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EXPLORING TEXT MESSAGES BY USING EMOJIS ON INDONESIAN WHATSAPP

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ABSTRACT

WhatsApp is a free messaging and calling application that can be downloaded to mobile phones all over the world that supports the feature. It is straightforward, trustworthy, and secure. WhatsApp enables us to exchange text, voice, and audio-visual (video) messages. However, text message recipients often fail to understand the intended meaning of a text message because the text messages are not provided with intonation and direct expression, resulting in the recipient's difficulty interpreting the message's intended meaning. This study aimed to find out the functions of emojis in WhatsApp text messages. Interpretative qualitative was used as the research methodology in this study. The data source used is the results of screenshots of chat activities on the WhatsApp application. The study came up with the findings that the primary function of emojis in WhatsApp text messages is to show and emphasize emotion, expression, and feeling like happiness, sadness, apology, embarrassment, support, anger, mockery, gratitude, criticism, humorous, etc. that cannot be spoken verbally or conveyed/shown directly.

Keywords: *communication, emoji, text messages, whatsapp*

INTRODUCTION

Communication is a necessary part of human life as social beings. Humans exchange messages in which we as senders attempt to deliver the message to the receivers. While when we become receivers, we attempt to comprehend the messages we hear from the other person. Language is one of the most important means of communication in human life. However, realize or not, humans employ emotions, sentiments, body movements, and facial expressions when communicating. This implies that there are two types of messages that can be delivered in communication: verbal communication and nonverbal communication. The sophistication of technology advancements in the present period allows for more modern and non-outdated communication between people. The WhatsApp application is one among them. From youth to the elderly, Whatsapp is becoming increasingly popular. There are emojis in the Whatsapp application that make it easier to interact with others and can directly explain the sender's feelings without having to meet face to face.

Junus (2019) stated that communication in social media is no longer a matter of language efficiency or economics. With the increased use of social media and the assistance of more

advanced technology, such as Whatsapp, it is extremely easy for us to use the application's facilities indirectly with other Whatsapp users, verbally or nonverbally. Time and space are no longer barriers to communication nowadays. We can communicate with people in various locations without revealing to the recipient of the sender's face expressions. Whatsapp is a messaging application that allows users to send and receive emoji messages and photos. In which this emoji represents the sender's emotion towards the recipient. This media enables humans to engage across time and space.

Emojis adds more meanings to the textual communication. But, nowadays emojis also molding the digital text language of youth. Steinmetz (2014) said that emoticons are simply made up from punctuations “:-) :-(”. In early 1980s, a computer scientist, Scott Fahlman, at the University of Carnegie Mellon, observed that the exchange of messages on electronic mails were going awry and conversation became jokeless and toneless. Brisson, C. M. (2015) says that Fahlman suggested a view, that if any person is going to be sarcastic or full of amusement, so he should use smiley face which is made up of parenthesis, dashes and colons to label in his written view. Shortly emotions were spread to other universities and then spreading into electronic mails and text messages by filling the gap with visual signs in CMC which was only a part of face-to-face conversation. Emoticons gave its ways to Japanese emojis which were more convenient and operative in use.

Emojis are a type of symbolic communication that can facilitate creative interaction. According to (Groot, 2018), the purpose of emoji is to satisfy the requirement for accurate communication, which is accomplished through the use of emojis. The use of emojis must have meaning for the contents of the message given in order for the message to be conveyed appropriately. According to (Berlianty, 2016.), the construction of a perception impacts the culture where the sign is employed so that there is consensus on comprehending the meaning. Emojis serve as a substitute for nonverbal communication in social media conversation. Emoji are also frequently used in text-based internet communication to represent emotions, such as smiling, laughing, or crying/sad. As technology advances, emojis take on new shapes and forms. It no longer simply reflects expressions and feelings, but also represents contemporary activities (Sobang, R. R., Werdiningsih, E., and Efendiy, K, 2020).Based on the explanation, the researcher then formulated the study into: how to explore text message by using emojis on WhatsApp. The purpose of this study is to investigate the functions of the emoji using in text messages on Whatsapp.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Communication

