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這個笑點有夠「迷」：網路社群對迷因翻譯看法之研究

Humor, by all “Memes”: Research in
Reader Reception on Internet Meme Translation

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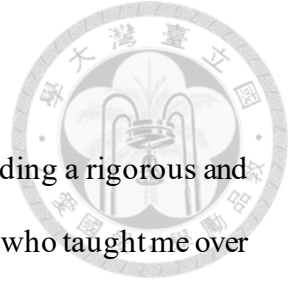
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“For those who come after.” (Expeditioners of Lumière, 2025)

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“No cost too great. No mind to think. No will to break.

No voice to cry suffering.” (The Pale King, 2017)

This journey began as a detour into mist-bound woods and now reaches a checkpoint at the shore of *where-to-next*. I was born curious, though never a scholar, never a speaker – only a quiet thinker. Yet through these ventures beyond expectation, I have become someone my childhood self could never have imagined. So, in the end, I’d like to thank Ricky – myself – for staying, for enduring, and for never letting go.

“Thank you for not giving up on me.” (Chen, 2026)

摘要




隨著網路迷因的流行，網路上出現許多專門翻譯迷因笑話的網站，使得迷因成為一種跨國跨語言的交流形式，而譯者在這當中扮演的角色也值得引人深思。本研究希望能透過分析台灣網路使用者對於迷因和 X（前身即「推特」）貼文翻譯內容的看法和評價，了解社會對於這類創作的期待以及這類媒體對於現代生活的影響，並進一步探討現代人對於翻譯工作和譯者的看法。本研究將採取質性為主、量性為輔的研究方式。除了發放問卷，研究者也將對網路使用者進行訪談，深度探討他們對於迷因翻譯的想法。研究文本將搜集網路上的主流圖文創作網站的翻譯內容，語言涵蓋中、英、日三種語言。

經過調查，研究發現英翻中的迷因相關創作內容比起日翻中不僅數量更多，主題也更加多元，而日翻中的內容集中在 X 貼文的翻譯上。即便兩者的內容及呈現不盡相同，卻由於分享、儲存方便，成為現代興起於社群平台的流行文化產物。該現象出現的原因，包括使用者在現代步調快的生活中需要尋找快速、方便的方式放鬆自己；並藉著翻譯內容感受其他文化的不同以尋找新奇感。

關鍵詞：網路迷因翻譯、X（推特）、關聯理論、幽默、流行文化

Abstract



As internet memes continue to rise in popularity, the number of meme translation websites is also expanding. These platforms facilitate communication across diverse cultural communities, transforming memes into a medium for conveying ideas, and thus shine a spotlight on the translators who contribute to these pages. The research seeks to examine comments and reviews from online audiences of meme translation and X (formerly known as Twitter) post translation pages, and analyze the results to uncover what influence these translations have on contemporary daily life. The research employs both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the final outcomes. Alongside distributing surveys to the public, interviews are conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives of audiences. The materials for the study consist of translated meme images sourced from popular meme translation websites that produce content with Mandarin, English, and Japanese text. This study reveals a notable disparity in the variety of translated content, with English-Mandarin translations outnumbering Japanese-Mandarin translations significantly. Moreover, a substantial portion of Japanese-Mandarin translation sources originates from X. Despite these differences, both English-Mandarin and Japanese-Mandarin meme translations enjoy widespread popularity and are extensively shared across social media platforms. Additionally, modern internet users, who often lead fast-paced lives, seek quick and accessible forms of relaxation — and memes fit this need perfectly. Some even perceive memes as a way to engage with foreign pop culture.

Keywords: Internet Meme Translation, X (Twitter), Relevance Theory, Humor, Pop Culture

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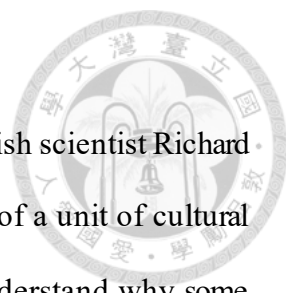
Chapter 1 Introduction

With the Internet becoming increasingly widespread, it has been easier for people to share interesting or essential content with their friends and families. Among the many things shared and posted daily, internet memes stand out as one of the most significant elements contributing to internet content creation and creativity. The popularity of internet memes can be confirmed through their use in business promotion. According to an article about memes on *Forbes*, it is estimated that “an average millennial looks at 20-30 memes every day,” and internet memes “had about 10 times more reach with 60% organic engagement” (Tama-Rutigliano, 2018), signifying the wide-spreading influence of internet memes.

Nowadays, it would not be challenging to find a viral post that weaves in the humorous effects of internet memes, showing how internet memes foster a sense of belonging and mutual understanding. As for why internet memes became so popular, linguist Kirby Conrod explains that the emergence of internet memes is related to human tendencies to repeat and share, as stated in the article from *The New York Times* (Benveniste, 2022). Internet memes have thus become an essential medium for sharing information, be it product promotion or political propaganda, and are an indispensable part of modern online life.

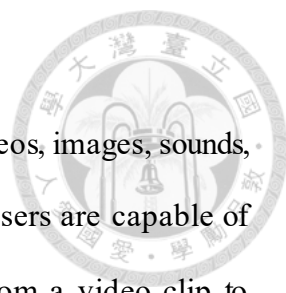
1.1. The Origin and Definition of Memes

The internet term *meme* was first used in a biological and sociological sense. According to an article published in the official website of the Richard Dawkins



Foundation for Reason and Science, the term was introduced by British scientist Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*, referring to "the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation," which "was an attempt to understand why some behaviors, from an evolutionary perspective, seemed to make no sense but, somehow or other, were found to be very common in human societies" (Jordan, 2014). Based on these descriptions, back then, the term was seemingly by no means related to the funny, joking "memes" we are familiar with on the internet. While it is now difficult for us to identify the first-ever modern-sense meme on the Internet, Merriam-Webster stated that, "The first instance of this use that we were able to find in the Nexis database of thousands of mostly news publications is a 1998 interview on CNN" (Editors of Merriam-Webster, n.d.), indicating that people started to use the term *meme* in its modern sense as early as the 1990s. Nowadays, a modern internet meme is defined as "an image, video, piece of text, etc., typically humorous in nature, that is copied and spread rapidly by internet users, often with slight variations" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023).

Nevertheless, as creativity and technology spurred the creation of internet memes, the form of internet memes grew diverse, and thus, the definition of internet memes cannot be determined solely by their presentation. Therefore, Davison proposed that "An internet meme is a piece of culture, typically a joke, which gains influence through online transmission" (Davison, 2020, p. 122). This definition captures the recurring nature and the joking and humorous effects of internet memes, which explains how internet memes are able to effectively extract an image or clip from its original context, consistently reshaping those moments into something humorous.



Internet users create memes from diverse sources, including videos, images, sounds, or conceptual ideas. Furthermore, with the help of editing tools, users are capable of modifying the format of memes, such as utilizing a screenshot from a video clip to produce a still image; they can add motion and depth to a static and two-dimensional image, thereby transforming the image into a video. As the definition and types of memes become increasingly varied, it is essential for this study to focus on a specific category of memes. Therefore, it should be noted that this research only aims to discuss the effects of internet memes that are presented as a combination of images and texts.

1.2. Platform Affordances and User Participation in Meme Creation

As internet users engage with social media trends and incorporate digital tools into their daily routines, they provide momentum for the creation of memes, allowing memes to spread rapidly across various platforms and eventually become viral. In the past, users needed to know how to use an editing tool to create internet memes, but as more websites and apps made these tools accessible on various devices, users are encouraged to follow the trend and create internet memes about themselves, or even create the next viral internet meme. Websites like Meme House ¹ provide easy-to-use internet meme generators that allow internet users to create internet memes using templates. The website also encourages users to contribute to the variety of internet memes by allowing them to upload and alter their own templates. Moreover, users can even share their final creations on this platform. These user-made internet memes often reflect current topics, trends, and

¹ <https://memes.tw/>, retrieved 2025, May 20.



news, and are potentially useful for studying pop culture. The website was so popular that it even added three language interfaces, suggesting that many foreigners also use the site to create memes.

Popular platforms such as Instagram used to include filters² that allowed users to create internet memes from the default templates and share their creative works instantly right afterwards. For example, there is an internet meme known as the *Haikyuu Bedroom* meme, which shows a character from the anime series *Haikyuu!!* lying in bed in a dim bedroom with a tired and unmotivated look on his face. By using a filter featured in Instagram stories, you can swap the character's face with your face and become part of the internet meme. This internet meme became viral at some point, and users often use it to express their frustration or apathy about life. Surprisingly, despite the popularity of this internet meme, many users didn't even know that this internet meme template is made from a screenshot of an anime, which proves that the original context of an internet meme can be reshaped by the internet community. Moreover, this internet meme template provoked users to create variations of this internet meme by using other editing tools. In the comment section of a post³ on Threads⁴ about this internet meme, we can find a user posting an image of himself lying in bed with the character, and this cannot be done by simply using the Instagram template. In another comment, a user changed the quilt into a traditional Taiwanese quilt with vibrant colors, and even added a cat on top of the quilt.

² However, as Meta began to remove third-party filters from its products in Jan 2025, many meme-inspired filters might have become unavailable.

³ https://www.threads.com/@puffcho0oux/post/C4gFw2zh1Z5?xmt=AQF0dlQP0nNT1CK-FvlhdXcDFOsIVgRBb_j6Zyr2g0OnSA, retrieved 2025, May 20.

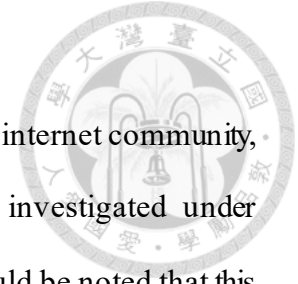
⁴ A social media platform launched and operated by American company Meta in 2023.



This shows that social platforms and the internet community work together in the contribution of internet meme variety, and internet memes often carry messages from personal experience or the culture that the creator comes from.

Since memes are created by internet users, it is understandable that they are closely linked to the social community on the net, and thus the use of memes on the Internet can be reviewed from a sociological and cultural perspective. Memes can spread easily throughout the Internet and be recreated and express different meanings by different users, and thus become part of the communicative system that contributes to the discourse of various situations (Vásquez, 2021). As studies investigate deeper into the internet culture of using memes, it becomes evident that memes are popular not only because they lubricate conversations and bring joy, but also foster a sense of belonging by foregrounding mutuality between individuals, cultures, and languages (Yus, 2023). This statement can be supported by the fact that memes are often used in political discussions, and can have a heavy impact on both the politicians and citizens (McLoughlin & Southerm, 2020).

For internet users in Taiwan, Taiwanese memes are often used as a starter for discussions on various topics, and are highly influenced by Western memes, both textually and graphically (Andersson, 2022). With the help of editing tools, it became easier for internet users to create variations of a meme to fit the meme into various discussions. According to Yeh, internet users in Taiwan often use memes to express their dissatisfaction with the government and politicians, and memes help them express this negative feeling in a joyful and humorous way (Yeh, 2019).



Since the development of memes is deeply associated with the internet community, the connections between memes and internet users must be investigated under sociological lenses that take into account the internet culture. It should be noted that this research focuses on the internet users' perspective about meme culture in Taiwan, and therefore, the discussions in the following chapters will solely surround the perspectives of Taiwanese people.

1.3. Meme Practices, Translation, and Sociocultural Meaning-Making in Taiwan

It is no news to researchers and businesses in Taiwan that internet memes are valuable advertising tools. In 2022, the Department of Public Relations and Advertising at Shih Hsin University conducted a survey on internet memes⁵. According to the survey, 98% of the participants come across internet memes every day, and 56% of the participants share internet memes with others. Over half of the participants also agreed that the use of internet memes boosts brand recognition among customers, while around 40% of the participants agreed that businesses can use internet memes to cultivate a more positive brand image. The results not only showed that internet memes are an inseparable

⁵ The results were shared in the 33rd Annual Advertising Graduation Exhibition. Although the exhibition didn't release an official report about the findings, it shared the results through several online news reports and shared the news reports on its Facebook page instead.
[https://www.facebook.com/pccuad36/posts/pfbid032Ezc23FkKx1f3HBtNR8EzPx5KABr5ZWZMG5NykPTtTzfCGrTFyhmFiXhsPeRrel?_cft__\[0\]=AZWiq9QWpl9hHizOGuw_vy3ZhWQ3n3PvApf69fuSRUyPyoATSPtsCCHB-yWhxA0u0UISJQ9WNzuB74ImPt7dYs6ILNVf7NJdDmpJq08K5GOzrxDZPuGYFW8Vep_hp8MZDnznEpwrVhohBODbPuk2oxcJcw2vIZO6Em6vv0v1AKRBig&_tn_=%2CO%2CP-R](https://www.facebook.com/pccuad36/posts/pfbid032Ezc23FkKx1f3HBtNR8EzPx5KABr5ZWZMG5NykPTtTzfCGrTFyhmFiXhsPeRrel?_cft__[0]=AZWiq9QWpl9hHizOGuw_vy3ZhWQ3n3PvApf69fuSRUyPyoATSPtsCCHB-yWhxA0u0UISJQ9WNzuB74ImPt7dYs6ILNVf7NJdDmpJq08K5GOzrxDZPuGYFW8Vep_hp8MZDnznEpwrVhohBODbPuk2oxcJcw2vIZO6Em6vv0v1AKRBig&_tn_=%2CO%2CP-R), retrieved 2025, May 20.



part of Taiwan’s internet community, but also indicated that internet memes can affect the perception of internet users.

Memes have been utilized in advertising by businesses, including large corporations. For example, PX Mart (全聯福利中心) posts internet memes that are simply humorous but are not directly related to their products, and they even created a hashtag “#全聯迷因俱樂部” (#PXMartMemeClub) for it. In one of their internet memes (Figure 1), PX Mart used the well-known *Hide the Pain Harold* meme. In this case, the Chinese word “泡” (pào) can either mean to make a beverage by putting the ingredients in water or to immerse something in water.

Figure 1

Meme Post by PX Mart



Caption: Grandpa’s Mug / Grandson: “Grandpa, what are you brewing (soaking) in your mug?” / Grandpa: “My denture.”



This internet meme cleverly used wordplay to create humor and became a viral post among PX Mart’s customers. However, despite the popularity it gained, the image itself doesn’t include any information about promoting products or services, and viewers wouldn’t know that they were actually promoting a sales event for elderly-friendly goods unless they read the post and clicked on the link in the post. Instead of promoting the event directly with this viral image, PX Mart utilized it to attract customers’ and non-customers’ attention to the whole business, as internet memes are capable of spreading across the Internet and reaching different audiences.

Before Western internet memes went viral in the country, Taiwanese people had been using local internet memes called “梗圖” (geng-tu, also known as Taiwanese internet memes). The word “梗” is associated with an older phrase known as “喂” (geng), which means a joke. Therefore, the term “梗圖” literally means “a joking picture,” and it is always associated with the Internet, making it different from other funny pictures like comical paintings.

Early Taiwanese internet memes that resemble internet memes nowadays started to gain popularity in the 2010s as the Internet, social platforms, and smartphones were popularized⁶. These internet memes were usually made with images from advertisements, celebrities and politicians, or television shows. According to the participants who participated in this research, young people use these internet memes in discussions about

⁶ According to the Ministry of Digital Affairs, the population using cellphones to access the Internet has grown from 35.3% in 2011 to 87.4% in 2017. <https://moda.gov.tw/digital-affairs/digital-service/op-survey/2088>, retrieved 2025, May 20.

pop culture, such as the internet meme “讓我看看” (Show It to Me). The internet meme is a screenshot from an educational video filmed by the National Academy for Educational Research in 2012, called *If I Had Known Boys Could Be Sexually Assaulted Too*⁷. The image shows an ill-intentioned man talking to a teenage boy, and the subtitle reads “Come, show it to me.” Unlike most internet memes nowadays, internet users back then didn’t create variations from the original images since editing tools weren’t accessible for most people, and thus, most internet memes can only be used in limited situations.



