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The American University in Cairo

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

**By All Memes, I want to learn Arabic: Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Using
Memes in AFL Classrooms**

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of Applied Linguistics

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree of Master of Arts in

Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language

By

Amani Batran

Under the supervision of

Dr. Dalal Abo El Seoud

June 2023

Acknowledgements

الحمد لله حمدا كثيرا طيبا مباركا فيه

To my mother, you left this world, but you will never leave my heart. You will always be the second greatest blessing Allah bestowed upon me in my life after Islam. Thank you, my mother, for your unconditional love, tremendous support, and great patience. I will be forever proud of being your daughter. Thank you for everything, *حبيبتي!*

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Abstract

As educational technology advances, teachers nowadays tend to incorporate technology into their classroom practices to enhance students' learning and achieve better outcomes. Memes, which are pictures with texts and sometimes movements circulated mostly among social media users, are a powerful tool to reach learning goals in a fun and engaging way. Researchers explored memes' effectiveness in various disciplines, yet the field of teaching Arabic as a foreign language (AFL) lacks investigation in this area. Therefore, this study aims to examine teachers' and students' perspectives on the use of memes in the classroom. This research also explores the disparities in perceptions and the reason(s) behind them. A mixed methodology is adopted where a questionnaire is utilized along with semi-structured interviews. Findings demonstrate a shared positive attitude towards using memes in AFL classrooms with suggestions by both groups. 72% of the teachers believe that memes are beneficial and 80.7% of the students reported that memes enhance foreign language learning.

Dedication

To my Beloved Mother

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1. Chapter 1: Introduction

The word meme was first coined by Richard Dawkins (1976) who is the founder of the science of Memetics. “Dawkins (1976, 1989) expounded that we can identify people’s ideas and beliefs in a society through memes which are considered as subunits of culture transmitted by copying and imitation because they are ideas, symbols, and cultural acts which are transmitted in various forms such as language (oral and written), behavior, customs, architecture, music, art, etc.” (as cited in Pishghadam et al. 2020, p. 19). In that sense “people can transmit cultural memes, and they play significant roles in transmission, reproduction, and balancing and eradicating some memes, and changing some other memes to the cultural norms” (Pishghadam et al., 2020, p.20). The processes of diffusion, creation, recreation, balancing, erasing and changing in cultural practices, products, and perspectives present potential activities using memes. In other words, “Culture evolves, and memes provide the mechanism for that evolution” (as cited in Distin, 2005, p. 2). These definitions nonetheless do not apply to today’s internet memes which acquired a modern definition, that will be adopted in this study, “The internet meme is hereby defined as a remixed, iterated message that can be rapidly diffused by members of participatory digital culture for the purpose of satire, parody, critique, or other discursive activity.” (Wiggins, 2019, p.11)

1.1. Importance of students’ and teachers’ perceptions

A student-centered learning approach was invented to highlight that the student is the center of the learning process, nevertheless, the teacher has a significant role in the facilitation of course content and the accomplishment of learning goals. Since the topic of this study was not examined in the field of Arabic as a Foreign Language (AFL), it is important to explore both perceptions to form a background for future research and replication. Therefore, it is beneficial to obtain the perceptions of students and teachers for investigating the feasibility of memes as a learning tool in AFL classrooms. Alimorad and Tajgozari (2016) explored the perceptions of Iranian high school teachers

and students about effective English teachers. Using a Likert scale-based questionnaire, the research resulted in contrasting perceptions of the two groups where the students preferred a communicative approach, unlike the teachers who appreciated the traditional approach to teaching English. This study provides empirical evidence of the significance of obtaining teachers' and students' perceptions because of the variance of both perceptions which might hinder the success of the entire journey of language learning for the students and failure in achieving learning outcomes for the teachers.

Using a Likert scale-based questionnaire for assessing effective language teaching through examining the teachers' and students' beliefs at the University of Arizona, Brown (2009) found major differences where teachers were positive about using a communicative method. The students showed contrary preferences where they supported the usage of grammar-based instruction. Brown (2009) recommends that teachers should explore their students' perspectives and get them involved in class discussions about the utilization of certain teaching methods and techniques. I believe that this recommendation presents a feasible solution for communicating the best teaching and learning practices to the students.

Discussing the teaching effectiveness of English for specific purposes (ESP), Bui (2022) investigated the teachers' and students' beliefs at five Vietnamese universities using a Likert scale questionnaire and interviews. Perceptions varied from matched and unmatched views within both groups; teachers and students gained similar perspectives on ESP effective teaching. However, teachers' and students' perceptions varied in relation to "language use, application of technologies, and grammar teaching" (Bui, 2022, p. 5). These discrepancies supported the same recommendations made by Brown (2009). This study by Bui (2022) shows a clear understanding of the investigated topic, as it utilizes a mixed methodology that provides an integration of research tools where the quantitative data is explained and confirmed by the qualitative responses.

For the purpose of addressing effective teaching at a university level, Ganjabi (2011) explored the perceptions of Iranian teachers and students about the effectiveness of foreign language teaching and found discrepancies between the two groups. The results of this study are in line with

that of Brown (2009). The Likert scale questionnaire revealed variance in the views of both parties where the teachers were in favor of the communicative approach while, interestingly enough, the students preferred a grammar-based approach for learning. Moreover, Ganjabi (2011) interpreted this surprising finding due to their junior university level and a great part of their language learning experience in high school was based on traditional learning methods. In my view, this interpretation requires further psycholinguistic research since this preference might be due to a low degree of confidence or fear of embarrassment to speak in front of a group, for example.

Another study that presents conflicted views of teachers and students was conducted by Yau et al. (2022) to examine the perceptions of both groups about online teaching and learning in general during the pandemic at the tertiary level. The study showed that teachers were unfavorable of online teaching and learning and believed that students should adopt the same perspective. However, the students preferred the online mode of teaching and learning. Surprisingly, students were more positive about the entire virtual experience with their teachers than their teachers themselves believed. Yau et al. (2022) mentioned that the mismatches between the perceptions of both parties are beneficial in improving teachers' satisfaction with their online teaching quality. This study corroborates the importance of obtaining the views of teachers and students together. The research of Yau et al. (2022) provides a new perspective of conflicted views where unmatched beliefs might be beneficial to one of the parties who thought that they did not do a good job.

1.2. Memes in Education

Teachers and researchers test modern educational tools to gauge their effectiveness in the learning process; one of these tools is memes which have been utilized extensively in actual and virtual classrooms. Memes are also investigated in educational settings in different disciplines and in English language teaching (ELT). For instance, Tu et al. (2022) found that memes have a significant role in creating a relaxed learning atmosphere, engaging students in course content, and relieving stress in the molecular biology research methodology course. This might be caused by the humorous nature of the messages implied in memes. Furthermore, engagement can be enhanced by visuals and

memes are an excellent example of them that might affect learning better than pictures if used appropriately. Moving from biology to engineering, Reddy et al. (2020) mentioned that a meme-based approach improved the performance of engineering students. The authors suggested that memes are an innovative learning tool that fits younger generations who use memes heavily on social media where memes became part of their life. The views of Reddy et al. (2020) can be strongly accepted and proved by real situations of our daily lives and are supported by further studies as well.

For instance, the field of mathematics might be considered by many individuals as one of the most difficult fields, and if memes were applied and used in that field, they can be used in other disciplines. Bini et al. (2022) attempted to connect digital culture with mathematics and offered teachers an effective method to create mathematical memes where the authors designed a model for memes creation in the field of mathematics. Cromby (2022) reviewed recent studies in different countries in relation to utilizing memes in various educational disciplines. The author concluded that “Students welcomed internet memes throughout the curriculum and described the effect of using internet memes for increased engagement and enjoyment (Cromby, 2022, p. 10). This finding stresses the humor factor of memes and their role in students’ engagement, as students will not interact with boring content or material. Moreover, Cromby (2022) suggested that internet memes serve as a creative tool for students in fulfilling course competencies and describing scientific concepts. Furthermore, Pharmacy education agrees on the effectiveness of memes, as Brown (2020) tested using memes in a pharmacy course by giving the students a meme-generation assignment. This experiment revealed that students manifested the ability to apply difficult course concepts through memes creation. Brown (2020) stated that the assignment was welcomed by students and they highlighted its role in encouraging an atmosphere of active learning. However, memes cannot be a creative successful tool without using a suitable approach to introduce them to the students. In the study of Brown (2020), the challenge of the assignment might have played a role in increasing students’ engagement.

Memes as a tool have a role in making classes more engaging; Subbiramaniyan et al. (2022) investigated the role of using memes in enhancing students' engagement in physiology learning. Responses were collected from medical students studying human physiology. By analyzing the responses, the authors found that memes resulted in generating interest in the topic, boosted a positive learning environment, contributed to peer interaction, facilitated information retention, and simplified associated complex concepts. This study highlights the importance of memes in creating a great learning experience in terms of topic, class interaction, and enhancement of course-related skills. Like medical students, computer-engineering students who were studying multimedia systems and virtual reality courses believed that memes are engaging and that memes help them understand course concepts better as indicated in the research conducted by Reddy et al. (2020). They also examined students' perceptions of integrating memes into classroom practices and the impact of it, for example, the inclusion of memes in test papers, the study revealed that students performed better with memes included in midterm than in traditional assessment. Therefore, memes can be used in different tasks/parts throughout the course.

1.3. Memes in language learning

Al Huang (2020) explored the educational benefit gained from using memes in English teaching and discourse analysis from students' perspectives. Omani college students participated in the study which resulted in their ability to deduce pragmatic meanings in memes, in addition to students' perceptions which indicated that they adopted positive attitudes towards the implementation of memes in the classroom. In Al Rashdi's (2020) study, the students expressed their views on using memes through a questionnaire. Most students agreed that memes are humorous and more interesting than ordinary pictures, and can be used for discussing concepts and addressing current issues. The students also believe that memes are an effective tool for developing pragmatic skills and inferring hidden messages. Thus, memes are a successful learning tool as they are fun and facilitate course content. Additionally, Altukruni (2022) explored the impact of incorporating memes in EFL/ESL classrooms and maintained that memes present a powerful tool to be used in EL

classrooms. With all the features of memes and research reporting their influence, memes might represent the teacher with solutions to teach hard or challenging material.

Han (2019) studied memes in a non-classroom environment and mentioned another reason for the effectiveness of memes in language learning, “Memes, by their very nature, are multimodal artifacts. They usually combine linguistic and visual resources, sometimes movements (GIF) together” (p. 70). This makes memes more advantageous than pictures alone, as memes usually include texts and visuals that might indicate motions. Han (2019) used an online chat group of Chinese language learners and native Chinese speakers on WeChat (i.e., a chatting app) where the chats of the group members involved meaning-making and memes were the most remarkable mode of communicating on the group. Han (2019) found that memes enhanced or as the author mentioned it “empowered” language learning and meaning-making.

In another ELT study that proved the significance of memes in relation to teaching writing, Huang (2016) suggested that the English writing proficiency of Chinese college students improved when they were taught with memetics compared to students in traditional classes, which was promoted by the students’ “accumulation of vocabulary, formulaic chunks, and patterns” (Huang, 2016, p. 4). These are challenging tasks for the teacher to help students achieve their objectives and memes are proven to be a successful tool for that. Still addressing foreign language learning, Aksenova (2020) maintained that memes contribute to achieving certain goals like improvement of the learning process, involvement in the discussion, reflection, and the use of visual material related to the current generation. It is beneficial that many studies link memes and today’s generation as they represent a great number of the social media consumers. Additionally, Purnama (2017) incorporated memes into Instagram to enhance the participation and learning process of Indonesian EFL college students. This is an interesting study, as Purnama (2017) employed two tools i.e., observation and a questionnaire. The observation was conducted through the use of memes creation on Instagram accounts and two questionnaires; one at the beginning and the other at the end of the study. The utilization of various research methods might be advantageous in the sense that it can contribute to the validity and reliability of the study. Purnama (2017) concluded that students are

favorable of using memes' activities in the classroom. Moreover, the author mentioned the usefulness of memes creation because it is appealing to the students due to its visual feature and because the students are familiar with image editing applications.

For the purpose of enhancing engagement and participation in language-teaching classrooms, Kessler (2013) mentions that memes offer an opportunity for rich cultural awareness when used in simple brief writing activities. Kessler (2013) suggested providing students with pictures and asking them to create their own texts, share them with peers, and receive feedback. Interestingly enough, memes can be used to focus on developing a single skill. Valdez et al. (2019) investigated memes' utilization in teaching critical inquiry to ESL students in the Philippines to develop evaluation, interpretation, and interrogation of the texts displayed in internet memes. The researchers indicated that critical inquiry results were demonstrated by identifying multiculturalism and multilingualism as a tool to engage with events. The outcomes were also manifested throughout the students' awareness of the purpose, convenient language resources, and potential audience.

Smith (2021) mentioned that the use of memes creation and design can enhance EFL Korean students' intercultural communication in their virtual classroom. The study required students to present idioms through memes creation. Conducting this study within the South Korean context offered a new perspective where students used memes in the classroom as a tool for free expression. In other words, the students chose to display memes from a Korean point of view. Smith (2021) stated that most of the students' memes were created to mock the North Korean regime; "In a general sense, all the students chose to highlight political issues with North Korea, social injustices, personal annoyances .. two of these items are not easy to speak about in a Confucianist, ethnocentric culture such as Korea" (p. 10). Interestingly enough, this study does not only tackle the effectiveness of memes creation activities, but the adaptation of culture of English idioms into South Korean culture as well. Nguyen et al. (2022) suggest that memes are an excellent tool for language teaching and learning. The authors offered examples of the characteristics of memes such as the inclusion of popular culture, cultural transferability, and humor. The researchers also maintain that "By studying

and remixing memes, students can develop their awareness of popular cultural artifacts and foster their digital, linguistic, and critical literacy skills” (p. 84). Moreover, Nguyen et al. (2022) mention that memes contain popular cultural references and are likely to “transcend” communities. Furthermore, Nguyen et al. (2022) suggest that memes can be promising to be used in language learning and teaching due to their communicable nature. The research of Nguyen et al. (2022) can be considered a seminal work, as the authors addressed the gap in the area of using memes in ESL classrooms and used previous guidelines for selecting, locating, and using memes and memes creation in order to enhance ESL learners’ language skills.

