Factors Influencing Thai Undergraduate Students' Use of Emojis in Facebook Messenger
Communication
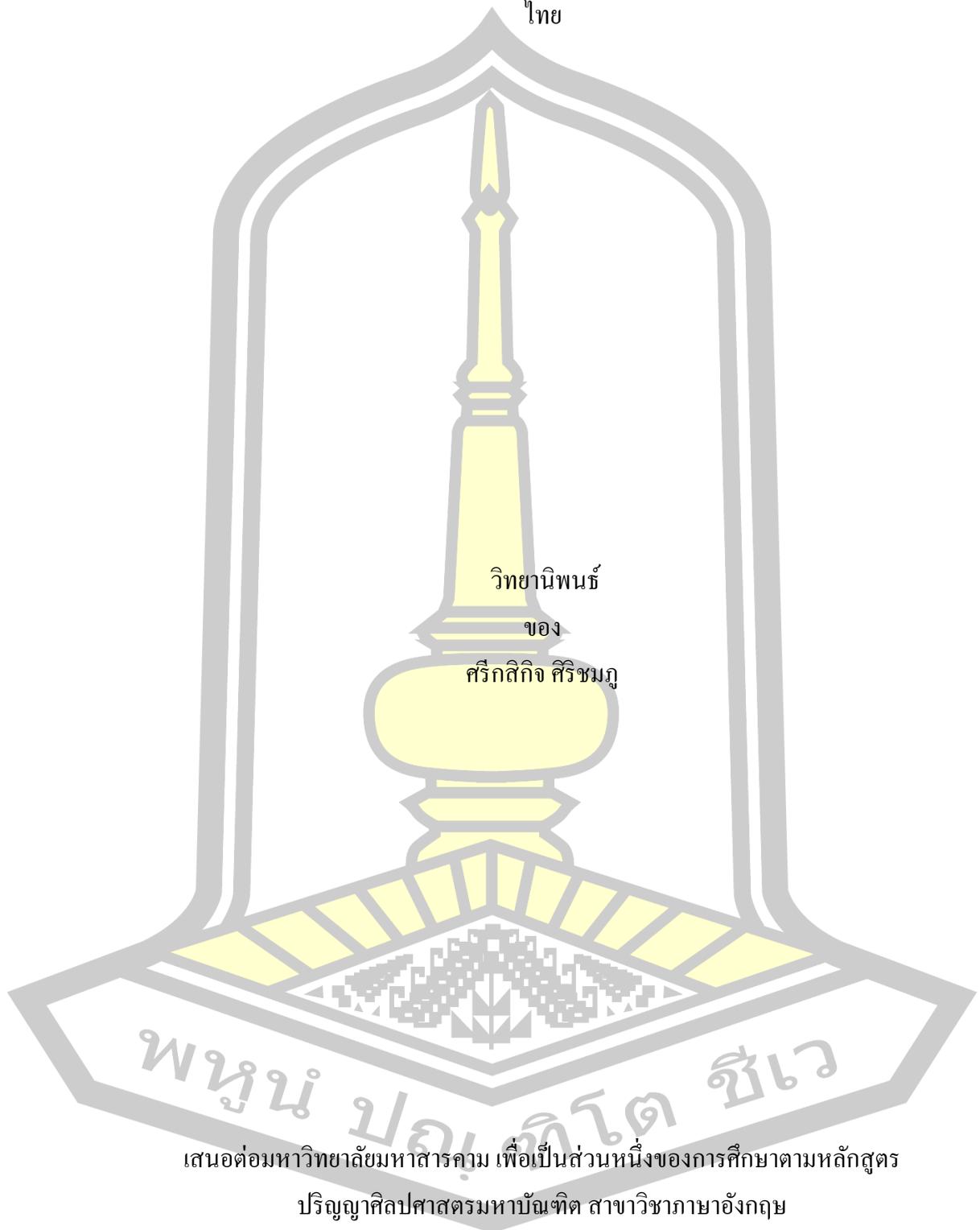
Srikasikit Sirichompoo

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for

degree of Master of Arts in English

November 2024

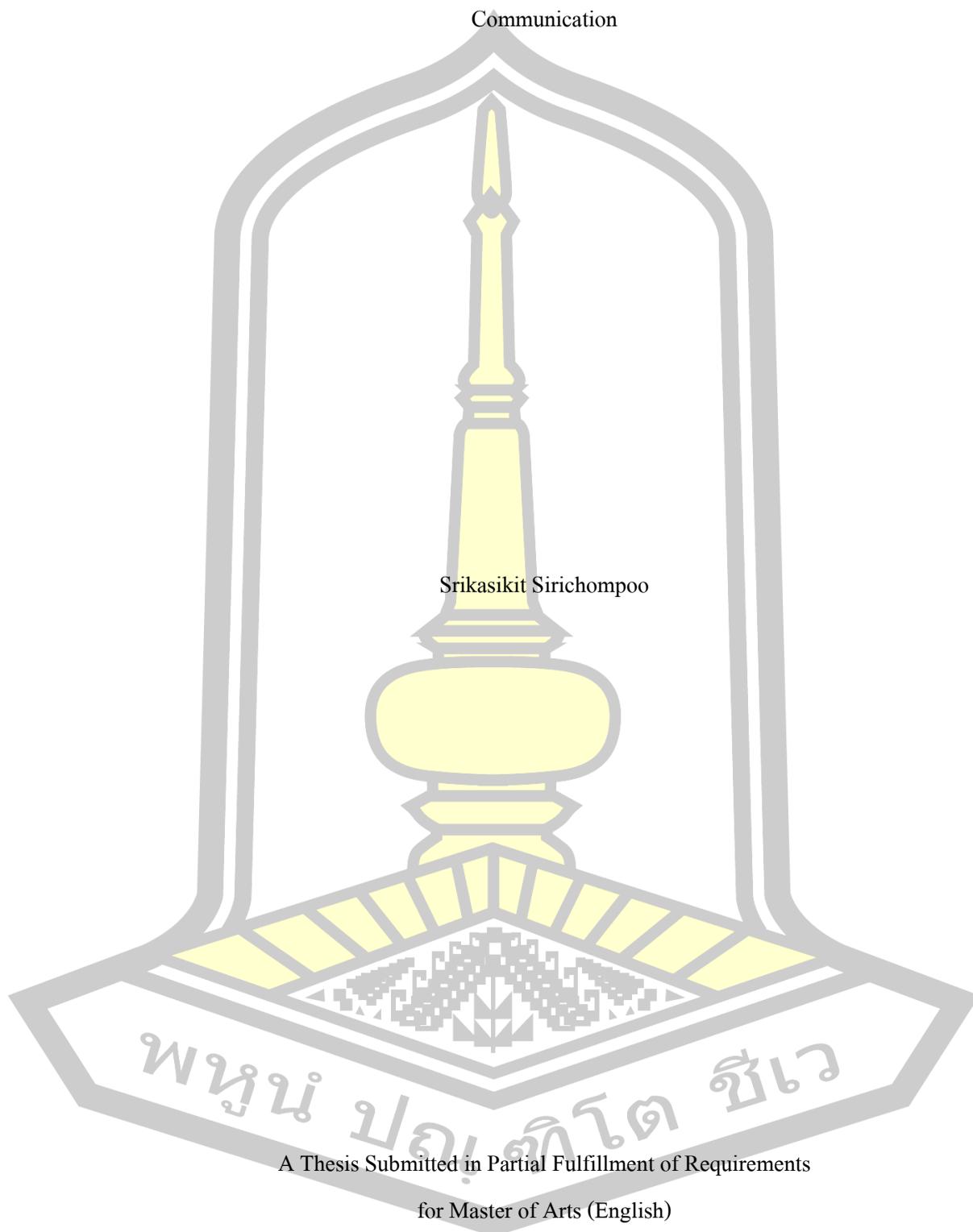ปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อการใช้งานอีโมจิในการสื่อสารผ่าน Facebook Messenger ของนักศึกษาปริญญาตรี
ไทย

วิทยานิพนธ์
ของ
ศรีกสิกิจ ศิริชมภู

Factors Influencing Thai Undergraduate Students' Use of Emojis in Facebook Messenger Communication

Srikasikit Sirichompoo

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

for Master of Arts (English)

November 2024

The examining committee has unanimously approved this Thesis, submitted by Mr. Srikasikit Sirichompoo , as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts English at Mahasarakham University

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the factors influencing undergraduate students' use of emojis in Facebook Messenger communication through a mixed-methods approach, incorporating quantitative from via Google Forms surveys and qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions, and real chat data. Data were collected from 143 students via Google Forms, with semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions, and real chat data analysis involving 5% (10 participants) of the sample. The findings reveal a preference for combining text and emojis to enhance clarity, emotional expression, and engagement. Key themes include the role of emojis in conveying emotions, enhancing communication, and their contextual appropriateness. Challenges such as potential misinterpretation and the need for careful use in formal settings are discussed. Using Multimodal Discourse Analysis, this research highlights emojis' significant impact on the tone and mood of interactions, contributing to a deeper understanding of digital communication among Thai undergraduate students.

Keyword : Emojis, Digital Communication, Facebook Messenger, Undergraduate Students, Multimodal Discourse Analysis

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this opening chapter, the current study begins by exploring the role of emojis in Facebook communication. This chapter establishes the foundation of the research by presenting the key elements included within. It offers the background of the current study, explaining the rationale behind this investigation and the insights it seeks to uncover. The objectives are outlined to specify the intended outcomes, while the research questions frame the specific inquiries guiding the study. Additionally, the scope of the research is defined, clarifying the boundaries and focus areas of the investigation. The significance of the study is discussed, emphasizing its importance and potential contributions to the field. Key terms are also defined to ensure clarity and consistency in understanding. Lastly, a summary concludes the chapter, and summarize its main points.

1.1 Background of the study

In this section, the researcher aims to provide insights into Facebook's background in Thailand, explore the emergence and significance of emojis, discuss the role of emojis in Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), and introduce the theoretical framework that forms the foundation of the current research. These details are crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the context and objectives.

1.1.1 Facebook background (use) in Thailand

Drawing from the researcher's firsthand experience and active engagement with Facebook, the researcher gained insights into communication patterns within the Facebook platform, thus allowing for a deeper understanding of its popularity and the evolving landscape of online communication. This firsthand perspective provides valuable context to assess the current popularity of Facebook usage. It therefore resulted in researcher searching for information about Facebook background. In the year 2022, Thailand witnessed an extraordinary surge in Facebook membership, with approximately 51.87 million individuals joining the platform. This surge emphatically underscored Facebook's extensive popularity, showcasing the profound affinity

people held for this social media giant. While a minor decline in user count is foreseen by 2026 (Degenhard, 2023), it is expected to stabilize at around 47.62 million users. In the global context, nearly three billion individuals were actively engaged with Facebook on a monthly basis by the close of 2022. Remarkably, in Thailand, almost the entire population of internet users, approximately 57 million people, actively participated on Facebook. This user base primarily consisted of young adults aged 18 to 34, who displayed a strong inclination toward Facebook's features. Both male and female demographics extensively utilize the platform for diverse purposes, including viewing trending images, enjoying entertaining videos, staying updated with news, consuming celebrity-related content, and engaging in communication (Degenhard, 2023). Facebook's prevalence remained evident in Thailand, securing the country's eighth position in global Facebook usage rankings for 2023, following India, the United States, Indonesia, Brazil, Mexico, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Thailand. This ranking accounted for 48.1 percent of the population (Degenhard, 2023). One of Facebook's key features that resonated with users was the ability to follow others and share personal stories (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). This way of using Facebook was especially helpful for undergraduate students who wanted to keep up with social trends and talk with friends on online platforms like Facebook (Madden, 2013).

1.1.2 The Emergence and Significance of Emojis

From one of the researcher's point of view, communication and the exchange of experiences or emotions have always been integral to human interaction. With the rapid advancement of technology, communication, and emotional expression have evolved significantly. This evolution has given rise to a unique feature enabling the expression of emotions, feelings, sounds, and more "Emojis." Emojis made their debut in the 1990s in Japan and continue to evolve to this day. Hasyim (2019) explained that "emoji" is "picture" and "letter" in Japanese. Using emojis enhances the effectiveness of conversational messages and underscores their significance. An alternative perspective by Seargeant (2019) suggests that emojis, when read, serve as visual cues similar to common symbol typefaces representing emotions or sentiments. The researcher assume that Emojis were developed to compensate for the limitations of written communication in conveying tone of voice, expression, gesture, and posture. They bridge the gap between face-to-face communication and written text, aiding readers in

understanding the author's intended message through images of various facial emotions. This surge in emoji usage aligns with the increasing number of internet users, particularly on social media platforms. As mentioned earlier, emojis convey emotions, feelings, or sounds to clarify messages. However, they are not entirely literal and possess inherent meanings. Thus, emojis become an integral part of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA).

1.1.3 Theoretical Framework: Emojis in Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA)

Multimodal Discourse Analysis, a term coined by Kress and van Leeuwen in 1996, extends the study of language to incorporate various communication modes, including visuals, scientific symbolism, gestures, actions, music, and sound (Kress, 2002). In this context, emojis qualify as subjects of MDA studies as they represent visual images functioning as a form of visual text. Emojis are considered part of the array of visual symbols and cues that contribute to the overall meaning of communication. This analytical lens facilitates a holistic exploration of emoji usage within Facebook Messenger interactions among the targeted linguistically oriented cohort.

1.1.4 Theoretical Framework: Conversational Analysis (CA)

The theoretical framework of the current study is rooted in Conversational Analysis (CA), a sociological approach developed by Sacks (1974). CA is focused on understanding the intricate dynamics of social interaction and language use within conversational contexts. By applying CA, the current study aims to bring to light the underlying patterns, structures, and social norms governing communication within these interactions. This alignment corresponds with the research's broader objective of comprehensively exploring the factors influencing emoji usage in Facebook Messenger communication among the selected group of undergraduate students.

Methodology: Discourse Completion Task (DCT): To apply the principles of CA, the current study utilizes the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) (Cyluk, 2013) as a methodological tool. The DCT involves presenting participants with hypothetical scenarios or prompts, encouraging them to respond as they would in actual conversations (Nurani, 2009). This methodology captures participants' natural responses and uncovers how emojis are employed across various conversational contexts (see more in Chapter 2)

As demonstrated in the preceding section, the significance of emojis in communication has been substantiated. However, it is important to acknowledge that the area of digital communication encompasses various facets. According to Smutny and Schreiberova (2020), they have focused on educational chatbots within Facebook Messenger, it is noteworthy that there are diverse elements to explore. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, within the Thai context, despite the widespread use of Facebook, there is a noticeable dearth of in-depth research that combines the power of emojis with educational chatbots, particularly on this subject. Hence, this investigation aims to bridge this gap by expanding the scope of inquiry. To address this issue, the forthcoming section outlines the study's objectives. The current study seeks to not only investigate the prevalence of different forms of emoji usage, including text only, emojis only, or the combination of text and emojis but also examines the factors of prevalent forms of using emojis.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

In the current study, the researcher has two main goals:

1.2.1 To investigate students' prevalence of elements of Emojis.

1.2.2 To identify factors influencing the prevalence.

1.3 Research Questions

In the current study, the researcher aims to understand how undergraduate students in Thailand use Facebook Messenger to communicate. To do this, the researcher has two main questions:

1.3.1 What are the prevalent forms of Facebook Messenger communication used by undergraduate students in Thailand?

1.3.2 What are the key factors influencing undergraduate students' choices of Facebook Messenger communication, particularly in relation to their preference for using text-only, emoji-only, or a combination of emoji and text?

Following the clear establishment of the research questions presented above, the current study endeavor will focus on defining the scope of the research, with a specific focus on the utilization of purposive sampling.

1.4 Scope of the study

To accomplish the objectives of the current study, the scope involves the recruitment of a purposive representative sample of 300 undergraduate students (first year to fourth years English major student from a higher education institution in northeastern Thailand, specifically focusing on those majoring in English and those studying Linguistics within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

The choice to focus on this institution and its students stems from the profound cultural significance and ubiquity of Facebook within the Thai digital landscape. Thailand boasts an extensive and enduring relationship with Facebook, which has become deeply interwoven into the social fabric of the nation. With approximately 47 million users as of January 2022, Facebook and the Internet enjoys a remarkable prevalence and influence, transcending personal communication to encompass various facets of daily life, including business activities, political engagement, and academic interactions (Palasri and Wenzel, 2013). Furthermore, Thailand ranks among the leading nations in terms of Facebook usage, with a substantial 48.1% of the population actively utilizing the platform (Degenhard, 2023).

The current study is scheduled to take place from January 9th to January 20th, 2024. The period is chosen because it coincides with the start of the semester, providing participants with the opportunity to participate at their convenience.

1.5 Significance of the study

The current research on "Factors Influencing Thai Undergraduate Students' Use of Emojis in Facebook Messenger Communication" holds paramount significance in various dimensions:

1.5.1 Academic Contribution: The current study contributes to the academic field by shedding light on a relatively unexplored area emoji usage patterns among undergraduate students in Thailand within the context of Facebook Messenger. It expands the existing body of knowledge in the domains of linguistics, digital communication, and sociolinguistics, providing valuable insights into the dynamic interplay between visual symbols and written language in online communication.

1.5.2 Enhancing Communication Strategies: By unraveling the factors that influence emoji usage, the current research will offer practical insights for educators, communication professionals, and policymakers. It will enable the development of more effective communication strategies tailored to the preferences and needs of young individuals, fostering improved engagement and understanding in digital interactions.

1.5.3 Insights for Digital Culture and Media Studies: The current research findings will be of interest to scholars and practitioners in the fields of digital culture and media studies. It offers a nuanced understanding of how technology shapes communication practices and social interactions. This knowledge can inform discussions and strategies related to the influence of digital platforms on contemporary society.

1.5.4 Fostering Positive Social Interactions: As emojis play a pivotal role in conveying emotions and intentions in online conversations, the current study's insights may help enhance the quality of social interactions in various contexts. Understanding how emojis contribute to meaning-making can lead to more positive and effective online communication.

1.5.5 Contextual Understanding: Recognizing the context-specific nature of emoji usage among undergraduate students in Thailand, the current research provides insights that acknowledge cultural and linguistic factors. This context awareness ensures that the findings are relevant and applicable within the specific social and cultural milieu.

1.5.6 Implications for Digital Emoji Design: Additionally, the current study holds significance for the field of digital emoji design. The findings can serve as a valuable resource for designers and developers looking to create emojis that resonate with the prevalence preferences of undergraduate students and teenagers, thus contributing to the evolution of digital communication tools.

In conclusion, the current study on emoji usage in Facebook Messenger communication among undergraduate students in Thailand holds broad significance, encompassing academic, practical, and societal dimensions. It offers a comprehensive exploration of a contemporary communication phenomenon and its implications, with the potential to shape future communication strategies and foster positive digital interactions. It is important to note that the current research does not solely center on the English language but instead takes a broader

perspective by focusing on linguistics, acknowledging the diverse linguistic landscape in digital communication.

When the researcher initially presented the significance of the current study, the researcher highlighted these key areas as the primary contributions. However, after completing the research discovered that its impact is even more profound and practical, particularly as detailed in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.

Following a thorough understanding of the significance of the current study, scholarly pursuit will shift its focus toward the precise definition of key terms and concepts integral to the current research. This critical phase entails a meticulous exploration and clarification of the definition of key terms used within the study.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

In the quest to understand the intricate world of Facebook Messenger communication among undergraduate students in Thailand, it is essential to establish a clear understanding of the key terms used in the current study. This section clarifies the Definition of Key Terms central to the investigation. These definitions lay the groundwork for exploring the various forms of communication, the factors guiding choices, and the overall significance of the current research.

1.6.1 Facebook Messengers Communication: In the context of the current study, communication refers to the intricate process of conveying thoughts, emotions, and information among Thai undergraduate students through digital platforms, such as Facebook Messenger. Facebook Messenger pertains to the messaging platform integrated within the Facebook social networking website, serving as the specific context where Thai undergraduate students engage in real-time textual and visual communication. This comprehensive approach to communication encompasses the exchange of written language, emojis, and visual cues, contributing to the formation of meaningful connections and understanding

1.6.2 Discourse Completion Task (DCT): The Discourse Completion Task, as utilized in the current study, involves presenting hypothetical scenarios related to Facebook Messenger interactions to participants. This method serves as a means to elicit responses that mirror real-world conversations, allowing researchers to examine the nuanced ways in which Thai undergraduate students employ emojis and text in their communication.

1.6.3 Emoji only communication: In this specific current research, emoji-only communication pertains to the predominant use of emojis or emoticons as the primary mode of expression in messages exchanged among Thai undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger. It signifies instances where visual symbols convey emotions, sentiments, and ideas with minimal reliance on written language.

1.6.4 Emoji & Text communication: Emoji & Text communication, within the scope of the current study, refers to the deliberate combination of emojis and written language in messages exchanged among Thai undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger. This communication mode leverages emojis as complementary elements to written text, enhancing emotional nuances and conveying intentions more effectively.

1.6.5 Emojis: Emojis, within the context of this research, are graphical representations utilized by Thai undergraduate students in digital communication to convey emotions, reactions, and concepts. These visual symbols play a pivotal role in enhancing the expressive aspect of messages exchanged on Facebook Messenger, allowing for succinct yet impactful communication.

Figure 1 A comprehensive collection of emojis, including their descriptions, can be found on Emojipedia at https://emojipedia.org/ (Emojipedia, n.d.).

1.6.6 Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA): Multimodal Discourse Analysis, within the parameters of the current study, refers to the analytical approach employed to examine the integration of various communication modes, such as text and emojis, among Thai undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger. It entails understanding how these modes interact to create meaning and convey messages within a specific digital context.

1.6.7 Text-only communication: Text-only communication, as examined in the current study, involves the utilization of written language exclusively in messages exchanged among Thai undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger. It excludes the incorporation of emojis or visual cues, focusing solely on the linguistic aspect of communication.

1.6.8 Thematic Analysis: Thematic Analysis, within the scope of the current research, is a qualitative methodology employed to identify recurring themes, patterns, and meanings within open-ended responses provided by Thai undergraduate students. This method aids in uncovering the underlying motivations, preferences, and experiences related to emoji usage on Facebook Messenger.

1.7 Chapter Summary

In Chapter 1, the researcher embarks on a journey into the digital communication of Facebook Messenger among undergraduate students in Thailand. The researcher commences by highlighting the massive surge in Facebook's popularity within the country, especially among the young (undergraduate student), underlining its significant role as a platform for communication, and social interaction. The introduction of emojis takes center stage as it explores their evolution and important role in conveying emotions and meanings in online conversations. In chapter 2, the researcher will focus on related studies to provide a broader perspective and information on the use of emojis in the current research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical frameworks guiding the current study, supported by a thorough review of previous research on emoji usage in Facebook messaging. The objective is to build a solid understanding to anchor the current investigation. The reviewed literature explores various facets of emoji communication, emphasizing its role and importance across different cultural and educational settings. This chapter is structured into seven sections: 2.1 Related Approaches for the Study of Emojis in Facebook Messenger Communication, 2.2 Emojis: Definition, Usefulness, Change in Human Communication, 2.3 Conversational Analysis (CA), 2.4 Related Studies each exploring different aspects of the subject, and 2.5 Chapter Summary. Through this arrangement, the chapter aims to blend global insights with a local focus, particularly on emoji usage among undergraduate students in Thailand, enhancing the efforts to understand the contemporary digital communication landscape.

2.1 Related Approaches for the Study of Emojis in Facebook Messenger Communication

In this section, the researcher has a brief introduction to various linguistic approaches, focusing on Discourse Analysis (DA), Semiotics, and Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) in the context of emoji communication. DA explores beyond linguistic forms to examine socio-psychological dimensions of communication (Gill, 2000). Semiotics investigates how signs and symbols across different modes contribute to meaning-making (Sebeok, 2001). Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) is an analytical framework used to study communication that goes beyond traditional textual analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), and also explores how language, visuals, and gestures interact to create meaning. This framework offers a solid foundation for analyzing the complex roles of emojis in multimodal communication, paving the way for an in-depth examination of emojis as crucial semiotic resources in the following discourse.

2.1.1 Discourse analysis (DA)

Discourse analysis (DA) is a field of study that examines spoken, written, or sign language usage (Gill, 2000). It aims to reveal socio-psychological aspects of communication, focusing on the coherent phrase sequences of sentences, propositions, speech, or turns-at-talk that define the objects of discourse analysis (discourse, writing, conversation, communicative event). Unlike traditional linguistics, discourse analysts explore language use "beyond the sentence boundary," preferring to analyze "naturally occurring" language usage rather than made-up instances. Discourse analysis is strongly tied to linguistics (Cheung et al., 2011), but its focus on communication and socio-psychological aspects distinguishes it from text linguistics, which primarily focuses on text structure. Thus, discourse analysis provides a valuable framework for studying communication in various contexts.

With the increasing prevalence of symbols, images, colors, and gestures in communication, language usage has become more complex than ever. To address this issue, scholars have developed a new field of study called Semiotics. Semiotics focuses on the various modes of communication and how they interact to create meaning (Harrison, 2003).

2.1.2 Semiotics

Semiotics, often referred to as "semiology (Eco, 1979)," is the attract study of signs and symbols and their profound role in conveying meaning. The study of signs as versatile tools they employ in our everyday communication. The researcher was interested because they can take the form of words, images, hand gestures, or anything that carries a message. Semiotics focus deeply into these signs, seeking to unravel how they represent not just words or visuals, but also the complex tapestry of ideas, thoughts, and even cultural beliefs (Chandler, 1994). For instance, consider a stop sign on the road; it is more than just a red shape color, it is a potent symbol with a universal meaning: "stop". Semiotics explores these intriguing symbols and their multifaceted usage, spanning diverse area such as language, culture, and interpersonal communication. It is like unlocking the hidden language beneath everything we encounter, say, and do in our world (Keane, 2018).

Semiotics and Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) share a close relationship (O'Halloran, 2011), with semiotics serving as the key to unraveling the layers of meaning within MDA. Semiotics acts as both a theoretical foundation and a practical tool for understanding how signs and symbols collaborate across various modes to shape the overall meaning in a multimodal text discourse (Hasan, 2005). MDA researchers use semiotics to navigate the complex world of signs, revealing hidden meanings and uncovering the intricate dynamics among different modes. Whether analyzing multimedia advertisements, digital interfaces, or other forms of communication, the synergy between semiotics and MDA enables scholars to explore the depth of meaning in the increasingly multimodal world (Kusters et al., 2017). In this Cross-functional fusion, semiotics not only aligns with Multimodal Discourse Analysis but also guides it, shedding light on the semiotic aspects of our contemporary communicative landscape (O'Halloran, 2011).

2.1.3 Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA)

Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) by Kress and van Leeuwen aims to understand how different modes of communication, including language, images, and gestures, work together to create meaning in various contexts. This approach recognizes that communication is not limited to linguistic forms but is also influenced by other modalities (O'Halloran, 2011). By analyzing different modes of communication, MDA provides a more comprehensive understanding of communication in various contexts. From the researcher's point of view, this approach has become increasingly important in today's world, where communication often involves multiple modes of expression.

Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) is also referred to as Multimodality, Multimodal Analysis, Semiotics, and Multimodal Studies. When analyzing text that includes visuals, MDA is an appropriate approach to studying the combination of linguistic and non-linguistic resources (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2002). It expands the study of language to include additional resources such as visuals, scientific symbolism, gesture, action, music, and sound. MDA has gained significant interest in the past two decades, with scholars using terms such as "semiotic resources", "modes", and "modalities" to describe language and other resources that combine to generate meaning in "multimodal" or "multi-semiotic phenomena" (O'Halloran, 2011).

MDA, rooted in the semiotic tradition, offers a comprehensive lens through which to examine the intricate interplay of various modes of communication. While semiotics focuses on the study of signs and symbols, MDA takes a step further by emphasizing the importance of "mode" in communication, encompassing not only linguistic elements but also visual, gestural, and spatial dimensions. From the researcher's point of view, employing MDA as a strong analytical tool to explore how individuals convey meaning and emotions through three distinct modes: Emoji-only, Text-only, and the Combination of Text and Emojis. By adopting this multimodal perspective, the researcher aims to uncover the prevalence and nuances of emoji usage within the broader context of digital communication among Thai undergraduate students. This approach allows the researcher to decipher the complex semiotic landscape of emoji-mediated interactions, shedding light on how different modes intersect and shape meaning in contemporary communication

All in all, this section has presented related approaches for the current study of emojis in Facebook Messenger communication. The next section will provide information about emojis and their relation to the current study.

2.2 Emojis: Definition, Usefulness, Change in Human Communication

In this section, the researcher explores the world of emojis, focusing on their definition, usefulness, and their profound impact on human communication. Emojis, visual symbols that convey emotions and meanings, have become an essential part of digital conversations. The researcher examines how emojis serve various functions, including emotional expression, conciseness, and providing context, transcending language barriers to convey universal understanding. Emojis have not only changed how people communicate, but have also altered the dynamics of human interaction, blurring the lines between traditional text-based communication and visual symbolism.

Figure 2 A comprehensive collection of emojis, including their descriptions

can be found on Emojipedia at https://emojipedia.org/ (Emojipedia, n.d.).

2.2.1 Definition of Emojis

From the experience of the researcher, the advent of digital communication has brought about a significant change in human interaction, with communication being a critical component of this interaction (Cappallo, 2018). The researcher has observed that Emojis have become a popular means of communication as they enable people to quickly understand the emotions represented by sounds, symbols, and pictures.

People can observe that emojis are visual representations that function as a form of shorthand in digital conversations. They consist of various images, symbols, and icons, often depicting facial expressions, objects, animals, and actions. Seargeant (2019) describes emojis as a pictorial language that uses images to represent information and emotion. In fact, according to a study by Algharabali and A. Taqi (2018), emojis have become an increasingly important part of digital communication and are used to add emphasis, convey tone, and convey meaning concisely. Algharabali and A. Taqi (2018) further argue that emojis are a form of language in their own right. Thus, emojis have become essential for effective communication in today's digital world.

2.2.2 Usefulness of Emojis

In today's digital world, the researcher has observed that symbols such as emojis are becoming increasingly popular to convey information about actions, things, places, weather, and animals through various online channels, including social media platforms like Facebook. While emojis are pictures, they hold meaning in various ways. Seargeant (2019) found that emojis are a new visual communication that can convey complex meanings and emotions.

Emotional Expression: Emojis allow individuals to express their emotions more vividly in text-based conversations. For example, a smiling face emoji can indicate happiness or agreement, while a crying face emoji can convey sadness or empathy (Kaye et al., 2017).

