

# Semantic analysis of emojis in Croatian and English instant messages

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UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB  
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**SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF EMOJIS IN CROATIAN AND ENGLISH  
INSTANT MESSAGES**

Master's Thesis

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Zagreb, 2024

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## Abstract

This master's thesis aims to analyze and describe the different usages of emoji found in online communication on social media applications like *WhatsApp* or *Instagram* due to the popularity of their usage. Firstly, all the examples in Croatian were placed inside a table and examined, and the same was done for messages in English. Secondly, all the examples were compared and the findings showed relevant similarities, but also differences. While some emojis, like the “airplane” and the “money bag” emoji were found in Croatian messages, they weren't present in English messages, showing that not all speakers use all the available emojis. However, the most used emojis in both languages were the “tears of joy” emoji, the “red heart” emoji and the “thumbs-up” emoji. Finally, it can be concluded that, even though the emojis serve numerous purposes, there are a few that are universal; they help us add an emotional tone to the message, making it more comprehensible simply because online communication is devoid of facial expressions. Emojis also help us avoid the misinterpretation of messages, and sometimes even substitute certain words. Gestural emojis, the most popular being the “thumbs up” make our messages more concise and the communication faster.

Key words: emoji, messages, emotions, tone, online communication.

## 1. Introduction

The chances of your dad replying to your messages with only ‘OK’ are high, but the chances of receiving only one emoji depicting a “thumbs-up” from him are possibly even higher. All around the world, wherever people communicate via platforms like *WhatsApp* and *Instagram*, we can be sure to find emojis. Ever since Unicode launched their universally available set of emojis in 2015, their usage has become very popular. Throughout the years, new varieties have been emerging, but there are some that hold the top three spots on the global level – the “tears of joy” emoji, the “red heart” emoji, and the infamous “thumbs-up” emoji. The answer to the question of why it is infamous, along with the answers to some other questions like – which ways emojis can be used or how their usage differs in languages like Croatian and English, can be found in this very paper. All the emojis in Croatian messages come from private *WhatsApp* communication between friends and acquaintances, aged between 20 and 30, whereas the messages in English come from *Reddit*, so we cannot be sure of the chatters’ age or nationality, nor if they are truly native speakers of English. Firstly, there is the theoretical framework and the methodology part, and secondly, there is the part where one can observe the analysis of different emojis throughout their 98 examples and read the comparison of the findings in the discussion. The last chapter is the conclusion, which contains a brief summary.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1 The origin of emojis

The world is changing right in front of our eyes. Communication is changing too, taking up new forms and being more than just words. Our ways of communication are changing more than ever, and with that, the symbols we call emojis are rapidly becoming important parts of speech. We are constantly texting, and with the rise of social media platforms like *WhatsApp*, *Instagram* and *Twitter*, we can observe many different usages of the said emojis. So, why emojis? Well, if we think of how computer mediated communication started off only with letters and punctuation signs – dots, commas, brackets etc., we can see how they evolved into emojis. According to Merriam Webster, emojis are any of various small images, symbols, or icons used in text fields in electronic communication (as in text messages, email, and social media). The origin of the word, however, comes from Japanese. As Marcel Danesi writes:

The word emoji is an English adaptation of Japanese 絵文字—the e of emoji means “picture” and the moji stands for “letter, character.” So, the definition of emoji is, simply, a “picture-word”—a rather accurate characterization of what an emoji is. The word itself can be used as both singular and plural in English (which will be the practice in this book), although it is now also commonly pluralized (emojis). (Danesi 2016: 2)

But how did all of this come to be? Since emojis emerged from digital communication, let’s start with their medium – the Internet. The Internet began as an experimental network in the 1960s USA as a part of a military and governmental experiment (Crystal 2001: 3). It enabled people from all around the world to become connected at any time through the development of emails, chatgroups and virtual worlds (2001: 3). Crystal also adds that the language of the internet can be called many names: “The term ‘Netspeak’ is an alternative to ‘Netlish’, ‘Weblish’, ‘Internet language’, ‘cyberspeak’, ‘electronic discourse’, ‘electronic language’, ‘interactive written discourse’, ‘computer-mediated communication’ (CMC), and other more cumbersome locutions.” (2001: 17). He adds that “there is a widely held intuition that some sort of Netspeak exists – a type of language displaying features that are unique to the Internet, and encountered in all the above situations, arising out of its character as a medium which is electronic, global, and interactive” (2001: 18). One can argue that emojis definitely play an important role in digital communication and one of the reasons why they became so popular is because they express emotions which online communication is devoid of.

In today's world, we all use emojis frequently, and see them as useful tools of online communication. But the first emoji symbols actually started some 26 years ago – they were created by “a Japanese telecommunications worker named Shigetaka Kurita, who was (purportedly) an avid reader of manga comics, adapting the visually appealing manga style to replace the more graphic emoticon style.” (Danesi 2016: 2). However, it should be noted that emojis are different than emoticons (2016: 2). Cohn explains that “the current vocabulary set of emoji grew out of emoticons, the facial images created by mixing letters and punctuation to form different faces such as :) and ;)” (2019: 2). At that time, Internet users used the standard set of digital codes representing letters and symbols – ASCII to create smiley faces and other facial expressions (Danesi 2016: 2). Emojis have more symbols, and they represent different objects, body parts, symbols, animals, flags and other. Schneebeli adds that “some platforms automatically turn emoticons into emoji (this is not the case of YouTube) but most emoji do not have an emoticon equivalent. For those reasons, it seems better to use the two distinct terms and not use one for the other” (2017: 2). It's interesting to note that, even though they are very widespread and form an important part of digital speech, the emojis as we know them aren't that old. Their widespread usage started only in 2011, when Apple launched its Operating System Five (iOS5), which included emoji characters designed by Kurita (Danesi 2016: 3). The year 2015 was crucial for the ultimate rise of emojis because of Unicode – an international encoding standard for use with different scripts (2016: 4). Since the launch of Unicode 8, different varieties of emojis became globally available, entering all spheres of private and public lives – from advertising to politics (2016: 4).

The reach of emojis can further be demonstrated by an incredible event from 2015. Namely, every year, the prestigious Oxford Dictionary chooses one word or expression which has gained a lot of popularity in the period of the previous 12 months. In 2023, the chosen word was ‘rizz’<sup>1</sup> and the Word of the year 2004 was ‘chav’<sup>23</sup>. Moreover, sometimes the Word of the year is actually an expression - for example, in 2022 the Word of the year was a compound–goblin mode. The expression was described as a slang term meaning "unapologetically self-indulgent, lazy, slovenly, or greedy" behavior.<sup>4</sup> But the real turning point happened in 2015, when the chosen word wasn't even a word, nor an expression – it was the “Face with Tears of Joy”

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rizz>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/chav>

<sup>3</sup> <https://languages.oup.com/word-of-the-year/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-63857329>

emoji! Oxford Dictionary's explanation was that they had chosen it because of its reflection of "the ethos, mood, or preoccupations of that particular year and to have lasting potential as a word of cultural significance".<sup>5</sup> Danesi notes:

The choice did not garner any significant complaints, protests, or polemical arguments from the guardians of traditional literacy (academics, teachers, language purists, and so on). This was a mindboggling event in many ways, signaling that a veritable paradigm shift might have taken place in human communications and even human consciousness. (2016: vi, preface)

So, if emoji is not a word or an expression, what exactly is it, and why did it appear on Oxford's list?

## 2.2 The emoji as a part of writing systems

The writing system is one of the biggest and most important creations of humanity. The most used writing system is the Latin Alphabet, used by more than seventy percent of the world population. It is followed by the Chinese characters, the Arabic alphabet, the Devangari – used in nearly 120 languages, and the Bengali alphabet.<sup>6</sup> It is incredible to think that all of them are much older than the emojis, but somehow, emojis encompass all of them – they appear in combination with each of the said writing systems – they are used by speakers of English, Croatian, Arabic, Chinese, Hindu etc. (Danesi 2016: 25). A widely accepted idea is that phylogenetically, pictographic writing precedes all other forms of writing (2016: 5). What is more, we have strong evidence that language as a mental faculty developed before vocal speech and that it was expressed through gesture and pictography (2016: 6). In a very similar way, emojis present just that – gestures and visual resemblances to all kinds of objects. But why is this so important for understanding emojis? Let us observe different kinds of writing:

Pictographic writing consists, of course, of picture signs that are made to resemble what they stand for. Ideographic writing involves the use of pictures and symbols to represent both objects and ideas, usually by combining pictographs in some way. Syllabaries are made up of characters that stand for speech syllables, thus approaching alphabet systems, and logographies consist of symbols that do not stand for a referent directly, but for the words that do. Alphabets consist of a standard set of letters, known technically as graphemes,

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<sup>5</sup> <https://languages.oup.com/word-of-the-year/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/list/the-worlds-5-most-commonly-used-writing-systems>



representing speech units called phonemes (such as distinctive vowel and consonant sounds).  
(Danesi 2016: 7)

If we think of civilizations such as the Maya, or the Egyptians, we can observe that they used a mixed-modal system which combined different kinds of symbols and characters (2016: 8). One modern mixed-modal, or bimodal system, as Danesi suggests, is Japanese, owing to its two syllabaries - hiragana and katakana, which were created to replace originally Chinese characters (2016: 8). Alphabets came later, emerging from pictograms, and allowed for a more rapid communication in marketplaces (2016: 8). A pictograph which represented the head of an ox in ancient Egypt was taken over by the Phoenicians who started drawing the ox outline sideways and it became the first sound of the word (a for *aleph*) because it became so familiar (2016: 8-9). Next, the Greeks turned the figure the other way around, and finally, in about 500 BCE, “the A assumed the upright position it has today in Roman script” (2016: 8-9). Since then, the alphabet incorporated other symbols which were then used to make smiley faces, which ultimately lead to the emergence of emojis. Danesi argues that “all this suggests that writing is not an arbitrary way for representing vocal speech, but rather a highly adaptive and culturally sensitive tool for encoding information” (2016: 8). Cohn adds that “emoji provide a visual vocabulary (albeit limited) that enable users to communicate” (2019: 1). However, Danesi notes that there is a difference between emojis and real pictographic writing systems - emojis are mainly used in an “adjunctive” way and were also “constructed beforehand and thus chosen from a preset repertory, such as that found on a keyboard. So, they have a hybrid structural value, so to speak—that is, they are, in part, like alphabet characters which are chosen to construct larger structures such as words; and, in another part, they are pictorial forms that have presentational structure” (2016: 52). We can truly say that the emojis represent inarguably important and useful tools, enriching our communication and adding depth to faceless messages – but how powerful are they really?

### 2.3. The emoji as the replacement for a face-to-face communication

The Internet gave importance to writing, rather than speaking, making our online communication easy, but at the same time emotionless, as people were unable to observe other parts of human communication – facial expressions and gestures. Danesi explains the role of emojis in the digital world:

From the outset of civilization, writing has been considered to have great social value, and thus used across time and cultural spaces to record important ideas, such as those found in sacred texts and scientific and philosophical treatises. It has always been perceived to be a

semiotic medium through which authoritative or significant messages are expressed. Of course, the opposite profane and vulgar uses of writing have always existed, alongside the authoritative and sacred ones, as can be seen in the ancient graffiti messages found on ancient walls, pillars, and various artifacts. It is noteworthy at this point to observe that emoji writing is considered by many social pundits to fall into the latter category. But this does not turn out to be true, as we shall see. Emoji writing is hardly profane or vulgar; its intent is, actually, to add what can be called “visual tone” to a message. (2016: 10)

Finally, we can say that emojis serve as an important annotative code (2016: 10), also making online communication easier and faster – new abbreviated forms emerged to save time and create efficiency in writing messages, so let’s not mistake it with being lazy or linguistically incompetent (2016: 11). Again, Schneebeli writes that they make up for the lack of non-linguistic cues, because by inserting a smiley face in a message, we are making up for the impossibility to physically smile (2017: 2). Moreover, Danesi argues that “today’s text messages, tweets, and the like have mainly an utterance function. The more textual functions of writing are still realized through traditional writing styles. Emoji serve (mainly) the utterance function, bolstering the rapidity of reading by providing visual imagery to the writing.” (2016: 11).

