



Effects of Emojis on Paralanguage in Social Media Communication among Students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2026.13020098>

Received: 03 February 2026; Accepted: 09 February 2026; Published: 06 March 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of emojis on paralanguage in social media communication among students in federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria. With the rapid growth of digital interaction, emojis have become an essential element of online discourse, functioning as non-verbal cues that supplement written language. Five research questions and hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. This research used the Socio-Semiotic Perspective theory. This is an appropriate theoretical framework for this study because it comprehensively addresses the social and cultural dimensions of communication, crucial for understanding how meaning is constructed and negotiated through various semiotic resources, including emojis. Survey research design was used in the study. The area of the study was South-South, Nigeria. The study population was 10,788 ND 2 students from four federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria out of which 381 was sampled using Krejcie and Morgan population and sample frame. A structured questionnaire known as “effects of emojis on paralanguage in social media communication among students Questionnaire (EEPSMCSQ)” was used in collecting data for the study. A pilot test was conducted using 30 students from a federal Polytechnic outside the main study area. The data generated was analyzed using dependent t-test analysis to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that emoji usage significantly affects paralanguage in social media communication. It revealed that emojis enhance message interpretation while excessive use negatively impacts grammatical accuracy, vocabulary development, and formal writing proficiency. The study concluded that while emojis improve clarity and emotional expression in informal contexts, their misuse can lead to misunderstandings and the transfer of informal habits into academic writing. It recommended among others that students should be educated on the appropriate use of emojis in informal as well as formal contexts.

Keywords: Paralanguage, Social Media Communication, Digital Interaction, Vocabulary Development, Grammatical Accuracy

INTRODUCTION

In this information age, written communication has undergone an immense transformation. While traditional written English relies on words, punctuation and grammar to convey meaning, online communication frequently incorporates visual elements such as emojis. Emojis have become a universal feature of digital discourse, appearing in text messages, emails, and social media platforms. Emojis are small images conveying meaning, emotions, and tone embedded in electronic text messages that allow people to express their feelings and emotions in nonverbal and informal conversations.

Scholars have defined emojis differently, Evans (2017) defined emoji as a form of paralanguage, a digital counterpart to the body language, gestures and tone missing in text. Amadu (2024) defined emoji as a visual cue that supplement digital text with emotional and communicative nuance. Dekker and Van Oort (2025) described emoji as contextually embedded signs whose meaning depends on textual and situational anchors. Bartolome and Kuppens (2025) defined emojis as systematic functional linguistics, functioning ideationally, interpersonally and textually. Doan and Malsky (2025) defined emojis as “paralanguage”, offering non-verbal cues in text—

much like gestures or tone of voice in spoken communication. They serve functions like reinforcement, substitution, contradiction, emphasis, metacommentary, and discourse management. According to Ali-Chand and Naidu (2024), the rise of emojis in digital communication is a captivating evolution that has significantly impacted the way people express themselves online. Udoudom (2024) remarked that emojis are expressive symbols used to convey emotions, ideas, and messages in digital communication, have become an integral part of our online conversations. Emojis originated in Japan in the late 1990s, created by Shigetaka Kurita, who was working for NTT Docomo, a Japanese telecommunications company (McCurry, 2016).

The term "emoji" is a combination of two Japanese words: "e" (picture) and "moji" (character). The initial set of emojis was designed to convey information in a visually efficient way. Emojis gained popularity quickly in Japan and eventually spread globally as communication became increasingly digital and visual. Unicode, the international standard for text encoding, started incorporating emojis, ensuring cross-platform compatibility and standardization (McCurry, 2016). The Unicode Consortium began officially encoding emojis in Unicode, ensuring that emojis would be displayed consistently across different platforms and devices. This standardization was crucial for the widespread adoption of emojis in digital communication. One of the most compelling pieces of evidence highlighting the rise of emojis is their sheer ubiquity across various digital platforms. According to a 2021 report by Emojipedia, over 10 billion emojis are sent daily, illustrating their pervasive presence in our digital lives (Emojipedia, 2021). The Unicode Consortium has added over 3,600 emojis to its list as of 2025, reflecting the growing demand for diverse and representative symbols in digital communication (Unicode Consortium, 2025).

