



Research Paper

Discourse in the New Style: the Virtual World Swaps Memes and Emojis For Lexes and Emotions.

Dr. Sujarani Mathew, Aswathy Maheswaran

(Research Scholar, Research and P.G Department of English, St. Thomas College, Pala)

Dept. of English, K E College Mannanam

Corresponding Author: Dr. Sujarani Mathew

ABSTRACT: *The expressive nature of human life gives due importance to 'signs' and the splitting up of the signs into visual, verbal and written forms have made the coding and decoding of reality a fascinating process. The 'linguistic performance' of an individual is highly predisposed to his knowledge in various disciplines, culture and myths, which provides room for aesthetic fulfillment as well as intellectual exercise. The choice of signs for narratives was once a determinant in dividing the society into elite and lower classes. But the development of Icons and indexes to the narratives endorse 'the free play' of the elements in the language system. The scope of inferring given by the arrangement of lexes creates confusion in the average but a chance for the execution of poetic imaginations for the elevated minds. In general it can be said signs expose a dialectical reality rather than the veracity of an object or state. In the advancement of technology, the communication among humans shrinks into the boundaries of virtual world where man's act of speech metamorphose to scripting and sending images. Many software applications in smartphone have instigated the return of symbols for conveying messages in texts. The narrative strategies of emojis in text messages and the memes in the sarcastic comments replace the traditional status of the signified in the system of language but never fail to do its function. The interesting fact is that it arrests the play of meaning in the system of language. This paper is an attempt to analyse how the memes and emojis in the digital world acquire the status of 'sound-image' in the structure of language and how they represent truth, consciousness and reality. It also verifies the revealing capacity of these indexical and iconic symbols about the speaker's/ writer's sentiments at the time of utterance.*

KEY WORDS: *Communication, Sign, Emoji, Meme, play, Icons, Indexes*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Communication is a 'sign' which denotes an activity that makes human community dynamic as well as it approves the definition of human beings as 'social animals'. Sharing ideas and knowledge is not the sole aim of the communication process rather it acts as a strong and effective gismo for expanding and sustaining human relationship. Before the inception of language as a medium of communication people had conversed through non- verbal signs like facial expressions, gestures etc. Though the complexity of human mind is represented in a better way through linguistic elements, the use of suprasegmental features of linguistic units, facial expressions and gesture have made language more influential, comprehensive, and effective during its utterance. The punctuation marks while writing something take the charge of deciding the places where stresses and pauses should be given in a sentence.

The advancement of technology has made certain changes in the chords of language set by the grammarians. People started writing on and speaking through the moving electrons where pen, papers and erasers had gone into oblivion. Scientific inventions like smartphones and its various software applications made communication easier and more expressive, but the technical words and registers have found a space in the common man's language which eventually led to the rise of pidgin and creole. As the world moves fast people save their time by having conversation through short scripts and crippled words. The unruly behaviour of the sentences and the interception of new communication units perplexed many in the inception but it becomes quite interesting when memes and emojis came into the scene.



II. A MEMOIRE OF EMOJIS

Emojis are actually the advanced form of emoticons. Luongova traces the chronological development of emojis and emoticons in the written form of language. He hazily talked about the 17 th century writers' practice of putting a colon before ending a parenthesis. He cited the example of Puck Magazine that was issued 1881 with vertically arranged symbols (typographical arts) to convey certain expressions like joy, astonishment, indifference and melancholy. Vladamir Nabokov in 1969 indicated in his Ambrose Pierce the need of a snigger point- a new punctuation mark to indicate humour and irony. Scott Fahalman, the first internet emoticon user developed two emoticons for Carnegie Mellon University's online newsgroup for distinguishing the sarcastic and serious comments. He used the emoticon ':~)' for humour and ':-('for serious comments. This emoticons underwent a series of changes and finally got wide acceptance when NTT Docomo's the mobile internet i-mode was launched in 1999 with Kurita's design of emojis who in turn took inspiration from manga comic. Memes , at the beginning came in the form of a humorous picture in the white backdrop with some texts. The picture in memes resembles with the face of a man which are later replaced with the face of popular characters in movies . Quoting Crystal's study Luongova says that even the younger generation is more expressive than their precedents and texting has improved their literary skills. In a study conducted by him it is proved that people use emoji to expressive their creativity, to become more sociable and for having fun. Psychology has a prominent place in the habit of using memes and emojis while texting. These phenomena got wide currency due to the absence of face to face conversation. During the face to face interaction the participants mimic the facial expressions and gestures of the speaker. This imitative gestures convey the listener's sympathy/ empathy to the speaker and it is a non – verbal form of encouragement to what the speaker says. This emotional appeal that the non –linguistic communications have makes the relationship stronger. These obligations of the non- verbal communication is now carried out by the memes and emojis. "Scientists have discovered that when we look at a smiley face online, the same parts of the brain are activated as when we look at a real human face. Our mood changes, and we might even alter our facial expressions to match the emotion of the emoticon"(Seiter).

