



Teaching Through Memes to Help Audience Understand The Concept

(A Pragmatic-Semiotic Study)

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Abstract

The monotonous teaching style carried out by teachers or lecturers tends to make students feel bored. The communication culture using memes is rapidly growing on social media can inspire and can be used to attract the attention of the audience in the learning process. Currently, many accounts provide educational-themed memes, considering that social media is the most accessible tool for everyone, including students, to get information. By utilizing pragmatic-semiotic, this study aims to describe and analyze how symbols in educational-themed memes, especially linguistics and English, can influence the audience to understand, namely Netizens. This study used the descriptive qualitative method. During the interval, data collection uses the listen-to method without being directly involved in netizen conversations. The results of this study indicate a positive response and active discussion among netizens responding to the meme. Some memes discuss the differences between Old English and Modern English, accents, tenses, syntax, etymology, phonetics, pragmatics, homonyms, and language variations. Some netizens who couldn't catch the idea in the meme chose to ask. Meanwhile, the meme creators and netizens who understand the idea in memes explain to those who ask. This proves that memes can help netizens understand the concepts more easily because an idea that needs a long explanation can be represented by a single meme.

Keywords: Memes, Pragmatic-Semiotic, Teaching

Introduction,

Learning is a challenge in the world of education amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Online learning makes teachers and students unable to meet face-to-face. One of the problems that can arise is the difficulty in maintaining students' focus that they pay attention to the teacher who is explaining. The monotonous learning model with lectures and displaying a lot of presentation texts is no longer relevant today. Remembering, online learning makes students face laptop and cellphone screens for hours, so it will be difficult for them to understand so much text.

In the end, students choose to look for sources of information other than the teacher to help them understand the subject matter. One of the closest things to students in the digital era is social media. There is a unique phenomenon in social media related to the world of education lately. That is easy to find accounts that make educational-themed memes there. These memes can directly describe how the concept of Science, such as History, Chemistry, Biology, including Linguistics, and English.

Memes are part of online culture that combine images with little text that contains a specific purpose. Christiany Juditha (2015) says:

The term meme comes from the ancient Greek "meme," which means something that imitates or resembles. Another similar term is "meme," which means memory. In its evolution, the term meme was first contained by a geneticist from Oxford University, Richard Dawkins. In his book entitled "The Selfish Gene," he coined the term meme by shortening the word mime to meme because it requires a monosyllabic equivalent that sounds similar to the word "gene."

Blackmore (1999: 4) says the basic explanation of memes is something transferred from one person to another. This particular thing can take many forms: an idea, an instruction, a behavior, or a piece of information. Dawkins (2006) asserts that a meme is an idea in the form of behavior, lifestyle, belief, fashion, etc. That is imitated and disseminated from one individual to another in social culture or subculture through interaction using several media, such as writing, and photographic images.

In the digital age, the spread of memes is faster and easier. Not a few accounts that upload memes are easy to find on social media. Memes have now become popular because they contain both humor and satire. However, the information in memes is often only accessible to people who share the same understanding as to the creator. Same with groups of people who have some interests and then discuss and use words that only they can understand. However, memes are now rapidly growing. In addition, used to satirize, memes circulate on social media can be used as learning media that makes it easier for the audience.

Research on memes on social media and their relation to education has been discussed before. Several relevant studies, including Purnama (2017), concluded that students prefer images, written texts, and special topics in social media application posts (memes and Instagram). There is an advantage in using memes to be creative and innovative in language teaching, is to say, the creation of memes offers an eye-catching learning process. That will be easy to adopt by students. Another research belonging to Manggong (2020) said in terms of teaching literature, memes and WhatsApp messages provide a medium that can bridge students' understanding of literary works discussed in class. Suswandari, et. al (2020) said that memes can be used as an alternative media for learning history so that history learning can take place well and interestingly. Another review in a recent study by Kayali (2021) showed using memes positively affected the vocabulary recall of Medical students studying at the College of Foreign Languages. It is because students become more interested in learning with pictures. Previous studies on memes for learning are still discussing the introduction of new words, and understanding of literary works. Through this research, the writer wants to know whether

memes can be used to explain scientific concepts thoroughly. The concept is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as a principle or idea.

