

Internet Memes as a Tool for Developing Pragmatic Awareness and Student Engagement in EFL Learning

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Abstract

This study investigates the use of internet memes as a tool for developing pragmatic awareness and student engagement in English language learning. Although pragmatics is not taught as a separate course, learners often face difficulties in interpreting implied meanings such as irony and sarcasm despite having adequate vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Internet memes, which combine images and text, provide authentic and contextualized language input that helps students interpret these meanings in a more meaningful way. The study aims to identify students' ability to interpret memes' meanings and investigate their attitudes toward using memes in learning English. A descriptive-analytical approach was adopted, involving 29 undergraduate English students at Misrata University. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results indicate that students were able to successfully interpret pragmatic meanings embedded in memes and showed positive attitudes toward their use in English learning. The study concludes that internet memes can effectively enhance pragmatic awareness, increase learner engagement, and support more interactive, contextualized, and meaningful language learning in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: *Internet memes, pragmatic awareness, implied meaning, hidden meaning, English language learning, EFL, student engagement, multimodal communication.*



الصور الساخرة عبر الانترنت كأداة لتنمية الوعي التداولي ومشاركة الطلاب

في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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ملخص البحث

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف استخدام الصور الساخرة الإلكترونية (الميمز) كأداة لتطوير الوعي البراغمي وزيادة تفاعل الطلاب في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. وعلى الرغم من أن علم التداولي لا يُدرّس كمقرر مستقل، إلا أن الطلاب يواجهون صعوبات في فهم المعاني الضمنية والمخفية مثل السخرية والتلميح، رغم امتلاكهم مستوى جيد من المفردات والقواعد. وتُعد الميمز الإلكترونية، التي تجمع بين الصور والنصوص، وسيلة تعليمية فعّالة تقدم سياقات لغوية واقعية تساعد المتعلمين على تفسير المعاني غير المباشرة بشكل أفضل. وقد اعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، وشملت عينة مكونة من 29 طالبًا جامعيًا من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة مصراتة. تم جمع البيانات باستخدام استبيان منظم، وتحليلها باستخدام الإحصاءات الوصفية. وأظهرت النتائج أن الطلاب تمكنوا من تفسير المعاني البراغمية الضمنية والمخفية في الصور الساخرة الإلكترونية بشكل جيد، كما أبدوا اتجاهات إيجابية نحو استخدامها في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن استخدام الصور الساخرة الإلكترونية يمكن أن يعزز الوعي البراغمي، ويزيد من تفاعل الطلاب، ويدعم تعلم اللغة بشكل أكثر فاعلية وتفاعلية داخل بيئة تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الميمز الإلكترونية، الوعي البراغمي، المعنى الضمني، المعنى المخفي، الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية،

تفاعل الطلاب، التواصل متعدد الوسائط

1. Introduction

In recent years, internet memes have become an important element of digital communication, especially among young people and university students. Memes are widely recognized as multimodal communicative units that combine images and text to convey humor, opinions, and social commentary in a concise and engaging form (Shifman, 2014; Altukruni, 2022).

Unlike ordinary images, memes function as multimodal cultural artifacts that often carry implicit meanings requiring interpretation beyond their literal content. The concept of multimodality refers to the combination of different semiotic modes such as visual and linguistic elements to construct meaning in communication (Shifman, 2014).

In the context of English language learning, memes provide learners with authentic and contextualized input that exposes them to pragmatic functions such as irony, sarcasm, and implied meaning (Yus, 2011). These pragmatic features are essential for understanding real-life communication, where meaning is often indirect rather than explicitly stated.

However, despite the frequent exposure of students to internet memes in daily life, many learners still face difficulties in interpreting their underlying meanings, even when they have sufficient grammatical and lexical knowledge. Therefore, integrating memes into English language instruction may enhance learner engagement and contribute to the development of pragmatic awareness by connecting classroom learning with real-world communication (Mukherjee & Mukherjee, 2025).

2. Statement of the Problem

Despite the widespread use of internet memes in students' daily digital communication, their potential as pedagogical tools for developing pragmatic competence in EFL contexts remains underexplored. Many learners are frequently exposed to memes, yet they continue to experience difficulties in interpreting implied meanings such as irony, sarcasm, and contextualized humor, even when they possess adequate linguistic knowledge. This gap between exposure and actual pragmatic interpretation suggests a need to investigate how internet memes can be systematically integrated into language learning to enhance students' ability to infer meaning beyond the literal level. Therefore, this study examines the effectiveness of internet memes in developing pragmatic awareness and increasing student engagement among Libyan EFL learners.

Objectives of the Study 3.

The study aims to explore the educational value of internet memes in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Examine students' ability to interpret the implied meanings in internet memes.
2. Investigate the contribution of internet memes to the development of students' pragmatic awareness in English language learning.

