

**THE DEVIATING MEANING OF EMOJI IN GEN Z'S
TWITTER DISCOURSE: A CASE STUDY OF SOCIAL
SEMIOTICS**

THESIS



**BY:
ENGGAL RIDHO SAPUTRO
REG. NUMBER A93219090**

**ENGLISH LITERATURE DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF ADAB AND HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI SUNAN AMPEL
SURABAYA
2023**

DECLARATION

I am the undersigned below:

Name : Enggal Ridho Saputro
NIM : A93219090
Department : English Literature
Faculty : Adab and Humanities
University : UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya

declare that the thesis entitled:

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Who makes the statement



Enggal Ridho Saputro

Reg. Number. A93219090

APPROVAL SHEET

THE DEVIATING MEANING OF EMOJI IN GEN Z'S TWITTER
DISCOURSE: A CASE STUDY OF SOCIAL SEMIOTICS

by
Enggal Ridho Saputro
Reg. Number A93219090

approved to be examined by the board of examiners of English Literature
Department, Faculty of Adab and Humanities, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya

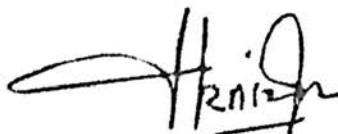
Surabaya, *13 July*..... 2023

Advisor 1



Suhandoko, M.Pd.
NIP. 198905282018011002

Advisor 2



Mumi Fidiyanti, M.A.
NIP. 198305302011012011

Acknowledged by
The Head of the English Literature Department



Eriarotno Pili Swasono, M.Pd.
NIP. 197106072003121001

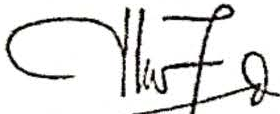
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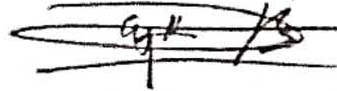
Board of Examiners:

Examiner 1



Suhandokp, M.Pd.
NIP. 198905282018011002

Examiner 2



Endratno Pilih Swasono, M.Pd.
NIP. 197106072003121001

Examiner 3



Prof. Dr. As Dzo'ul Milal, M.Pd.
NIP. 196005152000031002

Examiner 4



Dr. H. Mohammad Kurjum, M.Ag.
NIP. 196909251994031002

Acknowledged by:

The Dean of Faculty of Adab and Humanities
UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya



Dr. H. Mohammad Kurjum, M.Ag.
NIP. 196909251994031002

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KARYA ILMIAH UNTUK KEPENTINGAN AKADEMIS

Sebagai sivitas akademika UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, yang bertanda tangan di bawah ini, saya:

Nama : Enggal Ridho Saputro
NIM : A93219090
Fakultas/Jurusan : Adab dan Humaniora/Sastra Inggris
E-mail address : enggalrsaputro@gmail.com

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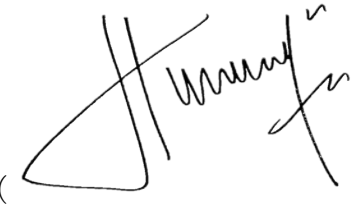
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ABSTRACT

Saputro. E.R. (2023). *The Deviating Meaning of Emoji in Gen Z's Twitter Discourse: A Case Study of Social Semiotics*. English Literature Department, Faculty of Adab and Humanities, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Advisors: (I) Suhandoko, M.Pd., (II) Murni Fidiyanti, M.A.

This study examines the deviating meaning of emoji in Gen Z's *Twitter* discourse, focusing on *NCT Dream Center* and *9GAG memeland* as case studies. The research explores the forms and factors of deviating meaning in emoji, particularly in the context of the launching announcement of *NCT Dream* and *TosTos* snack collaborations in *NCT Dream Center* and a *meme* featuring two dogs with contrasting expressions in *9GAG memeland*. The study adopts a qualitative research approach, utilizing data from these two online platforms. The data analysis involves observation, a close-ended questionnaire, and interviews. The researcher classified the data according to whether the users were Gen Z. The analysis is conducted within the theory of Halliday's (1978) context of situations in social semiotics, including field, tenor, and mode of text. Also, the study draws on Barthes' (1981) concepts of intertextuality, subversive uses, layered meanings, and contextual shifting to identify and analyze the forms of deviate meaning in emoji. The key findings of the research reveal various forms of deviate meaning, such as intertextual references, subversive uses, layered meanings, and contextual shifting, as well as factors influencing these deviations, including substitution, irony or sarcasm, *memes* and references, and current trends. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how Gen Z employs emoji in online discourse. The interpretation of the results underscores the significance of intertextuality, subversive uses, layered meanings, and contextual shifting in comprehending the deviating meaning of emoji. The implications of the study extend to the fields of linguistics, communication studies, and digital culture. Overall, this research explored the dynamic nature of emoji usage among Gen Z on *Twitter* and highlighted the importance of considering cultural and contextual factors when analyzing the meaning behind these symbols.

Keywords: Deviating meaning, emoji, Gen Z, Twitter discourse

ABSTRAK

Saputro. E.R. (2023). *Penyimpangan Makna pada Emoji di Wacana Twitter Gen Z: Sebuah Studi Kasus Sosial Semiotika*. Program Studi Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Pembimbing: (I) Suhandoko, M.Pd., (II) Murni Fidiyanti, M.A.

Studi ini mengkaji penyimpangan makna pada emoji dalam wacana *Twitter* Generasi Z, dengan fokus pada *NCT Dream Center* dan *9GAG memeland* sebagai studi kasus. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bentuk-bentuk dan faktor-faktor dari penyimpangan makna pada emoji, khususnya dalam konteks pengumuman peluncuran kolaborasi antara *NCT Dream* dan *TosTos* snack di *NCT Dream Center*, serta *meme* yang menampilkan dua anjing dengan ekspresi berbeda di *9GAG memeland*. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan penelitian kualitatif dengan memanfaatkan data dari kedua platform online tersebut. Analisis data melibatkan observasi, kuesioner *close-ended*, dan wawancara. Peneliti mengklasifikasikan data berdasarkan apakah pengguna termasuk dalam demografi Generasi Z. Analisis dilakukan dengan menggunakan teori konteks situasi dalam semiotika sosial Halliday (1978), termasuk *field*, *tenor*, dan *mode* teks. Selain itu, penelitian ini menggunakan konsep-konsep *intertextuality*, *subversive potential*, *layered meanings*, dan *contextual dynamics* dari Barthes (1981) untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis bentuk-bentuk penyimpangan makna pada emoji. Temuan utama dari penelitian ini mengungkapkan berbagai bentuk penyimpangan makna, seperti *intertextual references*, *subversive uses*, *layered meanings*, dan *contextual shifting*, serta faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi deviasi tersebut, termasuk *substitutive*, *irony* atau *sarcasm*, *memes* dan *references*, juga *trends*. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman yang lebih dalam tentang bagaimana Generasi Z menggunakan emoji dalam wacana online. Interpretasi hasil penelitian menegaskan pentingnya intertekstualitas, penggunaan subversif, makna bertingkat, dan pergeseran kontekstual dalam memahami penyimpangan makna pada emoji. Implikasi dari penelitian ini berdampak pada bidang linguistik, studi komunikasi, dan budaya digital. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menjelajahi sifat dinamis penggunaan emoji oleh Generasi Z di *Twitter* dan menekankan pentingnya mempertimbangkan faktor budaya dan kontekstual saat menganalisis makna di balik simbol-simbol tersebut.

Kata Kunci: Penyimpangan makna, emoji, Gen Z, wacana Twitter

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, research questions, objectives, significance of the study, scope, limitations, and the definition of key terms on the topic of the deviating meaning of emoji in a social semiotic case study.

1.1 Background of the Study

The growing development of social media has provided *Twitter* users with various ways to express their emotional feelings and desires in discourse through emoji. The use of emoji in a discourse can make a difference in the vocabulary used on social media. Because only with an emoji in social media, users can send their emotions to others without any phrases. However, nowadays, emoji have deviated from their intended meaning and can be analyzed using a semiotic social approach.

M.A.K Halliday's social semiotics theory is an appropriate way to understand the meaning of messages conveyed through emoji, so there are no differences in the meaning produced by one person through discourse and the understanding received by the other person in the discourse. According to Leeuwen (2005, p. 1), social semiotics is not a 'natural' concept or self-contained field. It comes into its while applied to particular instances or problems and is usually united in semiotic concepts or other disciplines. M.A.K Halliday was originally a linguist theorist who used the first term of social semiotics in his book "*Language as Social Semiotics*" in 1978. Social semiotics is a branch of the study of signs that

explicitly examines the sign system produced by human symbols in words and sentences. In line with Leeuwen (2005), Dresner (2010) states that social semiotics is not independent. Social semiotics is open to another discipline of study, even though Halliday was believed to have accelerated the idea of ‘semiology’ of Ferdinand de Saussure, who sees semiotics as ‘the science of knowledge that studies the ways of working of signs in a society.’ Interpreting language in the sociocultural context in which it is interpreted in semiotic terms is an “information system.” On a concrete level, language contains not only sentences but contains “text” or “discourse,” that is, the exchange of meaning in an interpersonal context. Therefore, Hodge and Kress (1988) imply social semiotics as the study of ways human beings design and interpret meanings, the study of texts, and how social pursuits are adapted as society adjusts.

In the 21st century, the social semiotics study focuses not only on text but also on emoji. In line with Alshenqeeti (2016), language has many forms; as in the usage, emoji can also be used as text or discourse. Also, McGrath (2006) states that some people can construct phrases and meanings with emoji. Therefore, studying the emoji through a social semiotic approach is essential. The researcher considers that in forming a discourse, we need a text. However, in its development, emoji can be used as a message without even a phrase. The use of emoji can also change the meaning contained in non-verbal communication.

Halliday (1978) introduces intrinsic elements of social semiotics analysis; *text, situation, register or context of the situation, the code, social structure, semiotic resources, mode, and affordance*. The development of emoji accelerated rapidly, first introduced by Shigetaka Kurita in the 1990s. Emojis were first lined with

keyboard combinations such as “<3” and “:),” which represent a smiling face and the heart (Novak et al., 2015). That evolved into more colorful and diverse symbols, and how different emojis can convey facts without using morphemes and other grammatical structures (Lucas, 2016). Therefore, it is essential to know the importance of exploring the relationship between emoji and language in an interaction, one of which is linguistics.

There have been several studies on the interpretation of emoji usage, given emoji semantics and pragmatics. Several studies about emoji have been done by (Novak et al., 2015) about the massive use of discourse associated with emoji. Next is how readers interpret individual emoji with context (Miller et al., 2016) or without context (Miller et al., 2017), how people use new emoji features such as skin color modifiers (Robertson et al., 2020), how specific emoji influence message interpretation (Tigwell and Flatla, 2016), also comparing the types of emoji constructs like Animoji (Herring et al., 2020). Therefore, studies on emoji’s deviating meaning through social factors are scant. Although there is evidence of an emerging syntax (Herring and Ge, 2020), emoji’s semantic and pragmatic properties are what most suggest emoji are, if not the language, at least linguistically similar.

On the other hand, previous studies on the factors that influence the use of emoji have been conducted recently. Emoji are generally considered time-invariant artifacts, exhibiting variation only between each other or between populations of emoji users, for example, iOS versus Android (Miller Hillberg et al., 2018), young versus old (Herring and Dainas, 2020), male versus female (Chen et al., 2017). However, some work is on how small, close-knit groups apply

their special meaning to specific emoji (Wiseman and Gould, 2018). To the researcher's knowledge, little work has been done to apply social semiotic deviation of meaning research to emojis specifically.

In recent years, semiotic research on emoji has progressed from focusing on the meaning of attitudes to recognizing their phatic, semantic, and pragmatic functions in a text (Gibson et al., 2018; Hutabarat, 2019; Kelly, 2015; Kerslake and Wegerif, 2017; Marino, 2022; Muzakky et al., 2021; Syahfitri et al., 2021; Talukdar, 2021). These studies focused on signs, and the signification of emoji used by the sender does not match the original context to describe and interpret the symbol. The researcher considers that the scope of emoji in linguistic studies is much broader than just analyzing the symbols' meaning as Mazor (2018) argues that within the era, emoji can fill a gap in nonverbal exchange that was not previously possible. Emojis produce a shape of pragmatic language that extends to "euphemisms, sarcasm, tips, and affection" Basic research on emoji is closely related to social phenomena. Therefore, the social semiotics approach is essential to study how people use signs or symbols to construct life.

Several studies on social semiotics have been done by (Huffaker and Calvert, 2005; Kelly and Watts, 2015; Sugiyama, 2015; Wolf, 2000) on how emoji affect people's relationships and the cultural context. Next is to deconstruct discourse rights on emoji (Xie, 2019), emoji and language by the theoretical framework of Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Logi and Zappavigna, 2021), also emoji as cross-cultural communication clarity (Alshenqeeti, 2016). Furthermore, there has not been a significant amount of research on the deviating meaning of emoji

in discourse, especially on *Twitter*. Therefore, the researcher considers the importance of the deviation of emoji meaning as a case study of social semiotics.

Social-cultural factors can cause more massive deviations in the meaning of emoji by Gen Z, which can be analyzed using a social semiotic approach. Recently, emoji features have been widely available on social media such as *Twitter* and Facebook. Social media give Gen Z a unique space to express their feelings and a sense of solidarity (Pankova and Kugele, 2013; Dunlap et al., 2015). That allows affordability during an online interactive engagement, which is not always possible or acceptable in face-to-face interactions. Among this affordability is utilizing emoji to express the user's feelings.

Several studies on emoji in a social approach have been done by Rahmawati (2019) on emoticons as linguistic features on *Twitter*, Dunlap et al. (2015) on emoji as an educational tool in the classroom, the use of emoji by gender differences (Brunet and Schmidt, 2010; Dresner and Herring, 2010), the role of emoji in people's lives (Donovan, 2016), and emoji in casual interaction in Omani culture (Rashdi, 2015).

In terms of the researcher's evaluation, the study of emoji meaning deviation factors in discourse using the methods of social semiotics has not been conducted significantly. Therefore, the researcher has analyzed the deviant use of emoji meaning in the discourse on *Twitter* by Gen Z using social semiotics theory. At the same time, social semiotics is a branch of knowledge appropriate for analyzing society's emoji. These approaches can identify the significance of emoji in non-verbal communication and the impact that can be caused if the meaning of an emoji deviates or is not following the context of the discourse. That could lead

to a misalignment between the message being delivered and the understanding of the message being received.

The deviating meaning in emoji is an appropriate topic for analysis in non-verbal communication. Several studies about the deviating meaning of emoji understanding the meaning of the use of emoji on social media that has been changed has been done (Berengueres and Castro, 2017; Parkwell, 2019; Robertson et al., 2021; Saeed and Arfan Lodhi, 2020). These studies have established changes in the meaning of emoji that are widely used by social media users based on gender. However, studies on social factors in emoji meaning deviation are rarely conducted. An example of a language shift is apparent in the emergence of emoji features. The characteristics of emoji and slang are used to communicate because those who understand the meaning of emoji and the context are teenagers. Therefore, the emoji in a conversational text is often misinterpreted and instead deviates from the actual meaning of the first created emoji.

Using emoji in discourse text on *Twitter* often causes misinterpretation, resulting in a deviation from the meaning of the initially intended emoji. In order to comprehensively understand the forms of meaning deviation in emojis, it is essential to use Barthes' (1981) concept of intertextuality, subversive use, layered meanings, and contextual shifts offers a concept to analyze and reveal the forms of emoji meaning. By integrating these concepts' underpinnings into the investigation of emoji deviance, the researcher has uncovered the complex interplay of social, linguistic, and contextual factors that shape the deviant meanings of emoji in Gen Z's *Twitter* discourse.

Several previous studies discuss emoji using intertextual references, subversive uses, layered meanings, and contextual shifting. In some of these studies, Moschini (2016) focuses on the "tears of joy" emoji; the author uses the concept of intertextuality to argue that this emoji should be analyzed as a marker of the merging of Japanese and American cultures. Next is (Pettis, 2018; Zhou et al., 2017; Highfield, 2018) analyzed that the subversive use of emoji significantly affects culture or how people communicate non-verbally. Furthermore, Parkwell (2019) has observed that one emoji can bring up multiple meanings. As well as studies from Islam (2018) and Gregory et al. (2020) contextualized emoji in the Millennial era can lead to different representations in each communication on *Twitter*. Therefore, the urgency of studying the deviations in the meaning of emoji on *Twitter* using Halliday's social semiotic theory (1978) and analyzing the forms of emoji deviation through Barthes's (1981) concept is essential to conduct.

The present study analyses how emoji are used in comments on the *NCT Dream Center* and *9GAG memeland* on *Twitter*. *NCT Dream Center* fanbase is an international platform on *Twitter*; the community consists of fans or a group that idolizes an idol boyband from South Korea called *NCT Dream*. The community contains the latest information about *NCT Dream* in its activities, for example, launching new songs, daily life, and even buying and selling *NCT Dream* merchandise. In the form of communication itself, the admin of the community posts news related to *NCT Dream*, then other members can react freely in the comment column. Uniquely, the fans' reactions sometimes overreact so often that they use emoji that do not fit the context of their conversation.

Furthermore, *9GAG memes* is an international community on *Twitter* consisting of *Twitter* users in general (not limited by the background of its members) because *9GAG* is a place where *memes* or users imitate other funny posts and share them with other members. Unlike the fanbase community, *meme* members often use emojis that are not common or use an arrangement of several emoji with their meaning. *Twitter* users use emoji more when responding to a bar, but likely, emojis are also often used in a user's status post as a form of expression from the sender of the command. Therefore, the researcher applies Halliday's social semiotics regarding changes in linguistic meaning in society. Social semiotics explain the signs of emoji in the form of substance. In other words, each emoji has a different meaning depending on the character. Then, the researcher could explore the deviation of an emoji's definition, which should not have the true meaning even though there are only emoji or supporting text.

