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Conversational Incongruity and Humor in Facebook Memes: A Pragmatic Study of Online Language Use

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Abstract

Memes serve not only as entertainment but also as linguistic texts that reflect how humor is pragmatically constructed. This study examines how humor is generated through the creation of implicatures in conversational memes by analyzing the flouting of Grice's Cooperative Principles, particularly the maxim of relation. Qualitative research is conducted through the analysis of selected memes from the English Memes Facebook page from 2023 to 2024. The research applies Gricean pragmatics alongside Ritchie's Incongruity Theory to interpret how conversational expectations are deliberately disrupted to produce humorous effects. Findings reveal that flouting the maxim of relation is the most prevalent, followed by quality and quantity, indicating that intentional irrelevance effectively creates incongruity and implicature. By extending Grice's framework into digital discourse, this study contributes to the broader field of digital humanities, offering insight into the linguistic mechanisms underlying humor in online meme culture.

Keywords: *Cooperative Principle, Implicature, humor, incongruity, meme*

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INTRODUCTION

Human communication, as it stands, does not only rely on the things that people say but also on the underlying meaning behind them. Thus, a crucial branch of linguistics called pragmatics explores how language and its meaning are influenced by context in addition to literal interpretation. According to the linguist Yule (2018), pragmatics focuses on the study of meaning as it is conveyed by a writer or speaker and understood by a reader or listener.

Additionally, Mey (2001) states that pragmatics is concerned with the study of language in use and how communication is shaped by speakers' intentions, social conventions, and cultural background. In other words, pragmatics is essentially the study of contextual meaning. On top of that, British linguist Crystal (2004) defines pragmatics as a study that examines the factors that govern our choice of language in social interaction and the effects of our choice on others.

Pragmatics analysis in linguistics allows us to examine how context can influence the interpretation of language beyond the literal meaning. Levinson (1983) also highlights the role of pragmatics in bridging the gap between what is said and what is meant, highlighting the importance of context, social norms, and shared knowledge in communication. In essence, there is a gap between the meaning of language and the message that is actually conveyed, and pragmatics helps in mending the gap. This is especially important in understanding complex interactions where shared knowledge and implicatures play a crucial role, such as telling jokes, in which language is used to achieve humorous effects. Hence, pragmatics analysis often involves understanding implicatures, where speakers imply meanings that go beyond what is explicitly stated, as thoroughly explored by Grice's theory of Cooperative Principles (1975). Through pragmatic analysis, how speakers adjust their language to suit different situations and essentially employ linguistic strategies can be studied for a deeper understanding of the subtleties and nuances of language use.

As previously stated, the use of language that is loaded with context with shared knowledge and implicatures is the important key is that of achieving humor or a humorous

effect. To understand humor and its scope, several experts and linguists have tried to define it. Stankić (2022) reveals that humor does not have precise and rigid definitions and theoretical frameworks and that the definitions may vary depending on the approach and level of generality. For example, Graesser (1988) and Ross (2005) opt for a more general view and state that the term humor can denote anything that can make someone laugh. On the other hand, Holmes (2000) describes humor as utterances that contain linguistic and contextual clues to support its interpretation and are intended to be entertaining. In line with that, Zakky et al. (2019) state that humor works when there are shared ideas and norms between the joker and the audience. In essence, humor is an extremely common quality that can be found in and possessed by a language through its usage.

As it stands, humor is not as simple as it is thought to be. Most people do not usually have any problems with recognizing humor in any form in everyday language use, as it is extremely common. However, defining humor and understanding how it works proves to be harder than it seems. Despite being very familiar with it, humor cannot be easily grasped. To better comprehend humor, Hay (2001) makes the distinction between humor production and humor comprehension. In addition, Martin & Ford (2018) try to incorporate both of those aspects and define humor as something that encompasses anything that people find funny and evokes laughter, as well as the mental processes that are involved in the creation and perception of the humor, and also the emotional response of enjoyment. Furthermore, verbal humor is said to imply a semantic-pragmatic process that involves a text and a violation of Grice's maxims of the Cooperative Principles (Attardo, 2003).

