

The Semiotics of Social Media Analyzing Emojis And Memes

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Chapter one (Introduction)

Q/ How do emojis and memes contribute to the formation of a new language in digital communication, and what semiotic and linguistic roles do they play in enhancing emotional and cultural expression across digital platforms?

1.1. Background to the concept of language:

The way people communicate is rapidly evolving due to cultural and technological shifts, particularly through computer-mediated communication (CMC). This transformation has introduced new linguistic features, especially among "digital natives." Digital writing is characterized by four main conditions: it is vernacular (beyond educational or professional control), interpersonal and relationship-focused, unplanned and spontaneous, and dialogical (conversation-based).(1)

The internet has significantly influenced both written and spoken language, often modifying traditional linguistic structures. Various online platforms, such as email, chat rooms, and social media, provide spaces for linguistic creativity. As a result, experts in linguistics and communication analyze this digital linguistic revolution, questioning its mutual or exclusive relationship with language and its broader implications.(2)

David Crystal (2001) describes "netspeak" as the emerging language of the internet, also referred to as electronic discourse or interactive written discourse. He classifies netspeak into subcategories based on communication modes, such as email language, which has distinct elements like greetings, signatures, and spelling variations, and chat group language, which is highly colloquial and non-standard. This digital linguistic evolution signifies a major shift in language use, shaping how people interact globally.(3)

1.2. Background to the concept of Emoji

Emojis are two dimensional pictograms originally designed with the intention of conveying emotions between participants in text-based conversations. They were first invented by a Japanese worker Shigetaka Kurita in 1990(4) . He devised a method of adding a simplistic cartoon image to the company's pager service so as to distinguish their services from that of their competitors and also to appeal to teenagers. In Japan, the word Emoji means more or less "picture- word" It is a combination of the Japanese words "e" meaning picture and "moji" meaning word. Today, they are used in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) to convey certain gestures, emotions or ideas(4).

Users can either type emojis from their key boards or even download them as an application or program on a smart phone, computer or tablet (5). Emojis exist in numerous variations and projections some include facial expressions that denote varied emotions such as happiness, sadness, hunger, buildings, stones, glasses among others. Others show location and places, others include; fingers, folded arms, waving arms, running feet, clenched fists, slant bodies, tools, foods, and clothing among others Initially, emojis were only used by Japanese mobile operators NTTDoCoMo and Softbank mobiles. However, in 2010, emoji characters were included into Unicode consortium. This is a standard and universal system of coding, meant to support and facilitate worldwide interchange, processing and display of written text across languages in the modern world. Due to their advanced technological nature, Emojis have been modified so much that they go beyond the traditional role of portraying emotions only. As is evident in the succeeding chapters, various emoji characters are being employed creatively to substitute for intentions such as "fine, ok, cool, nice, well" among others. As observed, some emojis like the "winking and frowning face "emojis are now used in place of exclamations like "wow! Huh! mmh!"(6).

1.3. Background to the concept of memes:

Internet memes are a viral and widespread phenomenon in the online space. Accordingly, memes have a wide range of constructions, and language means that support them. Moreover, they have certain key features that are intended to determine their specifics. Multimodality has been studied in ground-breaking studies from the standpoint of metaphor theory(7), semantics and concept theory and structural linguistics. Internet memes are marked by a wide range of topics, constructions, and language tools. The cultural codes represented in memes are also important, as well as their ease of perception, open structure, and ability to circulate widely and quickly. The popularity of memes and their widespread distribution make them a great subject for scientific research in various fields of knowledge(7).

1.4. Objectives:

The following are the objectives of the study:

- i. To describe how emojis and memes have been characterized as a new form of language in text messaging.
- ii. To identify the role played by emojis and memes in provision of paralinguistic features in text messaging.
- iii. To establish the broader linguistic elements of emoji and its communicative functions.

