

Emoji Meanings Have Evolved on Social Media Platforms

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Abstract

Internet communication makes instant messaging software extensively used. Internet emoticons have become an important tool for people to communicate and spread information. On social platforms, the meaning of the same online emoji can change based on specific events. This article/thesis analyzes the semantic transformation of Internet emoticons in hot topics that happened on social platforms, and analyzes the effects and limitations of emoticon expressions.

Keywords

Emoticons; Interpersonal communication; Semantic transformation.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Characteristics of Communications on Social Media

In face-to-face communication, human facial expressions can enhance the expression of emotions during verbal communication. One side of a conversation can capture the inner meaning outside the literal words by observing the facial expressions of the other side, so as to grasp more accurate psychological dynamics, which is the basic skill of communication in the real world. Different from face-to-face communication, the network is a virtual platform and online communication with only words cannot be as controllable as the interpersonal communication in reality. Language is more characterized by ideographic limitations, openness, contingency, etc.

China is in the period of social transformation, social platform users are always in a lost and anxious emotion, and lack of emotional catharsis way. However, the balancing power feature of Internet emoticon in dialogues provides a way of self-mapping for the public, which people can ignore the status and class. Users place their trust in the humorous and exaggerated image of emoticons, and vent their emotions through online activities such as discussion on public affairs and arguing with emoticons. [5]

Emoticons and emojis have become one of the languages that users communicate with each other on the Internet.

1.2. Emoji

Emojis are visual emoticons used in wireless communications in Japan. These expressive symbols can be used to represent a variety of expressions and objects, such as a smiley face, moon, monkey, etc. In 2011, When Apple Inc Released iOS 5, it added emojis into the built-in input method. Such simple emojis can simulate people's sensory expressions and replace

abstract words with intuitive pictures, thus effectively improving the efficiency of communication. Emoji has been adopted by the Unicode code that is compatible with most modern computer systems, and is widely used in various mobile text messages and social networks, leading to a globalization of online communication in the network era.

About 90 percent of the world's online users are frequent users of emojis, make a 6 billion times of emoji transmitted daily. According to the report, the 10 most popular emojis worldwide include "Love", "bawl", "smile" and "bawl", with "laugh and cry" topping the list with 21.25 percent of total, "Love" ranked the second with 7.89 percent and "Two eyes with Love" not far behind with 7.78 percent [2]. According to Tencent's QQ emoji usage analysis in 2016, the emoji "yiya" ranked the first consecutively for five years, with 30.3 billion times sent [3], which is persuasive enough to show the large size of the emoji users.

2. The Semantic Changes of Emoji in Social Platforms Event

Zhang Guoliang argued in *The Principles of Communication* that the best effect of communication can only be achieved when the information is compiled and interpreted with the same level of cognition and understanding. In interpersonal communication on the Internet, emoji, as a situational language, should also follow the process and rules of using situational language in real life. Just like code telegram, participants communicating with emojis must have the same symbol recognition and decoding context in order to successfully complete the online communication. [4]

According to the cognition and consensus of Internet users on emojis, their comments and emojis on social platforms, combined with the specific events they comment on, often have specific meanings and expressive effects. The interpersonal communication on the Internet is both temporal and spatial. In a particular event, use of emojis will also change with the changes of time and space, and will have different meanings and expressive effects as the event progresses.

2.1. The Semantic Change of in the American Female Singer "Taylor Swift Event"

2.1.1. Changes in the Meaning of 🐍

🐍 was at first, just an emoji to describe the animal snake.

In 2016, American singer Kanye released his new song "Famous". But the lyrics in the song made the public feel very insulting. Kenya's recording, released shortly after, confirms that singer Taylor Swift was approval of Kanye's use of the insulting lyrics and even praised them.

Kenya's wife, famous reality show actor Kardashian tweet and use the metaphor to describe Taylor as poisonous snakes with the 🐍 expression. Being cold-blooded, (snake) is culturally and characteristically associated with negative meanings such as "snake-scorpion heart" and "viper". Use the 🐍 🐍 expression to reflect Taylor's negative influence instead of using irony context, is entirely appropriate in such event.

Under the environment of social platform, verification is very difficult due to the mix of real and fake news. Group emotion is infectious strong, especially emotions like anger, sadness, fear and other negative emotions. Derogatory words like "snake" are easier to be used by the angry public who are concerned with the development of such negative social events, not to mention that most people felt offended about Taylor's behavior. At the background that people do not need to bear the consequences of their own opinions on the social network, the offensive comments and rumors will appear more frequently and frankly. As more people comment and retweet on this hot topic, its influence can diffuse at a rapid speed.[6]

Since then, the term "Taylorisoverparty" even once hogged the Twitter trend list first, and Taylor's ins comments area is a perennial be occupied by refresh for people to express she "has a murderous heart".

