

More Than Just Memes: How Are Memes Being Used on Social Networks as a New Visual Language Built on Appropriation?

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As technology has developed within the modern world leading to the creation of the internet (Berners- Lee, 1989) and eventually to social media such as Facebook (Zuckerberg, 2004) and Instagram (Krieger and Systrom, 2010) a new generation has been exposed to a different society built on globalization. With the development of social networking sites it has become a platform for people to create and share memes which are being used as a new form of communication. This led to an assessment of whether memes are being used as a visual language and how they are spread built on appropriation. In this independent inquiry it assesses this through an analysis of three key areas: appropriation, memes and language in the format of an extended essay. This research will focus on the development of memes and how they have been adopted into everyday spoken conversation.

Appropriation taken from late Latin word ‘appropriatio’ translates into ‘make one’s own’ (Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, 2019), it is a word used to define the act of taking something that does not belong to you and adapting it to make your own creation. From a design context appropriation is seen as a form of learning but the pupil must cite their sources to avoid plagiarism, Van Camp (2007, quoted in Wang, 1990, p. 161-81 and Carlin, 1988, p. 108-11) expresses that ‘visual artists throughout much of the twentieth century ‘appropriated’ elements of existing art’. In tradition of art and design education, copying from another work of art allows the student to fully understand the thought process behind the technique used to create it. It is a hands-on approach for the student to gain experience which would further help their practice. Therefore it is seen as invaluable as it allows the student to improve their own skills while learning from the masters. Through adopting elements from existing artworks and popular culture it allows for new ideas to be created based on adapting pre-existing designs. This could be to improve work that has already been made or just to make a comment on existing theories

and beliefs. In relation to the question appropriation is a key factor as to how people communicate, the material needs to be visual in order for the information to be passed on properly. Teaching this information in person allows for students to engage fully and to proceed with copying and presenting new knowledge in different formats.

Artists are constantly learning and acquiring new knowledge through expanding and pushing the limits of their practice by replicating existing artworks. Some consider this however as copying.

Copying is defined as ‘a thing made to be similar or identical to another’ (Lexico, 2019).

However copying may be looked down upon; seen as cheating by taking credit of someone else’s work. On the other hand, it has been argued that copying allows students to learn stated by Fishman et al (2019, p. 101) ‘imitative behavior might reflect ‘rational’ learning when poorly informed individuals look to the behavior of other, possibly better informed individuals’. If they did not copy each other nothing culturally significant would exist such as language, visual symbols and traditions. Without spreading our own knowledge the human race would not be able to evolve as mutations are needed to prevent natural selection from wiping out the weakest. These mutations enable us to improve our skills for survival, one of these being the development of visual aids.

Visual aids such as images allow us to help spread this knowledge, through association of putting sound to image together we have been able to develop a way of communication all through copying each other. Crucial for education copying allows the appreciation of how something was developed; by breaking down the production it enables pupils to understand the importance of each process. Breaking down the process is crucial as it allows for unique parts to be appropriated and communicated in a new visual language.

Fowler and Mayes (1999, quoted in Cole and Scribner, 1974, p. 7) express that the:

Approach to the cognitive implications of formal and informal learning, can be regarded as a socio-psychological view of situativity. They emphasize the importance of context-dependent learning in informal settings. Children in traditional societies learn by observing others, a form of apprenticeship where the knowledge often remains tacit. In contrast, formal education removes the child from context by locating learning in schools.

Different forms of education allow for different skills to be learnt, Fowler and Mayes (1999, quoted in Cole and Scribner, 1974, p. 7) are stating that formal and informal learning have different benefits to the pupil. Everyone processes information in a unique way and what may work for one individual may not help another. It is down to the context of the learning to ensure that the pupil is actually engaging. Even though we all learn through different methods there is one common thing we all do to learn and that is copying. Copying each other helps the spread of information, how the individual reacts to that determines which style of learning they learn best from. Some people learn better by reading and listening to instruction whereas others need to visually see and take part in the activity to improve. This is known as being an apprentice. Apprenticeships are a common way for artists to learn new knowledge about their craft. Through copying their master they are able to gain valuable insight into the industries hidden secrets. Learning from physically copying their master benefits the student greater than trying to learn through a piece of text instructions. Although following written instructions could be classed as a form of copying, it doesn't allow the student to physically see in front of them what they are doing wrong. Each individual has a unique learning style involving copying; this repetition of information is sometimes passed on more efficiently through a teacher, by having a visual language as an aid it allows for the appropriation of information.