Paralanguage refers to the non-verbal elements of communication, such as tone, pitch and volume, which complement spoken words. In face-to-face interactions, paralanguage plays a crucial role in conveying emotions and attitudes. In the context of social media, where verbal cues may be limited, emojis can serve as paralinguistic cues to compensate for the absence of face-to-face communication. Zappavigna and Logi (2024) maintained that emojis function as paralanguage in social media discourse, complementing and enhancing textual communication with non-verbal cues. They emphasized how emojis facilitate emotional expression, interactional alignment, and rapport building in online interactions.

In analysing specific examples of emoji usage across different social media platforms, they demonstrate the intricate ways in which emojis contribute to the construction of meaning and social identity in digital spaces. It is apparent that emojis have become an essential part of social media discourse, provided context, and enhanced the emotional tone of messages (Miller *et al.*, 2016). The significance of emojis as paralinguistic resources in social media discourses highlights their potential to enrich communication in digital platforms. Research has shown that emojis can enhance emotional expression in online communication (Battestini *et al.*, 2020). Emojis allow users to convey complex emotions that may be difficult to express in words alone (Wu *et al.*, 2016).

Among university students, emojis have been found to facilitate more authentic and emotionally expressive interactions on social media platforms (Tigwell & Flatla, 2016). Emojis also play a significant role in shaping social interactions on social media platforms. Studies have shown that emojis can influence the perceived warmth and friendliness of messages (Li *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, the use of emojis has been associated with increased engagement and social connectedness among university students (Miller *et al.*, 2016).

Moreover, statistical data underscores the profound impact of emojis on user engagement and communication effectiveness. A study conducted by Adobe in 2021 found that 90% of global emoji users believe that emojis make it easier to express themselves, and 89% of respondents stated that emojis help them communicate across language barriers (Adobe, 2021). This aligns with findings from 2021 research by the University of Minnesota, which revealed that the use of emojis can increase the perceived friendliness and warmth of messages, thereby enhancing interpersonal connections in digital communication (University of Minnesota, 2021). The rise of social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, played a significant role in popularizing emojis. Social media's character limit and the need for concise communication made emojis a convenient and expressive tool to convey emotions and add nuance to messages. The surge in popularity of mobile messaging apps, like WhatsApp, Messenger, and Viber, further fueled the use of emojis. These apps provided a convenient and user-friendly interface for incorporating emojis into conversations, making them an integral part of everyday communication.

Over the years, emojis have evolved to become more inclusive, with efforts to represent a diverse range of people, cultures, and identities (Kelly & Watts, 2015; Miller, 2016; University of Minnesota, 2021). The introduction of skin tone modifiers, gender-neutral emojis, and emojis depicting various professions reflects a commitment to diversity and representation (Miller, 2016). World renowned brands recognize the communicative power of emojis and have started to incorporate them into marketing campaigns and branding strategies making emojis a tool for creating relatable and engaging content, allowing brands to connect with their audience on a more emotional level (Khamis *et al.*, 2017). The integration of emojis into business and marketing strategies further attests to their significance. According to a report by Appboy (now Braze), marketing campaigns that included emojis in their push notifications saw a 9% increase in open rates and a 70% increase in conversion rates compared to campaigns without emojis (Braze, 2020). This highlights how emojis not only facilitate personal communication but also drive engagement and action in commercial contexts. Emojis have also found their place in academic research, with scholars exploring their role in digital communication, emotional expression, and social interaction.

