



A Pragmatics Study of Implicature In Internet Memes And Jokes

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Abstract*

This paper examines the linguistic meaning of language in memes and jokes on the internet, focusing on the dynamic nature of online platforms like Reddit. It aims to understand the language distinctions underlying humor found in these platforms, which often defy accepted linguistic conventions. Implicit meaning, derived from the verb "to imply," refers to something that a speech implies but does not state outright. In conversational encounters, the idea of cooperation between speakers is inextricably linked to the understanding of implicature. The paper highlights the importance of understanding the linguistic features of jokes and memes on the internet, as they become a breeding ground for linguistic innovation. The meaning of a sentence can be divided into conventional meaning, conversational implicatures, and conventional implicatures. Internet memes and jokes, often used for propaganda, satire, and defamation, can contain implicatures. The study examined internet-published memes and jokes involving implicatures and aimed to identify other joke styles and implicatures. Gender-related implicatures are common in jokes, with conventional implicature being the most common. Examples include jokes about women, cultural basic jokes, and social phenomena. The analysis of implicatures in jokes involves evaluating extrinsic linguistic factors, including social and cultural dimensions, and the influence of context on the inferred meaning. Overall, the interpretation of internet memes and jokes is influenced by their linguistic features.

1. Introduction

Twenty years ago, linguists virtually rarely discussed pragmatics, but today it is one area of linguistics that is gaining increasing recognition. According to linguists who are becoming more aware of the subject, attempts to explain the nature of language will not be fruitful without a foundational knowledge of pragmatics, or the use of language in communication (Culpeper & Haugh, 2014). One of the subfields of pragmatics is the study of implicature (Haugh, 2014), which is both an interesting and challenging topic to discuss. It should already be familiar with and frequently hear the terms "implicit" and "implications" in daily lives. However, it is not always easy to determine the literal meaning of both terms. An implied meaning that differs from the literal meaning of a term is known as an implied meaning. Furthermore, the term "implicature" can be employed to describe the speaker's possible meaning, implication, or suggestion in contrast to their actual words.

In the meantime, technological advancement keeps advancing quickly. People can socialise more simply these days because to the highly developed communication access

technologies. One of the technical advancements that has greatly aided in giving individuals the ability to interact and communicate is social media (Khang et al., 2023). Social media refers to online platforms like blogs, social networks, wikis, forums, and virtual worlds where people may readily engage, share, and produce content. Wikis, blogs, and social networks might be the most widely utilised social media platforms worldwide. Furthermore, internet resources are appropriate for studying urban folklore, including jokes (Lam, 2022). It is popularly known that jokes may spread quickly on the internet in a manner that mimics oral communication, making it a particularly suitable medium for this kind of folklore (Harshavardhan et al., 2019). Moreover, jokes shared online are instantly accessible to a large audience. From this reasoning, one may conclude that jokes are among the most interesting topics to talk about online. It might contain implicature, which gives jokes more wit, sarcasm, humour, and offensiveness. Other explanations for the implicature of jokes that surface online were looked at in this study. The resultant language phenomena were related to gender, culture, and social communication based on customs.

This paper attempted to explain the linguistic meaning of language found in memes and jokes on the internet based on the scenarios mentioned above. With an emphasis on previously reported scenarios, this research aimed to identify the language distinctions underlying the humour found in memes and jokes that are making the rounds on the internet (Lymarev, 2023). Online platforms have proliferated as dynamic venues for expression and communication in the digital age. Of these, Reddit is notable for serving as a centre for a variety of groups and subcultures that have formed a distinct linguistic landscape (Hamza & Yunus, 2022). This study is particularly interested in the language characteristics of jokes and memes discovered on Reddit since they frequently defy accepted linguistic conventions. It suggested to provide a thorough understanding of how jokes and memes are interpreted in the context of internet culture by exploring the linguistic aspects of humour on this platform. Reddit allows for real-time interaction and content creation, leading to the rapid emergence of novel linguistic expressions. The linguistic features found in these online humorous artifacts often break away from conventional language norms, showcasing a dynamic interplay of semantics, pragmatics, and sociolinguistic elements. As users engage in linguistic play, creating and reshaping jokes, the platform becomes a breeding ground for linguistic innovation. It is anticipated that this paper will provide us with more details and an explanation of how jokes and memes on the Internet are interpreted according to linguistic features.

1.1 The definition of Implicature

The word implicature (implicature) is derived from the verb "to imply" that is derived from the Latin "plicare". Etymologically, "to imply" means something that is folded into something else. So, in order to interpret something that is "folded" to know its meaning we must "dismantle" it so that the true meaning can be understood (Cummings, 2013). Implicit is another word for implicature, or a concept that describes something that a speech implies but does not state outright (assert). Implicature term was to explain a meaning that might be described, interpreted, suggested, or intended in speech by the speaker which may be different from what was actually said by the speaker (Katsos & Bishop, 2011).

