

The Role of Emojis and Emoticons in Enhancing Interpersonal Communication through Messenger and WhatsApp Applications

دور الرموز التعبيرية في تعزيز التواصل بين الأشخاص من خلال تطبيق الماسنجر والواتساب

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Abstract

Communication process is not only speaking or writing words. It is very a complex matter that requires factors affective such as language, grammar, experience and non-verbal elements. Sign language and facial expressions can reveal what person is trying to express than what person actually says in in conversation of face-to-face interactions. However, in text-based communication. The absence of non-verbal can cause misunderstanding and confusion in interpersonal communication. This study focuses on the role of emojis and emoticons in communication technology, specially Messenger and WhatsApp application. This study depends on a theory called (Media Richness Theory) that is proposed by Daft and Lengel. The method used is qualitative research method. Research results show that emoji and emoticons have very important role in interpersonal communication technology.

Key words: communication, WhatsApp, Messenger, technology, emoji & emoticon

1. Introduction

Humans essentially need to communicate with each other in order to continue in their life as social creature. In the life, humans have verbal and non-verbal communication. Nowadays, Communications are supported by rapidly developing technology since the inventions (Smartphone, computer, iPad, and any other communication tools.

The development of communication technology presents possibility not to be (face to face) when delivering meaning of message to the other. The system of Android and iOS as smartphone operating system contains a lot of supporting applications to ease communication such as Messenger and WhatsApp application. WhatsApp has popularity of 1

billion monthly users, meanwhile Facebook said its Messenger service now has 1.3 billion monthly users throughout the world. Messenger and WhatsApp application have many users over world because they are very easy to use in the process of communication. Interpersonal communication is the most commonly used communication in conveying a message in nowadays. Although interpersonal communication should be done in direct way (face to face), but some researches show that interpersonal communication could also be done by using social media (Sun et al., 2011: 7-15). Interpersonal communications aren't just done by meeting the people directly because nowadays media and technology had been rapidly developing in communication, people hope that the others can understand their feelings, ideas, impressions, and messages when they use this technology.

Non-verbal in the communication technology present (emoticons & emojis). Those emoticons and emojis can show present condition of people. For example, a happy person can send laugh/smile face emoji so the others will understand the condition of the sender. Emoji and emoticon facilities are presented in Messenger and WhatsApp application since they were launched. Emoticon or emoji is a chat facility presented in Messenger or WhatsApp application in form of icon or image that shows expressions or conditions such as (sad, happy, shocked, impressed, scared, and so on. Emoji can also be called as facial emotion, or combination of keyboard characters expressed along with a text message that shows the writer's mood. Walther and D'Addario (2001: 324-347) indicate that "Emoticon is symbol typography or the combination of symbols which shows the mood, resembling facial expression, or in form of particular activity". It is used as nonverbal communication and emotion substitutes for text based message.

2. The aims of the study

This study aims to prove that using nonverbal environment in communication technology can support and enhance the interpersonal conversation. Also , using emoji and emoticon can show the condition of people such as (feelings & emotions) without need to talk in direct way (face to face) as well as to know the how emoji and emoticon can effect on interpersonal communication in social media specially Messenger and WhatsApp application.

3. Literature Review

Emoji and Emoticon are widespread digital pictograms which will seem in text messages, emails, and on social media. In half of the 20th

century appear the first iconic “smiley” face. Emoji is a cultural type has emerged out of typographic habits, corporate methods, copyright claims, and on-line chat rooms. Moreover, Schnoebelen (2011) conducts a study to show the role of emoji in improving technological communication, nonverbal communication in technology basics present in face-to-face communication that usually require from written conversations in Virtual world. Novak et al (2015) say that “Emoji can be described as graphic symbols that not only shows facial expression but also wider concepts and ideas such as celebrations, weathers, food, drinks, animals, plants, emotions, feelings, and activities”.

Some researches show that emoticons use to power and reinforce verbal messages, such as Walther and D’Addario’s (2001: 324-347) Study of Emoticons on Perceptions of Chat Messages, which found negative emoticons shifted the interpretation of those messages in the direction of the negative message elements.

