POSITION OF MEMES IN TROLLS: A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF INTERNET TROLLS IN THE CONTEXT OF SCRIPT BASED SEMANTIC THEORY OF HUMOUR

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Abstract- Internet trolls are the most innovative yet hilarious side of the virtual world where tech savvies tryout their creativity. Society has reached the point where there exists no boundaries between humanworld and virtual reality. This lack of distinction between the two worlds has enabled technology to intrude even in the language of homo sapiens. In addition to the oral and written form of language they have invented a new sign system to communicate in a morerelaxed manner likethe lingos of internet,emojis,stickers and memes. Though it has been invented for entertainment purpose, the acceptance of internet trolls even in the official sectors inspires man to exert much energy in creating, sharing and understanding memes. Since Internet trolls have grown large enough to deal with serious matters like politics and other social discourses, they reduce the space for alphabets and that space has been accorded to memes. But the presence of meme enabled trolls to present their ideas in more precise, effective and also in a hilarious way. This paper is an attempt to analyse the structure and nature of internet trolls in the context of humour. Using the Script Based Semantic theory, put forwarded by VictorRaskin, the nature and functions of words and memes in a troll text and different types of communication it contributesis analysed and studied.

SSTH is perhaps one of the few theories to analyze the linguistic behaviour of humour texts. By delineating the various criteria put forwarded by the linguist for a humour text, each element in the internet troll can be identified,compared and contrasted with otherones in the same text. This paper also gives a short introduction to the origin and growth of the 'meme' and how it expressesits linguistic natureas different from the status of a single short image,within a troll text, is also manifested here.

Key words: **Memes, Internet trolls, SSTH, script, text, script oppositions, overlapping, semantic triggers, ambiguity, contradictory trigger.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The alpha generation being confused with the boundary of virtual and real-world mishmash their language, community of real friends (with those in virtual world), and reality with imagination. The phenomenon called internet trolls has become part and parcel of their life and memes become the meaningful unit of their language. Internet trolls were born as verbal abuse and sarcastic comments, but realizing its potential the virtual world started adding more components to increase the effect of the action called trolling. Memes are one of these components in trolls.Though the word *meme* is borrowed from Richard Dawkin's book *The Selfsh Gene* it was Mike Godwin who put forwarded the idea of 'internet meme' in 1993. From the short video clips that appeared in You Tube, meme continued its journey as GIFs in Twitter, Facebook and later as precise static images. Being one of the indispensible components of internet trolls, memes have acquired the status of a significant element in virtual language.

A meme carries bits of cultural information along with its entertaining and communication capability. Similar to a word in a language, memes communicate ideas and emotions. Memes are becoming a constant part of communication through sharing. "In this new era, the two meanings of the term in the pre digital age-sharing as distribution and sharing as communication-converge" (Shifman 19). Hence the people who participate in the virtual world communication finds a meme as something that can have a good life span, productivity and at the same time, is mimetic too.

A meme is precise like a word that can be learned and reproduced and convey meaning as letters do in a language. A meme has a perfect locus in the structure of trolls. It is indeed like a slang in a language. Only those who understand the connotative meaning can enjoy the entire partof the troll.

A meme becomes viral when a group of people share and enjoy it as they have the same cultural consciousness. People have the basic knowledge about the trolls existing in social media and the way it to

be used as every human has the langue part in their linguistic capacity. On the other hand, like parole make use of the language, an expert can repack it/ remix it with different context in different forms as their creativity permits them to do it . A wrong choice of word can destroy the structure of a sentence and spoil the fun and meaning. Likewise a meme should be carefully placed, to be read and enjoyed in the language of a troll.

Being a digital version of human communication, the structure of troll should be analysed order to comprehend the mechanism of troll for being humorous. Since people read the memes and enjoys its presence in the structure of a troll it is important to understand the linguistic behaviour of an internet meme. Here, some celebrated trolls are analysed using the linguistic theory of humour.