Based on the previous explanation, the researcher intends to study the social interpretation of an emoji sign through Halliday's social semiotics and analyze the deviations in the true meaning of an emoji that occur in Gen Z's *Twitter* discourse using the context of a situation in social semiotics.

1.2 Problems of the Study

In line with the background above, the problems of the study are formulated as follows:

1. What are the forms of deviate meaning in emojis used on *Twitter* in terms of social semiotics?
2. What factors do *Twitter* users often use emoji that do not fit the original meaning?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

In line with the problems of the study above, this study aims to

1. To identify and analyze the various forms of deviate meaning in emojis used on *Twitter* within the framework of social semiotics.
2. To examine the factors that lead *Twitter* users, particularly from the Gen Z demographic, to employ emojis in ways that deviate from their original intended meanings.

1.4 Significances of the Study

The present study is expected to convey and explain the meaning and deviation of emoji used among Gen Z in the 21st century. From the results of this study, the researcher also hopes that current research can fill the gaps of previous studies that focus on social semiotics on emoji. The results of this study could also help readers find out that the language we use daily, even non-verbal languages such as emoji, is dynamic and can change according to social circumstances. Emojis can affect the content of a conversation in short messages or on social media because we cannot know the real feelings and cannot imagine the tone of voice or gestures made by an emoji user. Then, this can lead to misunderstandings considering that each user's age can properly understand not all emojis. Finally, this study can help interpret an emoji symbol and its interpretation and the factors that influence the deviation of the meaning of an emoji.

1.5 Scope and limitations

This study only focuses on emoji and text used by users on *Twitter*. The limitation is intended to make the researcher focus on linguistic units regarding

the meaning, social interpretation of emoji, and the deviation of its significance among the public. The researcher limits the research subject to the context of emoji and text in chosen groups. If there is a post on *Twitter*, the researcher takes data from users' status posts or replies by netizens containing emojis with/without discourse text. In determining the meaning of symbol interpretation and deviations from the definition of an emoji, the researcher only applied all the elements of deviations in meaning contained in Halliday's social semiotics theory. Hence, the researcher studied the deviating meaning of an emoji and the reasons or factors that make users deviate from the purpose of the emoji they use.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

In order to clarify the key terms used in this study, some definitions are put forward:

Deviating meaning is the act of using emojis in ways that deviate from their standard or conventional interpretations, leading to the creation of new or alternative meanings in digital communication.

Emoji is a modern form of emoticon with colorful graphics. It usually appears together with the text and expresses the sender's feelings.

Twitter is a social networking service or online microblog that allows users to send, read, and reply to text messages by entering various emoji that *Twitter* has prepared.

Generation Z was born between 1995 and 2010, before the millennial generation, and after Generation Y. Generation Z was born and grew up with technological advances. They are accustomed to using various technologies to fulfill and make their lives easier.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter presents an overview explanation of the theory used in the present study or the definition of each topic, such as the concept of social semiotics, register, emoji, the form and factors of deviating meaning, *Twitter*, and the definition of Generation Z.

2.1 Social Semiotics

Etymologically, semiotics comes from the Greek word *semeion*, which means “*sign*.” A sign is defined as something that can be considered to represent something else based on pre-established social conventions. Semiotics can be defined as studying a broad range of objects, events, and all cultures assigned. Van Zoest defines semiotics as the science of signs and everything related to them, such as how they function, their relationship to other words, their transmission, and their acceptance by those who use them (Sobur, 2006, p. 95-96). The study of semiotics assumes that social phenomena or society and culture are signs—semiotics studies the systems, rules, and conventions that allow these signs to have meaning.

There are nine branches of semiotics; *Analytical, descriptive, faunal* (zoo-semiotic), *cultural, narrative, natural normative, social, and structural semiotics*. M.A.K Halliday describes social semiotics in his book “*Language Social Semiotics*.” Social semiotics is a branch of the study of signs that explicitly examines the sign system human produce in symbols, both in the cast of words and characters in the form of words in units called sentences. In other words,

social semiotics examines the sign system contained in language. The term 'social semiotics' can clarify a general ideology, a conceptual point of view on the subject matter. Halliday (1978) defines that social semiotics consists of two concepts: 'semiotic' derived initially from the sign. That modern word has to do with the terms *semainon* (signifier) and *semainomenon* (signified) used in ancient Greek linguistics by Stoic philosophers. Semiotics can be said to be a general study of signs. Before connecting with other characters, symptoms tend to be separate, independent, and utterly independent.

The fundamental of Halliday's concept of language as social semiotics, this formulation interprets language in the sociocultural context in which culture is interpreted in semiotic terms as an "information system." At a concrete level, language does not contain sentences, but language contains 'text' or 'discourse,' which is the exchange of meaning in an interpersonal context. The study of language essentially analyzes text or discourse, meaning that language forms encode socially constructed representations of the world. Thus, language is one of several meaning systems that unite human culture.

Next is the term 'social,' which conveys two things simultaneously. First, 'social' is used in the sense of a social system which means culture. In this sense, social semiotics limits social or culture as a system of meaning. However, in this case, Halliday also wants a more specific interpretation of the word 'social' to show attention, especially to the relationship between language and social structure, considering the structure as one side of the social system. Meanwhile, social structure can be seen through human social relations in everyday life when communicating and exchanging meaning. Hence, the word used in the context

gains its meaning from activities that contain the meaning of social activities with social media and purpose. Social semiotics perceives language as a system of signs or symbols that expresses a particular society's cultural values and norms in a social, linguistic process. Thus, social semiotics is the relationship between every human being and the human environment that has meaning and is interpreted by people who interact with each other by involving the environment.

Social semiotics by Halliday (1978) views that reality can be poured into a language which is then run into text and speech. It has three approaches to describing symbolic violence in forming reality. Language is a social phenomenon that the community uses to interact and communicate in certain situations and cultural contexts. In contrast, the third language as a semiotic reality means that language is a symbol that realizes the above social truth and reality in certain cultural situations and contexts. Language, sign, or symbol becomes a means of communication that does not stand alone and is neutral. That means language or diction is strongly influenced by life experience, geographical factors, education level, economic level, religion, political system, prevailing customs, and culture. However, it indicates the existence of a unified language used by individuals or communities living in an area with a prevailing social structure.

The context of speech is a semiotical construct that has a form that allows participants to predict register features that apply to understanding others. Through daily acts of meaning, society acts out social structures, asserts its status and roles, and establishes and transmits shared value systems and knowledge. The study of language as social semiotics in Halliday's view (1977, p. 13-41; 1978, p.

108-126) includes sub-studies: (1) text, (2) register, (3) code, (4) lingual systems; which include ideational, interpersonal, and textual components, (5) social structure.

2.1.1 Text

Halliday and Hasan (1992, p. 13) state that the text is a language that performs some specific role in the context of a situation. The important thing about the characteristics of text is that although the written text appears to be composed of words or sentences, it is constructed of meaning. As an independent thing, the text is essentially a unit of meaning. Because character is a unit of meaning, the text must be considered simultaneously as a result and a process.

Text is a product in the sense of output or something that can be recorded and studied because it has a particular structure expressed with systematic terminology. Furthermore, the text is a process as a reciprocal event, a social exchange of meaning. Thus, the text is an object and an example of social meaning in a particular situation.

The text is an object and an example of the process of making social meaning in the context of a particular situation. Meaning is created by the social system and exchanged by members of society in the form of texts. Meaning cannot be created in isolation from its environment. Halliday asserts that meaning is a social system. Social system". Changes that occur in the social system are reflected in the text. The situation determines the form and meaning of the text.

2.1.2 Context

The word context originally meant woven together, with the prefix con indicating the meaning of “being together.” Over the centuries, the word context referred to the elements that accompanied the text (Christie and Misson, 1998, p. 8). According to Halliday (1978), two contexts impact language use of language; the context of the situation and culture. The combination of these two contexts, namely the context of the situation and the context of culture, gives birth to similarities and differences between texts.

Social semiotics is also concerned with context because language understanding is based on text analysis. In social semiotic studies, text and context cannot be separated. The terms context and text refer to the fact that they are aspects of the same process. There is a text and another text that is attached to it. That attached text is called the context.

The situation is the environment in which the text occurs. The context of the situation is the whole environment, both the spoken (verbal) environment and the environment in which the text is produced (spoken or written). In M.A.K Halliday’s social semiotics model, three elements become the center of attention of textual interpretation: the ‘field,’ ‘tenor,’ and ‘mode.’ These concepts are used to interpret the text’s social context, the environment in which meaning is exchanged.

2.2 Register

The term register was first used in the sense of textual variability. The register is a semantic concept defined as an arrangement of meanings associated with a

particular situational arrangement of field, tenor, and mode (Halliday and Hasan, 1992, p. 53).

There are two main points in the notion of register. First, the register is equated with style, a variation in a person's speech or writing. Style generally varies from very intimate to very formal according to the type of situation, the person or persons addressed, the location, and the topic discussed. Secondly, the register is the variety of speech used by certain groups who usually have the same job or the same interests.

The register can be identified by lexico-grammatical and phonological characteristics accompanying or expressing specific meanings. The characteristics of a particular lexicon and grammatical and phonological forms are clues to a particular register. The political register, for example, has characteristics that distinguish it from the academic register. The medical register has characteristics that distinguish it from the legal register. A particular register has characteristics that distinguish it from other registers.

In addition, the register or context of the situation is the environment in which the text operates. The term concept is derived from the Latin "*conceptum*," which means something comprehensible. Concepts are the main constituent in establishing scientific knowledge and the philosophy of the human mind. The concept is a broad generalization of several groups that share specific characteristics so that it can be used to describe other characteristics in the same case. The concept is an abstraction of an idea or mental representation expressed in a word or symbol. The concept is also defined as a part of knowledge that is built from a variety of characteristics.

According to M.A.K Halliday's concept of social semiotics, language is social semiotic, which refers to interpreting language in a sociocultural context where culture is interpreted in semiotic terminology as an "information system." Language is the study of 'meaning' in a text or discourse, an exchange of meaning in an interpersonal context. Therefore, language is a component of meaning systems forming human culture together. Social semiotics is more likely to see language as a sign or symbol system that conveys a particular society's cultural and social values in a social, linguistic process.

According to Halliday (1978, p. 110), in certain situations, three critical factors in context influence the choices we make from language systems: Field, tenor, and mode of discourse.

2.2.1 Field of Discourse

The field of discourse refers to the social activity and the institutional setting in which the language units appear (Halliday, 1978, p. 131). To analyze the field, we can ask, "*What is going on*" including experience, short-term and long-term goals. The domain of experience refers to the transitive questioning of "*what is going on*" with processes, participants, also circumstances. Short-term goals refer to goals that must be achieved immediately. They are very concrete. Long-term goals refer to the place of the text in the larger scheme of things. They are more abstract, pointing to what is happening, to the nature of the social action that is taking place: what is being discussed by the participants, in which language participates as a particular central element. In analyzing the field, we can use the question of "*what is going on,*" which includes three things, there are; The realm of experience refers to the transitive that questions what is happening with the

whole “process,” “participants,” and “situation.” Next is short-term goals refer to goals that must be achieved immediately. The last is long-term goals refer to the place of the text in the larger scheme of things.

2.2.2 Tenor of Discourse

The tenor of discourse refers to the relationship between participants, including understanding their role and status in the social and lingual context. These permanent and temporary relationships, both the kinds of speech roles they perform in the conversation and the overall set of group-significant relationships in which they are involved. To analyze complicity, we can ask, “Who is taking part” which includes the role of the society, social status, and social distance. The role is related to the function that an individual or society performs. Status relates to the individual’s place in society concerning other people, whether they are equal or not. Social distance relates to the level of familiarity a participant has with another participant, familiar or distant. The role, status, and social distance can be temporary and permanent (Eggins, 1994, p. 63)—for example, roles between students and teachers, customers and sellers, between friends. In the campus context, we can identify some patterns of tenor relationships between language users. For example, the spoken language between lecturers and students often has the following characteristics.

- a. Unequal status: lecturers are usually in a stronger institutional position, both as experts in the subjects taught and as supervisors of the actions performed in class.
- b. Regular contact: lecturers and students meet regularly (Disadvantaged Schools Program, 1996, p. 17) on tenor in schools.

Tenor in written language is more challenging to identify and describe (Disadvantaged Schools Program, 1996) but is just as crucial as a tenor in oral language. For example, textbooks further argue that in DSP, authors write with an “authoritative” role. That status is given to them through their published work. That does not mean that their writing is free from challenge, but that publication gives writers an “authoritative” status as writers. In the campus context, this means that the status relationship between the author and the student reader is a relationship of different statuses (Disadvantaged Schools Program, 1996, p. 17).

2.2.3 Mode of Discourse

Mode of discourse refers to the part of language being played in the situation, including the chosen channel, whether oral or written (Martin, 1992). It refers to the part played by language: how the communicator (mass media) uses language style to describe the field (situation) and the participants (people quoted), whether to use softened or hyperbolic language, euphemistic or vulgar. Furthermore, Martin and Rose (2003, p. 243) state that to analyze the means, the question that can be asked is, “What is the role assigned to language.” That includes five things, and there are (1) The role of language is related to the position of language in the activity: language can be mandatory (constitutive) or only as an addition. An auxiliary role occurs when language assists other activities. (2) Interaction Type refers to the number of actors: monologic or dialogic. (3) Medium relates to the means used: oral, written, or sign. (4) Channel relates to how the text can be received: phonically, graphically, or visually. (5) Rhetorical mode refers to the overall “feeling” of the text: persuasive, literary, and academic.

2.3 Emoji

Emoji comes from a Japanese word meaning “characterized image” and was created to facilitate digital communication (Novak et al., 2015, p. 2). Emoji are symbols widely used on the internet, electronic media, and communication via text, such as instant messaging applications and social media (Aluja et al., 2018). Emojis are character images popular on *Twitter*, and their function is to express a graphic meaning of the emotional expression relevant to the original physiological expression (Annamalai and Salam, 2017). Emojis were initially invented and developed in 1999 by an NTT Docomo company. In electronic communication, small digital images or icons express ideas, emotions, and feelings (Andral and Laroque, 2016, p. 6). Thus, it can be concluded that emoji are icons, ideograms, or graphic symbols that represent a character and function to express emotions and ideas in digital communication.



Figure 1 Emoji on Twitter

(Source: <https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2015/11/19/twitter-emoji>)

The factors that cause someone to use emoji are that users do not need to know the actual function of an emoji. The “Unicode Consortium” has described each emoji’s meaning, but users do not read the description when using the emoji.

Users prefer to give their character to an emoji; users prefer emoji characters that are more similar to the word with the most similar meaning. The similarity between emoji and meaning is measured semantically. In addition, using emoji as a complement to words can avoid misperceptions. When a word is inserted with an emoji, the message's recipients more readily perceive and interpret the content of the message. Each emoji have a different meaning depending on the recipient's perception. It is the same as facial expressions that can be interpreted differently by people with different perspectives.

For instance: Emoji users more often use “💧” as an expression with a negative connotation or sexual context. That does not follow the real meaning, just a sweat droplet.

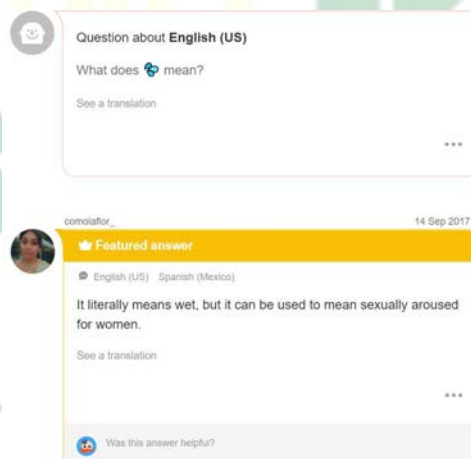


Figure 2 One of the user's responses regarding the orientation of the emoji's meaning

(Source: <https://hinative.com/questions/4801729>)

2.4 The Deviating Meaning of Emoji

Emojis, small digital images or icons used to express emotions, ideas, or concepts, have become integral to online communication. While they are intended

to convey specific meanings, interpretations of emojis can differ among individuals and cultures, leading to potential miscommunications or deviations in meaning. Research on emojis often explores their usage patterns, cultural implications, and potential for misinterpretation. Some studies focus on the cross-cultural understanding of emojis and how cultures perceive and use them differently. For example, a particular emoji might carry a positive connotation in one culture but be interpreted negatively in another.

Moreover, research has also been conducted to investigate the potential for ambiguity or multiple interpretations of emojis. Certain emojis could have nuanced meanings or be used sarcastically, leading to different interpretations depending on the context or the individuals involved in the conversation. The meaning of an emoji can sometimes deviate from its original or intended interpretation due to various factors, including cultural differences, context, and individual interpretation. Here are a few examples of how emojis can have deviating meanings:

1. Cultural Differences: Emojis can carry different connotations across cultures. For instance, the "thumbs up" emoji (👍) is generally seen as a positive gesture in many cultures, indicating approval or agreement. However, it could be perceived as offensive or vulgar in some cultures.
2. Contextual Interpretation: The meaning of an emoji can change depending on the context in which it is used. For example, the "smiling face with tears of joy" emoji (😂) is commonly used to convey laughter or humor. However, it can also be used sarcastically or ironically, where the intention might be to express sadness or disappointment.

3. Individual Interpretation: Emojis can be subject to individual interpretation, leading to deviations in meaning. People could have personal associations or experiences that influence how they perceive and use certain emojis. As a result, different individuals could interpret the same emoji differently.
4. Emoji Combinations: Combining multiple emojis can create new meanings or convey complex messages. Emojis can complement or modify each other's meanings, adding layers of interpretation. However, the interpretation of these combinations cannot always be universally understood, and their meanings can deviate based on personal understanding or cultural contexts.