A study published in the journal *Computers in Human Behavior* in 2015 demonstrated that emojis play a crucial role in enhancing message clarity and reducing ambiguity, especially in emotionally charged or complex interactions (Kelly & Watts, 2015). Furthermore, emojis provide a nuanced way to convey emotions in text based communication. They allow users to express feelings, tone, and intent more accurately, reducing the chances of misinterpretation in digital conversations. Emojis have also become a form of visual storytelling, allowing users to convey complex ideas, events, or narratives with a single character or a combination of characters (Danesi, 2017). This visual shorthand enhances the efficiency of communication in an era of information overload. It is now apparent that emojis have become deeply embedded in digital culture. Memes, GIFs, and internet slang often incorporate emojis to convey humour, sarcasm, or cultural references. Emojis have become a recognizable and dynamic component of the digital lexicon. The continued evolution of emojis includes ongoing efforts to increase representation, introduce new symbols, and explore innovative ways to enhance digital expression. As technology advances, emojis are likely to remain an essential and evolving aspect of digital communication.

The rise of emojis can be attributed to their visual expressiveness, cross-platform standardization, and their seamless integration into various digital communication channels. From a niche concept in Japan to a global phenomenon, emojis have become an integral part of how people communicate in the digital age.

Statement of Problem

In an ideal situation, communication remains structured, contextually appropriate, and mutually intelligible across different platforms and social settings. Traditional linguistic norms have been maintained through standardized grammar, syntax, and semantics, ensuring clarity in both spoken and written discourse. Formal communication settings, such as academic institutions, professional environments, and literature, have historically adhered to conventional language rules, fostering coherence and linguistic integrity. Digital communication was initially expected to follow similar patterns, with technology serving as an enabler rather than a disruptor of linguistic standards.

However, the rise of social media, digital messaging, and online interactions has introduced a paradigm shift in how language is used, with emojis restructuring communication dynamics and serving as visual substitutes for words. While emojis facilitate quick expression, they also raise concerns about its impact on traditional linguistic structures, comprehension, and interpersonal relationships. Excessive reliance on digital symbols may lead to ambiguity, misinterpretation, and even a decline in formal writing proficiency. The integration of non-verbal elements into written text challenges existing linguistic frameworks, making it essential to investigate their longterm implications.

Despite the increasing body of research on digital communication, there is still limited empirical evidence on how emojis influences para-language communication among students. Most studies focus on either the linguistic creativity fostered by digital communication or the potential deterioration of traditional language standards. This study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the Effects of Emojis on Paralanguage in Social Media Communication among Students in Federal Polytechnic in South-South, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to investigate the Effects of Emojis on Paralanguage in Social Media Communication among students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. examine the extent to which students in federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria use emojis in their daily communication.
- ii. determine the influence of emojis on grammatical accuracy among students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria.
- iii. investigate the influence of emojis on vocabulary development among students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria
- iv. examine the influence of emojis on the interpretation of messages in social media communication among students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria.
- v. ascertain the influence emojis on formal writing proficiency among students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study sets to answer the following questions:

- i. What extent do students in federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria use emojis in their daily communication?
- ii. How do emojis influence the grammatical accuracy of students in Federal Polytechnics in SouthSouth, Nigeria?
- iii. Do emojis influence the vocabulary development of students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria?
- iv. How do emojis influence the interpretation of messages in social media communication among students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria?
- v. What is the influence emojis on formal writing proficiency of students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria?

The following hypotheses was formulated and tested.

- H₀₁: Students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria do not significantly use emojis in their daily communication.
- H₀₂: The use of emojis has no effects on the grammatical accuracy of students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria.
- H₀₃: There is no influence of emojis on the vocabulary development of students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria.
- H₀₄: There is no significant influence of emojis on interpretation of messages in social media communication among students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria.
- H₀₅: There is no significant influence of emojis on formal writing proficiency of students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the digital age, social media platforms have become digital classrooms and significant communication channels for university students. Emojis, as visual and pictorial representations of emotions are being used

increasingly and are now an integral component of online communication. The Linguistic and Cultural Dimensions of Emojis While emojis are globally recognized, their interpretation can vary across cultures (Tay *et al.*, 2018). Polytechnic students from different cultural backgrounds may have unique emoji preferences and interpretations, which can influence the effectiveness of emoji-based paralanguage in social media communication (Majid *et al.*, 2020). Zappavigna and Logi (2024) also emphasize the importance of considering contextual factors, such as cultural norms, social dynamics, and platform affordances, in understanding emoji usage and interpretation.