The usage of emojis for sentiment enhancement or sentiment modification is illustrated by the conclusions made by Novak et al. (2015). “On average, emojis are placed at the last tier of the length of a tweet”. Considering this fact, emojis are often used to enhance or modified a textual content by adding information at the emotional level, at the end of the sentence. According to Argyle et al. (1970: 222-231) point out that “people use spoken language for communicating information about events external to others, non-verbal communication factors are used to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships”. In regards to express interpersonal attitudes, humans communicate interpersonal signals through a series of nonverbal actions known as immediacy behaviors. Easy examples include smile, nodding/shaking head, active/passive eye contact or ignoring. Argyle concludes that there are five main functions of nonverbal body behavior in human communication (Argyle et al., 1970: 222-231)

1. Express emotions
2. Express interpersonal attitudes
3. To accompany speech in managing the cues of interaction between speakers and listeners
4. Self-presentation of one's personality
5. Rituals (greetings)

Emoji and emoticon are used to strengthen the message so that the receiver will understand the condition or emotion of message sender.

Maíz Arévalo (2015:140-145) shows in his research table about types of emoticon and their usage percentage.

Table No1: Types of Emoticon and Usage Frequency

No	Type of emoticon Ratio	Percentage
1.	Smiley [😊]	27%
2.	Wink [;-)]	14.6%
3.	Laughter [:-D]	41.5%
4.	Tongue out [:-p]	2.2%
5.	Emoji [^^]	12.3%
6.	Thinking emoticon [:^(^)]	1.2%
7.	Tired emoticon ([=_=)]	1.2%
	Total	100%

Brown and Levinson (1987) point out that “Emoticon is frequently used in positive messages such as thankfulness, compliment, and regards, etc. “as the follows points:

1. Okay, Agreed: D
2. Thank you for helping my work :)
3. You are great, you can do your work faster ;)
4. See you ^^
5. Thank you so much: D or ^^

The examples above reveal that emoticon can strengthen and enhance the positive text message. The usage of negatively emoticon is very rarely seen because an angry person tends to bother making an emoticon with his present emotion.

4. Media Richness theory

Media Richness Theory, originally proposes by Daft and Lengel (1986: 554-571). They provide a framework for comprehension how rightly different communication mediums are able to replicate the information being sent over them. Media Richness Theory provides that media vary in ability to facilitate changes in understanding between partners in conversation. The theory suggests that communicators will be a lot of effective and efficient when they use richer media for ambiguous tasks and leaner media are used for less ambiguous tasks, with. Daft,

Lengel, and Trevino (1987: 355–366) discuss that Media Richness Theory (MRT) is based on four major standards:

1. Feedback, or how immediately available responses are.
2. Multiple cues, which regards how much communication information is available.
3. Language variety, which concerns how much meaning can be made through symbols.
4. Personal focus, which regard how customized messages can be crafted for their recipients.

According to Daft et al.'s MRT standards (1987: 355–366) relate to this study. Four main standards evaluate medium richness. They enhance the feedback by providing richer nonverbal messages which may be interpreted or understood faster than verbal only messages. Emoji also might perform better under the multiple cues norm because Emojis enhance and support the language variety. Daft et al. (1987) argues that “media must facilitate sufficient levels of information.” Thus, Media Richness Theory (MRT) argues the role of media in communication process, such as decision making, is to enable immediate processing of rich information. Daft and Lengel (1986: 554-571) point out that communication media can be classified along a continuum of richness, where richness is based on the ability of media to carry the following:

- nonverbal cues
- provide rapid feedback
- convey personality traits
- support the use of natural language

Above theory indicates that the face-to-face medium is the richest and contains most effective medium for decreasing equivocality, which is assumed to be high in knowledge-intensive tasks. Lengel and Daft. (1988: 225–232) say “Communication media is made by electronic communication devices that took place somewhere between the (face-to-face) medium and paper-based written media, depending on their ability to do nonverbal cues, provide rapid feedback, convey personality traits, and support the use of natural language”

5. Process of Interpersonal Communication

Communication is derived from Latin word “communicare” that means “to share” or “to make common” (Coates, 2009). According to Keyton (2011) conducts that “Communication is the process of conveying message or information from one to another” Cheney (2011)

Communication happens when it fulfills some elements as depicted in Fig. 1.