Universal Understanding: Emojis transcend language barriers, making them universally understood symbols of emotion and meaning. Furthermore, emojis come in different shapes, colors, and expressive gestures, which can lead to various connotations. Users often use emojis to express different emotions during conversations with more refined tastes (Dechakaneewong, 2022).

Although emojis are visual and not text-based, they can convey the same, if not more, meaning than text. The current study of emojis falls within the same scope as MDA. However, some people still believe that emojis have no meaning or are merely a form of decoration. Cramer, De Juan, and Tetreault (2016) also found that emojis can be used with other linguistic elements to generate meaning and have their own grammar and usage rules.

2.2.3 Change in Human Communication

Emojis have not only revolutionized how individuals communicate, but have also changed the new human communication (Alshenqeeti, 2016). Their widespread use has prompted shifts in language and expression, blurring the lines between traditional text-based communication and visual symbolism. This change in communication is evident across various platforms, from personal messaging to professional emails and social media interactions. Emojis have become an integral part of modern conversations, transcending age, culture, and language.

The influence of emojis on human communication has sparked significant interest and research. The researcher is examining the intricacies of emoji usage, including how people from various backgrounds interpret and use these symbols in various contexts. The rise of emojis

has prompted a more profound examination of non-verbal communication in digital interactions, highlighting the significance of visual cues and emotional expression in an environment primarily driven by text.

In summary, emojis have not only redefined how emotions and information are conveyed in the digital age, but have also triggered a profound transformation in the way people communicate, bridging gaps and enriching the expressive possibilities of language. In Section 2.3 Conversational analysis (CA) below, this vital tool for dissecting digital dialogues, including those enriched with emojis. CA offers a systematic approach to deciphering the intricacies of language and non-verbal cues in modern communication. Through CA, the researcher aims to uncover how emojis influence and shape digital interactions, shedding light on this evolving language of expression in the digital age.

2.3 Conversational analysis (CA)

Conversational analysis (CA) by Schegloff (1978) is a multidisciplinary field, particularly within linguistics, that investigates the intricate dynamics of social interactions and conversations. By examining authentic dialogues, CA aims to uncover the underlying norms and consistent practices governing how people engage in social interaction. Schegloff (1978) highlights patterns such as turn-taking, repair, action formulation, ascription, and action sequencing, which are analyzed both across multiple cases and within specific interactions. A key tool employed in this analysis is the Discourse Completion Task (DCT), which, as a practical method of CA, gathers spontaneous and authentic interaction data from participants (Ogiermann, 2018). Through carefully designed questionnaires, the DCT enables researchers to explore how people integrate emojis into their conversations, shedding light on the prevalent forms of usage and the factors that influence these communication choices. Given its role within CA, the DCT is invaluable for studying the subtleties of digital communication, particularly in understanding how emojis function in everyday messaging.

A Discourse-Completion Task (DCT) is a valuable method for eliciting specific speech acts in the fields of linguistics and pragmatics (Labben, 2022). As explained by Cyluk (2013), a DCT typically consists of a one-sided role play that contains a situational and question prompt, which a participant could read to elicit the responses of another participant. There are five types

of DCT, including Ranking, the Filling in the Blank, Open-ended, Multiple Choices, and the fifth type, which is similar to the open item-verbal response format but includes detailed situational background. In the final part of the research study, the researcher will prepare another example from another paper to further illustrate the use and effectiveness of DCTs in eliciting specific speech acts.

A: Ranking for instance, involves participants assigning relative values or preferences to a set of options. In this example, respondents were randomly assigned to different response scales for the Net-Promoter question, illustrating the range of responses:

"*Respondents were randomly assigned to four different response scales for the Net-Promoter question: the original 11-point Net-Promoter scale ('not at all likely' at the lowest value, 'neutral' at the middle point, 'extremely likely' at the highest value), a 7- point scale with labels identical to the original 11-point scale, a 7-point scale with fulllabels ('not at all likely', 'slightly likely', 'somewhat likely', 'likely', 'very likely', 'remarkably likely', 'extremely likely'), and a 5-point scale with full-labels on all scale 18 points ('not at all likely', 'slightly likely', 'moderately likely', 'very likely', 'extremely likely'). The question wording matched the recommended wording for the Net-Promoter score: 'How likely is it that you would recommend each of the following companies to a friend or colleague?' Each scale was standardized to range from 0 to 1, to allow comparability*" (Schneider, 2008)

(For the current research, see more Chapter 3)

B: Filling in the Blank, requires in participants to complete a sentence or phrase, providing insight into their thought processes. In one study, participants were presented with a sentence like "She _____ her head", and their responses shed light on their linguistic choices:

"*She_____ her head) as the question sentence, and the word which fills in the blank as the answer.* (Maharaj, 2017)

(For the current research, see more Chapter 3)

C: Open-ended DCTs, such as "In According to your opinion, what is the most important, most critical problem the internet is facing today?" encourage participants to offer unstructured, narrative responses.

According to your opinion, what is the most important, most critical problem the internet is facing today? (Reja, 2003)

(For the current research, see more Chapter 3)

D: Multiple Choices DCTs present in respondents with a set of options, as seen in the physics problem example, to gauge their problem-solving abilities and preferences.

"Two metal balls are the same size, but one weighs twice as much as the other. The balls are dropped from the top of a two-story building at the same instant of time. The time it takes for the balls to reach the ground below will be:

(A) about half as long for the heavier ball.

(B) about half as long for the lighter ball.

(C) about the same time for both balls.

(D) considerably less for the heavier ball, but not necessarily half as long.

(E) considerably less for the lighter ball, but not necessarily half as long"

(Dufresne, 2002)

(For the current research, see more in Chapter 3)

Although Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) have been widely used in various research areas, their application in studies focused on emojis has received limited attention. Consequently, this present research introduces DCT as an innovative and pioneering tool for investigating the prevalence and factors influencing emoji usage patterns in social communication. This approach enables researchers to collect responses from participants that accurately reflect their real-world use of emojis in naturalistic communication, providing valuable insights into the factors and underlying principles shaping emoji usage in social communication.

In summary, DCTs offer a valuable research method for studying the use of emojis in social communication, allowing the researcher to elicit realistic responses and gain deeper insights into the research questions.

2.4 Related Studies

The widespread utilization of Facebook and emojis, limited research has been conducted specifically focusing on their usage patterns in Thailand, particularly among undergraduate students. The current study aims to address this gap by investigating the utilization of emojis within the Facebook platform, specifically among undergraduate students in Thailand. The current study concentrates on comprehending the semantic significance of messages, the linguistic roles fulfilled by emojis, and the influencing factors guiding their application. Through the current research endeavor, the intention is to provide insights that enhance the understanding and effective employment of emojis for communication within the Thai context.

Interestingly, a correlated study titled "The Linguistic Functions of Emojis in Facebook Interactions Among Undergraduate Students at Jadara University in Jordan" has explored the usage of emojis within the undergraduate community of a distinct cultural milieu (Alshboul & Rababah, 2021). While this research has contributed to an understanding of the linguistic functions and communicative roles of emojis, its scope remains centered on the Jordanian context. The current study seeks to expand the inquiry by investigating the usage dynamics of emojis on the Facebook platform, with specific emphasis on the context of Thai undergraduate students.

Prior research has explored the utilization of emojis in various communication contexts, shedding light on their significance and functions among different populations. Notably, the study titled "Taming the Sting: The Use of Evaluative Emojis by College Students in Kuwait" (Algharabali & Taqi, 2018) focused on the reasons and methods behind college students' use of emojis in academic settings at the College of Basic Education in Kuwait. This investigation, while offering valuable insights into the role of emojis, was centered on a specific cultural and educational context. However, as messaging through smartphones continues to be a prevalent mode of communication, it becomes imperative to examine how emojis are employed by college students in Thailand, thereby addressing a notable gap in the existing literature. The current study

seeks to bridge this gap by exploring the specific nuances and patterns of emoji usage among Thai undergraduate students in academic-related exchanges, contributing to a deeper understanding of this phenomenon within a distinct cultural and educational milieu.

A relevant study titled "Sender-Intended Functions of Emojis in US Messaging" (Cramer et al., 2016) has examined the motivations behind using emojis in mobile messaging within the context of the United States. This investigation delved into the intended meanings and functions of emojis, revealing their multifaceted roles, such as conveying emotions, adjusting tone, enhancing message engagement, managing conversations, and nurturing relationships. However, while this study provided valuable insights into the American mobile messaging landscape, it is essential to consider the unique sociocultural dynamics and communication patterns that prevail in Thailand. The current study, situated in Thailand, aims to address this gap by focusing on Thai undergraduate students and their specific motivations and practices regarding emoji usage in mobile messaging. By exploring the sender-intended functions of emojis in the Thai messaging context, the current research endeavors to contribute a localized perspective to the broader understanding of emoji communication.

There is another study called "Facebook Sentiment: Reactions and Emojis" that highlights the frequent use of emojis in social media (Tian et al., 2017). While this study explored the interplay of emojis and linguistic texts, its focus extends to a broader context, encompassing public media pages. In contrast, the researcher seeks to narrow the focus to a specific and distinct demographic – Thai undergraduate students. What makes the current study even more specialized is that the researcher zooms in on a specific platform – Facebook. The researcher aims to understand how emojis are used by Thai undergraduate students on this particular platform, especially on Facebook Messenger. By examining the way emojis are used within the context of Facebook Messenger communication among this specific group, the study aims to uncover nuances and insights that may differ from findings in broader studies. The researcher recognizes the potential for emojis and linguistic texts to modify each other's meaning, and endeavors to investigate how these dynamics play out within the Thai undergraduate community on Facebook

Employing a mixed-methods approach, the current study combined qualitative and quantitative methods to gain comprehensive insights into the prevalence forms and factors influencing emoji usage patterns among Thai undergraduate students. Ethical considerations will

guide the research process, ensuring participant confidentiality and informed consent. Ultimately, this investigation strives to illuminate the pivotal role emojis play in the Facebook Messenger communication of Thai undergraduate students. Through this investigation, the researcher aspires to shed light on the significant role emojis play in undergraduate students' Facebook Messenger communication in Thailand and provide valuable insights that can optimize emoji usage for effective communication in the digital age.

In the area of Facebook and emoji usage, there exists a noticeable gap in research, specifically pertaining to the patterns of emoji utilization among undergraduate students in Thailand. The current study sets out to bridge this gap by delving into the world of emojis on the Facebook platform, with focus on Thai undergraduate students. It aims to unravel the semantic intricacies of messages, the linguistic roles assumed by emojis, and the factors shaping their deployment. The current study aspires to shed light on the significant role emojis play in undergraduate students' Facebook Messenger communication in Thailand and provide valuable insights that can optimize emoji usage for effective communication in the digital age.

After providing an overview of the previous research in the preceding section, the following section will present a comparative analysis, highlighting both the commonalities and distinctions between each research study.

2.4.1 Applying Related Studies to the Current Research

In this section, the researcher explores how the findings and methodologies of these related studies are directly applicable to the current research. By identifying commonalities and shared research interests with four notable papers, namely, "The Linguistic Functions of Emojis in Facebook Interactions", "Taming the Sting: The Use of Evaluative Emojis by College Students", "Sender-Intended Functions of Emojis in US Messaging", and "Facebook Sentiment: Reactions and Emojis", the researcher highlights how the current study leverages and aligns with previous research efforts. This alignment strengthens the foundation and underscores the commitment to providing comprehensive insights into emoji usage within the unique context of Thai undergraduate students' Facebook Messenger communication.

Circle 1: Paper 1 ("The Linguistic Functions of Emojis in Facebook Interactions")

Circle 2: Paper 2 ("Taming the Sting: The Use of Evaluative Emojis by College Students")

Circle 3: Paper 3 ("Sender-Intended Functions of Emojis in US Messaging")

Circle 4: Paper 4 ("Facebook Sentiment: Reactions and Emojis")

2.4.1.1 Mixed methods

In this chapter, the researcher explores the research methodology used in the current study, which aligns with four other research papers: "The Linguistic Functions of Emojis in Facebook Interactions", "Taming the Sting: The Use of Evaluative Emojis by College Students", "Sender-Intended Functions of Emojis in US Messaging", and "Facebook Sentiment: Reactions and Emojis". What connects with the current study to these papers is the use of a mixed-methods research approach. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods is common in social sciences and linguistics, offering deeper insights into complex topics. The current study, like the others, benefits from this approach. The researcher uses surveys, and semi-structured interviews to understand how Thai undergraduate students use emojis in Facebook Messenger communication. This shared research methodology allows the current study to delve into the prevalence forms and factors influencing emoji usage patterns comprehensively. Surveys provide quantitative data, and semi-structured interviews offer qualitative insights. This mixed methods approach helps the researcher uncover the intricate world of emoji use among Thai undergraduates, answering both the "what is the prevalent forms" and "factors" behind their emoji choices. Recognizing this alignment in research methods emphasizes our commitment to rigorous and multifaceted research, reinforcing the foundation of the current study.
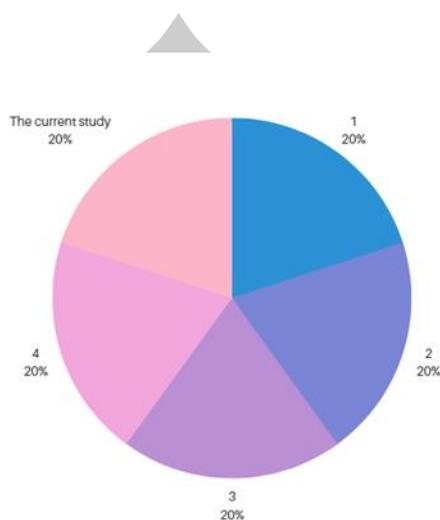
Mixed methods:

Figure 3 Applying Related Studies to the current research, Mixed Methods

As shown in Figure 3, this chapter outlines the current research methodology, emphasizing the alignment with four notable papers in the domain of mixed methods research. By sharing this common research ground, the researcher strived to contribute valuable insights to the broader discourse on emoji usage, building upon the foundations laid by these previous studies.

2.4.1.2 Emojis as a Research Focus

In this section, the researcher highlights the shared research focus that connects the current study with four other referenced papers. All these scholarly works revolve around the usage and significance of emojis in different communication contexts. This common theme forms a critical intersection, emphasizing their collective dedication to unraveling the role and impact of emojis in the digital communication landscape. The current study specifically focuses on emoji usage within Facebook Messenger among undergraduate students in Thailand. The researcher explores the meaning of messages, the linguistic functions of emojis, and the factors influencing their use. The main objective of the current study is to provide insights that enhance emoji usage for effective communication within this unique demographic. Meanwhile, the four referenced papers offer diverse perspectives on emojis, examining their linguistic

functions in Facebook interactions, the use of evaluative emojis by college students, sender-intended functions in US messaging, and sentiment analysis in Facebook posts. Despite their contextual differences, these research endeavors contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted roles that emojis play in modern digital communication.

Emojis as a Research Focus**:**
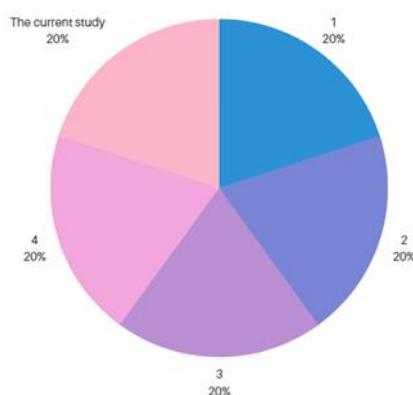
Figure 4 Applying Related Studies to the current research, Emojis as a Research Focus

As shown in Figure 4, these five research endeavors share a common thread of investigating emojis as a central subject of inquiry. While each paper brings its unique perspective and contextualization to the study of emojis, they collectively contribute to a richer understanding of the multifaceted roles these symbols play in contemporary digital communication.

2.4.2.3 Interest in Social and Linguistic Aspects

In this section, the researcher focuses on the alignment of research interests with four distinct papers, namely, "The Linguistic Functions of Emojis in Facebook Interactions", "Taming the Sting: The Use of Evaluative Emojis by College Students", "Sender-Intended Functions of Emojis in US Messaging", and "Facebook Sentiment: Reactions and Emojis". A key point of convergence among these studies is the shared fascination with the social and linguistic aspects of emoji usage. Emojis, with their multifaceted nature, extend beyond mere text-based

communication to convey intricate social and emotional meanings. The current study, like that of its counterparts, is deeply engaged in exploring how emojis operate within the intricate fabric of social and linguistic contexts.

This common research interest propels the researcher to not only examine the technical dimensions of emoji usage but also to scrutinize the sociolinguistic factors that influence their deployment. The inquiry encompasses questions about how emojis contribute to meaning construction, influence interpersonal dynamics, and serve as instruments for emotional expression within the specific context of Thai undergraduate students' Facebook Messenger communication.

Interest in Social and Linguistic Aspects:
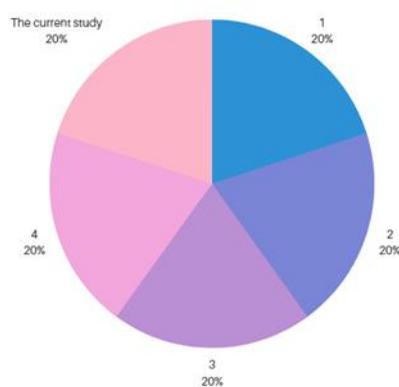
Figure 5 Applying Related Studies to the current research, Interest in
Social and Linguistic Aspects

As shown in Figure 5, this chapter explains the current research methodology while accentuating the shared fascination with the social and linguistic facets of emoji usage, aligning with four significant papers. This shared ground underscores the dedication to contribute valuable insights to the broader discourse concerning emojis' roles as tools for social and linguistic expression, particularly among Thai undergraduate students.

In Section 2.4.2 above, "Applying Related Studies to the current research", The researcher strategically aligns the current methodology study and focus with four significant

papers in the area of emoji usage. These studies, namely, "The Linguistic Functions of Emojis in Facebook Interactions", "Taming the Sting: The Use of Evaluative Emojis by College Students", "Sender-Intended Functions of Emojis in US Messaging", and "Facebook Sentiment: Reactions and Emojis", serve as guiding for the investigation into emoji usage within the context of Thai undergraduate students' Facebook Messenger communication. The researcher embraces a mixed-methods research approach, mirroring the methodology employed by these papers, to comprehensively explore the multifaceted nature of emoji usage. Additionally, the researcher shares their common research focus on emojis as a central subject of inquiry and the social and linguistic dimensions of emoji usage. This deliberate alignment underscores the commitment to building upon previous research and contributing nuanced insights into the unique landscape of emoji communication among Thai undergraduate students.

However, it is important to note that the researcher did not employ the research method or protocol described in the current study above, as will be discussed in the following section below.

2.4.2 Divergence from Previous Studies

This current research takes a different path compared to previous studies. For instance, it differs from "The Linguistic Functions of Emojis in Facebook Interactions Among Undergraduate Students at Jadara University in Jordan" (Alshboul & Rababah, 2021), where a corpus-based tool was used to observe emoji usage. Instead, the current study opts for semi-structured interviews to dig deeper into the unique factors influencing emoji usage. This approach recognizes that individuals have distinct preferences and situations affecting their emoji choices, which automated tools may not fully capture.

Likewise, the decision to forgo Facebook Reactions as a data source, as demonstrated in "Facebook Sentiment: Reactions and Emojis" (Tian, 2017), aligns with the preference for qualitative interviews over automated methods. Emojis in social media settings are often context-dependent, and the interplay between linguistic texts and emojis can be better grasped through direct participant responses.

By employing a mixed-methods approach that combines semi-structured interviews and surveys, the current research seeks to offer a comprehensive understanding of emoji usage among undergraduate students. It takes into account both the qualitative and the quantitative trends emerging from real-life situations, all within a meticulously controlled research setting.

2.5 Chapter Summary

Chapter 2, the Literature Review and Conceptual Framework, serves as a foundational exploration of key theoretical concepts and related studies essential for contextualizing the current research. It introduces Discourse Analysis (DA) as a field that examines language usage's socio-psychological aspects and Semiotics, elucidating its role in decoding signs and symbols in communication. Emojis, a vital component of contemporary digital communication, are discussed in detail, recognizing their evolution into a distinct form of language. The chapter also emphasizes the significance of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) in understanding how different modes of communication work together to create meaning in various contexts. The Discourse-Completion Task (DCT) are introduced as research methods. Additionally, related studies from various contexts, including Jordan, Kuwait, the United States, and broader social media platforms, are reviewed. The chapter underscores the necessity of examining Thai undergraduate students' emoji usage within Facebook Messenger in the specific Thai context. This chapter lays the groundwork for the subsequent chapters, bridging the global studies on emojis with the need for localized insights in Thailand's unique sociocultural setting.

The upcoming chapter will present the research design, research instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis, and exemplify the data analysis process.
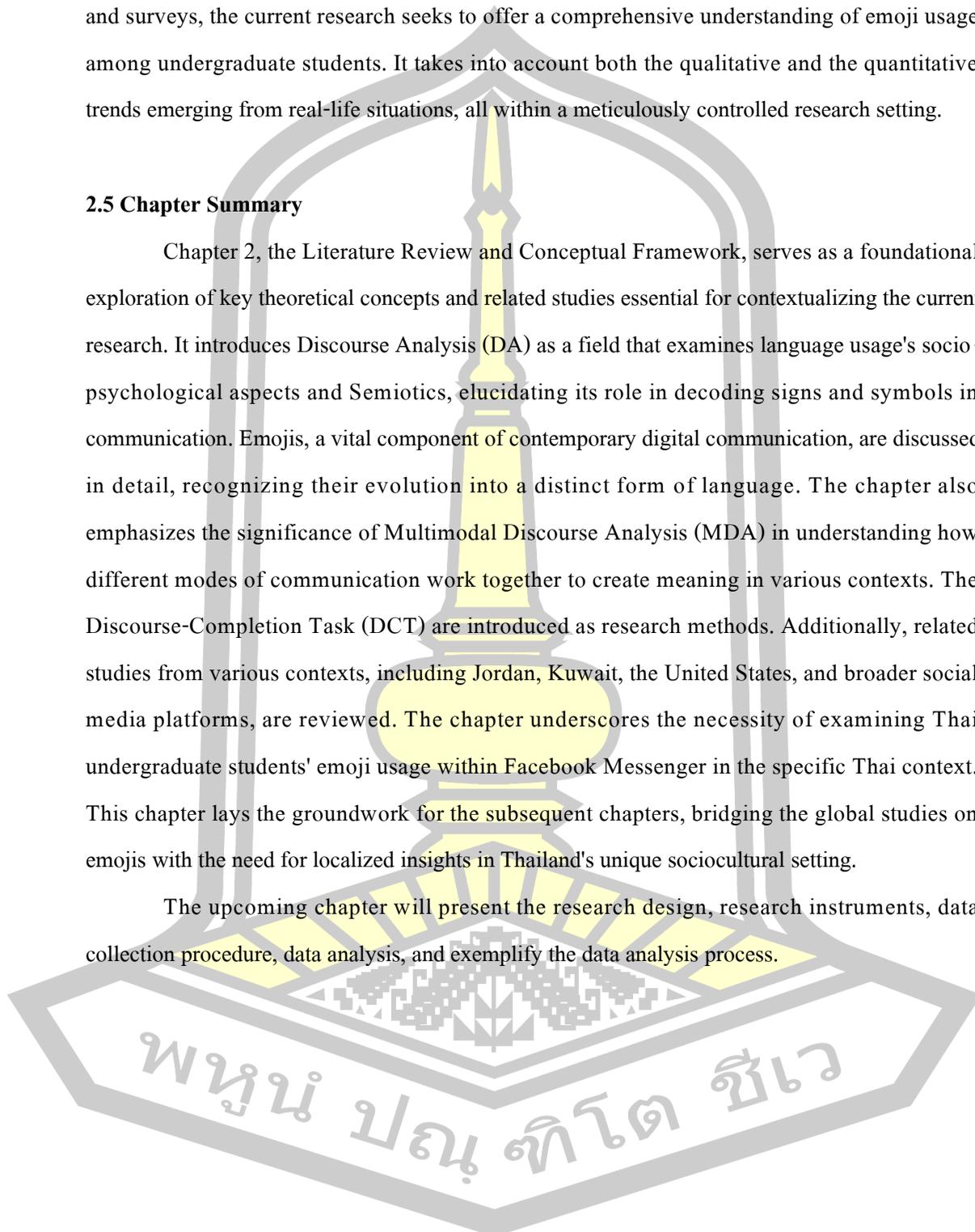
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Given that Emojis have become integral to digital communication, this chapter explores not only how commonly they are employed but also the determinants guiding their usage patterns in this specific demographic. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, the researcher aims to provide insights into the prevalence and factors shaping the use of emojis in online communication within this linguistically oriented academic community. This chapter presents the following sections: 3.1 Research Design, 3.2 Research Instruments, 3.3 Quality of Research Instrument, 3.4 Data and Data Collection Procedure, 3.5 Data Analysis, 3.6 Chapter Summary.

3.1 Research Design

The current study employs a mixed-method design to address the two research questions (RQ1: What are the prevalent forms of Facebook Messenger communication used by undergraduate students in Thailand? and RQ2: What are the key factors influencing undergraduate students' choices of Facebook Messenger communication, particularly in relation to their preference for using text-only, emoji-only, or a combination of emoji and text?) The mixed-methods approach in the current study draws inspiration from previous works (Alshboul & Rababah, 2021; Algharabali & A. Taqi, 2018; Cramer et al., 2016; Tian, 2017), combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods. To answer the two research questions in the current study, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, qualitative data were acquired through semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions and real chat data. In contrast, quantitative data were gathered through ranking questions, fill-in-the-blank exercises, and multiple-choice questions.

3.2 Research Instruments

   Two research instruments were employed in the current study, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.

   3.2.1 Research Instruments for Collecting Quantitative Data

    In the following sections (3.2.1.1, 3.2.1.2, and 3.2.1.3), the researcher focuses on the quantitative findings pertaining to emoji usage prevalence among the surveyed undergraduate students. Each of these sections employs distinct quantitative data collection methods, collectively providing a comprehensive view of how emojis are utilized within the current research context. Firstly, in 3.2.1.1, the researcher presents the results of ranking questions that illuminate the hierarchy of factors impacting emoji usage, allowing us to discern the relative importance attributed to different considerations by participants. Moving on to 3.2.1.2, the researcher explores the outcomes of filling-in-the-blank questions, which provide participants the freedom to express their preferences and perceptions concerning emoji usage. Lastly, in 3.2.1.3, the researcher examines the quantitative findings derived from multiple-choice questions, offering insights into the prevalence of communication modes and the factors influencing emoji usage. Together, these sections offer a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted dynamics of emoji deployment in the digital communication practices of undergraduate students.

    It is important to note that, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no previous research that has employed a similar approach or questionnaires. Therefore, the researcher has proposed these choices and questions based on the research's objectives and purposes. While the current study's question will play a crucial role, they will also undergo expert review in the upcoming section 3.3.

   3.2.1.1 (Ranking question; i.e. DCT): Emoji Usage prevalence

    To exemplify the quantitative data analysis, the researcher presents the prevalence percentages of different forms of emoji usage among the surveyed undergraduate students.

    The integration of ranking prompts (quantitative data) introduces an additional layer of complexity to the research design. This facilitates an assessment of the hierarchical importance attributed to distinct factors that impact emoji usage. Through this, the

current study aims to distinguish the relative significance of various considerations that mold students' decisions in deploying emojis. Here are examples related to the current study.

Table 1 Ranking question

Pattern	Ranking
I'm good. 😊	3
I'm good.	2
😊	1

    Participants will be asked to rank their preferences, with "1" indicating the most satisfied or preferred choice, "2" representing the next choice, and "3" reflecting the choice in that order. Using ranking prompts in the survey will help the researcher understand the relative importance or preferences of different factors or choices, allowing the researcher to identify which items are considered more important or preferred compared to others.

    3.2.1.2 Quantitative data (Filling in the blank question): Emoji Usage prevalence

    In this section, the researcher presents quantitative findings related to the prevalence of different forms of emoji usage among the surveyed undergraduate students. The use of filling-in-the-blank questions in the survey allowed participants to provide specific responses with free expression, enabling researcher to gain insights into their preferences and perceptions regarding emoji usage. The current research approach draws inspiration from a similar methodology employed in the paper "Measuring Non-native Speakers" Proficiency of English by Using a Test with Automatically-Generated Fill-in-the-Blank Questions' Sumita (2005), which used filling-in-the-blank questions to gather valuable data

Filling-in-the-Blank Question

Participants were asked to complete the following questions:

A: How are you today?

B: _____.

Here are examples of responses from the participants:

"I'm good."

"I'm good 😃".

" 😃 "

3.2.1.3 Quantitative data (Multiple choice question): Emoji Usage prevalence

In this section, the researcher presents the quantitative findings related to the prevalence of different forms of emoji usage among the surveyed undergraduate students. The utilization of multiple-choice questions allowed participants to select their preferred communication modes and provide insights into their emoji usage habits. It is worth noting that this research methodology aligns with a similar approach used in the paper 'Taming the Sting: The Use of Evaluative Emojis by College Students in Kuwait' (Algharabali & A. Taqi, 2018), which also employed a mixed-method survey and semi-structured interviews to gather valuable data

The utilization of multiple-choice prompts (quantitative data) serves the purpose of scrutinizing students' preferred communication modes. Here are examples related to the study.

Section 1: Facebook Usage

1. How many hours per week do you spend on Facebook?

a. Less than 1 hour   b. 1-3 hours

c. 3-5 hours   d. More than 5 hours

Section 2: Emoji Usage

2. How often do you use emojis when communicating with others on Facebook?

a. Always   b. Most of the time

c. Sometimes   d. Never

3. Why do you use emojis in your Facebook interactions?

a. To express emotions   b. To convey meaning

c. To create humor   d. To save time typing

Section 3: Perception of Emoji Usage

4. In your opinion, do emojis enhance or hinder communication on Facebook?

a. Enhance   b. Hinder

c. No effect   d. Neutral

5. Do you believe that emojis can replace traditional written language in online communication?

a. Yes   b. No

c. Maybe   d. No idea

In Sections 3.2.1.1, 3.2.1.2, and 3.2.1.3, the researcher comprehensively explored the quantitative data related to emoji usage prevalence among the surveyed undergraduate students. These sections employed a range of quantitative data collection methods, such as ranking, filling-in-the-blank, and multiple-choice questions, to unravel the complex landscape of emoji utilization within the current research context. In Section 3.2.2 below, the researcher transitioned to the qualitative data collection instruments (i.e. open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews), where the researcher focuses deeper into participants' factors and experiences regarding emoji usage. Through open-ended questions and semi-structured

interviews, the researcher aims to provide rich insights into the qualitative aspects of emoji communication, shedding light on the intricacies of this digital phenomenon.

