Article

THE IMPLICATURE OF REDDIT MEMES FROM R/HISTORY MEMES SUB-REDDIT

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Abstract

Memes have been a media of entertainment when the internet has been a part of human's life. Reddit as a source of a community who shares anything from news, information, gossip, to memes, is the core of this research. Fifty memes taken from a subreddit called r/HistoryMemes became the object of the research. The question is, do the memes exclusively enjoyed by the community or do the memes can also be brought outside the community and people still understand the joke? Using the Implicature theory, the researcher tries to answer the question. The result is that there is a possibility for the people outside the community of r/HistoryMemes subreddit to understand the joke that is delivered by the meme.

Keywords: *Pragmatics, Implicature, Memes*

Sari

Meme telah menjadi media hiburan ketika internet telah menjadi bagian dari kehidupan manusia. Reddit sebagai sumber komunitas yang membagikan apa saja mulai dari berita, informasi, gosip, hingga meme menjadi inti dari penelitian ini. Lima puluh meme yang diambil dari subreddit bernama r/HistoryMemes menjadi objek penelitian. Pertanyaannya, apakah meme tersebut hanya dinikmati masyarakat secara eksklusif atau bisa juga dibawa keluar masyarakat dan masyarakat masih paham dengan leluconnya? Dengan menggunakan teori Implikasi, peneliti mencoba menjawab pertanyaan tersebut. Hasilnya, ada kemungkinan orang-orang di luar komunitas r/HistoryMemes subreddit memahami lelucon yang dibawakan oleh meme tersebut.

Introduction

Memes have been the source of happiness for so many people. The main intention of a meme is to entertain the ones who see and understand it. Besides existing as

entertainment, a meme can be a way of expressing a culturally-relevant idea (Cannizaro, 2016). 'Meme' is a word that was coined by Richard Dawkins in his book entitled 'The Selfish Gene' as an attempt to explain how ideas replicate, mutate, and evolve (memetics) (Dawkins, 1976). In the June 1993 issue of Wired, Mike Godwin has proposed the concept of the internet meme for the first time. In 2013, Dawkins described an Internet meme as being a meme intentionally altered by human creativity, which distinguished from biological genes and his own pre-Internet definition of a meme, which involved mutation through random modification and spreading by accurate replication as in Darwinian selection (Solon, 2013).

The meme is represented through image or video. It depends on the meme creator. An Internet meme may remain the same or may evolve over time, by chance or through comments, imitations, parody, or through the incorporation of news accounts about itself. Internet memes can evolve and spread extremely quickly, sometimes reaching worldwide popularity in a matter of days. Internet memes usually arise from some kind of social interaction, pop culture reference, or situations that people often find themselves in. Their rapid growth and impact have caught the attention of both researchers and industry (Kempe, Kleinberg, Tardos, 2015). In addition, Internet memes carry an additional property that ordinary memes do not: Internet memes leave a footprint in the media through which they propagate (for example, social networks) that makes them traceable and analyzable (Coscia, 2013).

The analysis of the meme analysis is covered within the study of pragmatics. The study of pragmatics is related to context, utterances and meaning. In order to get the meaning in utterances, the study of pragmatics does not disregard the context of who speaks the utterances, who is the addressee or the hearer, the location and circumstances and other factors that contribute to utterances' meaning. As a study, pragmatics covers the study of language use and linguistic communication in relation to language structure and utterances (Akmajian, 2010). Based on those understandings, it can be concluded that the study of pragmatics caters to those who want to search for meaning with several approaches. One of the approaches is about text implicature.

Implicature, according to Davis Wayne, is something the speaker suggests or implies with an utterance, even though it is not literally expressed. Implicatures can aid in communicating more efficiently than by explicitly saying everything we want to communicate (2019). In pragmatics, implicature is divided into several types, namely, conversational implicature, generalized conversational implicature, scalar implicature, particularized conversational implicature, and conventional implicature (Yule, 1966).

