

Exploring Gender Differences in Emoji-Text Relations: A Study on the Role of Gender in Emoji Communication

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Abstract:

This study delves into the selection and functionality of emojis in the context of emoji-text scenarios, with a focus on gender differences. In today's era, emojis are increasingly being utilized on online platforms to fulfill people's daily expressive needs. The article employs a survey method, using random sampling to gather responses from 30 participants (15 males and 15 females) on this topic. The survey categorizes emojis into seven types for discussion. The results indicate that gender influences the choice of emoji-text and suggest that there may be certain intersections in the interpretation of emojis across genders. This research sheds light on how the use of emojis is not only a reflection of individual expression but also a nuanced aspect of communication that is influenced by one's gender, highlighting the complexity of digital communication and the role of emojis in conveying meaning.

Keywords: cross-culture linguistics, emoji-text relations, gender differences, digital communication, survey method

1. Introduction

In the thriving landscape of contemporary digital communication, the integration of emojis with text, or emoji-text, has become a prevalent mode of interaction across various platforms, both online and offline. This fusion of visual symbols with textual content not only enhances the depth of communication but also facilitates a more profound understanding between interlocutors. The widespread use of emoji-text in visual media, including online chat communities and urban linguistic landscapes, underscores its

significance in modern discourse.

Moreover, emoji-text communication resonates with diverse audiences, enhancing engagement and connectivity. Different types of participants, each with their unique language styles and modes of expression, can leverage emojis and symbols to corroborate textual content, making messages easier to understand and convey (ftikhar, & Ahmed, 2024). This approach helps create more inclusive and effective communication strategies and platforms, reducing the rate of misunderstanding.

The academic study of emoji-text relationships, as

highlighted by Siever, Siever, and Stöckl (2020), contributes to a broader understanding of multi-modal communication practices. This research transcends disciplinary boundaries, drawing from linguistics, psychology, communication studies, and gender studies, among others. By encompassing a range of academic perspectives, it emphasizes the interdisciplinary nature of emoji research and its relevance to various fields, offering valuable insights that enrich academic discussions.

Focusing on gender differences in emoji usage, this interdisciplinary research provides nuanced insights into the dynamics of gender communication patterns in the digital realm (Prada et al., 2018). By examining the selection, frequency, and interpretation of emojis among males and females, we can better understand the impact of gender on emoji communication. This understanding enables individuals, organizations, and platform designers to tailor their messages in a way that resonates with diverse audiences, fostering enhanced engagement and connectivity, and leading to effective and profound communication.

2. Literature Review

The field of emoji usage has seen a surge in academic interest, with a focus on how gender differences impact frequency, preferences, and interpretation. Commencing from the frequency. Research indicates that women generally use emojis more frequently and expressively than men, often selecting emojis that convey warmth and positive emotions. This trend is supported by Wirza, Hanifah, & Hanifah (2020), whose study highlights the gendered nature of emoji use. Women's greater emoji use is reflective of broader social and communicative norms that encourage emotional expressiveness in communication.

Emoji preferences also vary significantly across genders. Women tend to favor emojis that express positive emotions, friendliness, and intimate relationships, while men show a preference for emojis associated with neutrality, humor, and virtual characters, as noted by Koch, Romero, & Stachl (2022). This divergence in preference may be attributed to societal expectations and gender roles that influence the way emotions are expressed and perceived.

The interpretation of emojis is another area where gender plays a pivotal role. Women are often more accurate in deciphering the emotions and intentions behind emoji use, as opposed to men who may be more prone to misinterpretation, according to Miller et al. (2017). This accuracy in interpretation could be linked to women's generally heightened emotional intelligence and empathy (Chen et al., 2024). This gendered interpretation can lead to different emotional responses and social attributions, which has implications for interpersonal communication and social

media interactions. Furthermore, the influence of societal norms and gender roles on emoji usage is evident in how individuals select and interpret emojis. This is explored in "A New Gender Deal for Media and Digital Communications: Rethinking Governance and Narratives", which discusses the impact of societal expectations on the gendered use of digital communication tools like emojis (Hohlfeld et al., 2013).

The academic journey into understanding gender differences in emoji usage has been multifaceted, with studies exploring the psychological, social, and cultural factors at play.