Chapter two

2.1. Overview of Semiotics:

Criticism is a method of exposition that is subject to change based on the role of many different forms of art. History has seen the development of different forms of art criticism. For the most part, different types of art criticism have been shaped on the basis of notions of art. The common objective of these different forms of criticism is to explain, interpret, evaluate and, on occasion, judge these works of art. The most taxing aspect of art criticism, which we may define as the act of interpreting works of art, emerges when attempts are made to make use of objective and aesthetic criteria. Would it be correct to say that what emerges during the critical process is what the work of art – now transformed into a text - tells us based on its textual consistency and the underlying system of meaning? Or does it refer to something else that consumers discover based on their system of expectations? To what extent can the subject be in this respect? At this point the method of semiotic analysis differs from criticism. Similarly to criticism, semiotic analyses do not lead to interpretations and judgments; because the process of interpreting and judging is susceptible to individualization and subjectivity. The purpose of semiotic analyses is not to proffer a value judgment about the object being observed, but to describe the object from a neutral perspective (8). Thus, in contrast to different varieties of criticism, it is the method being applied during semiotic analysis that is at the forefront. An effort is made to prevent interpretation and judgment through the use of the method being applied and its inter-regulating stages and limitations. The hypothetico-deductive approach, which was initially applied in logic and later used in semiology by Algirdas Julien Greimas, was instrumental in the organization of semiotics. By adopting the hypothetico-deductive approach, semioticians hope to revise the semiotic method as a theory of signification. In a semiotic analysis, the object of the analysis is considered to be a texture or text that is hypothetically established through the relationships between a range of elements(8). In relationships between elements that are hypothetically conceived, an attempt is made to

successively reveal a set of stages through the use of a meta-language. The tendency of semiotics to analyze works of art in stages through a meta-language is another way in which it differs from types of criticism that rely on natural language. The greatest difficulty in criticizing works of art arises when one attempts to convey the structural characteristics of a work that has been realized, through the use of specific substances and tools, with reference to another series of signs that utilize different substances and tools. Semiotics makes use of a distinct ‘constructed’, ‘scientific’ symbolic meta-language that has been formed independently of the meaning structure of natural language – one which we use daily in order to interact(8). As semiotics moves toward the production process of a work of art, it becomes mobilized toward the formation of a target text in its reproduction. Also, the transformations that will be applied during the reproduction of the target text creates the universe of meaning in the work and the stages of the production process through a meta-language that is logical, narrative and – in a manner that can equally carry the discursive order – symbolic, using a linguistic process comprised of a multitude of stages (8). With the semiotic approach, the importance of logical thought reveals itself when attempting to explain the structure and connections of a work of art through a symbolic meta-language.

2.1.1. intellectual foundations of semiotic analysis:

While the concept of “signs” has garnered attention since ancient times, semiotics, as an independent field, emerged around the beginning of the 20 th century. Some of those who were instrumental in founding and developing the field of semiotics include the Linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, the philosopher, logician and mathematician Charles Sander Pierce and Algirdas Julien Greimas. Notes on the linguistics lectures given by Saussure at the University of Geneva were published in 1916 under the title “General Linguistics Studies” (F. De Saussure Cours de Linguistique Generale). Following the publication of the book, it transformed the viewpoints on social sciences, impacting especially the field of linguistics, and found application in a host of different scientific areas. Saussure, by referring in his book to the field of semiotics that would be

established in the future, conceded its existence. He argued that communication was based on a system of signs and that it was necessary for many systems to be analyzed within the context of semiotics. In 1966, Gerimas published a series of his lecture notes entitled 'Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method'. In terms of method, this work may be considered the starting point for the field of semiotics. Semiotics is a method of analysis that has been established and developed using the general principles of structuralism as its starting point. Structuralism is an approach that we see applied throughout all types of narratives, from linguistics to cultural studies, that is generally motivated by the notion of 'structure' and its determinism. The most important movements underlying the approach of semiological analysis – which focuses primarily on the work of art – are structuralism and phenomenology – one of the most important philosophical constituents underpinning structuralism. The founder of the phenomenological approach, Edmund Husserl, argues that 'we should cease our preoccupation with the subject in our study of art and its output and rather turn our attention back to the work of art itself' (8). This is their point of origin from structural approaches. These may be construed as an effort to shift the central focus away from the subject and towards the structure of the language spoken and created. Structural approaches rejected the subject-centric approaches that shaped the social sciences and philosophies before them and instead focused on analyzing social phenomena based on 'structure', 'rules', and 'codes. The structuralists held that one product of language within the subject was its creation. They committed to establishing a method of scientific analysis by eliminating the conscious self and the acts of giving. The structuralist movement, which was developed based on the ideas of Saussure, became structural linguistics in the first half of the 20th century. The theories and principles proposed in Saussure's book, 'General Linguistics Studies', led to the birth of a form of linguistics that approached language scientifically and, by taking on different forms, aided the creation of novel fields of research. Theoretical and practical analyses provided by structural linguistics was, for the most part, welcomed by linguists and semioticians in later periods. While it may not have accepted into its own field all the

