

## Linguocultural aspects of English and Uzbek memes

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**Annotation:** *This article investigates an Internet meme from linguocultural point of view. The purpose of the article is to compare English and Uzbek humor, the usage of both verbal (linguistic) and non-verbal(visual) signs, identify differences and similarities, explore how memes can be the tool for transmitting political information through humor. The article defines memes as the important part of culture that consist of multimodal components, letters and images and are characterized by adaptability features. During the research, the memes are analyzed by the combination of cross-cultural and comparative analysis to reveal distinctive aspects of two languages. As a result of the analysis, it is determined that cultural values are contrastive in two nations; while English memes often emphasize on daily routine challenges, Uzbek memes highlight more national rituals. Similarities of English and Uzbek memes can be seen in the verbalization with linguistic choices due to the fact that sarcasm, irony, hyperbole, symbolism, pun and other stylistic devices are widely utilized in these processes, excluding cultural nuances.*

**Keywords:** *speech etiquette, internet meme, cultural values, linguoculturemes, humor, multimodal text.*

## Лингвокультурные аспекты английских и узбекских мемов.

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**Аннотация:** *В данной статье рассматривается интернет-мем с лингвокультурной точки зрения. Целью статьи является сравнение английского и узбекского юмора, использование как вербальных (языковых), так и невербальных (визуальных) знаков, выявление различий и сходств, изучение того, как мемы могут быть инструментом передачи политической информации посредством юмора. В статье мемы определяются как важная часть культуры, которая состоит из мультимодальных компонентов, букв и изображений и характеризуется признаками адаптивности. В ходе исследования мемы анализируются путем сочетания кросс-культурного и сравнительного анализа для выявления отличительных аспектов двух языков. В результате анализа установлено, что культурные ценности контрастны в двух странах; в то время как английские мемы часто подчеркивают ежедневные проблемы, узбекские мемы больше подчеркивают национальные обряды. Сходства английских и узбекских мемов можно увидеть в вербализации с языковым выбором из-за того, что сарказм, ирония, гипербола, символизм, игра слов и другие стилистические приемы широко используются в этих процессах, исключая культурные нюансы.*

**Ключевые слова:** *речевой этикет, интернет-мем, культурные ценности, лингвокультуремы, юмор, мультимодальный текст.*

## Ingliz va o'zbek memlarining lingvomadaniy xususiyatlari

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**Annotatsiya:** *Ushbu maqola internet memlarini lingvomadaniy nuqtai nazardan o'rganadi hamda tahlil qiladi. Maqolaning maqsadi ingliz va o'zbek yumorini, lisoniy(lingvistik) va nolisoniy(ko'rgazmali) belgilarning qo'llanilishini solishtirish, farq va o'xshashliklarni aniqlash, memlar qanday qilib hazil orqali siyosiy ma'lumotlarni uzatish vositasi bo'lishi mumkinligini o'rganishdan iborat. Maqolada memlar multimodal komponentlar, harflar va tasvirlardan tashkil topgan va moslashish xususiyatlari bilan ajralib turadigan madaniyatning muhim bir qismi sifatida tavsiflanadi. Tadqiqot davomida memlar ikki tilning o'ziga xos tomonlarini ochib berish uchun madaniyatlararo va qiyosiy tahlilning kombinatsiyasi orqali tahlil qilinadi. Tahlil natijasida ikki xalqda madaniy qadriyatlar bir-biriga o'zaro zid ekanligi aniqlanadi; ya'ni bunda ko'rishimiz mumkinki, ingliz memlari asosan kundalik muammolarga urg'u bergan bir paytda, o'zbek memlari ko'proq milliy urf-odatlariga alohida e'tibor berib o'tadi. Ingliz va o'zbek memlarining o'xshashligini lingvistik vositalar bilan ifoda qilishda ham ko'rishimiz mumkin, chunki bu jarayonlarda piching, kinoya, bo'rttirish, ramziy ma'nolar, so'z o'yini va boshqa uslubiy vositalar keng qo'llanilgan.*

