

Influence of English Memes regarding Critical Digital Literacy
Trabajo de Grado II

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Abstract

While literacy practices have changed around the world, this paper mentions how students from Universidad Católica Luis Amigo have improved their literacy skills through interacting with English memes and how English memes have started to promote Critical Digital Literacy. Therefore during this research was made some analysis in order to identify how actually this practice influence the Critical Digital Literacy Development using case studies as method for this research in order to have a better analysis of the information, the data analysis found led to the conclusion that English memes are useful for developing and improve critical Digital Literacy on students being this a new communicative and literary practice.

Keywords: literacy, memes, education, literacy practice

Abstract

Si bien las prácticas de alfabetización han cambiado alrededor del mundo, este documento menciona cómo los estudiantes de la Universidad Católica Luis Amigo han mejorado sus habilidades de Literacidad al interactuar con memes en inglés y cómo los memes en inglés han comenzado a promover la Literacidad Crítica Digital. Por lo tanto, durante esta investigación fue realizado un análisis para identificar cómo esta práctica influye realmente en el Desarrollo de la Literacidad Crítica Digital, en la cual se utilizó como método de investigación un método cualitativo el cual es el estudio de caso con el fin de tener un mejor análisis de la información, dicho análisis permitió concluir que los memes en Inglés facilitan el desarrollo de la Literacidad Crítica Digital en los estudiantes siendo esta una nueva práctica comunicativa y literaria.

Palabras clave: Literacidad, memes, educación, práctica de Literacidad.

Degree requirements

This research project was made as a requirement to graduate from the Bachelor's degree in english teaching at the school of humanities and education, Universidad Catolica Luis Amigo, in Medellin, Colombia.

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Introduction

Problem statement

Nowadays promoting Critical Digital Literacy through Memes have a great impact on the process of students who are teenagers of English Teaching Program of Universidad Católica Luis Amigó, this population constantly have contact with this kind of content which is found most on social media websites, but how Critical Digital Literacy can be promoted through this content which is what they frequently read. In 2001, when (Knobel, 2005) began writing what was to become *New Literacies* we claimed ‘memes’ as an emerging ‘new literacy’, therefore that is the reason why we relate Critical Digital Literacy with memes.

When we talk about critical literacies, we mean the use of print and other media to analyze, critique, and transform the social norms, rule systems, and practices of everyday life, it is another way to decode information with verbal and visual-verbal elements to be socially recognizable with the objective of transmitting the message,

However, in the new era, the most used for people are the digital resources (Aguilera, 2013), literacies are about the many ways that people can develop in and expressing themselves actually with ‘Memes’ which have always been a part of human cultures; and the concept of ‘meme’ has been developed and become widely accepted as having explanatory power with respect to cultural development.

Memes are very connected with critical thinking because it is not just about to share a meme, it about to have a specific purpose

Problematic question:

How Critical Digital Literacy can be promoted through English memes in students of English teaching program from Universidad Católica Luis Amigó?

The interaction with a meme is an opportunity to practice reading and writing, share what the person thinks with the world, and may of them know a personal view and perspective about something, (Freire, 2020) says “Literacy is not just learning language; it is learning the world(s) that language speaks to, for and about”, memes are a great part of that due to it allows thinking about the information read, besides whom create the meme has a critical capacity which let the

author choose and organize the appropriate information to justify the ideas and knowledge this person wants to share.

Memes became literacy practice in a social space more participative for people and also allows them to collaborate in order to have social impact and influence, further passing along from person to person quickly with the intention of the receiver to interpret the message shared and spread the information around society in the shortest possible time.

General Objectives:

To discover how English memes influence on the development of Critical Digital Literacy in students of English teaching program from Universidad Católica Luis Amigó.

Specific Objective:

- To identify how English memes improve Critical Digital literacy development in students of English teaching program from Universidad Católica Luis Amigó.
- To identify how CDL can be promoted through English memes in students of English teaching program from Universidad Católica Luis Amigó.

Conceptual framework

Memes and critical thinking skills

Memes are one of the most common digital ways used for sharing opinions with the intention of transmitting or manifest something about a specific topic, memes not only are images with text now videos or audio fields are qualified as memes (Knobel, 2005) People can share ideas, opinions, and theories through memes and to have an impact on society for that reason it is named as a literacy practice; because people can interact with all this information, make an opinion and transform that information in a critical way.

