The Interplay between Text and Emojis in Iraqi Telegram Group Chatting: A Pragmatic- Relevance Study

Research : Sattar Fakher Abbas
Asst. Prof. Nazar Abdul Hafidh Ubeid (Ph.D)
University of Basrah / College of Arts

Abstract:

Internet-Mediated Communication (IMC) has entered a new era with the rise of emojis. These colourful signs are neither redundant nor decorative in nature. Instead, they possess a potential for affecting the final interpretation of the accompanying text. The current study probes the connectedness of emojis to textual exchanges in Telegram group chatting, namely the ostensible incongruity between text and emojis. It explores the influence that emojis posit on the user's intended meaning in Iraqi Telegram university chat group. Building on pragmatic, relevance-theoretic approach, data analysis was executed according to Yus's (2014) model, a version revised by Li and Yang (2018). The study addresses two research questions: (1) What kind of connection is there between text and emojis in Iraqi Telegram group chatting? and (2) What implications does the use of emojis have in Iraqi Telegram group chatting? The results the study came up with indicated that the apparent mismatch between text and emojis could be eliminated by marking a deeper meaning other than the one signaled by the surface meaning of the text. The results also showed that parallel emotion signal is the most significant function in the whole sample. The implication of this finding denotes that emojis were primarily utilized to convey a social meaning that is equivalent to the one depicted by facial expressions and body language in face-to-face conversations.

Keywords: *Internet-Mediated Communication, Emojis, Text, Relevance*

العلاقة المتبادلة في المعنى بين النص و الرموز التعبيرية في الدردشة الجماعية العراقية عبر التليغرام: دراسة تداولية

الباحث   الاستاذ المساعد الدكتور

ستار فاخر عباس   نزار عبد الحافظ عبيد

جامعة البصرة / كلية الآداب

الملخص:-

لقد دخل التواصل عبر الانترنت حقبة جديدة مع نشوء الرموز التعبيرية. لا تعد هذه العلامات الملونة فائضة عن الحاجة ولا تستخدم لأغراض تجميلية بطبيعة الحال، بل انها تمتلك القدرة على التأثير على التفسير النهائي للنص المصاحب لها. تستكشف الدراسة الحالية الترابط بين الرموز التعبيرية والتبادلات النصية في الدردشة الجماعية عبر التليغرام و بالأخص عدم التناغم الظاهري بين النص و الرموز التعبيرية. تستقصي الدراسة التأثير الذي تمارسه الرموز التعبيرية على المعنى المقصود للمستخدم في مجموعة درشة تليغرام خاصة بطلبة الجامعات العراقية. تم تحليل البيانات وفق المنهج التداولي و نظرية الصلة و ذلك باتباع منهج يس (٢٠١٤) و تحديداً النسخة المعدلة بواسطة لاي و يانغ (٢٠١٨). تجيب الدراسة على سؤالي البحث التاليين: (١) ما نوع الصلة الموجود بين النص و الرموز التعبيرية في الدردشة الجماعية العراقية عبر التليغرام؟ و (٢) ما هي مضامين استخدام الرموز التعبيرية في الدردشة الجماعية العراقية عبر التليغرام؟

واشارت النتائج التي خرجت بها الدراسة الى امكانية التخلص من عدم التناغم بين النص والرموز التعبيرية باكتشاف معنى أعمق من المعنى السطحي للنص. كما توصلت الدراسة الى أن إشارة المشاعر الموازية هي الوظيفة الأهم في العينة برمتها و هذه النتيجة تدل على أن الرموز التعبيرية تستخدم بالدرجة الأساس للتعبير عن المعنى الأجتماعي المماثل للمعنى الذي تنقله تعابير الوجه ولغة الجسد في المحادثات الواقعية.

1. Introduction

With the advent of technology, online communication becomes mosaic in nature. It comprises different forms of textual, visual, and audio effects. However, the interaction between the textual and the visual seems to have a hand over the other types. One of the most prominent phenomena in the digital arena at present is the interrelation between text and emojis.

It is indisputable that the rise of emojis is so pervasive phenomenon that cannot go unnoticed. Emojis have attracted so many scholars from different fields to explore their role in online communication. For linguists, emojis are part of the new virtual language. Just like text, emojis have forms, meanings, and functions. However, the view that link emojis to texts in online conversations is still at its infancy. The current paper sheds light on the degree to which emojis contribute to the underlying meaning of the text to which they are attached in Iraqi Telegram group chatting. It aims to investigate the nature of interaction between text and emojis and the impact of using emojis on the user's intended meaning in Telegram group chatting. This is so because the relationship between text and emojis is not always straightforward. In most cases, emojis have different connotations than the accompanying text. As such, it is hard to identify the underlying meaning that users intend to convey. The difference in meaning could result in a misinterpretation due to the ostensible mismatch between the visual effect and the verbal message.

