

From laughter to awareness: illocutionary acts in English environmental

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Abstract

This study examines the types and communicative purposes of speech acts in humorous English-language memes pertaining to environmental awareness, aimed at promoting Sustainable Development Goal 13: Climate Action. This study examines, via the lens of Speech Act Theory, the role of comedy as a pragmatic tool for advancing ecological messages in digital contexts. The data was intentionally gathered from English-language memes on Instagram and Facebook between 2023 and 2025, comprising 30 memes posted by seven accounts (@environmental.awareness22, @plantcare.solutions, @greenpeace, @intersectionalenvironment, @acc_national, @trash_free_teen, @environmental_awareness). Each meme underwent pragmatic content analysis to ascertain illocutionary behaviors and delineate their function in constructing ecological discourse. The findings indicated that aggressive, directive, and expressive activities predominated in the dataset, reflecting an endeavor to educate, critique the global situation, and motivate audiences to adopt sustainable practices. Expressive acts predominated, employing sarcasm and irony to convey indignation and humor about environmental deterioration. The multimodal aspect of memes demonstrates that illocutionary force is collaboratively created through text, imagery, typography, and visual arrangement, resulting in pragmatic meaning derived from the entire semiotic composition rather than solely from the words. This study enhances the comprehension of digital humor by conceptualizing memes as performative instruments of environmental advocacy, rather than solely as sources of enjoyment. It also contradicts earlier findings indicating that forceful actions are frequently seen in English-language memes. This study globally affirms and enhances the notion that memes amalgamate assertive truth-telling with exuberant critique. The research indicates that environmental humor serves as eco-pragmatic activism, employing multimodal speech actions to encourage reflection and pro-environmental behavior among modern internet audiences.

Keywords: Digital discourse, Environmental awareness, Funny memes, Illocutionary acts

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Introduction

Memes have become a prevalent communication tool in digital discourse, combining visuals, text, and humor to form a complex multimodal entity (Shifman, 2014). Nevertheless, despite their extensive ubiquity, memes have garnered a limited number of linguistic analyses. Memes have progressively

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assumed a political dimension, serving as a vehicle for commentary on governance, ideology, and social issues (Milner, [2016](#)). Given their cultural significance and communication power, it is essential to recognize the influence of online memes and to critically analyze the information they present. To comprehensively grasp the operation and significance of memes, it is essential to examine their composition and the particular formal attributes they utilize (Forceville & Clark, [2014](#)).

Memes do not constitute a language system; rather, they display numerous linguistic characteristics. Memes serve to communicate, convey information, and facilitate social interactions, rendering them a pertinent subject of linguistic inquiry (Dyvel, [2016](#)). Memes may appear enigmatic or challenging to comprehend for anyone unacquainted with meme culture, frequently depending on implicit significance and collective cultural awareness. Memes operate at the convergence of various fundamental linguistic concerns, specifically the essence of signs, the development of symbolic systems, grammatical ingenuity, linguistic innovation, and the social aspects of language utilization (Crystal, [2011](#)).

Initially, digital memes were widely seen as anonymous and unsigned creations within participatory digital culture (Nissenbaum & Shifman, [2017](#)). Nonetheless, modern meme culture illustrates a transition towards identifiable creator authenticity, along with the emergence of unique meme-making styles and the establishment of audiences on digital platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Patreon, and Discord (Galip, [2024](#)). These developments underscore the growing cultural acceptability of memes as creative and communicative artifacts, rather than ephemeral internet information.

In the digital era, memes have transcended their status as simply entertainment and increasingly serve as instruments for social critique and activism (Malsawmtluangi et al., [2025](#)). Humorous English-language memes pertaining to environmental awareness have received notable attention within this area. Environmental memes utilize comedy and satire to tackle urgent ecological concerns in a manner that is accessible, engaging, and emotionally impactful (Zhang & Pinto, [2021](#)). Environmental memes integrate visual imagery with astute textual components, simplifying intricate environmental topics and promoting public engagement in sustainability discussions (Jones et al., [2022](#)). Understanding the linguistic mechanisms underpinning these memes is crucial, as they mirror present language practices and social dynamics in environmental communication.

