



Functions of Using Emoji in Japanese Sentences in Twitter

Via Luviana Dewanty^{1,*}, Ghaida Farisyah²

¹Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia

²Universitas Garut

*Corresponding author. Email: luvianadewanty@upi.edu

ABSTRACT

Emoji comes from a Japanese word, literally meaning "image letter", which is a small digital image or pictorial symbol that represents something, feeling, or concept used in text messages and other electronic communications. This study aims to describe the role and function of emojis used by Japanese idols as Japanese-language Twitter users. This study relied on data sourced from Twitter accounts of Japanese idols who use Twitter to convey messages/news to fans, which amounted to 368 tweets, and which were posted within 1 month. 96 types of emoji were classified into 4 roles and functions: Pictograms (symbols that represent concrete objects), Ideograms (symbols that represent concepts or ideas about something), Emoticons (symbols that represent feelings), and Phatic expressions (expressions to establish or maintain contact between the communicator and the communicant). The analysis shows that the roles and functions ranking of emojis which were found include (1) Phatic expressions, (2) Emoticon, (3) Ideograms, and (3) Pictograms. The top 3 most frequent emojis were ✨ (Glitter/Shiny), 🙏 (Praying Hands) and 🔥 (Fire). Through their messages, news, and daily activities, Japanese idols most often use emojis as an expression to establish/maintain contact between idols and their fans.

Keywords: *Emoji, Japanese sentences, Social media, Twitter.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Emoji literally comes from Japanese, consisting of "e" which means image and "moji" which means letter (Li & Yang, 2018). Most of these types of emoji are inspired by the Japanese cultural and visual conventions such as manga, anime, kanji, and others (Barbieri, Ronzano & Saggion, 2016). Wolny (2016) stated that Emoji was originally used in the exchange of electronic messages in Japan, until it eventually spread outside Japan. Emojis are a huge success among mobile phone users in Japan, giving rise to intense competition among cell phone companies to design the most attractive emoji sets (Daliot-Bul, 2010; Na'aman, Provenza & Montoya, 2017). In its development, until now the updated emoji (emoji v14.0) consists of 1853 characters (Davis & Edberg, 2015; Unicode Consortium, 2022). Li, Chang, Chng, and See (2019) stated that there are 8 general categories of emoji, namely Smileys & People, Animals & Nature, Food & Drink, Travel Place, Activities, Objects, Symbols and Flags.

Emoji were designed as nonverbal information to convey emotions through facial expressions and other physical indicators that were expressed in the form of images (Dresner & Herring, 2010; Sakai, 2013; Maíz-Arevalo, 2015). Emoji has become part of the text structure that can convey messages with intonation, pauses, and visuals so as to assist the recipient in reading the message (Na'aman, Provenza & Montoya, 2007). 2017; Arafah & Hasyim, 2019; Al-Rawi et al., 2020; Alshboul & Rababah, 2021). The use of emoji as a delivery of emotions and expressions in text or electronic messages can clarify the meaning of the message/text, so that it plays a role in filling the absence of nonverbal cues in written communication (Thompson & Filik, 2016). There are also roles and functions of emoji, namely, as Pictograms (symbols that represent concrete objects), Ideograms (symbols that represent concepts or ideas about something), Emoticons (symbols that represent feelings), and Phatic expressions (expressions). to establish or maintain contact between the communicator and the communicant (Pavalanathan & Eisenstein, 2015; Stark & Crawford, 2015; Barbieri, Ronzano & Saggion,

2016; Wolny, 2016; Wood & Ruder, 2016; Li & Yang, 2018).

The popularity of emoji can improve users' skills in managing interactions in internet/online-based social life such as on social media such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and other platforms. Emojis have become a common way to communicate emotions in online social media because emojis are used widely in various social contexts so that they can function to detect emotions and feelings from text or writing (Wood & Ruder, 2016). Without emojis, most Internet users cannot understand the emotions, attitudes, and intentions of the sender of the message (Thompson & Filik, 2016).