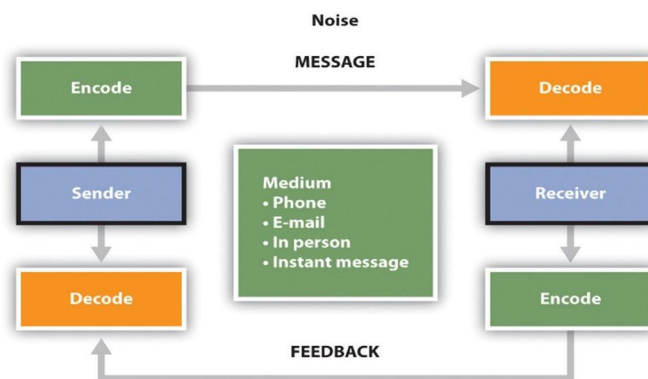


Figure: 1. Communication Process

Above diagram explains the two main tools of communication

- a. Message sender (noise message)
- b. Message receiver. (feedback message)

Message sender sends the message (face-to-face) or through social media or technology device like smartphone, telegram, computer, or any other communication supporting media. Communication can define as process of conveying message done by two or more people, involving two main elements the first one is called (message sender) and the second is called (message receiver) and subsequently induce a feedback. Interpersonal communication is usually based on an intimacy of formality to someone. Another argument. Interpersonal communication is a communication that involved two to three people. According to above illustration interpersonal communication is a process of conveying message between two people involving message (sender & receiver) that produce feedbacks. Look to figure: No. 2

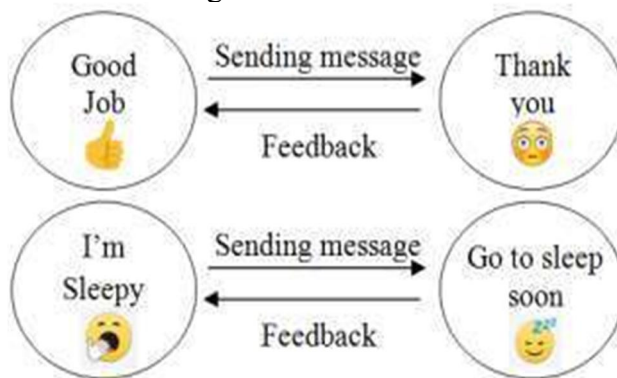


Figure: 2. Framework of Correct Usage of Emoji

Figure: No.2 explains that emoji can strengthen the meaning of context and explain emotion. By understanding each other's emotion, the communication process will run well.

