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The Add-Ons of Verbal Emoticons Into Facebook Walls: Categories, Locations, and Pragmatic Functions

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ABSTRACT

Facebook (FB) continues to stir the limelight and since it is a phenomenal social media platform, with users utilizing it to convey both spoken and nonverbal expressions, the researchers chose this site to investigate the rich repository of verbal emoticons. Anchored on three over-arching frameworks such as Technological Determinism Theory, Thematic Analysis, and Pragmatics attached to the notion of Speech Act (expressive act) Theory, 300 verbal texts (FB Posts) were used as corpus to investigate the occurrences of the iconic virtual emoticons as substitutions and extensions for verbal elements in Facebook statuses or wall posts of 60 purposively selected participants. This study identified the various classifications, positions, and functions of each emoticon based on the structures of the verbal texts in the data. It was revealed that the majority of the Facebook users preferred facial expressions and people emoticons over others. It was also found that most icons were frequently put towards the end of the verbal texts, and their conjoint function is to do the entire turn. This implies that most emoticons were applied to encompass the inclusive message expressed in the verbal transcripts.

INTRODUCTION

The current digital era has provided people access to a virtual community for social contact and global communication. Information technology connects everyone worldwide in a matter of seconds, which is expressly essential when the timely delivery of information is at stake. Some of the most requisite venues where communicative events take place include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, YouTube, academia.edu., among others (Herring, 2007). This revolutionary technology is dubbed as computer-mediated communication (CMC). As a result of this CMC innovation, it has altered the way people exchange information and messages by bringing in their digital presence in the virtual community. Besides, online communication has become the immediate sphere of people's global connectivity.

Analogous to this, social networking sites (SNSs) create multimodal of embedded communication to anyone who has an instant access to internet. SNSs have made it simple, rapid and appealing to share ideas, opinions, knowledge, and other bits of information. People can update their status, which represents what is going on in their minds. These statuses can reflect an individual's mood, success or failure, as well as their thoughts on movies, products, businesses and services. Additionally, the comments on the same can assist in gathering other people's opinion, resulting in an overwhelming and valuable piece of knowledge on a specific subject (Vashish, 2014).

Explicitly, Facebook is currently the largest computer-mediated social networking system that has gained widespread popularity in virtual communication. In the study of Theodoropoulou (2015), she claimed that Facebook is one of the most widely used online

social networks, through which people manage their communication with a wide range of contacts or friends, ranging from family members and classmates to work colleagues and popular cultural idols or other people they admire. Since its launching in 2004 by Zuckerberg, this renowned SNS allows its users to create their own online personal profiles and add a huge number of friends to remark on each other's pages or read each other's profiles. People use status updates to not only express their emotions, but also to share details about their daily lives, such as what they were doing or what was going on at that time. This illustrates how socialization patterns evolve as feelings, information, and ideas are shared. People utilize status updates as one strategy to make other network users aware of their presence. This feature not only keeps people linked, but it also strengthens the bonds of friendship between members (Ilyas, 2012).

With the growing fame of Facebook, the use of informal language and emoticons is fast expanding. The use of emoticons in text to indicate feelings has made it difficult for automated sentiment analysis tools to effectively read these graphical cues for emotion. It is for this reason that the researchers considered emoticons to be the focus of their investigation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An emoticon is a face expression made up of punctuation marks, letters, or other characters that is a combination of the words 'emotion' and 'icon.' Today, software such as Microsoft Word translates typographic emoticons into graphic ones, which are more expressive and frequently animated (Amaglobeli, 2000). It also covers graphic signs, such as smileys, which are most commonly used

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as iconic indicators of emotions transmitted over a communication channel. The first smiley face was created in 1982 by Scott Fahlman, a computer scientist at Carnegie Mellon University, and it represents eyes, a nose, and a smiling mouth. He reasoned that employing smile and frown text icons would make it easier for message board users to distinguish between serious and humorous posts. Emoticons are little graphics or diacritical symbol combinations. While adorning their Facebook statuses and comments, people may simply communicate themselves to their friends when they are happy, sad, in love, irritated, or experiencing just about any other emotions. They are able to select the emoticons that best suit their mood from a large range of emoticons. In electronic communication, Amaghlobeli (2012) identified three categories of emoticons. The typographic emoticon - :-) - is the initial type, made up of punctuation marks and other typographic symbols found on mobile phone's keypad or computer's keyboard. The graphic emoticons (😊), on the other hand, are graphics in GIF format that automatically transform typographic emoticons to graphic ones. The third type, verbal emoticons, or (Happy Smiley 😊), verbally represent graphic or typographic ones and are becoming more and more productive, similar to non-verbal smileys.