2. Online Text

Online text refers to text-based communication over the Internet. It is devoted to mark any written communicative activity performed by means of the network. The term 'text' is controversial as it encompasses a variety of meanings. However, in general, it can be used to denote any coherent piece of language under discussion (Barton & Lee, 2013: 25).

Written forms constitute the bulk of exchanges implemented over the Internet. Despite of that, the virtual world exhibits a rather distinct view

of the term 'text'. According to Barton and Lee (2013: 26), digital texts are more dynamic than offline texts and they are constantly changing. In addition, online text is mainly characterized by informal use of language whereas offline text is usually written to fulfill official aims.

Online text exhibits a wide range of properties which can be subsumed under two headings: textual paralinguistic cues (TPC) and abbreviations. Textual Paralinguistic Cues (TPC) refer to "written manifestations of nonverbal audible, tactile, and visual elements that supplement or replace written language and that can be expressed through words, symbols, images, punctuations, demarcations, or any combination of these elements" (Luangrath et al., 2016: 98). In principle, written Internet-Mediated Communication (IMC) lacks such nonverbal features as facial expressions, body language, and voice manipulations which enable the interlocutors to identify the tone and the emotions embedded in their messages. Accordingly, users resort to a number of strategies, such as letter repetition, punctuation mark repetition, laughter, and capitalization, to make up for the shortage in online nonverbal behaviour.

Abbreviation is one common feature of digital writing and a hallmark of chat rooms language in particular. Online communicators tend to utilize abbreviated expressions in order to 'save valuable typing time' (Danet, 2001: 18). In fact, not all abbreviated forms are contemporary. Instead, some of them have been conventionalized prior to the evolution of IMC. Some of online abbreviated forms mentioned by Crystal (2006: 91-92) include: asap (as soon as possible); btw (by the way); cu (see you); jam (just a minute); m8 (mate); np (no problem); rip (rest in peace).

3. Emojis

The term 'emoji' is of a Japanese origin. Evans (2017: 18) describes it as "an anglicized version of two Japanese words *e*, 'picture', and *moji*, 'character'… [E]mojis are colourful symbols the winks, smilyes, love hearts and so on embedded as single character images, or glyphs, in our digital keyboards."

The emergence of emojis can be traced back to 1998, when the Japanese expert of telecommunication, Shigetaka Kurita, unveiled the first emoji signs (Danesi, 2017: 2). Till 2010, emojis were widely used in Japanese mobile and electronic systems. Nonetheless, the actual debut of emojis was in 2011 when they were integrated within systems of mobile phones that were available across the world (Evans, 2017: 18). Smartphones with IOS and Android systems were provided with emojified keyboards to be used as a new mode of computerized facial expressions. This broad recognition of emojis ended up with the announcement of the emoji of "Face with Tears of Joy," as the 2015 "Word of the Year" by Oxford Dictionary (Alshenqeeti, 2016: 56; Danesi, 2017: vi ; Evans, 2017: 10-11).

The creation of emojis was first intended to fill the gap of the lack of nonverbal cues in digital exchanges. Thus, efforts were basically devoted to develop a set of emojis that are capable of miming the human facial expressions. However, later on developers decided to extend the scope of emojis to cover different symbols of everyday life. Emojipedia (2019) classifies emojis into eight categories: smileys and people, animals and nature, food and drink, activity, travel and places, objects, symbols, and flags.

The meaning of emojis can be better understood if it is conceived in terms of signs. According to Evans (2017: 94), emojis are icons, i.e. the meaning of the emoji is attached to the object they denote via resemblance. An icon is based on analogy between the entity and the concept to which it refers, e.g., the icons of applications that appear on smartphone screens. The semantic component of emojis is also governed by a number of contextual parameters. As Danesi (2017: 51-52) points out, the manner in which emojis are connected to concepts and emotions can be adjunctive, substitutive or mixed. To clarify, the adjunctive mode involves the co-existence of text and emoji in an utterance. Principally, the emoji can be integrated into three main positions in the message: initially, finally or in the middle. This would add a tone to the meaning of the text and correspondingly the meaning of the emoji will be affected

as well. As with the substitutive relation, the message is composed of emojis only. This involves what Danesi (2017: 35) labels as 'emoji competence' or the knowledge of using and interpreting emojis appropriately in different contexts. Finally, there could be a mixed mode which has aspects from both adjunctive and substitutive modes. In such case, the meaning of the emoji is contiguous to the understanding of the two preceding levels.