One of the social media that uses emojis in the communication process is Twitter. As one of the largest social media platforms, around 19.6% of tweets on Twitter contain emojis (Wahyuni & Budi, 2018). Twitter allows users to send short text messages to inform their followers about current activities, feelings, and emotions that are being felt and also to publicly voice opinions and attitudes of users on various topics (Pavalanathan & Eisenstein, 2016). They found that communication on social media in the form of short texts such as Twitter is known to lack non-verbal cues. This causes context, intentions, and emotional states to be difficult to represent, making it difficult to provide contextual information to readers. Lebduska (2014) stated that emojis are culturally and contextually bound, so when reading tweets on Twitter, each user may have different references or understandings of the context of the tweet. However, Takahashi, Oishi, and Shimada (2017) assert that communication between emoji users will not end in misunderstandings if users can interpret emoji well. Therefore, to compensate for the absence of facial expressions as a tool to show emotions or feelings, emojis in the form of emoticons and pictograms are used on Twitter (Dresner & Herring, 2010).

As in the research of Li and Yang (2018), discussed the role and function of emojis on chat application in China. It was found that the role of emoji was used as a marker of emotion, while the function and efficiency of the emoji form itself led to differences in the preferences of each user. The next research is emojis on Facebook. Alshboul and Rababah (2021) discussed the functions of emoji that are often used and how emoji are used by male and female. It was found that women used emoji more often when sending messages, expressing emotions, interacting online and responding to messages according to the recipient of the message (Alshboul & Rababah, 2021). In Wahyuni and Budi (2018)'s research, they analyzed the use of linguistic features such as punctuation, word count, adjectives, and semantic features (Wahyuni & Budi, 2018). In addition, research conducted by Barbieri, Ronzano, and Saggion (2016) which analyses the assessment of 10 million tweets that have been posted by users in the USA. Twitter user

assessment as well as quantitative and qualitative evaluations to determine the similarity of emoji functions and their relationship (Barbieri, Ronzano & Saggion, 2016). Several studies on emoji have explored the relationship between text and emoji such as semantic meaning analysis, linguistic features and lexicon. the role and function of emoji, as well as the construction of emoji use based on sex and gender identity.

This study analyses the role and function of tweets tweeted by Japanese idols to their fans. Japan, which created the first emoji, has used emoji in every social interaction such as the exchange of electronic messages (chat), writing topics on social media, and the like by various groups (Wahyuni, & Budi, 2018; Li, Chng, Chong & See, 2019). Including the interaction between Japanese idols and their fans. From various accounts and topics on Twitter, this study analyses tweets containing emoji belonging to the Twitter accounts of Japanese idols. Japanese idols convey their messages, news and daily activities to fans via Twitter. Tweets analysed are tweets belonging to Japanese idols with a total of 268 tweets, which were posted within 1 month. This study aims to describe the 4 roles and functions of emoji in tweets on Japanese idol accounts as Japanese-language twitter users. The 4 roles and functions of emoji referred to are in accordance with the roles and functions of emoji proposed by Stark and Crawford (2015), namely as Pictograms, Ideograms, Emoticons, and Phatic Expressions.

2. METHOD

Emojis originating from Japanese continue to be used for online textual interactions by various levels of society including idols. This study examines tweets containing emojis belonging to the Twitter account of a Japanese idol agency from LDH (Love, dreams, happiness to the world). In this study, emoji were categorized and analyzed based on 4 roles of emoji functions, namely pictograms, ideograms, emoticons, and phatic expressions. data is displayed based on 3 emojis that appear frequently (Wolny, 2016; Wood & Ruder, 2016; Stark & Crawford, 2015; Wahyuni & Budi, 2018; Muzakky, Hidayat, & Alek, 2021; Aull, 2019). This study analyses the role and function of emoji on 7 Japanese idol accounts that convey messages, news, and their daily activities to fans as well as online communication between fellow idols. Tweets found and used as analysis data amounted to 268 tweets, which were posted within 1 month.