Youssef (2023) explored students’ and teachers’ perceptions of using memes in ESL classrooms in addition to the variables that might affect their perceptions. Youssef (2023) found that Students and teachers have a favorable perspective on using memes in ESL language learning and teaching contexts. However, teachers were neutral about the types of memes that are considered inoffensive. On the other hand, the students mentioned that only relevant memes that can be used pedagogically can be used within the classroom. Additionally, students believed that memes increase their engagement, improve information retention, strengthen student and teacher communication, and diminish the affective filter. In my view, these findings dramatically impact language learners when there is an agreement between teachers and students on the effectiveness of utilized tools and strategies in the language classroom.

1.4. Statement of the problem

Previous literature has shown the significance of exploring teachers’ and students’ perceptions in language learning and teaching. Additionally, since memes’ effectiveness in education and language teaching has been examined in different languages and various settings (i.e., actual classroom, virtual classroom, social media platform(s)), excluding the area of Arabic as a Foreign Language whether from a teacher perspective and/or student perspective, this study will address this gap and contribute to the existing literature on memes and form a background in the field memes in AFL.

1.5. Research Questions

Hypothesis

I hypothesize that there will be a discrepancy between the two groups of participants; teachers and students. A large number of participants from the students' category might support the utilization of memes within their classrooms because of their young age and familiarity with social media platforms. Unlike students, I hypothesize that there will be variance in the teachers' responses where a number of them might find memes ineffective at certain levels or challenging to be applied in AFL classrooms. Therefore, the questions below are formed and this study is conducted in order to answer the following research questions:

- 1- What are teachers' perceptions regarding the potential benefits and challenges of using memes in AFL classrooms?
- 2- What are students' perceptions regarding the potential benefits and challenges of using memes in AFL classrooms?
- 3- What are the variations between teachers' and students' perceptions regarding using memes, if any? What are the reasons for such variations?

1.6. Delimitations

This study deals only with adult AFL students and not with any school stage before the tertiary level. As for teachers, the research is limited to AFL teachers with at least 3 years of experience and not all AFL teachers. This small population was selected for the sake of the precision of the study. This study does not aim to identify the students' language proficiency or observe the utilization of memes in an actual classroom. A language classroom is the setting of this study whether an actual, virtual, or hybrid classroom. Self-learning, MOOCs, or any other informal learning environment will not be the focus of this study. Additionally, this study involves both genders from the two categories and does not involve gender as a variant. Furthermore, this study does not seek generalization but provides a novel perspective on a teaching tool.

1.7. Operational definitions

For the purpose of conducting this study, the following definitions will be adopted as follows:

Memes: “The internet meme is hereby defined as a remixed, iterated message that can be rapidly diffused by members of participatory digital culture for the purpose of satire, parody, critique, or other discursive activity.” (Wiggins, 2019, p.11)

International memes: Memes that are circulated on a global level by an enormous numbers of internet users on different social media platforms and became part of the internet culture. This definition was coined by the researcher for the purpose of conduction this study.

Perception: Perception is the individual’s beliefs of and expectations about the learning environment and its achieved goals. This definition is adapted from the study of Vandercruysse et al. (2013, p. 931).

Culture: “Culture is that set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or social group, encompassing all the ways of being in that society; at a minimum, including art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs.” (UNESCO, 2001 as cited in Deardorff 2020, p. 4)

Intercultural Communicative Competence: “adequate knowledge about particular cultures, as well as general knowledge about . . . issues arising when members of different cultures interact, holding receptive attitudes that encourage establishing and maintaining contact with diverse others, as well as having the skills required (in) . . . interacting with others from different cultures.” (UNESCO, 2013, as cited in Deardorff 2020, p. 4)

Modern Standard Arabic (MSA): is the pan-Arabic variety of Arabic shared by educated speakers throughout the Arab world. It is the language used for written and formal oral communication, such as broadcast news, courtroom language, and university lectures, and is generally the language of the mass media (radio, television, newspapers)” (Boudelaa & Marslen-Wilson, 2010, p. 482)

Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA): “Egyptian Arabic is a continuum of four sub-dialects, geographically divided as:

- Coastal Egyptian of coastal towns like Alexandria,
 - Lower Egyptian spoken in the Nile delta,
 - Upper Egyptian spoken in Upper Egypt
- Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA) spoken mainly in the Egyptian capital, Cairo. Among these, ECA is the most prominent given that it is understood all through Egypt and across most of the Arab World countries due to the predominance of the Egyptian media, basically movies, TV programs and series.” (Adapted from Al-Sabbagh & Girju 2010, pp. 288-289)

2. Chapter 2: Literature Review

As culture is a part of the definition of memes, especially the digital culture, therefore, the connection between memes and culture has a significant role in understanding the meme. In addition, the digitalization of teaching and learning demonstrates a potential to introduce new tools and methods in the language classroom and invite teachers to test these tools. Moreover, some researchers concluded that the use of memes contributes to motivating and engaging the students which might be due to many factors including the humorous nature of memes. Another factor that plays a role in memes' effectiveness is that they are popular with young adults because of their daily use of social media. Furthermore, memes have been proven by some researchers to be an effective tool, however, their effectiveness is open to challenge since memes application to classrooms might be problematic for some teachers.

2.1. Memes and culture

Harshavardhan et al. (2019) researched the effectiveness of employing internet memes in ESL classrooms and maintained that "The sharing of internet memes is considered as a sharing of the culture that is infused in those memes" (p. 45). I strongly agree with that because it highlights the culture and widespread factors of the memes. Furthermore, Nguyen et al. (2022) examined how memes can be used to develop ESL learners' digital literacy skills and referred to the main features of selected memes as presenting "references to popular culture" (p. 84). Popular culture's references here might be translated into more than one culture in a single country which presents rich material for language learners. Additionally, Shnip (2020) discussed internet memes as a source of authentic materials to be introduced to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classrooms. The author pointed out that memes can present internet culture, satisfy the needs of today's generations of students, and fulfill real-life and pedagogical goals. Another synonym that memes are part of is digital culture as Han (2019) highlighted that memes have a rapid and widespread nature in this environment of "digital culture", as memes involve aspects of culture and communication.

Han (2019) investigated the way memes contribute to meaning-making within an intercultural context facilitated by digital platforms. In my view, this highlights the intercultural

aspect that memes enjoy because of their diffusion and appeal to younger generations as shown in previous research. This intercultural setting might be among cultures and/or subcultures presented by relevant memes, which gives teachers a suggestion for activities of memes' cultural relevance in terms of culture. As the author mentioned, "Reading, sharing, and reproducing memes offers opportunities to mix languages and cultures through multiple modes", which in turn can promote meaning creation and comprehension (Han, 2019, p. 70). The result of this mix using memes and activities of relevance might significantly contribute to the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) because, with the teacher's guidance, this will give the students a chance to relate and compare the products, practices, and perspectives within these cultures. Moreover, Alyeksyeyeva et al. (2022) examined the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) of Master's Ukrainian students of English and found that their ICC is based on information taken from English textbooks and social media content. This, in my view, invites textbook authors to reconsider their curriculum and teachers to develop creative materials using social media tools like memes.

Han and Smith (2023) explored the usefulness of utilizing memes for language and cultural learning. The researchers used a voluntary Chinese-English intercultural chat group, which is run by university students in the United States. Students are international Chinese native speakers and Chinese L2 learners at the same university. The group aims to create intercultural communication activities and language exchange opportunities. Data comprises screenshots, meme artifacts, and recordings of meme-related communicative practices, in addition to semi-structured interviews with the 3 most active memers in the group. Besides the online activities, the group met face-to-face once weekly to participate in activities like picnics, movies, and board games. As for the chat group that included 321 members, Han and Smith (2023) mentioned that "Memeing was the most salient multimodal means of communicating and the focus of this study" (p. 159). Findings revealed that memes-related practices increase motivation and contribute to developing linguistics, pragmatic, and intercultural communication skills.

2.2. Memes, motivation, and engagement

Keeping students engaged and motivated might represent a challenge for teachers in traditional learning settings and virtual learning environments. Memes can be used as a tool to achieve that goal which was proven by many researchers. For instance, students' feedback in research by Subbiramaniyan et al. (2022) demonstrated that memes inclusion is enjoyable and engaging. On the other hand, Suseno (2015) discussed the impact of using internet memes in terms of motivation for today's students. The author claimed that meme is a powerful visual communication tool due to its four main features which are art, message, humor, and creativity, unlike traditional teaching tools. These features assist the teacher in utilizing memes in different ways such as developing cultural sensitivity or honing a certain skill like expecting the message in a humorous context. Suseno (2015) suggested that memes can be used to set up rules, elicit feedback from students, introduce new topics, and they can be also used as a class project, and fun icebreaker.

Mendez-Reguera and Lopez Cabrera (2020) discussed that a way to find a strategy that works with the learners' generation is to understand the main characteristics of this generation. In an attempt to engage the students in the immunology class, the students were given a side optional assignment to create memes. Positive attitudes towards the meme activity were expressed not only by feedback collected from students, but also by presenting the students' memes in an online conference where they voted on the best meme. Mendez-Reguera and Lopez Cabrera (2020) mentioned that the 45 students created 64 memes which means that some students designed more than one meme for a voluntary assignment. Additionally, Purnama and Desiarti (2016) utilized memes as a motivational tool to make students interested in writing, where they were asked to find an interesting image and then write a catchy caption.

2.3. Challenges of teaching with memes

Al Rashdi (2020) suggested that memes can be utilized in teaching various skills in the English language and mentioned that this is based on teachers' potential to adapt memes in their respective classrooms. In addition, the author discussed that the understanding of memes by students

depends on their awareness of media consumption and popular culture. Therefore, according to the author, if students are not well-aware of that, this might be detrimental to their ability to create memes and make connections among popular media culture, movies, the semantics of the memes, and social and political matters. Moreover, Suseno (2015) mentioned that teachers should avoid using memes in topics such as ethnicity, religion, pornography, and racism which might result in developing sensitivity towards the content. Moreover, Purnama (2017) showed carefulness in using memes on Instagram by avoiding any sensitive topics like body shaming or bashing and asked the students to use their own images, cartoons, or movie scenes.

Rucynski and Prichard (2021) also postulated that students face the challenge of recognizing different memes and understanding their messages. Henderson (2017) and Ohashi (2017) (as cited in Rucynski and Prichard (2021)) recommended that teachers can familiarize students with a set of the most popular examples of English memes. This might represent an option for AFL teachers who consider that using memes is challenging due to the students' lack of knowledge and context of the memes. Moreover, Rucynski and Prichard (2021) discussed the safe usage of memes for students by creating an only online-class space where students can share memes as well as related confusion and incomprehension. A teacher in the research conducted by Baysac (2017) reported using his/her own memes of students' pictures performing some school activities. On the other hand, another teacher surprisingly faced the challenge of the possibility of students' previous knowledge of the meme which might affect the element of surprise. Another suggestion was mentioned by a third teacher which is to let students choose the memes they can comprehend and use in the classroom.

2.4. Calls for the digitalization of teaching and learning

Being used by many internet users on various social media platforms, memes constitute an appealing learning tool for many learners. It was also suggested that "Memes appeal to different users as they draw on different resources such as referents to pop culture, current events, and political issues and spread ideas online Memes appear to be suitable artifacts for critical inquiry, through which learners develop the skills of evaluating, interrogating, and interpreting the

information presented in memes.” (Farangi & Ghodrat, 2021, p. 145). The authors also linked the usage of memes with crucial inquiry because it is context-free or as they expressed it, “travels via area and contexts” (Farangi & Ghodrat, 2021, p. 148). This could mean that memes are applicable to different specializations and contexts. In an attempt to promote digital media literacy skills of the 21st century EFL/ESL university language students, Domínguez Romero and Bobkina (2021) implemented a meme activity and examined students’ responses as code breakers, text participants, text users, and text analysts. The researchers recommended that EFL/ESL students be more exposed to memes in order to develop these skills.

2.5. Social media use in learning

Memes are seen to be circulated mainly by young generations on social media platforms. Subbiramaniyan et al. (2022) discussed that memes represent an excellent tool for today’s generation because it helps students throughout their learning journey because of their social-connect realm. Considering previous suggestions of including memes in the current tools’ pedagogies, Subbiramaniyan et al. (2022) explored the use of memes in physiology education through social media and recommended that using a discussion forum to share memes allowing space for students and faculty interaction for enhancing learning and retention. In the Chinese language context, social media takes another form in China which was utilized in research by Jin (2018) where memes on WeChat, one of the popular social media platforms in China, were utilized by 2 Chinese-language learners for language communication, one of the learners expressed that “Using those memes and stickers are making things even more fun!” (Jin, 2018, p.35). As memes are social media artifacts, some researchers extended the use of social media tools and suggested that language learners can use social media platforms to enhance pragmatic competence and new literacies, experiment various identities, and build relationships (Chen, 2013; McBride, 2009, as cited in Jin, 2018). Furthermore, Harshavardhan et al. (2019) associated memes and memes creation with the youth and claimed that youth create memes as a way of expressing their sociopolitical views or entertaining art. This indicates that memes are motivating youth as a fun tool for self-expression and establishing identity which might be learning outcomes the teacher wishes to reach.

