

Review of the Book by Aleksandra Klimkiewicz, Żanna Śladkiewicz, and Marcin Trendowicz Titled *Creating Meaning in Online Communication: Meme, Stereotype, Myth* [Klimkiewicz Aleksandra, Śladkiewicz Żanna, Trendowicz Marcin. *Kreowanie sensów w komunikacji internetowej: mem, stereotyp, mit*]. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2025, 180 pp., ISBN: 978-83-8206-705-7

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Summary. The concepts of meme, stereotype and myth were used to examine the problem of creating meaning in online communication, and then to explore their mutual relations and impact on collective consciousness and language. The structure of the work allows for a systematic and multifaceted presentation of the topic, combining theoretical considerations with practical examples, through to analyses and detailed case studies. The analysis of the corpus of internet memes, which are the result of the culture of resistance to the political mythologization of reality, allowed for an assessment of the role of this myth in shaping public opinion. Stereotypes and myths, as the cognitive foundations of memes, play a key role in both informal social discourse and political discourses, significantly influencing the way we perceive and interpret reality.

Keywords: internet communication, cyberculture, meme, stereotype, stereotyping, myth, mythologem, mythologization, valuing, context, Russia, social discourse, political discourse, propaganda, collective consciousness.

Recenzja monografii Aleksandry Klimkiewicz, Żanny Śladkiewicz i Marcina Trendowicza *Kreowanie sensów w komunikacji internetowej: mem, stereotyp, mit*. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2025, 180 ss., ISBN: 978-83-8206-705-7

Streszczenie. Do zbadania problemu kreowania sensów w komunikacji internetowej zastosowano pojęcia jakimi są mem, stereotyp i mit, by następnie zgłębić ich wzajemne relacje oraz wpływ na świadomość zbiorową i język. Struktura pracy zbiorowej pozwala na systematyczne i wielostronne przedstawienie tematu, łącząc teoretyczne rozważania z praktycznymi przykładami aż po analizy i szczegółowe studium przypadków. Badanie ukazuje, jak memy, stereotypy i mity współuczestniczą w kształtowaniu zbiorowej świadomości oraz opinii publicznej. Stereotypy i mity, jako kognitywne podstawy memów, odgrywają kluczową rolę zarówno w nieformalnym dyskursie społecznym, jak i dyskursach politycz-

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ných w sposób znaczący wpływając na sposób, w jaki postrzegamy i interpretujemy rzeczywistość.

Słowa kluczowe: komunikacja internetowa, cyberkultura, mem, stereotyp, stereotypizacja, mit, mitologem, mitologizacja, wartościowanie, kontekst, Rosja, Rosjanie, dyskurs społeczny, dyskurs polityczny, propaganda, świadomość zbiorowa

Aleksandros Klimkiewicz, Zannos Śladkiewicz ir Marcino Trendowicz knygos „Prasmės kūrimas internetinėje komunikacijoje: memas, stereotipas, mitas“ recenzija (Gdanskas: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2025, 180 p., ISBN: 978-83-8206-705-7)

Santrauka. Monografijoje memo, stereotipo ir mito sąvokos buvo pasitelktos tiriant prasmės kūrimo problemą internetinėje komunikacijoje, taip pat jų ryšį ir įtaką kolektyvinei sąmonei ir kalbai. Darbo struktūra leidžia sistemingai ir įvairiapusiškai pristatyti temą, derinant teorinius svarstymus su praktinių pavyzdžių analize. Interneto memų, kurie yra pasipriešinimo politiniam tikrovės mitologizavimui kultūros rezultatas, korpuso analizė leidžia įvertinti mito vaidmenį formuojant viešąją nuomonę. Stereotipai ir mitai, kaip kognityviniai memų pagrindai, vaidina svarbų vaidmenį tiek neformaliame socialiniame disкурсе, tiek politiniame disкурсе, reikšmingai veikdami mūsų tikrovės suvokimą ir interpretavimą.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: internetinė komunikacija, kibernetinė kultūra, memas, stereotipas, stereotipizavimas, mitas, mitologema, mitologizacija, vertinimas, kontekstas, Rusija, socialinis diskursas, politinis diskursas, propaganda, kolektyvinė sąmonė



The book *Creating Meaning in Online Communication: Meme, Stereotype, Myth*, published in 2025 by the University of Gdansk Press, falls within the domain of linguistic pragmatics and addresses one of the key elements of contemporary online communication, notably, memes. As the authors rightly emphasize in the introduction, memes reflect cognitive and linguistic practices and based on stereotypes, myths, and images of heroes and antiheroes, shape socially significant perceptions. They play a crucial role in molding public opinion, modifying stereotypes, creating and disseminating political and cultural narratives. Therefore, the subject matter of the reviewed work must be considered highly relevant. Its authors Aleksandra Klimkiewicz, Żanna Śladkiewicz, and Marcin Trendowicz are respected linguists with a well-established body of work in media linguistics, cultural linguistics, communication pragmatics, and discourse studies. The goal of this publication is to explore the theoretical foundations of the concepts included

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in the title (meme, stereotype, myth) and to present, through analysis of selected internet memes, the characteristics of contemporary online communication, the communicative practices used in memes, and the mechanisms by which meanings are created and maintained through socially embedded stereotypes and myths. All of these goals have been fully realized by the authors.

