EMOTES IN MOBILE LEGENDS GAME COMMUNICATION: A SEMIOTIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstrak
Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui makna dan fungsi ekspresi penggunaan emote dalam permainan Mobile Legends. Objek penelitian ini adalah game Mobile Legends. Data penelitian berupa emote-emote yang dalam game dan dikelompokkan menggunakan pendekatan semiotik Pierce (Represetamen, objek dan interpretan kemudia analisis data dilakukan dengan mendeskripsikan makna emote dalam game Mobile Legends. Hasil yang ditemukan terdapat beberapa fungsi penanda emote seperti penanda ekspresi pujian, ejekan, kaget/terkejut, mengakui kehebatan, dan frustasi meningkatkan semangat, 'bermasa bodoh/tidak peduli. Terdapat beberapa sistem komunikasi dalam game Mobile Legend di antaranya: 1) Fitur kolom chat, 2) Fitur percakapan kilat (Quick chat), 3) Fitur percakapan langsung, dan 4) Emote. Dari keempat fitur ini fitur emote paling banyak digunakan dalam komunikasi bermain game Mobile Legends. Fitur emote ini sebagai bentuk komunikasi yang menggabungkan beberapa unsur yaitu gambar, teks, gerak, dan suara. Hal ini tentu menciptakan suasana bermain yang lebih menarik.

Kata kunci: Emote, Mobile Legends, Semiotik

Abstract
This research aims to determine the meaning and function of expressions using emotes in the Mobile Legends game. The object of this research is the Mobile Legends game. The research data is in the form of emotes in the game and grouped using Pierce's semiotic approach (Representation, object and interpretant), then data analysis is carried out by describing the meaning of emotes in the Mobile Legends game. The results found that there are several functions of emote markers such as expression markers of praise, ridicule, surprise /surprised, recognizing greatness, and frustration increasing enthusiasm, 'being stupid/don't care. There are several communication systems in the Mobile Legend game including: 1) Chat column feature, 2) Quick chat feature, 3) Direct conversation feature. , and 4) Emotes. Of these four features, the emote feature is most widely used in communication when playing the Mobile Legends game. This emote feature is a form of communication that combines several elements, namely images, text, movement and sound. This certainly creates a more interesting playing atmosphere.

Keywords: Keywords: Emote, Mobile Legends, Semiotic

Introduction

Language is an essential tool for communication, both verbally and nonverbally. Verbally, language is used in the form of words arranged in sentences to convey messages and interact with others. Verbal communication involves the use of phonemes, words, phrases, and sentences to transmit information, thoughts, and emotions. Meanwhile,

language is also used in nonverbal communication, which includes facial expressions, body movements, voice intonation, and sign language, as well as images, symbols, and more. Nonverbal communication often provides additional information that complements verbal communication, such as conveying emotions, emphasizing messages, or indicating attitudes. The combination of verbal and nonverbal communication forms a complex and profound language. When used together, they allow individuals to communicate more effectively, facilitating better understanding between the speaker and the listener and enriching the overall communication experience. Thus, both verbal and nonverbal language play a crucial role in facilitating social interactions, exchanging information, and forming relationships between individuals. According to (Kemalasari et al., 2021), language consists of symbols that need to be interpreted for the communication process to be effective. In the communication process, language is used to convey messages between humans, both verbally, which consists of words, and nonverbally. To understand the meaning of the conveyed message, a study that examines the use of these signs or symbols is needed.

Mobile Legends: Bang Bang is a highly popular and influential mobile game in the Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) genre. Developed by Moonton and released in 2016, the game has attracted millions of players worldwide, especially in Southeast Asia. Mobile Legends offers a dynamic and competitive gaming experience, where two teams, each consisting of five players, battle in an arena with the goal of destroying the enemy's base while defending their own. The game's popularity is not only supported by its engaging gameplay but also by its strong community and rapidly growing e-sports ecosystem. This game is considered one of the popular games according to (Lakuana & Adam, 2023) who state, "Online games are currently a popular game such as PUBG and ML (Mobile Legends) played." The game also integrates action and communication systems, meaning that the gameplay is enhanced by communication features that make the gaming experience more engaging.