The first step taken to classify the data is to collect tweets that have emoji elements from the beginning and the month of July 2022. After being collected, emoji are classified according to the 4 roles and functions of emoji, namely, as Pictograms, Ideograms, Emoticon and Phatic expression (Wolny, 2016; Wood & Ruder, 2016; Stark &

Table 1. Roles and functions ranking of emoji

Rank	Function	Numbers
1	Phatic expressions	198
2	Emoticons	168
3	Ideograms	156
4	Pictograms	54

Crawford, 2015; Muzakky, Hidayat, & Alek, 2021; Aull, 2019).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Emoji analysis results of 268 tweets of Japanese idols are presented in tabular form. Table 1 presents the ranking of 4 roles and functions of emojis in the analyzed tweet data.

In Table 1, it can be seen that rank 1 roles and functions in emoji are phatic expressions with the use of 198 emoji. Phatic expressions on Japanese idols' tweets are not only used as an ordinary conveyance of information, but are also used to create and perpetuate a "bond" relationship between idols and their fans (Malinowski, 1923). Then the second rank is occupied by emoticons, namely the role and function of emoji that are used to provide a signal in the form of digital symbols that can represent attitudes or emotions so that the recipient of the message can understand the intent of the sender of the message (Novak, Smailović, Sluban & Mozetič, 2015).

Third rank and Fourth rank for the role and function of emoji in twitter are ideograms and pictograms. With 156 emojis as ideograms, this shows that the use of emojis has ideas that are not tied to a particular language (Suntwal, 2021). Emojis as Pictograms with a total of 54 emojis act as emojis that are able to convey information on a concrete object in digital visual form to express a concrete object. Table 2 below shows the Top 3 most frequent Emoji on Japanese idol tweets.

As shown in table 2 above, the first place is Glitter/Shiny. The dominant use of Glitter/Shiny indicates that the use of emoji is a technique to start or end a conversation that shows a bright mood with use with the consent of one party. (Petitjean & Morel; 2017, Li & Yang, 2018). People as idols certainly express their feelings by expressing their gratitude to the fans. In

Table 2. Top 3 most frequent emojis

No	Emoji	Name	Numbers
1	🌟	Glitter/Shiny	77
2	🙏	Praying Hands	37
3	🔥	Fire	26

second place, the emoji that often appears on Japanese idols' tweets is the Praying Hands 🙏 emoji, which has 37 items. This emoji can visualize hands like praying, and is generally used to show gratitude. The third place is the Fire emoji, which has 26 pieces. The fire emoji shows the feeling of passion represented by the image/icon of the flames, depicting the spirit that is burning like fire.

3.1. Emoji as Phatic expressions

Online conversations work with face-to-face communication actually have similarities. In the real world, convey a person's situation or condition through the movement of parts of the body, one of which is the five senses, voice intonation, and expressions that can be felt. So, in the virtual world, reality is poured one of them through emojis which act as phatic expressions. Emoji as a phatic expression can be used to stabilize the speed of conversation and avoid silence in online communication (Schandorf, 2013; Li & Yang, 2018; Aull, 2019; Kazmi, Rana, Anjum & Khan, 2019). The following table 3 lists the most widely used emojis in their roles as Phatic expressions.

In table 3, Emoji ✨ (sparkles) is ranked 1 most often used by Japanese idols. in second place is the Praying hands 🙏 totaling 32 emojis. Emoji (blow kiss) apart from being a phatic expression, it also has another role, namely as an emoticon. However, based on the context of the tweet, this emoji has a role and function that can create a bond between idols and fans, The following is an explanation of the three roles and functions of the emoji.