It is important to note that emojis are a form of visual communication that relies heavily on context and shared understanding. While there are some general trends and conventions in emoji usage, the interpretation of emojis is ultimately subjective and can differ from person to person. Understanding the potential for deviating meanings in emojis is crucial for effective communication, especially in cross-cultural or diverse contexts.

2.4.1 The Forms of Deviating Meaning in Emoji

According to Barthes (1981), concepts of intertextuality, subversive potential, layered meanings, and contextual shifting play crucial roles in understanding and analyzing various cultural and textual communication forms. Barthes (1981), a prominent French literary theorist and philosopher, introduced these concepts in his seminal works, which continue to influence critical discourse and cultural analysis. Roland Barthes contributed significantly to cultural analysis by

exploring intertextuality, subversive potential, layered meanings, and contextual dynamics. That study examines these theoretical concepts and their applications in understanding the complexities of cultural communication, especially concerning the deviating meaning of emojis. Emojis have become integral to digital communication, transcending their conventional interpretations and acquiring alternative meanings. By delving into Barthes's works, including "*S/Z*," "*Mythologies*," and "*The Pleasure of the Text*," this study seeks to highlight the historical context, scholarly discussions, and practical examples that illustrate the significance and impact of these concepts.

2.4.1.1 Intertextuality

Intertextuality is a concept first introduced by Julia Kristeva in the late 1960s and serves as a foundation for understanding the deviating meaning of emojis. The interconnectedness of texts and the influence of primary texts on the interpretation and creation of new ones play a significant role in emoji usage. For instance, using the 🦴 skull emoji to represent humor or excitement within online gaming communities is intertextually linked to the gaming culture's shared knowledge and references.

In Barthes's book "*S/Z*" published in 1981, Barthes discusses intertextuality as the interconnectedness of texts and the influence of primary texts on the interpretation and creation of new ones. For instance, the film "*Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid*" (1982), directed by Carl Reiner, skilfully incorporates scenes and characters from classic film noir to create a playful intertextual dialogue with the genre—intertextuality suggests that no text exists in isolation but is shaped by and references other texts. Intertextuality recognizes the presence of prior texts,

literary traditions, cultural references, and shared knowledge that contributes to the meanings and interpretations of a text. It highlights the importance of recognizing and analyzing the dialogue between texts, allowing for a deeper understanding of their cultural, historical, and ideological implications.

2.4.1.2 Subversive Potential

The subversive potential concept provides a lens to explore how emojis can challenge established norms, ideologies, and power structures. Emojis, often dismissed as careless or cheerful, can subvert expectations and convey more profound meanings. A notable example is the use of the 🍆 eggplant emoji, which has acquired a subversive connotation associated with sexual innuendos and provocative messaging, challenging conventional modes of expression. Emojis on *Twitter* frequently make intertextual references to *memes*, viral trends, or specific cultural phenomena. Users associate emojis with specific contexts, jokes, or cultural references, expanding their meanings beyond their literal interpretations. That intertextuality allows emojis to convey shared meanings understood within specific online communities or subcultures. The subversive potential of language and text in Barthes' "Mythologies" was published in 1957. He argued that language and signs could be tools for challenging and deconstructing dominant ideologies and power structures. By revealing and subverting the hidden meanings and assumptions embedded within cultural phenomena, Barthes emphasized the potential for resistance and alternative interpretations. Subversive potential recognizes the ability of language and texts to disrupt and question established norms, inviting critical engagement and promoting social change.

2.4.1.3 Layered Meanings

Layered meanings, another concept associated with Barthes, emphasize texts' complexity and multiple interpretations. In his book "The Pleasure of the Text," published in 1973, Barthes explores the notion of texts containing multiple layers of meaning that can be uncovered and appreciated through close reading and analysis. Layered meanings recognize that texts often operate on different levels, incorporating symbolism, metaphors, cultural references, and allusions. That concept invites readers to engage with texts beyond their surface-level interpretations and encourages a more profound exploration of their rich and intricate tapestry of meanings. These layers invite readers to interpret and uncover the richness embedded within texts actively. For instance, a poem could have symbolic imagery representing broader themes or personal experiences, inviting readers to navigate its multi-dimensional nature and explore its diverse meanings. Emojis on *Twitter* often acquire layered meanings by combining them with other textual or visual elements. Emojis interact with hashtags, captions, or accompanying text to create complex semiotic messages. Combining emojis with linguistic and visual cues enhances their meanings and allows creative interpretation and deviation.

Furthermore, layered meanings illuminate the complexity and depth of interpretations that emojis can possess. Emojis are not merely visual symbols but also carry metaphorical, symbolic, and cultural connotations. The 😂 face with tears of joy emoji, intended initially to represent laughter, has acquired layered meanings over time. It is now used to express sarcasm, irony, or even discomfort, showcasing its interpretation's nuanced and context-dependent nature.

2.4.1.4 Contextual Dynamics

Contextual dynamics is the significance of the social, cultural, and historical context in shaping the production and reception of texts. Barthes emphasized that meanings are not fixed but are influenced by the context in which texts are created and encountered. Its intrinsic properties do not solely determine a text's interpretation but are also shaped by the social and cultural forces at play. Contextual dynamics highlight the fluidity and malleability of meanings, urging readers and analysts to consider the broader cultural and historical framework within which texts operate.

Understanding the deviating meaning of emojis necessitates an exploration of contextual dynamics. Emojis are influenced by social, cultural, and historical contexts, shaping their interpretation and usage. For example, emojis can take on new contextual meanings during significant global events or movements. The 🌈 rainbow flag emoji, traditionally associated with LGBTQ+ pride, has evolved to represent solidarity with various marginalized communities, reflecting the dynamic and evolving nature of emojis' contextual dynamics.

Therefore, Roland Barthes's concepts of intertextuality, subversive potential, layered meanings, and contextual dynamics provide valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of cultural and textual communication. These concepts, first introduced in Barthes's works such as "S/Z," "Mythologies," and "The Pleasure of the Text," continue to serve as powerful frameworks for critical analysis and interpretation. They enhance our understanding of the interplay between texts, challenge dominant ideologies, recognize the richness of layered meanings, and emphasize the contextual nature of interpretation. By considering these concepts,

scholars, and researchers can delve deeper into the complexities of cultural production and consumption, fostering a more nuanced understanding of texts and their societal implications.

2.4.2 The Factors of Deviating Meaning in Emoji

The meaning and usage of emojis in Gen Z's *Twitter* discourse can deviate from their traditional or intended interpretations. Like any other generation, Gen Z has developed its unique communication style and language on social media platforms, including *Twitter*. Here are a few ways emojis can have deviating meanings within Gen Z's *Twitter* discourse.

2.4.2.1 Substitutes Factor

Substitute factors indicate that Gen Z often uses emojis as substitutes for words or phrases. For example, they could use a single emoji to represent an entire concept or emotion, condensing their message into a single visual symbol. In this way, the intended meaning of the emoji could extend beyond its traditional representation.

2.4.2.2 Irony or Sarcasm Factor

Emoji as irony or sarcasm refers to Gen Z frequently employing emojis in ironic or sarcastic ways, deviating from their original meanings. For instance, they could use a positive or happy emoji in a negative or mocking context, creating a dissonance between the intended and literal meanings of the emoji.

2.4.2.3 Memes and References Factor

Emojis for *memes* and reference factors refer to the fact that Gen Z heavily uses *memes* and pop culture references on *Twitter*, often incorporating emojis to enhance or add meaning to these references. Emojis can become part of the *meme* or reference itself, taking on a context-specific meaning that could deviate from their conventional interpretations.

2.4.2.4 Trends Factor

Emojis, as trends refer to the meaning of emojis, are not fixed but evolve. New interpretations and associations emerge as language and cultural trends evolve on *Twitter*. Users adapt to these changing trends and incorporate new meanings or connotations into their use of emojis, contributing to the deviation from the original meanings.

Understanding the deviating meanings of emojis within Gen Z's *Twitter* discourse requires active engagement and familiarity with the specific communities and conversations on the platform. Keeping up with the latest trends, *memes*, and widespread usage patterns among Gen Z on *Twitter* can provide insights into emojis' evolving meanings and interpretations in this context.

2.5 Twitter

Twitter is a social media service that allows users to write a maximum of 140 characters, known as a Tweet, founded by Jack Dorsey in 2006. That social media has about 332 million monthly users, with 500 million tweets sent daily and 200 billion tweets yearly. *Twitter* is a website owned and operated by *Twitter* Inc., which offers a microblogging social network that allows its users to send and read

Tweets. A microblog is an online communication tool where users can update their status about those thinking and doing something and what they think about a particular object. One of the advantages of *Twitter* is its high-speed access to information. Users often use *Twitter* to find the latest information, such as natural disasters and current events. In addition, Davidov et al. (2010) concluded that a tweet usually contains a URL address, a *Twitter* user address called a username (@+username), or tagged content called a hashtag (#) and emoji. Users usually use hashtags (#) to mark or define a particular topic, and emojis are facial expressions represented by certain characters to describe the user's mood or emotions. Using hashtags and emoji is also considered non-representative of the sentiment in a tweet.

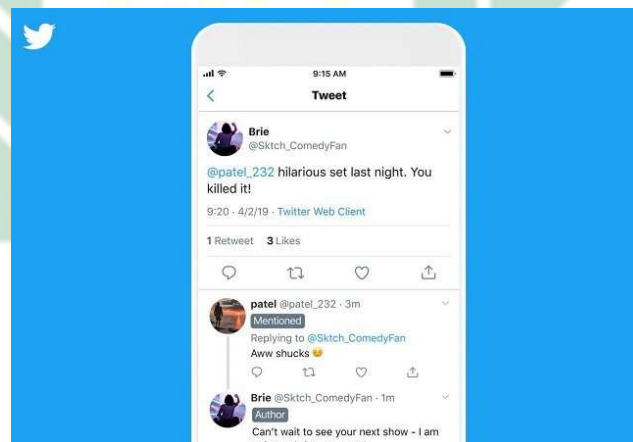


Figure 3 Example of Twitter features

2.5.1 NCT Dream Center

The *NCT Dream Center* is a global fanbase on *Twitter* that represents a dedicated community of fans who passionately support and engage with the South Korean boy group *NCT Dream*. With a solid online presence, this fanbase serves as a virtual gathering place where fans can connect, share their love for the group, and participate in various fan-related activities. The *NCT Dream Center* fanbase is

characterized by its diverse and global nature, comprising fans from different countries, cultures, and backgrounds, all united by their shared admiration for *NCT Dream*.

At its core, the *NCT Dream Center* fanbase on *Twitter* functions as a hub of information and updates about *NCT Dream's* activities, including music releases, performances, and appearances. Fans actively contribute to disseminating news, videos, photos, and other multimedia content related to the group, fostering a sense of camaraderie and collective fandom.

Furthermore, the *NCT Dream Center* fanbase extends beyond being a mere information-sharing platform. It is a supportive community where fans can express enthusiasm, discuss *NCT Dream's* music and performances, and engage in fan-driven projects and initiatives. Through hashtags, fan accounts, and group interactions, fans establish meaningful connections with each other, forming friendships and even organizing offline events such as fan meetings and birthday celebrations. Moreover, the *NCT Dream Center* fanbase on *Twitter* is known for its creativity and dedication to showcasing their love for the group. Fans often create fan art, fan fiction, and fan edits, showcasing their artistic talents and deep connection to *NCT Dream*. These creative endeavors highlight individual fan contributions and contributions to the overall fan culture surrounding *NCT Dream*.

2.5.2 9GAG Memeland

The *9GAG* Memeland on *Twitter* is a distinct online community that revolves around sharing, creating, and appreciating humorous and entertaining content in *memes*. As one of the most popular *meme*-centric platforms, *9GAG* has amassed a

large and diverse user base that actively participates in creating and consuming *memes*. That online community serves as a space for users to connect, engage, and contribute to the ever-evolving world of internet humor.

At its core, the *9GAG memeland* on *Twitter* is characterized by its vast collection of *memes*, often shared and reshared among users. Memes, defined as humorous or satirical content that spreads rapidly through online platforms, are a vital component of online culture and play a significant role in shaping conversations and interactions within the community. Users leverage *memes* as a means of self-expression, social commentary, and cultural critique, with each *meme* conveying a specific message or evoking a particular emotion.

The *9GAG memeland* on *Twitter* is known for its distinctive sense of humor, which often incorporates sarcasm, irony, and clever wordplay. Users engage in witty banter, share relatable experiences, and find common ground through humorous content. Meme is a form of shared language allowing users to communicate complex ideas concisely and easily digestibly. They catalyze engagement, sparking conversations and debates, and even foster community and belonging among users.

Thus, the *9GAG memeland* on *Twitter* represents a vibrant and engaging online community centered around creating, sharing, and enjoying *memes*. It is a space where users can connect, express themselves, and find entertainment through humorous and relatable content. The *9GAG memeland* serves as a cultural hub that reflects the evolving landscape of popular culture and societal trends.

2.6 Generation Z

According to Kopperschmidt (2000), a generation is a group of people with the same birth year, age, location, and historical experiences or events within the same individual that significantly influence their growth phase. One of them is Generation Z. Kopperschmidt argues that Gen Z was born between 1995-2010. Generation Z is the youngest to enter the job field, usually called the Internet generation. Generation Z is more socially connected through cyberspace. Since childhood, this generation has been widely introduced to technology, is very familiar with smartphones, and is categorized as a creative generation. The characteristics of Gen Z are more like social activities than the previous generation. It means that they prefer to be in start-up companies, multitask, really like technology, are experts in operating the technology, care about the environment, easily influence the environment regarding intelligent products, and easily capture information quickly. For Generation Z, information and technology have become part of their lives because they were born where access to the internet has become a global culture, thus affecting their values and outlook on life goals. That year, on average, the millennial generation is taking the most education courses. The millennial generation likes something out of the box and likes challenges and awards. They tend to be overconfident and dare to express opinions directly or through social media. That generation has grown with various breakthroughs in communication technology, ranging from *Twitter*, E-mail, Telegram, WhatsApp, and Line.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter describes research strategies and data collection techniques carried out during the research. The parts in this chapter are research design, data collection, and data analysis. Each segment is explained more below.

3.1 Research Design

The researcher used a descriptive approach. The descriptive research method has been used to identify and analyze the deviating meaning of emoji on *Twitter* through social semiotic. That research has searched and collected data on *Twitter* to know the factors of the emoji phenomenon (Nazir, 1998, p. 51). Qualitative research is also intended as a type of research whose findings are not obtained through statistical or quantitative procedures (Moleong, 2007, p. 6). While descriptive qualitative is research that attempts to seek the solution to existing problems based on data so that it also presents data, analyzes data, and interprets data (Narbuko and Achmadi, 1997, p. 44). Descriptive qualitative research seeks to draw problem-solving without going through statistical procedures or quantitative forms. Qualitative research aims to make people more aware of a theory and develop existing theories (Narbuko and Achmadi, 1997, p. 44). The results are explanations, observation notes, documents, interviews, or questionnaires in the qualitative method.

3.2 Data Collection

This section presents the data collection techniques used in this study and the individual instruments used to collect the data. In qualitative research, data

collection approaches include in-depth interviews, document analysis, observation, and audiovisual material analysis (Creswell, 2012).

3.2.1 Research Data

The data for this research is emoji by respondents from Gen Z at *NCT Dream Center* and *9GAG memeland*. The comments contain sentences/phrases/words written by respondents involving an emoji as their response to a particular post, as in this study using how respondents respond to information using emojis.

3.2.2 Data Source and subject of the Study

An asynchronous conversation takes the data source. The present study data was taken from one of the *Twitter* posts on the *NCT Dream Center* fanbase and *9GAG memeland*. The conversation was taken through *Twitter*, where the platform allows users to make a post about events, feelings, or life stories on *Twitter*. The feature of the *Twitter* company is that users can reply to other people's posts in various expressions, such as disappointed sentences and laughs, and even the more popular ones reply with emojis. The following provides details regarding the data sources for this study.

NCT Dream Center



Figure 4 Post on NCT Dream Center Twitter

9GAG Memeland

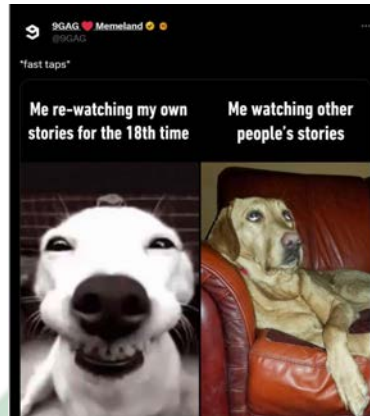


Figure 5 Post on 9GAG Twitter

Since the data are in the form of emojis, this research used *Twitter* users who use emojis in responding, telling, and expressing their feelings on the posting page or comment page. The criteria are English text *Twitter* users, while the researcher randomizes the age and gender criteria so that the data obtained is more numerous and varied. Although this research focused on Gen Z. Therefore, this study subject focused on deviating emoji meaning in Gen Z's *Twitter* and social factors related to this phenomenon. Several *Twitter* users do not understand the latest popular meaning of an emoji because sometimes *Twitter* users often combine different emojis so that they can form other meanings from the actual meaning of the emoji. However, it is essential to study what social factors make the emoji's meaning deviate from its true meaning.

3.2.3 Instrument(s)

An instrument is needed to obtain valid data (Moleong, 2010, p. 168). In qualitative research, findings or data can be declared valid if there is no difference between what was reported by the researcher. In this study, the researcher acts as

a data collector and an active instrument to collect data on *Twitter*. The researcher's observation is a measure of success in understanding the case under study, so it is necessary to actively involve the researcher on *Twitter* by entering and participating in an asynchronous interaction.

a. Observation

The researcher used observation in collecting data from *Twitter*.

