

Emoticon and Its Impact on Social Culture in the Context of New Media

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Abstract—The development of information technology promotes the continuous upgrading of media. The emergence of new media has brought about changes in language symbols. The rise and popularity of network emoticons are the result of media technology, audience demand and cultural logic. The essence of Internet emoticons is an auxiliary means of Internet communication with the function of emoticons, which is mainly used to express the emotions and attitudes of both parties. Especially in the communication of youth groups, it carries not only a simple symbolic meaning, but also a new emotional expression and a unique subculture. But the network excessive entertainment, also easy to bring some effects. By examining the influencing factors of new media language, this paper discusses the use and influence of emoticons in the context of new media, in order to attract attention and reflect on youth group culture.

Index Terms—New media language, emoticons, symbol, subculture.

I. INTRODUCTION

The emergence, existence and development of human society are inseparable from the dissemination of information and language. Essentially, sound, video, etc. are all forms of information transmission through language. In the process of communication, different media forms have different requirements for language and the characteristics it embodies. With the development of information technology and the popularization of the Internet, new media represented by blogs and social chat software such as WeChat, Facebook and Twitter are rapidly spreading. At the same time, due to relying on the Internet, new media covers almost all aspects of social life, and has the characteristics of openness and convenience. The language of new media also presents new characteristics. phenomena are closely related. In the process of the development of new media language, a phenomenon that cannot be ignored is the use of emoji. Unlike standard languages, it is full of variability. As an important part of the new media language, emoji is a window to analyze new media culture.

Walther and D'Addario (2001) studied web emoticons such as ASCII characters in E-mail by controlling experimental methods Emoticons smile :-), frown :-(, and wink:- , a series of behavioural changes that occur after the receiver accepts emojis, and it is concluded that the effect of network emojis on information understanding is not as significant as that of text itself [1]. Biber D, Davies M,

Jones JK ET AL. (2006) pointed out that language style refers to a general term for a series of tactical features that people organize language in their daily communication, which is related to social life and social relations. complexity) [2]. Kristin Byron and David C. Baldrige (2007), experimentally study the personal characteristics of email recipients and their understanding of the nonverbal symbols delivered by the sender, and found that emotionally stable people were more likely to like emails with emojis and had the impression of preference for the sender, and vice versa [3]. Provine RR, Spencer RJ, Mandell DL (2007) indicated that emoji use behaviours exhibit many characteristics of language use [4]. Derks D, Bos A, Von GJ (2008) argue that the number of people utilizing emoji is affected by the intimacy of the two parties in the conversation (that is, the closer the relationship is, the more emoji are used) [5]. Marcel Danesi (2016) puts forward an interesting hypothesis that emoji is a memory of a hybrid writing of the past, which combined graphic images and phonetic constructions [6].

Based on the above research, this paper starts from the perspective of new media culture, defines the concept of new media language and explains its influencing factors. Moreover, by reviewing the history of emoji the history and types of emoticon, it attempts to analyze the impact of emoticon on society.

II. THE CONCEPT OF NEW MEDIA LANGUAGE AND ITS INFLUENCING FACTORS

Media driven by information technology are constantly iterating and upgrading. The so-called "new media" is relative to the old media. In fact, what we now call "new media" is the third generation of media represented by the Internet. Generally speaking, new media is a new means and form of communication formed in the information age with the help of digital technology, network technology and other high-tech achievements after traditional media (or old media) such as newspapers, radio and television. Therefore, new media is the carrier of information dissemination by means of computers (or digital equipment with essential characteristics of computers) [7].

With its characteristics of convenience, speed and no time or geographical restrictions, new media has rapidly occupied the channels for people, especially young people, to receive information. At the same time, the difference brought by this new carrier is not only manifested in stronger timeliness, but also in the communication content, means, methods and ways. Compared with the other three types of media, new media pays more attention to the integration of various means, such as digital technology,

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pictures, language, sound and video. The research shows that media language is a mixed symbol system, including words and audio-visual coding. [8] Therefore, media language can be regarded as an independent language. Compared with other language habits, the media language has its own unique rules and complete system, and has unique usage habits and expressions.