A systematic review by Siddiq & Scherer (2019) analyzed the gender differences in ICT literacy, which includes emoji usage, suggesting that such differences may be influenced by educational and cultural factors. Bai, Dan, Mu, & Yang (2019) also provides a thorough overview of the development, usage, function, and application of emojis, emphasizing the need for future research to consider the individual differences in emoji comprehension. Moreover, the research by Chen et al. (2024) and others highlights the need to consider age and cultural factors that may influence how emojis are interpreted and used across different populations.

Overall, the literature on gender differences in emoji usage presents a nuanced picture of digital communication, where women's greater use of emojis reflects their more expressive communication style. As our reliance on digital communication continues to grow, understanding the role of gender in emoji usage becomes increasingly relevant, shaping the way we connect and interact in the digital landscape.

3. Research Gap

The burgeoning field of emoji research has predominantly centered on understanding how gender influences the selection and interpretation of emojis in isolation. This focus has provided valuable insights into the preferences and cognitive processes that underlie emoji usage among different genders. However, a significant gap exists in the literature regarding the role of context, particularly the textual content that accompanies emojis, in shaping emoji usage and perception. The current research has often overlooked the fact that emojis are not used in a vacuum but are embedded within a broader textual and conversational context that can significantly alter their meaning. This context can provide cues that influence how emojis are chosen and understood, yet there is a paucity of studies that explore this dynamic interplay. The influence of gender on emoji choice and interpretation may vary depending on the surrounding text, and this variation has not

been sufficiently examined.

Moreover, the way in which gender interacts with contextual factors to affect the effectiveness of emoji-text communication remains understudied. The implications of these interactions for digital communication strategies and platform design are also not well understood. There is a need to explore how gender, in conjunction with contextual factors, influences the clarity, emotional impact, and overall success of emoji-text communication.

The lack of research on the combined effects of gender and context on emoji-text usage presents a missed opportunity to develop a more nuanced understanding of digital communication. It is crucial to address this gap to inform the design of more effective and inclusive digital communication platforms and to enhance our understanding of the social and psychological processes that underpin emoji-text interactions.

4. Research Questions

This research will not only enrich the academic discourse on digital communication but also have practical implications for enhancing the design of digital platforms and the development of communication strategies that are sensitive to the complexities of emoji-text interactions. Addressing following research questions will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of emoji-text communication, highlighting the importance of considering both gender and context in shaping the use and interpretation

of emojis.

- (1) How does the emoji-text influence the choices made by different genders regarding emoji selection?
- (2) In what ways does the textual context modify the interpretation of emojis by different genders?

5. Methodology

5.1 Quantitative Method

This study apply quantitative approach, which offer many advantages. Designers can obtain different answers from certain groups of people in all kinds pf online or digital platforms, which provide a more comprehensive understanding of gender dynamics in emoji communication. Moreover, this method allows for the collection and analysis of numerical data, providing a systematic and objective examination of gender differences in emoji usage and interpretation.

5.2 Sampling

The research utilizes a survey distributed through platforms like Xiaohongshu and WeChat, ensuring a wide reach and diverse participant base. The random sampling method, which targets an equal number of male and female respondents (15 participants each), guarantees a balanced gender representation, critical for studying gender differences.

Table 1

Gender	Number	Proportion
Male	15	50%
Female	15	50%
Sum	30	100%

5.3 Data Collection & Classification

The survey consists of 15 questions designed to explore emoji usage habits, platform preferences, motivations, and gender-related perceptions and impacts. By collecting participants' views on gender differences in the selection and use of emojis, as well as their awareness of how emojis may reinforce or perpetuate gender stereotypes in communication, we attempt to uncover whether people consider gender factors when using emojis and how gender influences the choice and interpretation of emojis. Additionally, we focus on potential misunderstandings that may arise in cross-gender communication and the importance of individuals considering gender dynamics when using emojis. The classification of emojis into seven categories based on Apple's emoji design serves as a standardized

framework for analysis

5.4 Ethical Considerations

The study adheres to ethical research principles, ensuring that participants are treated with respect and dignity. Informed consent is obtained from all participants, and their privacy is maintained throughout the research process. The ethical conduct of the study enhances its credibility and contributes to the validity of the findings

5.5 Data Analysis

In this questionnaire, there are 10 main questions. The first three questions is about some basic information of participants in emoji-text usage. After that, gender related

questions will followed up.