The digital discourse has expanded conventional language analysis to include online comments, chats, and memes (Arjulayana et al., [2025](#)). According to Crystal ([2011](#)), digital communication is inherently multimodal, integrating text, graphics, emojis, and visual designs, all of which enhance the performative aspect of speech acts. Yule ([1996](#)) underscores that illocutionary force is contingent upon context, a phenomenon especially evident in digital environments where humor, irony, and satire shape interpretation. The utilization of speech act theory in the analysis of memes enables academics to investigate the role of linguistic and visual components as social acts within online humor and digital activism (Nita et al., [2021](#)).

Indonesian researchers have made substantial contributions to meme studies via speech act theory, particularly with humor and popular culture. Research on "Forever Alone" indicates that expressive behaviors, including self-criticism and irony, are crucial in shaping emotional significance and attitudes (Kusuma, [2019](#)). The examination of regionally favored memes, such as Bu Tejo – Tilik, demonstrates that expressive and directive actions frequently transpire concurrently, allowing satire to serve as a mechanism for social critique and persuasion (Siregar & Kusyani, [2021](#)). This research has primarily

concentrated on humor and social appraisal, with insufficient emphasis on specific thematic areas like environmental communication.

Rahman (2021) asserts that political memes on social media serve as instruments of resistance and mechanisms for shaping public opinion. Fa uzia and Hidayat (2023) have examined environmental memes in Indonesian, discovering that directive and aggressive acts are frequently employed to enhance ecological awareness and encourage behavioral change. This study examines environmental discourse; nonetheless, it is constrained in scope and fails to comprehensively address the multimodal creation of pragmatic meaning.

Scholars globally have demonstrated that memes possess pragmatic and sociolinguistic importance. Stvan (2024) emphasizes the adaptability of memes as speech actions, illustrating their function as advice and commentary within digital communities. Holm (2020) contends that memes serve as performative resources in the creation of identity. The materials, consequently, empower users to negotiate group affiliation and ideological stances. Dynel (2016) demonstrates that the humor in memes often originates from indirect speech acts that need common cultural knowledge and inferential reasoning.

The results of these investigations indicate that online memes serve as a substantial medium of communication with considerable social ramifications. Nevertheless, the majority of existing study focuses on memes concerning communication, politics, and identity, with limited emphasis given to environmental memes, particularly in the English language. Moreover, several studies concentrate on written material and insufficiently examine the interplay between words and images in conveying the speaker's intent.

The research integrates Shifman's (2014) concept of memes as units of participatory culture with Chovanec and Dynel's (2015) assertion that multimodality enhances conventional speech act frameworks. The study's findings categorize memes as intricate communicative events that integrate linguistic, visual, and pragmatic elements. This study is notable for examining several distinct aspects. Initially, it examines humorous images in English pertaining to the environment, a topic that has not been extensively explored by many individuals. Secondly, there exists the amalgamation of speech act theory with multimodal analysis, focusing on the collaborative creation of meaning through visual and linguistic components. Third, it links language analysis to environmental communication and the worldwide initiative of Sustainable Development Goal 13: Climate Action.

The integration of language pragmatics and digital activism research is accomplished through the examination of assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative speech acts inside environmental memes. This is a response to Crystal (2020) and Shifman (2014) regarding cross-disciplinary methodologies to understand how digital language practices affect public awareness and societal change. This research seeks to elucidate the interaction between humor, language, and visual aspects in English environmental memes. This examines how these elements foster ecological awareness. The research also supports global sustainability programs.

Method

This research employs a qualitative descriptive design within a pragmatic analytical framework, specifically grounded on Searle's (1976) speech act theory. This study utilized a qualitative design to discover, explain, and interpret the communication functions of language within English-language hilarious memes that promote environmental awareness. The research topics examine the execution

of different speech actions and the construction of their meanings through verbal and visual features, necessitating comprehensive interpretive analysis instead of quantitative analysis. The qualitative design is the most suitable approach, since it enables an in-depth analysis of contextual significance, multimodal characteristics, and pragmatic subtleties that quantitative measures of forms or frequencies cannot adequately capture. The pragmatic method enhances comprehension of how textual and visual elements collaborate to communicate desired meanings and social messages within environmental action.

This study utilized humorous English-language memes centered on environmental awareness, sourced from various internet platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. The selected memes encompass material released from 2023 to 2025, ensuring pertinence to contemporary global environmental concerns and digital communication trends. The criteria for meme selection to maintain focus included: the presence of text and visual elements; an explicit or implicit environmental message (e.g., pollution, climate change, recycling, sustainability); a humorous, ironic, or satirical tone intended to engage audiences; and the use of English as the primary language.