Mememes and emojis have some linguistic onus in the text messages. In the technological communication emojis and the mememes have assumed the characteristics of a word. A word (the functional is the fundamental, indivisible, unit in the system of language which can stand independently as well as in a series of other linguistic elements (grammatical words). The linear and vertical relationship of a word with other morphemes in a structured sentence can make semantic changes. Similarly emojis and mememes are the minimal meaningful unit in the realm of electronic communication. These emojis and mememes can be identified with the Saussurean concept of signifiers which are then fallen into Charles Sanders Peirce's three categories of icons, index and symbols. Icons are the proximate imitation of an object or concept which has direct connection with the signifier and signified. The emojis in the Whats App, Instagram and the reactions in Facebook that directly transmit the emotional states of the user can be allocated into the groups of 'icons'. On the other hand internet mememes that are used in trolls are the 'indexes' because it acts simultaneously as signifier and the signified. Indexes cannot stand independently as signifier but can co- existed with its signified. The alliance between the signifier and the signified in indexes should be recognized innately or by learning. Steven Bardley says that "One thing to be careful with indexes is to make sure that the correlation between the signifier and signified is understood by whoever sees the sign."



Emojis are defined in the Oxford Dictionaries as "a small digital image or icon used to express an idea or emotion in electronic communication." They accomplish the duties of punctuation marks, the adjectives and adverbs. Schnoebelen's in his Twitter analysis has laid out the rules for using emojis. He says that an emoji can act like a punctuation as the users tend to place emoji at the end of a message. Emojis are used before or in the middle of a text . Saussure says that "A language is a system in which all the elements fit together, and in which the value of any one element depends on the simultaneous existence of all the others" (113). As the horizontal relationship of signs decides the meaning of a word, emoji users follow linear time and action. For instance 🎄🏠🍷🎁🧁🍰👨👩👧👦🤗 would show the linearity of actions which describes an individual's plan for Christmas celebration. As the parts of speech have specific order in the structure of a sentence the stance, there is an order in the arrangements of emojis and mememes. Stance is often followed by face emojis 😊😟😞 where as the mememes are arranged according to the development of themes. The intensity of an action and the quantity and quality of an object is expressed through adverbs and adjectives respectively. Similarly " The intensity of the emotions are indicated through the number of times an emoji is repeated(👍👍👍 indicates a high appreciation for something that is conveyed). A single emoji character can be functionally closer to a noun(👍 - good) repetition will constitute an adjective (👍👍👍 -excellent), and a compound word can be made through pairing one character with other (a strawberry ice-cream 🍓🍦. " Using emojis alone an idea or event can be described"(Luongova 22).

Emojis can be divided into various segments for analysing them in the backdrop of day to day life. There are some emojis that express all basic human emotions like love, happiness, anger, sadness, wonder, confidence, peace, fear, disgust. As a word alters its meaning in different contexts, emojis can show an array of meaning in a narrow range. A “Well-known example would be peach and eggplant emoji which have been frequently used (often in pairs) in sexual context as both characters resemble certain parts of human anatomy.