Creating a meme it is a big performance for the person who design it and also for the readers due to the person who think about creating a meme, first he has to think about the topic, about the purpose he has, what he wants to transmit and the way he is going to do it, what format is going to select, what kind of population is going to interact with the meme and also the website to share it

Memes as a literacy education

Literacy practices associated with meming that are invested in meaning-making, social significance making, and identity making in one's lifeworlds, according to, (Dawkins, 1993) "memes are seen as a cultural product" because it allows sharing information in order to transmit it using visual language which also is acquiring influence while is shared and which means that memes are an excellent exercise for promoting critical digital literacy and teachers can use it as a tool for improving critical thinking. Memes are an alternative for social construction and a space for debate on political and social topics where communities can take part about what they concern (Chavez, 2020). It implies that memes have become an important part of people's life for expressing and having an active contribution, proposing new ideas and also expanding knowledge. Effectively teaching students how to create memes requires new and diverse literacy skills, semiotic and multimodal text knowledge, besides students can put their own learning into practice in classrooms creating and sharing it through memes making students be able to interpret, react, articulate and express their thoughts which are important skills to develop in a education learning process for those reason the meme is included as a didactic tool because it also help to make a description or explanation of a topic as an effective way for understanding.

Memes as a semiotic sign

Memes acts like a semiotic sing which are trying to communicate a message to a specific community, but before of being shared it has a linguistic and visual production, what (eco, 1974,)in his book " la estructura ausente" includes as a semiotic sings' communication channels like television, cinematography, paper and comics, but taking into account this time, and technological advances, one of the most used tools for sharing information and also what has a lot of receivers in a very short period of time are memes, especially if we remember the population of this research the information shared can be understood in different ways depending on the context so the meaning making process is different depending on the person who is reading using inference and association to draw out hidden or implied meanings, it is because every person read the meaning of the signs and the text differently to the others, for that reason

memes make part of semiotic text and therefore make parts of the development of new literacy competencies and be conscious about using the appropriate language for the purpose and audience.

Memes as a multimodal text

Through time the forms of communication have changed, even the way of how a text are presented, due to what people wanted is that the information shared arrived to the majority of people, and also they could understand better the meaning, for that reason the use of multimodal texts learning a foreign language are very important to transform the learning way, multimodal texts include comics/graphic novels, picture books, newspapers, brochures, print advertisements, posters, storyboards, digital slide presentations (e.g. PowerPoint), e-posters, e-books, and social media. So people who create multimodal text have the opportunity to design and share ideas, therefore it is quite important taking into account the multimodal text is very connected with memes design because it is a great bridge about developing critical digital literacy nowadays using all the resources in order to share your knowledge combining forms with the objective to help people to connect with the idea presented.

Due to memes can be presented in different formats we can refer to a meme as a digital multimodal text which involves a way of communication and a performance for those who create this content for what they use understanding codes and modes to facilitate their interpersonal development and their social interaction.

Method

Qualitative methodology

The method that we are going to use with this project is a case study, taking into account that we have a specific case and the idea is to observe and to analyze how to promote Critical Digital Literacy through English memes looking for the criticism of people in which the specific community is a real life context, they are students between 20 and 26 years old of English teaching programs of Universidad Católica Luis Amigó. So, what we wanted to explore and discover is how this specific population is constantly interacting with English memes they are watching and sharing on social media for educational purposes and how this interaction helps them to develop or improve their Critical Digital Literacy. Besides, connecting our case with the other research carried out related to this topic helps us to understand the main aspects which influence this practice and the successful results of this for making our corresponding report. Also, this method allows us to have a bigger perspective and enrich the knowledge about English memes for educational use. The instruments we used to analyze and get the information we needed were a focus group and personal interview on the web, which allowed us to collect specific data and also analyze the way they interact in real context with English memes and what they comment to each other about.

Context

English teaching program students will be selected for carrying out this research because we want to discover the influence that English memes have during their career development and of course at the time of their practicum or experiences in the field as teachers. They are three students of Universidad Católica Luis Amigó coursing the last semesters of the program. So, participants are constantly experiencing different challenges for being uploaded with nowadays technological devices to interact with each other on social networks, medias and webpages. They decided to participate in this qualitative research because they felt comfortable providing the required information and sharing the different opinions while applying the investigative instruments. Then, it will be treated as incognito for carrying their identity in the field. But, it will not impedit being original, real in order to the critical digital literacy discussions we are

going to create, being more specific about English memes as a general term and constructing knowledge for completing the established objectives.