#### 2.4 The emoji vs. the word

To understand why emojis aren’t real words, but merely serve as a representation of them, let’s go back to the basics. So, what is a word? According to Alan D. Cruse, the prototypical word should be described as a minimal permutable element (2000: 87) and has two features: “(i) It can be moved about in the sentence, or at least its position relative to other constituents can be altered by inserting new material. (ii) It cannot be interrupted or its parts reordered.” They are separated by spaces in writing, and the only position where we can introduce new elements is between words (2000: 87). Cruse also notes the important distinction between words and lexemes:

Word forms, as the name suggests, are individuated by their form, whether phonological or graphic (most of our examples will be both); lexemes can be regarded as groupings of one or more-word forms, which are individuated by their roots and/or derivational affixes. So, run, runs, running, and ran are word forms belonging to the same lexeme run, while walk, walks, walking, and walked belong to a different lexeme, walk, distinguished from the former by its root; likewise, obey, obeys, obeying, and obeyed belong to a single lexeme and disobey, disobeys, disobeying, and disobeyed, despite having the same root as the first set, belong to a

different lexeme, distinguished this time by the possession of the derivational affix *dis-*.  
(2000: 88-89)

Furthermore, we can distinguish between lexical and grammatical words which both carry meaning, but have different characteristics – some of them are open-set items which means that they acquire new members, whereas closed-set items rarely acquire new members or don't acquire them at all: “there is no limit to the particularity or richness of the meaning an open-set element may carry, as there are no requirements for recurrent meanings or wide co-occurrence possibilities. Hence, open-set items typically carry the burden of the semantic content of utterances.” (2000: 89). Why couldn't we then say that emojis are words? They carry meaning, they can be moved about in the text, they are constantly acquiring new members – symbols, faces etc. Finally, when we see them placed inside a message, we usually understand their meaning, although they aren't made up of letters. To fully understand this, let us go back to the curious choice for the 2015 Word of the Year.

Danesi reiterates: “The smiley and face with tears emoji, used to indicate “laughing so hard I am crying,” are the two facial emoji that are likely to be understood in the same way across the global village—as evidenced by the Oxford Dictionary's choice of the latter as its word of year and the fact that the smiley is found on all keyboards, no matter what language is involved.” (2016: 14). So, emojis truly aren't traditional words and cannot be seen as such even though one of them was chosen as the *word* of the year by a very prestigious and traditional dictionary. Perhaps the very fact that something as traditional embraced something as new and modern shows us how important emojis really are to people nowadays. Their comic- book-like design replaces words, but cannot do so entirely (2016: 15). Danesi explains that they “reinforce, expand, and annotate the meaning of a written communication, usually by enhancing the friendliness of the tone, or else by adding humorous tinges to it” (2016: 15). Therefore, their role is not only substitutive or decorative (2016: 15). Danesi provides a useful explanation which beautifully describe their power: “They are meaning-enhancing devices that are amalgamated with alphabetic ones, turning modern-day informal writing into a unique kind of bimodal system” (2016: 15).

## 2.5 Phatic function of emojis

According to Danesi, there are three basic phatic functions of emojis – the utterance opener, the utterance ending and the silence avoidance (2016: 19). Emoji as the utterance opener usually gives the message a cheerful tone, and it is usually a smiley face or a similar looking emoji – they are designed to “to strengthen or maintain friendly bonds between interlocutors

even when (and perhaps more so) a message may have some negativity in its contents” (2016: 19). When we want to avoid the danger of sounding unfriendly, we will use some emoji, most likely a smiley one, to end our message, as a way to say good-bye and maintain the friendly relationship between the senders (2016: 19). Also, this would mirror a real-life reaction according to Schneebeli, she writes that “more than express a reaction or irony, this laughter emoji may well mirror a phatic use of laughter that already exists in face-to-face communication. According to some neuroscientists, laughing at the end of an utterance is a way to create empathy with the hearer” (2017: 11). Finally, to avoid the equivalent of real-life silence gaps, we can place emojis into content gaps when we choose not to give away more information than we want to (2017: 19).

## 2.6 The uses of emojis

If we were to look at our own messages, I am sure that each and every one of us would find numerous examples of all three functions. This means that emojis really do have the power to represent all kinds of emotions. Schneebeli highlights the importance of adding emojis to messages:

Emoticons and emoji do enable to express affective states, but expressing an affective state itself can indeed have multiple purposes. Even in face-to-face conversation, people more often than not do not smile for the mere sake of expressing an emotion. There is far more in a smile than just an affective state. First of all, a smile, as any facial expression or bodily gesture, may be an indicator of how a speaker stands in an interaction. Expressing an emotion may therefore have a pragmatic and argumentative function. (2017: 3)

That shows that emojis influence the way the chatters perceive a message. Moreover, Danesi writes that a primary function of emoji is to gain control over the emotions which suggests that “conveying one’s state of mind (opinion, judgment, attitude, outlook, sentiments, etc.) is a basic need in discourse exchanges” (2016: 21). The emojis have also substituted other important parts of face-to-face communication such as interjections or intonation (2016: 21). So, the emotive function of emojis can be further categorized - 1) they serve as a substitution for facial expressions and 2) they visually emphasize a point of view (2016: 22-23).

The facial emojis are at the highest number in terms of their usage (2016: 26), the most popular being the smiley face, laughing-crying emoji, smiling face with open mouth and sweat, the smirking face etc. (2016: 23). However, other forms have emerged because of its

popularity, so Unicode adds more culture-sensitive designs (2016: 26). Danesi concludes that “diversification of the emoji lexicon is being brought about primarily by marketplace and political pressures, as people and brands use emoji more and more to tap into new markets, audiences, interest groups, and the like (2016: 28). Moreover, we can think of emojis as a type of a code which has three features, the first one being representability – “the signs and the rules for combining them can be used to stand for something in specific ways”, or in other words, they can substitute certain words (2016: 41). The second feature is interpretability, meaning that “messages can be understood successfully by anyone who is familiar with the signs and rules of the code used to construct them” (2016: 41). Finally, the third feature is contextualization – “this implies that message interpretation is affected by contextual factors, including outside information or points of reference” (2016: 41).

Another important feature of emojis is that they frame our perspective on things – we add emojis, which are visual, therefore making our message more comprehensible (2016: 56). Schneebeli writes that emojis are very effective for taking a stance – they not only have a descriptive value, but also a pragmatic and argumentative one (2017: 3). So, a smiling emoji doesn’t only say that someone is happy, and isn’t there to express an emotion just for sake of it (2017: 3).

A laughter emoticon or emoji, be it XD or tears of joy, packs the whole reaction or stance of the commenter in a single image. One might argue they are more concise, hence straightforward, than a whole sentence: instead of writing something as « I found that funny », the emoticon packs the whole stance in a single graphic sign, which can then be used without any words. (2017: 3)

This is also true with emojis that express other emotions like sadness, disappointment or shock (2017: 4). Other emojis, like gesture emojis, often express an evaluative stance or approval – the “thumbs up” emoji, the “OK hand” emoji, praying hands emoji etc. (2017: 4). However, we should keep in mind that the meanings of gestures vary (Danesi 2016: 64). Many of those kinetic emojis aren’t universal, but have different meanings in different cultures; the waving hand emoji usually stands for ‘hello’ or ‘goodbye’, but clapping doesn’t have such a straightforward meaning – in some tribal cultures, it doesn’t represent approval or praise (2016: 64-65).

Schneebeli adds that other, non-gestural emoji, such as the heart emoji can express the same stance (2017: 4). But another important question we must investigate is why do some chatters

combine emojis with text, and others don't, that is, why they send messages where the emoji is the only content. For example, in the analysis, we will be able to see some emojis which stand alone, such as the "red heart" emoji. Schneebeli explains that sometimes, there is no need for words, because some emoji have the power of combining both the propositional content and the stance into one symbol (2017: 5). Schneebeli calls them naked emoticons (2017: 5). On the other hand, we sometimes duplicate the content of a verbal statement with emojis; placing a heart emoji at the end of a message which says 'I love you', for example. The explanation for this would be to add emphasis because the emoji mirrors the verbal message and, in that way, reinforces the content (2017: 10). Schneebeli explains "emoticons and emoji enable the commenter to reinforce an assertion or a predicate, just as an intensifying adjective or adverb might do, or a contrastive speech pattern in spoken language" (2017: 9). Another use of emojis is to mitigate the misinterpretation of messages, oftentimes humorous or sarcastic ones (2017: 7). Imagine that a person you are chatting with suddenly sends you a message that says 'I'm dying' – it would certainly transmit feelings of unease, sadness or shock. However, if we add a "laughing-crying" emoji at the end, it would enable us to understand the person isn't really dying, but is merely joking about it, or sending the message as a way to start telling a story. Schneebeli explains the situations where the emojis are used to make the chatter's intention clear – in a situation where the person would say "I'm dying" or 'I'm pissing myself' and add a "laughing-crying" emoji at the end doesn't say that the person is literally doing that, but that it is meant to be a joke (2017: 8). In some cases, emojis can also be used to indicate that a message is not a joke, which is the case with "disappointed face" emoji – it only "confirms what the verbal part of the message suggests and signals that it is not meant to be taken as a joke or an ironic statement" (2017: 8).

However, just as they can be helpful, emojis can also be ambiguous. There are number of different uses of emojis, and this number also affects the number of different interpretations of the *same* emoji. Why is that? Well, there is culture-specific variation and a constant potential for ambiguity (Danesi 2016: 27-28). Even though Unicode has tried to avoid ambiguity and create universal emojis, people still interpret them differently (2016: 30). In this thesis we can claim that this has to do with polysemy. Although Lyons defines polysemy as lexical ambiguity (Lyons 1997: 550), we can also say that emojis can be a part of that phenomenon. The criteria for polysemy (and homonymy) are 1) etymological - the lexicographer's knowledge of the historical derivation of words, and have to do with 2) relatedness of meaning (1977: 550-551). Lyons takes the word 'mouth' as the example – it

can be interpreted as ‘mouth of the bottle’ or ‘mouth of the river’, proving that the same word can have different meanings, i.e. is polysemic (1977: 552). Although etymology doesn’t really play any role in the interpretation of emojis, we can say that some emojis have the same polysemic potential – one emoji can convey a couple of different emotions. That means that one emoji, which has one form, can have multiple interpretations i.e. meanings. For example, the “worried face” emoji can represent a variety of different emotions – worry, concern, disappointment or sometimes even mild sadness – that will be shown in the analysis part. Sometimes, *miscounstrual* happens – the recipient’s interpretation is different from sender’s intended meaning of the emoji (Miller et al., 2021: 262). Miller et al. also claim that more cases of misconstrual appear across platforms, because different platforms have different renderings of the same emoji (2021: 266). However, they take certain emojis, like Microsoft’s “smiling face with open mouth and tightly closed eyes” and conclude that 44% of participants in their analysis labeled it as negative and 54% labeled it as positive, which indicates a clear lack of consensus (2021: 263). This means that, even though we see one emoji the exact same way, we can *think of it*, or *interpret* it differently. For example, we will see the analysis of the “four leaf clover” in this paper. Its meaning is always positive and connected with luck, but appears in different situations – the meaning of the clover is related but may differ according to its linguistic environment.

Finally, there are situations where we use emojis without any linguistic or paralinguistic function – they don’t add content, but simply make the message more colorful and more pleasant to read – their only function being the aesthetic one (Schneebeil 2017: 12). In this paper, we will be able to observe this function in the examples with the “airplane” emoji (examples (33) and (34)). Other emojis, such as the “four-leaf clover” one, is also interesting to analyze. Danesi explains that some emojis also have a connotative function:

The four-leaf clover implies a particular connotation (“good luck”). It was used to wish an interlocutor good luck for an upcoming test. The strawberry icon was employed to indicate that the interlocutor liked to eat it during periods of stress. The van/minibus was used after the phrase “This is how my parents get around,” with an obvious ironic intent. The clock icon was used after the expression “Time is ticking” to indicate that an important and inevitable event was fast approaching. In other words, the choice of the icons involved much more than conveying information or sprucing up the written text visually; rather, they added specific connotative nuances to its meaning, most of which were derived from culture-specific symbolism. Connotations cannot be checked or tamed in any usage of signs by humans. They



are always present and, according to some semioticians, are even the basis upon which our common ideas and concepts are formed and utilized. (2016: 59)

As we can observe, there are countless uses for different emojis. Sometimes they help us discern the meaning of the messages, and sometimes they can be misleading. Nevertheless, they have become an important part of online communication. The emoji code is evolving with almost every new Unicode update, and that is why we can also observe the emergence of Internet sites which keep track of all emojis such as *Emojipedia* (Danesi 2016: 118).

### 3. Methodology

The aim of this study is to find out how and why certain emojis are used in Croatian and English messages, compare their usage, and see whether they substitute lexical items, or serve some other communicational purpose.

