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How to Analyse Emojis, GIFs, Embedded Images, Videos, and URLs: A Bakhtinian Methodological Approach

Profiling Emerging Research Innovations

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Abstract

This article offers a means of analysing social networking, visual dialogues of emojis, GIFs (images in the Graphics Interchange Format), embedded images, videos, and URLs (Uniform Resource Locators). Doing so addresses these often overlooked and undervalued forms of visual communication, suggesting a unique means of gaining insights into their use within online interactions. Utilising a Bakhtinian methodology, the author extracts excerpts from her research, situated within Facebook, to demonstrate a Bakhtinian genre analysis, a framework that the author contends is adaptable to multiple social networking spaces. Highlighting emojis, GIFs, embedded images, videos, and URLs as integral components of online communication, an emphasis is placed on how the text dances with the visual, presenting a nuanced framework for such an analysis. Consequently, an argument is developed for the significance of visual dialogues in contemporary online spaces, and the need for researchers to better understand these dynamic forms of communication, offered through Bakhtinian dialogism.

Keywords

emerging research innovations – emojis – GIFs – analysis – Bakhtin – dialogism – social networks – chronotope – genre analysis – carnivalesque – authoritative discourse

1 Introduction

The presence of visual dialogues epitomises encounters within social networks (Lacković, 2020), necessitating a means to analyse these forms. Visual dialogues include emojis, images in the Graphics Interchange Format (GIFs), memes, Uniform Resource Locators (URLs), and embedded images and videos. Scholars in recent years have studied these visualities within social networks, recognising the significance of digital visuals within the current era (Lacković, 2020). For example, Gerodimos and Justinussen (2015) examined the use of Facebook's 'Like' button as a political activity, while Fane et al. (2018) and White et al. (2021) incorporated emojis in their research design to empower young children's voices. These studies not only confirm the growing prevalence of visual dialogues as a mode of communication in our contemporary world (Lacković, 2020), but also highlight their influential role in fostering new dialogues (Jandrić et al., 2019). This is because visual aspects appear to contribute to the meaning of posts and intended responses, serving as significant components for both the topic and medium of communication (Rowell & Pahl, 2015). Hence, an analysis of social networking posts necessitates a critical exploration of the cultural meanings conveyed by these visualities, considering their nuanced nature as forms of language (Rowell & Pahl, 2015). To undertake a means of analysing these visual forms within social networking posts, I utilised the Soviet Russian thinker Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism as a methodology.

Bakhtin's thinking has been titled a philosophy and a theory (Emerson, 1997; Matusov, 2007; White & Peters, 2011), offering a nuanced means of analysis. Whilst considered a literary critic given his attention to the novel,¹ Bakhtin has also been applied to diverse fields given the in-depth relational

1 Bakhtin's focus on the novel has been considered a form of Aesopianism, or hiding the deeper philosophical meaning between the texts (Haskins & Zappen, 2010; Hirschkop, 2021; Koczanowicz, 2016) with Bakhtin titling himself a philosopher (see Gratchev, 2019; Hirschkop, 2021). Aesopianism was arguably critical for Bakhtin who lived in Soviet Russia during Stalin's Great Purges and genocide of over 9 million people (see Naimark, 2012). As such, Bakhtinian researchers apply this thinker by reading between the lines of his texts to inform their thinking with and through dialogism.

language investigations he offers. These fields include visual arts (see Haynes, 2002), education (see White, 2014), public relations (see Capizzo, 2018), news media (see Craig, 2010), health care (see Sullivan & McCarthy, 2008), applied linguistics (see Molon & Vianna, 2012), psychology (see Clegg & Salgado, 2011), biblical studies (see Boer, 2007), and accounting (see Bebbington et al., 2007) to name but a few. This research, which seeks a deeper understanding of language and communication, infers the suitability of a Bakhtinian analysis for everyday encounters, such as those that take place within social networks. When adapting Bakhtin to a visual analysis within such sites, I contend dialogism facilitates a means to analyse the often overlooked and undervalued role of emojis, GIFS, URLs and embedded images and videos, as integral to communication. Speaking to the potentials of dialogism, Capizzo (2018) stated Bakhtin's "framework helps investigate the connotations that bind symbols together to create the rich meaning of the human experience" (p. 525). Similarly, adapting Bakhtin's thinking to a visual, dialogic analysis enables an investigation of the forms and content of emojis, GIFS, URLs and embedded images and videos as co-relational encounters. Thereby, facilitating a means to seek insights into human interactions and experiences, arguably advancing critically situated visual analysis.

Bakhtinian dialogism has also been employed for visual analysis, implicating its ability to adapt to this practical application. Haskins and Zappen (2010) utilised dialogism when analysing Soviet Union posters as propaganda. They contended Bakhtin offers insights that may otherwise be overlooked, given his emphasis on the numerous ways one can be responsive to another. Although limited, this application suggests that a visual extension of dialogism is possible and fruitful for nuanced language investigations.

