When the local meets the global:
viral world dissemination of the catchphrase "Hawk Tuah" on social media

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This research aims to trace out how a local event can have a world impact on global discourses that disseminate freely on social media platforms. An original speech act enacted in a post on a social media platform can be quoted by users all around the world. This is particularly exemplified when a short video becomes viral and gives birth to a series of reenacted speeches.

This dissemination of digital discourses on social media often relies on memes that are iconotextual forms of discourse that have emerged as quintessential elements of social media culture, blending humour, critique, and social commentary. Typically, a meme combines an image, text, or video clip with a recognizable template or format, creating a shared language of humour and expression. With translations of text contents from one language to another, memes can easily disseminate around the world by erasing geographic borders and contributing to a universalised vision of a global culture.

This research will analyse how the combination of memes and embedded videos can disseminate a local event and turn it into a mainstream viral post. We have chosen the amazingly popular "Hawk Tuah" video initially posted on YouTube. This paper will show how this local event turned out to be a global event based on the remanence of a "discursive moment" (Moirand, our translation) thanks to the global onomatopoeic value of the "Hawk Tuah" phonological production that goes beyond a local area to become a world-famous gimmick. The corpus will involve posts published on X, Instagram, and TikTok.

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