The memes discussed in this research are taken from Instagram accounts that specifically discuss linguistics and English lessons. Images in memes have meanings that can support the short text that is there. Netizens act as an audience who sees the meme. Ideas in a meme and the response of the audience who receives it can be studied using linguistic studies in the form of pragmatic semiotics. The semiotic theory of a linguistic figure named Peirce can be used to analyze the relationship between text and images in memes and their interpretation. Peirce (1931) said that a sign is something that represents something. It refers to a satisfying meaning. Based on certain social conventions, the sign is called a symbol.

Pragmatics study can explain how signs make a difference in human life or practical use. In addition, pragmatics looks at how signs have various effects and influences on social life. Kondoahi (2013) says that the pragmatic dimension in semiotics is the study of signs and their users (interpreters), especially those relating to concrete users in various events (discourse), as well as effects or impacts on users. In direct the receiver and the result of the sign on society. The pragmatic dimension in semiotics is also related to the value, intent, and purpose of a sign, which answers questions about the exchange and utility value of the sign for its users.

Memes that develop on social media, now also used to convey linguistic and English concepts. Based on the description above, the formulation of the research problem is (1) what are the concepts of linguistic and English lessons that can teach through memes, and (2) how is audience understanding seen from the response to linguistic and English memes. Research on this matter can be used academically as a reference for the development of science. In addition, it is practical for educators to develop more innovative, effective, and interested learning for students.

Research Methodology,

Djajasudarma (2006: 4) said that research methods were tools, procedures, and techniques chosen in conducting research (in collecting data). In this study, the author used a qualitative descriptive perspective as well as a pragmatic-semiotic study. The descriptive qualitative research method chose because the data obtained for analysis was not numbers, symbols, or coefficients about the relationship between variables. Meanwhile, semiotic studies related to the object under study, namely educational-themed memes, contained the concept of linguistics. Then, a pragmatic study analyzed the communication involved among netizens in responding to the meme. This study presented descriptive results in written words from the data and analyzed that carried out.

The data and data sources in this research were determined and based on the research problem. The data source of this research is Instagram social media which discussed English and linguistic lessons. The data were collected by listening without being directly involved in the conversation. According to Sudaryanto (2015), the listening method is followed by two techniques, namely basic techniques in the form of tapping techniques and advanced techniques in the form of listening techniques free of engaging in conversation, recording techniques, and note-taking techniques.

Researchers listened to memes about English and linguistic lessons on Instagram social media. Then, record how netizens responded to understand the memes they had seen. The language in the meme and the one used by netizens' important role made a meme succeed. It is because memes consisted were not only of images but also of text. In addition, the text supported memes to share and remember. After memes and responses from netizens had been recorded, the researcher conducted an analysis using a pragmatic semiotic study.

The image in the meme is a sign. Pierce (in Sari, 2018) formulated a signed model as a triadic model (three parts). The first part is the representamen, which is the form of the sign. It doesn't just have to be material. It is called "sign vehicles." The second part is the interpreter. It is the meaning made of the sign, and the third is the object. It is something beyond the signed to which referred (reference). From that explained, a sign is a unity of what is represented (object), how it is represented (representamen), and how it is interpreted (interpretant).

Here's a sample meme that used to explain the concept of linguistic lessons in this research:



The meme above showed the first man marked with the American flag and the second man marked with the Indonesian flag. That is, the first man is American, and the second man is Indonesian. The first man-made refusal gesture for the word "Nah." Meanwhile, the second man showed an agreeing signal for the word "Nah."

Although the two words have the same sound, they have different meanings depending on who pronounces them. In Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, the word "Nah" is an informal form

of "No" which can be used as an expression of disagreement, rejection, or disagreement. Meanwhile, for Indonesians, the word "Nah" is an expression that shows that "that is something that is meant." In the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), "Nah" is an exclamation to end (interrupt, conclude, etc.) a word or a line of thought.