3.2.2 Research Instruments for Collecting Qualitative Data

In this section, the researcher focuses on the qualitative analysis, which offers a deeper understanding of the factors influencing emoji usage among the surveyed undergraduate students. Through semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions and real chat data, the researcher sought to uncover rich insights into the qualitative aspects of emoji communication within the context of Facebook Messenger. This qualitative exploration allowed participants to express their perspectives and experiences freely. Specifically, in 3.2.2.1, the researcher will present the qualitative themes emerging from semi‑structured interviews, where participants shared their thoughts on various aspects of emoji usage, including its frequency, reasons, and impact on communication. In 3.2.2.2, the researcher will further exemplify these themes by showcasing a participant's response to an open-ended question, shedding light on how emojis are used to infuse conversations with a personalized and engaging touch. In 3.2.2.3, the qualitative analysis using real chat data allows for a deeper and more authentic understanding of how emojis are used in Facebook Messenger conversations, enhancing the study's authenticity and validity. This approach provides valuable insights into the nuanced ways in which emojis influence digital interactions. Together, these qualitative findings provide a nuanced view of the role of emojis in shaping digital interactions among the participants.

3.2.2.1 Qualitative Themes (A semi-structured interview): Factors Influencing Emoji Usage

In this section, the researcher focuses on qualitative data, where participants freely express their views and experiences regarding emoji usage on Facebook. Through Semi‑structured interviews, the researcher gains valuable insights into the factors influencing their emoji choices. These questions cover various aspects, including frequency, motivations, emotional conveyance, social group variations, preferred emojis, differences from other communication modes, impact on tone, and challenges faced. The participants who enroll in the Semi-structured interviews will represent 5 percent of all participants, and they are volunteers.

Participants' responses reveal recurring themes that illuminate the diverse dynamics of emoji use in digital interactions.

Based on researcher's review of previous research, it is apparent that no prior studies have utilized the same set of research questions as those in the current study. Therefore, the current study is pioneering in addressing these questions, aligning with the specific aims and objectives of the current study. It is important to note that while the semi-structured interviews will play a crucial role, they will also undergo expert review in the upcoming section 3.3.

1. How often do you use emojis when interacting on Facebook?

2. What are some of the reasons why you use emojis in your Facebook interactions?

3. Do you think emojis can convey emotions better than words? Why or why not?

4. Do you think the use of emojis varies among different social groups, such as age or gender? Why or why not?

5. Are there any specific emojis that you use frequently in your Facebook interactions? What do they typically represent for you?

6. How do you think the use of emojis in Facebook interactions differs from other forms of communication, such as face-to-face or written communication?

7. Do you think the use of emojis has any impact on the tone or mood of Facebook interactions? If so, in what ways?

8. Have you ever encountered any challenges or misunderstandings when using emojis in your Facebook interactions? Can you describe the situation and how you resolved it?

In this section (3.2.2.1), the researcher focuses on qualitative analysis, where participants freely express their views and experiences regarding emoji usage on Facebook through Semi-interview. Insights into the factors influencing their choices, such as usage frequency, motivations, emotional conveyance, social group variations, preferred emojis, differences from other communication modes, impact on tone, and challenges, emerge through participants' candid responses, revealing recurring themes. As the researcher transition to the next

part (3.2.2.2), the researcher continues to explore these themes, exemplifying participants' responses to open-ended questions, providing deeper insights into the role of emojis in shaping their digital communication experiences

3.2.2.2 Qualitative Themes (Open-ended question): Factors Influencing Emoji Usage

In Section 3.2.2.2, the researcher shifts the focus to open-ended questions, granting participants the freedom to openly express their thoughts on the factors influencing their emoji usage. This qualitative analysis allows for unrestrained and spontaneous insights. Through this exemplification, the researcher gained deeper insights into how emojis are used to enhance personal engagement in Facebook Messenger conversations. As they proceed, the researcher continues to uncover the richness of participant responses, further illuminating the role of emojis in modern digital communication.

In the qualitative data, the researcher identified a free question for all related to the factors influencing emoji usage. Here, the researcher exemplifies one of these themes:

Question: Other ideas _____.

This exemplification showcases the participant's opinion of the use of Emojis in Facebook Messenger, illustrating how participants described their use of emojis to make conversations feel more likely and engaging and enhance the personal touch of their messages.

3.2.2.3 Qualitative Themes (Real chat data): Factors Influencing Emoji Usage

In the current study, real chat data collected from participants were used to examine the use of emojis in Facebook Messenger. The utilization of real chat data offers a unique opportunity to gain authentic insights into the patterns and practices of emoji usage in natural communication settings. Participants in the current study have provided their informed consent for the inclusion of their chat data, which has been carefully anonymized to protect their privacy and confidentiality. The researcher looked for chat conversations among participants on

topics such as adolescent relationship, university, and alcohol influence. This focus is based on the researcher's experience, where these topics frequently appear in everyday conversations among the target demographic, and there is currently no other study employing real chat data on these specific themes. Real chat data from the participants in the current study can provide valuable insights and strengthen the authenticity of the current study.
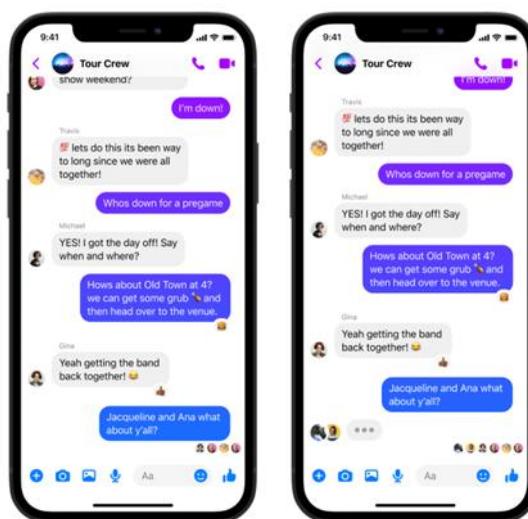
(TechCrunch, 2021)

Figure 6 The picture provided is just one example. More illustrations can be found in the article 'Facebook Messenger releases cross-app group chats, further integrating with Instagram' on TechCrunch's website.

Retrieved from: (https://techcrunch.com/2021/09/30/facebook-messenger-releases-cross-app-group-chats-further-integrating-with-instagram/).

3.3 Quality of Research Instrument

To investigate the prevalent forms and the factors influencing emoji usage among Thai undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger, the current research employs a carefully crafted instrument, refined with guidance from two esteemed experts in education, linguistics, and language communication.

The first expert, an accomplished educator and Director of the Curriculum Research and Instruction program at Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University brings over three decades of teaching experience to her role, playing a pivotal role in enhancing the instrument's quality. With a comprehensive academic background, including a Doctor of Education (EdD) and a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Teaching Research in Language Education from an Australian institution, her extensive expertise ensures that the research tool adheres to stringent educational and linguistic standards.

The second expert, affiliated with Mahasarakham University's Department of Western Languages and Linguistics, brings over two decades of experience as a lecturer, along with her wealth of knowledge in language and communication, to enhance the current research instrument. With a Ph.D. in Language and Communication and extensive experience in the field of linguistics, her contribution strengthens the instrument's aptness and precision in capturing the subtleties of language, emojis, and communication patterns on Facebook Messenger among Thai undergraduate students.

Collaboratively, these experts have played an integral role in crafting and validating the current research instrument. Their insights have guided the methodological framework, encompassing Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), Conversational Analysis (CA), and the Discourse Completion Task (DCT). This comprehensive approach ensures that our instrument thoroughly investigates the factors influencing emoji usage within our specific study context.

The current research instrument incorporates both qualitative and quantitative questions, meticulously designed to offer a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny. Inclusion of open-ended prompts and semi-interviews adds depth to the data collection, providing rich qualitative insights. Quantitative data analysis, utilizing SPSS, and qualitative thematic analysis methodologies reinforce the instrument's reliability in addressing the current research questions.

The questionnaire and semi-interviews were inspired by previous methodologies (Algharabali & Taqi, 2018). The Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) Form for Experts assessed the questionnaire using a scoring system (+1, 0, -1) (As you can see in Appendix F). The total score from all experts was 13, indicating that the questionnaire passed the validity assessment successfully. This IOC assessment method is pivotal as it ensures that each item in the

instrument aligns well with the intended research objectives, confirming the content validity of the research tool (Fouzul Kareema & Bt Zubairi, 2021)

In conclusion, the current research instrument, developed with the expertise of the experts, is poised to deliver robust and meaningful insights into the factors shaping emoji usage among Thai undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger. The collaborative efforts and methodological position instrument as a dependable tool for exploring our chosen research domain effectively**.**

3.4 Data and Data Collection Procedure

In this section, the research will detail the procedures for data collection, including the specific methods employed for gathering both quantitative and qualitative data.

3.4.1 Participant Selection

The participants in the current study were carefully selected to align with the research objectives. All were undergraduate students majoring in English, a focus that made them particularly suitable for this study due to their background in linguistics and familiarity with language studies. Their deep interest in linguistic concepts and solid understanding of language use enhanced their engagement with the research.

Originally, the population consisted of 300 students. However, due to internships, particularly among fourth-year students (153 in total), the actual number of participants who volunteered for the study was 143. These students were required to complete open-ended questions to provide in-depth responses about their communication behaviors. Additionally, only about 5% of these volunteers participated in semi-structured interviews and provided real chat data, offering deeper insights into individual communication practices and contextual challenges.

All participants were also required to engage with Conversation Analysis (CA) through the Discourse Completion Task (DCT). The DCT was chosen for its ability to elicit authentic responses by simulating real communication scenarios. This method ensured that the data collected accurately reflected the natural communication patterns of the participants, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the study's findings.

3.4.2 Bilingual Data Collection

To ensure participants felt comfortable and provided authentic responses, the data for the current study was collected in both Thai and English. Recognizing the importance of minimizing disruptions to their natural communication flow, participants were given the option to respond in either language. This flexibility was intended to inspire openness and genuine engagement, allowing participants to express their thoughts and ideas freely in the language they preferred.

Once the data was collected, responses in Thai were carefully translated into English to ensure consistency in the analysis. This bilingual approach not only respected participants' linguistic preferences but also enhanced the depth of the data, capturing nuances that might have been lost had responses been restricted to one language.

3.4.3 Quantitative Analysis: Discourse Completion Task (DCT)

For the quantitative component of the current study, the researcher employs the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) method. The DCT is a structured approach that allows us to collect data in a controlled and standardized manner (Cyluk, 2013). One of the key advantages of utilizing the DCT method is that it provides the researcher with a high degree of control over the data collection environment (Schauer & Adolphs, 2006). This control is essential for ensuring consistency and reliability in the data obtained. The data collection for the current study was conducted at Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University.

The DCT method incorporates multiple-choice prompts (quantitative data) to scrutinize students' preferred communication modes. Specifically, it seeks to determine whether students predominantly opt for text-only communication, emoji-exclusive conversations, or a fusion of text and emojis.

Furthermore, the integration of ranking prompts (quantitative data) introduces an additional layer of complexity to the research design. This facilitates an assessment of the hierarchical importance attributed to distinct factors that impact emoji usage. Through this, the study aims to distinguish the relative significance of various considerations that mold students' decisions in deploying emojis.

Lastly, the inclusion of Filling-in-the-blank prompts (quantitative data) provides participants with the latitude to candidly express their preferences regarding emoji use, whether in conjunction with text, as standalone emojis, or exclusively as text. This approach fosters a more nuanced understanding of the communication preferences embraced by undergraduate students.

3.4.4 Qualitative Analysis: DCT question, Semi-structured interview and Real chat data

The qualitative aspect of the current study involves both the use of the Discourse Completion Task (DCT), semi-structured interviews and real chat data to gain in-depth insights into participants' emoji usage and their experiences (Adams, 2015).

The incorporation of open-ended prompts (qualitative data), semi-structured interviews and real chat data significantly enriches the exploration of students' motivations, challenges, and experiences tied to their use of emojis within the Facebook Messenger platform. This qualitative methodology empowers participants to provide profound insights into the intricacies of their emoji usage, augmenting the quantitative findings with richer qualitative data. The researcher plans to conduct semi-structured interviews and collecting real chat data with approximately 5 percent of all participants (10 participants), deepening the understanding of the nuances in their emoji usage choices.

Participant Selection: Participants for semi-structured interviews and real chat data were selected based on their willingness to participate, aiming for diversity in emoji usage patterns and experiences.

Interview Format: Semi-structured interviews were conducted either in person or through video conferencing, depending on participants' preferences. An interview guide will be utilized to ensure consistency and focus on key themes. Ethical principles, including informed consent, confidentiality, and privacy, will be strictly adhered to throughout the interview process to protect participants' rights and data.

By employing these systematic data collection procedures, the researcher aims to gather comprehensive quantitative and qualitative data that will facilitate a thorough exploration of emoji usage patterns and the factors influencing their usage among Thai undergraduate students in the context of Facebook Messenger communication.

3.5 Data Analysis

This section details the methods utilized for analyzing the diverse forms of communication data emoji-only, text-only, and mixed forms of emojis and text captured in this study, with a focus on the underlying factors influencing their usage.

3.5.1 Quantitative Analysis: SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences)

In the current research, SPSS is used extensively to perform quantitative analysis on data collected from various survey types, including filling in the blank, ranking, and multiple-choice formats, which are prevalent in social science studies, especially those concerning linguistics. As a well-recognized tool in social sciences, SPSS is instrumental in identifying patterns, trends, and correlations within the data, allowing for a structured examination of different forms of communication among the study participants.

In the analysis of filling in the blank responses, SPSS proves crucial by quantifying text responses and coding them into numerical data to identify common patterns and trends that may not be immediately apparent from a simple review of raw data. For ranking questions, the software facilitates the statistical analysis of ordinal data, computing measures of central tendency and dispersion which assists in prioritizing communication preferences and factors influencing emoji use among students. When analyzing multiple-choice questions, SPSS effectively handles categorical data, using tools like chi-square tests and frequency calculations to uncover relationships between variables and to map the distribution of responses across categories.

The application of SPSS in this study not only enhances the depth and reliability of the analysis but also supports the creation of clear, comprehensive graphs and charts that illustrate the findings. This makes complex data more understandable and accessible. The flexibility and capability of SPSS to manage large datasets and its compatibility with various data types are also critical, ensuring a thorough coverage of the study's broad scope.

Further details regarding the use of SPSS in this research are provided in Chapter 3, where the methodologies are explained comprehensively. Alongside quantitative analysis, the research integrates open-ended prompts and semi-structured interviews to explore deeper into the motivations, challenges, and experiences related to emoji usage. This innovative application of

thematic analysis and the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) methodology to study emojis marks a significant contribution to emerging research fields.

Throughout the research process, ethical considerations such as informed consent, data privacy, and confidentiality are rigorously maintained to ensure the well-being and respect of all participants.

To facilitate qualitative analysis, the researcher will employ Thematic Analysis. The data for this analysis will be collected through the use of semi-structured interview and Open-ended questions.

3.5.2 Qualitative Analysis: Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is particularly suited to the deep exploration of qualitative data within this study. Its flexibility and depth make it an exemplary tool for examining the complex use of emojis among Thai undergraduate students. Referenced by Braun & Clarke (2015), thematic analysis aids in systematically identifying recurring themes, patterns, and nuanced insights hidden within the rich narratives and open-ended responses from participants. This method allows the researcher to probe deeply into the motivations, challenges, and experiences tied to emoji communication, enabling the extraction of meaningful and context-specific findings that capture the essence of participants' voices and provide a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives within the broader research context.

This research is among the first to utilize thematic analysis in the study of emojis, which may contribute significantly to the field by offering a novel method for decoding the intricacies of emoji communication. The approach facilitates a thorough examination of both explicit and implicit content, yielding a layered comprehension of how emojis function as tools of digital communication. Through systematic coding and categorization of the data, thematic analysis exposes patterns that highlight overarching themes of emoji use, such as emotional expression, miscommunication, and the cultural contexts influencing these interactions.

Employing thematic analysis enhances the analytical depth of this study and is in line with the objective to uncover the subtle and often overlooked elements of emoji communication among Thai undergraduates. This methodological decision highlights the innovative perspective of the research, providing new insights into an evolving area of digital communication.

Table 2 The table provides an illustration of the methodology employed for conducting Thematic Analysis within the context of the current research.

Pharse	Description of the process
Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic map of the analysis.
5. Definition and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
5. Producing the repeat:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

(Kerr, 2002)

From Table 2 provides an overview of the thematic analysis methodology used in the current research, helping readers understand the systematic approach employed to interpret

the data. The table outlines each phase, starting with familiarization with the data through reading and re-reading, followed by coding key features and organizing these codes into potential themes. It continues with the review and refinement of themes, ensuring alignment with the data set, and concludes with naming themes and producing the final analysis report. This structured framework, ensures a clear, consistent, and transparent approach to analyzing qualitative data, facilitating a deeper understanding of the research findings.

3.6 Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 has looked into Research Design, Research Instruments, Data and Data Collection Procedure, Data Analysis, and An Exemplification of Data Analysis employed to investigate the prevalence and factors of emoji usage within the Facebook Messenger platform among Thai undergraduate students. In this chapter, the researcher has provided examples from a subset of 20 undergraduate students to illustrate the research methods and findings. However, the following chapter will present the comprehensive results based on a larger sample size.

This mixed-methods study combines quantitative surveys, encompassing multiple-choice, ranking, and filling-in-the-blank questions, to gauge prevalence communication forms, including emoji-only, text-only, and combinations of both, with qualitative data collected through open-ended queries and semi-structured interviews to explore participants' motivations and experiences related to emoji utilization.
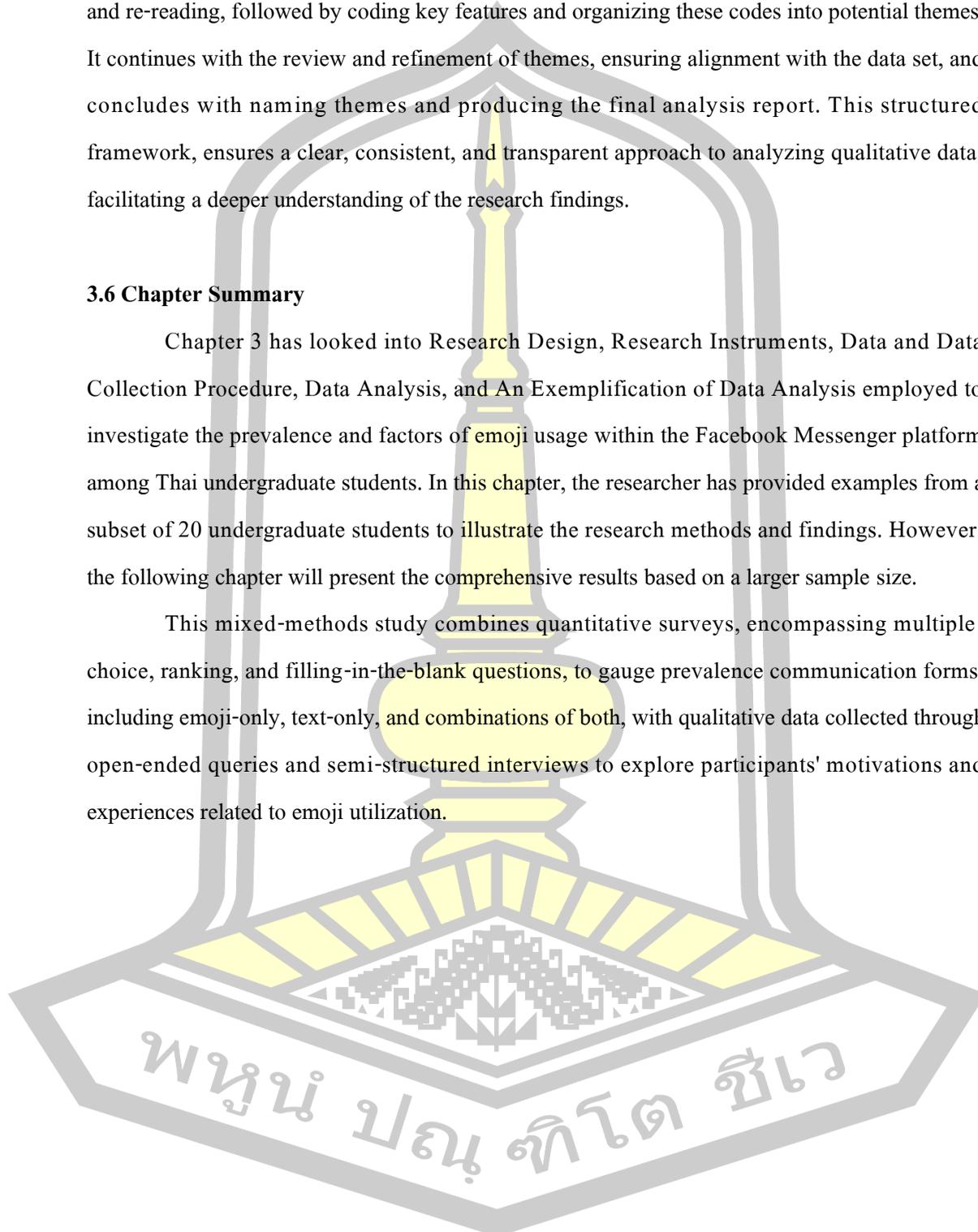
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this chapter, the researcher will focus on the comprehensive findings of the current study. The researcher begins with 4.1 The Prevalent Forms of Facebook Messenger Communication Used by Undergraduate Students in Thailand, highlighting the various ways in which students utilize emojis in their digital interactions. In 4.2 The Key Factors Influencing Undergraduate Students' Choices of Use emojis in Facebook Messenger Communication, the researcher identifies and analyzes the determinants that shape students' preferences for different communication modes. Following this, the chapter concludes with 4.3 Chapter Summary, analyzing the key insights from the analysis to provide a cohesive understanding of the findings.

4.1 The prevalent forms of Facebook Messenger communication used by undergraduate students in Thailand

This section offers a comprehensive interpretation of the quantitative data collected on the prevalent forms of emoji usage among undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger. The analysis draws from data gathered through a variety of structured survey methods, including ranking prompts, fill-in-the-blank questions, and multiple-choice questions. These methodologies ensure a robust quantitative foundation that supports a detailed understanding of the communication preferences and behaviors of students, specifically regarding their emoji usage. The findings reveal distinct trends and insights into how emojis are integrated into daily communication.

4.1.1 Overview of Findings

The collected data indicates that undergraduate students exhibit diverse preferences in their communication styles on Facebook Messenger, with a notable emphasis on the combination of text and emojis. This preference for combining text and emojis is consistently reflected across different survey methods, underscoring the multifaceted role of emojis in digital communication.

4.1.2 Preference for Combining Text and Emojis
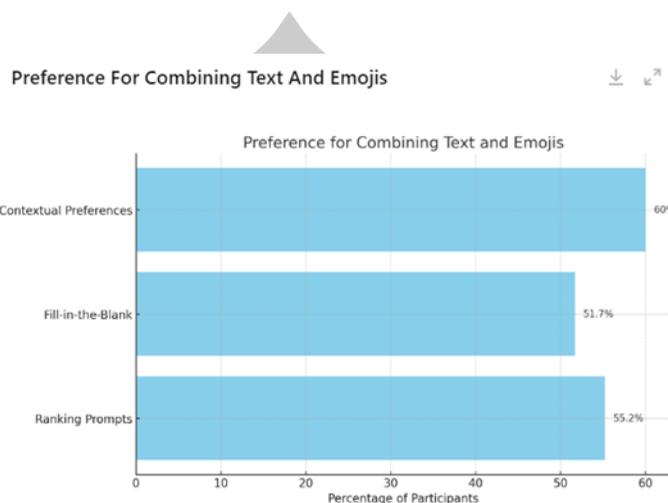
Figure 7 The chart illustrates the preferences of students for combining text and emojis in their

communication across three categories

The analysis reveals a strong inclination among students to use the combination of

text and emojis in their messages. This preference emerged as the most favored choice among the

majority of participants across various data collection methods:

Ranking Prompts: According to the ranking prompts, 55.2% of participants (79

individuals) identified the combination of text and emojis as their most preferred form of

communication. This finding highlights the widespread appreciation for the enhanced

expressiveness and emotional clarity that emojis can bring to textual messages.

Fill-in-the-Blank Questions: Similarly, the fill-in-the-blank questions revealed that

51.7% of participants (74 individuals) expressed a preference for using the combination of text

and emojis in their communications. This suggests a new trend among students to enhance their

messages by integrating visual elements with textual content.

Contextual Preferences: When discussing various topics such as Alcoholic

influence, university-related matters, and Adolescent Relationships, a significant portion of

participants favored combining text and emojis. This preference underscores the versatility and

effectiveness of emojis in conveying nuanced messages across different contexts.

These findings suggest that emojis, when used alongside text, significantly enhance the clarity, emotional tone, and expressiveness of digital communication, making it a preferred choice for many students.

4.1.3 Usage Patterns of Emojis
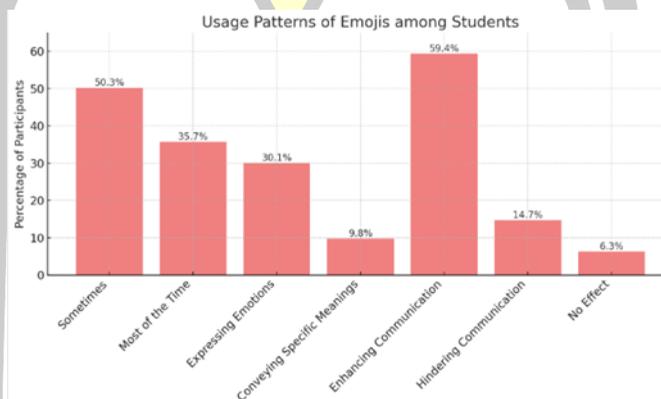
Figure 8 The frequency and context of emoji usage among students

The data also sheds light on the frequency and context of emoji usage among students. Frequency of Usage: A considerable number of participants reported using emojis "sometimes" (50.3%) or "most of the time" (35.7%), indicating that emojis are a regular feature in their digital interactions. This frequent use suggests that emojis play a substantial role in everyday communication among students.

Motivations for Emoji Usage: The primary motivations for using emojis include expressing emotions (30.1%) and conveying specific meanings (9.8%), with many participants (50.3%) acknowledging the multifaceted role of emojis in enhancing communication. These motivations highlight the importance of emojis in adding emotional depth and clarity to messages.

Perceptions of Emoji Usage: The majority of students (59.4%) perceive emojis as enhancing their communication by making interactions more expressive and clearer. However, a smaller percentage view emojis as hindering communication (14.7%) or having no effect (6.3%). These perceptions indicate that while emojis are generally seen as beneficial, there are some challenges associated with their use.

These findings underscore that emojis are not merely decorative elements but play a crucial role in digital conversations by enriching emotional expression and enhancing message clarity.

4.1.4 Contextual Variations in Emoji Usage

The use of emojis varies significantly depending on the context of the conversation:

Sensitive Topics: For sensitive topics such as Alcoholic influence and Adolescent Relationships, a combination of text and emojis is preferred by many students. Specifically, 53.1% preferred this combination when discussing Alcoholic influence, and 46.9% preferred it for discussing Adolescent Relationships. This preference suggests that students find it easier to discuss sensitive subjects with the aid of visual elements that can soften or clarify the message.

Academic Discussions: In conversations about university-related topics, text-only communication is more prevalent, with 59.4% of participants favoring this approach. This indicates a preference for clarity and precision in academic contexts, where emojis might be seen as less appropriate or necessary.

This contextual variation underscores the adaptability of emoji usage, where students strategically employ emojis to enhance their communication based on the topic at hand.

4.1.5 Diverse Attitudes Toward Emoji Usage

The data reveals a range of attitudes towards emoji usage among students.

Positive Attitudes: A significant portion of participants (27.3%) have a positive attitude towards emojis, viewing them as valuable tools for enhancing communication. This positive perception is likely due to the ability of emojis to add expressiveness and emotional nuance to digital messages.

Neutral or Ambivalent Attitudes: A substantial number of participants (51%) are ambivalent about emoji usage, reflecting uncertainty or mixed feelings about the impact of emojis on their communication. This ambivalence might be due to varying individual preferences and experiences with emojis.

Negative Attitudes: A minority of participants (16.1%) hold a negative view of emojis, possibly due to difficulties in interpreting them or a preference for traditional text-based communication. This negative perception highlights the challenges some students face in using or understanding emojis effectively.

These varied attitudes highlight the complexity of emoji usage and its perceived impact on digital interactions among students.

4.1.6 Summary

In summary, the prevalent forms of emoji usage among undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger is characterized by a strong preference for the combination of text and emojis, frequent but context-dependent use, and diverse perceptions of their impact on communication. Emojis are integral to enhancing the expressiveness and clarity of digital messages, particularly in emotionally charged or sensitive conversations. However, attitudes towards their use vary, reflecting the nuanced and multifaceted nature of digital communication in contemporary social interactions. The data underscores the importance of considering the context and individual preferences when analyzing emoji usage patterns, as well as the significant role emojis play in modern digital communication.

4.2 The Key Factors Influencing Undergraduate Students' Choices of Use emojis in Facebook Messenger Communication

This section presents an in-depth analysis of the key factors influencing communication choices among undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger, primarily drawn from qualitative data sources. Through semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions, and analysis of real chat data, this study captures comprehensive insights into the students' communication behaviors and preferences. These qualitative methodologies allow for a nuanced understanding of the factors that shape how emojis and other communication forms are utilized in undergraduate student interactions on the platform.

4.2.1 Open-Ended Questions

    The thematic analysis of open-ended questions revealed several themes related to the use of emojis by college students on Facebook. The identified themes include the expression of emotions, enhancement of communication, convenience and time-saving, fun and engagement, formality and appropriateness, and ambiguity and misinterpretation.

Figure 9 Open-Ended Questions' Themes

4.2.1.1 Expression of Emotions

    Many respondents emphasized that emojis are essential for expressing emotions. Emojis help convey feelings that words alone might not fully capture. For instance, one participant stated, "It's always good to use both because it can help me convey all of my feelings in the text" (See appendix A #2). Another participant shared, "Emojis can replace emotions that we do not want to express in words" (See appendix A #19). These sentiments highlight the integral role of emojis in emotional expression, making messages more vivid and relatable.

