TURKISH MEMES AND THEIR USERS: INDEXICALITY AND IDENTITY THROUGH LANGUAGE PLAY

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Turkish Memes and Their Users: Indexicality and Identity Through Language Play

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ABSTRACT

Turkish Memes and Their Users: Indexicality and Identity Through Language Play

Internet memes have been a considerable point of interest to their users ever since their widespread recognition on social media channels. These digital items often come in different shapes and formats, varying from simple texts accompanying images to complex video edits and audiovisual tokens. Recently, memes have started to appear in linguistics studies (George, 2020; Vasquez and Aslan, 2021, Yus, 2020) where their text-over-image properties proved to be significant in terms of indexicality and identity construction, language play, and the pragmatics of incongruity resolutions. This thesis aims to contribute to what has been discussed in the literature, with a selection of additional language play strategies observed in memes and Caps in Turkish social media. In addition to these language play strategies, an analysis utilizing the Indexicality Framework (Eckert, 2008; Silverstein, 2003) was used to demonstrate the complex meaning-making processes of memes, as well as the identity construction via the use of text and imagery. The second part of this thesis involves a practice-oriented approach to the communities that make and consume memes on social media. For this part, the Community of Practice framework (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1999; Meyerhoff and Strycharz, 2013; Wenger, 1998) was utilized to demonstrate how certain affordances of social media channels allow for different practices that form within the meme communities. Furthermore, the member practices were shown to demonstrate the membership and identity construction within the meme communities.

ÖZET

Türkçe Mimler ve Mim Kullanıcıları: Yapılan Dil Oyunları Çerçevesinde Belirtisellik ve Kimlik

İnternet mimleri, sosyal medya kanallarında geniş çaplı tanınırlık kazandıklarından bu yana mim kullanıcıları için önemli bir ilgi odağı haline gelmiştir. Bu dijital öğeler görsele eşlik eden basit yazılardan karmaşıkça düzenlenmiş videolar ve sesli-görüntülü işaretler gibi farklı şekillerde ve formatlar karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Yakın zamanda mimler, görsel üzerindeki yazılı özelliklerinin Belirtisellik ve kimlik inşası, dil oyunları ve edimsel anlamda uyumsuzluk-çözüm gibi alanlardaki öneminin kanıtlandığı dilbilim çalışmalarında da (George, 2020; Vasquez and Aslan, 2021, Yus, 2020) karşımıza çıkmaya başlamıştır. Bu tez, Türkçe sosyal medyadaki mimlerde gözlemlenebilen bir takım ilave dil oyunları yöntemlerinin eklenmesiyle literatürde daha önce bahsedilenlere katkı sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu dil oyunları yöntemlerine ek olarak, mimlerin karmaşık anlam yaratma işlemleriyle birlikte görsel ve yazıyla yaptıkları kimlik inşalarını göstermek amacıyla Belirtisellik Kuramını (Eckert, 2008; Silverstein, 2003) kullanan bir çözümleme yapılmıştır. Bu tezin ikinci kısmı sosyal medyada mimleri yapan ve tüketen topluluklara karşı uygulama-odaklı bir yaklaşım içermektedir. Bu kısım için farklı sosyal medya kanallarının olanaklarının mim topluluklarında nasıl farklı uygulamalara erişim kazandırdığını açıklamak amacıyla Uygulama Topluluğu (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1999; Meyerhoff and Strycharz, 2013; Wenger, 1998) kuramına başvurulmuştur. üyelerin uygulamalarının mim toplulukları içinde üyelik ve kimlik inşasını yansıttığı gösterilmiştir.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis investigates how online *Meme* forms in social media platforms reflect and shape interaction within Turkish online communities. An internet meme is an audiovisual or textual token of interaction that is often used on social media platforms, inside groups, or posted on pages, for humor. Shifman (2014) explains the term “Meme” first emerged from Richard Dawkins’ *The Selfish Gene* (1989) where it was originally used to describe “small units of culture”, though the phenomena relevant to our discussion are stated to be a misuse of that term (Wiggins, 2019). The memes are conceptualized as propagating items such as jokes, rumors, videos, and websites (Shifman, 2014) or in some cases as artistic expressions (Wiggins, 2019); they are used as parodies or remixes, and they are intertextual in the sense that they can refer to each other in some ways. This text type involves heavy use of language play both in the visual formats of internet memes and in user comments or messaging. Depending on the type of meme or community, this language play can be as simple as puns, easily understood by the common user. An example could be the early forms of online memes in Turkish social media, called “Caps” or “Monte”, which allowed simplistic representations of ideas and text over images shared within their respective communities. Contemporary memes, on the other hand, can emerge as complex, heavily distorted, or repetitive forms, both visually and linguistically. Mainstream use of memes can be regarded as micro-trends as they usually have a lifespan (of from a few weeks to several months or even years) where they first emerge and slowly gain popularity, become highly popular, and even spread outside of their initial communities, and lastly die out due to a lack of iteration or carry some

of its elements to the next micro-trend. This process yields sociolinguistic significance for many reasons. (i) The language play happens at different levels, such as in phonology, morphology, or semantic/pragmatic interpretations. (ii) Those changes are understood and accepted by the community members, allowing members to reiterate or remix these forms into their own memes and interactional norms. (iii) Ownership of the memes and meme trends as well as gatekeeping among the communities are observed during meme sharing and consumption. (iv) The language and the semiotic tools used bear certain properties that index group identity. (v) Language play or deviations from the standard could be helpful indicators of generational language change. (vi) Co-occurrence of images and sounds with language and the text offers abundant grounds for multimodal analysis. In addition, Shifman (2014) agrees on the importance for researchers to follow Internet Memes for potential research, as they reflect the general social mindset of users.

Given these reasons, adopting suitable frameworks for the analysis of visual and linguistic aspects of memes, as well as the communities where memes are extensively shared is crucial to be explored by academics. Therefore, with this study, it is aimed to contribute to these areas, help close many of the gaps in the current literature, and provide a baseline for future research in similar domains. Ultimately, this thesis is set to explore the aforementioned domains and find answers to the following research questions.

- How are the textual elements organized and transformed in memes in Turkish social media?
- What kinds of language play do these memes have?
- In what ways do meme pages constitute a community of practice?
- How are the language and interaction patterns affected by memes and

memetic forms?

- How are the meaning and identity constructed through memes and interactions made around online memes?

Our focus will be on meme communities using Turkish monolingual and Turkish-English bilingual discourse in Turkish social media. The content of these selected communities involves a general stream of Turkish popular media, mostly consisting of political posts, with occasional small groups focusing on a specific topic (such as a fantasy-book universe or a Twitch[1] streamer). However, it should be noted that the communities that use meme interactions vary greatly in topic, user identity, and language, which is too large to cover in one go. The remaining area we will cover will involve memes as multimodal tokens that are text-over-image visuals (e.g. Fig. 1) and short videos which have textual elements. These types of tokens collected for this study will be analyzed with the help of various tools previously used in the literature (Vasquez & Aslan, 2021; Yus, 2021), with the main focus on Indexicality Framework (Eckert, 2008; Ochs, 1992; Silverstein, 2003).

The tools to be used in the meme analysis consists of eight attributes (or Tags/strategies) that were designed to capture linguistic strategies and language play in the textual contents of memes (see Chapter 4 and 5). Three of these attributes (voicing, register humor, wordplay) were borrowed from Vasquez and Aslan's (2021) study where they used them for the categorization of memes made in English on global social media channels. Though these eight attributes were designed to cover as many elements as possible in memes, we nevertheless require a deeper analysis of memes to fully grasp how they use these strategies to construct complex

[1] Twitch is a platform where people stream their content online. The platform has live streaming feature where the spectators can also engage in via commenting.

connections of meaning to reach the humor they intend. The discussion regarding the structures of memes and indexicality analysis will be in Chapter 5.

Internet memes allow for a set of interaction dynamics depending on the affordances (see Chapter 6.1) of the online social medium housing them. This interaction domain allows for communities to emerge around the core practice of meme-making/sharing and meme-browsing. In addition, we see various types of comments as well as some other interaction dynamics that co-exist with memes in those communities. One of the findings of this study is that some of the texts used in memes extend to the comments or can even be observed being used in speech in daily life. Given their linguistic significance and practice-oriented constitution, this thesis formulates an approach influenced by the previous studies of Community of Practice (CofP) in linguistics literature (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Meyerhoff & Strycharz 2013; Wenger, 1998). A discussion on various properties and applications of CofPs will be discussed in Chapter 3 to be later applied to meme communities in Chapter 6. With the help of supplementary data from a questionnaire, this thesis will analyze the practices that form around the act of meme-making and sharing that will turn into a working description for a CofP of memes. The thesis also presents a discussion on *Caps* culture as being a possible starting point of the meme culture in today's Turkish social media platforms. Caps culture, starting with a specific community "İnci sözlük" in 2009, involves a similar text-over-image approach for humor. In addition, it has distinct community dynamics which are cited from various authors in Chapter 3, which provides a good point for comparison.

Overall, We will first start with various views on the definition of a meme and then slowly build up our analysis after discussing the relevant frameworks from the literature. The frameworks that will be used in the analysis, in addition to those

which will be not used but are worth reviewing, are going to be reviewed in Chapter 3. The methodology chapter (Chapter 4) will go into the specifics of the data collection of memes and a summary of the content in the questionnaire. The memes collected for this study will have a statistical analysis and an indexical analysis in the relevant part (Chapter 5), and questionnaire answers as well as collected social media comments will be discussed in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT IS A MEME?

Memes as a concept have been a point of interest since 2011, with a count of 1,900,000 Google search hits in 2014 (Shifman, 2014). However, this interest did not actually rise for the term's original version. That makes defining the concept of meme come with its own difficulties and misconceptions. The concept first started with Richard Dawkins (1989) who coined the term in his book *The Selfish Gene* where he also elaborates on the etymology of the term. As Shifman (2014) narrates, the term evolved from the Greek word *Mimema* meaning "something which is imitated" and made rhyme with the word "gene" by Dawkins. In evolutionary terms, the word "meme" was created in order to address a new replicator, "a unit of imitation" as they call it (Wiggins, 2019). Similar to genes, a meme would replicate and propagate by jumping from one brain to another via imitation. A Dawkinsian meme was described as a cultural unit that infects peoples' minds for their own survival, common examples being slogans, learned skills, fashion et cetera. Considering this definition, one can observe the major misconception behind the average Internet usage of the term that refers to some images uploaded to various major social media networks by internet users. This misconception is also recognized by the original authors as, according to Wiggins (2019), Dawkins himself asserts that the concept "Internet Meme" is a hijacking of the original term. However, this misconception is not completely out of merit as Shifman (2014) emphasizes that the concept of memes seems to have been taken up by internet users due to some properties of a Dawkinsian meme, namely propagation from individuals to the society, copying and imitation, and competition and selection. These properties work

hand-in-hand to achieve a great audience by becoming viral pieces of visual and textual tokens. Contrary to what one may think, however, they are argued to be not in close similarity to other viral content. Wiggins (2019) distinguishes internet memes from viral media by suggesting that memes have agency involved in them in their production and dissemination. While the famous YouTube video "Gangnam Style" has its virality, a memetic video has a different structure of participation as it includes imitation and remixes (Shifman, 2011). Wiggins (2019) also expands the previous description of memes from jokes to a "new form of artistic expression" as he argues there are memes that communicate a critique rather than simple jokes. By discussing modern life through the invocation of ironical, satirical, dark, and offensive humor they resemble the Dadaists and surrealists of the early twentieth century. Ultimately, we reach a definition for the internet meme as "a remixed, iterated message that can be rapidly diffused by members of participatory digital culture for the purpose of satire, parody, critique, or other discursive activity" (Wiggins, 2019, p. 11). The "remix" aspect of the internet memes involves an idea of people, places, or events in addition to a modified portrayal of that content. They also depend on elements such as parody and intertextuality heavily. They are argued to even possess intermemetic-referentiality where they refer to other memes as well (Wiggins, 2019), which is another way to put across their intertextual properties.

If the term "meme" is problematic for the new concept it refers to, then how should one approach these forms? Wiggins (2019) suggests the term *Enthymeme* to better suit the concept of internet memes. The difference between these two concepts lies within internet memes' (also enthymemes') ability to form discursive arguments via visual and verbal interplay. Enthymemes were also stated to have key points of an argument but no conclusive argumentation, instead the hearers supply for the rest

of this argumentation (Huntington, 2017). Therefore, their effectiveness depends on the audience. Though it would be wise to separate the concept of "meme" from the funny internet images and categorize it within what it really fits into, shifting the whole phenomenon to this new term seems not feasible given their overwhelming recognition as memes by users. Therefore, I will still name them as memes throughout this thesis like the majority of internet users while showing regard to the term's origins by Dawkins, and also agreeing with Wiggins' view of them as "discursive arguments". Then, what does an average user actually refer to by saying "meme"? Common definitions of the term "meme" for the average Internet user can be acquired from online dictionaries. One definition is "an amusing or interesting item (such as a captioned picture or video) or genre of items that is spread widely online, especially through social media" by Merriam-Webster[2], which captures the common use adequately.

In view of this definition, Figure 1 depicts an example meme called "Anti-joke Chicken" that was popular around 2011 according to Knowyourmeme[3]. This visual shows a cropped image of a chicken head on a red-colored background in addition to the top and bottom texts in Impact font. The meme propagated with remixes made into its text domain by the users while the background and chicken head were kept as they were. Some memes have their own set of rules for creation (Wiggins, 2019), and these sets of rules can constitute "meme formats". This particular meme format in Figure 1 requires the top text to start as if it is the beginning of a joke, only to be finished with a bottom text including an unexpected and unfunny punch-line, as an anti-humor. The meme is, therefore, an embodiment

[2] Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Meme. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved November 14, 2021, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/meme.
[3] Anti-joke chicken (2018). Retrieved November 15, 2021, from Know Your Meme: https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/118379-anti-joke-chicken.

of a joke, with the chicken possibly standing as a representation of one of the earliest versions of this kind of humor, “Why did the chicken cross the road?” jokes. From what Yus (2021) argues, presented in later chapters, this particular meme could belong to the category of frame-based incongruity, where after the built-up situation and the end of the joke, the users need to go back and reinterpret the message. The image of the chicken then becomes an either “aiding” or “crucial” factor for this reinterpretation of the joke due to the intertextuality of the meme. When one sees enough remixes of this chicken template and the name “anti-joke chicken”, it becomes evident due to the intertextuality that the joke was actually an anti-joke and this fact alone was the actual humorous part. (Additional explanations and context on memes discussed in this thesis are given in Appendix A, and the original web sources can be found in Appendix B).

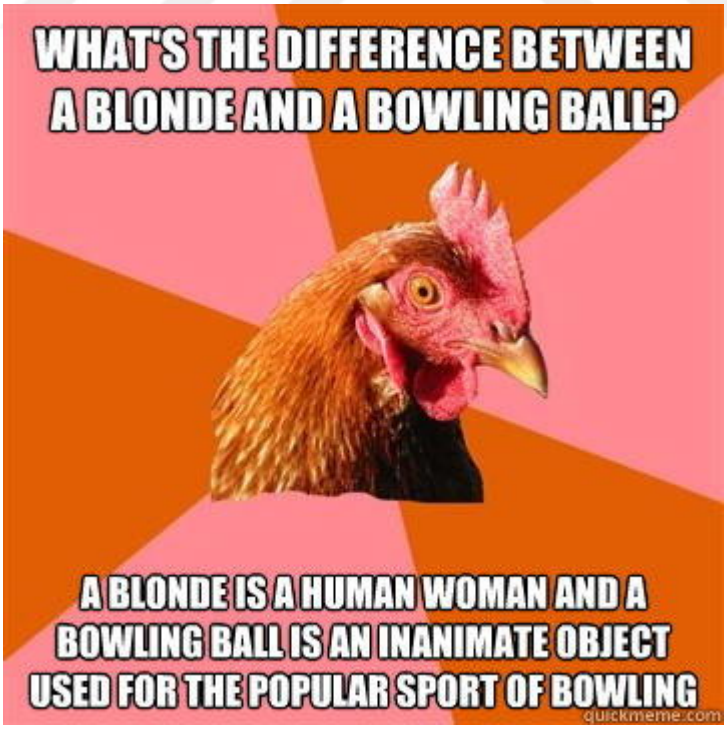


Fig. 1 Anti-joke chicken

To elaborate on Wiggins' (2019) mention of discursive arguments, a meme can take a form of argument backed by semiotic tools and imagery to convey an idea and/or the user's stance on something. Figure 2 shows a meme format featuring Drake, a Canadian hip hop artist, in two sections on an image where the top image denotes a preference while the bottom section denotes a dispreference. The preference/dispreference aspect is often used ironically or as criticism in a way that gives the message "this is not something good/ideal, but I do it nevertheless". According to Knowyourmeme[4], this format got popular around 2015. It is still relevant, and used on online social media platforms in 2022, making it a long-lasting meme unlike most. In addition to its longevity success, the meme can translate into other languages quite readily thanks to its visualization of easily interpretable gestures and convenient formatting. The figure features an interesting meme that is made by a presumably Turkish person for a Turkish audience, despite having mostly English words and sentence structures. The meme, therefore, hints at a bilingual identity, also indexing possible ideas, stances, and notions via its selection of code-switched words. The discussion of identity and indexing will be elaborated on in the upcoming chapters. The meme in Figure 2 starts in a relatively formal tone in the 2nd panel (top right) with only the word "Cumhuriyet" (Republic) code-mixed into the sentence while the 4th panel has two phrases "PR kasmak" (improving public relations) and "bayram" (holiday) code-mixed into the sentence. The tone also changes as "kasmak" is a slang word, originally meaning "flexing" or "tightening". In addition to that, "5 min" is a reduced form which also affects the tone.

[4] Drakeposting. (n.d.). Retrieved May 14, 2022, from Know Your Meme: https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/drakeposting



Fig. 2 Drake meme

Another aspect this thesis aims to show is that memes, though perhaps most commonly conceived as viral funny images or videos with captioned texts or added music, can and do exist as communicative tokens, plain texts, and even speech. One has to take a closer look into everyday interactions and user comments to pinpoint types of tokens of repetitive and/or remixed nature, which are crucial for memes. Take, for example, the Turkish phrase "Afiyet olsun" (bon appetit) which was distorted into the form "Afied" at some point and reiterated further by certain meme community members as shown in Figure 3, which is a screenshot taken from the comment section of an Instagram post. Contrary to what one would normally expect from the original phrase's denotation, this form is often used ironically under posts

that depict inconvenient or disgusting meal preparation videos or food pictures. In this case, the comments of “Afied” were made under a post showing huge amounts of chocolate cereal prepared with milk inside a steel food storage container, which is the inconvenient preparation in the context. The Instagram user/page sharing this visual is known for similar posts and is followed by more than 100 thousand people just for this type of content. The users, therefore, know what to expect and are ready to reiterate the form “Afied” under these posts. Furthermore, other forms that are distorted or deviated from the standard Turkish also exist alongside it and are used the same way, such as “Yenur” for “Yenir” (It is edible/I would eat that) and “Yenur Omega X” where “X” stands for a number of user’s choice, to parody an omega vitamin that would presumably be gained by the consumption of the dish in question.

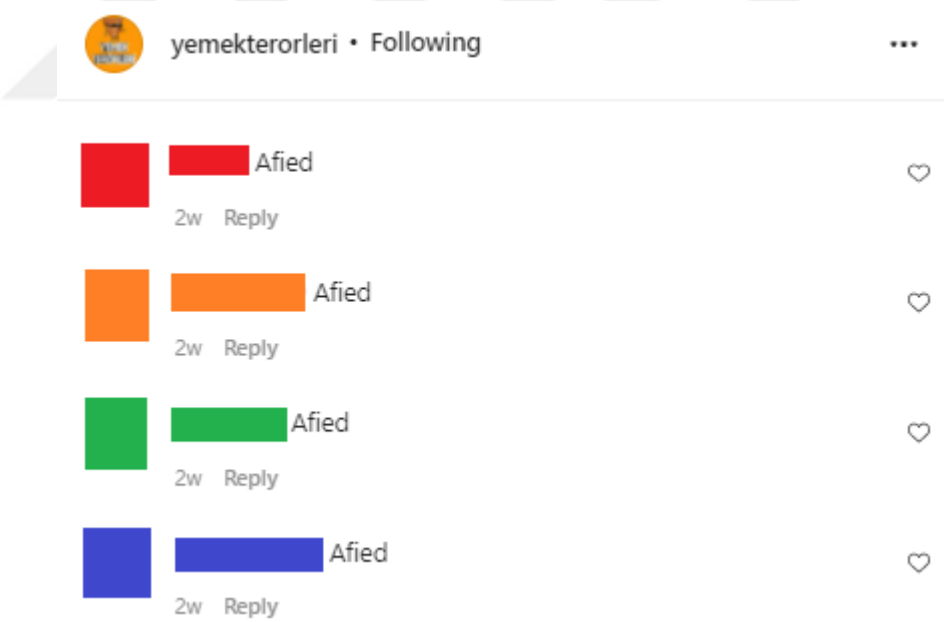


Fig. 3 Distorted form “Afied” in comments

Observing meme-like content in user comments can be a strong predictor of their possibility to occur in the domain of interaction as verbal phrases, in direct

messaging, or even in speech. Here, I would like to argue that jokes or phrases can behave very similar to online memes in the sense that they are decontextualized, remixed, and reiterated for the users' purposes. For example, A famous Turkish comedian Cem Yılmaz made a joke in one of his performances[5] where he made fun of Turkish-style food ordering in a restaurant for which he presented an English-Turkish parody phrase "little little into the middle". The phrase has gained popularity, and it can be observed being used by Turkish people ever since. It has been stripped of its original context for its use where users are not actually re-telling the joke but applying it to another context that has come up during a conversation. The joke also comes with its own gesture, making a shape of a plate with both hands reaching onto the front, bridging an online/virtual element to the physical domain.

