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Exploring the Use of Memes in Learning about Norwegian Culture and Language in a Foreign Language Learning Context

This paper explores the use of memes in learning about Norwegian language and culture within a foreign language learning context. Memes, and particularly Internet memes, as a relevant part of today's popular culture, can be considered useful authentic resources for learning a foreign language. Due to their informal character, memes can facilitate learners' engagement in the classroom and offer exposure to authentic language. The aim of this paper is hence to analyse several popular memes featuring Norwegian texts (transmitted through social media platforms such as Reddit or Instagram) with the intention of using them in the Norwegian classroom. The analysis reveals that memes could be highly useful resources in learning about Norwegian culture as well as improving the vocabulary and understanding of grammar.

Keywords: Internet memes, Norwegian culture, foreign language learning, cultural awareness, authentic resource, socio-cultural context

General considerations

In this paper, we explore the use of Internet memes in learning Norwegian and gaining knowledge about Norwegian culture within a foreign language learning context. More particularly, we intend to look into how memes can be used to enhance the understanding of Norwegian language and culture for university students who study Norwegian at Bachelor's level in Romania. First of all, when learning Norwegian outside Norway, the extent of its authentic socio-cultural context is rather limited. Thus, learners might have difficulties in grasping the semantics of the language, in producing accurate grammatical forms or in achieving native-level pronunciation. Secondly, the learning of a foreign language in a formal setting can be less engaging

or artificial due to the teacher's simplified input aimed at practising the language (Hasan 2006). The discourse in a formal educational context "contrasts with other types of language produced in real communicative discourse" (Hasan 2006: 7). Likewise, we argue in this paper that given their humorous character and online availability Internet memes can provide a meaningful socio-cultural context and can facilitate students' engagement in learning a foreign language in a formal setting.

Our opinion is that in the field of foreign language learning teachers need to seize the educational opportunities that arise when making use of digital technologies. During the Covid-19 pandemic, teaching and learning have undergone considerable changes. The availability on the Internet of a variety of content urges the teacher of a foreign language to consider the pedagogical benefits of using different digital apps and resources. The current paper intends to provide an understanding of the added value that is brought in the classroom as a result of using Internet memes in the teaching of Norwegian at undergraduate level. Our focus is twofold and targets mainly the development of students' language competence as well as their cultural awareness.

Harnett, Brown and Anderson (2014) suggest that the emergence of digital technology has determined students to rethink the way in which they perceive, handle, explore and make use of the information they are presented. On a daily basis they "live immersed in a world of social networking, texting, blogs, wikis, online games, music and videos" (Harnett, Brown and Anderson 2014: 118). The target group that we have in mind for this paper are Generation Z and Y students, who value experiential learning and the use of technology. They prefer information to be presented in a multimodal manner by employing different modes. According to Prensky (2001: 2–3), Generations Z and Y prefer graphics and visual resources to written ones. As such, memes represent a suitable authentic resource due to their attractive packaging that is both catchy and multimodal. In addition, "most students are familiar with memes" (Hartman et al. 2021: 79) and their use in the classroom "can help activate background knowledge by allowing students to apply a familiar means of interacting with information" (Hartman et al. 2021: 79).

Internet memes have gained worldwide popularity, but can students relate to them in an academic manner and understand their didactic utility? In a digital age where education is intensively digitised, there is a certain urgency for a new type of literacy suitable to handle different types of content. Therefore, Scolari (2019) suggests the need to develop multimodal literacy, i.e. the "ability to interact in a meaningful way with multimodal texts (icons, visual representations, sound, video) and to create multimodal and digital resources". In this line of thought, multimodality refers to a theoretical framework in social semiotics which studies language as an act of making meaning together with other non-linguistic semiotic resources (Kress et al. 2001; Kress 2010). An Internet meme is a multimodal resource because it incorporates more than one mode of communication to create meaning (colour, font, letters, layout, etc.).