4.2.1.2 Enhancement of Communication

Emojis were frequently mentioned as tools that enhance communication by making messages more meaningful and enjoyable. Participants highlighted that emojis could convey emotions better than text, adding depth and clarity to digital conversations. One respondent remarked, "Emojis can represent emotions and actions in messages, making conversations more engaging" (See appendix A #51). Another added, "Emojis enhance the meaning of messages and save time expressing feelings in conversations" (See appendix A #21). These responses underscore the value of emojis in enriching digital interactions.

4.2.1.3 Convenience and Time-Saving

Convenience and time-saving were also significant factors. Participants found that emojis could quickly convey complex emotions or thoughts, saving time that would otherwise be spent typing. As one participant put it, "Using emojis can replace words and save time while showing our emotions" (See appendix A #36). Another noted, "They save time in responses sometimes" (See appendix A #67). This indicates that emojis are not only expressive but also efficient in communication.

4.2.1.4 Fun and Engagement

The fun and engaging nature of emojis was another recurrent theme. Emojis make conversations more live and enjoyable, adding a playful element to interactions. A respondent noted, "Using emojis is fun; it makes the conversation more friendly and spicy" (See appendix A #29). Another mentioned, "Emojis are a way to express emotions, adding color to conversations" (See appendix A #59). This shows that emojis contribute significantly to the enjoyment and engagement of digital communication.

4.2.1.5 Formality and Appropriateness

Some participants pointed out that while emojis are great for casual conversations, they might not be suitable for formal interactions. One participant explained, "Emojis help convey emotions, but I don't use them in formal conversations or with teachers because they seem less respectful" (See appendix A #45). Another added, "Emojis are good but

should be used appropriately because some might be misunderstood" (See appendix A #62). These comments suggest that the appropriateness of emojis varies depending on the context and audience.

4.2.1.6 Ambiguity and Misinterpretation

Despite their benefits, emojis can also lead to ambiguity and misinterpretation. Participants mentioned that the meanings of some emojis could vary between individuals, leading to potential misunderstandings. One respondent highlighted this issue, stating, "Emojis have no language, so sometimes they might not convey the intended feeling" (See appendix A #17). Another remarked, "Some emojis can have multiple meanings, which can be confusing" (See appendix A #103) These responses indicate that while emojis enhance communication, they also introduce a layer of complexity that can affect message clarity.

4.2.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews provided nuanced perspectives on emoji usage. Participants discussed various aspects such as the frequency of use, motivations, emotional expression, variations across social groups, preferred emojis, differences from other communication modes, impact on tone, and challenges encountered. The themes identified in these interviews Expression of Emotions, Enhancement of Communication, Convenience and Time-Saving, Fun and Engagement, Formality and Appropriateness, and Ambiguity and Misinterpretation align with those derived from the open-ended questions.

These themes were intentionally selected as the foundation for the semi-structured interviews to maintain consistency across data collection methods and facilitate a deeper exploration of participants' experiences. This consistency allows for structured comparisons between the findings from both open-ended questions and interview data, enriching the qualitative insights.

Notably, the themes were derived from the responses of 143 participants in the open-ended questions, ensuring a broad and diverse dataset. The inclusion of all participants' responses strengthens the reliability and variety of themes, making them particularly robust and representative of the students' digital communication experiences.

By building on the themes identified from the entire participant pool, the semi-structured interviews provided a platform for more detailed reflections and elaborations, offering additional depth to the patterns and motivations behind emoji use. This comprehensive approach ensures that the study captures both the breadth and depth of participants' experiences with emojis, yielding reliable insights that align with the objectives of the current research.

4.2.2.1 Expression of Emotions

The data from both open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews emphasizes the importance of emojis in expressing emotions. Participants consistently highlighted that emojis enhance emotional expression, often complementing text to ensure that the intended emotions are accurately conveyed. For example, one participant in the open-ended responses noted, *"It's always good to use both because it can help me convey all of my feelings in the text"* (Appendix A #2). This perspective was echoed in the semi-structured interviews, where participants stressed the value of emojis in supplementing written communication. Participant 2.3 shared, *"I prefer using emojis to express my feelings and tone,"* indicating that emojis enrich messages by adding non-verbal cues that words alone might struggle to convey.

Several participants also emphasized that emojis can replace emotions that are difficult or awkward to express verbally. In the open-ended responses, one participant observed, *"Emojis can replace emotions that we do not want to express in words"* (Appendix A #19). Similarly, participant 2.5 in the interviews remarked, *"I use emojis in every sentence because I feel it reflects our true intentions the most."* These insights suggest that emojis provide an alternative channel for expressing emotions, enabling participants to communicate feelings they may not verbalize directly.

The interview data particularly highlighted the ability of emojis to mimic non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions and tone. Participant 3.1 noted, *"Emojis can convey emotions better because they represent facial expressions and gestures."* This idea was further reinforced by participant 6.10, who explained, *"It's like face-to-face communication because it's the face of people."* These responses indicate that emojis serve as substitutes for physical expressions, bridging the gap left by the absence of face-to-face interaction in digital communication.

In addition to enhancing emotional expression, emojis also play a key role in reducing ambiguity and enhancing clarity. Participant 6.4 pointed out, *"If we type 'okay' with a smiling emoji, readers will understand it clearly,"* highlighting the importance of emojis in preventing misunderstandings. The open-ended responses similarly emphasized how emojis make emotional messages more vivid and relatable, ensuring the intended tone is conveyed. However, some participants acknowledged challenges in interpretation. For example, participant 8.3 noted, *"Without text, it's also misinterpreted. If someone smiles at us, we don't really know what they think,"* demonstrating that emojis, while helpful, are not immune to misinterpretation.

The data also reveals that emojis are particularly effective in managing emotions within personal relationships. Participants reported using emojis to convey love, joy, or boredom. Participant 5.2 noted, *"The emoji I use frequently, if I were to use one, would be a heart symbol,"* while participant 7.9 explained how emojis contribute to emotional engagement: *"When I chat with my friend or others, I will be happy if I see the emojis."* These responses highlight that emojis are not only emotional tools but also relational markers that foster intimacy and engagement in personal interactions.

While emojis are generally viewed as effective for emotional expression, participants acknowledged that their use is not without challenges. In certain contexts, such as personal relationships, emojis were occasionally misinterpreted. For instance, participant 8.5 shared, *"The squinting eyes emoji upset me, so I called my partner to check if they understood us,"* illustrating how the intended meaning of emojis can vary between individuals. This aligns with insights from the open-ended responses, where participants expressed concern about the potential for misunderstanding when emojis are used without accompanying text.

In conclusion, the analyze of data from open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews confirms that emojis play an integral role in emotional expression on Facebook. They act as both complements and replacements for text, mimicking non-verbal cues and enhancing message clarity. Emojis also foster emotional engagement in personal relationships, strengthening emotional bonds between users. However, participants acknowledged that the effectiveness of emojis depends on the communication context, and challenges related to ambiguity or misinterpretation can arise. Overall, the findings underscore that while emojis are

powerful tools for expressing emotions, their impact is shaped by the dynamics of the conversation and the relationship between communicators.

4.2.2.2 Enhancement of Communication

The theme of Enhancement of Communication emerges prominently across both the open-ended responses and semi-structured interview data, reflecting participants' perception that emojis enrich digital conversations by adding clarity, emotional depth, and engagement to messages. The integration of insights from both sources offers a deeper understanding of how emojis improve communication on Facebook.

Participants in the open-ended responses described emojis as tools that make messages more meaningful and enjoyable. For instance, one participant noted, *"Emojis can represent emotions and actions in messages, making conversations more engaging"* (Appendix A #51). This idea of enhancing meaning was echoed in another response: *"Emojis enhance the meaning of messages and save time expressing feelings in conversations"* (Appendix A #21). These responses suggest that emojis improve communication not only by conveying emotional content but also by making messages more concise and engaging.

The semi-structured interviews provided further confirmation of this perspective. Participants frequently mentioned that emojis make messages clearer and more expressive. For example, participant 2.1 remarked, *"Emojis make text messages look nicer and convey meaning better,"* and participant 2.4 emphasized, *"Emojis make the meaning of messages more realistic and clear."* These responses suggest that emojis help reduce ambiguity, ensuring that the sender's intent is communicated more effectively.

In addition to enhancing clarity, several participants discussed how emojis prevent miscommunication. Participant 3.2 explained, *"Text alone might make messages too static, leading to misunderstandings,"* highlighting the limitations of text-only communication. Similarly, participant 6.4 mentioned, *"If we type 'okay' with a smiling emoji, readers will understand it clearly,"* demonstrating that emojis add emotional cues that mitigate potential misunderstandings. This aligns with the open-ended responses, which emphasized that emojis add emotional nuance to digital conversations, preventing messages from being interpreted differently than intended.

Another important insight from the interview data is the idea that emojis complement text-based communication rather than replace it entirely. Participant 3.7 noted, *"There must be text to make the conversation genuine. But if we use emojis, it's more playful,"* suggesting that combining emojis with text results in more meaningful communication. Similarly, participant 6.9 observed, *"It can use but mixed it, I think maybe better,"* underscoring the complementary nature of emojis in enhancing textual messages.

Participants also mentioned that emojis contribute to more engaging and enjoyable interactions by making messages visually appealing and emotionally rich. As participant 7.8 expressed, *"Most of the time, emojis turn a message from being plain into a more colorful one."* Others agreed that emojis positively impact communication, with several participants, such as 7.3 and 7.10, acknowledging the significance of emojis in making conversations more dynamic and lively.

While emojis generally enhance communication, some participants identified specific challenges. Participant 8.4 shared an instance where a friend used an emoji with a teacher to make the message clearer, but it was misinterpreted, showing that even when intended to clarify, emojis may not always achieve the desired outcome. Additionally, participant 6.7 remarked that while emojis have a positive impact, *"It would be better if there were text included,"* indicating that emojis alone may not suffice in all situations.

In conclusion, the analyze of data from the open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews confirms that emojis significantly enhance communication on Facebook by adding emotional depth, reducing ambiguity, and making interactions more engaging. Emojis complement text to create messages that are clearer, more expressive, and enjoyable for both the sender and receiver. However, participants also recognized that while emojis enhance communication, they work best when used in combination with text to ensure accurate interpretation. These findings underscore the vital role of emojis in enriching digital communication, facilitating both emotional expression and message clarity in online interactions.

4.2.2.3 Convenience and Time-Saving

The theme of Convenience and Time-Saving emerges from both the open-ended responses and semi-structured interviews, reflecting the practical role of emojis in digital communication. Participants consistently emphasized how emojis streamline interactions by allowing them to express thoughts and emotions quickly, reducing the effort required for typing long messages.

In the open-ended responses, participants highlighted the efficiency of emojis in communication. One participant remarked, *"Using emojis can replace words and save time while showing our emotions"* (Appendix A #36). Another noted, *"They save time in responses sometimes"* (Appendix A #67). These statements reflect how emojis not only convey emotional content but also serve as efficient tools for quick responses, making them ideal for fast-paced digital conversations.

The semi-structured interview data aligns with this idea, with several participants mentioning the convenience of using emojis. Participant 2.2 explained, *"Sometimes I'm lazy to type, and emojis can express my feelings,"* illustrating how emojis reduce the cognitive load of composing detailed messages. Similarly, participant 3.6 noted, *"It can convey a lot because it helps readers visualize when sending messages,"* suggesting that emojis enhance efficiency by visually communicating meaning without the need for lengthy explanations.

Participants also acknowledged that while emojis are helpful for convenience, they are not always a complete replacement for text-based communication. For example, participant 6.1 remarked, *"It can replace well, but not entirely,"* and participant 6.2 observed, *"I think it only replaces some things."* These responses indicate that while emojis save time, certain situations still require more detailed or nuanced text-based communication to avoid misunderstandings.

Additionally, participants discussed how emojis can complement greetings and everyday expressions. Participant 5.9 expressed a preference for *"Hello emojis,"* highlighting the convenience of using familiar symbols for routine communication. Similarly, participant 6.9 suggested, *"It can use but mixed it, I think maybe better,"* reinforcing the idea that combining emojis with text results in more effective and clear communication.

While most participants found emojis to be straightforward and efficient, a few indicated that the ease of emoji communication could vary depending on context. Participant 4.3 pointed out, *"When talking to people of different ages, we still have facial expressions similar to using emojis,"* suggesting that emojis may be more or less effective depending on the audience. However, participant 8.6 mentioned, *"No, not yet. I think it's really understandable or maybe I'm lucky,"* indicating that in most cases, emojis are convenient and easily understood.

In conclusion, the analyze of data from the open-ended responses and semi-structured interviews demonstrates that emojis offer both convenience and time-saving benefits by enabling quick and efficient communication. Participants appreciated the ability of emojis to convey emotions and messages succinctly, reducing the effort required for typing. However, the findings also reveal that emojis, while efficient, are not always a perfect substitute for text and work best when combined with written content. Overall, the use of emojis enhances digital interactions by balancing expressiveness and efficiency, facilitating seamless communication in a fast-paced environment.

4.2.2.4 Fun and Engagement

The theme of Fun and Engagement is strongly reflected in both the open-ended responses and the semi-structured interviews, showing that emojis play a key role in making digital conversations enjoyable, playful, and engaging. Participants consistently highlighted how emojis contribute to the liveliness and friendliness of interactions, fostering a sense of connection and enhancing the social experience.

In the open-ended responses, participants emphasized the enjoyable nature of emojis. One respondent remarked, *"Using emojis is fun; it makes the conversation more friendly and spicy"* (Appendix A #29), suggesting that emojis add a playful tone to conversations, making them more dynamic. Another participant noted, *"Emojis are a way to express emotions, adding color to conversations"* (Appendix A #59), indicating that emojis not only express emotions but also visually enhance interactions, making them more vibrant and engaging.

The semi-structured interview data aligns with these insights, with several participants acknowledging that emojis make communication more playful and enjoyable. Participant 3.7 mentioned, *"It's a combination. There must be text to make the conversation*

genuine. But if we use emojis, it's more playful," reinforcing the idea that emojis add a fun element without replacing meaningful textual communication. Similarly, participant 4.7 shared, *"If it's talking to close friends, emojis will be there. But if it's talking to adults, I might use more formal emojis, like bowing,"* highlighting how emojis contribute to lighthearted interactions among friends.

Participants also discussed the social and emotional engagement facilitated by emojis, particularly within friend groups. For example, participant 5.4 stated, *"It's a crying emoji. Mostly used with friends, I use the crying emoji for any feeling because it's funny. In friend groups, it's for cuteness and being playful. Everyone knows each other well."* This illustrates how emojis foster familiarity and bonding by adding humor and playfulness to group interactions. Additionally, participants 5.6 and 5.8 both mentioned their preference for the "laughing with tears" emoji, emphasizing that it is both funny and cute, which enhances the enjoyment of communication.

Participants also noted that emojis can create an immersive experience by simulating face-to-face interactions. As participant 6.5 observed, *"I think it's similar to chatting with friends in real life. We can really see our friend's face,"* and participant 6.6 added, *"It helps us chat with friends as if we're really together and can see each other's faces."* These responses suggest that emojis mimic the non-verbal elements of in-person interactions, making online conversations feel more personal and engaging.

Moreover, several participants highlighted the emotional uplift provided by emojis. Participant 7.9 noted, *"The reason is that when I chat with my friend or others, I will be happy if I see the emojis,"* underscoring how emojis contribute to emotional well-being by making conversations more enjoyable. This sentiment aligns with participant 7.8's observation that *"Most of the time, emojis turn a message from being plain into a more colorful one,"* reflecting the idea that emojis visually enhance messages and make them more engaging.

In conclusion, the analyze of data from open-ended responses and semi-structured interviews reveals that emojis significantly contribute to the fun and engagement of digital communication. Participants appreciate the playful, colorful, and lively tone that emojis bring to their interactions, especially in personal relationships and social settings. Emojis also enhance emotional engagement by making conversations feel more immersive and fostering

positive emotions. However, participants recognize that while emojis add enjoyment to casual conversations, their use may vary depending on the social context, with more formal communication requiring a different approach. Overall, the findings demonstrate that emojis are a powerful tool for enhancing engagement and enjoyment in digital interactions.

4.2.2.5 Formality and Appropriateness

The theme of Formality and Appropriateness emerges clearly across both the open-ended responses and semi-structured interview data. Participants recognize that while emojis are effective tools for communication, their appropriateness depends heavily on the context, particularly in formal or professional settings. The data reveals a shared concern about the potential for emojis to undermine credibility and professionalism, highlighting the need to adjust emoji usage based on the audience and situation.

In the open-ended responses, participants emphasized that emojis are more suited for casual conversations than formal interactions. One participant explained, *"Emojis help convey emotions, but I don't use them in formal conversations or with teachers because they seem less respectful"* (Appendix A #45). This indicates a perception that emojis, while valuable, might compromise the tone of professionalism or respect in certain contexts. Another participant cautioned, *"Emojis are good but should be used appropriately because some might be misunderstood"* (Appendix A #62), underscoring the importance of using emojis thoughtfully to avoid potential misinterpretation in formal interactions.

The semi-structured interviews provide additional insights into how participants navigate the use of emojis in different contexts. Many participants acknowledged that their emoji usage varies depending on the relationship or formality of the interaction. For example, participant 2.8 mentioned, *"Personally, I only use them with friends. But with people I'm not close with, I don't use them much,"* demonstrating that emojis are reserved for informal interactions. Similarly, participant 4.9 noted, *"If I talk with the teacher or adult, maybe I will use fewer emojis or text only,"* suggesting that participants consciously limit emoji use in professional settings to maintain appropriateness.

Several participants emphasized that emojis can have an impact on credibility in formal situations. Participant 4.5 explained, *"For instance, in official communications, we might not be able to use emojis for professionalism and credibility. But with partners or friends, we can use them to show affection."* This response highlights the need to differentiate between personal and professional communication, using emojis selectively to align with the expected tone. Participant 4.6 similarly noted, *"I think we should separate them for credibility. I'm afraid they'll think we're playing too much,"* expressing concern that excessive emoji use might be perceived as unprofessional or frivolous.

The interviews also reflect the participants' awareness of the nuanced impact emojis can have, depending on the context. Participant 4.7 remarked, *"It depends on the context. If it's talking to close friends, emojis will be there. But if it's talking to adults, I might use more formal emojis, like bowing,"* indicating that participants adapt their emoji usage based on the nature of the relationship. Participant 4.4 further reinforced this idea by stating, *"For official purposes, we should avoid using them sometimes,"* suggesting that emojis are consciously avoided in settings where professionalism is paramount.

There were also instances where the use of emojis in formal contexts led to misunderstandings. Participant 8.4 shared an example where a friend sent an emoji to a teacher, and the teacher responded by questioning whether the student was *"playing."* This demonstrates the potential for emojis to create unintended interpretations when used inappropriately in professional interactions. Similarly, participant 8.1 reflected, *"In situations when I'm talking about work with my teachers, sometimes I secretly think they're free. But if I add an emoji that doesn't seem like they're free, it might be better,"* indicating that participants carefully consider the appropriateness of emojis to avoid miscommunication.

In conclusion, the analyze of data from open-ended responses and semi-structured interviews reveals that participants view the use of emojis as context-dependent, with a clear distinction between formal and informal settings. While emojis are effective in conveying emotions and fostering engagement in casual conversations, their use in professional or formal contexts is often limited to maintain respect, credibility, and appropriateness. Participants demonstrate an awareness of the nuanced impact emojis can have on the tone of communication and acknowledge the need to adjust their usage accordingly. Overall, the findings highlight the

importance of using emojis thoughtfully to align with the expectations of different communication settings.

4.2.2.6 Ambiguity and Misinterpretation

The theme of Ambiguity and Misinterpretation highlights a recurring challenge in the use of emojis: while they enhance communication by adding emotional depth, their meanings can be open to interpretation, leading to misunderstandings. Both the open-ended responses and semi-structured interviews reveal that emojis, despite their usefulness, introduce a layer of complexity to communication, as users might interpret them differently based on context, culture, or individual understanding.

In the open-ended responses, participants expressed concern over the ambiguity of emojis, noting that the lack of a standardized "language" could lead to miscommunication. One respondent explained, *"Emojis have no language, so sometimes they might not convey the intended feeling"* (Appendix A #17). Another remarked, *"Some emojis can have multiple meanings, which can be confusing"* (Appendix A #103). These responses suggest that while emojis are widely used to enhance messages, their flexibility in meaning can sometimes lead to unintended interpretations.

The semi-structured interviews provided further examples of how ambiguity can arise. Participant 3.8 noted, *"If used in important conversations, we must use text because if we only use emojis, it can be interpreted in various ways,"* illustrating that relying solely on emojis in serious conversations may lead to confusion. Similarly, participant 2.3 mentioned, *"Text alone might make messages too static, leading to misunderstandings,"* suggesting that both text and emojis carry risks of miscommunication when not used appropriately.

Several participants described specific situations where emoji usage led to misinterpretation. Participant 8.4 shared, *"A friend sent an emoji to the teacher, and the teacher said, 'Is your friend playing?' My friend just wanted to make the message clearer."* This example demonstrates that even when used with good intentions, emojis can be perceived differently, especially in formal settings. Participant 8.5 experienced a similar issue with the squinting eyes emoji, explaining, *"Yes, when talking to my partner, it's the squinting eyes emoji. I got upset and called to check if they really understood us."* These cases highlight how emojis can inadvertently

create emotional misunderstandings, requiring additional clarification through other communication channels.

Participants also reflected on the difficulty of understanding the intent behind emojis, especially when they are used without accompanying text. Participant 8.3 noted, *"Yes, I only have one emoji. It represents my facial expressions truly, but without text, it's also misinterpreted. For example, if someone smiles at us, we don't really know what they think about us."* Similarly, participant 8.7 stated, *"Yes, sometimes if there's only one emoji, I'm secretly confused because emojis have their own meanings,"* emphasizing that without textual context, even familiar emojis can be interpreted in unexpected ways.

Furthermore, the interview data suggests that the interpretation of emojis can vary across different groups. Participant 4.2 observed, *"In my opinion, it does have an impact, especially in communication with different groups. It may also depend on age,"* pointing out that demographic factors can influence how emojis are understood. Participant 6.3 reinforced this idea, stating, *"As readers, we want to know for real because it's interpreted in many ways,"* reflecting the inherent uncertainty in emoji interpretation.

In conclusion, the synthesis of data from the open-ended responses and semi-structured interviews confirms that ambiguity and misinterpretation are significant challenges in emoji communication. While emojis enhance communication by adding emotional nuance, their meanings are often subjective, leading to potential misunderstandings. Participants emphasized the importance of using emojis thoughtfully, especially in formal contexts or when clarity is essential. The findings underscore the need to balance emojis with text to ensure accurate communication and minimize the risk of misinterpretation in digital interactions.

4.2.3 Real Chat Data Analysis

The analysis of real chat data provided authentic insights into emoji usage patterns in natural communication settings. Participants' Facebook Messenger conversations were analyzed to understand how they use emojis in discussions about university, Adolescent Relationships, and Alcoholic influence.

4.2.3.1 Expression of Emotions

Adolescent relationships (9/10 combination of text and emojis): Participants heavily relied on the combination of text and emojis when discussing relationships. This aligns with the interview data where participants emphasized that emojis help convey emotional nuance and affection, particularly in personal relationships. Participant 4.5 noted, "With partners or friends, we can use them to show affection." The frequent use of emojis here reflects participants' reliance on visual cues to express emotions like love, happiness, or even frustration.

Alcohol influence (5/10 combination of text and emojis): The partial use of emojis alongside text suggests that participants express emotions associated with drinking experiences—whether humor or regret—through emojis. The remaining half, who used text-only, may reflect either a more serious tone or formal intent in these conversations. This data aligns with the mixed responses in the interviews, such as participant 8.8, who mentioned, "Sometimes when chatting with my partner, I don't know if they're speaking from the heart or just kidding."

4.2.3.2 Enhancement of Communication

University topic (10/10 text-only): In university-related conversations, participants avoided emojis altogether, suggesting that they rely more on clear, text-based communication for academic or formal discussions. This reflects the findings from interviews where participants expressed caution about using emojis in formal settings. Participant 4.4 explained, "For official purposes, we should avoid using them sometimes." The preference for text-only in this context emphasizes that clarity and professionalism take precedence over emotional expression.

Adolescent relationships (9/10 combination of text and emojis): In these interactions, emojis likely enhance communication by adding emotional layers to conversations, ensuring that messages are not misinterpreted. This supports earlier interview data, such as participant 6.4's remark: "If we type 'okay' with a smiling emoji, readers will understand it clearly." The combination of text and emojis ensures that the tone of the message is conveyed effectively.

4.2.3.3 Convenience and Time-Saving

Alcohol influence (5/10 combination of text and emojis): In conversations influenced by alcohol, participants may have found it easier to use emojis to communicate quickly and efficiently, without the need for lengthy explanations. Participant 2.2 shared, "Sometimes I'm lazy to type, and emojis can express my feelings." The partial use of emojis indicates that they serve as a shortcut to convey emotions or tone efficiently.

4.2.3.4 Fun and Engagement

Adolescent relationships (9/10 combination of text and emojis): The frequent use of emojis in these conversations reflects the participants' desire to make their interactions more playful and engaging. This aligns with participant 3.7's statement: "If we use emojis, it's more playful." Relationships between adolescents often involve humor, affection, and emotional expression, and emojis enhance the fun aspect of these interactions, making them more enjoyable.

4.2.3.5 Formality and Appropriateness

University topic (10/10 text-only): The absence of emojis in university-related conversations reflects participants' awareness of formal communication expectations. As participant 4.9 noted, "If I talk with the teacher of adult, maybe I will use fewer emojis or text only." This shows that participants consciously adapt their communication style to maintain professionalism and appropriateness in academic contexts.

4.2.3.6 Ambiguity and Misinterpretation

Alcohol influence (5/10 combination of text and emojis): Conversations involving alcohol might involve humor or sarcasm, which could be open to interpretation. Participant 3.2 remarked, "Typing can also lead to misunderstandings, but readers interpret differently." The combination of text and emojis in these conversations suggests that participants try to reduce ambiguity but might still encounter challenges in ensuring their intended tone is understood.

The real chat data provides further evidence of the nuanced use of emojis across different conversation topics. In formal contexts, such as university-related discussions, text-only communication dominates, reflecting participants' preference for clarity and professionalism. In conversations about adolescent relationships, the frequent use of text and emojis demonstrates the importance of emotional expression and engagement in personal interactions. For alcohol-related conversations, participants show a mixed approach, with some relying on text-only and others using emojis to add tone and clarity. This analysis supports the themes identified in previous sections: participants use emojis strategically to enhance communication, save time, foster engagement, and manage ambiguity, but they are mindful of formality and appropriateness, particularly in academic or professional contexts.

4.4 Chapter summary

The complex dynamics of emoji usage among Thai undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger. It elaborates on how emojis are integrated into their digital communication, primarily enhancing message clarity, emotional expression, and interaction engagement. The chapter demonstrates that the prevalent form and the factors of communication combines text and emojis, with undergraduate students often using emojis to convey nuanced emotions and tone, particularly in informal contexts. However, their use varies significantly depending on the conversation's context, such as academic discussions or sensitive topics like Adolescent Relationships and Alcoholic influence, where the choice and frequency of emojis differ. Despite the benefits, challenges such as ambiguity and the potential for misinterpretation persist, highlighting emojis as a double-edged sword in digital communication. Overall, emojis significantly impact the tone and mood of interactions, underlining their crucial role in modern digital exchanges among students. Chapter 5 Conclusion and Discussion will focus on the synthesized findings and offer insights into the broader implications of emoji usage in digital communication among Thai undergraduate students.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher will focus on a comprehensive exploration of several critical sections: 5.1 Summary of Findings, where the researcher will recapitulate the key results of the current study; 5.2 Discussion, providing an in‑depth discussion of the implications drawn from the current study; 5.3 Implications for Practice, highlighting the practical applications of the study findings; 5.4 Limitations of the Study, acknowledging the constraints and challenges encountered; 5.5 Areas for Future Research, proposing potential directions for subsequent studies; and finally, 5.6 Conclusion, summarizing the overall contributions and significance of the current study. Through these sections, the researcher aims to provide a detailed reflection on the study findings, discuss their relevance in the context of existing literature and theories, and outline practical implications and recommendations for enhancing digital communication practices.

5.1 Summary of Findings

In the current study, the researcher explored the prevalence and patterns of emoji usage among undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger, focusing on the factors influencing their communication choices. The research employed a mixed‑methods approach, incorporating questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and real chat data analysis.

The study revealed a strong preference among undergraduate students for using a combination of text and emojis in their Facebook Messenger communications. This preference was consistently observed across various data collection methods, including ranking prompts, fill-in-the-blank questions, and multiple-choice questions. Specifically, 55.2% of participants ranked this combination as their most preferred communication mode, and 51.7% expressed this preference in fill-in-the-blank questions.

Regarding the frequency of emoji usage, the data indicated that emojis are a regular feature in students' digital interactions, with 50.3% using them "sometimes" and 35.7% using them "most of the time." Emojis were particularly prevalent in discussions on sensitive topics such as sexual relationships and alcoholic influence, where they helped convey emotions and nuances that might be difficult to express through text alone.

The primary factors for using emojis among undergraduate students were to express emotions (30.1%) and convey specific meanings (9.8%). The multifaceted role of emojis in enhancing communication was evident, with many students (50.3%) acknowledging their importance in digital conversations. Most students (59.4%) perceived emojis as enhancing their communication by making interactions more expressive and clearer. However, some viewed emojis as hindering communication (14.7%) or having no effect (6.3%).

The current study also highlighted significant contextual variations in emoji usage. For academic discussions, text-only communication was more prevalent (59.4%), reflecting a preference for clarity and precision. Conversely, sensitive topics saw a higher use of combined text and emojis. Attitudes toward emoji usage were diverse; while 27.3% of participants had a positive view, seeing emojis as valuable communication tools, a substantial number (51%) were ambivalent, reflecting mixed feelings about their impact. A minority (16.1%) held negative views, emphasizing challenges in interpreting emojis or a preference for text-based communication.

Challenges and misunderstandings were noted, particularly due to the ambiguous nature of some emojis and contextual challenges, especially in formal or professional settings where emojis might be seen as less appropriate. Analysis of real chat data corroborated the patterns observed in the survey and interview findings, showing that participants used emojis to enhance emotional expression and clarity, particularly in discussions on sensitive topics.

Overall, these findings provide valuable insights into the communicative practices of undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger, underscoring the integral role of emojis in digital communication.