Thirty environmental memes were intentionally chosen to guarantee a representative variety of illocutionary activities while maintaining analytical rigor. In this research, data saturation was determined by theme saturation and analytical redundancy. Thirty environmental memes were intentionally chosen to ensure a representative variety of illocutionary activities while maintaining analytical rigor. Data collection and analysis were performed concurrently until no more categories of illocutionary or pragmatic functions, or patterns of interpretation emerged. Consequently, the dataset was deemed saturated and adequate to exemplify the communicative phenomena of environmental memes and substantiate the validity of the research findings. The researcher employed documentation methods to gather the data. The memes were downloaded or captured as image files and methodically cataloged with metadata, including the platform of origin and upload date.

The data analysis conformed to Searle's (1976) categorization of illocutionary acts, encompassing assertives, directions, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. The analysis was conducted in the following stages: Identification of Speech Acts. Each meme was analyzed to discern the speech acts executed through the interplay of image and text; identified utterances were classified according to Searle's categories of illocutionary acts; the researcher examined how humor, irony, or satire enhanced the illocutionary force, considering the meme's environmental message and its socio-digital context; the communicative objectives of each speech act are interpreted as critiquing, persuading, warning, or expressing empathy concerning environmental issues; Cross-case Comparison: findings are juxtaposed among memes to ascertain predominant types of speech acts and patterns of humor in environmental discourse. These analytical approaches seek to elucidate the role of comedy as a vehicle for environmental awareness through linguistic expression in digital communication.

Triangulation was utilized in two manners to enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings: theoretical triangulation, which involved integrating insights from pragmatics, digital discourse research, and eco-linguistics, and researcher triangulation, which entailed consulting peer reviewers and linguistic experts to corroborate the interpretation of illocutionary acts. Furthermore, informal peer verification was performed by disseminating sample analyses to researchers in English linguistics to guarantee consistency in classification and pragmatic interpretation. The analytical techniques were

meticulously documented to ensure transparency and reliability of results. Each meme was assigned a code (e.g., M1–M30) to enable referencing during analysis.

Results and Discussion

The examination of thirty humorous English-language memes regarding environmental awareness reveals many sorts of illocutionary acts as delineated by Searle (1976), including assertives, directives, expressives, commissives, and declaratives. Nonetheless, the prevalence and role of each category varied markedly based on the communicative intent of the meme, humor style, and environmental message delivered.

Table 1. Distribution of Illocutionary Acts in Environmental Awareness Memes

No	Type of Speech Act	Function of Speech Act	Total
1	Assertive	Declare	4
		State a fact	4
		Expressing an opinion	2
		Declare a situation	1
		Declaring information	1
		Describing	1
2	Directive	Invitation	8
		Encouragement of critical thinking	1
		Advising	3
		Commanding	1
3	Expressive	Criticizing	4
		Expression of attitude	3
		Sarcasm	4
		Expressing frustration	1
		Expressing sadness and concern	1
		Expressing dislike	1
		Approval	1

The findings indicated that expressive activities constituted the predominant category, however this dominance was not exclusively due to their frequency. The prevalence of expressive acts signifies a broader communicative trend in environmental memes, particularly the employment of emotional comedy and irony as mechanisms to convey disappointment, social critique, and ecological apprehension. A plethora of memes illustrates environmental concerns while adopting an emotive perspective, often through sarcasm aimed at companies, politicians, and indifferent customers. For instance, the meme stating *“What if I told you that plastics manufacturers promote recycling to blame you for the impact of their own products?”* not only criticize manufacturers, it’s also highlights the imbalance of power between corporate responsibility and individual blame, demonstrating a pattern in which memes question dominant environmental narratives. Similarly, the utterance *“But you think recycling and clean-ups will help?”* It conveys criticism through sarcasm, indicating an increasing pessimism regarding small-scale personal harm in relation to large-scale industrial devastation.

The discernible pattern indicates that memes originating from global platforms predominantly address multinational corporations and systemic issues, whereas those disseminated on community-based or activist-oriented pages tend to emphasize individual negligence and everyday conduct.