By having a master work with students they can be corrected on the spot and be given demonstrations to help perfect their work. The environment they work in is crucial for their development, this has been shown through 'Situativity Theory' which 'refers to theoretical frameworks which argue that knowledge, thinking, and learning are situated (or located) in experience (Durning, S. J and Artino, A. R, 2011, p 188). Experiencing firsthand the new skills that they are learning benefits them as they would pick up the new skill a lot quicker than trying to copy it from a pre-existing work such as painting. Students who have hands-on tutorials with a lecturer experimenting with different techniques would benefit from the experience. Without physically engaging with the skill there would be no practice for the pupil to improve. Therefore to become better at something you have to repeat it numerous times until it has been learnt and ingrained in memory. Although a traditional classroom allows for students to learn it is not the right environment for all types of subjects to be taught in. Hence the type of classroom has a big effect on how well a pupil will learn, without the correct type of equipment it can hinder a student's progress to engage properly within their craft. 'Historically, the culture of design education reflects an uneasy liaison between the mediaeval monastic ('book') and the crafts guilds ('design studio') traditions. For this reason it has been difficult to integrate both modes of knowledge in design education' (Wood, 2000, p 44). A textbook would be useless to an art student as it does not allow them to get physically involved with their work. Consequently it is not practical for an art student to do written work about painting without actually doing any painting. By allowing students to physically do their own work they learn about themselves, understanding what their strengths and weaknesses are and focus on how to improve them. Without practice they cannot perfect their skills. Appropriation is needed in order to learn more about a specific thing, without it no new information would be spread. It is human nature to seek

Indeed, Richard Sennett states that ‘Craftsmanship names an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake.’ (2008, p. 9). We as people have this constant urge to better ourselves, to accomplish this we need to form new habits and practice them. By practicing it allows us to critique our progress in order to help us develop the skill further. By using pre-existing information to also help practice these skills we are also partaking in the notion of taking in and appropriating memes by using a new visual language to enable this.

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I think

Can you be the child in
your own living or was
you living in the way
Do you think it was only
after the war.

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Fig 1. Darwin's idea of mutation

A meme is a piece of information that gets regurgitated repeatedly, however as it passes from one person to another the information inside it is altered slightly, thus changing the way it is viewed from an outside perspective. Depending on how relevant that meme is at that point in time it may be seen as relatable therefore allowing it to spread more quickly. The meme disperses and multiplies until almost everyone has been a part of it. This consequently leads to the death of the meme, it's no longer relevant to people and therefore the information stops spreading. Mesoudi et al (2006, p. 329) states that:

The implication of this growing body of theory is that culture exhibits key Darwinian evolutionary properties. If this is accepted, it follows that the same tools, methods, and approaches that are used to study biological evolution may productively be applied to the study of human culture, and furthermore, that the structure of a science of cultural evolution should broadly resemble the structure of evolutionary biology .

Mesoudi et al are explaining that biological evolution is also applied to cultural objects and behavior. Tangible and intangible culture both are examples of cultural heritage. Cultural heritage shows the ways a community developed over numerous generations; inclusive of language, folklore, history, artwork, music and other objects with cultural importance. Tangible culture is specifically related to physical items you can touch such as artwork, clothing and buildings; intangible culture relates to intellectual traditions such as music, language, rituals, beliefs and knowledge. UNESCO (2017) states that:

Heritage is the legacy that we receive from the past, that we experience in the present and that we will pass on to future generations. Through the 1972 Convention Concerning the

Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, UNESCO established that certain places on Earth have “exceptional universal value,” cultural heritage is not limited to monuments and collections of objects. It also includes lived expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants. Despite its fragility, intangible cultural heritage or living heritage is an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity.

Cultural diversity is a key factor as to why cultural heritage exists. It is evidence that there are different cultural beliefs and traditions within numerous societies around the world and shows a variety of ethnic histories. Culture is part of the process of how memes spread, without culture there would not be a reason for memes to exist. Applying Darwin’s theory, allows researchers to understand why and how cultures exist, the act of spreading information replicates that of a gene in the human body.

