

The Semiotics Reflection of Stickers Used in the Line Application¹

การสะท้อนเชิงสัญวิทยาของสติ๊กเกอร์ที่ใช้ในไลน์แอปพลิเคชัน

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Received: August 8, 2018

Revised: December 17, 2019

Accepted: December 24, 2019

Abstract

This research aims to understand the function of stickers, as signs, used in the Line application and explore the semiotic reflection of stickers -the relationship and closeness level, between the senders and receivers. This is a mix of quantitative research and qualitative research. In the quantitative part, 152 screenshots of personal chats were collected from twenty-five university students. They were asked to categorize their relationships with their interlocutors into 5 groups; Lover, Immediate Family, Extended Family, Professional Relationship and Friend and rate the relationship closeness level. The statistical package program - Pearson Correlation method is used to explore the correlation between the relationship closeness and the number of stickers used in the chats. Though the correlation result is weak ($r = 0.312$, $p < 0.05$) but the positive linear relationship suggests a significant correlation between relationship closeness and the number of stickers used in the Line application (Sig 0.027, Sig < 0.05). In the qualitative part, the triadic model of

¹ This article is conducted as a part of the thesis on “Semiotic Analysis of how Stickers Used by Thai University Students in the Line Application Reflects their Relationships with Receivers” submitted to the Master Program in English and Communication, Department of English, Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Mai University.

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the sign is applied to understand the function of stickers as sign, used in the Line app. It is found that stickers were interpreted according to the perception of the relationship among the Representamen, the Object and the Interpretant. Likewise, to Emojis, stickers also have the ability to construct and substitute messages. Plus, stickers illustrate actions and facial expressions that are lacked in Emojis. The curtain stickers are employed specifically with curtain interlocutors. The use of stickers in the chats reflects and conveys both direct meaning of stickers and semiotics meaning-relationship and level of closeness between senders and receivers.

Keywords Semiotics, Sticker, Line Application, Relationship, Closeness

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยการสะท้อนเชิงสัญลักษณ์ของสติ๊กเกอร์ที่ใช้ในไลน์แอปพลิเคชัน มีวัตถุประสงค์ 2 ประการ คือ เพื่อศึกษาการใช้สติ๊กเกอร์ ซึ่งเป็นสัญลักษณ์ที่ใช้ในไลน์แอปพลิเคชัน และเพื่อศึกษาภาพสะท้อนเชิงสัญลักษณ์อันได้แก่ความสัมพันธ์และระดับความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้ส่งและผู้รับ งานวิจัยนี้เป็นงานวิจัยแบบผสมผสานเชิงปริมาณและเชิงคุณภาพ ในเชิงปริมาณผู้วิจัยได้เก็บข้อมูลรูปถ่ายบทสนทนาที่ปรากฏบนโทรศัพท์มือถือ (Screenshot) จำนวน 152 รูป จากกลุ่มตัวอย่างที่เป็นนักศึกษาในระดับมหาวิทยาลัย จำนวน 25 คน โดยกลุ่มตัวอย่างระบุประเภทของความสัมพันธ์ของตนเองกับคู่สนทนา ซึ่งแบ่งออกเป็น 5 กลุ่ม ได้แก่ กลุ่มคูรััก กลุ่มครอบครัว กลุ่มญาติ กลุ่มเพื่อนร่วมงาน และกลุ่มเพื่อน รวมถึงระดับความสัมพันธ์ของตนเองกับคู่สนทนา โดยแบ่งออกเป็น 10 ระดับ ผู้วิจัยใช้โปรแกรมสำเร็จรูปทางสถิติในการประมวลผลข้อมูล โดยวิธีหาค่าสัมประสิทธิ์สหสัมพันธ์แบบเพียร์สัน (Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficiency) ผลการศึกษาพบว่าแม้ค่าสัมประสิทธิ์สหสัมพันธ์เพียร์สันของตัวแปรทั้งสองมีความสัมพันธ์อยู่ในระดับต่ำ ($r = 0.312, p < 0.05$) แต่มีลักษณะเป็นเส้นตรงในเชิงบวก ตัวแปรทั้งสอง ได้แก่ ความสนิทสนมของคู่สนทนาและการใช้สติ๊กเกอร์ในไลน์แอปพลิเคชัน มีความสัมพันธ์กันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ 0.05 (Sig 0.027, Sig < 0.05)

ในการศึกษาเชิงคุณภาพ ผู้วิจัยได้ใช้ทฤษฎีสัญลักษณ์ของชาร์ลส์ ซานเดอร์ส เพิร์ซ ผลการศึกษาพบว่าการตีความความหมายของสติ๊กเกอร์นั้นเกิดจากรูปแบบความสัมพันธ์ 3 ส่วน คือ สื่อกลางที่เป็นตัวนำความคิดไปสู่จิตใจของผู้รับ (Representamen) วัตถุอ้างอิง

