The Indirect Speech Acts of College and University Students' Meant Intentions in Social Media Communication

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Abstract—**Communication in social media does not necessarily take place by making use of words. Words in written form, texts in social media communication are often combined with images. This qualitative descriptive study addresses young people's meant intentions by interacting using emoji in posts and comments in social media. To obtain the data, 150 set of questionnaires were distributed, filled out and then gathered from 68 students of a college and a university in Surabaya. The results of the investigation revealed that sometimes they reacted using emoji in social media for different reasons with the emoji's apparent meaning. Thus, the emoji as the indirect speech acts they used to communicate in the social media revealed their various true meant intentions. The use of emoji in social media nowadays has been serving more than that of its well-known purpose.**

Keywords—emoji; indirect speech acts; meant intentions; social media; young people

I. INTRODUCTION

Lifestyle nowadays is inextricably intertwined with the internet, which is limitless because it triumphs over most barriers and borders. Interface and interpersonal communication in social media via the internet have more than meets the eye. They can take forms both in direct or indirect ways; both spoken and written language communication. Traditional public communication has evolved into something varied and sophisticated in this digital era. Social media as one of platforms provided in the internet connect people from all around the world. Each social media is equipped with features to answer the challenges in communication in person. Coelho, Correia & Medina claim that it is considered as one of the most effective and commonly used means of communicating [1]. Some of the features in social media bring a whole lot different meaning from its original meaning as what most people believe in.

One of social media most widely used in Indonesia is Facebook. Indonesia is the fourth highest number of Facebook users in the world and Indonesia is first most users of Facebook in Southeast Asian country (Indonesia, fourth highest number of Facebook users in the world 2018). While for Instagram Indonesia has reached to 45 million active users in Asia

Pacific's list of Instagram's market [2]. For Whatsapp users have reached 52,1 million in Indonesia (Number of mobile phone messaging app users worldwide from 2016 to 2021 (in billions)). Despite its notorious image of young people's use of social media as making them more ignorant and individualists, there are also positive effects, creative and playful to name a few of them. Facebook, Instagram, and Whatsapp are a free social media and communication platforms with immense space memory, that enable its users to connect people, share and keep things like status, photos and videos, send messages, and interact with others and also post almost anything to and from across around the world. Lam states that Facebook enables its users to engage in linguistic and identity practices [3]. Their content equipped with various features to interact through giving response by choosing emoji, gif, or sticker, giving comments or using their combination to serve its unique use, a social and personal social media platform.

Popular activities of Facebook users in Indonesia includes watching videos, liking content via button, reading articles and messaging friends (Number of Facebook users in Indonesia from 2017 to 2023 (in millions)). These features enable public messages in the personal walls, inboxes as the private messages, posts that allow caption and comment [4].

In addition to as written and spoken communication as discourse, social media also serves as public discourse. These features of communication manifest in various kinds with their interrelated purposes. There are three things embody a text according to Gee [5]. He states that the combinations of different modes like language, images and music in texts are called multimodal texts. Texts, multimodal texts and other modalities are meant to communicate. In addition, Pimentel & Diniz claim that people make use the online way as a medium to be in contact, and to communicate [6]. Furthermore, Ramanathan and Hoon state "As a whole, social theory of discourse is concerned with how discourse bonds with society while focusing on the interaction patterns between participants, social goals and types of social events [7]." Research about social media communication and media discourse have been gradually expounded and discussed. According to Jorgensen and Philips one of two things that must be taken account in

analyzing text containing visual images is the relationship between language and images [8].

The writer assumes that college and university students are more aware of social media. Another reason of the divergence of the subjects between college and university students is in order to figure out whether there is difference result between them. The reasons why most social media users are young people—whom WHO defines as those who are in 18-65 years old—is because most of them are the dynamic and they are often in fashion of what is new trends [9]. There is social power dynamics that reveals on social networks and manifests in the users use of language [10]. Higher education is impacted by social media through interconnected "literacies" and they covers attention, participation, collaboration, network awareness and critical assumption [11].