The cultural spread and impact of memes is otherwise referred to as Memetics. 'Memetics is the counterpart of genetics in the cultural arena. In its application to science, it deals with the manner in which memes/ideas spread in the scientific communities' (Kantorovich, 2014, p. 363). In essence memetics is a replica of how genetics work. Using communities as an example, the development of memetics relies on older generations to pass down this intangible and tangible culture; again when this information is passed it can mutate, adapt and evolve to stay relevant to newer generations. Mirroring that of a gene being passed down from one living organism to another through reproduction. Nonetheless as technology has evolved the ways this information is collected, stored and passed have become more modern. With the rise of the internet this has allowed for the spread of information to be at its quickest and most efficient.

The advancement of technology has allowed globalization to occur and with this came the spreading of information, which included languages, cultures, and imagery, Giddens (2002, p.1) states that ‘the changes affecting us are not confined to any one area of the globe, but stretch almost everywhere’. This spreading of new information around the world enabled people to engage with new material. It allowed people from different countries learn about each other through seeing different ways of life, where it was through film, tv, music, literature or art. Our world which is seen as big became a lot smaller due to most people in developed countries being able to instantly connect to each other through the production of the internet. Susan Blackmore (1999) shows that we keep memes alive to help us live through life, and imitate each other in order to spread memes further. Older generations act as masters and teach the younger generations who are seen as apprentices about their culture, this shows that culture is a meme and is spread through our appropriation of each other. Blackmore (1999, p. 40) lists the complexity of this form of appropriation:

Memes are ideas, skills, habits, stories, songs or inventions that are passed from person to person by imitation. They have shaped our minds, leading to the evolution of big brains and language because these served to spread the memes. But the memes with the cleverest trick are those that persuade us that our "selves" really exist. We all live our lives as a lie. The memes have made us do it--because giving us the illusion of "self" helps them to survive and spread.

She states memes give us ‘the illusion of ‘self’” which ‘helps them to survive and spread’. By allowing the meme to enable this sense of self within ourselves, we force ourselves to keep surviving. We, as individuals, would believe that we are fighting to stay alive to see the future. Our minds are the most powerful possession we own as a species and Blackmore recognizes this

as memes have allowed our abilities to develop over time through evolution. Without memes we would not have evolved from our common ancestor the ape. What sets us apart is how we have developed sound to become language followed with additional visual aids. According to Blackmore, we have evolved physically allowing us to build and create new inventions, as a species we have invented society; we have created morals, ethics, religion, languages and cultures as a product of memes. It could be argued that these societal standards have been created to help guide us through life and survive. Humans need to have culture to justify their existence, to keep cultures alive they pass them down generations. In order to achieve this language has been developed; humans have become smarter and realise that in order for information to keep on spreading it needs to be relevant and engaging, keeping others entertained while passing this information on presented as a meme.

Meme's in the digital age have evolved so that they are more about how people relate to them, for a meme to stay relevant it usually must follow a current trend that is popular in the climate. 'Certain memes, will be more successful than others because they fulfil a cultural need' (Marwick, 2013, p. 12). People start to replace what they know with this new information. Social networking sites and apps such as Vine, Tik Tok, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat have enabled a new type of internet culture to develop. The creation of Vine allowed for a new generation of memes to be created; a vine is a 6 second looping video. With the format being in video it allowed anyone to engage in creating relatable content. Over a short period of time people found that by creating humorous content it got shared repeatedly and spread to a wider audience all because people could relate to the topic being discussed in the six second video. 'Vines' became a subcategory of internet memes, additionally within the Vine app it was developed to show different video categories allowing for different genres to be created. 'Every

meme has its own theme. Therefore, it allows the user to always come up with newer and more creative ideas in delivering its message' (Kariko, 2012, p. 189). As a result of the videos only being as short as 6 seconds it allowed the creator to engage with the production of the video on a larger scale figuring out how they can pass information on in a humorous way with a time limit. Creators began to invest their time in how they film, produce and edit these videos wanting the outcome to be high quality like a film. Furthermore as the popularity of the app progressed with the quality of the videos also becoming higher it allowed the viewer to not put a lot of effort in to pay attention, this is due to the video length and creativity of the clip. A distinct benefit of this short video format is that the user can take in a substantial amount of information without having to use up a lot of time, as a result users of this app can easily take in this information due to it being understandable and relatable. Conveying the use of it in everyday situations; people began to quote popular Vines and this has led to the assimilation of Vine language becoming a part of spoken language.