According to Media Richness Theory proposed by (Tan et al., 2012) in Daft and Lengel (1986), communication media vary in their richness in conveying information. Rich media, such as face-to-face communication, allow for more complete message communication with the presence of nonverbal cues. Conversely, text communication in games tends to lack emotional context. Here, emotes play a crucial role, adding nonverbal elements that can enrich text communication.

Additionally, the Social Presence Theory proposed by Short, Williams, and Christie (1976) explains that social presence is the degree of awareness of another person in a mediated interaction. Emotes can enhance social presence in digital communication by providing a more tangible sense of presence and reducing the psychological distance between players. In the context of gaming, strong social presence can improve collaboration, coordination, and a sense of camaraderie among players, ultimately enhancing the overall gaming experience.

Mobile Legends: Bang Bang is a game that combines elements of strategy, teamwork, and communication. With millions of active players worldwide, Mobile Legends has become a global phenomenon in the mobile gaming industry. One of the features that draw attention in Mobile Legends is the use of emotes in player communication. From a semiotic perspective, emotes can be seen as signs that carry specific meanings. They are not just cute images but also symbolic systems used by players to communicate and interact with each other. There are several communication systems in Mobile Legends, including: 1) Chat feature, 2) Quick chat feature, 3) Voice chat feature, and 4) Emotes. Among these, emotes are the most frequently used in-game communication feature.

Emoji, emoticons, and emotes share a common function as forms of digital expression in communication, but they differ in origin and usage. Emoji, originating from Japanese

(with "e" meaning picture and "moji" meaning character), were first introduced by Japanese telecommunications companies in the 1990s. (Nazilah, 2019). Emojis are primarily used to add emotion to digital communications. They tend to add a positive tone to messages, seen by their users as 'fun'. (Kerslake & Wegerif, 2017).

Emotes, on the other hand, is a term originally used in online gaming communities to refer to icons expressing character emotions in games. There is also the term emoticon, but in the context of online gaming, "emote" is more commonly used. Emotes have a unique concept, combining images, text, sound, and motion into a single object, making their use more engaging, exciting, and capable of conveying player emotions. This makes communication more interesting. A brief distinction among emoji, emoticon, and emote is thus established.

Table 1. Emoji, Emoticon and Emote

Emoji	Emoticon	Emote
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Emotes play various roles in the game. Gamers use emotes to express emotions, communicate, and enrich their gaming experience. Emotes can effectively convey the player's emotions in the game. Emotes can express various emotions such as joy, sadness, anger, even causing irritation that can lead to toxicity, thus making the gaming experience more lively. Using emotes in games allows for richer communication than simple text conversations because emotes combine images, text, movement, etc. and sound. Emotes allow players to communicate emotions effectively and better understand in-game situations.

Emotes are also categorized as 'signs' which have meaning which can of course be analyzed using a linguistic approach to semiotic studies. Research related to emoticons has been carried out by several previous researchers, including: (Hasyim, 2019) who wrote about Linguistic Functions of Emoji in Social Media Communication. (Winata, 2022), with the title The Role of WhatsApp Emoticons as a Means of Communication. (Sunaryo et al., 2022), Use of Emoticons on Whatapps Media in the Btn Sakura Residence Complex, Bungo Regency and (Mariyam, 2021), Motives for Using the Emoticon Feature on Whatsapp social media.

The four authors discuss the same thing regarding emoji and emoticons in the communication system on WhatsApp social media. The current position of researchers is discussing the same thing regarding the use of emotes used in online game communication, namely Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang. There have been several studies related to the online game Mobile Legends Bang-Bang, but other researchers have never discussed emotes. Therefore, researchers are currently interested in discussing the use of emotes in communication in the online game Mobile Legends Bang-Bang.

Research Method

The data source is in the form of emotes in the Mobile Legend game. Data analysis of emote use in digital communication (Mobile Legends Bang-Bang game) uses Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach. The focus is on the three main components of Peirce's theory: Representament (sign), Object (which is represented by the sign), and Interpretant (understanding or meaning produced in the mind of the recipient of the sign) (Merrell, 2005; Pape, 1990; Putra, 2022). The Emote illustration is explained in the form of a

description. The emote feature can be accessed by inserting an access link so that readers can see and hear the emote feature directly.