4. Research Questions

To achieve the objectives of the study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. To what extent are Libyan EFL learners able to interpret the implied meanings in internet memes?



2. How do internet memes contribute to the development of students' pragmatic awareness in English language learning?

5. Significance of the Study

This study highlights the potential of internet memes as educational tools in teaching pragmatics. It may provide insights for English teachers on how to integrate digital content into classroom instruction to enhance engagement and contextual understanding. Additionally, the findings can inform curriculum designers and educators about innovative approaches for teaching pragmatic competence in EFL classrooms.

6. Related Studies

Several empirical and theoretical studies have examined the role of internet memes in language learning, pragmatic development, and learner engagement. These studies provide valuable insights that support the theoretical foundation of the present research. Al Rashdi (2020) conducted a small-scale exploratory study on Omani college students' perception of pragmatic meaning embedded in internet memes. The findings revealed that most students were able to correctly infer implied meanings such as humor, irony, and contextual messages. The study also indicated that learners generally held positive attitudes toward the use of memes in language learning contexts.

This study is particularly relevant to the present research because it demonstrates learners' ability to interpret pragmatic meanings beyond the literal level, which directly relates to the focus of this study on pragmatic awareness.

Nugroho and Liemantara (2024) investigated EFL students' interpretation of implicature and gender representation in internet memes. Their findings showed that exposure to memes contributed to learners' ability to identify implied meanings and develop pragmatic competence.

The study highlights the role of memes in enhancing inferential thinking skills, which are essential for understanding indirect and context-dependent meanings in communication.

Altukruni (2022) provided a systematic literature review on the integration of internet memes in EFL/ESL classrooms. The study concluded that memes have a positive impact on student engagement, motivation, and language comprehension when used appropriately in educational settings.

In addition, the review emphasized that memes function as multimodal resources that combine visual and textual elements, making them effective tools for modern language teaching.

Mukherjee and Mukherjee (2025) explored the use of internet memes as multimodal tools for language teaching. Their study found that memes enhance student engagement by making learning more relatable, enjoyable, and contextually meaningful.

They further argued that memes bridge the gap between informal digital communication and formal classroom learning, thereby supporting meaningful language acquisition.

Romero and Bobkina (2021) examined the role of memes in developing critical and visual literacy in EFL/ESL classrooms. The study found that memes encourage learners to analyze meaning beyond the surface level and engage in deeper interpretation of visual and textual information.

This supports the idea that memes are not only entertaining materials but also tools for developing higher-order thinking skills.

Purnama et al. (2017) investigated the use of memes to promote student motivation in language classrooms. The findings revealed that memes increase participation, creativity, and motivation, especially when students are encouraged to interpret or create memes themselves. This suggests that learner-centered activities involving memes can significantly enhance classroom engagement. Hutagalung and Siregar (2024) explored meaning-making in internet memes and their role in creating humorous interpretations. The study highlighted that memes rely on shared cultural knowledge and contextual understanding to generate humor and meaning. This reinforces the multimodal and culturally dependent nature of memes in communication. Overall, previous research has consistently highlighted the positive role of internet memes in enhancing language learning, pragmatic awareness, and student engagement across different EFL contexts. However, most of these studies have been conducted in non-Libyan settings, with limited focus on Libyan university students and their specific challenges in interpreting implied meanings. This gap highlights the need for context-based research that examines how Libyan EFL learners interpret memes and develop pragmatic awareness within their own educational environment.

7. Methodology

This section presents the methodology adopted in this study, including the research design, setting, participants, research instruments, data collection procedures, and methods used to ensure validity of the instrument. It also



explains how the data were collected and analyzed in order to address the research questions of the study.

7.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative descriptive-analytical research design to investigate the role of internet memes in developing pragmatic awareness and enhancing student engagement in English language learning. The quantitative approach was selected because it allows the researcher to collect numerical data from a group of participants and analyze the results statistically. In addition, the descriptive-analytical design was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to describe students' perceptions, experiences, and understanding of internet memes without manipulating any variables. The study focused on examining students' interpretations of meme meanings and their attitudes toward the use of memes in learning English. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistical methods.

7.2 Research Setting

The study was conducted at the Faculty of Education, Misrata University, Libya. The participants were undergraduate students enrolled in the English Department. The university was selected because it provides an appropriate environment for investigating English language learning among EFL students. In addition, internet memes are widely used among university students, making this setting suitable for the objectives of the study.

7.3 Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 29 female undergraduate students from the English Department at the Faculty of Education, Misrata University. The participants represented different academic years, including first-year, second-year, third-year, and fourth-year students. A convenience sampling technique was used because the participants were easily accessible to the researcher. This method is commonly used in educational research when data are collected from available and willing participants.

The participants were selected because they are English language learners who are regularly exposed to digital content and social media platforms where internet memes are frequently shared. Therefore, they were considered suitable for examining the relationship between internet memes and pragmatic awareness.

