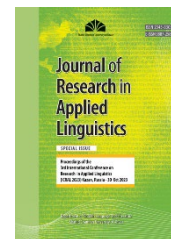




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## The Examination of English Folklore Limited to the Internet Memes and Languages From Some Most Renowned Social Media Platforms

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### Abstract

Contemporary social media platforms are crucial for internet users to communicate with one another, shaping public opinion and highlighting the most important topics. The focus of this study is online folklore, which, because it is essential to portraying real life, constitutes a significant crisis-related subset of social media content. The study's main goal is to examine how vernacular responses to various contemporary life crises are expressed. The purpose of the research is to reexamine internet folklore as a crisis management instrument. Only online memes and languages from some of the most well-known social media platforms—Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest—are included in the analysis of English folklore. The primary characteristics of the crisis-related memes in terms of their functional, thematic, and discourse value were made clear by the analysis's empirical and quantitative methods. Due to the genre specifics revealed in its linguistic and paralinguistic tools, the obtained results show the memes' capacity to ease social and psychological tensions. As a result, the data from this study supports the notion that English folklore plays a critical role in helping people deal with stressful situations.

**Keywords:** English Folklore; Social Media; Language.

### 1. Introduction

An increasing number of people are getting their information and communication needs from the internet. According to Francisco (2015), almost all forms of communication in the modern era are internet-based. Furthermore, when it comes to private, public, and community communications, the internet is a thriving hub for creativity and self-realization. The paradigm of folklore underwent a revolutionary shift with the advent of digital and virtual communication, giving rise to a new kind of folklore that is commonly referred to as internet folklore. Digital folk art is the modern technological embodiment of folk traditions on the internet, and contemporary folklorists assert that the internet has played a major role in this development. It is well known that the majority of internet folklore consists of artifacts that have been created or are in circulation online. But there has been a heated discussion regarding the nature of online folklore for many years. Its genre classification is muddled by the general ambiguity of the interpretation of folklore on the internet. Memes, urban legends, and even wiki entries are examples of different genres. The present study does not aim to precisely classify genres; instead, the analysis will concentrate on the most widely recognized patterns of internet folklore, namely internet memes and languages. The creative quality of the contemporary folklore under study aligns with the fundamental aspect of traditional folklore, which Bronner (2009) defined as the "rationale of fantasy," which is made evident through the imaginative application of linguistic and paralinguistic devices. Since internet memes and languages are perceived as users' responses to various crises in their personal lives or in the life of the entire modern society, their topicality appears to be the most important factor in terms of the current study.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines a "crisis" as "a period of great disagreement, confusion, or suffering." The definition and pertinent example sentences restrict the categories of crises to financial or political ones exclusively, which account for the majority of term collocations. The concept's broad interpretation is consistent with Ulmer et al. (2017)

and his coauthors' organizational crises classification. After classifying crises into two main categories—intended and unintended—they also distinguish a number of smaller subcategories within each, providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Leon & Ballesteros-Lintao, 2021). Most of what we know about folklore surrounding crises comes from a very small amount of data. Prior research has only examined discrete facets of the crisis as they are portrayed in political and financial jokes, illness folklore, and disaster and catastrophe folklore (Kazantseva et al., 2019). Up until now, personal crisis folklore has received little attention.

## **2. Literature Review**

Together with traditional folklore, the new media also disseminate folklore that has been modified for the medium and that has come to life exclusively in it. The goal of folklorists was to gather and preserve some folklore for the internet. The roughly 30,000 anecdotes from the Estonian-language internet are among the biggest compilations (Laineste, 2003). Additionally, information was gathered from a few chat rooms in Estonian, email lists (Vesik, 2003), discussion boards for family life, and pet portals. Classic internet folklore items like ASCII art, chain letters, computer-related folklore, smilies, and chatroom aliases were among the single phenomena that were taken into consideration (Kuperjanov, 1998). Popular pages about religion and customs were proliferating. Comprehensive research in the field of post-socialist humor was done, with particular focus on ethnic and political humor, anger speech, and identity. Some attention was also given to the popular message boards on popular portals in the late 1990s and their discussions and comments (Krikmann 2009). Internet folklore, in which traditions are seen as a series of phenomena, a continuous process that the individual creates and through which the individual influences his life, is a fitting vehicle for describing tradition as a tool of social self-realization. The observer's and tradition-determinator's job is to follow the development of these rites, beliefs, and objects rather than to locate and name individual ones.

This viewpoint holds that every individual and every group aspires to become traditional. To put it another way, they will attempt to generalize certain parts of their experiences and behaviors and present them in a way that would allow others to adopt that generalized form. Individuals come to terms with who they are not only through the physical offspring and artistic endeavors, but also through the continuation of their lifestyle and mindset. By its very nature, the desire to establish and create traditions is universal. The degree to which individuals and groups are able to transform their experiences into customs varies. When it comes to online folklore, we frequently observe the need to establish oneself, share personal experiences with others, become visible and heard, and add one's voice to the deluge of information. When one looks at home pages, one finds that they frequently exhibit beliefs, prejudices, and fashions that the author does not explicitly express online, or even ones that are implied but are discernible from the text. Given that men have tended to use the internet more than women, this presents a fantastic opportunity to learn about men's attitudes, misconceptions, and superstitions. Additionally, family and personal websites are great for monitoring alterations to family history (Luks 2002). International folkloristics adopted the internet gradually; the first comprehensive study of narratives was published by Fabula in 1996 (Kõiva & Vesik, 2015).