(Object) และ ความคิดที่แปลได้จากสัญลักษณ์ (Interpretant) ในศึกษาการตีความหมายของ สติ๊กเกอร์ ซึ่งเป็นสัญลักษณ์ที่ใช้ในการสื่อสารในไลน์แอปพลิเคชัน จากการศึกษาพบว่า ผู้ใช้ใช้สติ๊กเกอร์เพื่อเติมเต็มความต้องการในการแสดงออกทางอารมณ์ของผู้ใช้ เนื่องจาก รูปสติ๊กเกอร์สามารถเลียนแบบการกระทำต่างๆ ผ่านอุปกรณ์ออนไลน์ ซึ่งแตกต่างจากการใช้อีโมจิ (Emojis) นอกจากนี้ ผู้ส่งข้อความมีความเฉพาะเจาะจงใช้สติ๊กเกอร์กับ คู่สนทนาที่เฉพาะเจาะจง ยกตัวอย่างเช่น สติ๊กเกอร์ที่แสดงออกถึงความใกล้ชิดสนิทสนม เช่น การกอด การจูบ มักจะใช้กับคู่สนทนาที่อยู่ในกลุ่มคู่รัก สติ๊กเกอร์ที่เลียนแบบท่าทาง ตลกขบขัน มักจะใช้กับคู่สนทนาที่อยู่ในกลุ่มครอบครัว และ กลุ่มเพื่อน ด้วยเหตุนี้ การใช้ สติ๊กเกอร์ในแอปพลิเคชันไลน์จึงไม่เพียงสื่อความหมายโดยตรง ตามตัวของสติ๊กเกอร์เท่านั้น แต่ยังสามารถให้เห็นถึงความหมายในเชิงสัญลักษณ์ อันได้แก่ความสัมพันธ์และระดับ ความสนิทสนมระหว่างผู้ส่งและผู้รับอีกด้วย

คำสำคัญ สัญลักษณ์, สติ๊กเกอร์, ไลน์แอปพลิเคชัน, ความสัมพันธ์, ความสนิทสนม

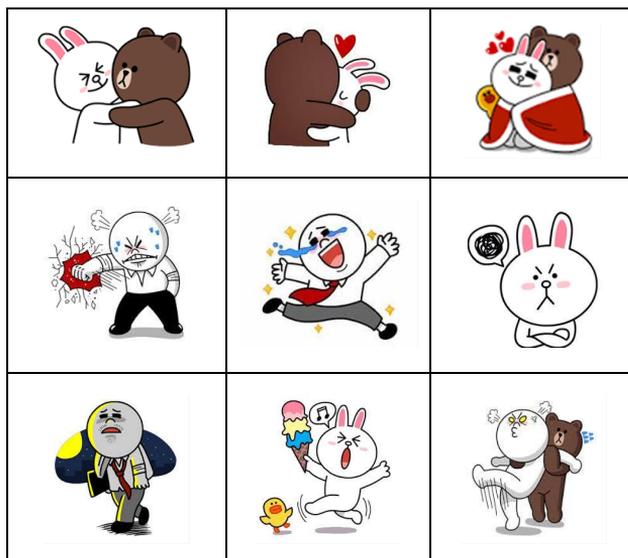
1. Introduction

Communication always has been important to mankind. People firstly communicated with each other using body language before verbal communication was created. Until present day, the first language of mankind is still a controversial subject among linguists. Sumerian and Egyptian (around 3200BC) are the languages that have the earliest writing systems and are among the earliest recorded languages, as far as written evidence goes. Besides, one of the oldest written language that is still in actual use would be Chinese (1500BC) (Chislett, 2019).

Nowadays, the pattern of communication has developed tremendously. The important key that affects communication is the internet. Human communication is not limited to face-to-face interaction (F2F). Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) is a wide range of technologies that facilitate human communication and the interactive sharing of information through computer networks including e-mail, discussion groups, newsgroup, chat, instant messages and web pages (Barnes, 2002).

However, online communication was limited for the text-based message of which emotion and non-verbal cues were lacked (Derks, Bos, & von Grumbkow, 2007). Therefore, people have tried many ways to solve this problem. The Line application, which is the online application sending the instant messages and used mostly by Thai people, created pictorial cartoon-like characters depicting actions and emotions called “stickers”. The main aim of these stickers is to solve the text-based message problem. Thousands of stickers provided in the Line Store for users show facial expression and are able to simulate various feelings and complex actions.

