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THE ROLE OF MEMES IN THE WORLD OF DEVELOPING INTERNET COMMUNICATION

Summary. The article is devoted to the specificity of memes using in the world of developing Internet communication due to the fast and uncontrolled spreading of that phenomenon. The author highlights the key aspects of the memes usage and the influence they have on the developing communication in general. Moreover, the article provides its own definition of a concept “meme” and proposed the classification based on the linguistic and pragmatic characteristics of units, which implement memes in the process of Internet communication.

Key words: meme(s), Internet communication, interaction, linguistics, pragmatics.

Nowadays, in the world of developing Internet communication it is quiet important to pay attention to every single unit of interaction. People all over the world create numerous ways of communication using various means. Every type of communication is to be observed and studied in accordance with the norms and key features of modern linguistics. In 1986 the English ethologist, evolutionary biologist and author Richard Dawkins [1] said: “What lies at the heart of every living thing is not a fire, not warm breath, not a ‘spark of life.’ It is information, words, instructions” – and the best way of information exchanging is communication – live, informative and unbelievably powerful. Modern types of communication are quiet broader than it is usually persuaded. Communication does not stop developing and those changes depend on the numerous aspects which include lexicology, semantics, pragmatics, grammar, etc. Modern technologies do the process of interaction easier and faster with the help of Internet and its numerous web sites, social networks and various blogs including Twitter.

More and more works are devoted to the wide **range of problems** of the Internet communication which nowadays enlists various aspects of interaction. Abbreviations, acronyms, shortened words and trendy – *memes* have become popular in the wide field of Internet communication. At the moment it is possible to name the following authors whose papers are addressed to the studying of such phenomenon as *meme*, they are: S. Blackmore [2], A. Daze [3], R. Dawkins [4, p. 7], P.L. Marion [5], D. Rushkoff [1], Tim Tyler [6] and many others. It is necessary to determine that the biggest quantity of latest **publications and researches** are turned to the analyses of memes not from the side of linguistics but from the evolutionary point of view; in the frames of our work memes will be studied as a mean of Internet communication and language unit.

The goal of our work is determined by the fact of the low level of memes studying from the side of linguistics and the strong need in the analyses of all the aspects of the Internet communication which includes widespread usage of memes. These papers will provide with the definition of a concept “meme”, present the main principle of its usage, propose its own classification based on linguistic and pragmatic aspects of a passage and enlist the key features of memes’ appearance.

According to Dr. Richard Dawkins’ words during the open Q&A session at the Oxford Union on 18th February 2014, meme is “a unit of cultural inheritance, it is everything that behaves like a gene in human culture” [4] the same idea he has prolonged and developed in his work “The Selfish Gene” in 1976 where this concept has been firstly coined out as an independent term “We need a name for the new replicator, a noun that conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of *imitation*. ‘Mimeme’ comes from a suitable Greek root, but I want a monosyllable that sounds a bit like ‘gene’” [7, p. 192]. Dr. Richard Dawkins compared the way of coping information with the way gene works and called them “replicators”. If memes are like genes, they, as well, want to be replicated to continue their existence and so called “evolution” even taking up several or numerous improvements. Moreover, memes are not magical entities or free-floating Platonic ideals but information lodged in specific human memories, actions and artifacts. Nor are all mental contents memes, because not all of them were copied from someone else. If all your memes were removed, you would still have many perceptions, emotions, imaginings and learned skills [2, p. 52-64]. So, summing up the whole amount of information it is possible to set out the definition, which is based on the concept belonging to a kind of communicative language means, accordingly, *meme* is a cultural, linguistic phenomenon which depends on emotional, educational and imaginary possibilities of its author and further Internet users and which serves as language unit in the process of modern electronic communication. But what aspects of such electronic communication can be named memes and which characteristics do they own? Nowadays many scientists and simple Internet users try to classify memes in accordance with different features of their using. A. Deza and D. Parikh in their work “Understanding Image Virality” [3] proposed to divide memes according to their context, thus they distinguish *intrinsic context*: “visual content related to the pixels of the image”, *vicinity context*: “visual content of images surrounding the image”, *temporal context*: “visual content of images seen before the image” and *textual context*: “non-visual context referring to title or caption of an image”. Tim Tyler in 2011 in his book “Memetics. Memes and the Science of Cultural Evolution” [6, p. 229] proposed his own classification based on substrate, thus he highlighted *neuromemes*, *artimemes* and *actimemes*.

Memes, as a communicative unit, influence the language due to its understandability, easiness of using and actuality in the endless area of Internet. It is a living gene which takes much from the culture and general mood of the author and user as well. But, we should keep in mind that the language itself plays a significant role in memes’ coining due to linguistic and pragmatic specificity of speaking, mental, pronouncing and other varieties.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to determine the main principles of memes’ formation. The outcome of a work depends on several factors – who is an author (professional or amateur), what are

the key circumstances (by accident, for fun or on purpose), who is the main character (politician, actor, sportsman, movie-cartoon-video game hero, piece of art, etc.), how much time is required (short-termed or long-termed), what is the main intention of the author (negative, positive or neutral) and there is one more – what is a pragmatic aspect of a work (emotional state, atmosphere of a process, place of working, etc.). All those features may influence the meme in the process of its creation. Nowadays there are plenty of fixed memes which are set in numerous social networks all over the Internet (such as the Awaiter, Star Track and others).

