Create and distribute a meme

Christoph Hülsmann, e-lang citizen team

Teacher sheet

Task

Your students will be given the following task.

> You will create, in groups, a meme on a specific theme to share it with an online community on a social network.

Sites

The meme is an internet phenomenon that has become increasingly popular in recent years on social networks. It is a textual and/or visual element (image[s]), GIF, video) intended to convey a message in a humorous, ironic or cynical way. As a general rule, the aim of a publication on social networks is to be distributed as widely as possible.

The following sites offer memes in French, English and German. They can be consulted to provide examples for learners:

- in French: https://meme-lords.com/;

- in English: https://knowyourmeme.com/;

- in German: https://www.pinterest.de/onlinesprachede/deutsche-memes/.

During the meme creation phase, learners can work with online generators and templates that can be found, for example, on the following sites:

- in French: https://meme-lords.com/meme/generator;

- in English: https://imgflip.com/memegenerator;

- in German: https://www.iloveimg.com/de/meme-generator.

The posting of the meme can be done on the meme sites mentioned above. However, if you want as wide a distribution as possible, a publication on the major social networks (Reddit, Pinterest, Twitter, Facebook, etc.) might be preferred.

CEFR level - For A1 level and above

Objectives

Digital citizenship and literacy

	Dimensions covered by the task	Specific (potential) objectives
Digital citizenship	Critical	Questioning your own digital practices.
Technology Literacy		Know how to use online generators to create a meme from textual and visual elements (image, video, GIF).
Meaning-making literacy	media literacy	Adopt a digital genre with its characteristics: to deal creatively (comically, critically, satirically) with a specific theme.
	Multimodal Literacy	Knowing how to create meaning by combining textual, visual and/or sound elements.

Main language activities

- Written production: production of texts for memes.
- Oral production: production of the videos (if planned).

Possible steps

- Ask learners about their digital practices. Have they ever heard of memes? Do they subscribe to meme sites? Are they meme producers themselves? What do they think of this practice?

- Have learners consult existing memes. From a selection, ask them which one they find the funniest, most shocking, weirdest and why. Which ones did they not understand? Get learners to react to comments made by their peers.

- Ask each learner to select a meme in their language that they find particularly successful and to explain why.

- Present the characteristics of this kind of multimodal text. The first step could be to propose a group classification activity based on a corpus of memes. How did the groups classify the memes? What categories did they choose? Then draw their attention to multimodality (combination of textual, visual and/or sound elements). What is the relationship between the different modes: redundancy, contradiction, complementarity? Finally, ask the learners to consider what they think creates the desired effect (humour, satire, criticism, etc.) in a given meme.

- Propose a theme for the creation of memes, for example a current topic or a subject currently covered in the course.

- Discuss the most suitable platforms to share these memes with a community. Thematize the legal aspects when publishing on the Internet (e.g. image rights) and systematic non-compliance in the case of memes.

- Divide the class into several groups. Each group creates a meme on the proposed theme, taking into account the publication platform and the target audience.

  - Choose a template (on the sites indicated above) or create a personal template.

  - Develop textual elements that go well together with the visual elements.

  - Cross-evaluate created memes.

  - Edit memes based on feedback.

  - Publish the memes and respond to possible reactions (comments, likes, etc.).

Collaboration with art or technology colleagues may be considered for this task.

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Student sheet

Task

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Sites

To create the memes, you can work with online generators and templates, for example on the following sites:

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CEFR level - For A1 level and above

Objectives

Digital citizenship and literacy

By completing this task, you can:

- learn how to use digital tools to create a meme on a specific topic;

- discover the characteristics of this very popular type of text on social networks;

- take a critical look at your own digital practices;

- discover the most suitable platforms for publishing memes.

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Hints

Keep in mind who you are addressing

Your meme is aimed at people using popular social networks. When choosing the platform, ask yourself the following questions:

- Where can we achieve the greatest possible reach for our meme?

- What are the social rules of the platform?

- Is it possible to get an idea of the audience of the platform and their expectations?

Work on the language-related aspects

Very often, a meme combines visual (image[s]), GIF, video) and textual elements. To achieve the desired effect of a meme, the text - which is, in general, relatively short - must be well adapted to the images. A certain length of the text is often already imposed by the image, for example in the case of text bubbles.

You could look at different memes to identify what makes them good and what creates the desired effect.

For you to think about

While completing this task, you can reflect on the following:

- What characterises memes? Try to formulate a definition of the term.

- Do you know any meme platforms and/or software to create memes?

- Under what conditions do we have the right to use images or film extracts without indicating the source?

- What criteria could one use to judge whether a meme could be perceived as inappropriate, offensive or even racist?