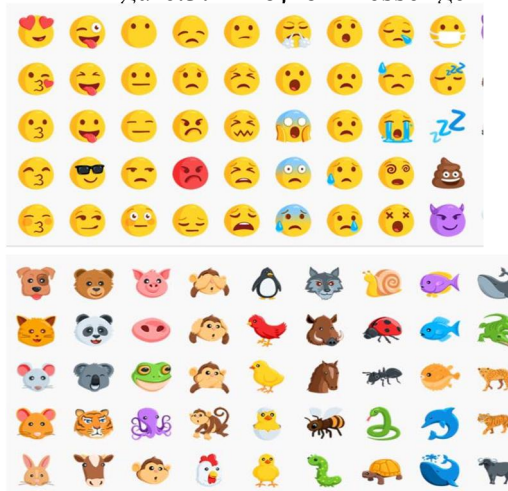
6. Research Method

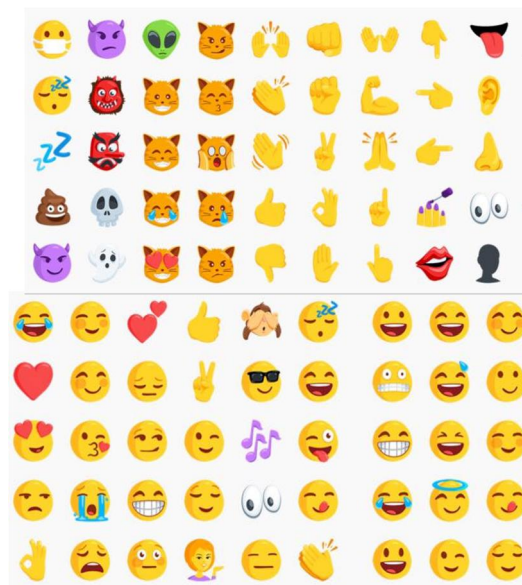
This study uses qualitative research method with some samples to strengthen the results. A qualitative is done by constructing reality and understanding its meaning. According to Yin (2011) indicates that “Qualitative method is chosen because of the limitation of study, incomplete data, or insufficient research variables”. Qualitative research originated from the depth, nuance, context, multidiscipline, and complexity. The result of qualitative research could be derived from valid findings through comparison and conclusion. This study depends on Media Richness Theory (MRT). Daft and Lengel (1984: 284-295) state that through communication channel a conveyed message has high noise level so that by using this theory the message can convey perfectly.

7. Display of Emoji and Emoticon in Messenger & WhatsApp

Emoji is an emoticon which likes someone's facial expression or other images such as buildings, plants, animals, weathers, and so on. Meanwhile, emoticon is a symbol that forms emotion. Emoji in Messenger shown in Figure No: 3 is taken from screenshot of researcher's iOS devices (iPhone) on September 28th, 2017. Version of the application was 135.1. The emoji consist of facial expressions, animal's facial expressions, body parts, animals, plants, and etc.

Figure.3: Emoji of Messenger





Emoji in WhatsApp shown in Figure No: 4 is taken from screenshot of researcher's iOS devices (iPhone) on September 27th, 2017. Version of application was 2.17.52. The emoji consist of facial emotions, plants and animals, sports, food and drink, vehicles, symbols, multimedia and flags. Different with Messenger, WhatsApp's emojis are grouped according to the icon's shapes and makes it easier for user to pick. Besides that, WhatsApp emojis are more various than Messenger.





Figure: 4. Emoji in WhatsApp

Emoticon is the combination of emotion and icons that creates a funny and unique emoticon. The emoticon shown in Fig. 5 was taken from www.piliapp.com that provides various emoji and emoticon. Emoticon can also be used in every Smartphone because each of them had prepared with symbols needed to make emoticon.

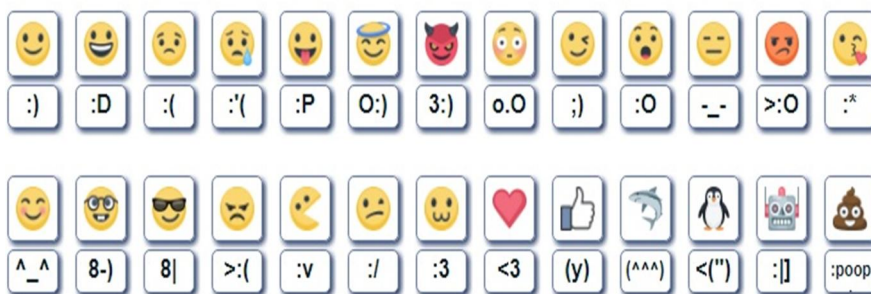


Figure: 5. Emoticon

8. The role of emoji/emoticon in interpersonal communication

Emoji or emoticon is frequently used to strengthen and support the message or as feedback to the message in interpersonal conversation. If the message sender gives praise by text message, he/she can add supporting emoji or emoticon in order to strengthen the meaning so the message receiver will feel the emoji and emotion effect. For example see Figure No. 6.

