

## A COMPARATIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK INTERNET MEMES ON TIKTOK AND OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the discursive characteristics of English and Uzbek internet memes on social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. Memes function as multimodal units combining text, image, and audio to communicate humor, social commentary, and cultural identity. English memes typically target a global audience, employing abbreviations, acronyms, slang, and pop culture references, while Uzbek memes are localized, relying on idioms, cultural allusions, and situational humor. The analysis examines themes, linguistic strategies, humor mechanisms, cultural references, and engagement metrics. Findings reveal that language choice affects interpretation, audience engagement, and social interaction, demonstrating how memes serve as tools for cultural expression and community cohesion.

**Keywords:** Internet memes, TikTok, English, Uzbek, discourse analysis, humor, social media, multimodal communication.

### Introduction

The rise of social media platforms, such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook, has dramatically transformed the ways in which people communicate and share information in contemporary society. Among the most prominent phenomena on these platforms are internet memes, which serve as concise, humorous, and often culturally loaded units of discourse. Memes can convey complex social, political, or personal messages in a highly accessible and visually engaging form, and they have become a dominant medium for youth communication worldwide [1].

In the context of bilingual or multilingual societies like Uzbekistan, internet memes frequently emerge in both English and Uzbek, reflecting the intersection of global digital culture with local linguistic practices. English-language memes often follow global trends and international humor patterns, whereas Uzbek-language memes are more localized, drawing upon cultural references, idioms, and sociopolitical contexts unique to the Uzbek-speaking community [2]. This dual presence allows for a comparative study of how language, culture, and humor intersect in digital discourse.

Recent studies highlight that memes are not merely tools for entertainment; they perform critical communicative functions. They act as markers of social identity, vehicles for expressing political opinion, and mechanisms for peer bonding and social cohesion [3]. For instance, in TikTok videos, short captions combined with popular audio tracks and visual effects create a multimodal communicative event that can rapidly reach millions of viewers. The linguistic choice—English or Uzbek—affects the interpretation, reach, and socio-cultural resonance of the meme.

Despite the prevalence of memes in social media discourse, there is a limited body of research focusing on the comparative analysis of memes in English and Uzbek, particularly regarding their discourse functions, thematic patterns, and rhetorical strategies. Understanding these aspects is crucial for exploring the cognitive and sociolinguistic mechanisms through which digital humor operates and spreads within and across linguistic communities [4].

The present study aims to investigate the discursive characteristics of English and Uzbek internet memes on TikTok and other social media platforms. Specifically, it examines (1) thematic trends, (2) language strategies, (3) humor mechanisms, and (4) socio-cultural references embedded in these memes. By adopting a comparative perspective, this study seeks to shed light on how memes function as a hybrid form of communication that blends global digital practices with local linguistic and cultural identities [5].

In summary, the introduction of internet memes in bilingual contexts presents a unique opportunity to analyze the interplay between language, culture, and digital media. This research contributes to the growing field of digital discourse analysis, highlighting the ways in which memes act as both entertainment and socio-linguistic instruments in English and Uzbek online communities.

## Methods

This study employed a qualitative and quantitative mixed-method approach to investigate the discursive characteristics of English and Uzbek internet memes on TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. The research aimed to identify thematic patterns, linguistic strategies, humor mechanisms, and cultural references in memes, while also analyzing engagement metrics such as likes, shares, and comments. Data collection was conducted over a six-month period from January to June 2025, focusing on widely shared and culturally relevant memes in both languages.

### 1. Data Collection

A total of 500 memes were collected for analysis, evenly divided into 250 English memes and 250 Uzbek memes. Selection criteria included:

- Minimum **5,000 likes or shares**
- Clear textual content, including captions, hashtags, or overlay text
- Representation of current trends, humor, or socio-cultural commentary

All memes were stored in a digital database along with metadata such as posting date, number of likes, shares, comments, and platform of origin.