The implicature in pragmatics is tightly related to Gricean's maxims. Levinson (1983), and Wilson and Sperber (1981) state that Grice were primarily concerned with conversational implicatures. Like all implicatures, these are part of what is communicated. In other words, conclusions the addressee draws from an utterance although they were not actively conveyed by the communicator are never implicatures. According to Grice, conversational implicatures arise because communicating people are expected by their addresses to obey the maxims of conversation and the overarching cooperative principle, which basically states that people are expected to communicate in a cooperative, helpful way. Hopefully, this theory can explain the point that makes the meme funny. The pragmatics implicature is divided into several types according to Yule (1969).

a) Conversational Implicature

The basic assumption in order to have a conversation can smoothly be going, the participants are following the cooperative principle and maxim. The conversational implicature is divided into generalized, scalar and particularized conversational implicature.

b) Generalized Conversational Implicature

Figure 1.1

To understand something, there is no special knowledge required. The meme above simply implies that the caption under the picture is rhyming like a verse of a rap song. Because the context is clear and described well through the phrases, this is the example of Generalized Conversational Implicature.

c.) Scalar Implicature

Figure 1.2

The speaker uses a scale to indicate something. Examples: some, mostly, often, always, etc. From the figure 1.2, the scalar implicature is indicated from the word 'many'. A variety of generalized conversational implicature works in tandem with scalar implicature, which is the foundation of the value scale, in the applications (Nanda, Sukyadi, Sudarsono, 2012). The figure above is one of the example how scalar implicature works well with generalized conversational implicature when both give a context of how many countries that Stalin had destroyed in the past.

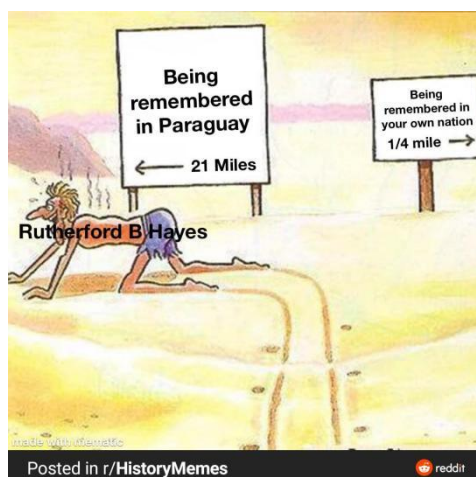d.) Particularized Conversational Implicatures

Figure 1.3

The participants need to have particular knowledge since there might be maxim flouting happening. This implicature from Figure 1.3 also falls under the category of particularized conversational implicature since it occurs in a specific situation and flouts the maxim (Gamage & Makangila, 2019). Thus to understand what the meme implies, reader has to have an understanding about the particular topic.

e.) Conventional Implicature

Figure 1.4

They do not have to occur in a conversation. They also do not depend on a special context for their interpretation.However, coventional implicature uses word such as "but, however, anyway, etc." as demonstrated in Figure 1.4. While Generalized Conversational Implicature can works well with Scalar Implicature as in Figure 1.2, Particularized Conversational Implicature works the opposite since there might be maxim flouting.

Nova Rina, Yusrita Yanti; Hayqal Idham from Universitas Bung Hatta (2020) conducted research in the same field entitled 'Implicature in The Internet Memes: Semio-Pragmatics Analysis'. This study aims to see the implied meaning, the functions, and the representation of the idea behind the pictures by using pragmatics principles (Strauss & Feiz, 2014); and semiotic principles in which all of the symbols, index, and icon in the internet memes involved (Hoed, 2011).

Another research article with the same idea is conducted by Sela Wildaan Aulia and Nurhayati (2020) entitled Meme Implicature Using the Word *'Tenggelamkan'*. From this study, the researchers found that there are many meanings from various memes with one template. This study is conducted by following the conversational implicature by Grice. What makes this research different from the previous studies mentioned are the object and the aim of the research. This research is conducted to see not only the implied meaning and idea behind the memes, but also to see whether there is a possibility that people outside the community of subreddit r/HistoryMemes can understand the memes presented in the forum. Therefore, this research answers two questions. First, what are the implicatures that are found in the memes from r/HistoryMemes since January to February 2021? Second, are memes that belong to r/HistoryMemes can be easily understood by the people outside the community?

