

Exploring WhatsApp Emoji from Tamizh Culture

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24321/2395.3810.201827>

Abstract

Emojis are evolving as universal language as it is embodied with text messaging. It emphasises the text message as what we could do in interpersonal communication with postures, gestures etc. A set of different symbols available in WhatsApp to add emotions to the text. A symbol is not only representing an object or human emotion, it is part of a culture. People from different culture use different meaning to the symbols and they give their own meaning to a particular symbol which may be differ to another culture. This paper explores the WhatsApp Emojis from Tamizh Culture. Survey method is adopted in order to analyse the usages of WhatsApp Emojis among college students in Chennai.

Keywords: WhatsApp, Emoji, Thamizh Culture, Symbol

Introduction

Communication is essential of human being. The channel or medium of communication is embedded with social norms or identity of people particularly the symbols which we use in communication has its cultural value. "It is necessary ... that we ground ourselves firmly in our culture, beliefs and ethos. We need not copy the western models blindly" (IGNOU, 2005b, p. 24). The business model of communication imposes the western culture to India and the communication devices produced in western countries. Naturally it carries all the possibilities of western culture itself and less of other culture in terms of symbols. In India Initially the mobile phones came up with English later the local languages are setup. The relationship between culture and communication is vital part to understand different culture (Adhikary Nirmala Mani, 2015).

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is an Instant Message servicing mobile application founded by Brian Acton and Jan Koum in 2009 acquired by Facebook in 2014. WhatsApp allows users to send text messages and share images, audio, video, document and

location. The video and audio calling feature also available in WhatsApp. WhatsApp has 2823 emoji as of June 2018 according to emojiopedia.org.

Emoji

Emoji is Japanese word, 'e' stands for picture and 'moji' stands for face or character. It is used to represent an emotion or an idea as a small icon in various digital communication platforms. Japanese artist Shigetaka Kurita developed first Emoji in 1999 for DOCOMO. Later many mobile companies adopted Emoji in Japan. In 2010 Emoji adopted to Unicode format which lead popularising Emoji across globe. Five skin tones added for Emoji in 2015. Emojiopedia website gives regular updates of Emoji.

Emoticon is used to express emotions before the development of Emoji. Emoticon is understood that the symbols convey a specific human expression. For example combination :-) is a representation of happy face. The first emoticon introduced by Scott Elliott Fahlman it came in use in Internet in 1982 (Didi Sukyadi, Sri Setyarini, Ade Irma Junida 2011). In 1881 Puck Magazine used emoticon which is considered first use of emoticon in print media.

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How to cite this article: Sathish R. Exploring WhatsApp Emoji from Tamizh Culture. *J Adv Res Jour Mass Comm* 2018; 5(4): 109-111.

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As the extended version of emotion Emoji is now in use of almost all the digital platforms. It has been adopted business too. Burger Burger invited customers through sms using of Burger Emoji. Emoji masks are produced by an American company and they got good profit.

It is now common to use the Emoji to rate any services offered on Internet. We can find that online newspaper organization, blogs giving Emoji to use in comment section of an article.

Review of Literature

The Indonesian *Kaskus* emoticon is different from western emoticons. It has unipq cultural value. It has different colour Emoji for different emotions for example *berduka* a block colored man (symbol) carries a wilted red rose denotes the feeling of Sad and Agony.

(Didi Sukyadi, Sri Setyarini, Ade Irma Junida, 2011). The Indonesian community at Lunge forum aware about emoticon and its intended meaning and they used it effectively in online communication. The Emoji and emoticons do not their own meaning, it is highly contextual. The meaning of Emoji depends on the situation and the person's mood. Every individual may interpret differently the same Emoji (Caroline Kelly 2015). In the sentence formation and texting the signs (Emoji) played vital role and it is recommended that the conversationalist should use more emojis as it adds emotional function in their conversation (Otemuyiwa Abosede Adebola, 2017). The students should know the meanings of Emoji/Smiley in order to avoid miscommunication in their digital communication

(SUBASHINI ANNAMALA, SOBIHATUN NUR ABDUL SALAM 2017). As the Emoji evolves as universal language it is needy that we have to know the meanings of it.

Objectives of the Study

To study the use of WhatsApp Emoji among college students in Chennai.

To understand the Emoji use in different contexts.

To understand the Emoji from Indian context particularly form Tamil culture

Methodology

Convenience sampling method is adopted for data collection. Survey questionnaire were distributed to 200 undergraduate students in Chennai. The questions contain their demographic details and 81 Emoji from people section of Emoji keyboard attached with question. Students were asked to write the meaning or situation to the Emoji which they use frequently. They are asked to do not answer to the Emoji which they never used.

The Emoji set of WhatsApp is taken for analyses of from the perspective of Tamil culture.

Limitations

The data are collected in the method of convenience sampling hence it cannot be generalized to overall population.

Findings

Out of 200 questionnaires 15 questionnaires were not answered to all questions and it is not counted for data analysis. Of 185 students 60% students are using more WhatsApp more than

3 years. 28 % of students are new user of WhatsApp and 12 % of students are false under user of 1 year to 3 years. 15% of students use WhatsApp more than 5 hours of a day. 80% of students use WhatsApp 3- 5 hours of a day. 5% of students said that they use WhatsApp less than 1 hour of a day. 20% percent of students should not turn off mobile data during class hours, they check WhatsApp if they have got chance during class.

90% of students answered that their most frequent used Emoji is laughter smiley and next is simple happy face smiley. Out of 81 questions 70% of students answered for less than 20 Emoji. 18% of students answered 30 to 40 Emoji. 12% of students answered more than 40 Emoji. 80% of students answered that they don't the exact meaning of smiley that they use in the conversation. Of the total answered Emoji 90% of answers are wrong.

Discussion

Students from Chennai have less aware of meanings of WhatsApp Emoji. The students should have more awareness of WhatsApp Emoji.

WhatsApp Emoji contains eight categories: Smileys & People, Animals & nature, Food and Drink, Activity, Travel & Place, Objects, Symbols and Flags. Smileys have the human emotions. There are 82 Emoji which has variety of emotions of human face. The emotions of humans are common of all human being. The remaining of this category has people and the objects. There are no Emoji which has Dhoti, Saree, Half Saree and other clothing culture of Tamil Culture. All the objects and clothing are western but one Japanese female coat is found in this. The second category has animals which is common of the globe. The other categories also have elements of western countries. The fact that there is no culture symbol available in the WhatsApp Emoji.

Conclusion

The symbols are identification of culture in a perspective.

Globalization leads the unification of culture but the local culture is fading away in the case of WhatsApp Emoji. The western domination is more vibrant in all the sectors as well as symbol and image portrayal.

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Date of Submission: 2018-09-19

Date of Acceptance: 2018-10-01