Ritchie (1997) postulates that among many theories and discussions on humor, the one general fact that can be concluded is that humor involves incongruity. The incongruity theory is one of the classic humor theories that explains how humor releases psychological tension (Raskin, 1985). Moreover, Incongruity is the most popular theory of humor among the others as it illustrates the mechanism of humor which elicits laughter (Bai, 2011). The basic idea behind the incongruity theory is the fact that people generally live in an orderly

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world where they expect certain patterns in objects, events, and other things. Thus, Morreall (1982) adds that humor occurs when people experience something that does not fit into these patterns or formed expectations.

According to Ritchie (1997), humor can further be analyzed in two main parts based on the concept of incongruity theory, which are the setup and punchline. While humor is widely used in everyday language and communication, its exact definition and workings remain complicated to comprehend, which is where linguistic approaches to humor come into play.

To communicate, people partake in what we know as conversation, and the basis of a successful conversation is cooperation. In relation to that, British philosopher H.P. Grice came up with three major concepts, namely Cooperative Principles, Conversational Maxims, and Implicature. In his paper, Grice (1975) states that for a person to be able to interpret what someone else says, some kind of Cooperative Principle is assumed to be in operation. Grice's Cooperative Principle essentially operates by "contributing as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" Grice, 1975). Additionally, Thomas (1995) also states that both the speaker and hearer cooperate in order to achieve efficient communication. Thus, according to the Cooperative Principle, both speaker and hearer converse with the awareness and willingness to deliver and interpret a message.

In order to better interpret the meaning behind utterances, Grice (1975) divided the Cooperative Principle into four maxims, which are a set of rules people should follow or observe to achieve effective communication. The maxims are maxim of quantity (be informative), maxim of quality (be truthful), maxim of relation (be relevant), and maxim of manner (be clear). When one or more maxims are unobserved, the hearer will look for the implied meaning since the Cooperative Principle is assumed to be in operation. The non-observation of maxims creates what is known as implicature. Yule (2018) defines implicature as an additional conveyed meaning, that something must be more than what the words mean. In essence, implicature is the implication in an utterance that is not

explicitly stated and requires the hearer to interpret it. As Attardo (2003) mentioned, violating the maxims and creating implicatures is often used intentionally to cause humor or create humorous effects.

As long as humans use language as a means to communicate, humor will always inevitably occur. In this digital age, it is especially easy to find humor as the medium and the forms of the humor themselves evolve. As stated by Syahriyani et al. (2022), technology has expanded beyond its functions as a means of communication and information, but also entertainment. Thus, technological development and the internet paved the way for memes. The term meme itself refers to any content, usually a picture or video, that goes viral online because of its relatability or humor. Coined by Dawkins (2006), the term meme is initially used to refer to cultural beliefs or practices that are passed down from one person to another in a way similar to genetic transmission. Memes are similar to "viruses" that spread and change as they move across cultural settings (Dawkins, 2006). Later, the internet and its users adopted this idea, and memes are now extensively circulated, particularly on social media platforms.

Nowadays, memes can be found in almost every corner of the internet, from the constantly evolving trends of TikTok to the regurgitated memes by old people on WhatsApp status. Memes on the internet are shared through social media, as it can be used to produce, distribute, and consume cultural digital products (Suriadi, 2019) much like memes. The practice of posting and sharing memes across the internet is used to spread certain ideas that are often highly relatable for people to find it funny (Handayani et al., 2022). However, one social media platform particularly stands up when it comes to memes and their distribution, Facebook. According to du Preez & Lombard (2014), the way memes are shared and reproduced has changed as a result of social media platforms, especially Facebook. The study also draws attention to how Facebook's features, such as the 'like' the 'share' buttons make it easier for memes to very and spread quickly, which makes it a haven for meme culture. Therefore, it is not surprising to find many Facebook pages are dedicated solely to post and share memes. One of the aforementioned pages is

English Memes, a Facebook page created in 2013, which has been actively posting memes on their page.

The memes posted are mainly in the form of pictures, though there are some videos posted with less frequency in comparison. There are many studies that have been done about memes before. A study by Lymarev (2023) titled "The Secret Third Thing: A Pragmatic Analysis of Post-irony and Post-ironic Internet Memes" analyzes Facebook memes through Grice's Cooperative Principle and implicature. However, the study focuses more on the irony and post-irony elements of the memes and how they are produced by and correlate with the implicatures. The memes that are analyzed also slightly differ from the usual Facebook memes as they selectively chose the memes that contain irony, and most of the memes do not use the conversation format.