To answer those questions, two objectives are presented to define the aims of this research. The first objective is to find the types of implicature in the memes through the theory of Pragmatic Implicature by Yule and Brown. Which later the result is served into a table to see which implicature is found in a particular meme. The second objective is the result of analysing the data that later connected to whether the meme can be interpreted by the people outside the community according the Implicature theory.

Methods

Descriptive study is used in conducting this research. According to Nazir (2005) as cited from Simanjuntak *et al.* (2020), descriptive study is research that aims to provide a description, a systematic, factual and accurate description of the facts, the properties and

the relationship between the phenomena under investigation. The data of this research are taken from an application named Reddit. It is a forum which has various topics, referred as subreddit. In the subreddit r/HistoryMemes, the researcher takes 50 recent memes to analyse. As the name suggests, the memes are related to the humor that has a historical story in it. The data are collected from the post between January to early February. For gathering the data, the researcher has made a Reddit account and joined the community to directly observe the memes produced by the community.

The first step after joining the community is the researcher gains the data from subreddit r/HistoryMemes. The researcher later sort the 50 Recent memes from January-February 2021 by sorting it through the 'Newest Post' filter feature and the data are taken to be displayed into the table. After that, the data are classified according to Yule and Brown's Implication theory and counted. The last step is to analyse the result to see what the memes imply and how the memes deliver the joke through the analysis of Implication.

Results and Discussion

The data are taken from subreddit r/HistoryMemes. The memes are posted by the Redditor around January to early February. To develop the understanding about the interpretation of the memes and whether the memes can be understood with or without particular knowledge, the initial step is to understand the range of data. The data is served within the table below:

Table 4.1. The result of Meme Implicatures in r/HistoryMemes

No.	Implicatures	The Number of Data	%
1	Generalized Conversational Implicature	24	48
2	Scalar Implicature	0	0
3	Particularized Conversational Implicatures	21	42
4	Conventional Implicature	5	10
	Total	50	100

From the data above, 50 recent memes from r/HistoryMemes posted between January-February 2021, are 44% Generalized Conversational Implicature. That means most of the time, Redditors do not need any special understanding towards certain topics. Then,

22% and 20% of the data are Particularized Conversational Implicature and Conventional Implicature, respectively. The least type of implicature in this data, which is 14%, are Conversational Implicature.

Generalized Conversational Implicature

In this type of implicature, the memes are often served in the format of conversation, captioned picture, and comic strip.
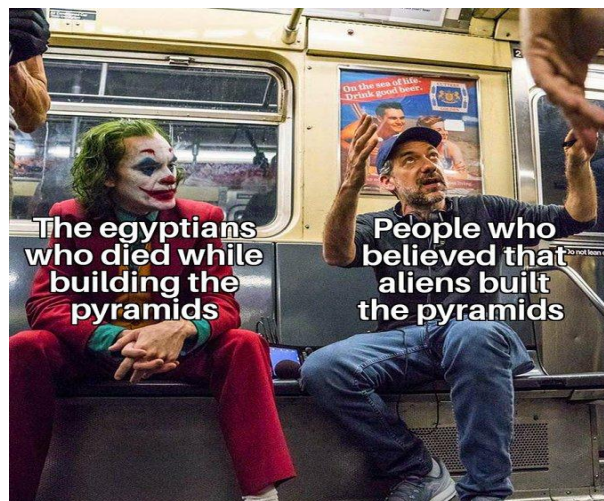

Figure 4.2. Joker and The Director meme

The first example is a captioned picture. The meme's topic is the mystery of The Pyramids. In the point of view of Historians, Pyramids were built by the Egyptians. It involved slavery and power of the Paraoh. However, there are also people who believe that actually, the Pyramids were the work of the aliens. The trend of this conspiracy theory comes from the late 19th century when fiction writers imagined that mega inventions on the earth involved aliens (Bond, 2018). This meme implies that the man (probably a director of Joker) and the Joker himself are in a film set and they are talking about something. This material is used by the meme creator as a template of someone who is tired of listening to other people talking. People who see the template and the caption without any special knowledge can find this meme funny because the template and the complete information attached to the picture are related. By seeing both the caption and the picture, people can perceive that if the Egyptians know they are being discredited by the conspiracy theory believers, they might look like the Joker who is

tired about the lies from the people who believe that aliens were the ones who built the Pyramid.