An approach to understand what others' meant in their utterance provided a framework context from Pragmatics; it is the indirect speech acts. The indirect speech acts when one intends something that is different from the literal meaning of it [12]. Furthermore, Mey describes it as when an utterance that seems unrelated to the first utterance [13]. Then he adds that the indirect speech acts is recognized and processed by with the way we are equipped for recognition and action by the context. To get the meant intentions, then this study should focus on the three categories of most utterances. The three categories are locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Saddock describes the stages [14]. The locutionary acts according to Austin are acts of speaking and they involve in the speech production. The illocutionary acts are acts done in speaking, the apparent purpose for using a performative sentence. The perlocutionary acts is a consequence of speaking, whether intended or not. Therefore, in order to figure out what the college and university students' meant intentions are and the real meanings behind their reactions are, it should be focused on the locutionary acts and the illocutionary acts. Saddock explains observation, "…observation resulted that a common strategy for indirectly achieving an illocutionary effect is to assert a speaker-based sincerity condition governing that sort of illocutionary act…[14]" As the perlocutionary acts are the acts as consequence of speaking, hence, they are not the emphasis in this study. The purpose of it that it is in line with this study's limitations i.e. to find out what the college and university students' reactions are and what the real meanings behind their reactions of the posts are.

Cotter explains that methods used by media researchers often makes use of cross-disciplinary manner [15]. The research methods are assembled in one of several areas irrespective of the approach or field: critical (discourse approach), narrative/ pragmatic (discourse/sociolinguistic approaches), comparative/ intercultural (discourse/sociolinguistic approaches, and media studies (nonlinguistic approach). This study investigates the indirect speech that belongs to discourse and or pragmatics. Thus, it is proper to use qualitative descriptive through narrative/ pragmatic (discourse/ sociolinguistic approaches).

Three previous studies related to emoji, social media communication, discourse, and pragmatics. First, it is from Tchokni, Seaghdha, and Quercia [10]. They investigated how

social power was related to language use and communication behavior on Twitter and Facebook. They did this by focusing on two aspects of status, popularity and social influence. The status was seen in two different ways: the user's predictor that predicts social power on individual basis on Twitter and they explored how social power differentials between Twitter users were reflected in the converse. They found out that the emoticon features achieves high performance that suggested there was a strong link between emoticon use and social power. Emoticon use was a powerful predictor of social status on both Twitter and Facebook. Those who use emoticons often the positive ones tend to be popular or influential on Twitter.

Second previous study is by Dovchin [16]. Dovchin obtained from Facebook set of data revealed youth linguistic diversity from the perspective of the online mixed language practices like English, Russian, Japanese, Korean and Turkish linguistic by university students in contemporary Mongolia. In addition, there was the complex ways of blending varied symbols, scripts, genres, styles, modes, codes and texts within other sets of texts.

Third previous study is by Sharma [17]. Sharma acquired the data from three economically and educationally privileged undergraduate students in Nepal through their Facebook pages. His ethnographic study investigated conceptual constructs of mediascape, convergence culture and global English on how the beginning of social networking online in Facebook by his three subjects has influenced their use of English and other semiotic resources to index both their local and cosmopolitan identities.

The three previous studies cover research in discourse, sociolinguistics and language use in social media, namely Twitter and Facebook by young people. Their investigation were about social status, the user's use of English and mixed language in social media. However, none of the previous studies investigates kinds of reactions the users—young people—use to their friends' posts on social media and the meaning what they want to say by reacting to posts in certain ways.

The significance of this study is expected to give depictions of: a. demography of social media communication of college and university students in Surabaya, b. kinds of reactions they give and c. the reason why they react to posts in social media. These are analyzed through pragmatics and or discourse frame. This study would give an insight to researchers predominantly on what college and university students' meant intentions by reacting to their friends' posts in communicating through social media.

II. METHOD

The nature of this study is qualitative descriptive and it derived data from paper-based questionnaire. The questionnaire was generated by the author with the guidelines to find out the answers of the two research questions. The subjects were college students and university students with various faculties and study programs. They are chosen with the assumption that they are more aware of social media. 150 questionnaires were distributed randomly to college students and university students and 68 were acceptable. The

