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Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Kalyan Gangarde

Director,

Centre for Humanities and Cultural Studies, Kalyan (W)

Issue Editors

Dr. Mahesh Waghmare

Department of English, Balbhim Mahavidyalaya Beed

Dr. Abdul Kadar Maniyar

Head, Dept. of English,

Balbhim Arts, Sci. & Commerce College, Beed. 431122(Maharashtra)



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The Impact of Internet Culture, Memes, and Emoji's on Communication

Prof. Dr. Archana R. Banale,
Venkatesh Mahajan Senior College, Dharashiv

Abstract

Human beings now have come far away from the concept of just culture to internet culture. The things that once supposed to be a system of learned and shared beliefs, language, norms, values and symbols that humans once used to identify themselves have undergone a drastic change. Today the world witnesses a culture whose influence is mediated by information communication technology specifically the internet. During and after COVID19 pandemic the world increasingly turned to technology. Now the online platforms have become the dominant means of communication. One of the most profound changes has been the advent of internet culture, which includes memes, Emojis, and other visual and textual tools of communication. This research paper explores the impact of internet culture on personal and public communication. It is an effort to examine how these new forms of communication have influenced language, social interaction, and the way we perceive information in the digital age. This paper mainly concerns the two very important means of communication viz. memes and Emoji's and their impact on the changed way of communication.

Introduction

Digital growth has revolutionized the way of communication. It has made communication faster, accessible and global. We could say digital technology has become an integral part of our life. The daily and most particularly the informal ways of communication are being substituted or added by digital forms of interactions. Among the most prominent elements of this new digital communication culture are internet memes and Emojis, which have become integral to the daily interactions of internet users across various social media platforms. These forms of communication have reshaped the way language is used, the way emotions are expressed, and how social bonds are formed. The internet's influence on communication is a multi-faceted phenomenon, and it is important to understand how memes and Emojis have become part of a larger digital lexicon.

The transformation of communication in the digital age

In this era of information and technology we mainly rely on internet for communication, both formal and informal. Initially there use to be text based communication in the form of email and basic messaging services. Later it gradually shifted towards more visual, multimedia and interactive exchanges. These platforms allowed for real-time, text-based communication, and were early examples of how the internet could foster new forms of interaction. These are replaced widely by internet based communication. The rise of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram truly began to influence the way people communicated in broader, more mainstream ways. The speed at which information travels is the key feature of this era. It has broken down all the barriers to access the information. No doubt it has its own challenges and limitations as well. The digital revolution has changed business models of traditional media outlet. This advanced platforms introduced faster, more visual and reliable multimodal elements like, images, videos, GIFs. Memes and Emoji's emerged as the most notable forms of new communication.

Memes: New digital language of communication

In December 2012, the exuberant video "Gangnam Style" was viewed more than one billion times. These viewers responded by creating their own variation of the video. This is one of the most famous examples of an internet meme. This piece of digital content spread quickly around the world and became a shared cultural experience. Later on there came a wave of internet memes. Limor Shifman

in her book, **Memes in Digital Culture** offers a novel definition of Internet memes: Digital content units with common characteristics, created with awareness of each other, and circulated, imitated, and transformed via the Internet by many users. Here she differentiates memes from viral. Internet memes may be entertaining, but in this book Limor Shifman makes a compelling argument for taking them seriously.

A meme is generally defined as a piece of cultural information such as a phrase, image, or behaviour spread as a means of communication. At present memes are not limited only to laughter or joke material. If a picture is worth of thousand words then memes are worth of lakh words because of their presentation.

Memes are easily understandable accessible and easy to share the information, ideas and views. They are produced depending on how people see and assume their culture. According to the studies, online memes are various types of surprising things that are available on the Internet depending on the audience. They are as common as everyday news. 50% of the total population of the world is available on social media platform moving ahead to the cultural consciousness by not only introducing the person and his content to diverse people but also the whole cultural value behind it.

The reason of the popularity of memes is its capacity to convey complex ideas, social commentary, or shared experiences in a highly compressed format. This ability to transmit information through visual and textual elements is one of the reasons memes have become such a dominant form of communication. They act as a sort of shorthand for larger concepts, with humor often serving as a vehicle for cultural commentary.

What makes the role of Memes socially and politically important?

Though Memes look like a light piece of humorous content that quenches your thirst for quick entertainment. But in reality, memes have also become powerful tools for social and political commentary. Memes look like an omnipresent source of light entertainment, a quirky way to express themselves through satire and puns. It helps to mix and match text images, audios and videos to create quick funny and relatable content and share it with the world on social media. It may seem to be an amusement in idle time but is definitely more than that. It also has a serious side of capturing a feeling, experience or state of mind. This could also be powerful tools for self expression connection of social influence and even political campaigns.

