



# CHANGING PARADIGM OF COMMUNICATION: USE OF EMOJIS AS A NEW LANGUAGE OF COMMUNICATION, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COLLEGE STUDENTS

**DR. PAYAL SEN CHOUDHURY**

Assistant Professor, Journalism & Mass Communication  
Dum Dum Motijheel College, West Bengal State University, Kolkata, India

**Abstract:** Emojis are small digital images or icons that are used to express an idea or emotion in electronic communication. They are a fascinating and powerful form of communication as they offer new insights and opportunities for understanding and enhancing the language and interaction in the digital age. In today's fast paced world emojis have gained quick popularity because of its ability to save time for typing and also for being an excellent medium in expressing one's emotions. Not only a quick messaging option, emojis are also often seen as a fun and expressive way of communicating, so much so that they are now-a-days often considered as a language with its own identity. But can emojis actually be considered as an evolving language as they are just visual symbols that are used to enhance text-based communication, especially in computer-mediated contexts. However, they have an undeniable, significant role in enhancing and enriching written communication and are not just simple and playful icons. They are complex and powerful symbols and can affect and reflect various aspects of human communication and behavior. Thus, Emojis have become a popular and pervasive phenomenon in the digital world, attracting the attention of researchers from various disciplines. The paper, 'Changing Paradigm of Communication: Use of Emojis as a New Language of Communication, with Special Reference to College Students' tried to study and find answer whether emojis can truly be considered as the evolving language in digital media and how much threat is there to written words when the use of digital symbols and signs becomes a habit. The paper focuses on a specific group, i.e., college students. This is because they form a large section of new media users and being the future of the country their usage habits and preferences to a large extent decide the future of emojis. Through extensive research spread across the length and breadth of India, effort has been made to draw an accurate conclusion.

**Index Terms -** Emoji, Communication, Language, Digital Image, Icon.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Emoji are small digital images or icons that are used to express an idea or emotion in electronic communication. They originated in Japan in 1999 and have since become a global phenomenon, with billions of emoji being used every day on various platforms and devices. Emoji are often seen as a fun and expressive way of communicating, but can they also be considered a language?

To answer this question, we need to define what a language is. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a language is "a system of communication used by a particular community or country". A language typically has a set of symbols (such as letters, words, or signs) that convey meaning, and a set of rules (such as grammar, syntax, or morphology) that govern how these symbols are combined and used. A language also has a social and cultural function, as it reflects the identity, values, and norms of its speakers.

Using this definition, emoji do not qualify as a language, but rather as a component of written language. Emoji are not a standalone system of communication, but rather a supplement to existing languages, such as English, German, French, etc. Emoji do not have their own symbols, but rather borrow from existing ones, such as pictograms, emoticons, or characters from various scripts. Emoji do not have their own rules, but rather follow the rules of the languages they are used with, such as punctuation,

word order, or sentence structure. Emoji do not have their own social and cultural function, but rather reflect the social and cultural context of the languages and platforms they are used on, such as tone, mood, or style.

However, this does not mean that emoji are meaningless or irrelevant. Emoji have a significant role in enhancing and enriching written communication, especially in the digital world. Emoji can convey information that is otherwise difficult or impossible to express in words, such as emotions, gestures, actions, or objects. Emoji can also add nuance, humor, irony, or emphasis to written messages, making them more engaging and effective. Emoji can also create a sense of connection, intimacy, and identity among users, especially in online communities or groups.

Therefore, emoji can be seen as a universal component of written language, but not as a universal language. Emoji can be used across languages and cultures, but their meaning and usage are not universal. Emoji can have different interpretations and connotations depending on the context, the platform, the sender, and the receiver. Emoji can also cause misunderstandings and confusion if they are used incorrectly or ambiguously. Emoji users need to be aware of these factors and use emoji appropriately and responsibly.

In conclusion, emoji are a fascinating and powerful form of communication, but they are not a language in themselves. Emoji are a part of written language, and they enhance and enrich it, but they do not replace or substitute it. Emoji users need to be mindful of the advantages and limitations of emoji, and use them wisely and creatively.

## II. HISTORY OF EMOJIS

Emojis are digital icons that express an idea or emotion in electronic communication. They are widely used on social media, texting, e-mail, and other platforms. Emojis can represent objects, animals, people, gestures, emotions, and more.

