

The pragmatic analysis of 🙌, 👍, ✌️ Emojis by ESL learners in Verbal modalities: A case study of Whatsapp chat

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Summary

Social media is in demand now these days; even in learning or teaching as a platform to create social presence for active learning, and usage of Emojis is a creating such a huge gap in the field of research. The study has been documented to investigate the pragmatic approach of Emojis in the Whatsapp group of English as second language learner (ESL) of Pakistan. The study aims to identify the culturally specific context used by Pakistanis speakers which helps to obtain communication through emojis in text-based communication. Discussion has been focused on only most commonly used three emoji as a sub-topic of researcher's thesis. Wow emoji 🙌, okay 👍, and Victory ✌️ has been discussed in the study. Methodology has been constructed on Cultural psychological theory in qualitative method. The population has been taken from the first-year students of Quaid-e-Awam University of Science and Technology, Nawabshah, sample unit is 30 participants. In the research design, screenshots of participant's chat had been taken for contextual analysis. The study supports that expressions are not innate. The study is occupied on the exact usage of Emojis which aids teachers and learners of modern era to use Emojis for their better understanding in social apps

Key words: Emojis, Flipped classroom, English as second language, cultural specificity.

1. Introduction:

Emojis are upgraded version of Emoticons. Emojis, pictograms are the representatives of facial expressions, ideas, feelings and also use instead of punctuation marks, recently the worth of emojis are being worldwide momentum (Nikola Ljubesi c', Darja Fiser, 2016). Language without feeling is not complete because languages are the code of communication. Communication is an approach which connects people their ideas views and information with each other. Xi Zhu (2015) in his thesis asserted that information must have any medium or form of symbol i.e. gestures, postures, words or sounds or expressions to be shared or expressed. According to him, a set of symbols form a communication system and these

symbols can be words, sounds, signs, gestures and postures etc. In the addition, language depends upon non-verbal communication, which could be different in meaning in different region of people. Language learning and teaching have molded their way along with patterns, methods and tools due to the heavy impact of technology on communication such as internet-based collaborative learning or computer mediated communication CMC (Yamada, 2007). Language teachers are suggested to be offered the environment of face-to-face communication with social presence in learning environment. Learners' satisfaction can be increased and promoted by allowing their social presence in learning environment (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997). Wolff, (2016) documented and highlighted the online classroom's learning should include social presence for student's active learning by creating specific social apps such as: whatsapp, Wechat or messenger. Leh, (2001) stated that learners' can be motivated and enhanced their communication skills by having clues like symbols of gestures or smiling for effective learning along with social presence. Gunawardena, (1995) stated that learners or teachers can involve social community in their social settings through text-based communication by making possible efforts. Whereas the social presence is important, on the other hand the absence of social clues can create problematic issues such as body language which are very important to add emotions, otherwise the concept could be multipurpose for example in audio call or text message. Keeping in mind the importance of emotions are important which can be expressed in social presence by adding emoticons or emojis (Levy & Stockwell, 2006). The context of the study is to explore the use of hand emojis as how challenges and issues are being faced in verbal modal due to having lack of literature (Vendergrief, 2018). In the ground of research, Emoji are still less known and less worked in spite of the fact, they are popularly used in all regions of the world. They were invented at western world to full fill the gap of non-verbal communication slot in internet-text communication. Jibral (2013), claimed that the language used in different social-context indicates the reflection of culture on it. Due to changes in Language there is use also change across the world e.g. as above in abstract.

Folded hand emojis (two yellow hands placed or clapped firmly together) are used as apology in Japanese culture, hands for praying in Indian culture, Hi-fi in English culture, and a symbol of courtesy in Sindhi and so on. This study is on the ESL learners of Pakistan. In modern learning, online interaction is a one of new trend in learning and gap in research to fulfil the requirements of social apps used for communication by learners and teachers (Wang, 2018). The study is being focused on hand-emojis and its usage in whatsapp class created by the ESL learners of Quest University to create social presence with their classmates and teacher after their classroom as a learning tool. The usage of emojis is versatile and a big gap in the form of research which every learner and teacher should know to meet the upcoming pedagogies and methods of learning and teaching. This research is on emoji will be providing the specific usage and meaning of gesture-hand emojis by ESL Learners to enhance their learning environment. The study carries different of its kinds and the findings is great addition in the existing bank of knowledge on emojis in the context of Pakistan for the teachers and learners. As emojis are replacing the tag of lingua Franca from English to Emojis (Schneebeli, 2018). Research objectives have been set to obtain the results of required approach.

