

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA

UNIVERSITY OF MOHAMED KHEIDER BISKRA

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



TITLE:

Using internet memes to enhance English as a Foreign Language learners' sociocultural
competence

The case of the third year English language students at Biskra University

A dissertation submitted in Partial Fulfilment for the requirements of the Master Degree in
Sciences of Language

Presented by: Debbab Aladdin

Supervised by Bechar Maamar

2020-2021

Dedication:

With my genuine appreciation, I would like to dedicate this work to:
To my parents who deserve special appreciation for raising me to be the person I am today.
For always believing in me and making me feel unique, despite the fact that I was never the
golden child they deserved. My father who believed in me and trusted me; my mother who
instilled in me the value of kindness.

Acknowledgements

In the name of Allah, the most merciful, the most beneficent. All praises and gratitude go to him for giving me strength, ability to undertake this research and complete it.

I would thank my supervisor 'Mr. Bachar Maamar' for coping with my project 'Thank you for your Hard Work'. I would also thank the board examiners for giving this piece of work some of their time. Since we are talking about teachers, I want to thank all of those who remember our names even when they are no longer teaching us 'that simple act encourages us and makes us feel that we meant something'.

My University family, with whom I spent more time than my family over the last four years. I am grateful for the time we spent together; I learned a lot and shared many memories with you. I would especially thank my best friends 'Jamal, Mohammed, Younes, Zee and Rania'. I would especially thank Djena Chafia Soualah for her continuous guidance. I'm thankful for the memes and the memories, God Bless and Godspeed.

A shoutout to the jury members who dedicated their valuable time to analyze this research paper.

Abstract

The present research work investigates the impact of Internet memes in enhancing English as a foreign language learners sociocultural competence and attempt to confirm the hypothesis that states that internet memes aid in the enhancement of sociocultural competence. The learners to be treated in this dissertation are third-year English language students at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra (sample= 30), accompanied by 28 English native speakers from both the United States of America and the United Kingdom. A handful of internet memes are used for this study. They have an educational (they serve as a window to the culture of those who created them) aspect. It is assumed that they help learners improve their communication skills and other skills, such as reading. The mixed-method approach is opted to conduct the study, and the data is collected through interview and a questionnaire. The data analysis shows a cause-effect relationship between the variables (Internet memes - Sociocultural Competence), indicating a direct impact of the independent 'Internet memes' variables on the dependent one, 'Sociocultural Competence.'

Key words: *Internet memes, Sociocultural competence, third year students, English language Biskra University.*

List of Abbreviations

ARPA: Advanced Research Projects Agency of the Department of Defense

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

EFL: English as Foreign Language

CC: Communicative Competence

FL: Foreign Language

HTML: Hypertext Markup Language

IP: Internet Protocol

L2: Second Language

LANs: Local Area Networks

TCP: Transmission Control Protocol

URL: Uniform Resource Locator

Wi-Fi: Wireless Fidelity

Gif: Graphics Interchange Format

List of Figures

Figure 1: A screengrab from the Numa Numa video

Figure 1.1: Leery Jenkins

Figure 1.2: Arow to the knee.

Figure 1.3: Rage Comics

Figure 1.4: Doge

Figure 1.5: 2017's Meme calendar

Figure 1.6: Reddit's main page

Figure 1.7: r/Memes subreddit

Figure 1.8: Discord Desktop application

Figure 1.9: The dual nature meme

Figure 1.10: The self-judgment meme

Figure 1.11: The Dual image meme

Figure 2: Frequency of using authentic memes by EFL learners.

Figure 2.1: BENEFITS OF SHARING NATIVE MEMES ON EFL LEARNERS

Figure 2.2: Students attitude towards implementing memes in EFL classes

Figure 2.3: Students thoughts on the statements that say memes offer an uncensored look onto the community that created it

Figure 2.4: EFL learners' reasons for creating and sharing memes

Figure 2.5: Native speakers reasons for creating

Figure 2.6: How memes affected EFL students

Figure 2.7: Differences between cultures of elf learners and natives

List of Tables

Table 1: Votes on memes being a fitting tool for EFL learners to practice cultural knowledge

Table of Contents:

Dedication.....II

Acknowledgments.....III

AbstractIV

List of AbbreviationsV

List of Figures.....VI

List of Tables.....VI

General introduction

Statement of the problem 1

Significance of the study.....2

Aims of the study3

Research Questions and Hypothesis3

Methodology4

Data Collection Methods4

Population and Sampling:5

Dissertation Structure:5

Limitations of the Study:6

Chapter One: Sociocultural Competence

Introduction.....	8
Communication Historical Review.....	9
The Concept of Communication.....	11
Communication and Culture.....	13
Intercultural Communication.....	14
Communicative Competence (CC).....	15
Sociocultural Competence.....	16
Sociocultural Competence Vs. Sociolinguistic Competence.....	17
Importance of Sociocultural Competence.....	18
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).....	18
Communicative Language Teaching Advantages (CLT):.....	19
Conclusion:.....	20

Chapter two: Internet Memes.

Introduction:.....	22
Internet & Memes Time Line:.....	23
Internet The beginning:.....	23
Internet Adoption and spread:.....	25
Memes:.....	26
Types of memes:.....	30

Meme Categories 31

Memes platforms: 32

Memes and mental health: 35

Conclusion: 38

Chapter Three:
Field work and discussion of the results

Introduction..... 39

Research Design..... 40

Observation 40

Interview 40

Questionnaire 40

Population and sample 41

Data Analysis 41

Data Analysis of the Observation 41

Data Analysis of the Interview..... 43

Data Analysis of the Questionnaire 44

Conclusion 54

Recommendation of the Study 55

General Conclusion..... 56

References..... 57

Appendices.....62

المخلص.....71

General introduction

The aim of learning a language is to communicate with others. This process requires the one communicating to have a basic level of communicative competence, which is divided into four levels: linguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, and sociolinguistic competence. The latter is relevant to this work.

A common hurdle English as a Foreign Language (EFL for short) face is their inability to communicate with foreigners effectively. This is due to their lack of awareness of the target language's social rules and cultural references.

Due to the amount of time EFL learners spend online, they are bound to be familiar with memes, as described, are part of the online culture; often jokes, presented through mediums such as combinations of image and text or GIF and text or just plain text, and spread virally through all internet-based channels, which change along the way. This paper will concentrate only on memes that are a combination of a certain image and a piece of written text; since they are the most common category, they are riddled with many references that require impressive knowledge to be fully understood. This paper will focus on how internet memes can be used to enhance EFL learner's sociolinguistic competency.

Statement of the problem

According to Enisa and Kenan (2015), sociolinguistic competence can be described as knowing and understanding how to communicate in the circumstances in which one is in. When EFL learners speak in their native language, to go into more depth, they do not have to worry about whom they are referring to or how they should say it. Usually, their words come quickly, and not all the nuances that go into the process are understood. Although they often do not think consciously of this method, it is an integral part of successful communication. However, a large number of EFL students at Biskra University fall short when it comes to having an

adequate sociocultural competence cause the instructional materials the learners had received did not reflect the use of English in international and local contexts. Situations that represent foreign communication would be those that learners are likely to experience, like asking for directions during a holiday abroad and exposing themselves to an exchange program at universities. An example of a local background will be to send the tourists directions.

As a consequence, students whose sociocultural competence is not yet up to speed especially at the level of social rules and cultural references may feel left behind and resort to other methods of improving their competence, the majority of student resorts to watching movies as means of improvement, whilst not entirely flawed movies, offer a stereotypical rendition of the foreign cultures, stereotypes which are bound to offend someone in this day and age. The rest of them may resort to another method, which is memes. Besides the references they include and the age group they typically target, memes have several features in their textual component, which are exceptionally fascinating from a linguistic point of view. Memes use vernacular words, phrases from different words, dialects, puns and punishing riddles, jargon, slang, shortenings, and neologisms, as well as patterned forms of spelling incorrect spelling and multiple, intentional or unintentional grammar and syntax mistakes. This paper will delve into the possibility of using memes to enhance learners' sociolinguistic competence.

Significance of the study:

The act of using internet memes for educational purposes is not that familiar in Algerian society. For them, this virtual world is nothing but a waste of resources, especially for parents. The urge to change this view led us to do this research. The fact that memes could be more beneficial in the educational area (which will be mentioned in detail and with examples in the upcoming chapter of the present research work) cannot be ignored. Since the world is being colonized by technology, there is no other option but to use this technology for good. What is

meant by that is to make use of students' affection and addiction towards technology and internet memes to serve their educational career.

Based on the fact that and since this research is about English proficiency, internet memes are expected to allow students to improve their communication skills. Since English, at first, is the language of these memes (although there are options to change the wording of these memes and translate them, we assume that an EFL student would choose English), learners should become familiar with its structures. Over time, their brain would instinctively understand and store more words and phrases that would later come out naturally depending on the situation they face in real life. This research paper aims to explain the relation between Internet Memes and communicative skills in a similar way. To our understanding, communication is not just the presentation of thoughts by speaking. Rather, it is the combination of communicative skills and comprehension with the intention of producing a coherent response and a detailed interpretation of the received message.

Aims of the study:

This research paper's main purpose is to show how memes could be used as a modern and active method to ensure a guaranteed outcome for achieving sociocultural competence. However, it was not only influenced by speaking skills but also by listening, reading, and writing. The research paper aimed to provide evidence of how the inclusion of the virtual world could alter the perspective of the educational environment in the eye of the learners (be it students or even aspiring researchers).

It also aimed to explain the optimistic side of Internet memes and culture to parents and how they can use the passions of their children to improve their relationships.

Research Questions

The presented research aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the learners' attitudes towards the implementation of internet memes in their courses?
2. Why do some learners have a higher level of communicative competence than their peers?
3. How do Internet memes develop Sociocultural competence?

Hypothesis

1. We assume if internet memes provide sufficient conditions for acquiring sociocultural competence that motivate the learners to learn the language

Methodology

A mixed-method approach is presumed to be the optimal option to meet the research's intended aims and objectives. A correlative analysis seems to meet the researcher's purposes behind this case study and to assess the hypotheses' reliability. The explanation behind this methodology's use is that it helps the researcher compile a variety of data collection methods to gather more information and an in-depth understanding of the findings.

Data Collection Methods

The study will undergo a triangulation data collection method using observation, an interview, and a questionnaire. Long-term observation of the population for a better understanding of the issue at hand is the first step. Next, an interview to get the student's motives behind their decisions. The students will be given a pilot questionnaire to make sure that the notes taken from the observations meet the researcher's interpretation. Finally, in order to provide a clear view of the uncertainty that prompted the study to start, a questionnaire for a selected sample.

Population and sampling

The study population will be the License Level students (L3) of the English department at the Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. The reason behind choosing this particular level is that they are at a point where they are improving their sociocultural competence. Furthermore, from using much of their online presence in Arabic to using just English, they are switching to a completely different social media setting. In addition, it is easy to gauge the contrast between the sociocultural competence of learners, which stands as a hook to investigate.

In this view, the sample to undertake the study will be chosen according to their Communicative skills and their experience with Internet memes. Later on, the scope will be narrowed to those who have experience in using, sharing, and creating memes.

Dissertation Structure

This research paper has one independent variable, which is Internet Memes, and one dependent variable, which is Sociocultural competence. The overall look of it is a general introduction, three chapters, a general conclusion, appendices, a list of references, and the students' questionnaire sample.

In accordance with its meaning and its connection to culture, the first chapter provides a historical examination of communication. Later on, it narrows the emphasis on verbal communication, then on sociocultural competence. It then explores the differences between sociocultural competence and sociolinguistic competence. Furthermore, it delves into CLT and its advantages

Next, the historical overview of internet memes is discussed in chapter two, then described by their various genres and styles. It also narrows the reach of talking about their relationship with cognition, education, teaching, and their relationship to learning advantages when used at schools. In general, the general introduction introduces what it is about, the

population, the methods of data collection, and the research constraints. The first chapter, entitled ‘Sociocultural competence,’ follows the introduction. It talks about the history of communication, the meaning of skills, teaching communicative competence, and the barriers to speaking and teaching it.

Besides, ‘Internet Memes’ is the title of the second chapter, in which a timeline of the term is the opening. The chapter discusses the various genres of internet memes, their forms, the focus of each category, and the relationship between memes and culture.