In contrast to the main creation of the emoticon, emojis were created in the late 1990s by NTT DoCoMo, a Japanese telecommunication company. Emoji is a contraction of *e* and *moji* to denote pictograph in English. Emoji, unlike emoticons, are real photographs of things like painted nails (💅) and a little whimsical ghost (👻). However, most existing literature regard emojis and emoticons as synonymous and associated to smiley faces. Facebook supports half of the 845 emojis that are available on iOS and Android, including heart/ love symbols, stars, signs, and animals. Once these are entered in Facebook, your friends see these colorful icons across all desktop, iPhone, and Android devices. This paper uses the term verbal emoticon in referring to the verbal type. Emojis and emoticons are two interchangeable terminologies for small graphics that abound on the internet, however, the researchers used the umbrella term emoticon for all sorts or types.

Significant also to note, in recent years, Facebook became subject of scholarly discussions and researches. While for some, the site provides mere entertainment; for others, Facebook is proving to be a valuable research tool and a medium for expression or documentation of language, peculiar behavior, personality, and emotions. Thus, the succeeding works related on Facebook and emoticons are also recognized.

Through the analysis of language styles on Facebook, Barazoval *et al.* (2012) investigated self-presentational and relational issues. The authors compiled a corpus of 79 participants' status updates, wall posts, and private messages. Based on the publicness and directedness of the interaction, these communications differed in some language style characteristics, showing variances in

underlying self-presentational and relational objectives. Positive emotion terms in status updates were connected to self-reported self-presentational concerns, indicating a purposeful use of positive emotions in public and nondirected communication via status updates. In public wall posts, language juxtaposition is linked to partner familiarity, but not in private communications, implying that linguistic immediacy signals act as markers to distinguish between more and less familiar partners. Walther *et al.* (2009) conducted two studies in which they used mock-up profiles that looked like Facebook accounts to present self-generated clues and other-generated clues about a Facebook user. The first experiment (N=115) looked at extraversion perceptions. Experiment shows that warranting and competing theories (negativity and additivity) are both found to be true. The second experiment (N=125) looked at the thoughts of physical attractiveness. Friends' comments took precedence over self-comments, proving that the warranting theory was correct. Boundary-setting research for warranting and the possible effects of social remarks on a range of new information forms are among the implications.

On the other hand, studies on the usage of verbal emoticons on Facebook were also reviewed to provide stronger support in this paper. One study was carried out by Herring (2010) to investigate the use of emoticons as indicators of emotion, non-emotional meanings, and illocutionary force. She pointed out that emoticons, in many circumstances, reflect the illocutionary power of the text to which they are linked, contributing to the pragmatic meaning of the text, and are thus an integral component of the linguistic communication channel. Herring's (2010) findings are backed up by Derks *et al.*'s (2007) study of secondary school pupils and their use of emoticons, which revealed that emotions serve to reinforce a message and raise the intensity of its intended meaning.

Macarro (2000) also studied emoticons in an actual sample of Facebook discussions to see what tasks they can serve in real-world situations and whether gender influences how they are utilized. Pragmatics (speech acts) and multimodality strategy have been used to achieve this target. The findings show that some emoticons are more versatile than others, as well as disparities in usage based on the users' gender. Vashisht & Thakur (2014) desired to demonstrate how emoticons naturally transmit sentiments and how people may leverage emoticons by manually creating an emoticon sentiment lexicon and then using finite state machines to determine the polarity of a sentence or paragraph. They tested the approach on 1,250 Facebook status updates and 2,050 Facebook comments, all of which include emoticons and have been manually annotated for sentiment. They identified the most widely used emoticons and grouped them according to the sentiment they intensify, which ultimately determines the sentence's polarity. They aimed to offer a method for doing sentiment analysis on text-based status updates and comments, ignoring all speech information

and detecting both positive and negative attitudes using only emoticons.

