Meme virality and humour style: Exploring internet memes as a multimodal language in social media

Sunshine G. Balan[1], Keith Daryl A. Aguipo[2], Ronalyn A. Cabaguing[3], Lynjel P. Edar[4], Joseph P. Nacionales[5], Norberto Claridad[6]

Eastern Visayas State University, Philippines[1,2,3,4,5,6]
[1]Email: sunshine.balan@evsu.edu.ph
[2]Email: keithdaryl.aguipo@evsu.edu.ph
[3]Email: ronalyn.cabaguing@evsu.edu.ph
[4]Email: lynjel.edar@evsu.edu.ph
[5]Email: joseph.nacionales@evsu.edu.ph
[6]Email: norberto.claridad@evsu.edu.ph

Abstract - The study only includes the randomly chosen students from one of the state universities in Tacloban City, Philippines, in its scope. This study takes into account every aspect of the students' individual personal lives, including their understanding and prior experience with internet memes. For this study, the researchers used qualitative research, especially the survey/interview method. This design will be used by the researchers to examine the influence that an internet meme has on an individual across all social media platforms. Studies that use randomization and the evaluation of interventions are known as qualitative research. The following factors contributed to the researchers' decision to randomize the respondents: (1) easy access to study participants, (2) large/universal sample size, and (3) to be able to identify trustworthy participants who, based on their own experiences, have sufficient knowledge of internet memes. Memes can be used to spread a particular message, serve as a platform for mass communication, and serve as a form of entertainment, according to the study's analysis of data from 26 carefully chosen participants. According to the research, it would be preferable for the reader to understand the meme's meaning because it would make it possible for them to more clearly understand the message or even just enjoy the meme. The reader will be able to understand the content as a result.

Keywords: meme virality; humour style; social media; multimodal language

I. INTRODUCTION

Internet memes, which are known for their rapid dissemination and viral nature, have emerged as a common form of communication in social media. In order to convey humour and meaning, memes are multimodal in nature, combining text, images, videos, and other elements. In recent years, there has been an increase in interest in researching the humour and virality of memes on social media, shedding light on the dynamics of meme culture and its effects on online communities (Taecharungroj & Nueangjamnong, 2015; Yus, 2018; Mahfouz, 2021; Ali, 2023).

The landscape of communication has been fundamentally changed by the emergence of social media and social networking websites in the twenty-first century. Social media is an online platform that encourages user-generated content and interpersonal communication between people, groups, and organizations. According to Mills (2012; Esfidani, 2022; Susanto et al, 2022; Sia et al, 2023), social media have facilitated the shift in communication from broadcasting to social dialogues through networks of engaged users. The emergence of social media has changed the roles of users from content consumers to content creators. Online social media and communication have a stronger sense of community in the digital age, bridging disparate platforms to connect with new authors and audiences. It's getting harder to distinguish between social network users who are experts and those who are amateurs, as well as between top-down and bottom-up. more youthful generations are media in ways that their parents did not, which is on the rise.

Millennials, also referred to as digital natives, are drawn to social media because it can satisfy many of their needs. According to Kilian et al (2012), the following are the reasons why people use media (1) Information: looking for information and advice, satisfying curiosity; (2) Integration and Social Integration: feeling a sense of belonging and connection with family, friends, and society; (3) Personal Identity: enhancing one's sense of self; and (4) Recreation: unwinding, letting off steam. The most notable feature of social media-based online communication is "humour," which seems to meet most, if not all, of the prerequisites. Social media users are engaging with more entertaining content than ever before, which results in a virality effect where viewers turn to themselves by sharing the content. spreading the word to people in their networks. Using "Internet memes" is a common way to make jokes.

The internet has changed the way we communicate on an unprecedented scale. In the last two decades, social communication patterns have undergone a fundamental transformation as a result of its new capabilities and characteristics coming together to create a multidimensional and multimodal medium. Online communities of people who share similar or identical experiences, interests, beliefs, and morals have emerged as a result of the internet, which has also improved the speed, convenience, and reach of human contact. Members of virtual communities can transmit any piece of information by combining visual, textual, or aural elements thanks to the Internet's multimodal nature.

