

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE INTERNET MEMES EMPLOYING THE GROTESQUE

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In the contemporary digital era, internet memes play a pivotal role in shaping cultural and communicative practices, reflecting current sociocultural trends and provoking discourse. Of particular interest are those memes that not only exemplify the linguistic and cultural idiosyncrasies of Anglophone society but also transcend linguistic and civilizational boundaries, facilitating global exchange and adapting to local contexts. Their dynamic nature enables the exploration of novel forms of humor, irony, and sarcasm, which unveil latent dimensions of online discourse and mirror societal sentiments.

Concurrently, memes serve as vital material for intercultural studies examining the impact of digital content on the globalization of communication, underscoring the pertinence of this inquiry. The present study focuses on internet memes incorporating elements of the grotesque. As an artistic device amalgamating contrasting, often absurd, and comically macabre elements, the grotesque engenders a distinctive effect on audience perception when deployed in memes. We investigate the grotesque essence of internet memes as a communicative-expressive phenomenon poised at the nexus of absurdity, satire, and sociocultural reflection, analyzing how grotesque imagery, hyperbole, incongruous amalgamation, and reality distortion convey social, cultural, and political messages.

The research corpus comprises English-language internet memes featuring grotesque elements, selected from prominent digital platforms (Reddit, Twitter) based on criteria of virality, recognizability, and salience of grotesque techniques. With the advancement and dissemination of technologies, the intensity of information

consumption has escalated, alongside the diversification of online content, wherein internet memes assume a salient role. E. Tsykhovska conceptualizes this phenomenon as follows: "Memes constitute information that proliferates and gains popularity rapidly; they represent fashions propagated through communication channels and the attitudes guiding our selection of particular items. Identified as a psychological virus, a meme detaches from its originator, evolves within the communicative sphere, and swiftly infects new demographics. Memes effectively dictate the fashions governing our consumption, thereby establishing the informational – and consequently, advertising – backdrop for the modern paradigm" [1, p. 153].

The grotesque ranks among the most intricate and multifaceted phenomena in art, attested since antiquity. Its meanings, functions, and characteristics have evolved across epochs. As an artistic device, the grotesque manifests across diverse media: in painting through ornamental motifs in frescoes, vases, murals, and temple decorations; in sculpture via depictions of human-animal hybrids, sphinx statues at temple entrances, and other sacred sites; and in literature, particularly in mythologically grounded works. Fundamentally, the grotesque as an artistic principle entails the fusion of disparate elements into a cohesive whole, yielding novel aesthetic structures capable of elucidating the profound essence of phenomena.

The authentic signification of the grotesque is increasingly supplanted by proximate concepts such as hyperbole, metonymy, oxymoron, phenomenon, and alogism. Its essence is often conflated with contextual functions like irony, sarcasm, or satire generation. The semantic scope of "grotesque" dilutes and merges with satirical genres such as caricature, caricature, and parody. In contemporary philology, its boundaries are frequently delineated through hyperbole, oft construed as its foundational constituent.

Thus, the grotesque emerges via an array of lexical devices accentuating its contrastive, absurd, and hyperbolic qualities. Hyperbole predominates, enabling the exaggeration of traits, events, or phenomena to amplify comic or shocking effects. It is complemented by litotes – deliberate understatement – that may underscore

absurdity. Oxymoron fuses semantically antithetical concepts to produce alogism, while metonymy facilitates unanticipated semantic shifts. Alogism itself disrupts logical linkages, a crucial grotesque element. Epithets bearing contrastive or unexpected attributes dismantle conventional object perceptions. Paradox, defying common sense yet harboring latent meaning, integrates into grotesque poetics. Sarcasm and irony impart covert criticality, whereas neologisms and authorial coinages infuse idiosyncrasy and whimsy.

We propose an examination of the communicative-pragmatic features of internet memes utilizing the grotesque.

Example 1: "I don't wanna be dramatic but the work week continuously restarting is literally ruining my life." The communicative-pragmatic attributes of this utterance manifest in its informal, colloquial style and relatable theme (workweek vicissitudes), rendering it accessible and resonant with broad audiences. Hyperbole is evinced in "literally ruining my life," wherein "literally" engenders absolute exaggeration – realistically, a workweek cannot devastate one's existence, a commonplace adult affliction. The verb "ruining" intensifies negativity, dramatizing the plight. Grammatically, hyperbolization is reinforced by the Present Continuous ("is literally ruining"), evoking perpetual impact and categorical assertion, collectively yielding comic effect and amplified authorial exasperation.

Example 2: "have you ever tried to copy and paste text from a PDF it's like scraping plastic off a frying pan." This meme evinces pronounced expressivity via metaphorical simile conveying experiential frustration. The author engages readers informally through a rhetorical question, prompting associative cognition. Its communicative intent—conveying irritation and futility in PDF text extraction – is achieved via the question eliciting empathy from shared experience, hyperbolic simile likening it to a physically arduous task ("scraping plastic off a frying pan") for emotional hue and humor. Hyperbole materializes through exaggerating digital drudgery as visceral toil; grammatically and lexically, via "it's like" enabling

visualized amplification, an unanticipated physical analogy to digital process, replete with negative connotations of difficulty and ingratitude.

Example 3: "Drinking a small amount of Mcdonalds Sprite every day so I become immune to the electric chair." Constructed on grotesque humor via absurd hyperbole and irony, this meme leverages the internet trope of McDonald's Sprite's hyper-carbonation and piquancy as ostensibly "shocking." Hyperbole operates multiply: contextually, positing quotidian beverage consumption as conferring electrocution immunity constitutes blatant exaggeration; lexically, "become immune" in a capital punishment scenario yields grotesque absurdity, typically a medical/biological term misplaced.

Analysis of the communicative-pragmatic features of English-language memes employing the grotesque reveals their efficacy hinges on amalgamating absurd humor, hyperbole, and irony. The primary comic mechanism entails deliberate rupture of causal-logical bonds, inducing cognitive dissonance and concomitant laughter in recipients. Hyperbole emerges as the paramount lexico-grammatical instrument forging grotesque in memes, escalating mundane phenomena to absurdity. Concurrently, unanticipated associations and fantastical cognition engender unique communicative paradigms of high expressivity. Rhetorical questions crucially activate reader cognition while fostering communal experiential engagement.

References:

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