

## Original Research

# French medical memes: Themes, language, functions

by Natalia M. Dugalich and Yulia N. Ebzeeva

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*The study concerns the organisation and content of both the visual and verbal elements within the polycode text of French-language memes that pertain to medical discourse. The meme's connection to medical discourse is established through its subject matter, the incorporation of medical symbols in its visual elements, and the inclusion of medical terminology in its written content. It also involves depicting communication scenarios between doctors, between doctors and patients, and between nursing staff and patients at both the image and text levels. The study's novelty lies in its dual approach: firstly, it examines French memes as subjects for linguistic analysis, and secondly, it explores them as a genre of polycode text within medical discourse. The research material comprises 100 French memes centred on medical themes, obtained through continuous sampling from the internet. Study results revealed that memes pertaining to medical discourse are dynamic, viral, and eclectic texts that encapsulate the distinctive elements of institutional medical discourse. Thematically, the meme encompasses various medical topics and addresses social issues prevalent in France. Deciphering the author's intention behind the meme relies on a layer-by-layer examination of how the idea is expressed through the polycode text, as well as an understanding of the sociocultural context that informs the text, which requires presuppositional knowledge on the part of the recipient. Linguo-cultural characteristics observed in the verbal component, as identified through the analysis, include the use of language play at phonetic and lexical levels, inclusion of colloquial and slang vocabulary alongside emotionally charged expressions within doctor-patient communication contexts, and the utilisation of phonetic spelling. The visual component of the polycode text in French medical memes is distinguished by the incorporation of elements from civilisational phenomena, such as political figures from the country, film protagonists, and globally recognised actors. The analysis revealed that the meme serves various functions including comedic, informative, compensatory, and appellative roles. The article constitutes a segment of a broader study examining polycode texts within medical discourse across multiple genres including memes, medical posters, and demotivators in languages such as Russian, French, English, Chinese, and Arabic.*

**KEYWORDS:** polycode text, meme, medical discourse, Russian, French, comic genre



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Linguists are increasingly turning to the corpus of polycode texts driven by the advancement of discursive linguistics, which primarily targets institutional discourses such as political, advertising, pedagogical, and religious contexts. This focus stems from the relatively confident description of all four types of features – constitutive features, signs of institutionality, signs of a specific type of institutional discourse, and neutral signs (Karasik, 2000, p. 32). However, describing medical discourse poses certain

challenges within this framework. In terms of constitutive features, communication involves the interaction between the recipient of the service (the patient) and the provider (such as the author or compiler of the text in the case of a medical poster, who possesses knowledge of medical issues and terminology). The conditions of communication typically revolve around the patient's request for a service or its offering, with medical posters being the subject of consideration in medical institutions (Dugalich, 2024a). The organisation of communication can be

categorised within clinical settings (e.g., hospitals, pharmacies, etc.). Methods and materials encompass a wide array of genres within medical discourse, ranging from monocode versions (such as instructions for medical drugs) to polycode texts (like medical posters, memes, and caricatures), which involve various elements such as motives, goals, channels, modes, tone, and style.

Because discourse is constrained by the social institution within which it operates, articulating medical discourse poses a challenge due to the need to define and broaden the scope of its application. Accordingly, medical discourse is characterised by its execution within a public institution, wherein it is identified by a distinct label recognised within the collective linguistic framework, commonly encapsulated by the central concept of the institution (medical – health) (Karasik, 2000). However, the role characteristics of agents and clients of the institute, chronotopes, symbolic genres and speech clichés of medical discourse, which constitute the features of institutionality, cannot be represented by a single corpus, since in the subcorpus communications between doctor and patient, doctor and doctor, pharmacist and patient, texts of advertising of medical services and drugs are contrasted in their characteristics, partially overlap and are not always precisely defined in the agent/client category. Such complexity complicates the analysis of medical discourse texts.

The article extends its investigation into the emerging polycode genres of medical discourse, namely memes and demotivators (Dugalich, 2024b). The justification for linguistically analysing meme texts lies in their viral dissemination, frequent emergence of new content, incorporation of contemporary vernacular and specialised terminology, as well as the presence of linguistic game and other elements characteristic of the comedic genre. The article aims to identify the linguistic and cultural attributes present in both the verbal and visual components of medical memes in the French language. It seeks to describe the techniques utilised to captivate the attention of meme recipients towards medical and social issues represented through the vocabulary and symbolism of medical discourse.

## 2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study's primary research method involves linguo-semiotic analysis of the verbal component within the polycode text of memes, as well as component analysis of lexical units and semiotic analysis of visual elements. Additionally, the research employs continuous sampling of texts for analysis, alongside quantitative and comparative methodologies. We collected a dataset of 100 French medical memes from the internet using continuous sampling. The analytical approach is grounded in established linguistic traditions for describing polycode text (Poimanova, 1994; Dugalich, 2016; Ebzeeva & Dugalich, 2018; Baranov, 2018; Novospasskaya & Dugalich, 2022; Guseynova et al., 2022), as well as humour analysis techniques (Malyuga & McCarthy, 2021; Malyuga, 2011; Gornostaeva, 2019; Kosichenko, 2022), and methods for identifying universal and national-cultural features (Issers, 2015; Zou & Novospasskaya, 2021; Stepanova, 2021). In this study, we adopt a layered examination of the polycode text,

which encompasses analysing thematic relevance, the content and tools of the verbal component, as well as the characteristics of visual and symbolic elements and their interaction.