Malik and Haidar (2020) discussed schematic learning in memes where non-native English speakers experienced unintentional and unconscious learning. The authors chose participants from an online language-learning community (i.e., K-Pop Stan Twitter) who communicated using English memes. The authors stated that the participant's engagement in the online community resulted in a learning by-product indicated by their increased English language proficiency. In addition, one of the participants expressed that the K-Pop fandom community is a judgment-free community where no one will judge them for their mistakes unlike what usually occurs in real life. Moreover, Malik and Haidar (2020) suggested that memes helped online community members to recall the used expressions and the contexts of using these expressions.

2.6. Memes as a source of humor in the classroom

Some researchers interpreted the effectiveness of memes implementation in the classroom in terms of its joyful nature which usually yields positive outcomes for teachers and learners. For instance, students' responses on the use of memes collected by Subbiramaniyan et al. (2022) included words like fun way, enjoy the learning, enjoyable, and stress relief. Harshavardhan et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of innovative teaching and the inclusion of digital communicative tools in the 21st-century classroom and claimed that humor could promote retention even when learning boring topics. In light of their claims, the researchers postulated that internet memes decrease anxiety and represent a source of humor. Rucynski and Prichard (2021) claimed that memes are a source for learning English expressions in the context in addition to providing insights into the way humor is used in various cultures. The researchers suggested students can function humor in their own way by using free websites to create memes. In addition, Baysac (2017) claimed that humor could be effective by choosing memes that connect with students and their life which conveys the targeted message.

3. Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Methodological Design

This study adopts a mixed methodology since it utilizes both quantitative and qualitative approaches as presented by the questionnaires (Appendix 1) and semi-structured interviews respectively. Students and teachers are asked to answer an online questionnaire and to reflect upon their responses in the interviews. Fetters et al. (2013) claimed that one of the benefits of integrating mixed methodology in research is that the validity of quantitative results can be assessed by the qualitative data. Furthermore, Regnault et al. (2018) discussed a number of advantages of utilizing both strands together (i.e., quantitative and qualitative forms), for example, Mixed Method Research (MMR) provides the ability and flexibility to study small samples and benefits from personal lived experiences qualitatively reflected by data.

A questionnaire is administered in this study since researchers like Carpino et al. (2019) summarize that the questionnaire is a widespread and valid tool for collecting information. The authors also recommend that a questionnaire should be “planned and well-structured”. Within the context of this research, the five-point Likert scale (i.e., strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree) is employed in the questionnaire, as the five-point scale presents a simple and easy tool than scales with higher points in terms of comprehension and consuming time. Allen and Seaman (2007) mentioned that Likert scales are commonly used as a rating tool for surveys, and they discussed the importance of including a 5-point response rate at least. The questionnaires are anonymous where no identity-related information about participants is disclosed.

Regarding semi-structured interviews, they are utilized in this study because of their flexibility which gives the researcher/interviewer the freedom to slightly deviate from the questionnaire’s questions and provide elaborations on participants’ initial responses as suggested by McIntosh and Morse (2015). In semi-structured interviews, the researcher is usually allowed to adapt questions and changes based on the interview situation as indicated by Galletta (2013). After obtaining respondents’ written consent, Qualitative data is gathered from 6 participants from each

group (i.e., teachers and students). Zoom is the medium of conducting and recording the interviews. Then, interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. Moreover, interviewed teachers were given number identity and students were given alphabetical identity.

3.2.Data Collection Instruments

The general framework for this study procedures is as follows; after obtaining the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, participants are first asked to fill in the online questionnaire and then, upon their consent, reflect on their responses in the interviews. Six participants from each category are interviewed. Interview questions will be a follow-up on the questionnaire responses and the reason(s) behind providing these responses. Furthermore, responses to the students' questionnaire will be utilized to answer the first research question. Statements from the teachers' questionnaire will present an answer to the second question. Additionally, variations of alignments between the two groups in interviews and questionnaires offer an answer to the third question.

3.2.1. Questionnaires

Regarding the teachers' 26-item based questionnaire (see Appendix II), it addresses the first research question. These items focus on some similar aspects of the students' questionnaire in addition to other points in terms of teaching. The matching points between the teachers' and students' questionnaires are effectiveness, frequency, usefulness, and challenges of utilizing memes, in addition to memes' role in promoting linguistic skills, cultural knowledge, engagement, motivation, making learning fun, and classroom environment types. Other questions seek the teachers' viewpoints specifically about memes' appropriateness to certain levels or a specific language variety (i.e., MSA and ECA), the likeliness of using memes in the future, the role of memes in achieving learning outcomes, the and existence/non-existence of memes in AFL textbooks.

The 28-item questionnaire (see Appendix II) of the students addresses the second research question. It involves items about the students' views on various points. The items require a response

to issues like the frequency of the students' use of memes, experiencing memes in different classes, the need to see memes in AFL textbooks, and their preference for utilizing memes in their AFL classrooms. Moreover, they touch upon the humorous feature of memes, the appropriateness of using memes in terms of requiring background information, memes and Arabic language varieties that include Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA), preference of memes versus ordinary pictures, and limitation of using memes in certain fields like politics. Regarding linguistic skills, some items discuss the role of memes in facilitating hidden-meaning understanding, improving knowledge of the target language and its culture, and enhancing motivation and engagement. Additionally, three items are related to memes activities, which comprise creation activities, analysis activities, and assessment activities. Furthermore, the last three items address the classroom environment, whether virtual, actual, or both settings. Responses to all these items should answer the first research question of this study.

3.2.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

The interviews are the second data-collection instrument employed in this study to acquire a broader perspective on the subjects' responses and offer participants an opportunity to reflect on their views expressed in the questionnaires. Samples of interview questions can be found in Appendix III. It is hypothesized that the quantitative tool might indicate variations; however, the importance of the qualitative one lies in providing a rationale behind these variations, if any. The semi-structured interviews provide the participant with a free-expression tool for speaking about their beliefs, thoughts, expectations, intuitions, and emotions. This qualitative tool gives the participants a chance to explain their responses and the reasons for maintaining certain beliefs or positions. Most importantly, it assists the researcher in recognizing any misunderstandings that might result from items used in the quantitative strand.

Therefore, semi-structured interviews represent a significant tool in data gathering. Respondents will be allowed to reflect on their answers expressed in the questionnaires in terms of memes' effectiveness and usage, memes in textbooks, motivation, engagement, memes and students' level, and fun learning with using memes. Moreover, memes activities, types of classroom

environments, and the role of memes in advancing linguistic skills and cultural knowledge will be discussed as well. Both research methods should answer the third research question by comparing the responses of the two parties.

3.3. Study Procedures

It is worth noting that items no. 2-8 and 10-12 of the students' questionnaire were adapted from the study of Al Rashdi (2020). These questions were selected because they are closely related to the potential responses can contribute to addressing the first research question. The data-gathering process commenced right after obtaining the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. An invitation for participation in the study was sent to AFL professors, instructors, and teachers in educational institutions and centers in Egypt and abroad via email, chatting applications, or social media platforms. They were asked to respond to the teachers' questionnaire and to share the students' questionnaire with their students; both questionnaires were created using Google Forms. Thirty-one students and twenty-five teachers responded to the questionnaires. The number of teachers was lower than that of the students' because the teacher population is usually less than the student population. In addition, six individuals from each group were invited for an interview to reflect upon their responses in the semi-structured interviews after obtaining their written consent at the end of the questionnaires by providing their contact details for an interview. Then, the questionnaire results were analyzed statistically using SPSS, and the interviews were transcribed and color-coded for deep analysis in both group responses. Interviews were conducted and recorded using Zoom. Furthermore, English was the language of the study tools including the questionnaire and interviews for the sake of consistency in data gathering.

3.4. Participants

For the purpose of conducting this study, regarding the quantitative strand, the data collection yielded 31 students' responses, and 25 teachers' responses collected by utilizing the questionnaire. In addition, 6 respondents from each group participated voluntarily in the interviews. Since the study investigates the use of memes in a classroom context, student participants are AFL students aged

over 18 years old who are studying Arabic as a foreign language or a second language in Egypt or abroad. Subjects' level of Arabic starts from the beginner level. Therefore, participants are defined as anyone, male or female, studying Arabic formally in an AFL classroom at the beginner level or beyond anywhere in the world. Regarding teachers, the selection was based on any AFL/ASL teacher, male or female, who has more than 3 years of experience in teaching Arabic as a foreign language in any country.

Students' Sample

Age (You should be at least 18 years old)
31 responses

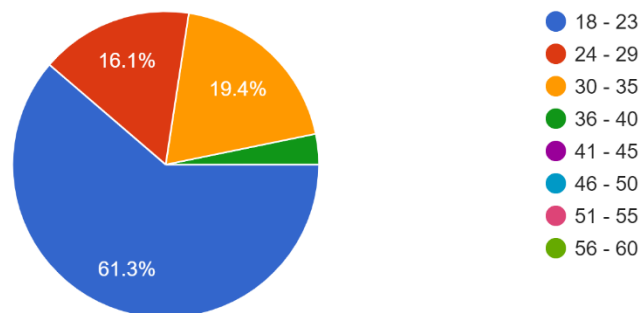


Figure 3.1. Age of students

As for the student population, 61.3% fall in the 18-23 age group, 19.4% belong to the 30-35 age group, 16.1% are aged 24-29, and 3.2% are aged from 36 – 40. Females represented the largest sample 61.3% compared to 38.7% of males. The participants come from different countries such as the USA, Britain, Italy, Germany, Nigeria, Serbia, Vietnam, Czech Republic, Serbia, and France. They obtained a university degree or are still working towards one since the highest education level of 67.7% of the respondents hold a bachelor's degree, 16.1% obtained a master's degree, 9.7% have a PhD degree, and 6.5% have a high school certificate. Furthermore, 32.3% of the students studied Arabic for 3-4 years, 29% learned Arabic for less than one year, 19.4% studied Arabic for over 6 years, 9.7% studied Arabic for 1-2 years, and 9.7% studied Arabic 5-6 years.

Teachers' sample

Education level
25 responses

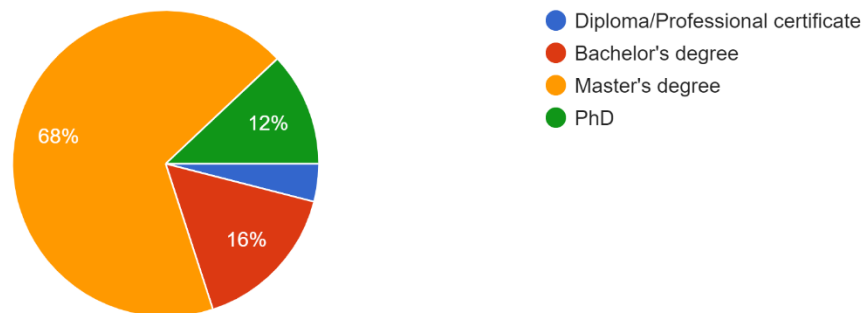


Figure 3.2: Education level of teachers

The teachers' sample included 68% females, and 32% males. Regarding the age groups, 28% from the 36-40 age group, 20% aged 30-35, 12% fall within 41-45, 12% from 46-50, 12% from 56-60, 4% from 24-29, 4% from 51-55, 4% from 61-65, and 4% from 71-75. In addition, teachers are affiliated to various academic institutions and language institutes in different countries comprising Egypt, Jordan, America, and Austria. Moreover, 68% of the teachers hold a master's degree, 16% have a bachelor's degree, 12% hold a PhD, and 4% have a diploma or professional certificate. Furthermore, 56% of the teachers have over 10 years of experience, 16% have from 7-10 years of experience, 16% have from 3-5 years of experience, and 12% have from 5-7 years of experience.

3.5. Ethical Issues

Since this study requires gathering natural data, an approval was required and obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before starting the process of data gathering. Furthermore, all participants voluntarily agreed to take part in this study knowing that their information is kept confidential and anonymous.

3.6.Data Analysis

After data gathering, data was collected to be analyzed in two forms. First, the quantitative strand where the responses to the surveys were analyzed statistically using SPSS in order to obtain mean, standard deviation, and frequencies. Second, the qualitative data which was analyzed first by transcription, and then classifying responses into respective themes. Thematic analysis was utilized based on the quantitative data and applied to responses of the qualitative data. Thematic analysis was selected because its flexible application to data patterns which allows clear interpretation of participants' perspectives within the datasets. The qualitative data of teachers produced 6 themes, which includes:

1. The use of memes in classrooms and teaching materials
2. Effectiveness and challenges of using memes
3. Humor, motivation, and engagement
4. The use of memes and language variety
5. Types of memes activities
6. Memes and linguistic skills development

Regarding the data gathered from students, it was discussed in 7 themes that comprise:

- 1- The use of memes in classrooms and teaching materials
- 2- Memes humor, motivation, engagement, and effectiveness
- 3- Memes understanding
- 4- Memes and linguistic skills development
- 5- Memes versus pictures
- 6- The types of memes activities
- 7- The use of memes and language variety

The next step was to identify the participants interviewed throughout the study while maintaining their anonymity and confidentiality. 6 participants from each group were interviewed. The teacher participants were given number identity from 1 to 6 in the order of their interviews.

Therefore, the insights of Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3, Teacher 4, Teacher 5, and Teacher 6 are discussed. As for the student participants, they were given alphabetical identities from A to F. Thus, the perspectives of Student A, Student B, Student C, Student D, Student E, Student F are analyzed. By using the approach of thematic analysis, the data analysis of each theme starts with the statistical analysis and then proceeds to the analysis of the qualitative data of the 6 participants in the two groups.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

4.1. Introduction

This study aims to explore AFL teachers' and students' perceptions of using memes in AFL classrooms by adopting a mixed-methodology approach in answering the research questions. For this purpose, 25 teachers responded to the teachers' 26-item questionnaires and 31 students answered the students' 28-item questionnaires. Both questionnaires are 5-point Likert-scale-based questionnaires. Tables A show the mean and standard deviation and Tables B indicate the frequencies of each survey question. Additionally, 6 respondents from each group participated in the semi-structured interviews after obtaining their consent. This data was collected in an attempt to answer the following research questions:

- 1- What are the teachers' perceptions regarding the potential benefits and challenges of using memes in AFL classrooms?
- 2- What are the students' perceptions regarding the potential benefits and challenges of using memes in AFL classrooms?
- 3- What are the variations between the teachers' and students' perceptions regarding using memes, if any? What are the reasons for such variations?