participants were male and female students with the age range from 18 up to 41 years old. The female participants were 24 and male participants were 44. From college students there were 21 female participants and 15 male participants. 3 female participants and 29 male participants from university students.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The subjects' range of age was between 18-41. Age 18 – 20 there were 12 female and 9 male. For the range of age 21- 23 there were 8 females and 26 and for 24 – 26 there were 0 female and 8 males. The range age of 27 – 29 were 1 female and 0 male and for the age more than 30 were both 2 for female and male. It is described with the chart below:
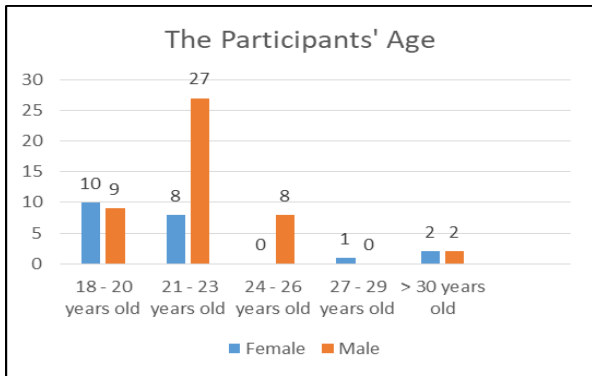

Fig. 1.   The participants' age.

A. Number of Social Media Accounts and Years Having Social Media Accounts

All subjects have more than email accounts. The subjects have had their social media accounts is for 1-3 years there were 6 participants, for 4-6 years there were 20 participants and for 7-9 years there were 19 participants and only 1 participant has been having his social media account for 1 year.
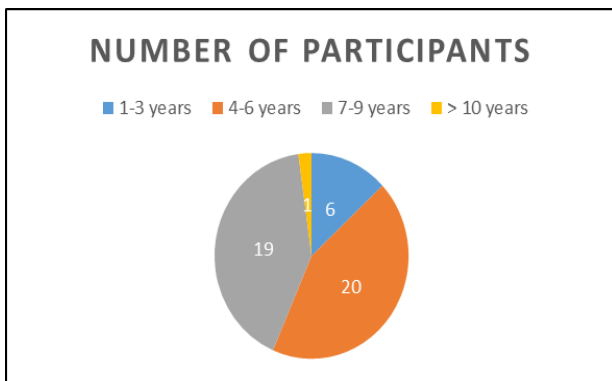

Fig. 2.   Number of participants.

The next data is about the number of social media accounts that the participants have. The biggest number was 37 participants that had 1-3 social media accounts. It was followed by 4-6 social media accounts that reached 25, and 7-9 accounts with 4 participants, also 1 participant had 1 social media account.
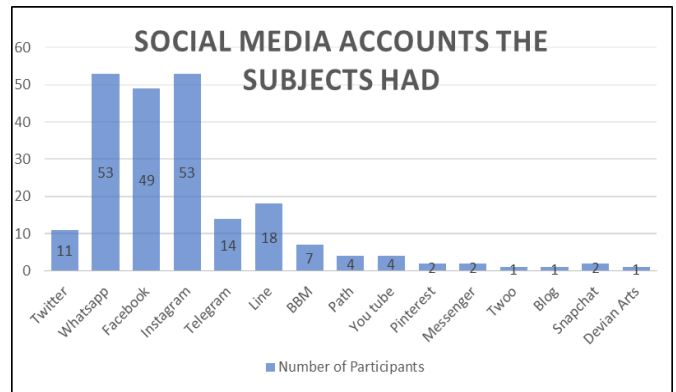

Fig. 3.   Social media accounts the subject had.

All participants had more than one social media accounts. Popular social media account that most subjects had were Whatsapp and Instagram that reached the same number 53, then it was followed by Facebook that had by 49 participants. All subjects that had Telegram and You tube were male students while there was one male student admitted that he did not have any social media account, in terms of that is not primarily for communication. Whatsapp, Instagram and Facebook shared almost balanced the participants' gender. It was inferred that all participants had email accounts because having an email is a mandatory to sign up for a social media account.

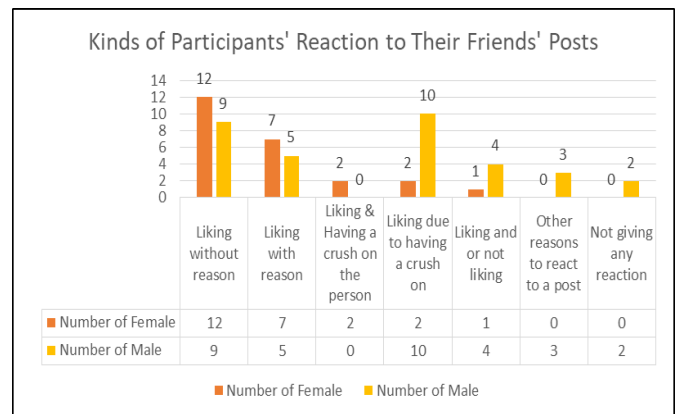### B. Kinds of Participants' Reactions to Their Friends' Posts

Fig. 4.   Kinds of participants' reactions to their friends' posts.

