The signifier, signified & stance: happy/sad emoticons as emotionizers

Schamp-Bjerede, Teri; Paradis, Carita; Kucher, Kostiantyn; Kerren, Andreas; Sahlgren, Magnus

2014

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):

Total number of authors: 5

General rights
Unless other specific re-use rights are stated the following general rights apply:
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.
• Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
• You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
• You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Take down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Read more about Creative commons licenses: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/
The signifier, signified & stance: happy/sad emoticons as emotionizers

On-line communication has exploded over the past decade. From bulletin boards, to email to blogs, the advantages are many and using this type of instantaneous communication that is available to everyone and at any time is only limited to what you wish to say. Stance studies in language investigate how interlocutors position themselves with their utterances in a dialogic interaction. This synchronic study employs a construction of stance and stancetaking based on DuBois’s evaluation-position-alignment framework (2007). More specifically this study addresses how the emoticon signifiers, termed emotionizers, :) and :( are used as positive and negative signified emotions in online posts, and how they are employed as emotional intensifiers and/or downtoners, of stance in lieu of words.

Beginning with time criteria and topic, a data-mining, visual analytics tool gathered suitable documents from the internet into a database. After which the search criteria was refined to positive and negative sentiment words that are well-known to be visualized as emotionizers. The tool then created different visual analytical patterns that i) can help in further data refinement and ii) reveal specific data clusters for uncomplicated recognition. After aggregation of the data was completed and ranked as to descending polarization, the documents were loaded for closer analysis and exportation. This further analysis is where complete document contextuality was addressed revealing that these emotionizers help individual users create clarity in posts where ambiguity is possible. It was also found that emotionizers were employed as emotional intensifiers and/or downtoners of stance in lieu of words. The analysis posits that emotionizer use is a universally accepted replacement for allusion to vocal tone, style, and mood in on-line, social media discussions.