Figure 2

Laughing Tsai Ing-wen Meme



Participants also shared their opinions on how people of different age groups use Taiwanese meme images. According to the participants, their family members over the age of 40 often use images of politicians to create internet memes to criticize the

⁷ <https://stv.naer.edu.tw/watch/289393>, retrieved 2025, May 20.


government or, in many cases, simply to mock the politicians. Figure 2 is an internet meme that shows several images of former president Tsai Ing-Wen laughing, and apparently, this internet meme was created with an editing tool. Though the exact time of when this internet meme was created remains unknown, some of the materials that were used to create this internet meme had been used separately as internet memes themselves, as shown in this post⁸ from PTT⁹ in 2015. However, like the *Show it to me* Taiwanese internet meme, these images weren't edited with additions of text. Users will simply comment or post with these images and have the text showcased on the side.

Memes from that time didn't always aim to make the viewers laugh in a positive way. For example, though this internet meme can be used in a non-critical manner, many detractors of Tsai use it to criticize Tsai, implying that Tsai is laughing menacingly like a villain. The way internet users at that time used memes demonstrates that internet memes have been employed in a manner that not only expresses humor but also conveys personal beliefs, such as political stances. Moreover, this internet meme shared the features of some of the earliest Taiwanese internet memes known as “南部 P” (which literally translates to “Southern Photoshopped Images”¹⁰). These internet memes often show signs of unskillful editing traces, but nevertheless marked the beginning of another era of internet meme creation with the help of digital editing tools.

⁸ The first image on the right appeared in a post on PTT Bulletin Board System (PTT), one of the most popular social platforms in Taiwan. <https://disp.cc/ptt/joke/1LL29cnI>, retrieved 2025, May 20.

⁹ The PTT Bulletin Board System (批踢踢實業坊), a BBS system based in Taiwan that was founded in the 1990s.

¹⁰ The term originated from the idea that things in Southern Taiwan are inferior and rustic. “P” is short for the editing tool called Photoshop, one of the first editing tools popularized at that time.



In Taiwan, the terms “迷因” (internet memes) and “梗圖” (geng-tu) are now often used interchangeably, and they broadly refer to various humorous videos and image creations that are repeatedly used and shared on the internet, forming a cross-national, cross-language communication network. Although some of the participants who joined this study insist that “迷因” refers to those that come from foreign social platforms and are known globally, while “梗圖” refer to the ones created in Taiwan and are often only screenshots from viral video clips, this phenomenon nevertheless shows how much the Taiwanese internet community loved internet memes – and Taiwanese internet users can talk about a lot of things with internet memes. For example, there are internet meme platforms specifically dedicated to curating and sharing internet memes on particular themes, such as nursing professions in hospitals, Chinese historical costume dramas, or postgraduate student life. These platforms often begin as personal pages managed by internet meme enthusiasts and gradually attract followers without the need for formal marketing, as internet memes tend to spread rapidly within online communities. Unlike many mainstream social media pages with large followings, these internet meme pages typically do not pursue monetization through collaborations or merchandise promotion; instead, they focus solely on sharing content for entertainment.

Moreover, some official websites, including those of the government (Figure 3), have started to use internet memes to promote news and commercials. The official Facebook page of the Coast Guard Administration (CGA) often posts internet memes to promote public policies, making it one of the most popular government fanpages among young citizens. In 2023, their post about a typhoon uses the *Jojo Walk* meme template,



which is a scene from the manga series *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: DIO's World by Jump* comics.

Figure 3

Meme Post from CGA



Caption: Did Typhoon Mawar change its direction? // There are still swell waves near the shores. Don't come to the beach yet.

This post demonstrates that the popularity and communicative power of internet memes are increasingly recognized by big organizations and agencies, making them an effective medium for information dissemination. The growing presence of internet memes on official websites may also reflect a generational shift, as more younger individuals are appointed to roles in website management and digital marketing. This shift also suggests a broader public acceptance of lighthearted or humorous elements in official



communication. In contrast to earlier reactions a few years back, current responses indicate a changing expectation of tone in public discourse, as humorous posts on government platforms were often criticized as inappropriate or lacking seriousness.

Due to the popularity of internet memes, numerous websites dedicated to translating internet meme jokes have emerged in Taiwan, with some even boasting billions of views, such as Horny Dragon (好色龍的網路生活觀察日誌)¹¹. The content creator of Horny Dragon began translating memes in the 2010s and has since become one of the most renowned meme translators in the online community, having been recognized as the “No.1 meme translator” (Kuo, 2016) or the “original gangster (OG) of memes” (Kung, 2020). Including Horny Dragon, these internet meme translation websites often originated with different themes and focuses, such as English language learning, game streaming, or international news reports. Over time, as memes gained widespread popularity, these platforms began incorporating meme content related to their original focuses as a way of promotion and boosting audience interaction. This strategy has proven to be effective, as these websites now attract not only internet meme lovers but also audiences interested in the original themes the platforms were built around. The success of this approach is reflected in the fact that some of the most popular internet meme translation websites today are managed in this way, in contrast to pages that focus exclusively on meme translation, which generally have smaller followings. Although the individuals managing these websites may not be professionally trained translators, they often demonstrate


¹¹ <https://hornydragon.blogspot.com/>, retrieved 2025, May 20.

sufficient language proficiency and content management skills. As a result, the quality of their meme translations is generally trusted and well-received by their audiences.

The popularity of internet memes (hereafter referred to simply as *memes*) in Taiwan doesn't end here. The term itself has led to the coining of slang words such as “迷因事件” (meme events) and “迷因級” (meme-like). This suggests that memes have established their significance in the internet community, contributing to the semantic and pragmatic variations among languages. With the dedication of translators, meme culture in Taiwan has developed and prevailed even further among social media users.

1.4. Research Purposes

This research investigates how internet users view meme translations from meme websites and how their responses might shape contemporary ideas of social expectations towards translation. There are several reasons why memes can be a research-worthy subject in contemporary society. To begin with, the production of memes is tightly associated with the internet community, and thus memes spread much faster, unlike most other translated works, like books and theatrical pieces. With the help of the Internet, memes overcome space and time when spreading, require little effort to share and save, and are easy to revisit (Davison, 2020). They reach audiences from all social groups, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, political stance, ideology, etc. Therefore, memes are judged and commented on by individuals of various backgrounds since they exist everywhere on the Internet.



Next, it's easier for the audience to review meme translations compared to reviewing most other translated works. Again, with the help of the Internet, feedback from the audience could be reflected in the comment section right under the post, giving the website manager (usually the translator themselves) immediate feedback. Moreover, the comment section is open to the public, giving viewers a platform to conveniently discuss their thoughts on the translation, and this can happen within a few hours after the meme is posted. This indicates that viewers can now participate in the production of translation works more closely than ever before.

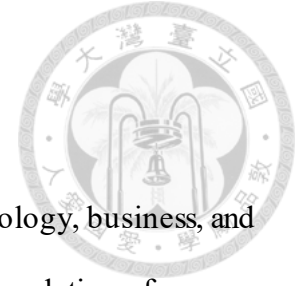
Last but not least, memes are complex in nature, for they contain not only textual information but also graphic and auditory elements. This quality of possessing both textual and non-textual information within a source of information is also known as multimodality, which will be further discussed in section 2.2. These various elements compose the final meaning of the meme with the goal, mostly, of expressing humor. The success of memes reminds us of how humor connects people worldwide despite the most dissimilar aspects between languages. Therefore, besides investigating the relationship between translation and individuals in the internet community, this research also aims to investigate the multimodal and humorous nature of translated memes.

With these in mind, it is safe to say that the work of Taiwanese translators dedicated to the translation of meme posts has established its significance. It is no news that the field of translation work has been changing over time, for different source texts appear as technology and society advance. Translators have thus been exploring and modifying the various methods and approaches of translation work. Knowing how internet users perceive meme translation would open the gateway for further research on the interaction

between translation works and modern society, while also revealing the challenges for modern translation works that are exposed to direct criticism on the Internet.

This research investigates the three main aspects of meme translation: humor, multimodality, and its popularity among internet users. The questions focus on the relationship and interaction between internet users and meme translations, hoping to unveil the challenges that translators face on the Internet and raise awareness of this issue. Furthermore, this research aims to explore both English-Mandarin and Japanese-Mandarin memes to gain a better insight into meme culture in the Taiwanese internet community. The questions are:

- (1) What are the cultural and typological differences between English-Mandarin meme translations and Japanese-Mandarin meme translations? Do these differences reflect the popularity of different types of memes in Taiwan?
- (2) How do internet users perceive meme translations and meme translation sites? What can we learn from the practice of meme translation?
- (3) What is considered a share-worthy and potentially viral meme translation? Does this reflect society's overall expectations of modern translation works?



Chapter 2 Literature Review

Studies of memes are not new in the fields of linguistics, sociology, business, and other related disciplines. There are limited research studies on the translation of memes, let alone the translation of memes from English to Mandarin. It goes without saying that the many ways of observing how memes are used and spread highlight the complex nature of this ubiquitous phenomenon.

Memes are created to possess features that allow for their transformation across various formats, catering to a global audience with diverse cultural backgrounds. This adaptability not only fosters widespread engagement but also promotes cross-cultural interactions, as memes can be tailored to resonate with different societal contexts while maintaining their core humorous or satirical essence. When viewed from a linguistic perspective, memes typically contain humorous elements, which attract and engage viewers. Other than that, memes come in multimodal forms, such as combining text with images. Based on these observations, this research anchors its focus on revisiting studies about humor translation and multimodal translation, which would be crucial to the overall research of meme translations.

2.1. Humor in Translation

Humor is an integral part of everyday communication and can be found in all cultures, making it an indispensable element of human language and interaction. Scholars generally agree that humor enhances social interactions in certain contexts, including communication between individuals from different cultures and languages. However,

research on the translation of humorous texts has shown that humor is a particularly challenging element to transfer from one language to another.

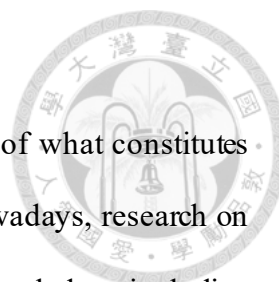


2.1.1. Humor in Sociolinguistic and Theoretical Contexts

To begin with, the term *humor* in its modern sense and current humor studies dates no further back than the 20th century. Though the discussion about humor from a philosophical viewpoint can be traced back to Plato and Aristotle, where the term is used to describe nature within a person, it wasn't associated with the effects of comedies until the 17th century. Furthermore, before the 19th century, scholars were more interested in the social effects of comedies and the objects involved in a joke (Attardo, 2017).

As for linguistic research on humor itself, it discusses the manifestation process of humor and wasn't fully established until the publication of Raskin's work on the Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH) in 1985. Raskin utilized semantic theory as an approach to explain how humor is developed in verbal language, i.e., written and spoken humor. He pointed out that semantic theory "...provides semantic entities with descriptions which are supposed to match the speaker's intuitive judgments about the same entities" (Raskin, 1984, p. 59). In other words, he believed that speakers can convey humor by following certain models to arrange words, and listeners possess the ability to interpret humor based on their internal knowledge of the language.

The study of humor translation took place after Attardo proposed the revised version of SSTH – that is, the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) in 1991. GTVH is an extension of SSTH, proposing a much more complex structure of how speakers can construct verbal jokes, while also explaining how jokes can vary and relate to each other.



Raskin's and Attardo's studies primarily focused on the discussion of what constitutes humor and how humor is achieved through verbal discourse. Nowadays, research on humor translation has taken into account various fields of knowledge, including philosophy, linguistics, and literature (Liu, 2008).

In regard to the different aspects of viewing humor as a sociolinguistic approach, scholars have pointed out the difficulty of identifying humor. As Ross stated, humor is often defined as something that makes people laugh, but the fact is that not everything that is considered humorous makes everyone laugh (Ross, 1998). Therefore, this research adopts the idea of Attardo and sees humor as an umbrella term that includes different methods of achieving humor, such as irony, sarcasm, ridicule, etc. It should be noted that this approach does not imply that it's impossible to differentiate different kinds of humor (Attardo, 2020). By shifting the focus to establishing a precise definition of what humor is, this research aims to open up broader discussion in the fields of humor studies and, thus, humor in translation studies.

2.1.2. Challenges and Constraints in Translating Humor

It is also no surprise that the field of humor translation faces various limitations, since humor can be presented in all sorts of forms and is influenced by a wide range of factors, such as context, individual preferences, manner of delivery, etc. As Vandaele stated, both practice-oriented and non-practice-oriented texts provide evidence that showcases the qualitative differences between humor translation and other types of translation, such as literature translation. Translators not only have to interpret the



semantic meanings of the words and context but also determine the pragmatical concepts behind the words (Vandaele, 2002b). Consider the following jokes:

(a) A: “Sir! I am kidnapped!”

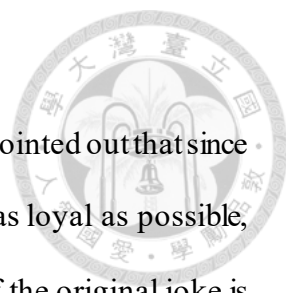
B: “Hello, Kidnapped. I am John.”

(b) C: “How dare you get a tattoo! You know it’s a lifetime commitment.”

D: “Yeah, unlike your marriage.”

In joke (a), it wouldn’t be too difficult for the translator to realize that speaker B introduced himself as John because he thought speaker A was introducing himself too, since the sentence “I am...” is commonly followed by the speaker’s name, and this misunderstanding is what makes the conversation humorous. Therefore, when translating this joke, the translator can try to reconstruct the joke by using similar sentence structures in the target language and achieve similar effects. However, joke (b) appears to be merely describing a scenario where a kid talks back to an adult. At first glance, it seems disrespectful, and the conversation might not appear to be humorous. Nevertheless, it’s still a joke, so there should be something humorous about it. Such cases require the translator to dive into why this joke is appreciated by some, but not by others – in this case, the kid’s response can be seen as “roasting”, which is a comedic act that involves insulting a person with facts. Should a translator fail to detect the humorous element and degree of humor in the source text, it would be possible that they produce a piece of translation with a different effect (Vandaele, 2002b).

Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that different cultures and languages create humor in different ways. The translatability of humor has therefore been questioned by scholars. Attardo proposed to utilize the theory of GVTH to examine the similarity



between jokes in the source and target language (Attardo, 2002). He pointed out that since the translator's job is to carry meanings across borders and remain as loyal as possible, knowing whether the effect of the translated joke is similar to that of the original joke is crucial for translators. However, it should be noted that similarity doesn't sum up to funniness for all jokes (Zabalbeascoa, 2005). As Zabalbeascoa points out, sometimes it's just not possible to retain the same effect of humor if translators focus on preserving similarity, and overcoming these obstacles when translating humor will always be a challenge for the translator.

Despite the modules and methodologies proposed by researchers for analyzing humorous texts, another challenge awaiting the translator is the rise of social media platforms on the Internet that spread humor through various approaches. Most theories have been influenced by the linguistic theories of SSTH and GVTH, which focus on verbal humor created through the semantic features of words and rely heavily on the presentation of text only, such as puns and wordplay. However, people don't only tell jokes with texts nowadays – non-textual devices such as images and sound can also create humorous effects. Also, multimodal devices such as memes might possess both textual and non-textual humor. As Attardo pointed out, “the field of translation studies has shifted its focus from textual (or verbal) humor to multimodal, audiovisual humor” (Attardo, 2020, p. 342). This is a reminder to all translators that textual and non-textual information should all be taken into consideration when translating humor, which leads us to the next discussion on multimodality.