Sample

Participants are two men and a woman who wanted to be part of this project voluntarily. Also, all of them are between the ages of 22 and 30 years old. They are young people who are interested in the topic of English memes used in educational scenarios like the university as English teaching program students and at schools as teachers in a real context in the field. So, participants have a proper language level for providing the required information through written formats and oral discourses taking into account the different resources we as researchers are using for finding the expected results with them according to the development of critical thinking creating and using English memes as a digital tool for learning and teaching processes.

Data collection

We followed a logical sequence for applying the instruments in the best possible way for finding the expected results with participants of the investigations. First, they answered a questionnaire we sent for discovering the initial information related to English memes and Critical digital literacy because it works together as digital formats promoting critical thinking. Later, we carried out a focus group in order to share opinions, complement and discuss since their interaction and experience they have felt in the influence of English memes during their careers and working. Also, they were constantly disposed to complementing their participation by sharing important information in our research.

Data analysis

Triangulation was a fundamental part of the research for understanding and organizing the information expressed and shared for the participants previously because it allowed for analyzing it since different instruments focused with particular characteristics and aims. According to the first questionnaire they answered, we noted some important information with a relationship of the influence of English memes regarding critical digital literacy being English teaching program students and teachers during the practicum or evolution in a job at schools. After a deep analysis, we could postulate the most important information we considered that

were coherent with our general and specific objectives created before. Also, they showed some emotions and likes at the moment for starting the discussions during the development of the focus group, it means they were sincere and real.

Findings

After the application of the instruments that were previously chosen to develop the research, we could find some relevant information according to the use of English memes into the classroom and the educational processes in different scenarios and having as main focus the digital and virtual contexts. So, the information presented in this research was taken from the analysis and understanding of the participants in itself. As it was mentioned before, the focus group and the questionnaire allowed and made it possible to describe.

First, it was clear that English memes have great influence on English teaching program students with respect to critical digital development due to the fact that they are constantly interacting with virtual environments to communicate with each other. For the participants it is very important to be updated to the new alternatives of presenting the information looking for a critical opinion of whatever topic, in this case the using of English memes in order to improve the digital literacy during the teaching practicum in real scenarios and with different population of students without matter their age, social status or general interest. Then, for the participants, it is relevant using English memes to increase the critical digital literacy for their professional growth in the field.

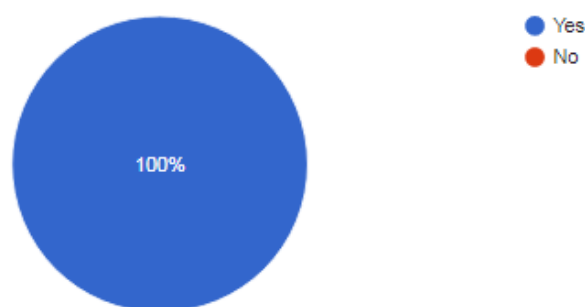
The participants concluded that an English meme is a way to express feelings, opinions, points of view, arguments or just for fun, another important characteristic that they coincided with is the critical part that it must contain. It seems easy and simple to construct but for them, it is a structured format with some basic steps for being presented and considered as a meme, it is not a singular image or irrelevant text without justification for being shared. Also, they are interacting with students, teachers and people with a relationship in education. So, an English meme must be created with objectives to promote the interaction during the different teaching and learning processes looking for the enrichment mainly with critical digital literacy development.

During the research, the participants mentioned various formats for creating the English memes. Maybe people think that it is just an image with text, but it goes beyond and can be expressed through different formats as they shared previously. The most common is the image with a purpose, it can contain text or not, normally it has text due to the communicative approach is the aim to achieve. Another format for using the English memes are the videos that allow interaction with this specific digital resource and promote criticism for the participants and complement those material that they use for their classes as teachers or practicum students. Later, they mentioned the audios as another way for creating English memes in the area, and it has a relationship with the listening skill of the students in context. So, there are multiple options not only for teachers, but also for students as an indispensable part of education. The posters were other constant considered as English memes for the participants due to that kind of format allowing having a bigger alternative for sharing the information and discussing it, of course looking and promoting critical digital literacy.