Other studies have been carried out to validate if the use of emoticons in the CMC is a potential niche for figuring out how the combined approach to pragmatics (speech acts) can be adopted for analysis. Ilyas & Khushi (2012) examined the communicative functions of Facebook status updates, including how identities were constructed and portrayed through language. Searle's Speech Act framework was used to investigate the status updates. The sample included 60 males and females between the ages of 18 and 24. A total of 171 status updates were collected over the course of five days, and the data was subsequently categorized using the coding system created. The findings found that expressive speech actions were used most frequently in generating status messages, followed by assertive and directive speech acts. Also, the data revealed a new type of poetic lyrics, and that by sharing feelings, information, and ideas, numerous socializing patterns arise.

Walter & Addario (2001) looked into a number of factors that influence the adoption of emoticons. An experiment was done to realize how three typical emoticons affected message interpretation. According to their findings, emoticons' contributions were overwhelmed by verbal content, but the negativity impact appeared to work in such a way that any negative message aspect affects message perception in the direction of the negative element.

It is assumed that in a stretch of language, emoticons can be positioned in various ways, however, to no avail of published research articles that would discuss this. Though, it is a different concept, in the case of syntactic positions of vocatives, according to Leech (1999), it can either be initial, medial, final, or stand-alone. These placement categories or locations are also used in the study of Agbayani (2022) when he analyzed the vocatives of Ferdinand E. Marcos in Philippine news articles. Leech (1999) puts forward that the position of vocatives within communicative units (C-units) are related to pragmatic functions.

Some writers' research has also offered a range of emoticon functions based on various criteria. Dresner & Herring (2010) looked into the functions as (a) Emotion indicators, mapped directly onto facial expression; (b) indicators of non-emotional meanings, mapped conventionally onto facial expressions; and (c) illocutionary force indicators that do not map conventionally onto a facial expression. Amaghlobeli (2012) investigated functions as (a) Additions of para-verbal elements to the message; (b) expressing redundancy; (c) acting as antiphrasis (when emoticons are used to contradict or annul the verbally expressed meaning); (d) acting as an entire turn (when emoticons serve the purpose of an entire message); and (e) functioning as syntactic markers (often serving as punctuation).

Other proposed varieties of functions include (a) Expressing emotion; (b) enhancing the verbal part of

the message (acting as a supporting emoticon); and (c) expressing humour (Luor, Wu, Lu, & Tao, 2010); (a) As devices of modesty; (b) as hedging devices; (c) to soften requests; (d) as positive politeness strategies; (e) in rapport building; (f) humour; (g) to help convey emotion, humanize online interaction; (h) emphatic use; and (i) lexical use (Kavanagh, 2010). Evaluative function (the addition of an emoticon allows others to interpret the meaning of an utterance); to express politeness and friendliness; and as backchannel devices (e.g. to give feedback) are inclusions of the array of emoticon functions along with expressing emotion; strengthening the message; regulating the interaction; and putting into perspective. Finally, accentuating or emphasizing the tone or meaning of the message, establishing the current mood or impression of the sender; and making the otherwise completely textual conversation creative and visually salient are the functions put forward by Xu *et al.*, 2007.

Other researchers have also emphasized that emoticons have distinct social roles beyond their propositional role, such as mirroring what happens in face-to-face interactions when interlocutors use nonverbal behavior to enhance the act of communication or the social connotation beyond the propositional content itself (Jibril & Abdullah, 2013). Ahern (2010) is right in pointing out that emotional states are not always tied to the content of an utterance: they may simply reflect how the speaker is feeling at the moment of the utterance without having much to do with what is being said. In these situations, it appears that establishing a link with the interlocutor and sharing analogous emotions is more crucial than expressing emotion toward the message's propositional substance.

In a holistic sense, it can be professed from the extant literature the presence of relatively rich studies that focused on Facebook platform, but only few researches have been done in the past which considered emoticons as a hot pick area to explore. Given Facebook's popularity, usefulness and wide reach; to date, there are still limited published references that directly zero in on the classifications, positions, and functions of emoticons in Facebook statuses and updates. As a result, further inquiry is required.