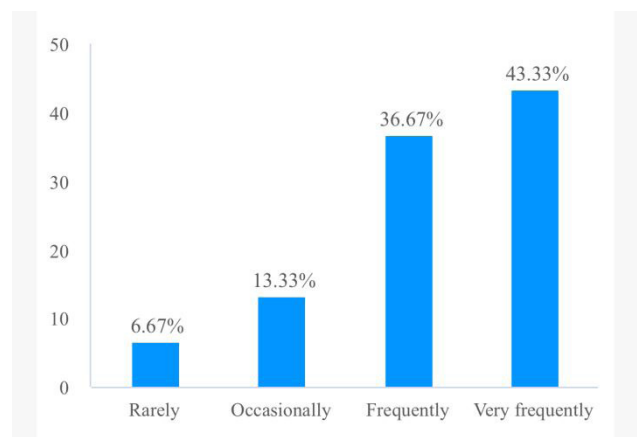
In terms of the first three question, it is clear that male and female share common in it since everyone live in the digital era. As indicated in the Chat 1, the distribution of emoji utilization frequency within textual communication is showed. Notably, the prevalence of emoji usage is substantial, with over one-fourth of the surveyed individuals reporting a high frequency of emoji integration into their textual interactions.

According to Chat 2, the data indicates that most users employ emojis on social media and messaging apps. fewer participants use emojis in emails and online forums. Two participants noted using emojis on Bilibili, YouTube, and QQ. It is said that social media and messaging apps are the primary platforms for emoji usage, likely due to their supportive nature for personal expression and connection-building. The platforms where emojis are most frequently used encourage personal expression and the seeking of attention and engagement. The demographics on these platforms are often acquaintances or individuals with the intention of forming connections, providing an ideal environment for communication.

The preference for using emojis to enhance emotional ex-

pression and add humor or playfulness suggests that emojis serve as a critical tool for enriching the tone and mood of digital communication (chat 3). The lower selection rates for clarification and emphasis, as well as conveying non-verbal cues, indicate that while these functions are recognized, they are not the primary drivers for emoji usage.

Chat1: How frequently do you use emojis in your text-based communication?



Chat 2: On which platforms do you primarily use emojis? (Select all that apply)

Options	Number	Percentage
Social media (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, Twitter)	26	86.67%
Messaging apps (e.g., WhatsApp, Messenger)	22	73.33%
Email	2	6.67%
Online forums or communities	5	16.67%
Other (please specify):	2	6.67%

Chat 3: What is your primary motivation for using emojis? (Select all that apply)

Options	Number	Percentage
To enhance emotional expression	26	86.67%
To add humor or playfulness	25	83.33%
To clarify or emphasize textual content	10	33.33%
To convey nonverbal cues	6	20%
Other (please specify):	2	6.67%

Commencing to the Chat 4, a significant majority, 76.67%, perceive gender differences in the use and selection of emojis, suggesting a widely held belief in the influence of gender on emoji communication. The substantial minority who are uncertain, accounting for 20%, indicate that while there is a prevailing opinion, the matter is not universally agreed upon. A small but definitive 3.33% consider no gender differences exist, highlighting diversity in views.

As for specific emoji use, data from table 5 reveals that nearly half, 46.67%, of respondents believe certain emojis are more frequently used by women, while a smaller 13.33% think men prefer specific emojis. Interestingly, 20% feel gender has no impact on emoji choice, pointing to a sizeable group that views emoji use as gender-neutral. Overall, these insights indicate a general consensus that gender plays a role in emoji selection within textual

communication, with some variation in perceptions of the extent and direction of this influence.

Chat 4: Do you believe that there are gender differences in emoji usage and choice?

Options	Number	Percentage
Yes	23	76.67%
No	1	3.33%
Not sure	6	20%

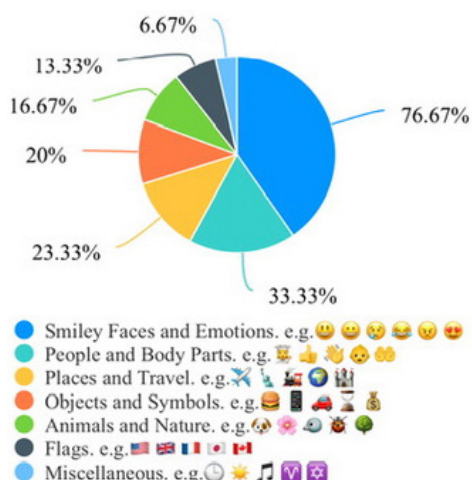
Chat 5: How do you think gender influences the choice of emojis in text-based communication?

