



Research Article

Analysis of Emoji and Emoticon Usage in Interpersonal Communication of Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp Application User

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Abstract

The aims of this research are: 1) to know the display of emoji and emoticon in Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp application, 2) to know the usage of emoji and emoticon in Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp application on interpersonal communication, and 3) to know the role of emoji and emoticon usage on interpersonal communication. In this research, the method used was qualitative research method. This research was based on media richness theory. Through the communication channel, the message will have high noise level so that it could be conveyed perfectly. Research results showed that emoji and emoticon have very important role in interpersonal communication. In media richness theory, Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp media had fulfilled the criteria. 1) Ability of communication channel in conveying message signals such as facial expression, body movement, and vocal inflection; 2) Feedbacks are directly given by the message receiver as response to every chats, 3) Variety of language such as the presence of symbols and foreign language, and 4) Ability of communication channel in conveying personality such as showing personal emotion. This research concluded that emoji and emoticon have important role in interpersonal communication to enhance the text message's meaning.

Keywords: emoji; emoticon; interpersonal communication; Blackberry Messenger; WhatsApp

Introduction

Humans basically needs to communicate in order to support their lives as social creature. Every day, humans have verbal communication as well as non-verbal communication. Communications are nowadays supported by rapidly developing technology since the inventions of telephone, computer, telegram, and any other communication tools. Presently, Smartphone had invented as the most used technology in communication. The development of communication technology gives us possibility not to be face to face when delivering information to the other. The usage of communication technology had been increasing every year since Smartphone could ease the communication. The renewal of technology also makes the communication a lot easier. Internet and Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) are the main networks that support the communication through Smartphone. Supporting applications for communication is also renewing in line with the development of Smartphone technology. Android as Smartphone operating system has many supporting applications to ease communication between its user such as Blackberry Messenger and

WhatsApp. WhatsApp has popularity of 1 billion downloads, meanwhile Blackberry Messenger has the popularity of 100 million downloads throughout the world. Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp have many users because they are easy to use and offer complete features.

Interpersonal communication is the most commonly used communication in conveying a message. Although interpersonal communication should be done face to face, but small researches showed that interpersonal communication could also be done by using media (Sun *et al.*, 2011). Interpersonal communications are not only done by meeting the people directly because nowadays media and technology had been rapidly developing. In communication, people are hoping that the other person could understand their feelings, ideas, impressions, and messages. The developed technology could support those communication objectives without being face to face with the other by the presence of emoticon or emoji facility. Those emoticons and emojis could show our present condition. For example, a sad person could send sad face emoji so the others could understand the condition of the sender.

Emoji was first invented in Japan on 1990s and then it began to develop from the product of Apple iPhone until Android and spread to various social Medias (Miller *et al.*, 2016). Emoji and emoticon facilities are present in Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp since they were launched. Emoticon or emoji is a chat facility presented in messenger such as Blackberry Messenger or WhatsApp in form of icon or image that shows expressions like sad, happy, shocked, impressed, scared, and so on. Emoji could also be called as facial emotion, or combination of keyboard characters expressed along with a text message that shows the writer's mood (Crystal, 2001). Emoticon is symbol typography or the combination of symbols that shows the mood, resembling facial expression, or in form of particular activity. It is used as non verbal communication and emotion substitutes for text based message (Walther and D'Addario, 2001).

Blackberry Messenger is one of instant messaging application that could be used to send messages in form of text, image, video, location map, recording, voice call, and video call. To use Blackberry Messenger, a stable and fast connection of internet is needed especially in making voice call or video call. A stable and fast connection of internet is needed so that the message delivery will not be interrupted.

WhatsApp is also an instant messaging application that could be used to send text messages, recording, voice call, video call, and location map (helped by Google Maps). It also could attach various files such as images, document, video, and music. The development of technology makes it possible that an application has complete features for communication. To support Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp application, the users should have internet connection. Both Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp need a stable connection and data package on Smartphone. WhatsApp has facilities that enable its user to send text message freely without the presence of data package, but the process will take slower. The other way of communication that could be used in Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp is by making group with the facility provided by those applications. By using group facility, the users could communicate with a number of people at once.

