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Semiotic rendition of Emoticons, Emoji and Smileys in the Present Whasapp and Social Networking Scenario

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Abstract:

Semioticians perceive signs not in seclusion but as an integral part of sign systems. They examine how meanings are constructed, being interested not only with communication but also with the structure and sustenance of phenomenon. Structuralists aim to chronicle the overall system of signs as 'languages'. Nonetheless, for this study , we would be viewing the structuralist approach, which is involved with the constitutional elements within an autonomous system, exploring to analyse the use of signs in definite social situations. Emoji, the omnipresent digital representation that appear in text messages, whatsapp and other social media platforms are affluent in the social, cultural and economic scenario of the contemporary world. It definitely enhances and contributes to the realm of sign system.

Keywords: Semiotics, emoji, social media, whatsapp.

Semiotics refers to the theory of sign system. Every accepted sign systems in existence come under the realms of semiotics. Semiotic studies acquires importance from the fact that almost all existing species of flora and fauna of nature engage in some or the other types of sign system, knowingly or unknowingly. It does not strictly cohere to the word 'sign' in our every day speech, because it refers to anything which 'refers to' something else. This late 'insight' has widened the scopes and confines of semiotics excessively.

Semiotics is not generally considered as an academic discipline. It is an area of specialization involving many contrasting theoretical view points and specialised tools. The present day semioticians study sign as part of semiotic sign system. They analyse how meanings are shaped, not only their communicative aspects, but how it is composed and maintained.

According to chandler,

semiology was a science which studies the role of sign as part of social life.   It would form part of social psychology and hence of general psychology. We shall call it semiology. It would investigate the nature of signs and the laws governing them. Since it does not yet exist one cannot say for certain that it will exist. But it has a right to exist a place ready for it in advance.

Linguistic is only one branch of this general science. The laws which semiology will discover will be laws applicable to linguistics and linguistics will thus be assigned to a clearly defined place in the field of human knowledge.

For the Philosopher Charles Peirce,

Logic is formal semiotic. A sign is something. A, which brings something B, its interpretant sign, determined or created by it, into the same sort of correspondence (or a lower implied sort) with something. C, This definition no more involves any reference to human thought than does the definition of a line as the place within which a particle lies during a lapse of time. It is from this definition that I deduce the principles of logic by mathematical reasoning that , I aver, will support criticism of Weierstrassian severity, and that is perfectly evident.

This is seen in the use of emojis on Whatsapp conversation. When we refer to the express low signs are used to convey certain elements.

For an entity to aquire the' sign status' it must be ethereal, arbitrary and unparalleled. Before a linguistic entity is allowed in it must be proven to comply with the 'fundamentals'. A sign is the connection or relationship between a signified and the Signifier. The signified is a concept or meaning or thing while the signifier represents the signified. Signified: the concept tree, signifier: The word 'tree'. When these two are meaningfully connected or linked, 'sign' gets the meaning. According to Chandler, the study of signs is the study of the construction and maintenance of reality. Semiotics involves not only what we refer to 'signs' in our communication, but of anything which stands for something else. In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, pictures, sounds, signals, gesticulations and objects.

Semiotics is important because it can help us understand something having a disengaged verisimilitude, which is independent of human elucidation. It helps us to know that meaning is assiduously created according to a multiplex synergy of codes or keys without our resolute awareness.

This study looks into how emojis and smileys become a part of our dynamic communication and also their exposition and implications. It will also look into the structures in which communication occurs.

Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, was the founder of linguistics and semiotics. He contributed much in the early development of semiotics. It was Charles Sanders Pierce and Charles William Morris who developed behaviorist semiotics. Structuralism, which has been used by many semioticians, is a characteristic method and it is established on Saussure's linguistic model. Structuralists sought to portray the comprehensive organization of sign systems as 'languages'. They are involved in an exploration of ' deep structures' , unrevealed under the superficial of canvas. The structuralist approach deals with the inner relations of elements in an entity and exploring the use of signs in certain social circumstances.