7.4 Research Tools

The main instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher after reviewing relevant literature on pragmatics, multimodality, and internet memes.

The questionnaire consisted of five sections with few items in each section:

Section One: Demographic Information

This section aimed to collect some basic information about the participants, including age, gender, and academic year.

Section Two: Experience with Internet Memes

The second section was designed to examine participants' familiarity with internet memes, frequency of exposure, and previous use of memes for learning English.

Section Three: Meme Interpretation Tasks

The third section included a number of internet memes that required participants to interpret implied meanings and identify social messages. The purpose of this section was to evaluate students' pragmatic awareness and their ability to understand meanings beyond the literal level.

The memes used in the questionnaire were collected from publicly available online platforms, and their original sources were not always identifiable due to their widespread circulation.

Section Four: Attitudes and Engagement

This section contained Likert-scale statements that measured students' attitudes toward using memes in English language learning and their perceptions of the impact of memes on engagement, enjoyment, and classroom participation.

Section Five: Open-Ended Questions

This section provided participants with an opportunity to express their opinions regarding the usefulness of memes in English learning and suggest possible ways of integrating memes into classroom instruction.

7.5 Validity of the Instrument



To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by the research supervisor and examined in light of previous studies related to internet memes, pragmatic awareness, and English language teaching. Necessary modifications were made to improve clarity, relevance, and suitability for the target participants. The questionnaire items were designed to address the objectives and research questions of the study. Particular attention was given to selecting memes that contained clear pragmatic meanings such as irony, implication, symbolism, and social commentary.

7.6 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted during the Spring semester of the academic year 2025-2026. Printed copies of the questionnaire were distributed to participants in person at the Faculty of Education, Misrata University. Before completing the questionnaire, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and were provided with clear instructions on how to answer the questions. They were assured that participation was voluntary and that their responses would remain confidential. Participants completed the questionnaire and returned it after completion. They were encouraged to answer honestly based on their own experiences and understanding, and were informed that there were no right or wrong answers. After collection, all questionnaires were reviewed, organized, and prepared for data analysis.

8. Literature Review

This section presents a review of the relevant literature related to internet memes, pragmatic awareness, and English language learning. It covers key concepts such as memes, pragmatics, and multimodality, as well as previous studies that investigated the use of memes in EFL contexts. The chapter also highlights the theoretical background of the study and identifies the gap in the existing literature that this paper aims to address.

8.1 Definition of Memes

The concept of “meme” was first introduced by Dawkins (1976) to describe cultural units that spread through imitation and replication. In contemporary digital communication, internet memes have evolved into multimodal communicative artifacts that combine images, captions, and

symbols to convey meaning in humorous, creative, and socially relevant ways (Shifman, 2014).

These digital artifacts are widely shared across social media platforms and often reflect cultural, social, and political ideas.

Altukruni (2022) further explains that memes are not only humorous images but also participatory cultural tools that allow users to express opinions and communicate ideas in a condensed and multimodal form. Therefore, memes represent a modern form of communication that relies on shared cultural knowledge between users.

8.2 Pragmatic Awareness

Pragmatic awareness refers to the ability to understand meaning beyond the literal interpretation of language, including implied meanings, irony, sarcasm, and context-dependent interpretation (Yus, 2011).

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, pragmatic awareness is often challenging for learners because it requires both linguistic and cultural competence.

Pragmatics plays a crucial role in successful communication since meaning is not always explicitly stated. Learners need to interpret what is meant rather than what is said, especially in informal and real-life communicative situations.

Mememes, Pragmatics, and Multimodality

Internet memes are considered powerful multimodal communicative artifacts because they integrate visual and linguistic elements to construct meaning. According to Shifman (2014), understanding memes requires interpreting both image and text together, as meaning is created through the interaction between different semiotic modes.

Pragmatically, memes often rely on implied meanings, such as irony, humor, and sarcasm, which require the reader to go beyond literal interpretation (Yus, 2011). This makes memes useful tools for developing learners' pragmatic awareness, as they encourage inference and contextual interpretation.

In addition, memes frequently include cultural references that require background knowledge, which makes them effective for promoting intercultural understanding and learner engagement (Hutagalung & Siregar, 2024).

Mememes in Language Teaching



Recent studies have highlighted the pedagogical value of internet memes in EFL classrooms. Mukherjee and Mukherjee (2025) found that memes increase student engagement and motivation due to their familiar, relatable, and entertaining nature.

Similarly, Romero and Bobkina (2021) reported that memes encourage critical thinking and visual literacy by requiring learners to analyze meaning beyond the surface level.

Purnama et al. (2017) also emphasized that using memes in classroom activities enhances student participation and creativity, especially when learners are encouraged to create or interpret memes.

These findings suggest that memes can be effectively integrated into language teaching to support interactive and meaningful learning experiences.