1.2 Previous Background

The use of emoticon/emoji is flexible not constant. The growth of computer-mediated interaction increases many inventions to form, meaning and assumption. It varies from different living environment of people or particular group (Karianne Skovholt, 2014). In other words, the usage of Emojis is depends upon perception of an individual, usually differentiate from situation to situation. Emoji were invented for Japanese mobile phone by Shingetaka Kurita in 1990s. He further explained the difference between Emoji and Emoticons, Emoticons express emotional states, while Emojis refers to a wider range of concepts or ideas i.e. animals, plants, weather, sports or food etc (Nikola Ljubesi c', Darja Fiser, 2016). Rezabeck & Cochenour (1995) claimed that emoticons are the representatives of the feelings in situation, relationship, age, gender, context, choice of selection and personal individuality. So, this is really important for email writing to represent between the lines. In the conclusion, the emoticons or emoji used to express emotion in computer-mediated communication such as gestures, facial expression, and other non-verbal clues to fulfil the gap of emotion in CMC (Dunlap et al. 2015). Now these days the improvement of technology empowered the teachers and learners collaboration with social presence (Fott, 2011). Online discussions outside the classroom can enhance the motivation of learners in the informal learning environment (Yamada 2007). Levi (2006) raised the issue of lack of gestures and facial expressions created misinterpretations hence nonverbal communications requires for better understanding. Learners

tend to raise social presence in continuous communication by expressing their emotions in ways such as typing emoticons. Based on John Dewey's experiential learning (Dewey, 2009).

Emoji were invented for Japanese mobile phone by Shingetaka Kurita in 1990s. He further explained the difference between Emoji and Emoticons, Emoticons express emotional states, while Emojis refers to a wider range of concepts or ideas i.e. animals, plants, weather, sports or food etc (Nikola Ljubesi c', Darja Fiser, 2016). Amagholbeli (2012), assessed that since the electronic written communication were introduced the emoticon (updated emoji) filled the gap of visual representation and used as pictorial representation of meaning. Harn (2017) recommends that higher education organizations consider using emojis with students in order to reduce social barriers and develop more personal relationships. The concept of flipped class refers to the outside class learning or teaching for the necessity and benefit of learners (Wang, 2018). Doiron (2016) recommends the use of emojis for peer assessment tasks in online collaborative learning such as online chat.

Harn (2017), recommends that higher education organizations consider using emojis in informal communication with students in order to reduce social barriers and develop more personal relationships. ESL learners in learners-centered communication can accomplish their goals more effectively with the help of social presence, (Yamada, 2007). Doiron (2018), find out that lacks of social clues learners tend to raise social presence in continuous communication by expressing their emotions in ways such as typing emoticons. The use of emoticon/emoji is flexible not constant. The growth of computer-mediated interaction increases many inventions to form, meaning and assumption. It varies from different living environment of people or particular group (Karianne Skovholt, 2014). In other words, the usage of emojis is depends upon perception of an individual, usually differentiate from situation to situation. Rezabeck & Cochenour (1995) claimed that emoticons are the representatives of the feelings in situation, relationship, age, gender, context, choice of selection and personal individuality. So, this is really important for email writing to represent between the lines. In the conclusion, the emoticons or emoji used to express emotion in computer-mediated communication such as gestures, facial expression, and other non-verbal clues to fulfil the gap of emotion in CMC (Dunlap et al. 2015). Now these days the improvement of technology empowered the teachers and learners collaboration with social presence (Fott, 2011). Online discussions outside the classroom can enhance the motivation of learners in the informal learning environment (Yamada). Levi (2006) raised the issue of lack of gestures and facial expressions created misinterpretations hence non verbal communications requires for better understanding.