semiotic methods and viewpoints touched on in this book, it did, however, make use of some of its specific principles and tendencies. The use of these principles and tendencies was done through the assigning of function, within the general theoretical framework, to concepts - thought to be necessary - that were rooted in another scientific field; because natural languages and narrative forms that are removed from sentence structures display structural differences with regard to the material they use. By meditating on 'The nature of language as a language' and asking 'What is language?', Saussure attempted to extract it from elements other than itself. By objectifying language as something that can be analyzed on its own, he attempts to define language in relation to its differences and oppositions. He held that, before enterprising to examine the history of a specific object, addressing the problems of origin, development and dissemination, and finding explanations for the object's qualities through external influences, it was necessary to circumscribe, define and describe the object. This approach is referred to as 'synchronic' analysis. Where synchronic analysis is concerned, the movement is towards the internal order of the structure and influences that remain outside are construed in the manner in which they are displayed by the structure. This approach was adopted in the same manner as it existed in semiotics. After much criticism around this research limitation imposed by the semiotic approach, the 2000s saw more emphasis being placed on the reciprocal interaction between the infrastructure and the superstructure, thanks, in part, to Umberto Eco efforts(8).

2.1.2. general characteristics of semiotic approaches:

It should be noted that there are linguistic and semiotic approaches and models being practiced under very different schools and circles that are involved in semiotics and linguistics research (To name just a few: The Geneva School of Linguistics, The Prague School, The Copenhagen School of Linguistics, The French School of Functional Linguistics and the Paris School of Linguistics, etc.). The central focus of these schools and approaches when analyzing signs differ from one another. Whereas

some approaches aim to analyze the structure of the superficial realization of works, some concentrate on only the structures of deep meaning. Others redefine the formative structure of establishing meaning as it extends from the depths to the surface (9). While one applies itself to studying the structural characteristics of the realm of the language that is directly revelatory, the other focuses on the articulation of definitive strata. While different schools and models in the area of semiotics converge on distinct areas in their analysis, there are commonalities between their approaches. These commonalities can be defined separately to demonstrate the general characteristics of semiotic methods:

- Semioticians view objects of analysis as a structure. Their primary objective is to explain the conditions of meaning perception and production within a conceptual framework (9). The object of analysis, which is construed as a structure, is viewed as a texture, a text that is hypothetically established through relationships between various elements. Semioticians work towards restructuring a given structure that is assumed to exist within the object of analysis by systematically re-establishing it with specific methods through deconstruction and subversion(8).

- Methods of semiotic analysis limit themselves only to the content of the object under analysis by centralizing the work of art being studied. While information that is external to the text (work of art) is collected, these are only utilized if they appear in the text (8).

- The semiotic method uses a scientific meta-language. Its goal is to determine the layers of meaning that make up a meaningful whole, a painting, written or scientific discourse, an image, an architectural edifice, a theater performance, a musical composition etc. and to relate it by systemizing it through the use of a meta-language. A meta-language and symbolic narratives are used to analyze the data within a text (work of art). The purpose of approaching the work of art through symbolic processes and the meta-language is to avoid going outside the text and to be able to control all the stages. The meta-language they utilize consists of stages that contain, define and oversee each other. The connections that constitute the structure are analyzed by logically examining relations of opposition, conflict and inclusion (8).

- Semiotic approaches concentrate on the articulation of meaning rather than the meanings themselves. They attempt to expose the processes of meaning production. Thus, they are theories of signification that are focused on the form of the content.

- They believe that comprehending the meaning of a work of art resides in the observation of divergences occurring within the content. They believe that the content of a work of art is distinguished on the basis of the divergences between meaningful elements and that such divergences are instrumental in determining the value of elements in relation to one another (8).

- When developing models and tools of analysis, practical semioticians they also research advances that develop their reading models through applications of analysis. They attempt to develop a new model, depending on the emerging situation as they carry out an analysis based on a given model.