They highlight the variability in emoji conventions and meanings across different cultural and linguistic contexts, underscoring the need for nuanced analysis when studying emoji-mediated communication. Various research has examined the linguistic functions of emojis, highlighting their role in supplementing and enriching written communication (Derks *et al.*, 2008; Miller *et al.*, 2016). Emojis convey various linguistic features, including emotions, attitudes, emphasis, and tone, contributing to the overall meaning and interpretation of text-based messages. Studies have also conducted semantic and pragmatic analyses of emojis to explore their meanings and usage patterns across different communicative contexts.

Emojis often carry multiple layers of meaning and can be interpreted differently based on linguistic, cultural, and situational factors. Research has investigated the cultural connotations of emojis and their implications for cross-cultural communication (Thurlow & Brown, 2003). Emojis reflect cultural norms, values, and stereotypes, influencing how messages are interpreted and perceived by individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds (Miller *et al.*, 2016). Several studies have examined emojis as cultural symbols that encode shared meanings and representations within specific cultures (Park *et al.*, 2014; Riordan, 2017). Emojis serve as visual shorthand for cultural concepts, practices, and identities, facilitating communication and identity expression in digital environments (Alshenqeeti, 2016; Stark & Crawford, 2015).

Research has explored how emojis contribute to language variation and change, particularly in digital communication (Baron, 2015; Danesi, 2017). Emojis introduce new forms of expression and creativity, shaping linguistic norms and conventions in online discourse communities (Danesi, 2016). Studies have investigated the role of emojis in intercultural communication, highlighting their potential to bridge linguistic and cultural barriers (Kelly & Watts, 2015; Kaye, Malone, & Wall, 2017). Emojis facilitate cross-cultural understanding by providing visual cues and context clues that aid in interpretation and negotiation of meaning (Dresner & Herring, 2010; Park *et al.*, 2014). While emojis offer various benefits for communication, challenges include ambiguity, cultural differences, and misinterpretation (Derks *et al.*, 2008). Emojis can also be interpreted differently based on individual preferences, cultural backgrounds, and contextual factors, leading to communication breakdowns.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research used the Socio-Semiotic Perspective theory. This is an appropriate theoretical framework for this study because it comprehensively addresses the social and cultural dimensions of communication, crucial for understanding how meaning is constructed and negotiated through various semiotic resources, including emojis. Given that emojis function as multimodal resources within social media discourse, this framework allows for an exploration of how they contribute to the expression of emotions, attitudes, and interpersonal relationships, which are central to the study's focus. Halliday's socio-semiotic theory of language, which underpins this approach, provides a robust foundation for analysing the interplay between text, context, and social structure.

By viewing language as a unique system of signs with a social function, Halliday's theory emphasizes the unity between linguistic and non-linguistic elements in communication. This is particularly relevant to the study of emojis, which, as visual symbols, operate within the same semiotic system as language but contribute distinctively to the construction of meaning. Finally, this framework facilitates an examination of how emojis function within specific social contexts, aligning with the study's aim to explore cultural and contextual variations in emoji usage. By employing the Socio-Semiotic Perspective, the research can delve into the complex ways emojis augment textual communication, enhancing the understanding of how these symbols shape meaning and interaction in the digital landscape.