Communication is the interchange of verbal and nonverbal messages between the sender and the recipient of the message in order to affect behaviour (Arni, 2005). According to Bernard Berelson and Gary A. Steiner, communication is the conveyance of information, ideas, emotions, skills, and so on through the use of symbols, words, pictures, figures, graphs, and so on. Communication refers to the act or process of transmission (Mulyana, 2010). According to Lasswell in Mulyana (2010), there are five elements that must be met in communication, namely:

1. The source, is also known as the sender, encoder, communicator, speaker, or originator. The source is the one who starts or requires communication.
2. Message, what the source communicates to the receiver.
3. Media/channel, which refers to the tool utilised by the source to communicate his message to the recipient.
4. Recipient (communicant, receiver, recipient, audience), which is the person who receives the communication from the source.
5. Result (effect, impact, influence), what happens to the recipient once he receives the message.

Non Verbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is a method of communicating in which messages are transmitted without the use of words. Gestures, body language, facial emotions, and eye contact are examples of nonverbal communication, as are the usage of things such as clothes, hairstyles, and so on, symbols, and ways of speaking such as intonation, emphasis, voice quality, emotional style, and speaking style. According to Liliweri, nonverbal communication is frequently utilised to express feelings and emotions (Liliweri, 1994). Although verbal and nonverbal communication are sometimes carried out together, nonverbal communication appears to be distinct from nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication is distinguished by the following characteristics:

1. Nonverbal communication involves more than one channel and can occur simultaneously.
2. Nonverbal communication is ongoing. The sustainability in question is measurable and makes greater use of the body. Although a person can stop talking, he cannot stop communicating with his body.

The term nonverbal is commonly used to characterise any communication events other than spoken and written language. Verbal communication has various functions that promote verbal activity. These functions are as follows:

1. Nonverbal behaviour can replicate verbal activity. For example, when someone nods their head indicating "Yes", or when they shake their head stating "No".
2. Complements and reinforces verbal behaviour. For example, when someone waves goodbye.
3. Nonverbal activity that replaces verbal behaviour. For example, by putting on a sad look. Someone will interpret the face expression without any verbal conversation.

Message

Messages, in the form of words, gestures, and behaviour, are the primary product of communication. Symbols that represent ideas, attitudes, feelings, and behaviours can be used to express this message. The message is defined as what the source communicates to the recipient. The message can be a verbal or nonverbal representation representing the source's feelings, values, ideas, or goals. In terms of message, communication can be divided into two types: verbal communication (where the message is verbal) and nonverbal communication (where the message is nonverbal).

Stuart Hall proposed a message reception theory in his book *Message, Signs, and Meaning*, which emphasises the role of the reader or audience in receiving the message rather than the sender of the message (Danesi, 2012). The message's meaning is determined by the audience's cultural background and life experiences. This demonstrates that the meaning in a text is established in the interaction between the text and the reader rather than in the text itself. The communication process is more sophisticated in this theory. The audience not only gets the message transmitted by the sender of the message, but can also duplicate the message conveyed. Siahaan (1991) stated that messages can be understood in three elements as explained in the followings:

1. Message code

A collection of symbols structured in such a way that they are relevant to others. For example, Indonesian is a code that includes aspects of noises, sounds, letters, and words that are structured in a meaningful way.

2. The message content.

The foundation or substance chosen and determined by the communicator to transmit the message's intent.

3. The message form.

Something that encircles the message's centre. The communicator provides the message a concrete form so that the communicant is interested in the communication's contents.

Emoji

Emoji is derived from the Japanese words "e" means picture and "moji" means letter. In other terms, emoji are writing character icons. Shigetaka Kurita invented emoji in 1990 with the intention of beautifying texts. Emoji, unlike kaomoji and emoticons, are visual symbols that imitate facial emotions for people, animals, activities, holidays, and more (Kelly, 2015).Emoji may demonstrate how messages are delivered through the use of the following indications: feeling indicators, nonverbal indicators, and illocutionary indicators(Herring, 2010). Emoji, when used in a sentence, serve as a linguistic feature that demonstrates how a message is transmitted.