### 2. Analytical Framework

The analysis combined elements of discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and multimodal analysis. Each meme was evaluated based on:



- Theme: Topics such as humor, social issues, pop culture, politics, or education
- Language strategies: Use of abbreviations, slang, code-switching, and wordplay
- Humor mechanisms: Irony, exaggeration, parody, and visual puns
- Cultural references: Idioms, historical or social context, and local traditions

### 3. Coding and Categorization

Memes were manually coded using NVivo software. Coding categories included:

- Language: English or Uzbek
- Humor type: Satire, parody, absurdity, situational comedy
- Cultural specificity: Global or local references

Two independent coders analyzed the memes to ensure intercoder reliability, achieving a Cohen’s Kappa coefficient of 0.87, indicating high agreement between coders.

### 4. Quantitative Metrics

Engagement metrics were tabulated to examine the social impact of each meme type. The table below summarizes **average likes, shares, and comments** for English and Uzbek memes:

Metric	English Memes (n=250)	Uzbek Memes (n=250)	Observation
Average Likes	12,450 ± 3,210	8,320 ± 2,140	English memes had higher reach globally
Average Shares	3,820 ± 890	2,150 ± 670	English memes more widely disseminated
Average Comments	450 ± 120	620 ± 140	Uzbek memes had higher interactive engagement
Virality Index*	0.74	0.65	Measure of likes + shares normalized by followers

\*Virality Index calculated as:  $(\text{Likes} + \text{Shares}) / \text{Followers}$

### 5. Data Interpretation

The data was analyzed to compare discourse strategies across English and Uzbek memes. Particular attention was given to:

- The impact of language choice on interpretation and engagement
- How cultural context influences humor perception
- The interplay of text, image, and audio in multimodal meme formats

By combining qualitative discourse analysis with quantitative engagement metrics, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of meme communication in bilingual social media contexts.

## Results

The analysis of 500 internet memes, equally divided between English and Uzbek, revealed notable differences and similarities in their discursive functions, humor strategies, and cultural references. In terms of thematic content, English memes predominantly addressed global trends, pop culture, internet challenges, and political satire, whereas Uzbek memes were more localized, reflecting social norms, traditional humor, and national cultural references. For instance, English memes often referred to viral challenges like the “Silhouette Challenge” or international celebrities, while Uzbek memes frequently incorporated proverbs, local celebrities, or regional social issues, highlighting the cultural embedding of humor [1,2].

Linguistic strategies differed significantly between the two groups. English memes showed extensive use of abbreviations, acronyms, slang, and code-switching with other widely known languages, particularly for humorous or ironic effects. Common examples included “LOL,” “BRB,” or “TFW” (That Feeling When), which were used to convey emotion or social commentary succinctly. Uzbek memes, while occasionally borrowing English abbreviations, primarily relied on native lexical items, creative wordplay, and culturally-specific metaphors to evoke humor. For example, phrases like “Og‘ir yukni ko‘tarishning oson yo‘li yo‘q” were stylized humorously to comment on daily life or social behavior, demonstrating how linguistic creativity reflects local cognitive patterns [3].

Regarding humor mechanisms, both English and Uzbek memes employed exaggeration, irony, and parody, but their implementation varied. English memes often relied on visual puns, absurdity, and juxtaposition of incongruous images with text, appealing to a wide international audience. Uzbek memes, by contrast, combined cultural allusions, local idiomatic expressions, and situational comedy, resonating deeply with community members familiar with shared experiences and values. Notably, multimodal elements (text, video, audio) were present in both languages, but TikTok videos in Uzbek frequently included traditional music or local dialects, enhancing cultural specificity [4].

Engagement metrics revealed that English memes generally achieved higher global reach in terms of likes and shares, attributable to their alignment with widely recognized cultural references. Uzbek memes, while often reaching fewer users globally, demonstrated higher comment-to-like ratios, indicating active engagement and discussion within the local community. This suggests that language choice not only shapes content but also affects interaction patterns on social media platforms [5].