In this study, the researcher used non-participant observation because the researcher did not actively participate in *Twitter* discourse. The researcher only logged into the *NCT Dream Center* and *9GAG memeland* groups without interacting or influencing the interaction process between *Twitter* users. Observations were conducted to collect data on the form and factors of deviant meaning in emoji that can occur and are often carried out by *Twitter* users among Gen Z.

b. Interview

In this study, the researcher used written semi-structured interviews to obtain information about the factors and forms of emoji meaning deviations made by *Twitter* users, especially Gen Z.

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Table 1 Interview question (the question is mentioned based on the interview question)

Construct	Sub-Component as Item of Investigation	Interview Question
Forms of deviant meaning on emoji	Identify frequently used emoji Recognize the form of deviation of meaning on <i>Twitter</i> Exploring the reasons for deviating meaning on <i>Twitter</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What emoji do you use the most? 2. Do you know the original meaning of an emoji? 3. In your opinion, the meaning of emoji is stagnant, or can you keep up with the times?
The factors of the deviating meaning of emoji	Gender factor Age factor Social Culture factor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you think everyone's emoji use differs depending on their gender? 2. Do you think seeing older people on <i>Twitter</i> using emojis like today's teenagers is weird? 3. Is there a trend of using certain emojis where you live?

c. Questionnaire

This study used a questionnaire structured into close-ended questions. The method obtained data on the perception of the use and intent of the emoji used by the respondents. The questionnaire in this study consists of close-ended regarding gender and age. The questionnaire form has carried out via Google Form so that the identity of the respondents would be kept safe. The examples of questions to fulfill research objectives regarding the deviation of the meaning of emoji in society are as follows:

Table 2 Example of questionnaire

“Enter your Twitter username.”
“How old are you?”
“What is your gender? (Select one)” a. Male b. Female
“Still in school or work? (Select one)” a. School b. Working
“Which groups do you follow on Twitter? (Select one)” a. NCT fanbase c. 9GAG group

The screenshot of the questionnaire in Google form is as follows:

Figure 6 Screenshot of the questionnaire in Google form

3.2.4 Data Collection Technique

The data collection technique used in this research are questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The steps of data collection techniques are as follows.

1. Observing the comments of *Twitter* users who use emojis on the *NCT Dream Center* and *9GAG Memeland* selected post.
2. Contact potential respondents who comment with emojis.

- As for how to contact them, the researcher has been contacting them via Direct Message on *Twitter* to prospective respondents who use emojis. The contents of the opening sentence are as follows:

“Hello, sorry to disturb your time... My name is Enggal Ridho Saputro, I am from UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, and I would like to conduct a short interview regarding my research about deviating meanings of emoji. However, before that, I would like to give you a short questionnaire. Are you willing to answer short questions from me?”

- The researcher sent or directly contacted via DM to 180 potential respondents who used emojis. Of the 180 users, 52 from the combined followers of *NCT Dream Center* and *9GAG memeland* replied to messages from the researcher.
3. After the prospective respondent responds to the message from the researcher, the researcher asks permission for the availability of the prospective respondent to become a respondent for the researcher's research. As for the 180 users who were contacted, 52 users were accepted to serve as respondents.
 4. Next, the researcher sent a questionnaire related to predetermined criteria such as the respondent's age must be included in the Gen Z category (13-28 years old). Of the 52 respondents who had filled out the questionnaire, 40 met the Gen Z criteria (13-28 years old). Meanwhile, 12 respondents did not fulfill the age criteria as Gen Z.

5. After sorting the data regarding the criteria for respondents, the researcher continued the next step with semi-structured interviews with respondents who met the criteria. In other words, 40 respondents were successfully interviewed. The steps taken by the researcher during the interview were as follows:

- Contact the respondent again after sorting the data, and ask for their availability to answer a short interview.
- Open the interview by showing proof of the respondent's comments in the group post. The sentence goes as follows: "Recently you have posted a comment on 9GAG with emojis like this '🤔👩', what is the meaning of your emojis?"
- After asking what the emoji meant, the researcher analyzed whether the meaning the respondent used was the same as the meaning of the emoji according to the emoji encyclopedia at *emojipedia.org*. The researcher does not continue the interview if the meaning is the same. However, if it is the other way around, the researcher continues the interview and asks why the respondent deliberately distorted the meaning of the emoji.

3.3 Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis technique categorizes data sequences into a pattern and category. It distinguishes it from interpretation, namely, giving significant meaning to the analysis, explaining the description pattern, and looking for relationships between the dimensions of the description. The techniques are as follows.

a. Identification of Data

The researcher identified the forms of meaning deviation in emoji using the concept introduced by Roland Barthes. However, in analyzing the deviation of the meaning of the emoji itself. The researcher uses the situational context theory contained in Halliday's social semiotics.

Furthermore, the researcher interviewed users to gather their perceptions and interpretations of emojis. Ask questions about how they assign meaning to emojis, any cultural or personal influences on their interpretation, and whether they have observed deviations in meaning in specific contexts.

b. Classification of Data

The researcher classifies the emoji data used by respondents based on their shapes, such as intertextuality, subversive potential, layered meanings, and contextual dynamics. After grouping data based on its shape, the researcher classifies it based on the factors. That is intended so that the researcher knows what factors influence the deviation of the meaning of the emoji. These factors include emojis as substitutes, irony or sarcasm, evolving language, and trends. So that through this study, readers know the factors that cause deviations in meaning that occur on *Twitter*. However, analyzing the results obtained from the classification and deriving meaningful insights about the forms and factors influencing the deviating meanings of emojis

c. Description of Data

In presenting the data, the researcher explains the number of respondents taken. Then, in the data description, the researcher classifies the forms of deviant meanings based on the group. Thus, the form of the deviated meaning

of the emoji at *9GAG* differs from that of the deviated meaning at the *NCT Dream Center*.

After presenting the forms of deviating meaning from the two groups that have been classified, the researcher analyzes the factors that deviate meaning from the emoji according to the answers from the respondents. In the process, the researcher classifies or groups the types of factors according to the responses from the respondents.

d. Discussion of Result

The discussion was carried out by attaching the discourse associated with emoji on social semiotics taken from *Twitter*. In addition, the researcher explained the findings and that the present research's findings supported the previous studies on the same topic.

e. Conclusion

The last step is the conclusion. The researcher concludes from the findings in the forms and factors of deviating meaning on socio-semiotic emojis. Thus, this study can be helpful in linguistic research, accurate, and meaningful.

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CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the research findings and discussion on deviating the meaning of emoji. The discussion consists of the demographics of respondents, research results regarding forms and factors of deviation meaning, and discussions related to research findings.

4.1 Findings

The study involved a sample of 40 *Twitter* users who actively participated in an interview, providing valuable insights into their experiences and perceptions regarding the deviating meaning of emojis. The following is the demographic of the respondents.

Table 3 Respondent Demography

Criteria		Total Respondent
Gender	Male	18
	Female	34
Age	9-12	3
	13-15	1
	16-20	15
	21-25	19
	26-30	6
	31-35	4
	35-40	4
Profession	Student	31
	Working	21
Community	<i>NCT Dream</i> fanbase	25
	<i>9GAG memeland</i>	27

From the table above, it is known that women dominate the subject. That is not a problem because the subject's gender not affected the research findings.

Weintraub et al. (2015, p. 34) state that a person will perceive men and women differently. In controlling for these variables, the researcher deliberately kept the identity of the respondents confidential when conducting questionnaires and interviews.

As mentioned in the sentence above, the age distribution of the subjects is an essential element in this study. The researcher focused on respondents aged 13-28 years or the Gen Z group, and the researcher sorted data regarding the appropriate age to serve as the proper research subject. The total number of *Twitter* users from the two communities who filled out the questionnaire was 52 respondents. However, 40 respondents belonged to Gen Z, and 12 were outside the Gen Z category.

4.1.1 The Forms of Deviating Meaning in Emoji

The following is an explanation of the forms of deviation in the meaning of emojis carried out by *Twitter* users who are members of the *NCT Dream Center* and *9GAG memeland* communities. In identifying these forms of deviation, the researcher has used Barthes's (1981) concepts of intertextual references, subversive uses, layered meanings, and contextual shifting have contributed significantly to understanding the complexities of communication and meaning-making in various contexts. In analyzing the true meaning of the emojis used by respondents, the researcher used references from *emojipedia.org*. Therefore, the researcher has identified more deeply the forms of meaning deviation in emoji as observed on *Twitter*. The following is an identification of the forms of deviation in the meaning of emoji.

4.1.1.1 Intertextual References

Intertextual references refer to how a text or cultural artifact (such as a *meme* or emoji) refers to or draws upon other texts, cultural references, or shared knowledge within the *NCT Dream Center* fanbase and *9GAG memeland* on *Twitter*. These references serve to create a shared understanding and connection among users. Refer to the connections and references to other texts or cultural phenomena within a particular context. In the context of deviating the meaning of emoji, intertextual references can manifest as incorporating popular *memes*, viral videos, or iconic cultural symbols within emojis.

Data 1 : *NCT Dream* for TOSTOS 🥰👉❤️ (posted by *Kyra* in *NCT Dream Center Twitter fan page*)

Data 2 : Kiyowooo, I love 'em 🥰❤️ (posted by *Nil_Jinbe* in *NCT Dream Center Twitter fan page*)

In Data 1 and Data 2, the researcher observed two users' comments in the contexts that the user in *NCT Dream Center* comments. The field represents the context of the collaboration announcement between *NCT Dream* and *TosTos*.

Users *Kyra* and *Nil_Jinbe*, likely fans of *NCT Dream*, express their enthusiasm and support for the collaboration through their comments. The emojis and words used, such as “*NCT Dream* for TOSTOS 🥰👉❤️” and “Kiyowooo, I love 'em

🥰❤️,” indicate excitement, adoration, and positive sentiments towards the collaboration. The participants in this context share a common interest in *NCT Dream* and are engaged in fandom-related activities.

Regarding the tenor of the text, in the *NCT Dream Center* context, *Kyra*, *Nil_Jinbe*, and other users are likely fans of *NCT Dream*, showing their support

for the collaboration. The comments demonstrate the fan-community relationship and the shared role of being fans of the boyband. Next is the mode of text; both contexts involve written language that mimics spoken discourse. Users in *NCT Dream Center* use conversational language as if speaking directly, to express their thoughts and emotions. Additionally, emojis are used to enhance communication and convey specific meanings.

The deviate of the 🤔 emoji in response to positive news could be attributed to the influence of expressive irony and the incorporation of humor as a form of engagement within this online community. In this context, the deviating use of the 🤔 emoji could be seen as an attempt to heighten emotions, express excitement, or add a touch of humor. However, considering the specific situation presented in Data 1 and 2, where users are touched or happy about the good news, a more appropriate emoji choice would be 😄, which signifies laughter and joy. The 😄 emoji aligns better with the intended emotions and effectively conveys the users' positive reactions to the announcement. Therefore, using emojis in line with their conventional meanings ensures that the intended emotions are accurately conveyed, leading to more precise communication and better understanding among participants.

In a different context, emojis with intertextually deviated meanings are also found on *9GAG's Twitter* fan page.

Data 3 : it took me some time to realise 🤔 (posted by *itsLuna47_43* in *9GAG Twitter*)

On the other hand, in Data 3 of the *9GAG memeland* context, the field revolves around humorous content and *memes*. The photos of the two dogs with contrasting expressions represent people's reactions to social media posts. The user, *itsLuna47_43*, comments, "It took me some time to realise 🤔," referring to the relatable situation depicted in the images. The participants in this context are members of a humor-oriented community on *9GAG*, engaging in *meme*-sharing and humor-based interactions. Regarding the tenor of the text, in the *9GAG memeland* context, *itsLuna47_43* and other users are part of the humor-oriented community, sharing humorous content and engaging in *meme*-related discussions. Next is the mode of text; the contexts involve written language that mimics spoken discourse. The user in *9GAG memeland* used conversational language, as if speaking directly, to express her thoughts and emotions. Additionally, emojis are used to enhance communication and convey specific meanings.

Data 3 presents a comment that utilizes the 🤔 emoji, which conventionally signifies sadness or crying, according to *emojipedia.org*. In this situation, the user could employ the 🤔 emoji ironically to create a humorous effect or express an exaggerated disappointment or frustration related to the depicted scenario. However, if the user in Data 3 intends to convey a sense of being touched or happy about the *meme* post, a more appropriate emoji would align with these emotions. For instance, the 😂 emoji, denoting laughter and joy, would better reflect the user's positive response to the humor or relatability of the *meme*. Thus, by selecting an appropriate emoji, the user can effectively convey their intended emotions and contribute to a more straightforward and accurate response communication.

The researcher has also observed using the ❤️ emoji in Data 4 and Data 5.

Data 4 : NCT DREEEEAMMMM, Thank

U ❤️ ❤️ ❤️ ❤️ #TosTosxNCTDREAM (posted by *Nihal_Just 4 You* in *NCT Dream Center Twitter fan page*)

Data 5 : 🍉 ❤️ #TosTosxNCTDREAM (posted by *Heart Can't Be Blank* in *NCT Dream Center Twitter fan page*)

In Data 4 and Data 5, the researcher observed comments from two users, *Nihal_Just 4 You* and *Heart Can't Be Blank*. The comments are situated within the context of the collaboration announcement between *NCT Dream* and *TosTos* snack. Users *Nihal_Just 4 You* and *Heart Can't Be Blank* express their excitement and gratitude towards *NCT Dream* in response to this collaboration. Their comments, such as “NCT DREEEEAMMMM, Thank U ❤️ ❤️ ❤️ ❤️ #TosTosxNCTDREAM” and “🍉 ❤️ #TosTosxNCTDREAM,” demonstrate their enthusiasm and support. The field represents the fandom community’s engagement with the announcement and celebration of *NCT Dream*’s involvement with *TosTos*. Moving on to the tenor, both users, *Nihal_Just 4 You* and *Heart Can't Be Blank*, are likely fans of *NCT Dream*, as they actively participate in the *NCT Dream Center* and support the collaboration. The tenor reflects the relationship between the participants, who share a common interest in the *NCT Dream* boyband and belong to the fanbase community. They assume the role of passionate fans and use the comments to show their love and appreciation for *NCT Dream*.


Regarding the mode of text, the comments are written in a style that mimics spoken language. Users employ exclamation marks, elongated words (e.g., “DREEEEAMMMM”), and emojis to convey emotions. The mode aims to create

an informal, conversational tone as if users are directly speaking or expressing their excitement and gratitude towards *NCT Dream*. Adding emojis, such as ❤️, enhances communication and adds visual elements to convey affection and support.



In this specific scenario, the users could employ the ❤️ emoji ironically or playfully, using it as a form of deviation from the conventional meaning. The irony could stem from a humorous or exaggerated response contrasting with the expected emotional expression. If the users in Data 4 and Data 5 genuinely intend to express their love or excitement about the good news regarding *NCT Dream* and the collaboration with *TosTos* snack, a more suitable emoji choice would align with these positive emotions. For instance, the 🥰 emoji, which signifies admiration and excitement, or the 🙌 emoji, indicating applause and appreciation, would be more appropriate to convey their love and support for the announcement. The results of interviews with related users justify the error in using the meaning of the emoji. The respondent in Data 5 answer is as follows.


Excerpt 1: *Ohh, so ah the watermelon refers to the song from NCT Dream lol... and green love, like somebody else, people who love NCT Dream always use it... when idols use it, we use it... simple as that*

Based on the interview results, the user often uses emojis as a form of love for *NCT Dream* members. Besides that, these emojis also show that they are *NCT Dream* fans. The use of the emoji ❤️ is considered inappropriate when used in the context of this time because it can bring up other interpretations from readers.

Switching from the emoji , the researcher also observed using other emojis found in Data 6 and 7.

Data 6 : Jaemin  #TosTosxNCTDREAM (posted by  in *NCT Dream Center Twitter fan page*)

In Data 6, the comment is situated within the context of the launching announcement of the *NCT Dream* and *TosTos* snack collaboration. The user expresses her excitement and support for the collaboration by mentioning specific members, such as “Jaemin  #TosTosxNCTDREAM.” Moving on to the tenor, the user in the *NCT Dream Center* is likely fans of the *NCT Dream* boyband or fanbase members. She participates in the *NCT Dream Center* platform to express her enthusiasm and support for the collaboration. The relationship between the participants is that of fans sharing their excitement and admiration for *NCT Dream*. Regarding the mode of text, the comments in this context resemble written language but are formulated as if speaking directly. The user in the *NCT Dream Center* uses emojis, such as , to complement her text.

In this case, the user could connect the positive news about the collaboration with her favorite member Jaemin, resulting in a nuanced emotional response. The  emoji, which conventionally represents sweat, could be used metaphorically to express excitement, enthusiasm, or admiration for Jaemin, the post's subject. The user's intention could be to convey a sense of "sweating" excitedly or emotionally overwhelmed by the news. Alternative emojis can connect the good news and the user's enthusiasm for Jaemin. *Emojipedia.org* can serve as a reference to explore suitable emojis that align with the intended emotions. For

instance, the 🍷 or 😊 emoji, denoting love or happiness, would be more appropriate for expressing the user's excitement and positive emotions related to the news. These emojis convey the user's connection between the good news and her favorite member. The results of interviews with related users justify the error in using the meaning of the emoji. The respondent in Data 6 answer is as follows.

Excerpt 2: *you know. Emmm, people use that emoji to show the naughty things?... something wet? Or someone who is hot?*

According to the user in the interview results, she often uses this 💦 emoji as an expression or expression of herself towards something that is hot or even shows her interpretation through the emoji that Jaemin is the hottest or most handsome member of *NCT Dream* according to the user.

In a different context, emojis with intertextually deviated meanings are also found on *9GAG's Twitter* fan page.

Data 7 : oh my 🍷💦 (posted by *Mbry_* in *9GAG Twitter*)

On the other hand, in *9GAG memeland*, the comments are related to photos of two dogs expressing different reactions to social media posts, one being happy and the other being disapproving. The field represents the contexts of the humorous *meme*-oriented community on *9GAG*. Meanwhile, in the tenor of text, the user in *9GAG memeland*, the users are members of a humor *meme* community, and their roles are that of participants engaging in humor-oriented discussions and sharing related content. The relationship between the participants could differ, but they share a common interest in humor and *meme* culture. Regarding the text mode, in *9GAG memeland*, the comments include emojis, such as 🍷💦, to add a

visual element to the humorous context. The mode aims to create an informal and conversational tone, aligning with the nature of social media interactions.