From the statement that already been described, the research problems are as follows: 1) how is the display of emoji and emoticon in Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp application? 2) How is the usage of emoji and emoticon on interpersonal communication in Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp application? And 3) how is the role of emoji and emoticon usage on interpersonal communication?

The aims of this research are: 1) to know the display of emoji and emoticon in Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp application, 2) to know the usage of emoji and emoticon in Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp application on interpersonal communication, and 3) to

know the role of emoji and emoticon usage on interpersonal communication.

The significance of this research are: 1) Know the display of emoji and emoticon in Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp application, 2) Know the correct way to use emoji and emoticon in Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp application, 3) Know the difference of emoji and emoticon in Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp application, and 4) Know the usage of emoji and emoticon for effective interpersonal communication.

Literature Review

Emoji and Emoticon

Most of messenger applications including Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp have emoji and emoticon facility. Before the development of technology, emoticon is just in form of symbol such as ;) that shows happy expression. Emoji and emoticon nowadays had been developed into a figure like ☺ and even have different color and interesting shapes. Although the shapes of emoji and emoticon are different but the emotions expressed through them can show various emotions of its user.

Emoji can be described as graphic symbols or ideogram that not only shows facial expression but also wider concepts and ideas such as celebrations, weathers, vehicles and buildings, food and drinks, animals and plants, emotions, feelings, and activities (Novak *et al.*, 2015). Emoticon can also be described as emotion used in text communication such as smile (Dresner and Herring, 2010). Emoticon is short character that use punctuation symbols in text message (Novak *et al.*, 2015) and depicting emotional form in non-verbal language (Derks *et al.*, 2018). From those definitions, it can be concluded that emoji is an image that could express facial expression, including wider concepts and ideas such as building shapes, celebrations, food and drinks, animal, plants, and etc. Emoticon could also be concluded as text symbol that show facial expression in form of face icons.

From the statements that had been described before, it can be concluded that emoji is an image in form of colored icon of facial emotions, animal emotions, plants, vehicles, and etc. Meanwhile, emoticon is the collection of some symbols that form facial emotions in text messages.

Interpersonal Communication

Communication is derived from Latin word "communicare" that means "to share" or "to make common" (Coates, 2009). In this context, sharing or making common means to share information or message that could be received by other people. Communication is the process of conveying message or information from one to another (Keyton, 2011). Communication happens when it fulfills some elements (Cheney, 2011) as depicted in Fig. 1.

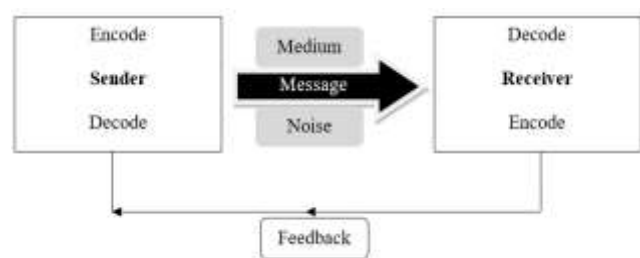


Fig. 1: Communication Process

Fig. 1 explains that the main element of communication is message sender and message receiver. Message sender sends the message directly (face-to-face) or through a particular media like telephone, internet, telegram, computer, or any other communication supporting media. The use of media in communication tends to be disturbed, such as network interference when using internet. From the statements above, communication can be defined as a process of conveying message done by two or more people, involving message sender and message receiver and subsequently induce a feedback.

Interpersonal communication is a communication that usually done by two individuals. Interpersonal communication is usually based on an intimacy of formality to someone (McLean and Moman, 2012). Other argument states that interpersonal communication is a communication that involved two to three people (Wood, 2014).

From those definitions, it can be concluded that interpersonal communication is a process of conveying message done by two people involving message sender and message receiver that induce feedbacks from those people.

Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp

Blackberry Messenger is an application provided in Playstore that can be used to chat by text, voice call, or video call. Blackberry Messenger can also be used to share photo, send a location, broadcasting, multi personal chatting, and group chatting. To be able to use this application, users should have internet connection in their Smart phones (www.blackberry.com). WhatsApp is a chat application as well as Blackberry Messenger that runs by the presence of internet connection (4G/LTE, 3G, 2G, Edge, or Wifi). The difference is that not every operator asks an additional charge to send a message through this application when the data package is empty. WhatsApp can be installed in numerous Smart phones like Android, iPhone, Windows Phone, and some types of Nokia phone. WhatsApp can also be used to send text messages, phone calls, video calls, making group, and send various files such as images, videos, recordings, music, and locations.