First, the themes were based on the survey's questions and adapted into the qualitative data. An analysis of the survey's questions is provided using the statistical data and, then, the thematic analysis of both questionnaires first by stating the mean and standard deviation of each theme, and discussing the frequency of each question afterward. This is followed by a comparison between the two groups to answer the third research question. Regarding answering the first research question; **What are the teachers' perceptions regarding the potential benefits and challenges of using memes in AFL classrooms?** The response to the 26 questions answered by teachers in the questionnaire and survey is demonstrated through themes. In an attempt to answer this question, participants' responses are divided into 6 themes as follows:

4.2. Thematic analysis of teachers' data

Responses to survey and interview questions were categorized into groups that discuss the same topic(s) and gathered under one theme in order to analyze patterns of meaning in the set of data for the theme. First, results are discussed in terms of statistical data (i.e., mean, standard deviation, and frequency). As for frequency, percentages of the Likert scale data reported using the five points of the scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. Then, patterns of meaning are defined and discussed in relation to previous literature. Finally, this is followed by responses of the six interviewed teachers. Further interpretations are provided by the researcher. The thematic analysis detected 6 topics as follows:

- 1- the use of memes in classrooms and teaching materials
- 2- effectiveness and challenges of using memes
- 3- humor, motivation, and engagement
- 4- the use of memes and language variety
- 5- types of memes activities
- 6- memes and linguistic skills development

Teachers' Responses (N=25)

4.2.1. Theme 1: The Use of Memes in Classrooms and Teaching Materials

Table 1

The Use of Memes in Classrooms and Materials

<i>A. Mean and Standard Deviation</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation
The Use of Memes in Classrooms and Materials	3.14	0.29

B. Frequencies

	Theme 1 - The Use of Memes in Classroom and Materials
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Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I do not use memes in the classroom	12%	28%	28%	28%	4%
I do not use memes now but I want to use them in the future.	4%	28%	32%	28%	8%
I believe using memes is very limited to certain levels.	16%	40%	12%	24%	8%
I use memes in the classroom.	4%	12%	32%	44%	8%
Memes do not exist in the AFL teaching materials that I use.	8%	24%	20%	36%	12%
I believe memes should exist in AFL materials.		4%	28%	52%	16%
I believe using memes helps the teacher in teaching the target culture better.			20%	56%	24%
Memes can be used in real AFL classrooms only.	28%	52%	12%	8%	
Memes can be used in online AFL classrooms only.	28%	48%	12%	12%	
Memes can be used in both real and online AFL classrooms.			4%	56%	40%

Theme 1 discusses the survey's questions no.1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 24, 25, and 26, which include the use of memes and their appropriateness for language levels, memes and AFL materials, memes and teaching the target culture, memes in online and offline classroom settings. The sample of size $n=25$ has a mean of $M=3.14$ and a standard deviation of $SD=0.29$, which highlights that teachers support the use of memes in classrooms and materials. The following are the qualitative results of interviewed teachers regarding the different questions under this theme.

4.2.1.1. Use of memes and proficiency level

Regarding the interviews qualitative data of this topic, all teachers use memes and believe that memes are useful. Teacher 1, Teacher 2, and Teacher 3 agreed that memes are limited to be used in high levels. However, Teacher 1 said that simple memes can be used in low frequency from the beginner levels and higher frequency as you go higher in subsequent levels. Teacher 1 believes that the use of memes depends on the level of the students because it is difficult to spend a lot of time explaining some memes in the beginner, intermediate, novice intermediate, advanced intermediate, and advanced low. Teacher 1 stated that she teaches culture but using memes makes it difficult for the students in the mentioned levels besides the long time required to digest these memes. However, at high advanced and superior levels, it is important to use memes because the students have enough background about the culture. Teacher 1 also believes that the students should watch the movie or the source of the meme and this will take a lot of time as much as explaining the story of the meme of the movie in class. Teacher 1 mentioned that whenever she responded "Neutral" throughout the survey, it meant that "it depends on the level".

In addition, Teacher 2 highlights that it is difficult to find the appropriate memes for beginner levels, unlike advanced levels, for example. She also wants to use memes more in the future. She reflected on the aspect of time when using memes in beginner classrooms will take a long time to explain the meme and make sure students fully comprehend it, which also represents a

challenge for her. Therefore, Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 have challenges with using memes in beginner levels because they are time-consuming.

Teacher 3 also believed that she can use memes in intermediate high to advanced levels because students in these levels usually have the necessary vocabulary repertoire and can detect pragmatic meanings which supports the students' views in the study of Al Rashdi (2020) where they reported that memes present an excellent tool to be used in developing pragmatic skills. Additionally, Teacher 3 believed that students in the said levels usually have enough cultural background in the target language and are able to be creative with the language. Teacher 3 said that it depends on the level and that she rarely uses them with beginner or intermediate learners because it is hard to find memes that suit their levels.

Unlike most teachers, Teacher 4 and Teacher 6 disagreed that memes are limited to certain levels. Teacher 4 believed that memes can be used at all levels and that "It depends on the meme and how deep it is in the culture". Teacher 4 stated that it depends on the context, as some memes are suitable for intermediate and elementary students, not only advanced students. Teacher 5 is neutral about the limitation of the use of memes in certain levels. She mentioned that memes might not be beneficial at the beginner level unlike the intermediate and advanced levels because beginners will take a long time to infer the pragmatic meanings and cultural aspects. Furthermore, Teacher 6 does not support the restricted use of memes to certain levels saying that "memes are a subset of authentic texts, right? And I agree in principle with the position that you can use any text at any level if you pick the right tasks". Teacher 4, Teacher 5, and Teacher 6 use memes, not necessarily on a regular basis, but when they are suitable for the level or related to the lesson.

4.2.1.2. Memes and AFL textbooks/materials

Teacher 2 mentioned that, in some cases, she designs her own memes, but she would like to use more authentic memes in the future. Teacher 1 also said that memes do not exist in most AFL textbooks, but they exist in the materials that she creates. Additionally, Teacher 1 agrees that memes should exist in Arabic textbooks/materials because it helps students to think more about the culture

and background of ECA phrases and still depending on the level. As for Teacher 2, memes do not exist in AFL textbooks but her own created materials contain memes. Moreover, Teacher 2 agrees that memes should exist in AFL textbooks and materials since they are “a component of the Egyptian culture in particular and the Arabic culture in general”. Teacher 2 also mentioned that textbooks should reflect this “young-adult culture”, which is significant for the students since, in her view, it is an authentic source and most AFL learners are young adults. Reddy et al. (2020) stressed the same notion that memes are an innovative tool to reach younger generations who use them as part of their daily routine. Additionally, Aksenova (2020) underlined that memes present materials that connect with today’s generation.

Teacher 4 strongly disagrees that memes do not exist in the AFL materials she uses because they exist in the materials she creates. She also agreed that memes should exist in the AFL materials, however, they have to be very well chosen, updated, and simple because she will not use memes that “are very too cultural that you would need a lot of time to explain”. The recommendation of Teacher 4 confirms the careful method followed by Purnama (2017) in using memes and avoiding sensitive topics. In addition, Teacher 4 added that she does not recommend “very deeply soaked in culture memes” to be used in AFL materials because they are usually time-consuming.

Additionally, Teacher 5 disagreed that memes do not exist in AFL materials, as they exist in the materials she creates, not in the AFL textbooks. Moreover, she agreed that memes should exist in AFL materials since she believed that “memes are an important component in a foreign language.”, however, she recommends that they should be regularly updated if used in textbooks. In addition, Teacher 2 also believes that memes help with reaching both cultural and linguistic goals where students learn chunks of the language and memorize them easily. Teacher 3 also believes that when students learn the content of the meme, they can start using it in their daily life situations. As for the use of memes in actual or virtual classroom settings, all teachers agreed that memes can be used in both online and offline environments without any potential challenges. Their views are in line with Han (2019) who used memes in an online chat group, and Brown (2020) who gave students an

offline memes' creation assignment. Thus, memes present a flexible tool that can be utilized in actual, virtual, hybrid classroom settings.

4.2.1.3. Memes and culture

All of the 6 teachers agreed that memes help them teach the target culture better. Teacher 1 believes that memes are “mainly .. completely about culture”, as most memes have different meanings other than their literal meanings, that is why memes are not useful for learning the language but useful for learning the culture, according to Teacher 1. Teacher 5 also mentioned that memes are a way to reflect Egyptian culture. Moreover, Teacher 4 offered an example of using memes as an addition in the class, saying that “I use memes in the classrooms among other texts”. For instance, using a meme in a media class in a discussing Saffkat AlQarn or Deal of the Century. This meme is from az-zawgah ath-thanyah movie, “The second wife” movie. The meme taken from the 1967-movie was when the mayor told Abou El-Ela “I’m going to marry your wife”. The meme reads “Zawgat-il-qarn”, or the Wife of the Century. Teacher 4 used this meme in this context “to show the students how culturally this is being accepted and how the Egyptians are making fun of this term”. Teacher 4 introduces memes for “cultural emphasis”. The rationale of Teacher 4 behind the use of memes agrees with the view of Rucynski and Prichard (2021) about using memes in addressing how humor is used in the culture.

4.2.2. Themes 2: Effectiveness and Challenges of Using Memes

Table 2

Questions (2-3-6-7-12-23) - Effectiveness and Challenges of Using Memes

<i>A. Mean and Standard Deviation</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation
Effectiveness and Challenges of Using Memes	3.05	0.34

B. Frequencies

	Theme 2 - Effectiveness and Challenges Using Memes
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Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe that memes are useless	24%	48%	24%		4%
I have challenges using memes in my classroom		28%	32%	40%	
I believe that my students will not benefit from memes.	24%	60%	16%		
I believe using memes is very limited to certain levels.	16%	40%	12%	24%	8%
I believe using memes helps the teacher to reach the learning outcomes of his/her lesson.		4%	32%	48%	16%
I believe my students will have a better learning experience when I teach with memes.		4%	20%	64%	12%

This part includes memes' usefulness, challenges of using memes, and memes' use in certain language levels, which might pose a challenge for some teachers. Moreover, some notions are discussed, such as memes' contribution to reaching the learning outcomes, and memes' assistance in giving the students a better learning experience. The data shows that $M=3.05$ and $SD=0.34$, which demonstrates that teachers emphasize the effectiveness of memes and acknowledge the presence of challenges using them.

Teacher 1 reported that she uses memes as a "celebration" kind of activity to reach the lesson outcomes, not as an objective of the outcomes. Furthermore, she agreed that memes will give the students a better learning experience at high levels where students can understand the culture better.

To Teacher 1, the main challenge is the long time taken to explain memes, especially at lower levels. Furthermore, Teacher 1 stated that memes when used with students at high levels, the students will have a better learning experience. Teacher 2, who uses memes and believes in their usefulness, she said that the selection of memes is challenging because she has to find a meme the students can relate to and that suits their level. For instance, the meme of the woman yelling at a cat (see Appendix IV) where this meme can be considered an international meme and can be adapted to the Arabic text which might be easier to understand by novice students than pure Egyptian memes.

Additionally, Teacher 2 believed that her students benefit from memes, as they present an authentic source of the culture where students can comprehend not only the cultural aspects of the meme but understand the story behind the sense of humor also. Regarding challenges of teaching using memes, Teacher 2 mentioned that it is hard to use memes with beginner students, unlike advanced ones. Additionally, she finds memes helpful in reaching the learning outcomes, especially when she teaches a culture-based lesson because “Memes are basically about culture”. This is in line with Aksenova (2020) who suggested that memes can play a role in achieving certain goals like improving the learning experience. Teacher 2 also said that memes help the students have a better learning experience when she uses memes in the classroom because of the “funny nature” of memes and the fact that students can relate to them which assists the teacher with engaging the students. In addition, Teacher 2 believes that providing the students with a positive learning experience should be the ultimate goal of the teacher.

As for Teacher 3, memes make the class fun and demonstrate real-life situations of the local culture’s sense of humor related to economic and political situations or everyday life. It gives them a sense of achievement when they learn why Egyptians laugh about something and use this meme which makes them feel they understand the culture just as its native speakers. She also believes that the benefit of the meme depends on the level of the students and the meme’s relatedness to the student’s life. For instance, when using memes, Teacher 3 asks the students to compare the cultural aspects of the meme with their own culture and point out the similarities and differences which opens doors for discussion. Regarding the challenges of student levels, Teacher 3 uses memes in

intermediate high to advanced levels because students in these levels usually have a vocabulary repertoire and can detect pragmatic meanings. Teacher 3 stated that she is neutral about the role of memes in helping her reach the learning outcomes because memes themselves are not the goal but can be used as a tool to achieve it. She also believes that students will have a better learning experience when she uses memes because memes will help them communicate better and, then, they can start using apply them to daily life situations.