Fig 2. Screenshot of Peaches Monroe's vine

An example of this is of vine user Peaches Monroe exclaiming that her ‘Eyebrows on Fleek’, she filmed herself (see fig 2) after having her eyebrows done expressing how good they looked; using the word ‘fleek’ as an adjective. The Vine was posted on June 21st 2014 and within five months the short clip had accumulated over 20 million views.

Search Interest

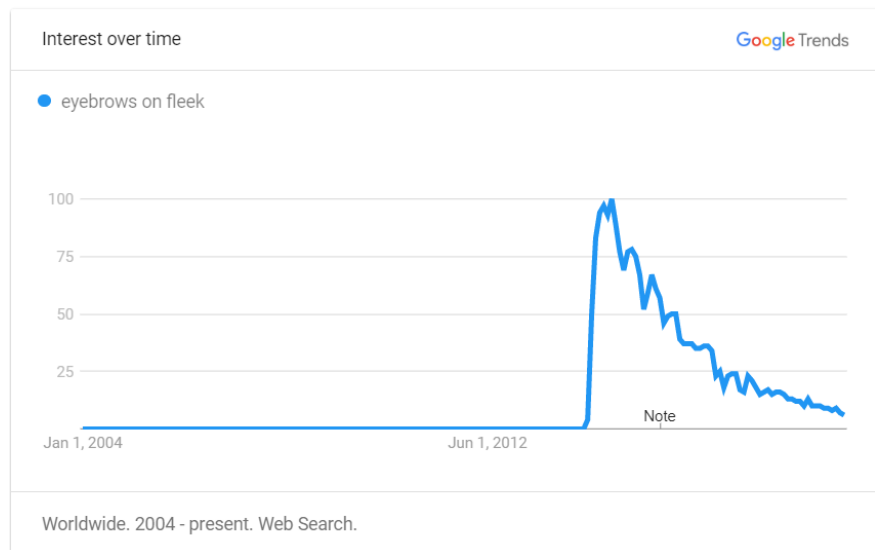


Fig 3. Graph showing ‘eyebrows on fleek’ search interest

In conjunction with Peaches using the word ‘fleek’ this graph shows how within such a short space of time of this meme being created it was being shared and searched for. This spreading of information soon became part of everyday conversation with people adopting the word ‘fleek’ as a new positive adjective. This is known as ‘memetic selection’ (Heylighen, 1994), the memetic selection of this phrase became a part of internet culture. Nevertheless these words then become part of everyday vocabulary by individuals using them during conversation with each other, once a new definition has been applied (seen as a mutation) it will spread and people will be able to

know what the word means depending on the context it's being used in. This type of meme stays relevant as it's humorous.

Celebrities and businesses soon caught on and started to incorporate it with their content to try and garner a wider audience. An example of this is International House of Pancakes (IHOP).



Fig 4. Tweet of IHOP using the word 'fleek'

IHOP is an American pancake house, the image above (see fig 4) shows a tweet from Twitter of the company expressing how good their pancakes are by using the word 'fleek'. By doing this IHOP are hoping to engage with a specific generation of people through a phrase associated with internet culture. This passing down of information about how good their pancakes are is a meme itself using another meme to appear more relatable. This is referred to as 'memeception', Urban Dictionary user lakerlandb (2016) defines this as 'when one meme is created using another meme'. This term was created as a reference to the 2010 movie 'Inception' by Christopher Nolan, the Merriam Webster dictionary (2019) defines it as 'the origin of a point which something begins its course or existence'. This shows that the meme would repeat itself or

