

INTERNET MEMES AS MODERN PHRASEOLOGICAL EXPRESSIONS

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Annotatsiya. Ushbu tadqiqot internet memlarini raqamli kommunikatsiyada frazeologik ifodaning yangi segmentlari sifatida o'rganadi. Ushbu ish memlarni uchta mashhur meme konstruksiyasi - *I was today years old...*, *This is fine*, va *When you + gap tuzilmalari* asosida tahlil qilib, ularning strukturaviy, semantik va pragmatik jihatlarini tasvirlaydi. Sifatli lingvistik tahlil asosida tadqiqot shuni ko'rsatadiki, internet memlari so'zma-so'z ma'nodan tashqarida ma'no ifodalovchi, yarim-turg'un va ijtimoiy jihatdan umumiy bo'lgan til shakllaridir. Natijalar memlar barqarorlik, qayta ishlab chiqarish imkoniyati va idiomatik ma'no kabi frazeologik birliklarga xos asosiy xususiyatlarni namoyon etishini ko'rsatadi. Shuningdek, bu iboralar hissiy ifodani kuchaytirish, shaxsiy identitetni shakllantirish hamda onlayn diskursda muloqot samaradorligini oshirishda muhim rol o'ynaydi. Tadqiqotga ko'ra, internet memlari multimodal kommunikatsiya va internet madaniyatidan kelib chiqqan yangi turdagi raqamli frazeologiyadir.

Kalit so'zlar: internet memlari, frazeologiya, raqamli diskurs, idiomalar, lingvistik innovatsiya.

Abstract. This research explores internet memes as novel segments of phraseological expression in digital communication. This work analyzes memes in three popular meme constructions - *I was today years old...*, *This is fine*, and *when you + clause structures*, and describes their structural, semantic, and pragmatic aspects. Using qualitative linguistic investigation, the study shows how internet memes are semi-fixed, socially shared forms of language that encode meaning beyond literal interpretation. The results indicate that memes exhibit the key properties that characterize phraseological units in terms of stability, reproducibility, and idiomatic meaning. Also, the phrases contribute greatly to emotional expression, identity construction, as well as to the efficiency of communication in online discourse. Online memes are a new kind of digital phraseology which stems from multimodal communication and internet culture, according to the research.

Keywords: internet memes, phraseology, digital discourse, idioms, linguistic innovation.

INTRODUCTION

Language is constantly changing and evolving under the strain of technological and social change. Recently, with widespread digital communication platforms, new

forms of expressive activity have emerged, which go against traditional linguistic categories. People have invented several ways for themselves in order to facilitate language learning process because it is challenging [6]. Of all these forms, internet memes have been the most commonly exchanged modality of communication, especially, among younger generations. The concept of memes as units of cultural transmission was first established by Dawkins who theorized them to be multimodal, humorous, and context-dependent expressions that are widely used across social media platforms [4]. However, as Shifman suggested, internet memes are “groups of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and stance,” which are circulated, imitated, and transformed by internet users (Shifman, 2013). Memes are largely unexplored in linguistic phraseology. This is the gap that the present research aims to fill by considering memes to be modern phraseological expressions, using three cases as examples:

I was today years old...

This is fine

When you + clause” constructions

1. *I was today years old...*

This meme is used when someone discovers a fact very late in life that they feel they should have known earlier. It usually expresses surprise, embarrassment, and humor at the same time. The phrase became popular on social media platforms like Twitter, TikTok, and Instagram, where users share funny personal discoveries.

In this context, the speaker humorously admits learning simple information much later than expected.

2. *This is fine*

This meme comes from a comic by KC Green, where a dog sits calmly in a burning room and says, “This is fine.” It is used to describe situations where everything is going wrong, but the person pretends to stay calm and act as if nothing is wrong.

Here, the speaker uses irony to show stress and helplessness while pretending to be okay.

3. *When you + clause*

This meme format is used to describe relatable everyday situations. It usually introduces a common experience that many people understand, creating humor through recognition and emotional connection.

This context shows a feeling of achievement and relatability for language learners, especially English learners.

The primary research question is:

To what extent do internet memes function as phraseological units in contemporary digital communication?

METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative descriptive and uses discourse and phraseological analysis. The data consist of three widely recognized internet meme expressions, collected from social media platforms such as Twitter (X), Reddit, Instagram, and meme databases (e.g., Know Your Meme).

The article’s focus is on three linguistic dimensions:

1. Structural properties (fixedness, patterning, variability)
2. Semantic interpretation (literal vs. figurative meaning)
3. Pragmatic function (communicative use in context)

The memes were chosen based on their frequency of use, recognizability, and relevance in online discourse. Theoretical interpretation was supported using secondary sources in linguistics and digital communication studies [2, 3, 5].