## 3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In linguistics, medical discourse is examined through various perspectives, including communication strategies (Barsukova et al., 2019; Zhura, 2007); distinctive employment of linguistic means (Mishlanova & Utkina, 2008; Razdorskaya & Tsybina, 2019; Mohammed, 2022); genre representation and thematic diversity (Kositskaya & Matyukhina, 2018); chronotope, suggestive aspects (Goncharenko, 2008; Stepanova, 2022; Grishechko et al., 2016); characteristics of monocode and polycode texts of various genres of medical discourse (Akhrenova, 2021; Dugalich, 2023; Malyuga, 2023), etc. The novelty of our research is the appeal to the memes in medical discourse, which are recognised as a multifaceted phenomenon in internet communication, defined as cohesive units comprising both text and imagery enclosed within a square frame (Kanashina, 2017, p. 85). Several studies have examined the linguistic characterisation of the emerging phenomenon of internet communication. Primarily, researchers have explored their conceptual attributes (Dugalich, 2023), developed typologies of internet memes (Zinovieva, 2015), examined their functions (Kolokoltseva & Lutovinova, 2018), including the comic function (Shmelyova, 2020; Akopova, 2016), and their application across various linguistic cultures (Mikitenko et al., 2020; Qian & Melnik, 2021; Grishechko, 2011; Akopova, 2023).

Analysing a meme entails several steps: categorising it based on thematic relevance (medical discourse memes exhibit significant thematic heterogeneity), identifying the function a particular text implements, examining the linguistic tools employed to fulfil that function at the verbal (primarily precedent phenomena and language game) and visual levels (utilisation of precedent non-verbal elements, zoom effects, and comic techniques). Additionally, it involves scrutinising symbols and code interactions, identifying intra-genre connections, and discerning its national and cultural identity. For medical discourse memes, characterised by their rapid creation, dissemination, and subsequent fading into obscurity, the symbolic content holds significant importance. As per Barthes (2009), *'any communication presents a myth – an unconscious belief or a professional or personal representation of reality'* (as cited in Peluso, 2021, p. 65). Memes often employ medical symbols not only to address medical topics but also to highlight societal concerns regarding interpersonal communication, challenges faced by medical professionals, breaches of social assurances, and other pertinent issues.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Key results

The research was based on a dataset comprising 100 memes in the French language, gathered through continuous sampling from the internet. The examined medical memes exhibited the following characteristics.

1. A prevalence of memes addressing sociomedical themes, encompassing aspects concerning the dynamics between doctors, nurses, patients, and doctors' esteemed societal status.
2. The presence of various types of language game at the verbal level, along with the utilisation of emotionally charged vocabulary and phonetic techniques to capture spoken language in written form.
3. An abundance of precedent phenomena at both verbal and visual levels, drawing from civilisational contexts.

#### 4.2. Sociomedical themes

Memes obtained through continuous sampling demonstrated the significance of addressing the role of doctors in contemporary society, accounting for 24 out of 100 samples. Within this theme, distinct subtopics emerged, including the legibility of doctors' handwriting, the juxtaposition of doctors vs nurses, and doctors vs patients.

Doctor's handwriting serves as a recurring motif across various polycode genres in medical discourse, such as caricatures, memes, demotivators, and medical advertisements, observed in languages including Russian, English, French, and Arabic. The central motif revolves around contrasting the legibility of an ordinary person's writing with that of a doctor's, which is often illegible, whether intentionally, accidentally, hastily, or in a specialised encrypted language. This narrative evolves to explore the connection between a doctor's professional competence and the quality of their handwriting, and its impact on what the patient can decipher from the notes.

For example, in the meme *Les étudiants et Docteurs en médecine* ('medical students and doctors') we witness a progression in the doctor's level of expertise from *1er année* ('1st year medical

student') with neatly written *Bonjour* ('Hello') to *Spécialiste* ('specialist doctor'), represented by a mere straight line instead of a word. This illustrates the notion of the doctor's distinctiveness and elitism within society (Figure 1a).

Similarly, in the meme portraying the game *Le Scrabble* ('scrabble'), an intellectual pursuit inaccessible to non-doctors due to the inability to decipher the letterforms further reinforces the idea of the doctor's specialised knowledge and status. This narrative suggests that one doctor's poorly written notes are easily decipherable by another doctor (Figure 1b).

Another example is found in the meme *Quand tu vas chez le médecin* ('when you go to the doctor'), where the visual element comprises two images. The first image displays a piece of paper with the caption *Ce que tu aimerais qu'il écrive* ('what you would like him [the doctor] to write'). Neat handwriting suggests a comforting prescription: *Ordonnance. Un bisou magique de ta maman et tout ira mieux d'ici demain!* (Prescription. A magic kiss from your mother and everything will be better tomorrow!). In contrast, the second image shows the same piece of paper with the inscription *Ce qu'il va t'écrire* (What he [the doctor] will write), but the prescription is depicted in wavy lines, making it difficult to decipher (Figure 1c).