It can be inferred from the statement above that, in a conversational encounter, the idea of cooperation between the two speakers is inextricably linked to the understanding of implicature. Implicit could be interpreted as contained meaning (though not stated clearly and openly), the

meaning of implications is included or knotted but not declared, implicature has hidden meaning in a conversation, or the speaker's intended meaning associated with cooperation that could have another different meaning (Antoniou, 2019).

People frequently say more when they speak than the sentence literally and strictly implies. Saying "there's a post office around the corner" in response to a question about the closest post office actually indicates that one can find one nearby. It did not, in fact, state that the post office is open. Still, people were intending to say that. People also mentioned a number of other things, like the fact that it is the closest post office and that one should turn around to get there. Therefore, it can be said that, regardless of whether the meaning is intended, something can be deduced a great deal from a single utterance.

The meaning of a sentence can be broken down into three distinct categories, they are sentences conventional meaning, conversational implicatures of utterances of that sentence and, the conventional implicatures of those utterances.(George & Mamidi, 2020). First, a sentence's conventional meaning refers to what is said when it is spoken, regardless of the context. The truth condition of the sentence establishes its meaning. When someone speaks, part of the information they provide in the context is the conventional meaning of the words they just stated (Depraetere, 2019).

The second category, conversational implicature, a speaker's meaning is often not fully expressed when he utters a sentence in its strict and literal sense, or conventional meaning. Three components interact to enable the speaker to deliver additional information. In a conversational act, conversational implicature is present (Sofyan et al., 2022). As a result, it is non-conventional (the object that is inferred has no direct connection to the stated words) and has a transitory meaning (occurs as the conversation continues).

The final one is conventional implicature, which is an understanding of a conventional topic and general knowledge; put another way, it means that the meaning or implications of a certain instance are already understood by the general public (George & Mamidi, 2020). It is assumed that the reader or listener has experience with and general knowledge of the subject matter being discussed in order to comprehend the implications of the customary implicature. For instance:

He is an English man therefore he is brave.

The British man has courage, and he has courage because he is English, are two aspects in the example sentence above that form the conventional meaning that has speech consequences. Even though there is ongoing discussion regarding the meaning of such typical implicatures, it is normal for the reader or listener to comprehend the meaning immediately and accept it (Finkbeiner, 2019).

The variety of implicatures demonstrates how intricate and multifaceted a speech may be. It takes certain experiences and understanding of the speech act situation to comprehend conversational implicature (Depraetere, 2019). Put differently, implicatures become clearer in a discourse when there is a common experience and knowledge between the speakers and the listeners.

1.2 Internet Meme and Jokes

Meme is a cartoon or an animation showing the expression of the maker. It is usually used as Internet propaganda, satire, defamatory, and jokes. Internet meme is not ordinary joke because

to understand meme jokes, one must be smart enough and has proper knowledge (Abanador, 2022). Internet memes are all funny and it all depends on us whether we understand it or not and although it is funny for one it can be amusing for others.

Since these websites just function to service the joke collection, jokes on them are never contextualized (Vásquez & Aslan, 2021). Jokes that have been heard or made up are welcome to be added, and anyone can read them. It seems that individuals use social media and the internet for more than just communication; they also use them to disseminate non-formal content like memes, jokes, and even rumours. Jokes shared on social media can contain implicatures. In terms of sociocultural communication, language phenomena can also be seen in internet memes and jokes (Nicholls, 2020). This study examined the phenomenon of internet-published memes and jokes involving implicatures. Additionally, the goal of this research is to identify other joke styles and implicatures.

2. Research Methods

The study made use of pragmatics-focused language research. The author of this study focused on analysing implicatures from online memes and jokes and then deciphering their meanings. This study employed a descriptive methodology with a qualitative approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Memes and jokes from Reddit forums served as the source material for this study. The investigator employed the descriptive qualitative approach, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (Miles et al., 2020). Descriptive qualitative data analysis involves three types of activities: data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification (Kemmis et al., 2016). The process of choosing, concentrating, streamlining, and altering the gathered data is known as data reduction. The data of meme and jokes found must be lowered in order to improve the accessibility and comprehension of the info. The researcher then provided a summary of the information. According to Miles and Huberman, data display is the systematic presentation of condensed data so that researchers may identify trends and make inferences. In this step, the researcher displayed the data that had been simplified and summarized. The third step in this research was conclusion drawing and verification. In the last step, the researcher drew a raw conclusion in every proses of collecting data. Following the collection of all the data, the data that related to the relevant literature were then narratively drawn.