Allan and Barbra (2004), investigated the varieties of non-verbal clues according to different cultures. According to them as verbal language is different from culture to culture as same non-verbal communication are different in specific community. For example: the meaning of any gestures can be represent differently in various culture. Racheal E. Jack (2012) refuted the universality among human expressions by using the computer-graphic platform by combining the Generative Grammar (UG) OF Noam Chomsky, 1965 with the visual perceptions on six universal expression investigated from participated: fifteen Western and fifteen Eastern which resultant the powerful impact of culture on their facial performances in both group. Si'c (2016), documented the global analysis on emoticon/emoji to prove that the usage along with symbolism are different in variety according to the different part of region in world. Adams, (2017) pointed out the use of emoticon is only to express the varieties of thoughts but also highlight the cultural difference within practice by community and the future research can be extended to compare the varieties of cultural and gender differences by using the emojis in non-verbal communication to conduct pragmatics analysis on it. That's why the study is going to cover the gap by exploring the pragmatics analysis on the meaning interpreted from ESL learners by using emojis by applying the cultural psychology to know their exact responses in their verbal modalities.

The backbone of the study is designed according to the framework of Cultural Psychology theory given by Richard Shwedar (1993). According to his point of view, this theory is interrelated with human and mind; to shape the human cognitive process according to particular set of culture (Shwedar,1999). Ratner, (2008) constructed the qualitative framework to investigate the human perception related with the culture. This study is constructed macro level to identify the link between emotions and culture by using hand emoji from Sindhi speakers. However, the same theory will be applied on this study to explore the contextual meaning of hand emoji used by Pakistani speaker by relating their emotions with their particular set of practice in their culture.

Research objectives:

The objectives of the study are:

- To explore the actual meanings of the hand gestures resemblances to the hand-emojis varies in the world.
- To investigate the contextual meaning behind the usage of hand-Emojis used by ESL learners in verbal modalities.

Research Questions:

In the current research following research questions have been formulated in order to achieve the set objectives.

- What are the actual meanings of the hand gestures resemblances to the hand emojis varied in the world?
- What are the contextual meanings behind using hand Emojis used by Pakistani speakers in verbal modalities?

2. Methodology

The present study addresses the research questions in qualitative paradigm of research explains qualitative research as an attempt towards understanding the meanings and concepts people attribute to their work and social construction.

2.1 Research design

The study is qualitative research mainly is reliable over the research data which has been carried out on selected Whatsapp group chat of Pakistani speakers of Quaid-e-Awam University of Science and Technology, Nawabshah in which 30 participants are added in Whatsapp group. Their age limitation will between 18-22. Their usage of emoji had been from 5-8 year. The group was created by the teacher to create social presence with teacher and classmate throughout the semester. The added participants were belonging from the different region of Sindh. The sample has randomly chosen 30 participants which are actively using different emojis online and having a great exposure to these text-based communication. In this paper, only three hand emojis has been focused which are frequently used in the chat. Similarly, the screenshot were interpreted along with the usage, interpretation of text and microanalysis of each emoji. The screenshots have been taken in which hand emojis has been used to convey message in the text as discussed in chapter: 04. In screenshots the participant's names have been hidden and numbers has been given on each participant.

For example: Participant1, participant2, participant3... participant 30.

The observation has been contributed in the research on researcher's part by allowing them to take detailed account of the situations around the theme. The only purpose of this section is to get close idea of the behaviours and situations/contextual variations in which participants' change the use of emojis without knowing their actual background/actual usage.

2.2 Data collection

Data has been collected from the Whatsapp group of 30 members contextual analysis. The back up online of each participant for better analysis. The data has been collected in such way the chat has been selected by taking screenshots in which hand emojis will be found in text, then it had been decided by the researcher according to the situation to analysis the interpretation and use of participants' emoji in

whatsapp chat. Secondly, the researcher observed the use of hand emoji in conversations of participants about their usage of emojis in contexts/situations in a duration until the saturation point of data collection.

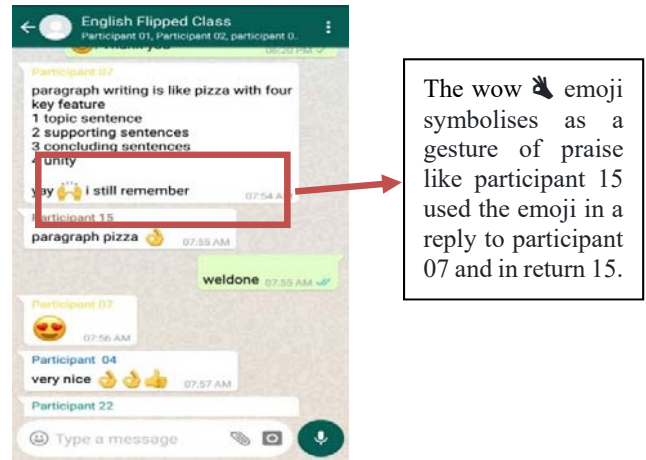
2.3 Data Analysis

The collected research data has been analysed through content analysis which is a type of research data analysis of qualitative research study. The themes has been constructed according the contextual analysis of emoji of whatsapp used by participants. The analysis will be carried the responses of the participants and gets divided by the researcher into themes/categories. Those themes will be generated on the selective hand emoji from participants’ responses After this each research question had been answered with the help of contextual analysis to help generate findings.