4. Yus's (2014) Model

The analysis is carried out according to Francisco Yus's (2014) eight-function taxonomy of *emoticons* that is based on a pragmatic and relevance-theoretic approach. However, the researcher adopted the version of the model modified by Li and Yang (2018: 4) who applied Yus's model to *emojis* (instead of emoticons) and reworded the eight functions as follows: 1) attitude signal; 2) attitude intensity enhancer; 3) illocutionary force modifier; 4) humor; 5) irony; 6) emotion signal; 7) parallel emotion signal; and 8) emotion intensity enhancer. In fact, emojis (e.g. 😣,🙂) are viewed as successors of emoticons (e.g. :-(, ☺) (Novak et al., 2015: 1) that lay full graphical effects to them (Danesi, 2017: 3). Accordingly, emoticons have been replaced by emojis in the theoretical account of the model in the current study.

The first function that emojis may fulfill in relation to the accompanying text is attitude signal. In IMC, the interactant's attitude is not quite explicit or is not visually recognizable (Yus, 2014: 519). Hence, communicators tend to use emojis to facilitate the identification of their attitudes. Emojis can play a key role in signaling attitudes that are not explicitly identifiable by text-based messages. Emojis can also enhance the intensity of the attitude that the accompanying text underlies (2014: 520). The task that the emoji performs here is to increase the power of the attitude expressed by the preceding text.

Emojis can be powerful devices for modifying the illocutionary force as well as the content of an unpleasant message. According to Yus (2014: 520), an emoji can achieve relevance via strengthening or

mitigating the illocutionary force of the speech act. Likewise, Dresner and Herring (2010: 257) argue that the winking 😉 can be used to weaken the force of the illocutionary speech act of a request as in the following sentence:

"I would like a noncircumventing solution 😉"

The emoji in the example above downgraded the request making it less face-threatening.

In textual IMC, the recognition of humor is not easily detectable. The reason is the absence of nonverbal cues (such as body language, facial expressions, and prosodic features) that would lead the receiver of the message to identify the sender's real intention. However, evidence from IMC research revealed that emojis can be typical devices for expressing humor. As Yus (2014: 521) demonstrates, one main function that an emoji can fulfill is to derail the message from being interpreted literally and to provide a humorous sense instead.

Emojis can be employed to highlight irony in textual IMC. Originally, the ironic meaning is not straightforward in online conversations due to the absence of nonverbal cues. To bridge things up, interlocutors resort to emojis to facilitate expressing their ironic attitudes. Yus (2014: 522) mentions the following example of someone living a high life:

What a hard life you lead 😆.

The grinning squinting face emoji 😆 (Emojipedia, 2019) in the example above implies dissociation on behalf of the speaker from the surface meaning of the message providing an entirely opposite meaning of the recipient's real life (Yus, 2014: 522). The speaker posits an emoji at the end of the utterance to achieve relevance via providing an ironic tone.

Emojis can be effective devices for signaling emotions. The function that an emoji can perform here is to reflect the emotion embedded in the content of the utterance (Yus, 2014: 523). By adding an emoji to an utterance, a user can signal an emotional meaning that is difficult to express without the aid of the emoji.

Another function that emojis can fulfill in cyber communication is to add an emotive meaning in parallel to the communicative act. According to Yus (2014: 524), emojis have a phatic (social) connotation in that they reflect how the communicative act gives rise to the emotional state.

The last function to be realized by emojis is to enhance the intensity of the emotional state coded by the utterance (Yus, 2014: 526). In such case, the speaker's emotions or feelings are already expressed verbally. However, the emoji achieves relevance by fostering the strength of the emotions contained by the accompanying utterance.

5. Relevance Theory

Relevance Theory (RT) is one of the most influential theories that have emerged in the last four decades. It is "a cognitive pragmatics theory of human communication which was developed in the mid-1980s by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson in their book, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (1986, 2nd edition 1995)" (Yus, 2010: 753; Italics in the original). The main hypothesis of RT is that humans are equipped with a biological apparatus that gives rise to the maximization of relevance of inward stimuli (Yus, 2006: 512). Yus adds that relevance is not merely motivated by means of exterior stimuli; rather, it is achieved via such interior factors as mental representations and thoughts where all constitute the source of mental processing.

The focus of RT is how to minimize the cognitive effort involved for decoding a message and, consequently, to achieve relevance. As stated above, the research problem is centred on the non-straightforwardness of the relationship between the text message and emojis in Telegram chat rooms. This gap can be bridged by the application of the RT to account for the manner in which both the message sender and receiver arrive at a shared cognitive environment to access the typical interpretation of exchanges.

