

The Practice of Tone Indicators in Chat-based Communication



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ABSTRACT

With chat-based communication being at the forefront of online communication, for many internet users, the importance to distinguish tones and effectively communicate online is more relevant than ever. Some internet communities have developed systems to ensure that vocal tones and implications can be understood in chat-based media such as X (formerly known as Twitter), Reddit, Discord, etc. These communities are not only aiding in effective communication practices with limited body language and tone inflection but also making chat-based communication with tone indicators a growing practice across communities and online forums. Our goal is to determine the efficiency and practicality of these tone indicators to those unfamiliar with the concept and their willingness to utilize this tool in their everyday use of chat-based communication



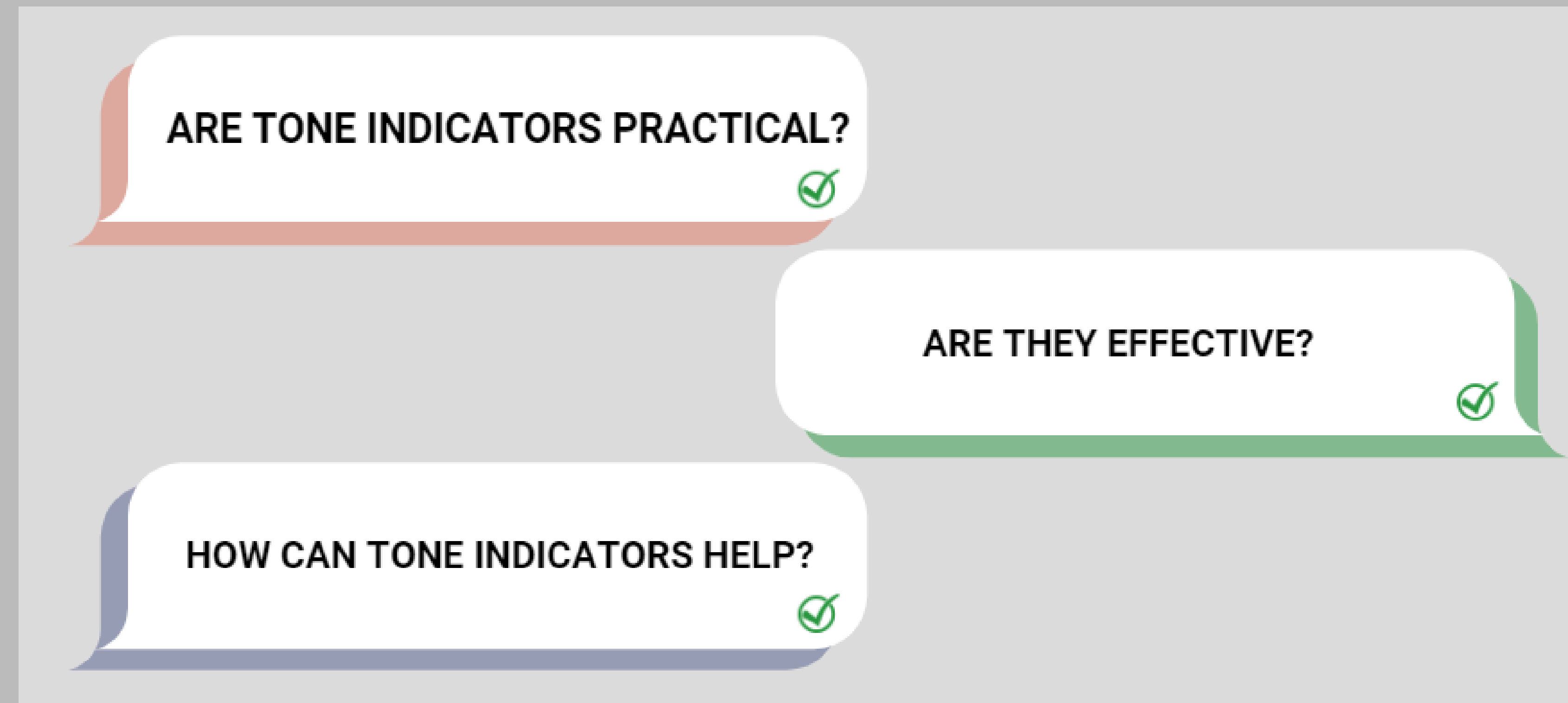
INTRODUCTION

The objective of this proposal is to explore the benefits and effectiveness of tone indicators in online chat-based communication. With chat-based communication being at the forefront of online communication the effort to distinguish tones and have effective communication online. The proposal follows the proposed methodology of having students use a list of tone indicators to determine a prerecorded chat conversation containing tone indicators and a test without tone indicators. The hope is to determine the ease of use, practicality, effectiveness, and possible benefits of online tone indicators in chat-based communication.

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"Have you stopped beating your wife? :-)"