Another study conducted on memes is titled "Implicature In Internet Memes: A Cyberpragmatic Approach" by Hamza & Yunus (2022). As the title suggests, the memes are being analyzed through Grice's theory of implicature. In addition to implicature, this study also utilizes the cyberpragmatic approach in order to analyze the memes. However, the chosen memes for this study do not contain conversation. Therefore, this study only contains the analysis of memes with conventional implicatures as opposed to conversational implicatures.

In a similar vein, a study conducted by Angesti & Meilasari (2021) titled "The Study of Implicature and Humorous Devices of Dark Memes" also discusses memes through the theory of implicature. The researchers took memes from several social media platforms and identified the implicatures contained in the memes. Additionally, they also classified Berger's humorous devices used in the memes in order to generate humor. However, the research only analyzed dark memes or memes that could potentially offend some people, as the title suggests. Due to the specification of the memes, the analysis is therefore limited and cannot be applied to all types of memes.

Other studies on memes have been conducted by other researchers, like in their article titled Pragmatic Analysis of Internet Memes on Distant Learning. As the title suggests, the

article discusses several internet memes through pragmatic analysis. Similar to the other studies that have been mentioned above, this article also uses the pragmatic theory of implicature proposed by Grice to analyze the memes. However, this article particularly focuses on Facebook memes about distant learning and how they act as a coping mechanism during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In comparison to the previous research mentioned above, this research will focus on the memes from the English Memes page, which are in the form of pictures, characterized by the conversation formats, and posted within the year 2024. The memes used in this research will be general in nature, with no specific topics, but rather contain various contexts. The conversation meme format will then be analyzed by Grice's theories of Cooperative Principle and implicature. Additionally, the implicatures found in the memes will be further analyzed through the Incongruity theory to see how humor is produced in memes. In essence, this research will analyze how Grice's theories of Cooperative Principles and implicature can help in understanding how humor is generated in memes from the English Memes Facebook page through the Incongruity theory.

RESEARCH METHOD

The English Memes Facebook page was selected as the data source for this study due to its consistent and frequent posting of memes that utilize conversational formats. These memes often present structured dialogue, making them particularly suitable for a pragmatic analysis focused on Grice's Cooperative Principles and their flouting to generate implicature. The page, established in 2013, has built a sizable following and produces content that reflects common patterns of online humor within English-speaking digital communities. While the research focuses on a single page, the English Memes Facebook page serves as a case that exemplifies a broader trend in meme-based digital communication in this study. The selection criteria include recency, conversational format, and linguistic accessibility, which are intended to ensure relevance and clarity for pragmatic analysis.

This study adopts a qualitative method to examine how humor is generated in memes through the lens of pragmatics. Qualitative research is used to investigate and understand the meaning that some particular groups of people think comes from social life or human issues (Creswell, John W., & Poth, 2018). The data were collected using the documentation technique, with memes selected based on visual format, conversational structure, and recency. The researcher served as the primary instrument, supported by data cards to organize and analyze implicatures within each meme. The analysis applied Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principles and implicature theory to identify instances of flouted maxims and how they produce meaning beyond the literal content. Additionally, the Incongruity theory of humor was employed to explain how these flouts generate humor by breaking conversational expectations.

The data analysis is non-statistical, which is the most suitable technique for qualitative research as it does not involve statistical calculation but rather reading the data (Wasito, 1993). After the data was collected, it is followed by several steps which included identifying implicatures in the memes, analyzing their role in humor construction, and presenting conclusions. The unit of analysis comprises the selected memes themselves, treated as structured, context-rich artifacts of digital communication. The analysis focuses on memes from the English Memes Facebook page, particularly those in conversational formats posted between 2023 and 2024. Through this pragmatic lens, the study seeks to see how deliberate flouting, especially of the maxim of relation, produces humor in meme discourse. This methodological framework allows for a theory-driven interpretation of humor as a form of meaning-making in digital media.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

To generate humor, the memes use conversations, and therefore the Cooperative Principle and its associated maxims are assumed to be in operation. However, Attardo (2003) stated that violating the maxims and creating implicatures is often used intentionally to cause humor or create humorous effects. As implicature is generated because of the assumption that the speaker is following

the Cooperative Principle and its associated maxims, observing the Cooperative Principles creates expectations that the maxims are being adhered to as well. Thus, participants of conversations are seen as generating implicatures of whatever assumptions are needed, including creating humorous effects. Therefore, the non-observance of maxims and the implicatures that arise in the memes are noted to be further analyzed.

