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ENGLISH WITH MEMES

For today's generation, the Internet is the primary means of information, communication and entertainment. Social networks are now the main way to communicate and share information. Various emoticons, gifs and memes become helpers of communicating their feelings, emotions and experiences. Recently, the interest in memes on the part of teachers is especially high, as this topic is of particular interest to study due to the impact they have on learners.

In the process of teaching a foreign language, teachers often face the problem of motivating students. The solution to this problem can be the selection of material in a foreign language for practical classes on topics that are relevant or interesting to students. Such material, while fulfilling, first of all, an educational function, can also refer students to topics relevant in society or interesting to the students themselves; it can also fulfil, to some extent, an entertaining function. One example of such educational material can be a popular Internet phenomenon - memes.

The relevance of the study is due to the fact that today the issue of approach to teaching English is becoming one of the most important in the context of globalisation. The consequence of this is the growing need to master new teaching methods. The relevance is also connected with the low degree of studying memes as Internet phenomena of modern culture and the possibility of their use in the teaching process.

The hypothesis of the research: we suppose that the use of memes in English language lessons as a teaching tool allows to make the learning process diverse, the presentation of material becomes more exciting for students. In addition, the use of Internet memes allows to activate speech activity and creativity.

The object of our research is the phenomenon of a meme.

The subject of the research is the possibility of using memes in English lessons.

The goal of this work is to study the peculiarities of using memes in English language learning.

This research is devoted to such an interesting phenomenon as a meme. In the main part of our research we considered the basic concepts associated with the word "meme".

Memes didn't start with the internet. Some linguists argue that humans have used memes to communicate for centuries. Memes are widely known as conduits for cultural conversations and an opportunity to participate in internet trends. Although it's difficult to identify the first meme ever. The word "meme" first appeared in the New York Times Crossword in 1953 with the clue "Same: French." Its most recent appearance was on Dec. 24, 2021, with the clue "Something that gets passed around a lot".

The concept of "meme" was introduced by British biologist and populariser of science Richard Dawkins in 1976. In his book *The Selfish Gene*, he suggested that human culture develops according to the laws of biological evolution. And if in biology genes copy themselves and are passed from person to person, then there should be a similar term for a unit of cultural heritage. This is how the word "meme" came into being. By it Dawkins meant ideas, trends, obsessive melodies, fashionable expressions and winged phrases popular in society.

While Richard Dawkins had no idea of its future internet-related context, he used the word meme to describe an idea, behavior, or style that rapidly spreads from person to person in a culture. In his book, he likened a meme's spread to that of a virus. The word meme came from the Greek word *mimeme*, which means imitated thing. Decades later, Dawkins supported the appropriation of the word meme into the digital world. He said that the new meaning isn't that far from his original explanation.

So we defined the concept of memes and their main characteristics. We studied the history of memes and examined the classification.

In the article "The potential of using Internet memes as a teaching tool", A.O. Zagoruiko, M.A. Efremova offer a detailed classification of Internet memes based on various principles.

Speaking about the use of Internet memes for the purposes of learning English, it is natural, in our opinion, to classify memes depending on the aspect of the language being learnt.

1. Lexical memes help learners memorise vocabulary such as stable expressions, phrasal verbs, idioms.

2. Grammatical memes which demonstrate the use of different grammatical phenomena in spoken phrases.

3. Phonetic memes are memes aimed at mastering the pronunciation side of speech.

We also showed variants of using memes at lessons and created a basis for use in English lessons.

We were also able not only to show the positive facts of using memes at lessons, but also to point out the difficulties that can be encountered when working with memes. And, of course, we pointed out solutions.

Thus we studied the peculiarities of using memes in English language learning. The main goal was achieved.

We do our research in several stages. At the first stage we also conducted a survey in order to find out the attitudes of respondents to this problem. With the help of the survey we've found out that all respondents know what a meme is. After that several lessons were conducted using Internet memes. The students liked these lessons. In addition, dictations and tests showed that students learnt vocabulary faster and better. At the next stage, we invited students to create their own memes. Phrasal verbs were chosen as the topic. Since, according to the students, this is one of the most difficult topics to memorise. At the end of this stage, the students said that they enjoyed the activity. They noted that with the help of memes it was easier to fill in the meaning of these words and it was easier to use them in speech.

At the final stage, we decided to use the capabilities of artificial intelligence to see who would be better at creating memes on a given topic.

Finally we asked whether memes should be used in English lessons. As for the use of memes in the educational process, 95% are in favour of their use. Pupils whose lessons used tasks with memes noted that the tasks became more diverse, the presentation of the material was more exciting and it became easier to remember the material. In addition, creating their own memes allows them to show their creativity. All these facts prove our hypothesis.

A special pride among the results of our work is our website Memeare which was created on the basis of the materials of our research.

Memeare is a website that lets you choose memes in English to educate yourself or others. All the memes on Memeare are created either by the creators of the website, or by AI. The goal of the project is to make the process of learning English diverse, and sometimes even funny. On the site you can find a collection of useful memes on various topics: classroom rules, environment, family, tenses, grammar, phonetics, etc., and download the memes from our Google Drive.

The best part of this collection is our own memes created by our students. We have chosen the grammar topic phrasal verbs. And you can see what we have created. For example phrasal verbs to call, to look, to get.

We have also offered examples of tasks using our own memes. If you are already familiar with the verbs, you can test yourself by adding the preposition. You can also use memes to guess the meaning of verbs. And use memes with mistakes to check your grammar. With the help of memes, students can test their knowledge and learn new material. Teachers can use this resource to prepare for lessons.

The link to the site is on the website of our gymnasium. So everyone interested can use these materials. The site has been recently created. However, it is already being actively used by students and teachers. It's especially popular with high school students.

The site is constantly being updated. New memes and exercises for them are added. In the future, we plan to expand the topics and enlarge the collection.

All materials created in the course of our work you can see using the link <https://memeare.tilda.ws>

The need to adopt new learning methods and the limitless possibilities of memes as aids indicates that our research can be continued. The information acquired during the research is useful for learning and understanding the essence of memes and their role in communication; it develops language competence and encourages people to activate speech activity.

The materials of our research work can be useful at the lessons of the English language.