present itself in another form but displaying the same theory. As the information of meme would be repeated but presented in a different format it shows an example of how fast the turnover of the internet is. The speed of how quickly memes mutate depend on their relevancy and popularity and during this time period the word 'fleck' became popular very quickly as it was adopted as a new word to use in everyday conversation. Due to the fast turnover nature of the internet many people share memes everyday on most social networking sites without even noticing it, if the individual relates to the context of the meme they will feel as if they have a connection to it, it becomes relatable and some find it easier to express their feelings through sharing the meme instead of trying to verbalise it. 'Social networks distribute internet memes without cessation every moment of everyday. Most Facebook users likely encounter a meme and/or distribute a meme daily' (Wiggins and Bowers, 2015, p. 1890). Consequently this is due to the content of the meme being humorous. People associate memes with comedy and different types of memes appeal to different types of people due to the genre of comedy within them. In the case of the Peaches' vine (above) people had a visual aid, but took the language from it to use in everyday conversation, showing how visual languages may be built on this form of appropriation.

Most people have a sense of humour and by involving it with memes nearly everyone can relate to it. Those with a sense of humour are more likely to engage with something humorous, with their attention spans being much longer when they find the topic more interesting and entertaining. Different generations develop different senses of humour and if the topic is deemed to be interesting to the user they will take in this information and pass it on to others through reposting it.

In contemporary society it is assumed that youth are more likely to be the main source of memes and memetic selection due to them being born in the internet age and having a completely different sense of humour through assimilating quotes and actions from social networking sites. More so due to them being raised surrounded by modern technology they are unconsciously absorbing information on different devices. Harshavardhan et al (2019) expresses that 'Marc Prensky coined the term 'Digital Natives' to refer to those born in the internet age; in this case, the young students. The rest of the people, he says, are the 'Digital Immigrants'. Thus the reason why we only see youth partake in this particular type of internet culture is that they were born during the time of the creation of modern internet making them Digital Natives. Older adults would have been around during the birth of the computer having only the option to write programs, their introduction to social networking sites would have come later on in life thus making them Digital Immigrants. They witnessed the birth of the internet however it was children born in the late 1990's who grew up and shaped social media websites such as 'Bebo' and Myspace', these early social networking sites would inspire 'Facebook'. Hence exposure to social networking sites compared to older generations who only used their computers for office type work show how younger people are referred to as digital natives.

Toddlers and children are exposed to gadgets in modern society as opposed to the older generation having more traditional forms of entertainment such as toys, books and television. Most adults today struggle to grasp how to use social networking sites as they were never exposed to them as children, similarly to learning a language children absorb way more information at a quicker rate and therefore it is easier for them to pick up how to navigate technology, this is a lot harder for adults as that learning period has drastically slowed down with age. As children are using technology from a younger age they become used to digital products

much more quickly, the Michael Cohen Group (MCG) did a survey nationwide which asked 350 parents about how their children aged 12 and under spent their time playing. The results of this poll showed ‘more than 60% of parents claiming that their child uses a touchscreen’ (Michael Cohen Group, 2014). These two graphs below (see fig 5 and 6) show the different categories of toys compared to touch screens and how often children use these to play with.

