

## INTERNET MEMES IN ESP CLASSROOM

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What do we usually associate teaching and learning English for specific purposes with? Coursebooks and handouts, tablets and tables, flashcards and board come to mind. The problem is that there is a difference between all these things and real-life English, hence the task of an ESP teacher is to bring authenticity into their classroom.

According to Esteve and Safont, a crucial feature in ESP methodology is authenticity [7]. ESP as a learner-centered approach is concentrated hugely on learners' needs and obviously published texts from coursebooks can not satisfy these needs. Due to this fact the real-life and job-related situations should be used as a source of authentic materials for an ESP classroom. Internet memes can be an option to bridge the interest to the content and language learning in ESP classroom.

Macmillan online dictionary gives two definitions of "meme" [5]:

1. a feature of a culture, for example its language, that is passed from one generation to the next;
2. an idea or piece of information that spreads very quickly on the Internet.

Initially "meme" was presented by the biologist Richard Dawkins as a term to describe a theoretical self-replicating unit of cultural transmission that spreads by imitation [8]. Within Internet culture the term is commonly used to refer to phrases, videos, images, or a combination thereof that are widely propagated by Internet users [1 p. 1]. This usage of the term now refers to a unit that combines an image and text clear for internet users [1].

Internet memes refer to an emerging form of up-to-date discourse which appears in online discussion forums, social media and generally Internet culture [1 p. 1]. Due to this fact they are extremely important pieces of authentic material to be considered not only for those who study memetics but in ESP classroom of any subject field as they can relate to any topic or issue. For the majority of ESP learners the focus will be mainly not on the sociocultural aspect (the exception can be, for instance, marketing students) but information generally understood by internet users functioning as a part of communication.

If we take into consideration Hyland's five aspects that characterising ESP [3], we can claim that memes as material cover all of them:

1. the focus on studying communication rather than language
2. the teacher as a researcher
3. the collaborative pedagogies
4. the focus on language variation
5. the representation of broader social practices in language.

Internet memes are extremely important for communicative purposes since they can provide a realistic context for tasks that relate to learners' needs.

Using internet memes for designing tasks can be considered to be both authentic (for example, for social media marketing students) and for pedagogical purposes in case of other subject fields. The book "Authenticity in Materials

Development for Language Learning” suggests learners to generate a meme using digital devices as one of activities and then submit it on an institution’s virtual learning environment (e.g. Moodle) [6]. This task compiles authenticity principles both intellectually and linguistically challenging [6].

Internet memes can be used as a short warming up activity or a filler [2]. For instance, a teacher can take an existing meme and delete the words and ask students to show their creativity and write their own job-related texts. Meme-based warmers promote speaking [2]. Facilitating the acquisition of all of the linguistic skills, productive and receptive: writing, speaking, reading and listening is the ultimate goal of such activity [2]. The activities mentioned above can be applied in an ESP classroom with the usage of subject or job related vocabulary of a particular field (Fig.1).

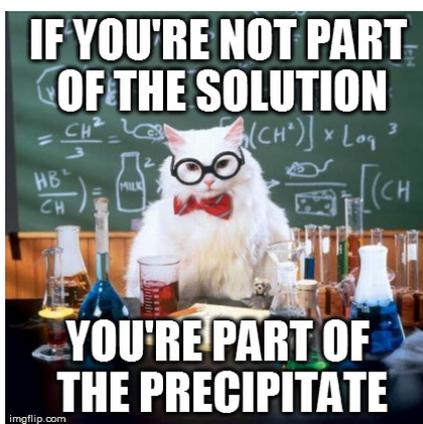


Figure 1. An example of a meme containing text related to the subject field of chemistry [4].

To conclude, we can consider using internet memes in ESP classroom as an essential authentic material nowadays. To satisfy students’ needs we can adapt them to their job-related context and use both for simulating real-life and pedagogical purposes. Thus, internet memes can be used not only as a material but also as a tool in the teaching-learning process.

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