- The semiotic method approaches the content plane of a work of art by proceeding from its depth to its surface. Roughly speaking, the processes used are as follows:

Firstly, the object under analysis – construed as a structure – is divided into different sections (fragments) in order to carry out an analysis and make comparisons. The method of division varies depending on the structure of the language being used (images, video...). The elements that make up the object and the figures comprising the work of art are singled out when determining the material used to create the work of art. Once the division (fragmenting) process is concluded, the signs that make up the work of art can be determined. Signs are divided into their regular and peripheral meanings. After determining the object, person, space and time elements present on the plane of the work the question of how the discourse stage was achieved can be researched. The analysis of the discursive plane is followed by efforts to uncover the motifs involved(9). Then, the functions of the signs and how they are arranged and the articulation of the narrative are examined. With works of art that are prone to change during the process (video, environmental art...), the stages and the transformations acting on the narrative in revealing its final form are examined. A determination is made as to whether the motifs have been transformed into themes.

The final stage of the analysis involves revealing the potent fundamental structures at the most abstract, logical and deep level – as determined in the deep structure, in the initial stages of the work of art - where the universe of meaning is based. The deep structure is built on the fundamental oppositions in the world(8).

Chapter three

3.1. The Evolution of Emojis

Emoji, also known as character images, is a particular style of language originating from Japan. Shigetaka first introduced and created emojis in 1999. The forms of emoji vary, ranging from facial expressions, feelings, and particular objects such as vehicles, buildings, natural scenery, food, animals, and plants to symbols such as flags, instructions, etc. Emojis facilitate communication between individuals and represent their situations and conditions through written text on their smartphones. Emojis can be interpreted as character images with a more detailed and easy-to-understand meaning(10). They are easier to remember than written words, often used in today's communication, especially on digital platforms. The form of emoji on each device and platform is different, so the interpretation is also different. Previous research has interpreted emoji as non-verbal communication. The use of emoji in this study is considered more effective, especially in cross cultural research. It is due to the lack of translation of emotional words. Therefore, the presence of emoji can replace expressive words that are difficult to understand to be easier to interpret. An emoji is a character image representing a person's situation and condition to facilitate communication on digital platforms. In addition to emoji, several photos are also important in digital communication. The appearance of images can also reproduce textual meaning, express ideas and emotions, and form social relationships in the digital field. The reason is that images are increasingly popular in the digital world as a platform for delivering messages directly and realistically(11).

3.2. Emojis as Semiotic Signs:

Over the years many scholars of semiotics have given their take on the definition of the sign. Such scholars include de Saussure (1966) and Peirce (1958) . Peirce, who is often considered as the father of semiotics, postulated a sign theory which gives an account of signification, representation, reference and meaning. Therefore, in the definition of a sign, it is crucial to first examine Peirce's theory in its breadth and complexities(11).

3.2.1. Peirce's Sign Theory

Peirce's basic claim in the definition of a sign is that it has three inter-related parts: The "representamen", the object and the "interpretant." He writes: I define a sign as anything is so determined by something else, called its object, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect, I call its interpretant, that the latter is thereby mediately determined by the former. To simplify this, the representamen (sign) can be looked at as a signifier, for example an utterance, smoke for fire or just letters on a paper. While the object is seen as the idea or reality that is being conveyed by the sign, that is the material that the utterance or written letters attaches; their signification. For example, the letters "c h a i r" signify in English, the constructed material that is primarily used for sitting. And finally, the interpretant- which was Peirce's most innovative and distinctive feature is defined as the logical understanding that we derive in the relationship found between the sign and the object. According to him, the interpretant was the most fundamental element of the sign due to the fact that the process of signification is only made solid and complete because of the availability of the interpretant without which there is no dyadic relationship that cuts between sign and object. This means that a sign can only signify something upon being interpreted. That the meaning of a sign can only be realized in the interpretation it generates among sign users. He presented this relationship in a figure as shown below(12):