Social media platforms, particularly social networking sites, have drawn more academic attention due to their extensive capabilities and reach. research. SNSs are used daily by millions of people; Facebook, for instance, has over 865 million daily active users. Facebook is a social phenomenon that has drawn interest from academic disciplines like sociology, psychology, education, law, communications, and media studies. As a result, there is a sizable body of literature on the social, technical, and political implications of Facebook. The widespread use of social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can be attributed to a number of factors. The user can express themselves in a wide range of ways thanks to its highly configurable interface and practically limitless surroundings. Second, they offer a variety of forms of involvement and communication, both one-way and two-way, due to their combined strength.

The goal of this study is to look into how the 26 students from Eastern Visayas State University who were chosen for the study communicate. Any internet memes shared on social media make up the content. Multimodal discourse analysis was used to understand the information shared by Internet memes. The study shows that the memes' content is structured around humour, news, history, or even catchphrases. The current study, which focuses on social media online memes, aims to shed some light

on the following topics (1) Does exposure to internet memes make the content more amusing than those exposed to non-meme content? (2) How do these internet memes influence the participants' mood?

The concepts of internet memes as multimodal language in social media are explained in this section. It describes in detail the earlier research that was done on these topics and succinctly explains why the current study is obviously important.

Even though visual memes are becoming increasingly important, we still don't fully understand the factors that might make a meme go viral on social media. In this study, we investigate the visual characteristics that differentiate highly viral image memes from those that are not shared by examining composition, subjects, and target audiences. Drawing from studies in art theory, psychology, marketing, and neuroscience, we develop a codebook to describe image memes and use it to annotate a collection of 100 image memes culled from 4chan's Politically Incorrect Board (/pol).

This examines the communication phenomena on the busiest and most widely used social media platform. They try to understand the role of humour and virality, or the dissemination and spread of the message, by analysing Internet memes. They found a link between the types of humour, the volume of likes and comments, and the popularity or number of memes shared. Marketers and other communicators who want to use humour to make their points on the internet may find the study's findings useful.

Psychological studies have long recognized humour as a beneficial coping strategy for people dealing with difficult circumstances and life challenges. To fully comprehend the role of humour in battling the COVID-19 pandemic, empirical research is necessary. In a community sample of 527 Spanish adults, we looked into the relationships between humour preferences, the threat that COVID-19 is perceived to pose, the amusement value of COVID-19 memes, and people's affective moods. During the third week of Spain's shutdown, from March 26 to March 31, 2020, data were collected. According to our research, intrapsychic humour was associated with better COVID-19 pandemic coping.

The analysis of the humourous meme communication process in this study uses Facebook, the most well-known online phenomenon. This study uses a quantitative and qualitative content analysis of memes shared on a Facebook page to investigate the effects of different humour styles and types on the virality of memes. Despite this, they do so by combining tried-and-true communication techniques with the concepts and theories of humour and virality to create the framework for amusing memes in social media communications. Professionals who work in humourous social media communications may find the study's findings useful. Even though it is not the most popular, researchers who delve deeper into the relevant topics might discover that the best humour is self-defeating. Using the typology used in the context of broadcast and print media, this study shows that while the seven types of humour that have been shown to have an effect on virality—comparison, characterization, understatement, pun, humour, silliness, and surprise—don't necessarily differ from one another. The two most prevalent types of humour found in Internet memes are sarcasm and silliness. It's helpful to have a framework and understanding of the various humour subgenres and meme types on social media (Mustafa & Muhammad, 2023).