In this case, the user's "oh my" comment connects with the accompanying emoji and the *meme*'s context. The 💦 emoji, which conventionally signifies sweat, could be used metaphorically or in a non-literal sense to represent arousal or sexual innuendo. The user's intention is likely to convey a sense of excitement or arousal in response to the *meme*'s context. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that using the 💦 emoji in this context could not align with the intended meaning. Given the theme of the *meme* and the potential for misinterpretation, it is recommended that the user selects an emoji that better conveys their intended response, as *emojipedia.org* can serve as a resource to explore suitable alternatives. In this scenario, a more appropriate emoji might be 😲 or 😄, which denote surprise or amusement, respectively, capturing the user's reaction to the *meme*'s context more accurately.

On the other hand, the researcher has also observed using the emoji 🙄 as found in Data 8 and Data 9.

Data 8 : Haha 🚀 🤩 🙄 (posted by *Call Me Jon* on *9GAG Twitter*)

Data 9 : Twitt 🐶 🙄 (posted by *Lionel Van Persie* in *9GAG Twitter*)

Those comments in Data 8 and Data 9 are situated within the context of a *meme* or humorous content on *9GAG*. They refer to the photos of two dogs expressing contrasting reactions to social media posts, where one dog represents happiness when seeing its posts. In contrast, the other dog represents dislike or disapproval when seeing other people's posts. The field represents the humorous

and satirical nature of the content on 9GAG, where users share and engage in humor-related discussions. Moving on to the tenor, “*Call Me Jon*” and “*Lionel Van Persie*” participate in the 9GAG *memeland*. Their role is that of active users engaging with the humorous content by leaving comments. The relationship between the participants in the comment section could differ, but they share a common interest in humor and *meme* culture. The relationship between the participants and the admin who posted the content is typical, with users engaging with the shared content rather than a personal or formal relationship.

Regarding the text mode, the comments are formulated as written language but with an informal and conversational tone. The addition of emojis, such as 🚀👁️🌀 and 🐕🌀, enhances the expressiveness and humor of the text. The mode aims to create a cheerful and playful atmosphere, mimicking how people communicate casually.

In this case, the users' comments and the accompanying 🌀 emoji connect with the *meme*'s context. Rather than interpret the emoji in its conventional sense of dust or wind, the users employ it metaphorically or non-literally. The 🌀 emoji is likely used to convey a sense of swift or rapid movement, potentially symbolizing the users' reactions to the *meme* or their humorous response to the contrast between one's posts and those of others on social media. Considering the context and the humorous form of the responses, the users could consider selecting alternative emojis that align more closely with their intended meaning. *Emojipedia.org* can serve as a resource to explore suitable alternatives. For instance, in Data 8, the user might choose an emoji like 😂 to represent laughter or amusement, capturing the humorous tone of their comment. In Data 9, an emoji

like 🤪 could be used to depict intense laughter, further emphasizing the humorous response to the *meme*.

4.1.1.2 Subversive Uses

Subversive uses refer to *Twitter* users who employ emojis in unconventional or unexpected ways to challenge or subvert established norms or expectations. Fans could use emojis sarcastically or ironically to convey their thoughts or opinions.

Data 10 : It is time to calling my Ma! 🤪 #TosTosxNCTDREAM (posted by *YOU LOVE ME* in *NCT Dream Center Twitter* fan page)

The field of the text shows that the comment made by *YOU LOVE ME* in *NCT Dream Center* relates to the launching announcement of *NCT Dream* and *TosTos* snack collaboration. Moving on to the tenor, the *NCT Dream Center* comment participants are fans of the *NCT Dream* boyband or fanbase members. The relationship between the participants and the admin who posted the content is that of fans engaging with the official channel related to the *NCT Dream* group. Regarding the text mode, the comment in *NCT Dream Center* is formulated as a written language but with an informal and conversational tone. The comments mimic direct speech and incorporate emojis to enhance expressiveness and convey emotions. The mode aims to create a sense of immediacy and personal engagement.

The user deliberately employs the 🤪 emoji to express a contrasting emotion or to convey a humorous or sarcastic tone in response to the good news. That subversive use of emojis is prevalent in Gen Z's *Twitter* discourse, where

individuals often employ emojis in unexpected or unconventional ways to add layers of meaning or create humorous effects. Considering the context of the comment and the subversive use of the 🤔 emoji, the user could select an alternative emoji that aligns more closely with their intended meaning.

Emojipedia.org can provide insights into suitable alternatives. For example, the user might opt for an emoji like 😂 to represent laughter or amusement, implying a sarcastic or ironic tone in response to the announcement. That would more effectively convey the intended subversive meaning with the context of the good news—that deviating meaning of emoji in Data 10, supported by the interview's results from the respondent. The user's answers are as follows.

Excerpt 3: ohh, thatss, I just wants to express my reaction, I'm crying because I'm ssoooooo happy

The respondent said that she used the emoji 🤔 as a form of joy at the news of the launch of the *NCT Dream* collaboration with *TosTos* snack. The user should be able to use the right emoji according to the meaning in the context, and there are ❤️ or 😊.

In a different context, emojis with subversive uses and deviated meanings are also found on *9GAG's Twitter* fan page.

Data 11 : LOL 🤔 (posted by *Gillian :p* in *9GAG Twitter*)

Data 12 : how many this post related to you? ME: Yess 🤔 (posted by *Igon_MunL* in *9GAG Twitter*)

On the other hand, in Data 11 and Data 12, the comments made by *Gillian :p* and *Igon_MunL* on *9GAG memeland* refers to the photos of two dogs with

contrasting expressions, where one represents happiness when seeing our posts on social media. In contrast, the other represents dislike or disapproval when seeing other people's posts. The field represents the context of social media culture, where users engage with content, express their emotions, and share their reactions. Moving on to the tenor, in the *9GAG memeland*, the relationship between the participants could differ, but they share a common interest in humor, *memes*, and social media culture. The relationship with the admin who posted the content is typical, with users engaging with the shared content without a personal or formal relationship.

Regarding the text mode, the comments in *9GAG memeland* are formulated as written language but with an informal and conversational tone. The comments mimic direct speech and incorporate emojis to enhance expressiveness and convey emotions. The mode aims to create a sense of immediacy and personal engagement.

Those comments employ the 🤔 emoji ironically or subversively. By juxtaposing the expression "LOL" or affirming their connection to the post with the 🤔 emoji, the users introduce a subversive or contradictory effect. That usage could convey sarcasm, mock exaggerated emotions, or create a humorous twist. The subversive use of emoji aligns with the tendencies of Gen Z's *Twitter* discourse, where emojis are deployed in unconventional ways to subvert expectations and add complexity to communication. Given the context and the users' intended meaning, alternative emojis can be employed to better align with their response to the *meme* post. *Emojipedia.org* serves as a valuable resource for understanding the original meanings of emojis. For instance, the users could select

an emoji like 😂 to represent laughter or amusement. That choice would more accurately convey the intended subversive or ironic response within the context of the *meme*. The alternative emoji would better reflect the users' subversive intent and enhance the comedic effect or sarcastic tone they aim to convey.

The researcher has also observed using other emojis on *Twitter*, as found in Data 13, 14, 15, and Data 16.

Data 13 : NCT DREAM x TOS TOS 🔥😱 #TosTosxNCTDREAM (posted by *Only on Your Luminous* in *NCT Dream Center Twitter* fan page)

Data 14 : Haechan 💅 (posted by *Leyla_* in *NCT Dream Center Twitter* fan page)

Data 15 : THIS IS C R A Z Y 🔥💚 (posted by *Hiro01_* in *NCT Dream Center Twitter* fan page)

The comments in Data 13, 14, and 15 are in response to the launching announcement of the collaboration between *NCT Dream* and *TosTos* snack. The user “*Only on Your Luminous*” expresses enthusiasm and excitement about the collaboration using the phrase “NCT DREAM x TOS TOS,” accompanying it with the fire emoji, 🔥, and the astonished face emoji, 😱. That comment reflects the participant’s role as a fan or supporter of *NCT Dream* and their engagement with the *NCT Dream Center*. The user “*Leyla_*” mentions the name “Haechan,” a member of *NCT Dream*, and includes the painted nails emoji, 💅, which could indicate admiration or personal connection. The user “*Hiro01_*” expresses astonishment towards the collaboration with the phrase “THIS IS C R A Z Y” along with the fire emoji, 🔥, and the green heart emoji, 💚. These comments demonstrate the participants’ engagement with the announcement and their

emotional investment in the collaboration. The mode of text used in these comments is written language, resembling a *Twitter*-like format, with an informal and direct style supplemented by emojis to enhance the expression of emotions.

The comment in Data 13 uses the emojis 🔥 and 😲. In this context, the 🔥 emoji could represent excitement, enthusiasm, or something being hot, while 😲 might signify surprise, shock, or awe. The users' response using these emojis aligns with the good news of the *NCT Dream* and *TosTos* snack collaboration, expressing excitement and surprise. However, these emojis could be considered deviating or subversive from a semiotic perspective since they do not directly signify the intended meanings. If the users in Data 13 want to better connect their comments with the context of the good news, they could consider using emojis that more explicitly represent excitement and positive emotions. Emojis like 😍 (expressing love or adoration), 🎉 (symbolizing celebration or excitement), or 👏 (representing applause or appreciation) would better convey their intended emotions and align with the announcement.

Meanwhile, the comment in Data 14 includes the 💅 emoji, which typically represents nails or beauty-related concepts. In this case, the user might be referring to Haechan's well-groomed appearance or expressing admiration for his style. From a semiotic perspective, this emoji could not be considered deviating or subversive, as it aligns with its conventional meaning. Since the user's choice of the 💅 emoji in Data 14 is appropriate in its original meaning, there is no need for an alternative suggestion.

Furthermore, the comment in Data 15 features the emojis 🔥 and ❤️. Here, the 🔥 emoji might indicate intensity, excitement, or something being hot, while ❤️ represents the color green or can symbolize love and affection. The user's comment expresses enthusiasm and excitement about the situation. From a semiotic perspective, these emojis could not be considered deviating or subversive, as they align with their conventional meanings. As the users in Data 15 have used the emojis appropriately in their comments, there is no need for alternative suggestions.

The deviation from the use of the meaning of the emojis for the three users was justified through the results of interviews which stated their reasons for using these emojis. The results of interviews with the respondents are as follows.

Excerpt 4: ah oke, so I do more like haechan as personnel in NCT... and emoji of nails, I want to express that Haechan is so slay, so handsome in that photo

Excerpt 5: yeah, I was like got excited about the news... I mean crazy, is not literally crazy or mad person

Following the interview results, *Twitter* users like those found in Data 14 and Data 15 often use emojis that do not match their original meaning. Like emoji 🔥 represents something hot, but this can change according to the context used.

In this case, the user changes the meaning into something as a form of enthusiasm for the announcement.

In a different context, emojis whose meanings are subversive uses deviated are also found on *9GAG's Twitter* fan page.

Data 16 : what the dog doing? 🤪🤪🤪 (posted by *Cynna* in *9GAG Twitter*)

In the *9GAG memeland*, a user named “Cynna” reacts to photos of two dogs with different expressions that symbolize the contrasting emotions associated with viewing one’s posts and other people’s posts on social media. The comment humorously asks, “what the dog doing?” and includes the laughing face emoji, 😂, the astonished face emoji, 😲, and the painted nails emoji, 💅. That comment reflects the user’s engagement with the content and recognition of the familiar emotions experienced when interacting with social media. The mode of text is written language with a casual and humorous tone, reminiscent of the conversational style often seen in internet *memes*.

From a semiotic perspective, the subversive use of the 💅 emoji in this context can be analyzed as irony or sarcasm. Using an emoji associated with beauty or fashion, the user could express a humorous or exaggerated reaction to the question about what the dog is doing. The combination of the emojis 😂, 😲, and 💅 in the comment suggests a playful and exaggerated response. To better align the emoji with the context of the *meme* post, the user in Data 16 could consider using an emoji that represents humor or surprise rather than the 💅 emoji. Emojis like 😄 (expressing laughter or joy) or 😲 (indicating surprise or astonishment) would be more appropriate to convey the intended meaning within the given context.

On the other hand, the researcher has also observed using the ✨ emoji as found in Data 17 and Data 18.

Data 17 : WOW 🤩 🐲 ✨ #TosTosxNCTDREAM (posted by *Dinosaur dream_* in *NCT Dream Center Twitter* fan page)

Data 18 : THIS IS SO COOOLL YO 🤩 ❤️ 🔥 ✨ LOVEE YOUU (posted

by *Melin Luna* in *NCT Dream Center Twitter* fan page)

The comments from “*Dinosaur dream_*” and “*Melin Luna*” in Data 17 and Data 18 are in response to the launching announcement of the collaboration between *NCT Dream* and *TosTos* snack. The user “*Dinosaur dream_*” expresses excitement and amazement with the comment “WOW” accompanied by the crying face emoji, 🥹, the woman dancing emoji, 💃, and the sparkles emoji, ✨. That comment reflects the participant’s role as a fan or supporter of *NCT Dream* and their enthusiastic reaction to the collaboration. The user “*Melin Luna*” also expresses excitement and admiration, describing the collaboration as “SO COOOLL” and adding the crying face emoji, 🥹, the green heart emoji, 💚, the fire emoji, 🔥, and the sparkles emoji, ✨. These comments indicate the participants’ emotional investment in *NCT Dream* and their positive response to the collaboration announcement. The mode of text used in these comments is written language, resembling a direct and conversational style. Emojis enrich it to convey emotions and enhance the message’s impact.

According to *emojipedia.org*, the ✨ emoji typically represents sparkles, magic, or something shiny. From a semiotic perspective, the subversive use of the ✨ emoji can be analyzed as a form of emphasis or exaggeration. By incorporating the ✨ emoji, the users add excitement or enthusiasm to their comments. The combination of the ✨ emoji with other emojis like 🥹, 💃, 💚, and 🔥 reflects a heightened emotional response and a sense of celebration. To better align the emojis with the context of the good news announcement, the users

in Data 17 and Data 18 could consider using emojis that represent joy, celebration, or support. Emojis like 🎉 (denoting celebration or party), 👏 (indicating applause or support), or 😍 (expressing admiration or excitement) would be more suitable choices to convey the intended meaning and align with the context of positive news.

Deviations from emoji meanings are justified through the results of interviews with the respondent in Data 17. The results of the interviews are as follows.

Excerpt 5: actually, it shows that I'm so happy about the news tostos x NCT Dream

The interview results show that the user on Data 17 uses emojis ✨ as a form of joy in the *NCT Dream* collaboration. Supposedly, the user can use other emojis, such as 😍, 👏, and 🎉 that are more appropriate for representing the true meaning of happiness.

Not only that, the researcher has also observed the use of other emojis, such as 🦋 on *Twitter*, as found in Data 19, Data 20, and Data 21.

Data 19 : so Colorful 🦋🦋 (posted by *Naii Queen* in *NCT Dream Center Twitter* fan page)

The field aspect of the context pertains to the specific domain or subject matter, which in this case is the announcement of the collaboration between *NCT Dream* and *TosTos* snack. The user's comment reflects their response to the collaboration's visual aspect, highlighting the project's perceived vibrancy and

colorful nature. The tenor aspect of the context focuses on the relationship and roles of the participants involved. "*Naii Queen*" is identified as a fan of *NCT Dream*, expressing their reaction to the collaboration announcement. They are an *NCT Dream* fan base member, engaging with other fans and the *NCT Dream Center Twitter* page admin. The user's comment demonstrates their involvement and connection to the *NCT Dream* fandom, expressing their opinions within this community context.

Regarding the text mode, the comment is written language presented in a conversational style, mimicking direct speech. The user employs informal and colloquial language typically used in online platforms like *Twitter*. Additionally, emojis, specifically 🦴 and 👁️, add non-verbal cues and visual elements to their comment. The skull emoji 🦴 could indicate surprise or shock, while the eyes emoji 👁️ suggests attentiveness or curiosity. These emojis contribute to the expressive and interactive nature of the comment.

According to *emojipedia.org*, the 🦴 emoji typically represents a skull or death. However, it is used subversively in this context, deviating from its original meaning. The use of the 🦴 emoji in this context could be intended to convey a sense of surprise or shock, emphasizing the user's enthusiasm and excitement toward the collaboration. To provide a more appropriate emoji for *Naii Queen* to express her comment about the colorful collaboration, she could consider using emojis that convey brightness, excitement, or positivity. For instance, she could use emojis such as 🌈 (rainbow), 🎉 (party popper), or 🥰 (heart eyes) to better align with the intended meaning of her comment. These emojis would

communicate their enthusiasm for the vibrant collaboration while maintaining a consistent and appropriate semiotic interpretation.

The deviation in the meaning of the emoji is justified through the results of interviews with the respondent in Data 19. The results of the interview are as follows.

Excerpt 6: I mean, that you know it is weird to see the colorful style... it refers to my expression, like bruh I'm dead lol... to see the color

According to the interview results with the respondent, she used the emoji 🤪 as a form of humorous expression. She was amazed at the color of the clothes used by *NCT Dream* personnel in the advertisement photo. However, using the emoji, 🤪 is considered inappropriate, giving rise to other perceptions from readers.

In a different context, emojis whose meanings are subversive uses deviated are also found on *9GAG's Twitter* fan page.