RESULTS

The questions of whether internet memes are modern phraseological expressions are best approached through a three-level analysis of linguistic features: structural features, semantic features, and pragmatic roles. These factors are significant because phraseological units are typically characterized by their rigid structure, figurative or shared meaning, and communicative function in real interaction. Structural properties have been found to indicate whether an expression is stable, and whether it is used repeatedly in the same form. Semantic characteristics show whether or not meaning is literal and depends on context and cultural understanding. Pragmatic functions show how the expression can be exploited to express the emotions, attitudes, and social meanings in its communication form. For this study, three well-known meme expressions found favor: *I was today years old...*, *This is fine*, and *When you + clause* (such as *When you watch a movie without subtitles*). The memes were selected as they are frequent, widely used in digital communication, and can easily visualize the phraseological features.

1. Structural Properties

The analysis found that all three meme expressions exhibit partial or full formulaicity:

I was today years old... is a fixed introductory clause that indicates a sudden realization.

This is fine works as a minimal fixed expression closely attached to its visual meme setting.

When you + clause can be regarded as a syntactic structure that is productive (with constant recognizability but freedom in variation).

These structures tell us that memes are not random utterances; rather, they are conventionalized linguistic patterns that are repeated on digital platforms.

2. Semantic Characteristics

The semantic analysis indicates that meme meanings are non-literal as well as context-dependent:

I was today years old... → a surprise and late realization.

This is fine → ironic acceptance of problematic situations.

When you + clause → relatable personal or social experiences.

Short and concise, these expressions retain high semantic density and require a common cultural interpretation.

3. Pragmatic Functions

Our findings suggest that memes fulfill several important pragmatic functions:

- a) Expressing emotions indirectly (humor, irony, frustration)
- b) Improving communicative efficiency in digital environments
- c) Building social bonds based on common understanding
- d) Acting as discourse shortcuts in online conversations

These functions show that memes function more like tools of communication than merely products for entertainment.

DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that internet memes serve as developing phraseological expressions of digital discourse. Traditionally, phraseological units are stable, idiomatic phrases and their conventionality has been de facto characterized by the study done in 1998 [1]. This work reveals that memes share these attributes, yet they also embody new linguistic features.

1. Memes vs Digital Phraseology. Meme expressions are, unlike those in classic idioms, dynamically evolving, user-generated, multimodal (text+image), disseminated quickly through digital channels. This further confirms that memes form a distinct set of phraseological units shaped by the internet.

2. Cognitive Interpretation. Memes are mental shortcuts which trigger shared conceptual frames from a cognitive linguistic perspective:

This fine activates a frame of tightly controlled chaos and emotional repression. *I was today years old...* opens a frame of discovery of knowledge.

When you ... activates a frame of personal experience recognition.

So that confirms that meme understanding is based on a common cognitive and cultural knowledge base.

3. Sociolinguistic Significance. Memes also act as indices of social identity. Their use indicates belonging to digital communities, and understanding of internet culture and active involvement in casual global contact. Accordingly, memes help construct identity and form group membership online.

4. Pedagogical Relevance. The results demonstrate the significance of memes in English Language Teaching (ELT). Memes can increase student engagement, support vocabulary acquisition, develop a pragmatic ability and competence and expose learners to authentic informal English, develop a cultural appreciation. Therefore, memes stand as useful pedagogical devices for the 21st Century language classrooms.

5. Theoretical Implications. The new study builds on linguistic theory with its proposal of phraseology into the digital domain. It illustrates that phraseological units are no longer confined to fixed verbal expressions but consist of semi-fixed templates, multimodal expressions and socially constructed digital forms. This provides the justification for the development of a digital phraseological theory that combines linguistics, semiotics, and media studies.

CONCLUSION

The present work shows that internet memes perform as modern phraseological expressions in which memes have structural stability, semantic complexity, and pragmatic efficiency. As such, the analysis of *I was today years old*, *This is fine*, and *When you* + *clause* demonstrates that memes function as conventionalized units of meaning in digital communication. The results support that memes are not just humorous contents of the internet, but a systematic linguistic phenomenon reflecting the evolution of language in the digital era. Future studies deserve to investigate multimodal phraseology and cross-cultural variation in meme usage.

This study assessed internet memes as contemporary phraseological expressions utilizing three widely-used examples. The goal was to assess if these meme expressions act as traditional phraseological units in digital communication. We found the three memes to possess the fundamental features of phraseological expressions. They establish structural persistence via a set of recognized patterns, semantic complexity through figurative and context-indicative meanings, and pragmatic value by highlighting feelings, attitudes, and common experiences. This validates that memes are

not just humorous media transmitted online, but also meaningful linguistic subunit of natural language in ordinary human interaction. Unlike classic idioms, memes are both fluid and multimodal. They are frequently text and image-centered, internet culture dependent, and they spread very quickly via social media. They have meanings driven by joint understanding and electronic exchange, thus rendering them a contemporary way of phrasing in the digital universe. The paper also suggests that memes are effective in the teaching of English. They can improve learner motivation, cultural understanding and pragmatic competence, as informal English is portrayed in genuine cases. In other words, internet memes must be considered a component of contemporary expressions. They are a testament to language dynamics under the influence of technology and digital interaction, and they still influence modern English in novel and artistic forms.

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