

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the background of the research, research questions, problems identification, research objectives, significance of the research, and scope of the research

1.1. Background of the Study

Humans as social beings require communication to live, which is to engage in both verbal and nonverbal communication daily. Haji (2019) explained verbal communication is the process of sharing information between people through voice, and nonverbal communication is the act of delivering the message through mediums other than speech or writing. Human communication is responding to societal trends, lifestyles, technology, and language are knowledge as a living creature. Since the development of the telephone, computer, telegraph, and other communication tools, communications have been backed by fast-evolving technology that is required virtual communication devices. According to Sari (2018), language's reaction to social change and attitudes, as well as its forms and usage, are determined by the requirements of its users, like social interaction and the communication instruments available to them. Traditionalists in the linguistic community and elsewhere were initially concerned that the growth of virtual communication devices would lead to the loss of important communication

cues in face-to-face communication, particularly non-verbal ones were lost, devaluing overall communicative ability.

Yang (2018) stated that virtual communication refers to any technology that allows people to communicate with one another by voice, video, or any other message with people who are not physically meeting. He argues that such virtual communication circumstances as telephone, social media conversation and email which are mainly based on written text and speech, make nonverbal communication incomplete due to the absence of supra-segmental features such as body language, facial expression, and emotion. Finally, with the advancement of technology, humans have been able to bridge this gap and overcome this constraint by developing a new modern visual language, one of them called emoji. According to Chairunnisa & Benedictus (2017), emoji are a collection of little pictorial cues that assist modern digital communication. Emoji can stimulate a creative first thought and aid users in speeding up their visual thinking process. Al Rashdi & Tannen (2015) mentioned emoji are viewed as socio-emotional sources to the computer-mediated interface due to the lack of nonverbal characteristics in current communication mediums. This remark supports the idea that emoji may transfer and express nonverbal information, which is currently lacking on social media platform.

Emoji are being used more often in communication networks, and how they are utilized is growing more diverse as well. Emoji have their own semantic and emotional characteristics. Tandyonomanu & Tsuroyya (2018)

describes emoji as the description of nonverbal symbols in communication technology and an alternative for nonverbal face-to-face interaction. Spoken and non-verbal texts (emoji), were utilized to communicate emotions and clarify the sender's purpose in social media communication. Kelly (2015) argues emoji are significant in human lives because emoji serve important purposes. Emoji have always served as vehicles for expressive expression, and the meaning is frequently more intimately linked to language than their interpretation as emotional symbols allow. According to Arafah & Hasyim (2019), emoji are a different language with social rules organized into categories. These categories include smiles and people or expressions, nature and animals, food and drink, activities, travel, objects, symbols, and flags. Kelly (2015) said emoji may be accessed and utilized on social media platforms and his survey show that the most used emoji is in WhatsApp Messenger.

WhatsApp is a messaging software accessible on smartphones that allow users to send and receive messages, photos, voice notes, videos, and files. WhatsApp is an instant messaging program that allows users to send messages without having to pay, and it uses internet bandwidth with larger coverage (Chairunnisa & Benedictus (2017)). Many individuals in Indonesia use WhatsApp to connect indirectly with other WhatsApp users as the program has grown in popularity. Shahid (2018) explained WhatsApp has a large user base because it is simple to use and provides a comprehensive set of functions. WhatsApp lets users exchange text messages, phone numbers,

videos, pictures, GIFs, documents, audio files, voice notes, emoji, stickers, and user location through the internet using standard cellular phone numbers. Irfan & Dhimmarr (2019) mentioned WhatsApp has a feature called status that allows users to submit images and videos to a 24-hour feed that is available to all contacts by default. The use of emoji grows very fast, WhatsApp users use emoji to convey their emotions. Arafah & Hasyim, (2019) stated that WhatsApp users often create sentences or chats with a combination of vocal text and emoji to communicate thoughts and emotions.

In addition, the widespread use of emojis on WhatsApp has resulted in a problem of individuals misinterpreting emoji based on how they are perceived by others. These might lead to disagreements, conflicts, and debates between the senders and recipients of the text; some may understand it simply by looking at the emoji, while others may dig deeper and develop a new meaning for it based on their perspective and the circumstances. Sari (2018) argues many WhatsApp users interpret the meaning of emoji with more than one interpretation. Hannah (2018) explains an emoji transmits its meaning by its graphic similarity to a tangible item or sign, although it is unclear how individuals perceive the meaning of emoji. Emoji are indeed a visual representation of nonverbal communication cues. People need to have a common understanding of what each emoji represents, or communication will break down. Sari (2018) argues that everyone creates meaning, a person makes meaning through the creation and interpretation of signs in a unique way. Different items are used as signals, but they have no meaning on their

own and only become signs when humans give them significance. Anything can be seen as a sign if it is interpreted as referring to or representing anything other than itself.