Overall, the results indicate that memes function as dynamic discourse units that blend humor, culture, and language. English memes emphasize global connectivity and shared international humor, while Uzbek memes prioritize local identity, cultural cohesion, and community-specific knowledge. These findings confirm that internet memes are not only tools for entertainment but also instruments of cultural expression and social communication, providing insights into how linguistic and cultural context mediates meaning in digital discourse.

## Discussion

The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek internet memes on TikTok and other social media platforms demonstrates the complex interplay between language, culture, and digital humor. Memes, as multimodal discourse units, perform multiple functions, including entertainment, social commentary, and cultural expression. The study shows that while English memes often target a global audience, using widely recognized symbols, abbreviations, and pop culture references, Uzbek memes are deeply contextualized within local cultural and social norms, relying on idioms, local humor, and culturally significant references [1,2].

One key finding is that linguistic strategies significantly shape meme interpretation. English memes employ concise textual elements, acronyms, and intertextual references that allow for rapid comprehension and broad accessibility. This aligns with previous studies indicating that brevity and recognizability are critical factors in the viral spread of memes in English-language online communities [3]. In contrast, Uzbek memes often require shared cultural knowledge and contextual understanding, which strengthens community cohesion but may limit global dissemination. This demonstrates that language choice is not merely a medium of expression but a cultural filter influencing audience engagement.

Humor mechanisms also differ between the two languages. English memes frequently utilize absurdity, juxtaposition, and parody, aiming for a universal humor appeal. Uzbek memes, however, rely on situational comedy, wordplay, and culturally embedded metaphors, suggesting that humor in localized contexts is closely tied to social norms and everyday experiences. The integration of multimodal elements, including images, video clips, and audio, enhances the expressive potential of memes, reinforcing both emotional impact and interpretive depth. For instance, TikTok videos in Uzbek often incorporate local music or dialect, which strengthens the affective connection between content and audience [4].

Engagement patterns further highlight the sociolinguistic functions of memes. English memes tend to reach a wider audience with higher view counts and shares, reflecting their global appeal. However, Uzbek memes exhibit higher levels of interactive engagement, particularly through comments and discussions, indicating active participatory discourse within the local community. This suggests that memes serve as social instruments, fostering dialogue and reinforcing communal identity [5].

Overall, these findings underscore that internet memes are not only tools of entertainment but also vehicles of cultural transmission and identity formation. They provide a lens through which to examine how language and culture mediate meaning in digital communication. By comparing English and Uzbek memes, the study illustrates the ways in which global digital

trends intersect with local linguistic and cultural practices, shaping both the production and reception of online content. These insights contribute to the broader understanding of digital discourse, participatory media, and cross-cultural communication in contemporary social media landscapes.

## Conclusion

The present study highlights the distinctive discursive characteristics of English and Uzbek internet memes on social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. Memes function as multimodal units of communication that combine text, image, and audio to convey humor, social commentary, and cultural identity. English memes are generally aimed at a global audience, utilizing abbreviations, acronyms, slang, and pop culture references to achieve rapid comprehension and viral dissemination. In contrast, Uzbek memes are deeply localized, drawing upon idioms, cultural allusions, and situational humor that resonate with the Uzbek-speaking community and reinforce social cohesion [1,2].

The comparative analysis indicates that language choice directly influences the meme's interpretive framework, audience engagement, and sociocultural relevance. English memes achieve wider reach and visibility, whereas Uzbek memes generate higher interactive engagement, including comments and discussions, emphasizing community-specific participatory discourse. Humor mechanisms also vary: English memes rely on absurdity, irony, and visual juxtaposition, while Uzbek memes leverage wordplay, contextual references, and culturally embedded metaphors. Multimodal features in both languages further enhance expressive potential, allowing memes to function as both entertainment tools and instruments of cultural expression [3,4].

In conclusion, internet memes in English and Uzbek exemplify how global digital trends intersect with local linguistic and cultural practices. They serve as a lens to explore the interplay between language, culture, and social interaction in digital media. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for scholars of digital discourse, sociolinguistics, and participatory media, as memes continue to shape communication patterns, cultural identity, and social engagement in contemporary online communities [5].

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