Figure 4.3. The Fish and Yi Xing monk meme

The second example is a dialogue template with a caption. The caption helps the reader understand the context of the dialogue meme below it. It says that "In the 8th century the monk Yi Xing built the very first mechanical clock to determine the perfect time for the emperor to conceive an heir". Below that, a dialog with a question "what time is it?" is answered by the figure of Monk Yi Xing "it's sexy time!". There is no maxim violation happening and the people who see the meme can understand what "it's sexy time" implies because of the caption above.

Figure 4.3. The comic strip girl meme

The last example from this implicature is the type of comic strip. The reader does not really need special knowledge. The information is already there in the bubble and column. This meme's template implies that there is a shocking fact. In the first column,

the fact that red and yellow combined creates orange. Color blue and red creates color purple and those facts make sense. However, when it comes to the fact that 'France has assassinated 22 African presidents since 1963' is shocking for the character in the comic strip. This meme has a purpose which is to inform readers about certain information in a fun way. Thus, rather than taking this meme as a mockery, sarcasm, amusing or anything else, this meme can be taken as an informative one.

Figure 4.4. The shocking fact meme template

This meme uses a template that shows shocking facts.Without any special or particular knowledge, the reader can find the meme funny and get the idea since the meme provides a caption on the left side. It is known that Hitler adores Frederick the Great, or well known as Frederick II. He was the king of Prussia and a military leader in the 1740 to 1786. But from the meme's template and caption that says 'Finding out he was gay, progressive and found French culture superior to German culture', it is assumed that the meme tried to joke about how if Hitler found the fact that his idol was just like the caption described.
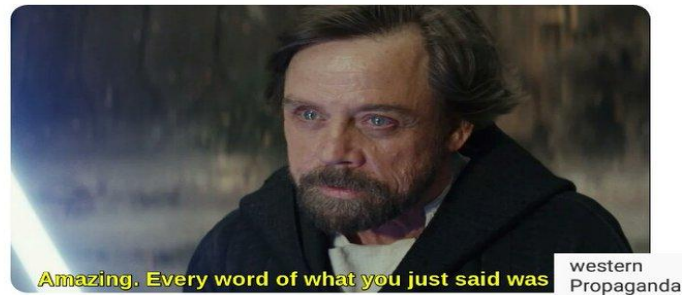
Figure 4.5. Meme about communists

The meme above is intended to joke about the communists. The caption said '14 year old communist when you tell them about the countless crimes Stalin committed' implies that this meme talks about the communists who believe that the western world is framing Stalin as a bad guy despite the fact that Stalin did commit several crimes in the past. The subject '14 year old communists' here does not really mean the 14 year old communists, but this expression implies that communists who think Stalin is clean and the facts about Stalin's crimes are western propaganda are acting like a kid. That is why to understand the context of this meme does not require particular knowledge since the captions already complete each other.

Figure 4.6. Strong Spongebob meme template

The meme's template is to show something as a 'badass'. From the meme above, Spongebob is presented in different shapes, the round one as the representation of the weakest and the muscular Spongebob is the strongest. The caption on the right explains the event that was happening during the administration of each country's government. The US with 40 presidents and 1 civil war is represented by the round and clean Spongebob. The UK with 61 kings and 3 big civil wars is represented by the regular Spongebob as if nothing is special. The last one when it comes to Brazil, the caption shows the fact that Brazil has turmoil in each period of the government's administration. Because of the complete information of the event in the captions and they are combined with the picture of Spongebob to represent the joke, this meme can be considered as a generalized conversational implicature. People outside the community can understand what the memes tries to imply with the Spongebob template and its complete caption.

