

White collar? Blue collar!
Engineers are not Enjoyers!

-- Humor meme analysis

MEET OUR TEAM



Ruzhuo XIONG

MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

■ ■ ■ ACADEMIC INTERESTS

Mechanism and machine theory



Houcheng LI

MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

■ ■ ■ ACADEMIC INTERESTS

Embodied AI training



Xiaoyu Jiang

MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

■ ■ ■ ACADEMIC INTERESTS

Renewable fuel engine aerodynamics

What is meme?

- A meme (or "Internet meme") is a piece of culture, often an image, video, phrase, or concept, that spreads rapidly online, usually with slight variations.
- It is a form of digital communication that carries shared cultural meaning, humor, science communication, and academic life. Memes evolve as they are adapted by different users, making them dynamic and context-dependent. They use jokes to make ideas clearer, more interesting, and easier to remember.

Example (static image)

$$\int^b f(x) dx$$

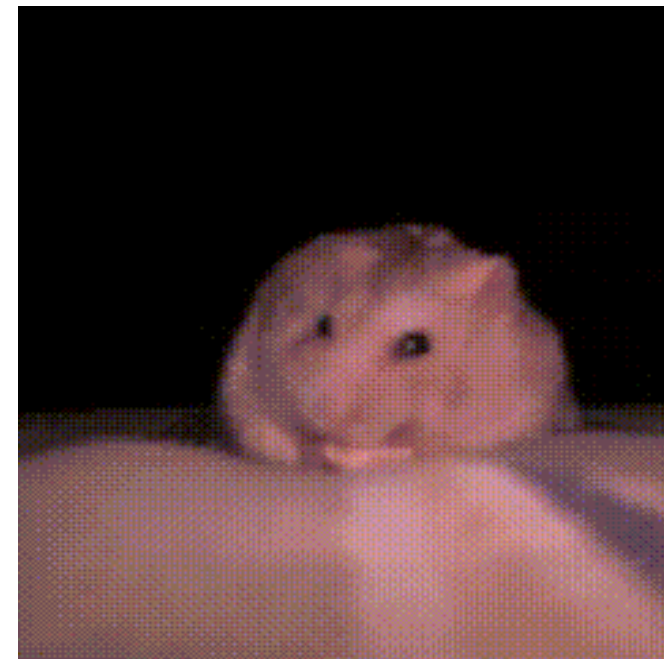
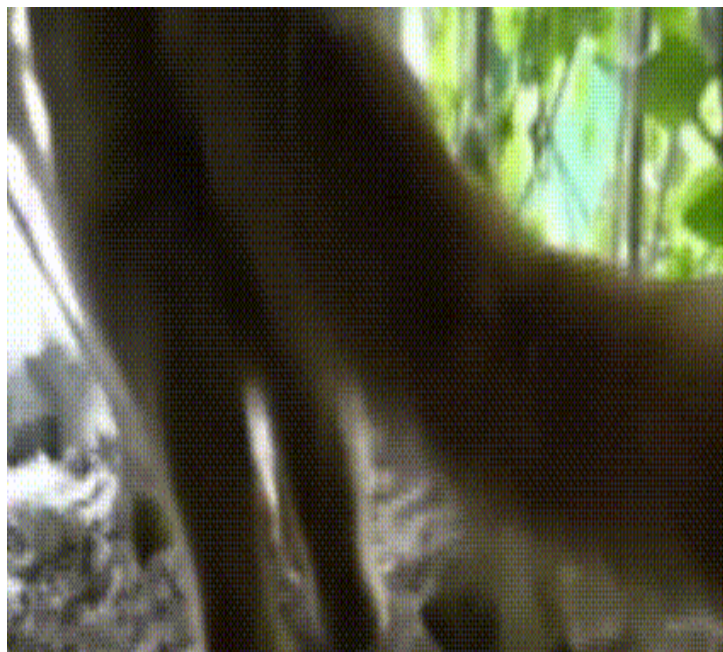
It has no lower limit at all.