9. Results and Discussion

In this section, the researchers present and discuss the findings obtained from the questionnaire administered to 29 undergraduate female students from the English Department at the Faculty of Education, Misrata University. The results are presented through tables, percentages, and figures. Each set of results is followed by a discussion that interprets the findings and relates them to the objectives of the study and previous literature.

Section one: Demographic Results

Age: The participants represented different age groups, with most students ranging between 18 and 24 years old.

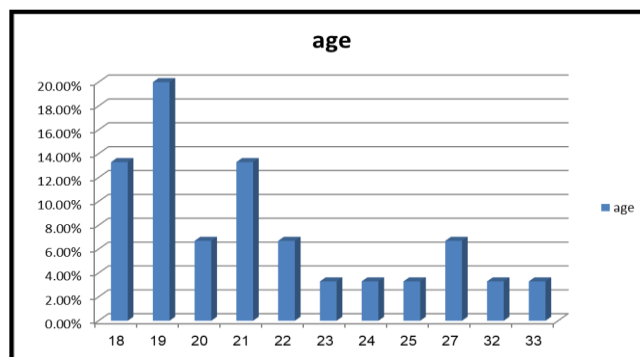


Figure 1: Age Distribution

Most participants were between 18 and 24 years old, representing the typical age group of undergraduate EFL students.

Gender: All participants in the study were female students.

Table 1: Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	29	100%

All participants were female students, reflecting the composition of the selected sample.

Academic Year: The participants were distributed across different academic years.

Table 2: Academic Year Distribution

Academic Year	Frequency	Percentage
First Year	13	44.8%
Second Year	1	3.4%
Third Year	3	10.4%
Fourth Year	12	41.4%

The participants came from different academic years, with the highest percentages from first-year and fourth-year students, providing perspectives from learners at different stages of study.

Section Two A: Image-Based Meme Interpretation

This section presents the students' interpretations of the four memes used in the questionnaire. The analysis is divided into two parts for each image: implied meaning and social message. The responses are summarized based on the most common themes identified among participants.



Meme Interpretation Task 1 : Social Inequality Meme

Implied Meaning

Most participants interpreted the meme as illustrating that people sharing the same situation may experience different realities depending on their social class and responsibilities.

The main interpretations included:

- Differences between rich and poor individuals
- Unequal distribution of effort and comfort

This shows that learners focused mainly on class-based differences in lived experience rather than multiple separate dimensions of inequality.

Social Message

The social message identified by participants focused on inequality within society, especially in relation to economic and social class differences.

The most common themes were:

- Social inequality
- Class division

The responses demonstrate that students were able to move beyond literal interpretation and identify deeper social meanings. This reflects their ability to infer meaning from contextual and visual cues, which is a key component of pragmatic awareness. This finding suggests that learners are capable of interpreting multimodal input in a way that reflects inferential thinking rather than surface-level comprehension. It supports the view that memes can function as effective tools for developing pragmatic competence.

Meme Interpretation Task 2: Parrot in a Cage Meme

Implied Meaning

Most students interpreted the meme as showing that expressing opinions or telling the truth may lead to negative consequences such as punishment or loss of freedom.

The main interpretations included:

- Speaking the truth may lead to punishment
- Restrictions on freedom of expression
- Loss of personal freedom due to speaking openly
- Consequences of expressing opinions

This suggests that students associated the image with limitations on free expression and its possible consequences in real-life contexts.

Social Message

The social message highlighted issues related to freedom of speech and limitations placed on individuals when expressing their ideas.

The most common themes were:

- Freedom of expression
- Restrictions on speech
- Punishment for speaking the truth

The responses indicate an understanding of freedom of expression as a socially regulated and sometimes restricted right. This ability reflects pragmatic awareness, as learners relied on contextual interpretation rather than literal meaning. This aligns with previous research on the role of memes in promoting critical interpretation.

Meme Interpretation Task 3: Marriage / Trap Meme

Implied Meaning

Most participants viewed the meme as representing marriage or romantic commitment as something that may appear attractive but can lead to loss of personal freedom or independence.

The main interpretations included:

- Marriage may limit personal freedom
- Relationships can have hidden consequences
- Commitment can feel like a trap
- The difference between appearance and reality in relationships

This indicates that students interpreted the meme as contrasting appearance with underlying reality in social relationships.

Social Message

The social message focused on the idea that society may idealize marriage, while in reality it can involve challenges or limitations.

The most common themes were:

- Marriage as a social institution
- Hidden emotional and social consequences
- Loss of independence

Overall, responses reflect awareness of how social norms may differ from personal lived experience.

Students demonstrated awareness that memes often communicate indirect messages through metaphor and symbolism. This supports the role of memes in developing inferential interpretation skills in EFL learners. The findings highlight that learners are able to connect personal experience



and cultural knowledge with textual-visual input, which strengthens their pragmatic awareness and interpretive competence.