3.1.1. ✨ (Sparkles)

まだ見てないという方
 ぜひこの機会に✨
Mada mitenai toiu hou
Zehi kono kikai ni
 If you haven't seen it yet
 Please take this opportunity✨

Table 3. Top 3 most frequent emoji as phatic expressions

No	Emoji	Name	Numbers
1	✨	Sparkles	66
2	🙏	Praying hands	32
3	😘	Kissing heart/Face blowing kiss	7

Table 4. Top 3 most frequent emoji as emoticon

No	Emoji	Name	Numbers
1	🙏	Praying hands	31
2	😭	Loudly crying face	18
3	😭	Face with tears of joy	14

In the context of the tweet above, the idol informs his fans those who haven't seen the show to take this opportunity and can watch it if there is time. Emoji (Sparkles) used at the end of the sentence certainly has a role and function to provide positive emotions that can bind the relationship between idols and fans even tighter. In addition, the emoji depicts something shining in this case is a symbol of the attitude or character of an idol. In the same way as non-verbal behavior in face-to-face communication in real life, these emojis are also used to regulate online interactions as silence avoidance (Kazmi et al., 2019).

3.1.2. 🙏 (Praying hands)

楽しい番組作りましょー🙏 ✨
 宜しく願います 🙏
 Tanoshii bangumi tsukurimasho 🙏 ✨
 Yoroshiku onegaishimasu 🙏
 Let's make a fun program 🙏
 Please take care of me 🙏

In this tweet, the 🙏 emoji has 2 roles and functions at once, namely, as emoticons and phatic expressions. This happens because of the different context in the tweets delivered by each Japanese idol. The context of the tweet conveyed an invitation to fans to create excitement together in the event program. In addition to inviting, the idol gave a positive impression of "please help" which is an expression when someone wants to do an activity together this indicates that the idol wants to create a positive attitude and impression to his fans. It is understood that through written electronic media, an idol's caution can be shown by the frequent use of the 🙏 emoji when communicating with his fans (Derks, Bos & von Grumbkow, 2007; Schandorf 2013; Maíz-Arévalo 2015).

3.1.3. 😘 (Kissing heart/Face blowing kiss)

おやすみ 😘
 Oyasumi
 Good night 😘

This emoji is an emoji with a face shape that gives a kiss. This emoji provides a strong symbol that its use does not actually give a kiss, but only as a form of hospitality, so that the idol can present himself as a friendly person,

romantic and understanding towards his fans. In this case, the 😘 emoji can be used as a bonding tool where the idol seems to be closer to his fans. On the other hand, fans assume that he is close to his idol (Malinowski, 1923; Aull, 2019).

3.2. Emoji as Emoticon

With a variety of facial emojis and expressions available on communication devices (smartphones, laptops) can be used to convey self-expression and feelings. In this study, 3 emojis were found as emoticons that were most often used by Japanese idols. Among them, the emoji praying hands 🙏 as an emoji that is often used on twitter by idols with a total of 31 emoji. This finding shows that emoji can serve the role of the main communicative function that is performed nonverbally and substitutes feelings and expressions for text-based messages in this case twitter (Walther & D'Addario, 2001; Novak et al., 2015; Chairunnisa & A. S, 2017).

The following is an analysis of the three tweets that are included in the role and function of emoji as emoticons.

3.2.1. 🙏 (Praying hands)

初回放送ありがとうございました 🙏
 Shokai housou arigatou gozaimashita 🙏
 Thank you for the first episode 🙏

The highest emoji that functions as an emoticon is a symbol of praying hands 🙏. As in the tweet above, this emoji can serve to convey feelings of gratitude, gratitude and can be a symbol to strengthen the relationship between fans and their idols. Petitjean & Morel (2017) found that laughter in online conversations works in a similar way to face-to-face communication. If idols communicate on twitter with emojis truly reflect reality, it is understandable that Japanese idols tend to use emoji 🙏 to others when they need to give positive feedback (Novak et al, 2015; Chairunnisa & A. S, 2017; Li & Yang, 2018).