Teacher 4 stressed that she uses memes as “an addition”, not the main teaching tool. She mentioned that memes are useful where students will benefit mainly from the cultural components in the meme along with part of the language. Teacher 4 has challenges in terms of time because some memes have a big story behind them to tell, which will consume a long time explaining it for the students besides the teaching time. “The only thing that I won’t teach is the meme that requires a lot of explanation about the context.” She also mentioned that “It’s a matter of selection”. Teacher 4 said that memes can be used at all levels and that “It depends on the meme and how deep it is in the culture”. In addition, Teacher 4 stated that it also depends on the context, as some memes are suitable for the intermediate and elementary students, not only advanced students. Furthermore, she agreed that memes contribute to a fun learning environment and help her reach the learning goals because they contribute to creating a nice environment and help the students remember the terms and context. The statements of Teacher 4 confirm the notions in Jin (2018) where memes create a fun atmosphere within the class and enhance pragmatic competence.

According to Teacher 5, memes are useful when “correctly used”. She uses memes as an addition that supports the lesson or students’ comprehension of a certain issue or specific topic they are discussing in the class. Teacher 5 also mentioned that she must be very careful and neutral when presenting political or religious memes and make sure that they are not offending anyone in the class. To Teacher 5, the challenge lies in finding that meme that does not offend anyone. Moreover, she believes memes are useful because they reflect the target culture where the students benefit from comparing their culture with Egyptian culture through memes. She added that students also can perceive ideas and issues, and form background knowledge from memes. This coincides with

Purnama (2017) who recommends a careful selection of memes, and Harshavardhan et al. (2019) who view memes as a fun tool for self-expression. Careful Teachers like teacher 5 use memes for enhancing cultural sensitivity like Suseno (2015) where the researcher mentioned that memes are a powerful tool that can be carefully used by avoiding topics like pornography, racism, religion, and ethnicity.

When Teacher 5 provides more explanations and clarifications about the meme, she provides them with input that contributes to discussions in the class and develops their language as well, not only the culture, since memes sometimes “trigger language, culture, and knowledge”. Regarding using memes with all levels, Teacher 5 believed that memes might not be beneficial at the beginner level unlike the intermediate and advanced levels because beginners will take a long time to infer the pragmatic meanings and cultural aspects. Additionally, to Teacher 5, memes activate the student’s critical thinking and support her in achieving her outcomes, yet she does not depend on memes to reach her objectives. Nevertheless, Teacher 5 mentioned that memes help her provide the student with a better learning experience. This is in line with Farangi and Ghodrat (2021) who mentioned that memes are suitable for developing critical inquiry. Most teachers might agree that enhancing the critical skills of the students is a significant part of their learning and memes can serve this purpose by offering a good number of activities of discussion, analysis, and comparison.

Teacher 6 mentioned that memes are “really useful as a way to get a little bit of contemporary culture into the classroom, and they're good as a conversation starter”. This supports Suseno (2015) who suggested activities for utilizing memes like introducing new topics. However, he has the challenge of finding the right meme in the right time that supports the learning objectives. To him, it is very challenging for elementary students because of their limited vocabulary repertoire. In addition, Teacher 6 said that the ultimate goal of a foreign language classroom is to build students’ communicative skills. He also believes that memes offer a good source for that, saying “I see the role of an Arabic class in helping students build their communicative repertoire, and engaging with authentic current cultural materials is an important part of that”. Unlike most teachers, Teacher 6 believes that memes can be used with students at all levels, noting that “Memes are a

subset of authentic texts, right? And I agree in principle with the position that you can use any text at any level if you pick the right tasks”.

Some teachers might agree with teacher 6 that memes can be used with students at all levels, and that the selection and appropriateness of the memes and activity might be challenging, not the level. Moreover, he mentioned that memes can help him reach part of his learning outcomes. Teacher 6 also supports that memes can help him give the students a better learning experience, noting “I think anything we can do to get away from traditional teaching, like grammar, vocabulary, or translation. You just like really form focused instruction that makes it more enjoyable”. This confirms the views of Suseno (2015) who sees memes as a creative fun tool to be used in the language classroom. This notion is also underlined by Huang (2016) who mentioned that students’ performance was improved when they were taught with memes unlike students in traditional classes.

As discussed before, some teachers have challenges with using memes with low and intermediate levels and the long time consumed in explaining memes which cannot be noticed in previous literature since studies on the English language utilized English memes which are very popular to a great number of people around the world. Therefore, teachers did not have the same issue with Arabic where AFL teachers would have to explain the story, context, and any background information related to the meme to ensure full comprehension for the students. Moreover, the stance taken by some of the teachers might seem to make sense; they mentioned the challenge of student level might only apply with students in low and intermediate levels or students with no focus on the vernacular/dialect. Some teachers reported the previous challenge in terms of time and levels, however, others mentioned that they can use memes with any level and that it is a matter of selection which is in line with what Al Rashdi (2020) who suggested that the use of memes rests on the teacher’s ability to adapt memes into the classroom.

4.1.3. Theme 3: Humor, Motivation, and Engagement

Table 3

Questions (4 & 11) Humor, Motivation, and Engagement

A. Mean and Standard Deviation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Humor, Motivation, Engagement	3.96	0.74

B. Frequencies

Questions	Theme 3 - Humor, Motivation, and Engagement				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Memes are usually humorous and make the students' learning fun.		12%	16%	40%	32%
Memes do increase the students' engagement and motivation for the topic.			20%	60%	20%

This theme focuses only on the humorous nature of memes and their role in increasing the students' motivation and engagement. This theme indicates that teachers believe memes contribute to engagement and motivation ($M=3.96$, $SD=0.74$). The above statements in the questionnaire focused only on the humor and the role of memes in increasing engagement and motivation. Moreover, in total, 72% agreed that memes are usually humorous and offer the students a fun learning experience. Additionally, 80% support memes' role in increasing students' engagement and motivation. This confirms previous findings in the literature like Subbiramaniyan et al. (2022), Harshavardhan et al. (2019), and Suseno (2015) who supported the role of humor in memes in engaging and motivating students.

The qualitative data suggested that the 6 teachers agreed that memes are usually funny and make the students' learning fun. According to Teacher 6, a meme "Doesn't have to be humorous, it can be serious, it can be political, it can be thought-provoking". As for Teacher 5, she disagreed with the statement because memes are not humorous all the time; "Sometimes it reflects the misery of the

people. Sometimes people reflect how they feel, or their attitudes towards economic issues, political issues, so not all the time”. Teacher 5 believed that sad memes sometimes display how Egyptians “create humor out of misery.. in an attempt to lighten the crisis”. She also highlighted that the way she perceives a meme might be different from the way her students see the meme due to differences in age and life experiences, for example. This can be considered an important point for teachers to not set or refuse any specific interpretation by the students and to give them the chance to interpret the meme in free different ways. Then, the teacher can ask the students to compare between the perspective he/she has and their perspectives.

Teacher 1 reflected on her experience as a Syrian and Egyptian woman, as she is familiar with the culture of Syria and Egypt. She said that when some Egyptian friends use a meme, she neither found it funny nor understood it, however, they share the same culture. Teacher 1 also stressed that the said real-life situation happened among speakers who share the same native language and culture which makes it difficult for the students to understand. Teacher 1 also mentioned that the same case applies to her as a non-native speaker of English, when her students who are native speakers of English say a joke and they all laugh about it but she does not because she does not understand it.

Furthermore, Teacher 3 believed that memes are usually humorous and make the students’ learning fun. She can use humorous or non-humorous memes if they relate to the students. Additionally, according to Teacher 3, memes should not involve taboos or sensitive topics, otherwise, they will not be appropriate to be used in the AFL classroom. Teacher 3 also mentioned that besides memes being authentic real-life situations, they present “A way of communication that younger generations use”. Moreover, she stressed that she is careful about finding suitable memes and avoiding uncommon sensitive ones. The way Teacher 3 describes memes confirms the notions of some researchers like Reddy et al. (2020), Aksenova (2020), and Han (2019) who mentioned that memes are an effective tool to be used with today’s generation because they use them regularly and they can relate to them.

Teacher 2, Teacher 3, Teacher 4, Teacher 5, and Teacher 6 agree that memes increase students' engagement and motivation. Teacher 3 said that "Students are usually motivated when they understand the meme and know why native speakers laugh about it". As for Teacher 4, she believed that memes are part of the social media culture of younger generations. This is in line with Han (2019) who mentioned that memes interest young people, in addition to Subbiramaniyan et al. (2022) who stated that memes are a great tool to be used with today's generations. Moreover, Teacher 5 clearly explained her view saying that memes make students curious when they see a meme, as they want to understand the story behind it. This motivates them to learn more about the issue and culture and be linguistically engaged in analyzing the meme, which is highlighted by the research of Tu et al. (2022). Teacher 5 mentioned that memes are "Untraditional activities.. engaging and interactive activities", this makes memes a powerful tool as Altukruni (2022) describes them. Moreover, Teacher 1 is neutral about the role of memes in increasing engagement and motivation because, to her, this role depends on the level of students.

4.1.4. Theme 4: Use of Memes and Language Variety

Table 4

Questions (14-15-16) – Use of Memes and Language Variety

A. Mean and Standard Deviation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Use of Memes and Language Variety	2.73	0.45

B. Frequencies

Questions	Theme 4 - Use of Memes and Language Variety				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe memes can be used only with the Egyptian	20%	40%	16%	16%	8%

colloquial variety of Arabic, not MSA.					
I believe memes can be used only with MSA, not the Egyptian colloquial variety.	40%	84%	8%	4%	
I believe memes can be used with both MSA and the Egyptian colloquial variety.	4%		16%	60%	20%

This section discusses the use of memes in MSA and ECA. It showcases a tendency of teachers towards using memes in both varieties of the Arabic language; MSA and ECA ($M=2.73$, $SD=0.45$), which demonstrate a tendency towards the use of memes in both language varieties. Moreover, 80% of the teachers agreed that memes can be utilized with both Arabic language varieties; MSA and ECA. Regarding the interview sample, Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3, Teacher 4, Teacher 5, and Teacher 6 said that memes can be utilized with both varieties, however, ECA is more suitable because most of the memes in our daily life are produced in ECA, not MSA. In addition, Teacher 1 believes that only 5% of our memes might come from MSA and 95% are taken from ECA. Teacher 1 also stresses that memes are suitable to teach ECA more than MAS but still work with both varieties work. Moreover, Teacher 3 believes that memes are usually more beneficial in ECA than in MSA. Due to limited research in this area, none of the teachers' views can be supported by scientific evidence. Nevertheless, in my view, memes can be used equally in both varieties if the teacher exerted a lot of effort finding the right meme, especially in MSA where it can be found in formal speech, poetry, books. For instance, an author once wrote in the introduction page of his book, "People do not usually read introductions, go to the next page". I would certainly use this as a meme with the appropriate class and lesson.

4.1.5. Theme 5: Types of Memes Activities

Table 5*Questions (17-18-19) – Types of Memes Activities**A. Mean and Standard Deviation*

	Mean	Std. Deviation
The Types of Memes Activities	3.64	0.45

B. Frequencies

Questions	Theme 5 - The Types of Memes Activities				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe I can use memes designing/creation activities			16%	64%	20%
I believe I can use memes analysis activities		4%	32%	56%	8%
I believe I can use memes assessment activities		16%	48%	36%	

The use of memes in creation/designing activities, analysis activities, and assessment activities are explored in this part. Mostly, teachers support the memes-creation activities, and memes-analysis activities more than the use of memes in assessment activities ($M=3.64$, $SD=0.45$), which indicates the teachers' inclination to use memes in the said activities. Additionally, 84% believed that memes designing or creation activities are interesting. As for analysis activities, 64% reported that memes analysis activities are interesting. Most teachers were not intrigued by using memes in assessment since only 36% of the teachers mentioned that memes assessment activities are interesting. This is in line with Smith (2021), and Bini et al. (2022) who utilized creation activities, and Domínguez Romero and Bobkina (2021) who used an analysis activity.

Regarding the qualitative data, Teacher 1 stated that she is neutral about creating and designing activities, saying that “High levels can create by using memes but low levels no it’s difficult for them. They can create memes in their culture but not in the foreign one”. She also highlighted that it depends on the level and needs a lot of work to explain and analyze the meme and its context and background. As for assessment, Teacher 1 agreed to use it in assessment because when the students have enough background and context providing different examples after explaining the meme, the students will understand it very well and learn how to use it. For example, providing the students with a photo without a text and ask the students to write a suitable text.

Teacher 2 supports the implementation of memes in analysis activities and creation/designing, not assessment ones, because, to her, memes are “intense cultural material” that students might find difficult. Furthermore, memes do not offer a reliable source of assessment. Teacher 3 agrees with Teacher 2 that memes can involve analysis and creation activities, as meme designing and analysis activities will help students to comprehend the cultural background and use the meme appropriately, but she will not use memes in the assessment. She uses memes only for “fun” and for “understanding the cultural background” because she is not assessing the meme itself but what understood from the meme and what she explained earlier to her students. As for Teacher 4, memes creation and analysis activities are interesting but she is neutral to their use in assessment. Teacher 4 said that she does not see herself using a meme in an exam because she uses it as an addition for fun during the class. She also mentioned that she cannot use memes in an exam because they are culturally-loaded items and she will not use them if she is testing the language.

Furthermore, Teacher 4 believes that maybe in the future, if she is testing the culture and found a meme that is exam-friendly, she might use it. Teacher 5 agrees that memes can be used in the three kinds of activities which are creation activities, analysis activities, and assessment activities. In addition, Teacher 6 Agrees to the use of memes creation and analysis activities but not assessment activities, he explained that “I often give an option for projects, you can write a story, or you can format it as a social media post. So, I've had students write a twitter post. you know, imagining some situation, and they bring in lots of memes, and it's often.. it's really funny, and it

helps them express themselves”. As for memes analysis, he said “To take some example of the language actually being used and break it down. How does this work? Why did they choose this and not that? What are the parts of this? So that you can be aware of that kind of thing, and going forward? And I think if you lead students in that kind of like discovering for themselves how it works, They're really excited about it”. The data yielded from the qualitative strand in this theme highlights that only Teacher 6 take the use of memes outside the classroom into social media platforms. He does not use memes within the classroom only like the rest of teachers. I believe that the ideal use of memes comprises the classroom and chatting applications and/or social media platforms. This is because such applications or platforms might offer the students a space to “freely” act and express themselves unlike the classroom. To me, the classroom and free internet spaces present a hybrid and better method to use memes than the classroom alone. Most teachers who support the creation activities are consistent with a number of researchers such as Brown (2020), Smith (2021), and Purnama (2017).