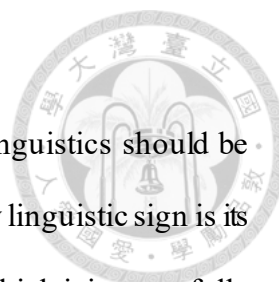


2.2. Multimodality in Translation

According to Merriam-Webster (as mentioned in section 1.1.), when memes first became popular among internet users, most of the memes were simply images. However, with a touch of creativity and the help of technology, internet users can combine text, sound, image, and video materials to create memes. To understand these memes, it is important to examine every piece of information in the meme and comprehend the whole meme as an integrated piece of information, i.e., one might not get the joke if they only see and understand the text or the image in the meme. This approach to creating memes with textual and non-textual information has inevitably led to the discussion of semiotics and multimodality.

2.2.1. Semiotics and Multimodality

In everyday communication, people express their thoughts and transmit information through signs, such as words, gestures, and images. Signs carry meanings and concepts that are not only semantic but also pragmatic, and can thus express meta-information that isn't directly indicated by the signs themselves. Semiotics is the study of signs, focusing on their origins, uses, and consequences (Jensen, 2015). Therefore, signs are also known as semiotic resources. When speakers communicate with different types of semiotic resources, they create a multimodal system that requires the listener to piece together the meanings from all these resources and understand the information as a whole. This use of several semiotic resources can then be defined as multimodality (O'Halloran et al., 2016).



Within the discussion of semiotics, Jakobson proposed that linguistics should be seen as a subfield of semiotics. Jakobson stated, “the meaning of any linguistic sign is its translation into some further, alternative sign, especially a sign ‘in which it is more fully developed’ ...” (Jakobson, 1959, pp. 222-233). In other words, there is no complete equivalence between signs and their assigned meanings, and meanings are conveyed through the act of interpretation and explanation. He added that this is especially true of language, which is a structured system of signs. Moreover, he proposed that a person doesn’t need direct acquaintance with an object to understand it, indicating that experience isn’t the only key to understanding a sign.

Jakobson’s idea that the meanings of signs are open to interpretation and inference by individuals is further supported by Eco, who proposed that meaning is negotiable, though culturally constrained. Eco stated that signs in the context of language and linguistics are produced with the intention of communicating, so that one can “transmit one’s representation or inner state to another being” (Eco, 1984, p. 16). He further explained that for humans to achieve the goal of mutual understanding through language, i.e., for the meaning of words to be conveyed successfully, the speaker and listener must “presuppose” the equivalence relation rather than the inferential relation between signs and meanings (Eco, 1984).

As the world advanced with technology and changes in society, the way people communicate has also changed over time. Kress stated that modern communication often occurs through a combination of semiotic modes rather than verbal language alone (Kress, 2009). His observations are based on the fact that digital messages are now an inseparable part of contemporary life, stating that “...current social and economic conditions are



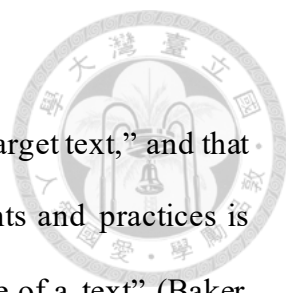
paralleled by and characteristic of features of the contemporary media landscape” (Kress, 2009, p.22). Furthermore, Kress pointed out that language users nowadays are actively “designing” meanings by selecting and arranging a wide range of modes, and that people are also engaging in communication more than ever.

2.2.2. Multimodality and Translation

The concept of translation has been constantly changing over time, and theories regarding the methodology and nature of translation have also been discussed. Still, most of these theories derive from a verbal viewpoint, which observes the linguistic aspects of text (Dicerto, 2018). Moreover, modern translators not only have to deal with text but also the accompanying elements in the same resource, whether it is visual, audio, or even spatial. According to Dicerto, these multimodality cases therefore face the problem of not having an integrated model for literary analysis.

“... the model must take into account the fact that different semiotic systems—or aspects of these systems—are likely to be exploited to convey different types of meaning in source texts and that they make different individual contributions to the text.” (Dicerto, 2018, p. 22)

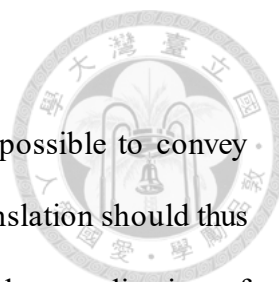
Translators have to take into account the meanings of the words and the meta-linguistic features of the source (such as where the source is produced) in the process of translating. As Baker suggested, “it is essential if one is to understand what is going on in any kind of verbal communication... any mistranslation of words and structures in the



source text may well affect the calculability of implicatures in the target text,” and that the ability “...to identify references to participants, entities, events and practices is essential for drawing inferences and for maintaining the coherence of a text” (Baker, 2018). However, as the presentation of information develops with the advance of technology and for the sake of creativity, translators nowadays face sources containing non-textual elements more than ever before. Understanding how these semiotic components interact with each other would be key knowledge for translators to make decisions, and for readers to understand the translated piece.

The difficulties posed to theorists and translators by multimodality mainly derive from the fact that the semiotic systems of a multimodal creation (e.g., words, images, etc.) are fundamentally different, making it challenging to establish a direct link between their meanings (O’Halloran, K. L. *et al*, 2016). In the translation process, some meanings of a certain element might be associated with those of another element and be rendered into parts of it. Moreover, based on the purposes of the translation, the meanings understood and created by translators can vary. Rather than sticking closely to the original text, translators might need to examine the other semiotic resources and opt for translation methods that don’t stick closely to the original text (Dore, 2020).

According to Jakobson’s classification, there are three types of translation within the discussion of semiotics: *intralingual* (rewording), *interlingual* (proper translation), and *intersemiotic* (transmutation) translation. These approaches are adopted by all language users, including translators and linguists. Furthermore, translation involves establishing equivalence between two messages through explanation and restructuring, and he remarked that “equivalence is the cardinal problem of language and the pivotal concern

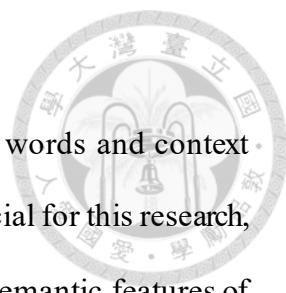


of linguistics” (Jakobson, 1959, p. 233). In other words, it is impossible to convey information with complete equivalence through translation, and translation should thus be considered the process of establishing approximation rather than replication of meaning. This idea aligns with the studies in humor translation, which also discuss the translatability of humor.

2.3. Relevance Theory and Reader-Response Criticism

Memes result from cross-national and cross-cultural interaction on the Internet, and their development is closely associated with the Internet community. Therefore, this research focuses on internet users’ perspectives on meme culture in Taiwan, and the discussions in the following chapters will focus solely on internet users’ perspectives within the context of Taiwanese culture. Moreover, as the audience’s understanding and context of the memes are essential for this study to interpret their meaning, the connections between the memes and the audience should be investigated through sociological lenses that take into account internet culture. To set the scope of discussion, this research introduces relevance theory as the analytical framework.

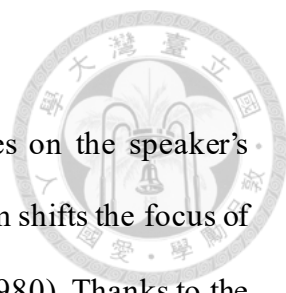
Linguistically, studies on the context of a conversation and participants’ understanding in the process of communication are mostly considered part of the pragmatic field, specifically under the discussion of relevance theory (Wilson & Sperber, 2006). Relevance theory was first proposed by Wilson and Sperber in 1986. The theory claims that “... the expectations of relevance [of the communicated meaning] raised by an utterance are precise enough, and predictable enough, to guide the hearer towards the speaker’s meaning” (Wilson & Sperber, 2006, p. 607). In other words, the theory argues



that the listener can infer the speaker's meaning by observing the words and context provided during communication. Wilson and Sperber's theory is crucial for this research, as they proposed that the construction of meaning is based on the semantic features of spoken words and the listener's knowledge about the conversation, as well as how the listener recognizes themselves as part of the communication. As Wilson & Sperber pointed out, "Understanding is achieved when the communicative intention is fulfilled – that is, when the audience recognizes the informative intention" (Wilson & Sperber, 2006, p. 611). This statement suggested that not all meanings produced by a speaker make sense even if they're grammatically and syntactically accurate, and that communication is only fully effective when the signs are accepted by the listener. For the speaker, the intention to provide enough information for the listener to understand alters the outcome of the sign; as for the listener, it's the realization that the sign is relevant to themselves that prompts them to decipher the meaning behind the sign further to reach deeper conclusions.

At this point, it should also be noted that relevance theory states that individuals involved in a specific communication seek different approaches to establish the best possible relevance between the assumption made by a speaker and themselves, and the context is selected to accomplish this goal (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). Therefore, Forceville concluded that according to Wilson and Sperber, "... in mass-communication, relevance is always relevance to an individual" (Forceville, 2014, p. 7). This idea is crucial for this study, as Internet memes are always open to the public and never target a specific individual directly.

Apart from the traditional discussions about how readers interact with the text in different contexts and settings, the theory of reader-response criticism should also be



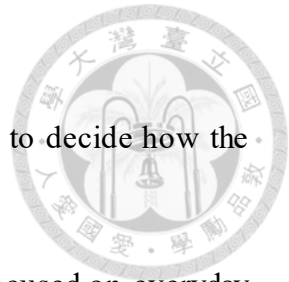
included in the discussion of memes. As relevance theory focuses on the speaker's meaning in the text within a given context, reader-response criticism shifts the focus of literary appreciation from the text itself to the reader (Tompkins, 1980). Thanks to the advent of comment sections beneath posts, all internet users now have the ability to respond to the post and even share their insights regarding the content directly with the content creator. Moreover, users are able to engage with other viewers through the comment section, igniting discussions that originate from a single comment. In this manner, the perspectives of readers have never been more significant or more prominently displayed.

The field of reader-response criticism can be overly immense, as different scholars tackle various aspects of a reader's role. According to Tompkins, Gibson proposed that all readers adopt a persona called the "mock reader", who only exists in the face of a piece of literature. This persona is adopted to further understand and explore the discourse within the text, and thus, the reader is able to construct understanding based on the knowledge within the text itself, which is "a way of unlocking further treasures in the text..." (Tompkins, 1980, p. x). Building upon this concept, readers are now positioned at the core of the textual analysis process, and the impact of the text on the readers' identities can now be considered for further discussion.

To explain the relationship between a person and the act of reading, Holland proposed that readers interpret text in a way that fits their psychological state, and thus the process of "uniting" text meanings reflects the reader's mind, i.e., "Identity is the unity I find in a self if I look at it as though it were a text" (Holland, 1975, p. 815). This indicates that the reader's knowledge about themselves could have a bigger impact on

what they know about the world and text, as readers are the ones to decide how the meanings within the text should come together.

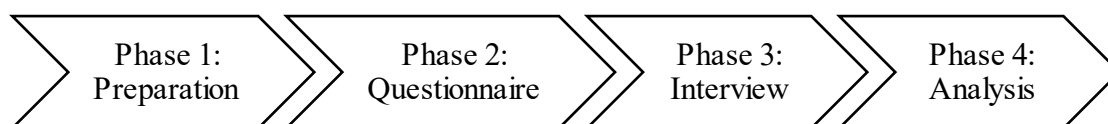
Besides viewing readers as sophisticated interpreters, Felski focused on everyday reading conducted by “ordinary” readers, stating, “Everyday practices of assessing and evaluating, such as the experience of debating the merits of a movie with a friend, usually fall under the rubric of ‘criticism’” (Felski, 2015, pp. 134-135). She argued that reading isn’t just about trying to understand and uncover deeper meanings in the text, but also about connecting with the text. The feelings that come from the experience are real and truly important.





Chapter 3 Research Methodology

The research consisted of four major phases: preparation, questionnaire, interview, and analysis. In the first phase, an amorphous study about the phenomenon of meme culture in Taiwan was conducted. Next, a questionnaire was carried out to help the researcher grasp a more overall idea of how society observes meme culture. After that, based on the results of the second phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with several participants. It should be noted that each stage is designed to be a foundation work for the following stage, and therefore, the results from the second phase would mostly be used as a reference for the researcher to outline the questions and topics for the interview in the third phase. Finally, all data and results from the previous phases were analyzed and reviewed collectively. Relevance theory serves as the guiding framework for this research, informing the methods used to interpret textual and conversational data.

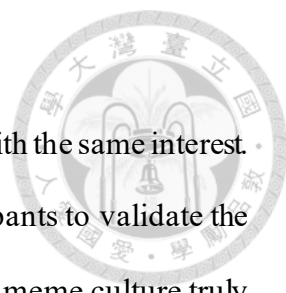


Only the details of the first three phases are explained in this section.

3.1. Preparation Phase

At the beginning of this phase, meme translation sites on social media platforms, mainly Facebook and Twitter¹², were investigated to gain an overall perspective on the meme culture in Taiwan. All inspected pages are dedicated to translating foreign language

¹² Following the acquisition of Twitter by South African Entrepreneur Elon Musk in 2022, Twitter was rebranded and now known as X. However, for the sake of clarity and nostalgia, this research will adopt the original name of the platform to ensure readers don't mistake the name for a random capitalized letter.



memes into Traditional Chinese, targeting Taiwanese internet users with the same interest. Next, a semi-structured interview was conducted with three participants to validate the previous research, specifically to confirm whether the popularity of meme culture truly exists. In addition, related research studies were reviewed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the meme phenomenon from a theoretical perspective.

While investigating the popularity of memes on social media platforms, it was observed that despite the widespread popularity of Japanese culture among the Taiwanese community, there were hardly any, if any, pages dedicated to translating Japanese memes. Instead, there were several popular Facebook pages committed to posting Twitter post translations. This discovery led to an interview with three individuals. These individuals have all studied and worked in Japan and are familiar with Japanese culture, including Internet culture. They are also active on social media platforms and thus are capable of providing information about Japanese memes. The interview was conducted using a semi-structured format, aimed at exploring the popularity of memes within Japan and gathering participants' perspectives on the translation of Japanese memes in Taiwan.

3.2. Questionnaire Phase

The results from the previous phase only showed the ideas of a small number of individuals, and consequently, a survey aimed at the public would be required to gain a deeper insight into how the meme phenomenon is shaped in the Taiwanese internet community. Apart from that, based on the results from the previous phase, which would be discussed in later sections, the questionnaire for this phase was designed to focus on memes translated from English memes translated to Mandarin rather than those translated



from Japanese. This decision helps narrow down the audience and pinpoint questions for more accurate results.

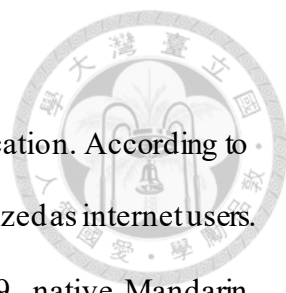
First, questionnaires were designed to survey how internet users observe meme translation as an integrated part of the internet community. The questionnaire drew inspiration from the *Questionnaire Design Tip Sheet* and other resources released by the Harvard University Program on Survey Research¹³ and surveys carried out by the Taiwan Network Information Center (TWNIC)¹⁴. The questionnaire was distributed via online platforms from March 28, 2024, to April 10, 2024. Prior to its online release, the questionnaire was tested by peers, and necessary adjustments were made. The main focus was to determine whether the observations are associated with specific sociological groups, such as gender, age, or education. To reach this objective, the questions were designed to evaluate respondents' familiarity with memes, their judgments of the humor and relevance elements of chosen meme translations, and their awareness of the informational aspects of memes in a global context. Consequently, the questionnaire was structured into three sections, each exploring different facets of user-meme interaction. The questionnaire is shown in the Appendix.