3.2.2. 😭 (Loudly crying face)

ただ、沖縄旅行も寿司も
 本気で行きたかったす 😭 笑
 tada , okinawa ryokou mo sushi mo
 honki de ikitakatta su
 However, I really wanted to go on a trip to Okinawa and
 sushi lol

Emoji 😭 (Loudly crying face) also ranks second highest as a tool to convey expression. However, in the tweet above the role and function of the emoji is not as it should be. It can be seen from the name as well as the emoji symbol, which means a crying facial expression with heavy tears, which is actually used to convey an

expression of wanting something. By using the 🍖 emoji, fans will assume that he really wants to go

Table 5. Top 3 most frequent emoji as emoticon

No	Emoji	Name	Numbers
1	🐷	Pig face	19
2	🔥	Fire	13
3	🐯	Tiger Face	4

traveling to Okinawa and eat sushi there. Thus, the emoji 🍖 as a communicative online tool, cannot be perfectly mapped to the real world because the emoji shape can exaggerate expressions to convey feelings properly. Sources of knowledge on the function of emoji as communication are important to achieve effects or goals comparable to face-to-face communication. Understanding the function of this emoji can occur often using positive emojis that produce an emotional effect into something positive (Wu, Guan & Gao, 2016; Chairunnisa & A. S., 2017; Petitjean & Morel, 2017; Li & Yang, 2018).

3.2.3. 😄 (Face with tears of joy)

は今日で
また楽しすぎましたね 😄
Kyou wa kyou de
Mata tanoshisugimashitane 😄
Today is today
It was too much fun again 😄

In this tweet, the emoji 😄 (Face with tears of joy) is used to convey something funny, humorous as well as fun and happy feelings. So, the emoji 😄 was used to represent the excitement he had and wanted to experience such fun in the future. Thus, this emoji acts as an explicit expression of personal emotions (Chairunnisa & A. S., 2017; Petitjean & Morel, 2017; Li & Yang, 2018).

3.3. Emoji as Ideograms

In our findings, emoji as ideograms are symbols that represent concepts about something, tend to be used less than emojis that function as conveying feelings and perpetuating relationships between communicators, as seen in the table 5 below.

Animal-shaped characters such as 🐷 (pig face) and 🐯 (tiger Face) are often used as ideograms and are the highest emoji occurrences compared to other characters. Here are the results of the analysis of the three emojis.

3.3.1. 🐷 (Pig face)

jibun o taisetsu ni shitekureru hitotachi o shiawase ni
shiyou tte boku wa omotta

I thought I'd make people who care about me happy 🐷

The context of the tweet is to convey his opinion about fans who care about him, then placing the emoji 🐷 at the end of the sentence is a punctuation mark that can end the conversation. Animal icons are symbols that represent the idol's personality as a person with a funny and fun personality (Derks et al. 2007; Schandorf 2013; Maíz-Arévalo 2015). It can be understood that the emoji 🐷 functions as a visual symbol that defines ideas but is not bound to a particular language, and is a part of non-verbal communication (Li & Yang, 2018; Suntwal, 2021). Emoji as a communicative online tool, in this case cannot be understood in the real world. It's the same with the emoji in the tweet above that only idols, fellow idols, and fans know. So, it can be said that to understand the function of this emoji depends on the individual who already has knowledge of an idol.

3.3.2. 🔥 (Fire)

気合い入りまくりました 🔥
kiai irimakurimashita
I was in high spirits 🔥

In the context of the tweet, the 🔥 (fire) emoji is an emoji that conveys a feeling of passion that burns like fire. Various findings of tweets that accompany the emoji 🔥 appear when the context of the sentence relates to strength, enthusiasm, encouraging themselves, or encouraging their fans. In addition, the emoji 🔥 is used as a sign of ending sentences such as punctuation marks (.) (Li & Yang, 2018). Thus, the function of the fire emoji turns positive into an electronic symbol that can represent the idol's daily activities and mood conditions (Wagner, Marusek & Yu, 2020).