Figure 1 The samples of stickers simulating feelings/actions in the Line application



Source: LINE STORE (n.d.)

In terms of linguistic study, the stickers are the new feature of communication in the internet era. Users choose the stickers as the signs to convey their messages alongside with textual messages. Language, itself, is also an indexical sign. As a person studying in linguistic field, it is very interesting to explore the stickers as one of the signs used for communication in the internet.

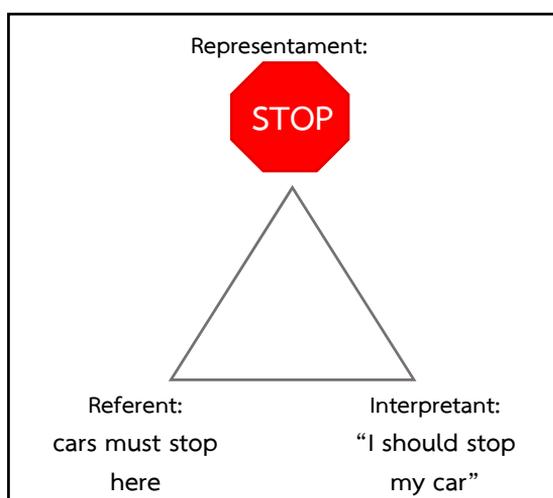
Therefore, this study aims to analyze the functions of the stickers such as the stickers' interpretation and stickers' competence. Plus, due to the numerous number of stickers provided in the application, it seems that each sticker is used differently by different receivers. Plus, another purpose of this study is to investigate whether these stickers could be used as a sign to reflect the relationship and the closeness level between the interlocutors.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Triadic model of sign by Peirce

In Handbook of Semiotics, the sign is a process combined with three parts which are *Representamen*, *Object* and *Interpretant* (Noth, 1990). Defined by Charles Sanders Peirce, it is called “the Triadic model of sign.” The term *Representamen* refers to something that represents another thing. The next term is Object or the Referent that is what the sign refers to. The third term is *Interpretant*, which is the understanding perceived from the sign (Chandler, 1994). Figure 2 shows the systematic process of the Peirce's theory that creates sign's interpretation.

Figure 2 Triadic Model of a sign offered by Charles Sanders Peirce



Source: Chandler (2017)

2.2 Semiotics Analysis applied from the Emoji Competence theory by Marcel Danesi

As mentioned previously, the study on stickers in terms of semiology is quite limited. Therefore, the theory of emoji competence coined by Marcel Danesi, will be applied in this study. Danesi had studied on emojis that are used as sign connecting users in particular semiotic and formal way (Danesi, 2017). He pointed out that that people are able to select and combine the form and structures of emojis in specific ways in order to construct messages in meaningful ways called “Emoji Competence” (Danesi, 2017, p. 36). Likewise, this theory of emoji competence will be used to discover if the stickers in the Line app. share the same functions as the emojis both in semiotic way and formal way.

3. Methodology

This study is divided into two parts; the statistical part and semiotics analysis part. The statistical methodology will emphasize on the significant relationship between the level of closeness and the stickers used in the chats. Moreover, the qualitative research focusing on the semiotics analysis will explore the semiotics meaning of stickers. The conceptual framework used in this study is described as follows:

3.1 Quantitative Research

3.1.1 Research Tool

One hundred and fifty chats are expected to be collected from thirty university students (5 chats per a student) who use the Line application to communicate with their interlocutors in everyday life. The subjects will be asked to submit the screenshots of chats to the researcher and identify 1) the relationship between them and their interlocutors; and 2) the level of closeness. Names and profile pictures of the users anonymized in order to protect their identities.

In this study, the types of relationship have been categorized into 5, groups which are 1) Lover, 2) Immediate Family, 3) Extended Family, 4) Profession Relationship and 5) Friend. The description of each category is described as follows:

(1) The relationship categories

The five relationship categories and the description created as follows.

(1.1) Lover - A relationship including sexual intimacy with the sender, such as a wife, a husband, a boyfriend or a girlfriend.

(1.2) Immediate Family - Immediate family members such as parents or siblings.

(1.3) Extended Family - Family members such as grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins, in-laws.

(1.4) Professional Relationship - Persons who are part of subject's professional work such as supervisors, employees/employers or colleagues.

(1.5) Friend - Other known persons who are not in the above categories.

(2) Closeness levels

Since closeness levels rely on the feelings of each individual and have abstract meanings, identifying closeness can be very subjective. Therefore, a scale of closeness has been developed with a range from 1 to 10 (scale 1 = least closeness, scale 10 = closest relationship) and has been given to the subjects. However, the descriptions of level 1, level 5 and level 10 will be shown below as the minimum level, immediate level and the maximum level respectively. Then subjects were asked to choose the level of closeness between them and their interlocutors. The following description of the closeness levels was given to the students.