Meme Interpretation Task 4: Bee Perspective Meme

Implied Meaning

Most participants interpreted the meme as showing that people can understand the same situation in different ways depending on their mindset. The main interpretations included:

- Differences in perception between individuals
- Positive vs negative thinking
- Optimistic and pessimistic viewpoints
- Influence of mindset on interpretation

This reflects students' understanding that meaning is shaped by individual perspective.

Social Message

The social message focused on how perception shapes reality and how individuals interpret life situations differently.

The most common themes were:

- Mindset influences interpretation of events
- Optimism vs pessimism
- Different perspectives on the same situation

The responses show that communication is interpretive and influenced by personal cognition and experience, reflecting pragmatic awareness in interpreting meaning beyond the literal level.

Section Two B: Multiple-Choice Meme Interpretation

This section includes four tasks, 5, 6, 7 and 8. Each task has four choices.

Meme Interpretation Task 5: Climbing Ladder Meme

Table 3: Implied Meaning of Meme

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage
People should avoid starting difficult goals	5	17.2%
Big success happens without effort or planning	0	0%
Progress can be achieved through small continuous steps	24	82.8%
The meaning is not clear	0	0%

The results indicate a strong level of correct understanding among participants, as the majority (82.8%) correctly identified that progress can be achieved through small continuous steps, with no reported confusion. The high percentage of correct responses demonstrates strong comprehension of implied meaning. Students were able to identify the underlying motivational message rather than focusing only on the literal image.

Meme Interpretation Task 6: Lion and Sheep Meme

Table 4: Implied Meaning of Meme

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage
Animals are always similar to human behavior	6	20.7%
Appearances do not always show the true nature of things	20	69%
Lions can actually survive only as vegetarians	0	0%
The meaning is not clear	3	10.3%

The findings suggest that participants generally understood the meme's intended message, although some variations in interpretation were observed, along with a small number of unclear responses (10.3%).

This result suggests that participants could interpret symbolic meaning and recognize the contrast between appearance and true nature. Such interpretation requires inferential thinking and pragmatic awareness.

Meme Interpretation Task 7: Hammar and Nail Meme

Table 5: Implied Meaning of Bent Nails Meme

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage
Bent nails are always more useful than straight ones in all cases	0	0%
Straight nails are less important than bent nails in construction work	1	3.4%
Honest or straight people may be treated unfairly in society	27	93.1%
The meaning is not clear	1	3.4%

The results show a very high level of comprehension, as most participants (93.1%) correctly interpreted the implied meaning related to social treatment of honest individuals, with minimal incorrect or unclear responses.



This was one of the highest comprehension scores in the study. The result indicates a strong ability among participants to infer social meanings and understand metaphorical messages embedded in memes.

Meme Interpretation Task 8: Sitting Man Meme

Table 6: Implied Meaning of Newton Meme

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage
Newton is simply using a mobile phone in a normal situation	1	3.4%
Scientific discoveries are not affected by distractions	0	0%
Modern technology can distract people from important tasks and ideas	24	82.8%
The meaning is not clear	3	10.3%

The findings indicate that the majority of participants correctly understood the pragmatic meaning of the meme, recognizing the idea that modern technology can distract individuals from important tasks, despite a small percentage of misunderstandings.

The finding demonstrates that students can understand modern social criticism expressed through humor and visual symbolism. This supports the role of memes in developing critical and pragmatic interpretation skills.

Section Three: Experience with Internet Memes

Question 1: Have you ever used internet memes to learn English?

Table 7: Use of Memes for Learning English

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	15	51.7%
No	14	48.3%

The results show that slightly more than half of the participants had used internet memes to learn English.

The results show that 51.7% of the participants had previously used internet memes to learn English, whereas 48.3% reported that they had not used memes for learning purposes. Although the difference between the two groups is relatively small, the findings indicate that memes already play a role in the learning experiences of many students.

This finding suggests that internet memes can serve as informal learning resources outside the classroom. Through repeated exposure to authentic language, students may acquire vocabulary, expressions, and cultural references in a natural way. This result supports Mukherjee and Mukherjee (2025), who argued that memes can facilitate language learning by combining entertainment with meaningful linguistic content.

Question 2: How often do you see or use memes in English?

Table 8: Frequency of Meme Use

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Never	1	3.4%
Rarely	5	17.2%
Sometimes	13	44.8%
Often	5	17.2%
Always	5	17.2%

Participants reported different preferences regarding the types of memes they find most useful.

The results indicate that the largest proportion of students (44.8%) reported that they sometimes use or encounter memes in English. Smaller percentages selected often, always, rarely, and never. These findings demonstrate that internet memes are a familiar part of students' digital experiences.