3.3.3. 🐯 (Tiger Face)

🐯 まこっちゃんが発信しているように、発売記念イベントについて増枠など各所と調整
🐯 Makocchan ga hasshin shiteiru you ni, hatsubai kinen ibento nitsuite zouwaku nado kakusho to chousei
🐯 As announced by Makocchan, we are coordinating with various places such as increasing the number of slots for the release commemorative event.

In this tweet, the 🐯 (tiger Face) emoji can only be understood perfectly by idols, fellow idols, and their fans. This animal-shaped emoji can represent idol personalities who are fierce, cool and masculine like tiger characters in the real world. In this case, the emoji 🐯 functions as a visual symbol that defines an idea whose symbolic meaning is created and understood as part of subjective and individual non-verbal communication (Suntwal, 2021).

ibento no kaisai nitsuite

About event time 🕒

3.4. Emoji as Pictogram

Table 6. Top 3 most frequent emoji as pictogram

No	Emoji	Name	Numbers
1	☀️	Sun	8
2	🏆	Trophy	7
3	🕒	Clock	3

Our findings regarding emoji as pictograms vary, but the most common roles and functions of emojis are ☀️(Sun), emoji 🏆 (trophy), and emoji 🕒 (Clock). Emoji as pictograms are to convey concrete objects by being represented by emojis according to the concrete objects in question. Table 6 below show 3 most frequent Emoji as Pictogram.

Here are the results of the analysis of 3 emoji as pictograms.

3.4.1. ☀️ (Sun)

おはよう☀️

Ohayou

Morning☀️

The context of the tweet above is an idol greeting "good morning" to fans, explained by the (Sun) emoji which shows the condition of a sunny morning. Thus, the function of the (Sun) emoji as a pictogram to show concrete objects according to real conditions and as a substitute for punctuation marks (.) to seem to have a positive message delivery meaning (Stark & Crawford, 2015; Li & Yang, 2018).

3.4.2. 🏆 (trophy)

U-NEXTではここ数日間

毎日国内ドラマで一位です🏆

U - NEXT de wa koko sou nichikan

mainichi kokunai dorama de ichiidesu

U-NEXT has been #1 in domestic drama every day for the past a few days 🏆

Next emoji was the 🏆 (trophy) emoji, used to convey that U-NEXT, a program starring Japanese idols, is ranked 1st in domestic drama every day. Emoji 🏆 functions as a pictogram with pictures, shapes, colors according to the concrete object, namely the trophy (Stark & Crawford, 2015; Li & Yang, 2018).

3.4.3. 🕒 (Clock)

イベントの開催時間について🕒

Emoji as the last pictogram is 🕒 (clock) which has the symbol of time. In the tweet, the Japanese idol reminded fans of the time the event would start. In order for this text-based conversation to appear like a face-to-face conversation, the idol added the (Clock) emoji which can describe the time explicitly and concretely according to the clock shape in the real world (Stark & Crawford, 2015; Li & Yang, 2018).

4. CONCLUSION

The emoji found on Japanese idols' tweets are mostly hand gestures rather than facial expressions. Based on findings by Li and Yang (2018) the stereotype of Chinese people showing fewer facial expressions than other cultures. The findings in this study can be related to this study that Japan and China as East Asia have the same cultural tendencies. Thus, Japanese idols use emoji more to express their politeness in order to form a positive image so as to maintain a relationship between fans and build a positive image online.

Then, from the results of the 4 emoji functions that have been analyzed, the emoji function besides being used as an emotion, emoji was originally created to facilitate online text-based communication. In some emojis, it is used as an interaction tool that can refine sentences, image the form of politeness, maintain the flow of text conversations and can be used as punctuation marks that can end sentences.

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