3. Discussion

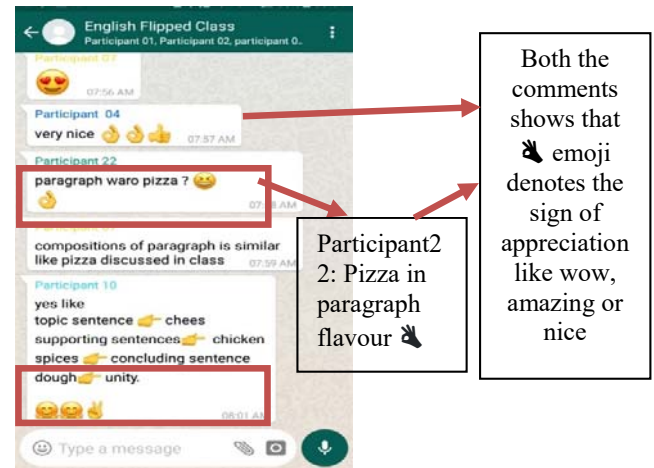
The discussion has been based on qualitative to discuss in detail the perception of Sindhi speakers by using Hand emoji. There is versatility to expression emotions by using emoticons across culture (Kohske Takahashi1, 2017). Novelty has been found in the context of Pakistani speakers while using hand emojis which are associated to their non-verbal communication according to their culture. The discussion has been mentioned below:

3.1 🙌 Wow Emoji: This emoji is known as 🙌 okay sign emoji by closing the forefinger and thumb to form “O” shape. Schneebeli, (2018), discussed that the 🙌 (okay emoji) is most frequent emoji also signs as positive signal according to her research. In some Asian countries this symbol interpreted the meaning of “fine” but somehow it also use as meaningless (Ridwan, 2012). According to Allan and Barbara (2004) this is positive sign in Europe and North America but Mediterranean region, Russia, Brazil, Turkey: An orifice signal; sexual insult. This sign also refers zero signal in Tunisia, France, Belgium. Not only this, but it also shows the sign of having money in Japan as a shape of coins. On the contrast, Roman Lefevre (2011) called okay gesture as near-universal word, hence couldn’t interpret exactly with the one context. Countries like Brazil, Germany, Greece, Italy, Malta, Mexico, Middle East, Paraguay, Russia, Tunisia, Turkey this gesture is not used as sign of appreciation of praise but consider as a rude indication and mostly abusive such as, orifice, (Lefevre, 2011). The study found that the usage of this emoji or gesture is opposite from other countries in context and form the meaning of appreciation such as excellence or great work and mostly denotes Wow expressions. For example, this emoji has been found in many comments as:



The wow 🙌 emoji symbolises as a gesture of praise like participant 15 used the emoji in a reply to participant 07 and in return 15.

Fig 1.1



Both the comments shows that 🙌 emoji denotes the sign of appreciation like wow, amazing or nice

Participant2 2: Pizza in paragraph flavour 🙌

Fig 1.2

Here, in Fig 1.2 the wow emoji integrates positive attribute and used as emoticon as indicator of stance. Schneebeli (2018) discusses that emojis are related with verbal modalities (in the sense of using words) and can be used instead of word. As in this screenshot participant7 had used hyperbole to compare pizza with paragraph as an example. In next message 🙌 emoji is used with the “paragraphs poetry” which indicates that answer is good and here okay emoji is used as the sign of appreciation by the participant15 same as by participants04 along with very nice. Hence, emojis also plays the role parts of speech. Sometimes time emoji also works oppositely as sarcastically or appreciation but with different context as the screenshot attached with the interpretation.