6. Research Methodology

The study is conducted qualitatively as it meets a range of the requirements of qualitative research. These requirements include: implementing research in its natural context, the engagement of the

researcher himself in collecting data and describing documents, the emphasis upon the meaning that informants derive, and the interpretability of data in context.

6.1 Data Selection

The data were selected from online text-based conversations delivered by Iraqi university students in a Telegram chat group. The total number of messages opted for analysis is 2000. Having insights from Herring's (2004: 11) account of computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA), the selection of data is based on phenomenon and time. In terms of phenomenon, emojis constitute a hallmark and one of the most prominent features of Telegram chat group. With regard to time, a ten-day thread of conversations is collected for the study ranging from 1/1/2019 to 10/1/2019.

6.2 Data Collection

Conversations were collected on February, the 6th, 2019 from the digital archive of the chat group. The data were gathered via computer Telegram software through the 'export chat history' option. The exported chats were automatically transformed into Chrome HTML documents. Thereafter, all the contents were copied and pasted into Word Microsoft Documents. Afterwards, all messages were given numbers and kept in the same order they appeared in the original source. So, the sample could appear as one large block of 2000 messages.

6.3 Anonymity and Sequencing

With regard to anonymity and sequencing of data, a number of techniques were followed. Each turn in the conversations was given a serial number. A member's name was substituted by U (standing for User) followed by number, for instance, (U1, U2, U3, …, etc.). Numbers were provided on the basis of the appearance of users in the chat group. Names and nicknames employed in vocative forms or those mentioned throughout the course of conversations were replaced by (Name). A username address was replaced by '@(Username)'. Unlike formal language, IMC exhibits distinct features with regard to arrangement and sequencing of text. One characteristic of Telegram and most of Instant Messaging platforms is that in most cases the message of a single sender is not delivered all at once. Instead, the message is subdivided into

smaller fragments that are sent bit by bit in vertical sequencing. In many occasions, what happens is that the interlocutors need to reply just to one fragment of the message rather than to all its contents. To solve such a problem, the researcher resorted to place 'M+No', (message plus number) e.g. 'M1', 'M2', prior for each fragment of message that needed to be replied to in the interaction. When a user has to reply to an already posted message, he/she summons the addressee's name by tapping and holding on the massage which he/she wants to react to, and then chooses the command 'Reply' among other choices. For privacy purposes, the researcher mentioned the serial number of the addresser's turn, followed by U+No, and then the addressee's serial number of the message replied to preceded by '@', e.g. 127) U49@126.

6.4 Method of Data Analysis

The method devoted for data analysis is grounded on Creswell's framework of qualitative inquiry (2014). Consequently, the analysis of data falls into six steps through which a transition is directed from the specific to the general. These comprise "organizing and preparing the data for analysis", "reading through all the data", "coding", "description", "interrelating themes", and "interpretation" (Creswell, 2014: 197-200).

7. Data Analysis and Discussion

The sample comprises 2000 messages and the number of emoji-containing utterances is 457. The remainder of messages is either naked emojis or purely textual exchanges which both lie outside the scope of the study. Table (1) shows the frequency and percentage of emoji-containing utterances in relation to the overall number of messages.

Table (1): Frequency and Percentage of Emoji-Containing Utterances as Contrasted against the Total Number of Messages

Total Number of Messages	Frequency of Emoji-Containing Utterances	Percent
2000	457	22.85%

The number of emoji-accompanied utterances comes to 457 out of 2000 messages. This constitutes 22.85% of the overall messages realized

in sample. This finding, though relatively low, underlines the significance of emojis in relation to text and it highlights the contribution of emojis to the final interpretation of the message.

In general, the presence of the functions of emojis is not highly marked in the sample. However, the variance they exhibit has a number of implications with regard to the relation of emojis to the accompanying text. The functions are ranked grounding on their salience in the sample. Those with the highest scores appear first followed by less appearing functions and so on. Table (2) shows the frequencies and percentages of all the functions realized in the sample.

Table (2): The Frequencies and Percentages of Functions of Emojis in the University Telegram Chat Group

Function	Frequency	Percent
Parallel Emotion Signal	169	37
Attitude Signal	86	18.8
Emotion Signal	57	12.5
Humor	42	9.2
Emotion Intensity Enhancer	37	8.1
Irony	27	5.9
Illocutionary Force Modifier	22	4.8
Attitude Intensity Enhancer	17	3.7
Total	457	100