Memes having a part of themselves realized in the physical world is not uncommon. The meme "Kilroy was here" as explained by Shifman (2014) is a prime example of a non-online meme (named "traditional memes") that is limited only to the few instances people would see as graffiti on the streets. In contrast, some performative memes such as "Planking" or "241543903/Heads in Freezers" have sizable amounts on the internet just one click away. While the acts regarding these memes are performed in real life, their images are spread online which in turn causes more recognition and thus more of the performance of the meme itself.

Thanks to the Internet, it is quite easy for users to follow and create new trends and memes in real-time. *Hypermemetic* is a term Shifman (2014) uses to describe how swiftly and widely the memes spread, how any major event is likely to cause a surge of memes, and how memes are not just sporadic entities on the internet

[5] Dündar, M. (Director). (2013). CM101MMXI Fundamentals [Stand-up Performance]. Tiglon

but rather massive groups of text and images. He also links the term hypermemetic to an aspect of internet memes that differs from traditional memes, which is users having knowledge of a selection of memes that are readily available one click away. Traditional memes like “Kilroy was here”, therefore, lack this user aspect. According to her, hypermemetic can also refer to the “monstrously sized” groups of texts and images of such memes. Shifman’s use of this term can be closely linked to the intertextuality of memes in the sense that meme users have this repertoire of memes they have seen or collected which is easily accessible to them. This can be argued to strengthen tie intertextual ties between the memes as the users’ knowledge of other memes would most certainly affect the future iterations.

While we discussed definitions, examples and the history of mostly the “global” memes above, the main dataset of this thesis consists of memes made in Turkish social media accounts and pages. To see how this phenomenon, or at least a counterpart of it, developed on the Turkish side, I will present a brief history and literature in the next chapter.

2.1 A brief history of Turkish memes

When we say history, it is important to define a starting point and then slowly build up until the present for a clear view of the situation. Though we focus on online memes and therefore should start somewhere when the internet became more accessible to the Turkish audience, the culture of sharing imagery with texts written on them can date back to the postcard era when it was common to congratulate your loved ones’ holidays or life accomplishments via physical cards you send their address such as in Fig. 4 (left). When compared to an average image post of the same message commonly seen on social media platforms such as Facebook (Fig. 2 (right)),

we can see that there is little to no difference in terms of multimodality apart from one existing only digitally. Even farther than the recent postcard era, Aktaş (2016) argues that memes are in fact not a new method of communication, but they show similarity to posters dating back as far as the WW1 campaigns in the USA where a popular figure “Uncle Sam” was used. It could be a far-fetch to argue this kind of content to be the direct predecessor of Turkish internet memes but in essence, they share quite a bit when we later consider a meme (Fig. 22 in chapter 5.3.1) involving a “register humor” (see Chapter 5.1.8) of this genre.



Fig. 4 Typical holiday celebration cards (left) and digital images (right)

As access to the internet has become more available for the average consumer, it was not too late until people gathered around social media platforms and formed their own communities. This brought about different stylizations in communication, one of which being the one formed around İnci Sözlük.

A variant of memes, first emerged with the founding of İnci Sözlük in 2009 is called “İnci Caps” (or “Caps” for short) where its distinct and widely-used format shows itself as a red line with white text positioned at the bottom of a picture of the

user's choice, though other formats were also possible. According to Çaktı (2014) Caps format has been in use since 2009 where it first started with the incorporation of various images of Fatih Terim, a well-known football team manager, then continued with pictures of owls, political figures, Sabri Sarıoğlu (a national football player) in the following years. It is reported by Çaktı that Caps pages on Facebook were followed by more than 12 million people and Caps had retweets around 87 thousand times on Twitter at that time.



Fig. 5 A typical Caps

Caps, as in the form of Facebook or Twitter posts, often have an image with a context with the text pointing out a message with the purpose of humor while examples of Caps that can be used as reactive messages to someone, with no clear context within the image itself, are also present. This secondary type of Caps is easily available to use as comments to tweets or under posts but they do not have

much of a function as a stand-alone post. Rather, they serve the function of a communicative token in a sequence such as the Caps in Figure 6 for ending a conversation that reads as “Al şu parayı, konuyu kapat!” (Take this money, and drop the subject) or the one in Figure 7 to insult somebody in the discourse “ne çeşit bir geri zekalısınız anlamadım ki” (I did not (cannot) understand what kind of a retard you are).



Fig. 6 Ending a Conversation via a Caps



Fig. 7 Insulting Caps

Yılmaz (2017) refers to Caps as the "Turkish versions of memes", and argues that they are a synthesis of the east and west, where the users can praise or condemn either side depending on their own world views. He describes "caps'" as funny, creative, progressive, and thought-provoking digital cultural objects that reinterpret existing texts by moving them out of their original context. The leading two sources of Turkish memes "İncicaps" and "Bobiler" have their own community dynamics and terminologies for their contents. According to Yılmaz, İncicaps can be argued to have been derived from the words "caption" and "capture", the first indicating the existence of a message or joke while the latter indicates a captured moment to be processed and remixed later. On the Bobiler side, it is stated on their website[6] that they are creating somewhat a parallel universe where they design everything that, however, does not exist yet. It is also humorously remarked that they will tape this

[6] *Genel şeyler*. bobiler.org. (n.d.). Retrieved November 29, 2021, from https://www.bobiler.org/yardim.

universe together once they designed everything. This description of “design” also reflects on how they name their posts, that is “monte” (reassembly), and on the general format of their creations which involve mostly photoshopped images and usually no textual content. Speaking of website mottos, Güldüm.net (another site where funny images are posted) also has a description of self, including statements such as:

“We have taken indexing all the Caps and memes in the world as a duty [… …] No more following thousands of funny accounts. Güldüm.net collects all within its body.”

These motivations will become relevant during the discussion of community practices later in this thesis.

It is stated in a book written by Kullar and İnci (2015) that though they did not intend to copy the popular foreign sources of memes, the platform they created (İncicaps) has certainly been influenced by them. Yılmaz (2017) agrees on foreign influence as meme sources such as 4chan and Reddit were established before İncicaps and were available to the public internet users, strengthening the argument of influence. According to Yılmaz, “meme” is a concept with no correspondence in Turkey in terms of mental and perceptual aspects. Therefore, he finds it useful to study “Caps” and “Monte” separately from the term “meme” as it would help eliminate confusion in academic studies. This claim seems to be losing its validity as the term “meme” as a word can be observed in many groups and pages this study has focused on, and the term has even been subject to wordplay like “göğüs” (breast) as the synonym of the Turkish word “meme”, and double inflected plural form “memesler”. While there are still people referring to these funny images as “Caps”, it is also quite common to observe people using the term “meme” instead. Therefore, it

can be argued that the term and the concept are gaining recognition among the Turkish audience. Aktaş (2016) agrees with their similarity and bridges “caps” and the foreign concept of “memes”, in that they share the same consciousness behind their production and they both feed on popular culture.

With the incorporation and translation of foreign-based internet memes, images having texts with the Impact font emerged as a new format for Turkish memes, alongside whichever distinct formats those memes used. Consequently, there has been a noticeable drop in the use of red-line and white text format, even on the Facebook pages with the word “Caps” in their names. The posts shared on those pages with the intention of humor nowadays consist of Twitter screenshots or context images edited with a white area and black text above, which could be argued to be the new Caps format. The translated and incorporated foreign memes appear both in Turkish and English, indicating a bilingual audience in such groups and pages. While the Drake meme we discussed previously uses code-mixing on a foreign meme format, the meme in Figure 8 uses a foreign format but it has texts fully in Turkish. In the meme, the two men on the sides labeled “Gerildiğim için çalışamamak” (Not being able to study due to stressing out) and “Çalışamadığım için gerilmek” (Stressing out because I cannot study) are doing a laughing motion while keeping the other man in between labeled “ben” (me). The meme depicts a state of discontent and helplessness for the person in between while the two labeled states are getting along just fine.



Fig. 8 Foreign meme format constructed in Turkish

The introduction of foreign internet memes to the Turkish audience seems to also cause the emergence of shitposting groups and pages on Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, and Instagram. Shitposts, greatly resembling internet memes, do not necessarily have a similar degree of virality in comparison to posts that can be regarded as internet memes. However, the remixing process is almost identical and shitposts have the potential to become memes or meme formats provided that they achieve adequate virality. Unlike memes, as shitposts do not comply with an already established format or context, their variation can be radical within their communities in terms of format, topic, language use, intended message, or purpose.

After this brief discussion of the concept of memes and the Turkish meme history, we will continue in the next chapter with the necessary tools to analyze both the memes themselves and the apparent communities behind the act of sharing and creating memes.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As this thesis aims to shed light on the memes themselves and the community behind them, it would be beneficial to separate the domain of memes into two parts, with a different framework approach for each. In this thesis, the frameworks chosen to analyze this domain are Indexicality for the memes themselves, and Community of Practice (CofP) for the groups and communities that use memes. In addition to these two main tools, studies from various sources will be taken into account and utilized in the analysis.

3.1 Meme analysis

The discussion of memes has already been going on in the domain of communication studies. However, in the field of Linguistics, such studies are still rare. Approaching the analysis of memes with an indexicality framework, this thesis will contribute to Linguistics literature on memes, building upon studies such as George's (2020) work on memes used by Serbian youth. In addition to indexicality, various studies such as Vasquez and Aslan (2021) who categorizes memes under linguistic strategies (wordplay, voicing, and register humor), and Yus (2021) who approaches memes in the domain of pragmatics as humor and incongruity resolution will be integrated into the analysis as need be. There are also studies on "Caps" such as from Kahya (2018) worth mentioning as they offer initial perspectives and analysis on the domain of Caps. The research available on the nature of the Caps is quite limited, presumably due to their lack of global recognition and smaller audience in comparison to memes.

3.1.1 Indexicality

The Indexicality framework makes use of semiotics to explain phenomena from various domains. Indexes function via assigning meaning, or in Eckert's (2019) words, they indicate rather than refer. They evoke something in the physical, temporal, or social world. Indexicality Framework has also been used by other authors studying language variation and sociolinguistic phenomena such as Ochs (1992), and Silverstein (2003). Among those authors, George (2020) particularly used this framework to explain the choice of language and script in memes from Serbian youth on social media.

To understand how indexicality allows us to make assumptions of the real world and how it is utilized in sociolinguistic research, we can go over key studies and observe other authors' approaches. "An index is a type of sign, in which the signified is inherently or directly connected to its signifier" (Kiesling, 2013, p. 457), an example being thunder and clouds' association with the rain, making a meaningful connection. The concept rests on C. S. Peirce's (1935) semiotic system where the indexical meaning is distinguished from icons and symbols. Symbols do not have a connection between the signified and the signifier, and icons have signifiers that resemble the signified. There is a hierarchy of mediation formed by the trichotomy of symbol, index, and icon (Peirce, 1935; Urban, 2006). Following a continuum, symbols are based purely on knowledge, being the expression of external or public information while icons are based on unmediated experience, expression of the inner self, or affective states. Indexes lie somewhere in between these two ends.

Non-linguistic objects and actions can index meaning and identity as Kiesling (2013) states that superficial appearances such as habits or dressing in a particular way can construct an identity for a group of people and Eckert (2000) demonstrates

how stylistic features such as the width of one's jean cuffs and "cruising" activities can help construct social categories in Belten High, namely "jocks" and "burnouts". Linguistic variants are no exceptions to that process and were found to correlate with those social categories in Eckert's study. According to Ochs (1992), there are assumptions that the language varies across social contexts, and this variation is part of the meaning indexed by linguistic structures. Those indexed meanings are referred to as social meanings. So hypothetically, phonological variants of a word can have different social meanings though having the same reference. Group members, if they are competent enough, can interpret these meanings easily.

One important distinction made about indexicality is that they can be direct or indirect (Ochs, 1992). Direct indexicality holds a relationship between the language and the stance, act, or activity, an example being the English imperatives which directly index a power relationship. Indirect indexicality of imperatives can index a category of "men" because it indexes power and power indexes masculinity (Kiesling, 2013). As specified by Silverstein (1976) indexes can be referential or non-referential, such as in the context of gender the pronouns "he" and "she" and the titles "Sir" and "Madam" have reference to genders (Ochs, 1992). According to Ochs, referential indexes are far fewer in count in comparison to non-referential ones.

Another property of indexes is that they can be creative, or presupposing (Silverstein, 1976). The creative function is done via context changing while the presupposing function is done via responding to the current context. Blom and Gumperz (1972) illustrate the context-changing aspect of indexes with a dialect code-switching behavior of a group of people in Norway, where the official business is conducted in the official language (Bokmål) of the government while for a casual

and intimate speech people use the local dialect (Ranamål). It was stated that this switch between the dialects is a creative index, changing the context from formal to informal. There is some disagreement as to the separate existence of the presupposing indexes as Kiesling (2013) explains. Researchers, such as Silverstein (2003), suggest that indexes have both a creative and presupposing aspect simultaneously. However, to put this in an example, the presupposing aspect is studied in Sidnell (2003), where a man designs his talk such that he tries to create and maintain a "male space", and preserve gender exclusivity in the presence of women in a rum shop.

While there is still more remains to be explored in terms of the properties of indexes, two important additions to the framework of indexicality will be the most relevant to this study. These are the order of indexicality by Silverstein (2003) and indexical field by Eckert (2008). Although they might sound different, these two concepts are quite similar and they work hand-in-hand in the meaning-making process.

Order of indexicality (Silverstein, 2003) captures the construal and reconstrual of signs within an ideological field. Silverstein emphasizes that indexical order is "central to analyzing how semiotic agents access macro-sociological plane categories and concepts as values in the indexable realm of the micro-contextual". An indexical order consists of ordinal degrees of 1^{st}, 2^{nd}, 3^{rd}… n^{th}, $n+1^{st}$, etc. He explains that any n^{th} order comes with its presuppositions of schemas that we can use to model the "appropriateness" of its usage in that context. An $n+1^{st}$ order indexicality is also already immanent as a competing structure to the n^{th} order indexicality. This competition in turn, as Silverstein states, can have the $n+1^{th}$ order indexicality as the supplant one or at least have it blended with the n^{th} order if its

ideological force of uniformity, intensity, and sociological spread is sufficient (referred to as ideological "oomph"). This micro-realtime indexicality must then ultimately constitute a major vectorial force in linguistic change. For example, a speaker having a southern accent indicates the southern roots of the speaker (as the first order of indexicality). The construers can infer other qualities stereotypically associated with having a southern accent such as being rural or uneducated (Campbell-Kibler, 2007) which becomes the higher level of indexicality. This new order of indexicality can constitute an "Indexical Field" (Eckert, 2008) alongside other accumulated associations. With the concept of *indexical fields* (Eckert, 2008), indexes were described to have multiple potential levels of meaning that are connected through cultural ideologies. Eckert defines it as "a constellation of meanings that are ideologically linked" (2008, p. 464). In her study, Eckert (2008) demonstrates two variables of English (ing), velar [ŋ] and coronal [n], having separate sets of meanings, any of which can be activated more intensely or less, depending on the speaker, the listener, the setting, etc. The coronal variable indexes an easygoing, relaxed, and unpretentious stance, while the velar variable can index being educated which can, in turn, be associated with "unmasculine", strengthening the masculinity index of the coronal variable. All in all, linguistic variables help create social meanings, and how they index meanings depends on the speakers' pre-existing ideas on the identity they are already bringing to the table.

While the discussion on indexicality so far was on rather phonological variants, Labov (1993) argues that morphosyntactic forms can also show alternation to indicate different social meanings. For example, "be like" is a quotative tool that emerged to allow speakers to quote internal dialogues or gestures (Singler 2001, Taglimonte & D'arcy 2004). It is a form recognized as indexing youth, and the

positive and negative qualities associated with youth (Beltrama & Staum Casasanto, 2017). As they gain social-indexical meaning, they lose some or all potential pragmatic specificity. Related to our discussion, “be like” though used as an uninflected form unlike the quotative studied in Singler (2001), is extensively used in memes to voice entities. It has presumably been translated into “olur gibi” for use in Turkish memes, maintaining a similar distorted form of language play.

As we review the literature on indexicality, we come closer to this thesis’ subject matter with George’s (2020) study where she examines the identity aspects of Serbian youth reflected by memes on Facebook, drawing from a Simultaneity framework. She suggests four types of simultaneity to be essential in order to make sense of intricate semiotics of online identity: features (Woolard, 1998), indexical operations, effects, and scale (Blommaert, 2015). Features, more specifically referred to as bivalency, correspond to the use of language that would require bilingual or biscriptical competence, exemplified with a meme of English idiom being written in Cyrillic and having semantic features of Serbian. By doing so, the users engage in a wordplay where we observe “invocation of two voices, role sets, relationships, or identities” as she claims. Similarly, via indirect ties of meaning and context, indexical operations also play a crucial role in constructing stances and therefore, identity. It was argued that the use of Cyrillic indexes tradition, national and religious identity while English indexes a global popular culture. A juxtaposition of these two indexes was used for comedic effect in English-Serbian memes presented in her study. While Turkish memes make little to no use of biscriptal competence, it is possible to see a striking similarity in identity construction via bilingual and code-mixed memes. The use of bilingual elements, which will be later defined under the attribute “foreign effect” (see Chapter 5), index a similar identity construction in

groups where memes like Figure 2 are shared. The fact that the words indexing cultural values are written in Turkish hints at this clash of local and global popular culture.

The simultaneity effect becomes relevant as the speaker's intention, indexes, and semiotic signs are required to be received by the hearers. George (2020) argues that some layers might get lost at different social levels, and this challenges users' ability to control their posts' indexical force. This, in turn, creates different effects for possible audiences involved.

As the last type of simultaneity, she mentions scalar simultaneity which, according to her, "underlies and enables the other three". The success of indexing a particular stance or meaning can vary across different audiences, summarized as "the scope of communicability" by Blommaert (2015). Scales refer to "various nested or overlapping levels at which meaning is negotiated simultaneously" and they can be re-ordered regardless of any restrictive linguistic or political categories around the speaker (George, 2020). The importance of the sociolinguistic scale for our purposes becomes clear when we understand that members of a particular meme group would adjust their scope of communicability in accordance with group identity, linguistic background, and shared repertoire (Wegner, 1998) while sharing or making memes. For example, one should not expect strictly monolingual members of either Turkish or English in a group where the meme Fig. 2 is created and shared. The scale is adjusted just right for members who speak both above a certain proficiency level. Overall, George's (2020) contribution with notions of simultaneity and indexicality creates a valuable reference point for this thesis.

After this discussion, it is important to specify what kind of an approach this thesis adopts for indexicality. Though some of the studies mentioned above deal with

linguistic variants used through the indexicality framework, it is more appropriate to call this thesis a study regarding a stylistic variant that is being used around the act of sharing and consuming memes. There are certain orthographic variants this study includes (see Chapters 4 and 5) that could be subjects to a linguistic variant study, as well as morphological variants that are already being subject of studies such as Kartal (2021) which focuses on two variants “-mIşImdIr” and “-Iyorumdur”. However, as they are still extremely volatile and ever-changing, I see it more appropriate to study the very process that leads to the creation of these countless variants, as further research. Therefore, we will be considering all the variants in the data as belonging to a single style that deviates from conventional (standard, if you will) patterns of interaction.

3.1.2 Non-indexical analyses from the literature

Memes and Caps have also been a subject for authors using different approaches and analyses. Notable examples include but are not limited to an approach of pragmatics and humor by Yus (2021), a semiotic approach on Caps from Kahya (2018), and a grammatical approach with a judgement test focusing on a specific memetic form by Kartal (2021).

As one of the primary functions of the early memes was humor, it was not uncommon to see memes that would be formed as jokes. In addition to the example of anti-joke we previously mentioned in Figure 1, different formats existed for different types of jokes to tell. Figure 9. shows a meme featuring “Bad Joke Eel” format where telling bad jokes using wordplay was a common strategy.

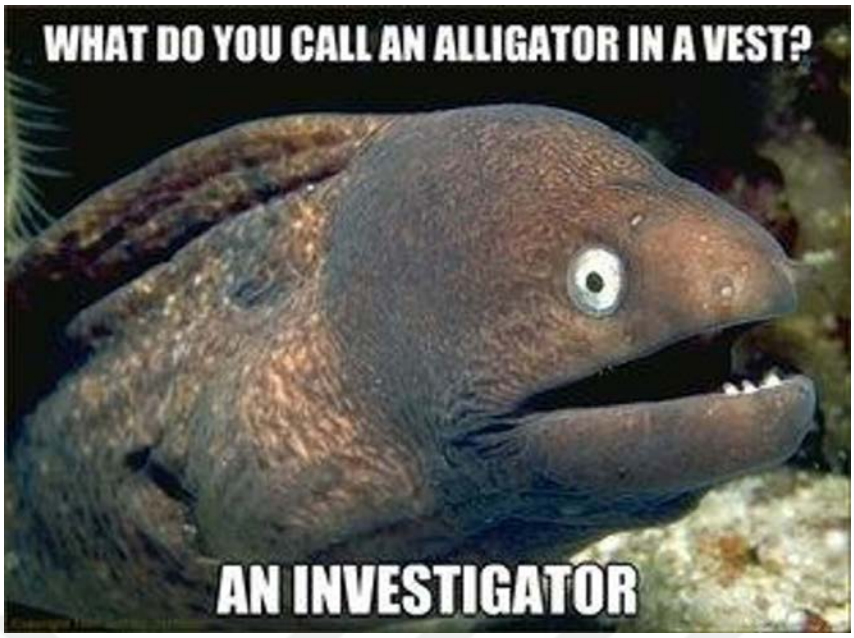


Fig. 9 Bad joke eel

The contemporary memes appear quite different than the old memes in Figures 1 and 9 but they can still be analyzed in terms of pragmatics, as Yus (2021) demonstrates in his study.