There are different opinions on the definition of new media language in academic circles. New media itself is a new thing, and new media language is naturally a new thing. There are great differences in its interpretation, since people pay attention to different angles while defining it. However, there is no doubt that new media language not only has the attribute of "generated by new media", but also has certain linguistic attributes and characteristics. In general, the new media language is also a special symbol system of mixed types. In addition to words, letters and various writing symbols, expressions such as emoticons, dynamic pictures, icons and pictures often appear in new media [9].

As for the factors that influence the development of new media language, we think it should be analyzed from the following four aspects:

First, the development of new media language benefits from the development of information technology. The development of language is closely related to the development of language technology and the development of different ways of communication resulting from language technology [10]. With the rapid development of science and technology, new communication tools and applications relying on computer networks are emerging, and the language of communication between people based on computer media is also changing accordingly. People have adapted to socializing online. In addition to changes in words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs, some non-verbal signs are also changing accordingly. As technology continues to improve, emoticons from the original punctuation marks have been transformed into all sorts of interesting emoticons.

Secondly, the diversified development of the media industry itself has also changed the language development and communication mode of new media. A variety of audio and video applications emerge one after another to attract more audiences. These new media platforms provide users with personalized recommendations on the page and promote the development of diversified new media languages. Many buzzwords have become popular on these platforms. These platforms provide communication channels for the audience, accelerate the speed of new media language communication, and enable the audience to have a deeper understanding of the communication content. At the same time, new media products are updated quickly, and their language development also changes with the changes of new media products.

Thirdly, the changing needs of people in modern society promote the continuous development of new media languages. Maslow's hierarchy of needs tells us that people's spiritual needs are much higher than their material needs. The Internet is a very flexible private entertainment space. The young generation is good at obtaining network resources, using the network to show themselves, the pursuit of personal self-realization. Since the 1990s, the Internet

language has become more and more entertaining [11]. As an important language expression form of new media, emoticons have become an important choice for people to convey information or express emotions. At the same time, the language on the Network is novel and interesting, which also meets the psychological needs of young people pursuing novelty and difference, and inspires them to create more novel languages.

Fourth, the new media audience's demand for the right to speak. From the perspective of language economics, the discourse power is controlled by the group with economic rights, and the person holding the discourse power determines the trend of social public opinion. Young people do not have enough rights to speak in real life. Facing the pressure of life and work as well as the anxiety in mind, in order to meet spiritual needs, they are eager to express their demands and try to compete for the right to speak with their own language symbols. In the process of communicating through new media, people enjoy the freedom and sense of achievement of creating language by breaking the original constraints of language [12]. This sense of accomplishment is especially strong when a newly created language spreads quickly and is widely used.

III. CONCEPT AND DEVELOPMENT OF EMOTICONS

From the perspective of human society and culture, "symbolic thinking and symbolic behavior are the most representative characteristics of human life" [13]. Language itself is a special sign system. Internet emoticons, as widely used symbols in Internet language, interpret social communication based on the Internet. The development of social media has provided necessary ground for such a breakthrough in language, and emoticons emerged in this context, a product of social communication in the new media era.

In communication science, symbols are divided into linguistic symbols and non-linguistic symbols. Internet emoticons are one of the non-linguistic symbols in communication. Communication scientist McLuhan thinks that the media is message. In the field of new media, in addition to the traditional text symbols, non-text symbols -- emoticons are undoubtedly the most important communication symbols. New media has broken the communication mode of traditional media, changed the existing way of human language communication imperceptibly, brought about the revolution of communication, and produced the new thing of network language.