Options	Number	Percentage
Certain emojis are more commonly used by men	4	13.33%
Certain emojis are more commonly used by women	14	46.67%
Gender has no influence on emoji choice	6	20%
Not sure	4	13.33%
Other (please specify):	2	6.67%

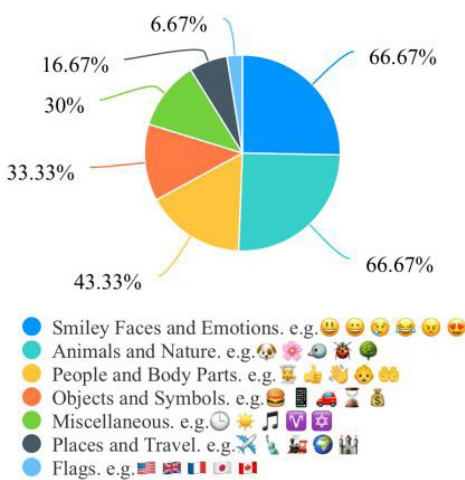
According to Table 6, both males and females highly favor emojis from the Smiley Faces and Emotions category, indicating a universal tendency to use emojis for emotional expression. However, males show a higher preference for Places and Travel, Objects and Symbols, and People and Body Parts, suggesting they might use emojis to convey activities, interests, or objects more frequently. In contrast, females have a more significant inclination towards Animals and Nature and People and Body Parts, which might reflect a stronger connection to natural elements and human expressions. In addition, the lowest usage categories

for males are Flags and Miscellaneous, while for females, it's Places and Travel and Flags. This could imply that males are less likely to use emojis related to national symbols or various other topics, whereas females might be less inclined to use travel-related or miscellaneous emojis. Moreover, the percentage points for the most used categories are higher for males (76.67% for Smiley Faces and Emotions) compared to females (66.67% for the same category), indicating a possible more extensive use of emojis by males overall.

Chat 6: In your experience, which emojis are more commonly used by male/female?



(male)



(female)

According to the data table 7, the majority of individuals adjust their emoji usage based on the gender of their conversation partner. These findings suggest that emoji

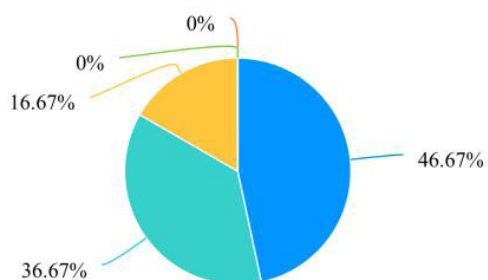
selection is not a neutral act but is influenced by social and contextual cues, such as the perceived preferences and potential reactions of communication partners. The

higher percentage of those adjusting to prevent misunderstandings implies a conscious effort to facilitate clear and effective communication.

Data table 9 shows that out of 30 individuals, 4 (13.33%) have experienced or caused a misunderstanding regarding the intent behind emojis used by people of different genders. Another 16 (53.33%) have never had such an experience, and 10 (33.33%) are unsure if they have. This suggests that some individuals may indeed misunderstand the emojis used by people of different genders, highlighting the need for more cross-gender communication and understanding. Thus, the significant number of individuals considering the other party's usage habits indicates a level of social adaptation in digital communication. Conversely, the minority who disregard gender suggests variability in communicative styles and potentially a greater focus on individual expression rather than social cues. This insight underscores the nuanced ways in which emojis serve as a conduit for social information and relationship management in digital interactions.

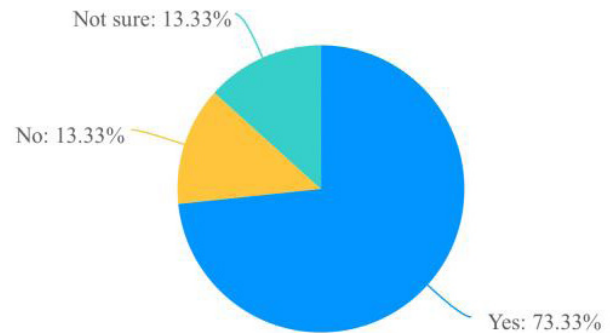
Data table 8 reveals that 73.33% of individuals believe that emojis can reinforce or perpetuate gender stereotypes or expectations, while other believe they do not or uncertain about the answer. The significant belief that emojis can reinforce gender stereotypes indicates a societal awareness of how non-verbal cues can perpetuate social norms. Additionally, the majority's view that considering gender dynamics is important (Chat 10) when using emojis reflects a growing sensitivity to the role of language and symbols in shaping social interactions.