Memes focusing on the unique role of doctors in society fulfil an appellative function, shaping public opinion to foster respect for those dedicated to the field of medicine. Notably, these memes often incorporate social themes alongside medical ones. For instance, in the meme addressing a doctor's poor handwriting (Figure 3), the background introduces a social narrative concerning parental care and maintaining connections with aging parents in the context of changing family formats in modern society.

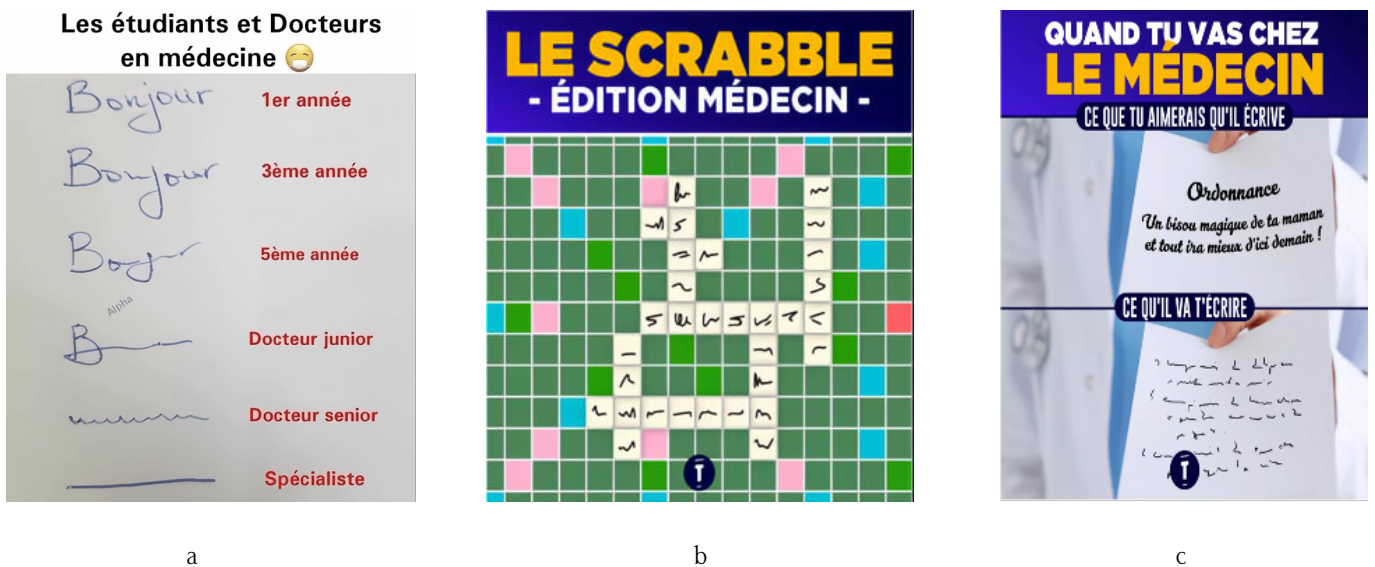


Figure 1. Examples of doctor handwriting memes

The study revealed a distinct thematic category present in French-language medical discourse memes, which was not found in the selection of memes in Russian, English, and Arabic – the contrast between doctors and nurses. In this category, doctors are depicted in opposition to nurses in terms of efficiency, workload, and remuneration, with nurses typically portrayed as female. In one of the memes, a doctor is depicted wearing a white coat, a stethoscope around their neck, and holding a medical chart. They are shown addressing a patient with an energetic smile, saying *Alors... Dis-moi tout ce que t'as dit à l'infirmière il y a 5 minutes* ('So... Tell me everything you told the nurse 5 minutes ago'). This statement diminishes the role of the nurse in the medical setting, suggesting that despite the patient having already communicated their concerns to the nurse, the information was not adequately recorded or addressed. Ultimately, all decisions are portrayed as being made by the doctor, who holds a higher hierarchical position than the nurse (Figure 2a).

In another meme, the concept of contrast is visually depicted, with a sad man at a press conference attracting little interest, as indicated by the single microphone in front of him. This is juxtaposed with a young woman, surrounded by numerous microphones, indicating high interest in her. The verbal component emphasises the importance of care provided by nursing staff, highlighting its difficulty and the skills unique to nurses that doctors may lack. Notably, this meme belongs to the category of polycode texts, where the visual component lacks

explicit medical discourse elements, while the verbal component includes lexical units such as *infirmière* (nurse), *médecin* (doctor), and *patient* (patient). Accompanied by the captions *L'infirmière qui a passé les 12 dernières heures avec un patient* ('The nurse who spent the last 12 hours with the patient') and *Le médecin qui est allé le voir pendant 3 minutes il y a 12 heures* ('The doctor who came to see him for 3 minutes 12 hours ago'), these phrases are constructed following a general model, contrasting the verbs *passer* ('to spend') and *aller* ('to go') with the semantic difference of one-time use and short duration of action, as well as numerical indicators of 3 minutes versus 12 hours (Figure 2b).