Furthermore, Bakhtin has been employed for research within social networks given his emphasis on the prosaic, or the everyday, mundane place in which dialogue naturally occurs. Rahimi (2011) employed Bakhtinian dialogism when researching Facebook as a site of dialogue during the Iranian Arab uprising. She titled it a unique site for communities to engage in dialogues that may be reduced or silenced in other spaces. Additionally, Davies (2015) employed dialogic analysis in her investigation of blogs for the neurodivergent. She similarly stated such sites were ideal Bakhtinian researching spaces given they could embody the 'life of the people'. Or, being situated within everyday encounters where organically occurring dialogue flourishes. These studies emphasise that Bakhtinian research is called into the spaces in which participants are already dialoguing, instead of pulling peoples into sterile and unfamiliar spaces, such as focus group or interview rooms (for further guidance on how to design Bakhtinian research see Frank, 2005; Sullivan, 2012). Given

dialogism's attention to how time and space alter axiology (chronotope), Bakhtinian research is necessitated to attend to the participants spaces of dialogue and community. Therefore, social networks can be critical sites for researchers, emphasising the importance of analysing all forms of dialogue that occur within these spaces, such as the often overlooked and yet arguably critical use of emojis, GIFs, images and URLs.

In this article, I utilise excerpts of data from my doctoral thesis collected in Facebook, however, I contend the visual analysis presented is not bound to this site or these specific visual forms. This is because emojis, GIFs, embedded images, videos and URLs are not unique to Facebook, but rather common place across social networks. As such, the visual analysis offered in this article could be of use in multiple social networking sites. Additionally, the specific visual forms offered for analysis arose from my research data, yet there is the potential to extend these tools to other social networking visualities, such as memes. Doing so would further Bakhtinian dialogism which stipulates "when dialogue ends, everything ends" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 252). Therefore, I encourage readers to adapt and extend on the tools offered in this article in the same way I have adapted and extended upon Bakhtinian dialogism, leaving room for further adaptation within this arena.

2 Dialogic Methodology

From a Bakhtinian perspective, I comprehend the nature of existence as dialogue, compelling me to analyse the visual and textual forms within social networking posts. Doing so entails an analysis of how the text dances with the visual. Bakhtin (1984a) describes language as "everything a person uses to express (reveal) himself [or herself] on the outside (for others)" (p. 295). Every element within a post, therefore, dictates analysis to better understand the speaker's intent. As such, I extend upon Bakhtin's thinking to encompass the various forms of communication within social networks, such as emojis and GIFs, adapting my reading of Bakhtin's texts. For this entreaty I utilise what Moe and Sidorkin (2019) have titled "metaphorization ... expanding the meaning of each concept beyond what was initially intended" (p. 28), developing continuing dialogues for Bakhtinian analysis.

The analysis offered aims to facilitate researcher insights into the relational aspects of visual and textual posts. All encounters within social networks are appreciated as shaping knowledge acquisition and the nature of being, for "to be means to communicate" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 287). Hence, posters are

continuously in communion with others' opinions, thereby influencing their own responses. When extended into a visual analysis, I appreciate all aspects of posts as relational engagements. Describing this process, Bakhtin (1986) outlines how individuals encounter each other "*on the boundary between two consciousnesses, two subjects*" (p. 106, emphasis in original), signifying that when posters engage with others, they step out from themselves to meet the values and opinions of this other. They then retreat to their own values and beliefs to form their interpretations and responses. This process lies at the core of Bakhtinian dialogism (see Sullivan, 2012 for a fuller discussion), and my ontological and epistemological understanding of social networking dialogues.

Critically, the proposed analysis does not suppose all there is to be said about another, an undertaking that would be deeply anti-Bakhtinian. Frank (2005) explains that "for Bakhtin, all that is unethical begins and ends when one human being claims to determine all that another is and can be" (p. 966). Therefore, my adapted dialogic analysis to the visual, offers an entry point and ethical entreaty seeking deeper perspectives that does not delimit people,² implicating how and why a post may include specific forms and content. As such, the dialogic analysis that follows is intended as a potential approach that seeks to foster a lively debate and ongoing adaptation, not a static authoritative system. Within this framework "learning is not a piling up of facts but an expansion of dialogic space, each new voice adding a new perspective from which to experience and understand the world" (Wegerif, 2022, p. 9). The offered analysis does thus not seek to fit themes or typologies. Instead, it is dynamic and ambiguous in its investigation of complex language forms, which may serve as provocations for future chronotopic times and spaces.