There are seven kinds of reaction that the participants gave to their friends' posts or status. The first one is liking a post without reason. It meant that they just hit the "like" button as a reaction to their friends' post without giving any comments in texts and or emoji, emoticon or gif. For this kind of reaction 12 female students and 9 male students chose to do this. Second kind of reaction was, liking a post or a status with reason that was done by 7 females and 5 males.

Their reasons were diverse. They hit the "like" button or gave the emoji thumb up when they thought that the posts were funny, entertaining, beneficial and profoundly related with themselves, interesting or fascinated them, as sharing knowledge, and occupied with advice and suggestion. There were also other interesting reasons for hitting the like button,

namely as a sign of appreciation to their friends, when the post was about religious matter, comedy and even as a means to greet their friends or because the person who posted it was their neighbor or from his or her neighborhood or someone they knew. A like hit button as a token of friendship appreciation was most likely influence of their eastern culture background. It is seen as essential to show courtesy or chitchat in eastern culture background.

The third kind of reaction was both liking and having a crush on the person who posted or made status were filled by 2 females and no male student did this. The fourth kind of reaction was, liking a post due to having a crush on the person who posted. Surprisingly, 2 female students and 10 male students admitted they did this.

Using indirect language is widely known to be woman's entity. Women are often seen as having been recognized along with hesitance, insecurity, indirectness [18]. He continued, "Men, on the other hand, are perceived as having been socialized into strong, dominant, forceful, and direct ways of talking" [18]. Nevertheless, the participants' reaction by hitting the like button as a presentation of their feelings might also be affected by several things, like the trends of nowadays communication via social media, the shifting values and norms, etc.

In contradiction of that and as well as popular belief, this study figured out that more male students used indirect language or indirect speech act. They hit the like button or thumb up emoji because they confessed that they had a crush on the person who posted the post or the status; not the status or the post's own sake. There is one other possibility for this finding. Possibly, the male students wanted to reveal his feeling that was represented with 'like' button. Furthermore, it is assumed when their 'like' is often seen then they (their social media account) would appear more in the notification to get the person's attention. It is only natural when one has a crush on someone then he or she will try to have curiosity and to keep on engaging or lingering in the life of person they like.

It is in line with what D'Arcy and Young's statement that the visibility of online interaction lies in the ways of its content: public or private [4]. It is public when the context's structure is built and sustained through participation. The content is considered private when the context is reflective or unobserved. The participation gives an impression as communication between the accounts' owner and the people who reacts his or her posts. The accounts' owner who posts made their posts can be seen by public or friends as a sign of making their content public and the participants who hit the like button or thump up emoji keep their participation seen by the accounts' owner whom they liked.

The fourth kind of reaction was, liking and or not that was chosen by 1 female and 4 male students. They stated this in this way, they would react to a status or a post because they liked it and when they did not like it, they did not give any reaction.

The fifth kind of reaction was other reasons to react to a post or a status. The distinguished reasons were, a. they thought there were comments before them, b. because they were traumatic of hacker, and c. they would comment only when the

post or the status was not in accord with theirs and the last reason, d. when the post or the status was asking questions.

Among students, a few did not really engage with their social media and media communication's friends. They tended not to give any reaction and just read the post or status. It was because they were too busy and they had other things to do. The number of participants who belonged to this were zero female and 2 male students. Hence, it is derived that all female students tend to give reaction and comment to their friends' status or post.

IV. CONCLUSION

Opposing the common belief that women tend to use indirect language, more men in social media communication use the indirect speech act to express their feelings. The trends of liking post due to having crush on the person between male college students vs. male university students is proven to show the same trend i.e. more male students rather than female students who hit the like button of a post or a status out of having a crush on the person. Liking what people post or status in Facebook, Instagram or Whatsapp are not always because they like the post or the status. They had various reasons for liking a post or a status by using emoji. Most of Facebook, Instagram, and Whatsapp users (the participants) reacted to their friends' post regardless their contents. This study has some weaknesses. It does not reveal why the participants used indirect speech acts to express their feelings through liking their friends' posts and status. It also does not provide balanced perspective in terms of equal numbers of participants' genders. The last weakness is, it still cannot be considered as a representative description of young people's meant intentions in social media communication in Surabaya for it only covered two institutions.

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