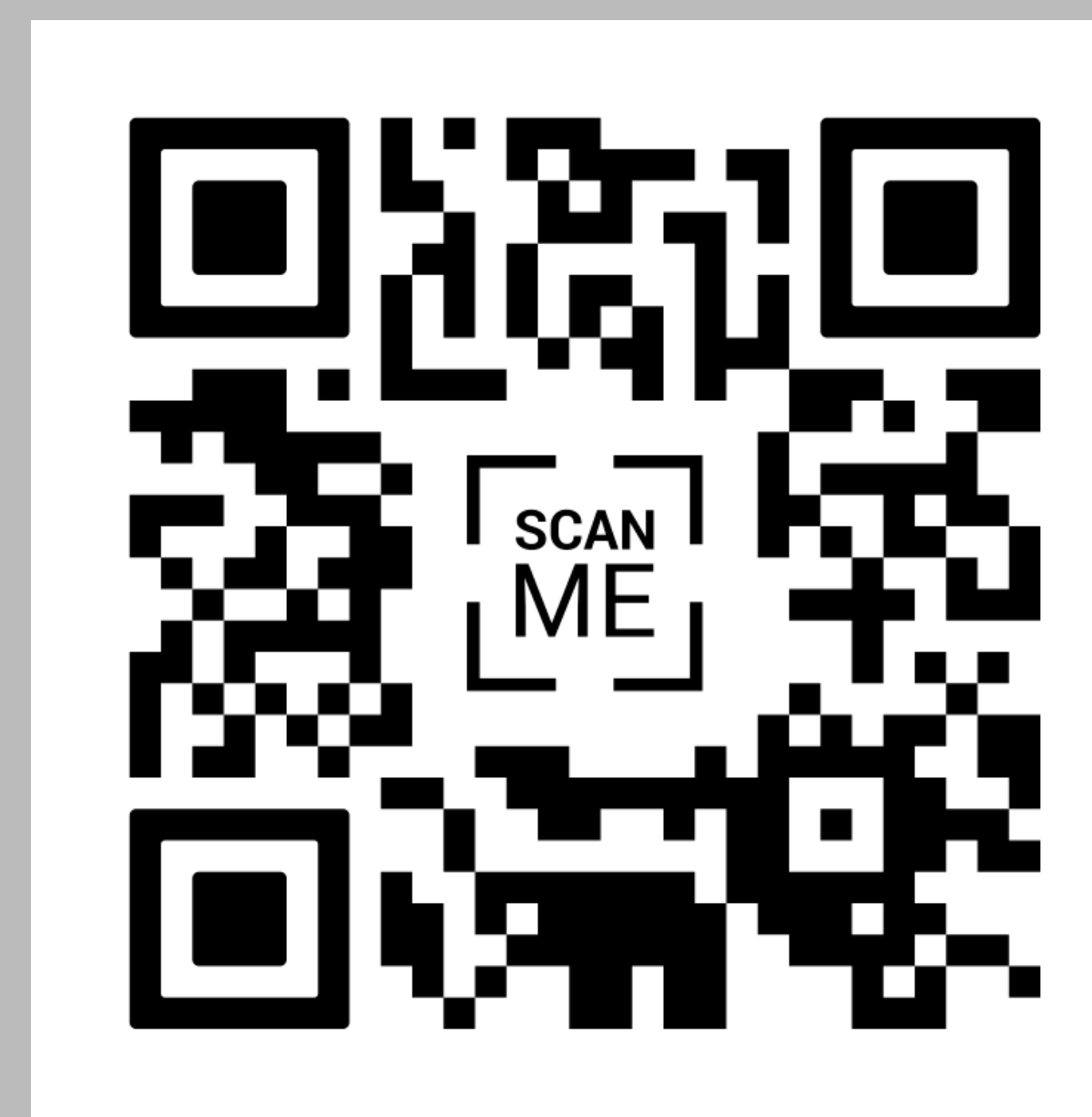


Tone indicators provide a method of clear and efficient communication. In the past we have seen written media (i.e. punctuation marks) and even in the early internet (Carnegie Mellon) with :-). However, tone indicators have grown more in many different online communities such as those who are neurodivergent despite the lack of research. The scare research regarding tone indicators ave seen that people can feel uncomfortable when unable to decipher the tone of a message online (Akiatan et al.) Additionally, people and sentimental analysis can have similar levels of error when attempting to detect tones through online text-based chat (Massachi et al.). Tone indicators help create an inclusive environment that is spreading online though various online communities (Christanti et al.)

<p>/j = joking /hj = half-joking /s = sarcastic /srs = serious /p = platonic /r = romantic /l or /ly = lyrics /t = teasing /nm = not mad or upset /nc or /neg = negative connotation /pc or /pos = positive connotation /lh = lighthearted</p>	<p>/nbh = nobody here (used in vague vents) /m = metaphorically /li = literally /rh or /rt = rhetorical question /gen = genuine question /hyp = hyperbole /c = cospasta /sx or /x = sexual intent /nsx or /nx = non-sexual intent /th = threat /cb = clickbait /f = fake</p>
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METHODS

Students will watch 2 videos of two discord users "talking" with each other. One prerecorded video will not have tone indicators and prompt the user to explain what they believe the tone of the conversation was. After the first video, the participant will watch another prerecorded video of another conversation between 2 discord users who use tone indicators. In addition to the tone indicators, participants will be given a list of tone indicators in shorthand form to aid them. The video will play with tone indicators and once again, the participant will be prompted on what they believe the tone of the conversation will be.