Next, since memes are commonly recognized as products of internet social platforms, the phenomenon can be closely linked to the demographic qualities of internet users. Therefore, the selection of respondents was decided based on the survey¹⁵ conducted by TWNIC in 2023. TWNIC's survey investigated the population of Taiwanese internet users

¹³ <https://psr.iq.harvard.edu/book/guides-survey-research>, retrieved 2024, Mar 20.

¹⁴ <https://twmic.tw/news/publications/>, retrieved 2024, Mar 20.

¹⁵ <https://report.twmic.tw/2023/>, retrieved 2024, May 20.



based on several categories, including gender, living area, and education. According to the survey, over 98% of the 18-to-39-year-old population was recognized as internet users. Therefore, respondents who were between the ages of 18 and 39, native Mandarin speakers, residents of Taiwan, and who had lived in Taiwan for at least 2 years up to 2024 were selected to complete the questionnaire. Responses from respondents that don't fit into all of these criteria were then eliminated from the final analysis.

In Part 2, several graphic memes were presented to the respondents. Most of the memes were collected from Facebook fanpages that post meme translations, and the owners of these pages have made sure that the audience is aware that they translated these memes, either by adding watermarks or reference links. After receiving permission to use their memes from the translators, memes that met the following conditions were then selected. Memes selected for this study were required to meet several criteria. They had to be posted within the past two to six months and contain sources easily verifiable via Google Image search. They were expected to show no obvious signs of translation, such as references to personal experiences abroad, and to appear as if created by a Taiwanese person in Taiwan using Mandarin. Offensive content was excluded to maintain focus on the relationship between humor and translation and to reduce variability in respondents' perceptions. To ensure diversity, the memes covered a range of topics, from sex to well-known novels. After choosing the memes and retrieving their sources, watermarks were erased from the images, leaving only the words, the images, and their styles and arrangements unchanged.

Additionally, the creators of the memes were informed about the selection process and the removal of watermarks, to which they agreed. In some cases, edits were necessary



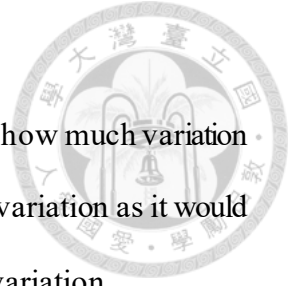
to ensure that the translated memes maintained a consistent format. Ultimately, all images were reviewed for clarity after being uploaded to the online questionnaire, and any images that were distorted or of low resolution were replaced.

Finally, all data collected were organized and analyzed in Microsoft Excel and were analyzed with the most basic formulas. As mentioned, this questionnaire was carried out as the primary stage of the overall research, which provides quantified data to give researchers a fundamental insight into the many aspects of meme translation. Therefore, data collected in this stage doesn't and won't explain the whole theory by the data itself and should only be seen as the first step to further investigation. The fundamental numbers that are in use are as follows: average (μ), standard deviation population (SD, σ), the coefficient of variation (CV), and the Pearson correlation coefficient (PCC). These numbers are sufficient for researchers to attain a rough picture of how categories and survey results can be explained:

- (1) Average (μ): This number represents the tendency of a large set of numbers. It shows how the majority of respondents react to the question.

$$\mu = \frac{(x_1 + x_2 + x_3 + \dots + x_n)}{n}$$

μ = Average; n = Number of values



(2) Standard Deviation Population (SD, σ): This number shows how much variation there is among individual data collected and showcases the variation as it would be in a population. The higher the number, the larger the variation.

$$\sigma = \sqrt{\frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N (x_i - \mu)^2}$$

σ = Standard Deviation; x_i = Terms given in the data

μ = Average; N = Total number of terms

(3) Coefficient of Variation (CV): This number presents the extent of variability of data in a sample and refers back to the means of the population, i.e., the dispersion of data from the average or the mean value. It allows different sets of data to be compared to tell if a set of data is more relative to its mean than the other. The lower the CV, the more predictable or consistent the data.

$$CV = \left(\frac{\sigma}{\mu}\right) * 100\%$$

σ = Standard Deviation; μ = Average

(4) Pearson Correlation Coefficient (PCC, r): shows the correlation between two sets of data. The correlation is usually described as one leading the other to change in a linear matter.

$$r = \frac{(n(\sum xy) - (\sum x)(\sum y))}{\sqrt{[n \sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2][n \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

r = Pearson Correlation Coefficient; x = Values in the first set of data



y = Values in the second set of data; n = Total number of values.

The data acquired through these formulas is sufficient for constructing the questions in the next phase.

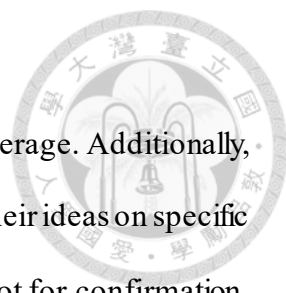
3.3. Interview Phase

Based on the previous results, individuals whose results are closest to the average numbers were selected to participate in the interview either face-to-face or through the webcam. This research drew inspiration from the guidelines provided by Scribbr¹⁶ and Oxfam¹⁷, and designed a series of questions to aid in interpreting the results from the previous phase. These questions explored why some translations are considered funnier than others, why certain translations seem more overtly "translated," how these two aspects interact, and how internet users perceive the role of translators and the work of translation, particularly in the context of memes. The interview was semi-structured, and the questions served only as conversation starters, allowing each participant to contribute different perspectives as the interview proceeded. In addition, the interview was conducted with one individual at a time. The interview took place between June and August 2024. The questions can be found in the Appendix.

Although the interview was semi-structured, all participants were encouraged to share their opinions on specific research aspects through guidance and prompts from the

¹⁶ <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/semi-structured-interview/>, retrieved 2024, Mar 20.

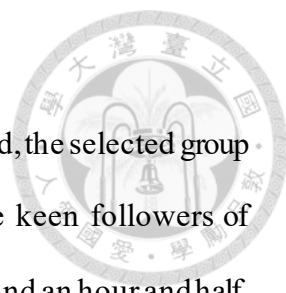
¹⁷ <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/252993/ml-guideline-conducting-semistructured-interviews-221112-en.pdf;jsessionid=BD53E957F4860F1249918C990071C00E?sequence=13>, retrieved 2024, Mar 20.



interviewer. As a result, the interviews lasted at least an hour on average. Additionally, the interviewer periodically assisted the participant in summarizing their ideas on specific topics. These summaries were presented to the participant on the spot for confirmation. This approach allowed the interviewer to monitor the participant's responses, enabling the identification of any contradictory statements or gaps in their logical reasoning. For the participant, this step offered an opportunity to pause, reflect, and consider how to elaborate on their thoughts further.

A total of 36 participants were selected to participate in this phase, divided into two groups: the English group, and the Japanese group. The former group includes 24 participants, while the latter group is consisted of 12 participants. The 24 participants selected for the English group interview were individuals who completed the questionnaire and received scores close to the average. This method ensures that the research captures the perspectives of the majority of the public. Furthermore, participants from the 18 to 35 age group were chosen to obtain more consistent and coherent insights. This selection was informed by the classification of this demographic as distinct from those over 35, as identified by the Market Intelligence & Consulting Institute (MIC)¹⁸. Other than that, there was an even distribution of 12 men and 12 women participants, including one or two people from each age group. Next, the 12 participants selected for the Japanese group interview were recruited through online postings since research conducted in Phase 1 indicated that the audience for these pages was relatively smaller compared to those who follow English-Mandarin meme pages, and that conducting a

¹⁸ MIC. (2024). **【社群通訊行為調查】常用社群平台有顯著世代差距 35 歲以上為 FB 重點用戶 Line 消費應用持續提升 網友最偏好的社群內容形式為限動**》. <https://mic.iii.org.tw/news.aspx?id=691>, retrieved 2025, May 20.



survey on Japanese-Mandarin memes would be challenging. In the end, the selected group of 6 men and 6 women included internet users who claimed to be keen followers of Japanese meme pages. The average time of each interview lasted around an hour and half, leaving the participants with plenty of time to express themselves.

3.4. Relevance Theory as an Analytic Framework

Within the framework of relevance theory, translation can be discussed from the translator's perspective or the audience's perspective since the translator's background knowledge and motivation directly affect the final result of the translation (Kliffier & Strońska, 2004). For audiences, the principle of relevance prompts them to access the most accessible and adequate interpretation (Gutt, 1990). Either way, the effectiveness of the translation is directly affected. Other works stated that "translation scholars address cognitive aspects of translation influencing both translation as a product and translation as a process that involve [sic] complicated decision-making procedures" (Iłinska, 2019, p. 37). In other words, relevance theory provides a structural way to analyze translation works with a linguistic approach, which deals with the purposeful aspects of translation (from the translator's viewpoint), as well as how and why different translations receive different reviews (from the audience's viewpoint).

As effective communication is crucial for society to work cooperatively, people tend to follow the principle of making conversation easier for the audience to understand, and this is no different from how translators handle their work most of the time. Therefore, "RT [Relevance Theory] combines the attractiveness of high plausibility and precision in explaining how its central concepts apply to real-life communication" (Forceville, 2014,

p. 15). Under this framework, it is possible to investigate the inferences made by Taiwanese users and understand how they interact with memes.





Chapter 4 Results

In this section, the results are primarily concluded from statements made by interviewees, supported by data collected from the questionnaire. As interviews are conducted throughout the research process, interviewees will be assigned codenames that indicate the phase in which the interview took place. The three interviewees who shared their views on Japanese meme culture in Phase 1 (the Preparation Phase) are labeled P1~3; the twenty-four interviewees of the English group from Phase 3 (the Interview Phase) are labeled E1~24, while the twelve interviewees of the Japanese group are labeled J1~12.

Regarding the data gathered from Phase 2 (the Questionnaire Phase), a total of 536 respondents completed the questionnaire, yielding 509 valid responses (223 males and 286 females). The validity of responses was examined under a specific criterion, and responses from respondents who completed the questionnaire within 180 seconds, provided the same answers for the entire questionnaire, and failed to pass the selected test questions were deemed invalid. Only participants who passed this examination were selected for the Interview Phase.

4.1. Japanese-Mandarin Memes in Taiwan

Through interviews carried out in this research, it was discovered that the difference between English-Mandarin memes and Japanese-Mandarin memes lies in both quantity and presentation. Specifically, Japanese-Mandarin meme translations were fewer in number and didn't cover as many topics and themes as English-Mandarin memes. This was confirmed by the participants, as most participants from the Japanese group could only name fewer than five Japanese-Mandarin meme pages, whereas most of those from

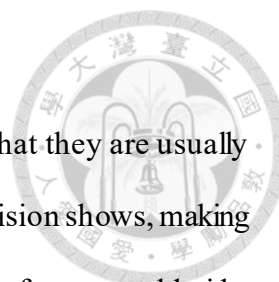


the English Group could easily name more than six English-Mandarin meme pages. The main factors contributing to these differences include the typology of memes, the use of memes in the source language community, and the viewer's acceptance in the target language community. These factors reflect that meme translators are faced with challenges within the meme itself, including textual and non-textual aspects, and challenges from the cultural aspects of the internet community.

4.1.1. Typologies of Japanese Memes: Insights from Interview Data

As the number of English speakers exceeds that of Japanese speakers significantly, the source of English memes can be varied, making it extremely difficult to track the origins of English memes and decipher the social and cultural context behind these memes. Therefore, this research focuses on the investigation of meme culture in Japan by interviewing participants who are familiar with the Japanese internet culture. According to interviewees, memes are indeed popular and seen throughout social media platforms, being a means of self-expression and a way of joking. However, they also stated that many of these memes are the ones that most Taiwanese people see or use in everyday lives. Participants P1, 2, and 3 all agreed that the graphic memes commonly seen on Taiwanese social media platforms aren't common in Japan. On the other hand, memes that are common in Japan can be found in Taiwan, though these memes are slightly less popular and are not as frequently used by internet users.

According to the interviewees, Japanese graphic memes can be categorized into four main types: the *oogiri* (“大喜利” in Japanese kanji), animal memes, popular audio/video effects (referred to as “素材” [sozai] in Japanese), and viral media clips. According to



participant P1, what these four types of memes have in common is that they are usually created using materials from Japanese internet communities and television shows, making them distinctive from memes that are popular on social media platforms worldwide. Participant P3 stated that “...many Japanese people live a busy life, and it’s easier to understand these memes [that use materials from Japanese social media].” P3 also added that these meme materials are popular in Taiwan, too, for the same reason, though “the variety of memes [in Taiwan] is much larger.”


Figure 4

Example of an Oogiri Meme



Caption: One, two, three... Freeze! Aaaaah!!

According to interviewees, oogiri is the most popular one among these four main types of Japanese memes. Figure 4 shows a Japanese oogiri translated into Mandarin by

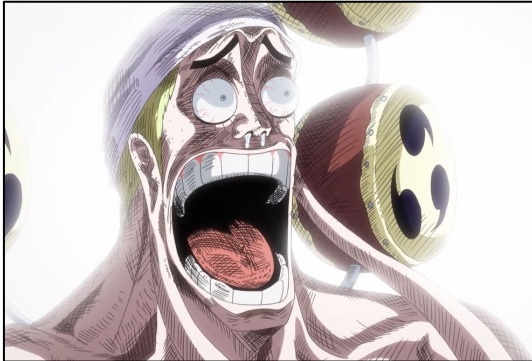


Facebook content creator Funghikunn (方吉君), showcasing a man who looks shocked and a man with a poker face. The oogiri describes a children's game called “達磨さんが転んだ”(Daruma-san ga koronda, which literally means “the Daruma fell over”), a game similar to “red light, green light”. What's interesting about this piece of oogiri meme is that the scenario was entirely predictable, yet it was nevertheless funny to the audience. In this scenario, the player moving is likely to attempt to approach the spotter closely, which may understandably cause discomfort for or surprise the spotter if a face is presented in close proximity. This indicated that memes are able to create humor with a different approach that is not the same as verbal jokes, as one of the elements that generates humor through jokes is the element of surprise and plot twists. All interviewees also confirmed that the oogiri is the one that resembles Taiwanese popular memes the most, which is, in participant P2's words, “simply a combination of words and pictures.” Participant P2 also stated that oogiri is popular in Japan since the concept behind it was simple, and the tools and materials needed to create such memes were easy to access.



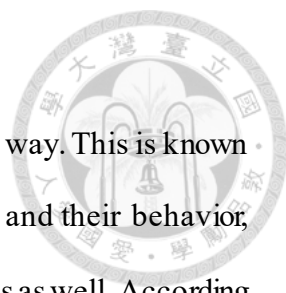
Figure 5

Example of Kaogei



Note: This is a scene from the anime series *One Piece*.