Data 20 : 🤪 bruh, i'm dead lol (posted by *I am_Mendolia* in *9GAG Twitter*)

Data 21 : Bruh, am I the only one who read this fast fap? 🤪🤪🤪 🙄
(posted by *Antonia_Alaska* in *9GAG Twitter*)

The field is the *9GAG memeland*, where users engage in humor, *meme*-sharing, and cultural references. The participants in this context are users who enjoy consuming and creating humorous content on the platform, including *I am_Mendolia* and *Antonia_Alaska*. They have a shared role as contributors to the *memeland*, engaging in conversations and expressing their reactions through comments. The admin of the *9GAG memeland*, who posted the photos of the dogs,

serves as a facilitator of the community and content curator. The mode of text used in these comments is a combination of spoken-like and written language, characteristic of *Twitter* discourse. The users adopt a casual and direct style as if conversing with others. Adding emojis, including the repeated 🐼 emoji, enhances the expressiveness and humor in their comments.

The users employ the 🐼 emoji to convey a sense of humor, exaggeration, or disbelief rather than its literal interpretation of death. Using the emoji in these contexts, they intend to express that something is amusing, surprising, or mind-boggling, playing with the juxtaposition of the unexpected emoji and the text. That subversive use allows them to engage with the content in a lighthearted and humorous manner, deviating from the anticipated meaning of the emoji. To better align their comments with the context of the *meme* post and their intended meanings, the users could consider using emojis that represent humor, surprise, or incredulity. For instance, they could use 😂 (Face with Tears of Joy) or 😲 (Face with Open Mouth) to convey amusement or astonishment. These emojis would better capture the intended humor and reaction to the content while maintaining a more consistent semiotic interpretation.

4.1.1.3 Layered Meanings

Layered meanings refer to the multiple interpretations or connotations associated with a single emoji. Emojis can carry deeper meanings beyond their literal representation, often reflecting the fandom's shared knowledge or inside jokes.

Data 22 : ❤️👉👁️👄👁️ #TosTosxNCTDREAM (posted by ONLY ON YOUR Helin in *NCT Dream Center Twitter* fan page)

Data 23 : NCT DREAM X TOSTOS 👁️👄👁️ (posted by *mavi_only* in *NCT Dream Center Twitter* fan page)

The field of the situation pertains to the announcement of the collaboration between *NCT Dream* and *TosTos* snacks. Participants, who are fans of the *NCT Dream* boyband or members of the fanbase, engage with the *NCT Dream Center*, an online platform dedicated to sharing updates and fostering a sense of community. The context revolves around the collaboration's excitement and anticipation, with fans expressing their support and enthusiasm through comments. The tenor encompasses the relationships and roles of the participants within the *NCT Dream Center*. Fans bond with one another based on their shared admiration for *NCT Dream* and their involvement in the fan community.

Additionally, participants share a collective connection with the admin of the *NCT Dream Center*, who assumes the role of a facilitator, disseminating information and maintaining a positive online environment. The text mode utilized in these comments reflects the characteristics of spoken language adapted for written communication on *Twitter*. Participants adopt an informal and conversational tone, mirroring direct speech with the addition of emojis to enhance expressiveness and convey nuanced meaning. The emojis serve as visual cues to supplement and augment the text, allowing participants to communicate affective and subjective aspects of their message.

In terms of layered meanings, the combination of 👁️👄👁️ in Data 22 and Data 23 introduces a subversive element into the discourse. While traditionally associated with surprise or shock, the users in this context employ

these emojis with a different intent. They utilize them as visual shorthand or code within the Gen Z *Twitter* discourse, implying an inside joke or a shared understanding among the fanbase. The exact meaning conveyed by this combination could differ among individuals, but it generally conveys a sense of humor, playfulness, or intrigue regarding the collaboration announcement.

Excerpt 7: ahhh.... HAHAHA. So ah, the emoji two eyes with a lip, it expresses my reaction that time...when I saw the post, like I can't even speak

Excerpt 8: ahh so that's the comments from anyone, I just following them to make NCT trending on twitter... and those emojis, were like I stunned to speak... I love them

In the given context, where the good news of the *NCT Dream* and *TosTos* snack collaboration is being announced in the *NCT Dream Center*, the use of the 🙄 emoji appears incongruous. To explore this deviation, excerpts from user interviews (Excerpt 7 and 8) reveal their justifications. User responses indicate that the emoji sequence reflects their stunned or speechless reactions upon encountering the post or news. These interpretations justify their unconventional use of the emoji, as it aligns with their emotional response rather than the traditional meaning.

To ensure that users in Data 22 and Data 23 align their comments with the context of the collaboration announcement, they could consider using emojis that better represent their excitement and support. *Emojipedia.org* can serve as a resource to explore suitable options. For example, users could choose emojis such as 🎉🥳 or 😄🔥, which convey celebratory or enthusiastic emotions, respectively.

In a different context, emojis 🤔 🙄 🤔 whose meanings are layered and deviated, are also found on *9GAG's Twitter* fan page.

Data 24 : giggiti giggiti giggiti, it's me! 🤔 🙄 🤔 (posted by *Emeryn* in *9GAG Twitter*)

In the field, the context of the comment revolves around the portrayal of the dogs' expressions in response to social media posts. The underlying meaning conveyed by these expressions reflects the experiences and emotions associated with individual posts and posts from others on social media platforms. The comment captures this context and provides a self-identification of the user within the *memeland*, presenting themselves as part of the shared experience of encountering such posts. Regarding the tenor, the participants in this context are the users of the *9GAG memeland*, including *Emeryn*, who posted the comment, and the admin(s) of the *memeland* responsible for sharing the photos. *Emeryn's* comment serves as a way to contribute to the ongoing conversation within the *memeland* and establish a connection with other participants who can relate to the humor or the relatable experience depicted in the photos.

Regarding the text mode, the comment is written in spoken language, as if *Emeryn* directly addresses the audience. The addition of the 🤔 🙄 🤔 emojis further enhances the expressiveness and playful tone of the comment. The emojis, which conventionally represent a surprised facial expression, are repurposed within the context of the *memeland* to convey humor and a sense of shared understanding among the participants.

The layered meanings conveyed through this usage of the emoji encompass several aspects. Firstly, *Emeryn* employs the emoji to emphasize a sense of surprise or amazement, amplifying their reaction to the content displayed in the photos. By visually representing widened eyes and an open mouth through the 🤪 emoji, they aim to intensify their response playfully. Secondly, the deviation from the conventional meaning of the emoji introduces a subversive element, as it diverges from the expected interpretation and challenges the established semiotic associations. To ensure a more substantial alignment between the emoji and the intended context, *Emeryn* could utilize the 😲 emoji instead. According to *emojipedia.org*, the 😲 emoji signifies a state of astonishment or surprise, which would better capture the intended meaning of *Emeryn's* comment in response to the *meme* post. That alternative emoji would maintain the tone of excitement and engagement with the content while more closely aligning with its intended interpretation.

Apart from emoji analysis 🤪, the researcher has also observed the use of other emojis, such as 🤩 which are contained in Data 25 and Data 26 below.

Data 25 : 🤩👩 (posted by *Friska* in *9GAG Twitter*)

Data 26 : bro 🤩 is thinking about the universe 🤩👉🤩 (posted by *ArrietyAbsurd_🤩* in *9GAG Twitter*)

The comments in Data 25 and Data 26 from “*Friska*” and “*ArrietyAbsurd_🤩*” on *9GAG memeland* pertain to photos of two dogs with different expressions, symbolizing the contrast between our posts on social media (which make us happy) and other people’s posts (which we could not like).

Applying Halliday's social semiotic theory, the field of these comments revolves around the online community of 9GAG, specifically in the context of humorous and relatable content related to dogs and social media experiences. The participants in this context are members of the 9GAG community, engaging in positive interactions and sharing their thoughts through comments. The tenor of the situation indicates that "Friska" and "ArrietyAbsurd_🤔" are users on 9GAG, commenting on the post created by the admin of 9GAG *memeland*. The mode of text used in these comments reflects the spoken language in a written form, with a direct and conversational tone. Emojis enhance the expression of emotions and add a playful element to the comments.

According to *emojipedia.org*, the 🤔 emoji, commonly known as "smiling face with sunglasses," represents coolness, confidence, and a laid-back attitude. That conveys a sense of being "hip" or "chill" and is often associated with feeling relaxed or having a carefree demeanor. The layered meanings conveyed through the usage of emoji include various elements. Firstly, the 🤔 emoji is employed to evoke a sense of nonchalance, confidence, or a laid-back attitude in response to the content shared in the *meme* post. It adds a touch of coolness to the users' expressions, indicating their detachment or perceived superiority. That usage aligns with the established connotations of the emoji as a symbol of being "cool" or "in control."

However, the deviation from the conventional meaning introduces a subversive element to the users' comments. By using the 🤔 emoji within the context of the dogs' expressions and the discourse surrounding social media posts, they infuse irony or sarcasm into their reactions. The subversive use challenges

the expected response and introduces an element of self-awareness or critique regarding the impact of social media on self-perception and comparison. To enhance the alignment between the emoji and the intended context, users could consider using the 🤔 emoji. According to *emojipedia.org*, the 🤔 emoji signifies a pensive or thoughtful expression, often associated with contemplating or pondering. That alternative emoji would better capture the idea of the dog thinking about the universe in Data 26 while maintaining a sense of humor and engagement with the content.

Furthermore, apart from observing emoji 😊 as in Data 25 and Data 26, the researcher has also observed the meaning of using emoji 🏃 as in Data 27 and Data 28 below.

Data 27 : For *TosTos* 🏠 🏃 #*TosTosxNCTDREAM* (posted by *Drip* in *NCT Dream Center Twitter* fan page)

The field of this comment is the *NCT Dream Center*, a *Twitter* fan page dedicated to the *NCT Dream* boyband. The context revolves around the *NCT Dream* and *TosTos* collaboration announcement, indicating a promotional or marketing aspect. Participants engaging with this post are likely fans of *NCT Dream* or members of the *NCT Dream* fanbase, as they are following and interacting with the official fan page. Regarding the tenor, the *NCT Dream Center Twitter* fan page participants share a common interest in *NCT Dream*. They have a fan-fan page admin relationship, where the admin is a facilitator or mediator of information related to *NCT Dream*. The users, such as *Drip*, in this case, express their enthusiasm and support for the collaboration through their comments. The

text mode in this context is a hybrid of spoken-like and written language on *Twitter*, with an added layer of direct speech through emojis. The comment includes emojis such as 🏠🏃, which enhance and supplement the text with visual cues and emotional expressions.

According to *emojipedia.org*, this 🏃 represents a person running. However, when analyzed from a semiotic perspective, the meaning conveyed by the user is not appropriate. The context of the comment revolves around the announcement of the collaboration between *NCT Dream* and *TosTos* snack, which is good news for fans in the *NCT Dream Center*. The user's response with the 🏃 emoji deviates from the expected meaning, potentially introducing ambiguity or confusion. That is reinforced by the results of interviews with respondents as follows.

Excerpt 9: Ahh, so, I'm shocking new launch of TOs Tos from Indonesia have a contract with NCT... So, the emoji running girl is represent that I want to buy it right now! Lol

In the given context, where the announcement of the *NCT Dream* and *TosTos* snack collaboration is being made in the *NCT Dream Center*, the use of the 🏃 emoji appears unrelated or incongruous. However, an excerpt from the user's interview (Excerpt 9) sheds light on the justification for this deviated meaning. The user explains that the running girl emoji represents her eagerness to purchase the product immediately upon learning about the collaboration. In this case, the user's interpretation of the emoji as a representation of her desire to acquire the newly launched *TosTos* snack aligns with her response and enthusiasm.

To ensure that the user in Data 27 connects her comment with the context of the collaboration announcement, she could consider using emojis that more directly convey her excitement and anticipation. *Emojipedia.org* can serve as a resource to explore suitable options. For instance, the user could opt for emojis such as 🥰🔥 or 🎉👏, which express enthusiasm, joy, and celebration. By selecting emojis that better align with the positive sentiment surrounding the *NCT Dream* and *TosTos* collaboration, the user can enhance the coherence and clarity of her comment while effectively conveying her excitement and desire to purchase the product.

In a different context, emojis 🏃 whose meanings are layered and deviated, are also found on *9GAG's Twitter* fan page.

Data 28 : that's absolutely f true 🏃👤🎉 (posted by *Bartholomew_Beast* 省 in *9GAG Twitter*)

The field of this comment pertains to the photos of the dogs and their expressions, highlighting the emotional disparity between the two scenarios. One dog's expression reflects happiness upon viewing one's posts, while the other conveys dislike or negative emotions toward other people's posts on social media. In terms of tenor, the participants in this social semiotic analysis are the users on the *9GAG memeland* platform, including *Bartholomew_Beast* 省, and the administrator of the *memeland* who posted the content. The users engage in a relationship of shared understanding and participation within the online community, expressing their agreement or validation through their comments. The

mode of text used in this comment is written language, specific to *Twitter*, with a conversational tone as if directly speaking.

The use of the 🏃 emoji can be interpreted beyond its literal running or jogging representation. It could imply a sense of urgency or quick agreement, indicating the user's enthusiastic support for the truthfulness of the statement. The 🤗 emoji, which signifies a hug, can be seen as an expression of empathy or solidarity with the sentiment expressed in the *meme*. The 🤣 emoji, denoting laughter, suggests that the user finds the *meme* amusing or relatable.

To ensure a more appropriate use of emojis that aligns with the given context, users in Data 28 could consider utilizing emojis that directly convey emotions associated with viewing one's posts or other people's posts on social media. For instance, they could use 😊 to express happiness when seeing their posts and 😞 to represent dissatisfaction or indifference towards other people's posts. By selecting emojis that reflect the intended emotions in the context, users can enhance the clarity and accuracy of their communication. *Emojipedia.org* can serve as a valuable resource to identify the original meaning and potential connotations of different emojis, aiding users in making informed choices in their online discourse.

Not only the deviation of meaning in 🏃 emoji. The researcher has further observed that the deviation of meaning also occurs in emoji 😊 as shown in Data 29 and Data 30.

Data 29 : literally me 🙌🔥😂 (posted by *Zofihno* ✍️ in *9GAG Twitter*)

Data 30 : It's hilarious 🤪😂🙄 (posted by *Bowie_* in *9GAG Twitter*)

The comments from “Zofihno 🖋️” and “Bowie_” on the *9GAG memeland* are in response to the photos of two dogs expressing contrasting emotions related to social media posts. The first dog represents happiness when viewing our posts, while the second dog represents a dislike or adverse reaction when viewing other people’s posts. Analyzing these comments within the framework of Halliday’s context of the situation in social semiotics, we can examine the field, tenor, and mode of text. The field of these comments relates to the theme of humor and relatable experiences on social media. The photos of the dogs serve as a visual representation of the emotions associated with viewing different types of posts. The comments from “Zofihno 🖋️” and “Bowie_” reflect their engagement with this theme and their connection to the content shared. The tenor reveals the relationship and roles of the participants within the *9GAG memeland*. “Zofihno 🖋️” and “Bowie_” are users interacting with the platform and responding to the content posted by other users. Their roles are that of active participants and contributors to the *memeland* community. While they are not directly related to the admin who posted the content, they are significant in generating discussions and reactions. The text mode in these comments represents a written language style miming informal spoken language. The use of emojis, such as 🙌, 🔥, 😂, 🤪, and 🤨, enhances the expressive nature of the comments. Emojis add layers of meaning and convey emotions, gestures, or reactions accompanying the text.

According to *emojipedia.org*, the 😂 emoji typically represents a "face with tears of joy" and is commonly used to indicate laughter or amusement. However, when analyzed from a semiotic perspective in the given context, the meaning

attributed by the users is inappropriate. The use of the 😂 emoji goes beyond its literal representation of laughter. It signifies the users' identification with the depicted scenario and their amusement at the relatability of the situation. The 🔥 emoji, denoting fire, can be interpreted as an intensifier, emphasizing the users' solid emotional response to the *meme*. The 🙌 and 🙏 emojis, respectively representing raised hands and a person receiving a massage, could convey a sense of agreement or relaxation in response to the humorous content.

To ensure a more appropriate use of emojis that aligns with the given context, users in Data 29 and Data 30 could consider utilizing emojis that directly convey emotions associated with amusement or relatability. For example, they could use 😂 to express laughter or 😊 to denote amusement. Additionally, emojis such as 🙌 or 😊 could indicate agreement or positivity in response to the relatable content.

Apart from using emoji as in Data 29 and Data 30, the following is a deviation in the meaning of emoji, such as 🙌 listed in Data 31 and Data 32.

Data 31 : ❤️ 🙌 🍷 #TosTosxNCTDREAM (posted by *Sabi* :) in NCT Dream Center *Twitter* fan page)



In the text field, the comment pertains to announcing a collaboration between *NCT Dream* and the snack brand *TosTos*. It reflects the fan community's excitement and support for this partnership. The comment is situated within the specific domain of *NCT Dream* fandom, indicating the shared interest and enthusiasm for the boyband. Regarding tenor, the participants in this context are fans of *NCT Dream*, who actively engage with the *NCT Dream Center Twitter* fan



page. The relationship between the participants and the admin of the *NCT Dream Center* can be characterized as that of a fanbase and its representative. The fans look to the admin for updates and announcements related to *NCT Dream*.


In contrast, the admin acts as a mediator, disseminating information and fostering a sense of community among the fans. In terms of the mode of text, the comment employs a written language style commonly seen on *Twitter*. Despite the written form, the language used is conversational, aiming to simulate direct speech. The addition of emojis, such as 🟢 (green heart), 💃 (woman dancing), and 🪷 (person in lotus position), enhances the expressiveness and emotional tone of the comment.




According to *emojipedia.org*, the original meaning of this emoji signifies dancing, joy, or celebration. However, when analyzed from a semiotic perspective, the meaning attributed by the user deviates from the original intention. The context of the comment revolves around the announcement of the collaboration between *NCT Dream* and *TosTos* snack. *Sabi's* use of the 💃 emoji suggests that she is expressing her happiness and excitement about the news. That deviates from the original meaning of the emoji, which represents the act of dancing. Nevertheless, the user's deviation from the intended meaning can be justified based on her explanation provided in Excerpt 10.