Furthermore, emojis have other functions such as expressing the communicator's feelings to the communicant, a symbolic form of sympathy and solidarity shown by the communicator in the message conveyed, softening criticism, emphasising the basis of the conversation, and concealing the communicator's intent. Furthermore, according to Stark and Crawford's website, emoji can also serve as:

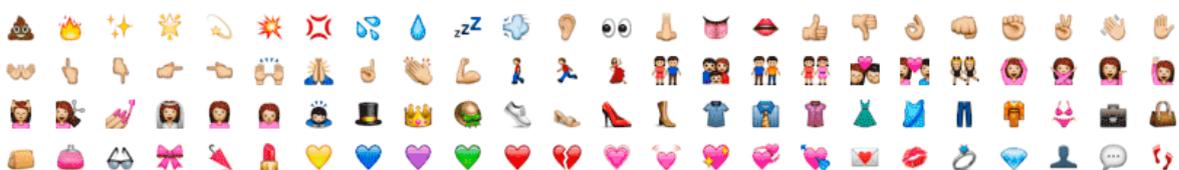
- Pictogram: a symbol that symbolises a real-world object
- Ideogram: a symbol representing a concept or idea about something.
- Emoticons: symbols representing emotions
- Phatic expression: a phrase used to make or keep contact between the communicator and the communicant.