Previous Studies on the Use of Emojis in Language Learning

Miller *et al.* (2016) conducted a series of experiments to investigate the impact of emoticons on reading comprehension and affective interpretation. Participants were presented with text passages containing emoticons and were asked to complete comprehension and interpretation tasks. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyse the data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the role of emoticons in written discourse. The study by Miller *et al.* (2016) yielded several important findings. They found that emoticons had a mixed effect on reading comprehension. While some participants reported that emoticons helped them understand the emotional tone of the text, others found them distracting and detrimental to comprehension. Emoticons were also found to enhance affective interpretation by providing additional emotional context to the text. The study also demonstrates that participants are more likely to accurately identify the intended emotions and attitudes when emoticons are present. Participants perceived text passages with emoticons as more positive and friendly compared to passages without emoticons.

Studies have also explored the use of emojis as visual aids to support vocabulary acquisition and retention among language learners. Emojis serve as pictorial representations of words or concepts, helping learners associate visual cues with linguistic meanings (Thurlow & Brown, 2003; Miller, 2016). Miller *et al.* (2016) also suggest that incorporating emojis into language learning activities enhances learners' communicative competence by providing additional means for expressing emotions, attitudes, and intentions. This demonstrates that emojis supplement linguistic communication with nonverbal cues, enriching learners' expressive abilities.

Other studies have also examined the cultural implications of emojis and their role in intercultural communication (Thurlow & Brown, 2003). Emojis carry cultural connotations and can vary in meaning across different cultural contexts, prompting discussions about cultural diversity and sensitivity in language learning. Research has explored the use of emojis in writing and composition tasks to enhance learners' creativity and expression (Derks *et al.*, 2008). Emojis provide learners with alternative means of conveying emotions and nuances in written texts, promoting linguistic fluency and stylistic variation. Some studies have investigated the role of emojis in developing learners' pragmatic competence, particularly in understanding and interpreting social cues in digital communication (Dresner & Herring, 2010; Barr, 2016).

Other studies have revealed how emojis help learners navigate the pragmatics of online discourse, including politeness strategies, humour, and sarcasm (Tagg, 2015; Barr & Gillon Dowens, 2019). Research also suggests that the use of emojis in language learning activities can enhance learners' motivation and engagement by making language learning more enjoyable and relevant to their digital lives (Lu, 2019; Derakhshan & Hamed, 2020).

Emojis appeal to learners' interests and preferences, fostering a positive learning environment (Wang & Wen, 2017);

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. Kristonis (2012) defined descriptive survey as the collection of data that describes events and then organizes and tabulates the data collection. It is seen as the type of research that studies large and small populations by selecting and studying samples chosen from the population to discover the relative incidence, distribution, interrelations of sociological and psychological variables. Survey design is used in the study because it facilitates the use of questionnaires with numerically rated items to obtain responses from a target population. It also helps to obtain information describing characteristics of a large sample of individuals of interest relatively quickly. The variables of interest in this study are emojis and Paralanguage in Social Media Communication.

Area of the Study

This study was conducted in South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria. The South-South geo-political zone is popularly known as the Niger Delta zone of Nigeria. The zone is approximately between longitude 5⁰⁰ and 6⁴⁵ east and latitude 5⁰⁰ and 6³⁰ north of the country. It is a tropical region, known for heavy rainfall. Major

occupations are agriculture, fishing and extraction of raw materials, such as limestone, gold, oil. Approximately 31 million people of more than 40 ethnic groups including the Bini, Efik, Ibibio, Annang, Oron, Ijaw, Itsekiri,

Isoko, Urhobo, Ukwani, and Kalabari are among the inhabitants in the zone speaking about 250 different dialects. The South-South is of high interest due to its richness in natural resources including crude oil, the country’s highest foreign exchange earner. It is a sensitive location in many ways including infrastructural and educational perspectives. The major occupation of people in the zone includes fishing, farming, trading carving, weaving while some people worked in the industrial and civil service commission. The South South geo-political zone is one of the most education-advantaged zone in the country.