Research Questions

Generally, the emphasis of this research is on the examination of verbal emoticons as part and parcel of Facebook statuses and walls (Facebook posts) of users. Specifically, this paper sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the prevalent categories of emoticons used by the participants?
2. How are these emoticons normally positioned or located in the verbal texts?
3. How do these verbal emoticons pragmatically function to convey emotions?

Theoretical Framework

This study is fastened by three over-arching theories: Technological Determinism Theory (McLuhan, 1962); Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006); and Pragmatics attached to the notions of Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969).

On one hand, the Technological Determinism Theory (McLuhan, 1962) claims that new electronic media are altering people's thoughts, actions, and feelings. Throughout history, every communication channel or invention has shifted people's perceptions of themselves and the world around them whether it is oral, written, or electronic. According to his view, the dominating medium of communication has a greater impact on human behavior than the messages it contains. Because of their universality, he asserted that the channel is the message and that technical media have become staples or natural resources. Further, when new technological systems are established, the culture or society is quickly altered to reflect the senses required to operate the new technology. It predicts that as new media technology systems emerge, society will change and adapt to them (Griffin, 2003).

Thematic Analysis, on the other hand, is one of the most common forms of analysis in qualitative research, and it focuses on pinpointing and examining themes within data. Themes are patterns across data sets that are important to the description of a phenomenon and are associated to a specific research question. Thus, the themes become the categories for analysis. In addition, Thematic Analysis is performed through a six- phase coding process that results in the creation of established, meaningful patterns. These phases are familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report.

Lastly, the pragmatic functions of emoticons are based on the Speech Act Theory (Illocutionary Acts/ Force) of Austin (1962) and later extended by Searle (1969). The expressive act, as defined by Searle (1969), explains the type of emotions dispensed in the context because this study focuses on the many emotions conveyed by participants through the usage of iconic features such as verbal emoticons in their Facebook statuses and walls. This expressive act incorporates the emoticons' illocutionary force (intentions) in the verbal texts. Searle, like Austin, argues that meaning cannot be explained without considering the context of a speaking act. Statements, according to Searle, do not represent a proposition, but tokens or phrases in context do. Since emoticons are understood based on the context established in the

participants' Facebook statuses and walls, the expressive act elucidates how these emoticons contain a relevant portion of the extra- linguistic feature of the spoken or written texts as what the user intends by the emoticons s/ he employs. Moreover, when these emoticons are used by users to further deepen or highlight their emotions and the ideas they want to express, they serve a variety of pragmatic tasks. The expressive act and illocutionary force are illuminating in the Speech Act Theory, and Facebook serves as a social framework where people can freely and spontaneously communicate their inner thoughts.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The corpus of this study is lifted from the Facebook walls of the FB friends of one of the researchers posted during the months of January to March 2019. A descriptive-qualitative approach was implemented. The purposive sampling technique was applied because participants were taken as samples depending on their voluntary participation. One of the researchers first posted a status addressed to her friends requesting their consent whether they would allow the researchers to browse on their walls and extract the needed corpus for analysis. Respondents signaled their engagement by clicking the LIKE button. Only 60 participants (who were active users and who were spotted with emoticons on their walls) were chosen by the researchers from the 114 hits. The researchers browsed the participants' walls looking at their status updates and comment threads. A total of 300 verbal texts were collected, coded from FB Post #1 to FB Post #300, and each text was scrutinized in accordance with the study's objectives. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentage computations were utilized in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION




This section discusses the analysis and interpretations of the data acquired in this study. These findings, analyses, and interpretations are arranged according to the specific problems of this research and with the aid of the literatures and studies included in this study. Hence, it highlights the categories, locations and pragmatic functions of emoticons.

Categories of Verbal Emoticons

This study delves into the varied types of verbal emoticons prevalently employed by the participants in their Facebook statuses and posts. The analysis is organized according to the themes identified in the data, as summarized in Table 1 below, which shows the frequency of occurrences of each emoticon type.