Kinds of Emoji

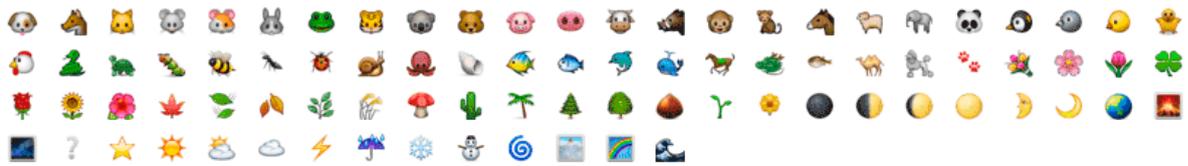
a. Smiley



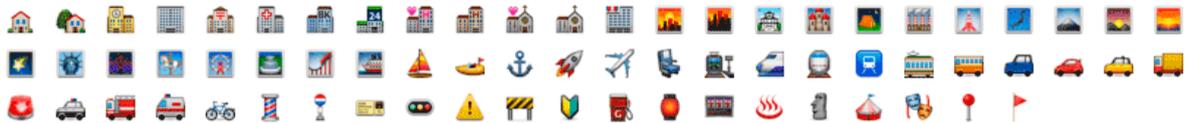
b. Faces and people



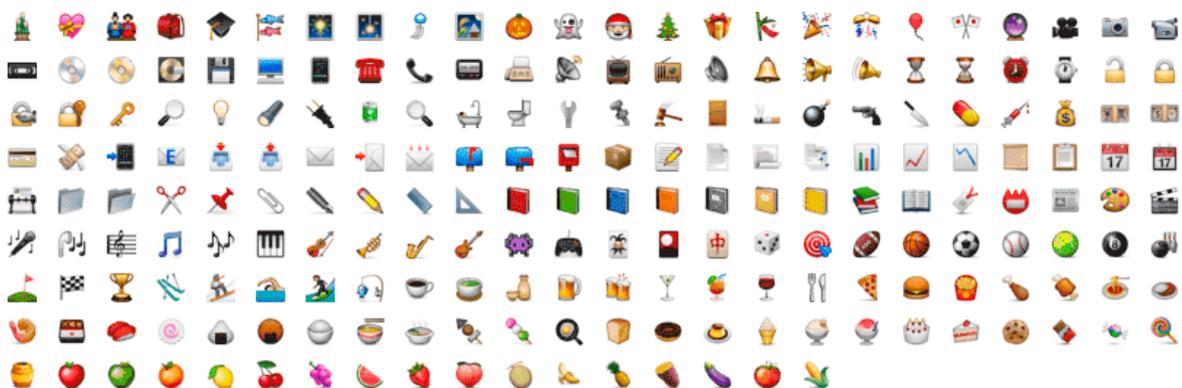
c. Animals and plants



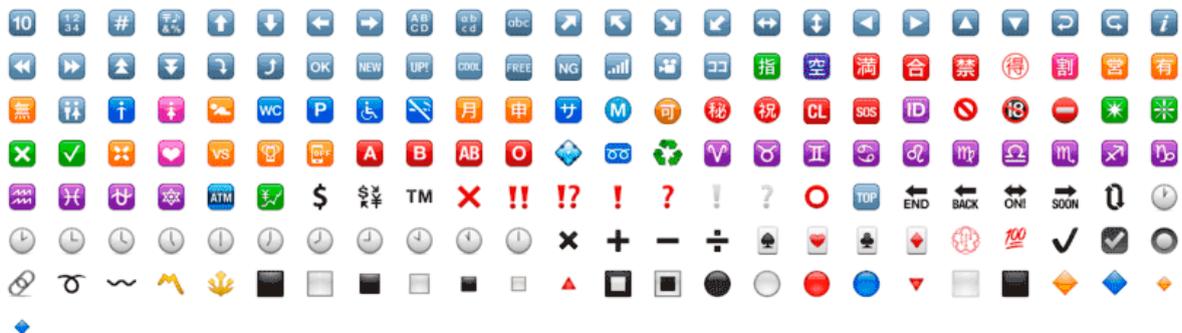
d. Places



e. Object



f. Symbol



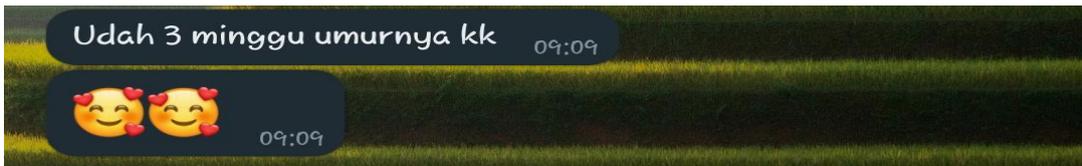
METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative as the research methodology.. This is an interpretive qualitative study in which the researcher thoroughly studied the contents of emojis found in Whatsapp conversations. The data source used is the outcome of screenshots of Whatsapp chat activity. This research strategy employs the documentation method for data collection. Documentation is a data collection strategy that analyses messages WhatsApp screenshots created by the researcher herself and others.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

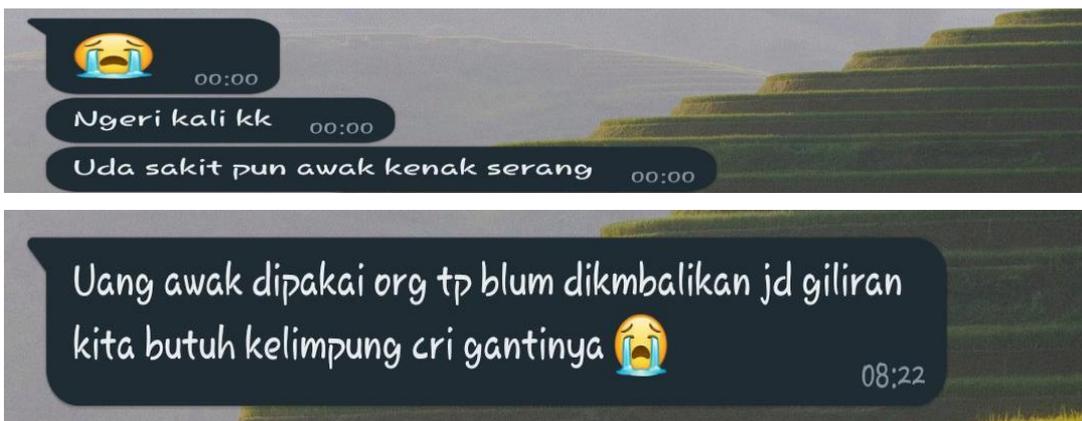
Emojis are used to emphasize the contents of a message conveyed by the message's sender. The use of emojis on Whatsapp can be adjusted to the sender's preferences. The followings are the WhatsApp messages that contain emojis in it in order to describe and emphasize kinds of sender's feelings and emotions.

