



*Gender and cultural differences in the use of facial emoji*  
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#### Abstract:

Emojis are pictographs that are common in computer mediated communication and used in all platforms of the internet. An emoji obtains its meaning through its graphic resemblance to a physical object (smiling face). Emojis are used in a number of ways in daily life outside the computer mediated communication. There are certain events used to indicate the importance of emojis in communications. In 2015, The Oxford English Dictionary selected Face with Tears of Joy emoji as the word of the year.

The current study has adopted Danesý's model in analyzing the meaning of emojis. It is concluded that emojis have less cultural variation than it is assumed to be and that there are less cultural variations.

## 1. Introduction

Emojis are "realistic painting facial expressions that highlights emotions in daily life" Lu (2019: 60). The word emoji is an English adaptation of the Japanese... (絵, 'picture') + moji (文字, 'character') ...which means (picture word). The outbreak of the use of emojis started in 2015 when the English dictionary named 😂 " face with tears of joy " as the word of the year and since then individuals and business organizations have started to use emojis heavily. So, the whole thing started with a smile (Stark and Crowford, 2015).

## 2. Emojis, Culture and Gender

It has been suggested that different renderings of emojis found on different platforms may lead to different understanding of the same emoji. Platform diversity is one of the important factors affecting emoji use. Gender is another factor that may affect the frequency of emoji usage . The cross cultural studies of emojis have agreed that there is variability in the use of emojis .The variability may be according to the frequency of emoji usage , that is in some countries the average number of messages containing emojis is higher than that of others. People from different cultural

background tend to understand emojis differently for example crying face 😞 can mean sadness in one culture and in another might mean sleeping (Wiseman and Gould,2018: p 2) . Translators have to be careful when translating from one language to another .

Men and women are fundamentally different from each other . The belief that males and females have different traits ,abilities and inclinations pervades all age groups and all cultures ( Vial, 2016: p139 ) . Chen et al. (2018 ) in their paper investigated gender specific use of emojis and made several conclusions . In terms of frequency of usage they found that females use emojis more than males . It was also found that messages sent by females contain more emojis than men's messages.

## 3. Emojis as face saving strategy



Brown and Levenson define face as "the public self-image that every member of society wants to claim for himself" ( Saeed, 2016: p 244 ). One's face can be threatened through the production of face threatening acts. Face threatening acts refers to the communication acts that causes a threat to the individual's expectations regarding self-image (Slman and Betti, 2020: p223 ). When you say something that lessens the possible threat to another's face it can be described as face saving act ( Yule, 2020:p156 ) . In face to face interactions there are a number of instruments such as gaze, smiles, laughter and winks . These instruments were not available in CMC (Kraujalis, 2016: p16 ) . Since their emergence, emojis have been used in CMC to mitigate FTA .


#### 4. Methodology



##### 4.1 The adopted model


Danesi (2017) claims that the meaning of emojis and facial emojis in particular is very straightforward because the meaning nuances are derived from the configuration of mouth, eyes and eyebrows. He states that in semiotics there are two main forms of meaning that can be found in all signs namely denotative and connotative. Danesi introduces the term " Thesaurus effect " to refer to the connotative type of meaning and defines it as " *the implied potential set of related cultural and symbolic concepts that are evoked by an emoji as it is used in some specific context* " . Danesi( 2017: 66) suggests that all emojis are " metaphorical blends " and a conceptual process " whereby separate domains of meaning are blended to produce new forms of meaning " .

##### 4.2 Facial emojis and their types

There are a number of facial emojis . They can be classified into positive , neutral and negative facial emojis. Kutsuzawa classifies them into six categories namely strong positive sentiment , moderately positive sentiment, neutral sentiment with positive bias , neutral sentiment with a negative bias, moderately negative sentiment and strong negative sentiment ( Kutsuzawa, 2022 ). The number of facial emojis is unlimited since new emojis are being added and old ones have been deleted as well as the changes on the appearance that have been applied Emojipedia lists about 100 facial emoji , Evans(2017: 86-89) lists about 72 facial emoji.