Unexpectedly, emotional manifestations of ecological despair are juxtaposed with funny elements, contrasting lighthearted formats with severe underlying issues. These memes illustrate that humor functions not just to entertain but also to validate critical contemplation and address social dissatisfaction with environmental deterioration. The findings indicate that expressive behaviors are predominant not merely due to their frequency, but because they facilitate users in negotiating identity, responsibility, and emotional responses within online environmental discourse.

Other data revealed that forceful activities were included in memes articulating opinions and asserting facts. A meme illustrating a fact or assertion on the annual influx of plastic into the ocean, accompanied by the statement “8 million tons of plastic enter the ocean every year,” disseminates information and encourages the audience to accept the claim as factual. It neither issues a command nor makes a plea; rather, it emphasizes the articulation of a reality.

Directive statements regularly emerged in memes that promote behavioral modification, such as “Be part of the solution, not part of the pollution.” This message urges readers to engage in proactive measures to safeguard the environment and refrain from exacerbating pollution. The language employed constitutes a compelling invitation (persuasive imperative), so serving the illocutionary function of inciting action to contribute to the environmental solution.

The prevalence of expressive speech acts in environmental memes suggests that communication tactics emphasize the articulation of attitudes, emotions, and evaluative perspectives on environmental matters rather than the simple transmission of factual information. This tendency pragmatically promotes the audience's emotional involvement, as expressions such as humor, criticism, empathy, and worry facilitate an emotional connection with the delivered message. The ramifications for environmental persuasion are considerable, as emotional reactions frequently serve as the catalyst for awareness and engagement in digital activism. Thus, environmental memes function as a potent medium for articulating ecological concerns as widely shared social experiences.

1. Assertive, Directive and Expressive Acts

“Single Use Plastic”

Data 1



Figure 1. Meme 3

(Source: @environmental.awareness22)

M3 : “Earth Day”
 “Global Warming”
 “Lost Fishing Equipment”

Context:

The image comically depicts environmental issues such as global warming, abandoned fishing gear, and single-use plastics as invisible or neglected concerns, while Earth Day is represented as a tangible and prominent issue, underscoring the irony of superficial environmental consciousness that neglects everyday ecological accountability.

Analysis and Discussion:

These memes utilize potent, expressive, and implicit language to collectively critique the ephemeral nature of symbolic environmental events, such as Earth Day, while contrasting them with more urgent ecological concerns, including global warming, fishing waste, and single-use plastics. Assertive acts convey direct criticism of ceremonial environmental practices, whereas expressive acts, manifested through sarcasm and humor, reflect a cynical perspective on the disproportionate public focus on celebration over meaningful environmental action. Concurrently, the hidden directives subtly push audiences to shift their focus from symbolic gestures to fundamental ecological issues. The incorporation of criticism, emotional expression, and indirect persuasion effectively improves communication by engaging the audience and diminishing resistance, so allowing crucial environmental messages to be seen with greater seriousness. The pattern indicates that environmental memes serve not merely as informative content, but also as affective and persuasive instruments that recontextualize environmental discourse, contest symbolic activism, and redirect public focus to systemic ecological concerns, thus affirming the role of memes as a medium of digital environmental activism capable of fostering awareness and engagement, consistent with recent research findings. This outcome aligns with a previous worldwide study (Kong, [2024](#)) that demonstrates a comparable role of environmental memes in enhancing awareness and fostering participation with environmental issues (Kong, [2024](#)).

As memes are multimodal, the "real threats" are formulated through both textual and visual elements inside the image. Earth Day is depicted as a naive human outside, whereas Global Warming, Abandoned Fishing Gear, and Single-Use Plastics are represented as concealed figures wielding knives behind a door. This juxtaposition between the innocuous, overt "Earth Day" and the latent, armed threats suggests that symbolic observances are not the fundamental issue; rather, the genuine environmental perils are the obscured structural problems embodied by the three assailants.