The netizen's response showed how they understood the meme. One of the netizens asked the idea of what the authors wanted to convey in the meme using Indonesian. The creator of the meme, the owner of Instagram @linguisticsisme explained that. The meme model as above can be used to explain the concept of micro linguistics lessons, namely homonyms. According to Verhaar (1996: 135), homonymy is an expression (a word or phrase or sentence) that has the same shape as another expression, but with a difference in meaning between the two expressions. That is, homonyms are relations between meanings whose writing is the same, the pronunciation is the same but the meaning is different.

The another sample:



The meme above showed two columns. The left column showed the sentences that got shorter and shorter. Meanwhile, the column on the right got lower, showed a more brilliant brain. The first sentence in the left column reads "are you okay?" parallel to the normal human skull. Second sentence "are u ok" has the same meaning as the first sentence, but the word "you" is represented by the letter "u," "okay" is represented by "ok," and is aligned with a human head whose brain is brighter than the first picture. The third sentence "ruk?" has the same meaning as the first and second sentences, but "are" is represented by the letter "r," "you" is represented by the letter "u", "okay" is represented by "k", and is parallel to the human head whose brain is brighter than pictures one and two. The last row of the left column showed the UK flag and parallel to the human head whose brain was brighter than pictures one, two, and three. The meaning of the text in the last row of the left column was the same as the meaning of the first, second, and third sentences, however, "you okay" is represented by the UK flag.

Memes like the one above can be used to explain that the more a person masters English, the shorter the choice of vocabulary to communicate. Netizens who saw the meme understood the concept. Shortening words to letters is usually done when someone communicates via text messages such as on social media. That is, one word can be represented by one letter that has the same sound.

In addition to the sample examples above, there are other memes on Instagram that can be used to explain the concept of linguistics and English lessons. Other findings had analyzed in the same way. The data had classified based on the idea that the meme creator wants to convey.

Findings and Discussion,

Findings

Based on the research that has been done, there was found data from social media Instagram specifically uploaded content about linguistics and English. From all existing uploads, memes were selected that could explain linguistics and English concepts. Researchers listened to 9 Instagram and found 26 data related to the formulation of the problem and research objectives.

Table 1: Instagram names and the number of data found related to the

Instagram	Data
@anna_the_linguist	1
@languagesmeme	4
@linguistisme	4
@linguistik	9
@lingualid	2
@santpolygot	1
@humour.in.the.countries	1
@nativeenglishtips	3
@allthingslinguistic	1

Table 2: Linguistic and English concepts in the data.

Linguistic and English concepts	Data
Difference between Old English and	1

Modern English	
Accent	6
Word form	11
Syntax	1
Etymology	1
Phonetics	2
Pragmatic	1
Homonym	2
Language Variations	1

Differences between Old English and Modern English



The meme above shows the difference between Old English and Modern English. The dog in the Old English section is bigger and more manly than the dog in the Modern English section. The meme is trying to inform that Old English is more difficult to master than modern English. Many things matter in Old English, such as complex conjunctions, gender, case, and others. Meanwhile, these things did not take into account in modern English.

The meme that discusses the differences between Old English and Modern English above has attracted many netizens to comment. There was a discussion between them, and the meme maker also gave a response to the comments he got. This meme model can be used by teachers to explain the differences between Old English and Modern English. The concept of the difference between Old English and modern English could explain used briefly through memes.

Accent



The meme above shows an image of someone looking annoyed. It says, "When you use British English and your American teacher corrects you all the time." Meanwhile, the caption below is "Why are you boozing me? I'm right." The person in the meme indicates a student who did not accept it because his teacher used an American accent blames his English. However, the student uses a British accent. American accent with British is different.

The comments from netizens showed that they understand the idea that the meme maker wants to convey. Discussions took place between them and discussed their respective experiences when facing teachers with different English accents. Netizens who previously thought that English was pronounced the same in different countries, could know different British and American accents. In real life, linguistics and English teachers can use memes like the one above to explain to their students that there are different accents even in the same language.