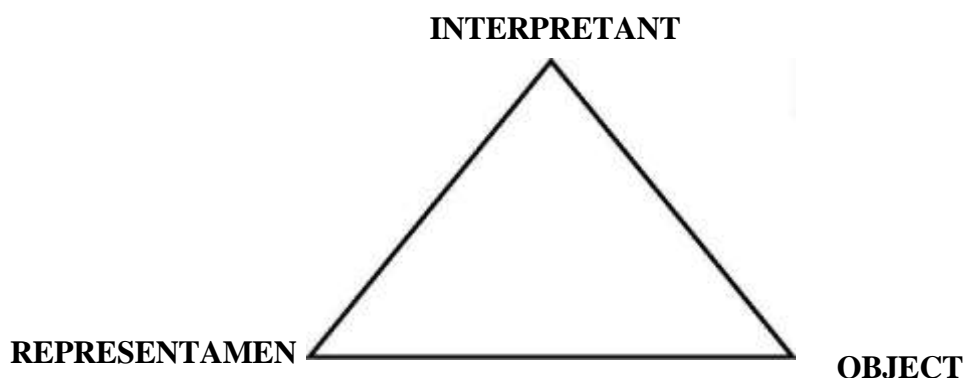


Fig 1.1 Peirce's triadic model of the sign

The process of reference made between the connection of the representamen and object is a mental one that links the experiences of the representamen and the object. Peirce

calls this mental process “abductive reasoning” where he says that based on available information, a person can make their best guess, this being the interpretant(12).

3.2.2. De Saussure’s sign

Saussure defined a sign as that which is experienced when someone comes into contact with a set of stimuli that can be equated to a mental concept. He posited that in order for words to convey meaning, it must consist of two significant parts; the ‘signified’ and the ‘signifier.’ The signified is that part of a word that pertains its meaning while the signifier is that part of the word that is representative of that meaning. Through his concepts of *langue* and *parole*, he notes that there is a mutual presupposition between the signified and the signifier. The ‘signifier’ he described as the form taken by the sign and ‘the signified,’ he considers to be the concept in the mind. This could include our experiences, impressions, feelings, perceptions, and attitudes in relation to an object or situation. For example, mentally, there is a representation of the word “cat”. It is intrinsically bound to the signifier which is representative of that concept that is to mean that when put together; the letters CAT signify the concept of cat in written English. In essence therefore what Saussure means is that the signifier represents the physical part of the sign while the signified is the meaning represented by the physical entity. Saussure’s concepts are later clarified and strengthened by Hjelmslev (1961) where he introduces the two terms form and substance. He likens the substance of the signifier as the physical materials of the medium for example, sound, light, wood or stone(13).

3.2.3. Emoji as Semiotic Resource

Leeuwen defines Semiotic resource in reference to a means for making meaning. ‘Semiotic resources are the actions, materials and artifacts we use for communication purposes, whether produced physiologically- for example, with our vocal apparatus, the muscle we use to make facial expressions and gestures-or technologically-for example, with pen and ink, or computer hardware and software-together in the ways in which these resources can be organized. Semiotic resources have a meaning potential based on their past uses and a set of affordances based on their possible uses and these will be actualized in concrete social contexts where their use is subject to some form of

semiotic regime' . This elaborate definition captures the functionality and elements of emoji as is used in text messaging. First, Emojis are found and used on smart phones. According to Oxford Dictionary (2017), a smart phone is a mobile phone that performs all the functions of a computer; it typically has a touch screen interface, internet access and an operating system (O.S) which has the capability of running downloaded applications(10). The dynamic elements of emojis such as its layout, colors, flashing font and graphics are able to be harnessed by users and in the long run play a significant part in creating a platform of reference that qualifies them as interactive icons. The emoji icons provide users with a signifier for some elements of functionality. That is to say, that by just looking at them, they signify to the user, some form of functionality(10).

The key aspects of these icons lie in their ability to communicate their purpose to the users. The affordances that emojis provide are like pictograms. According to Bertin (1983) affordances of graphic medium, such as color, line, shape etc. relate to our perceptual capacity as ways of relaying and communicating information. For example, it is easy to identify pictograms due to a loose association of the connection of its objects and cultural values(10).

3.3. Emojis and Literary Expression

Emoji symbols are often used as a system of creating language codes. These codes may be effectively used and understood by a given group of persons who intend to pass across certain messages and information that they may want to exclude others from accessing or making meaning from. The coding of the messages could be restricted or elaborate(10).

3.3.1 Facials for Words

(1) Chatter A: Today my favorite team lost, I feel like 🙄

Chatter B: oops, sorry, I'm all 😊

(2) Chatter A: came home late, mum not talking

Chatter B: why so?

Chatter A: she's 🙄

(3) Chatter A: Hey, did you manage to complete the work?

Chatter A: hey, hey, you so quiet???