**Figure 2. Meme 5**

(Source: @plantcare.solutions)

Data 2

M2 : "Companies selling plastics products as recyclable"
 "The population"
 "Me knowing that most plastics don't actually get recycled"

Context:

The graphic employs humor to juxtapose public discussions over recyclable products with the neglected truth that the majority of plastic waste remains infrequently recycled, underscoring a disparity between environmental assertions and actual behaviors

Analysis and Discussion:

This meme employs aggressive and expressive actions to highlight the disparity between corporate assertions about recycled plastics and the reality that the majority of plastic garbage remains unrecycled, while concurrently depicting the speaker as possessing superior epistemic knowledge compared to the misled public. This underlying statement of displeasure serves as a critique of greenwashing and public apathy, emphasizing how corporate environmental narratives shape audience perception and hinder critical knowledge. This pattern indicates that environmental memes function as emotional instruments that contest prevailing corporate narratives, incite skepticism, and promote critical engagement with sustainability assertions, thereby reinforcing their significance in digital environmental activism, corroborated by recent findings on public discontent with deceptive green labeling. Fang (2024) indicates that deceptive green labeling and corporate environmental narratives frequently engender public mistrust, revealing underlying frustration and disapproval of greenwashing methods (Fang, 2024).

The illustration illustrates the problem from a multimodal perspective, depicting “companies selling plastic products as recyclable” as a soothing hand, “society” as relaxed and unaware, and the dog labeled “me knowing that most plastics don’t actually get recycled” as the silent knower. The arrangement, perspective, and bodily stance collectively suggest that corporate disinformation, rather than typical customers, is the primary cause of the 'real' environmental hazards.

Data 3**Figure 3. Meme 7**

(Source: @environmental_awareness)

M7 : “Single use plastics” (with a reject gesture)
“Reusables” (with a nod of approval)

Context:

This meme comically juxtaposes the dismissal of single-use plastics with the embrace of reusable alternatives, advocating for eco-friendly options in a recognizable pop-culture format. The humor in this meme arises from the juxtaposition of contradictory templates, merging exaggerated rejection with affirmative poses, so generating a comedic feeling of incongruity and hyperbole, rendering the environmental message both pleasant and memorable.

Analysis and Discussion:

The research indicates the sole utilization of expressive acts to convey evaluative opinions regarding plastic consumption, wherein gestures of rejection and approval articulate disdain of single-use plastics and endorsement of reusable alternatives. These expressive behaviors function as implicit persuasive signals that influence audience behavior toward a desired outcome without explicit instructions, illustrating the capacity of visual approbation and disapproval to shape ecologically responsible decisions. These findings underscore the efficacy of expressive visual components in environmental messaging, indicating that memes and infographic-style content can enhance audience readiness to embrace sustainable behaviors, consistent with prior research on the persuasive influence of environmental visual communication. The findings align with the research conducted by Skoric, M. M., et al. (2022), which demonstrated that visual and infographic-based messages effectively enhance individuals' propensity to diminish single-use plastics, highlighting the persuasive efficacy of expressive visual elements (Skoric, M. M., 2022). The prevalence of expressive actions suggests that environmental meme makers rely on emotional appeal to diminish resistance and enhance message reception in the digital realm.

From a multimodal perspective, the evaluation source is established through the amalgamation of verbal text ("Single use plastics" vs. "Reusables") and the divergent body gestures in the two panels, where the upper image signifies rejection via an averted gaze and raised hand, while the lower image signifies endorsement through an affirmative gesture and facial expression; collectively, these modes delineate reusable products as the favored environmental option.

Data 4

(Source: @trash_free_teen)



M9 : "We should be using paper straws instead of plastic!"

"We should be using metal straws instead of plastic!"

"Me, an intellectual:" (picture of a woman drinking from a glass without a straw)

Figure 4. Meme 9

Context:

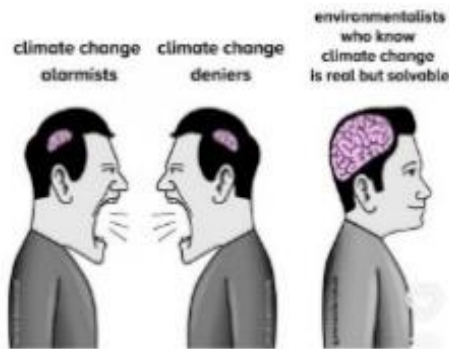
It satirically critiques the discourse surrounding paper and metal straws by positing that forgoing straws entirely is a more logical and eco-friendlier alternative.

Analysis and Discussion:

This meme combines directive and expressive speech acts to promote ecologically responsible behavior by assessing various consumption options. The advisory guidelines pragmatically encourage the audience to replace plastic straws with alternative materials, while the expressive act depicts straw-free consumption as a more rational and appealing option. This interaction demonstrates that environmental memes not only influence behavior through recommendations but also create societal norms by portraying specific choices as cognitively and ethically better, hence enhancing their persuasive efficacy in digital environmental communication.

