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STUDENTS' SILENT READING PROFICIENCY AND INTERPERSONAL IMPRESSIONS OF EMOJI AS CONTEMPORARY TOOL OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY USED IN COMMUNICATION

Annie A. Parmis

Jeson Eric B. Galvez

Rovel I. Veloso

Department of Liberal Arts and Behavioral Sciences
Visayas State University, Baybay City, Leyte Philippines

gravoso.annie@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to find out the students' silent reading proficiency and interpersonal impressions of emoji as contemporary tool of digital technology used in communication. The first set of respondents composed of forty-two (42) Bachelor of Arts in English Language (AB-EL) students at the Visayas State University (VSU) answered a research instrument adopted from Bliss-Carroll's study (2016). Furthermore, it investigated the respondents' interpersonal impression and understanding of emojis. Results showed that the respondents' understanding of emojis connects or relates to whom they communicate with and meanings were evaluated through emoji's appearance. The respondents also indicated different meanings in one single emoji, thus clearly showing that they recognized different emojis in different contexts. The results of this study concluded that emojis were considered to be part of the respondents' non-verbal communication which helped them make their messages more expressive in thought and in emotions allowing them to clearly convey their messages to the person on the other line. Results suggest that understanding of emojis is one great factor to have good communication skills because emojis can show concrete meanings to messages. The second set of respondents composed of one hundred-two (102) Grade 10 students at Bunga National High School (BNHS) answered three (3) reading passages from Philippine Informal Reading Inventory or Phi-IRI (DepEd Tambayan, 2013) for silent reading. Pearson (r) was used to measure the significance and to determine the relationship between the students' silent reading proficiency level and their academic performance. Findings revealed that majority of Grade 10 students belong to "Frustration Level" (74 and below) in their silent reading proficiency. Male students are less proficient in silent reading compared to female students. When grouped according to students' academic performance, majority of Grade 10 students belong to "Approaching Proficiency" (80-84) category but still under "Frustration Level". Findings further revealed that there is a significant relationship between students' silent reading proficiency level and their academic performance. Findings implied that the Grade 10 students at BNHS have poor silent reading comprehension.

KEYWORDS: interpersonal impressions, emoji, digital technology, communication, silent reading proficiency, academic performance

I. INTRODUCTION

Symbols and signs take a significance in communication and meanings and are interpreted by different cognitive proficiency (Dimson, 2015). The idea is to understand things to its form and how others give its own meaning. Language and meaning are versatile and can be found in different aspects like person's gesture, facial expression, by pitch, tone, and intonation of the voice. These are just some of symbols and signs that language and meaning can be created. In the present time, communication has evolved alongside with technology (Tchernenko, 2017). Though texting started off in text format, through evolution of digitalism, communication via texts obtained a new form, a

IJETRM

International Journal of Engineering Technology Research & Management

symbolic form. From sending each other text messages, people began to send Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS) today as a new way to communicate, and through emojis. Shigetaka Kurita, a graphic designer working for a Japanese mobile phone NTT DoCoMo, developed the first set of 176 emoji pictures in 1998 (Busche, 2016). Thus came the idea that an emoji (a Japanese term for "picture character") could be introduced to save space and be more expressive (Chowdhury, 2017). Therefore, this type of typography or pictography was created to make it extra dramatic the way senders want to know its receiver. Indeed, both verbal and non-verbal communication are highly reformed by the influence of this new development of language in communication. This study wanted to explore more on the understanding of these emojis. Moreover, the said emojis are also connected to silent reading, as these emojis are written with designated meanings alongside with texts. English as a foreign language occupies an important place in the Philippine education system. The ability to read is important especially in accessing key information as children and mature adults go to higher education, and especially when they are into the corporate world. Reading is, therefore, the most important skill for foreign language learners because they have little exposure to the target language outside the classroom and most of the information in English come through reading. Poor academic achievement is clearly shown in the low ratings children received in the National Achievement Test (NAT) administered by the National Education Testing and Research Center (NETRC) according to Bro. Andrew Gonzales, the former Department of Education (DepEd) Secretary (Cabardo, 2008). Moreover, the results showed that most of the takers, both in elementary and high school, were weak in the silent reading comprehension part in English. This denotes that learners have low silent reading proficiency. In this regard, it is vital to know more about the students' understanding to emojis in texts as well as their silent reading proficiency level to gather more inputs on how to improve their level of understanding through non-verbal (emojis) and verbal (written texts) communication.

