

**GESTURE AS LANGUAGE IN DRAKEPOSTING INTERNET MEME
(A STUDY OF SEMIOTICS)**

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ABSTRACT

In digital technology era, memes provide a means of communication across various internet platforms. It is debatable that many people prefer using memes because of their performance. Memes' language shares cultural sense implied in language use. Drakeposting internet meme, for example, provide gestures involving facial expression and hand movement to communicate certain intentions. In semiotics study, gestures are part of signs conveying a specific meaning in a specific culture. This study discusses the ways of Drake's gestures in expressing meanings: (1) the type of gestures; and (2) the meaning conveyed. Data collection taken from a meme-collecting site was analyzed by applying descriptive qualitative method. In the findings, it is identified that gesture symbolizes meaning to communicate Drake's messages to his fans and people who read. Drakeposting internet meme speaks more than they are saying. Thus they motivate readers to improve their reading competency, leading to critical thinking.

Keywords: *gesture, internet meme, semiotics*

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of technology has changed the way people deliver their thought. By and large, most of them are likely to choose visual mode to simplify idea presentation. This phenomenon shows a factor which causes and affects their communication. As an outcome, many platforms use image to distribute ideas without much effort. Later on, the most used media to portray thought is internet meme. It is one method to give a visual presentation of idea. Although, long before internet meme existence, such a pictorial communication, cave painting, has been already conducted by human's ancestor, this meme offers a wide area of spreading in a short time. Thus, it provides human with easy communication platform.

Dawkins (1976) in *The Selfish Gene* firstly introduces meme, or *mimema* in Greek, which means imitated. Meme basically is an invention of unit of cultural transmission. With aid of spreading cultural information, meme has its own pressure by its environment. Diaz (2013) mentioned the concept of memes by Darwin that has some different aspects due to their characteristics and growth in larger medium like internet. Previously, Darwin conceived that people communicate cultural information in many ways. Withal Dawkins & Olesen (in Diaz: 2013) declared that “meme is any form of cultural phenomenon that can be copied from one mind to another.” Owing to his statement, in reality, memes in the internet compete in order to see how thriving their replicator can vie with other memes in the same medium. The cultural information in internet meme is easily accepted by user because in most cases, the meme shares general cultural information. Although internet meme has been edited, the general information stays. In other words, internet meme are easy to manipulate into another new creation.

Regarding to this phenomenon, Olesen in Diaz (2013), also stated that a meme which is easy to learn and remember is more likely to spread and survive. The imitation process on internet meme takes place in internet user’s daily communication today. Every idea in internet meme could be admitted by internet user after passing cooperative principles between the maker and reader. The principles allow people to catch same meaning. General information depicted in an internet meme through words and images. Yet there are memes which are not any words. In this case, any attributes become a tool to understand meaning of an internet meme including signs. Through signs, people embedded fact and their opinion that comes from any culture.

In linguistics approach, sign is taking part of semiotics. The father of semiotics, Ferdinand de Saussure in Chandler (2007) presented semiotic a part of social life that gives a sense on our sensory impression. As a human, sensory impression is a fundamental instrument to discover things around. In other place around the same time, an American philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce was also formulating his own model of the sign, *semeiotic*. Both of them were introducing semiotic approach yet their theories are dissimilar.

Zoest in Yakin and Totu (2014) mentioned Saussure is more likely to intend the activity of human mind about sign which have purpose and specific intention yet Peirce conceive everything that is exist in environment as a sign as long as the thing represents meaning according to one’s interpretation. Peirce in Chandler (2007) mounted a triadic model which consists of representamen (where the sign takes form), object (reference of the sign), and interpretant (sense made of the sign). To characterize a sign, Peirce’s triadic model is fundamental. Representamen, known as sign vehicle must be known first as people function

their senses towards the object. After decoding the sign in object, they may have interpretation. This method made Pierce's triadic model practicable in applied linguistics to interpret a media such as image and video.

Related to the theory, Costa and Xavier (2013) is discussing about visual literacy in school as linguistic skill in school. A video showed to student as a media to decode artifacts about new cultural information. In this sense, Buset, Bosch and Pujolà (2016) mentioned that language is perceived not only a verbal but also visual. The visual itself covers all codes except verbal language. Hence, signs such as gesture or facial expression from a media can also be understood as a way to learn about new culture. Along with academic development, the improvement makes semiotic applicable in linguistics to investigate sign another branch of sciences. In this paper, semiotics associate with communication.

In communication, gestures during conversation are essential. Goldin-Meadow and Alibali (2014) in their paper mentioned about Goldin-Meadow's previous researches (1998, 2010) which evident gestures in communication are acquire important role. She mentioned how hands are moving around when people do conversation. As she explored, gestures help the speaker to define some concept without having to describe it longer. Gesture commonly pertains to body expression that expresses symbolic action of thoughts or feelings. Such bodily function like hand and face movement applied to express meaning. Goldin-Meadow and Alibali (2014) stated that gesture reflects speaker's thoughts. Even the unconscious gesture conveys meaning and demonstrates idea of the speaker which could not carried by speech.

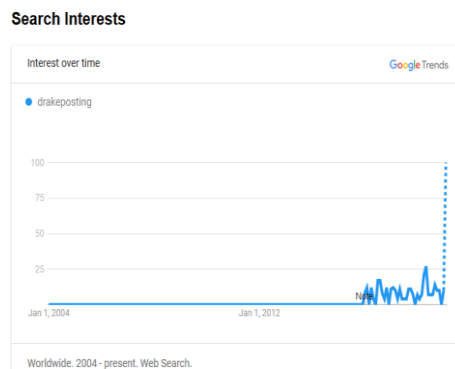
As stated by Wierzbicka in Elliott and Jacobs (2013), facial expressions are semiotic units that can be analyzed. She argues that some of facial expression has a universal meaning which can be construed without reference to any specific culture. Yet Ekman in Elliott and Jacobs (2013) asserted there are facial expressions which acquired culturally that can be used to inflect the emotional intention. It means the gesture and facial expression from a person could be fully understood as its sign elements are global. Another research by Sari and Sobarna (2018) highlights that contextual situated determine strategy. On their research, verbal strategies associated with mode sentences initiate one's action. They motivate him to evaluate the propositions conveyed in the sentences.

