

Reflection

In completing this task, I was reminded of Kress' (2005) description of the affordances of words versus images, and wondered what — to use Kress' term — “gains and losses” have come about with the remediation of emojis. Specifically:

- In 2005, Kress noted that “there is a finite stock of words—vague, general, nearly empty of meaning; on the other hand there is an infinitely large potential of depictions—precise, specific, and full of meaning” (p. 15). And now, in 2022, we have emojis, which I might consider a cross between words and image depictions. Interestingly, there is a finite number of emojis, a fact that was particularly clear to me as I was completing the activity above, and they have the potential to convey specific meanings of which the writer may not even be aware.
- Expanding on my last point, Bolter (2010) argued that “speakers of different languages could share the same system of picture writing” (Bolter, 2010, p. 59). However, as McCulloch (2019) warned in regards to emojis, “what [a person] interpret[s] a symbol as depends on [their] cultural context ... [their] linguistic context ... [and] the rest of [their] experience” (Zaltzman & McCulloch, 2019). In other words, the “additional meanings” conveyed by the emojis “can't be universal” (Zaltzman & McCulloch, 2019).
- In addition, as the understanding of the connotations of emojis evolve over generations (Abdullahi, 2021; Sanjay, 2020), I wonder to what extent emojis could be interpreted as the writer intended, especially over time. How would a millennial today interpret my emoji story? How would a Gen Z or Gen X today interpret my emoji story? How would an audience 10 years from now interpret my emoji story?

Did you rely more on syllables, words, ideas, or a combination of all of them?

I relied mostly on ideas. In addition to my thoughts above on the connotations and interpretations of emojis, I also realize now that I conveyed my ideas in consideration of the subject, order, and time:

- **Subject:** I started numerous lines with the emoji of the male character, where, aligning with Kress' (2005) point, “[b]eing first ... mean[s] being first in the speaker's attention (the theme of a sentence) ... or being cause of an action” (Kress, 2005, p. 12).
- **Order:** I used left-to-right sequencing, just like Boroditsky's example of the Nestlé nutritional supplement (SAR School for Advanced Research, 2017). I then followed this with top-to-bottom sequencing. I believe I subconsciously made this decision because my emoji story was created by an English-speaking writer (me) and intended for an English-speaking audience.
- **Time:** The passage of time, while not explicitly stated, was implied through this sequencing.

Did you start with the title? Why? Why not?

I did start with the title, but this was not an intentional decision. I would say I started with the title simply because I'm used to starting written pieces with the title, just like how this blog post starts with “Task 6: An emoji story”. I wonder if there are languages where it is not the norm to start written pieces with the title, and how that might influence their approach if they were asked to complete this task.

Did you choose the work based on how easy it would be to visualize?

Admittedly, I did! I originally wanted to do Stranger Things since I just finished volume 1 of season 4, but I couldn't figure out a clear way to depict “Stranger” or “Things” or most of the plot in the show. This goes back to my earlier point about the finite number of emojis — my ability to tell stories was limited by the emojis currently available. Similarly, I imagine my use of text for this post may be limited by the words available, where these words influence my thinking and in turn limit my thoughts.

I am very curious to know if anyone is able to guess what show I am referring to!

Wow! I thought this was going to be easier to execute than it was, considering my frequent use of emoji's when messaging with friends and colleagues!

Did you rely more on syllables, words, ideas or a combination of all of them?

1 Interestingly, I ended up using emoji's to reflect ideas and themes versus syllables or words. I believe this was because the emoji's I had to choose from didn't quite reflect the message I was hoping to convey. So instead of attempting to squeeze meaning out of a single emoji, I looked to grouping multiple emoji's to convey a theme or idea. I also took this grouping and sequenced it to give more meaning and to provide a storyline. Struggling to make sure the emoji reflected what I was trying to say provided great insights into how these symbols, while carrying so much meaning, could lead to others misinterpreting, or not guessing correctly the story I am attempting to tell (Bolter, 2010). When you see an emoji symbol for a bag of money, this can have endless interpretations, leaving it up to the reader to make their best guess as to what the author is trying to say. Perhaps the saying “a picture is worth a thousand words” is misleading, as we don't know which thousand words that picture could be referring to.

Did you start with the title? Why? Why not?

2 I did in fact start with the title. I think that is the best way to identify a topic and to provide structure around the message being portrayed. However, beginning with the title and structuring the sequence from left to right, top to bottom, reflects how language shapes the way I think. While I share culture and language with many others, this has not afforded me the ease to interpreting my classmates emoji stories. As I read through my peers emoji stories, I struggled to decipher both the title and plot of a show, sometimes I could guess the title while not be able to interpret the plot, and so on. This goes to show that despite being from the same culture, we all have our own unique way of attaching meaning to the images we are seeing. reinforcing the notion that “picture elements extend over a broad range of meanings” (Bolter, 2010, p.59).

Did you choose the work based on how easy it would be to visualize?

3 I would say no, I didn't. I wanted to attempt to depict a show that others might find funny or be as into as I am. I thought I would do better at this since I generally use emoji's to provide an emotional context to my prose/written text. Trying to depict relationships between people alongside big emotions, with only emoji's, was incredibly difficult. That aspect of the activity really drove home the argument Bolter (2010) makes regarding “narrative power” being lost entirely from “picture writing” (p. 59).

Breakout of the Visual

4 As I made my way through the readings this week (especially Bolter's) I couldn't help but wonder how Bolter's perspective of what the breakout of the visual is would change if TikTok was thriving when this book was written. His book was published in 2010 and in 2016 TikTok made its debut. I cannot help but associate his idea of the visual breaking out to TikTok in all of its hypermediated glory. TikTok epitomizes the “hectic photomontage” (p. 51) that Bolter describes in hypermediated styles of prose. It does this by utilizing green screen features, allowing content creators to share multiple different images while speaking to what exists within those images, it also combines verbal and picture reading all the while listening to spoken words (Bolter, 2010). TikTok embodies the joining of “interactivity with the immediacy of a global hypertext” (Bolter, 2010, p. 70). Does TikTok improve the authenticity of content while providing immediacy for consumption of it? Can we determine if TikTok has remediated previous forms of social media and web pages?

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