In yet another meme example, the verbal component elaborates on the specialised skills possessed by nursing staff. The image depicts a patient in an intensive care unit, evident from the complex medical equipment connected to them. The accompanying narrative addresses a medical theme: *La prochaine fois que quelqu'un te dira: 'Tu n'es qu'une infirmière'* ('The next time someone tells you: 'You're just a nurse'). *N'oublie pas qu'il n'y a pas de médecin au monde qui puisse brancher lui-même toutes ces conneries* ('Don't forget that there is not a single doctor in the world who can connect all this crap himself'). It is noteworthy that these memes serve an informative function, emphasising the evolution of nursing roles to encompass extensive technical and IT skills, challenging societal perceptions regarding the capabilities of modern nursing staff (Figure 2c).



a



b



c

Figure 2. Examples of doctor vs nurse memes

In medical discourse in the framework of institutional discourse theory, the doctor and the patient are two essential participants. However, a considerable portion of memes focuses on their opposition. For instance, in one meme, the doctor, depicted twice in the image (for each response to the patient's query), responds without looking at the interlocutor, offering blunt replies:

Patient: *Quel est le problème docteur?* ('What's the problem, doctor?')

Doctor: *Vous êtes en surpoids* ('You are overweight')

Patient: *J'aimerais un second avis* ('I would like a second opinion')

Doctor: *Vous êtes moche aussi* ('You are also vile')



While seeking a second opinion to clarify a diagnosis is a standard practice and isn't inherently offensive to the doctor, this meme addresses weight issues, which can typically be assessed through a straightforward calculation using a well-known formula. Thus, it illustrates mutual irritation between the patient and the doctor (with *second avis* implying a straightforward query and *moche* suggesting a pejorative remark about the patient's appearance).

Additionally, the visual component of the meme is noteworthy for its unique organisation. It features the same image of the doctor twice, with the second instance utilising a zoom effect to enlarge the image, focusing on the doctor's facial expression (Figure 3a).

The doctor vs patient opposition in another meme is articulated through the verbal component:

Doctor: *Je n'arrive pas à trouver le diagnostic exact, mais ça doit être dû à l'alcool...* ('I can't seem to find the exact diagnosis, but this is probably due to alcohol...')

Patient: *Très bien, Docteur, je repasserais alors un jour où vous n'aurez pas bu...* ('Very well, Doctor, I will come back when you are not drunk...')

In this scenario, a patient found with alcohol in their blood shifts all the blame onto the doctor (Figure 3b).

In yet another meme example, the visual component lacks explicit elements indicative of medical discourse. Instead, it features a man in a suit rubbing the bridge of his nose, a gesture associated with deep thought or discomfort. The verbal component includes lexical units *diagnostic* (diagnosis), *patient* (patient), and *traitements* (treatment): *Quand le patient te dit qu'il a fait des recherches approfondies sur Internet au sujet de son diagnostic et qu'il commence à recommander des traitements* ('When the patient tells you that he has conducted thorough research on the Internet regarding his diagnosis, and begins to recommend treatments'). The meme humorously portrays the scenario where a patient claims to have researched their diagnosis online and proceeds to suggest treatment options to the doctor (Figure 3c).



Figure 3. Examples of doctor vs patient memes

#### 4.3. Verbal level of medical topic memes

A notable feature of the analysed memes is the inclusion of verbal elements such as language game, emotionally charged vocabulary, and phonetic writing. A language game, defined as a deliberate deviation from linguistic norms aimed at creating a humorous effect, is evident in the following, during a patient's interaction at a clinic appointment:

Patient: *Une bière s'il vous plaît, j'ai soif!* ('Beer, please, I'm thirsty!')

Receptionist: *Non mais c'est un cabinet vétérinaire ici!* ('But this is a veterinary clinic!')

Patient: *Ah ben une bière s'il vous plaît, j'ai s'ouaf ouaf!* ('Well then, beer, please, I'm thirsty woof-woof!')

The repetition of the response in the final part illustrates onomatopoeia *ouaf ouaf* (imitating a dog's bark), superimposed on the verb *avoir soif* ('to be thirsty') in the 1st person singular form *j'ai soif*, in response to the indication that the conversation

is taking place in a veterinary clinic (Figure 4a). In another example, the technique of language game at the lexical level is evident in the patient's remarks during an appointment with a psychotherapist at the clinic:

Psychotherapist: *La prochaine fois, nous travaillerons avec l'inconscient* ('Next time we will work with the unconscious').

Patient: *Je crains que mon mari ne puisse pas venir* ('I'm afraid my husband won't be able to come').

The language game revolves around the use of two lexical-semantic variants of the term *inconscient* (unconscious) within one context. In the psychotherapist's statement, *inconscient* is used in the sense of 'unconscious' as a noun, indicated by the definite article and the absence of a subsequent noun. However, the patient's response implies a different lexical-semantic variant of *inconscient*, suggesting 'unconscious' as an adjective. This implication is inferred using the noun *mon mari* (my husband) and the visual representation of Brigitte Macron, the wife of the

French President. The story of their relationship, characterised by the significant age gap between an adult teacher and a student, is well-known, providing context for the patient's humorous remark (Figure 4b).