Since the study is qualitative rather than quantitative, I searched through a number of my personal WhatsApp messages to find out which emojis were used in the majority of the messages. It became evident that there are more representations of some specific emojis – such as the „red heart” emoji, the „thumbs-up” emoji and the „laughing-crying emoji”. Nevertheless, I decided to choose a few more and divided them into three logical categories: the ones depicting a certain facial expression, the intensifiers, which consist of different symbols, and the emojis that illustrate a part of the body – in this case, the arm.

According to the categories, the emojis were as follows: under the category of the *facial expressions*: „tears of joy” emoji, „sad face” emoji, holding back tears” emoji, „confused/worried” face emoji, and the „smiling devil” emoji, under the *intensifiers* - „red heart” emoji, „celebration” emoji, „airplane” emoji, „money bag” emoji, „four leaf clover” emoji; and the *body parts* category – „muscles” emoji, „thumbs up” emoji, „folded hands” emoji, „peace” emoji and the „waving” emoji.

After picking out five different emojis for each of the categories described above, I placed them into a table which allowed for a more detailed view. Since the messages were written in Croatian, I decided to translate them, briefly describe their context, and see which phatic function they have, i.e., what is their position in the message: utterance opener, utterance ending, in the middle of the utterance, or standing alone. Next, I specifically focused on their meaning—observing which place they took inside a message, whether they stood alone, and also whether they substituted any words. I also wanted to find out whether their meaning was literal or whether any of them carried a figurative or metaphorical interpretation. After each



of the tables was described, I decided to compare the Croatian messages with the ones in English. I searched for existing data online, mostly on *Reddit* and *Instagram*, and scrolled to find specific emojis that I have already chosen from my messages in Croatian. After describing each one of the examples I found in English, I placed them into a table allowing to see their content more clearly, and used the same method as in observing the Croatian ones – declaring their context and seeing their function inside the messages. Since I wasn't able to find all of the emojis in Croatian tables, I concluded some of them aren't as used in English. In fact, the ones that appeared in a smaller number in my personal messages were usually the ones I didn't find on social media at all.

Finally, I wrote a discussion chapter in which I carefully examined and compared the usage of the same emojis in English and Croatian. From here, the meaning and the interpretation of certain emojis became clearer, and I was able to offer an explanation behind their usage. You can explore all the 97 examples in the analysis.

#### 4. Analysis

As we have seen in the previous chapter, emojis play an important role in instant messages and online communication, serving as vital tools for conveying emotions and augmenting the intended message's meaning. This analysis focuses on examining emojis within text messages exchanged on the WhatsApp platform, or taken from platforms like Reddit. Through numerous illustrative examples, this study aims to explain the nuances of emoji usage and characterize their representation within text.

Emojis in this analysis are categorized into three primary groups: facial expressions, intensifiers, and body parts (gestural) emojis. Each category will be explored, providing insight into their respective roles within text messages. Moreover, within the above-mentioned categories, we can observe more specific examples listed below.

Facial expressions:

- 1) 😄 Tears of joy emoji
- 2) 😞 Sad face emoji
- 3) 🙄 Holding back tears emoji
- 4) 😕 Confused/worried face emoji
- 5) 😏 Smiling devil emoji

## Intensifiers:

- 6) ❤️ Red heart emoji
- 7) 🎉 Celebration emoji
- 8) ✈️ Airplane emoji
- 9) 💰 Money bag emoji
- 10) 🍀 Four leaf clover emoji


## Body parts emojis:

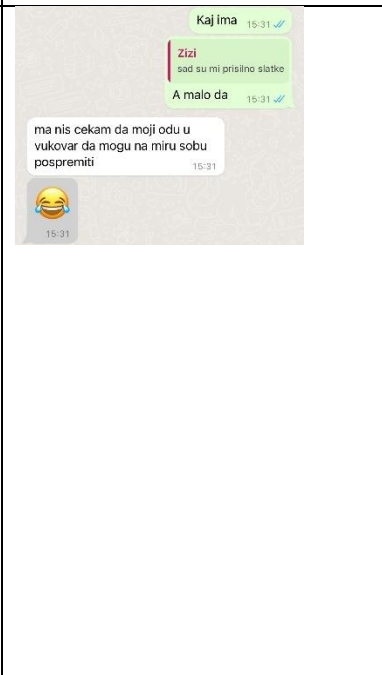

- 11) 💪 Muscles emoji
- 12) 👍 Thumbs up emoji
- 13) 🙏 Folded hands emoji
- 14) ☮️ Peace emoji
- 15) 🙌 Waving emoji


Each one of the listed emojis will be placed inside a table which allows for a comprehensive examination of their contextual significance and semantic potential, what their position in the message is, and their translation, considering that the majority of examples are in Croatian. Later on, the same analysis will be conducted on a number of examples in English in order to compare the use and meaning of emojis in the two languages.

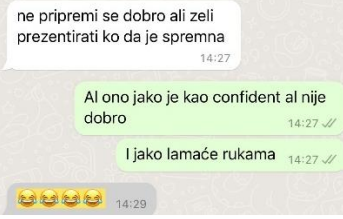
## 4.1 Facial expressions

### 4.1.1 Tears of joy emoji

Example	Representation	Translation	Context	Position
(1)		<p>A: Hej då. Hur mår du?</p> <p>A: When are we going to speak</p> <p>A: Online coffee</p>	<p>In the first example we see a communication between two students. Chatter A, who isn't studying Swedish, engages with</p>	Utterance opener.

		<p>B: 🤖          legend,          although the          first thing          means          goodbye          hahah          B: today, if          you have          time</p>	<p>Chatter B, an individual proficient in the Swedish language. Here, Chatter B utilizes an emoji to express a reaction to the unexpected and seemingly innocuous use of a Swedish expression by Chatter A.</p>	
(2)		<p>A: What's up          B: nothing, i'm waiting for my parents to go to vukovar so I can tidy up my room in peace          B: 🤖</p>	<p>Chatter B added the emoji to emphasize their message and add a joking tone to it, referring to the 'in peace' part.</p>	<p>Stands alone.</p>
(3)		<p>A: What an awesome midterm          A: If only every single</p>	<p>Chatter A expresses their satisfaction with the midterm</p>	<p>Utterance ending.</p>

		<p>one was like this hahahah B: right 🤪</p>	<p>they've had and are commenting on it with chatter B, who simply agrees by adding the emoji to confirm their reaction.</p>	
<p>(4)</p>		<p>A: Today I saw a video on how to plant a ginger seed A: And now I have the need to try it even though I don't know what the hell I'm supposed to do with all that ginger if I succeed. A: Good night ❤️ B: 🤪</p>	<p>Chatter B uses only the emoji to react to chatter A's idea of planting ginger seeds, which mimes how their reaction would look like in real life.</p>	<p>Stands alone.</p>

(5)		<p>A: she doesn't prepare well but wants to present as if she's ready</p> <p>B: But like she's very confident but it's not good</p> <p>B: And she is flapping her arms around a lot</p> <p>A: 🤪 🤪 🤪 🤪</p>	<p>Both chatters are commenting on a situation, but when chatter A adds their comment, chatter B uses the laughing crying emoji to emphasize their reaction.</p>	<p>Stands alone.</p>
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*Emojipedia* describes this emoji as a yellow face with a big grin, uplifted eyebrows, and smiling eyes, each shedding a tear from laughing so hard. Widely used to show something is funny or pleasing<sup>7</sup>. In the initial five examples, we observe the use of the “tears of joy” emoji in informal, often humorous contexts. This emoji carries a positive connotation, serving as a digital substitute for facial expressions which are present in face-to-face communication, but absent in online communication. It manifests itself at various positions within the message: at the beginning as in example (1), appended at the end as seen in examples (2) and (3), or even stands alone as depicted in examples (4) and (5). Notably, in example (5), the chatter's response includes even four emojis, accentuating their amusement and indicating a profound appreciation for the humor in the previous message sent by chatter B.

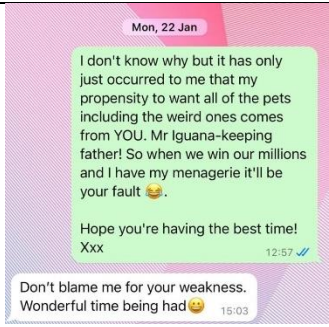
What is more, in example (4) we can see that the chatter uses the “tears of joy” emoji as the only reaction to the message, as a method to achieve conciseness, thereby saving time.

<sup>7</sup> <https://emojipedia.org/face-with-tears-of-joy>

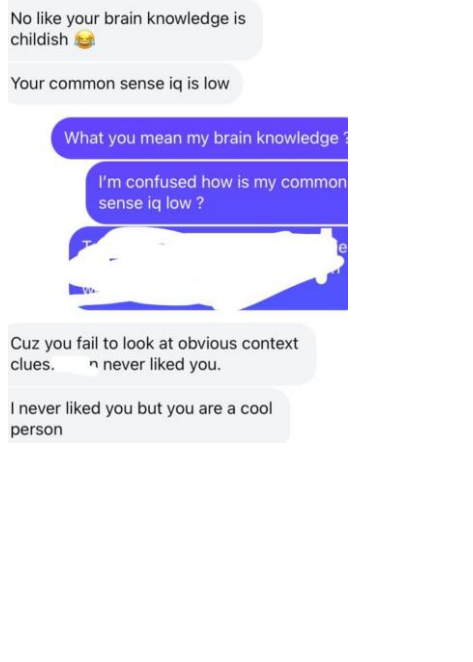
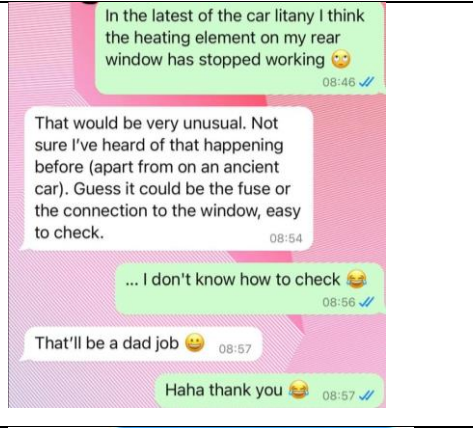


However, if we delve deeper into the examination of the context in (3), the interpretation of the emoji can be approached from two perspectives. If chatter A genuinely enjoyed the midterm and had a positive experience, chatter B's use of the emoji serves to affirm their mutual sentiments. However, if chatter A's remark about liking the midterm was intended sarcastically, implying the opposite due to its poor or bad quality, the "tears of joy" emoji would then be used ironically. Nonetheless, even in this scenario, it would still signify agreement with chatter B's suggestion.

The “tears of joy” emoji holds a prominent position in its usage as seen on Meltwater, an online media monitoring company which uses global sources. According to Meltwater, this emoji was referenced a staggering 254 million times in 2023<sup>8</sup>, solidifying its status as the most utilized emoji of the year.

Similarly, we can look at how the “tears of joy” emoji was used in messages in English.

Example	Representation	Context	Position
(5.1)		<p>The conversation is between a father and his daughter. The daughter jokingly points out that the “propensity” towards wanting many pets comes from him.</p>	Utterance ending.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.meltwater.com/en/blog/top-emojis-2023>

(5.2)		Chatter A and B were dating for a while, but it seems like their relationship is not advancing. Chatter A uses the emoji to insult the other chatter who does not understand what they are saying.	Utterance ending.
(5.3)		Chatters are discussing a recent car issue. The chatter whose heating element stopped working asks for advice.	Utterance ending.
(5.4)		Chatter A eagerly wants to keep chatter B's shirt.	Utterance ending.
(5.5)		Chatter A inquires chatter B about Allen keys for fixing their shower rack.	Utterance ending.

In (5.1), the emoji is being used in a friendly, humorous conversation. Even though the situation probably wouldn't call for a laugh that strong enough to bring tears to speaker's eyes, we can conclude that the chatter employs the emoji to show they are joking, as not to insult the other chatter with the words "it will be your fault". This way, the emoji serves a significant purpose, which is to be an indicator of humor. In this example, the emoji neither stands alone nor substitutes a word – it fulfills the role it would fulfill in real-life; the person wants to sound friendly and avoid the danger of misinterpretation of the message as rude ('It'll be your fault!').

On the contrary, in (5.2) the emoji really is used in a rude way to mock the other person, whose intellect is being insulted by their words. On Reddit, the context was described as texting between two people that were dating for a short period. Here we can see that chatter A clearly wants to insult the other person, and we might speculate that even in real life, the person would actually laugh to intensify their words and try to make the other person feel even more senseless, as a way to make them feel bad. This example is interesting because it shows an entirely different usage than the rest of the examples – here, the emoji is not used in a positive or friendly way. However, it does follow the usual rule – it stands at the end of the sentence and doesn't substitute words.