Population of the Study

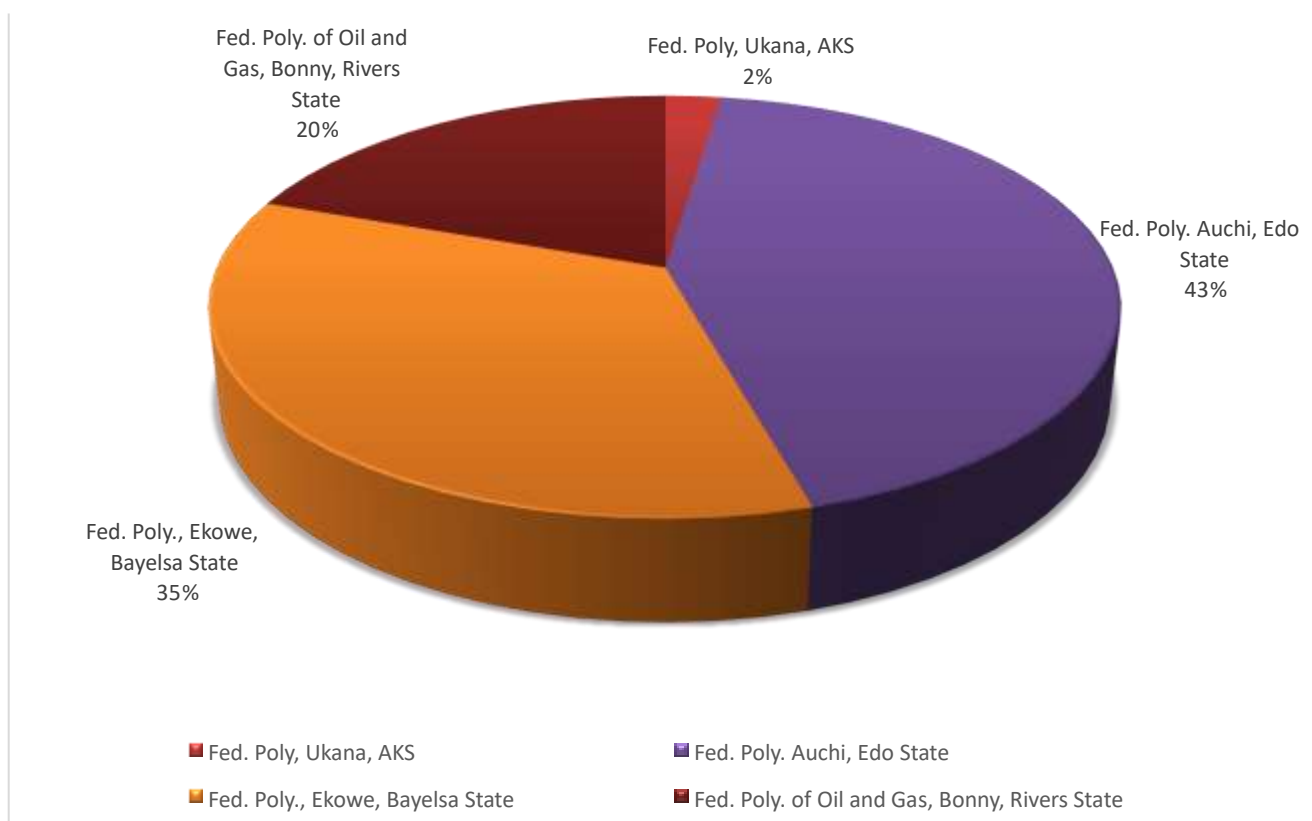
The population of this study consists of 10,788 ND 2 students in four federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria. The institutions are; Federal Polytechnic, Ukana, Akwa Ibom State (254), Federal Polytechnic, Auchi,

Edo State (4,672), Federal Polytechnic, Ekowe, Bayelsa State (3751) and Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas, Bonny, Rivers State (2111). These institutions were chosen because of their diverse student populations and widespread use of social media for academic and social communication.

