A CYBER-PRAGMATICS ANALYSIS: ANIMAL EMOJIS AS K-POP IDOL REPRESENTATION

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Abstract

In recent years, K-pop has expanded around all over the world, and its fans have created special ways that refer to their idols, such making use of animal emojis. This study examines how animal emojis are used in K-pop to convey alternate meanings, particularly when used in place of idol names. The study utilized a qualitative approach with the theory of reference as the theoretical framework. Data was collected from social media platforms, Twitter. The findings suggest that the use of animal emojis in K-pop culture serves as a form of the unique characteristics of the K-pop community and also a solution to convey meaning effectively within Twitter's limitation characters. The discipline of cyber-pragmatics, or the study of language use in digital communication, is pertinent to this investigation. As a type of digital communication, the use of animal emojis in K-pop culture demonstrates how fans have adapted to the digital age and created their own language and communication style.

Keywords: *Cyber-pragmatics, K-pop, Animal emojis, theory of reference, social media*

Introduction

The term "cyber-pragmatics" was coined in 2001 to describe a study focused on understanding how internet-mediated communication affects cognitive pragmatics. Its primary objective is to examine how information is generated and understood within the online environment. It also investigates how users navigate contextual information, which is often limited compared to face-to-face conversations, in order to bridge the gaps between their typed messages and their intended meaning. The various forms of communication on the internet have significant pragmatic implications, affecting the quantity and quality of the information that is exchanged and interpreted.

Today's youth use technology like cellphones in their daily lives, which has increased social media's popularity and accessibility. Social media and social networking sites (SNS) have evolved into a way of life,

influencing not only the things we do but also our identities and interpersonal interactions. Different social media platforms offer a variety of activities, such as chatting and socializing, in addition to texting and sending memes and emojis to one another. Teenagers in particular use various social media platforms to interact with others. Teenagers nowadays have grown up in a time when social media has advanced at the same rate as digitalization in our society.

Twitter has evolved from a specialized service to a mainstream phenomenon since its introduction in 2006. Twitter is now available in 33 different languages, and it has considerably improved its support for languages that utilize non-Latin character sets as a result of its success, which is expanding around the globe. Due to its popularity and the distinct communication dynamics it provides, Twitter is a platform that has received a great deal of attention from researchers in the field of cyberpragmatics. To better understand how pragmatic principles are employed and how meaning is formed in this particular digital context, researchers have looked at a variety of features of Twitter communication.

Twitter has been applied to cyber-pragmatic research as Twitter has limitation on the tweet user will make. Twitter imposes a strict character limit on tweets, which requires users to be concise and creative in their communication. This constraint has led researchers to examine how users employ linguistic and pragmatic strategies, such as abbreviations, acronyms, emojis, and stylistic choices, to convey meaning effectively within these limitations. In this study, the cyber-pragmatic strategy in solving the limitation problem will be examined.

Emoji is an expression symbol used on social media platformsto show a person's feelings in a chat room. Emoji can represent concepts and ideas such as celebrations, weather, vehicles, buildings, food, living creatures, feelings, emotions, and activities. Emoji can be found on various social media platforms such as Instagram, Whatsapp, Twitter, and others.

According to Novak, Smailovic, Sluban, and Mozetic (2015), emoji is a symbol or ideogram that represents something, not only expressions but also concepts and ideas. With the advancement of technology, emojis are now not only used to express what is being conveyed through messages, but over time, especially among K-pop fans, emojis have been used to represent the character of an idol. K-pop community have been using emojis, especially animal emojis when referring to the idols in Twitter. The use of emojis is often used by K-pop translator accounts to overcome the limit of letters provided by Twitter.

Method

This study employed descriptive qualitative methods. According to Bogdan and Taylor (1975), qualitative techniques are those used in research that yields descriptive data from subjects' own written or spoken words and behaviors. Descriptive research is the term for it. According to Donald (Donald, 2009), descriptive research methods are frequently employed in educational research to learn more about the situation of the world.

The data was obtained through the Twitter Archiver Program (API). The study's focus is on tweets from K-Pop fans that include animal emojis as a method of acknowledging their idols. The research data are their reactions to seeing animal emojis of their K-pop idols on Twitter before knowing any context. Thirty tweets are utilized to collect enough data for the study.

The theory of reference is a branch of pragmatics that studies how people use language to refer to things in the world. It investigates how speakers employ linguistic expressions, in this case emojis, to identify and characterize phenomena in the environment, as well as how they transmit information about those entities to their listeners.

Frege, Gottlob. "On Sense and Reference." The Philosophical Review 57, no. 3 (1948): 209-30., the theory of reference is concerned with how language users refer to objects and concepts in the world. He argued that words and symbols have a reference or meaning that is independent of the speaker's intentions or beliefs.

Result and Discussion

Based on observations that have been made on Twitter, especially in the K-pop community, the use of animal emojis as representatives of K-pop idols is a very important part in disseminating information and running communication in Twitter K-pop discourse. The character limit that Twitter has on users in making tweets, forcing users to find other alternatives.

For example, tweet from one of translation accounts for a K-Pop Group Tomorrow by Together (TXT)

TXT Translations □   [@translatingTXT],

"□ come back after you wash up

□ yup

□ oki

□ i'm going to come too

□ come — ah but..well yes, come!"