In (5.3) and (5.5) the situations revolve around fixing an issue, and one of the chatters is unsure of how to do it. As seen in (5.3), there is a car problem the person does not know how to fix, and the insertion of emojis at the end of the sentences where they admit their inexperience for solving the issue might be a way of saying they feel a little ashamed, but also a way to hint the other chatter to help. If we conclude that the latter is correct, then that would be justified, because in the next message, the other person (the father, in this case) realizes and offers his help. Maybe the emoji wouldn't necessarily substitute words such as "can you help me?" but are clear enough for the other person to take the hint. In (5.5), the situation is a bit different because the emoji merely acts as a way to describe the situation which chatter B finds funny – not being able to get the tower rail off the wall. However, one might conclude that, even in this case, the emoji could serve as a way to ask for help – the person uses the emoji to gain sympathy from the other chatter. In that sense, the chatter who is being asked to help can discern that hint.



Finally, in (5.4), we can observe a colloquial conversation between two friends. One of them would like to keep the other one's shirt. Chatter B, whose shirt was estranged, asks chatter A



what they mean by ‘a bit’. We can conclude that they had different understanding because chatter B includes even two emojis at the end of their last message, to highlight the amusement caused by chatter A’s perception of what a short period of time is. It could also be perceived as a digital substitute for a real-life facial expression.

#### 4.1.2 Sad face emoji

Example	Representation	Translation	Context	Position
(6)		<p>A: Are you going to cintra today</p> <p>B: Tomorrow</p> <p>B: There are fires around Sintra</p> <p>B: 😞</p> <p>B: I mean they have been going on for some time</p>	<p>Chatter B is expressing their sadness about not going to Sintra because of the fires. The emoji represents the facial expression which would be seen in face-to-face communication.</p>	Stands alone.
(7)		<p>A: Yes... it's also windy and cloudy here</p> <p>A: 😞</p> <p>B: Too bad</p> <p>A: I believe you...I'm sorry... the</p>	<p>Chatter A subsequently added the sad face emoji to emphasize their feelings about the weather after which they assure chatter A that</p>	Stands alone.

		sun came up and the clouds went away... it will be like that where you are	the weather will improve.	
(8)		<p>A: Did Saint Nicholas come to you? A: He didn't come to me 😞</p>	<p>In Croatia, St. Nicholas traditionally brings presents just like Santa Claus. Chatter asks if St. Nicholas visited the other person and expresses their sorrow because he didn't visit them. The emoji sets the tone of the message.</p>	Utterance ending.
(9)		<p>A: We will put Ita to sleep on Wednesday B: oh god 😞😞 I'm terribly sorry</p>	<p>Chatter B uses two sad face emojis to emphasize their feelings about chatter A's situation. Two emojis add</p>	In the middle of the utterance.


		B: I can imagine how you feel	intensity to the emotion which chatter B wants to transmit.	
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The use of “sad face” emojis is prevalent in messages conveying a negative or somber tone. *Emojipedia* describes it as a pensive, remorseful face. Saddened by life. Quietly considering where things all went wrong. Depicted as a yellow face with sad, closed eyes, furrowed eyebrows, and a slight, flat mouth<sup>9</sup>. Instances such as example (9) illustrate genuine sadness, such as the loss of a beloved pet, but the interesting point is that the emoji is used twice by the recipient of the message which can be interpreted as both genuine sadness and showing support to chatter A who is going through stress and grief.





On the contrary, examples (7) and (8) depict less severe situations where the chatter employs the emoji to highlight the emotional undertone of the conversation, compensating for the lack of facial expressions inherent in digital communication.

Notably, in examples (6) and (7), the emoji is appended subsequently, enriching the message with a specific tone that might have been misconstrued without its inclusion. The emoji serves as a pivotal tool in discerning the true emotional state of the chatter, offering insight into their feelings about the given situation.

The examples in English show some differences.

Example	Representation	Context	Position
(9.1)		Chatters are joking about a “fat insect” which was crushed by chatter A.	Utterance opener.




<sup>9</sup> <https://emojipedia.org/pensive-face>



(9.2)		Chatters are exchanging messages about an unusual unicorn shaped taco holder and craving eating them.	Stands alone.
(9.3)		Chatter B laments about their cold bed and admits being sad about it.	Utterance ending.
(9.4)		Chatter B is talking about their house being empty without their kids. Chatter B (their son or daughter) made a sad comment about the situation.	Utterance opener.
(9.5)		The person who posted this Instagram conversation described it as being rejected through direct messages.	In the middle of the utterance.

The situation from (9.1) is different than those in Croatian because I suggest that the chatter uses the emoji to joke, without feeling real sadness about “fat shaming an insect”. I believe that it is a friendly conversation in which chatter B is only pretending to be sad – similarly, they might even exhibit a sad facial expression in real life to joke about the situation. (9.2) is

another case where the “sad face” emoji is used jokingly, as I believe the situation of craving tacos isn’t that serious, however, here the chatter decided to use the emoji twice and send them as the only reaction. In (9.3), (9.4) and (9.5), the emoji is used as a compensation of a real-life facial expression and to create a melancholic-like tone. The “sad face” emoji does not substitute any words in English examples, and is placed at the beginning or at the end of the message, with an exception of (9.2) where it is placed twice and without any text, making it the only reaction.

#### 4.1.3 Holding back tears emoji

Example	Representation	Translation	Context	Position
(10)		<p>A: Are we going to see the DND movie ☹☹</p> <p>B: Yessssss</p> <p>B: When is it</p>	Chatter A uses the emoji to emphasize their wish to see a movie.	Utterance ending.
(11)		<p>A: I didn’t do the last activity but no one noticed so it was great</p> <p>B: Awesome</p> <p>B: Good job</p> <p>A: they applauded at the end ☹☹</p>	Chatter B expresses their satisfaction and pride because of the audience’s positive reaction.	Utterance ending.
(12)		<p>A: i’m just observing how beautiful your hair looks</p>	Chatter B positively reacts on chatter A’s comment about their hair.	Utterance ending.

		B: thankssss □□□□□	Multiple emojis intensify chatter A's gratitude.	
(13)		A: Miss u □ I am making some tea and I always think of you then hahaha B: Awwwww	Chatter A connects the act of making tea with chatter B and uses the emoji to emphasize how they feel.	In the middle of the utterance.
(14)		A: On Wednesdays we will have classes until 12 because of the faculty day so if you want, we can meet for coffee A: If you can make it A: We haven't seen each other for a long time and I miss you	Chatter B uses the emoji to underline the feeling they share with chatter A.	Utterance ending.

		B: I miss you too 🥺🥺		
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Described as a yellow face with tears welling up at the bottom of its two large eyes, which may be used to express a range of emotions including sadness, anger, embarrassment, admiration, and gratitude by *Emojipedia*<sup>10</sup>. As evident from examples (10) to (14), the "holding back tears" emoji assumes a positive connotation, contrary to its name and association with tears. It serves not only as a reaction, as depicted in examples (11), (12), and (14), but also in inquiries expressing desires or wishes, as seen in example (10).

However, a distinct usage emerges in example (13), where chatter A strategically inserts the emoji mid-message to heighten emotional emphasis. In examples (11), (12), (13), and (14), the emoji provides insight into the deeper emotional state of the user. Its repetition intensifies expressions of gratitude, as evidenced in (11) and (12), where the user is profoundly moved by a particular situation or comment. Similarly, both (13) and (14) showcase the emoji's deployment when expressing a strong desire to meet the other chatter.


In contrast, in example (10), the individual humorously introduces the emoji to express their eagerness to watch a movie. People often refer to this facial expression as “puppy eyes”.

In the case of the "holding back tears" emoji, it doesn't fully replicate the facial expression one might exhibit in person, particularly because the intensity of real-life emotions held back by tears would likely be too powerful for the scenarios described above.

On the other hand, we can observe some differences in English messages found online.

Example	Representation	Context	Position.
(14.1)		Chatter B is worried	Utterance ending.


<sup>10</sup> <https://emojipedia.org/face-holding-back-tears>

		about chatter A.	
(14.2)		Chatter A worries that someone will forget about their birthday	Utterance ending.

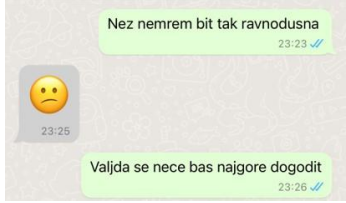

In English examples, the “holding back tears” emoji might even indicate sadness, which is another example of the polysemy of emojis – we can certainly understand that tears are generally connected with crying and being sad. In (14.1), chatter B employs it to express their level of concern towards chatter A, who is inquiring about them going through their phone messages. The emoji could even be mirroring a real-life reaction, depending on the severity of the problem.

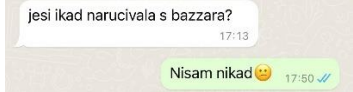
In (14.2), the chatter who uses the emoji is worried that their son might forget their birthday. As a mother, she obviously faces a difficulty accepting such a possibility.

#### 4.1.4 Worried face emoji

Example	Representation	Translation	Context	Position
(15)		<p>A: I could come for a coffee tomorrow or the day after in the morning, if you want.</p> <p>A: Because I'm working in the afternoon</p>	<p>Chatter A wants to meet chatter B for a coffee in the morning, but chatter B isn't available in the morning so they use the</p>	Utterance ending.



		<p>B: I have classes in the morning</p> <p>☹️</p> <p>A: Oh, they're already starting</p>	<p>worried face emoji to emphasize their reaction.</p>	
(16)		<p>A: Dunno I can't be that indifferent</p> <p>B: ☹️</p> <p>A: I hope the worst doesn't happen</p>	<p>Chatter A is expressing their concern to which chatter B responds with a single worried face emoji, which could be interpreted as a way to say 'I don't know what to say'.</p>	<p>Stands alone.</p>
(17)		<p>A: What will you do during that break tomorrow?</p> <p>B: I'm meeting</p>	<p>Chatter B employs the emoji to add a worried tone to their expression.</p>	<p>Utterance ending.</p>

		Vale and Nika 😞 B: I can't meet you if you had something in mind		
(18)		A: Have you ever ordered anything from bazaar? B: Never 😞	Chatter B uses the emoji to emphasize how they feel.	Utterance ending.

*Emojipedia* describes this emoji as a yellow face with open eyes and a skewed frown, as if scrunching its cheeks or chewing its lips. A look of feeling unsure. While it can convey confusion or hesitation, it is also commonly used for slight sadness, disappointment, and frustration<sup>11</sup>. The emotional palette of the “worried face” emoji is very wide. It can convey a number of different emotions and also serve to set the tone of the message. It usually varies from the feelings of uncertainty, disagreement and sometimes even mild sadness. This is, again, another example of emoji ambiguity or polysemy – different people may use the same emoji to represent different feelings, i.e. they exhibit polysemous senses.

The examples above show some of them, and in three of four cases, the emoji is combined with a text, e.g. it doesn't stand alone. This might be the key element of the emoji – it is simply used to add to the message, not be the lone testimony. In examples (15) and (16) the “worried face” emoji serves in situations of doubt and apprehension. In


<sup>11</sup> <https://emojipedia.org/confused-face>

example (15) and (17), it contributes a somber undertone, reflecting the disappointment of being unable to meet the other chatter.


On the contrary, in example (16), the emoji serves as the sole reaction to the message, effectively substituting words. This action could be interpreted as either a deliberate choice to eliminate text or simply as mirroring the nonverbal behavior one might exhibit in face-to-face communication, such as expressing concern through a worried expression.




In conclusion, in all of the examples except for the one in (17), the emoji stands at the end of the message as a way to set the tone. That way, even though we don't see the speaker, we can get a feeling that they are disappointed or, as in (18), they feel as if they couldn't help us – person B has never ordered anything from the mentioned site and uses the emoji to already express their minor regret of not being able to help.

In English, it is used in a similar way – it adds to the tone of the message (18.1). It may also be a mirror of a real-life facial expression.

Example	Representation	Context	Position
(18.1)		Chatter is sad they can't accept the proposal of playing games.	Utterance ending.

#### 4.1.5. Smiling devil emoji

Example	Representation	Translation	Context	Position
(19)		<p>A: That's the next one on my list if I'll go</p> <p>A: And tragus:)</p> <p>B: Let's go together 😏</p>	Chatter A and B are discussing whether they should go and get ear piercings together. Chatter B employs the	Utterance ending.