Table 1: Categories of Verbal Emoticons

Categories	F	%
😊 Face Expressions & People	745	74.13
🐾 Animals & Nature	95	9.45
🍔 Food & Drink	45	4.48
🏀 Activities/Events	41	4.08

 Travels & Places	41	4.08
 Objects	25	2.49
 Symbols	13	1.29
Total	1,005	100.00

It can be gleaned from Table 1 that from the 300 texts, a total of 1,005 verbal emoticons are used. Of these, 745 or 74.13% are face expressions and people emoticons, accounting for three-fourths of the entire usage. The second and third biggest percentages are documented by animals and nature as well as food and drink with 95 (9.45%) and 45 (4.48%), respectively. This is closely followed by activity, and travel and places, both have an equal frequency of 41 (4.08%). The least frequent categories are objects (25 or 2.49%) and symbols (13 or 1.29%).

Face Expressions and People

The purposeful usage of face expressions, such as 😊, 😊, and 😊, is consistent with findings of Derks *et al.* (2008), who suggest that emoticons serve as a form of emotional punctuation in online communication, enhancing the expression of emotion and aiding in the interpretation of the sender's feelings. The prevalence of these emoticons in Facebook posts aligns with the idea that social media users often engage in self-presentation, aiming to project certain emotions or states of being to their audience (Walther & D'Addario, 2001). The inclusion of people-related emoticons (e.g., 👤 and 👤) alongside specific lexical references to individuals further underscore the intent to reinforce the message through repetition, a technique known to strengthen the perceived importance or emotional weight of a statement (Jibril & Abdullah, 2013). This suggests that the participants are comfortable with publicly displaying their emotions and opinions. The examples below illustrate these:

Ang pogi talaga ni Sir Janus (Sir Janus is so handsome) 😊 😊 😊 😊 😊 (FB Post #2)

So often you find that the students you're trying to INSPIRE are the ones that end up inspiring you 😊 👤 (FB Post #47)

Coz we we're indeed happy. 😊 (FB Post #233)

Animals and Nature

The accessory of animal and nature emoticons may be reflective of the participants' attempts to express physical attributes or body shape metaphorically, which supports Herring & Dainas (2020) observation that visual metaphors are commonly employed in online communication to convey complex ideas succinctly. Additionally, these emoticons may serve a referential function, allowing users to describe their interactions with the environment or their observations of nature, as supported by Thompson & Foulger (2018), who note that such imagery often conveys a sense of place or environmental context.

They often judge you because of what they only see

outside. 🐼 (FB Post #33)

Ang hirap na magpapayat! (Losing weight is hard) 🍔 🍔 🍔 (FB Post #54)

Sunflowers 🌻 🌻 with my sunshine 😊 (FB Post #134)

Food and Drink

Emoticons related to food and drink often serve to supplement the verbal content of the posts, providing specific descriptions or enhancing the sensory appeal of the text. This is in congruence with Danesi's (2016) findings, which indicate that food-related symbols in digital communication often serve a dual purpose of depicting the actual items and conveying the social context in which these items are consumed. The usage of such emoticons may also evoke a communal experience, as sharing food images can be a way of building social bonds online (Katsuno & Yano, 2002).

Merienda po tayo. (Let's have snacks) 🍷 🍷 (FB Post #142)

Ang batang mahilig kumain, walang pinipiling pagkain. (The child who loves eating, chooses nothing.) 🍗 🍗 🍗 (FB Post #159)

Walking in our yard while waiting for my bacon and rice!!! 🍷 🍷 🍷 (FB Post #176)

Activities/Events

Facebook has become a platform, allowing people to share to a public sphere their life's events and activities. Emoticons related to activities or events, such as 🎓 for graduation or 🎉 for celebrations, serve to visually summarize and highlight these experiences. This is parallel to the findings of Lu *et al.* (2016), who suggest that such symbols are often used to convey enthusiasm and to mark milestones in the digital space, making them more memorable both for the poster and their audience.