Regular exposure to memes may contribute to learners' understanding of authentic language use and cultural references. Since memes frequently contain humor, irony, and social commentary, repeated interaction with such content may help learners develop pragmatic awareness and contextual interpretation skills.

Question 3: What type of memes do you prefer?

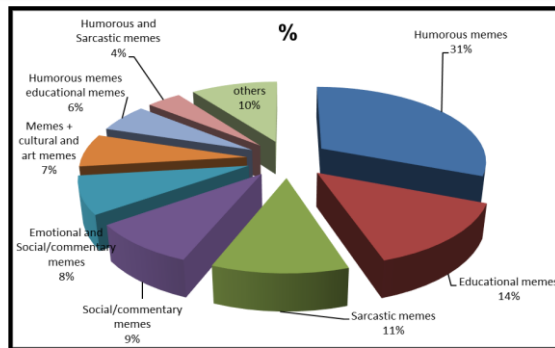


Figure 2: Preferred Types of Memes

The most frequently preferred type was humorous memes, followed by educational memes, social commentary memes, and sarcastic memes. Humorous memes were the most preferred category among participants. This preference may be explained by the entertaining nature of humor, which can increase motivation and make learning more enjoyable. Educational memes were also popular because they combine language learning with visual support and contextualized examples.

Section Four Attitudes and Engagement

This section presents the results of students' attitudes toward the use of internet memes in English language learning and their level of engagement. The results are presented using charts, frequencies, and percentages.

Item 1: Memes help understand implied meaning in English.

21 students (75%) agreed that memes help them understand implied meanings in English, 5 students (17.9%) strongly agreed, and 2 students (7.1%) disagreed.

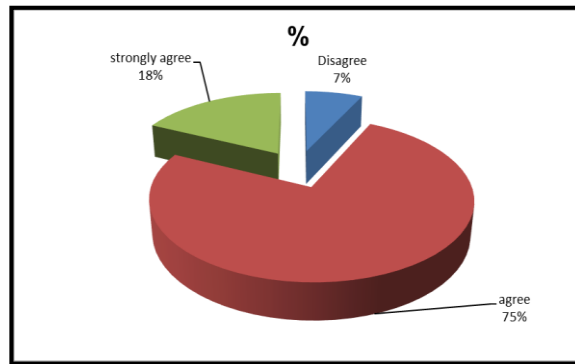


Figure 3: students' attitudes

This finding directly supports the main objective of the study. Students perceive memes as useful tools for understanding indirect communication such as irony, sarcasm, and hidden messages. This aligns with Yus (2011), who emphasized the importance of contextual interpretation in pragmatic competence.

Item 2: Memes make learning English more enjoyable.

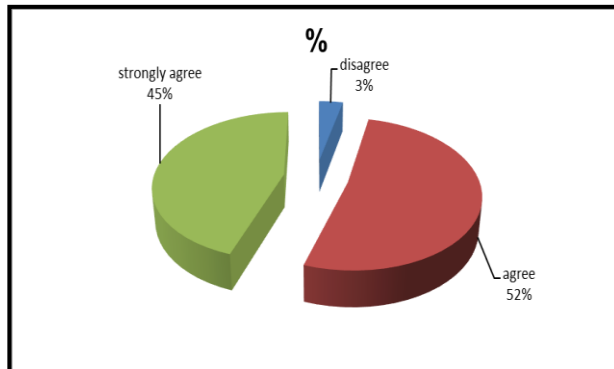


Figure 4: Students attitude Memes make learning more enjoyable

15 students (51.7%) agreed that memes make learning more enjoyable, 13 students (44.8%) strongly agreed, and 1 student (3.4%) disagreed. The result suggests that memes increase motivation and create a positive learning atmosphere. Enjoyable learning experiences often contribute to greater engagement and participation in classroom activities.

Item 3: Memes attract students' attention in English classes.

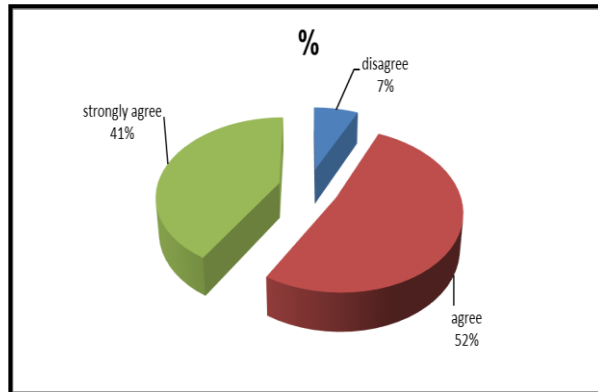


Figure 5: Students attitude Memes attract students' attention in class

15 students (51.7%) agreed that memes attract their attention in English classes, 12 students (41.4%) strongly agreed, and 2 students (6.9%) disagreed.

Visual and humorous content naturally captures learners' interest. Therefore, memes may help teachers maintain students' focus and increase classroom interaction.