## **3. Methodology**

The investigation is carried out in phases. The first step involved locating appropriate examples of online folklore. Intentionally, the selection of internet folklore genres was limited to memes and languages that were shared on the most widely used social media sites in 2020–2021, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest. We were able to identify the most pressing subjects, distinctive characteristics, and essential roles of the crisis-related vernacular coverage of the recent noteworthy events by employing empirical analysis. The use of internet folklore as a crisis management tool piqued interest in particular. Additional research into how users responded to crises showed that, because of particular communication patterns, online folklore has the potential to help people successfully survive crises.

## **4. Results**

Memes are usually made in response to noteworthy events and force their way onto social media platforms, where they become viral. Nonetheless, there are certain memes that represent specialized interests of a community—including professional ones—that are not intended for and understandable by regular users. There are several approaches to categorize a theme meme. Sorting them based on the image that was used is one method that could be used. Pinterest is the only social media platform where meme collections have been observed to be arranged in this manner. This kind of classification could be useful for quantitative studies because it shows the level of popularity of a meme image and the

number of meme variations that have been made using it. The inability of this classification to display the meme topic insofar as the same meme image can be used to illustrate multiple newsworthy events is a drawback, though, particularly in the context of our research. The massive popularity of the political, economic, and Covid-19-related memes was brought to light by the exact search for memes related to the aforementioned topics. Furthermore, social media sites are now home to dedicated public pages that produce online memes based on dramatic real-life events, occasionally for commercial or promotional objectives. But there's an obvious reason why this kind of popularity exists. Since these areas of life are always facing crises on a local and worldwide scale and affect everyone to some degree, internet users are most interested in learning more about them. These memes, which are usually humorous or satirical in nature, list the issues that people face in the various spheres of life. Even though the issues portrayed are grave, the majority of memes are upbeat by nature and serve as a helpful source of encouragement. However, within the context of this study, crises are not limited to the fields of politics, economics, or medicine. In light of this, we looked for online memes and languages pertaining to crucial moments in various areas of life, such as sports, terrorism, ecology, and natural disasters. They are obviously much less common and therefore much fewer in number. The relevancy of the events reflected in these memes greatly influences their life cycle and virality. Table 1 displays the research's overall findings.

Table 1. *Public Page Information*

Public page	Number of followers	Number of memes	topics
eBaumsWorld (Pinterest)	1 100 000	unknown	all
Know Your Meme (Pinterest)	639,000	unknown	all
Craftika (Pinterest)	449,000	unknown	all
Memes (Facebook)	21 344 046	unknown	all
-Economic memes	3,000	unknown	economics
-COVID Memes	564	unknown	pandemic
-Political memes	3,900	unknown	politics
Memezard (Instagram)	23 100 000	19 277	all
Advice (Instagram)	12 000 000	39 260	all
3.14159265358979323846264(Instagram)	4 800 000	17 817	all
Memelord (Instagram)	3 300 000	18 483	all

Facebook and Instagram have the most number of pages, while public sites on Pinterest have far fewer followers. While there were many memes about politics, pandemics, and economics on various Pinterest and Instagram pages, searching for topical meme groups proved to be fruitless. Facebook, on the other hand, offers niche groups with specific political, economic, and other biases. Instagram counts the number of posts with extreme precision. They are a vital component of each person's life, which is full of important times and circumstances. Because the internet memes that respond to this kind of crisis substitute positive feelings for negative ones, they may have a psychotherapeutic effect. The memes' use of irony and comedy helps them make an impact. The age-related characteristics of internet users contribute to the enormous popularity of this type of memes (Alderman & Ward, 2008). Based on data from the website *firstsiteguide.com*, teenagers and those between the ages of 25 and 34 make up approximately one-third of all internet users globally. About 20% of internet users worldwide are in the 35–44 age range (Hiimäe et al., 2021). It is noteworthy that the like, comment, and share features on every social media platform under investigation are used as rating tools for memes. As a result, tracking changes in topic and meme popularity is fairly simple. The most popular memes are shared on numerous open forums and webpages. We highlight some distinctive characteristics of the crisis-related internet memes and languages based on the study's findings. They are humorous, desensitizing, communicative, and intertextual.

The results obtained also demonstrate that memes and languages on the internet cover a wide range of topics and can react to almost any noteworthy event. Those that represent the pressing problems are the most common among them, regardless of the area of life they touch on. Even so, we are able to identify the subjects that are always important: family, love, politics, money, and health. The only reason the other themes go viral is when a prominent incident shocks a society. The internet memes' previously provided thematic classification can be divided into the subsequent subgroups: Memes that React, Descriptive, Quotation, Viral, But Untrue Stories, and Life Advice.