The Role of Emojis and Emoticons in Enhancing Interpersonal Communication . (124)

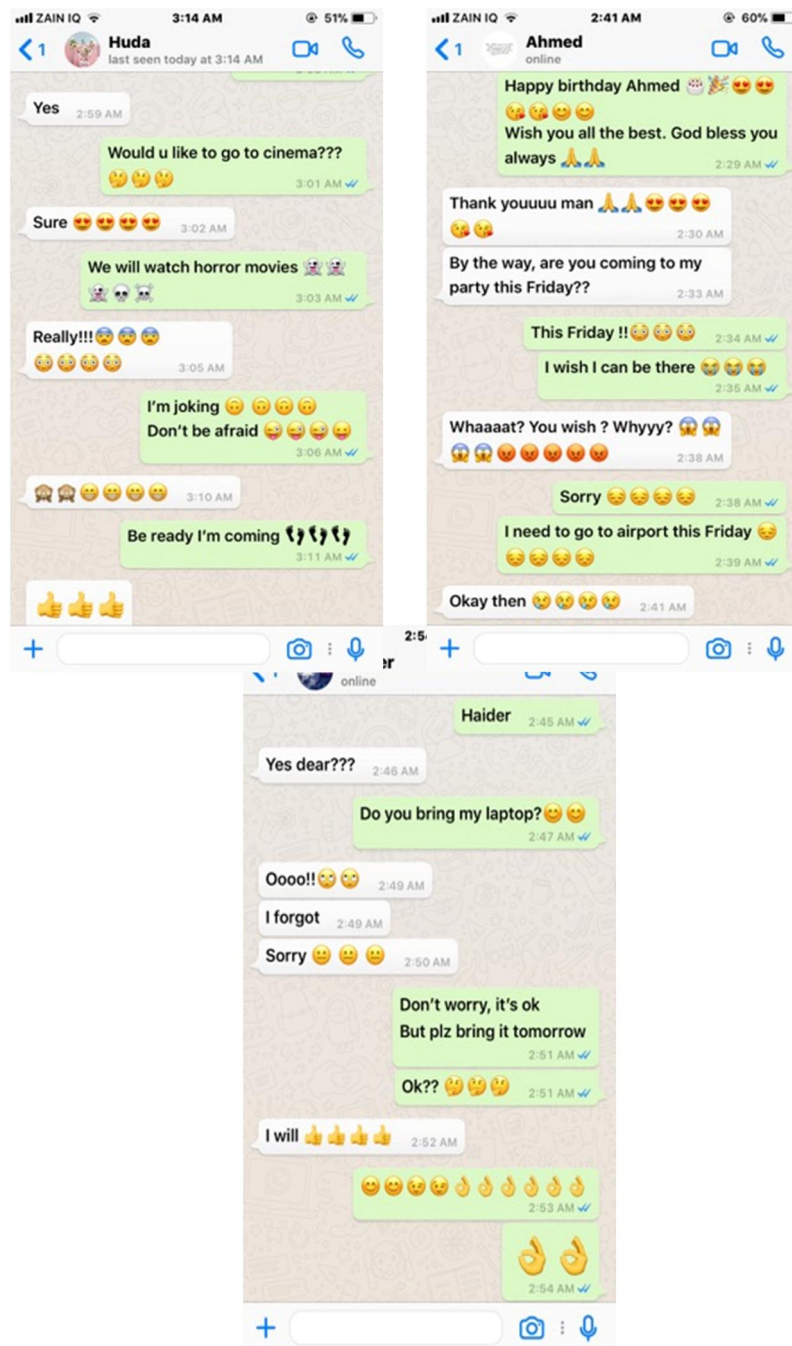


Figure: 6. the Use of Emoji in WhatsApp

In figure: No. (6) Emoji and Emotion play a very important role as part of interpersonal conversation on WhatsApp application. Receivers of the message interpret the message distinctly with the presence of emoticons; it makes it possible to realize directly a person's mood. Emoji are popular digital pictograms that can appear in text messages. The face with tears, cry, love, joke and angry is used by the respondents to imply specific situation that may also depend on the context or nature of their conversation. Emojis function as teasers for respondents because they use it to laugh at or criticize (someone) in a way that is either friendly or playful. The tongue-sticking out emoji is used exclusively for teasing purposes and, sometimes, for light jokes that occurs in conversations. There are also cases in which this emoji is used to fill in the spaces of conversations. It frequently occurs between lovers' conversations when they are flirting. Gratitude means thanks and appreciation. It is also the quality of being thankful, readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness. The face throwing a kiss emoji is used by the respondents to imply a sign of gratitude, and support; it is also their way of showing their affection towards that person. It is mainly a facial translation; in fact of words "I love you" from its sender. Church and Oliveira (2013:352-361) indicate that Messenger and WhatsApp application are frequently used to connect with close/best friends and family.

According to Media Richness Theory (MRT), there are four factors that can determine good delivery of message:

1. There is enough ability for communication channel in conveying message context signals through facial expression, body movement, and etc.
2. Feedbacks are immediately given by the message receiver as response to every chats.
3. Variety of language such as the presence of symbols and foreign language.
4. Ability of communication channel in conveying personality such as showing personal emotion. (Daft and Lengel, 1984: 209).

According to Cui et al. (2017: 1-4) mention to use nonverbal symbols like facial expression could make the message clearer. Responded nonverbal symbols will enhance feedback in form of other emotion. The essence of Media Richness Theory is language and symbol. Clear language and supporting symbol will make interpersonal communication in a media runs very well.