Chat 7: Have you ever modified or adjusted your choice of emojis based on the gender of the person you are communicating with?

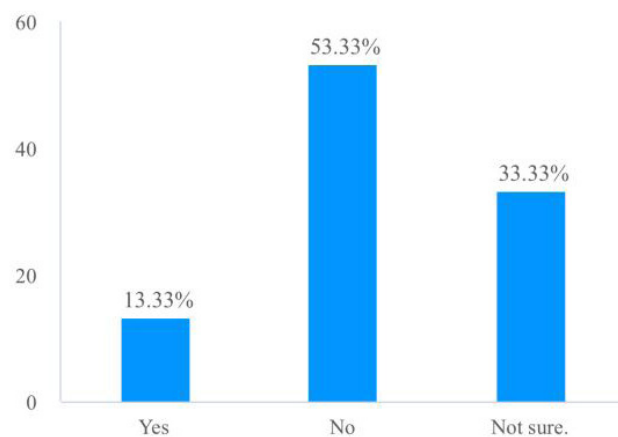


- Yes, to avoid potential misinterpretations.
- Yes, to match their emoji usage.
- No, I use emojis without considering the recipient's gender...
- Yes, other reasons
- Not applicable, as I haven't been in such a situation.

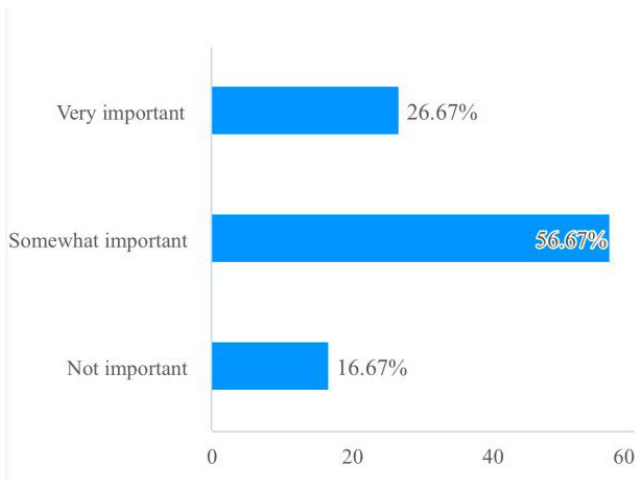
Chat 8: Do you believe that emojis can reinforce or perpetuate gender stereotypes or expectations in communication?



Chat 9: Have you ever misinterpreted or misunderstood the intended meaning of an emoji used by someone of a different gender? If yes, please describe the situation and what led to the misunderstanding.



Chat 10: How important is it for you to consider gender dynamics when using emojis in your communication?



6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study underscores the nuanced role of gender in emoji communication, providing a comprehensive analysis of how gender dynamics can shape the usage and interpretation of emojis in text-based interactions. The data indicates a pronounced influence of gender on emoji selection, with certain emojis being more frequently associated with either men or women, potentially reflecting and perpetuating existing gender stereotypes. The research also brings to light the subtle ways in which gender stereotypes might be reinforced through emoji use. There is a recognized need to understand the diverse interpretations of emojis across genders to preempt miscommunications and ensure effective communication. The tendency of participants to adjust their emoji choices based on the gender of the recipient further emphasizes the intricate interplay of gender dynamics in digital communication.

Moreover, the findings hint at the potential for misinterpretation of emojis across different genders, suggesting that while emojis are a powerful tool for emotional expression, they can also be a source of confusion. This underscores the necessity for a deeper understanding and more empathetic approach to cross-gender communication, particularly in the digital realm. The majority of respondents acknowledged the importance of considering gender dynamics when using emojis, indicating a collective awareness of the social implications of digital communication. This suggests that as we navigate the complex landscape of digital interactions, being mindful of how our choices might be perceived through the lens of gender is increasingly important.

Further research in this area can offer valuable insights into the intricate relationship between gender and emoji communication, leading to more nuanced and inclusive digital interactions. By exploring the nuances of emoji use across different demographic groups, we can foster a more empathetic and effective communication landscape that respects and incorporates the diversity of user experiences and interpretations.

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