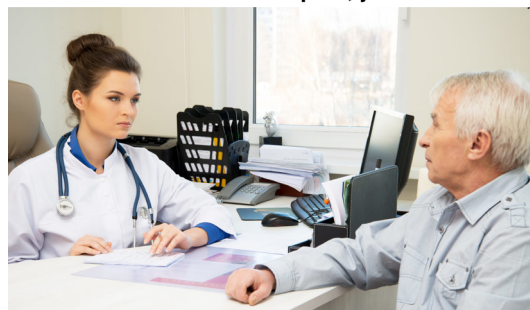
Next meme is an example of a language game involving a lexical unit used in both free and connected contexts:

Patient: *Docteur, j'aimerais commencer par enlever mes poignées d'amour* ('Doctor, I would like to remove the folds of fat around my waist').

Doctor: *Et si on commençait par enlever les poignées de votre frigo* ('What if we start by removing the cravings for the refrigerator').

In this exchange, the term *mes poignées* ('my handles') in the patient's statement refers to the folds of fat around the waist, which corresponds to the image of a stout girl. However, in the doctor's response, the term *poignées* ('handles') carries a different meaning. Coupled with the direct object *de votre frigo* (of your refrigerator') and the verb *enlever* ('remove, take away'), it suggests addressing the main cause of obesity – overeating – and a practical solution for weight loss – closing the refrigerator (literally, 'removing handles from the refrigerator'). This playful exchange on the topic of excess weight serves a compensatory function by fostering a healthy attitude towards a prevalent social medical issue (Figure 4c).

**Une bière s'il vous plaît, j'ai soif!  
Non mais c'est un cabinet vétérinaire ici!  
Ah ben une bière s'il vous plaît, j'ai s'ouaf ouaf!**



a



b



c

Figure 4. Examples of memes involving language game

The use of phonetic writing in French speech is a common phenomenon in Internet communication. This can be attributed to the intricate norms of French orthography, the significant number of non-native French speakers, and the authors' preference for efficiency. In our selection, examples abound, particularly in the most frequently used words and expressions, where spellings are easily decoded within the given context. For instance, in the dialogue:

Doctor: *On dirait que vous êtes enceinte...* ('It looks like you are pregnant...')

Girl: *CHUI ENCEINTE ?????* ('AM I PREGNANT????')

*CHUI* is phonetically spelled for *je suis*, conveying surprise, amazement, or disbelief in the context of the meme (Figure 5a).

In another example, the line *Docteur je pourrais pas venir au rdv* ('Doctor, I won't be able to come to the appointment today') features the abbreviation *au rdv* for *au rendez-vous*, which is commonly used but is not considered normative (Figure 5b).

In another instance, a meme features the phrase *Keski vous amène?* ('What brought you here?'), which is phonetically written as a simplified form of *Qu'est-ce qui vous amène*. This simplification preserves the use of allophones necessary for understanding the meaning but significantly vulgarises the spelling, especially in the computer/SMS version. Similarly, the phrase *Sa*

*fai mal qd j'appui* simplifies the verb forms to avoid the inclusion of special French graphemes, such as Ç, resulting in *Ça fai mal qd j'appui*. Additionally, the unreadable endings *Ça fait mal quand j'appuie* are omitted, and the word *quand* is shortened to *qd*. Notably, the phrase lacks a direct object (Figure 5c).

The use of emotionally charged (including obscene or abbreviated) vocabulary is a characteristic trait of memes as a genre. This linguistic choice renders the vocabulary of this genre appealing, effectively conveys negative emotions, and creates a sense of closeness between the author and the audience. In our examination of memes, we observed instances such as:

1. *Rien à foutre* (roughly colloquial) translating to 'Don't give a damn', employed as an invented commercial name for a drug against *Allergie aux cons* ('Allergy to idiots') (Figure 6a).

2. *Un salaire de merde* ('crappy salary') accompanied by the qualifier *de merde* ('bad, crappy'). Notably, this expression is used by a doctor during a patient consultation (Figure 6b).

3. *Si elle réussit à retrouver la maison faut surtout pas la niquer* ('If she manages to find a house, there is no need to sleep with her'), where the lexical unit *niquer* ('to have sex, sleep with somebody') is employed. The choice of verb is contextualised within advice given to a patient facing a challenging situation (Figure 6c).

4. Additionally, we observed evocative expressions like *péter le feu* ('to set fire') in *Qui a dit qu'être infirmière était stressant? J'ai 39 ans et je pétè le feu!* ('Who said being a nurse is stressful? I'm 39 years old and I'm full of energy!'), wherein the evocative

expression contrasts with the image of a 39-year-old nurse being portrayed as an energetic elderly woman (Figure 6d).