5.2 Discussion

This section interprets the study's findings in relation to the research questions and objectives, comparing the results with existing literature and theories. It also addresses any unexpected findings and discusses their implications.

5.2.1 Research Questions and Objectives

The primary research questions aimed to understand the prevalence and patterns of emoji usage among undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger and identify key factors influencing their communication choices. The current study sought to explore the role of emojis in digital communication, particularly their perceived impact on message clarity, emotional expression, and the contextual variations in their usage.

5.2.2 Emojis can convey emotions better than words

The findings from the open-ended responses, semi-structured interviews, and real chat data consistently highlight the participants' belief that emojis are powerful tools for conveying emotions, often more effectively than words. Emojis add emotional nuance, provide visual cues, and prevent misinterpretation by complementing or replacing textual content, particularly in digital conversations where tone and non-verbal expressions are absent. This section discusses how participants across different contexts found emojis to be more effective than words in communicating emotions, using rich examples from the collected data.

Participants repeatedly emphasized the role of emojis in expressing emotions that are difficult to articulate with words alone. As one participant remarked, *"It's always good to use both because it can help me convey all of my feelings in the text"* (Appendix A #2). Another participant explained, *"Emojis can replace emotions that we do not want to express in words"* (Appendix A #19). These responses reflect how emojis offer a visual shortcut to convey complex emotions without requiring detailed explanations, reinforcing the idea that emojis provide a more immediate and intuitive expression of feelings.

This perspective was further supported by interview data. For example, participant 2.3 noted, *"I prefer using emojis to express my feelings and tone,"* while participant 2.7 shared, *"Sometimes plain text can't convey our emotions. I like using emojis to express real feelings."* These insights indicate that emojis enhance emotional clarity by preventing the flatness of text-based communication. Similarly, participant 3.4 remarked, *"If we're crying or feeling something, using a crying emoji enhances the feeling,"* demonstrating how emojis amplify emotional depth and help convey nuanced sentiments.

The real chat data also confirms the importance of emojis in emotionally rich conversations, particularly in personal contexts. In the category of adolescent relationships, 9 out of 10 participants combined text with emojis, suggesting that emojis are essential in expressing affection, humor, and emotional nuances. This aligns with participant 4.5's observation that, *"With partners or friends, we can use them to show affection."* The frequent use of emojis in these interactions underscores their role in fostering emotional connections, which might not be easily achieved through text alone.

Emojis also play a critical role in managing emotional ambiguity, ensuring that the intended tone of a message is conveyed accurately. Participant 6.4 mentioned, *"If we type 'okay' with a smiling emoji, readers will understand it clearly,"* illustrating how emojis prevent misinterpretation by providing emotional context. Additionally, participant 7.1 noted, *"Sometimes if we type neutrally, we won't know how we feel,"* reinforcing the idea that emojis act as a bridge to express emotions clearly, which text alone may fail to achieve.

However, while emojis can effectively convey emotions, participants acknowledged occasional challenges. Participant 8.3 shared, *"Without text, it's also misinterpreted. If someone smiles at us, we don't really know what they think."* This highlights that although emojis are helpful, they are not immune to misinterpretation, especially when used without accompanying text. In these situations, participants found that combining text with emojis created the most meaningful communication, reducing the risk of emotional ambiguity. This was reflected in real chat data, where participants frequently blended text and emojis, especially in emotionally sensitive conversations such as those related to relationships.

In contrast, formal contexts, such as university-related discussions, saw little to no emoji use (10/10 text-only), indicating that participants consciously adapt their communication style based on the context. While emojis are effective for emotional expression, participants recognize the need for professionalism in formal interactions, as participant 4.9 stated, *"If I talk with the teacher or adult, maybe I will use fewer emojis or text only."* This demonstrates that while emojis excel in casual and personal conversations, their use is often limited in professional settings to maintain respect and clarity.

In conclusion, the data strongly supports the notion that emojis convey emotions more effectively than words in many contexts, particularly in personal and informal conversations. Emojis enhance communication by adding emotional nuance, preventing misunderstandings, and fostering engagement. However, participants also acknowledge that while emojis excel at emotional expression, they are not always appropriate or sufficient in every context, particularly in formal settings. The strategic use of both text and emojis emerges as the most effective communication approach, balancing emotional clarity with contextual appropriateness.

5.2.3 Suitability for Use in the Thai Context

The findings from the open-ended responses, semi-structured interviews, and real chat data reveal that emojis are highly relevant and widely embraced in the Thai context, especially for personal communication. Participants demonstrated a nuanced understanding of how emojis fit within the cultural expectations of politeness, emotional expression, and relationship management, adapting their usage according to both social relationships and communication settings. This discussion explores how emojis align with Thailand's cultural communication norms, while also highlighting challenges related to formality and potential misinterpretation.

In Thai culture, expressing emotions indirectly and maintaining harmony are important aspects of communication. The participants' responses reflect how emojis play a valuable role in expressing emotions subtly and effectively. For example, participant 2.10 remarked, *"Because I'm an energetic girl,"* explaining her frequent use of emojis to convey her personality and mood. Similarly, the real chat data on adolescent relationships showed that 9 out of 10 participants preferred using a combination of text and emojis, indicating that emojis are essential tools for expressing affection and maintaining emotional connections among close friends and partners. This is consistent with the cultural emphasis on maintaining warm, friendly interactions and avoiding direct confrontation.

The preference for emojis in informal conversations aligns with Thailand's communication style, which often favors non-verbal cues and gestures. Participants noted that emojis help express emotions that might otherwise be difficult to articulate in words. As

participant 4.5 shared, *"With partners or friends, we can use them to show affection,"* illustrating how emojis foster emotional engagement. This corresponds with the real chat data on alcohol-influenced conversations, where participants used a mix of text and emojis (5/10) to add humor or casual tone to their messages. Such usage highlights the versatility of emojis in lightening the mood and making conversations more enjoyable, aligning with Thai social interactions that often favor light-heartedness and humor.

However, participants also emphasized the need for appropriate emoji use depending on the social context. Thailand's culture places significant importance on respecting authority figures and maintaining formality in professional settings. This was evident in the university-related real chat data, where all participants (10/10) used text-only communication, demonstrating an awareness that emojis might be perceived as too casual or disrespectful in academic contexts. Participant 4.9 noted, *"If I talk with the teacher or adult, maybe I will use fewer emojis or text only,"* reflecting the participants' careful adjustment of communication styles to fit the expectations of formal interactions. This finding aligns with the open-ended response that stated, *"Emojis help convey emotions, but I don't use them in formal conversations or with teachers because they seem less respectful"* (Appendix A #45).

Participants also mentioned that misinterpretation of emojis can be influenced by age and social hierarchy, both of which are important factors in Thai communication. For instance, participant 4.7 commented, *"If it's talking to close friends, emojis will be there. But if it's talking to adults, I might use more formal emojis, like bowing."* This demonstrates participants' awareness that emojis need to be adapted based on the status of the recipient, aligning with Thailand's hierarchical culture.

Moreover, the ambiguity associated with certain emojis adds another layer of complexity to communication. Participant 8.4 shared an example where a friend sent an emoji to a teacher, leading to confusion: *"The teacher said, 'Is your friend playing?' My friend just wanted to make the message clearer."* This instance reflects the cultural sensitivity required when using emojis in formal or intergenerational communication. Participants recognized that while emojis enhance communication in casual contexts, they can sometimes introduce unintended meanings, particularly in hierarchical interactions where respect and clarity are crucial.

In conclusion, emojis are well-suited for use in the Thai context, especially in personal and informal interactions where emotional expression, humor, and engagement are valued. However, participants demonstrate an acute awareness of adapting their emoji usage to fit different social contexts. In professional or formal settings, such as academic communication, emojis are used sparingly or avoided altogether to maintain respect and appropriateness. The data highlights that while emojis enhance communication in Thailand, users must navigate social dynamics carefully, considering factors such as age, hierarchy, and cultural norms to ensure effective and respectful communication.

5.2.4 Cross Cultural Insights

The current study offers significant insights into emoji usage among Thai undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger, contributing to linguistic research by showcasing the intricate relationship between text and emojis in digital communication. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, the findings provide a nuanced understanding of how emojis enhance emotional expression and contextual clarity in Thailand, enriching the linguistic study of online communication.

The current study underscores the complexity and cultural variability of digital communication, emphasizing that emojis play a crucial role in maintaining positive interactions, enhancing emotional engagement, and clarifying context. Emojis are not merely visual elements but essential tools that facilitate effective communication within specific cultural frameworks.

The findings reveal that cultural norms and social dynamics significantly influence emoji usage among Thai students. In comparison with other cultures, Thai students primarily use emojis to maintain social harmony, express emotions, and ensure contextual clarity in conversations. Their preference for politeness and positive interaction aligns with the Thai cultural focus on interpersonal harmony. This pattern mirrors the findings of Algharabali and Taqi (2018) in Kuwait, where emojis help soften potentially harsh messages, illustrating how they function as tools for mitigating conflict and promoting politeness in both Thai and Kuwaiti cultures.

In contrast, Alshboul and Rababah (2021) found that in Jordan, emojis serve a different function by reinforcing textual messages and adding emphasis. While the emotional

functions of emojis are similar across cultures, the specific ways they are used reflect differing cultural norms. Similarly, Cramer et al. (2016) observed that in the United States, emojis are frequently employed to communicate subtle emotional states or to adjust the tone of messages. However, these nuanced uses may lead to misinterpretation in cross‑cultural interactions, as the intentions of American senders do not always align with how the emojis are understood in Thai or Jordanian contexts.

The current study also demonstrates that platform dynamics influence emoji usage. Tian et al. (2017) found that on Facebook, emojis are frequently used to express a wide range of emotions and are closely linked to reaction features such as "like" or "love." This platform‑specific usage contrasts with the preferences of Thai students, who tend to use emojis more in personal and academic communication. These findings highlight the importance of considering both platform-specific and cultural factors when analyzing emoji usage, as they interact to shape communication patterns in distinctive ways.

Despite its valuable insights, the current study's focus on Thai undergraduate students limits the generalizability of its findings. Future research should aim to explore a more diverse population to extend these insights to other groups. Additionally, incorporating objective data collection methods, such as chat log analysis, could help mitigate the potential biases inherent in self-reported data.

Overall, the current study enriches our understanding of the dynamics of digital communication and emphasizes the importance of cultural contexts in interpreting emoji use. It offers practical pathways for linguists and communication professionals to develop culturally tailored digital communication strategies, ensuring more effective communication

5.2.5 Interpretation of Findings
5.2.5.1 Prevalence and Preference for Emoji Usage

The finding that most undergraduate students prefer a combination of text and emojis is consistent with previous studies, such as Algharabali and Taqi (2018), which emphasized the role of evaluative emojis in enriching digital communication. This suggests that emojis play a significant role in enhancing the expressiveness and emotional clarity of messages,

supporting the broader literature that highlights the benefits of multimodal communication, where text is combined with visual symbols to improve message conveyance.

5.2.6 Frequency and Context of Emoji Usage

The frequent use of emojis, especially in sensitive topics like adolescent relationships and discussions involving alcohol, aligns with studies that have shown individuals often use visual elements to express emotions and nuances that are difficult to convey through text alone. This indicates that emojis are an essential tool for managing tone and emotional content in digital conversations, reinforcing the findings in the existing literature that emphasize the utility of visual aids in communication.

5.2.7 Motivations for Emoji Usage

The primary motivations for using emojis to express emotions and convey specific meanings are consistent with theoretical frameworks like Multimodal Discourse Analysis and Conversational Analysis. These frameworks suggest that emojis function as semiotic resources that enhance meaning-making in digital communication. The students' use of emojis to add emotional depth and clarity to their messages aligns with the literature that highlights the role of multiple modes of expression in enriching digital interactions.

5.2.8 Perceptions of Emoji Usage

The perception that emojis enhance communication by making interactions more expressive and clear aligns with studies such as Derks, Fischer, and Bos (2008), which found that emoticons improve message interpretation and emotional understanding in online communication. However, the mixed perceptions where some students viewed emojis as hindering communication or having no effect highlight the complexity and subjective nature of emoji interpretation. This suggests that while emojis are generally beneficial, their effectiveness can vary based on individual preferences and specific communication contexts, echoing the findings of previous research on the nuanced roles of emojis.

5.2.9 Contextual Variations in Emoji Usage

The preference for text‑only communication in academic discussions and the combination of text and emojis in sensitive topics underscores the importance of context in digital communication. This finding supports theories of context‑dependent communication, which propose that the appropriateness and effectiveness of communication tools, such as emojis, depend on the situation and audience. The adaptability of students in using emojis strategically to enhance their communication in different contexts mirrors the literature's emphasis on context as a critical factor in communication effectiveness.

5.2.10 Diverse Attitudes Toward Emoji Usage

The diverse attitudes toward emoji usage, ranging from positive to ambivalent or negative, reflect the findings of studies like Kelly and Watts (2015), which noted that while emojis are appreciated for their expressiveness, they can also lead to misunderstandings due to their ambiguous nature. This diversity in attitudes highlights the need for further research into the factors that influence individual perceptions of emojis and their impact on communication, a topic that has been widely discussed in the literature on digital communication.

5.2.11 Challenges and Misunderstandings

The challenges and misunderstandings associated with emoji usage, particularly in formal or professional settings, highlight the limitations of emojis as communication tools. These findings align with the work of Herring and Dainas (2017), who emphasized the potential for miscommunication due to the questionable nature of emojis. This suggests that while emojis can enhance communication, their use and interpretation must be carefully considered to avoid ambiguity and misinterpretation, a concern well-documented in the literature.

5.2.12 Real Chat Data Analysis

The analysis of real chat data confirmed the patterns observed in the survey and interview findings, demonstrating the practical application of emojis in enhancing emotional expression and clarity in digital conversations. This aligns with the theoretical perspectives on

digital communication, which stress the importance of integrating visual elements to support and enrich textual communication, further reinforcing the study's relevance to existing literature.

5.2.13 Unexpected Findings and Implications

One unexpected finding was the significant number of students with ambivalent attitudes toward emoji usage. This ambivalence suggests that while emojis are widely used and appreciated, their impact on communication is not universally perceived as positive. This finding has important implications for the design and use of emojis in digital communication, indicating a need for more standardized and context-sensitive emoji representations to reduce ambiguity and enhance clarity, which the literature also suggests.

Additionally, the contextual variations in emoji usage, particularly the preference for text-only communication in academic settings, emphasize the importance of considering audience and context when using emojis. This suggests that digital literacy education should include guidelines on the appropriate use of emojis in different communication contexts to optimize their effectiveness and avoid misunderstandings, a recommendation supported by existing studies on digital communication practices.

In conclusion, the findings of the current study provide valuable insights into the role of emojis in digital communication among undergraduate students. While emojis generally enhance expressiveness and emotional clarity, their effectiveness is influenced by individual preferences, communication contexts, and the potential for misinterpretation. These insights align with the broader literature on digital communication and have important implications for the design of digital communication tools and the development of guidelines for effective emoji usage.

5.3 Implications for Practice

The findings of the current study have significant practical implications that can be applied across various real-world settings, including education, professional communication, digital platform design, and marketing. These implications emphasize the importance of understanding and leveraging emoji usage to enhance communication effectiveness in different contexts.

5.3.1 Educational Practices

This study used an experimental approach to explore how emojis function as an artificial digital language in educational settings, involving both teachers and students, as well as professionals from other fields like programming and economics. The findings show that emoji usage is extra, meaning its interpretation varies widely based on the user's background, such as age, profession, and language skills. This variability is influenced by the user's professional experience and mental frameworks. The study concludes that while emojis can enhance digital communication, their interpretation can differ significantly across different professional groups, suggesting potential benefits and limitations of emoji use in education and beyond (Makhachashvili, Kovpik, Bakhtina, Morze, & Shmeltser, 2020).

5.3.2 Professional Communication

Organizations should establish guidelines for using emojis in professional settings to enhance communication clarity and reduce misinterpretation. These guidelines should consider appropriate contexts, emoji types, and cultural sensitivities to improve cross-cultural communication. For instance, emojis can help convey tone in emails and messages, fostering better understanding among diverse teams (Doiron, 2018).

Furthermore, leveraging emojis in marketing communications can help companies connect with their target audiences more effectively. By understanding the role and impact of emojis, businesses can create engaging campaigns and gain insights into consumer behavior, ultimately enhancing their marketing strategies (Doiron, 2018). This integrated approach highlights the potential benefits of emojis in both professional and marketing contexts.

5.3.3 Digital Platform Design

Designers of digital communication platforms can optimize emoji integration by making them easily accessible and their meanings clear to users. Research shows that understanding emojis in text messages is crucial for effective communication (Kelly, 2015). Platforms could provide custom emoji sets tailored for specific contexts, like education or professional use, and enhance user interfaces with prediction and search features to improve the overall user experience and engagement (Kelly, 2015).

5.3.4 Social Media and Marketing

Social media managers and marketers can strategically use emojis to boost engagement, making posts more relatable and emotionally resonant, which encourages higher interaction rates. Brands can develop a unique emoji language to build a consistent and engaging brand voice, enhancing brand loyalty and connecting with younger audiences. However, emojis can be open to interpretation and vary across platforms, potentially leading to miscommunication. Understanding how different renderings are interpreted can help marketers tailor campaigns more effectively and ensure their messages resonate across diverse audiences (Miller et al., 2016).

5.3.5 Enhancing Digital Interaction

The study emphasizes the potential of emoji-first communication, particularly in fostering close relationships and creating engaging digital experiences. Emoji-first messaging, like that seen in Emojis Chat, is suited for casual, affectionate exchanges and maintaining relationships through quick updates. It also holds promise for applications beyond communication, such as life-logging and health monitoring. By encouraging thoughtful emoji use and understanding potential misinterpretations, users can make digital interactions more meaningful and avoid misunderstandings, enhancing the overall effectiveness of digital communication (Chikersal et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the practical implications of the current study emphasize the need for a nuanced understanding of emoji usage across various contexts. By incorporating the insights from this research into educational practices, professional communication, digital platform design, and emoji design, stakeholders can enhance the effectiveness and clarity of digital interactions, ultimately improving overall communication outcomes.

5.4 Limitations of the current Study

While the current study provides valuable insights into the use of emojis in digital communication among undergraduate students, several limitations should be acknowledged. These limitations highlight areas where future research can build on the current findings to develop a more comprehensive understanding of emoji usage.

5.4.1 Sample Size and Diversity

The study was conducted with a relatively small sample size, which may not fully represent the broader population of undergraduate students. As Bai et al. (2019) note in their systematic review, research on emojis has expanded significantly over the past two decades, encompassing a variety of research directions including the development, usage, function, and application of emojis in computer-mediated communication (CMC). This breadth underscores the potential variability in emoji use across different populations, suggesting that future research should aim to include a larger and more diverse sample to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study focused primarily on students from a single cultural background (Thailand), which may limit the applicability of the findings to other cultural contexts. Bai et al. (2019) emphasize that expanding the research to include participants from diverse cultural backgrounds would not only address this limitation but also provide a more comprehensive understanding of emoji usage on a global scale, as emoji functions and usage can vary significantly across different domains and cultures.

5.4.2 Self-Reported Data

The study's reliance on self-reported data in questionnaires and interviews may introduce biases, such as social desirability bias or recall bias, which could affect the accuracy of the findings. This limitation is well-documented in research literature, with various studies suggesting that self-reported methods can lead to skewed data due to participants' desire to present themselves in a favorable light or inaccuracies in remembering past behaviors (Firth, Nelson, Hale, Hill, & Helliwell, 2010). To address this, future studies should consider incorporating observational methods or analyzing actual communication data to validate the self-reported findings. For instance, real-time data collection or the use of digital tracking tools can provide more objective and reliable data, thereby enhancing the reliability of the results. Implementing such methodologies would align with current trends in social science research that prioritize the triangulation of data sources to improve study validity (Silver, D'Amato, & Wooldredge, 2022).

5.4.3 Context-Specific Findings

The study focused on Facebook Messenger as the primary platform for data collection, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other digital communication platforms with different user interfaces and emoji sets. Given the variability in platform designs and the specific sets of emojis they offer, these factors can significantly influence how emojis are used and interpreted (Erle, Schmid, Goslar, & Martin, 2022); (Miller et al., 2018). Future research should explore emoji usage across various platforms to identify platform-specific trends and differences, offering a more nuanced understanding of how platform design influences emoji usage. Such studies could provide insights into the broader applicability of emojis in digital communication, potentially leading to more tailored communication strategies across different social media platforms.

5.4.4 Temporal Limitations

The data was collected at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of emoji usage patterns. This temporal limitation suggests the need for longitudinal studies to capture changes in emoji usage over time and to understand the factors driving these changes. Jensen (2002) highlights the importance of employing various research methodologies in media studies to address different temporal scales, which could provide deeper insights into the evolving nature of digital communication. Such studies could offer insights into how emoji usage evolves and adapts in response to technological advancements and shifts in communication practices.

5.4.5 Limited Scope of Analysis

The study primarily examined emoji usage in discussions on university-related topics, sex, and drunkenness. While these topics are relevant, they represent a narrow scope of conversational contexts. Expanding the scope of analysis to include a wider range of topics could provide a more holistic view of emoji usage in different conversational contexts, revealing how emojis are employed in various types of interactions. This broader approach aligns with recommendations by scholars like Terras and Touat (2021), who utilized a social semiotic multimodal analysis to explore emojis used in students' Facebook interactions, highlighting the diverse applications of emojis across different communicative contexts. Such an expansion could

uncover nuanced patterns of emoji usage that are context‑dependent, offering richer insights into digital communication dynamics.

5.4.6 Addressing Limitations in Future Research

To overcome these limitations, future research should employ enhanced sampling methods, such as stratified sampling techniques, to ensure a more representative sample of the student population, including diverse cultural and demographic groups. Additionally, combining quantitative methods with qualitative approaches, such as focus groups and ethnographic studies, could provide deeper insights into the contextual and subjective aspects of emoji usage. Extending research to multiple digital communication platforms would allow for a comparison of emoji usage patterns across different technological environments. Finally, implementing longitudinal research designs could track changes in emoji usage over time, identifying long-term trends and shifts in digital communication practices. Longitudinal studies, such as the one conducted by Paez et al. (2020), which examined the effects of internet use on subjective well‑being, demonstrate the value of tracking changes over time to understand the deeper impacts of digital media on human behavior.

By acknowledging these limitations and addressing them in future research, a more robust understanding of emoji usage and its impact on digital communication can be developed, ultimately leading to more effective and nuanced communication strategies in digital environments.

5.5 Areas for Future Research

Building on the findings of the current study, several potential avenues for future research can be identified. These suggestions aim to address gaps and unanswered questions that emerged during the study, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of emoji usage in digital communication.

5.5.1 Cross-Cultural Comparisons

Future research should explore how emoji usage varies across different cultural backgrounds. By investigating diverse cultural contexts, researchers can identify specific cultural

nuances and commonalities in emoji interpretation and usage, thereby enhancing the global applicability of the findings. In their study on cross-cultural comparisons of online collaboration, Kim and Bonk (2002) highlight how cultural factors influence online interactions, underscoring the necessity of adapting digital communication tools to meet diverse cultural needs. Similar research into emoji usage could provide invaluable insights into how emojis function as tools of expression across different cultures, potentially guiding the creation of emojis that are more universally interpretable and effective.

5.5.2 Longitudinal Studies

Conducting longitudinal studies will provide valuable insights into how emoji usage evolves over time, particularly among younger generations who are growing up in a digital-first environment. Such research could reveal trends related to the adoption of new emojis, shifts in communication habits, and generational changes in digital communication practices, offering a dynamic view of how emojis are integrated into digital interactions. Green et al. (2021) emphasize the significance of understanding digital media's role in the lives of children, which can extend to how emojis are used as a form of expression and communication from an early age. Longitudinal studies that examine these aspects can provide deeper insights into the evolving relationship between digital technology and communication practices across different age groups.

5.5.3 Platform-Specific Studies

Exploring emoji usage across various digital communication platforms, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Tiktok, can uncover platform-specific patterns and user behaviors. This research would contribute to a more holistic understanding of how different technological environments influence emoji use and communication styles. Morstatter et al. (2017) address the challenges of cross-platform emoji interpretation, offering solutions that can help understand the discrepancies in emoji display and meaning across different platforms. This knowledge is crucial for developing communication strategies that are effective across various digital environments, where emojis play a significant role in enhancing user interaction and expression.

5.5.4 Contextual Analysis

Future research should examine emoji usage across a wider range of conversational contexts, including professional settings, family interactions, and educational environments. By doing so, researchers can gain a more detailed understanding of how context influences the use of emojis and the effectiveness of digital communication.

5.5.5 Emotional and Psychological Impact

Investigating the emotional and psychological effects of emoji usage on users can shed light on how emojis influence mental health, emotional expression, and social connectedness in digital interactions. This line of research could contribute to the development of guidelines for healthier and more mindful emoji use in digital communication. The work of Giaxoglou, Döveling, and Pitsillides (2017) on networked emotions offers valuable insights into how online expressions of loss and grief are mediated through digital platforms, highlighting the complex ways digital tools like emojis can impact emotional experiences. By extending these findings, future studies could examine how emojis contribute to emotional expression and psychological well-being across various contexts, potentially influencing guidelines for digital communication to foster positive interactions and emotional support.

5.5.6 Misinterpretation and Ambiguity

Further research is needed to explore strategies for reducing misinterpretation and ambiguity in emoji usage. This could include developing standardized guidelines for emoji use or enhancing digital platforms with features that clarify emoji meanings, thus minimizing the potential for miscommunication. The study by Udoudom et al. (2024) provides a pertinent example, examining how emojis contribute to miscommunication in text-based interactions among Nigerian youths. Their findings underscore the need for cultural considerations in the development of emoji guidelines to ensure clarity and reduce misunderstandings across diverse user groups.

5.5.7 Demographic Factors

Investigating how demographic factors such as age, gender, and social groups influence emoji usage can provide deeper insights into the personalized aspects of digital communication. Understanding these demographic influences can help tailor digital communication tools to better meet the needs of different user groups. The study by Herring and Dainas (2020) provides significant evidence on how gender and age affect the interpretation and function of emojis, demonstrating that demographic variables can greatly influence digital interactions. Incorporating such insights into the development of communication tools can lead to more nuanced and effective user experiences, ensuring that digital communication is accessible and relevant to all user demographics.

5.6 Conclusion

In the Chapter 5 has provided a comprehensive overview and critical reflection on the findings from the study of emoji usage among undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger. The summary of findings highlighted the predominant preference for combining text and emojis, frequent use of emojis, particularly in sensitive topics, and diverse attitudes towards emoji usage. The discussion interpreted these findings in relation to the research questions, comparing them with existing literature and theories, and addressing unexpected findings. Practical implications for educational practices, professional communication, and digital platform design were discussed, along with specific recommendations for future research and policy changes. Limitations of the study were acknowledged, and suggestions for addressing these in future research were provided. Potential research avenues were identified, emphasizing the need for cross-cultural studies, longitudinal research, and the exploration of varied communication contexts. In conclusion, the chapter reinforced the significance of the study's contributions to the field of digital communication, highlighting the importance of understanding and effectively using emojis to enhance clarity, expressiveness, and engagement in digital interactions.

