LINGUOPRAGMATIC AND COGNITIVE STUDY OF EMOJIS

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Abstract. This article provides an in-depth analysis of emojis in modern digital communication from linguopragmatic and cognitive perspectives. The study explores the semantic, pragmatic, and cognitive properties of emojis, their role in modifying speech acts, and their participation in meaning construction. Particular attention is paid to their discourse functions and cognitive processing mechanisms. The findings suggest that emojis are evolving into a new semiotic system that increasingly resembles traditional linguistic units.

Keywords: emoji, linguopragmatics, cognitive linguistics, digital discourse, semiotics, speech act, communication.

Introduction: In the 21st century, the rapid development of digital technologies has significantly transformed the nature of human communication. Computer-mediated communication (CMC), unlike face-to-face interaction, lacks nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, and intonation. This limitation creates potential ambiguity and misinterpretation in message transmission. To compensate for this deficiency, users increasingly rely on visual elements, particularly emojis. Initially developed in Japan, emojis have now become a global communication tool. They serve not only to express emotions but also to clarify meaning, reduce ambiguity, and signal communicative intentions.

The aim of this study is to investigate the linguopragmatic and cognitive features of emojis and to analyze their functional role in digital communication.

Methodology: This study employs a combination of qualitative and analytical approaches, including: functional linguistic analysis**,** discourse analysis**,** cognitive modeling**,** interpretative analysis. The data for analysis were collected from digital communication platforms such as Telegram and Instagram, as well as from recent scholarly studies on emoji use.

Linguopragmatic Features of Emojis: From a linguopragmatic perspective, emojis play a crucial role in shaping meaning within communication. They function as tools that modify, reinforce, or even replace linguistic elements. The main pragmatics-based functions of emojis include tone modification. Emojis influence how a message is interpreted by adding emotional nuance. For example, the same sentence may appear friendly with 😳 and aggressive with 😖. Illocutionary force enhancement: emojis can strengthen the force of a speech act, making requests, statements, or commands more expressive and effective. Expression of stance and attitude: they indicate the speaker’s attitude, such as approval, irony, sarcasm, or criticism. Reduction of ambiguity: Emojis help clarify meaning in contexts where text alone may be insufficient. Importantly, the interpretation of emojis is highly context-dependent and may vary across cultural backgrounds.

Results: Cognitive Nature of Emojis. From a cognitive linguistics perspective, emojis activate mental concepts and facilitate rapid interpretation. As visual stimuli, they are processed quickly and efficiently by the human brain. The cognitive processing of emojis involves several stages: visual perception, cognitive interpretation, contextual integration, emotional response. Emojis contribute to

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cognitive economy by allowing complex meanings to be conveyed in a concise and efficient form. This makes communication faster and more effective. Moreover, emojis automatically trigger conceptual associations. For instance, the 💝 emoji typically activates concepts such as love, affection, or emotional warmth.

Semantic and Semiotic Properties of Emojis. Semantically, emojis can function as independent carriers of meaning. Some scholars consider them a form of “visual language,” while others argue that their meaning remains dependent on verbal context. From a semiotic perspective, emojis represent hybrid signs combining: iconic features (visual resemblance), indexical features (contextual reference), symbolic features (conventional meaning). This hybrid nature makes emojis a unique phenomenon within digital communication systems.

Emojis and Speech Act Theory. Recent studies suggest that emojis actively participate in speech act realization. They can reinforce the intended meaning of a message, function independently as communicative acts, signal pragmatic categories such as sincerity, politeness, or irony. This demonstrates that emojis are not merely decorative elements but meaningful components of communication.

Discussion: The findings indicate that emojis have evolved beyond simple emotional markers. They now play an essential role in constructing meaning**,** shaping discourse**,** activating cognitive processes.

Furthermore, emojis are increasingly used in various domains, including marketing, education, and psychology, highlighting their growing communicative importance.

Conclusion: Emojis represent a new linguistic and cognitive phenomenon in digital communication. Their multifunctional nature allows them to perform complex roles in meaning-making and interaction. It is likely that emojis will continue to develop and may eventually become a more structured component of language systems. Future research should focus on their role in intercultural communication, translation, and language teaching.

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