Item 4: Memes increase student involvement.

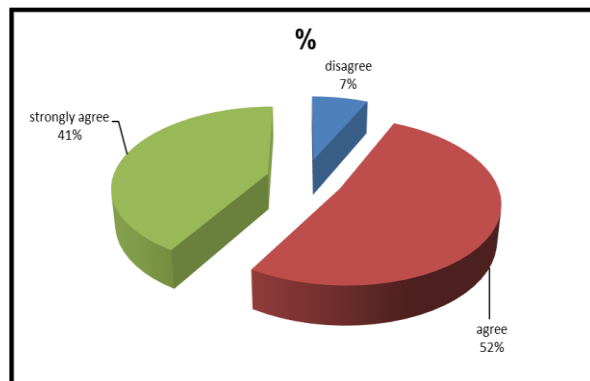


Figure 6: Students attitude Memes increase student involvement

15 students (51.7%) agreed that they would feel more involved in class activities if memes were used, 12 students (41.4%) strongly agreed, and 2 students (6.9%) disagreed.

This result indicates that memes can encourage active participation and interaction. Students appear more willing to engage with learning materials when those materials are familiar, entertaining, and relevant to their daily digital experiences.

To summarize, the results indicate that students generally have positive attitudes toward the use of internet memes in English language learning. Most responses fall under “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” across all items.

Section Five: Open-Ended Questions

This section presents the results of the open-ended questions. The responses were analyzed and grouped into common themes based on students’ answers.

Question 1: Which memes are most helpful for learning English, and why?

The responses indicate that students prefer different types of memes for learning English, which can be categorized into several key types.

The most frequently mentioned type was humorous memes, as students reported that humor makes learning more enjoyable, reduces stress, and helps them remember vocabulary more easily. Another commonly mentioned category was educational memes, which were considered useful for learning new vocabulary, grammar, and expressions in meaningful contexts.

Many students preferred a combination of educational and humorous memes, explaining that learning becomes more effective when information is presented in an engaging and enjoyable way. In addition, some participants highlighted sarcastic and social memes, noting that they help in understanding implied meanings, idioms, cultural context, and real-life communication. A smaller number mentioned simple memes with clear text and images, as they support vocabulary development and reading comprehension.

Overall, students value memes that combine humor, clarity, and educational content.

Question 2: Should memes be used regularly in English classes? Why or why not?

The majority of students supported the regular use of memes in English classes. Most participants stated that memes make learning more enjoyable, interactive, and less boring, and help them understand meanings more quickly through visual and contextual support.

Students also emphasized that memes increase engagement, motivation, and participation in class by connecting classroom learning with real-life digital communication. However, a small number of participants



expressed concerns about overuse, suggesting that memes should be used in moderation to avoid distraction or reduced academic focus.

Briefly, students show a strong positive attitude toward using memes in English classes, provided they are applied appropriately.

Item 3: Students' suggestions for using memes in English learning.

Students provided several suggestions for integrating memes into English language learning. The most common suggestion was encouraging students to create their own memes, which was seen as beneficial for improving creativity, writing skills, and vocabulary use.

Other participants recommended using memes in classroom activities such as warm-up tasks, discussion prompts, and vocabulary exercises. Some suggested using memes to teach grammar, idioms, and daily expressions, while others recommended using them as visual aids to simplify complex language points.

Additionally, students suggested using memes at the beginning or end of lessons to increase motivation and reduce boredom. A few also emphasized the importance of selecting culturally appropriate memes to ensure understanding and inclusivity.

Overall, memes are viewed as a flexible and effective teaching tool when properly integrated into lessons.

Students' Understanding of Meme Meaning

The results show that most participants were able to correctly interpret the intended meanings of the memes. In the image-based tasks, students identified implied messages related to social inequality, freedom of expression, relationships, and differences in perception.

Similarly, the multiple-choice section revealed high levels of comprehension, with students correctly identifying meanings such as gradual progress, appearance versus reality, social injustice, and technological distraction.

These findings indicate a generally strong level of pragmatic awareness among students.

Memes and Pragmatic Awareness

The findings support the idea that internet memes contribute to the development of pragmatic awareness in EFL learners. Participants demonstrated the ability to interpret irony, symbolism, and implied meanings.

Since memes combine visual and textual elements, they encourage learners to infer meaning from context rather than relying on literal interpretation. This supports the development of pragmatic competence, where meaning is understood beyond explicit language.

Students' Attitudes Toward the Use of Memes

The results show overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward the use of memes in English learning. Most students agreed that memes help them understand implied meanings, make learning more enjoyable, and increase classroom engagement.

This positive attitude may be linked to students' familiarity with memes in their daily digital communication, making learning more relatable and motivating.