Yus (2021) examines the humor part of memes, drawing from verbal jokes and incongruity resolutions. He categorizes incongruities under two names which are discourse-based and frame-based incongruities. According to Yus (2016), discourse-based incongruity targets the hearers' inferential strategies of the coded text, he calls "the joke", which is done by reference assignment, disambiguation, concept adjustment, etc. Frame-based incongruities, on the other hand, require hearers to shift their make-sense frame and re-interpret the joke. He defines three types of resolution strategies for such incongruities: discourse-based, frame-based, and implication-based resolution. In addition to the first two resolutions, already explained by the concepts of incongruities, implication-based resolution applies to cases where "the hearer has to find the resolution outside the text of the joke through the derivation of

implicated premises and implicated conclusions". He finalizes this taxonomy with the locational properties of the incongruity which is either the "setup" part or the "punchline". Applying it to the memes, he introduces another incongruity type which he calls "discourse-image incongruity" that is triggered by an inferential clash between the text and the (meme) image. Yus elaborates on the role of the image on memes, dividing it into three categories of essential role, aiding role, and no role. He found that the majority (~38%) of his data of memes were under the category of discourse-image-based incongruities where the image's role was essential, followed by frame-based (~31%) and discourse-based (~21%) incongruities respectively. In frame-based and discourse-based incongruities, the role of the image was either aiding or essential by a total of 36%. Overall Yus' work of analyzing memes with a framework based on jokes proves beneficial for certain points. One is that, though not necessarily inseparable from their visual elements, the majority of the memes consist of visual and contextual cues to aid interpretation alongside the textual and linguistic components. Therefore, deciphering the visual elements is crucial for a thorough linguistic analysis. Another point could be that as memes can behave just like verbal jokes, the line dividing the memes' visual and artistic aspects from their linguistic and communicative purposes diminishes.

A recent study from Kahya (2018) uses a similar approach targeting the humor part in "Caps" but applies a different framework. He surveys "Caps" with the theme of sports and describes them in three categories in meaning using Guiraud's *Semiology* (1975), namely first ("düz") meaning, secondary meaning, and humorous meaning. His data demonstrates how people using "caps" show their feelings and ideas, and in many instances, their stance on religious and societal ideologies as well as sports-related issues. These categorical meanings arguably fall short in

comparison to an analysis of indexicality of multiple levels and indexical fields. Therefore, it is in my best interest to keep Kahya's (2018) approach here for those who would prefer an alternative method on *Caps* analysis, but to stick to the framework of indexicality.

A recent phenomenon was examined by Kartal's (2021) study, where recently emerged memetic forms with verbs having "-Iyorumdur" and "-mIşImdIr" suffixes were observed outside their standard use. These forms are actually common in non-meme use accompanying adverbs such as "belki" (maybe) which emphasizes the evidential use. An example of this use in memes can be found later in the thesis in Figure 21. What is unusual about this form in such a context as Kartal (2021) narrates, is that they do not have the adverbials, have authority, or claim of significance, and do not express summary and diagnosticity all of which were described otherwise in the literature (Csato, 2000; Johanson, 2016; Göksel & Kerslake, 2005). In her study, Kartal (2021) examines this form's morphological properties and shows grammaticality judgments gathered from different groups of different ages and education. She found that age and formal education negatively correlate with the acceptability of these particular forms while the participants with higher L2 levels had a higher acceptability rate. Also in her qualitative analysis, she shows the speakers' insight on the forms. There were three major groups identified which (i) showed disapproval, (ii) stated that the forms emerge as an answer to a question, and (iii) stated the form related to the social media environment. Apart from the major categories, other responses were identified under the categories of (a) relating to a past event, (b) image description, (c) narrative, (d) declaration, and (e) humor. For our purposes, interesting results and user interpretations lie within the categories of disapproval, image description, narrative, and humor. The participants

who showed disapproval in Kartal's study tried to correct the given forms or stated that they were "faulty", attributing authority to themselves even going so far as to state that this was "The speech of someone who has clearly low IQ". Image description and narrative interpretations of the participants can be argued to have resulted from the memetic aspect of the form. Their co-occurrence with images depicting events or states could have a role in that manner. The forms show parallelism with the way foreign memes narrate events, exemplified in Kartal (2021) as "When X / X When" memes (e.g. Figure 10), which then can explain the narrative interpretation. Also, trying to make the event depicted in the memes relatable and funny serves the humor interpretation of the form. The "When X" meme given in Figure 10 captioned as "when yo friend ain't give you no cover y'all went to sleep" is an example of a global meme using that format. It depicts a person being too shy to ask for a blanket during a sleepover, and their endeavor of finding and using whatever possible object as a cover to fall asleep.



Fig. 10 A “when x / x when” meme

3.1.3 Intertextuality

Another suitable tool to analyze memes is intertextuality. Up until now, it has been mentioned multiple times making sense of the given examples, and while reviewing some authors (Shifman, 2014; Wiggins, 2019) own versions of intertextuality. This term is used to explain the relationship between each text that has ever been created, in that we cannot imagine a piece of text that has not been affected by its predecessors. According to Wiggins (2019), intertextuality is a notion that was introduced by Kristeva (1980), bridging Saussurean semiotics with Bakhtin’s *Dialogism*. It means that a text “does not exist as an independent or closed unit system” (Wiggins, 2019). Likewise, an internet meme cannot exist without referring

to something other than the subject matter it contains (Wiggins, 2019). The necessity to use intertextuality for memes stems from the shortcomings of previous works on memes. Wiggins (2019), for example, states that Shifman's (2013) tripartite meme video typology of content, form, and stance falls short for image memes in terms of stance. Therefore, he suggests semiotics and intertextuality to be considered for replacing stance, grounding his reason on the lack of human speech in such memes. Instead of human speech, semiotics within stance works with the construction of visual cues to convey a specific meaning, together with metaphors, juxtaposition, metonymy, synecdoche, etc.

Another study which is relevant in terms of intertextuality is from Hill (2005) who argues that for Mock Spanish, the experience of intertextuality is part of the users' knowledge and competence. This experience is linked to a series of intertextuality where the speakers can draw presuppositions and conventional implicatures as well as get constricted by such usages. Its similarity to this study lies within the exposure aspect of these textual forms, which again can be considered as intertextual series. As memes go viral, they produce an ample amount of remixes of similar texts from which the users constitute an understanding of the form and its limits. For a meme like in Figure 2, the users who have already seen countless iterations would presuppose a comparison of two things upon encountering the meme. As it is not uncommon to use the meme with sarcastic remarks, the users would also get the implicatures outside of the literal text if the meme is indeed sarcastic.

3.2 Individuals as meme-makers and communities sharing memes

At first glance, memes seem to be standalone entities in formats of images, videos, or texts. However, they sustain their life force from the communities behind them, who design and create those entities, share them on various networks, and consume them. Memes cause a considerable amount of interaction in varying degrees and forms on different social media platforms. They gather people for a common theme of interest such as a video game, movie, or music band, a YouTuber or a Twitch streamer, a political view or an institute, or even for the sole sake of meme-ing. Even if being founded on a common theme, these communities are not necessarily restricted to these themes i.e the communities can shift topics or the members can negotiate group dynamics and ideals. A Facebook meme and shitposting group with the music band "Gojira" in their name can have members posting about a similar band "Mastodon" even if the latter has its own separate meme group. Those kinds of posts would be still emerging as long as the members find the content relevant or acceptable. Similarly, a Subreddit founded with the theme of YouTuber/Twitch streamer "Kaanflix" can have content about politics, economics, funny random stuff, or even other YouTubers.

There have been multiple instances in the literature that attempt to capture these communities and their culture under various frameworks. One prime example is that to describe a community that is formed around meme-making, Wiggins (2019) adopts Jenkins' (2009) "participatory culture" for his variation of "digital culture". According to his terms, participatory culture allows for artistic expression as it forms a supportive environment for the participants' own creations as well as provides mentorship from the most experienced to the novices. However, Wiggins (2019) states that Jenkins' (2009) term should be transposed into a broad sense where the

relationship to discourse is elevated and the sharability of digital items is put out of emphasis. Thus, Wiggins further adds that *digital culture* is a space that links the offline and online interactions where discourses emerge as a result of human interaction. To exist, this space requires human agents for the continued recursive formation and reification of itself.

On the Turkish side of the meme communities, İnci Sözlük, which is the community behind the early Turkish memes "Caps", was examined for its communal aspects by Türk and Tugen (2014). They address İnci Sözlük as a post-modern tribe mentioning Maffesoli's (1996) description of such phenomena, and Tönnies' (2001) distinction of "Gemeinschaft" (*Tr.* Cemaat) and "Gesellschaft" (*Tr.* Cemiyet). The first notion "Gemeinschaft" draws a picture of a community where the individuals have mutual beliefs, geographical placement, values, and natural relationships. The latter "Gesellschaft" describes a more heterogeneous type of community where the connections are formed by trade and industrial endeavors, the communication is temporary, formal and professional, and individualistic tendencies are dominant. Türk and Tugen argue that the type of community İnci Sözlük has is the digitalized version of "Gesellschaft". Türk and Tugen define the following properties of İnci Sözlük's community:

(a) Residence, which was stated to be incisozluk.com.tr, and various social media accounts carrying the name "İnci Sözlük". (b) Community Leader and Social Control, that is the founder of İnci Sözlük (Serkan İnci) with the rules established within İnci Sözlük. (c) Language, which was described to be involving much profanity and various jargon on how they address each other or name their activities. (d) Totems and Taboos, which include the animal "owl" and the mask from the movie "V for Vendetta" as the totems or icons. The taboos were stated to be

nationalistic values, being Turkish, the Turkish flag, and Atatürk. The existence of these strengthens the feeling of solidarity and violation of any of these taboos is condemned. (e) Culture was exemplified by the ranks of entry posters which increase with the number of entries. There are also certain understandings of entry posting such as the second entry of each post being valued and expected to be honored. (f) Sense of Belonging and Togetherness, which, according to the authors, is maintained via the use of childhood memories, conscience, and common sociocultural features. (g) Identity and Alienation, which works via the members' discrimination of other micro or macro communities. Macro communities can be other nations, enhancing the Turkish nationality among the members while micro-communities can be other similar groups and dictionary sites such as "Ekşi Sözlük" or "Uludağ Sözlük". (h) The Way of Organizing, according to the authors, ranges from the jargon, topics, and interests resulting from the community's patriarchal views to the activities they carry out such as "visiting" websites to do "trolling" or manipulate online questionnaires.

Kahya (2018) notes on the Caps communities by arguing that people gathered around the act of sharing "Caps" form closeness via laughing together at even the most nonsensical things. "Caps" also create an environment for the participants to freely express their ideas via repeated content, which would also cause a change in the established social perception due to the repetition. He states that "caps" also aid the formation of "echo chambers" where the sharing of the same content leads to individuals seeing themselves as righteous on the discussed topics and may even show a tendency to become "militant".

These communities' core activity, that is gathering around memes and participating in various ways, creates the opportunity to treat them as a "Community of Practice" which has been used by many scholars of sociolinguistics. Meyerhoff

and Strycharz (2013) describe a Community of Practice (CofP) as an analytical tool for linguistic variation. It is differentiated from a “speech community” in that CofPs are smaller and are defined in terms of the subjective experiences of its members, and the boundaries between the communities. These boundaries are constructed by the contribution of a range of activities the members participate in. Considering the varying themes and member count of groups, different allowances of social media platforms, and user roles, this description seems promising for meme communities to find their place within the domain of Communities of Practice.

For a community to be called a CofP, three criteria that must be met were described by Wenger (1998). These are (i) mutual engagement, (ii) jointly negotiated enterprise, and (iii) shared repertoire. *Mutual engagement* describes getting together and engaging in shared practices be it harmonious or conflictual. Though he notes that face-to-face interaction is quite important, there are forms of communication-over-distance such as emails, talking on the phone, or radio broadcasts, which can be considered mutual engagement as well. Nowadays, the methods of communication-over-distance are in a more evolved state than they were back when Wegner made this statement. The contemporary landscape of online interaction, now, involves more instantaneous interaction via texts, images, sounds, and videos. Meyerhoff and Strycharz (2013) state that if an online community has ways for its members to interact at the same time, then it is reasonable to analyze these communities within the CofP framework, provided that Wenger’s other criteria are also met. This type of interaction is extensively observed in social media-based meme platforms in formats of shared images, comments, upvotes, and direct messaging. Notification systems and high-speed connections can turn even the most asynchronous of these types of online interaction into near-instantaneous or near-simultaneous.

Jointly negotiated enterprise, the second criterion, is a circular process of members getting together for a purpose, where that purpose is also defined through the members' pursuit of it in a cyclical way. Though Meyerhoff and Strycharz (2013) emphasize that this enterprise should not be too general or abstract, a shared enterprise should not also be "explanatorily vacant". It is possible for members to be not able to point this enterprise out right away. They specifically emphasize the need for avoiding high abstractions while working on a CofP. Otherwise, sensitive social goals and the explanatory power of CofPs are lost, and it turns into something only a little different than a social strata in the Speech Community framework. A similar concept, *members' shared goals*, was mentioned by Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999) as a point where CofPs radically differ from speech community and intergroup theories. What does all this say for meme communities? Why are people gathering around meme pages in the first place? What is the reason for someone to click "follow" on a page or "join group" on a group? An initial guess would be the humor side of the majority of the content that might be enticing to users. However, a meme does not have to be always funny. There are meme templates that can be shaped into a type called "depressing memes" by the users, or some templates serve functions that are not necessarily humorous, such as making confessions, telling random facts, or asking philosophical questions. Similarly, in his work, Aktaş (2016) introduces a collection of political "caps" and emphasizes the point that those caps have purposes beyond just humor. He states that they can be considered a brief, shocking, and eye-catching communication method with their persuasive narratives, valued by the ones with fast-paced lives, and those who see thousands of content about the events far away every day. A questionnaire made for this thesis tries to uncover what the jointly negotiated enterprise of memes could be in the upcoming chapters.

The last criterion, *shared repertoire*, is defined as resources that are "the cumulative result of internal negotiations". CofP is a domain defined by a process of social learning, initially developed in order to describe and understand how professional communities acquire and train new members, and maintain routines for doing tasks. This criterion is a crucial part of an average meme community as the members form a concept of memes and related communication over time, during their involvement. This concept includes meme formats, inter-referentiality (referred to as intermemetic-referentiality by Wiggins (2019)) between the memes, and ideologies in a group (what to joke about and not). A meme's lifespan could be very short but during its trending period, members of the community would see many remixes and iterations formed with different ideas which would, in turn, end up in a shared repertoire. The repertoire, then, helps members to recognize new evolved forms or references made to the older contents. For example, a four-panel meme such as Figure 2 featuring visuals on one side and text on the other, creates a mental representation of the format that is easily recognizable in other memes. The same four-panel approach emerges in many meme formats with some differences such as in Figures 11 and 12. The difference here being instead of two body-language reactions to two separate concepts, the information flows as a conversation, still requiring visual cues of the body.



Fig. 11 Turkey-Cyprus Clueless Padme meme

The meme in Figure 11 is using the original format of this meme where the four frames have images that are taken from a Star Wars movie. The structure of this conversation was not derived from the original movie itself, but rather constructed upon the taken screenshots of the individuals' facial expressions. This conversation has been remixed into different memes following the same conversational structure where the facial expression in the 3rd panel gives away the persona's true intentions that are either not shared with the persona in the 2nd panel or are surprising. After the intentions are made clear, the 4th panel depicts the secondary persona as being troubled by those intentions. The remix of this format, which is shown in Figure 12, uses the exact structure but the characters are replaced by real historical figures instead of textual labels. For context, the person on the first panel, Atatürk, was tasked to put down a riot in Samsun for the Ottoman Empire, which actually turned into the war of independence that drove the invasive forces out of Anatolia and led to

the collapse of the Ottoman Empire to be rebuilt as the Turkish Republic. Observing the connections between those memes (e.g. four panels, the conversation structure, figures and labeling, facial expressions) makes it clear to see how intertextuality and shared repertoire gives way to new formats and remixes.



Fig. 12 Another version of Clueless Padme remixed with historical figures

The repertoire does not have limitations in terms of what to store to later reuse during remixing new memes. It can host almost every variable in a meme such as figures, characters, colors/effects, and language in addition to the ones we have already discussed. Such elements are readily available for members to make use of in their reiterations of memes. The example in Figure 13 is the embodiment of a color/effect element that gained popularity as a meme material around October 2021. This element co-exists with a language play element that is made into the speech or identity of the figure used in the visual. In this case, the negative photo effect that

was applied onto the visual is also reflected in the language as a polar opposite version of something the character is associated with or something they would say. This format of memes would have the format of “Evil X be like:” as the title where the “X” is the person in the visual. The phrase used commonly by the person in the visual “Kıymetli kardeşlerim” (My precious (younger) siblings), is perceived oppositely and remixed into “Değersiz abilerim” (My worthless (older) brothers) where the adjective becomes the antonym and the noun’s denotation of younger age shifts into older age.



Fig. 13 Evil Sedat Peker be like meme

Returning to the characteristics of CofPs, Wenger (1998) further characterizes CofPs by them having (i) a rapid flow of information and propagation for innovation, (ii) absence of introductory preambles and quick setup of a problem to be discussed, (iii) substantial overlap in members’ description of who belongs and mutually

defining identities, (iv) specific tools, representations, shared stories, and inside jokes, (v) jargon and shortcuts to communication, and (vi) a shared discourse that reflects a certain perspective on the world. The first characteristic is by no means a distant concept to the memes. As mentioned previously, their nature of involving a lot of remixing/reiteration presents considerable grounds for innovation and being present in dense social media communities allow for rapid sharing and consumption of popular forms. The users, instead of going through tutorials as to how to make or consume a meme, quickly find themselves in the environment of interaction. When they finally decide to interact via memes, it is the user feedback and trial error that determines the success of the interaction. This user feedback can be mere numbers of likes/reacts, share counts, or comments. The third characteristic can be found in the user descriptions of others in the community. Meme makers are often named as "Memelords" in the global communities, or if the meme is in the format of posts, they are referred to as "OP" in 9GAG and Reddit, or "admin" on Instagram. Turkish variants of such names also exist such as "Capser" for those who make "Caps" (Yılmaz & Özdemir, 2016), and "Mizahşör" (Kullar & İnci, 2015), a term derived from "mizah" (humor) and "silahşör" (musketeer). The use of the name "admin" is also prevalent in Turkish Instagram meme pages. The fourth and fifth characteristics can be related to the language and content within the meme communities. Memes can behave much like inside jokes where they do not make sense at first for those outside the community, and the memes which can be considered more linguistic than visual can output jargon or shortcuts specific to the community. There are various unique words known in the community of İncicaps such as "panpa" (a distorted form of "kanka" (buddy)) and "şuku" (a distorted form of "şükela" (a neologism that is used to show liking) that could be prime examples for such phenomena. Bobiler,

another community that is known for its sharing of funny photoshopped images, uses the term “monte” for the posts created in its domain (Yılmaz, 2017). The last characteristic Wenger puts forward, shared discourse and perspective, can be observed in the themes some meme communities have negotiated among themselves. It is especially observable in Facebook meme groups as the titles for such groups usually indicate a theme, something the non-members would see first or it would come up in the search function of the site. For example, a page exists with the name “Etymology Memes for Reconstructed Phonemes” which is instantly relatable for linguists or people interested in language-related endeavors. Inside the group, one would observe a humor-intensive discourse made on language differences, some linguistic theories, or even popular Linguistics figures such as Noam Chomsky via memes. On the Turkish side of Facebook, one meme group “Turkish Khaganposting” stands out with its bilingual community with a heavy nationalist and sometimes racist discourse via memes and shitposting while a meme page “Turkish Memes” addresses itself to a more general bilingual community with a significantly milder discourse on culture and nationalism compared to the first example. While one can argue that those three groups/pages appeal to different communities, it is possible to consider each of those groups as micro-communities of one larger meme community that encapsulates all that is within the domain of meme-making and meme-browsing practices, a CofP.

Based on the discussion in Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999), there exist several aspects of CofPs that distinguish CofP from other frameworks. One aspect is *individuals’ multiplicity of identities* across different CofPs they belong to. CofPs have effects on individuals’ self-styling and group identity (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1999). Another aspect is *boundaries*, where Meyerhoff and Strycharz (2013)

state that CofPs may have members that are not actively in control of their own membership. It is argued that practices that stand in opposition to other groups, though not necessarily competitive, can reveal such boundaries clearly. Unlike other frameworks, CofP is interested in the issues of power and legitimate membership. *Power structure* of CofPs where there is a constant evolution and negotiation of hierarchy creates another difference (Eckert & Wenger, 2005). It is stated that there cannot be a linear stratification with a clear-cut top and bottom. Even if there is such a clear hierarchy, the members situated at the top are in a process of constantly reasserting their place. All in all, CofP framework is a sociolinguistic tool focusing on individuals' social mobility, and the negotiated nature of social identities. With this chapter, we overviewed CofPs' properties and their relation to meme communities. A practical application of this framework to meme communities will be done in Chapter 6 with additional data of comments and questionnaire answers.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I describe the sources and the amount of data used in this study. In addition, I will also describe the methods used to gather information on the users/ producers of the memes.