andrea Today at 7:36 PM
 Ah, yes. I completely understand what you're trying to say now

Above is an example of a tone- ambiguous discord chat that participants will have to evaluate. With personal interviews inbetween the planned breaks of the video, we hope to gain qualitative data on how participants perceive the tone on their own. Weather it be sarcastic or truthful, will be for the participant to decide and justify why they believe so.

andrea Today at 7:36 PM
 Ah, yes. I completely understand what you're trying to say now /s

Above is an example of the previous tone-ambiguous chat with a tone indicator "/s". Participants will obtain a "tone indicator list" similar to the one seen in a previous section to aid them. During this section of the interview we aim to see if the participant will more confidently understand the texts messages in the video now that tone indicators are being used. Additionally, we will ask the participant questions regarding the understanding of the messages, the practicality of tone indicators, and how willing they are to use tone indicators in their own texts.

Future Applications

Possible social applications of tone indicators are to create an inclusive web experience that allows everyone to confidently understand and effectively communicate. As stated before, tone indicators have helped primarily the neurodivergent community online but have also successfully been adapted into other realms of online chat-based media and been used by others.

In terms of technical applications, this may help sentimental analysis research. By simply adding in a few characters in one's post/text/tweet/etc. one can help train analysis models one positive or negative indicating speech/tone. Thus, if the list of tone indicators are agreed upon, then sentimental analysis models have training material.