The word emoji comes from two Japanese words: e, meaning 'picture', and moji, meaning 'character'. Emojis were first created in 1999 by Shigetaka Kurita, a designer for DOCOMO, a Japanese mobile phone company. Kurita wanted to design a simple and attractive way to convey information on the small screens of mobile phones. He drew a set of 176 images, each 12/12 pixels, that could be selected from a keyboard-like grid and sent as individual characters. Kurita's emojis included symbols for weather, traffic, technology, and the phases of the moon, as well as some faces and emotions<sup>1</sup>.

Emojis became popular in Japan, but they were not compatible with other mobile phone systems or platforms. In 2007, Google engineers petitioned the Unicode Consortium, the organization that standardizes characters across languages, to adopt emojis as part of the Unicode standard. In 2010, Unicode approved 722 emojis, based on the original set by Kurita and some additions by other companies. This allowed emojis to be used across different devices and applications<sup>2</sup>.

Since then, emojis have expanded and diversified, with thousands of new characters added every year. Emojis now reflect the diversity of human culture, identity, and expression, with different skin tones, genders, hairstyles, and orientations. Emojis also have a social and cultural impact, as they influence the way people communicate, express themselves, and connect with others. Emojis have become a part of popular culture, art, literature, and even politics<sup>3</sup>.

Emojis are not a language by themselves, but they are a universal component of written language. They enhance and enrich written communication, but they also have limitations and challenges. Emojis can have different meanings and interpretations depending on the context, the platform, the sender, and the receiver.

## III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Emojis are visual symbols that are used to enhance text-based communication, especially in computer-mediated contexts. Emojis can convey emotions, attitudes, moods, and other non-verbal cues that are often missing or ambiguous in plain text. Emojis can also enrich the language and creativity of users, as well as facilitate social interaction and relationship building. Emojis have become a popular and pervasive phenomenon in the digital world, attracting the attention of researchers from various disciplines.

The literature on emojis can be broadly categorized into four main themes: the development and usage of emojis, the emotional and linguistic features of emojis, the functions and effects of emojis in communication, and the applications and implications of emojis in different domains. The following is a brief overview of each theme, based on some of the relevant studies in the field.

- **The development and usage of emojis:** This theme covers the historical and cultural aspects of emojis, as well as the patterns and preferences of emoji users. For example, Bai et al<sup>1</sup> provide a systematic review of emoji research, tracing the origin and evolution of emojis, and summarizing the current trends and future directions of emoji studies. Kabir & Marlow<sup>2</sup> examine the frequency and perception of emojis among college students, finding that emojis are used more often by females, younger students, and extroverts, and that emojis are perceived as helpful, expressive, and fun.
- **The emotional and linguistic features of emojis:** This theme focuses on the semantic and pragmatic aspects of emojis, as well as the emotional and cognitive processes involved in emoji production and comprehension. For example, Riordan<sup>3</sup> reviews the empirical studies on emoji use in computer-mediated communication, highlighting the role of emojis in conveying and interpreting affective and social information. Hakami<sup>4</sup> explores the sentiment lexicon of emojis, proposing a framework for emoji sentiment analysis based on the polarity, intensity, and subjectivity of emojis.
- **The functions and effects of emojis in communication:** This theme investigates the communicative and interpersonal outcomes of emoji use, such as the enhancement of message clarity, the expression of personality, the formation of social bonds, and the influence of persuasion. For example, Chen<sup>5</sup> analyzes the use of emojis in Twitter, finding that emojis can serve various functions, such as emphasizing, complementing, substituting, or contradicting the textual content. Derks et al<sup>6</sup> examine the effects of emojis on social presence, liking, and trust, finding that emojis can increase the perceived warmth and intimacy of online interactions.
- **The applications and implications of emojis in different domains:** This theme explores the potential and challenges of emojis in various fields and contexts, such as marketing, education, health, law, and politics. For example, Dresner and Herring discuss the legal implications of emojis, arguing that emojis can create ambiguity and misunderstanding in legal communication, and that emojis should be treated as evidence and interpreted in context. Barbieri et al. propose a method for emoji prediction, using deep learning techniques to generate relevant emojis for a given text.

The literature on emojis shows that emojis are not just simple and playful icons, but complex and powerful symbols that can affect and reflect various aspects of human communication and behavior. Emojis are a fascinating and fruitful topic for research, as they offer new insights and opportunities for understanding and enhancing the language and interaction of the digital age.