Major social media platforms with high potential for meme sharing and interaction, namely, Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, Twitter, Whatsapp, and 9GAG were chosen for data collection. Each platform has its own separate groups and pages for memes and interaction for a variety of subjects, user types and profiles. From those groups, the ones that are targeting Turkish speaking or Turkish/English bilingual people as an audience were focused on. For comparison purposes and source analysis, pages targeting global audiences were also taken into account. The data collection involved Instagram accounts whose follower counts ranged from 400 and up to 114.000, Reddit groups (subreddits) with 28.000 - 403.000 members, Facebook groups with 200-500 members, and pages with up to 128.000 followers, and Twitter accounts with followers ranging from 16.000 to 161.000. It was not possible to get a user count from the “Turkey” section of 9GAG.

The data was gathered as screenshots or the original image files of meme contents. Original meme images were kept as examples of format and linguistic use. The screenshots were taken in order to indicate various contextual elements behind memes, such as the titles, like/upvote count, comments or replies, and the source page/group where the meme is shared. Another reason for the use of screenshots was to capture memes that have limitations for saving or downloading from a PC (such as Instagram stories).

The data collection took place in a span of one and a half years. During that time, certain contemporary memes that rose in popularity as well as some that were around long before the data collection process were collected and archived. A screenshot collection of 300 memes and roughly 530 comments were collected during the data collection period. The collected screenshots of memes were put together with their URL links (when possible) and they were tagged as a part of the non-indexical analysis with the tags:

- Foreign effect
- Distorted use of language
- Narration
- Labeling
- Framing
- Voicing
- Wordplay
- Register Humor / Style shifting

Detailed descriptions of these tags and relevant sources are given in Chapter 5. The tags (or attributes) are aimed to capture strategies for meme-making and humor. The data resulting from this analysis will be discussed in Chapter 5.2.
The comments that were captured as screenshots (such as in Figure 3) will be used to argue various aspects of memes including the community, identity, meme comments, interaction types and practices, and platform affordances.

Another set of data that will be used in this thesis comes from a questionnaire that was prepared to acquire some statistics such as age, linguistic backgrounds, and platforms used for meme consumption[7]. In addition to that, questions that survey

[7] This questionnaire was given ethics clearance by SOBETIK with the date and number 26.03.2022-59476. (Appendix E)

people's participation in meme consumption, community practices, and their thoughts on memes in general and Caps/meme culture were also included. Google Forms was utilized to create this questionnaire, and it was distributed with its link via announcements made on my personal social media, university groups, and close networks of acquaintances. The questionnaire is conducted in Turkish and surveys the following information from the participants:

- Age
- Education level
- Mother tongues and foreign languages
- Daily spent time on meme making or consumption
- Which social media platforms they use for memes
- Their criteria for following or joining a meme group/page
- A survey of which distorted forms they have seen and used on social media
- A survey of group identity assumptions on three selected distorted forms
- Agree/disagree questions on meme consumption habits
- Agree/disagree questions on meme-making habits (optional)
- Short answer question on Caps culture and meme culture difference

The questions regarding social media platforms, criteria, and distorted forms had the freedom of adding more options by the participants. The selected social media platforms were Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Whatsapp, Telegram, Reddit, 9Gag, incicaps.com, Bobiler.org, and Güldüm.net.

As one of the core parts of this thesis is to investigate the use of language play and distorted forms, there was a list included in the questionnaire where the participants were asked about seeing and/or using some of the distorted or unusual forms observed in memes and comments. The list involves the following distorted

phrases in Table 1. Their correct/usual phrasing or explanations are given where available: The phrases were presented to the participants without the explanations given in the table.

Table 1. Distorted Forms Surveyed in the Questionnaire

Distorted Form	**Explanation**
Afied	“Afiyet olsun” (bon apetit)
Bne	“Ben” (me/I)
hiç kimse: ben:	no one: me:
benim eşgal/sıfad-ül eşgal/çehre/yüz hatları	Various remixes of the translation of “my face when”
-yorumdur / -mışımdır	A newly emerging evidential (narrative of self) use (Kartal, 2021)
Hüzüwn, Kawga, Mewzu	“w” insertion on words and use of standalone infinitival verbs
Öncelikle kestane balının diyarı Zonguldak’tan herkese selamlar	A quote that has been stripped out of its original context and used to index an illocution of wanting to change the topic
(Temsili)	A phrase meaning “symbolic” which is used to indicate that the situation in the meme/caps is just symbolic.
Average fan/average enjoyer	a meme format directly borrowed from global memes. It sometimes has chicken-translated Turkish counterparts (e.g. “ortalama sevici”).
anlık (bir kişi ya da kurum)	A phrase meaning “instant”, used instead of “at the moment” usually combined with names of a person, a group, or institutions.
bazlı/temelli	Chicken translation of “based”, a slang term used to express agreement.
bruh moment anı/ birader anı	Remixes and translations of “bruh moment”, “bruh” being a short form of the “brother”, and an exclamation used for shocking experiences.

To investigate the membership and identity associated with these forms, which is another core part of this thesis, the questionnaire included three examples where the participants indicated whether they used that form, found it weird/wrong,

thought that the ones who used it form a group, and they saw themselves belonging to that group. The three examples were from the formats “-Iyorumdur / -mIşImdIr”, “benim eşgal” and “W insertion” (Hüzüwn etc.).

The first set of agree/disagree questions was prepared to investigate meme consumption habits and some community practices of the participants. It included 21 questions that can be answered in five degrees that are (i) strongly disagree, (ii) disagree, (iii) indecisive, (iv) agree, and (v) strongly agree. The questions surveyed various points in meme consumption and practices, some of which are the time spent browsing memes, commenting/liking/sharing patterns, tagging users under memes, views of other people using memes, and surfacing of distorted forms in everyday life. All of these questions can be found in Appendix C with the rest of the questionnaire, and in translated form in Appendix D.

Similarly, the questions surveying meme-making habits also had the five-degree answering option and included 10 questions. The topics for these questions included thoughts on likes and comments made on their own memes, feeling of belonging to a community, and perception of others using their memes and formats. This part was kept optional to answer, as not everyone actively creates memes.

The last question was also an optional one which required participants to give their opinion on the subject of like-ness or unlike-ness of Caps culture to Meme culture. The question is aimed to clarify some doubts in the literature as well as to get a lead on this culture’s roots in Turkish social media.

CHAPTER 5

MEME ATTRIBUTES AND INDEXICAL MEME ANALYSIS

5.1 Proposed attributes for memes

In order to understand what kind of formatting and/ or language play is utilized in memes, this study makes use of a set of attributes to tag the collected memes. These attributes are determined in close inspection of Turkish memes, to give a better view of how users create or imitate certain elements to achieve what they intend to through the act of sharing memes. Some of these attributes are borrowed from other studies, namely (i) wordplay, (ii) register humor, and (iii) voicing all of which are adopted from Vasquez and Aslan (2021) who used these attributes to categorize global memes emerging from a viral video. Though these three categories alone capture a great part of the internet memes around, we would still benefit from an inclusion of additional tags. Moreover, in contrast to Vasquez and Aslan (2021), treating these concepts as attributes rather than categories proves useful as memes often use multiple strategies simultaneously, therefore making it hard for them to be constricted into singular categories. We can expand what we already have in literature with the following attributes. *Foreign effect* to capture the memes that have a linguistic influence from a foreign language, *distorted use of language* for deliberate manipulation of orthographic forms and meaning, *narration* for memes depicting a flow of a short event or action sequence, *labeling* for memes that have labels on visual objects to assign them personality and meaning, and lastly, *framing* for memes which consist of multiple panels or certain visual formats that help to set an interpretation order and structure.

To clear it up, the full list of attributes selected to tag the collected Turkish memes for this study are (a) foreign effect, (b) distorted use of language, (c) narration, (d) labeling, (e) framing, (f) voicing, (g) wordplay, and (h) register humor / style-shifting. This list is claimed to be neither exhaustive nor optimal. It is possible to come up with additional attributes regarding the non-linguistic content depending on one's domain of approach to memes. However, with the addition of new tags to those in Vasquez and Aslan's (2021) work, we certainly capture a wider spectrum of meme strategies, at least those involving the language. We can define the listed attributes in separate sections with examples as below.

5.1.1 Foreign effect

As the accessibility of the internet increased over the years, it can be argued that the Turkish users of the internet have been exposed to more foreign media than ever before, this of course includes foreign memes. This exposure shows itself in memes shared on Turkish social media, be it as chicken translations of English memes, or code-mixing/switching occurring in the language used in memes. Figure 2 is a fine example of a meme to which this tag of "foreign effect" can be attributed. While the meme is from a foreign origin and most of the language is constructed in English, there are some Turkish phrases incorporated into English morphosyntax such as "bayram videos" and "PR kasmak with…". The emergence of mixed language or foreign factors in memes is certainly not something exclusive to this study's domain as it was also analyzed in George (2020). It appears to be a phenomenon affecting wider audiences and communities across the globe.

5.1.2 Distorted use of language

The comedic effect intended for certain memes is often achieved by making use of a "distorted" version of written language. This distortion can include odd but grammatical phrasing of sentences which can be observed in a recent trend of "Twitter language" where suffixes like "-mIşImdIr" and "-Iyorumdur" are observed (Kartal 2021), incorrectly written words such as "afied" (instead of "afiyet" (appetite), and phonological variants occurring in fast speech and texting such as "gidion" (instead of "gidiyorsun" (you are going)) (Figure 14). This attribute is one of the most linguistically interesting ones as it can shed light on the generational variation of language and offers insight into novel utterances. It is also the main inspiration for this thesis to be ever contemplated.

5.1.3 Narration

Some memes aim to narrate an event with the help of frames, visuals, and texts. These narratives usually have an action-resolution sequence that evolves through the use of multiple frames put adjacently or one under the other. Figure 14 shows a meme with a narrative that is presented as texts going from top to lower right and then to the bottom depicting a series of events. Though the narrative steps were not separated via clear boundaries on the image, the user reiterations of this meme indicate a certain format where they put the elements onto the same spots, creating the meme's own unique frame.



Fig. 14 A narrative meme

The meme translates as “you like a girl - you open up (to her) - you get rejected - you go to the gym - you gain muscles - you gain self-confidence - months later the girl messages (to you) - you talk - you open yourself again - you get rejected again”.

In addition to this example, it was argued by Kartal (2021) that the forms “-mIşImdIr” and “-Iyorumdur” were conceived as narratives by the participants in the study. Considering the forms’ memetic use, having an attribute that covers the narrative aspect appears to be integral for our meme analysis.

5.1.4 Labeling

When memes do not narrate a series of events but rather set up a scene, they usually have descriptive texts on visual entities the users want to "label" (or "attribute" as used in Wiggins (2019) on the "Pompeii Victim meme", p. 17-18) as a person, a stance, an opinion, an object, or a fact. Therefore, they might yield sociolinguistic significance in some topics, especially in stance taking. The meme in Figure 15 has a person in an orange shirt labeled "akıl sağlığımı korumaya çalışan ben" (me trying to protect my mental health) who is being attacked by another man with a knife that is labeled "tam kapanma" (full lockdown). It reflects the stance of the creator of this meme against Covid-19 precautions, where the full lockdown is a metaphorical threat to one's psychological wellness.



Fig. 15 Full lockdown Meme

Another linguistic relevance of the use of labeling in Turkish memes is the heavy use of incomplete CPs in the forms of relative clauses or infinitives. In that sense, the visuals on the meme serve as a context that completes the remaining information of the intended utterance.

5.1.5 Framing

This attribute works in a general sense where if the meme has visual elements ordered in a certain way (i.e. panels, top and bottom texts, etc.), they can be argued to have some sort of "framing" that aids the user interpretation, sets the events in chronological order, helps to connect one visual element to another, or simply indicates that the meme is a reiteration of a certain format. Defining this broad of an attribute comes with its own consequences as it becomes less distinguishing because it seems that the majority of the internet memes use at least one of the specifications made above. Nevertheless, this attribute still stays relevant if we take a closer look at the memes that lack such an attribute. The meme in Figure 15 was analyzed in this study to be lacking this attribute while the "Drake meme" in Figure 2 shows a clear framing of visual objects and texts. Figure 15 introduces a meme where the order of perception does not affect the interpretation or fluency of the meme. One can understand the meme whether they focus on the event first or focus on either of the texts in whichever order. On the other hand, Drake's two reactions in Figure 2 are based on the concepts that are adjacent to those particular panels and this helps distinguish two contrasting preferences of the labeled entity according to the user conceptualization. Based on that, utilizing the attribute of "framing" can tell us to what extent people choose to order the information structure to create their memes.

5.1.6 Voicing

Voicing is a strategy used in many memes to voice the characters or labeled entities with actual or fictional lines. In Vasquez and Aslan's (2021) work, voicing strategy of generating a meme is done via invocation of a known character (e.g. Mike Tyson, Hitler, or Yoda) as a background image and appropriating the linguistic material to those characters' features (e.g. Yoda's syntax or Mike Tyson's lisp). While their work introduces examples of famous characters voiced by meme-makers, this thesis took voicing more broadly in that if the textual content is presented as something uttered by the entities in the images, famous or not, they were tagged as having the voicing attribute. Figures 11, 12, and 13 can be given as examples for voicing in memes.

5.1.7 Wordplay

Like in verbal jokes, wordplay is used as a source of humor in memes as well. Wordplay was described to involve altering the linguistic elements via exploitation of homophony, paronymy, and such in Vasquez and Aslan (2021). Particular examples were the use of "cash, cats" for "catch" and "cashmere" for "catch me". Users generated their memes using altered words together with images corresponding to the words' primary meanings for humorous effect. This strategy can be observed in Figure 5 where the humor results from a shift of meaning via wordplay of a common phrase that is used in İnci Sözlük groups meaning "The man is right, guys" to "The man is from Hak, guys". It is a homophony of the adjective "haklı" (right) and "Haklı" (from a place called Hak), the latter meaning being emphasized by the altered image presenting "Hak" as if it was a city name.

5.1.8 Register humor/Style shifting

This attribute is also one of the most linguistically interesting and indexically rich strategies used in memes to achieve humor. Register humor is observed as a change made to the linguistic material of the topic in terms of style or tone (Venour, Ritchie, & Mellish, 2011). For instance, Vasquez and Aslan (2021) demonstrate a set of memes where the viral element for the user-generated memes had non-standard English while memes using register humor had more sophisticated, poetic, or standardized language ("Cash me ousside" vs. "Confront me outdoors to resolve our preexisting issues with a battle of fisticuffs"). Our current approach is that we take the concepts Register Humor and Style Shifting together and tag memes if they show textual material that is a parody of another distinct text style or tone. This could be a meme remixed into the appearance and linguistic style of a news report or a quote from somebody. Later in this thesis, Figure 22, which will have a thorough indexicality analysis, can be considered one of the prime examples for this attribute in Turkish memes.

5.2 Meme attributes surfacing in the dataset

As mentioned earlier in the methodology chapter, this study makes use of a dataset of collected memes from Turkish social media. Tagging these 300 memes with these attributes revealed the following distribution of linguistic meme-making strategies (Fig. 16).

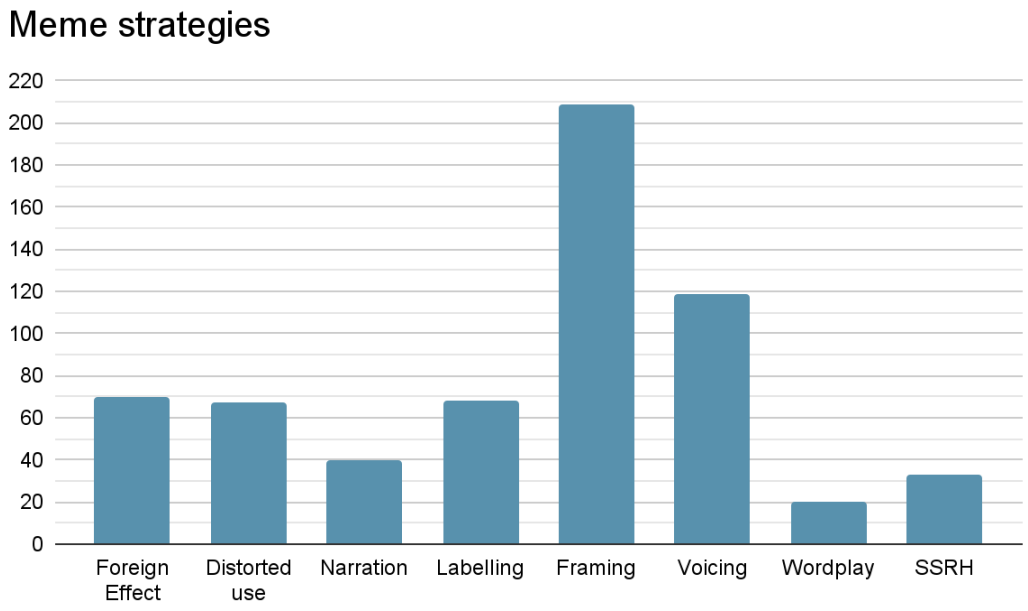


Fig. 16 The graph on meme strategy distribution

The most commonly surfaced attributes were Framing and Voicing which appeared in 209 and 119 memes respectively. What this finding shows is that ordering of the texts, use of frames or panels, and use of common meme formats are the most common strategies for structuring a meme. However, there is still an amount that is almost a third of the total dataset that did not have this attribute. This suggests that while structuring is important, a good amount of memes consists of simply unstructured and/or unframed images/videos with incorporated text. Regardless of being framed or not, more than a third of the dataset had the text in the manner of Voicing. This indicates the need for the creation of a situation or a universe where someone is portrayed in accordance with the author's imagination through that someone's utterances. Often times the entity that is being portrayed is a political figure, and it seems so that making a critique is achieved commonly by the fabricated utterances coming from the figure's own mouth. When it is not a real person, memes often use drawings of people or fictional characters from movies and

animated series, and the intended message is given by making them talk. In terms of the text domain, Voicing is followed by Labeling which appeared in 68 tokens. When the people in a meme do not utter anything, those people and sometimes inanimate objects are labeled as a certain event, state, notion, stance, or another character with texts positioned on them. However, it is possible to label these objects with images as well. Figure 17 is an example that shows Labeling and Voicing being used simultaneously. The meme depicts a person labeled as Kılıçdaroğlu, who is the vice president of a political party, shooting and killing İnce and İmamoğlu who are also popular political figures alongside "Türk Milleti" (Turkish people/nation). In the second frame, he is voiced with the sentence "Neden %30'u aşamıyoruz" (Why can't we pass the 30% (vote threshold)). The meme intends to criticize Kılıçdaroğlu by giving a metaphor of him crippling his very own party and ultimately Turkish people due to his persistence in running as a presidential candidate. It is also important to note that these attributes are not complementary to each other. They are rather used when the need emerges.

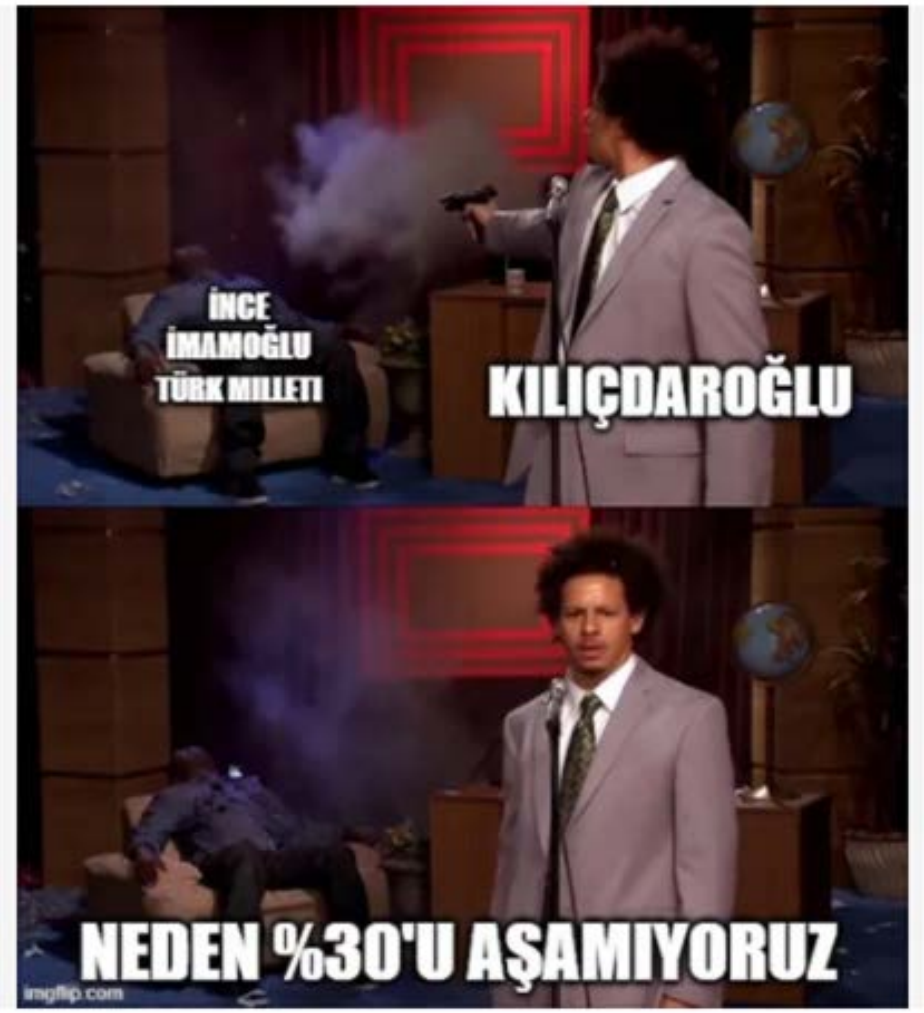


Fig. 17 A political meme with labeling and voicing

Style Shifting/Register Humor is another main textual content and has been tagged in the data set 33 times. While this attribute usually involves its own remixing of a genre text, it can co-occur with Voicing (see Fig. 22) and Labeling as well. When it is used as standalone content in memes, it mimics the targeted post's genre with added irony, as exemplified by Figure 18 mocking typical Facebook posts. The meme mocks the style, which people in the oppositional ideology stereotypically use to spread propaganda or misinformation on social media. The meme translates as "If America - Greece - Israel - France say "we must take down İmamoğlu", defending İmamoğlu is not a political matter, it is a matter of (defending) the motherland".