🙌 Okay emoji is also used ironically which experienced as a form of taunting on someone or not doing the task which is supposed to be performed or sometimes denotes the idea

of being meaningless as in example given above. The text has been translated in fig 2.2. The message with 🤔 (wow emoji) is used ironically by participant22 to participant07. Participant07 wanted to use resemblance between pizza and paragraph but participate22 reply with laugh emoji clears the meaning of response isnot positive but to make in it because participant22 was absent in the class and couldn't understand but later participant10 responded to explained. So, in this comment the 🤔 okay emoji is used differently not in the form of appreciation but meaningless. It also proves that sometimes this emoji is also found as the sign of meaningless (Ridwan, 2012). These emojis are helpful for the ESL learners as they used their Sindhi native language in their conversation and Emoji helps them to reduce the words and adds nonverbal signs for the exact context.

3.2 👍 okay Emoji: 👍 Thumbs-up is most common and frequent emoji used on internet-based communication (Li, 2018, Schneebeli, 2018). Lefevre, (2011) discuss that thousands of years according to many sicientist this gesture originated as a sign of approval. On the other hand, Li Li, (2018) mentioned that the idea of thumbs-up interplays its function by its icon, sometimes it uses to change the topic or sometimes ending the conversation so this emoji is also known as interactional emoji “two functions together”. Allan and Barbra (2004) defined the interpretations of thumbs-up that the gesture depends on situation and culture sometimes positive and sometimes negative in context. They further explained that this emoji has been influenced by Birtish culture, due to this this gestures has three meanings in America, USA, New Zealand, South Africa, Greece and Singapore such as, hitch-hike, Good or up-yours. Hence thumbs up emoji is mostly used as approval of anything in internet based communication by the existing users (Li, 2018). Adetunji (2012) state that many of the countries use this gestures for wishing good luck someone but in Iran this emoji is used as obscene. Hence the thumbs up emoji is also have positive as well as negative evaluation (Schneebeli, 2018). In European countries this gesture also having negative context such as thumbs-up gestures (upward jerk) means “sit on this”, but in Greece this means is hitch hike “asking for a ride or favour” (Barbar, 2004). While thumbs-up also denotes the greetings of good luck as in Italy this sign denotes against evil eye and the meaning would be changed when thumbs down (Barbar, 2004, Lefevre, 2011). Many countries like: Greece, Latin America, Middle East, Russia, Sardinia and western Africa use this gesture as rude signal or in terms of abusive signal such: Up-yours (Lefevre, 2011). Travellers from different region should use this gesture or emoji carefully because somewhere this emoji indicates abusive term as in turkey this is signal to call for homosexual relation. (Lefevre, 2011). Hence somewhere thumbs gesture indicates good or approval but in Latin America mostly this indicate as vulgar or rude gesture (Barbar,2004).

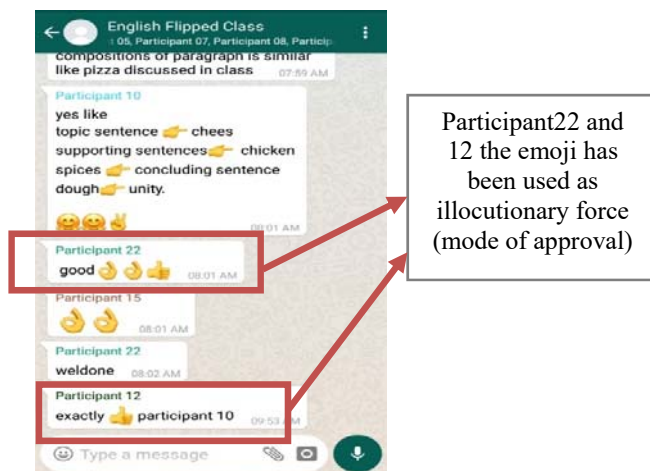


Fig: 1.3

In fig 1.3 the okay emoji has been found as sign of approval). Hence, it denotes the gesture of approval or achievement. Likewise, the participant 07 define the key features of paragraph writing asked by the teacher in feedback. The syntactical use also have been found in the text of which proves that emoji's are more helpful for those learner who couldn't exactly use the foreign language.