Table 2 The level of relationship closeness and the descriptions

Level of closeness	Description of the closeness
Level 1	There is no closeness. The interlocutors were added for a specific purpose, such as professional contacts, business contacts and etc.
Level 5	It is the middle level of closeness. The relationship between the chat owners and their interlocutors is neither close nor not close. The Thai term “Cheay-Cheay (เฉยเฉย)” describes the meaning of this level.
Level 10	Senders are very close to interlocutors. To clarify, the chat owner could communicate with their interlocutors and share every aspect of their stories. Chats can include either private or non-private topics. Intimate information, personal information or secrets are shared in the chat room. Occasionally, indecent or risqué topics such as dirty jokes are shared.

3.1.2 Data Analysis

The data was then put into the statistical package program (Pearson Correlation method) (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 1998 p. 118). In order to analyze the correlation of the independent variable, the relationship closeness and the dependent variable and the number of stickers used in the Line app. at a significance level of 0.05.

To test the significance level, the hypotheses of this study have been set as follows;

Ho (Null Hypotheses): There is no significant relationship between the relationship closeness and the use of stickers.

H1 (Alternative Hypotheses): There is a significant relationship between the relationship closeness and the use of stickers.

3.2 Qualitative Research

In this part, the stickers in Line app. used by the subjects are analyzed using semiotics analysis in order to investigate the meaning and function of the stickers. Firstly, the triadic model of sign will be used to explore the meaning of the stickers. Moreover, the idea of emoji competence will be

applied to investigate the capability of the stickers in Line application- the ability to select and combine the form and structures in specific ways in order to construct messages in meaningful ways.

4. Findings

4.1 Quantitative Analysis

The total number of one hundred and fifty-two screenshots has been collected from subjects. Even though each student had been asked to submit 5 chats, many students declined to submit this number of chats to the researcher. The specific number of chats or screenshots could not be mandated in the study due to privacy concerns. The bar graph below shows the number of chats collected from the actual twenty-five subjects.

Figure 3 The number of chats divided into 5 relationship categories

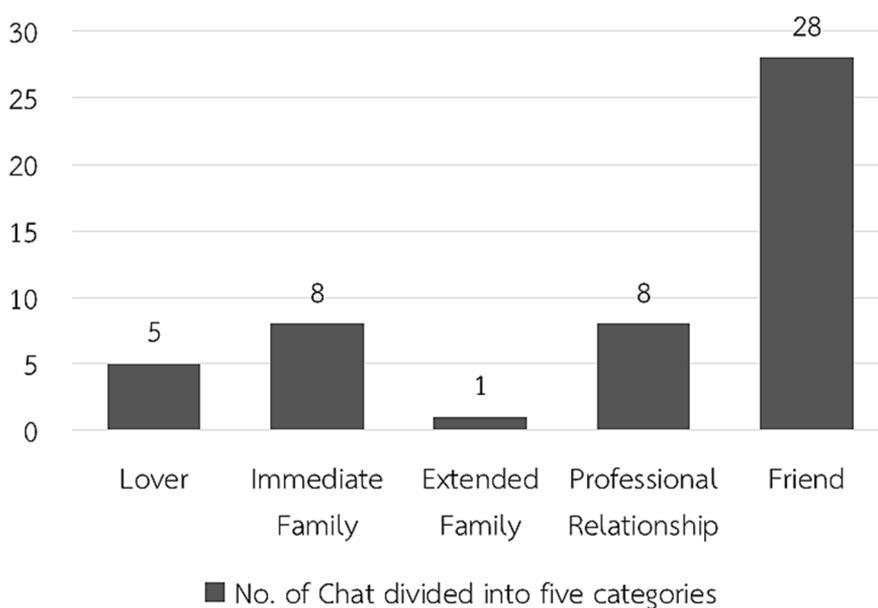


Figure 3 is the bar graph, which showed the number of chats as divided into the five relationship groups: Lover, Immediate Family, Extended Family, Professional Relationship and Friend. Most of the chats (28) submitted by twenty-five subjects have been held between them and their friends. The least frequent category is 1 chat with the extended family (1). The same number of chats (8) is with family and lover.