Although there has been a significant study on the meaning of digital nonverbal communication symbols. Nilasari et al., (2018) conducted one of them, she analyzes the meaning applied to the sticker emoticon in the Line messenger using semiotics theories. The result shows that sticker emoticons in LINE Messenger mean to carry happiness, sadness, satire, mental activities, and physical activity. Erni (2019) also researched the interpretation of Emoticon's meaning using Barthes's theory. The results suggest that emoticons have several meanings and are mostly used to represent the user's feelings. Arafah and Hasyim (2019) researched the usage of emoji from both a linguistic and a parole perspective, utilizing Barthes's theory. The study found that emoji are grammatical components of language utilized in social media communication.

Specifically, this study differed from other studies which were based on the object of the study, method, and theories used. In this study, the researcher analyzes Emoji in WhatsApp messenger used by ELE students using mixed-method and two Semiotics theories from Roland Barthes and Charles Sanders Peirce as the guidance. In consideration of how this research was conducted, the researcher carried out a preliminary observation. Based on the results of this preliminary observation, it was found that the use of WhatsApp is prevalent among ELE students and is

considered a social application to connect with friends, relatives, and colleagues. The researcher found that ELE students use emoji in their communication on WhatsApp, they combine vocal text or sentences with emoji in their conversation, and sometimes ELE students respond to the message using emoji. Related to the explanation above, the researcher is interested in analyzing and investigating the meaning of Emoji Interpreted by ELE students and the relationship between verbal and visual signs applied in emoji that ELE students used in WhatsApp Messenger through the research entitled “An Analysis Meaning of Emoji as Nonverbal Communication Symbol Used by English Language Education (ELE) Students in WhatsApp Messenger”.

1.2.Problem Identification

Mohd Rashidi,(2020) explained emojis are utilized to provide new meaning to existing words to interact with one another throughout one's life, and each emoji on a social media platform such as WhatsApp has its unique qualities and indications that might lead to a distinct message. However, because this online visual language (emoji) exists, there is no proof that emojis on WhatsApp will have the same meaning for all users. It means there will be differences in emoji interpretation between individuals for the same emoji set and across platforms. Concerning this issue, the significant difference between individuals' interpretations is the actual aims that need discovering in this research. With this research, the researcher hopes to create awareness among the users of emoji to avoid

miscommunication and misunderstanding in daily communication in this digital world.

1.3. Scope of the Research

To limit the discussion, based on the problems that have been decided before, the scope of discussion is required. This study is limited in analyzing the meaning of emoji as a nonverbal communication symbol and the relationship between verbal and visual signs applied in emoji used by English language education (ELE) students in WhatsApp messenger. Therefore, the discussion focused on; the meaning of Emoji Interpreted by ELE students in WhatsApp Messenger and the relationship between verbal and visual signs applied in emoji as nonverbal communication symbols used by ELE students in WhatsApp Messenger. The researcher chose emoji as a topic of the research because emoji play a crucial role in human lives because they have important functions and signs as a nonverbal symbols that express emotion in our digital communication.

1.4. Research Problem

The research problem of the study which based on the background can be formulated as follows:

1. What is the meaning of emoji as a nonverbal communication symbol Interpreted by ELE students in WhatsApp Messenger?

2. How are the relationship between verbal and visual signs applied to support the meaning of emoji used by ELE students in WhatsApp Messenger?

1.5. Objective of the Study

Based on the statement of the problem above, the objectives of the research are: General research objectives are to analyze the meaning of emoji as a nonverbal communication symbol used by English language education (ELE) students in WhatsApp messenger. Specific research objectives:

1. To analyze the meaning of emoji as a nonverbal communication symbol Interpreted by ELE students in WhatsApp Messenger
2. To investigate the relationship between verbal and visual signs applied to support the meaning of emoji used by ELE students in WhatsApp Messenger

1.6. Significance of the Study

1. Theoretical Significance

This study is expected to give positive contributions to the Linguistics field, mainly in semiotics study of signs, symbols, and signification, especially as elements of language or other systems of communication.

In this study, emoji become a sign in digital communication frequently used on social media.

2. Practical Significance

Practically, the finding can be useful for those who focus on the meaning of the sign or semiotic study. Moreover, the ideas and the point of view of the finding can significantly be useful to be used for:

- a. ELE students as their material references in understanding semiotics study and can help them learn how to identify verbal and nonverbal signs in communication, especially nonverbal communication through virtual like emoji.
- b. A linguistics teacher or lecture can be a reference for learning resources about the Linguistic field, mainly semiotics as a study of significant meaning in communication (emoji).
- c. The other Researchers as guidance for their future studies related to the significant meaning of the sign (Semiotics), especially on communication with different objects of study.