1. Smiling face   
It is a yellow face that is used to express positive feelings, happiness and affection . According to Dictionary . com this emoji sometimes used to convey mild embarrassment because of its rosy cheeks .

2. Crying face   
It is a yellow face with raised eyebrows . It sheds blue tear from one eye . It has less intensity than loudly crying face (  ) ( Emojipedia ) . It was approved in 2010 and added to emoji in 2015. It can be used to describe one's emotional state . It also can be used to empathize with others (Dictionary .com ) . This emoji is under the Unicode number U+1F622.

3. Face with open mouth   
It is also a yellow face . It has open eyes usually small and the mouth is large and round as if saying *wow* ( Emojipedia ) . It is used to describe someone who is shocked about something . It was approved in 2012 and added to emoji in 2015 under the Unicode number U+1F62E .

#### 4.3 Data Collection

The corpus data is collected from social media namely, Facebook . When collecting the data the writer takes into consideration that it is clear and slang- free.

## 5. Data analysis

### 5.1 Crying face emoji

Comment (1)



Crying face emoji can be used to investigate differences in gender usage . Wright comments on a video published by a therapist treating a child to speak for the first time. She shows respect to the lady who does this work and finishes her comment with frowning face to indicate sadness and emotional engagement. The same post has been examined and it is found that more than 700 crying face emoji is used with 257 female users and 270 male users, the other accounts were unknown so, they are eliminated .

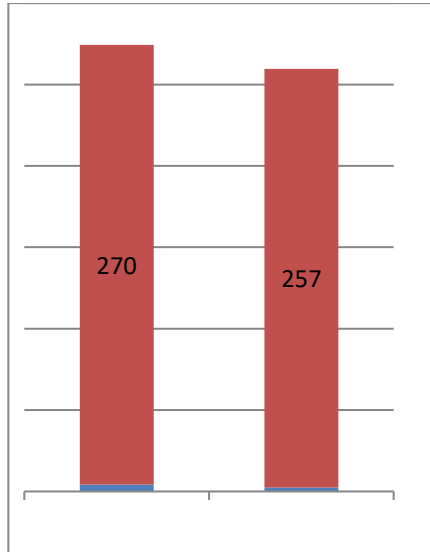


Figure 1 Male and female users

### Comment 2



### 5.2 Face with open mouth emoji

Concerning face with an open mouth emoji some gender differences in the frequency of usage have been noticed. In responding to the post ,made by ABC News about a man who was arrested for killing 24- year old woman, commenters used 34 face with open mouth emoji with 19 female and 15 male users . for another post on the same page people used 401 face with open mouth emoji 225 of them were females and the others 176 males.

