

The Role of Context and Demographics in Emotional Online Interpretation

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This paper investigates the ease and accuracy of the interpretation of emotional online communication through the use of emoji-only posts and accompanying demographic information. An anonymous online survey was used to collect data from participants, who were asked to interpret four emoji-only posts displayed with accompanying demographic information (either accurate or inaccurate). The study examines how different demographics of the poster and interpreter impact accuracy and confidence in interpretation, as well as how the inclusion of demographic information or the perceived similarity between the poster and the interpreter impacts interpretation. The findings show that gender itself does not impact accuracy or confidence, but differences in interpretation are seen between genders when interpreting each other, specifically that women were approximately 10% more skilled at interpreting men than men themselves were, and that men are about 21% easier to interpret than women overall. Age, student status, and familiarity with emojis impact confidence in interpretation, but not accuracy. We found that younger participants are approximately 20% more confident in their interpretations than older participants. Additionally, the inclusion of demographic information and perceived demographic similarity do not impact interpretation, however, actual demographic similarity between the poster and interpreter impacts confidence of interpretation. Overall, this study provides insights into how context and demographics play a role in the interpretation of emotional online communication.