The "when" meme, a popular online joke that stereo typically combines a when clause with an apparently unrelated image, is the subject of this essay. Although it initially seems out of place, I think this image promotes the creation of a multimodal simile by encouraging selective mapping between verbal and visual elements. I start by trying to clarify what a simile is and how it differs from a metaphor. By encouraging listeners to include odd and unexpected points of view, I secondly show how this multimodal simile demonstrates original perspective mapping. In order to show how closely related the two concepts are, I draw a comparison between the like construction in a simile and the like reported speech marker. The paper's ultimate goal is to advance the simile studies field by strengthening the links between embodiment, metonymy, viewpoint, blending, and multimodality (Lou, 2017).

In order to determine potential categories into which these memes could fall, a collection of 100 instances of an image macro meme (a type of meme that typically consists of a picture in the middle of a top and bottom stretch of text) is analysed for its multimodal quality in the present section. The quality of the final interpretation will be impacted. The basic premise of the chapter is that different text-picture pairings will influence ultimate relevance by resulting in different balances of cognitive effects and mental effort, the latter of which is occasionally lessened by additional cognitive effects in the form of implications. This is generally speaking within a cyber pragmatic framework.

II. METHOD
2.1 Research Design
The researchers used the Qualitative research design for this study, particularly the survey/interview method of research. The researchers will utilize this design to determine how the internet meme has influence as an individual in any kind of social media flatforms.

Qualitative research are studies that aim to evaluate interventions and use randomization. The reasons why the researchers choose to randomize the respondents are the following: (1) it is easy to find participants on our study, (2) universal/large available sample size, and (3) to be able to find reliable participants that have enough knowledge about internet memes based on their experiences.

2.2 Settings and Participants
State Universities Tacloban City, Philippines consisted of a population of estimated around 8,000 to 10,000 and this represented estimated of the total population of Eastern Visayas State University, Main Campus. Tacloban City. Nonprobability was used in this study, specifically purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a sampling method used in which the researchers rely on their judgment when choosing members to participate in the study.

In Eastern Visayas State University, Main Campus. Tacloban. Our teacher only requires 26 participants on our study. 26 participants will be given the research consent form and interviews questionnaires. The participants were randomly chosen depends of their decisions if they will be willing to participate or not, because the researchers believe that through purposive sampling, they obtained a representative sample using a sound of judgment, which also saved time and finances.

2.3 Data Collection Procedure
In this study, semi-structured interview method of data analysis strategy will be used as the strategy to analyze data. The researchers developed a questionnaire with explicit words to serve its intended participants in this study. Most of the questionnaire is constructed and are dichotomous questions that the participants can respond with their experiences on social media platforms about internet memes. After our teacher approved the questions, questions were asked to the 26 participants, provided with the documentary of the interview in (place where we conduct our study). After distributing samples of our consent form and interview questionnaire, this study will be conducted using a survey to the participants as a reference. The researchers collected the data utilizing a survey questionnaire about their name, age, gender, occupation and address. The participants allotted their valuable time answering the questions in the survey. The data gathered from this research instrument were collected and organized according to the answers responded by the participants. By this strategy, the researchers will have a better chance of gaining to know how social media or internet memes influenced each of the participants of our study. The researchers also used Thematic Analysis for analyzing qualitative data that involves reading through a set of data and looking for patterns in the meaning of the data to find themes.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to identify the effects of Internet Memes as a Multimodal Language in social media for some people. The findings of the investigation and discussion are provided in this chapter.
3.1 Internet Memes as a popular genre for Humourous Engagement in Online Communication
Social Media Memes can make other people happy.

> *"It helps me laugh when I'm having a bad mood or even bad day."*
> *"It just makes me happy every time I see or share some of it."*

The participants stating that people can find happiness and amusement in internet memes, especially when they're feeling down. The addition of alternative comes via the internet, social media, and viral cultures. The fury, joy, awe, and excitement felt online are fed by all of these feelings (Steinert, 2022; Hisham et al, 2021; Vásquez & Aslan, 2021).
3.2 Internet Memes as a Catchphrase or piece of Media that gains popularity and spreads rapidly via the Internet

Social Media Memes develop behavior in communicating with other people.