One of the reasons why oogiri became widely accepted and commonly used in Taiwan is attributed to the popularity of anime in the country. According to participant P1, some of the most popular graphic materials used for oogiri are screenshots from anime and manga, and a commonly seen humorous element in oogiri pictures is “顏芸” (kaogei), which literally translates to “facial performance,” and this Japanese term was introduced to Mandarin as “顏藝” (yan-yi). Kaogei refers to a comedic facial expression that is usually achieved through distorting or exaggerating details on a character’s face in anime and manga. This element is commonly used in oogiri as it conveniently expresses feelings that are difficult to fully express in reality, such as a dramatically wide-open mouth and spot on lighting (as in Figure 7). Moreover, some kaogei images appear to be more popular. Unsurprisingly, kaogei from fan-favorite characters attracts more attention, but kaogei from characters that don’t usually show the emotions denoted by the said kaogei can even be more popular. Take Figure 5, for instance, the character is known to be a tyrannical oppressor who is always nonchalant and proud. That’s why it amused viewers when he



showed such kaogei, being fully surprised and scared in a ridiculous way. This is known as “gap”, meaning the contrast between the character’s appearance and their behavior, and it is one of the most commonly seen elements in anime and memes as well. According to participant P3, “These humorous concepts that amuse the Japanese are comprehensible for the Taiwanese community as well. Personally, I think this kind of joke is the most basic and easy form of humor. It’s not as clever as wordplay jokes. However, that is why I think it makes a good meme element, because memes should be easy to understand and make viewers laugh quickly.”

Like all memes, oogiri can be spread quickly across the Internet, and internet users can follow a certain format to create these memes. However, the spread of oogiri in Japan and Taiwan is highly dependent on personal preference for the material used in the meme, not the actual joke. To elaborate, as the fan bases of each anime and manga differ significantly from one another, meme materials that depict a certain anime character might only be popular among the fan base of that anime or even among fans of that specific anime character. As a result, oogiri memes don’t spread as rapidly and widely as those commonly seen Western memes. According to participant P3, “Users often end up sticking to a favorite picture saved in their phones and creating memes out of this very picture for a long time.” The creation and use of oogiri memes suggest that internet users don’t always reuse common and objectively popular material to generate memes, and there are metalinguistic aspects, such as personal preference, which affect user interaction with memes.




Figure 6

Example of an Anime Meme



Caption: What kind of streetlamp is this?

In addition to being directly introduced to Taiwan through the Japanese internet community and Japanese animation, some Japanese meme materials gained popularity in the Western internet communities before reaching the Taiwanese social platform. Unlike the more simplified format of most oogiri memes, these memes that went viral among Westerners are often edited to resemble commonly seen memes and thus come in more varied forms. For example, the *Is This A Pigeon* meme originated from a TV anime series called *The Brave Fighter of Sun Fighbird* (太陽の勇者ファイバード), which was aired in the 1990s. In the scene, the character pointed at a butterfly and asked, “Is this a pigeon?” This act of a person asking a dumb question in the face of an obvious answer soon became



the format of this meme. In Figure 6, the creator edited the picture and placed the butterfly inside a grid-based CAPTCHA, and the character now plays the role of Google. Unlike regular oogiri, which places the text (subtitle of the characters speaking) outside of the picture, it adopted the modern meme style and had the text placed inside the picture. Most participants recognized the meme and understood its meaning, while only two participants knew which anime this meme was from, and both of these participants stated that they didn't think this anime was well-known among younger generations.

As interviews with participants continued, it was observed that the popularity of oogiri memes is linked to the different uses of memes. Take Figure 8 as an example, despite the anime not being popular among the participants, all participants agreed that the meme was intriguing and creative. Participant J1 said, "I can see why most translated memes come from English. These memes [that are translated from English memes] combine verbal and textual jokes with the images cleverly, and it makes me want to share them with my friends. However, I won't save these memes in my phone because I won't use them when chatting with friends." J1's words suggest that oogiri are more used in private conversations, adding a hint of humor to text messages, while common memes are posted and shared more publicly. This difference explains why oogiri translations aren't common in Taiwan, as suggested by the participants.



Figure 7

Doge Meme



According to participants, other commonly seen types of Japanese memes on Taiwanese social media platforms are animal memes and popular effects, which often use dogs and cats as the spotlight. For example, Figure 7 is the famous *Doge* meme, which is simply a picture of a dog called Kabosu from Japan. As shown in the picture, this meme simply shows a dog sitting on a piece of furniture, with no further context or meaning. This type of meme allows users to add all sorts of text and edits to it, making it more relatable to one's personal experience and expression. The topics can vary dramatically, and they often don't seem to have direct connections with the picture itself at all. For instance, participant P1 once saw a supermarket worker putting up a sign saying "Salmon on sale today" alongside the *Doge* meme. This act of putting words that are totally unrelated to the animal in the picture somehow generated a sense of humor, making animal memes popular on the Internet. However, P1 stated that, even though the addition of text makes this type of meme textually translatable, translations of these memes aren't common on social platforms. "After all, these animal memes have developed variations



in Taiwan as well, and I think the variations are far more interesting than plain animal pictures,” P1 added.

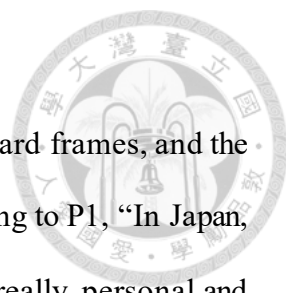
Figure 8

Example of a *Horny Dogs* Meme



Caption: No Horny / [Spell Card] / [Magic effect] / Use this magic card. Your opponent can't have sex for a day.


One of the variations of animal memes is a type of meme called *Horny Dogs*. Creators will use pictures of popular pet dog memes and frame them in a *Yu-Gi-Oh* (known as “遊☆戯☆王” in Japanese) style playing card, and send the pictures to friends as a form of mockery. Take Figure 8 as an example; it depicts a dog with a sad, innocent expression, while a finger points at it, evoking the image of a child being scolded by a parent. Participant P2 mentioned that people may find this meme amusing due to its



attempt to personify the pet, the unexpected addition of *Yu-Gi-Oh* card frames, and the sexual references, which contrast with the cute dog image. According to P1, “In Japan, most people just use these [pet] images to talk about something really personal and unimportant, just like oogiri, but the picture is a real dog. I think these types of memes are cute, but I don’t find them exciting or interesting. If I were the translator, I don’t think I would want to translate this type of animal meme because it’s common and not special. The Horny Dog memes are funnier.” The idea that different meme formats contribute to the degree of humor is also suggested by other participants. As stated by participant J2, “I know a meme is good when I am already expecting to laugh before I take a closer look at the details. When it comes to creating memes, the format and material used in the meme are the most important factors.”

Besides oogiri and animal memes, participants also suggested that audio/video memes, as well as viral media memes, are popular in Japan. Although these memes don’t contain text for translators to work on and are therefore not discussed in this research, the participants expressed opinions on these memes that help this research gain a better insight into how memes generate humorous effects. According to participant P3, “This type of meme has something in common... they don’t have many variations because they’re just something funny by themselves. Most of the time, they’re just a subtle addition to the original content, and they don’t necessarily need to be there.” Furthermore, P3 proposed that these audio/video memes, such as “The Happy Cat meme,”¹⁹ make the content more chaotic and overwhelming, which reminds the viewer of anime scenes, and

¹⁹ It is a video meme often accompanied by a theme music, showing a dancing cat. This video material can be edited and incorporated into another video.



that might be where the sense of humor derives from. As for viral media memes, participants hold different definitions for this type of meme. The participants' responses provide further insight into how memes are defined and utilized by internet users. According to participant P2, "Viral media memes usually come from TV shows or dramas, such as a piece of screenshot or video clip, and I'm pretty sure they can be called 'memes' because my boyfriend and friends would use this word to describe this kind of meme sometimes. Also, I see some websites posting viral media content to attract viewers as well. However, because they basically don't change, I will quickly lose interest in them if I see them the third or fourth time." Participant P3 also agreed that viral media should be considered as memes, saying, "Yes, they are definitely memes. They're funny, and they are widespread on the Internet, right? We can also edit them, although I think most people just like watching them as they are. They come in handy when you want to start a chat with a friend, so I don't think they will ever be unpopular." On the other hand, participant P1 disagreed that viral media posts should be considered as memes, stating, "I don't usually see these video clips on public websites, but rather through sharing from friends. It's like everyone knows them, but they don't openly share it on their accounts. How can it be called a meme if it can't be replicated and shown in different ways? To be frank, I actually don't enjoy most of these clips because I don't even know the context." In other words, participants P2 and P3 value memes more as a source of humor, while P1 values memes more as a way of expressing creativity.

Interviews reveal that the differences between Japanese memes and other popular internet memes reflect how users interact with and value them. Participants note that Japanese memes mainly draw from Japanese media and everyday images and are often



preferred in private chats. Despite these distinctions, Japanese memes are still used for self-expression, communication, advertisements, and humor, just like other memes. Furthermore, statements from the participants suggest that the popularity of memes isn't definitely related to the source of the material, though the degree of humor is highly linked to the format and material. It is thus concluded that these variations in format and purpose do not influence how internet users perceive Japanese memes, and that the popularity of Japanese memes is primarily driven by personal preference.

4.1.2. Popularity of Japanese Meme Translation Websites in Taiwan

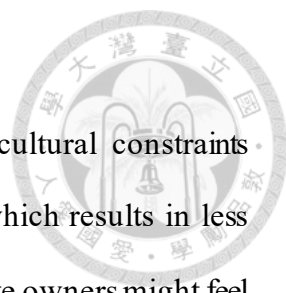
The unique nature of Japanese meme culture compared to English-speaking online communities has ultimately shaped the way memes are translated in Taiwan. When asked to comment on the translation of Japanese memes in Taiwan, participants P2 and P3 thought that these memes and the translations were quite commonly seen, while P1 disagreed with them. When discussing animal memes, P2 said, "For the Taiwanese community, a cat is just a cat. You can put it anywhere you like. They typically do not follow a specific pattern or format. I think that's why people don't usually realize these memes are translated from Japanese when they see one." Furthermore, participant P3 stated that these memes aren't recognized as translations because they don't usually show creativity, saying, "After all, [making oogiri] is simply matching up scenarios with facial expressions." In other words, P2 suggested that Japanese memes being common doesn't mean that the memes are seen as translations for internet users. Similarly, P1 said, "Most creators can come up with something equally funny without having to translate a meme from Japanese. Why say it's translated if you can say it's your idea?" In addition, both P1



and P2 mentioned that Japanese memes appear less popular or are not popular because memes translated from English have already taken the spotlight.

According to the participants, the popularity of memes is directly linked to the success of the websites. All participants stated that they thought original content is more likely to bring the website owners more likes and subscribers. As P3 stated, “Although I appreciate the effort of content creators who translate foreign content, and I also acknowledge the fact that their translation works are important for spreading information and joy, and I just don’t think the idea of ‘reusing’ creativity is going to bring the translator more public attention. At least not in a way that helps the translator build a distinct and popular persona.” To elaborate, P3 proposed that he didn’t think quality translation is the major reason for translation websites to gain audience attention nowadays, saying that he had seen popular posts with low-quality translation (though he didn’t comment further on the reason why he thought it was low quality). Therefore, P3 proposed that non-translation activities might be the major means for these translators to attract audiences. P3 also stated that the owners of popular websites often post content about collaborations or their personal lives, and they also reply to comments to converse with the audience, whereas owners of less popular websites either post translation-only content or interact less with the audience.”


At this point, it is shown that the driving factors behind the popularity of Japanese-Mandarin meme translations stem from the source meme culture, the meme itself, and the translator. Although Japanese oogiri memes are considered the most widely translated on social platforms in Taiwan, oogiri memes still remain less popular than many other memes translated from English in Taiwan. The reason for this is not only the limited number of



translators specializing in Japanese memes but also the greater cultural constraints surrounding this type of meme, especially its format and usage, which results in less variation. Furthermore, participants suggested that translation website owners might feel reluctant to translate these memes, as it would be easier for the website owners themselves to create memes than to translate. Participants also believed that many meme website owners hide the fact that the memes were translated and sometimes falsely claim to have created the memes themselves. This situation further reduces the popularity and recognition of Japanese meme translations. Therefore, to engage more audience interaction, Japanese meme translators might consider posting content unrelated to translation and responding more actively to viewers in the comment section. Participants' observations show that meme translation website owners today can't simply concentrate on increasing meme quality and quantity to boost the website's popularity – managing the website properly is equally important as selecting and translating the memes.

4.1.3. Defining Japanese Twitter Translation as a Form of Meme

During interviews, most participants agreed that popular Japanese translation websites in Taiwan often translate Twitter posts from Japanese internet users. To explain this phenomenon, most participants suggested that Japanese people use Twitter a lot, and therefore, a great majority of posts and content from Japanese internet users are shared on this platform. This observation is supported by surveys conducted by the World



Population Review Website²⁰, which reveal that Japan ranks second globally in Twitter usage, with 75.8 million users, just behind the US with 111.3 million in the year 2024. According to Acar & Deguchi, this can be a result of microblogging culture. In their findings, Acar and Deguchi found that younger generations tend to disclose more aspects of their personal lives on Twitter. The Twitter platform's design facilitates this behavior, enabling users to share freely without the constraints of interpersonal communication and real-life social restrictions in Japan (Acar & Deguchi, 2013). Although the reason for Twitter's continued popularity may have shifted within this decade since Acar & Deguchi's research, it is inarguably still one of the most popular social media platforms in Japan²¹. It should be noted that although surveys suggest that younger Japanese generations frequently post on Twitter, this doesn't necessarily mean they use memes in their posts.

All participants also agreed that most translation websites choose Twitter as the main source because there is significantly more content to translate, which means the topics would be more diverse. Meme website translators could also benefit from the variety of posts since they are less likely to translate the same post as other translators, giving them a better chance to stand out and attract the attention of internet users. Furthermore, translators can demonstrate their translation skills by translating these posts, which have

²⁰ <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/twitter-users-by-country>, retrieved 2025, May 20. In 2025, Japan still ranked second with 74.5M users.

²¹ According to a survey conducted by the Nippon Research Center Ltd., Twitter has consistently ranked third on the list of "most used social media platforms" since 2023. <https://www.nrc.co.jp/report/250924.html>, retrieved 2025, Dec 20.



more words than usual memes, and adding watermarks to the images to ensure their work isn't easily stolen or claimed by others.

Figure 9

Example of Twitter Translation




At this stage, this study proposes that Twitter translations be regarded as memes in their own right. Like other memes, these Twitter-based memes adhere to specific formats, incorporating elements of the post's user interface, such as the share button, user ID, timestamp, and other visual markers. For example, in Figure 9, the joke revolves around how people from different countries react when asked the question, "Have you had any experiences in dealing with this stuff?" This joke could have been easily conveyed by a post with words only, since most of the sentences describe what the person might say verbally, and it doesn't involve any physical movements or specific settings for the listener to visualize in their mind. Nevertheless, the translator went the extra mile and



merged the textual content with the interface into a single image, allowing users to share it easily, and thus provided the post with the features of a common meme.

According to some participants, the practice of preserving the original elements in a Twitter post affects their thoughts and expectations of the meme. Participant J3 suggested that Twitter memes make the post more appealing to Japanese learners and Japanese culture lovers, saying, “I love traveling to Japan and learning things about its culture, so I’m always willing to read articles about Japan, including the daily lives of a Japanese person. The username and buttons at the bottom of the picture in Twitter memes help me identify its Japanese origin quickly while I’m scrolling through my feed, and I’ll always spend more time reading the content in the post, more than other types of memes.” Participant J4 also stated that users might take the words on Twitter memes more seriously, saying, “... because there are more words on it, I expect the content to be more meaningful and informative, even if it’s just a stranger ranting on about their day.” On the other hand, other participants stated that they don’t typically spend extra time on Twitter memes. Participant J5 said, “When I’m after work and relaxing on my bed, I wouldn’t want to read anything with too many words on it, unless I spot keywords in the post that immediately interest me.”