The word "emoticon" appears in English contexts (from the merger of the English words "emotion" and "icon" - symbol and sign). It is widely believed that emoji was first used in 1982 by Carnegie Mellon University professor and computer scientist Scott Elliot Fahlman in an email to a friend on September 19, 1982, as a way to build playful contextual meaning into conversation. Emoji - small images of faces, objects, animals, natural phenomena - this is the next generation of emoticons. The word emoji itself is of Japanese origin, it is composed of the Japanese words "hieroglyph" and "picture". Emoji were created in 1999 by DoMoCo employee Shigetaka Kurita, who drew inspiration

from the pictures of weather forecasts, manga comics, and traditional symbolism.

According to Wikipedia, emoji is a traditional language of images and symbols used to communicate on the Internet. Normal language is built on words and sentences, and this is built on graphic symbols. They are displays of personal emotions, actions, states, or objects. The number of emojis keeps growing: new characters, objects and phenomena appear. People are turning to informal languages with increasing frequency -- thanks to the growing popularity of emojis.

According to the Oxford Dictionary [14], an emoji is a facial expression presented through various combinations of keyboard characters, such as smiling or unhappy, used in electronic communication to convey the author's feelings or the tone of the message.

By sorting out the development of emoji, it has roughly gone through the development process of single text, symbolic expression (emoji) - graphic and text combined with static expression - animation expression (flash and short video). The first representative emoji is mainly emoji, the second representative emoji is the rise of the emoticon — little yellow face, and the third representative emoji is the development stage of custom emoji. [15]

As mentioned above, the development of emoticons benefits from technological progress on the one hand. For example, some instant messaging software companies continue to introduce cartoon images, animal images, human images, static or dynamic. These emoticons image intuitive, more conducive to show the expression, their appearance better make up for the text in the delivery of on-site emotion limitations, very popular with the audience. With the development of emoji, more and more varieties have appeared, and users can express emotions, wishes, ideas and cultures according to their personal preferences and uses. Through the Fig. 1 below, let's get to know the most popular emoticons on WeChat. It can be seen that the expressions or emotion presented by these emojis are very rich, such as joy, sorrow, surprise, surprise, sadness, sadness, fatigue, love and so on.

On the other hand, it is also the audience's boost in virtual communication. 92% of the world's online population uses emojis in their communications. 1 As Postman said, images not only serve as a supplement to language, but also try to replace the function of language to interpret, understand and verify reality [16]. The words and visual images of online communication together build a conversation field. Emoticons simulate the non-verbal information in the real scene, replace the gesture language in the communication in the real scene to some extent, and correspondingly weaken the virtual sense caused by the lack of non-verbal symbols, so that online communication on the Internet seems to be true and lawful.

IV. THE IMPACT OF EMOJIS ON SOCIAL CULTURE

In the use of symbols, the language is constantly

¹About Emoji – Unicode <https://home.unicode.org/emoji/about-emoji/>

compressed. First, users of social networks send emoticons to reduce the amount of text they enter. The linguist Maxim Krognauz described a similar trend in the use of the telegraph. However, in the early 20th century, he also pointed out that although data processes are similar, they have completely different characteristics [17]. The earlier reduction in messaging was seen as a necessary measure, but now people are simplifying the language of communication by saving labor costs and time to enter text messages. With the continuous development of new media, communication culture is changing rapidly. A visible trend in virtual social networks is that in order to simplify and speed up the communication process, sending voice messages and pictures has become very popular, and emoticons have not bypassed this process and become a part of it [18]. The popularity and fashion of emoticons make them gradually become the symbol carrier of people's emotional expression. With the increasing frequency of use, the overuse of emojis has a certain negative impact on people's emotional expression to some extent, that is, the degradation of the ability to express emotions through language.