4.1.6. Theme 6: Memes and Linguistic Skills Development

Table 6

Questions (13-20-21-22) – Memes and Linguistic Skills Development

A. Mean and Standard Deviation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Memes and Linguistic Skills Development	3.88	0.49

B. Frequencies

Questions	Theme 6 - Memes and Linguistic Skills Development				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree

I believe using memes helps the teacher in teaching the target culture better.			20%	56%	24%
I believe memes help my students develop their meaning-decoding skills.		4%	12%	72%	12%
I believe memes help my students develop their information retrieval skills.		4%	28%	64%	4%
I believe memes help my students develop their analytical skills.		4%	8%	84%	4%

In this last theme, the researcher discusses memes enhancing the teaching of the target culture, developing meaning-decoding skills, information retrieval skills, and analytical skills. Teachers indicate that they agree that memes play a role in developing the said linguistic skills ($M=3.88$, $SD=0.49$), which confirms that teachers strongly believe in the contribution of memes to the development of linguistic skills. Moreover, effective culture teaching might play a role in developing ICC skills of the students. A high percentage 80% of the samples agreed that memes promote teaching the target culture better. Additionally, 84% agreed that memes help the students develop meaning-decoding skills. Regarding the role of memes in developing information-retrieval skills, 68% agreed to that premise. Furthermore, 88% reported that memes help students develop their analytical skills. This supports the findings in Al Rashdi (2020) where students were able to infer pragmatic meanings of the memes, Han (2019) who found that memes enhanced meaning-making and comprehension, in addition to Malik and Haidar (2020) who mentioned that memes help with recalling expressions and the respective contexts.

In the interview, Teacher 1 believes that memes are a good tool for teaching culture because they have a cultural substance by nature. Teacher 1 also agreed that memes help develop meaning-decoding skills that can be achieved by the students' understanding of everything about the meme. Moreover, Teacher 1 agrees that memes increase information retrieval because of the story, background, and context behind the meme which will help them remember. She also believes that memes assist in developing the students' analytical skills because they will analyze the meme and relate it to real-life situations.

Teacher 2 also believes that memes help with reaching both cultural and linguistic goals where students learn chunks of the language and memorize them easily. According to Teacher 2, memes help the students develop meaning-decoding skills because students usually work on comprehending the deep cultural meaning, then students can easily recall the information they learned from the meme especially when the meme is funny. She believes that memes also contribute to the development of the students' analytical skills where students have to analyze the context, humor, if it exists, and cultural aspects of the meme.

Teacher 3 supports the role of memes in teaching culture because when students learn the cultural aspects taken from the meme, they can start using it in their daily life situations. This is in line with Smith (2021) who found that memes contributed to the EFL students' intercultural communication, and Kessler (2013) who mentioned that memes can offer the students an opportunity of rich cultural awareness. Teacher 3 supports the role of memes in developing meaning-decoding skills because students can understand pragmatic clues behind the literal meaning. Regarding information retrieval skills, Teacher 3 said that memes help students recall previous information. Memes also help students develop analytical skills because after she explains the meme, they can detect the general meaning of the meme. Teacher 4, Teacher 5, and Teacher 6 believe that memes are a good tool for teaching culture. Like most teachers, Teacher 4, Teacher 5, underpins memes' role in developing meaning-decoding skills, information retrieval, and analytical skills. Moreover, Teacher 6 believes that memes can play a role in developing linguistic skills, noting that "I think all these things are possible as long as you are clear about what your goal is". I would stress

the previous statement of Teacher 6 where the teacher should set clear specific objectives in order to reach the learning goals or develop a certain skill. To ensure the effective use of the meme, this should be accompanied by the appropriate selection of the meme and suitable activity.

4.2. Thematic analysis of students' data

Students' Responses (N=31)

RQ2- What are the students' perceptions regarding the potential benefits and challenges of using memes in AFL classrooms?

For the purpose of answering this question, the responses will be discussed in light of the statistical data first (i.e., frequency, mean, and standard deviation), followed by discussing the qualitative data which included 6 students. Participants included 3 females and 3 males and studied Arabic starting from less than a year to over 6 years. This analysis comprises 7 themes as follows:

- 8- the use of memes in classrooms and teaching materials
- 9- memes humor, motivation, engagement, and effectiveness
- 10- memes understanding
- 11- memes and linguistic skills development
- 12- memes versus pictures
- 13- the types of memes activities
- 14- the use of memes and language variety

4.2.1. Theme 1: The Use of Memes in Classrooms and Teaching Materials

Table 7

Questions (1- 8-11-16-26-27-28) - The Use of Memes in Classrooms and Materials

A. Mean and Standard Deviation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
The Use of Memes in Classrooms and Materials	2.91	0.44

B. Frequencies

Questions	Theme 1 - The Use of Memes in Classrooms and Materials				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I used memes in my classes to learn Arabic as a foreign language before	38.7%	22.6%	9.7%	19.4%	9.7%
Memes only address political issues	29%	54.8%	9.7%	5.6%	
I want memes to be used in the Arabic classroom		6.5%	19.4%	48.4%	25.8%
I want to see more memes in my Arabic textbooks	9.7%	6.5%	19.4%	45.2%	19.4%
Memes can be used in real AFL classrooms only	9.7%	48.4	32.3%	9.7%	
Memes can be used in online AFL classrooms only	12.9%	48.4%	35.5%	3.2%	
Memes can be used in both real and online AFL classrooms.		3.2%	32.3%	38.7%	25.8%

This section discusses experience using memes before, domains of memes usage, the need to incorporate memes in AFL classrooms, and memes and online/offline classrooms. More than half of the sample did not use memes in Arabic classes before. However, they support the use of memes in

AFL classrooms addressing various topics. In addition, more than half of the students want to see memes in their textbooks. They also support the use of memes in virtual and actual classrooms ($M=2.91$, $SD=0.44$), results show that students did not get exposed to memes in the classroom or through textbook materials. Moreover, 29% of the students reported that they have used memes in AFL classes before, 61.3% did not use memes. Despite the popularity of memes in certain fields like politics, 83.8% believed that memes do not only address political issues. Additionally, 72.2% said that they want memes to be utilized in AFL classrooms. As for AFL materials, 64.6% reported that they want to see memes in AFL textbooks. Regarding learning mode, 64.5% agreed that memes can be utilized in both online and offline classroom settings. This confirms the findings in the study of Al Rashdi (2020), Altukruni (2022), and Huang (2016) where memes were used in different settings. Since the use of memes has not been investigated in language textbooks, the current results cannot be tied to previous research.

4.2.1.1. Using memes in AFL classrooms

Regarding the qualitative data, the students' sample demonstrates positive attitudes towards memes in general, except Student F who is not interested in using memes. Students studied or still studying Arabic starting from less than a year to over six years. They also learn MSA and different colloquial varieties, however, none of the six participants experienced memes in their classes before. Student D mentioned, "I don't remember that we used memes. I've used many materials, but not memes". Students agreed that memes can be utilized in different fields and their use is not restricted to only politics, for example. Student A said that "Memes might address different spears of life" and Student B stressed that "Memes can be used in every domain or for any topic." The rest of the students support the views of Student A and Student B.

As for utilizing memes in AFL classrooms, the students' expressed a need to see memes in Arabic classes, Student A stated "Yeah, I think it would be nice, I don't think memes can be like the main tool for teaching Arabic, but it would be like a fun way like a fun alternative, like an additional tool, especially when thinking about Fusha (MSA)". This underlines the need of students to see more innovative tools used particularly in MSA classes. It is obvious that this student finds her

MSA class in need of some humor. The same suggestion can be recommended for material developers where textbooks might lack the humor, diversity, and innovation in learning methods and/or tools. In addition, Student B said “I would love to see a meme in the class about grammar, Arabic grammar because it's such a beautiful topic. And the dialect. That'd be really fun to see as well”. This is another student who studies only MSA and believes that memes can lighten the seriousness of grammar lessons.

Moreover, Student C stated that “I think it would generally help especially young people, to learn the language, because memes are something that we use in our native languages a lot, and it's just an approach to youth culture, too, and it's an approach to internet culture. And the internet use of language is just an interesting, nice, little entertaining aspect that should be added to classrooms. If you ask me”. This recommends that teachers should investigate and address students’ needs in learning the target language and culture. Not only memes that should be used in language classrooms, but also digital artifacts on different social media platforms. As a teacher, trying Youtube shorts in AFL classrooms sounds interesting and is worth trying. Youtube Shorts are videos that last about one minute or less. It is believed that they are used on Tiktok and Facebook as well. Although Student F is neutral about seeing memes in Arabic classrooms because “There are better ways to learn Arabic”, he also said “If the teacher finds a good way of incorporating memes into a classroom, then go for it. You definitely should use all the different tools at your disposal”.

As for the use of memes in actual classrooms versus online classrooms, most students responded agreed that memes can be used in real and virtual classroom settings alike, except Student A who prefers actual classrooms for language learning in general, saying that “I think memes can be used both like in online and in-person classes, of course,”, she continued, “I mean, I feel like a language class should always be in person. I mean, having an online language class can be a big inconvenience, but I think memes could work in both settings”.

4.2.1.2. Using memes in AFL textbooks/materials

Regarding the use of memes in Arabic textbooks, all respondents agreed that they want to see memes in Arabic textbooks, except for Student F who does not like memes in general. However, the rest of the students have a favorable perspective on using memes in AFL textbooks, as all the interviewed students never saw a meme in an Arabic textbook before. For instance, Student A said, “Yeah, I agree with that. It would be awesome to see more memes, if not in the textbook, at least in the teaching experience as a whole, like the professor bringing memes in the classroom”. Moreover, Student B recommended textbook authors to be more creative with using memes in textbooks saying that “I would like to see more efforts for creativity on their part”. The recommendation of Student B would be effective if applied in textbooks because some of my fellow teachers believe that Arabic textbooks need further creative efforts to address the needs of today’s students who experience a new language and culture within the realm of the internet.

4.2.2. Theme 2: Humor, Motivation, Engagement, and effectiveness

Table 8

Questions (2-3-13-14) - Humor, Motivation, Engagement, and effectiveness

A. Mean and Standard Deviation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Memos Humor, Motivation, Engagement, and effectiveness	3.7097	0.63933

B. Frequencies

Questions	Theme 2 - Memos Humor, Motivation, Engagement, and Effectiveness				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Memos are usually funny.		3.2%	9.7%	71%	16.1%

I think memes discuss important ideas in a funny way.		3.2%	12.9%	58.1%	25.8%
I experienced memes in classrooms other than Arabic and I find them effective.	9.7%	12.9%	38.7%	29%	9.7%
Memes do increase my engagement and motivation for the topic	6.5%	6.5%	25.8%	41.9%	19.4%

Some premises are highlighted here, such as the humor in memes, the role of memes in increasing engagement and motivation, and a previous experience of memes, if any, where it was found effective. On average, students believe that memes are humorous, motivating, engaging, and effective ($M=3.70$, $SD=0.63$), which proves that students strongly believe that memes are usually humorous and play a role in raising engagement and motivation. Additionally, 87 % supported that memes are usually funny. Moreover, 83.9% agreed that memes discuss important ideas in a funny way. Furthermore, 38.7% reported that they have experienced memes in classes other than Arabic and found them effective. As for engagement and motivation, 61.3% agreed that memes increase engagement and motivation for the topic learned. This concurred with Subbiramaniyan et al. (2022), Harshavardhan et al. (2019), and Suseno (2015) who highlighted the role of humor in engaging and motivating the students.

Qualitative data showed that Student A, Student B, Student C, Student D, and Student E agree that memes are usually funny. Additionally, all students have contradicting views that memes discuss important ideas in a funny way. For example, Student A mentioned that “Sometimes not all memes are really meant to express an important idea”; Student B stated that memes are not funny all the time, sometimes they are serious. Additionally, Student C believes that not all memes are funny but they can be a good tool to introduce some humor in the class. As for question number 13 about

experiencing memes effectiveness in other classrooms, Student A, for example, mentioned that she has never experienced memes in any other classrooms

Most students agreed that memes increase their engagement and motivation for the topic. Student A, who is neutral about this point, explained her point of view saying that “Sometimes yeah, it doesn't really connect to my personal experience. So, it doesn't connect to my knowledge, so I might not feel engaged by it. Sometimes memes are about something that we all experience like. For example, childhood, or things about the school system, or more like general experience”. This student will have a good learning experience if taught by one of the teachers in this study who expressed carefulness with selecting the appropriate meme where students can relate to it and suits their level. In other words, the statement of this student emphasizes that choosing the right meme and activity is key, and how important it is to select a meme that student can relate to.

4.2.3. Theme 3: Memes Understanding

Table 9

Questions (4-5-7) - Memes Understanding

A. Mean and Standard Deviation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Memes Understanding	3.87	0.49

B. Frequencies

Questions	Theme 3 - Memes Understanding				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Memes usually have hidden meanings. (pragmatic messages).		6.5%	9.7%	45.8%	29%

The hidden meanings in memes are easy to infer	3.2%	22.6%	25.8%	45.2%	3.2%
Some memes can be difficult because they require background information in order to understand them		3.2%	6.5%	45.2%	45.2%

Regarding memes comprehension, the questions examined understanding the pragmatic meanings in memes and whether they are easy or difficult to infer ($M=3.87$, $SD=0.49$). This shows that students largely indicated that memes usually have hidden meanings, however, for the most part, they agreed that, without knowing the background and context, their meanings will be difficult to infer. Pragmatic meanings might be a regular feature of memes and 83.8% of the students agreed that memes usually have hidden meanings. Regarding the level of difficulty of understanding these meanings, 48.4% reported that the pragmatic meanings in memes are easy to infer. Furthermore, 90.4% agreed that some memes can be difficult to understand because they require background knowledge to understand them.