The third chapter, entitled ‘Fieldwork,’ also includes the notes, interpretation, and findings of the data obtained through a thorough description of the Internet memes.

Finally, a general conclusion provides an overview of the work and recommendations for more examples, plus the sample questionnaire used.

Limitations of the Study

We’ve switched from plan A to plan B in our field operations as the world rallies together in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic and to mitigate the virus’s spread. The former refers to the originally planned study, which was an experiment involving Internet memes, and the latter refers to the descriptive study.

Plan A

The first step in conducting this study was to convince the university administration to grant us access to the language labs and allow us to conduct the experiment under supervision. Due to the spread of the COVID-19, all educational institutions were shut down before we could do so.

Plan B

Because the experiment was unable to be carried out, the researcher switched to a strategy that has previously been used in studies addressing the same issue with the same tool.

While the observation and interview remain unchanged, the sample size is lowered, and a questionnaire is included in place of the experiment.

Chapter One: Sociocultural Competence

Introduction

Without question, communication is one of the most valuable skills human beings require in their everyday lives. Communicating involves being able to send and receive a message from two or more communicators and understand it. It was possible to relay the message in various ways and not just by speaking. Oral Communication, however, is typically the form that is used. Individuals who learn a foreign language placed 'achieving fluency in speaking capacity' at the top of their list of objectives because they need to learn how to communicate orally in front of the target language natives. Therefore, in this chapter, we will discuss the term 'Communication' and provide its history with a detailed description. Then, narrow the scope to a scientific (linguistic) view to learn about it. In other words, this work will concentrate on 'Communicative Competence' and 'Social Cultural Competence.'

Communication Historical Review

Communication existed, however, long humanity. From times of old to an advanced age, this interaction has had a striking development. In the first place, Caveman used to assemble around a fire to examine their everyday exercises; that sort of communication was not satisfactory to be named until they, out of nowhere, chose to take note of their insight by drawing on cave walls. After they began moving out of their caverns to live in different spots, they understood that they need to convey when they are away. This need made them use smoke signals. Smoke signals began first in North America and Ancient China as a notice for moving toward risk like assaults from different clans; however, it implied another pope's statement for the Vatican (TLE,2016).

Besides, pigeons and people (these days, mailmen) were utilized by Persian, Romans, and Mughal's rulers for further communication. After some time, human couriers were advanced by riding a horse to make the interaction quicker, and they called that method of communicating messages, sends, and bundles' *Pony Express*'. In the late nineteenth

century, the marine made '*Semaphore Flag*' Communication. Data, alerts, and directions were sent through this strategy by hand banner developments in a good way. Each hand development demonstrated an image to be decoded as a snippet of data. Just after, the Telegraph came to a presence. It was a success away from smoke signals and semaphore banners as it made it a quicker method of conveyance, yet it didn't keep going insofar as anticipated. In 2003, the US quit utilizing the Telegraph first, trailed by India in 2013 (LTE,2016).

Modern Means of communication

While individuals were occupied with zeroing in on the Telegraph, Graham Bell, in 1876, was eager to discover a smidgen of exact proof to take care of his interest. His zeal made him notice that sound vibrations could arrive at the intersection stay with a similar pitch. Depending upon how human communication is a mix of sound vibrations, he needed to concoct something that moves these sounds through a wire. After some path and blunders, his hypothesis brought forth 'Phone.' In those days, occupants did not give much consideration to this innovation as earning enough to pay the rent was hard. The phone bills cost 72\$ while everyday costs cost 60\$, so individuals would not like to squander cash on an incredibly superfluous gadget.

The following century brought an entirely different type of correspondence; it was the '*Radio*.' In expansion to broadcasting that began in 1914, Radio was a means of Entertainment. American people cherished dancing, so they utilized it to play tunes and dance from the start. After six years, Commerce was included as one more theme on the Radio, and around 2,000,000 houses possessed it by 1925. Nonetheless, this apparatus was not viewed as famous yet until the father of FM broadcast '*Edward Armstrong*' made '*Frequency Modulated Radios*' in 1933. going back to telephones, the general public required this gadget to be portable. As &1the need is the mother of invention, DR. Martin

Cooper created *'Portable Handset'* in 1973, and after four years, it turned into the country's discussion. With the assistance of Cell-telephones, individuals could communicate with their dearest ones without the utilization of any actual strength. This component made them addictive, and the degree of stress was on the ascent. Clients' requests developed more when they needed to have the option to see the individual they are conversing with through that gadget. Here came the internet alongside online media and web journals in 1997; however, it existed before that in 1967 for military administrations. The webspace became more extensive to contain specializing, publicizing, data gathering, and a path for youths to acquire prominence, individual and expert connections through publishing content to a blog.

We have covered the history of communication as a collective practice so far. Researchers researched this interesting incident from various angles as a topic of study. It was studied from the point of view of psychology, sociology, neurology, and even linguistics.

The Concept of Communication

The word Communication comes from the Latin word 'Communication,' meaning share or makes familiar (John, 1999, as mentioned in unknown, 2005, p.4), which implies that communicating is to share a piece of information or thought and built a shared understanding between the speakers about it. However, the task of defining this process is not easy. From the exact shape of communication that we know as speaking or writing to the implicit side, which is the brain's whole process, numerous books and articles were created.

In light of this, Dr. Gorden (2009, p.13) contended that it very well may be characterized through three stages, beginning from the most straightforward to the convoluted one. At first, he considered communication to be a tool to share data. At that

point, it is giving and accepting messages. Finally, it is moving data between two individuals or more. At first look, we may imagine that those definitions are not extraordinary; they pass on a similar significance, yet, that is not obvious. On the off chance that we look all the more carefully at it, the definitions given by Dr. Gordon begin from the broadest to the tightest. The first methodology is sharing data without the attention to the data's idea or the mean how it could be shared. From that point onward, he indicated the definition to imply that it does not just go; however, it proceeds to return; all in all, this cycle is a two different trip. In the last definition, we reason that this two-way communication is identified with individuals.

Besides, in supporting the first idea that communication is a sharing of common sense, Fred (2010) explained that if the two parts involved did not come to an expected result, it could not be considered communication (pp. 1-2). He continued by breaking down its process in which he said that it begins with a sender, who has a desire to transmit a thought or a feeling, and ends with the receiver, who is expected to respond later on. At first, the sender encodes by words, gestures, or symbols a message that can be verbal, non-verbal, or a written language. Then, this message is transmitted via phone, e-mail, or even face-to-face; in other words, a channel. Finally, the receiver receives the idea and decodes it, then gives feedback according to which the sender knows if his message was interpreted correctly.

Again, if nothing (meaning noise like emotions, language barriers) interrupts the communication process flow, it is considered effective communication. In the same vein, Nick Sanchez added that the sender usually assures that the receiver completely understands the intended meaning from his message if there is no negative impact on the process (p.1). Some of the barriers he mentioned were incorrect grammar, inappropriate medium, inflammatory words, and technical jargon.

In brief, quoting *communication is a simple process from the editorial staff, yet showing complexity in some aspects. Different ways of communication and the distances over which one is required to transfer the information make the process complicated'* (2019, p.1)

If we demonstrate that these are different terms, we can take the procedures, but the outcomes cannot be assured. The concept's interpretation is affected by other variables, and the cultural context is one of the significant variables.

Communication and culture

Before delving into the correlation between communication and culture, it better to examine the term 'culture' than use it in communication. The word culture originates from the ancient Latin word 'Cultura,' which means to develop or expand on; this term had been characterized distinctively due to the variety of hypotheses to comprehend human life and encounters. Consequently, a recurrent definition of culture is that it alludes to the common qualities, practices, and convictions among a gathering of individuals. It additionally can be encapsulated in their music, writing, and craftsmanship, which in this stream is lined up with human progress (Fawzia, 2008, p.47)

If we are to remember civilization in the definition of culture, we would be talking about social status and how these convictions and qualities are communicated to future generations. However, we are worried about its effect in transmitting an individual's language use which is a similar picture that connects to how a community is constructed. Sanchez, while clarifying the connection between culture and language, expressed that

Infants learn a language for the purpose of functioning in a particular cultural and language community-that is, language allows us to be able to communicate in a culturally appropriate manner within a specific linguistic community. It is the cultural community, including the family and other members, who identify the key concepts and categories that; are important to consider and pass them on across generations

(Sanchez, 1999 as mentioned in Fawzia, 2008, p.48)

To express it in other terms, the way a culture behaves involves the social expectations they were raised upon. Having the same cultural values, people adapt a particular manner of communicating transmitted through the next generations.

Furthermore, the relationship between culture and communication is intimate and old in history. There would not be a culture if there were no communication at first. For starters, if the primitives did not find a way to interact and pass along their culture by symbols and drawings, we would not know about their experience nowadays. If they did not have a culture or something they wanted to transmit in the same vein, they would not have communicated.

Intercultural Communication

Communicating within the same community is a natural, error-free mechanism (one cannot commit an error in his mother tongue as speaking the language fluently is a given). Still, it can be catastrophic if we try to cross-culture interact. In other words, we are to face challenges when interacting with people with a diverse cultural context.

Intercultural is a hybrid of the prefix 'inter' representing 'Between' and 'culture,' but it relates to the cross-cultural connections. According to the Study.com website, intercultural contact is the phenomenon explaining how two or more cultures interact. The website stated that it encourages constructive and fruitful contact; the individuals communicating seek to develop their communication skills about the foreign language (FL). However, this should not mean that either of the communicators should leave their society and beliefs to follow the others since they are merely communicating to use an FL.

Intercultural communication research allows us to venture outside of our comfort zones and develop greater self-awareness, which means we gain a deeper understanding of our own culture when learning about others'. On the other hand, it will help us better comprehend the

changing environment, economies, and technology. It's like looking at the same image from a different perspective or lens when we looked at variations in other cultures and adapted them when seeking to better ourselves. However, in addition to solid language skills, recognizing and respecting differences in other cultures is not the only prerequisite for intercultural communication. It necessitates a different set of abilities, including 'A Starting Point of Communication, Knowledge for Intercultural Communication, Application of Knowledge, and An Understanding of Differences.' First, effective intercultural communication necessitates knowledge and skills to avoid misunderstandings among international communicators.

First, knowledge and skills are needed for effective intercultural communication to avoid misunderstandings between international communicators. After that, gather data from different aspects of society, such as behavioral norms, language use, and way of life. It's time to bring our newly gained skills to good use. It is preferable to adjust to the other culture's culture by studying their language, apologizing for errors, and ensuring that we understood and understood. Finally, intercultural consciousness denotes a recognition that people are not always bound by their faith, implying that we must go beyond halfway.

'If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart' (Nelson Mandela)

To put it another way, if we wish our words to be wholly heard by the other person, we should learn their language to pay more heed to what we are saying.

Communicative Competence (CC).

A person is likely to be required to communicate in a second language at some stage in their life. The situations differ, but the topic remains the same: a second language learner (SLL) must perform a simple conversation. CC is a term used in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) that is said to have originated with Chomsky in the 1960s when he differentiated between

“performance” and “competence.” Although the majority of linguistics research performed on this subject refers to Hymes, who objected to Chomsky’s point of view because he only concentrated on the grammatical side to explain CC, the majority of the linguistics research done on this topic refers to Chomsky’s point of view because he only focused on the grammatical side to describe CC (Hymes, 1972, p.280 as mentioned in Lynn, 2014, p.3)

According to Hymes, being able to construct a grammatically correct sentence does not always imply that the intended message is encoded in the same way by the second language speaker (L2) and decoded in the same way by the native language speaker (L1) (Lynn, p.3). He called Communicative Interference (CI) to be made up of syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and even social aspects (register, dialect, rank, etc.). To summarize the concept of CC, we may conclude that it is the ability to communicate and use the language fluently while culturally and socially accomplishing tasks through extended interactions. (Lynn, p.6. 2014).

‘Communicative Competence’ involves not only knowing the language code but also knowing what to say to whom and how to say it in any given situation. It is relevant to Hymes’ (1972) description that learning the language alone will not help you have a good conversation; you must also have a thorough understanding and consideration of the targeted community’s culture and social appropriateness and rank.