This is it pansit, after 4 years 🎓 🎓 (FB Post #168)

Swimming time 🏊 🏊 🏊 (FB Post #197)

Happy birthday sissy Rizalyn Anastacio Fradejas! 🎉 🎉 🎉 (FB Post #228)

In order to succeed, we must first believe that we can. 🎓 (FB Post 279)

Travel and Places

Travel and place-related emoticons are frequently used by participants to share their travel experiences or convey a sense of nostalgia. This practice is supported by research indicating that travel-related symbols are often used in social media to evoke sense of adventure and to document one's journeys for public sharing (Gretzel & Yoo, 2013). The use of such emoticons can enhance the emotional impact of the post by associating it with specific locations (e.g., church) or travel experiences.

Good to be back at my home church 🏡 (FB Post #54)

Objects

Object emoticons are employed by participants to express their relationship with material possessions or to highlight significant items in their lives. This reflects the findings of Stark & Crawford (2015), arguing that such symbols in digital communication often represent status, ownership, or personal achievements. The use of these emoticons may also serve to visually communicate the importance of certain objects in the participants' daily lives.

Bag ang nagdala (The bag says it all) 🛍️ (FB Post #60)

Here's one of the funniest scenes in StarMagic Recital this afternoon with guest actors from ABS-CBN 📺 🎭 (FB Post #112)

Our little Jolly Managers 🧐 🧑 🧒 🧑 🧒 (FB Post #156)

Picture time 📷 (FB Post #221)

Symbols

Symbol emoticons show a meagre percentage across

the dataset, implying that participants do not use this so much. Nonetheless, they still play a role in emphasizing specific points or ideas. As suggested by Dresner & Herring (2010), symbolic emoticons usually function as visual reinforcements of verbal messages, particularly in contexts where the user wishes to emphasize a word or concept. This is illustrated by a student who shared school-related concerns and another participant who emphasized a life principle by adding a symbolic image. The sparse use of these emoticons may indicate that participants reserve them for instances where they wish to make a strong or clear statement.

Super windang na ako sa pagsosolve. (I am very confused in solving.) 🧐 + - × ÷ (FB Post #32)

If people are trying to bring you DOWN 📉...it means that you are ABOVE them. (FB Post #185)

Locations of Verbal Emoticons in the Verbal Text

Table 2 below summarizes the positions of each emoticon in every verbal pale of the text.

Table 2: Locations of Verbal Emoticons

Locations	F	%
End	226	75.33
Medial-End	59	19.67
Medial	12	4.00
Front-Medial-End	1	0.33
Front-Medial	1	0.33
Front	1	0.33
Total	300	100.00

The table shows that among the various locations of emoticon in the verbal plane of the text, 226 (75.33%) of them are found in the end position; while the least position and so far, only one item each is spotted in the front, front-medial-end, and front-medial positions.

Final Position (End)

Emoticons most often appear at the end of a sentence, either with or in place of standard sentence-final punctuation marks. In this position, emoticons regularly replace periods and sometimes exclamation marks, but never question mark. It is also noted that using emoticons at the end of sentence usually comes in series or multiples. This positioning suggests that emoticons are used to intensify the emotions expressed at the end of the sentence (Derks *et al.*, 2007; Dresner & Herring, 2010). This is evident in the following examples:

to God always be the glory...thank you Lord...we know we can't do it without Your guidance...we owe everything to You 🙏 🙏 🙏 (FB Post #133)

God is so good 🙏 🙏 🙏 🙏 🙏 (FB Post #126)

Congratulations Audrey 🎉 🎉 🎉 (FB Post #111)

Medial-End Position

The combination of middle and end position of emoticons shows that they are used as transitions

(middle) from the initial idea to additional information and punctuation marks (both middle and end). This is evident in the examples below, where emoticons facilitate the transition between ideas while also enhancing the emotional tone (Skovholt, Gronning, & Kankaanranta, 2014).