5. Lastly, we noted the use of *casser la gueule* (roughly colloquial) meaning 'to stuff the face' (Figure 6e).

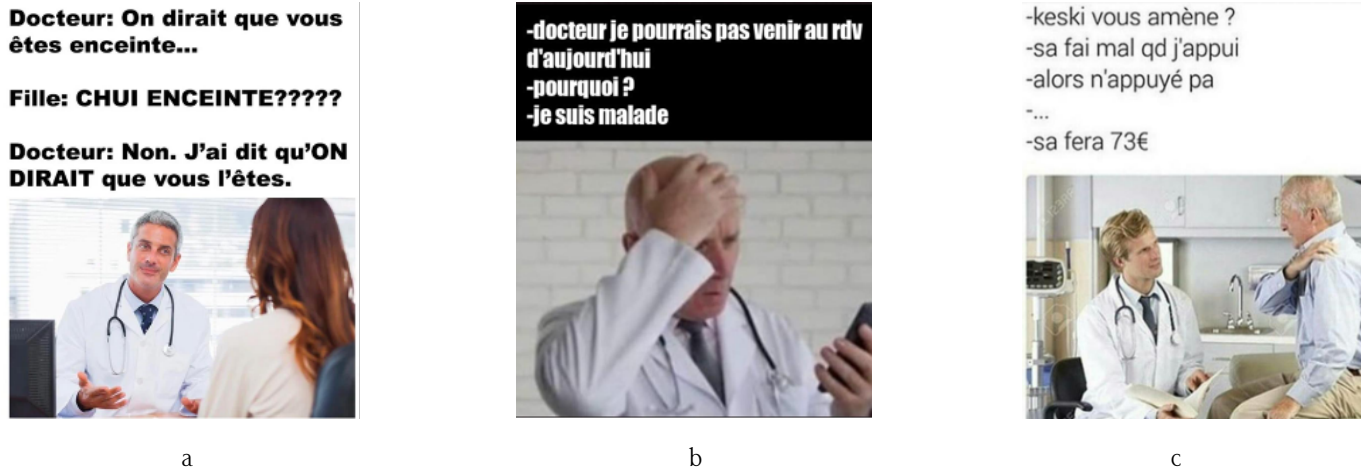


Figure 5. Examples of memes that include phonetic spelling and acronyms



Figure 6. Examples of memes containing emotionally charged vocabulary



#### 4.4. Precedence of the meme

Memes, much like many other Internet genres, frequently employ precedent phenomena. Based on the analysis conducted, we have identified such phenomena at both the verbal and visual levels.

One visual precedent phenomenon of a civilisational nature can be seen in Figure 7a: a bottle of Smirnoff vodka is humorously captioned as *Première photo du vaccin russe* ('The first photo of the Russian vaccine'), portraying the bottle as if it were a vaccine.

In Figure 7b, a visualisation representing DNA and RNA features two types of curls overlaid on the famous character Daenerys Targaryen. Daenerys Targaryen is a prominent figure in the fictional universe depicted in the book series *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R. R. Martin, as well as in the TV series *Game of Thrones*. Following the lore of the book series, she belongs to the Targaryen family and is the daughter of the King of the Seven Kingdoms, Aerys II the Mad.

The verbal precedent phenomenon is exemplified in a meme featuring an image of Dr. House and his colleagues (Figure 7c). The dialogue unfolds as follows:

Cameron: *Je vais vérifier ça* ('I'll check it out')

Foreman: *Je vais passer ce coup de fil* ('I'll make a phone call')

Chase: *Je vais le maintenir en vie* ('I'll save his life')

Hugh: *Je vais déjeuner!* ('I'll have lunch!')

Each character's line strictly aligns with their respective personalities as depicted in the TV show 'Dr. House'. However, Dr. House's line rather humorously references a common trope in memes and caricatures about French medicine, specifically highlighting the French doctor's perceived right to have lunch during lunchtime despite any ongoing medical emergencies. It's worth noting that the lines mix up the names and surnames of both the characters and the actors who portrayed them: Cameron (Allison Cameron – character, portrayed by actress Jennifer Morrison); Foreman (Eric Forman – character, not present in the photo depicting the meme, portrayed by actor Omar Epps); Chase (Robert Chase – character, portrayed by actor Jesse Spencer); Hugh (actor Hugh Laurie, portraying the main protagonist of the show Dr. Gregory House).

The meme in Figure 7d features Dr. Ross Geller, a character from the American TV series *Friends*, portrayed by actor David Schwimmer. In the series, Ross is depicted as the most intelligent character of the group, holding a doctorate degree in philosophy and working as a professor of palaeontology at a major university. In the meme, he delivers an emotionally charged monologue about the harsh challenges of being a doctor: *Quand t'as admis 3 patients, que t'as pas diné, que t'as pas fait pipi depuis 10 heures, que ton patient a fait caca sur tes chaussures et que l'infirmière en chef te demande si tout va bien: Ça va* ('When you've admitted 3 patients, haven't had dinner, haven't peed in 10 hours, your patient pooped on your shoes, and the head nurse asks you if everything is okay: I'm fine'). The inclusion of Ross's image in the meme is deliberate, as it amplifies the stark contrast between his typically positive demeanour and the distressing content of the speech he delivers. This incongruity noticeably enhances the comedic effect and underscores the understanding that Ross's character is not a medical doctor but rather holds a Doctor of Science degree.