Research Method

This research used qualitative research method with some samples to strengthen the research results. A qualitative research is done by constructing reality and understanding

its meaning (Somantri, 2005). Qualitative research method was chosen because of the limitation of research, incomplete data, or insufficient research variables (Yin, 2011). Qualitative research originated from the depth, nuance, context, multidiscipline, and complexity. The result of qualitative research could be derived from valid findings through comparison and conclusion (Kumar, 2011). This research used media richness theory, which states that through communication channel a conveyed message has high noise level so that by this theory the message can be conveyed perfectly (Daft and Lengel, 1984).

Result and Discussion

Through media richness theory, this research results showed that emoji and emoticon have a very important role in interpersonal communication. In media richness theory, Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp fulfill the criteria of: 1) Ability of communication channel in conveying message signals such as facial expression, body movement, and vocal inflection; 2) Feedbacks are directly given by the message receiver as response to every chats, 3) Variety of language such as the presence of symbols and foreign language, and 4) Ability of communication channel in conveying personality such as showing personal emotion (Daft and Lengel, 1984).

Through chat trials with a number of WhatsApp users, the use of emoji in WhatsApp can be shown on Fig. 2.

Through three different chats shown in Figure 2, it can be concluded that emoji or emoticons are indeed can be used to strengthen the message content. By using emoji, the message sender can express emotions through pictures available on their Smart phones. Angry, sad, happy, disappointed, shocked, or any other emotions can be expressed in form of a picture. But the expression of emotion through emoji is not always correct. For example, an angry girl will not always use angry emoji to express her feeling. She can use other emoji to cover the real feeling so that the message receiver wouldn't be guilty.

Emoji and emoticon can strengthen the meaning of sent message so that the receiver will feel the emotion of message sender. In message delivery, an emoticon can make the difference. With an emoji or emoticon, a message can have more extreme emotion (Ip, 2002). An emoji can also help to express thoughts and feelings by using digital media with universally known facial expression (Mesquita *et al.*, 1997). Emoji or emoticon should be used in suitable message so that the message can have stronger emotion and represent the sender's emotion (Stark and Crawford, 2015). Emoticon is an icon with facial emotion shape which is usually used in text message to represent emotion and personality in interpersonal communication (Dunlap *et al.*, 2016). By the use of emoji, the emotion of message receiver will be triggered more strongly, and furthermore understanding the message meaning (Luminet *et al.*, 2000).