Table 1: Population Distribution of the Study

S/N	Polytechnics	ND II Students
1	Federal Polytechnic, Ukana, Akwa Ibom State	254
2	Federal Polytechnic, Auchi, Edo State	4,672
3	Federal Polytechnic, Ekowe, Bayelsa State	3,751
4	Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas, Bonny, Rivers State	2,111
	Total	10,788

(Sources: Polytechnic admission units and office of the Registrars of the Respective Institutions under Study, 2025/2026 Academic Session).



Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 381 respondents was drawn using Krejcie and Morgan sampling size table. Thereafter, simple random sampling was used to enlist 381 respondents for the study.

Instrumentation

A structured questionnaire known as “effect of emojis on paralanguage in social media communication among students Questionnaire (EEPSMCSQ)” was used in collecting data for the study. It was divided into two sections.

Sections ‘A’ and ‘B’. Section ‘A’ contained personal data of the respondent such as gender, name of institution, level. Section B contained questionnaire items generated in line with the research questions and hypotheses.

Validation of the Instrument

To ensure validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in communication studies and educational research. Their feedback was used to refine and improve the instrument before administration.

Reliability of the Instrument

A pilot test was conducted using 30 students from a Federal Polytechnic outside the main study area. The responses was subjected to a Cronbach’s Alpha test to determine internal consistency. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or above will be considered acceptable.

Method of Data Analysis

The data generated were analyzed using dependent t-test analysis to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

Research Question One

What extent do students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria use emojis in their daily communication?

Table 4.1.1: Extent of Emoji Use (N = 381)

Extent of Use	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very High Extent	158	41.5
High Extent	166	43.6
Moderate Extent	42	11.0
Low Extent	15	3.9
Total	381	100

Table 4.1.1 shows that 85.1% of the students use emojis to a high or very high extent in their daily communication. This indicates that emoji use is a common and dominant feature of social media interaction among students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South Nigeria.

Research Question Two

How do emojis influence the grammatical accuracy of students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria?

Table 4.1.2: Emojis and Grammatical Accuracy (N = 381)

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
I pay less attention to grammar when using emojis	150	145	55	31	3.09
Emojis replace words in my sentences	165	140	50	26	3.17
Emoji use affects sentence construction	155	150	48	28	3.13

Decision Mean = 2.50

Table 4.1.2 All the items recorded mean scores above the decision mean of 2.50, indicating agreement among respondents. This suggests that emojis negatively influence grammatical accuracy, particularly in informal written communication.

Research Question Three

Do emojis influence the vocabulary development of students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria?

Table 4.1.3: Emojis and Vocabulary Development (N = 381)

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
Emojis reduce my use of descriptive words	160	145	50	26	3.15
I use emojis instead of searching for appropriate words	170	140	45	26	3.19
Emoji use limits my vocabulary development	150	150	55	26	3.11

The results in table 4.1.3 show that a majority of respondents agreed that emojis replace words and reduce descriptive expression. This indicates that emojis significantly influence vocabulary development, often in a limiting manner when overused.

Research Question Four

How do emojis influence the interpretation of messages in social media communication among students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria?

Table 4.1.4: Emojis and Message Interpretation (N = 381)

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
Emojis help me understand the tone of messages	185	155	25	16	3.34
Emojis reduce misunderstanding in communication	178	150	32	21	3.27
Messages without emojis are often unclear	165	148	42	26	3.19

The high mean scores in table 4.1.4 indicate that emojis enhance message interpretation by clarifying emotions, tone, and intent. Emojis therefore function effectively as digital paralanguage in social media communication.

Research Question Five

What is the influence of emojis on formal writing proficiency of students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria?

Table 4.1.5: Emojis and Formal Writing Proficiency (N = 381)

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
I struggle to write formally without emojis	155	145	50	31	3.11
Emoji use affects my academic writing style	170	150	40	21	3.25
I unintentionally use informal expressions in formal writing	175	145	36	25	3.26

Respondents in table 4.1.5 generally agreed that frequent emoji use negatively affects formal writing. This indicates that emojis have a significant negative influence on formal writing proficiency, particularly in maintaining academic tone and structure.

