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Bout

LingUU iz teh offishul, per reviewd, student journal ov linguistics at Utrecht University (UU). In dis journal students, both undergraduate an graduate, as well as PhD-students, can publish their papers. Students sometimez come up wif ideas dat r worth sharin, an develop creativ theoriez dat moar peeps shud read, othr than jus teh teachr. LingUU providez wai 2 mak dis happen, while givin students teh opportunity 2 git 2 knoe teh wurld ov academic publishin small-scale. Apart frum teh author-side ov publishin, teh journal offers students teh posibility ov developin teh skill ov per reviewin in real settin. teh journal aims 2 feachur articlez frum teh different sub disciplinez ov linguistics an publishez in both Dutch an English. Apart frum research articlez, LingUU featurez articlez on internships abroad, an book noticez or reviews.

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Expanding brains, expanding pragmatics

Pragmatic parameters in internet memes

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who	
whom	
WHOM'ST	
whomst'd	

ABSTRACT
It's impossible to be an internet denizen without rubbing elbows with memes. Any netizen, seasoned or novice, consumes scores of memes every day. While memetics, the study of transmittable cultural artifacts, has been around since the 1970's, internet memes transcend traditional cultural memes insofar as internet memes are rapid, ever changing, and immediately accessible to millions of people.



There has been a slow but noticeable surge in studying internet memes seriously. A combination of semiotics, mass communication, and a reflection of political and social landscapes, memes have been proving to be a rich trove of knowledge for sociologists, cognitive scientists, and linguists alike. Previous studies have demonstrated the essential intersection between image and text to derive meaning (Dancygier & Vandelanotte, 2017), memes as expressions of social identity and political commentary (Miltner, 2014), and the use of memes to create a more comprehensive theory of humor (Magel, 2016). It is thus nothing new to posit that memes warrant serious academic interest. However, few of these studies have examined memes from a theoretical linguistics standpoint, and those that have have focused nearly exclusively on older, antiquated memes such as Rage comics and Lolcatz (Calka, 2010 and Lefler, 2011). Canjura (2017) suggested (in a study on the Dog Pants meme, "If x wore y, would it wear it like a or b?") that memes behave similar to other utterances in regards to pragmatic constraints. Original meme formats, such as "If a dog wore pants, would it wear it like this or like this," establish some set of visual or written aspects a descendant meme should follow, while the real world referents of those aspects constructs the context. Canjura's findings suggest memes must satisfy particular pragmatic criteria within a context in order to be interpreted as "successful." The current study similarly examines the Expanding Brain format.

Does an Expanding Brain meme require adhering to certain pragmatic notions in order to successfully convey a meme format, or is the visual representation of expanding brains adequate to be interpreted as a successful Expanding Brain descendant?

We hypothesize that an Expanding Brain descendant must satisfy the following pragmatic parameters to be interpreted as successful. The first two elements presented are legitimate stances to a traditionally acceptable debate, dichotomy, or continuum that establishes a context C . The following elements are elements of the context C that are in increasingly worse or absurd order from a traditionally accepted viewpoint of C . The final element must be the worst element of C that is also an absurd stance of C .

Forty people, self-identifying as "meme-fluent," were given both the original Expanding Brain meme as well as descendants of Expanding Brain that either met or did not meet our proposed parameters. Participants were then asked to provide an interpretation of the descendant memes and give a grammaticality judgement based on whether they felt each meme was "successful." Successfulness of memes is difficult to define, but for the sake of the questionnaire "successful" was defined as having descended appropriately from an original meme format, incorporating the features of the original meme and utilizing these features to convey a (coherent) message or derive humor."

The overwhelming response posited that the original meme presents two ideas: that the use of *whom* over *who* is supposed to suggest more intellect, and that each element got increasingly ridiculous until the *whomst'd've* culmination. The majority of responses also suggested that the meme's increasing absurdity made a statement about the dichotomy presented in elements one and two (that is, people who insist on using *whom* and people who do not use *whom*), where the *whom* side is seen as pedantic and a false sense of intellectual superiority.