Undoubtedly, language and culture are both present in learning a foreign language because every utterance is situated in a socio-cultural setting. Therefore, many researchers consider that foreign language teaching and learning is deeply connected with the concept of culture (Kramsch 1998; Liddicoat and Scarino 2013). Learners of a foreign language become mediators between one or more languages. Moreover, they need to demonstrate that their linguistic abilities are backed up by their “cross-cultural understanding” (Carroli 2011). Internet memes can contain explicit and implicit elements of cultural representation and a thorough understanding of these is rooted in the ability to make connections between the linguistic and the cultural counterparts of a language. This mediation between one’s mother tongue and the target foreign language is proof that learners have to get accustomed to new communicative and cultural repertoires (Pop 2020). Although the aim to integrate both language and culture in foreign language teaching has been covered in the literature by many researchers (Kramsch 1998; Byram 1997; Dearsdorff 2006), Scarino (2009: 74) indicates that much is left for the teacher to decide what teaching resources are suitable for intercultural learning as there is no “adequate theory of language development from an intercultural perspective”. Therefore, teachers need to explore in depth the available content and find resources that can be conducive to learning a foreign language.

1. What are Internet memes?

The term *meme* – first coined by Richard Dawkins in 1976, when in his book *The Selfish Gene* he envisioned the cultural ideas or behaviours transmitted through imitation (Dawkins 2016: 229–230) – has undergone significant changes, particularly with regard to its subgenre, the Internet meme, which has become increasingly popular in recent years. Patrick Davison noticed the lack of a suitable rigorous definition of the term and proposed a definition which we consider proper for our paper: “an Internet meme is a piece of culture, typically a joke, which gains influence through online transmission” (Davison 2012: 122). According to Shifman, memes are “content units [...] in the form of remakes, parodies, or imitations” (2013: 73) which encourage meme creators to modify the original input. In terms of their online popularity, memes can last anytime from days to years. Furthermore, their global character, which is also relevant and adds to their transmission, is completed by their local value since Internet memes transmit ideas, beliefs and feelings specific to a given culture (Nistor 2022: 35), functioning as part of a culture (Nissenbaum and Shifman 2017: 485), and contributing to a set of ideas specific to a certain community. However, most importantly, they represent “a distinctive hallmark of digital culture” (Smith and Copland 2022: 25). Memes have gained global success as a result of their humorous tone, since the majority of Internet memes are jokes. Moreover, the likelihood of being transmitted by a large number of Internet users

adds to the speed of their transmission and emphasizes their uniqueness (Davison 2012: 122). Han (2019) highlights the potential of Internet memes in conveying complex information such as language, culture or identity. Their rich content is an outcome of “memeing” (Han 2019: 71), i.e. sharing, creating and remixing information in a meme by several authors.

Memes as a genre of popular culture offer attractive content to youths. Lüders and Sundet consider that “it is necessary to understand the importance of technology and the different platforms for the younger generations [...] as well as that of the various new entertainment platforms such as Twitch, YouTube, or of the memes, humour and challenges on TikTok” (Lüders and Sundet 2023: 4). Therefore, in order to engage younger generations in the learning of a foreign language teachers need to be savvy in finding suitable online content that can become a meaningful teaching resource.

In terms of audience, Internet memes target a variety of groups ranging from teenagers to adults and seniors. Internet memes are “sensitive indicators of public opinion” (Denisova 2019: 5) as they present current issues in various domains. The message they convey is meant to “entertain, inform and educate” (Denisova 2019: 5). However, Internet memes can sometimes trigger controversy as they touch upon sensitive subjects. Furthermore, because they are highly visible due to the messages they convey, Internet memes should be understood and explored (Denisova 2019: 5). Considering the popularity of Internet memes, their informal character, and influence upon the younger generations, we argue that it is worth analysing these resources as prospective means of enhancing language competence in Norwegian and cultural awareness at undergraduate level.

At the same time, we need to mention intertextuality as a central feature of memes, as observed by Laineste and Voolaid (2017: 28), converging the medium, the people and the message during the process of sharing cultural texts that engage users. The popularity of memes lies in their intertextuality, since they manage to easily attract users and they replicate with even more ease due to their engaging character, due to the convergence between the appropriate message appealing to the appropriate people through the appropriate medium.

