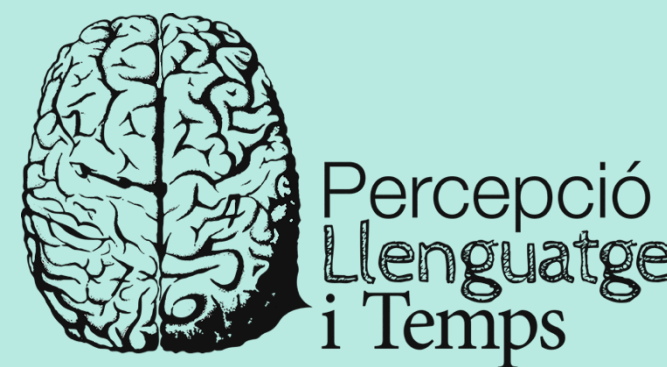


When words are not enough: exploring the use of emoticons by Catalan-speaking teenagers

Carolina Bastida Serra & Olga Soler Vilageliu

cbastida@andorra.ad

olga.soler@uab.cat



Textual Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) cannot use NON-VERBAL LANGUAGE. In face-to-face interaction, emotional information is mainly conveyed by non-verbal communication (face and body movement; paralinguistic; proxemics...)

- 3 strategies used to transmit emotional information in CMC:
- Verbal content
 - Paralinguistic elements
 - **Emoticons**

(Hancock, Landrigan, & Silver 2007)

- **EMOTICONS** are one of the few “endemic” elements of CMC.
- Their function in the discourse and their frequency of use in relation to different variables (gender, for instance) are relatively ambiguous.

AIM OF THE STUDY: to assess the use of emoticons by young teenagers when trying to convey six basic emotions: happiness, anger, surprise, sadness, fear and disgust. **What is the frequency of use of emoticons?** **Which emotions trigger the use of the different emoticons?** **Are there gender differences in the use of emoticons?**

The Experiment

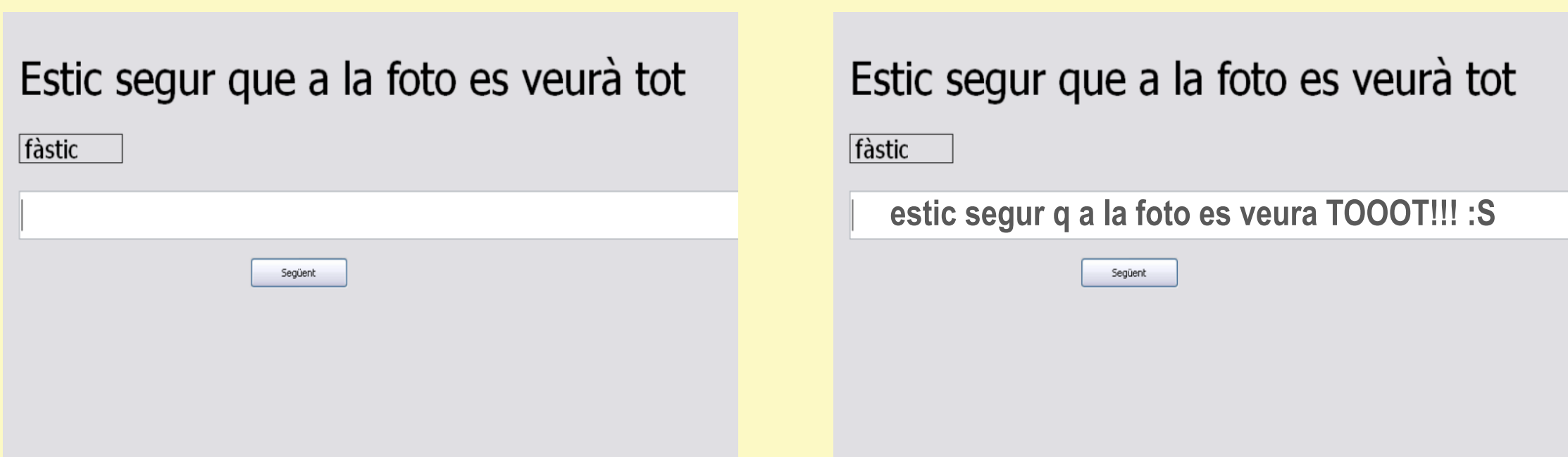
PARTICIPANTS

- 102 participants (51 male; 51 female)
- 12 to 14 y.o. (Mean age 13,2)
- First language: Catalan
- Secondary school students at 3 centers in Catalonia and Andorra (Catalan-speaking regions).