An oral conversation may be carried on by the usage of an emoji. For instance the sentence “Yeah, the film was pretty good...” can be ambiguous without any additional information. However, “Yeah, the film was pretty good... 😍 ” and “Yeah, the film was pretty good... 😊 ” significantly reduce the ambiguity.

Through these different contexts, we can identify the principal functions for which emojis are used:

1. Sentiment expression. A sentence can have a neutral emotional state. Therefore, using an emoji can simply add an emotion and a polarity to this sentence. An example of this could be “Ok, I’ll go there tomorrow.” compared to “Ok, I’ll go tomorrow... 🙄”. The former only describe an action when the latter is more about complaining.
2. Sentiment enhancement. A sentence may convey different emotions. For instance, “I’m really happy and a little sad for her.” The emojis may be used in this case to enhance the writer's emotions. In other words, it allows the writer to disambiguate an emotional sentence by pointing at a specific emotion when several may be present. In the previous example, the addition of an emoji give the priority to one of the two emotions happiness and sadness: “I’m really happy and a little sad for her... 😞”.
3. Sentiment modification. Another objective attended by the writer when using emojis is to modify the emotions conveyed by the text or its intensity. Indeed, in Informal Text Communication, emojis can be used to express complex emotions such as sarcasm, irony, or non-textual humor by simulating facial cues. To support this, in her study Kelly (2015: 1-44) came to the conclusion that emojis surpassed the text. With this, putting an emoji at the end of a text expressing the exact opposite emotion of the text allows the user to reproduce sarcasm, irony, etc. It can also be used only to lightly modify the intensity of the conveyed emotion by lowering it. It is for instance the case when someone is complaining but with a humoristic emoji attached, such as “I’m so sad he is dead... 😂”. In this case, the context will determine whether or not the emoji is used as an enhancer.
4. Notifier. Actually, emoji usages are not standardized at all and can be used as a simple notifier. As a way to keep the addressee’s attention the same way it is done in F2F communication: by body gestures

through emojis. A good example of this is chat rooms in which people usually greet each other on first connection. Of course it can also be the case with SMS when interlocutors only want to keep in touch by

sending a, mostly, random emoji or emoticon. (?) Thus, emojis can be used with a phatic function as one of the six functions Roman Jakobson described , and they have the sole objective to keep the conversation going. (Jakobson, 1963)