Using this style of text is uncommon for those who support ideologies İmamoğlu is associated with, so the irony here is the source of humor in this meme. In observation of the collected memes for this study, the targeted genres for this kind of humor are generally Facebook posts, news articles or reports, posters, and advertisements. To elaborate on my definition of Facebook posts, they usually involve imagery related to the context, and textual content that can be a quote, misinformation, a historical fact, a congratulatory message, or an opinion.



Fig. 18 A meme style-shifting into a typical Facebook post

There were 40 tokens where Narration attribute was observed. While four of those memes belonged to the format demonstrated in Figure 14 with descending narrative text, an overwhelming majority were the “-mışımdır/-yorumdur” type of narration. Most of the other tokens had frames that separated the action sequence such as in Figure 19 where the action in the bottom frame is portrayed as if it was the result of the action in the upper frame. Therefore, the meme narrates a sequence of events, different from a simple dialogue or a state. Though the narrative is conveyed through images in Figure 19 Narration was mostly done via the textual domain in the collected memes. The football player (popularly portrayed as clumsy) is voiced in the first frame by “İzleyin topa nasıl vuruyorum şimdi” (Look how I will hit the ball now) with a photo depicting the action of hitting while the second frame voices the other players as “Eğilinnnnnn“ (Get downnnnnn), showing them in a funny position as a result of the action in the first frame.



Fig. 19 Caps with visual narration

With 20 tokens, Wordplay attribute is another textual element that can be the sole source of humor in the meme, though it is often accompanied by other attributes, most commonly with Voicing. Figure 20 shows two memes that can be a general representation of this attribute. The meme on the left has the text “Dizmişiz - aylarca söylediğin yalanları bir sıraya dizmişiz“ (aligned - we have aligned the lies you have been telling for months) while the meme on the right has “Sırtlanmışız - sırtlanmışız tüm dertleri” (Borne - we have borne the burden of all the woes). The Wordplay strategy comes into play with the images in a way that is described as “discourse-image incongruity” by Yus (2021). The words “Dizmişiz” and “Sırtlanmışız” have double entendre where they also mean “We have been knees”[8] and “We have been hyenas”[9] respectively. The initial words and the images make speakers parse these meanings first, and then it shifts into the meaning in the long sentences, which becomes the source of humor. One should note that in this thesis, Wordplay attribute is used for phrases that remain in their standard forms but additional imagery and other features are used to invoke secondary meanings of those phrases. Any other form of change in the words and phrases (even the ones that Vasquez and Aslan (2021) would consider under the category of wordplay) was tagged as Distorted use of language.

[8] Diz -miş - iz
knee - past.evidential - 3rd.pl
[9] Sırtlan -mış - ız
hyena - past.evidential - 3rd.pl



Fig. 20 Double entendre wordplay memes

The textual content that was considered as Distorted use of language varies the most radically among these attributes in terms of the possibilities of manipulation that can be done to words, sentence structure, or even the meaning. Out of 300 memes collected, 67 of them included this strategy. The most frequent versions of distortion are repeating words that disturb the flow, gorilla memes/w insertion (e.g. Fig. 25), stuttering effect (e.g. writing "ş-şey" (thing) instead of "şey", -mIşImdır/-Iyorumdur, "sıfad-ül eşgal" variants (e.g. Figure 21), and various intentional misspellings. The meme on the left in Figure 21 reads as "Hepsiburada 7/11 Kasım indirimleri maaş gününe denk gelince benim sıfat'ül eşgal" (lit. The form of my face when Hepsiburada (a shopping site) 7/11 November sale coincides with my payday). It is a clever attempt at an advertisement that presumably targets a younger audience via the use of this trendy but distorted form. On the right, there is another very similar attempt of an advertisement which makes use of "-mIşImdIr" which reads as "Sizce be yağmur yağarken şemsiye almayı unutup sırılsıklam olup üşütmüş müyümdür?" (Do you think I might have caught a cold by forgetting to take an umbrella while it is raining and getting soaking wet?). The status of "-mIşImdır/-

Iyorumdur” as a distorted form is questionable as it could be on its way to slowly becoming one of the standard uses or “-Ir” based narrative function, as argued by Kartal (2021). Regardless of what the future brings, it is still relatively reasonable to assume that form to be currently “out of place”, especially considering there are some negative views against the form (such as the “low IQ” argument of a participant from the previous discussion). Additional distorted forms will be presented in the discussion regarding the questionnaire answers.



Fig. 21 Distorted use of language in advertisement memes

The last attribute Foreign Effect has shown itself in the dataset as code-mixes (e.g. Figure 2), foreign scripture (Arabic and Chinese), chicken translations, and foreign terminology (e.g. “pov” for “point of view”). This attribute surfaced overall in 70 tokens. It should be noted that there are social media pages that exclusively post memes in English with little to no use of Turkish, though having Turkish page owners, audiences, and going about Turkish matters. These kinds of memes were avoided during the meme data collection in order to keep the linguistic focus on the

Turkish and Turkish-English bilingual side but they were later included in the dataset of CofP analysis (but not reflected in the count of tokens).

5.3 Indexicality analysis

5.3.1 Use of register humor in memes and levels of indexicality

To demonstrate how indexicality unfolds the layers of meaning inside a meme, Figure 22 is chosen for an indexicality analysis. This meme is tagged as having voicing and register humor, among the previously mentioned attributes. However, to explain its source of humor that lies in its linguistic content, we need to go step by step through each level of indexicality and ultimately reach its final form and meaning. Before we start, this meme is from a format where a photo of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, is accompanied by a common phrase that is Turkified or secularized in an unusual way.



Fig. 22 Meme with register humor/style shifting “açlık festivali”

In Turkey, it is common to celebrate each other's Eid-al-Fitr with the sentence "Ramazan Bayramınız mübarek olsun" (lit. may your Ramadan holiday be blessed) which can be considered as the first level of indexicality, a religious way to celebrate this holiday. However, it is not the only form available for such a celebration. "Ramazan Bayramınız kutlu olsun" (lit. may your Ramadan holiday be blessed) can be uttered for an arguably less religious stance, switching "mübarek" (blessed), an Arabic word, with "kutlu" (blessed) which is a Turkic word that serves as the second level of indexicality. The word "kutlu" is also exclusively used for national holidays such as the 23rd of April (National Sovereignty and Children's Day) where the word "mübarek" is never used, which adds to its non-religious stance. This part can also become "tebrik ederim" (I congratulate) for a formal but not necessarily a less religious form of congratulating this holiday as the third level of indexicality. The last common form before the meme form, "Şeker bayramınızı" (lit. your candy holiday) can be considered as a secular approach to congratulate the holiday which makes up the 4th level of indexicality. One omits "Ramazan" while using "Şeker" for it instead, which focuses on the general activity that is done during the holiday part, and generally dismisses the fasting period. The ultimate meme form can be considered as a very unusual way to celebrate this holiday because of the potential negative meaning of "açlık" (hunger) and the addition of "festival" which does not commonly surface as a replacement for the word "Bayram" in the religious sense. This could be even conceived as an anti-religious approach to congratulate someone's religious holiday, as it downgrades the holy act of fasting into mere hunger. In this part, the photo of Atatürk comes into place as it invokes the historical concept of the founding of the Turkish Republic where there were many reforms made to the Turkish language and the role of religion (under his principle of

“Laiklik” (laicity) in the country. This, in turn, presents the phrase as if it was uttered by him, assigning it a nationalistic stance and creating a clash between a religious activity and secularism (or even atheism) which is the source of humor in the meme. The meme then serves the purpose of enjoyment for those who share a similar secular belief, and it seeks ways to trigger or offend religious audiences. Ultimately, this forms the 5th and the last level of indexicality, for this particular meme. This particular meme is a suitable example to examine within the boundaries of indexical order as the last level of indexicality (i.e. the meme form) is a unique form with a singular meaning of making fun of a religious practice. Unlike the rather objective outcomes of meaning in this case, indexicality can constitute subjective instances of meaning within a “field” as will be demonstrated in the next section.

5.3.2 The two sides of İmamoğlu memes, language, and imagery

Ever since Ekrem İmamoğlu (a political figure siding with CHP (Republican People’s Party)) became the mayor of İstanbul, he has been a subject of online political debates which often resulted in memes created by both the opposition and supporting sides. A major point that has been memed a lot is the general perception of secularism he inherits because of him siding with a political party (CHP) that is the main opposition of AKP (Justice and Development Party), which is known to be conservative and pro-Islam. However, his surname “İmamoğlu” (imam-son) creates this oxymoron which has been used by the meme-makers on the supporting side to picture him as if he were a figure siding with the conservative/pro-Islam parties.



Fig. 23 Register humor meme “İmamoğlu the leader of ummah”

Figure 23 shows clearly how the supporting side imitates and mocks the genre of posts that are often shared by the conservative side. The language used in Fig. 23 is shaped with heavy use of Arabic words both in Latin and Arabic orthography, with the addition of Islamic and nationalistic emojis. The phrases “Ümmetin Lideri” (The leader of Ummah (the religious community)) and “Seni batılı güçlere yedirmeyiz” (We will protect you from the western powers (lit. we will not allow you to get eaten by the western powers)) are repurposed in this context. It also allows us to observe an expansion of the indexical field for such phrases. As this meme aims to mock the conservative side, it uses the common phrases used by that side. This ultimately reveals an assignment of a “conservative” attribute to those phrases expanding their mere literal meanings to having a conservative political stance. The expansion of the meaning also allows for two different uses for the same phrase in different communities simultaneously. After this point, the phrase “ümmetin lideri” would strictly refer to İmamoğlu in meme communities as a result

of mocking this phrase's conservative index while the phrase's community of origin would have a different referent in the context.



Fig. 24 İmamoğlu in a Drake meme

On the opposite side of the İmamoğlu memes, Fig. 24 was collected from a Twitter account making political Caps for a conservative audience. The context was a recent snowstorm that caused disturbances in vehicular traffic across Istanbul, where the conservative group argues that İmamoğlu was unsuccessful in taking proper action. In the meme (Caps), İmamoğlu's face is photoshopped onto Drake's and it denotes a dispreference for taking action against the snowstorm ("Yola tuz" (Salt to the road)), and preference towards his non-conservative actions ("Rakıya buz" (ice to the Rakı(an alcoholic beverage))). Rakı, having national importance, is often depicted as a symbol of infidelity (therefore non-conservative) and associated

with various figures in Turkey to make negative remarks on them by the conservative side. Therefore, in this conservative community, its simple meaning of a beverage expands into a national drink that is drunk by Turks, and then ultimately to a drink that is drunk by local infidels. Using it in the meme's context then, starts to make sense if we take all these indexes into account. Interestingly, this Caps stems from a foreign meme but with the use of the original red and white style captions. This pattern is observed in many of the memes shared by this account. The fact that the red and white format is not very frequent even in the original İnci community nowadays might indicate that the account wants to maintain a native or nationalistic stance even in the imagery of the memes and caps. Hence, we can argue that for this sub-group in the community the indexical field of the original red background and white text is expanded into nationalism and conservatism, with a probable aiding factor in the meaning, the colors of the Turkish flag.

CHAPTER 6

THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE BEHIND TURKISH MEMES

It is important to define a set of practices for our hypothetical community of Turkish memes to call it a Community of Practice. As mentioned earlier, the act of creating, remixing, and sharing funny images that go viral on Turkish social media, often with captions as well, has been around ever since Bobiler and İncicaps were founded in 2002 and 2009 respectively. However, since then the affordances of social media and technological devices as well as the amount of foreign media consumption have changed drastically. This chapter will first discuss the restricting and liberating factors of different social media platforms under the name “affordances”. Then I will discuss the common practices of users that consume memes which will be critical for defining the membership and identity aspects of the community. This chapter also utilizes the answers given to the questionnaire by the participants, which will give us an insight into the community from the point of view of an average user.

6.1 Platform affordances

Variation among the social media platforms creates different circumstances for meme users to interact. These mechanics could be liberating as well as constricting and they would allow a variety of interaction methods. Facebook, for example, allows creation of groups where a visual meme could be shared by any of the group members. The memes surface as timeline posts and they can be liked or given a selection of reactions that are “angry”, “sad”, “love”, ”wow”, ”care”, and ”haha”. These reactions are visible to everyone when they are used on a post. These posts also allow for comments from users in forms of texts and visuals, which can also be

reacted to and commented on, the same way as posts. Considering all of the aforementioned affordances of Facebook, Instagram falls short on some interaction types. The posts are shared by account/page owner(s) for those that are following these accounts. They can only be liked as a reaction, and the comments are limited to texts or emojis only. Those affordance differences push users to express themselves differently. A recent “Gorilla Meme” for example, propagates as photos of gorillas with captions, mostly distorted with the inclusion of the letter “w” instead of “m” and/or inserting “w” to an empty consonant cluster, and via the use of infinitival verbs for an impression of primitive speech. In theory, Facebook users can comment those meme visuals directly under posts, and Whatsapp users can create stickers of these images and send them as a kind of a reaction while Instagram users are limited to remixing those texts and using gorilla emojis or sending those images as private or group messages.



Fig. 25 An Instagram post about Netflix sharing a gorilla meme

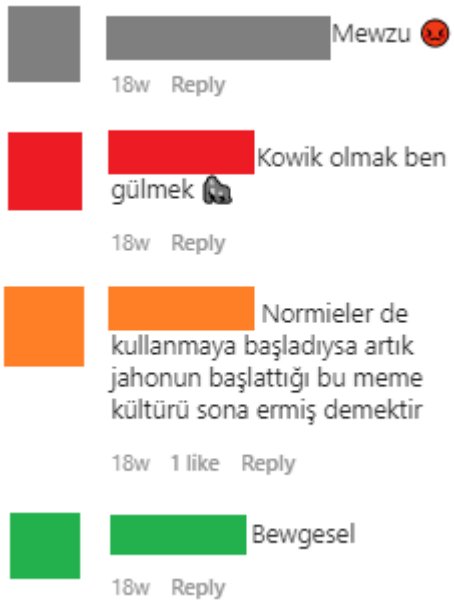


Fig. 26 A screenshot of the comment section under the post in Figure 25.

Such affordances help us define roles and group dynamics in meme communities. Users in a Facebook meme group can take up roles from most active/influential to least such as a meme maker/page admin, commenter, upvoter/liker, and lurker. A meme maker or a page admin would shape the conversation by providing resources (memes) to enjoy or discuss. They often create something that reflects their point of view or they share something they find that is funny, relevant, or interaction-worthy. People commenting under these memes would often share their opinion of the topic or comment on the quality/funniness of the meme (e.g. distorted form “kowik olmak” (it be funny) in Fig. 26). Such comments can easily turn into heated arguments between conflicting ideals, which are helpful in analyzing group identity (discussed later with Fig. 30). Users making use of reactions Facebook provides would reflect a statistical stance towards the memes and comments. A meme post with mostly “Love” reactions could indicate that it appeals to most of the reaction users while “Angry” reactions could mean a genuine or an

ironic negative stance. Lurkers have minimal influence on the communities. A lurker can be defined as someone who is a member of a social media group, or who follows a page but does not actively participate, or who keeps the participation at a minimum level. They are only reflected as numbers in follower/member counts of groups and pages or view counts on some of the social media platforms. It is important to note that the role “lurker” is also usually the first role a newcomer takes up before moving up to more interactional roles. Platforms like Reddit have further interaction types such as giving “awards” to post owners or commenters which can be bought with real money and allow certain platform functions for those awarded. The aforementioned social media platforms all require subscriptions to groups, accounts, channels, or subreddits while platforms like 9GAG have a main section where the most liked memes/posts from subsections appear. 9GAG has also locational channels where people living in the same country share their memes in that channel which makes it easier to find those posts among all the “global” ones. Similar in many aspects to 9GAG, “guldum.net” is another platform that has funny images and memes/caps but the site is dedicated to specifically Turkish content. The site has many topics to choose from to filter the posted content. Lastly, Twitter is another platform where the affordances are quite abundant like Facebook. One major thing that differs is that the retweet function which allows a certain post to be shared by the individual user is arguably more prevalent.

This brief discussion was aimed to provide readers, who are not accustomed to the selected social media platforms, with information on basic functions of interaction. These functions are not exhaustive and the social media platforms we talked about still carry on evolving and adding more functions as we speak.

6.2 Group practices

Now that we are familiar with social media affordances, we can start to define the core practices of online Turkish Caps/meme communities. It is obvious that there should be a content matter in the first place in order to create an interaction chain that would create and nourish other practices of the group. Therefore, our first core practice is *the creation of a caps/meme*. This is most often achieved by using an image that is associated with a format and then captioning or placing other semiotic objects to get an idea across. However, the meme creation process does not have to stick to those formats. As a unique design, it can gain popularity and become a new format. Other ways of creating an original meme can be listed as video editing and commenting. Video editing creates audio/visual memes which are fewer in comparison to image macro memes possibly due to the amount of work and skills required for their creation. They still make up a great part of the Caps/memes one would see online.

Caps/meme sharing is done on a greater scale as it involves just a few clicks and the users do not go through the hassle of image editing. While meme pages or accounts with mass followers can just collect and share memes without creating theirs, this process also allows memes to be present in individuals' own networks quite easily. It is common for pages/individuals to put their own account names or links as watermarks on memes to prevent their memes from getting stolen without credit by this practice. Therefore, it hints to us that keeping your memes original within a page or a group is a valued practice inside the communities. The watermark practice would also imply that gathering a bigger audience is also valued, be it for the page author's own satisfaction or potential ad revenues. Creating and sharing memes as a practice can even be observed to grant some sort of a title to the ones

who do it. For global memes in English, the title "memelord" is used prominently while "capser/kepser" and "mizahşör", as mentioned before, are the Turkish counterparts of such a title for meme-makers and sharers. One can deduce the positive value given to these titleholders from the word "lord" as it implies a higher social status and "mizahşör", whose etymology was discussed previously, implies a fighting stance one could perhaps interpret as brave or noble.

Commenting involves an area for users to accomplish different practices. The nature of the interaction in comment sections makes commenting an inseparable part of a CofP. As mentioned previously from Wenger (1998), one of the essential criteria for a CofP is mutual engagement. A comment section is, therefore, the perfect place for such mutual engagement to occur as it provides the freedom of expressing thought. In addition to this mutual engagement, it is a major practice to show active membership in the community. The data of collected comments from various meme groups and pages show what kinds of practices the members use in the context of memes for interaction. We have already seen a common practice in Figure 26, which is continuing remixing and reiterating the meme with one's own creativity or sharing versions that have been already shared somewhere else. Figure 27 shows the comment section of the Drake meme (Fig. 2) we discussed earlier. It reflects additional practices one of which is showing appreciation for the meme (the opposite is also common). Making use of common phrases (mostly from other memes) is also observed in many other comment sections. Comments like "We (do) live in a society" and "Koç bunu beyenmedi"[10] (Koç did not like this) in Figure 27 are examples of these commonly used and often remixed phrases. People often treat

[10] A parody of the phrase "X liked this" which appears as a notification when someone (X) likes a post on Facebook. The Turkish version is "X bunu beğendi".

memes as genuine arguments, hence they add their own arguments to support or oppose the content in the meme as seen in the comment “En ucubesi Cengiz İnşaatın 23 Nisan reklamıydı” (The most freak one was Cengiz İnşaat’s 23rd of April commercial). Additionally, those who do not understand the joke or the format of the meme are commonly observed as asking for clarifications or context in the comments. That constitutes another function of the comments in the community which helps users get relevant information and consequently aids them in fitting into the community.

When the comments become ”meme reactions”, it is likely to observe the attributes we have discussed previously to tag the memes in the dataset. One such example in Fig. 27 is the comment “Ain’t nobody (got) time for that pr bayram videos” where the person made use of code-mixing as a “foreign effect”. The phrase “ ain’t nobody got time for that” is a reference to a meme[11] that was popular back around 2012 when a video of a woman’s interview in a news report got widespread and the users started remixing that phrase into hundreds of memes.

[11] Sweet Brown / Ain't nobody got time for that. Know Your Meme. Retrieved March 16, 2022, from https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/sweet-brown-aint-nobody-got-time-for-that



Fig. 27 A collection of comments under the Drake meme in Figure 2

Using these common phrases as comments or reactions requires adequate knowledge of what can be understood within this community and not. The members have to have intertextual connections of either the origin or the other instances of the use of these phrases to appreciate them. The act of using such phrases, therefore, is a strong indicator of membership inside the community. Having a mixed code in the Turkish-English bilingual register can be counted as a distinct community practice for this particular group. This practice can be generalized to all sub-groups of the meme/caps community where the memes made by the pages target a bilingual audience with intentionally mixed registers on them.