At the top of the hierarchy, parallel emotion signal is located. This is the most prominent category that reaches the highest level in the entire sample. Participants use emojis to signal emotions in parallel to the

communicative acts in 169 occasions and the percentage of this is 37% of the overall functions realized in the data. Participants do not attach emojis to utterances because they experience certain emotions. Rather, the intent seems to reveal a sort of affect that is analogous to the one delivered by means of nonverbal behavior while communicating in face to face (FtF) conversations. Emojis achieve relevance not towards the content of the utterance, but to the communicative act around which the dialogue revolves. The salience of this function is an indicator of the social role emojis play when attached to texts. The following example explains how participants combine emojis with an utterance so as to highlight the emotions that come in parallel with the communicative acts:

1550) U8@1549: */ʔɪntɪ ʔaj kulɪjja/*

             (Which college do you attend)

 1553) U71@1550: */kulɪjjat tarbɪja/* ☺

             (College of Education ☺)

In (1550), U8 asks U71 to name him the college that she is studying at. U71 informs U8 in (1553) that she is studying at the 'College of Education', and she concludes her message with a smiling face emoji ☺. Nonetheless, there is no clear reason to which one can ascribe the pleasure that U71 reveals through the use of the smiling emoji. In fact, locating this emoji performs a phatic function where the smiling face does not belong to the mention of the college name; rather, it is attributed to the social bond that would exist between the two interlocutors in the chat room. In the above example, there is no direct relationship between the utterance and the emoji; therefore relevance can only be achieved by proposing that the underlying meaning of the emoji is in parallel to the communicative act of the utterance and not to the content of the utterance itself. In such case, the role of the emoji has a high resemblance to the nonverbal behaviour that accompanies FtF communication.

The second in ranking is attitude signal. The frequency of this function comes to 86 occurrences and the percentage of this is 18.8% of

the overall number of functions realized in the study. This indicates that almost fifth of emoji-containing texts is devoted to mark the recognition of the interlocutors' attitudes which cannot be foreseen by the exclusive meaning of the utterance. Participants express their propositional attitudes via emojis which otherwise are hardly identifiable by means of the text alone. The function that an emoji fulfills here is to guide the receiver of the message to identify the propositional attitude towards the content of the utterance. The propositional attitude is not made manifest between the addresser and the addressee by means of the utterance. It is the attachment of the emoji to the utterance which facilitates the recognition of that attitude. This explicates why participants tend to make use of this function more than others. To examine the manner through which emojis achieve relevance by reflecting the interlocutor's propositional attitudes, consider the following example:

1610) U71: */ʔɪnʃa:ḷḷa tɪzzawwadʒ w-tɪtxarradʒ ja: rab/* 😁

      (I wish you get married and graduate😁)

1612) U2@1610*: /θa:nks bas leeʃ gɪltɪ tɪzzawwadʒ wbaʕdeen*

   tɪtxarradʒ/ 🤦

(Thanks, but why you first wished me marriage then graduation 🤦)

In (1610), U71 has two wishes for U2: to get married and to graduate (from university). In (1612), U2 thanks U71 for his wishes; however, he quickly reacts to U71's statement by asking her about the reason behind placing 'marriage' prior to 'graduation'. It sounds that U2 is dissatisfied with U71's attitude because he, deep in his mind, believes that marriage is not a priority for him. In the meantime, his goal revolves around doing well at the university and graduating. This is evidenced by the utilization of 'man facepalming' emoji 🤦 which has a clear indication of disappointment on behalf of U2 towards U71's view. The attachment of the emoji facilitates the identification of the attitude inherent in the utterance with which it is merged. In relevance terms, the cognitive effort is accumulating until the interpretation of the utterance is guided by the cognitive environment provided by the emoji.

In the third place comes emotion signal. This function collects 57 instances out of 457. This constitutes 12.5% of the whole share of emoji-based utterances. It is evident through statistics that the salience of this function is not high. However, in comparison with most functions, emotion signal is relatively significant particularly when the detection of the emotional state of the addresser would not be attainable with the mere reliance on text. Consider the following example:

1) U1: /ṣa:rat 2019/ 🙂❤️

    (Now it's 2019 🙂❤️)

The message in (1) is exactly delivered by 2019. U1 provides a statement through which he announces that the new year is on. The two emojis that are adhered to the text unveils the emotional state of the utterer. The user is not merely informing other interlocutors about the new year. Instead, he employs the smiling face and the red heart emojis 🙂❤️ to signal her delight with the advent of the new year. The interpretation of the underlying meaning of the whole message is manifested by relying on the affective attitude undertaken by the emoji towards the content of the text.