**Kalit so'zlar:** *nutqiy etiket, internet mem, madaniy qadriyatlar, lingvokulturemalar, yumor, multimodal matn.*

### Introduction and literature review

Social values, traditions, and behavioral norms within a culture are manifested through speech etiquette. This system governs the linguistic expression of politeness, respect, formality, and social distance. Cross-cultural variation in speech acts like greetings, apologies, and refusals demonstrates the ways in which these values are encoded in specific linguistic forms, including honorifics, indirectness strategies, and distinctive phraseology. Furthermore, speech etiquette functions as a mirror of a society's cultural values, shaping how politeness and respect are communicated through language. According to Leech (1983), politeness principles are culturally constructed and influence how speakers maintain social harmony and avoid conflict through language. Similarly, Thomas (1983) refers that a lack of understanding of speech etiquette across languages can lead to pragmatic failure, especially in second language acquisition and intercultural communication. From a pragmatic perspective, speech etiquette helps speakers use language appropriately in social interactions. Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed the theory of politeness strategies, emphasizing how speakers manage "face" through indirectness, hedging, and formal structures, all of which fall under etiquette norms. Unlike others, Kramersch (1998) emphasizes the relationship between speech etiquette and language learning/teaching: "Language learners must acquire not only linguistic competence but also sociocultural norms, including speech etiquette, to communicate effectively." (Kramersch, 1998). Generally, speech etiquette is a set of unwritten rules that created by the society to retain politeness and it can be varied among nations as speech etiquette manifests one specific culture. Ashurova (2019) et.al state that etiquette includes several speech formulas that are used on the basis of community events ("greetings, farewells, congratulations, condolences, apologies, compliments, invitations, thanks, etc."), and these polite language choices mostly depend on "field, tenor and mode" (Halliday and Hasan, 1985; 12). While the above speech formulas denote a traditional paradigm of etiquette, the evolution of modern technology is generating a novel appearance of communicative etiquette. Humor is viewed as a constitutive element of speech etiquette. Andrew Dlugan (2009), an award-winning public speaker and founder of rule of three to improve the speech, declares that adding humor to the rule of three "is like a magician who is able to distract us with one

hand while deftly completing the “trick” with the other. In speeches, the pattern distracts, and thus magnifies the surprise”. This implies that humor usage in improving speech is more impressive and influential. Memes are of great importance, as classical speech etiquette types mostly influence on both verbal and oral courtesy and accordingly, memes are perceived to be the most contemporary pattern of speech etiquette formulas since they serve as a clue that represents how politeness is expressed online by humor. Initially, the term “meme” was introduced on the analogue of the “gene” by Richard Dawkins (1976) in “The Selfish Gene”. The reason why meme is associated with biological gene is that both are “units of imitation” as Dawkins (1976) says. Specifically, the aims of both memes and genes are almost the same: while genes transfer biological information, memes convey cultural information. Internet opened lots of doors to “share, circulate, distribute, and spread information/content” across the whole world which indicates that cultural values are also extended with the mass of information. Memes are regarded as multimodal texts which consist of letters and pictures from the linguistic point of view, and there is one term named “memefication” which was suggested by Shifman (2014) to the meme world. Appropriately, memefication denotes that as Shifman (2014) declares “purely viral content probably does not exist - once a photo, or a video, reaches a certain degree of popularity on the Web, you can bet that someone, somewhere, will alter it”. According to this statement, once one meme becomes viral, it does not stay without being altered, and for this situation, Holm (2021) represents the video “Charlie Bit My Finger” as an example that was popular on YouTube in 2007, though initially it was not a meme, just video, but this was altered to the meme by “remixing and mimicry respectively”. However, Mitman (2024) et.al. emphasize that as a result of memefication, memes can lose their original meaning and cultural influences, conversely their main function is to illustrate one specific national identity and cultural values, but rather they are being used as a marketing tool with the help of their social prominence. Internet memes are often expressed by linguistic, including word, word combinations, or linguoculturemes and non-linguistic signs (famous pictures, photos or videos). According to Ashurova (2019) et.al., linguoculturemes, in contradistinction to usual words, convey cultural meaning and can be verbalized as a word, word combination, paragraph or whole text, and seen in the following sources: myths, speech behavior, realias, literature, history, religion, etc. Across cultures, linguoculturemes can be varied: Halloween has a specific value in English nation, while Navruz is a unique ritual of Uzbek culture. They are widely used in the meme culture in order to illustrate the manifestation of one specific society’s values and customs by adding the sense of humor. Holm (2021) notes the saying “Keep calm and Carry on” as a sample that supports the above-mentioned idea due to the fact that this expression has a historical value since it was used as a motivational poster in Britain during the World War I, but there is a marked contrast between the original and current meanings of this poster. In fact, this phrase is humorously and ironically utilized today: “Keep calm and Order pizza” or “Keep calm and Blame the dog”. Evidently, there is a semantic shift between the original one and currents, as the initial idea suggested to take responsibility, whereas modern meanings are ignoring this. Ultimately, linguoculturemes are widely accepted to the meme culture as a verbalization of nationally specific ethics on media. Another core function of memes is criticizing political events or figures by the irony and satire which manifests the society’s attitude towards governmental issues in a polite and humorous way. Highfield (2016) refers that memes are becoming a standard part of the political conversation for people who are engaged in politics and familiar with social media. In short, it is believed that memes are not just for fun, but they are becoming integral parts of political discourse. Also, Milner (2016) particularly focuses on memes’ remixing feature that assists the public to comprehend state affairs facilitated by well-known meme templates. Although Mitman (2024) considers this aspect of memes is merely the tool for marketing, it is of paramount importance to enhance comprehensive knowledge structures on political and current news according to Milner’s point of view. On the other hand, Denisova (2019) warns that as it is uncontrollable to filter each idea on Social Media, memes can be used as a weapon for propaganda and distribute political misinformation due to information overload. Therefore, Denisova’s idea should be taken into