3 Chronotopic Framing

The chronotope methodologically frames the analysis offered, enabling investigation of the interconnectedness of visual and textual posts through the dimensions of time, space, and axiology. Bakhtin (1981) defines the chronotope as:

(literally, "time space") to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships ... Time, as it were thickens, takes on flesh, becomes

² Additionally, when researching within social networks, there are significant ethical considerations to be addressed that are beyond the scope of this article (for a fuller discussion see Golder et al., 2017).

artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope.

BAKHTIN 1981, p. 84

In other words, chronotope accounts for how the time and space integrally frames speakers' axiology (White, 2014). Posts within social networks are, therefore, understood as inherently bound by these dimensions, fostering a rich contextual framework for analysis that is adaptable across platforms. This adaptability is enabled via the analytical and normative aspects of this Bakhtinian concept (Hirschkop, 2021). Analytically, the chronotope provides a narrative that intertwines time and space, allowing for an exploration of the situational context that influences posts. Normatively, the chronotope enables an examination of the ideal or normative dimensions of time and space that encourage specific genres. The appreciation of how time and space alter axiology in analytical and normative ways, extends the visual analysis offered beyond Facebook, where I collected data, to an investigation of the genres within multiple social networking spaces.

Within the chronotope, I employ Bakhtinian genre as my unit of analysis. In doing so I present a framework for investigating the form, content, and strategic orientation of social networking dialogues. Bakhtin (1986) defines genre as one's "*speech plan* or speech will ... This plan determines both the *choice of the subject itself* (under certain conditions of speech communication, in necessary connection with preceding utterances), as well as its boundaries and its *semantic exhaustiveness*" (p. 77, emphasis added). Hence, genre represents the speaker's strategic orientation or intended outcome (speech plan) of a post. Insights into this orientation are analysable in terms of the form (e.g., GIF) and the semantics, or content, of the post (e.g., the content within the GIF or accompanying text). To make plain this analysis I employ White's (2010, p. 74) genre formula, applying this to the visual and textual dialogues within posts:

form + content = strategic orientation

Doing so facilitates my identification of the strategic orientations of posts, appreciating visual and textual forms as nuanced genres.

Specific genres I adapted from Bakhtin's oeuvre to analyse visual social network dialogues include carnivalesque, authoritative genre, sideways glances and loopholes.³ Carnivalesque genre enables a temporary halting

3 In the following writing I summarise my reading of these Bakhtinian concepts for the purpose of the visual analysis offered. For a fuller explanation of these concepts and their

of received truths, suspending and inverting the official world order for the lived experiences of those who may be typically silenced. Laughter, often that which mocks, parodies, or is grotesque, fosters a free and frank dialogue that uncrowns, or degrades, authority and fear by crowning those who are typically outside of such status (Bakhtin, 1984b). Analysing this genre offers insights into how posters strategically renew everyday issues through ridicule, which takes nothing seriously and as such can see everything anew. Conversely, authoritative genre upholds and further imbues official seriousness, entrenching received and hierarchical truths as profaned, alienating renewing laughter (Bakhtin, 1981). This genre enables analysis of the canonical script's posters may employ to entrench official ideas and values. Loopholes and sideways glances offer perspectives into the escape clauses and ambiguity of nuanced language forms. Loopholes foster ambiguity of the speaker's intent, whilst sideways glances achieve a similar aim by wedging the words of others into their speech. Examining these genres enables inferred insights into how posters strategically navigate and manipulate language to convey their messages in subtle and indirect ways.

4 Entering the Method

Drawing from my doctoral research, which I gained ethical consent for, I utilise a series of posts made by early childhood teachers during 2020 to demonstrate my Bakhtinian analysis. I have also included fictitious posts and visuals to supplement this data. My reasoning for employing these sources is not to provide insights into my doctoral research enquiry, which explored how teachers respond to political dialogues. Rather, I aim to illuminate how I conducted my visual, dialogic, genre analysis for fellow researchers who may be seeking a means of analysing similar forms. To elucidate this process, I have included my *form + content = strategic orientation* doctoral analysis conducted in tabled format, offering an additional illustrative example of how I conceptualised and executed the analysis in question.

The specific forms of analysis offered are embedded URLs (Figure 1, Table 1), embedded images (Figure 2, Table 2), embedded videos (Figure 3, Table 3), Facebook emoji reactions (Figure 4), GIFs (Figure 5 & 6) emojis (Figure 7, Table 4; Figure 8, Table 5; Figure 6, Table 6). To begin my analysis I followed several steps which I encourage fellow researchers to employ if undertaking a similar entreaty. Firstly, interpret how the social networking site's chronotope

nuances within Bakhtinian thinking see Shields (2007), White (2016), Hirschkop (2021) and Emerson (1997).

might influenced the genre forms of response. To accomplish this, I observed the closed Facebook group I researched in for several months prior to data collection, gaining a sense of what content was typically welcomed and what was rebuked. For instance, in the group I analysed within posts that expressed a lack of sector funding, sought teaching resources, or shared disgruntlement with the value of the sector's workforce were often warmly received. Conversely, posts that devalued the sector or their workforce were heavily rebuked. Therefore, it became possible for some topics to be more easily shared, denoting the norms of the time and space. Secondly, employing the chronotope emphasises examining a post's content holistically, not solely focusing on the visual. When applicable, this call encourages analysing the thread of replies in relation to the poster and replier.⁴ Such investigations can be fruitful for appreciating the normative and analytical chronotope of the space and time. Following these steps a further analysis of the visual and text forms is enabled.