The fire emoji  can stand for heat, hotness (attractiveness), trendiness and often for slang LIT (awesome, exciting) as seen in this tweet: “I can’t stop bumpin @joeyBADASS’s new album . Internet users could be inventive in creating new meanings based on shapes, colours, combinations or resemblance of particular emoji characters” (Luongova 23).

III. LINGUISTIC ONUS OF EMOJIS AND MEMES


As the semantic feature of a word decided by its cultural roots, emojis can be understood clearly when we have knowledge about its origin. Emojis are modeled upon the gestures of the Japanese culture. The emoji

of hands pressed together  is a cultural sign that Japanese do when greeting others. When this cultural scenario is replaced with the culture of the West, they read it as praying or high five emoji. Similarly, the Japanese orge, a folklore character that warns off devil spirits from homes, () is used by people differently as a devil mask, as a sign of something bad or sometimes as a gruesome face with acne. The culture codes are very prominent in emojis. Significance of flowers and plants in the culture of Arabs, the tendency of French people to use the symbol of heart, the prominence of romantic as well as cold-related icons in Russian culture are highlighted through the Swiftkeys of the emojis. When the LGBT-related characters cater to the Americans, the sport, money, violent emojis are made for Canadians. The cat, emojis are designed for Brazilians as well.

 (Luongovan 24)

Emojis talk about everything that we do and speak of in real life. It can convey religious feelings. The last Swift key of emojis contains many religious symbols like crosses, a star and crescent, Om, a Dharmachakra (Dharma wheel), two variations on a Star of David, a menorah, and a Tao, the kneeling figure  and the sacred worshipping places like churches, a temple, a synagogue, a torii, and the Kaaba . Two women with green and saffron headscarves and men in different dress colours are certain codes that point towards different religious beliefs. The different colour shades offered for some stances manifest the element of racism that is

slumbering in the conscious of the society () Onomatopoeic words have a significant place in linguistic communication as it belongs to the categories of oxymoron and euphemism. Many of the

onomatopoeic words are represented by certain emojis that replace slang words like LOL , baeeee..., hotttt

, OMG ec... Emojis like clapping and waving hands  show the capacity of the emoji to consummate an act.

IV. MEMES AS THE INDEX OF CULTURE

Memes can be addressed as an allied phenomenon of emojis in the internet language. According to Dawkins, a meme is a “unit of cultural information, as a concept, belief, or practice, that spreads from person to person in a way analogous to the transmission of gene.” (Collins Dictionary) whereas an internet meme is defined in Technopedia as “an activity, concept, catchphrase or piece of media that gains popularity and spreads rapidly via the Internet.” It is an index that points towards the pop cultural or sub-cultural phenomenon. Susan Blackmore says that memes are the triads of stance, content and form. Memes can usually be interpreted through the socio-political lens of a society. Plain memes are the ‘silent utterance’ of the concept that has its own socio-political background. For example; if the meme of Joker (image 1) in Christopher Nolan’s Batman epic is taken for making a troll, the Joker has his own story, characteristics and socio-political backgrounds. When this meme is used as one of the signs in the language of the troll, his story will be used against the current situation and the message or humour is produced as a result of reading the new context in the backdrop of the meme’s original culture. In many of the trolls that ask a woman to be bold and brave, use the image of Deepika Padukon or Kangana Ranaut (image -2) for the problems they faced and overcame in their personal life and the characters in films. This knowledge would work as the background for reading the text scripted along with the memes which would enable the reader to find the possible or connotative meaning of the troll.

But the same knowledge would pause the reader from gathering different levels of meaning. The readers when seeing a meme would be left with a limited choice of signified. A meme in the troll usually is used two or three times alone or in combination with other memes. Each time it may stand for the same

expressions in different context. Both memes and emojis bring a human touch to the language of technology where all the components of social life are addressed artistically in the possible modest way.



(image-1)

(Image -2)

V. CONCLUSION

Human history has witnessed many vicissitudes in the fleet of time. Ever since the origin man needs a medium to communicate. But with the arrival of technology their discerning capacities, way of expression, everything has been changed. In the ephemeral modern life, man is trying to have a durable, memorable discourse and it becomes possible that too in a fascinating way through new gadgets and new scripts like memes and emojis.

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