The predicted successful descendants were marked as successful by the vast majority. What was interesting about the results for the following descendants, was that those that did *not* meet our proposed notions concerning "successfulness" did not necessarily entail a negative result. For example, one descendant that failed the dichotomy requirement, such that the first and second elements were not at odds with each other in any traditional debate, yielded more successful accounts than unsuccessful ones (63%). One that only failed the increasing absurdity was not marked successful by any participants, or if it was deemed successful it was due to extraneous circumstances unrelated to the meme format. Another that failed all three requirements was deemed successful by only 10% of participants. For some, unsuccessfulness required violating a certain *gradedness* factor, while others found memes successful due to an indication of creativity and imagination for the escalating humor while moving down the image.

It is interesting to note that successfulness was interpreted to mean funniness by a large part of the sample. For instance, some participants found a descendant that failed the dichotomy and increasing absurdity requirements to be successful, because of its "inclusion of niche internet humor" and because the participants understood the meme, not because of its (lacking) grammatical parameters.

One meme that received a majority of ungrammatical responses is of note. This meme satisfied the dichotomy elements and the final most absurd element, but did not have elements of increasing absurdity throughout the meme. This meme had four elements. Participants found the final element to be the most absurd, but did not find the third element in the sequence to be more absurd than the preceding elements. Having received mostly negative responses, we can see that there are multiple factors that play into the grammaticality of memes, and some aspects appear to be more important than others in establishing grammaticality. This study suggests there is a high degree of interplay between grammaticality aspects, and some are more important, such that they can prevent other aspects from appearing in order to preserve grammaticality. Future research can hopefully explore whether there exists a hierarchy of elements that construct meme grammaticality, and if this relationship can be generalized to all memes.

While it was clear that some of the participants judged the instantiations of the meme format following our hypothesized parameters, it was not always clear that others followed these as well. It can be said that complete grammaticality in memes does not seem to be the most relevant factor for a meme descendant to be successful. The visual representation of expanding brains alone is also not sufficient for an Expanding Brain descendant to be interpreted as successful, but factors such as humor and creativity play their roles as well.

Successfulness might be a notion that is too broad, although future research can certainly be conducted further using more properly demarcated notions and more sophisticated (survey) questions. Meme grammaticality and successfulness is a complex and delicate idea, one that is confined both not to simple visual components nor pragmatic checklists, and future research is required in order to expand upon what makes good memes good memes. 🧠

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Word formation in the internet age

A case study of animal names

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KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT

This article shows how the defined types of word origin in etymological research still hold when investigating Internet Language. In this article we will specifically look at so-called *DoggoLingo* or *doggo-speak* (McCulloch & Boddy, 2017), but also touch upon *LOLcat* (Lefler, 2011), *Doge* and *Snek*. First, I explain the types of word origin and show how these formats fit on lemmas from DoggoLingo. Next, I compare DoggoLingo with other internet phenomena and older parallels in the naming of animals. Lastly, I take a broader view on the subject and discuss if and how DoggoLingo can contribute to language change.



1. Types of word origin

1.1 Onomatopoeia

The most transparent form of word origin is *onomatopoeia*. In these cases the word is named after the sound associated with verb; literally *imitation of a sound*. For English we see many onomatopoeia for animal noises such as *moo* for the sound a cow makes and *bark* for the sound of dogs. More recent examples describe the sound of machines such as *vroom* for cars or *bang* for guns. In several examples the onomatopoeia has been reanalyzed as a verb for example *to hiccup* or *to honk*. Lastly, a onomatopoeia can be analyzed in a metonymic relation signifying the object which produces the sound. An example of this is *Cuckoo* as the name for not only the sound but also the bird that makes it.

Onomatopoeia are found in DoggoLingo, especially with the various sounds dogs can make. First, we come across *bork*, close related to the already mentioned *bark*, and used similarly. Next, there are several sounds made by a dog sticking out its tongue such as *mlem* and *blorp*. The difference is explained by an internet citizen on the popular website Reddit: *A blorp is when a dog pokes his tongue out due to tiredness/forgetfulness and it often is only a small portion of the tongue. A mlem is basically any time a dog is licking their chops, or sticking their tongue out!* (blorp_cop, 2017). There is also a variant for cats; *blep*, as Reddit-user madsci954 (2017) points out. However, SergieKravinoff (2017) argues that *blep* is not exclusive to cats and other felines. The most diverse used variant must be *blup*, found with pictures of cows, lizards, reindeers, bears and even sloths, all sticking out their tongue.