The last commenting practice that is commonly observed is people tagging their friends under the meme posts for them to see. On the surface level, this does not serve a purpose any different than sending the meme post as a private message apart from it being public in the comment section, should the users decide to engage in conversation under that tag. It is simply a way of saying “hey, check this out” by a

user to the one they tagged. There exists an active choice between sending a meme post to someone as a private message and tagging someone which are almost equally convenient. The choice then, presumably attributes more meaning to the selected action in comparison to the other. For tagging, it could be the case that the users want to be more active or increase their visibility inside that community. What is significant about the tagging practice is that doing it reveals more than one membership at a time. We can assume that the user writing the tag has somewhat found the content relevant and tagged someone who is also potentially a meme/caps consumer, thus part of the community. The act itself can be considered a way of doing the core practice we have just mentioned, caps/meme sharing. Another common use of tagging accounts under the posts or comment section is for the purpose of humor, as demonstrated in Fig. 28. It is done by tagging an account or a person that is relevant to the topic instead but the person does not have to be a part of the conversation, nor they are expected to be so. Though, the tagged person actually joining the conversation could be a fun occasion for the users and it is not extremely unlikely on social media platforms like Twitter. Here in Figure 28., there is a screenshot of a meme that is posted in a comment section under an İncicaps post. Another account's comment with the tag of the account belonging to the Minister of Health, Dr. Fahrettin Koca is also visible under that comment. The meme translates "The corona Turkey takes precautions for" at the left frame and "The corona that should be taken precautions for" at the right. The meme itself is a criticism made to the government, emphasizing the alcoholic drinks (represented with Corona beer) getting harder to buy due to the government's tax policies while implying the same government making it not harder for Coronavirus to spread. Presumably, the second

member also agrees with the general criticism in the main post and in the comments and takes the humor forward via tagging the minister of health.



Fig. 28 A meme posted as a comment, and tagging of an individual

Reacting is the last general practice that can be done by the users on a social media platform. This practice is less significant in terms of the linguistic properties and interaction patterns of a community. However, it can be argued that reactions such as simple “likes” could be one of the driving forces of the continuity of content and comments in meme pages. More complex reactions, like on Facebook, allow users to show their individual stances towards the meme post more effectively than

simple “likes” without the need for commenting exclusively. But again, it is restricted and less interactive than commenting.

6.2 Participant data regarding community practices

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, a questionnaire was conducted to gain more insight into participants’ backgrounds, points of view on memes, and participation. The questionnaire had a total of 109 participants. 75% of the participants were between the ages of 18 and 24, while 21% percent were between 25 and 30. All of the participants were native speakers of Turkish with four of them having a secondary mother tongue. The participants reported speaking a vast scale of foreign languages, among which the most spoken ones were English by 99, German by 23, and French by 16 participants. In terms of proficiency, the participants reported varying English proficiency between B1 and C2 while for the other languages it mostly varied between A2 and B2. When asked about the time they allocated daily for browsing memes, 41% of them selected “one hour or less” 32% selected “one to three hours”, and 11% selected “three to five hours” while another 11% reported that they did not allocate any amount of time.

When the participants were asked about the criteria for liking or following a meme page or a community, 99 of them selected “the funniness of the shared content”, 59 of them found “absurdity” appealing, 45 of them preferred meme pages/groups sharing the same ideas, political views or general ideology with them, 26 of them preferred certain meme formats to be shared in those pages, 12 of them preferred the content to be in a foreign language they speak while another 12 preferred the pages also followed by their friends. Only three participants preferred memes to be only in their native language. The most frequently used social media

platforms to browse memes were reported as Instagram by 86, Twitter by 67, Whatsapp by 53, Reddit by 52, and Facebook by 29 participants. Some of the participants added their own options which were Tumblr, 4chan, Tiktok, Discord, and YouTube.

The distorted forms presented to participants in the questionnaire had the following percentages of familiarity, and use in Figure 29.

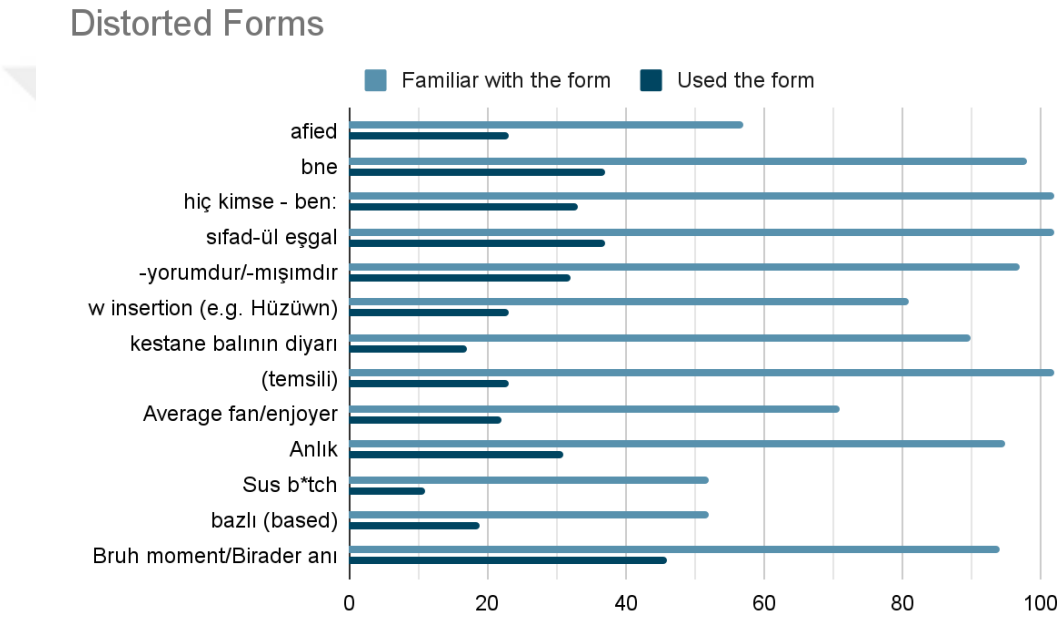


Fig. 29 The graph on familiarity and use of distorted forms

In addition to the statistics in this graph, 16 participants reported that they did not use any of the given forms in the questionnaire. However, each participant was familiar with at least one form. This section in the questionnaire had the option to add more choices, which had caught additional forms such as “bane” (distorted version of “bana ne” (none of my business), “ğ”(presumably used as an answer by giving an impression of the sound [ɯː]), and “olur gibi” (chicken translation of “be like”). It is quite evident that there is a considerable gap between the numbers of

familiarity and use, which can be explained by the ways of participating we discussed previously under social media affordances and group practices. The number of lurkers in those groups can be naturally expected to be surpassing the actively commenting or meme-making users. The question did not specify online or offline use, therefore the numbers showing the use of those forms can also include the commitment the members have in real everyday-life situations.

The next part of the questionnaire, which involved three distorted forms "-Iyorumdur / -mIşImdIr", "benim eşgal/sıfad-ül eşgal" and "Gorilla memes" (Hüzüwn, Kawhkaha, Efkar, etc.) yielded interesting results. The participants reported sharing memes involving these forms at least once by numbers of 36 for "-Iyorumdur / -mIşImdIr", 43 for "benim eşgal/sıfad-ül eşgal", and 55 for "Gorilla memes". The majority did not consider these forms weird or wrong, as only 15 participants selected that option, the maximum being seven for the form "benim eşgal/sıfad-ül eşgal". In terms of the feeling of belonging, however, the participant opinions differed almost one to two. For the three memes combined (a total of 327 possible instances of choice), there were a total of 113 instances where the participants chose the option "I think those who use this form belong to or form a group" while there were 118 instances of "I do not think I am in the same group with those who use this form". It can be argued that these results indicate the existence of a group or community concept in the participants' minds, regardless of their stance towards such a group.

The results of the next two parts of the questionnaire again present an insight into the practices of the participants. Some questions did not result in a clear sign of agreement or disagreement, so I will discuss the ones which show a significant difference in agreement. 75% browsed memes daily, 58% reacted to the memes they

liked, but only 7% stated that they commented under the memes on platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Similarly, the ratio of those who reported that they share memes on their own profiles was also low, at 23%. However, the numbers favor the act of sharing when it comes to the platforms such as Whatsapp or Telegram. These are the platforms where people in the groups often have a closer relationship than those who are in pages/groups with mass follower counts on other social media platforms. The existence of these close connections, in turn, supports the existence of a CofP among those who share memes. 55% of the participants reported using the meme forms in speech or as written text messages in their daily lives, and 67% stated they were saving or archiving the memes they liked. While 57% dispreferred making and sharing their own memes, 61% stated they use the memes they saved/archived to give an answer to someone. Similar to the contrastive results between massive social media (Instagram/Twitter/Facebook) and personal messaging apps (e.g Whatsapp), 58% of the participants reported that they did not prefer sharing memes with people with whom they do not have a close relationship. In addition, the results showed a dispreference towards tagging friends under memes, which was selected by 70% of the participants as so. Also, 74% of the participants did not engage in forming friendships around the meme groups on these massive social media platforms. 61% of the participants reported feeling close to people who make or share memes, another finding that strengthens the argument for close relationships in CofPs. From what is observed from the answers, memes have become quite the norm as 72% of the participants reported that it did not feel odd when they came across a meme outside social media platforms.

Coming onto the questionnaire section that was targeted at those who make memes, out of 109 participants, between 39 and 41 participants chose to state their

opinions in this section (as it was kept optional). 41% of those reported that they targeted popular formats while making memes. For 46% of the participants, the likes or reactions they are getting for their memes were marked as not very important. Another 46% liked to interact with people in the comment sections under their memes, and 47% felt like a part of the communities they posted memes. On the subject of their memes being used by other people as if they created that meme themselves, only 47% stated that they would feel angry about it. On the other hand, 70% reported that if a meme format they created became popular and were used by other people, they would feel good about it. Though memes nowadays can be used as advertisements, as demonstrated in the previous chapter (Fig. 21), only 10% of the participants reported that they contemplate a job at least once where they can get paid by making memes.

6.3 Membership and identity

Considering the site mottos of Bobiler and Güldüm.net mentioned previously, some of the platforms have explicit terms of membership ideals. For Bobiler, it meant to play with the reality via edited images whilst for Güldüm.net it meant collecting all kinds of memes most probably to prevent memes from getting lost in the endless scape of the Internet. One can assume a member of such platforms would agree on these predetermined functions and adjust their practices within the community accordingly. However, in some platforms and many groups or communities where people share memes, such clear directives are not always present for members. This being said, in such places we instead observe jointly negotiated practices and use of language for membership claims.

Distorted language use, as mentioned before, is a fairly common format that shows itself in various templates. The case in Figure 26 demonstrates the use of a meme, previously used exclusively within a small community, by a company account in the scope of a relatively larger community. This meme makes use of gorilla photographs with texts transformed with language distortion often depicting the theme in the used photograph. The distortion of this meme consists of using "w" instead of "m" or sometimes other letters, inserting "w" in available consonant clusters, and/or using simplified or infinitival verbs.

Interactional behavior of the users in the comment section mostly involves both previously-known and newly-made transformed texts written by them such as "Kawga" ("Kavga" (Fight)), "Kowik olmak ben gülmek"("Komik olmak ben gülmek" (it be funny, me laugh)), "HÜZÜWN"("hüzün" (sadness)) (and others seen in Fig. 26), etc.

One interesting theme in the comment section is people claiming this meme to be currently used by "Normies" as they call it. They further stated that because of this, the meme was dead or not valuable/funny anymore. In addition, the person claiming to be the creator of this meme stated more or less the same idea by tweeting "Anasını ağlattınız mis gibi meme'in"[12] (You made this excellent meme suffer (lit. you made the mother of this sweet meme cry)) as a reply to Netflix's tweet in Figure 25 and further saying "Arkadaşlar yine normieler kazandı" (Friends, the normies have won again).

This instance is a great example of evidence for the existence of a micro-CofP that claims the ownership of this meme. The members are aware of a distinction

[12] The discourse is accessible at https://twitter.com/jahreindota/status/1333703574191288321

between those who are in the community and those who are not (normies) through the use of a core practice. Of course, it should be noted that I argue for the existence of a greater community where everyone who shares and consume memes is a member. This example can be argued to demonstrate a membership clash between the subgroups of this greater community. Presumably, this subgroup wants this meme format to stay exclusive to the members and the discourse channels of the group. Seeing it being used by a popular platform's Twitter account creates the impression that the meme has been normalized or even defiled due to non-member use, hence the reaction.

Apart from the identity of being a meme community member, it is possible to observe people constructing identities of self and others through memes and comments. Figure 30 shows a drawing of a person sitting in an inconvenient position in front of the computer while typing. The written element is intended to show what this figure is typing to communicate his/her message. It translates as "You have destroyed the education system, you have destroyed our youth. What else do you want from us? Generation Z is coming fast and furiously and you have no clue. We will see you in 2023". The message includes elements from recent political issues as well as the generational term, Gen Z. The hashtags further gives the impression that this message is posted on a platform that allows hashtags as topics for discussion, such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. Finally, the Instagram account (might also be the content author) shares this post on their Instagram profile adding "aynen kardeşim" (exactly my brother) as the title which can be interpreted as an ironic reply to the persona in this image.



Fig. 30 A meme mocking Gen Z

Delving into the comment section reveals various identity constructions via indexing. Although it was not mentioned anywhere on the post, there were comments attributing this type of mindset to “leftists” and to “followers of leftist media”. Indexing such ideology to “leftism” was also done via humor by wordplay of “Solcu gazete” (The Leftist Journal) into “solak gazete” (left-handed newspaper), and ironic remarks such as “solcu gazete takipçileri olur gibi” (Followers of the leftist journal be like) or “Solcu gazete takipçileriyle dalga geçmen hiç hoş değil” (It is not nice that you mock the leftist journal followers). People also accused the meme-poster of being a “Rightwing” or “pro-government” person who tries to negatively criticize this Gen Z persona, further strengthening the indexes of “leftism” this particular meme has.

The age and generation aspect mentioned in the meme was also a part of the discussion under the comments. The figure portrayed as belonging to Gen Z hints at a mindset behind the meme that criticizes them, possibly a Gen Y person which is popularly seen as an ideologically contrasting group to Gen Z alongside Baby Boomers in this discourse. This clash comes with indexes of “Gen Z being a target” and “feeling of coolness or superiority of Gen Y”. Some comments also imply that Gen Z is being ignorant and naïve via ironic remarks voicing the phrase “gümbür gümbür”.

Figure 31 shows another identity construction of a group via the use of voicing. The meme’s concept is adjusted slightly to accommodate the author’s needs from “Are ya winning son?” to “Are you OK son?” implying the misfortune the character in focus experienced. The identity of the character belongs to the group of “guest workers and their families” commonly referred to as “Gurbetçi” or “Al(a)mancı” in Turkish. The misfortune of his and his family’s deportation from Germany back to Turkey was the focus of the Turkish media and humor pages for some time. This meme post’s comment section reveals non-group participants’ ways of constructing an identity for that group with heavy use of current political and economic aspects, as well as heavy code-mixing.



Fig. 31 A meme about the guest-worker mishap

The majority of the comment section (Figure 32) involves people posting in Turkish-German bilingual sentences. It is clear that these type of comments reflects the linguistic tendencies of members belonging to the group of guest workers, indexing this bilingual identity to make negative criticism. A common method observed is using frequent words in German such as “Mama” and “Papa” or “Nein”, but conveying the rest of the message mostly in Turkish.

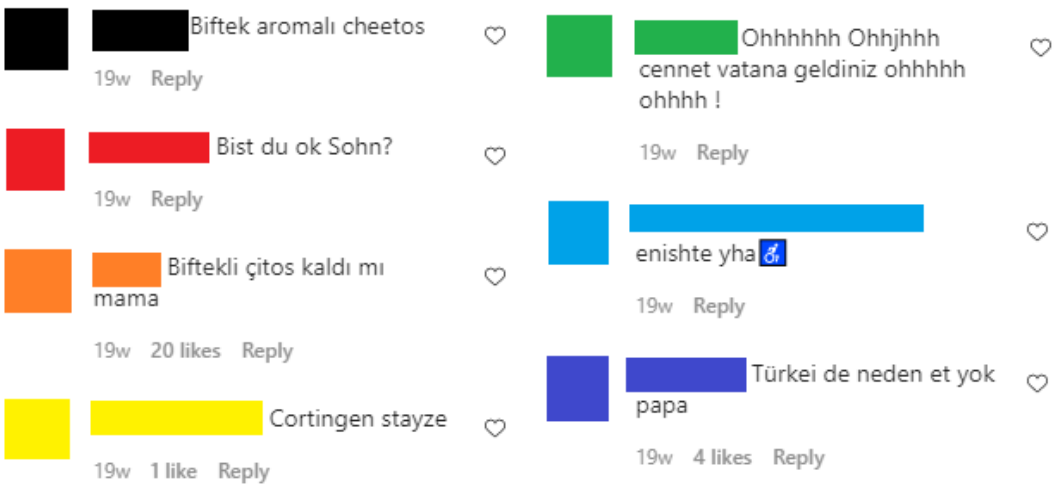


Fig. 32 A selection of comments under the guest-worker meme

Voicing in economic and political themes mostly involves the use of food items such as “Biftek” (steak) and “Et sote” (sauteed meat). The reason why such remarks are used dates back to the recent history of an ongoing clash between “Gurbetçi” (guest-workers) and native Turks on the subject of market prices and the diminishing value of the Turkish Lira. It is widely suggested by the natives that the current government is the reason for this economic crisis, hence being unable to purchase meat products easily. On the other side, “Gurbetçi” groups pose as pro-government while living abroad and remain unaffected by the economic grounds in Turkey, which causes negative reactions by the natives. It can be observed in an ironic remark voicing guest-workers’ stereotypical phrase “cennet vatan” (paradise homeland) in “ohhhhhh ohhjhhh cennet vatana geldiniz ohhhhh ohhhh !” (oh oh, you have come to your paradise homeland, oh oh), where this “oh” is a sigh of spite or satisfaction. Prime satirical examples include “Nein papa Nudel yemeyeceğim et sote istiyorum” (No papa I will not eat noodles, I want sauteed meat), “Biftekli çitos kaldı mı mama” (Is there any steak-flavored Cheetos left, mama?) and “Turkei de neden et yok papa” (Why is there no meat in Turkey papa?).

After the previous discussion of constructing an identity of “self” through memes, now we can observe how these two meme examples and related comments demonstrate the construction of an identity of “other” by the members. A simple voicing strategy used in the first meme and phrases like “gümbür gümbür” show how they alone index a certain ideology (leftism) associated with that particular generational group and how the existence of this criticism alone can index an opposing generational group, as seen with the attribution of right-wing upon the admin. The second meme’s comment section uses the memetic strategy of foreign effect as code-mixing to imitate a stereotypical Turkish guest-worker in Germany. Frequent utilization of Turkish-German sentences as well as the invocation of their arguments and mentality are used to create this indexical field of negative stances towards that identity.

6.4 Caps or meme, what is the perception of the culture?

Throughout the thesis, we have called these text-over-image tokens various things such as Memes, Caps, Monte, and Enthymeme. We have also argued that Monte culture was based more on photoshopped images than actual memes we see predominantly on social media. Then, what about Caps? Does this form from 2009 hold the same cultural elements in its background as the contemporary Meme culture in Turkish social media? To answer this question I have included one last question in the questionnaire which asked whether the participants observed a difference between Caps and memes. This was an open-ended question that yielded many answers with different points of view. The two images shown in Figure 33 were given as two examples of these two kinds. The image on the left is a stereotypical Caps featuring İlber Ortaylı, a historian, who is also commonly seen as someone

incredibly knowledgeable, and someone who has a negative stance against ignorant people. The Caps voices him as “7 dilden az bilen soru sormasın rica ediyorum” (I kindly ask those who do not speak at least seven languages to not ask any questions (to me)). The meme on the right voices the character in the corner labeled with the Turkish flag as “Siz eğlenin merak etmeyin benim aşılarım tam” (Enjoy yourselves, do not worry about me, my vaccinations are complete.) while other characters in the meme are labeled with other country flags and depicted as having fun. It is a criticism against the wording on the yellow masks of people serving in the tourism industry in Turkey during the Corona period which reads as “Enjoy, I’m vaccinated”. Although the answers were of qualitative nature, they were sorted into three categories which were (i) agreed on the forms having a cultural difference, (ii) agreed on the forms belonging to the same culture, and (iii) who remained “undecided”. The results were quite interesting as 47 participants stated they were different while 46 participants stated they were the same or at least a similar culture. With 11 participants being undecided, a total of 104 participants gave their opinions on the issue. There were surprisingly detailed answers on both sides some of which I will discuss in this chapter.



Fig. 33 Two images given in the questionnaire for Caps-Meme discussion

There are many reasons to think Caps and Memes belong to the same culture as they both propagate with images on which there are texts that are often manipulated with wordplay or distorted use of language. They are both mostly exclusive to social media use. Compiling the participant responses agreeing on the "same culture" option, they mostly state that they are two separate pieces of the same culture. According to them, they are two movements that emerged without the knowledge of each other's existence. The people that once created Caps and participated in that culture are the same as those who create contemporary memes on Turkish social media. They belong to different timelines but serve the same function. On the timeline argument, one participant specified that if these two forms are seen at the same time period, then they would likely belong to separate cultures or mindsets. Caps were seen as acceptable in terms of the basicness of their "boring" format at their times of popularity, and they are stated to have evolved into Memes as time went by.

There are also many reasons for not considering Caps and Memes as two pieces of the same culture. It is known that Caps have been exclusive to the social media platforms of İnci Sözlük or groups and pages that identified themselves as being related to that community, unlike memes which are used in a vast selection of social media channels. Some of the participants in the study gave their own reasonings for the "separate culture" argument which can be listed as the following. Caps were stated to be dwelling on the same subjects while Memes changed both in shape and subject over the years. Memes have a more straightforward language while Caps have a unique language and user base. Caps have the sole purpose of fun, differing from Memes which mostly draw attention to a message or an event. The

humor in Caps was stated to be crude, shallow, and limited while Memes can reach the levels of post-irony. Some felt that Memes appeal to a global audience whilst Caps are extremely local and they are not able to evolve into novel forms.