5 Analysis of Embedded Images, Videos and URL Forms

Analysing embedded images, videos and URLs enables an examination of authoritative, carnivalesque and sideways glance genres. Authoritative genres are appreciated occurring when posts confer a sense of sanctity and jurisdiction that elevates certain concepts or institutions to a profaned status. For instance, a URL might affirm a poster's ideology if this embedded content imbues an authority related to the topic in question. Such an occurrence is analysed in Figure 1 and Table 1, which showcase the authority of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's (ABC) Q+A, that seemingly affirms the poster's axiology of the bipartisan nature of Australia's key political parties. The infused authority of this program as an official news outlet suggests a strategic orientation to compel others to the view that "Labor and Liberals are two peas in one pod" (Figure 1, emphasis added). Notably, for the chronotope, this ideology was not welcome in the researched group, and therefore, received little to no response, with a lack of emoji reactions or post-replies. Hence, Figure 1 post became lowered in the feed due to inactivity, further framing

4 The ethical consent of participants gained and required will dictate the extent to which this can occur. For my research, I only analysed posts when the poster gave me their informed consent to do so. I also gained the informed consent of the group's admin to conduct the research within the space. This consent was deemed essential given the closed nature of the Facebook group and the potential sensitivity of political dialogues, perceived to be privately shared.

what was possible to say in the time and space. Such interactions affirm the importance of appreciating a social network’s chronotope. Additionally, it implicates that although a poster may utilise an authoritative genre through visual and textual forms, this does not necessarily equate to others’ embracing their espoused ideology.

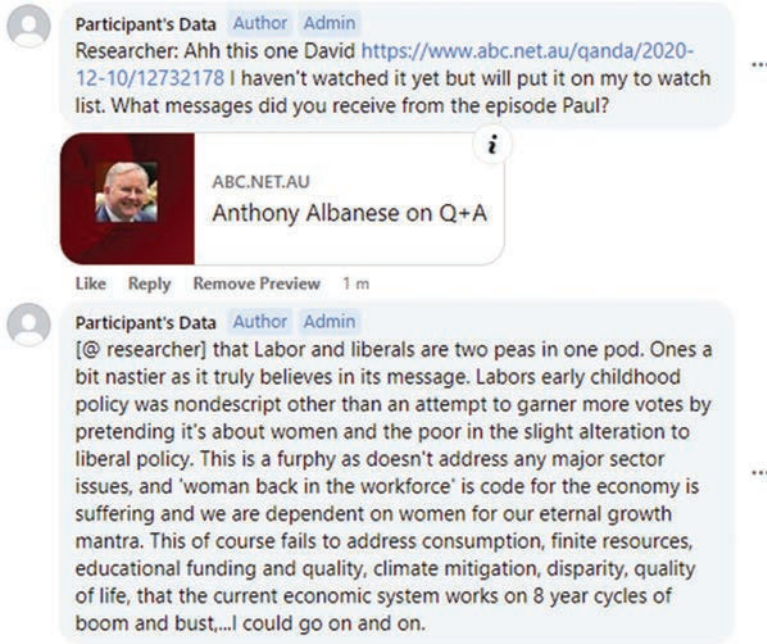


FIGURE 1 Embedded URL
PARTICIPANT POST, SEPTEMBER 14TH 2020

TABLE 1 Embedded URL analysis

Form	+ content	= strategic orientation
– URL to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s (ABC) Q+A documentary program	– Text appears to state and attempt to convince others as to the bipartisan nature of both Australian political parties – The Q & A show affirms the poster’s ideology	– Seeking other Facebook group members to embrace the political dialogue within the post as valid, given the authority fused to it by the ABC’s programme.

Embedded images and videos can also be analysed for authoritative genre when they imbue hierarchy. Figure 2 and Table 2 illustrate how to undertake such an endeavour in an image of a conference, with a large stage, podium and PowerPoint, imbuing the traditional officialness of this genre “connected to a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342). Additionally, the titles of the researchers and name of the conference affirms the “formal features for transmission and representation of authoritative” genre (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342). As a strategic orientation this authoritative image can be analysed as enabling the poster to officiate their strategic orientation to contend why Scott Morrison, the Prime Minister of the time forgot “about the Early Childhood sector” (Figure 2, emphasis added) during the pandemic. Thus, when analysing for authoritative genre, it is important to consider how this and other concepts enable the poster to strategically respond with their ideology, and how this may seek to influence the other.