GTANT may eat who didn't finish the homework in the Midnight 🤔😳😱😱



Example (dynamic image)



Functions of Memes

- Memes use humor to make difficult ideas easier to understand.
- They make learning more interesting and engaging for students.
- They help students remember key concepts better.
- They simplify complex topics (like correlation vs causation) in a fun way.
- They improve attention and motivation in class.
- As a popular digital tool, memes make academic communication relaxed and relatable.

Description of this meme



The dog in the picture is like a mechanical engineering worker. It is sitting in front of a high-end CNC machine, a common tool in factories.-The dog looks calm, but its eyes show a little nervousness . The words on the picture mean: “I‘m just screwing some screws. What’s up?”

First, the funny contrast : A cute dog is doing a hard, boring job that people usually do in a factory. Second, it's a joke about engineering students or workers : When you learn to use big machines or do boring work like screwing, you often look calm on the outside but feel stressed inside, just like this dog. -The sentence "What's up?" makes it funnier. It sounds like you are tired of your work and just want to finish it quietly.

Why we ME student choose it?



This meme has become so popular among mechanical engineering students and workers, and the reason is quite simple.

It uses a cute, funny dog to show the boring, repetitive, and stressful daily life in our field in a way that everyone can understand and laugh at. For people outside engineering, it's just a funny picture of a dog operating a machine. But for us mechanical engineers, it's like our "emotional comfort food."

The dog's calm face, while pretending to work at a CNC machine, perfectly mirrors how we feel every day. When we're adjusting parameters, clamping workpieces, or just endlessly tightening screws, we often look calm on the outside, but deep down, we're all just as tired and numb as this dog.

That's why this meme hits so close to home. It takes the pressure and monotony of our jobs and turns it into something light and funny. It's not just a joke about a dog; it's a joke about us, and we all see ourselves in it.

What is humor?

- Some examples in our life

jokes, funny tales, talk shows, some behavior art like Chaplin “modern time”

- Memes as a medium of humor

Today, on the internet, memes are all around.

- A common feeling

Everyone has his/her own laugh point. But we all regard humor as something funny, interesting that make us laugh.

However, it is ambiguous and subtle, we still need exact definition.

Thus, scholars tried to found their own theory to analyze “humor”, instead of daily description.

Academic definition of humor

- Henri Bergson

Laughter is a sign of social **correction** against the **automatization of life**

Humor is the opposite of **irony**

- Sigmund Freud

Laughter is a **signal** of the release of a certain amount of **saved energy**

Humor allows a painful experience to be shifted toward a less distressing and more manageable scenario

- Luigi Pirandello

Laughter: He described it as a reaction to the “**perception of a contrast**”, which occurs before one develops a deeper feeling

Humor is cognition conflict , a feeling of the opposite

Semantic Confusion

- Our daily descriptions about humor , are mostly ambiguous, subtle, not exact and accurate
- What is semantic confusion?

Semantic confusion refers to the difficulty of navigating the semantic field of humor because the terms used (such as humor, irony, and sarcasm) belong to **ordinary language**

Charaudeau's theory

- **Patrick Charaudeau:** Humor is a discursive strategy that consists of:
- confronting language constraints
- constructing of a shifted, transformed, metamorphosed vision of the world
- asking a specific addressee (individual or audience) to participate in this game

Charaudeau's Prism

- 6 elements:
- **Who?**
- **With whom?**
(Accomplice)
- **About whom/what?**
(Topic / Subject matter)
- **Against whom?**
(Target)
- **Rule or norm highlighted/violated:**
- **Pragmatic effect:**
(Type of complicity: playful/ mockery / self-mockery / criticism / cynicism)

Concept of Stereotype

--before we apply the prism

- **Stereotype:** In social psychology, a stereotype is a **generalized belief** about a particular category of people. It is an **expectation** that people might have about every person of a particular group.
 - Expectation: for example, an expectation about the group's personality, preferences, appearance or ability.
- Pros: make information processing easier by allowing the perceiver to rely on previously stored knowledge
- Cons: Stereotypes are often faulty and resistant to new information.