Table 3 Relationship closeness and the number of stickers used in each chats

Number of Chat	The Relationship Closeness (from 1 -10)	no. of stickers used
Chat 1	1	1
Chat 2	10	3
Chat 3	10	13
Chat 4	10	7
Chat 5	7	0
Chat 6	8	10
Chat 7	8	2
Chat 8	7	9
Chat 9	10	10
Chat 10	8	3
Chat 11	8	1
Chat 12	9	8
Chat 13	6	6
Chat 14	9	5
Chat 15	9	4
Chat 16	7	7
Chat 17	7	7

Number of Chat	The Relationship Closeness (from 1 -10)	no. of stickers used
Chat 26	7	2
Chat 27	9.5	4
Chat 28	9	2
Chat 29	7	2
Chat 30	9	0
Chat 31	7	0
Chat 32	9	0
Chat 33	7	5
Chat 34	8.5	1
Chat 35	8	2
Chat 36	7	2
Chat 37	9	6
Chat 38	9	13
Chat 39	8	3
Chat 40	6	3
Chat 41	9	38
Chat 42	9	2

Number of Chat	The Relationship Closeness (from 1 -10)	no. of stickers used
Chat 18	7	1
Chat 19	9	4
Chat 20	8	4
Chat 21	10	3
Chat 22	10	19
Chat 23	8	8
Chat 24	8	3
Chat 25	10	8

Number of Chat	The Relationship Closeness (from 1 -10)	no. of stickers used
Chat 43	7	8
Chat 44	9	5
Chat 45	10	8
Chat 46	5	10
Chat 47	6	5
Chat 48	8	3
Chat 49	9	7
Chat 50	8	4

The above tables show the data collection indicating the relationship closeness and the number of the stickers used in the chats. Then, the statistical program, Pearson Correlation method, was used to test the correlation of the closeness of relationship (the independent variable) towards the use of stickers (the dependent variable).

Table 4 The significant correlation between the relationship closeness and the number of stickers used in the Line application

Correlations			
		Sticker	LoC
Sticker	Pearson Correlation	1	0.312*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.027
	N	50	50
LoC	Pearson Correlation	0.312*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.027	
	N	50	50

LoC = Level of Relationship Closeness

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

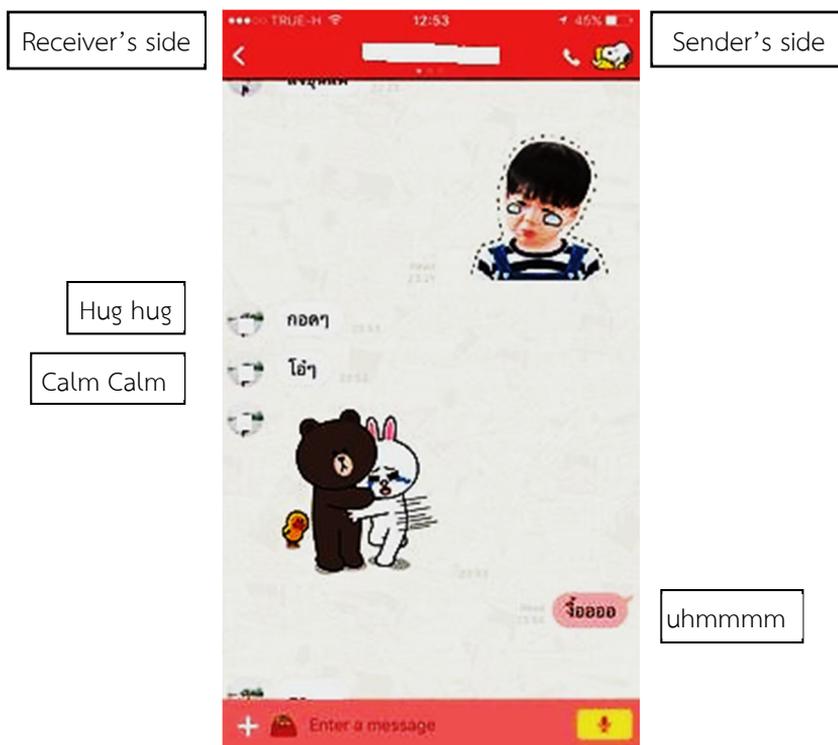
The results showed a significant relationship between the closeness of the relationship and the number of stickers used in Line application (Sig 0.027, Sig < 0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis (H0) was rejected. On the other hand, the result indicated that the alternative hypothesis (H1) was accepted, which means that the closeness of relationship correlates with the number of stickers used in Line app. The results suggest that the relationship closeness significantly relates to the use of stickers of the university students. Even though the result indicates a weak correlation ($r = 0.312$, $p < 0.05$), there is the positive linear relationship between the closeness of relationship and the number of stickers used in Line app. In this case, the more number of chats collected in order to find the strong correlation between the two variables. However, the qualitative analysis, specifically in terms of semiotics, has been conducted in order to explore more about the closeness of relationship toward the use of stickers in Line app.