Participant's Data

I am not surprised that Scott Morrison has forgotten about the Early Childhood sector.

Dr Stefania Giamminuti at the Semann & Slattery conference, reminded us of this quote from ScoMo in 2015 when he was an MP. Referring to early childhood

“We’re not trying to run an education system here were trying to provide a payment to help people stay in work which is good for the economy”



224

68 Comments

Like

Comment

Send

FIGURE 2 Authoritative image
PARTICIPANT POST, MARCH 25TH, 2020

TABLE 2 Authoritative image analysis

Form	+ content	= strategic orientation
– Embedded image from a conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Title of conference – Title and names of academics – Scott Morrison quote from 2015 	– Orientating to the authority of the conference and the academics in an attempt to bestow legitimacy of “ <i>not surprised Scott Morrison has forgotten</i> ” ECE, hence fostering an endeavour to have the teacher’s speaking up granted validity

Analysing embedded images, videos and URLs for carnivalesque genre necessitated several entreaties. As carnivalesque entails an inverting of the ‘typical’ world order, this concept enables investigations of content that is topsy-turvy to traditional hierarchies, especially when doing so in tongue-and-cheek ways. Figure 3 and Table 3 exemplify such an occurrence through the sharing of a video Tweet from the Labor Premier of Victoria at the time, Daniel Andrews. This politician conducts a mock interview with Harriet, a primary school-aged child. In this shared post, carnivalesque laughter can arguably be observed in the form of the embedded video that mocks official seriousness. Its light-hearted nature, shared on Twitter, a platform known for its informality, suggests this politician is engaging in a topsy-turvy of hierarchies. Furthermore, the accompanying content from Daniel Andrews stating, “We had a high-level briefing over some pretzels and hot chocolate” (Figure 3, emphasis added) reinforces the idea of suspending official seriousness. Additionally, the mention of Harriet setting the meeting agenda signifies a subversion of hierarchical roles, as a child takes on a leadership position typically reserved for those in authority. Analysing for carnivalesque, therefore, entails how the visual and textual forms flip the typical world order in jesting ways.

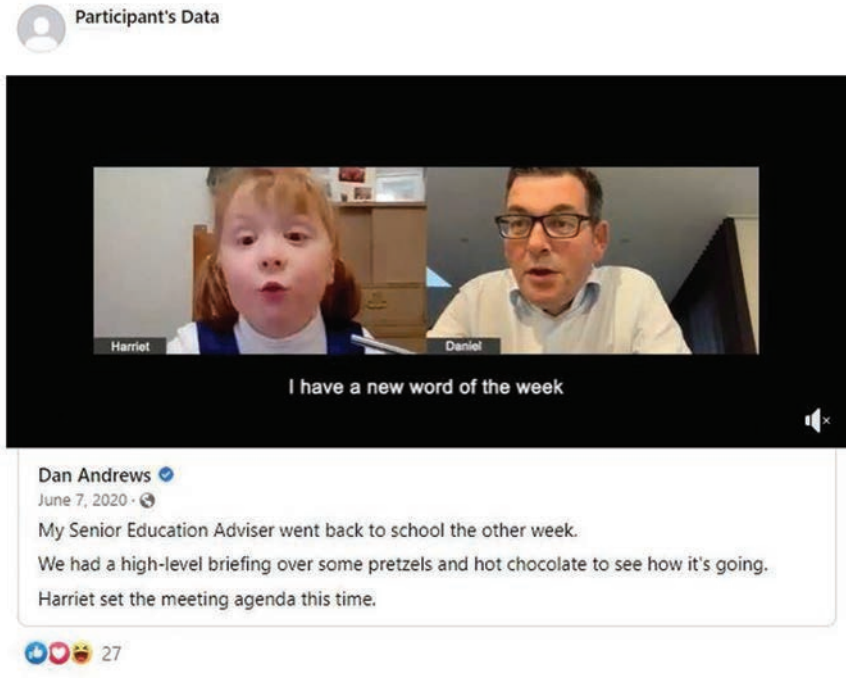


FIGURE 3 Embedded video URL
PARTICIPANT POST, JUNE 7TH, 2020

TABLE 3 Embedded video URL analysis

Form	+ content	= strategic orientation
– The content includes a tweet from Daniel Andrews, the Labor Premiere of Victoria, with an embedded video he posted on Twitter shared to Facebook	– The statement “My Senior Education Advisor went back to school the other week” implies the framing of the pandemic easing, specifically referring to the reopening of primary schools for in-person attendance.	– The video seems to be a playful and humorous representation, reminiscent of a carnival atmosphere, aiming to alleviate the seriousness of the pandemic while possibly minimising concerns and anxieties related to Covid-19.