Sixteen memes from the *English Memes* Facebook page have been gathered and analyzed through Grice's theories of Cooperative Principle, its associated maxims, and implicature. The sixteen data points were then filtered and selected based on the amounts of unobserved maxims as well as the types, as they showed the data's suitability to present the most relevant data to be further analyzed. Out of the sixteen memes, eight have been selected to be the representative data based on the amounts of unobserved maxims as well as the types. The eight data were classified based on the types of maxims that are unobserved, the implicatures they created, and how the humor is generated. The table below shows the type of maxims that are not observed in the eight data:

Table 1 *Types of maxims the number of non-observances*

No.	Type of Maxim	Total
1	Maxim of relation	6
2	Maxim of quantity	1
3	Maxim of quality	1

Three types of maxims of conversation are shown to be unobserved in the selected eight data, all of them being flouted. Six out of eight do not observe the maxim of relation, followed by the maxim of quality and quantity, which show only one instance of non-observance, respectively.

Maxim of Relation

The maxim of conversation that is most often unobserved in the data is the maxim of relation. The non-observance of the maxim of relation happens when someone gives a response or observation that is very obviously irrelevant to the topic at hand, and it is usually done by abruptly changing the subject, or by failing to address the other person's intention (Thomas, 1995). The maxim of relation is unobserved in six out of ten data.

Figure 1. English Memes Facebook Page

Girl: *Have you seen my TikTok?*
Guy: *It's called a watch. How old are you?*

The first meme contains a conversation between a girl and a guy. The girl asks whether the guy has seen her TikTok, and the guy responds unexpectedly. In the conversation, the maxim of relation or relevance from Grice's theories of Cooperative Principle and its associated maxims is being unobserved. The girl asks a straightforward question, "Have you seen my TikTok?", inquiring whether the guy has seen her TikTok. Instead of providing a relevant answer such as "yes" or "no," the guy responds with an unrelated statement about watches and age by saying, "It's called a watch. How old are you?". His response flouts the maxim of relation, and the flouting creates an implicature that he expects her to be aware that he is

uninterested in her TikTok, possibly mocking her for using it as well as suggesting that it is childish or inappropriate for her age. Furthermore, his response subtly implies that she should focus on something more meaningful than TikTok. The dismissive and possibly condescending tone shifts the conversation from her initial inquiry to a critique of TikTok or her engagement with it.

The flouting of the Gricean maxim of relation in this meme aligns closely with the Incongruity Theory of humor, in which Ritchie (1997) states that humor arises when an expected pattern is suddenly broken in an unexpected and absurd odd way, as they are central to humor. Through this framework, it is found that jokes and memes often have a set-up part that establishes an expectation and a punchline part that subverts that expectation. The non-observance of Grice's maxims of conversation plays a crucial role in creating this incongruity. This can be applied in this meme in particular, whereas the girl's question "Have you seen my TikTok?" is the set-up part, which creates an expectation of what the response should be, and the response, which flouts the maxim of relation by giving out an irrelevant answer, breaks the expectation and thus generates the humor. The humor in this meme is generated through the flouting of the maxim itself and the implicature that arises.

Figure 2. English Memes Facebook Page

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Guy: *Hey Siri, why don't my relationships work out?*

Alexa: *This is Alexa.*

The meme above contains a conversation between a man and an AI assistant device in the meme. This is another instance of the non-observance of the maxim of relation through flouting as the man asks his device, "Hey Siri, why don't my relationships work out?" expecting an insightful or at least relevant response about his personal struggles. However, instead of addressing his question, his device responds with, "This is Alexa," which is entirely unrelated to his concern. By providing an irrelevant clarification rather than an actual answer, Alexa disregards the intended topic of the conversation. This response, in turn, creates an ironic situation and the implicature that the AI assistant's failure to engage meaningfully mirrors the man's potential communication issues in real-life relationships.