To recap, the meanings differ, but the essence remains the same. CC is dependent on the user’s skills and abilities as well as their language knowledge.

Sociocultural Competence.

Canale states that “utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts depending on contextual factors such as participants’ status, purposes of the interaction, and norms or conventions of interaction. Appropriateness of utterance refers to both appropriateness of meaning and appropriateness of form”. Particular communicative functions, such as invitation, requesting assistance, expressing sorrow, and behaviors, such as

politeness, can be viewed as more or less acceptable depending on the circumstance or community. To put it another way, what is considered respectful in one country can be regarded as impolite in another. The latter is concerned with what is acceptable in a specific case. For example, in one culture, starting a formal conversation with the question “How are you?” may be adequate, while it may seem too personal in another.

Sociocultural competence Vs. Sociolinguistic competence.

Learners often find the closeness of sociocultural competence and sociolinguistic competence somewhat confusing, so to oversimplify what has been previously mentioned, Sociocultural competence involves the ability to use general details about a nation, as well as knowledge of speech etiquette and communication technologies, to reach a mutual understanding with other culture bearers.

Cultural studies, which provide an accurate image of the country’s sociocultural portrait of the target language, including historical and cultural awareness, values, and people’s lifestyles, are the foundation for sociocultural competence. This implies that learning a foreign language as a means of intercultural communication is linked to knowledge of the world and national culture, individual-society interaction, and the interaction of different society members with one another.

Although sociolinguistic competence is recognized as an essential aspect of L2 learners’ competency, it is a challenging definition to understand, describe, and teach. Indeed, this competency necessitates the acquisition of sociocultural values that define a community’s standards of proper conduct and language usage, which is challenging to teach in a classroom (Hinkel, 2001). Language instructors’ curriculum lacks suggestions and methods for fostering that competence’s growth, aside from suggesting prolonged and frequent communication with native speakers.

Importance of sociocultural competence

In an increasingly globalized world, where we are more likely to communicate with people from various cultures and countries that have been influenced by different values, views, and experiences, intercultural competence is a valuable asset to have for the reason that it encourages the acknowledgment and acceptance of differences in appearance, behavior, and culture, to put it in other words cultural competence is the ability to communicate and serve people in an appropriate manner, ensuring that the individual receives the level of respect and dignity they deserve.

It is important because there is a disparity in cultures when communicating with different people with different cultural backgrounds, and the only way to reduce such disparities is through achieving cultural competence, which opens the way to communicating with new groups of people that the learner or employee was not familiar with to attain as much benefit from the communication as possible.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The CLT approach focuses on teaching students how to use the four skills appropriately in real-life situations rather than teaching them the four skills themselves.

In the early 1990s, this approach was introduced to China, and its key characteristics were student-centeredness, independence, and pair/group function. According to Jin (2007), CLT is a student-centered approach in which the instructor encourages students to engage actively in class. Furthermore, s/he can help them be self-reliant, as they would not have their input when faced with a real-life situation. Finally, making the students work in pairs or classes allows them to understand better how the language operates. Adapting CLT in China faced some challenges, despite the favorable climate. For example, the method was not supported by the class size.

Returning to the concept of CLT, Patel (2008) agrees with Jin, claiming that it not only improves grammatical competence but also improves learners' comprehension of what to say, how to say it, when to say it, and where to say it (p. 94 as cited in Andhika, 2015, p.5). In reality, this approach has reinvigorated many researchers' interests; it has been defined throughout decades, but it has a common denominator: 'knowing how to use the language correctly.' For instance, consider the following definition:

'Communication Language Teaching makes use of real-life situations that necessitate Communication. The teacher sets up a situation that students are likely to encounter in real life.'(Venkat, 2015, p.22)

Communicative language teaching advantages (CLT):

The benefits of this approach will most likely be derived from the definitions provided by researchers. We may argue that it encourages students to study language as a means of communication and assist them in determining what is necessary to communicate in a given situation.

Venkat (2015, p.24) set up a list of the advantages we can mention:

- The teacher is a monitor.
- Because learning is active and student-oriented, learners design their learning plans.
- CLT puts more attention on learners' needs.
- Learners tend to be more motivated when CLT is used, as they are the ones who participate the most in the learning process.
- Grammar is learned through context.
- Greetings, asking for directions, self-introduction, voicing likes and dislikes, and enquiring about hobbies and interests are standard language functions covered by CLT.

The list could go on and on, which is a positive sign that CLT is an effective and fruitful technique. In a similar vein, the importance of teachers is not dismissed in this approach. It is also essential for the facilitator to correct and observe the learners' language comprehension and use.

Conclusion:

To put it another way, being able to convey our emotions and thoughts through words is a different kind of pleasure. It would only satisfy us if we could communicate the concept precisely as we see it in our heads, and not being able to do so is frustrating. As a result, teachers' primary emphasis is on teaching communication (communicative competence). They use a variety of materials to accomplish this purpose because they want their students to be able to express themselves freely. Speaking in a foreign language is not difficult, but it does require a lot of effort and practice.

Chapter two: Internet Memes.

Introduction:

This chapter will discuss the term internet & memes and how they influence the language learning process. Together we will discover how can these outside-the-classroom activities be a valuable and productive method to develop communicative competence, especially Sociocultural competence. Back in the day, the internet and memes were seen as a waste of time and a means to create a sense of toxicity for those who use them; in contrast, the internet has shown that this digital world holds more benefits than it seems. Henceforth, we opt to prove that such tools are of noticeable help for English language learners. It provides them with a native-like environment where they can practice communicating with natives to grasp the meaning behind their creations. This chapter will start with an overview of the internet and memes and how they developed through the years. Then, we will provide certain memes as examples and explain how they will help when used correctly. Finally, we will conclude with the suitable application that members use to communicate with their native peers actively.

Internet & Memes Time Line:**Internet The beginning:**

The internet has become an integral part of everyday life, closely tied to daily activities and routines. Nevertheless, it was not always like this; the internet's history began somewhere. The rapid and dramatic development of the internet will help understand the evolving nature of technology and communications, from primary computer networks to global interconnectivity and instantaneous wireless communications.

The 1960s:

The internet as it is currently known did not emerge until much later, but the history of the internet begins in 1962. J.C.R. Licklider, an MIT computer scientist, proposes the concept of a global computer network in 1962. Later, he discusses his theory with friends in the United States. Advanced Research Projects Agency of the Department of Defense (ARPA). Work on packet-switching theory by Leonard Kleinrock, Thomas Merrill, and Lawrence G. Roberts paved the way for the world's first wide-area computer network. Later, Roberts publishes a blueprint for the ARPANET, an ARPA-funded computer network launched in 1969. The ARPANET expands over the next few years.

The 1970s:

Robert Kahn and Vinton Cerf collaborated in 1973 to create a protocol for connecting multiple networks. This later evolves into the Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP). This technology combines several networks so that if one goes down, the others do not. While working at Xerox, Robert Metcalfe introduces a cable-based infrastructure that allows more data to be transferred over a network. This machine is called Alto Aloha, but it is later dubbed Ethernet. Ted Nelson suggests using hypertext to organize network information over the next several years, and Unix becomes mainstream for TCP/IP networks.

The 1980s:

University of Delaware's Dave Farber introduces a proposal to create a low-cost network using dial-up phone lines. The PhoneNet system is founded in 1982 and is linked to ARPANET and Telenet, the first commercial network. This increases internet connectivity and allows for email contact between countries around the world. In 1981, Metcalfe's company 3Com launched Ethernet devices for computer workstations and personal computers, allowing local area networks to be established (LANs). The Domain Name System, created by Paul

Mockapetris, Jon Postel, and Craig Partridge, uses domain names to handle the growing number of internet users.

The 1990s:

ARPANET is decommissioned in 1990. The World Wide Web is born when Tim Berners-Lee and his colleagues at CERN create the hypertext markup language (HTML) and the uniform resource locator (URL). 1995 is a landmark year for the Internet: Microsoft releases Windows 95, Amazon, Yahoo, and eBay all launch, Internet Explorer is released, Java is developed, allowing for website animation and igniting a new flurry of internet activity. To curb the growing amount of objectionable content on the Internet, Congress passed the Communications Decency Act in 1996. A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace, written by John Perry Barlow, was issued to combat that Google was founded in 1998. In 1999, the music and video piracy controversy intensified with the launch of Napster. The first internet virus capable of copying and transmitting itself to a user's address book is discovered in 1999.

The 2000s:

The dot-com bubble rises and then bursts in the year 2000. As a plethora of internet-based companies become commonplace, the Dow Jones industrial average experiences the most significant one-day decline in history. The majority of publicly traded dot-com firms had vanished by 2001. However, it is not just bad news: Google's meteoric rise to dominance in the search engine industry in the 2000s. This decade also sees the rise and spread of Wi-Fi (wireless internet communication) and handheld internet devices like smartphones and the first-ever internet cat video in 2005.

Internet Adoption and spread:

The majority of people associate the early years of the internet with the 1990s. However, this was the period that the internet became broadly used, not when it was invented. The internet had already been in existence since the 1950s. However, it was just a skeleton of what it would ultimately become. The development of the internet, coupled with the launch of TCP/IP (Transmission Control Protocol and Internet Protocol), meant that the technology was on the verge of becoming mainstream by the middle of the 1980s. However, massive teamwork was needed to ensure that all of the parties involved in developing the internet were on the same page and working toward the same end.

Memes

To better understand memes, we must venture back in time to before the world wide web. In 1967 Evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins coined the term Meme in a novel of his about evolutionary genetics. The word Meme is modeled after the word gene (gene + mimeme ancient Greek word for imitated thing). In his argument, Dawkins said that memes represent cultural ideas that spread throughout generations just as genes do; for instance, black hair can pass from parent to child, so does cultural information. Dawkins added that these cultural ideas replicate in an imitating fashion seeing that humans have a strong desire to belong, and arguably one of the better ways to do that is to do what everyone else is doing; thus, humans imitate to belong. Going back further in time shows us that other cultural ideas like the controlled use of fire and development of language are memes spread throughout cultures and repurposed for their unique specific uses. Although memes have drastically evolved, they still follow the same general format, so creating a successful meme now is a much more complex task because it requires :

- More time

- Thorough knowledge of current events
- A form of computer literacy

All these elements fuse to help in the creation of a meme, despite that knowledge of what is happening both on the internet and current events that occur in real life are a requirement if one seeks to understand memes better; for example, traditional schooling requires learners to study classical works of art be it novels, stories or even movies because they transcend their form to appear in other forms of entertainment or normal conversation for the reason that they make people cultured, knowledge of the internet memes functions the same way, especially amongst younger generations, these memes can be classified into three eras:

Pre 2010 Era:

Memes of that era were considered innocent and silly by internet users; they mainly consisted of viral images and videos spread between local friend groups and their families. Memes pre 2010 were more personalized; this is due to the fact that social media sites were still in their infancy; for example, Twitter was only launched in 2006 and Youtube a year prior to that. This era was characterized by memes such as Numa Numa and Leeroy Jenkins.



Figure 1 : a screengrab from the Numa Numa video.



Figure 1.1: Leery Jenkins.

Creation Era 2010-2014

It was around that time when memes started to make a substantial presence on the internet and form their own identity, humor transformed from being inside jokes to punch lines forever associated with iconic images this of it self defined what memes are for more and more people, this era of memes added what the latter lacked, user creativity. Memes took a creative turn, and people started putting their spin on things; In contrast, the early era of memes consisted of viral images shared between friends this era took it a step further to add a dozen variation of a single meme, memes such as Arrow to the knee, Rage comics and many more were the highlight of that period.



Figure 1.2: Arow to the knee.