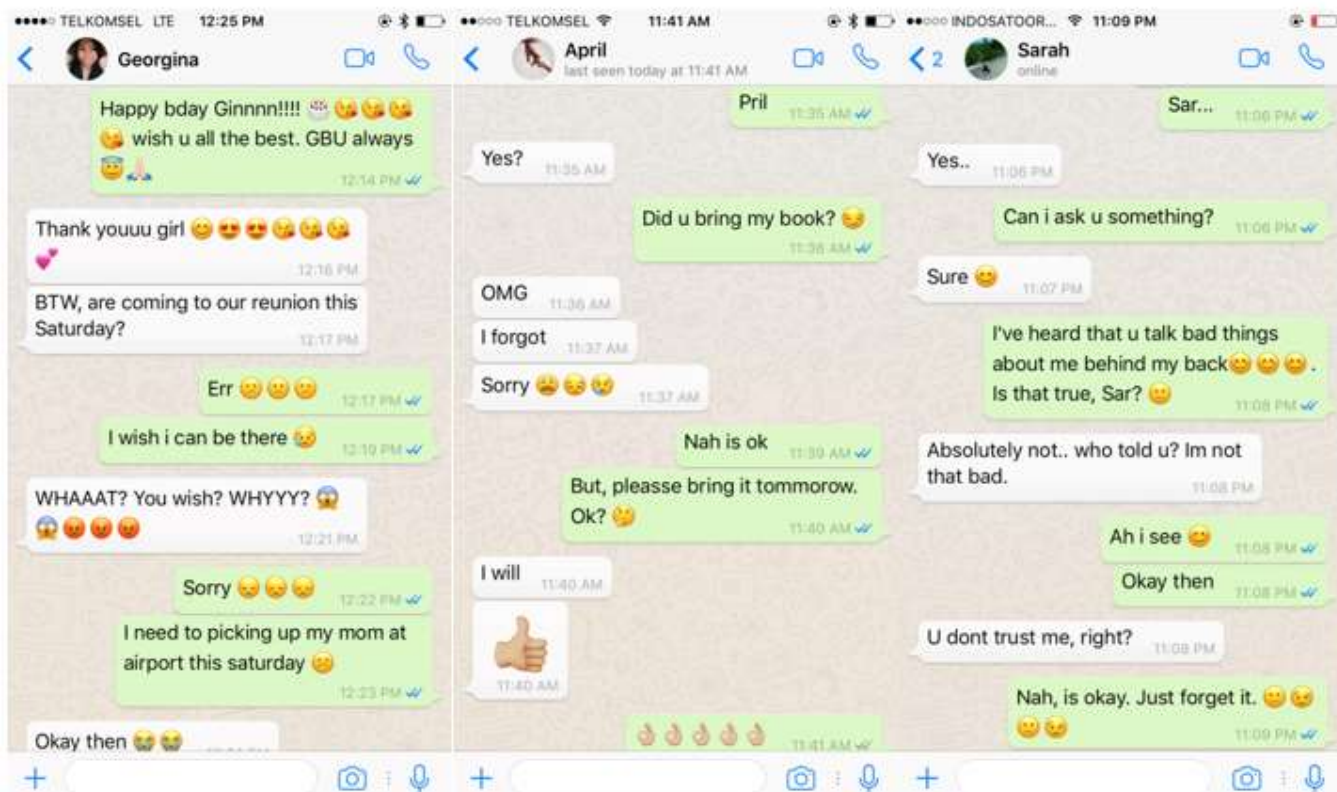


Fig. 2: The Use of Emoji in WhatsApp

Display of Emoji and Emoticon in Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp

Emoji is an emoticon which resembles someone’s facial expression or other images such as buildings, vehicles, plants, animals, weathers, and etc. Meanwhile, emoticon is a symbol that forms emotion.

Emoji in Blackberry Messenger shown in Fig. 3 was taken from screenshot of researcher’s Android Smartphone in February 24th, 2017. The application version was Version 3.2.5.12. The emoji consist of facial expressions, animal’s facial expressions, body parts, vehicles, sports equipment, plants, and etc.

Emoji in WhatsApp shown in Fig. 4 was taken from screenshot of researcher’s Android Smartphone in February 24th, 2017. The application version was 2.17.24. The emoji consist of facial emotions, plants and animals, sports, food and drink, vehicles, symbols, multimedia, and nations’ flags. Different with Blackberry Messenger, WhatsApp’s emoji are grouped according to the icon’s shapes and makes it easier for user to pick. Besides that, WhatsApp emoji is more various than Blackberry Messenger’s.



Fig.3: Emoji of Blackberry Messenger

Emoticon is the combination of emotion and icons that creates a funny and unique emoticon. The emoticon shown in Fig. 5 was taken from www.piliapp.com that provides various emoji and emoticon. Emoticon can also be used in every Smartphone because each of them had prepared with symbols needed to make emoticon.