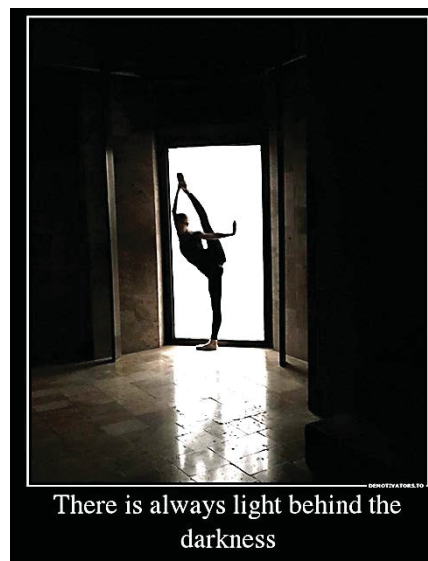
Having analyzed the main classifications of meme it is possible to point out that they only partially cover memes as language units in the world of developing Internet communication. So, after our working out the most popular social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest and Instagram we can distinguish the following classification of Internet memes which is based on four main principles – belonging to a group, intention of the author or the Internet user, emotional intensity and means which are used to implement the idea of the author. This classification will determine the role of meme as a separate informative unit, will serve to name the key features and will help to distinguish its linguistic specificity in the process of interaction on the Internet.

So, *belonging to a group* (according to our work we can distinguish six groups of units, they are – emoticons/emoji, stickers, motivational/inspirational posters, demotivational posters, GIFs, photos and some video fragments) which sets out the possible appearance and form of a meme. The *intention of the author or the Internet user* highlights the main purpose of a meme and its pragmatic side taking into the consideration the national, geographical, lexical and personal characteristics of the individual who develops memes. Intention is a key aspect of a result the author has at the end and the success this work has in Internet communication. *Emotional intensity* describes the reflection of one or another emotional state. Whether it is positive, negative or neutral – it has an essential supply of meaning which helps the individuals to share their emotions without a word being said. So, every time you chat on the Internet you try to make your conversation quick, meaningful and, at the same time, informative due to the high speed of the modern life, thus memes serve not only as a sign of laziness or unwillingness to communicate but also as a speech saving effort which may make interaction easier and emotionally bright. And, finally, *means which are used to implement the idea of the author* – this point is acceptable for every meme which includes written or video support and describes the passage in accordance with its linguistic and pragmatic specificity. Indeed, there is no use to forget and omit the background of memes, because not only words but pictures themselves implement the meaning and transfer the intention of the author.

To make this form clear and acceptable in the wide range of linguistic researches it is important to examine this classification through the meme of a group “*motivational poster*” (pic. 1).

Now, let's study picture number 1. In accordance with the proposed classification. The first step is to determine a belonging group, as it has been already mentioned – it is a motivational and inspirational poster, that can be understood through the positive and inspiring written script. The second step is to find out a key intention of the author – due to the inspirational script “There is always light behind the darkness” it is possible to figure out that the intention of the creator is to show the partner or interlocutor the positive side of life and to promote the idea of good moments which can substitute everything negative in someone's life. The third and one of the most

necessary issue is the emotional intensity. This meme highlights positive and partially neutral emotions. The picture provokes the desire to drop ourselves into the waves of dreams from the one side and into the depth of reality from the other one. The last fourth step is turned to the means of language which help to implement the intention of the author. This poster includes antonymous controversy both in a written passage and on the background picture (words – “light” and “darkness”, and the black-and-white picture itself). The posture in the background represents every individual whom this poster is addressed to. So, every meme is a link of the whole chain. It can not be understood without estimating every separate unit. Thus, the classification based on linguistic and pragmatic aspects will fulfill the whole picture of a meme appearance and meaning as well.



Pic. 1 “Motivational Poster”

To sum up it is important to stress out that the modern world of developing Internet communication spreads out using new techniques, thus it is necessary for our research to highlight trendy means of interaction such as *meme*. Being cultural inheritance it serves to promote different intentions or simply to substitute words which are turned to show emotional state of an interlocutor to make the process of communication easier and to make the process of sharing emotions more picturesque.

The proposed definition and classification of memes which are based on their linguistic and pragmatic aspects will allow the further studies to examine the memes as a separate language unit as a part of linguistics and pragmatics as well as a key mean of developing Internet communication. Moreover, each step of the proposed classification is essential for determining meme as an independent mean of communication, which is empowered to share information as well as emotions in the process of interaction.

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Заботнова М. В. Роль мемів у світі, де розвивається мережева комунікація

Анотація. Стаття присвячена особливостям вживання мемів у світі мережевого спілкування, яке розвивається завдяки швидкому та неконтрольованому поширенню цього феномену. Автор виділяє основні аспекти використання мемів та вплив, який вони здійснюють щодо розвитку комунікації у цілому. Також стаття впроваджує власне визначення концепту «мем» та пропонує його класифікацію, яка ґрунтується на лінгвістичних та праг-

матичних особливостях одиниць, які вербалізують меми у процесі мережевого спілкування.

Ключові слова: мем, мережеве спілкування, інтернет, комунікація, лінгвістика, прагматика.

Заботнова М. В. Роль мемов в мире развивающийся сетевой коммуникации.

Анотация. Статья посвящается особенностям употребления мемов в мире развивающегося сетевого общения в связи с быстрым и неконтролируемым распространением этого феномена. Автор выделяет основные аспекты использования мемов и влияние, которое они имеют на развивающуюся коммуникацию в целом. Также статья дает собственное определение концепту «мем» и предоставляет его классификацию, которая основывается на лингвистических и прагматических особенностях единиц, которые вербализируют меми в процессе сетевого общения.

Ключевые слова: мем, сетевое общение, интернет, коммуникация, лингвистика, прагматика.