How we regard engineers and engineering? --public stereotype

- Engineers
 - Ability: “intellectual, math and physics geniuses”
 - Personality: "introverted, socially awkward nerds“ “creative and dedicated”
 - Working environment: clean offices or high-end labs, on computers, in neat work clothes
- Engineering
 - prestigious, intellectually elite career.
 - developing high-tech products, solving complex problems, and designing innovative equipment

Who: ME(mechanical engineering) student (speaker)

With whom: ME student (Addressee)

About what/whom: the daily work of mechanical engineers today (Topic)

Against what/whom: Mechanical Engineering (Target)

Rule or norm violated:

An engineer sit by high-end device
|__ exhausted as a dog

vs

job is turning screws
boring, tiring repetition __|

- A contrast with public stereotypes

Engineers: do creative jobs and relax themselves.

Truth: boring and annoying

Engineering: innovative, creative, high-end

Truth: ordinary, repetitive

Pragmatic effect: (Type of complicity: mockery, self-mockery, criticism, cynism, playful)

There is a **playful** connivance based on a contrast with stereotypes. However, there is also an element of self-mockery; the speaker is joking about their own field and inviting the addressee—who is also a ME student—to join in the self-mockery;

The speaker (Who): is inviting to laugh at himself (self-mockery)

The addressee (With whom): is invited to laugh at the speaker and at themselves (self-mockery)



**Who: ME student
(speaker)**

**With whom: non-ME student
(Addressee)**

**About what/whom: the daily work of
mechanical engineers today
(Topic)**

**Against what/whom: Mechanical Engineering
(Target)**

Rule or norm violated:

An engineer sit by high-end device
|__ exhausted as a dog

vs

job is turning screws
boring, tiring repetition __|

- A contrast with public stereotypes

Engineers: do creative jobs and relax themselves.

Truth: boring and annoying

Engineering: innovative, creative, high-end

Truth: ordinary, repetitive

Pragmatic effect: (Type of complicity: mockery, self-mockery, criticism, cynism, playful)

There is a playful connivance based on a contrast with stereotypes. However, there is also an element of self-mockery; the speaker is joking about their own field and inviting the addressee—who is non-ME student—to understand his self-mockery and laugh at the joke (mockery)

The speaker (Who): is inviting to laugh at himself (self-mockery)

The addressee (With whom): is invited to laugh at the speaker (mockery)



Who: non-ME student but know ME (speaker)

With whom: ME student (Addressee)

About what/whom: the daily work of mechanical engineers today (Topic)

Against what/whom: Mechanical Engineering (Target)

Rule or norm violated:

An engineer sit by high-end device
|__ exhausted as a dog

vs

job is turning screws
boring, tiring repetition __|

- A contrast with public stereotypes

Engineers: do creative jobs and relax themselves.

Truth: boring and annoying

Engineering: innovative, creative, high-end

Truth: ordinary, repetitive

Pragmatic effect: (Type of complicity: mockery, self-mockery, criticism, cynism, playful)

There is a playful connivance based on a contrast with stereotypes. However, there is also an element of mockery; the speaker is joking about others field and inviting the addressee—who is a ME student—to join in the mockery

The speaker (Who): is inviting to laugh at somebody else's field (mockery)

The addressee (With whom): is invited to laugh at his own field and future job (self-mockery)



**Who: non-ME student
(speaker)**

**With whom: non-ME student
(Addressee)**

**About what/whom: the daily work of
mechanical engineers today
(Topic)**

**Against what/whom: Mechanical Engineering
(Target)**

Rule or norm violated:

An engineer sit by high-end device
|__ exhausted as a dog

vs

job is turning screws
boring, tiring repetition __|

- A contrast with public stereotypes

Engineers: do creative jobs and relax themselves.