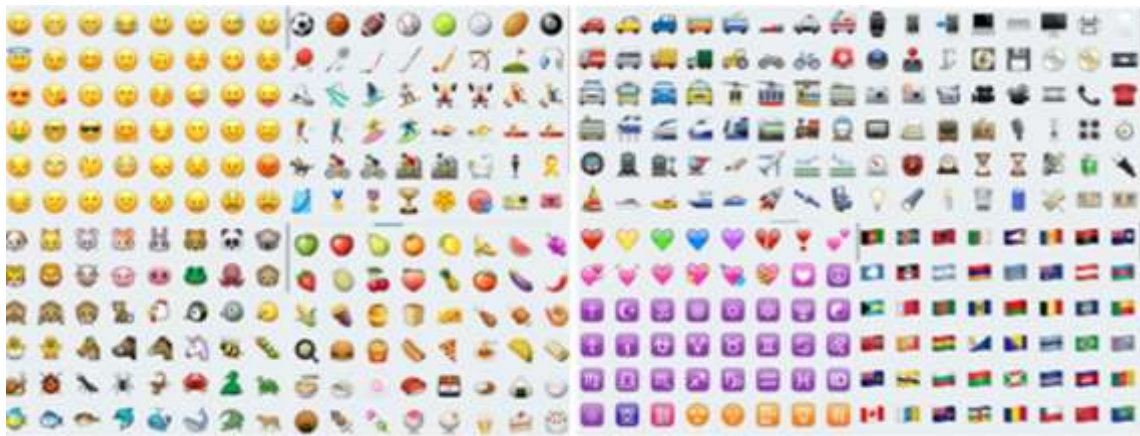


Fig.4: Emoji in WhatsApp

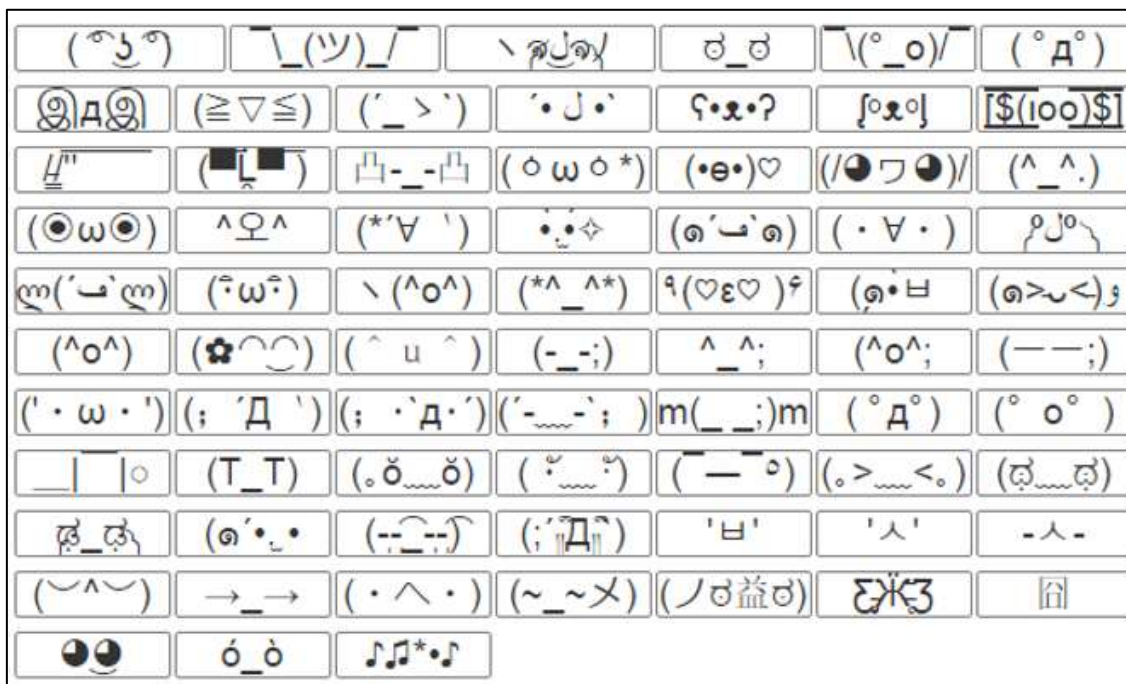


Fig. 5: Emoticon

The Correct Usage of Emoji and Emoticon in Blackberry Messenger and WhatsApp

Emoji and emoticon are used to strengthen the message so that the receiver will understand the condition or emotion of message sender. Table 1 shows the types of emoticon and their usage ratio from the research result of Maíz-Arévalo (2015).