Word Form



The meme above shows two words that are synonymous and antonymous. "Jail" is synonymous with "prison." According to the Cambridge Dictionary, jail is a place where criminals are kept to punish them for their crimes, or where people accused of crimes are kept

while waiting for their trials. And prison is a building where criminals are forced to live as a punishment. However, the affixation of "-er" makes the two have opposite meanings. "Jailer" is an antonym for "prisoner." The jailer is a prison guard. Meanwhile, the prisoner is a person who is kept in prison as a punishment.

Netizens leaved comments showed that they understood the idea that the meme creator tried to convey. Some netizens gave other examples, namely "terror with horror" and "terrific with horror." Some netizens responded in the form of emoticons with expressions indicating that they found out about it. The words "jail" and "prison" change due to affixation. Teachers can use memes like the one above to explain concepts about affixation and the different functions and meanings.

Syntax



The meme above shows a confused-looking "dog" face. The line in the meme says "When someone talks about a tree and you are forced to relive the memory of a syntax class." In syntax, there is a tree diagram used to dissect a word, phrase, or clause. The base word and the affixes that follow it can use.

From the number of comments, it showed that not many audiences understand the meme. The number of people who like the meme is 83. This meme model cannot be used practically by teachers to explain the concept of tree diagrams in syntax. However, the teacher can be used it as an introduction explaining that in the syntax, there is a "tree" where it is a diagram to do the analysis.

Etymology



The meme above shows someone who refuses to compile an etymology but wants to find an etymology. In linguistics, etymology is a branch that studies the origin of words. In the meme, the meme maker explains photo in captions. The number one sentence in the caption explains the meaning of the meme above that indicates someone refuses to compile an etymology. According to him, etymology is not easy and can not be finished by simply linking two somewhat similar words. Meanwhile, number two in the description of the meme explains the meaning of the lower part of the meme which shows someone wants to see the etymology. Meme creators said that finding etymology was easier than compiling etymology.

Based on the comments of netizens who are the audience, it is seen they understand the idea in the meme. They provided comments that match the topic said by the meme maker in the description or caption.

Explanations using captions make it easier for the audience to understand the meme idea. This meme model can be used by teachers to teach general knowledge about etymology in linguistics classes. There is a site on Google that can be used to increase knowledge about the etymology of a word. Composing an etymology is difficult, so first, it is better to know what etymology is like and an example.

Phonetics



The meme above shows two people showing a refusal and agreeing gesture. The image of people refusing parallels the phrase “post a meme so everyone gets it” which means the meme creator didn’t upload a meme that everyone can understand. Meanwhile, the picture of

people agreeing aligns with an International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) transcript of the sentence “post a meme so that only linguists get it.”

This meme is incomprehensible to someone new to linguistics. Ordinary people will only understand the meaning of the image of people with a gesture of refusing. The teacher can inform the idea in the meme above and the audience can simply remember how to read the sentence written in IPA in the meme. The audience will understand the “ng” in the word “post” in IPA is written as “ŋ”, the article “a” in science is written as “ə”, and others.

Pragmatics



The meme above shows a person in white (A) looking under his friend's bed, the person in purple (B). B asks what A found under his bed. A answered no. B then chimed in that it was semantics without pragmatics. B was crying too. The idea in the meme is that semantics without pragmatics would be empty and depressing.

However, no trace of comments was left by netizens to give respond to the meme even though the number of likes is 63. The teacher can inform the audience why semantics and pragmatics should not be used separately. Recarnati (2006: 447) says, according to a linguist named Jerold Katz, pragmatic phenomena are things where knowledge of the context of an utterance plays a role in how the utterances are understood. Meanwhile, semantics deals with what the ideal speaker will know about the meaning of a sentence when there is no information in the context. Semantics and pragmatics are two linguistic sciences that cannot be separated to analyze language phenomena.