Script Based Semantic Theory of Humour

As the scientific nature of human language has been divulged by the studies of linguistics a grave scrutiny of humour is prepared considering the rules of linguistic as a model by Victor Raskin, a living legend and the prodigy in linguistics. By trailblazing thoughts in his *Semantic Mechanism of Humour* (1985) Victor Raskin brought forth a new theory –the Script Based Semantic Theory- in the field of humour studies. He embraces the validations of linguistics and scrutinize the secrets that makes a text funny.

The term 'text' is used in the linguistic analysis to denote both 'lettering' as well as the 'spoken form' of a discourse. The linguistic theories, in general tries to define an object by breaking it into many units. Each parts of the object, then is categorized into already labelled groups - like subject, object, targets- according to their characteristics and they are elucidated further with the assistance of the rules of language within the constraints of already framed procedures. The native speaker of a specific language has a 'linguistic intuition' which is identified by Noam Chomsky as 'competence and performance'. Raskin brings forth a parallel concept to this is 'the competence and performance in humour' by which he meant that everyone in the universe has a 'sense' of humour. A native speaker can identify the grammatical correctness of a sentence. Similarly he can recognize if a text in his language is funny or not. The humorous text of any language can be said grammatically correct if it is meaningful, bona fide, comprehensive and appropriate to the context. Usually such texts will give some hints about the context also. Raskin believes that the linguistic competence of a native speaker includes the speaker's ability to comment on the funniness of a text in his language.

To analyze a humorous text, an analyzer uses the 'linguistic rules' which is designated as 'the source field' and 'the target field' will be the study of humour. Nonetheless the aim of the linguistic analysis of humour is not to define what humour is but to understand the making of humour. Corresponding to all the linguistic theories, the linguistic theory of humour can give all the comprehensive analysis of the given data and it states how the absence/ presence of certain details makes a text humorous. The procedures and methods of various linguistic theories enable the comparison of different scripts and predict the best of it. The linguistic theories clarify the norms that a text should have for being humorous. Script based theory, in particular deals with verbal humour.

Raskin says that the most important factors in a humour act is the speaker/ writer and the hearer/reader. To him the presence of the hearer is inevitable since "it is the perceiver's presence, of course, which makes the act a humour act, simply because it is the perceiver who laughs (Raskin 3). A discourse becomes humorous when an action assumes a new meaning with respect to its context. Something that arouses humour in a situation is named after as 'stimulus'. Both the characters and the humour act are set in some physical, social, psychological environment that is called the 'situation of the humour'.Any humour act or speech could not provide same amount of pleasure if it is repeated. Raskin has contributed a formulae to analyse the funniness of the text as follows: If X is taken as a text,

HU (S, H,ST,E,P,SI,SO) = X, where X=F or X=U   (Raskin 5)

Where HU stands for humour, S for speaker, H for hearer,ST for stimulus, E for experience, P for psychology , SI for situation, SO for society.

The semantic theory of humour is built upon two significant elements in linguistics - 'the lexicon' and 'the combinatorial rules'. Every text is made up of a number of lexicons that act like a storehouse of meaning from which the hearer chooses a familiar implication. The combinatorial rules enable the perceiver to identify the potential meaning of the lexicons in a sentence and select the appropriate

meaning that can contribute to the humour of the text. In short it can be said that the semantic theory of humour helps to find out the possible meanings of a text and to test the semantic competence and performance of the people who speak / listen to a joke. A verbal utterance or the written word that contributes to a humourous situation is called 'script'. The term owes its birth to the field of psychology and gained currency in linguistics in the late 1970s and early 1980s. "A script which is otherwise known as schema/frame/daemon can be defined as " a cognitive structure internalized by the speaker which provides the speaker with information on how a given entity is structured, what are its past and components, or how an activity is done , relationship organized, and so on, to cover all possible relations between entities(including their constituents)" (Attardo 2).