This expression was meant to refer to the animal snake. But once it was put in the negative language environment and endowed with sarcastic meaning, and is widely spread on the Internet as a kind of emotional expression. It is easy to bound on a new meaning by such online groups in the context of a specific event and, by the expression to have the implied meaning of "have a murderous heart like a snake". In 2019, Taylor use this element widely in her new album 《reputation》. Showing her strong and positive attitude in the face of slander and dark society not only the use of the MV lens but also the quotation of the lyrics.

In "Taylor swift event", Taylor for abusive words were qualitative misdeeds female artist, used as the meaning of "have a murderous heart like a snake" is obviously apt. The cultural connotation and the meaning of the corresponding joint emoji expression, people even do not know the whole event can realize the meaning of the emoji has righteousness under the language environment, as well as the figure and meaning in their culture. It also makes the emoji expressions from merely an animal, up to now because of the "Taylor swift event", are attached to the cultural implication of "have a murderous heart like a snake". Later, Taylor used the symbol herself and extended the symbol to the image of a strong woman who is not afraid of dark things. So far, the emoji symbol 🐍 has temporarily completed its network context transformation process.

2.2. The Emotional Change of Social Platform Users in the Process of 🍵 transform from the Original Meaning of "Green Tea" to Its Extended Meaning of "Bitch"

2.2.1. The First Semantic Change in the Meaning of

The original meaning of (Green Tea) is one of the main Tea drinks in China.

After an social news of an incident in 2005 in Sanya, China, the word "green Tea bitch" emerged on Chinese social media platforms, meaning "a woman who looks chaste but actually scheming than anyone else." The character of "Green Tea bitch" has also become a popular villain, and due to the spread of film and television series, "green tea bitch" has become a popular term in China.

The power of emoji on the Internet to balance dialogue allows users to bring symbolic and concrete representatives to the pejorative expression of green Tea bitch.

In an open social network, Internet users use emoji to refer to "green tea bitch" as a sign of negative rejection. Although in the original culture, there is no derogatory or implied meaning, but the popularity of the term green tea bitch, green tea and green tea bitch have a relatively close and public understanding and familiar connection. Because the word is a relatively vulgar, derogatory word in Chinese culture, most people avoid using it in writing and social contexts, referring to it in certain contexts. So the non-canonical symbol takes on a new meaning of "green tea bitch" in its original meaning.

2.2.2. The Second Semantic Change in the Meaning of 🍵

On the latest social media platform, an unscientific test called "Tea Art" has exploded in popularity, entertaining users with 10 questions that assess their ability to identify green tea bitters around them. Some groups participated extensively and Shared the results on social media.

Thanks to the widespread, everyday use of the test, users' feelings toward green tea bitch have changed from a simple q&a to a light-hearted, entertaining diversion. At the same time, this is not test a rigorous scientific q&a form also let the seriousness of the result and reference to

reduce, to some extent, even if the test results prove that the user is "one of the very people who know the green tea bitch", most users will not because a person entertainment test will be as a "green tea Biao" such a negative image, make the test in the criticism of the "green tea bitch", many users to show off or self-deprecating mood to oneself.

To some extent, due to its entertainment and high degree of participation, this test reduces the extreme prejudice of most users on this emoji and increases the tolerance and acceptance of netizens. The expression is no longer pure derogatory meaning, used between acquaintances, due to the trust of each other's good character, there will be a kind of ridicule like intimacy.

3. Summary

3.1. Features of Emoji

How did the referential role of emoji change from a simplified and a visual language to an implied projection of someone.

In the Internet environment, emoji itself, with its direct and popular style, is widely used as a situation in network communication. Using emoji can directly express their own emotions or convey information, which simplifies the process from text to emotion and from rationality to sensibility in interpersonal communication on the Internet, and directly ACTS on the emotional feedback of participants. When using emojis, users generally give priority to the emojis that are most suitable for their own emotions and personalities, so that participants can directly perceive the psychology of the other party and more intuitively construct their own characteristic attributes. Therefore, emojis are more emotional, more visual and more intuitive than languages.

At the same time, although emoji have certain representative meanings when they are created, strictly speaking, because there is no literal interpretation, emoji are still some symbols with unspecified meanings, which are widely used and rich in content interpretation, and can be interpreted in different ways according to the context and personality of the objects used.

These advantages make emoji become a strong meme in interpersonal communication on the Internet, and emoji have been developing well in recent years.

3.2. The Limitations of Emoji in Communication and Communication

Although emoji are composed of relatively intuitive graphics, users often have different understandings of graphics due to age differences, cultural differences, educational background, religious differences, etc. More often than not, young users who use the popular messaging app WeChat to communicate with their parents often receive emojis. Parents often use emojis to express a friendly smile or joy, but they represent the teasing and sneering of most young people.

The emergence of emoji on the Internet has enriched the ways of language expression and become an important means of supporting communication. Due to the differences in cognitive experience between the two parties and the changes in communication environment, but its communication effect in interpersonal communication is still limited, making people of different age groups have different perceptions of emoji. Misuse or misunderstanding of online emoticons may also occur in the communication process, thus affecting the intention of communication. Therefore, care should be taken when using online emojis to avoid conflicts caused by prejudice.

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