The multimodal nature of memes constructs meaning through the visual depiction of an individual sipping from a glass cup, which symbolically signifies a reusable choice in everyday life. Humor emerges from the relaxed and effortless way the individual savors the beverage, subtly ridiculing the prevalent usage of single-use plastics by highlighting that sustainable alternatives are straightforward and even "cool" or more appealing.

Data 5



Context:

The graphic depicts the contentious discourse between climate change advocates, who caution against the perils of climate change, and its skeptics, with environmental activists portrayed as composed individuals who perceive climate change as a significant yet addressable issue.

Analysis and Discussion:

This meme combines assertive, directive, and expressive acts to describe climate change as a factual reality and a solvable problem while simultaneously engaging the audience and expressing social criticism. Conceptually, the assertive–directive combination is design to encourage acceptance of beliefs and motivate constructive environmental action, while the expressive element presents an evaluative stance that distinguishes moderate environmentalists from extremist attitudes. The pattern shows that the inclusion of expressive criticism can improve persuasive effectiveness by balancing optimism and social differentiation, highlighting that environmental messaging can strategically adjust speech act configurations based on communication goals and contexts, in contrast to findings reporting the dominance of non-expressive acts in environmental advertising discourse. These results contradict Pekuwali (2024) findings, which report that environmental advertising discourse on social media overwhelming uses assertive and directive speech acts, without any identifiable expressive acts, demonstrating that emotional expression or social criticism is not consistently present and may depend on the communicative context and message style (Pekuwali, 2024).

The tripartite layout juxtaposes exaggerated emotional responses with a concluding serene and “enlightened” figure, employing caricature to depict the transition from panic or denial to rational problem-solving. The illuminated pink brain symbolizes clarity and optimism, while the transition from agitated to composed gestures encourages the audience to favor reflective and solution-oriented engagement.

Figure 5. Meme 11

(Source: @acc_national)

M11 : "Climate change alarmists"
 "Climate change deniers"
 "Environmentalists who know climate change is real but solvable"

Data 6**Figure 6. Meme 25**

(Source: @environmental_awareness)

M2 : "Coca-Cola"

200,000 Tons Per Year
33 Soccer Fields Daily

Context:

This picture underscores the substantial daily plastic pollution generated by large firms, utilizing comparable data to enhance public awareness and subtly critique corporate accountability for environmental deterioration.

Analysis and Discussion:

This meme amalgamates assertive, directive, and expressive acts to convey factual information about corporate plastic pollution while fostering reflection and emotional engagement from the viewer. The assertive-directive combination promotes critical awareness of the magnitude of corporate environmental impact, while the expression of sadness and concern humanizes the data and enhances its persuasive power. This aspect demonstrates that effective environmental memes not only inform audiences but also elicit an emotional response that encourages critical reflection and potential engagement with environmental accountability.

The composition juxtaposes a striking visual admonition with a concluding image that embodies serene comprehension, employing contrast to guide the viewer from apprehension to enlightened awareness of plastic accountability. The tranquil figure consuming from a glass represents a "enlightened" decision, while the visual shift from discarded plastic objects to a reusable alternative signifies rationality and sustainable problem-solving as the preferred approach.

Conversely, commissive and declarative acts are infrequently present in memes; however, their deliberate application underscores a significant pragmatic function. They not only convey collective accountability but also convert formal declarations into instruments of satire, thereby prompting audiences to critically reflect on institutional and corporate environmental practices and enhancing the persuasive and evaluative capacity of digital environmental discourse.

"Pepsico"

137,000 Tons Per Year
22 Soccer Fields Daily

"Nestlé"

95,000 Tons Per Year
15 Soccer Fields Daily

"Unilever"

70,000 Tons Per Year
11 Soccer Fields Daily

"How much plastic do they pollute every day?"