The monograph comprises four chapters, the first of which is theoretical in nature, while the others are based on empirical analyses. Each chapter forms a separate study, united by the central theme of memes and their role in online communication. Chapter One, titled *The Meme in Contemporary Linguistic Research*, presents reflections on the nature of internet memes and attempts to define them as this effort has not yet yielded a unified definition. The chapter includes a description of the functional and semantic aspects of memes and their distinctive features, and notes the lack of consensus among researchers regarding meme classification. The second part of this chapter addresses the category of otherness in social consciousness and language, closely related to stereotypes as predefined thought patterns and perceptions of reality, as well as evaluation. The authors also examine the differences between the often-interchanged concepts of stereotype and myth, which form the foundation of memes, and discuss the close relationship between the meme and the mythologem.

Chapter Two, *Meme-Stereotypes: The Enemy and the Myth in Informal Social Discourse*, discusses research on Polish ethnic stereotypes about Russians. The perception of Russia and its people by Poles stems from a historically rooted image of Russia as an oppressor, invader, and aggressor, which is an image further reinforced by the war in Ukraine. The analysis of tags, naming acts, and memes shows that the modern image of Russia and the Russians is based on deep-rooted negative stereotypes which have been expanded with a commentary on the current political situation and reflect a social need to reinforce community through the dichotomy of ‘us’ vs. ‘them’. Noteworthy is the inclusion of material found in tags, which, as the authors point out, serve not only pragmatic, organizing, and classifying functions but also define or suggest ways of perceiving memes. Accordingly, they are justifiably treated as integral elements of the message, functioning alongside the verbal or semiotic layer.

Chapter Three, titled *Myth as a Tool for Creating Worldviews and Shaping Public Opinion: The Evolution of the Mythologem “Russia is Rising from its Knees” in Propaganda Media and Online Discourse*, is an intriguing study of the mythologem mentioned in its title. It highlights the close relationship between mythologizing the reality and the propagandistic efforts of authorities. The phrase “Russia is rising from its knees”, popularized in the early 1990s, has become a slogan for Russian Orthodox believers, patriots, and nationalists.

The metaphorical image of the country rising from its knees was frequently used by Vladimir Putin to construct his image as a caring leader. The analysis of meme material clearly shows the ‘desacralization’ of this mythology, which has become a subject of jokes and mockery in the online space.

Chapter Four, which is the final chapter, called *The Hero Myth: Stierlitz – from Novel Pages to the Internet*, is devoted to the evolution of the fictional character Max Otto von Stierlitz, a Soviet intelligence agent and part of the USSR’s political national myth. This legendary agent, originally from the novels written by the Soviet spy fiction author Yulian Semyonov, gained widespread popularity following the screen adaptation *Seventeen Moments of Spring*. Over time, numerous jokes about the mythical, indomitable hero emerged in the public discourse. With the rapid growth of online communication, these jokes have become the material for memes and inspired the creation of new units that reflect contemporary realia and comment on current events.

In conclusion, it must be emphasized that all analyses and interpretations in the individual chapters are of high quality, with the authors displaying full command of the subject matter. The issues of how memes influence public opinion and the highly persuasive nature of messages by using stereotypes and political myths are presented systematically and from multiple perspectives. Theoretical reflections are combined with in-depth analysis of rich empirical material. The selected literature is highly representative. The book fits excellently into contemporary discussions on communication in the digital space, cyberculture, and the function of myths and stereotypes in collective consciousness. It organizes and enriches existing knowledge and thus constitutes a valuable contribution to the development of linguistic subfields such as cultural linguistics, discourse studies, and communication pragmatics.

The reviewed monograph has been meticulously prepared and is characterized by clear, communicative language. I strongly recommend the monograph *Creating Meaning in Online Communication: Meme, Stereotype, Myth* by Aleksandra Klimkiewicz, Żanna Śladkiewicz, and Marcin Trendowicz. Its originality, reliability, and insightful analyses make it a significant point of reference for further research on online communication.