4.2 Semiotics analysis

(1) Meaning of the stickers

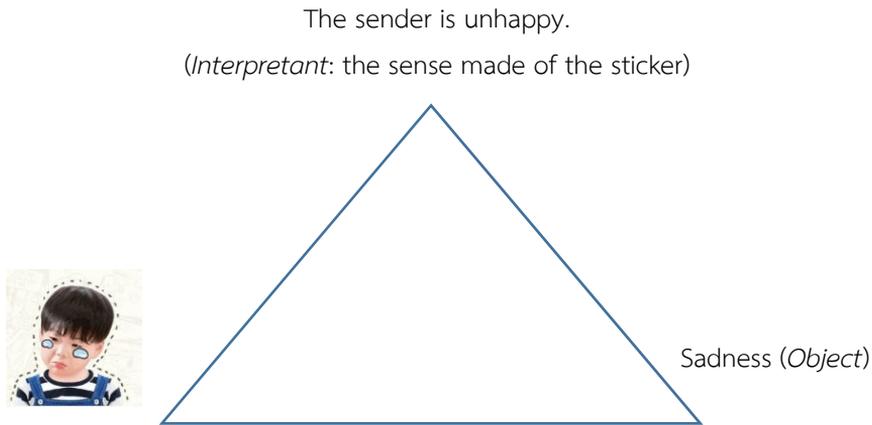
In this part, examples of screenshots collected from the subjects have been analyzed in order to see how users interpret the meanings of the stickers used in the Line app. The stickers' interpretations are very important since they are often used alongside with text in chats. In Figure 4, the right side of the chat was written by the chat's owner (hereinafter the sender). The left side of the chat was written by the person who was sent the message (hereinafter the receiver).

Figure 4 The example of the screenshot of chat collected from the subject



In Figure 4, it is seen that stickers and textual messages were used by both sides in the chat. In the beginning of the chat, the sender sent a sticker of a crying boy to the receiver. Even without a textual message, we can clearly see that the receiver understood the meaning of the sticker. So, he/she replied with two textual words, กอดๆ (Hug hug) and โอ้ๆ (Calm calm), followed by another sticker, a bear hugging a rabbit. To interpret this sticker, the triadic model of sign, as developed by Peirce was applied as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5 The process to interpret the meaning of the sticker applied from Peirce's model



The sticker is the Representamen, the form of the sign. When the receiver saw the sticker, he/she interpreted the meaning of the message. A sticker of a crying boy is a referent for sadness (Object). The relationship between the sticker (Representamen) and the sadness (Object) creates the sense made of the sticker (Interpretant). The receiver was able to interpret the meaning. The sense made the sticker led to the understanding that the sender is unhappy. The receiver replied with two words, *ကစတု* (Hug hug) and *ငြိမ်း* (Calm calm), followed by another sticker, a bear hugging a rabbit. This was intended to comfort the sender. From this example, it is clear that the meaning of sticker is all about the perception of the relationship among the Representamen, the Object and the Interpretant.

(2) Fulfilling the emotional expression with stickers

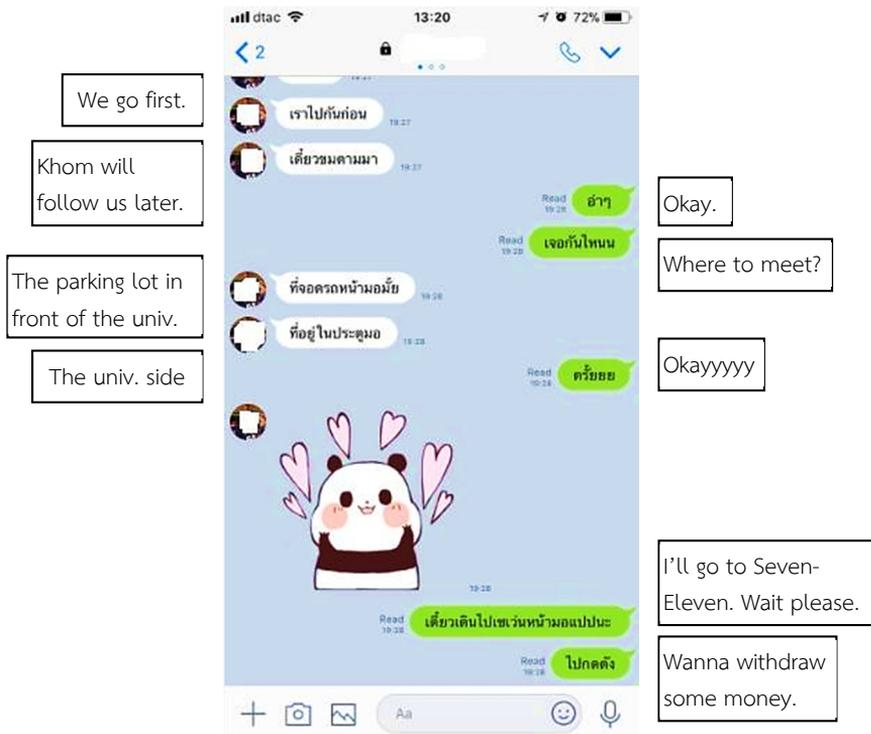
According to Danesi (2017, p. 36), emoji competence is used in two ways, adjunctive and substitutive. Adjunctive emojis are used alongside the text while substitutive emojis are used to replace the entire text. The stickers used in the Line application showed that people do employ stickers to express their emotions. As stated previously regarding to the emojis' competence, the results show that stickers are used and combined with textual messages in order to