consideration or critiques can be implemented by media reporters to increase political awareness of the society in spite of political benefits of Internet memes.

### Methods

To characterize the meme nature in the comparison of English and Uzbek media and identify their linguistic features, we used cross-cultural and pragmatic methods which helps to investigate how humor is shaped and understood on the basis of each nation's cultural identity and what kind of linguistic choices are used to verbalize English and Uzbek national world pictures. In fact, appropriate sources were initially selected. For the analysis, Telegram channel designated "Sarcasm" [15] and the Google website [16] are employed as corpora for English memes, while the Instagram channel "MilliyHub" [17] is served as a source for Uzbek memes, as all three are appropriate for analytical methods and are widely recognized in this domain. After this, identified cultural concepts were analyzed within each meme and the interpretations of these symbols and traditions were illustrated. Finally, contextual reading of how each culture encodes meaning, humor and values in visual and verbal meme components were given: they are all for cross-cultural analysis. It can obviously show how different cultural values and social norms are reflected in memes from different nations. Additionally, the main aim of comparative method for this research is to directly compare the memes from both cultures to identify similarities and differences in their expression of humor, etiquette, and cultural representation. It includes the following steps: 1) analyzing memes from each culture based on themes; 2) comparing linguistic tools that which type of linguoculturemes are used, like irony, pun, symbolism; 3) observing visual representatives of the memes and analyzing how images can illustrate social values and norms; 4) finally concluding with identifying contrastive cultural values. To conclude, through cross-cultural comparison, we can better understand how memes, as multimodal texts, reflect and transmit cultural values, humor styles, and communication norms. Examining memes from different nations reveals both unique national characteristics and shared traits, demonstrating how linguistic and visual components contribute to national identity. This approach enriches our comprehension of memes as culturally shaped artifacts operating on both global and local levels.

### Results and discussion

Earlier it is highlighted that Internet memes are good manifestations of culture which obviously represent national values by using humor, satire or sarcasm and while observing two countries' memes, we can identify both differences and similarities' and recognize that how cultures can be varying according to their history, conceptual world picture, rituals and how they are verbalized with linguistic means, including stylistic devices, sayings, phraseological units and etc.



**Illustration 1.**



**Illustration 2.**

As we can see, Illustration 1 and Illustration 2 show the English culture by the usage of Monday as a cultural concept. It is clear that Monday is the first day of both work and study in most English countries and it gives stress and several responsibilities, therefore most English people believe that Monday is the hardest day. Furthermore, the following sayings are the most appropriate examples to demonstrate it: "Monday morning blues" or "Thanks God it is Monday". According to the first

expression, Monday gives the feeling of sadness, tiredness, as the color of blue symbolizes due to the fact that after the weekend, it is not easy to return work or study, it gives the sense of anxiety. Moreover, the second phrase is always used ironically because instead of saying "Thanks God it is Friday" there is used Monday by using satire. It is also shown in both illustrations by the usages of expressive linguistic choices, like symbolism, metaphor, hyperbole and non-linguistic choice, the picture. Specifically, there is an exaggeration in Illustration 2 that Monday length is humorously equaled to Mercury's day which lasts for 1408 hours even.



**Illustration 3.**

In this example (Illustration 3) the stylistic device, pun is used with the help of following components: Pro, Crastinate and Ductivity. The picture itself is commonplace in the meme world, which is named "The Distracted Boyfriend". This meme is of great importance for English, as it indicates that procrastination is widely spread among English people, particularly in their job or academic assignments. So, it is visible that Internet memes not only show cultural values, but they make the audience aware of national behaviors as well.