2. Prospecting the use of Internet memes in language teaching and learning

This paper explores, from a didactic perspective, the suitability of including Internet memes in teaching Norwegian language and culture within a foreign language learning context. The targeted group are undergraduates who have no or minimal knowledge of Norwegian in the first year of their enrolment. Internet memes can be used in a variety of ways in the foreign language classroom. Literature in the field of education indicates that learners of a foreign language who have encountered

memes in formal or informal contexts have developed their language competence in the foreign language (Knobel and Lankshear 2007; He 2008; Han 2019; Kayali and Altuntaş 2021). However, the majority of published literature generally refers to classroom projects or literature reviews, and empirical research findings are scarce. Memes have been used as didactic resources to enhance the study of literature (Hartman et al. 2021), the study of math and journalism (Dongqiang et al. 2020) or the study of visual arts (Domínguez Romero and Bobkina 2017). The present paper is rooted in a foreign language learning context and represents a pedagogical endeavour to incorporate Internet memes in teaching Norwegian language and culture. Owing to the fact that memes foster cultural representations, students' cultural awareness can be enhanced. This paper fills a gap in knowledge as there are no similar studies that focus on teaching Norwegian as a foreign language at undergraduate level.

Mememes are authentic resources with language that is not graded to a certain level. Used as a teaching resource, they offer the possibility to introduce new elements of vocabulary or grammar which might not be included in the curriculum, but which are relevant for the discussion that takes place in the classroom. In this respect, memes are in line with the idea of enabling naturalistic language acquisition proposed by Krashen and Terrell (1983), as they provide students with a wide variety of exposure to language input. Internet memes tackle diverse topics ranging from culture and economy to current socio-political situation or health issues during the Covid-19 pandemic. Mememes can incorporate both explicit (art, food, clothing, etc.) and implicit elements of culture (values, beliefs, ethics, etc.). Therefore, they can be included in a culture and civilization course for students who study a foreign language.

Internet memes can be used as input for explaining syntax, morphology, punctuation rules or the pragmatics of the foreign language. Still, choosing these memes is heavily dependent on the teacher's competence to select relevant texts. Mememes can exhibit spelling or punctuation mistakes, text that might be difficult to interpret or the meaning of the words that might be difficult to grasp. Consequently, teachers need to judge the quality of a meme in view of some criteria that refer to: grammatical accuracy and appeal to students (Bugler et al. 2017), cultural appropriateness and relevance to learners' needs (McGrath 2002), novelty, coherence (Heylighen 1997), unbiased content or availability, just to name a few.

As receptive skills are concerned, the pre-listening and pre-reading stages of an activity are meant to engage students and allow them to make predictions about the content that is presented. Mememes can be included in this initial stage of an activity because they are catchy and can set the mood for the whole activity. In addition, memes can be used as an individual activity following the stages of presentation, practice and production.

3. Research methodology

The conceptual framework that guides this stage of the research is drawn from the distinction made by Kress (2010) between modes and mediums in the context of multimodality. Where applicable in the analysis stage, the modes are detailed and broken down into five categories: linguistic, visual, aural, gestural, and spatial. The mediums were social media platforms and websites. Qualitative content analysis was used as a research method to analyse seven Internet memes. The selection criteria were twofold: (a) Internet memes with texts written in Norwegian and (b) Internet memes that reveal Norwegian cultural elements. With this in mind, we consider that the Internet memes selected could be useful in improving undergraduates' vocabulary and grammar knowledge in Norwegian as well as their awareness of Norwegian culture.

We have stressed the importance of bringing digital culture into the classroom to enhance Norwegian culture and language learning. Hence, we have browsed several social media platforms and websites to identify the most suitable memes for classroom use. The search revealed that the most complex collection of memes could be found on Reddit and Instagram, whereas Facebook seems to be less interesting for meme creators and users. It is necessary to mention here that our focus was primarily on image macro memes, namely memes that involve adding the same text to various images or adding different texts to the same image, as defined by Davison (2012: 127). The fact that these do not contain videos makes them easier to be used in the classroom. The complexity of these memes, since they incorporate images and written text, makes them highly suitable for language learning, apart from helping create a more relaxed and less formal context in the usually formal space of a university language learning classroom.