#### IV. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- **Objective 1:** To understand the importance of emojis as a form of communication among college students.
- **Objective 2:** To measure the popularity of emojis among college students.
- **Objective 3:** To analyse the future of emojis as a form of communication.

#### V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Google forms were used for sample data collection. Questions on Google form for this survey were distributed among college students throughout India and collected. Google form was then linked to Google sheet to store responses received from responders. The responses received from Google sheet was analyzed. This survey helped us to collect information about usage of emojis from students of colleges throughout India and information was collected on different parameters. The responders were provided with multiple options and the responder selected option based on their experiences. These responses were analysed for better understanding of the research objectives.

#### VI. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

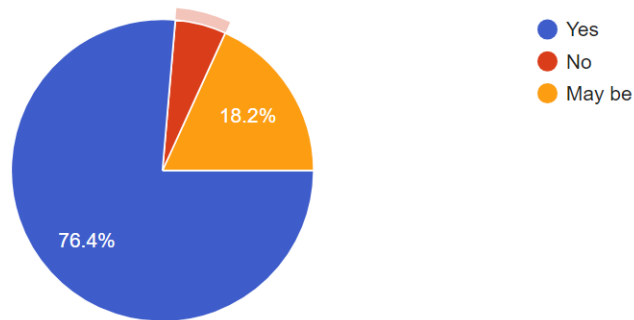
**Objective-1: To understand the importance of emojis as a form of communication among college students.**

Majority of the respondents (76.7%) believe that emojis helps them in communicating their messages effectively and 77.9% of respondents prefer using emojis in their messages. However irrespective of their belief majority of the respondents do not use emojis often (57.7%) and 37.2% of respondents know the meaning of each emojis while only 45.1% are not sure whether they know the correct meaning.

From the below figure it can be analysed that emojis are an important part in the communication process among college students as they not only believe it helps them to communicate better but that they do use it sometimes with a small majority. Also most of them are aware of the meaning of each emojis with only a minority saying that they do not know.

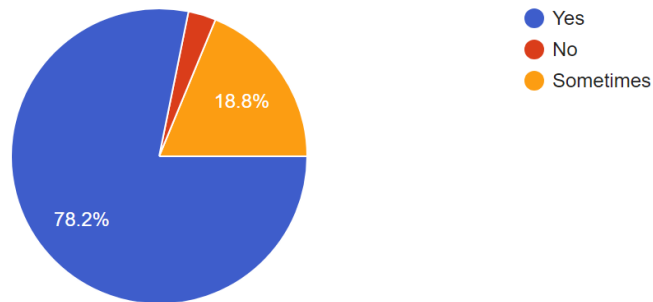
**1. Does emojis help in communicating your messages more effectively?**

165 responses



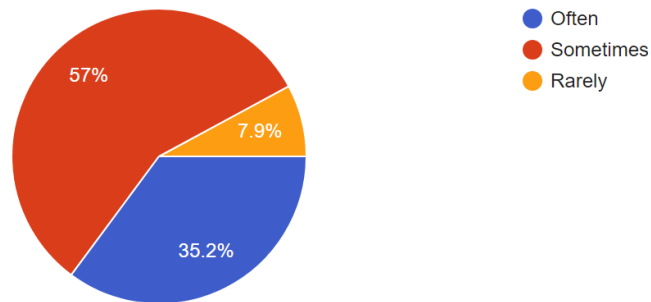
**2. Do you use emojis in your messages?**

165 responses



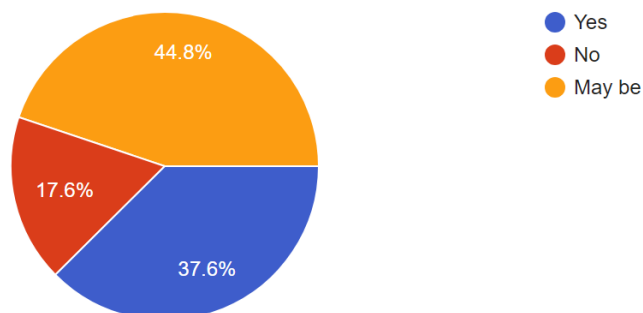
**3. How often do you use emojis to express yourself?**