Chatter B: talk tomorrow, 😴

Chatter A: come on I still want 🗨️

Chatter B: 😴

When communicating online, the words available may not be sufficient in provision of feelings emotions and attitudes(14). In addition, the lexicon of words might not entirely aid the users of that particular language to sufficiently show all the nuances

In example (1) above, chatter A intimates that his team lost and that he feels like crying (uses the crying face emoji) while the respondent is lost for words and says that he is speechless (uses the mouth less emoji) Similarly, in example (2) chatter A informs the other that they came home late and for that reason, the mother is angry and not talking to them. In (3) chatter A asks a question whereupon chatter B responds by saying that they are tired and exhausted. However, chatter A insists that they still want to chat more and more where B responds by saying they are already asleep.

and dynamics of their emotions. Tosell (2012) observes that the role played by emoticons in computer mediated communication mirrors non-verbal behavior as is observed in face-to-face communication(15). He says that the inclusion of emoticons help readers 'better understand the level and direction of the emotional context surrounding the message relayed over the internet' In addition, and add that it is not easy to perceive the emotions feelings and intents of users when they send texts that do not have emoticons. That a message which is considered positive and has a smile will be rated more positively as compared to a positive pure message, similarly, a message which is considered negative but has a supporting frown is looked at as more negative than a negative pure message. sought to find out how emoticon usage affects participant evaluation of extroversion and agreeableness. Their findings conclude that

when people chat online, it is easy to tell who is an extrovert depending on how they use emoticons or not. The study of emphasizes how emoticons provide additional social cues that are not normally found in plain text messages, for this reason they serve to heighten the exchange of social information(15).

Chapter four

4.1. The Nature of Internet Memes:

Internet meme have been largely ignored in academia“ is still true in 2016, although some researchers approached the subject with different intentions. One very noteworthy contributor is Dynel, who studies the „prevalent but under researched phenomenon of humorous Internet memes“ (2016, p. 1). Other notable papers are from Bauckhage (2011), Herwig (2010) and Rutkoff (2007). The internet meme is an artefact that consists of a picture and written language. I will provide a detailed definition later, but to simply call it text, like Miltner (2011, p.13), should be sufficient for now. Internet users then share the text in forums, via social media or other platforms to communicate in the widest sense of the word(16).

In the current digital era, communication modalities and mediums are evolving, and new "languages" are emerging. The internet meme is one of the most recent mediums that individuals have employed to convey their thoughts and ideas. Davison (2012) defines an internet meme as "a piece of culture, normally a joke, which gains influence through online transmission" in his essay, The Language of Internet Memes. Despite their viral growth, academics did not give memes substantial attention until 2011, when North-western University in the United States created Meme Studies, an actual academic course on memes. The extended implementation of this course showcased the profound impact of the internet on society, encompassing language, culture, and beliefs. The writers have since recognised the necessity of conducting research on internet memes in order to remain current with internet culture, demonstrate an alternative method of communication, a cost-effective method of mass advertising, enhance students' media literacy, and explore the relationship between images and text, thereby generating a new meaning. This investigation aims to scrutinise the signs/symbols, or more technically, the semiotic sources, employed in the creation of memes. Additionally, it will examine the manner in which signifiers embedded in memes employ humour to undermine the prevalent ideologies of digital users(17).

In his 1976 book "The Selfish Gene," evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins devised the concept of memes as a means of elucidating the cultural transmission, human behaviour, cultural evolution, and development of human society. Memes, in his view, are the cultural equivalents of biological genes. According to Dawkins, genes compete for environmental reproduction and dissemination. Because this is their primary function, we can also refer to them as replicators. In order to better understand cultural evolution, Dawkins sought out comparable principles, which led him to identify an additional type of replicator: a meme(18).

A meme is an alternative replicator. People can communicate concepts, ideas, or thoughts through memes. It may refer to an image, video, narrative, or joke, or it may be a catchy tune that you unknowingly adopt and continue to hum subconsciously as a result of a commercial's slogan. All of these have been transmitted to your consciousness from another individual's account or from one internet user to another through email, blogs, and other social networking sites. Memes often resemble viruses, acting as replicating agents that require a host carrier for replication. According to Dawkins (1976), memes possess three features(18):

- Fidelity: It refers to the elements of a meme that allow for effortless replication. The fact that a meme is memorable is more important than its truthfulness.
- Fecundity: The recurrence of an idea or pattern.
- Longevity: The longer a meme lasts, the greater its potential for replication.