Table 1: Types of Emoticon and Usage Frequency

Type of emoticon	Ratio
Smiley [☺]	27%
Wink [;-)]	14.6%
Laughter [:-D]	41.5%
Tongue out [:-p]	2.2%
Emoji [^^]	12.3%
Thinking emoticon [:^(^)]	1.2%
Tired emoticon [(=_=)]	1.2%
Total	100%

Emoticon is frequently used in positive messages such as thankfulness, compliment, regards, etc (Brown and Levinson, 1987) as follows:

1. Okay, Agreed: D
2. Thank you for helping my work :)
3. You are great, you can do your work faster ;)
4. See you ^^
5. Thank you so much :D or ^^

Some examples above show that emoticon can strengthen the positive text message. The usage of negatively oriented emoticon is rarely seen because an angry person tends to bother making an emoticon with his present emotion.

The usage of emoji in the research shows that respondents who are given a statement to add an emoji in the sentence “you are late ...” 46% of them fill it with angry emoji (Kelly, 2015).

From the research result it can be concluded that emoji or emoticon is frequently used to strengthen the message or as feedback to the message. If the message sender gives compliment by text message, he/she can add supporting emoji or emoticon so that the message receiver will feel the emotion effect. For example see Fig. 6.

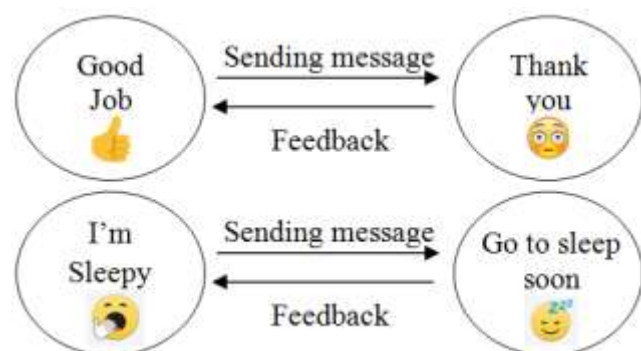


Fig. 6: The Correct Usage of Emoji

Fig. 6 explains that emoji will strengthen the given emotion so that the emotion effect will duplicate. By understanding each other's emotion, the communication process will run well.

The Role of Emoji and Emoticon Usage in Interpersonal Communication

BlackBerry Messenger and WhatsApp are frequently used applications to connect with close friends and family (Church and Oliveira, 2013). According to media richness theory, there are four factors that determine good delivery of message: 1) Ability of communication channel in conveying message signals such as facial expression, body movement, and vocal inflection; 2) Feedbacks are directly given by the message receiver as response to every chats, 3) Variety of language such as the presence of symbols and foreign language, and 4) Ability of communication channel in conveying personality such as showing personal emotion (Daft and Lengel, 1984). In interpersonal communication, the usage of nonverbal symbols such as facial expression and body movement could make the message clearer (Cui *et al.*, 2017). Responded nonverbal symbols will support feedback in form of other emotion. The essence of media richness theory is language and symbol (Littlejohn, 1983). Clear language and supporting symbol will make interpersonal communication in a media runs well as expected.

Research result showed exclusively that sending text message with emoticon will create information richness so that the receiver feel the effect of received message (Hsieh and Tseng, 2015). In interpersonal communication, emoticon's role is increasing the connection with other person in chat, showing emotion expression, and as a strategy to show present condition (Maíz-Arévalo, 2015). Brain is 60000 fold faster in responding pictures than

ordinary text, so a picture is an important element in interpersonal communication (Jibril and Abdullah, 2013).

From the research result, it could be known that emoji and emoticon is highly needed in interpersonal communication through digital technology. The role of emoji and emoticon is to support the message meaning. The usage of emoji or emoticon should match with the message. For example, a warning message should use angry emoji or emoticon instead of happy ones.

Conclusion

Emoji or emoticon is an icon or picture that can support message's meaning. The usage of emoji and emoticon is needed in interpersonal communication to strengthen the message meaning so that it can be easily understood. According to media richness theory, BlackBerry Messenger and WhatsApp had fulfilled the element of media richness as follows: 1) ability of communication channel in conveying message signals such as facial expression, body movement, and vocal inflection; 2) feedbacks are directly given by the message receiver as response to every chats, 3) variety of language such as the presence of symbols and foreign language, and 4) ability of communication channel in conveying personality such as showing personal emotion. The usage of symbol and language is highly needed in communication to make it effective and understandable.

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