The meme in Figure 7e features the British actor Daniel Radcliffe, with the first image taken from the film *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001), and the second from *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2010-2011), the last two parts of the series. The caption provides insight into the creator's purposeful intent, indicating the duration of study at medical school (*Etudiant en Médecine* – 'Medical student'). The juxtaposition of Radcliffe's images, depicting him as a child in the first year and as an adult in the sixth year, correlates with the progression of years of study in medical education.

The choice of Daniel Radcliffe's character was likely influenced by his immense popularity as both the character Harry Potter and as a successful, prominent, and well-recognised member of the movie industry. Additionally, the gradual aging of the character over the span of the seven-part film series naturally aligns with the passage of time during medical schooling. This selection underscores the familiarity of the character and actor to the audience, as well as the visual representation of the passage of time, reflecting the actor's growth throughout the series of films released over a decade.

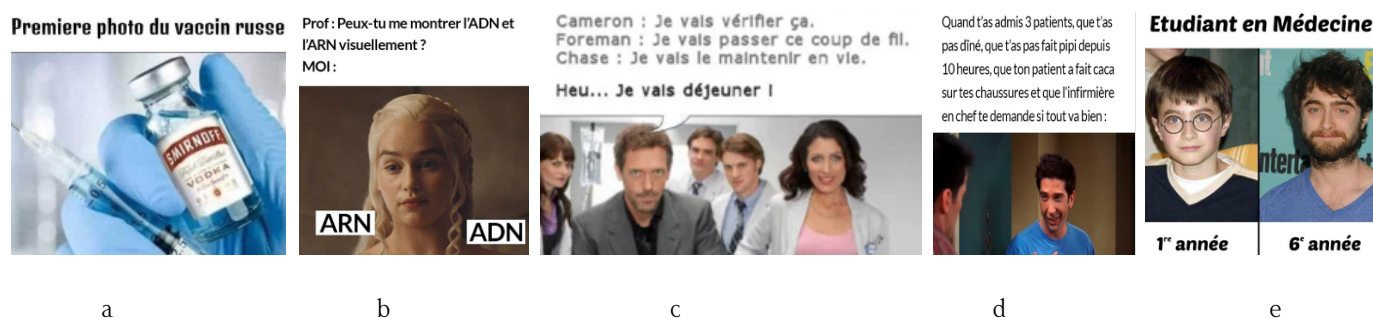


Figure 7. Examples of memes incorporating precedent phenomena



A distinct category of memes comprises those classified as translingual. These encompass memes that: (1) feature visual sequences identical to previously used images in memes, but with a verbal sequence in a different language conveying similar content (see Figures 8a and 8b); (2) present verbal sequences that are translations of well-known memes in another language, albeit with different accompanying images (see Figure 8c and 8d); and (3) display visual sequences that are entirely identical while the content has been altered (see Figures 8e and 8f).

In the example of the French meme (Figure 8a) and the Russian meme (Figure 8b), we observe the removal of the background from the first image, which in this case includes the image of a lamp above the operating table. This alteration immediately shifts the meme away from medical discourse. Additionally, the caption has been changed from medical-related content to a humorous interpersonal context: (1) *Des étudiants en médecine qui regardent une opération pour la première fois* ('Medical students observe an operation for the first time'); (2) *А говорили дружбы втроем нет и они правы он изгой* ('And they said there is no friendship between the three of us, and they are right, he is an outcast').

In the example of a French meme (Figure 8c) and a Russian meme (Figure 8d), we observe that the content of the verbal component in the French meme is replicated in the Russian text, but the visual sequence differs:

Docteur: *J'ai une mauvaise nouvelle. Vous avez une maladie rare* (Doctor: 'I have bad news. You have a rare disease').  
 Moi: *Quoi? Rare comment?* (Me: 'What? Rare how?')

Docteur: *C'est à vous de la nommer.* (Doctor: 'It's up to you to decide what to call it')

Moi: ('Me')

Врач: *У вас редкое заболевание* ('You have a rare disease')

Я: *Как оно называется?* ('What is it called?')

Врач: *А как бы вы хотели, чтобы оно называлось?* ('What would you like it to be called?')

Я: ('Me').

In the case of certain memes, we find counterparts in other languages where the visuals coincide, but the content differs. For instance, in the French meme (Figure 8e), the content revolves around a medical context: *Quand tu arrive à allumer ton ordinateur* ('When you manage to turn on your computer'), *mais qu'il te reste 12 étapes pour appeler ton médecin* ('but you still have 12 steps to go through to call your doctor'). On the other hand, in the Russian meme (Figure 8f), the content shifts towards a non-medical humorous context: *Сантьяго, как вы относитесь к текстовой мафии? Это лучшая игра на свете! Особенно, когда вы "красный"* ('Santiago, how do you feel about the text mafia? This is the best game ever! Especially when you are 'red').