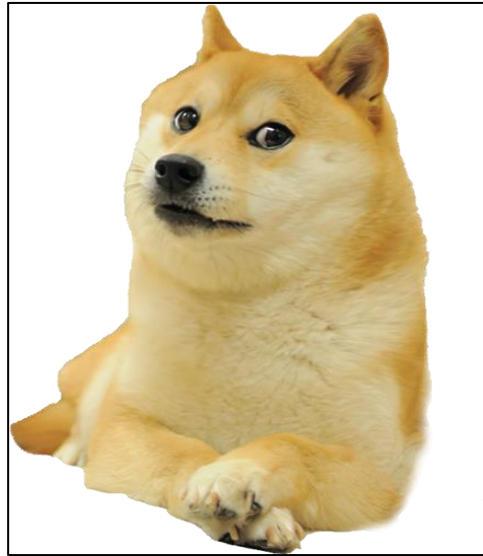


Figure 1.4: Doge

Kabosu, a Shiba Inu, is better known as “Doge,” / doudʒ/ had one of the most perplexing yet impactful journeys through meme culture in the 2010s. Her evident smirk (and overall charm) helped popularize her renowned “much wow” series of comic sans-heavy image macros. Nevertheless, then something strange happened in 2017. Doge was reintroduced to the meme-sphere in satirical edits that put the character in more ludicrous scenarios. It is not rare for an old meme to resurface in sarcastic modifications after its peak of popularity. However, most resurgences are utilized for cringe humor, mocking a meme that was previously popular. With Doge, however, this was not the case. Doge became more adaptable and, surprisingly, more amusing than before (Matt, n.d.).



Figure 1.5: 2017's Meme calendar

In his article, (Adam 2016) describes calendars as altered calendar images in which each month is represented with a relevant meme at the time. They are widespread in meme communities, where they have been discussed.

Types of memes:

The concept of the internet meme is not entirely new; memes as we know them date back to the early days of the World Wide Web. Back then, memes were much more straightforward in presentation and delivery, basically a comic without a formal outlet like a journal or a newspaper.

Image macros are considered to be the first type of memes to take the internet by a storm; almost all memes of that era were compromised of an image to serve as a background in addition to a witty or quirky relatable text, more modern editions of modern memes moved from putting the caption above or under the image, contemporary meme-makers impose the caption right on top of the image,

Relatable memes are much similar to image macros, some consider them a subgenre, but with a slight twist, relatable memes serve to describe a situation with a perfect reaction image that makes whoever is on the receiving end of it relate to it on a spiritual level; hence the name relatable memes, websites such as Twitter and Instagram were flooded by these memes because they were accessible to almost every user and it was about how relatable can a person get

Meme Categories:

The nature of the current internet landscape has made it a requirement for memes to be categorized in a set of divisions to ensure they reach a broader audience and survive the longest, leading to its evolution.

1) Relatability

The driving force behind relatable memes is the human will to belong and the desire to relate to someone else; Mackenzie Finklea further explains this notion in her talk (TEDx Talks, 2019), saying that the human desire to belong pushes them to jump off of a metaphorical bridge if everyone else has already jumped.

2) Obscurity

Internet humor has evolved to the point where internet users find humor only borderline insane; this is attributed to a phenomenon called Post-irony; according to Urban dictionary Post-irony is “When one’s ironic appreciation of something becomes genuine, usually due to either prolonged exposure or the enjoyment derived from how amusingly terrible it is.” Memes have become so out of context that the whackier a meme is, the funnier it is. The bottom line is that people are laughing at how low their humor has become.

3) Mockery and Parody

Mockery and Parody have always been the backbones of internet humor; according to Cambridge Online Dictionary, the word mockery meant to laugh at someone often by copying them in a funny but unkind manner. In contrast, parodies, however, are defined as writing, music, art, speech that intentionally copies the style of someone famous or copies a particular situation, making the features or qualities of the original more noticeable in a humorous way. Memes can creatively mock and parody events, communities, or individuals; these memes range from being clever and witty to surreal and bizarre.

Meme's platforms

The internet is a vast space. It is often challenging to find a healthy community that revolved around one specific interest; for this reason, entire social media websites were created to create or find a niche community, such as Reddit Discord.

1- Reddit:

Reddit is a social news aggregation website that ranks items using a user-vote-based scoring system. Its users are known as “Redditors,” and they are part of “one of the most important communities on the Internet,” according to a Voltier article. The website has been a key in the spread and creation of Internet memes. It consists of hundreds of communities; they are called ‘subreddits.’ Currently, there are over 138,000 active communities as of July 2018. Each subreddit has moderators to keep order and filter out any offensive posts that could offend the users; r/memes is one of the oldest running subreddits on Reddit; it was created on the 5th of July 2008. The subreddit has over 15 million users, with over 50 thousand of them active at any given time.

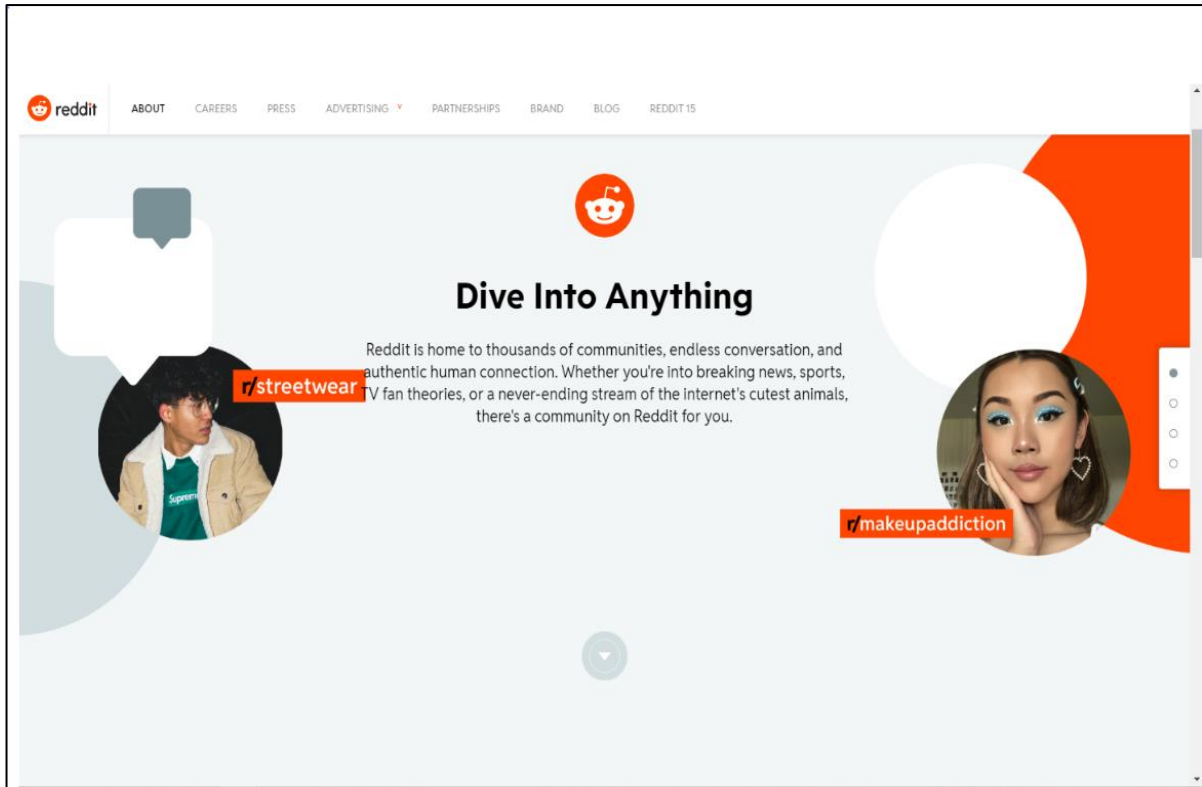


Figure 1.6: Reddit’s main page

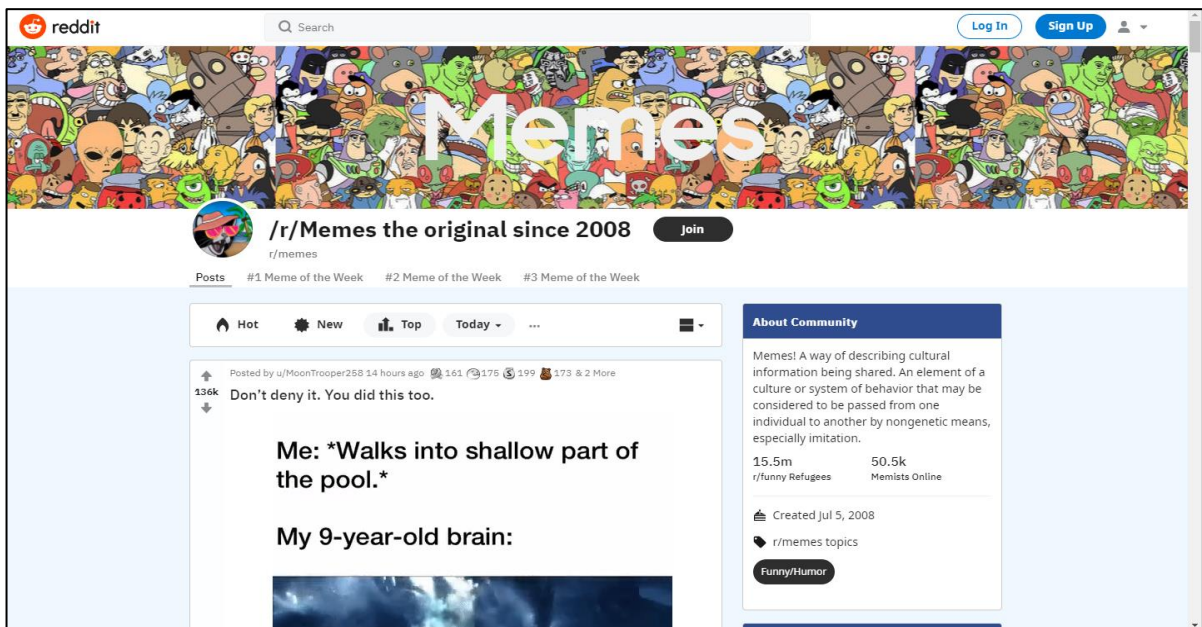


Figure 1.7: r/Memes subreddit

2- Discord:

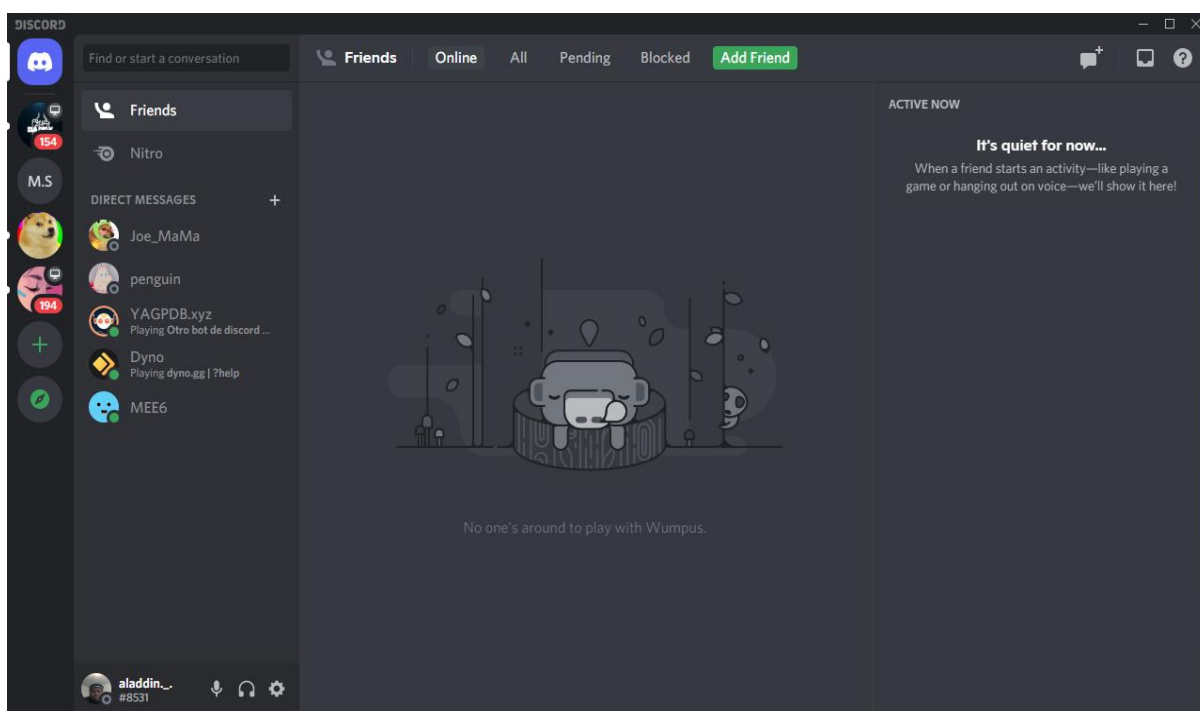


Figure 1.8: Discord Desktop application

It is a well-known chatting service, similar to Skype, Facebook, and other comparable messaging apps. It is a platform where people can meet others who share their interests and discuss them. Users on Discord join in a community known as ‘Server.’ A server is created to address a particular topic, such as memes, and is separated into channels linked to the overall theme. Those channels could be used to share photos, movies, or converse.