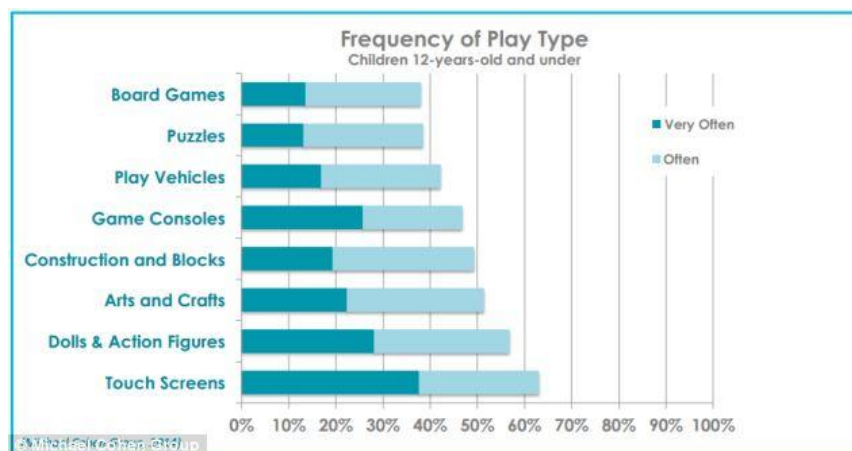


Fig 5. Graph 1: Frequency of play type

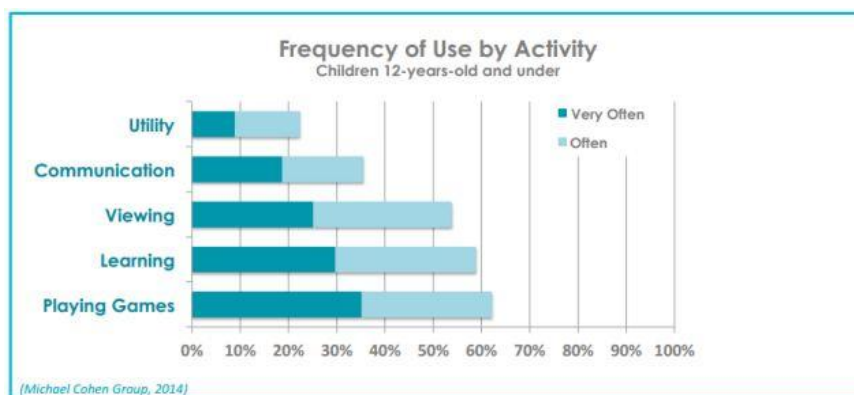


Fig 6. Graph 2: Frequency of touch screen use

In the first graph it shows that touch screens are the most popular form of playing. This graph shows how older toys such as puzzles and construction blocks are not as popular as they were back before the digital age. These toys are seen as obsolete and younger generations want the most popular form of toy which is anything touch screen or digital related. The second graph shows what use children are getting out of touch screens and most of them are playing games. However behind this we can see that the children are using them to learn, view and communicate. Coincidentally the same pattern used by memes, this early exposure to digital toys means that children are learning new information through the process of memetics. With children also receiving digital technology from a younger age, it is highly likely that they will become exposed to digital applications and social networking sites allowing them to be immersed with appropriating visual languages from a younger age. This exposure from a younger age would mean the younger generations are much more likely to use this digital language of internet memes due to exposure of them through digital applications. Thus it could be argued that this has enabled a new digital hybrid language appropriating both modern spoken language and digital language found online to be created. Younger children pick up language a lot quicker than adults as they are constantly absorbing new knowledge. Paul Bloom (2001, p. 1095) states that:

Children can grasp much of a word's meaning after hearing it in the course of a passing conversation. Here is how they do it: Young children can parse utterances (either spoken or signified) into distinct words. They think of the world as containing entities, properties, events, and processes; most important, they see the world as containing objects.

This would suggest that due to them being exposed to the internet at a younger age, they are more likely going to learn about internet memes and start adopting phrases into their everyday

conversation. Children can understand what certain phrases mean in different contexts, when they hear or read these words in conversation they start to unconsciously absorb it. Following this they begin to repeat it when engaging with another person. The contrast of environments that children are in compared to adults makes a huge significance on their language development. Children spend more time immersed in learning new information whereas adults don't have the luxury of time to do that due to their adult responsibilities. As youth in developed countries have the luxury of not having to be responsible within their households, they do not have to get a job, pay bills or do chores that would legally require them to be an adult. Consequently younger people have a significantly larger amount of free time to partake in any other activities. With the rise of the internet this has become a popular way for younger people to enjoy their free time by playing games, messaging their peers and engaging on social media sites. Malcolm Gladwell (2008, p. 40) said that it takes '10,000 hours to master a new skill', this translates to 9 years if you were to partake in that activity for 3 hours per day.

Teens are spending more than one-third of their days using media such as online video or music — nearly nine hours on average, according to a new study from the family technology education non-profit group, Common Sense Media. For tweens, those between the ages of 8 and 12, the average is nearly six hours per day (Tsukayama, 2015).

With teenagers spending almost 3 times the amount Gladwell recommends to master a skill, it is not surprising that the turnover of the internet is steadily gaining speed. The amount of time young people are on the internet allows them to absorb new information, picking up slang words along the way. As they are taking in a significant amount of new information through games, music and memes presented through social media apps, their use of language changes so that other young people participating can join in the conversation. Their increased time usage online

has enabled them to develop a new visual language which has been built on them appropriating memes.