Most participants also proposed that they expect the translation of Twitter memes to remain faithful to the source text without altering the meaning of the original content. Participant J6 said, “When I see a regular meme, I sometimes wonder if the translator changed some words to fit in the joke, especially when there’s wordplay. However, when I see a Twitter meme, I don’t give that much thought.” Moreover, most participants also proposed that this expectation stems from nowhere. As participant J5 stated, “I don’t think

The logo of National Taiwan University (NTU) is located in the upper right corner of the page. It is a circular emblem with the university's name in Chinese characters around the perimeter and a central design featuring a bell and other symbols.

about visiting the original page because I don't think most Twitter memes contain anything that's extremely important to the point that I have to fact-check them. If I am determined to enjoy the meme, I'll take things more easily." Participant J7 also added that many Twitter translators add footnotes in the meme, so the information seems more reliable, saying, "As a Japanese learner, I sometimes visit the original post to see what the original post is... Although it is possible to visit the original post by looking up the username and date of the post, Twitter memes don't usually come with links that take me to the page, so I don't think I'm always willing to do this extra mile." In addition, participants J5 and J7 both proposed that they've seen comment sections discussing the translation, and it shows that the translators are open to public critique, which may be a reason why they thought the translators were taking the translation work seriously. Nevertheless, some participants suggested that it's easier for translators to make mistakes when translating more words. Consequently, they don't judge the quality of Twitter meme translations by accuracy, but rather by consistency and topic.

For most participants, the biggest difference between a Twitter meme and other memes is the emotional effect of the memes. As most memes are created to include jokes and spread humor, Twitter memes can cover a wider range of topics, evoking joy, anger, or sadness. Still, based on the participants' statements, it is suggested that translators may feel compelled to translate Twitter posts following an established paradigm, generating translations that meet their target audience's expectations. Without this format, the audience might interpret the content differently, which could impact viewer engagement. Therefore, although unlike most other memes that have an apparent pictorial element in



the image, Twitter translation posts can be categorized as a meme that falls under this research's discussion.

4.2. Participants' Perception of Meme Translation

4.2.1. Meme Translation as a Gateway to Global Communities

Many participants mentioned that internet users nowadays are often encouraged to communicate across various cultures, and this act of learning about foreign cultures contributes significantly to the increasing popularity of meme translations. Modern individuals not only possess the capacity to learn about diverse cultures, but they are also increasingly likely to engage with them on a deeper level. In today's world, understanding another country encompasses more than just following global news or experiencing its exotic festivals and cuisine; it involves genuinely caring about the people and immersing oneself in their lives. Memes and translations of Twitter posts serve as enjoyable and accessible gateways to these cultural connections. Participant J10 reflected this perspective, noting, "Although memes provide only a snapshot of what's happening around the world, they help me stay current with trends. I feel welcomed and have developed a sense of belonging in this community."



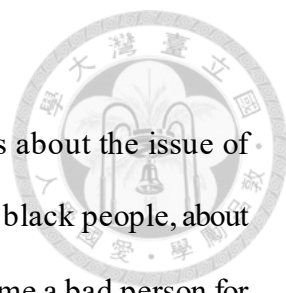
Figure 10

Example of a Non-domestic Meme



Caption: Hey, Putin! You can only be president for 8 years!

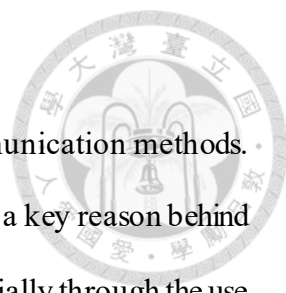
Besides obtaining global perspectives from memes, Internet users are also actively engaging with global issues through memes. For example, most participants find Figure 10 entertaining and even further stated that they liked the meme a lot. In the meme, Russian president Vladimir Putin rotated the number “8” in his hands, turning the number into the infinity symbol. This joke originates from the historical moment when his proposal to lengthen his presidential term was approved by the Russian parliament in 2020. For some of the participants, this event happened when they were still in junior high school, and they were well aware of what was indicated by the meme, nonetheless. This shows how deeply the global community is intertwined nowadays, and that many internet users are actively obtaining knowledge of foreign countries. At this point, under the influence of globalization, humor derives not only from the shared memories and experiences of locals but also from those of faraway countries.



In addition, nearly half of the participants expressed concerns about the issue of globalization. Participant E5 remarked, “I find humor in jokes about black people, about Jews, and about groups I’ve never encountered. But does this make me a bad person for sharing memes about them? Personally, I don’t believe so, yet I sometimes question when and why I began to laugh at these jokes.” It is important to note that none of the participants viewed memes as a catalyst for changing their ideologies on serious global matters; they did not consider memes to be the source of any racist or hateful attitudes. Instead, all of them acknowledged that they had learned to approach these issues with humor through their life experiences, viewing memes as a sarcastic tool to engage with these topics. However, it is important to highlight that while nearly all participants indicated that memes and Twitter posts capture their attention across various topics—from campus life to presidential elections—none could assert that they consistently seek out additional information online. As Participant E6 remarked, “At the end of the day, I enjoy watching memes for a good laugh. Unless a meme relates to political or diplomatic news, I’m not particularly interested in its origins.” This shows that memes are, after all, products that are meant to be viewed and appreciated in a short amount of time. With various topics presented to the viewers each day, it is easy for the viewers to forget what they’ve seen, and the informative effect of the memes tends to be watered down by the overwhelming information on the Internet.

4.2.2. Technology and Language Learning as a Catalyst for Meme Spread

One of the fundamental factors that enables internet users to connect with foreign cultures is technology. Thanks to technology, connecting with people around the world



has become easier, facilitating the development of various communication methods. According to the feedback from participants E1 to E24 and J1 to J12, a key reason behind the popularity of memes and Twitter posts is their accessibility, especially through the use of image files. In the past, posts often separated text from images, making it necessary for individuals to take screenshots or copy and paste content to share it. Participant E12 commented, “Sometimes, we are unable to capture parts of a post that are off-screen, especially if there is an excessive amount of text or if the image is too large. Additionally, we often have to crop out unnecessary sections of the screenshot afterward.” Participant J8 added, “It can also be quite inconvenient to sort through files after sharing those screenshots with friends, as there are so many [things on the phone] to capture each day, and all the images end up in the same folder.” The combination of memes and Twitter post translations into a single image has effectively addressed many previous concerns. Furthermore, an increasing number of social platforms are enhancing user experiences related to sharing, enabling these images to be effortlessly shared on reels or stories for friends and followers to enjoy. Participant J6 remarked, “Nowadays, it makes much more sense for people to share jokes and lighthearted content on stories. We prefer that this type of content not remain permanently on our personal pages. In the past, I would post a single joke on Facebook, and I still come across that post today, which takes up unnecessary slots [on the page]. Now, with the option to share memes on Instagram stories, they disappear the next day. This allows me to share many memes with my friends, ensuring everyone can enjoy a good laugh without those posts lingering on my page indefinitely.”

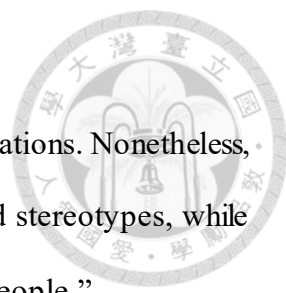
Furthermore, modern-day interpersonal relationships of internet users are shaped by the impact of technology, as users are typically presented with memes about certain topics



based on the algorithm and friend groups. For some participants, sharing memes became a habit – they saw a meme, laughed at it, and shared it either on their Instagram stories or sent it directly to a friend. This trend is known as *pebbling*²², which involves constantly sharing online content with friends without engaging in meaningful discussions that delve deeper into the content. For most participants, this is how they stay connected with friends and show their caring. Participant E16 explained that, “Most of my friends, including myself, are always busy at work and tired after work. Some of them also have plans during their free time, such as going to the gym, and I find it difficult to have a real conversation with them most of the time. But I don’t want to feel that we’re growing apart, so at some point, we just started to send Instagram reels to each other whenever we see something funny. Personally, I think it’s like handing over a cup of water to them and telling them that they did a great job.” Participant J1 added, “I hope my friends are happy, and I think that telling them jokes is the most straightforward way of showing my love for them.”

Language learning is another factor intricately linked to the spread of memes. With greater opportunities for individuals to attain high levels of language proficiency through education, it has become easier for them to immerse themselves in foreign cultures and adopt the perspectives of diverse cultural groups. Participant J4 shared valuable insights on this topic, stating, “I don’t think I would ever truly appreciate the humor in jokes without having learned Japanese. However, even before I achieved fluency, I found some of these jokes amusing because I understood the historical and societal context discussed in the classroom. I believe humor can be taught and learned, and the Taiwanese educational system has implemented various methods for students to engage with these

²² <https://www.parents.com/what-is-pebbling-and-why-are-teens-doing-it-8667690>



concepts, including exchange programs, foreign teachers, and publications. Nonetheless, we still need to focus on preventing the spread of hate speech and stereotypes, while encouraging citizens to research the global issues impacting real people.”

4.2.3. Memes in Everyday Life: Insights from Questionnaire Data

All questions from “Part 1: Me and memes” and “Part 3: Meme and translation” are investigated collectively since these questions are related to personal beliefs rather than situational conceptions, which is the case in “Part 2: Meme time”. In this sense, the results of Part 2 are seen as a reference for designing the questions in the interview phase and thus will be shown alongside the results from the interview phase after its completion. Initially, this research aimed to apply the Two-Sample t-test to analyze patterns among specific groups, such as men and women, residents of Taipei City versus non-residents, and individuals under and over the age of 30. However, due to the significant imbalance in the distribution of these groups, it became evident that the t-test would not effectively achieve its intended purpose in this context. Consequently, the values and terms associated with these questions were evaluated using the four previously mentioned formulas to ensure a more impartial and coherent outcome.



Table 1

Results from Questions in Part 1 and Part 3

Question	Average ($1 \leq \mu \leq 7$)	Question	Average ($1 \leq \mu \leq 7$)
1.1.	5.78	1.6.	5.05
1.2.	4.87	1.7.	6.13
1.3.	5.04	1.8.	5.87
1.4.	5.14	3.2.	3.88
1.5.	4.13	3.3.	4.54

In Table 1, the results for each question are presented as the average number, indicating what most respondents think on average. Based on the results from question 1.1. to 1.8., it is suggested that most people hold positive opinions towards memes, but don't necessarily consciously use them as a source of foreign news and information. However, the results from question 3.2. and 3.3. indicate that most respondents aren't aware that they are reading a piece of translated meme that contains non-domestic information while they are reading that meme. The respondents only notice the existence of translation when the information is so explicitly oriented for foreign audiences that they can't comprehend what the meme is about.



Table 2

Correlation Results from Questions in Part 1 and Part 3

Question	1.1.	1.2.	1.3.	1.4.	1.5.	1.6.	1.7.	1.8.	3.2.	3.3.
1.1.	1.00									
1.2.	0.49	1.00								
1.3.	0.43	0.73	1.00							
1.4.	0.44	0.59	0.53	1.00						
1.5.	0.01	0.14	0.10	0.07	1.00					
1.6.	0.42	0.62	0.53	0.51	0.05	1.00				
1.7.	0.38	0.49	0.38	0.52	0.10	0.55	1.00			
1.8.	0.23	0.33	0.28	0.42	0.08	0.32	0.50	1.00		
3.2.	0.23	0.34	0.31	0.28	0.01	0.30	0.24	0.26	1.00	
3.3.	0.14	0.26	0.33	0.26	0.00	0.28	0.24	0.24	0.51	1.00

Note: PCC value (r value), $0 < r \leq 1$

As questions from Part 1 and Part 3 explore the broader idea of meme translation and are presented with linear measurements, the data can be analyzed using the PCC mathematical formula. Table 2 presents the correlation results between questions 1.1. to 1.8. and 3.2. to 3.3. Correlation is defined as the interdependence quantity between two variables, meaning how dependent one event is on the other. This correlation link can only be demonstrated among linear values, and thus, not all questions fit under this analytic method. As higher values indicate a stronger correlation between two subjects, only two sets of correlation values above 0.6 stand out as highly significant, while the others below 0.6 can only be said to have low or medium significance. The current results from this analysis don't significantly contribute to the overall perspective of this research and will therefore be revisited in future analyses. Consequently, the results from the



correlation analysis show that the more frequently an internet user uses and shares memes, the more likely the user is to be familiar with the use of memes, i.e., the format and context. Moreover, if the user often uses and shares memes, they are also more likely to follow meme websites and fanpages.

Key findings suggest that people who view memes as humorous are also more likely to see them as an important source of information. Additionally, those who find memes humorous tend to see them as interlinguistic and intercultural sources of texts. However, individuals who view memes as interlinguistic and intercultural sources don't necessarily recognize the phenomenon of meme translation actively. Still, those who do notice this phenomenon are more likely to understand the background information behind the memes. Also, the average numbers for all questions except question 1.5 appear high; it is suggested that most internet users, regardless of age, incorporate memes into their lives and tend to use them as a means of communication. This demonstrates that the research is contributory in the way that it investigates contemporary phenomena. However, even though most people recognize memes as informative sources that carry humor, only a few are aware that memes also carry foreign ideologies and non-domestic cultural elements in essence. This raises the question of how meme translators render the texts in a way that conceals these elements, and whether readers are seeing the translations as intended or not.

Investigation carried out in this phase obtained a profound insight into how the majority of internet users observe the meme phenomenon. Surprisingly, there were no signs of highly significant correlations between perspectives and age, gender, and education. Moreover, people who like memes might not also notice meme translations

being a source of foreign information. Therefore, further research is required through the interview phase to focus on what makes a meme translation successful.

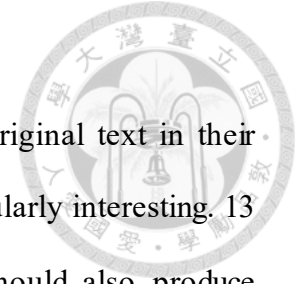


4.3. Participants' Views on Translation Practices

Through the interview questions, the research gained insight into how modern internet users perceive translation as a profession and what they expect from a translation. In response to the question – “What do you think of translators and translation work?” – all participants referenced terms such as “professional,” “important,” and “helpful,” highlighting their appreciation for the diligent efforts and acknowledging challenges encountered by translators. Participant E7 stated, “Without the assistance of translators, it would be challenging for me to learn and study, as most of my textbooks are written by individuals from abroad. I have great respect for the hard work and profession of translators.”

Participants who regularly engage with English articles in their daily lives are not uncommon. Among the English and Japanese groups, many possess above-average English proficiency, as evidenced by TOEIC scores exceeding 650. When asked why they do not simply read the English texts themselves, most noted that translated texts are easier and more convenient. Some mentioned that they occasionally use the translations as references and may seek out the original texts, although this is not a frequent occurrence. Participant E13 shared, “I have more trust in translators than in myself or translation apps, but sometimes when I have the time, I still try to read and understand the original text.”

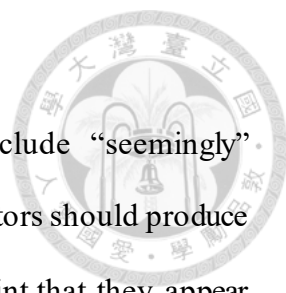
Next, each participant was asked to talk about the qualities that define a good translator. Everyone concurred that a proficient translator should have strong language



skills and be capable of clearly conveying the meaning of the original text in their translations. However, this is where the responses became particularly interesting. 13 participants from the English group asserted that translators should also produce grammatically and pragmatically correct Mandarin sentences. In contrast, the rest of the participants said they were not overly concerned about slightly awkward sentences, unless the text was so unclear that they had to read it multiple times to comprehend the meaning. Participant E14 shared their reading approach: “I tend to read quickly, so I don’t always carefully consider each sentence to grasp the overall meaning. As long as the ideas are presented clearly, I’m willing to read the text multiple times to achieve full comprehension. While a well-structured Mandarin translation certainly makes things easier, I won’t mind if there are a few sentences that sound somewhat non-native.”