Saussure projected language as a systematic entity. As it is a system, language should be studied synchronically, that is, at a certain period without concerning its historical antecedents. Its studies should be relational. Structural studies postulate that semiotics can be mentioned as a science of signification. According to Saussure, meaning is created by the projection of actions and objects which act as signs in relation to other signs. It is concerned with the connection between meaning and relation that exists between signs. When language is considered as a semiotic system, its existence as a system of binary opposition with language elements occurring in practically distinguished pairs as in the phonemic pairs using /lit/, /kit/and /sim/, /rim/ also should be taken into consideration. Saussure also posits that the two relational accesses of language, syntagmatic axis and the paradigmatic axis combine and communicate to create meaning.

Piaget is another structuralist semiotician. Piaget studied language as a structure. He put forward 'the structure of structure' and its major characteristics as wholeness, self-regulation and transformation.

Wholeness indicates completeness. The parts do not have an independent existence without the whole. The wholeness implies inner consistency or unity between the parts, which has a linguistic unity with the whole. Whatever instances we take, like writing an article or an essay or a speech or striking a meaningful conversation, there should be sequentially arranged rally of ideas or sentences that follow each other or surround one another to make coherence possible. To comprehend, one person should articulate at a time and a shift in speakers is repeated. This is similar to the adjacency pair posited by Schegloff and Sacks. The adjacency pair contains a number of sequences such as question/answer sequence, complaint denial sequence, compliment rejection sequence etc.

Self-regulation suggests the internal rules that help the structures to control its behavior. English is a rule-hegemonised language. For each element of language usage like transformation, concord, deletion, insertion, substitution there are rules. These rules serve the purpose of modifying the conduct of the internal structures.

Transformation points out to certitude that the structure has provisions for persistent internal regeneration. Transformational Generative Grammar by Noam Chomsky manifests the ability of language to modify its basic sentences to varying sentences. The kernel or the basic sentences can be modified to have the negative, passive, interrogative transform etc. Concisely, semiotics involves itself with how a few set of rules rationalize all the developments in the structure.

According to Saussure, the two types of signification relationships are syntagm and paradigm. They govern how sign identify with one another and thus create meaning. Culler notes in 'Ferdinand de Saussure' that paradigmatic relations are the oppositions between elements that

can replace one another ….. Syntagmatic relations define combinatory possibilities; the relations between elements that might combine in a sequence.

In a word, syntagmatic and paradigmatic association exist side by side in the semiotic structure. Syntagmatic relations appertain to the parallel combination of elements in the text. It is associated with the decrees of elements in content. A sentence can be ascribed as a syntagm of words. Progressions of words are formed by blending them in a perceived order; thence it is continuous in nature. For example, in the sentence 'The baby smiles sweetly in the cradle', all the seven elements have a syntagmatic relationship as they succeed on from one another. This type of relationships often adheres to strict grammatical as well as lexical rules, so that a sequence like 'The baby smile sweetly in the cradle' is not acceptable. Consecutive elements in a syntagmatic disposition actually construct a syntagm. It can also be alluded to the sequence of events that compose a string.

Pardigmatic relation refers to a perpendicular relation between an element that is displayed in a sequence and complimentary elements that are not displayed. In the afore mentioned example, ' The baby' contrasts a paradigmatic relation with the boy/the girl/it, while 'smiles' contrast a paradigmatic relation with 'claps', 'sings', 'dances' etc. This rule is also regulated by selectional rule such that only theoretically associated elements can be chosen as a paradigm, so that each associated element in a paradigm creates a paradigm.

The internet, at times referred simply to as 'the net' is an electronic self-sustaining facility accessible to public that convey in style that are fundamentally diverse from other semiotic situations. Basically, when language scripting commenced amid the Egyptian civilization, objects where contrived to be read. But the system had shortcomings and the largest of them was restricted to the person who made the objects. Internet made radical changes in language using. Internet users send and receive e–mails, surf internet for information on any choice topic, search for entertainment and engaged in social networking activities. So it can be said that the internet is a revolutionary invention.