Fig. 1. The most popular emoticons on WeChat²

²https://gimg2.baidu.com/image_search/src=http%3A%2F%2Fnmimg.ws.126.net%2F%3Furl%3Dhttp%253A%252F%252Fdingyue.ws.126.net%252F2021%252F0808%252Ff119bcc7p00qxit5h0035c000dz00nqm.png%26thumbnail%3D650x2147483647%26quality%3D80%26type%3Djpg&refer=http%3A%2F%2Fnmimg.ws.126.net&app=2002&size=f9999,10000&q=a80&n=0&g=0n&fmt=auto?s ec=1655110528&t=63fa5da2fb83e880fbf17dc2998b5ed7

At the same time, we can see that due to the generational differentiation, ideological differentiation and interest differentiation, the differentiation in virtual communication also presents obvious differentiation. One important indicator is the use of emojis. In China, many middle-aged people find some of the images used by their children almost incomprehensible or even unreasonable. For the young group, the aesthetic taste of "middle-aged and old emoticons" has also become an object of teasing and ridicule. In addition, some portrait GIFs made from local materials also have meanings that can be understood by certain groups in their internal communication. As mentioned above, the younger generation wants to have their voice, and the emojis they use will be noticed and understood by more groups, which may lead to further misunderstandings.

In social media, images spread faster than text, and the unit content is more informative, which can lead to viral spread, thus occupying the advantage of the right to speak [19]. Network emoticons use image symbols to record daily life and intervene in public events, dispelling the authority of mainstream culture. The free and open cyberspace is inclusive of public events and online language, and abandons traditional deep, serious and rational political critical thinking. It breaks the limitation of discourse level with "picture behaviors" which are noisy and interesting, containing the taste of ridicule and game, therefore, wins the discourse space belonging to sub-cultural groups. The image of the relevant personnel involved in the online incident will be wantonly graffitied, spoofed, insulted, satirized, or accompanied by abusive and offensive words and made into emoticons, which is an irrational, emotional and Recreational carnival behavior.

In the post-modern network society, we express our helplessness, dissatisfaction, fear and entanglement in ways of ridicule, sarcasm and humor[20]. On the one hand, it is the resistance and disassembly of traditional aesthetic cognition; on the other hand, it is the breakthrough and struggle of the grassroots for the right of self-expression. Under the cover of entertainment, emojis, as a "weapon", constantly fight against serious elite authority and occupy the discourse power of popular culture.

In modern times, rapid progress in information technology, new media rapid development, the renewal and the variation of any things are more difficult to predict. In the new media environment, the change of language symbols with the characteristics of randomness, but also constantly tend to entertainment and civilians, can make the involved in things easier to manufacture new pop culture.

In summary, the following conclusions are drawn:

Positive effects: 1. The use of emoticon will save writing time. Sending emoticon is faster than writing, creating positive emotions for users; 2. With the help of new media technology, users can create emoticon by themselves, thereby stimulating users' imagination, developing new types of art; 3. In the absence of language knowledge, emoticon will undoubtedly contribute to the development of intercultural communication, if the correct use of emoticon as visual art is intelligible for specific content of each country or ethnicity; 4. Emoticon, as a pop culture, provides a space for the younger generation to express

themselves, and can develop as an independent artistic genre and commercial development.

Negative effects: 1. Overreliance on emoticon can lead to gradual decline in writing and speaking skills; 2. The range of emoticon meanings or the creation of coded meanings can only be understood by people with the same knowledge experience, which limits the development of communication among wider groups; 3. Due to encoding special meanings that are not shared with different age groups, leading to a growing gap between generations.

V. CONCLUSION

The rise of the Internet is a complicated interactive process of society and technology. The technological revolution brings the iterative upgrading of media. The emergence of new media promotes the change of language symbols. In the use of emoticons, their critical attitude of games and entertainment not only dispels the authority of mainstream culture, but also weakens its own communication effect. More importantly, emoji, as a subculture, can bring generational, ideological and aesthetic differences. In the era of new media, for contemporary teenagers, daily cultural practices have established an inseparable relationship with the Internet, and their implied social mentality and value orientation need to be paid attention to and reflected on. Therefore, how to integrate the growth of the youth group into the development of the real society has become the essence of the current youth culture development.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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