**Illustration 4. Psychos, maniacs.**

***Those who drink hot tea at +40 degrees.***

Hot tea plays a very crucial role in Uzbek culture and is one of the most widespread traditions among the people. From the image above, we can also see that in the first case, the man is showing psychos and maniacs with his back turned, while in the second case, the woman with a mask on her face is looking at people who drink hot tea in the sense that they are even more frightening than psychos and maniacs, and hyperbole is used in this meme. It is also worthy to mention is that the chosen picture is taken from the film "Novda" which is popular and recognized as one of the best film which is full of Uzbek national rituals. This Internet meme is obviously illustrating how cultures are varied from each other according to traditions and cultural values: while it is normal to drink hot tea in even summer for Uzbek, especially old generation (we can see the cultural differences in one nation as well), it seems a very extraordinary habit for the rest communities.



**Illustration 5.**

This meme is created on the basis of irony, as it also plays on the stereotype that U.S. politics dominate global media discussions, sometimes making it seem as though the world revolves around American affairs. Furthermore, the picture usage is also worthy-mentioning that the choice of Kilgrave’s character, who is known for his manipulative and unsettling charisma, might suggest that the world is anxiously or even obsessively watching the election unfold and it symbolizes an influential power of America to the world. Overall, by means of visual and linguistic choices, the meme manifests that there is an indissoluble link between the US politics and the rest of the world.

"Kutilmagan" saylov natijalarini ko'rgan xalq:



**Illustration 6. People saw “unexpected” election results**

Unlike American elections, this meme (Illustration 6) claims how Uzbek elections are more predictable rather unexpected with the assistance of irony, visual hyperbole and contrast reality. In other words, irony is generated by the word in quotation marks (“Kutilmagan”) that means skeptical opinions toward the election fairness; the picture illustrates completely opposed public reaction after seeing results. Incidentally, the image, prominent in the meme world, is taken from the international source that indicates how globalization is influencing Uzbek culture and also political discourse. In short, the integration of sarcastic means and exaggerated picture can deliver humorously political information to the addressees and reveals culturally political distinctions between English and Uzbek nations. So it can be seen that the study finds that memes are not just humorous content but serve as linguistic and visual reflections of national identity and values. Memes act as subtle vehicles for political discourse, using humor and satire to discuss otherwise sensitive topics. Moreover, despite cultural differences, both English and Uzbek memes rely heavily on stylistic devices such as irony, sarcasm, pun, hyperbole, and these devices are used to shape humor and convey both implicit and explicit cultural messages, though the specific topics and targets vary. In addition to these, memes can be used as a political tool in both English and Uzbek media: while English memes may critique

global political dynamics, Uzbek memes often express skepticism about predictability or fairness in local politics, cleverly masked with humor.

### Conclusion

Even though memes are recently appeared, they can illustrate cultural values and traditions with a long history. As speech etiquette is recognized a type of linguoculturemes which is accepted by the society to keep polite behavior and shows cultural mentality and life style, memes are also the part of speech etiquette that is based on humor. Mostly, politics, which is mainly prohibited to talk, is represented by memes to convey political information in a humorous and polite way. Besides, culture verbalization in the meme world is also worthy to mention because not all words can convey cultural information so linguoculturemes have a major impact on the formation of Internet memes, particularly stylistic devices which is the basis for humor. Not only are memes produced by linguistic choices, but also visual images significantly contribute to the process, as memes are considered as multimodal texts which consist of both linguistic devices and pictures. Therefore, the image usage is also a key factor of the meme producing because the picture itself should illustrate culture as well and be integrated with the text. Summing up, comparing both English and Uzbek meme natures help us to deeply comprehend their culture, preferences, behavior norms and axiological aspects. Despite offering valuable insights into the linguocultural features of English and Uzbek memes, this study is not without limitations. Firstly, the meme samples were limited to a small selection from specific online platforms (Instagram, Telegram, and Google Images). This restricted dataset may not fully represent the diverse meme landscapes in both cultures, especially considering the fast-paced and evolving nature of internet content. Besides that memes' nature is very changeable, so research can easily become outdated. Future research could benefit from a larger and more diversified corpus, including memes from lesser-known regional sources and different social media platforms. Comparative studies involving more than two cultures could also broaden the understanding of how global memes adapt to local contexts. Furthermore, an interdisciplinary approach incorporating sociolinguistics, media studies, and digital anthropology would enrich the analysis of memes as modern-day cultural artifacts. Finally, more attention could be given to the role of meme creators and audience interaction, including how feedback, sharing behavior, and platform algorithms shape meme popularity and transformation over time.

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