According to Discord’s website (*Discord / Your Place to Talk and Hang Out*, n.d.), it is a place:

where you can belong to a school club, a gaming group, or a worldwide art community. Where you and a handful of friends can spend time together. A place that makes it easy to talk every day and hang out more often.

Memes and mental health:

As the meme culture evolves, it becomes clear that the majority of memes focus on mental health issues. These memes are rather popular because many people can empathize with them. Memes about mental illness are used to mask symptoms and act as a coping mechanism for users. They share their everyday challenges and symptoms with others on the internet by laughing and joking about memes; depressed or nervous persons utilize social media to alleviate their symptoms because they may have difficulty interacting with individuals face-to-face.

Kariko & Anasih (2019) state that memes deal with the belief that humans have multiple “selves” and that these memes fall into three categories: The dual nature, Self-judgment, and The dual image. These internet memes are related to the postmodern psychology theory. The two selves can communicate and be utterly distinct from one another. The first category is The dual image, and a prime example of this category is ‘the evil Kermit’ as the individual (written as ‘me’) is impacted by the other “self” (written as ‘me to me,’ the Meme acknowledges the presence of the other “self.” This wicked Kermit meme takes the form of a text that consists of a dialogue between the person and the other “self,” in which the other “self” affects the individual. A picture of two Kermit characters accompanies the text. When confronted with a scenario, the other “self” motivates the person to do the improper action. This Meme acknowledges that humans have numerous personas, one of which is their immoral side, which is a part of their general nature.

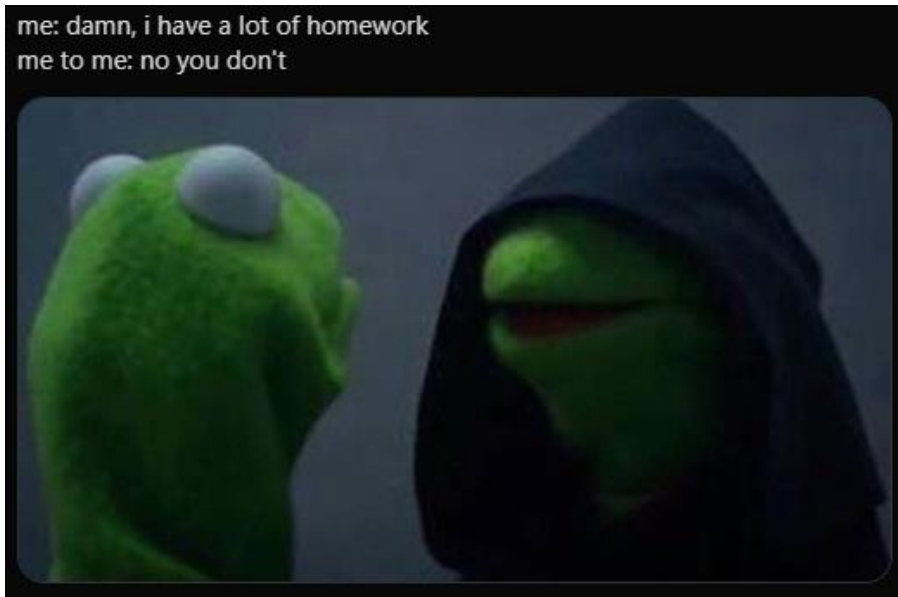


Figure 1.9: The dual nature meme

The self-judgment Meme falls under the second type. This Meme depicts the other person’s “self” judging one’s self. Figure 12 depicts the original Meme.



when u set 20 alarms in the morning and sleep through all of them and are late to everything

Figure 1.10: The self-judgment meme

my two moods



Figure 1.11: The Dual image meme

The Meme copy consists of a comparison between two images of one person in a different timeline. Identical with the dual nature meme, the dual image meme presents the other “self” with the same physique. However, the other “self” is dressed differently than the person and in a physical form instead of a reflection. What differentiates the dual image meme and the dual nature meme is the timeline. In the dual image meme, the other “self” exists in a different timeline.

Conclusion:

To conclude this chapter, we ought to say that meme usage exceeded the language learning area to become a tool to facilitate the cultural exchange process in general. As we mentioned in the written above, there is a noticeable rise in the number of shared memes. Away from the negative side of this mean, its positive side is growing wider. Scientists and researchers are getting more and more interested in the sociolinguistic side of memes due to the results they noticed with the few tests they performed using memes as a variable. The future of the internet memes field will notice enormous success and growth. They will no longer be a

tool to entertain oneself and an active process that will help develop new treatments for psychological diseases.

Chapter Three:
Fieldwork and discussion of the results

Introduction:

This chapter focuses on the practical aspects of research. It examines students' responses to a questionnaire regarding the usage of Internet memes to improve sociocultural competence. It also explains how the population was selected, the data collection instruments employed, and the methods utilized to support or refute the hypothesis presented at the start of the study.

Research Design

We used a correlative strategy in order to get a complete picture of the study at hand. Because the variety of data gathering methods offers the researcher a comprehensive set of possibilities, the study is constructed based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. A triangulation data collection method was used where we started by observing the population's online presence and then narrowed the population to a sample to be interviewed and answer a questionnaire.

Observation

We monitored third-year English students at Mohamed Khider University during their online activities on Facebook and Discord servers. We did not only observe but also intervened on occasion in order to better grasp the distinctions between the learners (interests, meme styles). The study focused on learners' communication skills and how they engage with native English speakers online. We were able to select a sample to work with after three weeks of observation.

Interview

The observation revealed that some students are very engaged and productive when participating in online activities, while others are not. We interviewed the students based on the observation findings to learn why there is such a disparity in interaction. However, they are from the same cultural sphere.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire is designed to suit students involved with internet memes and investigate whether memes directly impact the learners.

Population and sample

This study targets Third-year LMD English students at the University of Mohamed Khider. The reason behind choosing this exact population is that they are aware that the concepts of communicative competence (improving SCC in our case) will be detected why we chose this specific population. Because they have worked with memes and communicated with natives before, as a result, they are believed to be an excellent fit for our research.

The sample, on the other hand, was chosen after the observation was held. We, at first, selected the students who showed an interest in internet memes and in communicating with natives. As we expected, most active students were experienced memers and had communicated or are still communicating with native English speakers. Then, we narrowed our sample to only students who share native memes only, which made the sample size 30 students regardless of sex and age. In addition, 28 native speakers from the United Kingdom and America volunteered to answer a questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The final answer to whether the procedures used to perform this research covered the hypotheses is determined by analyzing the data. This step is very significant because it

highlights the primary goal of the entire research work. In other words, analyzing the data helps to grasp the research's aim by breaking down the complications.

Data Analysis of the Observation

The technique that assists the researcher in collecting a set of information on the sample that they want to analyze is observation. It aids in forming a complete picture of the problem at hand and provides insight into the source of the problem. As a result, we chose to use this tool to create a reasonable set of questions for our research and note potential answers.

So, we observed third-year English students' online interactions in various meme groups on the Facebook and Discord servers. The observation was passive primarily in that there was a limited interaction after the three weeks period was over.

While observing, we noticed that students fell into two main categories. One was very active in that they share more memes and engage with comments more frequently, while the latter category hardly communicated and was more of content consumers. Between the students, there was a noticeable divide. To put it another way, we can distinguish between inactive and active learners by their online interactions.

Less active students were either uninterested in the memes' topic matter or were sharing them around their smaller social circles. We initially identified the ability to choose the appropriate genre of memes to discuss with the students as the critical issue for those who were not interacting. However, their attitude remained consistent even when the subject and genre were altered. This made us question what the rationale for this could be. Then we put individuals who appeared to want to participate but did not under the umbrella of "psychological hurdles." However, these were only guesses, and we later confirmed their accuracy through a brief interview.

On the other hand, active students were eager to contribute their thoughts in the form of memes, despite the fact that some of them were chastised for using out-of-date memes. We noticed that the notions they were utilizing ranged from highly specific to broad stereotypes about locals' music, diet, and even the healthcare system, none of which would be taught in a classroom. We took advantage of this opportunity to see if our independent variable, "internet memes," could be one factor driving this active engagement. The responses we received were unexpected, as the majority of students agreed on this hypothesis.

Finally, the path that our research will take has become more evident as a result of the observation. There was a spark of hope that our project was on the right track and would be successful.

Data Analysis of the Interview

The interview was not planned initially. However, as previously stated, observation instructs a researcher on how to perform a study. We chose to use this brief interview to answer the questions that arose from our observations of the students' online interactions and confirm whether our hypothesis is correct.

We questioned less active students who were uninterested in the online session to motivate them to interact or what subjects would pique their interest. The majority of respondents stated that the topics are the same and prefer to share with a friend. The major hurdle was, as expected, timidity and the fear of making mistakes in front of native English speakers. This is to be expected; a new environment will bring new obstacles with it, surprisingly, those students didn't see it as a hurdle, some did not even care to overcome it, stating that they simply do not care.

We asked the active students what was underlying their confidence, vocabulary, and cultural ideas behind the memes they shared instead of the inactive students. Some stated they watch movies to assist them in picking up vocabulary and expression. Some said they listen to music, and yet others claimed they watch Youtubers and TikTok creators. However, most respondents thought that memes were quite helpful since they speak to people from many cultural backgrounds under the umbrella of English-speaking countries. Furthermore, because the memes are presented in English, they believe that learning the language is required to enjoy the meme properly.

When asked about what method they used to cope with the obstacles that might arise in communication, they said the secret is just to get involved, and that the worst thing that can happen is they would get angry reactions to their posts as a worst case scenario.

Finally, we realized that the hypothesis that “Internet memes have an impact on communicating in English” is somewhat valid. This conclusion prompted us to learn more about leveraging the virtual world to achieve real-world objectives (which in this case is improving SCC of EFL Learners).

Data Analysis of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was the last phase in this research. It was seven pages long and had both open-ended and closed-ended questions to fit the research topic. Also, the respondents to the survey (n=30) were chosen based on their experience communicating using memes rather than their age or gender.

We started the questionnaire with ‘How do you see yourself as a person?’ To see how their personalities would reflect how they communicate, either via textual/ visual memes or on voice chats in Discord servers. Over half of the students, 23 to be exact, identified themselves

as introverted, while the remaining 07 identified as extroverted individuals. This came as a surprise because, based on the observation, the number of learners who communicated with a confidence that reflects extroversion was higher than 07. This leads us to believe that introverted students receive a boost of self-esteem when communicating virtually rather than in person.

The following question was ‘How long have you been exposed to authentic Internet memes ?’ because the duration of using something has a great deal on the consequences. The applicants had three options to choose from: Less than a year, between 2 to 5 years, or more than five years. 02 participants crossed the first option box, 09 participants crossed the second option, and 19 participants crossed the final option. Depending on the results, we can notice that the majority of the applicants have been exposed to memes for more than two years. This indicates that the medium was beneficial and fun; otherwise, who would continue to use a tool for that long if it did not have a good impact.