 A script can be a single word that educes same or different semantic information in different contexts. "It represents the native speaker's knowledge of a small part of the world" (Raskin, Semantic Mechanism 81). For instance, the lexicon 'drive' can be interpreted as a trip, desire, will power, a tournament, part of computer and so on. It is the other lexicons attached to the word 'drive' in the sentence would decide which of these scripts should be more suitable.

Raskin has pointed out two necessary linguistic conditions for a text to be humourous. He says that

> A text can be characterized as a single- joke carrying text if ...(*i*) The text is compatible, fully or in part, with two different scripts (ii) the two scripts with which the text is compatible are said to overlap fully or in part on this text' (99).

 Using this principle some of the well enjoyed trolls are analysed here.

Anatomy of Trolls.   Troll 1-similarity in shape of man and animal

Trolls is a conversation mode assuming somebody is eagerly listening to the characters with much enthusiasm . The best part of a troll is that it can introduce the context of the particular situation either through images or with limited words as it makes use the human sense of eyesight. Xavier trolls are one of the well enjoyed trolls of recent origin which have the structure almost similar to punch line jokes. The text of the troll has two parts. The first part of the narrative gives the idea that a man is in a dangerous

Xavier

(Figure 1)

situation and that his life is at risk. And the hearerreplies that he does not want to interfere in the matter as it is a fight between siblings. This reply evokes the script that being in a dangerous situation a man seeks the help of another. And the hearer agrees that by saying that he has no role in rivalry between brothers/ siblings. On the other hand the meme evokes another script of a helpless man being attacked by an animal (where both have no reason for the enmity) and he runs away from the witless creature. Here the reader once again refers back to the meme to resolve the ambiguity around the word 'sibling'.This meme that clarifies the overlapping of the scripts(the fight between animals over fight between man) where the script opposition man vs. animal can be seen. For the humourous effect the reader chooses to select the script of fight between two animals and one assumes the shapes of a man.

In this troll (2)the conversation takes place in a classroom which is denoted by a blackboard and ruler in the hand. The teacher is obviously a language (English teacher) teacher who teaches the student the rudiments of English grammar. Here she is teaching future tense to a child who doesn't know grammar.But the reply 'future impossible tense' brings out the script of a veracious intelligent

(English Class)
(Figure 2)

student. The image of an intelligent veracious man stands against the script of an ignorant/ naughty student which brings about the humour in it.

In troll (3) the role of the combinatorial rule can be explained in a better way to realize the vital point of humour . When the man asks why they call it a dark age, the word darkness displays an array of meaning such as 'unlighted', 'dark colour', 'ignorance', a nick name of a historical age and so on. Similarly the punch line of the text contains another content word 'Knight' meaning a noble man destined to fight and that homonyms with the word 'night' (that can be understood as the 'a part of a day, lack of knowledge).' It evokes many scripts as follows:

(Figure 3)("Why They Call it a Dark Age)

(a)Why they call it age without light?

(b) why they call it black coloured age?

(c)Why they call it a period of ignorance?

(d)Why they call it a dark age in history? The answer can be

i)because nights appear more than once in a day.ii) Because number of nights are more than days. iii)Because the people lived in those are ignorant.iv)Because there are knights -a feature of middle age. Here the hearer chooses to select the third script for the first part of the text. Which creates the script - opposition of reason vs. imagination/ knowledge in history Vs. knowledge in language.

(Figure 4)

The text contains the script of dejected lover and a happy independent person who realises his worth. Her words tohim can be interpreted that she is not worth for him." you deserve a better one" is the conventional part of a break up that can be recalled with tears which shows the wishes, hopes, and the intense love that one had for their former partner. Though he knows it a truth the word 'only' contradicts her sentiments and raises the script opposition of a dishonest lover.

(Figure 5)

Unlike all the above trolls the troll (5) deals with much more serious,yet real time situation which can be categorized as political troll. The situation described here deserves all respect as the third citizen of the nation expresses his respect and admiration to a great football player.But for the sake of humour, his travels for external affairs of the nation is mocked at here. The word 'welcome' as in the troll (3) has been the source of different script~ the reciprocal expression for one's gratitude and the greeting at the reception of a guest. His desire to travel overlaps the script of his kind words to the player.