Adopting new words from memes and mixing them with spoken languages has allowed for new hybrid languages to be created. Valdman et al (2005, quoted in Papen, 2014, p. 155) states that 'It is possible to create a new language by mixing two distinct languages'. A hybrid language also known as a mixed language is when a group of people who speak more than one language begin to combine different parts of each language together creating a new language without having a clear primary source as to which language it was derived from. An example of a hybrid language; Luxembourgish is a West Germanic language which has a mixture of German, French and English and is spoken by approximately 390,000 worldwide. It is unknown when Luxembourgish was first developed and considered a language, however the first known recorded history of Luxembourg was back in 963 A.D when Sigfried, Count of the Ardennes was the first person to rule over the country. Due to the geography of the country it has been invaded numerous times by the French, Germans, Romans, Dutch, and Belgians.



Fig 7. Map of Luxembourg

It was often thought of as a German dialect due to the amount of times Germany violated treaties, invaded the country and made it their territory. However as Luxembourg was liberated in 1944 it is now considered its own country and therefore Luxembourgish was made one of the four national languages. Additionally due to the location of Luxembourg being surrounded by 3 different countries (see fig 7) in the middle of Europe it can also be argued that the cross pollination of the workplace has allowed for the development of Luxembourgish with different populations migrating and combining each other's languages to form one universal one.

There are similarities within this hybrid language within our new digital one, comparing the formation of this language through different populations invading or migrating it could be argued that the same thing is occurring online. Using the analogy that social networking sites are different countries and the users of these sites are different populations who all speak their own unique national languages (memes) to each other when they migrate (use a different social networking site) they pass on this new digital language to the original population. This causes the original population to start adopting words or phrases from the new population (appropriation) and begin to combine them to form a new hybrid language which is then adopted by both populations. This pattern would repeat itself with users using different social networking sites and eventually when a specific meme has gone around every mainstream social networking site a wider known hybrid language would have been formed, there would then be the possibility of online users from the same countries in the world using this hybrid language and further developing it into their own spoken language which could potentially be seen as a completely different new hybrid language. For example an English-Digital hybrid language would be

slightly different to a French-Digital hybrid language, presenting how memes are allowing new visual languages to be developed through appropriation.

This new spoken language could be considered a 'Creole' or 'Pidgin' language. Creole/pidgin languages are created through people attempting to imitate another language they are not fluent in thus a mixed language is formed within that specific population and over time they become fluent in both of the languages. 'The world's pidgins and creoles display many obvious differences in sounds, grammar, and vocabulary; but they have a remarkable amount in common' states David Crystal (1997, p. 338).

With individuals on the internet being exposed to this same digital language yet their mother tongues are completely different to each other, it can make communication difficult. To combat this they may develop their own language by first attempting to understand what the other person is trying to say then follow through by using a symbol both recognisable to them and giving it a new meaning. Memes on the internet has allowed for this process to be relatively quick and easy, by letting individuals choose what new phrases and words mean. This semiotic approach to developing a new language has allowed people to create one based off images alone. Ferdinand de Saussure states that 'A sign must have both a signifier and a signified. You cannot have a totally meaningless signifier or completely formless signified'(1916, p. 101). Saussure's theory explains that the sign being used is communicating a message to the interpreter of the sign; however it is the interpreters experience with the sign that will determine what it actually means. Appropriation of these signs on social media networks and mutating them has allowed for the development of new visual languages.

In most societies people believe that certain emotions and facial expressions mean the same thing, for example someone who is smiling is believed to be happy, whereas someone who is crying is believed to be upset. By using images of facial expressions it has allowed people to engage in conversations only using these symbols. Emoticons were the one of the first ways of expressing yourself by using digital symbols found on the computer's keyboard to create facial expressions. 'The predecessor to newer emoji's, were originally regarded as simple markers of emotions but more recent approaches have posited that they can serve many complex pragmatic functions' (Weissman and Tanner, 2018, p. 2).