1.2 Derivation

Let us move to the next possible word origin; derivation. In these cases a word is combined with a suffix to create a new word. The suffix often has influence on the word type or meaning of the new derivation. A good example from DoggoLingo is *pupper* to denote a small and/or young dog. This is derived from *pup* 'a young dog' with the suffix *-er*. It is unclear where the suffix comes from. Adding *-er* usually changes a verb into somebody who is doing the action, such as *baker* from the verb *to bake*. *To pup* is a verb meaning describing a female dog to give birth. However, this meaning does not seem to correlate with the DoggoLingo *pupper* which means the baby dog itself and not the mother. Perhaps the meaning could lie nearer to 'behave and/or looks like a pup' but seeing the *-er* as a diminutive suffix is also possible. This leads us to another form of the word; *pupperino*. Here the new formed word *pupper* is combined with the Italian masculine diminutive *-ino*. With the meaning of 'very small dog' this could point to the reading of *-er* as a first diminutive suffix and *-ino* as the second, especially regarding that Italian allows for double diminutive.

An equally interesting case is the DoggoLingo derivation *woofer* to mean 'large dog'. The first origin which comes to mind is the onomatopoeia *to woof* 'to make the sound a dog makes', combined with the aforementioned suffix *-er*. This derivation thus denotes the agent of the woofing, the one who woofs. *Woofer* could also be used to refer to a certain type of loudspeaker, designed for low frequency sounds. It is possible that *woofer* 'large dog' is used in analogy with the loudspeaker. This would be very remarkable since the loudspeaker is named with the comparison *woof* as a low sound in mind. This becomes more clear when we consider that mid frequency loudspeakers are called *squawkers* and high frequency loudspeakers are called *tweeters*. All three types consist of an onomatopoeia with the suffix *-er*. When *Woofer* 'large dog' is an analogy to the loudspeaker, the word has come full circle.

The last derivation I want to discuss here is the name giver of the linguistic form under discussion, *Doggo*, a derivation formed by *dog* and the suffix *-o*. This suffix is associated with (Australian) slang and is (among other things) used to form informal and familiar nouns. The Australian James Mofatt reports that *doggo* has been used already in his childhood 'as an affectionate diminutive to refer to dogs' (McCulloch & Body, 2017). They argue that this affectionate diminutive also holds for words as *pupper* and *pupperino*; suffices to make it cuter. Along with *doggo* we also find *catto* for 'cat', formed along the same lines. This also holds for small cats, being named *kitter* from *kitten* and *-er* (cf. *pupper*).¹

¹ Two special cases are the DoggoLingo words *fluff* and *fluffer*, both denoting a canine. The first is metonymic referring to the dogs fur while the second one is a derivation with *-er* using the metonymic relation of the first.

1.3 Compounds

Lastly, words can have their origin in a compound. In these cases two words are combined to a new word, with a new meaning. This is often a combination with two nouns but compounds with verbs, prepositions and adjectives are also widespread. To find examples of compounds, we must move away from usual pets as dogs and cats. Many exotic animals in DoggoLingo are denoted with compounds. Often these compounds describe a certain, well-known, aspect of the animal as if the word was created by a foreign traveller who comes across the animal for the first time. Other compounds are based upon association regarding the animals appearance or behaviour. For llama we find *giraffe sheep*, based on similarities with both animals; the elongated neck of a giraffe and the woolly fur of a sheep. Snakes are often called *danger noodles* in DoggoLingo, referring to their status as a (venomous) predator with a long slithering body. Finally bald eagles are referred to as *freedom glider*. The first part is an association with the USA, supposedly the most free country in the world, which uses the bald eagle as its symbol. The second part of the compound describes the flying technique of this bird, gliding on warmer air without flapping its wings.