In society the uses of common memes are generally for fun and in some cases also are for debate, criticism or sharing an opinion on social media. So, the participant of the research concluded that English memes can be used for both purposes, for fun and for academic aims.

Have you learned a particular topic thorough English memes?

4 respuestas



According to the previous finding, the English memes share the characteristics with another kind of memes because it is the essence of the tool. As it was mentioned a while ago the English memes are focused on the critical development of teachers and students debating a particular topic of whatever scenario on a digital resource. But, if someone wants to create it just for fun, it is accepted and opportune for sharing with each other. That is the fundamental aspect

for the participant, the interaction, publish, comments, diversity and why not the smiles with the central content of an English meme.

The promotion of critical digital literacy can be enriched through the use of English memes, because there are many alternatives and it is not for a singular topic, an English meme can be created to talk about politics, medicine, sports, education, sexuality, etc. For that reason it is common to share opinions, perspectives, points of view, doubts, thoughts and other criteria people want. So, for the participants the English memes are an original, different and useful tool to improve the interactions not only on social media, but also in those websites that are used for educational purposes creating material for going into the classroom and carry out a lesson, the learning of English as foreign language facilitates the promotion of critical digital literacy by academic population in the field, due to they have multiple alternatives, resources and ways for sharing the information they want.

For the participants, people normally spend a lot of time interacting on websites, in which they find many memes related to the situations of community or just expressing an emotion by someone. So, emotions determine the way of behavior for people, and it can be influenced by their interactions on social media and being more specific with memes they watch, share, send or comment. After analyzing, reading or listening to a meme people can feel sad, bored, frustrated, happy, scared, or also it can be irrelevant, but the participants mentioned that normally the memes generate whatever sensation in people. So, it is the same with English memes into the classroom for English program students for their professional careers and practicum development because it determines the mood they have to teach and share with the academic population. Then, English memes go beyond of presenting an opinion, it creates a sensation in human beings.

The participants mentioned some benefits that have the use of English memes into the classrooms. So, the most common benefit is the communicative approach and interactions that English memes have taking into account that everyone share their opinions of whatever topic, it allows using the language into real contexts for teachers and students of educational scenarios, it is very important because they are improving the critical digital literacy and the use of language through written and talked speech as participants mentioned. Another relevant benefit they concluded is the promotion of critical thinking that is very necessary in all aspects of life to share a position with fundamentals. Also, with English memes into the classroom they are using a

different way of coding and decoding the information with different formats, tools and alternatives that a meme has.

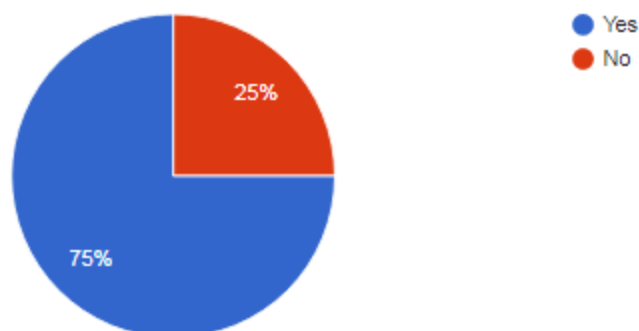
During the development of the research the participants commented and expressed that there are some ways in which English memes can become meaningful for them. It depends on the impact that the English meme has to construct their own beliefs, experiences and professional growth using this kind of material as teachers. Participants argued that the fundamental characteristic for a meme being meaningful is the critical thinking it can promote on people who are sharing the academic context. So, for them a meme seems simple but it could be the initial part or the first step in order to start a debate of whatever topic into the classroom independently of the scenario, virtual or face to face. Also, English memes can become meaningful for English teaching program students taking into account the digital resources they must use as a literacy tool. This means the starting of the interactions on websites as a new reality to carry out the educational processes nowadays.