TABLE 3 Embedded video url analysis (*cont.*)

Form	+ content	= strategic orientation
– There are 27 emoji reactions, including ‘Like’, ‘Love’, and ‘Haha’, suggesting a diverse range of voices and opinion.	– The line “We had a high-level briefing over some pretzels and hot chocolate” is interpreted as a deliberate attempt to negate the seriousness typically associated with official meetings. – The mention of Harriet setting the meeting agenda breaks hierarchical norms, as it involves a child who is typically not in a Senior Advisory role. – The post solely consists of an embedded Twitter video, without any accompanying content/comment, introducing ambiguity and resembling a sideways glance genre, which reduces the extent of carnivalesque elements.	– The poster potentially adds to the above strategic orientation by sharing the video, potentially indicating support for the Labor party during the pandemic. – The post allows room for ambiguity and flexibility in adjusting the group member’s strategic orientation, due to the lack of added content to the shared video. – The emoji reactions contribute to a carnivalesque laughter, creating an atmosphere of joy and merriment where multiple voices participate equally.

Another aspect to consider when analysing for carnivalesque is the analytical chronotope, as illustrated in Figure 3. Within the chronotopic context of the pandemic, the strategic orientation of the shared Twitter video appears to be fostering light-hearted laughter, which inverts the seriousness associated with the pandemic and Covid-19 fears. Moreover, the poster who shared this embedded video seems to be endorsing the aforementioned orientation by posting it, possibly indicating support for the Labor party, which faced criticism for implementing lockdown measures (Brown, 2021). The post

seemingly reflects an alignment with and laughing alongside the government rather than criticising them. In doing so, this poster's ideology may flip the arguably 'loud' voices that rebuked this politician. Hence, appreciating what time and space a post is situated within, and how this might form the response given, or make what is shared contradictory to the current climate, is of use to the carnivalesque visual and textual analysis.

The embedded video in Figure 3 is also useful for showcasing how to analyse sideways glances for embedded images, video, and URLs. To examine for this genre is to investigate when posters minimised or withheld their voice in their sharing of content from others, enabling ambiguity to their ideology. Figure 3 arguably demonstrates this occurrence, because the poster's content is unclear given they shared the video without any content or added comments. This exclusion enables a sideways glance, or leeway. Therefore, if their embedded video is criticised by others there is the potential for the poster to have an ambiguous response given they have not stated their views on this content. Analysing for sideways glances thus encourages investigations of posts with embedded visuals with little to no content, as a strategic intent for ambiguity, due to possible future reactions for the self and other.



FIGURE 4 Facebook emoji reactions

6 Facebook Emoji Reactions

Another visual analysis offered is Facebook emoji reactions. Unlike the other forms of visual analysis, its investigation is limited to Facebook and as such, is informed by the platform's descriptor. When hovering the mouse over an emoji reaction, as shown in Figure 4, Facebook's content definitions from left to right are 'Like', 'Love', 'Care', 'Haha', 'Wow', 'Sad', and 'Angry'. Each of these reactions signifies a strategic response that can be considered in conjunction with the post's content and the ensuing thread that prompted members to react with emojis. For this form, researchers can analyse for the presence of carnivalesque genre through the ability of these responses to incorporate many equal voices. Bakhtin (1984a) described carnivalesque as a "plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event" (p. 6). Whilst Bakhtin conceived of such a plurality

of divergent participatory voices as occurring in the town's market square, my reading of Facebook emoji reactions is that they also foster such interactions within this social networking site. This is because they facilitate a means of response and affirming others are heard in divergent ways, potentially inverting the silencing of underground voices. For instance, members can select any emoji reaction, potentially not constrained by what they think is a welcome response in the space. As such, researchers can cross-reference how many emoji reactions a post receives with the 'typical' volume of responses, analysing what chronologically situated post might enable carnivalesque.

Returning to Figure 3 exemplifies this carnivalesque analysis through the presence of twenty-seven emoji reactions, comprising 'Like', 'Love', and 'Haha', with 'typical' posts in the last month only receiving an average of seven emoji reactions. Hence, the emoji reactions for Figure 3 indicate a multitude of carnivalesque voices joining in on the humorous suspending of hierarchy and official seriousness. Offering another example of this analysis, Figure 2 received 224 emoji reactions, indicating a significant carnivalesque underground inverting of the official world order. Such analysis also indicates what might prompt internet lurkers, who regularly scroll the feed but do not respond, to speak up within social networks. Thus, embedded images, videos and URLs, via the emoji reaction form, can be analysed for how they facilitate carnivalesque by enabling numerous voices to engage in merriment and expressing frustration.