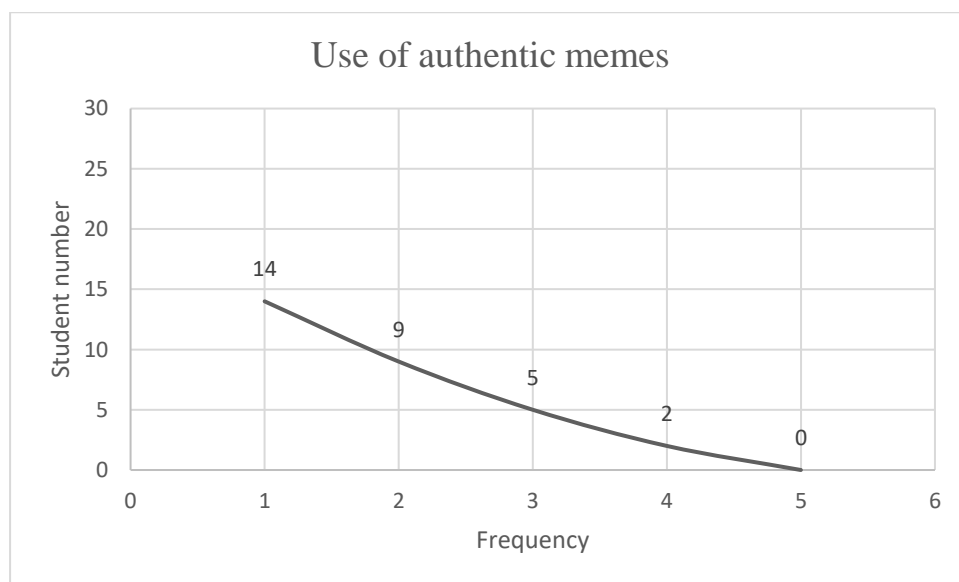


FIGURE 2: FREQUENCY OF USING AUTHENTIC MEMES BY EFL LEARNERS.

The Line graph presents the number of students (0-30) according to each rating value (0-5), one being always to five being rarely. The peak was at the beginning, which indicates

that most learners use native memes in their daily lives; the graph sees a gradual decline representing the diminishing frequency of using native memes daily. What is remarkable is that none of the students have said that they never consume native memes.

This highlights that the sample chosen was suitable for this research, for they use native memes frequently.

When asked whether they think memes enhance sociocultural competence, 89% of the respondents answered. Yes, while the remaining 11% opted for the second option, which is No. This means that the sample almost unanimously agreed that memes do indeed help EFL learners develop their cultural competence. When asked to further elaborate, they gave the following answers:

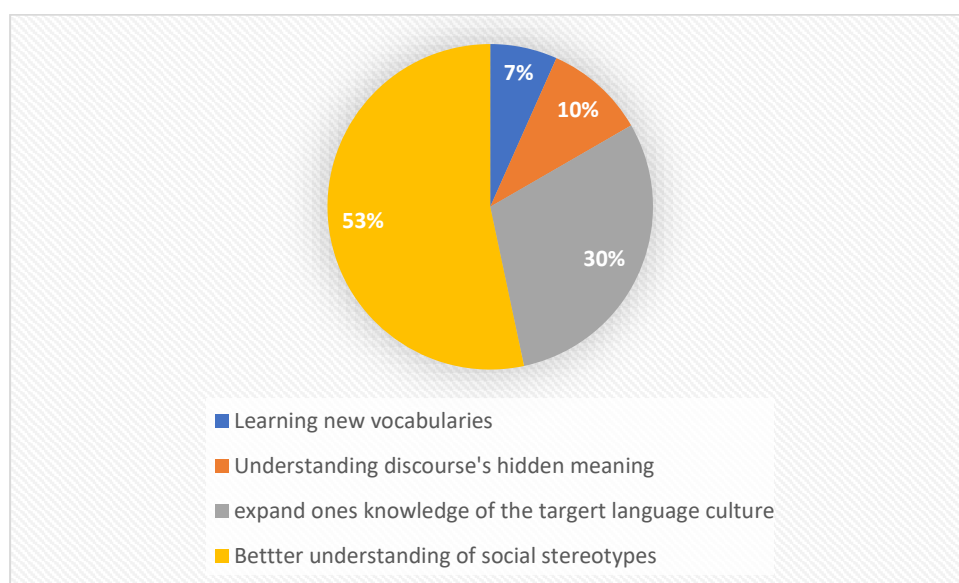


FIGURE 2.1: BENEFITS OF SHARING NATIVE MEMES ON EFL LEARNERS

This illustration (n 2.1) shows that the participants have reported that consuming native memes profoundly affects a plethora of linguistic aspects. As we can see, 53% of the students detail that memes have helped them better understand social stereotypes of native speakers as this option occupies a significant share of the pie chart. Being culturally competent is a title most learners aspire to achieve. The chart shows that memes help learners achieve it, where

30% of the participants note that memes help them expand their cultural baggage. 10% of the respondents stated that memes serve as a tool to help them catch what is hidden between the lines of natives' discourse. The remaining 7% reported that they had obtained new vocabulary after the exposure to native memes for prolonged periods of time.

From the results above, we can confidently say that some learners have higher levels of communicative competence because they consume media, memes in our case, created by native English speakers.

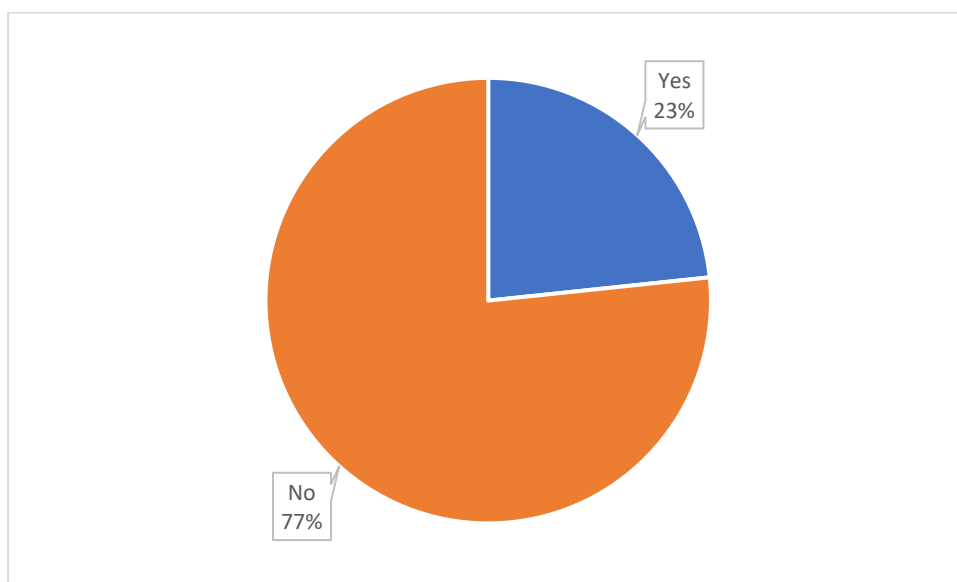


Figure 2.2: Students attitude towards implementing memes in EFL classes

As shown above, learners seem to agree that memes should be kept away from their EFL classes, in that 23 out of the total sample, making out 77% have rejected the implementation of memes in their courses, whereas only 23% believe that they should be used in class. This disparity in results had to have a drive behind it. When we asked the students to elaborate further, they provided very similar remarks, which boil down to:

- Teachers will use dated memes in class.
- Memes should never be used in real life.

- The school will find a way to make the funniest of memes unbearable.
- Memes lose their fun aspect when they become educational materials

This gives us a notion that 3rd-year students are primarily against the application of memes in their classes, mainly because teachers are still unfamiliar with the medium, so they believe that will make memes less enjoyable. One of the students added that memes are made for fun and to be enjoyed. To comment on this, we say that just as video games are both for fun and educational purposes, memes can be altered to fit the academic setting.

Agreement / Disagreement	Votes
Strongly Agree	11
Agree	9
Neutral	9
Disagree	1
Strongly Disagree	0

TABLE 1: VOTES ON MEMES BEING A FITTING TOOL FOR EFL LEARNERS TO PRACTICE CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

The table above highlights the respondents’ expressions to the following statement ‘Internet memes are a suitable tool for English language learners to practice their cultural knowledge in real-life situations as we can see, students have agreed to the notion that memes are a helpful tool that lets students put their cultural knowledge to practice. As seen above, 66% of the students agree with a varying degree of agreement, 30% stated that they are neutral to the idea, with the remaining 4% represented by one student have expressed their disagreement. One student commented that ‘I strongly agree because memes usually talk about relatable stuff that happen in real life and English language learners will definitely face those kind of situations in real life and they’ll express them by using memes’ this which proves that learners

are aware of memes’ usefulness in speaking about actual life events, their use varies from showing sympathy and solidarity to mockery and teasing.

The respondents were asked to highlight the extent of their agreement with this statement’ Memes offer an uncensored and unfiltered glance of the community that created it’ on a scale from one to five, one strongly agreeing to five strongly disagreeing. The following chart represents the respondent’s answers.

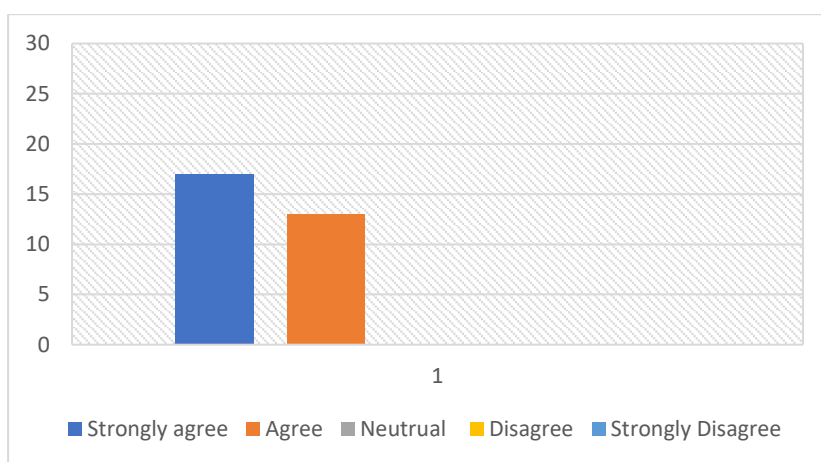


FIGURE 2.3: STUDENTS THOUGHTS ON THE STATEMENTS THAT SAY MEMES OFFER AN UNCENSORED LOOK ONTO THE COMMUNITY THAT CREATED IT

The figure mentioned above shows that the learners are on a unanimous agreement that memes indeed offer an unhinged look into the communities behind them, where 57% of the participants expressed their strong agreement. In comparison, the remaining 43% said that they agree. Unlike other media genres such as movies and news shows managed by a corporation that restricts the freedom of expression of those mediums, memes can express people’s opinions and emotions without the regulations of a higher authority. This agreement reflects the level of awareness of the students questioned and highlights how memes help develop sociocultural competence.