Twitter, 29 May. 2023, 2:43 p.m.,

Animal emojis were used to indicate the members' presence in the tweet rather than their names, which would have been more obvious in the message. The tweet's intended meaning, however, could not be understood by anyone who are unfamiliar with the background or the name of the account. The theory of reference, which contends that shared knowledge and understanding between the sender and receiver are essential to language and communication, can be linked to this phenomenon. If the audience comprehends the situation and is aware of the meaning meant by the symbols, then using animal emojis as a reference point in this situation will only be successful. Thus, the capacity of the sender to provide information in a way that is understandable to the target audience is a prerequisite for effective communication.

Furthermore, misunderstandings could also occur as a result of various interpretations of the employed animal emojis. One emoji, for instance, may be connected to a number of heroes, confusing admirers. Ten well-known K-pop bands were looked at (NCT, TXT, EXO, IVE, Seventeen, Treasure, BLACKPINK, ENHYPEN, Twice, and Red Velvet), and their use of animal emojis was divided into the five

most common ones (Rabbit, Bear, Cat, Dog, and Fox). This was done to demonstrate the argument. This study emphasizes the need of explicit communication in order to prevent misunderstandings or confusion.

Table 1 Sample of the most used animal emojis

Kind of Animal Emoji	Number Of Idols
Rabbit	7
Bear	6
Cat	6
Dog	6
Fox	3
Total	27 idols

According to the findings of a recent scientific study conducted on the K-pop industry, a significant proportion of stars frequently use animal emojis while interacting with their followers online. Fans may get misinformed or confused as a result of the various implications attached to these emojis, as a single emoji may be read in a number of different ways. As seen by a number of tweets from fans, this phenomenon has given rise to a number of misconceptions and misinterpretations. The tweets from several fans below show various different types of miscommunications:

Table 2 Sample of the confusion fans had because of the common animal emojis

Tweets	Meaning
[@loey_yeoli: I got this notif and I thought its Jaemin but remembered Doyoung who also use rabbit emoji]	The user thought of another idol instead of the purposed idol then seeing the emoji
[@tyeri0ky: I almost tertukar emoji bbl Jaemin and Suho at first, I thought Jaemin yang send bbl]	The user almost misthought the context of the text because of the emojis
[@haekits: the bear emoji made me panic I thought it was finally a Haechan content]	The user went panicked after seeing the emoji, expecting another idol's content
[@mingyushibe: I saw the puppy emoji and thought it was mingyu who said that at first and I was very confused]	The user confused after seeing a puppy emoji but the context wasn't about the expected idol

[@hunlees: I forgot jongin and haechan share the bear emoji thought this was for holo]	The user forgot about the common emoji two idols share and was thinking about the wrong idol
[@Sangsang4D: we use the fox emoji for Wooyoung as well I thought it was woo at first]	The user explains about the common emoji they use to refer another idol that wasn't in the context

The tweets above demonstrate the necessity for more reference and context to limit the possibility of ambiguities that might confuse the audience, in this instance the fans. fans may use an emoji that they feel depicts their idol, but it may be interpreted differently by the fans for another idol.

The results presented underscore the significant role that animal emojis play in spreading information and communication within the K-pop community on Twitter. It is clear that due to the character limit imposed by Twitter, users are using animal emojis to represent K-pop idols, indicating their presence in the tweets. Although this practice has become an important part of K-pop discourse, there are pros and cons associated with it.

On the one hand, using animal emojis allows fans to convey the presence of a specific idol in a limited space, which is a fast and efficient way of communication. This allows fans to talk about their favorite idols without having to repeat their names over and over again. This short method of communication can promote a sense of community and familiarity among fans as they share a common understanding of what certain animal emoji mean.

On the other hand, using animal emojis can also lead to misunderstanding and confusion. As the study found, different interpretations can be associated with the same animal emoji, which can lead to misunderstandings. Fans may mistakenly associate the emoji with another idol or misinterpret the tweet's intended meaning. This underscores the importance of explicit communication and provides enough context to avoid confusion.

It is very important for the news channel to pay attention to the understanding and background knowledge of its target audience in order to promote effective communication and minimize misunderstandings. In the case of K-pop fandom, it's important for translation accounts or fan communities to provide clear explanations or additional context when animal emojis are used to refer to specific idols. This will help fans unfamiliar with the background or specific meaning of certain emojis to understand the intended message.

In addition, this research also shows differences in the use of animal emojis between different K-pop groups. When multiple idols use the same animal emoji, fans may associate the emoji with a specific idol or group, causing confusion when used in different contexts. This further underscores the need for explicit communication and building consistent associations between specific idols and animal emojis within the fan community.

In summary, while the use of animal emojis as representative K-pop idols on Twitter has become an integral part of communication within the K-pop community, it also presents challenges in terms of potential misunderstanding and confusion brings. Effective communication requires providing clear

context, explaining meaning, and building consistent associations between specific idols and animal emojis. This allows fans to increase their understanding and reduce the possibility of misinterpretation, leading to better communication within the K-pop fan base.

Conclusion

According to the findings, animal emojis play an important part in cyber pragmatics as a representation of idols in the K-pop community. It is an efficient method of mentioning idols while overcoming the constraint of posting on Twitter. However, the usage of animal emojis without extra context might cause confusion and misunderstanding among fans. As a result, it is critical to give further information or explanation to avoid misinterpretation. Overall, the study emphasizes the need of knowing the relevance of emojis in online communication as well as the need for precise communication to avoid misinterpretation.

The findings of this study have implications for the development of communication strategies in online communities, particularly in the K-pop fandom. The use of animal emojis can be an effective way to engage with fans and convey meaning, but it requires careful consideration to ensure clear communication. Future research can explore the use of animal emojis in other online communities and examine their role in cyber pragmatics more broadly.

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