### Comment (3)

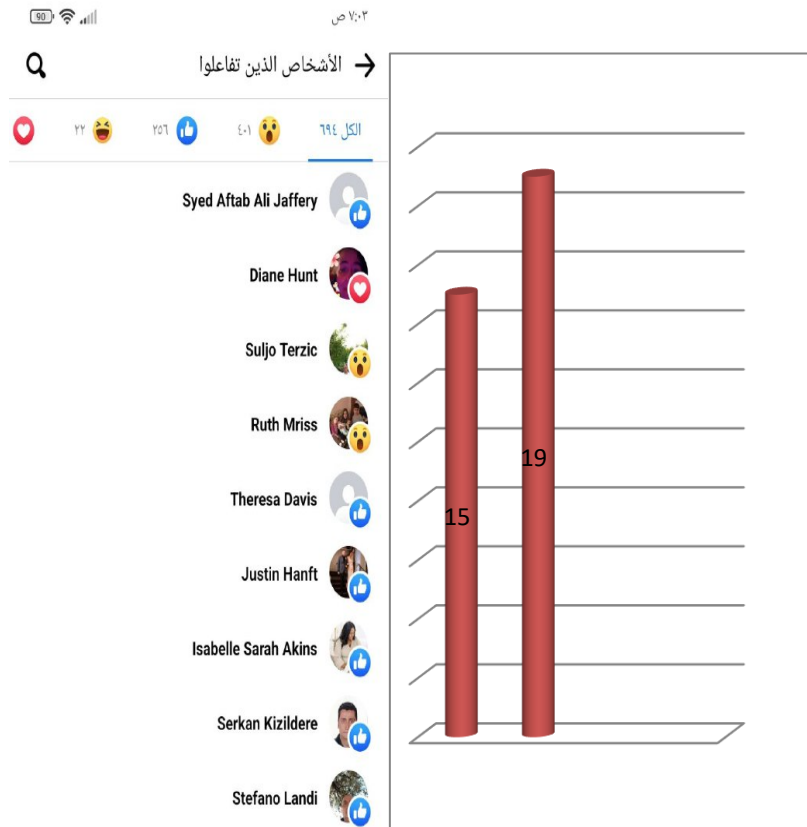


Figure 2 Male and Female users for open mouth emoji

### 5.3 Angry face emoji

emojis which express concepts associated with the findings of Ekman, who claimed that there are six basic emotions which assumed to be universally understood, tend to be more universal than other emojis not used to express these concepts. Angry face emoji and pouting face emoji are typical means to express the concept *anger*. It is found that Arabic users as well as non-Arabic perceive these emojis and use them in situations where angry face is the most typical one to be used. It is clear from the comments published by Layla Mahdi and Rabee Alsaeed that a text with facial emoji is easier for emotional detection than that without facial emoji

Comment (3)



The universality of this emoji reduces gender differences between male and female users. BBC News published a report about the possibility of Russia to take action to protect its national interests . The post had 12 pouting face emoji 6 were female and 6 male commenters .



### Comment (4)



### 6. Discussion of results

1. It is found that Arabic users as well as non-Arabic (comment 4) perceive these emojis and use them in situations where angry face is the most typical one to be used so the cultural differences are not perceived.
2. It is found that the ratio of emoji usage between men and women with few differences which can't be taken as enough evidences to say that male and female users use emojis differently

NO	Comment number	Name of emoji	Total number of usage	Number of male users	Number of female users
1	2	Crying face	700	270	257
2	3	Face with open mouth	34	15	19

## 7. Conclusions

1. Emojis serve as the missing links that are lost when speech is transformed to written communication.
2. They are the flavor of the text or even bring the text into life. The text would be classified as having positive, neutral or negative sentiment due to the presence of certain emoji.
3. Emojis have less cultural variation that it is assumed to be and they also have less gender variation.

## إختلاف الثقافات بين الجنسين في استخدام الرموز التعبيرية للوجه

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الكلمات المفتاحية: رموز تعبيرية ، ثقافات الجنسين

**Emojis** عبارة عن صور توضيحية شائعة في الاتصالات بواسطة الكمبيوتر وتستخدم في جميع منصات الإنترنت. يكتسب الرمز التعبيري معناه من خلال تشابهه الرسومي مع شيء مادي (وجه مبتسم). يتم استخدام الرموز التعبيرية في عدد من الطرق في الحياة اليومية خارج الاتصال بواسطة الكمبيوتر. هناك أحداث معينة تستخدم للإشارة إلى أهمية الرموز التعبيرية في الاتصالات. في عام 2015 ، اختار قاموس أوكسفورد الإنجليزي كلمة **Face with Tears of Joy emoji** باعتبارها كلمة العام.

اعتمدت الدراسة الحالية نموذج **Danesy** في تحليل معنى الرموز التعبيرية. استنتج أن الرموز التعبيرية لها تنوع ثقافي أقل مما يفترض وأن هناك اختلافات ثقافية أقل.

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