Happy Birthday ate Yang! 🎂 🎂 🎂 🎂 🎂 'di ka na teenager! Haha. #bente na! 🤔 Thank you for being a friend/ate. I love you Ate! 🙏 God bless. (FB Post #13)

Happy birthday sister 🎂 🎂 Yan lang nakayanan kung lutuin para sa kaarawan mo (It is the only food I was able to prepare for your birthday). Godbless and good health 🙏 🙏 (FB Post #69)

Medial Position

The use of emoticons at the middle of sentence may reinforce or intensify emotions depicted by the initial sentence (Yus, 2014). This placement can be seen in the following examples:

Nakakaproud kayo guys! Galing! (You are someone to be proud of) To God be the glory 🙏 🙏 🙏 Salamat sa lahat ng support niyo. (Thank you for your support) (FB Post #51)

sa throwback nalang ako payat mga bes. (It is only in throwback that I am slim) 🙏 🙏 🙏 huhuhu bat nahalungkat ko pa to? (huhuhu why did I find this?) (FB

Post #86)

Initial Position

It is rare for emoticons to be placed at the beginning of a sentence. When used, they typically serve to intensify the initial message of a longer utterance or discourse. This is demonstrated in FB Post #72, where the flying kiss emoji reinforces the introductory phrase “our yearly reunion” (Gajadhar & Green, 2005):

our yearly reunion, too bad Abby Batoon your not here..dont worry, bawe kame sayo (we'll make it up to you) (FB Post #72)

Front-Medial Position

The front-medial position combination of emoticons is also rare among participants. In FB Post 181, the repetitive and sequential use of emoticons reinforces the idea conveyed in the text (Luor *et al.*, 2010):

Hello
S U M M E R
Gravy nemen Eng init (It is so hot) (FB Post 181)

Front-Medial-End Position

The use of emoticons in the front-medial-end position within the same sentence is also rare. In FB Post #185, the presence of emoticons in these positions does not convey the same meaning. The placement suggests that different emotions are associated with different ideas within the same stream of utterance (Vandergriff, 2013)

Thank you Lord for creating handsome and beautiful people I enjoyed. hahaha

Pragmatic Functions of Verbal Emoticons

Table 3: Pragmatic Functions of Verbal Emoticons

Functions	F	%
Entire Turn	169	56.33
Addition of Para-Verbal Elements of the Message	84	28.00
Redundancy	33	11.00
Syntactic Marker	8	2.67
Anti-Phrasis	6	2.00
Total	300	100.00

Table 3 shows the distribution of emoticon according to function in the verbal plane of the text.

The most common function expressed by an emoji, as seen in the table, is the entire turn. As explained by Amaglobeli (2012), this occurs when emoticons serve the purpose of conveying the entire message. Typically, the emoticon is placed at the end of the text, summarizing the message and eliciting the specific emotion conveyed. The extract below illustrates this description:

When a wife has a loving husband it is easily seen on her face. (FB Post #99)

The first emoticon used, the “face with stuck-out tongue and winking eye” , is a face with one closed eye, one wild-looking open eye, open mouth and tongue sticking out. The second emoticon is the “face throwing a kiss” , featuring a winking eye, puckering lips, and floating heart, which often suggests friendliness or mild flirtation. The third is the “thumbs up” (a fist with thumb pointing straight up towards the sky), commonly used to indicate that everything is good or fine (Emojipedia, n.d.). These three emoticons, which are considered positive and enthusiastic, connote happiness and satisfaction, thereby elaborating on the message that the subject (the wife) expresses happiness and contentment with his husband. Give me faith to trust what You say that You are good and your love is great. (FB Post #127)

In this extract, the use of the “person with folded hands” and the “person raising both hands” affirms that the subject is expressing strong faith to what he is

referring to as You (God) in the text. The raising of both hands here indicates something very positive, expressing gratitude and bliss for God’s goodness and love (Ge & Herring, 2018).

The family's Champ had arrived home. You made us all proud bunso. What is my family that you had been so good Oh Lord. (FB Post #130)

The use of “raise hands”, “folded hands”, “index pointing up”, and “two hearts” indicates feelings of excitement, exuberance, praising the Lord, and love. These emoticons summarize the emotion of pride and gratitude that the family feels for the return and achievements of their “Champ” (Derks *et al.*, 2007).

The next common function of the emoticon in the verbal text is the addition of para-verbal elements of the message. According to Amaglobeli (2012), this function is evident when the verbal plane of the text lacks information about non-verbal elements, which the emoticons then provide. This is illustrated in the example below.