> *"I've become more humourous ever since I started finding and encountered memes online."*
> *"Sometimes communicating with my close friends, I adopt some memes that I got from social media."*

The participants stating that the way we use memes in our daily interactions has led us to develop new habits in communicating with others. People from all walks of life may now communicate using a new language called memes, which gives us more freedom to express ourselves while still adhering to the rules of online culture. Memes are any thoughts and behaviors that are not genetically based, such as cultural concepts or social customs, and they propagate throughout a civilization. Memes play a significant role in shaping much of human behavior and are taught and created by social forces like culture, religion, and education (Xu et al, 2012; Hisham et al, 2021; Joser et al, 2023).

3.3 Internet Memes serves as coping mechanism for some social media users
Social media memes coping mechanism for some people.

> *"If the memes are funny, it can help in reducing stress."*
> *"And can release my stress."*

According to the data gathered, internet memes can help some people cope with difficult emotions and situations. However, they may not work for some of the participants. Also, some stated that relying too much on memes can prevent them from seeking professional help or addressing underlying problems (Rahardi & Amalia, 2019).

3.4 Viewing memes help improve one's confidence in ability to cope with life
Viewing memes help boost confidence for some people.

> *"The internet memes can help improve one's mood depends on the context or content inside of it."*
> *"In my case, as the time that the internet memes got fame, yes, I do also share on social media such things because it might be a source of happiness to other people who can saw it."*

Majority of the participants stated that memes are entertaining and might provide temporary relief, but it shouldn't be their main means of gaining confidence or overcoming obstacles in life. It's crucial to have a balance approach to self-improvement and seek out support from trusted friends, family, or expert when necessary (Grundlingh, 2018; Ling et al, 2021).

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research study tries to explore the internet meme virality and humour styles, with the goal of investigating internet memes as a multimodal language in social media. We conduct interviews on our campus, we interview 26 random students in Eastern Visayas State University (EVSU). Humour is an important component of communication, and it can help increase the message's spread ability. However, according to research findings, there is a delicate cultural difference between sharing humourous memes on the internet. As a result, practitioners should pay close attention to how various types of Before developing a viral campaign, consider how audiences react to various types of messages.

The findings show that memes have a positive effect. Although none of the participants admitted to sharing internet memes, they were all well-versed in 26 meme literacy. Memes are created as a tool for representing identity and ideas. Internet users choose to react to and share memes that support their beliefs. By sharing and comprehending the joke (internet meme), as humourous comments or opinions. Memes, because of their humourous nature, are not reliable news sources, but they are an effective communication and entertainment tool. Because the participants are mostly from our university, the results may not be generalizable to the Eastern Visayas State University (EVSU). Furthermore, for those who responded, internet memes had an impact on their perception. Researchers may discover and investigate that internet memes are more influential to teenagers, memes are visual and intertextual, and their effect on viewers is in many ways dependent on how viewers view or interpret the arguments embedded in them, which discovered that those who agreed with a meme rated it higher on message effectiveness and lower on argument scrutiny.

REFERENCES

Ali, Z. (2023). The influence of social media on English language learning and academic performance at undergraduate level. Journal of Language, Literature, Social and Cultural Studies, 1(3), 281–293. https://doi.org/10.58881/jllscs.v1i3.127 (Original work published November 1, 2023)

Esfidani, M. R., Hassangholipour Yasouri, T., & Barmar, N. (2022). The Effect of Humour Types on the Advertising Virality: Humour Style and Social Ties of Consumers in Social Networks. *Consumer Behavior Studies Journal*, *9*(3), 1–18.

Grundlingh, Lezandra. (2018). Exploring the possibility of using appraisal theory to determine the legitimacy of suicide notes. Lingua. 214. 10.1016/j.lingua.2018.07.004.

Hisham, D., AlSayed, A., & Saad, Y. (2021). The use of Viral Humourous Memes To Raise Awareness of A Service through Social Media Platforms. *Business Studies Journal*, *13*(4S), 1–7. https://www.abacademies.org/articles/the-use-of-viral-humourous-memes-to-raise-awareness-of-a-service-through-social-media-platforms-13282.html

Internet Meme Culture: Affective Response and Political Indoctrination. University of California, Merced ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2022. 29169283.