4. An analysis of memes to be used in learning about Norwegian culture and language in a foreign language learning context

We will now proceed to analysing the memes selected in accordance with the criteria mentioned: memes with text written in Norwegian and memes that are suitable for learning about Norwegian language and culture. As the research methodology is concerned, we conducted a qualitative content analysis of these Internet memes.

The first meme (see Fig. 1) depicts four successive images that present the ways in which a person can learn Norwegian. It is indicated that the least beneficial would be to learn Norwegian with a teacher (Norwegian: "lære norsk med en lærer"), the second choice would be to use DuoLingo to learn Norwegian ("lære norsk med Duolingo"). Furthermore, the second best choice would be to learn Norwegian with the help of Reddit ("lære norsk med Reddit"), whereas the best and, presumably, the most advantageous choice would be to learn Norwegian through memes ("lære

norsk med memes”). This Internet meme suggests that memes can be a powerful tool when learning Norwegian as a foreign language.

- Mode: linguistic (the phrase *lære norsk med* is repeated in every image so it is easy for the reader, in our case an undergraduate with little knowledge of Norwegian, to follow the idea and be able to focus only on what is different in each picture); visual (the larger the font of the text, the more beneficial the learning tool); spatial (the image of the brain is situated in the middle of the meme indicating that the brain is the central element)
- Medium: Reddit, a social media platform
- Denotative meaning: the process of learning Norwegian can be performed in different ways
- Connotative meaning: why waste your time with other learning tools when memes are the most advantageous for learning Norwegian
- Didactic value: focus on reading skills, grammar and speaking skills as a follow-up activity

The second meme (see Fig. 2) illustrates a similar idea by means of two distinct images. This time the focus is not on how to learn Norwegian, but on motivation. The first image in the meme, depicting a man looking rather serious, contains the following text: “å lære norsk fordi du er interessert i norsk språk og kultur”, which means “to learn Norwegian because you are interested in Norwegian language and culture”. The meme creator highlights a much stronger motivation behind learning Norwegian: to understand more memes (“å lære norsk; å forstå flere memes”) by using an image of the same man with a happy face, which conveys a far stronger motivation to learn Norwegian than the first image. Thus, this meme comes to support the central idea of this paper, that memes, due to their popularity and their humorous content that digital users are familiar with, can easily engage learners and provide motivation for studying a foreign language.

- Mode: linguistic (the phrase *å lære norsk* is repeated in both images, making it easier for the reader, in our case an undergraduate with little knowledge of Norwegian, to follow the idea and be able to focus only on what is different in each picture); visual (the font of the text is the same in each image); spatial (the image of the man is situated in the middle of the meme, making it a central element); gestural (the facial expression and non-verbal language of the man convey a message that is in line with the text)
- Medium: Reddit, a social media platform
- Denotative meaning: one needs to be diligent, serious and hardworking in order to study Norwegian; the purpose of learning Norwegian is to know more about Norwegian language and culture
- Connotative meaning: the learning of Norwegian can be funny when one chooses to do that only to understand memes
- Didactic value: focus on reading skills, grammar and speaking skills as a follow-up activity



Fig. 1. *Learning Norwegian with Memes*

Source: <https://www.reddit.com/media?url=https%3A%2F%2Fi.redd.it%2Fgrahwbf9yzb11.jpg>
 (accessed: 20.12.2022)



Fig. 2. *Learning Norwegian to Understand More Memes*

Source: <https://www.reddit.com/media?url=https%3A%2F%2Fi.redd.it%2Fkmd3lpn2wc631.png>
 (accessed: 20.12.2022)

Meme no. 3 (see Fig. 3) showcases the grimaces Norwegians make when they have to hold the door for a stranger (the original Norwegian text is: “Fjeset til Nordmenn når de holder døren åpen for en fremmed...”). This meme, transmitted through the Instagram account @artigememes (the adjective *artig* can be translated into English as ‘funny’, ‘interesting’), exploits cultural stereotypes by making the reader understand the attitudes of Norwegians towards opening doors to strangers, or maybe to foreigners who have different customs, as the word *fremmed* can be translated both ways, namely ‘stranger’ or ‘foreigner’. Hence, both strangers and foreigners get to learn about the values Norwegians appreciate.