Finding and Discussion

Finding

The emote feature in the Mobile Legend game is called "Battle Emote" meaning that these emotes are used in fighting/competing situations for the purpose of communicating and playing with emotions (angry, happy, sad, etc).

Table 2. Emote Features in the Mobile Legend Game and Their Functions

Emote	Expression Function
	Praise or mock
	Praise or mock
	Praise or mock
	Shock/surprise, recognition of greatness, and frustration
	Raising the spirit

Attacking/playing aggressively can also be an expression of being 'ignorant/don't care'

Discussion

The discussion is carried out by grouping in tables with Peirce's semiotic patterns, namely Representamen, object, and Interpretant, then described

Representation	Objek	Interpretant
	An emote with a white haired character accompanied by the words "NT Kadang²"	Seeing this emote indicates that the player could be praising or mocking depending on the situation in the game

Source: The Emote feature in Mobile Legends: Bang Bang

Emote with a character with white hair and red eyes covered in flames and decorated with the words NT and Sometimes. NT writing is an abbreviation of the word 'Ente' which is a non-standard form of the word 'Anta' which means 'you' in Indonesian. The letters 'N' and 'T' themselves represent the word 'Ente'. If NT itself is said to represent the sound 'E/N/T/E' so they have the same sound even though 'Ente' is not written with the complete letter. This battle emote is used in combat/match situations in the Mobile Legend game. Its function can be directed at playing partners or at playing opponents.

1. *Example if used with playing partners as an expression of praise*
   For example, you are known as a player who is neither great nor weak on average. At that time you are in a desperate situation where your opponent will probably finish you off, and your friend knows that you will definitely be defeated. However, there is an unexpected event so that you are not defeated by your opponent, instead you finish off that opponent, so usually other players use this emote with the aim of praising 'You sometimes' which means "You just make me panic, I thought you would lose, but it turns out you can If you win, you're great," the sentence is represented by the emote in the context of playing a game that serves as a compliment.

2. *For example, if it is used against a playing opponent as an expression of ridicule*
   For example, two players are fighting. P1 has defeated P2 several times in these fights, and once again, they are fighting, and P2 loses to P1 again. Usually, P1 uses this emote to mock P2 by saying "Ente kadang2," meaning "you are overstepping, you've lost many times and still don't know your place." This phrase is represented by the emote in the gaming context as an expression of ridicule.

Representation	Objek	Interpretant
	An emote featuring a cat character with a combination of white and blue colors, along with the integrated text and sound "KELAZZZ!"	When a player or opponent uses this emote, it signifies either praise or mockery.

Source: The Emote feature in Mobile Legends: Bang Bang

An emote featuring a cat character with a combination of white and blue colors along with the text "KELAZZZ!" is usually used to express admiration or praise for something considered extraordinary, impressive, or remarkable. The use of double exclamation points "ss" or even changing 's' to 'z' "zzz" at the end of the word "kelas" indicates extra emphasis, adding a stronger sense of admiration or greatness. This term often appears in informal communication, especially in relaxed settings or on social media, as well as in gaming, as a way to show appreciation or reinforce expressions of awe. However, this emote can also be used as a form of mockery towards other players.

1. *An example of using the emote to express praise to an opponent or teammate*
   After a particularly impressive move or play during the game, a player might use the cat emote with the text "KELAZZZ!" to show their admiration and acknowledge the skill or excellence of the move. For instance, if a teammate pulls off a difficult maneuver or an opponent makes a clever play, the use of this emote serves as a way to say, "Wow, that was amazing!" or "Great job!" In this context, it highlights a sense of respect and recognition for the other player's abilities.

2. *For example, if it is used against a playing opponent as an expression of ridicule*
   For example, two players are fighting. P1 has defeated P2, and after P2 is beaten, P1 uses the emote to mock the opponent. The meaning of the emote shifts from praise to ridicule. The term "kelazzz," which originally was meant to commend gaming skills, is now used to belittle. The intent is to mockingly praise P2's skills, implying that they are insignificant or worthless, but still using the same emote. In this context, after winning the match, P1 might send the "KELAZZZ!" emote to P2. Instead of genuinely praising P2's effort, the emote now conveys a sarcastic tone, suggesting that P2's skills are not impressive at all.