Dr. Rintel, who has published on memes, notes that memes "represent a novel form of 'comment culture' on the internet." The function of internet memes in contemporary political expression, their capacity to emphasise a societal issue, and their ubiquitous presence in the development of social consciousness among internet users have been recognised by numerous researchers. Memes enable creators to articulate their responses and perspectives on critical social issues. Knobel and Lanarkshire (2007, as cited in Varona, n.d.) assert that the presence of humour, whether sardonic, satiric, or "quirky," distinguishes successful internet memes. Another component is intertextuality, which signifies "cross-references to everyday and popular culture events, icons, or

phenomena." Kuipers and Shifman (2007) also noted that digital humour frequently incorporates "incongruous elements" that combine reality and fantasy(19).

4.2. Memes as a Semiotic Phenomenon:

Literary and cultural concepts that denote the interconnected relationships between texts are known as intertextuality. Intertextuality implies that no text exists in isolation, but rather, all writings, whether explicitly or implicitly, influence and interact with other texts. Examples of this may encompass stylistic similarities between works, allusions, quotations, or references. Julia Kristeva, a Bulgarian-French philosopher, literary critic, and psychotherapist, created the word "intertextuality," stating that "any text is a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (Kristeva, 1986, p. 37). Kristeva derived this concept from the writings of Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, with a particular emphasis on his concepts of heteroglossia and dialogism. Bakhtin had previously investigated the concept of texts in dialogue; however, Kristeva built upon this concept to develop a more comprehensive theory of the ways in which texts interact and influence one another. Intertextuality has since become a fundamental concept in literary theory, cultural studies, and semiotics, influencing our comprehension of the generation and interpretation of texts across a variety of media(20).

Intertextuality and Barthes' semiotics are essential for comprehending memes. Intertextuality is the manner in which memes construct layered meanings by drawing on and referencing existing texts, images, or cultural symbols. Barthes' semiotic theory, particularly his concepts of denotation and connotation, aids in the decoding of the signs in memes. Memes employ both visual and linguistic symbols, with the denotative level conveying literal meaning and the connotative level evoking cultural, emotive, or ideological interpretive meanings. Barthes' model can be employed to comprehend the manner in which memes convey meaning through signs and establish or perpetuate cultural beliefs. The first order of signification uses literal elements like images and texts as denotations. The signified is the direct meaning of an image or text. At the connotation level (second order), memes often convey broader cultural or social

implications. Intertextuality is a critical factor in layered signification because it entails the use of cultural symbols or references to create new meanings. Memes often reinforce or challenge popular myths, such as when they use images of superheroes to make social commentary. Their effectiveness depends on common cultural conventions, as audiences must recognize and interpret the references. Additionally, memes defy meaning by employing irony or satire to dismantle prevailing cultural narratives, frequently drawing on Roland Barthes' concept of myth(20).

4.3. Literary and Linguistic Elements in Memes:

Traditionally, pictures were not part of linguistic research. In corpus linguistics for example, “a language corpus does not contain tables, diagrams, sketches, figures, images, formulae and other visual elements, although these elements are often present in written and printed texts and documents” (Dash 2008, p. 147). Although the main focus in linguistics is still the written and spoken word without any consideration for images, the so called “pictorial turn” (Mitchell 1994) had a great impact on the humanities. For a long time “textuality’was the lingua franca for critical reflections on the arts, the media, and cultural forms” (Mitchell, 1994, p.11), and now the picture has become more and more relevant. “Pictures as semiotic artefacts seems inevitable in linguistic accounts of textual objects” says Stöckl in 2009 (p.203) and a text in 2016 does not necessarily consist solely of written language. Instead, the prototype of a text is changing to an amalgam of language and image elements, which constitutes the “textual reality” (Ibid., p. 204). The increase in bandwidth all over the world makes it possible, that users can operate with images in news, social networking and even in personal or professional communication. The internet meme is only this widespread and therefore linguistically relevant, since images are such an important part of our communication. However, before I analyze the meme semiotically, we first have to look at language-image artefacts in general. The language-image relationship is very complex and in some cases hard to explain at all. One of the first approaches to handle these artefacts originated from the studies of Barthes, which are here represented by Bateman visualizes Barthes’ ideas

which base on the classification of the relationship between text and image. The expression text is a little misleading here, because I would consider any combination of verbal and pictorial parts as text, while Barthes differentiates text and image. A better nomenclature would be language (text for Barthes) and image, which Stöckl uses, too, in his studies concerning the subject (2009). The most important distinction Barthes makes, is if the text (verbal parts) is equal to the image. The case of equality is not of interest concerning internet memes, but amplifying and reducing are very relevant. We will see later, that most of the memes do not serve their purpose when either the language or the image is missing, unless the meme is very conventionalized. I will not enlarge upon the theory of language-image relationships here and instead switch to the subject at hand, the internet meme(18).