All students during interviews agree that memes have hidden meanings, Student A believes that “If I am not culturally fluent, then I guess they would be much harder to understand”. Student B explained that “There are layers of understanding a meme”. Regarding the difficulty of these meanings, Student A mentioned that “They're based on popular culture of popular references, and by popular, I mean, people make the memes, and they usually refer back to cultural references, things that they have grown up with”.

Additionally, Student B believed that the meanings will be easy to infer when the teacher steps in and explains the meme because of the cultural distinctions. Student C, Student D, Student E, and Student F supported the other two respondents, saying that they can infer the meaning if they are aware of the context and they all believe in the significance of having enough background information to comprehend the meme. The findings of this theme coincide with the teacher’s views

in theme 1 and 2 where they expressed that explaining the meme, its background, and context is challenging due to the long time consumed in such explanation. Students here mention that understanding the meme without knowing its background and context is difficult.

4.2.4. Theme 4: Memes and Linguistic Skills Development

Table 10

Questions (6-9-15-20-21-22) – Memes and Linguistic Skills Development

A. Mean and Standard Deviation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Memes and Linguistic Skills Development	3.96	0.72

B. Frequencies

Questions	Theme 4 - Memes and Linguistic Skills Development				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
In my view, memes are good for teaching students how to infer hidden meanings	3.2%	6.5%	9.7%	85.1%	22.6%
Memes can enhance my knowledge of the language I'm learning		3.2%	16.1%	58.1%	22.6%
Memes help me understand the target culture better	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%	51.6%	38.7%
I believe memes help me develop my meaning-decoding skills		6.5%		64.5%	29%

I believe memes help me develop my information retrieval skills	3.2%	3.2%	22.6%	51.6%	19.4%
I believe memes help me develop my analytical skills.	3.2%	12.9%	9.7%	58.1%	16.1%

This theme points out the effectiveness of memes in encouraging the students to infer hidden meanings, enhancing knowledge of the target language, learning the target culture, and developing meaning-decoding skills, information retrieval skills, and analytical skills. Responses are ($M=3.96$, $SD=0.72$) which relatively indicate that students concur with the previous statement. Most students agree that memes help them learn how to infer hidden meanings. Since memes might be considered an effective teaching and learning tool, 80.7% agreed that memes present a good tool for teaching students how to infer pragmatic references. Moreover, 80.7% agreed that using memes can enhance their knowledge of the target language. As for the culture component, 90.3% of the students agreed that memes help them understand the target culture better. Regarding the development of linguistics skills, 93.5% agreed that memes help them develop their meaning-decoding skills. In addition, 80% agreed that memes contribute to the development of their information-retrieval skills. As for analytical skills, 84.2% agreed that memes support the development of their analytical skills. This corroborates Al Rashdi (2021), Subbiramaniyan et al. (2022), Smith (2021), and Han (2019) who found that memes contributed to the development of linguistic skills.

As for the qualitative data, all students agree on the fact that memes help enhance their knowledge of the foreign language they are learning. Student D expressed that she is excited when she understands a meme on social media “When I see them on my Instagram sometimes, it takes me a long time to read it, and sometimes I understand it. But when I do understand it, I'm super happy and super proud of myself, and I'm like, Wow, this is great”. Comments such as these should encourage teachers to encourage students to negotiate the hidden meanings on their own, thus, they might enjoy this “aha” moment when they finally comprehend the meme. It might be believed that

students will be only happy of their achievements, but in the case of this student, she is also proud of herself. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers use innovative tools and activities and activities that encourages autonomous learning to make students happy and proud of their achievements.

Moreover, Student B believed that memes help her learn how native speakers communicate with each other, especially when using the vernacular, in addition to learning daily-life situations and understanding humor. As for students C, he stated the connection between youth and the use of memes, noting “It would generally help especially young people, to learn the language, because memes are something that we use in our native language a lot, and it's just an approach to youth culture too, and it's an approach to internet culture. And the internet use of language is just an interesting, nice, little entertaining aspect that should be added to classrooms”. Furthermore, most students agree that memes are a good tool to learn the culture and in developing meaning-decoding skills, information retrieval skills and analytical skills.

4.2.5. Theme 5: Memes versus pictures

Table 11

Questions (10-12) – Memes versus pictures

A. Mean and Standard Deviation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mememes versus pictures	3.74	0.51

B. Frequencies

Questions	Theme 5 - Memes versus pictures				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Mememes are different from ordinary pictures.			12.9%	51.6%	35.5%

I think memes should be used more than pictures in the classroom.	3.2%	9.7%	54.8%	22.6%	9.7%
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This section explores if participants believe memes are different and should be used more than pictures in AFL classrooms. The data ($M=3.74$, $SD=0.51$) demonstrates that most participants believe that memes are different from pictures, nonetheless, they do not favor one over the other. Since memes might seem similar to pictures, 90.7% agreed that memes are different from ordinary pictures. Regarding students' preference for memes versus pictures, 32.3% agreed that memes should be used more than pictures in AFL classrooms, 12.9% disagreed, and 54.8% were neutral. This contradicts the premise of Tu et al. (2022) that memes can be more effective than pictures, and the students in this study clearly do not agree with that. The sample in the present study is different from that of Al Rashdi (2021) where students favored memes over pictures. This might be due to the unfamiliarity of the AFL students with memes. Most students in this research expressed that they did not see memes in AFL classes of materials. Therefore, they are not familiar with the difference in effect while learning by using memes' and pictures' activities.

Student A believed that memes are different from pictures, she explained, "Yeah, I think they're different. If it's just a picture without a text, without a context that picture can spark different ideas and different thinking in the viewer's minds, but instead, like a meme narrows down the ideas, and brings all the viewers into one specific context". Furthermore, Student C mentioned that memes have more layers to understand. This might indicate that memes contribute to learning aspects beyond language like cultural, political, social, and/or economic aspects of native speakers' real-life.

4.2.6. Theme 6: The Types of Memes Activities

Table 12

Questions (17-18-19) – The Types of Memes Activities

A. Mean and Standard Deviation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
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The Types of Memes Activities	3.73	0.94
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B. Frequencies

Questions	Theme 6 - The Types of Memes Activities				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe memes creation/designing activities are interesting.	3.2%	12.9%	9.7%	51.6%	22.6%
I believe memes analysis activities are interesting.	3.2%	6.5%	9.7%	51.6%	29%
I believe memes assessment activities (i.e., examinations) are interesting.	6.5%	12.9%	32.3%	25.8%	22.6%

Regarding types of activities, using memes in creation/designing activities, analysis activities, and assessment activities is highlighted in this section. The data ($M=3.73$, $SD=0.94$) demonstrates that a large size of the population shows strong agreement where they find memes-creation activities and memes-analysis activities interesting. Memes-assessment activities had a moderate approval of about half of the participants. Additionally, 83.2% agreed that memes creation or designing activities are interesting. Moreover, 80.6% believed that memes analysis activities are interesting. On the other hand, 57.4% believed that assessment activities are interesting. This confirms the effectiveness of activities used by Smith (2021) where language instructors asked students to design memes using an idiom listed in their English language learning materials and Bini et al. (2022) where the creation of mathematical memes was investigated.

Throughout interviews, Student A stressed that she want to use memes-designing activities in MSA where the students can have the opportunity to create memes, she said “Yeah, I think it would be interesting because it would help us think of how to use the vocab that we have been learning so far, in maybe a different context from the one that we first learned especially with MSA”. Student C mentioned that he can make use of the layers of meanings by using them in different activities. Some students do not refuse to see memes in their exams, but they would prefer to have them for extra credit or a bonus activity. This means that students want to have memes as an option in assessment. This invites teachers to take students’ suggestions into consideration in terms of memes activities. In addition, teachers can let students choose how they want to use memes and encourage them to provide a number of options where they can use one idea or integrate two ideas or more in one activity like a bonus activity.

4.2.7. Theme 7: The Use of Memes and Language Variety

Table 13

Questions (23-24-25) – The Use of Memes and Language Variety

A. Mean and Standard Deviation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
The Use of Memes and Language Variety	2.79	0.40

B. Frequencies

Questions	Theme 7 - The Use of Memes and Language Variety				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe memes can be used only with the Egyptian colloquial variety of Arabic, not (MSA).	19.4%	45.2%	22.6%	12.9%	

I believe memes can be used only with MSA, not the Egyptian colloquial variety.	29%	48.4%	19.4%	3.2%	
I believe memes can be used with both MSA and Egyptian colloquial variety.		6.5%	6.5%	54.8%	32.3%

This theme discusses the use of memes in two Arabic language varieties; MSA and ECA. Responses ($M=2.79$, $SD=0.40$) did not favor the use of memes in only one variety over the other, but showed a preference for using memes in both MSA and ECA. Furthermore, 87% agreed that memes can be utilized with both varieties.

The qualitative data shows that some students expressed that they want to see memes in MSA classes, like Student A, who mentioned, “I think that memes could be found like in both with MSA or ECA; if memes were to be adopted in the classroom that teaches MSA, I think that would be interesting to see how instructors or you know whoever designs the textbooks can create and design memes in MSA”. Student C wondered why he does not see memes in MSA textbooks admitting that not a lot of memes are produced in MSA, he said, “I'm not saying a lot of people make memes in MSA, but I don't see any good reason why that wouldn't work”. There is no previous research that might support the students’ suggestions, however, their recommendations are worth testing and implementing. Not only Student C highlighted using memes in MSA classes, but Student A and Student B stressed the same need. This refers to the fact that more innovation and creativity in using digital tools must be introduced into AFL classrooms, especially the MSA ones.

4.3. Variations between the two groups

RQ3- What are the variations between the teachers’ and students’ perceptions regarding using memes, if any? What are the reasons for such variations?

Responses of teachers and students showed consistency in highlighting the effectiveness of memes and their role in developing linguistic skills, enhancing knowledge of the foreign language, and contributing to better teaching and learning of the target culture. Additionally, both groups agree that memes creation and analysis activities are interesting and that memes can be used in MSA and ECA alike. Moreover, teachers and students accord that memes can be used in online and in-person classroom settings. Nonetheless, each party has specific concerns. For instance, teachers did believe that there are challenges using memes with certain levels like beginners and intermediate-low. They also stressed that memes should be carefully selected and neutrally projected within the classroom. Teachers believed that memes assessment activities can be challenging for the students. Regarding students, they are divided about using memes in assessment and suggested the use of memes in the form of extra-credit or bonus activities.

5. Chapter 5: Conclusion

Perceptions of Most teachers and students were revealed through a questionnaire and interviews. They showed a positive attitude towards the use of memes in AFL classrooms with some recommendations on both sides. They recommend the use of memes because they are a tool of communication used by young generations, they are culturally-loaded items that can contribute to the enhancement of teaching the language and target culture. The two groups underlined that memes can contribute to enhancing some linguistic skills like meaning-decoding skills, information retrieval skills, and analytical skills. However, some teachers believe there might be challenges with memes being used at certain levels, especially beginners and intermediate. Others highlighted that memes can be used at any level as long as the teacher selects the appropriate meme and suitable activity. Furthermore, no disagreement on the teacher's side was reported about the benefit of memes for students, the role of memes in increasing engagement and motivation, in teaching the target culture. Moreover, teachers demonstrated a strong preference of using memes designing and creation activities which might refer to the need to experience memes in different activities other than the creation activities. For example, no teacher mentioned the use of memes through an online group like Han (2019) or Jin (2018).

In addition, teachers indicated that memes are effective and can be used in different activities, as they offer a tool or addition that helps the teacher with his/her objectives and better culture teaching. As for students, Students believe memes are beneficial especially when it comes to learning culture. Teachers and students also believe that memes can be used with both MSA and ECA alike. They want to see memes utilized in grammar lessons, for example, because they will make such lessons fun. Both teachers and students reported that they did not see a meme in an Arabic textbook. Nonetheless, memes do exist in the materials some teachers create for their classes. Furthermore, teachers recommend careful selection and regular updating of memes to be used in AFL textbooks and materials.

In regards to the study hypothesis, it was hypothesized that there will be variance in teachers' responses where some teachers are likely to support the utilization of memes and others will find

memes challenging to be used at certain levels. The current study relevantly proved my hypothesis where some teachers expressed that the level of students and the long time taken to explain the meme present a challenge for them. In addition, other teachers mentioned that the student's level is not problematic as long as they apply memes into their AFL classroom with carefulness in terms of selection and appropriateness. It was also hypothesized that students will support utilizing memes in AFL classrooms because of memes' popularity and familiarity to young adult learners. This hypothesis was also proven by this research where students showed a positive attitude towards the utilization of memes in AFL classes, including MSA and ECA. Furthermore, during the interviews, some students as well as some teachers expressed the effectiveness of memes with younger generations since they use it as "A way of communication", mentioned Teacher 3, or as Student C said, "It's just an approach to youth culture". As for variations between the two groups, the current study proved the teacher-related hypothesis that there will be variance in the responses of teacher and student, as results showed that some teachers found memes cannot be used in certain levels and others mentioned that the level is not the challenge but the matter of selection is.