Students' Preferences Regarding Meme Types

The findings indicate that humorous memes were the most preferred type, followed by educational memes and a combination of both. Students reported that humor increases motivation and improves memory retention, while educational memes support language learning in context.

Some students also valued sarcastic and social memes for their ability to reflect cultural meanings and implied communication.

Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings are consistent with previous studies, which also found that memes enhance language learning, motivation, and pragmatic understanding. Previous research similarly reported that learners can interpret implied meanings and respond positively to meme-based learning activities.

Overall, the present study supports earlier findings on the educational value of internet memes in EFL contexts.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study indicate that internet memes can play a valuable role in developing pragmatic awareness and enhancing student engagement in EFL learning. The results showed that most participants were able to interpret implied meanings embedded in memes, including irony, symbolism, social criticism, and contextual messages. This suggests that learners can move beyond literal interpretation and use contextual and visual cues to infer meaning.

In addition, students expressed positive attitudes toward the use of memes in English language learning. Most participants agreed that memes make learning more enjoyable, attract attention, and encourage classroom participation. The findings also revealed that humorous and educational



memes were the most preferred types, as they combine entertainment with meaningful learning opportunities.

These results are consistent with previous studies, which have highlighted the role of memes in supporting pragmatic competence, motivation, and learner engagement. Overall, the study suggests that internet memes can serve as effective multi-modal resources that connect authentic digital communication with classroom learning and contribute to more interactive and meaningful EFL instruction.

10. Conclusion

This study investigated the use of internet memes as a tool for developing pragmatic awareness and enhancing student engagement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. The main aim was to explore students' ability to understand the implied meanings in memes and to examine their attitudes toward using memes in English language learning.

The findings of the study revealed that students demonstrated a generally good level of understanding of pragmatic meanings embedded in memes. Most participants were able to correctly interpret implied meanings such as irony, sarcasm, social criticism, and contextual messages. This was clearly reflected in the high percentages obtained in the multiple-choice interpretation tasks, which indicated strong comprehension of non-literal meanings.

In addition, the results showed that internet memes contributed positively to students' pragmatic awareness. Learners were able to move beyond literal interpretation and understand meaning through context, visual cues, and cultural references. This suggests that memes can serve as effective multimodal tools for developing pragmatic competence in EFL contexts.

Furthermore, the study found that students had highly positive attitudes toward the use of memes in English learning. Most participants agreed that memes make learning more enjoyable, increase attention in class, and enhance participation. This indicates that memes play an important role in increasing learner motivation and engagement. Overall, the study concludes that internet memes are effective pedagogical tools that can support both pragmatic awareness and student engagement in EFL classrooms when used appropriately. This study contributes to the field of EFL pragmatics by demonstrating how internet memes can function as effective multimodal tools for enhancing learners' ability to interpret

implied meanings and engage more actively in language learning. It also provides evidence that digital, culturally familiar materials can bridge the gap between informal online communication and formal classroom instruction.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study have several important implications for English language teaching. First, teachers can integrate internet memes into classroom activities to help students understand implied meanings such as irony, sarcasm, and humor, which are essential components of pragmatic competence.

Second, memes can be used as a motivational tool to increase student engagement and participation in classroom discussions. Since memes are familiar and widely used by students in digital communication, they can bridge the gap between formal learning and real-life language use.

Third, teachers can encourage students to create their own memes as a classroom activity. This can help develop creativity, critical thinking, and deeper understanding of vocabulary and grammar in context.

Finally, memes can be used as supplementary materials in teaching vocabulary, culture, and real-life communication, making language learning more interactive and meaningful.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made for the effective use of internet memes in English language learning.

First, English language teachers are encouraged to integrate internet memes into classroom activities as a supportive tool for enhancing students' pragmatic awareness and engagement. Memes can be used to teach vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and real-life communication in a more engaging and meaningful way.

Second, teachers should actively guide students in interpreting both explicit meanings and implicit and hidden meanings in memes. Since memes are mainly based on implied, indirect, and hidden meanings that are not directly stated, learners may face difficulties or misinterpretations if they are not properly trained. Therefore, explicit instruction, guided analysis, and classroom discussion are essential to develop accurate interpretation skills.

Third, it is strongly recommended that teachers carefully select pedagogically and culturally appropriate memes. Some memes may contain hidden or implicit meanings that are not immediately obvious, and if not critically analyzed, they may lead to misunderstanding. For this



reason, educators should ensure that all materials are carefully evaluated, culturally respectful, and suitable for the educational context before being used in class.

Moreover, memes should be used in a structured and guided manner within the learning process rather than in an unplanned way. This is particularly important when dealing with ambiguous, culturally sensitive, or context-dependent content. Classroom support and guided interpretation help ensure that memes remain a safe and effective educational tool.

Finally, students should be encouraged to create their own memes as a learning activity. This promotes creativity, language production, and a deeper understanding of both explicit and hidden meanings in communication

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