Two participants noted that they would feel uneasy if a translation showed no traces of foreignized expressions, which would lead them to question its credibility. Participant E24 recounted her experiences with translations that initially appeared flawless, only to later realize that the translator had inserted personal interpretations into the sentences. She remarked, “Although I generally agree with the translator, some ideas were not explicitly articulated by the original author but were quite clear from the context. However, there are certain concepts that were entirely presumed, and I find it perplexing why he chose to include that particular sentence in the translation.” The comments from the participants shed light on the somewhat awkward relationship between translators and their audience.

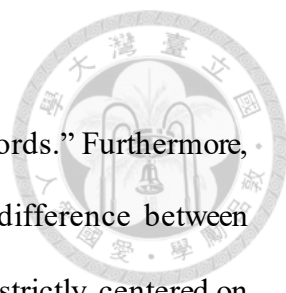
In the realm of English-Mandarin translation, audiences generally expect translators to deliver accurate renderings that effectively convey the original text's meaning. They



seek translations that avoid misunderstandings and do not include “seemingly” unnecessary omissions or additions. In other words, ideally, translators should produce translations that feel natural and fluent but not too good to the point that they appear overtly translated while still preserving the essence of the original content. Overall, accuracy tends to take precedence over literary aesthetics across most types of texts. This emphasis on precision can be attributed to the fast-paced nature of modern life, which provides individuals with less time to engage deeply with and appreciate translated works.

Throughout the interview, it is shown that most participants believe that translation is a tool that makes everyday life more convenient, yet they have enough language skills to understand foreign language texts. Additionally, participants adopt a critical stance but also show understanding toward translations they see as inferior. This interaction between translators and internet users stems from the fact that many internet users in their 20s and 30s today possess a certain level of foreign language proficiency or know how to leverage tools like Google Translate and dictionaries to assist them in grasping the meaning of texts independently. As Participant E12 expressed, “I depend on translators for their expertise, speed, and accuracy. Their support enables me to work more effectively. Even if mistakes that could lead to significant consequences arise, I am confident that I can identify these major errors.”

It is important to acknowledge that none of the participants characterized translators as entirely irrelevant in modern society, even when expressing their opinions on A.I. translation. As Participant J2 indicated, “The Japanese language is heavily dependent on context. Words do not always convey their apparent meanings, and I hold the view that human translators significantly outperform artificial intelligence in their ability to

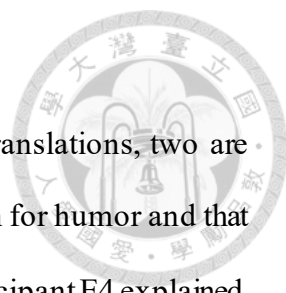


interpret the nuanced meanings that lie beneath the surface of the words.” Furthermore, during the interviews, all participants were made aware of the difference between translators and interpreters, ensuring that the discussions remained strictly centered on the concept of “translation.” Subsequently, this discussion led to the conclusion that a conventionally “imperfect” translation, i.e., a translation that focuses solely on accuracy rather than fluency, could be more acceptable for modern-day audiences.


4.4. Evaluation of Meme Translations

4.4.1. Comments on the Linguistics, Typological, and Cultural Aspects of Memes

At the beginning of the interview, most of the participants believed that translators should strive for perfectly accurate translations, both grammatically and pragmatically. However, as the discussion advanced and participants were encouraged to share their views on what makes a successful meme translation, only three individuals persisted in this belief, stating that meme translations could also be conventionally “imperfect.” They argued that the translator’s primary duty is to ensure that the meanings of each word in the meme are accurately conveyed. Meanwhile, the other group had a different view, claiming that meme translations should be easy to read and understand. They argued that puns need to be clear and the text concise, not too lengthy. The translated content should stay relevant to the original post’s topic and theme. Humor is encouraged, and changing the narrative is acceptable as long as it doesn’t violate the third requirement about maintaining the original topic.



Among the three participants who advocate for "imperfect" translations, two are from the English group. They argued that memes serve as a medium for humor and that humor should be experienced firsthand, not explained by others. Participant E4 explained, "I would prefer that the translator convey everything in the original text rather than present jokes that they came up with and are completely irrelevant to the original image. I am aware that certain aspects of language simply cannot be translated, which requires the translator to be creative in these instances. However, this creativity can sometimes deprive me of the joy of truly 'tasting' the joke." Participant E9 expressed a similar viewpoint, stating, "At times, I can sense that the translator is attempting to replicate the puns from the original text—such as creating wordplay with the last words of sentences to make them rhyme. However, more often than not, the translated version turns out so poorly that the translator has to add a footnote to clarify the pun." Participant E20 stated, "In instances where a pun cannot be effectively translated, I would recommend that the translator abstain from translating that meme entirely, thus allowing those proficient in the language to appreciate the meme in its original form." The other participant from the Japanese group, referred to as participant J10, emphasized that translated Twitter posts should convey as many original ideas as possible. This approach allows readers to fully immerse themselves in the world of the original content creator. He stated, "I enjoy learning about Japanese culture through these posts, and I want the translations to accurately reflect both what the original creator wishes to convey and how they express it. If the translator modifies the sentences to make them sound as if they were written by someone from Taiwan, then that translation would no longer represent a post from a Japanese person."



Among the 33 participants who believed translators should strive to make jokes relatable to a Taiwanese audience, their rationale was quite simple: memes and Twitter posts are intended to be humorous and enjoyable. As participant J1 noted, “After a long day, when I scroll through my screen, I don't have the time or energy to determine if a translation is good. I just want it to make me laugh. That’s all.” Notably, only one participant expressed a willingness to accept any modifications made by the translator as long as the outcome remained amusing, i.e., even when it meant to change the whole content. In contrast, the other 32 participants hoped that the translator would retain some connection between the original meme and the translation. Participant E12 commented, “For instance, if the original meme is about monkeys, employs wordplay, and consists of very short sentences, I would expect the translator to preserve at least one of these three features for it to qualify as a meme translation. After all, if the translator alters the joke so drastically that it becomes irrelevant to the meme’s image, it will result in a subpar meme.” Nevertheless, it is ultimately difficult to trace back meme translations to their source images, and thus it is almost impossible to tell whether the meme translation remains faithful to the source text. Therefore, without the original text, it is futile to discuss the translation methods and purposes of meme translation. Consequently, the effect of the result is what this research aims to highlight.



Figure 11

Example of Additional Translation in Memes



Isaac

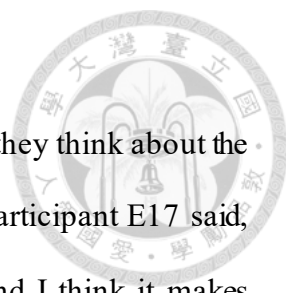
@GalaxyPeaBrain

開工第一天就遲到兩個小時，偷偷溜進公司，
希望沒人發現的我：



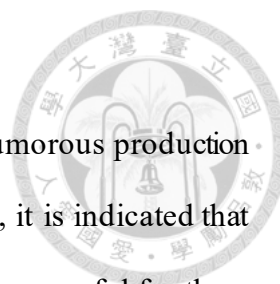
Caption: Me, late at work on the first workday after Spring Festival, sneaking into the office, hoping no one would notice me

In cases investigated in this research, translators receive positive feedback when taking transcreation approaches. Take the translated Figure 11 as an example. In the original post, the author simply describes actions like “show up to work” and “hope no one notices.” However, the translator of Figure 13 decided to add “開工” (first workday after Spring Festival) into the text, which is an element related to the Taiwanese community, and an extra verb “偷偷溜進” (sneak into). It is obvious that the translator made these decisions because the day the meme was posted was around Spring Festival, and this addition reflects people’s lives around that season. This addition was also accepted by most participants, who said that this addition made the scenario seem more



interesting and relevant to them. However, when asked about what they think about the additional verb, some participants expressed their disagreement. Participant E17 said, “This addition isn’t made to solve an untranslatable punch line, and I think it makes absolutely no difference with or without it. In this case, I don’t think it’s appropriate for the translator to make this addition, otherwise it’ll seem disloyal to the original creator.” On the other hand, over half of the participants said that they’re fine with the addition, and with the additional verb, the image in their mind has changed. Nevertheless, as a few pointed out, the original post doesn’t seem to imply a certain way of “showing up” at the workplace, and the additional “sneak in” could be the translator’s own comprehension and way of picturing the scene. Therefore, these participants stated that the translator may have potentially changed their way of thinking. Participant E4 added, “For this meme, I think this addition doesn’t change much. It’s not bad, but it’s also not that impressive. But to be frank, I hope the translator could try to stick to the original text in this case, where the punchline isn’t difficult to translate.”

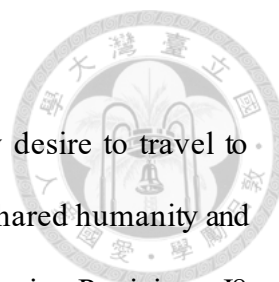
Another intriguing aspect of humor is its varying levels. Five participants from both groups specifically mentioned that meme translations should not be excessively funny, as this can provoke uncontrollable laughter. Participant E19 remarked, "Memes should ideally bring a smile or, at most, elicit a brief chuckle. If it's too funny, I end up feeling exhausted from laughing so hard." The others stated likewise, as they thought memes are a means of relaxing themselves after a long day or a distraction during work, and thus being provoked to laugh hysterically is not what they expect from this leisure time activity. Participant J1 added, "It just doesn't feel right to laugh hysterically at a translation of a Twitter post." Their statements show that the level of funniness doesn't always add up to



higher acceptance, and it contradicts to the idea that a piece of humorous production should attempt to provoke laughter from the audience. At this point, it is indicated that less humorous memes appear to be more acceptable and deemed successful for these audiences.

Most participants from the English group concur that the primary focus of meme translation should be the expression of humor, though the idea and taste for humor vary greatly. In addition, over half of them believe that memes from different countries act as a gateway for understanding foreign humor and puns. Consequently, they are generally open to translators who include footnotes to clarify these puns, as long as the description isn't too wordy and complicated. Participant E4 remarked, "Sometimes, if I don't understand the pun, I'll search online to understand what the meme is about." Other than that, participants have discovered that they can learn about foreign cultures through these memes as memes often reflect aspects of pop culture and trending news. This notion is supported by the idea that memes encapsulate recurring phenomena or cultural themes. As Participant E5 pointed out, "Memes are amusing because they address ongoing issues. For instance, I don't find school shootings in the U.S. humorous. Yet, if someone turns it into a meme, I might actually laugh at it. This doesn't mean I lack empathy; rather, the nature of memes makes serious topics appear less daunting and, therefore, easier to accept."

All participants from the Japanese group concurred that Twitter translations should emphasize themes of "healing," "warmth," and "everyday life." These elements are also crucial markers of a successful Twitter translation, as posts embodying these themes tend to garner more attention and are more widely shared. Participant J7 stated, "While the



mythical wonders of Japanese culture captivate me and inspire my desire to travel to Japan, it is the everyday lives of its citizens that remind me of our shared humanity and encourage me to persist in my study of the Japanese language.” Likewise, Participant J8 noted, “Japanese people possess a distinctive sense of humor, and it’s enjoyable to contemplate the differences between us [Taiwanese] and them. I’ve realized that I find myself laughing more frequently, as I am now exposed to a wider variety of humor, which makes it easier for me to be amused.”

Figure 12

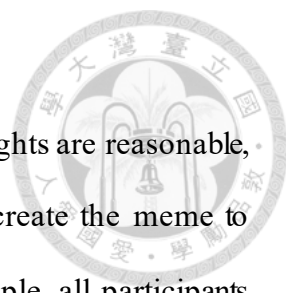
Example of a Disliked Meme

- >主角是工人階級
- >反派是資產階級
- >反派的計劃是把生產自動化以獲取更多利益
- >最終由政府高層解決了事情
- >快樂結局是工人階級奪取了生產手段

怪獸電力公司在宣揚馬克思主義，知道了



Some additional observations on what constitutes a good meme translation focus on its presentation. Participant E5 remarked, “If I see too many words on the meme, I wouldn’t even bother reading it unless the image is truly captivating.” Likewise, Participant E16 noted, “If the image quality is poor or if there are watermarks scattered



throughout the meme, I wouldn't be inclined to share it." Their insights are reasonable, as some translators take the initiative to modify the format or recreate the meme to enhance its quality without altering the original content. For example, all participants agreed that Figure 12 isn't appealing at all because there are too many words, even for participants that claim to like history jokes. When asked how they would attempt to make this meme better, most participants simply give up, saying that this joke might only be suitable for stand-up comedies. Participant E2 stated that this meme only makes sense after reading all the text, since the combination of Michael Wazowski (fictional character from the animation *Monsters Inc.*) and the Soviet Union flag is too random and doesn't make sense at all on its own. Others proposed that this meme would be great if made into a video clip, but still agreed that this joke doesn't fit into a graphic meme. In comparison with Figure 12, which also discusses communist countries and foreign ideologies, Figure 10 shows that well-translated and presented memes addressing non-domestic issues can also be interpreted and accepted by the internet community.

4.4.2. The Role of Japanese Meme Translations in Language Learning

Although not all participants from the English group have achieved high-level English proficiency, all participants from the Japanese group have reached a certain level of proficiency in the language, either through formal lessons in college or through self-study. When asked about their reading habits concerning original Japanese texts, 8 out of 12 participants indicated that they always refer back to the Japanese text for clarity, while the remaining 4 admitted to doing this only occasionally. In contrast, only 2 out of 24



participants in the English group reported that they consistently consult the original text when it is available. This phenomenon can be attributed to two main factors.

First, all participants from the Japanese group exhibit a strong dedication to language learning, which contributes to their diligence. Furthermore, many of them rely on translation work as a key resource in their studies. Participant J1 remarked, "Having a translated version of what I'm watching or reading is always beneficial, as I'm not entirely confident in my understanding of everything. By using translations, I can effortlessly learn new words and phrases every day." Even high-proficiency learners like Participant J9, who has been studying Japanese for over six years, commented, "I find it intriguing to see how translators navigate certain words and sentences, especially since some Japanese expressions are too challenging to convey in Mandarin. Through reading translations, I continually learn new concepts and even refine my understanding. In this respect, translators serve as my teachers." From their words, we can see that the role of translators is treated with utmost respect.

Next, participants shared that Japanese-Mandarin translations typically include links to the sources, whereas English-Mandarin pages often do not. Several factors contribute to this discrepancy. For example, many English memes have been circulating on the internet for quite some time before being translated, complicating the identification of their original sources. Additionally, English-Mandarin meme translators generally publish new content more frequently than their Japanese-Mandarin counterparts, making it cumbersome to provide links for each individual meme. Moreover, many Japanese content creators have strict requirements for translators to include links alongside the

translated material. These factors collectively make it more challenging for English meme audiences to find the original English content.



Moreover, readers of Japanese-Mandarin translations generally exhibit a more forgiving and understanding attitude toward translators. Though they rely heavily on translations to improve their language proficiency, many expressed their disappointment in their reading experiences. Among 12 participants from the Japanese group, 10 conveyed dissatisfaction. Participant J2 noted, “I have consistently found that the translations from Japanese to Mandarin sound peculiar; the sentences often feel tangled. Most translators do not alter the word order, which I believe would be beneficial if they did, as it typically takes me several readings before I fully comprehend the meaning.” Others pointed out that the errors in the translations are so glaring that they are immediately noticeable even in the Mandarin version. Participant J4, who is currently employed at a Japanese firm, remarked, “I recognize that Japanese can be a complex language due to its grammar, conversational nuances, and accents. However, I can’t help but notice that some translators seem prone to making errors. I sincerely hope that they could conduct a more thorough revision to ensure that the content sounds at least reasonable.” Many participants shared this sentiment, indicating that they primarily expect translations to be accurate, as they have grown accustomed to the non-native-like tone.