Example:



Figure . Pictorial act in form of a warning sign¹²

The mark is a pictorial work itself, in terms of Ostns from non -projection (reference itself, p. 101), and it is a warning in this case. This is not a review and has been been Reseched before (for Example novitz 1977, p Have thefore a major pootial Illocutive force. Let's discuss an example of Mim conversation(21)

Chapter five

5.1. Conclusion:

This research has explored the evolving role of emojis and internet memes within digital communication, analyzing their semiotic significance and their impact on how individuals express ideas, emotions, and cultural concepts in the online world. Emojis and memes are no longer merely playful or decorative; they have become central elements of modern communication, helping people convey nuanced emotions, social commentary, and humor in ways that text alone cannot. These visual symbols, through their semiotic functions, engage audiences by invoking shared cultural meanings and societal trends, often crossing linguistic and geographic boundaries.

In the first chapter, we laid the groundwork for understanding emojis and memes as distinct yet interconnected forms of communication. The second chapter dove into the semiotic theory that underpins the meanings of emojis and memes, demonstrating how they utilize both visual and textual elements to create layered interpretations. The third chapter examined their linguistic and literary elements, showing how they are incorporated into online discourse, often acting as substitutes for verbal expressions or amplifiers of emotional tone. Lastly, the fourth chapter emphasized how these digital artifacts function as powerful vehicles for humor, social commentary, and intertextual references, enabling them to challenge and reinforce societal ideologies.

Through semiotic analysis, it became clear that both emojis and memes are more than simple icons or images; they are complex symbols that shape the way we interact in the digital age. The interplay between text and image in memes and emojis highlights the changing nature of communication in a world where digital literacy is key to understanding how messages are constructed and consumed.

5.2. Recommendations:

1. **Continued Exploration of Semiotics in Digital Communication:** Given the rapid evolution of digital communication, further research should focus on expanding semiotic theories to include newer forms of communication, like GIFs, stickers, and reaction videos. This would provide a more holistic understanding of how meaning is created in the digital age.
2. **Educational Integration of Emojis and Memes:** As emojis and memes play a significant role in contemporary communication, educators should explore how to incorporate them into the curriculum. This could include teaching students how to decode and create meaning through these symbols, enhancing digital literacy skills and fostering a deeper understanding of online cultures.

3. **Global Perspectives on Meme and Emoji Use:** Research should be conducted across different cultural contexts to examine how memes and emojis are interpreted and utilized. Understanding regional differences in the use of digital symbols will help businesses, educators, and content creators to tailor their communications more effectively to diverse audiences.
4. **Ethical Considerations in Meme and Emoji Creation:** The potential for harm, such as the perpetuation of stereotypes, misinformation, or offensive content, is a significant issue with digital symbols. It is important to develop ethical guidelines and encourage responsible usage of memes and emojis, both in private and public spaces, to minimize negative impacts on social discourse.
5. **Memes and Emojis in Marketing and Public Campaigns:** Given their growing significance in digital culture, marketers and advertisers can use emojis and memes to enhance engagement. However, a careful understanding of the semiotic principles behind these symbols is essential to creating messages that resonate authentically with target audiences and avoid cultural pitfalls.
6. **The Impact of Memes and Emojis on Language Evolution:** The influence of memes and emojis on the evolution of language and communication should be further studied, as they are changing the way we form sentences, express emotions, and even construct identities. This evolving linguistic shift presents a unique area for future linguistic research.

In summary, emojis and internet memes are not merely fleeting trends but integral parts of the digital communication landscape. Their semiotic and linguistic functions make them valuable tools for expressing complex ideas, emotions, and societal messages. By understanding the intricate relationships between text, image, and culture, we can better navigate the digital world and engage with the rapidly changing ways in which we communicate

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