



## THE DENOTATIVE MEANING OF EMOJI UNITS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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**Annotation.** *This thesis compares the denotative meaning of emoji units, which are widely used as a modern digital communication tool, in English and Uzbek. The main (direct) semantic meaning of emoji characters, their communicative function, and linguoculturological aspects are revealed. The study examines the relationship between the denotative and connotative layers of emoji, as well as the differences in their interpretation in different cultural contexts. The results shed light on the universal and local characteristics of emoji units in global communication.*

**Key words:** *emoji, denotative meaning, semantics, digital communication, linguoculturology, comparative analysis, English, Uzbek.*

**Аннотация.** *В данной работе сравнивается денотативное значение эмодзи-единиц, которые широко используются в качестве современного цифрового средства коммуникации, в английском и узбекском языках. Раскрывается основное (прямое) семантическое значение эмодзи-символов, их коммуникативная функция и лингвокультурологические аспекты. В исследовании рассматривается взаимосвязь между денотативным и коннотативным уровнями эмодзи, а также различия в их интерпретации в разных культурных контекстах. Результаты проливают свет на универсальные и локальные характеристики единиц эмодзи в глобальной коммуникации.*

**Ключевые слова:** *эмодзи, денотативное значение, семантика, цифровая коммуникация, лингвокультурология, сравнительный анализ, английский, узбекский языки.*

As a result of the rapid development of information technologies, the forms of communication between people have changed radically, and digital communication has begun to take a leading position. In particular, emoji characters are widely used on social media and messenger platforms as a means of enriching written speech emotionally and expressively. Although emoji units originally emerged as pictographic symbols, today they are becoming an important object of linguistic research as independent semantic units. In linguistics, the concept of denotative meaning refers to the basic meaning of a unit that directly refers to objective reality. Emoji characters also have denotative content, representing a specific object, situation, or emotion, which can be interpreted similarly or differently in different languages. The semantic perception of emoji in languages belonging to different linguoculturological systems, such as English and Uzbek, is an important scientific issue. The relevance of this thesis stems from the need to identify the cultural and language-specific interpretive characteristics of emoji, as well as their use as a universal tool in global communication.

The central issue of semantic analysis is to identify the core of meaning, that is, the denotative layer of a unit that is relatively stable and serves as a basis for other uses. The same issue is shared when it comes to emoji units, which, although often manifested by a strong connotative and pragmatic load, under each emoji there will be a



specific subject, case or situational basis that will allow it to be recognized. Marcel Danesi, evaluating emoji as a pictographic language system, argued that their denotative meaning is formed based on visual representation [2:208]. Gretchen McCulloch, on the other hand, considers emoji as a means of conveying intonation and emotional color in written speech, noting that their semantic interpretation depends on context [3: 36]. In empirical research, Hannah Miller and co-authors have found different interpretations of emojis on different platforms [4:59-68]. This suggests that the denotative sense is also not constant. Susan Herring has evaluated emoji as paralinguistic units in computer-mediated communication, highlighting their role in enhancing communicative effectiveness [5:273-292]. J. Lyons and D. A. White Cruse describes the lexical meaning, he singled out the ratio between denotative core, paradigmatic connection, and additional layers of meaning that expand in context [6:174-188; 16-24]. Emoji are very specific to this model. For example, the 😊 emoji represents a smiling face, while the 👍 emoji represents a thumbs up. However, their value in real speech is much wider than that. More precisely, it is difficult to interpret the remaining semantic possibilities of emoji in English and Uzbek without correctly defining the denotative meaning, since the connotative and pragmatic layers are built on this core.

Analysis has shown that denotative semantics of emoji units are determined by their iconicity. That is, they generate meaning by directly describing a real object or emotion. However, a comparative analysis shows that the acceptance of certain emoji differs in the English and Uzbek language environments. For example, the 🙏 emoji is often used in English to mean thank you or prayer, while in Uzbek it is often used in the context of a request, prayer, plea, or gratitude. Also, while simple emoji like 😊 have a neutral positive meaning in English discourse, they can sometimes be interpreted as passive-aggressive or sarcastic in Uzbek discourse. This situation shows that in addition to the denotative layer of emoji, their connotative and pragmatic load is also important. The denotative meaning of emoji units is formed on the basis of a visual-iconic feature.

😄 (grinning face) - indicates a state of joy and happiness through facial expression. This emoji is based on iconic representation and is a visual model of a human smile. Denotatively, it directly expresses an emotionally positive state. In English, happiness, friendliness, and in Uzbek, joy, sincerity, that is, the denotative meaning is almost universal. 😭 (crying face) is an icon that represents sadness, crying, and the visual sign of tears. Here, the denotative meaning is based on a physiological reaction (crying) and is a stable denotative unit in both language environments. 🔥 (fire) - fire, combustion process. This emoji denotes a real physical phenomenon. The denotative meaning corresponds to an object in the objective world (iconic + indexical element). In English,



fire (main), but often awesome (slang), and in Uzbek, olov (main), but often used in the sense of great. The denotative meaning is stable, the connotation is strongly expanded.

❤️ (red heart)-heart (organ) visual form is a simplified model of the anatomical heart, an icon symbol. The denotative meaning refers to a biological object, and the connotative (love) is used more often than the denotative layer. 🐕 (dog face) is an emoji icon that belongs to the group of symbols and represents a real biological entity, with full denotative correspondence in the languages being compared. Based on the above examples, it can be argued that the denotative meaning of emoji units is largely based on the principle of iconicity, and that the denotative layer is universal because it is based on visual perception. A comparative analysis shows that the denotative meaning in English and Uzbek is often consistent, while the connotative/pragmatic meaning is different.

In conclusion, emoji units have become an integral part of modern communication, carrying not only emotional-expressive, but also semantic load. The results of the study showed that the denotative meaning of emoji is relatively universal, but their interpretation varies depending on cultural and linguistic factors. It is important to conduct further research in this area on a broader scale, as well as to deepen special studies on emoji linguistics in Uzbek linguistics.

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