"This is just sad :("

Multimodal Nature of Memes

The multimodal analysis of the environmental awareness meme produced numerous significant discoveries as follows:

Table 2. Multimodal Nature of Memes

Multimodal Aspects	Multimodal Function	Percentage
Visual Mode	Contrastive imagery	14%
	Iconic representation	12%
	Material contrast	9%
Linguistic Mode	Evaluative lexical choices	6%
	Metaphorical phrasing	5%
	Implicit verbal opposition	4%
Gestural Mode	Composed body posture	8%
	Absence of frantic or exaggerated movement	7%
Expressive Mode	Calm facial expression	4%
	Emotional shift	3%
	Affective stabilization	3%
Interpersonal Mode	Normative persuasion	4%
	Shared understanding	3%
	Viewer positioning	3%
Spatial and Compositional Mode	Juxtaposition of contrasting images	6%
	Sequential arrangement	5%
	Compositional focus	4%
Total		100%

Table 2 describes the multimodal nature of the environmental awareness meme by explaining the different multimodal aspects and their related functions that contribute proportionally to the construction of meaning. The findings demonstrate that the Visual Mode major component, reinforced

by contrastive images, iconic representations, and material contrast, that collectively establish a clear environmental opposition and represent sustainability as a visually comprehensible issue. The Linguistic Mode, through evaluative lexical choices, metaphorical phrasing, and implicit verbal opposition, complements this visual dominance by consolidating interpretation and reinforcing ideological positions. Finally, the Gestural Mode, marked by calm body posture and the absence of panicked or exaggerated movement, plays a crucial role in promoting calmness and rational control. The Spatial and Compositional Mode organizes meaning further by arranging contrasting images side by side, sequencing emotional developments, and directing attention to preferred solutions. Collectively, these modes work together to guide viewers from problem recognition to reflective understanding.

Significantly, the distribution of multimodal features exhibits a strong tendency toward the dominance of expressive acts, notably through Expressive Mode and its reinforcement by visual, gestural, and interpersonal resources. Calm facial expressions, emotional shifts, and affective stabilization collectively mark attitudes of affirmation, irony, and reflective concern rather than explicit alarm. This expressive orientation permits memes to articulate environmental values and emotional attitudes in a manner that is subtle yet persuasive, transforming potential anxiety toward manageable awareness. Through prioritizing emotional control and shared evaluative stances, memes not only convey information or instruction, but express a cohesive affective attitude towards environmental responsibility. Therefore, the dominance of expressive acts appears as a key mechanism through which the meme accomplishes their persuasive impact, encouraging audiences to internalize environmental awareness through emotional alignment and reflective engagement instead of forceful or purely informative means.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that comedy and speech acts are deliberately integrated to formulate environmentally persuasive messages, converting enjoyment into eco-conscious communication.

The prevalence of expressive acts in English-language memes concerning environmental awareness underscores that humor serves not merely for amusement but also as a pragmatic mechanism to convey emotions such as disappointment, social critique, and sarcasm. Through satire, irony, and hyperbole, meme creators execute illocutionary acts that are simultaneously entertaining and critical. This corresponds with Yule's (1996) assertion that context and intention influence the potency of illocutionary force, especially in indirect speech acts (Yule, 1996).

This discourse transcends mere reiteration of findings by elucidating the pragmatic functions of humorous environmental memes within digital communication. Rather than perceiving humor as mere entertainment, this study posits that it serves as a communicative tool that facilitates the expression of criticism in a socially palatable and engaging manner. Expressive acts not only prevail in quantity but also in functionality; they convey emotions, frame assessments, and legitimize environmental stances without direct confrontation. These findings underscore that emotional responses such as sarcasm, derision, and disillusionment are pivotal in the dissemination and acceptance of environmental messages online. In essence, memes do not merely articulate environmental messages; they enable audiences to engage with them, thereby enhancing their persuasive efficacy.

This study's primary contribution is elucidating the impact of genre on the distribution of speech acts. Prior research has indicated the predominance of assertive acts in general memes; however, this

study reveals a preeminence of expressive acts specifically within environmental humor (Kusuma, 2019; Siregar, 2020). The results imply a shift in communicative objectives from mere reality depiction to fostering awareness and inciting concern, rendering expressive acts more effective as they convey criticism through humor rather than direct accusation. While directive acts are present, they are intentionally mitigated through irony and playfulness, thereby lessening psychological resistance while still facilitating behavioral change. Consequently, this analysis reconceptualizes the frequency of speech acts as a reflection of communicative aims rather than as mere descriptive statistics.