The participants shared that they have had contact with English memes in the different places, scenarios, classes, meetings, practicum or experience as teacher they have been. So, it allowed them to have fluent research because they could directly analyse and discuss the influence and promotion English memes have on their own development in the field. First, they mentioned that the majority of the times they have used the English memes in the classroom is since the research on digital websites or just because they watched it on social media. So, teachers or pre service teachers have planned their classes using English memes as material to introduce, start or promote a debate looking for the critical thinking development of the students since digital resources. However, There are other moments that the participants create their own memes doing emphasis on the thematic they want to treat, it makes easier the interactions and the appropriation of the topic in itself, having clear fundamentals and understandable positions, for that English memes influence and promote their way of behaving as teachers.

People who participated in this research are teachers and it determines and influences the answers they provide. So, they not only create the English memes for being used during their classes, they also try to teach it to their students in the practicum or just in their daily classes. The participants feel influenced and they want to go beyond, creating an environment where the correct processes of teaching and learning are present.

Have you created English memes to express your feeling or ideas?

4 respuestas



Then, the idea is to increase the interest in students in general because it is a way to express feelings, doubts, points of view and other needed skills for sharing information with each other in an original format created by themselves or found on the internet. Taking into account that information provided by the participants it means that a teacher nowadays must be familiarized with the critical digital literacy for being acquired and for being taught to the students using the language on English memes and clearly with specific objectives looking for the promotion of critical thinking by people involved in the academic events.

After a socialization during the focus group and according to the answers that the participants provided during the exploration with the main topic, they mentioned that there are a lot of possibilities of using the English memes for their career as teachers, also to develop the profession. The participants explained and shared the reasons why they would like using English memes as important materials and tools during their classes. First, they want to promote the creativity of themselves and students, talking about a current topic that is relevant for society, having always the critical thinking as they mentioned during the whole participation, being more specific with critical digital literacy. Another key point they discussed was the alternatives that English memes provide due to English teaching program students have for creating an original, new and different way of presenting the information into the classroom and empower the students to go beyond and share their positions with an English meme. So, it means that teachers and students become influenced by English memes are protagonists of educational processes.

Discussion

The most significant contribution of our research to the field of education is knowing about the influence that English memes have on the development of English teaching program students for being uploaded with nowadays technological devices that allow us carrying out the educative processes of schools and universities since a virtual environment and also during the face to face classes because they use constantly digital tools for promoting critical thinking. So, this research is relevant for teachers, students, researchers and the general public related to academic and educative scenarios because it allows having a bigger perspective and knowledge about the uses of English memes as an original and different way of presenting the information into the classroom. On the curriculum designs of the different courses in the field, it is important including the English memes with different objectives having the promotion of critical thinking as a priority for constructing it. However, talking about some lack of the research we can say that it would have been interesting having a bigger number of participants with different range of ages, genres, likes and experiences in the field to complement it properly according to the main topic of English memes and its influence on critical digital literacy.

Conclusion

In conclusion English memes have great influence in the development of Critical Digital Literacy in students from Universidad Católica Luis Amigó, due to they do not use memes just for fun, they use it as a communication alternative with specific objectives in order to create academic or social impact on students or the people who probably is going to read it and improve their critical thinking skills while they are learning a foreign language interacting with the new literacies through diverse digital formats, and therefore motivate them to create their own, getting more people have access to them in a different and modern way, this literacy practice allow to the students be able to interpret, react, articulate and express their thoughts and not just students it also includes all the people who are interacting with this new literacy.

It is true that the person who try to design or read English memes should have a previous knowledge in order to react to the posture published by the authors, for that reason those teachers who are including memes as a way to promote critical digital literacy in the classroom should have an specific intention and objective and always take into account the previous knowledge of the students as a key for active understanding and participation, finally the digital era we are require we to be involved between the new literacies and communication modes which are of easy access for people, promote our own learning and we have the chance to share and know the different perspectives of people around the world and open our minds improving our critical digital literacy.

Then, English memes can be presented and created through multiple formats for being shared and discussed with people involved in education, it means that those English memes represent a very useful alternative for creating content and being uploaded with nowadays technological innovations promoting critical thinking. So, this generation of teachers must change the way of carrying out the processes of learning and teaching English as foreign language into the classrooms and digital scenarios.

Finally, English memes can become a solution for teachers, students, researchers and the educational community at the moment of creating original, new, contextualized and different content than the common. It implies motivation because it includes fun and criticism at the same time, images plays a very important role on memes, videos, audios, posters and other formats are considered as memes and can be used constantly for teachers evidenced on the curriculums.

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