaf 👍👍
Tiptopp tusen tack! 💕💕🥰
🥰

19:09

My pleasure!! 🥰🥰💕💕

19:16