Combined with the opinions of the undecided participants, the general view is that Caps and Memes are asynchronous entities serving more or less similar functions. It is a general opinion that Caps are much more archaic and limited. We can talk about a transition made from Caps to Memes, though the remaining Caps communities synchronous with Meme communities would be likely to reflect a different, traditional or local mindset (e.g. Anti-İmamoğlu Caps in Figure 24). While these opinions are a valuable contribution to our discussion, it is wise to take them with a pinch of salt for further studies regarding these two communities as the participant count is quite limited to determine a concrete verdict. Overall, this discussion provides an insight into the roots of the meme culture in Turkish social media and how it differs from its predecessors.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

So far, we have discussed a variety of topics starting from the core concepts of a Meme, then discussing and determining suitable frameworks to later apply to the data collected from Turkish social media. Here, I would like to summarize the system and the motives of my analysis, answer the research questions I stated previously, and discuss possible follow-up research relevant to this thesis.

We have talked about the roots of the term Meme and how the use of the term was seen as a misconception. Instead, the term Enthymeme was suggested by Wiggins (2019) with the reasoning that Enthymemes can hold key points of an argumentation, the rest of which to be supplied by the people browsing memes. From the various examples discussed in this thesis, it should already be clear that many internet memes do have that argumentation aspect in them. They do so much more than simply existing as humorous text-over-image tokens or viral videos. Internet memes have linguistic strategies in their textual domain that can reflect how speakers of that language engage in wordplay, distortion of words, narration, bilingual discourse, and many more. I attempted to capture these strategies with attributes that were determined as a result of an observation over a dataset and built upon already existing attempts (Vasquez & Aslan, 2021) to define these strategies. The strategies were designed to answer the first two research questions of this thesis regarding the organization of textual elements, and language play. From what the dataset shows, this set of strategies can be ordered by frequency as Framing, Voicing, Foreign Effect, Labeling, Distorted Use of Language, Narration, Register Humor/Style Shifting, and Wordplay. This thesis' points of origin, the distorted forms proved to

be an interesting concept as it houses many ways to manipulate the textual domain of memes, and the resulting variants show different levels of integrity and lifespan. Some of the distorted variants were pre-dating internet memes, going as far as to old messaging apps (MSN Messenger, ICQ, or SMS) era, which was the use of "-ion" instead of "-Iyorsun" (2nd person, progressive aspect suffix). A new use, "-mIşImdır/-iyorumdur" emerged as a memetic form that could be on its way to becoming a new standard variant, while another distorted variant "w insertion and infinitives" died out rather quickly due to lack of iteration.

The aforementioned strategies alone can only explain so much about the intricacies of language in internet memes. Therefore, I utilized the framework of indexicality to better explain how the semiotics and context work hand-in-hand to achieve the humor and intended message in complex memes. A simple one-sentence meme as in Figure 22 can have multiple layers of indexicality that are constructed in an order to constitute an indexical field where this meme can have, in Eckert's (2008) terms, a "constellation of meaning". This meaning-making works in accordance with the sociolinguistic scale (Blommaert, 2015), where a certain scope of communicability is required for the successful consumption of these multimodal tokens. With that, we realize that internet memes also have consumers which have to constitute some kind of a community that can appreciate and understand the multiple levels of meaning and context in memes. This community has to have a shared repertoire in order to employ and maintain intertextual connections. There have already been attempts to describe this community, namely Shifman's (2014) Participatory Culture, and Wiggins's Digital Culture. I have tried a different approach with the Community of Practice framework which, in fact, shared quite a bit of similarity to the other attempts in terms of some concepts and dynamics (e.g.

Hypermemetic (Shifman, 2014), and intermemetic-referentiality (Wiggins, 2019) that can be roughly captured by intertextuality). I trust that emphasizing the practice aspect of meme-making, meme-sharing, and commenting in these communities would contribute to the literature on memes with an alternative way of looking at this concept. We have talked about different affordances of different social media platforms which eventually affect the availability of possible practices. However, the four most integral practices which are meme-making, meme-sharing, commenting, and reacting can be done almost on any major social media platform. While the existence of memes is the backbone of these communities, commenting practice reveals many interesting phenomena for the domain of sociolinguistic studies. There are ways of claiming active membership by tagging friends or joining the discussions. Constructing the identity of the "self" and the "other" via indexing is also a substantial process happening in the comment sections, as demonstrated in this study. In addition, the use of forms and variants seen in visual memes surges into the comment sections which strengthens the claim of these communities' existence. Knowing what to post, requires taking other members' intertextual repertoire and shared enterprise into consideration. If, for example, one member writes the distorted form "Afied" (Figure 3) in a comment section, we can state that this user is making a strong membership claim, affecting and negotiating the practices of the community. Memetic forms' being surged into comment sections via remixing and reiteration is quite an interesting phenomenon because it expands the effective domain of these forms from memes into more communicative functions. According to the participants of the questionnaire, distorted and remixed forms are already in use for replying to someone. Though the questionnaire was not able to survey it precisely, I have witnessed some of these forms emerging in a casual speech many times (recall "little

little into the middle" joke). As the line between the memetic use and the communicative use wears thin, the linguistic implications of internet memes broaden.

This study has focused on textual strategies, indexicality, and community of practice aspects of Memes and their users. For further research, I see great potential in a study focusing on bilingual discourse and code-mixing around Meme communities. As mentioned earlier, the emergence of memetic forms in the domain of speech still remains obscure. While there are studies that document the physical application of memetic activity in the real world, a study focusing on verbal memes would surely be a great contribution. The multimodality aspect of memes seems to bear an interesting and fruitful area of research. Considering social media platforms' improvement and widespread availability in the past 15 years, one would expect even more channels of interaction to be available in the near future where the use of memes will certainly be a part of this kind of communication.

APPENDIX A

FURTHER EXPLANATIONS FOR THE MEMES AND THEIR CONTEXT

Anti-Joke Chicken (Fig. 1):

This meme is a variant of early memes where the template consists of two texts that are at the top and bottom of the image, and an image depending on the function of the formant is presented in the middle. The background color used also has a strict association with the memes. In this case, the red background color, as well as the chicken head in the middle, are inseparable parts of this meme and any changes made into that domain can either result in a new variant or be found unacceptable by the community. This particular meme presents an anti-joke in two parts where the top text is the build-up and the bottom is the supposed punchline. Because it is anti-joke humor, the users try to manipulate the punchline into something as unfunny or logical as possible while generating the meme.

Drake meme (Fig. 2, 24):

The meme is formed via four panels where two screenshots from Drake's music video are used on the left side and the content that is to be presented stays on the right side. The meme is constructed as two contrasting sides that are the top and the bottom parts where the content interacts horizontally with Drake's gestures. The content can be an image or text. The texts used often describe two different situations formed as gerundive constructions.

Planking:

Planking is described to be a photo fad where people have their photos taken while they are lying face down on different objects or places[13]. These photos were posted online which leads even more people into doing the same and sharing them online. It is one of the prime examples where a trend (or a meme if you will) interacts with the non-digital world so profoundly.

241543903 / Heads in Freezers:

Heads in Freezers is another photo fad where people have their photos taken whilst their heads are inside their freezers. Typing the code "241543903" results in this type of photos in online search engines. According to Knowyourmeme[14], this code was written on the title of the first ever online post featuring a person with his head inside a freezer. The spread was possible through instructions for recreating the same pose and writing this specific code.

Kilroy was here:

"Kilroy was here" is a graffiti meme where people would write this exact phrase in random locations often with a doodle depicting a bald man with a big nose. According to Shifman (2014), the origin of the meme is debated to be a shipyard inspector who would write "Kilroy was here" on machine parts to indicate that they were inspected by him. The spread was stated to be made by Allied forces in WW2, who saw this phrase in most unexpected places and decided to reiterate it by further scribing it to diverse surfaces.

[13] The description for "planking" is summarized from Knowyourmeme. Further information and examples can be found at https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/planking [Accessed 16.06.2022]
[14] Additional information on the origin and the spread of the "heads in the freezer meme" can be found at https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/241543903-heads-in-freezers [Accessed. 17.06.2022]

Bad Joke Eel (Fig. 9):

Bad Joke Eel is a meme similar to Anti-joke Chicken in that they have the formatting features of early internet memes where top and bottom texts are accompanied by an image of a face. In this meme, the top text starts the build-up of a joke and the bottom text is the punchline. As the name implies, the jokes told via this meme are considered bad or very cheesy often involving puns. The image of the eel in the middle can be argued to be put there in order to represent a joke teller in the context. The facial features can be interpreted as someone who has just told a joke and put on a smile expecting a positive reception for his joke.

-Iyorumdur/-mIşImdIr:

Although these two morphological structures have become the name to refer to such use, Twitter users who utilize these forms often use them in question formats as well (e.g. “Sizce ben X yapmış mıyımdır?” (do you think that I might have done X?)). The form appears mostly on videos and memes but they exist as tweets or textual posts on social media as well.

When X / X When (Fig. 10):

“When X” is a commonly used format to set a context in memes. It has a use similar to “My face when / mfw” memes where the captioning text sets a context followed by an image relating to that context. In addition to the –Iyorumdur/-mIşImdIr format which was argued by Kartal (2021) to have parallelism to “When X” memes, other formats such as “X yaparken bne” (me while doing X) are also commonly observed among Turkish memes.

Clueless Padme meme (Fig. 11, 12):

Clueless Padme (aka. For the better right?) meme format works with four panels that are intended to be read in a series from top left to bottom right. The meme introduces screenshots from the movie Star Wars II: Attack of the Clones where two characters, Anakin and Padme, are talking. The meme originated independently from the context of this talk[15]. Instead, the facial gestures of the characters are used to put across a situation where Anakin (the first character in the meme) has unclear intentions while Padme (the second character) is naïve and unaware of such intentions in the first half. The third panel introduces a facial gesture with no text, implying the naïve guess made in the second panel is wrong and the intentions are presumably something malicious or controversial. Lastly, the fourth panel introduces the face of Padme who starts to slowly realize the existence of such intentions. The text on this fourth panel is a repetition of the question asked in the second panel to get confirmation of the intentions. The meme can be generated by keeping the original faces by labeling them with texts and other imagery as different entities. Besides that, images that can imply the same interaction structure can replace the original ones (e.g. Fig. 12), eliminating the need for labeling.

[15] Additional documentation on Clueless Padme meme and various examples can be found at https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/for-the-better-right [Accessed 18.06.2022]

Evil X be like (Fig. 13):

"Evil X be like" is a meme format where a popular figure's acts, views, or utterances are twisted into stating the opposite. To enhance this contrast, the visuals are also filtered with the negative photo effect where the colors are reversed. The memes made in this format usually have the same title where only "X" changes into the name of the character in the context while the rest remaining as it is.

No one: …

me: …:

This format is another context-setting text that is used to imply the randomness of one's actions depicted in memes. The phrase "No one:" can be replaced by another entity in order to address the reaction to it. However, when used as "No one:", it implies the following action is done by the user without a reason or without an addressee to react to. It has the Turkish version "Hiç kimse: … ben: …" which is commonly observed alongside images shared on social media.

My face when / benim sıfad-ül eşgal:

"My face when / mfw" phrase is used to set a context which is followed by an image that depicts a reaction to that particular context. This type of meme has been borrowed by Turkish meme communities with the translation such as "benim surat" or "benim sıfat" which later evolved into the distorted form "benim sıfad-ül eşgal" (lit. the face of my face). The Turkish version has other forms such as "benim kafa" (my head), and "benim kafanın tomografisi" (the tomography of my head) all to put across a facial, gestural, or stance reaction.

Gorilla memes w insertion (fig 25, 26):

The gorilla memes were stated to be a result of the interaction in communities based around Jahrein, a Twitch streamer and a Twitter personality. These memes involve gorilla photos with distorted captions related to the situation in the photo (e.g. an angry gorilla captioned as “Kawga” (Kavga (Fight)). The distortion made into the textual part of the meme includes verbs as infinitival forms to mimic a kind of primitive speech, and the use of the letter “w” inserted into consonant clusters or as a replacement to “v”. The meme predominantly serves as an image material to react to someone, replacing text. With that function, it resembles some of the early Turkish Caps which were used as reaction tokens (e.g. Fig.6 and 7).

Average fan – Average Enjoyer:

“Average X fan vs Average Y Enjoyer” is a meme format where two things are compared side by side. The part attributed to “Average X fan” often corresponds to something that is dispreferred or looked down upon represented with ugly or non-masculine characters while the “Average Y enjoyer” corresponds to something that is desired or commendable, represented by handsome or masculine characters. Another format that is called “Virgin X vs. Chad Y” functions exactly like this format.

Bruh moment:

"Bruh" is a slang expression used for reacting to a range of feelings including disappointment and embarrassment[16]. Its spread was via a sound effect of "bruh" montaged on funny clips, where it eventually evolved into "bruh moment" to describe such moments. The term "bruh moment" is borrowed as it is by Turkish meme communities that post memes in bilingual discourse. There also exist mock translations of the phrase such as "bruh moment anı" (bruh moment moment) and "birader anı" (brother moment) that are used alongside the original phrase.

A narrative meme (Fig. 14):

This meme format has a narrative created by the descending text near the human figure. The language used in the text is crafted via distorting "-Iyorsun" (2sg. progressive aspect suffix) into the fast speech variant "-Iyon". When the meme presents a drawn human figure, the second person use in the text is an impersonal "you" which either generalizes the narrative or refers to the user making the meme. The drawn figure is observed to be replaced by real-life people, usually politicians, which then shifts the referent of this impersonal "you" to that figure. In that case, the narrative text then narrates the events that occurred around this person or their acts.

Who killed Hannibal (Fig. 17):

This is a two-panel meme where the first panel depicts a person shooting another person sitting in the background. In the second panel, his face is turned towards the audience and the bottom text is voiced by him. The original line that was uttered by him in the show was "Who killed Hannibal?" (Hannibal being the person he shot).

[16] Additional information on the "Bruh moment" meme can be found at https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/bruh-moment [Accessed 18.06.2022]

The meme format, therefore, depicts a deliberate malicious action towards another party, which ends in the action-doer's pretention of not being involved or knowledgeable in the occurrence of this event. The meme is reiterated by the labeling of these two people as two related entities in the context, and the bottom text is a question such as "Why would X do this?".

Conservative İmamoğlu memes (Fig 18, 23):

This refers to a series of memes where Ekrem İmamoğlu, the current mayor of İstanbul, is portrayed ironically as a conservative figure with heavily photoshopped images of him. Notable examples include him having a beard (Fig. 18), such as a conservative and pro-Islam person would have, and him portrayed alongside Arabic and Islamic imagery (Fig. 23). There is not a concrete format (unlike a 4-panel meme for example) for this series of memes. However, one could argue that the trend of his portrayal as such can constitute a format the users can work on. Therefore, I suggest including such memes under this format and leaving memes such as in Figure 24 out of this group, as the motives, imagery, and the community are different.

Atatürk meme (Fig. 22):

"Atatürk meme" refers to a series of memes where pictures of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, are used alongside texts that would mock the religious phrases and lifestyle by parodying a laic and secular mindset. The image is constructed similar to other images where historical people are presented with their influential quotes. Therefore, the text in such memes intends to voice Atatürk, enhancing the modern and laic reading of the text. Notable examples include the use of "açlık festivali" (hunger festival) or "şeker festivali" (candy

festival) for Eid-al-Fitr (fasting holiday) and “barbekü festivali” (barbecue festival) for Eid-al-Adha (festival of the sacrifice).

Sweet Brown / Ain't nobody got time for that (Pg. 94):

According to Knowyourmeme[17] “Sweet Brown” is a nickname referring to a person who got famous due to one street interview she gave. She says the phrase “Ain’t nobody got time for that” which has become the catchphrase of the series of memes that followed after the interview video has got widespread.

Are ya winning/ok son (Fig. 31):

This meme format portrays a stick figure of a father entering a room where his son is situated. The phrase “Are you winning, son?” is situated on top of the father figure which implies he is the one talking. Another popular version of the text is “Are you OK, son”, which was the one used in Figure 31. Widespread examples include the son figure playing video games on his computer, so the father is portrayed as a positive and supporting figure while some examples depict the son as a sad, depressed, or suicidal person, which implies he is not OK nor winning.

[17] More information on the “Sweet Brown / Ain’t nobody got time for that” meme can be found at https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/sweet-brown-aint-nobody-got-time-for-that [Accessed 19.06.2022]

APPENDIX B

SOURCES OF THE IMAGES SHOWN IN THE FIGURES

Figure 1. Anti-joke Chicken [Digital Image]. (). Retrieved from https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/anti-joke-chicken

Figure 2. Drake meme [Digital Image]. (2021). Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/COAxuJ9FNbz/

Figure 3. Distorted form “Afied” in comments [Screenshot]. (2021) Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/CV7gsobsWKT/

Figure 4. Typical holiday celebration cards (left) and digital images (right):

Holiday card [Digital image]. (n.d). Retrieved from https://www.modamuzayede.com/urun/1795309/kartpostal-nadir-cumhuriyet-donemi-turkce-sursajli-fantezi-gofre-bayram-karti

Holiday celebration [Digital image]. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://i.ytimg.com/vi/LQUhe3VQWJc/maxresdefault.jpg

Figure 5. A typical Caps [Digital Image]. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.pinterest.com/pin/186758715771421914/

Figure 6. Ending a Conversation via a Caps [Digital Image]. (2019) Retrieved from https://eksiup.com/p/tb525582xzmn

Figure 7. Insulting Caps [Digital Image]. (2019). Retrieved from https://twitter.com/rontgenciderler/status/1197621325642289152

Figure 8. Foreign meme format constructed in Turkish [Digital image]. (2021). Retrieved from https://guldum.net/post/650725805580828672/

Figure 9. Bad joke eel [Digital Image]. (2012). Retrieved from https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/234788-bad-joke-eel

Figure 10. A “when x / x when” meme [Digital Image]. (2019). Retrieved from https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/when-x-x-when

Figure 11. Turkey-Cyprus Clueless Padme meme [Digital Image]. (2021). Retrieved from https://twitter.com/hicetikdegill/status/1400458547121430528

Figure 12. Another version of Clueless Padme remixed with historical figures [Digital Image]. (2021). Retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/TurkeyJerky/comments/nrbmet/yes_for_sure/

Figure 13. Evil Sedat Peker be like meme [Screenshot]. (2021). Retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/TurkeyJerky/comments/qcmezu/evil_sedat_peker_be_like/

Figure 14. A narrative meme [Digital Image]. (2019). Retrieved from https://guldum.net/post/182391490713/

Figure 15. Full lockdown Meme [Screenshot]. (2021). (the original tweet in the screenshot is no longer available). Image retrievable in https://guldum.net/post/649989813314961408/

Figure 17. A political meme with labeling and voicing [Digital Image]. (2022). Retrieved from https://9gag.com/gag/a818gEe

Figure 18. A meme style-shifting into a typical Facebook post [Digital Image]. (2022). Retrieved from https://twitter.com/memessturca/status/1484114874162683907

Figure 19. Caps with visual Narration [Digital Image]. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.pinterest.se/pin/606578643532911071/

Figure 20. Double entendre wordplay memes:

"Dizmişiz" [Digital Image]. (2022). Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/CY9wg9FM7z3/

"Sırtlanmışız" [Digital Image]. (2022). Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/CYxDVirsPfh/

Figure 21. Distorted use of language in advertisement memes:

Hepsiburada advertisement [Screenshot]. (n.d.). (original source no longer available)

Insurance advertisement video [Screenshot]. (2021). Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/CVPekdOKax0/

Figure 22. Meme with register humor/style shifting "açlık festivali"[Digital Image]. (2021). Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/CNj7SEtBOVw/

Figure 23. Register humor meme "İmamoğlu the leader of ummah" [Digital Image]. (2021). https://twitter.com/jounochii/status/1400194538015277057/photo/4

Figure 24. İmamoğlu in a Drake meme [Screenshot]. (2022). Retrieved from https://twitter.com/misvakcaps/status/1485911033222995972

Figure 25. An Instagram post about Netflix sharing a gorilla meme [Digital Image]. (2020). Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/CIQmttFJE-T46SlokuDo61O-vJ9T502bn33d2s0/

Figure 26. A screenshot of the comment section under the post in Figure 25. [Screenshot]. (2020). Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/CIQmttFJE-T46SlokuDo61O-vJ9T502bn33d2s0/

Figure 27. A collection of comments under the Drake meme in Figure 2 [Compiled Screenshots]. (2021). Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/COAxuJ9FNbz/

Figure 28. A meme posted as a comment, and tagging of an individual [Screenshot]. (2021). Retrieved from https://twitter.com/Mhderszz/status/1387446092669853708

Figure 30. A meme mocking Gen Z [Digital Image]. (2021). Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/CLkFjCsBZ1l/

Figure 31. A meme about the guest-worker mishap [Digital Image]. (2020). Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/CJBqkqFhczF/

Figure 32. A selection of comments under the guest-worker meme. (2020). Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/CJBqkqFhczF/

Figure 33. Two images given in the questionnaire for Caps-Meme discussion:

Caps example [Digital Image].(n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.ensonhaber.com/galeri/ilber-ortayli-capsleri

Modern meme example [Digital Image] (2021). Retrieved from https://guldum.net/post/652628754108121088/

APPENDIX C

THE QUESTIONNAIRE GIVEN TO THE PARTICIPANTS

Caps ve Memeler üzerine Yüksek Lisans Araştırması

Sayın Katılımcı,

bu çalışma Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Dilbilim Bölümü yüksek lisans öğrencisi Ümit Can TUNÇER tarafından Doç. Dr. Didar AKAR danışmanlığında yürütülen bir yüksek lisans tezi çalışmasıdır.

Bu çalışmanın amacı sosyal medya platformlarında sıkça karşılaşılan yazılı ve görsel içerikli olan Caps ve Memeleri (miim) kullanan ve takip edenlerin bu formlar hakkındaki bilgilerini ve görüşlerini edinmektir. Aynı zamanda kişisel Caps/meme kullanım alışkanlıklarınız hakkında sorular da mevcuttur.

