

INTERNET MEMES AS CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC ARTEFACTS: A
MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF ONLINE YOUTH
COMMUNICATION

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Abstract: This study explores how internet memes act as cultural and linguistic tools in digital communication. We analyzed 100 popular online memes to see how pictures and short text work together to share hidden meanings, humor, and social views. The results show that memes are not just simple jokes. Instead, they help young internet users express feelings, criticize everyday social problems, and build strong online group connections using simple visual ideas.

Keywords: internet memes, multimodal discourse analysis, digital communication, sociolinguistics, intertextuality, cultural artefacts, digital youth culture.

INTERNET MEMLARI MADANIY VA LINGVISTIK ARTEFAKT SIFATIDA:
YOSHLARNING RAQAMLI MULOQOTIDAGI MULTIMODAL DISKURS
TAHLILI

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Annotatsiya: Ushbu tadqiqot internet memlarining yoshlar muloqotidagi o‘rnini hamda ularning til va madaniyatga ta'sirini o‘rganadi. Tadqiqotda 100 ta ommabop mem tahlil qilinib, ulardagi rasm va matnlar bir-birini qanday to‘ldirishi tekshirildi. Natijalar shuni ko‘rsatdiki, memlar faqat shunchaki kulgi uchun emas, balki yoshlarning o‘z tuyg‘ularini bildirish, ijtimoiy voqealarga munosabat bildirish hamda tarmoqda o‘z guruhini shakllantirish uchun muhim muloqot vositasi hisoblanadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: internet memlari, multimodal diskurs tahlili, raqamli muloqot, sotsiolingvistika, intertekstualik, raqamli madaniyat.

Introduction

In modern digital communication, people communicate using pictures and images instead of just writing plain text. Internet memes have become one of the most popular parts of online communication. Originally, the word "meme" meant a small cultural idea that spreads from person to person. Today, an internet meme usually combines an image with short text or video clips that people edit and share quickly across online networks.

Memes are not just funny pictures that disappear quickly. They work as modern cultural and language tools that show society's views, values, and feelings. In language learning, memes represent a unique style where short text relies on pictures to show irony, sarcasm, or humor. The main feature of a meme is its reliance on background knowledge or popular culture. To understand a meme, a person needs to know both basic language rules and specific online trends. This study uses simple Multimodal Discourse Analysis to examine how images and words work together to create modern digital expressions.

Methods and Materials

This study analyzed 100 popular digital memes collected from social platforms like Reddit, X/Twitter, Instagram, and Telegram over four months.

We analyzed each meme using three basic steps:

1. Visual Look: Checking image choices, facial expressions, and popular picture templates (such as “Distracted Boyfriend” or “Two Buttons”).
2. Text Structure: Looking at short text styles, slang, missing punctuation, and mixed language use.
3. Social Purpose: Understanding the hidden message, humor style, or social criticism in the meme.

Results and Discussion

The analysis showed that memes need both picture and text to work well. Neither the image nor the text can explain the full meaning alone.

Meme Category	Structural Composition	Primary Linguistic Semiotic Feature /	Pragmatic Function
Juxtaposition / Reaction	Image template + Dual contrasting text captions	Semantic Contrast / Irony	Highlighting social hypocrisy or personal conflict

Metaphorical Analogy	Pop-culture image + Abstract thematic label	Intertextuality / Visual Metaphor	Simplifying complex emotional or social situations
Absurdist Post-Irony	Distorted image + Decontextualized text	Anti-humor / Lexical Distortion	Expressing digital fatigue, surrealism, or subculture identity

As shown in the table, memes depend heavily on image-text teamwork. The written text usually acts as a guide that helps the reader understand an ambiguous picture.

Linguistically, memes use very few words to share big ideas. By using a well-known picture template, a creator can explain complex feelings in under ten words. Furthermore, understanding a niche meme makes users feel connected, turning memes into shared markers of modern digital group identity.

Conclusion

Internet memes represent a clever combination of visual art, language, and cultural views. As visual-textual tools, they show how digital communication is moving toward a mix of images and short text, where pictures serve as digital grammar and text provides context.

Understanding meme communication is very important for modern linguistics because it shows how online groups mix popular culture, build digital identity, and comment on social events. Future research should continue to monitor how visual communication changes alongside new technology platforms.

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