To the best of our knowledge, the internet memes were categorized by their technical or sociolinguistic features in previous studies. According to the former, memes can be classified as text-based, image-based, media-based, GIF-based, or creolized. The latter assumes that internet memes are divided into categories based on linguistic and cultural quirks. Some researchers try to categorize them into different genres; demotivators, photoshopped images, and advice

memes are a few examples. Additionally, there is a functional approach to meme research. It asserts that internet memes and languages can be used for marketing, promotion, defamation of movements, propaganda, and even as a political weapon in addition to providing amusement. The memes that are used as a tool to achieve specific goals, whether political or commercial, are included in this list of purposes. We suggest a new meme classification that is based primarily on non-lucrative meme purposes, as opposed to the previously mentioned one.

Let's examine each subgroup in more detail. As the name suggests, reaction memes display users' reactions to anything that piques their curiosity. Users' responses can range in tone from being critical and negative to being nice, upbeat, and ironic. A variety of memes, such as GIFs, comparison memes, and wholesome memes, are assembled into reaction memes. They differ greatly in terms of character, style, tone, etc. as a result. They can therefore be divided into even smaller subgroups, but not within the parameters of this study. Usually classified as media memes or creolized memes, descriptive memes use text to describe an image or video. Style differences may exist in descriptions. Allusions to various well-known cultural phenomena, metaphorical comparisons, or hypothetical dialogues are the most common techniques they use. The following are the language patterns that they use most frequently:

- 'When you...'
- a short dialogue
- 'This is how...'
- 'Your face when...'
- 'Me (doing something) ...'
- 'How I thought...How something really is...'

The next subgroup can be easily identified because it includes a well-known quote from a well-known figure, typically along with a reference to the person who was quoted. Both textual and creolized memes may be present. They are transmitted as witty expressions of common wisdom. Even though some proverbs might be cited but not actually said by them, it can be challenging to spot these types of forgeries. Thus, there is absolutely no reduction in the virality of quotation memes as a result of the deception. Thematically, quotes touch on many facets of life and are relatable to a wide range of internet users. Memes about British scientists are a humorous subgroup of Russian quotation memes; they usually make references to pseudoscientific subjects. They humorously convey a startling and unexpected discovery made by "the British scientists," bringing absurdity to otherwise serious subjects.

Text-memes, or texts accompanied by an appropriate photo, are the primary source of viral stories that have never occurred in real life. These texts typically have the same meaning throughout. Such stories are most recognizable by their blatant implausibility. Readers can easily discern that the storytellers embellished the incident to gain notoriety, advance their own careers, or for other highly personal motives. Since most people don't think these stories are real, they're usually harmless, if not humorous. They are the origin of modern mythological narratives. Their unique quality sets them apart from online fake news, which tends to have a more somber tone and is usually intended to frighten and agitate users. Life pro-tips provide guidance on a specific issue in life, usually in a lighthearted manner. These kinds of memes are frequently self-centered and hence self-ironic. Individuals divulge their life hacks, which are essentially useless. Still, because of their comic effect, they might actually contribute to defusing the situation. 'If / When you...' or imperative sentences that offer guidance or instructions are typically found in them.

## **5. Discussion**

Based on our research, we have concluded that the most common genre of modern folklore shared on various social media platforms is internet memes and languages. The majority of them have extremely brief lifespans. Genuine memes outlive transient ones and gain widespread acceptance as conventional wisdom. All online memes and languages, however, are users' reactions to noteworthy occurrences, typically crises in various areas of life. The fundamental characteristics of crisis-related memes that set them apart from other online folklore posts are intertextuality, communicative orientation, humorous nature, and desensitization. The study emphasizes that various methods exist for categorizing memes according to themes. Personal life and relationships, politics, health and medicine, economics, and other are among the important subjects. We have presented a novel method for categorizing memes based on their function in online communication. According to the study's data, memes and languages on the internet can be used to convey

information and common wisdom through quotes and life advice, demonstrate someone's reaction, or leave a lasting impression on other users by sharing false information. To aid in their recognition amidst the multitude of contemporary internet memes and languages, the most common differentiating language structures of the types of memes mentioned above are outlined. Our research has demonstrated that internet memes and languages are useful tools for communicating during times of crisis because they allow users to share information and support one another while dealing with difficult circumstances.

## 6. Conclusion

All internet memes and languages serve as a communication tool to spread information among users, regardless of their kind or intent. Additionally, the recipient typically understands it clearly and responds accordingly, demonstrating the efficacy of the communication process. Memes on pressing issues are frequently shared on social media, which indicates the users' need for this kind of communication and can be explained by the psychological impact it has on them. Memes assist users in releasing tension and stress brought on by a variety of stressful situations because of their humorous implications. Those who are communicants learn how to control their emotions and even behave appropriately in stressful situations.

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