Here are some points that make Memes influential in this digital era;

1. Capacity to capture quick attention
2. Quick and fast spreading
3. Cost effective campaign strategy
4. Simplification of message
5. Capacity to break language and cultural barriers
6. Wider capacity to influence emotionally

In today's world Memes can play a significant role in shaping socio-political ideas. This has a capacity to mobilise the opinions of people and contribute to the broader narrative of socio-political discourse in an unconventional way.

Emojis: More than just cute pictures!

Emojis, small pictorial icons used to express emotions, ideas, or objects, have become another crucial aspect of digital communication. The Japanese artist Shigetaka Kurita had never imagined what he created in 1999 as a set of 176 pictograms for NTT DoCoMo's i-mode mobile platform, would create a new revolution in the world of communication and expression. Emojis have become ubiquitous in digital communication acting as visual fuse that enhance emotional expression, clarity, and meaning, add context to written messages, making them a vital tool for both personal and professional interactions. Some of the key characteristics of Emoji are as follows:

1. Enhancing emotional expression
2. Adding humor and personality building connections
3. Breezing language barriers

4. Enhancing engagement expressing emotions
5. Adding context and personal connection
6. Adding humour or sarcasm

The role of Emoji in communication

One of the main benefits of emojis is their ability to convey emotions or tone in a text-based conversation, where non-verbal cues like facial expressions, body language, and voice tone are absent. This helps to bridge the gap in understanding that can arise in purely written communication.

For instance, a simple "thank you" can come across as cold or impersonal in a text message. However, by adding a smiling face emoji or a heart, the sentiment is immediately softened, and the tone becomes more warm and sincere. Emojis help fill in the emotional context that might otherwise be lost, making online interactions more relatable and human.

Emojis and Cultural Context

Despite their widespread use, Emojis are not universally understood in the same way across cultures. Different cultures interpret certain symbols or emotions differently, which can lead to miscommunication. Westerners give preference to mouth expressions (e.g., 😊 for happiness), while East Asians focus more on eye expressions (e.g., ^_^ or 😊). fMRI studies indicate these preferences are based on cultural visual processing tendencies (Jack et al., 2012). Understanding these cultural nuances is important when considering the global impact of Emojis.

The Impact of Emojis on Language

Emojis brought a tremendous change in the use of language. Emojis are used as visual shorthand. It has replaced elaborate language use. Emojis convey a variety of emotions like laughter, love, sorrow and many others used in everyday communication replacing the words. Every day thousands of Emojis proposed and introduced. This trend reflects the broader movement towards more visual and multimodal forms of communication in the digital age.

Positive Effects on Communication

The rise of internet culture, Memes, and Emojis has led to new dynamics in social interaction. Digital platforms enable instant communication, where interactions are often fleeting, informal, and fragmented. Memes and Emojis contribute to this dynamic by providing users with quick, entertaining, and emotionally resonant ways of engaging with each other.

One positive effect of this shift is the increased inclusivity and accessibility of communication. Memes and Emojis allow people to communicate across language barriers, with visuals serving as a universal medium that can be understood globally. This helps to create more inclusive online communities, where people from diverse backgrounds can participate in shared cultural moments.

Additionally, memes and Emojis can facilitate stronger connections between individuals, especially in the context of online relationships. These forms of communication provide a sense of shared understanding and cultural context, fostering a sense of belonging and connection among users.

Negative effects of Emoji on communication

Abbreviated and simplified communication

- Overuse of Emojis may lead towards a reduction of elaborate language and literary devices.
- While Emojis are very beneficial they can also lead to miscommunication when used incorrectly, as the meaning of Emojis varies from culture to culture.
- Oversimplification of Memes and Emojis may lead complex ideas or issues, reducing them to sound bites or images that may lack depth.
- Additionally, strong written communication skills may be hampered by an overreliance on emotions.

Dependency on Emojis and Cognitive Laziness:

- **Reduced Verbal Creativity:** The overuse of Emojis is related to less activation in Broca's area (language production). Example: Replacing "I'm excited!" with "😄" may degenerate refined expression.

Emotional Desensitization:

- **Diminished Amygdala Response:** Repeated exposure to extreme Emojis can reduce emotional reactions over time (similar to meme fatigue).

Conclusion

The rise of internet culture changed human life tremendously in every sphere. The increasing online use is changing every dimension of life. Memes and Emojis, has had a profound impact on how people communicate in the digital age. Memes have become a powerful tool for sharing ideas, emotions, and social commentary, while Emojis have enhanced the emotional richness of text-based communication. Together, these elements of internet culture have transformed language, social interaction, and the way we convey meaning online.

While Memes and Emojis offer new opportunities for creative expression and connection, they also pose challenges in terms of oversimplification and potential miscommunication. In this digital era, it is essential to strike balance between face-to-face communication and visual expressions.

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