			“smiling devil” emoji to add a rebellious undertone to their reaction.	
(20)		<p>A: Now he does</p> <p>A: He has his own little bed</p> <p>B: hahaha you managed to get him to come in after all 😈</p>	Chatter A is talking about their outdoor pet who finally came inside the house. Chatter B sees it as a rebellious act and uses the emoji to enrich the message.	Utterance ending.
(21)		<p>A: it's forbidden fruit</p> <p>A: You touch it, you die</p> <p>B: Buuu so scared 😈</p>	The emoji is employed humorously and sarcastically.	Stands alone.
(22)		<p>A:</p> <p>B: I'll create one fake mail 😈</p>	The emoji mirrors the real-life facial expression.	Utterance ending.

Emojipedia describes this emoji as a face, usually purple, with devil horns, a wide grin, and eyes and eyebrows scrunched downward in the same manner as 😏 Angry Face on most platforms. Google's design is red and Facebook's has black horns and green eyes. Commonly used to convey mischief, naughtiness, and excitement or excellence (slang, bad or wicked).<sup>12</sup> The use of the "smiling devil" emoji can be seen as playful, perhaps serving to replicate a mischievous smirk or a sly grin one might exhibit in face-to-face interactions, such as in the example (22). If a person were to say that sentence in real life, they may want to add a smirk or a mischievous smile. Also, it is obviously used in a friendly and humorous interaction which we can see in the usage of goofy smiles from chatter A.

It also tends to appear in contexts that could be interpreted as rebellious or slightly unconventional. In example (19), the emoji reinforces enthusiasm towards the idea of getting another piercing, while also conveying a friendly endorsement of it. On the contrary, in example (20), chatter B employs the emoji in response to chatter A's action, which they perceive as somewhat rebellious, possibly implying that it might have been an ill-advised decision, as indicated by their remark "after all". In (21) we can also observe the sarcastic tone of the "smiling devil" emoji which is obviously used in a friendly, jesting conversation. The emoji serves to show the exact opposite of fear – it is used as a friendly way to say they know there's no need to fear any consequences and to affectionately provoke the other person.

Finally, we can notice that the emoji is always used in a combination with the text, at the end of the utterance. It is never used alone or as a sole response to a message. In the cases shown above, the emoji doesn't serve as a substitution of the words but rather as a mainly jesting and humorous addition to the general tone of the message.

Conversely, I didn't find any of the "smiling devil" emoji examples in English.

## 4.2 Intensifiers


### 4.2.1 Red heart emoji

According to Meltwater, red heart emoji ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in its usage across various platforms in 2023, and was mentioned 124 million times. It's also the most used emoji on Valentine's Day and is often connected to keyword "love".<sup>13</sup>


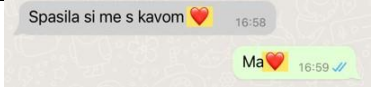
<sup>12</sup> <https://emojipedia.org/smiling-face-with-horns>


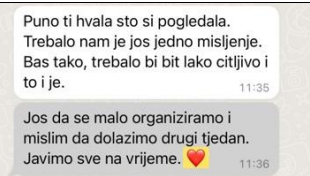
<sup>13</sup> <https://www.meltwater.com/en/blog/top-emojis-2023>

Similarly, in the next few examples, the use of red heart emoji can also be linked to situations that show love, support, gratitude and happiness. *Emojipedia* says that it is used for expressions of love and romance across many cultures, with this being amongst the most frequency use cases for this emoji. However, the Red Heart emoji is also often used to express non-romantic positive sentiments, in part thanks to its use as one of the default reaction emoji options across many social messaging platforms (e.g. Instagram, Slack, WhatsApp).<sup>14</sup>



Example	Representation	Translation	Context	Position.
(22.1)		<p>A: All will be well</p> <p>A: I love you and good night ♥</p> <p>B: Of course... I love you ♥♥♥♥♥</p>	<p>Chatter A is expressing their support, wishing good night and expressing their love for chatter B. Chatter B responds with multiple red heart emojis to intensify the feeling they are trying to transmit.</p>	Utterance ending.

<sup>14</sup> <https://emojipedia.org/red-heart>

(22.2)		<p>A: And then we can walk to Mimara because it's near</p> <p>B: Deal</p> <p>A: Great</p> <p>A: Looking forward to it</p> <p>♥</p> <p>B: Me too</p> <p>B: ♥</p>	<p>Chatters are talking about their meeting point and get together. Both of them use the red heart emoji to express happiness about the event.</p>	<p>Utterance ending and the second one stands alone.</p>
(22.3)		<p>A: You saved me with that coffee ♥</p> <p>B: Oh ♥</p>	<p>Chatter A is expressing their gratitude about the coffee chatter B brought them. Both chatters use the emoji to emphasize the general undertone.</p>	<p>Both are utterance endings.</p>

(22.4)		<p>A: I'm very happy you came</p> <p>A: I'll call you when I'm alone</p> <p>B: Sorry, I went to bed straight away and wasn't on my phone</p> <p>B: It was great ❤️❤️❤️</p>	<p>Chatter A is expressing their gratitude for chatter B's coming to their party.</p> <p>Chatter B expresses their approval for the party by employing multiple heart emojis.</p>	Utterance ending.
(22.5)		<p>A: Thank you for taking a look. We needed one more opinion.</p> <p>That's right, it should be easy to read and it is.</p> <p>A: We need to organize a little bit</p>	<p>Chatter is expressing their gratitude for help. They are also letting the person know about their satisfaction about visiting the other</p>	Utterance ending.



		more but I think we are coming next week. We'll let you know on time. ❤️	person next week and adding the heart emoji to emphasize.	
(22.6)		<p>A: It's hard</p> <p>B: It is, I agree</p> <p>B: Hang in there 🤪</p> <p>A: Thanks ❤️</p>	Chatter B shows their support for chatter A's hardship by adding a "muscles" emoji and chatter A is thanking by adding a heart emoji.	Utterance ending.
(22.7)		<p>A: I'll manage to learn it for a positive grade</p> <p>B: of course</p> <p>B: we'll do it</p> <p>B: 🦍</p> <p>A: ❤️</p>	Chatter B is agreeing and showing support and approval of chatter A's idea by adding "muscles" emoji. Chatter B	Stands alone.

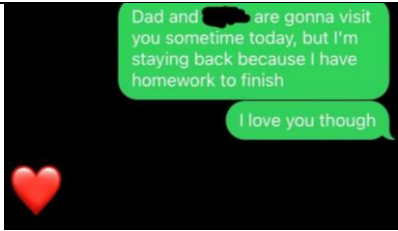
			uses a single red heart as a response, substituting words.	
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Example (22.1) strengthens the notion that the red heart emoji is frequently employed to express affection towards someone. Notably, both chatters utilize it, with one repeating it multiple times to amplify the depth of emotion they wish to convey. Rather than simply stating "I love you so, so much," the chatter opts for four hearts, intensifying the sentiment. Similarly, in example (22.4), where the emoji is used three times, it conveys a sentiment akin to "I liked it very, very much." Additionally, it's noteworthy that the red heart emoji is often exchanged by both chatters, serving as mutual affirmation of shared feelings, as evidenced in examples (22.1), (22.2), and (22.3). In (22.3) we can also add that it is used to substitute words and short sentences such as "you're welcome", "it's nothing", or maybe even "I love you" depending on the relationship between the chatters.

In (22.5) it follows the friendly, positive attitude of the chatter and could be interpreted as a way of adding more sentiment to the message.

Furthermore, it's evident that the red heart emoji can be complemented with other emojis within the same context. In (12) it was used in combination with "holding back tears" emoji where the chatter wanted to express how grateful they were for a positive comment they had gotten. In examples (22.6) and (22.7), the scenario revolves around offering support, where the red heart emoji is coupled with the "muscles" hand sign. This combination symbolizes not only strength and perseverance but also underscores a sense of determination and perhaps even solidarity. This intertwining of emojis suggests a nuanced overlap in their usage, where they serve the same purpose and may even occupy the same space, as illustrated in (22.6), where the red heart emoji is employed alongside words of encouragement like "hang in there." Finally, we can also observe an overlap in (9) where it once again served as a substitute for saying "thank you".

We can observe quite a few similarities in English texts below.

Example	Representation	Context	Position.
(27.1)		On Reddit, the person who posted the screenshot described it as texting their ex.	Utterance ending.
(27.2)		Chatters are exchanging romantic messages.	Stands alone.
(27.3)		Chatter A hints that they wish to take chatter B on a date.	Utterance ending.
(27.4)		Chatters are exchanging messages of support and encouragement.	Utterance ending.
(27.5)		Chatter A informs chatter B about their visit and says 'I love you' to which chatter B responds with one heart emoji.	Stands alone.

The red heart emoji in English messages is used similarly as seen in Croatian examples, that is to show affection and support. In (27.1) and (27.3) it was combined with other emojis. Example (27.1) is interesting because the person is writing a message to an ex-lover. They use emojis that can be associated with words in the message – the moon with 'night', the puzzle with 'insert' etc., but these emojis do not necessarily replace words. We can say that



they all follow the theme of falling in love and missing the other person, and serve to make the message visually more beautiful. In (27.3), the emoji also doesn't substitute words but can be seen as a way of showing curiosity about other person's perfect date idea.

In (27.2.) and (27.4), the usage of the emoji is straightforward – used to show support, but in (27.2) we can see that the chatter employs even four hearts following the words 'you're going to make me cry again' as a way to express how much they cherish the received messages.




The only English example where the red heart emoji is used as a single response is (27.5.) and we can conclude that in this case it serves as a substitution of the words 'I love you too', achieving conciseness.

#### 4.2.2 Celebration emoji

The “celebration emoji”, also known as the party popper emoji is the next one in the category of intensifiers. According to *Emojipedia*, it is an icon consisting of “a gold party hat, striped on some platforms, at a 45° angle, with multicolored confetti and streamers coming from its opening at the upper right”.<sup>15</sup> The examples from (28) to (32) depict its usage in daily conversations, most frequently employed to express birthday wishes and feelings of gratitude and satisfaction. We can observe it is always used with a positive intention.

Example	Representation	Translation	Context	Position.
(28)		A: I wish you all the best for your birthday, lots of 🍀 and ❤️! Enjoy 🎉🎉 B: thanks	The emoji was used in a 'happy birthday' message.	Utterance ending.
(29)		A: satisfied? B: Yes yes	Chatter B employs the emoji to	Utterance ending.

<sup>15</sup> <https://emojipedia.org/party-popper>

		A: 🎂 🎂 🎂 ❤️	show mutual feelings.	
(30)		A: One of the best birthdays I have ever attended! B: It was really amazing guys, great ambiance and company! I'm happy you invited us! 🎂	Chatter B uses the celebration emoji to emphasize their satisfaction with the party.	Utterance ending.
(31)		A: We are best man and maid of honor B Great 🎂 🎂	Chatter B uses the emoji twice to congratulate chatter A.	Utterance ending.
(32)		A: Dear (name), I wish you all the best for your birthday! 🎂	The emoji was used in a 'happy birthday' message.	Utterance ending.

		B: Thanks dear!		
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Not only does it always appear with a text, but it is also often used multiple times, as seen in examples (28), (29) and (31). In two of five examples, specifically (28) and (32) it is used in a message which contains birthday wishes and is combined with other emojis such as red heart, birthday cake and four-leaf clover, all of which fit the general celebrating tone of the messages. Notably, the image itself depicts a commonly used item in birthday celebrations – a party popper which contains confetti, which is then naturally connected to the said usage.

Similarly, in (31) it appears inside a situation where chatter A shares a piece of good news – becoming the best man and the maid of honor, with chatter B who employs the celebration emoji twice alongside another one – a golden confetti ball, all to say they are happy for chatter A.

In (29), chatter B uses the emoji three times to make sure the chatter B knows how glad they are for their success. It is noteworthy to say that, normally, none of these situations in real-life would call for the actual usage of party poppers or confetti, as people usually don't carry those items around, but in the case of text messages, it can be used as a way to set the tone and add more to the overall celebrating feeling. Similarly, most of the situations from the text messages don't always mean to be celebrated, especially in examples such as (29) and (30), where the emoji is employed just to emphasize the good feelings of satisfaction and contentment. Finally, the emoji itself does not substitute words in any of the listed messages.

We can observe that the “celebration” or the “party popper” emoji is commonly found in well-wishing messages as a representation of joy and excitement because of somebody's birthday, success or achievement and special occasions such as in (31).



In English, it is also used to express birthday wishes, as we can see in (32.1)

Example	Representation	Context	Position.
(32.1)		The chatter is wishing someone a happy birthday.	Utterance ending.