The humor in this exchange arises from the sheer literalness and unhelpfulness of Alexa's response. The flouting of Grice's maxim of relation by Alexa in this meme aligns closely with Ritchie's Incongruity Theory of humor. The man's question sets up an expectation of what answer the AI assistant device would give to the question. However, the AI assistant breaks the expectation and subverts it by giving an ironic statement. Instead of offering emotional support or even an attempt at an answer, Alexa's statement unintentionally highlights why the man's relationships might not work out, which is implied to be his ignorance of the most important things, such as his partner's name. The meme employs irony, which in humor refers to something said that is different from what it is meant for humorous effect (Hay, 2001). There is a layer of irony in the fact that the man seeks guidance from an AI assistant, only to receive an indifferent response. This humorous incongruity underscores the idea that his personal struggles in real life might stem from similar issues.

Figure 3. English Memes Facebook Page

Man: *Any last words, Caesar?*
Caesar: *Name…*
Caesar: *Name a… salad after me*

The meme above illustrates the assassination of the historical figure Julius Caesar. One of his assassins asks Caesar for his last words, expecting something serious, reflective, or historically significant. Instead of delivering a conventional or dramatic statement as expected, Caesar responds with, "Name… Name a… salad after me." This response is unexpected and irrelevant given the gravity of the moment, as it shifts the focus from his betrayal and impending death to an odd request about a salad. His response to the question thus unobserved the maxim of relation by flouting, as it is intentional and is not meant for deceitful purposes. His words, however, contrast starkly with the seriousness of the situation, which creates an incongruity that results in humor.

The humor arises from the absurdity of Caesar's trivial and frankly anachronistic request in his final moments, which subverted the expectation of what his last words should be. Rather than addressing his legacy or Rome's future, he fixates on having a salad named after him, creating the implicature that his greatest concern is his culinary legacy rather than historical impact and that Caesar

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salad is actually named after him. The line indeed plays on real-world knowledge since Caesar salad actually exists, and therefore the humor is retrospective, suggesting that his wish was granted. The maxim of relation is flouted as in this meme, Caesar's last words do not appropriately and irrelevantly respond to the seriousness of the situation, generating humor through incongruity or contrast between expectation and reality. Ritchie (2003) stated that when people do not observe Grice's maxims on purpose without the intention to deceive, it leads the other participants to read between the lines and figure out the implicature. In jokes, the meaning behind the implicature often creates a mismatch called incongruity, which is a key part of what makes something funny. The previous statement by Richie further perpetuates how the flouting of Gricean maxims in jokes, in this case in memes, aligns with the Incongruity theory of humor.

Figure 4. English Memes Facebook Page

Interviewer: *You've got a lot of work experience, but what are your degrees in?*
Interviewee*: Well, I'm from Canada so Celsius.*

This meme above illustrates a job interview and a conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee. A humorous instance arises when the interviewer asks the woman being interviewed about her academic degrees, which creates the expectation of what her answer should be, which is her educational background, as he asked, "But what are your degrees in?". Instead of answering with her

educational background, the interviewee who is from Canada, deliberately or not, misinterprets "degrees" as referring to temperature and responds with "Celsius." This irrelevant answer ignores the intended meaning of the question and humorously plays on the double meaning of the word "degrees." The humor is derived from the broken expectation and the unexpected shift in context, throwing off the reader and subverting the standard conversation of an interview.

The flouting of the maxim of relation through the woman's response can imply playfulness or deflection. She might be jokingly avoiding the question or playing with the question by flouting the maxim and creating the implicature that she lacks a degree, or she could be using deliberate wit to lighten the mood. The resulting confusion and surprise would further enhance the comedic effect. The maxim of relation is flouted as her response does not directly answer the question but instead creates humor through wordplay and an unexpected shift in meaning. This is in line with the Incongruity theory of humor as the question serves as the set-up which creates an expectation, and the response that flouts the maxim serves as the punchline which adds something unexpected that surprises the audience and makes them laugh. According to Suls (1972), this fits the general idea that humor works in two steps which starts with something seeming off (incongruity), and then it makes sense in a funny way (resolution).