- Mode: linguistic (the text is representative for the three images depicting people); visual (the text is in large bolded letters); spatial (the image focuses on the face of three people and no other details are presented); gestural (the facial expression and non-verbal language of the three people are in accordance with the text)
- Medium: Instagram, a social media platform
- Denotative meaning: this is the facial expression of someone who opens the door to a stranger
- Connotative meaning: this can be humorously perceived as a cultural stereotype
- Didactic value: focus on reading skills, grammar, introduction to Norwegian culture and civilization

Meme no. 4 (see Fig. 4) makes use of two of the most treasured elements in Norwegian culture, elements which are also widely known to be representative for the Scandinavian space: Vikings and Christmas. By using an illustration depicting two Vikings laughing at someone, this meme has a considerable potential to become popular with any group of learners of Norwegian due to the familiar character of its protagonists. The image is rendered complete by the text, which refers to a topic that could be considered surprising after seeing the image of the Vikings: Christmas. Thus, the image of the heroic heathen figures of Scandinavian history is juxtaposed with a text that can be translated as follows: “When people in other countries have to wait until tomorrow to open the Christmas gifts” (in Norwegian: “Når folk i andre land må vente til i morgen for å åpne julegaver”). The result is surprising and amusing at the same time, revealing that Norwegians do not have to wait until Christmas Day to open the gifts, as is the case with other countries and cultures.

- Mode: linguistic (the text is connected with the image depicting two Vikings); visual (the text is in large bolded letters); spatial (the central focus of the image are two Vikings); gestural (the facial expression and non-verbal language of the two Vikings are in accordance with the text)
- Medium: Instagram, a social media platform
- Denotative meaning: this is the facial expression of someone who opens his/her presents; it is customary in Norway to open the gifts on Christmas Eve

Fjeset til Nordmenn når de holder døren åpen for en fremmed...



Fig. 3. *The Face of a Norwegian*

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cazl3H3NQI8/?igshid=MTI1bGthOTg0ZG8yOA%3D%3D>
(accessed: 10.01.2023)

Når folk i andre land må vente til i
morgen for å åpne julegaver



Fig. 4. *Christmas Gifts*

Source: <https://www.reddit.com/media?url=https%3A%2F%2Fi.redd.it%2F29y5te2xh8621.png>
(accessed: 20.12.2022)

- Connotative meaning: Norwegians open their presents earlier in comparison to other cultures
- Didactic value: focus on vocabulary and introduction to Norwegian culture and civilization

While the other memes we have discussed above do not contain images of well-known figures, Meme no. 5 (see Fig. 5) is repetitive and makes use of images from the popular American comedy TV series *Friends*, produced between 1994 and 2004. The message it conveys is related to the Covid-19 pandemic, when people all over the world were supposed to stay at home, but this recommendation was in contradiction with the Norwegian lifestyle, as we learn from this meme.



Fig. 5. *Friends*

Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/norge/comments/fnguth/alle_over_50_%C3%A5r_n%C3%A5r_de_h%C3%B8rer_p%C3%A5_beskjedene_fra/ (accessed: 20.12.2022)

The images featuring two characters from the TV series, Phoebe and Joey, illustrate a conversation between them, in which Phoebe seems to be uttering words that are repeated by Joey. The same image of Phoebe is repeated three times, juxtaposed with an image of Joey, each time containing a different word (in Norwegian: “hold. deg. hjemme”, i.e. “stay. [you]. at home”), while the last image, which is different, contains all the words put together, conveying the message: “stay. at home. stay at home.” Joey’s reaction is totally contrary to the recommendation provided by Phoebe – he exclaims, as if enlightened: “travel to the cabin!” (in Norwegian: “reis på hytta!”).