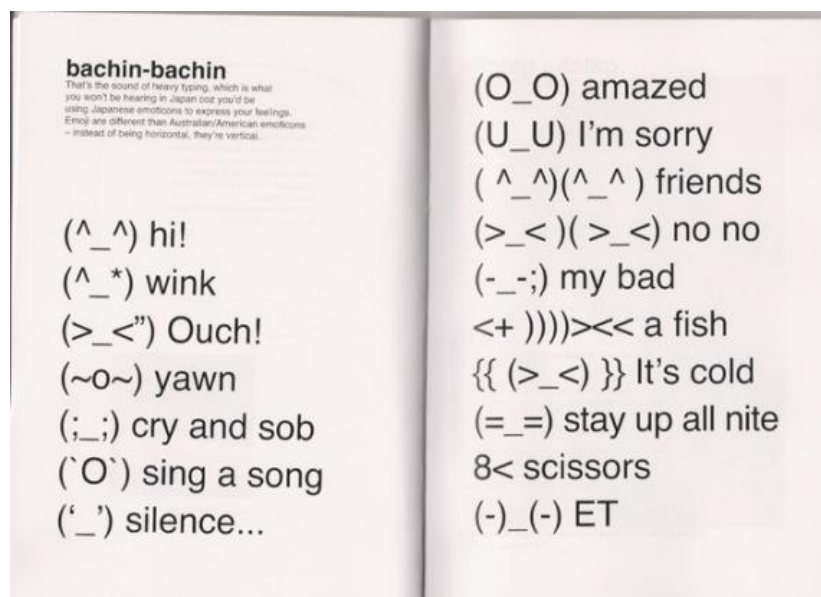


Fig 8. Book showing different emoticons



Fig 9. Artwork showing different emojis

By combining different symbols it created a new image, punctuation marks became the alphabet and by putting them together in different orders created the language. This style of messaging became popular on MSN Messenger in 2005. People were able to have conversations using emoticons and ‘textese’ which is a language based off texting abbreviations. During this time people wanted to get their messages across as efficiently as possible due to early mobile phones being more time consuming to use to send a message. To enter text on to a mobile it required the same button to be pressed numerous times on a small keypad to enter every letter of a word. Messages were also limited to 160 characters, by sending a few symbols as opposed to a small paragraph allowed the recipient to briefly skim over the message and instantly understand it instead of spending time to read thoroughly. Phone developers such as Apple started to modernize emoticons by using ‘Emojis’ instead as a result of this new visual language becoming more popular worldwide, Kaye et al (2017, p. 66) states ‘These images were termed ‘emojis’. They are now popular worldwide and used across numerous digital platforms and contexts’. It

allowed for other visual forms of communication to be developed, emoticons became obsolete and emojis took its place (see fig 8 and 9). Being a visual symbol that presented an emotion allowed for people to express themselves more clearly as most people find it easier to identify what the emoji means ‘Communication is central to our lives and draws on both verbal (e.g., speech) and non verbal (e.g., facial expressions) behaviours to convey information (Kaye et al, 2017, p. 66)’. The nature of the emoji allows for more people to relate to it, when appropriated and shared repeatedly it developed into its own visual language where people began forming sentences purely out of emojis. The emoji is a meme and this is an example of how it got turned into a visual language through appropriation.

Ultimately this independent inquiry has shown that memes have been developed into their own language and have been adopted into everyday spoken language. Through analysing the three key areas, it has been found that appropriation had led to this development. Appropriation is a crucial element on how people communicate. Incorporating visual aids such as symbols allows the individual to break down what is being presented to them. Depending on their interpretation of the symbol there is an element of relevancy and if the individual relates to the symbol there is a stronger urge to share that information. However using a symbol perceived as humorous will enable the meme’s longevity. Digital natives are more likely to engage with the memes used on social networking sites due to being exposed to technology from a younger age. Youth are more likely to assimilate words from memes and adopt them into their everyday conversation. This is achieved by appropriating memes they have seen in the past, they select a part of the meme they view as relatable and present it explaining its relevancy to them. Memes are usually visual and this aids in the sharing process; it allows for easy appropriation. This pattern repeats itself and people start to use digital languages in spoken conversation instead of traditional ones to express

themselves, thus showing how a new visual language has been formed using memes built on appropriation. This independent inquiry has been successful and has allowed for further future discussion on the topics discussed above.

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