Excerpt 10: Okay, so ehh... green heart represents our symbol as NCT Dream fans... Idk for sure, but people on group frequently use it, so I know sometime Haechan use green heart too... but the dancing emoji, refer to that I'm so happy to know the news about NCT have a contract with tostos.

Sabi explains that the green heart emoji  is commonly used among *NCT Dream* fans to symbolize their support and love for the group. The dancing emoji , in this particular context, represents *Sabi's* happiness upon learning about the collaboration between *NCT Dream* and *TosTos* snack. It reflects her joy and enthusiasm for this partnership.

Considering the user's connection of the context with her comment, a more appropriate emoji that aligns with the original meaning could be used. To express excitement and happiness regarding the collaboration, an emoji such as  (grinning face with smiling eyes) or  (smiling face with heart eyes) would be more suitable. These emojis convey positive emotions and are commonly associated with expressions of joy and admiration.

In a different context, emojis  whose meanings are layered and deviated are also found on *9GAG's Twitter* fan page.

Data 32 : LOL   , 100% me (posted by *Alegre.Alexi* in *9GAG Twitter*)

The field of this comment pertains to the *meme* about dogs and their expressions, highlighting the dichotomy between self-referential happiness and dissatisfaction with others' posts on social media—the participants, including *Alegre.Alexi* and the admin of the *9GAG memeland*, who posted the *meme*, engage in a virtual relationship as content creators and viewers in an online community. The mode of text used in this comment reflects the characteristics of written language on *Twitter*, resembling informal spoken language. The inclusion of emojis such as  (rolling on the floor laughing),  (skull), and  (woman

dancing) adds visual elements to enhance the expression. These emojis contribute to layering meanings and convey the user's emotional response to the *meme*.

The comment "LOL 🤪👁️💃, 100% me" was posted by *Alegre.Alexi* in *9GAG Twitter* (Data 32) utilizes several emojis, including 💃, also found in the previous Data 31. According to *emojipedia.org*, the 💃 emoji typically represents a woman dancing or a joyful expression. However, when analyzed from a semiotic perspective, the meaning attributed to this emoji by the user could not align with its conventional interpretation. In the context of the comment, which revolves around photos of two dogs expressing different reactions to social media posts, the use of 💃 could seem out of place. The response to this *meme* in the *9GAG memeland* is expressed through the same 💃 emoji. The user's intention and potential deviation from the original emoji meaning must be considered.

If the users in Data 32, like *Alegre.Alexi*, wishes to connect his comment with the context of the *meme* post. A more appropriate emoji could be used to convey the intended meaning. For instance, an emoji that represents laughter, such as 😂 or 🤪, could be used to align with the humorous nature of the *meme*. Alternatively, an emoji that symbolizes agreement or understanding, such as 👍 or 😊, could be more suitable to express his relatability or connection to the content.

4.1.1.4 Contextual Shifting

Contextual shifting refers to *Twitter* users' involve ability of emojis to acquire different meanings depending on the specific context or situation. Emojis can be adapted to suit the current conversation or to reflect the emotions and sentiments of fans.

Data 33 : it's kinda true tho haha 😏 (posted by *Yuna_04* in *9GAG Twitter*)

Data 34 : bro said 😁😏 (posted by *Hissoka_* in *9GAG Twitter*)

The comments in Data 33 and Data 34 from users “*Yuna_04*” and “*Hissoka_*” on the *9GAG memeland* platform, which read “it’s kinda true tho haha 😏” and “bro said 😁😏,” respectively, can be analyzed using Halliday’s context of the situation in social semiotics. These comments are in response to the photos of two dogs with different expressions, representing the contrast between our posts and other people’s posts on social media, where we could feel happy seeing our posts but not appreciating others’ posts. The researcher applied the context of the situation in terms of the field, and the comments are situated within the *9GAG memeland* platform, known for humorous and entertaining content. The context of the photos involving the dogs’ expressions sets the stage for users to share their reactions and opinions. Regarding the tenor, the participants are users of the *9GAG* platform. “*Yuna_04*” and “*Hissoka_*” are two participants who engage with the content by expressing their thoughts. The role of the admin who posted the photos is to curate and share content that sparks interactions among the users. In analyzing the mode of text, the comments are presented in written language but with a conversational tone, simulating direct speech. “*Yuna_04*” and “*Hissoka_*”

also incorporate emojis to enhance their expression. The use of “haha” and “bro” further reflects the informal nature of the text.

According to *emojipedia.org*, the 🙄 emoji typically represents a person rolling their eyes, often indicating skepticism, annoyance, or disbelief. In the context of the comments, which relate to photos of two dogs reflecting different reactions to social media posts, including the 🙄 emoji, could seem out of place. Not only that, the response within the *9GAG memeland* community employs the same 🙄 emoji, indicating a shared understanding or response to the *meme*. That contextual shifting suggests a reinterpretation of the emoji's meaning within the specific discourse of Gen Z's *Twitter* community.

To better align their comments with the context of the *meme* post, users in Data 33 and Data 34, namely *Yuna_04* and *Hissoka_*, could consider using alternative emojis that convey their intended meaning more accurately. For instance, an emoji expressing agreement or affirmation, such as 👍 or 😊, might be more appropriate to indicate their acceptance or endorsement of the content.

Alternatively, an emoji symbolizing amusement, such as 😂 or 🤔, could be used to align with the humor associated with the *meme*.

Furthermore, in addition to the deviations in the meaning of emoji 🙄 as found in Data 33 and Data 34, the researcher has also observed deviations in emoji 🤔, which are listed in Data 35 below.

Data 35 : She's like: “yeah I did that” 🤔 (posted by *Ember Only* in *9GAG*)

The comment in Data 35 made by the user “*Ember Only*” on the *9GAG memeland* platform states, “She’s like: ‘yeah I did that’ 🙏,” can be analyzed using Halliday’s context of the situation in social semiotics. That comment is in response to the photos of two dogs with different expressions, representing the contrast between our posts and other people’s posts on social media, where we could feel happy seeing our posts but not appreciating others’ posts. The researcher applied the context of the situation in terms of the field, and the comment is situated within the *9GAG memeland* platform, known for humorous and entertaining content. The context of the photos involving the dogs’ expressions sets the stage for users to share their reactions and interpretations. Regarding the tenor, the participant is a user of the *9GAG* platform, specifically identified as “*Ember Only*.” That user engages with the content by commenting on one of the dog’s expressions. The role of the admin who posted the photos is to curate and share content that sparks interactions among the users. In analyzing the mode of text, the comment is presented in written language that mimics direct speech. The emoji adds a visual element to the comment and could convey a specific meaning or tone.

According to *emojipedia.org*, this 🙏 emoji represents a face with a military-style salute gesture. In the context of the comment, which relates to photos of two dogs expressing their reactions to social media posts, the use of the 🙏 saluting face emoji could appear incongruous or unrelated. The response within the *9GAG memeland* community using the same 🙏 emoji indicates a contextual shift in the meaning of the emoji within the specific Gen Z *Twitter* discourse.

To better align the comment with the context of the *meme* post, the user in Data 35, *Ember Only*, could consider using alternative emojis that more accurately convey her intended meaning. For instance, an emoji symbolizing affirmation or agreement, such as 👍 or 🙌, would be more appropriate to express approval or acknowledgment of the situations described in the *meme* post. These emojis better align with the original meanings described on *emojipedia.org* and enhance the user's ability to communicate their response effectively.

4.1.2 The Factors of Deviating Meaning in Emoji

The rise of digital communication has brought about a significant transformation in how people communicate, giving birth to new forms of language. One prominent aspect of this digital language is the use of emojis. In line with Alshenqeti (2016) shows that emojis are not a new language but a new form of an old method of communication. That study explores the factors contributing to the deviating meanings of emojis on *Twitter*, focusing on comments observed in the *NCT Dream Center* fanbase and *9GAG memeland*, examining the factors of substitutes, irony or sarcasm, *memes* and references, and trends. Each analysis contains data in the form of answers from respondents related to deviations from emoji meanings in Gen Z. The following are the factors that affect the deviation of the meaning of emoji on *Twitter*.

4.1.2.1 Substitutive Factor

Substitutive factors indicate that emojis can replace words or phrases, allowing for more efficient and expressive communication. However, substituting words with emojis can lead to ambiguity and misinterpretation, as the intended

meaning could differ depending on the receiver's understanding of the emoji. In the context of *NCT Dream Center* and *9GAG memeland*, individuals could use emojis as substitutes to express their reactions, emotions, or thoughts in response to the content posted. Based on the results of observations and interviews by the researcher, Gen Z often uses factor emoji as a substitute in their sentences on *Twitter*. That is because emoji can complete sentences and clarify the feelings or expressions they want to include on *Twitter*. Thus, the substitutive factor is proven based on the answers of Gen Z when interviewed.

Excerpt 1: *I believe that they have the freedom to express themselves through emojis creatively... I see emojis as **versatile tools** that can be repurposed and reinterpreted to convey something meaningful. That agency allows them to contribute to emerging new or alternative meanings for emojis. (Nil_Jinbe in NCT Dream Center Twitter fan page)*

Excerpt 2: *Ahh, basically I'm doing it for fun only **I don't have a specific agenda or something negative**... that's mean I want to say that the post is cool because it is the same with what I did every day while on social media. (Friska in 9GAG Twitter)*

Excerpt 3: *tbh I'm using emoji just to fit out my words. U know, emoji make it more complete, and I'm using it **bcs the pictures are exactly what I mean**. (Antonia_Alaska in 9GAG Twitter)*

Their interviews explored the reasons behind this practice, confirming the existence of substitutive factors contributing to the deviation of meanings in emojis. *Nil_Jinbe* highlights emojis as versatility, perceiving them as capable of repurposing and reinterpreting to convey something meaningful. The users' agency in creatively utilizing emojis enables them to contribute to emerging new or alternative meanings associated with these visual symbols. That supports the argument that emojis are a substitute for sentences, as users harness their adaptability to convey complex ideas concisely. In line with *Nil_Jinbe*, *Friska*

explains her use of emojis as primarily driven by a sense of enjoyment, without a specific agenda or negative connotations. That suggests that the users' decision to substitute emojis for sentences is rooted in the desire to express positive sentiments or convey appreciation for specific content. In other words, users employ emojis to convey meaning without solely relying on written sentences, enhancing the communicative experience through visual elements. Not only that, *Antonia_Alaska* acknowledges that emojis serve to complement his words and provide a sense of completeness. Using emojis, he believes the visual representation precisely aligns with his intended meaning. That element further strengthens the argument that users resort to substituting emojis for sentences when they find that the visual depiction effectively captures their thoughts or emotions in a manner that words alone cannot.

4.1.2.2 Irony or sarcasm Factor

Irony or sarcasm means that by combining specific emojis with textual messages, individuals can alter the tone or intention of their statements, implying a hidden meaning or subtext. However, the interpretation of irony or sarcasm conveyed through emojis can differ among individuals, leading to potential miscommunication or differing understandings. The irony or sarcasm factor in the deviation of emoji meanings on *Twitter* by Gen Z is often carried out by *Twitter* users who are members of *9GAG memeland*. That is because the *meme* posts on *9GAG* are inseparable from elements of sarcasm, regardless of the form of the sarcasm. The irony or sarcasm factor is widely practiced by users at *9GAG*, while *Twitter* users at the *NCT Dream Center* fanbase rarely or never even use emojis as a form of sarcasm. Because posting on *NCT Dream Center* is semi-formal and is

only used for information regarding their favorite boyband. That can be seen from the answers of Gen Z in the interview session via *Twitter*.

Excerpt 4: *bcs it's so much fun to use emoji, you know my friend they were using emoji on every chat. But sometime, im using **emoji to sarcasm** (ArrietyAbsurd_ 🙄 in 9GAG Twitter)*

Excerpt 5: *like, I could employ these emojis to add an element of **wit, irony, or playful exaggeration to my tweets**. For me, deviating the meaning of an emoji can enhance comedic effects and engage in humorous exchanges. (Cynna in 9GAG Twitter)*

Excerpt 6: *ah nah, you know sometime I just keep following the trends on Twitter, maybe like people **said to show the sarcasm**. It doesn't feel right if I'm not using emoji to complete my text. (Bowie_ in 9GAG Twitter)*

The interviews provide insight into the reasons behind this practice, confirming the presence of irony or sarcasm factors contributing to the deviation of meanings in emojis. *ArrietyAbsurd_ 🙄* expresses the enjoyment derived from using emojis, mentioning how their friends frequently employ emojis in their chats. However, *ArrietyAbsurd_ 🙄* specifically uses emojis to convey sarcasm. That indicates that users resort to emojis as a tool to add a layer of irony or sarcastic undertones to their messages. Adopting emojis for sarcasm aligns with deviating from the literal meaning of the emoji to hidden meanings. Besides that, *Cynna* discusses the role of emojis in adding wit, irony, or playful exaggeration to her tweets. By deviating from the meaning of emojis, she aims to enhance comedic effects and engage in humorous exchanges. That suggests that users strategically utilize emojis as a form of irony, leveraging the ambiguous nature of these symbols to create humorous or sarcastic undertones. In this context, emojis serve as tools to convey hidden meanings that contribute to the message's overall ironic or sarcastic effect.

Furthermore, *Bowie_* mentions following trends on *Twitter*, mainly using emojis to display sarcasm. *Bowie_* feels that using emojis is integral to completing her text when intending to convey sarcasm. That demonstrates the users' belief that emojis effectively capture the nuances of sarcasm and that omitting emojis would hinder the proper expression of ironic or sarcastic intent.

4.1.2.3 Memes and References Factor

Memes and references mean that emojis used in *memes* can carry specific connotations or references understood by a particular online community. However, the meaning of these emojis could be lost or misinterpreted by individuals unfamiliar with the associated *meme* or reference. Incorporating *memes* and references in conjunction with emojis in the Gen Z *Twitter* discourse of *NCT Dream Center* and *9GAG memeland* enables users to communicate with brevity, humor, and cultural relevance. The answers of Gen Z respondents justified this during the interview as follows.

Excerpt 7: *I mean, I dont have specific purpose why I'm doing that... it just because people use, my idol sometimes use it, and for me. When I'm using emoji, I dont care about the meaning, I just put it the emoji for some fun or creativity? Lol. (ONLY ON YOUR Helin in NCT Dream Center Twitter fan page)*

Excerpt 8: *I dont know if you ask me in detail, i Just know because people on group use it. (Hamtaro Jaemin in NCT Dream Center Twitter fan page)*

Excerpt 9: *but in 9GAG, where deviating emoji meanings are tied to specific memes, people who are part of 9gag rely on a **shared understanding of those references** ... We draw upon common knowledge or established meanings associated with those memes. (Igon_MunL in 9GAG Twitter)*

Emojis can become an integral part of the *meme* or reference itself, taking on context-specific interpretations that deviate from conventional meanings. The

supporting reasons in the excerpts explored how users employ emojis as *memes* and references within this context. Excerpt 7 illustrates that *ONLY ON YOUR Helin's* usage of emojis is not driven by a specific purpose but rather by the observation that others, including their idol, use them. The user mentions using emojis for "fun or creativity," indicating that emojis serve as tools to amplify expression and engage lightheartedly. That suggests emojis contribute to the humor or playfulness of *memes* and references shared within the community.

Similarly, excerpt 8 reveals Hamtaro Jaemin's usage of emojis being influenced by the observation that others in the group employ them. Although the user could not possess in-depth knowledge of the nuanced meanings of emojis, their usage reflects a desire to conform to the group's practices and participate in shared cultural experiences. In this case, emojis become a means of expressing affiliation and reinforcing the sense of community within the group. Also, excerpt 9 emphasizes the importance of shared understanding within the *9GAG* community, where deviating emoji meanings are tied to specific *memes*.

Igon_MunL highlights that people in this community rely on a shared understanding of these references, drawing upon common knowledge or established meanings associated with the *memes*. Emojis serve as visual cues or symbols that evoke specific cultural references, facilitating effective communication and fostering a sense of belonging among community members.

4.1.2.4 Trends Factor

Trends factor refers to emojis gaining popularity and widespread use in digital communication. As technology and online platforms have advanced, emojis have become famous for visual expression and communication. *Twitter*

users at *NCT Dream Center* and *9GAG* often use emojis not because they include hidden meanings but because they follow *Twitter* trends regarding emojis as an alternative communication method.

Excerpt 10: *I'm not sure. But I think emoji can keep up with the times. U know, sometimes people use emoji, and I, as a reader, can know what its meaning or what those people are trying to say... so, basically, emoji can change how we communicate in the future. (Alegre.Alexi in 9GAG Twitter)*

Excerpt 11: *Hashtags and ongoing trends on Twitter can influence the interpretation of emojis. (Melin Luna in NCT Dream Center Twitter fan page)*

Excerpt 12: *I know the true meaning of some emojis, but I deviate those meaning because my friends did that... I mean, trends, meme whatever you call... I'm following them right now. (Canan_00 in NCT Dream Center Twitter fan page)*

In excerpt 10, the respondent named *Alegre.Alexi*, suggests that emojis have the ability to keep up with the times. The user notes that when people use emojis, readers can understand their intended meanings or messages. That indicates that emojis have the potential to shape the future of communication. By using emojis in their digital interactions, users are adapting to the evolving trends in communication methods, embracing emojis' visual and expressive nature to enhance their online conversations. Not only that, in excerpt 11, *Melin Luna* emphasizes the influence of hashtags and ongoing trends on *Twitter* in shaping the interpretation of emojis. Hashtags serve as a means of categorizing and grouping content, including those associated with specific trends or events. Users who engage with these hashtags become familiar with emojis' prevalent usage and interpretations within the associated trend.