Students of Norwegian can thus learn about the importance of the cabin in Norwegian culture: not even the fact that people were urged to stay at home because of the pandemic can prevent Norwegians from travelling to their cabins. *Frilufslivet* ‘life outdoors’ is central to the Norwegian lifestyle, and owning a *hytte* ‘cabin’ enables Norwegians to indulge in spending time outdoors, in nature, as often as possible. This meme, produced during the coronavirus pandemic, indicates that their strong attachment to nature cannot be altered even by a disease that confined millions indoors.

- Mode: linguistic (the text repeats itself in 6 images); visual (the font of the text is common); spatial (the four images on the left have Phoebe as central focus while the ones on the right depict Joey); gestural (the facial expression and non-verbal language of the two characters are different in the last row as compared to the previous six images, where they are the same)
- Medium: Reddit, a social media platform
- Denotative meaning: Covid-19 is dangerous and you should stay at home
- Connotative meaning: many Norwegians did not adhere to the restrictions and went to their cabins anyway
- Didactic value: focus on vocabulary, grammar, and introduction to Norwegian cultural traits

Meme no. 6 (see Fig. 6) is particularly useful to learn the use of the indefinite pronouns *noen* and *noe*, which can be translated as ‘some’ or ‘any’ and are normally used with uncountable nouns, but *noen* also means ‘somebody’ or ‘someone’, whereas *noe* means ‘something’ or ‘anything’. The Norwegian text featuring in this meme is: “Når du må forklare noen noe mer enn to ganger...”, which translates into English as follows: “When you have to explain to somebody something more than twice...”. It is an illustrative example of the use of *noen* and *noe* in the same sentence, while the text is juxtaposed with a funny illustration of SpongeBob SquarePants, the main character of the popular American animated comedy TV series that started to be broadcast in 1999. On the 20th anniversary of the series, Aja Romano remarked that SpongeBob had grown into a cultural phenomenon as SpongeBob memes had become some of the most popular Internet memes, particularly on Reddit (Romano 2019).

Når du må forklare noen noe mer enn to ganger...

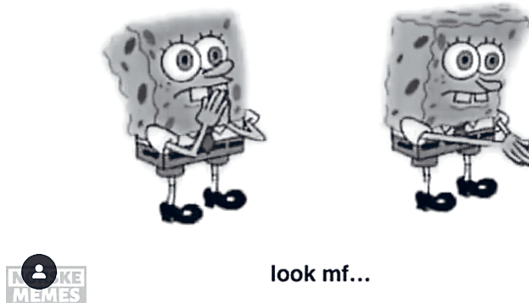


Fig. 6. *SpongeBob SquarePants*

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/ChHUR1Lt9Pr/?hl=en> (accessed: 10.01.2023)

- Mode: linguistic (explanatory text); visual (the text is in large bolded letters); spatial (two images of SpongeBob SquarePants); gestural (SpongeBob SquarePants has a different non-verbal language in each image)
- Medium: Instagram, a social media platform
- Denotative meaning: grammar can be sometimes difficult to understand
- Connotative meaning: SpongeBob SquarePants acts a bit childish and clumsy in the TV series; grammar should be explained differently in accordance with the learners' age and language skills
- Didactic value: focus on grammar

Meme no. 7 (see Fig. 7) can be considered highly useful in both expanding the vocabulary and learning the degrees of comparison of adjectives in Norwegian. The meme contains illustrations of two characters engaged in a conversation on who is the stupidest. It represents a funny method to approach a rather arid field, and the Norwegian text attached to the three illustrations is as follows: "Jeg er den dumme person" (in English: "I am the stupidest person"). The reply is: "Jeg kjøpte en app for å ta bilder", which translates as: "I bought an app to take photos", while the answer is: "Du er helt klart dummere" (in English: "You are definitely stupider"). We can thus use the meme to discuss the endings that need to be added to adjectives in order to use them for comparison, namely *-ere* for the comparative form, and *-est(e)* for the superlative. The text of the meme illustrates the definite form of the superlative, i.e. *den dumme* 'the stupidest',



Fig. 7. *Memes Are Best in Norwegian*

Source: <https://www.reddit.com/media?url=https%3A%2F%2Fi.redd.it%2Fs00j89kszhn31.jpg> (accessed: 10.01.2023)

providing an opportunity for discussing both the indefinite and definite forms of the superlative.