Truth: boring and annoying

Engineering: innovative, creative, high-end

Truth: ordinary, repetitive

Pragmatic effect: (Type of complicity: mockery, self-mockery, criticism, cynism, playful)

There is a playful connivance based on a contrast with stereotypes. However, there is also an element of mockery; the speaker is joking about other else's field and inviting the addressee—who is also a non-ME student—to join in the mockery

The speaker (Who): is inviting to laugh at someone else's field and job (mockery)

The addressee (With whom): is invited to laugh at someone else's field and job (mockery)



A deeper interpretation of norm violated

- **The public stereotype of engineering work:** The image subverts the idealized view of mechanical engineering. Instead of showing an engineer working on a high-tech creative project, it depicts an exhausted dog (representing the engineer) performing the most repetitive, mundane task: tightening screws. The contrast is stark: the setting is a high-end industrial machine shop, but the work itself is mindless, repetitive labor—far from the “innovative problem-solving” people imagine.
- **The unspoken expectation of “professional dignity” for engineers:** The meme breaks the norm of presenting engineering as a prestigious, intellectually elite career. The tired, vacant expression of the dog and the casual line *“I’m tightening screws, what’s up?”* highlight the fatigue, monotony, and even absurdity of the work. It rejects the pressure to frame engineering work as always “impressive” or “exciting,” and instead normalizes the unglamorous, tiring reality of many entry-level or day-to-day engineering jobs.

Conclusion — Theoretical Synthesis & Resolving Semantic Confusion

The Evolution of Humor Frameworks

- **Henri Bergson:** Laughter as a social weapon against the “*automatization of life*” → Perfectly mirrors the robot-like, repetitive action of turning screws.
- **Sigmund Freud:** Laughter as the “*release of saved psychic energy*” → An emotional pressure-relief valve for heavy engineering workloads.
- **Luigi Pirandello:** Humor as the “*feeling of the opposite*” → Moving from the surface contrast (cute dog vs. heavy factory) to a deeper cognitive conflict.

Charaudeau’s Discursive Strategy

- Resolving “**Semantic Confusion**”: Moving beyond ambiguous daily language (irony/sarcasm) into precise discursive roles.
- **Humor as a Game:** A calculated transformation of world vision, built upon a “playful connivance” between the speaker and the audience.

Conclusion — The Matrix of Charaudeau's Prism Applied

The Dynamic Variables of the Prism

- The pragmatic effect is NOT static; it shifts dynamically across our **4 Audience Scenarios** based on the relationship between the **Speaker (Who)** and the **Addressee (With whom)**.

Core Rule Violated & Stereotype Shattered

- **The Norm Violated:** Utilizing multi-million dollar, high-end CNC machinery merely to perform the basic labor of "turning screws".
- **Shattering Imaginations:** Confronting the public illusion that engineers always perform glamorous, creative work.
Result: *Engineers are not Enjoyers!*
- **Pragmatic Shift:** Transitions seamlessly from pure internal **Self-mockery** (ME to ME) to safe external **Mockery** (Non-ME to Non-ME).

Conclusion — The Quadruple Functions & Engineering Education

Four Practical Implications of the "Screw-Dog" Meme:

- 1. Industrial Dualism:** Revealing the hidden, monotonous underbelly of high-tech manufacturing.
- 2. Psychological Solace:** Serving as "emotional comfort food" to foster collective resilience.
- 3. Reality Check:** Grounding ME students' career expectations to balance mechanical boredom with mental relaxation.
- 4. Academic Motivator:** A playful warning—*“Study hard, or your future is literally just turning screws.”*

The Broader Picture: Humor as an Academic Lubricant

- Mitigating the extreme pressure and rigidity of STEM fields.
- Transforming individual academic anxiety into a shared, healthy cultural community.

Thank you!