165 responses



**4. Do you know the meaning of each emoji?**

165 responses



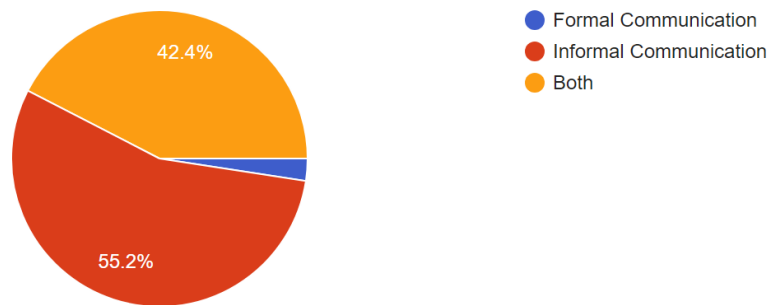
**Objective 2: To measure the popularity of emojis among college students.**

Emojis are fast growing in popularity because a whopping 61% of respondents believe that emojis help them save their time from writing a message. Also, most respondents have admitted that emojis help them to reduce misunderstanding in communication (47.6%), express their emotions properly (58.5%) with a definite yes being close second every time.

From the below responses, it can be very well understood that though most respondents responsibly use emojis for informal communication only but a close second use it for both formal and informal communication and that most of the respondents believe that emojis sometimes help them to communicate and express better, however a close second believes emojis always help them.

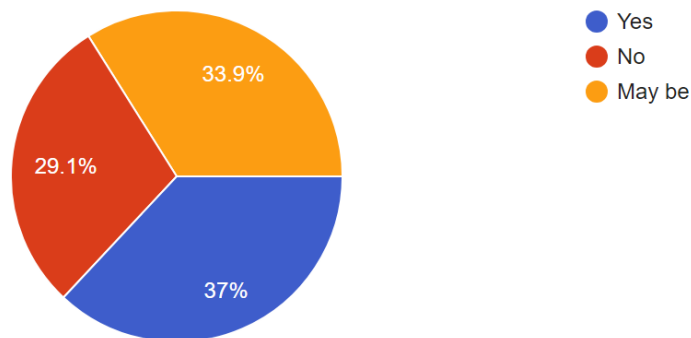
**5. When do you use emojis?**

165 responses



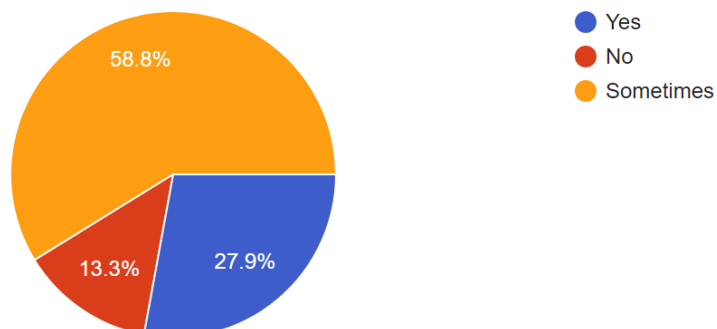
**6. Are emojis replacing communication through written words?**

165 responses



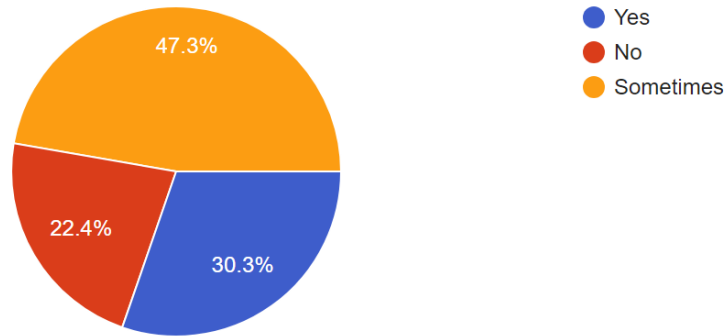
**7. Are emojis able to express emotion properly?**

165 responses



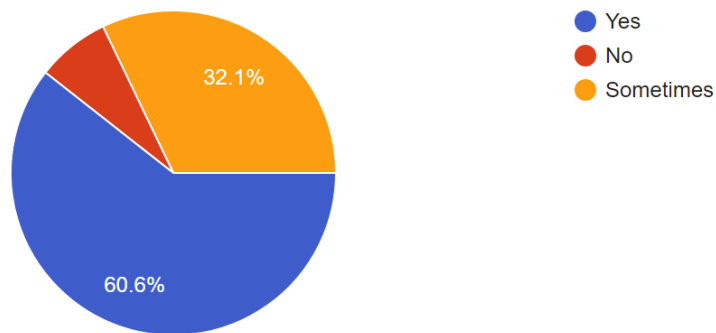
### 8. Does emojis help to reduce misunderstanding in communication?