Figure 5. English Memes Facebook Page

Guy 1: *Anybody would like to say something?*
Guy 2: *I'm vegan.*

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The meme above illustrates a scene of someone's funeral. During the funeral, one guy invites people to speak, and it sets up an expectation of a comment about the deceased, such as a eulogy or a meaningful message, such as "He was a good guy, he will be missed". Instead, another guy subverts the expectation and responds with "I'm vegan," which is completely irrelevant to the context. His response disregards the situational appropriateness and introduces unrelated personal information, making it seem absurd and out of place. Attardo (1993) once stated that jokes and funny texts often break one or more of Grice's conversational maxims, and they are usually done on purpose to create incongruity, which the audience understands as part of the joke. Therefore, this shows a clear connection between Grice's ideas about conversation and how humor works through creating incongruity.

The humor arises from the unexpected and inappropriate response, which stems from the non-observance of the maxim of relation. Instead of honoring the deceased, the guy inserts an unrelated personal statement. This meme might be made to mock the stereotype that vegans often bring up their lifestyle choices regardless of relevance, making it seem as though the guy in the meme prioritizes his veganism over the solemnity of the funeral. Alternatively, the remark could hint at an inside joke or personal connection if the deceased was known for something related to food or dietary habits, but the meme's lack of context makes the statement seem bizarre. Thus, the maxim of relation is flouted because the guy's statement is completely irrelevant to the funeral, creating an implicature that he is socially oblivious or overly eager to mention his veganism, resulting in humor through absurdity and inappropriateness.

Figure 6. English Memes Facebook Page

Girl: *Is this gluten free?*

Guy: *No, it costs money.*

The meme above contains a conversation between a customer and a worker in a bakery. The setup occurs when the customer asks if something is gluten-free. The expected response would be a simple confirmation or denial regarding the presence of gluten in the food. Instead, the worker misinterprets "free" as meaning "free of charge" and responds with the punchline, "No, it costs money." This irrelevant answer deliberately plays on the double meaning of "free." According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the word "free" can be used at the end of words to mean "without," which is what the customer meant in the context of gluten, and it can also mean "costing nothing, or not needing to be paid for" which is what the worker interpreted it as. The double meaning of the word "free" allows for a humorous misunderstanding by flouting the maxim of relation because the worker's response is irrelevant to the actual intent of the customer's question. The customer is clearly asking whether the product contains gluten, a question about ingredients or dietary content, but the worker responds as if she were asking about price. This topic shift creates an irrelevant reply, breaking the expectation that conversational contributions should be appropriately related to the preceding utterance.

The humor in this exchange stems from the intentional misinterpretation. The worker might be playfully teasing the customer by taking her question too literally or using mild sarcasm to imply that gluten-free options are often expensive. In other words, the worker intentionally subverts the expectation of what his response to the customer should be by taking advantage of the ambiguity and double meaning of the word "free". This flouting of the maxim of relation results in humor through wordplay, shifting the focus from dietary concerns to an unexpected financial implication, which fits the general idea that humor works in two steps, which starts with something seeming off or incongruous, and then it makes sense in a funny way (Suls, 1972). The conversation becomes amusing, incongruent, and unexpected, which, according to Ritchie (2003), contribute to the perception of incongruity, a key component in the experience of humor.

Maxim of Quantity

The non-observance of the maxim of quantity occurs when a speaker blatantly gives more or less information than the situation requires (Thomas, 1995). Out of the eight data points that have been selected for this research, one of them shows the non-observance of the maxim of quantity.

Figure 7. English Memes Facebook Page

Passenger: *How often do planes crash?*
Flight Attendant: *Just once.*

The meme above illustrates a conversation between an airplane passenger and the flight attendant. The conversation begins when the passenger asks about the frequency of plane crashes, setting up an expectation of a statistical or general response. The flight attendant, however, subverts the expectation by responding with "Just once," which is technically true; airplanes can only crash once, but it does not provide the expected information about general crash frequency. This response humorously plays on a literal interpretation of the question while avoiding addressing the real concern and does not give the required information, but without the intention of deceiving or misleading, thus flouting the maxim of quantity.

The humor itself is enhanced by the dark irony in the response, which simultaneously acknowledges the seriousness of plane crashes while also being unhelpful by not giving out the response the passenger requires. Therefore, the maxim of quantity is flouted here by failing to provide the amount of information that is reasonably required. The non-observance of the maxim of quantity in this meme, according to Attardo (1993), forms a mechanism through which incongruity is introduced and resolved, which shows its importance to how jokes and, by extension, memes function.