Whatsapp is a specific kind of technology that is used in specialised mobiles and computers. Since the idolisation of smart phone become prevalent, a number of messaging services were launched, but Whatsapp has obtained the leading position. The application has a major influence on its users and is capable of creating an addiction which gradually becomes troublesome in terms of control and cure.

The functional ability of Whatsapp messenger has been increased from time to time. It is available on almost all the android phones of all the brands and I phones. To get started, the users have to download Whatsapp and agree to its terms and conditions. A list of users appears who have already installed the application. Users can start sending massages and also form groups.

People are often seen swiping their mobile phones while using the public transport, railway stations, on the roads, their beds etc. Most of the time they are messaging or chatting

through Whatsapp. It tops the list of chat applications that rule the world today. People share and store thousands of massages, photos, trolls, videos and audio attachments on their Whatsapp. It is the most easily and cheaply feasible internet communication accessory available today. It is used for diverse functions like commercial purposes, teaching, friendly chatts, documentation etc. It also grants direct communication through Whatsapp calling where you have a choice of video call and audio call.

The idea of Whatsapp is conceived by Brian Acton and Jan Koum in 2009. The main intention behind its conception was to make the e-communication and social media activities effortless and brisk. It is a cross platform mobile go-between that performs on an internet data plan that cut shorts international call rates. Whatsapp applications has certain disbenefits especially for children as it eats up most of their creative time, endorses their attention from their genuine issues and also deviate their mind from their studies.

Presently, plain verbal texting has been replaced by quite a few effective nonverbal means of communication that include Jpegs, links, animated gifs, smileys and emojis. You have hundreds of emojis to choose from that suits your mood, emotions, alteration of thought and abstract concepts. The realm of such expressive icon was launched by Facebook through its introduction of F B Stickers. These illustrated expressions are termed 'Emojis' which is a Japanese word.

Emojis are innovations created by Japanese and many of the Watsapp icons have peculiar Japanese denotation and connotation. There is a Chinese proverb that 'one picture worth ten thousand words'. The first Emojis symbols were designed in 1998 by Shigetaka. Kurita a Japanese telecommunication employ influenced by Manga comics in exchange for more graphic emoticons. As it was the age that was rapidly embracing the dominance of the internet world wide, many of the ASCII users – ASCII symbolize American standered code for Information Interchange, the accepted series of digital cryptographies representing letters and symbols employed in the transfer of information – switched to Emoji. Meanwhile smiley was created by Nicolas Loufrani and Franklin Loufrani, a journalist who popularized smileys in an attempt to impart an optimistic tone to the print media. Thenceforth, smiley was accepted globally as a mark of positivity and cheerfulness.

With the initiation of Unicode 8 in 2015 that made available an abundance of emoji and smiley including those with a selection of skin tone, a unique script code that took the digital world by storm. Unicode is a global encrypting standard for adopting multiple scripts thus enhancing a unified structure of fonts for the practitioners of diverse languages. The rapid upsurge of smileys and emojis indicates the revolutionary change in the ways of expression and communication. The modern Internet era inspires innovative fashions of scripts and tools to be used alongside the classic scripts or an amalgam that meaningfully blends pictures and texts. New generation, especially young blood has popularized the use of emoticons and emoji by frequently using them in their texts.

Used as representatives of other thoughts formerly, emoji ultimately grew into addressing thoughts itself. Enormously expanded, the modern array of emoji provide for more subtle choices than the traditional happy face/ sad face/ angry face. Dictionary.com defines emoticon as "any of several combination of symbols used in electronic mail and text messaging to indicate the state of mind of the writer such as to express happiness". A great number of smileys and emojis are arbitrary items like flowers, cakes with lighted candles, animated boy, girl, animals etc. The smiley faces vary from ecstatic to bitter. A large number of them are not intrinsically related to human emotions anymore.