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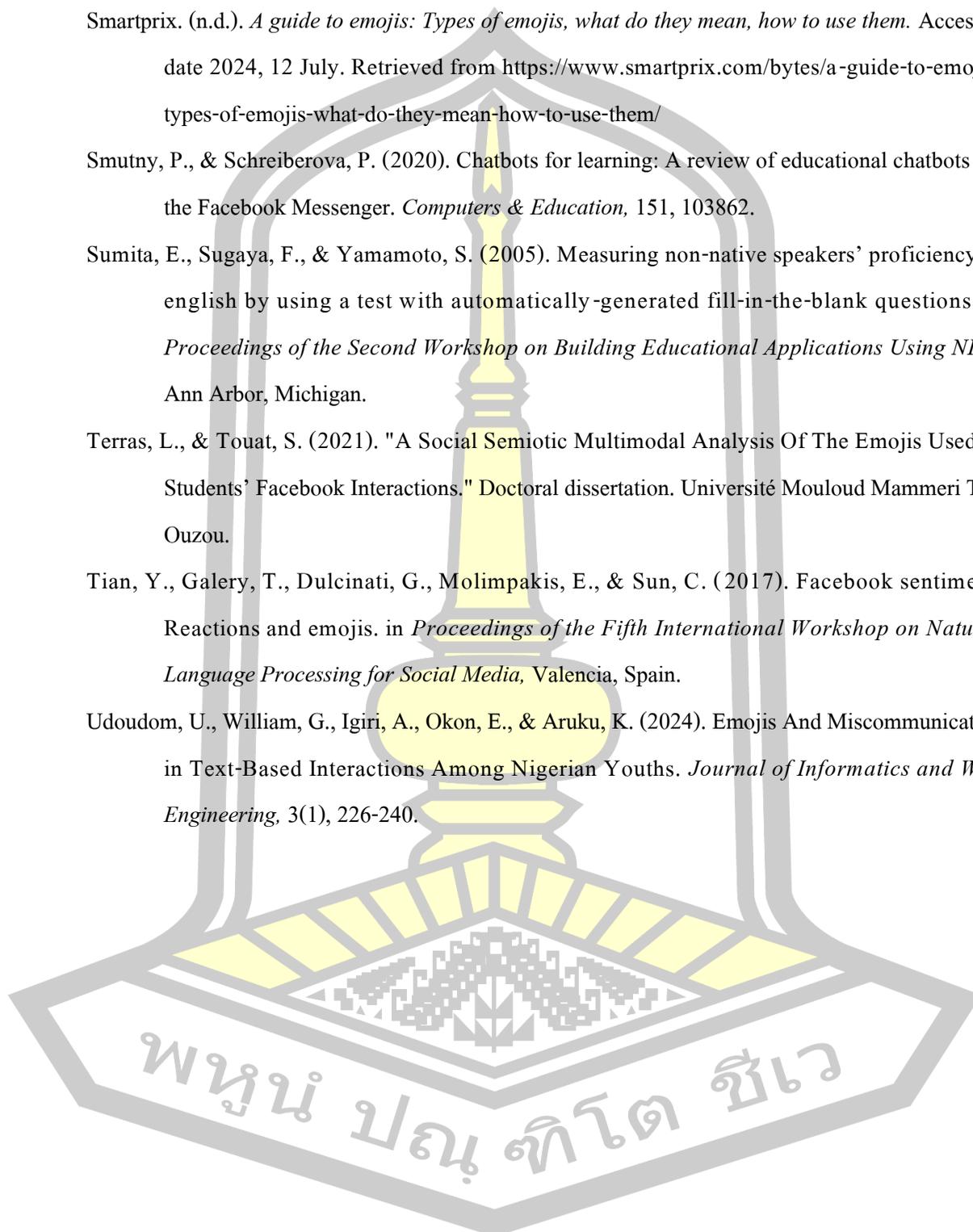
APPENDICES

The appendices offer a comprehensive overview of the study's findings, presenting supplementary data and analyses that support the research. Appendix A highlights patterns in emoji usage identified through thematic analysis of open-ended responses, focusing on themes such as emotional expression, communication enhancement, and ambiguity challenges. Appendix B provides qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews, exploring participants' views on the impact of emojis on tone, mood, and social interactions. Appendix C presents quantitative data from questionnaires, analyzing students' preferences and motivations for using emojis. Appendix D features real chat data, showcasing authentic examples of emoji use in natural settings. Appendix E details the research instruments and data collection tools utilized through Google Forms, noting that the questionnaires and methodology were uniquely designed to align with the study's objectives, given the absence of prior studies using a similar approach. Appendix F provides the Index of Item-Objective Congruence Form for Experts, ensuring the validity of the instruments. Together, these appendices offer a well-rounded understanding of the factors shaping emoji use in digital interactions among undergraduate students.
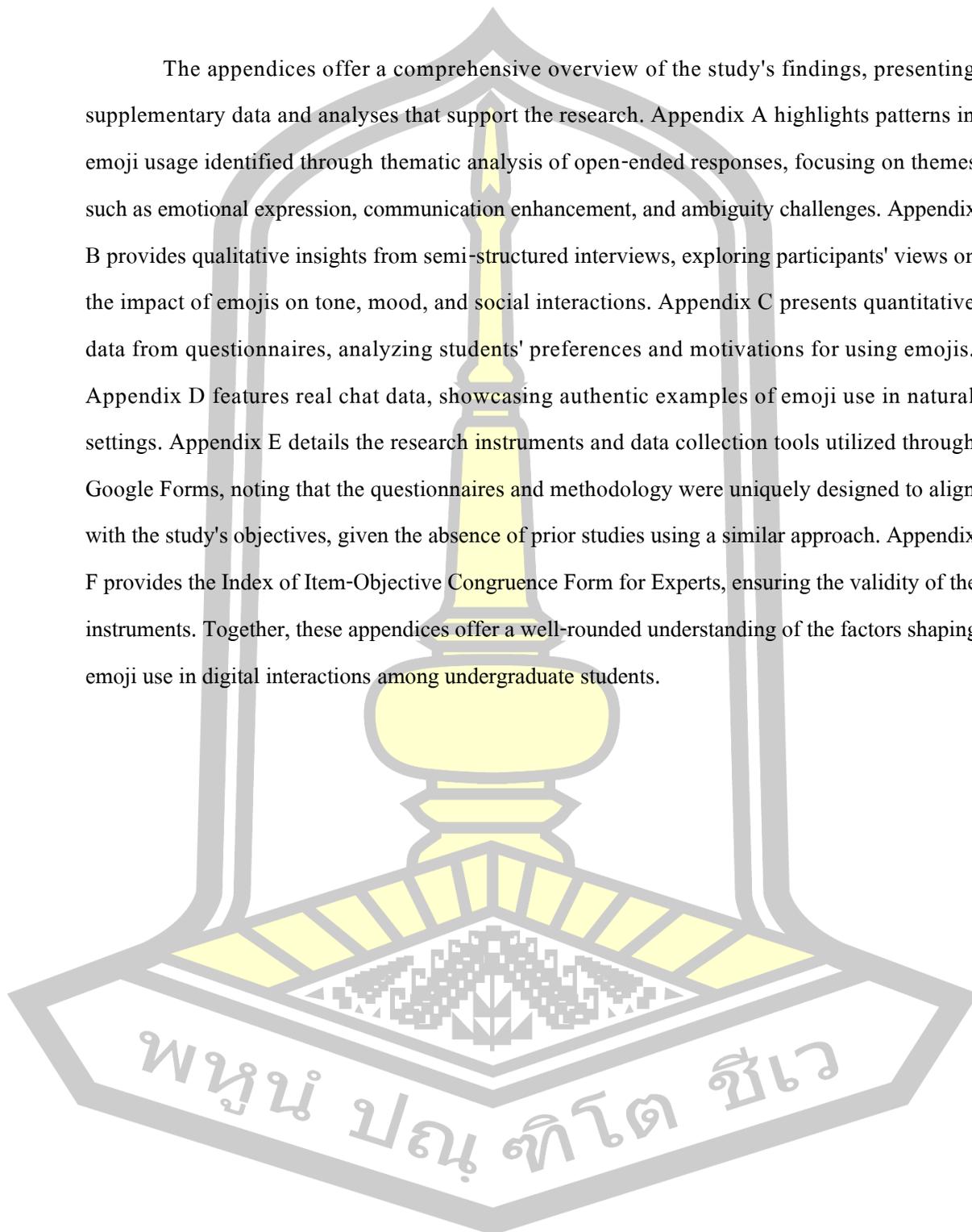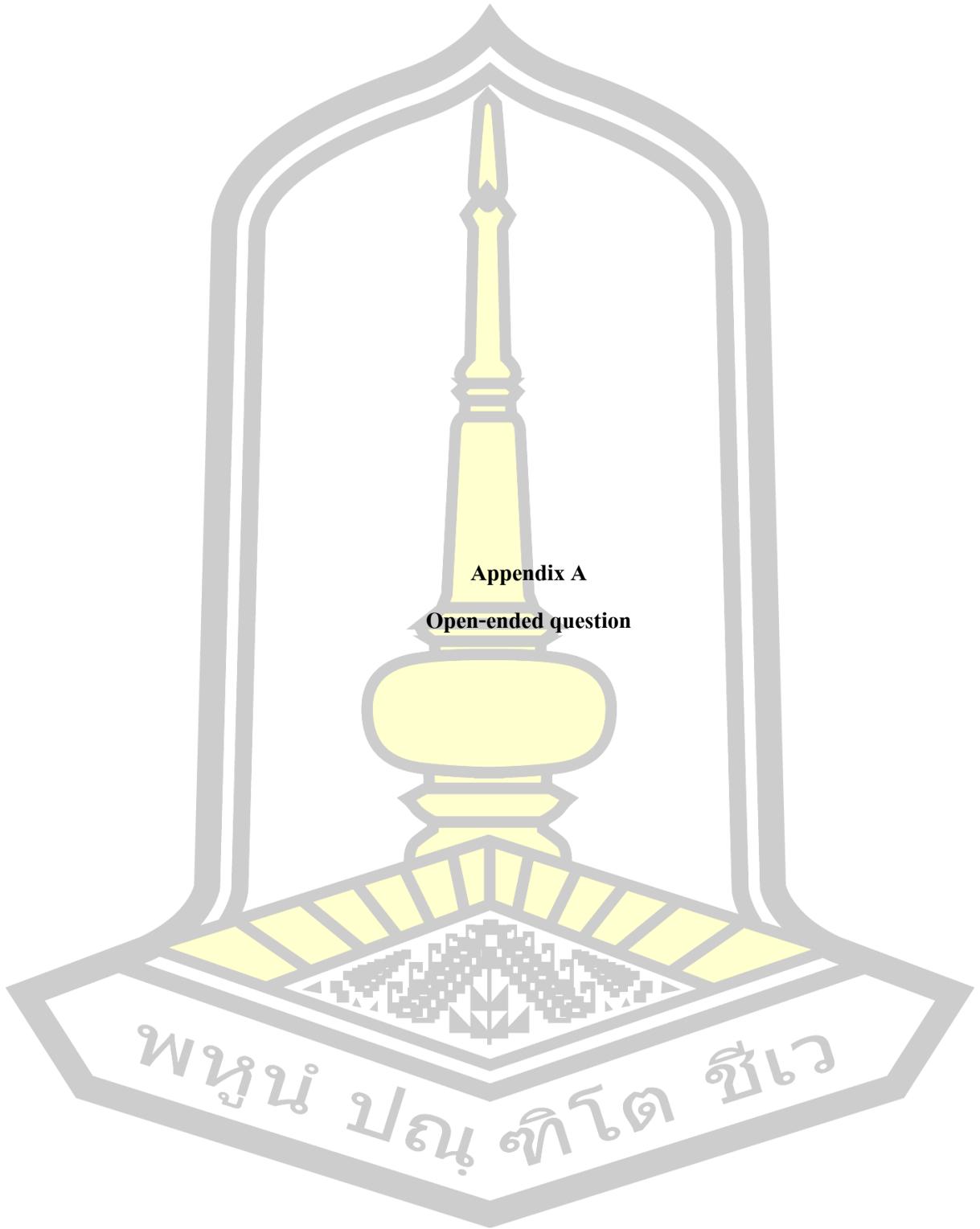
Appendix A

Open-ended question

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. For this task, the researcher grouped the comments into several themes related to the use of emojis by college students on Facebook.

Identified Themes:

1. Expression of Emotions

2. Enhancement of Communication

3. Convenience and Time-Saving

4. Fun and Engagement

5. Formality and Appropriateness

6. Ambiguity and Misinterpretation

The thematic analysis of 143 comments on the use of emojis by undergraduate students on Facebook reveals several key insights. Emojis are widely appreciated for their ability to effectively express emotions, enhance communication, save time, and add fun and engagement to conversations. They provide a visual means to convey feelings that may not be as easily expressed through text alone, making interactions more lively and expressive feeling.

However, the analysis also highlights some concerns. There is ambiguity in emoji interpretation, as their meanings can vary between individuals and contexts, leading to potential misunderstandings. Additionally, while emojis are well-suited for casual and friendly communication, their use in formal or professional settings is often viewed as inappropriate or less respectful.

Overall, emojis are valued for their communicative benefits, but users should be mindful of the context and audience to avoid miscommunication.
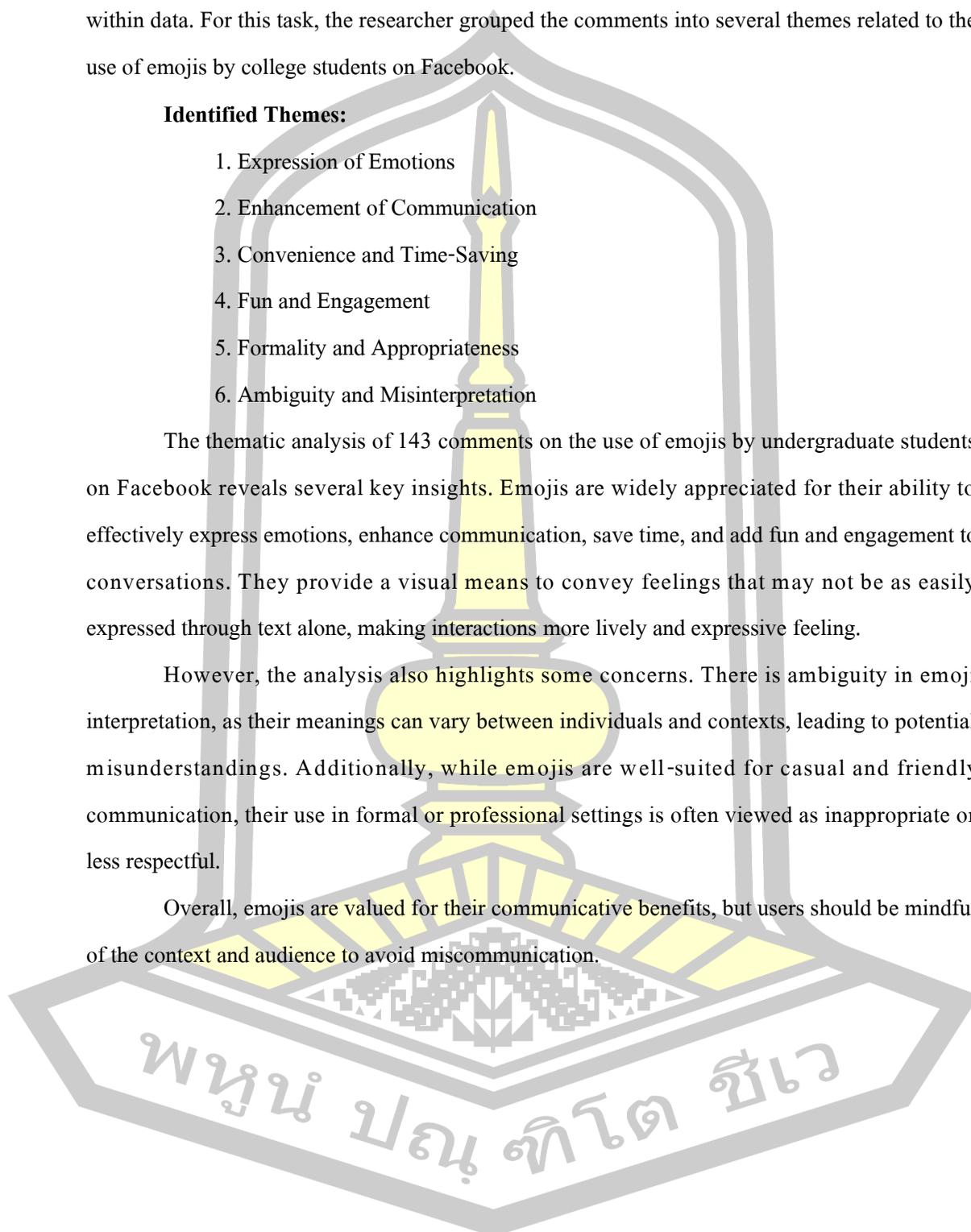
Table 3 Open-ended data

Comment Number	Comment	Theme
2	It's always good to use both because it can help me convey all of my feelings in the text. 😁	Expression of Emotions
19	Emojis can replace emotions that we don't want to express in words.	Expression of Emotions
51	Emojis can represent emotions and actions in messages, making conversations more engaging.	Enhancement of Communication
21	Emojis enhance the meaning of messages and save time expressing feelings in conversations.	Enhancement of Communication
36	Using emojis can replace words and save time while showing our emotions.	Convenience and Time-Saving
67	They save time in responses sometimes.	Convenience and Time-Saving
29	Using emojis is fun; it makes the conversation more friendly and spicy.	Fun and Engagement
59	Emojis are a way to express emotions, adding color to conversations.	Fun and Engagement
17	Emojis have no language, so	Ambiguity and

Comment Number	Comment	Theme
	sometimes they might not convey the intended feeling.	Misinterpretation
103	Some emojis can have multiple meanings, which can be confusing.	Ambiguity and Misinterpretation
45	Emojis help convey emotions, but I don't use them in formal conversations or with teachers because they seem less respectful.	Formality and Appropriateness
62	Emojis are good but should be used appropriately because some might be misunderstood.	Formality and Appropriateness
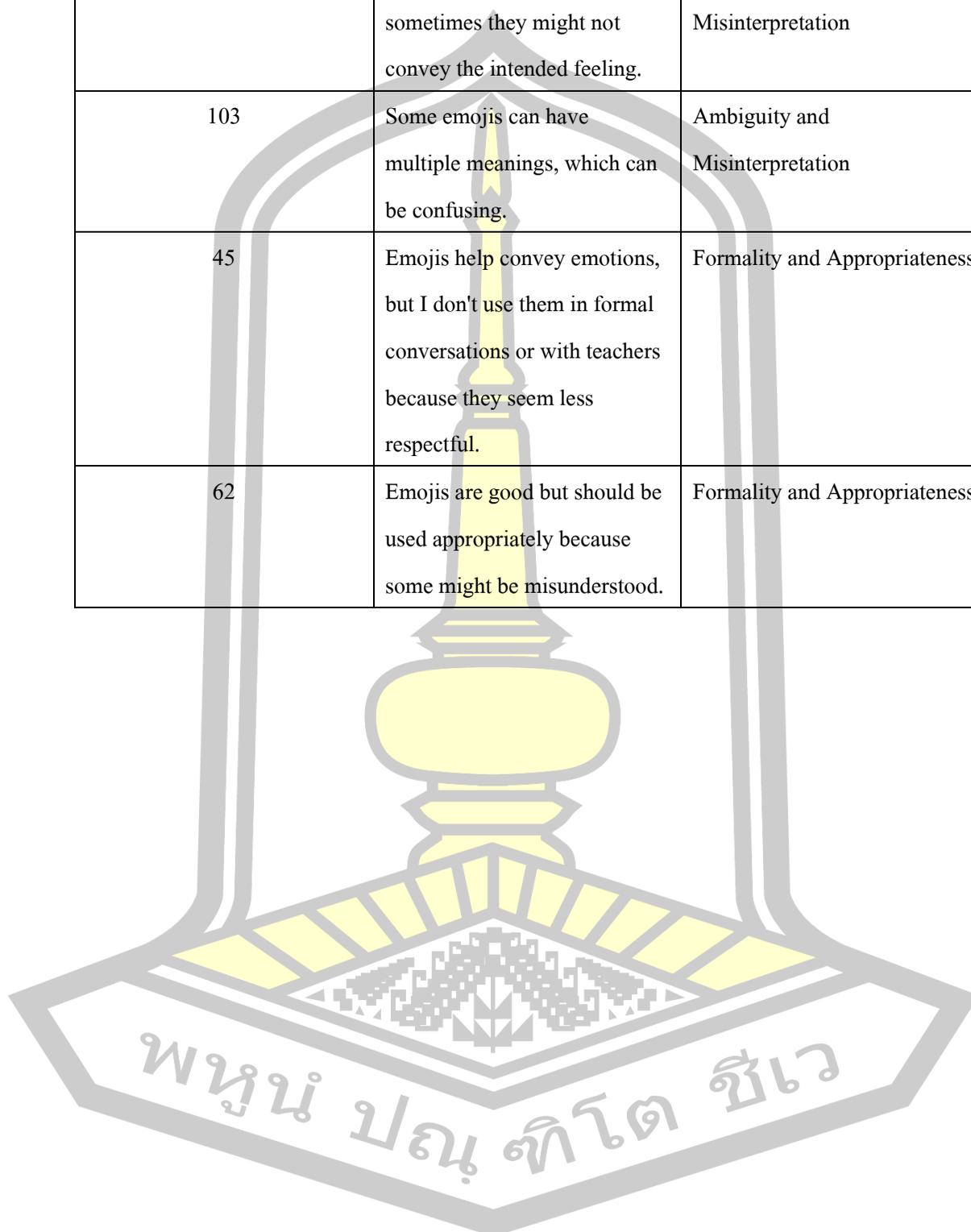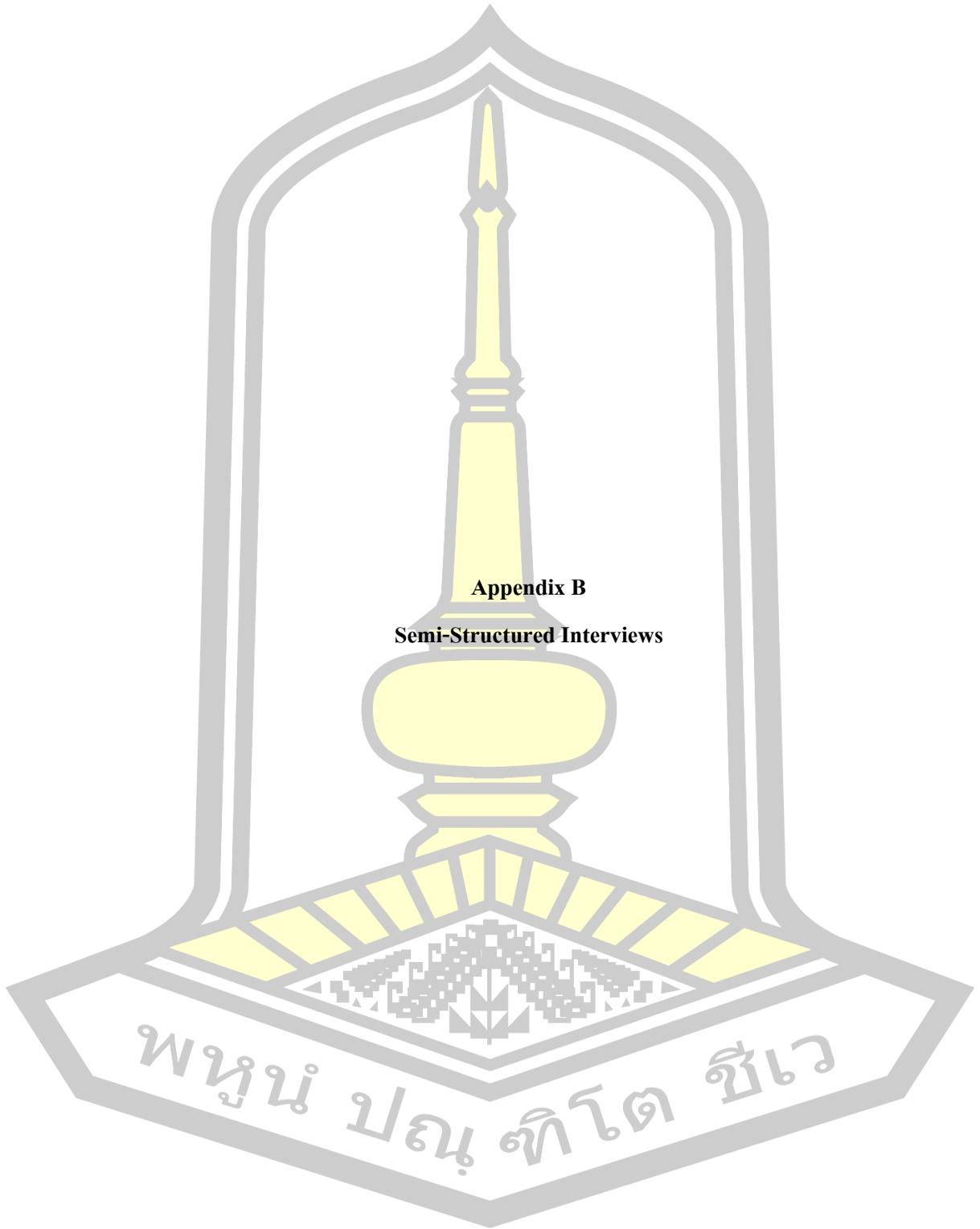
Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interviews

Qualitative insights into emoji usage were gathered through semi‑structured interviews, which allowed participants to freely share their perspectives and experiences. The interviews explored various dimensions, such as frequency of usage, motivations, emotional expression, differences across social groups, preferred emojis, distinctions from other communication modes, the impact on tone, and challenges encountered. These participants, representing 5% of the total sample, volunteered to provide nuanced insights into the factors influencing their emoji choices.

This approach adds to the uniqueness of the current study, as no previous research has employed identical research questions. Additionally, the semi‑structured interviews play a crucial role in uncovering the complex dynamics of emoji use in digital interactions. In qualitative research, reaching data saturation is vital, and as Mason (2010) notes, saturation can often be achieved with a relatively small sample size. This method not only enriches the study's findings but also offers a deeper understanding of the varied uses of emojis in online communication.

1. How often do you use emojis when interacting on Facebook?

1.1 Often

1.2 I use them quite often.

1.3 Fairly often.

1.4 Often.

1.5 Often.

1.6 Not very often.

1.7 Often.

1.8 Often.

1.9 Always

1.10 Often

2. What are some of the reasons why you use emojis in your Facebook interactions?

2.1 Emojis make text messages look nicer and convey meaning better.

2.2 Sometimes I'm lazy to type, and emojis can express my feelings.

2.3 I usually work with people, and communication is key. Text alone might make messages too static, leading to misunderstandings. I prefer using emojis to express my feelings and tone.

2.4 Emojis make the meaning of messages more realistic and clear.

2.5 I use emojis in every sentence because I feel it reflects our true intentions the most. For instance, if I'm not okay, I'll express it. This helps others understand my feelings better.

2.6 I believe everyone can understand through reading.

2.7 Sometimes plain text can't convey our emotions. I like using emojis to express real feelings.

2.8 Personally, I only use them with friends. But with people I'm not close with, I don't use them much because I tend to be ambiguous. If I only use text, readers might not understand my messages, but with emojis, it becomes clearer.

2.9 I think it's the best way to express my felling.

2.10 The text is not enough for showing the feeling of me, because I'm an enegetic girl.

3. Do you think emojis can convey emotions better than words? Why or why not?

3.1 Emojis can convey emotions better because they represent facial expressions and gestures.

3.2 Definitely better, but sometimes not entirely. However, typing can also lead to misunderstandings, but readers interpret differently. For me, I think they're equal. Using them together would be great.

3.3 I think they communicate more. For example, a single word can express many emotions.

3.4 Absolutely. For instance, if we're crying or feeling something, using a crying emoji enhances the feeling.

3.5 I think it's a hundred percent. Sometimes, text alone can't directly express emotions.

3.6 It can convey a lot because it helps readers visualize when sending messages.

3.7 It's a combination. There must be text to make the conversation genuine. But if we use emojis, it's more playful.

3.8 For me, it's useful in some situations. If used in important conversations, we must use text because if we only use emojis, it can be interpreted in various ways.

3.9 Sure, emojis is a picture of face so that it's will better than word.

3.10 Absolutely, it is the picture of face. It's like our face as well.

4. Do you think the use of emojis varies among different social groups, such as age or gender? Why or why not?

4.1 Yes, for example, when talking to friends, partners, or teachers, the usage differs.

4.2 In my opinion, it does have an impact, especially in communication with different groups. It may also depend on age.

4.3 I don't think so. When talking to people of different ages, we still have facial expressions similar to using emojis.

4.4 It does have an impact. For official purposes, we should avoid using them sometimes.

4.5 I think we should differentiate. For instance, in official communications, we might not be able to use emojis for professionalism and credibility. But with partners or friends, we can use them to show affection.

4.6 I think we should separate them for credibility. I'm afraid they'll think we're playing too much. But if we're talking to friends, we can use them to let them know our feelings.

4.7 It depends on the context. If it's talking to close friends, emojis will be there. But if it's talking to adults, I might use more formal emojis, like bowing.

4.8 I don't use emojis much with adults because there are many factors to consider. It can be quite serious.

4.9 If I talk with the teacher of adult maybe I will use less emojis or text only.

4.10 Maybe not, because I think it will good, I can use emojis with all of the people. It's very helpful for enhance the meaning of the text.

5. Are there any specific emojis that you use frequently in your Facebook interactions? What do they typically represent for you?

5.1 I often use only a few emotions and specific emojis, such as anger and laughing emojis. If I'm feeling good, I smile.

5.2 The emoji I use frequently, if I were to use one, would be a heart symbol.

5.3 Most of the time, I use smiling and laughing emojis to replace tone of voice. Some messages might seem too serious, but we don't want readers to feel stressed out.

5.4 It's a crying emoji. Mostly used with friends, I use the crying emoji for any feeling because it's funny. In friend groups, it's for cuteness and being playful. Everyone knows each other well.

5.5 I like using hearts. I use them because they make things look friendly and approachable.

5.6 I like using the laughing with tears emoji. It looks funny.

5.7 I use the squinting eyes and mouth emojis because I'm bored and tired of the world.

5.8 I use laughing with tears emojis. I feel it's cute.

5.9 I would love to use like Hello emojis.

5.10 I often use smile and love emojis.

6. How do you think the use of emojis in Facebook interactions differs from other forms of communication, such as face-to-face or written communication?

6.1 It can replace well, but not entirely.

6.2 I think it only replaces some things.

6.3 It helps with communication. For example, we want to know the sender's feelings behind the message. If they don't send it, we won't know their feelings. As readers, we want to know for real because it's interpreted in many ways.

6.4 For me, it helps. Common sense, if we type 'okay,' but if the receiver interprets it as angrily okay, it might turn into another message. But if we type 'okay' with a smiling emoji, readers will understand it clearly.

6.5 I think it's similar to chatting with friends in real life. We can really see our friend's face.

6.6 It's the same. It helps us chat with friends as if we're really together and can see each other's faces.

6.7 It has an impact. But it would be better if there were text included.

6.8 I think we can video call instead. But compared to before, I think it has a big impact.

6.9 It can use but mixed it, I think maybe better.

6.10 It's like face to face communication because It's the face of people.

7. Do you think the use of emojis has any impact on the tone or mood of Facebook interactions? If so, in what ways?

7.1 Yes, but sometimes if we type neutrally, we won't know how we feel.

7.2 It has an impact if accompanied by an emoji.

7.3 It has a significant impact. If I had to rate, I'd give it 100%.

7.4 Agreed.

7.5 Agreed. Because it makes us feel like we see the sender's or recipient's facial expressions.

7.6 Agreed.

7.7 I strongly agree. It gives a voice to the message.

7.8 I strongly agree. It depends on the emojis we use. Most of the time, emojis turn a message from being plain into a more colorful one.

7.9 I agree with it. The reason is that when I chat with my friend or others, I will be happy, If I see the emojis.

7.10 Agreed.

8. Have you ever encountered any challenges or misunderstandings when using emojis in your Facebook interactions? Can you describe the situation and how you resolved it?

8.1 Yes, in situations when I'm talking about work with my teachers, sometimes I secretly think they're free. But if I add an emoji that doesn't seem like they're free, it might be better.

8.2 Yes, but not very often.

8.3 Yes, I only have one emoji. It represents my facial expressions truly, but without text, it's also misinterpreted. For example, if someone smiles at us, we don't really know what they think about us. For example, when I talk about work with my teachers or friends, if it's just an emoji, I might interpret it in many different ways or make mistakes.

8.4 Yes, I was studying and it was a friend. He sent an emoji to the teacher and the teacher said, "Is your friend playing?" This message was used with friends. My friend just wanted to make the message clearer.

8.5 Yes, when talking to my partner, understand? But it's the squinting eyes emoji. I got upset and called to check if they really understood us.

8.6 No, not yet. I think it's really understandable or maybe I'm lucky.

8.7 Yes, sometimes if there's only one emoji, I'm secretly confused about what the meaning is because I feel like emojis have their own meanings. So if there's just an emoji, I might be confused in some situations.