5. Convenience. Emojis can be used to replace words and to give minimal information faster than by writing. Few research seems to have been conducted on this usage. The Emoji Sentiment Ranking corpus (ESR) could be used to explore this usage (Novak: 2015). If a sentence is composed only of one emoji we can suppose that it is used to replace a word, used as a notifier, or to simply indicate a specific emotional state.
6. Other: For fun. Finally, another usage of emojis can be because the addresser think the emoji is fun and thus, that the addressee will find it fun too. But it is on the fringe of standard usages, if by standard we refer to sentiment related usages. This usage was also called “Permitted Play” by Kelly and Watts (2001).

9. Results and Discussion

Through Media Richness Theory, the results of study reveal that emoji and emoticon have a very important role in strength and enhance meaning interpersonal communication in Messenger and WhatsApp application. In Media Richness Theory, Messenger and WhatsApp fulfill the criteria of:

1. Ability of communication channel in conveying message signals such as facial expression, body movement.
2. Feedbacks are directly given by the (message receiver) as response to every chats in the virtual world
3. Variety of language such as the presence of symbols and foreign language.
4. Ability of communication channel in conveying personality such as showing personal emotion.
5. Through chat trials with a WhatsApp application users, Using emoji in WhatsApp can show on Figure No: 2. through three chats shown in Figure No: 2, it can be concluded that (emoji/emoticons) are indeed can be used to strengthen and support the meaning.

Through using emoji, the sender can express emotions through emoji or emoticon available on their Smart phones such as (fear, jealous, scared, leery, shy, and lonely) or any other emotions that can be expressed in form of a stickers. Emoji and emoticon can strengthen and support the meaning of sent message so directly the receiver can recognize the feeling of message sender. Study's Results show that attaching emoji and emoticon to text message will make information richness and strengthen the meaning of text so the receiver will feel the effect of received message. In interpersonal communication, emoticon's role is increasing the connection with other person in chat, showing emotion expression, and as a strategy to show present condition Maíz-Arévalo (2015: 140-145) points out that Brain is 60000 fold faster in responding pictures than ordinary text, so a picture is an important element in interpersonal communication.

ملخص البحث

لا تقتصر عملية التواصل على التحدث أو الكتابة فقط، فهي عملية معقدة تتطلب عوامل مؤثرة مثل اللغة والنحو والخبرة، كذلك تشمل عناصر الوسط غير اللفظي. فيمكن لغة الإشارة وتعبيرات الوجه أن تبوح عما يحاول الشخص أن يعبر عنه من خلال المحادثة وجها لوجه. وفي أسس المحادثة نجد أن غياب الوسط غير اللفظي يسبب عدم الفهم والإرباك في التواصل بين الأشخاص تركز هذا الدراسة على أثر الرموز التعبيرية (الايوجي) في التواصل الإلكتروني وبالأخص برنامج (الماسنجر والوتساب) حيث اعتمدت هذا الدراسة على نظرية ثراء الوسائط. الطريقة المستخدمة هي طريقة البحث النوعي، وقد أظهرت النتائج أن للرموز التعبيرية دوراً مهماً في التواصل الإلكتروني بين الأشخاص.

10. Conclusion

Emoji or emoticon is an icon or picture that can support message's meaning. The usage of emoji and emoticon is needed in interpersonal communication to strengthen the message meaning so that it can be easily understood.

According to Media Richness Theory, Messenger and WhatsApp had fulfilled the element of media richness as follows:

1. Ability of communication channel in conveying message signals such as facial expression, body movement, and vocal inflection.

2. Feedbacks are directly given by the message receiver as response to every chats.
3. Variety of language such as the presence of symbols and foreign language.
4. Ability of communication channel in conveying personality such as showing personal emotion. The usage of symbol and language is highly needed in communication to make it effective and understandable.
5. Emoji and emoticon are highly needed in interpersonal communication through digital technology.
6. Using emoji and emoticon to support and enhance the message meaning in interpersonal communication.

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