It can be concluded that memes which are easy to understand by people who do not have particular or special knowledge to understand the meme context are already provided the information or the template is clear enough to make people understand the meme's context.

The memes above are considered as generalized conversational implicature because they are typically derivable in a certain context and infer from cooperative principles in a specific way utilizing specific information about the context of phrases and the context of the utterances (Wijayatiningsih, 2015). The memes presented in the figure 4.2 to 4.6 are the example of how memes that belong to a certain community can be understood by the people ouside r/HistoryMemes as they already have enough context from both texts and figures.

Particularized Conversational Implicatures

The memes that do need a special knowledge to be interpreted are often in the format of captioned pictures but there is no clear information related to the context of the memes.
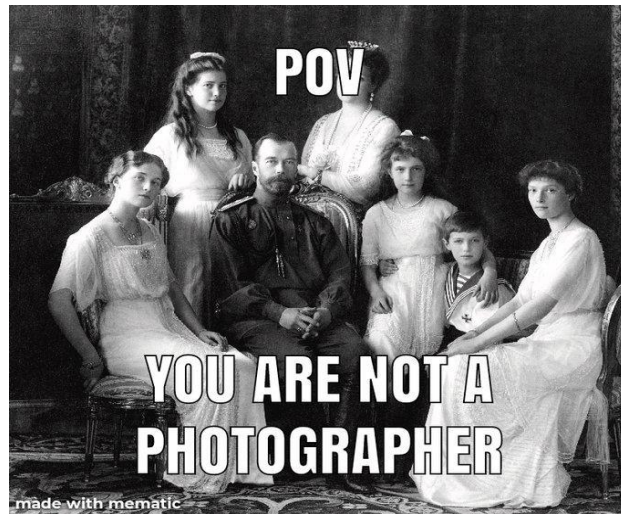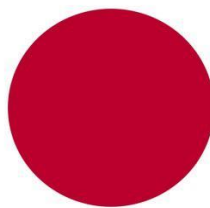
Figure 4.7. The Romanov Family Photo Meme

The caption on the meme does not give any clear information about the point of view of the reader. If the reader is not the photographer, then, for the reader who does not know the meme's context will question this meme. Thus, to understand this meme, the reader must have an understanding about the family in the picture, so the reader can relate to the meme. The meme has a picture of the Romanov family. The tragedy of the Romanovs assassination happened when they were taking family pictures. The executor was using his photography skill to make the family members easier to shoot. From the photo, it is seen that nobody is in front of another, the shooter's intention was making the bullet directly shoot the family members. Thus, the POV is not as a photographer but a shooter or executor. So, if the reader does not know the information about the tragedy of the Romanovs, then the reader might not get the point of this meme. Therefore, to understand what this meme implies, the reader needs to know about the history.

Figure 4.8. Pie chart resembles Japan flag

Similar to the previous meme, the type of the meme template is captioned picture. The red dot is similar to a pie chart, but the point is not on the pie chart. The reader who does not understand the history of World War II might be confused with the context of this meme. In WWII, Japan was nuked by the US in 1945, and that was the only country that got nuked twice by the US. Thus, seeing the context and the caption of the meme, the reader that knows this event might know it directly that this is actually not a pie chart but a Japanese flag. Besides knowing the fact to understand that the meme is funny, being ambiguous is also the reason why this meme is categorised as a particularized conversational implicature.

Figure 4.9. The Tower of Babel meme

The context of this meme may be clear for certain people only. Without the knowledge about religion especially Christianity, the reader might find this meme is not understandable. The context of this meme is The Tower of Babel. The story of The Tower of Babel is in the book of Genesis in the Holy Bible. In the Holy Bible, it is believed that The Tower of Babel is the reason why the human race has various languages. Therefore, this meme can be understood if the reader has special knowledge regarding the history of The Tower of Babel. It can be concluded that the Particularized Conversational Implicatures memes are the memes that are ambiguous and unclear about the information of the memes. In order to understand the memes, the reader needs to have special knowledge in the particular topics.