8.8 Yes, sometimes when chatting with my partner, I don't know if they're speaking from the heart or just kidding.

8.9 I have no idea

8.10 I think I have, but I might not have realized it after using it.
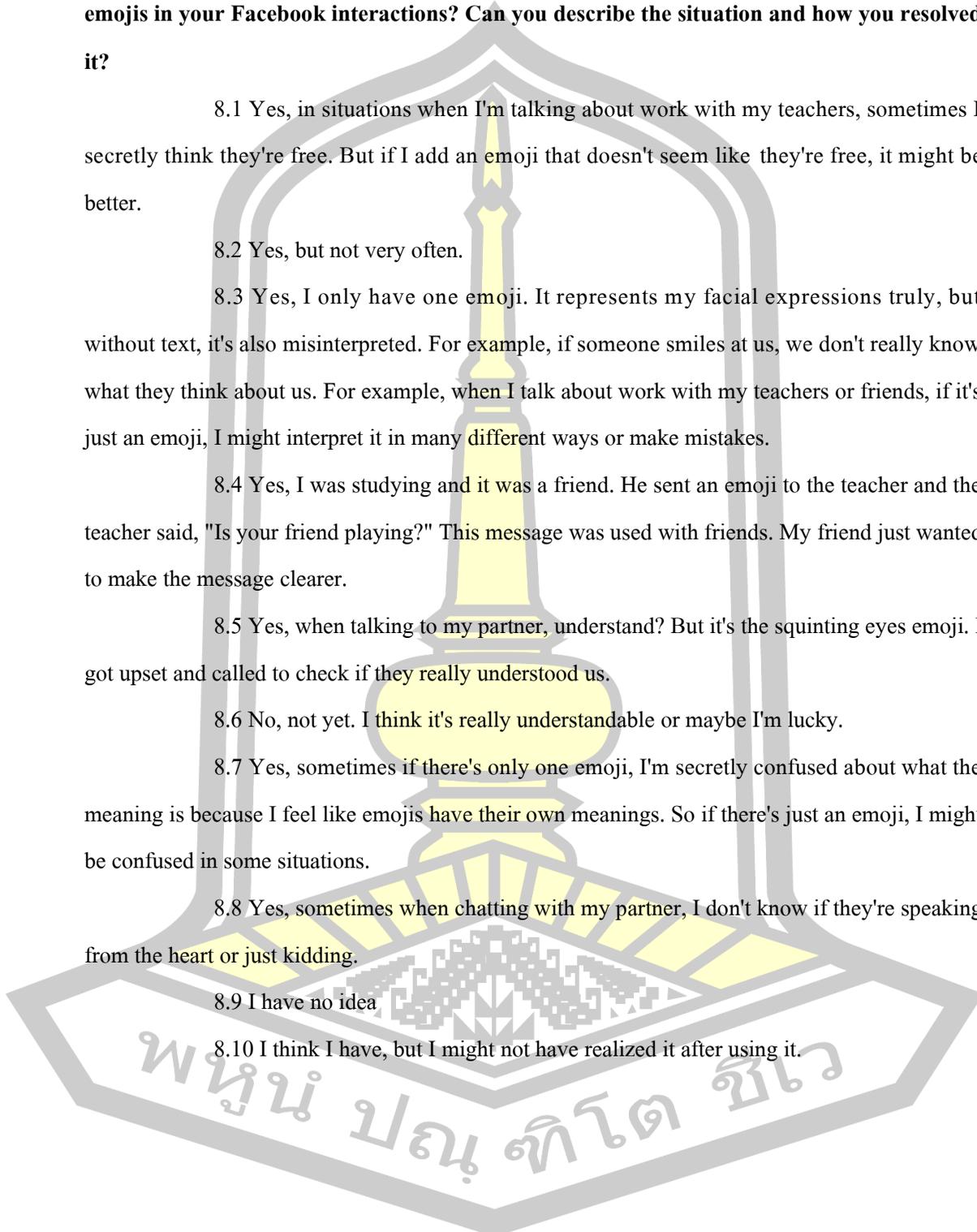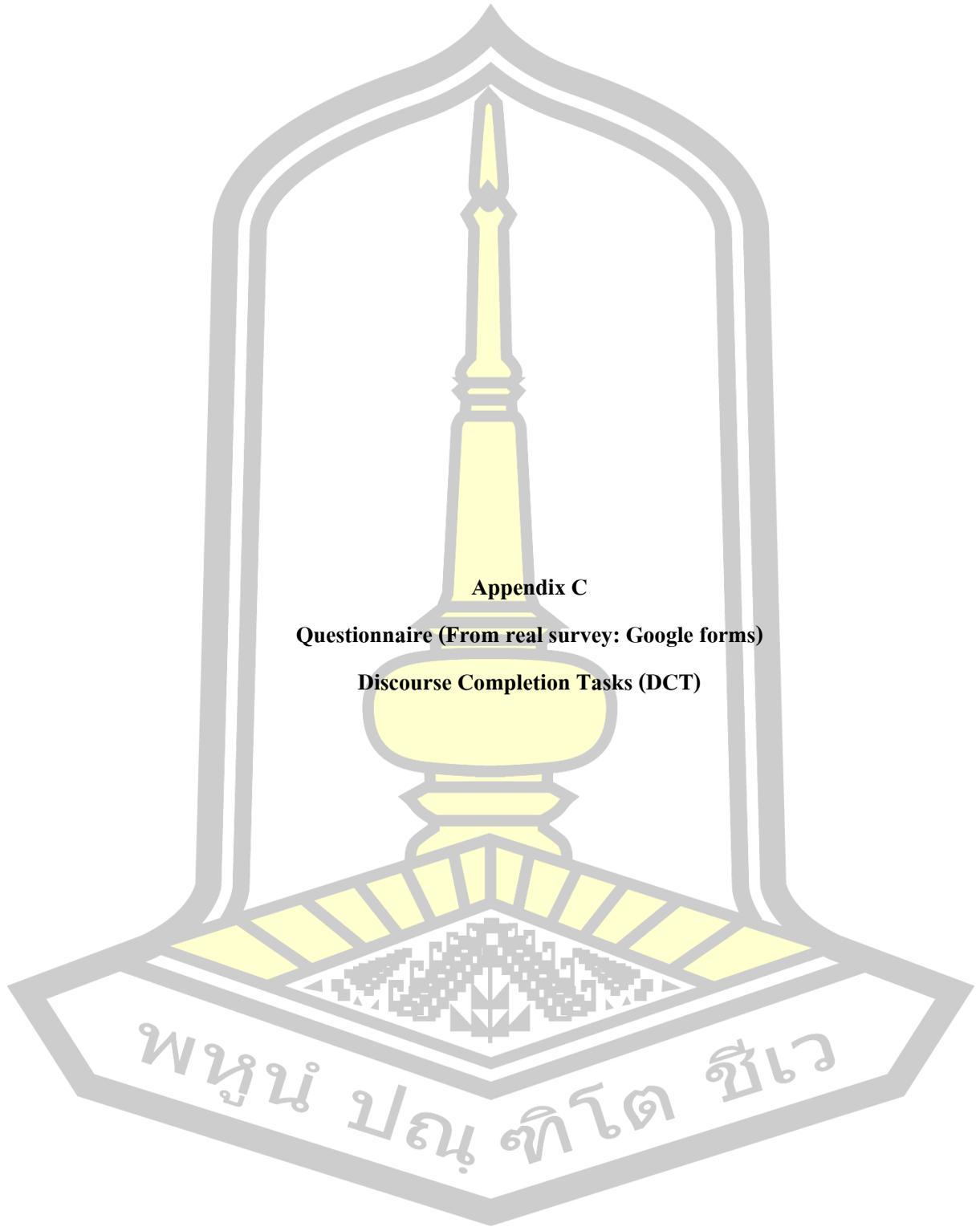
Appendix C

Questionnaire (From real survey: Google forms)

Discourse Completion Tasks (DCT)

The quantitative aspect of the current study focused on gathering data through questionnaire surveys administered via Google Forms. This approach enabled efficient data collection and facilitated participants' responses. The surveys aimed to elucidate the prevalence of different forms of emoji usage among undergraduate students. Employing Ranking, the Filling in the blank, and multiple-choice questions allowed participants to articulate their preferred communication modes and offer insights into their emoji usage habits. Notably, this methodology aligns with previous research methodologies, as exemplified by Algharabali and Taqi (2018) in their study, "Taming the Sting: The Use of Evaluative Emojis by College Students in Kuwait." The utilization of multiple-choice prompts facilitated the examination of students' communication preferences, ensuring a structured approach to data collection.

Following the completion of data collection, the collected survey responses were subjected to analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. This software facilitated the organization, management, and statistical analysis of the survey data, allowing for comprehensive examination and interpretation of the findings.

C1: Ranking

To analyze the prevalence of emoji usage among the surveyed undergraduate students, ranking prompts were utilized to assess participants' preferences for different forms of communication on Facebook Messenger. The integration of ranking prompts introduced an additional layer of complexity to the research design, enabling the identification of the relative significance attributed to various factors influencing emoji usage. Participants were asked to rank their preferences, with '1' indicating the most satisfied or preferred choice, '2' representing the next choice, and '3' reflecting the subsequent choice in that order.

The results revealed that the majority of participants, comprising 79 individuals or 55.2 percent of the total sample, ranked the combination of text and emojis as their preferred choice for communication. This finding indicates a predominant inclination towards integrating both textual and visual elements in their messages. Furthermore, a significant portion of participants, totaling 39 individuals or 27.3 percent of the total sample, ranked emojis-only communication as their second preference, highlighting a considerable proportion of students who opt for emoji-centric communication. In contrast, the remaining participants, comprising 37

individuals or 25.9 percent of the total sample, ranked text-only communication as their third preference, indicating a notable portion of students who still favor traditional text-based communication without the incorporation of emojis.

C2: Filling-in-the-Blank Question

Filling-in-the-blank questions in the survey allowed participants to express their preferences and perceptions regarding emoji usage freely.

The results indicate that a majority of participants, comprising 74 individuals or 51.7 percent of the total sample, preferred using a combination of text and emojis in their communication on Facebook Messenger. This widespread inclination towards integrating both textual and visual elements suggests a prevailing trend among undergraduate students in enhancing message conveyance. Furthermore, a significant proportion of participants, totaling 57 individuals or 39.9 percent of the total sample, expressed a preference for text-only communication, indicating the continued relevance and popularity of textual messages. Conversely, a smaller percentage of participants, comprising 11 individuals or 7.7 percent of the total sample, indicated a preference for emojis-only communication. While representing a minority preference, this finding underscores the presence of a distinct subgroup of students favoring emoji-centric communication. These quantitative findings offer valuable insights into the prevalence and diversity of emoji usage patterns among undergraduate students, enriching our understanding of their communication preferences and practices on Facebook Messenger.

C3: Multiple choice questions

The utilization of multiple-choice prompts (quantitative data) serves the purpose of scrutinizing students' preferred communication modes.

C3.1 Prevalence of Emoji Usage Form (Facebook Usage)

As illustrated; the majority of participants, constituting 27.3% of the sample (Frequency: 39), reported spending more than 5 hours per week on Facebook. This substantial time investment highlights the platform's significance in their digital lives. Additionally, 25.9% of participants (Frequency: 37) indicated spending 1-3 hours weekly on Facebook, while 18.2%

(Frequency: 26) reported spending 3-5 hours on the platform, respectively. These findings provide valuable insights into the students' Facebook usage patterns and set the stage for understanding their emoji utilization within this context.

C3.2 Prevalence of Emoji Usage Form (Emoji Usage)

The findings from the survey provide insightful observations regarding the prevalence of emoji usage among the surveyed undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger. Analysis of the responses reveals that a significant majority, comprising 50.3% of the participants (Frequency: 72), reported using emojis "Sometimes" in their digital communications on the platform. This indicates a prevalent incorporation of emojis into their messages, albeit not as the sole mode of communication. The high frequency of emoji usage suggests that emojis play a substantial role in enriching and enhancing their interactions on Facebook Messenger, contributing to the expression of emotions and nuances within their conversations.

Moreover, a substantial proportion of participants, totaling 35.7% (Frequency: 51), indicated that they use emojis "Most of the time." This finding underscores the widespread adoption and frequent utilization of emojis as a fundamental aspect of their communication practices. The prevalence of using emojis "Most of the time" suggests a strong preference for incorporating visual symbols alongside textual content, further emphasizing the integral role of emojis in facilitating effective and expressive communication among undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger.

These results provide valuable insights into the prevailing patterns of emoji usage within the surveyed group of undergraduate students, highlighting the significance of emojis as a communicative tool in digital interactions on social media platforms.

C3.3 Prevalence of Emoji Usage Form (Emoji Usage)

The quantitative findings shed light on the prevalent motivations behind the use of emojis in Facebook interactions among the surveyed undergraduate students. Analysis of the responses indicates that the primary motivation for using emojis is "All correct," which garnered 50.3% of responses (Frequency: 72). This suggests that emojis are predominantly employed as a versatile means of conveying feelings, sentiments, and emotional nuances in digital

conversations. The widespread adoption of emojis for various purposes underscores their significance as a communicative tool for enhancing expressiveness and emotive resonance in online interactions.

Moreover, a substantial proportion of participants, totaling 30.1% (Frequency: 43), reported using emojis "To express emotion." This finding highlights the role of emojis in facilitating the expression and interpretation of emotions, contributing to the clarity and richness of communication on the platform. The use of emojis to convey emotions serves to enhance the emotive tone of messages, fostering a deeper understanding and connection between communicators.

Lastly, a smaller percentage of participants, comprising 9.8% (Frequency: 14), indicated that they use emojis "To convey meaning." While representing a minority preference, this finding suggests that emojis are also utilized as symbolic representations to convey specific meanings or concepts in digital conversations. The use of emojis to convey meaning adds layers of interpretation and nuance to messages, enriching the overall communicative experience on Facebook Messenger.

In summary, the results underscore the multifaceted role of emojis in digital communication among undergraduate students, encompassing their functions in conveying emotions, enhancing clarity, and conveying meaning within messages.

C3.4 Prevalence of Emoji Usage Form (Perception of Emoji Usage)
a. Enhance: 59.4% (Frequency: 85)
b. Hinder: 14.7% (Frequency: 21)
c. No effect: 6.3% (Frequency: 9)
d. Neutral: 19.6% (Frequency: 28)

The analysis of participants' perceptions regarding emoji usage on Facebook Messenger yielded diverse perspectives on the impact of emojis on communication experiences. The majority of participants, comprising 59.4% (Frequency: 85), indicated that emojis enhance their communication interactions, emphasizing their role in enriching digital conversations by facilitating the expression of emotions and enhancing clarity. Conversely, a smaller yet notable proportion of participants, totaling 14.7% (Frequency: 21), perceived emojis as hindering their

communication experiences, suggesting potential challenges in interpreting or contextualizing emoji usage within messages. Additionally, a nominal percentage of participants, comprising 6.3% (Frequency: 9), reported no discernible effect of emojis on their communication experiences, indicating a neutral stance towards emoji usage. Furthermore, a significant proportion of participants, totaling 19.6% (Frequency: 28), expressed a neutral perception towards emoji usage, reflecting a balanced viewpoint where emojis are neither overwhelmingly viewed as enhancing nor hindering communication experiences but rather perceived as a neutral aspect of digital interactions. These findings highlight the varied attitudes towards emoji usage among undergraduate students, underscoring the complex interplay between emojis and communication dynamics on social media platforms.

C3.5 Prevalence of Emoji Usage Form (Perception of Emoji Usage)

a. Yes: 27.3% (Frequency: 39)

b. No: 16.1% (Frequency: 23)

c. Maybe: 51% (Frequency: 73)

d. No idea: 5.6% (Frequency: 8)

The analysis of participants' perceptions regarding emoji usage on Facebook Messenger unveiled diverse perspectives on the subject. Among the surveyed undergraduate students, 27.3% (Frequency: 39) indicated a positive attitude towards emoji usage, responding affirmatively to the question. This suggests a substantial portion of participants who perceive emojis positively as a valuable tool for communication enhancement. Conversely, 16.1% (Frequency: 23) of participants expressed a negative attitude towards emoji usage, responding negatively to the question. This minority perspective highlights a segment of participants who view emojis unfavorably or may have reservations regarding their efficacy in communication. Additionally, a majority of participants, comprising 51% (Frequency: 73), responded with "Maybe," indicating a neutral or ambivalent stance towards emoji usage. This suggests a significant proportion of participants who exhibit uncertainty or hesitation in forming a definitive opinion on the matter. Furthermore, a small percentage of participants, totaling 5.6% (Frequency: 8), responded with "I have no idea," indicating a lack of clarity or knowledge regarding their perception of emoji usage. These findings underscore the complexity of attitudes towards emoji

usage among undergraduate students, highlighting the need for further exploration into the factors influencing individual perceptions and attitudes towards emojis in digital communication.

C3.6 Alcoholic influence

a. Emojis only: 5% (Frequency: 3.5)

b. A combination of text and emojis: 53.1% (Frequency: 76)

c. Text only: 21.7% (Frequency: 31)

d. I avoid discussing this topic: 21.7% (Frequency: 31)

The analysis of communication preferences among undergraduate students concerning the topic of Alcoholic influence on Facebook Messenger reveals diverse patterns of emoji usage and textual content. Among the surveyed participants, 5% (Frequency: 3.5) indicated a preference for using emojis only when discussing the topic of Alcoholic influence. This minority preference suggests a segment of participants who utilize emojis as the primary mode of communication to convey their thoughts or sentiments on the subject. In contrast, a majority of participants, comprising 53.1% (Frequency: 76), preferred using a combination of text and emojis when discussing Alcoholic influence. This predominant preference underscores the inclination towards integrating both textual and visual elements in communication, facilitating nuanced expression and enhanced conveyance of messages related to the topic. Additionally, 21.7% (Frequency: 31) of participants favored using text only, indicating a preference for conveying their thoughts on Alcoholic influence solely through textual content. This preference for textual communication suggests a subgroup of participants who prioritize clarity and precision in their messaging approach. Furthermore, an equal percentage of participants, also totaling 21.7% (Frequency: 31), expressed a preference for avoiding discussions on the topic of Alcoholic influence altogether. This indicates a reluctance or discomfort among participants in engaging in conversations related to this specific subject matter. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of communication preferences among undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger, reflecting varying degrees of reliance on emojis, textual content, and avoidance strategies in discussing sensitive topics such as Alcoholic influence.

C3.7 University

    a. Emojis only: 1.4% (Frequency: 2)

    b. A combination of text and emojis: 36.4% (Frequency: 52)

    c. Text only: 59.4% (Frequency: 85)

    d. I avoid discussing this topic: 2.8% (Frequency: 4)

The examination of communication preferences among undergraduate students regarding the topic of university on Facebook Messenger illuminates distinct patterns of emoji usage and textual content. Among the surveyed participants, a minimal proportion, comprising 1.4% (Frequency: 2), indicated a preference for using emojis only when discussing the topic of university. This minority preference suggests a small subgroup of participants who rely solely on emojis to convey their thoughts or sentiments related to the university context. In contrast, a significant majority of participants, totaling 36.4% (Frequency: 52), preferred using a combination of text and emojis when discussing university-related matters. This predominant preference underscores the inclination towards integrating both textual and visual elements in communication, enabling nuanced expression and enhanced conveyance of messages pertaining to university experiences. Additionally, a substantial proportion of participants, comprising 59.4% (Frequency: 85), favored using text only when discussing the topic of university, indicating a preference for conveying their thoughts exclusively through textual content. This preference for textual communication suggests a sizable subgroup of participants who prioritize clarity and precision in their messaging approach when discussing university-related topics. Furthermore, a small percentage of participants, totaling 2.8% (Frequency: 4), expressed a preference for avoiding discussions on the topic of university altogether. This reluctance or avoidance strategy among participants may stem from various factors, including discomfort, disinterest, or the sensitive nature of the topic. These findings underscore the diverse communication preferences among undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger regarding discussions surrounding university experiences.

C3.8 Adolescent Relationships

      a. Emojis only: 4.9% (Frequency: 7)

      b. A combination of text and emojis: 46.9% (Frequency: 67)

      c. Text only: 34.3% (Frequency: 49)

      d. I avoid discussing this topic: 14% (Frequency: 20)

The examination of communication preferences among undergraduate students concerning the topic of Adolescent Relationships on Facebook Messenger reveals distinct patterns of emoji usage and textual content. Among the surveyed participants, a small proportion, comprising 4.9% (Frequency: 7), indicated a preference for using emojis only when discussing the topic of Adolescent Relationships. This minority preference suggests a subgroup of participants who rely primarily on emojis to convey their thoughts or sentiments related to this sensitive topic. In contrast, a significant majority of participants, totaling 46.9% (Frequency: 67), preferred using a combination of text and emojis when discussing Adolescent Relationships ‐ related matters. This predominant preference underscores the inclination towards integrating both textual and visual elements in communication, enabling nuanced expression and enhanced conveyance of messages pertaining to Adolescent Relationships topics. Additionally, a considerable proportion of participants, comprising 34.3% (Frequency: 49), favored using text only when discussing the topic of Adolescent Relationships, indicating a preference for conveying their thoughts exclusively through textual content. This preference for textual communication suggests a sizable subgroup of participants who prioritize clarity and precision in their messaging approach when discussing sensitive topics such as Adolescent Relationships. Furthermore, a notable percentage of participants, totaling 14% (Frequency: 20), expressed a preference for avoiding discussions on the topic of Adolescent Relationships altogether. This reluctance or avoidance strategy among participants may stem from various factors, including discomfort, privacy concerns, or cultural norms surrounding discussions of Adolescent Relationships. These findings underscore the diverse communication preferences among undergraduate students on Facebook Messenger regarding discussions surrounding Adolescent Relationships.
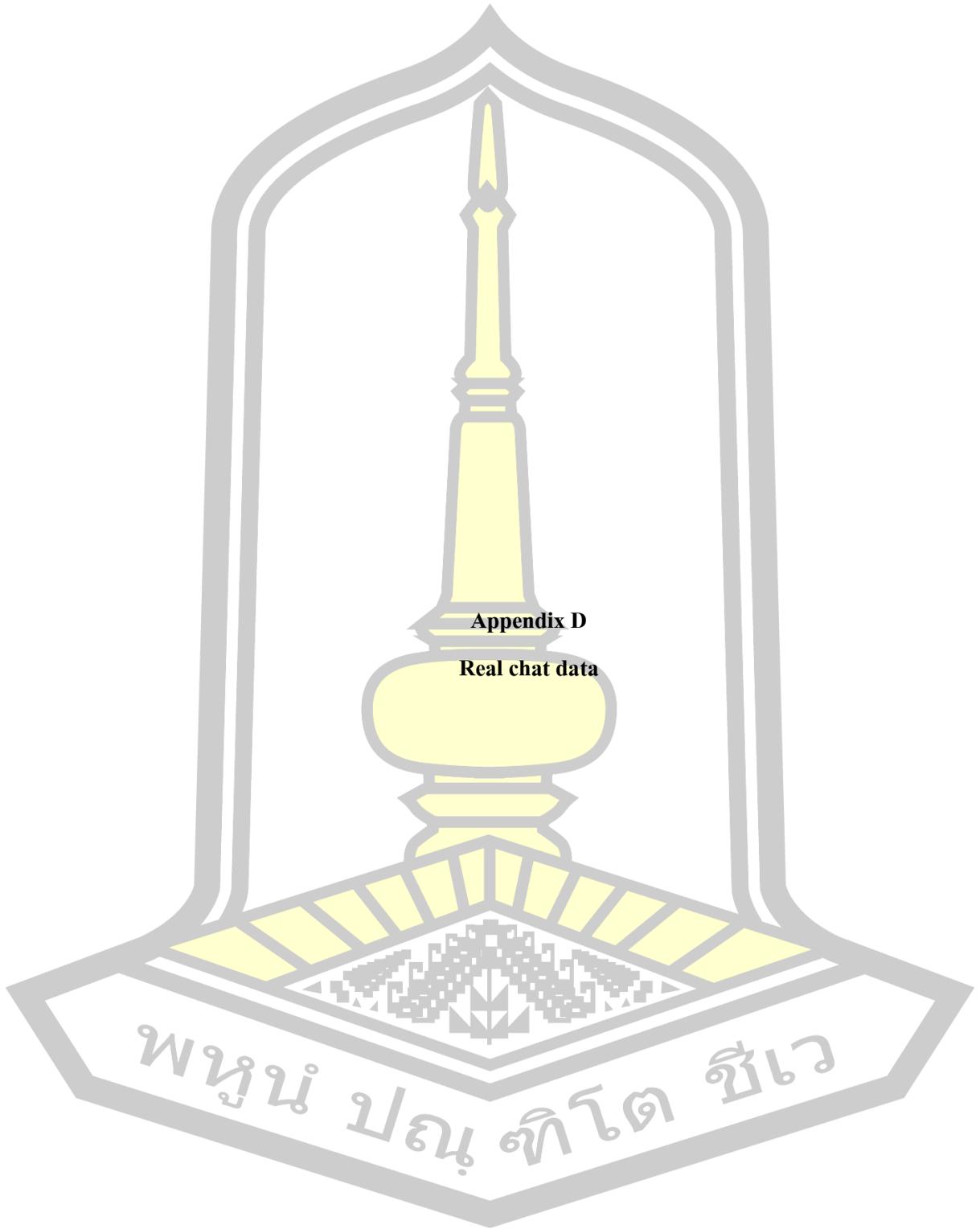
Appendix D

Real chat data

Real chat data collected from participants' Facebook Messenger conversations forms another crucial aspect of the current study, offering authentic insights into emoji usage patterns in natural communication settings. Participants provided informed consent for the inclusion of their anonymized chat data, safeguarding their privacy and confidentiality. While typically focusing on three main topics— Adolescent Relationships, university, and Alcoholic influence. The researcher will analyze chat conversations encompassing various topics. Real chat data analysis enriches the study by providing firsthand insights into the nuances of emoji usage among undergraduate students.

D1: University

The researcher has gathered and organized the collected data. In practical application, the sample group consisted of 10 individuals. The initial topic explored was 'University', revealing that all 10 participants were active users and undergraduate students. Among them, 9 individuals communicated solely through text, while 1 participant employed a combination of text and emojis. This trend may be attributed to the perceived gravity or formality associated with academic pursuits within the university context. I intend to utilize this information for presentation purposes.

D2: Adolescent relationship

The data analysis reveals intriguing insights into the dynamics of communication surrounding the theme of Adolescent Relationships among the participants. It is noteworthy that a majority of the participants (8 out of 10) opted for a combination of text and emojis in their discussions. This finding underscores the multifaceted nature of digital communication, wherein the use of emojis serves to enrich and augment textual expressions. Furthermore, the prevalence of this communication style suggests a potential correlation between the use of emojis and the level of closeness or relationship between participants. It is plausible that individuals employ emojis as a means of enhancing intimacy, conveying nuances in tone, or expressing emotions that may be challenging to articulate solely through text.

In summary, the observed patterns in communication strategies underscore the complex interplay between digital expression, interpersonal dynamics, and the sensitive nature of discussions surrounding Adolescent Relationships. Emojis emerge as a salient tool in facilitating communication, potentially serving as a marker of closeness and relationship dynamics within these interactions.

D3: Alcoholic influence

The balanced distribution of communication styles regarding the theme of Alcoholic influence, with 5 participants utilizing a combination of text and emojis and 5 participants opting for text only, suggests a nuanced approach to discussing this topic. This equilibrium may stem from varying attitudes towards intoxication among the participants. Those who enjoy or embrace Alcoholic influence may be more inclined to express themselves using a combination of text and emojis, while those who do not share the same sentiment may prefer a more straightforward textual approach. This divergence in communication preferences contributes to the observed balance between the two communication styles.

From the analysis of real chat data collected on three themes—University, Adolescent Relationships, and Alcoholic influence —the researcher has gathered valuable insights into the communication patterns and dynamics among the participants. Across all themes, the researcher observed variations in communication styles, with some participants preferring text-only communication while others utilized a combination of text and emojis. Additionally, the prevalent forms of certain communication styles differed between themes, indicating nuanced approaches to discussing each topic.

The analysis highlights the multifaceted nature of digital communication and its role in facilitating discussions on sensitive topics such as Adolescent Relationships and Alcoholic influence. Emojis emerge as a significant tool in enriching textual expressions, potentially enhancing intimacy and conveying emotions that may be challenging to articulate through text alone. Furthermore, the observed balance between text-only and text-with-emoji communication styles suggests varying attitudes and preferences among participants, reflecting the complex interplay of individual communication styles and perceptions within digital interactions.
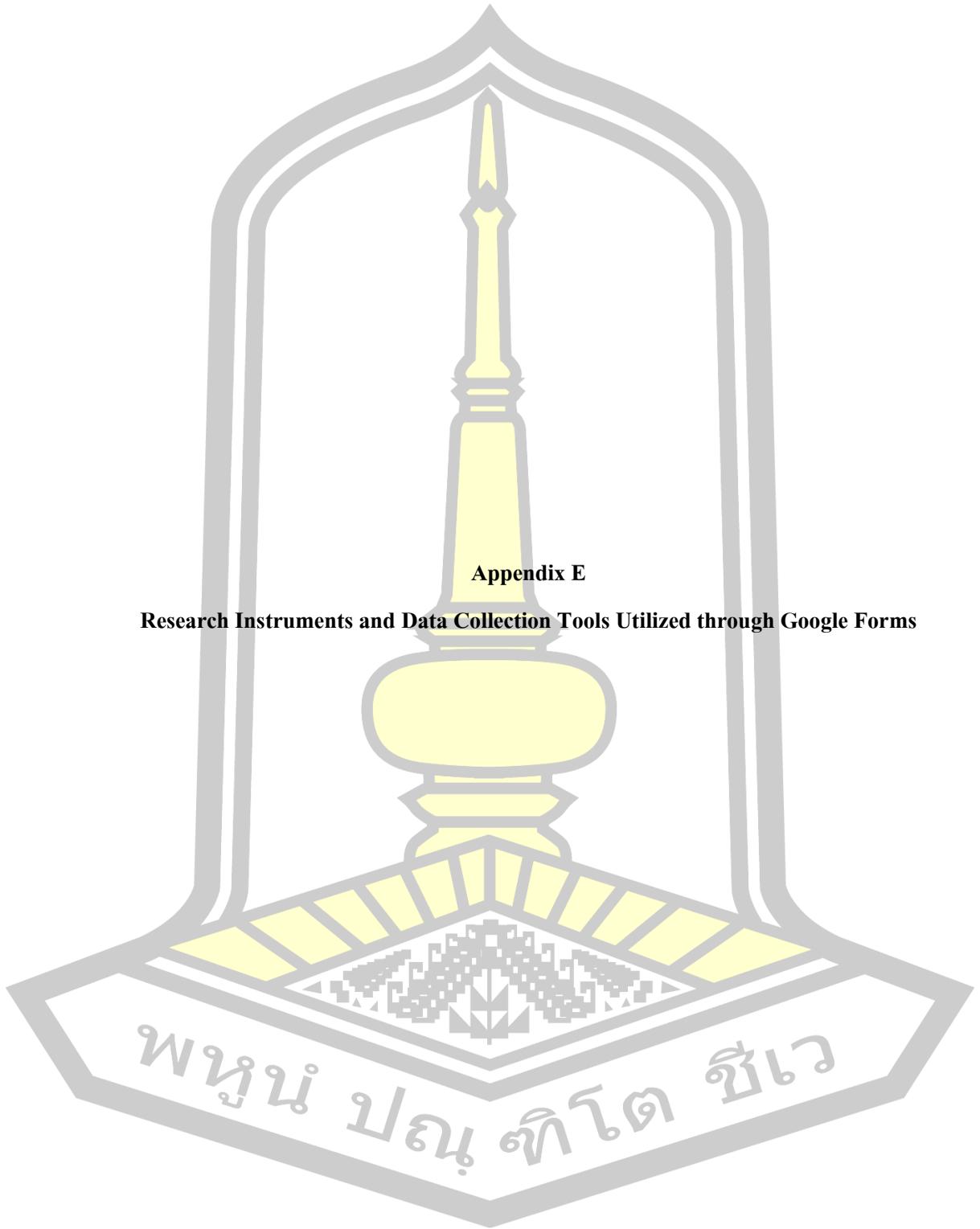
Appendix E

Research Instruments and Data Collection Tools Utilized through Google Forms

It is important to note that, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no previous research that has employed a similar approach or questionnaires. Therefore, the researcher has proposed these choices and questions based on the research's objectives and purposes. They are including the questionnaire format, so readers can view the complete structure and content firsthand, with the front pages provided for clarity.