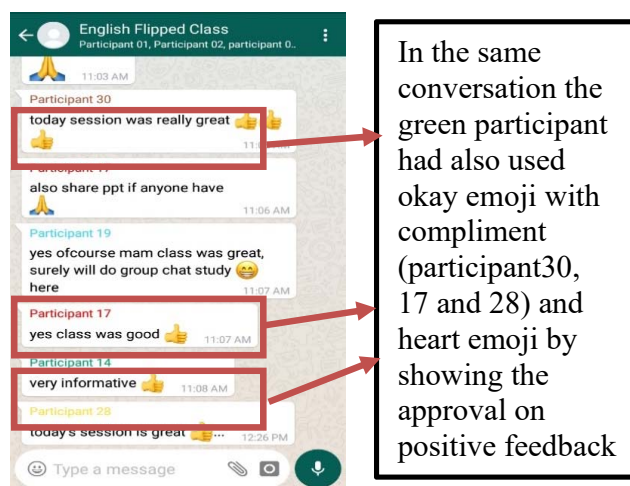


Fig 1.4

The syntactical error also been found in the text of participant 28 which proves that emojis are more helpful for those learner who couldn't exactly use the foreign language. Similarly, thumbs-up also highlights the positive response in Chinese culture too but in real world it's not effective, perhaps people don't aware from it's actual use in real world but Chinese do use frequently (Li, 2018). According to Li Li (2018) people need to use thumbs-up to maintain positive-socio emotional atmosphere even in groups too.

3.3 🙌 Victory emoji: This emoji known as V-Emoji denotes the gesture of victory or peace. This gesture introduced after French invasion when English archers defeated French, the V-gesture was used to taunt them because English people used to torcher to cut their first two front fingers (index and middle) before conquer, so this gesture introduced (Lefevre, 2011). Barbar, (2004) explained the different context of using V-gesture with the impact of different culture as in German this means victory as well as France also denotes with the positive attribute such as peace and Ancient Rome used this gesture to order five beers. On the other side, V-gesture also indicates negative signal which should not be used in that countries like in Malta, New Zealand, Britain and Australia this gesture consider as rude signal for abusive term such as: Up your! (Barbar, 2004). This sign could be mean as two in West and Greece refers to Go to Hell! The study found this emoji as the sign of victory as you can the SS is above that the participant showing his success by comment in the video that test would be good as we had the class today.

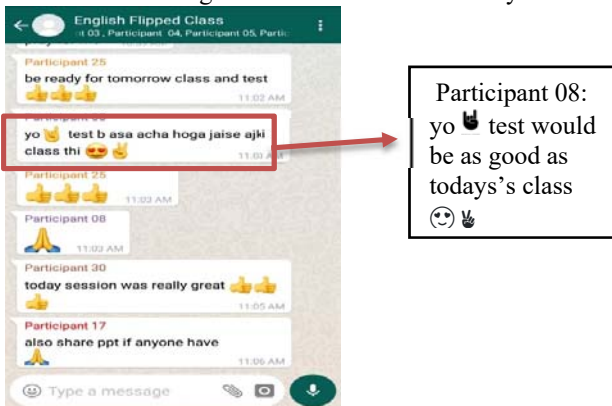


Fig 1.5

The victory emoji used with the 😊 “smiley face with heart-eyes emoji” shows the sense of achievement in the text as a reply from Participant08 in group chat because participants were discussing about lecture and upcoming test, hence the positive reply clarifies the context behind using victory emoji is achievement or success. Though, participants were satisfied from the lecture that’s why they commented about test will be good alike the class was conducted and victory sign used as motivation for other’s participants.

4. Conclusion:

The usage of five emojis in this study examined that emojis are universally diverse not specific as in Universal Grammar UG (JACK, 2012). The role of emoji in entire study is being helpful semantically as well as syntactically in verbal modalities. Their uses are not as chaotic as it seems, and they can no longer merely be simply opposed to linguistics cues and verbal modalities, as used to be the case in early studies. All the discussed emojis could be used as

commonly gestures have been used in culture. They have integrated all domains of the traditional material of linguistics: communication of descriptive content in the same way as lexical words, communication of attitudinal information and illocutionary force in the same way as punctuation (and some grammatical words), or expression of emphasis. Though, an addition in the list of research this study is huge examined analysis on emojis by Pakistani users aid teaching and learning of new era. The research could become conventionalized in some extend to explore cultural specificity for future investigations (Dresner and Herring, 2010: 264). Moreover, the future domain of emojis would lean towards the replacements of verbal modalities along with expressions and contextual meaning according different cultures, which could be an attention-grabbing area in the field of research.

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