- Mode: linguistic (explanatory text); visual (the font of the text is bigger in the first image in comparison to the other two images); spatial (the two characters have different size in each image); gestural (gesture: offering the crown, i.e. non-verbal language indicating recognition and acceptance)
- Medium: Reddit, a social media platform
- Denotative meaning: grammar can be sometimes difficult to understand
- Connotative meaning: someone can act more stupidly than you in some situations
- Didactic value: focus on grammar

5. Discussion

In view of the qualitative analysis performed we consider that the Internet memes we have selected represent a useful resource in developing undergraduates' language skills – in expanding their vocabulary and enhancing their understanding of grammar. Apart from this, our analysis has focused on the cultural traits exhibited by the selected memes, which can thus broaden undergraduates' level of cultural awareness. In line with the literature we have indicated, we consider that owing

to their humorous character and popularity memes can enhance language acquisition and cultural awareness.

The qualitative analysis of the selected memes revealed the potential benefits of using them as instruments for both expanding vocabulary and grammar knowledge, and for becoming more familiar with Norwegian culture. Still, in order to evaluate undergraduates' level of cultural awareness before and after using Internet memes it would be useful to conduct a survey and use a questionnaire as a research tool for collecting information.

There are certain problems that could arise from the use of memes in the foreign language classroom, and the most likely one would be the fact that some of the memes contain mistakes. However, this can be avoided as long as the teacher makes a proper choice of the most suitable memes for classroom use.

Each of the seven Internet memes has been qualitatively analysed with reference to mode, modality, didactic value, and the denotative and connotative meaning. The analysis revealed that the memes have both a denotative and a connotative meaning, which makes them appropriate for engaging undergraduates in speaking activities that focus on the literal meaning as opposed to the secondary, cultural meaning. The various modes in which the Internet memes render a message relate to the multimodal teaching methods in which different sensory modes are employed. Thus, undergraduates' different learning styles are taken into consideration.

6. Conclusions

The idea of this research started first of all from the necessity to enable foreign language learners' ability to manipulate various types of educational content. Although Internet memes containing English texts are the most popular worldwide, people from around the world have become both users and creators of memes in their own languages. This is also the case with Norwegians, who have created and circulated numerous memes that are representative for their culture.

For obvious reasons, the strong impact of memes stems from the use of appropriate images to convey the desired message, images that are rather familiar and have usually been transmitted with various messages in various languages. This is owed, indeed, to the fact that the same images represent indefinite sources for memes, if we consider that many of them have been continuously used in meme templates. There are countless websites that give their users the chance to create their own memes by making use of the existing template database. This opportunity eventually contributes to the creation and transmission of Internet memes by allowing users to become actively engaged, to become meme creators.

Our analysis gives us reasons to experiment with the use of memes in the classroom with students of Norwegian at undergraduate level. Developing learners' cultural awareness is paramount when learning a foreign language, so it is only

natural to make use of memes that reveal Norwegian cultural traits. In addition, due to their popularity, and their humorous content that digital users are familiar with, Internet memes can easily engage learners and provide motivation for studying a foreign language.

In addition, we intend to engage in further research and conduct empirical studies in an attempt to explore the perceptions of both teachers and students on using memes in a foreign language teaching context. The fast changing world we live in sets the pace for the educational environment as well. Making use of the growing influence of technology in order to reach common ground with younger generations and facilitate their foreign language learning has become more and more necessary. Memes, as key elements of popular culture, are relevant and attractive when it comes to youth identity. Likewise, they represent useful authentic resources in foreign language teaching and learning.

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