It is also combined with a “birthday present” emoji.

#### 4.2.3 Airplane emoji

*Emojipedia* defines this one as a literal airplane, to represent an overseas vacation, or sometimes as a proxy for airplane mode on a phone or tablet.<sup>16</sup>

Example	Representation	Translation	Context	Reaction/question
(33)		A: we're flying soon A: xoxo B: Enjoy your flight ✈ ✈ ✈ ✈ ✈	Chatters are talking about a flight. At the end of the message, chatter B uses the emoji 5 times.	Stands alone.
(34)		A: Do you have your luggage with you or do you have to wait? ✈ B: I have it with me A: Great	Chatter A uses the airplane emoji when asking about chatter B's luggage.	Utterance ending.

<sup>16</sup> <https://emojipedia.org/airplane>

(35)		<p>A: Is the car ready?</p> <p>B: Yes</p> <p>A: Is everything okay now?</p> <p>B: Awesome, it's like an ✈️</p>	<p>Chatter B uses the emoji to substitute a word, giving the whole message an idiomatic meaning.</p>	<p>Utterance ending, but substitutes the word “airplane”.</p>
(36)		<p>A: She's so pretty</p> <p>B: Yes, the woman is a ✈️</p>	<p>Chatter A uses the emoji to substitute a word, making their answer idiomatic.</p>	<p>Utterance ending, but substitutes the word “airplane”.</p>

The airplane emoji has a list of meanings in the examples from (33) to (36). Although it is used in situations where a person would be flying, waiting for the flight or just happen to be in some airport setting, which we can observe in examples (33) and (34), it can also have a different meaning, and not have any connection whatsoever with air traffic or planes.

In (33) and (34), even though the word “plane” or “airplane” is not mentioned, one of the chatters makes a mental association with the image of a plane, and decides to add it at the end of their message. Despite being placed at the end of both of the examples, in (33) it was multiplied. One could speculate why the chatter decided to use the airplane emoji as much as five times in (33). It could signify a long flight, or merely be a way to strengthen their wish for chatter A's safe flight.

In (35) and (36), however, the airplane emoji does substitute words and has a different, metaphorical meaning. Since the original chatters are native speakers of the Croatian



language, their usage of emojis can be viewed from an idiomatic perspective. In (35), the chatters are exchanging messages about car repair. After affirming that the car was repaired, chatter B answers another question—the one about the current state of the car. In this interesting example, chatter B chooses not to simply use words but employs the airplane emoji as a way to say that the car is in very good shape—that it ‘goes like an airplane’ which would be a direct translation from Croatian. In Croatian, when we say that something is “like an airplane,” it means that it is in good shape, state and overall represents a positive connection with the circumstances or condition revolving around a person or an object.


Similarly, in example (36), we can once again observe the positive connotation of the word airplane with, in this case, a woman’s beauty or fitness level. Chatter B decides to compare the woman, whom chatter A is calling *so pretty*, with an airplane—a similar situation as in (35). Here, we can ascertain that the airplane indeed does have a positive meaning in Croatian and can be used even in text messages, both for objects (35) and people (36).

Finally, we can say that in cases (33) and (34), the airplane emoji doesn’t substitute words, but in (35) and (36) it does, and it even has an idiomatic meaning.




The sources I used for English messages didn’t contain any examples of airplane emojis, making the comparison with Croatian messages impossible, but I decided to retain them because of their interesting usage.



#### 4.2.4 Money bag emoji

The money bag emoji appears only in messages in Croatian. *Emojipedia* describes it as a bag full of money. Depicted as a sack, usually tan, tied off and displaying a dollar sign. May be filled with coins, as most platforms show a rounded bag.<sup>17</sup>

Example	Representation	Translation	Context	Position
(37)		A: Vitamin C for your face A: Do you use it? B: No	Chatters are talking about an expensive skincare product, which	Stands alone.

<sup>17</sup> <https://emojipedia.org/money-bag>

		<p>B: 🍊 🍊 🍊 🍊</p> <p>A: I found another wallet-friendly version</p>	<p>chatter B decides to explain using only emojis.</p>	
(38)		<p>A: no eurojackpot for me...</p> <p>B: more luck next time 🍀 🍀 🍊 🍊</p>	<p>Chatter B wishes luck to chatter A by employing the four-leaf clover and the money bag emojis.</p>	Utterance ending.
(39)		<p>A: I'm working the whole week</p> <p>B: ooo 🍊 🍊 🍊 🍊</p>	<p>Chatter B uses multiple emojis to indicate that chatter A is going to be paid well.</p>	Utterance ending.
(40)		<p>A: We are going there too?</p> <p>A: When is it?</p> <p>B: 7-10 July</p>	<p>When talking about a concert, the chatter B uses the money bag</p>	In the middle of the utterance.

		A: I still say   error no money	emoji to say they lack money.	
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The money bag emoji has a dollar sign stamped in the middle. Even though the chatters are all Croatian and do not use dollars, it seems they don't mind it being a foreign currency. From (37) to (40), we can observe different usages of the "money bag" emoji, which is used in all of the examples in situations where the chatters talk about finances. It is interesting to note that in all of the examples, the emoji is used multiple times.

In (37) the emoji is used as a stand-alone message multiple time. When talking about a skincare product, namely a vitamin C serum, chatter A inquires chatter B about it. After the inquiry, chatter B reveals they don't use it because of its price. Even though they didn't say it with words, by employing even four money bag emojis, they want to say that the product is expensive, and we can conclude that the emoji indeed substitutes, in this case not only words but a whole idea. One could argue that using the said emoji multiple times, one wants to highlight the idea of a higher price, as seen in example (40), where chatter B wants to say that it is too expensive for them to pay for the concert tickets. What is more, in (40), they combine it with a single red cross emoji, and a robotic-like wording "error, no money", "humorously mimicking the style of a cash machine or a banking app. In addition, the emoji represents a situation where a person is in a less appropriate financial standing.

Conversely, in (39), chatter B employs it multiple times to indicate a good financial situation of chatter A, who tells them they will work every day that week. Chatter A uses the emojis in good faith and to show their understanding of another person's salary. It is used at the end of the sentence and could also be understood as a way to transmit the idea of making good money or meaningful results for chatter A's work.

Finally, in (38), the background of the conversation is not winning the jackpot. When wishing good luck, chatter B decides to use the combination of a four-leaf clover and the money bag, neither of which represent words but merely serve to enhance the tone of the message, making it more colorful and nicer to read – they don't add content but only have an illustrative function.

#### 4.2.5 Four leaf clover emoji

The rarest variation of a shamrock is the four-leaf clover which usually represents good fortune. Both are considered to be symbols of Ireland<sup>18</sup>. *Emojipedia* says it is a symbol of good luck. Depicted as a bright green sprig of clover, with four, heart-shaped leaves<sup>19</sup>. Here are some examples of text messages containing the four-leaf clover emoji.

Example	Representation	Translation	Context	Position
(41)		<p>A: It's Saint Patrick's Day</p> <p>B: Shall we go celebrate in the pub?</p> <p>🍀</p>	Chatter B makes a mental association with S. Patrick's Day by putting a four-leaf clover emoji.	Utterance ending.
(42)		<p>A: I wish you much luck today</p> <p>❤️ ❤️</p> <p>❤️ 🍀 🍀</p> <p>🍀 🍀 🍀</p> <p>B: Thanks</p>	Chatter A employs the four-leaf clover emoji more than once and combines it with red hearts to wish chatter A good luck	Utterance ending.

<sup>18</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four-leaf\\_clover](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four-leaf_clover)

<sup>19</sup> <https://emojipedia.org/four-leaf-clover>

			on their exam.	
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Alongside (41) and (42), we can go back and look at (28) and (38) to observe different usages. As it was previously mentioned, the clover is one of the symbols of Ireland and was used by St. Patrick, Ireland's patron saint, to teach about the Holy Trinity. In (41) we can see that chatter B makes a mental association with St. Patrick's Day after it was mentioned by chatter A. Chatter B then proceeds to ask if they will go celebrate it at the pub, a place commonly associated with Irish culture and traditions. The four-leaf clover emoji is placed at the end of the question as a symbolic complement to the topic that connects the pub and St. Patrick's Day. In this case, the emoji does not serve as a substitution for words; it merely represents good emotions connected with celebration and is used in friendly, cordial communication between two friends.

To prove the theory that the four-leaf clover emoji represents good-hearted wishes and positive feelings, we can look at examples (28) and (42) where it was used to convey good wishes and success to other people such as a happy birthday wish in (28) and wishing someone luck on an exam in (42). In (42), it could represent the word luck, but it is used probably only symbolically to accentuate their hopes for the other chatter. It is, however, used multiple times and combined with the red heart emoji. On the other hand, in (28) it substitutes the word luck – if we were to translate the whole message into words, it would be: "I wish you all the best for your birthday; lots of luck and love!". We can observe that the person wishing a happy birthday decided to substitute both 'love' and 'luck' with emojis in order for the message to look less dull and more joyful.

Finally, when we observe example (38), where the four-leaf clover is combined with the money bag emoji, we can see that they are both used at the end, and they don't represent words. Just think of it: when we would 'translate' the whole sentence with the emojis into words, it would appear as "better luck next time, luck, luck, money, money." Seeing that such a sentence does not make any sense at all, we can conclude that emoji does not always represent the word with which we associate its visual representation, nor that it is always used in the same way, but we can conclude that it is used to transmit positive feelings between chatters, usually in situations of birthdays and celebrations.


In conclusion, we can see that, just as in examples that feature the red heart emoji, the four-leaf clover emojis mostly don't substitute words but merely serve as an enrichment of a kind-hearted, friendly message where we want to show more affection through the emoji, as text messaging usually represents a faceless, emotionless communication.

### 4.3 Body parts emoji



The concluding category, "body parts," encompasses the "folded hands", the "peace sign" emoji, the "waving" emoji, the "thumbs up" emoji and the "muscles" emoji. Despite their anatomical distinctions — with the first four emojis focusing on hands and fingers while the "muscles" emoji depicts the arm — they are grouped together within this paper due to their shared location on the body — the arm.



#### 4.3.1 Folded hands emoji

The "folded hands" emoji could visually be interpreted in two ways. The first one might be as two hands pressed together as a sign of togetherness, mutual efforts or a popular *high five*, but the other one could be the hands of the *same* person pressed together for religious prayer or pleading. Emojipedia reinforces that it may have a meaning of please or thank you, prayer, respectful greeting or show of adoration many in Southeast Asian religions and cultures, such as the Hindu namaste or Buddhist añjali mudra. Rarely used as a high-five, despite often being suggested as one by emoji keyboard search features<sup>20</sup>. In the next few examples, we can observe both versions.

Example	Representation	Translation	Context	Position
(43)		A: We're playing jamb now A: And I was winning up until now A: And today I'm losing terribly	Chatter B uses the emoji to humorously cheer up chatter A because they are losing in a board game.	Utterance ending.

<sup>20</sup> <https://emojipedia.org/folded-hands>

		B: I'm rooting for you 🙏 🙏 🙏		
(44)		<p>A: Don't scare me 😞</p> <p>A: I only have faith in our secret service</p> <p>A: Guys, if you're reading this, I believe in you and that you protect us from bad intentions 🙏</p>	When talking about secret service, the chatter employs the folded hands emoji as a way to say they trust and "pray" they protect the people.	Utterance ending.
(45)		<p>A: I can't wait</p> <p>A: Homemade soup</p> <p>A: My stomach will go into shock</p> <p>B: hahahaha</p> <p>B: have strength 🙏</p>	Chatter A feels happy about coming home and eating a home cooked meal. Chatter B adds the emoji to	Utterance ending.

			humorously wish them strength until they come home and eat it.	
(46)		<p>A: I'm sure we won't fight</p> <p>B: hope we won't</p> <p>B: 🙏</p> <p>B: I don't like conflicts</p>	Chatter B uses the folded hands emoji to express their hopes.	Stands alone.
(47)		<p>A: The exam is at 11</p> <p>A: 🙏 4 me</p>	Chatter employs the emoji to substitute the word 'pray'.	Utterance opener but substitutes the word "pray".

In examples from (43) to (47) we can observe different usages of the folded hands emoji. Originally, it represents 'please' or 'thank you' in Japanese culture, where it's a common visual gesture to express gratitude. However, in Croatian culture, we don't necessarily express those emotions in the same way.