3. Discussions

The outcome and the data of the discussion are covered in this section. There are two sections to the data analysis. The first topic of discussion is joke styles, which are categorised according to specific criteria. In this instance, the implicature that appears in jokes is used to determine the categories. In order to improve the clarity and understandability of the debate, a few pertinent examples are provided.

Joke styles were categorised according to certain categories based on data gathered from social media. In essence, the categories are established through an analysis of the many implicatures that are present in the jokes. Basic jokes about gender, basic jokes about culture, and jokes that describe social phenomena are all included in the classification (Huang, 2017).

3,1 Gender Basic Jokes

Gender-related implicature can appear in jokes. Since the definition of gender varies depending on the language and culture, implicature pertaining to gender can essentially be

categorised as conventional implicature (Talbot, 2019). There are many gender-based jokes in the internet which have implicature such as an example below:

Q: *Why are women like clouds?*

A: *Eventually they go away and it's a nice day.*

That joke obviously contains implicature and it is a gender-based joke. Women are described like clouds that they will eventually go away and it will be a nice day when they finally go away. It can also be argued that men may perceive women as bothersome, thus leading to a more positive or pleasant experience for men when women are absent. The list will go on and on depends on the reader's imagination. It can be interpreted by its literal meaning hence it has many implicatures that make it describable in many ways. Take a look at an example below:

Q: *Why hasn't a female been to the moon?*

A: *Because it doesn't need cleaning yet!*

The joke above describes that female is not suited for male's job. It implies that female's job is only in the house. It can also be implied that female is too stupid to go to the moon. Next, the following meme is taken from social media. It is meme about woman.



Figure 1. Internet Meme about woman

The message implied in the joke is that women when they are mad they will say nothing. It also implies that we must be careful when women are mad they will do anything. They will even burn your car if you don't know how to handle them.

3.2 Cultural Basic Joke

Jokes that are derived from cultural elements sometimes incorporate common implicatures that are widely recognised by individuals across the globe (Taguchi et al., 2013). The suggested example is depicted in the subsequent illustration:



Figure 2. Cultural Joke

Everybody knows that Arabic tradition in terms of clothing is more closed than the Westerners because it has a very strict rule while Westerners are more likely to open up. When those two traditions meet there will be prejudice and awkwardness even when they are not talking to each other. The illustration above explains to us what happens and we understand right away the message behind it. It is because before we see the illustration we already know the general knowledge of the world and surely we also have mutual understanding with the illustrator. The subsequent depiction of a meme that encompasses implicatures pertaining to culture is presented in the ensuing image sourced from the internet and social media:



Figure 3. Cultural Joke

The Meme is surely rather offensive for some people but when it comes to Meme there is no limitation how far can it go. If you are following news and trending topics nowadays you will get the meaning. There is news about priests do crimes such as rape and pedophile act and the Meme is intended to emphasize that matter. We can infer the meaning if we have knowledge about those topics.

3.3 Jokes Describing Social Phenomena

Social phenomena can be conveyed through the utilisation of humour (Nicholls, 2020). The subsequent joke encompasses implicature that elucidates a societal occurrence related to Donald Trump's campaign into the United States presidential election.

Donald Trump wants to control
the country but he can't even
control his hair



Figure 3. Social Phenomena Joke

It's a satire joke about Trump's hair. It implies that Trump cannot control his hair. It has been a long discussion that so many people are curious about Trump's hair. After running for the election campaign, he always becomes the headline. The joke also tells us that people have no trust on Trump because he cannot even control his hair let alone control a country as big as United States of America.

4. Conclusion

Memes and jokes shared on the internet and social networks are commonly perceived to possess implicatures. Furthermore, the incorporation of implicature in memes and jokes proved to be a highly successful method for conveying humorous expressions. Jokes encompass two distinct categories of implicature: conventional implicature and conversational implicature. Subsequently, a comprehensive examination reveals that implicatures inside jokes can be categorised into three distinct types: those associated with gender, culture, and social phenomena.

The analysis of implicatures in jokes involves the evaluation of extrinsic linguistic factors, including social and cultural dimensions. Moreover, the influence of context is significant in determining the inferred meaning in memes and jokes. This discussion aims to provide further insights and elucidation regarding the interpretation of Internet memes and jokes, specifically in relation to their linguistic features.

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Biography of Author



Romadhon, born on April 24 1989 in Cilegon, Banten, is a writer, educator and speaker focusing on the development of English education. He completed his bachelor's degree at the English Language Education Study Program, FKIP, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University and continued his master's studies at the English Language Education Study Program at the same university. His career began as an English Teacher at MTS in 2013, honing his insight into teaching methods and language learning challenges. In 2020, he became a Lecturer in English at the Piksi Input Serang Polytechnic, sharing knowledge with prospective professionals. Romadhon is also active in writing articles in national journals, providing new insights into English and education.

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