2. Comparison between (non-)Internet Languages

In this section I will compare DoggoLingo with other Internet Language phenomena such as *LOLcat*, *Snek*, and *Doge*. First, I will discuss the latter two which are quite similar. Both are meme formats, pictures with a certain set of (linguistic) rules attached to them to make them work (Dancygier & Vandelanotte, 2017; Canjura & Sastrowiardjo,). In both instances text is put seemingly random on a picture of a snake (*snek*) or of the dog breed Shiba Inus (*Doge*). The idea is that these lines of text refer to the animals thoughts and feelings. Each has their own personality. The Shiba is often impressed or surprised while the snakes are depicted as 'They talk a big game, but they're basically puppies.' (Douglas, 2016). What is important to note is that the language used must be seen as the language of the dog or snake itself.

This is in contrast with *LOLcat* and *DoggoLingo* which is used by humans (McCulloch & Boddy, 2017). *DoggoLingo* usually only concerns animals while *LOLcat* can cover every topic. There is even a bible translation in *LOLcat*. *LOLcat* is also much more complex, having a grammar of its own which follows Universal Grammar rules (Lefler, 2011). *DoggoLingo* consists of a lexicon of alternative animal names with not much more. The only construction we find often in *DoggoLingo* images is 'doing a [verb]' which is loaned from the *Snek* memes (Douglas, 2016).

Now we compare *DoggoLingo* to non-internet language. When looking at animal names we see many similarities especially regarding compound words. For this research purpose I suggest we can divide non-internet animal names in two categories before moving on.

The first category are compound animal names which have been classified correct-

ly but have rather strange names sometimes. This group consists of compounds of which the last word describes the correctly classified animal. Animal names from this group are for example the raspberry crazy ant which are indeed a variety of ants, and the chicken turtle, a variety of turtles which accidentally taste like chicken (Heimbuch, 2014). The second category are also compound animal names but in these cases the classification of the animal have gone wrong. Animals here include the bearcat (not a kind of cat), the electric eel (not a kind of eel) and the red panda (not a kind of panda). These animals were named on their appearance and behaviour, not by the correct taxonomic classification.

It is in this second category we see the similarities with DoggoLingo. Both consist of misnamed animals, named for their appearance and behaviour.² However, there is one big difference. In DoggoLingo the 'wrong' names are given on purpose. The users of *danger noodle* for snake know the real name of the animal. With the non-internet names for animals, we do not find purposeful wrongdoing but rather mistakes and assumption which were made when the animal was first encountered. The true nature of the animal is known by zoologists but the already name stuck in most cases, creating the second category.

3. Influence on language and language change.

In this last section I discuss DoggoLingo in a broader picture. I answer if and how DoggoLingo can change the language we use now and in the future. First of all we saw how DoggoLingo consists of (rather big) set of animal names but no grammatical features. There is only the expression *doing me a* [verb], which also occurs in *snek* memes. Perhaps the combined occurrences of both memes can introduce this construction in non-internet language. However we should be careful discussing how Internet Language can change non-internet language. Although memes like *doge* and *snek* and the use of DoggoLingo are used very much on the internet, the transition to day-to-day speech situation can prove to be difficult. An important factor is here the medium. Almost all of these types of memes are used as a form of written language. Everybody reads them in certain voice and this is hard to translate to speech. Furthermore is identity on the internet hidden behind usernames and non-topical profile pictures, especially on fora such as Reddit. This means that using these types of memes or style of speech can prove to be funny with other internet friends but in real life it is often unclear if the hearer has seen the correct memes to correctly interpret the joke. This raises the threshold to use DoggoLingo in public.

The same has proven to be true for LOLcat. This form of Internet Language is fairly old and although the language works along the lines of Universal Grammar we have not seen loaning words or construction from LOLcat into non-internet

² A case which shows this relatedness comes from Dutch. Seals are called *sea dogs* in DoggoLingo since they look like dogs but swim in the sea. Many years ago Dutch people made the same observation which has caused the word for seal to be *zeehond* in Dutch, literally sea dog.

language (yet). This is also the small speck of hope for DoggoLingo. Because it consists of (almost) only words, which can be loaned more easily than grammatical constructions, several items can perhaps be borrowed into our daily speech. This is especially true for the most famous word *doggo* since it probably came from an actively used idiolect of English, namely Australian slang.