Maxim of Quality

The non-observance of the maxim of quality occurs when a speaker says something that is clearly untrue or something for which they lack adequate evidence and therefore cannot be proven (Thomas, 1995). Out of the eight data that have been selected for this research, one of them shows the non-observance of the maxim of quality.

Figure 8. English Memes Facebook Page

Interviewer: *It says in your CV that you are quick at mathematics. What is 17x19?*
Interviewee*: 36*
Interviewer: *That's not even close.*
Interviewee: *But it was quick.*

The meme above shows the conversation between job interviewers and the interviewee. The exchange begins with the interviewer asking the candidate to solve a math problem quickly, as the man has stated in his CV, which sets the expectation of an accurate and quick response. Instead, the candidate responds with "36," which is entirely incorrect and thus breaks the expectation. The interviewer, pointing out the mistake, expects an acknowledgment of the error. However, the candidate justifies his answer by saying, "But it was quick," implying that speed rather than Accuracy was his priority. This response shows the flouting of the maxim of quality as it is factually incorrect, while also humorously exposing the gap between expectation and reality regarding his resume claim.

The humor stems from the candidate's literal interpretation of "quick at mathematics." Typically, this phrase implies both speed and accuracy, but by prioritizing only speed, the candidate technically fulfills what is required of him. However, since his answer is not accurate, he ironically highlights his incompetence instead by flouting the maxim of quality. This exchange subtly critiques resume

embellishments, suggesting the candidate may have exaggerated his abilities. The candidate or interviewee does not observe the maxim of quality by flouting while also playing with the expectation of speed versus accuracy, leading to an amusing and ironic conversational incongruity that aligns with Ritchie's (1997) Incongruity theory of humor which mentions how humor involves incongruity, surprise, and the violation of expectations which are all qualities that can be present in ironic statements or other humorous forms.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of memes from the English Memes Facebook page reveals that humor is mainly generated through the deliberate flouting of Grice's conversational maxims, particularly the maxim of relation. The findings of this study highlight the central role played by irrelevance in generating humor through memes. These flouts are not intended to deceive but instead function to create implicatures that generate humor through incongruity. Deliberate irrelevant responses that flout the maxim of relation are often more effective in creating humor. These findings underscore how subtle linguistic deviance in short conversational meme formats can deliver humorous effects through minimal textual input. This indicates the pragmatic significance of conversational maxims in digital humor, where unexpected and irrelevant responses break conventional dialogue structures to generate comedy.

This research demonstrates that Grice's Cooperative Principle, though originally formulated for spoken discourse, can still be applicable to constructed dialogues such as those in memes. Furthermore, by aligning the flouting of maxims with Ritchie's Incongruity theory of Humor, the study provides a pragmatic-linguistic framework that explains how broken conversational expectations produce humor. By intentionally disrupting conversational expectations, memes align closely with the Incongruity theory of humor which explains how humor is generated from broken expectations. The frequent flouting of the maxim of relation

showcases how irrelevant or absurd replies serve as punchlines, effectively engaging audiences through surprise and implicit meaning. This reinforces the value of integrating traditional pragmatic models into the emerging study of digital communication forms.

Nonetheless, this study is not without its limitations. The dataset is restricted to memes from a single Facebook page, "English Memes" and only includes examples posted within a specific timeframe. As a result, the findings may not fully represent the broader landscape of internet humor across other platforms, cultures, or meme formats. Additionally, the analysis centers on textual content in image-based memes, without incorporating multimodal or audience reception elements, which limits its scope in addressing the complexities of meme interpretation and humor appreciation.

Overall, these findings highlight the value of integrating pragmatic analysis and humor theory in the study of digital communication. Memes with short conversational structure are particularly well-suited for observing how non-observance of maxims functions to create humor. This research extends the application of Grice's Cooperative Principle into the domain of digital discourse and contributes to a broader understanding of how humor is constructed and interpreted within online meme culture. Future research could consider a broader and more diverse data sample, including memes from different platforms, languages, and cultural contexts. Incorporating multimodal analysis and audience-based reception studies would offer a more comprehensive understanding of how humor operates within digital media.

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