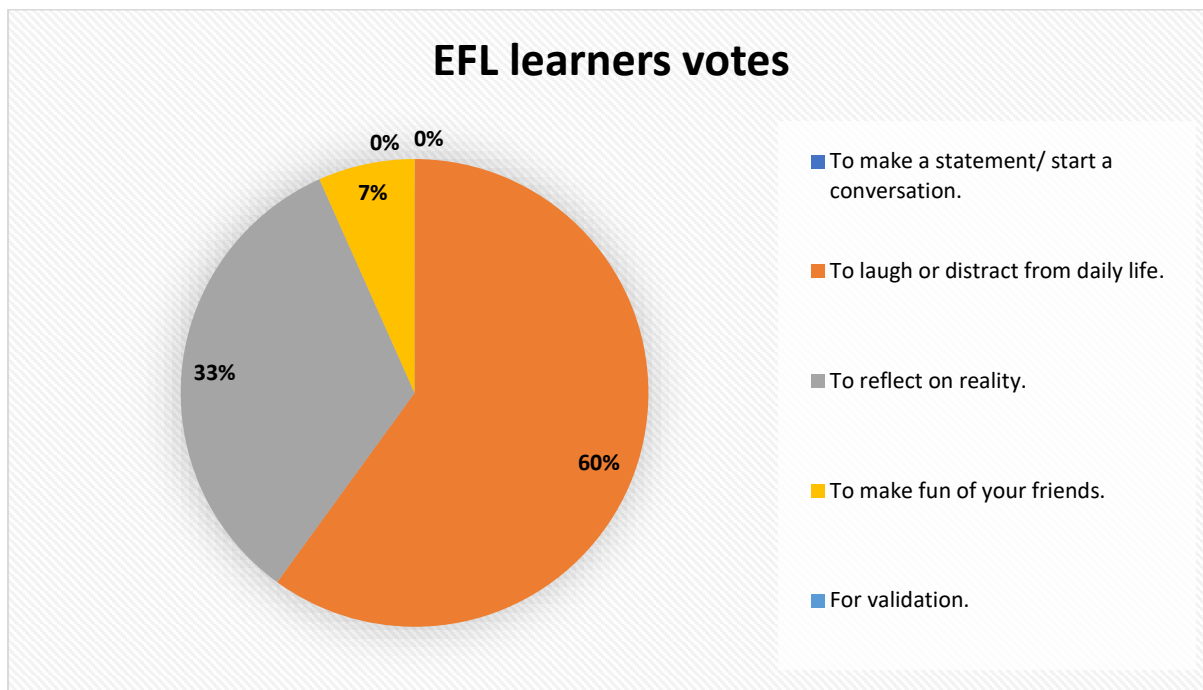


FIGURE 2.4: EFL LEARNERS REASONS FOR CREATING AND SHARING MEMES

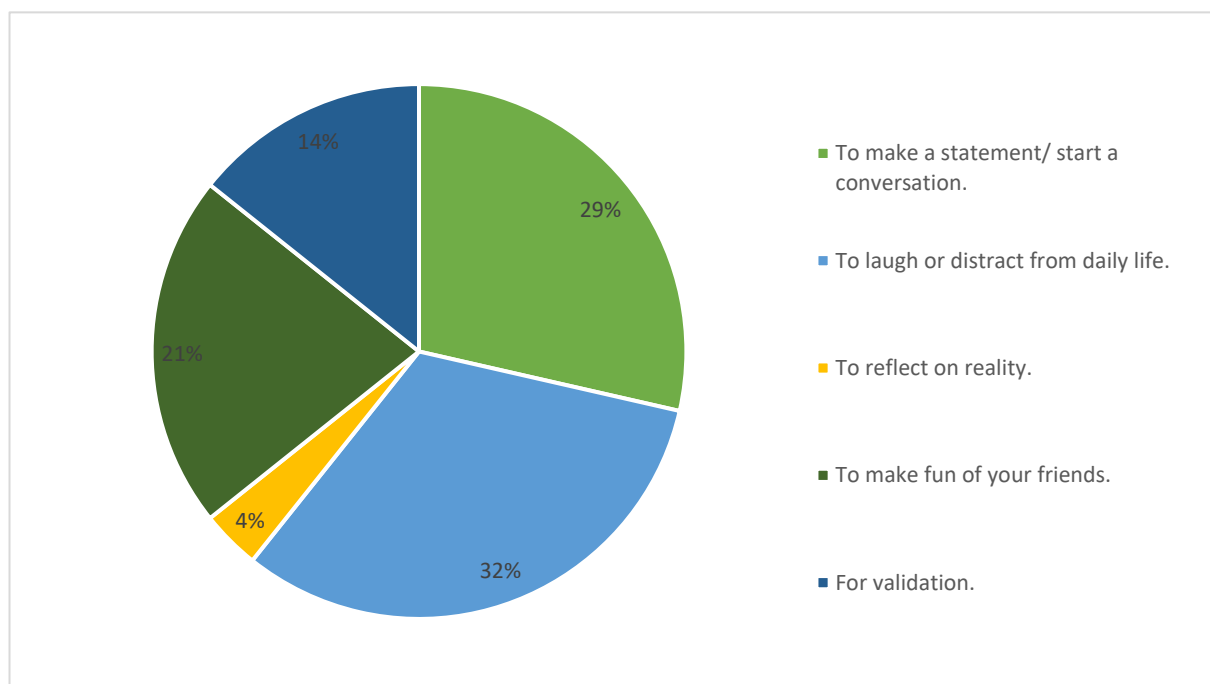


FIGURE 2.5: NATIVE ENGLISH REASONS FOR CREATING AND SHARING MEMES.

The figures above (6 and 7) illustrate the motivation or drive behind creating and sharing memes. We compared our original sample, i.e., 3rd-year students, with a selection of native English speakers. Due to certain limitations, we were unable to match the size of the original sample, so we only questioned 28 participants, regardless of their age and gender. Starting with figure 6, which represents the EFL learners, we can see that only two legends occupy a majority of the pie chart. Eighteen participants (60%) stated that they share and create memes to laugh and distract from their daily life. In addition, 10 participants or (33%) of the total sample use memes to reflect on reality, while the remaining 7% use memes to make fun of their friends. This is on the one hand.

On the other hand, figure 7 represents a healthier mix of answers, 8 of the native participants or (29%) said that they use memes to make a statement, be it political, religious, or to start a conversation with a stranger or friend they have not spoken to in a long time, additional 9 participants making up (32%) of the sample, said that they use memes to laugh and distract from daily life. Only one participant or (4%) uses memes to reflect on reality; furthermore, 21% of the participants, represented by six people, stated that they use memes to make fun of their friends. In contrast, the remaining four people (14%) said that they use memes for validation.

The lack of variety in the answers of the 3rd year students can be attributed to the environment they live in, which imposes on them to use internet memes as a distraction from their daily life.

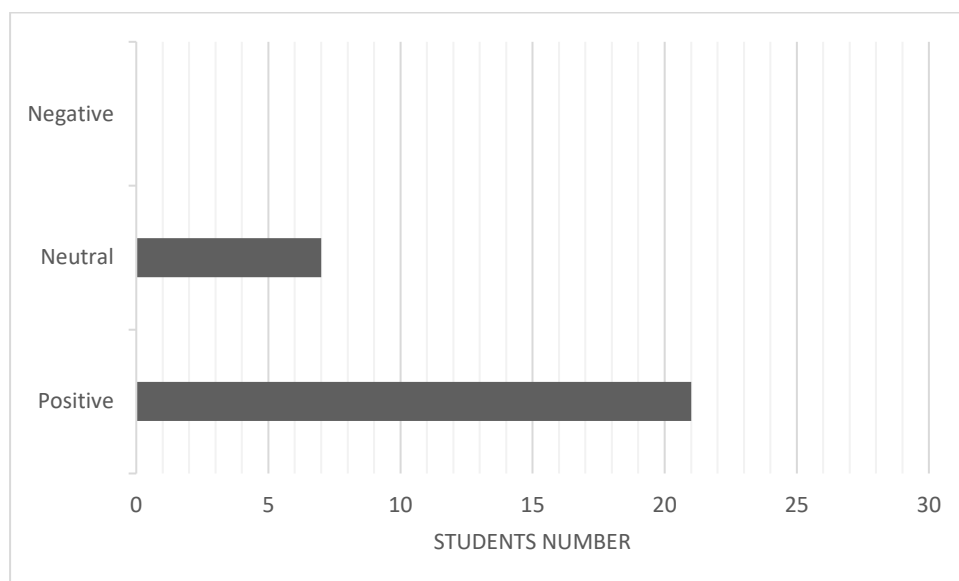


FIGURE 2.6: HOW MEMES AFFECTED EFL STUDENTS

The figure above illustrates how exposure to native memes affected their language development, where 0% of the learners think that memes negatively affect them, which further reinforces the notion that memes are a useful tool for linguistic and cultural improvement. Seven students or (30%) stated that they are neutral to the idea because they either didn't notice an improvement or they did not improve, which is less likely, while the rest of the students 21 to be exact, making up 70% of the total sample stated that they noticed an improvement, either their linguistic competence, cultural competence or both. When asked to further elaborate, they gave the following answers:

- Being exposed to memes for almost 3 years now, it helped my language learning process by improving vocabulary. There are certain words that I've learned through ;although, most would find informal, but are used in the daily life of the speakers. It helped to understand how western society thinks in a more liberal open minded way.

- everytime im exposed to a new meme with new voc or new concept, i find myself using in real life unconsciously, and even being able to get the ref of some topics thanks to memes.
- As mentioned above, memes content can be uncensored and unfiltered so this unfilterness taught me how americans think and interact with everyday events.

This was a small sample extracted directly from the students' answers. This displays that the learners are aware of their level of knowledge. That awareness will help them tailor what must be learned to fit their needs best in their academic careers.

The final question in our questionnaire was, 'While consuming native memes have you felt the differences between the native speaker culture and your own?' There was a disparity in the responses, as the following graph illustrates:

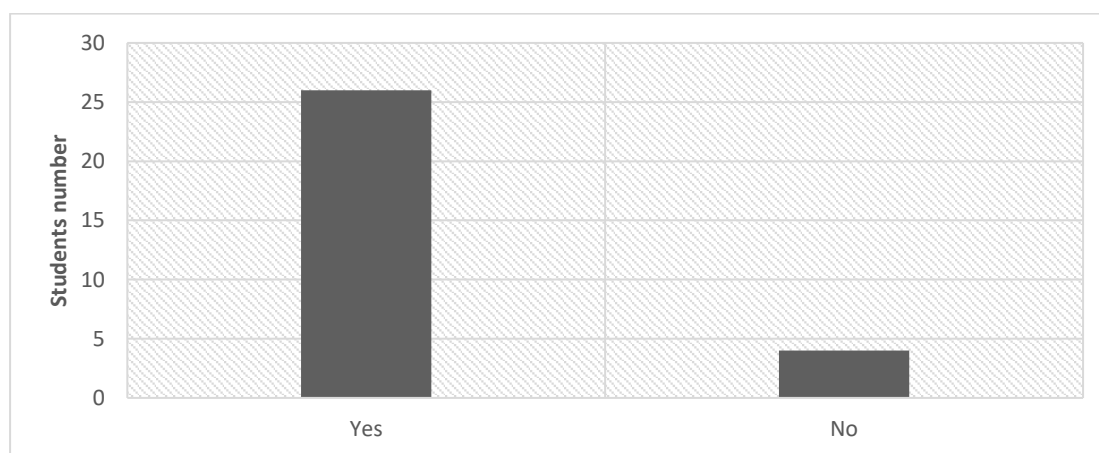


FIGURE 2.7: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CULTURES OF ELF LEARNERS AND NATIVES

As we can see from the figure, the answers are mostly one-sided, meaning that a majority of the students, 26 or (88%) to be exact, votes yes; they have felt a difference between the culture of natives and their own. In contrast, the remaining 12% said no, they did not notice any difference. To further understand the motives behind these answers we asked the learners to expand on their choice. The following answers are extracts from their responses:

- Yes, western society and culture are more open minded and accepting of the differences among the individuals ; however, our society is not the same, as people are more social oriented.
- They're different in a way if perceiving situations. Some situation might not sound funny in my culture but in the native speaker culture they are.
- I'm more aware of the cultural differences between my culture which is influenced by religion and that sometimes natives memes can discuss taboos in my own culture
- Yes, it's the ability to discuss taboos in a welcoming environment that draws me into the natives culture, doing that here will make u an outcast.

These answers highlight that the students are aware of cultural differences between their own cultural and social believes and those of the natives. While it is fun and informative to explore other cultures, one must remain deeply rooted in their own culture.

CONCLUSION

The outcomes of this chapter have been beneficial to our endeavor. Finally, we discovered that our hypothesis had a positive ending and was proved to be feasible. While it is true that certain communicators are better than others due to Memes, this is not the sole reason as memes are still far less popular than games and TV shows. Furthermore, we discovered how memes inspire learners to improve their English language skills and how different memes affect communication and mental health of those consuming them. We could prove the desired results even if we could not test our hypotheses through an experiment as planned.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE STUDY

*We recommend instructors delve into the world of internet memes, not even to understand the lore of memes or partake in them, but to have a broad idea about them.

*For EFL teachers, especially language mastery teachers, it would be better to shift the focus of the class to the cultural aspects of language with the help of memes.

*There are some websites and YouTube channels that explain memes in a simplified way, and we recommend teachers and students alike to check them out. We recommend:

- Knowyourmeme.com
- Lessons in Meme Culture on YouTube
- Behind the meme on YouTube

*We recommend future research on cultural competence to check both YouTube and TikTok, for they offer an in-depth look into the cultural side of the creators.