The findings elucidate current multimodal pragmatics theories by demonstrating that illocutionary force is collaboratively established through textual and visual elements. Visual hyperbole, caricature, color symbolism, and juxtaposition enhance or even convey the speech act, particularly in memes where verbal content is scant. These results indicate that environmental memes function as multimodal speech acts, with visual components executing expressive, assertive, and occasionally directive roles. This study not only replicates prior research but also extends it by elucidating how environmental humor integrates verbal and visual elements to depict ecological concerns as both urgent and resolvable.

This discussion, in addition to comparing with prior research, underscores broader implications. Firstly, environmental memes have facilitated public discourse by normalizing critical reflection on greenwashing, plastic consumption, and symbolic activism. Secondly, these memes have fostered a participatory environment where users emotionally resonate with ecological values, thereby reinforcing community identity through shared humor. Thirdly, humor serves as an effective strategy for activism, diminishing defensiveness while enhancing engagement, indicating that affection is a crucial conduit for digital sustainability communication.

This study recognizes that meme interpretation relies on shared cultural and environmental knowledge, rendering meaning contextual and variable among audiences. It advocates for future research into cross-cultural reception, platform-specific dissemination, and the empirical impacts on behavioral change, rather than solely focusing on linguistic form.

This section aims to enhance the discussion by (1) interpreting patterns instead of reiterating results, (2) elucidating the mechanisms linking humor and persuasion, (3) broadening the scope beyond mere comparisons with prior studies, and (4) elucidating the theoretical and practical implications of expressive dominance in environmental memes for climate communication related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This study also has a number of limitations that need to be acknowledged when interpreting the results. First, the sample size is relatively limited and focuses on a specific group of English-language environmental memes which limits the scope of representation, meaning that the patterns identified may not reflect the full diversity of global meme production. Second, the data is limited to a specific platform and moments in time, meaning interpretations may change as environmental discourse and meme trends evolve. Third, the research instrument relies on the researcher-driven qualitative coding, introducing the possibility of interpretive bias despite efforts to apply consistent analytic criteria. Fourth, since qualitative interpretation is inherent influenced by researcher involvement, the identification of speech acts and humorous intentions reflects judgement based on knowledge rather than mechanical measurement. These limitations constrain statistical generalizations; nevertheless, these findings remain analytically or transferability valuable. Conceptually, insights into expressive

dominance and ecological humor as forms of activism can be applied to similar environmental communication context, both locally and internationally, especially in discussions regarding plastic waste, climate change, and SDGs 13. Therefore, although these conclusions must be read with caution due to their contextual nature, they do offer implications that can be conceptually applied in general to understand how humor-based digital discourse contributes to environmental awareness in various environments.

Conclusion

These findings indicate that humorous environmental memes in English are significant not only for their specific speech acts but also for their role in the production, dissemination, and perception of environmental meaning in digital-visual media. This study posits that online environmental humor serves as a form of soft activism; it mobilizes attitudes, delineates responsibility, and shapes norms while preserving enjoyment, thereby providing an alternative to traditional environmental campaigns that often depend on threats or excessive factual information. Consequently, the essence of this research is to demonstrate that environmental persuasion in the digital era increasingly hinges on emotional resonance and shared humor rather than solely on explicit instruction.

This study's novelty lies in its focus on multimodality. It demonstrates that illocutionary force in environmental discourse is constructed not only verbally but also visually through layout, color, caricature, comparison, and iconic imagery. Memes serve as multimodal speech acts, wherein images not only illustrate language but also actively engage in criticism, evaluation, and subtle directives. The study underscores a significant shift in contemporary communication studies; environmental arguments now manifest through hybrid visual-textual artifacts that distill complex ecological issues into readily shareable formats. Understanding this shift is essential for environmental education, digital activism, and sustainability campaigns increasingly conducted on social media.

This study underscores the growing significance of participatory digital culture in climate communication. The malleability and redistributive nature of memes enhance their pragmatic influence, fostering collective involvement and shared ecological identities. These results indicate that digital humor can serve as an accessible entry point for environmental engagement, particularly among younger demographics who predominantly engage with ecological issues online.

Future research is advised to further investigate visual rhetoric analysis, platform-specific dynamics, and audience reception to elucidate how multimodal humor influences environmental comprehension and behavior. By emphasizing the digital and visual aspects of speech acts, this study contributes to the evolving interdisciplinary discourse at the convergence of pragmatics, semiotics, and sustainability communication, demonstrating that environmental humor is not ancillary but pivotal to the communication of climate issues in contemporary digital life.

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