convey the meaning and also construct messages in more meaning ways-to show the emotion.

As seen in Figure 5, the receiver replied with two textual messages- “กอดๆ” (meaning Hug) and “โอ้ๆ” (meaning Calm). A bear hugging a crying rabbit sticker () has been applied after the text message. The inclusion of both the textual message and the sticker shows that the sender felt that using only text-based message was insufficient to convey the sentiment. The sticker simulates an action of hug has been sent to support the textual message. As previously described, sending this pictorial sticker not only emphasizes the textual message, but also indexes emotional expressions such as gestures and the facial expressions.

There are many stickers that have been used in the chats to substitute the text message. Figure 6 shows a chat in which a sticker is used. English translations are placed alongside the original Thai.

Figure 6 Sticker used to substitute for a text message



The above picture shows a chat between 2 friends discussing a meeting place. The receiver suggested meeting at the parking lot in front of the university and the sender (the chat's owner) agreed. A sticker of a smiling panda with pink hearts was sent as a reply. This sticker represents the positive answer, showing that the chat owner agreed with the meeting place. Rather typing with a text message like 'Okay' or 'Yes', a sticker is employed. Rather than signifying the cartoon-like of smiling panda sticker surrounded with hearts, the sticker conveys the acceptable answer to the receiver. In this case, the sticker of a smiling panda is equivalent to words as suggested by Danesi that signs are able to construct messages in both formal and specific ways.

Unlike emojis, stickers tend to be much more straightforward. In Danesi's works, he mentioned that emojis have been used as signs in the online communication. So the limitation of textual message is solved. The

adjunctive emojis, which are used alongside text, might lead to misinterpretations depending on the cultural backgrounds of the users (Danesi, 2017, p. 38). Therefore, adjunctive emojis require guidelines or training to understand the specific meanings. On the other hand, stickers, as a pictorial sign, simulate actions. This makes it is easier to decode the meanings and understand them. Therefore, it is seen that people employ stickers in two ways: use with the text and use to substitute for the text. Both techniques fulfill their desire for emotional expression.

(3) The stickers as the representation of relationship closeness

In this research, the researcher found that stickers are able to indicate the relationship closeness. To clarify, the use of emojis and the use of stickers is compared in order to show this special feature of stickers.

Danesi mentioned that people use and mix emoji with textual message and/or other emojis to convey their completed messages. The messages perceived from emoji rely on selection, combination and associative relations. Figure 7 illustrates how users combined emojis in their message according to Danesi's theory.

Figure 7 The combination of two emojis used in Twitter

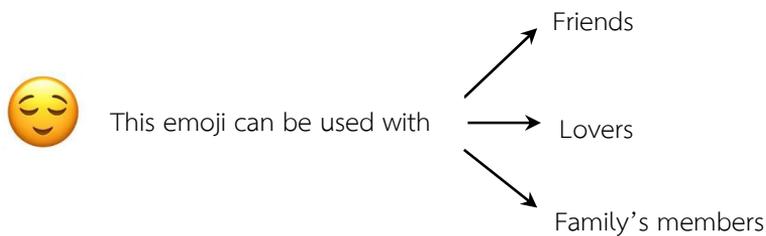


Source: iEmoji (2018)

As can be seen in Figure 7, the headphone emoji 🎧 and the basic 'Smiling Face' emoji 😊 were used in the message. The users had to interpret the meanings of these signs from their associative relations. As mentioned

previously, interpreting the overall meaning of text and emojis requires a high degree of “emoji competence” (Danesi, 2017, p. 38). Moreover, since each emoji has its own interpretation, they can be applied to any interlocutors. In other words, one may send any emoji to anyone, and it will convey the same meaning. Figure 8 shows the idea of using emojis with all kind of interlocutors.