General Conclusion

From the beginning to the end of this dissertation, there was just one core idea. ‘Improving Sociocultural Competence’. There have undoubtedly been a large number of studies on this subject; the methods used to approach it must have varied, but the desired outcome was likely similar. If this were to imply anything, it would be the importance of sociocultural competence

This research aimed to improve oral communication skills by using memes as a modern tool in Algerian universities, primarily 3rd-year English students at Mohamed Khider University. Algerian public is still unfamiliar with the term “memes” in education; they typically regard it as a form of diversion or a waste of time. Changing the viewpoint they see through to such topics is a must as technology continues to take over the globe; the material was a necessary. Using such a modern technology not only improves the learners’ capabilities (whether communication, coding, building, imagination, or creativity), but it also strengthens the teacher-student relationship.

The study was thoroughly investigated to monitor the hypotheses presented and answer to the questions that emerged. It was discovered that certain students had better sociocultural competence due to their exposure to more memes. Furthermore, memes drive learners to develop and assist in presenting cultural themes in a radically different manner that captures students’ interest and encouraging them to pay more attention. The hypothesis that Memes can be used to improve SCC and educational level, in general, has also been demonstrated to be correct (as discussed in Chapter Two).

References List

Adam. (2016). *Meme of the Month Calendars*. Knowyourmeme.Com.

<https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/meme-of-the-month-calendars#>

Andhika, R. E. (2015). The Use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach to Improve Students Speaking Ability. English Learning Education, Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Siamet Riyadi University.

Brichenkova, E. (2018). Research of features of Internet-memes functioning on the Russian 23Internet. *Journal of Symbolic Logic*, 23, 29-55. Print

C, D. G. (2009). Notes on Communication: A Few Thoughts About the Way we Interact with the People we Meet. Creative Commons Copyright (Free e-book from www.wanterfall.com)

Canale, M. "From Communicative Competence to Communicative Language Pedagogy." *Language and Communication*. Ed. Jack C. Richards & Richard W. Schmidt. London and New York: Longman, 1983. 2-27. Print

Discord / Your Place to Talk and Hang Out. (n.d.). Retrieved May 22, 2021, from <https://discord.com/brand-new>

Essays, U. (2013, Nov). TheScientificHistory Of Communicative Competence English Language Essay. Retrieved from UniAssignment Center: 105 <https://www.uniassignment.com/essay-samples/english-language/the-scientifichistory-of-communicative-competence-english-language-essay.php?vref=1>

Eric Koston. (2009, September 30). *Leeroy Jenkins - The Original* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jIxeJrPICNM>

Ethan Elliott. (2012, January 24). *Original Numa Numa* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OE8WzYNRPN>

- Fawzia, B. (2008). Attaining Fluency in Oral Communication: The Case of Students at DLU English Department. Sidi Bel-Abbas, Algeria.
- Heylighen, F., & Chielens, K. (2009). Evolution of Culture, Memetics. In R. A. Meyers (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of complexity and systems science* (pp. 3205–3220). Springer.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274707118_Evolution_of_Culture_Memetics
- Hinkel, E. (2001). Building awareness and practical skills for cross-cultural communication in ESL/EFL. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 443-458). Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle
- Jane, S. t. (2011-2020). Intercultural Communication Skills. Retrieved from
SKILLSYOU NEED: Helping you gain Life Skills
<https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/intercultural-communication.html>
- Jin, Y. (2007). Adapting Communicative Language Teaching Approach to China's Context.
- Kulkarni, A. (2017, June). *Internet meme and Political Discourse: A study on the impact of internet meme as a tool in communicating political satire* [PDF]. Journal of Content, Community & Communication.
- Kariko, A. A. T., & Anasih, N. (2019). Laughing at one's self: A study of self-reflective internet memes. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, 1175(1), 012250.
<https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1175/1/012250>
- knowyourmeme.com. (2011). *Good Guy Greg*. <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/good-guy-greg>
- Laughing at one's self: A study of self-reflective internet memes*. (2019).
<https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1175/1/012250>
- Leigh, H. (2010). *Genes, memes, culture, and mental illness: Toward an integrative model*. Springer Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-5671-2>

- L, F. C. (2010). *Communication: the Process, Barriers And Improving Effectiveness. SCHOOLING*, 1-3.
- LTE. (2016, jul 11). 1.1 Evolution of Communication: Stone age to Modern age. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxTUC5I22LU>
- LTE. (2016, jul 22). 1.2 Evolution of Communication: From 1G to 4G to 5G. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nsEAW_SirQ
- Lynn, D. (2014 (Edited 2015)). *Communicative Competence: it's Definition, Connection to Teaching and Interactional Competence*. Retrieved from ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283711223_Communicative_Competence_Its_Definition_Connection_to_Teaching_and_Relationship_with_Interactional_Competence
- Lynn, D. (2014 (Edited 2015)). *Communicative competence: it's Definition, Connection to Teaching and Interactional Competence*. Retrieved from ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283711223_Communicative_Competence_Its_Definition_Connection_to_Teaching_and_Relationship_with_Interactional_Competence
- Matt. (n.d.). *Doge / Know Your Meme*. 2017. Retrieved May 18, 2021, from <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/doge>
- Mede, Enisa & Dikilitaş, Kenan. (2015). *Teaching and Learning Sociolinguistic Competence: Teachers' Critical Perceptions*. *Participatory Educational Research*. 2. 14-31. 10.17275/per.15.29.2.3.
- Publishing, U. o. (2013). *Communication in the Real World: Introduction to Communication*. Elearning Support Initiative.
- RAKHIMOVA, Alina E. "Sociocultural Competence as One of Thecore Competencies of the Individual." *Revista Espacios*, vol. 38, no. 45, 2 Aug. 2017, p. 34.

Sino-US English Teaching, 4(10), 30-31.

Reddit's Astonishing Altruism. (2014, February 14). Voltier.Com.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20110214001001/http://voltier.com/2010/11/12/reddits-astonishin-altruism/>

Shifman, L. (2014). The Cultural Logic of Photo-Based Meme Genres. *The Cultural Logic of Photo-Based Meme Genres*, 13(3), 340–358.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1470412914546577>

TEDx Talks. (2019, May 23). *Internet Meme Culture | Mackenzie Finklea | TEDxUTAustin*

[Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MLjFNxi9Yo>

TEDx Talks. (2017, July 6). “*More than just a Meme*” | *Emily Sands* |

TEDxSantaClaraUniversity [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9u2f44VdzBs&t=88s>

Unknown. (2005, Nov 1). What is Communication?: Unsettling a Priori and a Posteriori

Approaches. International Communication Association. Philosophy of Communication Division.

Z. (n.d.). *Rage comics*. Knowyourmeme.Com. Retrieved May 18, 2021, from

<https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/subcultures/rage-comics>

Appendices

Appendix 1: Observation notes:

We observed 3rd-year students' online activities to gather the necessary material for the case study and to reduce the scope of our research (it sounds as if we stalked the sample, but it was an act to see if students use English in their online communications). After a few weeks of observation, we came to the following remarks:

- There was a division in the sample; a majority of the learners are passive observers.
- Active students seem to partake in memes that have no relation between them, unlike passive students who react to only memes of a specific genre and or topic.
- Active students are not shunned away by the mistakes they make; however, passive students stop reacting to the posts when corrected, some left the groups in extreme cases.
- Some students used English memes exclusively, while others used a mix of English and Arabic memes.
- Some learners tagged their friends to help in explaining some obscure memes.
- Students that have prior knowledge of the topic participate, while others do not even attempt to comprehend the conversation topic.

Appendix Two: Interview Questions:

We interviewed 3rd-year English Language students at Mohamed Khider University in order to get a clear picture of the difficulties and motivations affecting students' involvement. We already knew what we were searching for, so the interview questions were straightforward.

- Passive Students:
 - Is there any specific reason why do you avoid participating in online discussions?
 - What are the obstacles that prevent you from developing your cultural competence?
 - Have you tried something to overcome these obstacles?
- Active Students:
 - How did you achieve your current level of competence?
 - Have you faced obstacles communicating with native English speakers before?
 - How did you cope with these obstacles?
 - What would you suggest for those who want to improve but do not know how?

Appendix Three: The Questionnaire

Internet Memes & sociocultural competence

Internet Memes & sociocultural competence

The following questions are about Internet memes. By analyzing your answers, we are hoping to figure out how do internet memes impact EFL learners' socio-cultural competence. Please give your personal opinion according to your personal experience with internet memes.

***Required**

1. How do you see yourself as a person? *

Mark only one oval.

Introverted

Extroverted

2. How long have you been exposed to authentic Internet memes ? (those made by native English speakers)

Mark only one oval.

Less than one year

2 - 5 years

More than 5 years

3. On a scale from 1-5 how would you rate your usual use of authentic memes ?

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

4. Do you think internet memes help you enhance your socio-cultural competence?

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

5. If yes, tell us in what way did they improve your competence? Check all that apply

Tick all that apply.

Learning new vocabularies

Better understand the hidden meanings of discourse

Broaden your knowledge of the culture of the target language

Better understanding of social stereotypes

Other: _____

6. Do you think that memes should be implemented into EFL courses ? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

7. Briefly explain *

8. 'Internet memes are a suitable tool for English language learners to practice their culture knowledge in real-life situations' *

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

9. Please elaborate on the statement above (explain your choice) *

10. "Memes offer an uncensored and unfiltered glance of the community that created it "

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

11. Why do you create / share memes

Mark only one oval.

- To make a statement/ start a conversation
- To laugh or distract from daily life.
- To reflect on reality.
- To make fun of your friends
- For validation
- Other: _____

12. How do you think the exposure to meme culture affected your language development as an EFL learner?

Mark only one oval.

- Positively
- Negatively
- Neutral

13. Please explain *

14. While consuming native memes have you felt the differences between the native speaker culture and your own? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

15. If yes, in what way ?

16. If you got any comment or remark please feel free to to mention it.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms

Appendix Four: Native Speakers Questionnaire

Internet memes & sociocultural competence

Internet memes & sociocultural competence

This survey targeted at native speakers of English, you are kindly requested to pick an option that you relate to the most.

***Required**

1. Why do you create / share memes *

Mark only one oval.

- For validation
- To make fun of your friends
- To make a statement/ start a conversation
- To laugh or distract from daily life.
- To reflect on reality.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms

الملخص

يبحث العمل البحثي الحالي في تأثير **internet memes** على تعزيز الكفاءة الاجتماعية والثقافية لمتعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية. المتعلمين الذين عولجوا في هذه أطروحة هم طلاب السنة الثالثة في اللغة الإنجليزية من جامعة محمد خيضر في بسكرة (عينة =30 طالب) يرافقه 28 الناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية . واستخدمت مجموعة من **internet memes** لهذه الدراسة (لأنها بمثابة نافذة لثقافة أولئك الذين صنعوها) ويفترض أنها تساعد المتعلمين على تحسين مهارات الاتصال وغيرها من المهارات، مثل القراءة. وقد تم اختيار النهج المختلط لإجراء الدراسة، وتم جمع البيانات من إجراء الدراسة ، تم إختيار منهج الطريقة المختلطة وتم جمع البيانات من خلال الملاحظة والمقابلة والاستبيان. وأظهر تحليل البيانات وجود علاقة سببية بين المتغيرات (ميمي الإنترنت - الكفاءة الاجتماعية والثقافية)، مما يشير إلى أن هناك تأثيرا مباشرا لمتغير "ميمي الإنترنت" المستقل على المتغير التابع، "الكفاءة الاجتماعية والثقافية".

Résumé

Les travaux de recherche actuels étudient l'impact des médias Internet sur l'amélioration de l'EFL Apprenants Compétences socioculturelles. Les apprenants traités dans cette thèse sont de troisième année Étudiants anglais à l'Université Mohamed Khider de Biskra (échantillon = 30), accompagnés de 28 Anglophones. Une poignée de médias Internet sont utilisés pour cette étude. Ils ont une perspective éducative (ils servent de fenêtre sur la culture de ceux qui les ont créés). Il est supposé qu'ils aident les apprenants à améliorer leurs compétences en communication et d'autres compétences, telles que lecture. L'approche à méthode mixte a été choisie pour mener l'étude, et les données étaient recueillies au moyen d'entrevues et d'un questionnaire. L'analyse des données a montré une cause-effet relation entre les variables (médias Internet - Compétence socioculturelle), indiquant un impact direct des variables indépendantes « médias Internet » sur la variable dépendante, « Compétence socioculturelle ».