Mangga is real.. (FB Post #215)

The very literal idea of the verbal text simply states that “mangga” (mango) exists. However, considering the pragmatic notion of the text, it could be inferred that “mango is real...” denotes a situation where the user is expressing amazement or quirkiness, potentially indicating that they are dealing with some difficulty or are excited about finally tasting a mango (Vandergriff, 2013). The use of the half-smile wink face adds layers of meaning, giving the message a playful or quirky tone, and

enhancing the verbal expression.

This implies that emoticons can have an extra-linguistic function, as users can also utilize them to represent additional message beyond the verbal text. The addition of paralinguistic elements through emoticons extends ideas and helps augment verbal expression, serving as a logical connection to the message brought by the text (Gawne & McCulloch, 2019). According to Derks *et al.* (2007), users may experience a wide range of emotions that they encode in emoticons, with readers ascribing various feelings when encountering these symbols attached to a verbal message. Although emoticons are used more deliberately than actual nonverbal behavior, they allow for greater control over the conveyed message. *Redundancy* also ranks as a common function of emoticons. Amaghlobeli (2012) describes redundancy as the direct correspondence between emoticons and verbal components when emoticons express the same emotion as the verbal text. The following extracts illustrate this:

Swimming time 🏊🏊 (FB Post #197)

Give LOVE everyday!! ❤️❤️ (FB Post #177)

Galingan mo sa pagluto Chef [Give your best in cooking chef] (FB Post #166)

In FB Post #197, the emoticon used is a “man swimming freestyle” 🏊, reflecting the activity described in the text. FB Post #177 contains a “heart” ❤️, symbolizing love, which is also mentioned in the text. In FB Post #166, the word “chef” is represented by the “chef” emoji 👨🍳. In all these cases, the emoticon reinforces the verbally expressed emotion, emphasizing the message and making its meaning clearer (Ge & Herring, 2018). Studies also pointed out that emoticons function as expressions of politeness, markers of illocutionary force, or boosters of rapport (Skovholt *et al.*, 2014).

The *syntactic marker function*, though less frequent, serves as a punctuation mark. This can be seen in the examples below.

God is so good 🙏🙏❤️🙏🙏 (FB Post #126)

Congratulations Audrey 🎉🎉🎉 (FB Post #111)

When Doro is somewhere in the Philippines 🇵🇭🇵🇭🇵🇭. (FB Post #105)

In these examples, the emoticons used after the verbal text act as punctuation marks, specifically as periods. This suggests that emoticons can function not only as iconic representations of emotions but also as syntactic elements that complete the structure of the text (Gawne & McCulloch, 2019).

The *anti-phrasis* function, although less frequent, occurs when emoticons are used to contradict or annul the verbally expressed meaning. This is found in the following: I love you 😞 (FB Post #67)

feeling teenager..haha 😞😞😞 (FB Post #75)

In FB Post #67, the verbal text “I love you” is contradicted by the “worried face” 😞, creating an ironic message. Similarly, in FB Post #75, the expressed laughter “haha” is contradicted by the use of “face with closed eyes, relaxed slightly open mouth, eyebrows and a snout bubble” 😞, indicating irony. This suggests that

users sometimes employ emoticons to create a stylistic form of expression using irony, encouraging readers to critically analyze the extended meaning conveyed by the emoticon (Dresner & Herring, 2010). The emoticon here also functions to represent verbal irony, further enriching the text’s connotative meaning.

CONCLUSION

Emoticons come in various depictions, positions, functions, and specific emotions are embodied in different ways. Facebook users depict a sense of openness and expressiveness as they view Facebook as their personal journal and as an extension of their real world. They tend to use face expressions and people in conveying their messages to point out their intended thoughts behind their elicited moods and sensations. Most of the time, the participants in this study positioned the emoticons at the end of their verbal texts because the main function of these icons is to take the entire turn to best serve the overall meaning of the text. That is, emoticons are used not only as signs of emotion, but rather as indications of the illocutionary force of the textual utterances that they supplement. These symbols also carry a significant feature of the verbal text they are attached to, and what the user intends by what she or he encodes. However, further studies may be done to further substantiate the findings. It is suggested that the employment of multiple methods (i.e., interview and survey) for triangulation purposes may be considered so that the emergence of other functions of emoticons may be realized through direct involvement of the emoticon users.

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