The fourth grade goes for humor whose frequency reaches 42 instances representing 9.2%. The majority of participants in the chat room are anonymous for each other. In addition, the general context of the Telegram group tends to be serious due to the educational orientation it is based on. These two properties are expected to hinder the excessive engagement in humorous conversations, and this may explicate the low presence of humor in comparison with the three aforementioned categories. The sense of humor can be derived when users do not intend their text-based exchanges to be interpreted literally. Instead, they opt for adding emojis to the utterances to provoke an indirect humorous meaning beyond the one portrayed by the literal use. The following example shows how humorous utterances underlined by banter (one of the strategies used to signal out humor) can be conceived with the aid of emojis:

975) U1: /ʕiraftitʃ wir-rab/ 🌝

(I knew you; I swear by God 🌝)

976) U50: */ʔınta masi:ħi:/* 😂

      (Are you a Christian 😂)

977) U1: */mulħıd wa-lħamdu: lıla:h/* 😌

      (I'm an atheist; thanks for Allah)

978) U18: 😂

979) U50@977: */hahahahahahahah/* 👍😂

      (hahahahahahahah👍😂)

In the above dialogue, U1 uses a Christian form of swear, 'by God', instead of 'by Allah' that is habitually used in Islam which the user affiliates to. U1's statement is combined with a smiley moon-face emoji 🌝 which mirrors an emotion in parallel to the communicative act. In response to U1, U50 asks if the latter is in fact a Christian locating a face-with-tears-of-joy emoji 😂 at the end of the question. The function of this emoji is to guide the receiver of the message to infer the indirect jocular sense embedded in the utterance. The unseriousness of the conversation continues as U1 replies to the question by claiming that he is an 'atheist' and he thanks 'Allah' for that! He follows this propositional attitude by the attachment of the relieved-face emoji 😌 which can be used to convey different types of pleasant emotions including "good-natured humor" (Emojipedia, 2019). The interpretation that fits into this context can be facilitated by considering the entire dialogue to be a form of 'banter'. It is evident that all interlocutors are not serious about the information they provide in this dialogue. This interpretation is guided by the use of emojis particularly in (976) and (977). In these two exchanges, the emojis achieved relevance by reducing the cognitive effort required for the decipherment of the messages by adding an indirect humorous meaning other than the one realized by the texts which they combine with.

Emotion intensity enhancer occupies the fifth position in UG. The realization of this category is low in UG. It recurs in 37 occasions and the percentage it represents is 8.1% of the eventual participation of all functions. In fact, the low contribution of this category can be ascribed to the possibility of identifying the interlocutor's emotional state by means of text alone. Text-based exchanges could be sufficient for designating the emotional state of interlocutors. Nonetheless, users tend to add emojis to exchanges in order to increase the strength of the emotions characterized by the utterance. So, the emojis are not attached to utterances needlessly. Rather, they are coupled with utterances in order to intensify the power of emotions embedded in these utterances. Consider the following example:

1679) U71: M1: */ʔɪljɔ:m farħa:na ʔɪʃtareet mala:bɪs/* 😄😌

(I'm happy today because I've bought clothes 😄😌)

In (1679), U71 bought clothes and she is delighted for that reason. Her statement could be sufficient for her interlocutors to understand the reason behind her joy. All the same, the placement of grinning face and the relieved face emojis 😄😌 tend to possess the same connotation as that of the text which precedes them; they are employed to convey pleasure and relief respectively. The two emojis achieved relevance via enhancing the intensity of the emotions underlain by the accompanying text.

The sixth position is taken by irony. Emojis are exploited to add an ironical tone in 27 instances making 5.9% of the total realization of categories. Irony is a complicated psychological phenomenon which involves a higher level of processing. This might counts for the very limited presence of it in the whole sample. In this respect, emojis achieve relevance by triggering an underlying ironic meaning rather than the one maintained by the literal meaning of the utterance. Consider the following example:

982) U50@981: */ʔi: waḷḷa ħa:ltɪ-ɪnnafsjɪa fad marra/* 😞

(Yes, my psychological state is really bad 😞)

983) U1@982: */huwwa mɪnu: mɪrta:ħ nafsɪjan/* 🙄💔

(No one is psychologically feeling well💔🙄)

988) U49: /keef-ɪl ʔaħwa:l/

      (How are things)

989) U53@988: /tama:m/

       (Very well)

990) U50: /mɪtwansi:n mɪrta:ħi:n/ 😶

      (Happy and comfortable 😶)

In (982), U50 seems to be in a bad mood. This is evident through the placement of a disappointed face emoji 😞 at the end of the utterance. Against all reason, U50 describes the situation she and her colleagues live by via denoting that they are feeling 'happy' and 'comfortable'. Yet the underlying meaning of the mouthless emoji 😶 does not correspond to that of the verbal message which precedes it. The mouthless emoji is conventionally used to "convey moderately negative emotions, such as disappointment, frustration, or sadness" (Emojipedia, 2019). Hence, a search for relevance is triggered as soon as such an ostensible contradiction exists. One solution is that the text should not be interpreted literally; rather, it underlies an implicit sarcastic tone that is guided by the use of the emoji. U50 cannot be depicted as being happy simply because she has just expressed her bad temper in (982). Relevance, then, can only be manifested when the meaning of the utterance is conceived non-literally along with the meaning that the accompanying emoji offer in the given context.