4. Conclusion

In this article I discussed how words in the Internet Language *DoggoLingo* follow the word forming possibilities we find in natural language. I reviewed four different types of word origins on which I applied the *DoggoLingo* words. Next I compared *DoggoLingo* to other Internet Languages and meme formats such as *Doge*, *Snek* and *LOLcats*. I showed how *DoggoLingo* is not similar to the other Internet Languages since it does not follow a meme format and has no grammatical constructions. However, it is comparable to falsely named animal names in non-internet languages. Lastly, I answered if and how *DoggoLingo* could change our language. I argued that there is only a small possibility of change from this language and even more so from other Internet Languages. The only word which can be introduced into widespread speech is *Doggo* but it can be argued that this word was already in one of the language idiolects and simply became more popular after being used in *DoggoLingo*. 🐾

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The contemporary cat

Three quick and easy ways to acquire the indigenous language of Hooman

S. (Samantha) de Kuiper



Samantha ('Sammie') de Kuiper (2004) is possibly the best-known feline representative of the current cat population in The Netherlands. Her continuous efforts to provide pet owners with up-to-date information about the preferred brand of organic cat food, cheap ways to eliminate a smelly litter box and the health benefits of providing your furry friend with a napping place close to the heater, she is an all-round adviser and lifestyle coach. In her spare time, she takes an interest in writing brief articles about current-day cat-ownership (or, as she likes to call it, cat-meownership). Before publishing in LingUU Journal, she has published in numerous worldwide leading journals like No, don't pet me on my belly, Mice and mischief and Cats R Us.

1. Introduction

Now the end of the world as we know it is literally approaching (Meowngels, 2017) as a result of decades of mindless consumerism and less than beneficial corporate deals, it is time for change. Since we, as the feline community, are quite popular among humans and we even established some kind of cult status within their communities (Everybody on Reddit, 2011) we are in the ultimate position to take matters into our own paws. We need to meow up about the unfeasible habits your particular human might have - after all, they don't need pre-sliced avocados during their miserable break from their corporate self, and you don't need lavender-scented cat litter to relieve you from your existential crises.

Before doing so, however, it is key to formulate your message clearly and effectively (Grice's cat, 1969), or your efforts will go to waste. Therefore, I will provide you with three quick and dirty tips to acquire the indigenous language of Hooman - or any of its subvarieties relevant to your position. Buckle up, felines!

2. Get that quality CDS-input and practice in solitude

According to many humans there is a phenomenon we, as the feline community, are all too aware of: child directed speech or CDS (Trubetzcat, 2015). Humans have particular ways to speak to human kittens or - and I am painting with a broad brush here - living things that are smaller than them. This way of speaking is not

only ridiculous, but also strangely effective: it is supposed to aid the human kitten in acquiring their native language. Now here comes the trick: next time your human is speaking to you with this high-pitched, silly tone of voice, which is especially noticeable in females, pay close attention and try to mimic the sounds they are making. Do so by repeating the relevant movements with your tongue, jaw and sometimes even your velum. Make sure to practice at a nice and quiet spot in the house, as to not attract any unwanted attention.

3. Stick to the bare necessities

An often-heard complaint about language acquisition in general, especially within the feline community, is the ridiculous amount of words humans have for the various objects surrounding them. It is, after all, a truly baffling species!

Trying to acquire all of them is not only time-consuming but also an absurd and nonsensical mental exercise, so don't even make an attempt. Instead, take the fast lane, and minimize the words you do need to acquire to communicate your message effectively. It is key to stick to the relevant topics! Obvious examples are 'consumerism,' 'apocalypse' and 'climate change' - other, perhaps less obvious entries can be 'socialism,' 'trickle-down economics,' 'the mystery of the one percent' or 'daddy Marx.' For the entire list, which has about 300 lexical entries, please take your journey online: you can download a free PDF at linguujournal.nl/sammiak or you can send an email to sambal@zonnet.nl. Acquiring and perfecting your Hooman lexicon takes up to six months in total, naps included.

4. Download my e-book!

I hate to be this tomcat, but since my particular human is facing some financial struggles in the near future as a result of moving rooms and spending too much money on my dope-ass water fountain, I want to support her where I can. You can unlock the third, **essential** tip by purchasing my online journal *Samtactic Structures - acquiring Hooman for the feline* on my website for just €39.99 (no UBU-link provided). 🌸

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