5.1. Delimitations, Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study did not examine the difference of using memes between AFL learners in Egypt and abroad. It also did not investigate the impact of student level on using memes. Moreover, the current study did not explore the effect of age, gender, or educational level of teachers or students on using memes. This research does not touch on the developing language skills through observing the use of memes or the appropriate use of memes by teachers, students, and teaching materials developers. The study's sample included only adult learners because they are usually easier to access than minors. Another reason is that the researcher does not seek generalizations. It investigates the perceptions of AFL teachers and students regarding using memes in the classroom. This study did not include observation as a research method due to time constraints. Moreover, the study included many aspects of these memes, the value of some of them like memes and language variety are not supported due to the lack of previous research on the topic in the field of AFL. Due to time constraints, this study does not explore any specific variants or correlations such as age, gender, proficiency level, educational level, and teaching experience. Additionally, Perceptions of memes,

their application, and effectiveness in terms of students' level and language variety need further research.

Further studies are needed to investigate the use of memes in AFL classrooms with different language proficiency levels and research methods, for instance, using observation, student groups on social media platforms or chatting applications, memes assignments, memes competitions, memes exhibitions, etc. Additionally, future research might explore the same topic in relation to younger samples like school students in different grades. Regarding challenges, a deep investigation of challenges using memes by teachers and students is recommended in order to shape a framework of appropriateness when using memes in teaching and learning AFL. Most importantly is taking students' views into consideration and examining the use of memes in Arabic grammar as one student suggested, for example. In addition, extensive research can be carried out on memes in AFL textbooks which presents a gap that needs to be addressed. Furthermore, this work serves as a starting point for future researchers studying memes' benefits, applications, and methods.

5.2. Pedagogical Implications

This work will benefit AFL teachers, students, and textbook authors. It presents opportunities for the three parties to reconsider the use of memes in light of teachers' and students' perceptions.

5.2.1. Teachers

The teachers who do not use memes can learn how other teachers applied them to their classes in terms of students' levels and the types of activities. Moreover, the findings revealed students' recommendations for using memes with MSA, for example, which might encourage teachers to be more creative and incorporate memes into the MSA class. Teachers also will learn about the reasons and ways students favor the use of memes. Most importantly, teachers can create a framework or a set of guidelines to use memes in certain levels or topics. It is also beneficial for teachers to find memes in both varieties and use them in creative activities. Interviewed teachers mentioned that memes can be challenging in terms of the long time taken for explanation, and

interviewed students said that context and background information are crucial to comprehend the meme. Thus, Teachers are invited to come up with new activities to enhance the use of memes in the AFL classroom without spending a lot of time explaining the meme. For instance, teachers can use memes outside the classroom by creating a group on a social media platform or chatting application. The teachers can moderate this group and encourage the students to use memes or use the group for language exchange. In other words, the group can be joined by AFL and ESL learners or applied to any language pair in order to enhance language learning in the language of generation Z. An example activity is provided in Appendix V.

5.2.2. Students

Students can learn how teachers approach memes in the classroom and the reasons some teachers might not consider using memes at a certain level of language variety. They can also learn about the different ways the teachers in this study and others in the studies mentioned in the literature applied memes into their classrooms. Since teachers are encouraged to use memes as a creative tool, students are also encouraged to let teachers know their preferences, needs, and suggestions to help teachers meet the students' needs.

5.2.3. Material developers

Potential implications for textbook authors are highlighted throughout the perspectives and suggestions of teachers and students to introduce more innovative tools, be creative, and constantly update the materials. Therefore, textbook authors can start to carefully select and include memes in AFL textbooks and ensure regular updates of such memes. It is also recommended that the material developers seek AFL teachers' help in choosing the appropriate memes and application methods.

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Appendices

Appendix I: IRB Approval



Case# 2022-2023-188

To: Amani Batran

Dalal Abo El Seoud
Sara Tarek

From: Heba Kotb Chair of the IRB
Date 6/3/2023

Re: IRB approval

This is to inform you that I reviewed your revised research proposal entitled

“By All Memes, I want to learn Arabic: Teachers’; and Students’;
Perceptions of Using Memes in AFL Classrooms”

It required consultation with the IRB under the "expedited" category. As you are aware, there were minor revisions to the original proposal, but your new version addresses these concerns successfully. Your proposal used appropriate procedures to minimize risks to human subjects and that adequate provision was made for confidentiality and data anonymity of participants in any published record. I believe you will also make adequate provision for obtaining informed consent of the participants.

This approval letter was issued under the assumption that you have not started data collection for your research project. Any data collected before receiving this letter could not be used since this is a violation of the IRB policy.

Please note that IRB approval does not automatically ensure approval by CAPMAS, an Egyptian government agency responsible for approving some types of off-campus research. CAPMAS issues are handled at AUC by the office of the University Counsellor. The IRB is not in a position to offer any opinion on CAPMAS issues, and takes no responsibility for obtaining CAPMAS approval.

This approval is valid for only one year. In case you have not finished data collection within a year, you need to apply for an extension.

Thank you and good luck.

Heba Kotb

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Institutional Review Board
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Appendix II: The Questionnaires

A. Teachers' Questionnaire

1. I do not use memes in the classroom.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
2. I believe that memes are useless.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
3. I have challenges using memes in my classroom.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
4. Memes are usually humorous and make the students' learning fun.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
5. I do not use memes now but I want to use them in the future.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
6. I believe that my students will not benefit from memes.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
7. I believe the use of memes is very limited to certain levels.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
8. I use memes in the classroom.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
9. Memes do not exist in the AFL teaching materials I use.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
10. I believe memes should exist in AFL materials.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
11. Memes do increase the students' engagement and motivation for the topic.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
12. I believe using memes helps the teacher to reach the learning outcomes of his/her lesson.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
13. I believe using memes helps the teacher in teaching the target culture better.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
14. I believe memes can be used only with the Egyptian colloquial variety of Arabic, not MSA.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
15. I believe memes can be used only with MSA, not the Egyptian colloquial variety.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
16. I believe memes can be used with both MSA and the Egyptian colloquial variety.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
17. I believe I can use memes creation activities.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
18. I believe I can use memes analysis activities.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
19. I believe I can use memes assessment activities.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
20. I believe memes help me develop my meaning-decoding skills.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
21. I believe memes help me develop my information retrieval skills.

- a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
- 22. I believe memes help me develop my analytical skills.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
- 23. I believe my students will have a better learning experience when I teach with memes.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
- 24. Memes can be used in real AFL classrooms only.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
- 25. Memes can be used in online AFL classrooms only.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
- 26. Memes can be used in both real and online AFL classrooms.
 - a. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree

B. Students' Questionnaire

1. I used memes in my classes to learn Arabic as a foreign language before.
 - i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
2. Memes are usually funny.
 - i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
3. I think memes discuss important ideas in a funny way.
 - i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
4. Memes have hidden meanings. (pragmatic messages).
 - i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
5. The hidden meanings in memes are easy to infer.
 - i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
6. In my view, memes are good for teaching students how to infer hidden meanings.
 - i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
7. Some memes can be difficult because they require background information in order to understand them.
 - i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
8. Memes only address political issues.
 - i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
9. Memes can enhance my knowledge of the language I'm learning.
 - i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
10. Memes are different from ordinary pictures.
 - i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
11. I want more memes to be used in the Arabic classroom.
 - i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
12. I think memes should be used more than pictures in the classroom.
 - i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
13. I experienced memes in classrooms other than Arabic and I find them effective.
 - i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
14. Memes do increase my engagement and motivation for the topic.
 - i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
15. Memes help me understand the target culture better.
 - i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
16. I want to see more memes in my Arabic textbooks.
 - i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
17. I believe memes creation activities are interesting.

- i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
18. I believe memes analysis activities are interesting.
- i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
19. I believe memes assessment (i.e., examinations) activities are interesting.
- i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
20. I believe memes help me develop my meaning-decoding skills.
- i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
21. I believe memes help me develop my information retrieval skills.
- i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
22. I believe memes help me develop my analytical skills.
- i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
23. I believe memes can be used only with the Egyptian colloquial variety of Arabic, not MSA.
- i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
24. I believe memes can be used only with MSA, not the Egyptian colloquial variety.
- i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
25. I believe memes can be used with both MSA and the Egyptian colloquial variety.
- i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
26. Memes can be used in real AFL classrooms only.
- i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
27. Memes can be used in online AFL classrooms only.
- i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree
28. Memes can be used in both real and online AFL classrooms.
- i. Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral - Disagree - Strongly Disagree

Appendix III: Samples of Semi-structured Interview Questions

Students' semi-structured interview questions

1. Have you experienced using memes in Arabic classes or any other classes than Arabic? What are these classes?
2. Do you think that memes enhance your knowledge of Arabic as a foreign language?
3. Why do you think that hidden meanings in memes are easy to infer?
4. Do you think background information is required to understand memes? Why? Does this happen with memes in your culture?
5. Why do memes help you understand the target culture better?
6. Do you believe memes analysis activities are interesting? Why?
7. Do you believe that using memes helps the teacher in teaching the target culture better? How?
8. Do you believe that memes can be used with both MSA and the Egyptian colloquial variety? How?
9. Do you believe memes help students develop meaning-decoding skills? How?
10. Do you believe that memes can be used in both real and online AFL classrooms? Are there any challenges to using memes in any mode?

Teachers' semi-structured interview questions

1. Do you use memes in the classroom? How?
2. Do you believe that memes are useful? Why?
3. Do you have challenges using memes in your classroom? What are they?
4. Do you believe that using memes helps the teacher in teaching the target culture better? How?
5. Do you believe that memes can be used with both MSA and the Egyptian colloquial variety? How?
6. Do you believe memes help students develop meaning-decoding skills? How?
7. Do you believe that memes can be used in both real and online AFL classrooms? Are there any challenges to using memes in any mode?

Appendix IV: The woman yelling at a cat meme



Appendix V: Example activity

In the case of using memes for teaching culture and developing the students' ICC, the below meme activity can be introduced as an example:

Meme: “كنتي سيبه يمسكها يا فوزية”, or “You should have let him hold it, Fawzia”. This meme is from the 1980-play. This comedy play starring Fouad El-Mohandes, Sanaa Younes, Sherihan, Ahmad Rateb, and Muhammad Abou El-Hassan.

Context: Fawzia, who is the older daughter of a professor, is getting married after a seven-year engagement. She had a fight with her soon-to-be husband on the night before the wedding. Fawzia told her father about the fight on the day of the wedding while they are waiting for the groom to come for making the marriage official and, then, starting the wedding party. Professor Ra'ft was shocked to know about the quarrel and the reason behind it. Fawzia told her father that Hanafy, her soon-to-be husband tried to hold her hand while they were trying to cross the street. Fawzia fought with him in the street in front of everyone where people thought that Hanafy is trying to harass her. So everyone gathered to beat him. Her father was so upset because he knew that Hanafy might not come which is a scandal that will negatively affect him, her two younger sisters, and the whole family. If Hanafy does not come, this would mean one thing only that would be detrimental to the reputation of Fawzia and all of her family members. Therefore, her father said “You should have let him hold it”, meaning holding her hand.

Rational of selecting the meme: It is a 43-years old meme that might seem old to be used, however, it is a very popular meme that a great number of Egyptians know regardless of their age. It is a good meme to start talking about marriage in Egypt, its practices and related perspectives.

Target level: intermediate high

Pre-activity (assignment of the previous class): students were asked in the previous class to ask their language partners (provided by the teacher) about the play and meme and learn more about the culture of marriage in Egypt

Learning outcomes: by the end of this activity, students should be able to:

1. Apply background information to interpret real-life situations related to engagement/marriage
2. Analyze the situations in terms of dos and don'ts based on the target culture
3. Apply the lessons learned from the previous two steps into analyzing the meme of Fawzia
4. Compare practices and perspectives of marriage/engagement in Egypt with those of the student's country
5. Create memes that shows cultural differences of marriage/engagement in different parts of the world

Activity

Step 1: activation of students' schemata

- 1- Students are asked the following questions:
 - How people get engaged or married in your country?
 - Have you attended a mixed marriage before? If yes, how was it?
 - If you want to get married from a different country, which country would it be and why?
- 2- You are invited to attend an Egyptian engagement/wedding party, what do you expect to see?

- 3- What are the dos and don'ts for the groom and bride during the time of engagement until official marriage
- 4- Can these dos and don'ts be applied to all Egyptians? If yes/no, Why?

Step 2: the meme-analysis activity:

- 1- Students are asked to work in groups of 2 to:
 - What can you understand from this meme
 - Why did the father said to his daughter “كنتي سيبويه يمسكها يا فوزية”
 - Compare between the stance of the father and that of his daughter, was he/she right? Why/why not?
 - What happens to Fawzia and her family if Hanafy does not show up and marry her?
 - Does this meme apply to your country? Why/why not?
 - Why Egyptians laugh about this meme?
- 2- After discussing the meme, students are asked to fill in two tables of dos and don'ts in terms of engagement and marriage in Egypt and their country or a culture they are familiar with
- 3- Students are encouraged to comparisons using subcultures. For instance, compare marriage in Egypt with marriage in a small village in Germany
- 4- Then, students are asked to present their findings to the class

Engagement/Marriage in my country/culture	
Dos	Don'ts

Step 3: Meme sharing

- Students are asked to share engagement/marriage memes from the Egyptian culture, their culture, or different culture(s) on the Telegram group created by the teacher for this purpose.
- It is worth noting that the teacher ensured that all students are Telegram users.
- Students are expected to explain the meme and why a student choose a certain meme

Step 4 – (assignment)

- Students are asked to create 3 memes
- For designing the memes, students should choose pictures of engagement/wedding other than the ones discussed or shared on the group before
- The 3 memes should contain an Egyptian meme, a meme from the student's culture, and a meme from a different culture
- Students will share their memes on the Telegram group

- Each student is asked to choose 3 memes shared by one student and compare between them in writing
- Each student should let the rest of the group know about their chosen memes so no more than one student can analyze the same memes
- Each students submit the 3 selected memes along with the analysis to the teacher