Araştırma sırasında toplanan veriler anonim olarak değerlendirelecek olup kimliğiniz üçüncü partilerle paylaşılmayacak, kimliğinizi açığa çıkaracak herhangi bir veri yapılan tez çalışmasına yansıtılmayacaktır. Toplanan veri, ankete verdiğiniz cevaplarla kimliğiniz bağdaştırılamayacak şekilde saklanacaktır.

Bu ankette size verilen yerleri eksiksiz bir biçimde işaretlemeniz ve gerekli yerlerde kısa cevaplar yazmanız istenecektir. Anket yaklaşık 15 dakika sürmektedir. Ankete katılım tamamen gönüllülük esaslıdır. Anketin tamamlanması maddi ve ya manevi bir mükafat getirmemektedir. Çalışmanın herhangi bir noktasında çalışmaya devam etmemeyi tercih edebilir ve katılımı bırakabilirsiniz. Çalışmaya devam etmediğiniz takdirde bunun size olumsuz bir yansıması olmayacaktır.

Bu çalışmaya sağladığınız katkı için çok teşekkür ederiz. Anket ve araştırmayla ilgili herhangi bir sorunuzu ve ya karşılaştığınız problemleri aşağıdaki iletişim bilgilerine yönlendirebilirsiniz.

Ümit Can Tunçer - umit.tuncer@boun.edu.tr
Doç. Dr. Didar Akar - akar@boun.edu.tr

Eğer ilgili haklarınız ya da etik konusunda kaygılarınız var ise üniversitenin etik kuruluna aşağıdaki e-posta adresinden danışabilirsiniz.

sbe-ethics@boun.edu.tr

Not: Katılım için 18 yaş ve üzerinde olmanız zorunludur

* Required

1. **Yukarıdaki metni okudum ve çalışmanın amacını anladım. 18 yaş ve üzerindeyim. Çalışmaya katılmayı kabul ediyorum. ***

Check all that apply.

☐ Evet, kabul ediyorum

Bilgiler

2. Yaşınız *

3. Öğrenim dereceniz (en son mezun olunan kademe) *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ İlkokul
- ◯ Ortaokul
- ◯ Lise
- ◯ Lisans
- ◯ Yüksek Lisans
- ◯ Doktora

4. Anadil(ler)iniz *

5. Anadil(ler)iniz dışında bir dil biliyor musunuz? Cevabınız evet ise lütfen hangi dilleri ne seviyede konuştuğunuzu belirtin.

Caps/memeler hakkında

6. Caps/meme okumak için bir süre ayırıyor musunuz? Gününüzün ortalama ne kadarını Caps/meme takip ederek ya da yaparak geçiriyorsunuz? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ 1 saatten az
- ◯ 1-3 saat
- ◯ 3-5 saat
- ◯ 5 saatten daha fazla
- ◯ Zaman ayırmıyorum
- ◯ Fikrim yok

7. Komik Caps ve Memeleri hangi sosyal medya platformlarında takip ediyor ve ya paylaşıyorsunuz? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Whatsapp
- ☐ Telegram
- ☐ Reddit
- ☐ 9Gag
- ☐ incicaps.com
- ☐ Bobiler.org
- ☐ Güldüm.net

Other: ☐ _____

8. **Bir Caps/meme sayfasını takip etmek ya da caps/meme paylaşılan bir gruba girmek için ne gibi kriterler ararsınız?** *

Check all that apply.

- [ ] Paylaşılanların komik olması
- [ ] Paylaşılanların kendi fikir, siyasi görüş ve ya ideolojilerimi yansıtıyor olması
- [ ] Paylaşımların anadilimde yapılıyor olması
- [ ] Paylaşımların yabancı bir dilde yapılıyor olması
- [ ] Paylaşılanların belirli bir formatta olması (dank memes, copypasta, deepfried, rage comics, kırmızı çizgi vs.)
- [ ] Paylaşılanların absürtlük seviyesinin yüksek olması
- [ ] Arkadaşlarımın da o sayfaları takip ediyor olması
- [ ] Other: _____

9. **Aşağıdaki Caps/memelerde kullanılan söz kalıplarından hangilerine daha önce rastladınız?** *

Check all that apply.

- [ ] Afied
- [ ] Bne
- [ ] hiç kimse: ben:
- [ ] benim eşgal/sıfad-ül eşgal/çehre/yüz hatları/tomografi vs.
- [ ] -yorumdur -mışımdır / sizce ben -mış mıyımdır?
- [ ] Hüzüwn, Kawga, Mewzu
- [ ] Öncelikle kestane balının diyarı Zonguldak'tan herkese selamlar
- [ ] (temsili)
- [ ] Average fan - average enjoyer
- [ ] Anlık (bir kişi ya da kurum)
- [ ] Sus b*tch --- Emredersiniz efendim
- [ ] bazlı/temelli
- [ ] Bruh moment anı/Birader anı
- [ ] *****Yukarıdaki şıklardaki ifadelerin hiçbirine aşina değilim*****
- [ ] Other: _____

10. **Bu söz kalıpları arasından hangilerini paylaşım yaparken, konuşurken ve ya yorum yaparken kullandınız/kullanıyorsunuz? ***

Check all that apply.

- [ ] Afied
- [ ] Bne
- [ ] hiç kimse: ben:
- [ ] benim eşgal/sıfad-ül eşgal/çehre/yüz hatları/tomografi vs.
- [ ] -yorumdur -mışımdır / sizce ben -mış mıyımdır?
- [ ] Hüzüwn, Kawga, Mewzu
- [ ] Öncelikle kestane balının diyarı Zonguldak'tan herkese selamlar
- [ ] (temsili)
- [ ] Average fan - average enjoyer
- [ ] Anlık (bir kişi ya da kurum)
- [ ] Sus b*tch --- Emredersiniz efendim
- [ ] bazlı/temelli
- [ ] Bruh moment anı/Birader anı
- [ ] *****Yukarıdaki şıklardaki ifadelerin hiçbirini kullanmadım/kullanmıyorum*****

Other: ☐ _____

11. **Aşağıdaki görselde kullanılan söz kalıbı (–yorsundur, –mışsındır) hakkında hangilerini söyleyebilirsiniz?** *



Check all that apply.

- [ ] Bu söz kalıbıyla en az bir paylaşım yaptım.
- [ ] Bu söz kalıbını bu şekilde kullanmanın tuhaf/yanlış olduğunu düşünüyorum
- [ ] Bu söz kalıbıyla paylaşım yapan kişilerin bir gruba ait olduğunu düşünüyorum
- [ ] Bu söz kalıbını kullanan kişilerle aynı grupta olmadığımı düşünüyorum
- [ ] Bu kalıba rastlamadım

12. **Aşağıdaki görselde kullanılan söz kalıbı (benim eşgal/ sıfad-ül eşgal/çehre/yüz hatları) hakkında hangilerini söyleyebilirsiniz?** *



Check all that apply.

- [ ] Bu söz kalıbıyla en az bir paylaşım yaptım.
- [ ] Bu söz kalıbını bu şekilde kullanmanın tuhaf/yanlış olduğunu düşünüyorum
- [ ] Bu söz kalıbıyla paylaşım yapan kişilerin bir gruba ait olduğunu düşünüyorum
- [ ] Bu söz kalıbını kullanan kişilerle aynı grupta olmadığımı düşünüyorum
- [ ] Bu kalıba rastlamadım

13. **Aşağıdaki görselde kullanılan söz biçimleri hakkında hangilerini söyleyebilirsiniz?** *



Check all that apply.

- [ ] Bu söz biçimiyle en az bir paylaşım yaptım.
- [ ] Bu söz biçimini bu şekilde kullanmanın tuhaf/yanlış olduğunu düşünüyorum
- [ ] Bu söz biçimiyle paylaşım yapan kişilerin bir gruba ait olduğunu düşünüyorum
- [ ] Bu söz biçimini kullanan kişilerle aynı grupta olmadığımı düşünüyorum
- [ ] Bu söz biçimine rastlamadım

Caps/meme Tüketim Alışkanlıkları

14. **Aşağıda belirtilen dizelerdeki tanımlamalar sizi ne kadar yansıtıyor? Tanımlanan durum yerinde kendinizi düşünüp sizi yansıtma derecelerine göre işaretleyiniz.** *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Hiç katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kararsızım	Katılıyorum	Tamamen katılıyorum
Her gün meme/caps takip ederim.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Facebook, Twitter ve Instagram gibi platformlarda Caps/meme görünce sıkça beğeni atarım.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Facebook, Twitter ve Instagram gibi platformlarda gördüğüm Caps/memelerin altına yorum atar ya da atılan yorumlara sıkça cevap veririm	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Beğendiğim Caps/memeleri kendi profilimde/sayfamda sıkça paylaşırım	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Whatsapp ve Telegram gibi uygulamalarda kişilere ve ya gruplara sık sık caps/meme atarım.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Caps ve Memelerde kullanılan söz kalıplarını gündelik hayatımda tanıdıklarımla yazılı ve ya sözlü kullanırım	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sevdiğim Caps ve memeleri kaydederim/arşivlerim	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Fikir buldukça kendi Caps ve memelerimi yapıp paylaşırım	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Kaydettiğim Caps/meme görsellerini ve ya stickerlarını birilerine cevap vermek için sıkça kullanırım					
Caps ve memelerin zaman kaybı olduğunu düşünürüm					
Caps ve memelerin bağımlılık yaptığını düşünürüm					
Çok yakından tanımadığım insanlarla Caps/meme paylaşırım					
Bazen Caps/meme paylaşılan platformlarda insanlarla tanışıp arkadaş olurum					
Caps/meme görselleri oluşturmak zaman alıcı ve yorucu					
Beğendiğim Caps/memelerin yorumlarına arkadaşlarımı sık sık etiketlerim					
Beni takip eden insanlara kötü bir imaj vermemek için profillerimde Caps/meme paylaşmam					
Bir Caps/meme gördüğümde verilmek istenen mesajı ve ya yapılan şakayı hemen anlayabilirim.					
Caps/meme kullanan insanlara karşı yakın					

hissederim.					
Caps ve memelerden sosyal medya platformlarının dışında bahsedildiğinde garipserim.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Birçok toplumsal olayı ve ya önemli haberi onlar hakkında yapılan Caps ve memelerden öğrenirim.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
İçinde bulunduğum meme gruplarındaki bize özel bir meme'in Netflix gibi ana akımda kullanıldığını gördüğümde o meme'in değeri gözümde düşer.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭

Caps/meme Yapma Alışkanlıkları

15. **(Bu kısmı Caps ve ya meme yapıyorsanız doldurun.) Aşağıda belirtilen dizelerdeki tanımlamalar sizi ne kadar yansıtıyor? Tanımlanan durum yerinde kendinizi düşünüp sizi yansıtma derecelerine göre işaretleyiniz.**

Mark only one oval per row.

	Hiç katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kararsızım	Katılıyorum	Tamamen katılıyorum
Caps/meme yaparken popüler trendleri ve formatları hedeflerim	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Yaptığım Caps/memelerin aldığı beğeni sayısı benim için önemlidir.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Yaptığım Caps/memelerin altına yapılan yorumlarda insanlarla etkileşime girmeyi severim	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Caps/meme yapıp paylaştığımda kendimi o topluluğa ait hissederim.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
İnsanların paylaştığım Caps/memeler hakkındaki düşünceleri benim için önemlidir	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Yaptığım Caps/memelerde hazır bulunan meme formatlarına ve konulara bağlı kalmayı severim.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭

Eğer yapmış olduğum Caps/memeleri birileri alıp kendileri yapmış gibi paylaşırsa bu beni kızdırır.					
Kendi özgün Caps/meme formatlarımın başkaları tarafından kullanılmaya başladığını görmek bana iyi hissettirir.					
En az bir kere Caps/meme yapıp para kazanabileceğim bir meslek sahibi olmayı hayal ettim.					
Bazen bir Caps/meme yapmak için çok uzun süreler harcadığım olur.					

Caps ve Meme Kültürü

16. **Fikrinizi kısaca belirtin: Sizce İncicaps'in başlattığı caps kültürü (sol) günümüzde sosyal medyada gördüğümüz yabancı formatlı memelerden (sağ) daha farklı bir kültüre mi ait? Yoksa ikisini de bir bütünün parçaları gibi değerlendirmek mümkün mü?**





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APPENDIX D

TRANSLATED QUESTIONNAIRE

A Graduate Thesis Study on Caps and Memes

Dear Participant,

this study is for a graduate thesis written by Ümit Can Tunçer, a Graduate Linguistics student in Boğaziçi University, under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Didar Akar.

The purpose of this study is to collect information and opinions of people who use or browse Caps and memes which are visual and textual content we often see on social media platforms.Additionally, there are also questions regarding your personal Caps/meme consumption habits.

During the study, the gathered data will be handled anonymously, your identity will not be shared with third parties, and any data that would reveal your personal identity will not be reflected on the thesis. The collected data will be stored such that your personal identity will not be able to be matched with the answers you give.

In this questionnaire, you are expected to mark the required areas in full and write short answers where needed. The questionnaire lasts about 15 minutes. Participation in this questionnaire is completely on voluntary basis. The completion of this questionnaire will not bring any material or spirtual rewards. At any point during the study, you can decide to stop participating or opt out from the study. It will not by any means reflect negatively on you if you do not continue participating in the study.

We kindly thank you for your contribution in this study. If you have any questions about the questionnaire and the study, or you experience any problems with the questionnaire you can address them to the following contact information.

Ümit Can Tunçer - umit.tuncer@boun.edu.tr
Assoc. Prof. Didar Akar - akar@boun.edu.tr

If you have concerns about your rights and ethics, you can contact the university's ethics committee via the following e-mail adress.

sbe-ethics@boun.edu.tr

Note: You are required to be at least 18 years old to participate

* Required

1. **I have read the text above and I understood the purpose of this study. I am at least 18 years old. I agree to participate in this study.** *

Check all that apply.

☐ Yes, I agree to participate.

Info

2. Age *

3. Level of education (The level lastly graduated from) *

Mark only one oval.

- Primary School
- Elementary School
- High School
- Bachelor of Arts
- Master of Arts
- PhD

4. Native tongue(s) *

5. Do you speak any languages besides your native tongue(s)? If yes, please state the languages you speak along with your level of proficiency.

On Caps/memeler

6. Do you allocate any time to browse Caps or memes? On average, how much time do you spend browsing or making Caps/memes? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Less than 1 hour
- ◯ 1-3 hours
- ◯ 3-5 hours
- ◯ more than 5 hours
- ◯ I don't spend any time on memes
- ◯ No idea

7. On which social media platforms do you browse funny Caps and memes? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Whatsapp
- ☐ Telegram
- ☐ Reddit
- ☐ 9Gag
- ☐ incicaps.com
- ☐ Bobiler.org
- ☐ Güldüm.net
- ☐ Other: _____

8. **What kind of criteria do you have for following a Caps/meme page or join a group where Caps/memes are shared?** *

Check all that apply.

- [ ] The funniness of the shared content
- [ ] The shared contents' reflecting my ideas, political views or ideologies
- [ ] The shared contents' being my native tongue
- [ ] The shared contents' being in a foreign language
- [ ] The shared contents' being in a particular format (dank memes, copypasta, deepfried, rage comics, red line etc.)
- [ ] The shared contents' level of absurdity being high
- [ ] My friends' following those pages too
- [ ] Other: _____

9. **Which one of the phrases used in Caps/memes have you come across before?** *

Check all that apply.

- [ ] Afied
- [ ] Bne
- [ ] hiç kimse: ben:
- [ ] benim eşgal/sıfad-ül eşgal/çehre/yüz hatları/tomografi vs.
- [ ] -yorumdur -mışımdır / sizce ben -mış mıyımdır?
- [ ] Hüzüwn, Kawga, Mewzu
- [ ] Öncelikle kestane balının diyarı Zonguldak'tan herkese selamlar
- [ ] (temsili)
- [ ] Average fan - average enjoyer
- [ ] Anlık (bir kişi ya da kurum)
- [ ] Sus b*tch --- Emredersiniz efendim
- [ ] bazlı/temelli
- [ ] Bruh moment anı/Birader anı
- [ ] *****I have not come across any of the phrases above*****
- [ ] Other: _____

10. **Which one of these phrases do/did you use while sharing content, speaking, or commenting?** *

Check all that apply.

- [ ] Afied
- [ ] Bne
- [ ] hiç kimse: ben:
- [ ] benim eşgal/sıfad-ül eşgal/çehre/yüz hatları/tomografi vs.
- [ ] -yorumdur -mışımdır / sizce ben -mış mıyımdır?
- [ ] Hüzüwn, Kawga, Mewzu
- [ ] Öncelikle kestane balının diyarı Zonguldak'tan herkese selamlar
- [ ] (temsili)
- [ ] Average fan - average enjoyer
- [ ] Anlık (bir kişi ya da kurum)
- [ ] Sus b*tch --- Emredersiniz efendim
- [ ] bazlı/temelli
- [ ] Bruh moment anı/Birader anı
- [ ] *****I do/did not use any of the phrases above*****
- [ ] Other: _____

11. **What can you tell about the type of phrase pattern (-yorsundur, -mışsındır)in the following image?** *



Check all that apply.

- [ ] I have shared at least one post with this phrase pattern
- [ ] I think that using this phrase as such is weird/wrong
- [ ] I think that people sharing content while using this phrase pattern belongs to a particular group
- [ ] I do not think that I belong to the same group with people using this phrase pattern.
- [ ] I have not come across this phrase pattern

12. **What can you tell about the type of phrase pattern (benim eşgal/ sıfad-ül eşgal/çehre/yüz hatları)used in the following image?** *



Check all that apply.

- [ ] I have shared at least one post with this phrase pattern
- [ ] I think that using this phrase as such is weird/wrong
- [ ] I think that people sharing content while using this phrase pattern belongs to a particular group
- [ ] I do not think that I belong to the same group with people using this phrase pattern.
- [ ] I have not come across this phrase pattern

13. **What can you tell about the phrase patterns used in the following images?** *



Check all that apply.

- [ ] I have shared at least one post with this phrase pattern
- [ ] I think that using this phrase as such is weird/wrong
- [ ] I think that people sharing content while using this phrase pattern belongs to a particular group
- [ ] I do not think that I belong to the same group with people using this phrase pattern.
- [ ] I have not come across this phrase pattern

Caps/meme Consumption Habits

14. How much do the following descriptions reflect you? Think yourself as being in the position of the described situation and mark accordingly. *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
I browse Caps/memes everyday	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I frequently like Caps/memes when I see them on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I frequently comment under Caps/memes or reply to the comments below them on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I frequently share the Caps/memes I liked on my personal profiles or pages	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I frequently send memes to my friends and groups on platforms like Whatsapp and Telegram	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I use the phrases seen in Caps and memes while messaging or in verbal communication.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I save/archive the Caps/memes I like.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
When I get an idea,	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

I create and share my own Caps/memes					
I frequently use the caps/memes and Whatsapp stickers to reply to someone	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
I think that Caps and memes are a waste of time	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
I think that Caps/memes are addictive.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
When a meme that belongs to a meme group I am a part of is used in more general channels like Netflix, the meme's value drops for me.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭

Caps/meme Making Habits

15. (Fill in this part if you make Caps or memes.) How much do the following descriptions reflect you? Think yourself as being in the position of the described situation and mark accordingly.

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
When making memes, I target the trendy and popular formats.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The like counts of the memes I make is important for me.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I like interacting with people under the comment section of the memes I make.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Seeing a original format I created becoming more and more popular would make me feel good.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I have at least once dreamed of having a job where I get paid by making memes	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sometimes I spend a considerable amount of time when I create memes.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Caps and Meme Culture

16. **Shortly give your opinion: Do you think that the Caps culture (left) İncicaps has started is different from the culture of contemporary memes with foreign formats (right) we see on social media? Or is it possible to argue that they are the integral parts of the same culture?**





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APPENDIX E

ETHICS CLEARANCE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE BY SOBETIK

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 26.03.2022-59476

T.C.
BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL VE BEŞERİ BİLİMLER YÜKSEK LİSANS VE DOKTORA TEZLERİ ETİK İNCELEME KOMİSYONU
TOPLANTI KARAR TUTANAĞI

Toplantı Sayısı	:	29
Toplantı Tarihi	:	24.03.2022
Toplantı Saati	:	10:00
Toplantı Yeri	:	Zoom Sanal Toplantı
Bulunanlar	:	Prof. Dr. Ebru Kaya, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Yasemin Sohtorik İlkmen
Bulunmayanlar	:	

Ümit Can Tuncer
Dilbilim

Sayın Araştırmacı,
"Türkçe Mimler ve Mim Kullanıcıları: Yapılan Dil Oyunları Çerçevesinde Belirtisellik ve Kimlik" başlıklı projeniz ile ilgili olarak yaptığınız SBB-EAK 2022/20 sayılı başvuru komisyonumuz tarafından 24 Mart 2022 tarihli toplantıda incelenmiş ve uygun bulunmuştur.

Bu karar tüm üyelerin toplantıya çevrimiçi olarak katılımı ve oybirliği ile alınmıştır. COVID-19 önlemleri kapsamında kurul üyelerinden ıslak imza alınamadığı için bu onay mektubu üye ve raportör olarak Yasemin Sohtorik İlkmen tarafından bütün üyeler adına e-imzalanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla, bilgilerinizi rica ederiz.

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Yasemin
SOHTORİK İLKMEN
ÜYE

e-imzalıdır
Dr. Öğr. ÜyesiYasemin Sohtorik
İlkmen
Öğretim Üyesi
Raportör

SOBETİK 29 24.03.2022

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

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