Sometimes, it can be a way to say 'pray' or 'I hope', like in (46) and (47). After expressing their hopes for peaceful agreements, chatter B uses a single "folded hands" emoji as a way to say that they do not want any conflict or fight, which they also write afterwards. Since the emoji was sent as a stand-alone message, it may mean that the person wanted to show how big their expectations are. In (47), however, the emoji stands as a substitution for the word 'pray', in a situation where a person is taking an exam which they fear.



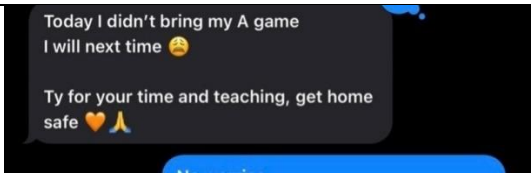
One could argue that the only example where the “folded-hands” emoji means ‘please’ is in (44). The person writes several messages about their attitude towards the secret service and expresses their gratitude to them, but also hopes that they will continue to protect them from ‘bad intentions’. In fact, they end up ‘talking’ to the Secret Service, as if they were reading the same message, proceeding to add the “folded hands” emoji as a way to say ‘please’. Since it is a conversation between two friends, one could suggest that the emoji was added jokingly.




Conversely, the two examples whose meaning could be ambiguous are (43) and (45). If we look at both of them, they illustrate lighthearted situations. In (43), chatter A tells chatter B they are losing in a game of *jamb*, a popular game with dice in Croatia, to which chatter B replies with the words of support – “I’m rooting for you” but also adds three “folded hands” emojis at the end. This example shows another understanding of the same emoji – showing encouragement, even if it is used in a non-serious situation. Maybe some would interpret the emojis in a way that chatter B is praying, but judging by the words which accompany them, I would argue that is not entirely correct. In any case, we can observe that not every “folded hand” emoji means “gratitude” or “prayer”.

Example (45) shows another similar situation where the emoji wouldn’t necessarily be used to express gratitude nor would it be a plea. It does, however, portray a humorous and a little exaggerated way of saying “please”, although it might be a bit of a stretch.

Finally, one could argue that the “folded hands” emoji usually substitute words such as “pray” or “thanks” but don’t mirror real life situations because it is not usual that in Croatian culture people fold hands to express as often as the Japanese. Interestingly, if the emoji is used as a single message, it usually conveys a greater degree of hope and is typically reserved for the conclusion of the message. However, if we have a look at (50), the only response to the message was the use of the “folded hands” emoji.

Below are some English texts where the “folded hands” emoji was implemented.




Example	Representation	Context	Position
(47.1)		Chatter A is expressing their feelings about the other	Utterance ending.

		person's teaching.	
(47.2)		A guy is flirting with a girl he met and sending his photo to remind her of his looks.	Stands in the middle of the utterance.
(47.3)		Chatter B is feeling grateful for chatter A	Utterance ending.
(47.4.)		Chatter is wishing the other person a good night.	Utterance ending.

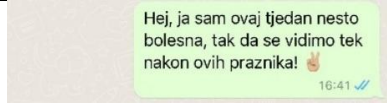
In (47.1), the person uses the emoji to express gratitude, but in (47.2) the “folded hands” is combined with “fingers crossed” emoji, both of which could substitute the word “hope”. (47.2) is the only example in which the emoji was implemented in the middle of a longer message. In (47.3), however, judging by the previous messages, chatter B was jokingly adding the emoji to express their relief. We cannot know if there was a real hurricane, but it is probably only an exaggerated conversation between two friends, one probably being in the mood for jokes and playful teasing of the other chatter. Joking or not, the emoji was still used to express feelings of gratitude, and is, like in the majority of messages, implemented at the end. In (47.4), the emoji could be interpreted as a way of saying “I hope” – “I hope you sleep tight”, although it is appended at the end.

### 4.3.2 Peace sign emoji

Interestingly, according to Emojipedia, this emoji is called Victory sign -two fingers held up on one hand making a V sign. The reverse of this symbol is considered an offence gesture in British culture, similar to giving the middle finger.<sup>21</sup>

Example	Representation	Translation	Context	Position
(48)		<p>A: If he says we need to pay, I'm against it</p> <p>B: 🕊️</p>	Two chatters are discussing a payment difficulty to which one chatter reacts with the peace sign emoji.	Stands alone.
(49)		<p>A: Will you be there soon?</p> <p>B: Yes</p> <p>C: Me too 🕊️</p>	The chatters are arranging a meeting.	Utterance ending.
(50)		<p>A: First question: Are you all alive?</p> <p>A: Second question: What is the plan for tomorrow?</p>	Chatter A is asking their friends in the group chat whether they are feeling well. Chatter B	Utterance ending.

<sup>21</sup> <https://emojipedia.org/victory-hand>

		B: Almost like new 🤝	reacts positively and adds the emoji.	
(51)		A: Hey, I'm a bit sick this week, so I'll see you after the holidays! 🤝	Chatter informs their coach about not coming to the practice.	Utterance ending.

The “peace sign” emoji appears as a hand with two fingers placed to look like the letter V. Its usage varies, but is often employed as a way to say ‘me too’ like in (48) and (49). In (48), the person wants to say that they agree with chatter A, using only the emoji which successfully substitutes words. Similarly, it is an addition to “me too” (48) in a situation where the chatters are arranging a get-together. One could imagine the real-life situation where people would raise their hands and show a peace sign to signal agreement or as a way to say “I’m here.”

In other two examples, it is employed as a way to express positivity or maybe even hope – (51) depicts a situation where the chatter lets their trainer know they will miss one training session and expresses their hope for being able to train after the holidays. The emoji most likely does not serve as a substitution for the word “peace,” but could signify a colloquial way to say “peace out,” which is a casual way to say “bye”. However, since the chatter is Croatian, that might be an erroneous conclusion.


In conclusion, even though the “peace sign” might substitute words such as “me too”, “I’m here” or “peace out”, it may just be a way to add a positive symbol in the message which is devoid of any facial or physical expression. On the other hand, I wasn’t able to find any of the examples in English.

### 4.3.3 Waving emoji

Emojipedia describes it rather simply -it is most commonly used to say “hello” or “goodbye”.<sup>22</sup>

Example	Representation	Translation	Context	Position
(52)		A: Great, see you B: See you 👋	Chatters are arranging when to meet.	Utterance ending.
(53)		A: He's here with me A: He says 👋 👋 👋 too	Chatter employs the emoji to substitute the word 'hi' or 'hello'.	Utterance ending.
(54)		A: Are you on the ferry B: Just boarded B: It leaves at 16 A: Great A: Leaving the sea 👋 👋 👋 👋	Chatters are talking about chatter A's departure from their holiday destination.	Utterance ending.

<sup>22</sup> <https://emojipedia.org/waving-hand>


(55)		A: See you B: 🙌	Chatters are arranging when to meet.	Stands alone.
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The “waving” emoji is a very straightforward and non-idiomatic emoji, as seen in examples from (52) to (55). It usually mimics a real-life hand gesture of a wave, and it serves the same purpose in messages, similarly to the thumbs-up emoji.





It is used at the end of the message and sometimes stands alone, like in (55) where it substitutes the words “see you” or “bye.” The way in which it is visually portrayed eliminates the need for a written reply. Sometimes it substitutes the word “hello” (53), “he says hello too,” or is simply added to the words like in (53). I couldn’t find any examples of this emoji in English examples. I wasn’t able to find any representations of this emoji in English messages.

#### 4.3.4 Muscles emoji

You can also find it under the name “biceps flexing” or “flexing muscles”. *Emojipedia* defines it as an arm flexing to show its biceps muscle. Represents strength, or working out.<sup>23</sup>

Example	Representation	Translation	Context	Position
(56)		A: I have lots of midterms next week B: Uff good luck for next week then 🦾	Two students are talking about their midterms. Chatter B adds the muscles emoji to intensify their	Utterance ending.


<sup>23</sup> <https://emojipedia.org/flexed-biceps>

			support for chatter A.	
(57)		<p>A: I have three more midterms and a presentation</p> <p>B: Yes, yes</p> <p>B: Be brave</p> <p>👉</p>	Chatter B encourages chatter A.	Utterance ending.
(58)		<p>A: I think I could do it</p> <p>A: I'll try</p> <p>B: Try it 👉</p>	Chatter B expresses their support for chatter A's idea.	Utterance ending.
(59)		<p>A: It hasn't been like this for a long time for me so it's a change</p> <p>B: aha yes, I get it</p> <p>B: we'll manage 👉</p>	Chatter B roots on both themselves and chatter A for studying.	Utterance ending.
(60)		<p>A: I'll let you know in one hour if I can make it, okay?</p> <p>A: Friday?</p>	Chatters are trying to find a meeting that would accomodate both of	Utterance ending.

		<p>B: Sure</p> <p>B: We'll be in touch</p> <p>A: Today's fine. See you 🤪</p>	<p>their schedules.</p> <p>When they finally agree, chatter B adds the muscles emoji to express their satisfaction.</p>	
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The “muscles” emoji was consistently employed as a reaction in each example from (56) to (60), primarily functioning as an amplification of support. It often accompanied positive reinforcement phrases like “good luck,” “be brave,” and “we’ll manage,” serving as an encouragement to root someone on and express empathy. The contexts in which it was utilized were mostly college and business situations where work needs to be done and lots of effort put into studying.

Moreover, the "muscles" emoji was utilized to convey solidarity and encouragement, illustrating a visual gesture of support and determination. The mere visual representation of this emoji – flexing muscles, immediately transmits a message of strength, power and endurance, so its presence alongside phrases such as "you've got this" and "keep pushing forward" emphasizes a shared sense of strength and resilience, fostering a supportive atmosphere within the conversation. One could argue that it may even substitute words of support.

Example	Representation	Context	Position
(60.1)		Chatter A brags about a recent weight loss progress.	Utterance ending.



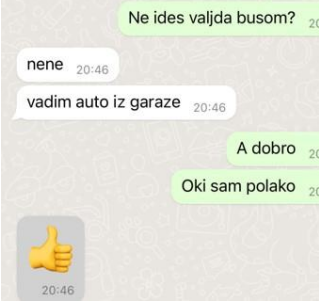


In English example, however, we can observe a different kind of usage. The chatters are talking about losing weight. When asked about their secret for losing weight, chatter B rather ironically and jokingly says it is because of ‘stress and overwork’, accompanying the message with one “muscles” emoji. Here, the emoji isn't meant to encourage or support weight loss, but is merely used due to an association between physical activity, weight loss and muscles, even though the weight loss didn't actually occur due to exercise. The emoji does not substitute words in (60.1).




#### 4.3.5 Thumbs up emoji

For the final subcategory, we will examine the "thumbs up" emoji, which mirrors the real-life hand gesture universally recognized as a means to confirm, approve, or positively react to a particular situation. *Emojipedia* describes it similarly, but adds an interesting note - a thumbs-up gesture indicating approval, but, in certain contexts, the use of it may be construed as being passive aggressive or sarcastic. Despite this possible use, it remains a popular means of quickly and earnestly expressing approval.<sup>24</sup>

Exa mple	Representation	Translation	Context	Position

<sup>24</sup> <https://emojipedia.org/thumbs-up>

(61)		<p>A: You're not going by bus, are you?</p> <p>B: No</p> <p>B I'm taking the car out of the garage</p> <p>A: Okay, take it easy</p> <p>B: 👍</p>	<p>In this daily conversation, the emoji is used as a substitute for confirming chatter A's "wish" to take it easy.</p>	<p>Stands alone.</p>
(62)		<p>A: Let's do it that way</p> <p>A: Same place, I'll be there around 3:20</p> <p>B: 👍</p>	<p>Chatter B uses the thumbs-up emoji to confirm the deal and acknowledge they've read the message.</p>	<p>Stands alone.</p>
(63)		<p>A: I've bought it.</p> <p>A: It lasts one and a half hours</p> <p>A: 6,5 euros for students</p> <p>B: When does it start?</p> <p>A: 8</p> <p>B: 👍</p>	<p>Chatters are talking about an event they are going to attend together. Chatter B thanks and acknowledges chatter A's answer with the thumbs-up emoji.</p>	<p>Stands alone.</p>

(64)		<p>A: Fallerovo tour, Wednesday 16:10</p> <p>B: 👍</p>	<p>Chatter B confirms the deal about the real estate tour.</p>	<p>Stands alone.</p>
(65)		<p>A: Let's meet at 18:30, ok?</p> <p>B: Deal</p> <p>A: 👍</p>	<p>Chatters are agreeing on a meeting. Chatter B confirms their deal with a thumbs-up.</p>	<p>Stands alone.</p>
(66)		<p>A: Dear Ivana, we agreed on 18:30 today?</p> <p>B: 👍 👍</p>	<p>Chatter B confirms the agreement.</p>	<p>Stands alone.</p>

The “thumbs up” emoji successfully substitutes words as we can see in examples from (61) to (66) because it, unlike other emojis, always shows up without any text or other emojis. That means that it is frequently utilized as a swift means to acknowledge a message or indicate agreement, eliminating the need for a written reply. It is usually used only once, but in (66) it is used twice, possibly in haste or to simply signalize that the agreement is one hundred percent valid. It also mirrors the real-life reactions where a person would simply put their thumbs up to show approval or confirmation of some deal.