a. Emoji on WhatsApp to describe and emphasize happiness



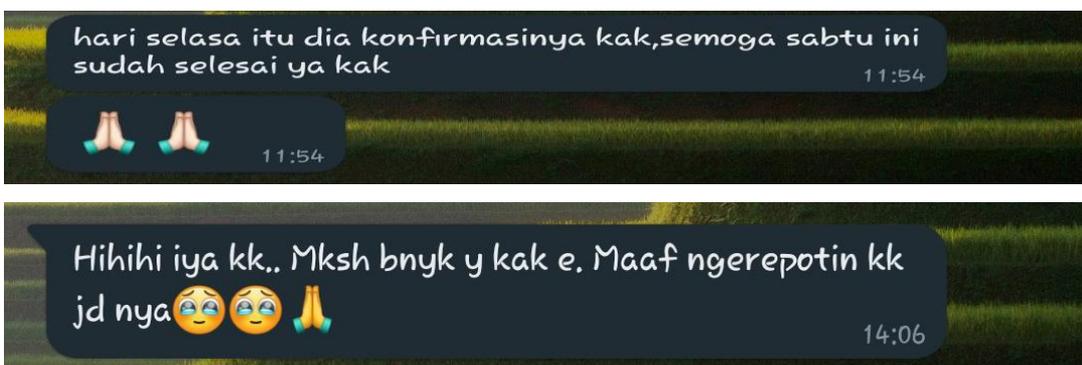
In this section, the emoji surrounded by love indicates that the sender of the message is filled with joy. It is clear that the sender is overjoyed because her family now includes a newborn infant. The emojis indicate that she is joyful without her stating so explicitly.

b. Emoji on WhatsApp to describe and emphasize sadness



The sender of the message attempted to confirm her sadness in this part by inserting the crying emoji. Because the receiver cannot see the sender's unhappiness expression directly, the sender used the crying emoji to make it obvious and highlight her sorrow.

c. Emoji on WhatsApp to describe and emphasize apology



In the apology section, the message's sender used an apologetic emoji coupled with

another emoji to express her regret. The word 'sorry' is clearly used by the sender in the above WhatsApp message to express regret. She did, however, utilise emojis to underscore her apology.

d. Emoji on WhatsApp to describe and emphasize embarrassment



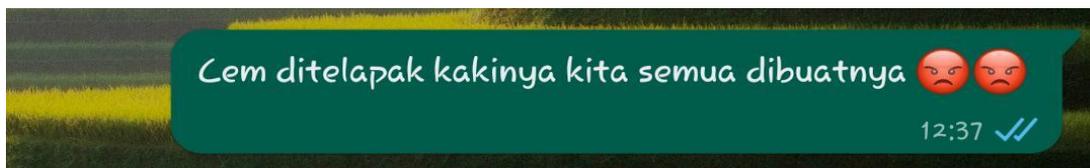
In this part, the sender used an emoji to express his embarrassment at not understanding how to go by train. People who do not know the sender or the entire dialogue may struggle to interpret the intended meaning of the communication. However, by looking at the emoji, the reader will realise that the sender was embarrassed for not understanding how to travel by train. By the presence of emoji in the message, the receiver/reader of the communication has understood the sender's feeling without articulating it.

e. Emoji on WhatsApp to describe and emphasize support



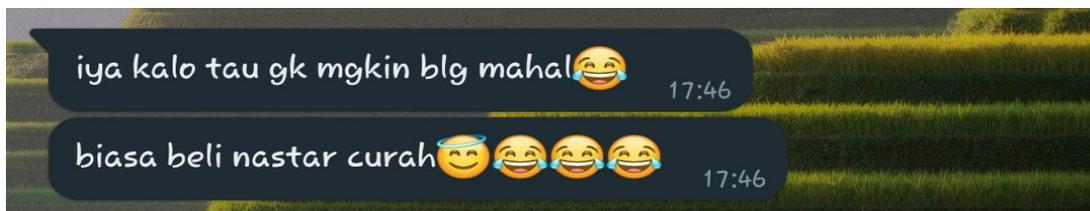
Emoji, in addition to expressing emotions and feelings, can sometimes indicate support to the recipient. As seen in the WhatsApp conversation above, the sender attempted to underline his support for the recipient by using the term 'semangat (fighting)' together with the emoji.