Illocutionary force modifier is sequenced in the seventh class. The frequency of this function comes to 22 and the percentage is 4.8% of the overall use of emojis. The utilization of emojis in order to attenuate the force of speech acts is so minor. Participants tend to restrict or to avoid using emojis for mitigative purposes. This can be assigned to the absence of power relations (such as doctor-patient relation) among interlocutors who are somehow similar in terms of age and the educational level. However, the few cases which witnessed the use of emojis as

illocutionary force modifiers shed some light on how emojis possess the potential to serve mitigative purposes. Consider this example:

805) U46: */ʔa:x ʔɪtðakkarɪt ɪssa:dɪs galbɪ ɪnħɪsar/* 😄😄😄

   (Huh, I remembered the 6 class and my heart sank 😄😄😄)

The user in the above example definitely is not feeling happy. This is evident through the use of such painful words as 'huh' (a groan in pain), and 'my heart sank'. All the sudden, the user contradicts what she states verbally and attaches a row of smiling face emojis. This clash between the negative meaning of the utterance and the positive meaning of the emojis involves ultra cognitive effort to achieve relevance. The user seems to posit a thread of smiling emojis to mitigate the utterance and to prevent the negative feeling that the utterance implies from penetrating into the other interlocutors. Technically speaking, the emojis modified the 'expressive' speech act which the utterance underlies into an 'assertive' speech act making it less face-threatening. The function that the smiling emojis serve here is to alleviate the content of the utterance so as not to be construed as a complaint, but as a description of the conditions the user experienced (Dresner & Herring, 2010: 258).

   Finally, attitude intensity enhancer concludes the table making the least contribution among other categories. The group members rarely tend to benefit from this function. Out of 457, only 17 occasions are employed for increasing the force of attitudes. This little number merely constitutes 3.7% of the total use of functions in the whole sample. The marginality of this function can be ascribed to that the propositional attitude is already exhibited by the utterance. Therefore, participants tend to avoid intensifying its power visually. However, whence the emoji is added, it can achieve relevance by strengthening the propositional attitude which is already highlighted by means of the utterance. The following example clarifies how this is possible:

1288) U55: */ʔaṣlan huwwa maħħad jħɪb burdʒ ʔɪl-ħamɪl w-ɪl-kul jɪġa:r mɪnna/*

   (Originally, no one loves Aries and everyone is jealous of it)

1294) U1@1288: */leeʃ jɪġa:ru:n mɪnna/* 😐

(Why are they jealous of it?) 😐

1297) U55@1294: */jkɪrhu:na lɪʔan huwwa mumajjaz/* 😌

(They just hate it because it is unique 😌)

In this conversation, U55 presumes that Aries people are not welcomed in society and that everyone is jealous of them. U1 asks U55 about the rationale behind signaling such an attitude following his question by a neutral-face emoji 😐 to express his attitude towards U55's one. In (1297), U55 replies that people hate Aries individuals due to the latter's uniqueness. The attachment of the smiling emoji 😌 is intended to reflect U55's admiration of the Aries due to his belief in the special traits they possess. As the propositional attitude is already exhibited by the utterance, the smiling emoji achieves relevance by intensifying the power of that attitude.

8. Conclusions

The current paper examines the relatedness of text-based exchanges to emojis in Iraqi Telegram group chatting at the university level. The conclusions of this study are:

1. Eight functions are considered in analysis to account for the connectedness between online text and emojis.

2. It has been found out that the ostensive incongruity between text and emojis can be eliminated by signaling a deeper meaning other than that of the accompanying text. This task is performed by six functions out of eight, namely attitude signal, illocutionary force modifier, humor, irony, parallel emotion signal, and emotion signal.

3. For the two other functions, i.e. attitude intensity enhancer and emotion intensity enhancer, the meaning of the text is compatible with the meaning of emojis. However, emojis are not redundant here; they achieve relevance by fostering the level of those attitudes and emotions respectively.

4. Another finding is that emojis are principally employed to convey a phatic (social) meaning by the participants of the three samples. This is ascribed to the prevalence of parallel emotion signal that is based on

achieving relevance by adding emojis to utterances where the intent is to highlight the emotions that are felt among interlocutors during interaction in a similar manner to the role played by body language in physical conversations.