However, studies suggest that the usage of once very popular “thumbs up emoji” is fading away because of Gen Z who perceive it as old-fashioned and even hostile (Evans, 2022<sup>25</sup>). In his 2022 article, cognitive linguist Vyvyan Evans suggests that “the thumbs-up emoji is increasingly viewed as signaling sarcasm or being downright hostile”. So, “thumbs up” emoji could be used as a way to swiftly end the conversation or make someone stop texting you, but that’s not the case in any of the examples above.

In an intriguing development from Canada, the Canadian Court has ruled that the thumbs-up emoji constitutes a legally binding agreement. This decision arose from a peculiar case involving a farmer attempting to sell 87 metric tons of flax via text messages. The farmer


<sup>25</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/language-in-the-mind/202211/whats-the-problem-with-using-the-thumbs-up-emoji>

simply confirmed the buyer's offer with a thumbs-up emoji, leading to this unusual legal ruling.<sup>26</sup>

The usage of the “thumbs up” emoji contributes to the conclusions made from observing Croatian messages.

Example	Representation	Context	Position
(66.1)		Chatter A is asking about a reggae song. When chatter B responds, the first chatter uses the emoji to acknowledge the answer.	Stands alone.
(66.2)		As most of the fathers, the father in question uses the emoji to confirm his child's want.	Stands alone.
(66.3)		Chatter B uses the “thumbs up” emoji to confirm the deal about gaming.	Utterance ending.
(66.4)		Chatter B uses the emoji to acknowledge chatter A's love confession.	Utterance ending.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/06/canada-judge-thumbs-up-emoji-sign-contract>

(66.5)		Chatter B erroneously used the “middle finger” emoji instead of “thumbs up” to confirm the message.	Utterance ending.
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As seen in examples from (66.1) to (66.5), the usage of the “thumbs up” emoji mirrors the one in Croatian messages, mostly employed to confirm a deal or a meeting or acknowledge a message. Some of them are depicted in humorous situations, namely (66.2) where we cannot be sure that chatter B (who was supposed to call the taxi), actually did what they were asked, but can surely confirm they have acknowledged other person’s inquiry. Similarly, in (66.5), the “thumbs up” emoji was mistaken by a “middle finger” emoji. (66.4) follows the same usage, but because of it, the message gets a rather cold, indifferent tone.

In all the other cases, the “thumbs up” emoji also serves as a fast way to say ‘yes’, or ‘agreed’ and shows up both alone and at the end of the message – effectively substituting words. It could also mirror the real-life reaction.

## 5. Discussion

The comparative analysis conducted after observing all of the examples reveals that there are more similarities than differences overall.

Firstly, we can notice that some examples of emojis are lacking in English messages – that is because I wasn’t able to find any examples on Reddit, which was the source for the messages in English. The ones I included in Croatian but couldn’t find in English are: the “smiling devil” emoji, the “money bag” emoji, the “four-leaf” clover emoji, the “airplane” emoji, the “peace sign” emoji and the “waving hand emoji”. The reason for that is probably that they are used in smaller numbers, and in specific conversations. It is important to point out that, even though I had the missing intensifiers in my personal messages, all of the ones I included were actually the only ones I found while I was going through my personal messages. I found the examples interesting, and wanted to analyze them because of their specific meanings (like the airplane emoji and the clover). It did, however, surprise me that I hadn’t found any of the “waving hand” emojis in English.

Conversely, there were some emojis which I found in big numbers. What is more, I found all the needed examples very quickly, without having to scroll through numerous screenshots on Reddit. I immediately concluded that those are the emojis that are most widely and liberally used – the “red heart” emoji, the “tears of joy” emoji and the “thumbs-up” emoji. Let’s observe their similarities.

The “tears of joy” emoji was mostly used in friendly conversations in both languages. One difference is in (5.2) where the English speaker uses it to insult the other chatter. Here, the emoji was used sarcastically, making the words harsher, and the insult more serious. It was used to mock the person. In all the other examples, the emoji was used to add a lighter, humorous tone to the conversation, often mimicking a smile or a laugh that would occur in real life – a very common function of that emoji. In terms of their position in the message, they were used at the end, except for (1), where it was placed at the beginning, but it doesn’t show any real difference. In some of the examples, the emoji was used as an only reaction to the message, meaning that the person who used it found the words or the situation from the chat very funny – (2), (3), (4), and (5). Those are the examples of the so-called naked emojis. Interestingly, we can see that only in Croatian messages, whereas in English messages the emoji is always placed in the combination with a text.

In the matter of word substitution, the emoji would likely serve as another way of writing ‘hahahaha’, or merely be a digital representation of the person laughing in real life. On that note, it is also curious to think about why we often use the “tears of joy” emoji to show that we find something funny, when we probably wouldn’t be *crying* of laughter in real life. Is it because of the overall lack of expressions and maybe even the tone of the voice which can’t be heard in text messages? Why wouldn’t we just use the “wide smiling face” emoji which doesn’t include tears? I suggest it might be because we want to make sure that the person we are texting is happy with our reaction, and the tears which appear in the “tears of joy” emoji prove them that we are truly and sincerely amused by their words – it is enhancing our message and showing our stance. We can also say that the person who used it as an insult in (5.2) knew that the emoji is strong enough to make the other person feel more hurt. My conclusion is that the “tears of joy” emoji is widely recognized as an effective emoji which can intensify the emotions we want to convey, successfully shaping the tone of the message.

Another emoji which I found numerous examples of was the “red heart” emoji. In both of the languages, that emoji is always used in a positive tone, without any ambiguous meaning. It

covers a wide array of emotions such as love, support, hope and liking, and is often employed many times, to highlight the feelings we want to transmit. As we can see from both the examples in English and in Croatian, it doesn't necessarily always substitute saying 'I love you' as in (27.5) where it is employed to be more concise. It is used to transmit different types of affection, but always in a kind-hearted, positive way. Since the messages are quite similar, we can conclude that the red heart is the international sign of love, and is exchanged by lovers (22.1), parents and their children (27.5), friends (22.4), and even ex-lovers as seen in (27.1). It is often appended at the end of the message, or it stands alone as a substitution of the words "I love you". If it is combined with a text, its role is also to make the message more visually beautiful.

The "thumbs-up" emoji, often used to achieve conciseness and speed up typing, was the third most popular emoji. It is mostly used to acknowledge the delivery of a message, to quickly respond to a proposal, and to show agreement. In both of the languages, it substitutes words such as "OK", "yes" or "deal", and mirrors the real-life gesture. It almost always appears alone, except for (66.3), where it is used merely to reiterate the words, and in (66.4) where it is used with the word "OK", giving the messages a very cold and rejecting tone. Its meaning is the same in every example, so it can be inferred that the speakers of both languages see it as a quick way of showing agreement. However, this emoji is problematic in some parts of the world like the Middle East, West Africa, Russia, and South America – it is the equivalent of a middle finger (Danesi, 31).

Other emojis which I found in smaller numbers on Reddit will be analyzed below.

The "sad face" emoji conveys the exact same emotion – sadness, and is often used alone or at the end of the message – setting its' tone. Most of the examples don't depict real grief but display emotions of some mild sadness or even disappointment – (6), (7), (8). A good example where true sadness is transmitted with the emoji is (9), and a completely different setting can be seen in (9.1) and (9.2) where the chatter uses it in a non-serious situation, merely to joke. Other examples in English depict situations which could make us feel sad but aren't severe. We can say that this expression is used just like in real life – sometimes it is a true emotion, but it can also be seen when we are "acting" or pretending. In messages, however, it normally doesn't substitute any words, but serves as a compensation of a real-life facial expression which is lacking in digital communication.

The “holding back tears” emoji shows a palette of different emotions, but would all of these situations really bring tears to our eyes? Out of both of the languages, the examples in which we could suggest the tears would come from sadness are (14), (14.1), and (14.2). These mostly convey feelings of worry and concern, which we can see from the text. They do not substitute words, but only mirror a real-life reaction. Other examples show less severe situations, in fact, they reveal another way of using the emoji – to show happiness that brings tears to people’s eyes – (11) academic success, and (12) – a very positive reaction because of a compliment. In (10), the emoji is more in a way of pleading – the popularly called “puppy eyes”.

The final facial expression I was able to find in both of the languages is the “worried face” emoji which usually substitutes a frown or a grimace we might make in real life when we disagree or cannot attend an event, similar as in (15), (17), and (18.1). The worried expression allows us to transmit feelings of disappointment or even mild sadness, and appears combined with a text, strengthening the emotion we want to convey because other chatters can’t see our face. It normally wouldn’t substitute a word, but probably body language (16) where we can imagine the chatter shrugging their shoulders in the lack of words.

The “celebration emoji” appears in examples from (28) to (32.1), the last one being the only example I found for English messages. Since every single one of the examples appears in a specific context – wishing a happy birthday or simply a good luck on the exam, we can conclude that the usage is the same in both languages. They didn’t substitute words in any of the included examples, and appeared at the end of the message, sometimes combined with other emojis which would typically be connected to celebrations – the “birthday cake” emoji and the “golden confetti ball” emoji. This emoji is used to make the message more colorful and more attractive to read.

The “folded hands” emoji can be found in examples from (43) to (47.2.). Even though the said emoji might be interpreted even as a *high five*, none of the examples show that version. We can mostly find it implemented at the end of the message, except for when it stood alone in (46) and could mean “please” and in (47.1) where it was placed in the middle of a longer message. Normally, its’ meaning varies from “please” and “hope”, however, it does have a meaning of a “prayer” in (47) which is also the only appearance of it at the beginning of the message, where it does substitute the word “pray”. It’s interesting that, even though the whole message is in English, the speaker was Croatian. We can conclude that the speakers of



both languages use this emoji for similar purposes – to express feelings of hope or to plead. It is usually used at the end of the message, combined with a text.

The “muscles” emoji is used to show support in Croatian messages, but the English chatter uses it because of the topic of the conversation – weight loss. In this case, the emoji is associated with physical exercise, the body, and therefore the muscles, which explains the usage which is completely different than the usage in Croatian messages, where it is used as a reaction and symbol of encouragement. Again, this is another rendition of the polysemy in emojis.

As for their phatic functions i.e. positions in the messages, more than 60 %, - more precisely, 64 were placed at the end of the utterance, two of them acting as substitutions for words, whereas only 4 of them being the utterance openers. 25 of them stand alone, sometimes even multiplied, and 5 of them stand in the middle of the utterance.

## 6. Conclusion

Although there were certain limitations in this research – not finding all the emojis in English examples, it can be concluded that the top three used emojis are the “laughing-crying” emoji, the “red heart” emoji and the “thumbs-up” emoji. I found them quickly and in large numbers, and I could have certainly done the entire research using only those three. The emojis I didn’t find in English examples are the “smiling devil” emoji, the “money bag” emoji, the “four-leaf” clover emoji, the “airplane” emoji, the “peace sign” emoji and the “waving hand emoji”. What the research primarily shows is the Croatian way of using emojis, as I wasn’t able to find the above-mentioned examples in English. They are more specific and, therefore, require to be placed in a more specific context. It could be that some of them aren’t as commonly used in English. On the contrary, we can see that most speakers (of both languages) prefer to place emojis at the end of the message; in lesser cases, they place them alone or in the middle of the utterance; and the least common cases are those that show an emoji placed at the beginning. Emoji as a way to end a message has numerous functions, but in this paper, the most common ones are to mitigate the danger of sounding unfriendly or simply to make the message more colorful and beautiful to read. The “thumbs-up” emoji was interesting because it appeared alone in 8 out of total 11 cases in both languages. In Croatian, however, it was never used in combination with text, and we can conclude that it is one of the most effective emojis when we want to achieve conciseness and save time, but successfully attain our message. While certain emojis bring similar meanings – the heart is always linked

to positive feelings of love and encouragement, the clover being a symbol of good luck and wishes, and the “folded hands” transmitting feelings of hope, others like “worried face” emoji and the “laughing-crying face” emoji can be interpreted differently.

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