Figure 8 The example Emojis applied in different interlocutor categories



Unlike emojis, stickers not only help to express the emotions of users, but are also able to show relationship closeness. There are a wide variety of stickers available, so users are able to select those which fit their needs. In this research, it is found that some stickers are used with some specific interlocutors.

For example, Figure 8 shows a sticker of a bear kissing a rabbit. The cartoon characters are hugging each other. Also, the sticker illustrated the closed eye of the rabbit, as well as the red small heart, indexes a sense of romance. People might consider sending this sticker to those they are intimate and romantic with, such as lovers or spouses. This sticker would be inappropriate to use with someone they don't have a romantic relationship with, such as a supervisor at their workplace or a professor at their school.

Figure 9 The sticker of a bear kissing a rabbit



Source: LINE STORE (n.d.)

The researcher found that users in each relationship category employed stickers differently. The pattern of stickers demonstrated in this study, is as follows;

(1) Lovers - There are five out of fifty chats categorized in Lovers group. The stickers that show intimate actions such as kissing () and hugging () are used in all chats in this category (100%). Plus, all chats contain stickers illustrating humorous actions such as  and  are indicating a high level of relationship closeness between the senders and receivers.

(2) Immediate Family - There are eight out of fifty chats categorized in this group. The stickers used in this category vary. The stickers substituting easy words, such as the 'ok' sticker () and the 'yes' sticker () are commonly used (88%). The stickers are informal and funny, and would be inappropriate to use with other people unless they are very close. For example, a sticker of a crying boy (), a sticker of an angry panda () and a sticker of a laughing cartoon-like person () are only sent to people who are known well.

(3) Extended Family - There is only one chat in this category. Therefore, no sticker patterns can be determined.

(4) Professional Relationships - In this group, users mostly communicate by textual message. Only one sticker was employed in this category. This might because the chatting topics are formal. The users don't

have personal issues involved in the chats. Therefore, the straightforward text messages are sufficient to communicate. The ‘salute’ sticker () is the only sticker that has been used. The sticker also reflected the formal relationship and respect.

(5) Friends - The stickers used in this category vary. Users employ stickers both to support their textual messages and to substitute for words. The stickers tend to be funny and informal. Examples of stickers used in chats with friends include a sticker of a panda with the word “Thank You” () , a bear sticking out its tongue () , a sticker of a panda with the word “OK” () and a sticker of a laughing cat with the word “555” (meaning laughter) () .

As illustrated, stickers are used in the chats as signs signifying the formal meaning such as “yes” () “ok” () or “thank you” () and the semiotic meaning- level of closeness. It is shown that users apply stickers with text and substitute the word. These abilities are as same as Emoji’s function discovered by Danesi. However, the stickers are picturesque and straightforward since they depict actions and facial expressions. The number of stickers provided in the Line application are numerous. The action and facial expression of stickers also vary. Therefore, users are able to choose in order to construct and satisfy the messages. Since stickers show semiotics meaning, some stickers are certainly used with certain person. For example, this sticker () has been applied in the chat with lovers but it would be inappropriate to use in the professional group. On the other hand, one emoji such as 😊 can be used with all interlocutors. This feature amplifies the ability of stickers in the Line application since they are able to satisfy the emotional expression of users.

5. Conclusion

The quantitative part shows the significant relationship between the relationship closeness and the number of stickers used by Thai university in the Line app. (Sig 0.027, Sig < 0.05). The coefficient of correlation value ($r = 0.312$, $p < 0.05$) indicates the positive linear but weak relationship between the closeness of relationship and the number of stickers. In the qualitative part, the results are divided into three main parts. The first part shows that the stickers' interpretation is developed according to the thinking process perceived by the users from the stickers. The stickers' interpretation is subjective. Also it bounds with the users' background. However, comparing with the use of emojis, stickers are much more straightforward since they simulate both actions and facial expressions.

Next, stickers are able to fulfill the facial expression in the text-based communication. The stickers are employed as same as the emojis – to support the textual message and to substitute the text. However, using the stickers is much more straightforward since it shows actions and facial expression.

Lastly, stickers show that the semiotics meaning-closeness level has been demonstrated aside from the direct meaning themselves. Some stickers are certainly used with certain interlocutors. The closeness level and the stickers used in each category tend to have a pattern that shows the level of relationship closeness. For example, stickers showing strong intimacy and care are used in Lover and Immediate Family group. Stickers substituting single words such as “yes” and “okay” are used in chats with friends. Therefore, using stickers can reflect the relationship closeness between senders and receivers.

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