Testing of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between frequent and rare emoji users in grammatical accuracy.

Table 4.2.1: Independent t-Test of Emoji Use and Grammatical Accuracy

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Frequent Emoji Users	221	2.79	0.62
Rare Emoji Users	160	3.37	0.56

t-calculated	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
-9.42	379	0.000

Decision:

Since $p < 0.05$, H₀₁ is rejected

The data in Table 4.2.1 indicated that there is a significant difference in grammatical accuracy between frequent and rare emoji users. Students who rarely use emojis demonstrate better grammatical accuracy.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between frequent and rare emoji users in vocabulary development.

Table 4.2.2: Independent t-Test of Emoji Use and Vocabulary Development

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Frequent Emoji Users	221	2.74	0.65
Rare Emoji Users	160	3.33	0.59

t-calculated	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
-8.61	379	0.000

Decision:

Since $p < 0.05$, H₀₂ is rejected.

The data in Table 4.2.2 indicated Emoji usage significantly influences vocabulary development. Rare emoji users exhibit stronger vocabulary skills than frequent users.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between frequent and rare emoji users in message interpretation. **Table**

4.2.3: Independent t-Test of Emoji Use and Message Interpretation

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Frequent Emoji Users	221	3.46	0.53
Rare Emoji Users	160	2.88	0.61

t-calculated	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
10.27	379	0.000

Decision:

Since $p < 0.05$, H_{03} is rejected.

The data in Table 4.2.3 indicated that there is a significant difference in message interpretation. Frequent emoji users understand message tone and intent more clearly than rare emoji users.

H_{04} : There is no significant difference between frequent and rare emoji users in formal writing proficiency.

Table 4.2.4: Independent t-Test of Emoji Use and Formal Writing Proficiency

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Frequent Emoji Users	221	2.66	0.69
Rare Emoji Users	160	3.44	0.55

t-calculated	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
-11.38	379	0.000

Decision:

Since $p < 0.05$, H_{04} is rejected.

The data in Table 4.2.3 indicated that frequent use of emojis has a significant negative influence on students’ formal writing proficiency.

SUMMARY OF RESULT

The independent t-test analysis based on 381 respondents confirms that emoji usage significantly affects paralanguage in social media communication. While emojis enhance message interpretation, excessive use negatively impacts grammatical accuracy, vocabulary development, and formal writing proficiency.

The combined descriptive and inferential analyses reveal that:

1. Emoji usage among students is widespread.
2. Emojis significantly influence paralanguage in social media communication.
3. While emojis enhance message interpretation, they negatively affect grammatical accuracy, vocabulary development, and formal writing proficiency.
4. All descriptive trends observed in the research questions are statistically supported by the independent samples t-test results.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effects of emojis on paralanguage in social media communication among students in Federal Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria. Findings showed that students frequently use emojis in daily communication, which enhance expressiveness and aid message interpretation. However, overreliance on emojis was found to negatively affect grammatical accuracy, limit vocabulary development, and reduce formal writing

proficiency. While emojis improve clarity and emotional expression in informal contexts, their misuse can lead to misunderstandings and the transfer of informal habits into academic writing.

RECOMMENDATION

1. **Raise Awareness:** Students should be educated on the appropriate use of emojis in informal versus formal contexts.
2. **Strengthen Writing Skills:** Institutions should emphasize formal writing and discourage informal social media habits in academic work.
3. **Promote Vocabulary Use:** Encourage descriptive language instead of overusing emojis to support vocabulary development.
4. **Digital Communication Guidelines:** Provide guidance on responsible emoji use to improve clarity and reduce misinterpretation.
5. **Further Research:** Conduct studies on long-term effects of emoji use on communication and writing skills across different regions or levels of education.

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