Adding to their proposal, this research argues, in spite of the verbal, visual participates in persuading the action. Propositions of the visual may be the focus on this research; the ways of gesture propose a certain proposition to be evaluated in order to stimulus the action. As quoted by Colbey from Sebeok (2001), various body parts may be entailed, singly or in combination. On the other hand, facial expression, gesture, and posture

are commonly facilitated internet meme makers to share their thoughts. Moreover, they may apply codes of body parts to deceive readers.

Responding to the phenomenon of meme without words (verbal), this paper analyzes the sign represented in a meme. The data uses gesture as attribute to communicate with the reader. Therefore, descriptive qualitative methodology used to dissect the signs meaning embedded in media such as internet meme. Krathworl in *The Handbook of Research for Educational Communication and Technology* (2001) mentioned purposes of research are to describe, explain and validate findings. To validate the explanation, description should go forth a creative discovery. The data were screened to pick the selected one which correlated with theoretical review and method. After analyzing, the data would be described with evidence theories to valid the research question.

This research took data from knowyourmeme.com. This website is chosen as it cumulates any kind of internet meme. From eight confirmed memes with Drake keyword on the website, two has the same background. Both *Drakeposting* and *Hotline Bling* internet meme were inspired from Hotline Bling music video. Yet the utilizing of *Drakeposting* has more enthusiasm among internet user from January 2016 until now.



Graph 1: Interest of *Drakeposting*
(source: knowyourmeme.com)

In graph 1, the use of *Drakeposting* meme in 2019 on social media such as Instagram or Facebook is still increasing. It is because Drakeposting presents specific emotions that can be used to react some relevant conditions. This emotions which depicted by gesture, such hand movement and facial expression, is frequently used in daily communication. As the result, *Drakeposting* internet meme becomes useful for internet users to communicate.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION



Figure 1: *Drakeposting* internet meme
(source: knowyourmeme.com)

Drakeposting is a meme which was first published in a meme platform, 4chan. This meme contains two expressions of Drake that were taken from his music video, *Hotline Bling*. Drake is a Canadian rapper who already debuted from 2010. According to Billboard, *Hotline Bling* was becoming his best rap song. The song itself is about a man who is disappointed about his ex-girlfriend's attitudes towards him after being abandoned. The man represents his disappointment through words which told about how his ex is doing right after he left.

From some verse in the *Hotline Bling* song, narration is corresponding to *Drakeposting* internet meme. Indeed to understand the meaning, the cooperative principles still be needed. Goldin-Meadow and Alibali (2014) added that in communication, gesture helps to direct the visuo-spatial information into units that are appropriate for verbalization. In this case, gesture can be understood as another medium that could be read as a verbal. Through the gestures, *Drakeposting* internet meme could be understood and deliver same meaning by internet users.

Apparently, visuo-spatial is taking a part for people to understand a message only by a gesture. It is a skill that requires the ability to canvas an object. It includes everyday instrument as a tool to recognize meaning. Visuo-spatial used as an instrument to reiterate a sign into verbal. Gesture cannot be separated from text. It also carries meaning which portrayed on visual representation (Goldin-Meadow and Alibabi, 2014). In this research, to understand the gesture, verbal element from song lyrics is used. This verbalization helps the reader to catch the same interpretation which directly depicted in visuo-spatial information or meme.



Figure 1.1: *Drakeposting* internet meme
(source: knowyourmeme.com)

**“You used to call me on my cell phone, late night when you need my love,
and I know when that hotline bling, that can only mean one thing.”
“Be a good girl, you was in the zone.”**

In 1.1, Drake is moves his head forward as the direction of a person or other subject indicates interest. It can be interpreted when society agree on the idea of direct pointing as a sign of interest. Meanwhile, exposing the neck is also a sign of trust. When people feel free and safe, they tend to show themselves to others. Exposing the neck may be indicated that Drake puts his trust. Adding to the ideas, his hand looks like pointing as if he refers to something. In this case, Drake does not talk with anyone but the blank panel next to it that could be filled by anything the editor wants to. Yet if 1.1 put after the verses, it is understood that Drake is actually visualize how he likes the time when his ex was calling him and also being a good girl.



Figure 1.2: *Drakeposting* internet meme
(source: knowyourmeme.com)

**“Girl, you got me down, you got me stressed out.”
“Right now, you’re someone else.”**

Different from 1.1, in 1.2, the correlation between gesture in meme and the song verses is Drake dislikes the new person his ex becomes. To represent this situation, Drake shows the *talk to the hand* gesture. It used as a contemptuous way of dismissing something someone has said. It is often accompanied by a gesture in which the palm of the hand is held in front of the original speaker's face. He is also put his head down as the symbol of rejection. In the end, the gesture Drake made is accepted by many as the sign “yes or no”. Although it had no words, *Drakeposting* internet meme influence people to use it in their communication.

CONCLUSION

A new media such as meme is counted as a mode to communicating. *Drakeposting* internet meme include some gestures such as hand movement and facial expression that lead to one meaning. As the result, this meme is already used by many internet users to deliver their idea without change any characteristic in *Drakeposting* internet meme but contain a new certain cultures depending on the individual's interpretation.

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