Homonym

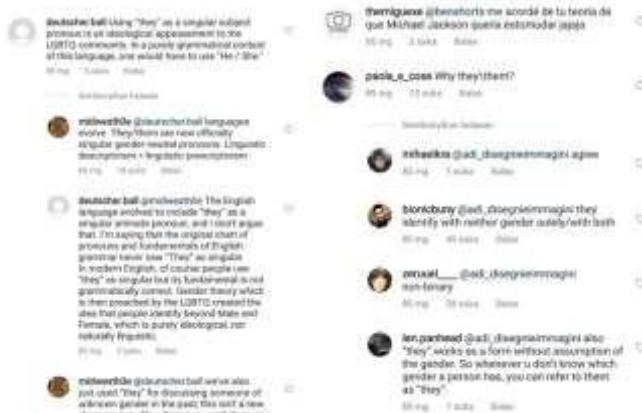


The meme above shows two buttons with the words “guy” and “gay” and a man sweating with a confused expression. The meme uploader, Instagram @nativeenglishtips wrote in the caption "Have you ever confused these two words?." Based on the comments of netizens who are the audience, it showed that they understood the idea of the meme. Some of them recounted their experiences of understanding sentences using the words “guy” and “gay.”

The words "guy" with "gay" are homonyms in the form of homophones because they sound similar in pronunciation, but have different meanings. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a guy is a man, while a gay is sexually attracted to people of the same sex and not to people of the opposite sex. Linguistics teachers can use these memes to explain the concept of homonyms as well as examples.

Language Variations





The meme above shows the use of pronouns for both subject and object. The pronoun for female as subject/object is "she/her," the pronoun for male as subject/object is "he/his." However, in the meme above the second picture uses the pronoun "they/them" even though there is only one person. Meanwhile, the word "they/them" is used to refer to more than one person. "They/them" is a variation of the language used by LGBT people to refer to themselves or their friends.

Based on the discussion that took place in the comments column, it showed that the netizens who are the audience understand the idea that the meme maker wants to convey. Some ask why they use "they/them" when it only refers to one person. Netizens who understood the meaning of the meme told other netizens who did not. Linguistics teachers can use memes like the one above to explain language variations that are part of sociolinguistic lessons.

Discussion

In the digital era, teachers usually use PowerPoint that contains principal points to be conveyed to students or the audience. Uniquely delivering knowledge and can attract the attention of the audience is something important in the learning process. In addition, what is no less important is whether the audience understands the way the teacher teaches. The communication culture using memes that are rapidly growing on social media inspires that it can be used to attract the audience's attention in the learning process.

In general, memes can be used as learning media, including Physics (Irwandani & Juariyah, 2016), Mathematics (Serano, 2018), and Citizenship Education (Amri, 2018). Not much different from PowerPoint, a meme is a simple image that contains an important point. However, the researchers assessed that memes have many advantages over PowerPoint slides, including attractive visuals that make it easier for the audience to remember them. Plus, the side of humor that makes the audience not bored. Plus, it's full of ideas to make memes concise more and doesn't practice much space to explain concepts. However, memes also have drawbacks compared to Powerpoint, namely that they cannot use as the dominant medium of learning. The

character of using memes in providing an understanding of the concept is as a supporting medium.

The study of pragmatic semiotics in memes containing ideas about science contributes directly as a reference for choosing innovative media concerning the learning process. Pragmatics examines the relationship of symbols to their interpretation. Pragmatic semiotics describes the origin of signs, the use of signs by those who apply them, and the effects of signs for those who interpret. Kondoahi (2013) in his research said:

Pragmatics, the main study of semiotics which shows how signs make a difference in human life or practical use and the various effects and influences of signs on social life. This branch has the most important influence on communication theory because signs and sign systems are seen as tools of human communication.

This study searched whether memes can help the audience easily understand the concept of lessons, especially linguistics and English. Based on the data found on Instagram, some memes contain ideas related to linguistics in English, including the differences between Old English and modern English, accents, word forms, syntax, etymology, phonetics, pragmatics, homonyms, and language variations. To find out ideas in memes, researchers have used semiotic studies. The response of netizens who are audiences on social media can see through the comments column. In this case, the researcher uses a pragmatic study.

