The Paralinguistic Function of Emojis in Twitter Communication

Authors : Yasmin Tantawi, Mary Beth Rosson

Abstract : In response to the dearth of information about emoji use for different purposes in different settings, this paper investigates the paralinguistic function of emojis within Twitter communication in the United States. To conduct this investigation, the Twitter feeds from 16 population centers spread throughout the United States were collected from the Twitter public API. One hundred tweets were collected from each population center, totaling to 1,600 tweets. Tweets containing emojis were next extracted using the “emot” Python package; these were then analyzed via the IBM Watson API Natural Language Understanding module to identify the topics discussed. A manual content analysis was then conducted to ascertain the paralinguistic and emotional features of the emojis used in these tweets. We present our characterization of emoji usage in Twitter and discuss implications for the design of Twitter and other text-based communication tools.

Keywords : computer-mediated communication, content analysis, paralinguistics, sociology
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