Representation	Objek	Interpretant
	Emote with a character wearing red glasses and a bow tie combined with the text and sound "SANTAI BRO".	Seeing that emote indicates that the player or opponent is either praising or mocking.

Source: The Emote feature in Mobile Legends: Bang Bang

Emote with a character wearing red glasses and a bow tie combined with the text *"SANTAI BRO."* This *"SANTAI BRO"* emote has two functions, as a reminder and as a taunt.

1. *Example when used towards a teammate as a reminder function:*

For instance, in a situation where your teammate is not playing calmly and is easily provoked, the teammate would use this emote as a reminder. Consequently, the teammate will become more relaxed and calm while playing.

2. *Example when used towards an opponent as a taunt function:*

For example, if you are facing an aggressive opponent with above-average skills, agility, and so on, but Player 1 is able to defeat that player, this *"CHILL BRO"* emote is usually used towards the opponent to convey the message "just relax, no need to rush."

Representation	Objek	Interpretant
	Emote with a character with purple hair combined with the text "Sheeeshhh!"	Seeing or using this emote indicates that the player or opponent is expressing surprise, acknowledging skill, and frustration.

Source: The Emote feature in Mobile Legends: Bang Bang

Emote with a character with purple hair combined with the text "Sheeeshhh!" This emote serves several expressive functions, including: First, expressing surprise. Second, expressing acknowledgment. Third, expressing frustration.

1. *Example if used towards an opponent as an expression of surprise/shock*

For instance, in a situation where the opponent is hiding in bushes/grass, making them unseen on the radar/map, and suddenly they attempt to ambush you, but you manage to evade the ambush successfully, then the "Sheeeshh!" emote can be used as if to say "ah, trying to surprise me, huh?"

2. *Example if used towards an opponent as an expression of acknowledgment and frustration*

Illustration of the situation: let's say you were attempting to ambush your opponent or even engaged in a showdown, but your opponent managed to escape. In this case, using the emote would be appropriate. If translated into words, it would be like "Darn! You/he/she is so good."

Representation	Objek	Interpretant
	Emote featuring a character with yellow hair and clothing, combined with text and sound "ORA."	Seeing or using this emote indicates that the player or opponent is boosting their spirits.

Source: The Emote feature in Mobile Legends: Bang Bang

1. *Example if used towards an opponent as an expression of encouragement*

For instance, in a situation where you're engaged in a skillful duel with your opponent, during the midst of the battle, this emote could be used as an expression of encouragement, reflecting bravery and fighting spirit. This expression adds to the intensity of tension and spirit felt by both the player and the opponent.

Representation	Objek	Interpretant
	Emote with a bull character combined with text and sound *"TABRAK SAJA LAH!"*	Seeing or using that emote indicates that the player or opponent is about to attack or play aggressively; it can also serve as an expression of recklessness or indifference.

Source: The Emote feature in Mobile Legends: Bang Bang

1. *Example if used towards an opponent as a marker of aggression*

For example, in a situation where you're engaged in a skillful duel with your opponent, during the midst of the battle, this emote could be used as an expression of encouragement, reflecting bravery and fighting spirit. This expression adds to the intensity of tension and spirit felt by both the player and the opponent.

2. *Example if used towards an opponent as a marker of recklessness/indifference*

For example, in a situation where your team is outnumbered. On one hand, your teammate might feel like the team is going to lose, while on the other hand, you might feel indifferent about the situation. In such cases, this marker emote is typically used. The phrase *"JUST RAM IT!"* indirectly conveys "Let's just charge ahead!"

Conclusion

Emotes are digital communication terms used in games, especially in Mobile Legends Bang-Bang. Mobile Legends game has several chat features. However, the use of emotes is the most effective feature used in gameplay. This emote feature serves as a form of communication that combines several elements such as images, text, motion, and sound.

This certainly creates a livelier gaming atmosphere, although some players may use the chat column feature during gameplay, emotes are more dominant in communication within Mobile Legends game.

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