PROCEDURE

Re-Writing Task.

Participants had to retype 36 emotionally neutral sentences in order to confer one of six different emotions: HAPPINESS, ANGER, SURPRISE, SADNESS, FEAR, DISGUST. (not adding or changing any word)



SCREEN SAMPLE:

I'm sure that the picture will show everything (DISGUST)

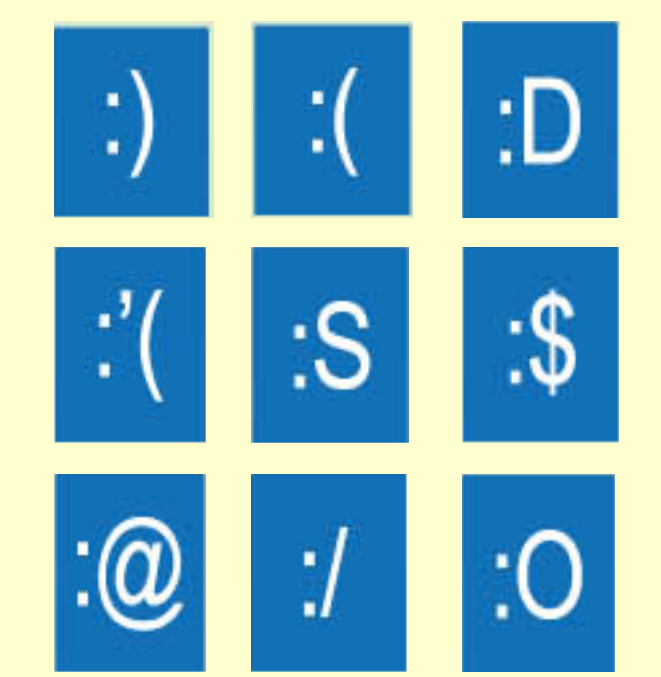
MATERIALS

Apparatus: Personal computers provided at the schools' computer rooms
Ad Hoc Software application.
Stimuli: 36 sentences (6 sentences * 6 emotions). Emotions were randomly assigned to sentences.
Measures: Writing time (latency + typing)
Coding and categorising productions: ATLAS.ti©

Results

Participants produced a mean of 35.75 emoticons in 36 sentences.