It's worth noting the frequent appearance of András Arato, a Hungarian electrical engineer who gained fame as a model and became a meme sensation across various topics. Known as *Harold Hiding the Pain*, meme researchers recognise him for his distinctive facial expression, characterised by a forced smile that conceals underlying feelings of discomfort or distress (Figures 8e and 8f).

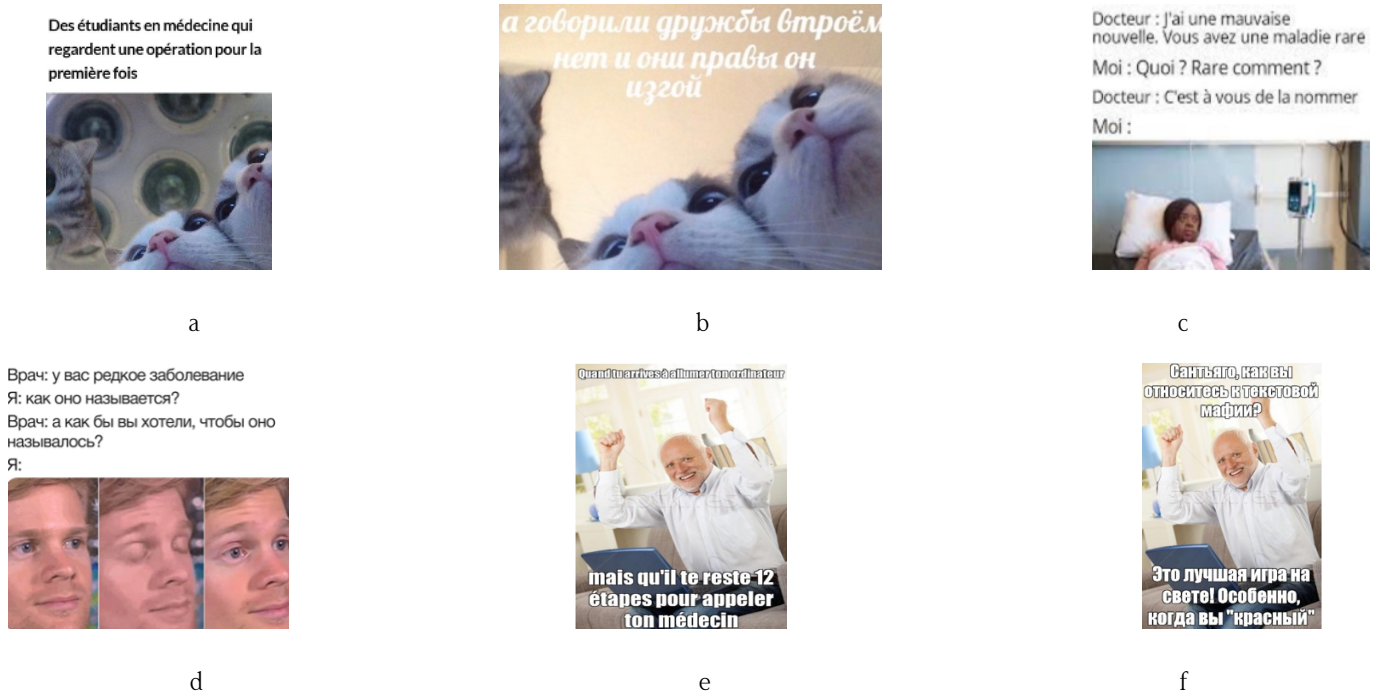


Figure 8. Examples of translingual memes

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study addressed a notable research gap in the exploration of polycode texts in medical discourse, specifically focusing on French-language medical memes. The aim was to examine the organisation and content of visual and verbal elements in these memes, identify their thematic relevance, and analyse their functions and sociocultural implications. To achieve this aim, we employed a combination of linguo-semiotic analysis, component analysis of lexical units, and semiotic analysis of visual elements. The research was grounded in established linguistic traditions and utilised continuous sampling methods to gather a dataset of 100 French medical memes from the internet.

Key results from the study revealed that French medical memes are dynamic, viral, and eclectic texts that encapsulate distinctive elements of institutional medical discourse. These memes often address sociomedical themes, exposing the dynamics between doctors, nurses, and patients, and the esteemed societal position of doctors. The verbal components of the memes frequently utilised language play, emotionally charged vocabulary, and phonetic spelling to convey humour and critique. The

visual components incorporated elements from civilisational phenomena, such as political figures and popular culture icons, to enhance the meme's impact and relatability.

The analysis demonstrated that medical memes serve various functions, including comedic, informative, compensatory, and appellative roles. They reflect and shape public opinion on medical and social issues, offering insights into the sociocultural context that informs the texts. The study identified linguo-cultural characteristics in the verbal component, such as the use of colloquial and slang vocabulary alongside emotionally charged expressions within doctor-patient communication contexts.

The beneficiaries of this research include linguists, sociologists, and healthcare professionals interested in understanding the interconnection between language, culture, and medical discourse. The findings have implications for the broader study of polycode texts in various genres and languages, contributing to the growing field of discursive linguistics. Moreover, this research provides a foundation for future studies on the role of memes in digital communication and their potential applications in medical education and public health messaging.

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