Consequently, emojis take on contextual meanings and associations, aligning with the ongoing trends and allowing users to communicate effectively within

those digital communities. Furthermore, excerpt 12, shared by Canan_00, highlights the role of friends and peer influence in driving the deviation of emoji meanings. The user mentions deviating from the true meanings of emojis based on what their friends do. She attributes this behavior to following trends and *memes*, indicating a desire to conform to their social circle's practices and cultural norms. By aligning their emoji usage with the trends and practices of their friends, users actively participate in the ongoing dialogue and contribute to the collective understanding of emoji meanings.

4.2 Discussion

The research objectives of this study were to analyze the deviations in the meaning of emojis in the discourse of Gen Z users on *NCT Dream Center* and *9GAG memeland Twitter*, employing social semiotic theory as proposed by M.A.K Halliday (1978). The present study investigates how emojis deviate from conventional interpretations and acquire new meanings within these online communities. The study seeks to understand the forms and factors contributing to the deviation meaning of emoji, and it explores how users creatively repurpose emojis, employ irony or sarcasm, incorporate *memes* and references, and follow trends to convey something meaningful in their digital interactions. By applying social semiotic theory, the study aims to comprehensively analyze how emojis function as communicative resources within the discourse of Gen Z users.

The social semiotic theory by MAK Halliday (1978) examines how meaning is constructed, conveyed, and interpreted within social contexts. It views communication as a multifaceted process involving various semiotic resources, including language, visual signs, and other communicative modes. In deviating

emoji meanings, social semiotic theory helps uncover social factors' role in shaping emojis' interpretations and usage. Freedman (2018) argues that emojis reveal discrimination and diversity within cultures. Thus, Emojis are visual signs that carry social and cultural connotations, negotiated and understood within specific communities. These meanings can be influenced by shared knowledge, trends, *memes*, and references, as well as the social norms and practices of the online community.

Relating to answering the first research question, the analysis explored the distinct ways emojis are utilized; intertextual references, subversive uses, layered meanings, and contextual shifting. These findings contribute to our understanding of emoji communication and provide insights into online interactions' complex and dynamic nature within these communities.

The main findings from the research on the deviating meaning of emojis in Gen Z's *Twitter* discourse within *NCT Dream Center* and *9GAG* reveal several forms of meaning deviation, including intertextual references, subversive uses, layered meanings, and contextual shifting. Intertextual references involve emojis that refer to specific cultural references or online communities. For example, on the *NCT Dream Center Twitter* fan page, the 🥰 emoji was used in Data 1, Data 2, and Data 3 to express emotions of joy, admiration, or gratitude related to the announcement launching of *NCT Dream* and *TosTos* snack collaboration. In this context, the more appropriate emoji would be 😂, which conveys laughter or amusement. In the *9GAG Twitter* community, the 🤮 emoji was used in Data 3, accompanying images of dogs with different expressions. Here, the emoji took on a contrasting meaning, indicating a negative response or dislike towards other

people's posts on social media. In this context, the more suitable emoji would also be 😂, representing laughter or mockery.

Similarly, the analysis of Data 6 and Data 7 showed the usage of the 🌊 emoji in different contexts. In the *NCT Dream Center*, it was related to the collaboration announcement, while in *9GAG*, it had a different meaning associated with explicit content. In the *NCT Dream Center* context, more appropriate emojis would be 😍 or 😊 to express positive emotions, while in the *9GAG* context, 😲 or 😂 could be used to convey surprise or laughter. Lastly, Data 8 and 9 featured the 🤖 emoji used in the *9GAG* community. In this context, it indicated a sense of humor or amusement. Here, the more fitting emojis would be 😂 or 🎭 to capture the intended comedic effect.

Subversive emojis use involves employing them in unexpected or unconventional ways to convey sarcastic, ironic, or subversive meanings. For example, in Data 10, Data 11, and Data 12, the same emoji 🐶 is used. In the *NCT Dream Center* context, this emoji signifies the good news about the announcement launching of *NCT Dream* and *TosTos* snack collaboration. However, in the *9GAG* community, where photos of two dogs are associated with this emoji, its meaning diverges. One dog's expression represents happiness when seeing our posts on social media, while the other dog's expression signifies disliking other people's posts. In this context, the appropriate emojis to convey these sentiments would be 😂 and ❤️ or 😍.

Similarly, Data 13, Data 14, Data 15, and Data 16 employ the emojis 🤖, 🎭, and 🔥. In the *NCT Dream Center*, these emojis signify excitement and

enthusiasm about the collaboration between *NCT Dream* and *TosTos* snack. However, their meanings deviate within the *9GAG* community, where the context involves dogs' expressions. In this context, the proper emojis to convey the intended emotions would be 🍷, 🎉, 🙌, 😊, and 😮. Moving on, Data 17 and Data 18 use the emoji ✨, which in the *NCT Dream Center* context represents excitement and celebration regarding the collaboration. However, in the *9GAG* community, the same emoji has a different meaning associated with dogs' expressions indicating a dislike for other people's posts. In this context, the appropriate emojis would be 🍷, 🙌, and 🎉. Lastly, Data 19, Data 20, and Data 21 utilize the emoji 🦠. In the *NCT Dream Center*, this emoji represents colorful content related to the collaboration. However, in the *9GAG* context, it is associated with expressions of finding something humorous or being overwhelmed. Thus, the suitable emojis in this context would be 😊, 🌈, and 🎉.

Layered meanings refer to emojis to convey multiple or hidden meanings simultaneously. In Data 22, Data 23, and Data 24, the same emoji 🗨️👄🗨️ is used. In the *NCT Dream Center* context, this emoji signifies the excitement surrounding the announcement of the collaboration between *NCT Dream* and *TosTos* snack. However, within the *9GAG* community, where dogs' expressions are associated with this emoji, its meaning takes a different turn. One dog's expression represents happiness when seeing our posts on social media, while the other dog's expression signifies disliking other people's posts. In this context, the appropriate emojis to convey these sentiments would be 😮, 🎉🙌, or 😊👄.

Moving on to Data 25 and Data 26, the emoji 🙄 is utilized. In the *9GAG* context, this emoji relates to dogs' expressions, signifying the dislike of other people's posts on social media. Therefore, the appropriate emoji in this context would be 🤔, indicating a sense of contemplation or uncertainty. Data 27 and Data 28 employ the emojis 🏃 and 🏃. In the *NCT Dream Center* context, these emojis convey the enthusiasm surrounding the collaboration announcement. However, in the *9GAG* community, where dogs' expressions are associated with these emojis, their meanings deviate. Here, the appropriate emojis to express the intended sentiments would be 😍🔥 or 🎉👏. Data 29 and Data 30 use the emoji 😂. In the *9GAG* context, this emoji signifies amusement or laughter, irrespective of whether it is our posts or others'. Therefore, the suitable emojis in this context would be 😊 or 😄, conveying a sense of joy and humor, along with 👍 or 😊 to express approval or contentment. Lastly, Data 31 and Data 32 utilize the emoji 🎉. That emoji in the *NCT Dream Center* represents the excitement and celebration surrounding the collaboration announcement. In the *9GAG* community, the same emoji, associated with dogs' expressions, indicates a dislike for other people's posts. The appropriate emojis in this context would be 😊 or 😍, 😂 or 🤔, and 👍 or 😊, conveying a range of emotions from joy to humor and approval.

Contextual shifting involves emojis in specific contexts to convey different or modified meanings. In Data 33 and Data 34, the emoji 🙄 is employed. Within the *9GAG* context, where dogs' expressions are associated with this emoji, it typically signifies the dislike of other people's posts on social media. However,

the emoji takes on a different meaning in these particular instances. It conveys a sense of amusement or sarcasm in response to a statement or situation. Therefore, the appropriate emojis in this context would be 👍 or 😏, indicating agreement or a lighthearted reaction.

Meanwhile, Data 35 introduces the emoji 🙄, which also undergoes contextual shifting within the 9GAG community. Generally, when associated with dogs' expressions, this emoji signifies the disliking of other people's posts on social media. However, in this specific instance, the emoji depicts a person confidently stating, "yeah I did that." The appropriate emojis in this context would be 👍 or 🎉, expressing approval or celebration.

On the other hand, the second research question shows that the deviation of emoji meanings in the *Twitter* discourse of *NCT Dream Center* and 9GAG by Gen Z is influenced by various factors, including substitution factors, irony or sarcasm factors, *meme* and reference factors, and trend factors. Excerpt 1 reflects the substitutive factor because users believe emojis give individuals the freedom to express themselves creatively. Holtgraves and Robinson (2020) argue that emoji could similarly facilitate recognizing the intended indirect meaning. Therefore, emojis as versatile that can be reused and reinterpreted to convey something meaningful, contributing to new or alternative interpretations.

In addition, excerpts 2 and 3 further support substitutive factors by emphasizing users' usage of emojis as substitutes for sentences. The users mention using emojis for fun, without a specific agenda. They perceive emojis as completing their words and conveying precise meanings through visual representations. Similarly, excerpts 4, 5, and 6 highlight irony or sarcasm factors.

Users express their enjoyment of using emojis and acknowledge that they utilize emojis to convey sarcasm. They employ emojis to add elements of wit, irony, or playful exaggeration to their tweets, thereby enhancing comedic effects and engaging in humorous exchanges. Excerpts 7, 8, and 9 shed light on the influence of *memes* and reference factors. Users indicate that they use emojis without a specific purpose, often due to observing others, including their idols or people in their social groups, using emojis. Emojis become part of shared references and *memes*, relying on a collective understanding and established associated meanings. Excerpt 10 emphasizes the trends factors, where users perceive emojis as keeping up with the times. They believe emojis can effectively convey meaning, allowing readers to understand the intended message. Users speculate that emojis could potentially reshape future communication practices. Excerpt 11 highlights the role of hashtags and ongoing trends on *Twitter* in influencing the interpretation of emojis. These trends contribute to emojis' evolving meanings and usage within the discourse. Furthermore, excerpt 12 further supports the trends factors by indicating that users deviate from the true meaning of emojis based on the actions of their friends and the prevailing trends. Users actively follow trends and engage in *meme* culture, aligning their emoji usage with the evolving practices of the online community.

In answering research questions, the findings in this study regarding forms and factors deviating meaning of emoji are in line with several previous studies. Regarding intertextual references, present research finds that Gen Z *Twitter* users frequently employ emojis to evoke specific cultural or media contexts, such as *memes* or popular phrases. That aligns with previous research by Thornborrow

(2019), who also observed the use of emojis as cultural symbols that reference shared knowledge and experiences. For example, on the *NCT Dream Center Twitter* fan page, a user named *Nil_Jinbe* mentions the agency of emojis in contributing to emerging new or alternative meanings, highlighting the intertextual versatility of emojis. In terms of subversive uses, this research identifies instances where Gen Z *Twitter* users deviate from the conventional meanings of emojis, using them in unconventional or unexpected ways to convey alternative messages. That finding is consistent with the research by Evans (2017), who discussed the subversive potential of emojis in digital communication. For instance, in a comment from a user named *ArrietyAbsurd_ 🤔* on the *9GAG Twitter*, sarcasm is mentioned as a motive for using emojis, indicating the subversive nature of their usage.

Furthermore, concerning layered meanings, present research reveals that Gen Z *Twitter* users employ emojis alongside text to create nuanced and multi-dimensional messages. That finding aligns with the understanding of emojis as tools that augment the expressiveness and subtlety of digital discourse, as discussed by Thornborrow (2019). For example, a user named *Cynna* in the *9GAG Twitter* comments on the ability of emojis to enhance comedic effects and engage in humorous exchanges, illustrating the layered meanings achieved through their usage.

Furthermore, in terms of contextual shifting, the present research highlights that the meaning of emojis can change depending on the surrounding context of the conversation. That supports the notion that emojis are context-dependent symbols, as Evans (2017) discussed. For instance, a user named *Alegre.Alexi*, in

the *9GAG Twitter*, emphasizes the role of emojis in facilitating understanding and communication, indicating their contextual nature.

The second research question in the present study observed the factors contributing to the deviations of meaning in emojis within *Twitter* discourse by Gen Z. The unique finding of the present research is the presence of substitutive factors in the use of emojis by Gen Z individuals. The present research highlights that users creatively repurpose and reinterpret emojis to substitute for sentences or words, allowing for concise and expressive communication. That finding can be seen in *Nil_Jinbe*'s comment on the versatility of emojis and their ability to contribute to emerging new or alternative meanings (excerpt 1). Also, that aligns with previous research by Dresner and Herring (2010), who explored the functions of emoticons in computer-mediated communication. They found that emoticons can serve as substitutes for nonverbal cues, enhancing the illocutionary force of the message. Thus, the present study's findings corroborate their conclusions regarding the substitutive role of emojis in conveying meaning.

The presence of irony or sarcasm factors in emoji usage by Gen Z is another significant finding in the present research. Gen Z employs emojis to add an element of sarcasm, irony, or playful exaggeration to their tweets, enhancing comedic effects and engaging in humorous exchanges. That has been proven in the comments from *ArrietyAbsurd_* 🤪, who mentioned using emojis for sarcasm (excerpt 4). The identification of emojis as tools for irony and sarcasm is supported by the previous studies conducted by Miller (2019), who discussed the sociolinguistic aspects of emojis. Miller highlighted how emojis can contribute to

the expression of emotions and social identity, including the use of irony or sarcasm. That indicates a shared understanding of this phenomenon.

Not only that, but the present research also reveals the influence of *memes*. It references factors in meaning deviations of emojis among Gen Z. The use of emojis in specific *meme* contexts and reliance on a shared understanding of references contribute to the deviations of meaning. *Igon_MunL*'s opinion confirms this, and the respondent answered that the reliance on shared knowledge and established meanings are associated with *memes* on *9GAG* (excerpt 9). That finding resonates with the previous study by Thornborrow (2019), who examined emojis in workplace communication. Thornborrow (2019) discussed how emojis could evoke shared meanings and associations within specific contexts or communities. The present findings align with Thornborrow's (2019) observations regarding the importance of *memes*, references, and shared understanding in deviating emoji meanings.

Furthermore, the present research highlights the impact of trends on meaning deviations in emojis. Emojis can be influenced by ongoing trends on social media platforms like *Twitter*, shaping their interpretation and usage in line with previous research by Evans (2017), who explored the rise of emojis as a visual language in the Internet age. Evans (2017) discussed how emojis reflect contemporary communication practices and trends. Therefore, the present findings align with Evans' (2017) observations regarding the trend-related aspects of emojis in communication. Thus, the influence of trends on emoji usage has also been acknowledged in previous research.

In conclusion, the findings from analyzing deviating meanings of emojis in the context of *NCT Dream Center* and *9GAG Gen Z Twitter* reveal several essential aspects. Emojis such as 🤖, ❤️, 💧, 🔥, 🧑‍🚒, 🎨, 🧑‍🚀, and ✨ are utilized by Gen Z with distinct purposes and meanings. These emojis serve as expressive tools for conveying emotions, emphasizing humor, indicating enthusiasm, or adding visual embellishments to their messages. Gen Z are frequently involved in online activities and readily adopt new forms of language, suggesting a more excellent receptiveness to language evolution than older generations. Their affinity for emojis is influenced by their freedom and flexibility in language usage on *Twitter*, allowing them to express themselves in novel and creative ways. It is important to note that the different language practices and preferences of Gen Z, including their use of emojis, should not be considered incorrect or improper. Instead, these practices reflect their individuality, adaptability, and the unique linguistic dynamics of online communication.

While the research on the deviating meanings of emojis in Gen Z's *Twitter* discourse, specifically within *NCT Dream Center* and *9GAG*, provides valuable insights, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations. Firstly, the research relies heavily on data collected from these specific platforms, which could not represent the broader Gen Z population or the entire range of online discourse. That limited scope could affect the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, future research could benefit from employing diverse data sources and adopting a more comprehensive theoretical framework to account for the multifaceted nature of emoji usage and meaning deviations in Gen Z's *Twitter* discourse.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter presents the researcher's conclusion of the study. That part then continued with the suggestion related to the topic of the study.

5.1 Conclusions

The present study has explored the deviating meaning of emojis among Gen Z in *NCT Dream Center* and *9GAG memeland Twitter* through Halliday's context of the situation in social semiotics. The main findings of this study highlight the various forms and factors that contribute to the deviating meaning of emojis in online communication. The analysis revealed that the forms of deviating meaning include intertextual references, subversive uses, layered meanings, and contextual shifting. These forms demonstrate emoji communication's creative and dynamic nature, where users employ emojis to convey subtle messages beyond their literal interpretations.

Furthermore, the factors influencing emojis' deviating meanings were substitutes, irony or sarcasm, *memes* and references, and trends. These factors reflect the social and cultural contexts in which emoji usage occurs and emphasize the importance of considering intention, context, and shared understandings within online communities. Therefore, this research enhances our knowledge of the deviating meaning of emojis among Gen Z in *NCT Dream Center* and *9GAG memeland Twitter*. It highlights the diverse forms and influential factors in emoji interpretation, advancing our understanding of how emojis are utilized in online communication. By examining these findings through Halliday's framework of

social semiotics, this research contributes to the broader field of digital communication. It provides a foundation for further exploration in this evolving area of study.

5.2 Suggestions

The researcher suggests that future research could explore cross-cultural emoji usage and interpretation variations to extend the scope. Comparing the deviating meaning of emojis among different cultural contexts would unravel the influence of cultural norms, values, and communication styles, highlighting the complex interplay between cultural factors and emoji communication.

The researcher also suggests that researching emojis become increasingly prevalent in influencer marketing campaigns. So, we could explore how influencers strategically use emojis to engage their audiences and shape consumer perceptions. Therefore, investigating the persuasive power of emojis and their role in digital marketing would offer practical implications for brand communication strategies.

By addressing these areas of future research, we can further advance our understanding of the deviating meaning of emojis among Gen Z in *NCT Dream Center* and *9GAG memeland Twitter*. These studies would contribute to the growing knowledge of digital communication, social semiotics, and Gen Z culture while providing practical insights for effective communication in the digital age.

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UIN SUNAN AMPEL
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