

Internet Memes and Communication Online

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(Summary)

The paper focuses on the genre and structural features of internet memes as a means of communication online – a topic unexplored so far by Bulgarian scholars. A critical overview of the scholarly publications in English on the subject is carried out and a discourse analytic approach is employed on a number of selected internet memes from English and Bulgarian internet sites in Google and the social media. “Internet meme” is regarded as a narrower concept than the concept of “meme” as understood in memetics, the evolutionary theory of culture. The analysis covers only those internet memes in which image and text interact. Internet memes are not viewed as isolated artefacts, but as a group or system: otherwise, they are perceived as chaotic and arbitrary. Internet memes are preceded by viral artefacts – a photograph, a text, an advertisement, a song, a video, a film trailer, etc., which internet users share and disseminate without change, whereas alteration and transformation are emblematic for internet memes. Necessary parallels are drawn between humour in internet memes and humour in jokes as well as parallels between intertextuality and multimodal communication in internet memes and those in political cartoons and print advertisements.

Keywords: viral artefact; internet meme; humour; multimodal communication; intertextuality

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