Emoji has been put away may times as the incoherent phraseology of adolescence, but on close scrutinizing, undoubtedly a language of intense fineness and arcane provincial dialect is unveiled afore our eyes. The most frequently adopted emojis are the smiley face and heart amalgamation, but there are multitudes of emojis whose implications shift and slide from the 'essentially representative' to an eloquently articulating mode.

The Nail Polish emoji, for instance is significant since it assumes a position between gender, race and class that allows prospective shift from various Professional platforms. It denotes a certain type of self-adorning culture. Dictionary.com defines nail polish emoji as "Since at least 2014, the nail polish emoji has been used as an emotional tone marker to communicate sass, indifference or poise in text, the image evoking a sense of regal aloofness." In March 2014, Alexander Abad – Santos and Allie Jones wrote in the Atlantic that the nail polish emoji was " the Beyoncé of emoji" and can mean anything from shutting haters down to a sense of accomplishment; a swift 'I don't care' to a spa day…….. It had begun to mean "I'm not bothered" or "Haters gonna hate".

Murray Spain, one of the entrepreneurs behind the 1970s smiley face, expresses smiley as a symbol of capitalism. The customs that emoji or smiley present is virtuous are evocative, consumerist, gender specific gratification. In Katy Perry's song "Roar", the emoji adaptation of the song's libretto serve as a blunt commentary on the essential 'anatomo-political maintenance' of the mundane. The chronic domestic conservation characterised in the video, nevertheless oftentimes treated "women's work" is thickly depicted in the basic emoji character set. Foucault ascribes the punitive structure of anatomo-politics as operating as a result of "the body as a machine……. The optimization of its capabilities, an extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls."

Since adequate standardization in sign deployment is absent, the emojis or smileys just provide a colour to the meaning of words in different contexts. It calls for a standardization of emoji or smiley implications if we have to attain a literature with diversified strings of judgment. But emoji, while a practice of communication, exhibits both the characteristics of a code system and a language system in its design as a means to provide communication. At the same time, it differs quite remarkably from language in its constitution and adoption. Emojis, for example,

are often repeated, boosting emphasis by visual recurrence. Repeating the 'red heart' emoji many times intuitively works, establishing the point. But the expression 'I love you' is effective when articulated or composed just once. With excessive repetition, it may seem insincere or insane.

Devon Schiller in his article 'Eco's Face Drawing and the Continuum of Emoticon Articulation' says

Yet, 'the semiotic machine' of the computer, whether embodied as laptop, touchpad or smartphone and its standardized graphical user interface (GUI), predominantly advances verbal signs over the averbal signs of face-to-face (F2F) communication. Consequently, computer mediated communication (CMC), short messaging service (SMS) and social network services (SNS) all enclose a 'semiotic vacuum' devoid of behavioral codes. The media etiquette or netiquette of the emoticon, the word itself a portmanteau of emotion and icon, serves to fill this void through a Platonic mimesis (Greek *mimeisthai*, or to imitate) of the facial expression of the emotion… Eco states that such "iconic figurae do not correspond to linguistic phonemes because they do not have positional and oppositional value."…."Circumstantially sensitive" in a different context, theses pertinent features would again become free variants…. To Eco, for a sign like the emoticon to be seen as iconic, it must be viewed as: "(a) visual text which is (b) not further analyzable either into signs or into figurae" and the verbal equivalent of which schematizes a "whole story" rather than a single word.

The content based digital communication –any   non-spoken communication between two or more people through an electronic equipment, containing but not limited to SMS, instant messaging and social media posts- restates identical cognitive and interpersonal strategies to those that already exist. Emoji, just like any other means of communication, constructs on a progressively deep-seated, species-specific instinct to collaborate. Essentially, though, in this brand new era of revolutionary digital communication, emoji is further enlarging the human capability to communicate.

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