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Appendix

A Chart of Iraqi Arabic Phonemic System

The following is a list of the phonemic symbols of the Iraqi Arabic. The list is adopted from Ghalib (1984: xii-xiii). Some modifications are provided for convenience and accessibility of typing.

1. Consonants

Symbol	Symbol in Arabic	Description	Example	Phonemic Transcription	English Equivalent
/ʔ/	ء	A Glottal Stop	أنام	/ʔana:m/	I sleep
/b/	ب	A Voiced Bilabial Plosive	بارد	/bɑ:rɪd/	cold
/t/	ت	A Voiceless Denti-alveolar Plosive	تعبان	/taʕba:n/	tired
/θ/	ث	A Voiceless Inter-dental Fricative	ثوب	/θɔ:b/	dress
/dʒ/	ج	A Voiced Palato-alveolar Affricate	جمل	/dʒɪmal/	camel
/tʃ/	چ	A Voiceless Palato-alveolar Affricate	چان	/tʃa:n/	was
/ħ/	ح	A Voiceless Pharyngeal Fricative	حديد	/ħadi:d/	iron
/x/	خ	A Voiceless Uvular Fricative	خير	/xeer/	good (n.)
/d/	د	A Voiced Denti-alveolar Plosive	دار	/da:r/	house
/ð/	ذ	A Voiced Inter-dental Fricative	ذاب	/ða:b/	melted
/r/	ر	A Voiced Alveolar Flap	رابح	/ra:bɪħ/	winner
/z/	ز	A Voiced Denti-alveolar Fricative	زيْت	/zeet/	oil
/s/	س	A Voiceless Denti-alveolar Fricative	سفر	/safar/	travel (n.)
/ʃ/	ش	A Voiceless Palato-alveolar Ficative	شنو	/ʃɪnu:/	what
/ṣ/	ص	A Voiceless Denti-alveolar Emphatic Fricative	صباح	/ṣaba:ħ/	morning
/ḍ/	ض	A Voiced Denti-alveolar Emphatic Plosive	ضابط	/ḍa:buṭ/	police officer
/ṭ/	ط	A Voiceless Denti-alveolar Emphatic Plosive	طفل	/ṭɪfɪl/	child
/ð̣ /	ظ	A Voiced Inter-dental Emphatic Fricative	ظِل	/ð̣ɪl/	shadow
/ʕ/	ع	A Voiced Pharyngeal Fricative	عسل	/ʕasal/	honey
/ġ/	غ	A Voiced Uvular Fricative	غابة	/ġa:bɑ/	jungle
/f/	ف	A Voiceless Labio-dental Fricative	فقير	/faqi:r/	poor
/q/	ق	A Voiceless Uvular Plosive	قفل	/quful/	lock
/k/	ك	A Voiceless Velar Plosive	كريم	/kari:m/	generous
/g/	گَ	A Voiced Velar Plosive	گَوُم	/gu:m/	stand up
/l/	ل	A Voiced Alveolar Lateral	ليل	/leel/	night
/ḷ/	ل	A Voiced Alveo-dental Lateral, Verlarized	شغل	/ʃuġuḷ/	work (n.)
/m/	م	A Voiced Bilabial Nasal	مُر	/mur/	bitter
/n/	ن	A Voiced Denti-alveolar Nasal	نسيت	/nɪseet/	I forgot
/h/	هـ	A Glottal Fricative	هلال	/hla:l/	new moon
/w/	و	A Voiced Velar Approximant	وردة	/wardah/	flower
/j/	ي	A Voiced Palatal Approximant	ينجح	/jɪndʒaħ/	he succeeds

2-Vowels

Symbol in IPA	Symbol in Arabic	Description	Example	Phonemic Transcription	English Equivalent
/ɑ/	◌َ	A Short half-open unrounded vowel	بَس	/bɑs/	only
/ɑ:/	ا	A Long Open front unrounded vowel	جامع	/ʔɪmːɑ:mɪʕ/	mosque
/ɪ/	◌ِ	A Short half-close Front with Lip-spreading Vowel	سِن	/sɪn/	tooth
/u/	◌ُ	A Short Half-close Back Rounded Vowel	مهم	/muhɪm/	important
/u:/	و	A Long Close Back Rounded Vowel	شوف	/ʃu:f/	look (v.)
/i:/	ﭘ	A Long Close Front with Lip-spreading Vowel	سمين	/sɪmi:n/	fat
/ee/	ﺑ	A Long Half-close to Half-open Front with Lip-spreading Vowel	ليش	/leeʃ/	why
/ɔ:/	و	A Long Half-close to Half-open Back Rounded Vowel	موز	/mɔ:z/	bananas