From the data obtained by this study, the discussion in the Instagram comments column that shares memes show how well the netizens or audiences understand the idea in the meme that the creator wants to convey. Some netizens understood because they were helped by the caption written by the meme maker. Some netizens did not understand and asked what the meme they saw meant. Meanwhile, netizens who understand the ideas in memes will answer questions from netizens who don't understand. Not infrequently, Instagram accounts that share memes about linguistics and English respond to netizens' comments to explain their meaning. The discussion proves that learning linguistics and English by involving memes as a medium can be applied.

This research hypothesizes that memes can help the audience understand the concept more easily. Although it has not been used in formal linguistics learning, actually memes containing linguistics ideas are interesting media to use. Memes use images that are symbols to represent an idea. One meme can represent a concept. Getting people to remember a single meme image is easier than telling them to remember long texts with explanations.

There is no significant difference between this study and previous studies. This research strengthens the hypothesis of preceding studies and becomes a continuation of it. The researcher agrees with Purnama (2017). In her research, Purnama says that memes, in their principal meaning, are ideas shared between the brain. It's about how we influence others using our ideas

by advantage through attractive packaging, catchy phrases, or tones. The difference between Dian's research and this research lies in the role of the audience. Purnama invites students to create memes and share them through social media Instagram to increase their participation and English skills. Meanwhile, this study places the audience as the target who is given memes about linguistics and English. The results of both studies show a positive response from the audience.

This research has similarities with Manggong's (2019), which places the audience as people who are given memes. Manggong wanted to see how the students reacted the interpreting and understanding memes through WhatsApp messages. His research proves that memes and social media can be used for learning media. She said in terms of teaching literature, memes and WhatsApp messages provide a medium that can bridge students' understanding of literary works discussed in class. If Manggong uses WhatsApp, this study uses Instagram as a medium for spreading memes to the audience. WhatsApp messages in Manggong's research have the same function as captions and comments on Instagram, which are the data for this research. Meanwhile, audience responses on the WhatsApp forum in Manggong's research are paralleled to netizens' comments on Instagram in this study. Manggong's research and this research both prove the role of memes in making it easier for the audience to understand a lesson.

Memes to explain concepts in the learning process have also been studied by Suswandari, et al (2020). They said that in the process, teachers/lecturers must provide an understanding of existing memes, with the power of memes as a stimulus for readers to find out information. Memes can be used as an alternative media for learning history accordingly that history learning can take place well and interestingly. In line with that, the results of this study also showed that the creators of memes about linguistics and English sometimes also have to explain the ideas in the memes. Thus, the audience could understand. It is because not all audiences know about the concepts of lessons related to linguistics and English. However, the use of symbols in the form of images believed can help the audience remember the concept of the lesson conveyed through memes.

Regarding the audience's memory of learning using memes, Kayali (2021) has conducted research related to this. The results of his research stated that the memory of medical students studying at the College of Foreign Languages about vocabulary taught using memes showed something positive. However, the use of pragmatic semiotics studies in this study has not proven whether the audience, it easier to remember the concepts of linguistic and English lessons using memes compared to texts. Further research is needed in the future.

Conclusions and suggestions

Ideas in memes continue to grow, not only used to satirize but can be used to convey a scientific concept. Explaining a lesson concept takes a lot of space and long sentences using only text. However, the images in the memes can represent that. The semiotic pragmatics study in this research looks at the impact of memes on linguistics and English that layout on Instagram for the audience who see them. There was a discussion among netizens through the comments column. Some of those who couldn't catch the idea in the meme chose to ask. Meanwhile, netizens who understood the concept in the meme explained it to them. Although not yet used to teach linguistics and English formally, memes can be created for that.

Based on the existing finding, the researcher suggests that future research should dig deeper into the potential of memes as a learning medium that makes it easier for the audience to understand the scientific concepts of linguistics and English. Future research can find out about the ability of the audience to remember the lessons they get using memes in the hope of explaining more deeply the effectiveness of memes as a learning medium. Thus, strengthening the consideration of teachers using memes to teach is hoped that direct and online classroom learning can happen better and more interestingly.

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