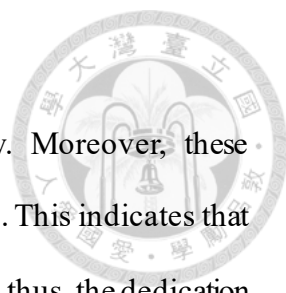


Chapter 5 Conclusion

Although there are several distinctions between translating memes and translating Twitter posts from Japanese, both exert significant influence on society, contributing to the vibrancy of our culture and popular trends. While the historical development of meme translation may not be extensive, it has undeniably emerged as one of the most noteworthy cultural phenomena society has embraced. As most participants pointed out, memes and translated memes became an inseparable part of their lives.

To begin with, memes translated from English and Japanese vary in both quantity and diversity due to cultural and linguistic influences. On Taiwanese social platforms, Japanese memes stand out for their distinctiveness, such as oogiri and animal memes. The popularity and use of these memes depend heavily on their fanbases, which are often tied to the characters depicted. However, the most translated memes are Twitter post memes that don't include humorous pictures but follow a specific format, suggesting that meme translation is driven by social norms. Although Japanese-Mandarin meme translations seem less popular in Taiwan, this is not mainly due to audience preference but rather the smaller Japanese user base and the less frequent use of memes on Japanese social platforms, i.e., there are limited resources for translators to work on. On the other hand, translators may avoid selecting memes that aren't interesting, which further limits their options.

On a broader scale, meme translations allow internet users to actively and passively engage in cross-cultural communication and seek a sense of belonging among the global community. Though they don't always acknowledge the work of translators when encountering meme translations, all participants agreed they have benefited from these



memes, whether by harvesting joy or learning something new. Moreover, these perceptions aren't closely related to their age, education, gender, etc. This indicates that meme translation is embraced by various groups of internet users, and thus, the dedication of translators can never be belittled. Nevertheless, although meme translations may seem significant, they don't have a huge impact on shaping the viewer's ideology or motivation to seek further information about a specific topic. Still, the phenomenon of meme translation shows that technology has been assisting the spread of content across countries and that the online community's need for humorous content continues to grow, as language learning fosters cross-cultural understanding of humor.

When it comes to meme translations that go viral, the most crucial factors are the meme's typology and topic. The quality of the translation and the types of humor have little impact on popularity, as users generally don't spend much time appreciating memes, and humor varies greatly from person to person. Typology is important because users prefer memes with easy-to-spot humor, and having too many words or a low-quality image may deter them from taking the meme seriously. The topic is important because users prefer humor that resonates with them, and thus transcreation is encouraged to better achieve this goal. As participants further shared their thoughts on translation practices, it was discovered that many participants who are learning foreign languages prefer an imperfect and mediated translation that simply informs them of the meaning in the meme. For them, translation is either a way to learn a language better or simply a convenient tool to access a piece of information quickly. Most of them can look up the source text and learn directly from it, and thus they appear to be more tolerant of translations that aren't "perfect" in every way.



It is important to note that the role of translators in contemporary communication has been continually reshaped in this digital world. The success of meme and Twitter translation depends not only on the translator's strategy but also on their ability to select content that can be meaningfully translated, since most meme translators have autonomy over their choices and would generally focus on memes that are easy to translate. This is understandable, as most meme creations are forgotten shortly after being enjoyed and seldom persist on the Internet. Moreover, viewers rarely trace it back to the original if it is not explicitly provided. At this point, fidelity to the source text seems largely irrelevant to a meme's popularity. Therefore, translators should recognize the limits of translation and understand that online interactions have shaped how audiences perceive the role and significance of translation.

In the end, it is crucial to acknowledge that this research is subject to certain limitations, particularly during the Questionnaire Phase. These limitations may stem from factors such as sample size, the number of materials used, and the formulation of the questions. For example, the questionnaire could have been distributed to a larger pool of internet users to gather more responses, and the distribution among respondents across different categories could have been more balanced. Additionally, incorporating more images could have provided deeper insights into the connection between meme culture and society's views on various topics. Furthermore, the questionnaire could have been simplified to make it easier for respondents to complete, as some participants reported that the survey took too long. Moving forward, it would be advantageous to refine the methodology for conducting questionnaires to gain a deeper understanding of the overall perception of memes among internet users.



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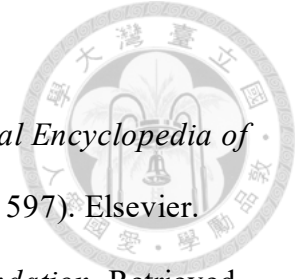
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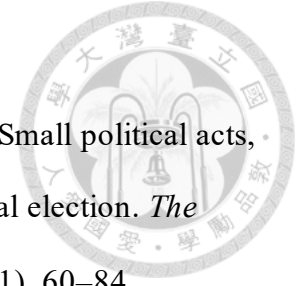
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3. *Figure 3*: Meme Post by CGA. (2023, May 29). 《海巡署長室 Coast Guard》臉書粉絲專頁. Retrieved May 20, 2025, from <https://www.facebook.com/CGA4U/posts/pfbid0SFeunNMDBWEaH62Reh69WosA39grqpdGNqUjQHAjt3Ef6EwV83fe1TF1rZBm8vHol>



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Appendix 1: Questionnaire



The questionnaire presented in the Appendix has been translated into English.

Dear respondents:

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to assist with this questionnaire. The purpose of this study is to understand the interaction between internet meme translations and Taiwanese internet users.

We invite Taiwanese residents aged 18-39, who have lived in Taiwan for over two years and are native Mandarin speakers, to participate in this survey. Gender and education levels are not restricted. The questionnaire will take approximately 8-12 minutes to complete. All responses are solely for academic research and will be kept strictly confidential, so please feel at ease when answering. There are no right or wrong answers; please respond according to your most intuitive thoughts.

As a token of our appreciation for your thoughtful participation, 7 respondents will be randomly selected to receive NT\$300. If you wish to enter the draw, please leave your email address on the last page of the questionnaire. Additionally, to further explore this topic, we hope to conduct online interviews with 10 respondents before the end of May. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes, and participants will receive NT\$300 as a reward. If you are willing to participate in the interview, please leave your email address on the last page of the questionnaire as well.

The email addresses provided will be used solely for contacting prize winners and interview participants and will be kept strictly confidential. We sincerely ask for your support in this research. Thank you!

We wish you peace, health, and success in all your endeavors.



Master's student: Ricky Chen
Advisor: Professor Yvonne Tsai
Graduate Program in Translation and Interpretation, NTU

Before you begin...

This study explores the relationship between memes, translation, and humor. Humor is defined as "the intention to make people laugh and feel relieved." Memes and “géntú” (written as 迷因 and 囍圖) are defined identically in this research. The latter is also often translated as “Taiwanese internet memes.”

Part 1: Me and memes

For the following statements, please rate your level of agreement.

[1] indicates "Strongly Disagree" and [7] indicates "Strongly Agree."

- 1.1 I often see my family, friends, government agencies, businesses, etc., sharing and using memes in my everyday life.
- 1.2 I often use and share memes in daily life.
- 1.3 I am familiar with different ways of using memes (such as contexts, formats, etc.).
- 1.4 I believe memes are important sources of information (including news, advertisements, knowledge, etc.).
- 1.5 I believe memes are only popular among the younger generation.
- 1.6 I follow or pay attention to fan pages or websites that post memes.
- 1.7 I believe memes spread happiness, convey humor, and bring smiles.
- 1.8 I believe memes transcend language and national boundaries.

Part 2: Meme time

In the following memes, **at least one has text that has been translated from English to Mandarin.** For each image, please answer the following questions:



1. Humor level — [1] indicates "Not at all humorous"; [7] indicates "Extremely humorous." 🖱️ Humor is broadly defined as "the feeling that makes people feel amused and relieved."
2. Elements of humor (multiple choice)
3. Do you think it is translated? — [1] indicates "Strongly Disagree"; [7] indicates "Strongly Agree" 🖱️ Only [1] indicates disagreement; [2] to [7] indicate varying degrees of agreement.
4. Reasons for thinking it is a translation (multiple choice)

n-1. Humor level.

n-2. Elements of humor:

None Word Choice (i.e., wordplay puns, use of slang, etc.)

Content (i.e., topic, narrative, etc.) Image Others

n-3. Do you think it is translated?

n-4. Reasons for thinking it is a translation:

None Word Choice (i.e., wordplay puns, use of slang, etc.)

Content (i.e., topic, narrative, etc.) Image Have seen that before Other

2.1.




2.2.






2.3.


擁有時光機的我




把所有錢都投資到蘋果上



好窩








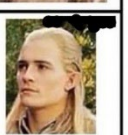

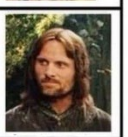
蘋果股價大漲



干

2.4.

魔戒角色心境懶人包


	完全不知道自己 在衝三小	大概知道 是要幹嘛	知道的比他們 願意透露的多
玩得很爽			
別人幹嘛 他就幹嘛			
超不爽			

2.5.

顯少有人討論到耶穌身上的另一個神蹟，就是
過了三十歲身邊還有十二位親近的朋友：



2.6.



2.7.






2.8.

阿姨：你知道刺青刺下去就是一輩子了嗎？

我：對阿，不像你的婚姻

家庭聚會上的其他人：





2.9.

成年人都怎麼找樂子？



2.10.



2.11.

開工第一天就遲到兩個小時，偷偷溜進公司，希望沒人發現的我：



2.12.

在1976年發明了「迷因」一詞的
理查·道金斯就像：

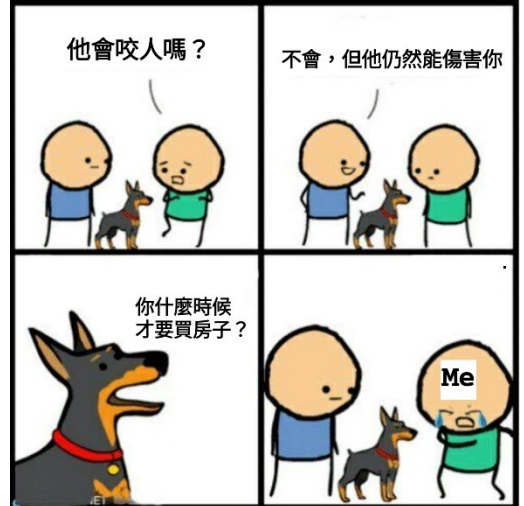


2.13.

當你被拿來當梗圖玩太久
一個不小心也跟著進化了



2.14.





Part 3: Meme and translation

3.1. What do you think are the necessary conditions for a "good" meme translation?
Please select up to **4 items**:

Humorous Faithful to the original text Concise Follows the format of the meme (e.g., while using the “panik” meme, it’s crucial to use typos deliberately)

Reflects current events and trends Conveys useful information (e.g., educational)



content, political discussions, etc.) Other



3.1. Example of a “panik” meme

3.2. With the increasing prevalence of meme translations in Taiwanese online communities, are you aware of the increasing number of memes that originated from foreign websites and are related to non-domestic issues such as religion, politics, etc.? (As shown in the meme below about foreign political figures)

[1] Not at all aware; [5] Totally aware.



3.2. Example of a translated meme

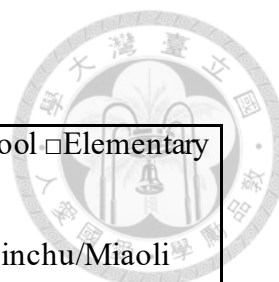
3.3. Following the previous question, are the messages behind these phenomena and related creations (not just the example meme) influencing and resonating with you emotionally? [1] Not at all; [4] Sometimes yes, sometimes no; [7] Always.

Part 4: Basic Information

4.1. Gender: Male Female Other

4.2. Age: [Must be between 18 and 39]

4.3. Highest degree: Graduate school College Junior college High school/



Vocational school Junior high school/ Vocational Junior High School Elementary school and those that don't fall under the above categories.

4.4. Residence area: Taipei/ New Taipei/ Keelung Taoyuan/ Hsinchu/Miaoli Taichung/ Changhua/ Nantou Yunlin/ Chiayi/ Tainan Kaohsiung/ Pingtung/ Penghu/ Kinmen/ Matsu Yilan/ Hualien/ Taitung

4.5. Would you like to participate in an online interview? (lasts about 60 minutes)
 Yes No

4.6. Email address. For those willing to participate in the interview and those who wish to enter the draw, **please make sure to fill this out.**

Thank you again for filling out this questionnaire. With your support, the research is one step closer to graduation. We wish you the best of luck and hope you have a wonderful day.

Ricky Chen



Appendix 2: Interview Questions for the English Group

The contents presented in the Appendix have been translated into English.

1. How is your language ability? Tell me all the languages that you know and provide me with any evidence, such as course experiences and certificates, to help me understand your proficiency in these languages.

2. When surfing the Internet, what types of content or posts do you usually see on social media platforms? What languages are the contents you see mostly written in?

3. What do you think of translators and translation work?

4. How would you evaluate translation works? Which aspects do you value the most?

5. What influence do you think translation has on your life?

6. What do you think of the meme culture in Taiwan? Why do Taiwanese people love using memes in their daily lives?

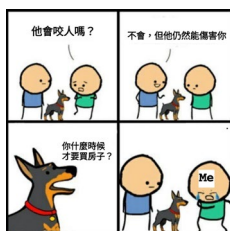
7. What do you think of original meme content and meme translation fanpages and websites? What makes a “good” meme?

8. What do you think of the following memes? Share your thoughts on what makes them funny or unfunny.

阿姨: 你知道刺青刺下去就是一輩子了嗎?

我: 對阿, 不像你的婚姻

家庭聚會上的其他人:



在跟蹤對方的臉書時
不小心對照片點到讚



魔戒角色心境懶人包



當你需要到達得要命的王國
來場精彩刺激的大冒險





>主角是工人階級
>反派是資產階級
>反派的計劃是把生產自動化以獲取更多利益
>最終由政府高層解決了事情
>快樂結局是工人階級奪取了生產手段
怪獸電力公司在宣揚馬克思主義，知道了



9. Consider the following two questions as one: Do you think there are any puns or topics that only appear humorous to certain groups of people (i.e., divided by gender, occupation, etc.)? How about those that appear humorous to every, single human being on Earth? Explain your reasons.

10. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me?



Appendix 3: Interview Questions for the Japanese Group

The contents presented in the Appendix have been translated into English.

1. How is your language ability? Tell me all the languages that you know and provide me with any evidence, such as course experiences and certificates, to help me understand your proficiency in these languages.

2. When surfing the Internet, what types of content or posts do you usually see on social media platforms? What languages are the contents you see mostly written in?

3. What do you think of translators and translation work?

4. How would you evaluate translation works? Which aspects do you value the most?

5. What influence do you think translation has on your life?

6. What do you think of the translated Twitter posts on the Internet? Why do Taiwanese people love sharing these?

7. What do you think of Japanese Twitter translation fanpages and websites? What makes a “good” Twitter translation?

8. Please show me the Twitter translation pages that you follow, and tell me what you think about the translation of humorous posts.

9. Consider the following two questions as one: Do you think there are any puns or topics that only appear humorous to certain groups of people (i.e., divided by gender, occupation, etc.)? How about those that appear humorous to every, single human being on Earth? Explain your reasons.

10. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me?