7 GIF Forms

GIFs play another significant role in the form, genre analysis offered. They exist within different chronotopes, acknowledging time and space as essential factors of the speaker's axiology (White, 2014). Posts can often only be understood within their specific chronotopes, which define the speaker's axiological values, making space for the adaptability of this framework across social networking platforms. For instance, Miltner and Highfield (2017) identified how a waving Obama GIF served the agendas of both left-wing and right-wing political social networking spaces. For the former, it represented a strategic orientation of "love" and approval, while for the latter, it conveyed a strategic orientation of sarcastic dislike. This research highlights the importance of the chronotope's framing of genre forms for strategic orientation. Therefore, when analysing GIFs, I considered the norms of the social networking space and time, which were reflected in the 'typical' responses. These replies fostered insights into

the connotations conveyed by the form of the GIF within the specific time and space.

Furthermore, I divided my analysis of GIFs into two distinct categories; emotive forms; and co-speech forms, with this split also suggested for fellow researchers undertaking this approach. Jiang et al. (2018) contended that Facebook users carefully select GIFs to share complex thoughts and feelings. Building on this understanding, Tolins and Samermit (2016) identified two primary types of GIFs used in posts; emotive forms, which convey emotional responses and display the poster's stance; and co-speech forms that share complex thoughts. I have selected two GIFs for each category to illustrate how to analyse these types of dialogues. Figure 5 combines two emotive GIFs that enable posters to evoke an emotional reaction to the content. In my analysis, I focused on instances where a GIF expressed an emotion rather than providing additional content or complex thoughts (as exemplified in Figure 6). This allowed me to investigate how such posts established a strategic orientation in response. Thus, this form of GIF analysis provides insights into the emotive responses, examining the implications and effects of these replies within the specific space and time.



FIGURE 5 Emotive responding stance GIFs
TENOR, 2019A, 2020B



FIGURE 6 Co-speech GIF
TENOR, 2019B, 2020A

Figure 6 provides an example of two ‘co-speech’ GIFs which I offer a means to analyse. These differ from those displayed in Figure 5 as they contain additional content, resulting in a more complex genre within the chronotope. For example, the GIF featuring Yoda, a symbol of knowledge mastery, with the text “TEACH YOU I WILL,” implies a strategic orientation of having expertise in a subject and the ability to instruct or train others. This GIF demonstrates how the analysis of this language style is derived from the context of the response, allowing for various possible strategic orientations based on the situation to which the GIF elicits a response.

The second co-speech GIF emphasises the significance of the chronotope framing for analysis. It features a visual of the child pauper Oliver Twist, who famously asked, “Please sir, can I have some more?” The accompanying text says, “Please sir, can I have another stimulus check?” When analysed in the context of pandemic lockdowns and the financial hardships faced by many individuals without work, parallels can be drawn between Oliver Twist’s struggle for food and people’s desperate plea for adequate government support to cover their expenses during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, even within this interpretation, the analysis could shift if additional content were added to the post or if the GIF were placed in a different context. Therefore, when analysing emotive responding and co-speech GIFs, I encourage their examination in relation to the chronotope framing and the specific content being responded to. This approach allows for deeper perspectives into the possible strategic orientation of the GIFs within the given context.

8 Emoji Forms

In post emojis can also be analysed across social networks. Wang (2019) classifies emojis into two categories: those with commonly agreed-upon meanings (linked to the Figure 4 definitions) and those that are highly subjective. The use of commonly understood emojis allows for an exploration of the different stances and implications within the context of the posts. Focusing on emojis with commonly perceived meanings, I present Figure 7 and Table 4, which includes a post and two fictional responses to illustrate how to analyse these forms. This post is situated within the chronotope of the Black Lives Matter protests. The poster creates a resource to help her brother understand this political issue, underscoring again the importance of the chronotope for analysis. Although the post includes embedded visuals, I did not interpret these as authoritative or carnivalesque genres based on the criterion already traversed, excluding them from the aforementioned image analysis. Instead,

I utilise Figure 7 to focus on the fictional responses, which include emojis with commonly agreed-upon meanings. The first response features a heart eyes emoji and the text “Great resource” (Figure 7, emphasis added). This indicates a strategic orientation that affirms Black Lives Matter and expresses appreciation for integrating this political issue into pedagogy. In contrast, the second response says “No!!” (Figure 7, emphasis added) and includes an angry-faced emoji. This suggests a dialogue that vehemently disagrees with the resource being used as a pedagogical tool and potentially rejects the core message of the Black Lives Matter movement. It implies a disagreement with the notion that communities are more likely to experience violence from the police and other community members when racism is involved. As such, by analysing these emojis and their accompanying texts, can foster potential insights into the strategic orientations conveyed through the responses.