In all these trolls one can see that the meme has contributed something more than giving information about the context or entertain one with funny expressions or faces. In troll(1) the word 'sibling ' becomes quite ambiguous and that compels one to refer back to the meme in the text. The meme in the first troll evokes another script opposition that Possible vs. Impossible that an animal can never be the real sibling of a man but what makes the hearer considers them as sibling is the similarity in their physique. It is from here the person who enjoy/ read

the troll understand the opposition thatthe man is the sibling of the hippopotamus. Such incongruity is the key of laughter here. Xavier is very familiar person in the world of internet trolls and his presence indicates that he is going to perceive the speaker's utterance in a humourous manner and it would end up as a non bona-fide communication. Similarly, the meme (made up of two films taken from *Captain America: the Winter soldiers* and the *Avatar: End game*) in troll 3 also foretells that it would be a non~bonafide communication as the hearer in the conversation will discard the seriousness of the speaker. This enables the reader to evoke various scripts and choose the most contradictory one to enjoy it.

'The impossible future' in the punch line of the second troll can be ignoredas the slip of the tongue of the student or/ the cleverness of the scholarin the class. But it attains the status of stark reality when the reader understands that it is said by the 'bro meme' a man known for his guileless speech. The blood shot eyes, the weed on the lips and the black beard gives him the status of a grown up man who knows his society in a more realistic way. And analysing from a grown upperson the sentence(that one day our country will become corrupt free) can be uttered by politician or a patriot as the lady holds a stick/ ruler which is symbol of power and authority. But the man with his rough and careless looks assumed the status of a commonman in the democratic country or a keen observer of the society. Itis from this juncture the truth starts pricking the conscious of the rulers and the people start to mock at them through uncontrollable laughter. The bro meme is always known for his veraciousness, blunt statement of facts and it would be a **bona—fide** communication.

 The speaker in the troll 4 can be disappointed for two reasons: his lover is now not with him, and she was disloyal to him.But the meme evokes (the happy face of DeCaprio) theironic script that she is not worthyof him and that he realized the truth with happiness. The last meme in troll (5) are real people who appear in trolls. The first part of the conversation between them is bona—fide as both were engaged in truthful serious talking but the final part changes the nature of it as Mr. Modi perceives it in wrong way. He is celebrated for his foreign trips which for many is a topic for discussion. A meme could communicate with readers without using large narratives and instances. It is not his perception of the word welcome that makes one laugh but his action itself in the meme.

Analyzing many trolls in the same way one could find that memes are not mere intruding images in the structure of troll language but they are the semantic script- triggers. According to Raskin " Many jokes contain an element which triggers the switch from the one script evoked by the text of the joke to the opposed script , the switch which make up the joke. This element is called semantic switch trigger" (114). This trigger can be of two types ambiguity and contradictory. The ambiguity can be again divided into three as the syntactic ambiguity as in troll (4) situational ambiguity(troll 1) , Quasi ambiguity (troll 3 and 4). Dichotomizing trigger comes under the contradictory trigger and troll 2 serves as an example of it.

II.   CONCLUSION

Raskin has enumerated that "any text which is capable of creating a humourous effect is, therefore, a legitimate object of investigation here. What is excluded is the non-verbal humour, i.e a humourous situation which is not created expressed by a text."(46). But memes have content words having both connoted and denoted meaning, container of significance, gives ample scope for intonation and have particular space for the grammar of trolls. It is like a slang that can be understood by sharing certain cultural roots. By analyzing the verbal structure of troll one can understand that memes define the nature of communication whether it is bona –fide or non- bona-fide. More over in a troll, the meme evokes different script and urges the reader to find the different combinations to contradict the evoked script in the text.It is assumed that with the advent of technology and the interest of man in trolls, memes will make it anundeniable presence in the string of human communication which in turn would acquire the status of new scripts in human language.

III.   REFERENCES

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