f. Emoji on WhatsApp to describe and emphasize angry



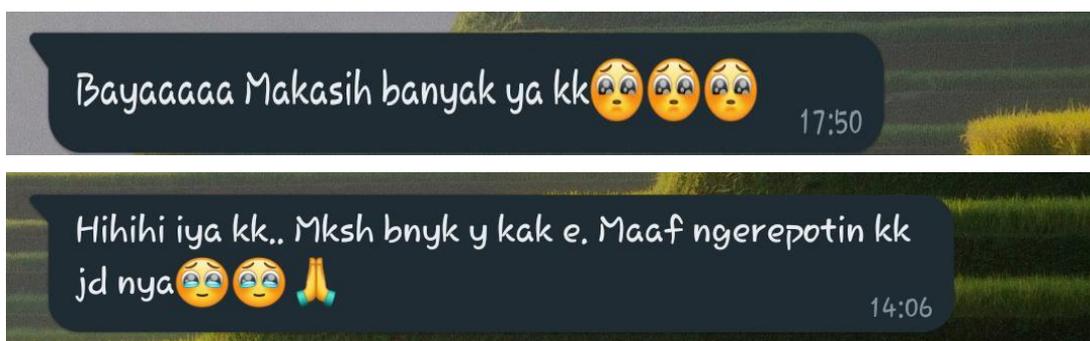
Anger is frequently expressed by raised voices, facial emotions, and other body language. It is possible if the person being scolded is directly in front of us. It will be more difficult to express our anger or feelings via text messaging. Emojis make expressions of rage or displeasure more plain, as seen in the WhatsApp message above. Without expressing 'I am angry,' the receiver can infer from the emojis that the sender of the message is angry.

g. Emoji on WhatsApp to describe and emphasize mockery



In this section, the sender showed insults in the form of jokes by glancing at the emojis in the WhatsApp message. The laughing emoji is not necessarily associated with a hilarious or cheerful feeling, as shown in the messages above. The laughing emojis indicate that the sender is making fun of someone for not knowing the cost of a good pineapple jam cake (nastar).

h. Emoji on WhatsApp to describe and emphasize gratitude



Aside from words, there are other ways to convey gratitude. If done in person, we might express our heartfelt gratitude through gestures or body language. However, in a text message, the sender may utilise emojis to express her gratitude. It can be observed in the whatsapp chat above that the sender used some emojis to express her profound gratitude for someone's assistance. From the messages above, it can be inferred that the sender is really greatfull/thankful by looking more than one emojis in it.

i. Emoji on WhatsApp to describe and emphasize criticize



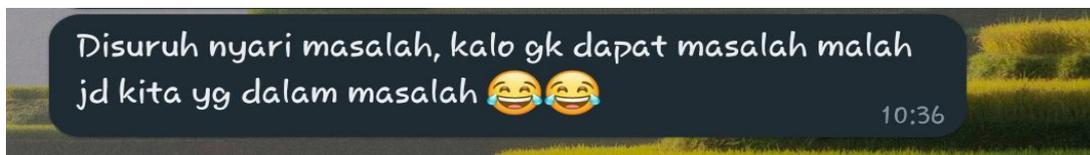
In this section, the sender used emoji to express her disagreement at something. The emoji in the aforementioned WhatsApp message suggests that the sender does not like the fact that something is pending. By looking at the emoji in the message, the recipient has deduced the sender's emotion/feeling.

j. Emoji on WhatsApp to describe and emphasize disgusting



In this situation, the emoji on the WhatsApp message above has highlighted something unnecessary or disgusting. The emoji above suggests that the sender is already so tired of something that the emoji has confirmed his own assertion.

k. Emoji on WhatsApp to describe and emphasize funny thing



In this section, the sender attempted to demonstrate an amusing thing that supported her sentence by using a laughing emoji. Because the recipient cannot see the sender's expression/emotion directly, the emoji assists the reader in interpreting the sender's intended message.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, using emojis in the WhatsApp application allows users to communicate their emotions without having to observe the sender's facial expression. Users are also incredibly helpful in getting the information through the emojis. Because of the large number of emojis available in the WhatsApp application, its users have complete freedom in selecting these emojis. It can be used to express emotions and feelings like happiness, sadness, apology, embarrassment, support, anger, mockery, gratitude, criticism, humorous and etc for the message's recipient.

Using emojis carelessly is best avoided since it will have a negative influence and worried of becoming a conflict to the person receiving the message, because when we send the emojis, we do not observe the recipient's mood or facial expression. We send emojis based on the emotional condition felt at the time. We cannot send laughing emojis while the circumstance is sad. Having emojis on the WhatsApp is quite useful for conveying emotions. Thus, emojis are crucial in the communication process because they can aid in minimizing misinterpretation caused by a person's lack of understanding of the message he receives.

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