It's so badass when people stand
in front of shit they destroyed

Figure 4.10. Meme about Bubonic plague

The context of this meme is about the Black Death that happened in Europe. If the reader does not have any knowledge related to Black Death plague, the reader might not know anything about what the picture of a rat implies. The Black Death was happening in Europe because of the bacteria that came from the rat colony. Therefore, the caption "It's so badass when people stand in front of shit they destroyed" when it comes to the picture of a rat in front of the map of Europe becomes the key point of the comedy from this meme. Because this meme requires special knowledge to interpret and understand the meaning, this meme belongs to Particularized Conversational Implicature.

Figure 4.11. Drake template meme

The last example is only pictures without captions. With this type of meme, people need special knowledge to know what this meme implies. This template meme is from Drake's music video entitled 'Hotline Bling'. This template is used for what people like and dislike. On the right side, there are pictures of History Channel's TV programs. This meme is to ridicule the History channel TV programs which are not really reflecting the name of the channel. In the bottom-right, the pictures of the old History Channel's program are the ones that are being liked by the people. Because of this, only people who are fans of History Channel and the people in the history subreddit community that might know the topic is about.

Figure 4.12. Comic strip meme

The meme is a plot twist comic strip. However, if the people who read the meme do not have any particular knowledge about the guillotine of King Louis XVI, there is a chance that the reader does not know the context of this comic strip and why in the end the girl guillotines the boy. Thus what the mom implies by treating the boy she loves like a king is not by doing a guillotine, but treating him so well. However, what the girl gets is treating him like a king who gets guillotined like King Louis XVI because that is how people in the past treated the king. Therefore, to understand the plot twist in the meme, the reader has to understand the context and know the history of the King Louis XVI execution.

It can be concluded that memes which need special knowledge on a certain topics can be served in any kind of meme templates. Moreover, a meme without captions can be considered as a meme that needs certain understanding in order to get the point of the meme. Memes that belong to this category can be successfully going around within the community of r/HistoryMemes subreddit forum or for people with sufficient knowledge about the topic. From the previous study related to the particularized implicature, it is found that particularized implicature causes the reader to consider the speaker's concealed meaning (Syafryadin *et al*. 2020). Which is inline with the findings from the analysis of memes that use the same implicature.

Conventional Implicature

There are 20% memes that do not depend on special context in order to understand the memes, and also there is no need for clarity or information attached to the memes. These types of memes are served in the form of captioned pictures or just pictures without a caption.

Figure 4.13. Meme that uses 'but'

This meme has no special context in order to understand what this meme implies. Conventional implicatures can be indicated by the usage of 'but'. This meme explains about the England intervention in foreign affairs. The first clause indicates that England does not want to get involved in foreign affairs. However, the word 'but' indicates that in fact England is involved in almost every foreign affairs. The irony of this fact is

served in the meme. Therefore, the key of the joke is in the irony using the conventional implicature. Conventional implicature is determined by the conventional meaning of specific particles and phrases such as "after all, even, but, although, however, anyway, whereas, yet, still, besides, nevertheless, moreover" (Carston, 2002). Since the meme uses 'but' and creates irony in the utterance, therefore this one is categorised as conventional implicature.

Conclusion

The memes have different styles in serving the joke. Not all memes belong to r/HistoryMemes subreddit need to be interpreted using special knowledge. It is shown from the table 4.1 that 48% of the memes taken from January to February 2021 are Generalized Conversational Implicature. However, for memes that are using particular knowledge to interpret, which are Particularized Conversational Implicature, are the memes which can be easily consumed by the Redditors that belong to the subreddit r/HistoryMemes community or people outside the community who have particular knowledge in the certain topics. It is not a problem when the meme is brought up to the outside community since many of the memes are generalized conversational implicature. That means, some of the memes in the subreddit r/HistoryMemes can be understood easily by the people outside the community. The least number of memes from this r/HistoryMemes community interpreted conventionally as the memes contain conventional implicature features like the word 'but'. This study is only a small part to contribute in understanding about pragmatics. Later can be developed with other theories such as Gricean maxim to get better understanding related to utterances or texts implication.

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Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest is reported.

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