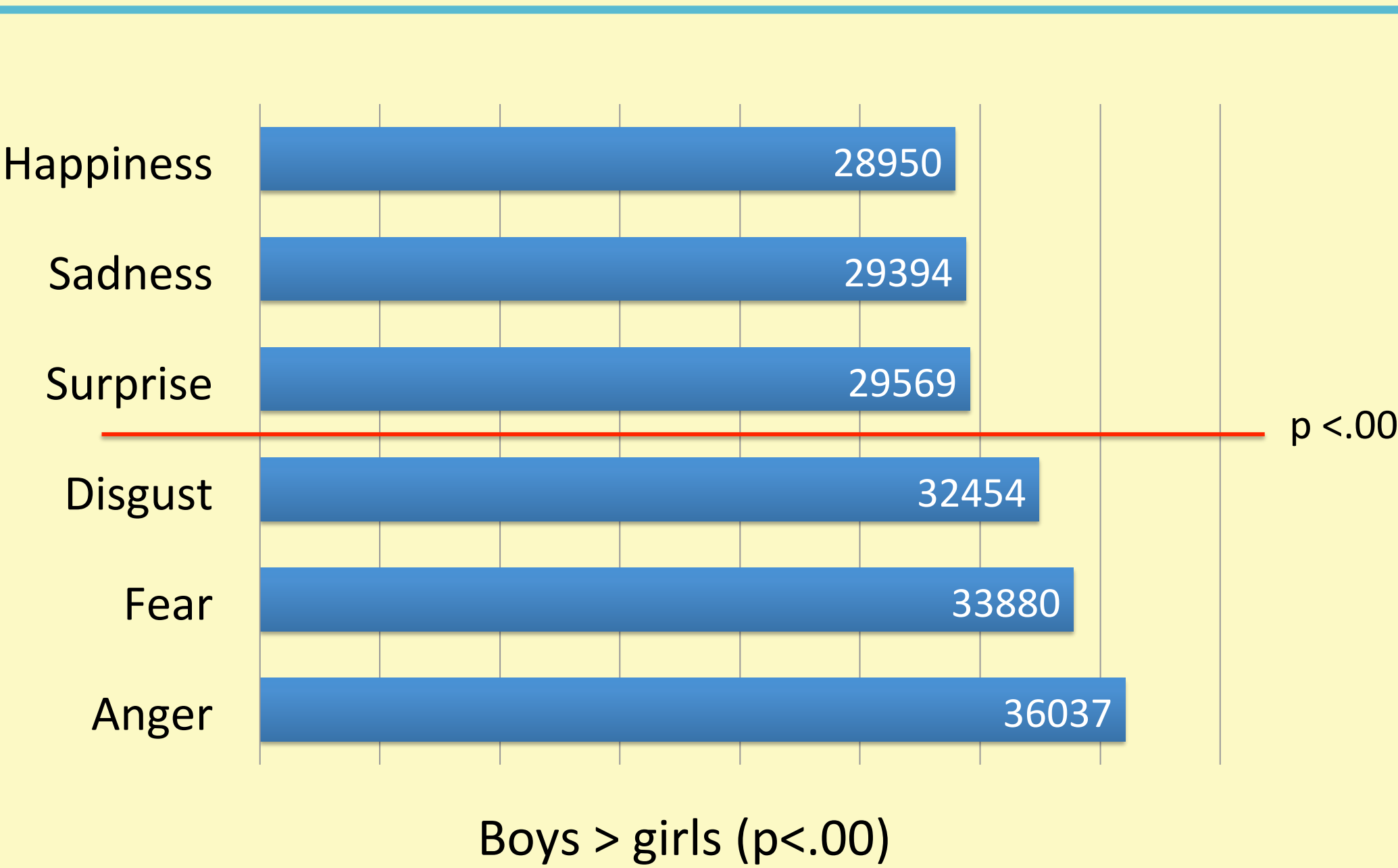
Repertoire of Emoticons used (more than 50 times)



Occurrence of Emoticons x Emotion & Gender

		:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	Total	Total x emotion	
SADNESS	boys	2	0	161	70	2	1	1	4	0	241		565	p<.00
	girls	0	0	183	130	0	2	2	7	0	324			
HAPPINESS	boys	155	55	4	0	5	0	0	0	0	219		541	p<.02
	girls	171	151	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	322			
FEAR	boys	0	0	37	3	42	58	11	2	0	153		411	p<.00
	girls	0	0	36	9	47	83	58	23	2	258			
SURPRISE	boys	10	3	2	0	150	1	0	1	0	167		399	p<.05
	girls	4	7	1	0	209	1	7	3	0	232			
DISGUST	boys	3	1	33	1	7	57	12	8	0	122		319	p<.00
	girls	5	3	16	1	4	81	42	40	5	197			
ANGER	boys	1	0	53	3	14	7	4	4	28	114		224	p=.82
	girls	1	0	36	0	3	0	4	17	49	110			
		352	220	562	217	483	291	141	109	84	2459			

Latency + Writing time & Emotion



Conclusions

- Analyses of Latency+writing time suggest that participants were faster in conferring some emotions (Happiness, Sadness, Surprise) than others (Disgust, Fear, Anger) using emoticons.
- There seems to be some regularity regarding the use of emoticons for the basic emotions proposed in our task (especially for Happiness, Sadness and Surprise). Both results seem to point out that the emoticons used to express Happiness, Sadness and Surprise are standardized, thus easy to produce by the users.
- There is an effect of gender on the usage frequency of emoticons and on the latency + writing time. This finding is in line with the research on expression of emotions in face-to-face communication, where we also find qualitative and quantitative gender differences.