Joser, J. R., Dedace, J. R., Daclizon, K., Salvaña, P. L., Nacionales, J., & Claridad, N. (2023). The rhetoric of comedy: exploring the language and humor styles of Filipino stand-up comedians. *Journal of Language and Pragmatics Studies*, 2(2), 71–88. https://doi.org/10.58881/jlps.v2i2.17

Kilian, Thomas; Hennigs, Nadine & Langner, Sascha. (2012). Do Millennials read books or blogs? Introducing a media usage typology of the internet generation. Journal of Consumer Marketing. 29. 114-124. 10.1108/07363761211206366.

Ling, C., AbuHilal, I, Blackburn, J., De Cristofaro, E., Zannettou, S., & Stringhini, G. (2021). Dissecting the Meme Magic: Understanding Indicators of Virality in Image Memes. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, *5*(CSCW1), 1–24.

Lou, A. (2017). Multimodal simile. *English Text Construction*, *10*(1), 106–131. https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/etc.10.1.06lou.

Mahfouz, I.M. (2021). A Multimodal Analysis of Gender Representation in "Men vs. Women Memes". *Textual Turnings: An International Peer-Reviewed Journal in English Studies*.

Maulden, Hannah Leah. (2022). Internet Meme Culture: Affective Response and Political Indoctrination

Mills, Adama J. (2012). Virality in social media: the SPIN Framework. Journal of Public Affair. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/pa.1418.

Mustafa, M., & Muhammad, L. A. (2023). Discourse towards understanding the impacts of humour in foreign language classes. *Journal of Language, Literature, Social and Cultural Studies*, *1*(3), 163–167. https://doi.org/10.58881/jllscs.v1i3.99 (Original work published September 1, 2023)

Rahardi, H., & Amalia, R. (2019). Meme as political criticism towards 2019 Indonesian general election: A critical discourse analysis. *Studies in English Language and Education, 6*(2), 239-250. doi:https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v6i2.14020

Sia, D. K., Fabi, N., Maceda, R. A., Udtuhan, J. H., Nacionales, J., & Claridad, N. (2023). Trend starts here: perks on self-esteem among Filipino undergraduate TikTok users. *Journal of Language, Literature, Social and Cultural Studies*, *1*(2), 116–125. https://doi.org/10.58881/jllscs.v1i2.58 (Original work published July 2, 2023)

Steinert, Ulrike. (2022). Emotion and the Body from: The Routledge Handbook of Emotions in the Ancient Near East Routledge Accessed on: 24 Jul 2023.

Susanto, B., Wajdi, M., Sariono, A., & Sudarmaningtyas, A. E. R. (2022). Observing English classroom in the digital era. *Journal of Language and Pragmatics Studies*, *1*(1), 6–15. https://doi.org/10.58881/jlps.v1i1.1

Taecharungroj, V., & Nueangjamnong, P. (2015). Humour 2.0: Styles and Types of Humour and Virality of Memes on Facebook. *Journal of Creative Communications*, *10*(3), 288–302. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0973258615614420

Torres-Marín, J., Navarro-Carrillo, G., Eid, M., & Carretero-Dios, H. (2022). Humour Styles, Perceived Threat, Funniness of COVID-19 Memes, and Affective Mood in the Early Stages of COVID-19 Lokdown. *Journal of Happiness Studies*.

Vásquez, C., & Aslan, E. (2021). "Cats be outside, how about meow": Multimodal humour and creativity in an internet meme. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *171*, 101–117.

Xu, J., Coats, L.T., & Davidson, M.L. (2012). Promoting Student Interest in Science: The Perspectives of Exemplary African American Teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*, *49*(1), 124–154. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831211426200

Yus, F. (2018). Multimodality in Memes: A Cyberpragmatic Approach. Analyzing Digital Discourse, 105–131. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-92663-6