FIGURE 7 Emoji analysis
PARTICIPANT POST AND FICTIOUS RESPONSES, JULY 1ST 2020

TABLE 4 Emoji analysis

Form	+ content	= strategic orientation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Post includes embedded images as teaching resources for educating about Black Lives Matter – Reply 1: Heart-eyed emoji indicates love for the post – Reply 2: Angry face emoji and exclamation marks signifies animosity and vehement rejection of the post 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Post: Resource created for brother to understand Black Lives Matter, situated within the protests – Reply 1: “Great resource” indicates another’s support for teaching Black Lives Matter as a political dialogue – Reply 2: “No!!” interpreted as a dissenting and rejecting response to using the resource as a political dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Post: Political dialogue resource for educating about Black Lives Matter – Reply 1: Affirms Black Lives Matter and supports integration into pedagogy – Reply 2: Strongly disagrees with the resource as a pedagogical tool and potentially rejects the core message of the Black Lives Matter movement

In addition to commonly agreed upon emoji definitions are subjective ones, classified as loopholes. For the text, loopholes are analysable in language such as “I have to admit”, “maybe”, “hopefully”, and “although”, which enable flexibility to the assertions made in a post. For loophole emojis, I call on Wang’s (2019) secondary group of these forms that are highly subjective in meaning and purpose, varying for each individual and context. Consequently, deriving clear meaning from these emojis within the chronotope is challenging. Novak et al. (2015) refer to this group of emojis as the second-most used on social networking sites. I argue that due to their ambiguity, these subjective and neutral emojis reflect the genre of loopholes. To investigate this form entails an analysis of how secondary emojis imbue ambiguity, as exemplified in Figure 8 and Table 5. The winky face in this post is analysed as a loophole due to its unclear meaning within the sentence, unlike the emojis in Figure 8. Therefore, when analysing loopholes, I examined the presence of secondary, ambiguous emojis, considering them in relation to the thread and post’s context. In the case of Figure 8, ambiguous loophole emojis allow for leeway, indicating a wavering or malleable strategic orientation.



FIGURE 8 Ambiguous emoji
PARTICIPANT POST, JUNE 14TH 2020

TABLE 5 Ambiguous emoji analysis

Form	+ content	= strategic orientation
- Winky face emoji	- Content appears unrelated to secondary/ambiguous emoji	- Emoji versus content retains loophole for ambiguous political dialogue.

Emojis can also be analysed for loopholes when they are contradictory to the rest of the post. Research by Novak et al. (2015) indicates that emojis are predominantly positive, such as smiley faces. However, this positive use of emojis can offer leeway for expressing responses that do not fully align with others' ideologies, providing a potential loophole for future rebukes. Figure 9 and Table 6 present a dialogue where a reply post strongly disagrees with another's opinion but softens it with a seemingly contradictory smiley face emoji. This use of a positive emoji as a possible loophole, infers that the poster may anticipate potential offence or controversy and is therefore strategically including an ambiguous emoji to the text. Given the prevalence of trolling and disparaging replies on social networks, I argue that loophole emojis may hold significant strategic value. As such, this analysis encourages an investigation of dialogues for contradictory emojis that diverged from the overall tone of the post, considering these as indicative of a loophole strategic orientation.



FIGURE 9 Loophole emoji
MOCK, FICTITIOUS DATA

TABLE 6 Loophole emoji analysis

Form	+ content	= strategic orientation
– Smiley face emoji – positive connotation indicated	– “Ha! Hardly”: content contradicts emoji	– Disagreeing with another’s political dialogue, whilst retaining a loophole of ambiguity and leeway

9 Limitations and Challenges

Whilst I have offered the following means of analysis, there are limitations and challenges for researchers adopting this undertaking. These include ethical entreaties, in addition to the open ended and non-finalisable nature of dialogism. This methodology can cause frustration for those seeking definitive findings. Dialogism has been described as not for the faint of heart (White, 2016) because of this lack of generalisability. This methodology is, therefore, not recommended for those seeking definitive answers, thematic findings or prescriptive notions. Instead, dialogism offers nuanced insights situated within continual becomings that can serve as provocations. Hence, a limitation of Bakhtinian dialogism is this methodology’s refusal to give simple answers. I leave such approaches to other researchers, offering instead a nuanced means to analysis, that may offer provocations that prompt further discussions.

10 Conclusion

Visual forms within social networking sites are often overlooked and underestimated within analysis, even though they play a critical role in dialogue (Jandrić et al., 2019; Lacković, 2020; Rowsell & Pahl, 2015). Attending to this lacuna, I have offered a means of analysing embedded images, videos, and URLs, as well as GIFs and emojis. Adapting Bakhtinian dialogism to these visual forms has enabled the development of tools capable of seeking insights into the complexities and nuances of online social networking encounters. Through this offered approach I aim to advance critical engagement with, about and for visual analysis, encouraging others to adapt these entreaties to their spaces and encountered forms.

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