II. OBJECTIVES

This research was on the students' silent reading proficiency and interpersonal impressions of emoji as contemporary tool of digital technology used in communication. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. Find out the students' understanding of emojis;
2. Determine the students' impressions of some emoji figures;
3. Determine students' silent reading proficiency level;
4. Determine the students' level of silent reading proficiency when grouped according to sex and academic performance; and
5. Determine the relationship between students' silent reading proficiency level and their academic performance.

III. METHODOLOGY

The first set of respondents composed of forty-two (42) graduating AB-EL students SY 2018-2019 at VSU answered a research instrument adopted from Bliss-Caroll's study (2016). The research design used a questionnaire which is a series of written questions and figures a participant answers. The gathered data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The frequency distribution and percentage specified the percentage observation that existed in each item. The second set of respondents composed of one hundred-two (102) Grade 10 students at Bunga National High School (BNHS) answered three (3) reading passages from Phi-IRI (DepEd Tambayan, 2013) to measure their silent reading proficiency. The student's Grade Point Average (GPA) earned in the previous year (Grade 9) served as the academic performance variable. The study followed a descriptive survey design. Aside from reading assessment, the researchers also used frequency, mean, standard deviation, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) and t-test.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Under the study of interpersonal impressions of emoji as contemporary tool of digital technology used in communication, results showed that all (100%) of the graduating AB-EL students reported owning or using a smart phone, tablet, or other device equipped with an emoji keyboard. Respondents' descriptions of emojis included the following: 1) Describe a person's feelings and emotions; 2) Pictures and symbols display different emotions; 3) Fun,

IJETRM

International Journal of Engineering Technology Research & Management

cute, and convenient; and 4) Shorten messages or simply sugarcoating. Majority (97.62%) of the respondents indicated that they use emoji to communicate a message to someone with the reasons that emoji helped them to convey their message clearly, helped them to express what they feel, and allowed them to shorten their messages. When asked when it is appropriate to use emojis, 85.71% of the respondents checked both "casual situations" and "intimate relational", and also indicated that they use these emojis primarily among close friends. Findings further revealed that 88.10% of the respondents explained that emojis add color and allow them to express their feelings without being misinterpreted, and 71.43% also indicated that whoever received the emoji even with and from different personalities, the "meaning would not change". When shown with different emoji figures, majority of the respondents were able to guess what those emoji figures mean. This implies that the emoji sent or received online basically delivered the same content meaning. On the other hand, the overall silent reading proficiency level of Grade 10 students is in the "Frustration Level". When grouped according to sex, the female Grade 10 students have a higher silent reading proficiency level than the male ones, but still, their respective silent reading proficiency is in the "Frustration Level". Results further showed that the students' silent reading proficiency level is related to their academic performance. This probably means that the students' silent reading proficiency level depends on their academic performance since academic performance can be improved through reading practices.

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V. CONCLUSION

This study has come to conclude that emojis were considered to be part of the non-verbal communication which can help make messages more expressive in thought and in emotions. Using emojis allows the respondents to clearly convey their messages to the person on the other line. Understanding emojis is one great factor to have good communication skills because emojis give concrete meanings to messages read online. Results of poor silent reading proficiency among Grade 10 students could mean that these students have developed poor reading habits in their early grades and the effort of creating strong silent reading patterns will likely require involvement of teachers over several years of students' school attendance. However, the Grade 10 students are possibly good when it comes to oral reading wherein the focus is more on the pronunciation of individual words, and not more on comprehension done in silent reading, since there is a significant relationship between the students' silent reading proficiency and their academic performance.

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IJETRM

International Journal of Engineering Technology Research & Management

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