165 responses



### 9. Does emojis help to reduce the time used for typing?

165 responses



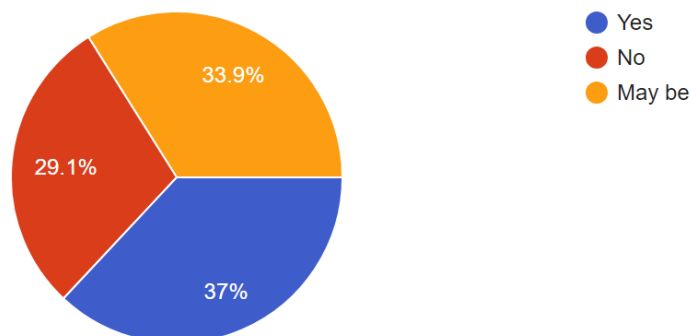
#### *Objective 3: To analyse the future of emojis as a form of communication*

Most of the respondents still believe that written words are still the best way to communicate (76.4%). A majority (60.6%) believe it saves the time for typing and a majority believe that emojis are replacing written words (37%).

The below findings gives an overview that though young respondents know that written words are the best way to communicate, but they also believe that emojis are replacing written words and to save time, they hence prefer to use emojis to typing.

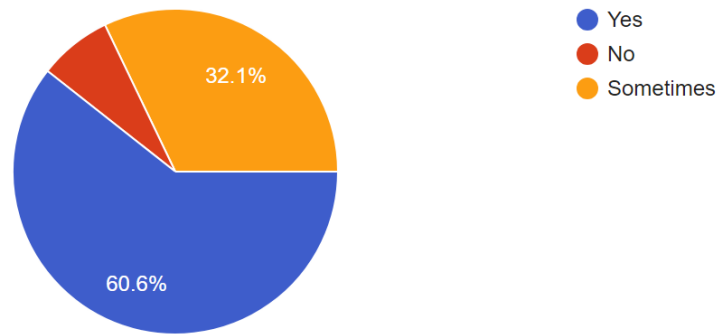
### 6. Are emojis replacing communication through written words?

165 responses



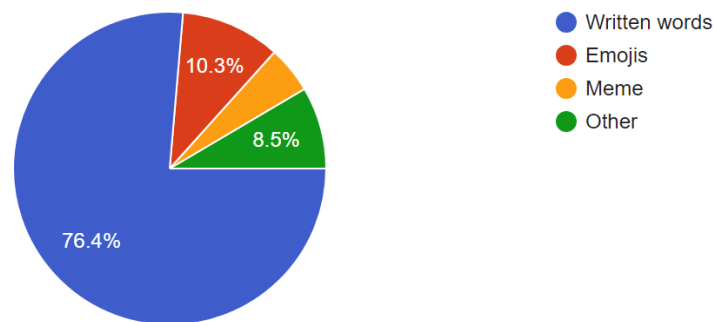
### 9. Does emojis help to reduce the time used for typing?

165 responses



### 10. Which of the following do you find the best means of communication?

165 responses



## VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the extensive research done among the different college students spread across different states of India, it can be concluded that emojis are fast growing in popularity and becoming a prevalent means of communication among youth. Most respondents are responsible enough to not use emojis always, specifically in formal communication, but however their often use of emojis and using it in both formal and informal communication comes a close second. Many believe that emojis help them to better express themselves and remove misunderstanding, but not always. Sadly it will not be wrong to say that written form of communication is at stake in competition to emojis. Theoretically respondents believe that written words are still the best means of communication, but there is lack of practical implementation. They prefer using emojis to save time and according to their usage habit, majority believe emojis are replacing written words. They prefer to use emojis in their messages as they find it more helpful in communicating their messages effectively and most of them prefer to use emojis in their messages.

As emojis are growing in popularity because of its ability to send responses faster in today's fast paced world, there is a huge scope in further extensive research in this topic. The study can be made more target oriented by analysing the preferences according to gender or state for better understanding of the growing popularity of emojis among the younger generation and the reason behind it.



### VIII. CITATIONS

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2. *The Emergence of Emoji as a Universal Language - Summa Linguae*
3. *Emojis As A Universal Language - Milestone Localization*
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