Thai Undergraduate Students' Use of Emojis in Facebook Messenger Communication

B I U ⊖ 𝚡̶

The questionnaire forms are aimed to examine Thai undergraduate students' prevalence of elements of emojis in Facebook Messenger Communication and identify factors influencing the prevalence. It is part of a research project to fulfill the requirements for a master's degree of Arts in English, Faculty of Humanities and social sciences, Mahasarakham University.

Email *

Valid email

This form is collecting emails. Change settings

Part I: Ranking question: The items based on the participant's preference, where number 1 to the most preferred choice and number 3 to least preferred choice.

Description (optional)

1. *

Forms
1. I am good.
2. 😊
3. I am good. 😊

	1	2	3
Text only	○	○	○
Emojis only	○	○	○
The combination of Text...	○	○	○

Part II: Filling-in-the-Blank Question (DCT): The use of filling-in-the-blank questions in the survey allowed participants to provide specific responses with free expression, enabling us to gain insights into their preferences and perceptions regarding emoji usage.

Description (optional)

2. How are you today? _____   *

Short answer text

Part III: Multiple choice questions (No. 3-10): The utilization of multiple-choice questions allowed participants to select their preferred communication modes and provide insights into their emoji usage habits.

Description (optional)

:::

3. How many hours per week do you spend on Facebook messenger? *

○ a. Less than 1 hour

○ b. 1-3 hours

○ c. 3-5 hours

○ d. More than 5 hours

○ e. Others

4. How often do you use emojis when communicating with others on Facebook messenger? *

○ a. Always 100%

○ b. Most of the time 75%

○ c. Sometimes 50%

○ e. Never 0%

:::

5. Why do you use emojis in your Facebook messenger interactions? *

○ a. To express emotions

○ b. To convey meaning

○ c. To save time typing

○ d. All correct

○ e. Others

6. In your opinion, do emojis enhance or hinder communication on Facebook messenger? *

○ a. Enhance

○ b. Hinder

○ c. No effect

○ d. Neutral

7. Do you believe that emojis can replace text messages in online communication? *

○ a. Yes

○ b. No

○ c. Maybe

○ d. No idea

8. When discussing topics related to "Sex" with your friends or peers, which of the following do * you typically use?

○ a. Emojis only

○ b. A combination of text and emojis

○ c. Text only

○ d. I avoid discussing this topic

9. When discussing topics related to "University" or academics with your friends or peers, * which of the following do you typically use?

○ a. Emojis only

○ b. A combination of text and emojis

○ c. Text only

○ d. I avoid discussing this topic

10. When discussing topics related to "Drunkenness" or social events involving alcohol with * your friends or peers, which of the following do you typically use?

○ a. Emojis only

○ b. A combination of text and emojis

○ c. Text only

○ d. I avoid discussing this topic.

Qualitative Data Collection

Description (optional)

Part IV: Open-ended question (A Discourse-Completion Task (DCT): The researcher shifts the focus to open-ended questions, granting participants the freedom to openly express their thoughts on the factors influencing their emoji usage.
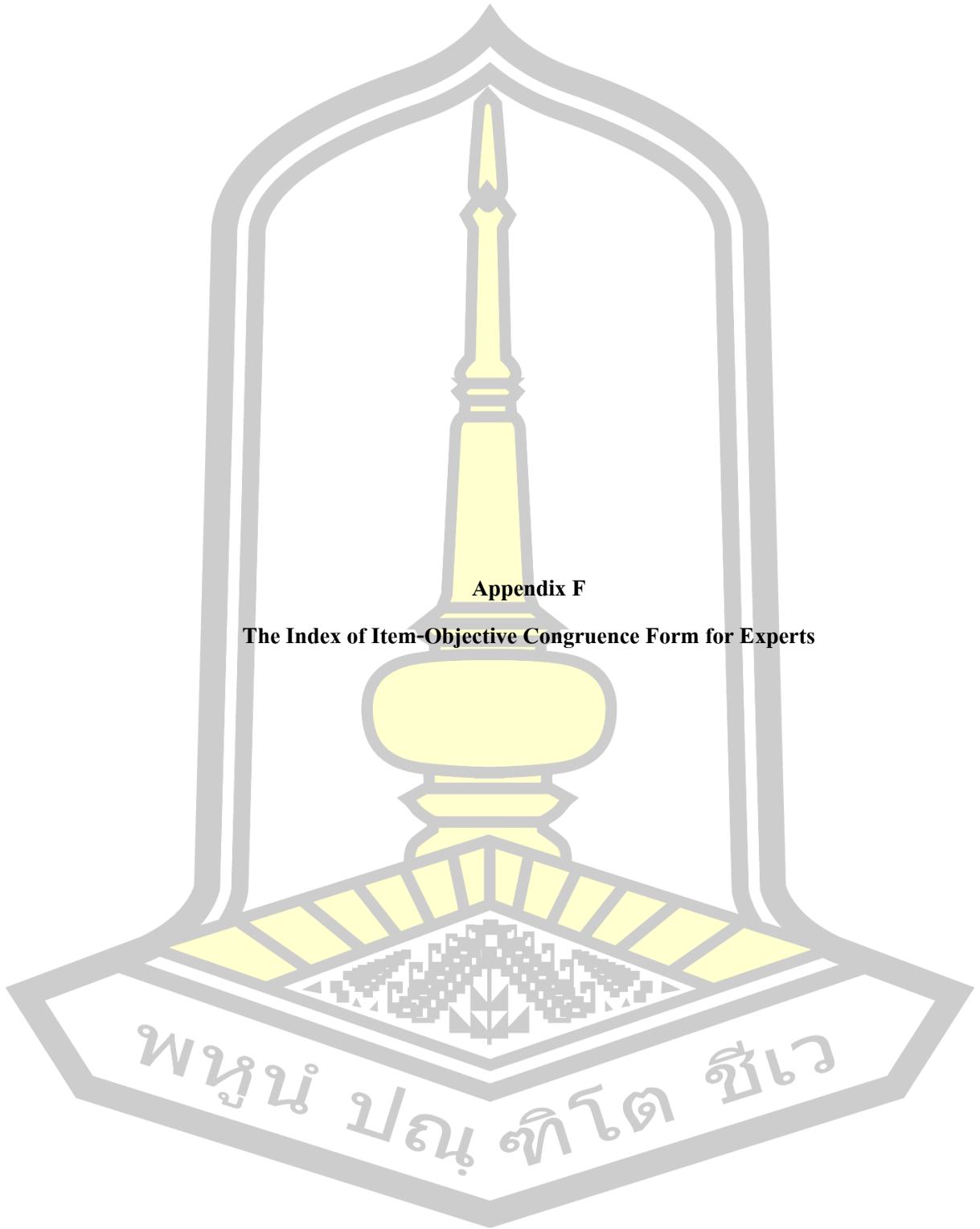
Description (optional)

11. Question: Other ideas _____. *

Short answer text

Appendix F

The Index of Item-Objective Congruence Form for Experts

The Index of Item-Objective Congruence Form for Experts

The questionnaire and semi-structured interview forms are aimed to examine Thai undergraduate students' prevalence of elements of emojis in Facebook Messenger Communication and identify factors influencing the prevalence. It is part of a research project to fulfill the requirements for a master's degree of Arts in English, Faculty of Humanities and social sciences, Mahasarakham University. The questionnaire and semi-structured interviews are divided into three parts:

Part I (Quantitative Data Collection): Prevalence of Elements of Emojis in Facebook Messenger Communication

The Ranking question comprises one item (No. 1), requiring participants to input numbers to rank the following item based on your preference, where number 1 to your most preferred choice and number 3 to your least preferred choice.

Part II (Quantitative Data Collection): Identify the form of emojis usage in their prevalence

This section comprises two types of question items based on a Discourse-Completion Task (DCT): One item for free expression by filling-in-the-blank question (No. 2), and eight items for multiple choices (No. 3-10).

Part III (Qualitative Data Collection): This section is divided into three parts: One open-ended question (No. 11), semi-structured interview items (No.1-8) and the real chat data (No. 13). In this section, the researcher will only ask 5% of the volunteers on a voluntary basis.

This index, which assesses the item-objective congruence, serves as a tool to evaluate the validity of research instruments, which include structured-survey and semi-structured interviews. It ensures that each question within these instruments aligns consistently with the research objectives. The researcher will employ the following evaluation criteria:

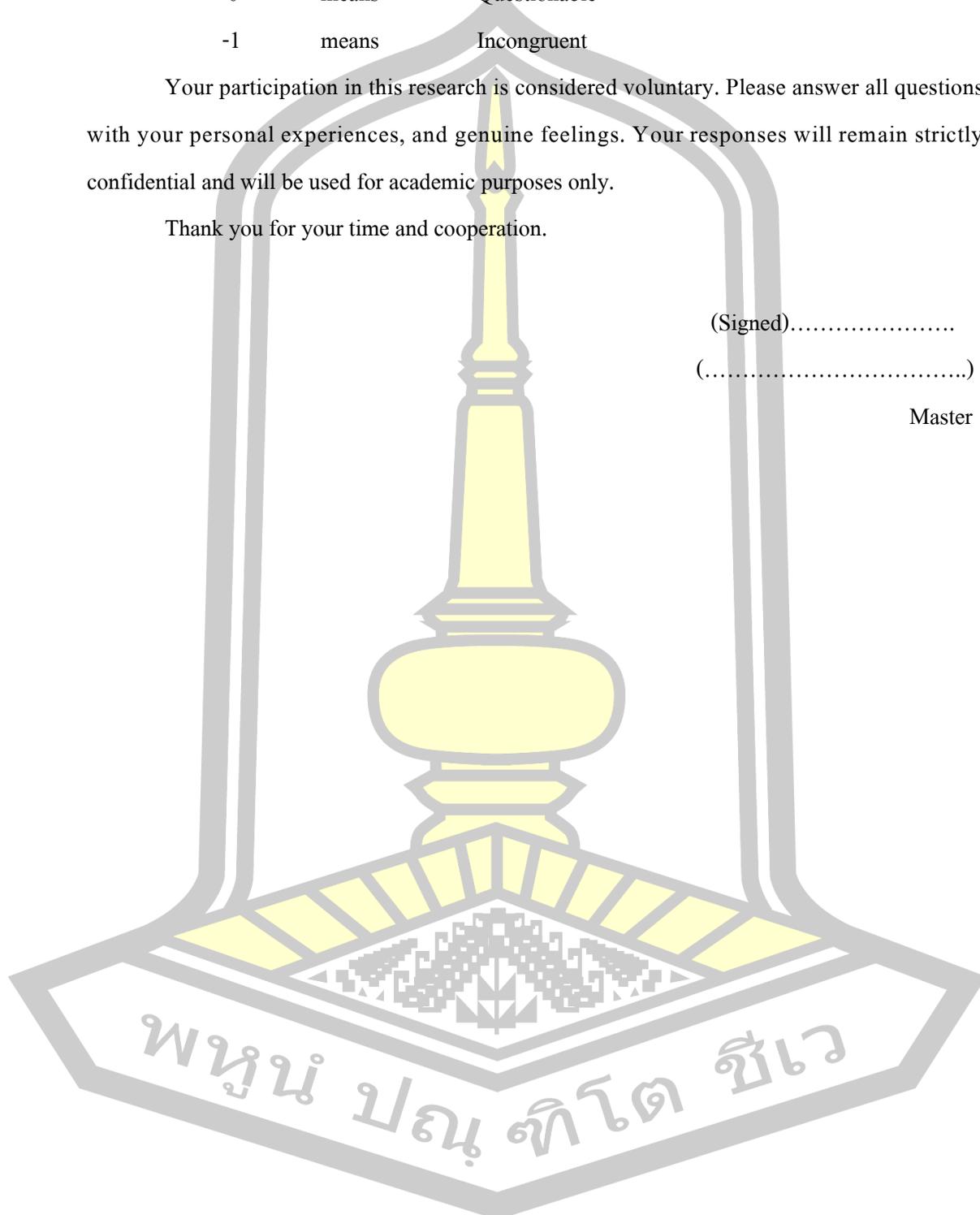| +1	means	Congruent
0	means	Questionable
-1	means	Incongruent

Your participation in this research is considered voluntary. Please answer all questions with your personal experiences, and genuine feelings. Your responses will remain strictly confidential and will be used for academic purposes only.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

(Signed)………………….

(……………………………..)

Master

1. Quantitative Data Collection				
Question Statement: A Discourse-Completion Task (DCT)	**Evaluation**			**Suggestions**
	+1	**0**	**-1**	
Part I: Ranking question: The items based on the participant's preference, where number 1 to the most preferred choice and number 3 to least preferred choice.				

Pattern	Ranking
I'm good. 😊	3 (or 1,2)
I'm good.	2 (or 1,3)
😊	1 (or 2,3)

Answer

Question Statement: A Discourse-Completion Task (DCT)	Evaluation			Suggestion
	+1	**0**	**-1**	
Part II: Filling-in-the-Blank Question (DCT): The use of filling-in-the-blank questions in the survey allowed participants to provide specific responses with free expression, enabling us to gain insights into their preferences and perceptions regarding emoji usage.				
2. How are you today? _____ Answer: I'm good. 😊 I'm good. 😊				

Question Statement: A Discourse-Completion Task (DCT)	Evaluation			Suggestion
	+1	0	-1	
Part II: **Multiple choice questions (No. 3-10):** The utilization of multiple-choice questions allowed participants to select their preferred communication modes and provide insights into their emoji usage habits.				
3. How many hours per week do you spend on Facebook messenger? a. Less than 1 hour b. 1-3 hours c. 3-5 hours d. More than 5 hours e. Others (Please specify) ……………………………				
4. How often do you use emojis when communicating with others on Facebook messenger? a. Always 100% b. Most of the time 75% c. Sometimes 50% e. Never 0% e. Others (Please specify) ……………………………				
5. Why do you use emojis in your Facebook messenger interactions? a. To express emotions b. To convey meaning c. To save time typing d. All correct e. Others (Please specify) ……………………………				
6. In your opinion, do emojis enhance or hinder communication on Facebook messenger? a. Enhance b. Hinder c. No effect d. Neutral				

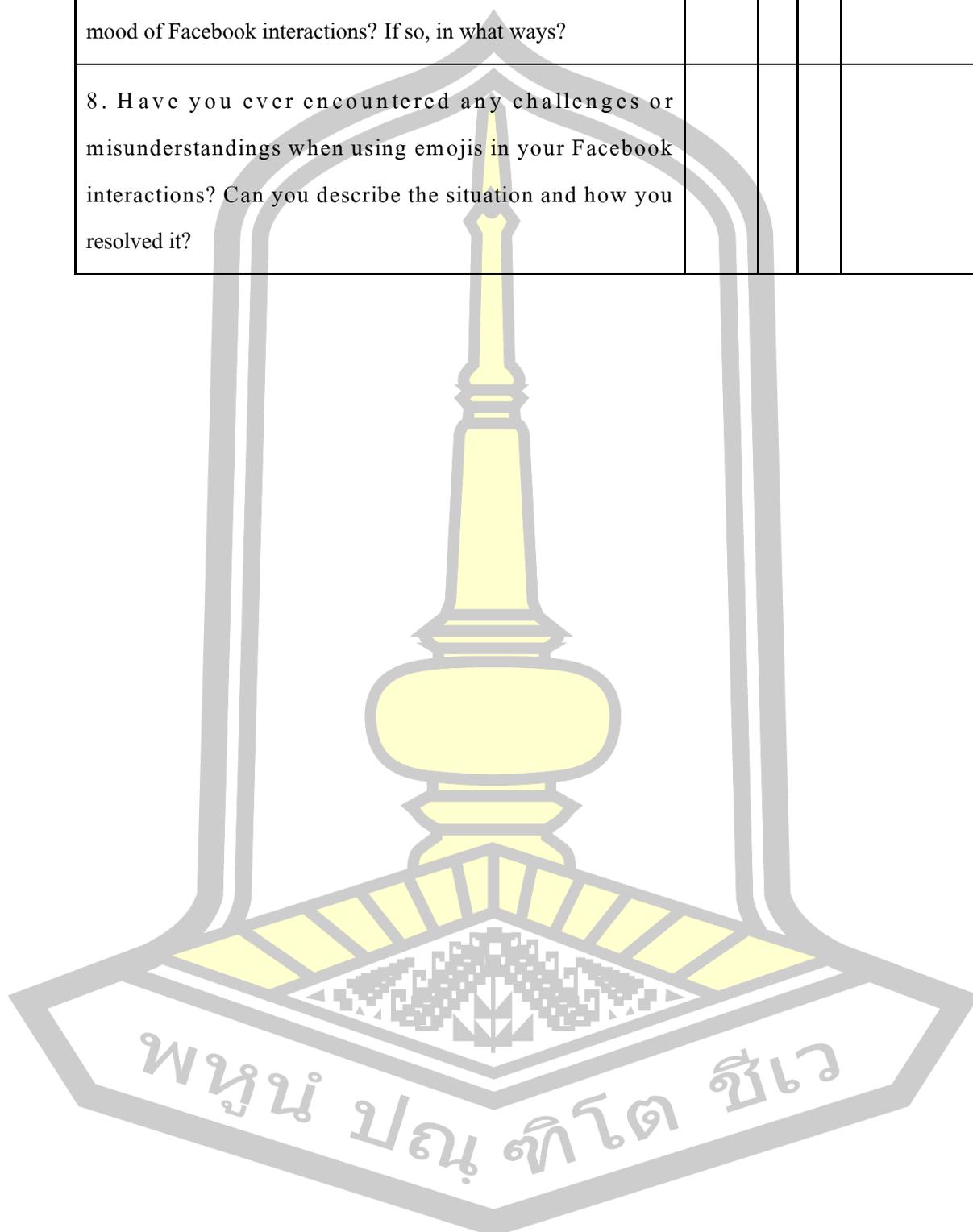| Question Statement: A Discourse-Completion Task (DCT)	Evaluation			Suggestion
	+1	0	-1	
Part II: **Multiple choice questions (No. 3-10):** The utilization of multiple-choice questions allowed participants to select their preferred communication modes and provide insights into their emoji usage habits.				
7. Do you believe that emojis can replace text messages in online communication? a. Yes b. No c. Maybe d. No idea				
8. When discussing topics related to "Sex" with your friends or peers, which of the following do you typically use? a. Emojis only b. A combination of text and emojis c. Text only d. I avoid discussing this topic.				
9. When discussing topics related to "University" or academics with your friends or peers, which of the following do you typically use? a. Emojis only b. A combination of text and emojis c. Text only d. I avoid discussing this topic.				
10. When discussing topics related to "Drunkenness" or social events involving alcohol with your friends or peers, which of the following do you typically use? a. Emojis only b. A combination of text and emojis c. Text only d. I avoid discussing this topic.				

The researcher will look for chat conversations among participants on topics such as sex, university, and drunkenness. This approach draws inspiration from the study conducted by (Schwartz et al, 2013).
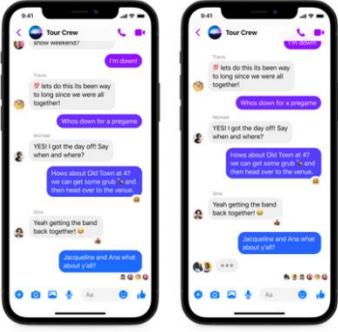
2. Qualitative Data Collection				
Question Statement:	Evaluation			Suggestion
	+1	**0**	**-1**	
Part III: Open-ended question (A Discourse-Completion Task (DCT): The researcher shifts the focus to open-ended questions, granting participants the freedom to openly express their thoughts on the factors influencing their emoji usage.				
11. Question: Other ideas _____. (Participants are welcome to express their opinions or provide answers regarding their perspectives on emoji usage. Participation in this question is optional, and individuals may choose whether or not to respond).				
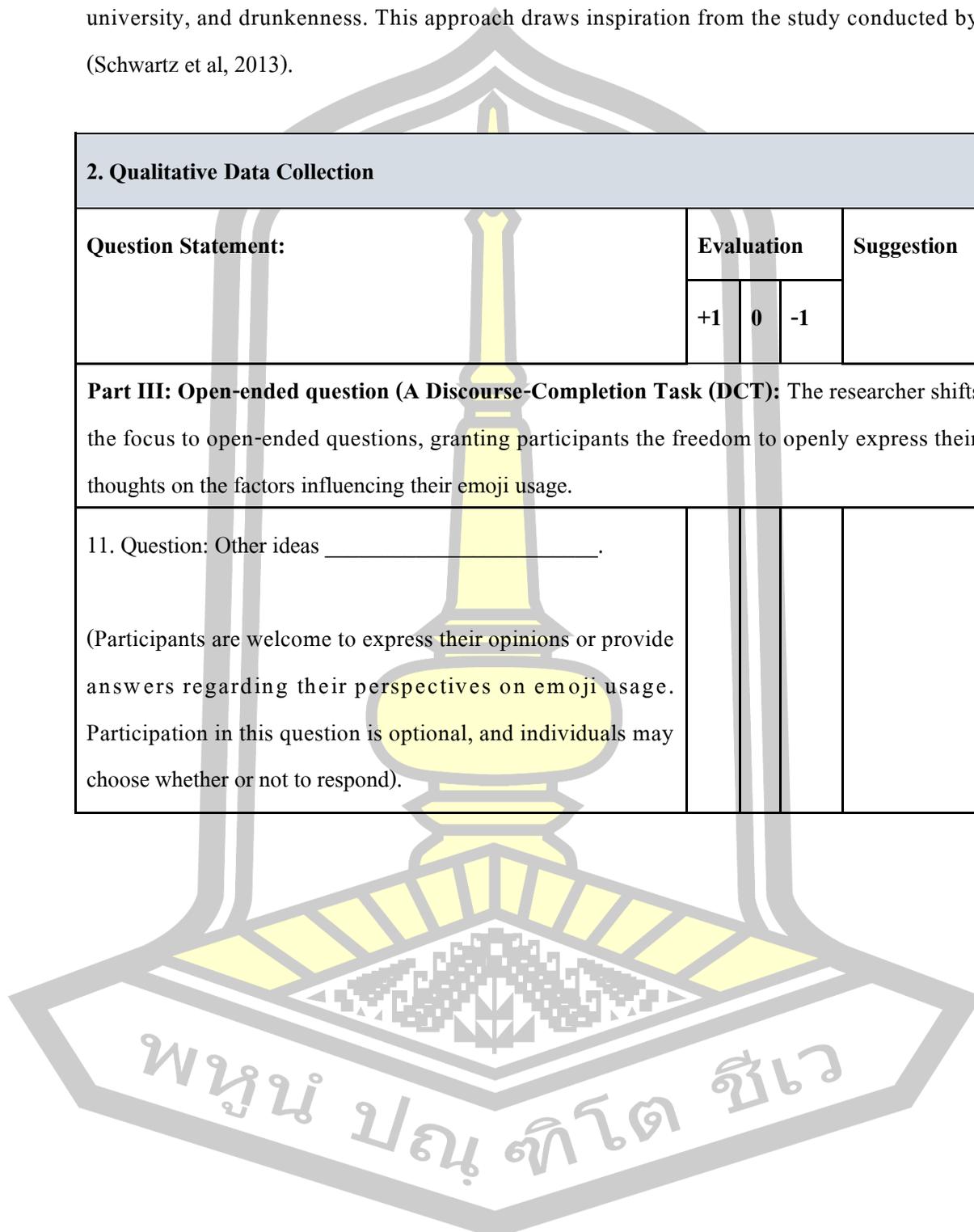
Part III: A semi-structured interview: The researcher will seek interviews with participants to discuss their usage of message formats and the influencing factors when communicating through Facebook Messenger. These interviews will comprise eight questions and are expected to last around 20 minutes. Interviews can be conducted at Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University or at a location convenient for the research participants.	Evaluation			Suggestions
	+1	**0**	**-1**	
1. How often do you use emojis when interacting on Facebook?				
2. What are some of the reasons why you use emojis in your Facebook interactions?				
3. Do you think emojis can convey emotions better than words? Why or why not?				
4. Do you think the use of emojis varies among different social groups, such as age or gender? Why or why not?				
5. Are there any specific emojis that you use frequently in your Facebook interactions? What do they typically represent for you?				
6. How do you think the use of emojis in Facebook interactions differs from other forms of communication, such as face-to-face or written communication?				

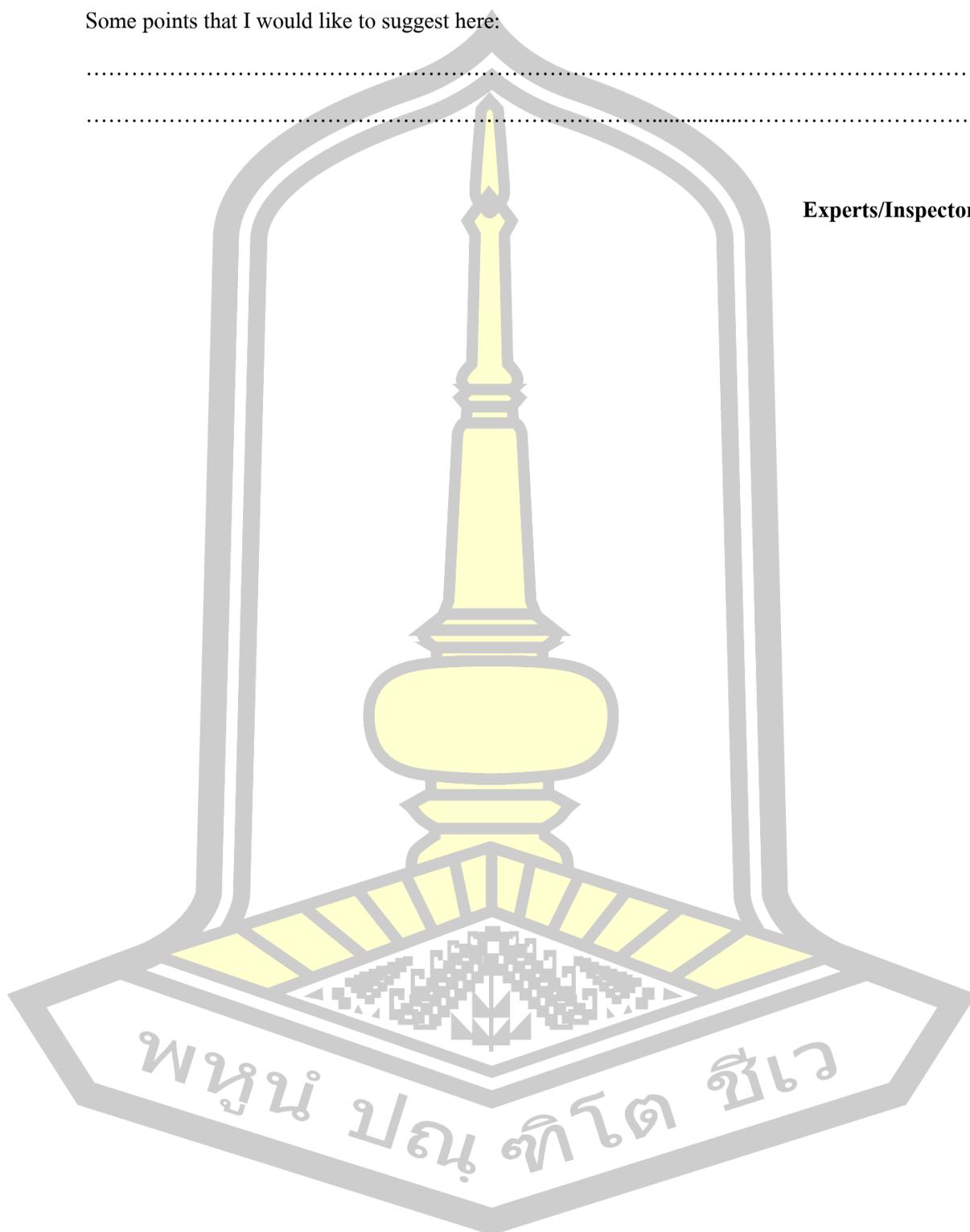|			
7. Do you think the use of emojis has any impact on the tone or mood of Facebook interactions? If so, in what ways?			
8. Have you ever encountered any challenges or misunderstandings when using emojis in your Facebook interactions? Can you describe the situation and how you resolved it?			

Qualitative Data Collection	Evaluation			Suggestion
	+1	**0**	**-1**	
Part III: The real chat data: The Real chat data collected from participants will be used to authentically explore emoji usage in Facebook Messenger, offering unique insights into natural communication patterns. Participants have provided informed consent, and their chat data has been anonymized for privacy. The researcher will examine conversations among participants on topics like sex, university, and drunkenness, drawing inspiration from Schwartz et al.'s (2013) study.				
13. (TechCrunch, 2021) The picture provided is just one example. More illustrations can be found in the article 'Facebook Messenger releases cross-app group chats, further integrating with Instagram' on TechCrunch's website. Retrieved from: (https://techcrunch.com/2021/09/30/facebook-messenger-releases-cross-app-group-chats-further-integrating-with-instagram/).				

Comments / Suggestions

Some points that I would like to suggest here:

………

…………………………………………………………………………….................………………………….

Experts/Inspector

BIOGRAPHY

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                                       Province

Research grants & awards   -

Research output   -